

Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences
Archaeology and Ethnography Institute

DETAILED SCIENTIFIC REPORT

Excavation of the Keçili kurgan at KP 311.8 SCPX pipeline

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2018

1 SUMMARY

The report focuses on archaeological excavations of a kurgan near the village of Kechili in Shamkir District of the Republic of Azerbaijan. This was discovered during topsoil removal on the SCPX pipeline. Archaeological excavations at the monument were carried out from 23 to 30 January 2017. Ceramic fragments were discovered at the monument during the excavation.

The kurgan is located at KP 311.892 of the SCPX pipeline route. The feature is a small stone kurgan overlying a burial. Based on radiocarbon analysis, the feature dates to the Middle Bronze Age, i.e. to the 18th-17th centuries BC.

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2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 SITE DISCOVERY

The Kechili kurgan located on the 311.892 kilometre of the SCPX line was registered in the second stage. The kurgan was discovered during monitoring of the topsoil stripping.

2.2 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The kurgan is located on the river terrace of the Shamkirchai that lies about one kilometre to the east. The area where the kurgan is located on a flat plain that has been heavily cultivated in recent years. After topsoil stripping the kurgan could be seen as a spread of large stones. It appears that the upper surface of the mound was damaged and removed by human activity in various historical periods.

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 from 23 to 30 January 2017 under the leadership of the Doctor of Philosophy and leading scientific worker Dmitry Kirichenko and with the participation of the employee of the institute, Seymur Farmanli. BP archaeologist David Maynard and SCPX Cultural Heritage Site Manager Shahin Aliyev participated in the excavations as observers.

3 RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

3.1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The area where the Kechili kurgan is located is a level terrace west of the Shamkirchai. The monument is located at the coordinates N-44526934 and E-8596332. The name given to the kurgan belongs to the administrative village of Kechili of Shamkir District. The kurgan is located about 500-600 metres southeast from the village of Kechili, north of the Ganja-Shamkir highway on KP 333 of the BTC route and on KP 311.892 of the SCPX route. The site could not be identified prior to construction as it was a level area that has undergone intensive cultivation in recent years.

4 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF CULTURAL LAYERS

4.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS

During the excavation of the Kechili kurgan, fragments of approximately two earthenware vessels (fragments of 2 rims and 31 sherds) and a small cutter made from a piece of transparent black obsidian were discovered.

4.2 GENERAL ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The cover of the kurgan was likely partly destroyed. A crescent-shaped round pile of riverstones was exposed during the cleaning process. Fragments of ochre and a small obsidian cutter were found in the soil during the cleaning process. The dimensions of the stone cover:

North-Sound: 5m, West-East: 5m

A second round-shaped stone cover was found after the stone cover was removed.

Dimensions:

North-South: 6.2m, West-East: 5.2m

A third round-shaped stone cover was found after the second stone cover was removed.

Dimensions:

North-South: 6.5m, West-East: 5.2m

Fragments of approximately two earthenware vessels, as well as fragments of coal and traces of ash were found under the stone layer in the southwest part of the barrow. In the southeast corner of the kurgan, a piece of chalk was found, 1.9 metres from the ceramic fragments.

After removing the third layer of stone, a fourth round-shaped stone layer was discovered.

Dimensions:

North-South: 4.7m, West-East: 4.4 m

After removing the fourth stone layer, outlines of a grave chamber were found in the centre of the kurgan, and there was a round stone pile of about 1x1m in size to the east.

Dimensions of the grave chamber:

North-South: 3.6m, West-East: 2.3m

The cemetery was in the northwest-southeast direction. At a depth of 50cm, a soil grave probably made with the cremation custom (small fragments of bones, traces of ash) and pieces of ochre and chalk were found in the soil of the chamber. In the south part of the kurgan at a depth of about 75cm, a round stone pile 70x70cm in size. Under it, a small piece of obsidian, pieces of ochre and coal were found.

5 5. ANALYTICAL RESULTS

The upper part of the kurgan cover was destroyed as a result of the environmental impact or human activity in various periods. Radiocarbon dating shows that the Kechili kurgan belongs to the Middle Bronze Age. Earlier such graves were excavated in the Ganja-Gazakh region. However, it should be noted that the Kechili kurgan differs from others by its poor range of grave goods.

5.1 COLLECTION OF RESULTS

The determination of the chronological framework of the archaeological complexes found at the Kechili kurgan was based on typological and comparative analysis methods and scientific findings.

5.2 SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION OF IMPORTANT MATERIAL CLASSES

Clay: 33 ceramic fragments were found at the Kechili kurgan. They belonged to two Bronze Age earthenware vessels.

Obsidian: A small obsidian cutter was found at the kurgan. The small cutter was made from light black obsidian. Its top surface is one one-edged, while the working area is sharp.

5.3 PALEONTOLOGICAL, PALEOZOOLOGICAL AND PALEOBOTANIC REMAINS

Burnt fragments of small cattle bones were found in the kurgan.

The bone residues were analysed.

5.4 PERIOD AND CHRONOLOGY OF THE SITE

Based on the radiocarbon analysis carried at Beta Analytic, the Kechili kurgan dates back to the 18th-17th centuries BC.

(Variables: $\delta^{13}C = -17.9$ o/oo)

Laboratory number	Beta-464795
Conventional radiocarbon age	3440 ± 30 BP

95.4% probability

(71.1%)	1785 - 1664 cal BC	(3734 - 3613 cal BP)
(15.4%)	1878 - 1838 cal BC	(3827 - 3787 cal BP)
(8.9%)	1829 - 1792 cal BC	(3778 - 3741 cal BP)

68.2% probability

(62.2%)	1772 - 1691 cal BC	(3721 - 3640 cal BP)
(6%)	1862 - 1851 cal BC	(3811 - 3800 cal BP)

This period is characterized as the Middle Bronze Age in the history of Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus. In this historical period, the second social division of labour, i.e. the separation of craftsmanship from agriculture takes place and the subsequent development of metallurgy and metalworking begins.

6 6. DISCUSSION

When submitting the results of the work for open discussion by summarizing the results of archaeological excavations, the scientific position of the author who wrote the report and the final results are summarized. These scientific findings have been confirmed by the observations of other scientists involved in the archaeological excavations.

6.1 COMPARISON WITH OTHER EXCAVATIONS IN THE AREA

The Kechili kurgan dates back to the Middle Bronze Age, namely 18th-17th centuries BC. It takes its place among the kurgans of this period in Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus. The burial custom here, may match the custom of cremation as traces of ash were found inside the grave

chamber. Cremation was performed at high temperatures outside, and then the remains were placed in the grave in the form of ashes. Fragments of vessels found in the southwest part of the kurgan were the accompanying offerings.

7 INVENTORY

No	Material	Class	Description and comments	Size
1	clay	Rim	A fragment of the mouth of a middle-sized vessel. Its edges are circular and flow into the shoulder. The clay contains small particles of sand and grinded shells. Its top surface is grey-brown, while its inner surface is pink-brown. Walls are thin. It is handmade.	Neck height 2.4cm Wall thickness 0.6cm
2	clay	Rim	A fragment of the mouth of a middle-sized vessel. Its edges are circular and flat and flow into the shoulder. The clay contains small particles of sand and grinded shells. Its top surface is grey-brown, while its inner surface is pink-brown. Walls are thin. It is handmade.	Wall thickness 0.6cm
3	clay	Body	A fragment of the body of a middle-sized vessel. The mouth is circular and flows into the shoulder. There is a small convex line that girdles the neck on the surface, and engraved incisions under it. There is a horizontal scratch on the body and an engraved wavy line and an engraved snake-shaped wavy lines under it. The clay contains small particles of sand and grinded shells. Its top surface is grey-brown, while its inner surface is pink-brown. There are traces of soot on the body. It is handmade. (31 fragments).	Wall thickness 0.7-0.8cm
4	obsidian	Cutter	Made from small flake of light black obsidian. Its top surface is one-edged, while the inner surface is sharp.	Length 1.7cm Width 0.7cm

8 APPENDICES

8.1. REFERENCES

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8.1 ILLUSTRATIONS

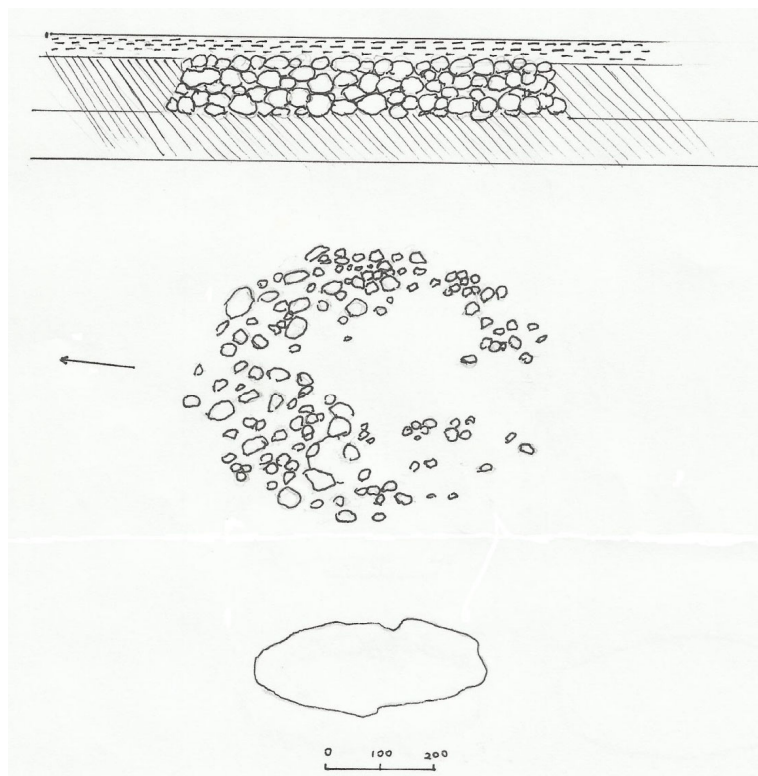


Figure 1 Plan of kurgan

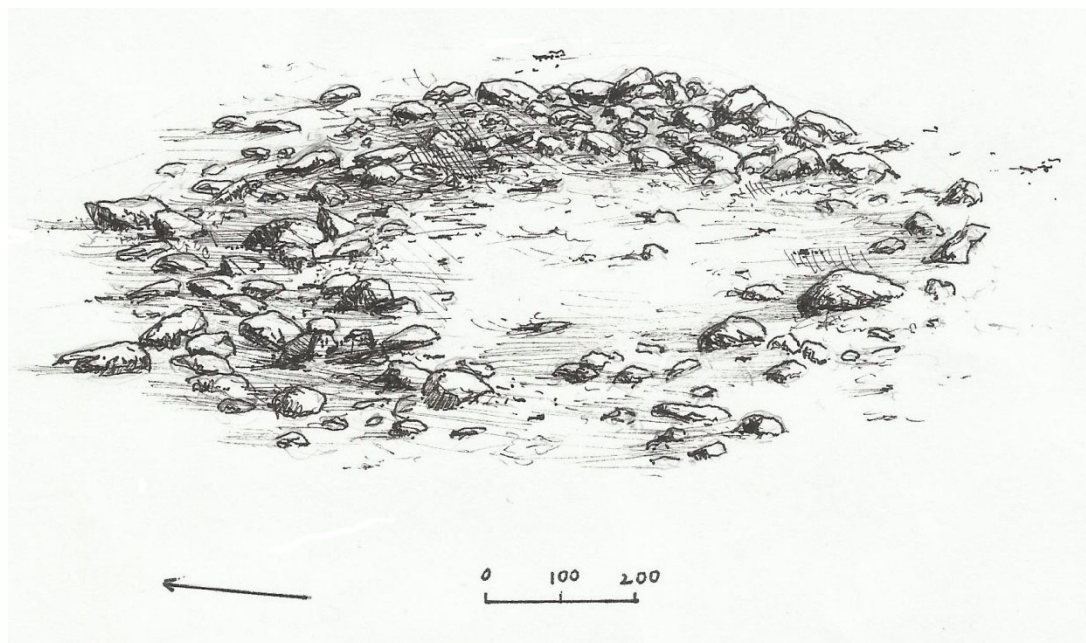
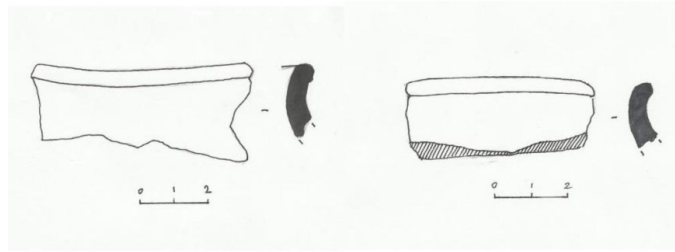
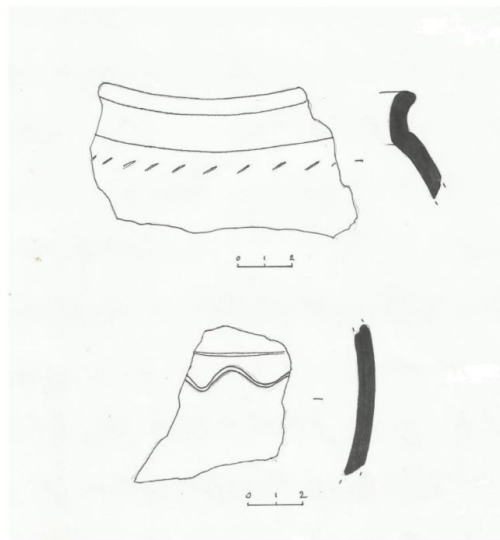


Figure 2 Stone cover of kurgan (graphical view).

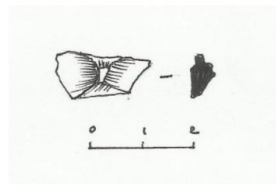


Inv.1

Inv.2



Inv.3



Inv.4

Figure 3 Artefacts.

8.2 PHOTOS



Figure 4 View of kurgan after initial cleaning following discovery. View to east.



Figure 5 Stone cover of the kurgan, exposed after removal of upper soil level. View to east.



Figure 6 Stone cover of kurgan, exposed after removal of upper soil level. View to west.



Figure 7 Sherds of earthenware vessel (in situ).

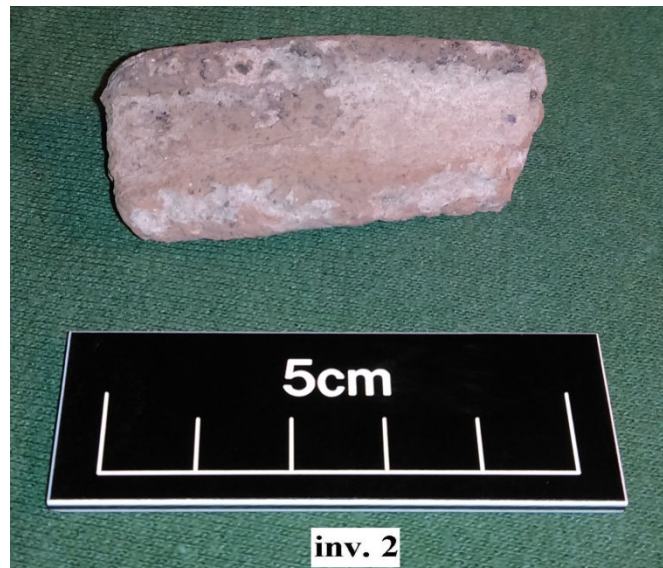
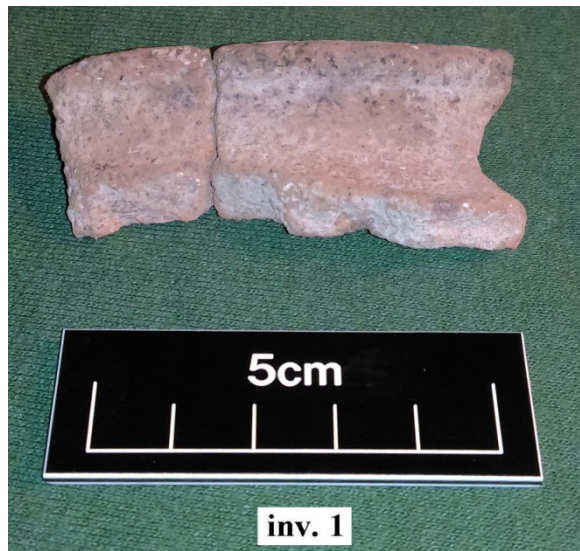


Figure 8 Pottery rim sherds.



Figure 9 Pottery sherds.

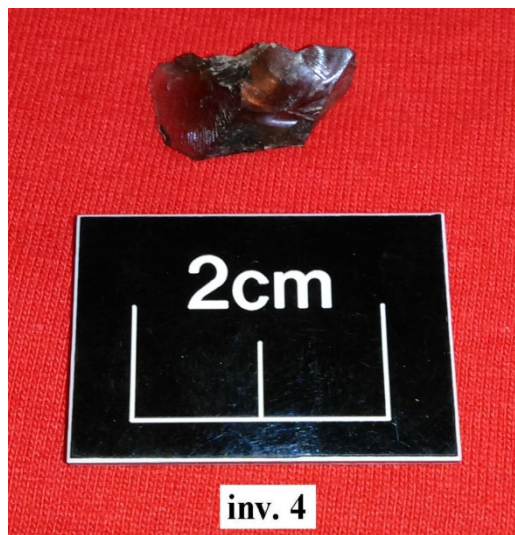


Figure 10 Obsidian cutting flake.