

**Azerbaijan
National Academy of Sciences
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**Short Report
Excavations of Poylu Settlement
KP 409.2 - BTC ROW**

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ABSTRACT

This Report describes the results of small-scale excavations carried out at Poylu Late Medieval Settlement located at KP 409.2 of the BTC ROW. Varied archaeological material including pottery, stoneware, metal ware and decorations were recovered during the excavations that took place in November 2004. Based on the study of all the material obtained notably pottery ware this site could be dated to the 17th-18th centuries, A.D. In addition to being a rural type settlement it is one of the few sites of that period so far excavated in Azerbaijan.

arable land and at the time of baseline surveys and trial investigations the area had standing crops which prevented archaeologists from entering the site. In addition, there were no visible surface markers at the site to attract attention. The site was recognized as such by a watching brief archaeologist during topsoil stripping for the pipeline. The site is located at Pulkovo coordinates 8538121, 4566080 at a height of 215m above sea level.

Archaeological excavations at this site were carried out in November 2004 with participation of Anar Agalarzade and Elnur Gafarov under the guidance of Najaf Museyibli.

II. Field and Office Methods

- *Field Methods*

No machines were used for the archaeological excavations at site. The excavation work was undertaken by the labour force using shovels, barrows, trowels, brushes and other hand tools to clean and expose features as they were located. The archaeological finds recovered were field sorted, washed, recorded in a field logbook, boxed and sent to the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography in Baku.

- *Office Methods*

At the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography the archaeological material was accordingly processed, the work on the excavation site plan and logbook records was finalized for the 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

- *Description of Cultural Horizons*

As the area where the site was located had long been used as arable land the cultural horizon was plough damaged, almost destroyed. In general, judging by all the evidence present it could be presumed that the cultural horizon was not thick, even originally. This late medieval settlement contained foundation debris of houses built of cobblestones approximately at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. This structural remnant basically 80 cm wide was at some points 1 m wide. The survived height of the foundation consisting of two rows of cobblestones was 20-30 cm. To knit the stones together, clay mortar was used. All the structural remains exposed were interconnected and appeared to represent those of one house.

The excavations were conducted along the pipeline centreline on a 32 m long and 4 m wide strip which was divided into 8 quadrats of four by four meters. Because of the previous damage it was impossible to identify any stratigraphy in the cultural horizon.

In Quadrat 7, the spot at a 20 cm depth at the bottom of the north-eastern wall indicated a hearth. The length of this burnt spot along the wall was 2.5 m, 1.1 m wide. The rest of the fire affected area was beyond the excavation site. Pottery shreds were found in the ash layer of the burned soil. The ash layer in the hearth was 8-10 cm thick.

One more spot consisting of ash was found at a depth of 15 cm in Quadrat 8. It was 110 cm long and 80 cm wide with the ash thickness being 8-10 cm.

The excavation continued down until it reached the natural layer at a 35-40 cm depth.

- *Description of Finds*

The archaeological material recovered during the excavations can be grouped as follows:

Ceramics

The bulk of the finds are fragments of ceramic vessels. All of them are wheel-thrown and mainly well fired. Although most of the pieces are of plain design fragments of glazed pottery could also be encountered. Many of the pots were angobe coated.

Jugs. Jug-type pots constitute the majority of the pottery finds. They are usually thick-walled and flat-based pots of a black, brown and red colour. Among them a piece of a decorated vessel is worthy of attention. This is a shoulder fragment of a thick-walled, well-fired, brown colour jug-type vessel tempered with sand. The point where the vessel neck connects to its shoulder bears a decoration consisting of horizontal wavy lines.

Another specimen of a jug-type pot is a vessel body fragment. It is decorated with parallel horizontally thumbled canal-shaped lines.

The next piece is a vessel base. The bottom of the base is decorated with circular patterns.

One pottery fragment is worthy of attention for its patterns and manufacture style. This is a thick-walled, sand tempered, poorly fired, light pink shoulder fragment of a jug-type vessel. The surface of this pot is coated with a thin angobe layer. It also has a horizontal wavy line scratched on it. Presumably, this wavy line covered the entire perimeter of the vessel shoulder. In general, wavelike scrachy decorations on the vessels necks and shoulders are characteristic of the pottery assemblage from this site.

One group of jug-type pots are of a black colour. These are thick-walled jug fragments with burnished surfaces.

Jars. The excavation yielded fragments of large volume storage jars. Almost all of them were chunks of jar bases. Judging by these pieces the jars were poorly fired. As a rule, large volume storage jars were buried in the soil vertically and used for a long time to store food products, especially wheat. The fact that only base fragments of vessels of this type were recovered at the Poylu Settlement could be accounted for by the long use of the site area as an arable land. Due to continuous ploughing during the soviet times the upper layer of the cultural horizon was damaged and mixed up and the major top parts of storage jars were cut off. The width of the recovered base fragments was 1.5-2 cm.

Dopus. The pieces of this type pots are those of the neck, rim and body. They are mainly of a red or orangey colour. These thin-walled vessels tempered with fine sand are well fired. A piece of a mouth and neck is decorated with canal-shaped lines. The rims are everted.

Bardags. A portion of pottery ware is bardag-shaped vessels. They have flat-bases, oblong bodies and narrow necks. The round section and ribbon handles are attached to the rims and shoulders. The clay is well mixed and fired. One of the fragments represents a remnant of a rim and shoulder and a ribbon handle connecting them. The pot is coated with a thin angobe layer. Canal-shaped horizontal lines are drawn on its shoulder.

Bowls. The pottery of this type is primarily of a light red colour. The recovered pieces are very small. For this reason they cannot be identified to forms. The clay of the bowls is tempered with fine sand and well fired.

Pots. The number of fragments of this type is not great. Only one of them is worthy of attention. It is a fragment of a thick-walled, sand tempered, well fired pot of a brown colour. The surface is covered with soot. Presumably the pot from which this comes was long used on a hearth.

Platters. Pieces from such type pottery do not include rims or other form making fragments. The material recovered consists of only body fragments of platters. Some of these pieces are glazed. Judging by the available fragments the platters were of relatively high quality, The clay is tempered with fine sand well fired.

The pottery ware from the Poylu Settlement is characterized by a decoration style of incising straight and wavelike lines on the necks and shoulders of pots before firing.

Although the significant portion of the pottery from the site is of plain style a few glazed ceramic fragments were also found. However the fact that these several pieces were among the finds is very important. Firstly, the discovery of glazed pottery suggests that pottery production was highly developed in the Poylu Settlement and secondly, these samples help more accurately date the settlement.

Mostly the glazed fragments are those of jugs and bowls. The prevailing glaze colour is blue. There are also pieces coated with transparent, green or violet glaze. Some fragments are glazed in dark green on the inside and in blue on the outside.

Tobacco pipe. The pottery ware from the Poylu Settlement includes also a fragment of a tobacco pipe. It was found at a depth of 25cm in Quadrat 2. The fragment well polished because of long use is a piece of a red colour well fired ceramics.

Metal Objects

Excavations in Quadrats 1 and 2 yielded remains of metal objects. Two of them were iron pieces. As they were heavily corroded it was impossible to determine what were the original objects.

Another metal find which is part of a copper pendant was found in Quadrat 1. This suspension decoration of oval shape is made of a thin, round section wire, its survived part is 2.3 x1.5 cm.``

Stone Artefacts

Two stone artefacts were found in Quadrat 8 of the excavation site at a depth of 15-20 cm. One of them is a cobble grindstone. Marks of long use could be seen on both sides in its central part. It is 14 cm long and 4.5 cm wide. The second stone artefact is an obsidian splinter. Its edges bear

marks of notching. Most likely, this implement was moved to this site accidentally from the nearby Poylu I Eneolithic Settlement site.

Beads

Two beads were found at a 20 cm depth in the northern corner of Quadrat 1 of the excavation site. These are dark pink agate beads of an oblong shape.

IV. Analytical Results

- *Interpretation of Excavation Results*

The Poylu Settlement does not cover a very large area. The major upper part of the cultural horizon was totally destroyed as a result of damage caused by cultivation of the land at different times. In this connection the excavations did not last long. All this factors made it impossible to gather more extended information about this site. However, the archaeological materials not numerous and very informative allows one to suggest that the Poylu site was a late medieval rural type Settlement. The archaeological material recovered – pottery, stone artefacts, metal objects are evidence of development of various crafts, especially pottery manufacture. Based on the available archaeological material, notably, pottery ware the Poylu Settlement could be dated to the Late Middle Ages, namely to the 17th – 18th centuries. The prevailing use of sky blue and dark blue colours for glazing ceramics is characteristic of late medieval pottery making.

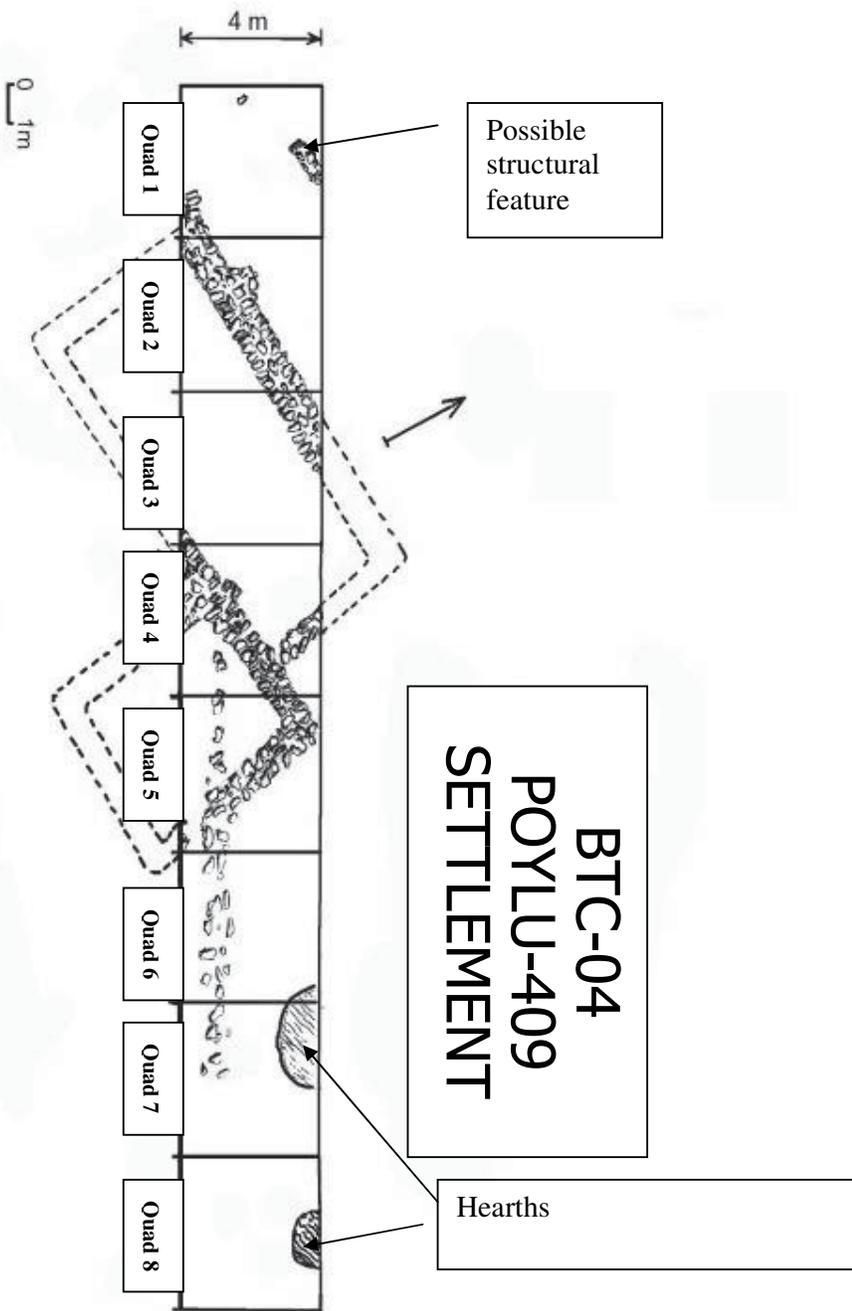
- *Discussion and Analysis of the Results of the Work Compared with Other Sites of a Similar Nature on the Pipeline Route*

Over ten archaeological sites dating from various periods of the Middle Ages have been excavated on the BTC and SCP pipelines route. These sites date to the early (4th - 7th centuries), developed (9th -13th centuries) and partly late (14th – 18th centuries) stages of the Middle Ages. The analysis of the results of excavations allow to conclude that settlements dating to all stages of the Middle Ages have been excavated on the BTC and SCP route. These were Fakhrali, Lak I and Lak II, Hajialili I, Hajialili II and Hajialili III, Seyidlar II and Girag Kasaman I and other settlement sites. The major characteristic that distinguishes the Poylu Settlement from all the other sites is that it dates only to the Late Middle Ages.

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

The medieval sites in Azerbaijan had been intensively excavated well before the archaeological studies were conducted within the BTC and SCP pipelines corridor. Long term archaeological excavations were carried out at such medieval urban sites as Baku, Shamakhy, Ganja, Beylagan, Shabran, Gabala and others the results of which were then reflected in various scientific and popular scientific literature. However, medieval rural settlement sites were relatively less explored in Azerbaijan and the least studied were particularly late medieval rural-type settlements. From this perspective excavations conducted at Poylu Settlement acquires specific importance. Due to this work it became possible to shed light on some issues related to the material culture of the western regions of Azerbaijan in the 17th and 18th centuries.

V. Illustrations



VI. Inventory of Artefacts

| No. | KP | Type of site | Material | Find | Quadrate Number | Comment |
|-----|-------|--------------|----------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | vessel fragment | 1 | |
| 2 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | vessel fragment | 1 | enamelled |
| 3 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | vessel fragment | 1 | enamelled |
| 4 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 1 | |
| 5 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 1 | |
| 6 | 409.2 | settlement | metal | artefact | 1 | |
| 7 | 409.2 | settlement | metal | suspended decoration | 1 | |
| 8 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | vessel fragment | 2 | |
| 9 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jar | 2 | charcoal trace inside |
| 10 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 2 | charcoal trace inside |
| 11 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 2 | charcoal trace inside |
| 12 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 2 | charcoal trace inside |
| 13 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 2 | charcoal trace inside |
| 14 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 2 | charcoal trace inside |
| 15 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | enamelled vessel | 2 | |
| 16 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 2 | |
| 17 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 2 | |
| 18 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 2 | |
| 19 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | dopu | 2 | |
| 20 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | tobacco pipe fragment | 2 | well polished |
| 21 | 409.2 | settlement | metal | nail | 2 | |
| 22 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | vessel fragment | 3 | |
| 23 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | vessel fragment | 3 | |
| 24 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 3 | |
| 25 | 409.2 | settlement | agate | bead | 1 | 2 pieces |
| 26 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jar | 4 | |
| 27 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jar | 4 | |
| 28 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 4 | |
| 29 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 4 | |
| 30 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 4 | |
| 31 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 5 | |
| 32 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | vessel fragment | 5 | |
| 33 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | vessel fragment | 5 | |
| 34 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 5 | |
| 35 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | vessel fragment | 5 | polished surface |
| 36 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jar | 6 | |
| 37 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jar | 6 | |
| 38 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | handle | 6 | |
| 39 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | dopu | 6 | |
| 40 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | pot | 6 | soot coat on the surface |
| 41 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | kasa | 1 | soot coat on the surface |
| 42 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 1 | soot coat on the surface |
| 43 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 1 | soot coat on the surface |
| 44 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 1 | soot coat on the surface |

| | | | | | | |
|----|-------|------------|----------|------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 45 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | bardaq | 1 | soot coat on the surface |
| 46 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | dopu | 1 | soot coat on the surface |
| 47 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | enamelled vessel | 8 | |
| 48 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | bardaq | 8 | |
| 49 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 8 | |
| 50 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | jug | 8 | |
| 51 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | vessel fragment | 8 | |
| 52 | 409.2 | settlement | stone | grind stone | 8 | seems to have been worked |
| 53 | 409.2 | settlement | obsidian | cutting tool | 8 | |
| 54 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | bardaq | 4 | |
| 55 | 409.2 | settlement | ceramic | bardaq | 4 | |