

NOTES ON KRONDIRS, AN INTERESTING TYPE OF LATE MEDIEVAL TIN-AND-LEAD VESSELS

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents and analyses the earliest evidence available to date about a specific type of tin-and-lead vessel used to store water and wine, and perhaps myrrh, known as “krondirs”. The conclusion is made that krondirs were most probably a product of Byzantine society, where they appeared as early as the Palaiologan Period. The hypothesis is rejected that the roots of this type of vessel lie in the East, in Central Asia, or even Egypt. The assumption is made that the centres where they were created were the Large Balkan Byzantine cities – Constantinople, Thessaloniki and Adrianople, from where their type not only spread, but in the early centuries of the Ottoman rule, their production blossomed to an extent.

Keywords: krondir, tin, water and wine vessels, Balkans, Byzantium, Palaiologos

Reason for writing the notes

At the beginning of this year, the author was shown several photos of a “lead”¹ vessel, offered for re-purchase to the National History Museum by its owner, a German resident.² During the preparation of a report requested by the Museum’s director on the vessel, the origin of the vessel was disclosed by the owner. He acquired the vessel from an antiques market in Germany (he did not provide further details), as a “powder keg from the 19th c.” The unsoundness of this definition provoked him to conduct his own modest research which ended, at least for the time being, with his request for help from the museum and, in the event of the museum experts expressing interest towards the vessel – an offer to re-purchase it. What is the vessel’s appearance? Here follows a brief description.

¹ Wherever the author has called the material the vessels of interest are made of “lead”, the definitions of the authors who have reviewed those vessels have been followed. The specimen extant in the collections of the National Museum of History (without an inventory No.) is the only one whose metal has been analysed. The author would like to express his sincere gratitude to Al. Vatov, restorer at the National Museum of History, for these analyses. The averaged calibration for heavy metals, are the following: tin (Sn) – 74.3 %, lead (Pb) – 25.3 %, and traces of copper, results for the composition of the alloy this krondir is made of, from several samples from the XRF analysis with cadmium and platinum, or, as a craftsman would say – 3 parts tin and 1 part lead. In what proportion these metals are found in other similar items of the period remains to be determined. The author believes that the amount of tin will exceed that of lead in the alloy they are made of. This is why, when discussing them below, the definition “tin-and-lead vessels” has been used.

² The author would like to express his sincere gratitude to the owner, Christian Stopperich, for the photos and information he provided. The author has personally not had the opportunity to hold the vessel in his own hands.

It comprises a hollow, flattened spheroidal body resting on a low, hollow, oval base, tapering slightly towards the junction with the body (fig. 1a, 1b). An elongated neck is formed at the upper end of the vessel, opening slightly towards the mouth to obtain an inverted bell-shaped form. Immediately below the mouth is a thickened ring with recumbent linear decoration, as is also present at the base just above its connection with the body.

Two opposite-facing handles are joined under the upper ring, with a specific type of decorative shape. They are almost horizontal at their upper ends, then curve downward almost at right angles to connect with the shoulders of the vessel. One of them has an opening at the top and must have served as a spout (fig. 1c). The dimensions of this particular vessel, according to the owner, are the following: height – 17 cm, diameter – 14 cm, thickness – 7 cm, weight – 954 gr. This vessel, undoubtedly made by casting its parts individually, which were then subsequently soldered together, impresses with its decoration. On both sides of the body, in circular fields enclosed in a thin frame with transverse incisions along its length, are presented the same type of images of a saintly rider mounted on a horse, moving to the right, with his head facing the opposite direction. His nimbus is incised with fine lines. His right hand is extended backwards, and a flower, presented frontally, is formed above, the same as the one in front of his head. A similar flower-like ornament is also present in front of the horse's chest. The image is interrupted in the middle by a wide, round and flat "bud", giving the impression of a circular shield, but which is rather a technological feature of the mould in which the sides of the vessel were cast. As a whole, the images from the scene are modelled extremely clumsily, even primitively, but with a marked aspiration to respect the proportions of the rider and the horse, which was certainly aided by conforming to some re-used model from another product, perhaps a mural image. The field outside the frame is decorated by a circular band running almost to the outer edge of the vessel, again made up of short recumbent lines. The edge formed at the junction of the two halves of the body is decorated with numerous larger buds (fig. 1d). On the sides, the handles are decorated with two groups of V-shaped protrusions, and their shoulders with a triangular widening, in which incomplete holes can be seen (fig. 1e). The corners of the handles are shaped like massive columns projecting upwards, and on their faces you can see the outlines of some ornaments which came out of the casting badly. The quality of the casting itself is not good, apparently due to some wear and tear on the moulds, no doubt the result of long use. The vessel thus represented has wonderful parallels from Egypt, which will be discussed further in the review.

The vessel, however, impresses primarily with its obvious similarity to the tin-and-lead *kronDIRs* from the Ottoman period, which are well-known in Bulgaria. This raises questions about the connection between them, the time when they were created, the ways they were used, their names, and a number of other poorly studied questions about their production. Along the following lines the subsequent discussion will attempt to provide answers to all of them.

Background

Before turning to the subject in substance, the author considers it necessary to provide some explanatory notes of a more general nature, which he believes will contribute to a better understanding of the problem.

To date, interest in the study of the tin-and-lead vessels in Bulgaria has been expressed mainly by ethnographers. This is understandable in part because finding them on archaeological sites is extremely rare,³ and at least to the author's knowledge, there has been no such find from Bulgaria. In addition, even if such have been found here, they were most likely in such a destroyed and

³ On this, see the notes of their Hungarian researcher, Imre Holl (Holl 1996, 241).

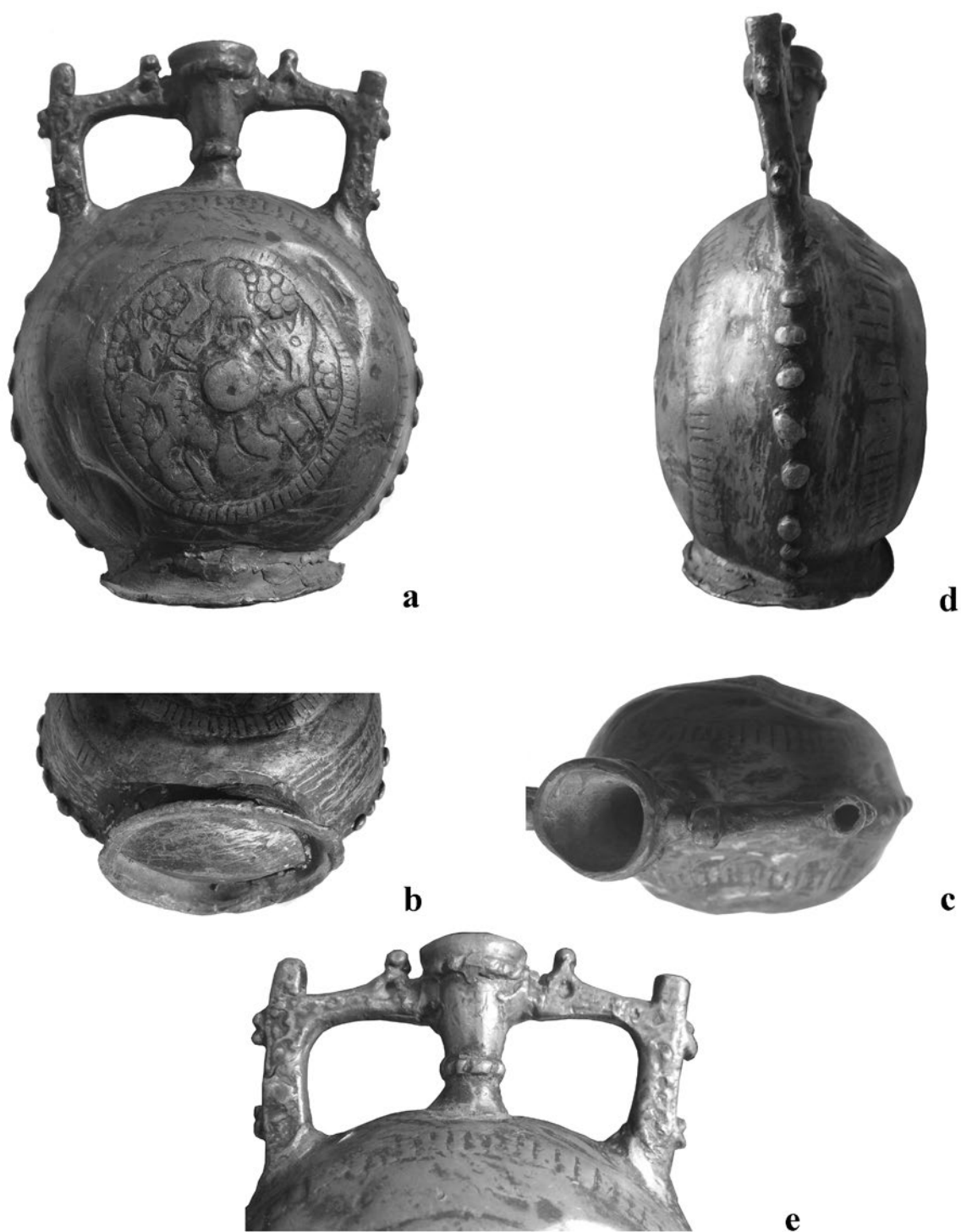


Fig. 1. The krondir purchased in Germany (photos: Christian Stopperich)
Обр. 1. Крондирът, закупен в Германия (снимки: Christian Stopperich)

fragmentary form that they remained unseen and unstudied by researchers. Moreover, even when fragments of such were found, and they may have been publicised (mostly in the summary statistics of finds), the material was invariably referred to as lead. And there can hardly be any doubt that tin-and-lead vessels were used in the Balkans during the Late Middle Ages. It is sufficient to recall a text from “The History of the Romans” by Nicephorus Gregoras, in which, when describing the crisis in Byzantium from the end of the 40s of the 14th century, it is said: “*At that time, there was such poverty in the palace that there was not a single cup or goblet of gold or silver – some were tin, and all the rest were ceramic and clay vessels*” (Никифор Григора 2014, XV, § 11, 183). There are also numerous entries, from the beginning of the next century (1436 – 1440), in the account book of the Venetian merchant Giacomo Badoer, residing at that time in Constantinople, from which we learn that the import of tin products and tin into the City at the beginning of the 15th c. was already commonplace (Bertelè 1956, 100 – 101, 216 – 217 and others). Most curious from the point of view of the aims of the present study, however, is an entry from 1438, which makes it clear that on February 10th, Badoer purchased 110 bars of tin for the amount of 107 hyperpyrons, needed for the production of 2 krondirs (Bertelè 1956, 280). (we will return to this entry later). Let us also recall the dramatic episode of the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, when, according to the Byzantine historian Doukas: “*Three days after the fall [of the City, Sultan Mehmed] permitted his ships to sail, each to its land and to its city. They were loaded to the point of sinking. But with what cargo? These were precious clothes, silver, gold, bronze and tin objects, countless books and captives: priests, laymen, nuns and monks.*” (Doukas 2016, 178). Although Doukas was not a direct eyewitness to the event, the accounts of the survivors, mostly Genoese but also Turks, lend enough historical weight to what he shared. Furthermore, even if the looters did not carry away tin vessels and books, apparently in Doukas’s mind they represented significant valuables, which is why they were specifically mentioned among the looted items. From this brief review of the written sources known to the author, it is well understood that certainly by the 14th and 15th centuries in Byzantium, and most likely throughout other vast territories of the Balkans, tin-ware, imported or locally produced, was already well known.

Such evidence from the previous centuries, however, is missing. Most probably, if tin-and-lead vessels were at all used in the Balkans at that time, the main reason for their low distribution was the limited quantities of tin that Byzantium (and medieval Bulgaria, respectively) had at its disposal. The first larger quantities of this metal to appear on Balkan markets seem to have been supplied by Venetian merchants from the 13th century onwards (Capitulare Nauticum 1792, 364, § CXV). From the middle of the 14th century, we already have reliable information about such supplies, both in Constantinople (Pegolotti 1936, 33), and along the Northern Black Sea coast (Tana) (Pegolotti 1936, 24). The tin supplied to the East came exclusively from Cornwall in England and was sold in marked bars which cost about ten times more than lead (Pegolotti 1936, 205). As for lead, it was not lacking on the Balkans. During this period, Serbian silver mines were particularly active, in which, in addition to silver, a significant amount of lead was mined.⁴ In Constantinople, similar to iron and tin, it was sold in bulk (Pegolotti 1936, 33). However, the author does not have any information showing that specialised producers of tin and lead products appeared in Byzantium or elsewhere in the Balkans at that time, such as the ones that had existed in Western Europe since the 13th century, organized in independent guilds (e.g., *veisseliers et beniers* in France).

⁴ See brief notes on this in Kovačević 1960, 257. Scattered notes on lead mining are also present in the whole work of Динић 1955, 1962.

On the name and shape of the krondirs

Although somewhat unusual for an archaeological study, the author will begin these subsequent remarks by determining the name of the vessels in question. This is considered necessary in order to be able to make full use of the written sources which mention them, as far as it has been possible to collect them.

It seems that in the Bulgarian environment the old name of this specific vessel, for which in our country today the descriptive lead-and-tin wine vessel⁵ is almost invariably used, was *krondir* (with the variant *kondir*).⁶ In Bulgarian, and the other Balkan languages, the name is a borrowing from the Modern Greek κροντήρι (*krontiri*) (БЕР 1986, 19).⁷ This is also the definition provided in the older Greek dictionaries that the author is familiar with. Confirmation that the name is very old can also be found in an entry from the trade book of Giacomo Badoer, which is mentioned above. The form there is *crondilli* (Bertelè 1956, 280).⁸ To date, this seems to be the oldest definite mention of the vessels under review. The next entry of interest is in the posthumously published (1709) work of the French Catholic missionary and curator of all the Catholic Capuchin missions in Greece, Alexis de Sommevoir (Alessio da Somavera), the first large dictionary of the Modern Greek language, reflecting the vocabulary of the second half of the 17th century. There, under the feature κροντήρι, τὸ (with variants κρεντήρι, τὸ and κριοντήρι, τὸ), it is written that this is “a tin or lead wine vessel” (Somavera 1709, 202).

With few exceptions, linguists seem to agree on the origin of the name. It is usually derived from the Middle Greek form κρυω(ν)τήριον, a vessel for cold drinks (Μπαμπινιώτης 2010, 737).⁹ This lexical form is found, for example, in Pseudo-Kodin’s compilative work “treatise on precedence”, probably created between 1350 and 1360 – “ὡσαύτως καὶ οἱ τὰ κρυοτήρια φέροντες παροινοχόοι ἔφιπποι καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐντὸς τοῦ παλατίου εἰσέρχονται”, translated by Jean Verpeaux as: “Thus the assistant cup bearers, carrying refreshments, also enter the palace on horseback” (Verpeaux 1966, 287), and by Joseph Munitiz “In like fashion the helpers of the wine suppliers who deliver the cooling containers also enter the palace riding a horse” (Macrides et al. 2013, 268 – 269).

The earliest use of the form κροντήρι known to the author is found in the work of the archbishop of Thessaloniki Symeon “On the Holy Ritual of Myrrh”, created between the years 1416 – 1429. At the beginning of the third chapter of this work it is said: “On the next day, which is Holy and Great Thursday, this myrrh is carried into the Church in a separate crontire, which is called an alabaster ...” (Συμεὼν ἀρχιεπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης 1863, 90).¹⁰ This shows that the krondir, in addition to a vessel keeping drinks cold,¹¹ was also used as a vessel for storing holy myrrh.

It is also necessary to say that the non-Greek speaking population of the Balkans adopted the name relatively early. Here, however, due to the probable ignorance of the specific type of

⁵ This definition was given by Vyara Kovacheva-Kostadinova; Todor Gerasimov calls them tin vessels. In the end, both definitions of the metal they are made of are inaccurate.

⁶ On the different local names for this type of vessels in Bulgaria, see Ковачева-Костадинова 2000, 51.

⁷ St. Mladenov supposes that it is “some modification of the Greek *kántharos* (Μλαδένωφ 1941, 258), on which the authors of the Bulgarian Etymology Dictionary have very tactfully commented that it is “not very likely”.

⁸ On p. 246 Tommaso Bertelè wrote that these are “unidentifiable tin objects for household use”.

⁹ The form κρωντήρι is given as a more correct spelling of the lexeme. See also Kretschmer 1905, 118, and maybe for most detail – Таховски 1950, 158. For other forms of the name, see Κριαράς 1985, 19 – 20.

¹⁰ The Paris edition gives *κρατήρι* instead of *κροντήρι* (Symeon Archiepiscopus Thessalonica 1866, 240).

¹¹ The author cannot understand the reason for this concept. One can suppose, however, that due to the fact that no one kept wine in lead-and-tin vessels, because its quality deteriorated, the drinks poured into them had to be drunk quickly and so there was no time for them to become warm.



Fig. 2. Miniature from a Late Byzantine calendar from 1461 (Eideneier 1979, 402)

Обр. 2. Миниатюра от къснoвизантийски календар от 1461 г. (no Eideneier 1979, 402)

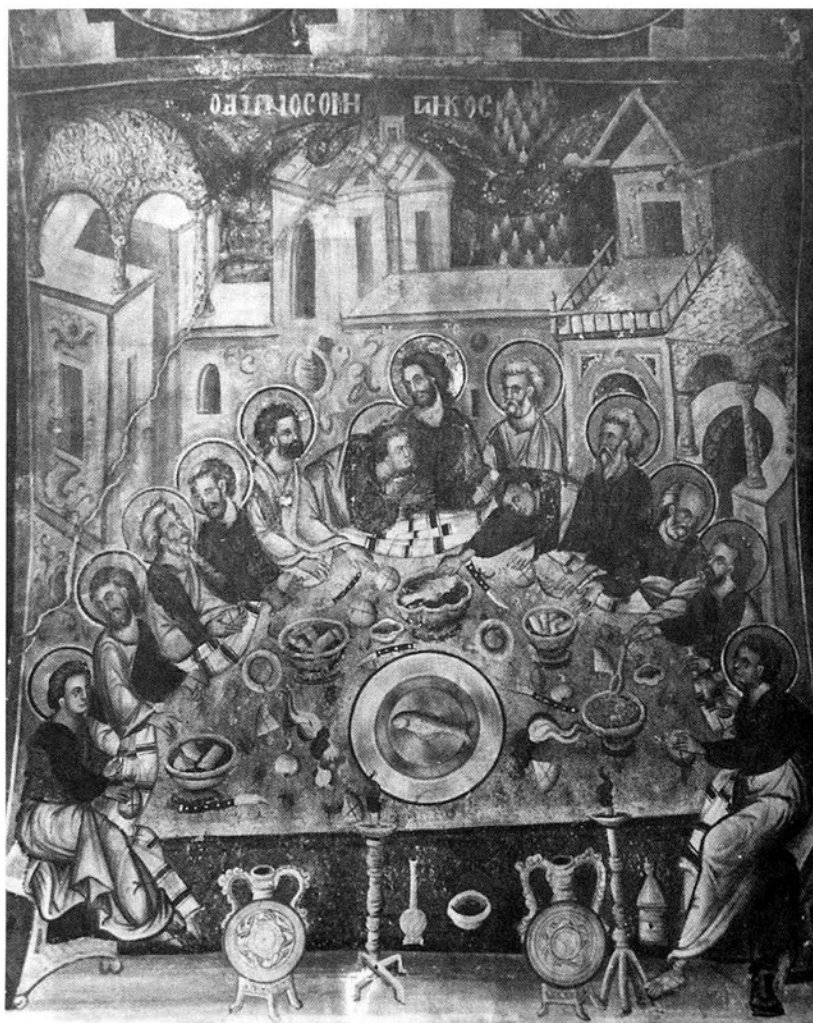


Fig. 3. Two krontirs depicted at the front of the table from the Last Supper scene, fresco from the old church of the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of Jesus ("Great Meteoron") at Kalambaka in Thessaly, dated to 1483 (Georgitsoyanni 1992, 125)

Обр. 3. Два крондира, изобразени пред масата от сцената „Тайната вечеря“, стенопис от старата църква на манастира „Преображение Господне“ („Големия Метеор“) при Каламбака в Тесалия, датиран към 1483 г. (no Georgitsoyanni 1992, 125)

vessel, and to a large extent due to the natural expansion of the lexical meaning of the word in any linguistic development, in the oldest record known to the author (from May 4th, 1406) where it is mentioned (in the form “кондѣръ”), the name seems to be used to denote a deep cup, a bowl (Пуццић 1862, 56).¹² Subsequently, it was also adopted in the Balkans to denote a certain volume for liquids, mostly for wine (Schweigger 1608, 227).¹³

However, what was the form of this specific vessel in Byzantium during this relatively early period, the written sources do not tell us. We get some idea of its appearance thanks to the miniature accompanying the verses dedicated to the month of July from a Late Byzantine calendar dated to 1461, preserved today in the library of the Topkapı Palace Museum in Constantinople under No. 35 (fig. 2) (Eideneier 1979, 402). The scene depicted in it – a young man lying down drinking wine, illustrates the short poetic story, in which it is mentioned that the young man, warmed up after visiting the bath, wished to drink cold wine, as a result of which he fell ill. To represent the cold drink, the miniaturist depicted the specific vessel above the young man – a wine cooler, undoubtedly the κροντήρι (krondir) known to us from the sources. Its flattened spheroidal body stands on four feet, its neck is elongated, and from the edge of its neck to the vessel's shoulders descend two jagged ornamented handles. In the middle of the body is marked a circular pictorial field, filled with some kind of pattern, which is not clearly visible from the illustration. It is also impossible to recognize the material from which the vessel depicted in the miniature was made. However, it is easily recognizable in the depictions of two similar vessels from a fresco in the old church of the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of Jesus (“Great Meteoron”) near Kalambaka in Thessaly, dated to 1483. In the foreground of the Last Supper scene, its creator, an icon painter from Kastoria, depicted them painted light grey, thus representing the tin-and-lead alloy of which they were actually made (fig. 3). In these depictions, the handles of the vessels are represented as florid, with wavy ornamentation running along their upper edges, which leaves no doubt that the painter thus reproduced the specific decoration of the handles of krondirs. The four feet they usually stand upon were also represented. The placement of the vessels, on the floor next to the table, their layout and their relatively large dimensions, gave reason to the researcher of the fresco, Evangelia Georgitsoyanni, to define them without hesitation as “water vessels” (Georgitsoyanni 1992, 125).

In exactly the same place, on the ground in front of the table, again in a fresco depicting the same scene, such a vessel was also depicted by the painter who decorated the church of the Poganovo Monastery of St John the Theologian (fig. 4). The pedestal of this vessel is shaped like a truncated pyramid, and a small trapezoidal window is incised in each of the walls of the pyramid. This vessel was identified by fresco researcher André Grabar as a “water jug” (Грабар 1927, 205, Табл. XXXVI, 1).

An idea of the use of this specific vessel is provided by a miniature created in 1574 by the Flemish traveller and diplomatic agent in the service of the Habsburgs in Constantinople, Lambert de Vos, in his “Book of Turkish Costumes”, kept today in the university library in Bremen under No. Ms. Or. 9. Jesters from the palace are represented in this life-painted miniature, eating. In the hands of the central character is undoubtedly a krondir, from which he is pouring himself wine, easily recognizable by the red colour of the liquid depicted by the miniaturist (fig. 5). The grey

¹² On p. 125 of the same collection (legacy from 1465) mentions two other krondirs (кондѣра) made of other materials. In a document dated July 26, 1441, we have there is a record of nine large silver goblets (кондиери) and two small cups (кондирька) (Miklosich 1858, 407, 408).

¹³ “... *Weinwachs ein Maß so sie nennen Crondir* ...”. The Great Dictionary of Geography of La Martinière of 1736 states: “[In *Negropont*] you buy a *krondir* of wine for three aspers, which makes [the price of] *Pot Lyonnais* for one sol.” (Martinière 1736, 78) (*Pot, mesure de Lyon*, synonym of *pinte*, at the time had a volume of a little over 1 litre; for more details, see Vial 1906, 13 – 15).



Fig. 4. Krondir depicted at the front of the table from the Last Supper scene, fresco from the church in the Poganovo Monastery (Грабар 1927, Табл. XXXVI, 1)

Обр. 4. Крондир, изобразен пред масата от сцената „Тайната вечеря“, стенопис от църквата в Погановския манастир (Грабар 1927, Табл. XXXVI, 1)

colour of the vessel is an indication of the material from which it was made, most likely tin-and-lead alloy. By the way, that is the colour of the cup that the jester is holding. The image shows that krondirs were held as jugs and, obviously, that they were also used in a Muslim environment.

So, we see that the oldest known texts and images of the vessel type we are interested in from the second half of the 14th and 15th centuries define them as “coolers” for wine or water, made of tin-and-lead alloy (or of silver) and even as vessels for myrrh, made of a currently unclear material.

On the origin of krondirs

What, however, was their origin? The few researchers who have studied the topic do not provide a satisfactory answer. For Bojana Radojković, the type appeared in the Balkans as an influence of Late Antique ceramic pilgrim ampullae (Радойковић 1956, 39 – 41) and vessels, some of which it actually resembles,¹⁴ and as a specific production of Armenian craftsmen (Радойковић 1956, 39). Todor Gerasimov assumes that they were “*produced in some specialized workshops in Eastern Asia and distributed as a commercial product in the lands of the Balkan Peninsula as well*”, and “*the city of Damascus should be considered as a probable centre where they were made ...*” (Герасимов 1983, c. 75). Without going too deep into the problem, the Greek researcher Charalambos Bakirtzis

¹⁴ See for example, Late Antique Egyptian ampullae kept in the Louvre collection, with dimensions: 27 x 17.5 x 7 cm (Metzger 1981, 39, 64, 103, fig. 80) (fig. 6).

makes a connection between the finds of ceramic wine vessels from the 10th – 14th c., known from archaeological studies in the Balkans (more on them in Алексиев 2000, 191 – 198) and the more luxurious metal vessels, but does not undertake to answer the question of their origin, nevertheless suggesting that the ceramic vessels were made as imitations of the metal vessels (Μπακιρτζής 2003, 102 – 103). Vyara Kovacheva-Kostadinova also makes such a connection, but for her the process was reversed – from the ceramic medieval prototypes to the more massive metal “wine vessels” (Ковачева-Костадинова 2000, 55 – 56). As can be seen from this brief review of what has been achieved so far, to date, there is no generally accepted answer to the question of the origin of the vessels of interest to us.

More data is available on their distribution area. The specimens known to the author give reason to outline its borders from the Balkans to the Middle East. The single finds from Egypt and from Anatolia (Pergamon) are good evidence for their use by the local Christian population in these areas as well. Unlike the Balkans, however, where we have abundant material, pictorial and written artefacts, which are a good indication of their existence since the 14th century, if not earlier, in the lands of the Middle East they are actually so rare that too little is known about them.



Fig. 5. Miniature from “The Book of Turkish Costumes” by Lambert de Vos, 1574 (Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen, Ms. Or. 9, Lambert de Vos. *Türkisches Kostümbuch*, Fol. 33)

Обр. 5. Миниатюра от „Книга на турските костюми“ от Ламберт де Вос, 1574 г. (Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen, Ms. Or. 9, Lambert de Vos. *Türkisches Kostümbuch*, Fol. 33)



Fig. 6. Late Antique ceramic ampulla from the Louvre collection (Metzger 1981, fig. 80)
Обр. 6. Късноантична керамична ампула от сбирката на Лувъра (Metzger 1981, fig. 80)

The vessels from Egypt which are closest to the Balkan krondirs have been of interest to researchers since the beginning of the 20th century. The first publication of such a vessel, kept at that time in the museum in Cairo, is due to the French scholar of Coptic art, Albert Gayet. In 1902, he made a very artistic description of a krondir, though it was lacking any metric data.¹⁵ It was made of bronze, which he frivolously attributed to the time preceding the Arab conquest of Egypt (fig. 7) (Gayet 1902, 295 – 296). Only two years later, however, another notable researcher of Early Christian art, the Austrian Joseph Strzygowski, declared Gayet's published vessel a forgery, without any argument provided, and in turn announced the existence of another completely identical vessel made of lead (Strzygowski 1904, 330, № 7021). This vessel had the following dimensions: height – 16.5 cm, width – 12.5 cm, depth – 9.5 cm. Unfortunately, like the vessel published by Gayet, its lead counterpart also had no clear origin. It was also acquired by the Cairo Museum as a re-purchase. Their dating was much broader than the one Gayet committed to – “*Coptic or Arabic period*”. Again from Cairo came a third identical specimen, acquired through re-purchase by the Berlin Museum in 1905, lost during the Second World War. Strzygowski's student, Oskar Wulf, who published it in 1911, dated it to the Late Middle Ages, more precisely to “*the Late Byzantine lead production*” (Wulf 1911, 94, № 1988 und Taf. VIII).¹⁶ The dimensions of this vessel were as follows: 17.5 x 11.5 cm. The fourth similar object is the one with whose description the present notes began which, although purchased from the antiquarian in Germany, at least to the author, is certainly of Egyptian origin.

¹⁵ The author has given it this name, Gayet only speaks of a vessel (*vase*).

¹⁶ See also the note at the annotation of the previous vessel (No. 1987).



Fig. 7. The bronze krondir from the Cairo Museum collection (Gayet 1902, 296)

Обр. 7. Бронзовият крондир от сбирката на музея в Кайро (Gayet 1902, 296)



Fig. 8. The "lead" krondir from Pergamon (Wulf 1911, № 1988, Taf. VIII)

Обр. 8. „Оловният“ крондир от Пергам (no Wulf 1911, № 1988, Taf. VIII)

Another lead vessel is of special interest in view of the current work – one owned until the Second World War by two Berlin museums – first the Pergamon Museum and subsequently the Museum of Byzantine Art (part of the Bode Museum) (fig. 8) (Wulf 1911, 94, № 1987 und Taf. VIII). Actually, this vessel so closely resembles these krondirs that there can be no doubt of their connection – the same material, the same structure, the same feet, the same decorated handles, one of which is shaped more like a spout than the more usual nipple-like protrusion used for drinking, the same central fields filled with a Christian scene, in this case – the “Fountain of Life”, which the author has termed as such on account of the nature of the object on which it is represented – a vessel for wine or water. However, unlike almost all the other Balkan examples, this vessel has the advantage of its known origin – Pergamon. Although historical studies conducted at the time when the vessel was acquired by these German colleagues, showed that at the beginning of the 14th century the Byzantine city came under the rule of the emirs of Karasi, and two or three decades later – under the rule of the Ottomans,¹⁷ the fact that it was poorly studied archaeologically seems to have given Oskar Wulf grounds to boldly date this larger vessel (27.5 x 16 cm) to the Early Middle Ages. However, the argument he put forward in his annotation for this dating cannot withstand even the weakest criticism – “*The device differs in shape and in the archaic style of its decoration*

¹⁷ The years in which Pergamon first came under the rule of the Karasi emirs and subsequently under that of the Ottomans are not well known. There are serious differences between historians' studies. More on the problem, see, for example, in: Gelzer 1903, 1 – 102; Zachariadou 1993, 225 – 236; Parry 1986, 1187 and bibliography.

from the mass of later Byzantine lead vessels,¹⁸ like the one here under No. 1988”.¹⁹ Today, this vessel, known only from the publication by O. Wulf, can be seen on the website of the Berlin Museum of Byzantine Art, where its dating is indicated as “*from an undefined period*” (unbestimmte Zeit).²⁰ However, the author has two strong reasons for accepting this vessel as the earliest known of the vessel type reviewed here. They are as follows: First, the vessel was most probably used in a Christian environment, and second, after the capture of Pergamon by the troops of the emir o Karasi around the beginning of the 14th century, the city remained deserted. We have good evidence of this from the record of the Arab traveller Ibn Battoutah who passed through Pergamon in 1332/1333: “... we arrived in Bergama, a city in ruins, which has a large and strong fortress situated on the top of a mountain.” (Ibn Battoutah 1854, 315). The fortress was at the time in the hands of the Muslims, and moreover, as is understood from Ibn Battoutah’s record (and also from modern archaeological surveys), it was remote from the ruins of the city. These circumstances lead the author to think that if the vessel was not later taken to the ruins of Byzantine Pergamon, located a few kilometres from the modern city of Bergama, which is unlikely, then it should be dated no later than the end of the 13th – the first years of the 14th c. Unfortunately, all attempts to learn of the circumstances under which it was found were futile. The documentation surrounding its acquisition by the German museums appears to have been lost.

The images of the scene depicted on the vessel, identified by O. Wulf as a palm tree (Palmettenbaumes) or bowl with a low foot, the two doves standing opposite on either side of it, the palm branches saturating the background fields, as well as the unexplained elements represented at the base of the scene, are modelled too primitively in the spirit of provincial art and cannot contribute much to determining the time when the vessel was made. The trefoil frame enclosing the scene, placed in the round pictorial field, is also strange – in fact, a very atypical composition for Byzantine art.²¹ In reality, the “ambiguities” surrounding this image can be explained relatively easily. By all accounts, it seems that the master, not particularly skilled in the field of Christian art, had at hand a clumsily made drawing of the “Fountain of Life” scene, the prototype of which was most likely a miniature from a Byzantine manuscript (Bible or Gospel) or some older monumental image from a church. Moreover, he did not interpret the water jets flowing in parabolas from the fountain as such, but rearranged them and raised them higher to obtain the special trefoil frame according to his own aesthetic perceptions. In the same way, he transformed the cone from the Dionysian thyrsus into a palm tree,²² presented most often in the centre of the kantharos from which the water flowed in the scene in question. By way of illustration, the author will mention a mosaic from the 11th or 12th century from the Church of the Assumption in Daphne near Athens with the scene “The Prayer of Joachim and Anna” in which the fountain is clearly visible (fig. 9), as well as two miniatures from a Gospel of the same time kept in the National Library of France (Ms. gr. 64) (fig. 10). Although it had been known since Late Antiquity, the scene regained some popularity in the 11th – 12th centuries, but at that time it was mainly reproduced in miniatures

¹⁸ It is noteworthy that O. Wulf defined these late Coptic vessels as Byzantine.

¹⁹ By the way, O. Wulf presents no arguments for the late dating of these vessels.

²⁰ <https://recherche.smb.museum/detail/1372053/>.

²¹ Trefoils are extremely rare in Byzantine art. Several examples of vessels decorated in the sgraffito technique, dated to the 13th century, can be misleading because the trefoils in them do not form frames. Their researcher, Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzi, usually interprets them as a “stylized star motif” (Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999, 55 – 56, 148 – 149, 248, 250).

²² It is curious that in modern times some researchers of the Dionysian thyrsus suggest that it was based on the Turkish sorghum, which very closely resembles its depiction, represented on the krondir under review (See, for example, in Olszewski 2019, 160 – 161).



Fig. 9. Fountain in a mosaic from the late 11th or early 12th c., from the Church of the Assumption in Daphne near Athens, with the scene "The Prayer of Joachim and Anna" (Millet 1899, Pl. XIX.1)

Обр. 9. Фонтан в мозайка от XI или XII в. от църквата „Успение Богородично“ в Дафни до Атина със сцената „Молитвата на Йоаким и Анна“ (по Millet 1899, Pl. XIX.1)

and stone sculptures.²³ In the 14th century, it was depicted again, including in church frescoes, but in a much altered form (Velmans 1968, 122, sqq). Although indirect, this clue could guide us in determining the lower chronological threshold for the dating of the vessel from Pergamon after the 11th – 12th century. If the vessel was a product of the Early Middle Ages, as Oscar Wulf suggests, then the scene would hardly have been so clumsily represented, not least because the craftsman who made the vessel would have been familiar with the symbol from its many depictions which he most certainly encountered daily, and therefore he would not have depicted it in this almost incomprehensible way. If correct in such reasoning, it means that this vessel is currently the oldest of the type reviewed here, and its dating could most likely be the end of the 13th – beginning of the 14th century.

Notes on the inscriptions on the krondirs

There is another aspect of the research conducted on the tin-and-lead krondirs until now that has not been clarified sufficiently – the date inscriptions which are found on a significant number

²³ From the 9th century onwards, until the 14th century, the scene was not frescoed in churches in the form known from Late Antiquity (Velmans 1968, 119); instead, it was often represented on stone reliefs, especially in the 11th – 12th c. period (See numerous examples in Grabar 1976).

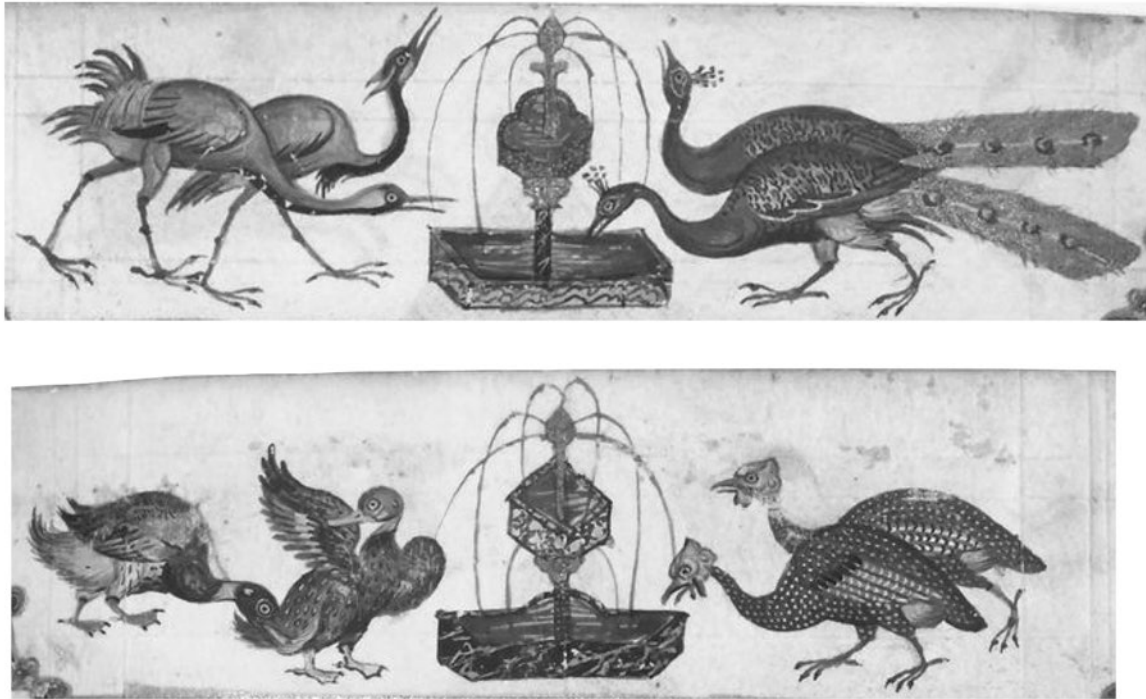


Fig. 10. Miniatures from a Gospel from the end of the 11th c., kept in the National Library of France (BNF, Ms. gr. 64, Fol. 6v, 7r)

Обр. 10. Миниатюри от Евангелие от края на XI в., съхранявано в Националната библиотека на Франция (BNF, Ms. gr. 64, Fol. 6v, 7r)

of them. Researchers who have studied them, including ethnographers, assume that those reflect the time of their creation. However, is this really the case? Most of these inscriptions are scratched extremely shallowly with a sharp chisel, usually at the upper end of the body, immediately above one of the circular medallions. In some cases, however, we find a different composition. For example, on a vessel kept in the Ethnographic Museum in Sofia (Inv. No. 1036) this most general scheme is violated. On one side of the vessel, the following inscription can be read: “КРСТАНА 1760 NANO MITP XLI”, and on the other – only the name “МИТАРЪ”, without the title “Haji”. Logic suggests that the name Mitar (derived from Dimitar) is the name of Nano’s father,²⁴ whose name is near the year 1760. It appears that the vessel is older than the date written on it, but exactly how much older is unclear. Moreover, it seems next to incredible that new vessels were bought for every wedding ceremony, where, according to Bulgarian ethnographers, such vessels were used. If it were so, they would be one of the most common vessels in the country, and this is not the case at all. It is more logical that for such cases the same vessel was used in the family, on which, depending on the circumstances, only the names and dates were changed. Erasing the old inscriptions was not a problem and could have been done even at home. In order to confirm this supposition, however, it is necessary to make microscopic observations of all the inscribed vessels known to date, for some traces of such intervention would surely be detected during such a careful examination. In addition, the moulds in which the krondirs, or rather their individual elements, were cast, were used for generations, naturally, with a little retouching and the necessary corrections. This is undoubtedly the case of the krondir from Malko Tarnovo, dated through scratching to “1891” (NEM, Inv. No. 44771) and the krondir from RMH – Burgas, dated in a similar way to 1866 (Inv. No. E 390).

²⁴Under the Ottoman naming system used during the period, there were no surnames, and people were identified by their given and patronymic names, in this case Nano (son of) Mitar.

Krondirs in the church

The author has not found written records about the use of these vessels in church rituals. However, some images on the frescoes and icons from the Ottoman period give reason to assume that they played a certain role in them as well. For example, such a vessel is depicted on the table placed in front of St. Anna in the “Nativity” scene depicted on an Arbanassi icon dated to the 17th – 18th c. (fig. 11) (Пандурски 1977, 396, № 204 и ил.). This position transforms it from a simple water jug into a vessel with a certain ceremonial-liturgical function. Although tentatively, in her study of the krondirs, V. Kovacheva-Kostadinova also suggested the idea, based on iconic images of the scene “Women in front of the empty tomb” (“Myrrh bearers”), that they also had the functions of vessels for myrrh (Ковачева-Костадинова 2000, 57).



Fig. 11. The krondir depicted on the table in front of St Anna in the “Nativity” scene, icon from Arbanassi dated to 17th – 18th c. (Пандурски 1977, 396, № 204)

Обр. 11. Крондирът, изобразен върху масата пред св. Анна в сцената „Рождество Богородично“, икона от Арбанаси, датирана към XVII – XVIII в. (по Пандурски 1977, 396, № 204)



Fig. 12. A Thessaloniki ampulla from the National Museum of History collections (photo by the author)
Обр. 12. Солунска ампула от сбирките на Националния исторически музей (снимка на автора)

However, were the krondirs for water and wine and those for myrrh the same? The attentive reader has probably already noticed the considerable differences in the dimensions of some of the vessels described here. The summarized data for the specimens known make it possible to distinguish two groups based on the formal feature of size. First, the larger ones were on average about 30 cm high and had volumes of about 2.5 – 3 L, and the smaller ones were usually about 17 cm high and their volumes did not exceed 0.5 L. It seems that the large ones were used as vessels for wine and water, and the smaller ones for carrying myrrh, in this latter case they performed functions close to those of the well-known Late Medieval Thessaloniki lead myrrh ampullae – *κουτρούβια*²⁵ (fig. 12), as all bulky clay or glass vessels with two handles were also called during the Middle Byzantine period (Koukoulès 1955, 459). By the way, in addition to the similarity of the material from which the two types of vessels were made, there is also the similarity of their shapes – the same flattened spheroidal bodies, the same elongated necks connected to the shoulders of the bodies by two handles. The small, portable ampullae, however, did not have pedestals because their purpose was related to the satisfaction of personal needs, and they were apparently worn around the necks of their owners.

The scenes depicted on the tin-and-lead krondirs, like those on the portable personal ampullae, are mostly Christian (Fountain of Life, double-headed eagles, St. George on horseback (?), Samson Rending Open the Lion's jaws, lions, etc.), with the exception, as far as information can be found regarding two krondirs – one from the Ethnographic Museum in Sofia (Inv. No. 24973) and the other from RMH – Burgas (Inv. No. E 391), on whose faces, blue and yellow, respectively blue and green beads, both of which undoubtedly performed magical-apotropaic functions, are mounted onto protruding thin wedges.

²⁵ For other forms of the name see in Κριαράς 1982, 350. On these ampullae and their purpose, see more details in Markov 2018, 122 – 135.

The tradition

The shape of the krondirs seems to have not changed for centuries. However, this should come as no surprise. The phenomenon is not isolated. The author had the opportunity to establish the same phenomenon in a number of other cases – once established and widely accepted, the shape of a product could be reproduced for centuries. This makes it extremely difficult to date the specific objects precisely, especially if their origin is not established. Attempting to compensate for this by analysing secondary elements, such as their decorations, usually leads to wrong conclusions. This is because the decorative elements, like the shapes, are no less inert in their development, and moreover, often the makers of the vessels reproduced scenes and images borrowed from much older examples. This lack of firm support in the dating of tin-and-lead krondirs is the reason why an undoubtedly relatively late-produced vessel, such as the specimen in the collection of the Düsseldorf Art Museum, is dated to the 16th century (Zinn 1981, 47 f., Nr. 55), the two completely identical krondirs, one from Janjevo, Kosovo, and the other from the region of the village of Ugljare near Gnjilane, to receive different dating – the first to the 16th – 17th c. (Церовић 2017, 246 – 247), and the second – to the 15th – 16th c. (Српско златарство 1981, 33, № 72, сл. 77), in Bulgarian museums all specimens are invariably dated to the 18th or 19th c. (See in Герасимов 1983 and in Ковачева-Костадинова 2000), and it is still unclear when the vessels from Egypt were made – in Late Antiquity or in the Late Middle Ages.

Development

There is another point of interest concerning the vessels under review that is worth mentioning. At the beginning of this paper, it was already noted that in the earliest dictionary of spoken Greek, that of the Catholic missionary Alexis de Sommevoir, krontirs (krondirs) were defined as *tin or lead wine vessels*. Later dictionaries, however, invariably define them as pottery. As an example, in the 1790 dictionary entry of Georgios Ventotis it states: “*κρυοντήρι, κρεοντήρι, κροντήρι, και κλοντήρι*, earthen (i.e., of clay) vessel with a handle (*vase de terre à manche, vaso di terra con manico*)” (Βεντότης 1790, 304). It certainly reflected the changes of the period that affected this type of specific vessels, the material from which they were already mass-produced at the time,²⁶ as well as the fact that the handle, which was used in tin-and-lead vessels as a spout or as a nipple-like protrusion for drinking, had already become a real spout on the ceramic vessels, still usually connected to the neck of the vessel via a transverse decorative beam, in which the handle actually remained as one piece.

Ethnographic museums in the Balkans abound with such later vessels from the 18th and 19th c. Of course, the process of transformation of tin-and-lead krondirs into ceramic ones was not clear-cut, which was actually normal, because during that period centuries-old traditions usually died out slowly. It seems that both the old and the new types of vessels were used for some time in parallel, perhaps even until the middle of the 19th century, and at the beginning of the next century, the civilizational processes of the Balkans, expressed in a large-scale Europeanization, finally threw these curious ritual vessels out of use.

²⁶ Certainly the ceramic vessels defined as krondirs existed in the previous centuries as well, at least in connection with the name for the volume of wine, which was mentioned at the beginning of the paper. However, they were undoubtedly not ritual vessels.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, it is possible to give an, if still uncertain, summary of this research. At the current level of the author's knowledge of these specific vessels, it can be suggested that they were most likely a product of Byzantine society,²⁷ where they seem to have emerged as early as the Palaiologan Period. Looking for their roots in the East, in Central Asia or even in Egypt, where they are either completely absent or known only by a few singly-discovered, completely identical specimens, cannot be accepted as viable. The centres of their creation were apparently the large Balkan Byzantine cities – Constantinople, Thessaloniki and Adrianople – from where the type not only spread, but in the early centuries of the Ottoman rule, their production bloomed to an extent, expressed above all in the significant variety of the images or other decoration present on the krondirs. However until the shovel of the archaeologist brings to light actual remains of specimens of really early vessels, these remarks will have the weight only of a pleasing hypothesis, albeit unsupported by anything sufficiently solid.

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²⁷Still, I do not exclude the possibility that the production of krondirs began under certain Latin influence. However, there were no such vessels in the West. The tin vessels used there for pouring wine (cimarre, cimaise) also had two handles, but they were placed at right angles to each other, and their spouts were shaped into their mouths (Gay 1887, 380 – 381).

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БЕЛЕЖКИ ЗА КРОНДИРИТЕ, ЕДИН ИНТЕРЕСЕН ТИП КЪСНОСРЕДНОВЕКОВНИ КАЛАЕНО-ОЛОВНИ СЪДОВЕ

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РЕЗЮМЕ

В статията са представени най-ранните сведения, с които за момента се разполага, за употребата на един специфичен тип калаено-оловни съдове, познати под названието крондири. Събрани са сведения за търговията с калай във Византия, както и такива, в които се говори за употребата на калаено-оловни съдове на Балканите през периода на Късното средновековие. Уточнено е названието „крондир“ за тези специфични съдове, за които в българската литература се употребява по традиция и досега описателното определение „оловно-калаени бъклици“. Уточнени са функциите им като съдове за вино и вода (по-големите) и вероятно за миро (по-малките). Анализирани са изображенията по най-старите познати образци. Изказано е предположение за някои специфики при употребата им от късносредновековните балкански общества и за евентуалното им развитие през периода на Възраждането.

В резултат от работата е достигнато до заключението, че на сегашното ниво на познанията ни крондирият най-вероятно са били продукт на византийското общество, в което те възникнали още през периода на Палеолозите. Отхвърля се тезата, според която корените на този тип съдове са на Изток, в Централна Азия или дори в Египет, където те или изобщо липсват, или са познати едва в няколко единични, при това напълно идентични екземпляра. Предположено е, че центровете им на създаване били големите балкански византийски градове – Константинопол, Тесалоники и Адрианопол, откъдето типът не само се разпространил, но и в ранните векове на османското владичество производството им достигнало до известен разцвет, изразяващ се преди всичко в значителното разнообразие на представяните върху крондирият изображения или друга декорация.

Ключови думи: крондир, калай, съдове за вода и вино, Балкани, Византия, Палеолози