

## **An archaeological aspect of black and red ware in Sri Lanka**

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Black and Red Ware (BRW) is considered as a special variety of earthen ware in archaeology. Unlike other wares it has a special kind of characteristic feature. Its interior and the exterior top are fully black and the exterior body is red. Considering the spatial distribution of Black and Red ware in world context it has been witnessed in Ancient Egypt (from 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C. to 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C.), India (from 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. to 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.) and in China (3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. to 1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D.). This type of ware is mostly found from Neolithic, Proto-historic or Early-historic burial sites. It had been used as containers for grave goods. The most respected view on BRW in Sri Lanka is that it had been begun to use in the Proto-historic Iron Age (900B.C.-600B.C.) and had been continued up to the Upper Early-historic Age (100A.D.-300A.D).

There are so many unsolved problems related to Black and Red Ware.

1. Where is the origin of Black and Red Ware?
2. Was there any reason to use these kind of pots in funeral practice?
3. What was the manufacturing technique of BRW?
4. What was the relationship between Egyptian, Indian, Chinese and Sri Lankan BRW cultures?
5. What is the origin of BRW culture in Sri Lanka?

Before finding out answers to these problems, it should have a clear idea of the types and the chronology of black and red ware in each region. But no attempt has been made to determine the typo-chronological horizon of BRW in Sri Lanka up to now. Hence, in this research an attempt was made to provide a typo-chronological basis to BRW in Sri Lanka. Other than that, the distribution pattern and the regional variations of BRW in the island was studied.

To reach these goals, a computer database was compiled including the form, type, stratum, period, texture and the colour of BRW found in all over the country so far. To construct the typo-chronological frame this database was analyzed. To identify the distribution pattern of BRW, a map was compiled.

In this research more than 150 BRW sites were identified. Considering the regional distribution pattern, it is obvious that BRW had been used all over the country. Sri Lankan BRW pots can be classified onto 25 forms and can be sub divided into 243 types.

Analyzing the BRW forms unearthed from different regions of the island, a vast regional variations can be identified. There is one major form predominant in each region. Also, this research has revealed that the beginning of the BRW culture of Sri Lanka can be pushed back to 4<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C. (Post Mesolithic Period) and had been continued up to 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Upper Early Historic Period) Hence this ware seems to have had a wide cultural association rather than with the proto historic and early historic megalithic cultures.

In future, this researcher hopes to compare this research findings with Egyptian, Indian and Chinese BRW to come to a final conclusion. Also, a mineral component analysis will be done to find out the manufacturing technology of BRW to support the final conclusion.

**Key words:** Black and red ware, Typo - chronological basis, Distribution pattern, Regional, Variations, Megalithic culture

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