

Research Report on Short-Term Travel Grant  
by  
Philip L. Kohl

Building ADA - The American-Daghestan-Azerbaijan  
Archaeological Research Project: Investigations in Northeastern  
Azerbaijan  
Year 2

With the support of an IREX short-term travel grant, ADA (the American/Daghestan/Azerbaijan Archaeological Expedition) completed its second successful field season from August 2nd to August 20th, 2002. The P.I. flew to Paris, France on July 23rd enroute to attend a field seminar in southern Russia from July 25th to August 1st. He returned to Moscow and then flew to Baku on August 2nd to initiate ADA's second season. He returned to Paris from Baku on August 15th, and his student Mary Gaye Gaither and principal Daghestan colleague Dr. Rabadan Magomedov finished the work in Azerbaijan on August 20th.

As planned, this year ADA focussed on two projects: 1) beginning the mapping of the Ghilghilchay Sassanian fortification wall that was built in the 6th century A.D.; and 2) opening a small stratigraphic sounding on the site of Serker-tepe, the Early Bronze Age type site for northeastern Azerbaijan. We mapped the eastern portion of the Ghilghilchay wall across the coastal plain and along the high river terraceto the point where it crosses the Ghilghilchay, ascending into the mountains (c. 15 km. in toto). We recorded over 300 tower-buttresses spaced regularly along the wall; 5 towers with interior depressed cultural deposits suggesting that soldiers once had been stationed there; 3 military garrisons or forts (2 of which had not been previously recorded) that would be prime areas for future excavations; and 1 apparently fortified Sassanian settlement. The sounding at Serker-tepe, which is located immediately west of the town of Khachmass, was meant to check the stratigraphy and nature of the cultural deposit at this rich Bronze Age site. We excavated our small sounding (2 X 1 m. at the top and, due to the westward-leaning slope of the previously excavated section or profile, c. 2 X 2 m. at the bottom or end of the sounding) through 5 meters of deposit to bed rock. Palaeobotanical, palynological, zooarchaeological, and ceramic samples were retrieved, and

charcoal samples were collected for radiocarbon analysis. The ceramics and small finds (a bronze toggle pin and two stone hammer-axes) were drawn and photographed. This work will allow us to place the earlier, extensively excavated materials from this site in much better, more controlled context and allow us to compare them with similar remains excavated on the Caspian coastal plain farther north in Daghestan, Russia.

ADA now is in a strong position to continue its work on a larger scale in future seasons. While it is unlikely that there will be any additional field work undertaken at Serker-depe (since most of the site has been completely excavated), the unpublished collections of materials from this site in Baku will need to be reexamined and published in light of our sounding. The map of the Ghilghilchay wall should be finished next season, and ideally it would be desirable to initiate excavations on one of those military garrisons. One of the unique and valuable features of the ADA program is that it brings scholars from three countries together to collaborate on problems of shared concern. The animal bones from the sounding at Serker-depe, for example, will now to be taken to Moscow for analysis by a zooarchaeologist, and the radiocarbon samples will be analyzed in the States. The Wellesley College student Mary Gaye Gaither will write her honors thesis on the work undertaken this summer on the Ghilghilchay wall, and, hopefully, will continue her work on these remains in graduate school. Everyone benefits. Professional and personal relations are excellent, and there should be no problem in continuing the collaborative work of ADA in the future. The support of IREX is gratefully acknowledged for making this work possible and allowing us to strengthen our collaborative field project.