

Archaeological Explorations in the Gomal Valley: The Third Phase 2004 - District Tank

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District Tank is the extreme northwestern part of the Gomal Valley in the North-West Frontier Province (hereafter NWFP), which is presently a barren land without any perennial source of water, occasionally flooded by a number of hill torrents in the rainy seasons of February, March and July, and August. The Gomal River (locally called *Luni*), Takwara and Rud Suheli *Nallahs* are the main sources of water apart from Tank and Gomal Zams. However, the water from these sources is insufficient for agricultural purposes. Similarly, the underground saline and sour water is a further obstacle in the development of agriculture. Mountains on the north and west sides and the plain from the south and east geographically border the district. The Bhattani hills on the north separate the district from Bannu region whereas it is bordered on the west by the Waziristan hills. The Bain Darrah in the Bhattani hills provides access to the Banuchi area (Tochi Valley). To the south and east, it is open to the plain area of Dera Ismail Khan (hereafter DI Khan) District. The important feature of the region is a series of passes (*District Gazetteer 1883-84*: 3), which are connecting the region to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Caravans packed with trading goods, pilgrims and trespassers from Central Asia have been using these passes since long ago.

History

District Tank has been a place of attraction for different people and rulers from various regions at different times in the past. It has witnessed intrusions of the Baloch, Jat, Lodhis and Pawindahs immigrants. The former two groups came from the south, whereas the latter two migrated from the northwest (*District Gazetteer 1883-84*: 25). Presently different clans and tribes like Katti Khel, Tators, Kundis, Ghorazais, Mianis, Bhattanis, Wazirs, Mahsuds and Marwats occupy the region.

The Ghaznavid rulers who first entered this part of the NWFP conquered the area. A successive chain of Muslim invaders like the Ghorids, Khiljis, Tughlaqs and Lodhis followed them at different times. Archaeologically speaking, the region also produced Tughlaq period (or probably earlier) Muslim tombs at Lal Mahra Sharif, DI Khan (Ali 1988). Moreover, Zaheer-ud-Din Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty, invaded the region in 1505 CE via Pezu Pass. After crossing the Gomal River, he proceeded victoriously towards modern Dera Ghazi Khan. After the great Mughal rulers, the Indian Empire was weakened and the Durrani started annexing this area. Nadir Shah defeated the Tator rulers of the Gomal Valley in 1738 – 1739 CE. Ahmad Shah Abdali who annexed the area west of the Indus in the Durrani Kingdom of Afghanistan in 1756 CE, followed him. After the Durrani rulers became weak, the local rulers took advantage and started dividing the region into small independent states, and they ruled it independently from time to time. After having established themselves in the Punjab, the Sikhs started to extend their sway over the Gomal Valley. Nau Nihal Singh, a Sikh prince, in 1836 CE occupied the Gomal Valley. The Sikh rule was for a short while and ended at the hands of the British rulers in 1847 CE who ruled the region until the partition of India.

Archaeological Work and Prospects

Archaeologically, the region is very rich and promising. Due to its unique geographical set up, it remained popular throughout for connecting Pakistan and India with Afghanistan and Central Asia. Sir

Aural Stein (1929) was the first to start archaeological exploration along the foothills and discovered a number of historic period settlements. Thomas Diven Morris, in 1938, studied the Bain Boulder Beds, which, he thought, to have been formed due to *lahar*. Moreover, he also collected three Achulean hand axes of the 'lower Palaeolithic' age (Morris 1938; Salim 1997). After a gap of over thirty years, the region was visited by Professor A. H. Dani in 1970-71 who added some more sites of the same period to the list (Dani 1970-71). In 1997, Abdur Rahman conducted a survey of the district for the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums (Government of the NWFP) and discovered a few more sites (Rahman 1997). However, the present authors on behalf of the same Directorate did the main work in 2003 and 2004. Archaeological investigation in 2003 has pushed the history of the region back to the Neolithic age, when the site of Gulgai Kot I was discovered (Jan 2002; Ali and Jan 2005). The importance of the area is, however, lying in the historic and Islamic period sites, which are found in sufficient number. These archaeological time capsules are very large and some mounds like Shad Garah, Garah Hayat, Nasran Dheri III, Kot Kat, Budd Dheri I, are as large and big as the Bala Hisar in Charsadda and Akra in Bannu. The large number of big sites on the border areas of the mediaeval empires (Islamic period) further signifies the region. Some of them were military posts to control and protect the frontiers from the western invaders. Tank District, in this regard, is unique throughout the province.

Explorations

Archaeological reconnaissance in the Gomal valley commenced in March 2003 by the authors on behalf of the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, which were mainly confined to Dera Ismail Khan District. In May 2003, again some work was conducted in the remaining part of the district and the whole of Lakki Marwat District. Finally, the Directorate, under Professor Ihsan Ali, decided to complete the survey of the Gomal Valley in November 2004. Archaeological explorations in District Tank were started in November 2004 and, apart from recording the earlier explored sites, some new sites were added to the list (see Map). The worth-mentioning new sites include Nasran Dheri I, II and III; Budd Dheri I and II, Kot Allah Dad II and III etc. All of them belong to the Islamic period.

Aims and Objectives

The main aims and objectives of the current investigation were:

1. To record all the archaeological sites of different nature and periods in the Gomal Valley in general and District Tank in particular
2. To establish a proper cultural profile of the region
3. To investigate the origin and development of past cultures in the area
4. To establish the trade routes in the Gomal plain that served to link this region with other regions
5. To preserve the rich cultural heritage of the Gomal valley
6. To provide a clear line of research to the students and scholars of South Asian Archaeology
7. To fill existing lacunae within the known history of Pakistan
8. To suggest proper conservation and preservation measures for sites and monuments
9. To select the most important and endangered sites for excavation
10. To create awareness among the people to preserve these cultural treasures.

Table showing site names, codes, periods and dates of discovery

The following sites of District Tank have already been discussed in detail elsewhere (Ali and Jan 2005) and therefore need no elaboration here:

Sr #	Site Name	Code	Period	Discovery
1.	Aba Khel	ABL	Historic/Islamic	1927
2.	Bain Boulder Beds	BBB	Palaeolithic	1938
3.	Garah Hayat	GHT	Historic/Islamic	1927
4.	Gulgai Kot I	GGK I	Neolithic	2003
5.	Gulgai Kot II	GGK II	Historic/Islamic	1927
6.	Kot Allah Dad I	KLD I	Historic/Islamic	1970 – 71
7.	Kot Azam I	KTA I	Historic/Islamic	1927
8.	Muharram Sultan	MHS	Islamic	2003
9.	Pathan Kot	PTK	Historic/Islamic	1927
10.	Shad Garah	SHD	Historic/Islamic	1997

In the current survey, the following sites were visited and recorded.

Sr #	Site Name	Code	Period	Discovery
1.	Budd Dheri I	BD I	Historic/Islamic	2004
2.	Budd Dheri II	BD II	Historic/Islamic	2004
3.	Fort of the Nawab of Tank	FT	British	2004
4.	Gomal Bazaar	GB	Historic/Islamic	1997
5.	Gomal Dheri	GD	Historic/Islamic	2004
6.	Gotkai Dheri	GTK	Historic/Islamic	2004
7.	Gul Imam Railway Station	GRS	British	2004
8.	Kauderi Dheri	KD	Historic/Islamic	2004
9.	Kaur Police Station	KPS	British	2004
10.	Kot Allah Dad II	KLD II	Historic/Islamic	2004
11.	Kot Allah Dad III	KLD III	Historic/Islamic	2004
12.	Kot Azam II	KTA II	Historic/Islamic	1927
13.	Kot Azam III	KTA III	Historic/Islamic	1997
14.	Kot Kat Dheri	KK	Historic/Islamic	1970 – 71
15.	Nasran Dheri I	NSD I	Historic/Islamic	2004
16.	Nasran Dheri II	NSD II	Historic/Islamic	2004
17.	Nasran Dheri III	NSD III	Historic/Islamic	2004
18.	Pir Sabir Shah Tomb	PSS	Islamic	2004
19.	Syed Shaheed Dheri	SSD	Historic/Islamic	2004
20.	Tank City	TNK	British	2004

Description of the sites

The sites are described in the following order: site name, location, access, size, description, surface collection, period and previous reference if any.

1. **Budd Dheri I:** Budd village, near Umar Adda; Umar Adda and Lati road; 170 x 150 x 7 m; a large site, intact and feasible for excavation, a gully divides it into two parts, partly affected by salinity; pottery, plain and painted, broken burnt bricks of small size; Islamic.
2. **Budd Dheri II:** 500 m south of Budd Dheri I; Umar Adda and Lati road; 175 x 80 x 4 m; partly disturbed by the encroachment of fields for cultivation from northern, southern and western sides, whereas on the eastern a modern house is constructed. Salinity as usual has disturbed the surface. However, it is good for archaeological probing. Sporadic robbers' trenches are also visible. The owner of the land is said to have taken two metal camel figurines, from those robber trenches, which he has lost now; pottery; Islamic.
3. **Fort of Nawab of Tank:** Mohallah Maidan, Tank City; Umar Adda road; 80 x 60 m; with the exception of a gate way, which is preserved, the rest of the fort has been collapsed in 1980's due to flood, now in a bad state of preservation, a verandah with pillars having flat roof, inside the complex is also preserved; burnt bricks; Late Islamic / British.
4. **Gomal Bazaar:** Gomal Bazaar Village; Kot Murtaza road; 9.5 x 9.5 x 9.5 m; once a large bazaar of the British period but now renovated mainly by the local people for houses and shops. Only the chowgala (square) of the bazaar survives presently, being used by the Frontier Constabulary as a post. The building is in a bad state of preservation. It is a square building with two storeys with the lower one open on four sides and the upper one is also square but closed. The opening in the lower chamber is provided by means of true arches. The south-western corner accommodates a flight of steps leading to the upper storey, made of iron bars, fixed in wall. Both the storeys have a flat roof; burnt bricks; British.
5. **Gomal Dheri:** 5 km east of Umar Adda; Ali Khel village; 220 x 50 x 7 m; A good site with south corner occupied by field for agriculture whereas partly eroded by Sidgai hill torrent, disturbed with saline effected surface, traces of burning on the surface are also visible; pottery and burnt bricks; Islamic.
6. **Gotkai Dheri:** 1 km south of Daud Khel Village; Lakki Michun Khel road; 50 x 45 x 0.5 m; a small and flat site, the surrounding area of which has also been silted up by floodwater of the hill torrents. An unmetalled road passes through the site, which has further disturbed it; few potsherds; Islamic.
7. **Gul Imam Railway Station:** 13 km east of Tank, in Gul Imam Village; Bannu road; a small part of the British time railway station still preserved, which is made of large size burnt bricks. The railway track is now removed completely. Moreover, the village is also an old one, which is now occupied and renovated completely by the local people. One of the local men has found an axe, engraved with geometrical and floral designs, having wooden handle, and a wooden stick, which is said to have been found during digging, wrapped in animal skin; British.

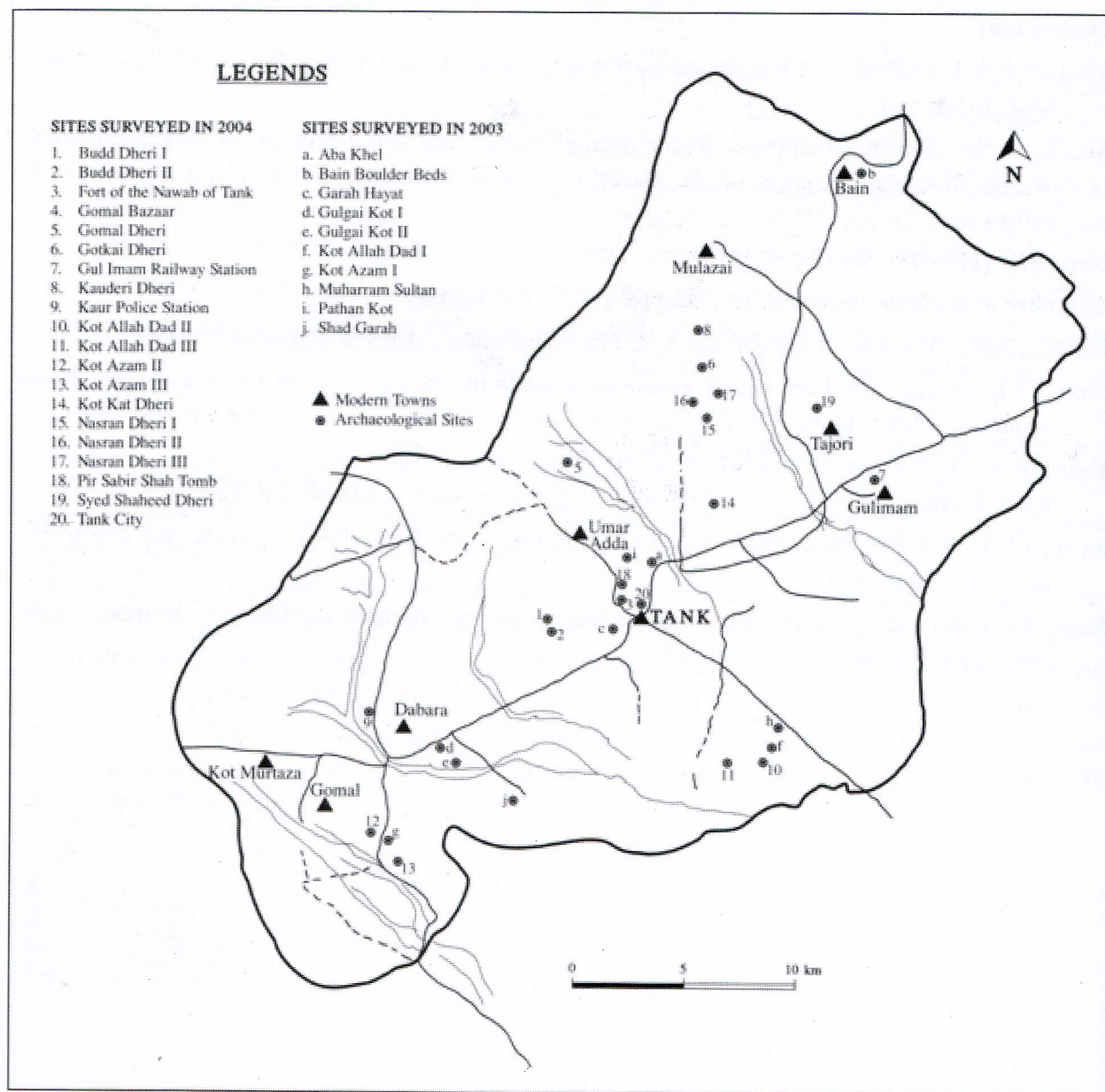
8. **Kaudari Dheri:** 7 km south of Lakki Michan Khel Village; Lakki Michun Khel road; 195 x 115 x 3 m; considerably a large site, which is in good condition and feasible for archaeological excavations. Rainwater has made gullies at certain portions of the site. Sporadic robbers' trenches are also visible. A local man is said to have taken a complete storage jar from the site while digging in search of antiquity; potsherds; Islamic.
9. **Kaur Police Station:** 10 km west of Tank; Jandola road; 100 x 100 x 9 m; It is a double storeyed building made of large size burnt bricks fixed in mud and lime mortar. The lower portion has a series of rooms, used as barracks, on all sides whereas at the centre is an open courtyard. The upper storey also has rooms in the same fashion, which is indeed an imitation of the lower portion. In front of the rooms wooden railings are constructed. Guardrooms in the form of balconies were provided at each corner of the square shape complex; British.
10. **Kot Allah Dad II:** Kot Allah Dad village; D I Khan – Tank road; 160 x 90 x 4 m; once a good site with a considerable size and height, now disturbed partly by different elements like a modern reservoir at the northern portion; a modern school at the eastern portion and cultivated field in the western part; pottery; Islamic.
11. **Kot Allah Dad III:** 1 km east of Kot Allah Dad II; D I Khan – Tank road; 185 x 150 x 2 m; a good site of considerable size, which is feasible for archaeological probing. Most of the site is intact except a certain portion in the northern side where local people have encroached on it for cultivated fields; pottery, glass fragments; Islamic.
12. **Kot Azam II:** 3 km east of Kot Azam Village; Kot Azam road; 145 x 65 x 2 m; a site of considerable size but unfortunately occupied by modern graves, which has disturbed it greatly. Due to its being used as a graveyard, the surface is full of grave stones. The northern side is also partly disturbed for cultivation purpose; pottery and burnt bricks; Islamic; Stein 1927.
13. **Kot Azam III:** 2 km west of Kot Azam Village; Kot Azam Road; 40 x 50 x 1 m; A modern house called *Mahsud Mela* now covers the mound. Nothing is seen, the owner has rather levelled the surface. According to the local people once it had a pile of sherds and was as large a mound as Kot Azam I but has been disturbed by robbers before the house was constructed, who have found terracotta bangles and complete pots; Islamic; Stein 1927.
14. **Kot Kat Dheri:** Kot Kat village; Tank – Pezu road; 350 x 330 x 11m; a huge site like Shad Garah, Surkh Dheri, Zarkani and Garah Hayat, which has potsherds scattered on the surface in large quantity. The site has been disturbed partly by a graveyard on the southeast corner. Sporadic robbers' trenches are also observed at certain parts of the site; pottery, burnt bricks in rectangular and square shapes; Islamic; Dani 1970 – 71.
15. **Nasran Dheri I:** 9 km north of Tank; Nasran village road; 175 x 125 x 1.5 m; a good site of considerable size, mainly intact and partly disturbed by a passageway to Tajori village, passing on the southern fringe of the site and partly by the sporadic robbers' trenches dug in search of antiquity; potsherds; Islamic.
16. **Nasran Dheri II:** 700 metres south of Nasran Dheri I; Nasran village; 185 x 165 x 3 m; slightly bigger and higher than Nasran Dheri I having different units due to small gullies made

by erosion, undisturbed and feasible for archaeological excavations, pottery, burnt bricks and a ring stone; Islamic.

17. **Nasran Dheri III:** 1 km east of Nasran Dheri I; Nasran village; 385 x 350 x 13 m; located on the western bank of Takwara Nallah, it is a huge site like Chaudhwan and Shad Garah mounds in Dera Ismail Khan, intact and undisturbed and is suitable for archaeological probing to know the cultural sequence of the site and the region as well. However, a robber trench at the eastern slope of the site is also visible. At one place a large number of burnt bricks were observed, which bespeak probably of a structure; pottery, bricks; Islamic.
18. **Pir Sabir Shah Tomb:** Northern part of Tank City; Umar Adda road; 50 x 40 x 3 m; The local people have demolished the original building and a new square shape chamber has now been erected on the cenotaph in 1989. Towards the west a newly constructed mosque on an old one is also replaced; burnt bricks; Islamic.
19. **Syed Shaheed Dheri:** 3 km northwest of Tajori village; Tajori/Kot Nasran road; 65 x 40 x 0.5m; a small site known as Syed Shaheed Mazar, due to the grave of this saint. The adjacent area of the site is silted up due to floods, which has diminished the height of the site, disturbed and levelled; pottery; Islamic.
20. **Tank City:** Tank city; Tank city; the city itself is an old one, which has some reminiscence of that age. Most of the buildings have been replaced by new ones, however, a few escaped from the ravages of time. One example is the main police station of Tank where an arched entrance of small waziri bricks is still visible. The Fort of Nawab of Tank and the tomb of Pir Sabir Shah are discussed above. Another is the British period post in the northern fringe of the city on Umar Adda road, which is made of large size bricks and is now in a miserable condition; British.

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Map showing distribution of archaeological sites in District Tank



Figure 1: Tank, Budd Dheri I, General view of the site

Figure 2: Tank, Budd Dheri I, the pottery

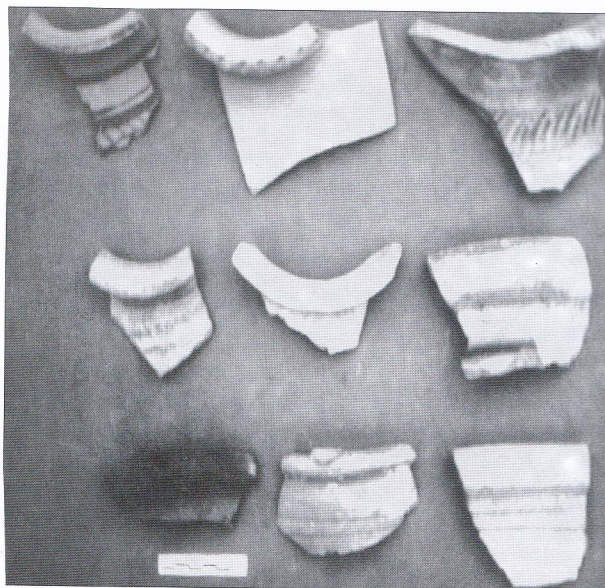


Figure 3: Tank, Fort of the Nawab, general view, inside

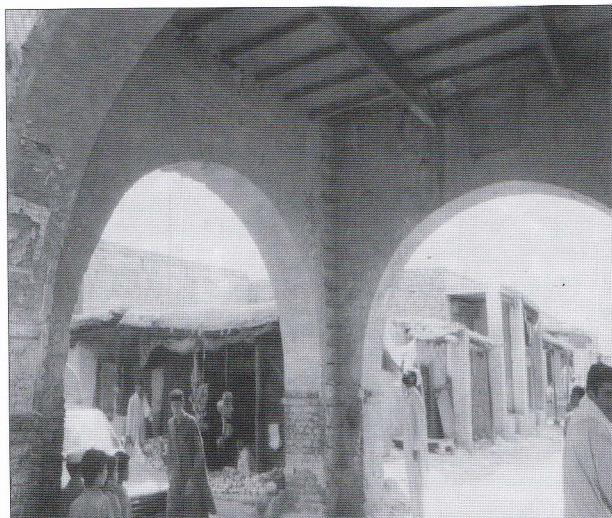


Figure 4: Tank, a chobara (square)
in Gomal Bazar

Figure 5: Tank, general view
of Gomal Bazar



Figure 6: Tank, Gomal Dheri,
general view

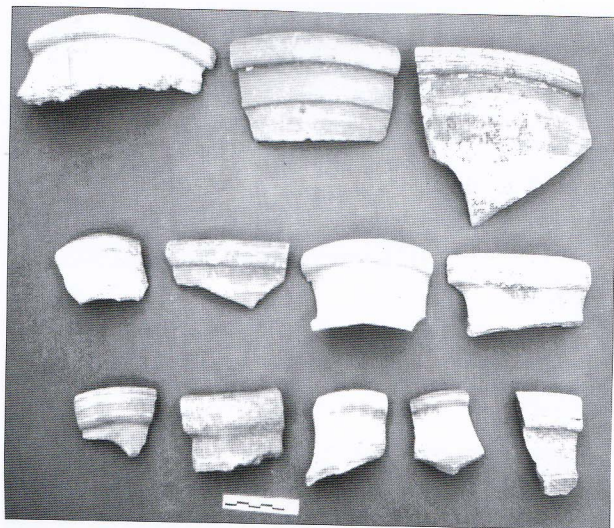


Figure 7: Tank, Gomal Dheri,
the pottery

Figure 8: Tank, Kaur Police
Station, general
view

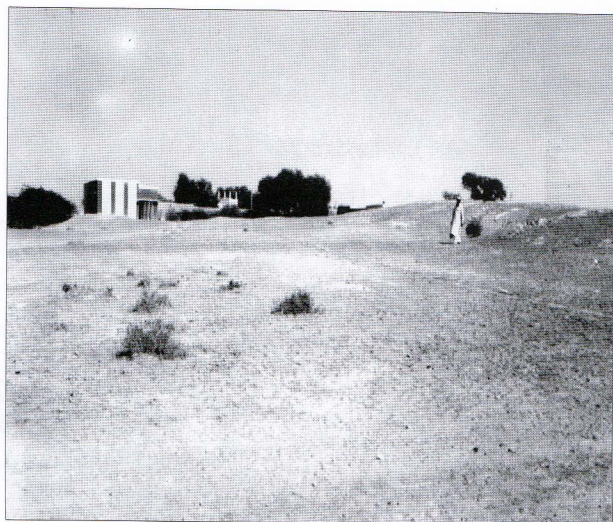
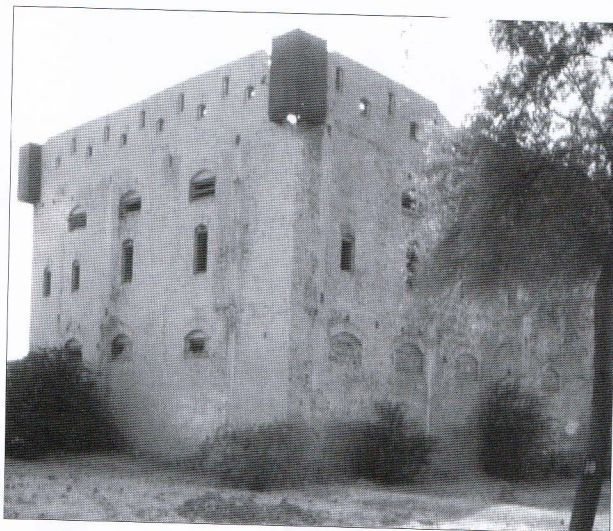


Figure 9: Tank, Kot Allah
Dad II, general
view



Figure 10: Tank, Kot Azam II, general view

Figure 11: Tank, Kot Kat Dheri, general view

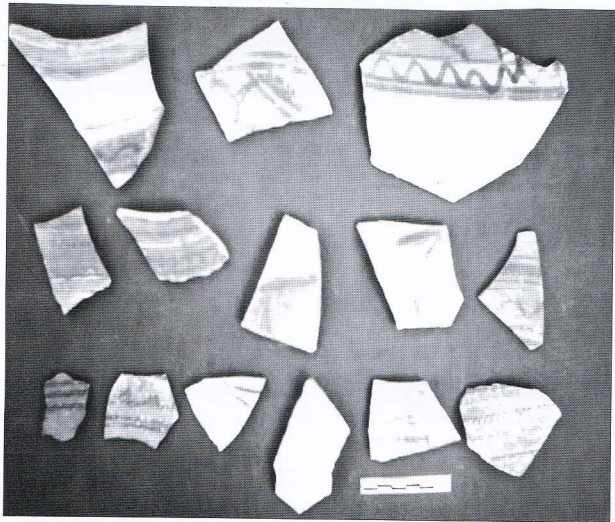


Figure 12: Tank, Kot Kat Dheri, the pottery



Figure 13: Tank, Nasran Dheri I,
general view

Figure 14: Tank, Nasran
Dheri I, the pot-
tery



Figure 15: Tank, Nasran Dheri
II, general view



Figure 16: Tank, Nasran Dheri II, grinding stone

Figure 17: Tank, Nasran Dheri III, general view

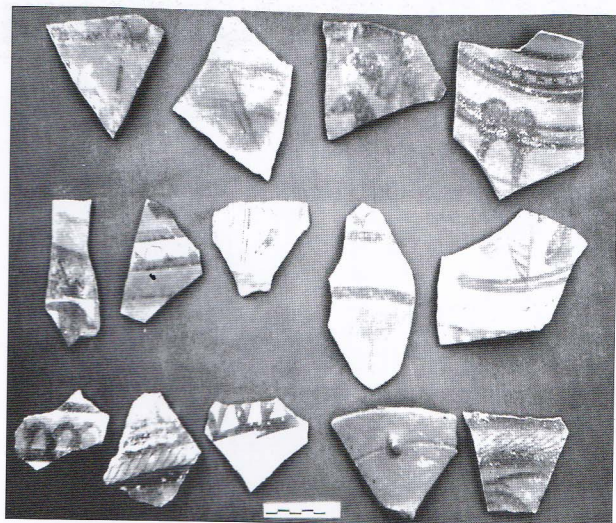


Figure 18: Tank, Nasran Dheri III, the pottery



Figure 19: Tank, Nasran Dheri III,
architectural fragment

Figure 20: Tank, Pir Sabir
Shah Tomb, gen-
eral view



Figure 21: Tank, City Police
Station, general
view