

Pot Internment System



Chapter: IV

Pottery Analysis

Introduction 4.1

The pottery assemblages of Andro Khuman, Khamaran / Khamaral, Koutruk, Khangabok, and Sekta are used to correlate the cultural traditions and burial traits in particular (Fig.5). Both tangible mortuary goods and intangible ritualistic practices help in setting a link in the burial network, the pottery types present at all the sites can be correlated, though Sekta differs slightly in terms of time bracket, pottery morphological attributes and its burial style are analogous. After pottery analysis, it leaves no doubt that, these sites shared parallelism in respect to their burial customs and mortuary goods. “Taxonomic systems depend on the concept that a people’s standards and traditions have a sufficiently strong influence to maintain a certain degree of uniformity and thus produce recognizable styles” (Shepard, 1956). The presence of morphologically uniform pottery types is the core reason for cladding the pottery assemblages from all the five sites and the appearance of intrusive pottery types cannot be ruled out.

This research converges on secondary urn burial practices, the nature of which has been discussed in Chapter 1.2. The present study deals with burial style in which the human relics are placed inside an earthen vessel following some particular customs. One of such customs, according to their reports of the State Archaeology, is the “Pot Internment System” which refers to a secondary urn burial style in which, the human relic is interned in an earthen vessel, the bone being either unburnt or burnt, in case of the latter a charcoal piece is apart of the relic, which is covered with a lid (bowl) and placed inside a bigger pot which is again inserted inside another much bigger pot. This secondary burial type is firm by three layers of pot internment. Sometimes a fourth pot is inverted on all the three pots, covering the entire tiers of urns.

Each burial in all the sites is accompanied with funerary goods, which is offered to the souls for their afterlife. “In the graves are placed various articles for the use and comfort of the deceased in the world hereafter. Clothes, spears, daos, sometimes as at

Maram the ornaments, the shield, the drinking cup and supplies of food and drink are

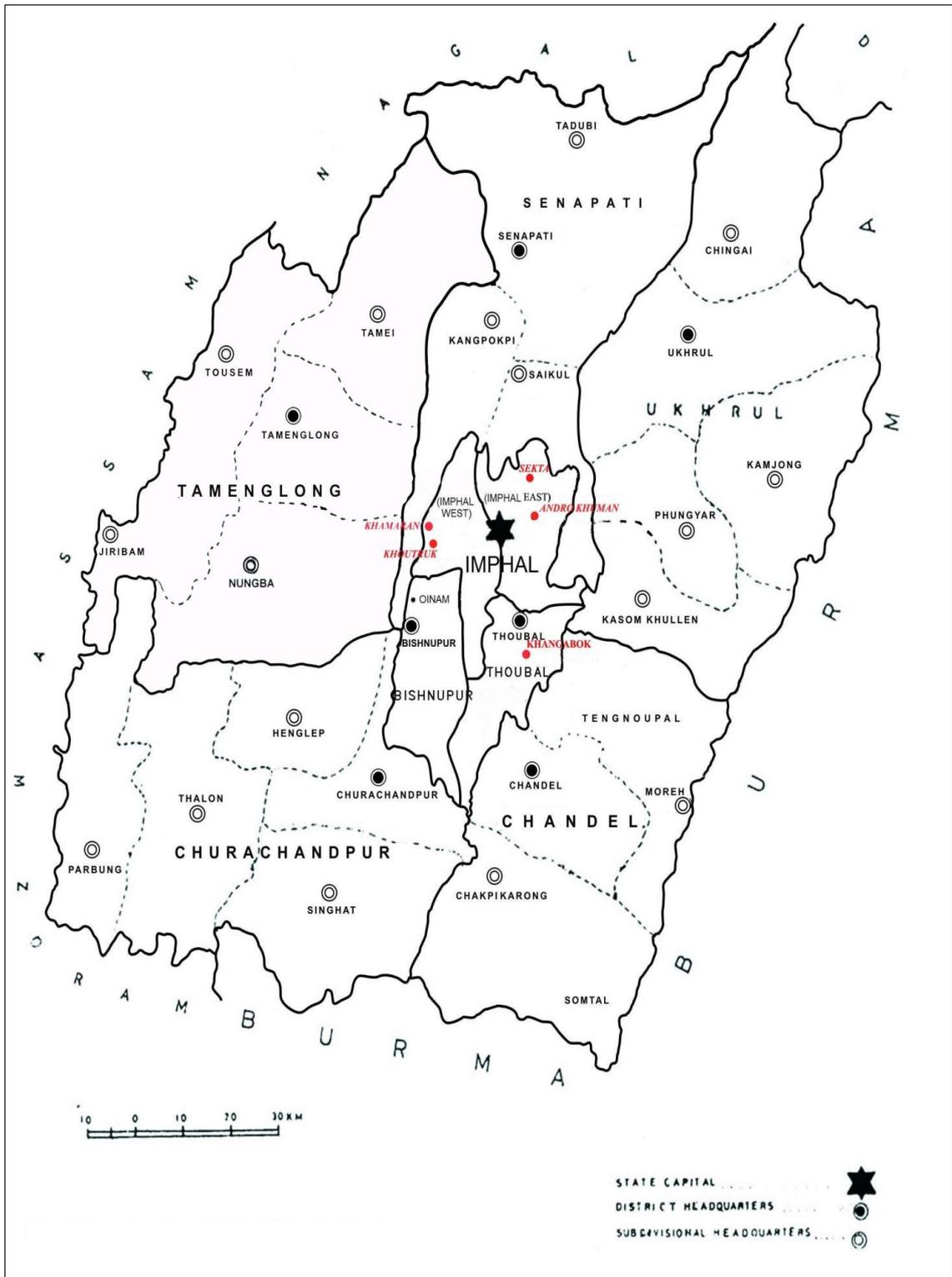


Fig.5. Map Showing the Five Secondary Urn-burial Sites

buried with the men” (Hodson, 1984:148). In between the pot layers or outside the three layers of urns, grave goods such as beads(rarely), metal ornaments consisting of rings, bangles, etc and iron implements such as sickle, dao, spade, butt-end of an arrow, arrow heads, knives, etc were found associated with the deceased as a part of the burial custom. The mandatory item amongst the mortuary goods offered to the death is the several pottery shapes found along with each burial in all the five sites. These wares associated with the grave are the main focus of the study, thus a proper understanding of the pottery shapes is the pre-requisite step to reach the apex of this research.

The perception of the pottery in all the five sites reveal existence of similar shapes in pottery, including local as well as intrusive shapes, thus the method of classification of the pottery is a necessary process, which is fulfilled by their analysis. Hence the pottery collections are classified based on the shapes, decorations, sizes, colours, textures, manufacturing techniques and their probable functions. The pottery manufacturing techniques are discussed in Chapter V in detail. Classification of pottery is a simple means of grouping them analytically for interpretive purpose. Thus, the first step is to comprehend the description of each vessel shapes. As the pottery assemblages of all the sites are directly or indirectly assimilated in terms of morphological attributes and decorations, they are described commonly as under and the exclusive elements are highlighted along with the reports.

Following Prudence M.Rice, the vessels have been anatomically compared, with three broad parts: orifice, body and base (Fig.6). Further structural forms are as follow:

1. Orifice (rim opening)
2. Neck (portion below the orifice to the shoulder)
3. Shoulder (portion where the neck and the upper body meets)
4. Body (portion which has the maximum diameter, except incase of the smoking cups)
 - i. Upper (upper part of body which is above the point of maximum diameter)
 - ii. Lower (lower part of body which is below the point of maximum diameter).
5. Base (bottom portion of the vessel)
6. Pedestal (leg or stand of the base)

7. Appendage (conclude handle, sprouted channel, pipes, etc).

In case of hookah tops/smoking cups, morphologically it is broadly divided into:

- i. Cup (the upper portion where the tobacco is placed)
- ii. Pedestal stand or base
- iii. Pipes/ channel

Description of the Pottery Shapes

- a) Pots (*Chaphu*): Characterized with a restricted neck and the height of the pot is more than the maximum diameter of the body.

Probable purpose: storing and cooking.

Probable technique: Hand made with dabber and anvil.

The pots are of several variants in terms of their shape, size, decoration, and with or without a pedestal stand. For analytical purpose they are classified as under:

- i. Regular pot with rounded body (III.II.1).
- ii. Elongated body III.II.2).
- iii. Distinct globular body (III.II.3).
- iv. Thin sherds of large pots
- v. Miscellaneous sherds of pots

- b) Bowls (*Kambi /Tengkot*): Bowls are characterized with an unrestricted orifice, deep body and with or without a pedestal.

Probable purpose: fluid serving, drinking, lids.

Probable technique: handmade of slab clay, moulded and smoothed with oyster shell as done at present day Thongjao. The pedestal stands are separately shaped with a wet cloth which leaves fine striations on the stand (cover page). Turn table (disc) method is another alternative method.

There are several variants of bowls at these sites.

- i. Bowl with a flaring funnel shaped body and with distinct pedestal stand (III. III.1).
- ii. Bowl with an out- turned rim, carinated/ inundated neck, and with pedestal stand (III. III2).
 - a. Same as ii but without the out-turned rim.

- iii. Bowl with an inward/incurved rim and with pedestal(III. III.3).
- iv. Bowl with a less prominent pedestal and with funnel shape body(III. III.4).
- v. Bowl with a flaring body and without pedestal(III. III.5)
- vi. Bowl which looks like a cup (high 7.4 cms) and with pedestal(III. III.6)
- vii. Bowl with a semi funnel shape body, rimless and with pedestal(III. III.7).
- viii. Bowl with a concave body and flat base(III. III.8).
 - a. Variant of viii but with flat brim.
- ix. Porcelain(III. III.9).

c) Channel Spouted vessels: Characterized with restricted orifice and its height is more than the diameter of the body. It has an appendage (channel spout).

Probable purpose: storing and serving liquid.

Probable technique: the body is handmade by beater and anvil technique, the neck portion and the pedestal stand are prepared by the turn table (disc) method by using coils.

These are the long narrow spouted channel vessels with globular or pear shaped body and with or without a pedestal stand. They are either plain or decorated. Thus on the basis of its distinct shapes they are divided into:

- i. Ribbed long neck with or without splayed-out rim(III. IV.1)
- ii. Short neck with splayed-out rim(III. IV.2).
- iii. Pear shaped body (exclusive shape, only at Sekta & somewhat similar shape found at Khamaran) (III. IV.3).

d) Dishes(*Kegam*III.V.1): Characterized with unrestricted orifice and shallow body.

Purpose: serving mainly solid, used as lids, etc.

These are dishes with or without a pedestal base, splayed-out/ flared-out rim. The trough or dishes are an exclusive pottery shape found only at Sekta. They are crude in quality and heavy. These are sometimes decorated on the exterior rim portion.

e) Hookah tops or Smoking cups (*Nganthak*):Characterized with an unrestricted orifice and deep body. They are with or without pedestal and appendage.

Purpose: smoking

The royal chronicle, Cheirharol Kumpapa, in the year of Khoipung Lokpam Mayang, Sakabda 1532 (1610 CE), during the reign of Meetingu Khakempa, records, “Smoking with pipes also began at this period” (Parratt, 2005:69). These resemble glass hour in shape, consisting of two major parts: the upper portion, known as the cup and the lower portion known as the base/pedestal stand. They are mostly with incised decoration. They are with perforations for air circulation or for usage purpose. They are divided into two types:

- i. Smoking cups (Ill.VI.1): Smoking cup is broadly divided into upper and lower parts. The upper part consists of a cup where the charcoal and tobacco are placed and the lower part is the pedestal stand /base. The cup has a mouth/orifice, neck, shoulder, mid ridge (maximum diameter), lower body and then the hip. The base/ pedestal stand starts from the hip portion of the cup. A perforation (more than 0.5cm) is present in the hip which is connected to another hole on the periphery of the pedestal stand. This particular hole in the pedestal stand is for inserting the pipe which might have been made of a bamboo. There are also two small holes ,measuring less than 0.2cm, one near the mouth pipe hole and the other is on the bottom of the base. These are mainly for air circulation.

Both the cup and the pedestal stand parts are generally decorated with simple oblique incised marks and rings/ striations.

- ii. Intricate smoking pipes (Ill.VI.2): Smoking pipes are different Smoking cups. This type is with an appendage (attached pipes) hence known as smoking pipes. These are broadly divided into upper and lower parts which are similar to the former type but this type is much smaller in size and bears intricate lotus petal and floral designs right from the orifice to the base. Another feature is the presence of the pipe which is missing in the previous shape. There are only two perforations in this type, one is in the hip portion and the other is where the mouth pipe is connected to the hip.

- f) Ribbed Long neck drinking vessels (III.V.2): Characterized with restricted ribbed long neck with its height more than the maximum diameter of the body and with pedestal stand. The neck is generally more than 6 cm in length.

Purpose: storage and carrying fluid.

These are with globular or almost rounded body or sometimes with pear shaped body for storing/serving liquid. They are with ribbed long neck and with or without pedestal stand. They are either plain or decorated which is restricted only to the body portion. They are generally decorated with sun motif and its variants. The tiered or ribbed neck which is joined later to the body bears striation marks indicating its upward motion to raise the neck, probably prepared on a disc (turn table) where else the body is handmade.

- g) Grey vases: Characterized with restricted orifice and possess a shorter neck of about 6cm. They are either with or without pedestal stand.

Purpose: carrying and storing fluid.

These are grey ware vessels with funnel shaped rim, globular body and usually with distinct pedestal. The diameter of the orifice is usual 6-8cm. They are either plain or with decoration, series of rings around the rim and incised oblique or straight vertical lines on the shoulder and the body portion. They have been divided into two types.

- i. Vase without pedestal stand with or without decoration (Pl.VII.i)
- ii. Vase with pedestal stand with or without decoration (Pl.VII.ii)

4.2. Andro Khuman

Andro (24° 45' 30.93"N- 94° 2' 48.88"E) is about 30 km from Imphal and it comes under the Imphal East District. According to a legend, the name Andro is derived from the word Handro, probably, meaning "Returned settlement" as it is believed that the place was re-occupied by the ancestors of the present occupants. Andro Khuman is one of the hamlets (leikai) of Andro. The term Khuman literally means an old/abandoned site. It is an old settlement of Andro village, inhabited by a schedule caste ethnic group known as the Lois (Chakpas), who resides near the main hill region of the Nongmaijing/ Shelloi Langmaiching. The excavated area is at the foothill, at a courtyard of Mr. Puthem Shyamo Singh.

Excavation: Excavation was carried out on 13th-18th September, 2003 under the leadership of Dr. L. Kunjeswori Devi, Senior Assistant Professor, Department of History, Manipur University in collaboration with the State Archaeology Department of Manipur. Two trenches of 3x3m were dug. Trench 'A' revealed eight burials within a depth of 0.16m and reached the virgin soil at the depth of 0.25m. Trench 'B' was to the south of the trench A, which yielded partial burial pot and a complete skeleton of an herbivorous animal which does not belong to the same context.

According to the report of the State Archaeology, the nature of the burial is the "Pot Internment System". It is associated with long neck drinking pots and few burials. The innermost pots are elongated ones containing burnt bone fragments and charcoal, which is covered with a footed or unfooted bowl. Like all the other sites sometimes it had a fourth inverted pot covering all three urns. In between the pot layers or outside the pots, grave goods such as beads (rarely), ornaments, iron implements of sickle, dao, spade, butt-end of an arrow, knives were found. "The probable chronology of the burial site might be from the last part of 18th century to the early part of 19th century" (Dr. Devi. 2005:32).

The analysis (Fig.7) of the pottery assemblage at Andro Khumanis atypical of all the other related sites. Unlike all the other sites Andro Khuman pottery collection consisted of only sherds. The pot sherd were sorted firstly, on the basis of their trench and secondly, diagnostic and non diagnostic categories. The sherds were cleaned and reconstructed carefully. Each stage of the analysis process was carefully recorded along with photographs. After a thorough study of the diagnostic and the non diagnostic pot sherds, the probable shapes were concluded. The final stage was to correlate the vessel shapes of Andro Khuman with the pottery present at the other sites. Some vessel shapes were similar and others were rare specimen, probably an intrusive element.

Originality or experiment which did not gain acceptance or may be unavailability of raw material can give rise to an individual inventiveness. The application of a solution of a bark of *sahikuhi* tree, botanical name is *Pasania pachyphylla* on the Andro pottery is such an example. The *Kuhi* solution is prepared especially for burnishing the pottery of Andro. Andro is currently an active pottery manufacturing locality in Manipur and the original potters known as Chakpa (Ethnic group). Their uniqueness

lies in their continuance of their ancestral techniques of pottery making. They are renowned for their primitive hand-made pottery which is exclusive of all the modern techniques and resources. It can be concluded that there was no necessity for the ancient inhabitants of Andro to purchase pottery from other localities until, in case of unavailability of a particular shape at Andro. Thus the pottery from Andro Khuman had their unique features in terms of its shapes and decorations.

Through reconstruction of the pot sherds of Andro Khuman, ten distinct vessel shapes can be concluded which are as follows:

Regular Big pot (Fig.8.6):

This vessel has a restricted orifice without a pedestal stand. This is a rounded big pot, *kuhi* treated and the sherds are thin compared to all the other sherds present from the site. They are generally with herring bone decoration which is left behind by the dabbing effect of herring bone incised dabbler. These pots are hand-made with anvil and dabbler method.

This variety is suspected to be similar to those of Koutruk regular big pot. At Andro as well as at Koutruk the rim portion of this type of vessel is missing probably removed during the mortuary ritual. The reason being the “Pot Internment System” thus removal of the rim to insert the smaller pots inside the big one is necessary.

Elongated Pot (Fig. 8.9):

This vessel has restricted neck and elongated body with height more than the maximum diameter of the body. It is similar to the regular pot but with elongated tall body with a prominent pedestal stand of about 2.5cms height, which is luted separately. The vessel of this type is always with *kuhi* treatment and the brim is generally flat with flaring rim. The elongated pots are generally of 12/13cms in diameter. They are plain without any decoration. The probable functions could be for storage and serving purposes. These are hand-made with anvil and dabbler method.

Bowl Fig.8.8:

The bowls of all the five undertaken sites are diverse as described above thus it will be dealt individually according to the variation. At Andro, fragments of bowls are found which ranged from thick to thin variety. The thick variety leaves no doubt that

it is hand-made but the thin variety shows evidence of striation at the base of the bowl. The striations lead us to believe that, turn-table or similar kind of technique was used to prepare such bowls. The bowls are with or without pedestal. The diameter of the bowls range between 12-14cm. The bowl with pedestal is locally known as *Koklou* which is made by hand and beater technique and used for drinking intoxicant beverage.

Basin/Shallow Trough (Fig.8.1):

This vessel type is heavy in weight. It is a shallow trough with flat brim which is much thicker at the rim portion and thins down towards the base of the basin. The diameter is approximately 40cm. The cloth mark striation on the exterior surface of the rim and the body execute that the vessel is hand-made.

Drinking vase:

This is a grayish drinking vase with a rounded/oblong body. A luted pedestal stand is either present or absent. It sometimes presents intricate designs on the rim, neck or body. The rim is generally long.

Perforated vessel (Fig .8.3):

The perforated vessel is a unique vessel type found only at Andro Khuman. The perforated vessel is believed to be of two varieties, which can be drawn from the diagnostic and the non diagnostic sherds from the collection.

Variety (a) is a base which is cylindrical in shape and has a hole or space to place a diya/light at the base end. This variety has clear cut incised marks forming a diamond shape design and perforation in the center of the incised diamond (Fig 8.5).

Variety (b) is a rim which is thick and long. Incised decorations are visible from the neck portion of the vessel, which are not deeply incised as those on variety (a). The brim of this vessel rim is flat. Generally, this vessel type is with soot marks (7.5YR 4/0). The perforated vessels are of 26cms in diameter and the rim portions of the perforated vessels are much thicker & heavier than the elongated pot rim portion. This type of vessel bears resemblance to dish-on-stand (*thali*) and lamp stand (*thangmei makhong*) which also bears similar diamond shape perforation design on the body (Fig.8.10).

Straight sided vessel (Fig: 8.4):

This is one of the exclusive vessel shapes found at the site. It is rimless, flat brim, bulky straight sided vessel which seems to be narrower at the mouth/orifice. Its orifice is 26 cm in diameter.

Elongated Big Rim Vessel (Fig 8.2):

This is a single specimen from this site as well as from all the other four related sites. It is an elongated shape vessel with a prominent heavy rim and a flat brim. The interior is *kuhi* treated. It has a rim diameter of about 12cms.

Carinated Corrugated Vessel:

This vessel type is again an exclusive specimen found only in this trench and site. It is a shallow vessel with carination and a corrugated body. It shows striations of a slow wheel (?). The upper portion as well as one side of the vessel is missing. It is of medium texture.

Channel Spouted Vessel:

This vessel type is also a single specimen of this site but this vessel type is also found at other related sites. It is a vessel used for storing and serving liquid. It is generally either rounded/ globular/elongated body with or without pedestal. It has restricted long or short neck. The single specimen here is a diagnostic sherd of a rounded body vessel with its channel. The most interesting feature of this specimen is that the channel has no hole to let the liquid flow out thus it might have been just for ritualistic purpose.

Several important points were encountered during the process of analysis especially during classification of the vessel types of Andro Khuman.

- i. Number of non diagnostic *kuhi* treated thin sherds of the big regular pots, outnumbered the rest of the vessel shapes at this site.
- ii. Rim portions found at the site varies from 1.5cms to 6cms in length.
- iii. Perforated vessel sherds both diagnostic as well as non diagnostic were found abundantly.

The pedestal stand and the rim portion of the vessels are difficult to distinguish as they have similar features but careful analysis shows:

- a. The rim is more flaring in angle than the pedestal stand.
- b. Upper portion/end of a pedestal stand which is attached to the base of the vessel has flat surface/brim unlike those of the brim of a rim.
- c. There is an irregular extension in the interior as well as the exterior surfaces of the upper portion of the pedestal where it is joined to the base of the vessel.
- d. There is clear cloth mark striation visible on the upper end of the pedestal because it has to be made separately before it is ready to be luted to the base of the vessel.

The rim of the perforated vessel and the rim of the elongated pot can be very confusing to distinguish but certain facts after the analysis can be concluded.

- a. Rim portions of perforated vessels are much thicker and heavier than the elongated pot rim portion.
- b. Perforated vessels are of 26cms in diameter & elongated pots are of 12 or 13cms in diameter.
- c. Perforated vessels develop a distinct flat brim and a deep incised cut mark around the neck portion which is a continuation of the triangular perforation on the body where else; the rim of the elongated pot generally has a flat brim but more flaring than the perforated vessel and bears no incised marks.
- d. Rim of the elongated pot is with *kuhi* treatment on the exterior and no such treatment on the perforated rim is visible and it has more of soot stain (7.5YR4/0) instead.

4.3. Khamaran / Khamaral

Khamaran/Khamaral (24° 52' 26.92" N – 93° 53' 40.82" E) is a village in the Imphal west District. It is located near Khonghapat, National Highway. 39., which is 12km from Imphal. It is surrounded by Yenkaobung on the east, Laitang Khunou on the north and Kameng village on the south. The nearest river is Luwangli which originates from the hills of Leimakhong and confluence with the river Nambul near Iroisemba hills.

Some villagers reported the State Archaeology Office of Manipur about an accidental finds of pottery in the forest of the Luwang Ching(hill). After investigation, it was concluded that the site was a common burial group and the top layer has been disturbed by treasure hunters. In June 1997, excavation at Khamaran was taken up. The site was located on the eastern slope of the Luwang Ching (hill) towards the western boundary of the present Khamaran village. The village Khamaran is an important historical site, which belonged to the Luwang Principality. “The main objective of the excavation was to ascertain the cultural sequence of the site and the nature of the burials practiced there and to see whether there is any similarity or not of the burials which was already discovered at Sekta (Imphal East District) and Khangaok (Thoubal District) excavations”. (Dr. Devi, 2005:14).

The word Khamaran was an ethnic name of the majority of the Burmese during the days of Ancient and Medieval History of Burma (Myanmar). They were known to the Meiteis from the time of the Meitei King Mungyamba (A.D.1562-97). There were constant wars between the Burmese and the Meiteis and especially during the reign of the King Garibniwaz (A.D.1709-49).This ethnic group of people were Burmese captives who in course of time got absorbed into the Meitei society. They are recorded in the Royal Chronicle. The probable date assigned to this burial site is taken from about the 18th century to the early part of the 19th century A.D.

Excavation: A trench of 4.5m x 4.5m was laid which revealed two burial layers within a depth of 115cm. Twelve burials were unearthed from the first layer and seven burials from the second layer. The virgin soil was reached at the depth of 120cms but no burials were found from the depth of 115cm onwards. The upper layer is loamy reddish brown colour soil and the lower is clayed yellowish soil.

Each burial displayed the “Pot Internment System”, pots of various sizes were placed inside one another forming three layers of pots. The inner most layer which is a complete pot contained the burnt (fully or partially charred)bones along with charcoal and then it was covered with a bowl (with or without pedestal stand). This is accompanied by few other pottery vessels like the black vase, long necked drinking vase and spouted vessels which were found mostly outside but sometimes placed between the outer and middle pot layers. Another interesting feature is the lower half portion of a pot which is used to cover the three layered pots by placing it upside

down. The second burial layer is 38cm thick and in this layer there are seven burials found. Here too, they follow the system of burial but the mortuary pottery like the drinking vase and spouted vessels are more in number in this layer.

As per the records, the pottery here is locally made and the site is believed to be a manufacturing site based on the scattered potsherds (insufficient evidence though). The earthenware includes: broken and unbroken lower portion of pots, nineteen jars of elongated and globular types, nine drinking vessels of long and narrow neck, eight spouted vessels, three grey vases, two bowls and eighteen ring footed bowls. In the “Pot Internment System”, the innermost pot is generally the elongated pot (described earlier) which is mostly with a pedestal stand. The size of the outer two pot layers ranges from 25-50cm. The pottery assemblage is ill-fired, hand-made and generally reddish, except the drinking vessels which are reddish brown in colour.

The decoration on these vessels includes; honey comb pattern, herring bone, ribbed, chevron, rows of wheels interconnected by criss-cross lines and slanting rows surrounded by a line which are interconnected by criss-cross lines.

The Mortuary goods comprised of iron objects (three knives and one spear head), bronze ornaments (three rings, two armllets, four bangles, a plate having a size of 11.5 cm in diameter and 1mm in thickness) and beads (six blue glass beads of spherical and 5mm in diameter).

The morphological attributes of the pottery assemblage at Khamaran is depicted in macroscopic scale as displayed in Table no.4. The assemblage includes large number of ribbed long neck vessels, channel spouted vessels, elongated pots, regular pots, bowl variants, grey vases similar to those of Sekta are also encountered here (Fig.7). A pot sherd containing unburnt bone fragments provide us with views on the burial practice at Khamaran (Ill.VIII.1).

Complete as well as only the ribbed neck portions of the ribbed long neck vessels type are found with its body portion generally decorated with sun motif in varied forms.

The channel spouted vessels are of three variant viz; with ribbed long neck, splayed-out rim and pear/elongated shape body. They are either decorated with sun motif or herring bone designs or without any decoration. An interesting point to be noted from one of this vessel type is the non perforated channel (Ill.VIII.2). This put forward a

thought relating to the burial customs mannerism overweighing the functionalistic aspect of the pottery grave goods or is it a potter's misstep?

The elongated pots are generally with a pedestal stand with or without decoration. Unlike the similar type found at Andro Khuman, these are without *kuhi* treatment.

The regular rounded pots are much smaller in size than the elongated pots. They are decorated with herring bone designs all over the body. Finger prints are clearly seen on the interior of these pots which shed light on its manufacturing technique.

The bowls found here are of all the above described variants i.e. type i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi.

The drinking vase consists both of Redware and Greyware. They are with slightly elongated body with funnel shape neck. The Redware is without any decoration.

Dr. Kujeswori Devi, Assistant Professor of the Department of History, Manipur University carried out an excavation at same site simultaneously. She and her students unearthed similar artifacts as those by the State Archaeology Office. The excavated artifacts are exhibited in the Department of History.

This pottery assemblage consists of various pots and bowls in large numbers followed by various types of channel spouted jars, ribbed long neck jars, drinking vases, a black drinking vase. The details are same as above and the morphological attributes are in Table no.4. The most interesting amongst the collection are serial no. 46 – 48 of this Table no.4. They exhibit the perfect example of three intact “Pot Internment System”. No. 46, 47 and 48 burial consists of a herring bone decoration pot of which the upper part is missing inside which a small complete plain pot covered by a coarse hand-made bowl is exhibited. The bowl has finger prints on it which execute the production method.

4.4. Koutruk

Site location: Koutruk (24° 53' 19.78" N - 93° 49' 52.9" E) is a schedule caste village which is 18 km away from Imphal .According to S. Rupobon Singh, the Assistant Archaeologist (Archaeology Office of Manipur), initially the villagers had occupied the foothill of the low lying hills, *Tesarot*, but with increase in population, extension of habitation over other nearby hills took place. The site is located at a height of about

110m. The archeological potential at the site was accidentally uncovered by Thangjam Rajen whilst constructing his house.

Excavation: A trench of 8x8sq.m was laid to carry out the excavation by the State Archaeology Office, Government of Manipur in April 2000. The excavation revealed three layers of burial to a depth of 1.92m, which had to end abruptly due to the protest of the local inhabitants. It is informed that the soil is red and exhibits some degree of podsolization. The first burial layer starts from the depth of 0.35 to 0.92m bearing six burials. The depth of the second burial layer is between 0.92 to 1.64m with seven burials. And the third layer is at the depth of 1.62 to 1.92m with four burials. “The mode of disposal of death seen at the site is still in practice at the Koutruk village” (Singh,2005).

According to the report, every burial follows the layers internment system. Each burial consists of three urns; the innermost contains charred bones along with charcoal or sometimes the grave goods like coins, copper plates, bangles, etc. and covered with a bowl either with or without pedestal. Almost all the earthenwares from the site are red in colour and all are hand-made, they are plain as well as decorated wares. The designs consist of stamped geometric designs and sun motif. “The poor economical condition of the people was also demonstrated by the few numbers of urn used in each burial” (Singh, 2005:27). The probable date of this particular site is subscribed to the later part of the 18th century to the early part of the 19th century A.D.

The mortuary goods at Koutruk were very less, which throw light on the economic plight of the people. It consisted of few coins, one ring, a bangle fragment, and fragments of copper plates.

In 2005, Assistant Professor, Dr. L.Kujeswori Devi of the Department of History, Manipur University conducted an excavation measuring an area of 5x5 sq.m. trench at the height of 110m on the hill slope. According to the excavator the site is a burial ground of the *Lurel* (head) of the Ningthoujam and Leisangthem clans. The first layer with a depth of 15-20cms bears five pot burials, 6th and the 7th burials found at the depth of 20cm to 73cm and 8th and the 9th burials were encountered between 73cm to 83cm.

The innermost pot of the burial is an elongated type with or without a pedestal stand. Fragments of charred bone and grave goods such as beads, fingerings, bangles, etc were found inside the pots. The characteristic feature of this site is the appearance of rounded pots with a small hole at the base of the vessel. Square bell metal coins bearing the legend 'Shri' in archaic Manipuri and Devnagari script and similar circular types were found. These belonged to the King Garib Niwaz who reigned between A.D.1709-1748.

The result of the present analysis of both the excavations is presented in details in Table no.4. The vessel types found at Koutruk include spots (type. a.i and iv), drinking vases and bowls (type. b.ii and iv).The hand-made regular pots are of various sizes. These are classified into four variants based on the diameters of the pots which range between 14-16cm, 10-14cms, 10-8cms and less than 8cm. The average size pots are with herring or mat impression decoration and they are generally with perforation in the bottom (Ill.IX.1& 2).The miniature pots with or without pedestal stand are plain without any decoration. The designs are found in the exterior covering from the base till the shoulder of the vessel, marked with herring or mat impression designs. A close examination of these pots reveal a Koutruk signature pottery, which can be divided into three; long straight neck, straight neck with thick brim and straight neck with slightly flaring orifice.

The thin pot with bone herring decoration is the main component of every burial thus these sherds are abundantly present as can be seen from the table below. As these large pots are thin in section and the upper portion (rim) is removed during the burial customs probably before burying, they tend to break easily. Thus these pots are often found in fragments.

Table:5**Stratigraphy and Featuristic Table of Koutruk(KTK)**

SITE	BURIAL NO.	PHASE	DEPTH	NO.OF SHERDS	POTTERY
KTK	2	I	0.35	–	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration
KTK	4	I		–	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration and fragment of a pedestal.
KTK	T-A	I	0.35	–	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration.
KTK	–	I	0.64	18	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration.
KTK	–	I	1.0	14	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration.
KTK	–	I	0.73	5	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration.
KTK	–	I	0.25	9	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration.
KTK	–	I	0.15	–	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration.
KTK	–	I	surface	–	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration.
KTK	–	I	0.73	7	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration
KTK	–	I	0.85	12	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration
KTK	–	I	surface	17	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration
KTK	–	I	surface	15	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration
KTK	–	I	surface	16	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration
KTK	–	I	2.00	11	Thin sherds of large pot with herring decoration

4.5. Khangabok

Site Location: Khangabok (24° 37' 11.09" N – 94° 1' 10.16" E) located in Thoubal District. The locals call this site, Murari/Morari Lampak (lawn or ground of the dead or the grave-yard), this is situated at Khangabok Meisnam Leikai, L.P.School Compound. Khangabok was under the Khuman (clan) principality prior to 1335 A.D.

Excavation: The excavation here was conducted from 18th-28th March, 1996 by the State Archaeology Office and also participated by Dr.L.Kunjessori Devi, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Manipur University. The burial trait here is different from those of the other four sites. Here, human bones, skulls and grave goods were found inserted inside or outside the pots. A grid of 3.5x3.5 sq.m was taken. A clear stratification of the site is not recorded due to disturbance of the particular area. Thus the archaeologists have stratified on the basis of the burials, hence the term "Burial Layer" will be used, and furthermore, each "Burial layer" is grouped, on the basis of the finds. All together there are five trenches: XA1, YA1, A1, XB1, and XA2.

The type of burial practice at Khangabok comprises of relic burial, symbolic burial, memorial burial and double burial. It is clear from the report that it is a mass graveyard where different types of burial practices were carried out. By studying the mortuary goods one can conclude that the burial ground was open to people of all social status as some burial bear iron object, metal ornaments and beads, some with net sinkers, some with hookah tops/ bowls, some with several types of pottery. Some with unburnt bone fragments or skull where else some are without relics at all. The richest burial may be Group G, XA2, 2nd layer which include a skull and a bone along with pots of various sizes, two bronze plates, two iron implements and six beads. Burial comprising of beads are very rare but retrieval of six beads in Group G is an obligatory indication of the deceased's social or economic status.

The pottery assemblage from Khagabok resembles those found at the other sites. It comprises of several various sizes of pots, bowls, five clay net sinkers, four terracotta hookah bowls, eight long ribbed neck vessels.

The big pots mostly contain the human relics and sometimes the base has been used as a lid. These generally bear herring bone decoration but geometric designs are found too. Pots are found in varied sizes like in all the other secondary burial sites. According to the report, the big pots are with 20-30cm in diameter, circumference at the widest bulging is 100-140 cm and 30-40 cm in height. The medium pots size ranged from 18-20cm with 19-25 cm of the widest circumference (body) and small pot size varied from 13-17cm and 13-18cms respectively. Net sinkers of about 1.3cm in diameter and 4.5 cm in length are found. Only two hookah tops (smoking cups, type.i) and two smoking pipes (type.ii) were found which are broken. The drinking vessels and its variants are known as Lee, Leiree, Leiree Khum, which is an indication of eminent status. This is believed to have been an integral part in the coronation of a Meitei king. The bowls and dishes are also part of the pottery assemblage from the site. The Carbon dating test conducted at the Birbal Sahani Institute of Paleo botany, Lucknow gives 226 years (around 1750 A.D.) as the date of the site which means 18th century A.D. this dating is complimented by the coins too. "Hence the two coins recovered from Khangabok excavation site as proved by the shapes and marks of depiction of Devanagari scripts for "Shri" and "Sa" are the coins of Meitei-lord Garib Niwaza (1734 A.D.) or his successors and descended kings" (Devi, 1999:42).

The pottery housed at the State Archaeology Office comprises of bowls (type i & ii) with its diameter ranging from 12-14 cm. Diagnostic sherds of regular pots with 11cm diameter and with charred bottom which could be an indication of a certain ritual practice or perhaps reused pots, as reported by the excavators. One specimen has a lump of human relic (maxilla and teeth). There is presence of long ribbed fine drinking vessels as well as short funnel shaped drinking jars. The latter incised with geometric (lines and triangles) decoration on them, either all over the vessel or on the portion around the rim and the shoulder portion.

Apart from the above mentioned collection, the State Museum of Manipur housed pottery consisting of pots, drinking vases, hookahs of two types and four roughly square coins with Devnagari script coins which were confiscated from the inhabitants of Khangabok, Thoubal District, not far away from the site excavated by the State Archaeology.

The pottery collections (Fig.7) here include large number of smoking cups especially of type i. along with type ii variant. The type i. variant has an orifice with diameter ranging from 3-5cm and height ranging from 4-5cm. The type ii variant with about 6cm orifice diameter and height about 2-3cm. as described above, seems to be of intrusive in nature as the technique of manufacture applied is moulding in this case and there is no trace of this technique encountered in Manipur.

The drinking vessels with long and ribbed neck are in plenty, some are complete vessels and some are sherds. These sherds throw light on the technique of manufacturing of this particular vessel for example the luting mark and the cloth striations are visible clearly.

The type ii variant bowls are with its orifice diameter ranging from 12-13cm. There is also a drinking vessel with incised decoration around the shoulder of the vessel with geometric designs. The base of this vessel bears charred evidence, similarly incase of a herring bone decorated pot indicates use of fire. This pot has charred residue on its bottom stating the fact that it was placed on fire.

Apart from pottery, there are metal (copper) rings, iron implements comprising of knife, arrow head, celt, etc. The most important of all, are the four bell metal coins which are described in Chapter III.

4.6.Sekta

The site Thumkhong Lairembi Sekta (24° 53' 25.58" N - 94° 2' 17.42" E) is located in Imphal District. The site Sekta is located at a distance of 18 km north-east of Imphal on the left bank of the Iril River, in the Imphal District of Manipur. In the royal chronicle, *Cheitharon Kumpapa*, during the reign of Meetingu (Sovereign of the Meeties) Loiyumpa, Sakabda 996 (1074 CE), the place Sekta has been mentioned as follows, "They defeated the Sektas and captured six people, including Mathanglen Tao and Angkem Tao of Chakpa" (Parratt, 2005:29). According to *Pakhangba Khunthok Puya*, the original inhabitants of Sekta were one of the *Chakpas* who settled at Sekta sometime after the *Nongdalaiaren Pakhangba*, a mythical ruler of Manipur probably in the 1st-2nd century A.D. and later on Sekta was merged into the Meitei kingdom.

It was first excavated by A.K.Sharma of Archaeological Survey of India in collaboration with the State Archaeology of Manipur on 23rd March, 1991. The surmise of a burial ground started emerging with an encounter of a masked skull in an oval shaped bell metal container by a shepherd in 1989. There are six mounds which are situated on the left bank of the Iril River, a tributary of the Imphal River. The mound selected for the excavation is the nearest to the river and has three meters of deposit. In the *Cheitharol Kumpapa* during the reign of Meetingu Khakhempa, sakabda 1519-1574 (1597-1652 CE) records, “When they raided Samsok of Kapo, Khuraiphatia was killed. They captured cattle and buffaloes. They also took away gold and silver masks (death masks), separating them from the skull” (Parratt, 2005:74). Thus the practice of utilizing metal skull masks for the death can be traced way back to the 16th century A.D.

Excavation: The excavation on the burial mound started from the highest part by taking 10x10metre square, in a total area of 17sq.m. The excavation revealed eight layers after which the natural soil was reached. The layers were divided into six periods in such a manner; 8th and 7th layers in period I, 6th layer in period II, 5th in period III, 4th layer in period IV, 3rd layer in period V, 2nd layer in period VI. “Total absence of any pit or pit lines except in Period I shows that no pits were dug to deposit the burial pots and other antiquities. In the burial ground after performing the necessary rituals, the pots and antiquities were covered up with earth. Normally the skull of the deceased along with other fragmentary bones and offerings consisting of his personal belongings, were interned inside a big jar.” (Sharma,1994:23).

According to A.K.Sharma, there was increase in number of pottery associated with each burial from Period I to Period VII. Human skulls were covered with thin copper mask, fragments of bones were inserted in a pot which was then interned inside another pot. There were three or four pots used in this internment system of burial. The mouth was then covered with a pot base or an inverted lid (bowl or dish). The human skulls were generally found in Period V, VI and VII.

Only in Period I and Period II did he come across some wheel-made pottery otherwise they were handmade. Sharma divided the pottery assemblage of Sekta as Red ware, Black ware and Grey ware. “In all three types large number of pots are made of impure clay, heavily mixed with quartz and sandstone particles, gritty and ill fired”

(Sharma,1994:27). The pottery shapes at Sekta comprised of large number of big jars with flat bottom lids, large dishes, bowls, basins, vases, long neck bulbous jars, spouted vessels and porcelian. “The designs include trellis pattern, oblique lines, diamond shaped notches, straw, reed and cord impressions, fish bone designs, rows of impressed hollow roundels, horizontal thick rows of grooves and sun patterns” (Sharma, 1994:28).

The hookah tops found from Period III to IV were morphologically, similar to those found from Khangabok but differed in decoration.

Other than the pottery assemblage, the grave goods included iron objects (dagger & knives, scythe/ swords, spear heads, ball), bronze bowl, bronze thin plates, copper and bronze trinkets, rings, bangles and beads made of stone and steatite.

On the basis of comparison of the iron objects to that of Tripuri and Nagda, A.K.Sharma dated Period VI and VII to 200-400 A.D., Period V to 100 B.C -200 A.D., hence Period III, II and I much earlier. These dates are disagreed by many scholars in Manipur. One being that the square coin found in Period VI according to Dr. Singh is of King Garib Niwaz (18th century A.D.). The dates of the site is re-evaluated by the, then Superintendent, Dr. O.Kumar Singh of the State Archaeology who carried out an excavation in 1994 by using the grid plan of 10x10 sq. m. These revealed eight layers going to the depth of 2.25 meters. Unfortunately under unconditional circumstances it didn't reach the virgin soil. “According to Clayton (1979:77), water-logged clays are grey or green, while well-arrated clay soils tend to be brown. Is we correlate the soil stratification with the ice-core palaeoclimate picture, the bottom 7th and 8th layers cannot be later than 16th century A.D.” (Singh, 199:11). One notable verity is the unawareness of urn burial customs amongst the present Sekta citizenry. As quoted “It appears that such burial was stopped atleast two or three generations ago. Considering these facts the upper age limit may be assigned to sometime between the 18th and 19th century A.D.”.

Table: 6

Stratigraphy and Featuristic Table of Sekta

Layer& thickness	Period	Pottery type	Burial styles	Mortuary Goods
1,20cms	III	pots, bowl	interned style, (four pots), upper parts missing	Beads of glass and faience, finger ringers of copper and bronze, iron spear, pieces of copper plate and glazed ware.
2, 23cms	II	pots, dish, grey vases, ribbed lotas (3-4 pottery)	Skulls & bones separately urn buried, copper mask	Glass, faience & semi precious stone beads, spear heads, iron knife, bronze and copper fingers rings, plates, bangles and bell and glazed ware.
3, 40cms	II	pots, dish, grey vases, basin, (4-6 pottery)	Skulls & bones separately urn buried, copper mask and unmask.	Knife, iron spear and spear heel, beads of glass and paste, spear heads, iron knife, bronze and copper fingers rings, plates, bangles and tinklets.
4, 27cms	II	pots, oblong pots, basin, grey vases, spouted vase. (1-2 pottery)	Skulls & bones separately urn buried, interned style.	Beads of glass rarely faience and agate, finger rings and few bangles of copper and bronze.
5, 30cms	II	Pots, grey vase,	Skull and bones interned together, unmasked, symbolic burial?	Glass beads, copper and bronze ear and finger rings, tinklet.
6, 24cms	I	pots	Interned style	Beads of glass and paste, finger and ear rings of copper.
7, 41cms	I	Pots, dishes (2-3 pottery)	Interned style	Beads of glass and faience, copper bangles.
8, 20cms	I	Pots, (2 pottery)	Interned style, skull masked & bones jointly & separately. Bronze bowl.	Beads of glass & faience, finger rings and a bangle of bronze.

Pottery: There is no doubt that Dr Singh has studied the pottery assemblage at Sekta relatively well. The ceramics of Sekta consists of both the local and imported wares: the imported wares include the glazed and white porcelain wares. The pottery types of local origin include pots, dishes, basins, bowls, vases and spouted vessels which are hand-made with anvil and beater strip method.

The Sekta pottery analysis in this study will combine the pottery collection of both the excavations. The pottery shapes present at Sekta are as follows (Fig.7):

- 1) Grey vase
- 2) Red vase
- 3) Channel Spouted vessel
- 4) Long ribbed neck vessel
- 5) Bowls
 - a. Redware
 - b. Porcelain
- 6) Dishes
- 7) Chaishen/ Basin
- 8) Pots
- 9) Hookahs top
- 10) Tripod leg

The predominant vessel shape is the Grey vase which has been described earlier. This vessel shape has been found at Sekta abundantly in several variants, in terms of decorations and shapes. The redware counterpart has also been found.

The Channel Spouted jars are present in all the five sites. All the three variants comprising of the ribbed long neck, pear shape body and the spared out rim with flat base are found at Sekta. They are either plain or decorated.

The long ribbed neck vessels are also found here. Unfortunately no complete ribbed neck vessels have been found but many broken long ribbed neck portions and the globular bodies are found. There is enough evidence to prove its presence at Sekta too. This particular vessel is generally of finer quality in all the other sites, at Sekta it is of much cruder quality except for one miniature vessel.

The bowls are of type ii, iv, viii and ix as discussed above. They are hand-made and crude in quality. One bowl exhibits a mat impression at the base. There are two porcelain bowls and one celadon bowl. This is of course not local pottery. They are either imported from South east Asian countries or an imitation which is highly doubtful.

The troughs or dishes which are crude in quality are exclusive pottery shape found only at Sekta. These are used as lids to cover the burial pots which are sometimes decorated on the exterior rim portion. They are either with or without (minimal) prominent pedestal stand, with flaring body, which is concave sided. Sometimes, the brims are thick and blunted. The diameter of the orifice of these dishes range from 22cm-30cm and their height range around 5-6cm.

The basin (*Chaisen*) is one of the distinctive vessel shapes, which has not been encountered in all the other four sites. This is similar to a bowl in shape except that it is much bigger in size with deep, globular body and the orifice is 15 cm. It is either decorated or plain. Similar shape vessel of bronze is still used in Manipur for ritualistic purpose.

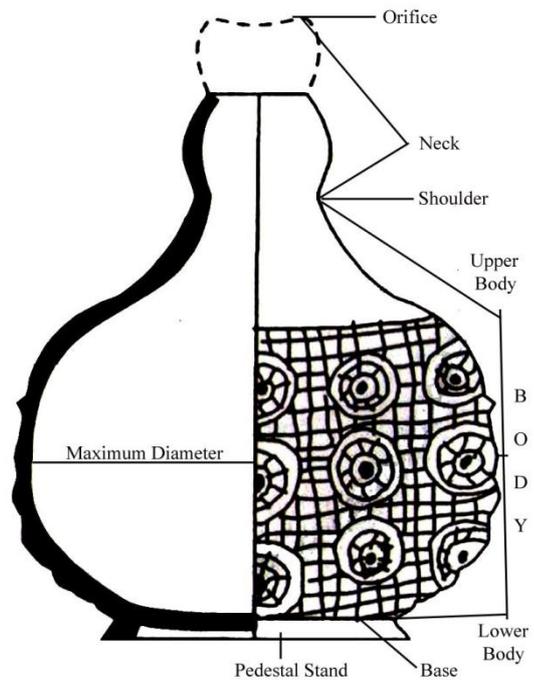
The pots like in all the other sites comprises of the regular pots, elongated pots, large pots (mentioned by Sharma and Singh). The regular pots have flaring rims which is different from their counterpart of the other sites. These vessels are either plain or decorated. They bear herring bone decoration which is a common feature of all the sites. There is an elongated pot with its rim missing. This shape is similar to those found at Khamaran.

The hookah tops at Sekta are morphologically similar to those of type i found at Khangabok. The type ii variant is not found at Sekta and it is not mentioned in any of the reports by Sharma or Singh. There is only a slight difference in the decoration of the type i variant. The hookah tops/ cups found at Sekta are decorated with straight lines, wavy lines, and small triangles on the upper portion.

Tripod legs (Fig.8.7) are exclusive vessel type which is not found from all the other related sites. The body of the vessel is missing, only three legs are found from one trench/group. All the three legs are thick but only one is long. The average length is

about 10cms, with maximum 4cms thick and minimum 1.9cms thick. They are of medium in terms of texture.

1



2



Fig. 6: Morphology

Illustration. II

Pots



1. Regular Pot



2. Elongated Pot



3. Distinct Globular Pot

Illustration.III

Bowls



1. Type.i



2. Type. ii



3. Type. iii



4. Type. iv

Illustration. III

Bowls



5. Type. v



6. Type. vi



7. Type. vii

Illustration. III

Bowls



8. Type. viii



9. Type. ix

Illustration. IV

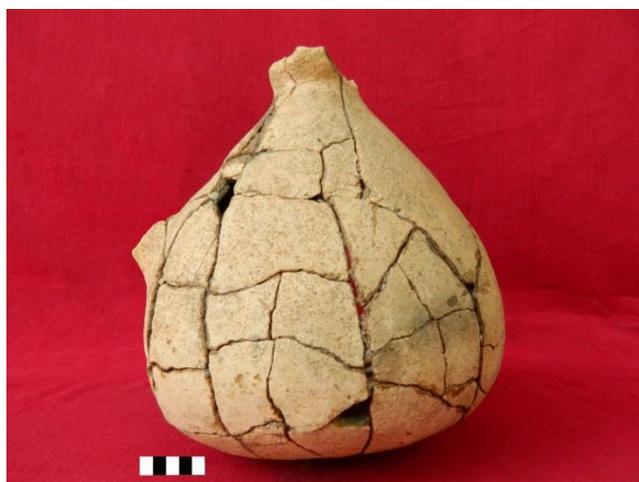
Channel Spouted Vessels



1. Type. i



2. Type. ii



3. Type. iii

Illustration.V



1.Dish



2. Ribbed Long Neck Vessel

Illustration. VI

Smoking cups (Hookah) & Pipe



1. Smoking Cup



2. Smoking Pipe

Illustration.VII

Grey Vases

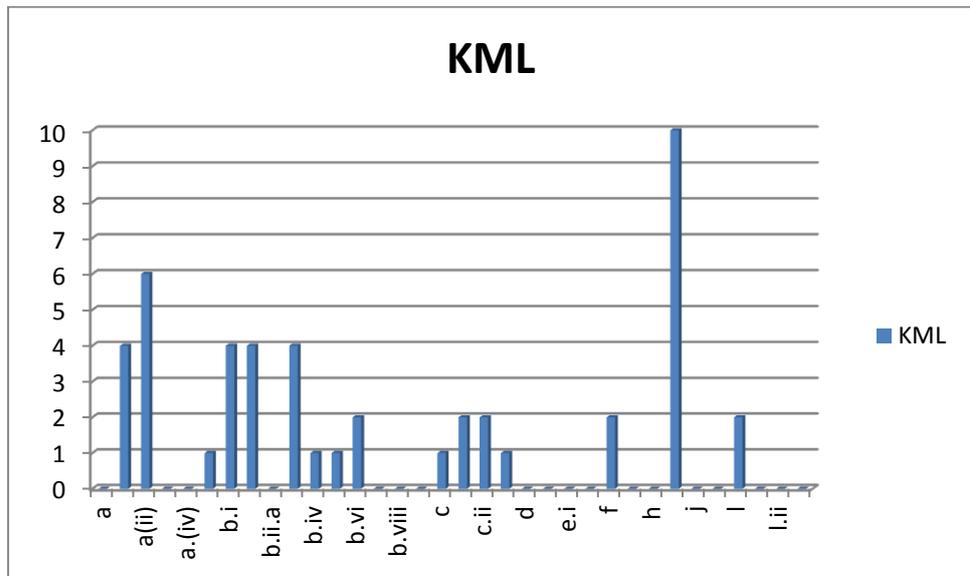
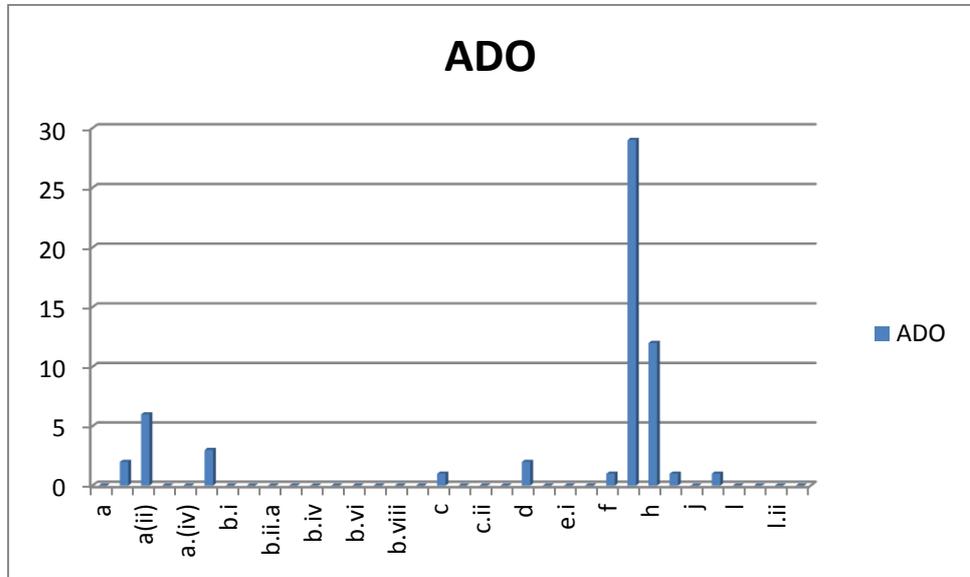


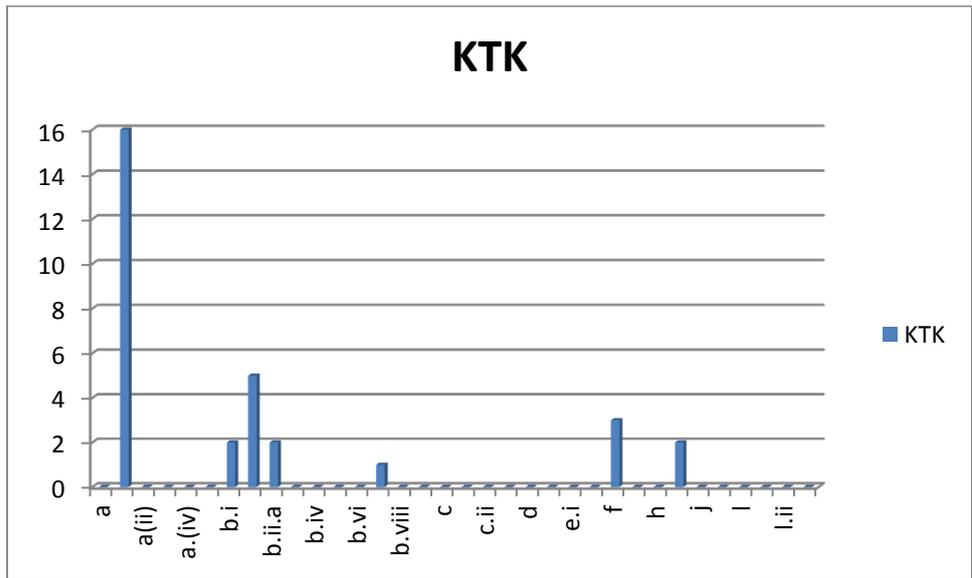
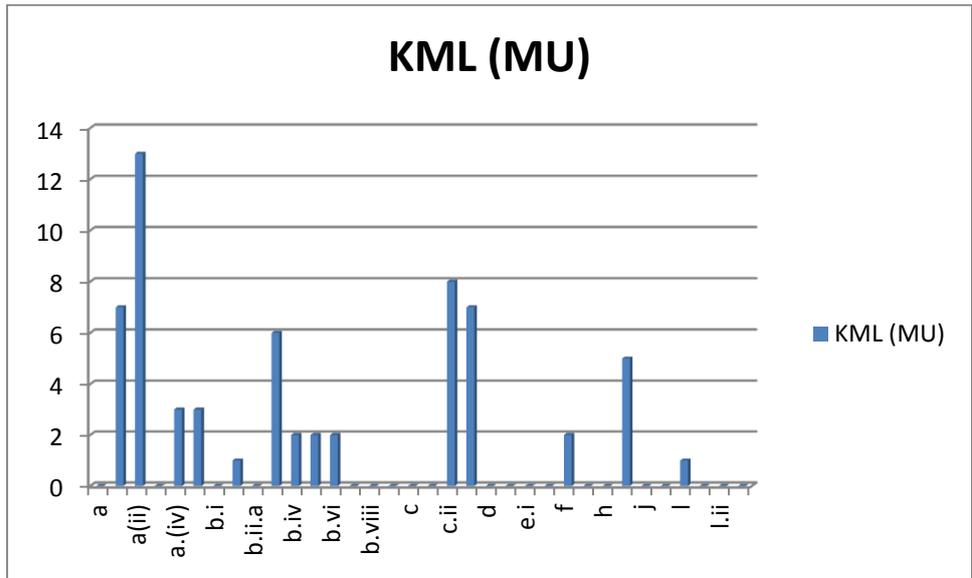
Type.i

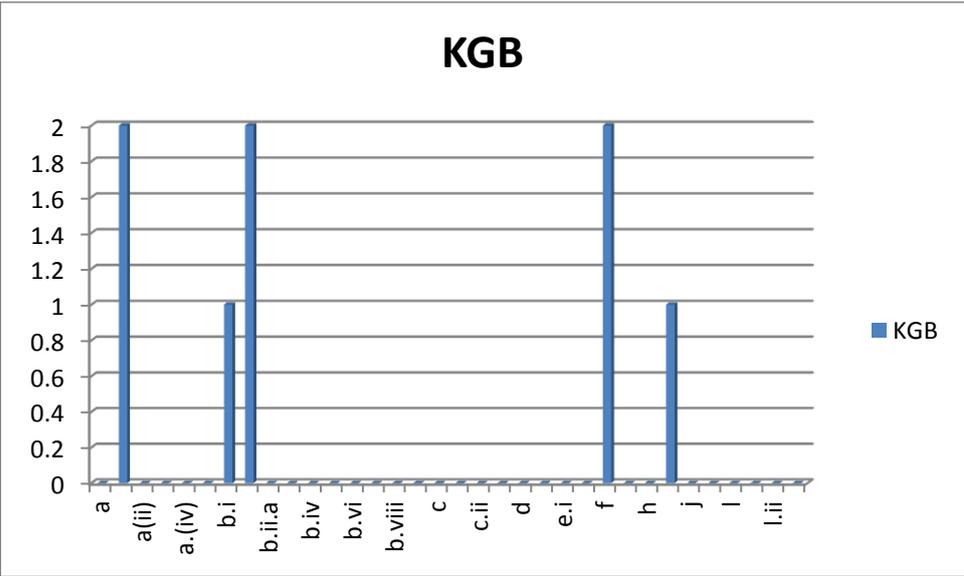
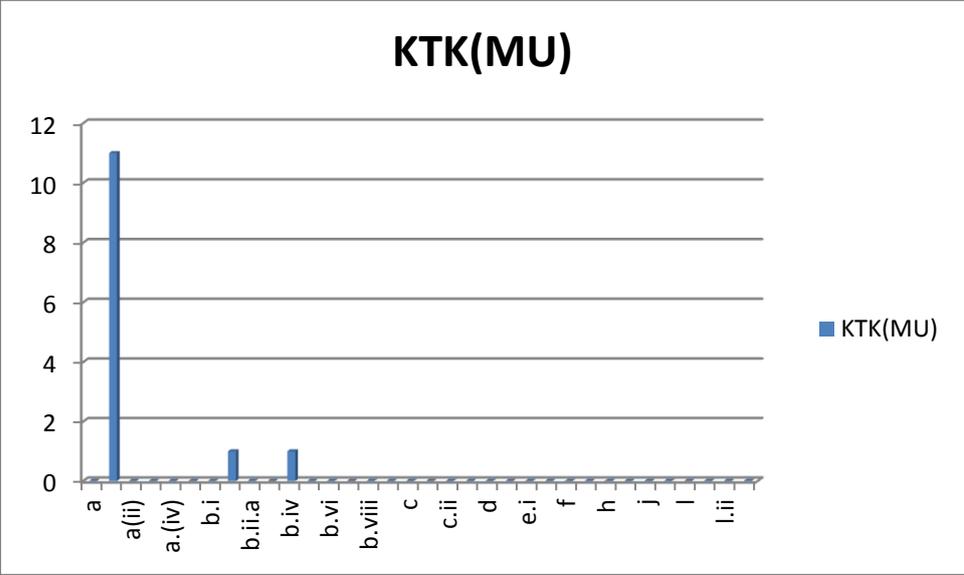


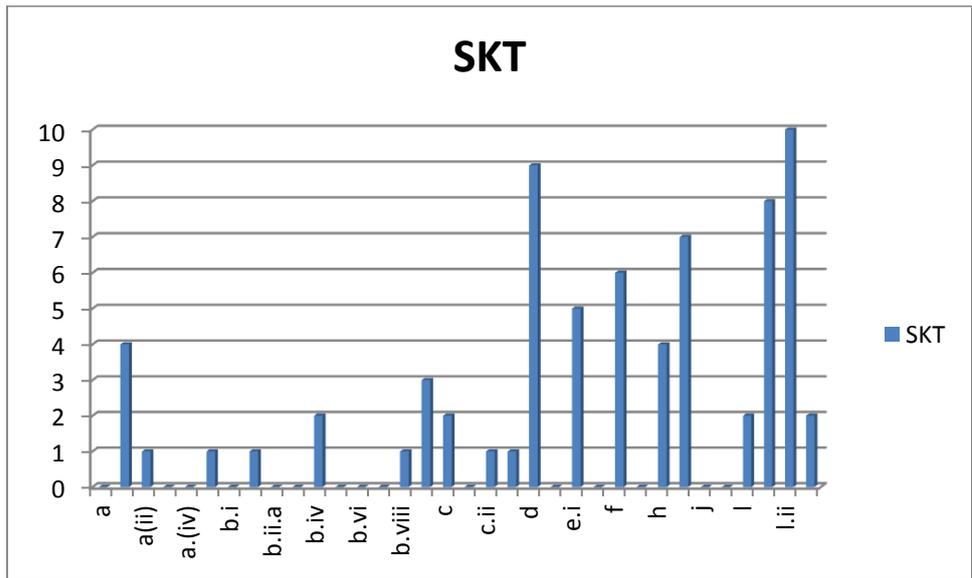
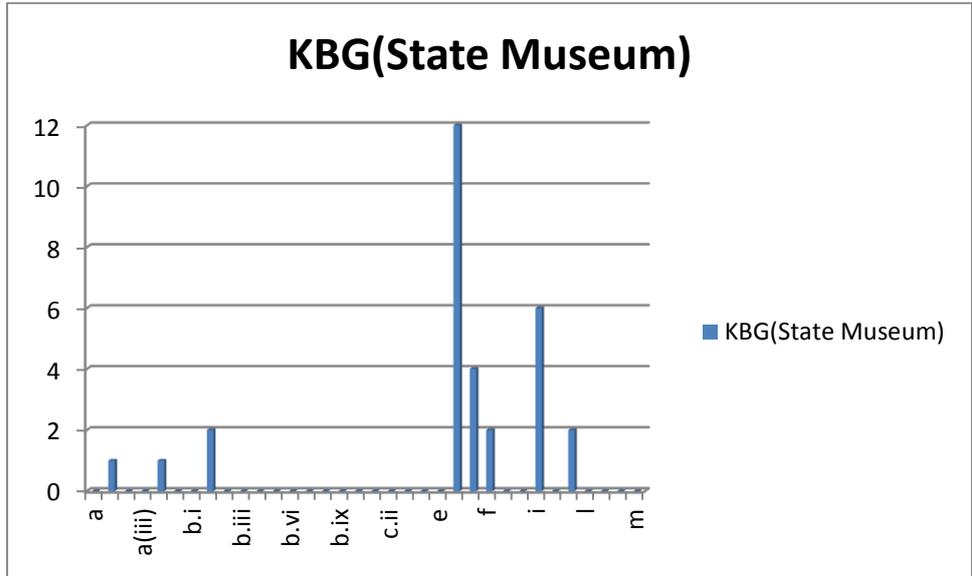
Type.ii

Fig. 7: Graphs









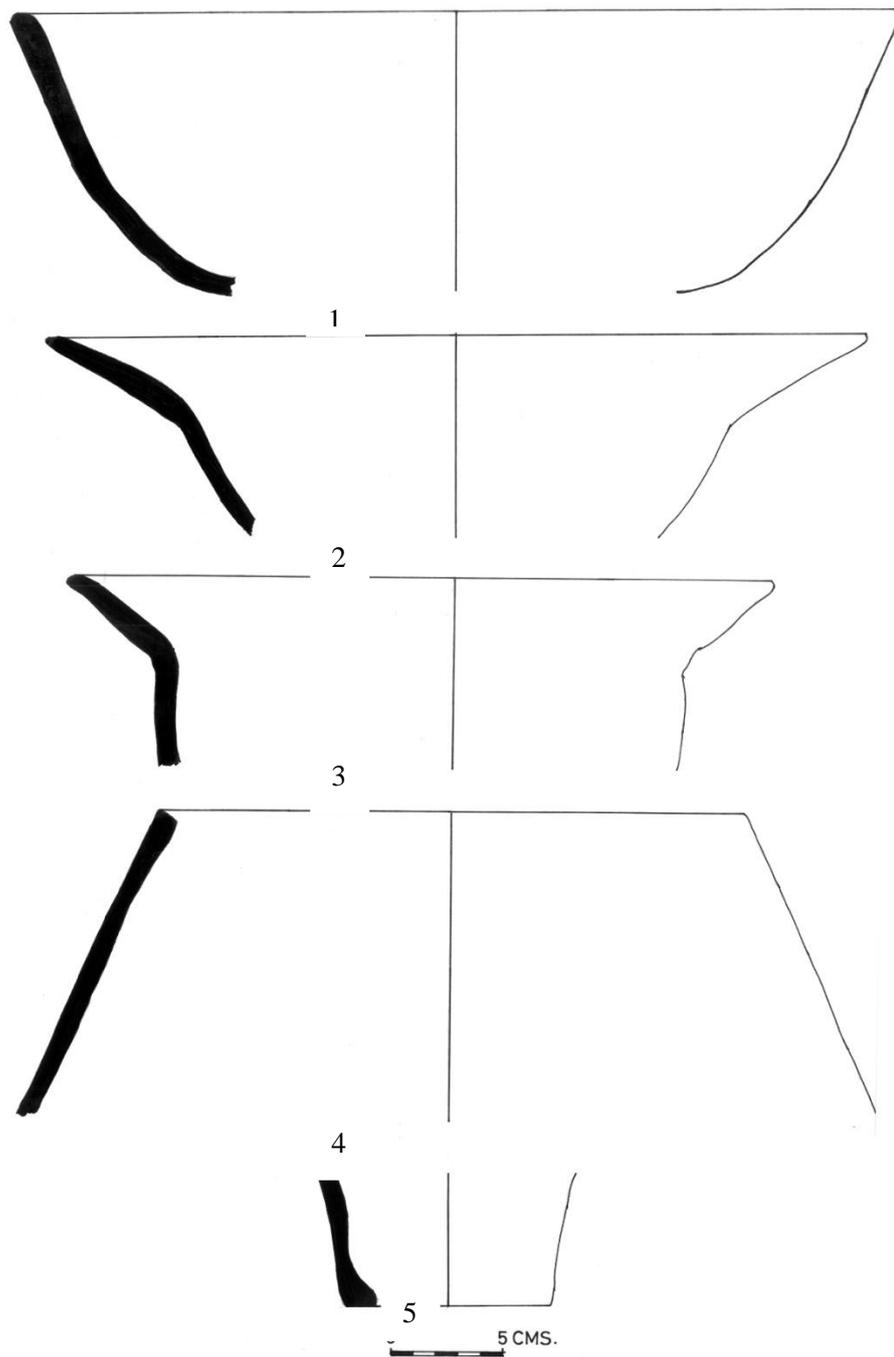


Fig.8: Pottery Shapes of Andro Khuman

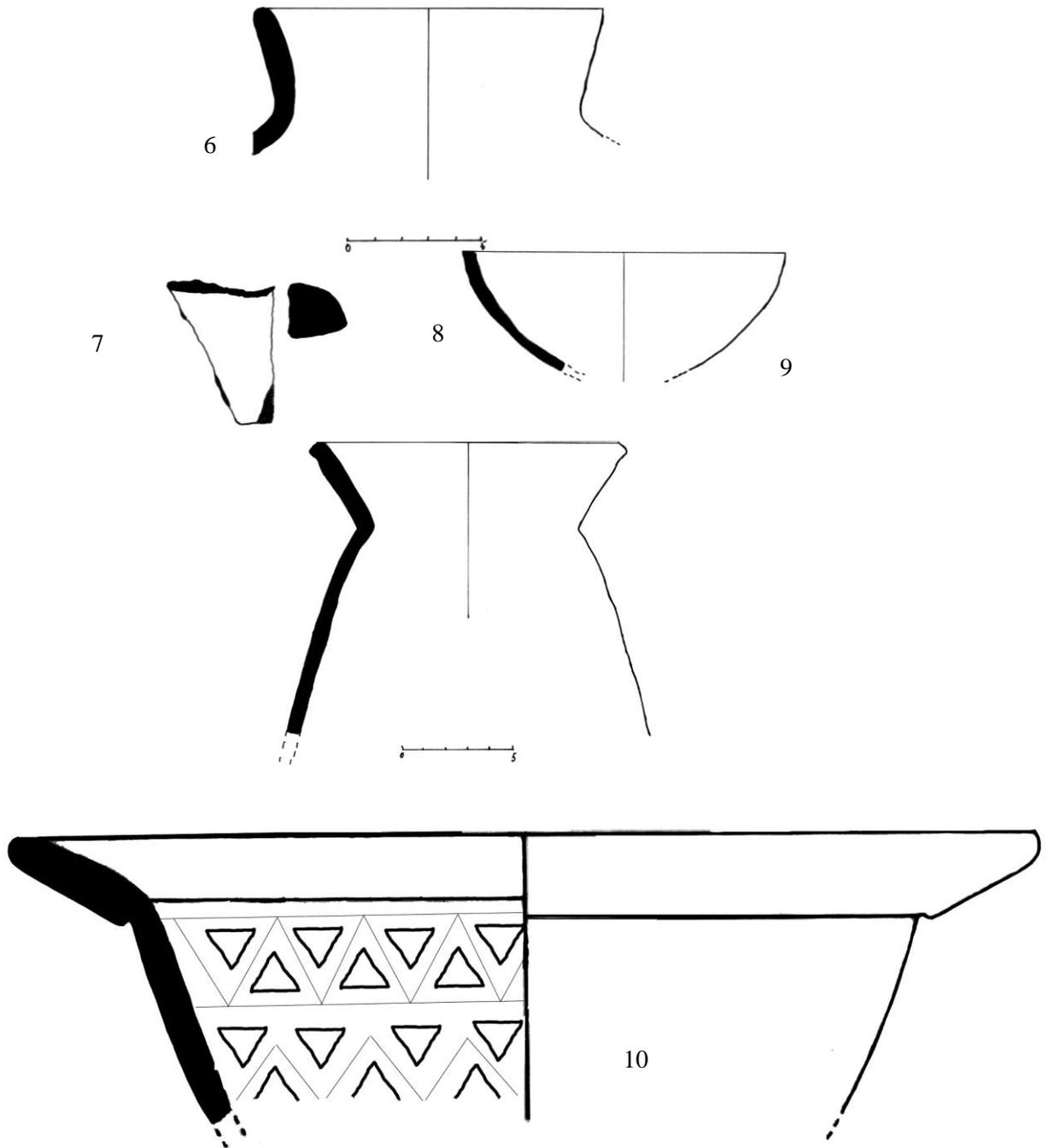


Fig.8: Pottery Shapes of AndroKhuman

Illustration.VIII

Khamaran



1. Unburnt Bone Fragment



2. Non Perforated channel

Illustration.IX

Koutruk



1. Pot with perforated base



Perforation