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Раздел I

АРХЕОЛОГИЯ И ЭТНОКУЛЬТУРНАЯ ИСТОРИЯ

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A “WARRIOR'S GRAVE” IN THE SOUTH-EASTERN REGION OF AZERBAIJAN: THE ARVANA KURGAN

The paper deals with a kurgan of the same name, excavated near the village of Arvana, Yardimly district. The kurgan is of 5 m diameter. It was arranged by cromlech of large boulders around it. 8 ceramic vessels, 1 bronze ring and 1 bronze dagger were placed in the grave. On the eastern side of the grave, on the top of the dishes animal bones was found. And beneath them human skeletons were revealed.

The Talysh-Mugan culture is characterized by large dolmen-like crypts, stone box graves and kurgans in the mountainous area, as well as cemeteries consisting of kurgans and earthen graves in the plain area. The existence of this culture in the form of two local groups is probably due to natural geographical conditions and other reasons.

Archaeological materials characteristic of the Khojaly-Gedabey culture, synchronous with the Talysh-Mugan culture, were also discovered in the Arvana kurgan. This typicality shows that the hereditary connection between the various cultures of the Late Bronze — Early Iron Ages is chronologically complementary.

According to a comparative analysis, the monument can be attributed to the second stage of the Talysh-Mugan culture — that is, 11th–10th centuries BC.

Keywords: Talysh-Mugan culture, Late Bronze-Early Iron Ages, stone box kurgan, pottery, weapons, chronology

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«МОГИЛА ВОИНА» В ЮГО-ВОСТОЧНОЙ ЧАСТИ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНА: КУРГАН АРВАНА

В статье сообщается о кургане, раскопанном в одноименном селе Арвана в Ярдымлинском районе. Курган диаметром 5 м имеет кромлехную выкладку из крупных скальных камней. В погребении найдено восемь керамических сосудов, бронзовое кольцо, бронзовый кинжал. В восточной части погребения выявлены остеологические остатки на сосудах, под которыми был человеческий костяк.

Для горной зоны тальш-муганской культуры характерны крупные дольменовидные гробницы, каменные ящики и курганы, для равнинной зоны — могильник из курганов и грунтовых погребений. Наличие двух локальных групп этой культуры, вероятно, связано с природно-географическими условиями.

Среди погребального инвентаря кургана Арвана были выявлены археологические материалы, характерные как для тальш-муганской, так и для ходжалы-гедабекской культур. Эта общность говорит об этнокультурных связях в эпоху поздней бронзы — раннего железа между разными регионами Азербайджана.

Палеоантропологический материал из кургана Арвана в настоящее время хранится в экспозиции Музея национальной истории Азербайджана. Краниологический материал из погребения был исследован по общепринятой в палеоантропологии методике Р. Мартина. Череп мужской (возраст 55–60 лет), гипердолихокраний, хамекраний. Антропологический тип европеоидный. Рост погребенного составлял около 170 см.

На основе сравнительного анализа памятник можно отнести к XI–X вв. до н. э., к второму этапу тальш-муганской культуры.

Ключевые слова: тальш-муганская культура, эпоха поздней бронзы — раннего железа, подкурганые каменные ящики, керамические сосуды, оружие, хронология

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Introduction and description of the kurgan

During the field research season of 2019, a stone box-type kurgan we discovered in the area of Arvana village of Yardimli district (fig. 1), 200 m south of the village, in the area called Garyatan (fig. 2). This grave, which we conventionally call Arvana kurgan No. 1, is located at an altitude of 1885 m above sea level. Moreover, it should be noted that the Arvana kurgan since built at the foot of a high natural hill, remained intact and out of the excavations for economic purposes. Although small stone remains were revealed during the prospecting and exploration work in the surrounding plain, the signs of the kurgan cover were hardly visible. The reason for all this was the allocation of land for agriculture during the distribution of share lands in the 90^s of the 20th century and the use of these areas for potato cultivation. Undoubtedly, the Arvana kurgan was not the only one, and there were other kurgans of the same type around it, but they have not survived to this day.

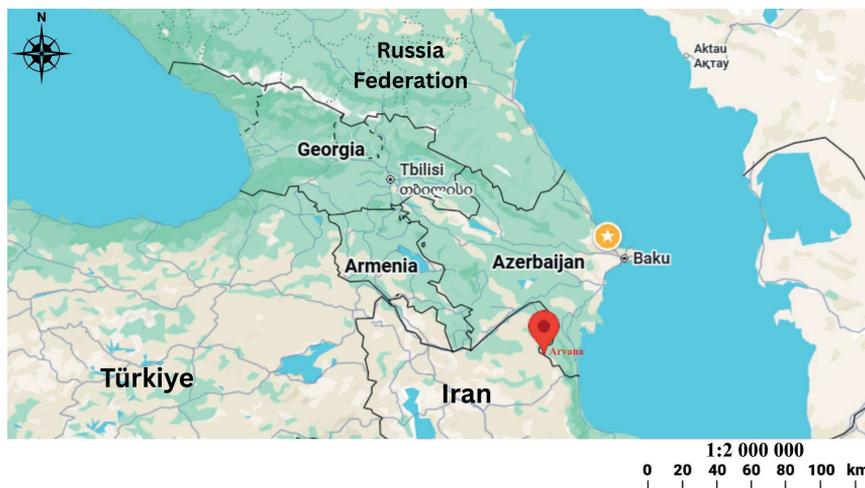


Fig. 1. Location of the Arvana village on the map of Azerbaijan

Рис. 1. Месторасположение Арванского кургана на карте Азербайджана

The Arvana kurgan, is 5 m in diameter and surrounded by a cromlech made of large boulders. There is a cast of big and small stones inside. Elongated rock stones were placed on the sides. The burial chamber of the kurgan was uncovered from a depth of 1 m. The chamber was 1.8 m long, 1.1 m wide. The grave pit was excavated in an elongated, oval shape and was oriented north-east-south-west. 8 pottery vessels, 1 bronze ring, 1 bronze sword and 1 bronze dagger were placed in the grave.



*Fig. 2. View of the Arvana village and kurgan
Рис. 2. Вид на деревню Арвана и курган*

On the eastern side of the grave, animal bones were found above the dishes, and a human skeleton below. The deceased was buried in the grave facing north, lying on his left side, with his legs folded back from the knees and his back towards the south wall of the grave. Only the lower part of the skeleton from the pelvis remained, and the upper part was almost decayed. A rapier-shaped sword was placed on its opposite side. The handle of the sword was placed on the side of the leg, and the blade — towards the head of the skeleton, i. e. the opposite. The human skull is completely intact (fig. 3). In the researchers opinion, according to ancient customs, if the corpse was buried lying on its back with arms on the sides, then the deceased would obey and worship the god in the afterlife [Müseyibli, Nəcəfov, Hüseynov, 2021: 123].

A similar grave with a deceased buried on its back is known from the Gazigulu necropolis. Due to the “Scythian-type” arrowheads found in this a strong possibility arises that it is a Scythian grave [Nəcəfov, Ağalarzadə, Əsədov, 2017: 36–37].



Fig. 3. Grave chamber and plan of the kurgan
Рис. 3. Погребальная камера и план кургана

Archaeological artifacts

One of our main goals is to provide a detailed analysis of the archaeological finds discovered in the kurgan, as they are few in number and each has separate type and pattern elements.

One of the *kupas* (jugs or small pitchers) has a narrow throat, globular body, and salient stripes embrace the shoulder and body. In the stripe below the throat, diagonally faintly polished patterns are drawn, and below it between the stripes in the shoulder area are small

and faintly mesh-like polished patterns. The space between the silent stripes of the shoulder and the body is also decorated with mesh-like polished patterns. The bowl seat is relatively heeled. The pottery is thick-walled and well-baked, made of mixture of grey clay and fine sand. As a result of unstable temperature, spots have appeared on it. Dimensions: the mouth is 11.5 cm in diameter, the throat — 1.5 cm high, height — 22.5 cm, body — 29 cm in diameter, seat is 11.5 cm in diameter (fig. 4.-1). Similar small *kupas* (jugs) having a narrow neck are known from the Buzeyir necropolis of Lerik district [Кәримов, 2006: 140].

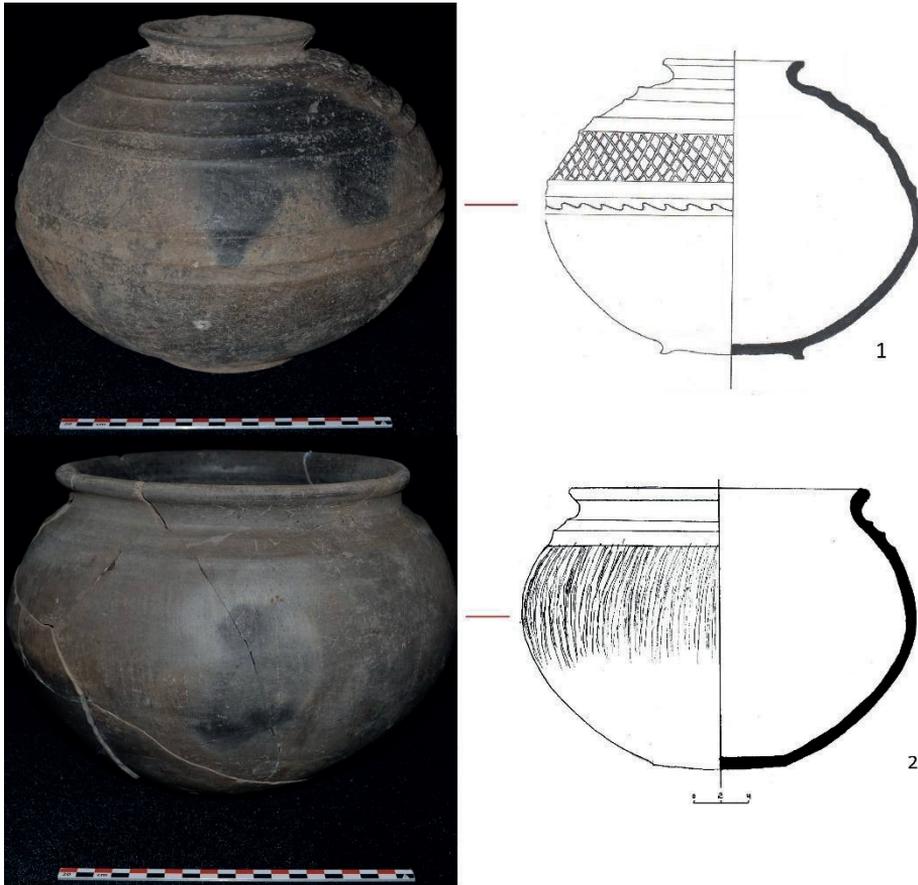


Fig. 4. Jugs
Рис. 4. Кувшины

The other *kupa* is a medium-sized vessel made of well-baked grey clay on a potter's wheel. The globular body is complemented by a narrow and flat seat. Along with faint channel-like lines drawn on the shoulder part, this part is also decorated with straight line polished patterns drawn vertically. This *kupa* was found under the skeleton's head. The vessel has been fully restored. Dimensions: the mouth is 22 cm in diameter, the throat — 2.5 cm high, height — 21 cm, body diameter — 29 cm, seat — 10 cm in diameter, wall thickness is 0.8 cm (fig. 4.-

2). Similar *kupas* were found in the Late Bronze–Early Iron Age necropolis of the Zayamchay basin [Nadzhafov, Asadov, 2017: 21].

Another *kupa* is grey in color with a narrow and relatively high neck and a globular body. The mouth rim is folded outward. In the center of the body, the place where the upper and lower parts were made separately and joined later, is clearly visible. On the shoulder part of the vessel, on one side, there is a moulded mushroom-like protruding lug, and the upper side of this lug is patterned grid-shaped. Between the throat and the shoulder, there are two convex stripes, and between these stripes, with the polishing method are drawn wavy patterns. On the upper part of the body, grid-shaped polished patterns and parallel vertical polished patterns are drawn in the area separating them from each other. These vertical patterns are also decorated asymmetrically with polished wavy patterns. The seat of the pottery is heeled. The body has a sharp transition towards the seat. The *kupa* is thrown on a potter's wheel. Dimensions: the mouth is 12.8 cm in diameter, height of the throat — 2.2 cm, lug — 2.5 cm high (mushroom-like protrusion is 5.5 cm in diameter), body diameter — 39.3 cm, height — 24.5 cm, seat is 12 cm in diameter (fig. 5). *Kupas* with a mushroom-shaped protruding lugs on the shoulder were also found in the Late Bronze–Early Iron Age necropolis of Shahtakhti [Араев, 2002: X tablo; Агаев, 2019: 69]. Similar vessels are found in earthen grave No. 39 in Zayamchay necropolis belonging to the Khojaly-Gedabey culture [Müseyibli, 2009: 55] and in grave No. 76 of the Tovuzchay necropolis [Müseyibli, Nəcəfov, 2019: 291].

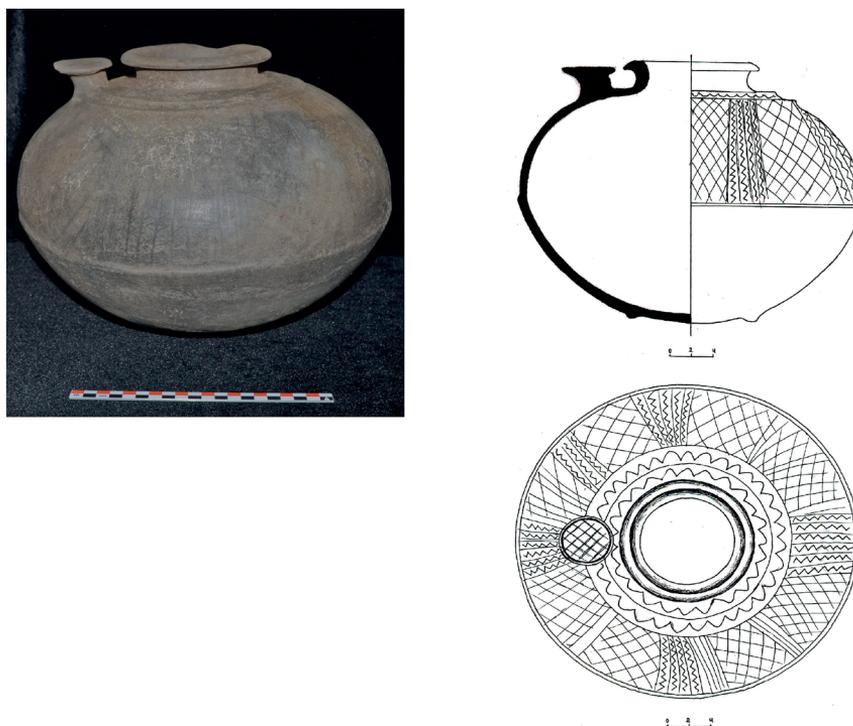


Fig. 5. Ornamental decorated jug

Рис. 5. Декоративно украшенный кувшин



Fig. 6. Potteries

Рис. 6. Керамические сосуды

Another black *kupa* with a narrow neck, balloon-shaped body, and flat seat is of medium capacity, with a edging rim folded to the side. The throat is relatively narrow and is surrounded

by prominent channel-like lines. The moulded lug connects the edge of the mouth and the body part. The lug is completely hewn. The surface of the bowl is polished. In the upper part of the body, in 4 places the image of the «tree of life» is described using the grinding method. The spaces between these images are decorated with grid-like patterns of thin polished lines. The body has a sharp transition to the seat. Dimensions: white the mouth is 9.3 cm in diameter, height of the throat — 5.5 cm, body diameter — 18.5 cm, height — 19.5 cm, seat is 8.8 cm in diameter (fig. 6.-1). A *kupa* of the same shape was discovered in a Late Bronze-Early Iron Age kurgan in Safikürd village of Goranboy district. On the globular body of this vessel, relief convex lines were drawn horizontally [Hüseynov, Ağalarzadə, 2008: 38–39]. The Safikurd find differs from the Arvana *kupa* only for its longer throat.

The mouth rim of the black, medium-sized **bowl-type** pottery vessel is outflared. Four channel lines encircle the shoulder. Polished patterns consisting of parallel and diagonal lines were drawn on the upper part of the body. The bowl has a flat, wide and round handle on one side of the shoulder. The slender biconical body tapers sharply towards the seat. Dimensions: the mouth is 10.7 cm in diameter, body — 17 cm in diameter, the height — 12.5 cm, the diameter of the seat — 6 cm, handle is 2.5 cm wide (fig. 6.-2). A similar vessel of this type is known from the Mehdi-Churi necropolis of Gilan [Jahani, 2014: 36–37].

A **dopu-type** (a ceramic vessel similar to a jug) pottery vessel of a grey color, with a high throat and a globular body is surrounded by horizontal channel-like lines. The throat has a sharp transition to the body. The body part is encircled by vertical embossed straight lines — ornaments called «cannelure». The twisting handle connects the mouth rim and the body. Dimensions: the mouth is 9 cm in diameter, the height of the throat — 4.3 cm, height — 14.7 cm, body — 14.5 cm in diameter, the diameter of the seat is 7.5 cm (fig. 6.-3). Some researchers have associated the fluting ornament, which was widespread in this period, with the Sun cult. According to V. Bakhshaliyev, this is related to the fact that certain successes of the ancient farming-cattle-breeding tribes were connected with the Sun [Baxşəliyev, 2002: 62].

Similar vessels of small size, with fluted ornament on, are known from the open grave in the Saritepe settlement and is attributed to about 7th century BC [Nərimanov, 1963: 85, 97]. Vessels with similar ornaments were encountered in the Shahtakhty of Nakhchivan, Gizilveng, the BC 11th–8th century stratum of Kultepe I, in the settlement of the Qarabaglar [Baxşəliyev, 2002: 7, 8, 16]. Similar vessels are known from the Tul necropolis of Gilan. During the excavations conducted here in 2002, samples of pottery with various shapes of fluted ornaments were obtained [Khalatbari, 2004a: 76]. On the whole, the period when ceramics with cannelure ornament became widespread is attributed to the end of the 2nd millennium BC [Baxşəliyev, 2002: 53–54].

One of the **plates** is *khaira-type* (a round, deep vessel) and has an ear-shaped protruding handle on one side of the shoulder. The seat has a small heel, and traces of rotation on the potter's wheel are clearly visible in this part. The pottery has been fully restored. Dimensions: the mouth is 31 cm in diameter, shoulder height — 3.5 cm, height — 9 cm, the diameter of the seat — 10.5 cm, the wall thickness is 0.8 cm (fig. 7.-1). Analogical *khairas* are known from Zeyamchay [Müseyibli, Nəcəfov, 2019: 65] and Tovuzchay necropolises [Müseyibli, Nəcəfov, Hüseynov, 2021: 70–71]. These types of vessels are usually larger than plates and often have a single line covering the rim of the mouth [Müseyibli, Nəcəfov, 2019: 66].

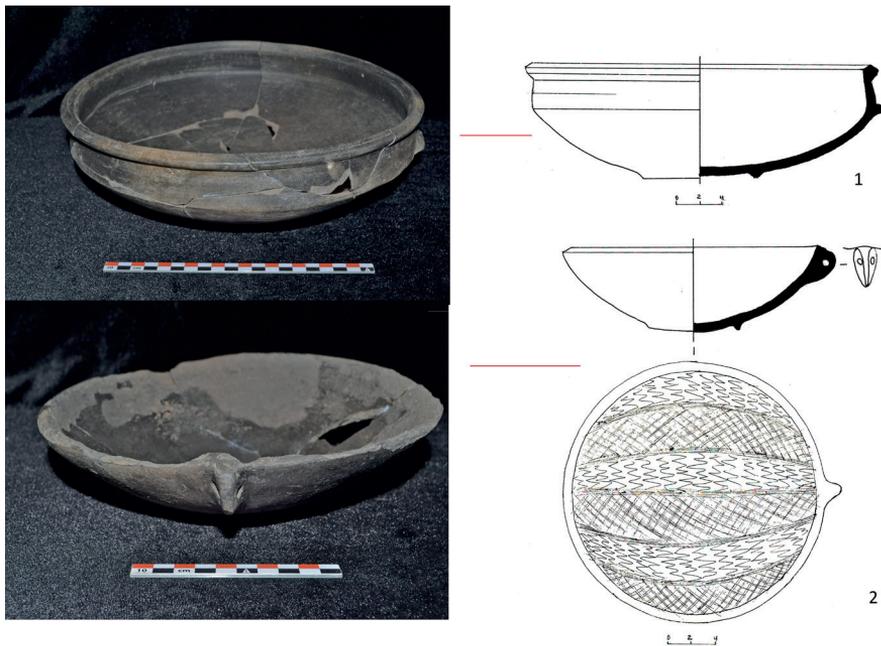


Fig. 7. Ceramic plates
Рис. 7. Керамические тарелки

The other **plate** is black in color and the rim of the mouth is straight and simple. Since the seat part is convex, the bowl does not stand stable on a smooth surface. On one side of the plate, there is a small lug — a protrusion on the rim of the mouth with a hole in the center, for hanging it. This part is more zoomorphic and resembles a “turtle head”. The inside of the vessel is decorated with a grid and wave-shaped patterns using the polishing method. The pottery was restored. Dimensions: the mouth is 23.3 cm in diameter, height — 5.5 cm, the diameter of the seat — 7.7 cm, wall thickness is 0.7 cm (fig. 7.-2). A similar vessel is known from the Miyanrud necropolis in Gilan province, Iran [Khalatbari, 2004b: 234]. But the Miyanrud plate is deeper than the Arvana find.

A bronze rapier-shaped sword. Made of thick bronze plate by casting, this sword has a long and double blade. Both sides of the sword were decorated with raised stripes. A 6.5 cm long hilt is made in the lower part. The length of the 3 nails left on the hilt is 2.2–2.8 cm. The dimensions of the sword: with hilt is 78.5 cm, without hilt — 72 cm, width — 2.8 at the bottom, 4 cm at the top, thickness — 1.3 cm (fig.-8.-2-3).

Rapier-shaped swords in archaeological literature were also found in the investigated graves in the Uzuntepe monument complex, where the Mughan culture was first discovered. Among the 15 pieces of bronze swords found in grave goods of Uzuntepe, one-shaped, two-edged swords differ only in their length [Dzhafarzade, 1946: 25–26]. These swords were divided into two groups by I. Jafarzadeh: the first group includes swords both the hilt and the blade made of bronze, and the second group includes swords the blade made of iron [Mahmudov, 1970: 72].

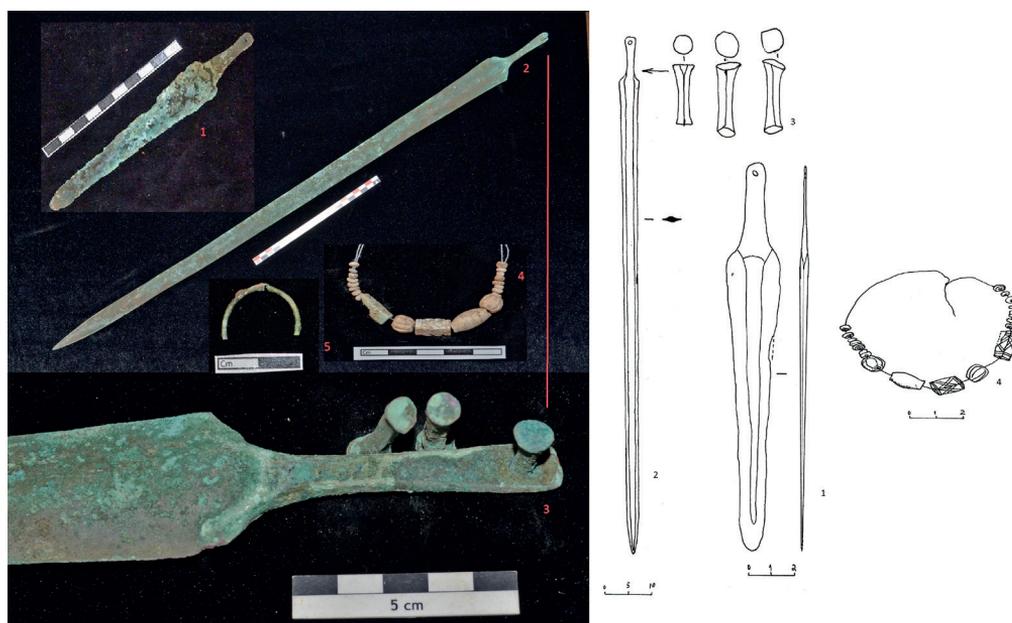


Fig. 8. Bronze rapier-shaped sword, bronze dagger, beads made of paste and bone
 Рис. 8. Бронзовый меч в форме рапиры, бронзовый кинжал, бусы из пасты и кости

According to F. Mahmudov, examples of this type found in both the mountainous and plain zones show that a single cultural unity spread in those areas at the end of the Bronze Age — the beginning of the Iron Age rather than the mutual ethnic relations between the tribes that lived in both areas [Muğan arxeoloji..., 2017: 4]. Analogical swords were found in Hishkadere and Mahmudavar villages of Masalli, Divalona village of Jalilabad and Lankaran [Mahmudov, 1974: 49; Mahmudov, 1970: 70]. Similar rapier-shaped swords are also known from Morgan's excavations. These rapiers found in Veri, Jodikesh and Hamarat necropolises of Lerik were also discovered by chance in Chayrud, Jangamiran, Rvarud, etc. monuments of the district in the mid of the 20th century. and some of them are kept in the history— regional ethnography museum [Ağalarzadə, 2018: 106–107].

Bronze dagger. A small-sized, simple-shaped dagger has two edges. A hole was opened for fastening with nails after was hafted to the wood in the upper part of it. The length of the weapon with haft is 15 cm, without haft — 11.7 cm, width — 2.3 cm at the widest point, 1 cm at the narrowest point, thickness — 3 mm (fig. 8.-1). In Azerbaijan, Late Bronze-Early Iron Age daggers were found mainly in Talish and Mughan zones, Nakhchivan, Lesser Caucasus regions and other areas. According to the researchers, the number and variety of daggers found suggests the existence of several dagger-making centers in the area during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages. These weapon centers obtained the raw materials needed for production from mines in Nagorno-Karabakh, Ganja-Gedabey, Talish, Zangezur and Mehri territories [Əliyev, 2019: 131]. Similar daggers are known from Jacques de Morgan's excavations in Lerik. This type of daggers, locally produced in Talish-Mughan area, can be attributed to the beginning

of the 1st millennium BC [Ağalarzadə, 2017: 28]. Analogues of these daggers are known from the kurgan with many graves excavated in Khachbulag in the 60s of the 20th century [Kesamanly, 1976: 68], from the Niftali kurgans in Mill-Karabakh [Rəsuloğlu, 1992: 23] and from the Mardangol necropolis of Nakhchivan [Əliyev, 2019: 250]. Similar daggers discovered in the Iron Age Boyeh necropolis of Gilan province of Iran also have a sharp and wide tip and a short hafted blade [Jahani, 2011: 45]. O. Danielyan, while writing about Late Bronze-Early Iron Age daggers, attributed these shape weapons to the group of I type daggers and came to the conclusion that they played a major role in Eastern Transcaucasia [Danielyan, 1987: 25].

Bronze ring. The hook-shaped ring made of thin bronze wire was 2 cm in diameter (fig. 8.-5). Since the find is poorly preserved and simple in shape, we do not consider it appropriate to give any comparative analysis of it.

Beads made of paste and bone. Beads of various shapes made of paste and bone are very small in size, blue and white in color and made in a round shape. Their number is 16. 2 relatively big white paste beads are barrel-shaped and the surface is with an embossed straight line pattern, reminds of a kind of toothed ring shape. Their diameter is 0.5 cm. 1 oblong, barley-shaped bead made of bone-like material. It is 1.4 cm long. Two more diamond-shaped oblong beads are made of blue and white relatively hard material. Patterns consisting of geometric elements are drawn on these beads. Their are 1.2 cm long. The total number of beads found is 21 pieces (fig. 8.-4). Similar beads were found in Kohne Kishlag area of Masalli, in earthen graves dating to the second half of the 1st millennium BC [Ələkbərov, Əzizov, 1994: 85–86].

Anthropology

Anthropologist, PhD in history, associate professor Dmitri Kirichenko investigated the human skull discovered in the Arvana kurgan. As a result of research, it was found that the skull belongs to a 55–60 year-old man, a hyperdolichocranium and belonged to the Europoid anthropological type. In the bone of the skull, belonging to a 170 cm tall man, in the area where it connects to the throat has cut left marks of cut (fig. 9.-1–2). According to the anthropologist, this cutting procedure was performed before or after the death of a person. A similarly cut skull sample was found by Y. Hummel from the “cult kurgan” No. 36 belonging to the Khojaly-Gedabey culture excavated on the bank of Ganjachay [Kirichenko, 2020: 40–41].

After our scientific research was published abroad, this skull was reconstructed under the name of «Yardimli Late Bronze Age» by one of the world's prestigious restoration laboratories called “Ancestral Whispers” and as a result, were got the restorations you see in the pictures (fig. 9.-3). The reconstruction of more than 70 skulls around the world, and the only find discovered from the Arvana kurgan in the territory of Azerbaijan, is also clearly shown in the map of the skulls studied by the laboratory [www.ancestralwhispers.org].

Chronology and conclusion

The Talish-Mughan culture is characterized by big dolmen-like crypts, stone box graves and kurgans in the mountainous part, and cemeteries consisting of kurgans and earthen graves in the plains. The existence of the culture in two local groups is probably due to natural-geographical conditions and other reasons [Muğan arxeoloji..., 2017: 5].

The custom of burial in stone box-type kurgans appears for the first time in the Early Bronze Age. Later in Middle and Late Bronze Ages, and then in the Early Iron Age, they become one of the leading burial types in the entire Caucasus [Ağalarzadə, 2019: 62].

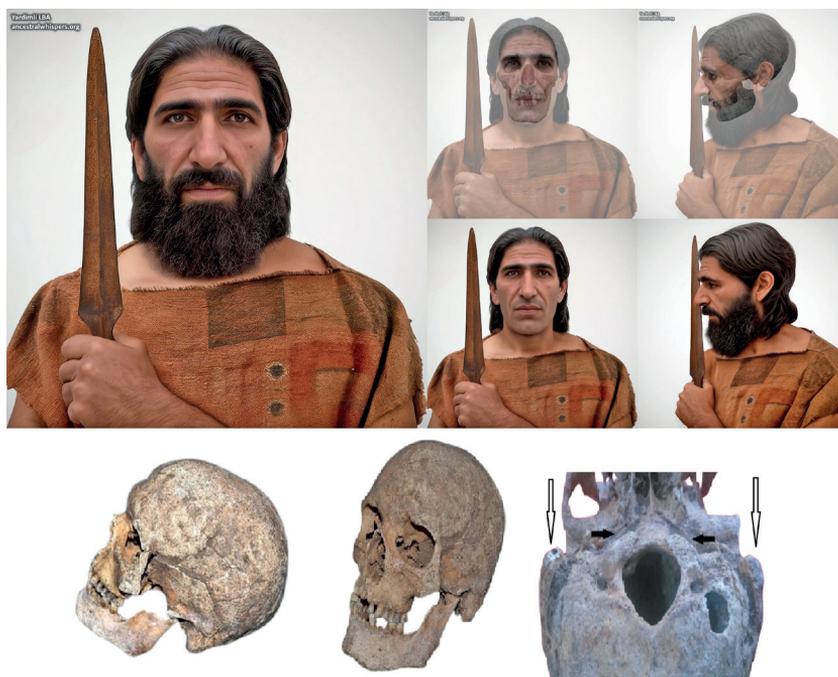


Fig. 9. Human skull

Рис. 9. Человеческий череп

In the highlands of Yardimli, in the meadows, Arvana-type stone box kurgans with cromlechs are widespread. However, their grave goods is very small compared to the kurgans in the foothills [Ağalarzadə, 2018: 8]. Similar stone box kurgans were excavated in Khachbulag in 1974 by H. Kesemenli. One of the kurgans studied there is located in the Choban Abdulla village, in the area between the cyclopean constructions Dashlitepe I and II. Researchers attribute this monument it to the 12th–11th centuries BC [Кесаманлы, Гусейнова, 1983: 27–28].

Archeological materials typical for the Khojaly-Gedabey culture were also found in the grave goods of Arvana kurgan. This characteristic shows that the hereditary connection between the different cultures of the Late Bronze and the Early Iron Ages complement each other chronologically [Müseyibli, Nəcəfov, 2019: 97]. Researcher M. Huseynova, who divides the Khojaly-Gedabey culture into Karabakh, Ganjachay and Gedabey groups, notes that the monuments included in these groups actually have local characteristics [Гусейнова, 1994: 107]. We can see the same features in the examples of Talish and Mughan. In our opinion, the Khojaly-Gedabey type pottery found in Arvana kurgan also shows that the cultures of the synchronous period were spread over a wide area as a result of ethnic interactions.

Aspects related to religious belief played an important role in the construction of Late Bronze-Early Iron Age grave monuments and building materials. The burial of corpses in different positions is closely related to ethnicity, social factors, and burial customs. The structure of the grave and the position of the dead body are considered to be an indicator of the

religious beliefs and views of the buried people, and the equipment placed in the grave is an indicator of the socio-economic and cultural level of the people who lived in this period, as well as a valuable source for studying the religious ideology of the period to which the society belonged [Müseyibli, Nəcəfov, Hüseynov, 2021: 121]. From this viewpoint, the burial custom in the Arvana kurgan is also interesting.

In the First Iron Age, the group of vessels characterized by grey ceramics can be considered a continuation of the traditions of the Bronze Age culture. However, in the mentioned period, new impulses appeared, which manifested themselves both in the shape and patterning of the vessels. Ear-shaped, mushroom-shaped protrusions, stamps and cannelure ornaments are widespread in the ceramics of this period [Baxşəliyev, 2002: 53]. Pattern elements on the pottery of the Arvana kurgan are also a visual proof of the mentioned indicators.

Artistic metalworking also played a special and decisive role in the development of metallurgy and metalworking craftsmanship in the South Caucasus during the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age. In the second half of the second millennium — at the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, a new and very important stage of development in the field of metallurgy and metalworking art began in Azerbaijan [Avşarova, 2007: 95], and we can clearly see that these processes also took place in the south-eastern region, which is rich in metals. As we mentioned above, these facts clearly manifest themselves in the production of weapons.

Thus, the Arvana kurgan, which we are talking about, is important for the study of burial customs in the Early Iron Age, both in terms of its structure and burial goods. According to comparative analysis, this burial monument can be attributed to the second phase of Talish-Mughan culture — that is, to the 11th-10th centuries BC.

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