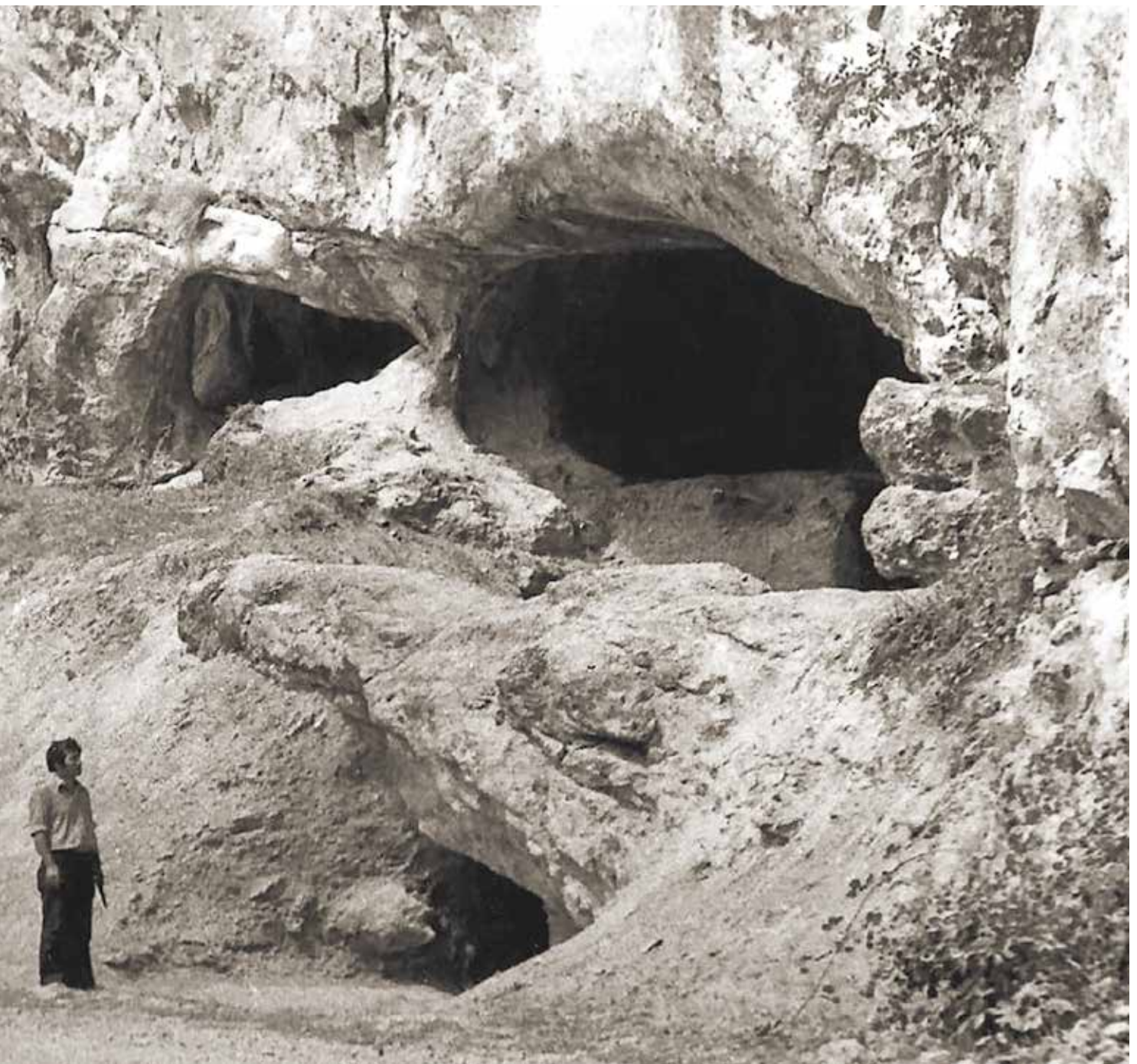




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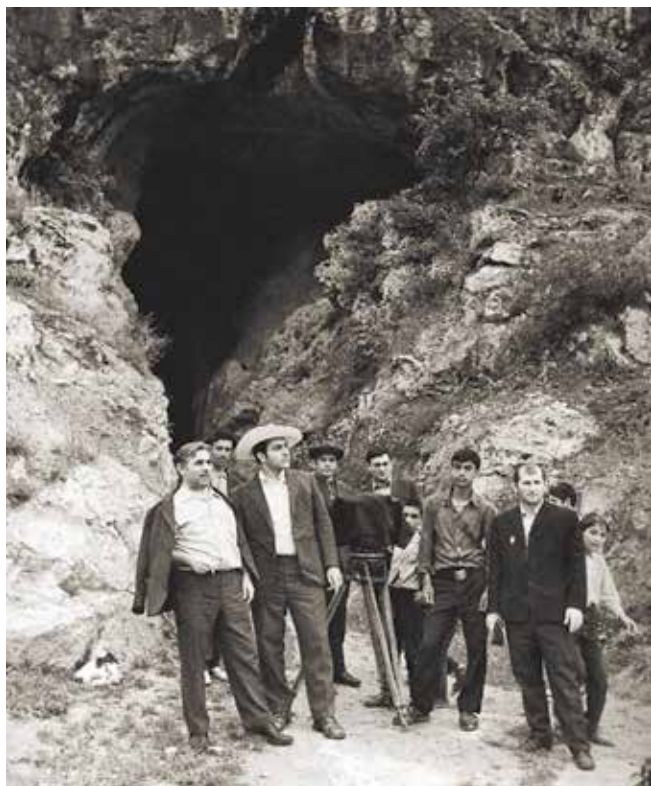
BRONZE AGE AND EARLY IRON AGE MONUMENTS OF KARABAKH

Author of the article at one of the entrances to the Azikh cave. 1960s



By saturation with archaeological monuments and their diversity, Karabakh stands out among other regions of Azerbaijan. The favorable geographical environment has contributed to people settling in Karabakh since ancient times. **Karabakh is one of the corners of the globe where the earliest traces of human activity have been found - the Azikh, Taglar and Zar caves** (1).

The first reliable information about the monuments of the region belongs to S. Weissenhof, who in the early 1880s conducted a visual inspection of antiquities in the basins of the Aras, Tartar and Gargar rivers and drew the first archaeological map of Karabakh (2). A pioneer of archaeological excavations in the region is E. Resler, who taught at the Shusha Real School. In 1892-1898, he conducted excavations in Khojali and Gulabli cemeteries



Azerbaijani scientists and local residents at the entrance to the Azikh cave. 1960s

and Dovshanli, Ahmahi, Ballugaya-Sirkhavand, Damgolou and other barrows. (3). A. A. Ivanovskiy, who was sent to the Caucasus by the Moscow Archaeological Society in 1896, conducted archaeological excavations in Khojali, the Khachinchay basin, Damgolou and Garabulag and discovered a new group of monuments near Garabulag (4).

In 1926, an archaeological expedition of the society for the survey and study of Azerbaijan headed by Academician I. I. Meschaninov began working in the region (5). Topographic plans of the Khojali burial were compiled and excavations of burial barrows and stone boxes were conducted. **The research results, together with Resler's excavation materials, served in the following years as a reliable benchmark for determining many aspects of the ancient history not only of Karabakh and Azerbaijan but of the Caucasus as a whole.** In 1927 and 1933, an expedition headed I. I. Meschaninov also studied the Mil-Karabakh plain.

Ya. I. Gummel contributed to the archaeological study of the great achievements of Karabakh. In 1938-1939, he explored monuments of Khojali, Karkijahan and Khankandi, where he found evidence of the Early Bronze Age for the first time (6). In the late 1930s, excavations in Nagorno-Karabakh were conducted by S. M. Kaziyev. The joint expedition of the Institute of Ar-

chaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan SSR led by A. A. Iessen in 1953-1960 conducted a large-scale survey of the monuments of Nakhchivan and the Mil-Karabakh steppe (7). The nature and location of known archaeological sites were clarified and new monuments of different times were identified and studied - from the Chalcolithic to the Middle Ages.

In the 1960-80s, expeditions led by M. Huseynov, I. Narimanov and G. Ismayilov conducted a study of Paleolithic, Eneolithic and Early Bronze monuments of Karabakh. In 1980, an archaeological squad headed by the author of the article began a systematic study of Bronze Age and Early Iron Age monuments in the area between Gargarchay and Tartarchay (8). In the mid-1970s, F. Osmanov studied a necropolis of pitcher burials in Agjabadi District, and in 1986, M. Mansurov discovered the Paleolithic cave Zar in the upper reaches of the Tartarchay.

Although the ancient history of the region has not been studied evenly in general, available data allow us to trace the main periods of the evolution of tribes that inhabited Karabakh in ancient times.

Monuments of the Early Bronze Age. This period is represented by settlements and cemeteries. Externally, Early Bronze Age settlements do not differ from Eneolithic ones, but unlike them, they are attracted to sources of water and therefore are numerically inferior to them. Partly, researchers (I. Narimanov) explain this by the drying of water bodies in the Karabakh lowland as a result of climate change. However, it should be taken into account that since the early Bronze Age, the life of local tribes has undergone dramatic social and economic changes. The increase in the number of livestock led to the development of new pastures first in the foothills and then in the mountains. **Property and social stratification emerged and deepened. In addition, as a result of the emergence and development of the patriarchal lifestyle, tribes consolidated and tribal unions emerged.**

One of the most impressive monuments of Karabakh is the multilayer settlement of Garakapaktapa where the Early Bronze layer exceeds 7 meters (G. Ismayilov). In terms of continuity of the Early Bronze period with Eneolithic, data of research into a settlement at Leylatapa on the Karabakh plain are indicative (I. Narimanov). Building remnants and material culture samples discov-

Karabakh mountains abound in ancient human settlements

ered here differ markedly from other finds and carry elements of a new tradition. In other known Early Bronze Age settlements of Karabakh, control and exploration pits are laid, allowing us to judge the nature of material culture. Among these settlements, Goytapa, situated near the central estate of the Karabakh stud farm (Aghdam District) and covering the whole Bronze Age, stands out. Early Bronze layer pottery is characteristic of developed and late stages of the Kura-Aras culture. By the power of cultural deposits (8 m), the settlement of Juttapa (Agjabadi District) stands out. There is also the settlement of Garahaji (2 ha) to the west of the city of Aghdam, which has one layer, but less power (up to 3 m) of the cultural layer. The settlements of Uchoglan near the villages of Sarichoban (Aghdam District) and Dayirmanyeri (Agjabadi District) are chronologically close to Garahaji and Juttapa monuments. In the complex of monuments (3rd-1st millennium BC – 1st-3rd centuries AD) near the village of Shatirli in Barda District, the single-layer settlement of Shortapa, where remains of rectangular premises were discovered, stands out. The nature of some tools points to the settled agricultural lifestyle of ancient settlers.

Funerary monuments of Karabakh from the Early Bronze Age have been studied more thoroughly. Among them, a special place belongs to four barrows

located north of the city of Khankandi (Ya. I. Gummel). Materials of all barrows with collective burials consist of different types of handmade ceramic vessels, stone arrowheads, mortars and pendants, clubs, archaic bronze daggers, gold jewelry and others. The nature of the materials makes it possible to attribute them to the initial stage of the Kura-Aras culture. From these materials, it follows that from the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC, the mountainous regions of Karabakh were developed by stock-raising tribes.

For the study of the late stage of the Early Bronze Age, the burial barrows on the right bank of the Khachinchay are of considerable interest (E. Resler). Of the five barrows investigated, the rite of inhumation was tracked in three and cremation in two. Of the greatest interest is barrow №2, where an elegant one-handed vessel decorated with convex rollers, a mace, obsidian plates and gold embossed with ornaments were found. The late stage of the Kura-Aras culture also includes a large barrow in the Uchtapa hole (A. A. Iessen), which stands out among the monuments of the early Bronze Age of the South Caucasus by a number of features. The huge size of the barrow (150 meters in diameter and 15 meters in height) and the burial chamber (14.30x2.20x2.70x2.60 meters) leave no doubt that an influential tribal leader lies here. **The construction of the Uchtapa barrow**



Outstanding Azerbaijani archaeologist M. Huseynov studies the occupation layers of the Azikh cave

evolution of ceramic vessels can be traced very well. Numerous tools and the remains of Paleolithic fauna and flora provide an insight into the economic lifestyle of the population of Karabakh in the first half of the 2nd millennium BC.

The funerary monuments of the Middle Bronze Age in Karabakh are relatively poorly studied and have been identified only in the Borsunlu cemetery so far. Of great interest is barrow №12 of the transition period from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age dating from the 15th century BC. A wealthy member of a tribe accompanied by significant inventory is buried in the dirt grave.

Monuments of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age (16th-8th centuries BC). It should be noted that the Borsunlu monument is the only necropolis of Karabakh, which allows us to trace the long section of the bronze culture evolution - from the beginning of the 3rd millennium to the first half of the 1st millennium BC. Of the 35 excavated burial barrows and cemeteries, 5 belong to the Early Bronze Age; 3 - to the Middle Bronze Age; 1 - to the transition stage from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age and the rest - to various stages of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. If in the graves of people with average incomes, we find different types of ceramic vessels, metalwork and jewelry, in poor barrows we usually find fragments of coarse kitchenware and only in rare cases - jewelry. Against the background of these simple graves, a huge earthen barrow with an enormous burial chamber (256 sq. m.), magnificent decorations and numerous samples of material culture, including ivory, glazes, glass and precious metals is astonishing. We are talking about a large earthen barrow in Borsunlu, where the leader of a tribal alliance is buried along with nine servants and associates and eight horses. **Research into the Borsunlu monuments allows us to formulate and solve many of the fundamental questions of ancient history in a new manner.**

Among Karabakh monuments of the late 2nd millennium BC, the Beyimsar barrow field stands out. Unlike Borsunlu, only elite burials - high cone-shaped earthen barrows, apparently ancestral tombs of tribal leaders – are represented here. In one of them, a huge funeral hall (200 sq. m) with a depth of 6 meters, overlaid with thick wooden beams, has been found. The remains of six people (tribal leader and his associates) and six horses, more than 120 ceramic vessels, a niche where there

involved masses of workers, which implies a certain level of social organization. It is estimated that 21,000 man-days were spent on its construction.

Among the Early Bronze Age monuments of Karabakh, the Borsunlu burial barrow located in the middle reaches of the Injachay River near the village of Borsunlu is of particular importance. Three of the earliest barrows are dated to the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC. In one of them (№7) a 3-tier collective burial has been found; in another (№12) – a collective burial with cremation, while the third barrow contained one grave. In all the barrows there were ceramic vessels typical of the early stage of the Kura-Aras culture.

Monuments of the Middle Bronze Age. The Middle Bronze Age sees a further growth in productive forces and relations of production and significant socio-economic changes. Defensive walls are built around settlements. One of these settlements is Uzerliktapa (K. Kh. Kushnareva) in the city of Agdam. This is the first archaeologically studied Middle Bronze Age monument in the South Caucasus. There are three building horizons with a total capacity of 3 meters here, the lower bedding of which was dated by A. Iessen to the early stage of the Middle Bronze Age. In Uzerliktapa the

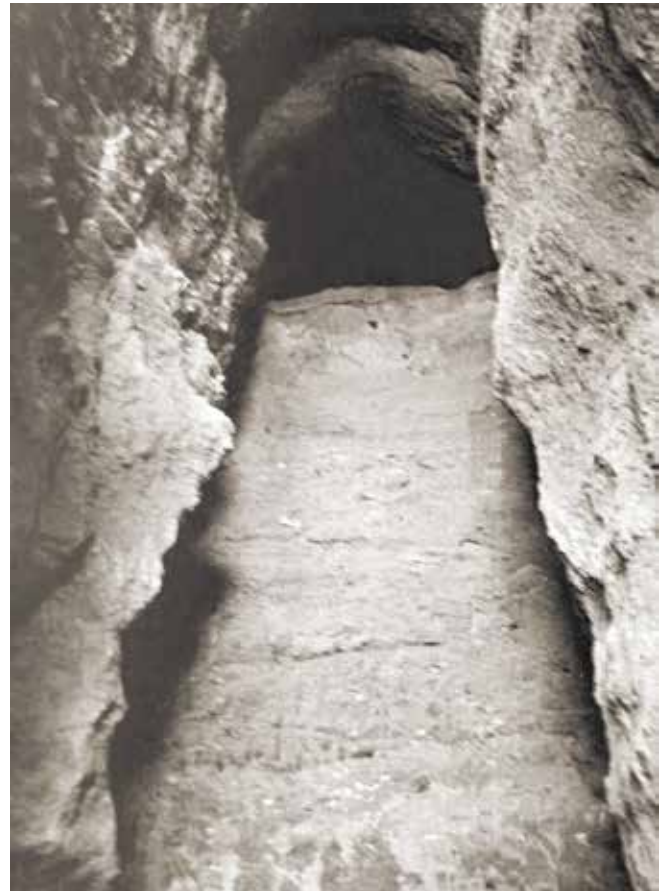
Internal passageways in the Azikh cave

were more than 50 ceremonial vessels, metalwork and jewelry have been found in the chamber.

Among the archaeological sites of this period we should highlight the complexes of antiques Sarichoban and Khindiristan where domestic and funerary monuments form a single complex. Local barrows in form and type are closer to large Borsunlu and Beyimsar earthen barrows. Apparently, no barrows were built for ordinary members of the tribe in this region, and they were buried in simple ground graves.

In one of the Sarichoban barrows, a cruciform burial chamber, which is focused on the four cardinal points and has no analogues in the world of archeology, has been found. The camera is covered with logs in several layers. Despite the looting, the available data allow us to restore the funeral rite of this unique monument. In the center, on a funeral bed with lush decorations, the tribal leader was buried and in the western and northern chambers - bodyguards (servants). The horses of the leader, many saddled, were killed and buried. Perhaps, some of the horses were presented as a gift from the leaders of neighboring tribes. The same can be said about some of the items. In any case, some samples of material culture are different from others by composition and typology. Numerous examples of bronze weapons, elements of equipment for horse riding, bone products, and others allow us to judge the level of development of various crafts, the spiritual culture and social hierarchy of that era.

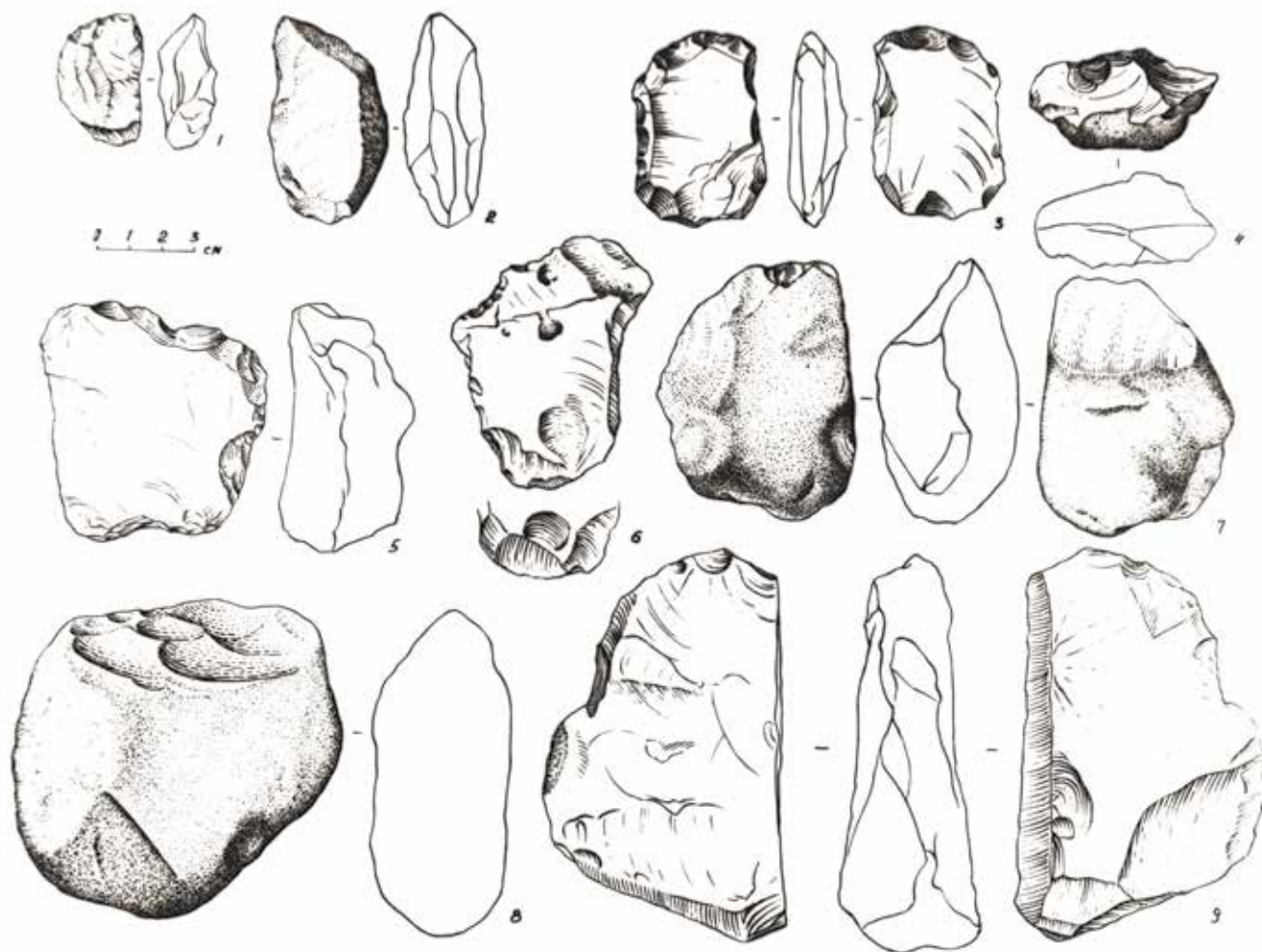
However, it should be noted that **excluding such wonderful monuments as Khojali, Dovshanli, Ahmahi, Bollugaya-Sirkhavand and Garabulag, you cannot create a complete picture of the socio-economic structure of everyday life in the late 2nd - early 1st millennium BC.** Among these monuments, the Khojali burial ground stands out. In a limited area, there are five types of barrows alone, plus four necropolises of stone boxes, and a stone wall for unclear purposes. All these different types of monuments cover a relatively short historical period - from the 14th-13th to the 8th-7th centuries BC. Despite the scarcity of the excavated monuments (30 barrows and 30 stone boxes), findings allowed us not only to find out the picture of many sectors of the economy and public life, but also gain valuable information about the worldview and social structure. **Some of the items found in the Khojali burial indicate active cultural and economic ties**



with the countries of the Near East, and at the same time, serve as a reliable benchmark for dating many synchronous monuments of the Caucasus. This is glazed pottery, gold jewelry, and especially agate necklaces with the name of the Assyrian king Adad-nirari engraved on them.

The next wonderful monument of Karabakh is the Dovshanli barrows located in a gorge on the left bank of the Khachinchay. In the group of nine barrows, Ressler studied two with a stone embankment. In one of them, a stone box with four dead people (one main person and three accompanying ones) was found, and in another – a beam-like tomb of three chambers, one dead person in each. Numerous items - bronze weapons, tools, jewelry, prestige items, items of horse equipment, as well as ceramic vessels eloquently indicate the belonging of these barrows to the tribal nobility. **The presence of a gold cylinder seal among funeral inventory testifies to the birth of private property.**

Near the Dovshanli monuments, between the villages of Ballugaya and Sirkhavand, there is another group of barrows. In a burial chamber on a wooden platform, a representative of the aristocracy is buried



together with numerous metal objects, ceramic vessels and bone items. There are also remains of a horse, bull and dog here. The original funeral rite (headless human skeletons) brings this burial closer to the second Argadzor barrow.

To the south of the village of Ahmahi there is a group of comparatively small stone barrows. Archaeological excavations (E. Resler) in five of them revealed that these barrows belong to the middle and lower strata of the population, although property and social stratification can be traced here too. Thus, in the main barrow No 3, the deceased (dolichocephalic type, i.e. the skull is elongated) buried is in the lying position and the eight accompanying people (brachycephalic type, i.e. with a round skull) - in the sitting position. By the number and diversity of the archaeological inventory, the Ahmahi barrows are inferior to the Dovshanli and Bollugaya-Sirkhavand ones. However, the main part of the inventory, especially ceramics, has the closest analogy to the abovementioned

monuments, leaving no doubt that all the aforesaid barrows belonged to the Khojali-Gadabay culture.

It is necessary to mention the Garabulag burial consisting of large earthen barrows, five of which were studied by A. A. Ivanovskiy in 1896. They have little difference from the rich barrows of the region, **but the presence of remains of camels with rich ornaments, inlaid with ivory, mother of pearl and gold in one of them allows us to highlight these monuments as a special local group.** The existence of camel-breeding in Azerbaijan at the end of the 2nd millennium BC is confirmed by other archaeological data. It played a major role in the life of local tribes. **Camel burials point to the special veneration of these animals up to their cult among the ancient population of Karabakh.**

The list of monuments of the late 2nd – early 1st millennium BC ends with the Uchtapa seasonal settlement and the so-called "Small Barrow" (A. A. Iessen). The settlement of Uchtapa dated the 10th- 9th centuries BC was

Ancient stone tools from the Azikh cave

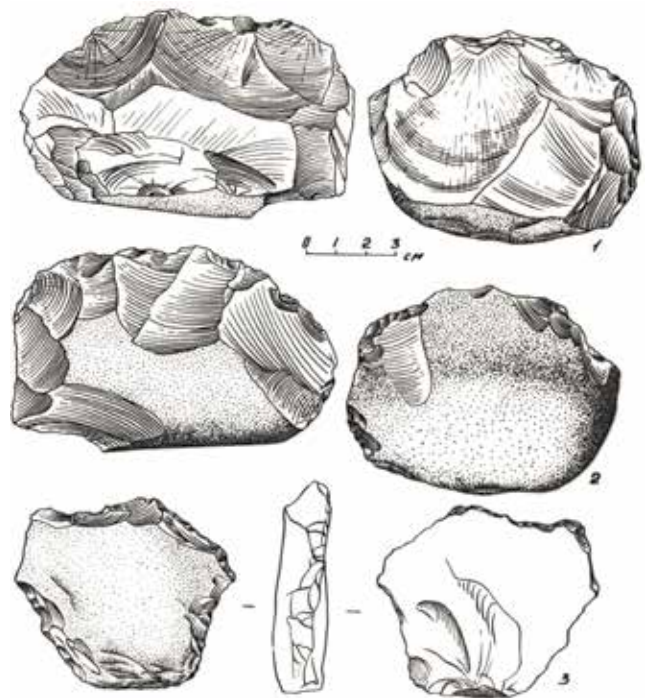
founded by nomadic cattle-breeders and, apparently, was only used in the winter season. This is confirmed by the remains of dwellings of the semi-earthen type that probably had a relatively light cover. Materials from Uchtapa are represented by heterogeneous ceramic vessels, stone tools and weapons, bone products and objects made of bronze and iron. The osteological (i.e. bone) remains almost entirely belong to small cattle. The nature of the settlement and materials found in it confirm the pastoral lifestyle of its inhabitants. The settlement of Uchtapa is the first and so far the only well-studied household monument of Karabakh in this period. Recent studies revealed a layer of this time, the materials of which are much poorer compared to the Early and Middle Bronze Ages, and most of them belong to the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. **Apparently, at some point, most of the population left the inhabited places of the region, which is probably connected with the development of distant pasture cattle-breeding.** The exception is the settlement of Garatapa near the village of Shikhabli in Agdam District. It has been established that the settlement was surrounded by powerful defensive walls with a thickness of more than 4 meters and quadrangular corner towers.

The last monument of Karabakh - the so-called "Small Barrow" ends the chronological list of monuments of the Early Iron Age, belonging to the 8th-7th centuries BC. Materials from the barrow – ceramic vessels, horse bridles, arrowheads and decorations – serve as a reliable benchmark for determining the chronology of synchronous monuments and allow us to judge the level of development of handicrafts.

In conclusion, we would like to stress that only studied archaeological monuments of Karabakh are succinctly characterized above. Research into such barrow groups as Evoglu, Buruj, Mamirli, Husanli, Tapgaragoyunlu, Safikurd, Naibli, Shatirli, Sultanbud, Magsudlu, Khindiristan, Evetli and others is the mission of the future generations of scientists. ❀

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