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## THE BTC AND SCP PROJECTS, AND THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF AZERBAIJAN

The Agreement concluded in 1994 between the Azerbaijan Republic and leading foreign oil companies was the starting point for economic prosperity in Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, the agreement was called the “Century Contract”, and its signing and implementation were inextricably related to the name of the national Azerbaijan leader Heydar Aliyev. The most important aspect of this Agreement was the development of effective transportation systems to deliver energy resources from Azerbaijan to the world markets. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, and the South-Caspian Baku-Erzurum (SCP) gas pipeline played a major role in the accomplishment of this task. Both pipelines in Azerbaijan had to pass through the shared transport corridor from the Sangachal terminal on the Caspian coast to the border with the Republic of Georgia. The length of the Azerbaijan section of these pipelines is almost 450 km. The partnership of our Institute with British Petroleum (BP) and other international corporations participating in this project began with the construction of these pipelines and the Sangachal terminal. At the design stage, when the route of the future transport corridor had been chosen, the parties committed to minimizing the adverse impact of the construction work on the environment, including the cultural-historical heritage in this area. With this aim, the Institute of Archeology and Ethnography of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, and the company BTC-SCP, which was involved in the construction of the pipelines, developed a special five stage program to identify and study all the artifacts along the pipelines’ route.

At the first stage of this program, in 2001, a group of scientists consisting of ecologists, soil scientists, geographers, zoologists, botanists and obviously archeologists were formed, and they walked along entire the route of the future pipelines, starting from the Sangachal terminal right to the border with Georgia. At this stage not only was each identified artifact registered, but even sites where such artifacts were suspected to be. At the same time changes were made to the pipeline routes, so as to avoid sites with the identified artifacts; and in some cases this was achieved.

At the second stage, in spring and summer 2002, the sites containing the archeological artifacts were assessed. Pits were excavated, the boundaries of the sites with the archeological artifacts were verified, and archeological material which was found was analyzed. As a result of these activities the scope of the ensuing work was determined.

The third stage of the program was implemented from the autumn of 2002 to the autumn of 2004: the artifacts in the oil pipeline corridor were studied. The fourth stage of the program was implemented from the end of 2004 to the end of 2005: artifacts in the gas pipeline corridor were studied. Due to the large area involved, the same artifact was often investigated both at the third and fourth stage. Finally, at the fifth stage of the program, which was implemented from 2006 to 2008, the materials collected were processed in the laboratory/office and reports were prepared.

To carry out the field studies planned for the third and fourth stages of the program, three archeological teams were formed that included over 30 specialists from the Institute, 4 Doctors of Science and 8 Masters of Science. Alongside the archeologists, who had extensive experience in field investigations, young specialists were also brought in to the project, as this was a unique possibility for them, in a short period of time, to gain experience in the field study of archaeological sites from various epochs – from the Eneolithic to the Late Middle Ages. Due to certain objective causes, in the 90-s of the XX century, large-scale archaeological studies were not carried out in the Republic. This project turned out to be a real field studies school for a whole generation of young Azerbaijan archeologists, and allowed them to gain substantial practical experience in field investigations.

Today these archeologists are the backbone of the Institute of Archeology and carry out field investigations independently.

The first, principal team of archeologists carried out monitoring studies at the third and fourth stages in the area of construction of the Sangachal terminal. This was due to the fact that the terminal was being built in close proximity to the world famous Gobustan historical-cultural nature reserve, with its unique petroglyphs and archeological monuments. Finally, the third team carried out monitoring of the pipeline.

Due to the fact that the work was organized in this way, a number of additional archeological artifacts were discovered during the field studies, mainly burial grounds of various historical epochs that had been missed at the first and second stages of study because of the absence of surface signs.

About forty archeological monuments were investigated during the three years that the field studies took place, and comprehensive scientific reports were written for each of them. It should be mentioned that the scale of excavations at some sites was unequalled in Azerbaijan during the last 25-30 years.

Field studies were financed by the pipeline construction contractors; the Institute got external support to equip premises for the proper storage of artifacts; special courses were organized for laboratory staff and technicians of the Institute on laboratory processing of artifacts and the preservation of archeological materials. Specialists of the US Smithsonian Institution were of great help to our Institute.

Radiocarbon analyses were carried out in the leading laboratories of Europe and USA with the purpose of accurately dating the studied artifacts. In 2005, BTC and SCP companies helped the Institute with the organization of the International Scientific Conference “Archeology, ethnology and folkloristic of the Caucasus.” Our Conference today is a part of this fruitful collaboration.

Just five years have passed since the end of the field investigations in the pipeline corridor. This time period is not significant for science. However, during this time three candidate theses have been prepared on the base of discoveries made in the pipeline corridor, and defended by the employees of the Institute; five monographs and dozens of scientific papers have been written. And this is only a small part of the work. Every year more and more archeological materials collected in the pipeline corridor will be used and will enrich the archeological science of Azerbaijan. One would hope that the fruitful collaboration of science and business that was demonstrated by the joint projects implemented in the pipeline corridor will continue in the future.

At that, I would like to finish my speech and thank you all for your attention.