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**Short Report
Excavations of Asrikchai Settlement Site
KP 377 - BTC ROW**

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ABSTRACT

This Report describes the results of excavations carried out on an early Iron Age settlement site located at KP 377, BTC ROW. Excavations revealed a series of features and varied artefactual material. Cultural material recovered from the site is largely represented by pottery fragments and

stone artefacts with pottery ware prevailing. Based on the stratigraphy of cultural deposits and analytical study of the area and cultural material, it was established that this was a one-layer seasonal settlement site occupied during the 9th-8th centuries, B.C.

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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 Asrikchai site at KP 377 of the BTC ROW was not discovered during Phase I or Phase II of the archaeology programme as it had no surface markers or signs to attract attention. The site was identified as a potential archaeological site by a watching brief archaeologist during topsoil stripping for the BTC pipeline in 2004. The pipeline construction work was suspended and opportunity provided to conduct archaeological excavations at the location.

Excavations at the Asrikchai early Iron Age seasonal settlement site were conducted in two stages during 2004-2005 by archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography (IoAE), Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences. Work during the first stage was carried out in July 2004; work during the second stage took place in December 2004 and January 2005. The first-stage excavations with participation of Bakhtiyar Jalilov, Muzaffar Huseynov and Vagif Asadov were led by Gahraman Agayev and Victor Kvachidze. The second-stage excavations were carried out under the guidance of Bakhtiyar Jalilov and Najaf Museyibli with participation of Vagif Asadov, Shamil Najafov and Yagil Daniyalov.

The work was supervised by the BTC archaeological representatives Richard Moore and Claire Angus.

II. Field and Office Methods

- *Field Methods*

The first-stage excavations were initiated in those sections of the site that attracted attention as areas with potential archaeological deposits. Twelve quadrats of 5m by 5m were marked out along

the centre-line of the SCP pipe and four quadrats of the same size were chosen to be excavated close to the BTC side of the pipeline easement.

During the second stage there was no need to divide the site into quadrats. Excavations were restricted to three adjacent locations where remains of pit-houses were exposed during the SCP pipeline trenching. The excavated pit-houses were accordingly designated as pit-house 1, pit-house 2 and pit-house 3.

The excavation work at the Asrikchai site was undertaken by the project labour force using shovels, barrows, trowels, brushes and other hand tools to clean and expose features as they were located. The stratigraphic sequence of cultural deposits was recorded according to depth and all the features exposed and artefacts recovered in the course of excavations were photographed, illustrated and recorded in site plans and field logbooks with brief descriptions of their morphology. Theodolites, geodetic levels, digital cameras and GPS were used for photographing, making plans and drawings and establishing the coordinates of the site and its height above sea level.

All archaeological finds were field sorted by IoAE staff to identify diagnostic material which was then boxed and sent off to IoAE to Baku. The finds that provided no new archaeological data were discarded by being buried at site.

- ***Office/Laboratory Methods***

At the “Archaeological Service” department of the IoAE the finds were further processed and systematized. Photographs of artefacts were taken and drawings were made where relevant. Where possible the pottery fragments were mended into complete or partially complete pots. The cultural material recovered from the site was compared with that from similar coeval sites that had already been studied and properly dated. This Report reflects the results of the implemented work.

- ***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.

IV. Excavation Results

- ***Site Description***

This site is located at KP 377, BTC ROW, on the ridge of high ground, between the Tovuzchai River and its tributary, the Asrikchai, approximately 1.5km east of Bozalganli village, Tovuz District. These two rivers are less than 900m apart at this point, and both occupy steep valleys, leaving a ridge of fairly level ground around 100m wide between them. The ground falls away very steeply to the east, towards the Asrikchai, and slightly more gradually to the west towards the Tovuzchai. The whole ridge characterised by grey sandy and gravelly soils is covered by sagebrush scrub and is used as rough grazing for sheep and goats. The site covers an area of 1.5 hectares and is located at Pulkovo coordinates 8556956, 4542348 and is 372m above sea level.

- ***Description of Cultural Horizons***

Prior to commencement of archaeological excavations the site had been disturbed during site preparation for the pipeline construction. Because of uneven relief, ground-levelling work at the site had caused serious damage to cultural deposits. While on flat areas the topsoil is generally removed down to a depth of 30cm, here the thickness of the removed topsoil layer was up to 3m

in places. This was confirmed by a 3m high topsoil heap stacked along the edge of the pipeline easement and also by the thickness of the remaining cultural layer that in most places did not exceed 10cm. In some parts of the site the cultural layer was altogether destroyed by being used as fill material for depressions. Adding proof to this statement was the presence of extensive pottery spreads in the topsoil removed and stacked on steep slopes falling away to the Asrikchai and Tovuzchai Rivers.

Another reason why the site was somewhat neglected and undergone great damage was that the presence of archaeological deposits had not been established across the entire area of the excavation site. The cultural layer was revealed only in locations where the pit-houses were exposed. It was not easy to detect archaeological material in the cultural layer that was greatly disturbed and mixed up with the underlying gravelly and sandy natural soil layer.

This made it difficult to characterise the uppermost layers and the entire depth of the cultural layer in some sections of the site.

Excavation Site I

Excavation Site 1 was the area excavated in June and July 2004. Work was only carried out in areas where surface indications showed deposits existed. This resulted in three groups of quadrats (1/2, 3/4 and 5/6) along the pipe trench line. Quadrats 7 to 11 were opened up on the south of the construction area in a soil deposition area. During trenching for the SCP pipe further deposits were recorded in the area between Quadrats 1/2 and 3/4, this was recorded during December 2004 and January 2005 and is described as Excavation Site II.

Kv1/2

Quadrat 1 fell within the north-western part of the excavation site, close to the Tovuzchai slope of the ridge. Starting from 40cm depth the quadrat produced pottery pieces of various types. The ground below 45cm depth was archaeologically sterile.

A roughly oval spread of ceramic sherds covering an area, approximately 3m in diameter, was exposed at a depth of 20cm in Quadrat 2. These were grey, pink and black ceramic pieces typical of early Iron Age pottery. In addition to pottery fragments, two candlesticks were found at 25cm depth in this Quadrat. A quern was revealed at 35cm depth in the central part of the quadrat and a rubbing stone at a depth of 40cm slightly north of it. The quern was intact while the rubbing stone was broken across the middle. A large quern was recorded at a depth of 55cm in the quadrat. This appeared to have been deliberately set on a bed of smaller stones. This stone bedding, 70cm wide by 80cm long, was constructed of a row of medium-sized river stones knitted together by some kind of mortar. A single rubbing stone was found in close proximity to the quern.

Kv3/4

This quadrat was opened up 20m southwest of Quadrat 2. Because of the greater thickness of the upper soil material removed, a decision was made not to excavate the area between Quadrat 2 and Quadrat 3. Quadrat 4 was adjacent to and southeast of Quadrat 3. Several pottery fragments were recovered 15cm below the surface in the north-west and south-west corners of the quadrat.

A hearth-like fire-blackened spot was detected in the central part of Quadrat 4. The remains of a single jug-type vessel (base missing) and varied pottery fragments could be seen on this dark spread. Consequently, all the pottery pieces were heavily sooted. The area against the southern corner of this quadrat had an extensive spread of various pottery pieces. It looked as if pots had been broken and their sherds piled here on purpose.

Kv5/6

Quadrat 5 was 15m south east of Quadrat 4. The 15m strip along the working width between the two quadrats was not targeted for excavation because the upper soil material here had been fully removed and the cultural layer completely destroyed during site preparation.

Excavations revealed an ash-rich layer at 15cm depth in Quadrat 5. This feature varying between 2.5m and 3.7m in width covered the entire extent of the quadrat in the northwest to southeast direction. Two star-shaped ceramic candlesticks were found close to the south-west wall of the excavation trench. They were closely spaced and came from the western corner of the ash layer. In order to fully define the edges of this ash-rich layer the quadrat was extended by 2m to the north-east and by 3m to the south-west. The fully exposed feature measured between 3.8m and 1.5m in width and extended for a length of 7.5m. Varied pottery pieces were contained within this ash layer.

Quadrat 6 was adjacent to and south-east of Quadrat 5. Apart from several pieces of pottery exposed 20cm below the surface, no other pottery finds were recorded in this quadrat. A stone pestle and two whetstones were recovered from a depth of 40cm in this quadrat.

The presence of archaeological deposits in Quadrat 12 was established starting 45cm below the surface. The cultural layer could be traced only in the south-west corner of the quadrat. The traceable section of the cultural layer was 1.8m wide by 2.3m long and consisted of black ashy soil. The surrounding substrate was a yellow layer of gravel-rich and clayey soil material.

Excavation on the BTC side of the pipeline construction corridor was restricted to three quadrats of 5m by 5m that were opened up in the area with the greatest concentrations of visible finds.

Kv9 and 11

Only quadrats 9 and 11 produced much cultural material. The area had previously been disturbed by the construction of a cable trench running north to south. Archaeological deposits covered a rectangular shape area measuring 4m in width by 6.5m in length. Varied ceramic fragments and numerous faunal remains were revealed within 30-35cm thick cultural layer. These had been badly damaged by ground levelling activities. An oval-shaped hearth, 1m in diameter was detected in the east facing section of Quadrat 9. The surrounding substrate was burnt ash-rich soil. Half of a quern was found at 35cm depth in the central part of the quadrat. The natural soil layer was reached below this depth.

Kv7

A scatter of pottery sherds was notable on a 3.5-4m diameter oval patch of ground in Quadrat 7. Beneath, at 30cm depth an ashy and charcoal-rich burnt soil layer was exposed. It was 10cm thick and contained animal bone and heat-affected pottery pieces. The base of this patch of soil fire-reddened in places had an elongated shape and measured 70cm wide by 165cm long.

These concentrations of material are thought to represent the base of pit-houses, the upper portions of which have been lost through natural erosion and pipeline construction activities.

Excavation Site II

Following observation of the pipe trench in December, 2004, it was realised that there were substantial deposits exposed on the trench edge in the area between Kv1/2 and Kv3/4. These were excavated in December 2004 and January 2005, in two episodes punctuated by the need to move the pipe to prevent it collapsing on the site workers. The structures recorded here are interpreted as three pit-houses or semi subterranean structures. This work was very useful in that it allowed the earlier excavated features to be reinterpreted in this light.

Pit-house 1

The preserved remains of pit-house 1 measured 3.4m in length by 2.8m wide and was lined with walls. The structure was filled with a cultural layer up to 45cm thick. Above this was a 80-85cm thick layer formed later as a result of collapse of the pit-house and accumulation of natural sediments. Within the pit-house debris were fifteen ceramic pots. These were placed along the walls of the structure. The pots were heavily sooted, along with the heat-affected charcoal-rich soil layer under the pots. Although cracked, the pots appeared to be complete and in situ.

There was a great density of pottery sherds within the grey-yellowish soil layer in the central part of the feature. These appeared to be the crushed remains of three or four pottery vessels. A portion of these sherds, including one large fragment could be identified to forms. They came from a large volume storage jar. Three more pottery vessels were found in the west part of the pit-house. These differed from the rest by their large size and narrow mouths.

A hearth was revealed at the east end of the structure. This rectangular shape feature constructed of clay measured 30cm in width and 35cm in length. One of the cooking-pots recovered from the site came from this hearth.

A single small jug was found lying on its side at a depth of 90cm in the southeast corner of the pit-house. It was broken and had an ashy, charcoal-flecked fill. The soil under the jug was yellow and clayey, while the surrounding substrate consisted of a layer of sandy and gravelly natural soil.

A spread of animal bones was recorded 30cm north of this jug in the south corner of the pit-house. The bones were exposed at a depth of 1.2m. A carefully executed rubbing stone was found close to the south-eastern walls of the structure at a depth of 1.15m.

Pit-house 2

Pit-house 2 was separated from pit-house 1 by a 70cm wide layer of natural gravel. The preserved remains of pit-house 2 measured 3.5m in length by 3.4m in width and were 1.5m deep. In contrast to pit-house 1, pit-house 2 had no walls. It had a floor gradually deepening towards the centre and with a somewhat boat-shaped or concave profile. Two post holes were revealed in the central of the structure. These were spaced at 1m distance and measured 30cm in diameter and 50cm in depth. A third post hole was recorded at 1.4m depth in the west facing section of the pit-house. It was 26cm in diameter and 60cm deep.

Six pottery vessels, three of which were intact, were found 90cm below the stripped surface within the inner perimeter of this feature. These were recovered from a noticeably dark heat-affected soil layer. The natural layer of gravel-rich soil of a yellow colour was reached at 1.3m depth below the surface of the working area. However, a portion of the cultural layer in the southeast facing section of pit-house 2 went down to a maximum depth of 1.5m. This layer, approximately 1.3m wide by 1.6m long, contained animal bone.

At a depth of 70cm the pit-house produced a quern made of grey porous tufa stone. This was found in an upside down position in the north-eastern part of the feature. Recovered from 140cm depth in the central part of the structure, was a small hoe chipped out of soft white stone.

Pit-house 3

The preserved remains of pit-house 3 measured 3m in length and 2.6m wide and were 1.5m deep. The feature had been truncated by machine during trenching. As a result, the 1.1m thick upper portion of the cultural layer was removed and only the 30-40cm thick lower portion survived.

Two pottery vessels were excavated in the south-eastern corner of the feature. Like in the two other pit-houses these were recovered from within a layer of fire-blackened ground. A short

distance from these jug-type pots, were the remains of a clay hearth. Only the heat-affected base of this feature was preserved. This had a rectangular shape and measured 30cm in width by 40cm in length. The depth from the subsoil surface to the hearth base was 1.2m.

A few sporadic fragments of pottery were noted in the central part of the pit-house. A scatter of pottery covered an area of 2m by 1.2m and was first visible at a depth of 1.2m below the stripped surface. The ground in this part of the pit-house was grey. The ground close to the walls of the structure was noticeably dark and contained patches flecked with fire-reddened clay and charcoal. This heat-affected soil layer was up to 15cm thick.

A group of whetstone-shaped stones were revealed at a depth of 1.4m in the south facing section of the pit-house.

The study of the lateral profiles of the pit-houses showed that the cultural and natural layers had the same stratigraphic succession in all of them. The uppermost stratum was characterised by a 90cm-1m thick layer of grey-brown soil. This was underlain by a 15-25cm thick dark sooty charcoal-flecked soil layer that produced the major portion of cultural deposits. The underlying lowermost stratum consisted of a 20-25cm thick grey-yellowish soil that contained a few occasional finds. To prevent the inward collapse, the inner sides of the walls were plastered with a 10-13cm thick layer of yellowish gravelly mud.

In addition to the excavated pit-houses, the remains of eight more pit-houses of this type could be traced in the walls of the SCP trench. The largest of these was up to 14m long and appeared to have been used as an animal housing structure.

- ***Description of Finds***

The cultural material recovered from the Asrikchai early Iron Age settlement site is represented by pottery and stone tools.

Pottery

The pottery vessels recovered from the site vary in shape depending on whether they were used as daily household items or for some specific economic activity. The forms, dimensions and decoration of the pots determined by their function allow definite conclusions to be drawn regarding the production technique, artistic taste and everyday needs and basic economy of early inhabitants. The pottery assemblage from the site includes jugs, storage jars, cooking-pots and bardags, the majority of which are narrow-mouthed and globular body pots.

Jugs

These are represented by fragments and complete pots of different sizes. Most of them are large-sized jugs with narrow mouths, tall necks and globular bodies. They also differ in terms of decoration. Thirteen complete jugs were retrieved from the site. Comparison of drawings of intact jugs allowed fragmentary pots to be identified to forms.

Large, tall, narrow-mouthed, fine sand-tempered jug of a grey colour. It has a high (5cm) neck and an everted rim. The shoulder is decorated with five rows of thumbled triangles in groups of six. The triangles in the uppermost row are directed downwards; those in the remaining four rows are directed upwards. Girding the pot below these triangles are three bulgy lines spaced at 1cm distance from each other. Dimensions: height – 43cm, body diameter – 38cm, mouth diameter – 16.5cm base diameter – 11cm (Plate 1.1).

Thin-walled, globular body, fine sand-tempered jug-type pot of a grey colour. There is no shoulder-to-neck transition; the rim is formed as a continuation of the shoulder. There is a wide,

semi-circular lug handle in the mouth region of the pot. The lug handle measuring 5cm x 3cm in size, is decorated with an incised pattern. There are three incised parallel lines running around the body of the pot at the junction between the rim and the shoulder. This pattern is replicated in the areas close to the shoulder and body of the pot. Dimensions: height – 19cm, body diameter – 27cm, mouth diameter – 10.5cm, base diameter – 9cm (Plate 1.7).

Small, thin-walled fine sand-tempered jug of a grey colour. The pot has a flat-base, globular body, short neck and narrow mouth with an everted rim. Five parallel incised lines run around the shoulder portion of the pot. Dimensions: height – 12cm, body diameter – 18.5cm, mouth diameter – 10cm, base diameter – 7.5cm (Plate 2.2).

Large jug of a grey colour tempered with fine sand. The pot has a tall body, long neck and narrow mouth with an everted rim. Four parallel running incised lines form a pattern around the shoulder and body sections of the pot. Highly fragmentary, the pot did not yield measurements.

Small, black, globular body jug-type pot with a wide mouth and everted rim. A ribbon-shaped handle connects its shoulder and the rim. The shoulder portion is decorated with spike-shaped patterns incised around the pot's circumference. Highly fragmentary, the pot did not yield measurements.

Small jug-type pot of a brown colour tempered with fine sand. The pot has a flat base, globular body and a wide mouth with an everted rim. The lower portion of the shoulder is girded with a series of incised lines. Slightly below, a single incised wavy line runs around the body of the vessel. Dimensions: height – 16cm, body diameter – 24cm, mouth diameter – 22cm, base diameter – 11cm (Plate 2.2).

Large, tall-bodied jug-type pot of a grey colour with a high neck, narrow mouth and everted rim. There are incised parallel lines running along the circumference of the pot at the junction between the neck and shoulder. Below, a single wavy line runs around the shoulder. Two parallel lines, one - straight, the other - wavy gird the body portion of the pot. The pot has two handles of a circular cross section vertically attached to opposing sides of the shoulder. Highly fragmentary, the pot did not yield measurements (Plate 1.6).

Thin-walled jug-type pot with a globular-body, narrow mouth and everted rim. The pot was tempered with fine sand and poorly fired to a grey colour. A single straight incised line and notched circles above and below this line form a pattern around the shoulder of the vessel. Dimensions: height – 19cm, body diameter – 19cm, mouth diameter – 11cm, base diameter – 7cm (Plate 2.1).

Small jug-type pot of a black colour. Tempered with fine sand the pot has thin-walls and an everted rim. The base is missing. Two parallel incised lines run around the shoulder. Notched circles above and below this line form a pattern around the upper section of the pot. Dimensions: height – 12cm, body diameter – 16cm, mouth diameter – 11.5cm.

Medium-sized jug of a grey colour tempered with fine sand. The pot has a relatively high neck, narrow-mouth and an everted rim. Two parallel bulgy lines spaced at 1cm from each other run around the shoulder circumference. Dimensions: height – 29cm, body diameter – 29cm, mouth diameter – 13cm, base diameter – 10cm (Plate 1.3).

Small, globular body, thin-walled pot with a narrow mouth and a flanged everted rim. Tempered with fine sand the jug is well fired to a black surface. Two parallel rows of thumbed circles form a pattern around the shoulder. Sandwiched in between these two rows is an incised line.

Dimensions: height – 14cm, body diameter – 17cm, mouth diameter – 10cm, base diameter – 6cm.

Medium-sized jug-type pot with a narrow mouth and everted rim. Tempered with fine sand the pot is poorly fired to a grey colour. There is an incised line around the shoulder. The pot has two perforated lug handles attached to the shoulder. Dimensions: height – 27cm, body diameter – 26cm, mouth diameter – 13cm, base diameter – 9cm (Plate 1.5).

Medium-sized, thin-walled jug-type pot with a high neck, narrow mouth and everted rim. Tempered with fine sand the pot was fired to a grey surface. Three parallel lines are incised around the shoulder. A single line, incised 5cm below, runs along the upper portion of the body. The vessel is fragmentary. Dimensions: height – 26cm, body diameter – 25cm, mouth diameter – 13cm, base diameter – 10cm (Plate 1.4).

Large, thin-walled, jug-type pot tempered with fine sand and well fired to a light grey surface. The vessel has a narrow mouth, everted rim and a relatively high neck. A single incised line runs around the pot's circumference on where the neck meets the shoulder. Starting 8cm below, there are two parallel bulgy lines incised around the lower section of the shoulder. The surface between these lines is decorated with six sets of small triangles thumbed in ascending order from top to bottom. The pot is fragmentary, only the mouth area yielded measurements. Mouth diameter – 16cm (Plate 1.2).

Decorative motives on some of pottery sherds recovered from the site are worth special consideration (Plate 3.3, 3.4). Such decorative ornamentation is typical of jug-type pottery vessels. One of these sherds is a shoulder fragment with thumbed decorations consisting of three parallel running rows of elongated vertical lines (Plate 3.2). Another shoulder fragment bears a wide, upside-down v-shaped stripe filled with small notches (Plate 3.3). The decorative motive consisting of eight applied strips thumbed on a fragment of a black polished jug appears to represent sun rays or flower petals (Plate 3.4).

Storage Jars

The jar fragments found represent thick-walled, narrow-mouthed and narrow-based medium-sized pots with elongated bodies. The crushed remains of two near complete storage jars were recovered from the site. One of these is made in a plain style of fine sand-tempered clay and fired to a pinkish surface. Dimensions: wall thickness – 1.5cm, height – 70cm, body diameter – 45cm, base diameter – 15cm. The other pot was badly smashed and did not yield measurements. In addition, the site produced the broken remains of a third storage jar. These are represented by mouth, body and base fragments of the pot.

Cooking-pots

These are represented by wide-mouthed and flat-based pots differing from each other in size and motives of incised decorations.

Thin-walled, black cooking-pot with an everted rim. Made of fine sand-tempered clay. The neck-to-shoulder transition is decorated with slanting notches. Below, running around the shoulder are four parallel incised lines. Framing this, is a line consisting of a series of horizontal notches. The base is decorated with notched strips diagonally applied around its edge. Dimensions: height – 18cm, body diameter – 24cm, mouth diameter – 16.5cm, base diameter – 9cm (Plate 2.3).

Small, thin-walled, wide-mouthed cooking-type vessel of a grey colour. Tempered with fine and coarse sand the pot is roughly made. The 0.9cm wide everted rim has a channel like groove running around its interior edge. A solid incised line and a line consisting of a series of slanting

notches form a pattern around the shoulder of the pot. Dimensions: height – 16cm, body diameter – 17.5cm, mouth diameter – 15cm, base diameter – 7cm (Plate 2.4).

Wide-mouthed, everted-rimmed, flat-based cooking-type vessel of a light grey colour. Tempered with coarse sand the pot is roughly made. A solid incised line and a line consisting of a series of slanting notches form a pattern around the shoulder of the pot. Similar to the above-described pot in terms of size and ornament. Dimensions: height – 16cm, body diameter – 21cm, mouth diameter – 16cm, base diameter – 6.5cm (Plate 2.7).

Small, thin-walled wide-mouthed cooking-type vessel with a flat narrow base and a 3cm wide everted rim. Tempered with fine sand the pot is coarsely executed and poorly fired to a grey colour. Similar to the last two pots described above, the pot has a single incised line and a line consisting of a series of slanting notches running around the circumference of its shoulder. Dimensions: height – 12.5cm, body diameter – 15cm, mouth diameter – 14cm, base diameter – 6cm (Plate 2.8).

In addition, the site produced a large number of mouth, body and base fragments of cooking-type pots varying in size and decoration.

Bardags

Bardags and bardag sherds found at the site suggested that these were small, elongated-bodied, thin-walled handleless pots made in a plain style and fired to a black surface.

One of these is a thin-walled pot with a tall neck and everted mouth. Plain in style, the pot was poorly fired to a black surface at an unstable temperature. Dimensions: height – 20cm, body diameter – 13cm, mouth diameter – 8cm, base diameter – 8cm (Plate 3.1).

Piyalas

The site produced one complete ceramic vessel of this type. This is a black pot with patches of a film-like deposit on the surface. Dimensions: height – 6cm, mouth diameter – 6.7cm, base diameter – 3cm.

Candle holders

The pottery assemblage from the site includes also two candle holders. Both have elongated cylindrical shapes and flat bases with a depression in the centre. The top end of the relatively large candle holder has a socket with a sinuously-shaped edge. The smaller one has also a sinuously-shaped top end but the socket is somewhat bulgy and lug-shaped. In addition this candlestick has a belt-like groove with sinuous designs running around its body. Dimensions of the large candlestick: length – 16.5cm, mouth diameter – 8cm, body diameter – 7cm, base diameter - 9cm. Dimensions of the small candlestick: length – 13.5cm, mouth diameter – 7cm, body diameter – 5.5cm, base diameter – 9cm.

Other Ceramic Objects

A single disk-shaped object should also be mentioned here. Half of the 'disk' was preserved. It comes from the body of a pot with combed decoration and has a 6.5cm diameter through hole in the middle (Plate 3.5).

Stone Implements

The stone assemblage from the site is represented by stone tools of various sizes and functions and includes querns, rubbing stones, whetstones and other stone implements.

Querns

One of the querns is distinguished by its large size. Chipped out of white tufa stone, the tool is 80cm long by 60cm wide and 50cm thick. The grinding surface has marks of heavy wear.

Another quern measures 42.5cm in length, 16.5cm in width and is 11cm thick. The bottom and lateral side surfaces are burnished. The grinding surface has a boat-shaped appearance and exhibits marks of considerable use.

Large quern made of black basalt stone has burnished bottom and lateral side surfaces. Serrations seen on the grinding surface are clear marks of extensive use. Dimensions: length – 65cm, maximum width in the centre – 35cm, width at the ends – 32cm, thickness – 26cm.

Intact, boat-shaped quern chipped out of grey porous tufa stone. One end is much higher than the other. Length – 40cm, width – 15cm, thickness – 8cm.

Rubbing stones

Fragment of a rubbing-stone chipped out of grey tufa stone. With the central part rubbed away, the tool shows marks of considerable use. The handgrip upper side of the tool has an oval shape. The survived length - 12.5cm, width - 14.5cm, thickness - 6.5cm.

Another rubbing stone of a similar shape is also represented by a fragment. This measures 14cm in length, 16.5cm in maximum width, 12cm in minimum width and 10.5cm in thickness.

Rubbing-stone delicately chipped out of grey tufa stone has burnished top and lateral side surfaces. The bottom side surface is serrated. Length – 25cm, width – 14.5cm, thickness – 10cm.

Pounding Tools

These are represented by two pestles and a mortar found at the site. Both pestles have retouched ends. The handgrip end of one of these is carefully executed to comfortably fit the hand, the working end shows clear marks of pounding. Length – 30cm, maximum diameter – 13cm, minimum diameter – 4.5cm.

The other stone pestle has a similar shape but differs in size. Length – 11cm, front end diameter – 5cm.

The mortar recovered from the site measures 6cm in height by 12.5-11.5cm in width. The diameter of the cavity is 7cm.

Cutting Tools

A few flint and obsidian blades were found at the site. Judging by their shape, these are assumed to be point and central teeth of sickles. The sickle teeth have smoothed rear edges and serrated cutting edges. Their length varies between 3cm and 7cm.

Whetstones

About ten whetstones were recovered from the site. All these are made of river-washed stones each having a flat cross section. Their length varies between 10cm and 15cm, the width is 3-3.5cm.

Stone Hoe

This is a small tool made of white soft stone. Like large hoes, the tool has chipped edges for fastening to a wooden handle. However, the working end shows no marks of use. Height – 9cm, width at the working end – 7.3cm, thickness – 1.6cm (Plate 3.6).

IV. Analytical Results

• *Interpretation of Excavation Results*

Geographical location and natural characteristics of the area, the results of the field work and analytical study of the finds has led to the conclusion that the site is a seasonally utilised site (transhumant over-wintering ground) of early Iron Age date. The fact that the cultural material recorded was not evenly distributed across the entire area of the site but was found in specific locations suggests that in addition, use of the site was not long lived. On the other hand, the absence of extensive spreads of cultural deposits over the entire area of the site might be accounted for by the subterranean form of the dwellings. Archaeological evidence gathered from excavations as well as observations of the pipeline trench have established the presence of large numbers of structures. The animal housing pit-house structures recorded at the site were large in size, but did not contain any archaeological deposits.

The pit-houses had a circular shape or a rectangular shape with oval corners. The underground portion originally went to a depth of 1.3-1.5m into the natural ground. After excavating a well defined hole into the ground, several wooden posts were set in the centre of the structure. Pit-houses, for both human dwelling and animal housing usually consisted of an earth-covered log framework roof over a circular to rectangular excavation. The excavated material from the pit was cast up to form low walls around the pit, or to act as covering for the base of the roof. Large numbers of remains of similar structures can be seen in Azerbaijan as a result of over-wintering transhumant flocks of sheep. These sites are often found in areas of low hills that are not utilised for arable farming, which is a directly comparable topographic situation for the site at Asrikchai.

The artefactual material recovered from the site provides substantial evidence that the basic economy of people occupying the site was animal husbandry, particularly transhumant husbandry. It is assumed that the early herder households lead a nomadic life transferring livestock from one grazing ground to another and that livestock rearing was predominated by goats and sheep.

The storage jars and grinding and pounding tools found at the site suggest that the population was also engaged in farming. The discovery of a quern that rested on a bed of smaller stones in Quadrat 2 indicates that this might possibly be identified as an activity area for grinding wheat into flour.

Varied pottery ware along with different decorative motives used for their ornamentation attest to a certain level of development of pottery making in the area. No evidence has been found to show that these were locally manufactured wares. However, pottery could have been produced by the local population or by neighbouring settled tribes because the pottery assemblage from this site is typical of the entire region and manifests the specific characteristics of the Khojali-Gedabey archaeological culture.

Massive patches of heat-affected ground within the pit-houses are indicative of large fires that occurred here, because ash and other combustion by-products from hearths could not have spread and covered such extensive areas. It can also be inferred that these were largely summertime fires, because the pots recovered from within the pit-houses in relatively well preserved portions of the site were intact and, presumably, ready for wintertime use. Setting fire to a seasonally utilised settlement left unattended during the summertime seems to be a more convincing explanation. Otherwise, if the site had been abandoned before the fire, the household items would not have been left in the pit-houses. However, other interpretations cannot be excluded.

• *Dating*

The site was dated on the basis of comparisons of the artefactual material recovered from the site with that already described and dated in the relevant literature dedicated to the results of excavations of similar coeval archaeological monuments. Taken as whole, the material recovered from the site represents the Khojali-Gedabey Culture typical of the region and the site is identified to date to the 9th-8th centuries, B.C.

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

The site under study has no direct analogues among the archaeological sites excavated within the BTC and SCP pipelines construction corridor. Of all the sites explored on the pipelines route the Asrikchai site is the only site that represents a seasonal occupation rather than a more permanent settlement of early Iron Age date.

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

The Asrikchai site does not belong to the category of common and most frequently encountered types of archaeological monuments. For this reason, the importance of this site cannot be overestimated as it provides new facts and promotes research into the lifestyles of early tribes whose basic economy during the early Iron Age period was transhumant stock-rearing. Sites of this type are the least studied not only at the regional scale but throughout the entire Caucasus. Previous archaeological studies have concentrated on deeply stratified settlement sites at the expense of one period site such as this one. This type of site is amongst the most commonly found through out the Caucasus, but because of the poor survival of site indicators, beyond a few pottery sherds, little work has been done on this type of site. The work described in this report shows how taking advantage of the exposure of a substantial area of land allowed the recognition and recording of this example.

Cyclopean structures of late Bronze to early Iron Age date that are encountered in the mountainous areas have been identified as the summer time counterparts of this type of site. However, it should be noted that the similarities between the two types of monuments do not extend beyond their temporary or seasonal nature.

- ***Special Recommendations Regarding the Protection of the Site or Future Research***

The Asrikchai settlement is a rare type of archaeological site and is extremely important as a data source. Valuable information recovered from excavations is only a brief glimpse into the lifestyles of early cattle-breeding tribes. A number of questions remain unanswered and are a subject for further research, therefore the excavation and study of the site should be resumed at some point in future. Meanwhile, to minimize the potential risk of damage to this valuable archaeological resource, actions should be taken to protect the undisturbed portions of the site along either side of the pipelines corridor.

V. Illustrations

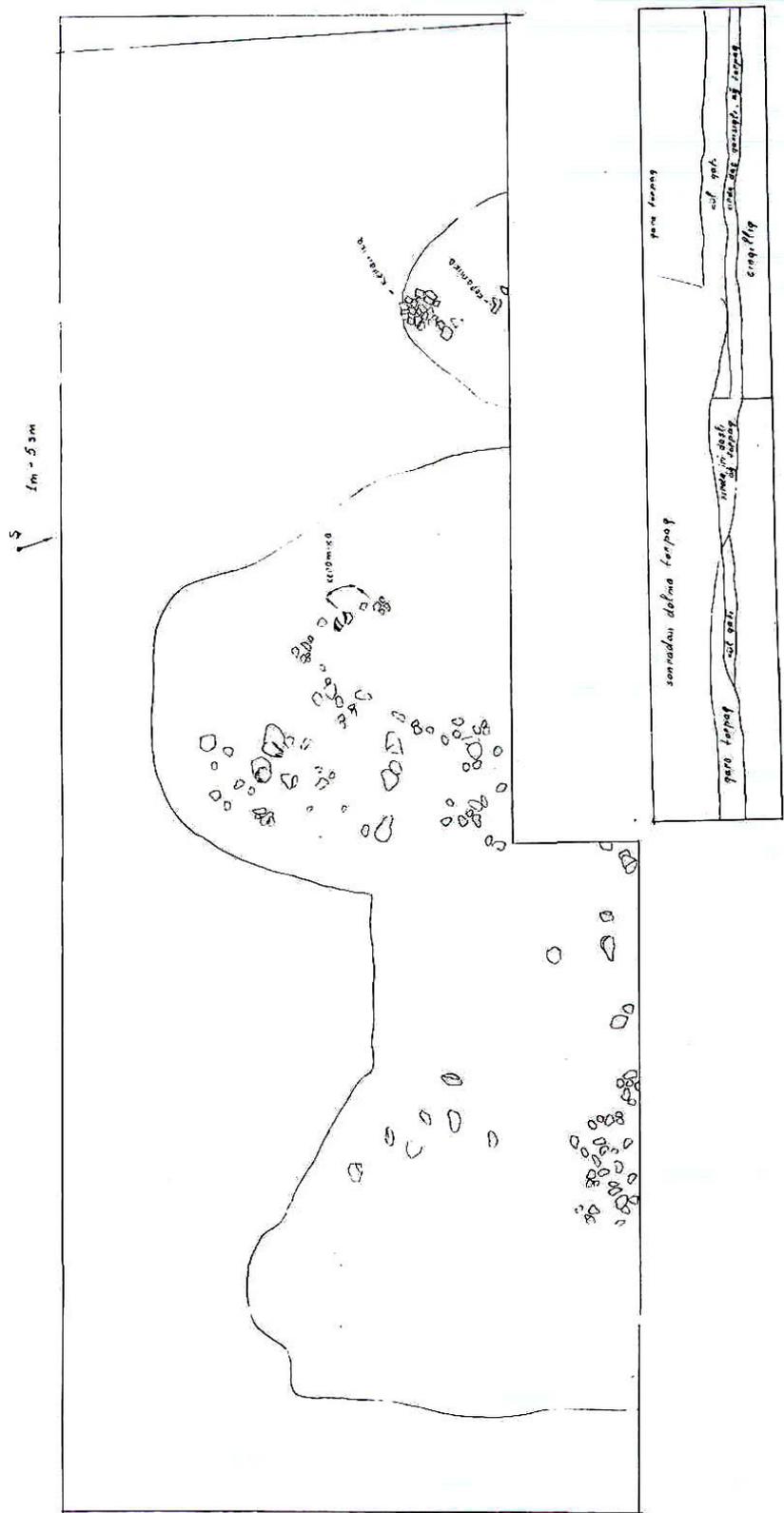


Figure 1

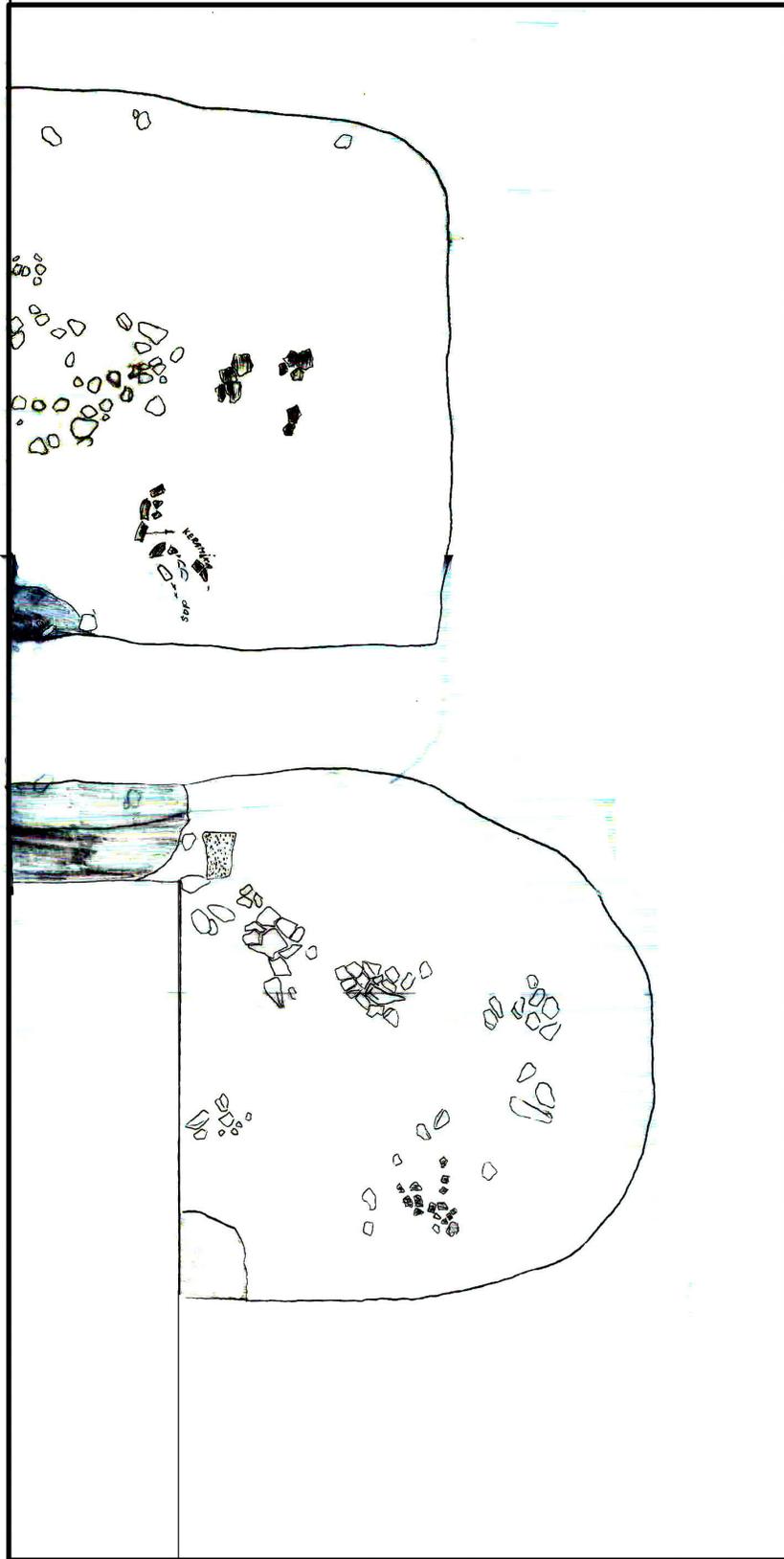


Figure 2

Plate 1

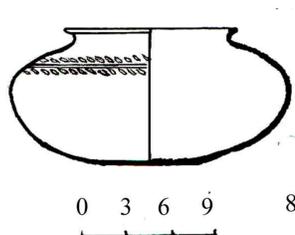
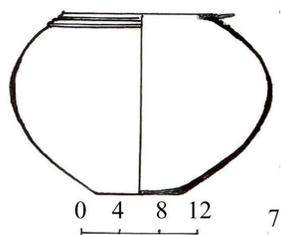
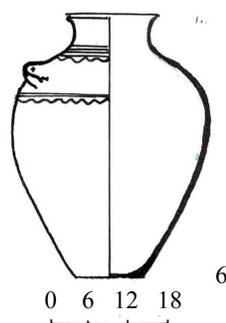
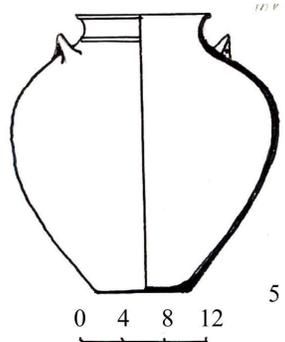
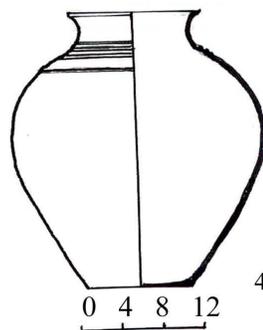
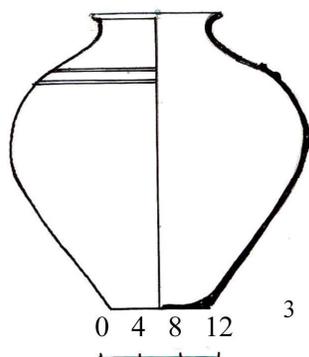
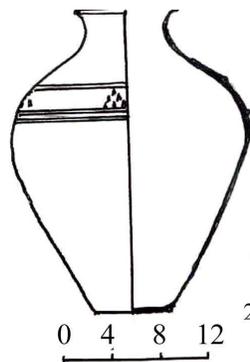
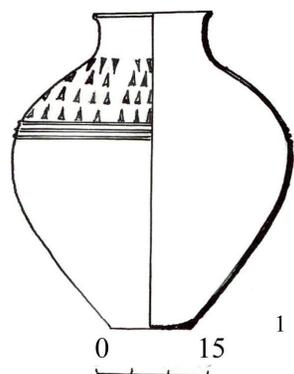


Plate 2

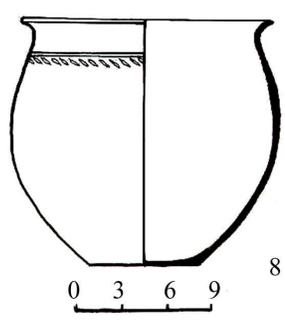
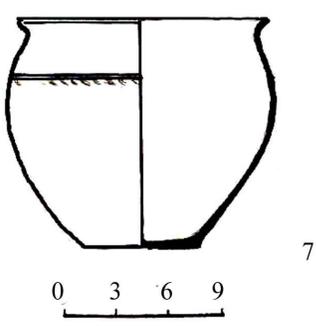
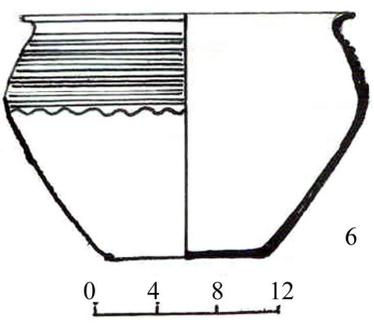
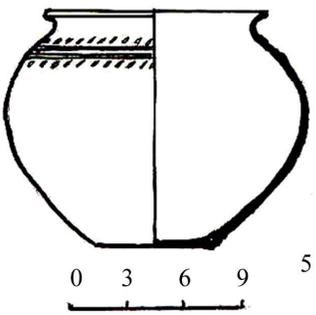
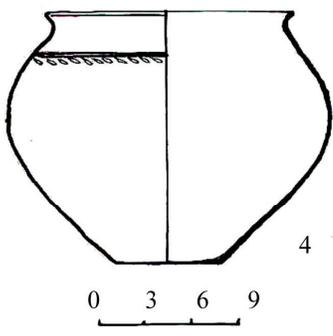
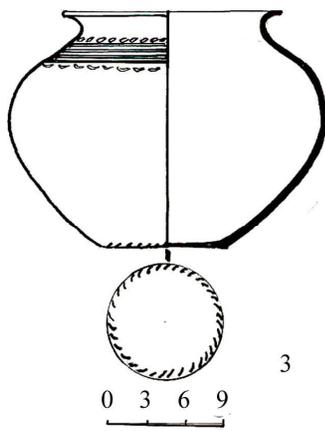
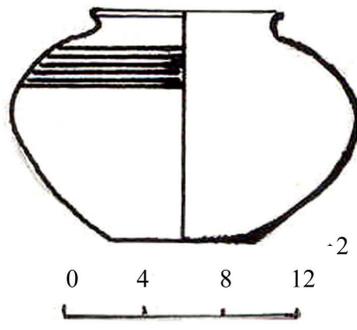
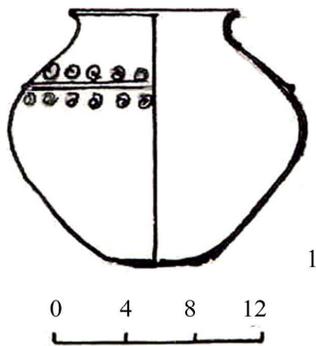
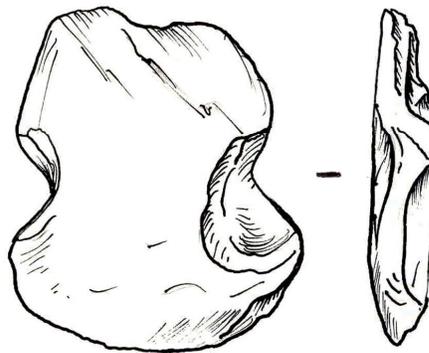
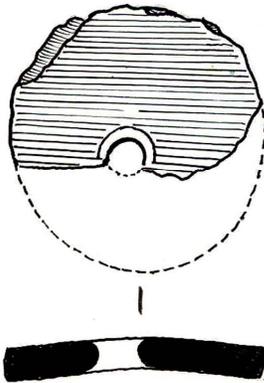
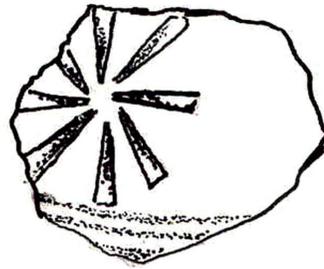
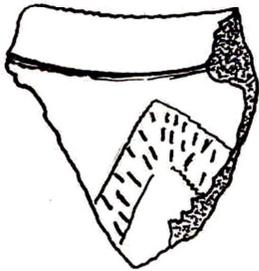
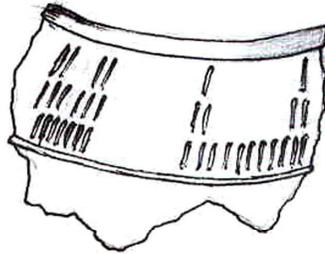
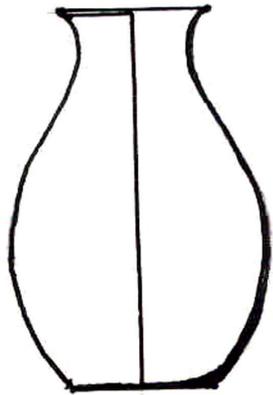


Plate 3



VI. Inventory of Artefacts

No.	KP	Type of Site	Material	Find	Semi-Pit-house	Quantity	Comment
1	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	114	
2	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	2	
3	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	2	60	
4	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	2	45	
5	377	settlement	ceramic	jar	2	103	
6	377	settlement	ceramic	cooking-pot	2	61	
7	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	46	
8	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	2	19	
9	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	67	
10	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	146	
11	377	settlement	ceramic	handle	3	1	
12	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	110	
13	377	settlement	ceramic	bowl	3	4	
14	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	28	
15	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	6	
16	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	3	
17	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	1	
18	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	2	10	
19	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	18	
20	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	2	33	
21	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	2	1	
22	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	20	
23	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1	24	
24	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	1	1	
25	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1	46	
26	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1	58	
27	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1	18	
28	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1	22	
29	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	1	17	
30	377	settlement	ceramic	salt-cellar	1	7	
31	377	settlement	ceramic	lid	1	2	
32	377	settlement	ceramic	dopu	1	3	
33	377	settlement	ceramic	handle	1	1	
34	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	1	1	
35	377	settlement	ceramic	handle	1	1	
36	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	12	did not yield measurements
37	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	28	did not yield measurements
38	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1	28	did not yield measurements

39	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1	2	did not yield measurements
40	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3		did not yield measurements
41	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3		did not yield measurements
42	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3		did not yield measurements
43	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	1	
44	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	1	
45	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1	18	
46	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1		
47	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1		
48	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1		
49	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1		
50	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1		
51	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1		
52	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1		
53	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1		
54	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1		
55	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1		
56	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1		
57	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1		
58	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	9	neck fragment
59	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	11	
60	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	8	
61	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	3	
62	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	4	
63	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	2	
64	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	1	
65	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	1	
66	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	2	1	
67	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	2	5	
68	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	2	2	
69	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	2	6	
70	377	settlement	ceramic	bowl	2	3	
71	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	2	1	
72	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	2		
73	377	settlement	ceramic	bowl	2		
74	377	settlement	ceramic	kuza	2		
75	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	2	7	
76	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	2		
77	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	1	
78	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	3	1	
79	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	3		
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81	377	settlement	ceramic	jug	1	1	
82	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	1	6	
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84	377	settlement	ceramic	spindle whorl	3	2	
85	377	settlement	ceramic	spindle whorl	3	1	
86	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	1	
87	377	settlement	ceramic	fragment	3	1	
88	377	settlement	ceramic	jug		10	
89	377	settlement	stone	quern		1	
90	377	settlement	stone	quern		1	
91	377	settlement	stone	pounding tool		1	