Study of historical demographic issues in pre-Islamic funeral ceremonies of Turkic peoples in Azerbaijani historiography

Abstract

The exact date of the funeral ceremonies in Azerbaijan is still unknown in prehistoric times. For a long time it was believed that burial in pitcher tombs in Azerbaijan took place in BC II century and lasted until the III century AD. The ancient funeral rites that existed in Azerbaijan associated with the graves of jugs were closely associated with the cult of the sun and water. The purpose of the article is to study the demographic views of our ancient ancestors on life and death in the pre-Islamic burial customs of Azerbaijan and other Turkic-speaking peoples. Our ancestors, seeing in death the continuation of life in another space and time, believed its eternity. So, thinking about the infinity of the world around us, our ancestors deeply believed that the growth of generations is also associated with the laws of the universe and space. Thus, the pre-Islamic burial customs of our ancestors, who believe in the infinity of the Universe, contribute to the science of historical demography, proving that the views of the Azerbaijani and Turkic-speaking peoples associated with population growth have ancient roots. As a source, the article uses scientific works of Azerbaijani, Turkish and Russian researchers. When writing the article, the method of comparative analysis was used.

Keywords: historical demography, funeral ceremony, pitcher graves, population growth

Azerbaycan tarihçiliğinde Türk halklarının İslam öncesi cenaze törenlerinde tarihsel ve demografik konuların incelenmesi

Öz

Azerbaycan'da tarih öncesi dönemlerde cenaze törenlerinin kesin tarihi hala bilinmemektedir. Uzun bir süre Azerbaycan'da testilere gömülmenin MÖ 2. yüzyılda gerçekleştiğine ve MS 3. yüzyıla kadar sürdüğüne inanılıyordu. Azerbaycan'da testi mezarlarla bağlı olan eski cenaze törenleri, güneş ve su kültüyle yakından ilişkiliydi. Makalenin amacı, eski atalarımızın Azerbaycan ve diğer Türkçe konuşan halkların İslam öncesi cenaze törenlerinde yaşam ve ölüm hakkındaki demografik görüşlerini incelemektir. Hayatın başka bir uzay ve zamanda devam ettiğini ölümde gören atalarımız, sonsuzluğuna inandılar. Bu yüzden, çevremizdeki dünyanın sonsuzluğunu düşünen atalarımız, kuşakların büyümesinin aynı zamanda evren ve uzay yasalarıyla da ilişkili olduğuna derinden inanıyorlardı. Böylece, Evrenin sonsuzluğuna inanan atalarımızın İslam öncesi cenaze törenleri, tarihsel demografi bilimine katkı sağlayarak, Azerbaycanlı ve Türkçe konuşan halkların nüfus artışıyla ilgili görüşlerinin eski köklere sahip olduğunu kanıtlamaktadır. Makalede kaynak olarak Azeri, Türk ve Rus araştırmacılarının bilimsel çalışmaları kullanılmaktadır. Makaleyi yazarken karşılaştırmalı analiz yöntemi kullanıldı.

Anahtar kavramlar: tarihi demografi, cenaze töreni, küp mezarlar, nüfus artışı

Изучение историко-демографических вопросов в доисламских погребальных обрядах тюркских народов в азербайджанской историографии

Резюме

В доисторические времена точная дата похоронных обрядов в Азербайджане до сих пор неизвестна. Долгое время считалось, что захоронение в кувшинах в Азербайджане происходило во II веке до нашей эры и длилось до III века нашей эры. Существовавшие в Азербайджане древние погребальные обряды, связанные с могилами кувшинов, были тесно связаны с культом солнца и воды. Целью статьи является изучение демографических взглядов наших древних предков на жизнь и смерть в доисламских погребальных обычаях Азербайджана и других тюркоязычных народов. Наши предки увидев в смерти продолжение жизни в другом пространстве и времени верили ее вечность. Итак, размышляя о бесконечности окружающего нас мира, наши предки глубоко верили, что рост поколений также связан с законами Вселенной и пространства. Таким образом, доисламские погребальные обычаи наших предков, верящих в бесконечность Вселенной, вносят свой вклад в науку исторической демографии, доказывая, что взгляды азербайджанских и тюркоязычных народов связанные с ростом населении имеют древние корни. В качестве источника в статье использованы научные труды азербайджанских, турецких и российских исследователей. При написании статьи использовался метод сравнительного анализа.

Ключевые слова: историческая демография, погребальная церемония, кувшинные могилы, рост населения

Introduction

In order to insure itself and humanity against any possible danger, humanity has always sought to learn the secrets of nature in its bosom and seek the cause of events that attract attention. The pre-Islamic burial rites of Azerbaijanis are one of the main and reliable sources reflecting the system of ancient beliefs and the philosophy of life of our people associated with the growth and death of a person.

The beliefs of our great ancestors in the most ancient periods of human history, related to various domestic issues, natural phenomena, including flora and fauna, naturally arose as a result of the regular exchange of information with the environment.

In this sense, the rich belief system of the Azerbaijani people, one of the oldest nations in the history, for thousands of years is an invaluable, unbiased, primary source for studying the national and spiritual values of our people, including traditions, ceremonies and lifestyles.

Discovered during archeological excavations The diversity of grave monuments of the first millennium BC (soil buried in an elongated or folded state, raw bricks, earthenware, wooden boxes, catacombs, etc.), as well as pre-Islamic burial customs and ceremonies of the Azerbaijani

people as the spiritual world, life and death of our people. It is important to study the way of thinking about important demographic processes and their attitude to those events.

It should be noted that while none of the ancient tombs of Caucasian Albania had a tombstone, all of the tombs had an inverter of belief in the afterlife. Strabo's account is interesting: "In old age, Albanians have a great deal of respect not only for their parents but also for strangers. It is unworthy to care for or remember the deceased. Together with the deceased, they bury all his property and, therefore, are deprived of their father's property and live in poverty. That's all I know about Albanians".[1]

However, a number of researchers, including I. Babayev, do not agree with Strabo's information about the funeral of Azerbaijanis: "In fact, the Albanians were quite wealthy. However, the presence of the poor among them is not an exception. Strabo himself repeatedly noted that the Albanians had well-cultivated fertile lands, rich flora and fauna. The Albanians simply put the corpse and other necessities in the grave, and, of course, the rest of the property was inherited.[2]

It is impossible to disagree with I.Babayev's opinion. Located in a very important geopolitical and geostrategic, as well as favorable geographical area, our country has a variety of climatic zones, rich underground and surface resources, existing trade relations with the developed countries of the ancient East, expanding from the Bronze Age to the diversity of religious beliefs. could not show. It is no coincidence that the famous archaeologist A. Alakbarov emphasized the extreme closeness of the jug tombs of Azerbaijan with the jugs of Babylon and Palestine.[3]

Main section

The richness of the material culture samples discovered by archeological excavations proves that Strabo's information about the funeral was justified. Thus, a large number of ornaments, food and weapons are found in some graves. In such tombs, sometimes only the number of pottery vessels exceeds 40. It is possible that the abundance of jugs in earth, stone boxes and jug tombs is directly related to the water beliefs of our great ancestors. After all, the delivery of water from rivers and springs to the settlement was carried out mainly in pottery jars. On the other hand, the placement of two or three, sometimes more blue balls next to these cubes is also interesting from this point of view. In some tombs, blue glass balls look very much like a drop of water. It is possible that people once placed pots full of water in graves. This was to meet the needs of the buried in the Hereafter and to protect them from the evil forces of the underworld.

Well-known Azerbaijani archaeologist Alasgar Alakbarov delivered a speech at the Second Iranian Congress in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) in September 1935 entitled "Pitcher graves in the Azerbaijan SSR" specifically emphasized: many Turkic-speaking peoples considered water to be

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[1]Strabo, *Qeoqrafiya*, Nauka, Moskva 1964, p.503.

[2]Ilyas Babayev, *Qoroda Kavkazskoy Albanii (v IV v do n.e – III v n.e.)*, Elm, Baku 1990, p.103.

[3]Alesker Alekberov, *Issledovaniya po arxeoloqii i etnoqrafii Azerbaydjana*, AMEA, Baku 1960, p.33.

the first source, including a source of strength and prosperity. That is why in ancient Turkish mythology, along with God, there was a strong belief in the existence of water in the universe.[4]

In ancient Turkic beliefs, there was an image of the patronizing Bodi, who supplied water to crops and protected them from drought and other dangers.[5] When Bodi, a perfect sage, was asked about the parentage of his parents, he replied, "The parents were born of water". So, water is the ancestor of human parents. In the Turkic-speaking peoples, unborn women came to rivers or lonely trees with a desire to have children and made sacrifices to them.

For example, Mullah Gazikhoja reports that Kyrgyz and Kazakh women who did not give birth spent the night near trees growing alone in the desert or near water sources (rivers, lakes - A.M.) and sacrificed to them.[6] Here, too, the belief that rivers and water should be treated as a sacred being, a force, or a guardian spirit, which begets human beings and guides the growth of the human race, is also reflected.

In Azerbaijani mythological texts, water is also treated as a sacred being that gives people immortality or exceptional abilities. According to the ancient beliefs of Azerbaijanis, the earth, mountains, sky and water have a protector, owner and protective spirit: "You should greet them. When you leave, say thank you. However, above all these patrons is the patron saint of water.When you go to the water in the morning, you should greet him. Never spit or throw water into the water. Otherwise, you will offend your patron, and you will win".[7]

Of course, Alakbarov, who knew the history of our people and the system of ancient beliefs perfectly, in his report based on the beliefs of Turkic-speaking peoples, including ancient Azerbaijanis, about water, associated the burial rites performed in pit graves with water belief: "In Azerbaijan, the cult of water is reflected in the tradition of building cemeteries along streams, rivers and canals".[8]

In the mythical thinking of our people, water is also considered a sacred being that can justify the world of the hereafter and death, and justify it as a natural consequence of human life. One of the ancient mythological texts of our people tells about the alleged discovery of Alexander in Shirvan, who was looking for the water of life. As he fills his golden cup with water from the spring, a bird flutters its wings and pours water on the ground. Alexander is angry. While trying to shoot a bird with a bow and arrow, he hears a voice from the unseen:

- Alexander, don't hit that bird, it's your savior. I sent him because I felt sorry for you.

It came from a hard rock. Alexander walked toward him. He began to listen intently:

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[4]Murat Uraz, *Türk mitolojisi*, Düşünen Addam Yayınları, İstanbul 1994, p.180.

[5]*Drevnetyurkskiy slovar*, Nauka, Leningrad 1969, p.107.

[6]Abdülkadir İnan, *Tarihte ve bugün şamanizm*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1986, p. 168.

[7]*Azərbaycan mifoloji mətnləri*, Elm, Baku 1988, pp.51-52.

[8]Alesker Alekberov, *Issledovaniya po arxeoloqii i etnoqrafii Azerbaydjana*, AMEA, Baku 1960, p.33.

Alexander, once I also drank this water of life and gained immortality. From that moment my name became “Living grandfather”. (Diri baba).

I lived a very long life until the end of the world. Gone are the days. All my close ones, relatives have died. I was left alone. There was a time when I lived as a person. My mind was working, my hands were sewing. I thought life was good. Now, my eyes do not see, my brain does not think, and my hands do not cling to someone's hand. Ask yourself, "Who needs such life?" Alexander did not drink the water and returned blindly.[9]

In this mythological text, water describes death as an important natural demographic process of the continuous change of human generations. A bird that waters the earth with the water of life, a mythical image of the future life. It should be noted that the other world is sometimes revived in the ideas of the Azerbaijani as a sunny country.[10] [11] According to these ideas, there were birds that carried the soul of a dead person to the land of the Sun. In the Sumerian epics Gilgamish and Enkidu, a bird named Aizud is described: “Aizud is a symbol of death, against which eternal life acts - the tree of life”.[12]

Researcher R. Aliyev rightly identifies the Aizud bird with Zumrud or the Simurg bird in Azerbaijani tales: according to the author, it was the Aizud bird that saved Malikmammad from the dark world, which is referred to as the Anka bird in Arab sources, Simurg in Persian sources and Zumrudi Anka in Turkish sources.[13] The author's conclusion is also interesting: “Based on such tales, we can say that a deeper understanding of the country of the Sun in the mind occurs long before understanding the other world”.

The fact that the zoomorphic vessels found in the pitcher graves are mainly in the form of birds is also associated with the belonging of the same underground kingdom to Aizud: “This type of vessels is also very common in the Nuidi monument. The tail of these vessels with bird figures ... is made somewhat vertically in the form of a tumor or two protrusions. Their clay contains white grains of sand. The dish is yellowish. The mouths of these vessels are closed with small round clay lids.[14]

As we have already noted, the Aizud bird was closely associated with the Sun, which watched the underworld. According to the astral views of the Sumerians, Akkadians and Babylonians, as in the Egyptian beliefs, every evening the sun god Shamash descends into the

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[9]*Azərbaycan mifoloji mətnləri*, Elm, Baku 1988, p.48.

[10]Aydin Mammadov, *Azərbaycan xalqının Günəş kultuna dair inancları*, Adiloğlu, Baku 2017, p. 272.

[11]Aydin Mammadov, *Azərbaycan xalqının qədim inanc, adət və mərasimlərimdə demoqrafik baxışlar*, Adiloğlu, Baku 2018, p.347.

[12]Veronika Afanasyeva, *Qilqames i Enkidu*, Nauka, Moskva 1979, p.22.

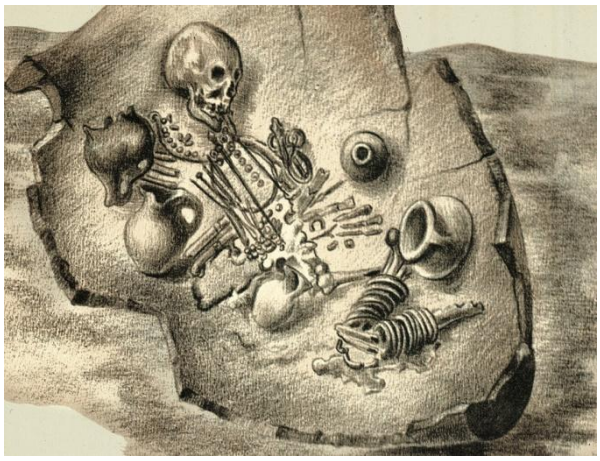
[13]Ramil Aliyev, *Azərbaycan nağıllarında mifik görüşlər*, Elm, Bakı 1992, p.66.

[14]Fazil Osmanov, *Ağsu ərazisində arxeoloji tədqiqatlar*, Adiloğlu, Bakı 2006, p.20.

underworld to give light and water to the dead in the future life. During the underground journey, the Sun judges the deeds of dead people - in the enlightened world.[15]

Traces of burnt hearths, which are often found on pre-Islamic gravestones, are associated with the cult of the hearth of our people, which is the sign of the Sun on earth. Fire played a huge role in the physical development of a person, in the transition to a sedentary lifestyle. Our ancient ancestors worshiped fire as a sign of the Sun on earth and considered fire to be the keeper of population growth, the protector of life.[16] It should be noted that in the Azerbaijani people's idea of the Sun, the other world is sometimes reborn as a sunny country. Therefore, the ancients rubbed the bodies of the people they buried with ocher, the color of the sun, believing that they would help them in their future life: If something was missing in this world, it was the Sun and sunlight. They took various measures to illuminate the dark world of the hereafter, lit fires in tombs, and placed symbolic images of the Sun in stone, metal, bone and wood.[17]





Pitcher graves which found in Azerbaijan as a result of archaeological excavations

Acquaintance with the exhibit reflecting the custom of burial in jugs in showcase No. 27 of the Museum of the History of Azerbaijan, allows students to get acquainted with the religious beliefs of our great ancestors in the afterlife. So, in the jug displayed in the showcase, small objects belonging to the deceased were inserted, and large clay pots were placed around it, and the head of the deceased was placed in the direction of the mouth of the vessel. The ritual of lighting a fire at the mouth of the jug to cleanse it of evil forces, as well as the swastika symbolizing the sun on the Shakhtakhti (Nakhchivan) jug, displayed in showcase No. 11, once again proves that our great ancestors worshiped the Sun and fire.

“Album of pitcher graves of Mingachevir” on the monuments of pitcher graves of Azerbaijani historiography Baku: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan SSR, 1960, 110 pages; “Ancient Mingachevir” (S. Gaziev; edited by Y. Mamedov. Baku: Ushakganjnashr, 1952. - 54 p.), "Two jugs and two tombs of the catacombs // Material culture of Azerbaijan" (1953), Mingachevir archaeological excavations: The famous

[15]Evelin Klengel-Brandt., *Puteşestviye v drevniy Vavilon*, Nauka, Moskva 1979, pp.162-164.

[16]Nasir Rzayev, *Əsrlərin səsi*, Azərnəşr, Bakı 1974, p.27.

[17]N. Rzayev, *Ibid*, pp.27-28

archaeologist S. Gaziev, who enriched him with research works such as “Album of pitcher tombs” (1960), also came to the conclusion that burning fire in pre-Islamic tombstones was aimed at protecting the tomb from evil forces.[18]

Already in the III-II millennia BC, that is, in the Middle Bronze Age, the cult of the Sun was very common in Azerbaijan. During this period, temples and cromlechs, built in connection with the cult of the Sun, had the geometric shape of either a single circle or concentric circles. For this reason, the bracelets made by our ancestors in the form of these temples included the protective and reproductive functions of the Sun. In other words, bracelets made of bronze by our compatriots were used at that time not as decorative accessories, but as a means of protection from accidents, evil spirits and evil spirits, and during the funeral they were placed next to deceased compatriots. Samples of material culture obtained during excavations in Sarkartapa in the Khachmaz region in 1982-1986 are especially important for studying the demographic representations of people who lived in the early Bronze Age: "According to researchers, images on ceramic products are patterns with rich motives; including drawings of the Moon, the Sun, and horses reflected the ideological views of ancient people. It is also noteworthy that on the wall of the Sarkartapa sanctuary there is an image symbolizing the Sun, expressed as a round funnel. Kultapa II ".[19]Horseshoe-shaped foci were found around rectangular foci in Kultapa II It should be noted that horseshoe-shaped foci resemble a seated human figure. It is no coincidence that A.K.Alekperov compared the construction of the hearth found in Shortepe with the foot of a human statue. This idea was also confirmed by G.I.Ione. Probably, horseshoe-shaped hearths like structures resembling schematic human figures were personified by the patron saint of the hearth.[20]

In the most ancient beliefs of our ancestors, the creation of fire from a stone, which is consecrated as a sign of the Sun on earth, or the "birth" of fire and a hearth from stone, of course, had to instill in the consciousness of our ancestors respect for this natural element.

Our great ancestors have always considered the Sun and its symbol, fire, a protector that protects them from evil events and evil spirits: “According to the ancient beliefs of Azerbaijanis, fire is one of the purest and most sacred elements of nature. It is no coincidence that many places of worship were called sanctuaries.[21]

The custom of pitcher graves in Azerbaijan began in the 6th century and lasted until the 7th century AD. It is interesting that in all the studied genotaph (empty - A. M.) tombs, as a rule, a flat piece of stone was placed on the edge of the jug, which was undoubtedly associated with the traditional stone beliefs of the population. R. Goyushov rightly wrote: “The pitcher tombs were the product of such a religious faith that man was created from the soil. Since he was born for the temporary world from the womb. Therefore, he must be obsessed with the jug, just as he

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[18]Saleh Qaziyev, *Mingəçevir küp qəbirləri albomu*, AMEA, Bakı 1960, p.9.

[19]Vali Bakhsaliyev, *Azərbaycan arxeologiyası*, Elm, Bakı 2007, p.95.

[20]V. Bakhsaliyev, *Ibid*, p.69.

[21]Havil Havilov, *Azərbaycan etnoqrafiyası*, Elm, Bakı 1991, p.238.

slept in the womb for the temporary world. Thus, the jug was created as a symbol of the mother's womb.[22]

Thus, stone, earth and ceramics are described in the most archaic religious beliefs of the Turkic-speaking peoples as sacred beings that directly reflect important demographic processes such as fertility, life expectancy, reproduction and population growth, as well as mortality in the belief system. Interesting ideas about tombstones are found in the scientific works of Y. Safarov, F. Osmanov, Y. Khalilov, I. Babaev, K. Aliev and other scientists. In Y. Safarov's book "Ancient Azerbaijan: What We Know" we read: "The Albanians also had a widespread culture of pitcher graves. They buried the dead alone".[23]

Along with the pitcher tombs in Azerbaijan, there are also tombs made of stone boxes: "As for the tombstones, they are the oldest type of tombs in Azerbaijan. On the one hand, they were built for the strength of the tomb, but on the other hand, they were created as a result of the ancient beliefs of our ancestors on the protective powers of the stone".[24]

From the examples given, it is clear that stones affect the death of people for one reason or another. In fact, death, one of the most important demographic processes, is a dialectical union with population growth.

Thus, the discovery of material and cultural samples of pre-Islamic tombs of the Azerbaijani people, reflecting the ancient beliefs, customs and rituals associated with family, children, birth and population growth, is an indisputable proof of the bright and rich demographic views of our ancestors.

Conclusion

Pre-Islamic funeral rites closely related to ancient beliefs have deep roots in our ancient history of life and existence. Therefore, it is impossible to study these rites from one article. Pre-Islamic funeral rites vividly demonstrate the idea of our ancestors about life and death. In these rituals, there are also the views of our ancestors about the wheels of fate. At the top of this wheel is the point of life, and the lower, opposite point, is death. Since this wheel rotates forever, Life and death often change places. Thus, a person's life acquires eternity. And death giving place to life is its continuation. In pre-Islamic funeral rites, the jug in its shape personified the womb of the mother and a person who was born life and after death could continue his eternal journey in the other world only in the womb of his mother. Therefore, after death, the person again placed himself in an artificial womb, that is, in a jug. That is how he came into this world and left. That's why pre-Islamic funeral rites represented the victory of life over death.

[22]Rashid Goyushov, *Qarabağın keçmişinə səyahət,* Azərnəşr, Bakı 1993, p.29.

[23]Yusif Safarov, *Qədim Azərbaycan: Nə bilirik?,* Azərnəşr, Bakı 1989, p.119.

[24]Rashid Goyushov, *Qarabağın keçmişinə səyahət,* Azərnəşr, Bakı 1993, p.29.

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