
**OVCHULARTEPE SETTLEMENT AS A MAGNIFICENT MONUMENT OF
ENEOLITHIC PERIOD AND EARLY BRONZE AGE**

***Emin MAMMADOV**

Studying the Eneolithic Period and Early Bronze Age has always been one of the major problems of the Caucasus archeology. Ovchulartepe settlement is one of the monuments representing the both aforementioned periods in a wide range. Plenteous tangible cultural patterns were discovered in the settlement as a result of systematic archaeological investigations conducted during 2007-2013. Investigations conducted by both local and foreign researchers studied the remains of Ovchulartepe, ceramic products, fauna and flora, metal items, labor tools and so on. As a result of research work, it became known that people had started to settle in Ovchulartepe from the middle of the 5th millennium BC, and there is a notable opportunity to study their economic and cultural relations with the countries of the Near East.

Key words: Nakhchivan, Sharur district, Ovchulartepe, Eneolithic period, Early Bronze Age, archaeological research, buiding remains , ceramics

Ovçulartepe settlement is one of the most widely studied monuments in ancient Nakhchivan. The monument is located on left bank of Arpachay river, in the north-west of the Dize village of Sharur region, with a total area of 10 hectares. In recent years, especially in 2006-2013, the international Azerbaijan-French archaeological expedition conducted research in this area, circular and quadratic buildings, cheramic objects, objects made of bronze and bones belonging to Eneolithic Period and Early Bronze Age were found. As a result of the research, it became obvious that that people had started to settle in Ovchulartepe from the middle of the 5th millennium BC. During the excavations, two phases of the Eneolithic period having completely different constructional features were found out . Subdugout houses were specific for the first phase, and quadratic single and multi-storey houses for the second phase. Houses belonging to the first phase were constructed in a four-cornered form, on the slope of the hill after flatting.

Studies showed that in Ovchulartepe houses belonging to the second phase , to the end of the fifth millennium BC consist of brick houses built on stone foundation. Here, the quadratic shape of

*Centre of Nakhchivan Study of Supreme, Majlis of Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, emammadov87@hotmail.com

houses and the construction of the supporting walls were typical for both phases. Warehouses, fireplaces, workplaces and other tangible cultural samples were identified. The houses of the second phase differ from the first one with their perfect architecture. The Architecture of the houses in Ovchulartepe was in harmony with the houses found in the monuments of Azerbaijan and Eastern Anatolia (5, p. 5).

The study of ceramic samples once again raised the importance of this monument to Caucasian archeology. Most of the clay dishes in the Ovchulartepe were yellow and straw mixed. Ceramic products mainly consisted of simple bulky bowls, clay pots and jugs. Jugs of this period, patterned with goat figures on are of great interest from point of craftsmanship. Researchers believe that the Eneolith ceramics of Nakhchivan mainly differ for being in red color. Red ceramics were characteristic for the monuments of South Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan. Red colored, polished ceramics also spread in eastern regions of the Urmia Basin. Research of the monuments in the territory of the Autonomous Republic shows that straw mixed ceramics were produced starting from the Neolithic period in Nakhchivan.

During the excavations, painted ceramic samples were also found. Painted ceramic products are known to exist in Ovchulartepe, although in small quantities. According to V. Bakhshaliyev, this kind of ceramics shows the ties of inhabitants with the South, especially Ubeyd culture. Ceramic products belonging to the Eneolithic period found in Halac, Shortepe and Sirab in recent years also prove such relations. In recent years, the study of Ovchulartepe monument in Nakhchivan allows people to get a detailed idea about the economy and culture of this period.

Ovchulartepe excavations were conducted successfully. The investigation of animal remains found therein, along with construction and ceramic remains, shows that they, in about VIII-VII centuries BC, came to this area following the ancient agricultural cultures. Generally, recent facts confirm that the ancient cultivation cultures of Mesopotamia influenced the cultures in the South Caucasus, including Nakhchivan. One of the key factors that strengthened economic and cultural ties between the tribes living in Mesopotamia and Nakhchivan was the latter's natural resources, particularly copper deposits.

As it is mentioned above, Ovchulartepe settlement is also a monument of the Early Bronze Age. The part of this area which belongs to the Early Bronze Age is relatively subtle. Only remains of circular shaped buildings were discovered in the first and sixth squares. The features of Kura-Araz ceramics in the South Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia are already known. This kind of ceramics is also known as "Early Transcaucasian" or "Karaz" (5, p. 11). Ceramic samples are characterized by sand mixed black, dark grey polished specimens. Most of the forms are bulky and distinguished with certain features, especially with the "handles made in Nakhichevan." The ornaments consist of bulky, concave and caving geometric motifs. However, a group of clay vessels in Ovchulartepe combine technological and morphological features characteristic of the Eneolithe Period and Early Bronze Age. The survival of the

last Eneolite and Kura-Araz culture tribes at the same time undoubtedly led to the adoption of certain technological approaches, to the formation of mutual relations between them. Presumably, Bronze Age ceramics are the result of local development of the previous period.

The study of fauna and flora also plays a positive role in the study of any monument. From this point of view, the study of this area in the Ovchulartepe was also in the focus of attention. A preliminary analysis of the botanical remains of this area was made by George Willcox (6, p. 19). Most remains consist of tares and peas. Grain is represented by barley and small quantities of wheat. According to G. Willcox, these grain crops belong to local production.

During the research, certain carbon analyzes were made from the excavation site. Analysis of the remains of wood coal gives interesting information about the ancient flora of this area. Initial investigations show that trees that do not exist any more in the area existed in ancient times (6, p. 17).

Labor tools also played a major role in the study of Ovchulartepe settlement. Most of the labor tools consist of the tusks of hook made from obsidian and flint. Most of them were made from obsidian. There are quite a few types of obsidian tools here. They consist of hook tusks, knives and groomers. Researchers believe that in spite of the presence of obsidian deposits in and around Nakhchivan, obsidian was brought from far away to produce labor tools. Analysis of obsidian instruments shows that most of them were brought from the Goyam Mountains. The sky and the surrounding mountains were used as pastures of the people living in Nakhchivan until recently. So it is absolutely natural for the half-nomad inhabitants of Ovchulartepe to use Goyam obsidian.

During the 2011-2012 excavations, a large number of bronze needles remains and metal tools were discovered in Ovchulartepe. The unbroken tools were mostly axes. Three of them were flat and one was an ax with holes. According to archeologist V.B.Bachshaliyev, flat-shaped axes with similar view were known from the Early Bronze Age monuments of Nakhchivan and South Caucasus. However, the objects similar to the ax with holes are not known to be typical for the Eneolith monuments. In 2010, researchers discovered molds to form flat- shaped ax, copper ore remains the Zirincli Eneolithic settlement, and the bellows ends in Ovchulartepe. The presence of the Misdaghı deposit in Nakhchivan allows the metal to be extracted from nearby mines and was related to local production.

It is obvious from the above mentioned facts that the Ovchulartepe settlement is one of the most important monuments of the Eneolithic and Early Bronze Age in the Caucasus.

References

- Aşurov S.H. Archaeological researches in Nakhchivan. Baku, 2003 120 p.
- Aşurov S.H. The Early Bronze Age ceramics of Nakhchivan. Baku, Elm, 2002, 158 p.

-
- Bakhshaliyev V.B. Azerbaijan archaeology. Baku, Elm, 2007, 240 p.
- Bakhshaliyev V.B. The archaeological monuments of Nakhchivan. Baku, Elm, 2008. 304 p.
- Bakhchaliyev V., Marro C. The Archaeology of Nakhchivan: Ten years of new discoveries. Istanbul: Ege, 2009, 118 p.
- Bakhshaliyev V., Marro C., Ashurov S. Ovchulartepesi. Baku: Elm 2010, 154 p.
- Marro C., Bakhshaliyev V., Ashurov S. Excavation at Ovchulartepesi (Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan). First preliminary report: The 2009-2010 seasons // *Anatolia Antiqua*, XVII, 2009, p. 31-87.
- Marro C., Bakhshaliyev V., Ashurov S. Excavation at Ovchulartepesi (Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan). Second preliminary report: The 2009-2010 Seasons // *Anatolia Antiqua*, XIX, 2011, p. 53-100.
- Seyidov A.Q. The monuments of Kura-Araz culture of Nakhchivan. Baku, Bilik, 1993, 164 p.
- Seyidov A.Q. Nakhchivan in VII-II millenia b.c. Baku, Elm, 2003, 334p.