



# ARCHAEOLOGY VIII. REPUBLIC OF AZARBAIJAN

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## ARCHAEOLOGY

### viii. REPUBLIC OF Azarbaijan

Archeological sites of northern Azarbaijan (the modern Republic of Azarbaijan) first came to public attention in the mid-19th century, when European travelers became aware that it abounded in ancient ruins. Fr. Dubois de Montpereux (1839-43) and A. Berger wrote about various site remains visible to anyone; and Baron de Baye gathered a collection of random finds. In 1861 the Fifth All-Russian Archeological Congress, held in Tiflis (now Tbilisi), stimulated an interest in the archaeology of the southern Caucasus and of Azarbaijan in particular. In 1890 J. de Morgan studied the mountainous areas of Talysh in the vicinity of Lenkoran, where he discovered over 230 burials at several sites dated to various periods of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages; he published his finds (de Morgan, 1896) and placed them in the museum of Saint-Germain-en-Laye in France. His was the first attempt to date the sites he had studied and to fit them into a broad context of contemporary culture. Between 1888 and 1890 a German engineer, W. Belck, excavated over 250 Early Iron Age burials at the towns of Kedabeg and Kalakent. (He worked on instructions from, and in close contact with, the noted German anatomist and student of anthropology, R. Virchow.) Some of the cemeteries proved to be large; that of the village of Paradiesfestung contained 185 burials. The



materials kept at the Berlin Museum remained unpublished until 1983, when their complete description appeared.

Between 1894 and 1903 E. Rösler, a teacher at the Shusha secondary school, excavated mainly in Nagorny Karabagh; in 1899 he moved to the towns of Elenendorf (now Khanlar) and Elisavetpol (now Gänçä). Rösler concentrated on cemeteries dated chiefly to the Late Bronze Age, including such major sites as the Archadzor and Khodjaly burial mounds in Karabagh. The steppe barrows at Elisavetpol and numerous other burial grounds yielded rich and significant finds. Reports of Rösler's fieldwork regularly appeared in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* and *Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte* (see 1882-96, 1898-99) and the *Izvestiya Imperatorskoï Arkheologicheskoi Komissii* (Proceedings of the Imperial Archeological Commission; see 1904, no. 12; 1905, no. 16). His materials were kept in part in the Museum of History in Moscow, in part in The Hermitage, St. Petersburg. At about the same time, Captain N. Fyodorov excavated at Nakhichevan on behalf of the Archeological Commission. He discovered burials with painted pottery later dated to the late second millennium BCE. Early in the 1890s O. Rosendorf and V. Skinder conducted small-scale excavations of burial sites in western Azarbaijan; their finds were sent chiefly to the Museum of History in Moscow. In 1896 the Archeological Commission dispatched A. Ivanovskii, a geographer, historian, and archeologist, to the southern Caucasus. He carried out large-scale excavations in western Azarbaijan, in the same places where Belck had worked, then moved to the southeastern coast of Lake Sevan and Nagorny Karabagh. Altogether he excavated over 90 burial sites, the materials from which were sent to the Museum of History in Moscow and were described in detail in volume VI (1911) of *Materialy po arkheologii Kavkaza* (Materials on Caucasian Archaeology) against the background of European and Asian cultures. Most of the burials Ivanovskii studied were dated to the Early Iron Age.

After 1919 the pace of archeological activities quickened. In 1920 the newly opened Museum of the History of Azarbaijan instituted regular archeological expeditions; in 1923 was formed the Azarbaijan Committee for the Protection of the Monuments of Antiquity, Art, and Nature, which regularly published results of archeological excavations. Also at that time the Society for the Study and Investigation of Azarbaijan was set up; it too carried out archeological fieldwork across the republic and published the results in the Society's proceedings (*Izvestiya*). From that time on, archeological finds have been sent



to the republic's museums. In 1926 the Society organized an expedition under Academician I. Meshchaninov to study the monuments of Nagorny Karabagh and the environs of Nakhichevan. In the same year, a publication by members of the expedition staff (Passek and Latynin 1926) included a survey of all archeological material then known. In the same year the Trans-Caucasian Scholarly Association organized an expedition under A. Miller to excavate the Kizyl-Vank cemetery at Nakhichevan. That site belonged to the Painted Pottery culture and was dated later than Fyodorov's finds. In fall 1926 D. Sharifov of the Azarbaijanian State Museum discovered previously unknown pottery forms in the Ialoilu-Tapa burial site in the Nukha District.

From the 1930s on, the majority of the archeological expeditions in the republic were conducted under the auspices of the Azarbaijan Branch of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences. In 1934 it organized an expedition that studied the cyclopean fortresses, the first of which had been discovered in 1927 by Meshchaninov's expedition. I. Djafarzadeh (1945) summarized the results. Between 1930 and 1941 J. Hummel, a teacher of a local secondary school, carried out systematic excavations at Khanlar (formerly Elenendorf) and, at a smaller scale, in Karabagh. He discovered a huge amount of diverse remains, including such important sites as Barrows I and II in Khanlar and hitherto unknown Late Bronze Age settlements. His results were regularly published in periodicals and separately (Hummel 1931, 1940). In 1946, when it was decided to build the Mingechaur Hydropower Station, a Mingechaur archeological expedition under S. Kaziev was organized. It discovered and studied a wealth of material ranging from the Eneolithic to the Middle Ages. In 1951 the Nakhichevan Expedition under O. Abibullaev was instituted; it concentrated on Kül-Tepe I mound. The Middle Ages came to the center of attention in 1938-41, and after 1945 medieval studies acquired an even greater scope. In 1953 the Institute of Archaeology of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences and the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Azarbaijanian S.S.R. organized a joint expedition under A. Iessen. It first concentrated on the medieval settlement Oren-Kala in the Mil steppe, but the scope of the expedition's work was much wider. Some of its groups studied remains of various periods in the Mil-Karabagh steppe; they paid particular attention to the origin and development of permanent settlements, emergence of the pasturing and semi-nomadic cattle breeding economy, town formation, and problems of the south Caucasian Eneolithic period. The expedition worked on, e.g., Uzerlik-Tepe, Kara-Tepe, and the Big and Little mounds of Uch-Tepe; and its reports did much to advance archaeology in the republic. Another



expedition of the Institute of History, working from 1947 to 1966, studied about 750 rock paintings in Gobustan which are dated to a long period from the Neolithic to the early Middle Ages; these became known all over the world (Djafarzadeh 1973).

Since the 1960s and 1970s several scores of archeological expeditions of the Azarbaijanian Academy of Sciences have worked in the republic. The Academy publishes the series “Material’naya kul’tura Azerbaïdzhana” (Material culture of Azarbaijan), “Pamyatniki material’noï kul’tury Azerbaïdzhana” (Monuments of Azarbaijan’s material culture), and “Arkheologicheskie i etnograficheskie izyskaniya v Azerbaïdzhane” (Archeological and ethnographic studies in Azarbaijan), as well as the journal *Azerbaïdzhanskaya arkheologiya* (Azarbaijanian archaeology). In 1953 S. Zamyatnin launched Palaeolithic studies in Azarbaijan, studying the Upper Paleolithic sites in the Avedag Mountains in western Azarbaijan. Research on this period was continued by M. Guseïnov, D. Gadzhiev (1979), and others (see D. Gadzhiev et al. 1979). The multi-layered Azykh Cave is the most important Stone Age monument in Azarbaijan. Its earliest strata produced pebble tools reminiscent, according to certain scholars, of the Olduvai tool industry. Occupation deposits cover a vast period of the Paleolithic from Early Acheulian to Mousterian. The strata are 1.5 to 5 m deep; the Middle Acheulian stratum contains traces of hearths, fireplace, and probably dwellings; the same stratum produced part of the lower jawbone of a hominid (pre-Neanderthal man of the Heidelberg type). The developed Mousterian can be found in nearby Taglar Cave. Its Mousterian industry has close parallels in Iranian Kurdistan and Luristan sites. The Upper Paleolithic is best represented by the finds from a multi-layered Damcili grotto in the Avedag Mountains.

Early and Late Mesolithic monuments of the ninth-seventh millennia BCE are represented by the finds in Gobustan and the Damcili grotto; cave shelters of the Beyuk-Tash Mountain in Gobustan and Firuz 1 and 2 sites contained Mesolithic and Early Neolithic strata that yielded, in particular, over 50 synchronous rock paintings. The earliest local pottery was also found there.

J. Hummel initiated Neolithic (seventh-sixth millennia BCE) studies in Azarbaijan; he discovered and studied the Kiligdar flint quarry, where the stone was also processed, as well as site 133 at Khanlar and a burial at Shamkhor. O. Abibullaev (1982), I. Narimanov (1987), and G. Ismailov (1977) demonstrated that the earliest strata of the multi-layered settlements of Kül-Tepe at Nakhichevan and Shomu-Tepe in western Azarbaijan were dated to



the Late Neolithic.

During the Late Neolithic and, mainly, during the Eneolithic (sixth-fourth millennia BCE), the mountain population started moving down to the Mil, Karabagh, and Mugan steppes. It was at that time that an economy of cattlebreeding and, predominantly, agriculture began taking shape. As a rule these were small, unprotected settlements, in which archeologists found traces of long habitation marked by artificial mounds and burial grounds. The settlements formed compact groups; chaotically placed adobe houses (stone was used in the southern areas) stood close to each other. Dwellings were mainly round, up to 2.5 m high. People used artificial irrigation, especially in the south. Abibullaev, Narimanov, Makhmudov and others studied settlements such as Shomu-Tepe, Toyre-Tepe, Gargalar-Tepe, Baba-Dervish, Leyla-Tepe, Shomu-Tepe, Alikemek-Tepesi, Misharchai II-IV, and Kül-Tepe I. The Eneolithic strata are usually 3 to 5 m thick; in Gargalar, however they extend up to 10 m. The Alikemek-Tepesi settlement covers an area of over 1 hectare; materials from some of the settlements (Alikemek-Tepesi) are very close to the materials obtained from monuments of northwestern Iran. It became possible to place these remains in a chronological context, thanks in large part to the position of the Eneolithic strata directly underlying the Early Bronze strata in the Kül-Tepe I and Baba-Dervish settlements and, especially, the finds of fragments of Halaf pottery in the Eneolithic stratum of Kül-Tepe identified and studied by A. Iessen.

In the Early Bronze Age (mid-fourth to third quarter of the third millennia BCE), the Kuro-Araks culture covered the territory of Azarbaijan, and the southern Caucasus for that matter. During this period agriculture continued to progress, while cattlebreeding sharply increased. Archeologists excavated the settlements of Mingechaur and Baba-Dervish in the north, Kül-Tepe I, Kül-Tepe II, Shor-Tepe and others in the south; Garapek-Tepe, Meine-Tepe, and others in the southeastern offshoots of the Lesser Caucasus. Presumably Early Bronze Age settlements were identified in northeastern Azarbaijan, which previously had yielded little archeological evidence. Cemeteries were situated outside settlements, only rarely within them. Fieldwork was carried out by C. Khalilov, T. Akhundov, G. Aslanov, R. Vaidov, G. Ione, S. Kasiev, O. Abibullaev, G. Ismailov, and others. The Kül-Tepe I Early Bronze settlement covered no less than 1 hectare; Baba-Dervish occupies an area of 300 by 200 m. In that period population density increased considerably, and new settlements appeared. Settlements were located, not only on artificial mounds, but also on



riverbanks, natural mounds, and mountain slopes. Settlements and houses became larger; the houses remained round (up to 4 m in diameter) or rectangular (in the upper strata); they were made of adobe bricks and stone. Semi-dugout dwellings were discovered in the Mingechaur settlement. Building technique became more complex; the number of outbuildings increased. Remains of metallurgical and pottery industries were found at the sites; in that period Azarbaijan, together with the entire Caucasus, became a major center of metallurgical production. During the Middle Bronze period a considerable part of the territory of Northern Azarbaijan (the Mil steppe and the adjacent foothills in the south) was part of the Sevan-Uzerlik cultural group of the 19th-17th centuries BCE, which is characterized by painted pottery. Uzerlik-Tepe, the main settlement of this group, was excavated by K. Kushnaryova (1957), who worked in the Azarbaijani expedition headed by A. Iessen. The settlement, 200 m in diameter, was found on top of a hill; its central part was protected with an adobe wall up to 3 m wide; the eastern entrance was flanked with buttresses. Archeologists uncovered remnants of houses with clay floors and wooden ceilings.

Sites with painted pottery of the Kizyl-Vank type are grouped around Nakhichevan and in the adjacent areas of northwestern Iran; they are represented by settlements and burials. Settlements of an open type (Kül-Tepe I, Kizyl-Vank) and fortified (Kül-Tepe II and probably Shor-Tepe). Ancient salt mines are associated with Kül-Tepe II. The polychrome pottery found shares many features with the pottery from the Urmia monuments of Haftavān-Tepe and Geoy-Tepe.

Population density in Azarbaijan increased during the Late Bronze and Early Iron ages (late 15th–7th centuries BCE) Local culture is represented by different types of remains—permanent and temporary, fortified and unprotected settlements, cyclopean constructions, sanctuaries, and rock paintings. Burials of all types with complicated structures, evidence of rituals, and rich bronze objects, indicate that a military elite had been formed by that time. Cattlebreeding and the domestication of horses required the existence of distant pastures and the seasonal migration of herds. The area established stable and regular contacts with northwestern Iran and the Eurasian steppes. Northern Azarbaijan was never captured by the Urartians, who had conquered the central part of the southern Caucasus; yet, if one judges from archeological finds, contacts between the conquerors and northern Azarbaijan existed. The following monuments are well known: The Big Archadzor and



Khanlar (Elenendorf) barrows; the Khodjaly cemetery, the burials around Dashkesan and Shamkhor, the barrows of Borsunlu, Sarychoban, Beimsarov, and Mingechaur; the burials and stelae of the Apsheron Peninsula, the cemeteries of Kharaba-Gilan, the settlements of Sary-Tepe, Uch-Tepe, Khanlar, and the lower strata of Kara-Tepe. These sites have been investigated by N. Minkevich-Mustafaeva, I. Narimanov, G. Aslanov, G. Jafarov, G. Kesamanly, O. Danielian, M. Guseynova, and others. The Small Mound in the Mil steppe excavated by A. Iessen proved that in the 7th century BCE some Scythian bands crossed the eastern part of the southern Caucasus on their march to the Near East.

In the heyday of the Achaemenid empire, Caspiana (Strabo, 11.4.5), which probably was situated in the Mugan steppe, was made part of satrapy XI (Herodotus, 3.92). Achaemenid objects and their local replicas appeared in northern Azarbaijan. The Sary-Tepe settlement revealed remnants of buildings and bases of columns that resembled Achaemenid bases; similar bases were found in the Shamkhor District. Once the Achaemenid empire fell apart, the southern part of northern Azarbaijan became part of Atropatene; and the northern part formed a section of Caucasian Albania; yet their borders were never stable. Until the end of the first millennium BCE the larger part of northern Azarbaijan was taken by the Ialoylu-Tapa culture (which probably included the jar burials culture). The better-known burial grounds of Ialoylu-Tapa and Dzshafarkhan, the Kara-Tepe settlement, the upper strata of Sary-Tepe, and other sites were studied by T. Passek, A. Iessen, O. Ismizadeh, D. Djabarov, and others. Coins from the burials and hoards were studied by E. Pakhomov. Starting in the late 4th century BCE coins had been brought to Albania; and in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE the practice of local minting arose. At first the Albanian settlements were more like small villages; in the 4th century BCE, however, the first towns appeared. Old Kabala, the capital of Albania, was one of them, dated on the strength of archeological evidence. For several centuries urban culture developed, and archeologists have managed to locate some of the towns mentioned in written sources. A. Iessen identified the Oren-Kala and Tazakend fortified settlements as respectively Baylakan and Paytakaran of Arab and Armenian sources. Archeologists are working at present in, e.g., Kabala, Shemakha, Baku, Shabran, Gäncä, Nakhichevan, and Bard. Nearly all of these places were founded as fortified towns that later, in the 9th and 10th centuries, developed into large trading and manufacturing centers. Early in the 13th century their progress was cut short by the Mongol invasion that left Baykalan and some other cities depopulated; in other places,



however, people continued to live during the 14th-17th centuries. Archeologists have established that architecture and handicrafts (including production of glazed pottery) were highly developed. They have also discovered evidence of wide and intensive trade contacts with cities of Persia such as Ray, Kashan, and Sultanabad. The architectural monuments of Northern Azarbaijan dating from the 12th-15th centuries are widely known.

Figure 1. Major archeological sites in the Republic of Azarbaijan.

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