

Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences
Archaeology and Ethnography Institute

DETAILED SCIENTIFIC REPORT

Excavations on the Dəllər Cəyir kurgans at KP 322.6
SCPX pipeline

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1 SUMMARY

The report provides information on the archaeological excavations carried out in the Dallar Jayir kurgans, located at KP 322.600 in the SCPX pipeline corridor. During initial clearance work for the pipeline, a previously unknown kurgan burial cemetery consisting of up to six settings of stone was identified. The majority of these lay to the north of the pipeline working area and so were unaffected. Two kurgan stone structures were excavated as they lay in the area affected by pipeline construction.

An interesting structure of kurgans and burial customs were observed in the area. Only a very small number of artefacts were obtained during the excavations.

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2 1. INTRODUCTION

2.1 SITE DISCOVERY

Circular spreads of stones were recorded in accordance with the SCPX project at KP 322.600 of the pipeline route. The discovered heaps were presumed to be rocks of a kurgan cover and further excavations confirmed this assumption. Those kurgans located in the pipeline corridor were numbered consecutively No.1 and No.2.

The discovery of these kurgans led us to believe that ancient residents of this basin carried out their burials in this territory during the Bronze Age and the early Iron Age.

2.2 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The discovered kurgan field is located about 300m west of Dallar Jayir village. This is a plain area, while the soil there contains gravel with a small amount of clay mixed with black soil. The local population is mostly engaged in sowing such grain crops as grain and barley.

2.3 TIMING OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

An archaeological expedition group of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Azerbaijan National Sciences Academy carried out excavations in the Dallar Jayir kurgans from September 26, 2016 to October 6, 2016, overseen by PhD in History, senior research fellow Vagif Asadov, with the participation of the Institute's employees, PhD in History, senior research fellow Dmitry Kirichenko, junior research associate Jeyhun Aliyev and senior laboratory assistant Farhad Farmanov. BP (SCPX) representative, archaeologist David Maynard contributed to the excavation work as an observer.

3 OUTCOME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

3.1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The Dallar Jayir kurgans are located at coordinates N-4529832; E-8586713, 301 metres above sea level in the territory of the Shamkir district. The burial sites were covered with stones.

3.2 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATION LAYERS

No occupation layers were revealed as this was not a settlement, purely a burial site. The excavations in the kurgans were carried out in the following order:

Kurgan 1. Dimensions of its upper cover were as follows:

north-south direction – 3.8m, west-east direction - 4m, Height – 13cm (Figure 1).

Six consecutive layers of river rocks were recorded over the kurgan's oval-shaped cover. Their dimensions were as follows:

1st layer of stones:

north-south direction – 2.3m, in west-east direction – 3.5m.

2nd layer of stones:

north-south direction – 4.5m, west-east direction – 5.4m.

3rd layer of stones:

north-south direction – 3.9m, west-east direction – 5.6m.

4th layer of stones:

north-south direction – 2.4m, west-east direction – 4.9m.

5th layer of stones:

north-south direction – 2.4m, west-east direction – 3.2m



Figure 1. Kurgan 1 after initial cleaning. View to east.

A neck fragment of an average size pitcher with a wide rim element emerged at the depth of 1.2m amid the fifth layer of stones (Inv 1). The pitcher's rim element broadens sideways slightly. The rim area is flat. The neck goes directly into the body. A criss-cross pattern comprised of dashed dots was applied upon the neck. Two embossed stripes girdle the part transiting from the neck into the body. The walls are thin. The colour is brown (Figures 4.1; 15).

The interchanging layers altered the configuration of the kurgan cover, assuming different dimensions. The burial chamber outline discerned following the sixth layer of stones. The chamber was located slightly to the northwest of the kurgan cover's central part. The surrounding area was girdled by large river rocks. The seventh layer of stones comprised of small river rocks was discovered over the burial chamber.

A total of five more layers (7-11) filled the burial chamber. These included small, medium size and large river rocks (Figures 7-11). The base of the burial chamber was uncovered after the 11th layer (Figures 3, 12). The oval chamber was sized 1.3x0.95. It was 1.5m deep. The chamber's western part was honed from river rocks. Fragments of a teenager's leg and arm bones and two ceramic vessel pieces were found inside the chamber. Some of the fragments were part of a medium size vessel base (Inv 2). The base is wide and flat. The body expands sideways and upward slightly from the base. The colour is dark grey (Figures 4.3; 16).

Another fragment is a part of an average size vessel body (Inv 3). The body is girdled by two parallel faceted stripes. There is a pattern comprised of intersecting polished wave-like lines over the facets. The walls are thin. The colour is black (Figures 4.2; 17). The bones and vessel fragments were scattered over the chamber area (Figures 13-14). Most likely, the dead bodies were buried in this kurgan by means of fracturing.

Kurgan 2. This kurgan's cover, which was slightly wider than the first one, had the following dimensions:

north-south direction - 6m, west-east direction - 5m, Height – 10cm (Figures 2, 18).



Figure 2. Kurgan 2 after initial cleaning. View to north.

An area with no stones emerged in the northeast part of the kurgan cover after the second layer of stones was removed (Figure 18). This area stretched 2.7m in the north-south direction and 3.3m in the west-east direction. The dimensions of the third layer of rocks were as follows:

north-south direction – 5.9m, west-east direction – 5.5m.

The third set of stones stretched in a round shape throughout the kurgan cover. The revealed empty area narrowed down, becoming 1.8m wide, crossing the kurgan cover's third round-shaped stone layer in the north-south direction. The river rocks around the empty square were large. As mentioned above, the area was 1.8m wide. No burial chamber was discovered during the excavations, which indicates that Kurgan 2 was a memorial site.

The burial traditions and analysis of the shape and structure of the vessel fragments found in Kurgan 1 lead to a conclusion that these kurgans date to the late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age.

4 ARTEFACTS

The artefacts found in the burial chamber and cover of Kurgan 1 include fragments of three clay vessels (Figures 4; 15-17).

4.1 GENERAL ANALYSIS OF RESULTS OF THE EXCAVATION

Interesting scientific conclusions were made during the excavations carried out in the Dallar Jayir kurgans. First of all, it is worth mentioning that the entire archaeological excavations planned and carried out in the Shamkir district necessitated repeated and comprehensive comparative researches of the region's Bronze Age-era archaeological monuments. The abundant archaeological materials obtained from the monuments located in the Shamkir district and the Zayamchai basin in particular, allow scholars to conduct more extensive researches and prepare a generalized view on this matter.

The tradition of piling kurgans over both stone-made boxes and ordinary soil graves observed in the Zayamchai basin originated long before the late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age. This observation was made with regard to the plains located between the Zayam and Shamkir rivers, the plateau between the Jayir river and the rivers in the west, as well as the kurgans located in the vicinity of the Chinarli and Chardaqli villages in the Shamkir district. Such kurgans were also discovered in the upstream part of Zayamchai, i.e. in the Gadabay district. The kurgans, which are rather low, are located apart from one another [8, p. 161-162].

A kurgan cemetery comprised of burial sites with a diameter of 10-12 metres is located in an area spanning 1.5 sq.km between Chinarli village and the city of Shamkir.

The clay vessels found in the kurgan graves in the Zayamchai basin reflected high skills of the craftsmen. Some metal-made items do not differ substantially from the finds recorded in outside areas. Undoubtedly, a version of the Khojaly-Gadabay culture, not an independent culture differing from the neighbouring regions, existed in the Zayamchai region during the late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age.

The similarity between metal and ceramic items found in Gadabay, Mingachevir and the Ganjachay basin shows that the Zayamchai basin was an integral part of the Khojaly-Gadabay culture (the late 2nd millennium-early 1st millennium BCE) in the mentioned period.

5 ANALYTICAL RESULTS

5.1 COLLECTION OF RESULTS

Both stone-covered and soil kurgans in the Shamkir district have been comprehensively studied. It is known that the kurgans in Shamkir and the Zayamchai basin are sparse. They are usually located close to the river and around residential areas. The kurgans in the Zayamchai basin were built with the use of a single construction material, i.e. river rocks. Some of the burials were piled using a mixture of rocks and gravel, which was definitely due to local relief features. The upper surface of some kurgans researched in the region's mountainous and plain territories, as well as foothills, was paved with stones in a round shape. In rare cases, the foothills of the kurgans were

encircled by one or two rows of stones. Scholars observed this feature at Zayamchai kurgans 3 and 4, which were excavated along the SCPX route. No more than 10 graves were usually discovered in the region's kurgans.

Although a slightly different structure of burials was tracked during the excavations carried out in Dallar Jayir, the discovered burial traditions and the archaeological samples were inherent to most of the late Bronze Age kurgans revealed in this region.

5.2 PERIOD AND CHRONOLOGY

Special tests were not run based on the kurgan material to determine the period of history pertaining to this monument. However, the structure of the kurgans and the comparative analysis of the finds are grounds to conclude that the burial site dates back to the late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The excavations carried out in the Dallar Jayir kurgans were successfully completed and relevant scientific conclusions were made. Researchers concluded that the kurgans located mostly in the region's foothills and plain areas have different dimensions. The structure of the kurgans in the late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age was relatively small and these burial sites were rich in artefacts. Despite the scarcity of the discovered samples, the Dallar Jayir kurgans reflect the tangible culture of this period.

It should be taken into consideration that in addition to the two researched kurgans, other burial sites were located in the surrounding area outside the pipeline corridor. One burial chamber was recorded in one of the kurgans (1) and human skeletons were found inside. Although there was a three-layer stone cover in the other kurgan, it lacked a burial chamber, which led to a conclusion that it was a memorial site. Similar observations were made during the excavations conducted in the Borsunlu Camp kurgans on the SCPX project. These kurgans were very interesting both in terms of the revealed burial traditions and the significance of the archaeological finds.

7 INVENTORY

No.	Item	Description	Location	Dimension
1	Neck	Neck fragment of an average size vessel with a wide rim element. The rim broadens sideways slightly. The rim area is flat. The neck goes directly into the body. A criss-cross pattern comprised of dashed dots was applied upon the neck. Two embossed stripes girdle the part transitioning from the neck into the body. The walls are thin. The colour is brown. Figures 4, 15.	Kurgan 1 mound cover	wall th.- 0.5cm
2	Base	Medium size vessel base. One of the base's parts is missing. The base is wide and flat. The body expands sideways and upward slightly from the base. The colour is dark grey. Figures 4, 16.	Kurgan 1 burial chamber	wall th.- 0.7cm
3	Body	Fragment of average size vessel body. The body is girdled by two parallel faceted stripes. There is a pattern comprised of intersecting polished wave-like lines over the facets. The walls are thin. The colour is black. Figures 4, 17.	Kurgan 1 burial chamber	wall th.- 0.5cm

8 APPENDICES

8.1 REFERENCES

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8.2 ILLUSTRATIONS

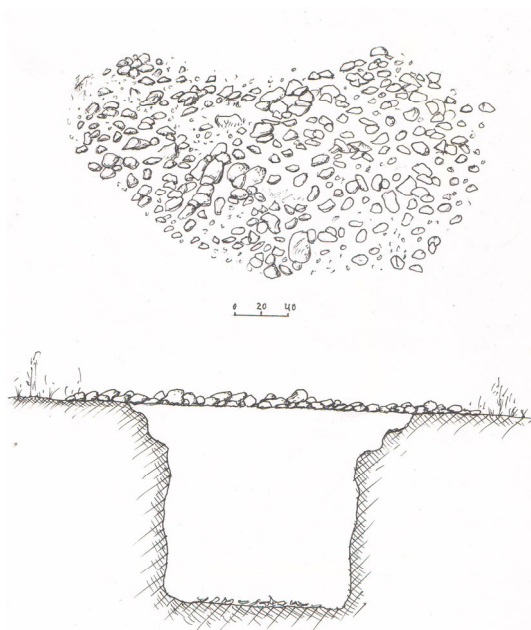


Figure 3. Kurgan 1, plan and profile of burial chamber.

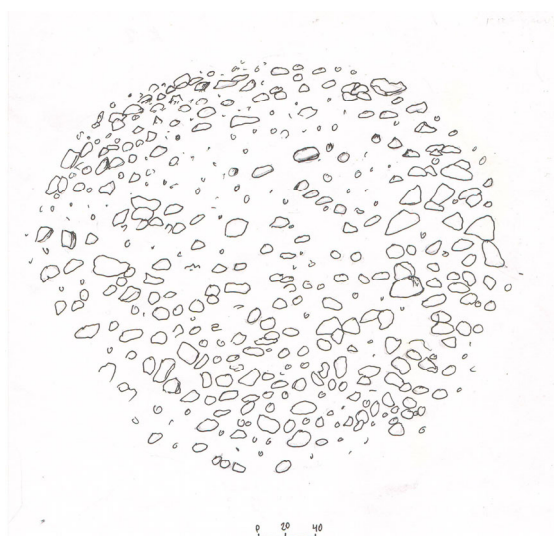


Figure 5. Kurgan 2. Plan after initial cleaning.

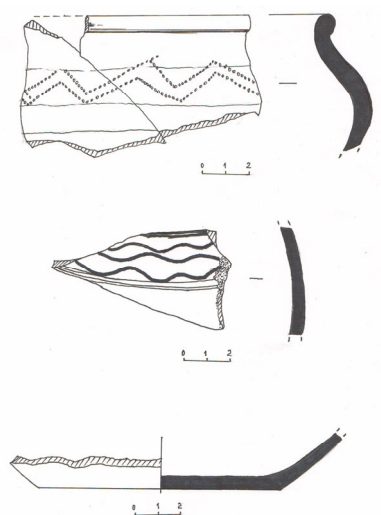


Figure 4. Kurgan 1, rim, body and base sherds. Inv 1-3.

8.3 PHOTOS



Figure 6. Kurgan 1, 6th layer of stones. View to northwest.



Figure 7. Kurgan 1, 7th layer of stones. View to northwest.



Figure 8. Kurgan 1, 8th layer of stones. View to northwest.



Figure 9. Kurgan 1, 9th layer of stones.



Figure 10. Kurgan 1, 10th layer of stones. View to north.



Figure 11. Kurgan 1, 11th layer of stones. View to north.



Figure 12. Kurgan 1, burial chamber. View to west.



Figure 13. Kurgan 1, burial chamber. View to southeast.



Figure 14. Kurgan 1, burial chamber. View to southeast.



Figure 15. Kurgan 1, rim sherd. Inv 1.



Figure 16. Kurgan 1, vessel base. Inv 2.



Figure 17. Kurgan 1, vessel body sherd. Inv 3.



Figure 18. Kurgan 2, empty area in cover of kurgan. View to northwest.