# DHOK GANGAAL, A PAINTED GREY WARE SITE IN ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

M. SALIM*

The period between the late Gandhara Grave Culture and Buddhist period is less known. However a recent investigation into the settlement site of Dhok Gangaal near Chaklala gives us some information about this period. This large site was discovered during the study of Soan Valley syncline, its geological deposits and Palaeolithic artefacts that are preserved here (Salim 1986). The pottery assemblage from Dhok Gangaal shows relationship and is typological similar to the PGW collections from Hakra river bed in Cholistan (Mughal 1982: 85–95). It must be pointed out that, at present, there is one main difference: the grey ware from Islamabad has no painted motifs. It could be due to the small collection that we made, or we may find it in future, or this painting tradition is absent here. The discovery of PGW at Dheri Qila and Dhok Gangaal in Islamabad has already been reported in the newspaper (Salim 1989a, 1989b).

## *Location*

The site was discovered by me in 1977 and remained unexplored until March 1989, when the present author with F.B. Lyon collected PGW pottery from mound 1. It is situated both to the north and south of Islamabad Highway, and 1 kilometre to the northeast is Kurang river. On maps by Survey of Pakistan (1985 edition) the name of settlement is written as Dhok Gangal, but in fact in Urdu it is spelt with *alif* (Gangaal), which I have adopted here. One kilometre from Gangaal, the site is situated on two mounds labelled 1 and 2 at the height of about 1700 feet separated by trees in the middle. The Highway was built by truncating part of the large mound 1 to its south; pottery sherds can be picked up right next to the Highway. The site is one and a half kilometre from Chaklala—Highway junction and 5 kilometres from Faizabad. The mounds are to the north of Dhok Lilihal and to the northwest of Karal. On mound 1 are large words written in English—Unity, Faith and Discipline; the words spoken by M. Ali Jinnah for Pakistani nation (Plate 1).

## *Stratigraphy*

The two natural mounds were already in existence when man occupied them for the first time. They are composed of pink silt and sand of Pleistocene Age. It is a soft deposit well suited for habitation and cultivation. Because of silt-sand deposit there is water available in it, which is used by locals by digging wells. The surrounding area of mounds afforded suitable land for agriculture. The mounds are an ideal place to live from where local fields and areas a few kilometres away can be seen. No excavation was conducted here, but the sections exposed due to erosion provided stratigraphy and material. One such south section of mound 1 was cleaned and studied. The stratigraphy of south section is given in Fig. 1. It was studied by Dr. S.N. Qureshi of Earth Sciences Department of Quaid-i-Azam University, who took soil samples from the layers described in this section.

* M. Salim, Assistant Director, Centre for the Study of the Civilizations of Central Asia, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad-45320.

Layer 7 is a fine grained deposit pink in colour. Its visible thickness above Highway is about 13 metres. It is of Quaternary period. No archaeological remains were found.

Layer 6 is also a Quaternary fine grained pink-brownish silt in colour with concretions of different shapes and sizes. Grass roots, which may be of recent date are identified. Some small pebbles are in it which give indication of a water laid deposit.

Layer 5 with 30–70 cm thickness has grass roots and concretions. Possibly of Quaternary Age, its surface remained exposed and eventually became weathered as the concretions might suggest. This weathered surface was occupied by PGW Culture.

Layer 4 to 2 are of PGW period of about 2 metres thickness. Layer 3 is a 10 cm pink silt. The deposit is soft, whitish-grey silt with charcoal, ashes, grey ware, red ware, animal bones, igneous rocks, sandstone, flakes and pebbles. The stones were possibly brought from Kurang river, which is about 1 kilometre to east of this site. These layers contain clay balls, not made by man, but may be formed chemically *in situ*. The PGW people dug earth from the weathered surface by a 3.3 metre x 30 cm trench as shown at the bottom of layer 4. No other structure is visible here. On 27th September 1990 Dr. Israr M. Khan, a Palynologist of Hydrocarbon Institute, Islamabad, took a soil sample from layer 4. He reports

> "abundant organic matter which looked re-worked. A few *pinus* (pine) pollen, fungal fruiting body and algal filament were recorded".

Layer 1 of about 1 metre thickness is whitish-greyish in colour and has Buddhist pottery, animal bone, sandstone pieces and charcoal. Corresponding to this layer, further to the east of this mound, is a layer from where terracotta lamps, a ram, and a baroque lady figurine was collected.

*Pottery*

The pottery can be classified as follows. At this preliminary stage no painted grey pottery or any metal was found in Islamabad.

1. Plain Grey Ware. The sherds are either grey or dark grey in colour thin and thick in section. Evidence of burnishing on some pieces is detected. The bowls include incurved rims and dish with grooved lines at its base.

2. Red Ware. It may be thick or thin in section. A cooking pot with wide flat rim has linear design outside. It is made of clay and limestone grit obtained from streams nearby. Some hand made pottery retain husk and plant impressions. Some pots have mud applique on their external surface. The characteristic of red ware is the impressed or stamped designs on their external surface such as rectangles, circles, squares, vertical and oblique lines, and a tree motif. A pot has thick disc-shaped base with red slip, on external surface. It is grey from inside.

Description of the pottery illustrated in plates 2–3 is as follows. Minerals on pottery surface were not applied, but were already present in the clay. On the surface of impressed and mud applique pottery, following minerals such as Kaolinite more dominant than, montmorilonite, calcite and quartz plus organic material were identified by Dr. Abdul Rauf of Earth Sciences Department, Quaid-i-Azam University.

## Plate 2. Plain Grey Ware

1. Light grey colour bowl with slightly incurved rim, and incised lines on external surface.
2. Grey colour bowl with slanting base and thick in section. On surface traces of minerals are present.
3. Light grey to dark grey in colour, bowl with slanting base and incurved rim and traces of burnishing with an incised line on internal surface.
4. Light grey to dark grey in colour, bowl with incurved rim and round base. Traces of minerals on surfaces.
5. Light grey burnished bowl with incurved rim and round base.
6. Light grey bowl with incurved rim and round base and minerals on surface. Small incised lines on outer surface were made when the pot was wheel turned.
7. Grey bowl with much more incurved rim, than the above examples, with the round base. Incised lines and marks of finger-pinching on outer surface.
8. Dark grey flat rim 2 cm thick with a grooved horizontal line and two semi-rectangular motifs on external surface.
9. Light grey ware external surface with pressed parallel lines and finger-pinching at the top of them.
10. Light grey dish with flat base and grooved crescent lines on external surface.

## Plate 3. Red Ware

1. Red surface outside, light red inside with small round rim, limestone grit mixed in clay. Impressed linear design on external surface.
2. Pot with broken rim and red colour. Impressed linear design on external surface and minerals.
3. Pot with broken rim, red in colour with linear stamped design on external surface.
4. 1.6 cm thick pot with flat *Handi*-type rim with limestone grit mixed in clay. Linear design below the rim on outer surface.
5. Red slip on external surface with minerals and impressed circles.
6. Red colour with impressed square design on external surface.
7. Greyish-red with tree impressed design (herring bone design of Dr. Mughal) on external with mud applique with plant impressions.
8. Red colour with tree impressed design on outer surface.
9. Red colour disc-shaped with tree impressed design on outer surface.
10. Grey-red with vertical and horizontal impressed lines on other surface.
11. Red colour with impressed rectangles on external surface.

## *Conclusion*

At present there is no C14 date in Pakistan. There are many dates published from such sites as Mathura, Atranjikhera and Hastinapur in India, ranging from 1000 BC. to 250 BC. (Agrawal 1985: 286). Makhan Lal (1980: 74) proposed 1300–600 BC. for PGW Culture in India. Tripathi (1987–1988: 26) while studying important PGW sites, C14 dates, and their distribution both in India and Pakistan proposes two time brackets; 1000–700 BC. (early PGW) and 700–400 BC. (late PGW). On the other hand Dr. Dani places this culture between 800–500 BC. in Pakistan (Personal Communication in 1991). The final date coincides with the rise of Achaemenians at Taxila in 516 BC. (Dani 1986: 41). Hathial is an interesting site, with late Gandhara Grave Culture, near Taxila Museum and is excavated by Dr. Sharif (Personal Communication in 1990). I examined the excavated pottery and identified PGW impressed types associated with it. Also if we consider the occurrence of PGW at the base, below Buddhist levels at Gangaal, its early chronology can be proposed. A time range of about 1000–400 BC. can be proposed, subject to the future research and excavation in Pakistan. Islamabad seems to be a further extention of PGW culture already discovered at Cholistan in Pakistan and well studied in India.

## *References*

Agrawal, D.P. 1985. *Archaeology of India*. Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies. No. 46. Curzon press, London.

Dani, A.H. 1986. *The Historic City of Taxila*. UNESCO, Paris and CEACS, Tokyo.

Lal, Makhan. 1980. The date of Painted Grey Ware Culture: a review. *Bulletin of Deccan College Research Institute*. 40: 65–77.

Map. 1985. Islamabad and surroundings. Surveyor General of Pakistan, Rawalpindi; Ist edition. Regd. # 374. RWD '84. (1: 50,000).

Mughal, M.R. 1982. Recent archaeological research in the Cholistan desert. *Harappan Civilization*. pp. 85–95 ed. G.L. Possehl. Oxford and IBH Publication Co., New Delhi.

Salim, M. 1986. *The Middle Stone Age Cultures of Northern Pakistan*. Centre for Central Asia, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

_____ 1989a. New archaeological discoveries. *The Muslim* Newspaper, Friday Magazine. p. 4. Ist September 1989.

_____ 1989b. Ancient Islamabad being bulldozed. *The Muslim* Newspaper, Friday Magazine. pp. 1, 5. Ist December 1989.

Tripathi, V. 1987–88 Early historic archaeology and radiocarbon dating. *The Indian Historical Review* 14 (1–2): 20–35.

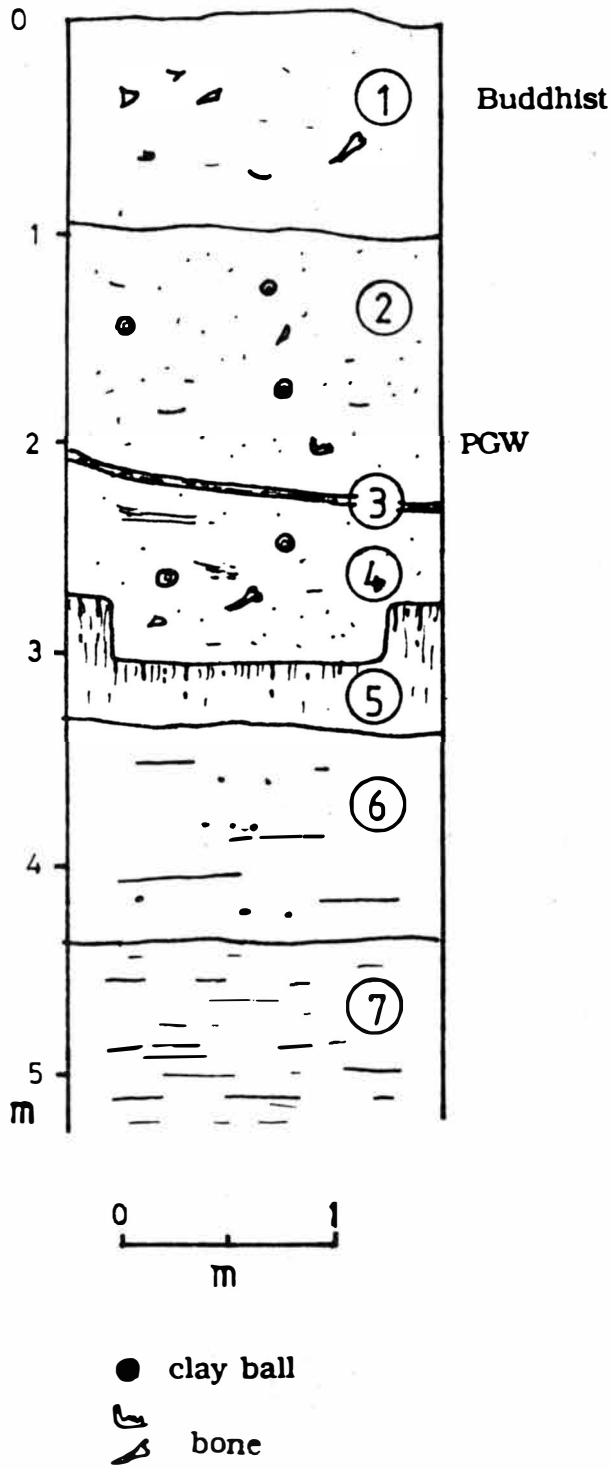
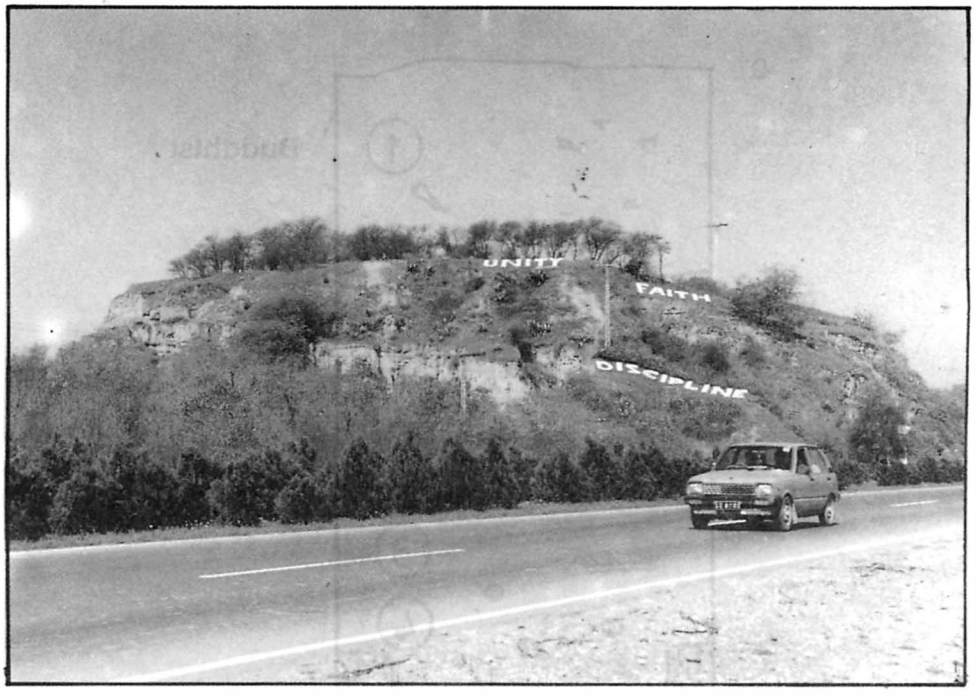
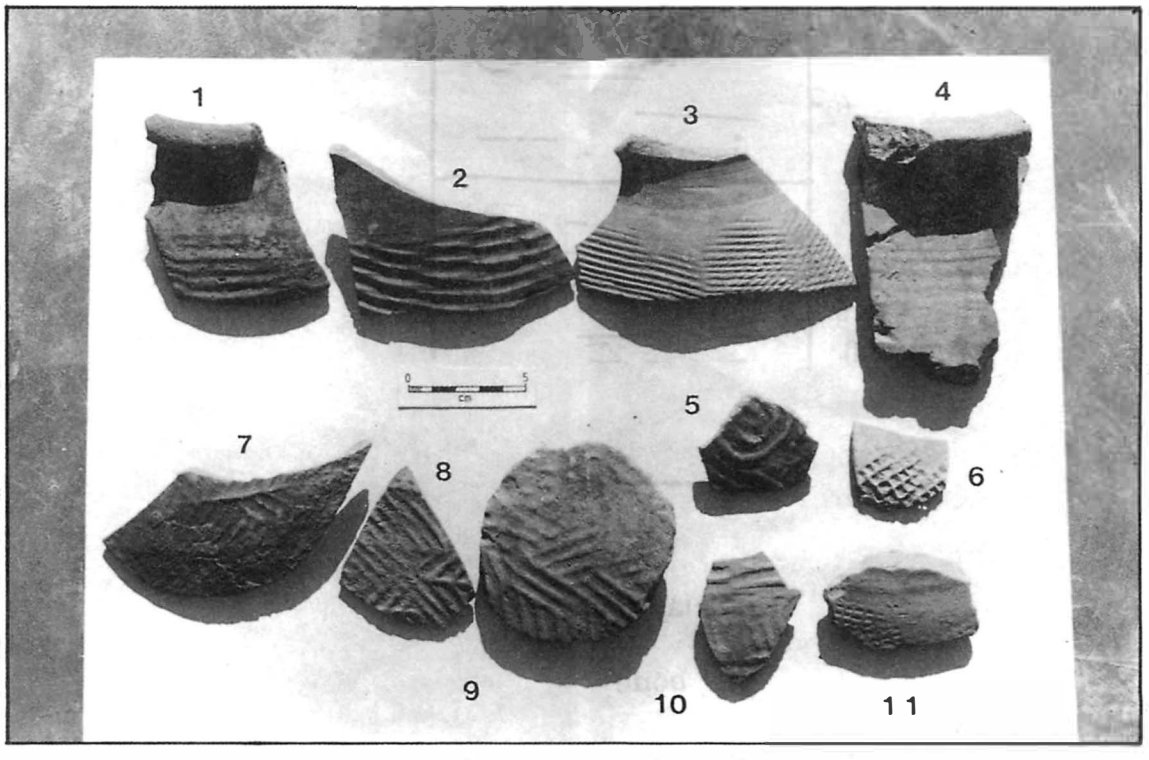


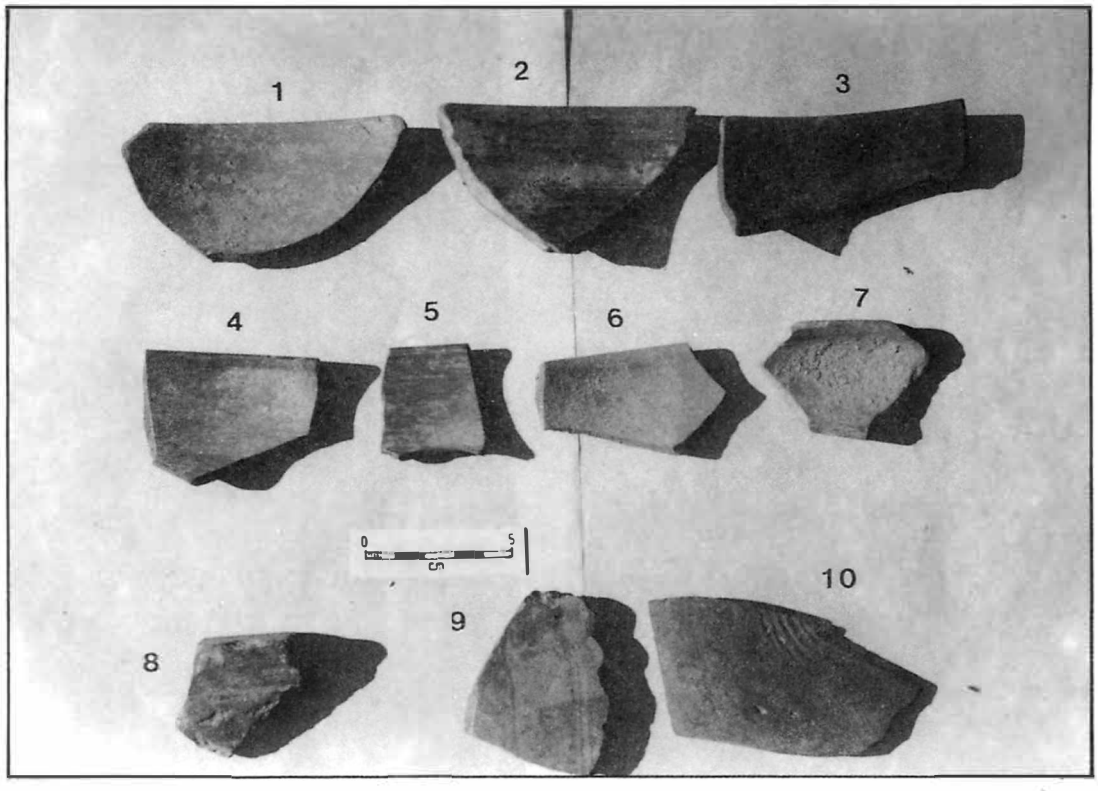

Fig. 1 Dhok Gangaal, South Section.




Pl. 1 Dhok Gangaal Mound 1 Photographed from Islamabad Highway.




Pl. 2 Dhok Gangaal Red Ware.




Pl. 3 Dhok Gangaal Plain Grey Ware.