

Azerbaijan National Sciences Academy
Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography

DETAILED SCIENTIFIC REPORT

**Excavations in Seyidlər III and IV jar grave necropolis at KP
295.8 and 296.2 SCPX pipeline**

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2020

1 SUMMARY

The report provides information regarding the progress on archaeological excavations carried out on April 4-6, 2017 in the Seyidlar jar graves, discovered northwest of Seyidlar village in Samukh district at KP 295.850 and 296.270 of the main gas export pipeline corridor of the SCPX project, as well as the revealed remains of tangible culture. Archaeological research was tackled without delay at the jar graves, which were discovered accidentally during construction work in the pipeline corridor. A necropolis area comprised of jar graves was found on the site during archaeological excavations and three jar graves located along the pipeline trench were excavated. Graves 1 and 2 were located close to one another, 420 metres north of the third one. Significant damage was inflicted to the jar graves during the pipeline trench excavation and archaeological material was scattered around. Clay vessels of different shapes and beads were found inside the burial jars. Based on the obtained ceramic items, the finds can be dated to the ancient period (the 2nd century BCE-2nd century CE).

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2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 SITE DISCOVERY

The Seyidlar jar graves, located at KP 295.850 and 296.270 of the SCPX route, were discovered accidentally during the digging of the pipeline trench. The jar graves, which were spotted by the archaeological monitor reviewing the area on March 30, 2017, sustained significant damage due to the use of machinery (Photos 1-2). The territory was recorded jointly with representatives of Saipem/Azfen (SAJV) and BP companies engaged in construction operations and signs were installed on the sites where jars were found. On March 31, 2017, David Maynard and Shamil Najafov conducted a repeated examination of the area and conducting archaeological excavations shortly thereafter was planned.

2.2 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The Seyidlar jar graves are located in Samukh district, 4km northwest of Seyidlar village. The territory is being used as a sowing area and a hayfield. There are low slanting hills in some parts of this smooth plain area. Raspberry bushes grow around the small water canals set up in between the sowing areas. Sowing had been done in this area prior to the digging of the pipeline trench. Grave 1 was discovered at the N4526472 and E8609563 coordinates, while Grave 2 was located at the N4526356 and E8609402 coordinates and Grave 3 was at N4526035 and E8609148 coordinates. The upper soil layer of this territory is comprised of black soil, while the lower strata include sand and rock sediment. The area is located 190m above sea level. The Seyidlar monument where archaeological excavations were conducted during construction of the BTC and SCP pipelines is located 500 metres southeast of this location.



Photo 1. Graves 1 and 2 seen the profile of the pipeline trench at the point of discovery. View to east.



Photo 2. Examination of the grave in the side of the pipe trench.

2.3 TIMING OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

One archaeologist was assigned to deal with this site as the main ANSA IoAE archaeological expedition group was involved in excavations in the Kerpilitepe settlement and the limited extent of the Seyidlar graves. Excavations were carried out on the Seyidlar site with the participation of research fellow Jeyhun Aliyev on April 4-6, 2017, BP(SCPX) Cultural Heritage Site Manager Shahin Aliyev and BP archaeologist David Maynard contributed to the excavation work as observers.



Photo 3. Clay vessel in Grave 3, inv 3.



Photo 4. Grave 3 exposed on the side of the pipe trench following discovery. View to east.



Photos 5-6. Clay vessels and fragments found in graves.

3 OUTCOME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

3.1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The Seyidlar jar graves are located in a plain area. The site is situated 190 metres above sea level. The monument has a general title and in terms of administrative division is part of the Seyidlar village of the Samukh district. There is a strip of sparse woods about 2.5km southwest of the area. This plain territory, which is rich in black soil, has been used for sowing for many years.

3.2 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF GRAVES

Graves 1 and 2 are located 400 metres north of Grave 3. Excavations were launched initially at the first and second jar graves, which are located in the same area.

Grave 1. The grave is located 60cm deep below the present-day soil layer (Photo 9). The jar dimensions are as follows: base diameter 20cm, wall thickness 2cm and body diameter is 1m. There are fine sand and gravel particles in the clay composition. The colour is light pink. The vertically placed, thick walled burial jar's upper part crumbled completely for technical reasons. The intact section equals 60cm (inv. 11). Clay vessels of different purposes were found inside the burial jar.

The thin walled vessel's fragments were once part of a black, pink and greyish pitcher (Photo 11). Another pitcher-type vessel's rim sherd has thick walls. The rim is bent outward. The pitcher has a narrow neck and a wide body. The latter is thicker than the rim, which broadens outward. The colour is black (inv. 8).

Fragments of an average size pitcher with a narrow neck were found as well. The rim bends outward. The cylindrical neck transforms smoothly into the slanting shoulder. The neck's transiting part is girdled by a stripe that has a welt. Notched patterns were applied underneath. There is a handle with an oval cross section in the back that connects the neck with the shoulder. The handle has a groove in the middle. The walls are thin. The body is convex. The outside surface is covered with whitish engobed coating (inv. 14).

Grave 2. The grave is located 3 metres southwest of Grave 1. It was discovered 50cm below ground level (Photo 7).

A rim fragment of a large burial jar was found on the site. The rim broadens outwards. The rim has a welt. The high neck expands toward the shoulder. The colour is pink. The item was made neatly. The surface is polished. There is slight sand admixture in the clay composition. The burial jar's dimensions are as follows: rim diameter 41cm, base diameter is 20cm, the wall thickness is 1.9cm and the body diameter equals 1 metre (inv. 13). The excavations were conducted to a depth of 140cm. The vessel's walls are thick. The vertically placed jar's lateral and upper parts completely collapsed under technical impact. The intact remaining length is 110cm.



Photo 7. Grave 2 after cleaning. View to southeast.

A grooved rim of a pink vessel, a dopu-type vessel's rim fragment and bones of a large-horned animal were found inside the burial jar. A layer of ash was discovered by the base. There were also parts of clay vessels inside. The obtained clay vessels are described below.

The discovered vessel's rim fragment has thin walls (Photo 14). The rim of this pitcher, which has a wide body, rises at a straight angle and is slightly inclined outward. The rim diameter is 7cm, while the wall thickness is 0.7cm (inv. 9). The neck of the pitcher, which has a grooved rim, connects the handle starting at the rim to the semi-circular shoulder. The thin walled vessel expands downward narrowly (Photo 13). The handle is round-shaped. The colour is light pink. The handle diameter is 1.4cm. The wall thickness is 0.5cm, while the rim element is sized 8.6x7.4cm (inv. 10).

In addition to pottery fragments, a small set of blue coloured glass beads was found at the depth of 80cm. The beads have a wave-like cross section and a hole that starts in the upper part. The item is flat (inv.12).

Grave 3. The damaged part of another jar grave was spotted to the south during the research activities (Photo 10). The territory around Grave 3, was cleaned off the soil piled for an excavated pipeline trench. While only fragments of vessels were found in Graves 1 and 2, vessels were found in their entirety in Grave 3 and they were mainly scattered horizontally around the buried jar.

The Grave 3 is located 420m south of Graves 1 and 2 at a depth of 60cm. The undamaged part equals 110cm. The large household jar was presumably used for burials. Its rim broadens outward. The jar has chain-like protrusions. The rim has a welt. The low neck expands toward the shoulder. The colour is pink. It was made inaccurately. There are sand and gravel particles in the clay composition. The rim diameter is 42cm, while the wall thickness is 2cm and the base diameter is 17cm (inv. 4, 5). A significant number of scattered vessel fragments had accumulated in the surrounding area. Presumably, these clay vessel fragments that used to be inside the burial jar were scattered around as a result of the operation of machinery. The fragments and the entire vessels found alongside were pink, grey and orange coloured samples. The items were made neatly. Despite sand admixture in their clay composition, their surface is polished or covered with engobed coating.

The obtained samples include a medium size, dark grey pitcher (Photo 22). The vessel has a narrow neck and a convex body. The rim broadens outward slightly. The low neck transforms smoothly into the slanting shoulder. There are two rather convex protrusions upon the shoulder. The base is wide and flat. There is a significant fine sand admixture in the clay composition. The surface is slightly polished. There are traces of burning in one of its parts due to baking in unstable temperature. The wall thickness is 0.7cm, while the rim diameter is 10.7cm, the body diameter is 19cm, the height is 20.5cm and the base diameter is 12.2cm (inv. 1).

Another sample obtained in the area was a little pink dopu (Photo 21). Its rim element expands in the funnel shape. The item is pear-like shaped. The neck goes smoothly into the body. The base is narrow and flat. There is a trace of a handle with a round cross section in the back. There is fine sand admixture in the clay composition. The surface is slightly polished. The colour is light pink. The wall thickness is 0.7cm, while the rim diameter is 7.4cm, the body diameter is 9.5cm, the height is 12cm and the base diameter is 5.6cm (inv. 2).

A small pitcher was found as well. The petal-shaped rim element broadens outward in the shape of a groove (Photo 20). The low neck transforms smoothly into the slanting shoulder. The convex body narrows downward. The base is narrow and flat. The neck part transiting into the shoulder is girdled by triangular notched patterns. There is a narrow tape-shaped handle connecting the shoulder with the rim element in the back. There is fine sand admixture

in the clay composition. The surface is polished. The colour is pale pink. The wall thickness is 0.6cm, while the rim element diameter is 8x9cm, the body diameter is 11cm, the height is 13.9cm and the base diameter is 4.5cm (inv.3).

A fragment of a jar handle, which has a semi-circular cross section, is oval. There is a deeply scratched crack throughout the handle in the upper part. The clay composition of this pink coloured fragment includes fine stone particles and sand. The wall is thin as its thickness is only 0.6cm. The handle is 2.4cm wide and 2.2cm thick (inv.6).

A handle with a semi-circular cross section is round-shaped. The clay composition of the greyish fragment is clean. The walls are thin. The item was made neatly. The handle is 2.4cm wide and 2.1cm thick, while the wall thickness equals 0.6cm (inv.7).

The samples found during the archaeological research were relatively abundant and included pink, grey and orange vessel fragments. Bones of cattle, sheep and goats were encountered in the area as well. Overall, no human bones were found inside the burial jars during the excavations. They were probably scraped and removed with machinery or just blended with soil due to complete rotting.

The structure of the burial jars was disrupted due to the territory's being used as arable land for a long time. Moreover, it was subjected to the damaging impact of heavy machinery during removal of the upper soil layer in the course of construction. In some cases, the base parts remained intact.

The obtained vessels were scattered around the buried jars. Mostly fragments of samples were discovered during the archaeological excavations. The surrounding territory was destroyed from the archaeological viewpoint in all the three excavation areas as a result of long-term household activities.

3.3 ARTEFACTS

Ceramic:

Pottery samples were found in the Seyidlar graves during the excavations, though the number of the archaeological samples was insignificant. These included ceramic vessels of different sizes lined up around most of the graves, as well as small vessels placed inside the buried jars. As a rule, the ceramic vessels were light pink and red coloured items. Some of these items were covered with whitish and yellowish engobed coating on the outside. The clay is either clean or has sand admixture in its composition.

Though most of the vessels were made by hand without using a potter's wheel, they are of very high quality, well baked and made in line with a refined artistic taste.

It is worth mentioning that baked bricks began to be used and roofing tiles of the ancient type began to be made in the cities of the Caucasian Albania during the researched period under the impact of the ties forged with the ancient civilization; money emulating Greek coins and antique clay vessels started to be made as well. Most likely, the vessels used while observing the burial tradition in the Seyidlar jar graves were products of craftsmanship of the settlement pertaining to the necropolis.

The ceramic vessels discovered in the excavation site are almost the same as the Samadabad and Bayimsarov materials in terms of their shape and content. These samples can be traced back to the 2nd century BCE to 2nd century CE based on their typological features.

Pottery fragments played a key role among the tangible cultural samples recorded during the excavations. Artefacts including clay vessels used as pitchers, bowls, aftabas, plates, jars, dopu, etc. show the cuisine and domestic culture of the people of that period. Pitchers, bowls and dopu-type vessels are particularly remarkable among these vessels, most of which were of high quality and made very skilfully. These vessels have round rims with petals and grooves. Their surfaces were decorated with model and scratched patterns. This indicates the good artistic taste of the craftsmen, who mostly made these items by hand.

Glassware:

A set of beads was the only glass material found on the site. The dark blue beads were of a small size. The beads have a wave-like cross section. Their hole begins on top. The item has a flat shape. Its length is 2.2cm (Photo 15).

4 ANALYTICAL RESULTS

4.1 COLLECTION OF RESULTS

The results achieved in the area of the Seyidlar jar graves are of great importance for researching the jar graves of the whole region. A total of three jar graves were discovered and excavated. The graves, which were accidentally revealed during construction operations, were semi-dilapidated. Therefore, the line-up of the available archaeological samples in the burial jars and human skeletons could not be identified. Researchers merely obtained archaeological materials or their fragments, which were further made systematic and grouped. The direction of the burial jars could not be determined either.

Ancient ceramic samples were scattered above the ground in the nearby territories, in particular, in an area located north of the pipeline corridor. The area with the highest concentration of such materials encompasses over 100m. Undoubtedly, there are more graves located in areas near the discovered graves. Presumably, a settlement where the buried people once lived was situated in this area as well. The excavation area covered a part of the jar grave cemetery that pertained to the settlement.

4.2 PERIOD AND CHRONOLOGY

The determination of the chronological range of the Seyidlar jar graves or more generally, the necropolis, is based on the structure of the graves and comparative analysis of the obtained tangible cultural samples. No specific conclusions could be made concerning burial traditions as human skeletons were either unavailable or damaged by machinery. The fact that the graves were revealed at approximately equal or almost the same depths proves that habitation continued in this area for a certain period of time. Comparative analysis conducted several times suggests that burials were carried out in the Seyidlar necropolis in around the 2nd century BCE-2nd century CE. Nevertheless, adjustments in this chronological range resulting from further researches are not ruled out.

Features of highly developed craftsmanship of the ancient period are traced in the tangible cultural samples discovered in the necropolis.

5 DISCUSSION

When the outcomes of the archaeological excavations are summarized and the results of the work are further put on open discussion, the scientific views and final conclusions of the report author are grouped. These scientific results have been confirmed by the observations of other research fellows involved in the archaeological excavations.

5.1 INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The archaeological excavations conducted in the jar graves revealed on the site of a trench drilled for a pipeline were designated for rescue purposes. The research conducted in the excavation area allows making a conclusion that the jar graves, which were discovered in the pipeline corridor, were part of a necropolis and three graves located in this necropolis ended up in this very corridor. Most likely, the necropolis is situated north of the pipeline route, given that one may come across ceramic samples above the ground while walking around these territories and these items date back to the ancient time period. The thick walled jar fragments probably belong to burial jars. These ceramic samples were scattered around during the operation of machines in the course of sowing work. The jar graves and pottery found in the necropolis may be traced back to the 2nd century BCE to 2nd century CE based on their typological and analytical features. Evidently, there was a rural settlement in the vicinity of that necropolis during the ancient times.

6 INVENTORY

No.	Description	Grave	Dimensions
1	Medium size pitcher. The vessel has a narrow neck and a convex body. The rim broadens outward slightly. The low neck transforms smoothly into the slanting shoulder. There are two rather convex protrusions upon the shoulder. The base is wide and flat. There is significant fine sand admixture in the clay composition. The outside surface is slightly polished. There are traces of burning in one of its parts due to baking in unstable temperature. Photo 22.	Grave 3	wall thickness – 0.7cm orif.diam.- 10.7cm body diam.- 19cm height – 20.5cm base diam. – 12.2cm
2	Small pear-like shaped dopu. The rim element broadens in the funnel shape. The neck transforms smoothly into the body. The base is narrow and flat. There is a trace of a handle with a round cross section on the back side. There is fine sand admixture in the clay composition. The surface is slightly polished. The colour is light pink. Photo 21.	Grave 3	wall thickness – 0.7cm orif.d. – 7.4cm body d.-9.5cm height - 12cm base d. – 5.6cm
3	Small, handled pitcher. Its petalled rim element broadens outward in the shape of a groove. The low neck transforms smoothly into the slanting shoulder. The convex body narrows downward. The base is narrow and flat. The neck part transiting into the shoulder is girdled by triangular notched patterns. There is a narrow tape-shaped handle connecting the shoulder with the rim element in the back. There is fine sand admixture in the clay composition. The surface is polished. The colour is pale pink. Photo 20.	Grave 3	wall thickness – 0.6cm orif.d.-8.9cm body d.-11cm height - 13.9cm base d.- 4.5cm
4	Burial jar base. The base was made inaccurately. Its walls are thick. The bottom part is smooth. It broadens toward the body. The clay composition includes fine sand and stone particles. The colour is light pink. Photo 19	Grave 3	wall thickness – 1.8cm base d. - 17cm
5	Rim sherd of a large burial jar. Its rim broadens outward. The jar has chain-like protrusions. The rim has a welt. The low neck expands toward the shoulder. The colour is pink. It was made inaccurately. There are sand and stone particles in the clay composition. Photo 18.	Grave 3	rim d. - 42cm
6	Fragment of a jar handle with a semi-circular cross section. It is round-shaped. There is a deeply scratched crack throughout the handle in the upper part. The clay composition of this pink coloured fragment includes fine stone particles and sand. The walls are thin. Photo 17.	Grave 3	width – 2.4cm thickness – 2.2cm
7	Jar handle with a semi-circular cross section. It is round-shaped. There is a deep crack throughout the handle in the upper part. The greyish fragment has a clean clay composition. The walls are thin. The item was made neatly. Photo 16.	Grave 3	width – 2.4cm thickness – 2.1cm
8	Pitcher-type vessel rim sherd. The walls are thick. The rim is inclined outward. The vessel has a narrow neck and a wide body. The latter is thicker than the rim, which broadens outward. The colour is blackish. Photo 11.	Grave 1	wall thickness – 1.3cm orif.d.- 26cm
9	Vessel rim sherd. The walls are thin. The pitcher has a wide body. The rim rises at a straight angle and is slightly inclined outward. Photo 14.	Grave 2	wall thickness – 0.7cm orif.d.- 7cm
10	Pitcher with a grooved rim element. The thin wall vessel expands downward. It has a handle that starts at the rim element and connects with the semi-circular shoulder. The handle is round-shaped. The colour is light pink. Photo 13.	Grave 2	wall thickness – 0.5cm orif.d.- 8.6cm
11	Burial jar base. The thick walled base was made neatly. The bottom part is smooth. It broadens toward the body. The clay composition includes fine sand and stone particles. The colour is light pink. Photo 12.	Grave 1	wall thickness – 1.9cm base d. - 20cm
12	Small set of beads. The beads have a wave-like cross section and a hole that starts in the upper part. The item is flat. Photo 15.	Grave 2	wall thickness – 0.6cm
13	Rim sherd of a large burial jar. The flat rim expands outward. The rim has a welt. The high neck broadens toward the shoulder. The colour is pink. The item was made neatly. The surface is polished. There is slight sand admixture in the clay composition.	Grave 2	orif.d.- 41cm
14	Narrow neck part of a medium size pitcher. The rim is bent outward. The cylindrical neck goes smoothly into the slanting shoulder. The neck's transiting part is girdled by a stripe, which has a welt. Notched patterns were applied underneath. There is a handle with an oval cross section in the back connecting the neck with the shoulder. The handle has a fissure in the middle. The thin wall vessel has a convex body. The outside surface is covered with whitish engobed coating.	Grave 1	wall thickness - 1cm orif.d. - 8cm handle width - 2cm

7 APPENDICES

7.1 REFERENCES

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3. Osmanov, F.L., 1987. *On the Issue of the Emergence and Spread of Jar Graves in Azerbaijan*. AMM, Volume 10, Baku.

7.2 PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 8. Initial cleaning of grave on the side of the of pipeline trench. View to northeast.



Photo 9. Grave 1 exposed. View to southeast.



Photo 10. Grave 3 after initial cleaning. View to east.



Photo 11. Grave 1. Rimsherd, inv 8.



Photo 12. Grave 1. Vessel base, inv 11.



Photo 13. Grave 2. Jug rim, inv 10.



Photo 14. Grave 2. sherd, inv 9



Photo 15. Grave 2. Glass beads, inv 12.



Photo 16. Grave 3. Vessel handle, inv 7.



Photo 17. Grave 3. Vessel handle, inv 6.



Photo 18. Grave 3. Vessel sherd, inv 5.



Photo 19. Grave 3. Vessel base, inv 4.



Photo 20. Grave 3. Pitcher, inv 3.



Photo 21. Grave 3. Dopu, inv 2.



Photo 22. Grave 3. Pitcher, inv 1