

Glazed Islamic Pottery

Despite its diversity and regional developments, glazed pottery is usually easier to date, except for small and non-diagnostic fragments. As the various wares and types present in the survey collection belong to well-known groups, they are only briefly described here in a more or less chronological order, the emphasis, however, is on associations and spatial distribution patterns. Dates are based on comparative material and are general attributions with flexible brackets, as the surface assemblages lack a contextual and chronological framework. The stratified assemblages from Ghazni, Termez and other sites in Central Asia are of particular importance, as they are the closest excavated sites to Herat Province with comparable finds.¹⁹⁴

The groups discussed in the first section below date from the late 9th/10th to the early 13th century. They share morphological, technological or stylistic features, overlap during certain periods and reflect the overall regional variability and stylistic development. The following sections deal with pottery from the 13th/14th century and from the late 14th to the early 16th century and beyond. The latter sections are shorter because the assemblages collected are smaller, there are fewer diagnostic sherds and the chronological framework is less well defined.

Pottery from the late 9th/10th to the early 13th century

Splashed Pottery and Splashed & Incised Pottery (Figs. 1829; 1830)

Splashed pottery is characterised by opaque or transparent white, sometimes yellowish glazes and by painted or splashed light green and/or brownish-yellow in-glaze colours as well as *Ishkornia*¹⁹⁵ sherds (Fig. 1830a; b, also incised). The group also includes sherds with thick or thin white slips and clear glazes, light green, sometimes bluish-green and/or mustard painted glaze colours, and thin sgraffiato patterns, showing a range of qualities and colour schemes (Fig. 1830c–e). This group is dated between the late 9th/10th and the

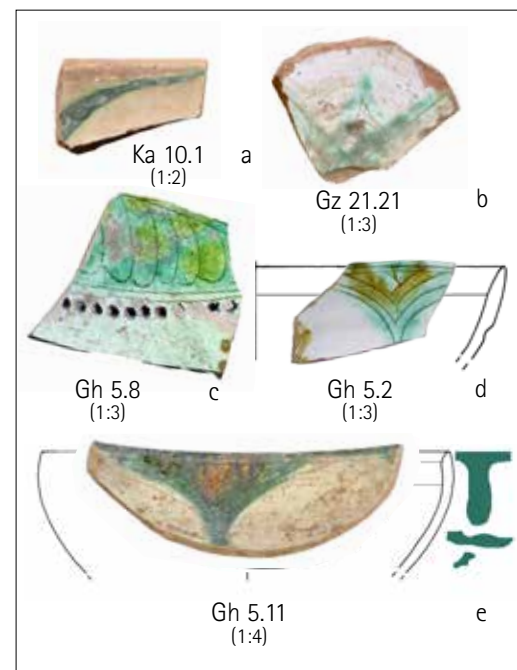


Fig. 1830 Splashed and Splashed & Incised pottery, late 9th/10th and 10th/11th century

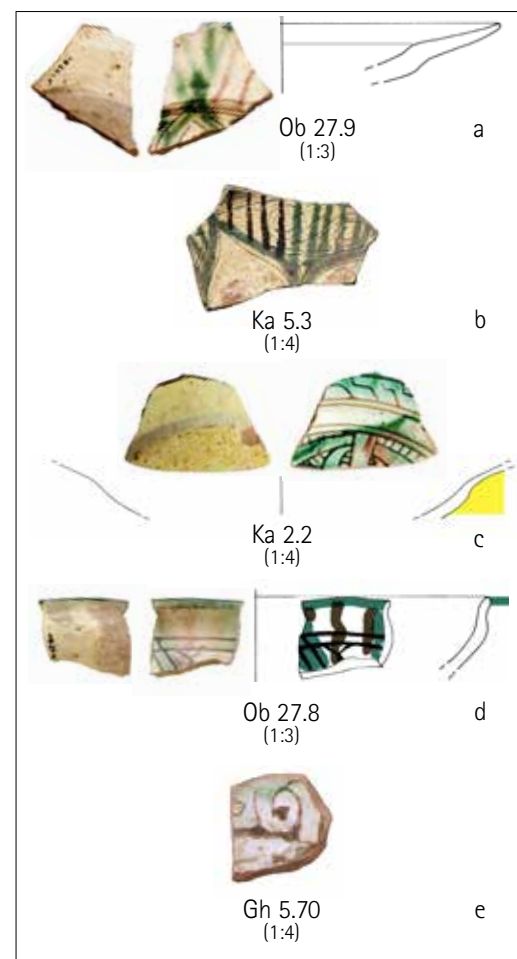


Fig. 1831 Incised pottery, late 11th/12th–early 13th century

10th/early 11th century.¹⁹⁶ Due to the mostly small size of the sherds in our collection, it is usually not possible to identify shapes or patterns. Examples of this group have been collected from eleven sites.¹⁹⁷ At ten¹⁹⁸, they were associated with Slip-painted pottery (attested at 46 sites in total), and at five¹⁹⁹ with 'Pseudo-Prehistoric Ware' (PPW, attested at 44 sites in the eastern part of Herat province). At none of the eleven sites was later 'Afghan Incised' pottery²⁰⁰ found, a type also recorded at eleven sites (see below).

'Afghan Incised' Pottery (Figs. 1821; 1831)

This group of earthenware vessels, almost exclusively bowls, shares some stylistic aspects with the previous types, such as incised motifs and bi- or polychrome, rarely monochrome patterns. However, it is distinguished by different shapes, hues, design structures and more complex motifs (Fig. 1831a–d). First defined by Gardin (1957b), recent studies of the material from Jam²⁰¹ and Ghazni have added considerable information on contexts, associations, stylistic diversity and dates of this group. The date proposed by Gardin²⁰² is largely accepted and has been confirmed by the evidence from Ghazni²⁰³, where it is one of the hallmarks of the mid-12th- to early 13th-century assemblages.²⁰⁴

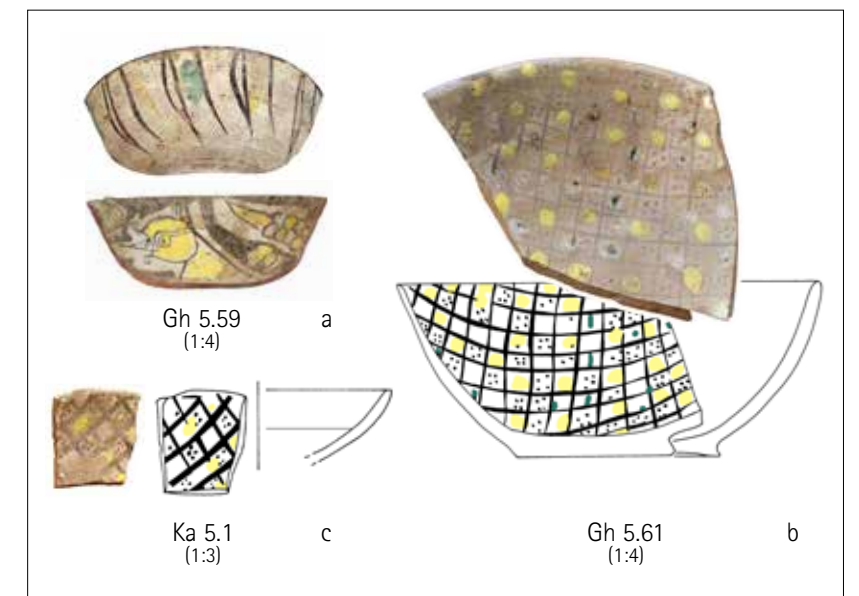


Fig. 1832 Slip-painted (a) and Buff ware, 10th–11th/12th century

This type was found at ten sites²⁰⁵, at six associated²⁰⁶ with Slip-painted pottery (46 in total), at seven²⁰⁷ with PPW (44 in total) and at only one site²⁰⁸ with Splashed & Incised sherds (see above). A sherd from Palگرد (Fig. 1831e; Gh 5.70, p. 716), chipped to a roundel, with a bold pattern incised through a white slip and a greenish accent (?) under a clear transparent glaze, is reminiscent of Iranian incised types, such as the 12th/13th-century Garrus ware, for example; the pattern may be similar to that of pedestal bowls in the Khalili collection, but its original shape remains unclear.²⁰⁹

Slip-Painted Pottery (Figs. 1829; 1832; 1833)

This group is one of the geographically most widespread ones, with occurrences from the Indian Subcontinent through Central Asia to Iraq and Egypt, reflecting different regional and chronological developments. A variety of sub-types show differences in quality and aesthetic concepts, but were often found in association – this is not surprising given the size of the region and a chronological frame from around the 10th to the 12th century. In fact, a large number of workshops have been identified at all major sites in Herat city²¹⁰ and at ten sites in Herat province.²¹¹ Stylistic variability is also attested in our surface collections, but chronological inferences are difficult due to the lack of stratified material.²¹²

194 The literature on this subject is vast and only a few publications are referenced here. General works on public collections that include pottery from Afghanistan are Grube 1994a–c; Morgan 1994a–d; Fehérvári 2000; Watson 2004; Franke/Müller-Wiener 2016, among others. The most important publications of at least partially stratified or otherwise dated primary material from the periods under consideration are still those on Nishapur (Wilkinson 1973; Rante/Collinet 2013), Sirjan (Morgan/Leatherby 1987), Qasr-e Abu Nasr (Whitcomb 1985), Susa (Rosen-Ayalon 1974; Kervran 1977) and even Bahrain (Frifelt 1971). Essential for Afghanistan are publications of the Italian team on Ghazni, for pottery especially Fusaro 2014; 2016; 2020 and Fusaro/Allegranzi 2023, which complement the earlier works of Gardin on Bust, Lashkari Bazar ad Balkh (1957b; 1963) and others cited in the previous section; for Jam see Gascoigne 2010, the publication of further material from Balkh and Kandahar is in progress, the one on finds from Sistan is forthcoming.

For recent research in Central Asia, stratified finds and the development of stylistic features see the contributions in Rante 2024 (not available anymore for this book), Baumer/Novak 2019, Baumer et al. 2022, and numerous publications by S. Stark, all with a focus on the Bukhara oasis. For the 8th/9th to the 11th century in particular Kurbanov 2022, 118; 126; 127; Shenkar et al. 2022; Lurje 2022; Pozzi et al. 2019; Pozzi et al. 2022; Mirzaahmedov 2003, 2008; Mirzaahmedov et al. 2019 on stratified pottery from the citadel of Vardanzeh, occupied between the 4th and the 20th century, and Mirzaahmedov et al. 2022 on Slip-painted types from that site, dated to the 10th/11th century and compared with material from the wider region. On Termez see Fusaro et al. 2022, Martínez Ferreras et al. 2020 and Houal/Le Maguer 2013, 432 Fig. 4.10–12. Publications in Russian could not be included.

195 Henshaw 2010, 170–173.

196 Watson 2004, 200: Group F, splashed examples are dated to the 9th, incised ones to the 10th century. Fehérvári 2000, 47: 9th–10th/11th century.

197 Ob 17 (?); Ob 18; Ka 10; Kh 12 (?); Kh 15; In 27 (?); Gz 21; Gh 5; Gh 16; Gh 41.

198 Except Ob 18.

199 Ob 17 (?); Ob 18; Ka 10; Kh 12 (?); Kh 15.

200 The sherd from Ob 17 is questionable.

201 Gascoigne 2010, 124 Fig. 5; Tab. 6 (Polychrome Incised).

202 Gardin 1957b, 228–238 Pls. 1–5. Fehérvári 2000, cat. nos. 203–210: 12th/13th century. – Watson 2004, 268 Group Ie: 11th/12th century.

203 Fusaro 2020, 77–100 Fig. 5d: termed 'Splashed Sgraffiato' or 'Sgraffiato Splashed', this is the predominant type of the third ceramic stage (mid-12th to early 13th century), which differs from the older Splashed Ware of the second stage (late 11th to first half of 12th century). Examples have been found in the Ghaznavid palace and in two sealed caches from the 'House of Lustrewares'.

204 So far, no related examples are published on the Ceramics page of the Helmand Sistan Project website (<https://www.sistanarchaeology.org/ceramics>).

205 CS 11; CS 19; CS 32; Ob 17; Ob 27; Ka 2; Ka 5; Gu 8; Ko 6 (?); Gh 24; Gh 29.

206 CS 19; CS 32; Ob 17; Ob 27; Ka 5; Gu 8.

207 CS 11; CS 19; Gu 8; Ka 2, Ka 5; Ob 17, Ob 27.

208 Ob 17, but questionable.

209 Morgan 1994d, cat. nos. 362; 363, late 12th–early 13th century.

210 Already mentioned by Grube (1994a, 68–70), but based on stylistic criteria.

211 Kiln remains were found at CS 12; CS 29; CS 41; Gh 5; Gh 16; In 27; Ka 10; Ko 7; Ko 11; PZ 38; slags at Ad 6 and Ob 13.

212 But see the typological development published by Mirzaahmedov et al. 2019 and 2022 for Vardanzeh/Bukhara.



Fig. 1833 Slip-painted pottery, 10th-12th century

This group was recorded at 46 sites, the highest number for chronologically diagnostic wares, followed by 'Pseudo-Prehistoric Ware' (PPW), which was found at 44 sites (Fig. 1829). Most of the common types are represented, although often only as small fragments, mainly of bowls, including white- and black-slipped examples, some epigraphic, red- or black-slipped vessels with bi- or polychrome (white, black, yellow) decoration, polychrome-on-white, yellow-staining black and lusterware imitations (Fig. 1833). The glazes were usually transparent and clear, but occasionally a greenish glaze was noted (e.g. p. 712). The largest assemblage with the greatest variety and the highest quality of sherds comes from the large urban centre of Palgerd (Gh 5). Abandoned in the 13th century and never re-occupied, large amounts of fragments were dispersed as a result of extensive illegal excavations.

High-quality examples have also been found at smaller sites, but the assemblages were more limited in number and less diverse.²¹³

This group also includes the Buff Ware, identified at Nishapur by Wilkinson (1973, 3-53), and attested at only a few sites in Herat Province.²¹⁴ Apart from one depiction of a bird (Fig. 1832a, cp. p. 715), the most common patterns are geometric, often with rather ran-

213 Such as Gh 41; Gh 42; Kh 9; Kh 10; Kh 12.

214 Ob 17; Kh 9; Gz 21.

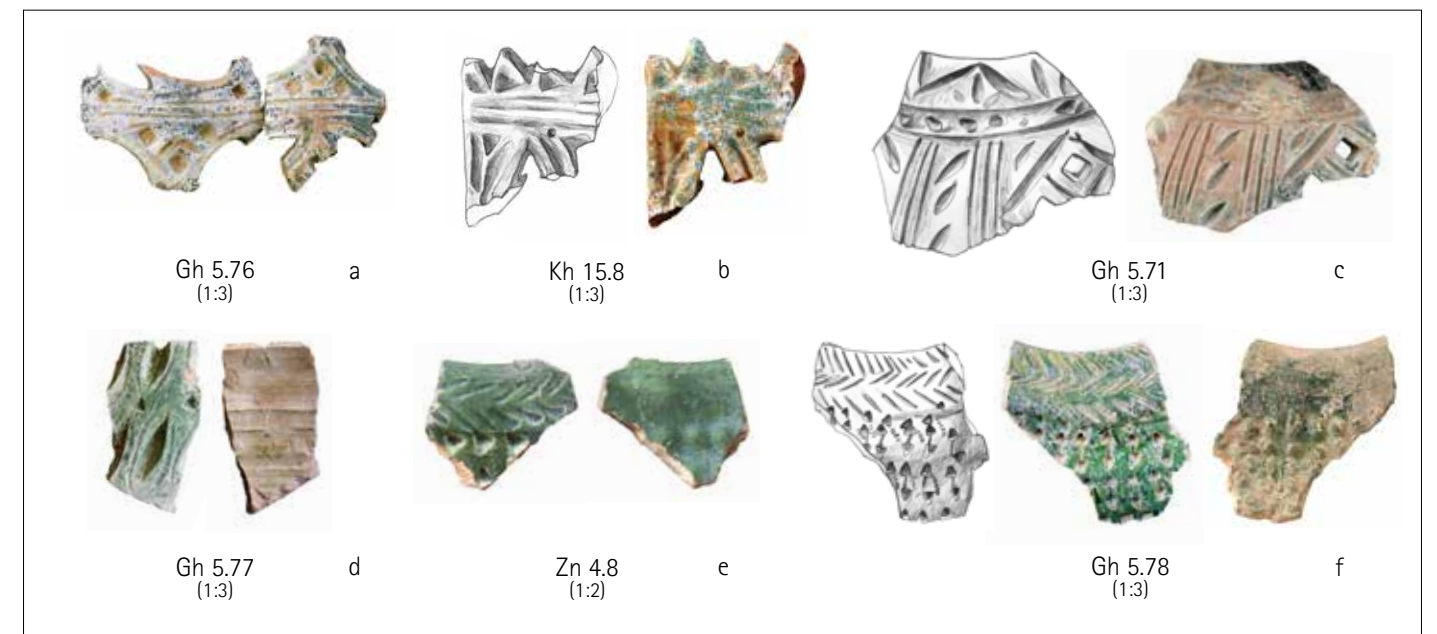


Fig. 1834 Green-glazed carved and incised pottery, 9th/10th-early 13th century

domly added dots, and geometrically arranged vegetal motifs. Thickly painted green, brown or yellow dots are also found on a number of vessels, not only in our collection, but also in Lashkari Bazar²¹⁵ and in Termez.²¹⁶ At Ghazni²¹⁷, dots were common on 'Sgraffiato and Dot-painted' pottery of the second ceramic stage (late 11th-first half of 12th century), but they differ in style and ornamental structure from the motifs found on the bi- or polychrome black-, red- or white-slipped vessels so common at Nishapur.²¹⁸

Monochrome-glazed Earthenware
(Figs. 1834; 1835)

Monochrome, especially green, bluish-green or turquoise-glazed vessels²¹⁹ are a common and often the most abundant group of glazed

ceramics. Mustard- and brown- or black-glazed²²⁰ examples are less frequent, but share shapes and production characteristics with the green-glazed types. Only one lilac-glazed sherd was found.²²¹ Notable is the presence of both a green and a mustard glaze on more than one vessel (Fig. 1835b). White slips are present on some sherds, but are not a reliable indicator for a 10th to early 13th century date since many vessels are not slipped.²²²

Diagnostic types are green-glazed vessels with perforated, carved or impressed patterns; dating from around the 9th/10th to the 13th century and later²²³ (Fig. 1834a; b; d?, resp. c; e; f). Shapes include lamps and lanterns and, for the later part of this period, closed globular bowls with incised or carved rims and notched bodies. The perforated vessels cannot have been used as containers, but rather as incense burners, but the perforations are often closed by glaze (Fig. 1834d-f).

The majority of vessels are green-glazed without decoration or with simple shallow, incised wavy bands. Bowls are very common, jars are rare. Typical, but long-lived shapes are large conical bowls with marked rims (p. 395; Gu 1.1; 3). Chronologically more diagnostic are small carinated open or slightly closed bowls with external ridges and/or incised²²⁴, notched or rouletted patterns (Fig. 1835c; g; h; Gh 16.8), S-shaped bowls and bowls

215 Gardin 1963, Pls. XVIII; XXIII; XXVII.

216 Houal/Maguer 2013, Fig. 4, 9-12.

217 The abundant use of dots provides a link to dot-painted bowls found at Ghazni, for example in two caches from the 'House of Lusterwares'. This type has been dated to the second, resp. the third ceramic stage (late 11th/early 12th, resp. mid 12th to early 13th century), when it became more popular (Fusaro 2016, 11; 12 Pl. IV.1 C101; Fusaro 2020, 95-98 Fig. 5d).

218 Wilkinson 1973, 173; 174.

219 Müller-Wiener (2016, 319-323), provides a comprehensive general overview of types in the Herat Museum.

220 Dark brown- and black-slipped sherds were found at 20 sites (Ob 13; Ob 17; Ka 3; Kh 5; Kh 9; Kh 15; Gu 7; Gu 8; In 11; In 13; Gz 5; Gz 14; Gz 27; Gz 31; Gz 54; Ko 6; Gh 5; Gh 6; Gh 13; Gh 14). Parallels come, for example, from Termez (kiln area. Fusaro et al. 2022, Fig. 17, 10th-13th century).

221 Kh 12.3, a 10th to early 13th site. In Akhsiket the colour was achieved by using MnO with low CuO in alkaline glazes, often related to *Ishkornia* types (Henshaw 2010, 175; 194; 196).

222 Müller-Wiener 2016, 320.

223 Fehérvári 200, 148, cat. no. 179. - Watson 2004, 161-165, only early types.

224 Green-glazed bowls with complex patterns, compared by Watson (2020, 140) with clear glazed splashed and incised types and dated to the 10th century have not been noted in the survey collection.

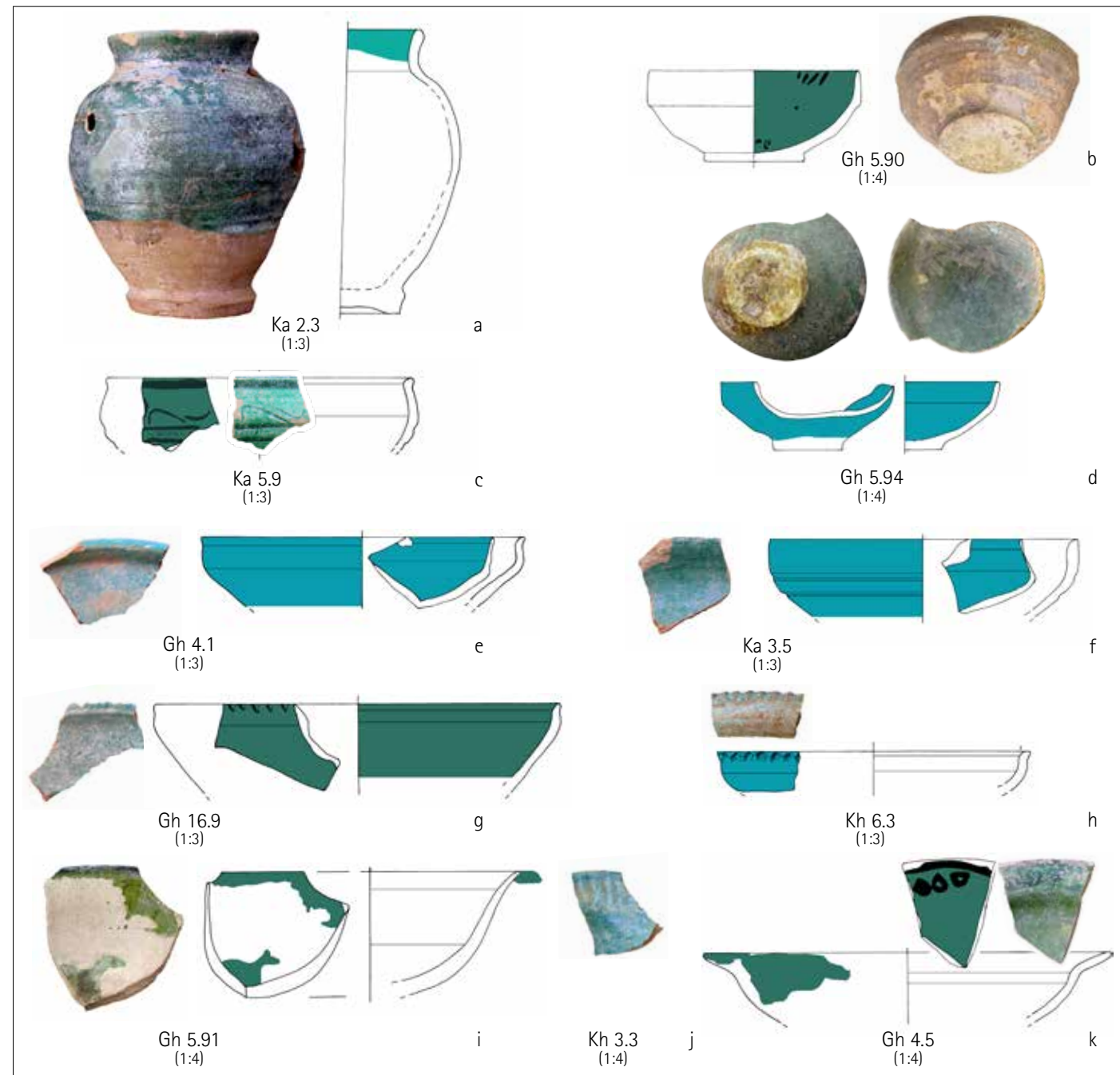


Fig. 1835 Monochrome green- and turquoise-glazed pottery, 11th–13th century

or plates with flaring rims (Fig. 1835i; j; k). The appearance of turquoise glazes in the eastern Islamic lands²²⁵ and Central Asia is usually dated to the 12th century, but they are known from late 11th-century contexts, at least on stoneware sherds.²²⁶

Notable is the absence of 'single-line underglaze painted' bowls, which occur in the third ceramic stage (mid-12th to early 13th century) at Ghazni, along with monochrome-glazed types. This date coincides

225 Bamiyan; Ghazni; Vardanzeh; see Fusaro 2020, 109 for detailed references.

226 From the Friday Mosque in Isfahan; at Estakhr; Nishapur (Rugiadi 2021a); Ghazni (Fusaro 2020, Fig. 3d, late 11th/12th century).

with those proposed for Balkh, Vardanzeh and Termez²²⁷, but later examples are also present.

227 Fusaro 2016, Fig. IV.2 (Z43) and turquoise-glazed (Z27); Fusaro 2020, 109 (parallels), Fig. 5b, c (single line), and Fig. 3d for a green-glazed stoneware with flaring rim from the second stage (late 11th/first half 12th century). Balkh: Gardin 1957, 64–68; Lashkari Bazar: Gardin 1963, 105–110 Group X. Vardanzeh: Mirzaamehdov et al. 2019, Figs. 2.3; 4.1–3: late 12th/early 13th century.

Examples of turquoise-glazed earthenware were found at 59 sites in the study area, but their dates may also cover a slightly longer period of time (Fig. 1838, dark turquoise dots).

Monochrome-glazed Fritware (Fig. 1836)

12th/13th-century stonepaste sherds are few in number compared to the glazed earthenware group. There are thrown or moulded, monochrome colourless or turquoise-glazed examples, some with patterns in relief and a few very sparsely splashed or painted underglaze with a bluish or blackish line or dots. Monochrome turquoise-glazed fritware sherds were collected from 26 sites, of which nine (marked in bold in note 228) were occupied from the 13th century onwards.²²⁸ Their distribution reveals a preponderance in the western Herat oasis rather than in the east, where turquoise-glazed earthenware types predominate (Fig. 1838, light/dark turquoise circles).

Monochrome-glazed fritwares are the last of the types that characterise the production of glazed pottery from the late 9th/10th to the 12th/early 13th century. As O. Watson²²⁹, among others, has pointed out, the most remarkable achievements in ceramic manufacture in Iran, sometimes sublimated under the label 'Seljuq wares', took place from the second half of the 12th century to the early 13th century, despite the instability that followed the demise of the Seljuq empire. It is marked by an increase in the number of stoneware bodies and the appearance of more intricate moulded patterns, underglaze- and onglaze painted and gilded Mina'i ceramics, Silhouette ware, and underglaze-painted vessels. The latter show strikingly simple linear or geometrically structured floral patterns, and in cases calligraphic bands, applied in blue or black under a transparent turquoise or clear glaze, then often with additional turquoise accents.

228 Gh 5; **Gh 11**; Gh 16; Gh 35; **Gz 1**; Gz 16; **Gz 29**; **Gz 49**; **Gz 50**; **Gz 53**; In 13; Ka 1; Ka 2; Ka 3; Ka 4; Ka 8; Ka 10; Kh 3; Kh 8; Kh 9; Kh 10; **Ko 11**; Ob 13; Ob 17; **PZ 27**; **PZ 38**. **Bold**: Sites occupied from the 13th century onwards.

229 Watson 2021, 201–214; Watson 2006, 325–331. See also Soustiel 1985, 77–105, who includes lajvardina ceramics in this group.

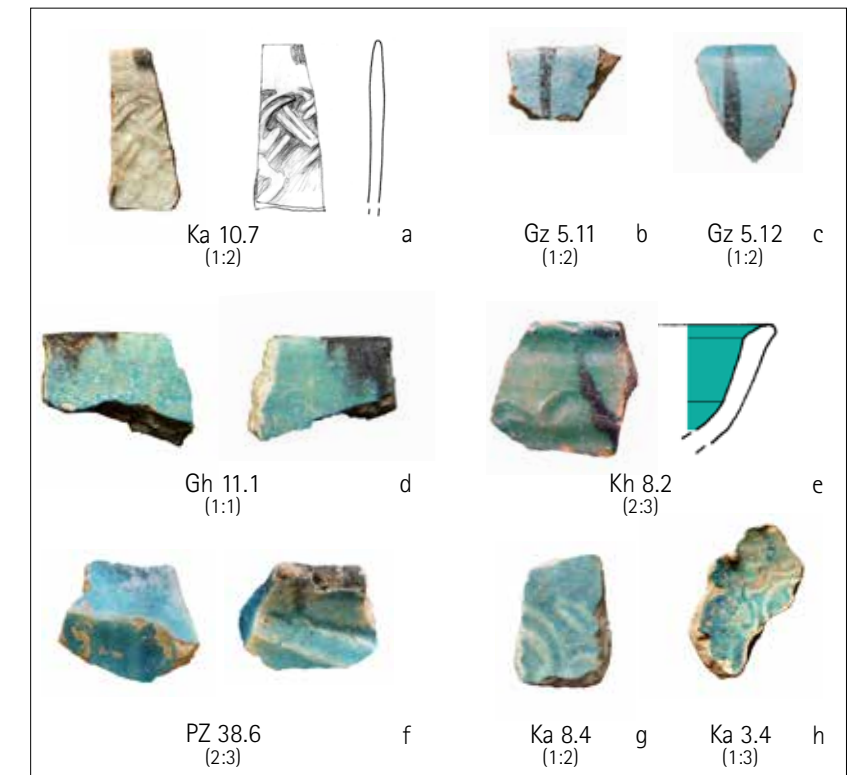


Fig. 1836 Fritware, 12th/early 13th century

Like the previously common Splashed, Slip-painted and Pseudo-Prehistoric wares, which ceased to be produced in the late 11th/12th or the very early 13th century, some of the short-lived high quality fritware types, such as Mina'i and Silhouette, disappeared before or with the Mongol conquest. On the other hand, relief-decorated jars as well as black under a turquoise glaze and polychrome under a clear glaze painted vessels continued to be produced with technological and stylistic advances, and reached a high level of sophistication in the 13th and 14th centuries.²³⁰ The devastation caused by the Mongol conquest seems to have led to a decline in demand and markets²³¹, causing some of the previously active workshops to stand still or closure. Others, most notably Kashan, apparently continued production after a brief interruption, but the emphasis seems to have shifted to the manufacture of tiles rather than vessels.²³² The demand for unglazed and glazed domestic pottery must nevertheless have been met by kilns supplying local and regional customers.

230 Watson 2006, 340–341.

231 Watson 2006, 329; 330.

232 According to O. Watson (2006, 330–331) the production of luxury vessels was resumed from the 660s/1260s onwards, but on a reduced scale; see also there for dated pieces and references to his own and other earlier publications.

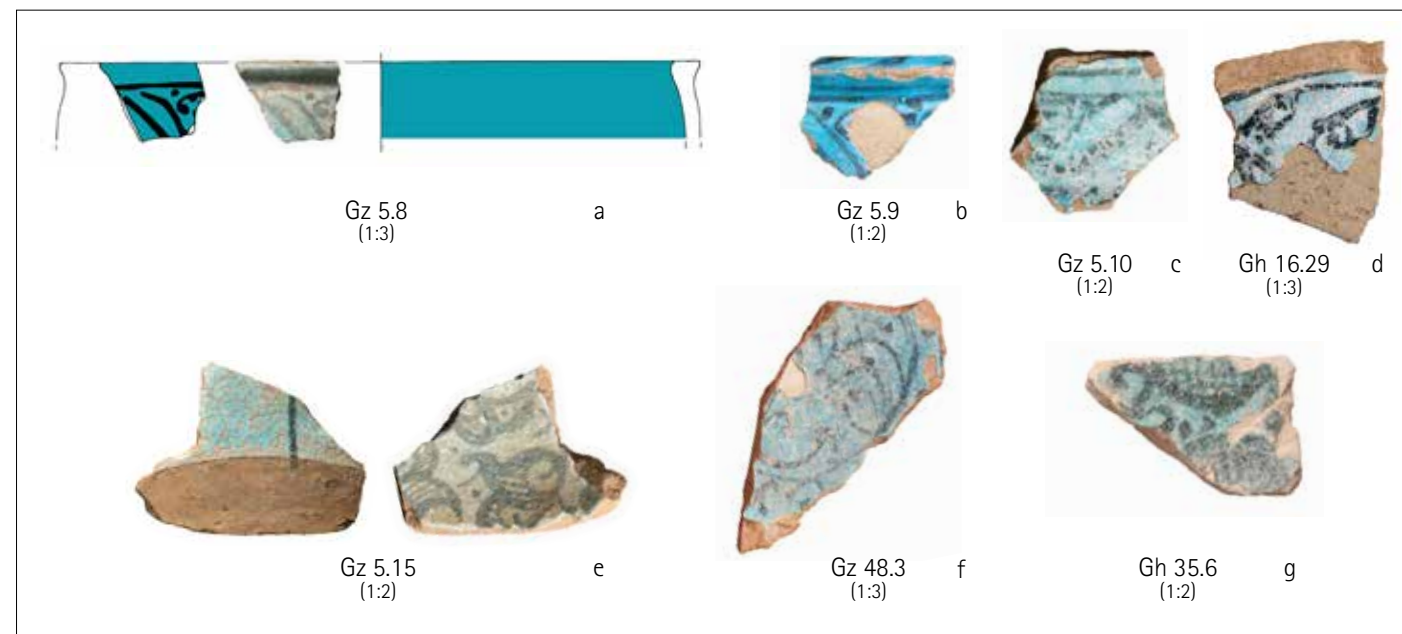


Fig. 1837 Black under turquoise glaze painted earthenware pottery, 13th/14th century

	Fritware	Earthenware
Black under turquoise glaze		
13 th /14 th century	4	10
14 th /15 th century and later	4	22
Black, blue and turquoise under clear glaze		
13 th /14 th century	3	3
14 th /15 th century and later	3	21

Tab. 16 Number of sites where two main pottery types are attested

Pottery from the 13th/14th century (Figs. 1837–1839)

As with monochrome-glazed fritware, the high quality stoneware types of this period, such as lustre, lajvardina, celadon and underglaze painted vessels, are entirely absent from our assemblage, as are tiles. Some examples have been excavated on the citadel²³³, but even the Herat Museum keeps only a few fragments of these types.²³⁴

The crisp, clear and finely-lined underglaze floral or geometric designs that appeared in the early 13th century declined in quality, and only a few, probably regionally produced examples of lesser refinement from the later 13th/14th or even the early 15th century were found during the survey (Fig. 1839). This development can be seen, for example, in the fabrics, which are often quartz-enriched clays rather than genuine stoneware paste, with a coarser and often reddish texture caused by

233 These include lajvardina sherds, celadon and two lustre tile fragments (Franke 2017a, 39–68 esp. Fig. 68a; pp. 484, 485, detailed information on find contexts is provided for each trench, most important is Trench 3).

234 Franke 2016c, 75–85.

the iron content of the clay, in thicker walls and less carefully applied and less accurately executed patterns.²³⁵

In general, underglaze painted earthenware, showing similar colour schemes, continued to make up the bulk of the collection. Diagnostic features include the shapes and rims of the vessels²³⁶, bold floral or curled patterns painted in black under a transparent turquoise glaze (Fig. 1837, earthenware), and polychrome floral or geometric motifs, painted in black, blue and/or turquoise²³⁷ under a transparent clear glaze (Fig. 1839, fritware).

235 See, for example, Keblow Bernsted 2003, 82–85. These fabrics are macroscopically and chemically also attested for samples from the citadel of Herat (Gradmann 2016; Gradmann et al. 2015).

236 A detailed analysis of the 13th- and later 14th-century pottery from the Ilkhan and Golden Horde regions has been published by Haddon 2011.

237 The colours are usually obtained by cobalt (lazurite) for blue, chromite ironstone or, rarely, manganese for black and copper for turquoise under an alkaline glaze (Keblow 2003). The glazes analysed from Herat were mostly alkaline glazes, rarely lead glazes and differ from other sites in the absence of SnO₂ (Gradmann 2016, 122–124; Gradmann et al. 2015).

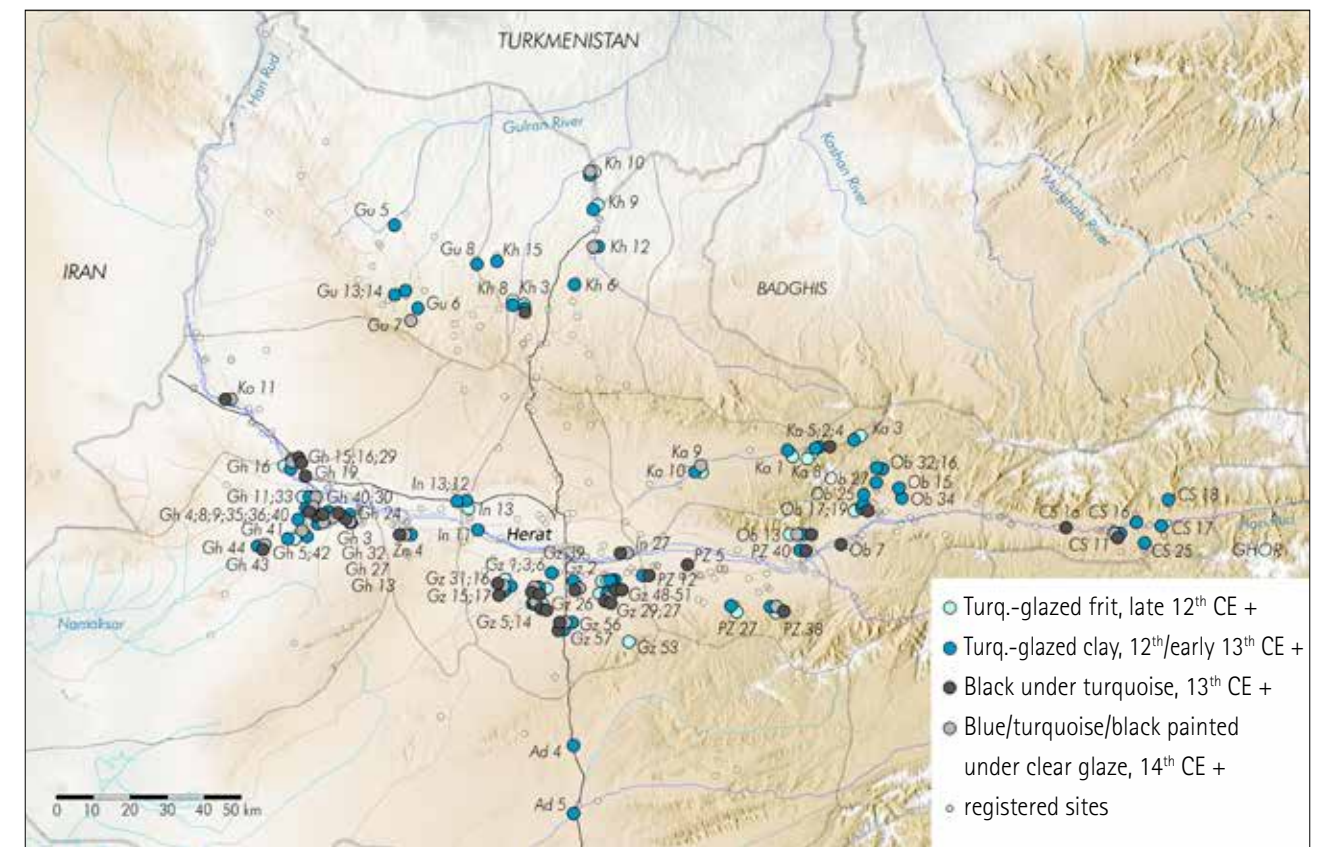


Fig. 1838 Spatial distribution of selected pottery types from the 12th century onwards (+ = 'and later')

The fragmentary nature of the sherds and the fact that these types continued into the 15th century, albeit with stylistic changes, make it difficult to date them more precisely unless diagnostic elements are preserved.²³⁸ For this reason, the distribution of types is displayed in the map Fig. 1838 without chronological differentiation. Tab. 16 shows the number of sites where the two main types have been found, differentiated by material and date. There are far fewer 13th/14th-century sites than late 14th/15th or early 16th-century sites, and black painted earthenware is the most common type in the earlier period.

Black painted under a turquoise glaze Pottery (Fig. 1837)

Of the mid 13th- to late 14th-century group of vessels painted black under a transparent, usually alkaline turquoise glaze, fritware sherds

238 See Watson (2006, 340–341, note 58). That dating is not always easy even for complete vessels is shown by different attributions, cf. Watson 2006, note 59, and Soustiel 1985, cat. nos. 256; 263.

were found at four sites²³⁹ and earthenware at ten; they overlap at only one site, the fortress of Gz 5.²⁴⁰ The latter figure is on the low side, as a reliable differentiation from 14th/15th-century examples depends on the availability of distinct shapes and patterns.

The sites are located in the central oasis and in the mountains bordering it south of Herat, only two sites lie in the district of Obeh further east.²⁴¹ The association of this type with polychrome sherds appears to be coincidental, but both often occur together with plain turquoise glazed sherds, due to the greater share of the latter type.

The earthenware vessels, mostly bowls, are characterised by biconical, conical or convex sections, sometimes closed, with everted or T-shaped rims. They have a rather coarse and less refined appearance, with thicker walls and rather broad-lined vegetal or geometric patterns, never preserved well enough to give an approximate idea of the ornamentation. No truly high-quality examples of this period have been found, neither earthenware nor fritware, and no animated motifs.²⁴² Some features are reminiscent of mid-13th century pottery, but the historical context remains unclear.

239 Gh 15; Gz 5; Ka 4; Kh 3.

240 Gh 16; Gh 19; Gh 35; Gz 5; Gz 14; Gz 29; Gz 48; Gz 56; Ob 13; Ob 19.

241 Gz 5 is a fortress in Guzara, south of Herat. The distribution pattern is clearer when the plain turquoise-glazed sherds are excluded from the analysis.

242 Fehérvári 2000, 225 cat. no. 290, earthenware. Watson 2004, 392, cat. no. Q.22, fritware.