

SOME NEWLY DISCOVERED BRONZE AGE SITES IN THE GOMAL VALLEY, NWFP, PAKISTAN

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Introduction

Different regions of the Frontier Province have their own historical and archaeological significance—depending mainly on their geology, geography, ecology, resources, accessibility and climatic conditions, which is reflected in the archaeological profile of these respective regions. Gandhāra Art of the Buddhists is found in the Peshawar, Dir and Swat Valleys; Epigraphic records, engravings and rock carvings are mostly found in Northern Areas of Pakistan. The Historic period sites are mostly seen in the Peshawar and Hazara Divisions whereas Bronze Age archaeological sites are mainly known from the southern parts of the Province from the Gomal Valley extending to the Tochi Valley in the Bannu Basin. The southern region of the Frontier Province has the credit of having roots of the Indus Valley Civilizations in its fertile soil.

The Gomal Valley, lying between 31°–15' and 32°–31' north latitude and 70°–5' to 71°–22' east longitude, occupies an ideal geographical position. It is a flood plain of the Indus River and its tributaries like Kurram and Gomal rivers. It is linked in the west to Afghanistan and Central Asia through hospitable passes in the mountains of Waziristan and the Suleman Ranges, marking the western boundary. The northern and northeastern limits are marked by, Bitthanis, Sheikh Budin and Khaisor hills respectively. These passes in the western hills, which have been used for at least the last seven thousands years, if not earlier, by the trade caravans, traders, missionaries and migrants while entering into the Indo-Pak subcontinent. To the east, where the valley is open, is the Indus River and Indus flood plain of the Punjab. The valley is also open to the south except southwestern part, which is bordered by the Baluchistan Plateau.

Explorations and Excavations in the Gomal Plain

Sir Alexander Cunningham was the first who, in 1878–79, conducted archaeological reconnaissance in the Gomal Plain, when he was Director General of *the Archaeological Survey of India* and paid a visit to the Hindu Shahi Period monuments (temples and fortifications) of Bilot and Kafirkot (Cunningham 1882). However, the discovery of archaeological sites in the valley was left to Sir Aural Stein, who in 1927 recorded a number of historic period sites in the western Gomal Plain, near the foothills of the Suleman Ranges (Stein 1904-05; 1929; 1934). After the establishment of the Department of Archaeology at the Peshawar University, Professor Ahmad Hassan Dani, the founder Chairman, commenced his explorations in the Valley and recorded a number of Neolithic and Bronze Age sites and conducted excavations at Hathala and Gumla (Dani 1970-71). Further progress was made by Dr FA Durrani (Durrani 1988 and 1991) when he conducted extensive excavations at the site of Rehman Dheri, thus bringing the first proto-urban and proto-literate site in South Asia to the limelight. Dr Taj Ali (Ali 1988), George Erdoshy and Ihsan Ali (Durrani et al 1991), Dr Abdur Rahman (Rahman 1997), Dr Mohammad Farooq Swati (Swati and Ali 1998), Prof Farid Khan (Khan et al 2000a) also paid a brief visit to the Valley and recorded a few sites. Prof Ihsan Ali and Gul Rahim Khan (Ali & Khan 2001) conducted excavations at Jhandi Babar I (a rich Neolithic site), Jhandi Babar II (Kot Dijian) and Maru II (Mature Harappan). They established not only a cultural profile for the Gomal Plain, from the Neolithic down to the late Islamic period, but also broadened the cultural horizon of the region.

Explorations in 2003

With the financial support of the Government of the NWFP, the provincial Directorate of Archaeology and Museums launched an intensive campaign of survey to bring to limelight the progressively fading archaeological sites in the Gomal Plain. The expedition was carried out from March 16 to April 4, 2003 by the authors with the help of Messer Mir Mohammad and Asim Amin (Graduate students of Archaeology). It aimed to record systematically all the archaeological sites and monuments in the District and, if possible, to excavate the most important and endangered sites. As a result, in this first phase of research, 106 different sites and monuments, ranging from the Late Neolithic to the Late Mughal Periods (including the 40 previously explored sites) were recorded. The majority of the sites are Islamic period, which may go back to earlier times, if excavated. The statistics of the survey conducted in 2003 are given in the following table.

S. No	Types of Sites	Earlier Explored	Newly Explored	Total
1	Neolithic	02	01	03
2	Early Bronze Age/ Kot Dijian	05	03	08
3	Harappan	05	06	11
4	Historic Sites	17	38	55
5	Temples	03	00	03
6	Historic period Wells	00	02	02
6	Mosques	01	09	10
7	Tombs	07	07	14
8	Total	40	66	106

The important among the newly discovered Bronze Age sites are Gulgai Kot I, Darazinda, Kot Musa, Maddi, Umar Daraz Theri I and II, Kauri Hot, Lal Mahra Sharif Site, $tj akwtj tj a$ (Nang Shah) and Rohri II. We will only discuss the recently discovered Neolithic and Bronze Age sites here, as the rest are outside the scope of this paper. All of these sites fall into the following four main periods:

1. Neolithic Period
2. Early Bronze Age / Tochi Gomal Phase
3. Kot Dijian Period
4. Mature Harappan Period

1. Neolithic Period

AH Dani, in 1970 was the first to identify the pre-ceramic Neolithic at Gumla, a site located 11 km northwest of DI Khan city on Tank road. Then the ceramic Neolithic site of Jhandi Babar in the Gomal valley was discovered in 1997, almost after 27 years by FA Durrani and his colleagues from Peshawar University (Durrani 1998) and then by Abdur Rahman (Rahman 1997). The present survey further broadened the cultural horizon of the Gomal Valley during the Neolithic times by locating Gulgai Kot I, near Tank city.

A. Gulgai Kot I

The most important of all the sites in the Tank District of the Gomal Valley is Gulgai Kot I, which has pushed the history of Tank region back to the food producing communities of late Neolithic/early Chalcolithic of 5th Millennium BC and hence can be called as the first village of

Tank District. The site is located near the village of Gulgai Kot, which lies 2 km northeast of Dabara and 8 km southwest of Tank city (Jan 2002: 197-205).

It was once a large site, which has recently been disturbed by the construction of an un-metalled road that passes through the middle of the site (Plate I). It is a unique site, the earliest in the Tank District and the second Neolithic site in the Gomal Plain, after Jhandi Babar I (Ali and Khan 2001). It was due to the bulldozing of the site that earlier cultural deposits were unearthed. The northern portion of the site shows some visible height in comparison to the rest of the levelled ground, which is undisturbed and will be fruitful for a trial trench to record the profile of this fast eroding mound.

The main findings from this site are pottery, stone tools and figurines identical to those from Jhandi Babar I in the Gomal Valley (Rahman 1997; Swati & Ali 1998; Khan et al 2000 and Ali & Khan 2001) and Sheri Khan Tarakai in the Tochi Valley (Khan et al 1987-88; 1991). The pottery can broadly be classified into two groups technologically, (i) hand-made and (ii) wheel-made (Plate II). The former is further grouped into internally and externally decorated sub-groups, having bowls, jars, and carinated pots as the main types. However, the wheel-thrown pottery, with fine thin fabric, evenly fired and painted with various geometrical motifs in polychrome and bi-chrome, is comparable to Rehman Dheri I (Durrani 1988), Gumla II (Dani 1970-71) and Lak Largai (Khan et al 1991).

The stone tools discovered from the site of Gulgai Kot I, include cores, either fluted or plain, blades, flakes and burins. The T/C female human figurines can (in general) be compared to Jhandi Babar I and Sheri Khan Tarakai, alluding to cultural interaction in the 5th millennium BC.

2. Early Bronze Age / Tochi-Gomal Phase / Gumla II

A. Darazinda

The site of Darazinda, lying between 70°-0'-42" LE and 31°-42' LN, is situated 20 km west of Darabin in the tribal area on the Zhob - DI Khan Road, 2 km west of Darazinda village, in the piedmont area overlooking the valley (Plate III).

Covering a large area of 200 x 80 x 1.5 m and on an ancient as well as a modern trade route that links Baluchistan and Afghanistan to the Gomal Valley and further the mainland of the Indus plain, Darazinda shows some sporadic robber trenches and modern graveyard on the surface, which has partly damaged the site. However, well-preserved parts at different levels are available for systematic trial trenches. The graveyard has modern as well as ancient graves. Interesting objects like metallic pots and jewellery were unearthed by a local, Gul Khan, from some of the ancient graves that were buried as grave goods with the deceased. Unless, proper excavations are conducted one cannot infer whether they were grave goods or the remains of the Bronze Age site, mixed with some old graves. More interesting are the stone circles, which are 80 cm thick and 8 meters in diameter, some of which have a *mehrab* (niche) toward the west. A total of 8 such stone circles were noticed. Apart from these structures, square and oval shape graves were also observed on the site.

On the hilltop above the plain were found a large number of pottery fragments and stone tools comparable to Rehman Dheri I, Gumla II, Lak Largai I (Durrani 1988; Dani 1970-71 and Khan et al 1991) (see Plate IV). The surface collection from Darazinda include pottery, stone tools and a grinding stone measuring 55 x 25 x 5 cm, which was found in a robber's trench. The pottery is thin in fabric, well-fired and decorated in polychrome comparable to Rehman Dheri I (Durrani 1988). They are mainly bowls having either slightly averted tapering or perpendicular tapering rims. The site can safely be dated to 3rd and even the end of the 4th millennium BC with later brief occupation in the Islamic period.

Worth mentioning is an area at the southern end of the site where *kanjur* (travertine) stone blocks of different sizes were found in large numbers. Here traces of a dried spring were also observed, which would have been the main source of water in the remote antiquity in this barren hilly area.

3. Kot Dijian Period

Another cultural phase, covering a far greater region than the *Tochi/Gomal Phase* settlement, has appeared in the Indus Valley, Baluchistan, Tochi and Gomal Valleys, in the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC and is named after the type-site of Kot Dijji, the *Kot Dijian Culture* with a distinct ceramic technology and settlement pattern. Such period sites occur in earlier than the Harappan context and share some common traits with the Harappans. That has therefore been called the *Early Harappan Culture* (Mughal 1971). This terminology however, is debatable under the current state of research on the Indus Valley Civilization.

A. Kot Musa

Two km from Proa–Chaudhwan road towards northeast, in jungles, is the well preserved Kot Dijian site of Kot Musa, named after the local village, which is lying 10 km short of Chaudhwan town and 30 km west of Proa in *Daman* between 70°-24'-54" LE and 31°-36'-18" LN.

The site, which is rectangular in shape and measures 280 x 250 x 5 m with north–south orientation, is feasible for excavation. It is still intact and in a good state of preservation except the southwestern portion, which is occupied by the Muslim graves. The surface is littered with thousands of potsherds of red and buff wares (Plate V). The former types are greater in quantity than the latter, which is limited. Exposed by erosion on the western side of the site, a thick ashy layer on the top surface was observed. Near a hearth (10cm in diameter), a greenish globular jar was found in situ, which contains ashes and small size bones, probably of animals.

The main surface collection from the site is typical Kot Dijian pottery, red ware having thick red bands below the rim and grooved pattern on the body also known from Gumla III (Dani 1970-71), Rehman Dheri II (Durrani 1988; Durrani et al 1991), Maddi and Kot Dijji I (Khan 1965) (see Plate VI). However, a buff textured ware was also collected in notable quantities. Also, red and gray T/C bangles, snake hooded female figurines like those from Gumla and Lewan, and stone tools in the form of flakes and blades were also collected.

B. Maddi

Another important Kot Dijian site in the Gomal plain is the low mound of Maddi, measuring 130 x 65 x 1.5 m, which is located near the village of Maddi, 1 km towards north, 19 km west of Gara Hindan and 35 km west of DI Khan City.

The site is almost levelled to the natural ground surface (Plate VII). Only a portion is preserved due to the modern graves, otherwise, it would also have been encroached by the adjacent field owners and silted up by floods. A large quantity of pottery is still seen on the surface, which has made it visible from a distance.

From this site short necked grooved Kot Dijian ware, flanged rim polychrome ware, buff textured ware, stone tools, bangles and T/C figurines, which bear close resemblance to those from Rehman Dheri (Durrani 1988), Gumla III (Dani 1970-71), Lewan II (Allchin and Knox 1986 and Khan et al 2000d), Kot Dijji (Khan 1965; Mughal 1972) Rana Ghundai IIIa and Damb Sadaat were also collected (Plate VIII).

4. Mature Harappan Period

AH Dani was the first explorer to find traces of the Harappan Civilization in the Frontier Province in the Gomal Valley where he located a number of sites (Dani 1970-71). Surprisingly no other region of the province yielded any Harappan site despite of the perennial flow of water. Later surveys here increased the number of Harappan settlements in the Gomal Valley (Rahman 1997; Khan et al 2000). The recent survey by the authors added six more Harappan settlements to this list, which are described as follows.

A. Umar Daraz Theri I

Situated 3.5 Km east of Chashma Right Bank Canal (CRBC) on distributary No. 17 and 5 km east of Maru I site and between 70°-35'-24" LE and 31°-37'-36" LN, is the site of Umar Daraz Theri I, named after the field owner. The term *Theri* in local Saraiki language means a mound. It can also be approached either from Sipra or Sikandar Janubi Village. The site lies midway (4 km from either side) between the two villages.

It is a square site measuring 40 x 40 x 1 m, which has been badly destroyed for getting its soil as manure and using it for agricultural purposes (Plate IX). Scatters of the antiquities are, however, available in the surrounding fields. A room is constructed on the levelled ground by the owner, which shows ancient potsherds in the mud plaster. At different points of the site, ashes and charcoal are visible.

Made on fast wheel, the pottery from this site is mainly plain red ware and comparatively thick in fabric. Apart from pottery, T/C cakes of round and oval shapes & pieces of T/C bangles were also found. The presence of T/C cakes assigns the site to the mature Harappan Period (Plate X).

B. Umar Daraz Theri II

At a distance of 500m and close to the west of Umar Daraz Theri I, between 70°-35'-30" LE, 31°-37'-36" LN is another sister site with low mound, which also shows of the ravages of time. Having been destroyed only a 20x25x0.5m area is left as a Dhera (camp) and a platform for loading and unloading trolleys of sugarcane and dug soil.

A rivulet from the Distributary of CRBC passes through the site where there are clear cut sections on both banks that contain pottery and T/C cakes in large numbers and up to a considerable depth. Potsherds in the surrounding area can also be observed, which indicates that this was a larger site than what it seems presently. The site seems to be the extension of Umar Daraz Theri I, which was originally a very large area. But due to the CRBC the local people levelled the mound for agricultural fields. Ashes are also found on surface.

Except dull red wash on only a few thick and medium thick potsherds, the pottery from this site is mainly plain and without any slip. Sandy clay forms the material of the pottery save some thick potsherds, which contain gritty substance and were probably used as storage jars. The rims are beaked having either flat or receding top surface whereas the bases are simple disc with a few concave disc shape. The other antiquity is T/C cakes of triangular and oval shapes.

C. Kauri Hot

Just across CRBC on Proa-Chaudhwan road, between 70°-34' LE, 31°-33'-30" LN, is another mature Harappan site, Kauri Hot, named after the nearby village, which is located 2 km southwest of the site. It is located at the same distance, i.e., 2 km west of Sikander Junobi village. From Sikander Police Post on Proa-Chaudhwan road the site is visible towards the northwest and is situated 200m

from the road. Furthermore, it is lying midway (20 km from both towns) between Proa and Chaudhwan.

The site (Plate XI) measuring 200x180x1.5m, has been badly damaged by the CRBC contractors who have taken the whole mound for the right embankment of the canal and potsherds can still be seen. Secondly, the adjacent field owners are encroaching on what is left, for their own fields. However, pottery is still found on the surface in large quantities. Potsherds are also found on the embankment of the newly constructed road, which tells the story of destruction of the site as well.

Kauri Hot produced red ware plain as well as decorated pottery of having black on red geometrical designs, perforated potsherds and T/C cakes of different shapes and sizes. All the pottery is made on the wheel (Plate XII). The bases are disc, flat, ring and concave. One disc base of greenish colour has a stamped pattern on the inner side. Like Umar Daraz Theri I & II no stone tools and figurines were collected from this site. The pottery decoration, cakes, bangles and perforated potsherds all indicate a Mature Indus period occupation.

D. Lal Mahra Sharif Site

The early Islamic period tombs at Lal Mahra Sharif, situated near the hamlet of Lal Mahra Sharif—named after a Muslim saint, lying between 70°-44'-06" LE, 31°-30'-30" LN, are well known to the scholars interested in the Gomal Plain (Ali 1988). It can be approached either from distributary No.18 A of CRBC from the west or from Proa towards the west at a distance of 8km from Multan DI Khan Road.

The anonymous tombs are actually constructed on a mature Harappan site, which is buried under the fields and silt deposited by floods in this area. While surveying in Gomal Plain, AH Dani observed a considerable height of the mound and also found a T/C cake here (Dani 1970-71). The present survey not only confirmed the ancient mound but also unearthed Mature Indus material. 100m north of the tombs a rivulet from minor of CRBC has cut a portion of the site at a depth of 1.3m, where T/C cakes and Indus pottery were found in situ on both banks of the rivulet. Moreover, a T/C cake was also found from the Tughlaq period tombs, on the surface.

Thick fabric plain red ware pottery along with T/C cakes of different types were collected from the rivulet. No stone tools and figurines of any kinds were collected. The pottery is simple and plain having everted beaked, thickened outward rims and flat, disc and concave bases.

E. t̪ akwt̪ t̪ a (Nang Shah)

t̪ akwt̪ t̪ a, a mature Harappan site (Plate XIII), is situated on Hathala–Giloti road, 15km NNE of Hathala and the same distance from Giloti. It is located on the right bank of t̪ akwt̪ t̪ a Nala where 25km downstream is Rahman Dheri, on the left bank of the Nala. Dividing into two mounds, eastern and western, the site covers an area of 120x115x8m. The eastern mound is higher than the western and is occupied by modern, late Islamic and British period graves. Here, on top of the mound, is the tomb of Nang Shah Bukhari, a Muslim saint, whereas the western mound is undisturbed.

There is variation in the pottery of t̪ akwt̪ t̪ a, which includes plain and black on red decorated potsherds having depictions of birds and geometric motifs. Made on a fast wheel, the pottery has also been occasionally provided with red slip like the pottery of Maru II (Khan 2000c). The other antiquities include T/C cakes, broken bricks, bangles, stone tools, beads, toy cart frames and perforated vessels (Plate XIV). A few grooved ware red slipped Kot Dijian potsherds were also collected, indicating the Kot Dijian occupation of the site for some time. However, the main period of the site is mature Harappan.

F. Rohri II

Apart from a historic period site discovered by us at Rohri, there is also a mature Harappan period site amidst the cultivated fields, if T/C cakes are the main features of the Harappan sites. Rohri-II is lying 800m west of Rohri I and is the property of Qudrat Ullah of Rohri village. The village is situated 2km east of the site, 15km east of Dabara and 20km west of Kultj chtlj . From here the historic period mound of Shad Gara on the bank of Gomal River is visible, which is located 6km north of Rohri II.

It is a small rectangular mound, which presently measures 70x35x1m, lying in N-S orientation. It has been severely damaged by the people who have encroached the surrounding fields (Plate XV). The fields been silted up has further engulfed the site. A local man told that it was a very large site about 15 years ago.

The site produced typical Harappan T/C cakes in different shapes and sizes along with perforated potsherds like Maru II (Khan et al 2000), Gumla IV (Dani 1970–71) and UDT I & II. The other antiquity is the thick, coarse and plain pottery, T/C bangles and a blade of stone.

Conclusion

Gomal Valley has great archaeological potential for understanding the Kot Dijian and Harappan cultural relations, which needs thorough investigation and excavation of all the important sites. If concrete steps for the scientific investigation of the sites in the Gomal Plain are not taken we will not be able to pay justice to the past glories of the region and the antiquity of mankind. The sites are constantly endangered by the natural as well as human perils. Silting up of agricultural fields and erosion of the uncultivated land is a phenomenon, which is washing the archaeological sites in the region from history.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to appreciate the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums and the Finance Department, Government of NWFP, Peshawar, for its financial and administrative support to conduct archaeological explorations and excavations in the Gomal Valley for persevering the cultural heritage of the Frontier Province. Our thanks are also due to Prof M Farooq Swati, the Chairman, and staff of the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, for their kind support. The administration of the Gomal University is also acknowledged for their help during our survey of the region.

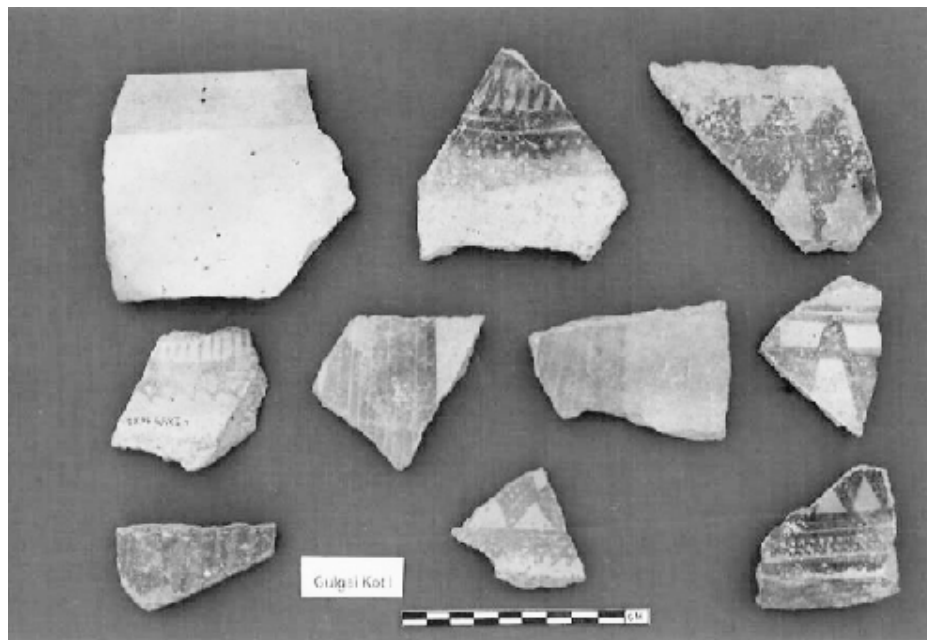
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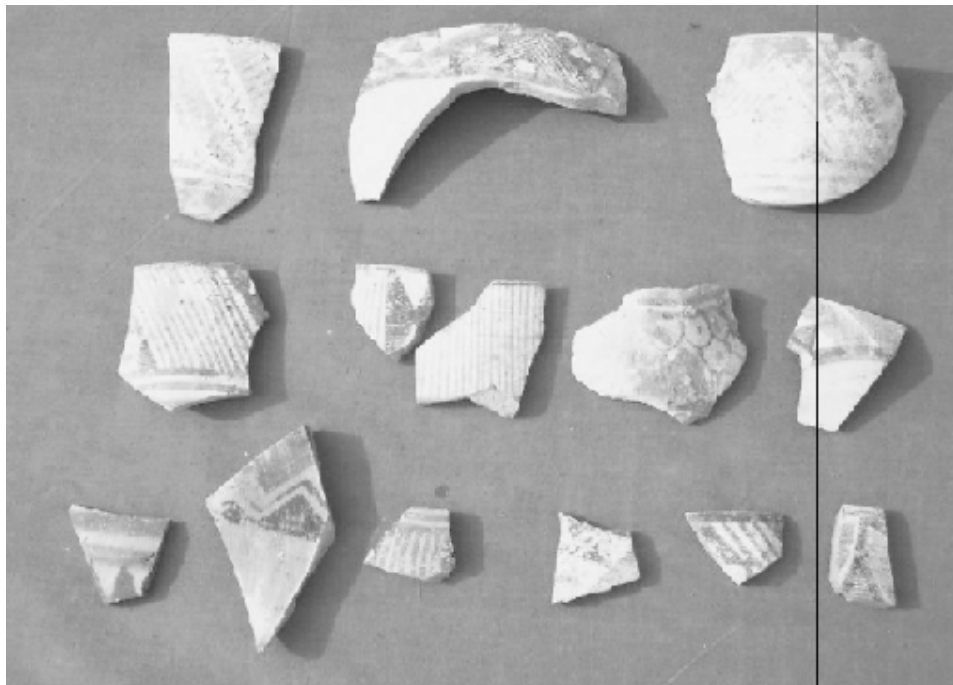
Pl. I: Gulgai Kot I, general view



Pl. II: Gulgai Kot I, pottery



Pl. III: Darazinda, general view



Pl. IV: Darazinda, the pottery



Pl. V: Kot Musa, general view



Pl. VI: Kot Musa, the Kot Dijian ceramics



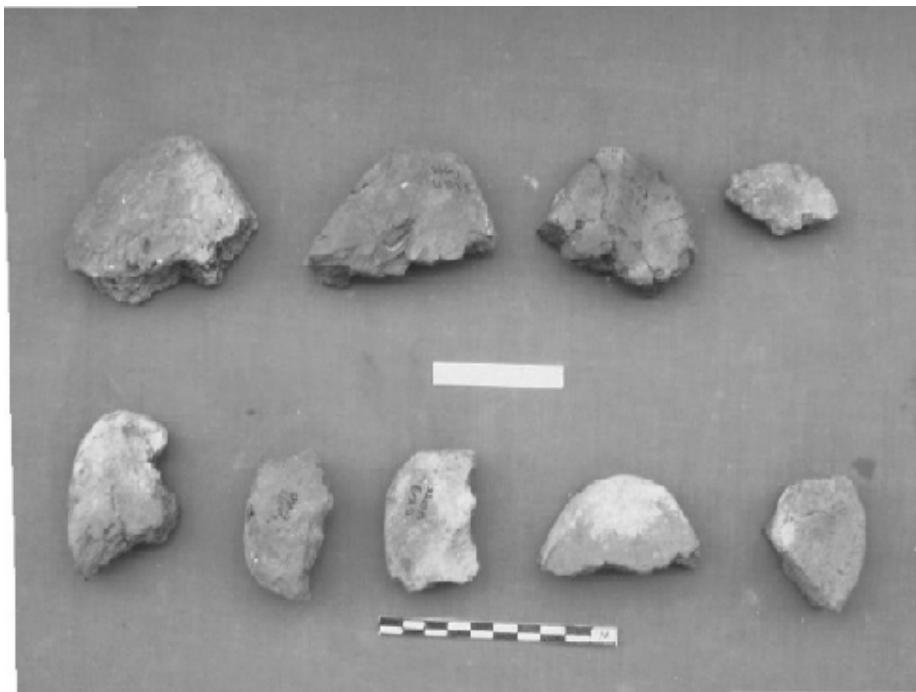
Pl. VII: Maddi, general view



Pl. VIII: Maddi, the flanged rim jars and grooved ware sherds



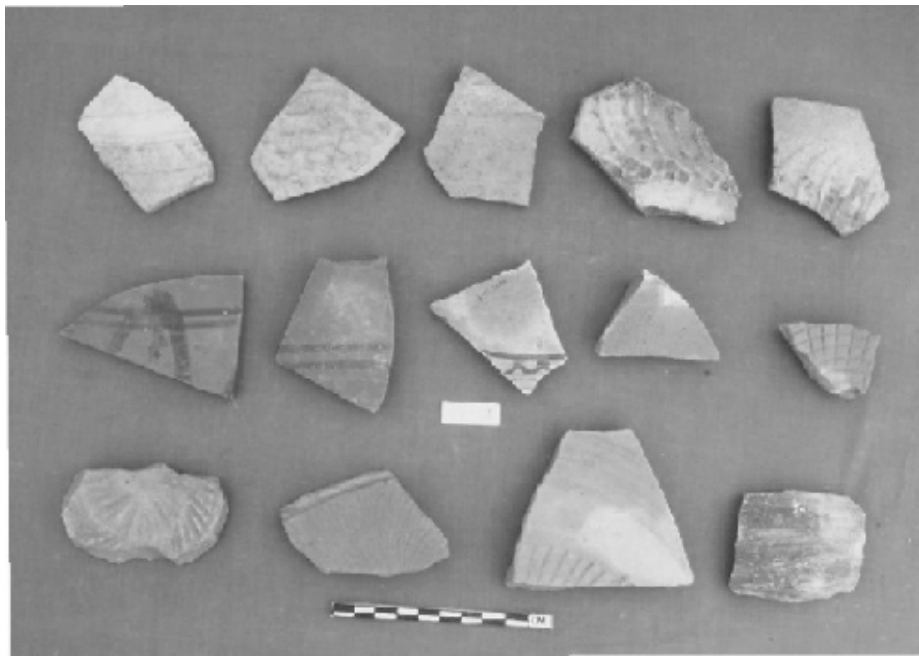
Pl. IX: Umar Daraz Theri I, general view with encroachment



Pl. X: Umar Daraz Theri I, the terra-cotta cakes



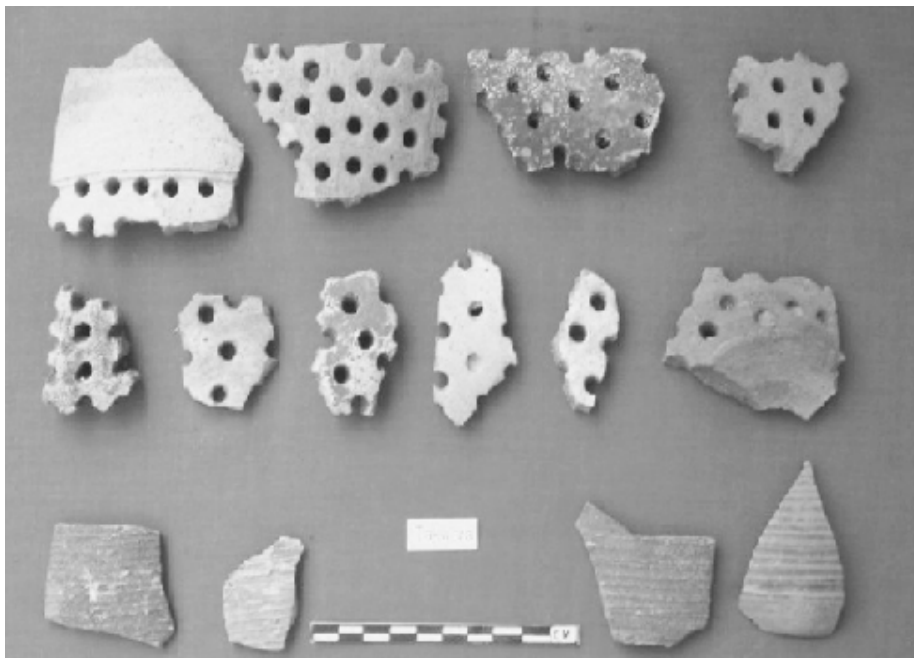
Pl. XI: Kauri Hut, general view of the site



Pl. XII: Kauri Hut, the wheel turned pottery



Pl. XIII: Takwara, general view of the western mound



Pl. XIV: Takwara, perforated and grooved sherds



Pl. XV: Rohri II, general view