

MARIA MANOLOVA-VOYKOVA, *Византийска керамика от българското черноморско крайбрежие (VIII–XIV в. сл. Хр.)* [Byzantine Pottery from the Bulgarian Black Sea Region (8th–14th c.)]. Varna: Онгъл 2023. 354 pp., 11 figs., 122 pls. – ISBN 978-619-258-012-4

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Publications on Byzantine pottery have proliferated over the past century or so: collections were catalogued, both those obtained during archaeological excavations and private ones, and valuable data was gathered about styles, chronology, provenance, workshops, and production techniques. A few pioneering studies discussed pottery from the Black Sea region.¹ In geostrategic and economic terms, that area was of exceptional importance within the transit route connecting Europe with the Middle and Far East, while a number of prosperous Black Sea towns formed major centres of production and consumption.

Mid-twentieth-century excavations in the Crimea and northeast of the Black Sea shed new light on the production and styles of Byzantine pottery.² ALEXANDER KUZEV and MARIA MANOLOVA-VOYKOVA subsequently published rich collections of sgraffito ware from the sea's west coast.³ Their work has now culminated in MANOLOVA-VOYKOVA's general study of Byzantine pottery from that region. Her well-structured book is divided

1. WLADIMIR DE BOCK, *Poteries vernissées du Caucase et de la Crimée*. Mémoires de la Société nationale des antiquaires de France 6 (1897) pp. 193–254; HENRY WALLIS, *Byzantine Ceramic Art. Notes on Examples of Byzantine Pottery Recently Found at Constantinople*. London 1907; GUSTAVE MENDEL, *Catalogue des poteries byzantines et anatoliennes du Musée de Constantinople*. Constantinople 1910.

2. ANATOLII L. YAKOVSON, *Средновековий Херсонес XII–XIV вв. (Материали и исследования по археологии СССР 17)*. Moscow – Leningrad 1950, pp. 167–229; id., *Средневековые амфоры Северного Причерноморья*. Советская археология 15 (1951) pp. 325–344; id., *Керамика и керамическое производство средневековой Таврики*. Leningrad 1979; TAT'ANA I. MAKAROVA, *Поливная посуда. Из истории керамического импорта и производства древней Руси (Археология СССР. Свод археологических источников Е1-38)*. Moscow 1967.

3. ALEXANDER KUZEV, *Средновековна сграфито керамика с монограми от Варна*, Известия на Народния музей Варна 10/25 (1974) pp. 155–170; id., *Сграфито керамика във Варненския музей*. Музеи и паметници на културата 2 (1980) pp. 19–24; M. MANOLOVA-VOYKOVA, *Ранна сграфито керамика от Варна*. Известия на Народния музей Варна 34–35/49–50 (1998–1999) pp. 208–225.

into four parts: introduction, historiographical overview, classification and chronology, illustrated catalogue of the finds.

A short preface (pp. 5–7) outlines the aims and scope of the author’s research, based on material from fifteen museum collections. The sites from which said collections originate are briefly surveyed on pp. 9–22. Except for a settlement on the Cenni Bayır hill in Balchik and a monastery at Ravna near Provadia, these are well attested in textual sources: Agatopolis (now Akhtopol), Urdoviza, Sozopol(is), Debelt, Therma, Anchialos (now Pomorie), Nesebar, Varna, Kastritsi, Kavarna, and Kaliakra. MANOLOVA presents the historical and archaeological data available for each of them (their archaeological exploration is unevenly advanced).

Chapter 2 (pp. 23–36) is a short but very informative review of the state of research, including underwater archaeology and archaeometry. Scholarly work began during the 1890s with an emphasis on material from Constantinople and the Crimea.⁴ Later on, two particularly influential studies considered origins, classification, and style: DAVID TALBOT RICE’s *Byzantine Glazed Pottery* (1930) discussed questions of eastern (Persian) influence, while CHARLES H. MORGAN’s *Corinth: The Byzantine Pottery* (1942) dealt with typology and chronology.⁵ Archaeological research in the Crimea brought the wider Black Sea region (outside Constantinople) into focus.⁶ The activities of the Association Internationale pour l’Etude des Céramiques Médiévales en Méditerranée, a specialized symposium (the first of its kind),⁷ a major exhibition accompanied by a catalogue,⁸ and a recent two-volume set⁹ all confirm that the Black Sea is a key area for understanding the production, style and distribution of Byzantine pottery.

4. See note 1 above.

5. MORGAN’s study has now been revised by GUY SANDERS, *New Relative and Absolute Chronologies for 9th to 13th Century Glazed Wares at Corinth: Methodology and Social Conclusions*. In: KLAUS BELKE et al. (eds), *Byzanz als Raum. Zu Methoden und Inhalten der Historischen Geographie des östlichen Mittelmeerraumes* (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für die Tabula Imperii Byzantini 7). Vienna 2000, pp. 153–173.

6. YAKOVSON, *Средневековый Херсонес*, pp. 167–229; id., *Средневековые амфоры*; id., *Керамика и керамическое производство*; ALLA I. ROMANCHUK, *Глазурованная посуда поздневизантийского Херсона. Портовый район*. Ekaterinburg 2003.

7. VINCENT DÉROCHE – JEAN-MICHEL SPIESER (eds), *Recherches sur la céramique Byzantine* (Bulletin de correspondance hellénique, suppl. 18). Athens 1989.

8. DEMETRA PAPANIKOLA-BAKIRTZI (ed.), *Byzantine Glazed Ceramics. The Art of Sgraffito*. Athens 1999.

9. SERGEI G. BOCHAROV – VÉRONIQUE FRANÇOIS – AYRAT G. SITDIKOV (eds), *Поливная керамика Средиземноморья и Причерноморья X–XVIII вв.* Kazan – Chişinău 2017.

MANOLOVA surveys relevant research in her native country, where the significant contribution of YORDANKA CHANGOVA, MAGDALINA STANCHEVA, VERA ANTONOVA, ALEXANDER KUZEV, LYUDMILA DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, BORIS BORISOV, and others has been successfully continued by a new generation of scholars.¹⁰

The book's longest chapter discusses the classification and chronology of Byzantine ceramics from the Bulgarian Black Sea coast (pp. 37–105). Vessels of presumably Byzantine manufacture from the eighth through fourteenth centuries are divided into 24 types of tableware and 8 types of amphorae. The classes (and types) are labelled in accordance with Anglo-Saxon terminology, as usual in specialized publications of this kind. They are listed in a uniform manner, with complete data for each individual class. The characteristics considered are clay, slip, glaze, underglaze decoration, forms, chronology, workshop origin, and distribution in the coastal and interior regions of Bulgaria. Each type is illustrated with drawings of the main vessel shapes and a table of their geographical distribution.

The classification of ceramic imports adheres to JOHN HAYES' system for the Saraçhane material.¹¹ When it comes to identifying pottery made after the mid-thirteenth century, MANOLOVA relies on parallels from continental Greece, the Aegean, and modern Ukraine and Russia. The typology for amphorae is based on analogous finds from the Black Sea region. Each class/type is concisely but exhaustively characterised, so that readers are informed about its main aspects. Classes are presented in chronological order, while the accompanying text contains additional data on their earliest occurrence, their likely workshop origin, and the peak of their production, distribution, and consumption. On the basis of the data thus presented, readers can situate each class within the broader social and cultural context of its time.

A distribution map illustrates changing trends in the consumption of Byzantine ceramics: Several groups of tableware enjoyed wide distribution in significant quantity. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, these were

10. MARIA MANOLOVA-VOYKOVA, За един малко познат тип вносни византийски блюда от селищата по западния черноморски бряг. In: Градът в българските земи по археологически данни. Shumen 2014, pp. 352–358; RUMYANA KOLEVA, Byzantine Sgraffito Pottery from Northern Thrace. Characteristics, Provenance and Distribution. In: PLATON PETRIDIS et al. (eds.), 12th Congress AIECM3 on Medieval and Modern Period Mediterranean Ceramics. Athens 2021, pp. 433–438.

11. JOHN HAYES, *The Pottery* (Excavations at Saraçhane in Istanbul 2). Princeton 1992.

Glazed White Ware IV along with the Fine Sgraffito and Slip-Painted classes (both of them representative middle-Byzantine products). In the fourteenth century, they were supplanted by the heterogeneous class of Palaeologan Sgraffito, within which Elaborate Incised Ware stands out. Amphorae of Types I, IIA, and III had a dominant presence on the Black Sea market, other amphorae being less common.

MANOLOVA concludes that the regular import and significant presence of Byzantine table-ware along the Bulgarian coast of the Black Sea shows the considerable economic power of coastal towns compared to those in the interior. Through intensive trade, sea-ports would accumulate economic resources and develop as multi-ethnic and multicultural centres. The first large-scale imports of Byzantine pottery are registered in the coast's southern section, as well as in Varna, during the late ninth and in early tenth centuries, while towns and settlements north of the Haemus (Balkan) mountain became involved in regular trade later on, evidently in the early 1100s. Local production of sgraffito ware on the east coast of the Black Sea began toward the end of the twelfth century: the earliest workshops were probably based in Sozopol, Nesebar, and Varna, and their first products imitated Fine Sgraffito Ware, Zeuxippus Ware, and Elaborate Incised Ware (pl. cxxii). The technology was subsequently transferred westward, so that sgraffito vessels became one of the hallmarks of the material culture of the Second Bulgarian Empire.

The book's first half is supplied with an extensive summary in English (pp. 145–158) and contains an impressive bibliography (pp. 119–144) that in itself provides an extraordinary insight into the current state of research. The catalogue (pp. 159–232) lists a total of 848 finds of Byzantine pottery, including five 'wasters' of unfinished and defective sgraffito ware. Each entry contains all necessary data and is accompanied by drawings and photographs of excellent quality¹² (pls i–cxxii).

In the wake of fruitful archaeological research by several generations of scholars, comprehensive overview of the material had become a major necessity. By putting together a representative catalogue of finds and systematising them according to uniform criteria, MANOLOVA-VOYKOVA's monograph highlights trends in the distribution and consumption of various classes of vessels. It makes a significant contribution to the study of Byzantine pottery not just in present-day Bulgaria but in the entire Balkan and Mediterranean region. Of particular importance are the data that place

12. The same can be said of the illustrative material in the main text.

the beginning of sgraffito-ware production in Sozopol, Nesebar, and Varna in the late twelfth century, when Byzantine political and military presence rapidly weakened and finally disappeared when the Crusaders took Constantinople (1204). In this context, the introduction of pottery manufacture in the northern Balkans by way of the Black Sea coast had far-reaching consequences connected to the rise of Serbia and Bulgaria (the Second Bulgarian Empire) as new political powers. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, local workshops in these two Slavic countries developed a distinct interpretation of Byzantine sgraffito – a Balkan sgraffito style. As yet, little is known about ceramic production technology (archaeometry), marketing, and consumption at the regional and supra-regional level in the medieval Balkans. MANOLOVA-VOYKOVA's book greatly advances our understanding of Byzantine pottery – and of medieval pottery in general. It provides a strong stimulus for further research on ceramic production in Southeastern Europe and beyond.

Keywords

Black Sea region; medieval pottery