
Black and Red Ware from Southern Rajasthan and Gujarat

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Abstract: Though Black and Red Ware is known from various regions of India, the white painted one is well known as a characteristic pottery of the Ahar Culture. To date over 110 sites of this culture are known from Southern Rajasthan. It is mainly represented by a variety of bowls and small jars. Generally the bowls were decorated with white painting on the inner wall and sometimes on the outer surface, particularly up to the shoulder portion. Somewhat similar ware has also been discovered from a number of sites in North Gujarat, Eastern Kachchh, and at Lothal and Rangpur. It is generally believed that in Gujarat, this pottery was introduced during the late phase of the Harappans. This paper is an attempt to present comparative study of white painted black and red ware from these two cultural complexes.

Keywords: Black and Red ware, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Ahar Culture, Gilund, Balathal, Kanmer

Introduction

Although Black and Red ware was innovated by the Neolithic people, its large scale production began only during the Bronze Age, and the credit goes to the authors of the Ahar-Banas complex. This typical pottery continued even in the historic and medieval phases. The Ahar-Banas is a well known Bronze Age cultural complex of south Rajasthan as over 110 sites of this complex are discovered in Udaipur, Bhilwara, Chittorgarh, Rajsamand, Tonk, Bundi, Dungarpur and Ajmer districts of southern Rajasthan (Misra 2007). Only a few have been subjected to excavation such as Ahar (Sankalia *et. al.* 1969), Gilund (Possehl *et.al* 2004), Balathal (Misra 2007), Ojiyana (Meena and Tripathi 2000), Lachhura, Maharaj ki Kheri and Chhatri Khera. These excavations have revealed that the Aharians had planned settlements made of mud, mud brick and stone. Some sites such as Balathal and Gilund have yielded evidence of fortified enclosure and defence wall indicating that the Aharians were quite an advance folks compared to their contemporary rural Bronze Age groups. Based on radio carbon dates, now one may argue the beginning of Ahar culture towards the end of the fourth millennium BCE, in not earlier. The characteristic pottery types of this complex are known as Bright Red Slip, Grey Ware, Tan Ware, Thin Red slipped pottery, Black and

Red ware, Buff ware, Sturdy Red Ware, Reserve slipped Ware. Among these the Tan ware and Thin Red ware were introduced in the prosperous phase.

Black and Red Ware

Black and Red ware is a specific pottery which is available in fine and coarse variety. Generally its outer surface is oxidized and inner face is black. The black surface extends up to shoulder portion on the outer surface. It is held that due to inverted firing its only outer surface is partially oxidized. In case of bowls both walls were burnished and treated with a variety of designs executed with white pigment. Mostly the designs were executed before firing was done. The major pottery types of Black and Red ware are bowls (convex sided), small globular pots, jars and basins. Bowls are often treated with white painting.

From the Table 1 it is clear that the Black and Red ware is discovered from all the geographical zones of Gujarat both in Harappan and rural Chalcolithic context. But the Ahar type white painted one is confined up to north Gujarat, eastern Kachchh, e.g., Dholavira (Bisht 2000), Surkotada (Joshi 1990), Kanmer (Kharakwal *et.al.*2011), Shikarpur (IAR 1986-87:80) in Kachchh, Moti Pipli, Zekhda (Momin 1983), Ratanpura (Bhan 2000), Nagwada (Hegda *et al.* 1990) in North Gujarat, besides Dhatwa (Mehta 1975), Bagasra (Sonawane *et al.* 2003), Vaagad (Sonawane and Mehta 1985), Datrana (Ajitprasad & Sonawane, 1994), Lothal (Rao 1979) and Rangpur (Rao 1963: 62). Bowls with convex sides and small jars somewhat analogues to the Ahar complex are reported from most of these sites. At some sites the inner wall of the bowls is also treated with white painting like Ahar.

Similarities of Black and Red Ware from Ahar and Gujarat

It seems that the Harappans were using Black and Red Ware which appears to be different than the Ahar type. Nor it was treated with white painting. The Ahar type was perhaps introduced during the late Mature Harappan phase or towards the end of the urban phase in Gujarat. It was in fact J.P. Joshi who pointed out the analogy of the Ahar type material from Surkotada way back in the seventies of the last century. He writes, *"In period I C the Black and Red ware and white painted Black and Red ware certainly shows the influx of a new people. Possibly the increase in the number of copper objects in later periods can be ascribed to the possible contact of the Harappans at Surkotada with white painted Black and Red ware using people, who in turn, had contacts in southeastern Rajasthan, particularly in the Banas valley"* (Joshi 1990:18).

Subsequently, the Ahar type material was pointed out from many other sites e.g., Dholavira, Kanmer and other sites.

After working at Dholavira, R. S. Bisht pointed out that in *"Stage VI : The burnished black, grey and Black and Red pottery ware, occasionally embellished with dots and lines in fugitive white, might have come from Gujarat and Rajasthan where they were widely distributed"* (Bisht 2000:310).

Table 1: Black and Red Ware yielding Sites in Gujarat

Sr. No.	Site Name	District	Co-ordinates	References
1	Andhi	Surat	21° 23' 00" N 72° 47' 00" E	IAR 1961-62, Ghosh 1989:20
2	Amra	Jamnagar	22° 16' 00" N 69° 55' 00" E	IAR 1955-56, Ghosh 1989:19
3	Alora	Mehsana	–	IAR 1964-65:10, Ghosh 1989:15
4	Alau	Ahmedabad	22° 15' 00" N 71° 30' 00" E	Rao1962-63 :205, Ghosh 1989:14
5	Adataala	Bhavnagar	21° 58' 05" N 71° 37' 06" E	IAR 1960-61:7, Ghosh 1989:14
6	Dhatwa	Surat	21° 09' 00" N 72° 46' 00" E	Mehta 1975
7	Kanasutariya	Ahmedabad	22° 47' 00" N 72° 16' 00" E	IAR 1954-55, Ghosh 1989:199
8	Lakhabawal	Jamnagar	22° 24' 00" N 70° 00' 00" E	IAR 1955-56, Ghosh 1989:249
9	Lakhpur	Kachchh	23° 32' 00" N 70°28' 00" E	IAR 1965-66:16, Ghosh 1989:249
10	Makawana	Bhavnagar	21° 57' 00" N 71° 40' 00" E	IAR 1960-61: 71-72, Ghosh 1989:270
11	Malwan	Surat	21° 06' 00" N 72° 43' 00" E	IAR 1969-70, Allchin and Joshi 1995
12	Ranigam	Bhavnagar	–	IAR 1960-61:7, Ghosh 1989:372
13	Sultanpur	Rajkot	21° 45' 00" N 70° 50' 00" E	IAR 1957-58, Ghosh 1989:423
14	Vadgam	Surendranagar	23° 21' 00" N 71° 48' 00" E	IAR 1964-65:10, Ghosh 1989:456
15	Dholavira	Kachchh	23° 53' 10" N 70° 13' 00" E	IAR 1967-68:14-17, Bisht 1991:71-82
16	Surkotada	Kachchh	23° 37' 00" N 70° 50' 00" E	IAR 1964-65:12, Joshi 1990
17	Kanmer	Kachchh	23° 23' 00" N 70° 52' 00" E	IAR 1985-86 :19 Kharakwal <i>et al</i> 2011
18	Ai-no Dhoru (Chitrod)	Kachchh	23° 24' 00" N 70° 40' 00" E	IAR 1977-78:20
19	Shikarpur	Kachchh	23° 07' 00" N 70° 35' 00" E	IAR 1986-87:80
20	Zekhada	Banaskantha	23° 51' 00" N 71° 28' 00" E	IAR 1977-78:20-21, Momin 1983:120-25

Sr. No.	Site Name	District	Co-ordinates	References
21	Santhali	Banaskantha	23° 53' 50" N 71° 29' 00" E	IAR 1993-94:32-33, Ajitprasad and Sonawane 1994
22	Datrana	Banaskantha	23° 46' 00" N 71° 06' 45" E	Ajitprasad and Sonawane 1994
23	Moti Pipli (Shakatri Timbo)	Banaskantha	23° 49' 25" N 71° 31' 00" E	Bhan 1994: 86-7
24	Rangpur	Surendranagar	22° 23' 56" N 71° 55' 19" E	Rao 1963: 1- 206
25	Lothal	Ahmedabad	22° 31° 25"N 72° 14' 59" E	IAR 1954-55:12, Rao1979
26	Loteshwar	Mehsana	23° 36' 20" N 71° 49' 00" E	Bhan 1994: 86-7
27	Nagwada	Surendranagar	23° 18' 15" N 71° 42' 45" E	Hegde <i>et al.</i> 1990, Bhan 1994: 86-7
28	Nageshwar	Jamnagar	22° 18' 00" N 69° 02' 00" E	Hegde <i>et al.</i> 1992
29	Prabhas Patan/ Somnath	Jamnagar	20° 53' 00" N 70° 24' 00" E	IAR 1955-56: 7, Nanavati <i>et al.</i> 1971
30	Rojdi	Rajkot	21° 51' 47" N 70° 55' 08" E	Possehl and Rawal 1989
31	Ratanpur	Mehsana	22° 28' 00" N 72° 30' 00" E	IAR 1984-85:17-18, Bhan 2000

Y.M. Chitalwala observed at Kuntasi, "There were a few finer types in the *Black and Red ware identical with the Ahar Black and Red ware*" (Chitalwala 1996:96).

K.K.Bhan compares the pottery from Chalcolithic Ratanpura and Ahar and finds out lot of similarity in shape and surface treatment (Bhan 2000: 336).

He writes, "*Pastoralism seems to have played a significant role in the colonization of north, central and south Gujarat. This migration brought them in contact with the Banas and Malwa culture areas*" (Bhan 2000:338).

We carried out exploration in eastern Kachchh and adjoining north Gujarat. We came across Ahar type white painted Black and Red Ware at Moti Pipli, Pabhumath and some other sites. At Kanmer this particular ware together with gritty red ware appears towards the end of KMR IIB or urban phase (Kharakwal et.al. 2010:220-259, 2011).

Charles Frank Herman has also compared the Ahar type Black and Red ware from Gujarat Harappan and Chalcolithic sites (Herman 1997).

Some scholars suggest that the Black and Red ware of Gujarat Harappans and Ahar is totally different as their shapes, fabric, surface treatment and so on do not match, based

on thin section analysis. Kajor Shah (2001) writes that the material of Harappan and Ahar BRW is different. It is likely that the Ahar pottery may not have been transported to Gujarat rather the idea of making black and red pottery may have travelled to Gujarat due to hinterland trade mechanism of the Harappans.

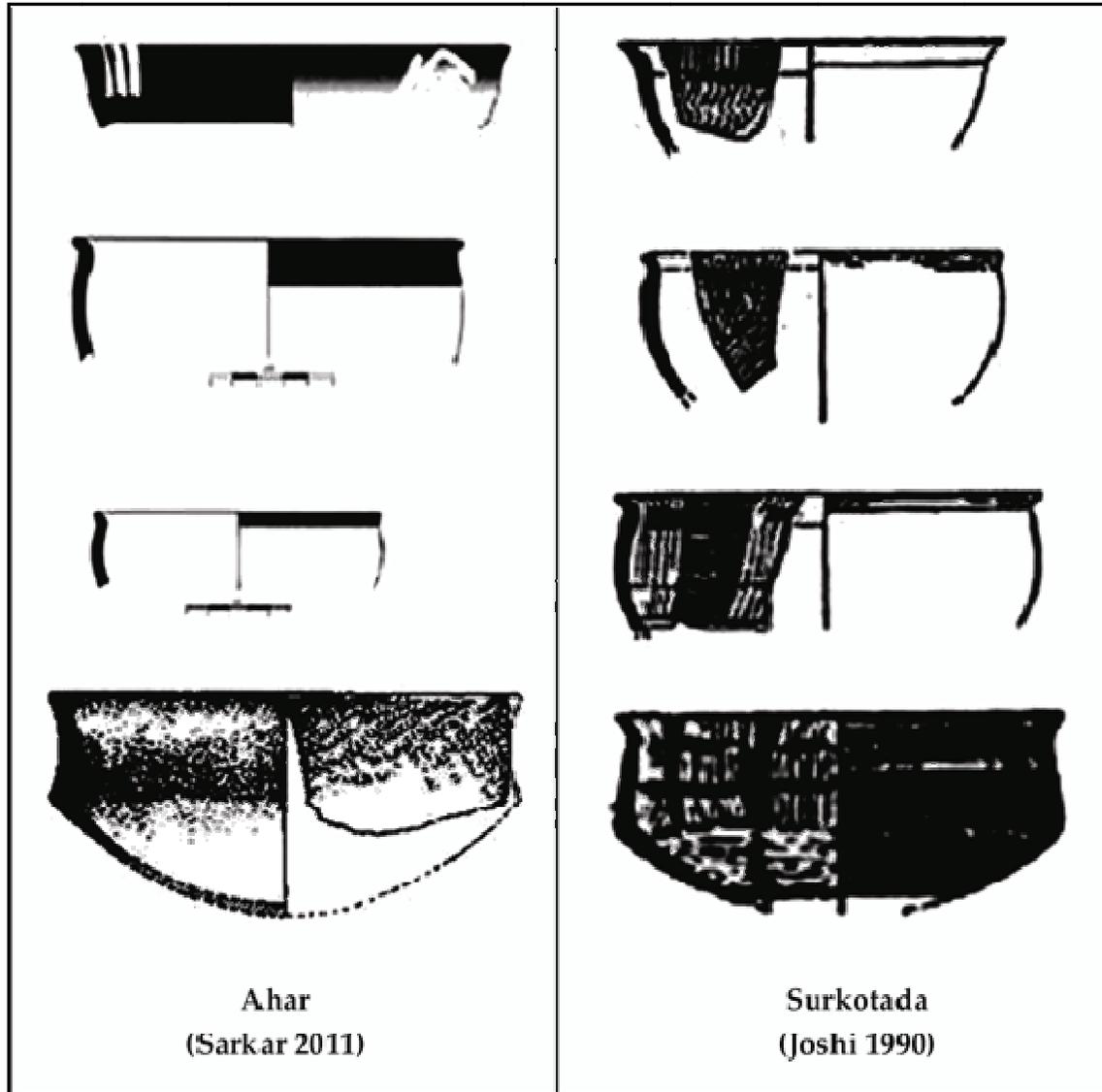


Figure 1: Similar Black and Red ware bowls from Ahar sites and Surkotada (Sarkar 2011, Joshi 1990)

Other Evidence

It is interesting to note here that it not only Black and Red Ware alone but there are other pottery types such as Buff, Tan and perforated Ware of Ahar complex are quite similar to Gujarat Harappans. Besides these, the gritty red ware pottery of Surkotada and Kanmer reminds the bright red slip pottery of Ahar. This pottery together with Black and Red Ware is alien at Kanmer and Surkotada. More interesting is the case of reserve slipped ware which is identical in both cultural complexes. What is interesting

is that its date in the Ahar complex is much older than the Gujarat Harappan. Apart from the pottery, clay sealing from Ratanpura (Sonawane 2011) are stated to be similar to Gilund sealings.

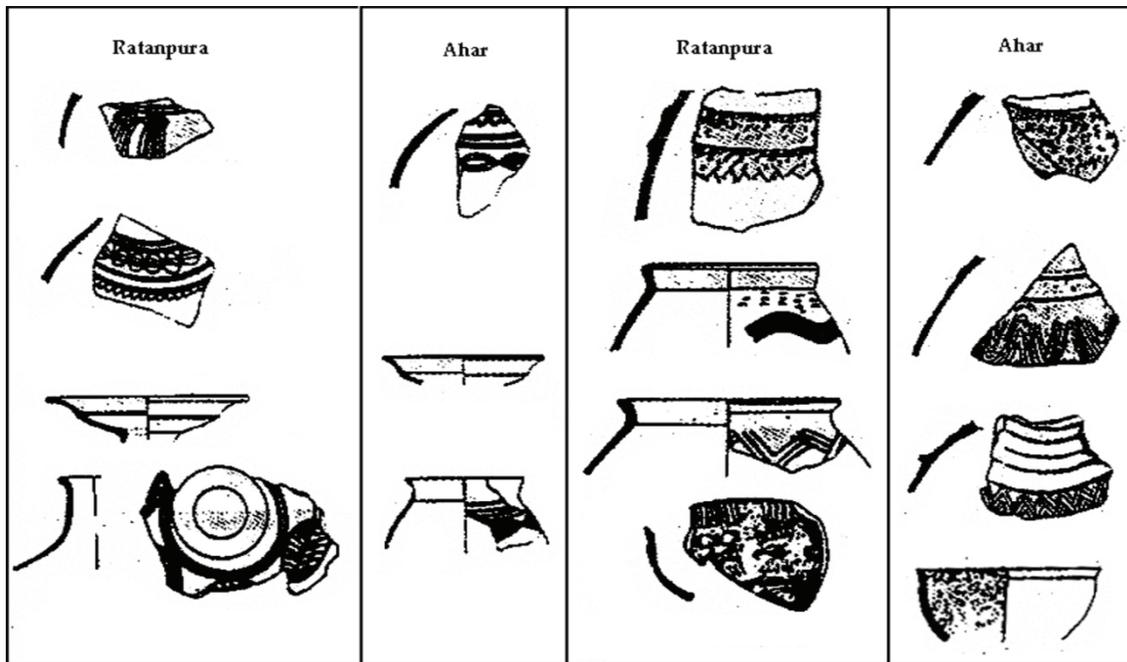


Figure 2: Similar Pottery shapes From Ahar and Ratanpura (Bhan 2000)

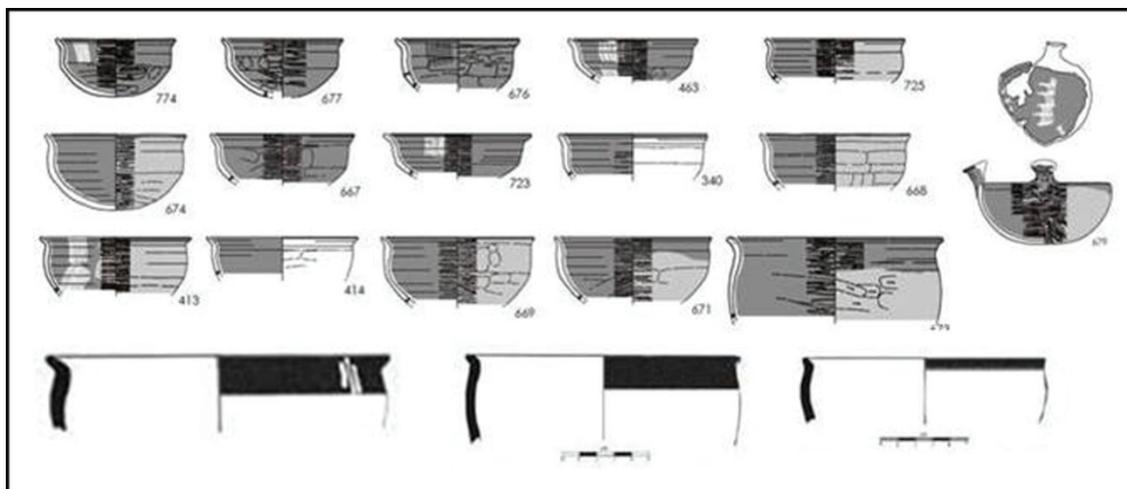


Figure 3: Similar Black and Red ware bowls from Ahar sites and Kanmer (Sarkar2011, Kharakwal 2011)

Conclusion

With the aforesaid evidence it may be concluded that the Ahar people may have come into contact with the Harappans due to their hinterland trade mechanism. The influence of Ahar culture is discovered on one hand up to central India and other up to Kachchh. The Ahar type Black and Red pottery is not found in the western part of Kachchh indicating that eastern Kachchh was the boundary of expansion.

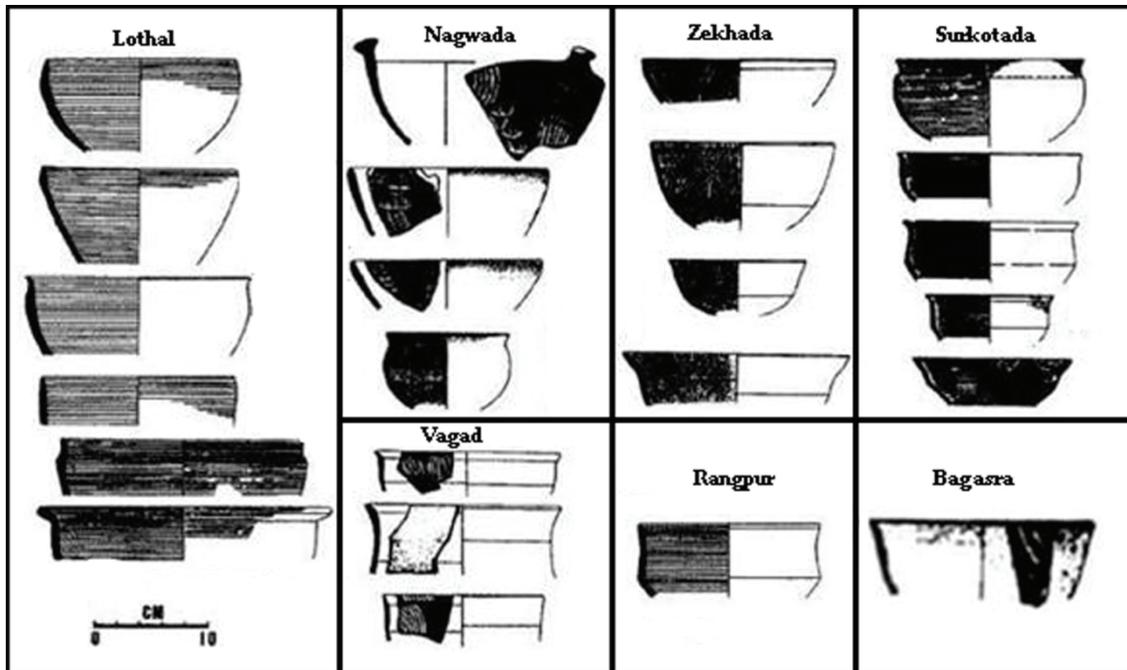


Figure 4: Black and Red ware from Gujarat Harappan and Chalcolithic Sites (Herman 1997)

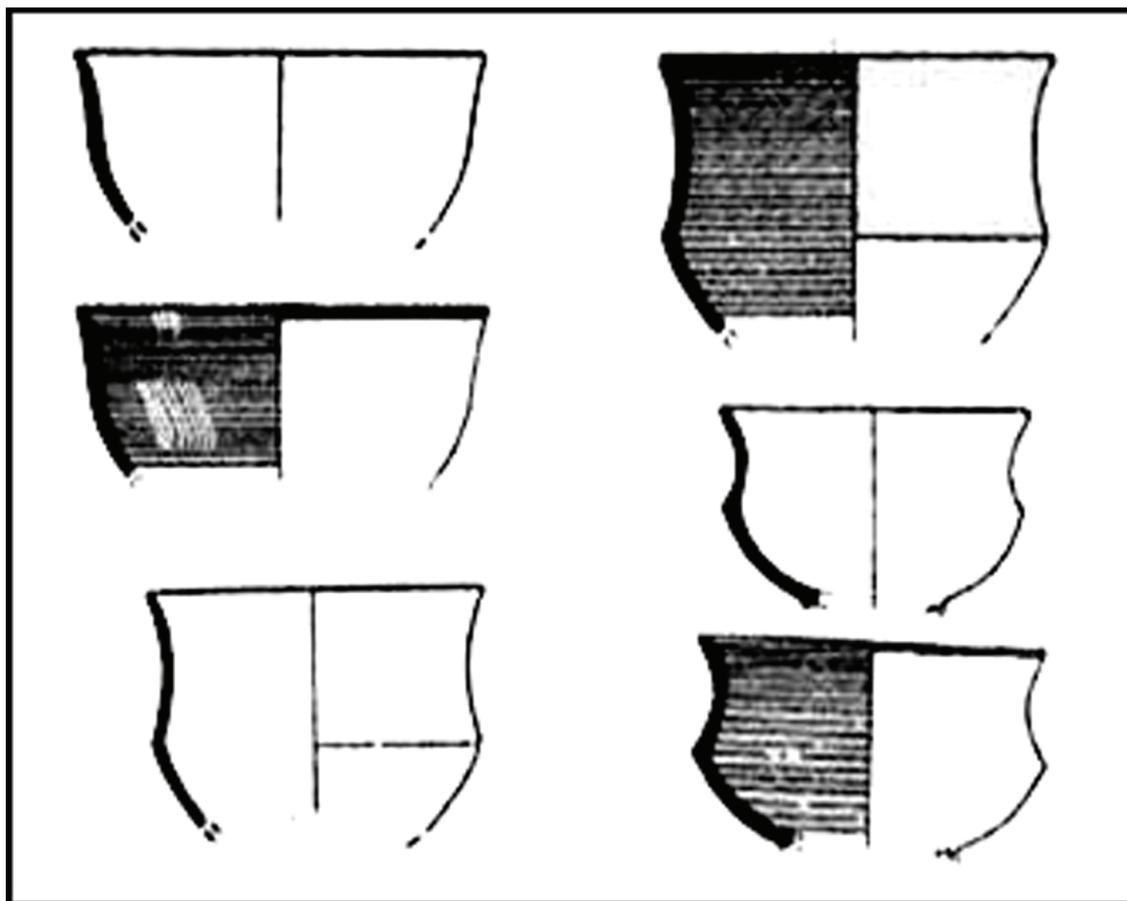


Figure 5: Black and Red ware from Rangpur (Rao 1963)



Figure 6: Black and Red ware from Moti Pipli (External Surface)

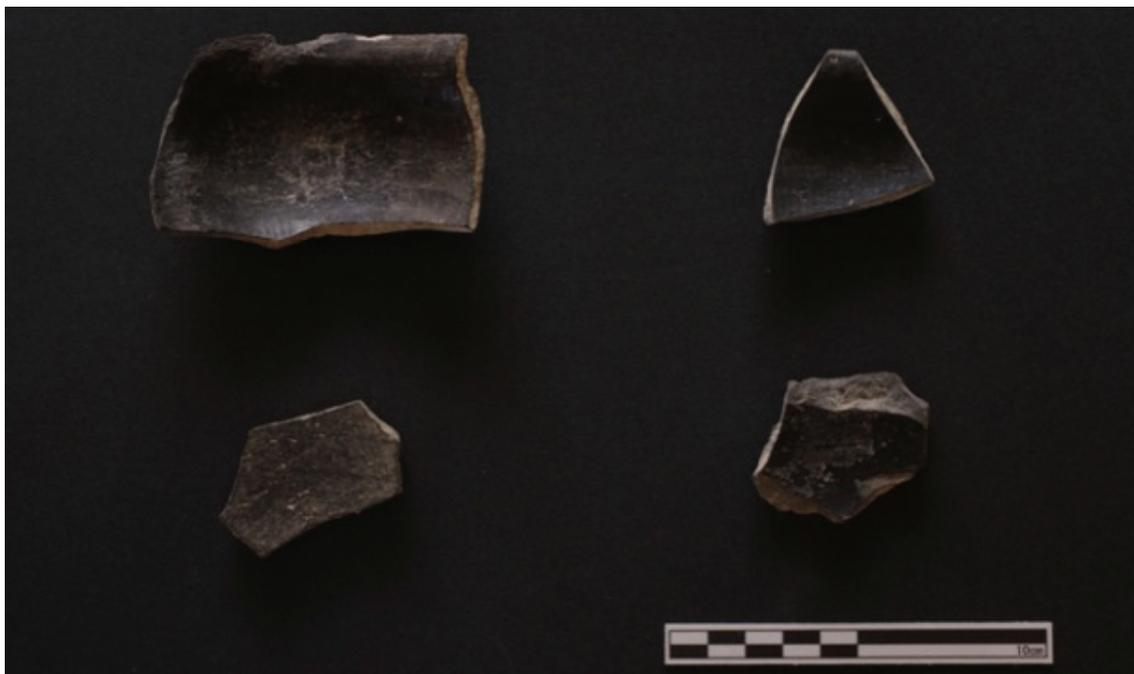


Figure 7: Black and Red ware from Moti Pipli (Internal Surface)

It is not only Black and Red Ware, a characteristic pottery of Ahar, but also other potteries such as Reserve slipped ware, gritty Red Ware, Bright Red Slip, Tan ware, perforated pottery, Buff ware which indicate contacts between two cultural complex. Perhaps we need to understand these contacts in other items e.g., if there was exchange of cereals, herbal medicine, fibrous material, honey, silver, gold, certain kind of wood, copper and so on.

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