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Chaparli Report
On Excavations of Late Antique and Early Medieval Period Chapel, Settlement and Burial Site At Kilometre Points 335/336 of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and South Caucasus pipelines Right Of Way

Baku - Azerbaijan
2008

ABSTRACT

The Report describes excavations of an archaeological site discovered near Chaparli, Shamkir District, at Kilometre Points (KP) 335/336 of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Right Of Way (ROW). Excavations revealed remains of a rectangular building, occupation debris and 80 human burials. The excavator interpreted these as an Albanian Christian Chapel, stone carving workshop, storage pit and metal-melt kiln and Christian graves. Artefacts recovered from the site include pottery ware, stone and metal objects. Based on the study of features and artefacts the site was identified as having contained several periods of occupation ranging from late Antiquity to the early middle Ages.

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I. Introduction

- ***Description of the BTC and SCP Archaeology Programme***

Archaeological excavations in connection with the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and South Caucasus Pipeline (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 programme 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 Site***

The site at Chaparli was not identified as a potential archaeological site during Phase I or Phase II, because the area had been continuously used as arable land and had standing crops at the time of baseline surveys. Moreover, there were no visible surface indicators or markers to attract attention. The site was discovered by a watching brief archaeologist monitoring topsoil stripping on the SCP side of the pipeline easement. All construction work was immediately suspended in order to prevent further damage to the site and actions were taken to enable archaeological excavations to take place.
Work at the site was initiated on 3rd August 2005. Excavations revealed a few small pottery sherds in the upper subsoil layers of the site. However no substantial evidence pointing to the presence of a cultural layer could be found. A new survey was conducted in the easternmost portion of the site where trenching was underway. This resulted in the discovery of pottery pieces and human bones scattered in the trench and the spoil heap next to it at KP 335.9 (Photos 1-3).
Visual examination of the spoil heap suggested that there might have been some structure constructed of large lime stones. The discovery of a padstone in close proximity to these stones provided additional proof to the existence of underlying structures on this spot (Photo 4). Trenching was temporarily halted and archaeological excavations resumed in the easternmost part of the site. Work was conducted under the guidance of Safar Ashurov and with participation of Muzaffar Huseynov, Ahliman Abdurrahmanov, Farhad Guliyev, Fuad Huseynov, Viktor Kvachidze and Anar Agalarzade, all from the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography (IOAE), Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, and supervised by the BTC archaeological representative Richard Moore.

II. Archaeological Contexts for Understanding the Site

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

The Shamkir District where the late Antique to early medieval Chaparli site is located lies in the western or Ganja-Gazakh geographical zone of the Azerbaijan Republic. The favourable natural and climatic conditions have attracted people to this area since ancient times. Damjili and Dashsalahli camps of middle Paleolithic date were revealed and studied in the territory of the Gazakh District to the west of Shamkir.

The transition of nomadic hunter-gatherers to a sedentary life-style enhanced the colonization processes in the area and brought about the emergence of a number of cattle-breeders' settlement sites dating to the Eneolithic Period. Excavations of such sites as Babadervish in the Gazakh District, Shomutepe, Gargalartepesi and Toyratepe in the Agstafa District, Goytepe, Mentejtepe and Toyratepe II in the Tovuz District, Kechili, Rustepesi and Ganlitepe in the Shamkir District dating to the 6th to 4th millennium, B.C. greatly contributed to the study of the late Eneolithic in this portion of Azerbaijan.

The Bronze Age is the more explored period in the history of the western region of Azerbaijan. A number of settlement and burial sites of this date have been investigated in the region. The Babadervish site in the Gazakh District was reasonably well studied by G. S. Ismayilzade. The site produced rich archaeological material of the Kura-Araz Culture. Burial sites of Bronze Age date have been excavated in the Khanlar, Shamkir and Dashkasan Districts and around Ganja city. Most of the sites in the Ganja-Gazakh region are those dating to the late Bronze Age to early Iron Age. The monuments of this date in the area relate to the Khojali-Gedabey Culture. The more fully investigated sites of this date in the area are Babadervish IV and Saritepe settlements. The late Bronze to early Iron Age is the period of intensive development of normadic transhumance in Azerbaijan. This faciliated the emergence of fortresses, fortifications and cyclopean structures which were meant to provide protection against both internal and external hazards. The Gedabey and Dashkasan Districts have quite a number of such structures.

Settlements and burials from the Antique Period (between the mid-1st millenium, B.C. and the 3rd century, A.D.) have been discovered in the Ganja-Gazakh region. Of these Saritepe settlement in the Gazakh District and Garajamirli settlement in the Shamkir District should be specifically noted.

The early Middle Ages (4th to 3rd century) in the area are represented by settlements, burials and religious facilities. 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. The excavations carried out at the late Antique to early medieval Chaparli site are thus far the largest-scale excavations in the area.

Both urban- and rural-type settlement sites dating to the Middle Ages (9th to 18th century) are known to exist in the Ganja-Gazakh region. Among these, such remarkable medieval cities as Ganja and Shamkir should be specifically noted. Excavations conducted at these sites provided evidence that they already developed into large cities during the 8th to 9th centuries. The city of Ganja stood out among other cities in the area for the high degree of development and even became the capital of the Saddadi and Atabey State.

- ***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 characteristed 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 to clean and expose features as they were located. The upper layers of the site were significantly damaged by continuous ploughing in the past. Furthermore, the 20cm thick uppermost layer had been removed during topsoil stripping. Because of this and the impact of natural processes the upper layers were hard to dig.

The stratification of cultural layers was based on vertical profiling of excavation trenches. All the features exposed and artefacts recovered in the course of excavations were photographed, illustrated and recorded in site plans and field logbooks with indications of their specific features and the depths of the deposits. To protect the exposed human skeletal remains the excavation site was covered by a plastic sheet at the end of each working day.

All archaeological finds were field sorted and washed by IoAE staff to identify diagnostic material which was then boxed and sent off to the BTC Agstafa Guest House and from there to the IoAE in Baku. The human skeletons were also cleaned of soil and retained for anthropological analysis. The remainder of the material as providing no new archaeological data was discarded by being buried at site.

- ***Office/Laboratory Methods***

The finds recovered from the site were further processed at the BTC Agstafa Guest House and then at the relevant department of the IoAE. The finds were accordingly treated and the work on the excavation site plans and logbook records was finalized. Photographs of artefacts were taken and drawings were made where relevant. To properly date the site the results of the excavations were systematized and compared with those obtained at similar sites. This Report reflects the results of the implemented work.

- ***Archive Disposition***

All the stones forming the foundation of the rectangular building were handed over to the Museum of History and Local Studies in Shamkir. Currently plans are being prepared for the open-air display of the original layout of the building in Shamkir museum. The remaining objects are stored in boxes in the IoAE special archive set up for the storage of finds discovered on the BTC and SCP ROW. The boxes are numbered and labelled with indications of the site name, year of excavation and inventory number of the find.

IV. Excavation Results

- ***Site Description***

The site is located at Chaparli village, Shamkir District, KP 335/336, BTC ROW, at Pulkovo coordinates 8593132, 4527934 at a height of 250m above sea level. The site is used by the local population as a transhumant over-wintering ground. The land in the area had long been cultivated for growing crops and therefore no surface markers of the monument survived. Only occasional spreads of pottery pieces could be seen throughout the entire area of the site. These might have been brought to the surface by deep ploughing or during laying irrigation canals. Part of the monument had been badly damaged by the BTC construction. Because of completely flat ground it was impossible to determine the boundaries of the archaeological site. The land in the area is black soil; however the underlying soil strata are clayey and unfit for crop growing. The major portion of the monument fell within the northern part of the pipeline construction corridor. No archaeological evidence was observed during construction of the BTC pipeline in the previous year, although concentrations of medieval pottery had been recorded in the general vicinity.

- ***Description of Cultural Horizons***

The area selected for excavation was a 4m wide strip of land along the SCP pipe centreline. The site was divided into trenches of 5 by 4m aligned west to east (Photo 7). Burials began to be exposed at 30-35cm depth. They were all aligned east to west. The skeletons in the graves lay stretched in supine position with their arms folded across the chest or groin area and the heads facing west. In several graves the heads had a slightly different orientation.

Five cultural layers could be traced across the site:

1. The lowermost layer contained evidence of Antique Period use of the site including jar burials and domestic activity including iron working in a hearth. The evidence for this phase of use was disturbed by later activity.

2. There is a group of burials that appear to be earlier than the others and have strong indications of Christian burial practise.

3. The overlying layer contained debris of a structure constructed of large slabs of white limestone and was tentatively interpreted as an early Christian Albanian Chapel

4. The next layer, fourth from the bottom, provided evidence that the site was reused as a burial ground following the collapse of the Chapel

5. Finally, the uppermost layer produced remains of a stucture built of river-washed stones.

Phase 1 Antique Period
Excavations below the hearth on the right-hand side of the Chapel doorway revealed a pit that had been used for dumping domestic rubbish. The pit appeared to be a natural depression that looked

like a wide river bed extending along the entire width of the excavation trench. Most probably, the Chapel was erected upon a spot somewhat elevated above the surrounding plain. Adding proof to this statement was the difference in the thickness of the stone foundation walls. However, the rubbish pit in front of the Chapel doorway was of an earlier date, because the pit area was levelled and later a hearth associated with the Chapel was built on this spot.

The pit contents included broken parts of late Antique period pottery and fragments of stone tools (Photo 12). Of these particularly noteworthy was a bowl-type pot, resembling bowls commonly referred to in scientific literature as Ahamani-type pots.

The remains of two large jars were exposed at 60cm depth in the west part of the Chapel. The jars tempered with coarse sand and grit had thick walls and short necks. The rims have wide flanges, the bases were slightly slanting. Both jars were found with their mouths facing east. Several skeletons were recorded in the area between the jar remains. Two skeletons were exposed right in between the jars. The deceased were buried with the heads directed towards the south-west. The skull of one skeleton was found adjacent to the feet of the second. It is interesting to note that the second skeleton lacked its skull and some other parts and the remaining bones were somewhat disordered and jumbled. The third skeleton's feet bones were uncovered close to the skull of the first skeleton. The fourth skeleton was excavated slightly west of the jar remains. Except for the second dissociated skeleton, the position, depth and alignment of all the other skeletons were the same. The jars together with the skeletal material were interpreted as jar burials widespread in the Antique Period Caucasian Albania (Photo 13). However, these graves were damaged, the skeletons jumbled and the grave goods robbed by the insertion of later Christian burials during the early middle Ages. The jar burials are older than the Chapel and the Christian cemetery over it.

A layer of burnt soil, roughly circular in shape, was detected at a depth of 80cm on and slightly west of the spot where the large jars were exposed. However, it was clear from the very beginning that this highly heat-affected ground could not be interpreted as the remains of an ordinary hearth or fire. A large broken fragment of a quern was seen on one side of the fire-affected area. The fragment did not appear to be associated with the burnt ground. Further excavation established that the spot had been a bow-shaped metal-melt kiln (Plan 2a). Because the walls were heavily affected by fire it was not possible to establish whether this was a mud brick construction (Photo 14).

The kiln walls were 20-25cm thick, the width of the inner kiln section being 60cm. The kiln section was slightly oval and consisted of two layers with a heavily burnt white interlayer. Traces of four post holes aligned east to west were clearly seen in the burnt interlayer. The front and west sides of the kiln were heavily heat-affected. There were three cavities about 50cm west of the kiln. These were 5-7cm in diameter and 15-20cm deep and were aligned north to south about 30cm apart from one another. The cavities were full of heavily corroded metal remains and appeared to represent some sort of mould for casting metal. The metal-melt kiln was coeval with the rubbish pit uncovered in the area in front of the Chapel.

A radio carbon was taken from charcoal associated with the kiln was dated to Cal BC 40 to Cal AD 120 (Beta 232331).

Phase 2 Burials

All the uncovered graves were identical in terms of shape and skelelon position. All the graves had the shape of an oval-cornered rectangle with a relatively narrow burial chamber dug in their central part. In all burials the skulls were on a higher level than the rest of the skeleton. Most graves contained a single skeleton (Photo 5). However a collective burial was recorded in Trench 3. The grave pit dug out in the form of a cross had four skeletons – one at each point of the cross (Plan 1a). The skeletons found at the east and west points of the cross were relatively deep and were those of adults. The skeleton at the south point was that of a juvenile and the one at the north point was a child skeleton (Photo 6). It was assumed that this cross-shaped feature was a family burial ground. Besides, the nature of the backfilled soil showed the grave pits here had been dug simultaneuosly.

As a whole, the graves unearthed in the upper soil layers were those of children. The number of these was small. Adult graves were exposed at relatively low depths and this did not seem to be accidental. Presumably, the difference in grave depth was conditioned by burial practices employed. It is interesting to note that even now in some regions of Azerbaijan children are buried in shallow graves, while women are interred in deep-dug graves.
Except for a single child's grave, none of the remaining graves at the site contained grave goods. This child's burial was uncovered within structural remains and produced beads and bronze jewellery.

Phase 3 Possible Christian Chapel
Remains of structures began to be first seen in Trench IV. Further digging showed there were two structures – one over the other. A narrow wall was seen stretching east to west in the uppermost layer. The wall built of a layer of river-washed stones was apptoximately 2.5m long by 40-45cm wide. There was another wall on the west side of this wall angularly extending beyond the confines of the excavation trench. The whole feature looked like the debris of a rectangularly-shaped structure. Two white limestones were found in the space between the walls. Both had engraved decorations and appeared to be architectural elements of the underlying structure. Further digging revealed the remains of a second structure which greatly differed from the first in shape and construction. To fully expose this second feature the excavation trench was extended to the north and south (Photo 8).
The remains of the structure exposed in Trench VI and partly falling within Trench VII covered an area of 5m by 5m. The structure was built of large blocks of limestone. Only portions of the foundations of the eastern, southern and northern walls survived here. The sourthern and northern walls had two layers of stones and measured 1.5m in width. The eastern wall with a 1.3m wide doorway in the central part had one layer of thick stones and was 1.6m wide. The slab stones – two on either side of the doorway were relatively large and wide and each had a carved rectangular cavity measuring 10cm x 10cm x10cm in size.. A padstone found against the doorway inside the structure pointed to a possible use of these cavities as post holes (Photo 9). All stones were worked, the stones of the western wall were more thoroughly chipped.
The remains of hearths were cleared out within and around the structure. Two of these were exposed on the left and right side of the doorway outside the structure. The right-hand hearth was relatively large, approximately 1.5m in diameter. Both hearths yielded Antique Period pottery pieces. All the sherds were heat-affected and heavily sooted. The presence of a thick layer of ash in the hearth suggested it had been used over a long period of time. These hearths are believed to be contemporary with the structure
Pieces of pottery came also from the fireplaces cleaned inside the structure. These appeared to represent large pots. The hearth cleared out in the centre of the structural remains was banded with a bow-shaped set of stones.
A stone with a cross carved in deep relief was recovered outside the eastern wall of the Chapel. Another stone with an engraved cross image was found near it. This stone was smaller than the first one and in addition to the cross had also cavities engraved on its surface. It was these finds and other carved stones recovered from the site that allowed these structural remains to be interpreted as the ruins of an early Christian Albanian Chapel.
A layer of white limestone chips was exposed in Trenches VII and VIII. This layer covered a large area and extended beyond the boundary of the excavation site. Presumably, this was an area where limestone was chipped and polished before being used in the Chapel construction. In other words, this could have been a stone working area. Nine post holes were recorded to the west of this quarry . They were 20-30cm in diameter and aligned along the southern and northern boundaries of the excavation site. There was another post hole in the central part of the eastern periphery of the excavation site. The post holes arrangement looked like the poles were used for the construction of the eastern, southern and northern sides of some structure with the west facing side left open. Spreads of limestone chips were noted in places in this area which might have possibly been a workshop with a lightweight shed roof where finer carving work was performed.

To the west of the workshop, at the balk of Trench IX and Trench X the remains of an old water ditch were exposed. This deep-dug water canal, aligned north to south, was thought to be coeval with the Chapel (Photo 11).

Phase 4 Burials

Several graves were uncovered in the course of excavation and cleaning of these structural remains. Some of these had been placed right on the slab stones. These indicate that the site was reused as a burial ground after the collapse of the structure (Photo 10).

One of these graves overlying the structure had a radiocarbon date of Cal AD 890 to Cal AD 1030 (Beta 232331).

On the whole, cultural layers dating to different historical periods have been exposed and cleaned. Only one of these layers was preserved – the one that contained Christian burials. The other layers were seriously damaged namely because of the Christian burials cut through them later (Photo 15).

- ***Description of Finds***

The artefacts recovered from the site include pottery, metal objects, stone tools and beads. Pottery ware makes up a significant portion of the finds assemblage and is largely represented by small shards of pots of early medieval date. Some pottery pieces could be mended into complete pots and these are illustrated in the relevant section of this Report.

Pottery

The great majority of pottery ware is made of high quality clay. The large storage jars are tempered with coarse sand and sometimes with grit. Small bowls and all decorated pots are made of well-kneaded fine-sand tempered clay and well fired.

Coarsely handmade clay crucible recovered from the rubbish pit. The rim shaped like that of a piyala (bowl) has a narrow groove on one side. Heavily sooted (Photo 16; Plate 3.8). Spindle whorl with perforation in the centre. One surface is flat; the other is cone-shaped. Diameter – 2.5cm. The object was recovered from the rubbish pit (Photo 16; Plate 2.3). Yellowish-grey jug-type pot with a globular body, short wide neck and flat base. Two wide loop-handles connect the upper part of the body and the flaring rim. Each handle has two parallel wide grooves decorated with spike-shaped notches (Plate 1). The jug is coated with colourless angobe with various decoration elements over painted in orange. The lower part of the neck is girded with a single brush-painted strip. Short, ray-shaped lines, some with rounded ends, extend downwards from this strip. The body is banded with two parallel lines. The space between the lines is decorated with overlapping triangles that form one continuous zigzag pattern around the mid section of the pot. On the whole, this is a fairly common type of pot decoration (Photo 17, 18).

Narrow-necked bardag-type pots make up a significant portion of the pottery assemblage. These as a rule are made of untempered clay. They have globular bodies, flat bases and short narrow necks (Photo 19; Plate 3.1). All of the bardag-type pots are coated with colourless angobe, presumably, for smoothing their porous uneven surfaces. Each has a single handle attached to the rim and upper part of the body. The majority of such pots have loop-handles. However, the bardags decorated with patterns applied in orange paint have more elaborate handles. Common types of bardags are decorated with short slanting lines applied vertically to the lower part of the necks by polishing (Photo 20).

Bardag-type pot with a wide ribbon-shaped handle connected to the incurving rim and upper part of the body. Two deep vertical grooves are incised on the handle. Straight lines painted in orange run parallel between and outside the grooves. The lower part of the neck is banded with a single painted strip. Evenly spaced short lines, some with rounded ends, extend downwards from this strip. The body is encircled with two painted parallel lines below the lower end of the handle. The area between the lines is filled with triangularly-shaped geometric patterns. Extending perpendicularly downward from the lower line are short, ray-shaped lines.

This type of handles and decoration motives is not uncommon for the pottery ware from the site. It is thought the pots with decorated handles were mostly used as kitchenware (Photo 21), whereas common loop-handled ones were largely typical of domestic pottery.

In general, the site yielded a large variety of pot handles. Wide ribbon-shaped handles predominate and their decorative elements include notches, incisions, and spike-shaped patterns. The vast majority have geometric patterns applied in black or brown paint.

As distinct from ribbon-shaped handles, loop-handles are commonly plain in decorative style. Only one handle has horizontal thumbed lines (Plate 6.1-7).

Other forms include plain ribbon-shaped handles, wide lug handles and handles in the form of a perforated rectangular jut. Several pottery fragments represent pots with cylindrical tubular juts. These pots are made of high quality clay (Plate 5.5).

Lug handles with flat and wide surfaces are more rarely encountered. Such handles were usually attached to the bodies of relatively heavy and large-volume jars. One of the handles recovered from the site is decorated with zigzag-shaped notched lines (Photo 21).

Large-volume jars tempered with coarse sand and more rarely with grit are usually well fired. These oval-bodied pots have relatively narrow bases which might be taken to indicate the pots were intended to be buried in special pits dug into the ground. Such pots often lack handles. They all have wide-flanged everted rims, presumably, serving as a replacement for regular handles (Photo 22).

One of such storage jars is worthy of attention because of its peculiar rim ornamentation. The flat rim surface is decorated with equally spaced oval-cornered rectangular depressions applied by stamping. Within each depression there is a symbol of a cross. Stamped decorations are typical of early medieval pottery of Azerbaijan. However, at the Chaparli site only one such jar was found (Photo 23).

A portion of the pottery assemblage is represented by dopu-type pots. These have small globular bodies, flat bases, narrow mouths and single loop handles.

The majority of vessels are represented by angobe coated bowls tempered with fine sand and well fired to a yellowish-orange surface. The bowls have wide flat and rarely oval-shaped bases (Plate 2.1-2; Plate 3.3, 3.7). They differ in body and rim shapes. Most have oval bodies and incurving rims. Others have angled bodies, often with straight rims. One bowl-type pot has a flat, slightly everted rim; another one has a narrow base, tall body and relatively incurving rim.

A group of bowls is worth special mention. These are made of untempered clay and have concave bases. They all have shouldered bodies and wide mouths. Bowls of this type are commonly referred to in scientific literature as Ahamani-type pots. These pots first came into use before our era, but were also widespread during the late Antique and early medieval Period (Plate 3.5-6).

Pots decorated using various techniques are the most frequently encountered. Combed decoration applied with a special toothed tool is characteristic of coarse sand-tempered pots made in a plain style. The pots incised with parallel lines, straight or wavy, are also coarse and plain in style. Painted ceramic ware makes up a significant portion of the pottery assemblage. The paints used are black, brown, reddish and yellowish, to name a few. The predominant patterns are geometric motives consisting of angles, ray-shaped lines and nets (Plate 4.1-3; Plate 5.1-4).

Decorated ceramic vessels include also glazed ware. Most of the glazed pottery fragments come from angobe coated pots covered with green glaze. Some of angobe coated pots are decorated with geometric patterns overpainted in white, black and yellowish glaze. Almost all of the glazed pottery is well fired. These were recovered from the upper layers of the site. No such pots were encountered in the lower layers.

Stone Objects

These can be divided into two groups. The first group includes wall decoration elements represented by a number of engraved stone fragments. These stones bearing exquisite engravings show that originally the Chapel had beautifully designed architectural elements, including rich facade and interior wall decorations. High quality white coloured travertine limestone was used

both for building and ornamentation of the Chapel. Decorative motives for stone ornamentation include roundels and meanders carved one within the other, engraved flower petal patterns, etc. Are these the 3 in Photo 34?

An arch-shaped stone found against the eastern wall of the Chapel is worth special consideration. Unlike other stones, the images on it were created by scraping away the stone surface. The wide girdle made up of raised edges gives the stone a banded appearance. The surface of the girdle is ornamented with criss-cross lines. In the upper wider part of the stone there is a scraped engraving of a cross decorated with circles in the centre and lateral flared ends. The circles are surrounded by grooves replicating the shape of the cross. It appears the stone with a cross carved in good relief was an element of facade or overdoor decoration (Photo 35).

Another stone bears a cross carved by incising. In addition, there are two incised lines extending diagonally upward and to the left from the midsection of the upper point of the cross. Five small carved holes are seen between these lines. Four of the holes are aligned with each other and spaced evenly apart; the fifth hole is adjacent to and slightly above the one carved at the point where the additional lines join the cross. Two more cavities are carved in the upper part of the angled area formed between the additional lines and the upper point of the cross. The overall hole arrangement appears to be a symbolic depiction of Aquarius zodiac (Photo 36.3).

The stone with a deep round cavity in the centre does not look like a tool. Similarly-shaped stones are known to have been used as padstones since the Eneolithic Period; therefore it seems most probable that this one performed the same function (Photo 36.2).

The second group of stones is represented by tools. One of these is a broken fragment of a grey rubbing stone recovered from the rubbish pit. One surface is flat, the other is bulgy. Such tools are commonly considered as wheat grinding tools.

Another rubbing stone was chipped out of a thin reddish stone. The edges are broken, the central part is concave. The rubbing surface shows marks of considerable use.

Large fragment of a mortar chipped out of a large cobblestone. The working surface became well burnished from long use. There is a deep bowl-shaped depression in its central part. The lower resting surface was left unworked. Judging by the size, this was a stationary stone used in a fixed position.

Two rubbing stones, one round, the other oval with well burnished surfaces.

Fragments of rubbing stones chipped out of thin and more rarely of black or brown tufa stone. Some of these have bulging sides and resemble boat-shaped querns of earlier dates.

Fragment of a bowl-type pot, presumably made of white stone belonging to the marble family. The base is flat; the mouth is wide and straight. The central part became well burnished from long use. Photo 41.

The pounding tools are represented by pestles for the most part chipped out of river-washed stones. They have different shapes – elongated, cylindrical, oval-shaped and round. Some show heavy wear on both ends only, others exhibit marks of pounding on their entire surface.

Two tools made of black marble are represented by broken fragments. One with an elongated shape has clear pounding marks at both ends and a surface burnished from long use. The other is bow shaped and has also a well burnished surface (Photo 42).

Metal Objects

Bronze earrings made of thin wire with one end bent into a hook and strung with round bronze slabs (Photo 43). The photograph needs to be retaken as it is out of focus

Bronze ring, 2cm in diameter.

Elongated slab-shaped object made of high quality bronze. Its function is unknown (Photo 44). Out of focus

Half of a large diameter bronze ring (Photo 45).

Small bronze nail-shaped object. Its function cannot be identified (Photo 45).

Bronze elongated pear-shaped pendant with a suspension eyelet at one end. The pendant made of high quality bronze has a heavy feel (Photo 45).

Beads

Beads recovered from the site can be divided into three groups. The first group includes beads chipped out of some black material. They are either rectangular or trapezoidal in shape. Rectangular-shaped beads prevail. Some have circular concentric roundels on their surfaces. One of these black beads had a cross-shaped protrusion in its centre (Photo 46).

The second group comprises beads made of some white shiny material. These are roughly 8-shaped. Two of the beads have laterally outward width wise protrusions that give them a cruciform appearance. All have suspension holes. Several of these have additional vertical holes on their flat ends pieced presumably for decoration purposes (Photo 46).

Beads in the third group are chipped out of white, black or brown paste. All have suspension holes (Photo 46).

V. Analytical Results

- ***Interpretation of Excavation Results***

Excavations conducted at Chaparli have brought evidence that this was a multilayer site used during different historical periods. The cultural layers of the site can be characterized as follows:

1. The lowermost layer contained a metal-melt kiln and a rubbish pit. Judging by the artefactual material recovered, this layer dates to the 2nd to 3rd centuries, AD. Radiocarbon date Cal BC40 to Cal AD120

2. Several graves together with the cultural material uncovered beneath the jar burials and the Chapel debris date to the 3rd to 4th centuries, AD.

3. The Christian Chapel dates to the 4th to 5th centuries, AD.

4. The cemetery built over the Christian Chapel dates to the 8th to 10th centuries, AD.Grave to the east of the site is radiocarbon dated to Cal AD 1000 to Cal AD 1160, grave to the west of the site is dated Cal AD 890 to Cal AD 1030

5. Finally, the uppermost layer produced the remains of a stucture built of river-washed stones. These remains together with glazed pottery date to the 11th to 12th centuries, AD.

- ***Dating***

The Chaparli monument reflects different stages of historical development of the Albanian State that existed in the territory of Azerbaijan from the 4th century, B.C. to the 7th century AD. What makes this site special is that it provides new data regarding development of early Christianity in the Caucasian Albania. Only a few settlements and religious structures dating to this historical period have thus far been investigated in Azerbaijan. Because of this it is very important to consider this site carefully. What are the parallels for stone carving in this Alban period; can other motifs be seen in metalwork of the period? What are the common denominators of the Alban culture? The consideration of dating shown by C14 needs to be addressed.

I suggest that there is an Antique settlement with domestic activity. The rectangular building could be a part of this or it could be later How well associated were the dressed stones feature with the structure?

There could have been an Alban period rectangular structure, and with dressed stone it is not inconceivable to imply a Christian origin for it.

A cemetery was laid out over the site, which appears to be entirely of one period of use, which occurred following the collapse of the rectangular structure and the disappearance of any surface indicators for the structure. Both radiocarbon dates obtained from the graves suggests it was used

a couple of hundred years after the start of the Muslim period, and may thus be comparable in age with the Muslim cemetery from Zayamchai. There may be a problem with the storage of the human bone in that the radiocarbon samples were taken several years after the bone was excavated, so may have been contaminated and caused the dates to be rather later than was truly the case. This is possible, but the same factors did not affect of bones stored in the same conditions.

The burial traditions do not seem to be strongly Muslim or strongly Christian in character, there are some that follow both traditions. One of the main elements seen in other Muslim cemeteries was the presence of timber or stone grave coverings. If they were present in timber, they may well have now completely disappeared, although no reference to any such material was seen by the excavators, or they may have been too far from a suitable stone source to allow that to be used.

The absence of strongly marked Muslim burial practise is notable. The excavation team had experience of working on several such sites, and the evidence from each site can be re-examined by studying the photographic records that enable common characteristics to be identified. This is in marked contrast to other late medieval cemeteries excavated at KP316 and KP405, every skeleton was strongly aligned in the Muslim character. This was so also in the other site at Zayamchai where all were in a Muslim style, but there was one exception with folded arms in a Christian style. This was interpreted by IoAE as being early in the Muslim period before the older religious rites had been completely forgotten.

Perhaps the burial ground we see here is a reflection of that early Muslim period when both old and new religious rites were followed or even mixed in a population that was on the face of it Muslim, but maybe allowed some of the old rites to be permitted in death. The other possibility is that Christian communities were accepted and allowed to co-exist in this early period,

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

No other archaeological site similar to that at Chaparli has been identified and explored within the BTC and CSP pipeline construction corridor. There are numbers of sites found on the BTC pipline that straddle the Antique/Albanian/Medieval divide (look at the sites around 300, Hajilili) but none of these contain the same strong elements.

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

Parallels to the artefactual material recovered from the Chaparli site are rarely encountered because the number of known coeval sites in Azerbaijan is very small.

- ***Recommendations for Public Education***

As stated above, following excavations all the foundation stones of the Chapel were taken to the Museum of History and Local Studies in Shamkir. It seems expedient that the remaining material, already processed at the IoAE, should also be stored in this museum.

The visual survey of the site showed that the major portion of the monument lay to the north of the pipelines route. Therefore it is very important to take precautionary measures to ensure safe preservation of the area for future research.

VI. Illustrations

Photo 1. Pottery shards in a temporary bedding mound under a welded pipeline section.

Photo 2. Human skeletal remains in the trench wall.

Photo 3. Pottery pieces collected from the spoil heap after trenching.

Photo 4. Padstone exposed following topsoil stripping.

Photo 5. Christian graves exposed in Quadrat 1.

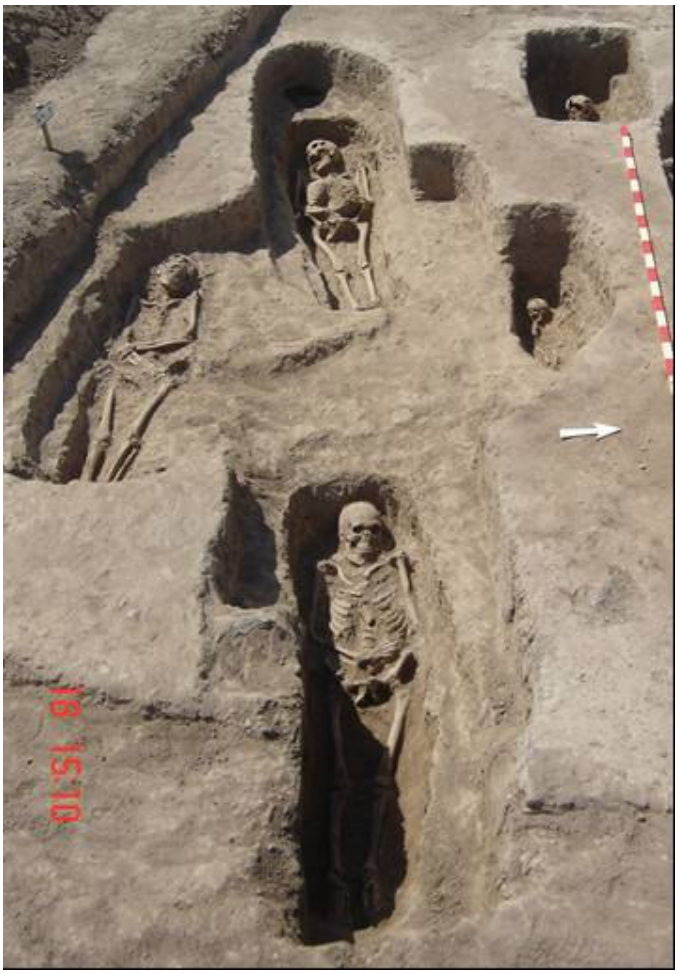

Photo 6. Cross-shaped burial.

Photo 7. Structural remains. View of the upper layer.

Photo 8. View of the expanded excavation site.

Photo 9. Slab stones in the entrance area.

Photo 10. View of burials over structural remains.

Photo 11. Excavation site – general view.

Photo 12. Top layers of the domestic rubbish pit.

Photo 13. Fragments of large jars, presumably, burial jars.

Photo 14. Metal-melt kiln remains.

Photo 15. View of the excavation site.

Photo 16. Ceramic melting-pot and spindle whorl.

Photo 17. Jug-type pot.

Photo 18. Jug-type pot – top view.

Photo 19. Bardag-type pots.

Photo 20. Bardags.