



UDC 902/904

ABOUT THE SETTLEMENTS OF THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE OF KARABAKH, AGTEPE AND SARYJALYTAYI

Valiyeva Gunel Ramin

doctoral student

Junior research assistant

ANAS Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-8069-8722>

Annotation. The article examines the archaeological sites of the Middle Bronze Age of Karabakh — the settlements of Agtepe and Saryjalytayi. The main attention is paid to their historical and cultural significance, chronological features and typology of the discovered artifacts, including ceramics of various types: black polished, painted and kitchen. The excavations revealed unique data on economic activity, social organization and material culture of the epoch. The analysis of the finds makes it possible to identify settlements in the context of the Uzerliktepe culture and emphasize their importance in studying the chronological sequence of events of the Middle Bronze Age in the South Caucasus. The obtained results contribute to the archaeological understanding of the processes of settlement formation and tribal unions in the region.

Keywords: archeology, Karabakh, middle bronze, ceramics, black polished ceramics, painted ceramics, Uzerliktepe culture, Saryjalytayi, Agtepe.

Introduction.

The monuments of the Middle Bronze Age were first discovered in the middle of the last century. Later, until the 80s, the number of monuments of this period increased significantly. The Middle Bronze Age lasted in Azerbaijan until the middle of the II millennium BC. Studies of some monuments have led to the conclusion that social and property inequality deepened in this period. A characteristic feature of the Middle Bronze Age is that during this period large tribal unions were formed, settlements resembling the first proto-cities of the ancient East arose. During this period, defensive walls began to be built around the settlements. There are also changes in metal production. So, they begin to make products from tin bronze. This is evidenced by finds from the settlement of Uzerlik tepe. This settlement has a special place among all other archaeological sites of the Middle Bronze Age, as it is the only one archaeologically studied at this time[6]. The studied archaeological sites of the Middle Bronze Age in the South Caucasus are rare. These settlements are determined, in essence, by the finds of painted ceramics. Further research indicates that there is an important circumstance that gives rise to a different approach. The above statement was especially vividly confirmed by the strictly documented finds in the lower and middle horizons of the settlement of Uzerlik Tepe, discovered as a result of excavations. There is clearly a certain ratio of painted and black polished ceramics, as well as kitchen ceramics of a mass nature, mainly of rough manufacture. A clear predominance of coarse black-flattened dishes has been recorded, which serves as a strong argument for taking into account the marked ceramics in determining and dating settlements of the period under consideration. Due to the fact that Uzerliktepe plays an important role in determining the chronological sequence of household monuments of the Middle Bronze Age, the culture of this period began to be called Uzerliktepe.



The results of the study.

In the early 80s of the last century, during exploratory excavations, several settlements containing the middle bronze layer were discovered. Among these monuments, Garatepe, Saryjalytayi, Namazaly, Uchoglan - I, II, Agtepe and others occupy a special place[1]. The settlement of Saryjalytayi. This archaeological site is located 3 km south of the settlement of Velibey Tepeleri. The deep ridge surrounding the settlement on the north and south sides provided natural protection on both sides. The settlement is oblong-oval in plan, covers an area of 2 hectares. The height in the north-eastern part reaches 3-3.5 m, in the south-west 2 m. In the center of the hill on which the settlement is located, in the east-west direction, attention is drawn to the depression dividing the monument into two parts. The extracted materials belong to the Early, partly Middle Bronze and the early period of the Late Bronze Age. Early Bronze pottery consists of fragments of bowls, deep plates and vessels with an elongated neck. The found fragments of dishes are red, chestnut, yellowish-pink, black and gray. One group of ceramics is pink, chestnut-pink or gray inside, their surface is black-flattened. Among all the fragments found, the majority are made of high-quality clay. Finely crushed stones and sand were added to the clay of some products. One of the groups of ceramics is made with a characteristic ribbon-hemispherical handle. The edges of the handle are made with finely smoothed edges. Stone products are represented by stone blocks, plates made of obsidian and flint. The materials collected from the surface of the Early Bronze Age reflect various periods of this culture. The multi-layered settlement of Agtepe is located on a natural hill 3 km east of the village of Chemenli in the Agdam district, 800 meters south of the settlement of Saryjalytayi.

On the south, the height of the hill is greatly reduced, reaching 4-5 meters. Just like the settlement of Saryjalytayi, Agtepe is divided into two sides due to the deepening in the south-westerly direction. The mentioned topographic feature can be studied in detail only through stationary excavations. In the early 80s of the last century, exploratory excavations were carried out here. During the research, artifacts dating back to the Early and Middle Bronze Age were discovered. Ceramics of the Early Bronze Age reflect different stages of the Kura-Araz culture. Ceramics decorated with a comb-like object and covered with red and chestnut angob were discovered here. Fragments of gray-polished, light chestnut, pink thin-walled dishes were also sometimes found. The inhabitants of Ag-tepe, as well as the population of Saryjalytaya, were engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding. Among the finds, ceramics of the Middle Bronze Age are particularly distinguished by their diversity and abundance. The collected material includes coarse kitchen ceramics, elegant black-glazed dishes, samples of painted dishes. Ceramics from all three groups of ceramic samples of the Uzerliktepe were discovered in this settlement. 3 Black polished vessels are distinguished by the purity of clay, high quality of preparation, careful molding and polishing of the surface of products, and a variety of patterns. Arched, diamond-shaped, vertical compositions, zigzag, etc., formed by a combination of numerous patterns. The painted bowl pattern is typical of a thick-walled bowl. Three parallel horizontal lines drawn in black on a red background are characteristic of materials from the Middle Bronze Age. In terms of the settlement, it is oblong-oval in shape.



Discussion and analysis of results.

An analysis of the material samples found in the settlements of the Middle Bronze Age shows that ceramic vessels of various types and characteristics occupy a leading place among the materials. They consist of household and kitchen utensils, tableware and painted dishes. A potter's wheel was used in the manufacture of a number of products. During this period, new methods (embossing, drawing, etc.) began to be used in the decoration of ceramics. Patterns on ceramics reached a high level. The main place among the patterns is occupied by various shapes (triangles and quadrilaterals, parallel lines) and other patterns (compositions consisting of circular zigzags, arched lines or Christmas tree patterns) made before the ceramics dried[4]. Interestingly, in the Middle Bronze Age, the lost tradition of the Eneolithic period – the production of painted vessels - is being restored. The ceramics of the Middle Bronze Age of the Gargarchai and Tartarchai basins include jugs, bowls, deep bowls, etc. Similar vessels, belonging mainly to the Uzerliktepe type, were found in neighboring Garakopetepe and Guneshetepe, as well as in the monuments of Nakhchivan.5 Tools were made mainly of stone – river stone, tuff, obsidian, flint, etc. Granular stone, gravel, handle, sickle teeth, pumice stone, etc. were used in various areas of the household. One of the interesting innovations related to agriculture is the use of stone tools.

The pear-shaped and spherical stone maces found in stone products were not only a symbol of power, but were also used as a type of weapon. Among the settlements in the studied area, stone maces were found only in Uzerliktep. Stone maces of this type were also found in the neighboring monuments of Kara-kepektepe, I and II Kultepe. Spherical maces are characteristic of the Middle Bronze Age. Obsidian arrowheads found in Uzerliktepe are found in the II Culture of Nakhchivan, Gyzyburun and other monuments[2]. Other stone products (pebbles, grater, mortar) found in the studied area, as well as bone awls and similar finds are widely found in other monuments of Azerbaijan. In the settlements of this period of the studied territory, bronze products were found only in the monument of Uzerliktepe. These are mainly bronze earrings, a fragment of a bracelet and a bronze dagger with a flat blade. The bronze type of dagger was found in Gyzylvang, Aznabyurd, etc. Thus, the archaeological materials collected in the settlements of the Middle Bronze Age region provide a good opportunity to obtain information about the development of various sectors of the economy, household and even crafts. Among the materials obtained from the settlements of the Middle Bronze Age, Uzerliktepe is of particular importance. The materials discovered by us and known from other monuments do not form a complete picture, but they all find analogies in the Uzerliktep. In such a situation, we took the Uzerlictepe as the standard for the analysis of medium bronze materials. As can be seen from the above analysis, ceramic products in the settlement are numerous and of mass quality. The settlement of Uzerliktepe is of particular importance in this regard[1]. The classification of the Uzerliktepin ceramics, the division into groups by pattern and function are widely explained in the archaeological literature.

Closing and conclusions. The study of the archaeological sites of the Middle Bronze Age of Karabakh, such as the settlements of Agtepe and Saryjalytayi, allows a deeper understanding of the processes of social, economic and cultural development of the region in the middle of the II millennium BC. The analysis of the found artifacts,



including black polished, painted and kitchen ceramics, revealed significant changes in material culture and social structures. It was found that during this period there was a development of technologies for the manufacture of ceramic products, as well as an increase in property and social inequality, which indicates a complication of social organization. The settlements of Karabakh, located in strategically protected areas, are characterized by the presence of defensive structures, indicating the increasing role of collective protection. Significant achievements are also noted in the manufacturing sector, including the use of tin bronze, which underlines the high level of development of metallurgy. Based on the excavations and analysis of the material, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Cultural identity: The settlements of Agtepe and Saryjalytayi represent unique monuments of the Uzerliktepe culture, defining the chronological framework and features of the material culture of the Middle Bronze Age in the South Caucasus.

Ceramics as an indicator of the epoch: The predominance of black polished and painted ceramics confirms the presence of highly developed production technology and artistic traditions. Various types of ceramics make it possible to explore in detail the cultural and economic aspects of settlement life.

Economic activity: The inhabitants of the settlements were engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding, which is confirmed by the finds of tools and other household artifacts.

Social organization: The identified artifacts indicate an increase in social stratification, which is probably due to the complication of social relations and the formation of tribal unions.

Thus, the settlements of Agtepe and Saryjalytayi play a key role in the reconstruction of the historical and cultural processes of the Middle Bronze Age of Karabakh, their study opens up new prospects in the study of the archaeology of the South Caucasus.

List of used literature

1. Сәғәров, Н., 2020. *Qədim Qarabağ*. Bakı: Elm. ISBN 978-9952-523-07-2.
2. Алиев, В., 1991. *Культура Азербайджана эпохи средней бронзы*. Баку: ЭЛМ.
3. Иессен, А.А. & Кушнарева, К.Х., 1965. Новые данные о поселении Узерлик-тепе. *Материалы и исследования по археологии СССР*, № 125, Труды Азербайджанской археологической экспедиции. Москва-Ленинград.
4. Кушнарева, К.Х., 1957. Поселение эпохи бронзы на холме Узерлик-тепе около Агдама. *Материалы и исследования по археологии СССР*, № 67.
5. Кушнарева, К.Х., К проблеме выделения археологических культур периода средней бронзы на Южном Кавказе. *Наука*, № 176.
6. Valiyeva, G.R., Proceedings of III International Scientific and Practical Conference, Berlin, Germany, ISBN 978-3-954753-05-5, pp. 367. Brief information about the study of monuments of the Middle Bronze age of Karabakh.

References

1. Cafarov, H. (2020) *Ancient Karabakh*. Bakı: Elm. ISBN 978-9952-523-07-2.



2. Aliyev, V. (1991) *Kultura Azerbaidzhana epokhi srednei bronzy*. Baku: Elm.
3. Iessen, A.A. and Kushnareva, K.H. (1965) 'Novye dannye o poselenii Uzerlik-tepe', *Materialy i issledovaniya po arkheologii SSSR*, No. 125. Trudy Azerbaidzhanskoi arkheologicheskoi ekspeditsii. Moscow-Leningrad.
4. Kushnareva, K.H. (1957) 'Poselenie epokhi bronzy na kholme Uzerlik-tepe okolo Agdama', *Materialy i issledovaniya po arkheologii SSSR*, No. 67.
5. Kushnareva, K.H. (n.d.) 'K probleme vydeleniya arkheologicheskikh kultur perioda srednei bronzy na Yuzhnom Kavkaze', *Nauka*, No. 176.
6. Valiyeva, G.R. (n.d.) 'Brief information about the study of monuments of the Middle Bronze age of Karabakh', in *Proceedings of III International Scientific and Practical Conference*. Berlin, Germany: [s.n.], pp. 367. ISBN 978-3-954753-05-5.