

August 5, 2003
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To: Philip Middleton
ESIA Manager, BTC Co

From: A. A. Abbasov
Director, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography,
National Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan Republic

Dear Sir,

Please find attached a brief report on the archaeological survey carried out during July 02-24, 2003 by the members of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography at the Zayamchay River necropolis along the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline (5 pages attached).

Yours respectfully,

A. A. Abbasov
Director, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography,
National Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan Republic

BRIEF REPORT

on the Archaeological Survey Carried Out by the Members of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography at the Zayamchay River Necropolis Along the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline

(July 02-24, 2003)

The archaeological excavations at the Zayamchay River necropolis were extended up to July 24, 2003. About 107 tombs had been discovered and studied until that date within the 24m-wide corridor. However, the results of the extra observations show that some tombs are left unstudied within the said corridor. Therefore, it is important to continue the archaeological surveys at the Zayamchay Necropolis located within the corridor of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline to examine these tombs.

In addition, a 5x5m sample pit was excavated within the settlement registered at c. 500-600 meters to the south of the necropolis. As a result of the excavations, a 110cm diameter pot, bonfire places and various pottery fragments were discovered at this location. Therefore, this territory is assumed to be an ancient dwelling area. Thus, it is also important to conduct surveys at this location, as the oil pipeline passes through the centre of the above-mentioned settlement.

As mentioned above, about 107 tombs are discovered in the area within the 24m corridor and studied during the report period. It is known that the main distinguishing feature of the Zayamchay tombs is the fact that they are represented by high-rise blocks made of cobble, which sometimes reach to 70cm. Besides, some other types of funeral rites were observed. The most interesting of them are the cobbles that sometimes reach 4 meters in diameter and are piled on the burial chamber in 4-5 layers. In upper layers these stones were sparsely piled, however, in the last layer on the burial chamber they were orderly placed. The tomb №67 is very interesting from this point of view. Thus, the area covered by stone piling composed of river stones and observed at 20cm depth was 4 meters in diameter. After the layout of the stones was drawn up and they were photographed and removed, the second stone layer was discovered at 15 cm depth. Such stone pilings were 5 times repeatedly found on the excavation site.

Only upon the removal of the 5th layer a grave was discovered at the depth of 195cm. It should also be mentioned that the interval between the 5 layers of stone piling on the burial chamber is 10 to 20 cm. Generally, though the number of such and similar burials is less than that of other burial types they are very interesting due to their shapes and the burial equipment used.

Another specific feature of the Zayamchay River necropolis is that tombs in some locations are placed on each other. The surveys carried out allow to say that this necropolis was used for a long period of time, approximately for 900-1000 years, by the people living in the area. The settlements variously named among the people as well as the necropolises covering an area more than about 40 hectares where the Zayamchay River falls into the Kura River and dating back to different historical periods are among the factors that make us draw such a conclusion. Thus the settlement named Mishartapa covering an area of about 5 hectares located near the Zayamchay necropolis 700-800 meters to the east as well as the settlements mentioned in the beginning of the report that are located 500-600 meters to the south of the necropolis also allow us to come to this conclusion. Of course, the main factors supporting our conclusion are the archaeological materials found in the tombs. Archaeological materials were found in nearly all the 107 tombs (with the exception of 3 tombs) studied up to date. These are mainly different types of pottery, including pots, jugs, bowls, basins, churns, kettles, pitchers, etc. The number of pots among these pottery is low, while the number of jug-type pottery is high due to their variety.

The tombs 102 and 105 are more interesting for the great number of pottery discovered in them. Thus, 24 fragments of pottery have been found in only one of the tombs - tomb no. 105. Among these the 60 and 42cm high narrow-necked jugs are very interesting. One of the interesting features of the tomb is that it had been long before destroyed in the middle part. Thus, a dead body was put in the grave and pottery was placed around. During the examination of the tomb it was discovered that the dagger and ornaments on the dead body were scattered around, which allows us come to this conclusion. The tomb was destroyed just in its centre where the skeleton was placed and the pottery next to the skeleton was broken when the items on the skeleton were taken away. But the pottery around the skeleton remained unbroken. There is another probability that a predatory animal destroyed the tomb. We draw this conclusion on the basis of the fact that the tomb was badly destroyed just in the part where the dead body was placed.

Besides the pottery, bronze ornaments and armament has also been discovered in the tombs. The ornaments include bracelets, rings, earrings, nighab and pins made of bronze. Also very interesting are various shaped beads made of agate and **pasta**. The figures resembling the mountain goat and made in the form of bronze ornaments are also of great importance.

The bronze armament includes daggers, spears and arrowheads. Besides, a lot of cutting tools made of obsidian have been discovered.

It should be mentioned as a result of the archaeological surveys carried out to date that the Zayamchay necropolis was in use for a long period of time, i.e. from the 15th century to the 7th century B.C.

Our conclusion is based only on the surveys carried out within the corridor of the oil pipeline. The Zayamchay Necropolis occupies a very large area. The surveyed area covers the relatively lower part of the hill. Should the surveys be carried out in the relatively upper area to the east of the oil pipeline corridor, new tombs dating back to other periods are likely to be discovered.

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Authorised Representative for Cooperation with BP

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