

# Gandhara Grave Complex in West Pakistan

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A PRELIMINARY report on the Gandhara grave complex in West Pakistan was published in *AP IX* (Dani and Durrani 1966). We pointed out that these graves are widespread throughout the Gandhara region, from Bajaur to the Indus. The nomenclature "Gandhara grave complex" does not imply that the graves are only in Gandhara, but simply that in the present state of our exploration, we know the graves are spread throughout this region. With the widening of our exploration, we are likely to find them in the areas east of the Indus River.

With a full season's excavation in 1965 at Timurgarha in Dir State by the University of Peshawar, aided by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Pakistan, and with even longer excavations by the Italians in the neighborhood of Mingora in Swat State, the significance of these graves is becoming clearer. While we are still awaiting the results of radiocarbon tests and the report of a physical anthropologist on the skeletons, we are nevertheless in a position to unfold the picture in a better way than we did last year. The materials fall into three cultural, and possibly chronological, periods.

## PERIOD I

In the first period, attested at Timurgarha and Swat, we find inflexed burials recovered from deep pits, the lowest stage of which is lined with stone masonry. Along with the complete skeletons, we have recovered pots of grayware and redware (generally plain), terracotta beads, hairpins, borers, and what may be a barbed harpoon.

In Timurgarha, these graves are noticed hardly 1 ft. below the present level of the fields. In excavation, after removing the top soil, we discover a circle of stones that marks the upper earth filling of the grave (Plate *Ia*). The fill continues down 2 to 3 ft. After removing the fill, we reach the top of the grave pit which invariably is covered by rubble stones. When these stones are removed, we come to the rectangular grave pit lined with dry-rubble stone masonry. At the bottom of the pit the skeleton is placed, generally southwest to northeast, lying on one side with legs inflexed, head turned to one side, and hands together (Plate *Ib*). Pots are placed

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on the sides of the skeleton. The female skeletons generally have hairpins and beads.

The pottery forms are most interesting (see Fig. 1). They fall into two broad divisions: grayware and redware.

#### *Grayware*

In grayware, we find only drinking vessels of three main forms. They are all turned on a wheel and have a fine texture. In color, they vary from brown-gray to dark gray or black. Generally, they are:

1. Narrow-waisted, tall drinking vases with slightly flaring, simple rims. All of them have flat-disc bases. They are further distinguishable into four subvarieties:
  - a) marked carination below the waist and a series of cordons at the neck (Plate IIa);
  - b) carination just above the base, cordons, straight sides for some portion of the lower body, and flaring upper portions (Fig. 2d);
  - c) forms similar to *a*, but with cordons below the waist in place of carination;
  - d) grooves in place of carination and no cordons; they are comparatively smaller in size than *a*, *b*, *c*;
2. Middle-sized drinking goblets on flat-disc bases with broad bodies and comparatively narrow, straight mouths. They have no cordons on their bodies;
3. Drinking cups with outturned lips, either
  - a) sagger-based or
  - b) flat-based with chamfered ends; one flat-based cup with chamfered ends was also found in redware.

#### *Redware*

Redware falls into two main forms with the additional form mentioned above under grayware (3b):

1. Offering stands made of well-levigated, well-fired clay. These pots have red slip on their bodies. They fall into the following subvarieties:
  - a) solid stemmed and straight-sided bowls with outturned rims (Plate IIb, 1);
  - b) solid-stemmed and incurved bowls; one bowl shows cordons on the body, and the other has incised triangles just below the incurved rim;
  - c) hollow stems and incurved bowls; in three varieties (*a*, *b*, *c*), the bowl was made along with the stem;
  - d) incurved bowls on tall stands, made separately, with broad bases; some have grooves on them;
2. Cooking vessels (Fig. 1g) of different sizes: globular jars on small, flat-disc bases that have sharply turned everted rims and rough, gritty textures; some have lids with either rounded or rectangular knobs in the middle—all are handmade; this is the most common pottery form throughout all the periods noted in the grave complex.

#### *Small Finds*

The beads are all of terracotta and are biconical in shape. The hairpins are of bronze and ivory. They are of two varieties: the first has a flat top, and the second has a conical head. The ivory specimen is conical. There are also two specimens of borers in ivory. The harpoon had barbs that are now broken.

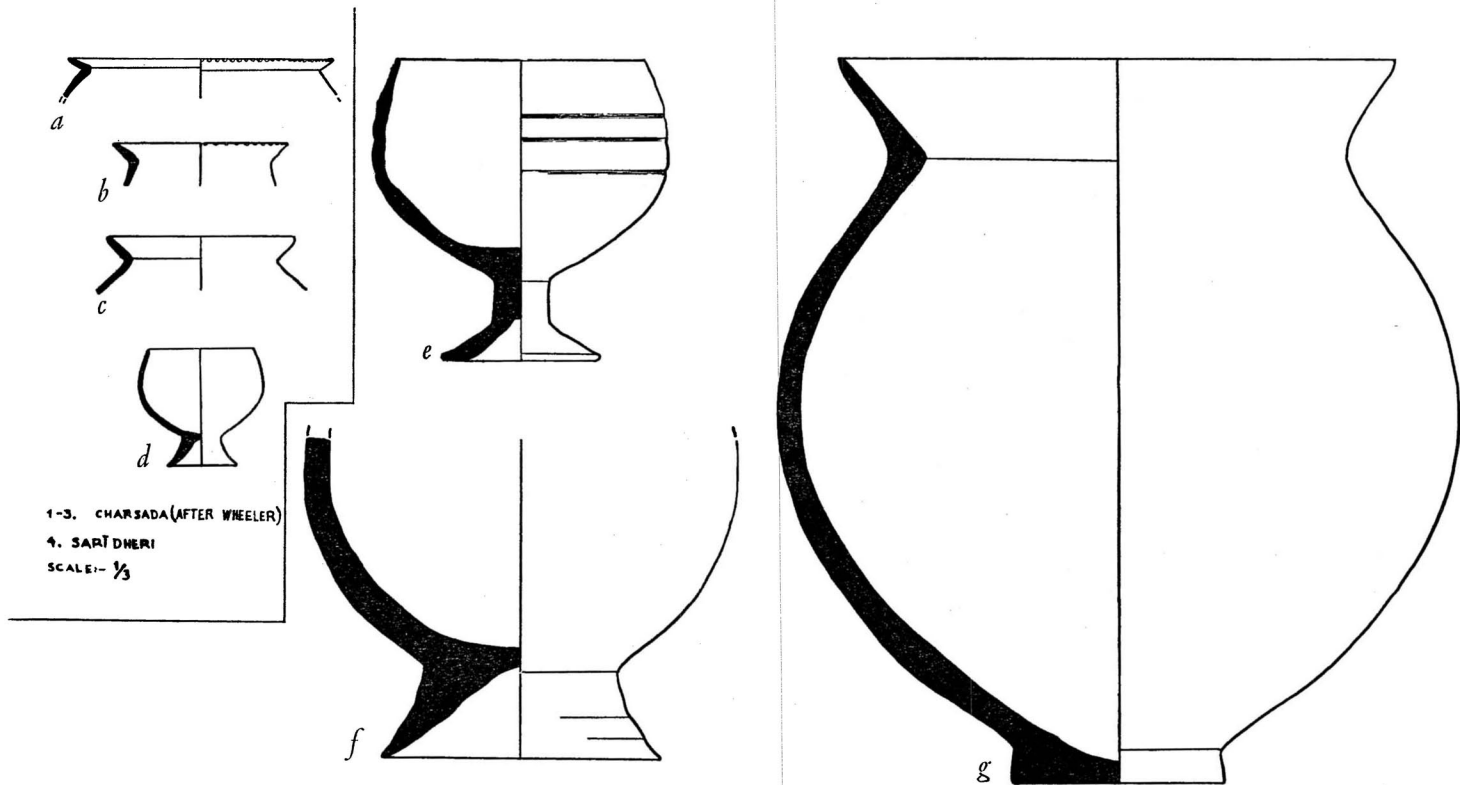


Fig. 1 Pottery from Timurgarha (*e, f, g*) compared with styles from Charsada (*a, b, c*) and Sari Dheri (*d*). Drawings *a, b, c, d* are from Wheeler 1962: Figs. 10.3, 11.1, 15.44, and 13.13; *e*, Timurgarha Grave 270, Period III; *f*, Timurgarha Grave 111: grayware from Period III; *g*, Timurgarha Grave 101, Period I.

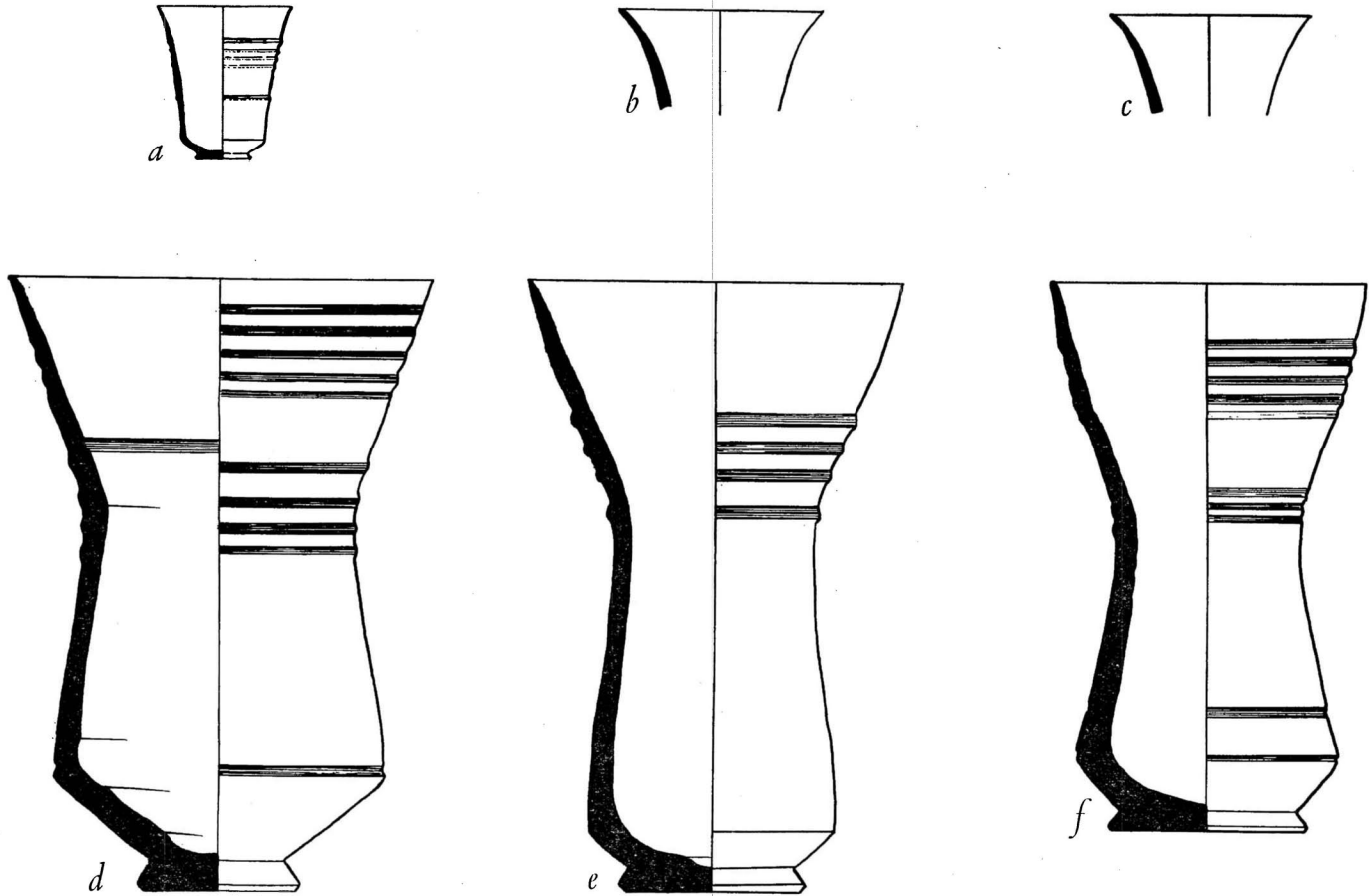


Fig. 2 Soapy-redware from Charsada (*a, b, c*) compared to Period II and Period III pottery types from the graves at Timurgarha (*c, d, e*). Drawings *a, b, c* are from Wheeler 1962: Figs. 10.3, 11.6, and 11.5; *d*, Timurgarha Grave 2 of 1964, Period I; *e*, Timurgarha Grave 254, Period III; *f*, Timurgarha Grave 213, Period II.

## PERIOD II

At Timurgarha, some graves of this period have been stratigraphically separated from those of Period I. They lie on the top of the first-period graves. There is a marked ritual innovation in this period. Though the inflexed burials continued with slight material innovations, as evidenced at Thana in Malakand Agency, we find in Period II for the first time the evidence of cremations and urn burials (Plate III*a*). The grave pits were dug in the same fashion as they were in the first period, but in place of the full skeleton, Period II burials have either partly-recovered charred bones deposited along with pots, or simply urn burials with or without ashes or bones. Two of the large urns are most remarkable (Plate III*b*). In make and form they are similar to Variety 2 of Period I redware; however, the Period II urns are exceptionally large in size. Below the neck, these urns have two holes for eyes, an applied nose, and a large hole for the mouth. The urns are usually covered with saucer-shaped lids that have holed handles in the middle of the convex side, unlike the lids of the first period that had knobs on the concave side. The older varieties continued in Period II also, and a fourth variety shows a holed handle in the middle of the concave side of the lid.

The pottery forms show remarkable evolution from those of Period I and at the same time show some new types. Again, the ceramics are divisible into two main groups: grayware and redware. Grayware generally includes drinking vases, cups, and narrow-necked bottle-shaped jars, but rarely offering stands (only two examples), and a lugged, semicircular bowl (from Thana). Redware has offering stands, cooking vessels, drinking vases, handled jars, cooking vessels on stands, water vessels of different sizes, and urns of different sizes and shapes.

*Grayware*

Period II grayware has the same characteristics as grayware of the first period. Generally, the pieces are:

1. Narrow-waisted tall drinking vases, however, Subvariety 1*a* (see Plate II*a*) of the earlier period is totally absent here; Subvariety 1*b* of the earlier period (Fig. 2*d*) is found more frequently and in different sizes; one such vase of medium size has one handle on the side; Subvarieties 1*c* and 1*d* of the earlier period continue in equal number, though, strangely enough, from Thana, in Malakand Agency, we obtained only two broken examples of these tall drinking vases—one in gray and the other in red;
2. Middle-sized drinking goblets like Variety 2 of Period I; found both at Thana (Fig. 3*d*) and Timurgarha (Fig. 3*e*). Some show cordons in the upper part. At Thana, they are found in redware also.
3. Drinking cups of both subvarieties, as in Period I; but there is a new subvariety (3*c*), an incurved drinking cup with a hole at the bottom. Two examples were found at Timurgarha.
4. A new variety: narrow-necked bottle-shaped jars with flat-disc bases and flaring lips; some such jars have cordons on the body; from Thana there are some examples in red also;
5. Two examples of offering stands with incurved bowls and hollow stems—found in grayware at Timurgarha;
6. A semicircular bowl with thickened rim, flat-disc base, single-holed lug at the lower

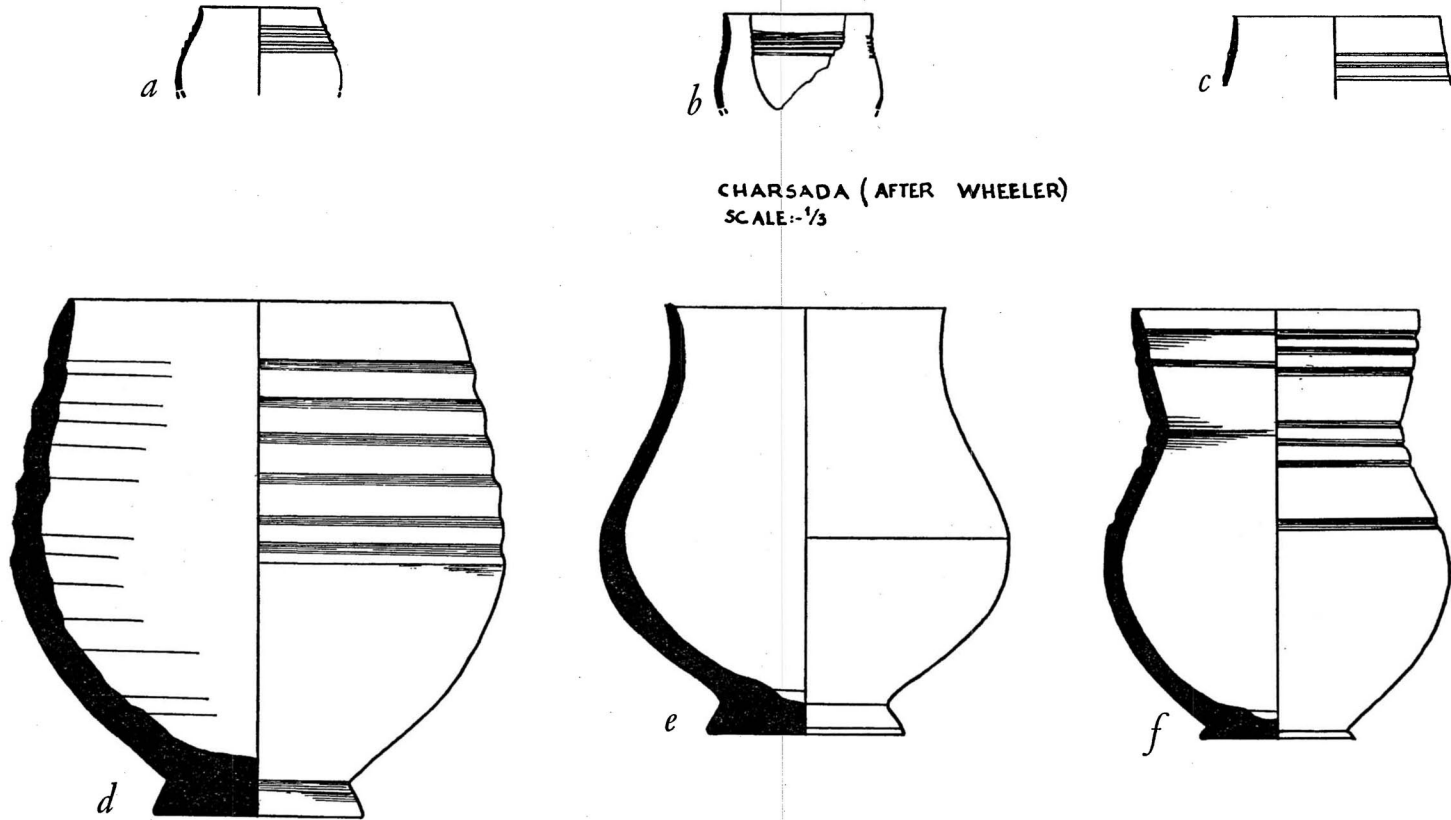


Fig. 3 Soapy-redware cordoned bowl from Charsada (*a, b, c*) compared with similar ware from Thana (*d*) and Timurgarha (*e, f*). Drawings *a, b, c* are from Wheeler 1962: Figs. 10.4, 10.5, and 11.3; *d*, Thana grave, Period II; *e*, Timurgarha Grave 213, Period II; *f*, Timurgarha Grave 105, Period III.

side, and cordons at the upper part—found at Thana—the only specimen found.

Period II redware is like the redware of the earlier period with the following exceptions:

1. Offering stands are of similar texture and characteristics as in Period I, but Subvariety 1*a* is absent here. Subvarieties 1*b*, 1*c*, and 1*d* are present, but the last is rare.
2. Cooking vessels in Period II continue to have the same characteristics as those of the earlier period except that they are found in different sizes. One such vessel has a single handle attached to a side, and the other has a double handle—one handle attached on either side. One example in fine, levigated clay has additional irregular line incisions at the neck. The following are new varieties in fine levigated clay.
3. There is a new variety of cooking vessel form on either tall stand or pedestal. This variety is known in Period II only from Timurgarha.
4. There is one example of a narrow-necked vase with globular body on a flat-disc base from Timurgarha (Plate IV*a*, 1).
5. There are globular urns with narrow necks and flaring rims on flat-disc bases found in different sizes. The largest size has nose, eyes, and mouth (already mentioned). A smaller size from Thana has line incisions at the neck and three pairs of applied insignificant knobs below the lines. Another smaller example from Timurgarha has a hole for the mouth and triple line incisions, making five arcs around the neck.
6. There are two middle-sized water vessels from Timurgarha, with slightly out-turned rims.
7. There is a middle-sized urn from Thana with four holed lugs at the sides. The shape is an enlarged version of Variety 2 in grayware.
8. There is a tumbler with a rounded body and a tapering upper half.
9. There is an extremely narrow-waisted drinking glass, almost like an hourglass. Only two examples are from Timurgarha.

#### *Small Finds*

In this second period, the metal is again bronze. Besides the two varieties of bronze hairpins of the earlier period, we have two more new varieties. One has a large-sized conical top, and the other has its upper part flattened like a leaf. We have also a bronze finger ring and bronze needles with eyes; the eyes were made by folding one end over. We have also flat, small discs of stone or shell for decorating or tying the hair. Terracotta biconical beads continue in this period, but a new variety is of a barrel-shaped bead in paste. Hairpins of bone and ivory are also found. One gold earring and one silver wire earring were obtained from Timurgarha and Thana respectively.

### PERIOD III

The graves of this period are found just on the surface at Timurgarha, Inayatkila in Bajaur, and Ziarat in Talash Valley. In the two latter places, huge slabs of stone lie on the surface of the ground indicating the location of the graves. At Timurgarha, where extensive excavation was done by the University of Peshawar, the evidence is very instructive. Besides the continuation of the two ritual practices of Period I and Period II, we observe a new practice of partial or fractional burial in the graves made in the same old fashion. It appears that the dead body was exposed in the open field and then the bones were collected and deposited in the grave

(Plate IVb). Some of the pottery forms are entirely new, and they are very fine in texture, suggesting an entirely new pottery tradition, though the older forms and fabric continued here also. And finally, in Period III, for the first time, materials of iron and terracotta human figurines have been recovered. If these features are not sufficient to justify the arrival of new people, they certainly betray the borrowing of new traditions and the enrichment of the older cultural milieu.

Like the first and second periods, pottery in Period III is in grayware and redware. But the redware falls in three different categories: pottery of coarse, gritty material; pottery of well-levigated clay, but thicker in fabric; and pottery of fine levigated clay extremely thin in fabric.

#### *Grayware*

In this period, all the Period II varieties of grayware continue, with the exception of the following: the offering stand in gray is not found here. The tall, handled drinking vase is not found, and Variety 4, the narrow-necked bottle-shaped jar, is conspicuous by its absence. The incurved drinking cups and semicircular bowl also have not been found. But we have some remarkable new additions.

The most important addition is the champaign cup on a stand (Fig. 1e). A similar cup (or bowl) on a pedestal, thick in section, is found in redware (Fig. 1f).

We have found one example of a narrow-waisted hourglass type in gray.

Finally, it may be pointed out that among the tall, narrow-waisted drinking vases, a few are thin in section and show extremely narrow waists.

#### *Redware*

##### *Category A*

Cooking vessels of rough, gritty texture of the earlier periods continue here. They are of various sizes. One has a single handle attached to the side. We have not found any vessel of this type on a stand or pedestal in this period.

##### *Category B*

1. It is in this category that we have all the offering stands. All the varieties of Period II continue here. In addition, there is a large-sized dish on a stand (Plate Va, 2). Sometimes the stand was removed and the dish alone was used. Similar dishes were also made without the stand (Plate Va, 1).
2. We have found cooking vessel forms also in this material and fabric. Such vessels often show line decorations at the neck.
3. Water vessels are of different sizes and have a tendency towards taller necks. Some of them are decorated with line incisions or fingernail impressions.
4. One new variety of water vessel shows a well-formed straightened rim above the narrow neck.
5. Another important addition is a liquid pouring jug with a pinched mouth and a handle on the side (Plate Vb, 1).
6. Finally, we have a new variety of lugged urns of medium size with a collar-like rim. For such urns we found lids with or without a knob.
7. Mention may also be made about the tumblers (Plate VIa, 3) and drinking cups in red similar to those found in Period II. Again, we find handled medium-sized drinking goblets (Plate IVa, 3).





Plate IIIa  
Urn burial at  
Timurgarha.



Plate IIIb  
Urn from Timurgarha,  
Grave 218, Period II.



Plate IVa Pottery from Timurgarha:

- (1) narrow-necked vase, Grave 251, Period II; (2) "hourglass" vase, Grave 149, Period III;  
(3) handled goblet, Grave 102, Period III; (4) "hourglass" vase, Grave 149, Period III.



Plate IVb Timurgarha fractional burial.

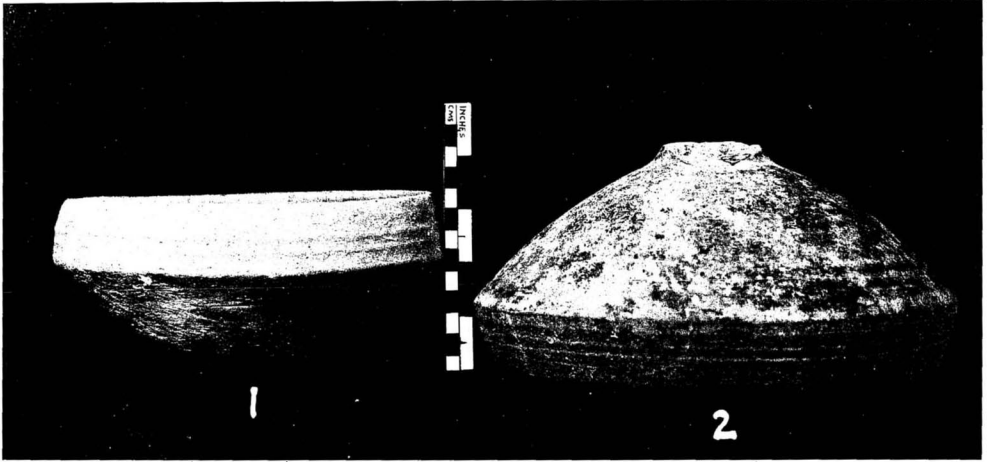


Plate Va Timurgarha pottery: (1) dish from Grave 197, Period III; (2) offering stand for dish that was broken, Grave 142, Period III.



Plate Vb Timurgarha finds: (1) handled jug, Grave 140, Period III; (2) *surahi*-shaped, tall-necked water vessel from Grave 149, Period III; (3) *badna*.

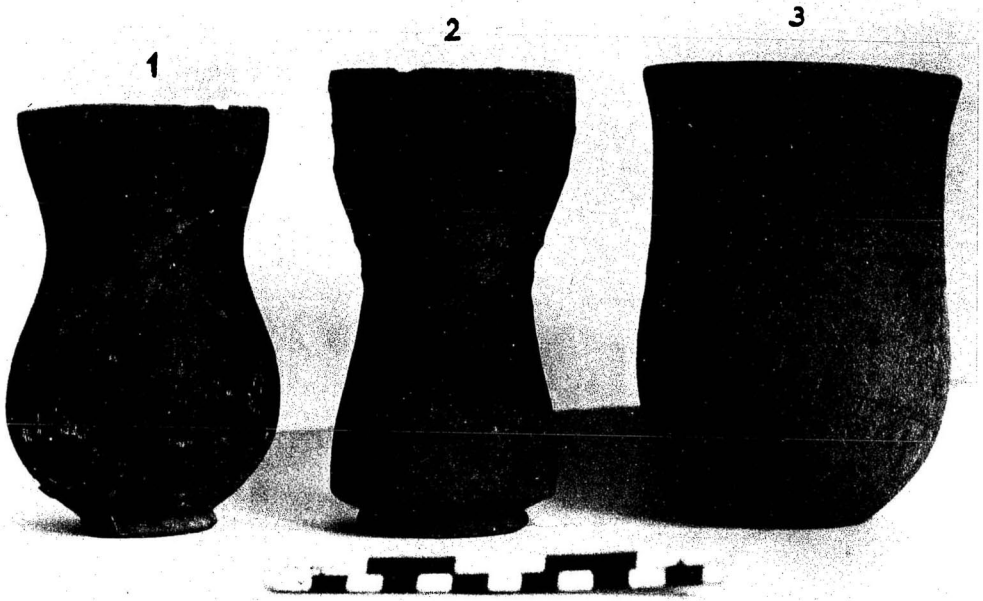


Plate VIa  
Tall drinking vases and tumbler  
(3) from Timurgarha, Period III.

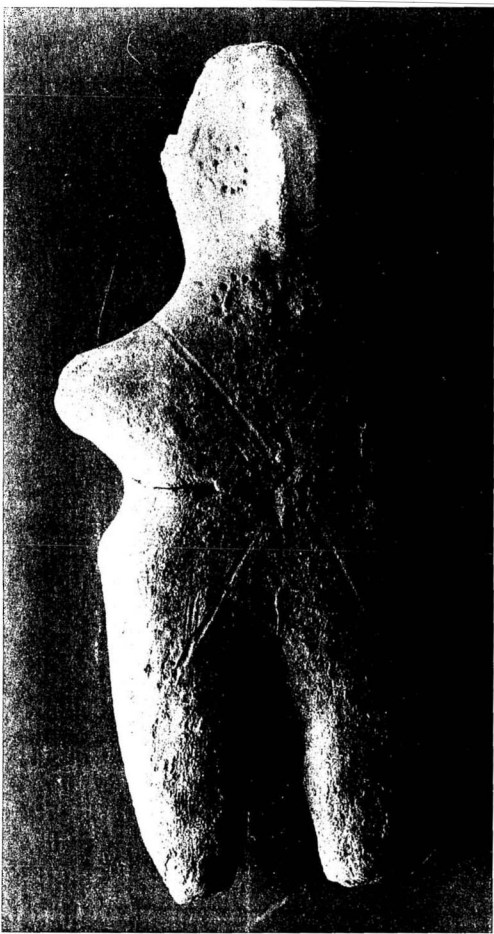


Plate VIb  
Timurgarha terracotta figurine,  
Period III.

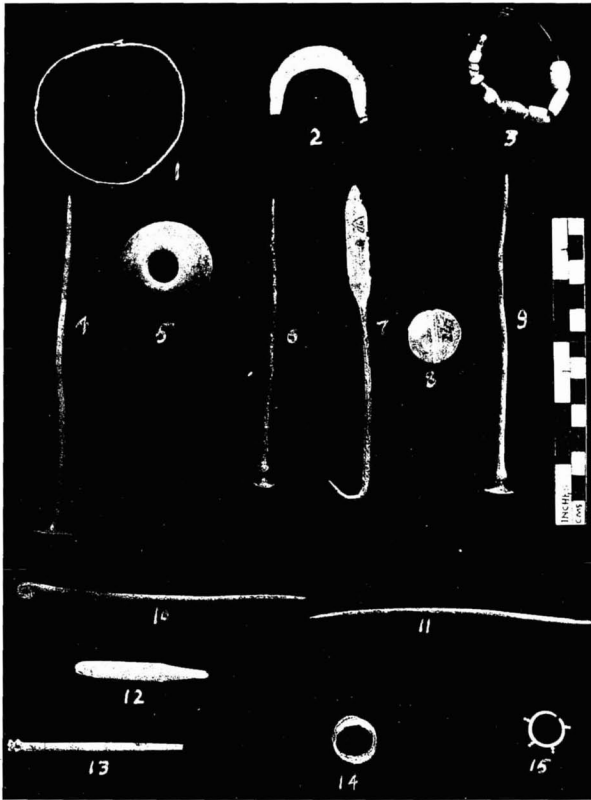


Plate VIIa

Bronze objects and other artifacts from Timurgarha:  
 (1) bronze wristlet;  
 (2) bronze ear pendant;  
 (3) beads of precious stones;  
 (4, 6, 7, 9) bronze hairpins;  
 (5) terracotta bead;  
 (8) tie disk; (10) bronze needle;  
 (11, 13) ivory hairpins;  
 (12) ivory borer;  
 (14) bronze finger ring.

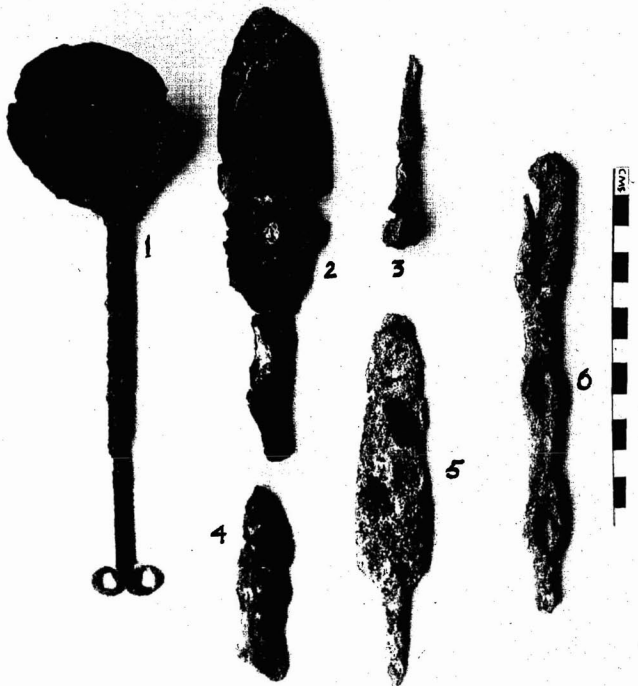


Plate VIIb

Iron objects from Timurgarha  
 (1, 2, 3, 6), Period III. and  
 from Inayatkila in Bajaur  
 (4, 5): (1) spoon; (2) dagger;  
 (3) nail; (4, 5) daggers;  
 (6) horse bit.

*Category C*

Category C includes vessels of fine-levigated clay, extremely thin in section, and almost all the forms are new.

1. The most important is the *surahi*-shaped tall-necked water vessel (Plate Vb, 2). Some of them have cordons on the body. One such vessel is like the modern *badna*-type (Plate Vb, 3), with a spout and a handle. The last-mentioned *badna* and two *surahis* have their necks and shoulders painted dark black.
2. The second common type is the extremely narrow-waisted tumbler almost like an hourglass (Plate IVa, 2 and 4).

*Terracotta figurine.* It is in this period that we have found a terracotta human figurine made in hand, rather flat, almost similar in technique to the so-called baroque ladies of Charsada (Wheeler 1962:104-108). Here the back of the head is pressed inside with the thumb. The figurine has cross-bands shown by incision (Plate VIb).

*Bronze objects.* Here we find all the varieties of bronze hairpins as of Period II. Besides, there are finger rings, ear pendants, and a wire wristlet (Plate VIIa). The most important discovery is a bronze cup.

*Beads.* Besides the terracotta biconical beads, we have one stone example of a flat-bottomed conical bead, disc and barrel-shaped beads of carnelian, and banded agate and paste.

*Iron.* The iron objects are very significant. They include conical-headed nails, a handled spoon, a dagger, and the most remarkable find is the horse-bit. From Inayatkila in Bajaur, we recovered one short dagger with a mid-rib (Plate VIIb).

## CONCLUSION

Before I draw any conclusion from the materials recovered from the graves, let it be recorded that a settlement site of these people has been discovered both at Timurgarha and in Swat State near Mingora. A preliminary probing has yielded two periods of construction, but it is too early to comment on the problem of the settlement. Hopefully, this year's excavation will throw some light on it.

It is also necessary to make a comment on C. S. Antonini's "Preliminary Notes on the Excavation of the Necropolises Found in Western Pakistan" (Antonini 1963). These notes were published on the basis of the Italian excavations in Swat. All the three types of burials that I have mentioned were noted by the author in the Swat excavations, but no attempt has been made to seek any stratigraphic or chronological distinction, though the excavator noted (page 15) the evidence of cremation lying on the tops of some tombs. Antonini then draws a chronological conclusion and says: "... the relationship to Buddhist remains found near the cemetery has offered the first secure data for dating the finds: the necropolis is earlier than the diffusion of the creed, and therefore earlier than the Buddhist works in this zone" (page 16).

But what is the date of the Buddhist works in Swat? At the earliest, the finds are of the post-Asokan period (mid-third century B.C.), and perhaps even later. It is not clear from the report whether there was a break in the occupation of the site by the "grave people" and the later Buddhists. All the pottery types, except the urn, illustrated with this report (Plate IIIb) belong to what I have designated Period III. The Swat urn is the same as the Timurgarha urn illustrated in Plate IIIb, except that there are three holes at the mouth. The author's remark: "The outer surface of the vases is (or at least was) glazed and often polished" (page

19) is very misleading. We have not found any glazed pottery at Timurgarha, nor have we seen any from Swat. By "polishing" the author probably means burnishing. The author has compared (page 23) a terracotta figurine found in Tomb 16 with the one in Peshawar Museum. But the Peshawar Museum specimen does not come from Baluchistan, as Antonini says. Its place of discovery is unknown. Antonini's description is important: "It is very flat, with the central part of the face and the nose very prominent; the shoulders, quite large, give the idea of arms, the legs are marked off only by a simple line." I made a personal examination of the figurine in Swat and found the parallels in *Taxila*, 1 and 2, Plate 132 (Marshall 1951). As I have said before, these terracottas from the graves have a direct relationship with the so-called baroque ladies from Charsada. At the end of her notes, Antonini finds similarities with the ceramic tradition of Tepe Hissar II B.

Commenting on Antonini's report, Professor Giuseppe Tucci, the director of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan, says: "It seems to me that it can hardly be doubted that they should be attributed to the Assakenoi of Alexander's historians" (1963:27). I feel that such attribution is premature. There seems to be a great disparity between the date of Assakenoi referred to by Alexander's historians and that of Tepe Hissar II B, with which a cultural link has been sought by Antonini. At this stage, it is necessary to classify the excavated materials and find the different cultural groups that fall in a sequence.

To begin, the material from the graves clearly falls into one of two distinct categories: either from graves that have yielded only bronze or metallic objects or from graves that have produced both bronze and iron. Evidently, we have here the remains of a people or peoples who were passing from the Bronze Age into the Iron Age. On the basis of pottery types and other considerations, I have subdivided the Bronze Age into two subperiods—graves that show only complete burials with a particular group of pottery forms and graves that show an additional ritual practice of cremation or urn burial together with advanced pottery forms. Following the above classification, we have three distinct groups and, from our analysis, the groups belong to three distinct periods, one following the other without any break.

Period I Represented by the complete burial: bronze hairpins, two varieties and distinctive pottery types—carinated, narrow-waisted, tall drinking vases (Plate II*a*) and offering stands with straight-sided bowls (Plate II*b*).

Period II Represented by the complete burial plus cremation and urn burials. Bronze, silver, and gold are found. Two more varieties of bronze hairpins are known. Pottery forms show remarkable evolution. The most important forms are the urns of different sizes, cooking vessels on stands, and narrow-necked, bottle-shaped vases.

Period III Represented by the complete burial, cremation and urn burials, plus fractional burials after exposure. The important new finds are iron tools and weapons. Among other discoveries, beads of precious stones and terracotta figurines are important innovations.

In the Swat excavation, two of the figurine types are similar to Charsada figurines (Wheeler 1962: Plate xxiii, items 12 and 13) though Wheeler's examples from Charsada show more ornaments. The Timurgarha figurine (Plate VI*b*) has greater affinity with the Charsada figurine shown in Wheeler, Plate xxvi, item 4, which has its legs apart. The Timurgarha example is a male figure with a thumb impression on the back of the head, probably made for a ritualistic purpose. On the question of dating, Wheeler writes: ". . . they came in sometime during the third century B.C. and lasted until the latter part of the second century B.C."

(1962:206). The excavation conducted by the University of Peshawar at Shaikhan Dheri site in Charsada has now revealed that this type of figurine continues to the very end of the Kushan period. As typological relationships have now been established between these figurines from Charsada and those of the graves, perhaps a chronological link can be established between the two.

It is from the study of pottery forms that we get a better idea of cultural evolution in Gandhara. For the Gandhara region, the best published material is the report of Wheeler on his excavation of the Bala Hisar mound in Charsada: typical forms of pottery fall in different periods. Some of the forms that Wheeler attributes to sixth-fourth century B.C. are most instructive, as they have a great bearing on the pottery forms of the last period of the grave material. In text, I have illustrated (Figs. 1, 2, 3) the types from Charsada, as given by Wheeler and their parallels found in Timurgarha and Thana excavations.

The commonest pottery type in the graves found in all three periods is shown in Fig. 1*g*. This type compares very well with the "rippled rim forms" of Charsada (Wheeler 1962: 37-39), as shown in Fig. 1*a, b, c*. The condition of the pieces from both sites is similar. Wheeler did not find a complete example. The only difference is that some of the rims at Charsada have ripples on them. Pedestalled cups (Fig. 1*e, f*) are common in the graves, but they were only from Period III. There is a close parallel between the Sari Dheri example (Wheeler 1962: 48) shown in Fig. 1*d* and the Timurgarha cup, Fig. 1*f*.

Another close parallel is found in pottery from Thana and Timurgarha and in what Wheeler calls soapy-redware from Charsada (1962: 39). Two forms in this ware (Fig. 2*a* and *b-c*) have close similarity to the grave pottery (Fig. 2*d, e, f*) of Period II and Period III. In the graves, this type pottery generally is found in gray, but examples in soapy-redware are also found. In the graves, we have several other varieties in this form (see above).

Lastly, we come to middle-sized drinking goblets (Fig. 3*d, e, f*) which compare well with what Wheeler (1962:46) describes as a cordoned bowl from Charsada (Fig. 3*a, b, c*) Wheeler did not get a complete specimen. His examples are in soapy-redware but the cordoned pottery we found in the graves is both in soapy-redware and in gray, but the latter is more common.

The parallels mentioned above do not prove the contemporaneity of the graves with the sixth-fourth century B.C. materials from Charsada. The pottery forms, terracotta figurines, and other materials from Charsada are a definite improvement on those of the last period of the grave goods. On the other hand, the distinctive pottery types of Period III (extremely fine pot forms) are absent from Charsada. I am therefore persuaded to place the Period III as determined from the graves to a period anterior to sixth century B.C., i.e., in the pre-Achaemenid period. The last period settlement at Timurgarha, the large number of graves, along with the increased grave goods suggest at least two centuries for their duration, if not more. Hence, Period III falls in eighth-seventh centuries B.C. This dating, by the way, moves the known introduction of iron back into Gandhara by at least two centuries. (See Wheeler's remark on this question (1962: 33-36)). We would assign a similar duration to Period II, i.e., tenth to ninth centuries B.C. Period I should be dated sometime in the second half of the second millennium B.C.

The present classification and tentative dating (to be confirmed later by radiocarbon dating) presents for the first time from a sequence study in this region, a connected series of cultures in Gandhara, beginning at the middle of the second millennium B.C. and continuing into the Historic period. It is about this time that we learn from literature about the



historic play of the enigmatic people in this region well known as Aryans. If this research of the grave complex has not led us to the tracks of the Aryans, we are nevertheless close upon their heels.

I believe the 1966 excavation is sure to give definitive answers to this problem.

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## \*ADDENDUM

The whole report on the grave material is now published under the title "Timurgarha and Gandhara Grave Culture" by A. H. Dani in *Ancient Pakistan* III, 1967.