

Investigations Conducted on Medieval Archaeological Monuments during the BTC Project

Excavation of the Medieval First Hajialili residential area located at KM 301 of the BTC Pipeline Route

The First Hajialili residential area is located approximately 500 m to the southeast of Hajialili village of the Samukh District on level ground on the right side of the asphalt road running to the village. This residential area is situated 215 m above sea level. The surface archeological materials collected from the territory of the monument mainly consist of pottery fragments and some stone tools. The pottery is represented by fragments of pots, pitchers, jugs, jars, bowls, cups and milk jugs characteristic of the Antique Period and Early Middle Ages. It is worth noting that there are also pottery fragments confirming local production and a burnt pottery fragment with adhered walls among the surface finds.

There were many weaving-related work tools among the pottery ware in the antique period – such as spindle heads– and they vary from a typological standpoint.

Metalware is limited to two finds. A green layer is formed on the ring, which is made of a thick wire with a circular cross-section, as a result of oxidation. Another metalware object is a specimen of a trinket. Some stone tools and a used stone object have been found during the field investigations conducted at the first Hajialili residential area. They are represented by whetstone, grindstone, millstone, sling stone fragments, etc.

Considerable osteological remnants have been discovered during the archeological excavations conducted on the territory of the archaeological monument. The overwhelming majority of them consist of cattle and sheep/goat bones. Some horse and pig bones have also been found therein.

Determination of the time frame of the archaeological complexes discovered at the first Hajialili residential area is based on typological and comparative analysis methods. The mixed top layer of the cultural layer (up to 40 cm) belongs to the initial stage of the early Middle Ages, and its bottom layers – to the antique period.

The first Hajialili residential area is of great importance for the investigation of the material culture of Caucasian Albania. The limited archaeological excavations of the antique and the medieval residential areas of the region make these field investigations all the more important.

As a result of the field investigations, we can conclude that there was intensive vital activity at the residential area during the antique period and the early middle ages. The factual materials obtained as a result of the archaeological excavations have provided very valuable information on the economic occupations, living conditions, and lifestyle of the residents of this area.

Excavation of Fakhrali Medieval residential area located at KM 289 of the BTC Pipeline Route

The archeological site is located on the territory of Fakhrali village in Goranboy district, 400 m northeast of the village at KM 289 of the BTC oil pipeline. The length of the monument is 250 m along the pipeline route, its width is 170 m, and it occupies approximately 4 ha on the basis of the surface materials observed on this territory, consisting of flat sowing areas. The archeological site is located 187 m above sea level. Based on the analysis of the results of the archaeological excavations, the Fakhrali residential area may be dated to the 9th-12th centuries. The archeological site is divided into the first and the second excavation areas on the basis of the excavations conducted in 2004 during the construction of the BTC oil pipeline and the excavations conducted in 2005 during the SCP stage. The artifacts discovered as a result of the archaeological excavations conducted on the Fakhrali medieval residential area consist of the remnants of welfare and household buildings, pottery, stone tools, glassware, bone objects, and metalware.

The welfare and household buildings are represented by remnants of ovens and furnaces. Remnants of a 9 x 7 m welfare and household or handicraft facility were discovered at a depth of 1.5 m at the archaeological site, and residues of 4 furnaces and 9 ovens were found in it.

The glazed and unglazed earthenware discovered at the Fakhrali residential area have different forms used for meeting various welfare and household needs. Their forms and decorations provide a look at the production process, as well as the taste and needs of the population for the noted period of time.

There are different types of dishes, kitchen utensils, tableware, containers used for water and other fluids, household dishes, lamps, salt-cellars, etc. among those utensils found from the archaeological site. The pottery fragments discovered at the Fakhrali residential area demonstrate the multiple types of dishes used by the residents of the Fakhrali area.

The archaeological excavations conducted at the Fakhrali residential area prove the existence of a rural residential area here in the 9th-12th centuries. The characteristics of the cultural layer and the artifacts discovered reflect that this residential area had a free-plan structure and constituted a village-type residential area with a large territory.

The artifact specimens confirm that planting and cattle-breeding were leading occupations of the population and that local residents also engaged in different trade areas to some extent, and that they led a sedentary lifestyle. Preference was given to the raising of cattle via animal husbandry. The discovered furnace residues and other evidences show that manufacturing of handicraft products was of local importance here and focused on meeting the village residents' need for earthenware and metalware.

Considerable iron alloy masses, production wastes, and various metal objects discovered at the archaeological site prove that the profession of blacksmith reached a high development level therein.

Glass and metal bracelets and beads were widespread among the trinkets. From this standpoint, the abundance of glass articles shows that this handicraft area had also developed considerably on this territory.

The Fakhrali archaeological monument was a medieval rural residential area and preserved samples of high cultural and economic development within. Despite the fact that the residential area only consisted of one cultural layer, the facts prove that life continued for several centuries therein.

The features of the highly developed 10th-12th century Ganja craftsmanship, which is located nearby, are observed in the material culture specimens of the residential area. It may be that some delicate and graceful material culture specimens found by the archeological excavations were not been the products of local production but were brought here through bartering from the developed nearby city of Ganja or were the products of local production under the influence of Ganja craftsmanship.

Very likely, the decline of agricultural and craftsmanship life in the medieval Fakhrali village, which was highly developed from an economic-cultural and trading relations standpoint, was connected with the Mongolian crusades in the 13th century.

Based on the comparative analyses, it is possible to say that life in the medieval Fakhrali village commenced in the 9th century and continued until the 13th century. Even the relation of some ceramic materials to the 13th century does not evoke any suspicion. Earthenware samples of the archeological site are similar to the materials discovered from the cultural layers of Beylagan (Orangala), Ganja, Gabala, Baku, Shamakhi, and other monuments and have an accurate time frame.

Glazed earthenware fragments discovered in Fakhrali belong to the 9th-11th centuries, and they are represented by specimens coated with blue and green glaze and painted with simple monochrome. Moreover, a group of polychromatic cups painted with white engobe and permanganic acid under the colored glaze is also included here. V. H. Leviatov discovered these types of glazed ceramics from the stratigraphic layers of excavations in the city of Baku and dated them to the 8th -10th centuries. Similar ceramic materials discovered in Gabala are classified in four groups by I. A. Babayev. Glazed dishes discovered in Fakhrali also correspond to this classification. This group or type of glazed ceramics is encountered in all the layers of Fakhrali residential area, and this proves our thoughts that the residential area consisted of one layer and existed within the boundaries of the 9th-12th centuries. We did not observe any classic developed glazed ceramics that are characteristic of the 12th-14th centuries anywhere in the residential area.

There is a great variety of unglazed ceramics in the Fakhrali residential area excavations: they consist of pots, pitchers, kettles, wide- and narrow-necked dishes and lids with different types of handles and ornaments. As is known, the forms, color, and fragments of unglazed ceramics are more durable and maintained their own production technology for a longer historical period and sometimes this makes it difficult to determine which period they date to. However, the unglazed

dishes have forms that restrict them to a certain historical period with some metamorphosis according to their own specific differences and characteristic elements. We may classify three fragments discovered in square II^b of the first excavation territory as such specimens of unglazed ceramics. They are kettles and milk jugs having spouts with filters under them and they are characteristic for the period existing up to the 12th century. Their spouts with filters under them were changed to short-tube spouts, and their production continued as an example of the finds discovered from Shykhlar. Kettles and milk jugs found from the Fakhrali residential area may be assigned to the period up to the 12th century. Thus, Fakhrali's glazed and unglazed ceramics allows us to date this residential area to the period before the Mongols, i.e. up to the 12th century. This was one of the suburban residential areas of the medieval Ganja.

Extensive excavation operations were conducted on the medieval monuments and the monuments belonging to the 9th-12th centuries of the middle ages of Azerbaijan prior to the excavation works carried out within the BTC and SCP pipeline corridor. Long-term archeological excavations were conducted on monuments dated to this period in Barda, Ganja, Baku, Shamakhi, Beylagan, Shabran, Gabala and other areas, and the results of these archeological excavations have been presented in scientific publications. All these monuments consist of large residential areas and cities of the noted centuries. However, as we have already mentioned, rural residential areas at the level of Fakhrali have been investigated relatively sparsely. From this standpoint, the archeological excavations conducted at the Fakhrali medieval residential area are of special importance. Investigation of the archeological monument allows us to track the characteristic features of the 9th-12th century rural residential areas of the region. If we take into account that Azerbaijan's medieval rural residential areas are one of the problems studied very sparsely in the history of the country, then we can point out that the archeological excavations conducted on the Fakhrali residential area assume not only local significance but also great importance on a nationwide scale.

Archeological excavations on the Dashbulag medieval residential area located at KM 342 of the BTC Pipeline Route

The Dashbulag medieval residential area is located on the territory of the Shamkir district on a flat area at KM 342 of the BTC Pipeline Route. Archeological excavations show that the Dashbulag residential area was a one-layered area and was formed as a result of the activity of a rural residential area in the 9th-12th centuries. The difference in the intensity of the structure of the cultural layer proves that the residential area was not a compact area and had a free-plan structure. The top section of the archeological site was seriously damaged during the construction of the Dallar-Dashbulag asphalt road over this site.

The material culture specimens discovered as a result of the archeological excavations conducted within the Dashbulag medieval residential area consist of the remnants of welfare and household buildings, pottery, stone tools, glass and bone articles, and metalware.

Residues of 18 ovens have been discovered on the archeological site and some of them have remained undamaged to this point. Ash pit sites have also been discovered in many ovens.

Twenty-four household wells of various size were discovered on the archeological site, and they were used for the preservation of excess product.

Antique-period Albanian graves were discovered under the cultural layer on the archeological site. The 8 graves discovered were removed from the oil pipeline corridor.

Considerable material culture specimens related to the economic and family life of the mentioned period were discovered as a result of the archeological excavations conducted on the Dashbulag medieval residential area, and these finds were represented by ceramic dishes, iron and stone tools, glass trinkets, etc.

Earthenware consists of pots, pitchers, narrow-necked pots, kettles, jugs, cups, bowls, salt-cellars, lamps, etc. Some of the discovered ceramic dishes consist of tastefully-decorated glazed dishes.

The remnants of one iron plough, which was one of the main tools of the sowing process, were found on the archeological site.

Bones of domestic animals prevail among the osteological remnants discovered from the excavation area, and they mainly consist of cow, sheep, goat, pig, and horse bones. Material residues prove that planting and cattle-breeding were leading occupations of the population and that local residents engaged in the production of handicrafts to some extent, and that they led a sedentary lifestyle.

Analysis of the earthenware shows that they are characteristic for the 10th-12th centuries according to their form and decoration and glazing methods.

Archeological excavations conducted at the Dashbulag residential area document the existence of a rural residential area here during the 9th-13th centuries. If we consider that Azerbaijan's medieval rural residential areas are one of the problems sparsely investigated in the archaeological literature, then we can conclude that the archeological excavations conducted on the Dashbulag residential area are of great importance.

Excavation of Gyrag Kassaman medieval residential area located at KM 405 of the BTC Pipeline Route

The Gyrag Kassaman residential area is located at KM 405 of the BTC Pipeline Route on the southeast slope of a large hill running from west to east. The wide Kura valley (Ceyranchol) is situated to the east, north, and northwest of the hill. A Muslim cemetery was established within the boundaries of the residential area at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century.

The archeological excavations show that the First Gyrag Kassaman residential area was a single-layered area and was formed as a result of the activity of a rural residential area here during the 8th-10th centuries. The thickness and richness of the cultural layer's structure is not the same in all sections of the residential area, and it is more thick and rich in the central part and sparse at the sides. The thickness of the cultural layer on the elevated section of the residential area and towards the central part of the hill is 1-1.1 m. However, this thickness varies between 20-40 cm at

the sides of the hill. Investigations conducted on the first and fourth excavation sites show that building and welfare remnants are located more densely in the central part and that frequent fires took place therein. The cultural layer in squares 1a and 1b within the first excavation area and in the first and second squares within the fourth excavation area was completely colorless.

Even the difference in intensity in the structure of the cultural layer in the central part of the residential area and the replacement of rich and rare-finds layers with one another indicates that the residential area was not a compact one and had a free-plan structure.

The economic-activity rooms, household wells, oven residues, various ovens and hearths of the dwelling house were discovered and investigated on the first excavation area.

Registration of carbonized wooden piles, the coal and ash layer to the north of the oven, and the hearth residues area allows us to say that the oven house had a light wooden structure and was destroyed as a result of a fire. The thick coal and ash layer recorded in the 6, 7, 8 and 9th squares of the fifth excavation area proves that a strong fire took place at the residential area at the end of the 8th century and at the beginning of the 9th century. Remnants of a building discovered in the 8th and 9th squares of this excavation area and destroyed as a result of the fire are of special interest. Layers of the economic-activity building were discovered upon the cleaning of coal and ash layer in the 9th square. It was impossible to completely clarify its structural features, since the building was destroyed as a result of the fire. As a result of the excavation, it became known that the floor of the building was made of soil and covered with clay plaster. A 2.4 m long and 0.8 m wide pavement was arranged to the west of this room, which was used as a kitchen and warehouse, and food material was collected in the ceramic dishes here. There were three jugs, three narrow-necked pots, and three pitchers on the pavement. They were full with food material. The fact was that there were carbonized wheat residues in the dishes. Lids were placed on top of the dishes. Five lids were found from the warehouse.

It is worthy of note that we managed to determine the flood layer and its direction in the cultural layer during the excavation of the third pit in the second excavation area.

Workshop residues, ovens and hearths, and household wells were discovered and investigated in the fourth excavation area.

Considerable archeological materials related to the economic and household activity of the population were obtained as a result of the archeological excavations conducted on the Gyrag Kassaman residential area, and these finds were represented by earthenware, iron and stone tools, and glass trinkets. Earthenware consisted of pots, narrow-necked pots, pitchers, jugs, lids, cups, bowls, plates, and salt-cellars.

An analysis of the glazed earthenware proved that they are representative of the early glazed ceramic dishes characteristic of the 9th-10th centuries according to their form and decoration and glazing methods.

Some iron articles were found during the archeological excavations. Most of them were represented by fragments. Copper and bronze products mainly consisted of supplementary tools and trinkets. The high quality of the glassware represented mainly by bracelets was of note among

the archeological finds. There were few glass dish specimens. Stoneware discovered during the archeological excavations consists of quern and mill stones and grindstones.

Considerable animal bones were found in the cultural layer during the archeological excavations conducted on the Gyrag Kassaman residential area. Domestic animals prevail among the osteological remnants, and they mainly consist of cow, sheep, goat, pig, and horse bones. As we know, plant remnants are rarely encountered during excavations, since organic substances decompose in the soil. As was mentioned above, during the first excavation, carbonized residues of a cereal crop were found from the kitchen and warehouse room destroyed by fire.

The archeological excavations conducted at the First Gyrag Kassaman residential area document the existence of a rural residential area here in the 8th-10th centuries. The nature of the cultural layer and the building remnants allow us to conclude that the residential area had a free-plan structure and that this residential area was a rural residential area with a large territory and sparse buildings on it.

The artifacts prove that planting and cattle-breeding were the leading occupations of the population, and local residents engaged in the production of handicrafts to some extent and led a sedentary lifestyle. Preference was given to the raising of cattle via cattle husbandry. Production of handicrafts was limited, simple, of local importance, and focused on meeting the village residents' needs for ceramic dishes and metalware. Various unglazed earthenware produced using a potter's wheel was widely used in everyday life. Moreover, usage of glazed tableware had also commenced. Glass and metal bracelets and beads were widespread among local residents' trinkets.

Archeological evidence allows us to observe that Christianity continued for a long time among the local residents and that Islam started spreading here in the second half of the 9th century. Investigation of the monument creates the opportunity for tracking the characteristic features of the 7th-10th century rural residential areas of the region.