

Stamped Terracotta Cakes from Tochi Gomal Phase at Jhandi Babar: A New Element

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We are delighted to contribute this article to the felicitation (now commemoration) volume for Professor Dr. Farzand Ali Durrani, who spent the best and most academically productive parts of his life in the Gomal Plain in a range of archaeological investigations, particularly the excavation of Rehman Dheri for many seasons. In this article we report on an interesting discovery of terracotta cakes from a site in the Gomal Plain that significantly pre-dates the Harappan period (the period with which terracotta cakes are invariably associated).

The site of Jhandi Babar-A lies approximately 50 km south west of Dera Ismail Khan City and 2 km north of the modern Jhandi village (Khan 1998; Swati and Ali 1998; Rehman 1997; Figs 1 & 2; Pl. 1). It has a very extensive surface scatter of artefacts of two distinct periods: a late Neolithic/Chalcolithic phase, mid late 5th millennium BC, as is also found at type site of Sheri Khan Tarakai in the Bannu Division and a Chalcolithic phase, early mid 4th millennium BC (Khan, Knox, Thomas, 1991), as found at Gumla 2 (Dani 1971), Rehman Dheri I (Durrani 1988), Lewan 1 (Khan, Knox, Thomas, Morris, 2000), Lak Largai, etc. The latter has been termed the 'Tochi Gomal phase' (Khan, Knox and Thomas, 2000b). The site measures approximately 666m east-west and 585m north-south. In the southwest area of the site is a modern graveyard to the northeast of this is a small excavation trench dug in 1998 by the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, showing 5m deep stratigraphy having two cultural phases. On the basis of the excavation report recently published (Ali and Khan 2001), two distinct cultural phases have been found. Period I (the lower; belonging to the Neolithic period) and the upper one, Period II, said to belong to the early Bronze Age, or Kot Dijian. The excavators have wrongly identified the upper period, i.e. period II as Kot Dijian because it is definitely Tochi-Gomal Phase.

The ceramics of Period II at Jhandi Babar, typical of the Tochi Gomal phase, are usually polychrome pots in fine well-levigated clay, well fired and wheel made. Pottery forms are usually bowls, jars and large flat dishes or platters.

BOWLS: There are plain and carinated bowls with simple and flaring rims. One complete bowl has a ring foot. The painting on the exterior of the bowls is in black, brown, red and dark green (Pl. 2). Dominated by loops, the decorative designs include circles, fish scales, a stepped motif, vertical line (Pl. 3) and crane motifs are also found (Pl. 4). There are few jars, some are wide and some are narrow mouthed.

DISHES AND PLATTERS: These have internal decoration, often polychrome (Pls. 5,6,7). Their external surface is either plain or with a creamy slip, burnished or unburnished but not painted.

Associated with the ceramics are stamped terracotta cakes, which have been collected in a large number from the surface of the site. The occurrence of stamped terracotta cakes (hereafter referred to as T/C cakes) in the Tochi Gomal phase (early mid 4th millennium BC) at Jhandi Babar-A in abundance is an important new element in the material culture of the Protohistoric period site in the Gomal plain. The stamped impressions of the T/C cakes exhibit a variety of rosettes (Pls. 10-11 and 13-16), scorpion, house/cottage like motifs (?; Pl. 12) and many others. Some T/C cakes have been engraved (Pl. 17). The stamped ones are the earliest known examples. They were found on the upper graves and elsewhere on the highest surfaces of the site. They occur in three shapes: rectangular "bricks"; oval with rounded ends; and oval with pointed ends (Pl. 8-9). All are handmade from ground up pottery mixed with clay and possible organic materials, and then baked. The

fabric is very coarse and gritty. Some have a creamy slip. Some have pressed motifs or have shapes stamped onto them.

Terracotta cakes, in general, have sometimes been seen as fillers or spacers in pottery kilns, but the presence of stamps suggests that here at Jhandi Babar-A they have some other, more significant, function which needs to be identified. These cakes are uniquely associated with the cultural assemblage from Jhandi Babar-A/II. We do not find them at otherwise culturally-analogous sites such as Rehman Dheri-I, Gumla-II, Lak Largai-I, Lewan-I, or Ter Kala Dheri. Neither are they found at the Jhandi Babar-B site (a Kot Dijian site nearby), nor in other 'Kot Dijian' sites such as Rehman Dheri-II, Gumla-III, Hathala, Karam Shah in the Gomal Plain, or Tarakai Qila, Tarakai Ghundi, Lewan-II, Seer Dheri or Isam Chowki in Bannu. They are, of course, a well-known category of artefacts from Harappan sites, but there is nothing remotely 'Harappan' about the material culture assemblages from Jhandi Babar-A. Also, Harappan terracotta cakes are invariably plain, while those from Jhandi Babar-A, Period II are decorated in various ways, as we have described above.

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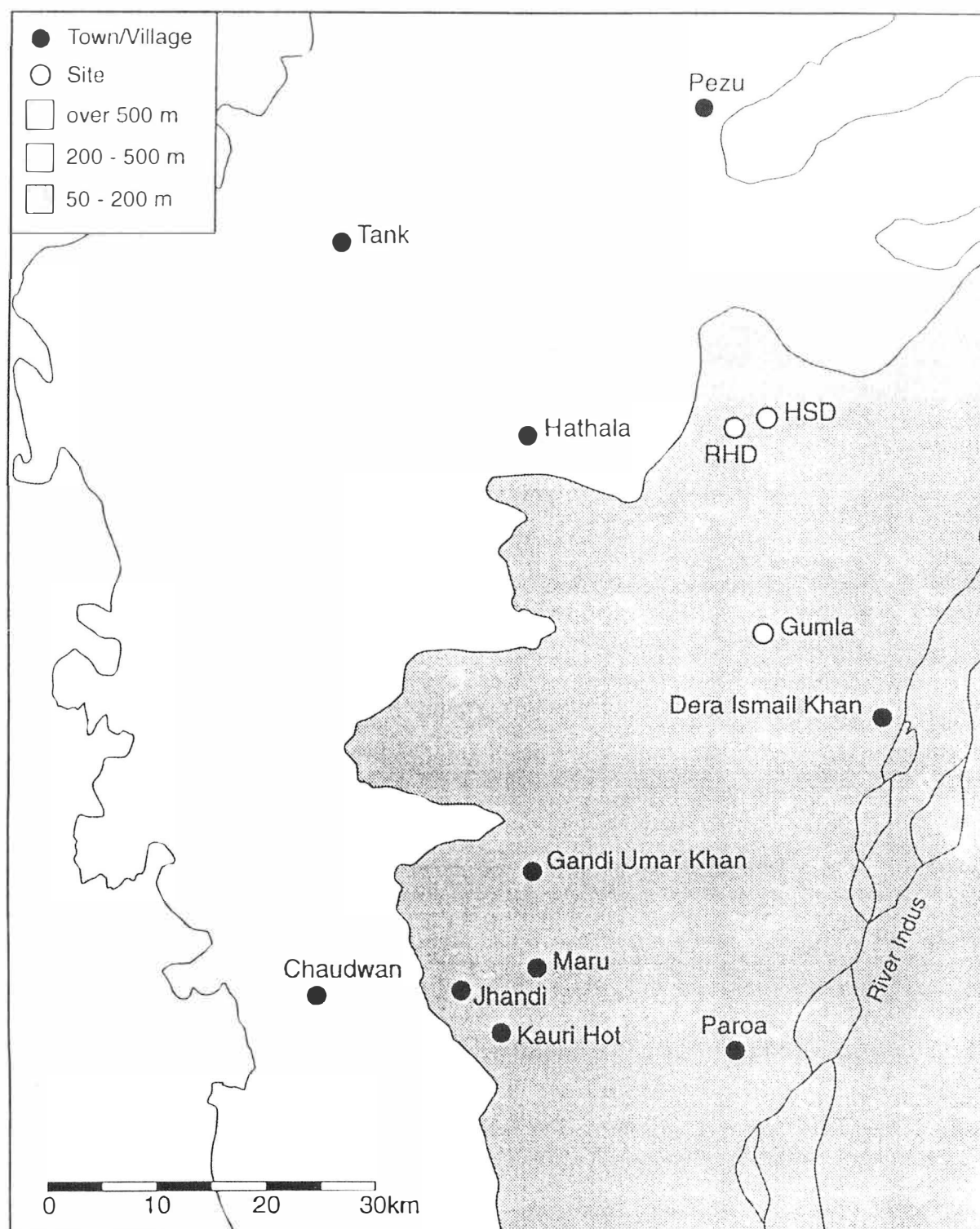


Fig. 1: Map of part of the Dera Ismail Khan district showing the locations of some important early sites (RHD=Rehman Dheri, HSD=Hisham Dheri, Jhandi, Maru, and Gandhi Umar Khan).

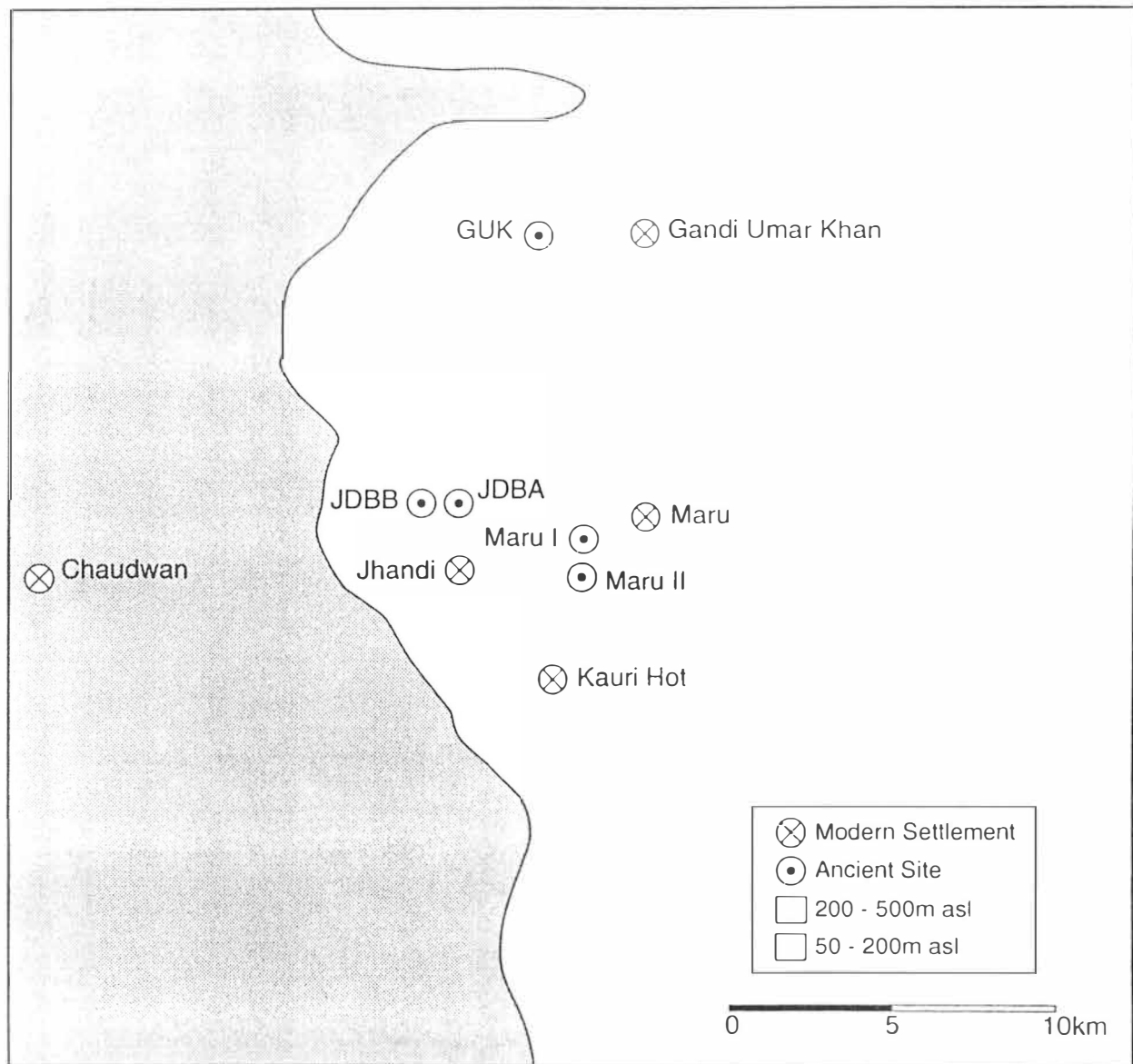
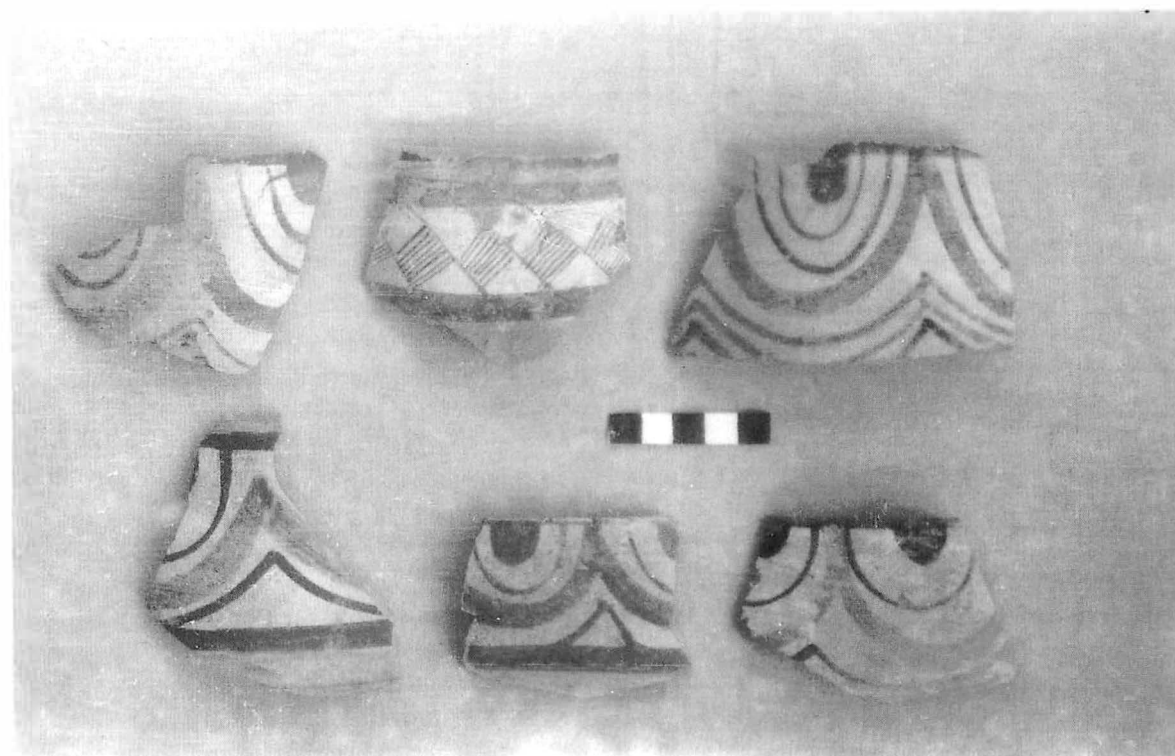


Fig. 2: Map of the Jhandi-Mar-Gandi Umar Khan Region of Dera Ismail Khan district showing the localities of the various sites reported in this article. Key to abbreviations GUK Gandhi Umar Khan site. JDBA=Jhandi Babar site A. JDBB=Jhandi Babar site B.



Pl. 1. Jhandi Babar-A. A view of the site.



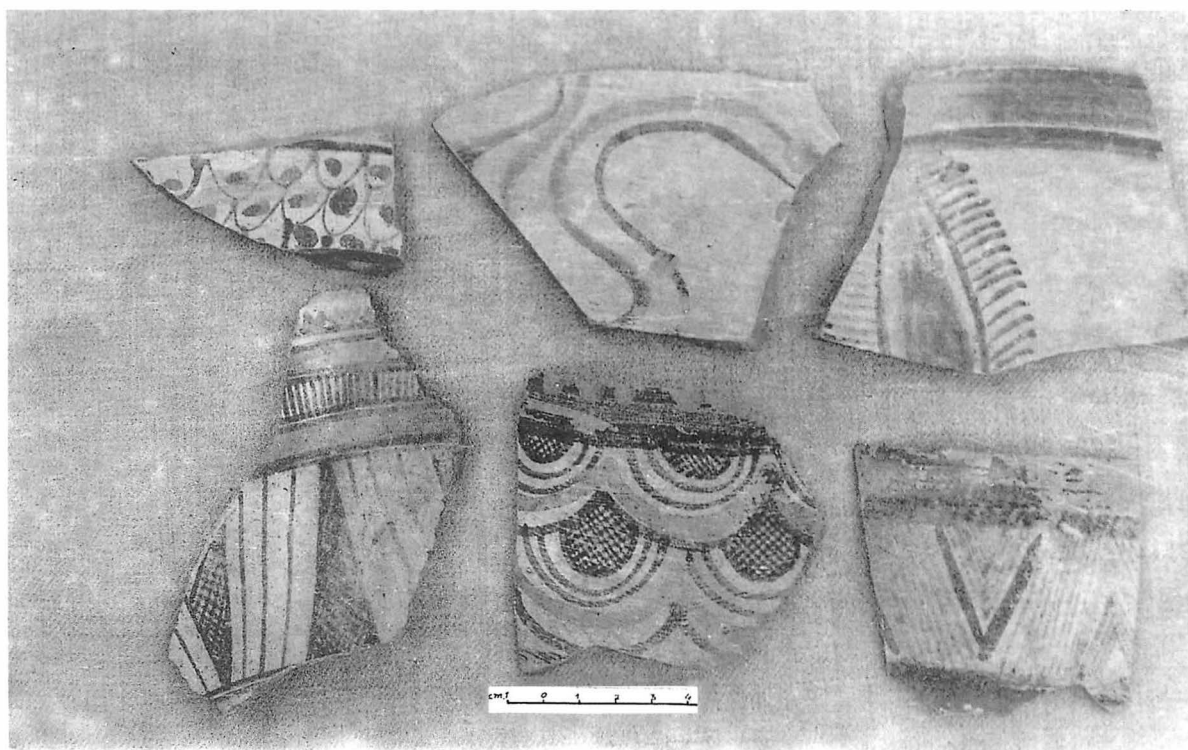
Pl. 2. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase Pottery. Painted bowls.



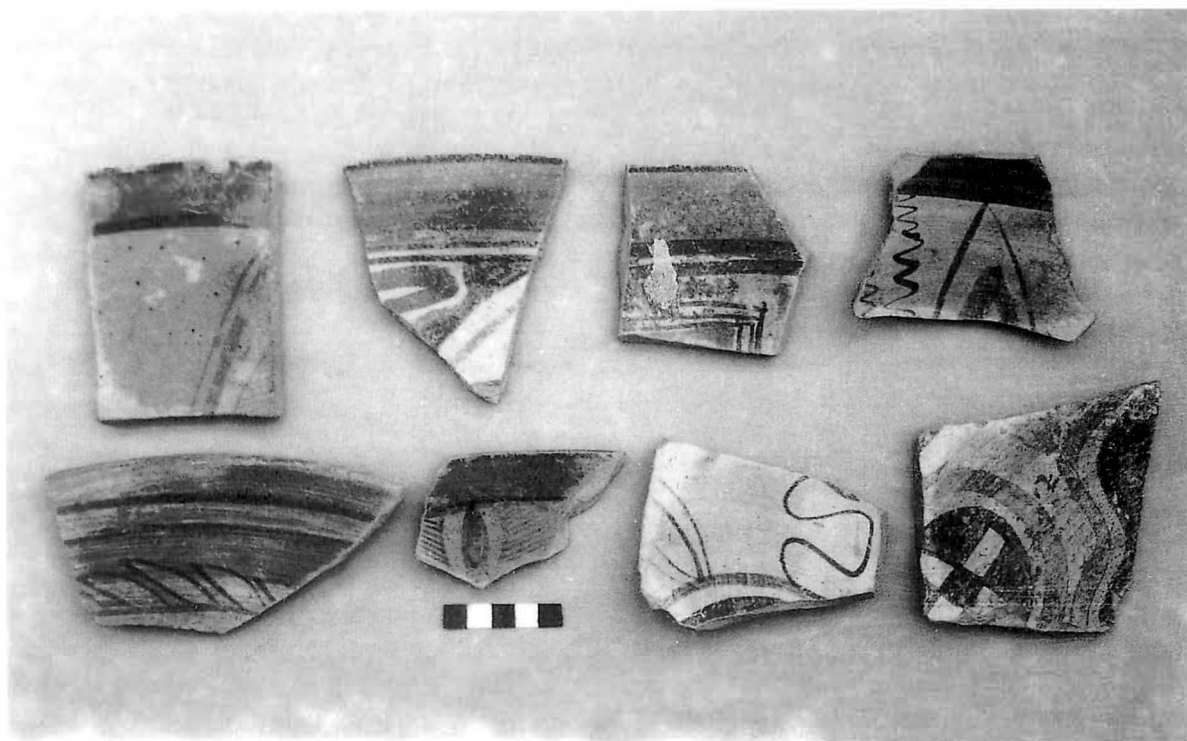
Pl. 3. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase Pottery. Painted bowls.



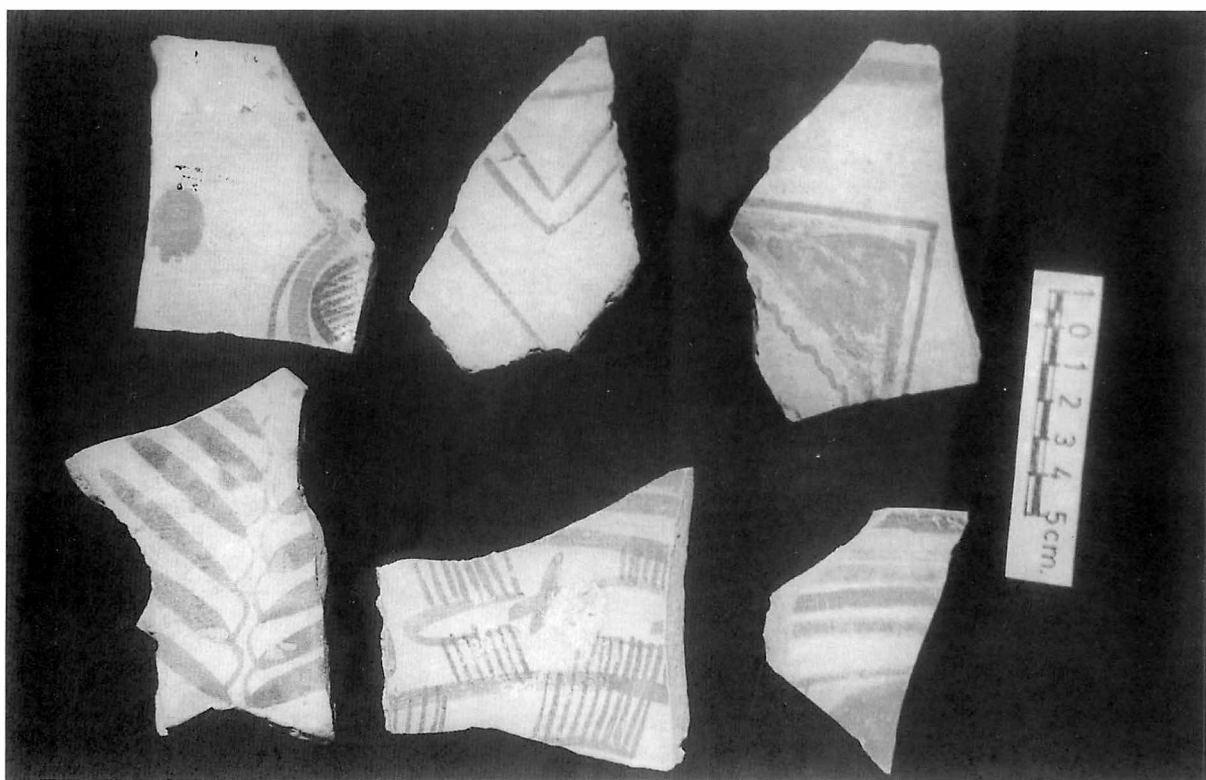
Pl. 4. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase Pottery. A bowl with crane motif.



Pl. 5. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase Pottery. Painted bowls and dishes.



Pl. 6. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase Pottery. Dishes and Platters.



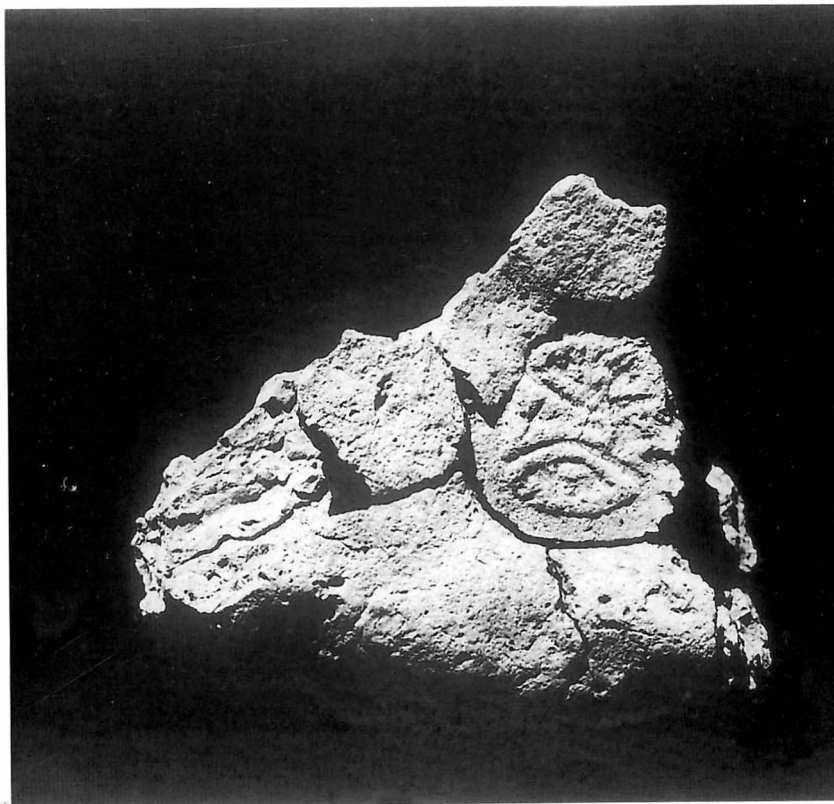
Pl. 7. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase Pottery. Dishes and Platters.



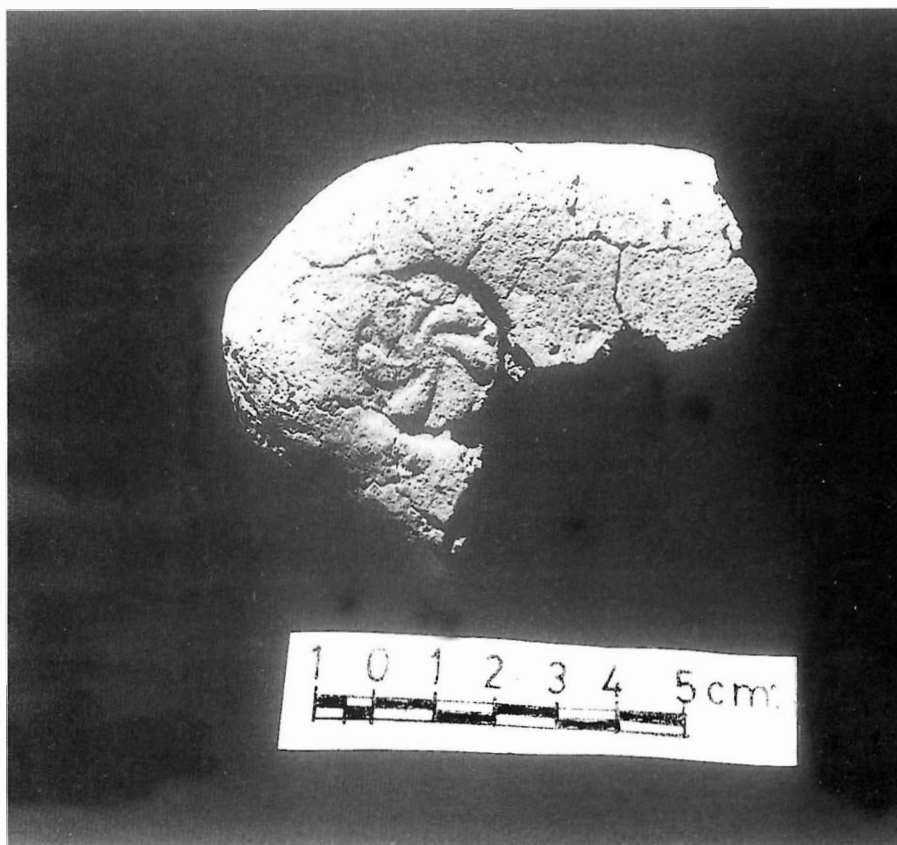
Pl. 8. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase. Stamped Terracotta cakes.



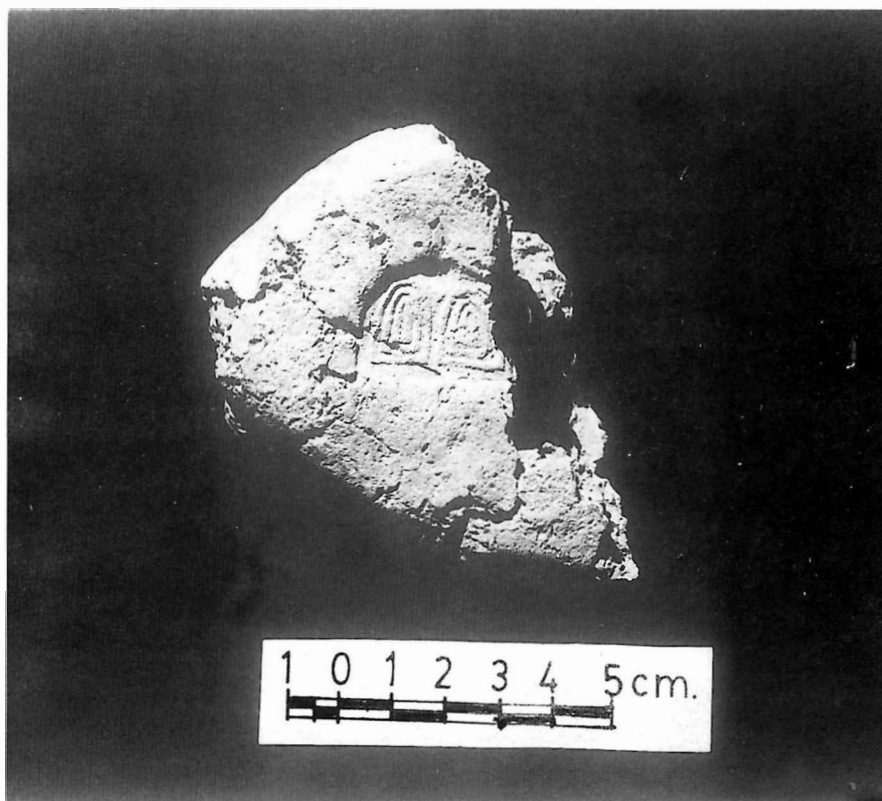
Pl. 9. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase. Stamped Terracotta cakes.



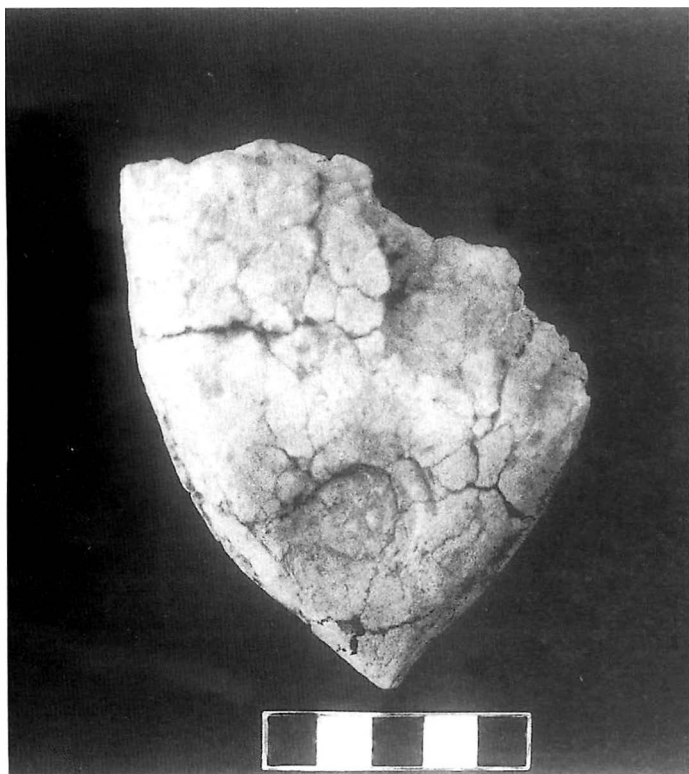
Pl. 10. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase. A Terracotta cake with stamp impression.



Pl. 11. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase. A Terracotta cake with stamp impression.



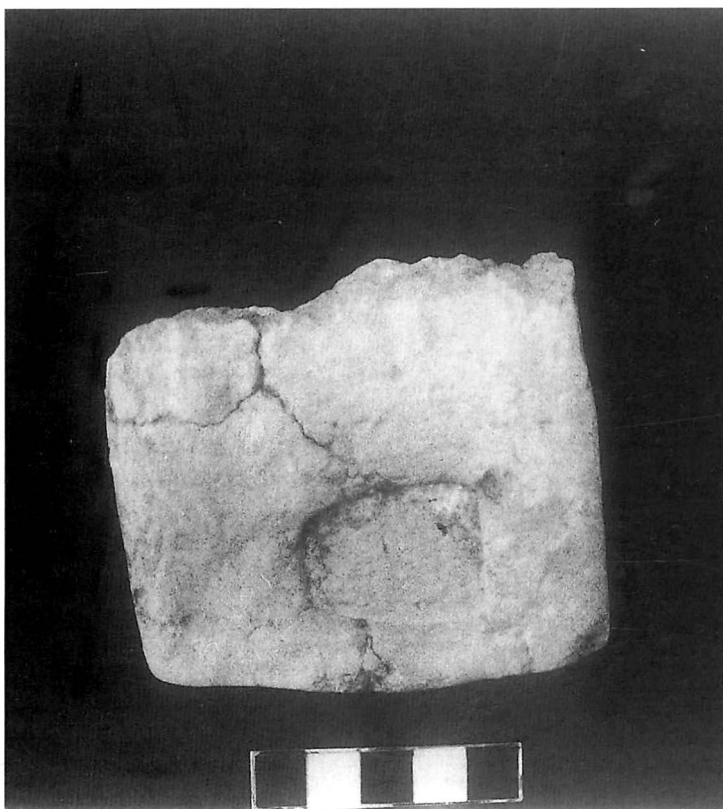
Pl. 12. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase. A Terracotta cake with house/cottage (?) Stamp mark.



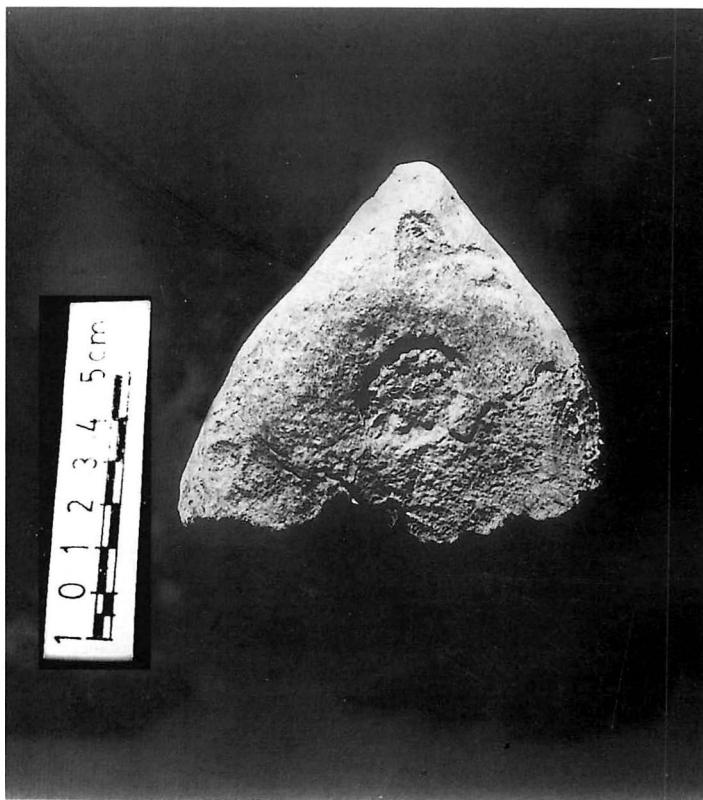
Pl. 13. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase. A Terracotta cake with stamp impression.



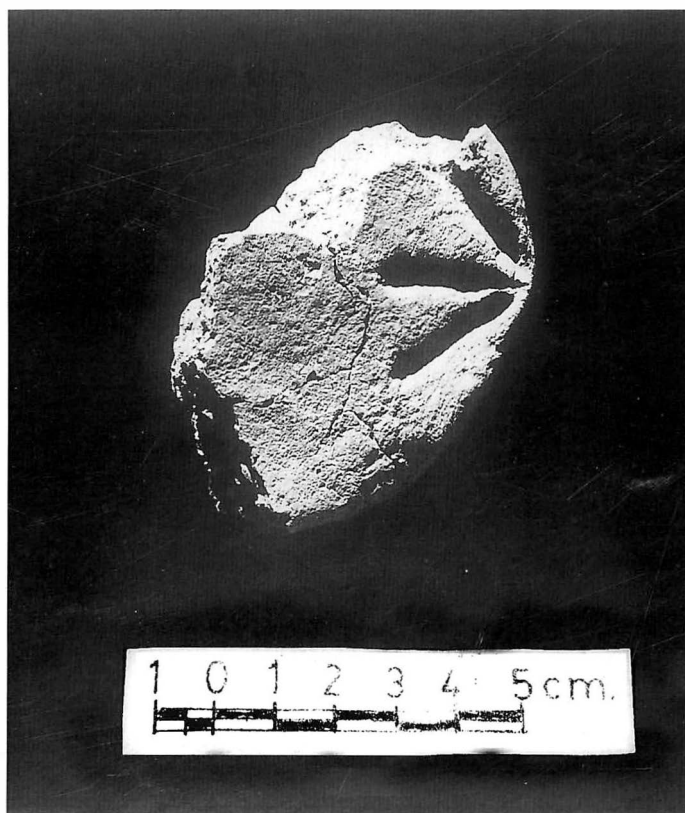
Pl. 14. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase. A Terracotta cake with stamp mark.



Pl. 15. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase. A Terracotta cake with stamp impression.



Pl. 16. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase. A Terracotta cake with rosette impression.



Pl. 17. Jhandi Babar-A. Tochi-Gomal Phase. Engraved Terracotta cake.