

**Azerbaijan
National Academy of Sciences
Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography**

Bakhtiyar Jalilov

**Short Report
Excavations of Seyidlar II Antique Period Settlement
KP 318 - BTC ROW**

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ABSTRACT

This Report describes the results of archaeological excavations carried out at Seyidlar II Settlement site located at KP 318.6 of the BTC ROW. Varied archaeological material including pottery fragments, stone tools, spindle whorls and melted slag were recovered during the excavations that took place in June 2005. Based on the study of all the material obtained notably pottery ware, this site is thought to be a rural settlement site dating from the Antique Period.

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I. Introduction

- *Description of the BTC and SCP Archaeology Programme*

Archaeological excavations in connection with the construction of the BTC and SCP pipelines were conducted prior to, and during the construction of these pipelines. These excavations generally were carried out within the 44m wide pipeline corridor from 2001 to 2005. The archaeology programme consisted of five phases of which the first four phases constituted field investigations:

Phase I – actual and potential archaeological sites were visually identified during walkover or baseline surveys during the selection of the pipeline route.

Phase II – the sites that were identified during Phase I as archaeologically potential were tested by digging test pits and conducting small-scale trial excavations.

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

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

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 previously known to archaeological science.

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

- *Discovery of the Site*

The site was discovered by a watching brief archaeologist in 2005 during topsoil stripping on the SCP side of the easement at KP 318.6 of the BTC pipeline. The site was not identified during the previous phases of the archaeology programme because there were no surface markers to indicate the underlying archaeological deposits. The excavation work at the site was conducted by Bakhtiyar Jalilov (lead archaeologist) and Yagil Danyalov from IoAE, ANAS, in June 2005.

II. Field and Office Methods

- *Field Methods*

No machines were used for the investigation of the site. The site was excavated by the project labour force using spades, shovels, brushes, knives and other hand tools. The site was divided into 10 quadrats of 4 by 4m and every feature exposed or artefact discovered in quadrats was recorded in the field logbook with indication of the depth of the deposit. The finds were then field sorted and washed, the diagnostic material was retained, boxed and sent to the IoAE in Baku. The remainder of the material was reburied on site.

- *Office/Laboratory Methods*

All the archaeological material recovered from site was accordingly analysed at the IoAE. The results of the excavations were compared with those obtained at similar sites to specify production methods of pottery making and properly date the site which work resulted in preparation of this Report.

- *Archive Disposition*

All the processed archaeological material was handed over to the IoAE special archive set up for the storage of finds discovered on the BTC and SCP ROW.

III. Excavation Results

- *Site Description*

The site is located at Seyidlar, Samux District, 1km to the south of Komunna village of Shamkir District at Pulkovo coordinates 8607906, 4525924. The site is on a level, slightly sloping area, 215m above sea level (Photos 1 and 2). The area where the site is located was formerly arable land, but as a result of continuous reclamation work the salinity of the soil had increased over time and the land became unfit for growing crops. Currently the topsoil consists of weakly productive clayey, saline sierozem. The sierozem layer measures 1m in thickness overlies a sandy, relatively black layer of ground which produced water at a depth of 1.3m.

- *Description of Cultural Horizons*

In the course of excavations five pits were discovered in Quadrats 3 and 4. The structure of the pits and artefacts recovered from them strongly suggested that these were storage and rubbish pits.

Ellipse-shaped Pit 1 was exposed at a depth of 50cm in the middle of Quadrat 4. It measured 120cm x 160cm in diameter and 80cm in depth. Mixed pottery assemblage retrieved from the pit implied that it was a rubbish pit.

Pit 2 was recorded at a depth of 50cm in the south-west wall of Quadrat 4. Half of the pit remained outside the boundary of the excavation. The depth of the pit was 75cm, diameter – between 140cm and 150cm. This roughly round pit was most likely used for storing rubbish.

Pottery sherds recovered from both of these pits represented various pots dating to the Antique Period.

Pit 3 was revealed at a depth of 40cm in the south-east part of Quadrat 3. The pit measured 155cm in diameter and was 1m deep. In addition to pottery sherds this pit produced large cattle bones.

Pit 4 was discovered at a depth of 45cm in the north-east part of Quadrat 3. Its mouth diameter was 130cm, internal diameter – 150cm and the depth – 120cm.

Pit 5 was exposed right at the juncture of Quadrat 3 and Quadrat 4 at a depth of 40cm at the north-west edge of the excavation site. The larger portion of the pit remained outside the excavation site. Its mouth diameter was 120cm, internal diameter – 190cm and the depth – 110cm.

The structure of both Pit 4 and Pit 5 and the pottery fragments present in them suggested that these were storage pits.

Other features and artefacts were uncovered in Quadrat 9 and Quadrat 10.

Rubbish pit 6 was exposed at a depth of 25cm in the south-west side of Quadrats 9 and 10. Almost half of this pit, measuring 5.6m in diameter, remained outside the limits of the excavated quadrats. The depth of the pit was 1.5m. The pit produced ceramic fragments representing pots of different shapes and functions, as well as cattle and fowl bones, spindle whorls, a stone punching tool, ash, charcoal and melted slag.

All the ten quadrats were excavated down to 80cm at which depth the ground proved to be archaeologically sterile. Archaeological material was found only in quadrats 3, 4, 9 and 10, the others being empty (1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8).

- *Description of Finds*

The finds recovered from the site include fragments representing jugs, jars, **bardags** and bowls of various sizes, spindle whorls, melted slag, animal bones and a grain grinder.

Pottery Assemblage

Pottery ware constitutes a major portion of finds recovered from the site. Many of these wheel-thrown pots are noteworthy for their quality of firing and delicate artistic design. The description of pottery forms is based upon descriptions contained in *Medieval English Pottery* (19xx), where there are no direct comparisons, local Azeri terms are used for vessel

Jars

These are fragments of coarse texture storage jars mainly of pink and red colour. They all have everted rims decorated with diagonal incised or thumbed lines. The same method was used for decorations on the belt-like strips applied on the shoulders and bodies of jars. These well-made pots have walls measuring between 1 and 1.7cm in thickness (Photo 5).

Jugs

Fragments of this type represent both narrow and wide mouthed jugs of various forms. These jugs were made of pure and well mixed clay. They are all well fired at a stable temperature to a grey or pink colour. The pots bear decorations painted in white paste. One jug has a funnel-shaped, everted rim. The low neck of this medium-sized jug bends and gradually passes into the body. The jug is coated with a greenish substance. The neck and body are decorated with parallel lines painted in white paste. Similar but thinner white lines decorate the internal surface of the neck. In addition the body bears patterns made up of incised lines.

Three of the fragments come from medium-sized jug-type vessels. They represent neck and shoulder fragments of thin-walled pots with flattened mouths. One of the fragments has a pattern made up of thin horizontal strips painted in white paste. There are incised notches resembling raindrops between the 2nd and 3rd strips and a wavelike line between the 3rd and 4th strips. Judging by the texture of the sherd the pot was made of pure, well mixed clay and fired at a stable temperature. The second fragment is also decorated in the same manner. The neck and shoulder of the third fragment are decorated with strips drawn in white paste. Two rows of notches are additionally applied over these decorations. Between the notches there is one more pattern made up of slanting lines.

Another jug-type pot is also noteworthy for its fabric and decorations. Only three fragments were found, which formed part of the jug above the body. The jug has a narrow, slightly everted funnel-shaped mouth. The shoulder of the pot is girded with a wide pattern and painted light red. The jug of a light pink colour has a globular body and plain design. The mouth diameter is 8.5cm.

Bardags

These are mainly represented by neck and body fragments. The neck fragment of a thin-walled bardag with an everted rim and funnel-shaped mouth is decorated with three parallel strips painted in white paste. As this was the only surviving piece, it is difficult to say whether these strips continue further down on the shoulder. It is estimated from the fragment that the neck measured 6.8cm in diameter (Photo 3).

All bardag-type pots recovered have the same shape. They differ from each other only by patterns incised or encrusted on their surfaces.

Bardag-type vessels are also represented by mouth and neck fragments consisting of two ceramic layers. The outer layer is of a greenish colour. The neck bears horizontal, parallel, irregular lines painted in thick white paste. Two of the ceramic sherds represent a wide-necked bardag which had patterns in the form of strips applied with white paste on its neck, shoulder and body. The juncture of the neck and shoulder is additionally decorated with thin notches. The base of the missing handle with a circular cross section is seen on the body. It is known the handle was

attached to the body after decorating the pot because the survived handle base conceals part of the decoration. Most of bardags have one handle with a circular or ribbon cross section (Photo 4).

Kheyras

A number of pottery sherds represent **kheyras** or reasonably deep bowl-type pots. Tempered with fine sand they were fired to a light pink surface. Whilst one group of **kheyras** have everted rims and are of plain design, another group have rims thinning towards their external edges and girded with bulging outside strips. A third group of **kheyras**, made of higher quality clay, were skilfully fired at a stable temperature. They are noteworthy for their thin rims. This group of **kheyras** look like they have been purposefully given a benched shape.

Several pots have attached lugs on the mouths.

The remaining pottery sherds of this type represent different parts of bodies. One such fragment has a remnant of a club-shaped handle. The handle remnant has a thumb groove. The area below and around the handle is smoothed by hand. The body is decorated with horizontal strips painted in white paste. The walls of the pot are thin and extremely delicate.

Dopus

This type of pot is represented by fragments of rims, necks and bodies. Tempered with fine sand they are well fired to a red or black surface. They have everted rims and plain design.

Spindle whorls

Two clay spindle whorls were recovered from the excavation site. These are cone-shaped spindle whorls of a grey colour.

Stone artefacts

A grain grinder was discovered at the excavation site. This grain grinder used as a punching tool is made of tuff and well notched. It is 20cm long and 7cm wide.

Metal objects

Except for melted slag no metal objects were discovered at the site. Such melted slag is usually metal smelting by-product.

Animal bones

A considerable number of cattle and fowl bones were found at the site. These were counted and reburied.

IV. Analytical Results

• Interpretation of Excavation Results

The limited number of finds recovered from the site provided little data because the excavated site is presumed to be located on the periphery of a major settlement that extended outside the operating width of the pipeline. Despite this, however the artefacts of different types retrieved from the site allow certain judgements to be formed about the nature of this monument.

The stylist study and comparative analysis of finds, especially pottery assemblage suggest that the site could be characterized as a rural settlement site dating to the Antique Period.

The pottery ware recovered from Seyidlar II Antique Period settlement are fine samples of pottery art. The fabric and texture of ceramic pots indicate that they were made by highly skilful professional potters that had mastered high pottery making technologies available at that time.

Discovery of a considerable amount of melted slag (a by-product of metal working) is indicative of development of local metallurgy, notably blacksmithing, in the Antique Period Azerbaijan.

The spindle whorls found at the site show that along with pottery making and metallurgy, weaving was among other practiced crafts.

The animal bones discovered at the site suggest that at that time the local population was mainly engaged in cattle breeding. The small bovid bones found at the site did not exceed 5% of all the faunal remains. In addition, the presence of chicken bones implies that poultry breeding was also widely practiced by the local population.

The nature of the archaeological material recovered from the site strongly suggests that Seyidlar II Settlement site could be dated to the Antique Period, i.e. first to third centuries, A.D.

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

Several settlement sites of Antique Period date have been excavated along the length of the BTC and SCP ROW. They differ from Seyidlar II settlement site in age and also in nature. They are Antique Period burials. From this point of view Seyidlar II monument is of particular importance in the study of Antique Period rural life in Azerbaijan. In addition, as distinct from burial sites Seyidlar II Settlement site provides more profound and more extensive data about the economic and domestic life in the period under investigation.

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

First and foremost it should be noted that Antique Period monuments have not been sufficiently investigated in the area where the site is located. Therefore discovery and excavation of several Antique Period sites along the BTC and SCP routes are of paramount importance for the archaeology of the region.

In general sites of this type are widespread in Azerbaijan and many of them have been sufficiently explored. However, the majority of excavated sites were Antique Period urban settlements (towns). From this standpoint Seyidlar II – an Antique Period rural settlement site, acquires special scientific importance. Excavation of this site has provided certain information about the economic and domestic life of small Antique Period settlements not only of this area but other parts of Azerbaijan.

V. Illustrations

Overall View of the Excavation Site



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5

VI. Inventory of Artefacts

No.	KP	Type of site	Material	Find	Quadrat Number	Comment
1	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	3	
2	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	3	
3	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	3	
4	318	Settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	
5	318	Settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	
6	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	4	decorated with white paste
7	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	4	
8	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	4	
9	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	4	
10	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	4	
11	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	4	
12	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	3	
13	318	Settlement	ceramic	dopu	3	
14	318	Settlement	ceramic	dopu	3	
15	318	Settlement	ceramic	cooking pot	4	soot traces on the surface
16	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	4	
17	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	4	
18	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	4	
19	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	9-10	decorated with white paste
20	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	9-10	
21	318	Settlement	ceramic	kheyra	9-10	
22	318	Settlement	ceramic	kheyra	9-10	
23	318	Settlement	ceramic	bowl	9-10	
24	318	Settlement	ceramic	kheyra	9-10	
25	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	9-10	
26	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	9-10	
27	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	9-10	
28	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	9-10	
29	318	Settlement	ceramic	handle	9-10	
30	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	9-10	
31	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	9-10	
32	318	Settlement	ceramic	sherd	9-10	decorated with white paste
33	318	Settlement	ceramic	handle	9-10	
34	318	Settlement	ceramic	handle	9-10	
35	318	Settlement	ceramic	kheyra	9-10	
36	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	9-10	
37	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	9-10	
38	318	Settlement	ceramic	handle	9-10	
39	318	Settlement	ceramic	handle	9-10	
40	318	Settlement	ceramic	handle	9-10	
41	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	9-10	decorated with white paste
42	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	9-10	

43	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	9-10	
44	318	Settlement	ceramic	jar	9-10	
45	318	Settlement	ceramic	jar	9-10	
46	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	9-10	
47	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	9-10	
48	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	9-10	
49	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	9-10	
50	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	9-10	
51	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	9-10	
52	318	Settlement	ceramic	handle	9-10	
53	318	Settlement	ceramic	handle	9-10	
54	318	Settlement	clay	spindle whorl	9-10	
55	318	Settlement	clay	spindle whorl	9-10	
56	318	Settlement	ceramic	handle	9-10	
57	318	Settlement	ceramic	handle	9-10	
58	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	9-10	
59	318	Settlement	ceramic	dopu	9-10	
60	318	Settlement	ceramic	bardag	9-10	
61	318	Settlement	ceramic	jar	9-10	
62	318	Settlement	ceramic	jar	9-10	
63	318	Settlement	ceramic	jar	9-10	
64	318	Settlement	ceramic	kheyra	9-10	
65	318	Settlement	ceramic	cooking pot	9-10	
66	318	Settlement	ceramic	kheyra	9-10	
67	318	Settlement	ceramic	bowl	9-10	
68	318	Settlement	ceramic	cooking pot	9-10	
69	318	Settlement	ceramic	sherd	9-10	
70	318	Settlement	ceramic	handle	9-10	
71	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	9-10	
72	318	Settlement	ceramic	jug	9-10	