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Report
On Excavations of Khunan Settlement
Conducted within BTC and SCP ROW at KP 380

I. Abstract

This report contains the results of small-scale excavations conducted at the Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age settlement at KP 380 of the BTC and SCP ROW.

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III. 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 were carried out within 44 m wide pipeline corridor in 2001-2005. The archaeology program consists of 5 phases of which the first 4 constituted solely field investigations:

Phase I – potential archaeological sites were visually identified during baseline surveys while selecting the pipeline route.

Phase II – the sites that were identified during Phase I as dubious from the archaeological point of view were tested by digging test pits and conducting small-scale trial excavations.

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

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

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 known to the archaeological science before.

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

- *Conditions for discovery of the archaeological site*

The site located at KP 380 was not discovered during Phase I or Phase II. The major reason was that the said site was used as an area under crop and the archaeologists were not allowed to enter areas under crop during Phase I and Phase II. On the other hand, there were no visible surface marks at the site to attract attention. The site was found while trenching for the BTC pipeline. The initial discovery was made during trenching operations on the BTC and subsequently, a small excavation was conducted on the southern side of the pipe trench. No evidence was found during a series of machine excavations controlled by archaeologists on the SCP pipeline 28m to the north, so it appears that the full extent of the settlement is to be found to the south of the project boundary.

- *Who excavated the site and when*

Archaeological excavations at this site were carried out for 4 days in September 2004 with participation of Yagil Danyalov and Elnur Gafarov under the guidance of Najaf Museyibli.

IV. Excavations results

- *General site description*

The site under question is located in Tovuz District at KP 380 of the BTC pipeline, about 3 km north of the District Centre, in a flat area known as Khunan by the local population. The land is a productive, fertile black soil. The site is located at Pulkovo coordinates 8554318, 4543319, at a height of 381m above sea level.

There had been no information before as to the existence of an old settlement in this area. It appears that the surface signs of the monument were removed as a result of levelling the soil for agricultural purposes and later the cultural layer of the site was covered by additional layers of soil brought in from around the site, which view is supported by the results of the archaeological excavations at the site. At the very edge of the operating width of the pipeline corridor large capacity storage jars were found in the course of trenching for the BTC pipeline (photos 1-4).

- *Artefacts*

Large-scale archaeological excavations had not been planned to be carried out at this site as the storage jars were found at 2 m depth 1.5-2 m towards the edge of the corridor from the already buried BTC pipe. The purpose was to withdraw the big storage jars that were encountered. It was impossible to trace all the traits of the cultural deposit at this site. However, a few aspects of it were elucidated. Thus, it was established that the jars were buried in the pits dug at 50-60 cm depth in the natural layer their upper part being in the cultural layer. The jars were covered with a slanting wooden roof. The suggested evidence for this lay in the form of 6-7 cm thick charcoal could be seen on the excavation wall. The soil under the jars at 2-2.2 m depth consisted of soil mixed with gravel.

In order to withdraw the jars it was decided to excavate a 4.2m x 2.6m area (photo 5). As a result a total of six large storage jars were found as well as fragments of small domestic pottery vessels both inside some of the jars and on the soil surrounding them. The

ceramic fragments found belong to bowl, jug and other types of pottery made of clay fired to a black colour, in most cases with a well burnished surface.

Judging by the large quantities of charcoal found inside the jars and around them and also by fire marks on the excavation wall, we can assume that this activity area was abandoned by the inhabitants after a fire occurred here.

Only two of the jars were more or less well preserved (photo 2). The top part of four other jars were cracked. However in the course of withdrawal the first two complete jars also broke, seemingly, because of the cracks, though invisible, previously caused by the weight of the soil over them. The rapid disintegration of the jars could be accounted for by the clay richly tempered with grit stone, pebbles and other ingredients, as well as by having been poorly fired and finally by exposure to high humidity soil where they stayed for a very long time. After these six jars were taken out having been cleaned from soil two more similar jars were detected on the excavation wall towards the area under crop (photo 4). However, being outside the operating width of the ROW and taking into account the potential disintegration of the jars in the process of withdrawal, these jars were backfilled with the aim to conduct archaeological excavations in more favourable conditions in future.

All the jars have the same shape. They all have a thick brim, extremely short neck and narrow base. The small diameter of the jar bases suggests that they were not movable – once buried in a certain place they stayed there immobile. The shoulder of the jars is girt with a 4.5cm thick belt decorated with spike-shaped patterns. It is very likely that the jars were buried in the ground up to these belt-like decorations. Four of the jars could not be measured due to extreme disintegration. The dimensions of the two relatively complete jars that were measured (Jars No.1 and No.2) are as follows:

Jar No.1: body diameter – 116cm
 mouth diameter – 46cm
 rim thickness – 5cm
 neck height – 3cm
 wall thickness – 2.5cm
 height – 128cm
 base diameter – 20cm

Jar No.2: body diameter – 120cm
 mouth diameter – 46cm
 rim thickness – 5cm
 neck height – 3cm
 wall thickness – 2.8cm
 height – 137cm
 base diameter – 18cm

.It is probable that, the jars were made by one potter for a common purpose, which accounts for their similarity.

V. Discussion

- *Comparative analysis and chronology*

The Khunan settlement is a monument representing the Khojali-Gedabey Archaeological Culture that covered the period of time from the second half of the 2nd millennium to the first centuries of the 1st millennium BC and spread in Garabag, Ganja-Gazakh areas of Azerbaijan and the adjacent areas in West Azerbaijan (present day Armenia) and also the south-east region of Georgia. The pipeline route traversed only a small portion of the Khunan monument which is potentially to be a very large. The depth of the cultural layer almost 2 m thick proves that life in this settlement went on for several centuries. More than that, not all the jars were buried at the same depth. For instance, the base of Jar No.2 is on the same level with the bodies of Jar No. 1 and Jar No.3. This jar layout shows that Jar No.2 was buried at a later time than Jar No. 1 or Jar No.3 and that this storage area was used in two stages.

The storage jars found in the Zayamchai settlement excavated in 2003 at KP 355 of the BTC and SCP ROW and is suspected as being coeval with the Khunan monument are identical with the jars from the Khunan settlement. In addition, in 2002 while realizing Phase II of the BTC and SCP archaeological programme a storage jar analogous to the Khunan jars was found in test pit No.7 dug out in the same Zayamchai settlement. The jar almost 130cm high was found in a disintegrated condition. As we stated above, the bulging belt girding the shoulder of the Khunan jars is decorated with a spike-shaped ornament. As to the Zayamchai jar, the belt girding the jar shoulder is decorated with a wavy line. The only distinctive feature between the Khunan and Zayamchai jars could be said to be this very difference in the decoration component.

Storage jars similar to the Khunan jars had been found in the Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age Babadervish, Saritepe, Yashiltepe, etc. settlements in the Ganja-Gazakh area which also includes the location of the Khunan monument.

The analysis of a piece of charcoal from one of the Khunan jars made in 2004 at Beta Analytic Inc. radiocarbon dating laboratory in Miami, Florida, US produced the following results:

Beta-200402, C13/C12
 2 Sigma calibrated result (95% probability)
 Cal BC 1410-1200 (BP3360-3150)
 1 Sigma calibrated result (68% probability)
 BC 1390-1270 (BP3340-3220)

Thus, the results of the radiocarbon analysis indicate the end of the Bronze Age, i.e. the second half of the 2nd millennium which falls within the presumptive chronological framework based on the study of pottery from the monument.

The radiocarbon analysis was made on the basis of charcoal taken from a jar from a small excavation area. The resulting dates cover only two centuries – 14-12th centuries BC, whereas all the characteristic traits of the monument allow us to assume that life continued at this site for a longer period, from 14th century BC to 10th -9th century BC. It should be noted that only 2 km east of the Khunan settlement, at KP 378 the Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age Tovuzchai necropolis was excavated. With a great degree of probability we can assume that this necropolis belonged to the inhabitants of the old Khunan settlement. Although the analyses of the bones from several graves at the Tovuzchai necropolis made in the same laboratory yielded results close to those of the radiocarbon analyses of the Khunan monument, some of them are indicative of the later centuries, namely, 10th -9th centuries BC. It could well be that if large-scale excavations were carried out in the Khunan settlement evidence of occupation continuing till the 10th-9th centuries BC would be found.

- *Recommendations regarding the protection of the site and future research*

As stated above, the upper layers of the old Khunan settlement had been completely damaged due to agricultural activity. As the archaeological excavations covered only a very small portion of land it was impossible based on scarce material obtained from the site to come to any well formulated judgment about this monument. There is a need for large-scale archaeological excavations in order to solve the issues related to the discovery of possible remains of structures or other features and artefacts, the stratigraphic description of the site, degree of correlation of this monument to the Tovuzchai necropolis, etc. Therefore, the site should be protected both by the pipelines operator and the relevant executive bodies and crop farming should be prohibited there.

- *Recommendations for conservation treatment of artefacts*

As the storage jars discovered in the course of archaeological excavations at the Khunan settlement fell apart in situ and for this reason could not be transported to Baku, a decision was made to hand them over to the Tovuz Museum of History and Local Studies. As individual parts of these jars are dry enough now it seems expedient to restore and display the jars in the show-room of the museum.