

CERAMIC VESSELS FROM THE BIRITUAL NECROPOLEIS AND THEIR METAL PARALLELS

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ABSTRACT

The present paper aims at presenting some ceramic vessels found in the earliest biritual necropoleis in present-day Northeastern Bulgaria, which can be said to resemble metal prototypes. The vessels come from sites near the town of Balchik, the town of Novi Pazar, the vilage of Kyulevcha, and the village of Topola. These vessels are similar in shapes to Sasanian and post-Sasanian vessels, vessels from the Pereshchepina treasure, from the rich Avar graves in Hungary, from the treasures found near Vrap in Albania and Nagyszétnyék in Transylvania. The number of vessels which can be connected with prototypes made not only of metal, but of glass and even wood, is significant. These are tablewares – jugs, amphora-like pitchers, bowls, spherico-conical cups, bucket pail cups, as well as pots and cauldrons with inner lugs.

The vessels from the biritual necropoleis in Bulgaria are early forms, brought here and reproduced through the years and decades after the settlement of the Asparuh Bulgarians, and especially in the first half and to around the middle of the 8th c. Later on, towards the end of the 8th c., they decreased in number, and after the first half of the 9th c., these forms are not found. The logical question arises therefore, whether some of them did not reproduce established specimens from the initial territories – prototypes which were passed on from one generation of potters to the next. There is no doubt that they are the work of Bulgarian potters (thrown on a tournette), whose ceramic workshops were located in the settlements to which the necropoleis belonged. An example for this are the four pottery kilns from the Early Medieval settlement near the village of Topola.

Keywords: biritual necropoleis, Early Medieval pottery, Late Avar period, metal vessels, Nagyszétnyék treasure

The discovery of the biritual necropoleis helped to clarify a number of questions regarding the history and culture of Early Medieval Bulgaria. These necropoleis offer previously unknown data about the spiritual world (beliefs, burial practices and rituals) and the everyday life of the common people, the Proto-Bulgarians who settled here with Khan Asparuh and their direct descendants. In these necropoleis, with the exception of the two found in the neighbourhood of Divdyadovo, city of Shumen, which are far away from each other and are insufficiently studied (Атанасов и др. 2007, 57 – 66; Atanasov et al. 2008, 59 – 80), there are no graves of members of the affluent class, nor expensive metal objects. Ceramic vessels, whose genesis researchers are trying to find, are predominant in them. Some of these vessels are close to the Byzantine ceramic, metal and glass specimens from the 6th – 7th c., which in turn inherited many earlier forms from Greek and Roman ceramics and glass. Others are connected with specimens mainly from Sasanian Iran, Caucasus and Central Asia.

In contrast to Hungary, where Avar graves with rich inventory from the 7th c. have been unearthed in Kunbáony, Bócsa, Kunágota, Ozora-Tótipusztá, Kiskőrös-Vágóhíd and others, related to leaders,

princes, and aristocrats, in Bulgaria graves of Bulgarian khans or high state officials – kavhans, ichirgu-Boila, župan, kolobar – have not been found, neither in the first state centres, nor in the auls. It is assumed that they were buried deep and in secret.

According to the Byzantine chronicler Theophanes the Confessor, the Byzantine Empire was forced to sign the first treaty with the new state on the Balkans, (in 681) and to pay them tribute for the “disgrace of the Romans”. Byzantine chronicles speak of the rich gifts received by Khan Tervel for his help to return Emperor Justinian II to the throne in 705, and of the silver vessels acquired after the victory over the Romans at Anchialos in 708. They report the new, humiliating treaty for the Byzantine Empire, signed between Khan Tervel and Emperor Theodosius III in 716, and the tribute amounting to over 30 *litrae* of gold, the trophies acquired by the Bulgarians under Khan Kardam after the victory over Emperor Constantine VI in 792 at Markeli, and especially under Khan Krum in 809 – in the Struma region, in 812 – at Mesembria, in 813 – at Edirne, and the events at Constantinople (Божилков, Гюзелев 1999, 92, 106, 109, 122, 127, 133, 135, 136). Sources report not only victories, treaties and acquired trophies, but also the pillage of Pliska and its being burnt down by Nicephorus I Genicus in 811 (ГИБИ 1961, 12), the great trophies taken by John I Tzimiskes when he captured Preslav in 971 (ГИБИ 1964, 274) and in 1018 by Basil II in Ohrid (ГИБИ 1965, 103). Perhaps that is why in the present-day territory of Bulgaria, no glass or expensive vessels of non-ferrous metals are known, but most probably, as it is assumed, the quantity of such vessels was small. In the territory of Bulgaria, with the exception of the accidentally discovered silver cup of Župan Sivin (Тотев 1964, 5 – 15), these few specimens number a fragmented bronze silvered jug from a building along the inner side of the southern fortress wall in Veliki Preslav with representation of the “tree of life” (Витаянов 2000, 57 – 61), a copper cauldron, kept at the Veliki Preslav Museum, and the gold plate from a room next to the southern gate of Veliki Preslav (Иванова 1955, 83 – 84; Иванова 1959, 147 – 148, обр. 15). No other metal vessels from the Early Bulgarian Middle Ages are known.

In the earliest necropoleis excavated here, however, near the town of Balchik, the town of Novi Pazar, the vilage of Kyulevcha, Shumen district, and the village of Topola, Kavarna region – ceramic vessels have been found, some of which can be said to resemble metal prototypes. The shapes of the ceramic vessels discovered in these necropoleis resemble Sasanian and post-Sasanian vessels, vessels from the Pereshchepina treasure, from the rich Avar graves in Hungary, from the treasures near Vrap in Albania and Nagyszentmiklós in Transylvania. The number of vessels which can be connected with prototypes made not only of metal, but of glass and even wood, is significant. These are tablewares – jugs, amphora-like pitchers, bowls, sphero-conical cups, bucket pail cups, as well as pots and cauldrons with inner lugs.

The influence of medieval toreutics on ceramic vessels and, more specifically, on the Sogdian examples from the 7th c., found in the vicinity of Samarkand – in Kafir-kala and Tali Barzu – was pointed out by the Russian scholar V. G. Grigorjev as early as the 1940s (Григорьев 1940, 96 – 99, обр. 6^{б, в, г, ж}). Later on (in the 1960s and the early 1970s), it was studied in detail (for jugs and cups) by B. I. Marshak (Маршак 1961, 177 – 201; Маршак 1971, 13 – 15, обр. 13). In the publication of the “yellow” Avar ceramics, Slovak and Hungarian scholars also looked for connections with the vessels made of non-ferrous metals (Bialeková 1967, obr. 4_{2,3}; Bialeková 1968, Abb. 1₇; Garam 1969, 240 – 241; Vida 1999, 127, Abb. 48). In the last study dedicated to the Nagyszentmiklós treasure, which Hungarian archaeologists define as Avar, É. Garam pointed out the similarities of vessels from the treasure with finds from Avar graves. She selected ceramic samples which imitate glass and mainly metal vessels from the rich Avar graves, as well as various other objects (belt ornaments) unearthed in necropoleis of the common people (Garam 2002, Abb. 15, Abb. 16, Abb. 19, Abb. 21). Such parallels, also in relation to the Nagyszentmiklós treasure, are also highlighted by Cs. Bálint (Balint 2010, 313 – 322, Abb. 122 – 124).

In the publication of the first biritual necropolis from Bulgaria – the necropolis near the town of Novi Pazar – St. Vaklinov was the first in the country to point out “resemblances to metal vessels” (Станчев, Иванов 1958, 89). Similarities between the ceramic bowls unearthed up to 1994 in the necropolis near the village of Topola, Kavarna region, and vessels from Avar graves, from the Vrap and Martinovka treasures, were also pointed out by the team researching the necropolis (Ангелова и др. 1997, 146, note 8). Some of the jugs from the ‘secret passage’ near the palace of Khan Krum in Pliska are unquestionable imitations of metal vessels. This fact was emphasised by their discoverer (Рашев 2004, 73 – 74). Connections between ceramic vessels from the ‘secret passage’ with metal specimens and examples from the necropolis near Topola and the jug with the two eagles from Pliska are also discussed by St. Stanilov (Станилов 2006, 146, обр. 24, обр. 25, 306, обр. 15, 2А – 2В, обр. 16).

The present study comprises ceramic vessels known until now, as well as new ones, unearthed in the last two decades (mainly from the biritual necropoleis near Balchik and Topola), which very probably imitate vessels from non-ferrous metals. They are presented by types.¹ It is assumed that the ceramics of fine fabric made from purified (well levigated) clay, with its burnished surface and decoration of vertical and criss-crossed burnished lines, appeared under the influence of metal vessels.

Jugs are one of the characteristic finds in the necropoleis. They were thrown, like the other types, on a tournette (manually propelled potter’s wheel). Thirteen jugs are known from the necropolis near Novi Pazar. One of them – from Grave No. 33 (fig. 1: 1) has a sphero-conical shape of the body (its widest part is towards the base), with an elongated spout coming from the funnel-like rim, and a precisely implemented decoration of indented zigzag vertical lines resembling hammering on metal (Станчев, Иванов 1958, кат. № 13, таблица XVII₃). This jug undoubtedly copies vessels from toreutics, even though parallels are not known to date. Another jug from the necropolis is similar in shape, but it has a trefoil rim and is decorated with vertical burnished stripes (Станчев, Иванов 1958, кат. № 9, таблица XVI₃).

In the Balchik necropolis, jugs are the most numerous from all vessels made with purified clay. They are 53 in number (or 36.30 % of the vessels). Several sphero-conical jugs have been uncovered in this necropolis (in Graves Nos. 110, 114, 172), resembling the ones from Novi Pazar in shape. Their walls are entirely burnished or decorated with burnished vertical stripes, with a grid ornament, which is the main decoration of Proto-Bulgarian ceramics (fig. 1: 2 – 4). Individual examples of similar jugs are known from the necropoleis near the village of Bdintsi, Dobrich district (Въжарова 1981, табл. XIII₄) and Kapul Viilor-Istria in North Dobrudzha, Romania (Зиппа 1963, обр. 25₉). In the largest necropolis near the village of Topola, where 625 graves have been excavated so far, the number of jugs is not large. Such have been documented in 38 graves with cremations, four have not been restored, and two different vessels have been placed in Grave No. 33. So far, no sphero-conical jugs have been unearthed in this necropolis. In terms of the shape of the body, the sphero-conical early jugs from Novi Pazar and Balchik come close to the silver Byzantine jug with gilding from the Vrap treasure, Albania (fig. 1: 5), but they have different necks, rims and bases (Werner 1989, 14 – 15, Taf. 11, Taf. 12₃). The bodies of the jugs from the Nagyszentmiklós treasure are sphero-conical, but they also have different necks, rims, and bases (fig. 1: 6, 7) (Gschwantler 2002, 19 – 20). Tracing the influence of toreutics on Sogdian ceramics from the 7th – 8th c., B. I. Marschak points out ceramic jugs from different settlements and mainly from Kafir-kala and Panjakent, which resemble metal vessels. In terms of the shape of the body, they come close to our jugs, but the rims and handles are different (Маршак 1961, 185, 191, обр. 1, табл. 8_{1, 2, 5, 6}). Russian researchers

¹ I apologise that the presented specimens are without scale. They were discovered in different time periods and the photos were taken by different authors, most of them without scale.



Fig. 1: 1. Jug from Grave No. 33 from the necropolis near the town of Novi Pazar (Photo: R. Staneva); 2 – 4. Jugs from the necropolis near the town of Balchik, Graves Nos. 110, 114, 195 (Photo: L. Doncheva-Petkova); 5. Silver jug from the Vrap treasure, Albania (after Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York – <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/464113>); 6, 7. Gold jugs Nos. 1 and 2 from the Nagyszentmiklós treasure (after Gschwantler 2002, 14, 16)

Обр. 1: 1. Кана от гроб № 33 от некропола при гр. Нови пазар (Снимка: Р. Станева); 2 – 4. Кани от некропола при гр. Балчик, гробове № 110, 114, 195 (Снимка: Л. Дончева-Петкова); 5. Сребърна кана от съкровището при Вран, Албания (по Метрополитен музей, Ню Йорк – <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/464113>); 6, 7. Златни кани № 1 и 2 от Надсентмиклошкото съкровище (по Gschwantler 2002, 14, 16)

of medieval artistic metal provide examples of silver jugs kept at the State Hermitage Museum, like the ones in fig. 2 – from Yagoshur, Pokrovskoye, Sedyar (Маршак 1961, 191, табл. 8_{9,11}; Даркевич 1976, 8 – 9, таблица 20; Marschak 1986, Abb. 71, 427_{11,22}). Their shape is close to that of the ceramic ones – “pear-shaped”, smooth body, without decoration, and their base is flat or with a short pedestal. Two of the jugs (fig. 2: 1 – 4) have their handle attached to the body ending in a trefoil palmette, and there is a Turkic runic inscription incised on the handle of the vessel from Sedyar (fig. 2: 5). Their origin is connected with the eastern regions of Central Asia, where Sogdian and Semirechyan ceramic jugs with similar shape were common in the 7th – 8th c.

Other metal jugs, silver and, rarely, golden, earlier Sasanian, or crafted in the Sasanian traditions, have a similar sphero-conical (piriform) shape. In the case of the golden jug from the Pereshchepina treasure (fig. 3: 2), the body is smooth, polished, and without decoration. The base is carefully shaped, it has a high profiled pedestal with a ring, and the rim has a very elongated spout (Вернер 1988, приложение 9_{21a,6}; Marschak 1986, 72, Abb. 89; Залеская и др. 2006, № 21). The silver jug from Pavlovka, Kharkov region, with the image of Simurgh and the “tree of life” is like this as well (fig. 3: 4) (Орбели, Тревер 1935, № 48; Даркевич 1976, 68 – 69, обр. 4₁; Marschak 1986, № 199). V. Darkevich, like K. Trever and V. Lukonin (Тревер, Луконин 1987, 88, № 21), date this jug to no

later than the 7th c., by analogy with the one from Pereshchepina. On the silver gilded jug with a winged camel from Maltseva, Perm region (fig. 3: 3), which according to B. Marschak was made in the 7th – 8th c. in Sogdia, the body is ovoid, the base is an ordinary conical pedestal with a wide base, and the handle ends with a palmette at the joint with the body (Marschak 1986, 53, 83, 430, Abb. 55, Abb. 56; Даркевич 1976, 23 – 24, табл. 10). The body is sphero-conical, and the conical pedestals have relief rings and star-shaped stilts like those of bronze jugs from Dagestan, like the one in fig. 3: 5 with images of flutists and monsters, dated to the 8th – 9th c. and defined as Islamic (Early Abbasid) imitation of Sasanian vessels (Орбели, Тревер 1935, № 70 – 71; Marschak 1986, 120, № 50; Тревер, Луконин 1987, № 50).² The shape of some of the ceramic jugs of light colour thrown on a potter's kick wheel from the 'secret passage' at the Palace of Khan Krum in Pliska is similar. The base of two of them is a high profiled pedestal, and their handles, at the joint with the body, end with bifoliate palmettes, like the other jugs with a flat base (fig. 3: 1). It is these jugs which R. Rashev relates most directly with the aforementioned expensive metal vessels from the Sasanian and post-Sasanian toreutics – the Pereshchepina treasure, Pavlovka, Maltseva, Dagestan (Рашев 2004, обр. 16, табл. IA, табл. IB_{2,3}). In contrast to the metal vessels and two of the jugs from the 'secret passage' in Pliska, the bases of the ceramic jugs from the necropoleis are flat, they do not have high profiled (with rings) pedestals, and they are not low, truncated cones like some of the post-Sasanian vessels, the jug from Vrap and the jugs from the Nagyszentmiklós treasure. Throwing pots on a tournette made it difficult to shape such bases, which is why they are not very common. To date, only two vessels from the necropolis near Topola have pedestal bases, but they are ordinary, truncated conical ones. On some of the ceramic jugs (fig. 1: 4) (jug from Grave No. 195 near Balchik), there is a clearly outlined convex ring, not at the base, but on the lower end of the neck, at the transition to the body. It resembles the rings (hoops) characteristic of the aforementioned metal vessels.



Fig. 2. Silver vessels: 1, 2. Yagoshur; 3, 4. Pokrovskoye; 5, 6. Sedyar (after Даркевич 1976, 8 – 9, таблица 20)

Обр. 2. Сребърни съдове: 1, 2. Ягошур; 3, 4. Покровское; 5, 6. Седяр (по Даркевич 1976, 8 – 9, таблица 20)

² Metal sphero-conical jugs are known and kept at a number of other museums – the State Historical Museum in Moscow, the Georgian National Museum in Tbilisi, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, etc.



Fig. 3: 1. Ceramic jug from the 'secret passage' at the Palace of Khan Krum, Pliska (Photo: L. Doncheva-Petkova); 2. Gold jug from the Pereshchepina treasure (after Залеская и др. 2006, № 21); 3. Silver jug from Maltseva (after Даркевич 1976, 23 – 24, табл. 10); 4. Silver jug from Pavlovka (after Тревер, Луконин 1987, 88, № 21); 5. Bronze jug from Dagestan (after Marschak 1986, 120, № 50)

Обр. 3: 1. Керамична кана от тайния ходник при Крумовия дворец, Плиска (Снимка: Л. Дончева-Петкова); 2. Златна кана от Перешчепинското съкровище (по Залеская и др. 2006, № 21); 3. Сребърна кана от Малцева (по Даркевич 1976, 23 – 24, табл. 10); 4. Сребърна кана от Павловка (по Тревер, Луконин 1987, 88, № 21); 5. Бронзова кана от Дагестан (по Marschak 1986, 120, № 50)

mentioned, the vessel from Balchik is also related to a jug from the far-away Kaybel necropolis (Tumulus No. 2, Grave No. 3), dated to the 8th c., "located on the main territory on which the Bulgarian tribes settled near Volga" (Сташенков 2003, 335, 339, обр. 5₃; Сташенков 2007, 428, обр. 5₃).

The body of the vessel from a female's grave with inhumation No. 164 is spherical (fig. 4: 2). The narrow neck, the wide trefoil rim and the round body make the jug interesting and it is impressive although its black walls have no ornaments, but are entirely burnished. The burnishing is strong, producing an extremely shiny surface, as in polished metal vessels.

The vessel from a male's grave with inhumation No. 208 stands out with its diligent craftsmanship, large size, wide biconical (but round in the middle) body (fig. 4: 3). The convex body, high neck and furrowed surface bring the jug from Balchik close to the one from Tumulus No. XXXIII in Pliska, which was published a long time ago (fig. 4: 4). The jug from Pliska, however, has a strongly protruding rim, like in the metal Sasanian and post-Sasanian jugs, and in the upper end of the handle and two other places (one opposite the other), small clay balls have been placed, resem-

Several other interesting jugs have been found in the Balchik necropolis, originating from graves with cremations (Nos. 139, 165) or from richer graves with inhumations, in which were also placed large animals (Nos. 164, 208, 261). In terms of shape and ornaments, they resemble metal vessels. While there are no known parallels from the field of toreutics, similarities can be found among the ceramic vessels from the Kuban-Black Sea region.

The jug broken over the grave with cremation No. 165, which has been restored, is beautiful (fig. 4: 1). The spheroid body, the elongated, slightly furrowed neck, the trefoil rim and the relief ring at the beginning of the shoulders, in particular, connect it with metal forms. There is an unusual resemblance between this jug and a vessel from Grave No. 357 (with more, and deeper grooves on the neck) of the necropolis near Dyurso – from the area with graves with inhumations, which are referred to the second stage, dated to the second half of the 6th – the end of the 7th c. (Дмитриев 2003, 202, табл. 84₃). In terms of the features



Fig. 4: 1 – 3. Ceramic jugs from the necropolis near Balchik, Graves Nos. 165, 164, 208 (Photo: L. Doncheva-Petkova); 4. Jug from Tumulus No. XXXIII, Pliska (Photo: R. Staneva); 5, 6. Jugs from the necropolis near Balchik, Graves Nos. 139, 261 (Photo: L. Doncheva-Petkova); 7. Jug from the necropolis near Topola, Grave No. 33 (Photo: A. Ismail); 8. Silver vessel from Afanasievo (after Даркевич 1976, обр. 19_{3,4}); 9. Jug from Plachi Dol (after Йотов 2007, 127, обр. 4)

Обр. 4: 1 – 3. Керамични кани от некропола при Балчик, гробове № 165, 164, 208 (Снимка: Л. Дончева-Петкова); 4. Кана от могила XXXIII, Плиска (Снимка: Р. Станева); 5, 6. Кани от некропола при Балчик, гробове № 139, 261 (Снимка: Л. Дончева-Петкова); 7. Кана от некропола при Топола, гроб № 33 (Снимка: А. Исмаил); 8. Сребърен съд от Афанасиево (по Даркевич 1976, обр. 19_{3,4}); 9. Кана от Плачи дол (по Йотов 2007, 127, обр. 4)

bling metal nails/rivets, which bring it even closer to metal prototypes (Дончева-Петкова 1977, обр. 19, кат. № 239 and references).

The jug from grave with cremation No. 139 (fig. 4: 5) stands out with its bigger size (height 19.8 cm, max. diam. 21 cm), the pronounced and proportionately wide biconical shape of the body, the short, slightly furrowed neck, and not particularly prominent trefoil rim. The black surface, furrowed neck and grid of polished rhombuses along nearly the whole body of this vessel also make it similar to metal forms. Biconical jugs are rare among Early Medieval ceramic vessels. A smaller jug, similar to the one from Balchik, is the one known for a long time from the necropolis near Razdelna – unearthed in Grave No. 29, together with a bronze buckle with beveled walls and pinched prong (Димитров 1959, 58, обр. 43; Fiedler 1992, Taf. 61_{2,3}) with analogues among the artefacts from the Vrap-Ersekë group, from the aristocratic graves near Divdyadovo, Kabiyuk, Gledachevo (Рашев и др. 2014, обр. 10), as well as from the necropolis near Balchik (Дончева-Петкова и др. 2016, обр. 59₂₁₂). The buckle mentioned helps the dating of the vessel from the Balchik necropolis – to the beginning or first half of the 8th c. Taking into account this specific shape, one cannot omit Alanian ceramics from the 7th – 9th c. in the North Caucasus, where one of the jugs presented by V. Kuznetsov from Verkhniy Arkun is closest to the interesting vessel from Grave No. 139 near Balchik (Кузнецов 1962, обр. 3₂₄). Whether this is just a formal resemblance or a preserved tradition is hard to determine. It seems that the shape is related to rather old traditions, because differently decorated biconical jugs, often with a grid of burnished lines, and a sharp edge at the joint of the two cones are known among the ceramics of the Chernyakhov culture (Археология 1986, 88, обр. 12₁₀; Айбабин 1990, обр. 6₁₋₅; Магомедов 2001, обр. 42, обр. 43).

The jug placed above the head of the man buried in Grave No. 261 is also interesting (fig. 4: 6). The upper half of the body is decorated with four relief arched strips, which reach the barely visible groove in the most convex part. Slightly above it, two opposing lug handles are attached. The yellow-pink fabric is relatively refined, with fine sand and white limestone particles visible in some places. Jugs with lug handles, some with relief ornaments, have been documented in other biritual necropoleis – near Novi Pazar (Станчев, Иванов 1958, табл. XVI₁), Bdintsi (Въжарова 1976, обр. 102₆; Въжарова 1981, табл. XII₄, табл. XIII₁), the village of Kyulevcha (Въжарова 1976, 116 – 118 et seq., обр. 69₂, обр. 73₁, обр. 75₂), and the village of Varbyane, Shumen district (Рашев 2008, 69, табл. XXIV₁). Some of the jugs from these necropoleis (with an ovoid body) have been found together with datable metal finds, which places them in the first decades of the founding of the state – the jug from Grave No. 36 of the necropolis near Novi Pazar was found with a copper casing of a wooden vessel, and two of the jugs from Kyulevcha (from Graves Nos. 55 and 66) were found with an axe head and a bridle with S-shaped bit shanks, determined as early types (Йотов 2004, 101, 135). Such jugs were also crafted towards the end of the 8th – the very beginning of the 9th c. in the production centre of Pliska, which was located to the west of the stone fortress wall – behind Tumulus No. XXXIV, near the river of Assar Dere, multiple waste from its function having been found in the test trenches of the Bulgarian-German expedition (Doncheva-Petkova 2007, fig. 10_{19–25}). The relief strips and the lug handles of the vessel from Balchik bring it close to jugs from the pottery centres Kantsirka and Machuha, where T. Minaeva and V. Malashev look for relationships with vessels from the North Caucasus, and explain their presence in the Dnieper workshops with the influx of a southern (Alanian-Bulgarian) population (Минаева 1961, 123 – 128, обр. 1_{6,7}, обр. 2₁; Гавритухин, Обломский 1996, 123).

A jug which is original in shape and craftsmanship was found in the necropolis near Topola, unearthed in a grave with cremation No. 33 (fig. 4: 7), where another one was placed as well, of a different type. Its body is highly convex, the neck is short with two small dimples, and the rim is wider, with a rounded lip and irregular traces of spinning. Wide bands are formed on the surface (seemingly as a result of taking off clay horizontally or the individual coils, which form the body), resembling metal convexities, on which burnished stripes descend vertically from the neck. The vessel was made by a master craftsman. It is close to vessels with “Turkic shapes”, more precisely, to the silver jug decorated with two rows of vertical grooves, dated to the 8th c. and originating from the eastern regions of Central Asia – from the village of Afanasievo, on the banks of the Kama river, now in the museum in Nizhny Novgorod (former Gorky) (fig. 4: 8). V. P. Darkevich relates this and similar vessels to the region of the Semirechye – Ferghana, and notes that in the 7th – 8th c., Sogdian-speaking settlers lived on the territory of the Western Turkic Khaganate besides Turks (Даркевич 1976, 35, 91, обр. 19_{3,4}).

A jug found in the necropolis near the village of Plachi Dol, Dobrich district, also impresses with its decoration (fig. 4: 9). Along the neck, and on the widest part of its ovoid body, between incised straight lines, arc-shaped ornaments curl, formed by separate incised short slashes, similar to ones hammered on metal (Йотов 2007, 127, обр. 4).

The comparisons made show that the jugs are early forms. They are predominant in the first biritual necropoleis – near the town of Balchik, the town of Novi Pazar, the village of Kyulevcha, Kapul Viilor-Istria. In the later necropoleis such as in Hitovo-2 and 3, Dobrich district (Йотов 1997, таблица III, таблица IV_{1,2}), in those from the Varna region – Varna-1, Devnya-1 and 3 (Димитров, 1973, 82 – 84), and in the one used for a long time near the village of Topola, where amphora-like pitchers appear, their number is smaller. It seems they were placed, as an exception, in graves in the necropoleis beyond the Danube, also dated as later. One jug each was found in Obârșia-Olt (Toropu, Stoica 1972, fig. 14₁), in Frătești (Dolinescu-Ferche, Ionescu 1970, fig. 5₁)

and in Stația de salvare near Alba Iulia in Transylvania (Cosma 2011, Pl. 25₁₀₄), two – in Izvoru (Mitrea 1989, 46, Abb. 285₂, 52, Abb. 340₁), and three in Sultana (Mitrea 1988, fig. 2/18₁, fig. 8/64₂, fig. 9/72₁). In the necropoleis of the Saltovo-Mayaki culture, on the other hand, this type of vessel was widespread throughout the 9th c., until its end – the beginning of the 10th c.

Amphora-like pitchers are found in necropoleis, which appeared later (towards the end of the 8th – beginning of the 9th c.) at Devnya-1, Devnya-3, Varna-1, the village of Nozharevo, Silistra district, the village of Karamanite, Varna district, the village of Nikolovo and that of Trastenik, Ruse district, Sultana and Obârșia-Olt in Romania, or those, which like the ones near Topola and the neighbourhood of Troshevo in Varna, continued to be used for a long time. The earliest ones assumed (end of the 8th c.) are the vessel from Grave No. 3 in the neighbourhood of Divdyadovo near Shumen (Атанасов и др. 2007, 59, обр. 1₃; Atanasov et al. 2008, fig. 8) and the only amphora-like pitcher from the necropolis near Balchik (Дончева-Петкова и др. 2016, обр. 26₁₅₀, табло XLIV₁₅₀).

The light coloured fabric, slipped pitchers are also earlier, but they were thrown on a potter's kick wheel. They are dated to the end of the 8th – beginning of the 9th c. They are not from necropoleis, but from the first Bulgarian capital – Pliska. One of the vessels (preserved height 30 cm) was discovered during excavations at the Huge Reservoir (Дончева-Петкова и др. 1999, кат. № 118). Plastic pyramidal bumps are formed at the connection between the handles and the walls (fig. 5: 1). Fragments of such vessels have been unearthed at various places in Pliska. The largest (height 45 cm) among the restored vessels from the burnt down 'secret passage' under the palace of Khan Krum is an amphora-like pitcher, impressive with its bent handles with plastic bumps, decorated with trefoils (fig. 5: 2) (Пашев 2004, 84, кат. № 1, таблица IA, IB). Another large (42 cm) restored amphora-like pitched was unearthed in Pliska – during excavations at the Small Wooden Fortification (fig. 5: 3) (Георгиев 2011, обр. 2). In terms of shape and size, it is related to the vessel from the 'secret passage', but its handles, with pyramidal bumps, are without ornaments. The form of the handles approximates handles of vessels from toreutics, like the above-mentioned jugs from Yagoshur and Pokrovskoye.

Amphora-like pitchers were widespread in the settlements and necropoleis throughout the 9th c., especially around the middle of the century. Among them, one can find vessels like the ones from Pliska, whose handles at the joint with the body end with an elongated relief pyramidal part. Such pitchers have been unearthed in the necropoleis Devnya-3 (fig. 5: 4) (Българите и техните съседи 2004, 47, кат. № 23₃), in the necropoleis near the village of Dolni Lukovit-1, Pleven district (fig. 5: 5) (Въжарова 1976, 200, обр. 124₇), in the neighbourhood of Troshevo – Varna-2 (Българите и техните съседи 2004, 50 – 51, кат. № 27_{5,6}), in Nikolovo, Ruse district (fig. 5: 6) (Христова 2018, кат. № 16, обр. 2₈) and others. As can be seen, the tradition to place relief handles, which first began in Pliska, was taken on and applied in other settlements, and it continued later on in Pliska, as is demonstrated by vessels from the pit in the 'secret passage', which was destroyed around the 860s (Григоров 2015, обр. 11, обр. 11a), it also continued in Preslav in the 10th c., even among glazed vessels (Дончева-Петкова 1977, кат. № 312, табл. XXVI₃₁₂). Probably not only the handles, but the predominant yellow colour in various shades of the fabric as well, are attempts to imitate vessels made of gold.

Bowls. After the pots from the necropolis near Topola, bowls take the second place in terms of numbers, and they were crafted in the ceramic workshops of the settlement. There is no other necropolis with so many vessels of this type (in the biritual necropoleis – two have been found near Novi Pazar, three – in Kyulevcha, two whole and several fragments – in Devnya-3, two in the necropolis with cremation at Castelu near Mangalia in Romania, one – near Razdelna). Whole ones, destroyed ones and fragments of ritually broken ones have been unearthed in 89 graves of the



Fig. 5. Amphora-like pitchers: 1. Pliska, the Huge Reservoir (Photo: K. Georgiev); 2. Pliska, 'secret passage' at the Palace of Khan Krum (Photo: L. Doncheva-Petkova); 3. Pliska, the Small Wooden Fortification (Photo: P. Georgiev); 4. Devnya-3 (Photo: R. Kostadinova); 5. Dolni Lukovit-1 (after Въжарова 1976, 200, обр. 124.); 6. Nikolovo (Photo: M. Hristova)

Обр. 5. Амфоровидни стомни: 1. Плиска, Голямото водохранилище (Снимка: К. Георгиев); 2. Плиска, таен ходник при Крумовия дворец (Снимка: Л. Дончева-Петкова); 3. Плиска, Малко дървено укрепление (Снимка: П. Георгиев); 4. Девня-3 (Снимка: Р. Костадинова); 5. Долни Луковит-1 (по Въжарова 1976, 200, обр. 124.); 6. Николово (Снимка: М. Христова)

necropolis near Topola. They were placed as grave gifts with food, in graves with inhumations, and in cremations they were usually smashed in ritual actions over or inside the graves. These are vessels with a low and wide, variously shaped body, unified in several types. Predominant are those with wide, rounded shoulders, occupying the upper one-third of the body, from where the walls narrow down to the base. In some, the slightly inward rims end with a rounded lip attached to the walls (fig. 6: 1), while in others, a neck is formed under the rim (fig. 6: 2). The fabric of these vessels is also refined, and generally brown, orange, orange-brown in colour, but the surface in most cases is grey-black. They are probably a continuation of ancient ceramic traditions, which is why it is difficult to claim that they copied certain vessels made of non-ferrous metals, since such metal forms are known from Rome and the Byzantine Empire. In one of them, however – from Grave No. 173 at Topola (fig. 6: 3, 3a) – copying of metal specimens is quite probable. This vessel resembles a metal tray. Its craftsmanship is precise and it is diligently polished. On the inside of the bottom, seven concentric circles are incised at an almost equal distance (0.4 – 0.5 cm) on the wet clay, probably with a tool resembling a set of drafting compasses. Copper bowls, close in shape (with a more rounded body) and size, have been unearthed in Corinth, and are kept there in the Archaeological museum. One of them had a handle (fig. 6: 4). They are dated to the Middle Byzantine period (Papanikola-Bakirtzi 2002, Nos. 372, 373).

Two deep bowls were discovered in the necropolis near Topola, in neighbouring graves – No. 4 with an inhumation (fig. 7: 1) and No. 29 with a cremation (fig. 7: 2). A vessel from the grave with cremation No. 182 in the necropolis near Balchik is similar to them (fig. 7: 3). In contrast to the other types, these bowls are not so wide, but are higher and deeper, respectively, with an almost biconical rounded body, more elongated in the upper half, widening above the bottom, and with a shorter and narrower lower part. There are no necks. The rims are turned inward. The walls are burnished. There are three straight incised lines, at an equal distance from each other, on the vessel from Balchik. Under the neck of the bowl from Grave No. 4 from Topola, linked circles are arranged, and under them – a horizontal line. This decoration, resembling hammering on metal forms, relates it to the fragmented bowl from Grave No. 25 and the restored one from Grave No. 11 (fig. 7: 4), which belong to another type. It is quite probable that, despite their different shape, the three vessels are the work of one and the same potter. Connections with toreutics

are also observed in a bowl from Grave No. 8, also with a cremation (fig. 7: 5). T. Vida included a similar vessel from Budakalász-Dunapart in the types, where Late Antiquity influence is assumed (Vida 1999, 96 – 97, Kat. № 351, Taf. 46₃). In terms of shape, the three bowls from Topola (Graves Nos. 4 and 29) and Balchik (No. 182) approximate a Late Avar ceramic vessel of yellow fabric from Szebény (Garam 2002, Abb. 21), but they are more commonly related to the widely discussed golden vessel No. 19 (fig. 7: 6) from the Nagyszentmiklós treasure (Gschwantler 2002, 38 – 39, № 19).

The bowl from a grave with an inhumation No. 486, Topola, is unique in its form among the biritual necropoleis from Bulgaria (fig. 8: 1). It is lower and wider. The walls narrow down to the base from the high rounded shoulders, the neck is short, and the rim is slightly curved. Its base stands out following a low, hollow conical stem only 1.6 cm high. In the lower half, slight burnishing



Fig. 6. Bowls from the necropolis near Topola: 1. Grave No. 569; 2, 2a. Grave No. 204; 3, 3a. Grave No. 173 (Photo: T. Dimov); 4. Copper bowls from Corinth (Papanikola-Bakirtzi 2002, Nos. 372, 373)

Обр. 6. Паници от некропола при Топола: 1. Гроб № 569; 2, 2а. Гроб № 204; 3, 3а. Гроб № 173 (Снимка: Т. Димов); 4. Медни паници от Коринт (Papanikola-Bakirtzi 2002, Nos. 372, 373)



Fig. 7. Bowls: 1, 2, 4, 5. The necropolis near Topola, Graves Nos. 4, 29, 11, 8 (Photo: A. Ismail); 3. Bowl from the necropolis near Balchik, Grave No. 182 (Photo: L. Doncheva-Petkova); 6. Gold vessel No. 19, the Nagyszentmiklós treasure (after Gschwantler 2002, 38, 39, No. 19)

Обр. 7. Паницы (купи): 1, 2, 4, 5. Некропол при с. Топола, гробове № 4, 29, 11, 8 (Снимка: А. Исмаил); 3. Паница от некропола при Балчик, гроб № 182 (Снимка: Л. Дончева-Петкова); 6. Златно съдче № 19, Надсентмиклошкото съкровище (no Gschwantler 2002, 38, 39, No. 19)

in a vertical direction is visible. The fabric is refined, and light brown in colour. This bowl also resembles vessels from the toreutics of the 7th c., different opinions having been expressed about their origin. It is hard to establish how the potters at Topola created or imitated this form. The shoulders of the vessel are rounded, but in terms of its pedestal base, it is related to the one defined by J. Werner as “Sasanian gold bowl” from the Pereshchepina treasure (fig. 8: 2) (Вернер 1988, приложение 10₂₂). According to B. Marschak, however, “the rough craftsmanship does not allow it to be referred to the true Sasanian crafted items”. He makes the supposition that it is the work of a “Barbarian master”, not in Iran, not on the steppes, but “in the Eastern Transcaucasia” plundered by the Turks and Khazars (Залеская и др. 2006, 173, № 24). The base of the bowl from Grave No. 486 resembles another metal (bronze) vessel with two handles, discovered in Grave No. 244 of the big necropolis near Zamárdi, Hungary (fig. 8: 3). Its discoverers, E. Bárdos and É. Garam believe that this vessel is not connected with Constantinople and instead they relate it to the production of Egyptian and Alexandrian workshops. They point out such “Coptic” vessels, coming from Egypt, from Langobardian graves in Italy, and from graves in France and England (Garam 2001, 174, Taf. 131₂, Taf. XL₂; Bárdos, Garam 2009, 43, 244, Taf. 236₁, Taf. 260₁). This form is found in the silver, so-called “Khorezm cups”, dated to the 7th – beginning of the 8th c., with different scenes on the walls and bases (Даркевич 1976, 17 – 18, таблица 25₂, таблица 26_{2,6}), and continued much later in the Byzantine toreutics from the times of the Komnenos dynasty (Даркевич 1975, cups 1, 2). The form is also documented in later ceramic vessels from the end of the 10th – first half of the 11th c. from the Byzantine Empire and from Pliska (Дончева-Петкова 2015, 181 – 182 and references).

Looking for parallels between ceramic and metal vessels, É. Garam presents reconstructions of wooden bowls with metal fittings from rich Avar graves from the 7th c. – Kunbábony, Želovce/Zsély, Andocs-Újhalastó, Környe (fig. 8: 4). The fittings of one of them – from Želovce/Zsély (Garam 2002, 94, Abb. 19₄) seem to be identical to the ones unearthed in graves from the Balchik



Fig. 8: 1. Ceramic bowl from the necropolis near Topola, Grave No. 486 (Photo: A. Ismail); 2. Gold "tray" from the Pereshchepina treasure (after Залеская и др. 2006, 173, № 24); 3. Bowl from Grave No. 244, the necropolis near Zamárdi (after Bárdos, Garam 2009, 43, 244, Taf. 236, Taf. 260,); 4. Reconstruction of wooden bowls with metal fittings from Avar graves (after Garam 2002, 94, Abb. 19.); 5. Silver fittings with rivets from a wooden vessel from the necropolis near Balchik, Grave No. 148 (Photo: L. Doncheva-Petkova); 6. Silver fittings with rivets from the necropolis near Balchik, Grave No. 205 (Photo: L. Doncheva-Petkova); 7. Copper (Graves Nos. 99, 205) and silver (Grave No. 148) fittings of wooden vessels, necropolis near Balchik (Drawing: L. Petrova)

Обр. 8: 1. Керамична паница от некропола при Топола, гроб № 486 (Снимка: А. Исмаил); 2. Златно „тасче“ от Перешчепинското съкровище (по Залеская и др. 2006, 173, № 24); 3. Паница от гроб № 244, некропола при Замарди (по Bárdos, Garam 2009, 43, 244, Taf. 236, Taf. 260,); 4. Реконструкция на дървени паници с метални обкови от аварски гробове (по Garam 2002, 94, Abb. 19.); 5. Сребърни обкови с нитове на дървен съд от некропола при Балчик, гроб № 148 (Снимка: Л. Дончева-Петкова); 6. Меден обков с нитове от некропола при Балчик, гроб № 205 (Снимка: Л. Дончева-Петкова); 7. Медни (гробове № 99, 205) и сребърни (гроб № 148) обкови на дървени съдове, некропола при Балчик (Рисунка: Л. Петрова)

necropolis. From two graves with cremations there – Nos. 99 and 205 (fig. 8: 6, 7) – originate thin copper bent plates, with preserved nails and rivets with semi-circular decorative heads. The plates from Grave No. 148, where a 10 – 11 year-old child was buried through inhumation (fig. 8: 5, 7) were of special interest. Above the head of the child in this “richest of graves”, a pot of sandy fabric with incised decoration was placed, and some of the most valuable finds were discovered in it – four bent plates, holding wooden parts from a coniferous tree, each equipped with two rivets with semi-hemispherical heads with a diameter of 0.5 cm. In contrast to the other two bent plates, these are made of silver alloy. It can be supposed that the plates from the Balchik necropolis decorated or cased the rims of some wooden vessels or objects, as is shown by the remains of a coniferous wood in those from Grave No. 148. The plates in question are very important, since they support the dating of the grave and the pot. A similar bent plate was found in Grave No. 36 from the necropolis near Novi Pazar. A small part of a willow tree has been preserved in it, which is why St. Stanchev defines it as a fitting of a wooden cup-bowl (Станчев, Иванов 1958, таблица XXXIII₁). Among the biritual necropoleis from the pagan period of the First Bulgarian Kingdom, in addition to the Balchik and Novi Pazar necropoleis, a bent plate with rivets has been uncovered in the necropolis near



Fig. 9: 1. Pedestal cup (bowl), Grave No. 56 in Topola (Photo: A. Ismail); 2. Silver chalice from Nova Nadezhda (Photo: K. Georgiev); 3. Bronze vessel from Várpalota-Gymnázium (after Garam 2001, 173 – 174, Taf. 131, Taf. XL₁); 4. Silver "bucket" from the Vrap treasure, Albania (after Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York – <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/464115>)

Обр. 9: 1. Чаша (купа) със столче, гроб № 56 в Топола (Снимка: А. Исмаил); 2. Сребърен потир от Нова Надежда (Снимка: К. Георгиев); 3. Бронзов съд от Варпалота-Гимназиум (по Garam 2001, 173 – 174, Taf. 131, Taf. XL₁); 4. Сребърна „кофа“ от съкровището при Врап, Албания (по Метрополитен музей, Ню Йорк – <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/464115>)

4-cm pedestal in the shape of a reversed truncated cone. Outside, in the widest part of the body and under it, the smooth walls are decorated with two bands of thin incised lines. The whole surface is burnished. The fabric is refined – brown in colour, and the surface – black. It reminds one of metal vessels defined as buckets, pails, cups or Eucharistic cups, from the Martinovka and Vrap treasures (fig. 9: 4) (Ангелова и др. 1997, 146, note 8; Станилов 2006, 24, обр. 1, 150, обр. 24), from the grave of a man – No. 204 at Várpalota-Gymnázium, Hungary (fig. 9: 3), from Grave No. 32 at Nocera Umbra, Italy (Garam 2001, 173 – 174, Taf. 131₁, Taf. XL₁; Vida 2002, 115 – 116, Abb. 4). The pedestal cup (bowl) from Grave No. 56 is, for now, a unique vessel among the ceramic forms from pagan necropoleis, which is why one cannot speak of traditions in its production within our lands. Similar Avar vessels, defined as pedestal cups, crafted by hand or on a tournette, are known from Hungary and Slovakia (Vida 1999, 156 – 157, Taf. 90₁₋₃). They are smaller in size (height 7.8 – 11.2 cm). In Grave No. 167 of the necropolis of Tatabánya-Alsógalla, Hungary, an Early Avar vessel has been found, close in shape, but with a rather everted rim, very diligently shaped on a potter's kick wheel and decorated with straight and wavy lines (Vida 1999, 75 – 76, Abb. 17_{ID/d}, Taf. 28.3). It is more important to note that in a female's grave, No. 116 of the necropolis near Nové Zámky,

Topola (grave with cremation No. 167), but the rivets' heads are small (0.1 – 0.2 cm) and are not decorative. Such are not known from other necropoleis and later monuments, most probably because the production of vessels with such fittings was abandoned.

Cups. These vessels are not so common finds in necropoleis. They are found mainly in Topola. There are different types. Next to the head of the adolescent buried in Grave No. 56, a vessel of unusual shape was placed (fig. 9: 1). When it was discovered, it was defined as a pedestal bowl. Although its function is not entirely clear (for eating, drinking or even ritual activities), at present we would rather categorise it among the vessels collectively known as cups. The conical base relates it only to the bowl from Grave No. 486 from the necropolis near Topola. This vessel is higher (14.8 cm), with a spheroid body, without a neck. The rim is slightly curved with a rounded lip. The base is a high hollow

a similar, smaller (height 10 cm) cup has been discovered. It was thrown on a tournette, the fabric is grey and the decoration consists of incised wavy and straight lines. An earring was also found in the grave, thanks to which the vessel was dated to the beginning of the 8th c. (Čilinská 1966, Taf. XXIX/116₃, Taf. LXXXII₁₀; Vida 1999, Kat. № 884). The vessel from Grave No. 56 in Topola probably also dates to that time.

Looking for parallels and establishing relationships with the grey burnished ceramics, one gets to the Tarki Sarmatian necropolis in Dagestan, from which similar bowls were published in the middle of the last century (Крупнов 1951, 225, обр. 11₇; Смирнов 1951, обр. 20_{2,7}). Similar features (in the lower half of the body and the pedestal) are observed in a Central Asian ceramic vessel (with a different rim), unearthed in a layer from the first half of the 7th c. in Balalyk Tepe, Tokharistan (Христова 2010, 530, табло II₃ and references). As for chronologically close metal forms of the vessel from the necropolis near Topola, it most generally resembles the silver church Byzantine chalices from the 6th – 7th c., but their pedestals are higher and usually with hoops, and some have relief ornaments (Mundell Mango 2000, fig. 5₂, fig. 6₁). The Early Byzantine (from the time of Emperor Justinian) silver chalice with an inscription from the village of Nova Nadezhda, Haskovo district is very well-preserved (fig. 9: 2), and is kept at the RMH – Haskovo (Gerassimova-Tomova 1987, 307 – 312; Аладжов 1997, 193 – 196; Даскалов, Думанов 2003, 200 – 201, фиг. 4). Another glazed ceramic chalice with a different shape, not earlier than the end of the 10th – beginning of the 11th c., was found in Pliska, in Church No. 36 (Михайлов 1955, 52, обр. 3; Дончева-Петкова 1977, кат. № 335, табл. XXVII₃₃₅). Of course, this is just a formal resemblance, as such function of the vessel from pagan Grave No. 56 of the necropolis near Topola is inadmissible.

Bucket pail cups. The very first excavations of the necropolis near Topola made it famous with the cups in the form of wooden pails, which were unearthed in the graves. So far, they have been discovered in 15 graves, mainly with cremations. Four pails are known from the Balchik necropolis – three from graves with inhumations and one from a grave with cremation (Дончева-Петкова и др. 2016, 101 – 104, обр. 29_{212,247}, табло XLVI). Such a cup has been unearthed in a grave with a cremation in the necropolis near Bdintsi (Въжарова 1976, обр. 101₃). These vessels differ in size – their height varies from 7.4 to about 19 – 20 cm. The differences in shape allow dividing them into two types – most resemble a reversed truncated cone (fig. 10: 1, 2) and only one, ritually smashed and restored, from grave No. 6 (fig. 10: 3), and several fragments from other graves in Topola, are cylindrical. Round openings have been indented at two opposite places under the rims, with a diameter of 0.5 – 0.7 cm, for suspending the vessels. The craftsmanship of the ceramic pails is precise – refined fabric of yellow-brown and brown colour, usually with black reduction firing. The walls are burnished very well. The decoration was applied with care. One or two straight lines are incised at intervals in some of them. On most vessels, wavy lines are applied between these lines, in separate bands with comb-shaped tools with different teeth.

Fragments from conical bucket pail cups have also been discovered in the medieval settlement to which the necropolis near Topola belongs (Бобчева 1977, табл. VII₁), from where one restored vessel is kept at RMH – Dobrich.³ Such vessels have been unearthed in other settlements in Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, and have been dated differently – from the 8th to the beginning of the 10th c. (Дончева-Петкова и др. 2016, 104 and references). The bucket pail cup from Kapul Viilor-Istria is different, with adhering outer lugs for suspension (Зиппа 1963, обр. 24₇; Fiedler 1992, Taf. 34₇). The vessel from Blandiana-Brod in Transylvania, where the openings for suspension are formed in the two opposite lugs protruding above the rim, is different (Cosma 2011, Pl. 31₁₂₉).

³ Inv. No. Ac 1915



Fig. 10. Bucket pail cups: 1 – 3. The necropolis near Topola, Graves Nos. 6, 19, 6 (Photo: A. Ismail, K. Georgiev); 4. Bucket pail cup from the village of Vokil (Photo: K. Georgiev); 5. Silver vessel from the Sasanian collection of the State Hermitage Museum (after Тревер, Луконин 1987, № 38); 6. Gold cup No. 11 from the Nagyszentmiklós treasure (after Gschwantler 2002, 31, No. 11); 7, 8. Wooden pails with metal fittings, Graves Nos. 453 and 641 from the necropolis near Zamárdi (after Bárdos, Garam 2009, 67, 92, Taf. 253_{3,4})

Обр. 10. Чаши-ведра: 1 – 3. Некропола при Топола, гробове № 6, 19, 6 (Снимка: А. Исмаил, К. Георгиев); 4. Чаша-ведро от с. Вокил (Снимка: К. Георгиев); 5. Сребърен съд от сасанидската колекция на Ермитажа (по Тревер, Луконин 1987, № 38); 6. Златна чаша № 11 от Надсентмиклошкото съкровище (по Gschwantler 2002, 31, No. 11); 7, 8. Дървени ведре с метални обкови, гробове № 453 и 641 от некропола при Замарди (по Bárdos, Garam 2009, 67, 92, Taf. 253_{3,4})

Vessels with the shape of a reversed truncated cone have also been found in several Late Avar necropoleis, and categorised as bowls. They were thrown on a kick wheel. The holes for suspension are missing, and their walls are smooth, very rarely with incised straight lines on them. D. Bialeková reports of such “bowls” from the necropoleis of Kiskőrös-Városalatt and Vrbas (Bialeková 1967, fig. 17₁), and É. Garam (Garam 1975, Pl. XVIII₄) and T. Vida (Vida 2015, Abb. 1₁) present a vessel from the necropolis near Szebény and another from Kővágószőlős (Garam 2002, 96, Abb. 21). They are dated, like the vessels from Bulgaria, to the 8th – the last third/end of the 8th – beginning of the 9th c. A conical vessel without holes for suspension, similar to the Avar ones, was also found in the necropolis near Izvoru, in the Wallachian Plain (Mitrea 1989, Abb. 10_{42,1}).

S. Angelova established similarities between these cups and Late Germanic vessels (Ангелова 1982, 61, note 192). It is very probable that the ceramic pails copied metal vessels, and, even more certainly, wooden ones with metal fittings. The bands, into which they are divided, imitate the iron hoops in wooden pails discovered in the necropoleis near Topola (Graves Nos. 98, 566, 600), Bdintsi (Въжарова 1976, обр. 102_{2,3}), Нитово-3 (Йотов 1991, 105), Nozharevo (Рашев, Станилов 1989, 218), Деvnya-1 (Димитров 1971, 67 – 68, обр. 13) and others, as well as the much more precisely crafted copper decorated hoops and handle from Grave No. 3 in the second, earlier ne-

cropolis in the neighbourhood of Divdyadovo near Shumen (Атанасов и др. 2007, 59, обр. 1₂; Atanasov et al. 2008, 70, fig. 7). These ones, with the shape of a truncated cone, resemble the richly decorated silver vessel dated to the end of the 6th – 7th c. from the Sasanian collection in the State Hermitage Museum. In the middle band of this vessel, plants and wild goats are depicted in medallions (fig. 10: 5) (Тревер, Луконин 1987, № 38). Another ceramic pail is similar, discovered in Bulgaria near the village of Vokil, Silistra region (fig. 10: 4). It is later (from the end of the 9th – 10th c.), covered in yellow-green glaze, and the surface is divided into bands by three relief “hoops”. A rhomboid grid is incised on the hoops and the lugs attached outside next to the rim (their upper part is broken). A tree, a bird, five horses and a stag are drawn in the upper band, and in the lower – a zigzag line (Дончева-Петкова 1977, 94, кат. № 336, табл. XXVIII and references). The shape of a truncated cone is also that of Cups Nos. 11 (fig. 10: 6) and 12 of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure (they had a handle), decorated with beaded decorative strips along the inner and outer rim edge and at the base (Gschwantler 2002, 31, № 11, 12). The cylindrical ceramic pail from Grave No. 6 near Topola bears striking resemblance with the wooden pails with metal fittings from the Late Avar period found in two graves (Nos. 453 and 641) from the necropolis near Zamárdi, Hungary (fig. 10: 7, 8). One of the pails has fittings from copper alloys with punched decoration, and the other one – with metal hoops and fittings made from copper alloy with depicted griffons (Báros, Garam 2009, 67, 92, Taf. 253_{3,4}).

Sphero-conical cups. This even more rarely found type of cup deserves attention, belonging to the so-called ‘goblet-like’ type under the definition of J. Werner. These interesting vessels were discovered in seven graves in Topola – in three with inhumations and four with cremations, two of them played the role of urns, and other two were ritually broken. Another broken one was found next to Grave No. 178. The vessels are wide and deep. Their body comprises two parts, the lower one – rounded, spheroid, ending with a flat base, and the upper, resembling a wide reversed truncated cone, whose rim is rounded. The walls are smooth and, rarely (the cups from Graves Nos. 257 and 488), decorated with vertically burnished lines. At the bases, irregular circles from the spinning of the tournette and the junction with the walls can be seen. Some of the vessels show defects during firing such as cracks (fig. 11: 1– 4, 6).

In addition to Topola, where they were most probably produced, single items of sphero-conical cups are known from Rogachevo, Dobrich district (fig. 11: 5) (Бобчева 1974, обр. 56) and from a grave with an inhumation No. 208 of the necropolis near Balchik, where the cup was ritually broken (Дончева-Петкова и др. 2016, 104, обр. 29₂₀₈).

M. Hristova notes the wide distribution of sphero-conical cups from the Byzantine Empire and the Avar Khaganate to Sogdia and China. Researching these vessels, she finds good parallels in the Tokharistanian fresco from the end of the 6th – first half of the 7th c. in Balalyk Tepe, as well as among the gold and silver vessels from the Pereshchepina treasure, and from Avar graves (Христова 2010, табло II_{1–3} and references). In relation to vessels from the Nagyszentmiklós treasure, É. Garam points out parallels among the pedestal glasses from Avar graves, from which two are closer to the ceramic cups from Topola – from Keszthely-Fenékpuszta and Zamárdi, dated to the 7th c. (Garam 2002, Abb. 22A_{1,2}). É. Garam also discusses metal pedestal vessels from Bócsa, Tépe, Kunágota, Szeged-Átokháza, Kiskőrös-Vágóhíd, Igar (Garam 2002, Abb. 22B). They are also mentioned by Cs. Bálint (Bálint 2010, Abb. 123B). É. Garam, as well as Cs. Bálint, review other metal vessels with and without a handle from the 7th c., among which the silver one from Budapest-Rákos (Garam 2002, Abb. 13, Abb. 14₉; Bálint 2010, Abb. 123A₉, Abb. 124₁) deserves attention. It is this vessel from Budapest-Rákos that is closest to the ceramic cups from Bulgaria (fig. 11: 7). It will also be highlighted here that the shape of the cups from Topola is close to that of the gold vessels from the Pereshchepina treasure (except for the pedestals) (Вернер 1988, приложение 7_{9–13}, 10_{23–25}, 22_{1–4}),



Fig. 11. Spheroconical cups: 1 – 4. The necropolis near Topola, Graves Nos. 232, 257, 500, 488 (Photo: A. Ismail); 5. Rogachevo (Photo: T. Dimov); 6. Cup from Grave No. 488, Topola, at the moment of discovery (Photo: L. Doncheva-Petkova); 7. Silver cup from Budapest-Rákös (after Garam 2002, Abb. 13); 8. Gold cup from Bócsa (after Garam 2002, Abb. 4); 9. Gold cup from the Pereshchepina treasure (after Залеская и др. 2006, 286, № 72)

Обр. 11. Сфероконични чаши: 1 – 4. Некропола при Топола, гробове № 232, 257, 500, 488 (Снимка: А. Исмаил); 5. Рогачево (Снимка: Т. Димов); 6. Чаша от Топола по време на откриването в гроб № 488 (Снимка: Л. Дончева-Петкова); 7. Сребърна чаша от Будапеща-Ракош (по Garam 2002, Abb. 13); 8. Златна чаша от Боча (по Garam 2002, Abb. 4); 9. Златна чаша от Перешчепинското съкровище (по Залеская и др. 2006, 286, № 72)

defined as goblets, chalices, or as “cups with feet” (Залеская и др. 2006, 286, 292, № 72 – 76), and to the glass and metal vessels from Avar graves (fig. 11: 8, 9).

The cup with a handle from Grave No. 178 is a unique specimen among the vessels not only from the necropolis near Topola, but also from the biritual necropoleis (fig. 12: 1). Its body shape relates it to the described sphero-conical cups. Its upper part is lower and wide. The lower part is slightly trapezoid. The walls are rounded towards the base, but the base itself was probably flat, like in the other cups. The vessel stands out with its handle attached to the lower part of the body. It has a square cross-section. The opening is round, the vertical stem is like a zigzag, while the upper and lower ones are straight. The fabric is refined, and orange-red in colour. Ceramic cups, but with ordinary rounded handles, dated to the second half of the 7th – 8th c., are known from Central Asia – from Panjakent (Маршак 1961, табл. 2_{5,9,13,15}; Бентович 1964, обр. 22₅, обр. 23₅). B. Marshak looked for analogues among metal vessels and traced the route of ceramic cups among those of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes in the last centuries BC and the first centuries AD (Маршак 1961, табл. 4, табл. 5). The cup from Topola is of special importance, since its handle partially resembles handles (with a round opening and topped with a horizontal plate) of works of the toreutics from Eastern Iran and Central Asia (fig. 12: 3, 4) (Орбели, Тревер 1935, № 52 – 54, № 57 I, № 57 II; Маршак 1961, табл. 4₁₁₋₁₃; Даркевич 1976, таблицы 8_{6,8}, 9_{5,7}, 16₄₋₇, 17₅₋₇). These cups are dated

differently – to the 8th c., the second half of the 8th – beginning/first half of the 9th c., and the cup of Župan Sivin is similar to them (fig. 12: 2). However, this type of vessels with their handles have a far earlier history. The exquisite silver kantharoi and skyphoi (1st c. BC – 1st c. AD), hidden in a Roman villa near Boscoreale, Italy are impressive (Сребро от Лувъра 2015, Nos. 19 – 23). The handle of the cup from Topola also resembles the handles of a glass from Grave No. 88 of the Meoto-Sarmatian necropolis No. 2 in Ust'-Labin-sky District (Анфимов 1951, обр. 17₁₂). The development of these forms (ceramic and silver vessels) from the Roman age, through the Byzantine Empire to Central Asia and China is also discussed by M. Mundell Mango (Mundell Mango 2000, fig. 7).

Pots are the most common vessels in pagan necropoleis, and in some of them (Novi Pazar, Balchik, Topola), those of refined fabric are predominant. Many of these vessels approximate the shine of metal with their burnished walls. All of them, with their diversity of shapes and decoration, were used in daily life, placed in graves as “sacrificial vessels” or “grave gifts” with food, and their size is not large (from 8.7 to 10 – 13 cm, rarely – up to 15 cm). The larger vessels in Topola (height 19.4 to 27 cm), like those from Graves Nos. 155, 188, 195, 220, 232, 237, served as urns (fig. 13: 1, 2). It is difficult to find relationships among them with similar metal forms, since pots are rare among the works of toreutics. Similar in size, but different in shape – narrower rims, pedestal bases and handles in the middle of the body – are one gold and two silver polished, without decoration “nomadic” vessels from the Pereshchepina treasure (fig. 13: 3) (Орбели, Тревер 1935, № 62), defined as jugs (Вернер 1988, приложение 9_{1,2}, приложение 21_{1,2}) or as cups-jugs (Залеская и др. 2006, 275 – 276, № 69, 284 – 285, № 71).

In several of the necropoleis from Bulgaria, there are about ten pots belonging to types which most probably approximate the metal ones. They have an elongated body, its widest part being under the middle, which makes they look more lumpy or squat, in the sense this term is used for similar forms. In the upper part towards the shoulders, the walls narrow gradually. The necks are narrow, the rims – short, sloped with a rounded edge. Their surface is burnished, grey-black in colour in places, and in some cases one or two lines are casually incised with a thin blade under the widest part. The fabric is almost identical in colour – light brown, brown to brick red. They differ in size (their height varies from 6 to 15.5 cm). They originate from two graves with cremations – Nos. 80 and 95 (fig. 13: 4) of the Balchik necropolis, four with inhumations – Nos. 120, 315 (fig. 13: 6), 322, 379 – of the necropolis near Topola, from Grave No. 3 with an inhumation of the necropolis near Kyulevcha (Въжарова 1976, обр. 481) and from Grave No. 22 of the necropolis



Fig. 12: 1. Ceramic cup with a handle, found next to Grave No. 178 in Topola (Photo: A. Ismail); 2. Silver cup of Župan Sivin (Photo: K. Georgiev); 3, 4. Silver cups from Central Asia (after Даркевич 1976, таблици 8_г, 16_г)

Обр. 12: 1. Керамична сфероколична чаша с дръжка, открита до гроб № 178 в Топола (Снимка: А. Исмаил); 2. Сребърна чаша на жупан Сивин (Снимка: К. Георгиев); 3, 4. Сребърни чаши от Централна Азия (по Даркевич 1976, таблици 8_г, 16_г)



Fig. 13. Ceramic pots from the necropolis near Topola: 1, 2. Graves Nos. 155, 188 (Photo: A. Ismail); 3. Silver vessel from the Pereshchepina treasure (after Залеская и др. 2006, 284, № 71); 4. Pot from the necropolis near Balchik, Grave No. 95 (Photo: L. Doncheva-Petkova); 5. Wooden cup, gold leaf casing, Pereshchepina treasure (after Залеская и др. 2006, 277 – 283, кат. № 70); 6, 7. Pots from the necropolis near Topola, Graves Nos. 315, 297 (Photo: A. Ismail)

Обр. 13. Керамични гърнета от некропола при Топола: 1, 2. Гробове № 155, 188 (Снимка: А. Исмаил); 3. Сребърен съд от Перешчепинското съкровище (по Залеская и др. 2006, 284, № 71); 4. Гърне от некропола при Балчик, гроб № 95 (Снимка: Л. Дончева-Петкова); 5. Дървена чаша, обкована със златен лист, Перешчепинското съкровище (по Залеская и др. 2006, 277 – 283, кат. № 70); 6, 7. Гърнета от некропола при Топола, гробове № 315, 297 (Снимка: А. Исмаил)

with cremations near Razdelna (Димитров 1978, табл. V₁₀). One such pot from the village of Rosenovo, Dobrich district, is kept at RMH – Dobrich. A similar vessel has also been identified at the Starokorsunskaya necropolis near the Kuban (Каминский 1987, обр. 448). It might seem a bit exaggerated, but the shape is related to that of the wooden “nomadic” cup, with gold-leaf casing, from the Pereshchepina treasure (fig. 13: 5), but the ceramic vessels lack a handle (Вернер 1988, приложение 21₄; Залеская и др. 2006, 277 – 283, кат. № 70). However, in two graves with cremations – Nos. 252 and 297 (fig. 13: 7) of the necropolis near Topola, and in Grave No. 10 in Novi Pazar (Станчев, Иванов 1958, таблица XV₂) pots with handles which are not in the middle part of the body, but between the neck and shoulders, were found.

Cauldrons made from ceramic should also be listed as kitchenware ceramics, although various functions have been attributed to them. Whole vessels of this type were not placed in graves, but only in Topola, fragments, broken during ritual activities, have been found in two-three places among the marking stones and above a grave with a cremation No. 396. In terms of colour, fabric composition (with a lot of sand inclusion), and decoration of incised lines, they resemble the pots with sandy fabric, which is why their presence is established only when parts of the rims or lugs are found. There is no doubt that the parts of ceramic cauldrons originate from the settlement, where, according to the researcher L. Bobcheva, over 350 fragments have been found. Pottery kiln No. 4 was stocked with such cauldrons, and seven vessels have been restored from it (fig. 14: 1, 2) (Бобчева 1980, 126 – 131, табл. I – VII). The vessels from Topola are large in size – their capacity, according

to L. Bobcheva, was between 8 and 10 litres, which is why it is justified to assume that they were used “for transporting liquids and food products” (Бобчева 1980, 126), in addition to being used for preparing food over the fire. The multi-functional role of cauldrons, even used for ritual or religious purposes, is also mentioned by V. Nahapetyan-Flyorova and V. Flyorov, who trace the distribution of these vessels “in Eastern Europe in the era of the Khazar Khaganate” (Нахапетян-Флёрова, Флёрв 1997, 63 – 67). A cauldron unearthed in an oven in Dugout No. 5 of the Popina-Blagodeasca settlement in Romania is very close to the vessels from Topola. E. Corbu dates it to the 9th c., but at the same time defines it inaccurately as Pecheng (Corbu 2013, 57, Pl. LII₁, Pl. LV₁). Other similar ceramic cauldrons have not been found in medieval settlements or necropoleis from Bulgaria. The cauldron from the Early Medieval settlement near the town of Devnya (near necropoleis Devnya-1 and 3) is different (Димитров 1975, 37, табл. I_{1,2}).

Several restored vessels from Kiln No. 4 in the settlement near Topola are similar in shape to the silver Sasanian “pails” from the State Hermitage Museum collection, dated to the 6th – 7th c. (fig. 14: 3) (Тревер, Луконин 1987, № 45, 46), and to the silver “pails” from the Klimovsk and Redikor treasures, which have been related to the eastern regions of Central Asia, and dated to the second half of the 8th – first half of the 9th c. (fig. 14: 4) (Даркевич 1976, таблица 12_{4,5}). The copper cauldron with a height of 20 cm from the museum in Veliki Preslav, which was unearthed in 1961 in the area of Selishte, probably during excavations of Y. Changova (fig. 14: 5) is similar to them.⁴ Some of the ceramic cauldrons in the Caucasus region are also of this type (Алексеева 1963, 16 – 31).

The examples mentioned uncover imitations of, and relationships between some ceramic and metal vessels. cursory observations show that the main forms originate from Antiquity – from Greek and Roman ceramic and glass vessels, Gothic, Sarmatian oenochoes, bowls, sphero-conical cups, pails, pots, cauldrons, and also from Sasanian, Alanian and Early Byzantine jugs, bowls, chalices. The studied vessels from the biritual necropoleis in Bulgaria are early forms, brought and reproduced through the years and decades after the settlement of the Asparuh Bulgarians, and especially in the first half and up to around the middle of the 8th c. Later on, towards the end of the 8th c., they decreased in number, and after the first half of the 9th c. these forms are not found, because there were changes in ceramic forms. From where and how they were borrowed from remains a



Fig. 14: 1, 2. Ceramic cauldrons from the medieval settlement near Topola (Photo: D. Aleksiev); 3. Silver cauldron, 6th – 7th c., the State Hermitage Museum (after Тревер, Луконин 1987, № 45, 46); 4. Silver cauldrons from Klimovsk and Redikor, 8th – 9th c. (after Даркевич 1976, таблица 12_{4,5}); 5. Bronze cauldron from Veliki Preslav (Photo: Kr. Stoeva)

Обр. 14: 1, 2. Керамични котли от средновековното селище при Топола (Снимка: Д. Алексиев); 3. Сребърен котел, VI – VII в., Ермитажа (по Тревер, Луконин 1987, № 45, 46); 4. Сребърни котли от Климовск и Редикор, VIII – IX в. (по Даркевич 1976, таблица 12_{4,5}); 5. Бронзов котел от Велики Преслав (Снимка: Кр. Стоева)

⁴ I would like to thank my colleague, Kremena Stoeva, for the data and the photograph.

mystery. In contrast to V. G. Grigorjev and B. I. Marshak, who had direct observations on the metal and ceramic vessels produced in Sogdia, such observations and relationships here are not possible. Our colleagues from Hungary and Slovakia working on Late Avar “yellow” ceramics encounter the same difficulties. They also relate it to metal specimens, but the problem of its appearance remains unsolved to this day. As had been already pointed out, the reviewed ceramic vessels from the biritual necropoleis are early forms, and the logical question arises whether some of them did not reproduce established specimens from the initial territories – prototypes which were passed on from one generation of potters to the next.

In contrast to the vessels from the ‘secret passage’ in Pliska, which are the most prominent manifestation of metal imitations, thrown on a kick wheel, the vessels from the biritual necropoleis were made on a tournette. And while different opinions have been expressed about the masters who made the vessels from the ‘secret passage’ in Pliska, there is no doubt that the vessels from the biritual necropoleis are the work of Bulgarian potters. They, like all of the Early Medieval pottery, were made on a tournette and from the same fabric as the other ceramics. They were produced in centres like Pliska and Topola, where pottery kilns have been discovered (Милчев 1960, 35 – 53; Бобчева 1977, 172 – 176).

We should note that ceramic vessels imitating the gold ones from the Nagyszentmiklós treasure have been established not only among the Avar necropoleis. The mentioned jugs with a spherico-conical body from Novi Pazar and Balchik, as well as the ceramic bowls from Balchik and Topola, and the conical bucket pail cups from Topola, Balchik and Bdintsi are comparable to vessels Nos. 1 – 7, 11, 12 and 19 of the treasure.

The appearance, patterns, and further development of the forms are part of the wide range of questions – about preserved traditions, influences – questions which have been the interest of scientists since the first biritual necropolis near Novi Pazar was discovered more than 60 years ago; questions which remain to be answered in the future.

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КЕРАМИЧНИ СЪДОВЕ В БИРИТУАЛНИТЕ НЕКРОПОЛИ И ТЕХНИТЕ МЕТАЛНИ ПАРАЛЕЛИ

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РЕЗЮМЕ

За разлика от Унгария, на чиято територия са открити богати аварски гробове от VII в., свързвани с предводители, князе, аристократи, на територията на днешна България нито в първите държавни центрове, нито в аулите са намерени гробове на български ханове или на висши държавни служители. Затова пък в най-ранните наши некрополи – при гр. Балчик, гр. Нови пазар, с. Кюлевча, Шуменско и с. Топола, Каварненско – са открити керамични съдове, за някои от които най-общо може да се каже, че наподобяват метални първообрази. Значителен е броят на съдовете, които могат да се свържат с прототипи, изработени не само от метал, но и от стъкло, дори от дърво. Това са трапезни съдове – кани, амфоровидни стомни, паници, сферокопични чаши, чаши-ведра, както и гърнета и котли с вътрешни уши. В изследването са събрани освен известните досега керамични съдове и нови, открити през последните две десетилетия, предимно от биритуалните некрополи при Балчик и Топола. Към тях са прибавени и няколко съда от първата българска столица Плиска. Те са представени по видове.

Каните са едни от най-интересните находки в некрополите. Изработени са, както и останалите видове, на ръчно грънчарско колело. Една от каните от некропола при Нови пазар – от гроб № 33 (обр. 1: 1) освен с формата си, впечатлява с прецизно изпълнената украса и безспорно копира съдове от торевтиката. В Балчишкия некропол каните заемат първо по количество място сред съдовете от пречистена глина и някои по форма са близки на новопазарската, но са украсени с излъскани вертикални ивици или с мрежест орнамент (обр. 1: 2 – 4). По форма на тялото каните от Нови пазар и Балчик се приближават до сребърната, с позлата, византийска кана от съкровището във Врап, Албания (обр. 1: 5), до каните от съкровището от Надсентмиклош, които са с различни шийки, устия, дъна (обр. 1: 6, 7), до сребърните кани, съхранявани в Ермитажа от Ягошур, Покровское, Седяр (обр. 2).

И други метални, сребърни и рядко златни, сасанидски или изпълнени в сасанидски традиции кани имат подобна сфероконична форма – златната кана от Перешчепинското съкровище (обр. 3: 2), сребърната позлатена кана от Малцева (обр. 3: 3), сребърната от Павловка (обр. 3: 4), както и бронзовите кани от Дагестан (обр. 3: 5), определяни като ислямско (ранноабасидско) подражание на сасанидски съдове. Подобна е формата на някои от формуваните на крачно колело светлоглинени кани от тайния ходник при Крумовия дворец в Плиска. Дъното на две от тях е с високо профилирано столче, а дръжките им при съединяването с тялото завършват, както и на останалите кани, които са с плоско дъно, с двулистни палмети (обр. 3: 1). Точно тези кани се свързват най-пряко с посочените метални съдове от сасанидската и постсасанидската торевтика. За разлика от металните съдове и две от каните от тайния ходник в Плиска, дъната на керамичните кани от некрополите са плоски. Работата на ръчно колело е затруднявала оформянето на такива дъна и затова те не са често срещани. В Балчишкия некропол са открити още няколко интересни кани, които по форма и орнамент приличат на метални съдове (обр. 4: 1 – 3, 5, 6). Оригинална по форма и направа кана е намерена в гроб № 33 в Топола (обр. 4: 7). Доближава се до сребърна кана от източните райони на Средна Азия – от с. Афанасиево, на брега на Кама (обр. 4: 8).

Амфоровидни стомни се откриват в некрополи, които са възникнали по-късно или са продължили да се използват дълго време. Изключение прави по-ранният съд (края на VIII в.) от гроб № 3 в кв. Дивдядово при Шумен, както и единственият съд от некропола при Балчик. Изключение правят и светлоглинени ангобирани съдове от Плиска, които са формувани на крачно колело (обр. 5: 1 – 3). Дръжките им при съединяването с тялото завършват с издължена пластична пирамидална част, която при съда от тайния ходник при Крумовия дворец е украсена с трилистници. Те наподобяват дръжките при някои метални съдове. Амфоровидните стомни са широко разпространени около средата – 60-те години на IX в, срещат се и през X в. При много от тях дръжките са с пластични издатъци (обр. 5: 4 – 6). Вероятно тези дръжки и преобладаващите жълти цветове са опити за имитиране на изработени от злато съдове.

Паници. След гърнетата от некропола при Топола, паниците заемат второ по количество място, тъй като са изработвани в керамичните работилници на селището. Преобладават такива с широки заоблени рамена, от които към дъното стените постепенно се стесняват (обр. 6: 1 – 3). Близки по форма и размери медни паници са намерени в Коринт (обр. 7: 4). В некропола при Топола в гробовете № 4 и 29 (обр. 7: 1, 2) и № 182 на Балчишкия некропол (обр. 7: 3) са открити дълбоки паници. По форма се свързват с широко коментираното златно съдче № 19 (обр. 7: 6) от Надсентмиклошкото съкровище. Единствена със своята форма от нашите биритуални некрополи е паницата от гроб с инхумация № 486 от Топола (обр. 8: 1). Отличава я дъното – ниско, кухо конусовидно столче, по което се доближава до „сасанидска златна купичка“ от Перешчепинското съкровище (обр. 8: 2). Дъното на паницата от гроб № 486 се свързва и с това на бронзов съд с две дръжки от гроб № 244 на некропол при Замарди в Унгария (обр. 8: 3).

При търсене на паралели между керамичните и металните съдове унгарски археолози представят реконструирани дървени паници с метални обкови от аварски гробовете от VII в. (обр. 8: 4). Пластините на една от Желовче/Зели са близки с откритите медни огънати пластини от гробовете № 99 и 205 (обр. 8: 6, 7) и сребърни от № 148 (обр. 8: 5, 7) на некропола при Балчик. Може да се предположи, че с пластинките от Балчишкия некропол също са били украсени или обковани устията на дървени съдове или предмети, както показват останките от иглолистно дърво при тези от гроб № 148.

Чаши. Тези съдове се срещат рядко. Представени са предимно в Топола. До главата на погребения юноша в гроб № 56 е поставен съд с необичайна форма (обр. 9: 1). Сферичното тяло без шийка, дъното и изцяло излъсканата повърхност го доближават до метални форми от съкровищата от Мартиновка и Врап (обр. 9: 4), от гроб № 204 при Варпалота-Гимназиум в Унгария (обр. 9: 3), от гроб № 32 при Носера Умбра в Италия. Съдът от Топола наподобява и на сребърните църковни византийски потири от VI – VII в., като този от с. Нова Надежда, Хасковско (обр. 9: 2).

Чаши-ведра. Още с първите разкопки некрополът при с. Топола стана известен с откриваните чаши с форма на дървени ведра. Намерени са в 15 гроба. Известни са и от некрополите при Балчик и с. Бдинци. По формата си повечето наподобяват обърнат пресечен конус (обр. 10: 1, 2) и само една от гроб № 6 (обр. 10: 3), както и няколко фрагмента от Топола, са цилиндрични. По тялото им на интервали са врязани прави линии или между правите линии са нанасяни вълнисти ленти. Твърде вероятно е керамичните ведра да копират метални съдове и още по-сигурно дървени с метални обкови. Тези с форма на пресечен конус напомнят на сребърния съд от сасанидската колекция в Ермитажа (обр. 10: 5). До него се доближава глазираното керамично ведро от с. Вокил, Силистренско (обр. 10: 4). С форма на пресечен конус са чашите № 11 (обр. 10: 6) и 12 от Надсентмиклошкото съкровище. Цилиндричното ведро от Топола намира прилика с дървените ведра с метални обкови от началото на късноаварския период от гробове № 453 и 641 на големия некропол при Замарди в Унгария (обр. 10: 7, 8).

Сфероконични чаши. Заслужава внимание този още по-рядко срещан тип чаши, който принадлежи към т.нар. бокаловидни, открити в седем гроба в Топола (обр. 11: 1 – 4, 6). Тялото им се състои от две части, като долната е закръглена, сферична и завършва с плоско дъно, а горната наподобява широк обърнат пресечен конус. Посочени са паралели със стъклени и метални съдове от аварски гробове от VII в., от които внимание заслужава сребърният от Будапеща-Ракош (обр. 11: 7), както и златните съдове от Боча (обр. 11: 8) и Перешчепинското съкровище (без столчетата) (обр. 11: 9). Чашата с дръжка, открита до гроб № 178, е единствен екземпляр сред съдовете от биритуалните некрополи (обр. 12: 1). По форма се свързва с описаните сфероконични чаши. Дръжката ѝ напомня на дръжки от произведения на торевтиката от Източен Иран и Средна Азия, датирани в VIII в., втората половина на VIII – началото/първата половина на IX в. (обр. 12: 3, 4), доближава се и до чашата на жупан Сивин от Преслав (обр. 12: 2).

Гърнетата са най-често срещаните съдове в езическите некрополи, като в някои от тях (Нови пазар, Балчик, Топола – обр. 13: 1, 2) преобладават направените от пречистена глина. При тях връзки с подобни метални форми трудно се откриват, тъй като сред произведенията на торевтиката гърнетата се срещат рядко. Подобни по размери, но различни по форма – с по-тесни устия, с дъна-столчета и дръжка в средата на тялото – са един златен и два сребърни, излъскани, без орнаменти „номадски“ съда от Перешчепинското съкровище, определяни като кани или като чаши-кани (обр. 13: 3). Десетината гърнета от Топола, Балчик, Кюлевча принадлежат към тип, който с по-голяма вероятност се доближава до металните (обр. 13: 4, 6). Може да изглежда пресилено, но формата им се свързва с тази на дървената „номадска“ чаша, обкована със златни листове от Перешчепинското съкровище (обр. 13: 5), само че при керамичните съдове липсва дръжка. Но в два гроба на некропола при Топола и в гроб в Нови пазар са намерени гърнета с две дръжки, които не са в средната част на тялото, а между шийката и рамената (обр. 13: 7).

Към кухненската керамика или с приписваните им разнообразни функции принадлежат керамичните **котли**. В гробовете цели съдове от този вид не са поставяни, но единствено в Топола сред маркиращите камъни на няколко места са открити фрагменти, начупвани при ритуални действия. Частите от керамични котли произлизат от селището, с такива котли е била заредена грънчарска пещ № 4 (обр. 14: 1, 2). Тези съдове приличат на сребърните сасанидски „ведра“ от колекцията на Ермитажа (обр. 14: 3), на „ведрата“ в състава на Климовското и Редикорското съкровища (обр. 14: 4). До тях се доближава медният котел от музея във Велики Преслав (обр. 14: 5).

Посочените примери разкриват подражания и връзки на някои керамични с метални съдове. Беглите наблюдения показват, че основните форми водят своя произход от Античността – от гръцки и римски керамични и стъклени съдове, от готски, сарматски ойнохое, паници, сфероконични чаши, ведра, гърнета, котли, от сасанидски, алански и ранновизантийски кани,

паници, потири. Коментираните съдове от нашите биритуални некрополи са ранни форми, донесени и възпроизвеждани в годините и десетилетията след настаняването на Аспаруховите българи и особено през първата половина и около средата на VIII в. По-късно към края на VIII в. те намаляват, а след първата половина на IX в. тези форми не се срещат, тъй като настъпват изменения в керамичните форми. Откъде и как са заимствани – остава загадка. Както се посочи, разгледаните керамични съдове от биритуалните некрополи са ранни форми и логично възниква въпросът дали някои от тях не възпроизвеждат утвърдени образци от изходните територии, образци, които са препредавани от поколение на поколение грънчари. За разлика от съдовете от тайния ходник при Плиска, които са най-ярка проява на метални имитации и са формувани на крачно колело, съдовете от биритуалните некрополи са изработени на ръчно колело. И докато за плисковските от тайния ходник са изказани различни мнения относно майсторите, които са ги правили, няма съмнение, че съдовете от биритуалните некрополи са дело на български грънчари. Те, както цялата ранносредновековна керамика, са изработени не само на ръчно колело, но и от същите глини, от каквито е правена и останалата керамика. Произвеждани са в центрове като Плиска и Топола, където са открити грънчарски пещи.

Трябва да отбележим, че не само сред аварските некрополи са засвидетелствани керамични съдове, които имитират златните от Надсентмиклошкото съкровище. Посочените кани със сфероконично тяло от Нови пазар и Балчик, както и керамичните купи от Балчик и Топола, конусовидните чаши-ведра от Топола, Балчик и Бдинци са съпоставими със съдове № 1 – 7, 11, 12 и 19 от съкровището.

Ключови думи: биритуални некрополи, ранносредновековна керамика, късноаварски период, метални съдове, съкровището от Надсентмиклош