

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF UZBEKISTAN'S PLAINS IN CENTRAL ASIA

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**Annotation.** *This thesis presents an integrated study of Uzbekistan's plains within Central Asia, focusing on the geographical characteristics and archaeological research of the Lower Zarafshan Valley and the Khorezm oasis. It examines the distribution of natural landscapes, the impact of Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers on settlement patterns, and the results of archaeological expeditions conducted from the 1930s to the 1990s. The study highlights the material culture of Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age communities and provides insights into the historical development of early societies in the region.*

**Keywords:** *Central Asia, Uzbekistan, Khorezm, Lower Zarafshan, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Amu Darya, archaeological research*

**Introduction.** Central Asia is characterized by diverse geomorphological features, with Uzbekistan forming a central part of this region. The country's territory comprises vast plains, river valleys, and desert zones such as the Kyzylkum and Karakum. These natural features have historically shaped human settlement, economic activity, and cultural development.

Uzbekistan's plains, including the Lower Zarafshan Valley, the Syr Darya lower basin, and the Khorezm oasis, demonstrate a complex interplay of hydrology, soil, and geomorphology. The rivers Amu Darya and Zarafshan have historically influenced the location of settlements, agricultural practices, and the development of irrigation systems. Archaeological studies in these areas provide valuable evidence of human activity from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age.

**Analysis.** Uzbekistan is located in central Asia, bordered by various geomorphological regions. The plains are composed of river basins, deserts, and low mountain ranges.

- **Major river systems:**
  - Amu Darya and Syr Darya play a crucial role in shaping the plains and enabling irrigation-based settlements.
  - The Lower Zarafshan Valley and the Khorezm oasis are situated along these rivers, with fertile soils supporting early communities.
- **Desert regions:** Kyzylkum and Karakum deserts divide the plains and influence settlement distribution.

Archaeological research in Uzbekistan has been conducted in two major periods:

**a. First Period (1930s–1940s)**

- Initial surveys and excavations by V.A. Shishkin, M.E. Masson, and other scholars focused on the Bukhara oasis, Kyzylkum, and Surkhandarya regions.
- Discoveries included Mesolithic artifacts such as stone tools, hunting and gathering equipment, and early settlement remains.
- Key sites: Ayirtom, Teshik-Tash cave, and Varakhsha.

**b. Second Period (1945–1990)**

- Systematic archaeological research with clearly defined scientific projects.
- Khorezm Archaeological-Ethnographic Expedition and Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences conducted excavations in the Lower Zarafshan and Amu Darya regions.
- Findings included Neolithic and Bronze Age settlements, tools, ceramics, animal bones, and irrigation-related structures.
- Notable researchers: S.P. Tolstov, A.V. Vinogradov, M.A. Itina, B.V. Andrianov, and others.

The discovered artifacts provide insights into the daily life, economic activities, and social organization of early communities.

Mesolithic communities relied on hunting and gathering, while Neolithic and Bronze Age communities developed agriculture, irrigation, and settlement systems. Archaeological evidence shows the transition from nomadic to semi-settled lifestyles, highlighting technological and cultural advancement over time.

**Conclusion.** Uzbekistan's plains, shaped by rivers, deserts, and lowlands, served as a cradle for early human settlement in Central Asia. Archaeological research has revealed the material culture of Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age communities, providing valuable insights into human adaptation to diverse landscapes. Systematic excavation efforts during the 20th century, particularly in Khorezm and the Lower Zarafshan Valley, established a scientific basis for understanding the region's historical development. Further research integrating geomorphology and archaeology can enrich our knowledge of early societies in Central Asia.

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