

THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE FORMATION OF "MASTER-DISCIPLE" TRADITIONS WITHIN THE SCIENTIFIC SCHOOL OF ACADEMICIAN AHMADALI ASKAROV

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Abstract

This article examines the pedagogical activities of Academician Ahmadali Askarov within the system of higher education and investigates the scholarly contributions of the representatives of his academic school that emerged at the Nizami Uzbekistan National Pedagogical University. The study highlights the role of this higher educational institution in training highly qualified specialists in history and archaeology and elucidates Askarov's distinctive mentoring system aimed at nurturing young researchers. Drawing upon the research conducted by his disciples, the article addresses major issues related to Bronze Age civilizations, early statehood, urban development, ethnogenesis, religious beliefs, cultural transformations, and the preservation of historical and cultural heritage. Particular attention is paid to the contribution of this scholarly school to the study of the ancient history and civilizations of Central Asia and to the continuity of the mentor-disciple tradition in academic scholarship.

Keywords

Ahmadali Askarov, scholarly school, Nizami Uzbekistan National Pedagogical University, archaeology, history, Central Asia, ethnogenesis, early statehood, urbanization, Zoroastrianism, cultural heritage, mentor-disciple tradition.

Аннотация

Мақолада ўзбек археология мактабининг йирик намоёндаларидан бири, академик Аҳмадали Асқаровнинг олий таълим тизимидаги педагогик фаолияти ҳамда айнан Низомий номидаги Ўзбекистон Миллий педагогика университети негизда шакллانган унинг илмий мактаби давомчилари фаолияти тадқиқ этилган. Унда мазкур олий таълим муассасасининг тарих ва археология соҳалари учун юқори малакали мутахассислар тайёрлашдаги ўрни ва олимнинг ёш тадқиқотчиларни шакллантиришга қаратилган ўзига хос устозлик тизими очиқ берилган. Олим раҳбарлигида тайёрланган

шогирдларнинг илмий тадқиқотлари асосида бронза даври цивилизациялари, илк давлатчилик, шаҳарсозлик, этногенез, диний эътиқодлар, маданий трансформациялар ҳамда тарихий-маданий меросни муҳофаза қилиш масалалари ёритилган. Шунингдек, мазкур илмий мактаб вакиллари Урта Осиёнинг қадимги тарихи ва цивилизациясини ўрганишга қўшган ҳиссаси ҳамда устоз-шогирд анъаналарининг узвий давомийлиги илмий жиҳатдан баҳоланган.

Калит сўзлар

Ахмадали Аскарров, илмий мактаб, Ўзбекистон Миллий педагогика университети, археология, тарих, Урта Осиё, этногенез, илк давлатчилик, шаҳарсозлик, зардуштийлик, маданий мерос, устоз-шогирд анъаналари.

Аннотация

В статье исследуются педагогическая деятельность академика Ахмадали Аскарова в системе высшего образования и научная деятельность представителей его научной школы, сформировавшейся именно на базе Национального педагогического университета Узбекистана имени Низами. Раскрывается роль данного высшего учебного заведения в подготовке высококвалифицированных специалистов в области истории и археологии, а также своеобразная система наставничества ученого, направленная на формирование молодых исследователей. На основе научных исследований учеников А. Аскарова освещаются проблемы цивилизаций бронзового века, ранней государственности, урбанизации, этногенеза, религиозных верований, культурных трансформаций и сохранения историко-культурного наследия. Особое внимание уделено вкладу представителей данной научной школы в изучение древней истории и цивилизаций Центральной Азии, а также преемственности традиций «учитель–ученик».

Ключевые слова

Ахмадали Аскарров, научная школа, Национальный педагогический университет Узбекистана имени Низами, археология, история, Центральная Азия, этногенез, ранняя государственность, урбанизация, зороастризм, культурное наследие, традиции «учитель–ученик».

The Uzbek archaeologist and academician Ahmadali Askarov, while continuing his research activities in scientific research institutes from 2000 onwards, also commenced his career in the higher education system as a professor. His work in higher education has been distinguished by its remarkable scholarly productivity and significant scientific achievements. Although the scholar regarded

himself as a successor to the academic school founded by his mentor, Ya. Ghulamov, he also emerged as an accomplished researcher who established his own distinctive scientific school. Under his academic supervision, 25 researchers successfully defended their Candidate of Sciences and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) dissertations, while 8 scholars completed and defended their Doctor of Sciences (DSc) dissertations. At present, nearly ten young researchers and PhD scholars continue their scientific investigations under his guidance.

In particular, of the 25 Candidates of Sciences and Doctors of Philosophy (PhD) trained within the framework of the scientific school established by the scholar, nearly 50 percent (11 individuals) emerged directly from a single higher educational institution-the Uzbekistan National Pedagogical University (formerly Tashkent State Pedagogical University), where A. Askarov himself received his education and where he has been engaged in pedagogical activities since 2001. It is noteworthy that these disciples were nurtured during the period of A. Askarov's pedagogical career. They were identified and selected as promising students already at the undergraduate and master's levels and were systematically guided toward scientific research. Today, they have become highly qualified specialists in the field of history, successfully pursuing academic, administrative, and research careers in higher education institutions and scientific organizations. Below, we briefly examine the scholarly works of the representatives of A. Askarov's scientific school who were formed within this educational institution and highlight the significance of their research for the development of the discipline.

In his dissertation, M. Kh. Esanov [1] investigated the reflection of Avestan society in archaeological materials through the case study of the Bronze Age monuments of the material culture of Ancient Bactria and Margiana, commonly referred to as the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC). Drawing upon archaeological evidence from the sites of Sopollitepa, Jarkutan, Gonur, Togolok, and Dashly, the study analyses the processes of religious and ideological centralisation in Bronze Age Bactria and Margiana within the framework of the Avestan tradition. The research further explores the emergence of the earliest cultic complexes and temples and examines their transformation into ideological and religious centres of the early city-states. On the basis of archaeological data, the study substantiates the argument that the earliest roots of Zoroastrianism developed within the socio-economic milieu of the ancient agricultural oases of Central Asia. It also demonstrates that Zoroastrian beliefs began to take shape in the land of Turan during the Bronze Age and constituted one of the principal ideological foundations of early statehood. Moreover, the dissertation investigates the poorly studied phenomenon of zoolatric beliefs as an independent field of

research for the first time and argues that animal cults represented one of the significant factors in the emergence and evolution of early religious systems.

The study conducted by Kh. Matyaqubov [2] is devoted to elucidating the place and role of Ancient Khorezm in the early stages of the formation of Uzbek statehood. The research aims to provide a systematic analysis of the principal factors, developmental characteristics, and historical traditions underlying the emergence of statehood and urban culture in the region. Furthermore, it offers a scholarly reconstruction of the socio-political processes that unfolded in the Khorezm oasis during the Archaic and Antique periods and comparatively examines the model of Khorezmian statehood in relation to other historical and cultural regions of Central Asia. As a result, the history of the formation and development of early statehood in Khorezm has, for the first time, been investigated as a coherent scholarly problem. Based on the analysis of archaeological materials, the study demonstrates that the earliest forms of statehood in the oasis were established on the foundations of city-states and an oasis-based model of political organisation. The research also clarifies the long-debated issue of the capital city of the ancient Khorezmian state, which had previously remained unresolved in scholarship. Moreover, it provides the first scholarly substantiation that Zoroastrianism acquired the status of a state religion in the example of the ancient Khorezmian polity.

In 2017, D.O. Karimova [3] successfully defended her dissertation entitled *Funerary Rituals and Religious Beliefs of the Population of Northern Bactria: Evidence from the Material Culture Monuments of the Bronze Age*. The primary objective of this study was to provide a systematic reconstruction of the historical processes associated with the funerary practices and religious beliefs of the Bronze Age population of Northern Bactria. The findings of the research resulted in the development of a comprehensive scholarly framework for understanding the religious beliefs and burial customs of the populations associated with the Bronze Age cultures of Northern Bactria, including the Sapalli, Bishkent, Vakhsh, and Andronovo cultural traditions. The study further demonstrated that the tradition of venerating the four sacred elements, characteristic of early Zoroastrianism, originated among the sedentary agricultural communities of the Late Bronze Age. Most importantly, the research provides scholarly evidence that the genetic and cultural roots of the ancient funerary customs and burial structures of the region are directly connected with the traditional customs and ritual practices of the Uzbek people, thereby demonstrating a significant degree of historical continuity in the cultural development of the region.

In her research, M.M. Khatamova [4] focused on the study of the cities of the Turkic Khaganate during the sixth to eighth centuries CE. The findings of the study demonstrate that the ancient Turks used the native Turkic term *baliq* to denote a “city,” while the concept of the state “capital” was associated with the Golden Horde (Altun Ordu), which symbolized supreme rulership and possessed a status higher than that of a permanent capital city. The research further substantiates that the Ashina dynasty established its political legitimacy in the region by constructing royal residences on the sites previously occupied by the administrative centres of such states as the Xiongnu, Rouran, and Wusun. Moreover, even after consolidating their authority over the oasis regions, the rulers of the Khaganate continued to reside in seasonal residences characteristic of steppe polities. As the territorial boundaries of the Khaganate expanded, new royal residences were founded in strategically important areas. The study also demonstrates, using the examples of Chach and Fergana, that under the rule of the Turkic Khaganate existing oasis cities underwent further development and new urban centres were established. Consequently, the Turkic cultural and demographic component within the oasis cities became increasingly pronounced, contributing significantly to the processes of urban and cultural transformation in the region.

In 2019, O.U. Inomov [5] successfully defended his dissertation devoted to the Qovunchi (Kaunchi) culture and its role in the formation of the Uzbek people. The study demonstrates that during the Antiquity period, the middle reaches of the Syr Darya witnessed the emergence of the principal factors that contributed to the formation of the Uzbek ethnos, including territorial unity, economic integration, ethnocultural cohesion, anthropological affinity, and ethnopolitical unity. These factors are identified as the earliest foundations of the ethnic consolidation of the Uzbek people. Using the Tashkent oasis as a case study, the research reveals that the ethnogenetic processes leading to the formation of the Uzbek people had already begun during the Antiquity and Early Medieval periods and clarifies the significant role played by the Qovunchi culture in these developments. Through a comparative analysis of archaeological, anthropological, linguistic, and written historical sources, the study establishes that the Tashkent oasis constituted one of the principal regions in which the earliest ethnic foundations of the Uzbek people were formed. Furthermore, based on the archaeological materials of the period under investigation and supported by primary sources, the research reconstructs the patterns of social, economic, and cultural interaction between sedentary agricultural communities and pastoral populations, thereby highlighting their contribution to the ethnocultural processes that shaped the region.

B.V. Eshquvatov [6] conducted a study on the history of the introduction and dissemination of Christianity in Central Asia. Based on the territorial analysis of archaeological monuments, the research substantiates that Christianity penetrated into Central Asia through the Sasanian Empire and subsequently spread primarily to the Zarafshan oasis and the Semirechye (Jetysu) region. The study systematically examines the socio-economic factors, particularly trade and migration, as well as the ethnic and political circumstances, especially during the period of the Western Turkic Khaganate, that facilitated the development and expansion of Christian culture in the region. Through a comparative analysis of the written sources from Dunhuang and Khara-Khoto and archaeological materials from sites such as Sufiyon and Durmontepa, the research elucidates the attitudes of the local population toward this confession. Furthermore, the study is the first to investigate the processes through which elements of European medical knowledge entered the region, using the intellectual activities of such prominent figures as Abu Sahl al-Masihi as a case study. By integrating archaeological and written evidence, the research provides new insights into the religious and cultural interactions that accompanied the spread of Christianity in Central Asia.

In his study devoted to the southward migration of the pastoral communities of Central Asia and the early ethnogenetic processes in Southern Turan, I.N. Juraev [7] substantiated that the emergence of nomadic pastoralism should be traced not to the Early Iron Age but rather to the activities of the Bronze Age communities associated with the Andronovo cultural horizon. The research demonstrates that the establishment of horse breeding as a means of transportation as early as the first half of the second millennium BCE constituted one of the principal factors in the formation of a nomadic economy. Furthermore, through a comparative analysis of archaeological evidence and data contained in the Chinese dynastic chronicles (*shi*), the study proposes, for the first time, that the ethnic roots of the “Aryans” were closely associated with Turkic-speaking populations. The research also demonstrates that the assimilation of the Andronovo communities with the indigenous population represented a significant ethnic stage in the formation of the Uzbek people. By integrating archaeological, historical, and written sources, the study offers new perspectives on the migration processes of Bronze Age pastoral groups and their contribution to the ethnogenetic development of the populations of Southern Turan and Central Asia as a whole.

Since the mid-1970s, A. Askarov has devoted considerable scholarly attention to the problems of the ethnogenesis and ethnic history of the Uzbek people. Continuing his mentor's research trajectory, one of his disciples, N.A. Sattorov, conducted a comprehensive study of this issue, focusing specifically on the

historiographical treatment of Uzbek ethnogenesis in twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship. The study demonstrates that, owing to the insufficiency of written sources, the principal evidence for investigating the ethnogenesis of any given people lies in the analysis of their contemporary language, physical anthropological type, and material culture inherited from the past. These factors are shown to constitute the primary sources for reconstructing the processes of ethnic formation and historical development. The research further establishes that the theory of autochthony was first formulated in modern scholarship by Academician N. Marr and that A.Yu. Yakubovsky subsequently employed this conceptual framework in seeking a scientific solution to the problem of the origin of the Uzbek people. In addition, through a historiographical analysis of the works of scholars who have approached the issue of Uzbek ethnogenesis from diverse methodological perspectives, the study elucidates the chronological framework, territorial scope, and ethnic roots of the ethnogenetic formation of the Uzbek people [8].

Since 2009, Ahmadali Askarov has devoted particular attention to the study of the material cultural heritage of the Ohangaron Valley. In pursuit of identifying, investigating, and introducing into scholarly circulation the archaeological monuments left by the region's sedentizing pastoral ancestors, he assigned a number of research topics on the history and archaeology of the Ohangaron Valley to his students. Among A. Askarov's disciples conducting research in this region is U.M. Ismailov, who completed both his bachelor's and master's degrees at the Tashkent State Pedagogical University named after Nizami (currently the Uzbekistan National Pedagogical University). Under the guidance of his mentor, he has continued investigations into the archaeological heritage of the Ohangaron Valley, contributing to the study of the processes of sedentarization and the historical development of pastoral communities in the region.

In his research, U.M. Ismailov examined the formation and development of the ancient and medieval cities of the Ohangaron Valley through archaeological investigations conducted at the site of Suyurlitepa [9]. Based on the results of these excavations, the study elucidates the patterns governing the emergence and development of urbanization in the Ohangaron Valley during the ancient and medieval periods. For the first time, the cities of the valley were classified according to their natural and geographical setting into two principal types: the piedmont-hill zone, represented by Suyurlitepa and Tunkat, and the plain zone, represented by Kanka and Banakat. The research further demonstrates that the defensive systems of the piedmont urban centres were fundamentally determined by the natural relief of the surrounding landscape. Through a comparative analysis of the geographical

descriptions contained in the *Hudud al-'Alam* and the toponym *Ovjas*, the study identifies the site of Suyurlitepa with the historical frontier city of Alakhjas. Moreover, on the basis of numismatic and archaeological evidence, the research establishes that urban life at the site continued until the beginning of the thirteenth century. The investigation also demonstrates that the funerary monuments of the region—including catacomb burials, burial mounds, and Islamic cemeteries—reflect a three-stage evolutionary process in the religious beliefs of the local population, tracing the transition from fire worship and Zoroastrianism to Islam.

Throughout his scholarly career, Ahmadali Askarov has devoted considerable attention to issues related to the preservation of historical and cultural heritage. The artefacts discovered during archaeological expeditions were systematically transferred to museums, thereby enriching museum collections and ensuring the preservation, study, and interpretation of historical sources that bear witness to the past. Particular emphasis has been placed on safeguarding these materials and bringing them into scholarly circulation. In recent years, he has continued these efforts by focusing on the musealization of the Uchtepa–Buloqmozor archaeological complex in Namangan Region. In addition to conducting archaeological investigations at the site, simultaneous work has been undertaken to develop strategies for its preservation and museum presentation. Recognizing the scientific significance of these issues, A. Askarov entrusted his disciple, D.I. Tukhtasinov, with the task of investigating the archaeological and museological aspects of the site as a dedicated research topic.

In his research, D.I. Tukhtasinov [10] provided the first systematic study of the historical topography and stratigraphy of the Uchtepa–Buloqmozor complex through the application of modern technologies and comparative source analysis. Based on the results of archaeological excavations and the examination of written sources, the study identifies the Uchtepa–Buloqmozor archaeological complex as the location of Haylam, the principal city of the Miyon-Rudon district. On the basis of architectural features and ceramic assemblages, the chronological framework of the site has been established as extending from the third century BCE to the eighth century CE. Furthermore, for the first time, the developmental dynamics of the local population's way of life have been divided into three distinct chronological phases. The study also demonstrates, on the basis of altar-hearths, stone constructions, and a complex of religious artefacts discovered at the Uchtepa-2 site, that this settlement functioned as a Zoroastrian fire temple. These findings substantially contribute to our understanding of the religious and urban history of the region and provide new evidence concerning the development of cultic architecture in ancient Central Asia.

In her dissertation, G.S. Norqulova [11] investigated the religious beliefs and ritual practices of the ancient population of the Miyonkol oasis through the study of ossuaries and the remains of temples discovered at the archaeological sites of Kurgontepa, Ishtikhan, and Afarinkent. By comparatively analysing archaeological evidence alongside the *Avesta* and other written sources, the study demonstrates that these funerary practices were closely associated with Zoroastrian rituals. This conclusion is further substantiated by the results of field investigations conducted in the Akdarya and Ishtikhan districts. Through a comparative-historical analysis of archaeological, ethnographic, and written sources, the research establishes that the Miyonkol oasis constituted an ethnocultural region in which the Uzbek and Tajik ethnoses developed through long-term coexistence and interaction, reflecting the historical synthesis of ancient Turkic and Sogdian cultural traditions. Furthermore, the study demonstrates, on the basis of field research and historical and ethnographic evidence, that a number of traditional customs and rites that continue to survive in the Miyonkol oasis today—including *chiroq yoqdi* (“lighting the lamp”), *yulduz ko'rdi* (“seeing the star”), *kir yuvdi* (“ritual washing”), *ko'k kiydi* (“wearing blue”), *momo isi, sachala, sirg'a taqdi* (“earring ceremony”), and *oq o'rar*—originate from ancient ritual traditions rooted in Zoroastrianism and early Tengriism. These findings provide important evidence for the continuity of religious beliefs and cultural practices in Central Asia from antiquity to the present day.

The analysis of the aforementioned studies clearly demonstrates that the successors of Academician A. Askarov's scientific school, formed within a single higher educational institution during his pedagogical and scholarly career, have made significant contributions to uncovering new dimensions of historical and archaeological research. The studies conducted by his disciples, who were carefully selected and guided from the undergraduate and master's levels, have provided comprehensive and systematic examinations of such complex issues as Bronze Age ethnogenesis, models of early statehood, urban topography, and religious and ideological transformations.

The scientific achievements of these scholars have substantially contributed to the reconstruction of the history of the ancient centres of civilization in Central Asia—including Bactria, Khorezm, the Ohangaron Valley, and the Fergana Valley—through the integrated use of material and written sources. Collectively, these studies attest to the existence of a coherent and sustainable scientific school that continues and further develops the scholarly traditions established by its founder.

The continuity of research themes, methodological approaches, and academic mentorship within this scholarly community demonstrates that A. Askarov's scientific school has evolved into an influential intellectual tradition, making a substantial contribution to the advancement of historical and archaeological studies in Uzbekistan and Central Asia as a whole.

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