

## SECTION OF HISTORICAL SCIENCES

### THE HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HISTORICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC THOUGHT IN AZERBAIJAN IN THE AZERBAIJANI HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE XX CENTURY – THE BEGINNING OF THE XXI CENTURY

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#### Abstract

The history of the study of the population of Azerbaijan, except for its individual fragments, has not yet been studied. Therefore, in the study and development of the demographic knowledge of Azerbaijan, the ancient demographic views of Azerbaijani people are of great importance. From the very first steps of the scientific study of demographic knowledge, one of the main issues was the problem of sources. Actually, it spontaneously arose at the end of the primitive society in the form of cave paintings and customs. These customs gave rise to an increase in population. The people of Azerbaijan are one of the most ancient peoples of the world. In Azerbaijan, even in antiquity, there was a great tendency to have many children. To protect ourselves and all our loved ones from all sorts of troubles, evil spirits and misfortunes, our ancestors asked for help from natural phenomena. According to the beliefs of our ancestors, the Sun and fire, water and stone are the main sources of heat, light and fertility. All these issues of historical demography are also highlighted in the writings of some Azerbaijani historians, archaeologists and ethnographers.

**Keywords:** historical demographic thought, population growth, population settlement, demographic knowledge, Azerbaijani historiography.

**Introduction.** In the formation and development of demographic knowledge in Azerbaijan, the system of beliefs and astral visions associated with birth and death, population growth, and in general, the beginning and end of life on earth have existed since ancient times and played a big role in the formation and development of Azerbaijani people.

Prior to conducting special researches on historical demography by professional historians in Azerbaijan, demographic knowledge was reflected in the system of views on population growth and settlement of Azerbaijani nation. Considering that historical demography itself as a field of science begins with the article published by the French scientists L. Chevalier and M. Reinard in 1946 in the collection of scientific articles called "Population" of the Institute of Demographic Studies in Paris, then it becomes clear that this field of science is very young. This once again proves how important the views of the peoples of the world, including Azerbaijani people who have made unparalleled contributions to human culture on population growth are important in the emergence of historical demography as a separate branch of the science of demography.

**Main part.** Favorable geographical factors of the area and relations with the developed countries of the Near and Middle East also played an important role in the formation of the demographic views regarding the rich system of beliefs of Azerbaijani people, who have had a turbulent journey from the Azykh cave to this day. It is for this reason that in Azerbaijan, as well as in the South Caucasus, there are monuments relating to almost all archaeological stages. Gamiqaya is one of the important monuments in terms of learning scientific

knowledge about the historical demography of Azerbaijani people. Descriptions of Gamiqaya are of incomparable importance for studying the ancient history and culture of Nakhchivan, including the way of life of our ancestors who lived in this area in the VII – I millennia BC, their demographic views and belief system. Here, an animal, a man and a snake are depicted on the 71st rock. The schematic animal drawings on the rock in question are depicted leaning back to back, as if along an oval-shaped circle connecting them. According to Vali Aliyev, an eminent Azerbaijan archaeologist who studied the monuments of Gamiqaya, this scene shows a symbolic image related to birth and population growth. According to the scientist, in this description, human growth is given as a force that protects the newly born generation. And the snake is depicted as a symbol of the force that protects demographic growth [7, p.45].

Beliefs related to the positive effect of snakes on population growth and health can also be found in the later periods of our history: *pir*<sup>1</sup> related to the snake worship in Azerbaijan still exist today: "Until today, the subject of snake worship in Azerbaijan is of natural interest. For example, patients who come to the *pir* called Suhamidi near Baku try to recover by visual contact with the snakes in the area of the *pir*" [6, p.57].

The culture of painted vessels of the Middle Bronze Age of Nakhchivan can be considered one of the rarest art examples of the ancient world, not only because of its high artistic and aesthetic design, but also in terms of the study of ancient ideas about the historical demography of Azerbaijani people. Thus, several polychrome painted vessels found in Qızılburun attract

<sup>1</sup> "Pir" or "ocaq" is a place of worship related to religious faith and belief.

attention because of the colorful plot of their ornaments. On one of these dishes, two people standing opposite each other between triangles are drawn. One of them belongs to a man and the other to a woman. The drawing of a man with one arm bent at the elbow and holding a red scarf in his hand, wearing a black backcloth, a red belt around his waist, and a red hat on his head is painted in black. The abundant use of red colors in the image of men is a sign of the sun, which protects the growth of generations. In the primitive society, the sun was considered the most sacred being that protects the human race from cold, hunger, evil forces, and consequently from death: "The worship of the sun and fire in the Gamiqaya pantheon, which is the highest mountain peak in the territory of Nakhchivan, also had a special meaning. ...It seems that meeting and observing the sunrise at the place where there are Gamiqaya paintings was considered a very sacred ritual among the local tribes in ancient times" [7, p.44].

Bending his other arm down, he extended the triangular shaped tool in his hand towards the woman in front of him. The woman raised her arms and extended one hand towards the man. Each of its shoulders has three protrusions reminiscent of a feather. Depicting the figures as if they dance, increases the dynamism of the composition. In general, from primitive images to the present day, movement or being in motion means interacting with the ever-expanding, growing, multiplying universe and environment. Movement is the main indicator of existence and life. Birth and death are undeniable, objective phenomena of existence. But if these two events happen at the same time, in the same amount, will life continue? Of course, for the permanence of life, birth must surpass death and should stand on the highest level like the sun. That is why our great ancestors connected all their demographic views and rites related to growth with the sun, its symbol on earth, the hearth, and preferred red colors. In the mentioned image, the fact that the belt on the man's waist, the hat on his head, and the handkerchief in his hand are red is proof of the above. A. Valiyev rightly connected the mentioned image with demographic growth: "It is likely that a very interesting dance or ritual ceremony related to generational growth and life is reflected in the symbolic image" [7, p.62].

In general, since primitive society, many elements of nature, heavenly bodies, for example, the sun and all the living and "inanimate" beings, ongons and objects that symbolized it in the thinking of our ancestors have been sacred, protecting the human race from evil forces not only in this world, but also in the hereafter. This ancient system of demographic views is also proved by

the archaeological finds discovered in the territory of Azerbaijan. Numerous studies and findings of Azerbaijani scientists in this field prove this fact once again. This matchless system of demographic views of Azerbaijani people, which has made incomparable contributions to the treasure of human culture, is widely reflected in our ancient customs and traditions, in artistic ceramics, which is one of the broadest fields of applied art, especially in the field of carpet weaving. So, warm colors, which are the symbol of the sun in our carpets, symbolize life, birth, population growth, population settlement, and dark-black colors symbolize darkness, the underground kingdom and, therefore, death. The struggle of opposites is constantly repeated and eternal, therefore, all the events and processes that take place on earth, including the birth that causes population growth, and the death that causes its decrease, are repeated and permanent because they are objective. It is for this reason that the battle scene of the black dragon containing death and evil forces is repeated twice on this carpet, which has an intermediate area of red and yellow colors, with a Simurg<sup>2</sup>, which symbolizes demographic growth.

In Azerbaijan, the custom of burial in pitchers began in the VI century BC and continued until the VII century AD. An interesting aspect here is that in all studied genotaph jar graves, as a rule, a flat piece of stone was placed on the edge of the jar. There is no doubt that this was related to the traditional stone beliefs of the population. R. Goyushov rightly wrote: "The pitcher graves were the product of such a religious belief that man was created from the soil. Just as he slept in the mother's womb until he was born for the temporary world, so should he be in such situation when he goes to the permanent world (the hereafter – A.M.). Thus, the pitcher was created as a symbol of the mother's womb" [8, p.29].

In the Pergamon Museum, located in Berlin, Germany, there is a small pile carpet with an original composition woven in Karabakh in the XV century. This carpet called "Dragon and Phoenix", which is among the rare exhibits of the museum, depicts the struggle between good and evil [3]. It is known that even in the most ancient times of human history in the Near and Middle East, including in Azerbaijan, along with rams, oxen, goats and other real domestic animals, the legendary simurg bird (phoenix) was also considered sacred as a symbol of the sun. Our ancient ancestors found the simurg as the source of the Sun on earth, the "source" of strength and courage, and considered it the guardian of generation, the protector of life.

<sup>2</sup> Simurg (or phoenix) is a benevolent, mythical bird. It is considered the king of all birds in Turkic-speaking and Persian mythologies.



*"Dragon and Phoenix" carpet, Pergamon Museum, Berlin, Germany.*

According to the astral views of Azerbaijani people, every celestial body and every being in the infinite universe has its reflection. The eternal struggle of these beings, which are always in opposition to each other, does not leave Earth without its influence. Our ancestors treated life and death, fertility and drought as the result of this struggle. In the system of demographic views of the population growth of the Azerbaijani people, respect and attachment to important natural elements such as land and water have deep roots. Azerbaijan has extremely geopolitical and geostrategic importance and is located in a favorable geographical location. Moreover, the presence of the most diverse climate zones in Azerbaijan, the abundance of rich underground and surface resources, the existing trade relations with the developed states of the ancient East, which have been expanding since the Bronze Age had a big impact to the diversity of the religious beliefs of the people living here [20, p.103].

Great-grandfathers of Azerbaijanis, who created fire by hitting two flint stones together, made practical use of the law of conservation of energy. So, the spark created as a result of the stones rubbing against each other was actually the transformation of static-frictional energy into thermal energy. Therefore, the stone that "gives birth" to light and heat made an incomparable contribution to human life and reproduction by improving the living conditions and household, saving it from the destructive frosts of winter and the claws of wild animals. The desire to live and increase one's offspring and the desire to realize it determined the high status of stones in the system of religious beliefs of our great ancestors, and laid the foundation for worshipping them: "...Our ancient ancestors, by fetishizing stones, waters, mountains, and trees, laid the foundation of pir, which were considered sacred places in later times" [14, p.57].

People believed that the stars shining in the sky, or the planets and satellites reflecting their light, were of terrestrial origin, that is, they were composed of metal

and metal oxides, including elements of stone origin. In other words, our great ancestors, who helped to eliminate their daily needs, ordered the sacred stones as auspicious elements in their mythological imaginations, attributed to them properties that could help birth and growth. Sometimes, the stones can directly help the increase of generation that will "replace" the stillborn children of people. So, according to ancient beliefs, stones also give children to people. In one example of mythological folklore, the stone gives the woman who gave birth to a stillborn child the bliss of experiencing the joy of motherhood. So, that mother hides her dead child from the fear of her husband and puts a stone in the crib instead of child, and starts rocking it: "When the husband returns home, he is very happy that his wife has put down her burden. He goes to the crib in order to look his child. The bride quickly gets up and says that a child just fell asleep and don't wake him up. After waiting for a while, the man loses patience. He doesn't listen to his wife's words and puts himself in the crib. He sees that there is a beautiful child in the crib. Both are surprised. The wife sees that the stone she placed in the crib was turned to a child. The husband is also surprised that a one-day-old child sings with saying "I have neither father nor mother, I was born from stone" [2, p.81-82].

According to popular belief, stones can also be mothers, that is, they can reproduce by giving growth and offspring. In Leyti village of Shabran district, Azerbaijan, a large stone with many small stones around it is called "stone that give birth" ("balalayan daş" in Azerbaijani). Even now, the inhabitants of that village, who respect the folk beliefs, explain the multiplication of small stones around that big stone every year as if the mother stone is giving birth. We meet the same faith and belief in other corners of Azerbaijan. According to the words of 106-year-old Sakina Ali gizi Huseynova, who used to live in Khanaga village of Julfa district, Azerbaijan: "There is a hill near the village of Qizilca.

It is called "Daban Tepesi". The stones there were a pir. They came down from the sky, they know the past and the future. They know the pain of people and their medicine. One of the stones was much bigger than the rest. Among the people, that stone is considered the mother of others. Small stones were also his children. The mother stone always gives birth..." [2, p.82].

Ancient ancestors of Azerbaijanis were also interested in the number of people living on earth. But where and how to learn and get this number? One of the interesting aspects is that our great-grandfathers considered the starry sky as a sign showing the number of people, its increase or decrease: "The number of stars in the sky is equal to the number of people living on earth. Everyone has a star. When a person dies, his star also sinks, which is called starflight. The day a person is born, his star is also born in the sky." [1, p.282].

In the early demographic views of great ancestors of Azerbaijanis, important demographic phenomena such as birth and death were described as dialectically complementary processes through separate elements of nature or with reference to them. From this point of view, the demographic views of one of the greatest thinkers of the East, Ibn Sina attracts attention. He considered death as a logical continuation of life, a process of replacement of living beings and their descendants on earth. According to Ibn Sina, the human race is created, develops and after a certain period of time gives way to other generations, if this were not the case, then the people on the Earth, which has a limited land area, would increase to an extreme degree, and living would reach an unbearable level. The eminent Azerbaijani scientist N. Tusi, who called Ibn Sina a "master" in his works, approached the event of death from the same position as Ibn Sina and wrote: "In philosophy, it is said that everything created can be destroyed; therefore, he who does not want to be destroyed, wants not to be created" [18, p.136]. N.Tusi writes on behalf of Ibn Sina in this quote: "If our ancestors had not died, it would not have been our turn, if it was possible to live forever, it would have been possible for those before us. If all the people who have ever been born and died were alive, they would not fit on the earth. If we suppose that all the people who descended from one of the past people whose ancestors and descendants are known and famous had survived, they would have been very numerous. If you add the people who were born and died before and after him, see how many thousands they will reach?" [18, p.136-137].

In the demographic thinking of great ancestors of Azerbaijanis, death is characterized as an important objective event that naturally regulates population growth. In the mythical thinking of of Azerbaijani people, water is also considered a holy being that justifies the afterlife, death, and can justify it as a natural consequence of human life. In one of the ancient mythological texts belonging to Azerbaijani people, it is mentioned that Alexander the Great, who was looking for the water of life, allegedly found it in Shirvan. When he wanted to fill his golden cup from the spring and drink, a bird flapped its wings and poured the water on the

ground. Alexander was furious. When he took out his bow and arrow and wanted to shoot the bird, he heard a voice from the unseen:

- Alexander, do not shoot that bird, it is your savior. I sent it because I felt sorry for you.

The sound came from hard rock. Alexander walked towards him. He began to listen closely to the voice:

- O Alexander, I once drank from this fountain of life and gained immortality. My name was "Diri Baba" ("Living Grandfather"). As the world existed, I existed. Decades have passed. My spouse, my grandchild, my grandson, my cousin, my brother, my sister, my brother-in-law have passed away. I was left alone. There was a time when I lived as a human. My mind was working, my hands were sewing. I thought it was good to be immortal. Now, neither my eyes see, nor my brain thinks, nor my hands grasp someone's hand. Say to yourself, "Who needed such vitality?". Alexander did not drink the water and returned with regret [1, p.48].

Historically, Azerbaijani people were chosen by their family spirit. This fact is also confirmed by ancient authors who provide information about our compatriots. When talking about the tendency of the ancient Medes to have many children, Strabo wrote, "Marriages take place in the spring, at the time of the equinox of day and night, and after eating camel brains and apples, they are getting married". Strabo specifically emphasized that polygamy was widespread in the mountainous part of Media, where men kept several concubines along with their wives, and a special prize was given for having many children every year [23, p.733].

The family life of Azerbaijanis is widely reflected in the epic "Book of Dede Gorgut". In the epic, being the owner of a child and experiencing the joy of fatherhood is described as an honorable and proud event. It is said in the epic that Bayandir Khan, the khan of the khans<sup>3</sup>, used to invite Oguz beys to visit him once a year. On one of these days, he orders to take the one who has a son to the white room, the one who has a daughter to the golden room, and the one who has no children to the black room. So, fathers of sons and daughters are actually the people who increase the Oguz generation, ensure its economic, political and military invincibility and security. Therefore, they are treated with respect and honor by the khan of khans, Bayandir Khan. In fact, this scene described in the epic can be evaluated as a demographic policy implemented at the state level in the direction of population growth in Oghuz. On the other hand, both the event in question and the worship of guardian spirits and holy powers related to the care given to pregnant women and newborn children in ancient beliefs of Azerbaijani people once again indicate that our people have been closely connected to the family since ancient times.

In the Azerbaijani family, great importance is attached to the fact that a woman is smart and elegant. The famous Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi saw that Afaq, who was given to him as a slave by the king of Darband, was very pure and clean, and made her his

<sup>3</sup> Khan is a royal title for a ruler.

lifelong companion. He advises his son Muhammed to love his mother, motherland, and woman. Nizami Ganjavi, staying true to his love throughout his life, writes:

Marry only one wife so you can be dear,

A polygamous man remains lonely.

When the emperor of Trebizond, who was captured in one of the battles with Agqoyunlu, was brought to Uzun Hasan, he asked him: "For what amount can I buy myself?" Uzun Hasan replied: "I have found the man I desire. I don't value it with money. It is said that you have an intelligent and good-natured daughter named Feodora. Marry her to me" – he said. When emperor of Trebizond said: "How can I do this when we are Christians and you are pagans?" Uzun Hasan protested: "It doesn't bother me". After that Feodora was sent to Agqoyunlu palace [9, p.26]. This fact clearly shows that Azerbaijanis approach the issues of family building with extreme responsibility, and at the same time, they are sensitive to the issues of maintaining pure love, mutual trust, and healthy relationships in the family. Historically, the main reasons for the strength and longevity of families in Azerbaijan have been their building on the principles of mutual trust and confidence.

Separate studies on population growth and settlement in Azerbaijani historiography can be found only in the scientific works of Hasan bey Zardabi in the second half of the XIX century. Almost for the first time, the famous scientist in his articles entitled "Birth and reproduction of human" and "Our statistics" comprehensively investigated the historical-political, socio-economic, religious-spiritual factors affecting the natural and mechanical growth, decrease and settlement of the population.

Louis Pasteur, a French chemist and microbiologist, a member of the French Academy, one of the founders of microbiology, the creator of the scientific basis of vaccines showing the microbiological nature of fermentation and many diseases of animals and humans put an end to the centuries-long debate about the spontaneous generation of some life forms in the present era by empirically proving its impossibility. Thanks to the pasteurization technology he created the mass extinction of people due to eating food without boiling it. Louis Pasteur's teachings had a significant impact on the thinking about hygiene of that time. The outstanding Azerbaijani thinker of the XIX century, H. Zardabi, repeatedly reminded in "Akinchi"<sup>4</sup> that a number of infectious diseases cause human death and what to do when faced with such undesirable situations: "It was declared by the test that some unhappiness falls from man to animal, from animal to man. For example, chest disease, which is called syphilis, also occurs in animals and also occurs in humans who use their milk. Therefore, it is not recommended to eat the milk of a healthy animal if it has the disease... Consequently, it is advisable to destroy the animal that has the disease, so that its meat and milk should not eaten by humans and animals" [13, p.15]. H. Zardabi considered it extremely important to preserve the rules of medical and sanitary

hygiene, to strictly follow these rules, as well as to expand all kinds of educational propaganda among the population in order to preserve the demographic gene pool. According to H. Zardabi, if these stated conditions were not followed, then at the important turning points of history: "... The Muslim nation is a single ship caught in a storm, and every wave takes a part of them and sinks them. In this case, it would be very disrespectful to read the tale of Rustam Zal and be proud of the strength of those who have been in the past, like a cow munching on the bread it ate from before, watching our brothers sank, and not be ashamed of our own sinking" [13, p.15]. H. Zardabi reminds that the pandemics caused by the non-compliance with hygiene norms have caused massive human massacres in the past, and puts forward concrete proposals to get rid of this calamity: "In the past, the plague was so severe that it left entire provinces in ruins" [13, p.14-15].

During the period of Tsarist Russia, all indicators reflecting the demographic characteristics of the Azerbaijani people were distorted. For example, during the 1897 population census in Azerbaijan, because of not fully registering the number of our Azerbaijanis, they were purposefully removed from the areas where they lived by the tsar's officials in one way or another. The attitude of the outstanding Azerbaijani scientist M. Valili (Baharli) to this issue is of great interest in his work entitled "Azerbaijan: Geographical-natural, ethnographic and economic considerations" published in Baku in 1921: "... But the census of 1897 was not detailed, was weak. Because the Islamic population is culturally the most backward, and they refused to be registered when the list was taken because they were afraid that they would be recruited (taken away), land taxes and other taxes would be increased" [19, p.17]. M. Valili wrote about the deliberate reduction of the population of Azerbaijan: "These mistakes were deliberately made by the tsar's officials and the police. They were purposefully reducing the number of Muslim nations from a political point of view, and they were secretly subject to it. For example, when the list was taken, it was rumored that this list was for raising troops, raising taxes and "zemsy" taxes. For this reason, most Muslims tried to avoid being mentioned in the census" [19, p.17].

The purposeful distortion of population figures was, of course, related to the policy of settlement of other peoples, including Armenians, Molokans<sup>5</sup> and Doukhobors<sup>6</sup>, in our historical lands. Since it was printed in French in Paris in 1919 and distributed to the participants of the Geneva Peace Conference, including the representatives of the member countries of the Organization of Nations, the address calendar can also be considered as the first book that presented information and data on the demography of Azerbaijan to the international world. Thus, in the section of the book called "Azerbaijani population", we read: "The population of the Republic of Azerbaijan corresponds to its territory. Data on the number of the population are taken from a special calculation, whose figures are always incorrect and delayed. The last calculation was made in 1897 by

<sup>4</sup>"Akinchi" ("The Ploughman") was the first Azerbaijani-language newspaper, published in Baku between 1875 and 1877.

<sup>5</sup> The Molokans (from Russian "dairy-eater") are a Spiritual Christian sect that evolved from Eastern Orthodoxy in the

East Slavic lands.

<sup>6</sup> The Doukhobours (from Russian "Spirit-Warriors") are a Spiritual Christian ethnoreligious group of Russian origin.

Russia. Unfortunately, we now have to rely on the results of this calculation. We should add the growth of the population in 20 years and change the figure of the Russian calculation for 25% of the Azerbaijan province. Now the total population of Transcaucasia is 8,081,668. More than half of them, 4,617,671 are the population of Azerbaijan”.

In the middle of the XX century, A. Sumbatzade's scientific article entitled “Progressive effect of the annexation of Azerbaijan to Russia on the growth of the country's population” published in 1952 can be considered one of the first research works on the historical demography of Azerbaijan. The famous scientist's works named “XIX century Azerbaijani agriculture” written in 1958, “XIX century Azerbaijani industry” written in 1964, “Azerbaijani - ethnogenesis and the formation of the nation” written in 1990 are rich in materials on historical demography [24, 25].

In the historiography of Azerbaijan in the second half of the XX century, many valuable research works on the most diverse historical periods of Azerbaijan's history have appeared. In these mutually interesting research works, socio-economic, political, cultural and spiritual problems of our people are reflected by referring to numerous sources. Objective reasons affecting the historical demographic processes, such as the natural and mechanical growth, internal and external migration, as well as settlement of the Azerbaijani people, were also highlighted in the research works on the mentioned period [10, p.212]. Such research works include Z.Bunaydov's "Azerbaijan in the VII-IX centuries" published in 1965, M.Sharifli's "Azerbaijani feudal states in the second half of the IX century - XII centuries" published in 1978, J.Ibrahimov's "Feudal states in the territory of Azerbaijan in the XV century" published in 1962, O. Efendiyev's "Emergence of the Azerbaijan Safavid state of at the beginning of the XVI century" published in 1961, etc [16, 21, 22, 26].

At the beginning of the XXI century Z. Eminov wrote a number of valuable research works on population growth, regulation of the demographic situation, settlement of the population, socio-economic development of cities and regions [4, 5].

K. Shukurov's work “Population of Azerbaijan: History and sources of study (from ancient times to modern period)” reflects the development dynamics of demographic processes in Azerbaijan from ancient times to the present [17].

With A. Mammadov's textbook “Historical demography” published in 2019, the issues of research and development of scientific knowledge on historical demography were again brought to the agenda [13].

**Conclusion.** At the current time, when global problems are extremely relevant, every member of society should actively participate and contribute to the solution of widely discussed issues such as population and environment, efficient use of natural resources, protection of ecology, population growth, population density, expansion of urbanization. The solution of these issues is impossible without a serious study of the achievements of historical demography, which includes the centuries-old experience of human society.

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