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Report
Agdash
On Excavations of Antique Period Jar Graves
at KP 200 of BTC and SCP ROW

I. Abstract

This report describes the excavation of an Antique Period jar grave discovered at KP 200 of the BTC and SCP ROW, Agdash District.

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III. Introduction

Description of the BTC and SCP Archaeology Programme

Archaeological excavations in connection with the construction of the BTC and SCP pipelines were conducted prior to and during the construction of these pipelines. These excavations were carried out within 44 m wide pipeline corridor in 2001-2005. The archaeology program consists of 5 phases of which the first 4 constituted solely field investigations:

Phase I – potential archaeological sites were visually identified during baseline surveys while selecting the pipeline route.

Phase II – the sites that were identified during Phase I as dubious from the archaeological point of view were tested by digging test pits and conducting small-scale trial excavations.

Phase III – small and large-scale excavations on the BTC route within the ROW were carried out.

Phase IV - small and large-scale excavations on the SCP route within the ROW were carried out.

In addition to these, all the construction activities were monitored by watching brief archaeologists.

In general, during the core Phase III and Phase IV archaeological excavations were carried out at 41 sites with thousands of artefacts discovered. None of these sites had been known to the archaeological science before.

Phase V – preparation of scientific reports on the archaeological excavations carried out during the previous phases.

Conditions for Discovery of the Archaeological Site

The archaeological site was discovered while trenching for the BTC pipeline.

Brief description of the Site

The site is located at KP 200 of the BTC ROW near Turyanchai in the Agdash District. The area is flat, the terrain is mostly a saline clayey land. The site is located at 8702296, 4488893 at a height of 10m above sea level.

Who Excavated the Site and When

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The site was discovered while digging the trench for the BTC pipeline at KP 200. A watching brief archaeologist from IoAE detected marks of a jar grave at the bottom of the trench at 2.5 metre depth.

This jar grave could not have been identified during pre-construction archaeological survey as graves of this type have no surface marks or signs.

IV. Field and Office Methods

The pipe trench was first backfilled to make the area safe and then a machine with a toothless bucket used to re-excavate the feature which was completed by hand. Additional areas were opened up with the machine on the north side of the pipe trench.

V. Excavation Results

The site was discovered by Mikayil following the Cleveland trencher as a large vessel in the spoil side of the trench. The pipe was laid and then an excavator with a smooth bladed bucket was used to open up the surrounding area down to the top of the vessel. Excavation continued by hand afterwards with Musaffar, Bakhtiyar and Viktor.

The vessel had been buried as an empty void and had collapsed at some point, so the upper parts of the jar were buried at the base of the vessel. It appeared that the vessel was empty when buried, this indicates that it was used for some domestic rather than funerary purposes.

Approximately, 10m to the west of this feature, a number of burnt areas were identified on the opposite side of the trench. The machine was used to expose these, followed by hand cleaning and recording. Although damaged by the trench, the features could be seen as a rectangular straight-sided depression with dimensions of 2m by 1m and 20cm deep. The sides of the features were formed of fired clay and filled with a fine crumbly, charcoal rich soil.

No other artefacts were recovered from the site. The date of the features appears to relate to the Antique period, if both are associated with each other.

This set of discoveries appears to represent a settlement of the Antique period, with features of a domestic nature. Unfortunately, due to the manner of discovery, other more ephemeral features were not observed, but it can be anticipated that further remains lie outside the boundaries of the construction corridor.

Archaeological Finds

No material was recovered.

Dating

A number of similar jar graves and many artifacts were found at different locations along the pipeline route. The feature is typical of sites of the Antique Period.

VII. Discussion

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

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During construction of the BTC and SCP pipelines jar graves of a similar nature were found at KP 194 in Agdash District, KP 204.25 at Amirarkh, KP 233 at Samedabad, KP 234 at Narimankend, KP 237 at Nematabad and KP 241 at Yaldili, Yevlakh District.

Discussion of the Site within a Regional and National Context

The first jar graves ever found in Azerbaijan were those excavated by F. L. Resler in Shusha in 1895. But the systematic study of jar graves began in 1927. Large-scale archaeological excavations were carried out in Lachin (1927), Mugan (1930), Mil Valley (1933), at Sultankend, Ismayilli (1934), Agsu (1960) and Mingachevir (1935-1938; 1941; 1946-1953).

Special Recommendations Regarding the Protection of the Site or Future Research

In case of discovery of any archaeology during construction or any other activity at the site the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, and the local authorities should be immediately notified and actions should be taken to declare the site a closed zone to warrant future archaeological research.

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Figure 1 Machine removing overburden on north side of trench



Figure 2 Features exposed on north side of trench



Figure 3 Storage jar exposed on south side of trench



Figure 4 Storage jar being cleaned by hand