

Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences
Archaeology and Ethnography Institute

DETAILED SCIENTIFIC REPORT

Excavation of Ramal jar burial at KP 169.6 SCPX pipeline

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1 Summary

The report provides information about the course of archaeological excavations that took place on 1-3 September 2016 in the Ramal necropolis of jar graves discovered at KP 169.65 of the SCPX export gas pipeline on the outskirts of Ramal village in Ujar District and about the material cultural remains that were discovered there. During the work, a jar graveyard and ceramic products were discovered here. Archaeological materials that clarify the funeral traditions of ancient residents were obtained in the necropolis. Based on the analysis of archaeological materials, it was established that the jar graves belonged to the second and first centuries BC - the ancient period of Caucasian Albania.

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2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Discovery of the site

The Ramal necropolis of jar graves located on KP169.65 of the SCPX line were identified in the fourth stage of the programme. When the pipeline trench was dug, it was observed by construction workers and the work was stopped immediately. One of the jar graves had been partially destroyed, but following, archaeological investigation, several more burial jars were found along the trench.

2.2 Brief description of the site

The Ramal necropolis of jar graves is located in Ujar District, on the outskirts of a village with the same name. These graves were identified as belonging to the period of Caucasian Albania.

The monument is located at a height of 10 metres above sea level, at N-04486964 and E-08710066. It is situated about 200 metres southwest of Ramal village in Ujar District, on the left side of the Baku-Gazakh highway, on KP 169.65 of the SCPX route. The monument is surrounded by saline soils on all sides. The terrain of the site is a flat hop plain. Hard clay soils give rise to pasture which has been used for many years [1, p. 2].

2.3 Who carried out the excavations and when

The archaeological expedition team of the Archaeology and Ethnography Institute of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences conducted archaeological excavations at the Ramal jar burial from 1 to 3 September 2016 under the leadership of PhD in history, senior scientific worker and associate professor, Anar Agalarzadeh, and with the participation of employee of the AEI, scientific worker, Ahliman Abdurahmanov.

3 RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

3.1 General description of the site

The Ramal jar burial lies in a north-east-south-west direction and consists of a large-sized burial jar. The burial jar is well baked red clay mixed with small sand. Its mouth edge is funnel-shaped and is bent outwards. This piece was simply decorated with concave ornaments before baking. During the excavation of the pipe corridor, the part of the jar from the mouth to the body was broken and, therefore, it is not known in what direction and how the human skeleton inside the jar was buried. However, the pelvis and leg of the skeleton were intact. The length of the jar was 170 cm, its diameter was 110 cm, and the diameter of the base was 30 cm.

There was a grater-type vessel on the back side of the skeleton and a pitcher-type earthenware vessel near the foot. Among the finds there was one transparent brown obsidian fragment.

The "grater"-type vessel is an interesting and unique find. The mouth of the vessel is open for pouring fluids. In order to filter the fluid, holes were made, and then to ensure that it is easily poured, trough-shaped canals were made. The arch-shaped handle has a zoomorphic shape. The handle connects the body and the upper part that resembles a dog's head. The body is

biconic and has symmetric molded button-shaped patterns on three sides. The body sharply narrows towards the base up, and the lower part has a concave shape. The vessel is well polished. Dimensions: height 15 cm, body diameter 14 cm, base diameter 5 cm and width 13 cm.

The second vessel is a small pitcher-type vessel and was poorly baked from dark brown clay mixed with sand. The composition of the clay is very fragile. It has a relatively narrow neck, and its ball-shaped body sharply narrows towards the base up. There are burns on the vessel. The shoulder is decorated with weak wavy patterns. These patterns were made before baking. Dimensions of the vessel: mouth diameter 17 cm, neck height 5 cm, height 21 cm, body diameter 23 cm, base diameter 12 cm.



Figure 1. General view of grave jar.

3.2 Description of artefacts

One of the artifacts discovered during the archaeological excavations is of particular importance. This find is a vessel with a grater. A "grater"-type vessel is yellowish and is well baked from pure clay. The mouth of the vessel is open for pouring fluids. In order to filter fluid, there are holes on the grater, and then to ensure that fluids are easily poured, a trough-shaped canal was made. The archaic handle has a zoomorphic shape. The handle connects the body and the mouth of the vessel and the upper part resembles a dog's head. The body is biconic and has symmetric molded button-shaped patterns on three sides. The body sharply narrows towards the base up, and the lower part has a concave shape. The vessel is well polished. Dimensions: height 15 cm, body diameter 14 cm, base diameter 5 cm and width 13 cm.

3.3 General analysis results from the excavations

The archaeological excavations at the monument were generally very successful. During the excavations, very valuable information was collected on the various spheres of the spiritual culture of ancient inhabitants.

Although the jar graves had no superficial signs and were discovered accidentally only during work on land, we can say that jar graves were one of the most common types of graves in Azerbaijan at that time given that more than a hundred necropolises of jar graves have been discovered so far. [5, p. 41; 3, p. 25]. It is not correct to associate the custom of jar burials with Zoroastrianism based on the fact that this funeral tradition, which existed for a long time (6th-8th centuries BC), came to Azerbaijani territory from Iran and that Zoroastrianism was Iran's ruling religion at that time. The tradition of burying the dead in a jar was practiced long before (from the 4th millennium BC) Zoroastrianism in different parts of the world. However, the fact that this funeral tradition corresponds to one of the main tenets of Zoroastrianism, i.e. the use of an earthenware jar to avoid defiling the holy land with a corpse is one of the reasons why such a custom became popular in Iran at that time.

During burial in jar graves, a large jar was used and the corpse and grave equipment were placed inside it. Burial jars had a round and thick mouth, lower necks, sloping shoulders, stout bodies that became narrower towards the bottom and flat base ups [6, p. 100]. During the burial, large earthenware vessels were placed around the jar. Many foods were often placed inside these vessels. Some scientists say that food was placed in vessels because it was believed that the soul periodically left the jar for food [4, p. 32]. Smaller earthenware vessels, decorative items, various weapons and other items were placed in burial jars. Over time, the size and range of grave equipment changed. We can say that just like in other necropolises of jar graves, the deceased was placed on his side in the Ramal jar grave. Although variability was observed in the direction of graves in necropolises of jar graves, there are also necropolises where graves are facing the same direction. Just like in necropolises of jar graves in Mingachevir, we observe this stability at the Ramal necropolis too. The burial jar found in the necropolis was in the north-east-south-west direction. Although it was found in an average condition, the skeleton inside the burial jar is thought to be facing the same direction as the jar (the head was facing the mouth of the jar and the feet - the base up). It is believed that the deceased was buried in a tightly crouched position on his left side. The fact that fragments of charcoal were found in the jar burial under review is a sign that a bonfire was made here during the burial ceremony here. According to S. Gaziyeu, the fire burning during the burial ceremony served to drive evil forces away [2, p. 9].

The study of the Ramal jar burial showed that during the burial ceremony at the necropolis, all traditions of burial in jar graves were observed. Analysis of the archaeological materials obtained from this graveyard, the observations made, and the observation of the burial tradition allow us to say that it belongs to the second-first centuries BC, i.e. the period of Caucasian Albania.

4 ANALYTICAL RESULTS

4.1 Identification of period and chronology

The study of the Ramal jar burial showed that during the burial at the necropolis, all traditions of funeral ceremonies were observed in the jar grave. Analysis of archaeological materials obtained from these graves, analogies and the observation of the burial custom make it possible to say that they belong to the second-first centuries BC, i.e. the period of Caucasian Albania.

5 DISCUSSION

When submitting the results of the work for open debate by summarizing the results of the archaeological excavations, the scientific position of the author and the final results are summarized. These scientific findings were confirmed by the observations of other scientists involved in the archaeological excavations.

6 INVENTORY

Inv. No	Item	Description of item	Size
1.	Jar	The burial jar is red and is well baked from clay mixed with small sand. The mouth is funnel-shaped and is bent outwards. This part was decorated with concave patterns before baking.	Length 170 cm, body diameter 110 cm, base diameter 30 cm
2.	Earthenware vessel with a grater	The grater-type vessels is yellowish and is well baked from pure clay. The mouth of the vessel is open for pouring liquids. Grater holes were made for filtering liquids, and then it was shaped as a trough to make it easier to pour liquids. Its archaic-looking handle has a zoomorphic shape. The handle connects the mouth and the body, while the upper part resembles a dog's head (?). The body is biconic and has button-shaped molded symmetric patterns on three sides. The body sharply narrows towards the base up and the bottom is concave. The vessel is well polished.	Height 15 cm, body diameter 14 cm, base up diameter 5 cm, trough length 13 cm
3.	Pitcher	It is a small dark brown pitcher-type vessel poorly baked from clay mixed with sand. The composition of the clay is very fragile. It has a relatively narrow neck, and its ball-shaped body sharply narrows towards its base up. There are traces of burns on the vessel. Its shoulder is covered with delicate wavy patterns. These patterns were made before baking.	Mouth diameter 17 cm, neck height 5 cm, Height 21 cm, body diameter 23 cm, base up diameter 12 cm
4.	Obsidian fragment	It is transparent and brown. Although there are no clear traces of use, it is believed that it was used in the household.	Length 3 cm

7 APPENDICES

7.1 References

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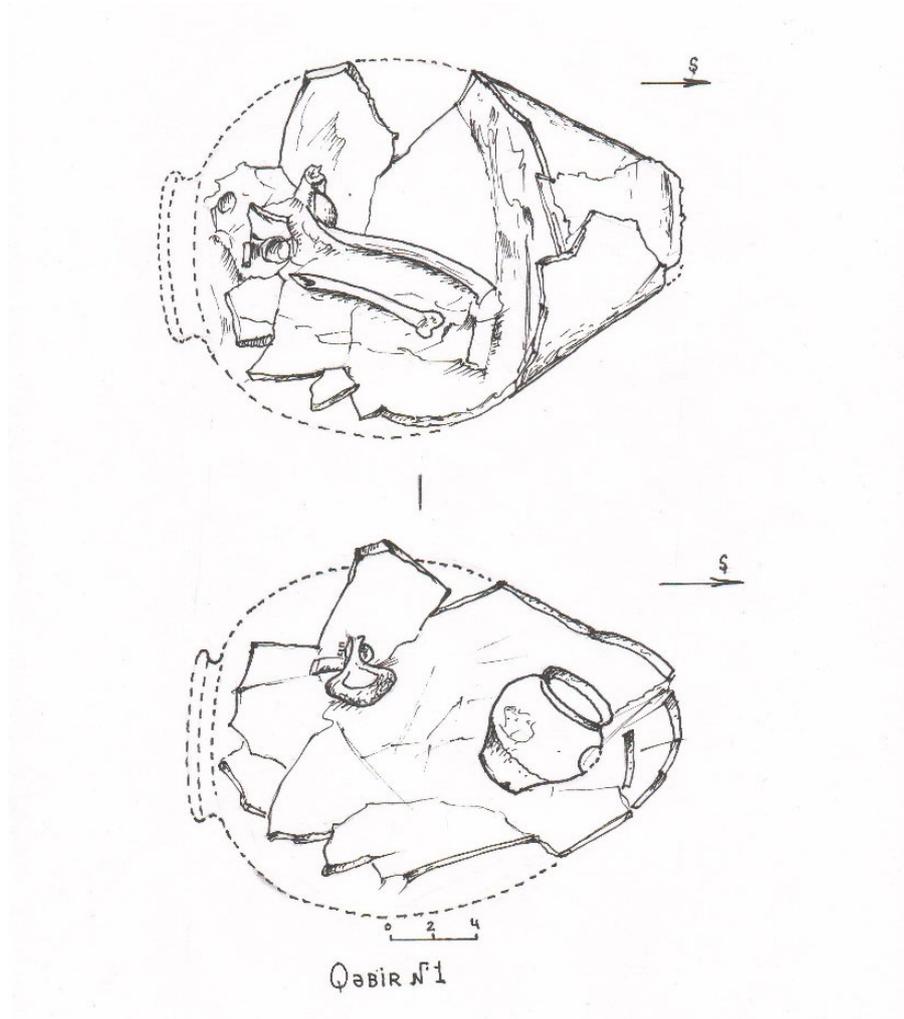
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7.2 Figures



7.3 Photos



Figure 2. Vessel with grater



Figure 3. Earthenware pitcher



Figure 4. Obsidian cutting tool