

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF UZBEKISTAN AND THE ROLE OF AHMADALI ASQAROV IN ITS ACTIVITIES

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### **Аннотация**

В статье анализируется история создания Института археологии Академии наук Узбекистана, основанного в 1970 году в Самарканде, его научные направления и основные этапы деятельности. Особое внимание уделено роли академика Ахмадали Аскаророва в становлении и развитии института, а также в формировании национальной археологической школы. Автор раскрывает научно-организационную деятельность Аскаророва, его вклад в проведение фундаментальных археологических исследований, создание учебных археологических экспедиций и подготовку научных кадров. Кроме того, в статье рассматриваются научные идеи и методологические подходы Аскаророва, оказавшие значительное влияние на современную систему археологических исследований в Узбекистане. Полученные результаты имеют важное теоретическое и практическое значение для изучения истории отечественной археологии и оценки национального научного наследия.

### **Ключевые слова**

Институт археологии, Ахмадали Аскароров, Академия наук Узбекистана, Самарканд, археологическая школа, научная деятельность, национальное наследие, экспедиции, историография.

### **Abstract**

The article analyzes the history of the establishment of the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, founded in 1970 in Samarkand, as well as its main research directions and stages of development. Particular attention is paid to the role of academician Ahmadali Asqarov in the formation and advancement of the institute and in the creation of the national school of archaeology. The author highlights Asqarov's scientific and

organizational contributions, including his fundamental archaeological research, the organization of training archaeological expeditions, and his efforts in strengthening the institute's academic potential. Furthermore, the article examines Asqarov's scientific concepts and methodological approaches, which have had a significant impact on the modern system of archaeological research in Uzbekistan. The findings of the study possess theoretical and practical importance for the study of the history of Uzbek archaeology and the evaluation of the national scientific heritage.

### **Keywords**

Institute of Archaeology, Ahmadali Asqarov, Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, Samarkand, archaeological school, scientific activity, national heritage, expedition, historiography.

Among the scholars and specialists who contributed to the development of history and archaeology in Uzbekistan and who, through the study of the most pressing issues of our history, put forward well-founded ideas concerning our statehood and the history of our people, an honorable place belongs to Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor, Academician of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, Honored Scientist of Uzbekistan, and laureate of the Abu Rayhan Beruni State Prize – Ahmadali Asqarov.

Academician Ahmadali Asqarov possessed great scientific potential and the ability of an organizer and public figure, playing an important role in managing scientific research centers.

Before the decision to establish the Institute of Archaeology was made, A. Asqarov worked as the Deputy Director for Archaeology at the Institute of History and Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences. From that period on, he began his organizational and managerial activities, serving the development of the archaeological profession. Together with a team of archaeologists and young postgraduate archaeologists, he organized speeches and presentations at various conferences, scientific sessions, and councils on urgent issues of Uzbek archaeology.

At the same time, he supported dissertation defenders with his proposals and advice during scientific defenses. This can be confirmed by the documents from the 1968 annual report.

In April 1968, the institute's scholars – A.A. Asqarov, K.Sh. Shoniyozov, M.R. Qosimov, V.Ya. Zezenkova, S. Mirkhasilov, T. Agzamkhodjayev, L.I. Albaüm, and M. Pachos – actively participated with their reports in the All-Union Council of Archaeologists and Ethnographers held in Moscow [1, - P. 31-32]. The reports

presented by the institute's scholars addressed the problems of Central Asian archaeology as well as archaeological and ethnographic research attention was given to presenting the research results. In the same reporting year, a discussion was held on the dissertation of R.Kh. Suleymanov, who is now recognized as a prominent archaeologist, on the topic "Issues of the Periodization of the Paleolithic of Uzbekistan" [2, - P. 20-23]. Within the framework of this scientific work, the monograph "Grot - Obi-Rakhmat and the Experience of Mathematical and Statistical Study of the Obi-Rakhmat Culture" was published [3, - P. 112].

A. Asqarov emphasized that he had read R.Kh. Suleymanov's candidate dissertation twice – both before and after the preliminary discussion – and highly evaluated the work, describing it as a scientific study that initiated a new stage in the research of the Paleolithic period in our country. According to A. Asqarov, this dissertation not only made a significant contribution to the chronological systematization of Paleolithic archaeology but also demonstrated, through the mathematical and statistical analyses carried out within it, the possibilities of applying modern methods in scientific research.

Particularly, in the monograph "Grot - Obi-Rakhmat," the statistical analysis of archaeological materials related to the Obi-Rakhmat culture was noted as a unique scientific innovation. Asqarov regarded this work as a methodological model and evaluated it as a valuable guide for young researchers.

In the same reporting year – 1968, under the general supervision of Ya. Ghulomov, research was conducted on the topic "The History of Primitive Cultures in the Territory of Uzbekistan (Stone and Bronze Ages)." In this project, A. Asqarov and N. Tashkenbayev carried out studies on sites related to the prehistoric period of the Samarkand region. During the study of the Mesolithic and Neolithic cultures of Uzbekistan, Senior Researcher U. Islomov analyzed materials from the Obishir I and V caves and the Qoshilish site. Concerning the Bronze Age culture of Uzbekistan, A. Asqarov, S. Rakhimov, and Juan Duque [4, - P. 111-112] conducted both preliminary examinations and large-scale research.

From the information above, it can be concluded that between 1968 and 1970, even before the establishment of the Institute of Archaeology, special attention was paid to the training of qualified specialists in archaeology. During this period, A. Asqarov served as the Deputy Director for Archaeology at the Institute of History and Archaeology and was both the scientific and practical organizer of these processes. It is important to note that he reviewed the works of researchers in every scientific discussion and provided his recommendations. For instance, during the 1970 discussion of the candidate dissertation of Junior Researcher Juan Duque on the topic "Issues of the Periodization of the Late Bronze Age in Central Asia,

Kazakhstan, and Siberia”, A. Asqarov stated that he had become familiar with the work twice, noted the perfection of its structure, and emphasized that it defined important tasks regarding the chronology of the Late Bronze Age sites in Central Asia, Kazakhstan, and Siberia. He stressed that the author, based on an in-depth analysis of numerous archaeological materials, had produced a well-generalized study on the Late Bronze Age, and therefore recommended the work for defense [5, - P. 19-20].

In the same year – 1970, during the discussions of the scientific works of Junior Researchers A. Anarboyev and T. Mirsaatov on the topic “Study of the Uchtut Mines and the Functional Determination of Tools through Experimental Methods” [6, - P. 59-60, 80-81], one can clearly observe A. Asqarov’s responsibility and attention toward the training of specialists in the field of archaeology.

During the discussions, his comments, suggestions, and support for young researchers demonstrated his dedication as a leader to increasing the number of young scholars engaged in scientific research and ensuring that they effectively used the opportunities provided to them. The year 1970 was one of the most significant stages in Ahmadali Asqarov’s professional career. During this period, he worked consistently toward solving pressing issues in the fields of archaeology and history. In particular, he organized scientific expeditions, introduced new methodological approaches to archaeological research, and put forward scientific ideas aimed at re-evaluating the earliest stages of historical processes. At the same time, Asqarov’s efforts during this period contributed not only to addressing specific scholarly problems but also to the formation of the national school of archaeology.

Another important event of that year was the preparation for the celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the city of Samarkand. The anniversaries of ancient cities carry great historical significance, and their proper commemoration provides the world community with an opportunity to recognize the ancient roots of Central Asian civilization. Ahmadali Asqarov took an active part in these processes. According to him, historical dates and monuments should be presented not only through cultural events but also through scientific research, fundamental publications, and archaeological expeditions. Therefore, based on the findings obtained during expeditions and historical sources, he made important proposals concerning the scientific substantiation of Samarkand’s true age.

At that time, only the early medieval layers of Afrasiab had been studied. Asqarov stated:

“We have not yet reached the ancient layers. The antiquity period has not been properly explored. A special group should be formed to address this issue. Many

unevaluated materials obtained from archaeological excavations have accumulated. We have made discoveries. Until recently, we could not scientifically prove that the city of Samarkand was 2500 years old. In 1969, we uncovered the ancient wall of Samarkand, which confirmed that the city had existed long before Alexander the Great" [7, - P. 26-27].

Subsequent archaeological research demonstrated that the city was even older than previously thought. Since 2001, Samarkand, one of the most important cities along the ancient Silk Road and included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, celebrated its 2750th anniversary in 2007.

In the mid-20th century, the sciences of anthropology and ethnography had developed considerably in Uzbekistan. However, for various reasons, these fields gradually declined. Archaeology could have faced a similar fate, but the leadership of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan developed plans for the advancement of archaeology. The implementation of these plans was entrusted to the young scholar and organizer Ahmadali Asqarov [8, - P. 87]. Recalling those years, A. Asqarov said: "Thanks to the initiative of my two mentors, I.M. Muminov and Ya.Gh. Ghulomov, in 1970 (the third such institution in the former USSR), it was decided to establish the Institute of Archaeological Research within the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. After obtaining permission from Moscow and the necessary approvals, a meeting of the Academy's board was convened to confirm the leadership of the new institute. Representatives of the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers also participated in the meeting. The chairman, President of the Academy, Academician O.S. Sodiqov, announced the following: 'Professor Ya.Gh. Ghulomov is recommended as Director of the Institute, and A. Asqarov as Deputy Director. After his official and ceremonial address, the chairman added seriously:

'Dear members of the board and participants of the meeting, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan and the Central authorities have decided that the Institute should be established in Samarkand, a city rich in ancient monuments. Therefore, the newly founded Institute of Archaeology within our Academy will conduct its activities in Samarkand, he concluded" [9]. Ya. Ghulomov, acknowledging the rich archaeological heritage of Samarkand, expressed concern over the lack of qualified specialists, insufficient fundamental libraries, and difficulties in accommodating transferred personnel. Therefore, he strongly argued that the institute should be established in Tashkent, emphasizing that he would only serve as director if the institute were based there. However, since the decision had already been made by the Central Committee, the Presidium considered it necessary to implement the directive of the Center. Therefore, the

candidacy of the young specialist Ahmadali Asqarov was nominated for the position of Director of the Institute.

The organizational skills, dedication to the science of archaeology, high standards toward himself and others, honesty, and integrity that characterized the young specialist had already drawn the attention of the leadership of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. As a result, in 1970, Ahmadali Asqarov was appointed Director of the newly established Institute of Archaeology. According to the government decree, Asqarov was entrusted with a challenging and highly responsible task – the scientific and organizational establishment of the newly founded research institution, the Institute of Archaeological Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. Ahmadali Asqarov and his colleagues – A. Mukhammadjonov, U. Islomov, Yu. Buryakov, M. Qosimov, R. Sulaymanov, A. Abdurazzoqov, T. Mirsaatov, M. Filanovich, T. Khodjayev, Sh. Ilhomov, Kh. Duke, and N. Toshkentboev – showed true devotion and selflessness in bringing this first institute of its kind in Central Asia to life and ensuring its successful operation [10, - P. 7].

In the formation of the Archaeology Institute opened in Samarkand, it is essential to emphasize the organizational and leadership contributions of Ahmadali Asqarov. The construction of the new institute building and the recruitment of qualified personnel did not happen automatically – both required tremendous effort and dedication. We can understand the challenges faced during this process from the words of the scholar's wife, Muborakkhon Aya: "Until Professor Asqarov managed to establish the Archaeology Institute in Samarkand, he went through many difficulties. On the site designated for the institute's construction, there was an old woman's house, and relocating her was a complicated process. There were times when he had to travel to Tashkent twice in one day" [11].

It is not difficult to imagine how challenging the first years of Asqarov's tenure as director must have been, especially since, despite the government's decision to locate the institute in Samarkand, there was no suitable building yet.

The most urgent issue was to construct the institute building, along with a residential block of 16 apartments and a garage for institute vehicles. By the autumn of 1972, construction of both the building and residential facilities was completed. On part of the institute's two-hectare territory, a garden was planted; a metal-frame vineyard arbor was built, and by 1973, the trees began to bear fruit. All of these improvements were created for the benefit of the institute's staff [12, - P. 59-60]. Ahmadali Asqarov and his colleagues succeeded in naming the new institute after their teacher – the first Uzbek archaeologist, Academician Ya. Gh.

Ghulomov. This act reflected their boundless respect and devotion toward their mentor.

Despite numerous artificial obstacles that arose during the establishment process, the young director remained undeterred. With determination and strong will, he overcame complex challenges and elevated the institute to the level of a recognized scientific center, not only in Central Asia but also internationally. Under Asqarov's initiative and leadership, the institute hosted several regional and international scientific conferences and symposia. His persistent efforts led to the formation of a united and productive community of archaeologists and the emergence of the unique "Samarkand School of Archaeology."

The scholar did not limit his work at the Institute of Archaeology to only scientific and organizational duties. He dedicated his entire activity to the path of science and personally participated in field archaeological excavations for several months every year. Professor Asqarov had his own unique method in selecting and mentoring young specialists. He would first involve young people in research within his own team and expeditions, and only after they had proven themselves through hard work and ability would he officially hire them.

According to his colleagues, he always demonstrated himself as an active researcher and a responsible leader during expeditions, serving as an example of diligence and integrity to everyone around him. During the day, the professor managed organizational affairs at the institute and worked with scientific literature in the library; at night, he conducted research in the archaeological laboratory as part of his doctoral dissertation topic. In addition, he personally supervised the classification of archaeological findings, the preparation of their drawings, tables, and photo albums. This not only reflected his hard-working nature as a researcher, but also his role as a model and inspiration for young scholars [13, - P. 52].

The goal of archaeology in our homeland is to reconstruct an objective historical reality that reflects the development of Uzbek civilization and statehood from the most ancient times to the Timurid period. It aims to present the history of the Uzbek people not separately from world history, but as an integral part of it – demonstrating their contribution to world civilization, particularly their role in transmitting advanced ideas and innovations along the Great Silk Road from East to West and from West to East.

Moreover, it seeks to highlight the place and contribution of the Uzbek people in the formation of the culture and statehood of the peoples of Central Asia. Special attention is given to priority directions in fundamental, applied, and innovative research, as well as studies on the ancient and medieval history, ethnogenesis, and ethnic history of the peoples of Uzbekistan.

Achieving scientific results in these areas plays an important role in the development of social sciences, as well as in training a new generation of scholars and highly qualified specialists in our country. The scholar worked at the Samarkand Institute of Archaeology for a total of 14 years, serving as the director of the institute during the periods 1970–1980 and 1983–1987. During this time, the institute became one of the most prominent scientific institutions in Samarkand.

The institute's material and technical base was developed, the scope of research expanded, and numerous new scientific discoveries were made. Gradually, the institute turned into a center for training archaeological specialists for all the Central Asian republics. In 1987, the establishment of a Scientific Council for awarding academic degrees at the Institute of Archaeology marked a new stage of scientific growth [14, - P. 35]. Later, this council was elevated to the status of a regional Scientific Council. A Field Research Committee was also established under the institute, which provided practical support to researchers in conducting archaeological investigations as a unified scientific center.

Ahmadali Asqarov was known for his firmness and consistency of thought. "He always stood by his convictions. If he believed his opinion was correct, he would never retreat from it. In such moments, he was ready to engage in debate with anyone" [15]. These very qualities became one of the key factors behind his success. They enabled him to consistently achieve high results in both his scientific and organizational activities and played a decisive role in the formation of the national school of archaeology.

Founded in 1970, the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan has now become one of the world's recognized archaeological research institutions. The substantial and meaningful contributions of Uzbek archaeologists have made a significant impact on global archaeological science. The scientific activities of prominent scholars such as Academicians Ahmadali Asqarov, Utkir Islomov, and Abdulahad Muhammadjonov, as well as Doctors of Historical Sciences Temur Shirinov and Rustam Sulaymonov, have been closely connected with this institution. All of them became worthy successors to their great teachers – Yahyo Ghulomov and S. P. Tolstov [16, - P. 87].

During Ahmadali Asqarov's leadership of the institute, numerous scientific conferences were organized, and international academic relations were established with foreign countries. The institute's researchers participated in international conferences and symposiums in Russia, Germany, India, and Afghanistan, delivering their scholarly reports. It is also worth noting that special attention was given to landscaping and improvement works of the institute's premises.

Even today, the fate and development of the Institute of Archaeology, its achievements, and its ongoing research directions remain at the center of Professor Asqarov's attention. Through his insights and initiatives, he continues to contribute actively to the growth, scientific potential, and international prestige of the institute. Ahmadali Asqarov holds firm views on the key issues facing the institute and continues to play an important role in shaping its progress.

These conclusions and observations show that in order to develop archaeology in our country on a solid scientific basis, ensure its continuous progress, and shape it in line with modern requirements, there must be constant scientific dialogue and methodological cooperation among scholars of different generations – senior archaeologists with vast experience, mid-career researchers actively engaged in fieldwork, and young specialists who are just beginning their scientific journey.

If this process is carried out not only through scientific conferences and joint projects, but also through targeted and systematic collaboration, it will undoubtedly lead to the strengthening of the theoretical foundations of archaeology and the increase of practical, innovation-oriented research. In this sense, intergenerational scientific interaction serves as an essential factor for the sustainable future development of archaeological science.

In conclusion, the 1970s and 1980s were a turning point in Ahmadali Asqarov's scholarly career. During this period, he raised archaeological research to a new level and achieved remarkable scientific success. It was in these years that he defended his doctoral dissertation in history and introduced the Sopolli, Kuchuktepa, and Ancient Bactria cultures into academic study on a scientific basis. These discoveries opened new directions in the study of Central Asian history and laid the foundation for the international recognition of the national school of archaeology. Therefore, this period holds decisive significance not only in the scholar's biography but also in the overall advancement of archaeology in Uzbekistan.

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