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Presentation date: July, 2020  
Date of acceptance: October, 2020  
Publication date: November, 2020

## TRACES

OF THE "SUN" BELIEF IN THE TOMBS OF THE BRONZE AGE OF AZERBAIJAN

**RASTROS DE LA CREENCIA DEL "SOL" EN LAS TUMBAS DE LA EDAD DE BRONCE DE AZERBAIYÁN**

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### Suggested citation (APA, seventh edition)

Avsharova, I. (2020). Traces of the "Sun" belief in the tombs of the Bronze Age of Azerbaijan. *Revista Universidad y Sociedad*, 12(6), 278-281.

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to analyze present evidence of Azerbaijani ancient tribes regarding their beliefs in ancestors and the cult of the Sun. The results of archaeological excavations in the territory of Azerbaijan were observed, where different types of burial monuments were distinguished in burial rites. Ordered cemeteries reflect some of the rituals and traditions of the bearers of the culture of these tribes, and represent one of the main sources of its knowledge. Thus, in spite of some previous research the study of the role of cults in burial rites until now was not universally enlightened. In connection with the said, it is necessary to note that the study of this topic is relevant.

**Keywords:** Eneolithic, bronze, cult of the dead, cromlechs, burial mounds, beams, suns, beliefs.

### RESUMEN

El propósito de este artículo es analizar la evidencia actual de las antiguas tribus azerbaiyanas con respecto a sus creencias en los antepasados y el culto al sol. Se observaron los resultados de las excavaciones arqueológicas en el territorio de Azerbaiyán, donde se distinguieron diferentes tipos de monumentos funerarios en los ritos funerarios. Los cementerios ordenados reflejan algunos de los rituales y tradiciones de los portadores de la cultura de estas tribus, y representan una de las principales fuentes de su conocimiento. Por lo tanto, a pesar de algunas investigaciones previas, el estudio del papel de los cultos en los ritos funerarios hasta ahora no fue universalmente ilustrado. En relación con lo dicho, es necesario señalar que el estudio de este tema es relevante.

**Palabras clave:** Eneolítico, bronce, culto a los muertos, cromlechs, montículos funerarios, vigas, soles, creencias.

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout human history, tribes that have lived at different times have had certain worldviews and beliefs about the Hereafter. The cult of the dead was widespread in the religious worldviews of the tribes that inhabited the territories of many states in the ancient East (including Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iran, China, the Caucasus, etc.).

This cult is also observed in the ancient tombs of Azerbaijan. Archaeological excavations have revealed different types of graves with different burial customs. These graves are the only sources that preserve the burial customs of the ancient Azerbaijani tribes. The main purpose of this article is to identify the belief in the sun in burial customs, touching on the religious and mythological worldviews of the Eneolithic and Bronze Age tribes. Although the subject has been studied by various authors and beliefs in burial customs have long been the subject of research, new grave monuments and artifacts discovered make this problem urgent.

One of the most widespread cults in the Bronze Age tombs of Azerbaijan is the cult of the dead. Archaeological excavations have revealed animistic views among the Eneolithic and Bronze Age tribes, one of the oldest of the primitive religious ideas.

According to animistic views, the human and animal spirits were alive and had supernatural powers, and the spirit of a troubled corpse could endanger loved ones, especially children. For this reason, primitive people, who were still helpless in the face of nature, performed various rituals at funerals, placed various dishes and utensils full of food in the tomb, and held lavish funerals to please the souls of those who had died.

Thus, the ancient Azerbaijani tribes, which connected and imagined the various forces of the universe and nature, as well as their religious ideas and beliefs with the cosmos, performed various funeral rites and ceremonies, as if creating a connection between the forces of nature and the dead.

Archaeological excavations have revealed rich burials in many tombs. Many material samples found in the graves are invaluable sources to study the spiritual, cultural, social, economic and religious life of these tribes. The data obtained proves once again that the farming and cattle-breeding tribes of Azerbaijan believed in the hereafter. The spirit of the man who died and left this life continues living, even after his death, in the ideas about the worldview of the people.

Traces of various religious ideas are also found in the tombs of Ganjachay region. Two types of graves (mounds and stone box graves) are more typical for Ganjachay region. Burial mounds are also found in the plain part of the Shamkir river valley west of the Ganjachay region. Going south, in the mountainous part of the region, the mounds are replaced by stone tombs. The height of mounds usually reaches 2.5 meters and in appearance, the mounds are flat-round, oval and conical. They were built mainly of sand, stone and mixtures of both but it is interesting how the upper surface of some mounds is paved with stone in a circle. Here the dead were buried in square tomb chambers. Grave chambers were filled with earth and river stones after the dead were buried, and the mouth was covered with slabs or wooden planks. Sometimes the inside of the graves was divided into several floors with stones and the dead were buried on each floor (Narimanov, 1958). Among this type of tombstones, burial customs related to the belief in the sun have also been found.

## DEVELOPMENT

Three forms of burial ceremonies in the beam system were found in the mounds in the Goy-Gol region: 1) multi-tomb mounds arranged in the beam system around two points on the north-south diameter of the mound; 2) multi-tomb mounds arranged in a beam system around a point on the east-west diameter of the mounds; 3) in the planning of the last type of mound, the graves were again placed in the beam system, as in other earthen mounds. In type 1 mounds, members of two families were buried under a common ground cover. This shows that both families lived under the same roof.

This fact, which is extremely important, gives grounds to say that ancient tombs were a double family at a certain stage of development. In addition to this fact, the multi-tomb mounds in the beam system around the two points allow it to be attributed to the period of tribal formation. In type 2 earth mounds, members of a family were buried in a beam system around a point.

At the time of the creation of such stone mounds, the double family was probably still in its infancy. The multi-graved earth mounds arranged around one point clearly show that the family has been strengthened over time and that these mounds were the property of the families at the time they were built. Single-tomb earthen mounds generally reflect the evolution of white inlaid clay pottery culture, and they belong to a newer stage of development of the Late Bronze Age (Hummel, 1940). Interestingly, the ruins of two ancient settlements were discovered near the mound.

Several small buildings were surveyed in the first settlement. The houses were semi-drilled and neatly built of river stone and mud. These buildings were designed for one family. They were surrounded by stone fences. Larger buildings are found in "long houses". These buildings were divided into small rooms with stone partitions. Excavations in the rooms revealed that many people lived there. The pottery found there, as well as bronze, bone, and stone objects, indicate that people living in tribal homes were buried in tribal mounds, that is, in large beams with a beam system with more than one number of graves. Such structures belong to the period of tribal structure.

In the first room of the building we have described, the signs of the house cult are clearly visible. In addition to a number of cult symbols, a hearth was recorded in that room. Burnt human bones were found in the furnace. There is no doubt that there is a connection between this room and the mound No. 36 under study. It differs from the mounds studied so far in that, like other mounds, it was located not in the highest point of the relief, but in the middle, and mainly performed religious rites - praying to the god, sacrificing, burning the dead, etc. was formed as a result of such work (Hummel, 1940). It was in connection with the worship of the sun that a beam-type burial custom was performed in the tombs. The lower part of the mound was made of stone.

There was a layer of ash 1.0 meters thick on the braided layer. Numerous animal bones and pottery samples typical of the long houses of settlement No. 1 and the tribal mounds on the terrace were found in this ash layer. Inside the pottery were three large, thick-walled jugs. These jars probably contained the remains of cremated corpses. In addition, a very interesting ellipse-shaped baked red clay sarcophagus was found there. Ash was collected in the jar-like protrusion of the sarcophagus, and its mouth was covered with a lid. It belongs to the Bronze Age, which developed on the ash layer.

It is possible that the people in these tombs were sacrificed to the gods. The skeletons of six people were lying on their backs. On the right side of the vertebrae of the three of them was found an oval-shaped hole resembling a stamp. The bones of domestic animals and black clay vessels typical of the last stage of the Bronze Age were also found in this layer (Hummel, 1940).

During the placement of the beams, beams were carried from one point to different directions, and grave holes were dug over these beams. These burial pits were dug in such a way that the beam from the center point, called S1, had to pass either diagonally or in the middle of the graves. If the beam coincides with the diagonal of the grave,

a man is buried in that grave, and if it passes through the middle of the grave, a woman is buried in that grave. According to the researcher, the focal point was the sun of the mound. The dead buried in the graves were buried in that state. However I. Narimanov in the monograph "Archaeological monuments of Ganjachay region" opposed Hummel's radiation system" (Narimanov, 1958).

The Late Bronze Age of the Talysh zone consists of stone boxes, cromleches of tombs, stones arranged in a circle in a vertical position. This type of tomb is rare in Azerbaijan. A collective burial custom was found in the tomb of Chilakhan stone box No. 4. In the central part of the tomb, the bones of a young boy were found lying flat.

The skeletons of the other four people found in the tomb were found with their legs in the form of a beam towards the center, facing the skeleton in the middle, and one skeleton sitting. Farman Mahmudov noted that this type of burial custom was found in the Dovshanli (Archadzor) burial mound No. 2 in Karabakh (Mahmudov, 2008). Under the Saricho-ban earth mound of Aghdam region, the whole complex consisting of a grave chamber and five graves in general was designed in the form of a regular cross (Jafarov Guide, 2016). As can be seen, the same type of burial custom found in the burial mounds and stone box tombs studied in Goy-Gol, Karabakh and Talysh so, it is an evidence that Hummel's research and findings are in line with reality.

Undoubtedly, according to the beliefs of the time, the burial mound and stone box excavated in Goy-Gol, Karabakh and Talysh were created in connection with the sun ritual. The purpose of the funeral was probably to establish a connection between the two worlds. As you can see, "Wheel of Fortune" is one of the most common symbols in mythical and religious systems, as well as one of the most important symbols in the culture of many peoples of the world.

The worship of the sun and the moon by the tribes living in the territory of Azerbaijan in the Bronze and Iron Ages is still reflected in the temples, hearths and "wheel" images, tomb chambers, rock paintings found in Babadervish and Saritapa settlements (Jafaradzad, 1973). Khanlar (now Goy-Gol district) and Ganjachay and others. Clay pots obtained from mounds in the areas, as well as artistic bronze products (Avsharova, 2017) and so on prove the images of the sun on the samples of cultural material.

Based on a hearth from the Babadervish settlement and a bust of the sun god Mitra Akhundov assumed that the temple (god of fire and sun) found in Babadervish's residence was the temple of Mitra. Ancient tombstones indicate that people in ancient times used them to protect their loved

ones from evil spirits. According to their religious beliefs, the forces of evil feared light and fire which are the attributes of the sun on earth, and for this reason they associated the rising of the sun with good and the darkness with the forces of evil.

Then, although researchers have different opinions about these symbols the author agrees with Piotrovsky, which establishes these signs were a symbol of the sun in the South Caucasus in ancient times.

## CONCLUSIONS

Various types of cosmogonic images that are found in the cultural materials of tribes are a product of philosophical imagery allowing us to study and comprehend the feelings and ideas of ancient people. The utensils found in the fired temples and tombs of South Caucasus, which were carried by ancient Azerbaijani tribes, support the idea of the widespread of the belief in the Sun and ancestors. Because of that, it is believed that ancient Azerbaijani tribes performed religious rituals as well as offerings to protect their families once they departed.

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