



The Pottery from Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin: An Overview

Pottery, encountered abundantly in excavations in the Middle East and Central Asia, plays an important role since it transmits a variety of information, from function and technology to social and economic issues. On the synchronic level it displays intra-assemblage variation, in the diachronic perspective it mirrors change through time. It was one of the primary perspectives of the project to retrieve a stratigraphically well-defined pottery corpus that would enable us to formulate the chronological development from the oldest to the uppermost levels.

The evidence obtained from trenches on the citadel Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin, in Kuhandaz and from building pits in the Old City of Herat covers a temporal range from c. the 7th century BCE to the early 20th century. Yet, most areas lack well-stratified cultural deposits and in no trench were substantial continuous habitation levels preserved that would reveal development through time. The assemblage provides insights into the cultural sequence in particular areas, but this evidence cannot be transferred to other quarters, e.g. the Old City, where the ancient remains are covered by many metres of modern and pre-modern rubble and the present habitation.

The wide scope of types, covering a time of more than 2,500 years, coupled with the lack of comparative archaeological material and the usually small size of sherds, hamper classification, stylistic analyses and, hence, dating. The assemblage nevertheless illustrates the regional and domestic craft production of glazed and unglazed frit- and earthenware vessels that remained more or less unknown despite being the most frequent commodity.

Considering the multiple cultural periods involved, a detailed analytical scope and qualitative-quantitative analyses are beyond the frame of this paper. It is therefore rather hoped that the publication contributes to a better knowledge of regional productions, including



Fig. 31 Herat citadel, view from northeast



Fig. 32 Kuhandaz, shrines and cemetery, view from north; Herat citadel in the background

imitations of Timurid and Safavid tableware, and will support more specialised studies. Thus, the chance – and challenge – to publish this assemblage from Herat was taken, despite the archaeological problems explained in subsequent chapters. Being well aware that attributions and suggested dates will be questioned and may turn out wrong, it is an invitation to specialised researchers to investigate the corpus in greater depth.

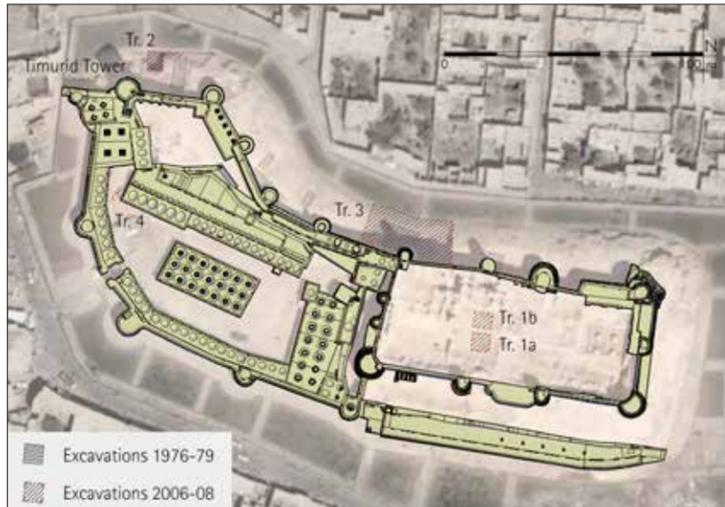
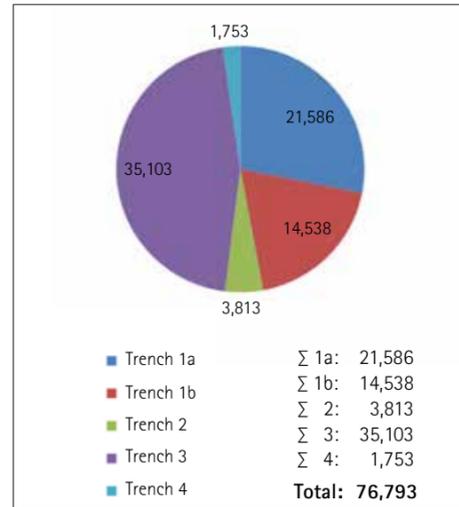


Fig. 33 Herat citadel; plan with excavation trenches



Tab. 1 Amount of sherds from Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin per trench

Since the overall ceramic assemblage was excavated at different sites in the city and covers a long, though discontinuous span of time, it includes many different groups and types, varying according to the temporal frame and, possibly, the function of the areas. It hence appeared useful to present a brief overview of the different excavations, the methodological approach, the various types, which are presented later-on according to their archaeological context and the limitations of this endeavour.

Provenance

The ceramic assemblage from Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin, the citadel and highest mound in Herat (Fig. 31), was collected in four areas (Tab. 1; Fig. 33). Trenches 1a and 1b are larger soundings that were opened to investigate the occupation sequence from the highest part of the citadel as far down as possible. There, the courtyard pavement of Abdur Rahman Khan's palace provided a *terminus ante quem* of c. 1900 CE for the layers below. It sealed burnt-brick architecture, which was constructed on top of and partly into a much older compact clay structure, probably a large platform. The latter was encountered in both trenches between 1.5 and 3 metres below the surface (931.50 to 930.00 m asl). The majority of sherds was found in pits that predate the burnt-brick architecture, and in the platform. Natural sediments were reached at a depth of 921.00 m asl. Although Trench 1a produced a 13-metres high sequence, covering 2,500 years in time, it did not yield a continuous occupation history reflecting phases of use and abandonment, and providing information on function and development of the area. Eight phases were defined on stratigraphic grounds and the pottery is presented accordingly, beginning with the oldest levels.

Trenches 2 and 3 are horizontal clearances at the northern outer foot of the citadel. They served to excavate the northern gateway, to investigate the building sequence of the architecture and to consolidate the adjoining citadel perimeter wall. The find-bearing deposits consisted mostly of debris

and rubble layers that accumulated during and after episodes of building, decay and repair of the buildings on top of the citadel. The sloping and irregular layers, with a loose matrix of stones and soil, did not support stratigraphic excavations, except in two soundings where only small amounts of pottery were found. Therefore, horizons defined by architectural features and spatial entities, such as rooms, provided the frame for the order of the pottery on the plates. Trench 4, a small sounding in the lower western citadel, was opened to search for a possible stratigraphic link to the lowest deposits in the relatively close-by Trench 2.

Excavations in Kuhandaz (Fig. 32), an oval mound to the north of the Old City, believed by some to be the core of the ancient city, were severely limited by a graveyard that developed in the neighbourhood of two shrines and the alleged 10th-century birthplace of Khaje 'Abdullah Ansari.¹ Probing into the 'circumvallation', an elevation visible in the north of the graveyard, and the adjacent area was done to verify the nature of the deposits. A sounding (Trench II) dug at the southern

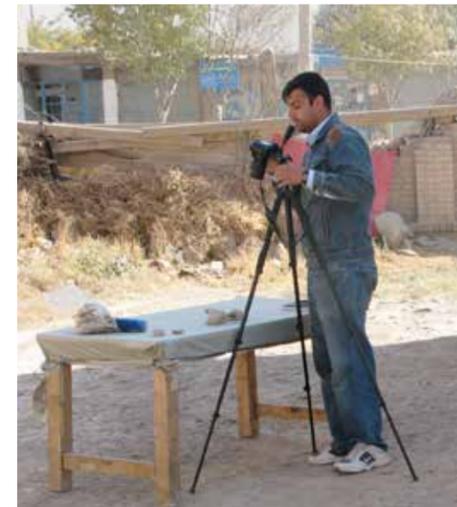


Fig. 34 Pottery photography



Fig. 35 Pottery sorting

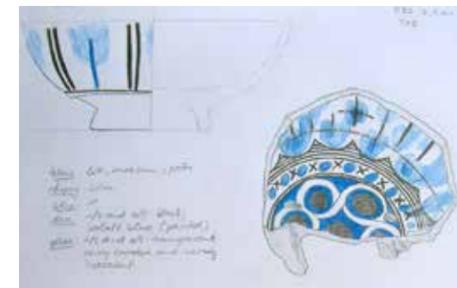


Fig. 36 Pottery drawing

border of the cemetery, the deepest point of the area, provided a larger amount of 10th/11th- to 13th-century pottery, while the close-by Trench IV yielded pottery similar to the pre-Islamic corpus from Trench 1a on the citadel, in addition to Islamic wares.²

Methodological Approach: Scope and Constraints

The pottery from the trenches on the citadel and in Kuhandaz³, was throughout all five seasons collected according to excavation units defined either by artificial removals or cultural layers. The total amount of sherds from Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin is almost 77,000; c. 3,800 were found in Kuhandaz Trenches I to IV. All sherds were recorded and classified following a consistent scheme based on technological and stylistic aspects and shape, and assigned to commonly used ceramic groups or 'wares', as far as possible (Figs. 34–36).

Out of this total, c. 4,000 sherds from Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin and 600 from Kuhandaz were drawn and their descriptions entered into a database. In the pottery catalogues attached subsequent to the description of the trenches, about 1,600 drawings and images along with photos of sherds from the same context at Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin are published.⁴ In order to ease the identification of types, all images are reproduced in colour, since black-and-white images make typological and technical identification difficult. This rather extensive scope of illustrations was opted for with regard to the lack of published, or available, archaeological assemblages from the wider region.

The focus in this chapter is on pottery from the citadel, which represents the widest scope of groups and types; the pottery from Kuhandaz is illustrated in the chapter on the excavations. In assessing this corpus, however, the contextual constraints outlined above need to be considered: although the sherds were recorded according to qualitative features, the amounts do not

1 Excavations were carried out on collaboration with the DAFA in Kabul. The pottery is discussed along with the excavation results from p. 689 onwards. Hazrat Shaikh Abu Ismail Abdullah al-Herawi al-Ansari, a venerated Sufi mystic and poet, lived c. 1006–1088. His shrine in Gazorgah is still one of the most prominent pilgrimage sites in the region.

2 Excavated by Julien Cuny and Quentin Borderie in 2008.

3 Except Kuhandaz, Trench IV.

4 The images were cut out from collective documentation photographs taken between 2005 and 2010 under difficult light conditions and with then still simple digital cameras. The illustrations were prepared by different persons and are therefore not uniform in style.

provide comparable quantitative information. This is mainly due to three factors: firstly, the disturbed contexts, very obvious in Trenches 2 and 3, and – more obscure but significant as well – in the upper deposits of Trenches 1a and 1b; secondly, different types of contexts, for example architecture, pits and habitation; and, thirdly, the fragmented preservation of sherds that often hampered stylistic classification and dating. The latter also produces irrelevant proportions of quartz-based and clay-bodied types, ruling out using excavation volumes as a means to compare find ratios.

Many pottery types are attributed to particular periods, regions, and sometimes even to production sites or workshops. Yet, while some examples are well-known, such as certain glazed types from the earlier Islamic era, others can only be dated within a wider chronological frame, and in many cases their attributions may prove wrong for the reasons outlined above.

Pottery Groups and Types

The groups used as framework for the assemblage from Herat are commonly used designations based on techniques and style. Up to the 14th century, they usually imply a certain chronological range.⁵ Concerning the later periods, regional and chronological attributions are only indicated for some groups for the reasons outlined above, hoping that the corpus will be researched in greater detail in future.

The main groups encountered in Herat date to the mid-first millennium BCE, the 10th to 13th CE, the 14th to the late 16th, and the 17th to late 19th century. For some groups, comparative archaeological evidence from the closer region is available, for others, particularly from the later periods, it is lacking.

Concerning the pre-Islamic occupation, Kandahar is the most important reference site, for which also detailed accounts of findings and finds are published. The pre-Islamic assemblage from Balkh was presented recently, but comparisons to that assemblage are limited.⁶ The same applies to sites farther away, such as Mundigak, Tureng Tepe, Qasr-e Abu Nasr, Siraf or Sirjan.⁷ Lashkari Bazaar, Nishapur and Samarkand provide ample evidence for the slip-painted and related wares⁸, much less for later ones. For some important sites only short reports are available⁹, other excavations are not yet published or work is in progress, for example for Ghazni and Islamic

Balkh.¹⁰ The 10th–14th-century pottery types kept by the Herat Museum were presented in greater detail in the volume on the collection of the Herat Museum and are discussed here only briefly. Access to the enormous amount of information on Central Asian sites is mostly difficult. This gap is partly filled by a volume providing summaries of the work of numerous French missions¹¹ and some monographs.¹²

From the late 14th and the 15th century onwards dating becomes more difficult. These centuries are stronger than the previous ones marked by the appearance of new styles influenced by Chinese and South Asian models. Soon after the 16th century European influence played a role as well.¹³ The fine table wares, often related to particular rulers and their workshops, were eventually adapted to taste within short intervals. They are characterised by a bewildering variety of decorative elements and patterns copied from contemporary and older Chinese prototypes, and were modified and enriched with local features, depending on taste and demand, resources and skills. In addition, large-scale migrations of craftsmen, set into motion by political events or economic constraints, led to the diffusion of similar styles and techniques that were produced in a few large centres from Istanbul and Damascus to Tabriz, Kerman, Mashhad, Nishapur, Samarkand, and others.

The research of L. Golombek, R. Mason and their associates on the Timurid and subsequently the Safavid table wares led to the archaeometric fingerprinting of workshop-related ware-type characteristics and the formulation of significant stylistic features.¹⁴

As a result of their multi-disciplinary approach, insights were gained on various aspects concerning the development of shapes, styles – or rather fashions – and fabrics, and on the context of production and consumption in the wider social and historical setting that had direct impacts on prevailing tastes, demands and supplies.

Through the identification of site-related characteristics, dates within the range of a few decades are proposed. Although Golombek and Mason also used archaeological examples, including some clay-bodied sherds, their results and definitions mostly rely on high-ranking complete pieces of outstanding quality, quite some having a date and/or the name of the potter or city. Hence, even if no archaeometric studies are possible, stylistic and morphological hallmarks support the attribution of vessels to a narrow time horizon and region. The problem of assigning archaeological sherds to the groups defined by them, however, persists: fitting tiny fragments into these not always clear schemes and matching a diverse and fragmented assemblage with the types described in these volumes requires an expertise in this particular field that at present only a few specialists have acquired.

The presence of a large number of good-quality earthenware vessels that copy Asian and Iranian high-quality wares with quartz-based bodies reflects a considerable demand for less exclusive ceramics. The needs of this cheaper market were probably catered for by smaller regional workshops, while the production of ordinary household wares most likely took place locally in every larger village. Their outcomes, which must have had a smaller circulation, remain by and large unknown. Being more conservative, some groups, such as monochrome-glazed vessels, particularly green-glazed bowls, and most, if not all, unglazed types were crafted for a long time and characteristic features supporting a narrower dating, such as morphological characteristics, yet need to be defined.

For the present assemblage, typological, and thus chronological attributions based on details of shape, material components and decorative styles – elements, structure, colour scheme and

technique – are therefore only possible within a wider margin, or not at all. Moulded or carved wares as well display a large variety of decorative patterns that appear to be long-lasting and produced far beyond the 14th century.

This gap in knowledge is partly due to the lack of well-illustrated publications of archaeological collections from excavations and museums¹⁵, to the extent that some regions crucial for a wider perspective on production and consumption remain rather unknown. This applies for example to the pottery of the Golden Horde as parallels from Otrar and the vast collection of Ilkhanid material presented by R. Haddon reveal.¹⁶ The deficit of comparable 'ordinary' domestic wares was particularly noted in the documentation of the Timurid and post-Timurid pottery from Trenches 2 and 3, but also in Trenches 1a and 1b on the citadel for the later periods.

Due to the nature of the contexts, the excavations in Herat do not contribute significantly to the solution of the dating problem: the association of types does not *per se* imply a corresponding date due to disturbed contexts: the general rule that the youngest example in a layer determines the date only relates to the layer, or its deposition, but tells nothing about the production date of the associated objects if this layer is disturbed.

In the pottery catalogues, attached after the description of the excavation, the sherds are presented according to their archaeological context¹⁷ and the stratigraphic sequence defined by architectural and archaeological features. This framework varies according to the conditions encountered in the trenches and is therefore outlined separately for each trench. Hence, in the catalogues priority is given to archaeological context, while stylistic dating, based on technology, shape and decoration, was of secondary importance. This presentation by provenance reveals differences between the assemblages and reflects functional variances and distinct phases of use. Within these contextual entities, the sherds are presented in the same order, based firstly on technology and style and, secondly, on shape, from closed to open forms. Dates are provided for commonly known types. Since some of them are well-described and researched they are only summarily discussed here. For other types, dates are given with wider margins or not at all.

Measurements, material, techniques of shaping, surface treatment and decoration as well as other properties and brief descriptions are provided in the catalogue for drawn sherds. Guidelines for reading the catalogues are found on p. 182.

Early Glazed Groups

Sherds of these groups were found in Kuhandaz and in all trenches on the citadel, considering the excavation volume most frequently in Trench 2, where they scatter from the oldest to the uppermost horizons.

5 For the holdings of the Herat Museum, see Volume 3 of this series: Franke/Müller-Wiener (eds.) 2016. In general: Watson 2004. – Fehérvári 2000. – Grube 1976; Grube 1994a–1994d. – Morgan 1994a–d.

6 Kandahar: McNicoll 1978. – McNicoll/Ball 1996. – Helms 1997. – Balkh: Maxwell-Jones 2015. – Pakistan: Casal 1961. – Petrie et al. 2008.

7 Casal 1961. – Boucharlat/Lecomte 1987. – Whitcomb 1985. – Morgan/Leatherby 1987. – Tampoe 1989. – Kennet 2004: detailed overview on Sasanian to 17th-century evidence from Arabian Peninsula and beyond.

8 Whitehouse 1978. – Gardin 1957a; Gardin 1963. – Whitehouse 1973. – Rante/Collinet 2013. – Siméon 2012. The 10th- to 13th-century material in the Herat Museum is discussed in greater detail and in relation to a wider context in Franke/Müller-Wiener (eds.) 2016.

9 Jam, Gascoigne 2010.

10 The Islamic pottery is prepared for publication by A. Fusaro for Ghazni and by P. Siméon for Balkh.

11 Bendezu-Sarmiento 2013.

12 Siméon 2012. – Shishkina/Pavchinskaja 1992. – Puschnigg 2006. – Henshaw 2010. – Siméon/Müller-Wiener, in prep.

13 Crowe 2007.

14 Golombek et al. 1996; Golombek et al. 2014. – Crowe 1998; Crowe 2002; Crowe 2012, all with ample references to further relevant literature.

15 Where they might be found in the depots, as e.g. in the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin.

16 Baipakov/Ertakovich 1990, rather cursory and without stratigraphic or contextual information. – Haddon 2011.

17 For easier reference, the provenance of sherds is mentioned in the illustrations. The number indicates the trench. Trench 1: Units 1–150; Trench 2: 2000–2040; Trench 3: 3000–3200; Trench 4: 4000–4030.



Fig. 37 Early glazed sherds; scale 1:2

Monochrome Turquoise-Glazed Earthenware, 8th/9th century (Fig. 37a)

The only identified sherd from this group is from a necked jar found on the surface of Trench 2. It is set apart from the large group of monochrome turquoise-glazed vessels by its shape, the sandy buff fabric and the quality of the glaze (Pl. 161,2). A sherd from Trench 1, Phase 7c, possibly also belongs to this cultural horizon (not illustrated).

Glaze-Painted Earthenware, 9th century, 'Samarra'-horizon (Fig. 37b)

Sherds belonging to this characteristic type are very rare. The two examples from Trench 2 (Horizon 2.1, lowest layers beneath the stone glaci; Pl. 144,1. 3), show a cobalt-blue decoration on a white glaze. The bowls are made of a sandy buff fabric.

Slip-Painted Earthenware, 10th/12th century (Fig. 37c-g)

Slip-painted sherds of various types are common in the region from about the 10th to the late 12th, possibly until the early 13th century.

While in Qala'-e Ekhtyaruddin only 24 sherds were found, many came to light in Kuhandaz Trench II. The types attested on the citadel include calligraphic black-on-white as well as red- and black-slipped and dotted examples (Fig. 37c-f). Sherds with black paint, striking yellow highlights and almost completely eroded glazes are unusual (Fig. 37g).

Some reminiscence to colour schemes used in late 14th-century Otrar pottery can be noted for this type, but style and decoration are different.¹⁸ The Herat Museum owns a large collection of related types and during the Herat Province Survey one large and a couple of smaller

18 Baipakov/Ertakovich 1990, e.g. 148; 149.

sites of this period were recorded as well.¹⁹ The assemblages from the excavations and the museum are closely related to material from Samarqand and Nishapur.²⁰

Examples of this type were most common in Trenches 2 and 3, with 10 sherds from each, while only two sherds come from Trenches 1a and 1b.

Splashed and Incised Earthenware, 12th/13th CE (Fig. 37h)

While no early splashed and incised wares are present, two later sherds from bowls with green, brown and yellow splashed and incised patterns in/under a transparent colourless glaze were found in Trench 3 and at the western outer wall (Horizon 3; Pls. 188,6; 211,1).²¹

19 Franke 2015a; Franke 2015b; Franke 2016d; Franke/Urban 2018.

20 Outlined in the volume on the Herat Museum, with reference to relevant publications: Franke 2016d. A detailed publication of the Afrasiab material in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, is in preparation by M. Müller-Wiener and P. Siméon.

21 Room 6, Horizon 3, Niveau 2.

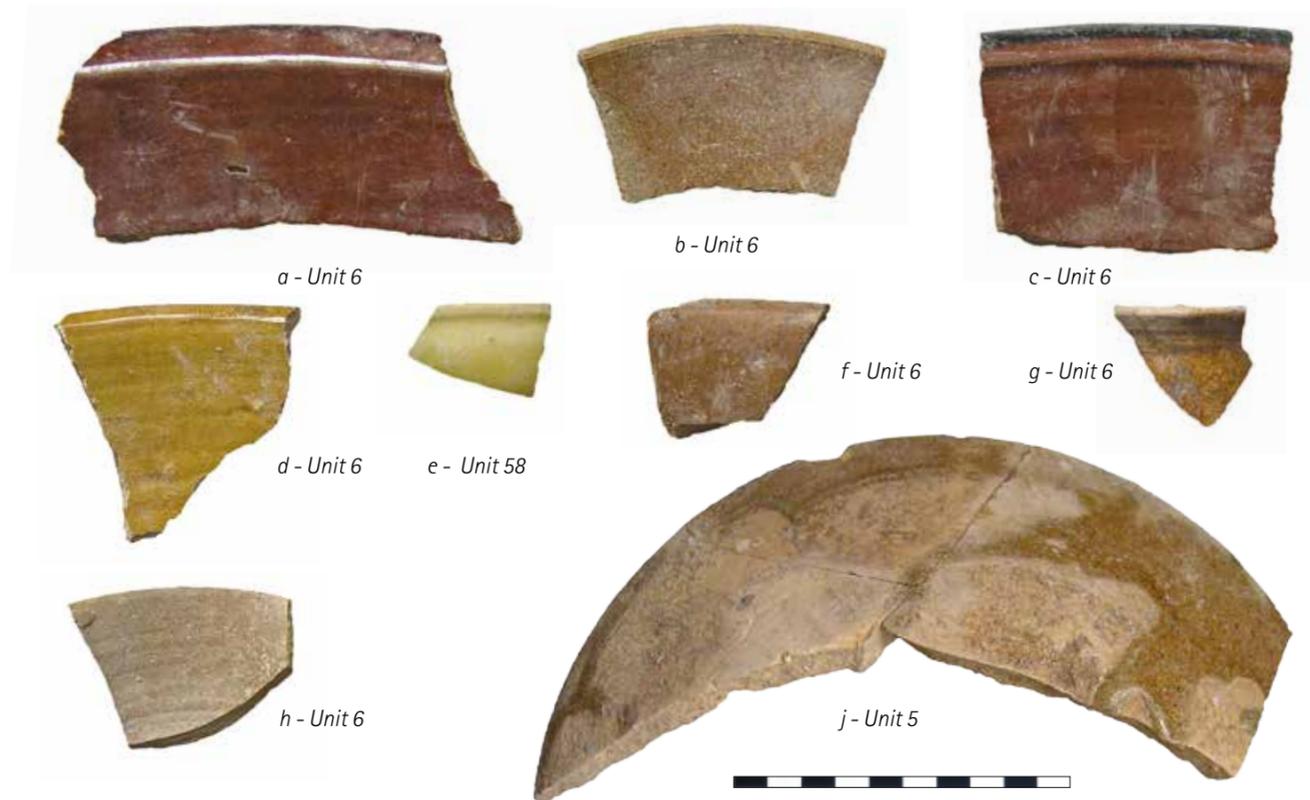


Fig. 38 Mustard- and brown-glazed earthenware; scale 1:2

Monochrome-Glazed Earthen- and Fritware²²

Monochrome-glazed earthen- and fritware is common and attested for a long time from many sites across the Middle East and Central Asia. The earthenware is, apart from plain ware, the predominant utilitarian type with apparently few changes in shapes and modes of production through time. The presence of whitish or buff slips is sometimes regarded as an indicator for an earlier date, but this appears doubtful since identical shapes occur in the same contexts with and without slips. It was noted in the assemblage from the citadel that, in addition to continuous common types, some vessels from later phases have less well-tempered fabrics, thicker walls with a heavy appearance, and angular rather than curved shapes that make them clumsy. Others vessels show particular

22 Quartz-based bodies only occur in the turquoise-glazed group. For a detailed discussion of these groups and the types in the Herat Museum see Franke 2016f and Müller-Wiener/Franke 2016.

features, such as a pinched rim. Found in large numbers in excavations and obviously produced at a number of sites for a long time, a specialised study might result in more differentiated chronological and spatial distribution patterns.

Mustard-Glazed Earthenware (Figs. 38b. d-j; 39)

Mustard-glazed earthenware is the second largest monochrome-glazed group after the green-glazed one. The vessels have well-worked and -tempered fabrics with mineral temper only, they are wheel-thrown and often trimmed as well, with usually rather thick walls. The glaze is applied either on a whitish slip or on the plain inner surface. On the outside, the slips and glazes just cover the rim or extend to 1/3 of the surface. A few examples are glazed on both sides. The shades range from yellowish to brownish-ochre, a pale yellow is rare (Fig. 38e). The glaze is often mottled or grainy. The bowls were fired in an upright position in the kiln, only a few show glaze drops on the rim indicating upside-down firing. Decorations include moulded patterns and incised wavy lines.

Most frequent shapes are large and heavy conical bowls with flat bases, often with a marked triangular or angular everted rim. Some bowls carry incised wavy bands on the inner upper wall. The same type is also attested on green-glaze and unglazed examples. Convex, carinated and flaring bowls are usually smaller and not as numerous. The same is true for closed shapes, such as jugs, and for lampstands, oil lamps and lids. Noticeable are shallow conical bowls or dishes with an internally pinched