



HEYDAR ALIYEV FOUNDATION

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF



AZERBAIJAN

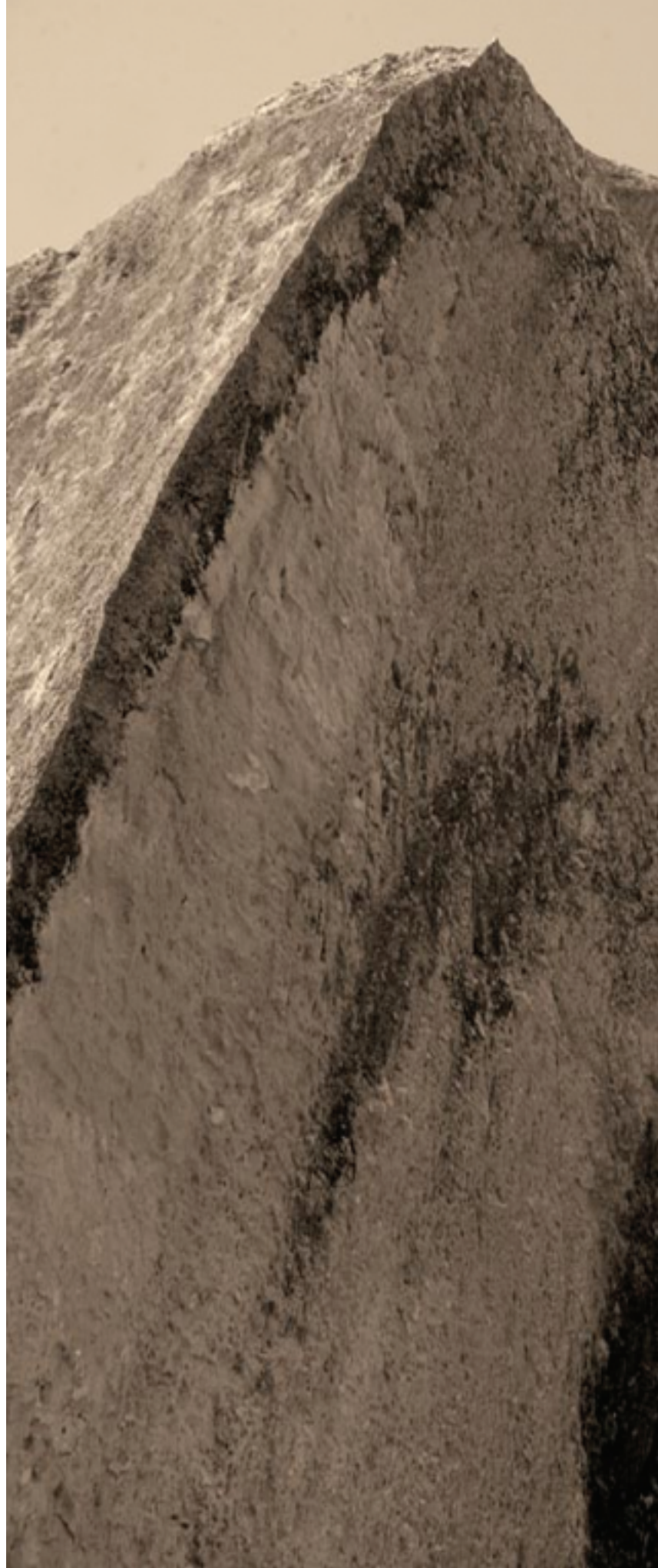
Petroglyphs



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A stone with remnant of a goat image
Gobustan, Kichikdash Mount, Firuz shelter
Mesolithic Age
27x23x9cm
7kg

Rock Carving Art of Azerbaijan

Plethora of rock carvings found in Azerbaijan is a very peculiar phenomenon in the country's tangible cultural heritage, a phenomenon hard to overestimate. Rock carvings constitute one of the basic and most important parts of local archaeological finds. A noteworthy detail in this respect is that Azerbaijan was the first place in the Caucasus where the major clusters of rock carvings were discovered.

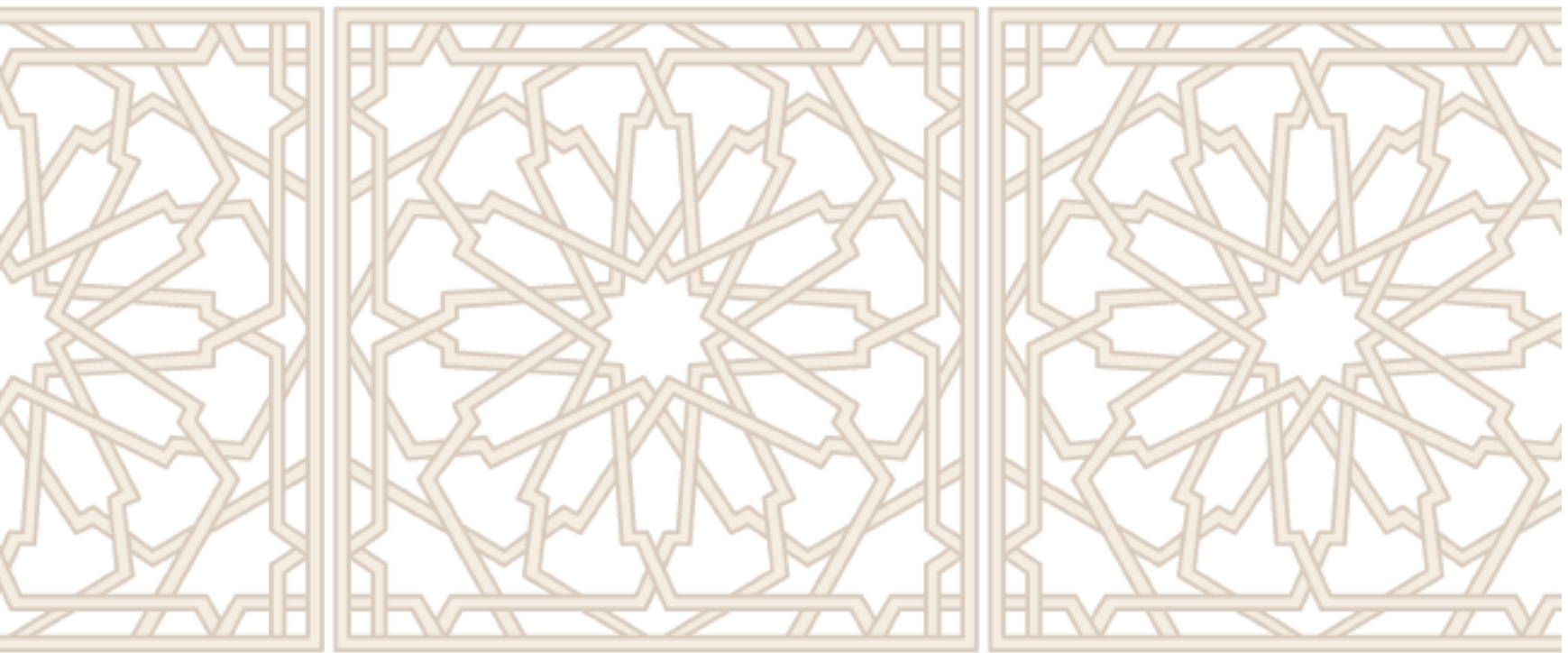
The pioneer and first researcher of these newly-discovered traces of human culture was Izhaq Jafarzadeh, a recognized Azerbaijani archaeologist who back in the late 1930's succeeded in finding out a large number of petroglyphs in Gobustan, the area in the immediate vicinity of Baku.

The period of 1960-1970's presented a new set of unique rock carvings revealed by the Azerbaijani archaeologists like G.M.Aslanov, V.G.Aliyev, G.S.Ismayilzadeh at the peninsula of Absheron, in Gemigaya, Nakhchivan, and the Kalbajar Highland. Meanwhile, large-scale research activities undertaken in the same period by J.N.Rustamov and F.Muradova doubled the number of discovered rock carvings in Gobustan. That was the way a very special type of archaeological evidence pertaining to the earliest human life, economic activities, deeply rooted cults, traditions, beliefs and other forms of tangible and intangible cultural heritage was uncovered in Azerbaijan. Rock carvings embracing an enormous time span from about 15th millennium B.C. to the Middle Ages, provide invaluable authentic data regarding the basic milestones of human development and testify to the vibrant contacts among various ethnic and cultural communities for millennia.

The major clusters of cave art are the following:

- 1) Gobustan, 65 kilometers to the south of Baku;
- 2) Peninsula of Absheron, environs of the capital city of Baku;
- 3) Gemigaya area, south-west of the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan, 60 kilometers from the town of Ordubad, at Mount Gapyjik, the highest peak of the Lesser Caucasus;
- 4) Kalbajar District, western Azerbaijan, the foot of Delidagh Mount;
- 5) Garabagh, south-west Azerbaijan, Azykh cave.





Gobustan

Location and Geographic Environment

Gobustan is a tiny area in the eastern part of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the western coast of the Caspian Sea. As of 2007, the area is included in UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List as the Rock Art Cultural Landscape.

Gobustan features rocky mounts with flat tops. Large pieces of fallen down rock create sizeable caves adding further value to the area's unique landscape. This is exactly the place where over 6000 rock carvings ranging from the end of the Upper Paleolithic to the Middle Ages were discovered. In 1966, mountains of Beyukdash, Kichikdash and Jyngyrdagh-Yazlytepe together with the adjacent area of 4500 hectares were granted the status of the National Reserve.

For thousands of years, the area was both a home and a shrine for the earliest human tribes. This was the venue for their sacral rituals, magic rites, religious ceremonies, ancestral worship, etc. The tradition of worship in Gobustan is preserved to this very day. The local residents still use the Beyukdash Mount as a pilgrimage place in the course of wedding ceremonies. The pilgrims also tie pieces of motley fabric to branches of trees and shrubs of Kichikdash Mount and the sacred place called Gara-Alty.



Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount



Unknown animal's image

Gobustan, Kichikdash Mount, Firuz shelter

Bronze Age

33x32x6cm

8kg



A big stone with a hollow
Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount
Bronze Age
40x34x15cm
23.5kg

The Gobustan Archaeological Complex

A substantial amount of petroglyphs (rock carvings) was discovered by archaeologist I.M.Jafarzadeh in Gobustan, Baku's southern environ, in the late 1930's.

With a view to preserving the rock carvings of high historic, artistic and cultural value, Mounts Beyukdash, Kichikdash and Jyngyrdagh were granted the status of the National Reserve pursuant to the Decree signed by Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on July 11, 2007.

The Archaeological Complex of Gobustan comprises the following valuable components:

- above 6000 rock carvings,
- shelter caves, primeval human settlements and burial places,
- shrines,
- numerous caves and shelters dating to various periods and bearing traces of consistent use during the period of 15 000 years.





Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount



Image of dancing people
Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Upper terrace, Ana Zaga cave
Neolithic Age



The Art of Rock Carving

Rock carvings of Gobustan feature variety of themes, multiplicity of subjects and a great deal of artistic mastery.

Images carved into the rock include hunters, women, wild oxen, horses, gazelles, bezoar goats, deer, lions, dogs, wolves, pigs, etc. Scenery of mounted and cave hunting together with battle scenes, joint work, sacrifice and harvesting may be found as well. Other images include ritual dances performed by individuals or in groups, very similar to the contemporary Azerbaijani round dance of yally. A number of carvings depict boats with very schematic human figures. Among the carvings discovered there were also portrayals of two-wheel carts, outlined fish figures, camel caravans, human footprints, outline of an arch presumably related to a certain cult. Portrayals of snakes, lizards, sun, stars, swastika, crosses and other signs and marks were also thoroughly studied and recorded.

Along with these carvings, inscriptions in Arabic dating to various periods of Azerbaijan's medieval history were also found in the area together with the Latin inscription testifying to the presence of the Roman troops (the 12th Legion Fulminata) in the late 1st century A.D.

A Large number of stones with holes 5-8 cm in diameter were found in the immediate vicinity of downhill shelters. These stones were used to tie animals. The rocks also feature numerous cup-shaped hollows 10-30 cm deep and 15-40 cm in diameter. These hollows are the most ancient primitive vessels for collection and storage of rain water, as well as blood of sacrificial animals, etc.

The tambourine stone (known as Gaval Dash among local people) located at the north-eastern foot of Mount Jyngyrdagh is of a particular interest. Hit by stones of various size, it produces clangs of various tones. It could be very possible that this clanging stone was used as a primitive musical tool for ritual dances.





Gaval-dash (Gaval-stone)

Gaval-dash is the oldest musical instrument discovered in Azerbaijan's Gobustan area with rock carvings and archaeological finds dating back to the 10th millennium B.C., nowadays, part of UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage. It is believed to be a predecessor of Azerbaijani drums, naghara.

Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Upper terrace,
Ana Zaga cave





Images of hunters and a boat
Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Upper terrace
Meolithic Age

Dating of Petroglyphs

Dating of petroglyphs discovered in Azerbaijan is rather approximate and based on various concomitant circumstances. Normally, rock carvings depicting women profiles and wild oxen are viewed as the earlier ones. Images of extinct animals may serve as chronologic benchmarks in cases when there is a possibility to reconstruct paleoecology (E.P.Frankfor, E.Jacobson, 2004).

The most recent research shed new light on the estimated age of the rock carvings in Azerbaijan. Pursuant to the most cutting-edge AMS dating technologies, the earliest human habitation traces in Gobustan are 14,5 thousand years old.





Image of goats
Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Upper terrace, Okuzler cave
Bronze Age



A 9cm-thick piece of sandstone with a human figure carved in the corner.

Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Kaniza Shelter

Paleolithic Age

40x30cm

18kg



A stone-carved bad, both sides thoroughly processed, untypical shape

Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Ana Zaga cave

18.0x20.0x3.2cm

2kg

Shelter Caves, Early Settlements,

Burials and Mounds

The earliest shelter caves dating to the late Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods are mainly located at the upper terraces of Mounts Beyukdash and Kichikdash. These are Gaya Arasy, Firuz, Ana Zaga and Kaniza.

The cultural layers found hereby include not only the finds related to the Upper Paleolithic, but Mesolithic, Neolithic and Eneolithic periods as well. The tools made of stone, bones, obsidian, as well as remnants of extinct species of flora and fauna provide an invaluable evidence for reconstruction of that-time geographic environment. 11 human skeletons discovered at Firuz settlement are of a particular interest indeed. Two of them are female remnants, one belonged to a child, whereas the rest are male. Numerous stone tools found at this spot include impact (percussive) knives, so-called nucleuses, edged chisels, knife plates, trapezoids, silicon chisels, arrowheads, notched mini-plates, scrappers with indented sides and bits.

The lower terraces of Beyukdash, Kichikdash and Jyngyrdagh mounts feature the settlements of the Bronze Age (such as Daire 1 and Daire 2) together with numerous burial places and mounds. These settlements and burial mounds abound in skeletons, and bones of extinct species. Several stones with petroglyphs together with other finds of the Bronze Age and anthropomorphous grave stones were discovered as well.





Image of boats
Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Low terrace
Late Neolithic - early Bronze Ages



Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Upper terrace



Shrines

Tabletop mountains with large pieces of rock scattered at the foot constitute the major feature of Gobustan. Located close to each other, these massive rock slabs created a sort of caves and grottos that were used both as dwellings and shrines for primeval human tribes for millennia. These were the places of ritual ceremonies, magic rites, worship to ancestral spirits and mountains, and so on. Deeply rooted cults of worship are practiced in the areas adjacent to Gobustan to this very day. E.g. procession to Mount Beyukdash is still a mandatory element of a wedding ceremony among local residents who perform popular folk round dance yally nearby the rock carvings at Beyukdash depicting similar dance (Farajova M., 2009).

Ruins of several old shrines were also found in the rocky area of Gobustan with petroglyphs carved into surrounding stones. The ensemble of shrines and worship places creates a very harmonious combination with the flat-top mountains nearby. The shrine known as Qara-Alty is located at Mount Kichikdash. A rock with natural hollow stands next to it. The place is frequently attended by pilgrims with special wishes and desires (niyyat). For these wishes to come true, people tie motley pieces of fabric to shrubs and the special local worship tree (*Celtis Caucasica* Wili) or assemble small dwellings at Qara-Alty shrine. Plethora of caves and shelters dating back to various periods is another indication of the place's active use within recent 15 thousand years.

Gobustan is a unique open-air depository of rock carving art since the earliest periods, like the Upper Paleolithic, to the Middle Ages. The 15th century caravan-serai (medieval inn) and a still active shrine (Qara-Alty) featuring similar rock carvings provide a clear evidence of the area's sustainability as a sacred place.

Summary of the facts mentioned above provide sufficient grounds to believe that Gobustan with its numerous rock carvings succeeded in preserving old religious traditions to this very day.



A piece of sandstone with
human figures depicted
on both sides.

Gobustan, Boyukdash
Mountain, Home den
Cave

above - Mesolithic
Period. Approximately

10-8th millenium BC

below - Bronze Age

61x29x11cm

22kg



A piece of stone with traces of carving depicting a goat

Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Firuz shelter

Bronze Age

27x23x9cm

7kg





Images of people

Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Upper terrace

Late Upper Paleolithic - Iron Ages



Stone hoe

Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Lower terrace, Maral shelter

Bronze Age

11.7x8.1x4.5cm

600 g



A big stone with an image of a goat
Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount,
Bronze Age
47x31x24cm
27kg





Images of people and a boat
Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Upper terrace
Mesolithic Age





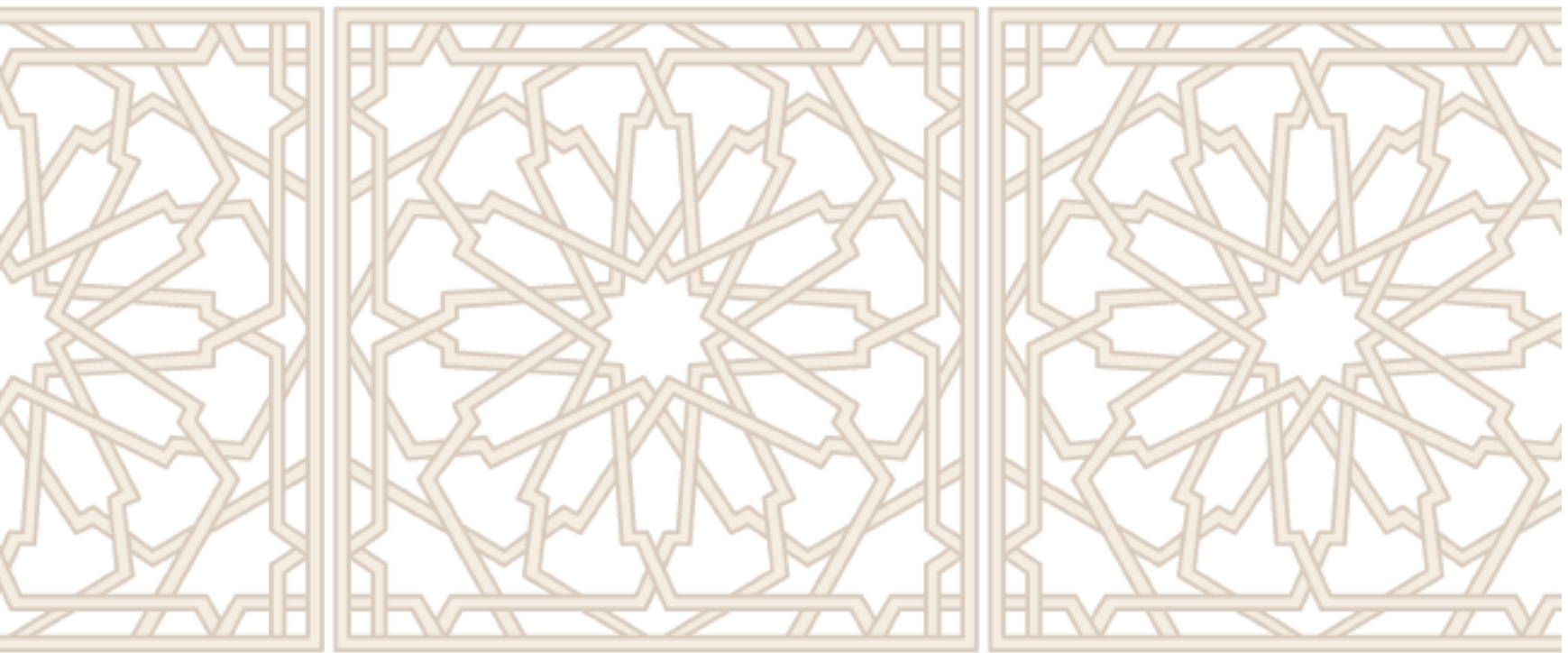
Images of buffalos and a boat
Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Upper terrace
Late Upper Paleolithic - Meosolithic Ages





Roman script
Gobustan, Beyukdash Mount, Down terrace
1st century B.C.





Absheron

Location and Geographic Environment

The Peninsula of Absheron hasn't changed its landscape since the early Bronze Age period. To this day, it features a semi-desert terrain dotted with hills up to 300-400 meters high. The area's south-western part presents a severe topography due to varying lithologic rocks such as clays, sands, sandstone and limestone of the Tertiary period. The peninsula is washed by the Caspian Sea from three sides and is fringed by substantial Caucasus mountain range from the west. A very peculiar sub-tropical climate of Absheron is the result of several interactive factors. On the one hand, this is a mountainous terrain with folded hills clearly visible to the west, whereas in the east the mountains are abruptly cut by maritime abrasion and covered by the historic and modern sediments creating a plain terrain. The easternmost part of this lowland at the Caspian coastline features sand dunes stretching all the way through the coastline.

Absheron, Gala Settlement
Gala Archaeological and Ethnographic
Museum Complex









Archaeological Complex of the Peninsula of Absheron

Rock carvings at the Peninsula of Absheron were first discovered in 1963. The first petroglyphs were found by archaeologist G.Aslanov as a result of archaeological excavations in the areas of Shuvalan and Mardakan.

Images of various animals and hunting scenes found on the walls built of rock slabs are performed in both the realistic and schematic manner. Separate stones with carvings on them were also identified during the excavations. The overall number of rock slabs with petroglyphs ranges around 100, whereas the rock carvings themselves amount to 200.

In general, petroglyphs found on megalithic stones and rocks of the Peninsula of Absheron date back to the late Bronze Age.

Rock art

A stone depicting human figures

Zira settlement

3-2nd millennium BC

105x20x90cm

200 kg





Dubendi tumulus, 3–2nd century B.C. (Dubendi settlement)





Jug for medicines, with zoomorphic images

Pottery

1st millenium BC

17.5x9x7.5cm

300g







Alachyg (nomad tent) — reconstruction of a primitive man's residence
Gala Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum Complex





3-handled pitcher
Pottery
Absheron
2-3rd centuries
24.5x27cm
1.9 kg





Goum Hamam (sand bathhouse),
12-14th centuries A.D.
Gala Archaeological and Ethnographic
Museum Complex





The Gala Archaeological and Ethno-graphic Museum Complex

Founded in 2008 with the support of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, this open air museum complex comprises artifacts dating back to the III millennium B.C. and stretching up to the 20th century. The exhibits include mounds, tombs, old residential premises, 4 ovdans (water wells), 5 mosques, 3 bath-houses (hamams), etc.

Rock art
A stone with lion and animal images
Zira settlement
3-2nd millennium BC
100x33x68cm
100 kg





Potter's yard, 17-18th centuries A.D.
Gala Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum Complex



Bowl with a handle

Pottery

Absheron

1st millenium BC

5.5x17cm

500g

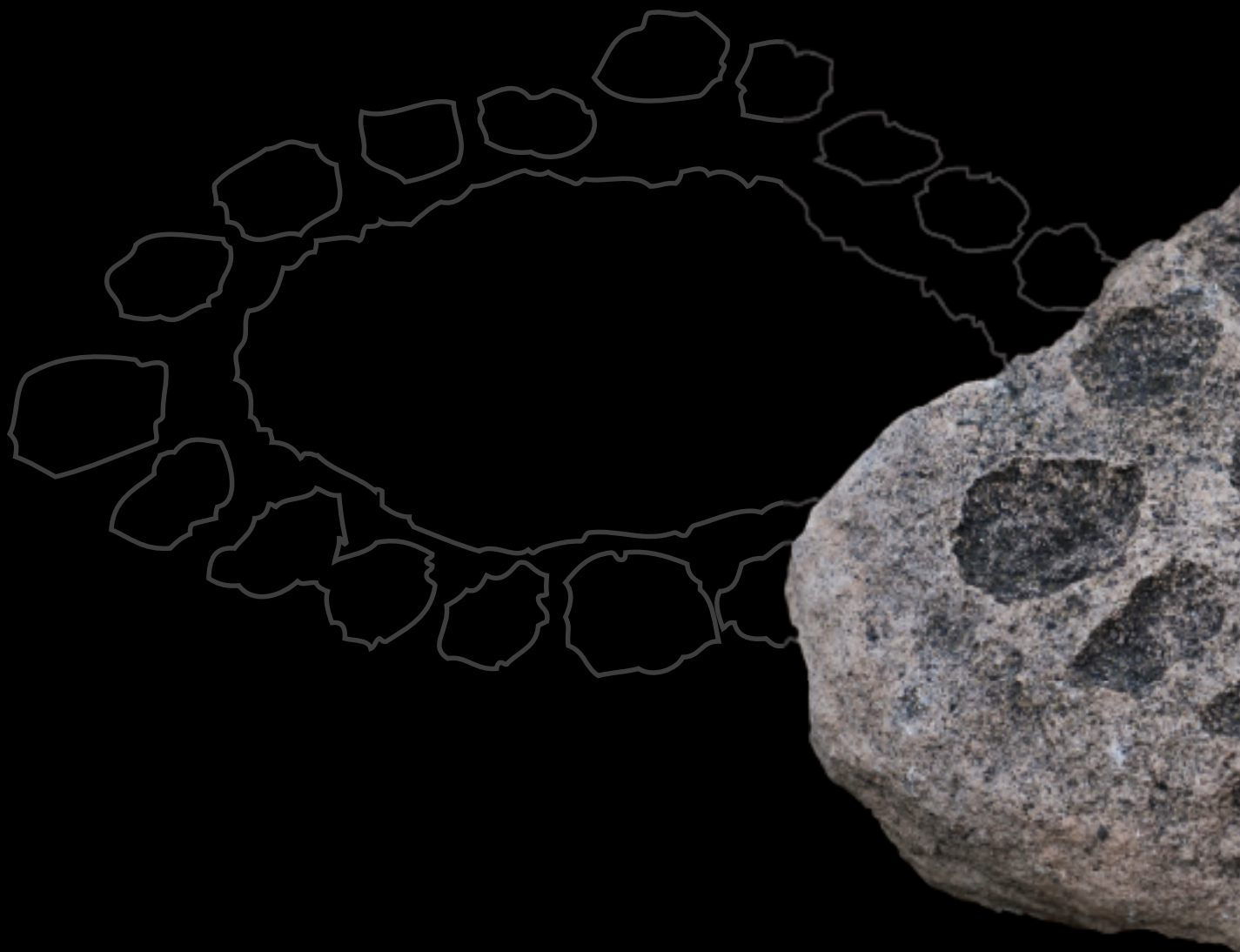


Rock art
Human and animal images
Stone
Absheron
3-2nd millenium BC
57x38x10cm
29kg





Dubendi tumulus, 3–2nd century B.C.
Gala Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum Complex



Rock art

A stone with symbol of the sun and stars

Zira settlement

3-2nd millennium BC

49x37x15cm

19.5 kg

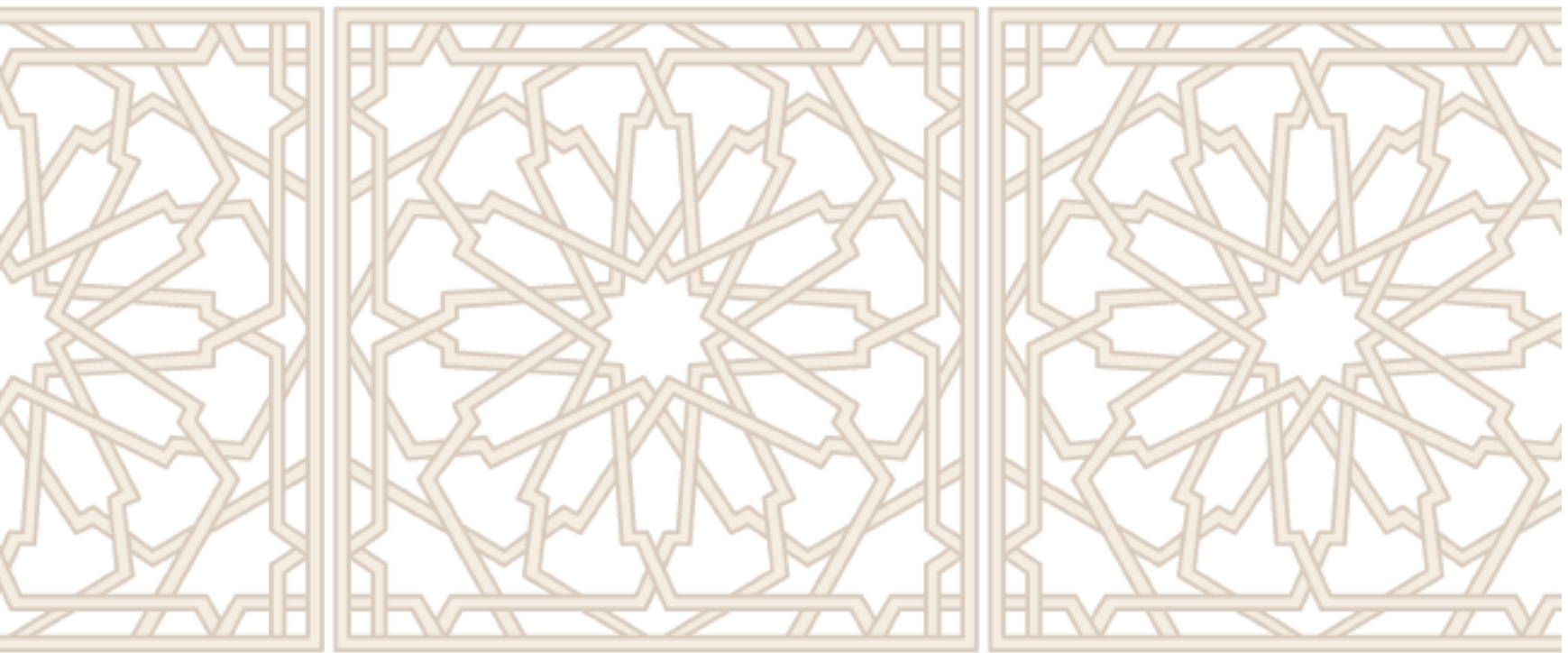




Rock art.
The Sun and fragment
Stone
Absheron
3-2nd millenium BC
49x37x12.5cm
19,5kg







Gemigaya

Location and Geographic Environment

Gemigaya is a mythical name of one of the highest peaks of the Lesser Caucasus (Mount Gapyjik, 3906 meters above sea level) located in Ordubad District of Nakhchivan, south-west Azerbaijan.

The peak of the mountain collapsed back in the Tertiary period, with large pieces of metamorphized tuff scattered throughout the southern and south-western slope. The area also features numerous springs at the mountain hollows. For millennia, frequent landslides and glaciers polished the rock surface to shining condition, thus providing the primeval artists with a sort of easel to leave their petroglyphs for generations to come.

Archaeological Complex of Gemigaya

The earliest information concerning rock carvings in Gemigaya emerged in 1992. The images found on rock include human beings, goats, aurochs, oxen, deer, etc. 1500 petroglyphs were registered and recorded as a result of the research. Most of the scenes depict semi-nomadic cults. Ruins of human inhabitation, burials and fragments of ceramic utensils excavated in Gemigaya provided some clue to the dating of the rock carvings which ranges from the 4th to the 1st millennium B.C. inclusive. The area adjacent to Gemigaya was the place for summer-time pastures as of the mid-early Bronze Age.



Gemigaya Mount, Ordubad





Image of a deer and spiral

Gemigaya

Bronze Age







Human and goat images

Gemigaya

Bronze Age





Anthropomorphic image and images of crosses within circles

Gemigaya

Bronze Age



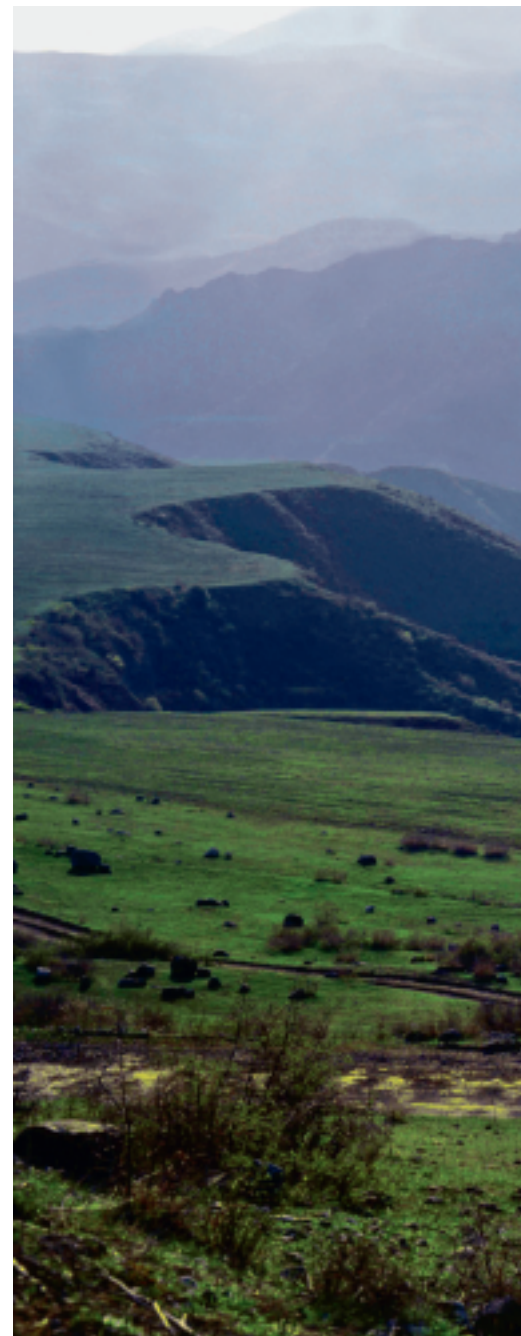


Kalbajar

Location and Geographic Environment

Kalbajar is an administrative district in the west of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In 1993 the whole area was occupied by Armenia and totally devastated. 60 thousand residents of Kalbajar were uprooted from their homes and casualties reached several thousand.

In 1967, multiple rock carvings were discovered in Kalbajar District, at the foot of Mount Delidagh, the Kalbajar Volcanic Highland (G.Ismayilzadeh, 1976). The largest cluster of rock carvings was discovered at Alagel kettle, 3000 meters above sea level. Numerous petroglyphs are located around the highland pastures and alpine meadows, the place is also known for large blocks of black basalt. The volcanic highland area constitutes the majority of Kalbajar's territory. The area mainly consists of Quaternary lava, so the major clusters of petroglyphs are concentrated at the banks of highland lakes, some of them filling the craters of extinct volcanoes. Lakeside areas are rich with obsidian, silicon, shale, soft porous tuff and granite. It were these rocks that have been attracting human beings to this place since times immemorial.





The view of mountains, Lachyn

Archaeological Complex of the Kalbajar Highland

The area boasts of 4000 carvings dating to the early Bronze Age. An early human settlement with round-saw type masonry dating back to the IV-III millennia B.C. (early Bronze Age) is of a very high significance from the standpoint of dating of local rock carvings. Remnants of human habitation in this highland area were discovered in 1976 when ruins of a circular stone construction with the diameter above 20 meters were found at the left bank of the Ter-ter river. The construction's inner walls were laid with river stone and massive pieces of rock. The walls were up to 2 meters deep. Both the floor and the ceiling were plastered with clay mixed with hay. Ruins of several circular-shaped stone masonry works with the diameter not exceeding 4 meters were found around.

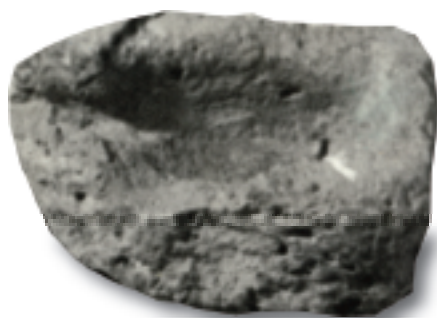
Round-shaped constructions of this type (i.e. constructions with circular plan) were quite typical of the Bronze Age in the areas like the South Caucasus or the Middle East. Similar structures (although of lesser dimensions than in Kalbajar) were used as residential premises. It may be assumed that back in the early Bronze Age period, the ruins of constructions found at the bank of the Ter-ter river could be used as dwellings of a mighty tribe. Fragments of simple and glazed vessels with typical semi-circular handles together with stone tools and hunting devices were found nearby. The tools included primitive millstones, knife plates and notched mattocks. The hunting tools comprised obsidian arrowheads. Production of clay utensils and pottery invariably triggered further development of agriculture and cattle-breeding. Emergence of dairy production in this period resulted in the appearance of churn and sieve.

The area features some truly unique rock carvings depicting day-to-day life of the early Bronze Age tribes engaged in agriculture and cattle-breeding. The presence of a cultural layer, rock carvings and permanent protected settlements was an outcome of the adaptation to the life in highland areas prolific with grassland.

Petroglyphs found at the Kalbajar Highland depict hunting scenes with primeval archers pursuing Caucasian goats. Some agricultural scenery such as oxen yoked with plough, harvesting and processing of grain crops, anthropomorphous figures with scythe, etc. may be found as well. Portrayals of leopards preying goats are of a



A small stone dish hewn on both sides
Kalbajar, Bronze Age



A stone dish of uncertain shape
Kalbajar, Bronze Age

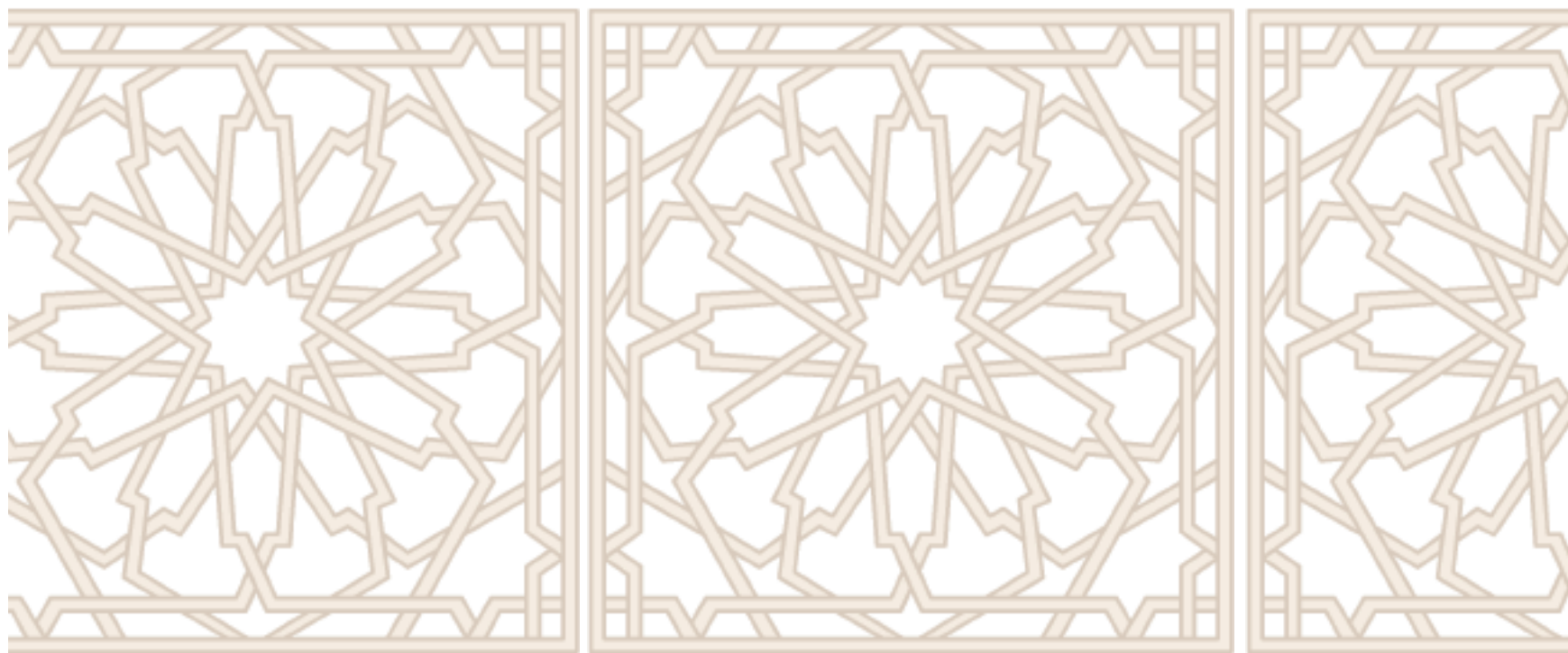


A fragment of stone with geometrical patterns
Kalbajar, Bronze Age

particular significance. Realistic images of leopards, deer and wolves are fascinating indeed.

Carts constitute a separate group of carvings. In general, emergence of carts and carriages in the territory of Azerbaijan dates back to the late Eneolithic period. During the Bronze and early Iron Ages, they were absolutely indispensable in transportation and economic life of local tribes. Multiple models of clay wheels found in various Bronze Age settlements all over Azerbaijan are a clear indication of this. Yet portrayals of bullock carts in highland areas inaccessible for carts is another proof of prevalence of this mode of transportation, therefore even the primeval highlanders were carving carts used by inhabitants of the plane areas. In fact, images of carts found in Kalbajar have a unique resemblance to those found in Gemigaya. Some researchers interpret them as an element of ritual tillage, whereas the others associate them with tiller's calendar.

Multiple images found in Kalbajar, this way or another originating from the works of Paleolithic artists in Gobustan, had a serious impact on the ceramic works of the Khojaly-Gedabey Archaeological Culture and bronze artifacts.





Garabagh

Archaeological Complex of Garabagh

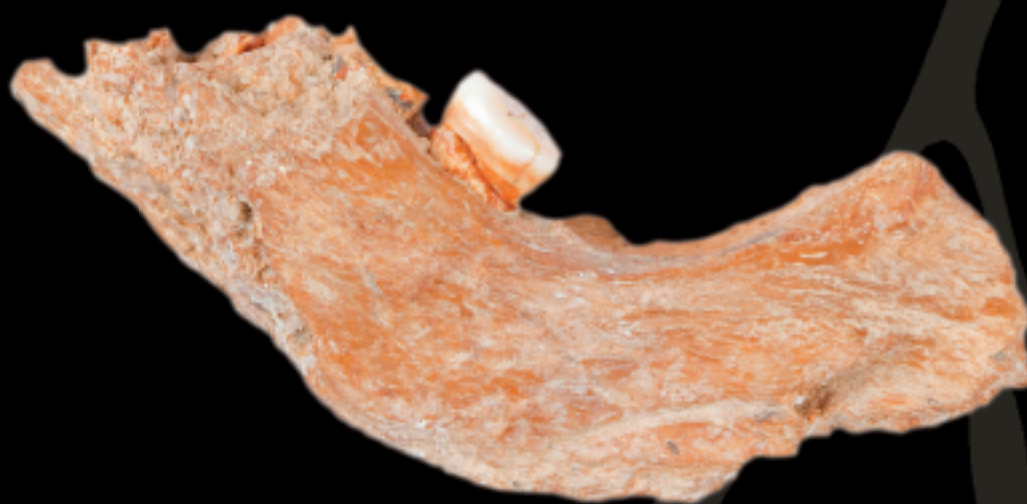
Located in the south-west of Azerbaijan, the region of Garabagh is one of the most ancient places of human habitation not only in the South Caucasus, but also in the whole of Eurasia.

Started in 1988, the separatism movement by Armenia resulted in occupation of the territory of Garabagh. Historical and cultural values considered as world heritage located in this territory were destroyed by the Armenian occupants.

The earliest archaeological culture in the Caucasus and the Middle East named Guruchay (2 million to 700 thousand years ago) was discovered in the cave of Azykh. Excavations in the Lower Paleolithic stratum revealed a jaw of a primeval human being aged 350-400 thousand years. The first find of its kind in the former Soviet Union and the third one in the world, this unique discovery provides clear evidence of the earliest human habitation in the territory of Azerbaijan. Another archaeological monument found in Garabagh – Taghlar cave from Early Stone age - was also a settlement for the ancient humans.

The jaw of an Anceulian man (the Azykh Man or Azykhantropos) who inhabited this area 350-400 thousand years ago is clear proof of Azerbaijan's being one of the earliest places of human habitation. This unique finding put Azerbaijan on the map of Europe's Most Ancient Residences.

Mammadali Husseinov, a known Azerbaijani archeologist, discovered lower jaw bone of an old human together with stone tools and petrified animal bones from average Ashel layer of Azykh Cave in July, 1968.



Fragment of jaw bone of Azykh man

Azykh Cave

350-400 thousand years ago

The National History Museum of Azerbaijan. 163





The view of Azykh Cave, Khojavand

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AZERBAIJAN

Petroglyphs

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