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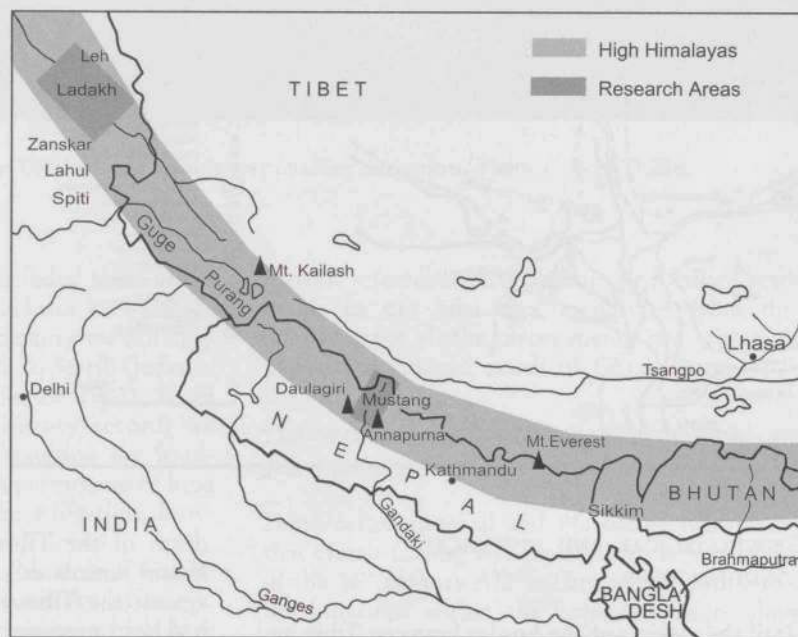
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C. Pohl-Thiblet

Preliminary Result on the Pottery from Garab-Dzong, the Surroundings Settlements from Dzo-Khang and Bumche-Khang, District Mustang, Nepal*

Fig. 1. The High Himalayas as spatial frame of the research programme and the particular research areas of Ladakh and Mustang (from Haffner/Pohle 1993, fig. 2).



The Garab-Dzong project as part of a research programme dedicated to "Settlement Processes and the Formation of States in the High Himalayas characterised by Tibetan Culture and Tradition" (fig. 1)¹ was financed by the German Research Council (DFG) in Bonn. Excavations within the area of the fortified settlement of Garab-Dzong and the surrounding settlements of Piang-Dang, Dzo-Khang and Bumche-Khang were carried out by the Institute of Pre- and Early Historical Archaeology of the Bonn University, directed by H. Roth. Between 1994 and 1999 the field work which dealt with the "Archaeology of Castles and fortified Settlements in Mustang" was directed by E. Pohl². This paper reports the first results from Garab-Dzong and Bumche-Khang and deals with first results of pottery analysis, which began in 2002³.

* My thanks are due to E. Pohl for giving me the opportunity to work on the pottery and the small finds from Garab-Dzong and the surrounding settlements. Furthermore I wish to express my appreciation for his facilitate concerning the geostrategical and historical part of this paper. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Director General and the staff of HMG Department of Archaeology in Nepal for their cooperation during the recording and drawing work time in Kathimandu. Moreover, I am indebted to I. Paap and H. Schenk for their extremely collegial and friendly support. All the drawings were made by the author, however they would not have been ready to be published without the patience and the lending hand from H. P. Wittersheim (KAVA).

¹ For a comprehensive introduction see: Hüttel 1994, especially pp. 47-71.

² For preliminary reports see: Pohl 1997; Pohl/Tripahee, 1995.

³ The pottery analysis will be part of a Ph.D. thesis that includes as well the small finds of Garab-Dzong and the surrounding settlements.

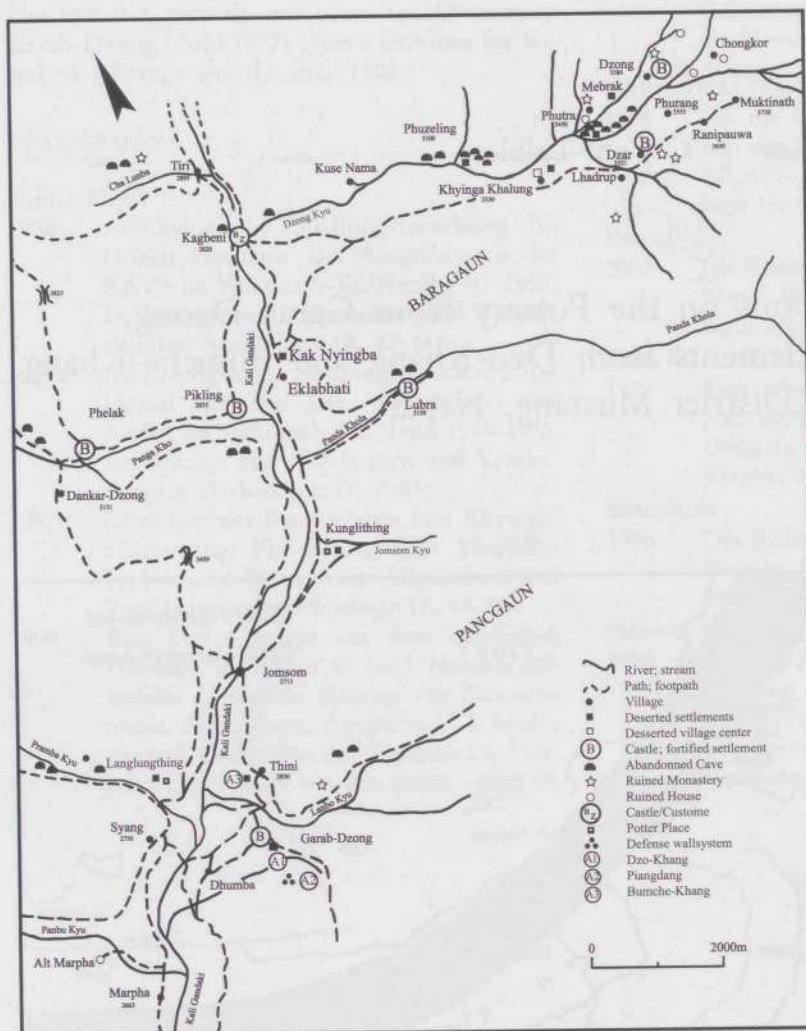


Fig. 2. The Kali-Gandaki and Muktinath valley, Southern Mustang (after Graafen/Seeber 1993, fig. 3 and Haffner/Pohle 1993, fig. 2).

GEOSTRATEGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Until the closing of the border between Tibet and Nepal, the Kali-Gandaki valley was one of the main North-South Trade ways in the Himalayas⁴. A significant number of abandoned castles and fortified settlements are situated in strategic locations controlling the ways through the Kali-Gandaki valley and its tributaries (fig. 2). The abandoned settlement of Garab-Dzong is located upon a hill east of the confluence of the Kali-Gandaki and the Langbo-Kyung. It controls the North-South route through the Kali-Gandaki valley and the route towards the East across the Mesokanto pass on the way to Manang (fig. 3).

In historical sources Garab-Dzong is said to have played a special role in the context of the kingdom of Se-rib, which is mentioned in the records since the 7th century AD⁵. Together with gLo, Se-rib was part of the conquests of the Tibetan king Song-tsen Gam-po (629–649/50) and had come under Tibetan supremacy within the subjection of Zhang-zhung⁶. In 705 AD, after the

death of the Tibetan king Dus-srong, the Tun-huang Annals tell us about a rebellion of Se-rib against the Tibetan central power. This rebellion had been suppressed only four years later with the capture of the king⁷. After the breakdown of the Tibetan empire at the beginning of the 9th century, evidence of Se-rib is constantly found in the source for the history of Mustang, but still we have no specific indications of its precise regional extent. According to D. P. Jackson and D. Schuh, this regional term is rarely mentioned, but often enough it can be concluded that Se-rib had been a political and cultural entity that "geographically formed a

⁴ For the importance of the North-South Trade route see in general: Furer-Haimendorf 1975; for the Kali-Gandaki valley see: Graafen 1994; Graafen/Seeber 1992–93.

⁵ On medieval history of Mustang see in general: Jackson 1976; 1978; 1984; Vinding 1978, 181 ff.; 1988, 165 ff.; Ehrhard 1993; Schuh 1995a; 1995b.

⁶ Jackson 1978, especially 208 ff.; Vinding 1987, 174 ff. About Zhang-zhung see: Bellazza 2001, 42 ff.

⁷ Jackson 1978, 198 ff. and note 8; for the sources: Bacot/Thomas/Toussaint 1940–48.

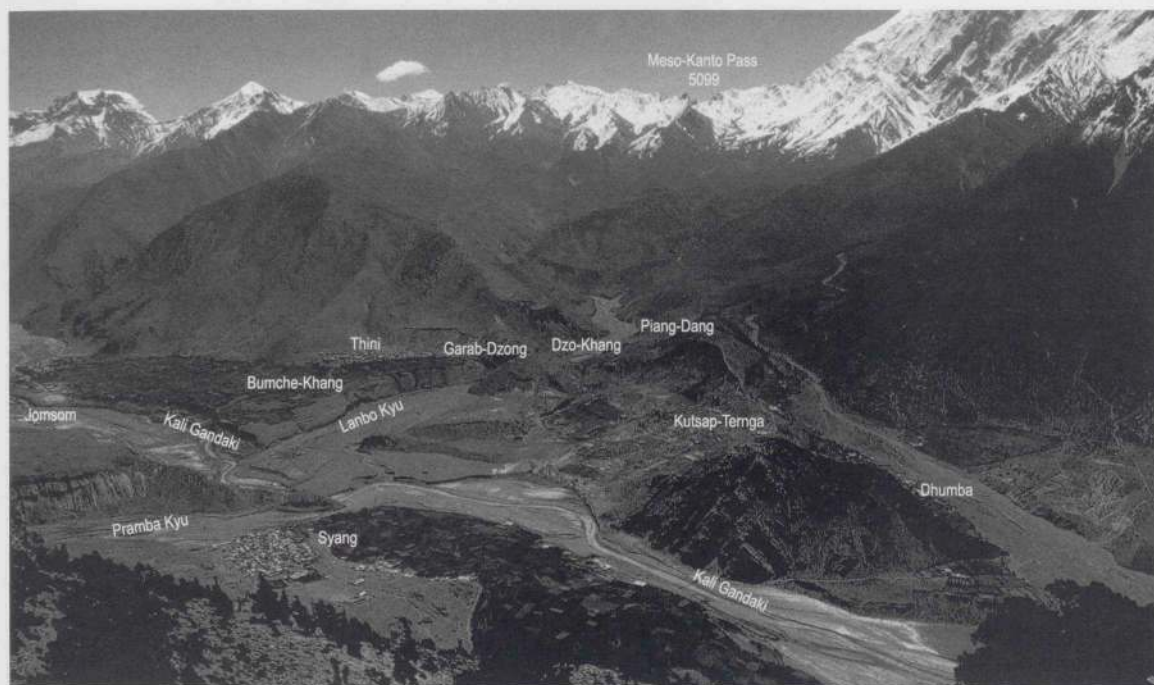


Fig. 3. View of the excavated sites: Garab-Dzong and the surrounding settlements. Photo C. Pohl-Thiblet.

special unit besides gLo, and included areas in the upper Kali-Gandaki valley" (Jackson 1978, 207f.; Schuh 1995a, 9f.). For the 13th century we can only prove for Lubra that it belonged to Se-rib (Jackson 1978, 206f.; for Lubra see: Ramble 1983). From the Cimang Bem-chag (local history record) we know that according to local tradition the foundation of Lubra took place with permission of king Thang-mig-chen from Sum, whose life-time, however, is not known⁸.

On the discussion concerning the role of Garab-Dzong within the scope of the history of Se-rib, Jackson has published a list of places, which have been tributary to Garab-Dzong in the past. Except for Marpha and the name Nye-shang (Manang), this list only contains settlements lying north of Garab-Dzong defining a territory south of gLo that has been associated repeatedly with the geographical circumscription of Se-rib (Jackson 1978, 209f., note 54). Considering this historical background, archaeological evidence of an early or high medieval fortification at Garab-Dzong will contribute to the history of this little known kingdom in the Himalayas.

Before the unification of the present Nepali kingdom at the end of the 18th century AD⁹, the political power in this area was divided into several small principalities more or less under the suzerainty of the western kingdom of Jumla (Jackson 1978, 218ff.; Francke 1926, 105). According to the historical sources, Garab-Dzong was the centre of a small late medieval kingdom called "Sum", "Sum-bo" or "Sum Garab-Dzong"¹⁰. However, no

explicit references of the castles or fortified settlements in our area can be derived from these sources since all the places mentioned within this period are situated north of Garab-Dzong¹¹.

DENDROCHRONOLOGICAL AND ¹⁴C DATING AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE SETTLEMENTS

Dendrochronological and ¹⁴C dating demonstrate that Garab-Dzong was founded in the second half of the 16th century AD¹². The general structure of the buildings within the upper enclosure shows that the construction followed a central plan. Isolated due to watercourses and erosion, it is nowadays connected to the surrounding terraces only by a narrow saddle in the South (fig. 4 a). With inclines steeper than 45°, the hill is easily fortifiable on three sides and is thus eminently

⁸ Ramble/Vinding 1988, 18; on the dating of the different names of kings see p. 7; for the legend see also Jackson 1978, 209.

⁹ Fürer-Haimendorf 1975, 142ff.; Regmi 1961, 329f.; Still-er 1973, 185ff.

¹⁰ Jackson 1978, 208ff.; Vinding 1988, 174ff.; Ramble/Vinding 1988, especially 18f.; Schuh 1995a, 69ff.; 1995b, 8ff.; Vinding 1978; 1998, 50ff.

¹¹ Schuh 1995a, 11f., esp. 40f.; 1995b, 52f.; Jackson 1976, 53; for Kagbeni see on the basis of the dendrochronological dates by B. Schmidt, Cologne in: Gutschow 1994, 23-50.

¹² Pers. communication from E. Pohl.



Fig. 4 a. Garab-Dzong, southern slope with the saddle to the surrounding terraces. Photo E. Pohl.

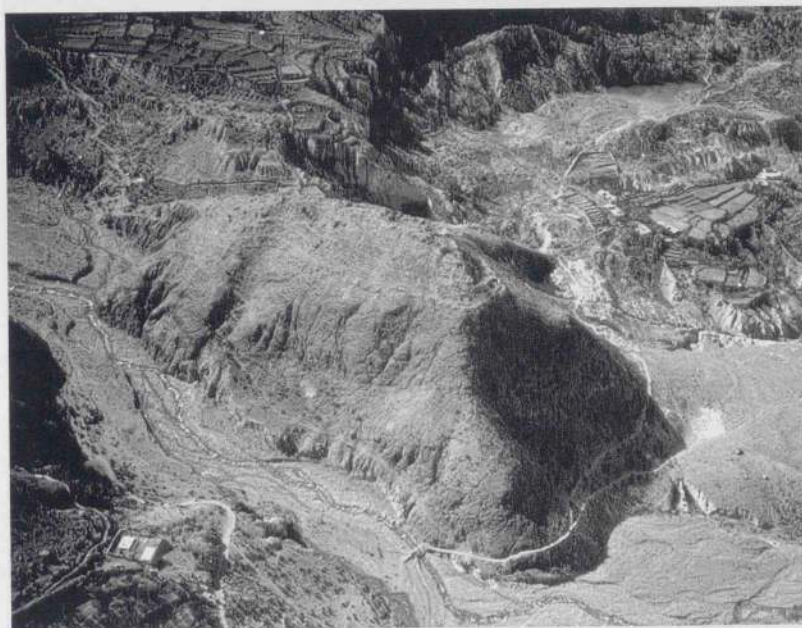


Fig. 4 b. Garab-Dzong, view from the northern slope and the plateau. Photo R. Kostka.

suitable for a fortified settlement, whose considerable remains are preserved upon the plateau and the slopes. Visible traces indicate that it was secured by several concentric walls (fig. 4 b).

At the centre a rectangular open square bordered by dense and small-scaled architecture on three sides can be recognised. The area to the north of the square can only be entered through an entrance in the middle of a wall and is thus separated from the rest of the plateau. It can be expected that a monastery was situated in this prominent place, which was to a large extent visible throughout the Kali-Gandaki valley (fig. 5).

During the course of time, alterations in the buildings were observed. The latest building activities, repair work rather than full reconstructions, are dated into the first half of the 19th century (Pohl 1997, 100ff.). At that time, the

strategic suitability of all the fortified places played no further role due to the change of the political situation after the conquest by the Gorkha kings. The lack of access to water supplies and exhausting distances to farmland and pastures made a living at Garab-Dzong uncomfortable in peaceful times (fig. 4b). So the people gradually changed their households to the present non-fortified villages in close proximity to their farmland. The ruins of the small settlement Dzo-Khang seem to have been one of those. Due to oral information we know that the last inhabitants of Garab-Dzong left their home at the beginning of the 20th century.

Whereas only insignificant traces of older periods of settlement could be uncovered at Garab-Dzong itself, parts of an older fortification were excavated in a settlement area called Bumche-Khang just 500 m north of Garab-Dzong. Under

a settlement layer belonging to the 16th–19th century AD and characterised by common house-structures, double-boarded dry-stone wall with a thickness of up to 1.90 m were excavated (fig. 6). This unusual width links the entire building with the architecture of Khyinga Period II, which is dated into the first millennium AD (Hüttel 1997). ¹⁴C-dates of the 4th to 7th century AD illustrate the comparison between the second period of the settlement in Khyinga and the older period of Bumche-Khang.

This fortification was destroyed by a massive landslide, covering the whole excavated area with rocks up to 4 m in diameter among other materials¹³. The landslide had a tragic dimension for the people proved by the excavation of a human skeleton within a room of the fortification which was covered by the remains of a stone-ceiling.

THE FIRST RESULTS OF THE POTTERY RECORDS

The foremost purpose of the pottery analysis will be to provide a systematic frame based on the stratigraphy of the different sites. The initial basis to define the relative chronology of the pottery will be a statistical analysis, showing changing proportions of associated features of pottery wares, shapes and decorations in stratigraphical correlation. After their classification within an absolute chronological frame, the regional cultural and historical interpretation mostly based on a comparison with the material from the excavations in the Muktinath valley and the observations made during surveys¹⁴ will as well be a major purpose of the study. The results of this analysis ought to be a "building stone" for the comprehension and knowledge of the cultural history, settlement processes and the pattern of states in Mustang and the adjacent regions.

¹³ Baade 2000 and pers. communication.

¹⁴ Mustang, Manang and Dolpo.



Fig. 5. Garab-Dzong, Plan of the upper plateau.



Fig. 6. Wall from Bumche-Khang, representing the earlier period of the settlement of the 4th to 7th century AD. Photo E. Pohl.

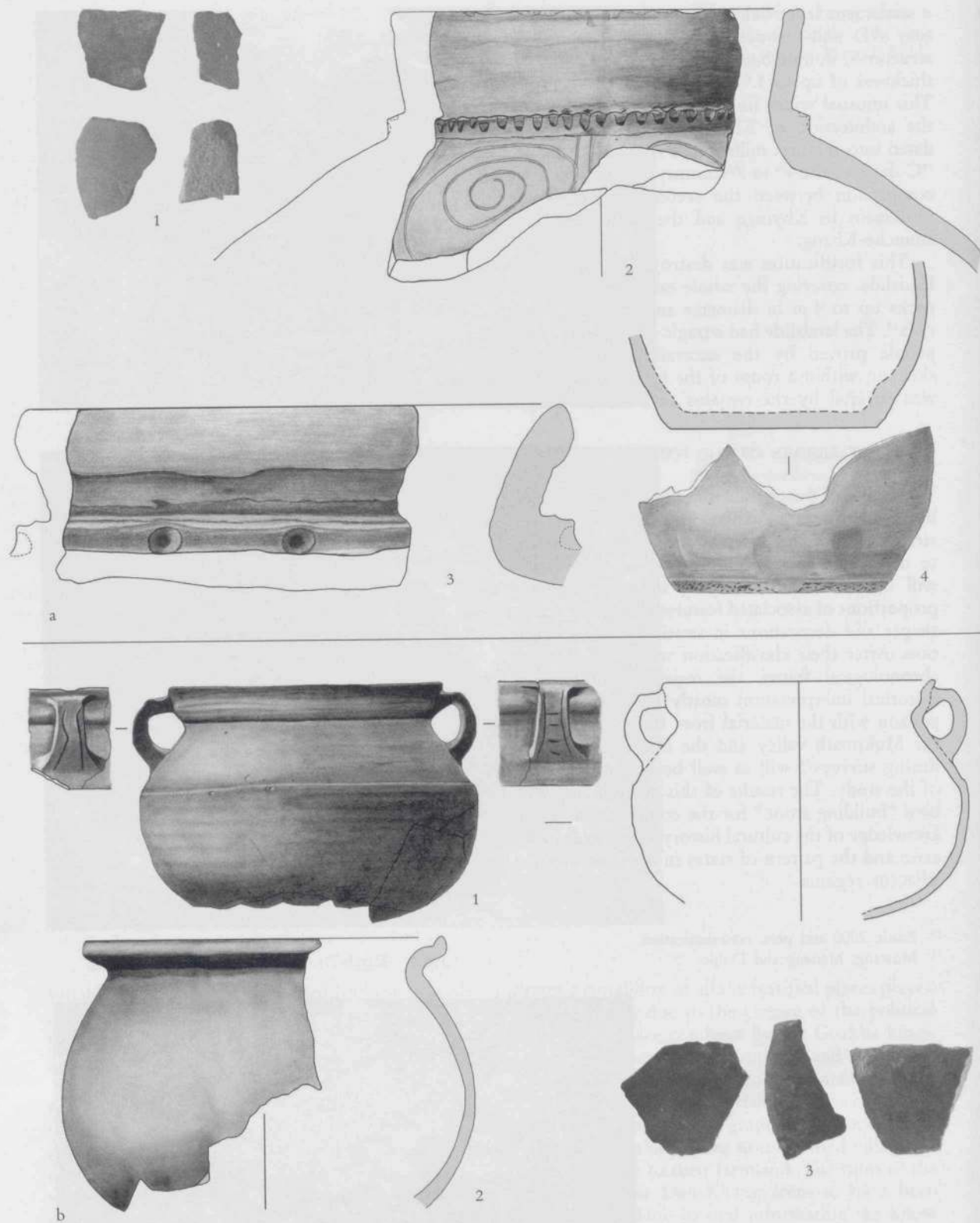


Fig. 7. a. Ware 1, fragments of storage and "Chang"-vessels. - b. Ware 6, globular pots. Scale 1:3.

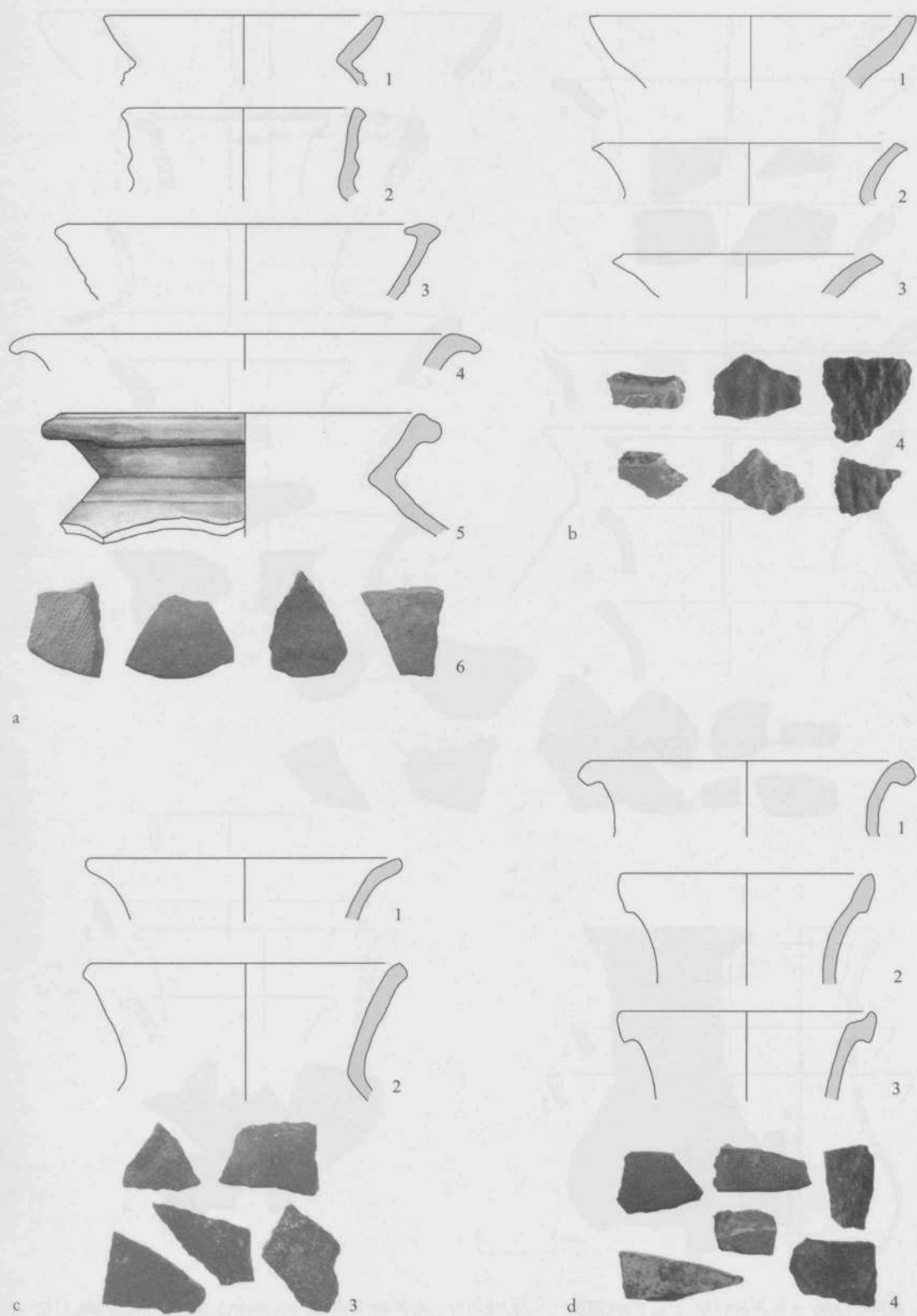


Fig. 8. a. Ware 20. - b. Ware 17. - c. Ware 18a. - d. Ware 18b: representative rim forms. Scale 1:3.

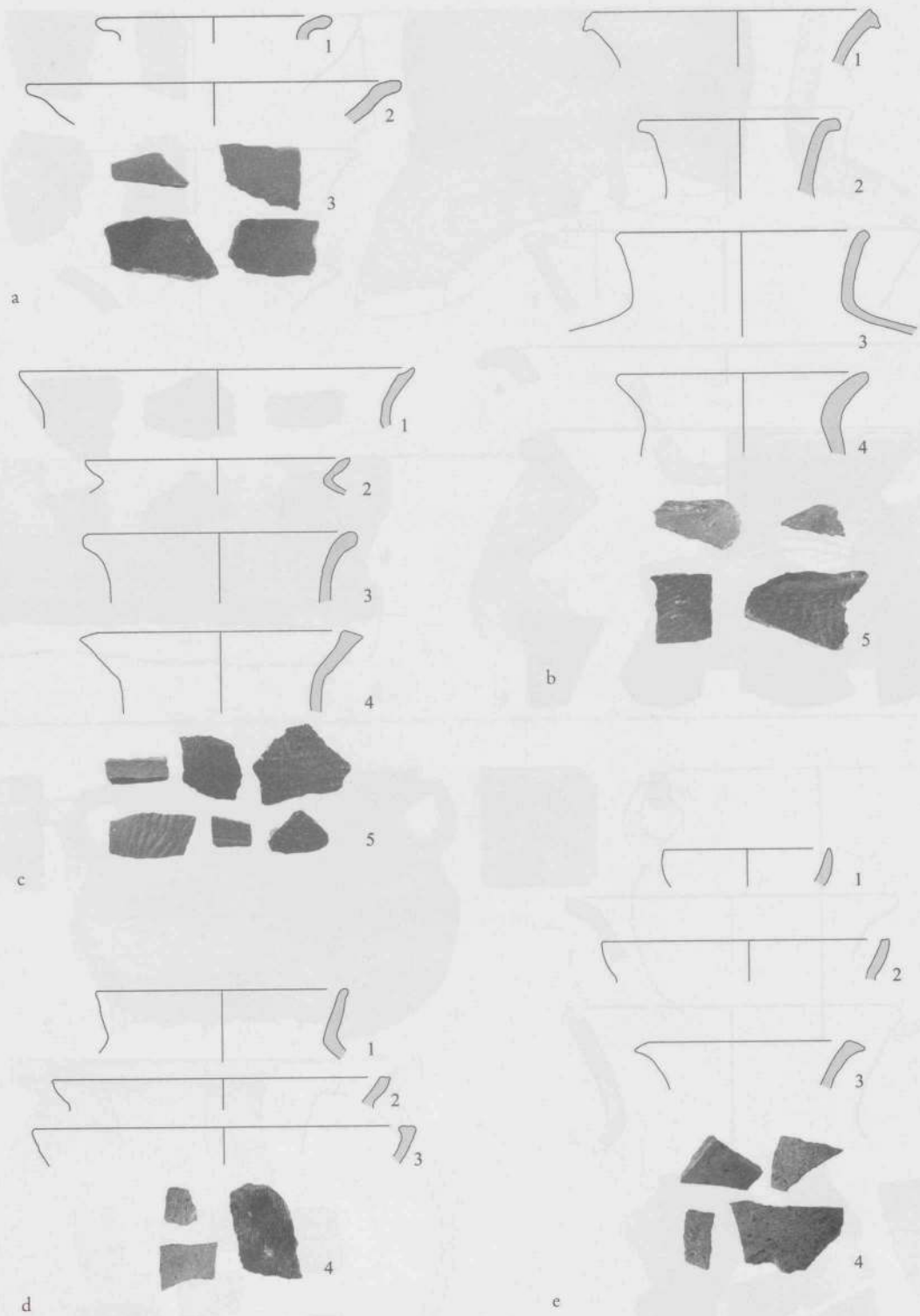


Fig. 9. a. Ware 18c. - b. Ware 21a. - c. Ware 21b. - d. Ware 21c. - e. Ware 21d: representative rim forms. Scale 1:3.

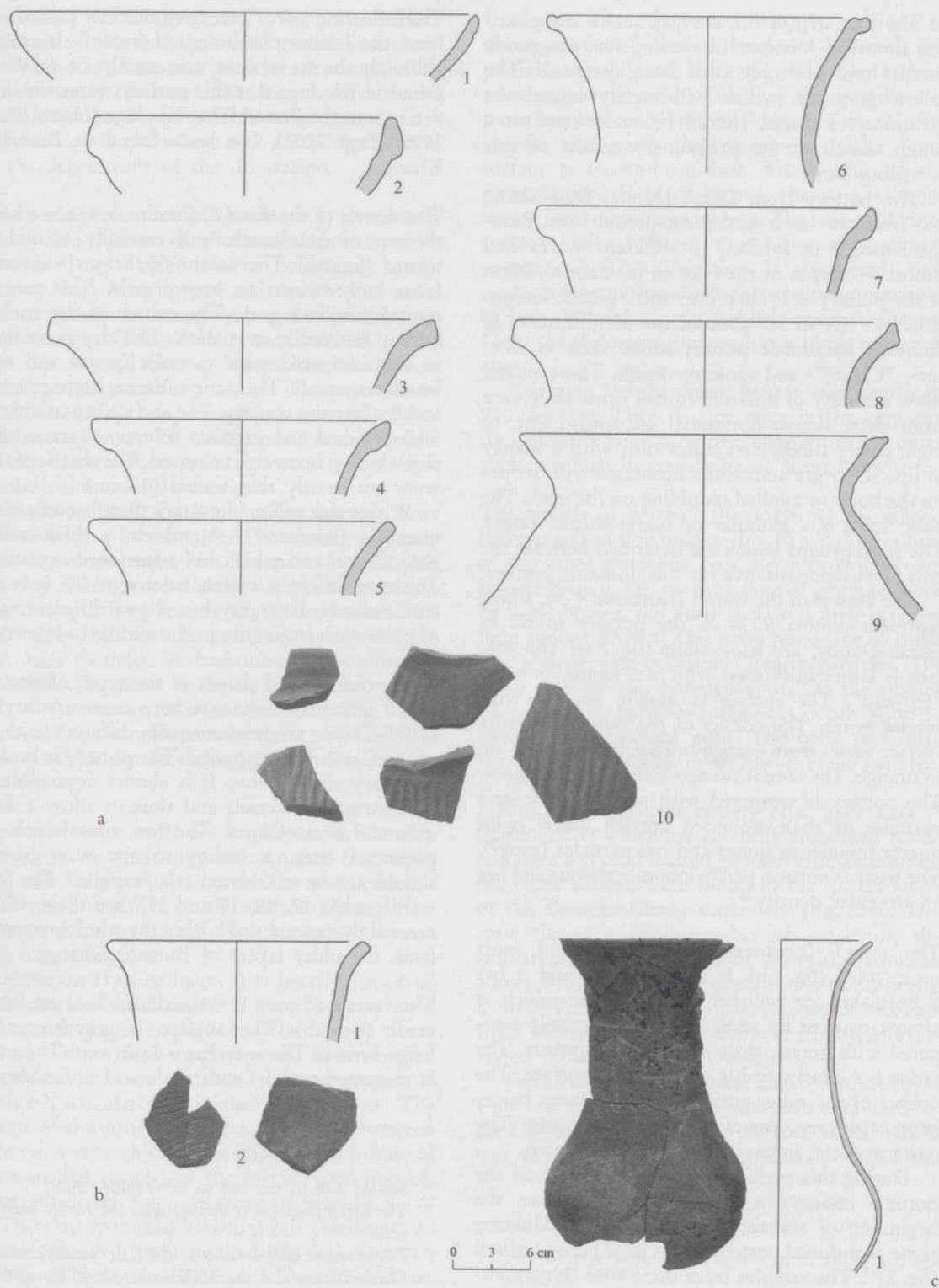


Fig. 10. a. Ware 19: representative rim forms. – b. "Grey Ware": representative rim form. Scale 1:3. – c. Flagon with round base from Feature 2006, Vessels 4, ware 28 from Khyinga Period I (after Paap 2002, pl. 39).

The first step of the work is nearly completed and almost 36,400 sherds including 4000 diagnostic sherds have been recorded in a databank. The following paper, which will mainly regard the definition of wares, should be understood as a rough sketch of the preliminary results of this recording work.

The pottery from Garab-Dzong, Dzo-Khang and from the latest settlement period from Bumche-Khang¹⁵ is similar. 16 different wares and almost 140 types of rims are so far defined. Most of the pottery is broken into small pieces. Reconstruction has so far allowed the identification of domestic handmade pottery-forms such as storage-, "Chang"- and cooking-vessels. These vessels show a variety of different funnel rims. They vary from short almost horizontal out-turned lips, to high, partly subdivided collar rims with a variety of lips. They are sometimes decorated with stripes on the body or applied moulding on the neck. The basic form is a globular or barrel-shaped vessel. The ware-groups which are described here are the two most representative for this domestic pottery.

The vessels of the ware 1 (hardness: 4–5), which represent almost 90% of the pottery found in Garab-Dzong, are hand-made (fig. 7 a). The surface is either burnished with wet hands or has a "self-slip". The surface is mostly smooth with single pores. The colour of the outer and inner surface varies from orange-brown, beige-brown up to orange. The core is orange-brown or often grey. The pottery is tempered with medium or coarse particles of shale, rounded greyish gravel, with quartz fragments; bones and red particles (grog?). The paste is porous, partly inhomogeneous and has an irregular density¹⁶.

The ware 6 (hardness: 4) is the second most represented (fig. 7 b). It is hand-made and it has a burnished or polished outer surface which is almost covered by soot. The clay is heavily tempered with gravel, shale and bone-fragments. The temper is clearly visible on the inner surface. The colour of the outer surface varies between beige-brown to grey, sometimes with a red tint. The paste and the inner surface are pale-brown.

During this period, the broad-spectrum of the pottery conveys a uniform picture. Since the beginning of archaeological research in Mustang some abandoned pottery places have been localised (fig. 2)¹⁷. The samples from these sites show without doubt that the majority of the coarse ware was manufactured in the surrounding area of the settlements.

The analysis of the pottery which has been found in the older layers from Bumche-Khang has not yet begun. The conclusions are therefore based on preliminary observation, comparison with the material from Khyinga (Hüttel/Paap 1998; Paap 2002) and the NAA results (Mommsen 2002).

The following wares have been recently picked out from the former chronological frame¹⁸. It seems, although the form does not exactly fit to those found in Khyinga that this pottery-ware, which is dating into the Period III at Khyinga (Hüttel/Paap 1998; Paap 2002), has been found in Bumche-Khang.

The vessels of the ware 20 (hardness: 6) are wheel-thrown or hand-made and carefully secondary turned (fig. 8 a). The colour of the surface varies from beige-brown to brown pale. The core is remarkable dark grey. The colour of the surface is only few millimetres thick. The clay is medium to fine tempered with sporadic quartz and tiny bones fragments. The paste is dense, homogeneous and the fracture is sharp. The surface is particularly well polished and presents sometimes traces of a slip which is brownish coloured. The sherds of this ware are mostly thin-walled (0.4 cm).

Within this group of pottery there is one variant ware 20a (hardness: 6–8) which is thick-walled (0.9–1.2 cm) and which has a fine cord-ornament. The core differs in colour from ware 20. It is not continuously dark grey but shows different scale of coloration from grey in the middle to brownish tint.

The fabrics and shapes of the types of pottery found underneath the structure contemporary to Garab-Dzong are fundamentally different to those of the Garab-Dzong period. The pottery is broken into very small pieces. It is almost impossible to reconstruct the vessels and thus to allow a definition of their shapes. The few rims which are presented here, according to the ware-groups, should just be considered as a "sample". The four ware groups 17, 18, 19 and 21¹⁹ are those which are mainly represented within the whole inventory from the older layers of Bumche-Khang.

The vessels of ware 17²⁰ (hardness: 3–4) are hand-made (fig. 8 b). The surface is grey-brown to beige-brown. The core has a loam tint. The paste is tempered mainly with shale and is inhomogeneous.

¹⁵ Second half of the 16th to 19th century AD.

¹⁶ The firing hardness is defined with the Mohs' hardness scale.

¹⁷ For example: lateral valley of the Kali Gandaki between Garab-Dzong and the Muktinath valley: Kunglithing, above Jomsom/Syang; Langlungthing.

¹⁸ The presentation of the poster during the 17th South Asian Archaeology Congress in Bonn shows a chronological frame which must be revised now.

¹⁹ Identical wares are defined by I. Paap as belonging to the Period II from Khyinga (4th–7th century AD). This dating is in corroboration with the ¹⁴C-dates of those layers.

²⁰ This ware is comparable with ware 4 from Khyinga period II.

neous and like "flaky-pastry". The inner surface is burnished. Nevertheless shale particles are clearly visible. Very fine mica particles are recognisable. An important attribute of the vessels of this ware is the thick cord impression on the outer surface which is coarse and where soot sometimes adheres to the depressions of the decoration.

The vessels of ware 18 (hardness: 4) are hand-made. The colour of the outer surface varies between ivory, beige-brown, beige-grey, grey-brown, black-brown, grey and brown. The inner surface is beige-brown, grey-beige, beige red, grey or pale brown. These colours are also found in the core. The paste is more or less enriched with mica. Other temper particles are bone. The paste shows a medium to fine tempered clay. It is mostly dense and homogeneous. The mica occurs clearly on the surface. Clear differences in this ware group allow a subdivision into 3 variations.

Variation 18a²¹ (fig. 8 c) has an uneven inner surface with a lot of mica. The surface is partly dark-brown and resin-like. The paste is dense and the clay is tempered mostly with bone particles. The distinguishing feature of the variation 18 b²² (fig. 8 d) is the carefully polished surface and the fine mica particles. A barbotine coat cannot be excluded. The paste is dense, homogeneous and only slightly tempered. Variation 18 c²³ (fig. 9 a) is thin-walled. The surface is carefully polished. The mica particles are accordingly fine and occur on the surface.

The vessels of ware 21 are hand-formed. The clay is medium to fine tempered. Quartz fragments, sand and shale particles occur. The ware contains mica which is visible on the surface. Clear differences in this ware-group allow here a subdivision into four variations.

Variation 21a (hardness: 3) is heavily tempered with medium-sized rounded gravel, coarse sand and quartz particles (fig. 9 b). The core is dense and sometimes with singles pores. Soot is often found on the outer surface. The inner surface is neither particularly burnished nor coarse. The colour of the surface and the core varies between different brownish tints. An important attribute of the ware 21a vessels are the careful cord impressions which are finer to those of ware 17.

The clay from the variation 21b (hardness: 3-4) is medium to fine tempered (fig. 9 c). Quartz-, shale- and bone particles occur. The core is dense and relatively homogeneous. There are also fine mica particles as well as soot on the outer surface. The colours are the same as those of ware 21a. The vessels are thin-walled and show an irregular rectangular-shaped impression (paddle or stamp). This Variation also displays the decoration-type of variation 21a. The decoration does not occur on the neck. Here the sherds are well wet-burnished.

Variation 21c (hardness: 4-6) is medium to strong tempered with little quartz, or with red particles (grog?) and shale (fig. 9 d). The lack of mica is conspicuous as well as the longish and more or less wide pores. The core is scarcely porous and partly inhomogeneous. The inner surface is coarse-burnished. The colour of the outer surface is black-brown, the core salmon-orange/red, grey-beige or grey. The colour of inner surface varies between grey-beige and salmon-orange/red. This Variation is decorated with medium-fine to fine comb patterns or impressions of bast cloth which run parallel, or are V-shaped. Only the decorated surface has a black brownish coat.

Variation 21d (hardness: 6-8) is very similar to 21c (fig. 9 e). There is fine mica in the clay and the colour is salmon-orange, apart from the outer surface which is grey-beige or beige-brown.

The vessels of ware 19 (hardness: 4) are wheel-thrown and of fine quality (fig. 10 a)²⁴. The colour of the inner surface is grey, beige-brown, brown or pale-brown. The core is coloured graphite-black or beige-brown, the inner surface is grey-beige or light orange-brown. This ware has a fine to dust-fine temper with occasional quartz particles. The paste is dense and homogeneous. On the surface dust-fine mica particles sometimes occur. Ware 19 has a well-burnished neck. The belly is mostly decorated with paddle or with wide comb patterns.

Finally, 21 hand-made pottery of a "grey ware"²⁵ (hardness: 4) which are carefully smoothed inside and have a typical incised geometric decoration on the outer surface were found in the lowest levels of the Bumche-Khang settlement (fig. 10 b). Despite the very small number of potsherds, the similarity of the ware and of the grid decoration allows without doubt a comparison with the group from of Period I Khyinga (fig. 10c) and the vessels from Mebrak 63. This assessment has been investigated through the NAA results²⁶.

Following a geostratigraphical and historical overview and a brief account of the sites excavated by the University of Bonn, the purpose of this article was to present a preliminary description of the

²¹ This ware is comparable with ware 20 from Khyinga period II.

²² This ware is comparable with ware 19 from Khyinga period II.

²³ This ware is comparable with ware 18 from Khyinga period II.

²⁴ This ware is comparable with ware 5 from Khyinga period II.

²⁵ This ware is comparable with ware 27 from Khyinga period I.

²⁶ Mommsen 2002; Hüttel/Paap 1998; Paap 2002; Simons 1996; Simons/Schön 1998.

different types of wares in combination with a groundwork of a typology of the vessel shapes which were found in the Garab-Dzong, Dzo-Khang and Bumche-Khang. Furthermore according to the stage of the processing, the idea was to hand over a pilot classification in an absolute chronological frame. At this stage of the study, the broad-spectrum pottery of Garab-Dzong and Dzo-Khang fit into a common schema which dates the sites between 2nd half of the 16th to the 19th century. The chronological frame of the pottery in Bumche-Khang allows the distinction of five pottery groups. Four of these groups range from the 4th to the 19th century. For one group (the "grey ware") a date earlier than the 4th century is suggested.

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