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**Long Report  
Excavations of Shamkirchai Kurgans  
KP 332.7 - BTC ROW**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This Report describes the results of excavations of early Bronze Age kurgans dating to the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium, B.C. The archaeological site is located at KP 332.7, BTC ROW, near Kechili village of the Shamkir District. Situated on the left bank of the River Shamkirchai, the kurgans were conventionally designated as Shamkirchai Kurgans. Two kurgans were excavated. Excavations produced human skeletal remains, pottery ware, metal objects and varied jewellery, including gold beads.

## Table of Contents

<b>I. Introduction</b> .....	3
• <i>Description of the BTC and SCP Archaeology Programme</i>	
• <i>Discovery of the Archaeological Site</i>	
<b>II. Archaeological Contexts for Understanding the Site</b> .....	3
• <i>General Archaeological Overview of this Portion of Azerbaijan</i>	
• <i>General Summary of the Geography and Geology of the Area</i>	
<b>III. Field and Office Methods</b> .....	5
• <i>Field Methods</i>	
• <i>Office/Laboratory Methods</i>	
• <i>Special Analysis</i>	
• <i>Archive Disposition</i>	
<b>IV. Excavation Results</b> .....	6
• <i>Site Description</i>	
• <i>Description of Kurgans and Finds</i>	
<b>V. Analytical Results</b> .....	10
• <i>Interpretation of Excavation Results</i>	
• <i>Dating</i>	
• <i>Discussion and Analysis of the Results of the Work Compared with Other Sites of a Similar Nature on the Pipeline Route</i>	
• <i>Discussion of the Site within a Regional and National Context</i>	
• <i>Recommendations Regarding the Protection of the Site or Future Research</i>	
<b>VI. Illustrations</b> .....	13
<b>VII. Inventory of Artefacts</b> .....	20

## **I. 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 generally were carried out within the 44m wide pipeline corridor from 2001 to 2005. The archaeology program consisted of five phases of which the first four phases constituted field investigations:

Phase I – actual and potential archaeological sites were visually identified during walkover or baseline surveys during the selection of the pipeline route.

Phase II – the sites that were identified during Phase I as archaeologically potential were tested by digging test pits and conducting small-scale trial excavations.

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

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

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 previously known to archaeological science.

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

- ***Discovery of the Archaeological Site***

Prior to pipeline construction the area where the kurgans were located had long been used for farming, and high standing crops during the Phase I survey prevented archaeologists from identifying it as an archaeological site. The site was identified as a burial monument by a watching brief archaeologist following topsoil stripping on the SCP side of the pipelines construction corridor. Excavations at the site took place from July 17 until August 3, 2005 and were lead by Najaf Museyibli, with participation of Yagil Daniyalov and Elnur Gafarov, all from the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan Republic. Work was supervised by the BTC archaeology representatives Chris Polglase, Tom Jameson and Ed Dunn.

## **II. Archaeological Contexts for Understanding the Site**

- ***General Archaeological Overview of this Portion of Azerbaijan***

The Shamkir District where the site is located is part of the western or Ganja-Gazakh region of the Azerbaijan Republic. The favourable natural geographic location and climatic conditions have attracted people to this area since ancient times which accounts for numerous archaeological sites of different historical dates revealed in this region. Intensive life continued in the Ganja-Gazakh area during all historical and archaeological periods beginning from the Stone Age to the late Middle Ages. Hundreds of archaeological sites of different dates have been discovered here. These were Stone Age camps, settlements of early farmers and stock-breeders, settlement sites and burials dating to the Bronze Age, early Iron Age, Antique Period and Middle Ages.

The Stone Age monuments were revealed and studied primarily in the territory of the Agstafa and Gazakh Districts. The best known among these are Damjili, Dashsalahli, Yatag Yeri camps and open sites of the Stone Age date.

The relatively more investigated monuments in the area are early farmers and cattle-breeders' sites dating to the Eneolithic Period (between 6000 and 4000, B.C.). Such sites as Shomutepe, Gargalartepesi and Toyratepe in Agstafa, Babadervish in Gazakh, Goytepe, Mentetjepe and Toyratepe II in Tovuz, Kechili, Rustepesi and Ganlitepe in Shamkir and others could be mentioned as ancient settlement sites. The first Eneolithic monument excavated in the Ganja-Gazakh area was the Shomutepe site. As the artefactual material recovered from this site drastically differed from that of South Caucasian coeval sites, a new Shomutepe archaeological culture was designated which covers the Kura River mid flow basin, the south-east of present-day Georgia and the Ganja-Gazakh region of Azerbaijan.

A number of various archaeological sites dating to different stages of the Bronze Age have been recorded in the Ganja-Gazakh region. A fairly well studied early Bronze Age settlement is the Babadervish site in the Gazakh District. Kurgan type burial sites of this date have been excavated in the Khanlar, Shamkir and Dashkasan Districts and around Ganja. The Gullutepe settlement site in the Agstafa District and burial mounds in Dashkasan, Shamkir and Tovuz could be named as dating to the middle Bronze Age. Of these more fully researched are burial sites. Most of the uncovered sites in the Ganja-Gazakh region are those dating to the late Bronze Age to early Iron Age (between the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium and the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium, B.C.). The monuments of this date in the area relate to the Khojali-Gedabey Culture. They are represented by ancient settlements, kurgans, earth burials and stone coffin graves. The more fully investigated sites of this date in the area are Babadervish IV and Saritepe ancient settlements. In the Gedabey and Dashkasan Districts small fortresses – cyclopean structures have been thoroughly studied. Hundreds of burials have been excavated in the Khanlar, Ganja, Shamkir, Gedabey, Dashkasan and Gazakh Districts.

Settlements and burials from the Antique Period (between the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium, B.C. and the third century, A.D.) have been discovered in the Ganja-Gazakh region. Among these Saritepe settlement in the Gazakh District and Garajamirli settlement in the Shamkir District should be specifically noted. The excavations at these sites provided evidence of a highly developed urban culture way back in the early Antique Period.

The early medieval period (4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries) in the area is represented by settlements, burials and ceremonial structures. Albanian Christian chapels as well as rural and urban settlements of this date have been excavated and studied. These were Christian chapels in the Gazakh and Agstafa Districts and the Torpaggala urban settlement site in the Tovuz District.

Both urban- and rural-type settlements dating to the Middle Ages (9<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century) are known to exist in the Ganja-Gazakh region. Among these such remarkable medieval cities as Ganja and Shamkir should be specifically noted. The excavations conducted at these sites provided evidence that they already developed into large cities during the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries.

- ***General Summary of the Geography and Geology of the Area***

The relief, geographic and geological characteristics of any region condition the economics, material culture and consequently the entire mode of life of people in this area during different periods of history. From this point of view of particular interest is the Ganja-Gazakh region which is divided into three distinctive parts in terms of relief, geography and geology: mountainous, sub mountainous and flat. From the west and south-west the area is locked with high ridges of the Minor Caucasus. The highest peaks in these ridges are the Goshgar Dagi (3378m) and Hinal Dagi

(3373m). The alpine and sub alpine grasslands high in the mountains and foothills of the Minor Caucasus are covered with thick green vegetation even in the hottest summer months which is the major factor in the development of summer animal husbandry. These areas are covered with woods at a height of 500-600m and up to 2200-2300m. Higher up the woodland changes taking the shape of narrow strips of forested land which gradually passes into sub alpine meadows and fields. At a height of 2500m the mountainsides mostly covered with alpine grasslands, sometimes rather scarce, alternate with steep rocks. It is in these mountains that the Kura River right-hand tributaries feed from plentiful water sources and snow-covered mountain peaks. The sub mountain wood and brushwood zones are the natural habitat for wild boar, bear, wolf, badger, jackal, hare and other animals. Of birds the most precious are pheasant and francolin.

The flat and partially foothill zone is located 150-600m above sea level. This zone is characterised by brown and chernozem soils fit for crop growing. At the same time large portions of this zone are semi-desert lands with sagebrush being the major vegetation. At a height of 500-600m the areas covered with sagebrush scrub are replaced with woods. Rapid water rivers running through deep gorges of the Minor Caucasus come out to the flat area and form wide river beds in these places which become even wider closer towards the Kura River. The fairly large rivers in this area are Agstafachai, Hasansu, Tovuzchai, Zayamchai, Shamkirchai and Goshgarchai. In the summer months the water flow in these rivers decreases to the extent that some of them may completely dry up and yield no water to the Kura River.

There are a number of mineral deposits in the region's mountainous areas. Commercially significant of these are a copper mine in Gedabey and an iron ore mine in Dashkasan. Deposits of semiprecious stones such as agate, opal, chalcedony, amethyst, jasper, aragonite and crystal were also discovered in this area. A gold mine and one of the largest obsidian mines in the Caucasus are located in the Kelbajar mountains in the immediate vicinity of Gedabey and Dashkasan.

### **III. Field and Office Methods**

- *Field Methods*

The excavation work was undertaken by the project labour force using shovels, barrows, trowels, brushes and other hand tools. The plans of the kurgans were made and their photographs were taken. The artefacts recovered were washed, recorded in field logbooks, photographed and then boxed and sent off to the IoAE in Baku.

- *Office/Laboratory Methods*

The material from the site was further treated at the relevant department of the IoAE. Photographs of finds were taken and their drawings were made. These were then digitally processed to be incorporated into the illustrative part of this Report.

- *Special Analysis*

The metal objects recovered from the Shamkirchai kurgans were spectrally analysed at the Analytical Centre, Institute of Geology, Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences. The results of this analysis are provided in the relevant section of this Report.

- *Archive Disposition*

The Shamkirchai materials are currently stored in a special archive set up in the IoAE for the finds retained from the BTC and SCP archaeological excavations.

## **IV. Excavation Results**

- *Site Description*

The site was located at KP332.7 on the Shamkirchai river terrace, 600m west of the river bed on a terrace above the flood plain at Pulkovo coordinates 8596356, 4527090. The kurgans detected on arable land, south of Ashagi Kechili village, fell within the SCP side of the pipeline easement. The area had been continuously cultivated well before the commencement of the construction project and consequently, the burials had been heavily truncated. Besides, in connection with site preparation the topsoil within the pipeline easement had been stripped to 20-30cm depth which made it difficult to make precise measurements of the burial mounds. The BTC pipeline had previously been constructed and backfilled with no record of any archaeological features in the area.

Two kurgans were excavated within the pipelines construction corridor. In addition a few sporadic spreads of stones were visible on the stripped surface. However these stone settings, clearly indicating the presence of kurgans underneath, were not excavated because their major portions fell either outside the construction corridor or extended towards the already buried BTC pipeline.

Excavation established that the upper layers of burial mounds consisted of earth, while the lower layers immediately over a burial chamber were constructed of large (30x40x60cm) and medium-sized (20x30x40cm) river-rounded stones. The burial chambers were filled with earth and river-rounded stones. The central heap of stones of Kurgan 2 was encircled by a cromlech-type set of river-rounded stones. The kurgans' stone capping and the cromlech were exposed below 30-60cm thick earth layer.

- *Description of Kurgans and Finds*

### **Kurgan 1**

The kurgan mound consisted of a dense spread of river-rounded stones forming a rectangle. It had an east-west alignment and measured 6m in length by 5m in width. A dog skeleton aligned east to west was uncovered 30cm below the stripped surface in the north-east facing section of this stone spread. The skeleton with the leg bones flexed was laid on its left side. A small broken ceramic jug was found in an upside down position by the skeleton's backbone.

A burial chamber was revealed under a dense concentration of stones in the north-east part of the excavation site. It had been dug into the natural gravelly subsoil down to 120cm below the stripped surface. The grave pit with oval corners had an east-west alignment and was 1.3m by 1.1m in size. The human skeleton in the pit was buried in a flexed position on its left side with the head at the west end. The arms were bent at the elbows and stretched forward. Leg bones of goats or sheep were seen in the area between the skull and the west wall of the burial chamber. The skull rested on a flat river rounded stone. The skeleton appeared to belong to a woman.

A single blue paste bead was found near the elbow of the skeleton. About sixty small beads chipped of white paste were recovered from the neck region. Because of long exposure to humidity in the soil the beads became very fragile and easily crumbled when lifted. Twenty three beads could be recovered. The neck region of the skeleton produced also a metal pin. No other artefacts were contained in this grave.

### **Finds from Kurgan 1**

#### ***Pottery***

1. Small jug-type pot of a brown colour. The broken pot has a pair of moulded decorations on the shoulder. Mouth diameter – 14cm.

### *Metal Objects*

1. Metal pin with a hole pierced slightly below the domed-shaped head. The pin made of a piece of thin round wire is broken on where the hole is.

### *Beads*

Bead with an uneven surface coarsely chipped out of blue paste. Diameter – 8mm.  
23 small beads chipped out of white paste. Maximum diameter – 3mm.

## **Kurgan 2**

Kurgan 2 was located 7m to the west of Kurgan 1. It was marked by a cromlech measuring 13.3m in diameter. The cromlech was constructed of large (30x40x60cm) and medium-sized (10x15x30cm) river-rounded stones and was between 0.8m and 1.6m in width.

In the centre of the area encircled by the cromlech there was a cluster of stones forming the stone capping of the kurgan's principal grave. This group of stones aligned north to south had a roughly oval shape and was 4.2m by 3.9m in size. Another dense concentration of stones covering an area of 90cm by 90cm was seen 1.1m north-east of this central group. There were also layers of stones laid perpendicularly to the cromlech from the north-east, south and west.

All the stones contained in the kurgan mound were exposed after removing the uppermost 30-50cm thick earth layer of the kurgan. Two graves were encountered within the kurgan.

### **Grave 1 of Kurgan 2**

Grave 1 had a mausoleum-type burial chamber dug into the natural gravelly soil at 3.15m depth. It had the shape of a square with 4m sides at the top. The floor of the burial chamber has a different size: 3.5m east-west by 2.8m north-south. There was a dromos-type entrance at the southwest end of the burial chamber. The dromos was slightly slanting and ended 80cm above the chamber floor.

The grave contained a juvenile skeleton. It was exposed in the north-west part of the grave pit. The body was buried on its left side with the head facing north-east. The tibia and femur bones were displaced and their preservation was very poor. Only few fragments of these bones were found. In general, high humidity caused by ground waters had a very negative impact on bone preservation. Heavily decayed, half of the skeleton was disordered and jumbled.

An incomplete, large-volume black jar in situ was uncovered 2m away from the skeletal remains, in the south-east part of the burial chamber. Two broken fragments of a cone-shaped bronze object were found – one against the south wall, the other against the north wall of the grave pit. Gold beads were lifted from the chest and the ground around the skeleton. Two of these were discovered in the area close to the dromos. A total of 10 gold beads were recovered from the grave.

Excavation revealed burnt remains of 15-20cm diameter wood poles vertically set into the ground along the grave pit perimeter. More remains of carbonized tree branches and reed could be found within the burial chamber.



From this evidence gathered it could be deduced that after the human body and grave goods were placed in the grave, the log framework roof supported by poles and covered with tree branches and reed was set on fire, i.e. fire was used as an important attribute of the burial ceremony. No trace of burning was observed on human bones. Only after that the burial chamber was filled with earth and river-rounded stones.

The grave pit material from the uppermost layer down to the bottom of the grave contained occasional pottery sherds. So, the presence of pottery pieces at all levels in the grave fill, the disorderly position of the skeleton and grave goods, and the fact that several of the gold beads were retrieved from the dromos area strongly suggest that this burial was robbed in ancient times.

As noted above, there was a dense group of stones in the area between this grave and the cromlech to the east. These stones were removed and a 25cm deep pit was exposed under them. The pit did not contain skeletal remains, nor did it produce any other cultural material.

## **Finds from Grave 1 of Kurgan 2**

### ***Pottery***

Fragments of a large sand-tempered jug were found in situ on the grave floor. The pieces could be mended into a partially complete pot. The pot has a flat narrow base, globular body, narrow neck with an everted rim getting thinner towards the edge. This handmade pot has an uneven well burnished surface coated with angobe and overpainted in black. The interior is painted in red brown. The pot is poorly fired. The wall thickness decreases down to the base. It ranges from 0.9-1cm on the shoulder to 7mm on the lower part of the body and 4mm on the base.

The jug is richly decorated. All the decoration is applied around the shoulder portion of the pot. The neck is separated from the shoulder by a channel-like groove. Immediately below, there is a row of thumb-dots. Further down encircling the pot, are three parallel wavy lines incised on the shoulder. Running down from the lowermost line, are short oblique strips resembling tree branches. The triangularly-shaped spaces formed by this wave-like pattern are filled with swastikas, one image in each open field. Five swastikas were preserved. The total number of swastikas could not be identified, as the available fragments allowed only the partial reconstruction of the jug.

The pot has two moulded handles at the level of this incised decoration. The 3.5cm wide ribbon-shaped handles have thickened ends at the points of attachment to the pot. Each handle appears to have had a bulgy protrusion on its outer surface close to the upper end. The function of these protrusions cannot be determined. Four parallel vertical lines and a single horizontal line over these lines form a pattern on the neck, immediately above the upper end of each handle. Lavish ornamentation and thin walls of the jug strongly imply that this pot was intended for ceremonial purposes rather than domestic use.

Rim fragment of a jug tempered with coarse sand. This thick-walled pot had a black well polished surface.

Body fragments of grey, thick-walled polished pots. One of these has an applied bulgy lug.

Fragments representing those of two neatly executed thin-walled pots. One of these is a bowl. The body thickness measures 6mm, while the rim thickness measures 3mm. The upper part of the pot is decorated with a lattice pattern made up of horizontal channel-like grooves criss-crossed in places with double vertical lines.

### ***Metal Objects***

50. Ten small beads made of a thin slab of gold. Nine of these are ball-shaped, one has the shape of a kuza-type narrow-necked pot. Diameters range between 4mm and 5mm. Photo 5.

Cone-shaped bronze object consisting of two parts. Length – 9mm, diameter – 3mm. This object is thought to have been some kind of tool used firmly fastened to a wooden handle.

### **Grave 2 of Kurgan 2**

This grave was uncovered under a set of stones joining the kurgan cromlech from the north-east. It had an east-west alignment and measured 1.7m by 1.2m in size. The burial chamber dug into the natural subsoil down to 0.8m depth was lined with 30-50cm wide row of stones. The cromlech stones formed part of this lining at the southwest end of the grave pit.

The skeleton in the grave had been laid in a flexed position on its right side with the head facing the west. Both the skeleton and the accompanying grave goods crushed and cracked under the weight of the overlying layers of river-rounded stones forming the grave cairn. However, they all remained in situ.

Four ceramic vessels were visible against the belly region and knees of the skeleton. A sheep or goat skull was found east of the skeleton's feet. A bronze mirror cracked into small pieces was recovered from behind the skeleton's feet. The area in front of the skeleton produced an oblong obsidian flake and a small dome-shaped lid of a brown colour. A single rectangular flat paste bead, 7 x 7 x 4mm in size, was detected near the skeleton's feet and two more paste beads were noted around the pelvis. At the northeast end of the burial pit there was a large pot. The pot had cracks and contained a bronze object measuring 3.2cm in length.

### **Finds from Grave 2 of Kurgan 2**

#### ***Pottery***

Flat-based, twin-handled jug tempered with fine sand and poorly fired to a black surface. The interior surface is grey brown.

Flat-based, globular-bodied black jug with a narrow, straight, cylindrical neck and flaring rim. The pot has a single semi-circular handle attached to the shoulder. There is a thumbed circular depression on the side of the shoulder opposite this handle. The outer surface is coated with a thin layer of black angobe.

Small, narrow-based, globular-bodied black jug with a cylindrical neck and flaring rim. The pot has a single semi-circular handle attached to the shoulder and a circular depression thumbed on the opposite side of the shoulder. Three channel-like grooves form a pattern around the shoulder. The outer surface is coated with angobe and well polished.

Narrow-based mug-type pot with a cylindrical body and slightly everted rim. The pot is small and has thin (4mm) walls. The interior surface is brown, while the exterior surface is black. The handle attached to the body has a semi-globular shape. There is a bulgy lug-shaped protrusion on the body section opposite to the handle. The entire surface, except for the area close to the base, is decorated with a lattice pattern formed by thin horizontal lines and vertical lines criss-crossing them in places.

Fragments of a small flat-based, twin-handled pot. Mostly consisting of small sherds the vessel form cannot be fully identified.

Small domed-shaped lid of a brown colour. The well smoothed inner surface is spotted with black stains. The whole outer surface is decorated with intricate ornamentation. The entire lid edge is decorated with thumbed dots. Slightly above, a thin line runs around the lid's circumference. Starting from the centre and going down to this solid line are eight double broad lines. The area within each double line is filled with oblique lines, while the areas between the double lines are decorated with dots. The lid has a 3mm diameter central hole and four symmetrically spaced peripheral holes drilled in the dotted areas below the midsection of the lid. Three of the holes are oblique, while one is straight. Lid diameter – 5.7cm, height – 3.2cm.

### ***Metal Objects***

Bronze mirror, covered with a thick layer of rust. Cracked into small pieces. Length – 18cm, width – 16cm, handle length – 4cm, handle width – 2-3cm. The results of its spectral analysis are as follows:

Object	Elements											
	AU	CU	AS	SN	AG	PB	SB	ZN	FE	CO	NI	BI
<b>Bronze Mirror</b>	<b>0,0003</b>	<b>94,36</b>	<b>0,0084</b>	<b>4,03</b>	<b>0,1060</b>	<b>0,42</b>	<b>0,0010</b>	<b>0,1340</b>	<b>0,21</b>	<b>0,0012</b>	<b>0,182</b>	<b>0,0006</b>

Bronze object recovered from within the pot is made of a piece of wire with a rectangular cross section. One side is heavily corroded. The other end is sharp. Size: 3.2 x 3 x 4mm.

### ***Beads***

Flat rectangular paste bead with well polished surfaces. The bead has four small circles with a dot in their centres. The diameter of the circles is 3mm. There is a through hole pierced diagonally corner to corner from the lateral side of the bead. Suspended by the thread running through these holes the bead would have taken a rhombic shape. Width – 7mm, thickness 4mm.

## **V. Analytical Results**

- ***Interpretation of Excavation Results***

### **Structure of kurgans**

Excavation on the SCP side of the pipelines construction corridor exposed only peripheral portions of kurgans, though these were densely spaced in the area under question. The excavated burial under Kurgan 1 is unlikely to be the central grave of the kurgan. It was very hard to distinguish between the stones overlying the grave pit from those forming the rest of the kurgan's stone cover. This simple-structured burial did not yield rich cultural material. It is interesting to note that no pottery was recovered from this grave, except for the remains of a single vessel retrieved from the kurgan mound.

Only Kurgan 2 fell completely within the pipeline easement. Excavation established that this kurgan had a very peculiar structure. It had a large mausoleum-type burial chamber surrounded by a cromlech. Several spreads of stones joined the cromlech from various directions. These stones were removed and another burial chamber was uncovered beneath one of these stone settings. Such stone arrangements could be related either to the burial practices or designed to distract robbers' attention. In spite of this, the central grave underwent a robbery shortly after the burial. It was robbed by people who were aware of the grave contents and the status of the person buried. It appears that the robbers used the dromos to enter the burial chamber. Adding proof to this view are several gold beads found in front of the dromos.

Grave 2 adjacent to the cromlech from the north-east was found undisturbed when unearthed. However, all the artefacts were badly damaged because of the weight of the overlying stone cover. The top and sides of the burial chamber were constructed of river-rounded stones. The group of stones between the central grave and the cromlech, and Grave 2 appear to have been deliberately constructed along a single straight line.

### **Archaeological Material**

As stated above, Kurgan 1 burial chamber did not produce pottery ware. The shape and fabric of a small jug found near the dog skeleton within the kurgan mound appear to represent archaic pottery-making traditions.

The central burial chamber (Grave 1) under Kurgan 2 retained fragments of only one ceramic pot after robbery. This pot is richly decorated.

The lateral burial chamber (Grave 2) under Kurgan 2 produced large quantities of pottery. Only one of the pots recovered from this grave has a polished surface. All of the pots have semi-globular handles. Decoration patterns consist of networks of differently directed applied incised lines. The side opposite the handle has either a hollow or a lug-shaped protrusion.

The kurgans produced a sufficient amount of metal objects typical of the early Bronze Age. Of these, gold beads found in the central burial chamber of Kurgan 2 must be specifically noted. These beads, in general, could be considered a rare find for the early Bronze Age of the South Caucasus.

The bronze ware recovered from the site includes domestic items, implements and weaponry. This group of finds can be exemplified by a wedge-shaped tool and a cone-shaped double-ended object found in the central burial chamber of Kurgan 2. The bronze mirror retrieved from Grave 2 of Kurgan 2 is also a rare find for the Kura-Araz Culture.

The beads are varied and the majority of these are chipped out of white paste. One bead is relatively large and has circular decorations incised on its surface.

As is obvious, excavations of Shamkirchai Kurgan 1 and Kurgan 2 resulted in the discovery of rare and rich cultural material typical of the Kura-Araz Culture.

- ***Dating***

The date of Shamkirchai Kurgans 1 and 2 was determined based on the structure of the graves and archaeological evidence recovered from the site. As noted above, the excavated common-type earth grave in Kurgan 1 was not likely to be the kurgan's central burial chamber, therefore could not be reasonably accepted as good evidence for the date and chronological range of the kurgan site.

Kurgan 2 was fully excavated and the study of the structure of this kurgan made it possible to draw some general conclusions regarding appropriate dating. The central grave with the surrounding cromlech was the core element of the kurgan structure. The mausoleum-type central burial chamber was noteworthy for its large size. Such large circular graves began to appear during the Kura-Araz Culture period and were intended for burying one (mausoleum) or several (vault) human bodies. The Kurgan 2 central burial chamber is very characteristic of the Kura-Araz Culture.

The pottery from the site, particularly those with semi-globular handles are characteristic of the early Bronze Age Kura-Araz Culture. Such pots had been known from excavations at both Kura-Araz Culture settlements and burial sites.

The central burial chamber of Kurgan 2 and the pottery ware in general are typical of the final stage of the Kura-Araz Culture. Therefore, Shamkirchai Kurgans 1 and 2 can be dated to the final stage of the early Bronze Age period, i. e. mid-3<sup>rd</sup> millennium, B.C.

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

The only site within the pipeline route that could be compared to Shamkirchai Kurgans 1 and 2 both in terms of date and archaeological material is Shamkirchai Kurgan 3 excavated at KP333 of the BTC ROW. Like Shamkirchai Kurgans 1 and 2 this kurgan is also a Kura-Araz Culture burial site. Pottery wares from both burial sites are completely identical. The only difference is that the central burial chamber of Kurgan 2 is dug into the natural subsoil, while that of Kurgan 3 is constructed on the natural ground surface.

- ***Discussion of the Site within a Regional and National Context***

The primary sources for the study of the early Bronze Age Kura-Araz Culture were settlement sites. Burial sites of this Culture have been investigated to a somewhat lesser degree. The majority of Kura-Araz Culture kurgan sites in the South Caucasus have been excavated in the Kura River mid flow basin. The main distinguishing feature of these kurgans is that they all have a large circular or rectangular vault-type burial chamber. All these burial chambers could be said to have dromoses. Except for occasional instances, all of the burial chambers contained charred wood remnants.

As is obvious from the above given descriptions, the Shamkirchai kurgans, especially Kurgan 2 is identical to the Kura-Araz Culture kurgans in terms of structure and arrangement. The discovery of remains of burnt wood in the Kurgan 2 central burial chamber implies that like in other kurgans fire in this kurgan was used as an important attribute of the burial ceremony.

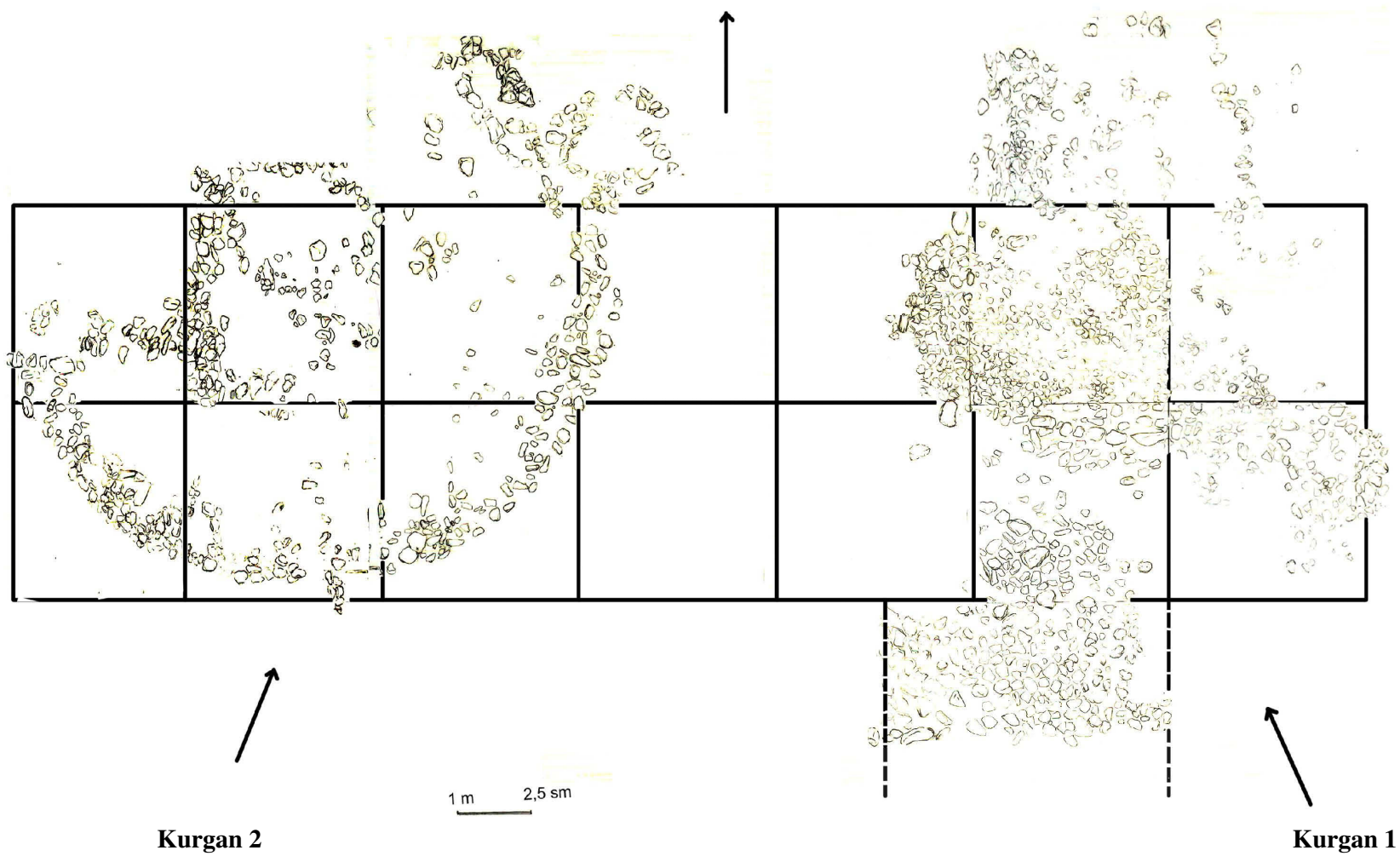
The cultural material from the Shamkirchai kurgans is analogous to that found in other coeval kurgans of early Bronze Age date. First and foremost this identity manifests itself through the characteristic features of the pottery ware, particularly the pottery from Kurgan 2. Grave 2 of this kurgan has great affinities within almost all the assemblages of pottery excavated at other coeval sites of the region.

- ***Recommendations Regarding the Protection of the Site or Future Research***

As stated above, the stone covers of the Shamkirchai kurgans are located below 50cm thick earth layer. The kurgans' earth mounds are no longer present because of resurfacing and ploughing of land for agricultural purposes. Time constraints imposed by the pipelines construction schedule did not allow the majority of kurgans to be excavated and studied. Therefore, taking into account the possibility of future excavations, the site should be treated as archaeologically sensitive and actions be taken to prevent construction or any other activity that would involve large-scale earthworks.



## VI. Illustrations



**Figure 1**  
KP332 Shamkirchai Plan of the Excavation Site





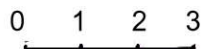
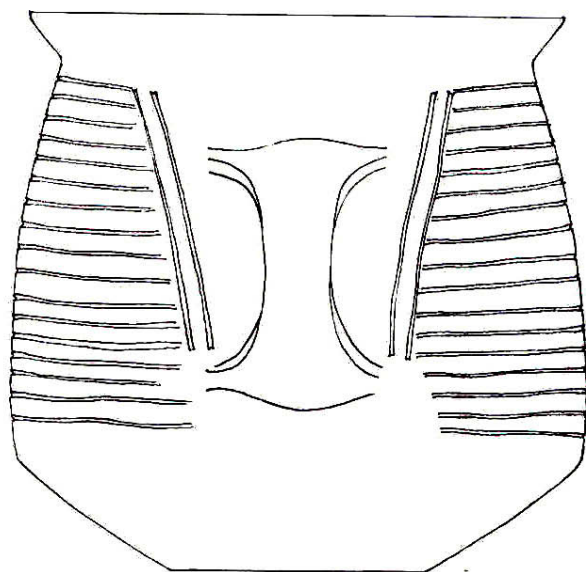
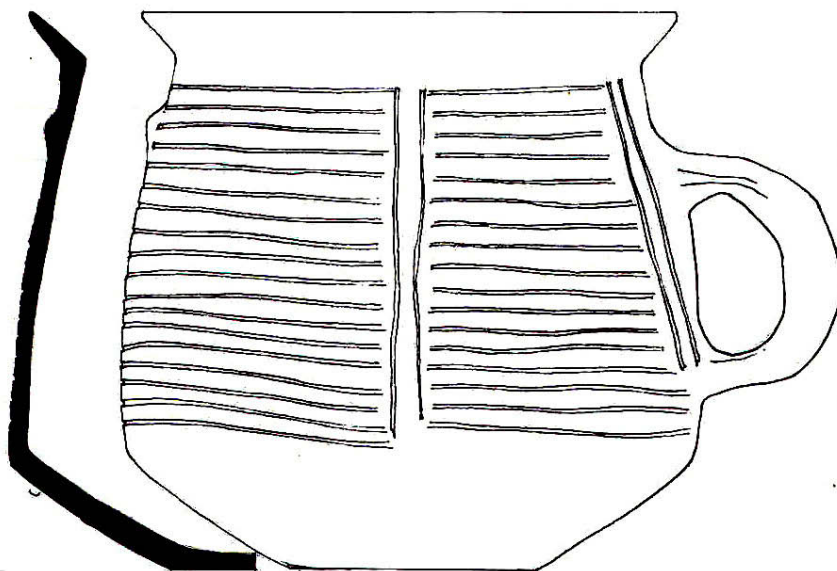
**Photo 1.** KP332 Shamkirchai Kurgan 1 Stone capping



**Photo 2.** KP332 Shamkirchai Kurgan 2 Stone capping and cromlech

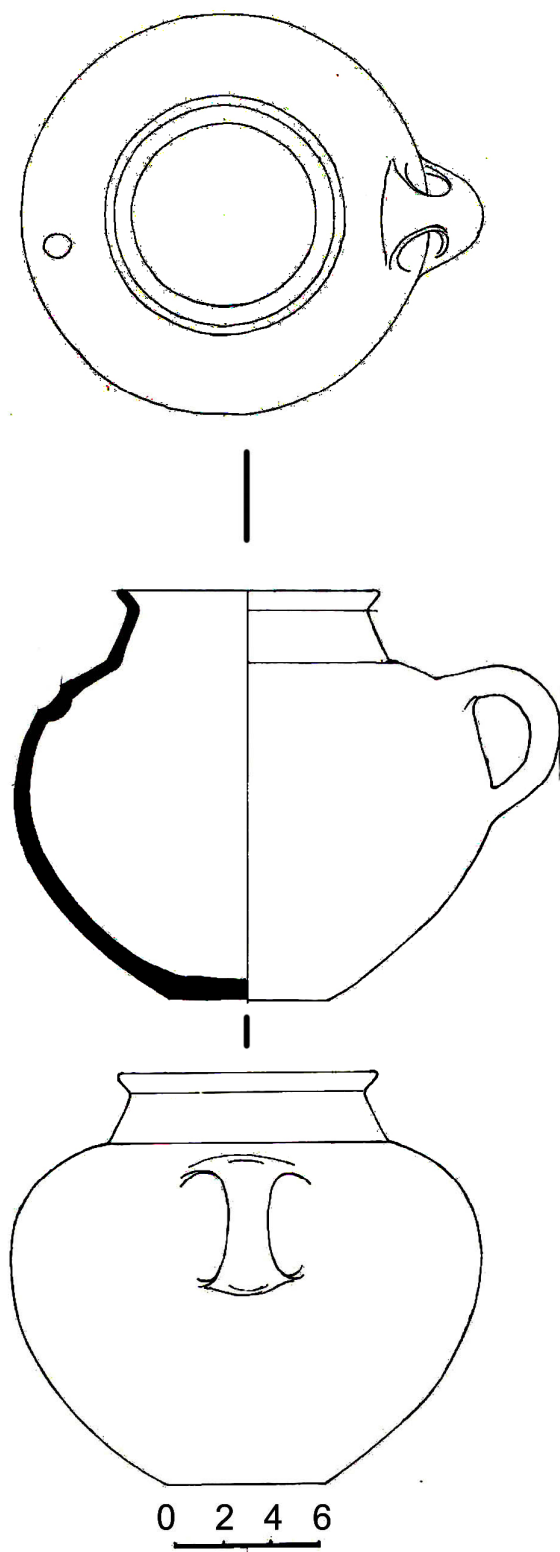


Plate 1



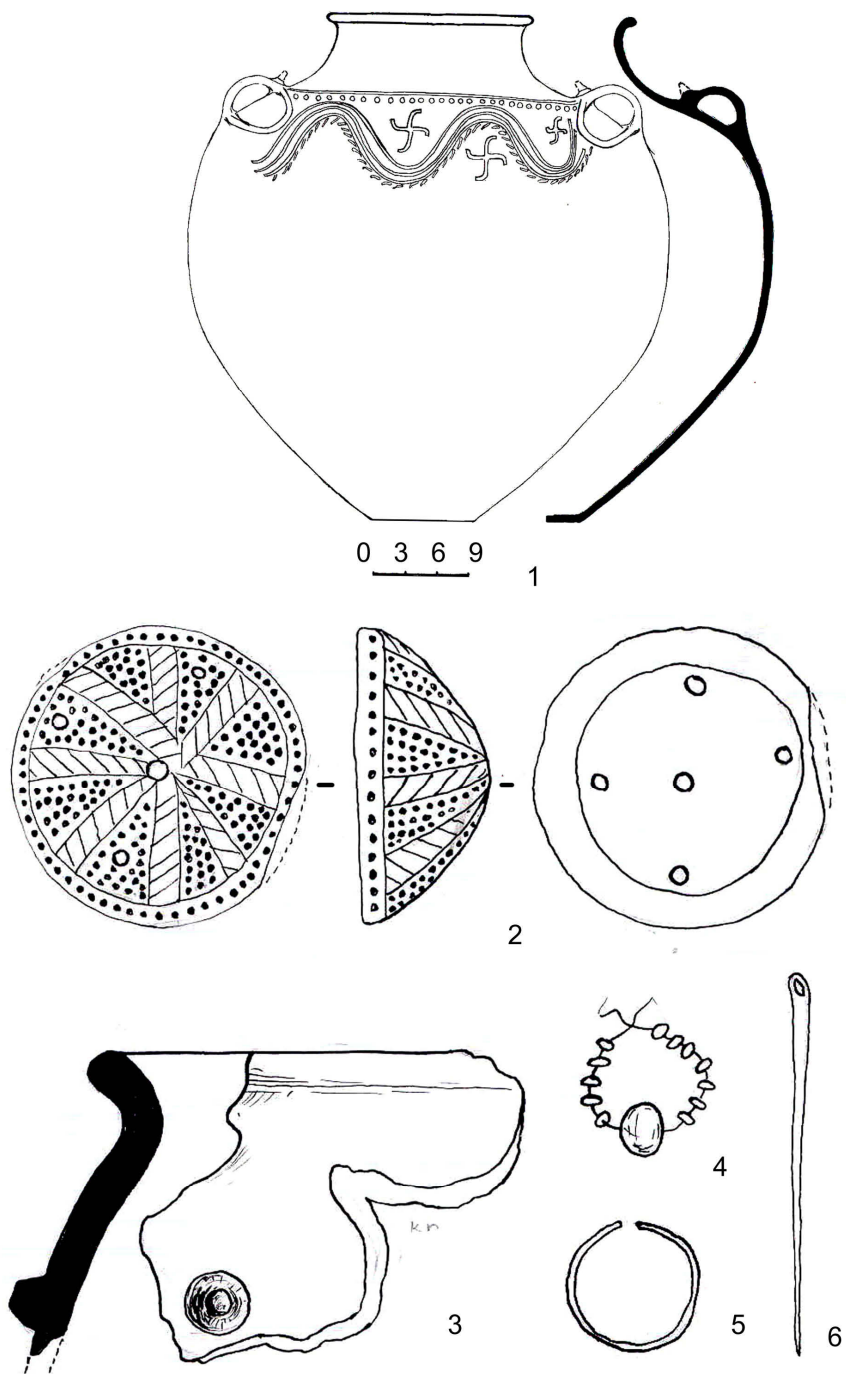
KP332 Shamkirchai Kurgan 2 Grave 2 – Pottery vessel

Plate 2



KP332 Shamkirchai Kurgan 2 Grave 2 – Pottery vessel

Plate 3



1. Ceramic vessel (Kurgan 2)
2. Ceramic vessel (Kurgan 2)
3. Ceramic vessel (Kurgan 1)
4. Beads (Kurgan 1)
5. Bronze earring (Kurgan 1)
6. Bronze needle (Kurgan 1)



**Photo 3.** KP332 Shamkirchai Kurgan 2 Ceramic vessel



**Photo 4.** KP332 Shamkirchai Kurgan 2 Ceramic vessel





**Photo 5.** KP332 Shamkirchai Kurgan 2 Gold beads Inv 50

## VII. Inventory of Artefacts

	<b>KP</b>	<b>Type of Site</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Find</b>	<b>Qty.</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	3	found in the upper layer
2	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	found in the upper layer
3	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	found in the upper layer
4	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	found in the upper layer
5	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	found in the upper layer
6	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
7	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
8	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
9	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
10	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
11	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
12	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
13	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
14	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
15	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
16	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
17	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
18	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
19	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
20	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
21	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
22	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
23	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
24	332.7	Kurgan	obsidian	cutting tool	1	found in the upper layer
25	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	4	
26	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
27	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
28	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
29	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
30	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
31	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
32	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
33	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
34	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
35	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
36	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
37	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
38	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
39	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
40	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
41	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	

42	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
43	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
44	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
45	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	jug	1	burial chamber 2
46	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	10	
47	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	pottery fragment	1	
48	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	dopu	1	
49	332.7	Kurgan	ceramic	dopu		
50	332.7	Kurgan 2 Grave 1	gold	bead	10	rare find for the period in question