

THE BULGARIAN GROUP OF SGRAFFITO CERAMICS WITH UNDERGLAZE MONOGRAMS: CHARACTERISTICS AND PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to present the characteristics and to discuss the main issues of a specific group of sgraffito ceramics with underglaze monograms. These ceramics were produced locally in the Medieval capital of Bulgaria, Tarnovo, as well as in some other urban centres such as Cherven and Silistra. The samples' distribution matches an area controlled by the Tsardom of Tarnovo during the second half of the 14th c. The appearance of the group could be dated in the 1340s based on the decipherment of the monograms of Patriarch Symeon and its production and use most probably does not exceed the time of the Ottoman conquest. Huge plates and bowls covered with transparent, colourless, light green or yellow glazes seem to be of earlier date, as opposed to later samples of smaller size, more often glazed in darker shades. Monochromacy is a distinctive feature in most cases, as well as incised decoration of concentric circles, possibly inspired by the Zeuxippus Family ceramics. The inscriptions, placed closer to the rim of the vessels, are of great historical significance since some of them comprise the names and titles of Bulgarian tsars, patriarchs and other dignitaries like Ivan Alexander (1331 – 1371), Ivan Shishman (1371 – 1395) and Patriarch Theodosius II. The samples with royal monograms are concentrated at the Palace and those with patriarchal inscriptions – at the Patriarchate in Tarnovo. An interesting case are the sets inscribed with single letters originating from several monasteries, among which the plates and bowls marked with 'M' (meaning 40) from the Tarnovo monastery of the Holy 40 Martyrs stand out as the most numerous assemblage. The archaeological contexts clearly show a connection between vessels with certain monograms and particular complexes. Therefore the possibility for the group's free circulation as trade goods and its use by the ordinary population should be excluded.

Key words: Glazed pottery, sgraffito, monograms, Tarnovo, Zeuxippus Family

The sgraffito ceramics with underglaze monograms are still an insufficiently studied phenomenon for the Eastern Mediterranean region, the Aegean and the Black Sea in the 13th – 14th c. The earliest manifestations of the monogrammatic fashion on glazed tableware during this period are found on specimens of the groups Zeuxippus Family and Port St. Symeon Ware, mainly from the Holy Land and the Crusader's Levant (Avissar, Stern 2005, 51 – 54). Towards the beginning of the 14th c., the monograms became a characteristic decorative pattern for the Byzantine Elaborate Incised Ware (EIW), widespread on the shores and in the hinterland of the Black Sea (fig. 1). This group is characterized by highly standardized vessel shapes of small sizes (mainly bowls, plates, and cups), monochrome glazes and sgraffito decoration, executed in the champlévé technique – by taking away areas from the slip background (fig. 2). Its distribution is associated with the activity of Italian merchants in the region (François 2003, 166). So far, a ceramic workshop in Constantinople

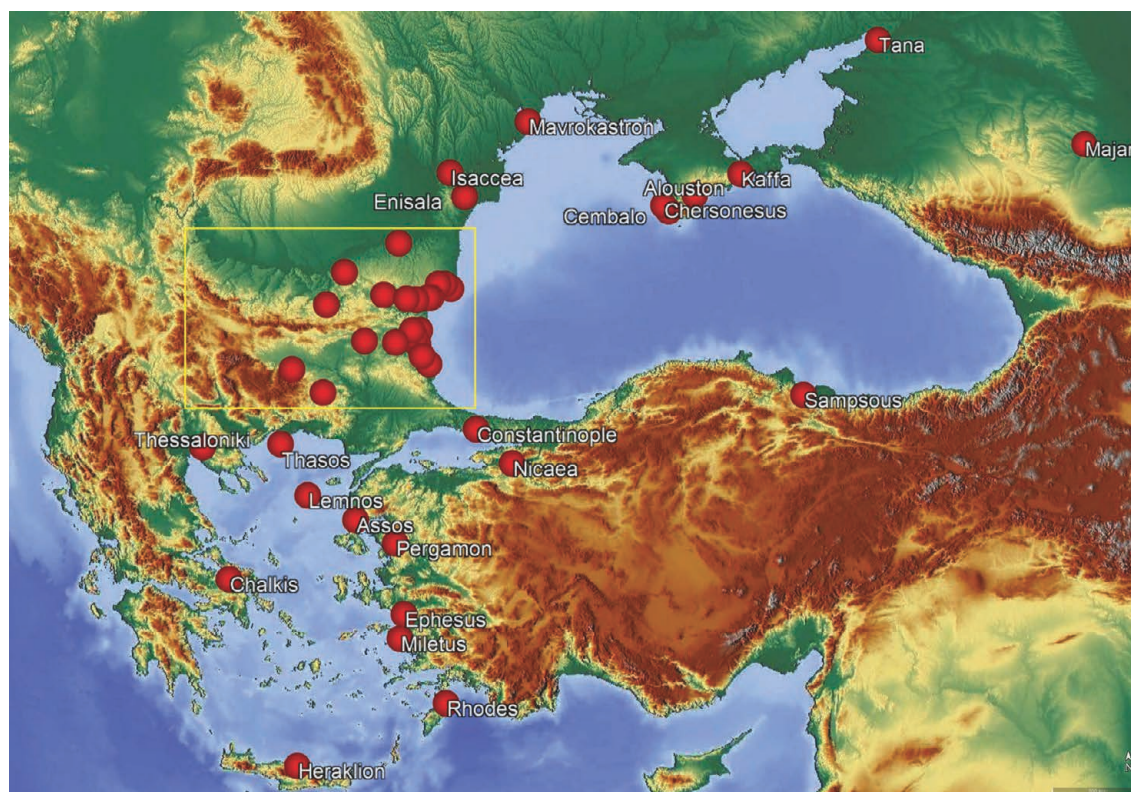


Fig. 1. Distribution of the Byzantine pottery with monograms from the Elaborate Incised Ware group
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Обр. 1. Разпространение на византийската керамика с монограми от групата Elaborate Incised Ware
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producing EIW has been studied (Waksman 2012, 148), but it is assumed that there are several more production centers (Kuleff, Djingova 2001, 73 – 76). The monograms themselves, engraved at the center of the inner surface of the vessels, are reduced to only four more common types and cannot be associated with specific individuals, workshops, etc. The main part of the samples of the Byzantine sgraffito ceramics with monograms, belonging to EIW, originate from centers that actively participated in the Black Sea trade and maintained strong ties with Constantinople – such as Nessebar, Sozopol, Varna, Kastritsi, and Kaliakra (fig. 3). Significant for the research of this pottery is the contribution of Al. Kuzev, who published a large part of the Varna collection (Кузев 1974, 155 – 170, табл. I – IX).

Quite different is the case of another group of sgraffito ceramics with underglaze monograms, which is found mostly in the capital of the Second Bulgarian Tsardom – Tarnovo, and can be denoted as **Bulgarian**. The very first scholars studying this pottery noted the differences with the Byzantine EIW (Ангелов 1980, 161). The uncovered Cyrillic inscriptions were quickly deciphered as names and titles of Medieval Bulgarian tsars and tsaritsas from the 13th – 14th c., of Tarnovo patriarchs and other representatives of the elite, and the vessels were accordingly interpreted as local products and not as Byzantine imports (Миятев 1967, 7 – 8). In the 1960s – 1980s a large amount of sgraffito ceramics with monograms was published successively by S. Georgieva (Георгиева 1966, 12, обр. 5; Георгиева 1974, 67 – 69, обр. 49 – 50, I), N. Angelov (Ангелов 1972, 60 – 61, обр. 11 – 13; Ангелов 1980, 154 – 158, обр. 151 – 156: VI – VII), Iv. Dzhambov (Джамбов 1978, 64 – 67; Djambov 1985, 261 – 266, Tabl. 1 – 2, 4), P. Slavchev (Славчев 1980, 217 – 220, обр.

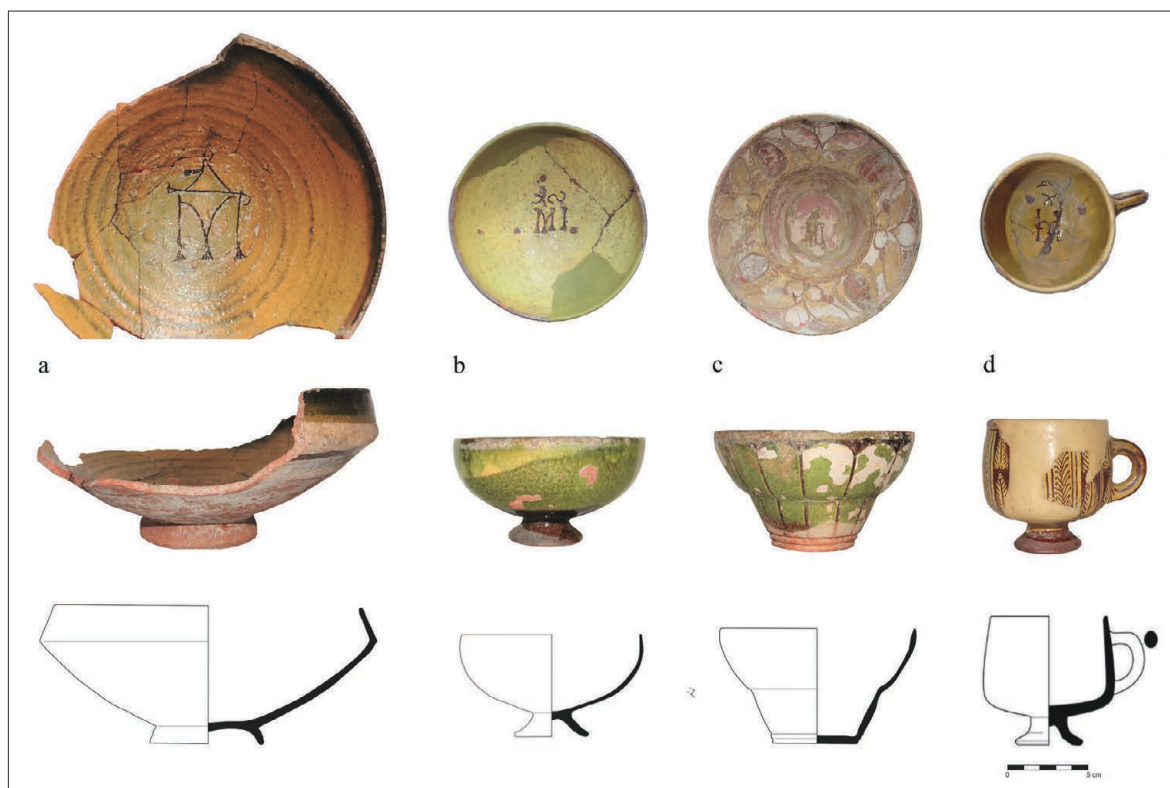


Fig. 2. Basic shapes of the Byzantine Elaborate Incised Ware: a. Plate with a monogram Prodomos (Kastritsi); b. Bowl with Michael (Varna); c. Bell-shaped cup with Michael (Varna); d. Cylindrical cup with Michael (Varna) (graphic image by M. Manolova-Voykova)

Обр. 2. Основни форми на византийската Elaborate Incised Ware: а. Паница с монограм „Продромос“ (Кастрици); б. Купа с „Михаил“ (Варна); с. Камбановидна чаша с „Михаил“ (Варна); д. Цилиндрична чаша с „Михаил“ (Варна) (граф. засн.: М. Манолова-Войкова)

4 – 5), At. Popov (Попов 1980, 183 – 185, обр. 10 – 15, 189 – 190; Попов 1984, 73 – 105, обр. 12 – 107, 148 – 151). Similar materials were later on published by At. Pisarev (Писарев 1992, 167, обр. 8), V. Nesheva (Нешева 2000, 49, обр. 29а, 83, обр. 70), Т. Ovcharov (Овчаров 2005, 204, обр. 51 – 53, 237 – 238, обр. 170 – 171), М. Dolmova-Lukanovska (Долмова-Лукановска 2003, 260, табл. III; Долмова-Лукановска 2007, 43, табл. XXIV: 3 – 4, 187 – 188, табл. V: 15 – 20, 280, табл. XIII: 1 – 3; Долмова-Лукановска 2008, обр. 43), М. Robov (Николова, Робов 2005, 109, табл. I; Робов 2010, 615 – 621; Робов 2015, 285, обр. 12), К. Totev (Тотев 2014, 239, обр. 1; Тотев 2017а, 152, обр. 1 – 2; Тотев 2017б, 168, обр. 5) and the team excavating the Northern sector of Trapezitsa (Дерменджиев 2011, 49, 110, обр. 12 – 13; Караилиев 2011, 138 – 140, 185 – 186, обр. 17 – 29; Тотев, Косева 2011, 235, 268, обр. 48). It is precisely the great historical value of the monograms on the vessels of this group that shifts the focus of its research in the direction of epigraphic observations, prosopographic and onomastic studies, political and social interpretations, etc. (Попов 1978, 76 – 81; Джамбов 1978, 64 – 69; Алексиев 1980а, 205 – 208; Алексиев 1980б, 443 – 450; Попов 1980, 176 – 187; Попов 1982, 345; Попов 1983а, 56 – 64; Попов 1983б, 64 – 74; Попов 1984, 26 – 41; Попов 1985, 358 – 359; Робов 1985, 395 – 403; Djambov 1985, 11 – 24; Овчаров 1992, 261 – 264; Алексиев 1994, 148 – 158, табл. 1 – 3; Анчева 1996, 109 – 114, табл. 1 – 4; Робов 1999, 517 – 522; Тотев 2014, 235 – 240; Робов 2015, 279 – 285; Тотев 2017а, 151 – 155; Тотев 2017б, 162 – 168). Almost no attention is paid to the vessels as such, with their functional-formal, technological and more general decorative characteristics. The

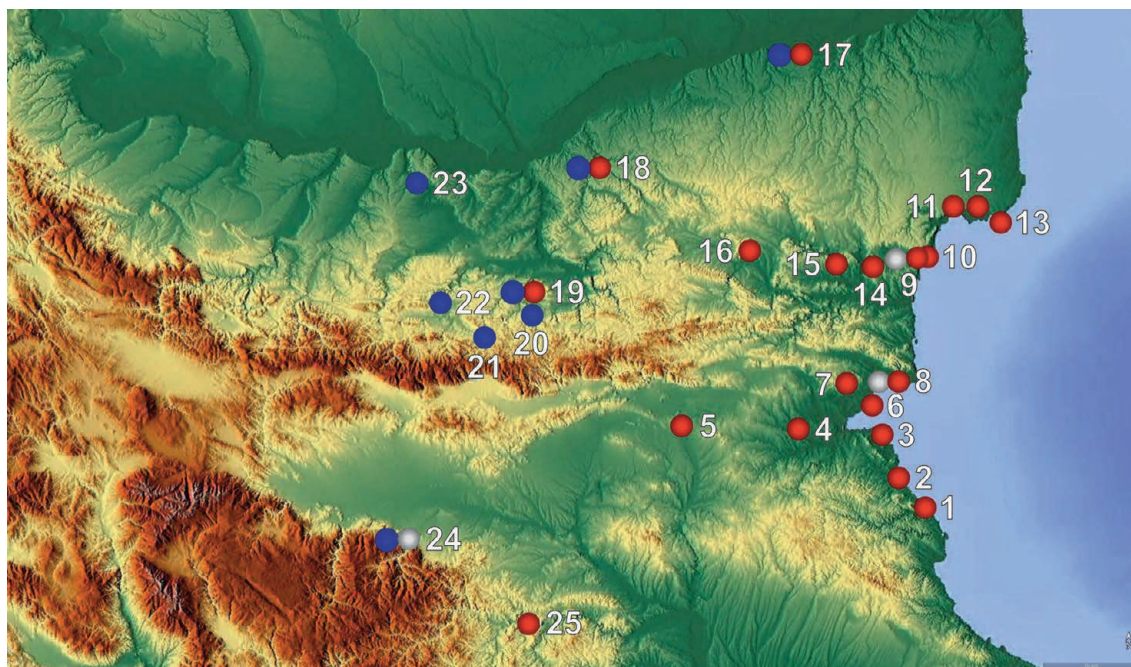


Fig. 3. Distribution of the Byzantine pottery with monograms from the Zeuxippus Family (white) and Elaborate Incised Ware (red), and the Bulgarian group (blue) from the territory of Bulgaria: 1. Ahtopol; 2. Kiten; 3. Sozopol; 4. Rousokastro; 5. Yambol; 6. Pomorie; 7. Kableshkovo; 8. Nessebar; 9. Varna; 10. Kastritsi; 11. Balchik; 12. Kavarna; 13. Kaliakra; 14. Petrich kale; 15. Provadia; 16. Shumen; 17. Silistra; 18. Cherven; 19. Tarnovo; 20. Kilifarevo monastery; 21. Gabrovo; 22. Gradnitsa; 23. Nikopol; 24. Asenovgrad; 25. Kardzhali (Author: G. Sengalevich)

Обр. 3. Разпространение на византийската керамика с монограми от групите Zeuxippus Family (бяло) и Elaborate Incised Ware (червено), и на българската група (синьо) от територията на България: 1. Ахтопол; 2. Китен; 3. Созопол; 4. Русокастро; 5. Ямбол; 6. Поморие; 7. Каблешково; 8. Несебър; 9. Варна; 10. Кастрици; 11. Балчик; 12. Каварна; 13. Калиакра; 14. Петрич кале; 15. Провадия; 16. Шумен; 17. Силистра; 18. Червен; 19. Търново; 20. Килифаревски манастир; 21. Габрово; 22. Градница; 23. Никопол; 24. Асеновград; 25. Кърджали (Автор: Г. Сенгалевич)

publications lack quality images, graphic representations, and often catalogue descriptions. The vessels are rarely and briefly considered in the more general context of the ceramic repertoire from Tarnovo, with its development over time, and with the various external influences on it (Георгиева 1966, 12; Ангелов 1972, 60; Георгиева 1974, 66 – 68; Ангелов 1980, 149 – 162; Славчев 1985, 159 – 160; Овчаров 1994, 169 – 170; Долмова-Лукановска 2003, 256; Долмова-Лукановска 2007, 24, 149, 157 – 159, 255, 260; Долмова-Лукановска 2008, 82 – 84). Sgraffito pottery with monograms from centers such as Cherven and Drastar (Silistra) is overshadowed by the one from the metropolitan city. Pieces outside of Tarnovo are generally either unpublished or mentioned in publications on a broader topic (Ангелов 1985, 256 – 247, обр. 30; Атанасов 2007, 353, табл. LXXIX: 435; Атанасов 2009, 329, 363; Колева 2010, табл. IV: 39, 711 – 712). R. Koleva's article on sgraffito ceramics from Drastar (Колева 2010, 695 – 712) should still be mentioned as a model for systematic and methodological research.

Characteristic features

A significant difficulty in the samples' analysis is posed by their fragmentation, as in the course of the excavations the sherds with underglaze monograms were mainly collected, while the other parts of the vessels have not been preserved. That is why mainly rims and walls on which the inscriptions are incised could be commented upon, as the bottoms are almost not available. A few

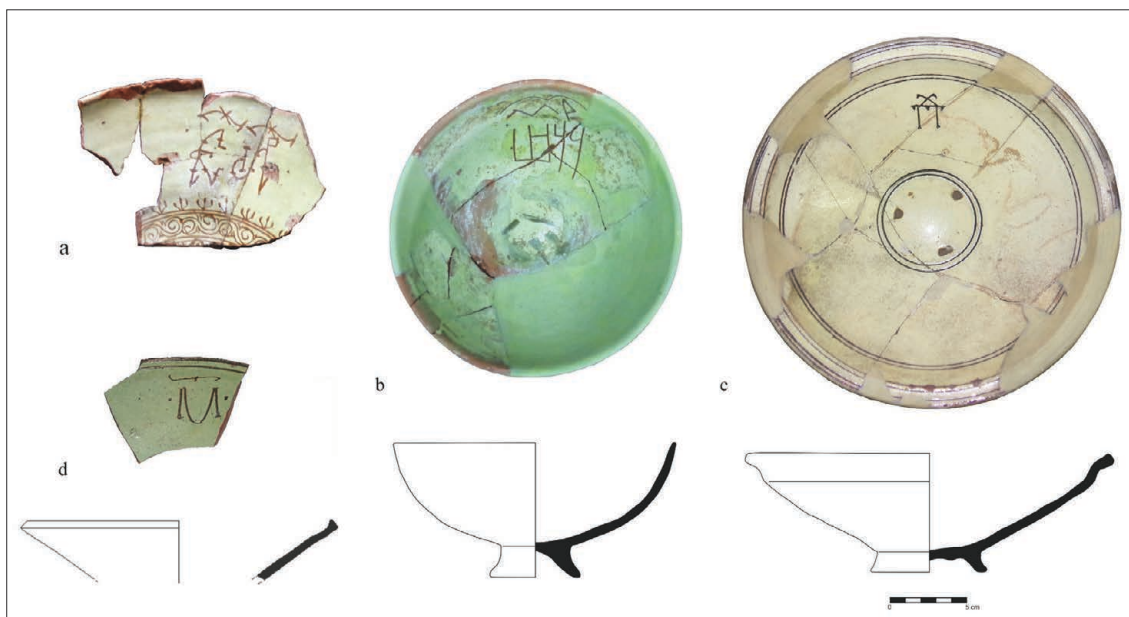


Fig. 4. Types of monograms from Tarnovo common for the Bulgarian group: a. Plate with monograms Alexander Tsar (Tsarevets: Royal palace); b. Bowl with monograms Shishman Tsar (monastery at the church of St. Demetrius); c. Plate with the monogram Patriarch (possibly Theodosius II) (Tsarevets: Patriarchate); d. Plate with the letter M with titlo (Great Lavra) (Author: G. Sengalevich)

Обр. 4. Популярни за българската група типове монограми от Търново: а. Паница с монограми „Александър цар“ (Царевец: Царски дворец); б. Купа с монограми „Шишман цар“ (манастир при църквата „Св. Димитър“); в. Паница с монограм „патриарх“ (вероятно Теодосий II) (Царевец: Патриаршия); д. Паница с буква М с титла (Великата лавра) (Автор: Г. Сенгалевич)

well-preserved and restored entire vessels bring more clarity. The observations presented here are based on 157 processed specimens of the Bulgarian group of sgraffito ceramics with underglaze monograms from the depots of Regional Museum of History (RMH) – Veliko Tarnovo (117 vessels), RMH – Silistra (18), NAIM – Sofia (10), RMH – Ruse (8), RMH – Gabrovo (2), RMH – Pleven (1), and MH – Asenovgrad (1),¹ as well as on 203 already published pieces that remained unavailable to me. Essential information is provided by the most common types of pottery with monograms of the tsars Ivan Alexander (1331 – 1371) and Ivan Shishman (1371 – 1395), of the Patriarch of Tarnovo Theodosius II, as well as the large series of vessels with incised underglaze letter M (fig. 4). Regarding the shapes, in all cases large-size deep plates (with rim diameters of 20 – 35 cm) predominate, mainly with a conical and less often with a spherical body (fig. 4c – d, fig. 5, fig. 7, fig. 9a, fig. 11a – c). Vessels with a biconical or more complex “angular” profile are exceptions. In several cases, the walls are embossed with grooves recessed by the potter’s fingers (fig. 5c). The layout of the rims varies from curved inward plain rims to rims drawn outwards, profiled from the inside like wide rounded grooves. Rims curved outwards and shaped like a curb are rare. The foot ring bases, if preserved, are low, wide and conical in shape. Among the bowls, vessels with a more closed shape, with a spherical and less often with a biconical body, and rim diameters of 15 – 20 cm are most common (fig. 4b, fig. 6, fig. 9d). The rims are either straight and plain, gradually tapering towards a rounded lip, or with a slightly S-shaped curve. The bottoms stand on low conical foot

¹ I express my gratitude to E. Dermendzhiev, N. Borisova, R. Koleva, Kr. Mihaylov, M. Robov, B. Tomova, S. Yordanov, S. Velikova, R. Yosifov, V. Naydenov, V. Ivanov, R. Moreva, Z. Krasteva for their assistance in finding and processing the materials, as well as to the National Program “Young Scientists and Postdoctoral Fellows” for the provided research opportunities and support.

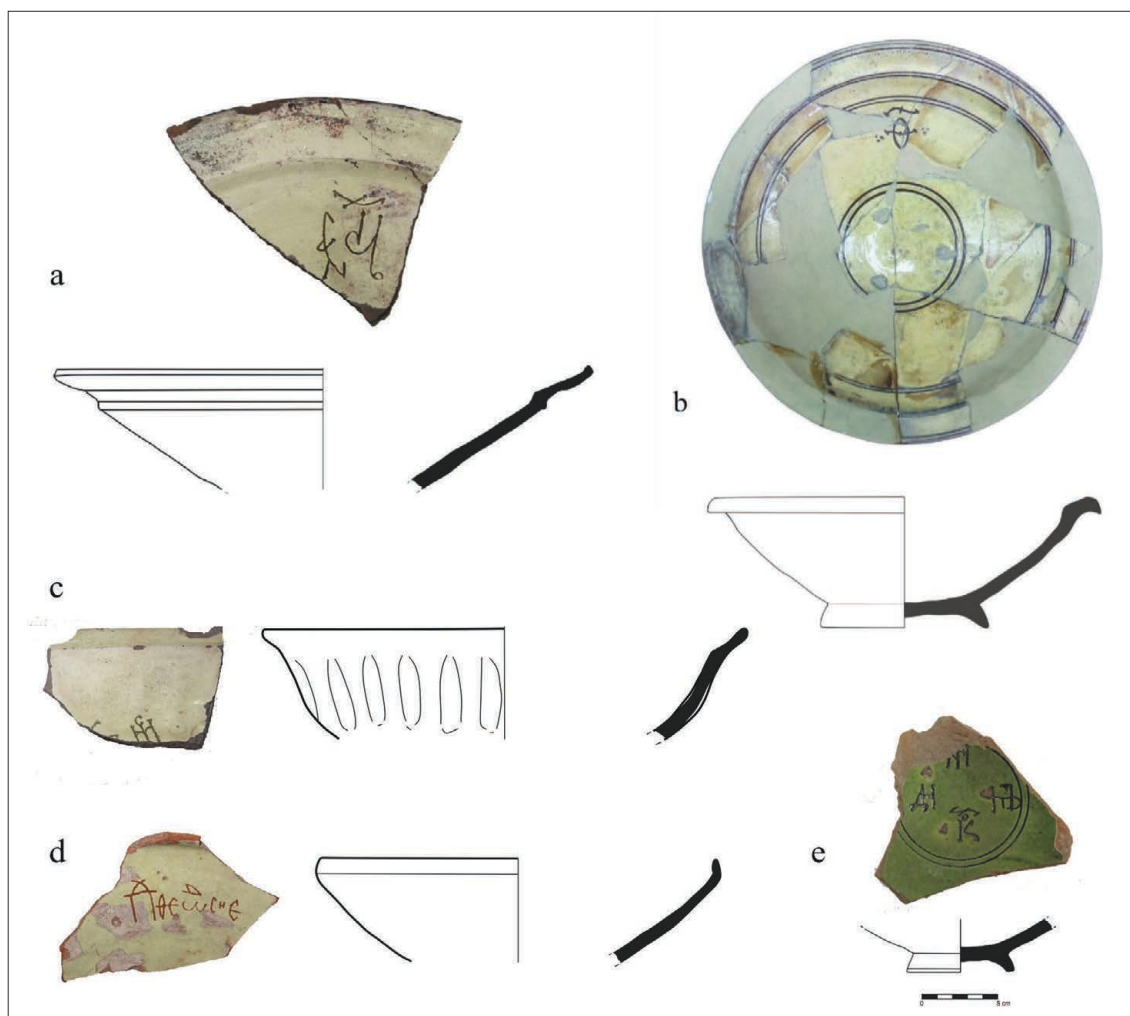


Fig. 5. Characteristic shapes of plates from Tarnovo: a. Conical plate with monograms of Tsar Ivan Alexander (Tsarevets: Royal Palace); b. Spherical plate with the initial of Tsaritsa Theodora II (Tsarevets: Royal palace); c. Spherical plate with relief grooves and monograms of Patriarch Symeon (Tsarevets: Northwestern slope of the Patriarchate); d. Conical plate with inscription of Patriarch Theodosius II (Tsarevets: site No. 16); e. Conical plate with cruciform monogram Nicodemus (Tsarevets: Northwestern slope of the Patriarchate) (Author: G. Sengalevich)

Обр. 5. Характерни форми паници от Търново: а. Конична паница с монограми на Иван Александър (Царевец: Царски дворец); б. Сферична паница с инициал на царица Теодора II (Царевец: Царски дворец); в. Сферична паница с релефни канелюри и монограми на патриарх Симеон (Царевец: северозападен склон на Патриаршията); д. Конична паница с надпис на патриарх Теодосий II (Царевец: обект № 16); е. Конична паница с кръстовиден монограм „Никодим“ (Царевец: северозападен склон на Патриаршията) (Автор: Г. Сенгалевич)

rings. For the time being, the group in question includes single vessels with a closed shape, such as three jugs from Tarnovo, glazed on the outside (Попов 1984, 88, обр. 60, 94, обр. 75; Караилиев 2011, 186, обр. 26), and an unpublished cup – chalice from Cherven. From Cherven originates the only example of decorative ceramics that is not household and tableware: a bowl insert for ceramoplastic façade decoration with an incised underglaze monogram (Сенгалевич 2019, 114, обр. 3). One of the sherds with an inscription of Patriarch Theodosius of Tarnovo seems to be part of the stem of a glazed ceramic candlestick, which separates it as the only representative of the ceramics with special functions (Попов 1984, 74, обр. 14).

The vessels from Tarnovo and Cherven are distinguished by their monochromacy, which from

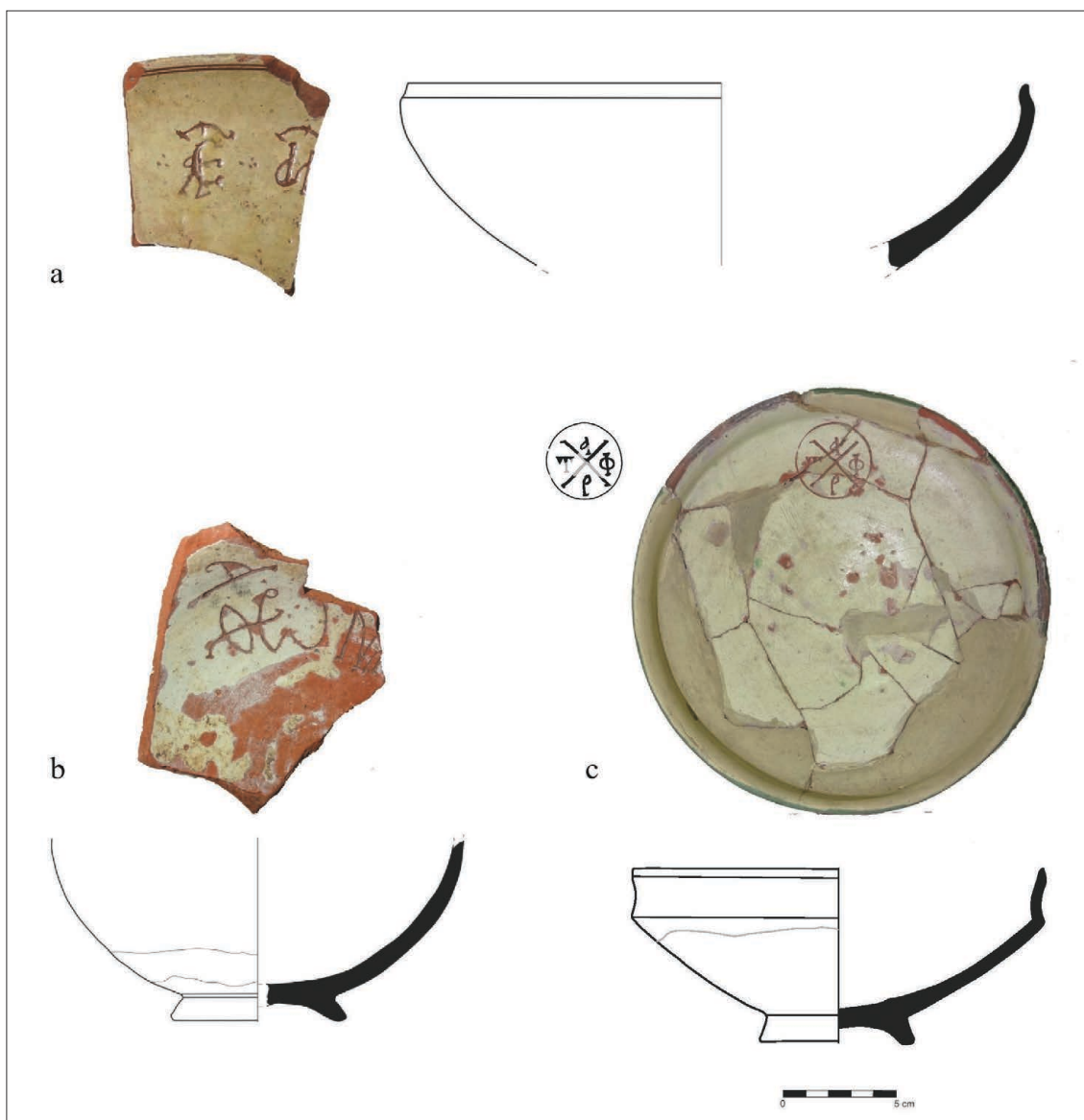


Fig. 6. Characteristic shapes of bowls from Tarnovo: a. Spheroconical bowl with monograms of Ivan Alexander (Tsarevets: Royal palace); b. Spherical bowl with monogram Theodora (Tsarevets: site No. 10); c. Biconical bowl with monogram Chartophylax (Great Lavra) (Author: G. Sengalevich)

Обр. 6. Характерни форми купи от Търново: а. Сферично-конична купа с монограми на Иван Александър (Царевец: Царски дворец); б. Сферична купа с монограм „Теодора“ (Царевец: обект № 10); в. Биконична купа с монограм „хартофилакс“ (Великата лавра) (Автор: Г. Сенгалевич)

an aesthetic point of view is not very typical for the local ceramic fashion of the second half of the 14th c. They are covered with white or creamy slip and glaze, which varies from transparent and colorless, through such of pale green color, which is the most common shade, to light yellow, dark yellow, reseda, dark green, and brown. In some vessels the slip and glaze are applied entirely on both sides (usually of the same color on the inside and on the outer surface), while in others on the outside there is only a slip coating, or a band of white slip under the rim, sometimes covered with glaze. Occasionally a strip without a slip coating is left on the lip, apparently in order for the fabric under the glaze to stand out contrastingly (fig. 4b, fig. 6c). There are few specimens from Tarnovo that are

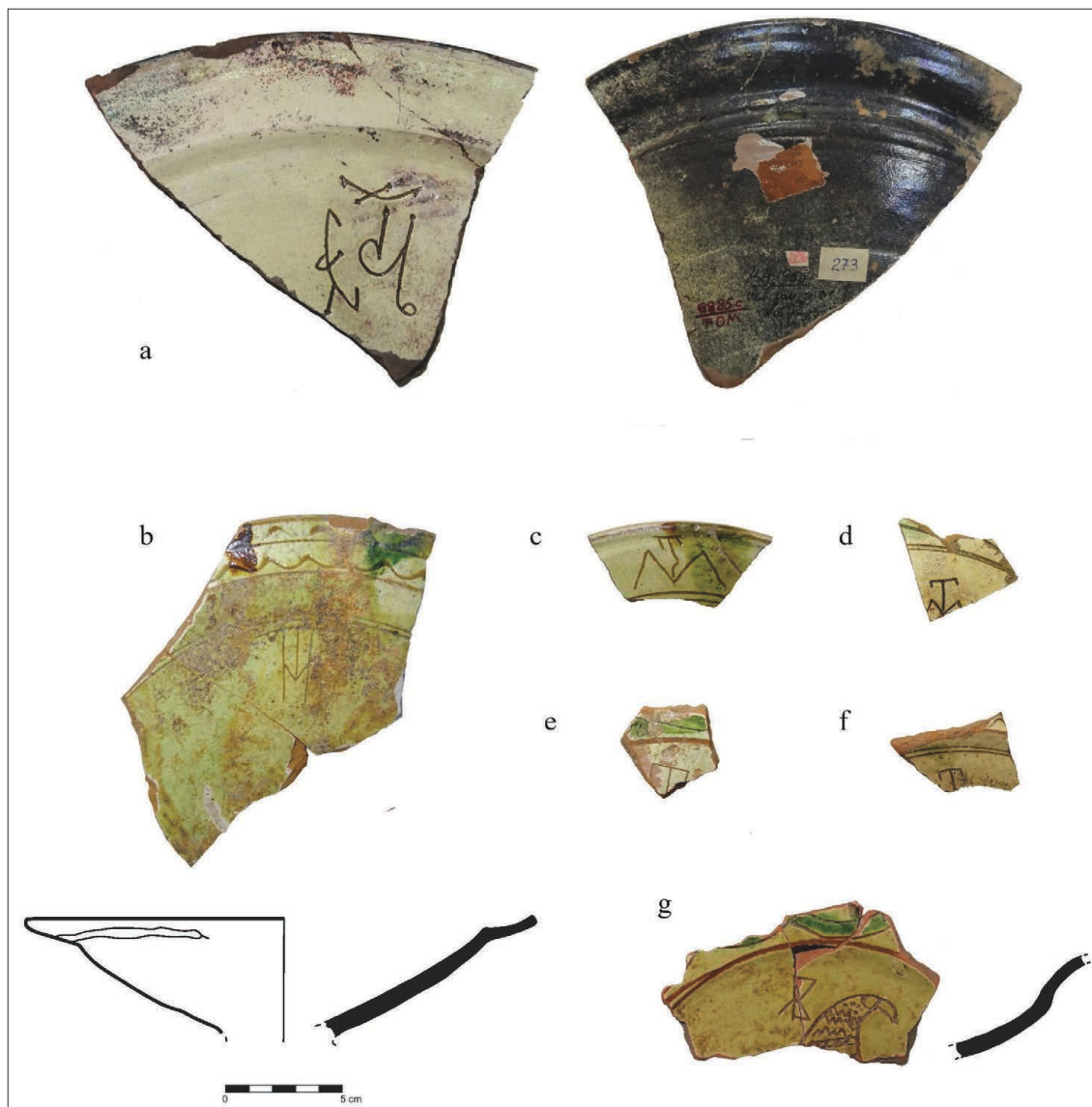


Fig. 7. Characteristics of the color scheme and the sgraffito decoration: a. Plate with monograms of Ivan Alexander with a partial covering and splashes of dark purple glaze (Tarnovo); b. – f. Polychrome vessels with monograms Metropolitan and incised concentric geometric and floral patterns (Silistra); g. Polychrome plate with monogram Vladimir(?), with geometric and zoomorphic decoration (Gabrovo – Vitata stena) (Author: G. Sengalevich)

Обр. 7. Особенности на колорита и сграфито украсата: а. Паница с монограми на Иван Александър с частично покритие и пръски тъмновиолетова глазура (Търново); б. – ф. Полихромни съдове с монограми „митрополит“ и концентрично врязана геометрична и флорална украса (Силистра); г. Полихромна паница с монограм „Владимир“ (?), с геометрична и зооморфна украса (Габрово – Витата стена) (Автор: Г. Сенгалевич)

not monochrome: in one case with a monogram of Tsar Ivan Alexander the lip is additionally decorated with green lines, in several vessels with different monograms there is a decoration of colored spots on the outer surface (Георгиева 1974, 67 – 68, обр. 49: 1, обр. 50: 2; Попов 1980, 185, обр. 14), and in other samples the letters of the inscriptions are emphasized with yellow or brown glaze. Three bowls with monograms of Ivan Alexander stand out for their spotted, 'marble' decoration, obtained by sprinkling the surface during the glazing with presumptive manganese compounds gave a specific dark purple color, most dense on the outer surface and on the rim of the vessels (fig. 7a). In some contrast to this monochrome look are samples from Silistra and Gabrovo, which are

distinguished by green and brown spots or stripes added to the glaze which usually emphasizes the patterns incised close to the rim (fig. 7b – g).

In almost one third of the specimens, apart of the underglaze inscriptions, additional incised decoration is observed. This is typical for vessels with certain types of monograms (e.g. with initials Θ and letters M), while in others, such as the sherds with inscriptions of Patriarch Theodosius or Tsar Ivan Shishman, it is almost non-existent. The sgraffito decoration is organized concentrically and is based mainly on geometric patterns. It consists mostly of two or three concentric circles on the bottom, and one to three bands of two or three circles on the walls and on the inner side of the rim (fig. 4c – d, fig. 5b, e, fig. 6a, fig. 11a – d). The spiral pattern at the center of the bottom is less common (fig. 11c). On individual specimens from Tarnovo, a band comprising a swirling floral pattern is incised above the monogram on the upper part of the walls (Попов 1984, 82, обр. 36) or instead, a band with a geometrized angular interlace (Нешева 2000, 83, обр. 70) – a very common pattern for the Tarnovo repertoire of the second half of the 14th c. (Рабовянов 2015, 282). Characteristic of the samples from Silistra with Metropolitan's monograms are the bands of straight and wavy lines on the rim, sometimes combined with a band of floral or spiral swirling patterns (fig. 7b – f). Most exquisitely decorated is a plate from Tarnovo on the inner surface, under the monograms of Ivan Alexander, there is an incised band with a spiral swirl, bordered by two pairs of concentric circles with geometrized palmettes on the outside, which encloses a medallion at the bottom (fig. 4a). In the decorative schema of a plate from the Vitata Stena locality, Gabrovo region, the geometric decoration along the rim is combined with a zoomorphic one: an eagle standing in profile and facing to the right (fig. 7g). Highlights of the decoration are almost always the underglaze monograms, incised on the inner side of the vessels, in the free space between the bottom and the rim. Only in the case of three vessels with monograms of Ivan Alexander and Ivan Shishman the inscription is applied on the outside or on both sides. The monograms on the four closed-shaped vessels are also found on the outer surface. It is presumed that Cyrillic inscriptions are typical for the Bulgarian group, although there are several Greek ones (Сенгалевиц 2019, 120).

Production and distribution

Relatively often there are noticeable traces on the sherds from the manufacturing process of glazed ceramics: mainly imprints from tripod stilts, usually three in number on the inner side of the bottom, and less often on the outside at the spots where the vessels have clung when stacked on top of one another in the kiln. In the case of a plate from Tarnovo with an inscription of Patriarch Theodosius (fig. 5d, fig. 8a) and also a sample from Silistra (Колева 2010, 711, обр. 39) some glaze has flowed through a crack in the walls, which probably indicates that the vessels cracked during the second firing, i.e. they should be considered as wasters. The chemical analyses performed on fragments with monograms from Tarnovo and Cherven clearly show their local origin, and the samples from Tarnovo group together with examined semi-finished products from the kilns on the eastern slope of Tsarevets (Кулев и др. 1993, 134 – 135; Кулев и др. 1991, 290; Kuleff, Djingova 2001, 72, 74). The production of sgraffito pottery with concentric circles from this location is supported by the presence of semi-finished products (Алексиев 1987, 56, обр. 3). Mica, sand and pores from burnt-out organics are characteristic for the fabric of the vessels from these two centers, as well as from Silistra. After firing (sometimes unevenly) it has turned to pink or orange-brown color (fig. 8b – d). Despite the impressive scale of the Tarnovo production, in which several different workshops probably took part, the geographical distribution of the ceramics is very limited. In Tarnovo itself, the pieces originate mainly from the Tsarevets hill, concentrate at the Palace and the Patriarchate, as well as from the Great Lavra Holy 40 Martyrs, and to a lesser extent from

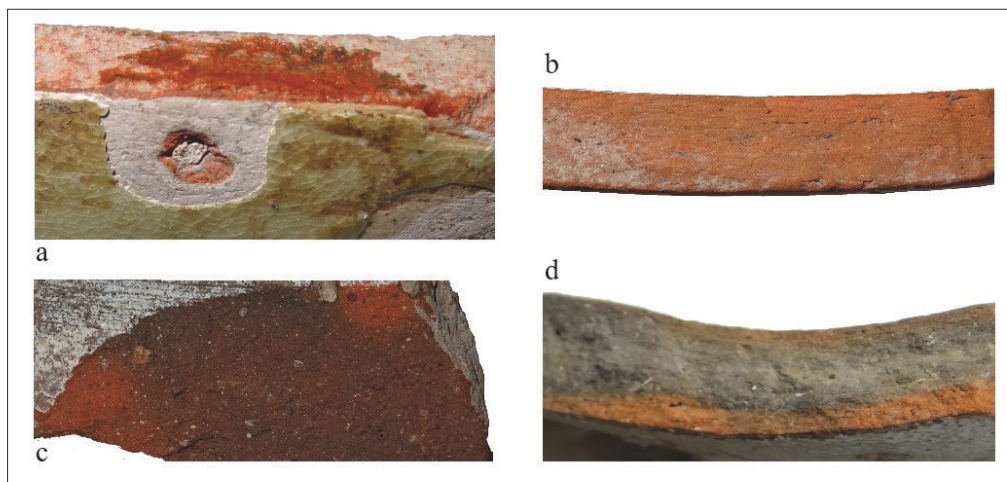


Fig. 8. Technological observations: a. Spot of melted glaze in the cracks of the wall of a vessel with an inscription of Patriarch Theodosius II (Tarnovo – Tsarevets: site No. 16); b. Characteristic evenly fired core of a plate with monograms of Ivan Alexander. The fabric is purified, pink-orange, with minor inclusions of mica, sand and small pores (Tarnovo – Tsarevets: Royal palace); c. Characteristic unevenly fired coarser core of a plate with monograms of Ivan Shishman, with larger sand inclusions (Tarnovo – Tsarevets: Royal palace); d. Characteristic 'tripartite' core of a bowl with monograms of Ivan Shishman (Silistra, church No. 2) (Author: G. Sengalevich)

Обр. 8. Технологични наблюдения: а. Петно разлята глазура в лома на съд с надпис на патриарх Теодосий II (Търново – Царевец; обект № 16); б. Характерен равномерно изпечен лом от паница с монограми на Иван Александър, изработена от пречистена розово-оранжева глина с дребни примеси слюда, пясък и шуплички (Търново – Царевец; Царски дворец); в. Характерен неравномерно изпечен лом от паница с монограми на Иван Шишман, с по-едри примеси пясък (Търново – Царевец; Царски дворец); д. Характерен „триделен“ лом от купа с монограми на Иван Шишман (Силистра, църква № 2) (Автор: Г. Сенгалевич)

other complexes, such as the monastery at the church of St. Demetrius and the ensembles around churches Nos. 2, 3 and 8 on the Trapezitsa hill. Outside the territory of the metropolitan city, the representatives of types typical of Tarnovo are rare: two sherds originate from the Kilifarevo monastery and one each from Gradnitsa, Nikopol, and Asenovgrad (fig. 3). In this regard, the set of five vessels with monograms of Tsar Ivan Shishman, discovered in Silistra, completely identical to the ones in Tarnovo, deserves to be commented upon more seriously (fig. 9). The great variety in the manner of writing Shishman's monograms seems to reflect the handwriting of several potters using different models for the inscriptions. It is significant that according to the chemical analyses, the sgraffito pottery with monograms of Ivan Shishman from Tarnovo is set into three different groups. It seems that vessels with the letter M were also produced in more than one metropolitan workshop (Кулев и др. 1993, 133 – 135). At the same time, the presence of local production of sgraffito pottery with monograms in Cherven and Silistra can be assumed both on the basis of archaeological excavations (Йорданов 2009, 139 – 146; Колева 2010, 695 – 712) as on the basis of the peculiarities in the shapes and decoration, and above all because of the types of monograms that are found only in these centers.

Chronology

The connection of the specimens to specific historical figures known from the sources to the underglaze inscriptions, and their analysis in the context of the data from archaeological excavations, provides an exceptional opportunity to refine their chronology. This in turn facilitates the chronological follow-up of the development of the Bulgarian sgraffito ceramic group with monograms throughout half a century. The uncertain decipherment of monograms of Tsar Georgi Ter-

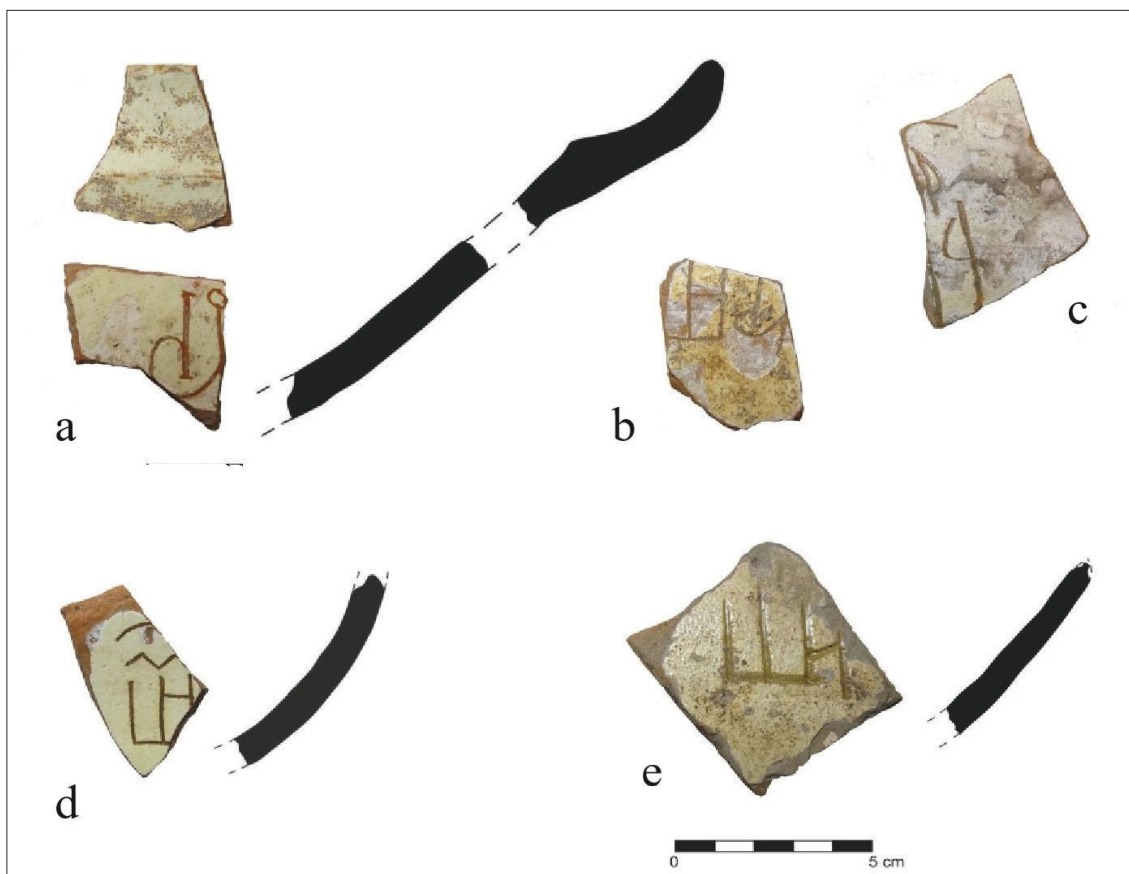


Fig. 9. Sgraffito ceramics with monograms of Tsar Ivan Shishman from Silistra (Author: G. Sengalevich)

Обр. 9. Сграфито керамика с монограми на цар Иван Шишман от Силистра (Автор: Г. Сенгалевич)

ter I (1279 – 1292) on the basis of posterior analogies (Авдев 2007, 245), as well as the misinterpretation of the letter M as the initial of Tsar Mihail Shishman (1323 – 1331) (Попов 1980, 179; Попов 1983b, 68 – 69; Попов 1984, 30 – 31), that was later refuted (Робов 1985, 401 – 402; Овчаров 1992, 261; Анчева 1996, 114), initially sets the appearance of the pottery with monograms in the last quarter of the 13th c. T. Ovcharov goes even further, as in the standard monograms of Ivan Alexander on a vessel from the area of the Small Gate of Tsarevets he sees the name of Tsar Ivan Asen II (1218 – 1241) (Овчаров 2005, 127). Actually, the first ruler whose underglaze monograms are found on vessels is Tsar Ivan Alexander. But when exactly during his 40-year rule should the beginning of the Tarnovo production of pottery with monograms be set? The relative uniformity of the ceramic forms, of their color scheme and decoration, as well as the uniformity of the underglaze inscriptions 'Alexander Tsar', the relatively small number of vessels (29) and their limited distribution are all indications that this is a series ordered and produced in a rather short period of time. The results of chemical analyses of sgraffito pottery, showing with only one exception, that the samples with monograms of Ivan Alexander form a common cluster, provide an additional argument in that direction (Кулев и др. 1993, 134). The closest parallels to the underglaze inscriptions can be taken as a chronological indicator: the signature of the tsar on the back side of the Mraka Charter from 1348 (Попов 1978, 72) and the monograms on a type of bronze coins minted in 1355/1365 – 1371 (Пенчев 1984, 19 – 20; Дочев 2009, 194 – 196). The discovery of a vessel with the initial Θ, deciphered as the monogram of his wife Tsaritsa Theodora II, in the Kili-



Fig. 10. Monograms of Patriarch Symeon on vessels from the Patriarchate in Tarnovo (Author: G. Sengalevich)

Обр. 10. Монограми на патриарх Симеон върху съдове от Патриаршията в Търново (Автор: Г. Сенгалевич)

successfully reconstructed in their entirety (fig. 10). To the right of the well-known monogram Patriarch incised is a bar monogram composed of the letters M, C and GO, which should be deciphered as Symeon. The connection with the Tarnovo Patriarch Symeon, known from several written sources, seems indisputable. According to Dušan's Code, he took part in the Council of Skopje in 1346 (Новаковић 1898, 4), and in the Boril Synodic he is mentioned as the successor of Ioannicius I and the predecessor of Patriarch Theodosius II (Попруженко 1928, 91). In 1347 – 1348 Symeon commissioned the translation of the Interpretive Gospel of St. John the Theologian (Гюзелев 1977, 208). According to Y. Andreev, he died around 1348, when Patriarch Theodosius was already mentioned in a note from a certain Vidin Gospel (Андреев 1993, 37 – 41). The identification of vessels with underglaze monograms of Patriarch Symeon is of great importance, because this seems to be the first patriarch of Tarnovo, who, following the Byzantine fashion trends, created his own monograms, and ordered them to be placed underglaze on tableware from the Patriarchate. This makes it possible to set the lower chronological limit for the Bulgarian group somewhere in the 1340s and rather towards the mid-14th c. From morphological, technological and decorative point of view these three vessels are most similar with several other specimens with monograms of Ivan Alexander and Patriarch Theodosius II, whose production date could also refer to the years around the mid-14th c. These earlier types are distinguished by massiveness of the vessels, with rim diameters of 25 – 35 cm for the plates. They are on both sides with dense white slip and a high-quality, transparent and colorless glaze. The archaeological picture from the excavations of the Patriarchate in turn provides important chronological evidence on the use of the pottery with monograms. A large number of the specimens found there, as well as the silver coins of Ivan Alexander and Mihail Asen from the complex, were badly damaged apparently as a result of a large fire that affected the Patriarchate (Ангелов 1980, 154 – 155). The fire is dated to 1355 at the latest, but given the new data on this coin type, the issue of which continued in the first years of the reign

farevo monastery (Робов 1985, 398), sets a certain *terminus post quem* in the mid-14th c., when the monastery was founded. Another chronological benchmark is set by the archaeological situation from the eastern residential wing of the Royal Palace (Георгиева и др. 1973, 100), where a fragmented plate with the same initial (fig. 5b) was found along a large collective find of 791 silver coins from the early issues of Ivan Alexander with Mihail Asen. They are characterized by higher coin weight, good workmanship, and inverted monogram Tsar. The coins, together with the plate, were severely damaged in a fire that occurred according to numismatic data no later than 1355 – 1356 (Дочев 1983, 3 – 5). Particularly important in order to refine the beginning of the monogrammatic fashion in Tarnovo are three huge, deep vessels from the area of the Patriarchate, the inscriptions on which are partially preserved, but when combined the monograms can be

of Ivan Shishman (Дочев 2009, 135 – 150; Авдѣв 2007, 108 – 109), the date of the fire can be drawn further in time, up to the 1360s or even the 1370s. Among the published coins (Ангелов 1980, 94 – 101) predominates the reversed image of the monogram Tsar, characteristic for the earlier phase of this coin type, but it seems that there are also coins dated at the latest in 1366 – 1367, and even such from Ivan Shishman's time (with three dots instead of inscriptions).² A similar observation can be made for the bronze coins of Ivan Alexander with Mihail Asen, with the fortress of Tarnovo on the reverse. They were minted until 1360 (Дочев 2009, 162 – 167). This situation clearly dates the use of vessels with inscriptions of Patriarch Theodosius II, many of which bear traces of fire and smoke, in the third quarter of the 14th c. At the same time in another series of eight vessels from the Patriarchate with an incised initial П there are no traces of fire, which suggests their use after the reconstruction of the complex (fig. 11a). They are very similar in appearance to the vessels with incised letters from the Great Lavra and from Trapezitsa. The plates among them are smaller, with rim diameters of about 20 cm, and are respectively thinner-walled. Quite often they are covered with reseda, dark green or brownish glazes, while the outer surface is not entirely glazed (fig. 11a – d). It is possible that the majority of vessels with М (over 80),³ together with those with П (11 vessels in total), Б (4 vessels), and ГД (10 vessels), mark a second phase of the monogrammatic fashion in Tarnovo sgraffito ceramics in the time of Tsar Ivan Shishman, i.e. in the 1370s – 1380s. This 'degradation' in the direction of reducing the size of the vessels, deterioration of the quality of workmanship and decoration, and simplification and roughening of the inscriptions, is observed to some extent also in the pottery with monograms of the last Tarnovo tsar (fig. 4b, fig. 8d, fig. 9). The greater number of vessels of this type (38), their wider distribution, the relative variety in shapes and quality of workmanship, as well as the different variants of Ivan Shishman's monograms, may mean that they were not produced at once, i.e. they are not a transitory and one-time phenomenon. So far, however, the samples can hardly be arranged in a certain chronological order. This also applies to the set with Shishman's monograms from Silistra, whose appearance there can still be connected with certain historical events. As early as 1369, Drastar was handed over by Ivan Alexander to the Dobrudzha despot Dobrotitsa, and the town soon became the main base of his son – Ivanko Terter. G. Atanasov suggests that for a short period from 1385 until the campaign of Ali Paşa in 1388, Tsar Ivan Shishman managed to regain Drastar and even to restore its status as a metropolitanate of the Tarnovo Patriarchate (Атанасов 2007, 335). It is logical the vessels with monograms of the Drastar's Metropolitan to be referred also to this period of time (fig. 7b – f). At this stage it is difficult to specify the upper chronological limit for the production and use of sgraffito pottery with monograms. It is assumed that this fashion discontinued towards the very end of the 14th c. with the fall of the Bulgarian lands to Ottoman rule, which put an end to the royal and patriarchal institutions (Робов 2010, 616; Робов 2015, 284). Not so clear seems the situation in Drastar, whose ruler between 1389 and 1416 – 1417 was the Wallachian voivode Mircea the Elder (1386 – 1418) (Атанасов 2009, 194 – 207) series of five unearthed there and unpublished vessels with yet un-deciphered monograms that are difficult to classify, deserves special attention.

² I express special gratitude to Vl. Penchev from the National Museum of History – Sofia for the consultation and shared thoughts on the chronology of the published numismatic material from the Patriarchate.

³ Among the ceramics with the letter М, however, there are several specimens with the features of the earlier types (Георгиева 1974, 67, обр. 49: 4), which may mean that it appeared before the other types with incised initial letters. According to the periodization of K. Totev, the monastery around the church of the Holy 40 Martyrs, where most of the pieces with М were found, appeared around the middle of the 14th c. and functioned until 1393 (Тотев 2001, 39 – 42).

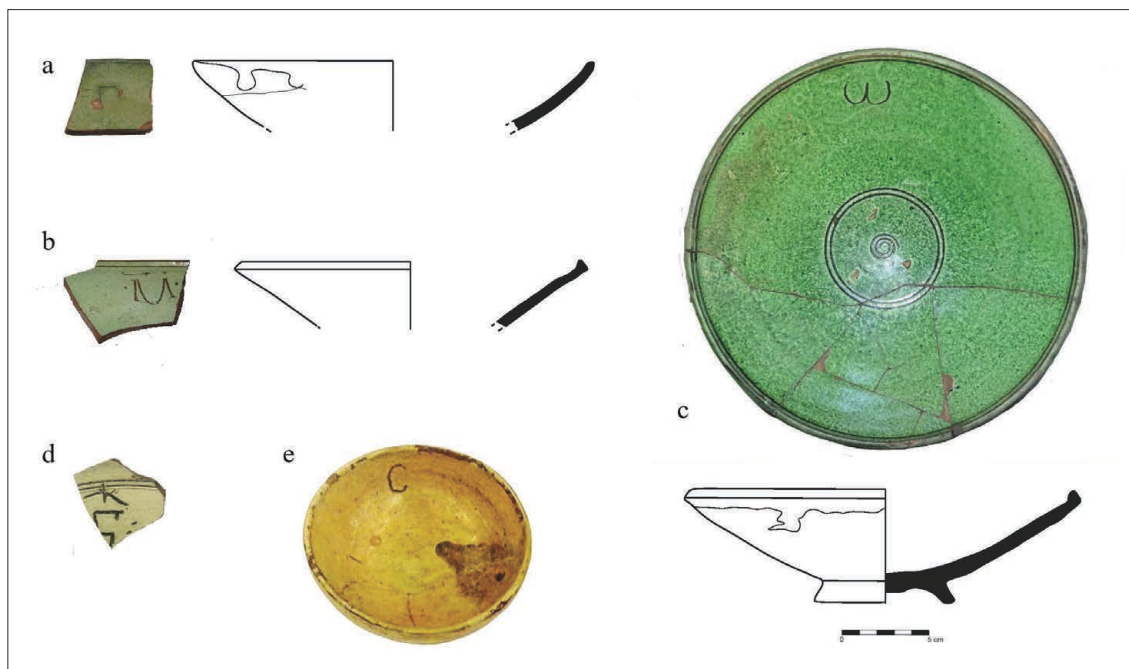


Fig. 11. Ceramics with underglaze incised letters, related to monastic compounds: a. Plate with initial П from Tarnovo (Tsarevets – Patriarchate: Northwestern slope); b. Plate with a numeral М – emblem of the Holy 40 Martyrs (Great Lavra: Northern courtyard); c. Plate with Г from Tarnovo (Trapezitza – Northern sector: Military building) (Author a – c: G. Sengalevich); d. Plate with Б from Tarnovo (Trapezitza – Southeastern sector: church No. 3; photo: M. Robov); e. Bowl with the letter С from Studenica, Serbia (Bikić 2015, 343 – 344)

Обр. 11. Керамика с подглазурно врязани букви, свързана с манастирски комплекси: а. Паница с инициал П от Търново (Царевец – Патриаршия: северозападен склон); б. Паница с числен знак М – емблема на Св. 40 мъченици (Великата лавра: северен двор); в. Паница с Г от Търново (Трапезица – Северен сектор: Военна сграда) (Автор а – в: Г. Сенгалевич); д. Паница с Б от Търново (Трапезица – Югоизточен сектор: църква № 3; снимка: М. Робов); е. Купа с буква С от Студеница в Сърбия (Bikić 2015, 343 – 344)

Functional characteristics

The analysis of the ceramic forms inevitably leads to the question of their functionality. Until now, the Bulgarian group with monograms has been interpreted mainly on the basis of the inscriptions and their reading. Kr. Miyatev was the first to identify them as signs of ownership (Миятев 1967, 8). Since at the beginning of the large-scale archaeological excavations of Tsarevets the discovered vessels with monograms originated exclusively from the compounds of the Palace and the Patriarchate, S. Georgieva and N. Angelov united around the hypothesis that they primarily represent the personal tableware of the tsars and patriarchs of the Second Bulgarian Tsardom, and were produced by specialized royal and patriarchal workshops (Георгиева 1974, 66; Ангелов 1980, 152, 159, 161 – 162). P. Slavchev additionally clarifies that some vessels could be an honorary possession of certain courtiers (Славчев 1980, 219). At. Popov admits that since the royal monograms were also signs of power, the vessels played a role in some ceremonies (Попов 1978, 80 – 81; Попов 1980, 181, 186; Попов 1982, 345; Попов 1983, 69). With the progress of the excavations in the Medieval Bulgarian capital, however, it became increasingly difficult to explain the discovery of sherds with monograms in multiple different places only with the looting and scattering of materials during the conquest of Tarnovo by the Turks in 1393 and the subsequent habitation of Tsarevets Hill. An impression began to arise that the use of sgraffito pottery with monograms was more widespread, since individual pieces were found in any context, incl. churches, monasteries,

military buildings, and common dwellings, inside and outside the fortified area of Tsarevets and Trapezitsa. In this regard, M. Robov suggests the participation of the vessels in the cult of the tsar and their use during festive meals on major holidays (Робов 1985, 398 – 403). V. Nesheva talks about ‘church utensils’ and the use of pottery in church rituals (Нешева 2000, 49, 112). N. Ovcharov, decoding the letters of some types as numerals, believes that they were used in commemorative practices (Овчаров 1992, 261 – 263; Караилиев 2011, 132 – 133). R. Ancheva seeks a connection with the ritual calendar (Анчева 1996, 114), and K. Totev – a pilgrimage function (Тотев 2017a, 153 – 154).

Some types of sgraffito ceramics with monograms, known by single or few pieces, can actually be interpreted as personal tableware, and the monograms on them – as signs of ownership, but also as personal emblems. In this sense, they are only somewhat similar to the content embedded in the graffiti, as well as in the longer underglaze inscriptions from a small group of vessels, which are most often associated with educated members of the clergy. These inscriptions, in addition to the name of the owner or author with explicitly stated possession (for example ‘Archimandrite’s vessel’) or authorship (‘I, priest Rad’), may also contain prayer formulas (‘Save, O Lord, the Reverend Nicholas’) (Ангелов 1980, 160, обр. 151, 155; Алексиев 1980a, 206 – 208; Алексиев 1980b, 447; Попов 1983a, обр. 7: 7, 8; Попов 1984, 73, обр. 11; Алексиев 1994, 150, 156 – 158, табл. 3; Алексиев 2003, 332, обр. 1; Тотев 2005, 212 – 215; Караилиев 2011, 140, 186, обр. 29; Тотев 2014, 239, обр. 1), while in other single cases the inscriptions represent underglaze Christian emblems, incantations, dates, etc. (Ангелов 1980, 161, обр. 151; Попов 1984, 102 – 103, обр. 97, 100; Djambov 1985, 265, Tabl. 3; Попов 1985, 866). The types containing more specimens however show a more intricate picture. The concentration of the vessels with monograms of Ivan Alexander in the premises of the Royal Palace, where they were used by its inhabitants (not necessarily by the ruler himself), is indisputable. A slightly later parallel in this respect are the bowls with monograms of the ruler of the Crimean principality Theodoro Alexander (1475), found in his residence in Funa (Тесленко 2016, 645, рис. 5и). Meanwhile, the discovery of pieces associated with Tsaritsa Theodora II in the Palace, but also in some of the large monasteries such as the one around the church of St. Demetrius (Николова, Робов 2005, 109, табл. I: 2) and the Kilifarevo monastery of St. Theodosius of Tarnovo allows their interpretation as gifts to the abbot or the brotherhood in connection with the patronage of the royal family, and especially of Tsaritsa Theodora. More significantly in the Boril Synodic it is explicitly said that she ‘renovated many churches and erected various monasteries’ (Попруженко 1928, 89), while from the Life of St. Theodosius of Tarnovo it is known that Tsar Ivan Alexander built a church and a tower for the hesychastic community in Kilifarevo (Златарски 1904, 19). The samples with underglaze monograms of the next Tsar Ivan Shishman obtain an even larger distribution area and some of them may have been presented as gifts to prominent and distinguished people, especially given the growing lack of money and hopelessness into which the last ruler of Tarnovo fell. In this regard, certain propaganda purposes may have been implied in the already mentioned five vessels with his monograms, found in Silistra during the excavation of Church No. 2 and the buildings around it (fig. 9). This is the only set with royal monograms found outside of the capital – furthermore in an important town which, unlike e.g. Cherven or Nikopol, was not a secure possession of Ivan Shishman. The vessels with monograms of the Tsar, found there, in all probability perform the same function as the Shishman’s inscription in Shumen: to demonstrate strength and to consolidate power over a town in the border lands of the Tarnovo Tsardom. In this background, the ceramics with monograms of Patriarch Theodosius II stands out with its concentration from the compound and the slopes of the Patriarchate on Tsarevets. Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine that it represented Theodosius’ personal tableware set, due to the extremely large number of specimens (105 vessels). It should not be forgotten that the Patriarchate, apart from being the residence and

seat of the head of the Bulgarian Church, was organized as a rather large monastery and probably functioned as exactly such a compound (Ангелов 1980, 19 – 30). Therefore it seems most likely that the vessels were used as monastery tableware. In this regard, the appearance of four vessels with underglaze inscriptions of Patriarch Theodosius, as well as all known specimens with inscriptions of Patriarch Euthymius, together with three vessels with the letter Π in the Great Lavra of the Holy 40 Martyrs (Попов 1984, 73 – 75, обр. 12 – 18, 104 – 105, обр. 103 – 105) is hardly accidental. So far the question of where the Bulgarian patriarch resided following the fire that burned the Patriarchate almost completely down to the ground has not been commented upon. In any case, it took at least a few years until its reconstruction and extension marked as a second construction stage of the complex (Ангелов 1980, 50 – 51). In the short time after the fire and before the renovation of the Patriarchate, there was hardly a more suitable place for the Patriarch than the monastery of the Holy 40 Martyrs. It is interesting to note that a bowl with a monogram, composed of the letters X, A, P, T, Φ, which can be read as the title chartophylax, originates from the same site (fig. 6c). It is known from sources of that time that the chartophylaxes played a significant role as the right hand of the Patriarchs of Constantinople and possessed very broad powers (Wehmeyer 1997, 109 – 111). The appearance in the 14th c. of a chartophylax, whose name is unfortunately unknown, is not a surprise, given that in Tarnovo the Byzantine system of noble titles and offices was strictly copied. Many hypotheses provoke the numerous series with the underglaze letter M, decoded quite reasonably as the numeral 40 (Робов 1985, 401 – 402). The samples of that type originate exclusively from the territory of the aforementioned monastery. Very similar are the vessels with the letter Б with a titlo interpreted as the initial of the Virgin Mary (Робов 2010, 617 – 618), from the monastic compounds at churches Nos. 3 and 8 on Trapezitsa, as well as the specimens with incised GO found in the Northern sector of Trapezitsa, inexplicably connected with Ivan Alexander on the basis of parallels with two underglaze inscriptions, originally read as ‘Father’ (Караимлиев 2011, 140, обр. 29; Тотев 2014, 235 – 240). The latest excavations of the ensemble near the northern fortress wall suggests that a monastery existed around church No. 2 in the last years of inhabitation of Trapezitsa (Тотев и др. 2015, 641). All this additionally suggests that the vessels with incised letters were used precisely as monastery tableware, in which food was served for the inhabitants of some of the metropolitan’s monastic compounds. In this regard, an interesting synchronous parallel bring several bowls from the Serbian Studenica monastery, marked underglaze with the letter C (Bikić 2015, 343 – 344), as an indication of the monastic property (fig. 11d).

So far, the characteristic location of the incised underglaze inscriptions – almost always on the walls of the vessels, near their periphery, has not been commented upon. This significant difference from the Byzantine groups Zeuxippus Family and Elaborate Incised Ware, where the monograms are incised at the bottoms, may be due to a different function. Byzantine inscriptions are most often interpreted as the names of saints (Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999, 22), which should serve to bless the meals and to drive away harmful influences. It is logical that they are at the bottoms, in direct contact with the food or drink served. In the case of the Bulgarian group, the monograms seem to serve rather as signs of power and prestige, and placing them close to the rims to be visible, even when a vessel is used for its intended purpose, expresses a certain ostentation.

Conclusions

Regarding the origin of the monogrammatic fashion in the repertoire of the sgraffito ceramics produced in Medieval Bulgaria, scholars have so far been definite that it is a matter of Byzantine influence (Алексиев 1980, 449). However, it is hard to say that this influence reaches Tarnovo and other centers through the Elaborate Incised Ware that circulated in the same period mainly in the

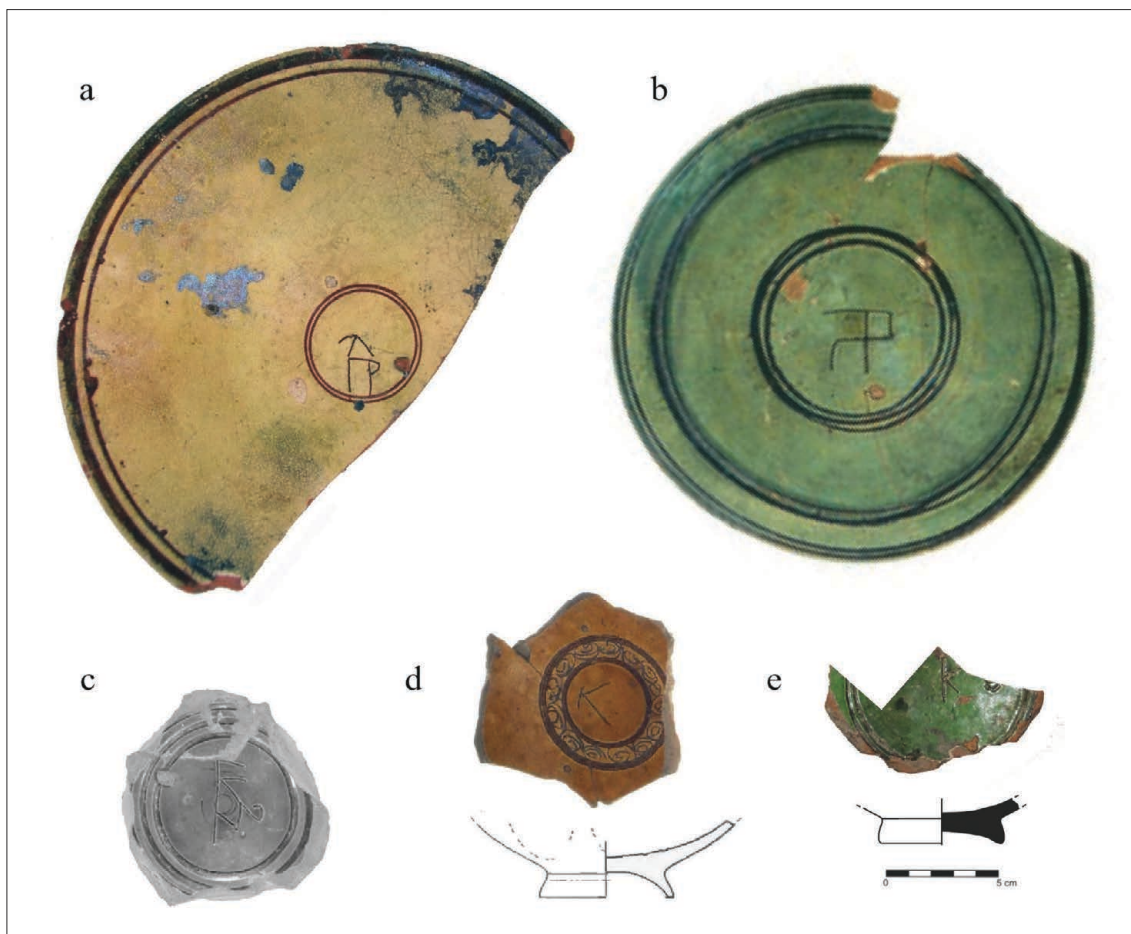


Fig. 12. Examples of Zeuxippus Family with underglaze monograms from the 13th – first quarter of the 14th c.: a. Plate from the Novy Svet shipwreck, Crimea, ca. 1277 (Photo: S. Zelenko); b. Plate from Acre, Israel (Stern 2012, Color Pl. 2: 11); c. Plate from Kadikalesi (Anaa), Turkey (Doğer 2004, 26, Res. 6); d. Plate with the letter K from Constantinople (Böhlendorf-Arslan 2013, 506 – 507, Taf. 154: Kat. 1227); e. Plate with the letter K from Varna (Author: G. Sengalevich)

Обр. 12. Образци на Зеухиппус Family с подглазурни монограми от XIII – първата четвърт на XIV в: а. Паница от коработрушението при н. Новий свет, Крим, ок. 1277 г. (Снимка: С. Зеленко); б. Паница от Акра в Израел (Stern 2012, Color Pl. 2: 11); в. Паница от Кадъкалеси (Анаа) в Турция (Doğer 2004, 26, Res. 6); д. Паница с буква К от Константинопол (Böhlendorf-Arslan 2013, 506 – 507, Taf. 154: Kat. 1227); е. Паница с буква К от Варна (Автор: Г. Сенгалевич)

Black Sea region. S. Georgieva, who is looking for similarities between the monochrome ware from Tarnovo and Proto-Majolica, meanwhile was the first to note the possible connection between the vessels with concentric circles from the Palace and the Byzantine Zeuxippus Ware (Георгиева 1974, 64). Its various derivatives from the 13th and the 14th c., distributed in the Eastern Mediterranean, Northern Italy, the Black Sea and especially in the Aegean, are most often referred to by the collective name Zeuxippus Family (Vroom 2005, 110 – 111; Inanan 2013, 59 – 76) (fig. 12). The concentric circle is essentially the most common pattern for the sgraffito pottery from Tarnovo (Долмова 2001, 121), and the well-stratified excavations of D. Rabovyanov in the Southern sector of Trapezitsa clearly show the appearance of monochrome vessels with concentric circles in the 1230s (Рабовянов 2015, 275 – 278). It should be noted that among the Zeuxippus Family, although less common, underglaze monograms appear too. Unfortunately only three such examples from Bulgaria can be cited so far: from Nessebar, Varna and Asenovgrad (Кузев 1974, 169, обр. 47; Даскалов 2010, обр. 3:

13) (fig. 12e). In any case, a large part of the Bulgarian group with monograms could be considered as a later imitation of Byzantine prototypes, while other vessels with polychrome and richer sgraffito decoration fit well into the local ceramic repertoire of the second half of the 14th c. The analysis of the specimens clearly shows that the chronologically earlier vessels from around the mid- and the third quarter of the 14th c. are characterized by the higher quality of the workmanship, as they are more often glazed also on the outer side, with light and almost colorless glazes. The monogrammatic inscriptions are longer and often with a calligraphic layout. These vessels' smaller number and larger size suggest that they were used by more people – e.g. as plates placed in the middle of the table. At the same time, the specimens, which can be dated later, to the 1370s – 1380s, are characterized by more carelessly incised and shorter inscriptions (often only single letters), and smaller dimensions suggesting personal use. Both the chronological and the territorial scope of the Bulgarian group seem to be quite limited with the capital Tarnovo and several other centers of the Tarnovo Tsardom, that play an important role in terms of church organization. And if the lack of its representatives in the ceramics from Shumen can be partly explained by the absence of a bishopric there, then the same cannot be said for towns like Lovech, for example. Pieces of the Bulgarian group are not yet found within the Vidin Tsardom. Archaeological contexts clearly show the connection of vessels with certain monograms with specific compounds, which at this stage excludes the possibility of their free circulation as a commercial commodity and use by the common people. Thus, the pottery with royal monograms originates mainly from the Palace on Tsarevets, the vessels with patriarchal monograms – from the Patriarchate, and those with Metropolitan's monograms from Silistra – from the area of the episcopal residence of Drastar. The connection of the vessels with incised letters from Tarnovo with compounds, which can be interpreted as monastic, is also extremely interesting. Future chemical and petrographic analyzes of the samples can significantly contribute to clarifying the problems of the Bulgarian group with monograms. This research is a step towards a more in-depth, systematic study of sgraffito ceramics from the Bulgarian lands, as well as shedding light on a number of historical events, cultural ties, social phenomena and processes during the turbulent 14th century.

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БЪЛГАРСКАТА ГРУПА СГРАФИТО КЕРАМИКА С ПОДГЛАЗУРНИ МОНОГРАМИ – ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА И ПРОБЛЕМИ

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РЕЗЮМЕ

Настоящото изследване има за цел да представи характерните особености и да дискутира проблематиката на една група сграфито керамика с подглазурни кирилски монограми, която се открива най-масово в столицата на Второто българско царство – Търново. Изложените наблюдения се базират на общо 360 нейни образци. Основна информация дават най-масовите типове керамика с монограми на царете Иван Александър (1331 – 1371) и Иван Шишман (1371 – 1395), на Търновския патриарх Теодосий II, както и голямата серия съдове с врязана подглазурно буква М (обр. 4). Направените химични анализи на образци с монограми от Търново и Червен ясно показват техния местен произход, като материалите от Търново се групират заедно с изследвани полуфабрикати от пещите по източния склон на хълма Царевец. Съдовете най-често са формувани от изпечена (понякога

неравномерно) до розово или оранжево-кафяво глина с дребни примеси слюда, пясък и шуплички от изгоряла органика (обр. 8). Въпреки внушителните мащаби на търновското производство, в което вероятно са участвали няколко работилници, и предполагаемото местно производство на някои типове в Червен и Силистра, териториалният обхват на разпространение на групата изглежда доста ограничен със столицата и още няколко центъра на Търновското царство (обр. 3). Във формално отношение доминират дълбоките паници с големи размери, основно с конична и по-рядко със сферична форма (обр. 4с – d, обр. 5, обр. 7, обр. 9а, обр. 11а – с). След паниците най-често се срещат купи със сферично и по-рядко с биконично тяло (обр. 4b, обр. 6, обр. 9d). Съдовете от Търново и Червен са монохромни, което чисто естетически не е особено характерно за местната керамична мода от втората половина на XIV в. Тези от Силистра и Габрово се вписват по-добре в местния керамичен репертоар с допълнително нанесените към глазурното покритие зелени и кафяви петна или ивици (обр. 7b – g). При близо една трета от образците, освен подглазурните надписи, врязани по стените на съдовете близо до периферията им, се наблюдава и допълнителна сграфито украса. Тя е организирана концентрично и е базирана предимно на геометрични мотиви, най-често във вид на концентрични окръжности върху дъното, стените и устието (обр. 4а, с – d, обр. 5b, е, обр. 6а, обр. 11а – d).

Обвързването на образците с конкретни, известни от изворите исторически личности, чиито знаци съдовете носят, и анализирането им в контекста на данните от археологическите проучвания, предоставя изключителна възможност за хронологическо проследяване на развитието в българската група сграфито керамика с монограми в течение на половин век. Появата ѝ трябва да се търси някъде в 40-те години на XIV в. въз основа на откритите съдове с монограми на Търновския патриарх Симеон (обр. 10). За ранните типове от средата до третата четвърт на XIV в., сред които са и съдовете с монограми на цар Иван Александър, царица Теодора II и патриарх Теодосий II, като цяло са характерни масивността на образците, с диаметри от 25 – 35 см при устията на паниците, както и цялостното плътно двустранно покритие с бяла ангоба и качествена, прозрачна светла глазура. Документираният при проучванията на патриаршеския комплекс в Търново пожар индикира появата към 70-те години на XIV в. на съдове с врязан инициал П (обр. 11а). Те са много сходни по облик с керамиката с врязани букви М от Великата лавра „Св. 40 мъченици“, Б и СД от хълма Трапезица. Паниците сред тях се отличават с по-малки размери, с диаметри при устията от около 20 см, като съответно са и по-тънкостенни. Доста често са покрити с резедави, тъмнозелени или кафяви глазури, без цялостно глазиране отвън (обр. 11а – d). Възможно е тези типове да маркират втора фаза на монограмната мода в търновската сграфито керамика, във времето на цар Иван Шишман, т.е. 70-те – 80-те години на XIV в. Тази „деградация“ в посока редуциране на размерите на съдовете, влошаване на качеството на изработка и украса, и опростяване и огрубяване на надписите, се наблюдава донякъде и при керамиката с монограми на последния търновски цар (обр. 4b, обр. 8d, обр. 9). На този етап е трудно да се прецизира горната хронологическа граница за производството и употребата на сграфито керамика с монограми. Приема се, че тази мода прекъсва към самия край на XIV в. с падането на българските земи под османска власт.

Функциите, които българската керамика с монограми изпълнява, са до голяма степен свързани със смисъла, вложен в подглазурните надписи. Някои от типовете, познати с по един или няколко екземпляра, могат да бъдат интерпретирани като лична посуда, а монограмите върху тях – като знаци за собственост, но и като лични емблеми. Типовете с повече екземпляри обаче чертаят една по-сложна картина. Археологическите контексти ясно показват връзката на съдове с определени монограми с конкретни комплекси, от чиито обитатели те са били използвани. Това на този етап изключва възможността за тяхното свободно циркулиране като търговска стока и употреба от обикновеното население. Така например керамиката с царски монограми произхожда основно от Царския дворец в Търново, съдовете с патриаршески монограми – от Патриаршията, а тези с митрополитски монограми от Силистра – от района на митрополитския комплекс. Изключително интересна е и връзката на съдовете с врязани букви с няколко манастира в Търново, където те изглежда са ползвани като манастирска посуда. Всичко това отличава българската група от синхронната византийска керамика с монограми, спадаща към Elaborate Incised Ware (обр. 1, обр. 2). Доколкото може да се търси външно влияние във формирането ѝ, то по-скоро прониква чрез монохромната керамика Zeuxippos Family с украса от концентрични окръжности, при която също се срещат монограми (обр. 12).

Ключови думи: Глазирана керамика, сграфито, монограми, Търново, Zeuxippos Family