

The Pottery Assemblage from Area 33 (2019 Excavations)

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Abstract

The pottery in Area 33 presents forms and types mostly coherent with the patrimony of shapes already identified during the previous research at Shahr-i Sokhta. But the new outline of the chronology due to the updated information from C14 opens a new direction of study and a general reassessment will be needed in the next publications. As far as it regards the shapes, the truncated-conical bowls are ubiquitous, in space and time, but there is also a wide variety of other smaller cups or morphologically different open vessels which expand our knowledge about possible distinctive uses in the domestic daily life. For the closed forms, the beakers, as usual, account for the highest percentage during the different phases while the decorations show few peculiarities compared to the already known designs. The storage vessels and the bigger containers display a high degree of variability as regards the profiles and the general structure of the shapes and considering for the future research a proper interpretational review

to understand the function and the use of this class of forms. Connections with Kech-Makran, Bampur, the Nal horizon as the presence of classes of fine ware highlight the wide range of contacts between Shahr-i Sokhta and the surrounding cultures.

1. Introduction

In this paper dedicated to the study of pottery found in Area 33 we present an outline of the shapes and types associated with the archaeological contexts identified during the most recent research at the site, in continuity with previous work on its pottery (Ascalone 2019a; 2019b).

A total of 1733 sherds from the 2019 excavations were processed and catalogued, of which 835 were used for diagnostics. A total of 143 sherds are examined in this paper.

Of the vessels belonging to the successive phases of this area, the open forms are presented first, and the closed forms second. In addition, in the final chapter, we present a general scheme of the most representative types recovered from the excavation in an effort to establish a 'universe' of shapes used during the daily life of this domestic unit.

The so-called 'truncated-cone bowls' account for the highest percentage of the fragments catalogued for Layers 3A, 3B and 4A (respectively 33, 42 and 33%), as already noted by S. Salvatori and M. Vidale (1997: 67, 69), followed in all three cases by the beakers, which are the most numerous in Phase 4B (accounting for 33% of the fragments).

Of the open forms in 3A, basins and cups account for 6% and 14% respectively; in Layer 4A the basins still make up 5%, with a higher number of total fragments, while the cups fall to 4%.

Frequent among the closed forms are the so-called necked jars, which account for about 10% of potsherds in 3A and 3B, almost doubling to 18% in phase 4A before falling back to 10-11% during the last excavated phase. Lesser percentages are accounted for by the neckless jars, i.e. 4.6% in 3A, 8% in 3B, 4.6% in 4A and

8.5% in 4B, a fairly constant rate reflecting the activities held inside the domestic unit.

In our excavation, Black-on-Red Ware and Black-on-Grey Ware account for a small part of the assemblage, equivalent to only 1% of the diagnostic potsherds. Polychrome jars occur in all four phases, increasing progressively from 1% in 3A to 7% in 4B, these specific vessels being more frequent in the earlier levels.

2. Layer 3A - L.122, L.142, L.138, L.217 - open forms

As previously specified, Layer 3A is characterised by the constant and ubiquitous presence of truncated-conical bowls, which account for the highest number - 128 - of fragments. These are mostly straight-bodied, especially in the upper part of the vessel, with a plain rim, while in some cases the body is slightly concave. In the majority of the sherds the rim is simply rounded, but another type has a pointed and everted rim, with a concave moulding just below it on the exterior surface.

In L.142 the decorations on the inner surface of the truncated conical bowls display mostly friezes with festoons inserted in triangles drawn with double lines hanging from the rim (Fig. 1: 1, 3, 4, 5) - already known from the 'Central Quarters' as a single motif or a frieze (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 114, fig. 140, 5, Phase 5A; Salvatori - Vidale: 112, fig. 137, 2, Phase 5A). In one case, the frieze consists of a double zigzag below the rim with festoons inside the resulting triangles, underscored by a continuous double line, below which there are two diagonal curving lines with the upper one fringed (Fig. 1: 2).

A loosely structured frieze consisting of a zigzag line alternating with short wavy lines (Fig. 1: 6) seems to be similar to the motif identified by C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky and M. Tosi (1973: fig. 22), Period II and to the decoration on a dish from Layer 4B in L.176. In the same locus, the truncated conical bowls have a diagonal chain of lozenges with tooth-edged lines or a single such line hanging from the vertex (Fig. 1: 7, 8) (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 113, fig. 138, 1, Phase 5A).

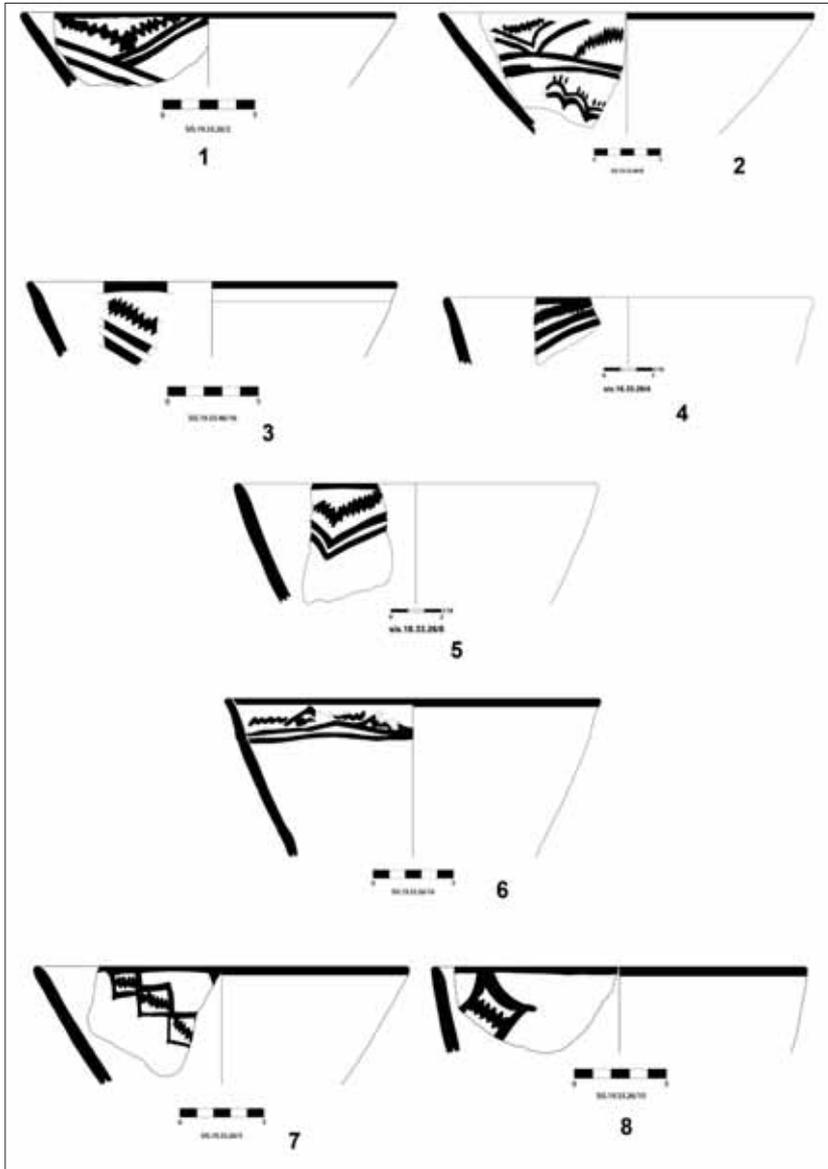


Fig. 1: the pottery assemblage of Phase 3A, open forms: 1. SiS.19.33.26/2; 2. SiS.19.33.46/8; 3. SiS.19.33.46/16; 4. SiS.19.33.26/4; 5. SiS.19.33.26/8; 6. SiS.19.33.26/16; 7. SiS.19.33.26/3; 8. SiS.19.33.26/10.

Two vessels have a group of three hanging stepped lines (Fig. 2: 10, 11), in one case alternating with a double V-shaped symbol fringed on the upper side (Fig. 2: 10) (Tosi 1969: fig. 28, 5, h, Period II-III). Diagonal cross-hatched lozenges and triangles seem to be a common feature of this layer (Fig. 2: 12, 13, 14). The variety of decoration is completed by a triple zigzag below the rim underscored by a double line (Fig. 2: 15, 16) (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 111, fig. 135, 2, Phase 5A, Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 190, G. 140, no. 7534). For the motif in Fig. 2: 9 there are no parallels.

Two distinct types of large container or basin were found: the so-called S-shaped contour type with an everted rounded rim, and the type with an almost straight profile and a rim that is square in cross section with a protruding outer lip. The former is painted, while the latter sometimes has only a black band on the outer surface of the lip. With their mix of linear and semi-curvilinear decorated friezes inside the rims, the three specimens retrieved from L.122 and L.142 (Fig. 3: 17-19) seem to belong to an older phase, probably the residue of Phase 6 garbage or infill, with parallels in the necropolis and the settlement (Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 238, G. 704, no. 7543, fig. 536 and 102, fig. 116, 3, Phase 6).

One bowl has a double curving line below the rim enclosing a festoon (Fig. 3: 20) (on the profile, see Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 130, fig. 170, 4, Phase 5B) while two others have diagonal stepped lines (Fig. 3: 21, 22) with several parallels from Phase 5A in the 'Central Quarters' (some of the examples are examined in Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 111, fig. 134, 5 and 113, fig. 138, 4).

A large basin with a tooth-edged Maltese cross (Fig. 3: 23) has a lip with a profile that seems to belong to Phase 6 (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 95, fig. 103, 4), and the Maltese cross (the central part of the motif on our piece is empty) also appears in Tepe Graziani at the beginning of the same period (Kavosh *et al.* 2019: 105, fig. 104, 22).

As already stated, the undecorated shapes include large basins with everted rims (Fig. 3: 24-26) (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 94, fig. 101, 1, 3, Phase 6), small cups with a curvilinear profile and an everted lip (Fig. 4: 27-28) and a miniature vessel with a highly irregular profile (Fig. 4: 29).

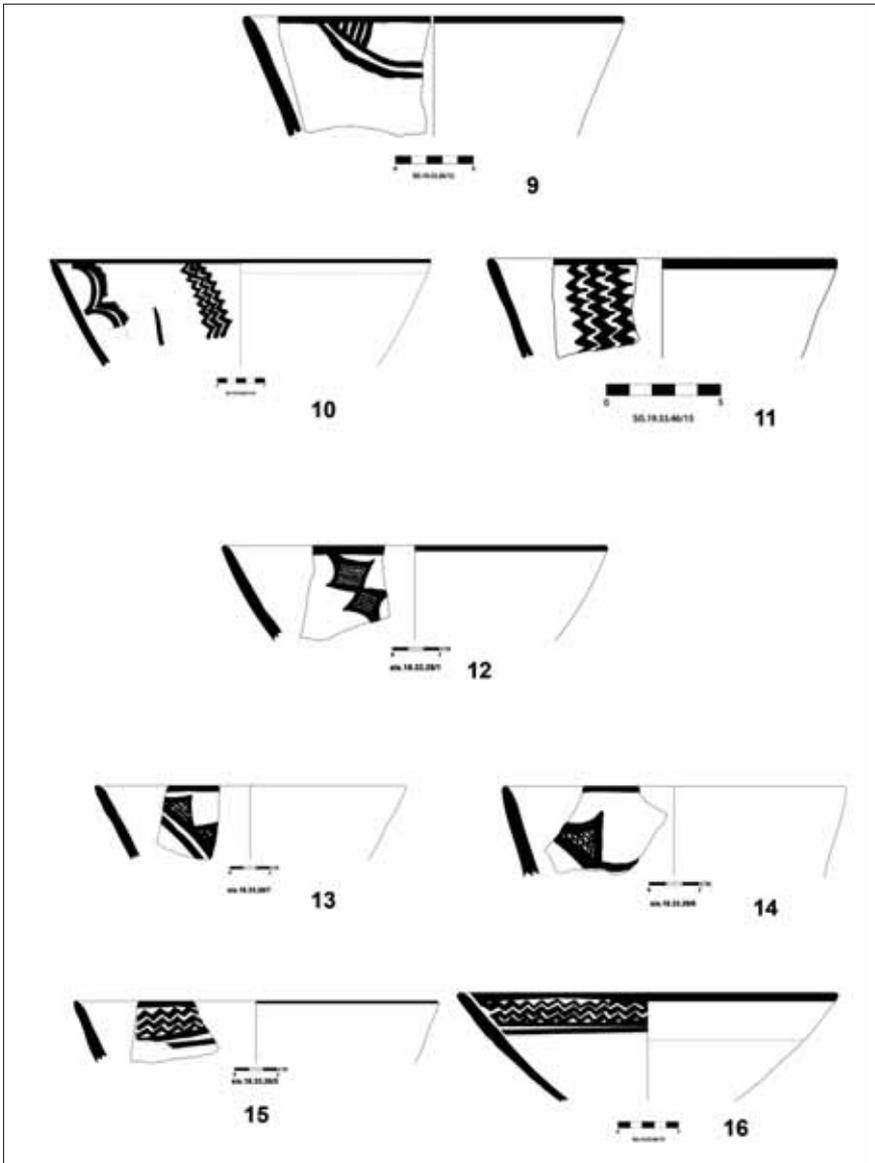


Fig. 2: the pottery assemblage of Phase 3A, open forms: 9. SiS.19.33.26/12; 10. SiS.19.33.60/3.5.8; 11. SiS.19.33.46/15; 12. SiS.19.33.26/1; 13. SiS.19.33.26/7; 14. SiS.19.33.26/6; 15. SiS.19.33.26/5; 16. SiS.19.33.46/10.

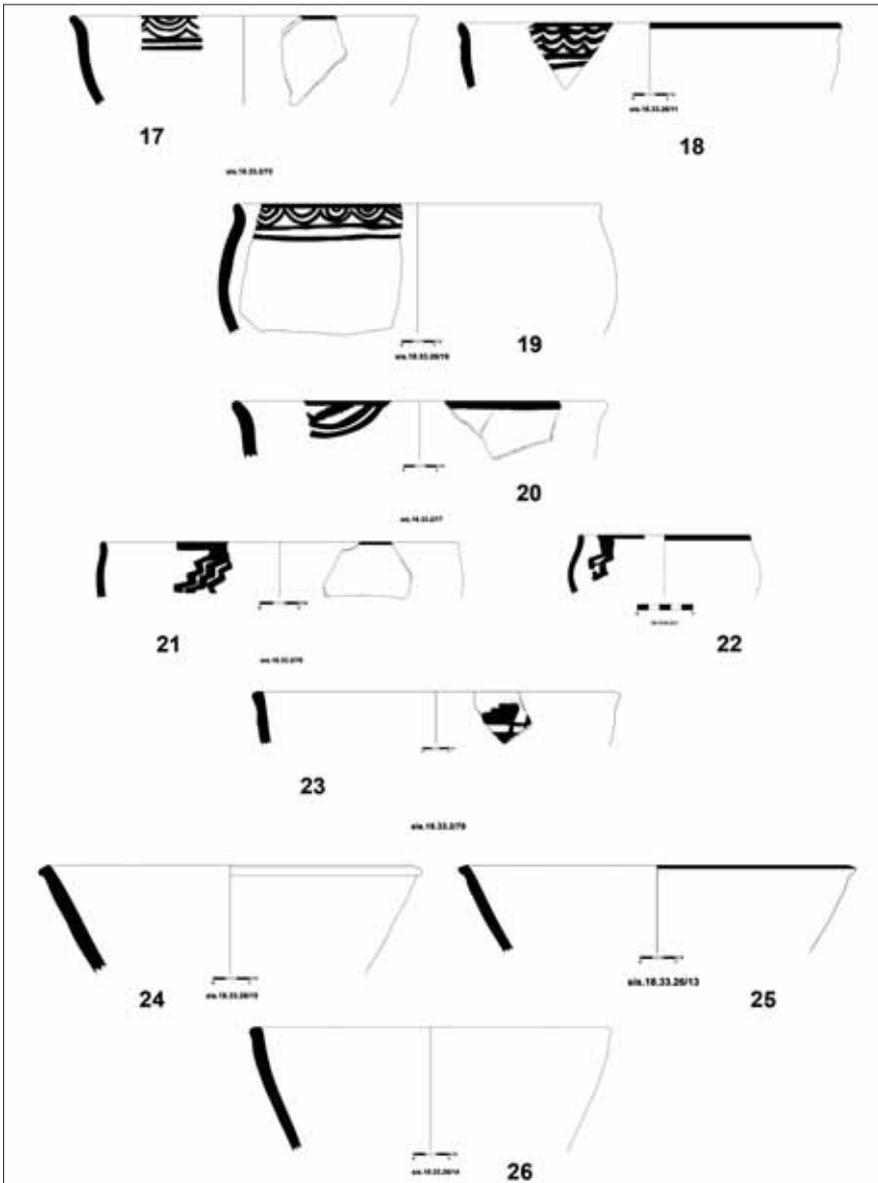


Fig. 3: the pottery assemblage of Phase 3A, open forms: 17. SiS.19.33.2/72; 18. SiS.19.33.2/11; 19. SiS.19.33.2/19; 20. SiS.19.33.2/77; 21. SiS.19.33.2/78; 22. SiS.19.33.2/1; 23. SiS.19.33.2/79; 24. SiS.19.33.2/15; 25. SiS.19.33.2/13; 26. SiS.19.33.2/14.

The Red Ware is represented by two cups (Fig. 4: 30-31), the first with a plain rim and distinct wavy lines - a fairly rare pattern - and the second with an S-shaped everted rim painted with bundles of zigzag lines inside and wavy lines outside: this kind of decoration can be partially compared with a cup, not decorated on the outside, from the 'Central Quarters' (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 142, fig. 187, 4). Another possibly comparable fragment comes from Sohr Damb, in the form of a bowl with similar decoration and surface treatment (Franke 2015: Pl. 06-d, Tr. II, Period II).

The Black-on-Grey Ware includes three vessels belonging to different types (Wright 1984: 131-133, fig. 3.25-26): Fig. 4: 32 is a cup with slightly concave walls and simple lines, irregularly painted below the outer rim (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 145, fig. 191, 1, 2). Fig. 4: 33 has a conical profile (with straight-sided walls) and a vertically hatched frieze of lozenges below the outer lip - a decoration which is quite frequent in Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 163, G. 118, no. 6633. However, inside it there is a distinctive motif consisting of hatched triangles that might symbolise leaves, so far not seen in Shahr-i Sokhta or other sites (see Jarrige 1974: 498, fig. 1, phase IV). The cup with straight walls shown in Fig. 4: 34 has a chaotic cross-hatched frieze between simple bands on the upper portion of the outside of the body that has no parallels.

3. Layer 3A - L.122, L.142, L.138, L.217 - closed forms

In this phase, the beakers (Buson - Vidale 1983; Vidale 1984) and their larger version, the pear-shaped jars, represent the most common of the closed forms (112 fragments). The profiles of the vessels are varied, probably due to the duration of the depositional process.

On the upper portion of the neck, some beakers have zigzags or wavy decoration in between bands (Fig. 5: 1, 2, 3) (Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 190, G. 140, no. 7535; Piperno - Salvatori 2007: G. 59 inf., nos. 6929-6930, dated to Phase 5, according to Piperno - Salvatori 1983: plate IV, b) or metopes (Fig. 5: 4) (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 120, fig. 153, 2, Phase 5A).

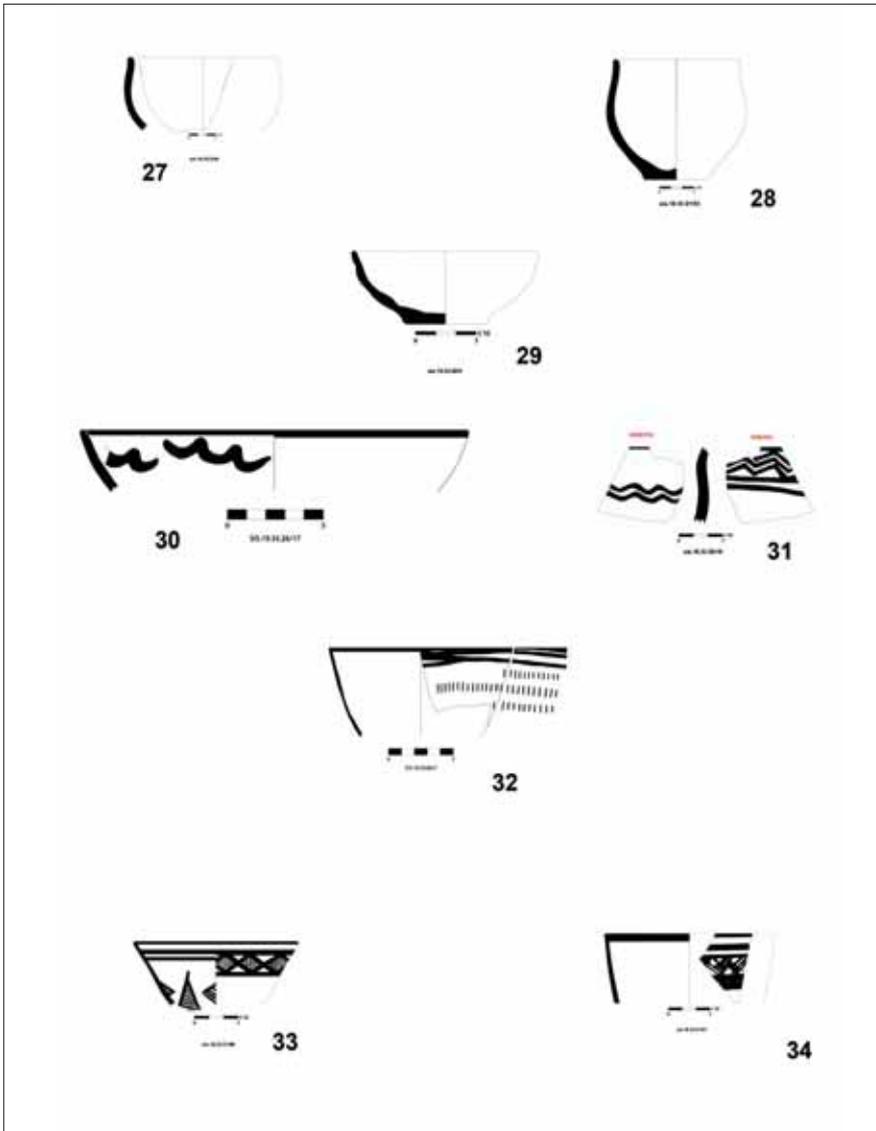


Fig. 4: the pottery assemblage of Phase 3A, open forms: 27. SiS.19.33.2/44; 28. SiS.19.33.2/153; 29. SiS.19.33.60/4; 30. SiS.19.33.26/17; 31. SiS.19.33.26/18; 32. SiS.19.33.60/7; 33. SiS.19.33.2/150; 34. SiS.19.33.2/151.

Other beakers have decoration on the body, as shown in Fig. 5: 6 (Biscione 1974, G. 10, Phase 6, Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 40-41, G. 10/19, not inventoried) and Fig. 5: 9 (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 137, fig. 182, 5, Phase 5B); a toothed zigzag band inside a frieze is also seen (Fig. 5: 5.1.3.4) (Piperno - Salvatori 1983: pl. V, Phase 5; Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 156, fig. 221, Phase 5B).

Cylindrical beakers also continue to be present in this phase. The fragment from L.142 shown in Fig. 5.8 has decoration that enables it to be recognised as the one in Salvatori - Vidale (1997: 138, fig. 183, 14, Phase 5B).

Two examples stand out. One is an elongated beaker (Fig. 5: 5.2) with decoration on the body and the neck consisting of a combination of two friezes filled with chains of alternating solid triangles with bases on the same line (first described by Biscione 1973: 114, fig. 8.10 e, and later by Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 54, G. 16, nos. 6211-6212, fig. 80). The other is a neck fragment of a beaker with a frieze of birds with straight legs (Fig. 5: 7), a motif seen in only one other case, a jar from the necropolis (Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 99, G. 44, fig. 197, no. 6283, dated to Period II according to Mugavero - Vidale 2003: 90).

There are two pear-shaped jars (Fig. 5: 10-11) with decoration on the upper section of the body and the neck, one with stepped lines and probably a spiral motif (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 132, fig. 173, 1, Phase 5B), while the decoration of the other has no convincing parallel in the 'Central Quarters' (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 137, fig. 182, 7, Phase 5B and 139, fig. 184, 9, Phase 5B).

There are three miniature vessels in Buff Ware (Fig. 5: 12), Red Ware (Fig. 5: 13) and Black-on-Grey Ware (Fig. 5: 14) with identical profiles and shapes. Decoration seems to be limited to the shoulders, with friezes composed of oblique toothed-edge lines between two bands or a chain of vertically hatched lunettes (common in Bampur during Period IV, Phase 1; de Cardi 1970: 289-291, fig. 25) or bundles of zigzag lines (Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 25, G. 2, nos. 6087-6088, the specimen in the necropolis belongs to Buff Ware, dated, according to Piperno - Tosi 1975, to Phase 5).

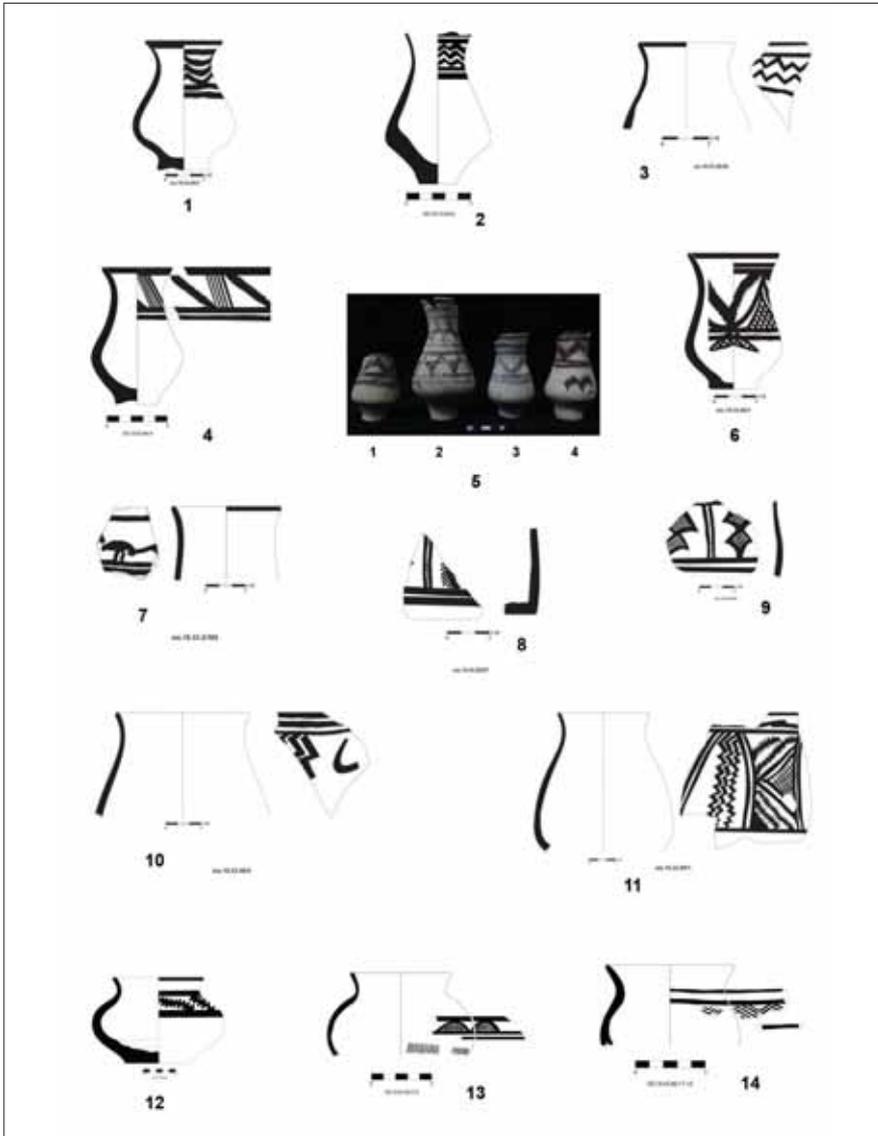


Fig. 5: the pottery assemblage of Phase 3A, closed forms. 1. SiS.19.33.46/2; 2. SiS.19.33.60/6; 3. SiS.19.33.26/26; 4. SiS.19.33.46/3; 5.1. SiS.19.33.2; 5.2. SiS.19.33.2; 5.3. SiS.19.33.2; 5.4. SiS.19.33.2; 6. SiS.19.33.46/1; 7. SiS.19.33.2/103; 8. SiS.19.33.26/27; 9. SiS.19.33.26/25; 10. SiS.19.33.26/4; 11. SiS.19.33.60/1; 12. SiS.19.33.46/9; 13. SiS.19.33.46/5.6; 14. SiS.19.33.46/11.12.

Storage vessels include a 'hole-mouth' jar (Fig. 6: 15) painted with an 'S' filled with horizontal tooth-edged lines - maybe part of a frieze - as in the type mentioned in Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 103, fig. 119, 3 (a later production) and two other jars with a well-defined neck and a slightly everted rim either plain or painted with bands under the lip (Fig. 6: 17-18) (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 42, NJ6).

There is also a well-known type (Fig. 6: 16) with a short neck and an everted convex lip (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: fig. 146, 4, 5, Phase 5A).

Two fragments of biconical jars (Fig. 6: 19-20) have the distinctive 'sigma' frieze on the shoulder. In one case this is a continuous sequence within double bands above hatched triangles: a possible parallel is found in de Cardi 1970: 286, fig. 22, no. 129, Bampur III (the piece from Bampur is fragmentary; the apexes could belong to triangles, but they do not seem to be hatched). The other is inserted in a metope/triglyph scheme, with parallels in Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 101, G. 46, fig. 203.

Zoomorphic motifs appear on two sherds. One (Fig. 6: 21) is a fragmentary frieze with ibexes with long curving horns and arched bodies, a distinctive theme already described by Biscione - Bulgarelli 1983: 235, no. 0145, that may be linked to Bampur (de Cardi 1970: 283, fig. 20, 92, Bampur II). The other (Fig. 6: 23) is believed to have had a metope frieze consisting of vertical strokes flanked by hatched lunettes, as well as what may be a springing goat: the combination of vertical strokes and lunettes is also seen on a jar from the necropolis (Piperno - Salvatori 2007: G. 14, no. 6201, dated to Phase 5 according to Piperno - Tosi 1975: 192).

There are long-necked jugs with slightly squat globular bodies and painted walls (Fig. 6: 22, 24) (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: fig. 155, 6, Phase 5A the former), while Fig. 6: 26, probably from a secondary deposit, has decoration similar to the Damb Sadaat II-III style (Lamberg-Karlovsky - Tosi 1973: fig. 13, from southern Turkmenistan, fig. 15, 4, 11, from Geoksjur and Quetta; Biscione 1973: fig. 8. 7, 4 and more recently Sajjadi *et al.* 2008: 317, fig. 8.b, G. MJN 6705/5).

L.217 in this phase yielded a fragmented and incomplete polychrome jar (Fig. 6: 25) with a complex metope design including lozenges with the ‘sun motif’ (Mugavero - Vidale 2003: 82, fig. 13, 6a).

4. Layer 3B - L.122, L.142, L.138, L.217 - open forms

Truncated conical bowls with almost unchanged rim profiles account for the majority of the pottery sherds (48 fragments). Double chains of festoons (Fig. 7: 1) (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 96, fig. 104, 5 and 99, fig. 110, 5, both Phase 6) prevail among the motifs, sometimes with zigzags, wavy lines (garlands?) and what may be sigmas (Fig. 7: 3, 4) or bundles of zigzags (Fig. 7: 2).

A small basin (Fig. 7: 5) has an inner frieze with cross-hatched triangles, while the rim’s square cross section resembles the bowl in Salvatori - Vidale (1997: 114, fig. 141, 4, Phase 5A). A Black-on-Grey cup (Fig. 7: 6) has inner decoration that resembles the specimen in Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 144, fig. 190, 2.

5. Layer 3B - L.122, L.142, L.138, L.217 - closed forms

In L. 138, a set of closed vessels seem to be part of a foundation deposit composed of three beakers and a miniature lentoid jar (Fig. 7: 7-8). One of the beakers (Fig. 7: 8) has decoration which recalls a design identified in the ‘Central Quarters’ (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 120, fig. 153, 2, Phase 5A and 137, fig. 182, 8, Phase 5B). The painted wall of a long-necked jug (Fig. 7: 9) bears decoration dated to Period II, according to C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky and M. Tosi (1973: fig. 25).

6. Layer 4A - L.149, L.168, L.176, L.182 - open forms

The layers under scrutiny in this phase concern the infill dumped in the various rooms before the new floors of Layer 3B were laid.

Most of the vessels are truncated-cone bowls, especially the older type characterised by tapering rims and chains of double wavy lines (Fig. 8: 2-6), others having a rounded lip and friezes of triangles, cross or diagonally hatched (Fig. 8: 8-11). Many parallels, all belonging to Phase 6, can be found in the

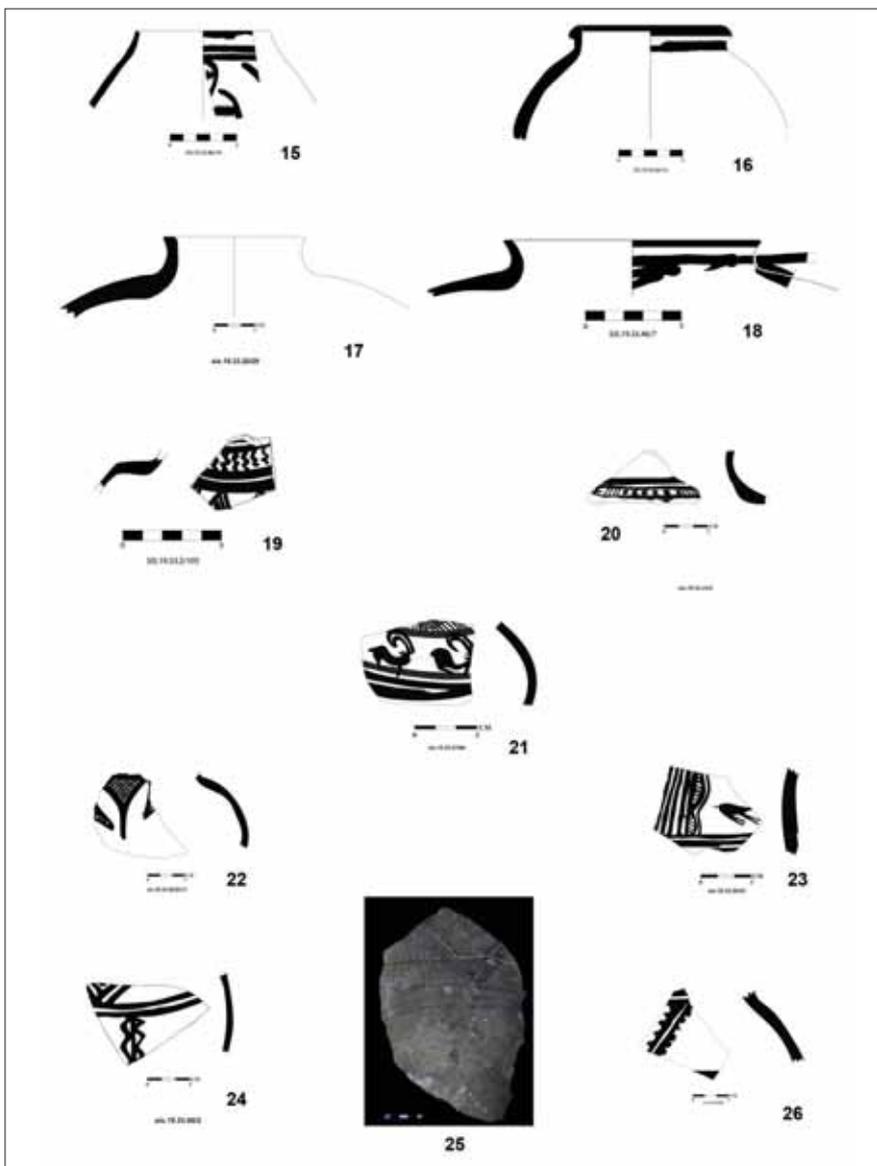


Fig. 6: the pottery assemblage of Phase 3A, closed forms: 15. SiS.19.33.46/14; 16. SiS.19.33.46/13; 17. SiS.19.33.26/29.30.31; 18. SiS.19.33.46/7; 19. SiS.19.33.2/105; 20. SiS.19.33.23/2; 21. SiS.19.33.2/104; 22. SiS.19.33.26/20.21; 23. SiS.19.33.26/22; 24. SiS.19.33.60/2; 25. SiS.19.33.23; 26. SiS.19.33.26/23.

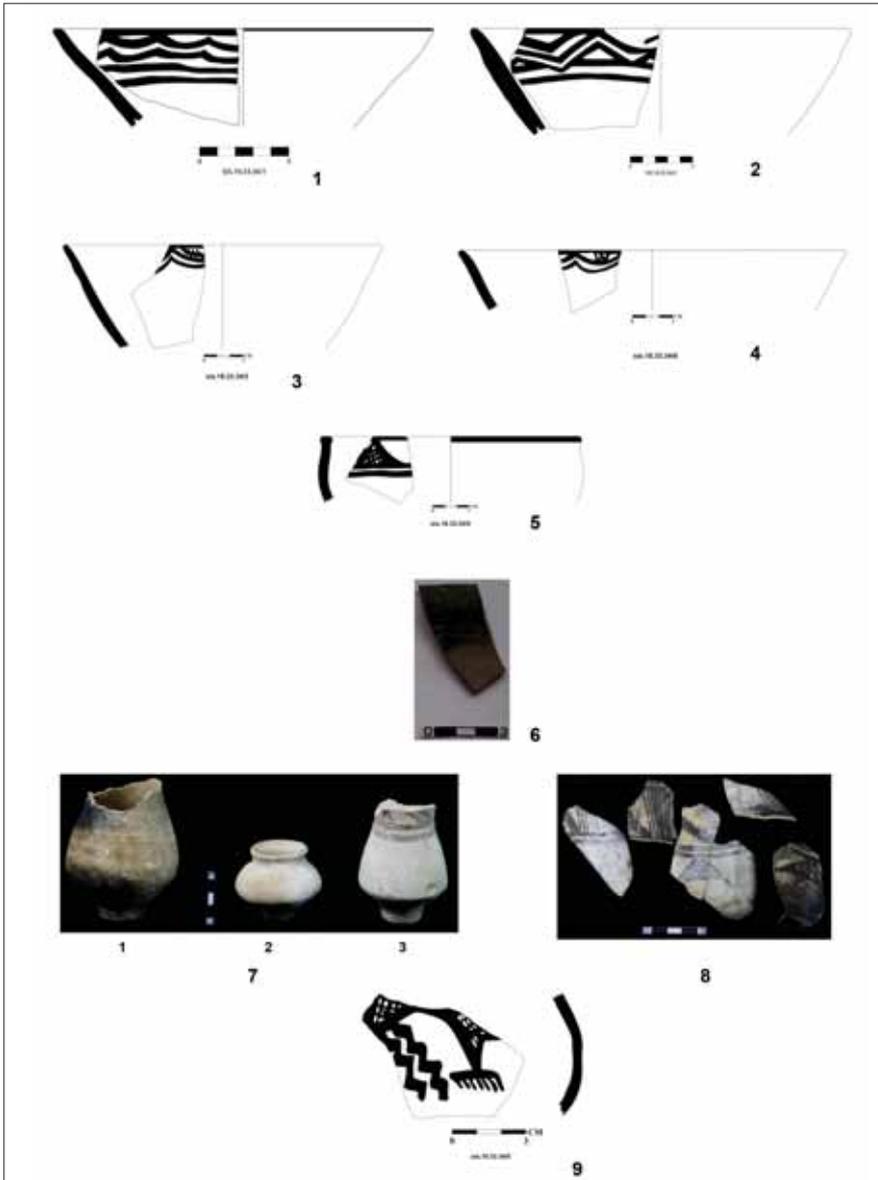


Fig. 7: the pottery assemblage of Phase 3B, open and closed forms: 1. SiS.19.33.34/1; 2. SiS.19.33.34/2; 3. SiS.19.33.34/3; 4. SiS.19.33.34/6; 5. SiS.19.33.34/4; 6. SiS.19.33.34; 7.1. SiS.19.33.22; 7.2. SiS.19.33.22; 7.3. SiS.19.33.22; 8. SiS.19.33.22; 9. SiS.19.33.34/5.

‘Central Quarters’ (on the double lines, see Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 96, fig. 104, 1, 5; 99, fig. 110, 3; 101, fig. 115, 1-2; 102, fig. 117, 2; on triangles, see Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 97, fig. 107, 3; 98, fig. 109, 2; 100, fig. 113, 3).

A smaller bowl with inner decoration consisting of a simple chain of hanging triangles, clumsily painted with a large brush and dark reddish pigment (Fig. 8: 1), could be from the earliest Phases recovered in the ‘Central Quarters’ (a similar technique appears in Tosi 1969: 324, fig. 34, e, k, as the author writes: ‘the paint has usually a red-brown colour’). An additional fragment might belong to the settlement’s foundation, given its distinctive motif (Fig. 8: 7) similar to one found by Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 83, fig. 79, 2, Phase 8-7.

Another group of conical bowls have decoration dated to Phases 5A/B: hanging triangles (Fig. 9: 12-13), cross-hatched lozenges or stepped lines (Fig. 9: 14-16) (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 114, fig. 140, 4, and 129, fig. 167, 4) and festoons or triangles containing garlands or zigzag lines (Fig. 9: 17-18) (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 129, fig. 167, 4; Biscione *et al.* 1974: 37; Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 115, fig. 142, 3).

An unusual shape is exemplified by the specimen seen in Fig. 9: 19, which is a large dish decorated inside with a double spiral filled with diagonal tooth-edged lines. Another painted sherd (Fig. 9: 20) with a highly stylised silhouette of an ibex may belong to the same category: currently this design has no parallel in Shahr-i Sokhta, the only close example being found in Tosi 1969: 312, fig. 33, d (this fragment belongs to the Black-on-Grey group).

There are curvilinear vessels with everted rims in an array of different dimensions, from basins to large bowls and cups. A large basin (Fig. 10: 21) decorated with chains of festoons should be included in Phase 6, like the bowls cited above. They can be plain (Fig. 10: 25-26) or decorated on the inside with diagonally arranged cross-hatched triangles and stepped lines (Fig. 10: 22-23), or on the external surface with complex friezes, probably with spirals and garlands (Fig. 10: 24).

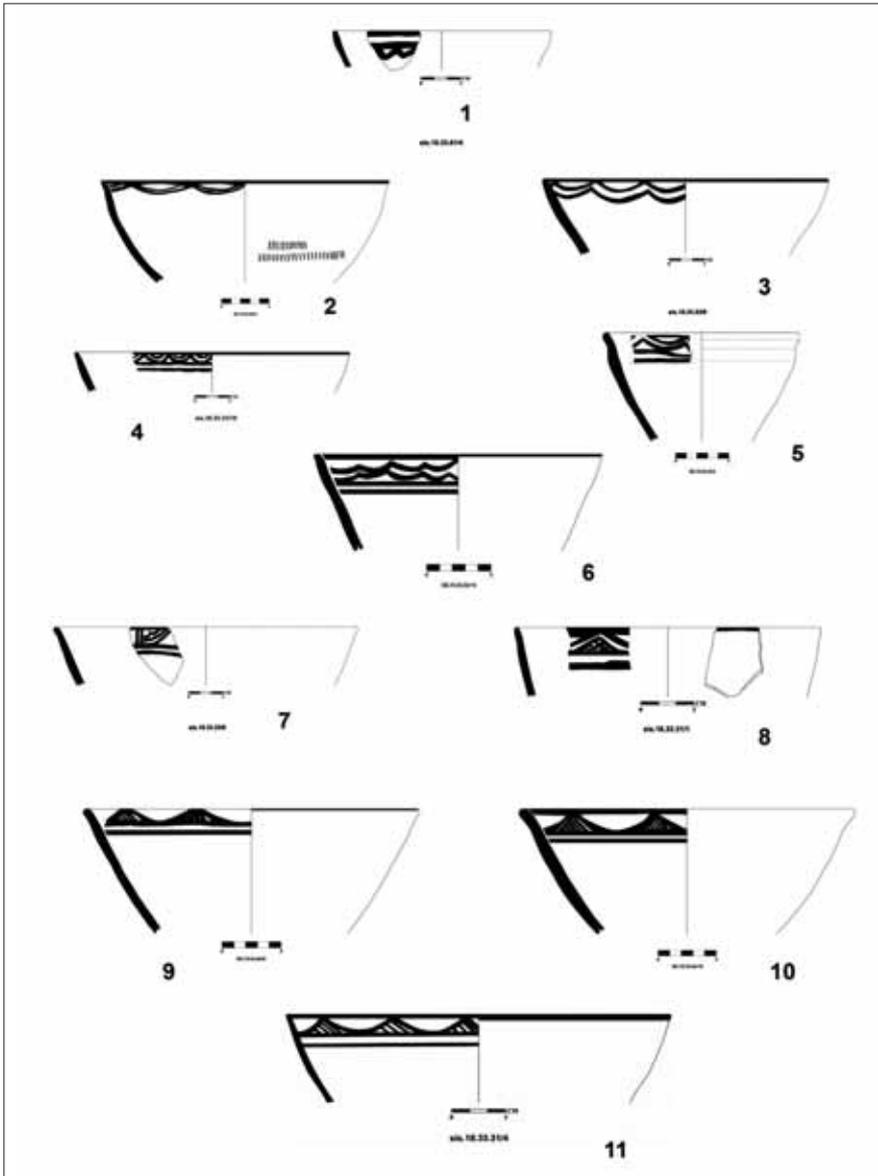


Fig. 8: the pottery assemblage of Phase 4A, open forms: 1. SiS.19.33.61/4; 2. SiS.19.33.29/3; 3. SiS.19.33.53/8; 4. SiS.19.33.31/19; 5. SiS.19.33.29/4; 6. SiS.19.33.53/14; 7. SiS.19.33.53/9; 8. SiS.19.33.31/1; 9. SiS.19.33.44/9; 10. SiS.19.33.44/10; 11. SiS.19.33.31/4.

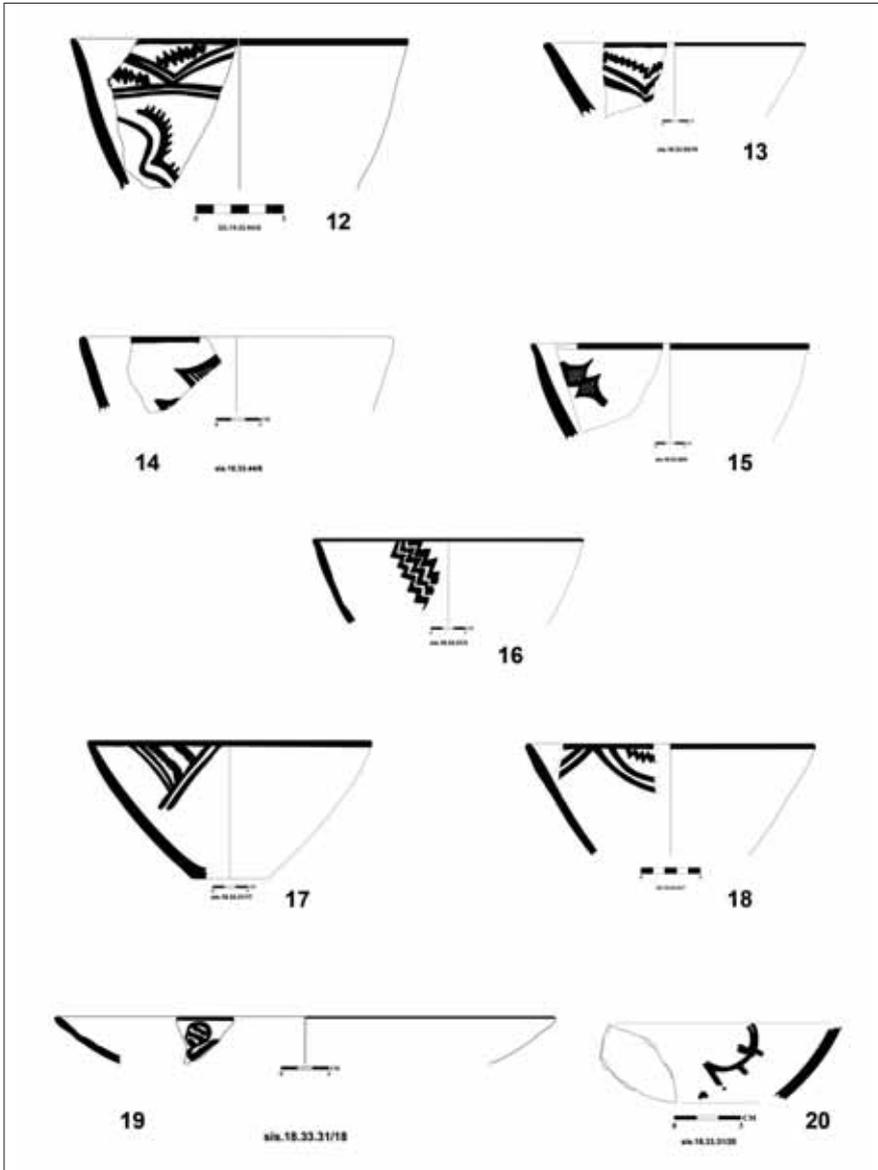


Fig. 9: the pottery assemblage of Phase 4A, open forms: 12. SiS.19.33.44/6; 13. SiS.19.33.53/10; 14. SiS.19.33.44/8; 15. SiS.19.33.29/5; 16. SiS.19.33.31/3; 17. SiS.19.33.31/17; 18. SiS.19.33.44/7; 19. SiS.19.33.31/18; 20. SiS.19.33.31/20.

There are deep basins with bevelled rims and motifs not attested elsewhere (Fig. 10: 27-28) (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 112, fig. 139, 1, Phase 5A). A miniature cup (Fig. 10: 29) with schematic linear decoration hanging from the inner lip completes the pottery sequence (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 130, fig. 169, 2, Phase 5B).

7. Layer 4A - L.149, L.168, L.176, L.182 - closed forms

Beakers account for the second highest percentage of fragments (115), and their decorations vary widely, being painted on the upper part of the neck (Fig. 11: 1-3), the body (Fig. 11: 5-7) or all over the surface (Fig. 11: 4). Regarding their chronology, the literature refers to two phases (Cortesi *et al.* 2008: fig. 4, Phase 5A *contra* Biscione 1974: 37, fig. 8, G. 10, Phase 6). However, in a table published by Tosi for items from the 'House of the Pit', the author shows beakers from an infill dated to Period II and three of them (Tosi 1983: 111, fig. 13, CC 1-10, CC 3 - third from left - CCXXIX S) display close similarities with Fig. 11: 2, 4, 6.

Metopes with S-shaped motifs and cross-hatched lozenges or stylised birds complete the catalogue. Note the presence of a cylindrical beaker with metopes with a stag and a vertical fringed V-shape (the so-called bird motif), an association which has not been recorded so far (Fig. 11: 8) (although there are multiple examples of the stag, see Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 138, fig. 183, 4-9, Phase 5B; for the bird, see Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 49, G. 14, fig. 67, no. 6462 and 52, G. 15, fig. 76, no. 6209).

Pear-shaped jars and lentoid, squat jars complete this group of small containers (Fig. 11: 9-12). Painted on the body of vase no. 11 is a very distinctive design with a stag, a spiral with tooth-edged lines inside the loops and a bundle of three stepped lines. There is no clear parallel for this zoomorphic element but the closest is attested in the necropolis (Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 358, motif no. 0136).

The painted medium-sized jars include a biconical carinated vessel with a double frieze with intersecting zigzag lines (Fig. 12: 13) (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 122, fig. 156, Phase 5). A Black-on-Buffer fragment probably has a chain of triangles drawn with double lines on the shoulder (the clay appears to be adequately fired, fine and unusually red, 5YR 5/8) (Fig. 12: 14).

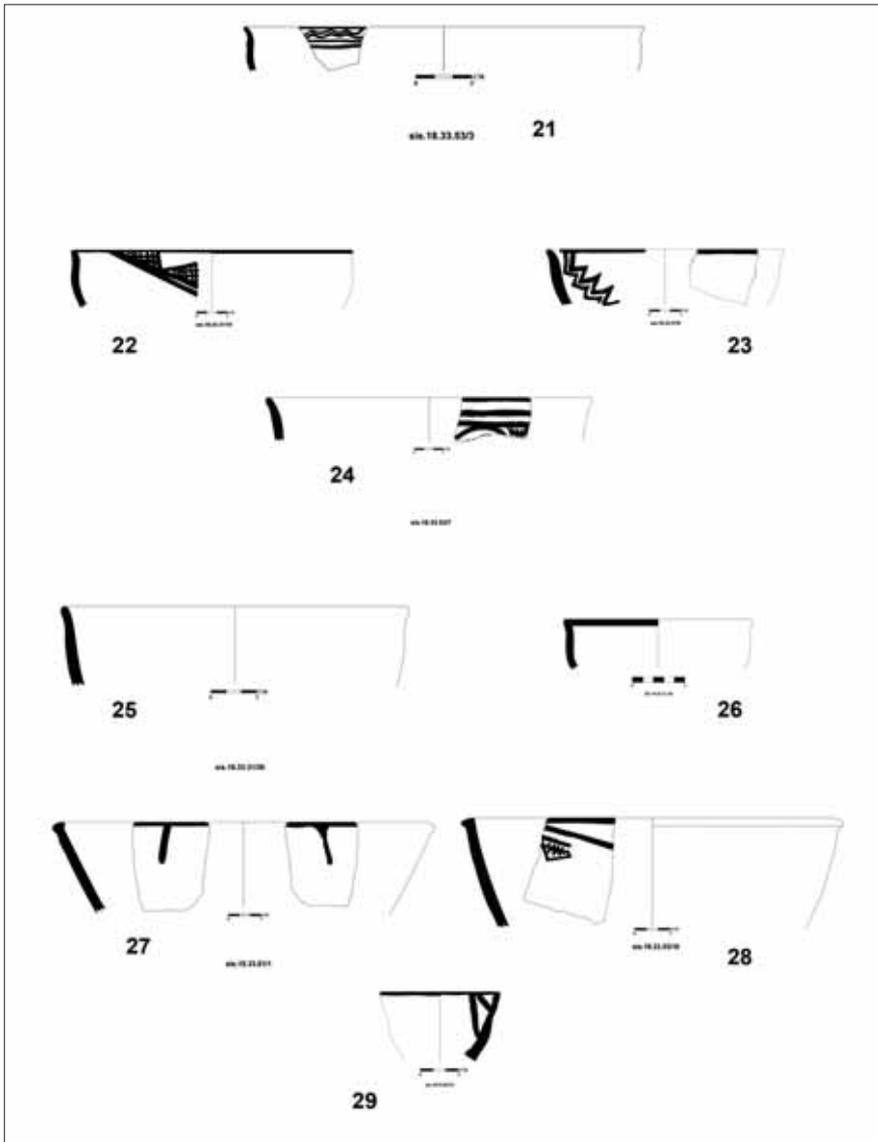


Fig. 10: the pottery assemblage of Phase 4A, open forms: 21. SiS.19.33.53/3; 22. SiS.19.33.31/10; 23. SiS.19.33.31/9; 24. SiS.19.33.53/7; 25. SiS.19.33.31/30; 26. SiS.19.33.31/29; 27. SiS.19.33.61/1; 28. SiS.19.33.53/10; 29. SiS.19.33.53/13.

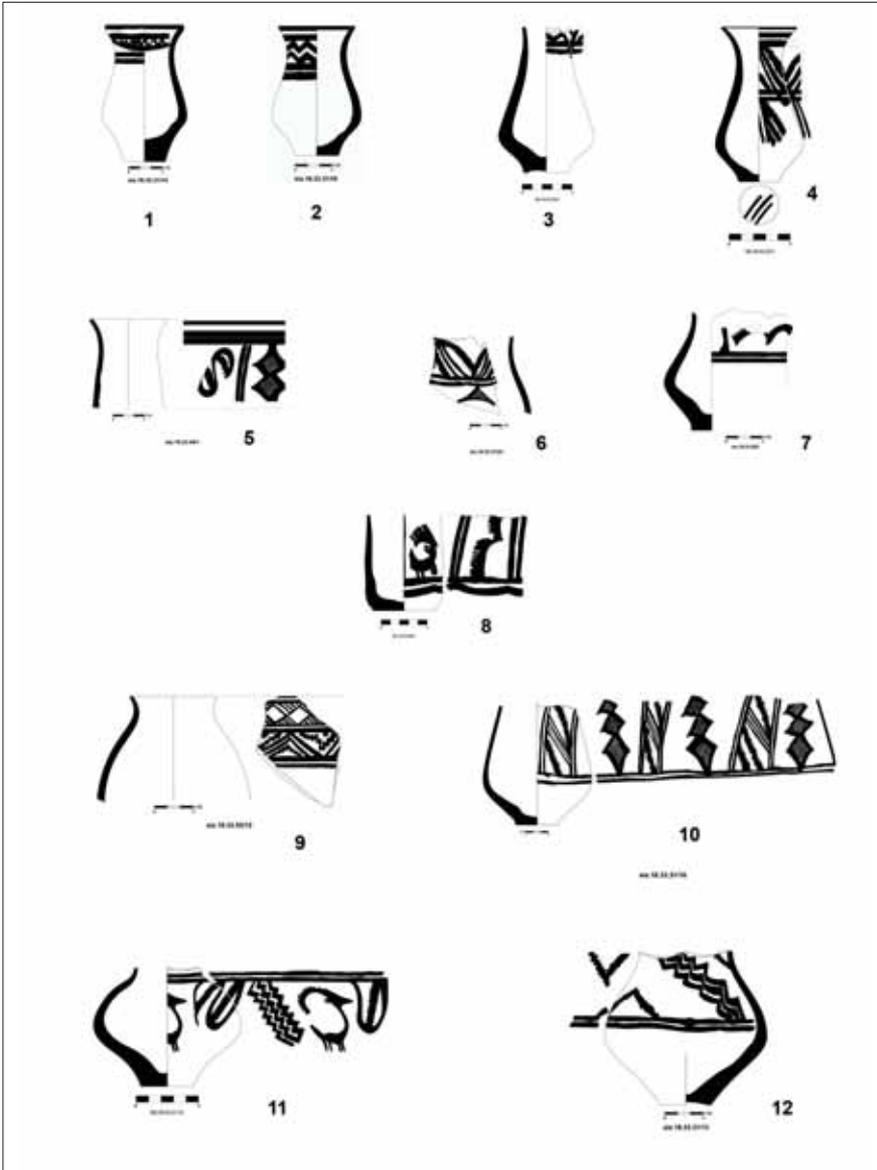


Fig. 11: the pottery assemblage of Phase 4A, closed forms: 1. SiS.19.33.31/14; 2. SiS.19.33.31/15; 3. SiS.19.33.53/2; 4. SiS.19.33.53/1; 5. SiS.19.33.44/1; 6. SiS.19.33.31/23; 7. SiS.19.33.29/2; 8. SiS.19.33.44/4; 9. SiS.19.33.53/12; 10. SiS.19.33.31/16; 11. SiS.19.33.31/12; 12. SiS.19.33.31/13.

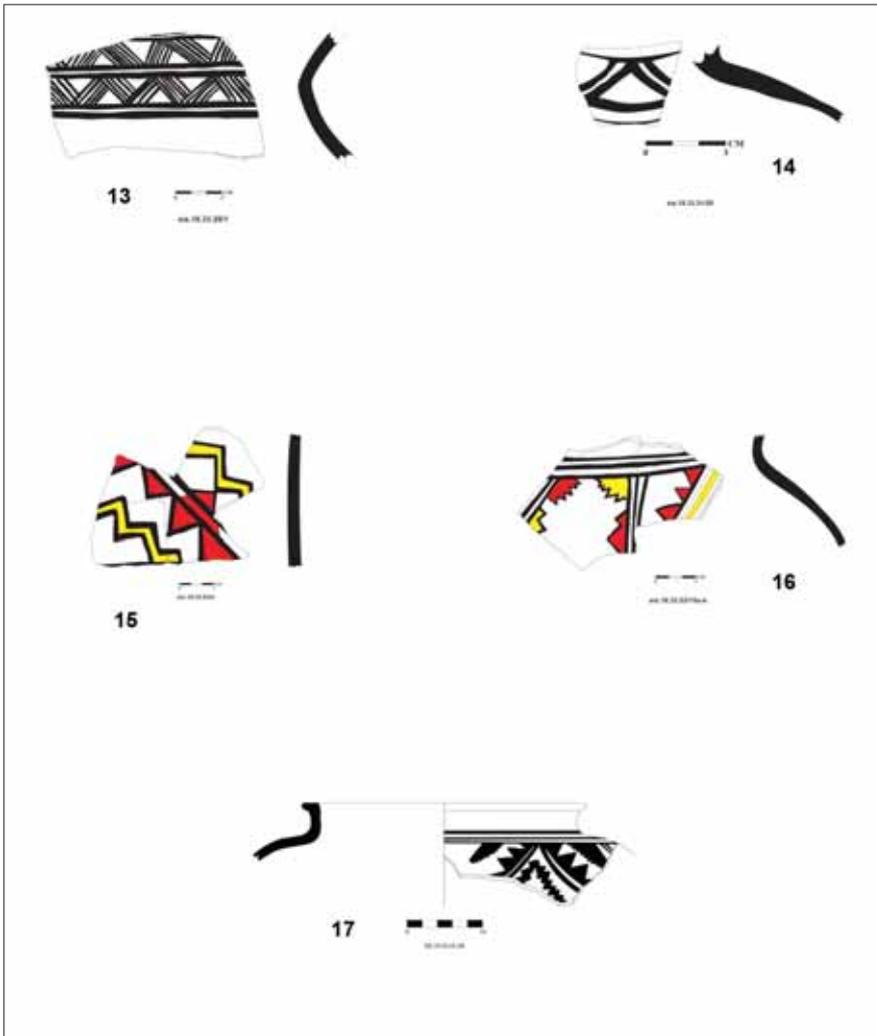


Fig. 12: the pottery assemblage of Phase 4A, closed forms: 13. SiS.19.33.29/1; 14. SiS.19.33.31/25; 15. SiS.19.33.53/4; 16. SiS.19.33.53/15; 17. SiS.19.33.31/14.

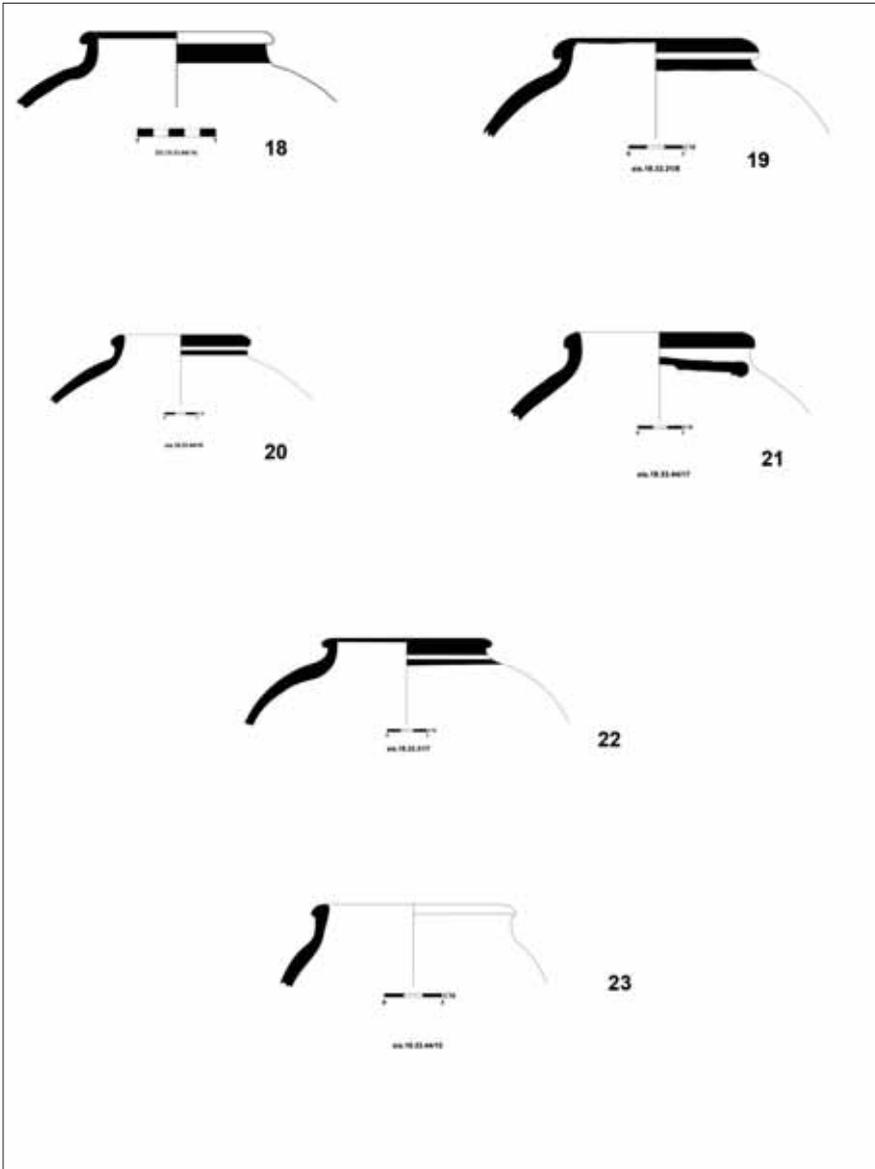


Fig. 13: the pottery assemblage of Phase 4A, closed forms: 18. SiS.19.33.44/16; 19. SiS.19.33.31/18; 20. SiS.19.33.44/18; 21. SiS.19.33.44/17; 22. SiS.19.33.31/7; 23. SiS.19.33.44/15.

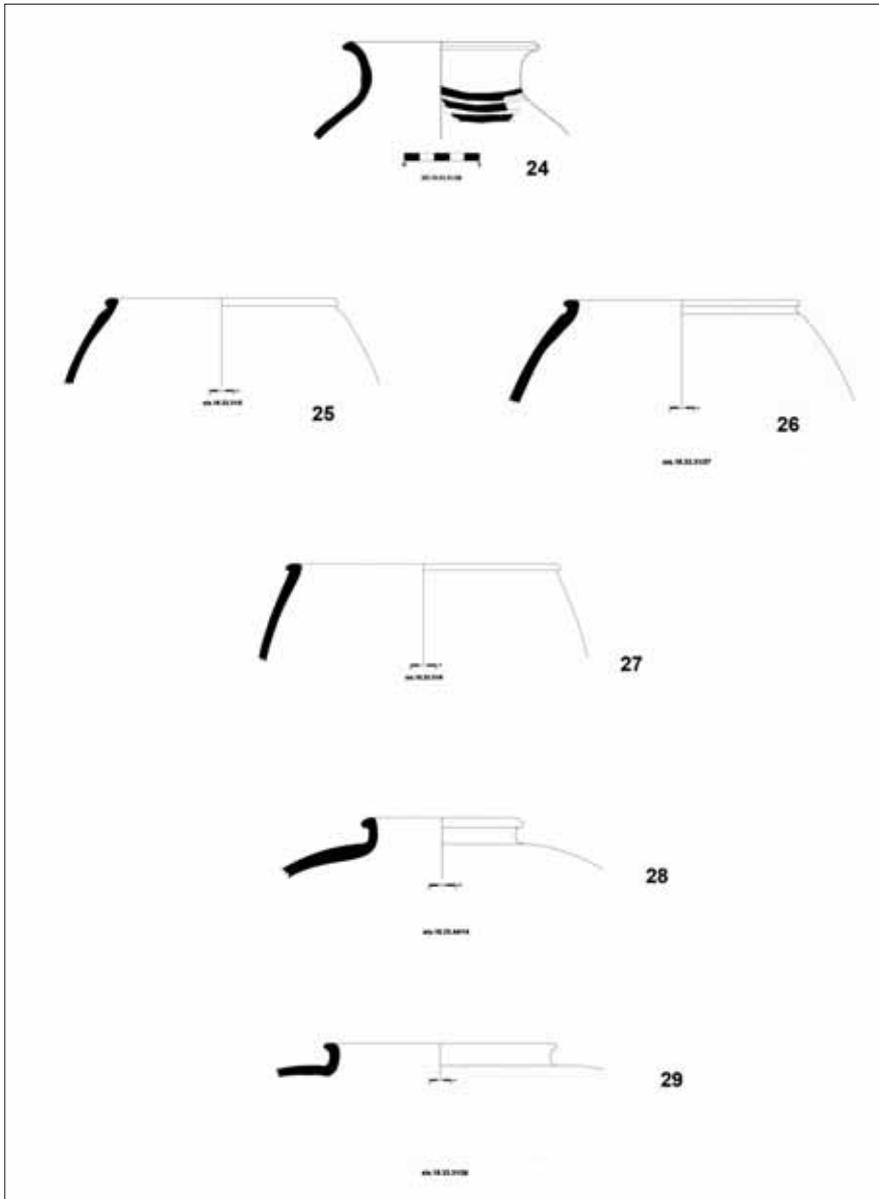


Fig. 14: the pottery assemblage of Phase 4A, closed forms: 24. SiS.19.33.31/28; 25. SiS.19.33.31/5; 26. SiS.19.33.31/27; 27. SiS.19.33.31/6; 28. SiS.19.33.31/14; 29. SiS.19.33.31/26.

A large bichrome jar seems to belong to the type with a collar neck and a flat everted lip (Fig. 12: 17), not recorded in the 'Central Quarters' (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 127, fig. 163, for the design, Phase 5A). The polychrome jars - black, red and yellow - display schemes (Fig. 12: 15-16) which could be connected to the type from Mugavero - Vidale 2003: fig. 14, 10b.

Necked jars with a bevelled convex lip, frequent in the 'Central Quarters' (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 117, fig. 146, 3 and fig. 147, Phase 5A), are also abundant in this phase in Area 33 (Fig. 13: 18-22), mostly displaying a painted black band on the neck and the lip. Another jar (Fig. 13: 23), undecorated, has a higher neck and a less prominent convex shoulder, which may be compared with a specimen in Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 119, fig. 151, 8, Phase 5A.

An unusual high concave flared neck is present in an item from L. 149, painted with three broad curvilinear lines on the shoulder (Fig. 14: 24): the shape may be compared with an item in Tosi 1969: 312, fig. 31, e.

There are large plain open-mouthed jars with a bevelled rim, sometimes separated from the body by a deep moulding (Fig. 14: 25-26), a feature not registered until now at Shahr-i Sokhta. Another storage jar (Fig. 14: 27) looks like the one from the 'House of the Jars' (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 123, fig. 157, Phase 5A).

Two larger undecorated containers have a short neck and do not seem to have parallels elsewhere (Fig. 14: 28-29).

8. Layer 4B - L.149, L.150, L.176, L.182 - open forms

The truncated conical bowls - accounting for the second highest percentage of the pottery assemblage (33%) - seem to belong to the chronological threshold between Phases 5A and 6, as in Fig. 15: 2 (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 110, fig. 132, 3, Phase 5A) and Fig. 15: 1 (Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 124, G. 71, no. 6958, fig. 255 and 111, G. 57, fig. 226). A large plate (Fig. 15: 3), which is a rare shape in this context among the open forms, and its decoration have a parallel in Lamberg-Karlovsky - Tosi 1973: fig. 22, Period II.

A miniature conical bowl (Fig. 15: 6) has a triangle hanging from the inner rim with one side extended. It is loosely painted, with two irregular diagonal lines inside. This kind of small vessel sometimes appears in the necropolis (Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 134-135, G. 77, no. 7011 and 236, G. 703, no. 7958). Another bowl with a convex profile (Fig. 15: 5) bears a distinctive design, although the piece is fragmentary. It appears to be a small portion of a curving element drawn with thick parallel lines, horizontally hatched inside. This kind of pattern has no match in Shahr-i Sokhta (Biscione - Bulgarelli 1983) but it shows some affinity with the 'branch' motif found on shallow bowls in Pakistani Kech-Makran (Mutin *et al.* 2017: 144, fig. 2, nos. 7-10). Our piece differs in terms of the layout however, as if it was an old-fashioned copy of a once renowned and appreciated style.

As for larger containers, there are four wide basins (Fig. 15: 4, 7, 8, 9) with an average diameter of more than 30 cm, including three plain and one with a chain of diagonal cross-hatched triangles (Fig. 15: 4). The latter has a distinctive design not occurring in any other contemporary context in Shahr-i Sokhta (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 112, fig. 136, 6, Phase 5A; (the specimen has diagonally hatched triangles without the double line at the base).

Two fragments displaying everted, almost flat rims may belong to deep basins (or alternatively large storage jars, Fig. 15: 10-11), with parallels in Tappeh Graziani (Kavosh *et al.* 2019: 105, fig. 104, 9, 10, Phase 6), although their alleged association with examples from the 'Central Quarters' does not seem to be completely borne out (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 105, fig. 123, 1, 2).

A small thick vessel (Fig. 15: 12) could be the clay variant of a mortar due to the large, flat, everted lip, easy to grasp when grinding something inside it, and the stable, flat base. A similar lip is seen in Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 141, fig. 186, 3, Phase 5B.

9. Layer 4B - L.149, L.150, L.176, L.182 - closed forms

A wide selection of decorations is seen on the beakers of this phase, which represent the most frequent of the pottery categories. The bodies are elongated and their bottoms display varying heights, more or less squat above the bases.

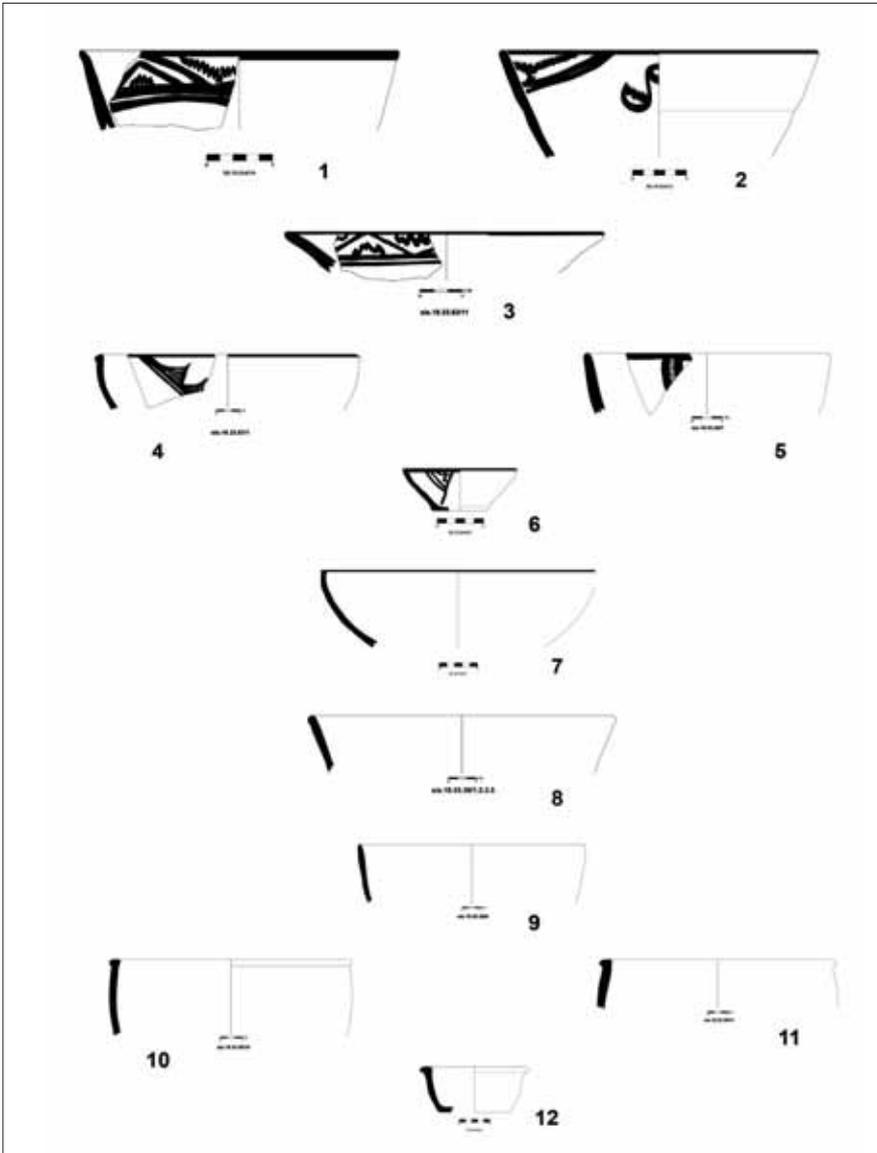


Fig. 15: the pottery assemblage of Phase 4B, open forms: 1. SiS.19.33.67/4; 2. SiS.19.33.67/2; 3. SiS.19.33.63/11; 4. SiS.19.33.67/1; 5. SiS.19.33.30/7; 6. SiS.19.33.63/2; 7. SiS.19.33.63/1; 8. SiS.19.33.30/1.2.3.5; 9. SiS.19.33.30/8; 10. SiS.19.33.30/10; 11. SiS.19.33.30/11; 12. SiS.19.33.63/9.

The designs can be divided into two groups: those in Fig. 16: 1, 4-7 have motifs on the upper section, such as fringed festoons, simple or wavy horizontal lines, double stepped lines and zigzags (see the festoons in Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 52, G. 15, no. 6209 and 63, G. 22B, no. 6471; wavy lines in Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 109, fig. 130, 3, Phase 6; stepped lines in Vidale 1984: 93, fig. 11.13, Piperno - Salvatori 2007: 177, G. 131, no. 7137; zigzags in Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 136, fig. 181, 3, 6, Phase 5B).

The vessels in Fig. 16: 2-3 have decorations on the whole surface or half of it. One (Fig. 16: 2) has metopes consisting of columns of four vertical lozenges alternating with diagonal garlands bounded by double vertical lines, as in the pear-shaped jars (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 132, fig. 174, 2 and 139, fig. 184, 2, Phase 5B); the other (Fig. 16: 3) has a unique motif composed of two (or three) stepped lines and what is probably a snake.

A trefoil jug with part of the strainer - in the same paste as the jug - seems to be the only example of this shape found in Shahr-i Sokhta so far (Fig. 16: 8-9), and we can assume it was a special vessel made for pouring and purifying liquids.

Possibly connected with liquids and their use is a body fragment of a biconical vessel that may belong to the squat/biconical high-necked jug decorated with a chain of triangles hanging from the shoulder (Fig. 16: 10). Something similar but inverted can be seen in Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 139, fig. 184, 9, Phase 5B.

The storage jars (Fig. 16: 11-12) are of the hole-mouth type (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 115, fig. 143, 3, 5, Phase 5A), while the vessel in Fig. 16: 13 belongs to the series of necked jars with a flat everted rim.

The decoration of Fig. 17: 14 has completely faded away but the rim finds a perfect match with a polychrome vessel from the 'Central Quarters' (Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 127, fig. 164, 1, Phase 5A).

Other polychrome wall fragments (Fig. 17: 15-16) have chains of solid red triangles outlined in black flanked by double stepped lines or metopes with stepped triangles in the corners filled in with red and white. The body sherd in Fig. 17: 17 has a very distinctive pattern, with double symmetrical stepped

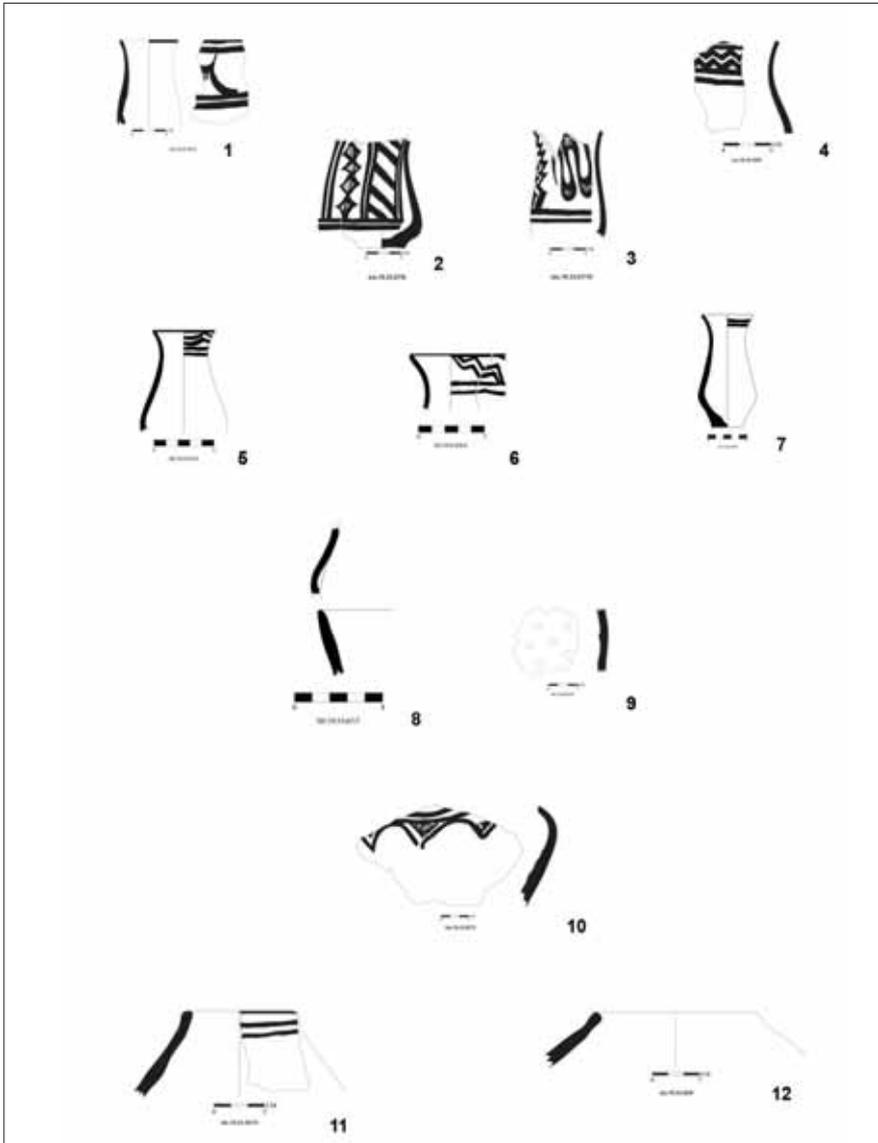


Fig. 16: the pottery assemblage of Phase 4B, closed forms: 1. SiS.19.33.30/12; 2. SiS.19.33.67/6; 3. SiS.19.33.67/10; 4. SiS.19.33.30/6; 5. SiS.19.33.63/3; 6. SiS.19.33.63/4; 7. SiS.19.33.63/8; 8. SiS.19.33.67/7; 9. SiS.19.33.67/5; 10. SiS.19.33.67/3; 11. SiS.19.33.30/15; 12. SiS.19.33.30/9.

lines on both sides of three vertical lines flanked by a diagonal chain of solid red triangles outlined in black. This pattern resembles a design framework that is seen in Central Baluchistan known as the Nal Horizon (see Salvatori-Tosi 2005: 282, fig. 2.2, and Cortesi *et al.* 2008: 11-13, fig. 3-5; Cortesi 2015: 193, Nos. 335, 217, No. 442 and according to the author, both pieces are chronologically contemporary with Period II of Sohr Damb/Nal, 3100-2800/2700 BC). In our specimen the chain of triangles is added, apparently reflecting the larger surface available on a jar than the small Nal cups.

10. Conclusions

During the 50 years since the start of scientific research in Shahr-i Sokhta, many studies have focused on pottery production, mainly the innumerable sequences and series of decorations painted on the surfaces of the vessels (Biscione 1973; 1974; Biscione - Bulgarelli 1983; Pracchia 1984; Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 44-49). Nevertheless, we still lack a general overview and analysis of the entire body of classes, shapes and types developed by artisans over the hundreds of years of the city's history. We still have an inadequate vision of the cooking ware class and nearly nothing has been published regarding food preparation and other typical domestic activities, which must have required mortars, basins, vats, trays, etc. Furthermore, in the existing bibliography, broad categories such as jars or bowls do not help to understand the complex variety of ceramic items used in the everyday life of a settlement in the third millennium BC. Another astounding example of the absence of a detailed study concerns the clay supports for lamps, such as lanterns or simple saucers. Even if the potters never produced such modest vessels essential for everyday life, it would still be important to study why the inhabitants of Shahr-i Sokhta were using other supports, or indeed which lighting technology they were accustomed to.

Ideally, the research on material culture and pottery production in Shahr-i Sokhta should proceed in various directions: an analysis of the ceramic paste and fabric could lead to a significant reassessment of obsolete theories, as some researchers have already demonstrated for production centres in Sistan

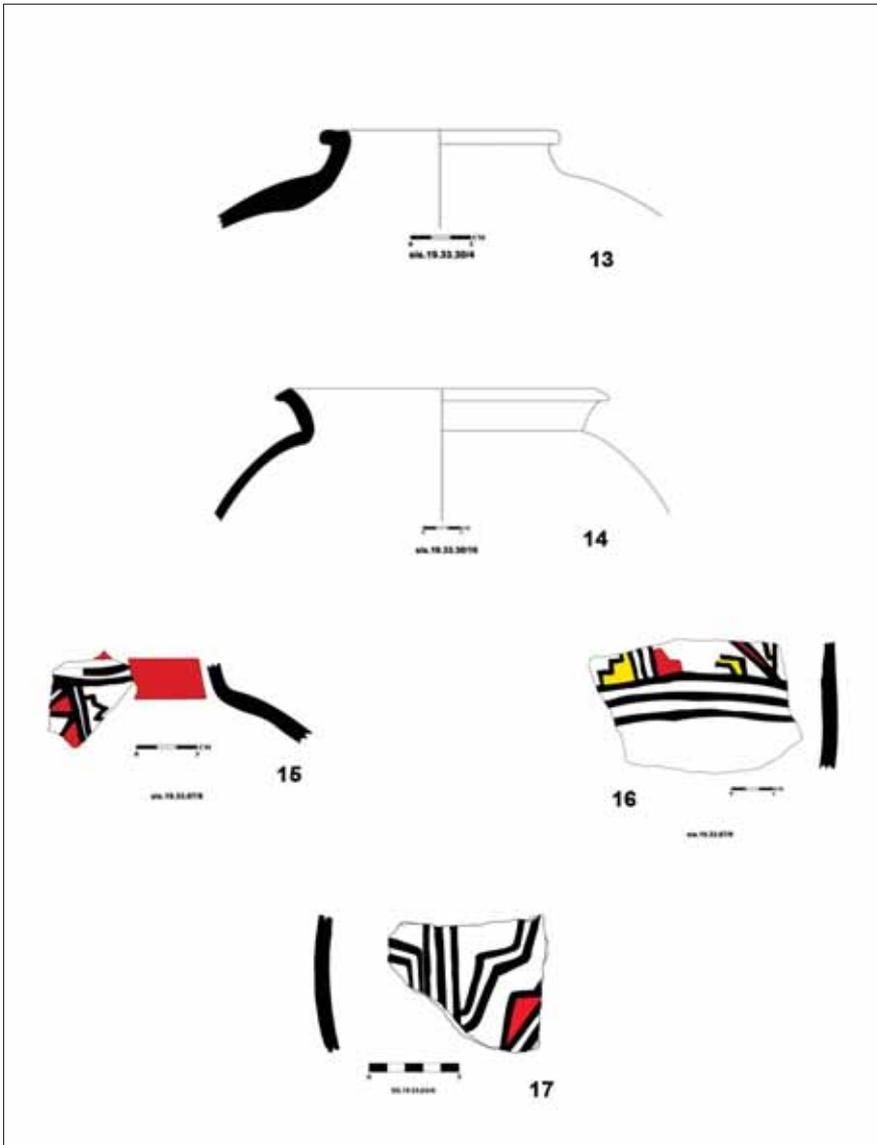


Fig. 17: the pottery assemblage of Phase 4B, closed forms: 13. SiS.19.33.30/4; 14. SiS.19.33.30/16; 15. SiS.19.33.67/8; 16. SiS.19.33.67/9; 17. SiS.19.33.63/6.

(Mutin - Minc 2019), while a general diachronic typology of vessel shapes and variants should be drawn up in order to establish a nomenclature valid for future excavations and useful for the chronologies of nearby cultures.

Lastly, a specific problem arises in connection with the nature of the deposits and the methodology of excavations in Shahr-i Sokhta. Concerning comparisons and the connections with one key area of the settlement, the Central Quarters, the reliability of the pottery's chronological sequence seems to have been affected by the method adopted for the archaeological research, which, according to the excavators, entailed 'artificial cuts'. This attitude is represented perfectly by the section in Salvatori - Vidale 1997: 24, fig. 37 in which Phase 5A comprises the floor level, the layers upon which it was founded and the rubble of the walls in connection with the same floor, meaning that three highly distinct activities - anthropic and natural - were mixed and confused when the pottery was examined and catalogued. Furthermore, the loose, silty texture of the majority of layers in this kind of geo-archaeological context makes it harder to understand correctly the ancient pits dug into the various deposits, as already pointed out for another iconic site, i.e. Tepe Yahya (Mutin 2013: 45; a satellite site of Shahr-i Sokhta, Tepe Graziani, suffers from the same problems, with more recent sherds in earlier contexts, Kavosh *et al.* 2019: 106). The consequence is that what is retrieved from the infill gets confused with what is found in the primary context. This makes it difficult to understand and compare the distinctive areas of the settlement, the development and duration of types, the preferences of customers and producers, the crystallisation of shapes and the emergence of new ones. The uncertainty is exacerbated by the lack - apart from a few scattered references in articles (Biscione *et al.* 1974; Piperno - Tosi 1975; Piperno - Salvatori 1983 and 1987; Piperno 1986; Bonora *et al.* 2000) - of a general chronological framework regarding the Shahr-i Sokhta necropolis (Piperno - Salvatori 2007), which in contrast may represent one of the most reliable pottery complexes of the region and its surrounding cultures.

Our task then is to contribute - with this work and with future researches - to a pragmatic effort to outline the overall structure underlying the preferences and practices of pottery consumers associated with specific domestic units in roughly the first half of the third millennium BC (Ascalone in this volume).

As an example, towards a general classification, figures 18 and 19 show an attempt to establish the development of the most frequent shape in the excavated areas of Shahr-i Sokhta, i.e. the straight-sided truncated-cone bowls, which are found in the majority of contexts in the site.

In the two different phases of Area 33 explored in 2019, although we lack a statistically substantial quantity of sherds, the general trend of the vessels is for thick walls and two main profiles, one straight-sided and the other slightly convex.

In Layer 3A (Fig. 18), many of them display a simple rounded rim while by the end of the phase there is a faint concavity just below the lip, which can be thinner at the edge. Moving into the deeper levels, in Layer 4A (Fig. 19) the tendency towards slightly convex walls associated with thinner everted rims continues, until some bowls show a concave moulding just below the lip.

Another element that should be highlighted is the morphological variety seen in the oldest Layer - 4A - and a more standardised profile in the most recent one, as if pottery production underwent a sort of centralisation, becoming more cohesive.



Fig. 18: the types of truncated-cone bowls in Phase 3A: 1. SiS.19.33.26/2; 2. SiS.19.33.26/12; 3. SiS.19.33.26/3; 4. SiS.19.33.26/10; 5. SiS.19.33.26/8; 6. SiS.19.33.26/9; 7. SiS.19.33.26/1; 8. SiS.19.33.26/6; 9. SiS.19.33.26/7; 10. SiS.19.33.26/5; 11. SiS.19.33.26/4. 12. SiS.19.33.26/16.

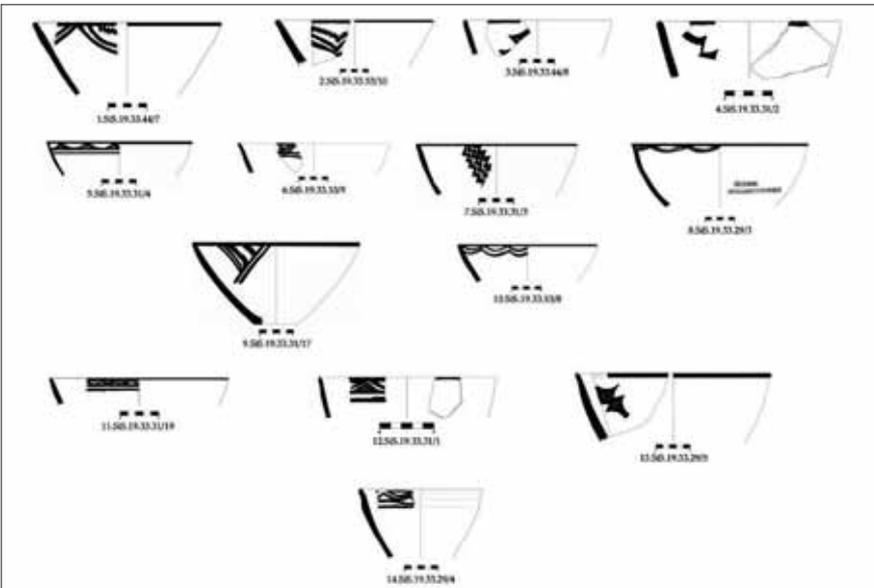


Fig. 19: the types of truncated-cone bowls in Phase 4A: 1. SiS.19.33.44/7; 2. SiS.19.33.53/10; 3. SiS.19.33.44/8; 4. SiS.19.33.31/2; 5. SiS.19.33.31/4; 6. SiS.19.33.53/9; 7. SiS.19.33.31/3; 8. SiS.19.33.29/3; 9. SiS.19.33.31/17; 10. SiS.19.33.53/8; 11. SiS.19.33.31/19; 12. SiS.19.33.31/1; 13. SiS.19.33.29/5; 14. SiS.19.33.29/4.

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