

THE ROLE OF WOMEN SCHOLARS IN THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. *This article is dedicated to the role and scientific contributions of women scholars in the archaeology of Uzbekistan. It highlights the research work of renowned female archaeologists such as G.A. Pugachenkova, V.A. Bulatova, M.I. Filanovich, and Z.I. Usmonova, as well as their significant contributions to the development of Uzbek archaeology. The article also discusses the effective work of contemporary female researchers in the study of ancient history, culture, and art.*

Keywords. *Uzbekistan archaeology, women researchers, Galina Pugachenkova, Vera Bulatova, Margarita Filanovich, Zamira Usmonova, archaeological research, scientific studies, ancient monuments.*

Introduction. The role of women scholars in the field of archaeology in Uzbekistan has been steadily increasing year by year. They have made significant contributions not only as experienced specialists in the study of ancient history and culture, but also by pioneering new scientific directions. The younger generation of female archaeologists is also enriching the field through in-depth research. Researchers such as F. Shomukaramova, M. Hamidjanova, Z. Kholmatova, and M. To‘xtaeva are actively studying various aspects of ancient periods. Prominent scholars like G.A. Pugachenkova, V.A. Bulatova, M.I. Filanovich, and Z.I. Usmonova have played a vital role in the development of Uzbek archaeology. Their scientific legacy, along with the work of younger female researchers, serves as a foundation for the further advancement of archaeology.

Research Methods. Various research methods were used in this article. First and foremost, the method of historical analysis was applied, involving an in-depth study of archival documents, scientific articles, expedition reports, and other written sources. The biographical method was used to examine the scientific activities of each female researcher and their individual contributions to their respective fields. Additionally, archaeological and ethnoarchaeological methods were employed to analyze excavations and research conducted by women scholars, as well as the scientific significance of the findings and monuments they studied.

Literature Review. The analyzed sources provide valuable information about the scientific activities of women scholars in the field of archaeology in Uzbekistan. N.A. Egamberdiyeva [1] examines the academic work of female archaeologists, while A.A. Mikheeva [2] explores the contributions of women researchers in the study of Christianity in Central Asia. D.Kh. Murodova [3] investigates Galina Pugachenkova’s work in the fields of architecture, archaeology, and art history. M.I. Filanovich’s bibliographic guide [4] offers a systematic compilation of scientific sources, whereas G.A. Pugachenkova’s work [5] analyzes the artistic aspects of Central Asian cultural heritage. The 2023 conference proceedings [6] highlight pressing issues and potential solutions in modern archaeology. As an electronic source, the Uzpedia article on Zamira Usmonova sheds light on her academic contributions.

Discussion and Results. In 1960, under the leadership of G.A. Pugachenkova, a comprehensive art history expedition was organized at the Institute of Art Studies. Despite facing opposition, the expedition proved its worth and was recognized as a new scientific approach that integrated archaeology and art history.

L.I. Rempel noted in this regard: “For Pugachenkova, archaeology was not only a means of studying new sources but also a true expression of her deep devotion to the history of art.”

The expedition operated in three main directions: reconnaissance and excavation of underground monuments, comprehensive study of above-ground architectural structures, and research into traditional folk arts [5]. The establishment and success of this expedition held great significance not only in the scientific sphere but also in preserving and studying the nation’s cultural heritage.

Through G.A. Pugachenkova’s innovative approach, the disciplines of archaeology and art history were brought closer together, enabling deeper and more comprehensive analysis. This, in turn, contributed to a more accurate understanding of monuments not only as historical sites but also as objects of aesthetic and cultural value. Additionally, the research on folk applied arts played a vital role in preserving the rich cultural traditions of the Uzbek people and passing them on to future generations.

The art history expedition led by G.A. Pugachenkova achieved significant results not only in the study of architecture but also in the identification of archaeological monuments. The expedition team included archaeologists, ethnographers, restorers, and other specialists, who surveyed hundreds of ancient mounds and monuments across the entire republic. As a result of these investigations, numerous historical sites were discovered, and their chronology and detailed descriptions were compiled. For instance, a domed mausoleum with a portal in the village of Tim was found and thoroughly studied.

Pugachenkova’s approach was based on the integrated analysis of architecture and archaeology, a method that paved the way for future research [3] and remains relevant today. Through this interdisciplinary approach, scholars were able to gain a deeper understanding not only of the external appearance and architectural features of the monuments, but also of their historical context, cultural significance, and social relevance.

Women researchers have made invaluable contributions to the study of Christian archaeological monuments in Central Asia, including in the territory of present-day Uzbekistan. In particular, the research conducted by M.A. Lala Comneno analyzes archaeological evidence of Christian-related monuments in Khorezm, Sogdiana, Semirechye, and Eastern Turkestan. Despite certain geographical ambiguities, the author demonstrates a deep understanding of historical sources and provides a thorough analysis of the sites [2].

Her scholarly work not only sheds light on religious and cultural history but also clearly illustrates that women scholars are fully capable of engaging in complex and demanding scientific research. In this way, the active involvement of female archaeologists contributes not only to the development of science but also to strengthening the role of women in the scientific and cultural spheres of society.

Vera Andreevna Bulatova’s early archaeological research focused on the study of significant monuments located in the ancient region of Margiana, such as Nisa and Anau. Beginning in the 1950s, she actively participated in the scientific investigation, archaeological documentation, and restoration of medieval architectural monuments in cities like Bukhara, Khorezm, Tashkent, Samarkand, Shakhrisabz, and Termez.

Her work on the stratigraphic analysis of the archaeological layers, Buddhist temple, and architectural complex at the Kuva site is of particular importance. Bulatova’s scholarly legacy—especially her contributions to urban culture, architectural monuments, and stratigraphic research—remains a vital source for contemporary archaeological science [1].

Through her research, the ancient part of Tashkent, historically known as the medieval city of Binkat, was topographically mapped, and the historical development stages of the city were carefully studied based on archaeological layers. Her stratigraphic studies introduced new methodological approaches to defining archaeological contexts more precisely and continue to serve as a foundational reference for ongoing research.

Margarita Ivanovna Filanovich is one of the most renowned female archaeologists in Uzbekistan. She dedicated her entire career to studying the material culture of the peoples of Central Asia. In the 1950s, she studied at the Department of Central Asian Archaeology in Tashkent and began her scientific work under the supervision of Professor M.E. Masson.

Her primary research focused on the ancient cities of the Margiana region, particularly the site of Gyaurkala.

Under Filanovich’s leadership, numerous archaeological excavations were carried out in Tashkent, leading to the identification of various stages of the city’s historical development. After the 1966 earthquake in Tashkent, she made significant contributions to the preservation and study of ancient monuments. Beginning in 1973, she headed the Tashkent Archaeological Expedition and conducted large-scale excavations at important sites such as Shoshtepa and Ko‘gaytepa [4].

Her dedication to researching the material culture of Central Asian peoples and ancient urban monuments not only enriched historical sources but also helped uncover new phases of regional history. Filanovich’s commitment to investigating the consequences of the Tashkent earthquake and preserving archaeological heritage, along with the excavations conducted under her guidance, clearly demonstrated her scientific expertise and practical capabilities.

Zamira Ismoilovna Usmonova stands out as the first female specialist to graduate from the Faculty of Archaeology at the National University of Uzbekistan. As one of the rare female archaeologists in Central Asia, Usmonova made significant contributions to the study of ancient history and culture throughout her academic career. Her research played a crucial role in identifying Erk-Qal’a, the ancient core of the city of Merv. In addition, she is the author of more than 150 scientific articles and scholarly works on the archaeology and art history of Central Asia [7].

Usmonova’s contributions have strengthened the position of female researchers in Central Asian archaeology, creating a solid foundation for the further development of the field.

In summary:

- G.A. Pugachenkova emphasized a methodological approach by integrating architecture and archaeology.
- M.A. Lala Comneno conducted deep scientific research on religious culture and Christian monuments.
- V.A. Bulatova was a leading figure in stratigraphic studies and urban archaeology, particularly in the ancient districts of Tashkent.
- M.I. Filanovich contributed significantly to the preservation and study of urban culture and historical monuments while strengthening the role of women in the field.
- Z.I. Usmonova, as the first female professional in the field, conducted extensive scientific research that enhanced understanding of Central Asian history.

The scientific research conducted by female scholars holds a vital place in the field of Uzbek archaeology. For instance, in the collection of abstracts from the national academic conference "*Uzbekistan Archaeology: Challenges and Solutions*", numerous female researchers presented the results of their scientific work.

In this volume:

- F. Shomukaramova explored the Paleolithic period through the study of loess layers,
- M. Hamidjanova analyzed anthropological findings from the Acheulean, Mousterian, and Upper Paleolithic periods,
- Z. Kholmatova examined the cultural and ethnic characteristics of ancient communities based on Neolithic ceramics discovered in the Zarafshan Valley,
- M. To‘xtaeva investigated the representation of female imagery in art and its reflection of aesthetic and spiritual values throughout history,
- S. Ilyasova studied Sufi poems inscribed on Timurid-era ceramic artifacts, highlighting their cultural and philosophical significance,
- G. Zununova shed light on the dietary practices and biological adaptations of ancient populations,
- Sh. Tosheva analyzed the history of social stratification in the Bukhara oasis,
- L. Pak focused on the culture and identity of the population in the Tashkent oasis through terracotta toys [6].

These researchers, through their in-depth studies across various historical periods and fields—such as ancient culture, anthropology, art, and social life—have contributed greatly to advancing archaeological knowledge. Their scholarly work not only enriches academic resources and drives the development of archaeology but also serves as an example and inspiration for future generations of researchers.

Conclusion and Recommendations. The role of women scholars in the history of Uzbek archaeology is truly invaluable. Dedicated research by pioneers such as G.A. Pugachenkova, V.A. Bulatova, M.I. Filanovich, and Z.I. Usmonova not only laid the foundations of national archaeological science but also opened up new directions for future studies. Thanks to their efforts, ancient monuments have been studied on a scientific basis, preserved, and presented to the wider public. Today, a new generation of female researchers is following in their footsteps, achieving significant success in the field and contributing to the further development of archaeology in Uzbekistan.

In order to further strengthen the role of women scholars in Uzbek archaeology, it is essential to support their research and expand opportunities for their professional development:

1. Introduce specialized grants, scholarships, and research programs for female specialists in the fields of archaeology and art history in Uzbekistan;
2. Organize seminars and conferences focused on the research of women archaeologists to facilitate experience sharing and academic networking;
3. Establish dedicated platforms to showcase the work of women archaeologists, increasing public awareness of their contributions.

By implementing these measures, the position of women in Uzbek archaeology will be further reinforced, enabling them to become leading figures in the study and preservation of national culture and history.

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