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## AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY OF KHOJALY-GADABAY CULTURE IN NORTHWESTERN IRAN

**Açar sözlər:** Xocalı-Gədəbəy mədəniyyəti, Son Tunc dövrü və Erkən Dəmir dövrü, Azərbaycan, Qafqaz

**Ключевые слова:** Ходжалы-Кедабекская культура, период поздней бронзы и раннежелеза, Азербайджан, Кавказ

**Keywords:** Khojaly-Gadabay, Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, Azerbaijan, Caucasus

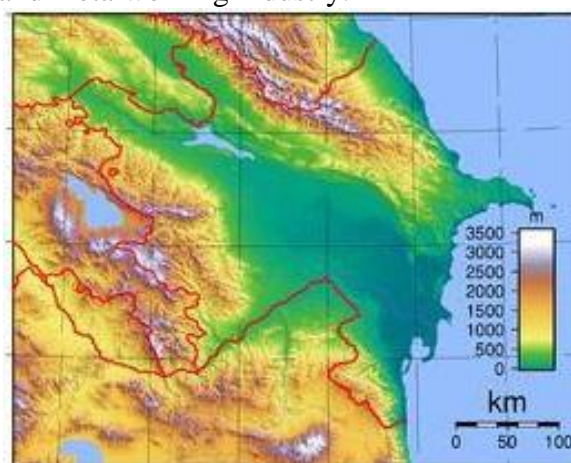
### *Abstract*

Khojaly-Gadabay's Archaeological culture belongs to a geographical area of Azerbaijan but has spread to other regions such as Caucasus and Northwest of Iran as well. Chronologically, this culture dates back to Late Bronze Age and early Iron Age in Caucasus geographical areas. Meanwhile, in the Northwest of Iran it dates back to Iron Age I and II. Different archaeologists who have studied this culture have given different names to this culture, some of which are Central Caucasus culture, Gandja-karabakh and Khojaly-Gadabay culture. In terms of livelihood, tribes of Khojaly-Gadabay culture lived both nomadic and sedentary lives, and they resided mostly in mountain slopes. Certain factors such as pottery, burials, metal tools, agricultural-animal husbandry economy have been identified and studied as some of

the important characteristics of Khojaly-Gadabay culture.

### *Introduction:*

In the second millennium B.C, in the Western part of Azerbaijan (Fig 1) those tribes which emerged had significant progression in agricultural field, animal husbandry and metalworking industry.



**Fig 1.** Azerbaijan in both sides of Araxes

According to archaeological investigations carried out on Kura River basin lands between XX-XIX centuries AD, the signs of Khojaly-Gadabay culture are found in the Northwest of Iran and in all Azerbaijan regions such as Mingachevir, Gadabay, Goygol,

Khaççbulag, Khojaly, Chovdar, Dashkesen and Gazakh. In the Western parts of Azerbaijan this culture has been formed mainly in mountain slopes and their inhabitants had been busy with agriculture, animal husbandry and craftsmanship. In the cultural period (Khojaly-Gadabay), defensive fortresses with no fences, and permanent residential premises such as Quru Qala, Sari Tapeh, Qaratapeh, Goygol, Mingachevir and Baba Dervish have been seen in Azerbaijan. Seasonal and monsoon premises have existed as well. Most of archaeologists believe that the most of Khojaly-Gadabay tribes were semi-nomadic, because most of these premises and graveyards were created in mountain slopes and next to the nomadic roads.

Graveyards in the geographical regions of Southern Caucasus, which belonged to Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, are identified rather well and are considered as spiritual elements and as one of the important sources for the study of social hierarchy and economic conditions. In this era, burial habits were diverse, some of which include: Kurgan Graves, stone box graves and simple earthen graves (dugout in the ground) (1, p. 62–69). V. Belkin is one of those archaeologists who have studied Khojaly-Gadabay culture. Coraf Von, Agayev, Aslanov, Afsharov and so on are among those who have conducted excavation in Gadabay Region.

This culture, which dates back to Late Bronze Age and early Iron Age, geographically include Central and Southern Caucasus. Studies on these regions started from early 19<sup>th</sup> century but archaeological reports obtained materials and museum data related to these areas are kept in libraries and museums of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Dagestan and Germany. In the archaeological literature, this culture is known by other names such as Central Caucasus culture, Gandja- Karabakh and Khojaly-Gadabay (2, p. 9).

Archaeological investigations of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in Azerbaijan have a history of 100 years in comparison to the history of studies in other areas. The culture of this region is mainly studied through

grave and burial investigation. This culture is called Khojaly-Gadabay because for the first time in the third decade of twentieth century archaeological data related to Late Bronze Age and early Iron Age were found in regions around Khojaly-Gadabay in Karabakh and Gandja-Kazakh regions (3, p. 11).

In terms of archaeology and cultural development studies, Iran's Iron Age is of great importance. In that period, cultural, religious and livelihood structures went under transformation and the bases of Iranian culture and the future of this great nation was formed. With the discovery and extensive use of Iron melting in early first millennium B.C, significant changes occurred in the lives of those who lived in Iranian plateau (4, p. 1). Of those archaeologists who studied Iran's Iron Age the following can be mentioned: Dyson, Muscarella, Young, Medvedskaya and etc.

The classification of Iron Age cycles which are based on pottery data are divided into pottery horizons by Young (5, p. 53-78). Through analyzing stratigraphy of Tepe Hasanlu, Dyson as the main excavator of that area reached results similar to Young's, but he only changed the terminology proposed by Young and instead of pottery horizons he classified Iron Age to Iron Age I, Iron Age II, Iron Age II. This classification was accepted (4, p. 55).

#### ***Northwest of Iran:***

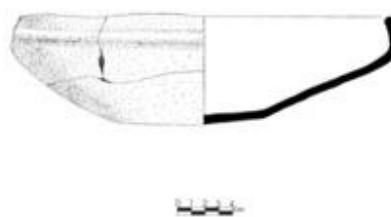
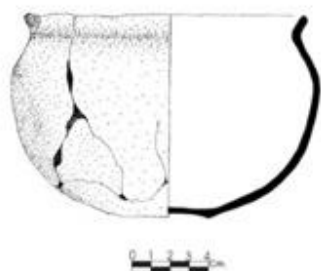
Because of its strategic position, the Northwest of Iran has been open to different cultures from ancient times, and from Pre-historic times to modern times it has played an important role in cultures of Near East.

Some of the excavated premises in the Northwest of Iran from which Khojaly-Gadabay culture can be identified are: Jafar Abad Kurgans in Khoda Afarin ( 6, p. 22); Larijan and Tu Ali Graveyards (7); Zardkhaneh settlement (8); Geoy Tapeh (9); Dinkha Tapeh (10); Hasanlu (11; 5); Haftavan Tepe (12); Yanik Tepe (13), and Kordler Tepe (14). Most of the studies which are carried out on Khojaly-Gadabay culture in the Northwest of Iran are mostly concerned with the pottery

form subjects, type of burials, structures' plans and iron tools, and they have been carried out according to such indices and factors.

The findings from Jafar Abad's kurgans indicate that the kurgans' architecture has formed a firm and strong structure. Some of the most important data retrieved from Jafar Abad kurgans are pottery data. The potteries are gray and creamy, and in terms of construction they are wheelwright and homemade. Different types of potteries retrieved from kurgans include: bowls, pots, skillets, mug and crocks (Fig.2) (15, p. 35-36). In general, the only motif among geometric, herbaceous, human, combinatorial motifs which has been used for decorating potteries is Geometric motif (6, p. 93). In terms of burial traditions and pottery decorations, the potteries resemble other excavated settlement specially Zardkhaneh. Jafar Abad's graves are kurgan. In archaeologists' opinions, this type of grave consists of a rectangular stone grave with big stones in the middle and a circular arrangement of stones which surrounds the interior space. In most of the settlement and regions which belong to Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I there are memorial stones in different

sizes on the top of Kurgan graves which indicate the existence of a society with an advanced social system. According to the aforementioned claim, those people who had a higher social class were endowed with larger memorial stones and those who were among middle class were given smaller memorial stones. Samples of these memorial stones are found in Smith's excavations (16, p. 123-145). According to Gimbutas, kurgan tradition was formed and recognized by those people who had a pastoral and semi-agricultural life (17, p. 401). According to Mert's opinion kurgans are an allegorical representation of home, tent, and bedroom of the buried person and many places where kurgans can be found are estimated as a holy place (18, p. 18). Sagona believes that the abundance of early Kurgans belongs to 2500 B.C, which indicates the existence of animal husbandry and nomadic life styles (19). This type of burial in Azerbaijan dates back to Middle and Late Bronze Age (20), and in Armenia they belong to a period between middle Bronze Age and Iron Age I. It has been identified in Georgia and in the south of Russia as well.





**Fig.2.** Iravani Ghadim and Mami Zadeh, 1391: 35-36

As mentioned before, the potteries of this culture have geometric designs including carvings, added designs, markings, polishing, zigzag lines, decoration using animal heads (Fig.3), horizontal lines, cord-like shapes, groove-like designs (Fig.4), shaped ornaments (Fig.5) and, in some rare cases, animal designs. In terms of typology, potteries of this culture include plates (Fig.6), barrel like containers (Fig.7), cups (Figs 8 & 9), tubed bowls (fig. 10) handleless simple bowls (fig. 11), simple bowls with handles (fig. 12,13) dished decorated with animal handles, simple bowls with open mouth on which a bold moon crescent or two holes on their walls can be seen (fig.14) and the one

next to tubed dishes with discontinues pipes (fig.15,16) tubed dished with continues pipes (fig.17) jugs without handles, jugs with handles, dishes with basket-like handles (fig. 18) crocks.

The acquired metal objects attributed to Khojaly-Gadabay culture include: daggers, bayonets, and arrowheads (Fig.19). Most of the artifacts of this culture are war equipment and tools which were created through molding and casting. Metal objects are both simple and decorative. In addition to war artifacts, bronze rings, jewelry, bronze chains, S-shaped bronze earrings, bronze bracelets, metal needles, and circlets (Fig.20) have also been discovered.

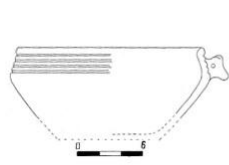


Fig.3. Brown, 1951: 157



Fig.4. Lippert, 1977: 153

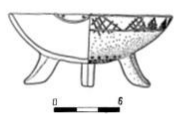


Fig.5. Lippert, 1977: 141



Fig.6. Brown, 1951: 138



Fig.7. Brown, 1951: 144



Fig. 8 Muscarella, 1974: 45-46

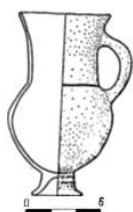


Fig.9. Lippert, 1977: 142



Fig.10. Brown, 1951: 163

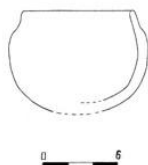


Fig.11. Brown, 1951: 158

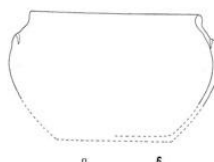


Fig.12. Brown, 1951: 163

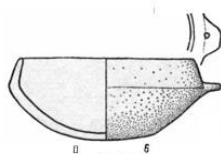


Fig.13. Lippert, 1977: 149



Fig.14. Muscarella, 1974: 45-47

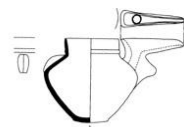


Fig.15. Muscarella, 1974:44



Fig.16. Lippert, 1977: 142

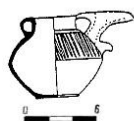


Fig.17. Young, 1965: 120



Fig.18. Young, 1965:120

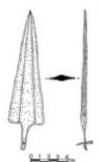


Fig.19. Kiani et al, 2016:10



Fig.20. Niknami & Kazempur, 1390: 82

### **Conclusion:**

Iran's Iron Age is greatly significant in terms of archaeology and cultural development studies of Iranian plateau. Classification of prehistoric life of humans is one of the

common classifications for understanding archaeological periods, which is in turn based on technological aspects of archaeological data. When human history is classified according to their contemporary technology and

materials used in their tools, 5 eras can be distinguished: Paleolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze and Iron Age. The start of each of these eras depends on used tools, the materials used in their production and acquired artifacts from archaeological premises. In the chronology of Iron Age both types of relative and absolute chronology are employed. Dyson and Young are among those archaeologists who have specified the framework of Iran's Iron Age. They did so after excavating Tepe Hasanlu, examining samples tests of C14 and comparing pottery typologies with other archaeological regions' potteries. Through analyzing stratigraphy of Tepe Hasanlu, Dyson who was the main excavator and researcher and the head of Archaeological commission of Hasanlu, instead of pottery horizons, divided Iron Age to Iron Age I, II, III. Later on this classification was accepted by Young himself. In terms of chronology, the transition of this cultural period (Late Bronze Age) into Early Iron age is related to the latter half of second millennium B.C. Studying archaeological data reveals that with the start of the second half of the second millennium, inhabitant tribes in Azerbaijan began to bring about a great development in civilization and socio-economical world. The history of studies and researches in Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age of Azerbaijan is more than 100 years. Archaeologically, this period, in contrast to other periods, has been under extensive study especially in typology of graves. Graveyards in the geographical region of southern Caucasus, which belonged to Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, are identified rather well and are considered as a spiritual element and one of the important sources for the study of social hierarchy and economic conditions. In this era, there were various burial habits, some of which include: Kurgan Graves, stone box graves and simple earthen graves (excavated in the ground). Most of the studies which are carried out on Khojaly-Gadabay culture in the northwest of Iran are primarily concerned with the pottery form subjects, type of burials, structures' plans and iron

equipment and they have been performed according to such indices and factors. The potteries are gray and creamy, and with regard to their construction, they are wheelwright and homemade. Different types of potteries retrieved from kurgans include: bowls, pots, skillets, mugs and crocks. In general, geometric motif is the only motif among geometric, herbaceous, human, and combinatorial motifs which has been used for decorating potteries.

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