

Pottery Excavated from Pir-Manakrai: A Preliminary Note

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Introduction

The Pir Manakrai site is situated 3.0Km northeast of the Haripur city on the right bank of the river Daur, a seasonal stream coming from Abbotabad and Dongagali. Across the river is situated the famous village Sarai Saleh. Although the existing site measures about 39,168m², archaeological remains scatter over an area of 1.5km radius (see Map).

The western part of the site is washed by the river, while the northern side is guarded by a steep hill of Mathian, where remains of a watchtower can still be seen. To the north of the site is an old living village Garh Mauryan, where a Buddhist establishment has already been excavated and published (Qamar 1990: 95-154).

Discovery of the Site

In 1993 a joint team of the National Heritage Foundation (NHF), a non-governmental organisation, and the Peshawar University while excavating the Panian site, 10.0Km west of the site under discussion, Chaudhry Manzoor, then the Superintendent of Police at Haripur, informed us about some antiquity recovered at Pir Manakrai near Sarai Saleh. We rushed to the spot, where we noticed multitude of people busy in pillaging the site. Part of the site had already been robbed before the local Police stopped the illegal digging on our request. A committee comprising of Prof. F.A. Durrani, Prof. Farid Khan, Prof. A. Rahman, Dr. Taj Ali (all of the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar), Mr. Abdul Haleem (official of the Federal Department of Archaeology) and local influential people was constituted to inspect the site. Just a day before the committee's visit, smugglers bulldozed 4.5m high part of the site where they had found a hoard of coins. Despite the devastating state of the mound the committee observed the potential of the site and suggested to excavate the site to retrieve the cultural history of the region.

Excavation

Prof. F.A. Durrani (who will be remembered as pioneer of archaeological excavations at Haripure), President of the NHF visited the site several times and started excavating it in collaboration with the Peshawar University in March 1997.

The site is divided into three parts named as Mathian, Khathain and Sathian. The local people believe that these three villages named after the daughters of a King. Mathian located to the north of the site is a hillock, where remains of a watchtower still exist, guarding the site in that direction. Here our sector 'C' has the remains of the Hindu period fort and antiquity of the Muslim period unearthed in the first season. Sathian, of the same elevation as that of Khathian, accommodates a modern building of "Īdgāh.

These lush green glens were once the home of the Indus-Greeks, Indus-Scythians and the Parthians and so much of the Hindu Shahis. Slightly turning towards the north, the main site slopes gradually down to the river and occupies a place of strategic importance and natural beauty.

Pottery from Pir Manakrai (Pls. 1-26)

The wheel-made pottery is mostly red-wash, while some of it is thickly coated with slurry at the lower part to reinforce the pot. Although mostly plain, yet some painted specimens bear

different designs drawn on a fine thin brush in black or red. Some pots having smoky core seems to have not been properly oxidised, however, the majority (particularly those of the Scytho- Parthian period) are well fired where the entire fabric of pot right to its core is turned red.

The clay is usually mixed with sand, loess, silt, straw, etc. But in case of heavy-duty thick textured pots the ratio of sand is higher. Usually, the fabric of pots is with medium thickness, however, a fine thin fabric with smooth surface is also present in the lot.

The common features of pots are almost similar to those unearthed from the late period Buddhist sites at Taxila and in ancient Gandhara (Marshall 1951: 405-37; Fidaullah). The most common types are storage jars, pitchers, bowls, goblets, pear-shaped pots, miniature pots and narrow as well as wide-open-mouthed pots. Bases are normally flat, convex, concave, ring and disc shaped. Moulded and stamped potsherds are very few. Complete pots are also excavated from the site.

All pots were turned on a fast wheel having fine evenly thick fabric and well fired, while large heavy-duty vessels have thick, gritty and strong fabric.

There are a limited number of shiny burnished black potsherds, already reported from Taxila. Prof. A.H. Dani calls it local imitation of the famous NBP ware, while Marshall termed it as a Black Polished Greek Ware (Dani 1965-66: 134-226; Marshall 1951: 401). M. Wheeler treated NBP and Greek Black Polished ware separately (Wheeler 1962: 44).

Spouted vessels with handles or without handles are also found. Spouts taper towards their distal end either with narrow or wide mouths. These vessels are of various shapes and sizes: some have round and squat bodies, while others are pear-shaped with wide-open-mouth like a jug. A few Lion-mask spouts in red ware with buff mica wash were also collected. Handles, semicircular and knobbed, are either incised or painted or with appliqué. Mostly lids are knobbed at the centre for the purpose of lifting.

Rims with flat top, inverted edge, flat top slightly averted, external depressed line, club shape, inverted stance, external groove, collar, triangular section are among the popular designs.

EMBOSSSED WARE WITH FIGURAL DESIGNS AND HELLENISTIC MOULDED WARE (PL. 3-4)

An embossed moulded ware from Pir Manakrai was excavated from Area 'A' trench B/6 layer 3. Fragment of bowl of fine red ware with red wash on the outside, on its outer surface is a figure and vine plant in low relief with a band as a borderline. The plant and bunches are moulded in dots. On the right another but almost complete vine plant can be seen. On the left a gazelle with fore legs lifted is shown as if trying to eat the plant in front of her.

Marshall mentions embossed ware with figural designs a local imitation of the Hellenistic moulded ware (Marshall: 435). He also compares it with the Megarian and Arretine wares, which were derived from a common Hellenistic origin. This became very popular in Asia Minor, Africa, Gaul, Belgium, Germany and England. Its important manufacturing centre in the late Hellenistic period was near Pergamum (Marshall: 435).

Our example from the Scytho-Parthian level at sector A is similar to the embossed and figural vessels excavated at Taxila by Marshall. The ceramic representation bear striking resemblance with those from the Bhir mound, Sirkap and ancient Gandhara (Marshall: 405-37; Fidaullah; Rahman; Khan *et alii*).

Apart from properly excavated pottery, a plentiful numbers came to hand from the smugglers' dump at sector A. Although, not found in stratigraphical horizons, its comparison is not difficult. All the complete pots are medium and small size, no large storage jars were found in complete form.

BLACK POLISH WARE

This ware of medium fabric is made of well lavigated clay and is polished on both in and outsides. The shiny polish does not suggest being NBP or Greek Black Pottery of Marshall (Marshall: 401), but could easily be fitted as its local imitation. This group sometime has light or dark grey shade effect. Wheeler dated it from fourth-third to the second century BC (Fidaullah).

Two lids from the top of section C appear to be most distinctive regarding their weight and inside treatment. They are heavy, thick and crude with black core, probably due to reduction. The clay with high concentration of mica particles is well lavigated and mixed with a good percentage of sand. Mottled on both the sides, it is burnished on the outer surface only. Probably they were used as lids for tall storage jars.

GREY WARE

Smaller vases made of well lavigated clay represent this type of ware. The firing is uniform and the potsherds exhibit bleaching surfaces. The colour of these vessels varies from grey brown to grey and black.

The whole lot is unpainted and completely devoid of any decoration except for some internal grooves of a single encircled line.

The range of forms includes complete bowels and potsherds of small vases with straight and out turned rims. Carinated as well as tapering-sided bowls also occur.

OTHER HELLENISTIC TERRACOTTA FINDS

Reg. No. 302; Trench No. H IV. 7; Layer No. 3; Pls. 7-9

A handmade male head in red-ware with pinkish wash and strongly pronounced features has coiled turban, hair falling straight on the back in incised lines and not combed back from the forehead. The forehead is occupied by protruding trefoil with concave leaves, probably showing fertility. He wears appliqué moustaches with a sharp bowed nose. His ears and head top are pierced, while his long eyes with heavy lids are half closed. A hole in the neck was probably provided for its attachment to the torso, now lost. He is shown in half profile to his left. The features strongly marked and the moulding exceptionally firm and clean indicates a fine appreciation of form and line. Decidedly superior in style and execution, it seems to be a personal portrait.

Reg. No. 305; Trench No. IV. 20; Layer No. 5; Pl. 14

The only terracotta plaque recovered from the site is in red-ware and washed in the same colour. It shows heads of a male and a female figures respectively on the left and right. The male wears a turban and elongated earrings, while the rich headgear of the female touches the turban of the male. Two floral studs stuck at the ear-level in the headgear on either side of the head. Marshall reports such specimens, dated to 3rd-2nd century BC from Bhir Mound, Taxila (Marshall: 449-50).

Reg. No. 423; Trench No. H/IV; Layer No. 8

A terracotta small almost in round head detached from its missing body has a flattened head and wearing a close fitting, a Greek cap. This may well have been copied from a contemporary Hellenistic coin type.

Reg. No. 303; Trench No. H/IV-20; Layer No. 4

A terracotta female small head damaged and broken off from its missing body is poorly fired and highly simplified. Head-dress is round in shape.

Reg. No. 440; Trench No. G/V-20; Layer No. 1; Pl. 13

Arm of a human figurine made of a well lavigated clay has black core and a band on the wrist painted in black. Wrist and fingers are indicated by incisions.

Reg. No. 442; Trench No. I/V/25; Layer No. 6; Pl. 4

Fragment of an embossed pot, clay well levegated, polished in red outside, inside is light grey. It is decorated on the outer surface with a moulded or stamped vine-scroll depicting pronouncedly stalks and a bunch of grapes. Lower register has radiating suns or some sort of arrow-decoration.

Reg., No. 443; Pl. 10a

A red polished fragment of a terracotta pot decorated with figural design is an embossed specimen, also found at Bhir Mound in Taxila (Marshall: 434). On the convex outer face a lady figure with swollen breasts and thin waist is shown standing. The pronounced facial features and lower abdomen are decidedly Indian in character. On her right a defaced figure, probably male, is holding a branch in his right hand. A tree, reel and beaded patterns surround the whole scene.

Trench No. I/V/25; Layer No. 6

Fragment of a handmade pot, showing ritual scene, probably belongs to a tile that has no parallel in the previously published reports.

Trench No. I.V 15; Layer No. 9 (pit); Pl. 15-16

This emblematic impression in the centre of an open-mouthed bowl is encircled by six concentric bands. Its out flaring sides make a good room for viewer to see the embossed figures on its flat round bottom. Two figures, a male and a female, are shown full of movement. Base of the bowl is concave. The pot may have been used for some kind of ritual. It has medium fabric and its clay and appearance are not so refined as can be seen in other decorative pots.

SCYTHO-PARTHIAN POTTERY

This kind of pottery includes water pitchers, storage vessels, cooking pots, trays, bowls, pedestal-dishes, etc. It has coarse thin fabric with well lavigated clay, mixed with no organic substance, uniformly fired and fully oxidised. Pitchers have black painted bands on their shoulders. Appliqué bands, in rope design, are found on heavy large storage jars.

There are examples of very fine small vessels with delicate fabric, about 1.0mm thick. The majority of bowls is painted in black at the top of the rim. The decorative patterns horizontal and vertical bands, concentric circles, strokes, plain and stylised dots are the typical features of the Scytho-Parthian pottery.

THE KUSHAN PERIOD POTTERY

The storage jars are decorated with cordons, either grooved in the middle or twisted like a rope, is the predominant type of the Kushana period pottery. It has five sub-types: Large jars with out-turned rims, large jars with externally thickened flat rims, jars with tapering rims, jars with thickened incurved rims and jars with vertical necks.

Besides these we collected handles of large cooking pans along with spouts of painted red ware either curved in the middle or straight. Spouts, particularly the straight ones, were made separately and then luted to the pot in leather hard condition.

Two shallow pans are provided with claw-shaped side handles. The handle girdled by clay fillets and roundels is applied on the inner side. We have unearthed the following three types: pans with claw-shaped handles luted on the edge of the rim, semi circular handles and perforated lugs.

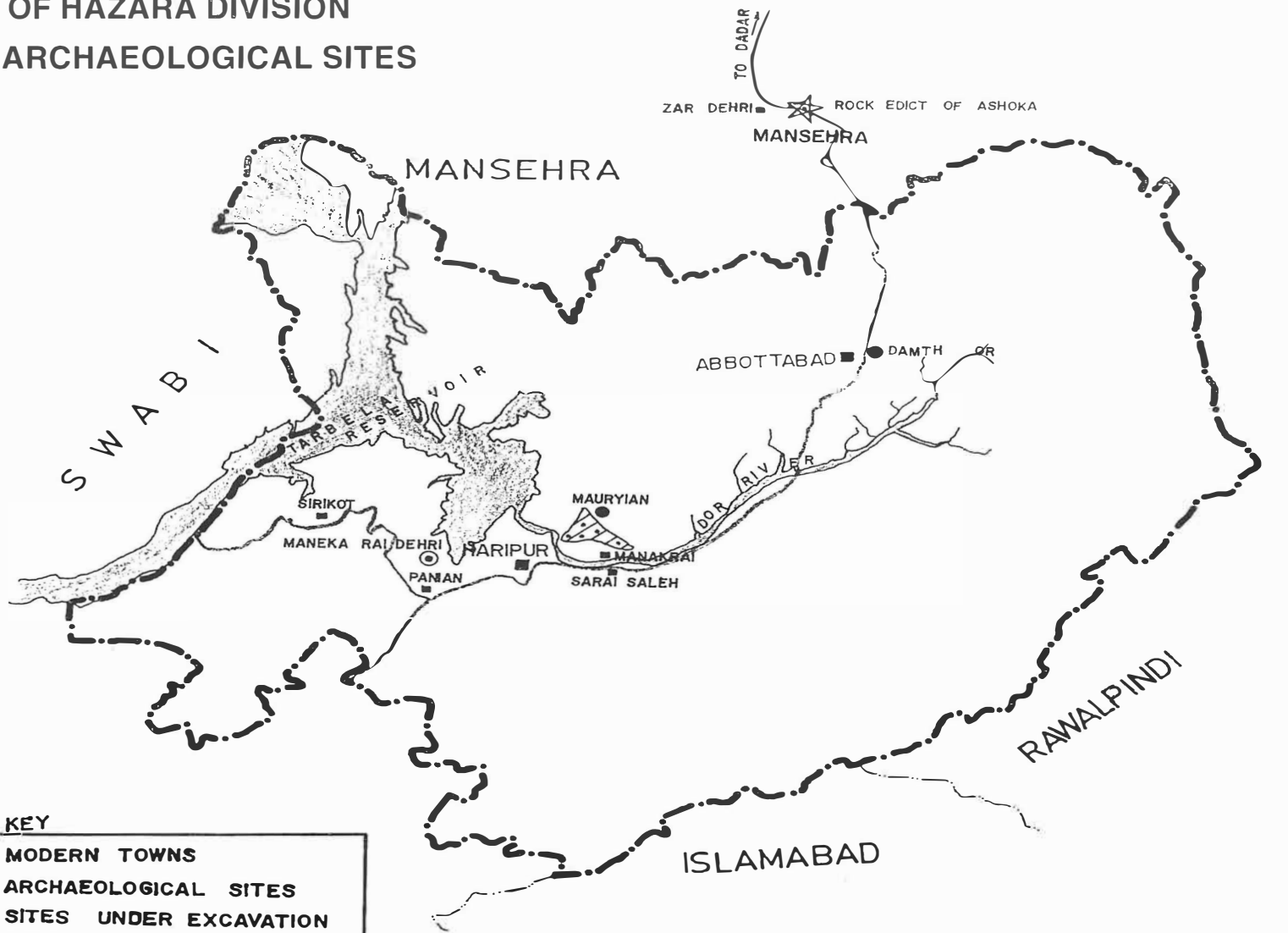
THE HINDU SHAHI PERIOD POTTERY FROM SECTOR 'C'

The fabric varying from thin to thick, this type of pottery includes storage jars, water pitchers, drinking bowls, dishes, cooking pots, small jars, etc. The decorative patterns are horizontal and vertical bands, loops, triangles, horizontal and vertical strokes, floral designs, stamped decoration mostly rosettes, concentric circles, bars and dots. Handles and spouts have applied as well as painted decoration.

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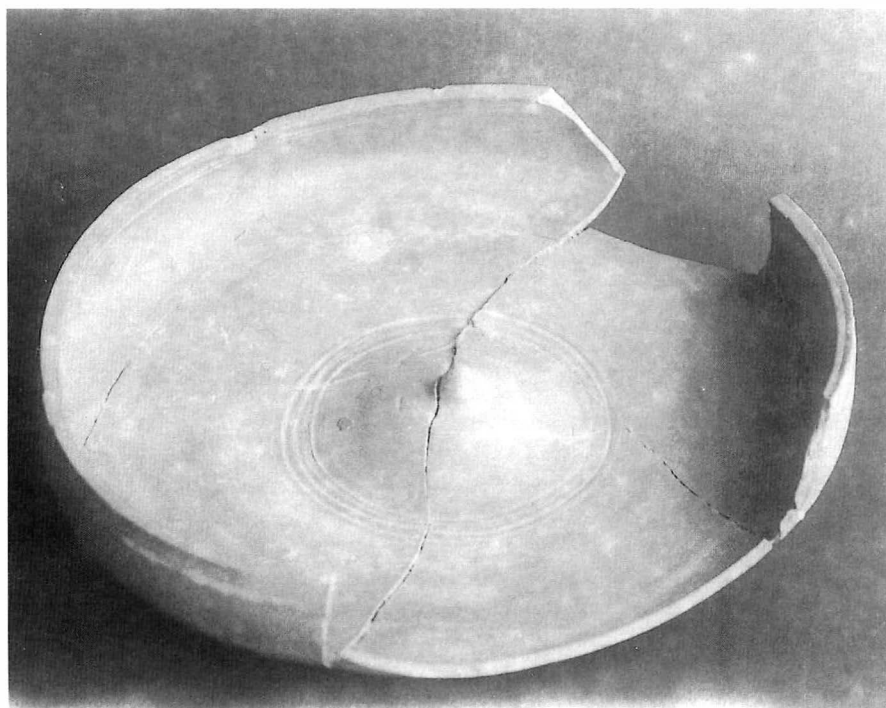
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PART OF HAZARA DIVISION WITH ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

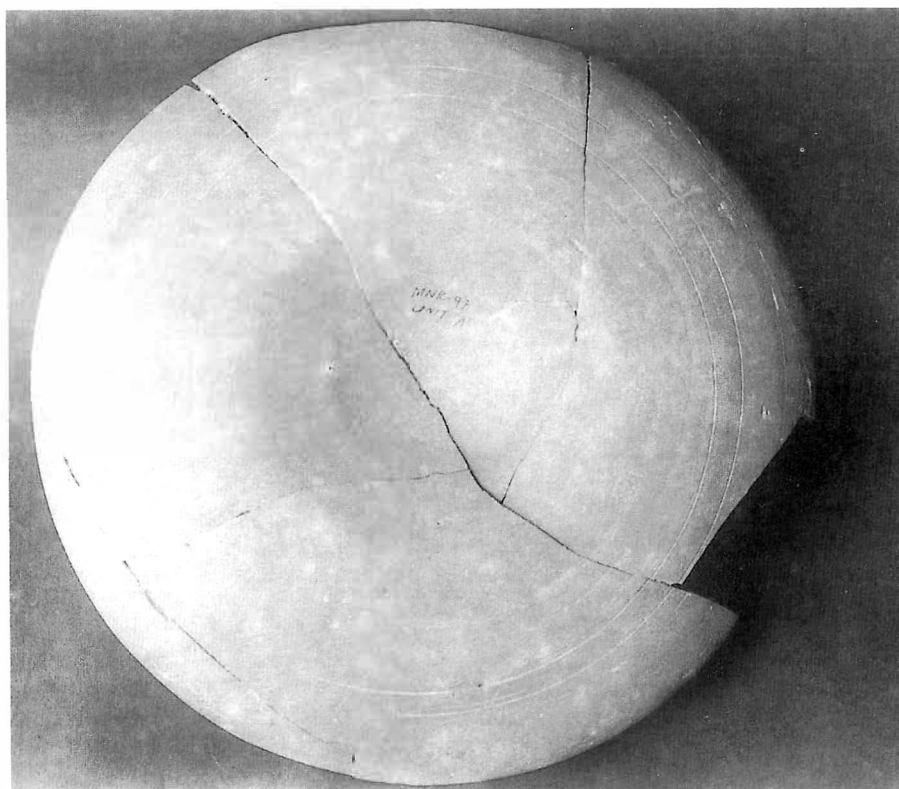


KEY	
■	MODERN TOWNS
●	ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES
⊙	SITES UNDER EXCAVATION
⊕	NEWLY DISCOVERED SITES
★	ROCK EDICT OF ASHOKA

KM 15 10 5 0 15 30KM



Pl. 1: A round terracotta dish with projecting boss in the centre.



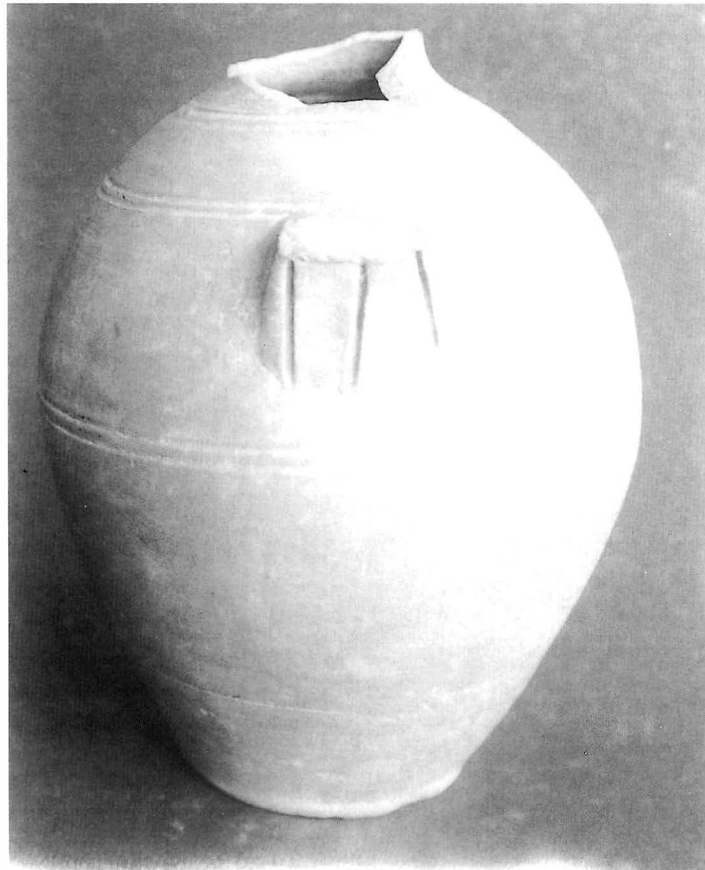
Pl. 2: Back view of the above.



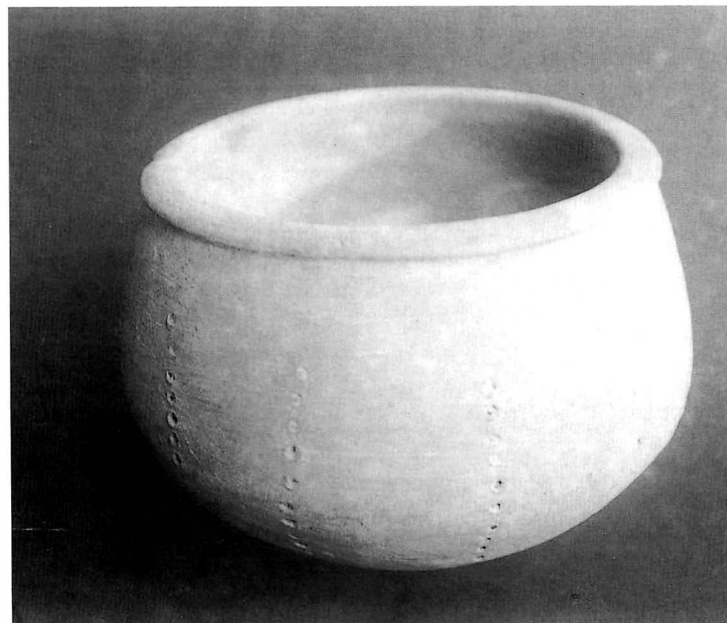
Pl. 3: An embossed moulded ware showing vine plant and a gazelle.



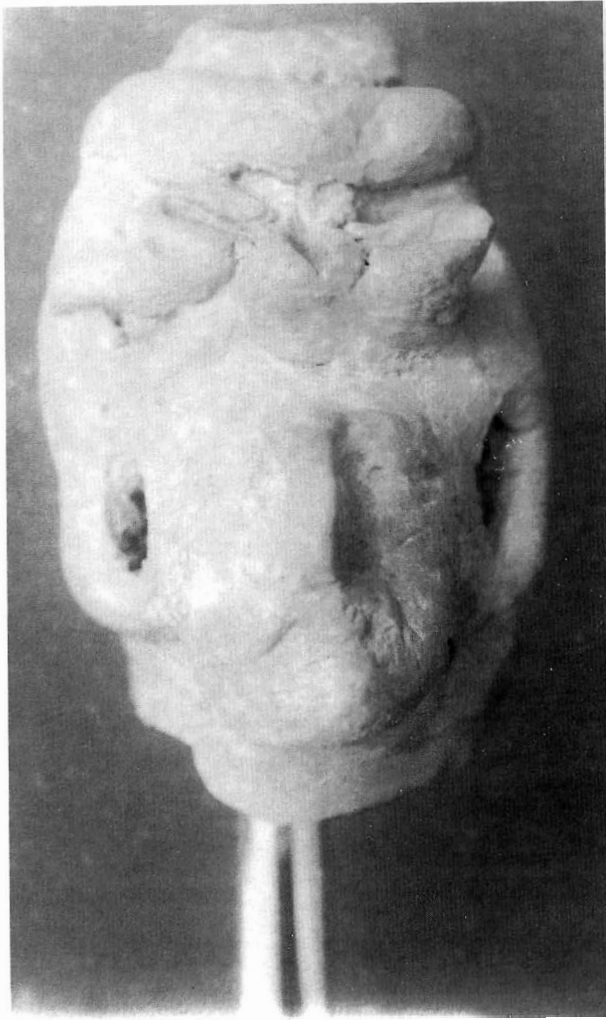
Pl. 4: Fragment of an embossed pot depicting stamped vine scrolls.



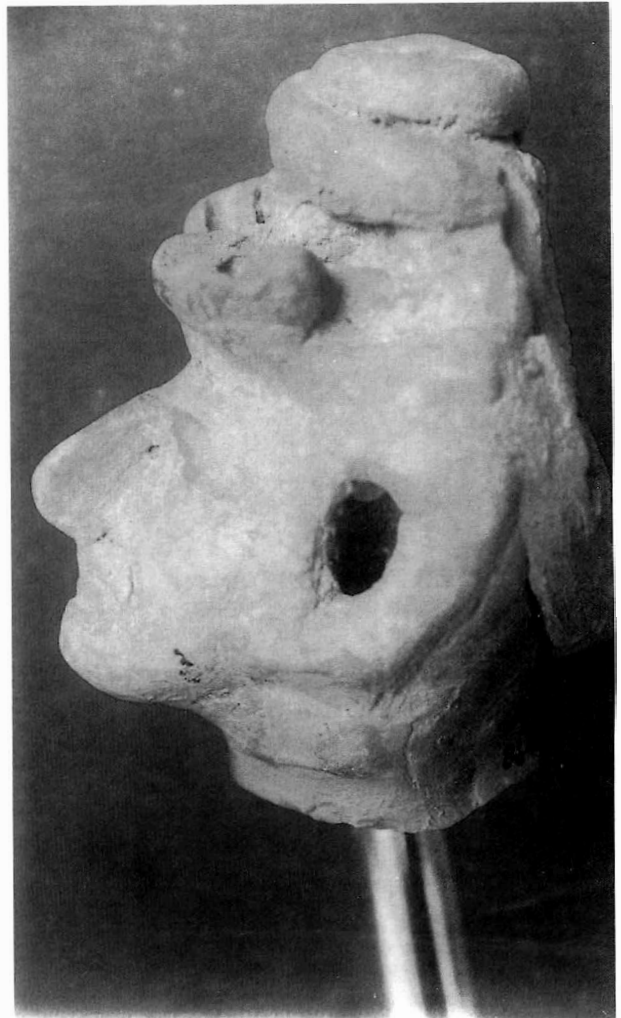
Pl. 5: Oval-shaped and narrow-necked bottle/jar.



Pl. 6: Redware bowl from trench B/6 layer 2.



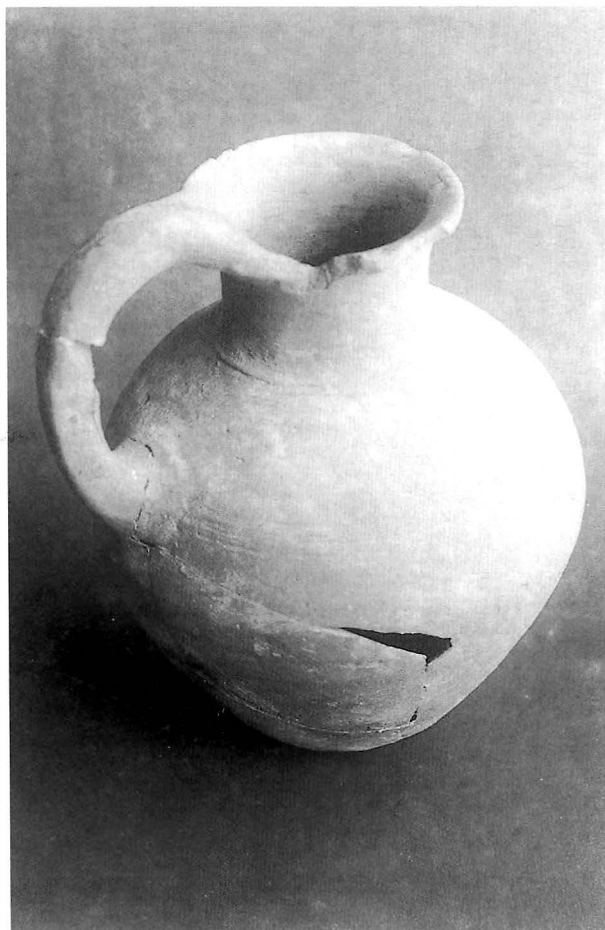
Pl. 7: Handmade male head: Front view.



Pl. 8: Left hand side view of the above



Pl. 9: Back view of the above head showing combed hair.



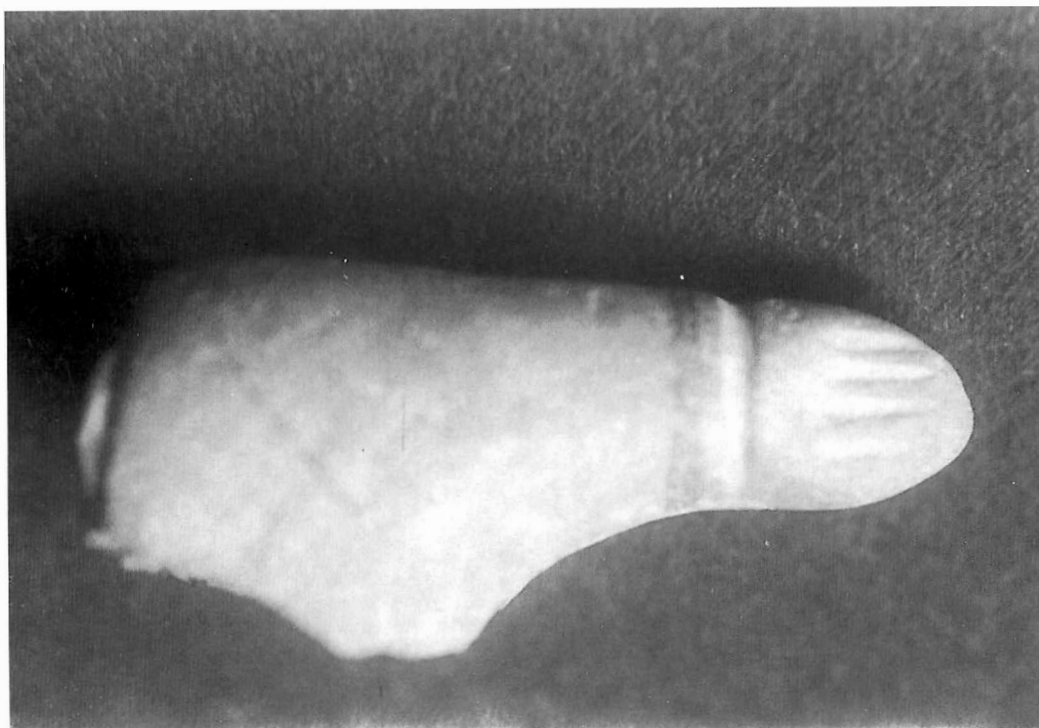
Pl. 10: A redware handled vessel.



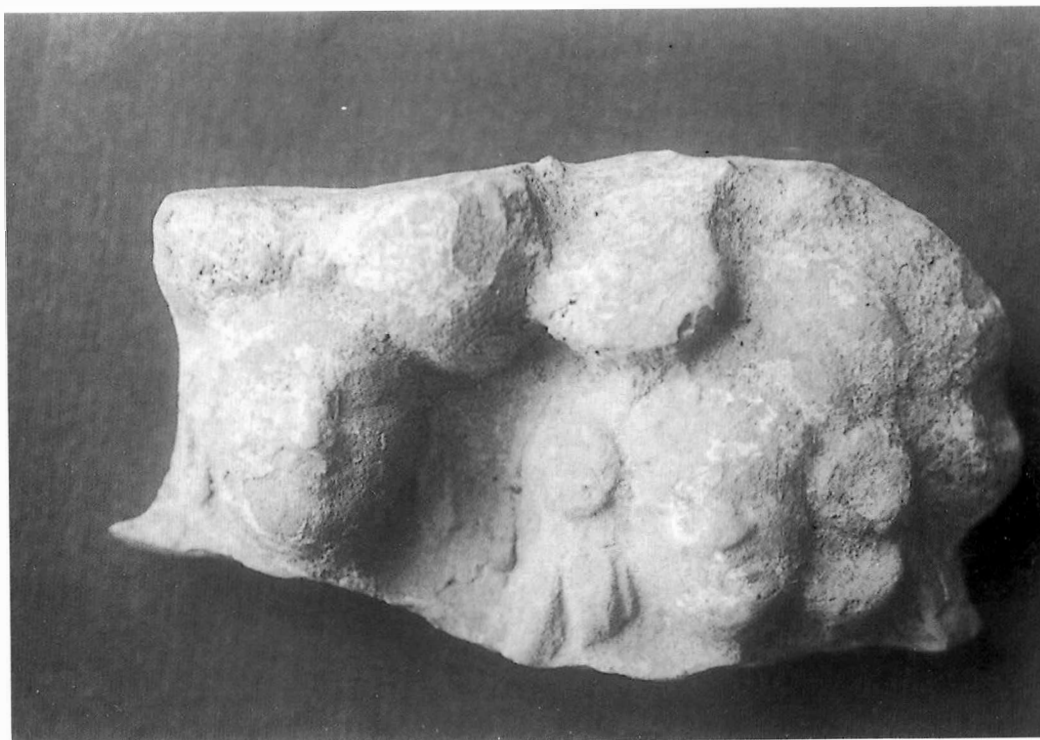
Pl. 11: Two small pots.



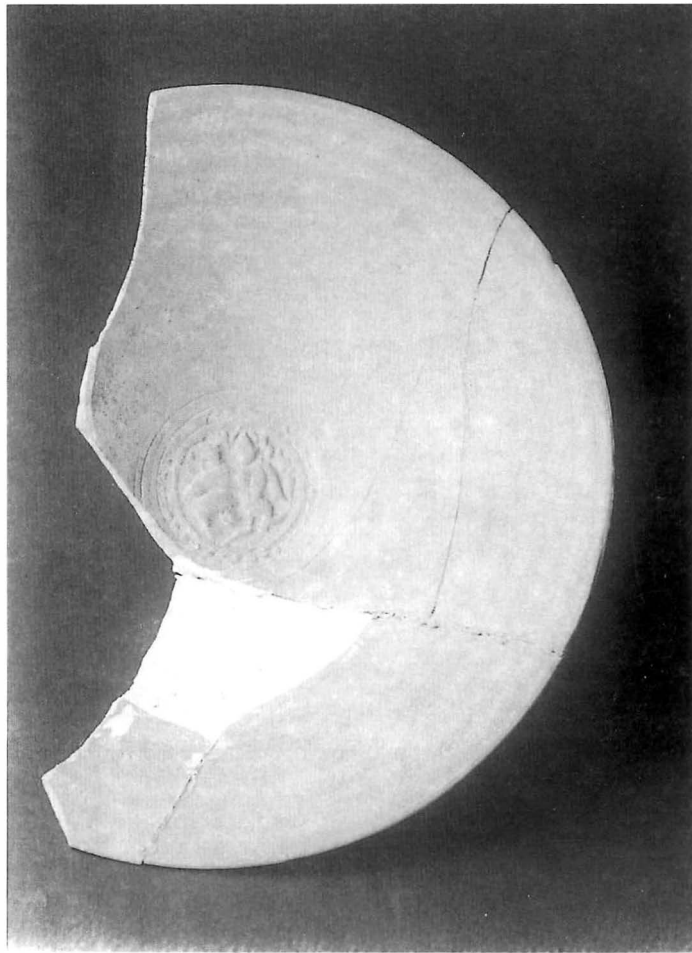
Pl. 12: Globular small pots.



Pl. 13: Detached left arm of a human figurine showing a black band on the wrist.



Pl. 14: Redware broken plaque showing heads of a male and a female figures.



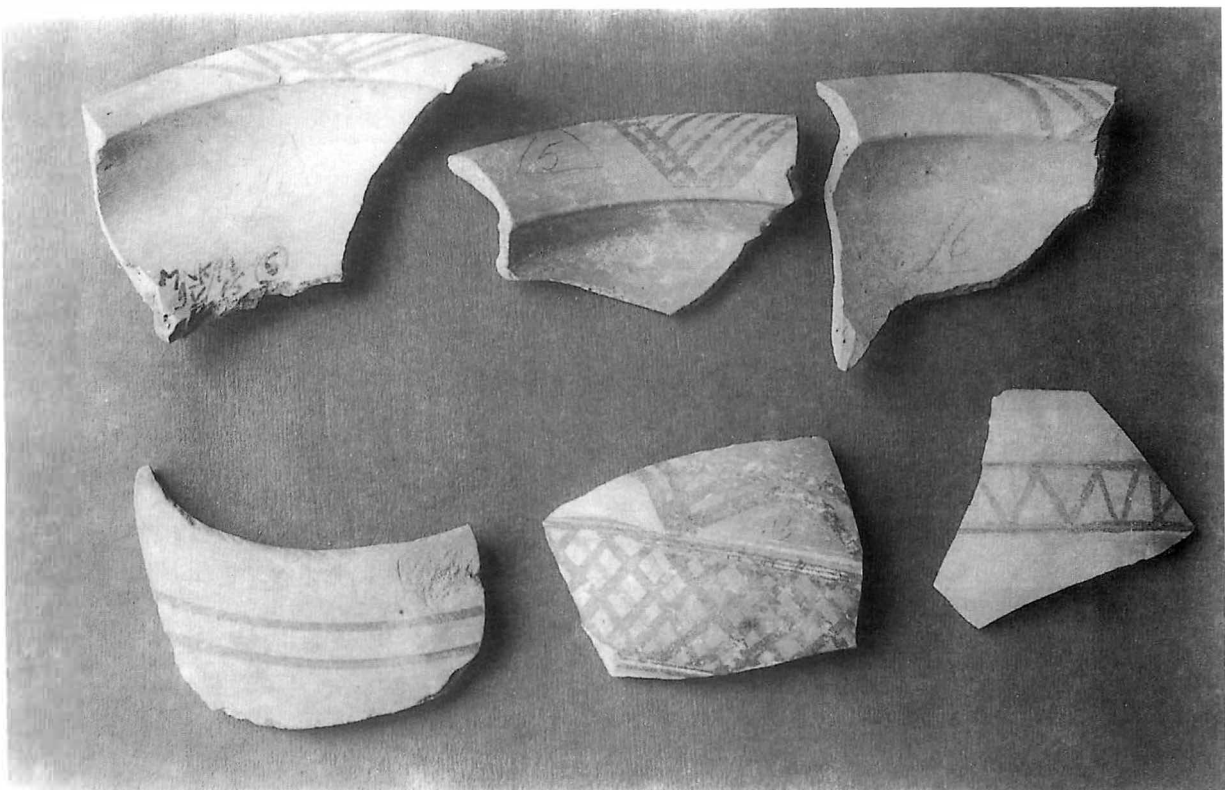
Pl. 15: Open-mouthed bowl showing at the front bottom a pair of male and female figures.



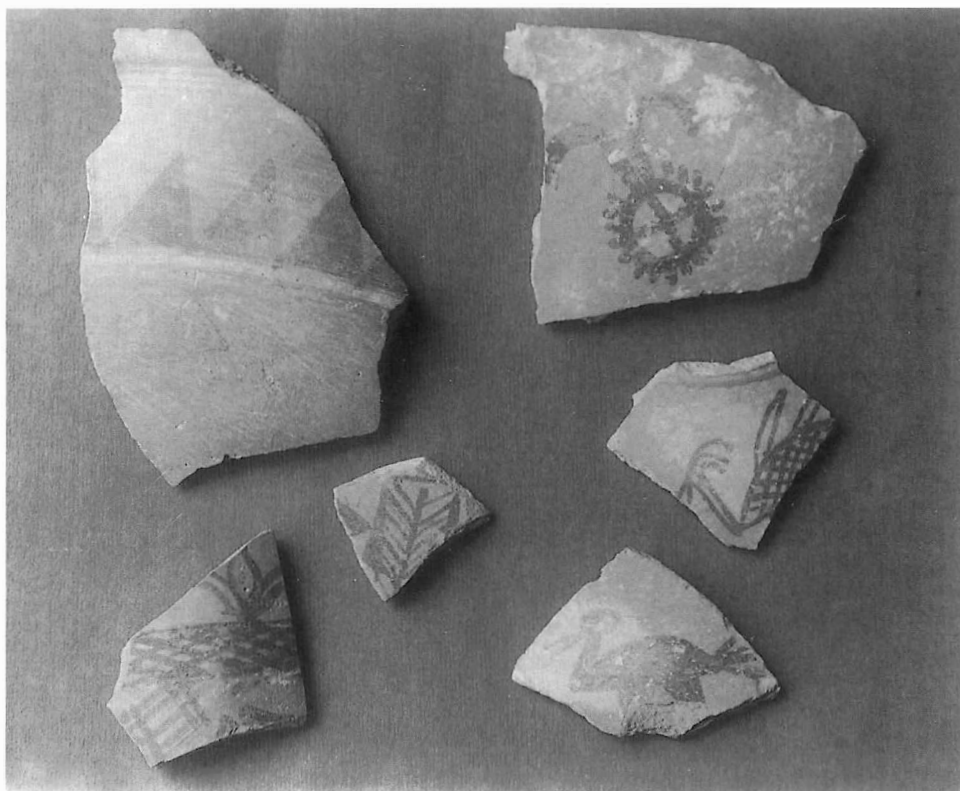
Pl. 16: Details of the above figures.



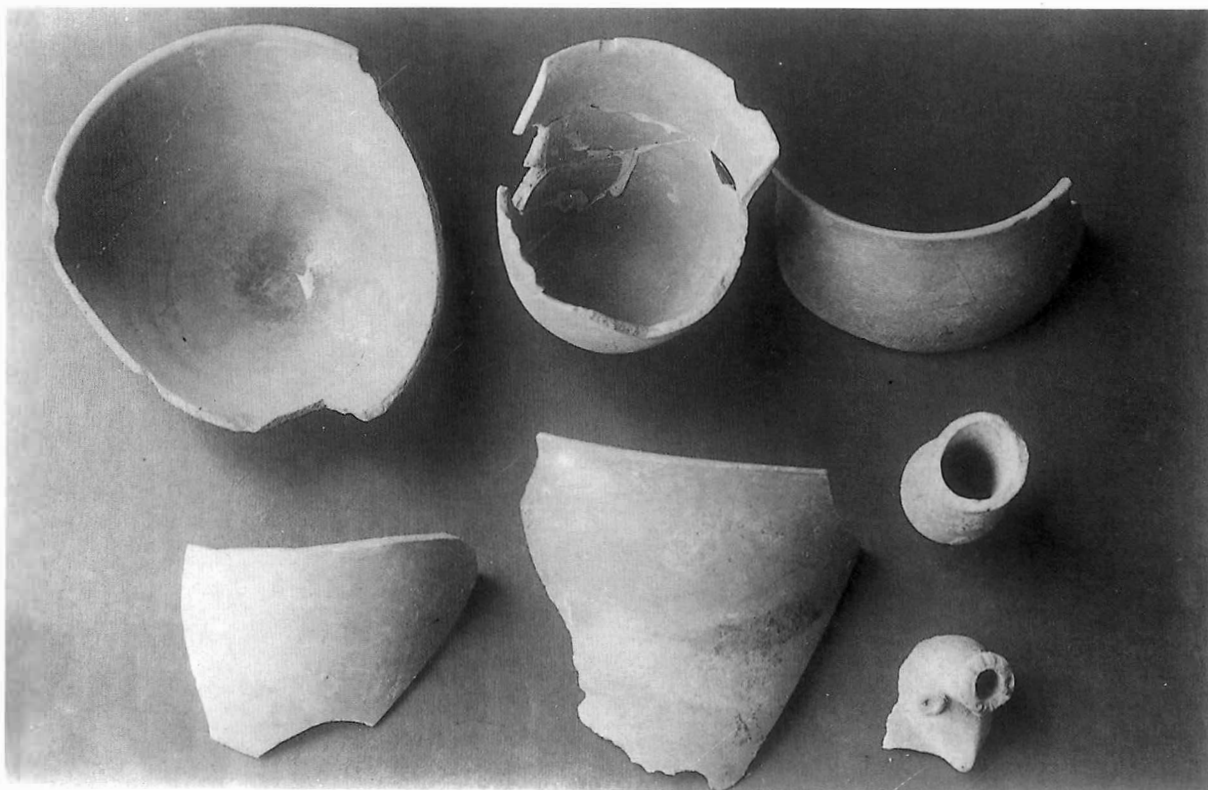
Pl. 17: Miscellaneous rims showing decoration in black on red.



Pl. 18: Body sherds depicting various geometric designs in black on red surface.



Pl. 19: Pot sherds in red ware decorated with zoomorphic and geometric patterns in black.



Pl. 20: Miscellaneous redware fragmentary vessels.



Pl. 22: Utility Ware.



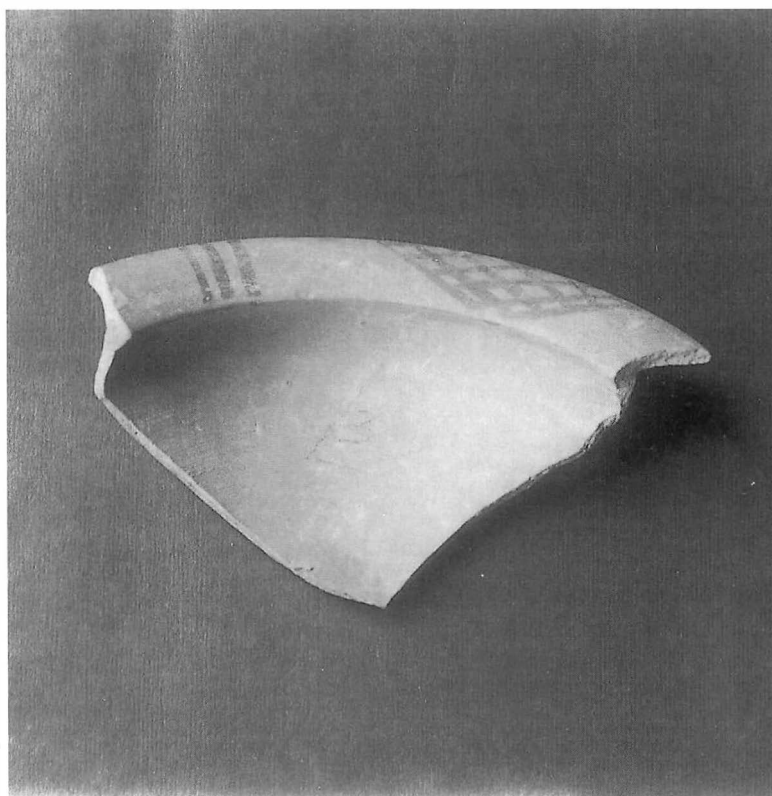
Pl. 21: Utility Ware.



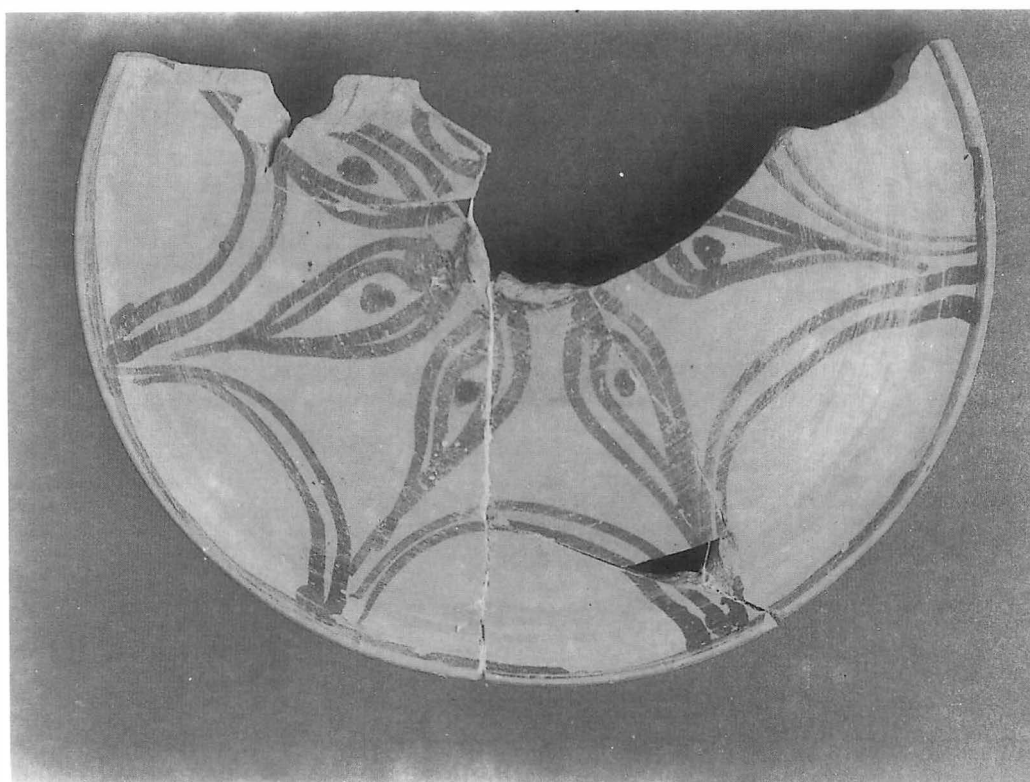
Pl. 23: Utility Ware.



Pl. 24: Fragment of red-polished terracotta pot showing human representation (female figures is prominent).



Pl. 25: Decoration in black on the rim of a bowl.



Pl. 26: Black-on-red decoration on the interior of a pot.