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**THE BURIAL OF THE ANCIENT POPULATION
OF «MUGAN PLAIN» OF AZERBAIJAN**

**ПОХОВАННЯ ДАВНЬОГО НАСЕЛЕННЯ
«МУГАНСЬКОЇ РІВНИНИ» АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНУ**

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This paper describes the burials of Mugan plain of Azerbaijan. As a result of archaeological exploration of the territory, it was revealed that the region belongs to one of the oldest populations of farmers and herdsmen in the Caucasus. One of the interesting sides of the culture, discovered through examination of these monuments are burials. These burials were completed by inhabitants and belonged to various building horizons. The age composition of dead men varies from infants to full grown men.

Keywords: Coarse ceramics, ceramic vessel burial, burial pit, red ochre, bead.

Описано поховання Муганської рівнини Азербайджану. В результаті археологічних досліджень території було виявлено, що регіон належить до однієї з найстаріших популяцій землеробів і скотарів на Кавказі. Однією з цікавих сторін культури, виявленої під час огляду цих пам'яток, є поховання. Ці поховання належали різним будівельним горизонтам. Віковий склад померлих варіюється від немовлят до дорослих.

Ключові слова: груба кераміка, поховання керамічної судини, могильник, червона охра, намистина.

(стаття друкується мовою оригіналу)

Mugan plain covers south–eastern part of Kur–Araz Lowland on the territory of the Azerbaijan Republic. The archaeological studies of the monuments established the ancient belonging of farmers and herders of Caucasus region. The ancient inhabitants of Mugan plain were the bearers of culture which carried specificities, distinguishing them in the environment of equals of neighboring territories. Alongside, they possessed common features for the Caucasus region and the Middle East, reflecting both epochal unity and specific mutual influences with neighbors.

To date, archeologically on the plain are studied three settlements–Alikemtepe, Polutepe and Alkhantepe. All of mentioned are located in Jalilabad region. The first two in the territory of the village Uchtepe, in Alkhantepe (4 km to the north–west). The remarkable aspects of the monuments revealed in the study are the burials of the inhabitants, committed by them on the territory of settlements. Chronologically, Alikemtepe and Polutepe cover the end of 5th millennium BC, and Alkhantepe second half of 4th millennium BC.

The settlement of Alikemtepe was studied by F. R. Makhmudov in 1971–1979; 1991–1992 [1, p. 480–481; 2, p. 441–442; 3, p. 454]. It occupies the edge of a steep southern shore. More than 20 burials of the Neolithic–Eneolithic age were excavated on a site of the

settlement. They are cleared at various levels and sites of the investigated area of the monument. The nature of cultural scurf, in which the grave pits were dug was disruptive. The erection of structures of subsequent horizons over them disrupted the original state of the burial pits, and often forms. Given this situation, we only point to the level of the bottom of the grave pit on which the remains of the grave pile lay.

Burial №1: Revealed at a depth of 2.4 meters. The burial was formed in an elongated–oval pit. The deceased was laid up in an arcuate state, on the right side, head to north, facing west. Slightly bent arms were lowered to the knees. Strongly bent legs, with feet perpendicular to the legs. The deceased was covered with ochre, which made the bones on the upper side specific color with red–coffee hint. Traces of ochre were traced on the rest of the grave sighting. The deceased was a young adult. The length of a body in a crumpled state was 1.05 meters.

With the deceased, there was a ceramic bowl molded from clay with a vegetable admixture next to the face.

Burial №2: Revealed at a depth of 2.7 meters. The burial was laid, crumpled on the back, head to the east. The face and knees were turned to the right, the feet were pulled to the pelvis. Hands bent were under the knees. On the bones there are traces of the sprinkling of red–coffee ochre. In a crumpled state, the length of the skeleton was 1.2 meters. The height was around 1.65 meters. With the deceases, there was found a ceramic bowl, molded from clay with a vegetable admixture facing a forearm.

Burial №3: Revealed at a depth of 2.85 meters. The burial was carried out in an oval pit, 0.4 meters deep. The dead man was laid, mowed to the right, head on 3–C3. His hands were bent at the elbows, feet were pulled up to the pelvis, the hips were perpendicular to the body. The deceased was covered with ochre, the traces of which was especially well preserved on the skull and lugs. The dead man was 1.2 meters long. The deceased was a man, about 1.65 meters in height. Alongside with deceased, there was a ceramic bowl (NN№191), molded from clay with vegetable admixture, in front of his face.

Burial №4: Revealed at a depth of 3.7 meters. The deceased was laid to the right side, head to south. The skull was laid face down. Lower jaw was somewhat apart. The right arm with a forearm pressed to the body, was bent at 90°. The hand of the bent left arm was pulled up to the face. The dead was in teenage years. The length of the arcuate skeleton was 0.85 meters. It was sprinkled with ochre. The inventory did not exist.

Burial №5: Revealed at a depth of 2.4 meters. The skeleton was laid on the right side, head to the north. It was a child. The length of crumpled skeleton was 0.5 meters. The remains were extremely fragile as well as poorly preserved.

Alongside the skeleton, in front of the face was a ceramic bowl (NN№243), molded from clay with a vegetable admixture. In composition of a bowl, a small window was inserted to the bottom, from a piece of transparent obsidian.

Burial №6: Revealed at a depth of 2.6 meters. The dead was laid to the right side, head to the south, facing

east. It was a child; bones were heavily decayed. There are traces of ochre on them. The length of the corpse was 0.5 meters.

With the buried, a ceramic bowl was laid in front of the face, molded from clay with vegetable admixture.

Burial №7: Revealed at a depth of 3.6 meters. The deceased was laid on the right side, head to the south. The face was turned to the right, knees on the left (to the west). The skeleton belonged to a child aged 5–6 years. The length of the skeleton was 0.45 meters.

On the bones, traces of red ochre sprinkling were found, as well as a ceramic bowl alongside the face molded from clay with a vegetable admixture.

Burial №8: Revealed at a depth of 3.7 meters. The remains were in position laid up on the right side, with the head to the west, facing south. It was a child. The length of the skeleton was 0.35 meters. There was no inventory found.

Burial №9: Revealed at a depth of 3.7 meters. The skeleton was laid on the right side in a strongly contorted position, head to the north. The burial belonged to a child aged 10–12 years. No inventory was discovered.

Burial №10: Revealed to a depth of 1.7 meters. The deceased was laid crumpled on the right side, with head to the east. It was a child. On the bones there are traces of a powder of a red ochre. At the burial, a deep cup in a small rack at the edge, molded from clay and vegetable admixture was found. Broken back in an ancient time, the side of a cup, was at same time restored with bituminous coating.

Burial №11: Revealed at a depth of 2.6–3.7 meters. The skeleton and a buried place were sprinkled with ochre.

Burial №12: Revealed at the depth of 4 meters. The skeleton was wrapped in a mat and was laid in a strongly crooked position, head to the east. At the burial, a ceramic bowl was found close to the back of a dead body.

Burial №13: Revealed at a depth of 3.8 meters. The buried was laid head to the west. Inventory was not found.

The burials were found under the floors of household buildings. In many cases, children and adolescents were buried. Burials are single. In four cases, the position of the buried was not found. In other cases, the deceased was put on the right side. The orientation is not stable. Each deceased was accompanied by a small ceramic vessel and in three cases (KK 1, 2, 3), traces of ochre were traced.

Settlement Polutepe, is being currently explored by T. I. Akhundov [4, p. 38–45; 5, p. 46–52]. It is also located on the edge of the steep southern bank of the Injachai River, 1 km east of Alikomektepe. As of today there are seven burials, made by ancient inhabitants of settlement revealed. There are no expressed burial pits and only in some cases a shallow recess is traced. One burial was preserved in separate bones; six cases the buried ones are sufficiently or clearly defined. All the buried were adults. Four of the mentioned burials were discovered in 2009. Three burials remained well, the fourth was determined according to the findings of the individual.

Burial №1 was completed on the left side in a strongly crooked position, head to the west. The deceased was covered with red ochre, the accompanying inventory was not found.

Burial №2 was also crumpled, but on the left side, head to the north. In front of the face there was a small bowl, turquoise was found in the chest area of the skeleton, and at the shin the copper beads. The whole burial was densely covered with a red ochre.

Burial №3 was also found in a strongly contorted position, but on the right side, and head to the northeast. There was neither inventory nor ochre found here.

Burial №4, as already stated is not definable. In 2013, three burials were also identified (№ 5, 6, 7).

Burial №5 preserved only the lower limbs, judging by which the skeleton was laid in a crocheted position, and the dead was oriented head to the southeast. There was no ochre or veneer rice wounding the fragment of the skeleton.

Burial №6 was stored quite well. The skeleton was placed in a shallow oval groove, crooked on his back with a blockage on his left side, his head to the north. Slightly bent arms rested on the abdomen. Next to the face of the buried was laid a small painted bowl, and everything was densely covered with ochre.

Burial №7 (the latest up to this day) identified on this monument, was strongly decomposed. At the same time, it was determined that the deceased was placed in a heavily curved position with his head to the west. No inventory, no ochre here is found.

Settlement Alkhantepe, was explored by T. I. Akhundov in 2008–2017 years [6, p. 74–76]. Despite the previous two monuments, this settlement is found far from now existing water arteries, and cultural memorials are therefore placed lower than modern horizon. On the surface of 200 square meters, on depth of 3 meters, 13 burials were found.

The buried were represented in accordance on belonging to one or another horizon, and were found on various levels of cultural layer. Specific for the burials, practically were not able to be found, which mostly is related to morphology of cultural layer.

In **Alkhantepe settlement**, 13 burials were found. Of these, 12 were in the main digging spot and one in the pothole. The buried were represented in all ages, ranging from infants to adults and depending on level of access to one or another horizon of the find were placed on different levels the cultural layer. Inland burial holes for burial practically did not survive, which apparently is associated with the morphology of a cultural layer.

Burial №1: Revealed in the stratigraphic hole on depth of 1.5 meters. The buried was crocheted on the back, with head facing south/ southeastern direction. Legs with tightened to the pelvis feet and and hips forming a right angle with spine were knees rotated to the right, to the south. On the same side was the head, laying on the right cheek. The forearms are extended along the body. The right hand, seemingly, slightly rotated in elbow was placed between the hips, so that the hand was located near the shin next to the feet. The left arm was stretched along the body, touching the wrinkle of the leg.

Burial №2: Teenager (?). The grave was a depth of 1.34–1.43 m. The grave an oval hole 0.8 meters in length, 0.4 meters wide, stretching alongside NW–SE. The deceased was laid in a heavily crumpled position on the right side, with head facing SE. Knees are tightened to the stomach, hands are in front of the face. Partially the skull. The spine and pelvis are torn by late earthworks.

Burial №3: Teenager. The depth was found to be 1.40–1.48 meters in depth, 1.2 meters to the east of burial №1. The grave pit is traced by the dark spotting, highlighting in gray–yellow soil layer. It is of an irregular oval shape stretched alongside NW–SE, with length of 72 cm and 35 cm in width. The buried was laid, strongly twisted on left side, head to NW. Preservation of the remains is in bad state. On the right rib was a lead–in–base ring with an outer diameter of 1.7 cm, coiled from a round rod with rounded closed rings.

Burial №4: Baby. Identified at a depth of 1.45 meters. It was laid, and was bent drastically on the back with a heap on a right side, head turned to SW. The right arm extended along the body. The left hand, bent at the elbow was at a tightened knee muscles. The grave pit was not able to be traced.

Burial №5: Child. The burial was found at a depth of 1.3–1.38 meters. The deceased was laid, crumpled on right side, head to the east. The left hand's wrist was at the elbow of the arm, pulling out the knee–joints. Unsuccessfully retained joints were by the facial bones. Beside it was the lower jaw of sheep.

Burial №6: Baby. The buried was found at a depth of 1.4–1.45 m. The burial is made in a fragment of a large vessel and is covered with a syllabus of another, a smaller vessel. Both fragments represented the elongating half of wide–neck jug: «Rough ceramics». The lower segment laid with the neck facing S–E. The dead body was laid in crooked position on the left side, with head turned to North – West. The body was covered with fragment of second vessel laid necked to NW. From south–western side of the burial vessel was laid a piece of backbone part / 6 vertebrae of a large animal. From northern side of the vessel, there was a part of scapula of a large animal.

Burial №7: Baby. Revealed at the depth of 1.3–1.58 meters. The burial was made in the fragment of large vessel and covered with fragment of a smaller vessel. Lower fragment of «rough ceramics» broad–necked pitcher was laid with the neck facing South–East. The remains of baby's body crooked to right side, with face turned to South–East were placed inside. The buried was covered with the fragment of second vessel, also laid necked to South–East. From western side nearby the buried were placed two flat stones laid packed one by another. On one of them, supposedly threshing stone, at the edge there was a through hole about 5 cm in diameter, and on the surface a round notch with a smaller diameter.

Burial №8: Adult. Revealed on the depth of 1.34–1.52 cm. The buried was laid, crooked on the abdomen with head facing to east. The spine was laid straight with two scapulae placed over shoulder and rib bones. The head, turned to right (to north), was laid on left

check, slightly turned to the side of a shoulder. Most probably the hands of the buried were tied together. The elbow of the right arm was raised, and the cyst was under the body. The left forearm and elbow were under the body and from under the right side protruded a portion of her radius bone and a hand. Probably, this resulted in a somewhat lifted shoulders to the head. The knee of the bent left leg was at the right side near the left hand, at the abdominal level. The second leg was less bent and her thigh bone formed almost a right angle with the spine. Pelvic bone, laid flat, partially covered the thigh–bone of the left leg. A bead was found at the neck of the buried. It is of a non–circular round shape in the form of a hexagon, made of yellow–white colored paste.

Burial №9: Adult. Discovered at the depth of 1.44–1.46 meters to the south of cranial part of a burial №7. The preservation itself is poor. Nevertheless, preserved fragments of the skeleton might depict the fact that, the buried was placed in extremely crumpled way on right side, with head facing South. The skull was not saved, but, on its assumed place was a brown bowl.

Burial №10: Baby. Discovered on the depth of 1.72–1.83 meters. The burial was made in large wide–necked vessel of «rough ceramics», laid on the side necked to South–East. In the vessel, the remains of intensely crooked baby on left side were found, with head facing South–East.

Burial №11: Adult. Discovered on the depth of 1.99–2.11 meters. The buried was laid crumpled on the right side, head to South. Spine was drastically turned. The turned in the elbow wrist of the left hand seemingly was placed under the right cheek of the buried, due to the fact, that spoke–bone rested against the jawbone, and in front of the face were several wrist phalanxes. The disclosed wrist of right hand, was placed around 20 cm aside from the face of the buried.

The right leg was not saved. The femur bone of crooked left/upper leg created a straight angle with lower part of crumpled spine, the knee was placed in 15–20 cm from elbows, the foot formed a right angle with the crus elongated through 3–B, similar to the position of a backbone. Next to the supposed heel was a lower jaw of a swine, nevertheless it is not correct to assume that the pig had any relation to the burial.

Burial №12: Baby. The depth of discovered burial remains unknown. The burial took place in wide–necked vessel of a «rough ceramics», laid on the side, with necked to C–C3. The neck was covered with a fragment of a bottom of wide–necked vessel of a «rough ceramics», purposely shaped to the size of neck of a buried vessel. It was incased to the neck of the vessel, swollen from inside, densely covering the hole. Inside the vessel, strongly damaged bones of a baby, mixed altogether with late soil filling were found. Judging from the oval shaped agglomeration of remains and the skull fragmentation, it might be assumed, that the baby was placed in a drastically crooked position, headed to North–East.

Burial №13: Baby. It was discovered at a depth of 9 meters. The cellar was made in the wide–necked vessel of a «rough ceramics», which had a throat cracked. The skeleton was placed on the side with neck

turned to South–South West. The place of the missing neck was a fragment of the upper part of a round pot of a «quality ceramics» with a wide, strongly bent whisk. The surface of an burial vessel was partially covered with fragments of barrel of an identical vessel. On the bottom of the vessel filled with soil and the roots of the plants, the severely destroyed and mixed wrists of the infant were found. Their state did not allow us to determine the form of the buried one.

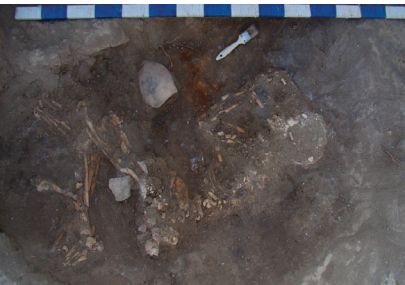
The last of the burials is also related to a newborn. The burial was conducted in broad based pitcher: «rough ceramics», which had the neck partially cracked. The neck was covered with a fragment of an upper part of cauldron: «quality ceramics» with a wide, strong, bent scyphus.

None of the burials found at Alkhantepe had traces of ochre sprinkled. The ceremony of the burial differs. For the burial of a newborns and babies, the clay bowls were often used, in which the dead were placed in crumpled state. They are oriented with the head primarily to south–east. In one case, the laying in crumpled position on the right side; newborn, with a head facing south–east is buried, seemingly in a burial place. The burial of mature person placed in a crumpled position on the abdomen, head facing east, delivers high interest. Presumably, the dead was buried with hands tied. Therefore, for all the ancient burial findings at Mugan plain of farmers and herdsmen, it is evident to state the crooked form of remains, yet the exact orientation is not traced. The belonging to one cultural–historical layer of Alikemtepe and Polutepe alongside with Nakhchivan and Garabagh, is believed to be apparent due to the often sightings of ochre sprinkles on burials in both examples [7, p. 73–80]. The Alkhantepe settlement, however, represents a different historical layer of Mugan plain. Here, there is no sprinkles of ochre found, and mainly, the burials of babies in vessels appear. This ancient ritual resembles with those in Middle East. Throughout Caucasus region it appears with Uruk culture carriers and is presented in monuments of Lelatepe culture [6, p. 74–76].

Epilogue Thus we observe common features of burials in both chronologically different monuments of one region, and differences related to their ethnic and cultural background.

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