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**Amirarkh Report
On Excavations of an Antique Period Jar Grave
At Kilometre Point 204.25 of
Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and South Caucasus Pipelines Right Of Way**

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ABSTRACT

This report describes the excavation of an Antique Period jar grave discovered at Kilometre Point (KP) 204.25 of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Right Of Way (ROW), Agdash District.

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I. Introduction

- *Description of the BTC and SCP Archaeology Programme*

Archaeological excavations in connection with the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) pipelines were conducted prior to and during the construction of these pipelines. These excavations were carried out within 44m wide pipeline corridor in 2001-2005. The archaeology program consists of 5 phases of which the first 4 constituted solely field investigations:

Phase I – potential archaeological sites were visually identified during baseline surveys while selecting the pipeline route.

Phase II – the sites that were identified during Phase I as unlikely to yield significant sites were tested by digging trial pits and conducting small-scale trial excavations.

Phase III – small and large-scale excavations on the BTC route within the ROW were carried out.

Phase IV - small and large-scale excavations on the SCP route within the ROW were carried out.

In addition to these, all the construction activities were monitored by watching brief archaeologists.

In general, during the core Phase III and Phase IV archaeological excavations were carried out at 41 sites with thousands of artefacts discovered. None of these sites had been known to the archaeological science before.

Phase V – preparation of scientific reports on the archaeological excavations carried out during the previous phases.

- *Conditions for Discovery of the Archaeological Site*

The archaeological site was discovered while trenching for the BTC pipeline.

- *Brief description of the Site*

The site is located at KP 204.25 of the BTC ROW at Amirarkh village in the Agdash District. The area is flat, the terrain is mostly a saline clayey land.

- *Who Excavated the Site and When*

The site was excavated by Mikayil Mustafayev on the 27th - 29th of August, 2004.

II. Field and Office Methods

The area where the large jars were found was excavated by dividing it into separate 2x2m quadrats. A detailed site plan was drawn up. All the material recovered from the site was camerially treated, restored, and conserved. The finds were illustrated and photographed, where relevant and then recorded in a logbook.

III. Excavation Results

The finds are of two jar graves each containing human remains and a number of smaller associated grave goods.

The excavation of jar grave 1 revealed a human skeleton. One dolcha-type ceramic pot was found in the lower part of the grave by skeleton's leg bones. In addition eight glass beads were recovered from the neck bones of the skeleton. The excavated jar had a hole close to its base which apparently was made during burial (Photo 1).

The excavation of jar grave 2 contained a human skeleton but in a disintegrated state. Around the jar were placed a number of pots of different sizes. A dolcha-type ceramic pot and sixteen beads made of glass and paste were found in the ground near the jar base (Photo 2).

- *General Site Description*

The site is located on a flat country near Amirarkh village in the Agdash District. The area is grey grassland and saline land.

- *Archaeological Finds*

The two excavated jar graves produced various ceramic vessels and a number of items of decoration.

The site was discovered by Mikayil following the Cleveland trencher as a large vessel in the spoil side of the trench. The pipe was laid and then an excavator with a smooth blades bucket was used to open up the surrounding area down to the top of the vessel. Excavation continued by hand afterwards with Muzaffar, Bakhtiyar and Viktor.

The vessel had been buried as an empty void and had collapsed at some point, so the upper parts of the jar were buried at the base of the vessel. It appeared that the vessel was empty when buried, this indicates that it was used for some domestic rather than funerary purposes.

Approximately, 10m to the west of this feature, a number of burnt areas were identified on the opposite side of the trench. The machine was used to expose these, followed by hand cleaning and recording. Although damaged by the trench, the features could be seen as a rectangular straight-sided depression with dimensions of 2m by 1.5m and 0.2m deep. The sides of the features were formed of fired clay and filled with a fine crumbly, charcoal rich soil.

No other artefacts were recovered from the site. The date of the features appears to relate to the Antique period, if both are associated with each other.

This set of discoveries appears to represent a settlement of the Antique period, with features of a domestic nature. Unfortunately, due to the manner of discovery, other more ephemeral features were not observed, but it can be anticipated that further remains lie outside the boundaries of the construction corridor.

IV. Analytical Results

- *General Description of Each Material Class*

Jar Grave 1

Dopu - a small light pink dopu with a single ring-shaped handle. The mouth is broken, but the shape of the vessel suggests it is a narrow-mouthed dopu. The circular handle on its shoulder is bent upwards. The neck and shoulder of the pot coated with engobe have wavelike scratchy decorations. It is a hand-made, thin-walled, well fired vessel with a flat base. Its dimensions are: height – 11cm, rim diameter – 0.5cm, body diameter – 14cm and the base diameter – 8cm.

Beads - eight beads were recovered from jar grave 1.

Bronze- a bronze ring of circular shape

Jar Grave 2

Vessels

1) A light reddish bardag-type ceramic vessel. A loop-shaped handle connects its mouth and shoulder. The vessel is gutter-shaped. Part of the mouth is missing while the remaining part has a lug attached to it. The vessel is decorated with one circular line on the neck and three symmetrically parallel circular lines at the point where the vessel neck connects to the shoulder. This point contains also various casual patterns. When the pot shoulder was painted, the paint seemingly spread down towards the body. This hand-made, flat base vessel has walls of medium thickness. It is well fired and covered with engobe. Its dimensions are: height - 18cm, neck height -5cm, mouth diameter – 7cm, body diameter – 13cm and base diameter – 10cm.

2) A light yellowish ceramic pot resembling a milk jug with a loop-shaped handle. The mouth is broken. The neck and the upper part of the body are decorated with wavelike scratchy patterns. This is a hand-made, thin-walled pot with a flat base. It is well fired. Its dimensions are: height – 20cm, neck diameter – 5cm, mouth diameter – 8cm, body diameter – 17.5cm and the base diameter – 10cm.

3) A light pink ladle with a ring-shaped handle. Hand-made, well fired, of plain design with a flat base. Its dimensions are: height – 6cm, mouth diameter - 20cm, body diameter – 19cm and base diameter – 11cm.

4) A light pink jug with two loop-shaped handles. The jug is hand-made, thick-walled, well fired with a gutter-shaped mouth and flat base. The neck is decorated with wavelike scratchy lines. Coated with engobe. The jug dimensions are: height – 26.5cm, rim diameter -13cm, neck diameter – 4.5cm, body diameter – 23.5cm and base diameter – 14.5cm.

5). A light reddish two-handle jug. The mouth is gutter-shaped and everted. The handles are attached by one end to the mouth and by the other end to the shoulder of the jug. There are seven ears depicted on one of the handles. The neck is decorated with two parallel wavelike scratchy lines. There are four triangular lugs thumbed out from the inside around the point connecting the shoulder to the body. This is a hand-made, well fired, thin-walled, flat-based jug coated with engobe. The jug dimensions are: height – 44cm, neck height – 4.5cm, rim diameter – 17.14cm, body diameter – 30cm and base diameter – 16.5cm.

6) A light brown vessel looking like a milk jug with a ribbon-shaped handle. The mouth is gutter-shaped. Two equally spaced lugs are attached to the rim. The handle connects the shoulder to the mouth. The handle is decorated with scratchy patterns in three rows: 6, 7 patterns

on the sides and 12 patterns in the middle. There are two crude parallel wavy lines around the neck and a number of lugs randomly attached to the body. It is a well fired, hand-made, thin-walled and flat-based jug covered with engobe. Its dimensions are: height – 28.5cm, neck height – 6.5cm, rim diameter – 14cm, body diameter – 18cm and base diameter – 17cm.

7) Sixteen beads were recovered from grave 2. These are glass and paste beads of various colours and forms (Photo 2). Cylindrical and tubular beads prevail; they are made of different colour pastes. The glass beads are yellowish, grey blue and green.

- *Dating*

Analysis of the archaeological material recovered from jar graves 1 and 2 suggests that both graves could be dated to the 3rd – 1st centuries BC.

V. Discussion

- *Interpretation of the Archaeological Field and Office/Laboratory Results*

The artefacts recovered from these jar graves are similar to the archaeological material revealed by excavations in other regions of Azerbaijan such as Ismayilli, Mingachevir and Muganli. It is thought that these artefacts were produced in Mingachevir, as the abundance of raw material (clay and sand) and fuel (firewood) promoted development of ceramics here. These vessels were used both for household and religious purposes.

- *Discussion and Analysis of the Results of the Work Compared with Other Sites of a Similar Nature on the Pipeline Route*

During construction of the BTC and SCP pipelines jar graves of a similar nature were found at KP 194, KP 200 in Agdash District, KP 204.25 at Amirarkh, KP 233 at Samedabad, KP 237 at Nematabad and KP 243 at Narimankend, Yevlakh District.

- *Discussion of the Site within a Regional and National Context*

The first jar graves ever found in Azerbaijan were those excavated by F. L. Resler in Shusha in 1895. But the systematic study of jar graves began in 1927. Large-scale archaeological excavations were carried out in Lachin (1927), Mugan (1930), Mil Valley (1933), at Sultankend, Ismayilli (1934), Agsu (1960) and Mingachevir (1935-1938; 1941; 1946-1953).

A number of jar graves also were discovered on the BTC and SCP pipelines route. The jar graves found in Agdash is more proof that this area has been very favourable for occupation from time immemorial because of its rich nature and location on caravan trade routes.

- *Special Recommendations Regarding the Protection of the Site or Future Research*

In case of discovery of any archaeology during construction or any other activity at the site the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, and the local authorities should be immediately notified and actions should be taken to declare the site a closed zone to warrant future archaeological research.