

# HUN CEMETERY OF BUZOVNA SETTLEMENT

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**Abstract:** Located on the Absheron Peninsula (37 kilometers from Baku) Buzovna Burgh, has managed to gain a reputation as a center of art, culture, and trade among the villages of Baku. The settlement of the population in this region began in the 3rd century BC. Historically, the people of the village in this region led a nomadic life, engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry, and fishing. Some historical documents (13th-14th centuries) indicate that the name of the place comes from the nomadic name "Bozok", which is related to the "Boz Turks". The Bozok that lived in this area during the winter months were engaged in farming and in the summer retreated to the mountains. Buzovna is rich in historical architectural monuments and there are several old cemeteries within the village, the oldest of which is the "Hun Cemetery". But unfortunately, the tombs belonging to the Huns in the Hun Cemetery, large headstones, the temple, and also the church, the Buzovna Castle at the entrance of the village, and dozens of historical monuments were destroyed during the Soviet period.

**Keywords:** Bozoks, Buzovna Burgh, Hun Cemetery, Boz Turks, Tombstones in Azerbaijan.

## BUZOVNA QƏSƏBƏSİNİN HUN QƏBİRSTANLIĞI

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**Xülasə:** Abşeron yarımadasında (37 kilometr Bakıdan aralıda) yerləşən Buzovna qəsəbəsi, Bakının kəndləri arasında incəsənət, mədəniyyət və ticarət mərkəzi kimi şöhrət qazana bilmişdir. Bu bölgədə əhalinin məskunlaşması eramızdan əvvəl III əsrdən başlamışdır. Tarixən bu bölgədə kəndin əhalisi köçəri həyat sürmüş, əkinçilik, heyvandarlıq və balıqçılıqla məşğul olmuşdurlar. Bəzi tarixi sənədlərdə (XIII-XIV əsrlər) yerin adının "Boz türkləri" ilə bağlı olan köçəri "Bozok" adından gəldiyi göstərilir. Bu ərazidə yaşayan Bozoklar qış aylarında əkinçiliklə məşğul olur, yayda isə dağlara çəkilirdilər. Buzovna tarixi memarlıq abidələri ilə zəngindir və kənd daxilində bir neçə köhnə qəbiristanlıqlar vardır ki, onlardan ən qədimi "Hun qəbiristanlığı"dır. Amma təəssüflər olsun ki, Hun qəbiristanlığında hunlara məxsus qəbirlər, iri baş daşları, məbəd, həmçinin kilsə, kəndin girişindəki Buzovna qalası və onlarla tarixi abidə Sovet dövründə dağıdılmışdır.

**Açar sözlər:** Bozoqlar, Buzovna qəsəbəsi, Hun qəbiristanlığı, Boz türklər, Azərbaycanda məzar daşları.



## Introduction

### *Why Hun Cemetery?*

From the establishment of the Soviet Union to the independence of Azerbaijan, this cemetery was known as the cemetery around the Tomb of Caliph Ali and Muhammad Mumin. (Figure. 1).



Figure 1.

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The tomb was built in the early XVII. century, but there are also tombs and grave structures in the cemetery that were buried before the XVII. century, in violation of Islamic traditions. Nesir Agayev, who was one of the pioneers of the Modern National Liberation Movement and a history teacher who has been researching the history of Buzovna for many years, conveys his own knowledge as follows:

*The history and birth certificate of any civilization or city is determined by its cemetery. The etymology of the word Buzovna comes from the name of the ethnos who lived here.*

The famous historian Rashid al-Din Fadlullah Hamadani (1247-1318) says in his “Oghuz-name”:

*Boz Oghus/Boz Ghuzz<sup>1</sup> tribe used to spend the summer on the mountain meadow named ‘aran’ and the winter on the ground level named as ‘kışlak’ and they were engaged in animal husbandry.’ The main occupation of the Buzovna people today is animal husbandry.*

He also mentions that before the construction of the tomb, there were high tombstones belonging to Turkish tribes in the cemetery. During the war in 1918 year, the tall tombstones with the records of the Hun Cemetery were

<sup>1</sup> Boz in Turkish languages declares color and means light earthy color or grey (grizzle).



destroyed or taken away. It was forbidden for the locals to sue, or even speak about it. When Azerbaijan regained its independence, many regions were given their old names again based on the memory of the native people and Nesir Agayev was the cause of the return of the old name of this Cemetery. In this Hun Cemetery there are no artifacts about the Huns today. From the records engraved on the headstones that have survived to present day it is understood that they belong to the XVII. century, but there are also graves from an older period. It is necessary to carry out new archaeological excavations here in order to obtain more historical information and evidences about this cemetery.

The graves around the tomb show different characteristics from each other since they belong to different periods. According to the burial tradition, it is possible to subdivide the graves into two groups: Pre-Islamic and Islamic. Pre-Islamic tombs can only be investigated in details after archaeological dig. Among the tombs belonging to the Islamic period there are in general tombs with Shirvan-Absheron construction style: with high stones, chests, with high roof or four-shaped head stones, stone boxes and other shaped graves.

### *About the Tomb*



**Figure 2.**

In this Hun Cemetery, there are graves from different periods, local sarcophags (serdabes) and one tomb- the Tomb of Caliph Ali and Muhammad Mumin. (Figure. 2). According to the plan the tomb has the form of a quadrant (length 6.75 m, width 5.15 m, and height 3 m), with a small dome and crown-shaped entrance door, consisting of four graves and made from lime. Above the door of the tomb, there is an inscription engraved on the full stone with beautiful, ornate “neshi style” detail (Figure. 3).





**Figure 3.**

This is not the only inscription in the tomb, there are also other inscriptions inside the tomb, on the headstones and sarcophags around the tomb. Meşedihanım Nemetova, the famous Azerbaijani historian, who has read many inscriptions of Azerbaijani historical monuments argues that buried in the tomb were members of the Bektashiyya Sufi Orden, dervishes of famous Bektashi sheikh Baba Samit. Particularly noteworthy are the two exquisite and neatly written inscriptions (large and small inscriptions), as well as the inscriptions inside the “buta” – shaped medallions. These medallions are the sign of the Shirvan/Absheron architecture school, and can be seen on the vast majority of Absheron's religious buildings and other monuments. According to the inscription the tomb was built in Hijri 1051/1641-1642. There is an Arabic text on the door: *“This shrine building was made under the care and effort of Bikekhan, a someone chosen woman, in the year of one thousand and fifty-one during the reign of the great Sultan Abu-l Muzaffar Shah Shafi Bahadur Khan, for the honorable recreational facility, for the deceased who reached the mercy of Allah: Caliph Ali ibn Khalifa Koca Ali and Muhammad Mumin ibn Khalifa Ali”*.

There are 4 graves in the tomb, each with a different constructive structure and design: two of them are simple in design, while the other two are more elaborate. It must be said that this type of footstone and headstones cannot be found in other cemeteries of Absheron. The entire tomb, which was made from shaping lime and whose head ended with a “şebkülâh” is fully covered by epigraphic inscriptions and various pictures. The length of the footstone of the tomb is 1.84 m, with a width of 1m, the height of the headstone is 94 cm, the thickness is 14 cm, and the width is 29 cm. There is a rahle -Quran reading desk, prayer beads pictures on the grave, which symbolizes the religion, and horse drawings indicating that the person was a hero. The footstone and headstone of the grave are decorated with beautiful “nesih, sulus” inscriptions. These inscriptions consist of both Arabic and Persian verses. The inscription on the footstone contains the name of the deceased, the date of his death, and the fact that he was a martyr and died at a very young age:

*“This tomb belongs to the late blessed martyr, Muhammad Mumin ibn Caliph Ali ibn Khalifa Koca Ali, who is in need of the mercy of Merciful*



*Allah. In the year one thousand forty-six (1636-37). "The earthy life lasts like an hour, spend it in obedience."*

On the edge ornament of the footstone, there are the names of the '14 Innocents' belonging to Shiism. In the mourning rubais inscribed on the front, back, and side of the headstone, it is stated that Muhammad Mumin died at a young age. Muhammad Mumin's father Ali and grandfather Koca Ali were given the nickname "Caliph" because they were the sect members of the "Baba Samit Dervishes" tariqa which was a branch of Bektashiyye Sufi Orden in Azerbaijan. This is why the shrine was sanctified by the local people and turned into a holy place. On the frame on the other footstone and on the headstone of the tomb next to it is written verse 256 of Sura Bakara from the Holy Qur'an. There is no encrypted name on the next gravestone, likely because it is a woman's grave, so as usually women's graves don't include names.

### *The Artistic Constructive Features of the Cemetery*

**Pre-Islamic Period:** The cultural and religious variability of a nation can be traced through its tombstones. In the so-called Hun Cemetery, which covers about 8 acres of land today there are two types of graves: Muslim's graves and non-Muslim's graves. Even if there were no constructive material on it, it can be easily determined whether is grave belong to a Muslim person or a non-Muslim, because all Muslim graves face the Qibla. So as a detailed examination has not been carried out here it has not been determined to whom and to which culture belong non-Muslim graves in the Hun Cemetery. However, the structure and placement of the graves indicate that they belong to non-Muslims. The total number of graves placed vertically to Qibla in the Hun Cemetery is three (which reached up to our days) and they belong to the Pre-Islamic period, others are most likely devastated. If to consider the constructive structure of these graves, it can be seen that the graves are surrounded by rock stones. (Figure. 4)



**Figure 4.**

The inside of the graves are made from rock stones, it is likely that the person who placed them in the ground was put face up. At first glance, no artifacts are visible in the burial chamber. The characteristics of the tombs are presented in Table 1:



**Table 1.**

Number	Length	Width	Height	Height of the interior	Constructive structure
№1	2,6 cm	2 m	60 cm	80 cm	RECTANGLE
№2	2,30 cm	1,60 cm	20 cm	-	RECTANGLE
№3	2,35 cm	1,74 cm	80 cm	-	RECTANGLE

### *Tombs of the Islamic Period*

There are about 30 tombstones in the part of the cemetery that belongs to the Islamic period. Tombstones vary according to their period (tombs built in the 17th, 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries), their constructive structure (footstones and headstones, sacrophacs, single headstones, flat-shaped tombs have reached until today), and their design (pictures, drawings, epigraphic writings, symbolic signs). The characteristics of the tombs can be seen in detail in **Table 2**:

**Table 2.****Foot Stone****Headstone**

№	Long.	Wide.	High.	Constructive structure	№	High.	Wide.	Thickness
№1	1,45 cm	42 m	78 cm	Rectangle	№1	2,16 cm	43 cm	10 cm
№2	1,35 cm	36 cm	80 cm	Rectangle	№2	2,11 cm	36 cm	11 cm

### *The Escrow graves*

Although the escrow (entrusted) graves are Muslim sacrophacs, there are some features that distinguish them from others and this is their settlement style: the tombs face south rather than our holy place. Such tombs are found in many parts of the Absheron Peninsula.

In the Islamic World if a person has passed away he/she must be buried into the ground and the buried person must be placed in a specific way: the right shoulder of the deceased person must be faced toward the Qibla, toward the Kaaba in Mecca. According to Haji Soltan, the Imam of the Juma Masjid in Baku's Buzovna district, these graves are also Muslim graves, but since some of the deceased persons wished to be buried in such holy places as Karbala or Najaf, their relatives temporarily buried them in the graves called "The Escrow Graves", but actually, this tradition has no background in the Islamic Sharia. This tradition emerged from Shi'ism and was acquired in a later period of Islam according which the deceased person is buried on his back, the purpose of this is to ensure the corpse decomposing. After a while, only bones remain and



these bones are placed into specially prepared boxes and taken to the place of the will, either to Karbala or Najaf. According to Islam Sharia the deceased people that were buried in the wrong way should be taken out of the grave and reburied facing the Qibla. As it is known, Khazrat Ali (r.a.) was buried in the city of Najaf on the 21st of Ramadan, at the age of 63. Ali ibn Abu Talib or Khazrat Ali (656-661) was one of the first Muslims, son-in-law of the Prophet and the fourth of the Hulefa-yi Raşidin. He is considered by Shia Muslims to be the first Imam, the rightful religious and political successor to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.s.). Those who wished to be buried in Karbala are followers of Imam Hussein, the son of Khazrat Ali.

Professor Kamil Ibrahimov says about it: "According to Muslim custom, some respectable people used to make a will to be buried in the holy places after they die. If the intended holy place was too far away, the deceased people were buried nearby as an escrow and after a certain period of time, the grave of the person who made his will was opened, bones were collected and were taken to the holy place and buried." Similar graves exist also in the Shirvanshahlar Palace Complex, as well as in Baku's districts such as Emirjan, Balakhany, Kurdakhani, Buzovna.


In such graves were buried not only those who wanted to be buried in sacred places, those who died away from their homeland and wanted to be buried in their own homeland also were buried in such escrow graves. This situation is confirmed by the existence of such graves nowadays, built by our compatriots who had to leave their homeland as a result of Armenian occupation. Many of them have made wills to move their corpses and rebury at their father's quarry if the land will be taken back.

In the Hun Cemetery, on the left side of the Tomb of Caliph Ali and Muhammad Mumin, there is a sacrophag (Sardabe) which is partially under the ground, consisting of several Escrow Graves with a length of 6 m, a width 3 m and a height of about 80 cm. (Figure. 5)



**Figure 5.**





This Serdabe was made of stones, that are not tightly glued to each other so there is some distance between them and partially of adobe. According to the Iranian researcher Mohammad Hashim Morida, the Tombs were made of raw adobe and clay in the upper layer of the earth for several reasons:

- 1- Because of the good airing the corpse would rot more quickly.
- 2- If the deceased were buried deeply, the grave can be lost over time.
- 3- It was easier to open the grave in the upper layer of the ground and collect the bones.

At the moment, some of them are empty, probably they have been delivered by their family members to the holy land where they were bequeathed.

### *Signs and symbols on the graves*

One of the features that makes man different from other living beings is his ability to think abstractly, to transform the events that take place around him into easily understood signs in a way that is completely simplified to any information, idea, or process. Even though these signs belong to various social spheres: cultural, intellectual, ethnocultural, and various societies according to time segment, they have generally assumed the feature of being the most rational means of communication for our ancestors, independent of national, religious characteristics and place.

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Modern science assumes that the oldest signets and other symbols of recognition and distinction are about 5000 years old. According to the American researcher James Harrod, in the material-spiritual world of ancient people, simple graphemes and letters were created on the basis of various sacrificial symbols, then transformed into alphabet signs, signets, hieroglyphs, ideograms etc. The primitive forms of these signs did not reflect individual objects and living things, but certain events, ceremonies and processes through them. The quest for hidden meanings in ancient symbols like alphabetic signs, the graphical expressions of quantity and sound (in numbers and letters) and coded Divine messages, has led to the formation of various religious and philosophical mystic/occult traditions like Hurufizm, Kabbalah and numerology, and has managed to find its followers in literature, music, painting, sculpture and architecture, even in the esoteric traditions of conspiracy.

Researcher Araz Gurbanov in his book "Signets, symbols... assimilations" shows that the using range and functions of signets (damga) in Turkic people's life have been enough wide: you can meet them in state traditions, lifestyle, farming, army, religious objects and also on tombstones from various places. It is interesting to look at some symbols from the headstones of Hun Cemetery and their semiotic meanings:

**Swastika:** Such signets like "Goose", "Wheel of Fortune", "Şemsi Gerdan", "Sarman" came from the primitive understanding of ancient people about kosmos and world, ancient Turkish shamanic tradition, from the symbols of Tengri Khan



and Mother Humay and mostly had a protective amulet function. Although by the time with the acceptance of Christianity and Islam the semiotic of symbols has changed the idea about their protective functions has not disappeared from the people's memory. We can see such symbols in the carpet patterns, tombstones and other cultural monuments of the Turkic Peoples from Azerbaijan, Anatolia, North Caucasus, Central Asia, Crimea and the Volga Coast.

When the ornament known as "Wheel of Fortune " is examined, it is clearly seen that this pattern is a stylized version of the black ram, the symbol of the Karakoyunlu. The combination of four such symbols is not one of the variants of this sacral image, but also indicates to the idea of the "power of the Karakoyunlu, which spread to all four corners of the world".

The original shape of the swastika can be seen in the Hun Cemetery, but it goes further diagonally from 4 sides toward infinity. Such a swastika is more commonly known as the mystic numerology, Shia symbolism or Sufi symbol, and also the symbol of "chahar (four) Ali" (four times the name of Ali). This form of swastika is seen in many places of Azerbaijan where the Shia sect widespread. This calligraphic symbol of "chahar Ali" has been seen in the Hun Cemetery. (fig. 6) We can see also a similar symbol of "shesh Ali- six names of Ali" of the Sufi (mystical) school of numerology and mystical calligraphy at the Shirvanshah's Palace in Baku and Tuba Shahi Masjid in Mardakan. The art historian Telman Ibrakhimov mentions that this rare mystic symbol also was found in the cemetery of the Sufi order "Cherme Ziyaretkah" (the white sanctuary-Tat) within the boundaries of the Helench village at the Khizi region:

There are some meanings of the "four Ali" symbol:



**Figure 6.**

- The 4 wings of the Swastika indicate that Imam Ali is the fourth Imam.
- The repetition of the name "Ali" four times along the perimeter of the circle like in mirror indicates that there are four sides of the world (Earth infinity) and that these sides earn meaning through Ali's name (Ali's miraculousness).



- The Swastika, the Sun formed from Ali's name is the mystical sun that illuminates the path of the mystical spiritual ascension of Sufi .
- According to Shii teaching some sacral knowledge was imparted by Islam Prophit to Imam Ali and “**الْجَامِيَّة**” - Al-Jamayah , a collection of secret texts that predict the future was imparted by Imam Ali to Muhammad Al-Mahdi (Mahdi az-Zaman), the 12th hidden Imam. According to this doctrine when the last hidden Imam will come back to the world then the contents of these secret texts will be clarified to people.

**"S" shaped moving Swastika.** Many different ideas have been generated about the meaning of the sign of the cross or "Swastika", which is one of the oldest known symbols of humanity consuming rich meanings such as "goodness", "truth", "representing the protective power" of societies in different geographies in different time periods. Before Christianity, it was the symbol of the sun, and we have talked about this in detail many times, but there is another ancient symbol that is related to swastika – the "Moving Swastika". Unlike the Sun, which rotates around its own axis (a single swastika), this symbol consists of the rhythmically repeating swastikas connected to each other in a manner similar to the successive letter "S". The structure of this symbol assumed the boundary feature in the old drawings, but before it became a decorative frame, it assumed the protective function of sacral trustee (talisman) in diary and cult ceramics, in jewelry, in the decoration of fabric and carpets. With the spread of Islam, the recurring and related swastika-shaped motif of the "moving Solar deity “ has also taken new meaning: it has lost its old protective context and in Muslim decorative artworks has become just a decorative frame. In the Hun Cemetery, the movable swastikas similar to the "S" was found on the headstones and this symbol are located inside the 8-pointed star and the star inside the chain-like ornament. (Figure. 7). The "Moving Swastika", which forms the three-layer geometric pattern composition is artistically worked on the stone.



**Figure 7.**

**5-pointed star.** Although the five-pointed star is about 3 thousand years old and was a symbol of sacral protection in many ancient traditions of the world, among Turkish tribes it was presented as a five-striped seal meaning "Sun", "Tengri/ Sky's Man" and has taken its 5-pointed shape mainly after the



spreading of Christianity and Islam religions. According to Islam, the five rays or vertices of a star emanating from a single center indicate the five pillars of Islam: profession of faith (shahada), prayer (salat), alms (zakat), fasting (sawm) and holy pilgrimage (Hajj).

Unfortunately, there are a lot of trunks and headstones in the Hun Cemetery that have been broken and subjected to erosion. There are some sarcophags that have been completely dismantled, but with the intervention of the local people, those pieces have been collected together in some place of the cemetery. The collected pieces include fragments of various patterns and depictions, also depictions of 5-pointed stars.

**6-Pointed Star.** The 6-pointed star, which is one of the basic symbols of Judaism is considered as both the star of Prophet David (p.u.h.) and his shield. During the period when Judaism began as the main religion in the Khazar Khaganate it was spread widely as a symbol and signet (seal) in the Caucasus region including South Caucasus. This symbol is known In Islamic tradition as the sacral symbol of Solomon (the seal of Solomon). This symbol can be seen on the battle flag of the Turkish Admiral Barbaros Hayrettin Pasha, on the walls of most mosques in Azerbaijan and Anatolia. In fact, the origin of this 6-pointed star dates back to ancient times, for example, it was known as the ‘Anahata Chakra’ in ancient India, which had no connection with Judaism. However, we can meet this symbol in the decorative art pieces of many cultures as well as among the magic symbols in the Middle centuries books. We have found some well-preserved 6-pointed star samples in this Cemetery on several headstones and footstones, above the water stump (in its central part can be seen this "David's star" (Figure. 8).



**Figure 8.**

**88-pointed star.** The 88-pointed star pattern, which is mainly considered one of the primitive symbols of the sun, can be seen in many ancient civilizations around the world, especially in Zoroastrianism and Turkish mythological



drawings as one of the astral symbols of the Tengri Khan. After the spreading of Islam, this symbol gained a new meaning: the rays (arms) of the star indicate the 8 good deeds of the Muslim, or the eight gates of Paradise, especially in Shii'sm for Safavid's it symbolized the Ahl al-beyt<sup>1</sup>. We frequently encountered the 8-pointed star symbol in the Hun Cemetery in the form of a stone-worked net, as well as on headstones in other depictions. (Figure. 9)



**Figure 9.**

**Other Patterns.** In general, patterns in Azerbaijan are studied in three historical periods:

- *Decoration of objects with totem paintings in the pre-historic period.*
- *Transformation of these paintings into symbols in the 1st millennium BC.*
- *Creation of patterns based on these symbols in the new age.*

Decorations most of the headstones from XV-XVI centuries include floral ornaments. It can be said that the floral and geometric ornaments are equally presented in the Hun Cemetery. Among mostly simmetric floral patterns there are round and eight-petaled flowers and surrounding frames of footstones made of plant elements. Geometric patterns include the style of painting known as the Seljuk chain, the repetitive frame-shaped altar (mihrab) pictures around the sarcophagus, triangles, stars, medallions etc. In terms of composition, plant motifs are usually seen on the back sides of the sarcophagus, but geometric patterns are on the seat places and upper frames.

### ***The Tree of Life***

One of the prevalent motifs of the headstones is the Tree of Life, which takes place in various decorative artworks, as well as in paintings among different civilizations that have thousands of years old. The presence of the picture of the Tree of Life on headstones connected with the wide scope of its meaning. In Turkish mythology, in the Pre-Islamic period, it is mentioned that

<sup>1</sup> Ahl al-Bayt (Arabic: أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ, lit. 'people of the house') refers to the family of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.s.)



the Tree of Life was planted by Kayra Han and connected the ground and the sky: the roots of the Tree of Life extend from underground to the ocean, its trunk was in the very center of the sky and its branches exceeded the sky. In Christianity and Islam, the symbolism of the Tree of Life (or the Tree of Immortality) regards great importance: it is associated with the first human on the Earth, which is his sin, eating him fruit of the Tree of Good and Evil in the Paradise. There is some information about it in the Holy books of Judaism and Christianity, where the tree of life first was mentioned, and in Islamic sources: Holy Quran, hadiths and its commentaries. It is assumed that the Tree of Life symbolizes the Existence of Allah, God's help and human wisdom. Tree of Life pictures which symbolizes life itself and Paradise also can be seen in the Hun Cemetery in a few headstones and sarcophages from the XVII-XVIII centuries. It should be added that the painting of the Tree of Life is handled differently in different cemeteries. Here, we see the Tree of Life in the center of the picture surrounded by beautifully carved ornaments and patterns. (Figure. 10)



**Figure 10.**

**Stone Carvings:** Scientific research in Azerbaijan revealed that the most exquisite headstone carvings samples decorated with floral ornaments and elegant inscriptions are in the Shirvan region and dated XVI-XVIII centuries. Gravestones were usually made of easily carved lime and artists made these ornamental elements so elegantly, so elaborately that the best sample of them do not lag behind examples of carpets, rugs and goldsmiths in terms of their artistic value.

The stone carvings from the Hun Cemetery can be compared with the sarcophages found in the Hezre Village of Kabala region of Azerbaijan in terms of their exquisiteness and craftsmanship. Elegant in appearance, with carvings resembling embroidery ornaments, ornate pits, double-sided carvings, grid carvings placed in square frames, various symbolic details, and inscriptions they are considered as the pearls of this cemetery's stone carvings. (Figure. 11)





**Figure 11.**

Famous art historian Rasim Efendi wrote in his book “Azerbaijani Art”:

*“The double-sided carvings among the XVII century gravestones found around the Tomb of Khalif Ali and Muhammed Mumine in Buzovna are particularly striking. According to rumors, inside such tombstones were placed burning candles and candlelight that seeps out from these ornate carvings at night created an original landscape.”*

The most beautiful stone carvings samples from the Hun Cemetery are the altar (mihrab) pictures located in the front of the headstone. There are mihrab pictures that reflect the architectural details of the real mihrab by using geometric carving shapes. (Figure. 12)



**Figure12.**

#### **Other Pictures on the Graves:**

**Religious pictures:** The Muslim’s reading desk (rahle), prayer beads, the pictures of Holy Qur’an, crescent and star, swastika and striped circles, the bowl of rose water related to Islam can be seen on the tombstones from the



Hun Cemetery. These depictions are usually found on the back and rarely on the front of the headstone. (Figure.13)

Horse or cavalry depictions symbolizing the valor, masculinity and heroism usually are located on the backs of the tombstones of the male graves and sometimes on the sarcophagus surfaces. But Since the horses depicted in the gravestones have real cavalry characteristics rather than a symbol, they probably convey real information about deceased person. (Figure.14)



**Figure 13**



**Figure 14.**

There are also pictures of the water jugs (Figure.15) and gulabdan (the bowl for rose water) and we can see the symbol of David's star on some urns from the graves. The picture of the gulabdans on the graves probably related to the use of rose water in burial ceremonies. As it is stated in one of the hadiths:

*If everyone rubs rose water on his face, he will be away from humiliation throughout the day. Rub the rose water on your hands and face and praise Allah and send Salawat on the Prophet and his family. Anyone who takes rose water in his hand and pours it on his head on the first day of Ramadan will be safe from poverty all year long. The rose is one of the most ideal flowers of Paradise.”<sup>1</sup>*

There are some interesting pictures of shoes drawn on the tombstones, which are mostly seen in male graves. Some of them are long and wide, some are joined together, some are separated, and some are placed backward. The depictions of shoes are generally located under the snow of the horse depictions, some have only one pair, some have two or three pairs of boots and nothing beside them. These paintings are thought to have a religious meaning. (Figure.16)

<sup>1</sup> Although this hadith not found in Sunni sources, there are many similar narrations attributed to the Prophet in early Shii sources: see Tabersi (d. 548/1153) "Makarimu'l ahlak", 54





**Figure 15.**



**Figure 16.**

One of the most interesting pictures seen in the tombstones is the rawhide sandal (charik) depiction. According to Turkish art historians, the sandal on the tombstone symbolizes the foot of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.s.).

### *Epigraphic Writings*

Among the ancient manuscripts and stone inscriptions bequeathed to us by our great ancestors, epigraphic monuments of the Middle Centuries have a special place. These are reflections of centuries, traces of history written by the Azerbaijani people themselves. Various inscriptions are found in architectural and historical monuments from the beginning of the X century to the end of the XX century and it is possible to find answers and clues to some questions about the social and economic life of Azerbaijani people in the Middle centuries. The inscriptions on architectural monuments and tombstones generally reflect the life, art, trade, history of social thought, of the people. Sometimes it provides a unique opportunity to clarify historical situations and bring the truth to light.

On the tombstones in Azerbaijan, there are usually some verses from the Holy Quran, verses from the poems of famous Sufi poets and information about the deceased. The epitaphs of the Buzovna Hun Cemetery are known as the most exquisite epigraphic writings of the XVII-XVIII centuries. (Figure. 17-18)





Figure 17.



Figure 18.

Two headstones found here are divided into lines and frames, with almost no patterns on them, and equipped with epigraphic inscriptions from beginning to end which include Arabic and Persian poetical verses and elegies. The content



of the text from the other grave includes a collection of information about the deceased, Surah Fatiha, and some verses from the Holy Qur'an and hadiths.

On some sarcophages and tombstones of the XVII century, there is the inscription "Nadi Aliyyen - Call Ali", which informs about the social and political affiliation of the buried. The verse fragments written on the monuments like "Esh-shekhid es-said" which means rewarded martyr (Happy Martyr) indicate that they died in the struggle for the sake of the people. The word "Mawlana" next to the name of the deceased on some tombstones indicates that they were religious scholars. According to the grave inscriptions read by Prof. Meşedihanım Nemetova, the famous Azerbaijani historian, we can give some information about the identity of some of those buried here:

1. Martyr Khoja Muhammed ibn Hasan (deceased: Hijri 1041/ 1631-32)
2. Mevlana Khoja Alaaddin (date of death: Hijri 1034 / 1624-25)
3. Mevlana Muhammad ibn Muhammad (death date: Hijri 1051/1641-42)
4. Martyr Muhammad Zaman ibn Molla Sohrab

According to the information given by sources, the monuments here were built by the famous stone master from Baku, the calligrapher Seyyit Taha, who is considered the founder of the stone carving art and calligraphy school in Absheron. We can meet his name written down on two sarcophagus.

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<sup>1</sup> Translator's Note: It is the name given to a 33-year period, but it is used to mean a century. <sup>11</sup>