BORSUNLU KURGAN

The end of XIX – beginning of XX century in Azerbaijan have seen an implementation of a large number of projects, associated with the agreement signed between the Azerbaijan Republic and world's leading oil corporations in September 1994, which went down in history as a "Contract of the Century". The main intent of this huge project is to join efforts of the available scientific, technical and economical potential of the Republic and leading international oil companies in development and efficient use of vast energy resources of the Caspian Region.

Development and construction of viable transportation systems for export of energy resources from the Caspian Region to the international markets is an integral part of this huge Project. Leading role in achieving this mission shall be played by Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan oil pipeline – main transportation route for hydrocarbon resources from the Caspian basin to the Mediterranean port.

Total length of Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan oil line on the territory of Azerbaijan is about 500 kilometres. From the early engineering stages of determining the route of the said oil line the target was set to minimise potential adverse impact of construction activities on the environment and to timely identify cultural monuments in the area of the pipeline route and infrastructure.

With this purposes representatives from BTC Environment and Social Protection Department and Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Azerbaijan Republic National Academy of Sciences have developed a specific three-stage program for identification and study of all cultural monuments in the area of Baku – Tbilisi - Ceyhan oil pipeline construction.

During the first stage of the program specialists from Archaeology and Ethnography Institute, together with British Archaeologist Devid Mainard, invited by BTC, walked along the entire proposed oil pipeline route from the Caspian shore (Sangachal Terminal) to Georgian border. Tens of archaeological monuments dating from different historical periods have been identified and registered. One of the purposes of this exercise has been to modify, where possible, the route of the future oil pipeline and to bypass areas containing cultural monuments. Today, one may say with confidence, that as a result of the work carried out during the first stage of this program, in many areas oil pipeline route has been modified so that to bypass sites with registered archaeological features.

During the second stage of the program, undertaken in spring and summer 2002, monitoring and evaluation work has been carried out aimed to determine the characteristics of the identified archaeological sites, which due to certain objective reasons, had to remain in the area of the pipeline impact. There are about ten such sites. These sites have been thoroughly re-investigated, digging has been carried out and excavated material collected and analysed. It was the work carried out at this stage of the program that helped to fully clarify the status of archaeological monuments in the area of the future pipeline.

Together with the above activities, second stage also included the inspection of those sections of the route, which could not have been inspected during the first stage due to being sown with different agricultural crops (wheat, corn, etc.). During the second stage of the program a group consisting of three earth burial mounds have been identified in the middle of the wheat field, on the area called "Dere Eri" by local people, located between Borsunlu and Gazanbulag villages of Geranboy district, one of these burial mounds being directly on the Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan oil pipeline route (Table 1, Figure 1).

However, as the wheat field has not yet been harvested, the detailed survey of these burial mounds was difficult to perform at the time. After the harvesting of this area has been finished this territory has been subjected to detailed survey. It was found out that the traces of former cromlech made of river cobbles are clearly seen on top of the burial mounds (Table 1, Figure 2). Survey, conducted at the same time in the surrounding areas, demonstrated that many hills around Borsunlu and Gazanbulag villages of Geranboy district have similar burials with mounds and cromlechs. Some of these burial mounds reached 30-35 meters in diameter. It was found out, that during agricultural and sowing earthworks in this area ground and pitcher burials dating to the ancient period have often been observed. Ceramic solids specific to this burial types have been collected from some ruined ancient mounds.

Also, it was identified that the burial mound located directly on the pipeline route, from the South-Eastern side, has a damage caused by earth works. It was decided that on the section, formed on this part of the mound, a cleaning will take place and a bore pit will be dug in order to determine the nature of the fill-up soil and principles, used in the construction of the burial mound (Table 2, Figure 1).

At the site of the bore pit, at a depth of about 120 cm from the ancient surface of the mound slope, a ground burial have been identified with strongly writhed skeleton. Only part of the grave appeared to be in the area of the bore pit. Initially a small red-clayey pitcher has been found here with round crown, and then skeleton's finger phalanxes with metallic rings have been unearthed. The bore pit was immediately back-filled. Discovered vessel (Table 2, Figure 2) leaves no doubts that the burial dates back to the ancient period, specifically, to the common for Caucasian Albania ground burials with strongly writhed skeletons.

On this stage of survey, it was thus determined that there is a hill directly on Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan route, which hill by its constructive features is typical for burial mounds of the Bronze Age, and that in addition to the main burial, the mound contains additional later entrance burials dating from the ancient period.

Initial reaction to this discovery was an intent to move pipeline route away from the specified mound, however, this proved to be impossible, for, if moved, the pipeline route will cross another mound, located nearby.

Following the meeting, which was held in Baku and was attended by the representatives of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, Ministry of Culture, State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic and personnel from the respective BTC Departments, a decision has been taken to conduct a full-scale dig of the burial ground located on the pipeline route, at the edge of Borsunlu village of Geranboy District in autumn 2002.

The surveyed burial mound was located on a small eminence in the middle of the wheat field. In order to accurately identify the stratigraphy of the site, its area has been divided into four sectors along the coordinates axis North – South, West – East - A, B, C and D. Diameter of the mound at the base point is 20 m (North – South) and 23 m (East – West). The height of the mound from the South according to the level is 1.6 m, and according to the reference post, positioned on the North – 2.62 m. After fixing relief layout of the mound keeping up to 100mm kerbs along the set coordinate lines, all four excavation square section, have been evenly dug, with constant layout updating and photographic shots of each digging stage (Table 3, Figure 1, 2, 3).

Upper section of the mound consisted of small stones placed in a conical shape. At the same time excavations demonstrated that initial stone mound in the upper section of the sector B was disturbed and stones have been randomly scattered. In sector B, on the area, conditionally denoted on the plan with "O" mark, at the depth of 40-45 cm from the original ground surface of the slope, grave walls have been discovered and cleaned. The grave contained a burial pitcher laid on one side. The mouth hole of the burial pitcher was sealed by a specially prepared clayey plaster. A part of the pitcher mouth was broken and placed inside the burial pitcher. The body of the burial pitcher was cracked all over under the impacts of natural elements. However, it retained an original shape, as the entire grave pit about the burial pitcher was filled with crashed ground. Medium-size cobbles have been placed around pitcher burial.

In this case burial pitcher placed horizontally was 1.28 m long and was oriented in the North-South direction. On the same level as the burial pitcher, slightly to the west, there was a small grey pot (Table 4, Figure 1), and to the east from the burial pitcher there were two pitchers with narrow mouths and one bowl (Table 4, Figure2, 3, 4, 5).

Skeleton, which was found inside the pitcher, was writhed. The head was oriented to the North and the face turned to the East. Legs has been bended in knees and in hips and stretched in the direction of the base of the pitcher. Judging by the position of the hip-bones, the body was positioned on its back with slight inclination of the torso to the left side. Right arm was bended in the elbow and stretched in the direction of the face (Table 5, Figure 1).

In the process of the burial, a part of the pitcher mouth was broken to allow for the positioning of the body inside the burial pitcher, and after the positioning was completed, it was placed back and attached by special clayey plaster. However, with time, and under the impact of the ground this section has detached and fallen inside the burial pitcher, thus damaging right part of the skull (Table 5, Figure 1).

Near toes phalanxes there was a small bowl with the crown part thrown aside, near the pelvis and bended cannon-bone, there was a dark single-handle jug, and on the opposite side, near toes phalanxes, there was a small pitcher with three-petal crown (Table 6, Figure 1-3). Nearby, on the leg bones, there was a phial with a pressed-in "умбон" at the bottom (Table 6, Figure 4) and a miniature vessel with a protruding handle (Table 6, Figure 5). In the upper section of the skeleton, higher than the hip-bones, close to back, there were two bowls inside each other (Table 5, Figure 1-2). One of these bowls, all along the circumference, had a decoration in the shape of a dark-red line (Table 7, Figure 1). Near these two bowls, lying on its side was a small, dark pot, with round crown, slightly inclined back and four prominent protuberances-nipples on the frame (Table 7, Figure 2).

Behind the hip-bone, between the bowls and the spine, there was a metallic item with sharpened end. Here, there also was a strongly-oxidized iron item with ivory handle and a fragment of a forked iron object (Table 8, Figure 1, 2, 6). In front of the arm there was a strongly-oxidized iron knife-like object (Table 8, Figure 3). On one of the fingers of the left hand there was an iron ring (Table 8, Figure 4), and in the chest area – a ring-like bronze pendant (Table 8, Figure 5). Around neck-bone and chest area 261 different small beads have been collected (Table 9, Figure 1, 2).

To the South of the pitcher burial, on the mound slope a ground burial, discovered during installation of a bore-pit have been cleaned.

Stones laid around the pitcher, partially covered a section of the ground grave. The entire area of the burial chamber under these stones was covered with clay plaster. Burial chamber was constructed in the mound and had a parallelepipedic shape with rounded edges of the angles. Lower part of the burial chamber was slightly wedged into the main ground (Table 9, Figure 3). The skeleton was lying on the right side in a very writhed position, face turned to the South. Arms have been bended in the elbows and crossed. An iron ring was on one of the left hand phalanxes, and a bronze ring – on the other (Table 10, Figure 3-4). Near the temporal of the skull there was a stone. A thin iron buckle-pin was lying near the right elbow. Two bronze ear-rings were discovered in the lower section of the skull. Upper section of these ear-rings was made in the shape of a sphere (Table 10, Figure 1, 2). At the base of the neck 9 identical flat bronze pendants, which were elements of one ornament, have been discovered (Table 10, Figure 7). 12 different necklaces have also been found here, they were made of bronze, paste and agate (Table 10, Figure 7).

Leg bones have been bended from the hip under 90^0C, and then in knees bended back and crossed. In front of the skull there was a small grey pot, discovered during pit digging (Table 10, Figure 8).

Describing an entrance pitcher and ground burials, it should be first noted, that both of these burials belong to the widespread types of burials dating back to the ancient period for the entire Southern Caucuses. Burial implements of the described graves are similarly

traditional, and there are solid grounds for dating these burials to the second half of the first millennium B.C.

As was described before, implements of the pitcher burial consisted of various ceramic vessels of different sizes and functionalities, numerous necklaces, metallic knife, sharp-edged weapon with ivory handle, iron ring and bronze pendant. Burial implements of the ground burial included a single ceramic vessel in the shape of a small pot, sandy-yellow in colour, bronze and iron rings, sphere-shaped ear-rings, bronze pendant, nine fragments of a bronze necklace, iron breast buckle and 125 small beads.

In general, burial implements are rather typical for the burials in Caucasian Albania in the second half of the first millennium B.C.

A strongly-oxidized iron weapon was found between the skeleton's ribs. Most likely it was a blade of a lance.

While analysing burial implements, it should be noted, that the most common materials here are different beads (Table 11, Figure 3). In ground burials all the beads have been very small and made of paste. The earth from the bottom section of the grave had to be sieved in order to retrieve the beads. Beads from the pitcher burial are more varied and are presented by several types. Prevailing type among these beads are small cylindrical tubular beads (Table 9, Figure 1, 2). They are made of a glassy paste of different colour and tints. Mass production of beads made of glass with the inside gilt and dark-yellow, grey-blue beads with greenish or bluish tint, i.e. the beads that form the vast majority of the beads material discovered in the pitcher burial, is dated by the specialists to the ancient period [1]. In III-II centuries B.C. such beads have become mass material in all regions of Forward Asia, Egypt, Northern Black Sea Region, Asia Minor and Southern Caucuses. For example, such beads and in such mass quantities have been discovered in ground and pitcher burials of Mingechaur [2], Agdzhabedi [3], Shemakha [4], dating to IV-III century B.C. They have also been found in mass quantities in the monuments in Armenia and Georgia, relating to the same period. In other words, they are characteristic for the entire Southern Caucuses in that period.

The second group of beads from the pitcher burial are the beads of light-pink cornelian. There were just a few beads like this. They are small and have a barrel shape. These beads have been drilled either using a joint-pin or a diamond fragment. Among cornelian beads one bead is many times bigger than the others, it is cerise and of a flattened round shape (Table 11, Figure 2, 3). Such rounded, barrel-shaped beads made of semiprecious stones have been commonly spread in the Hellenistic age [5]. The third group includes small paste beads of the rounded and flattened shape, barrel-shaped, round, tubular and cylindrical shape. All these beads are made of paste, have different colours, and some are multicoloured and probably had acted as amulets [6].

Light-pink cornelian beads, according to the classification of G.G. Lemmleyn, belong to the 5-th type, commonly-spread at the Caucuses and especially in the Transcaucasia in the Ist millennium B.C. [7].

Analysing bead material from both burials as a whole the following has to be noted in the first place. While the actual number of beads is quite large, the variety of shapes and sizes is relatively small.

Quite notable is the fact that among the beads material there are no silver or large cornelian beads, which are so characteristic for the boundary of two eras, called the Roman period. There are also no beads with different eyes – insertions, which are so characteristic for the monuments of Azerbaijan of the Hodjali-Kedabek cultural period, late bronze – early iron age (XII-VIII B.C.), as well as for the ground burials with stretched skeletons, well researched in Mingechaur and dated to VII-V centuries B.C. [8].

E.M.Alexeyeva, having studied ancient beads of Northern Black-Sea region, came to the conclusion, that: "from the IIIrd century B.C. the colouring of the glass beads has changed completely. Bright blue, cobalt, yellow and turquoise colours disappeared. They have been replaced by the beads of dim-red, bleak-yellow, grey-blue and light-green colours. Thus, the massive local necklaces of Hellenistic age have been replaced by a large variety of small, louder beads and various glass-beads" [9]. This conclusion is characteristic for the entire East of the Hellenistic period, which is confirmed by the bead material collected in the discussed graves.

It is too early to speculate whether these beads are the product of local production centres or were imported. However, it should be noted that ornaments, including beads, being very profitable materials for trade and are easily transported, have always attracted merchants. This is why, beads, sometimes in mass quantities, could be discovered in places, far from their original places of production. J.A.Halilov, who studied the beads from the monuments of Caucasian Albania of the ancient period, noted that local production of beads was well-established since the Ist century B.C. Most likely majority of beads of Hellenic and Early-Roman periods (IV-I centuries B.C.) have been imported. Exporting this products to Caucasian Albania could be centres, where production of various makes, sizes and shapes of beads have been established for many centuries. India, Syria, Egypt, Greek towns-colonies of the Asia Minor and Northern Black Sea Region could be named among such centres. According to J.A.Halilov, in Hellenistic period vast majority of beads have been imported to the Caucasian Albania from Bosfor, Pantikapeya and other Greek towns – colonies of the Northern Black-Sea region.

Thus, the analysis of beads from the ground and pitcher burials allows to date them to the Hellenistic period, particularly to III-II centuries B.C.

A large number of metallic items also can be seen in such burials. These are weapons and ornaments.

There have been five metallic items in the pitcher burial. The first is a very poorly preserved iron knife – total length of the remaining blade together with the remaining metallic base of the handle (Table 8, Figure 3) is 16 cm. Metal is strongly oxidised and is breaking along the entire length of the blade. On both side of the handle there remained rivets, which fastened wooden part of the handle. Such iron knives with thick blades are

well known from many monuments of the Southern Caucuses of the second half of the Ist Millennium B.C. and first centuries A.D. Similar knives from pitcher burial of Mingechaur [11] and ancient layer of the Garni fortress in Armenia [12] could be named as examples. The second item is an ivory handle from the forked object with sharpened scape for passing the handle through (Table 8, Figure 1). Only fragments of this item have been preserved, which doesn't allow to precisely identify, whether it is a domestic, military or household pitchfork. Discovered blade of the lance and a fragment of iron seal-ring have also been strongly corroded. Unfortunately, due to corrosion, the picture of the seal (Table 8, Figure 4) wasn't preserved. The fourth and the final item from the pitcher burial was a small bronze wire pendant (Table 8, Figure 5). Beginning in the Middle Bronze Age (II millennium B.C.), such pendants have always been the most common of the domestic ornament items, and could be seen in many burial complexes. Their numerous analogues could be seen in many different graves – from stone boxes of the Middle and Late Bronze Age in the area of Talish mountains, Karabakh, Nakhichevan, Mingechaur, to ancient necropolises with the burials in pitchers, stone boxes, wooden boxes, ground graves, etc. Such bronze pendants have been used by all social groups, which explains their mass discovery.

Metallic items from the ground burial have been more various. Here an iron seal-ring was found on one of the finger phalanxes (Table 10, Figure 5). Due to the strong erosion, resulted from the ring's oxidising, it was not possible to restore the picture on the seal, although its presence is beyond doubts. In general, seal-rings have been very common on the territory of Caucasian Albania. J.A.Khalilov, who studied all-metal seal-rings discovered in the archaeological monuments of Azerbaijan, notes, that such seal-rings had become widely spread in Azerbaijan from the second half of the Ist millennium B.C. [13]. Other researcher, I.A.Babayev, based on the fact that many such all-metal seal-rings have been discovered in Mingechaur, in the ground burials with stretched skeletons, which date back by researchers to VII-V century B.C., thinks possible that their use has become common in Azerbaijan from as early as second quarter of the Ist millennium B.C. [14]. Such seal-rings were moulded first and as a next step specific scenes and pictures were cut on the plate of the ring. Usually, such seal-rings had a flat shape and thin tie [15]. All-metal seal-rings have been especially spread in Azerbaijan in V-VIII centuries B.C. Various scenes could be seen on the all-metal seal-rings from Azerbaijan. These are the images of real and fantastic animals, scenes depicting animals fights or fights between animal and people, as well as different scenes of religious and domestic nature [16]. I.A.Babayev have been studying glyptical monuments of Azerbaijan for many years. He established, that such seal-rings have been used in Azerbaijan until the end of the IIIrd century B.C. [17]. He also discovered that some of these seal-rings contain the scenes that are not encountered anywhere else, which, without doubt, evidences their local production [18]. Common use of such seal-rings is also confirmed by numerous discovered bulls – clayey nubbins with seal imprints. Such bulls were used for sealing of bales, doors, etc. Hundreds of bulls have been found during digging works in Mingechaur, Kabala, Shemakha and also at the other monuments of the Caucasian Albania period. Analyses of the bulls have demonstrated that local population used both imported and local seal-rings [20].

In Hellenistic age seal-rings have been commonly used throughout Southern Caucasus. For example, many such rings have been discovered in Georgia [21]. An interesting collection of seal-rings, including the all-metal rings have been discovered in the graves of V-III centuries B.C. in the area of Talish mountains [22]. Thus, the study of the all-metal seal-rings indicate their wide application in V-III centuries B.C. Experts believe, that in later years, they have been replaced by imported and local seal-rings with carved stone insertions [23].

Second ring from the ground grave was made of plate bronze. The edges of the ring were not closed. Also, one of the edges had a narrowing, sharpened end (Table 10, Figure 3). Such rings could be widened to the required size when put on the winger. External side of the ring was decorated with en elegant rim formed of two bulged-in lines with a line of small bulging circles between them. The pattern was produced by way of stamping from the inside. Such rings made of plate bronze have been widely spread and are often encountered in the monuments from the late Bronze Age to the late ancient age. Similar bronze ring was discovered in the pitcher burial in Mingechaur [24].

A small pendant made of a bronze wire round section (Table 10, Figure 6) also belongs to the types of ornament, widely spread in Albanian period. Such pendants are encountered almost in all burial grounds of V-I centuries B.C. For example, such bronze pendants at one time were discovered in the burial mound of Mingechaur [25].

Also widely-spread during Albanian period is an iron vestment buckle (Table 10, Figure 9). Only an upper section of the buckle with an intricate delicate finish has been preserved. The pin rod has almost entirely oxidised and decayed. Metallic pin-buckles for vestments and for hair are commonly encountered in the archaeological complexes, beginning from the Bronze Age and up to the Early Middle Ages (inclusive). As the closest analogues (judging based on the preserved part) a hair pin from the pitcher burial in Mingechaur [26] could be named. Another similar hair pin is known from the ground burial in Mingechaur researched in 1941 by N.V. Minkevich-Mustafayeva [27].

It is interesting to note, that in this case the ground burial also was under the more recent pitcher burial [28].

Bronze ear-rings made of two globe-shaped fragments joined together by round shackle (Table 10, Figure 1, 2) have also been found in the ground burial. Ear-rings of such shape are also widely-spread in the jewellery art of the Caucasian Albania [29]. Golden ear-rings of a similar shape are well-known from the burial in Mingechaur [30]. In Mingechaur burial small ornaments imitating grape clusters have been welded to such global-shaped pendants. This element wasn't preserved on the studied ear-rings, however, there are traces of some sort of soldering at the bottom of the globes. Otherwise, the entire principle of the production of the Mingechaur and Borsunli bronze ear-rings is absolutely identical. Such ear-rings chronologically have been produced over a large period of time – from the Late Bronze Age up to the first centuries of our age (inclusive).

Ear-rings from the studied ground burial belong to earlier, simpler specimens. Similar items from the later periods, discovered in the archaeological monuments dating to the last centuries B.C. – first centuries (I-III) A.D., are presented by more developed types. Earlier mentioned ear-rings from Mingechaur, from the pitcher burial in Ismailli and others could serve as an example [31].

And finally, the last bronze ornament from the ground burial is a necklace, comprising nine identical bronze pendants. They were made of a thin plate bronze in a shape of an ancient local ornament "buta". Upper section of each pendant is bended and curled inside, forming a shackle for passing through a thread (Table 10, Figure 7). All nine pendants have identical ornaments in the shape of central bulging circles, surrounded by small dots formed by pressing from the reverse side. Ancient jewellers usually achieved such forms using the method called reverse stamping. Mentioned pendants could serve as an evidence of the jewellery art of that time. Although we don't know direct analogues of these pendants from the archaeological complexes of Azerbaijan and neighbouring regions, in general, the principle of pendants and necklaces of similar bronze, silver and gold items is a wide-spread principle of the jewellery art, which was used by virtually all nations from the earliest ages. Such necklaces have been very common as a jewellery of ancient period in the Caucasian Albania.

While describing ceramic material from the burial mounds, it should be noted that it is presented by different size pitchers, pots, bowls and phials. All ceramic vessels, by size, form and functionality are typical for the second half of the Ist millennium B.C. and have numerous analogues among many monuments of Caucasian Albania. Ceramic vessels from burial grounds in Mingechaur [32], Kabala [33], Shemakha [34] could serve as examples. Vessels from Jafarkhan burial ground in Mughan [35] and abode graves near Khanlar [36] could be noted among similar ceramic items. Ceramic material, virtually identical in minute details to the studied material, have been discovered in the pitcher burials near Uzeirkend village of Agdjabedi District in Mil Steppe. Analyses of these pitcher burials, as well as archaeological material discovered in them, allowed to date these burials to VI-III century B.C. [37]. Basically, pitcher burials of the Mil Steppe, turned out to be much older than the similar pitcher burials, known until that time in Azerbaijan, to the North of Kura river, namely, in the area of Mingechaur, Geokchay, Kabala and Shemaha, which are usually dated to the IIIrd century B.C. – II century A.D. Ceramics in Agdjabedi pitcher burials were presented by some vessels, which are actually slightly similar to the vessels of Khadjali-Kedabek type and to the vessels from Garatepe settlement in Mil Steppe and Saritepe settlement in Gazakh region [38]. Both settlements are multilayer monuments, and ceramic specimens, from vessels, similar to those of Agdjabedi, are identified here in the layers, related to the middle of the Ist millennium B.C. This, as well as a number of other factors allowed to the researches to date the pitcher burials discovered near Uzeirkend village to the VI-III centuries B.C. It is interesting to note, that the researchers of pitcher burials in Mingechaur suggested that the pitcher burials on the right bank are more ancient than those on the left bank [39]. Another feature, noted by the researches in the right-bank burial ground with pitcher burials – an earlier grave with ground burial with strongly writhed skeletons were

discovered under these graves with pitcher burials [40]. As mentioned above, similar picture were also observed during digging of Borsunli burial mound.

Ceramic vessels with paintings are often found in the pitcher burials in Azerbaijan. The painting is applied with red paint and depicts various geometrical figures, plants or birds [41]. Ceramic items discovered in Borsunlu burial mound include deep bowls with red painted edge round the border (Table 7, Figure 1).

All the features, including the type of the entrance burials themselves and accompanying burial implements, allows to date the pitcher burial to III-II centuries B.C., and the ground one (based on the stratigraphic characteristics) – to a slightly earlier period – V-III centuries B.C.

Following the digging of the entrance burials, the study of the main mound burial has commenced. After the cone-shaped mound (1 m thick and 5.5 m in diameter) of small stones on the top of the burial mound have been cleaned up, it was established that the main ground burial chamber is of a quadrangular shape (length – 4.35 m; width – 1.5 m) and is covered by 18 wooden beams. These beams vary from 0.9 to 3.3 m in length, and from 15 to 25 cm in diameter. The depth of the burial chamber was 1.3 m (Table 12, Figure 1, 2). Entrance to the chamber was made in the form of a narrow passage and was located in the South-East section of the grave. It is interesting to note, that unlike chamber, the passage had no cover. It was filled with small stones, similar to those, which formed the top section of the mound. There were no traces of special fastening of the wooden cover in order to provide the encapsulating of the inner space of the burial chamber. Moreover, some beams comprising wooden cover ended in the chamber itself, which resulted in its being filled with small stones and ground.

The decedent was buried in a sitting position in the western corner of the burial chamber. With time, i.e. after the disappearance of the tissue basis, skeleton bones disintegrated, and the skull of the decedent was on the very top (Table 13, Figure 1, 2). Spinal bones and ribs turned out to be positioned in the direction of the centre of the chamber, and the arm bones were positioned in northern direction.

Among the bones, under the skull, four flinty and one obsidian arrow-heads have been discovered (Table 14, Figure 1-5). In the same place have been discovered two bronze buttons and fragments of different bronze items, which were too poorly preserved to identify their functionality (Table 14, Figure 6, 7).

In the centre of the burial chamber, at about 1.0 m deep and in about 1.7 m of North-South direction and 1.15 m of East-West direction, there was an accumulation of small river cobbles mingled with bones of small cattle and poultry. It should be noted that the bones of the small cattle have been scattered over the entire area of the burial chamber. There also were cabane fang among the астеологического materials found (Table 14, Figure 12).

Bronze sward and bronze spear-head have been found in the central part of the burial chamber (Table 14, Figure 8, 9).

A fragment of the horse skeleton (Table 13, Figure 13), stretched in the direction North-South, have been found in the Eastern corner of the burial chamber at 1.2 m depth. It consisted of the rear part of the body and two hind legs. The length of the preserved part of the body is 85 cm. The length of the hind legs was about the same. 9 rib-bones have also been discovered. And again, bones of small cattle were scattered between the skeleton of the horse and the Eastern corner of the burial chamber.

It is interesting to note, that there have been practically no ceramic items among the implements discovered in this main burial chamber. At the same time, other items found in the grave have a significant scientific value.

Bronze plates. Fragments of semi-tubular bronze plates have been discovered in the area of the human skeleton location. As mentioned above, it was impossible to identify their exact functionality. However, as they were found near five arrow-heads, one can assume that those were elements of the quiver edge facing (Table 14, Figure 10-11).

Buttons. All buttons and button fragments have been found on the human skeleton and around it. Only two buttons have been relatively well-preserved. These buttons are bulging in the centre and have two symmetrical holes close to the edge, which served for attaching buttons to the vestment (Table 14, Figure 6). 12 more fragments from the similar buttons have been found together with these two buttons (Table 14, Figure 7).

Dagger. Was found in the very centre of the burial chamber at the depth of 1.2 m. Dagger blade is smooth from both sides, without any deepening lines. Dagger handle was relatively short and much flattened toward the end section (Table 14, Figure 8).

Arrow-heads. A bronze arrow-head, typical for the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age, have been found in the Southern corner of the burial chamber, at 1.2 m depth. Arrow-head has a sub-triangular shape with clearly defined wings (Table 14, Figure 9). Flinty and one obsidian arrow-heads, discovered in the burial chamber, although different in size, are performed in a similar stile. They are almond-shaped and have a small hollow at the base (Table 14, Figure 1-5). Arrow-heads of this type are frequently encountered in the monuments of the specified period.

Virtually all items, discovered in the main burial chamber have numerous analogues among the finds from the monuments of Later Bronze – Earlier Iron Age on the territory of Azerbaijan and entire Southern Caucuses. Similar finds, discovered relatively close geographically, in the monuments of Garabag [42], Kedabek [43] and Dashkesen [44] could be named as examples.

As a result of archaeological diggings, it was discovered, that around the second half of the IInd millennium a tradition was established to cover the burial chambers in the mound burials with wooden beams. For example, burial chambers of the mound burials in

Borsunlu and Beyemsar in Terter District and Sarichoban mound in Agdam District have been covered with the beams made of coniferous wood. Taking into consideration large size of the burial chambers in these mounds, the diameter of some of these beams reached 40-60 cm, and their length varied from 12 to 14 meters [45].

The rite of burying decedents in sitting position has a deep historical background in the Southern Caucuses. For example, in 1897, E. Resler has dug out a mound №1 dating back to the beginning of the III millennium B.C. The mound contained four skeletons buried in the sitting position, face to the South. In 1930s, Y.Gummel also registered a burial rite in the sitting position [46] in mounds № 103 and №109 dug near Khankendi.

Cases of burial in sitting position have been repeatedly registered by the researchers of monuments, belonging to Gandja – Garabakh area of the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age. The following facts should, therefore, be noted. E.Resler has inspected five burial mounds dating to the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age near Akhtaki village in Nagorni Karabakh. In four of these burial mounds the body was buried in a sitting position. It should be noted that in the mound #1 all three bodies, in the mound №2 – two bodies, in the mound #3 eight out of nine bodies and in the mound № 5 all four bodies have been buried in the sitting position. At the end of XIX century A.A.Ivanovsky has dug out five burial mounds dating to the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age near Demgolu village in Nagorni Karabakh. The rite of burial in sitting position has been registered in three of them [47]. In one of these mounds (№78), the form and orientation of the burial chamber, as well as the sitting position of the decedent and the orientation of his face in the South-Western direction are absolutely identical to the researched mound burials.

In 1888-1891, in a series of graves dug by V.Belkov in Kedabek region and dating to the Late Bronze - Early Iron Age burials in a sitting position have been registered [48].

The discovery of a horse skeleton in the main burial is very interesting from the scientific point of view. The rite of burial with the horse has been identified in a number of monuments of Late Bronze – Early Iron Age in Azerbaijan. This is a direct reflection of the fact that the horse-breeding was very well developed with the semi-nomadic tribes of that period. Horses have been widely used as pack animal and for transport purposes in the military art, as well as a source of a whole number of valuable products and as a trade raw material. As a result of all this, horse worshiping had a significant place in the religious rites of that time.

In the process of archaeological digging it has been established, that Azerbaijan was one of the ancient locations of domestication of horses. Thus, in Mughan, in Djalilabd region, osteological remains of domesticated horse [49] have been discovered during diggings of Alikomektepe village, in the layer dating to the end of Eneolith (V millennium B.C.).

Osteological and other materials, associated with the horse-breeding, have often been discovered during researches of the archaeological monuments of the subsequent historical periods – Early and Middle Bronze Age (IV-II millennium B.C.). Osteological material of horse was discovered in Kultepe I settlement in Nakhchevan in II and III

horizons of the cultural layer of this monument, relating to Early and Middle Bronze Age [50]. In the Makhta I settlement dating to the Early Bronze Age a clayey horse statue [51] has been discovered.

However, the most numerous finds associated with horses have been discovered in the monuments dating to the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age (second half of IInd – beginning of the Ist millennium B.C.). Here are some of the facts, which demonstrate this conclusion: in the graves of Kedabek, dug by V.Belkov (Garamurad necropolis – grave № 53; Geydere necropolis – grave № 3; Jannat Galasi necropolis – graves № 9, 49, 112) horse skeletons and horse gear have been discovered (псалии, bits) [52].

In Nakhchevan, during the digging of Shakhtakhta necropolis with the burials in stone boxes of the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age, in one of the graves a whole skeleton of horse was discovered without a human skeleton in the same grave. The rite of a horse burial is undoubtedly associated with worshiping of this animal. It demonstrates, that the horse cult had a significant place in the religious system of ancient South Caucasian.

Many archaeological features associated with the horse-breeding, horse cult and worship, have been found among the burial grounds of the Garabakh area. Six horse skeletons have been found in Beyamsar burial mound, near Terter District; eight horse skeletons have been found in Borsunli burial mound of Terter District; sixteen horse skeletons have been found in Sarichoban burial mound of Agdam District. In majority of cases burial of horses was performed with the whole set of the horse gear, and the number of variety of the horse gear (bits, псалий, умбонов, фаларов, etc.) evidence high development of trades connected with the production of horse gear [54].

In Shamkir District, in the burial ground dating to the beginning of the Ist millennium B.C. cases of joint burial of people and horses with the entire set of the horse gear have been registered [55].

Thus, above mentioned examples demonstrate that horse-breeding, which was born in the South Caucasus in the Eneolith Period (V millennium B.C.), reached high level of development during Late Bronze – Early Iron Age. Burial mound researched in Geranboy District, in the DaraEri near Borsunlu village is another evidence of this process.

Study of the Borsunlu burial mound in Geranboy District is yet another example of the fruitful collaboration between the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Science of Azerbaijan with British Petroleum company. At the same time it evidences that the Contract of the Century signed in 1994 helps to settle not only strategic issues of economic development in Azerbaijan, but also assists in tackling the problems of historical heritage of the Azeri people.

Described burial mound is the first site on the route of Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan oil pipeline, which has been researched by the joint efforts of scientists from the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography and BTC Company. All other archaeological finds discovered on Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan route will be researched in the similar manner

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