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THE FORMATION, DEVELOPMENT AND SCIENTIFIC HERITAGE OF THE FIRST SPECIALIZED SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract

This article comprehensively analyzes the formation, stages of development and scientific heritage of the Central Asian archaeological school, which was formed on the basis of the Department of Central Asian Archaeology at the Faculty of History of Tashkent State University (now the National University of Uzbekistan).

The purpose of the study is to reveal the content of the scientific traditions developed by Mikhail Evgenievich Masson, the methodological foundations of its 20 fundamental principles and their significance in modern archaeological science. The study used historical-analytical, comparative and source-based methods.

Keywords: Central Asian School of Archaeology, M.E. Masson, Tashkent State University, Department of Archaeology, Numismatics, Historical Topography, YuTAKE, Archaeological Supervision, Comprehensive Expedition.

In the second half of the 20th century, the Central Asian School of Archaeology, formed on the basis of the Department of Central Asian Archaeology at the Faculty of History of Tashkent State University, played an important role in the development of Central Asian archaeology. The founder of this scientific school



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was Mikhail Evgenevich Masson, who brought archaeological research to a new level not only in Uzbekistan, but also throughout Central Asia. In 1940, with the establishment of the Department of Archaeology at the Faculty of History of the Tashkent State University (later Tashkent State University), this school acquired an institutional form and by 1965 was already operating as a well-established scientific system.

As noted in the article “Central Asian Archaeological School of TashGU” by M.E. Masson, published in 1966, the roots of this school date back to the period after 1917. Before the revolution, archaeological research in the territory of Turkestan was mainly fragmented and amateurish, but during the Soviet period they acquired a systematic and scientifically based form. The formation of a new scientific school was of great historical importance, especially against the background of the limited activity of the circle of Turkestan archaeology enthusiasts.

Research conducted since the 1920s played an important role in the formation of the school. Archaeological monitoring work carried out during the construction of the Great Fergana Canal in 1939 brought this process to a new level. This experience later became the basis for the formation of the archaeological monitoring method.

The methodological basis of the school is formed by 20 fundamental principles developed by Mikhail Evgenievich Masson. These principles took archeology out of the scope of simple excavations and turned it into a complex scientific system analyzing historical processes. In particular, the need for an archaeologist not to collect personal collections, but to transfer all finds to state museums; the interpretation of archeology as an integral part of the science of history; the main goal of research is to identify historical processes; the organization of complex expeditions; the study of each object from the perspective of its emergence,



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development and disappearance; taking into account historical topography and geography; the mandatory use of stratigraphic analysis; and the use of information from the local population determined the main scientific direction of the school. Also, methods such as the study of microrelief, square excavation, layered fixation, and the establishment of archaeological control over construction processes were widely used within the framework of this school.

One of the important directions of this scientific school is numismatics. Although numismatic research began in the 18th–19th centuries, its development on a scientific basis is associated with the activities of Mikhail Evgenievich Masson. He worked in the Samarkand Regional Museum in 1919–1923, and later in the Central Asian Museum, enriching numismatic collections and scientifically describing them. Since 1939, the course “Central Asian Numismatics” has been introduced at Tashkent State University. Within the framework of this course, the theoretical foundations, methods, and monetary systems of numismatics from ancient times to the modern era were studied.

Later, this direction was developed by E.A. Davidovich, Z.A. Althausen, Edward Rtveladze, V.M. Masson, M.N. Fedorov, T. Khodzhanizoyov and B.D. Kochnev. In particular, E.A. Davidovich's research on monetary circulation during the Shaybanid period and his work on "treasures" made a significant contribution to the formation of numismatics as an independent scientific direction.

The Central Asian Archaeological School has also achieved significant results in the areas of historical topography, archaeology of ancient cities, and archaeological control. In particular, the archaeological study of such large historical centers as Samarkand, Bukhara, Tashkent, and Merv is closely related to the activities of this school. Complex expeditions play an important role in the activities of the school. The largest of these is the YUTAKE (Southern Turkmenistan Archaeological Complex Expedition), which, starting in 1946, was



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aimed at studying Govur Qala, Erkkala, and other monuments in the Merv oasis. As a result of this expedition, about 400 scientific works were published.

Within the framework of this school, the issue of "Soter Megas" was studied by Galina Pugachenkova, ancient tombs in the Tashkent oasis by Nina Krasheninnikova, and military weapons of the Sassanid era in Erkkala by Zamira Usmanova. These studies demonstrate the broad and multifaceted nature of the school's scientific areas.

The activities of the Department of Archaeology of Tashkent State University are distinguished not only by scientific research, but also by the training of highly qualified personnel. Scientists who have emerged from among the graduates of the department have subsequently made a great contribution to the development of archeology in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The fact that 306 scientific meetings have been held and more than 600 lectures have been heard over the past 25 years indicates the wide scope of activities of this scientific school. Today, the traditions of this scientific school are continued in scientific institutions of the National University of Uzbekistan and the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. Modern research is also carried out based on the complex and interdisciplinary approach founded by M.E. Masson.

In conclusion, the Central Asian school of archaeology is one of the most important scientific schools formed in the 20th century, its main feature is a comprehensive approach, interdisciplinary integration and practical orientation. The methodological principles developed by Mikhail Evgenievich Masson have retained their relevance today and play an important role in the development of modern archaeological science.



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