

FUNERAL RITE

Complex of actions and rites pointed to construct Geghovit tomb funeral system coincides usual Van-Tospian funeral rites, particularly to the kind of burials made in rock-cut (cave) tombs with combined version of inhumation and saecular burial; latter is characterized by collection of the human bones after the flesh has been removed by exposure, which is demonstrated in one instance. Door of the first funeral hall faced east. Right to the entrance corpse of an adult was crouched remained almost whole – on the right side – near north wall before and back to the narrow passageway leading next hall. There is no skull. Adult's skeleton occupied the hall in such a way that obviously blocked any motion in and probably guarded passage to the second main hall. Shards of three vessels – pithos, vessel with cylindrical body and flask – were scattered on the north-west corner of the western wall, not far from the corpse. Skulls and some remains of three men – of the age of 30-35, 45-55 and 50-60, - two women – of 20-25, 25-30, - and a child of 2-2.5 were thrown about the west wall in 1 metre from the vessels up and down, in disorder and without any anatomical integrity, against the door. As the pottery from this hall is synchronous, depended on the concrete stretch of time and both vessels and human remains are unearthed on the same plane, it seems to be a burial made simultaneously within adjacent halls.

Members of guide staff (men, women and some children) have been assassinated stipulated by the dead of principal person, then removed into the first of cave-tomb halls during this simultaneous collective act. This was the basic form of funeral rite. Such a funeral complex with simultaneous act is well known from the archaeological complexes in the Armenian Highland – Artik, Keti, Voskchask, Horom, Lori berd, Makarashen, Metsamor, Mayisian, Elar, Oshakan, Yeghegnadzor, Golovino, Djirarat and so on - and particularly Sevan basin – Lchashen, Chkalovka, Hayravank, Noratus, Gavar (former Kamo), Mrtbi dzor, Sarukhan, Karmir-gyugh, Nerkin Getashen, Zolakar, Karchaghbiur, Akunk and so on – and they date from the Bronze and Iron Ages (III-I millennia B.C.).

Comparison of the latter with epic heroes known from the Armenian writing sources, folk legends and national epic as Artavazd-Shidar and youthful Mher; as well as with similar persons and topics of Eurasian mythological systems, makes possible assume that the person of high social rank have been sepulchred in Geghovit cave-tomb, and funeral rite devoted to him have been fulfilled according to the ritual dedicated to the Dying and Raising God and divinity of the Storm and War.

Concluding data given by mythology, archaeology, linguistics and palaeoanthropology, it may be recorded that the rite realized in Geghovit Van-Tospian cave-tomb had old and deep traditions in the Armenian Highland. Nevertheless quantity and stock introduced in have been changed for a time but attitude, ideology and rite constituting the true essence of this cultural phenomenon have been untouched. Thus it testifies to the absolute interdependency, succession and continuity of ethno-cultural realities characteristic to the concrete area, - Armenian Highland and adjacent regions, - and period – early III millennium B.C. – late I millennium B.C.

TOMB DATING

Two essential facts work on the strict dating of Geghovit cave-tomb:

- a) circumstances of dagger-akinak discovery,
- b) presence of sign done by the principles of the Hittite hieroglyphic writing on the bronze vessel.

Dagger-akinaks are largely spread in the synchronous complexes of the Armenian Highland, Caucasus, South Russian steppes, Crimea, Central Asia and Iranian plateau. Earliest examples of them have been emerged in the last quarter of the VIII century B.C. and continued to be practiced down to the end of the I millennium B.C.

In its own turn, the Hittite hieroglyphic writing is in fact known by the mid of the II millennium B.C.; it have been practiced in the Hittite empire without any interruption, and then in the late Hittite