

A SCHOLAR WHO ENRICHED THE TREASURY OF UZBEKISTAN'S MUSEUMS

Karimova Dilafruz Obidjonovna

Doctor of Philosophy in History (PhD)

Head of the Department of History,

State Museum of History of Uzbekistan,

Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Annotation: This article highlights the contribution of the renowned Uzbek archaeologist, Academician Akhmadali Askarov, to the enrichment of museum collections in Uzbekistan. Special attention is given to the exhibitions created based on artifacts donated by the scholar, as well as to the unique exhibits displayed in these museums.

Key words: museum, archaeology, scientist, Akhmadali Askarov, bronze Age, monument, agricultural culture, ceramics, grave, jewelry, find.

Аннотация: Ушбу мақолада таниқли ўзбек археолог олими, академик Аҳмадали Аскаронинг Ўзбекистон музейларини бойитишга қўшган хиссаси ёритилган. Музейлардаги олим томонидан топширилган ашёлар асосида яратилган экспозициялар ва улардаги ноёб экспонатларга эътибор қаратилган.

Калит сўзлар: музей, археология, олим, Аҳмадали Аскаронинг, бронза даври, ёдгорлик, деҳқончилик маданияти, сопол буюмлар, қабр, заргарлик, топилма.

Аннотация: В данной статье освещён вклад известного узбекского археолога, академика Ахмадали Аскарова в обогащение фондов музеев Узбекистана. Особое внимание уделено экспозициям, созданным на основе переданных ученым артефактов, а также уникальным экспонатам, представленным в этих музеях.

Ключевые слова: музей, археология, ученый, Ахмадали Аскаронинг, бронзовый век, памятник, земледельческая культура, керамика, могила, ювелирные украшения, находка.

As any nation strives for development, it is natural to look back at history, study and preserve existing customs, traditions, and ancient monuments. In this regard, museums play an invaluable role. Museums serve as structured repositories of historical culture, enlightenment, and natural heritage from the past, systematically preserved and exhibited in accordance with established legal regulations. [1, – P. 17-18].

Museums can be classified into two types based on their structure: open-air museums and enclosed museums. One of the earliest open-air museums was established on the island of Skansen in 1891 by Artur Hazelius in Stockholm, Sweden. Over time, its name became synonymous with ethnographic museums in many European languages. Open-air museums include historical cities and architectural monuments under the open sky within our country. Examples of such sites include the ancient cities of Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva, Shahrisabz, Kokand, Tashkent, and others, where historical architectural monuments, archaeological sites, and remnants of ancient settlements from past centuries have been preserved.

One of the distinctive features of open-air museums is their varying spatial dimensions. In such museums, visitors often have the opportunity to touch and interact with certain exhibits, allowing them to gain a more immersive understanding of the past. These institutions serve as a bridge between historical heritage and the modern world, enhancing the connection between different eras.

Uzbek archaeologist academician Akhmadali Askarov, throughout his long-standing career, not only dedicated himself to the field of archaeology but also placed significant emphasis on the preservation and exhibition of artifacts discovered at historical sites. He regarded this mission as a fundamental responsibility toward his homeland. This can be seen in the artifacts entrusted by Ahmadali Askarov to the major museums of our country, which have been preserved and are continuously exhibited in their collections. It is appropriate to mention several specific museums as examples in this context.

In the ancient material culture monuments of Uzbekistan, many monumental architectural objects, residential complexes, various handicraft production sites, baths, temples, mosques, city defense walls, and communal infrastructure elements such as ceramic pipes, canals, and irrigation systems are being uncovered every year during archaeological excavations. However, due to natural weathering and degradation, these artifacts are not turning into museum exhibits. It is a sad reality that, instead of being scientifically and technically restored through chemical restoration and conservation methods, many of these items are deteriorating and eventually being lost, without ever being preserved as historical and ethnographic museum exhibits.

Akhmadali Askarov, particularly from the mid-1970s when he served as the director of the Samarkand Archaeological Institute, paid special attention to this area. An example of his work can be seen in the Afrasiyab ancient monument and the Registan ensemble. He was able to substantiate the necessity of transforming the large archaeological site of Afrasiyab, located in the Samarkand region, into an open-air museum. Sufficient and well-founded information on this matter can be obtained by studying the documents available in the scholar's personal archive.

The need to preserve and restore material cultural heritage remains a relevant issue not only for the 1970s but also today, requiring the involvement of restoration specialists and specialized laboratory facilities. Following the establishment of the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, a special department was created under the initiative of Akhmadali Askarov to develop methods for the chemical stabilization and conservation of archaeological sites. This department continues to operate effectively to this day.

At the initiative of Ahmadali Askarov, a number of works have been carried out on the issue of "turning the ancient city of Afrasiyab in the Samarkand region into an open-air museum." For the creation of a scientific-production association or restoration institute with a strong production base, effectively carrying out work on the creation of an open-air museum in Afrasiyab and other monuments of the republic, additional staff units and the corresponding material and technical base are important, without which any valuable idea will remain on paper. [2, – P. 81-88].

The largest museum in the republic is the State Museum of the History of Uzbekistan, to which Akhmadali Askarov handed over artifacts discovered during archaeological excavations under his leadership. The analysis of the finds presented by the scientist was carried out not only at the monuments of the territory of Uzbekistan, but also the results of the participation of the first peasant communities of the territory of Turkmenistan in expeditions to such monuments as Namazgah, Anov.

The 253rd collection of the Museum's Archaeological Fund contains 1214 exhibits presented by A. Askarov. Today, the museum has expositions created based on the research of Akhmadali Askarov, mainly located in the section "Uzbekistan in the Bronze Age." In it, among the finds of the Sapallitepa and Djarkutan monuments in the territory of Southern Uzbekistan, the most unique items amaze visitors from all over the world today. A woman's grave belonging to the Jarkutan monument [6, 7], which reflects the burial rites of that period, was brought to the museum in its original state and is displayed in the exposition. Many pottery items, seals, which are symbols of statehood, and bronze jewelry are among them.

In 1983, Akhmadali Askarov took on the main responsibility for the creation of the Sherabad Archaeological Museum based on the finds of the Djarkutan site and achieved his goal. Because the Sherabad region is rich in monuments of the Bronze and Early Iron Ages, and finds from these monuments were transferred to major museums in Tashkent and Samarkand. Recognizing that students in the region rarely visit museums in the capital, the scholar requested the support of the state leader Sh. Rashidov, during his visit to the Jarkutan monument in 1982, to help establish a museum for local students within the region itself. This would provide practical assistance for the creation of a museum aimed at enhancing the educational experience for the youth in the area.

During the day, along with continuing excavations in Djarkutan, it was necessary to work at night to timely fulfill the task assigned to the construction of the museum. In October-November 1982, the museum building was restored, in December the area of the museum complex was fenced with metal barriers, and by the end of February 1983, the area was ready for planting various fruit trees, various flower seedlings. In March, the builders completed their final work and handed over the building to us. Rose seedlings were brought from Samarkand. Simultaneously, in March and April, the exhibition hall and its exhibition cabinets were prepared, and archaeological materials were placed in them on a scientific and historical basis. On May 9, 1983, Sharaf Rashidov arrived at the opening of the Djarkutan Museum [2, – Б. 113].

Opened in 1983 at the initiative of the scientist, this museum began to fall into disrepair by the 2010s. For some time, this museum also served as a scientific base for French and Uzbek archaeologists who came to study the Djarkutan site. However, by the 2020s, it had fallen into a state of complete neglect. Not only was the museum not enriched with modern equipment, but renovation work was also not carried out. As a result, the finds in the museum were transferred to the "Termez Archaeological Museum" opened in Termez.

The 2nd hall of the "Termez Archaeological Museum" is called "The Surkhan Oasis in the Bronze and Iron Ages," and this exhibition hall contains archaeological artifacts found at the monuments of Sapallitepa, Djarkutan, and Kuchuktepa, studied by Ahmadali Askarov. The exposition fully depicts one grave found in the Jarkutan memorial cemetery. Such a burial, thanks to the initiative of Akhmadali Askarov, was brought to the State Museum of the History of Uzbekistan and is currently displayed in the museum's permanent exhibition hall titled "Uzbekistan in the Bronze Age". The display of this burial in the museum's exhibition halls allows visitors to gain a clear understanding of the burial traditions of the settled agricultural communities during the Bronze Age.

In addition, the "Termiz Archaeological Museum" features a collection of unique finds in its exhibition hall, uncovered during the archaeological excavations led by Akhmadali Askarov at the Sapallitepa monument. These include a construction tool – an andava (**Figure 1**) and a clay vessel shaped like a hummingbird (**Figure 2**). The display also includes ceramic items, ornamental objects, bronze arrowheads, and a warrior's stone.

The Samarkand State Museum-Reserve houses artifacts that bear witness to Samarkand's ancient history. Ahmadali Askarov has also contributed to this collection of findings. Since beginning his work in Samarkand in 1970, the scientist conducted archaeological expeditions at the Bronze Age Muminobod cemetery in Samarkand, and the artifacts discovered during these expeditions were transferred to the Archaeological Fund of this museum. Additionally, during the same period, Askarov organized and actively participated in expeditions to the Sapallitepa and Jarkutan sites in the Surkhandarya region. He also contributed items found at these sites to the museum's collection. Among these, the rarest finds were discovered at the Muminobod burial ground, including a flute dating back to the Bronze Age.

Such findings are being presented by the scientist to many museums of Uzbekistan. He even managed to establish an "Educational Archaeological Museum" for students at the Nizami Tashkent State Pedagogical University.

The "Educational Archaeological Museum," created on the initiative of the scientist, covers the history and culture of the Uzbek people from the ancient Stone Age to the late Middle Ages [4]. The purpose of establishing this "Educational Archaeological Museum" was to deepen and reinforce the theoretical knowledge of undergraduate and graduate students in higher education through exhibits in museum expositions. It aimed to educate the younger generation in the spirit of boundless respect and reverence for the Motherland and its history by showcasing examples of our people's rich cultural heritage. Additionally, the museum was intended to assist in the development of spiritually mature individuals who would become capable professionals.

A museum, inextricably linked with history, is not only an auxiliary tool for acquiring historical knowledge but also a mirror of our past. When a student is able to delve into the spiritual and educational essence of museum exhibits, their inner spiritual world is nourished, their faith in the homeland is strengthened, and their inner world, willpower, and beliefs become whole. An incomparable spiritual force awakens, stirring their conscience [5, - P. 12]. This historical knowledge, when conveyed to students through visual methods, forms the foundation and source of the ideology of independence. In essence, such an "Educational Archaeological Museum" is a crucial historical educational institution necessary for training young historians today.

Unfortunately, since the establishment of this museum, organizational work and cleaning have been carried out by A. Askarov and his students, as well as professors and teachers of the Faculty of History, without official staff. Akhmadali Askarov, the founder of this museum, considers it his duty and contribution to the formation of young historians, and continues to bear the responsibility for the museum to this day. However, for the further development of this museum and its enrichment with exhibits, it is advisable to assign dedicated, official personnel. Moreover, to enrich the museum with exhibits, it would be beneficial to take students of the Faculty of History for archaeological fieldwork at ancient sites in Uzbekistan as part of their Archaeology course programs. This would contribute to students' study of ancient periods of history and, most importantly, create a foundation for the emergence of future successors to accomplished archaeologists like Ahmadali Askarov from among these students.

It is fitting to recognize Akhmadali Askarov not only as a historian-archaeologist but also as a scholar who preserved history and conveyed it to future generations.



Figure 1. Bronze Age adze. **Figure 2.** Ceramic vessel shaped like a Humo bird.

Bibliography:



1. Toshboyev F.E. Muzeyshunoslik. Toshkent. “Mahmud Az-Zamaxshariy”. 2023. – B. 17-18.
2. Асқаров А. Меҳнат ва курашда тобланган ҳаёт онларим. Тошкент, “Donishmand ziyosi”. 2024. – Б. 81-88.
3. Асқаров А. Меҳнат ва курашда тобланган ҳаёт онларим. Тошкент, “Donishmand ziyosi”. 2024. – Б. 113.
4. <https://telegra.ph/Nizomiy-nomidagi-TDPU-Tarix-fakulteti-qoshidagi-Oquv-arxeologiya-muzeyi-02-05>
5. Асқаров А. Мустақиллик йилларида тарих фанларини ўқитишда инновацион ёндашувлар // «Олий таълимда ижтимоий-гуманитар фанларни ўқитишнинг долзарб масалалари» мавзусида илмий-амалий конференция материаллари. 24 август, 2011 йил. – Б.12.
6. Каримова Д. Ўзбекистон тарихи давлат музейи коллекциясидан бронза даври қабри таҳлили // “Музеyshunoslik XXI asrda: tadqiqotlar, ananalar va innovatsiyalar” xalqaro ilmiy-amaliy anjuman to‘plami. 3-kitob. Toshkent – 2023. – Б. 53-58.
7. Karimova D. Findings of the bronze age Sopollitepa monument preserved in the state history museum of Uzbekistan // International Journal of Education, Social Science & Humanities. Finland Academic Research Science Publishers. 22-08-2023. Finlandiya. (SJIF) = 7.502 Impact factor. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8287095>.