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## GLASSWARE FROM THE ANCIENT MONUMENTS OF LOWLAND KARABAKH

### Abstract

There are a lot of glassware among the archaeological materials revealed from the ancient monuments of Lowland Karabakh, especially from the burial monuments. From the Shortepe in Barda region, Galatepe in Aghjabadi district, Govurgala in Aghdam region and other monuments were founded glass bowls, bottles, plates, jugs, as well as various decorations that were made by the technique of casting and blasting. The artifacts identified in this area can be divided into three groups: locally produced items; antique imports that came to Caucasian Albania as a result of its extensive trade and economic ties with the outside world; local production emulating antique imports.

All glassware from the monuments of Caucasian Albania, based on forms and functionality, is classified into five main groups: balsamaria, bottles, glasses, jugs, and bowls. Analysis of glassware shows that the beginning of the local glass production in Albania dated by the end of the II-III centuries AD. Glassware related to the previous centuries were brought to Albania from the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire as a result of the trade relations.

**Keywords:** *Lowland Karabagh, Albania, Galatepe, Shortepe, glassware*

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### Düzən Qarabağın antik dövr abidələrindən aşkar olunmuş şüşə məmulatları

#### Xülasə

Düzən Qarabağın antik dövr abidələrindən, xüsusilə qəbir abidələrindən tapılan arxeoloji materiallar arasında şüşə məmulatı da vardır. Bərdə rayonundakı Şortəpə, Ağcabədi rayonundakı Qalatəpə, Ağdam rayonundakı Govurqala və digər abidələrdə şüşədən hazırlanmış qədəh, fincan, ətriyyat qabı, eləcə də tökmə və qumlama üsulu ilə hazırlanmış müxtəlif bəzək əşyaları və başqa qab nümunələrinə rast gəlinmişdir. Bu ərazidə aşkar edilmiş artefaktları üç qrupa bölmək olar: yerli istehsal olan əşyalar; xarici dünya ilə geniş ticarət və iqtisadi əlaqələri nəticəsində Qafqaz Albaniyasına gələn antikvar idxalı; antikvar idxalını təqlid edən yerli istehsal.

Qafqaz Albaniyasının abidələrindən olan bütün şüşə məmulatları forma və funksionallığına görə beş əsas qrupa - balzamariya, butulkalar, stəkanlar, küplər və kasalara təsnif edilir. Şüşə məmulatının təhlili göstərir ki, Albaniyada yerli şüşə istehsalının başlanğıc tarixi II-III əsrlərə aiddir. Daha əvvəlki əsrlərə aid şüşə qab nümunələri isə ticarət əlaqələri nəticəsində Roma imperiyasının şərq əyalətlərindən Albaniyaya gətirilmişdir.

**Açar sözlər:** *Düzən Qarabağ, Albaniya, Qalatəpə, Şortəpə, şüşə məmulatı*

#### Introduction

The unified and general culture of ancient Albania, high for its time, had its own local characteristics, formed on ancient local traditions. Archaeological material revealed as a result of the study of ancient monuments of Caucasian Albania in the area of Lowland Karabakh forms the factual basis for the reconstruction of many issues in the field of material and spiritual culture. At

the same time, during its analysis, both general Albanian elements, characteristic of almost the entire territory of Caucasian Albania in the ancient period, and specific local features, characteristic of Lowland Karabakh, are clearly visible. In connection with the above, the artifacts identified in this area can be divided into three groups:

- ❖ locally produced items;
- ❖ antique imports that came to Caucasian Albania as a result of its extensive trade and economic ties with the outside world;
- ❖ local production emulating antique imports.

### **Classification**

There are glass items among the archaeological equipment discovered in the ancient monuments of Lowland Karabakh. All glassware from the monuments of Caucasian Albania, based on forms and functionality, is classified into five main groups: balsamaria, bottles, glasses, jugs, and bowls. Among them, balsamaria predominate quantitatively, which, in turn, according to the shape of the body, is divided into the following three types: drop-shaped, hemispherical, and ovoid. Of particular interest among this group of materials is the elegant glass balsamarium made by blowing, discovered in the Galatepe jug burial (Fig. 1). It has a hemispherical shape, a high, narrow neck, and is covered with enamel (Melikov, Aliev, 2011: 318). According to J.A. Khalilov, such balsamaria was brought to Albania from the Middle East, in particular from Syria. According to M.M. Rasulova, such balsamaria initially appeared in Caucasian Albania from Asia Minor, and subsequently their local production was established (Rasulova, 2008: 173). Note that the production of such vessels has been recorded since the beginning of the 1st century AD in almost all provinces of the Roman Empire (Kruglikova, 1984: 75-79). They were widely known in the ancient and Hellenistic worlds. Also, at the monuments of Lowland Karabakh, in particular, Shortepe (Barda) and Govurgala (Agdam), glass balsamaria, glasses, bottles, bowls, and various decorations that were made using casting and blowing techniques were discovered (Nuriev, 2009: 142-175; Fig. 2-4).

### **Glass production technology**

Glass manufacturing technology has a long history. For the first time, they learned how to make man-made glass in Ancient Egypt and Western Asia (Technology, 1979: 48-49). Glass was melted in small crucibles, and the resulting translucent mass was molded to imitate ornamental stones for inserts into rings, jewelry, and later, dishes. Already in the 2nd millennium BC, the technique of pressing glass in open molds appears (Technology, 1979: 49). However, a real revolution in glass production technology occurred at the turn of two eras when they learned to make colorless transparent glass and mold products using the blowing method. The glass-blowing tube was invented in Western Asia (Phenicia, Syria) in the 1st century BC. It turned out to be a universal tool, thanks to which it became possible to create a variety of utensils and, first of all, dishes. Interestingly, glass vessels in Albania were made in the likeness of ceramic vessels used in everyday life (Huseynova, 2014: 124).

The production of glass products in the northern regions of historical Azerbaijan, and in particular in the territory of the modern Republic of Azerbaijan, began at the end of the 2nd millennium BC. These were glass beads, which were recorded in large quantities in many ground and burial mounds of Mingachevir (Aslanov, Vaidov, 1959: 154-155), Khachbulag (Kesamanly, 1999: 116-117), Shamkir (Rosendorf, 1906: 86-108), and Jalilabad (Jafarzadeh, 1946: 31-32), related to the monuments of the Khojaly-Gedabey culture. According to experts, a significant part of the bead material identified in the monuments of the Khojaly-Gedabey culture is a locally produced product (Nuriev, 2009: 143). At the same time, G.P. Kesamanly notes that glass beads found in mound No. 2 and burial No. 9 with a mass grave in the Khachbulag Yaylag should also be included as imported items. They cannot be recognized as locally produced products. The production of such jewelry required the lengthy development of complex technical skills (Kesamanly, 1999: 117).

During the period of antiquity, the production of glass jewelry increased even more. The vast majority of burials of all types on the territory of Azerbaijan from the ancient period contain a variety of glass beads. This fully applies to all the studied graves of the ancient period in the area of Lowland Karabakh. In general, glass beads in all regions of Caucasian Albania are almost identical. Both in Albania and in the neighboring states of the South Caucasus in the ancient period, beads made of glass with internal gilding, as well as beads of gray-blue or dirty yellow colors, became a mass phenomenon. Beads of this type were found in III–II BC and became mass material throughout the South Caucasus (Golubkina, 1989: 29).

### **Local glass production**

In our opinion, A.B. Nuriev was absolutely right when he noted that in Albania from the very beginning of its existence (IV century BC), there was local glass production (Nuriev, 1965: 113-122). He also notes that among the glass decorations, along with local ones, there were, judging by the appearance and manufacturing technique, also imported products from those countries in which glassmaking was more ancient than in Albania (Nuriev, 2009: 145). In this regard, the statements of such researchers as V.I. Leviatov and K.V. Trever (Leviatov, 1950: 65-92; Trever, 1959: 80) that glass production in Albania began only in the first centuries of our era are no longer consistent with the factual archaeological material that Albanian studies have today. There is no reason to assert that glass production, which had already established itself in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages, was then stopped and revived again at the beginning of our era.

Another thing - specifically the production of glassware. Here, all Azerbaijani researchers, based on an analysis of factual material, come to the conclusion that the beginning of local production of glass vessels can be dated back to the end of the 2nd–3rd centuries AD.

### **Imported items**

A.B. Nuriev believes that almost all glass vessels before the 3rd century AD were imported ones. In his fundamental work devoted to the production of glass in Caucasian Albania, he gives a detailed analysis of the glass vessels identified here from the ancient and early medieval periods and, based on the manufacturing technique, artistic design, and chemical composition of glass objects, identifies imported samples among them, indicating the probable centers of their production (Osmanov, 1975: 83-101). Noting that a significant part of the glass vessels identified from ancient monuments on the territory of Albania were made in Syrian and Phoenician centers of production, he simultaneously points out that the most likely route for their penetration into Caucasian Albania is the well-known waterway from the Black Sea and further along the rivers Rion and Kura to Albania. Therefore, in his opinion, imports from North Africa (Alexandria) and Europe (Rome and its provinces) were brought to Albania (Nuriev, 1966: 7).

J.A. Khalilov also believes that glass vessels in Caucasian Albania before the 3rd century AD were only imported from the countries of the Middle East. Starting from the 3rd century AD Albanian craftsmen mastered the technique of preparing glass vessels (Khalilov, 1985: 131). The same opinion is shared by I.A. Babaev, who writes that some glass products came to Caucasian Albania from Syria, Egypt, and Cyprus (Babaev, 1990: 143).

### **Conclusion**

Thus, the glass vessels identified in the monuments, in particular the burials of Lowland Karabakh, date back to the boundaries of two eras, are most likely also antique imports. At the same time, it should be noted that art critic N.I. Rzaev, analyzing the art glass of Caucasian Albania, believes that part of the glassware, especially vessels of the 1st–2nd centuries AD with flutes, which Azerbaijani archaeologists consider imported items, may be locally produced because their forms and decoration have significant similarities with the artistic ceramics of Caucasian Albania (Rzaev, 1976: 147).

Apparently, it is too early to put an end to the question of the place of production of glass vessels from the ancient period identified on the territory of Caucasian Albania. This problem

concerning each vessel should be specifically studied, taking into account a whole variety of factors, and researchers will return to this problem more than once. But in any case, until centers of craft production with characteristic tools for semi-finished products and manufacturing defects are archaeologically recorded, our conclusions will remain only at the level of assumptions.



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