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Excavation of the Pashto Academy Buddhist site, Peshawar, Gandhāra (Pakistan)

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Abstract: This article presents the results of recent excavations at the Buddhist site known as the Pashto Academy Buddhist site in Peshawar, located in the ancient region of Gandhāra. The site is now occupied by the Pashto Academy; from which it takes its name. Although the site was initially explored and subjected to random excavations during the British colonial period in the early 19th century, the identity of the site and the nature of the recovered antiquities remained ambiguous. In 2013/14, the authors initiated a programme to reinvestigate the Gandhāran historical landscape, scientifically excavate the remaining part of the site, and explore the surrounding area for further archaeological remains. This article details the excavations campaign's findings and examines whether they align with the accounts of early explorers, who largely focused on Buddhist monuments located east of the Khyber Pass, near Peshawar.

Keywords: Pashto Academy, Buddhist remains, Gandhāran studies, Colonial Archaeology.

The beginning of archaeological research in ancient Gandhāra (Fig. 1), as in other parts of Pakistan and India, is primarily linked to the interests of certain European officials and explorers—often antiquarians at heart. Their passion for acquiring and excavating ancient artefacts, particularly from the Buddhist period, also sparked a competition to determine who could make the most significant discoveries and gain the greatest recognition through these historical objects[1]. Nevertheless, their fascination with ancient artefacts later paved the way for more systematic archaeological endeavours in the region during the 20th century. This is exemplified by John Marshall's and Wheeler's excavations at Balahisar in 1904 and 1948, respectively[2]. While many Hindu and Buddhist sites in Gandhāra fell victim to unsystematic excavation practices during this early stages of Gandhāran studies, some eventually benefited from more scientific research in later periods (Wheeler 1962). As mentioned above (see note 1), archaeological activities were initially largely motived by the desire to make a profit or to acquire aesthetically significant artefacts unearthed in the valleys of Taxila, Peshawar, Buner, and Swat, as well as in the tribal areas near the Khyber Pass (see Zarawar Khan and Fawad Khan 2021). The intense demand from British explorers for antiquities led to widespread and destructive looting of sites, often obliterating them without any record being made. Only a handful of sites were subjected to systematic study and documentation. Among the Buddhist sites affected by this destructive looting were several located west of Peshawar and east of the Khyber Pass. Notable examples include the Peshawar or Tehkal/Tahkāl stūpas—a group which also included the Buddhist remains at the Pashto Academy site (Fig. 1).

Location of the Site

The site is located approximately 7 kilometres from Peshawar's old city and 4 kilometres from Peshawar Cantonment. It stands on the right-hand side of the main Jamrud Road. This important route connects Pakistan to Afghanistan via the famous Khyber Pass, which has historically been a major gateway to the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, as well as a key route for invasion, pilgrimage, and communication. Relics such as the renowned Sphola stūpa in the Jamrud region can still be seen along this route[3]. The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang, who visited Gandhāra in the 7th century AD, also travelled along this road. He may have passed by the Sphola stūpa, although he does not mention it in his accounts[4].

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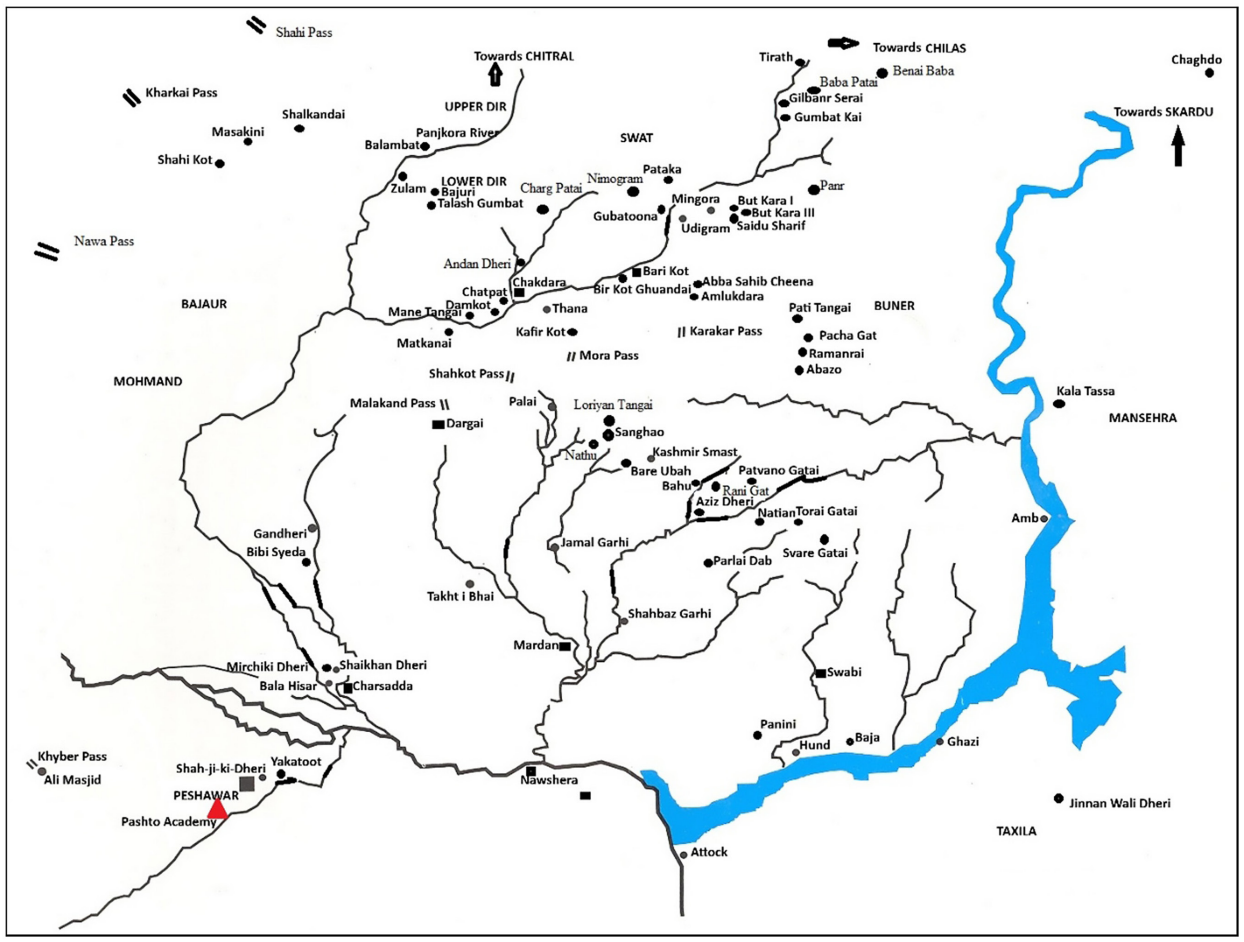


Figure 1. Map showing key archaeological site in Gandhāra. The site of the Buddhist remains at Pashto Academy is marked with a triangle

The modern building of the Pashto Academy stands on this ancient mound within the campus of the University of Peshawar (see Figs. 2, 3 and 4); the site is, therefore, known as the Pashto Academy Buddhist Remains. To the south of it lies the Muslim cemetery, which encroaches upon the remains of a Buddhist monastery or stūpa court (see below). Evidence of this can be seen in the continuous discovery of ancient structural remains while excavating in the area (see e.g. Figs. 5 and 6).

Background of the investigations in 2013-14

In September 2013, the first author of this article came across a fragment of a defaced stone Buddha head while strolling through the lawns to the east of his official residence (S-38) on the campus of the University of Peshawar. This fragment, likely detached from a large schist panel, heightened his curiosity about potential archaeological remains on campus[5]. Some of these had been recorded in British archives, while others were previously unknown to him. From that point onwards, he began searching for further evidence. To his surprise, a university professor informed him of a heavy, barrel-shaped, carved stone that had been found between Houses S-33 and S-34. The author visited the area and located the object near the entrance to the servants' quarters of the residence. It was a large *liṅga*[6], which had originally been found on the boundary line between the two houses and had long served as a bridge over the drainage channel running between them[7].



Figure 2. View of the Pashto Academy



Figure 3. Remains of the stūpa.



Figure 4. Remains of the stūpa at Pashto Academy

On another occasion, a professor living on the same campus confided in the author that he had noticed fragments of Buddhist sculptures during construction work near his home. He suggested exploring the area further and conducting formal excavations if necessary, to determine whether there were any more Buddhist remains in the area[8]. The author had previously spotted two large chattras from a stūpa in two different locations on campus in the early 1990s. One was found north of the Islamia College recreation centre, near the shop at the intersection of Turangzai Road and Recreation Centre Road. The other was found on the open ground to the south of the Muslim cemetery, near the Buddhist remains at the Pashto Academy. It appears that there were multiple Buddhist sites across the University of Peshawar campus and beyond. Some of these were destroyed during development, as was the case with Mound B in the grounds of Islamia College[9], as inferred from the Haslett report on the Buddhist sites in the area.

Although the project originally aimed to reinvestigate key Buddhist sites across Gandhāra, prevailing security concerns at the time restricted archaeological excavations to the Pashto Academy Buddhist site—a location within a secure part of the Peshawar region (see note 16). Furthermore, the ambiguous identification of this site in British historical records remained unresolved for decades and scholars could not agree on its exact location[10]. Ultimately, this situation led us to systematically excavate and diagnose the remaining potentially preserved parts of the site. Prior to this, we conducted a field survey of the surrounding area and a geophysical study of the mound. Although we did not expect optimal results—given that the site is now occupied by the Pashto Academy building and has undergone extensive excavation, particularly during the British colonial period—we proceeded with the excavation.

Excavations before 1947[11]

The first archaeological activities in the area around Peshawar began during the colonial period in the early 19th century. Among the early sites explored during this time were several stūpas located west of the city of Peshawar and east of the Khyber Pass. Notably, these included the sites known as the Peshawar stūpas or the three Tehkal topes, which also consisted the remains of the Pashto Academy Buddhist site (see below).

All three stūpas were likely subject to ongoing excavation by various European explorers from 1833 onwards. The earliest recorded mention of these Buddhist remains can be found in the report of A. Burnes, the explorer who was sent to Central Asia in 1832 with J.G. Gerard of the Bombay Army to gather information on countries beyond India's borders[12]. In his report, A. Burnes estimated that the site was located five miles from the city. The two most important points in the report are therefore the distance of the site from Peshawar and its condition. The distance between the city and the University of Peshawar is estimated at 8.5 kilometres (about 5 miles), corresponding to the south-west position of the university or the western boundary of the university campus. Tehkal is approximately 4 kilometres from the city. At the time of A. Burnes's visit, Tehkal was probably the only known and closest inhabited area west of Peshawar. Therefore, the mention of the presence of the tope in Tehkal does not mean that the tope was found in the village itself, but rather in an area that remained the communal property of the Tehkalees, extending west of the present day Islamia College University campus which is adjacent to and to the west of the Peshawar University.

It remains unclear which specific explorers visited or excavated which stūpas (topes) before P. Haslett, who left sketch drawings of his activities in the area (see Haslett 1876: 238-39). Buddhist remains have also been observed northwest of Tehkal, and A. Burnes may have been referring to one of those sites. We assume he meant a stūpa southwest of the University of Peshawar, on its present campus; but A. Burnes's report does not clearly state the direction. He noted that the site was in an advanced state of disrepair, making its original design indecipherable. Yet the surviving remains suggest that by the early 19th century the stūpa was probably in good condition, perhaps preserved down to the drum. If A. Court referred to the same site as Burnes (see below), the two accounts show major discrepancies.

However, based on the surviving records, E. Errington believed that the Sappers had only excavated at Tahkāl Bālā. She thought that this was the site now occupied by the University of Peshawar (Errington 1987a: 305)[13]. Loewenthal also visited the site in 1861 and published his observations on its condition and findings (Isidor Loewenthal 1861 and 1863; Marshall 1904) but he did not provide sufficient detail. P. Haslett, who was in charge of the Tahkāl Bālā excavations, identified three mounds (A, B, and C) in the area (see Figs. 5 and 6). Among these, Mound A (located at the Pashto Academy site) was the tallest, standing at around 70 feet. Mound B reached 35-40 feet, and Mound C stood at around 15 feet above ground level (Haslett 1875). These three mounds were mentioned, visited, and probably excavated by different explorers in different periods. However, despite E. Errington's extensive efforts, the narratives about the three stūpas contain only fragmentary information and provide too little insight into the layout of the Pashto Academy Buddhist site. Since Errington has already examined in depth the work of the British and other explorers on the Buddhist remains at Tehkal Bala (Errington 1987b), we must confine our analysis to synthesizing new findings from research conducted at the Pashto Academy after her publications.



Figure 5. Buddhist period structures exposed during excavation



Figure 6. Buddhist period structures exposed during excavation

Explorations and Excavations after 1947

Very little is known about archaeological investigations at the Pashto Academy Buddhist site from 1947 onwards. Even the question of whether any excavations have taken place there since the end of the British period remains uncertain. Apart from limited information gathered through discussions with senior staff of the Department of Archaeology at the University of Peshawar—especially the late photographer, Mr. Asad Ali—and a few photographs held in the department, which hint that trial or rescue excavations may have been carried out in 1973 and again in 1988, almost no substantive data on these activities seems to exist.

Excavations in 1973: In 1973, the Department of Archaeology at the University of Peshawar probably conducted ad hoc or rescue excavations prompted by the construction of the Pashto Academy. Despite our efforts to search old records for relevant documents—such as excavation reports, logbooks, or photographs from this excavation—it was unfortunately impossible to definitively assess the results[14];we are not even sure that such records ever existed. While E. Errington mentions meeting the late Professor Farid Khan of the Department of Archaeology, she did not confirm that excavations took place at this site (see note 22). However, she was informed of archaeological remains within the university precincts (Errington 1987b, ch. 3, n. 25). However, she did not specify what information she obtained from him about the Pashto Academy site. It seems that the Department of Archaeology did not carry out any formal excavations during the 1970s and 1980s. On the other hand, local residents may have conducted some informal digging on the mound prior to the construction of the Pashto Academy. Sources indicate that a wooden stall stood on the mound for trading purposes and that stones from the site's structures were routinely reused by the area's inhabitants.

Excavation in 1988: The expansion of the Pashto Academy (or the establishment of its department) required new buildings to be constructed on the site. Consequently, the university authorities decided to build additional facilities on the remaining part of the mound. The only surviving documentation of the remains unearthed during these works consists of a few photographs taken on 14 April 1988. These images depict structures revealed while excavating the foundations for certain new buildings in the same area (Figs. 7 and 8). According to the late Asad Ali (Photographer) and the late Daud Kamal (draftsman), both of whom served in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Peshawar, no other excavation records exist beyond these photographs. It is more probable that the Department never formally conducted excavations at the site.

Nevertheless, the lead author recalls his late professor, Farid Khan, who was chairman of the department at the time, alluding to a small-scale excavation there[15]. Thanks to Professor Farid Khan's efforts, some of the remains have been preserved and he is the one to whom the credit should go.

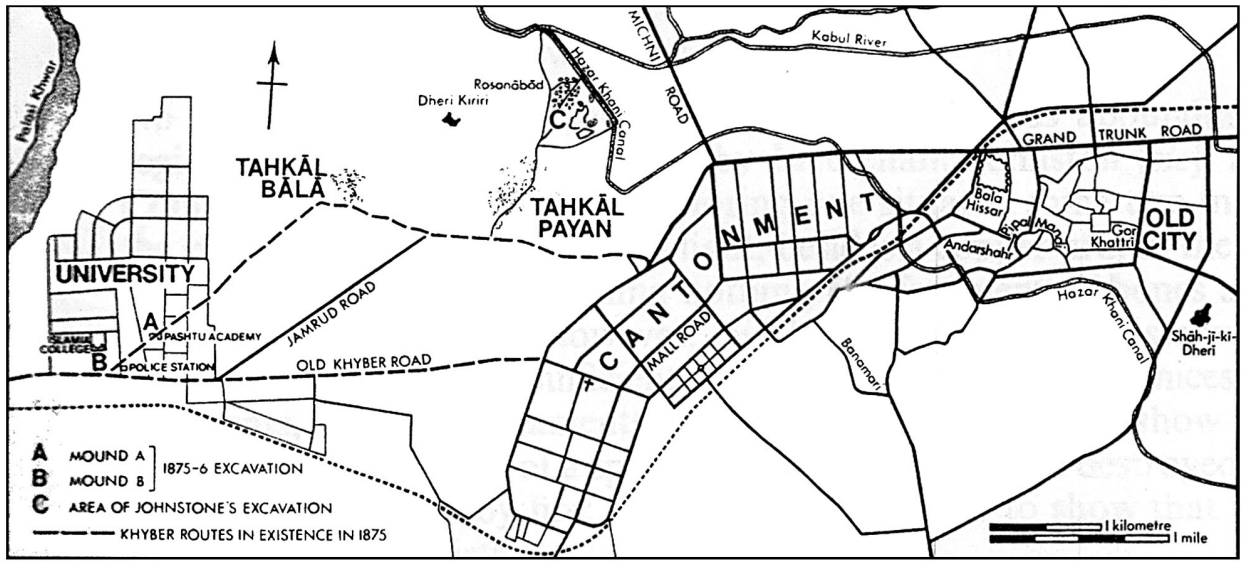


Figure 7. Map showing location of Mound A. Map Reference: M. Daud in Ahmad Hassan Dani, Peshawar. *Historic City of the Frontier*, (Peshawar, 1969).

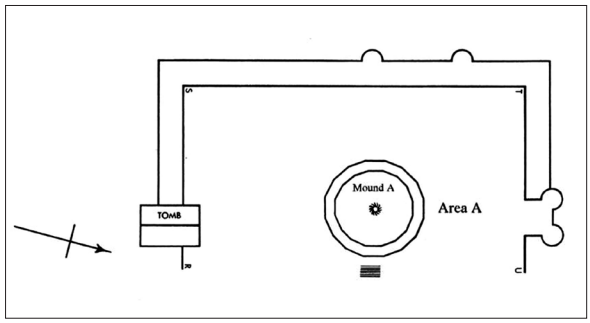


Figure 8. Sketch of Mound A. Reference: E. Errington, 'Tahkāl', 1987a: 309

Survey and Excavation in 2013-15

Although the preceding information indicates only sporadic archaeological activity in the region before and after independence, the fragmentary evidence discussed remains highly significant, as it confirms the former existence of Buddhist remains—now lost—between Peshawar city and the Khyber Pass. After a prolonged period of inactivity, the most recent archaeological investigation at the site was carried out in 2014 by the University of Peshawar in collaboration with the University Sains Malaysia, under the supervision of the present authors. Despite the site's degraded condition, resulting from years of damage caused by unscientific excavations, we undertook a systematic and scientifically based diagnostic investigation at the Pashto Academy Buddhist remains. Our objectives were to uncover evidence that could elucidate the site's layout and its spatial relationship with other Buddhist sites within the University of Peshawar campus[16].

Previous activities at the site had primarily focused on collecting art and other valuable objects, while a detailed study of the three cupolas mentioned by A. Court (Court 1836: 748) had never been undertaken systematically—except for a layout plan of the Buddhist remains at the Pashto Academy. Consequently, neither the 19th-century British documents nor the photographic records of the possible excavations carried out by the Department of Archaeology at the University of Peshawar provided sufficient information to understand the internal layout of the site or to establish a chronological framework for its Buddhist remains. Therefore, the objectives of our study (undertaken in 2013–14) were to conduct topographical and geophysical surveys, along with diagnostic studies, in order to understand the site's cultural profile and trace the layout of its buildings. Because most of the original structures had been destroyed for various reasons and replaced by modern buildings

(including the Pashto Academy, the post office, residential areas, and a recent Muslim cemetery), a second objective was to overcome the difficulty of determining the site's original landscape and internal configuration. Diagnostic excavations were carried out in specific areas: the grounds behind the Pashto Cultural Museum (Zone A), the car park to the west of the Academy (Zone B), the southern cemetery (Zone C), and the Commerce College premises to the southeast of the Academy (Zone D) (see Figs. 9 and 10). This diagnostic approach aimed to determine the extent of the site and its probable chronological profile.

Topographic and geophysical survey: The topographic survey was conducted in two phases: the first in 2013, and the second in 2014/15. The 2013 survey focused on the cemetery area, while the second phase centred on the Pashto Academy itself (see Figs. 9 and 10). A ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey was carried out in selected areas of the Academy's archaeological remains. Three areas were identified as potentially containing the remains of the stūpa, though only two were investigated. The main objective was to locate ancient Buddhist structures, such as stūpa, currently buried beneath the Academy and Pashto Department buildings. Traces of ancient structures are still visible along Chelmsford Road, to the south of the Academy (see above; Figs. 3 and 4), as noted in historical reports and by local residents. These traces may indicate the average depth of buried stūpa remains and the approximate height of the main stūpa.

Ground-penetrating radar (GPR) surveys were conducted to assess the site's potential (see Fig. 11, L1-L3). The surveys, which were carried out on December 12, 2014 and targeted two areas: Area 1 (11 lines, coded L1- L11) and Area 2 (six lines coded K1-K6), totalling approximately 17 lines. A 250 MHz shielded antenna was used to detect features at a maximum depth of eight metres. Potential areas were identified in Area 1 at depths between 2 and 4 metres. In contrast, Area 2 contained only natural layers.

Based on the survey results for lines L1 to L4, Area 1 exhibits a potentially significant anomaly suggesting the presence of an ancient structure. This anomaly has been identified at depths of 2–4 metres and extends along the survey line by 6–10 metres. Within this area, L2 displays a clearly visible, nearly linear feature with slight curvature, which is interpreted as the structure's foundation at a depth of 4 metres over a length of around 6 metres. L1, L3, and L4 also exhibits linear features, albeit with lower clarity. The upper portion of the anomaly (at a depth of 2 metres) differs morphologically from the deeper section: the upper part appears as a shallow, nearly straight line, while the lower section exhibits a shape that is more heterogeneous in shape consistent with that of the potential ancient structure itself.

L5 should produce an anomaly that is similar to the previous one, but which more closely matches the upper anomaly of the shallow subsurface zone. This indicates the presence of a modern man-made structure. However, this anomaly overlapped the existing data, obscuring the signal and reducing the reliability of the results.

There is less data available for detecting an ancient structure for lines L6 to L11. This may be because the linear survey was conducted along the structure itself meaning that it could not detect any potential anomalies. The most effective approach for ground-penetrating radar survey was to plan a linear survey perpendicular to the target.

Regarding Area 2, no potential anomalies were present except for the natural layer. This layer extends [or inclines] from the Pashto Academy towards the northern part of the area.

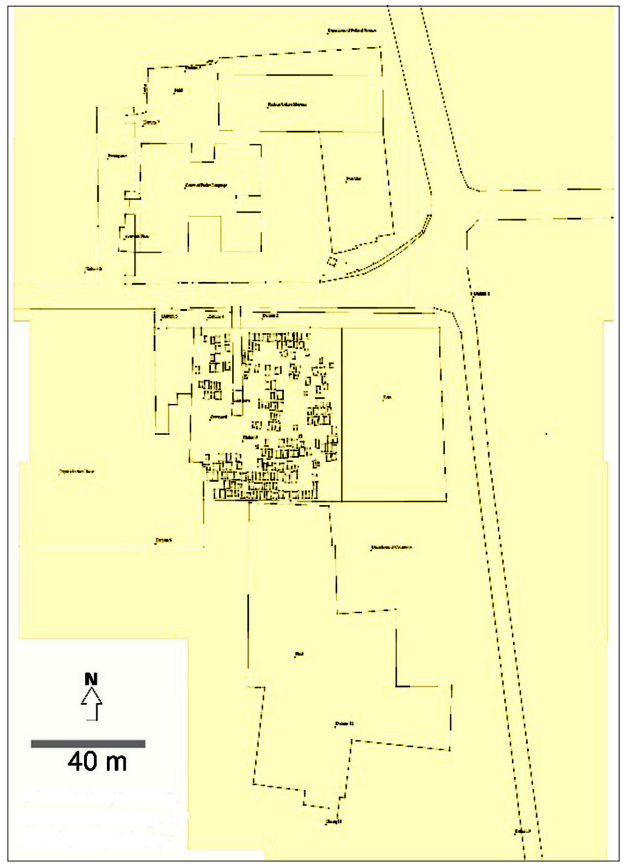


Figure 9. Topographic study of the Pashto Academy area

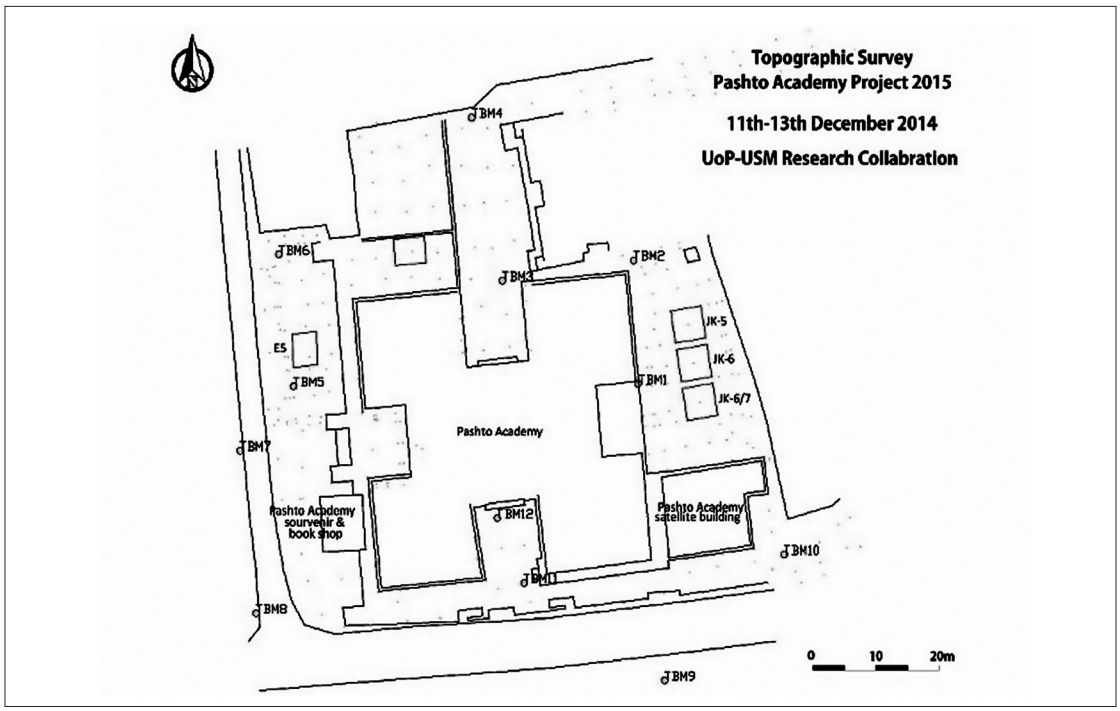


Figure 10. Two red-dotted boxes are defined as study areas: Area 1 and Area 2. Three potential areas were identified for excavation, located in the northern, eastern, and western parts of Pashto Academy.

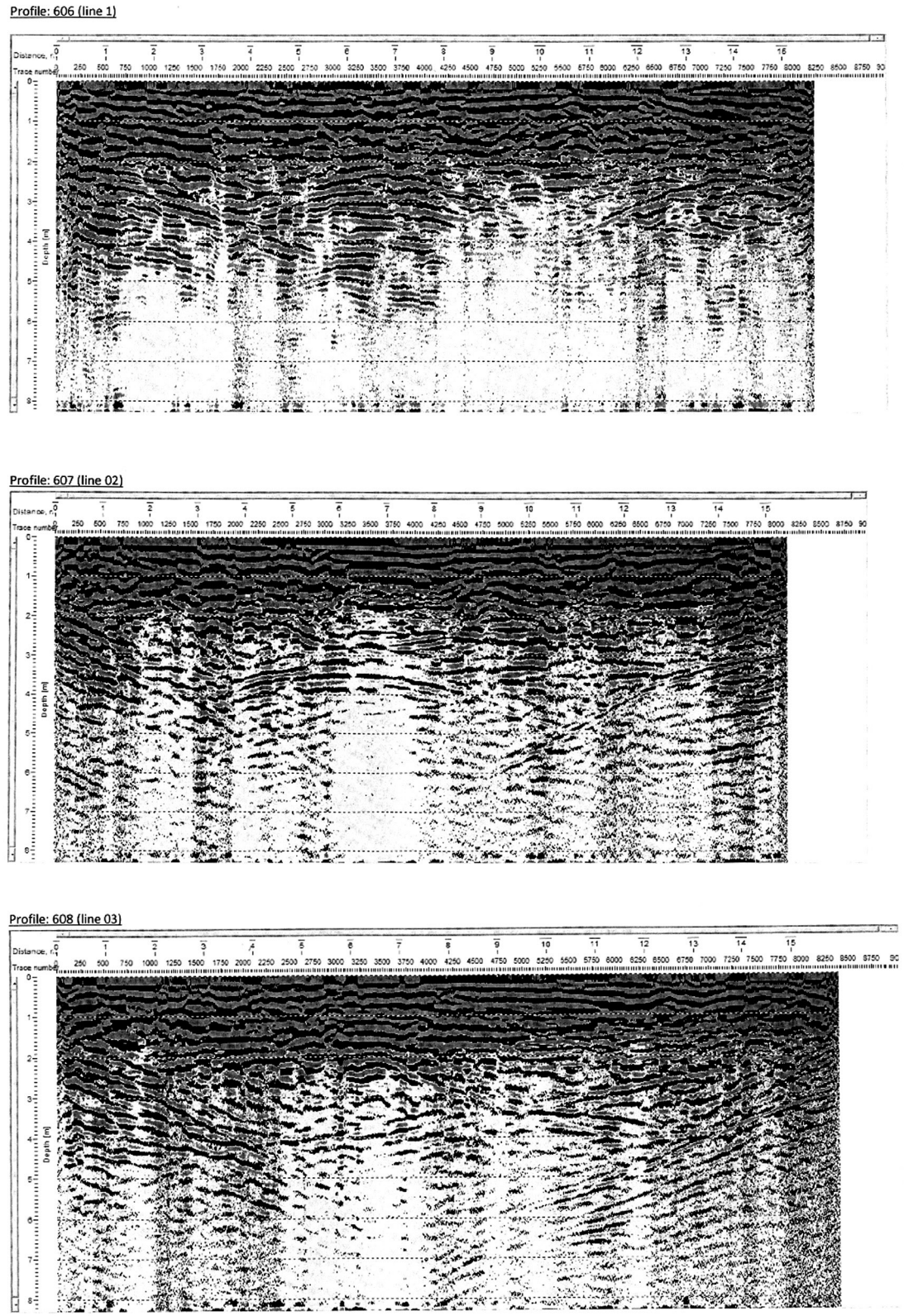


Figure 11. Examples from the geophysical study

Excavations in 2014/15

Owing to the significant thickness of the deposits in Area A, a 5m×10m trench was excavated for stratigraphic purposes. In each of the remaining areas (B through D), a 5m×5m trench was opened. Unfortunately, debris from earlier activities rendered these trenches inconclusive, leading to the decision not to pursue the investigation to the south and west of the cemetery. Hence, we redirected our efforts to Areas JK5, JK6/7, and E5.

Area J/K (Fig. 12)

This area is located within the ground and to the east of the Academy and to the west of the University of Peshawar's Post Mall. It is a rectangular strip of land that provides sufficient space for archaeological investigations. Initially, three 5 x 5 metres trenches were excavated, with a one metre gap between them. However, only partial excavations were conducted in trenches JK-5 and JK-6/7 due to significant debris resulting from previous activities.

Trench JK-5: Excavations reached a maximum depth of only 0.9 metre revealing that the entire deposit had likely been used as fill material for land levelling after the construction of the Pashto Academy, and later the Pashto Department. This trench comprised three distinct layers.

Layer 1, the uppermost layer consisted of humus, forming a deposit less than 15 cm thick. This layer was predominantly alluvial, vegetated, loamy, and sandy.

Layer 2 was relatively uniform and composed of loose brown soil, and approximately 25cm thick. In the centre of the trench, a large stone block was found alongside smaller stones and pebbles. No cultural material was found within this layer.

Layer 3 was quite irregular in thickness, ranging from 1cm to 40cm. At a depth of 47cm, a single-course wall, approximately 40cm wide, was discovered along the southern section of the trench. This wall was made of stones and pebbles, and a brick was found on its west side. The soil in this layer was brownish but relatively compact.

Trench JK-6/7: This trench was located at the southern end of the excavated area. The south-eastern corner was fully excavated, reaching a depth of around two metres, and a one square metre test pit was dug at this corner. A total of three layers were uncovered, but no culturally significant material was observed.

Layer 1: This layer consisted of humus and around 20 cm of alluvial material used to fertilise the grass.

Layer 2: It consisted of an irregular deposit of loose debris, likely resulting from the lime blocks used to construct the Academy and subsequent Department. Its thickness ranged from 5cm at the centre of the trench to 50cm at the southern end.

Layer 3: Layer 3 was only present in the 1x1m Sondages excavated in the south-east (JK-6/7A) and south-west (JK-6/7B) corners of the trench, at a depth of around 50cm below the surface. This layer consisted of disturbed deposits resulting from excavations conducted during the British period or later. It comprised a relatively compact deposit of brownish soil containing stone chips, cobbles, pebbles, limestone residue from earlier excavations, and brick fragments. Large stone blocks were observed at various locations and depths within the layer.

Area E5 (Figs. 13 and 14)

There were two main reasons for selecting this excavation site. Firstly, it was the only location likely to contain an intact tumulus deposit. The surrounding area is largely occupied by modern buildings and a Muslim cemetery. Secondly, it was one of the few open spaces available where the team could expand their excavation work in order to achieve their objectives. This compact site had previously served as a car park and, for this purpose a thick layer of gravel had been laid to prevent marshy or muddy conditions during the rainy season. Before work commenced, this

gravel layer was removed. Excavation began in December and proceeded to a total depth of approximately 2.5m below the surface. However, virgin soil was reached at a depth of 2.2m in the south-east corner. Of the nine distinct strata identified, seven represented occupation layers containing traces of cultural artefacts, including pottery sherds and beads (?). Layers 2 and 5 yielded the most artefacts recovery, primarily pottery sherds.

Trench E-5: As part of the strategy, a 5mx5m trench was excavated to the west of the Pashto Academy, located on the south side of its car park. This area was chosen due to the presence of a low mound, and it was anticipated reaching natural soil beyond the other objectives during the excavation. These objectives were successfully met. Natural soil was reached on the south-east side of the trench. The total excavation within this limited area reached a depth of 2.5m, with nine layers being unearthed in total. The deepest layer remained of natural soil. The top four layers consisted of loose deposits, likely comprising of backfill from previous excavations at the site, as well as residues from the inhabitants whose houses still encroached upon much of the area north of the Academy.

Layer 1: It consisted of a layer of gravel and sand placed on top of the natural soil to prevent waterlogging during rainfall. This relatively uniform layer was, approximately 10cm thick and contained no cultural material.

Layer 2: This layer was also almost uniform throughout the trench and was around 20cm thick. It constituted a later deposit containing various residues left by the site›s occupants.

Layer 3: Similar to Layer 2, deposits at Layer 3 contained pottery sherds, bones, and fragments of metal and glass, all of which were associated with the site's inhabitants, whose dwellings covered a significant portion of the site.

Layer 4: It is comprised of a thick deposit of ash forming part of a pit deposit.

Layer 5: This layer was approximately 60cm thick and consisted of both compact and loose soil. Inclusions included stones, pottery shards (including a large number of insignificant fragments), fragile iron slag, and bones.

Layer 6: It was a compact soil deposit less than 20cm thick and thinner than Layer 5. It contained stones and a few insignificant pottery shards.

Layer 7: This was a relatively thick, and compact deposit, exceeding 20cm in thickness. Inclusions consisted of stones, pottery shards, and bone fragments.

Layer 8: It was a compact deposit of brown clay, approximately 17cm thick, and containing loose, ash-coloured pockets. No cultural artefacts were observed.

Findings

The archaeological context was severely compromised by continuous looting from the British period onwards, exacerbated by the construction of modern structures—a process that continues to this day. Consequently, excavations yielded no significant antiquities. The finds consisted primarily of numerous pottery shards, crude iron slag, a few fragments of glass and shell bracelets, as well as large quantities of bone fragments.

Architectural evidence

Apart from a few large and medium-sized stone blocks arranged in a single layer and regular alignments within the J/K region (possibly the remains of fortified structures), no other structural remains from the Buddhist period were unearthed. By contrast, Area/ Trench E-5 yielded very few stone and brick structures. However, these were found in the upper levels of the trench and most likely date to the very recent period.

It is highly probable that the ancient structures were destroyed over time and that much of their material was subsequently reused in later construction, including of the Pashto Academy complex and other buildings. The only surviving structure from the Buddhist period is a section of the stūpa base in the form of

a walled structure running along Chelmsford Road to the south, which separates the Pashto Academy from the modern Muslim cemetery. This wall has features a moulded base and is built using diaper masonry with traces of lime plaster. Nothing else of the stūpa survives beyond these remains.

However, previous excavations in the graveyard area, which extends into the courtyard of the Buddhist monastery (or stūpa), revealed lime-plastered structures that may represent votive stūpas. This implies that the monastery's foundations remain buried and could be in a good state of preservation. In fact, ancient features are still observable during excavations for graves in this area.[17]

Iron slag

Iron slag fragments were found in almost all layers of trench E-5. These consist primarily of broken pieces of unidentified objects, although some fragments appear to be nails or knives (Fig. 15).

Bangles

Fragments of glass and shell bracelets were scarce (see Figs. 16 and 17). Nonetheless, such bracelets are well attested at other Buddhist sites in the region and are commonly encountered in inhabited areas and stūpas across Gandhāra[18].

Bone fragments

Bone fragments were also found during the excavation (see Figs. 18 and 19).

Pottery

The pottery was generally medium-textured and primarily composed of mica particles. Glazed pottery fragments were recovered from nearly all layers. Below are drawings of selected pottery fragments from Trench E-5, Layer 5. These include the remains of pitchers, jars, jugs, bowls, dishes, cups, and other vessels.

E5/Layer 2 (Fig. 20)

20.1: A small, open-mouthed vessel with a collard, pointed rim and thick profile.

20.2: Medium-sized bowl with a vertical collard rim.

20.3: A small cup made from a thin section of fine clay. Both the inside and outside glazed in white, with a broad black band below the rim.

20.4: Tiny bowl with a simple pointed rim.

20.5: Medium-sized ordinary bowl with an incurved vertical rim, a convex body and a collar. It has a semi-fine thick texture and fashion. It has a flat top and there are nail shaped designs between the rim and the collar.

20.6: A deep dish with a thin external rim and signs of use or soot traces. It has a fine profile and a flat base. The pot is not well fired.

20.7: Small dish with a vertical collar, an almost fine profile, mica presence, and an externally roughened surface.

E5/Layer 2 (Fig. 21)

21.1: The rim is probably from a pitcher with a flat top decorated with dented designs. Below the rim, the same type of designs is present. The flaring rim has a medium texture and fabric.

21.2: A medium size pot with a thin collar, double-banded rim and a fine profile. The inner surface is rough, most probably due to cementation.

21.3: A medium-size pot that is almost identical in shape and texture to 20.2.

21.4: A pitcher with a sharply out-curved rim, a flat and double-banded top, a medium texture and fabric. Thick section.

E5/Layer 2 (Fig. 22)

22.1: A medium-size bowl with a vertical rim and flat top. Thick in texture with mica particles present, it is well fired and has red slip on its interior.

22.2: A medium-size bowl with an incurved collar rim bearing nail shaped designs on its flat top and between the collar and the top. It has a semi fine, thick texture with mica particles.

22.3: A large bowl with a slightly incurved collar rim and flat top. It has and almost fine thick texture and red slip on both the interior and exterior surfaces. There is a wide black painted strip below the rim and black painted decorations on the interior.

E5/Layer 2 (Fig. 23)

23.1: A large size sherd broken from a pitcher made of semi fine clay. The inner surface is rough but the outer surface, only the shoulder, is decorated with nail shaped designs arranged both horizontally and in perpendicular manner.

E5/Layer 2 (Fig. 24)

24.1: A sherd with a thick section of fine clay. It has a ribbed, plain inner surface, while the outer, glazed green surface is decorated with crossed designs.

24.2: Sherd with a gritty section containing mica. The interior surface is comparatively smooth, while the exterior shows red slip with different designs painted in black.

24.3: Sherd with traces of mica. The interior is relatively rough, while the exterior has deep, horizontal groves.

24.4: Sherd with a thin section of fine clay. The interior is glazed yellow with green spots or designs. The exterior is smooth and plain.

24.5: Sherd with a gritty, thick section. The inner interior is rough, while the exterior features floral and leaf-shaped designs in relief

24.6: This is an upper body sherd, apparently from a pitcher. The texture shows an abundance of mica, particularly on the interior surface. The exterior is decorated with geometric designs. A slip can be seen on the exterior near the rim.

24.7: This sherd was most probably broken off pitcher. It has the same characteristics as 24.6 except the exterior decoration is floral.

E5/Layer 5 (Fig. 25)

25.1: Medium-sized pot, probably a bowl, with an outward-turned, tapered rim bearing parallel grooves on the outside and medium texture. A white slip has been applied to the exterior. The interior has a glazed surface in a whitish colour with golden colour designs. A brown dotted line is applied below the rim and on the interior surface.

25.2: Medium-sized pitcher with a flanged rim and a grooved line. Medium texture with mica present; well fired. There are soot marks in certain places.

25.3: A body sherd with a fine texture and glazed on both surface in a greenish colour.

25.4: A medium-sized storage vessel with a flanged rim, medium fabric and a well fired finish. There are two grooved lines on the interior surface.

25.5: A pitcher with an externally projected rim and grooved lines; two grooved lines on the interior surface. Medium texture.

25.6: A small bowl with a flat base, a thinned texture, and well fired.

25.7: A Small bowl with a flat base an internally glazed surface featuring dotted designs. Medium texture.

E5/Layer 5 (Fig. 26)

26.1: A pitcher with a flanged rim with a groove and a short neck with fine ridges and string marks on the inner surface of the rim. It has a brown slip on the exterior and contains mica particles. It has a medium texture and fabric.

26.2: Medium-sized pitcher with a flanged rim featuring grooves and an everted lip. It has a medium texture and fabric.

26.3: A pot with a flat top rim, gritty texture and medium fabric

26.4: A sherd with red slip on the exterior

showing grooves and a gritty texture.

26.5: This is probably a drinking cup with a disc base and stepped interior. It has a medium texture and fabric.

26.6: A small, short disc-based dish with medium texture and fabric.

26.7: A medium-sized bowl with a flat base and a deep groove. Medium texture and fabric.

26.8: A medium-sized pan with a roughen flat base, grooves between the pedestal and body, and a red slip interior.

E5/Layer 5 (Fig. 27)

27.1/5: Medium-sized shallow with sharp vertical rim, fine thin texture and fashion ware.

27.2: Bowl with sharply incurved pointed rim, fine thin texture and well fired.

27.3: A drinking cup with a disc base and grooves on the inside. It is pinched at one place on the outside and has a fine texture and thinned fabric.

27.4: A medium-sized drinking cup (?) with a disc base, a coarse exterior, and an interior glazed in a whitish colour. It has fine texture and is of a medium weight fabric.

27.5: A small pitcher with a carinated, everted, pointed rim, a short neck and two grooves inside the neck. It has a gritty texture and medium fabric.

27.6: Disc of a cup, coarse exterior and glazed interior. Medium texture and fabric.

27.7: Medium-sized dish with a flat base, medium texture and fabric.

27.8: Medium-sized dish with a flat base, roughen surfaces, a red slip on the inside, and medium texture and fabric.

27.9: Small pitcher (?) with a flanged rim and carination on the exterior. It has a gritty texture and medium fabric.

E5/Layer 5 (Fig. 28)

28.1: A small cooking pot (handi) without-curved round rim; medium profile and fabric

28.2: Small bowl with a flat base and an internally grooved, thickened texture.

28.3: Small size bowl with a sharply out-curved, flared rim; medium fabric; and bands on its outer surface.

28.4: Small bowl with a flat base, internally grooves, a thin texture, and a well-fired finish.

28.5: Pitcher with an out-curved collar, a flaring rim, a medium texture and fabric.

28.6: Pitcher with an externally projected, sharply out-curved rim and a medium texture, with a red slip on its exterior surface. It has a dented design on its body.

28.7: Small bowl with a flat base and an internally grooved surface, with a medium texture.

28.8: Pitcher with a sharply out-curved, flaring rim, a medium texture and fabric. Grooved line near the top

28.9: Body sherd with grooved lines on the interior and exterior, the exterior has a red slip.

E5/Layer 5 (Fig. 29)

29.1: Flanged rim with a grooved line and a medium texture. Red slip on certain areas; mica particles.

29.2: Small storage pot with an everted rim; thin texture.

29.3: Medium-sized bowl with an incurved collared rim having and a groove externally, medium texture.

29.4: Pitcher with a flanged rim with grooves on both surfaces and a medium texture. Red slip on the interior surface.

29.5: Small size pot with an everted rim and a groove on the interior surface with a thinned, fine texture.

29.6: A broken sherd from a possible medium-

size pot. It has a medium texture and a rough interior, while the exterior has a dark brown slip with geometric designs.

29.7: Medium-sized bowl with an incurved, thickened rim.

29.8: Small-sized bowl with a flat base, thick texture and roughened surface.

29.9: Pitcher with an externally flanged rim. Coarse ware with mica particles, a thin texture and a gritty profile.

E5/Layer 5 (Fig. 30)

30.1: A large bowl with a string impression on the flat base, a medium texture and a section containing mica particles.

30.2: Medium-size pan with a flat base, rough exterior and thickened, gritty section

30.3: A small bowl with a mat impression on its flat base, a rough inner surface, a thinned section and a medium texture.

30.4: A sherd with traces of fire and a fine grooved line, probably below the neck.

30.5: A small pitcher with a short neck and a rim with two parallel grooves. It has a black slip interior and a medium texture.

30.6: A small pitcher with a flat top rim with a groove, a short neck and a ridge at the shoulder with a red slip on the body.

30.7: Small size pitcher with a flat-to-high neck rim with a groove at the top and two grooves at the shoulder. Medium texture.

30.8: Medium-sized pitcher with a flanged rim and a medium texture; mica particles present.

E5/Layer 5 (Fig. 31)

30.1: Bottle-shaped with a vertical carinated rim and a medium texture containing mica particles.

30.2: A sherd that was probably broken off from a pan. It has a thick texture with an orange-coloured slip on the interior and parallel strips on the exterior.

30.3: Medium-sized bowl with a disc base and a medium, thickened texture.

E5/Layer 5 (Fig. 32)

32.1: The bottle-shaped object has a vertical rim with grooves on the inside and outside, a fine, thin texture, and has been fired well.

32.2: A plain and simple sherd

Ceramic Typology

Unfortunately, no complete or near-complete pottery vessels were unearthed during the excavations. Moreover, most of the numerous sherds observed at the site lack both large, intact sections and morphological features distinctive enough to establish a definitive typology for the pieces selected for this article. This difficulty is a primary reason why precise typological classification proves challenging. Uncertainties arise especially regarding sherds that may belong to pitchers or handis, as well as to dishes, bowls, and other forms (Fig. 33). Consequently, the typology presented below—which primarily encompasses bowls, cups, handis, pans, and pitchers—cannot be considered definitive. Some pieces are crudely made, while others have a fine texture; some feature a deep black burnish on the exterior. A significant number of sherds from the site bear a red slip. Finally, textures vary, ranging from fine to coarser, granular varieties.

Conclusion

Evidence of Buddhist-period remains and other early period evidence was observed on the university campus and near the Pashto Academy, suggesting that they belong to a larger Buddhist complex rather than representing isolated remnants. The areas to the south, north, and west of the Academy likely contained additional ancient remains, most of which are now lost or demolished. Although no significant antiquities were recovered during the 2013–14 field campaign, the valuable chronological and spatial data obtained can help determine the priorities of future excavations on campus—principally the Islamia College grounds, the Muslim cemetery,

and the zones south, east, and west of the Peshawar University Health Care Centre—though expectations from such initiatives should remain modest.

As for the the Buddhist remains at the Pashto Academy, they were first explored during the British colonial period, but little documentation exists regarding the excavations and their findings. Moreover, and even though the site can be identified with certainty, its precise layout and chronology remained unclear. The stūpa is estimated to be originally 21m high, but the full extent of the site is still unknown. Given the height of the stūpa and the traces of Buddhist structures in the graveyard area, the site may have extended in all directions—at least to the south and south-west, as indicated by the moulded walls in Figures 3 and 4. Mound B, which was probably part of this courtyard, suggests that the monastery was located south or west of the main mound, with the stūpa court to the south. Most of the site has now been destroyed or is covered by modern structures, so very little could have been achieved from the recent excavations. Nevertheless, the most significant result of the recent excavations was establishing the total depth of the deposit from the surface, which was found to be 2.5m. Previous excavations in the cemetery area also suggested that the remains of the stūpa's southern wall form part of its base rather than its foundations. If this interpretation is correct, it implies that the stūpa's original foundations exceeded 3m in depth. Conversely, if this interpretation is incorrect, we must consider the possibility that the stūpa encroached upon an earlier habitation site, as indicated by the presence of ashes, bone fragments, numerous pottery sherds, and bracelet fragments. According to P. Haslett's sketch, our excavation of trench E-5 was located either within the stūpa or near its western side. However, this location appears implausible.

Funding

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Acknowledgments

This excavation would have been difficult without the support of the Department of Archaeology and the University of Peshawar, the Federal Department of Archaeology and Museums of the Government of Pakistan, and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Penang. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the University of Peshawar, especially to Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Rasul Jan and his administration, for facilitating our excavations despite the security uncertainties of the period.

Our thanks also go to Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and especially to Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Dato Omer Usman for his continued support of the project. We would also like to express our appreciation to our USM colleagues and students who, despite being unfamiliar with the region's culture and professional context, adapted to the challenging conditions and made significant contributions to our efforts.

Our thanks also go to Professor Dr. M.A. Durrani, Head of the Department of Archaeology, and our colleagues and students including Professor Dr. Gul Rahim, Surveyor-Draughtsman Muhammad Naeem, Photographer Asad Ali (who has sadly passed away) and Field Superintendent Asim Amin for their invaluable help and support throughout the fieldwork. We would also like to thank Dr. Ghayyur Shahab, and students from the department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar for their valuable assistance.

Special thanks are due to Prof. Dr Tahir Ali Shah, the former Director of the National Centre of Excellence in Geology, for allowing relevant staff members to assist our team with the geophysical survey of the site.

Notes

1. Masson wrote, "My search for coins at this place has been very unsuccessful; I look forward however to a glorious from Kabul this year, and only hope that my competitors may not raise the market too high for me." (Charles Masson, 1834: 310)
2. The site first systematic archaeological

excavations were conducted by Wheeler in 1958, followed by other researchers. However, as Marshall observed, the British explorer Garrick had conducted irregular excavations at the nearby Shahr-i-Napursan site prior to J. Marshall's own excavations at Balahisar (Marshall 1904:142).

3. The Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of KP, recently investigated the stūpa; the report is pending. For a historical overview of the site, however, see Zarawar Khan and Fawad Khan 2021.

4. Having left the town of Dīpaṃkara Nagarahāra region of Afghanistan, he most likely crossed the Torkham or Khyber Pass into Gandhāra, visiting the city of Peshawar (also known as Po-lu-sha-po-lo) first (see Shaman Hwui Li 1911: 63). However, it is also possible that Xuanzang entered Gandhāra via one of the other passes through the Spin Ghar mountain range, though which are less convenient.

5. This topic was occasionally discussed among academics living on the university campus, some of whom had gone through the same experience.

6. An aniconic representation of the Hindu god Śiva

7. This cylindrical, pillar-shaped *liṅga* features a rough surface at its base, indicating it was originally set into a *yoni* (the symbol of the female generative force and goddess Śakti) or directly into the ground. Due to prolonged ritual use, the upper section is smooth and somewhat worn from frequent touching. Despite this wear, the artefact remains well-preserved overall.

8. This recommendation was also made by Professor Rasul Jan, then Vice Chancellor of the University of Peshawar.

9. See P. Haslett 1875. The existence of these Buddhist architectural elements was later confirmed by Dr. Shakeel Ahmad, former Registrar of the University of Peshawar, who had previously held the same position at Islamia College. Subsequently, when excavations began at the Pashto Academy site, Dr. Shakeel Ahmad visited us regularly to discuss the various remains (now missing) that he had personally observed on campus.

10. Important and detailed work on this subject has already been published by Errington 1987a: 301-324. We will therefore not cite all references provided by the author unless necessary, believing our work primarily complements that of Errington 1987a.

11. Pakistan emerged as an independent state on 14 August 1947, gaining independence from British rule. This year remains the most pivotal in Pakistan›s history, marking the nation›s birth after the end of the British colonial era.

12. In his report, A. Burnes wrote, "Like one in search of the philosopher's stone, I found myself referred from place to place, and at *Usmān* heard of a 'tope' near *Peshāwar*, which I afterwards visited. It is about five miles from the city, but in so decayed a condition that the remains would not suggest any idea of the design without seeing those of the *Panjāb*, though they were 100 feet high". (Burnes 1833: 310).

13. For a complete bibliography of these early records, see Errington 1987b.

14. We tried to confirm this with the head of the Department of Archaeology, but no documents or records of any kind relating to the excavations were available.

15. E. Errington also spoke with the late Professor Farid Khan, in which she acknowledged him as follows, "I am indebted to Professor Farid Khan, Department of Archaeology, Peshawar University, for information on this site, and also on the remains within the precincts of the University…" (Errington 1987b: ch. 3, n. 25).

16. Another key factor influencing excavations at this site was the regional security situation. Given these constraints, authorities advised us to limit activities and movement in the area during this period. Consequently, we decided to focus on exploring the archaeological remains at the Pashto Academy.

17. We could not excavate in the Muslim graveyard because that risked causing religious offense.

18. See, e.g. Dani 1965: Pl. XLIX; Rahman 1968: Pl. 93; Nasim Khan 2010: 123-152.

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Figure 12. General view of the JK area



Figure 13. Southestern corner of the trench E-5, Area B



Figure 14. Refilling of the trench E-5 in Area B is in progress



Figure 15. Iron slag from E-5/2



Figure 16. Glass bangles from trench E-5/6



Figure 17. Glass bangles from trench E-5/6



Figure 18. Bone fragments from trench E-5/2



Figure 19. Large size animal teeth from E-5/8

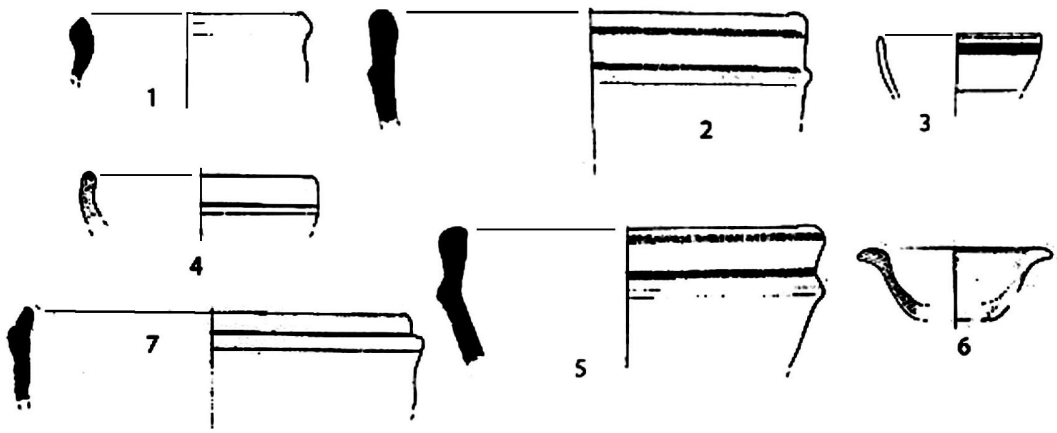


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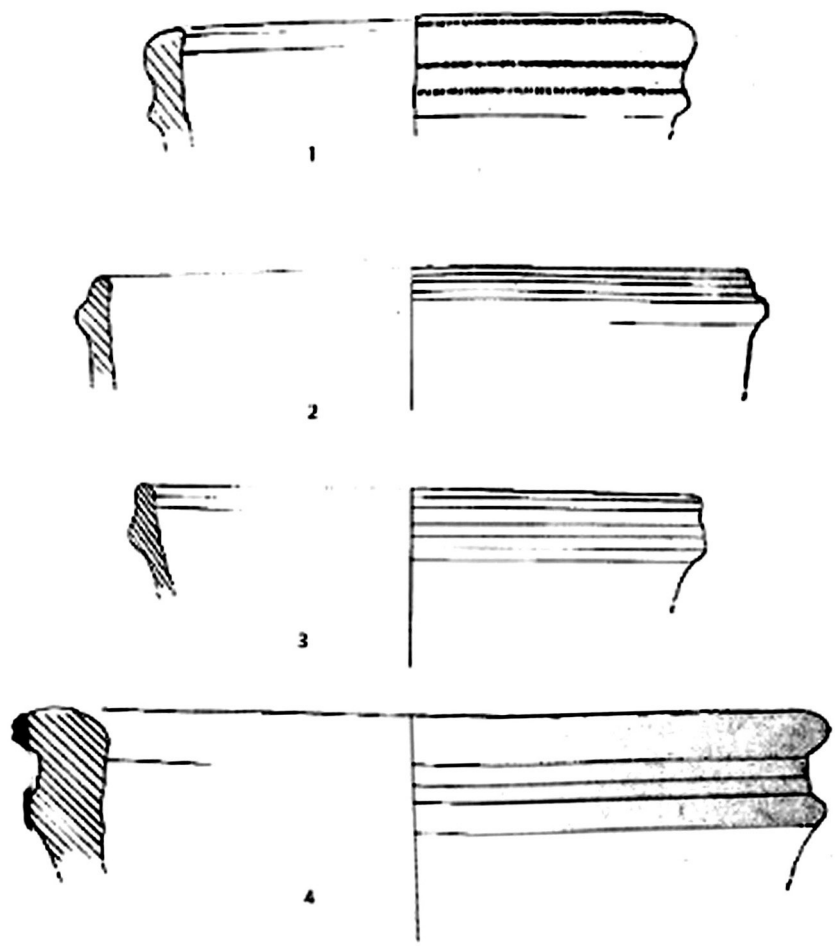


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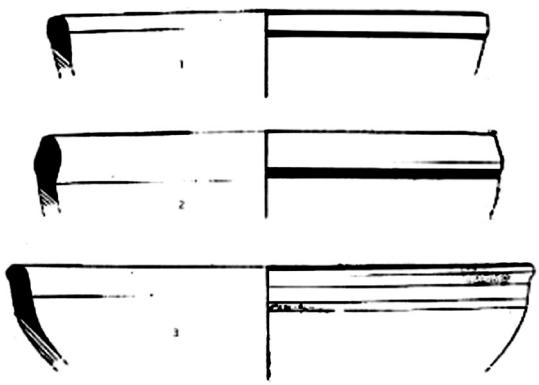


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Figure 23. E5/Layer 2

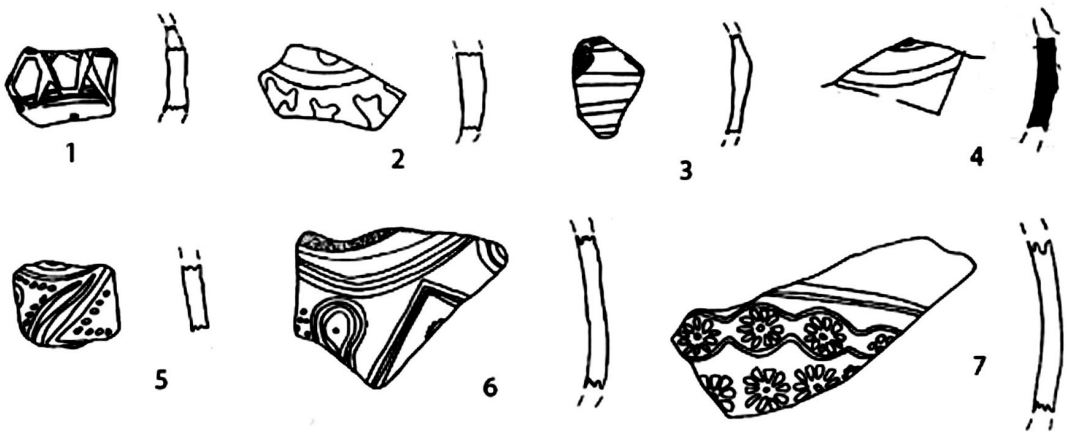


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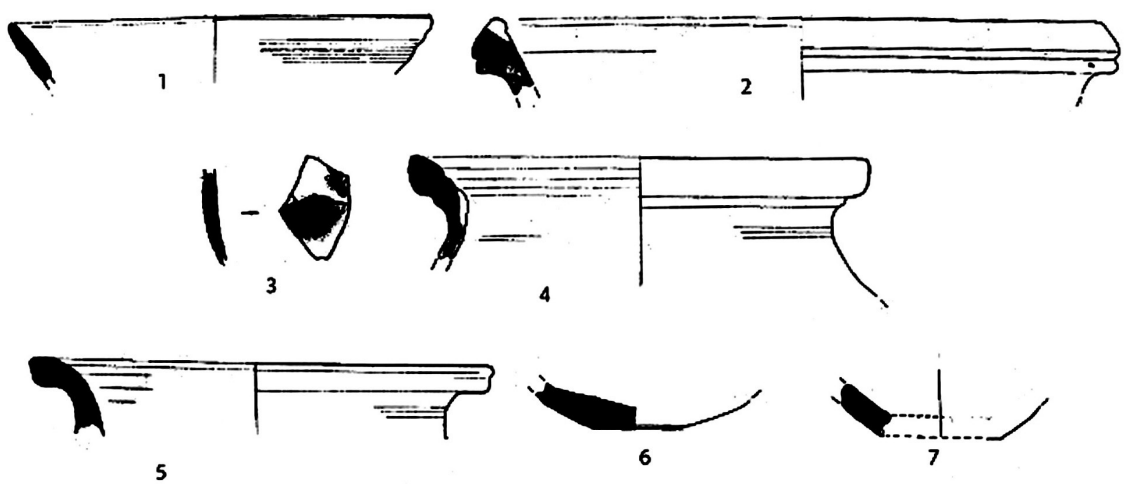


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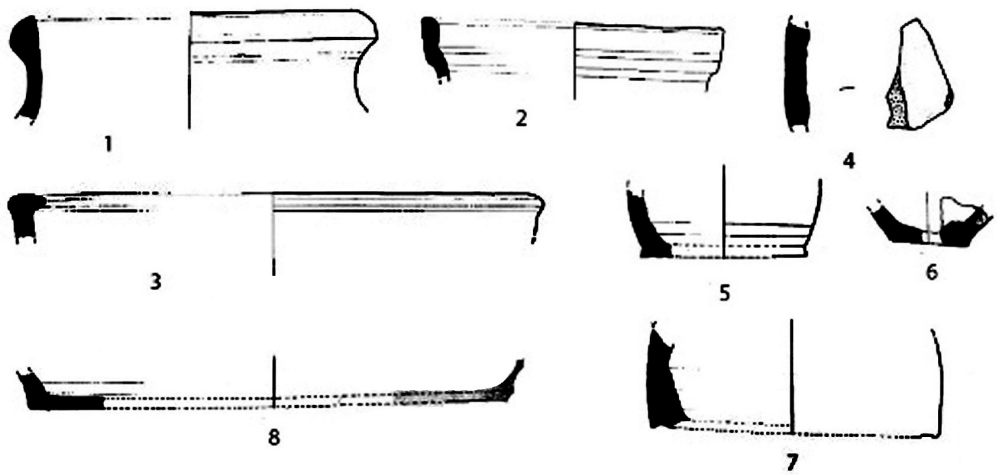


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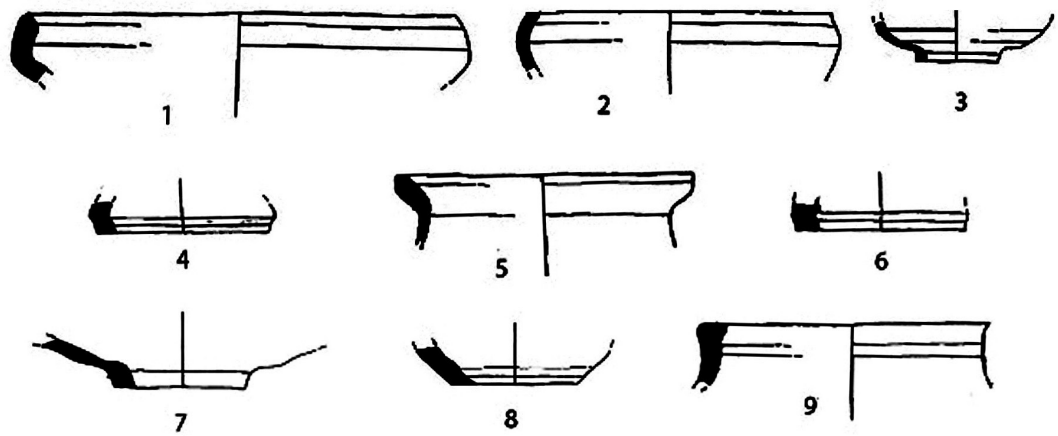


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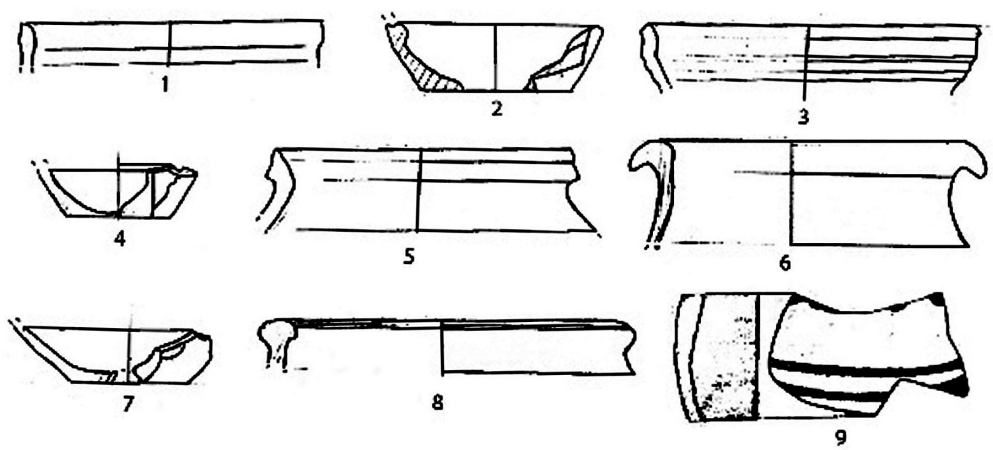


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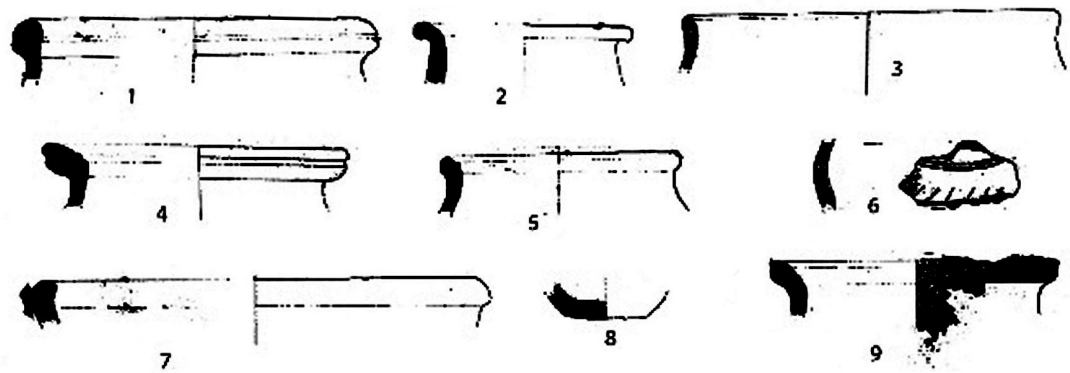


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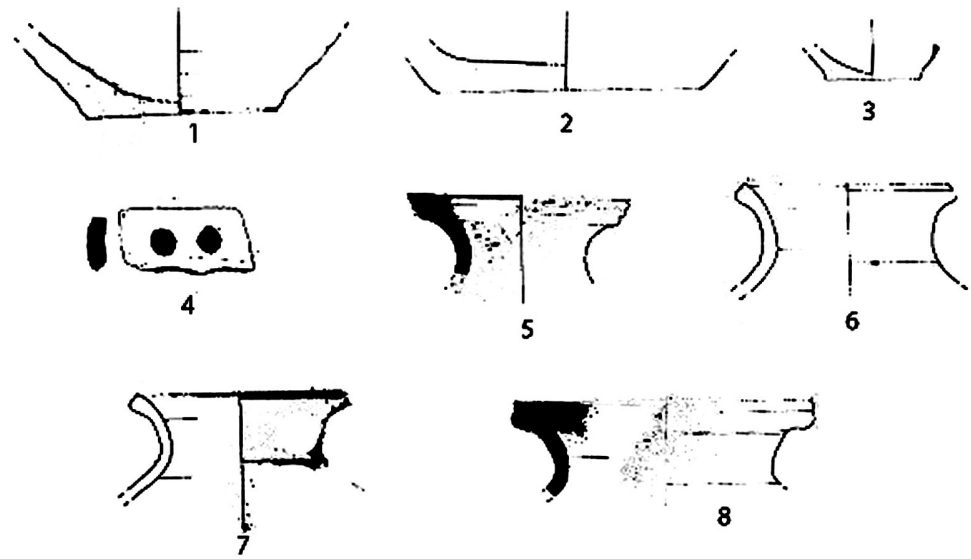


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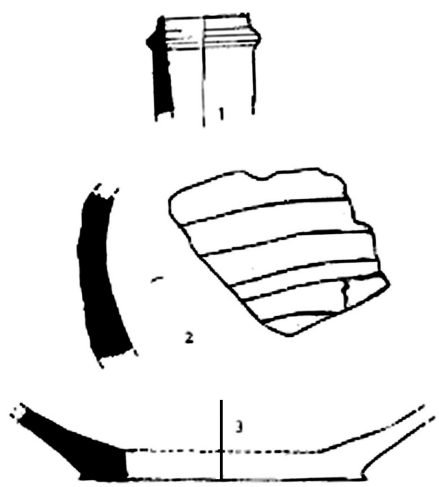


Figure 31. E5/Layer 5



Figure 32. E5/Layer 5

Fig. 33: Typology

Bowls


Fig.20


Fig. 20


Fig.20

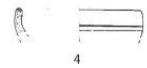

Fig. 20


Fig.22

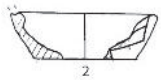

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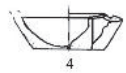

Fig. 22


Fig. 25


Fig. 27


Fig.27


Fig. 28


Fig. 28

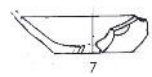
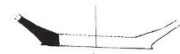

Fig. 28


Fig.29


Fig.31

Dishes

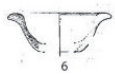
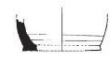

Fig.20


Fig. 20


Fig.27


Fig.27


Fig. 26

Cups


Fig.20


Fig.27

Pans


Fig. 26


Fig. 30

Handi


Fig. 28

Pitchers


Fig. 21

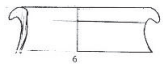
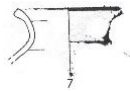

Fig.28


Fig. 29


Fig. 25


Fig. 25


Fig.30


Fig. 30

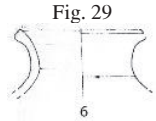
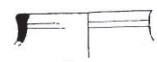

Fig. 30


Fig.28


Fig.27

Long neck pots


Fig. 31


Fig. 32

Pots


Fig. 26


Fig.29


Fig. 29

Figure 33. Typology