





**AZERBAIJAN'S ANCIENT
HISTORICAL SITE,
THE AZYKH CAVE, FREED
FROM OCCUPATION**



The counter-offensive operation of the Azerbaijani army launched in response to Armenian provocations on 27 September 2020 led to the liberation of not only settlements, but also of sites that are of no particular importance from a military-strategic point of view. One of such sites is Azykh Cave. It was liberated in early November 2020 and on 19 November 2020, Azerbaijani soldiers shared video footage showing that the retreating Armenian troops had planted mines in the cave. So what kind of a site is this if the Armenian side plants mines in it and the Azerbaijani side, having liberated it, raises its flag over it as over a site of national importance?

In 1960, Azerbaijani scientists led by prominent archaeologist Mammadali Huseynov discovered the most ancient human site in the Azykh Cave on the banks of the

Guruchay River in Karabakh. Instruments of labor more than 1.2 million years old, the remains of stone-fenced hearths and a primitive dwelling that existed here 300 millennia ago, a cache with the skulls of cave bears that served as objects of worship (there were scratches on the skulls – images that were considered elements of primitive human art) were found in the cave. There were so many finds and they were so significant that they were singled out into a special “Guruchai culture”. In 1968, fragments of the lower jaw of an ancient man named Azykhantropus were found. Based on materials from Azykh, hundreds of research papers and monographs were written and dissertations were defended. Archaeologist Damir Hajiyev defended his PhD thesis on the bones of an Azykhantropus in Moscow. His thesis was so



successful that the scientist was awarded a doctoral degree instead of a candidate's. The cave was an outstanding scientific discovery – the fifth such find in the history of archeology. From 1960 to 1980, Azerbaijani scientists carried out a lot of work to study the occupation layers on an area of at least 8,000 square meters. A corridor was restored that was divided by eight majestic grottoes with 20-meter domes and 2-meter-tall and 1.5-meter-wide stalactite columns. Archaeological materials, including human remains, were transferred to the Museum of the History of Azerbaijan, where they are kept to this day. Archaeological research in the cave continued for decades, hundreds of Soviet and Western scientists have visited it. A cast from the Azykh jaw, along with other ancient finds from other countries of the world, was used to reconstruct the appearance of a young Neanderthal girl, a model of which is shown at the Natural History Museum in London. Thus, the Azykh Cave was recognized as one of the oldest in the world.

However, everything changed after the occupation of Karabakh and the adjacent seven districts of Azerbaijan by Armenian armed forces. Armenian chauvinists, having destroyed and falsified monuments testifying to

the history and culture of the Azerbaijani people in the occupied territories, realized that it was possible to use the Azykh Cave as evidence of ancient Armenian roots.

First, "Azykh" was renamed. Armenian "scientists", followed by journalists, declared that the cave was actually called "Azokh", or "unripe grapes". At the second stage of the renaming, it was declared that "the locals (Armenians, of course) sometimes call the cave Virvan (Vorvan) or Virapavan, which can be translated as "abode in the pit". This is how the cave began to be referred to as "Azokh-Vorvan" or "Vorvan" cave. The village next to the cave with the ancient Azerbaijani name Salakoty was renamed into Armenian Drakhtik. Then illegal archaeological excavation began in the cave. The protests of the Azerbaijani side fell on deaf ears. Finally, the operation of the Azerbaijani army restored justice: the invaders were driven out.

In this issue, we are publishing an article by archaeologist Azad Zeynalov, which shows the place of the Azykh Cave among most ancient monuments of mankind. 🌟

**From the editorial board
of "Irs-Heritage"**