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# SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION BETWEEN UZBEKISTAN AND FRANCE IN THE FIRST DECADE OF INDEPENDENCE: A CASE STUDY OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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### Abstract

This article examines the development of scientific cooperation between Uzbekistan and France in the field of historical studies during the first decade of Uzbekistan's independence (1991–2001). The study analyzes the collaboration between the Institute of History and the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan and leading French research institutions. Particular attention is paid to joint archaeological expeditions, international grants, scientific conferences, and academic exchanges between Uzbek and French scholars. The article also highlights the results of collaborative research conducted at archaeological sites such as Afrasiab, Koktepa, and Ancient Termez, and evaluates their contribution to the study of Uzbekistan's history and cultural heritage. The findings demonstrate that scientific cooperation with France played a significant role in integrating Uzbek historical scholarship into the international academic community and promoting the country's rich historical and cultural legacy worldwide.

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**Keywords:** Uzbekistan, France, scientific cooperation, historical studies, archaeology, Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, Afrasiab, Koktepa, international grants, academic relations, cultural heritage, historiography.

### Introduction

The first decade of independence was a period during which Uzbekistan strengthened the foundations of its statehood, established foreign political and economic relations, and adapted its national scientific system to new conditions. In this process, the development of science and technology acquired particular significance for the country's socio-economic progress. In particular, preserving scientific potential and integrating it into the international scientific community became one of the priorities of state policy. To this end, broad opportunities were created for establishing scientific relations with foreign countries, implementing joint research projects, promoting academic exchange among scholars, and participating in international programs and grant projects. As a result, Uzbek science entered a new stage of cooperation with the global academic community. Such cooperation contributed to strengthening the international integration of national science, increasing the effectiveness of fundamental and applied research, and enhancing the intellectual potential of the country.

The Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan occupied a central position in the development of scientific relations with foreign countries [1]. The number of the Academy's international contacts increased steadily from year to year. For example, while the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan established cooperative relations with 25 countries in 1992 [2], by 1994 it was conducting research on 82 topics together with scholars from more than 30 countries, and the scientific institutions of the republic participated in the implementation of nine international research programs [3].

The history of Central Asia, including the history of Uzbekistan, has long attracted the attention of international academic circles due to the region's

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significant role in the development of world civilization and global historical processes. Consequently, extensive cooperation emerged between Uzbek scholars and foreign researchers in the study of the region's history, culture, and archaeological heritage. In particular, relations between French and Central Asian scholars developed successfully in this field, and the initial stages of scientific cooperation between the two sides were established through archaeological research.

The Institute of History and the Institute of Archaeology played a key role in the study of the history of Central Asia and Uzbekistan, as well as in the establishment of scholarly cooperation between Uzbek and French researchers. Scientific cooperation was carried out through inter-institutional agreements, cooperation between research centers, individual academic initiatives, and international grants. In addition, Uzbek scholars participated in the processes of global scientific integration through the publication of their research articles in foreign academic journals and collected volumes. The progressive development of this activity can be observed through the increasing number of publications. For instance, while researchers of the Institute of History published only three articles abroad in 1992, this figure exceeded 270 during the period 2000–2004 [4].

For many years, the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan participated in international grant projects and regularly attended international symposia and seminars held in France. Among the scholars who took part in academic events abroad, including those organized in France, were Prof. D.A. Alimova, Prof. S. Agzamkhojaev, Prof. E.E. Karimov, Prof. Sh. Vakhidov, Dr. Rajabov, M.I. Filonovich, V.A. Germanov, A. Malikov (Samarkand State University), V.S. Khan, and others.

The establishment of scientific cooperation in this field was particularly distinguished by the broad scope of archaeological research. Cooperative relations between Uzbek and French archaeologists date back to the 1950s.

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During that period, M.E. Masson and Academician G.A. Pugachenkova initiated scholarly correspondence with R. Ghirshman, who was conducting archaeological excavations in Iran and Afghanistan. In the 1960s, D. Schlumberger, head of the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan, who carried out archaeological excavations at Surkh Kotal, Balkh, and Hissar, visited Uzbekistan. Over the years, Uzbek archaeologists A. Abdullaev, A. Askarov, G. Pugachenkova, and E. Rtveladze established academic contacts with French scholars J.G. Gander, J. Rousman, A.P. Francfort, and F. Gorisan [5].

Cooperation in this field entered a new stage following the International Congress held in Paris in 1988. During the congress, the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan signed a four-year agreement with French scholars to conduct joint research at Afrasiab. This agreement was extended for an additional four years in 1992.

Within the framework of this agreement, the MAFOUZ–Bactria (Mission archéologique franco-ouzbèke) archaeological expedition conducted research at the archaeological sites of Ancient Termez and Khaytabadtepa. Under the leadership of P. Leriche, six French researchers participated in the excavations alongside three prominent scholars from the Ya. Ghulomov Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan: Sh. Pidaev, T. Annaeva, and Sh. Rakhmanov. As a result of these investigations, new scientific data concerning the Hellenistic archaeological monuments of Northern Bactria were obtained [6].

Among the French scholars involved in these studies were Paul Bernard, Claude Rapin (who worked together with M. Isomiddinov at the Koktepa archaeological site), and Lauriane Martinez, who discovered the remains of a quadrangular structure dating to the Greek period. Other participants included Frantz Grenet, Sébastien Stride, who studied the historical geography of Surkhandarya Province, Pierre Gentelle, who specialized in the history of irrigation in the same region, the ancient ceramics specialist Bertille Lyonnet, doctoral researcher Ms.

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Lauriane, and the Swiss specialist in the computerization of modern archaeological research, Claude Rapin. Joint investigations carried out by these scholars together with Uzbek archaeologists A. Anarbaev, M. Isomiddinov, and Sh. Rakhmatov demonstrated that the ruins of Afrasiab and Koktepa were at least one hundred years older than previously assumed [7].

In addition, excavations at the “Bukhara Gate” uncovered 240 silver ornaments gilded with gold that had decorated the horse harness of a local military commander [8]. The results of the joint work conducted by Uzbek and French archaeologists were presented to the international scholarly community through a special issue of the journal *Dossiers d’Archéologie* dedicated to the archaeological monuments of Uzbekistan [9].

In the development of Uzbekistan’s scientific relations with Francophone countries, individual scholars contributed to cooperation through their intellectual potential and academic achievements. One of the most prominent among them was E.E. Karimov, who established scholarly contacts from the very first years of independence. His initial academic activities in France began in March 1995 with a lecture entitled “Sufism in Central Asia during the Timurid Period,” delivered to professors and researchers at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)* in Paris. In March 1997, he further contributed to academic exchange by delivering a series of lectures within a special course on “The History of Central Asian Sufism in the Middle Ages.” As a result of these academic engagements, he undertook several research visits to France. For example, in 1997 he worked as a researcher at the French Institute for Central Asian Studies (IFEAC) and continued his scholarly activities by utilizing the resources of research centers and libraries in Paris during June and July.

Karimov’s third research visit lasted from November 1999 to May 2000, during which he conducted research at EHESS. In 2000–2001, he spent three months in France under the Diderot Fellowship Program. During these visits, he introduced French Orientalists and students to the medieval history and culture of Central

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Asia through conferences and round-table discussions [10]. The results of his research were published in several academic articles [11], thereby promoting the achievements of Uzbek scholarship within the international academic community.

In recent years, growing international interest in epigraphic monuments has contributed to increasing the visibility of Uzbek scholars abroad. In this regard, B. Aminov, Candidate of Historical Sciences, carried out extensive research on the epigraphy of medieval tombstones in Central Asia. Within a project organized by the Max van Berchem Foundation for the study of Islamic epigraphic monuments, he conducted research on the epigraphy of tombstones in Samarkand and its surrounding areas. Through international conferences [12] and scholarly publications, he introduced the international academic community to the epigraphic sources preserved in the rich historical and cultural heritage of various peoples and to the results of his research [13].

### Conclusion

In conclusion, scientific cooperation between Uzbekistan and France developed steadily during the first decade of independence, particularly in the field of the social sciences and humanities, with special emphasis on historical studies. This cooperation played an important role in integrating Uzbekistan into the global academic community and in promoting the study and dissemination of the nation's history and cultural heritage at the international level.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Institute of History and the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan established effective cooperation with leading French academic institutions and implemented a number of joint archaeological and historical research projects. In particular, collaborative expeditions conducted at Afrasiab, Koktepa, Ancient Termez, and Khaytabadtepa generated new scholarly data concerning the ancient history and cultural heritage of Uzbekistan. These studies

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not only enriched national historiography but also contributed to presenting Uzbekistan's archaeological heritage to the international scholarly community. At the same time, the academic contacts established by Uzbek scholars with prestigious French research centers, universities, and academic institutions facilitated the emergence of new research directions in history, Oriental studies, Sufi studies, and epigraphy. Research visits, international conferences, grants, and publications in foreign academic journals contributed significantly to enhancing the international reputation of Uzbek scholarship.

Overall, scientific cooperation in the field of historical studies between Uzbekistan and France during the period 1991–2001 became an important component of the cultural and academic relations between the two countries. The achievements attained through this cooperation provided a solid foundation for subsequent joint research initiatives and made a substantial contribution to strengthening the position and prestige of Uzbek historical scholarship within the international academic arena.

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