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## A-WARE POTTERY OF THE JHANDI PHASE CULTURE (NORTHWEST PAKISTAN): A TYPOLOGICAL STUDY

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### Abstract

*The Jhandi phase is a cultural manifestation associated with the later phase of Neolithic evolution in northwest Pakistan. This research investigates the A-Ware ceramics of the Jhandi Phase of the Late Neolithic period in Northwest Pakistan. The study aims to classify and analyze the A-Ware or open-mouthed vessels with distinct characteristics. Drawings from all Jhandi Phase archaeological sites have been considered. Data has been collected from already published material and newly surveyed sites. Different vessel forms are known in the collection such as hemispherical, carinated, and handled bowls. Further, sub-categories are also documented. Emphasis is placed on shapes, rims, decorations, and surface treatments. The finding contributes to understanding the evolutionary process of ceramics traditions. It offers insights into diverse types of open-mouthed vessels and their broader implications in the Jhandi Phase of Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Jhandi Phase, Neolithic, A- Ware, Ceramics, Decorations, Vessels, Typology, Rims, Bowls

### 1.1 Introduction

The Jhandi Phase is also known as the Late Neolithic culture of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and is often known as the Sheri Khan Tarakai Culture or Sheri Khan Tarakai Phase. Previously, research was limited to the districts of Dera Ismail Khan, Tank, and Bannu, but recent research has expanded the cultural boundaries to the Koh-e-Suleiman borderlands, which include the Baluchistan plateau and District Dera Ghazi Khan. This region provided a strategic environment for this early farming culture, which geographically falls between the lowlands of the River Indus and the highlands of Koh-e-Suleiman (Khan et al 2010).

The explored sites revealed quite a good quantity of ceramics which were broadly divided into A and B ware types. This study aims to develop a comprehensive typology of the A ware ceramics. This involves meticulously identifying and systematically documenting unique vessel forms,

prioritizing their distinctiveness over presumed chronological attributions. Special attention is given to body and rim forms, particularly those recurring across multiple instances, and individual forms are retained for detailed analysis.

## 1.2 Literature review

Archaeological investigations in northwest Pakistan revealed hundreds of sites belonging to different periods of the cultural history ranging from the Paleolithic up to the British Colonial times. However, the neolithic settlements were recorded and studied by Abdur Rahman (Rahman, 1997), and M. Farooq Swati (Swati and Ali, 1998). In 1998-99, Ali and Khan (2001) conducted excavations at Jhandi Babar I, but the ceramics were left unclassified.

The Bannu Archaeological Project (BAP) by Farid Khan, Robert Knox, and Kenneth Thomas focused mainly on the excavation of the Sheri Khan Tarakai site. Several other late Neolithic sites such as Girdai, Barrai Khuarra I, and Ter kala Dheri, were also probed which are referred to as the Sheri Khan Tarakai Cultural Phase (Khan *et al*, 2000). All these sites of the Late Neolithic period are parallel with Sheri Khan Tarakai. In the Sheri Khan Tarakai site, except for the basic forms, shapes, and making techniques, no evolution in the ceramics is ascertained in its four phases of occupation ascertained in the excavation. The material culture of the Sheri Khan Tarakai Cultural Phase is contemporary with the Late Neolithic culture in the adjacent Gomal Plain (Khan *et al*, 2010) where it is represented at Jhandi Babar (Ali & Khan, 2001), Gulgai Kot I (Jan, 2002). In the Bannu Basin, the Neolithic period was succeeded by a transitional period claimed at Ter Kala Dheri (Thomas *et al*, 1997: 246; Khan *et al*, 2010: 369). The fresh exploration led by the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, revealed six (06) parallel sites of the Jhandi Phase (Jan, Sehrai, Iqbal & Waliullah 2019).

The Late Neolithic Period sites and the accidental introduction of decorated ceramics give an evolutionary process of ceramics in the region. The ceramics of the Late Neolithic Period are well decorated and none of the sites in twin regions has so far ascertained plain ceramics. Our understanding in this regard is very limited. Previous studies on the Neolithic and Late Neolithic sites do not provide sufficient information to study the basic forms, shapes, and decorations of ceramics. For instance, in Sheri Khan Tarakai, the ceramics are classified into A and B wares based on distinctive forms and finishing (Khan *et al*, 2010). The repertoire of ceramics recovered from these sites is not well classified into broader groups. Furthermore, the inclusion of ceramics in the previous collection will help in establishing a reliable typology. The ceramics are broadly classified as follows.

### **1.3 Typology**

To facilitate a thorough examination, identified vessel forms are organized into fundamental types using a classification system inspired by established archaeological typologies but adapted as necessary. This typology methodology is specifically tailored to suit the distinctive archaeological context of the study region, enabling a systematic analysis of the ceramic assemblage. The overarching goal is to develop a well-dated typology that enhances understanding of the site's cultural and temporal dimensions.

Future research efforts at similar sites within the region, supported by datable artifacts and associated metalwork, are expected to refine and expand this typology further, contributing to a more comprehensive comprehension of ancient ceramic traditions in the region.

The representative collection encompasses basic ware types and small vessels, including both open and closed varieties, distinguished by their robust craftsmanship. This typology emphasizes vessel forms, with each shard exhibiting unique ornamentation, thereby obviating the need for additional subgrouping based on decorations.

#### ***1.3.1 A-Ware***

A-Ware consists predominantly of open-mouthed vessels, which dominate the ceramics assemblage of the Jhandi Phase. These locally crafted containers are renowned for their durability and substantial thickness. The interior of A-Ware vessels varies widely in shape and diameter, featuring a range of flat and open-mouthed bowls. Bowls with open mouths and flat contagious bases often display coarse and gritty materials, with firing processes ranging from fully fired red to oxidized grey or black cores. The main types are discussed as follows.

##### ***1.3.1.1 Hemispherical Bowls***

###### ***1.3.1.1.1 Simple***

This category encompasses a variety of open hemispherical bowls with simple, concave, or convex walls. These bowls come in shallow and deep forms, often adorned with bichrome designs. They are further classified based on their rim types:

###### ***1.3.1.1.2 Inverted rim***

Bowls in these slipped or burnished exteriors and inverted or projecting rims. Some also include pinched rims. Subtypes under this category include:

#### ***1.3.1.1.1 Slipped and Decorated***

These bowls are slipped on their exteriors, interiors, or both, sometimes painted with decorations or left plain. Rims may be thinned using pinching techniques or left sharp. Bowls vary in size from small to medium, with convex walls that can be thin or thick see Fig. 1.

##### ***1.3.1.1.1.1 Black burnished***

Bowls in this subtype are black burnished on the exterior, slipped, and painted with designs on the interior. Rims may vary in thickness, occasionally pinched outwards. The wall profile is typically convex, see Fig. 2

##### ***1.3.1.1.1.2 Everted***

This subtype includes coarse fabric bowls with everted rims, often pinched into angular shapes. Variants in this category are further classified as:

##### ***1.3.1.1.1.1 Slipped***

These bowls are slipped on their exteriors, interiors, or both, sometimes adorned with complex painted decorations on the exterior. Wall profiles vary from thin to thick, encompassing shallow and wide form Fig. 3.

##### ***1.3.1.1.1.1 Black Burnished***

Bowls in this category feature black burnishing on the exterior, slipped interiors, and various painted decorations. The wall profile typically transitions from concave near the rim to convex at the base Fig. 4.

##### ***1.3.1.1.2 External projecting***

This type is characterized by bowls with everted rims. It is further divided into two types, discussed as follows.

##### ***1.3.1.1.1 Slipped***

These bowls are slipped on their exteriors, interiors, or both, often intricately painted on the exterior. Rims are typically pinched outward, with wall profiles ranging from thin to thick and including shallow and wide bowls Fig. 5.

#### ***1.3.1.1.1.1 Black Burnished***

Bowls in this subtype feature slipped and decorated interiors with black burnishing on the exterior. The wall profile typically exhibits a concave near the rim and a convex near the base Fig. 5.

#### ***1.3.1.1.1 Flaring Rim***

Bowls in this subtype are characterized by coarse fabric and various pinched rims, often leaving a concave profile. Other variants include:

#### ***1.3.1.1.1 Decorated***

These bowls are slipped on their exteriors, interiors, or both, occasionally decorated with painted motifs on the exterior. Rims may be thinned or left thick, and bowls vary in size from small to medium Fig. 6.

#### ***1.3.1.1.2 Black Burnished***

Bowls in this category are treated with black burnishing on the exterior, sometimes slipped and painted on the interior, featuring shallow and deep forms Fig. 7.

#### ***1.3.1.1.3 Parallel lip rims***

This category includes bowls with parallel walls and lip projections, where rims may be pinched, cut straight, or occasionally thickened. Subtypes under this category are:

#### ***1.3.1.1.4 Slipped***

These bowls are slipped on their exteriors and interiors, often painted on the exterior. The wall profile typically exhibits a concave section below the rim with varying thickness Fig. 8.

#### ***1.3.1.1.4.1 Black Burnished***

Bowls in this subtype are treated with black burnishing on the exterior, sometimes adorned with painted motifs on the interior, featuring concave wall profiles with varying thickness Fig. 9.

#### ***1.3.1.1.5 Handled***

The Jhandi Phase assemblage includes bowls with upright handles attached to the rim. These handles are typically flat and crafted from coarse materials, providing a secure grip. Handles vary in shape, including curved, flat, or pointed ends. Bowls range from small to medium sizes and feature various handle types, some of which are slipped, decorated, or left plain. Decorated handles often showcase intricate motifs, including dots or human figures, offering insights into artistic expressions. Some handles remain attached vertically to bowls, highlighting the craftsmanship involved.

#### ***1.3.1.1.6 Carinated Bowls***

This category includes carinated bowls with different rim forms, featuring sharp or curved carination near the base. Carinated bowls often have intricate decorations and are classified further based on their rims and surface treatments Fig. 10.

#### ***1.3.1.1.7 Flaring Rim***

Bowls in this subtype lack a flaring rim and instead have outward-turning rims with sharp angles or cursive necks, creating an irregular thick profile. Sizes range from medium to large, decorated on the exterior and occasionally on the interior.

##### ***1.3.1.1.7.1.1 Decorated and Applied Slurry***

These bowls are slipped with painted decorations on the exterior and interior, including various black designs on the exterior. Sizes range from small to large, with shallow, wide, and deep forms, featuring concave wall profiles and pinched rims Fig 11.

##### ***1.3.1.1.7.1.2 Black burnished***

Bowls in this subtype feature everted rims with black burnishing applied to the exterior and decorated interiors. Sometimes, the black burnishing extends from the rim to the carination point Fig 12.

#### ***1.3.1.1.8 Parallel lip***

This subtype includes everted bowls with less decorative motifs on the exterior and interior Fig. 13.

#### ***1.3.1.1.9 External Projecting***

This category features bowls with external projecting rims, including small, large, and deep carinated bowls. Rims are typically pinched thin, and based on surface treatments, bowls are classified as:

##### ***1.3.1.1.9.1.1 Slipped and Decorated***

These bowls feature angled and cursive wall profiles, occasionally decorated on the interior and heavily embellished on the exterior Fig. 14.

#### ***1.3.1.1.9.1.2 Black burnished***

Bowls in this subtype are less decorated on the interior and feature black burnishing on the exterior Fig. 15.

#### ***1.3.1.1.9.1.3 Decorated and Grit Grog Tempered***

This category includes bowls with grit grog temper, classified into two subtypes.

##### ***1.3.1.1.1 Type I***

Carinated bowls with external projecting rims and applied grit grog at the carination point. The wall profile is concave above the carination and convex below it Fig. 16.

##### ***1.3.1.1.2 Type II***

Low, shallow bowls with simple everted rims and applied grit grog above the carination. Examples include bowls with simple flat bases and concave wall profiles above the carination point Fig. 17.

### **Conclusion**

The Jhandi phase ceramics are classified into two wares. A-ware includes bowls while B-ware consists of jars, The A-ware vessels are characterized by a variety of open-mouthed bowls. These bowls represent a range of shapes including hemispherical forms, carinated and handled bowls, The sizes of bowls range from shallow to deep. Most of the bowls were either slipped or painted on interior or exterior. Some bowls represent black burnishing on the exterior. The designs vary from vessel to vessel but the basic design such as lines, bands, and geometric motifs occurs on the interior and exterior. Grit grog inclusions are present near the carination of carinated bowls, while in jars, these inclusions occur on the lower body. The ceramics with upright handles and flat bases resemble open bowls in both morphology and decoration, with grog temper on the vessels measuring approximately 5 mm or less.

The A-ware is treated with black, black-chocolate to chocolate slip and black burnish on the exterior while orange-reddish, pinkish buff to cream color slip on the interior. The slip is subject to the interior and exterior of vessels extending to the lip of rims thus giving a glossy effect. Burnishing requires a specialized tool, while the slurry might be prepared in soaking pits or through sewing. Pigments were made in advance during the drying process of the vessels, and reusable brushes were likely used for decoration. A consistent range of shapes, forms, motifs, slips, and colors is evident. The parallels of the Jhandi Phase ceramics are known from Jhandi Babar I, Gulgai Kot I, and the recently surveyed six (6) sites by the University of Peshawar in District Dera Ghazi Khan and Sheri Khan Tarakai, Barrai Khuarra I, Girdai and Ter Kala Dheri in the Bannu Basin. These have strong similarities except for regional variations.

Overall, the ceramic types show continuity and uniformity. In the earlier villages like Mehrgarh, there is an evolution and adoption of newer ceramic technologies through the consecutive periods (Vandiver 1995: 648-661) but on a limited scale and periods. The fabrics, forms, and decorative and surface treatment styles attested in Jhandi Phase are mostly akin to the second developmental stage of ceramic repertoire from northern Baluchistan, often referred to as the Togau Phase found at Mehrgarh period III and Kili Gul Mohammed period III (Jarrige et al 1995, 2005, Jarrige and Jarrige 2006), but in Jhandi Phase only a few stances ascertained so that it can be reconstructed that how the early forms and styles became practically emic.

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### 1.5 List of figures

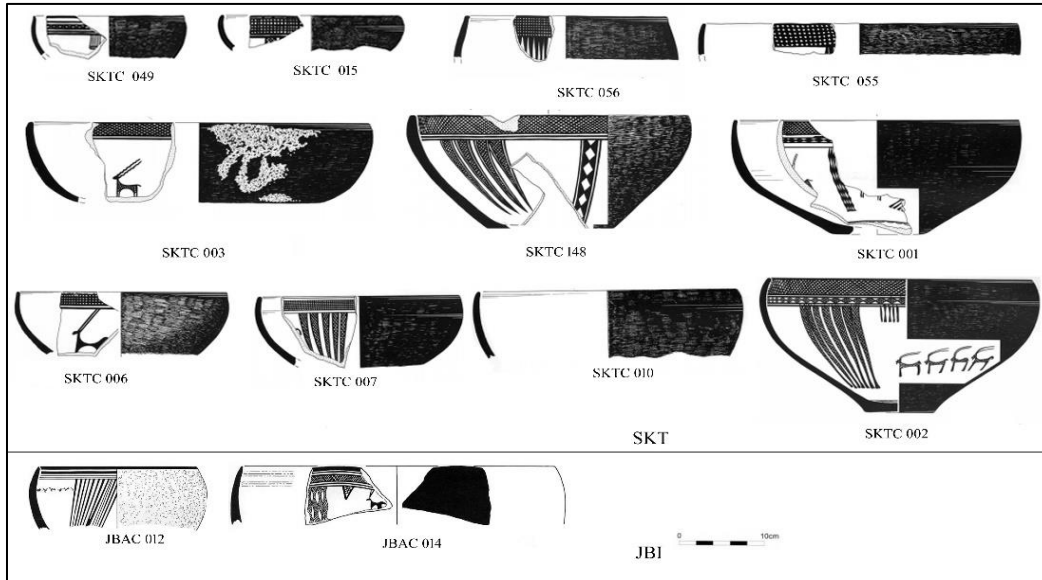


Fig. 1: Bowls with incurved rims (burnished)

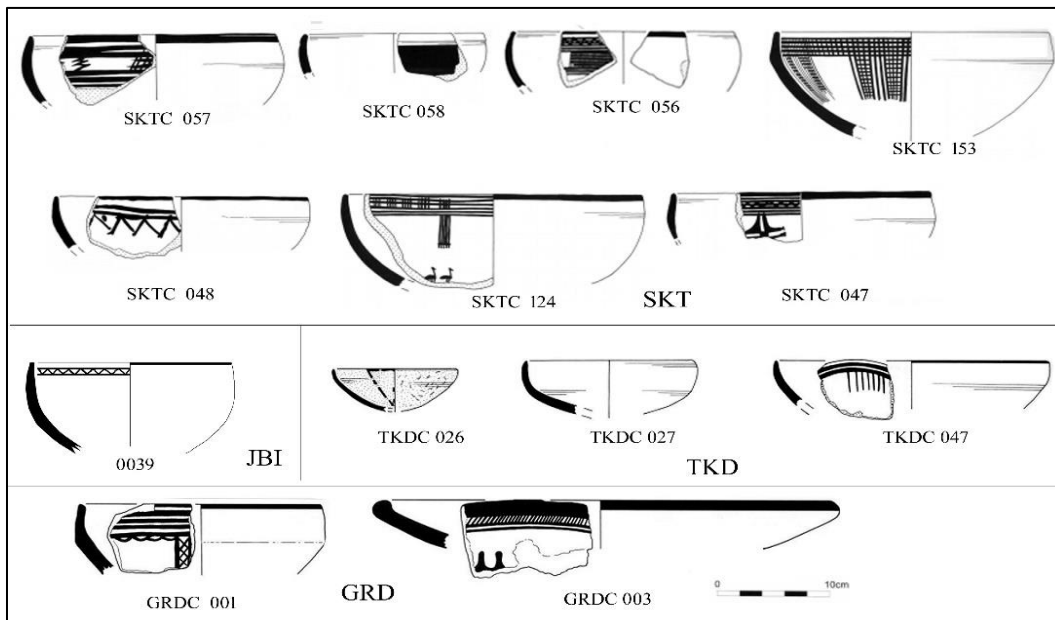


Fig. 2: Decorated bowls with incurved rims



Fig. 3: Decorated bowls with everted rims

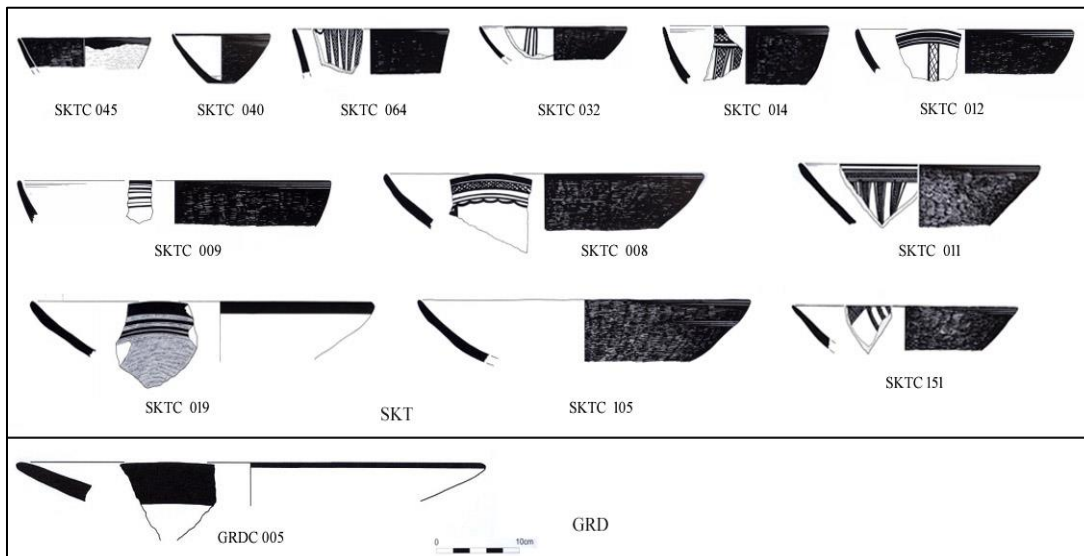


Fig. 4: Black burnished bowls with everted rims

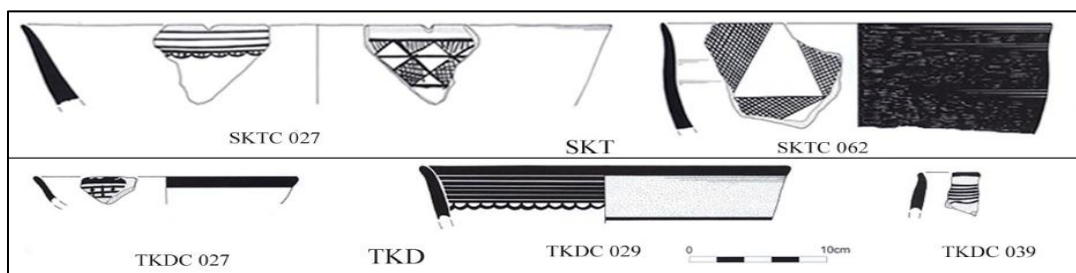


Fig. 5: Decorated and burnished bowls with external projecting rims

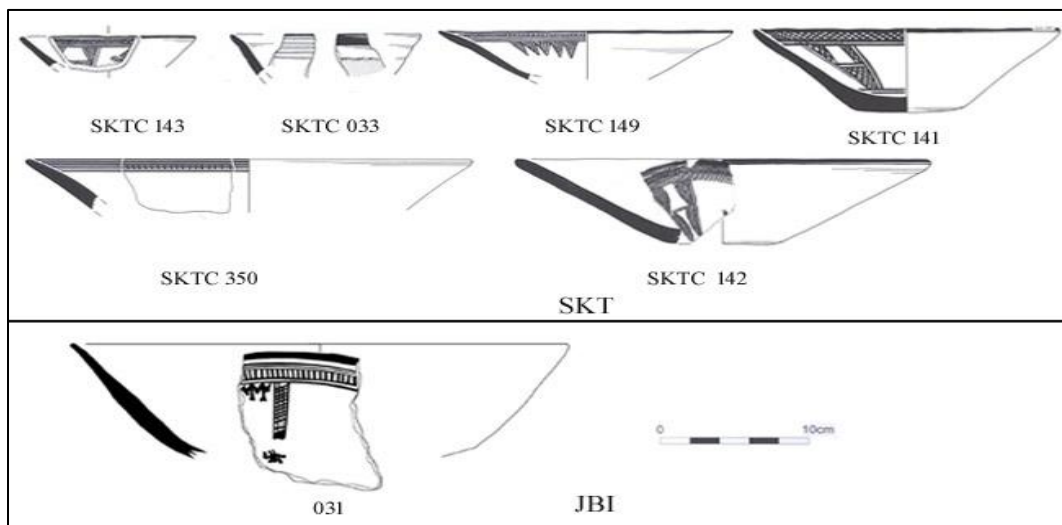


Fig. 6: Decorated bowls with flaring rim

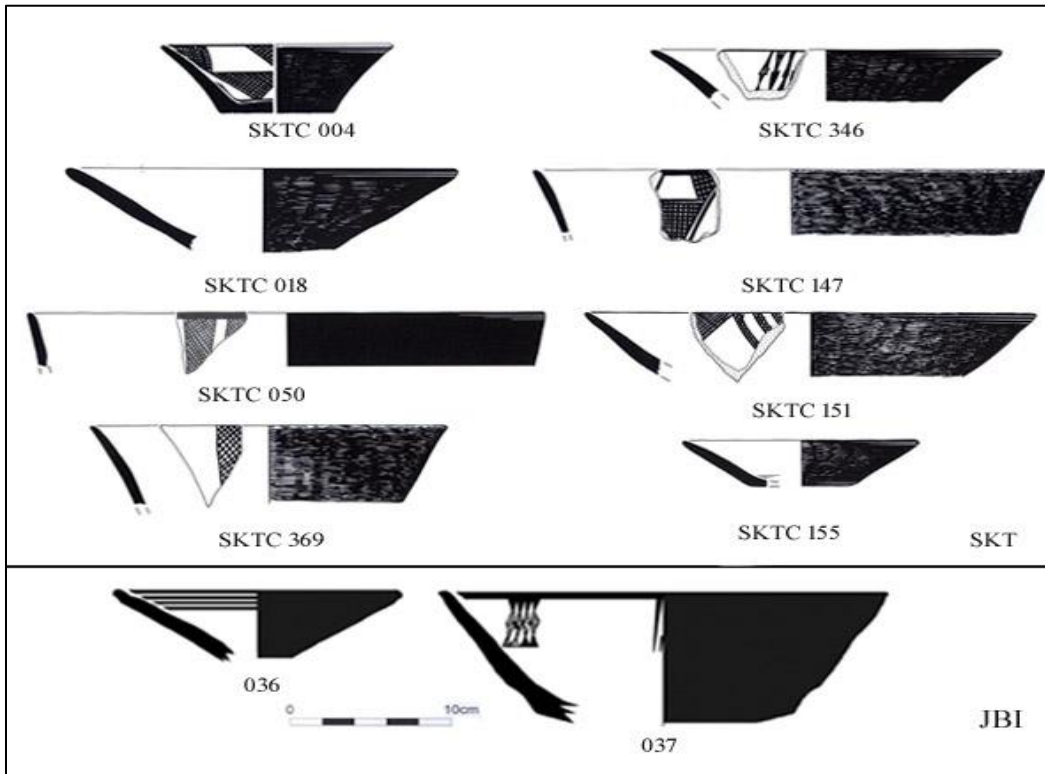


Fig. 7: Decorated bowls with flaring rim

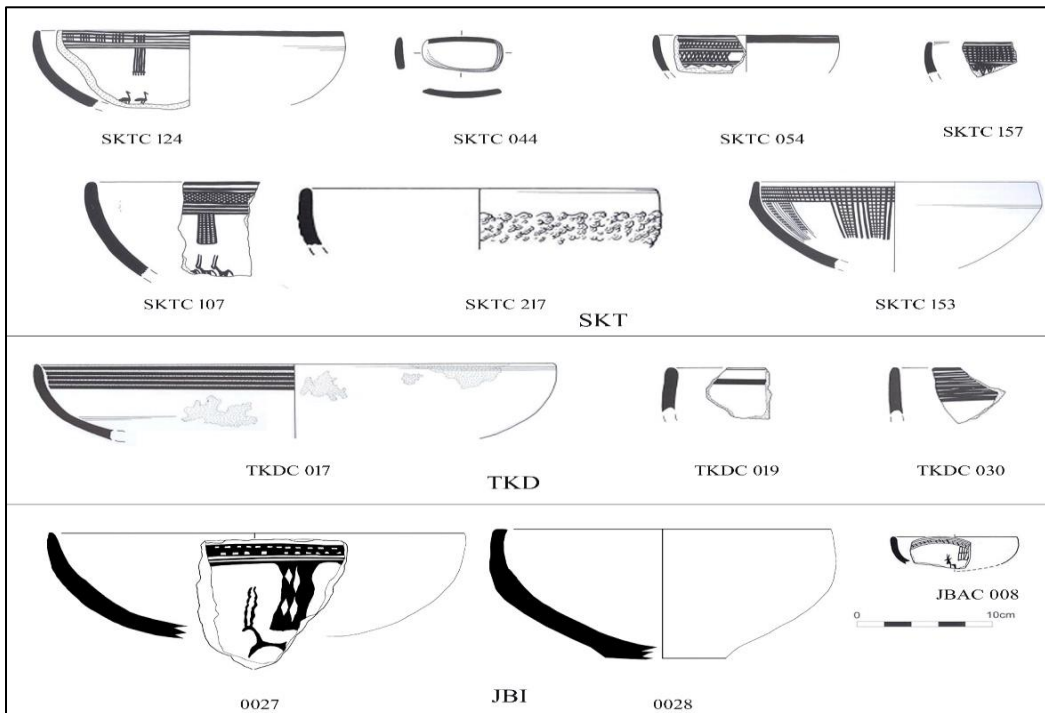


Fig. 8: Decorated bowls with parallel lip rims

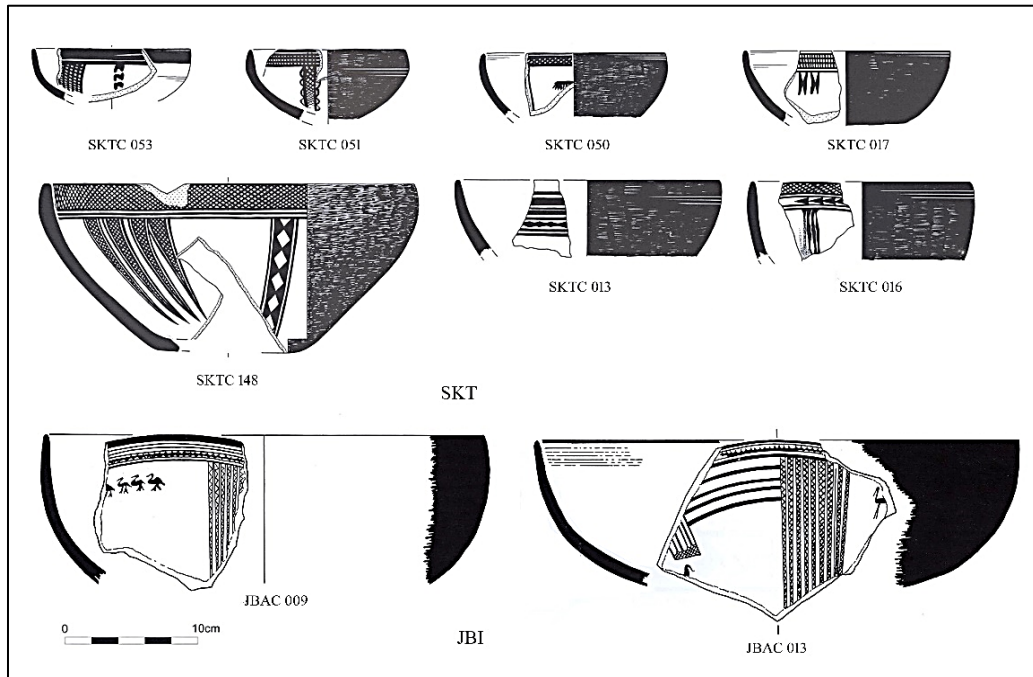


Fig. 9: Black burnished bowls with parale lip rims

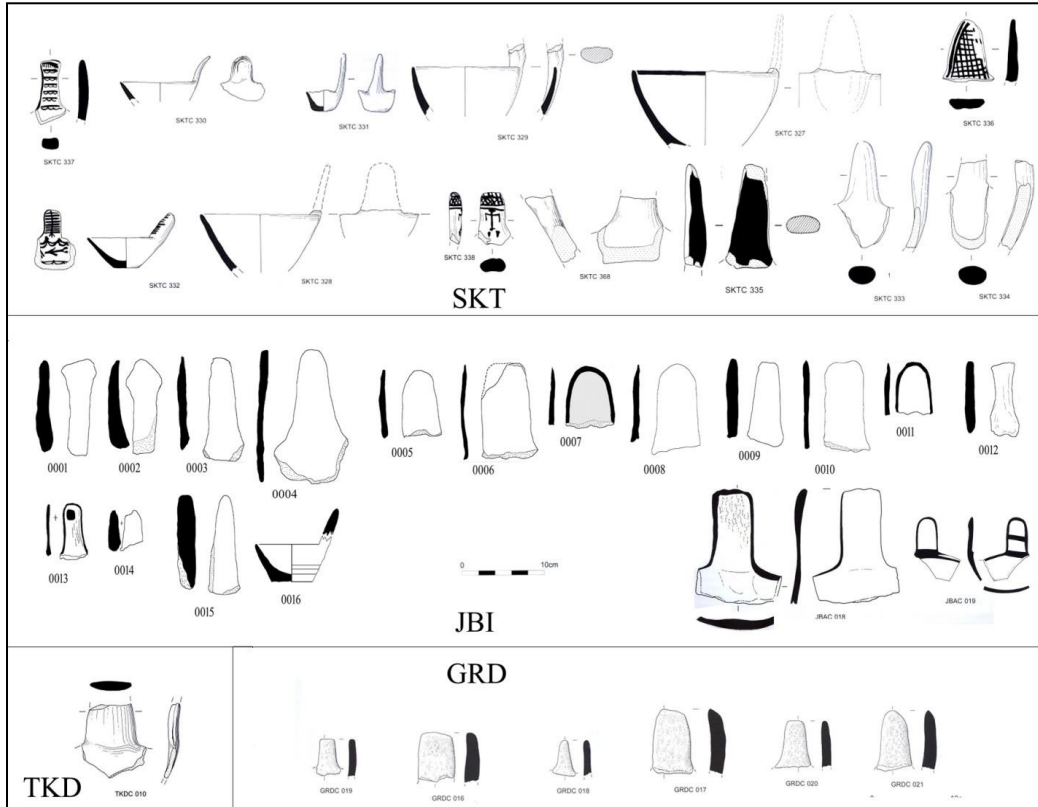


Fig. 10: Bowls with upright Handle

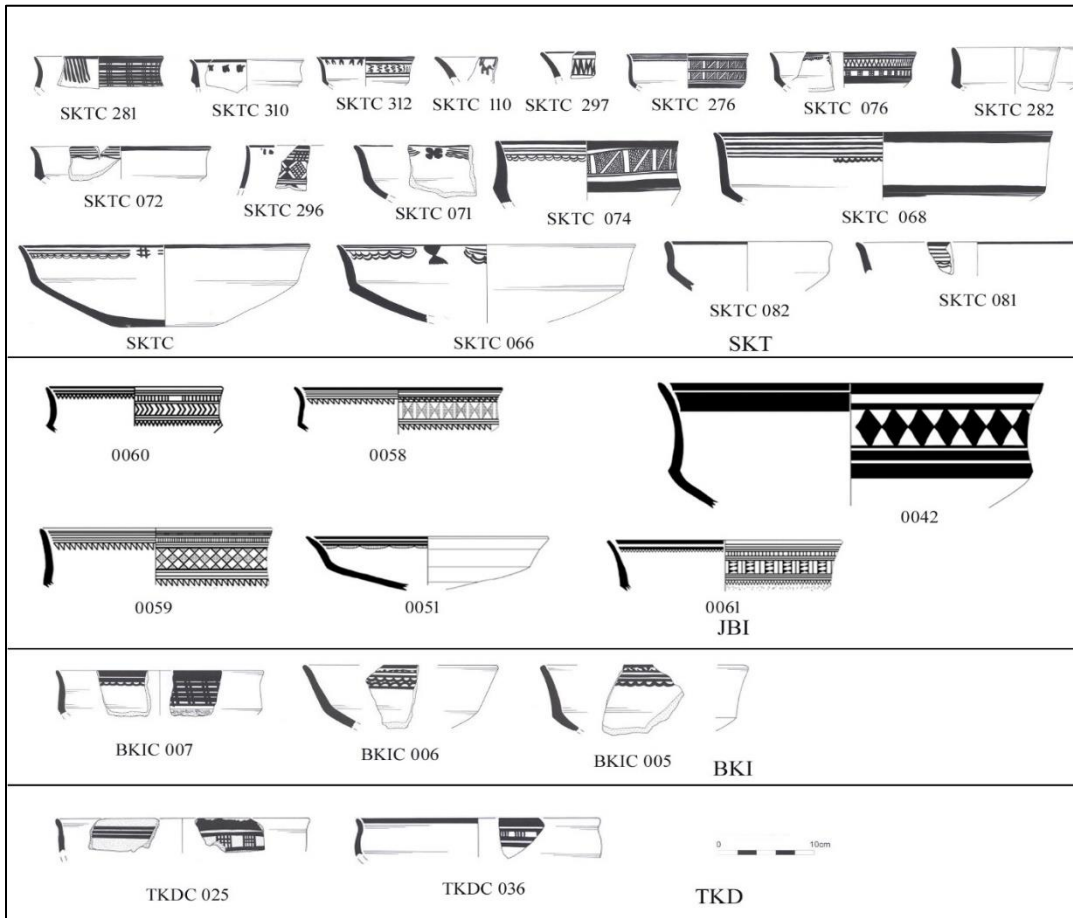


Fig. 11: Decorated bowls with flaring rims

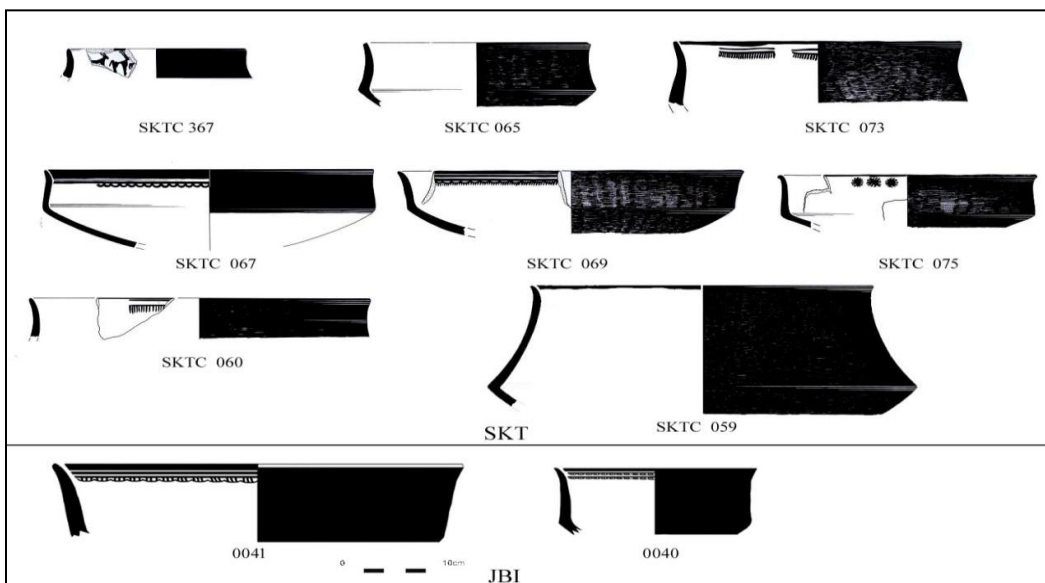


Fig. 12: Black burnished bowls with flaring rim

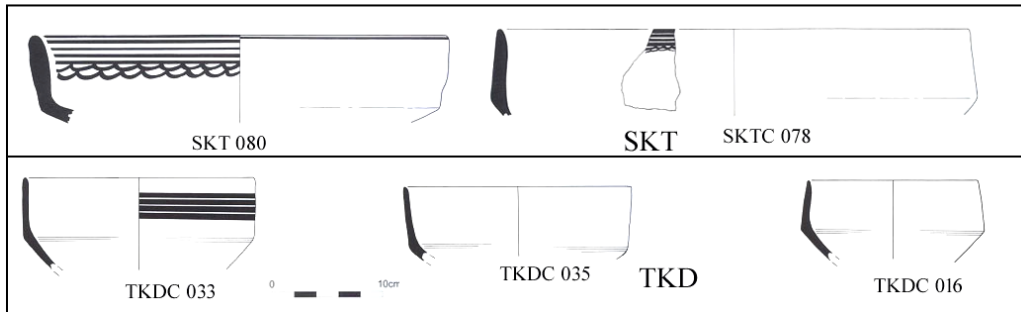


Fig. 13: Decorated bowls with parallel lip rims

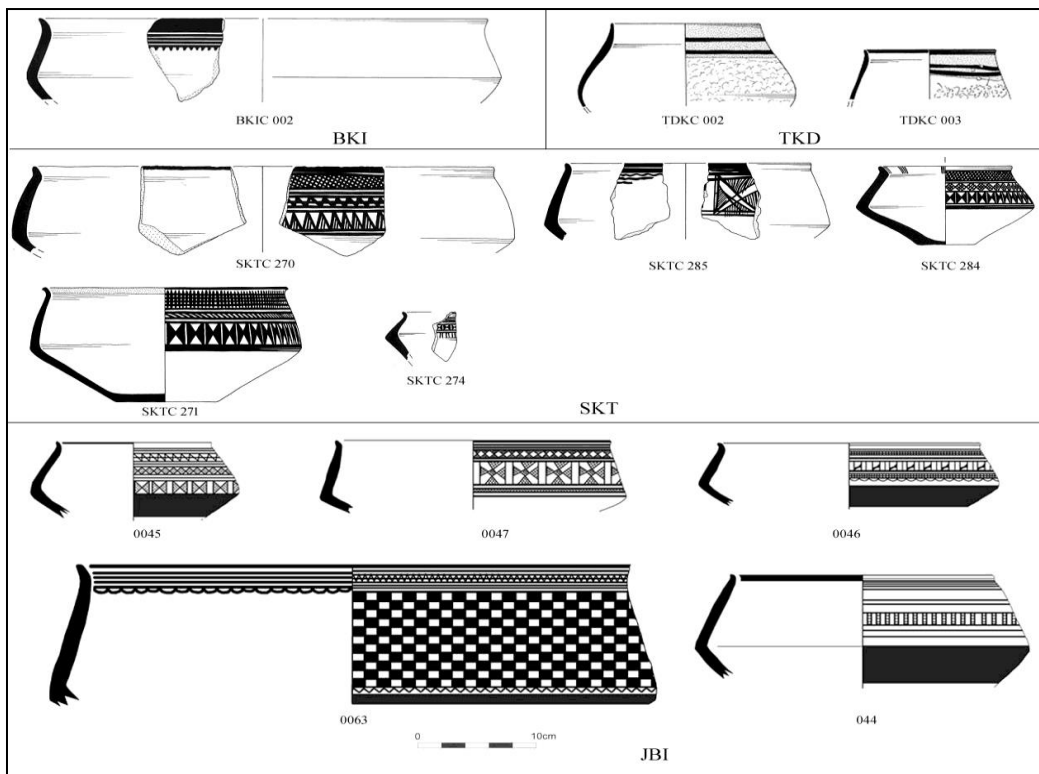


Fig. 14: Decorated bowls with external projecting rims



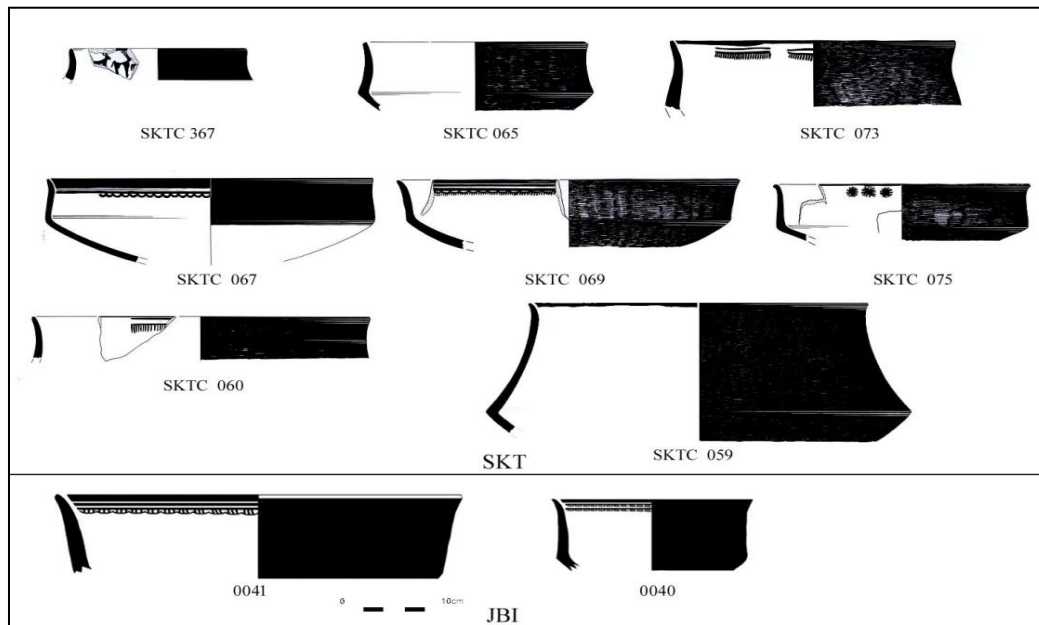


Fig. 15: Black burnished bowls with external projecting rims

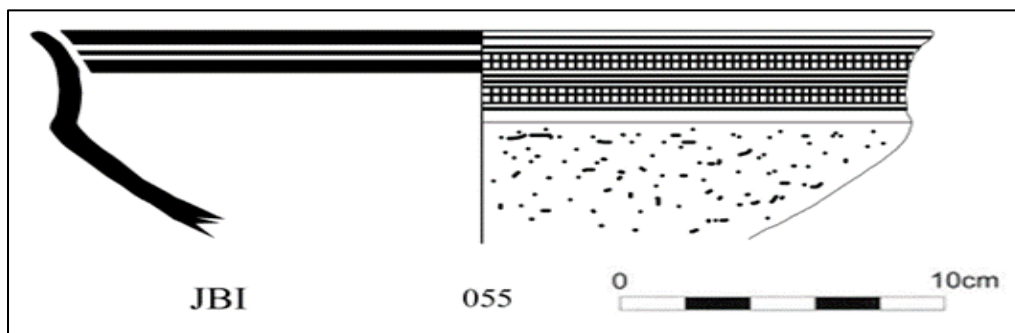


Fig. 16: Decorated and grit grog temper added to bowl with external projected rim (Type I)

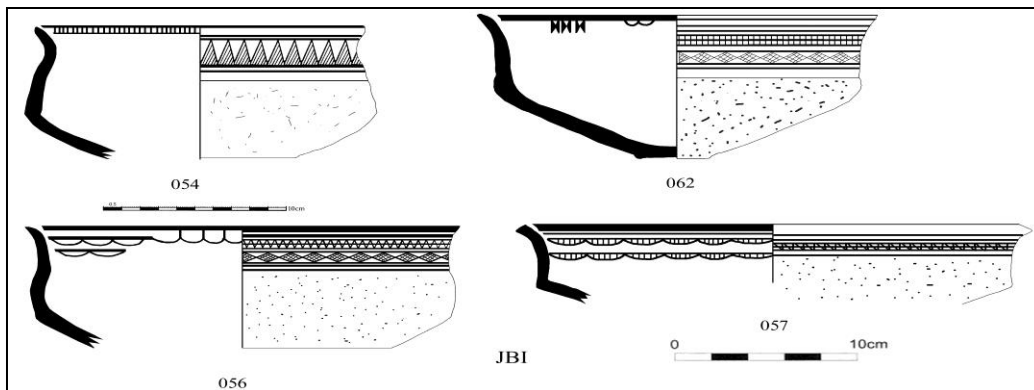


Fig. 17: Decorated and grit grog temper added to bowl with external projected rim (Type II)