

Japanese find Buddhist caves near Bamiyan

30 October 2006

A Japanese research team has found some Buddhist caves in a valley about 62 miles from the Bamiyan archeological site in Afghanistan.

Experts say the discovery by the group from Ryukoku University suggests there was a large-scale Buddhist cultural area west of Bamiyan, Japan's Kyodo News Agency reports.

Believed to have been built around the eighth century, the caves are connected to each other by access aisles.

"The valley must have been on the trading route, and traders were praying at the caves," says Takashi Irisawa, a professor at the Kyoto university.

One of the caves is reported to be about 13 feet wide and 13 feet deep.

Bamiyan is considered to mark the western edge of the spread of Buddhist culture in pre-Islamic Afghanistan.

In 2001, the ruling Taliban destroyed two giant Buddha statues in Bamiyan.

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