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**Том 2**

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С. Г. Бочарова, В. Франсуа, А. Г. Ситдикова*

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# **GLAZED POTTERY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BLACK SEA REGION, 10<sup>TH</sup>–18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES**

**Volume 2**

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*Sergei Bocharov, Véronique François, Ayrat Sitdikov*

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## Stone-Paste Ceramics from Tarnovgrad — the Capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom

**Keywords:** Second Bulgarian kingdom, Tsarevets, Trapezitsa, stone-paste (Qashan) ceramics, trade, Golden Horde, Mamlūk Egypt

**Ключевые слова:** Второе Болгарское царство, Царевец, Трапезица, кашинная керамика, торговля, Золотая Орда, Мамлюкский Египет

*K. Chakarov, D. Rabovyanov*

### Stone-Paste Ceramics from Tarnovgrad — the Capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom

This study is focused on pieces of the so called stone-paste (Qashan) ceramics, found during archaeological excavations on the two citadels in the capital of the Second Bulgarian kingdom. Most of the findings are sherds that come from the Southern part of Trapezitsa. There is also a restored bowl found at area 14 at Tsarevets. Their context is dated to the 13<sup>th</sup>—14<sup>th</sup> century. Not numerous artifacts of this kind, among the ceramic assemblage in this context, as stone-paste ware, Celadon ware and Western majolica ware, show that import of decorated luxury ceramic wares to the Bulgarian capital was limited.

The examples of stone-paste wares presented here were made at important production centres of the Golden Horde in the Lower Volga region and at the workshops of Mamluk Egypt. These evidences of distant trade connections are exotic exceptions among the art ware ceramic assemblage of medieval Tarnovo.

*K. Чакыров, Д. Рабовянов*

### Кашинная керамика из средневековой болгарской столицы Тырново

Исследование сосредоточено на находках кашинной керамики, обнаруженных во время археологических раскопок в двух цитаделях столицы Второго Болгарского Царства Тырново. Эти фрагменты происходят с южной террасы Трапезица и частично сохранились на участке № 14 Царевец, все они датируются XIII—XIV веками. Их небольшое количество в керамическом комплексе столицы Болгарии отражает ограниченный характер импорта художественной керамики, что относится и к другим ее видам, как восточного происхождения (кашин, селадон), так и западного (майолика).

Представленные в статье изделия из кашинной керамики из цитаделей Трапезица и Царевец происходят из крупных производственных центров Золотой Орды (Поволжья) и из пределов Мамлюкского султаната. Эти свидетельства дальних торговых связей болгарской столицы являются экзотическими исключениями в комплексе художественной керамики из Тырново.

Stone-paste ceramics is an exception among the ceramic assemblage of the capital of the Second Bulgarian kingdom. Usually it has been hardly identified and pieces found at sites conquered by the Ottoman period have been interpreted as faience of Eastern origin. By publishing materials with clear context, the authors hope they will contribute and add some new facts to the information about the variety of imports of

decorated pottery in the towns of the Second Bulgarian kingdom, particularly at its capital. The subject of this paper are four shards, found at the second citadel of *Tarnovgrad* — *Trapezitsa* and a restored bowl from *Tsarevets* — the core of the Bulgarian capital.

The first example is a piece of a bowl with flat, everted rim with rounded edge (fig. 1.). It is covered with transparent glaze that has soft yel-



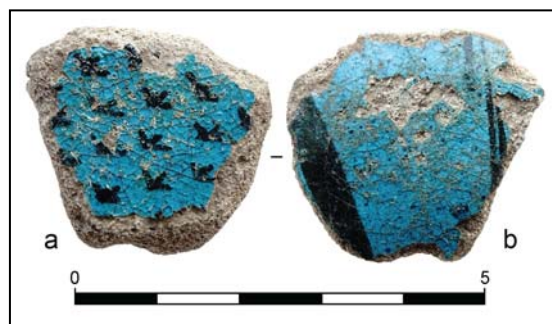
**Fig. 1.** Fragment of a rim of stone-paste ceramic vessel, found at the Southern sector of Trapezitsa: a — inner surface; b — outer surface (photo by D. Rabovyanov).

**Рис. 1.** Фрагмент венчика кашинного сосуда, найденного в Южном секторе Трапезицы: а — внутренняя поверхность; б — внешняя поверхность (фото Д. Рабовянова).



**Fig. 2.** Fragment of a body of stone-paste ceramic vessel, found at the Southern sector of Trapezitsa: a — inner surface; b — outer surface (photo by D. Rabovyanov).

**Рис. 2.** Фрагмент стенки кашинного сосуда, найденного в Южном секторе Трапезицы: а — внутренняя поверхность; б — внешняя поверхность (фото Д. Рабовянова).



**Fig. 3.** Fragment of a body of stone-paste ceramic vessel, found at the Southern sector of Trapezitsa: a — inner surface; b — outer surface (photo by D. Rabovyanov).

**Рис. 3.** Фрагмент стенки кашинного сосуда, найденного в Южном секторе Трапезицы: а — внутренняя поверхность; б — внешняя поверхность (фото Д. Рабовянова).

lowish hue. The decoration is performed by light and dark blue and grey-green colors laid on white ground. A stripe of circumscribed rhombs with peacock feather motif in its centre takes the front surface of the rim. Panels with nets of filled and empty rhombs and oval medallions with floral motifs are presented along the inner part of the vessel. Some parts of the decoration are divided by pairs of vertical and horizontal lines. The decoration of the outer surface consists of vertically elongated narrow grey-green brush lines.

The fragment has white granular highly friable fabric. It was found on the stone pavement of a large dwelling (No 4) dated to the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This living quarter covered the Southern terrace of *Trapezitsa*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The shard was enlisted into the field inventory book under No 176c. Now it is kept at the stores of the Regional museum of History in Veliko Tarnovo.

The decoration style resembles on the Underglaze-painted panel ware, made in Ilkhan Iran (Haddon 2011: cat. number 1.5.3.8a, b). Still, it is more similar to the 14<sup>th</sup> century stone-paste ceramics with underglaze polychrome decoration, found at the so-called Uveksko gorodishte in Ukek, near Saratov, Lower Volga region (Матюхина, Моржерин 2005: 110—112).

The second piece is a wall fragment of a cup or a bowl (fig. 2), covered with transparent turquoise glaze and dark painted floral motifs underneath it. There is a stylized floral wreath with rounded outline, framed with a row of dots. In the spaces in between, it has stylized lotus flowers with narrow elongated brush lines.

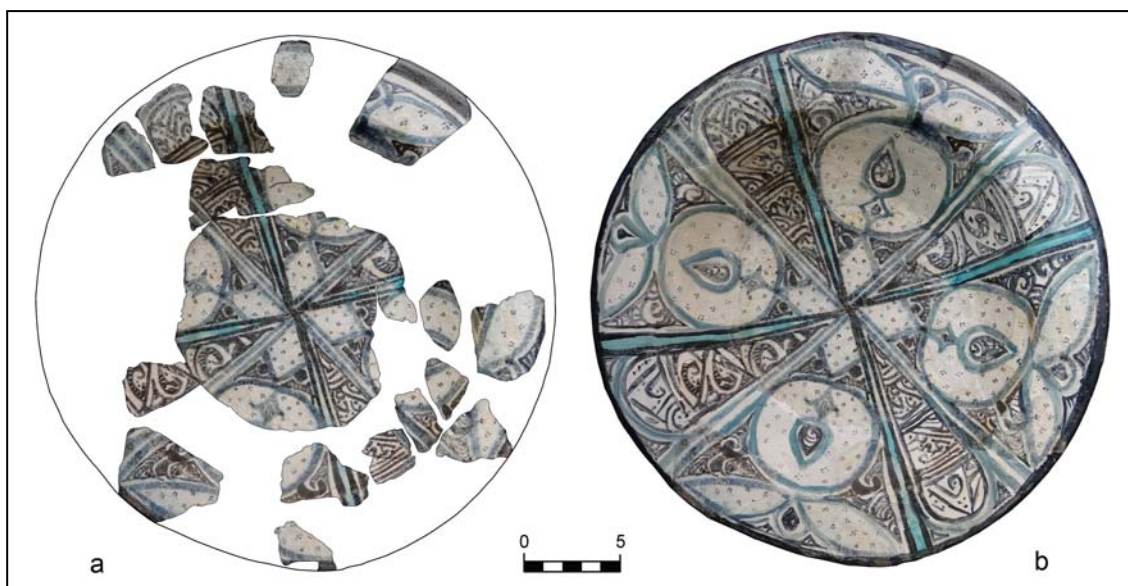
The fragment has white granular highly friable fabric. It is found in a rubbish-hill, accumulated on the rock cliff in front of the Southern fortress wall of *Trapezitsa* during the 80—90s of





**Fig. 4.** Fragment of a body of stone-paste ceramic vessel, found at earth depot of previous excavations of the Southern sector of Trapezitsa: a — inner surface; b — outer surface (photo by D. Rabovyanov).

**Рис. 4.** Фрагмент стенки кашинного сосуда, найденного на месте предыдущих раскопок южного сектора Трапезицы: а — внутренняя поверхность; б — внешняя поверхность (фото Д. Рабовянова).



**Fig. 5.** Stone-paste ceramic vessel, found in area no. XIV at Tsarevets, 14<sup>th</sup> c.: a — original inner surface without restoration; b — inner surface after restoration (photo and drawing by K. Chakarov).

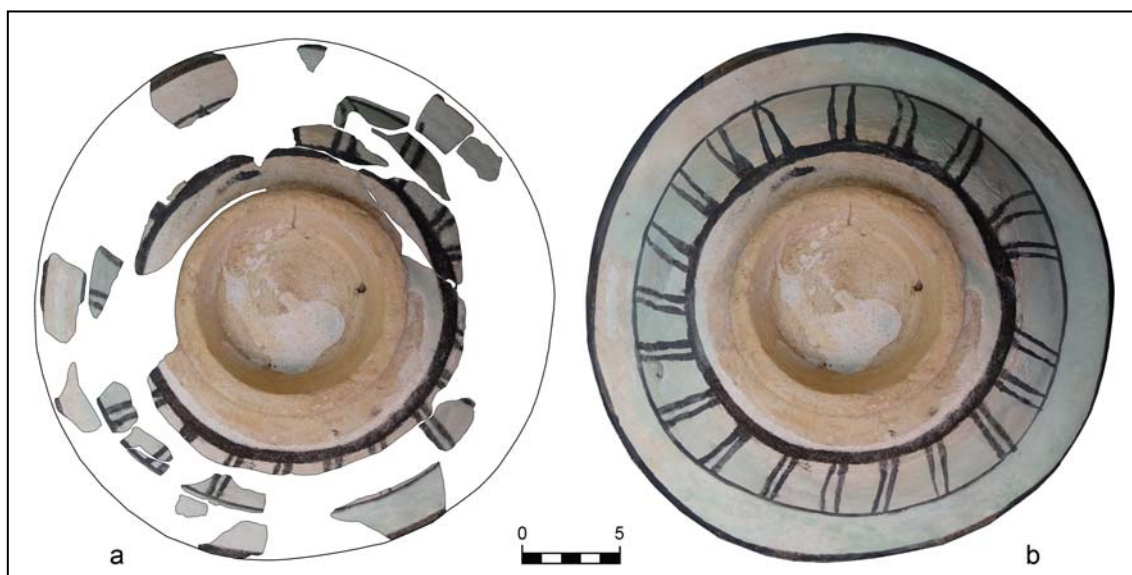
**Рис. 5.** Кашинный сосуд, найденный в раскопе XIV, Царевец, XIV в.: а — оригинальная внутренняя поверхность без реставрации; б — внутренняя поверхность после реставрации (фото и рисунок К. Чакырова).

the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Рабовянов 2015: 289, № 1877, Табло 97).<sup>2</sup>

The style of the well done decoration finds parallels among the Iranian 14<sup>th</sup> century ceramics (Коваль 2010: 38—39; Кубанкин, Сергеева 2013: 263—264, рис. 3). Nonetheless, the decorative motifs do not put into any question the

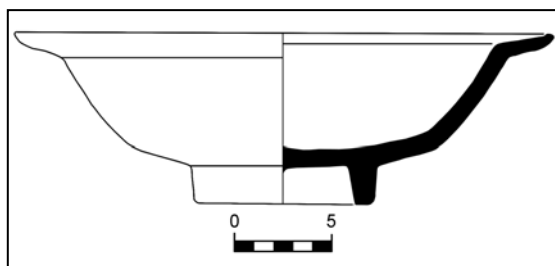
fact that the vessel comes from the production centres of the Golden horde in the Lower Volga basin. Almost identical decoration is found on a 14<sup>th</sup> century stone-paste cup from the above mentioned workshops (Лисова 2012: рис. 12). One more example, which has a bird surrounded by floral motifs, is found in the coeval layers at Ukek (Матюхина, Моржерин 2005: 112—113, рис. 5: 7). Quite similar is the ornamentation of a fragment of close mouthed vessel with a picture of running rabbits from the excavations of Saraychyq (Haddon 2011, cat. number 2.5.11).

<sup>2</sup> The shard was enlisted into the field inventory book under No1129. Now it is kept at the stores of Regional museum of History in Veliko Tarnovo.



**Fig. 6.** Stone-paste ceramic vessel, found in area no. XIV at Tsarevets area, 14<sup>th</sup> c.: a — original outer surface without restoration; b — outer surface after restoration (photo and drawing by K. Chakarov).

**Рис. 6.** Кашиный сосуд, найденный в раскопе XIV, Царевец, XIV в.: а — оригинальная внешняя поверхность без реставрации; б — внешняя поверхность после реставрации (фото и рисунок К. Чакирова).



**Fig. 7.** Stone-paste vessel, found in area no. XIV at Tsarevets, 14<sup>th</sup> c. (drawing by K. Chakarov).

**Рис. 7.** Кашиный сосуд, найденный в раскопе XIV, Царевец, XIV в. (рисунок К. Чакирова).



**Fig. 8.** Incised graffito on the inner surface of the ring of a stone-paste ceramic vessel, found in area no. XIV at Tsarevets, 14<sup>th</sup> c. (photo and drawing by K. Chakarov).

**Рис. 8.** Граффито на внутренней поверхности поддона кашинного сосуда, найденного в раскопе XIV, Царевец, XIV в. (фото и рисунок К. Чакирова).

Another parallel is a part of a bowl for rose water, found at the same site (Haddon 2011: cat. number 2.5.10).

The last fragment of stone-past ceramics that comes from the excavations of the Southern area of *Trapezitsa*<sup>3</sup> is another piece of open mouthed vessel, a cup or a bowl (fig. 3). It is decorated with the same technique as the previous one — black painting under turquoise glaze. The inner surface reveals a panel of stylized floral motifs

and the outer wide and narrow vertical stripes — probably stylized lotuses.

The fragment has the same fabric as the aforementioned. It comes from a layer with earlier materials, used as a floor level of the northern premise of a dwelling that was built in the 80es of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The building is one of the latest ones in the residential quarter on the Southern terrace of *Trapezitsa* citadel (Рабовянов 2016). The decoration and mainly its motifs connect this fragment to the 14<sup>th</sup> century production centres of the Golden horde on the Volga river basin (Лисова 2012: табл. 22: 15). An identical 14<sup>th</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Two more fragments have been excavated at the Southern area of the fortress. They are found over the pavement of the main street that goes along the Southern part of *Trapezitsa* and the so-called Western square. Both of them date in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The small size, poor condition and the lack of decoration are the reason why they are just mentioned in the study. They are covered with transparent turquoise glaze either and have the same fabric.



century bowl was found during the excavations of A. Tereshchenko at Gulistan Sarai, now kept at the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg under inventory No Cap-268 (Dschingis 2005: №271).

One more fragment of stone-paste cup or bowl has been found at *Trapezitsa* (fig. 4). It comes from an old earth depot of previous excavations on the Southern terrace of hill. It is covered with transparent light blue glaze, while the painting is performed in indigo-like blue color. A frieze of hatched triangles with peacock feathers rising in between them is represented on the inner surface. The decoration on the outer part consists of narrow horizontal and diagonal brush lines with single spots close to them. The fabric doesn't differ from the one of the already presented pieces.

There is no doubt that the decorative motifs show that the shard belongs to a vessel painted in the flower and peacock style, widespread in the towns of the Golden horde in Volga basin. Most probably this fragment is a base of frieze of feathers depicted on the walls of a bowl. Similar vessel was found in 1969 by G. Fyodorov-Davidov at Selitrenoe gorodishte. Now this example is kept at the Astrakhan museum under inventory No 16257/26A 7551 (Haddon 2011: cat. number 2.4.1). Another analogous fragment is stored at the museum of Bolgar (Haddon 2011: cat. number 2.4.4).

The most impressive example presented in this paper is a restored vessel discovered during the previous excavations of *Tsaravets* (fig. 5—7). It is a hemispherical bowl with everted rim with horizontally rounded edge and ring base. The color of the fabric after the firing is yellowish-white.<sup>4</sup> The vessel is covered by white slip on its inner and outer surface and is decorated by black and blue colored motifs. The inner surface is covered by transparent glaze and the outer by light blue one. There is a *T K ω* monogram (in ligature) incised after the firing on the inner surface of the ring and partly on the very bottom of the vessel (fig. 8).

The bowl was “found” into fragments at the store of the Ancient ceramic centre near Pavlikeni<sup>5</sup>. It comes from area XIV on *Tsarevets* excavated in 1972 by V. Valov.<sup>6</sup> This place is a narrow terrace on the Western slope of the hill ly-

ing right behind the Western curtain wall of the citadel. Probably the vessel was found in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> layers of this area, accumulated by the foundations of buildings adjacent to the inner side of the fortification wall. They are generally dated in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Вълков 1973: 60).

Besides its preserved shape, the vessel attracts attention due to its exotic, for the archaeology of the Second Bulgarian kingdom, origin. Its shape and decoration have direct parallels to a shallow bowl at the Museum of Islamic ceramics in Cairo. It was done in the so called Mamlūk Underglaze-painted panel style which was common in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Egyptian example has four triangle panels with pseudoepigraphic and crescent-like motifs (Haddon 2011: 54—56; cat. number 3.3.5a, b). This type of decoration could be found on other 14<sup>th</sup> century pieces of Mamlūk ceramics (Haddon 2011: cat. number 3.3.8, 3.3.9, 3.3.11).<sup>7</sup>

The *Tsarevets* bowl evokes also the interest with its incised on the inner surface of the ring graffito. The letters *T K ω* are common in both Greek, and Bulgarian Cyrillic alphabet. It shows that the owner was a Christian among those two language commonwealths. The context of the artifact tips the balance to the second assumption. It is hard to guess what the message of this monogram tells. It could be an abbreviation of the owner's name as a sign for his property. The practice of writing different types of graffiti on ceramic vessels is typical for the population of the medieval Bulgarian capital (Ангелов 1980: 120—133, 144—146, 162—165, обр. 140, 157—159; Долмова-Лукановска 2007: 159—160, 260—267, табл. XIV—XVI; Николова, Робов 2005: 111, кат. №8—30; Попов 1984: 41—50). That fact shows the high level of literacy among the local citizens (Алексиев 1980a: 50; 1980b: 212; Славчев 1991: 64). It should be mentioned that letter monograms are common mainly on the base of table wares — basically on sgraffito ones (Рабовянов 2015: 241—242).

The aim of this paper is limited to the analysis of particular examples from the capital of the Second Bulgarian kingdom and not to comprehensive studying of the stone-paste ceramics in medieval Bulgaria as a whole. To a certain extent, this fact is determined by the uncertain presence of this ceramics at the cities of Second Bulgarian kingdom, and what is the origin of the examples that have been found so far. The already published fragments and vessels have been

<sup>4</sup> Chemical analysis has not been done, but one of the contents is chalk that is visible into the fabric. The litter has white granular highly friable structure.

<sup>5</sup> Now it is kept at the store of the Museum of History at Pavlikeni under inventory number ПИМ А 778.

<sup>6</sup> The mark on the envelop shows that it was found in square XXX/3.

<sup>7</sup> The authors express their gratitude to Dr. Rosalind Wade Haddon for her distance consultation that coincides with their previous conclusion.

presented very generally as context of discovery and date. Usually they have been defined as fragments of faience or semi-faience ware from the Near East. Their production has been related to important production centres as Rey and Kashan in Iran (Георгиева 1985: 158, обр. 61).

The way of penetration of these imports in the Second Bulgarian kingdom is quite interesting. In the not so numerous studies on this subject, Eastern ceramics has been published from the excavations at the king's palace at *Tsarevets* and its presence in this context have been defined as gifts of foreign ambassadors and merchants (Георгиева 1974: 144—146). However the above presented materials and some single published fragments from *Cherven* (Георгиева 1985: 158, обр. 61) and Madara (Миятев 1934: Табло III)<sup>8</sup> show that this luxury ceramics had broader distribution.

The presence of stone-paste ceramics as single finds shows that it was an exotic exception in the variety of artistic ceramics in *Tarnovo*. It should be noted that it's not only for this particular wares but for import ceramics as Italian majolica, Spanish luster ceramics or Chinese porcelain as a whole (Георгиева 1974: 144—146; Рабовянов 2015: 289). Probably one of the reasons is the big diversity of shapes and decoration of the local *Tarnovo* sgraffito that could be enough for satisfying the needs of table ware of the local metropolitan population. Another factor that should be mentioned is that *Tarnovo* is a distant point of the international merchant routes. It is also away from water routs, which have always been main corridors for ceramic trade.

As far as for imports, regardless of their character, always emerges the question of their origin. Four of all published here examples were made at the towns of the Golden horde on Volga basin.<sup>9</sup> It is not a surprise, taking into account that the ceramics of this origin is widespread in the Black sea region and such vessels are presented among published assemblages (Кравченко 1986: 93—95; 1991: 117—119). Obviously by occupying the Western Black sea coast the Second Bulgarian kingdom is not an exception in these market relations and the presence of this particular luxury wares is not surprising.

The vessel made in Mamlūk Egypt is uncommon for the ceramics assemblage from *Tarnovo*. The incised monogram on its ring base reveals a

complex history. The question what was the way this ware entered in the Bulgarian capital is hard to be answered. Whether this is a material evidence for the diverse links between Egypt and the Golden horde<sup>10</sup> in the Black sea region or a result of complex distant trade?

There is a lack of evidences about trade relations between Danubian Bulgaria and the Crimean khanate (Кръстев 2010: 284)<sup>11</sup>. On the other hand, records for direct contacts between *Tarnovo* and Cairo are present. In the 70-es of the XIII century<sup>12</sup> the Bulgarian tsaritsa (queen) Maria, the third wife of Tsar Konstantin Tih Asen (1257—1277), sent an embassy to Egypt. The goal of the mission is to receive the sultan's support in the changed relations between Bulgaria and Byzantium after the union of the Western and Eastern churches, caused by the Second council of Lyon in 1272—1274 (Кръстев 2011: 619). The next known proof of Bulgarian mission in Cairo dates in 1330/1331. It was performed during the reign of tsar Ioan Stephan or Ioan Alexander and the third enthroning of sultan An-Nasir Muhammad (1309—1341). This diplomatic mission was sent for the same reason - the sultan's military support against Byzantium. The few written records that mention the embassy reveal that the sultan sent military insignia to the Bulgarian ruler (Кръстев 2011: 630—631). There is no word for trade contacts in these campaigns. However one can suppose that the diplomatic connections between the two states lead to trade relations as well. It has indirect confirmation by the fact that at that moment Egypt was

<sup>10</sup> The relations between the Golden horde and Mamlūk Egypt were defined of the complex socio-political context in the Eastern Mediterranean and Circum-Pontic region in 13<sup>th</sup>—14<sup>th</sup> century. They depend on the Crusaders states, Byzantium, etc., moreover in 1260 the established two years earlier Hulaguid Ilkhanate became one of the main powers in this region. The relations between Cairo and Crimea had been mainly friendly until the fall of the Iranian Ilkhanate in 1335, which was the common enemy. After the end of the Ilkhanate many small states that had not been serious threat for Egypt and the Golden horde emerged. It lead to cooling up the relations of the recent friendly states in the following decades. At certain times the political situation has caused restoration of the good terms of communication. At the end of the 14th century the energy of the Golden horde was focused mainly in the fight against the Timur's state, which caused the decline of diplomatic relations with the rest of the states as a whole (Закиров 1966: 3—97).

<sup>11</sup> The authors are grateful to Dr. Konstantin Golev about his consultation on the historical matters for the relations between Danubian Bulgaria, Egypt and the Golden horde at that period.

<sup>12</sup> Probably in 1275 (Салюм 1987: 34) or 1276 (Павлов 1989: 20).

<sup>8</sup> The personal expectations of the authors are that the publication of this kind of ceramics from other late medieval archaeological sites in Bulgaria will increase.

<sup>9</sup> Technologically they fully correspond to the so-called friable stone-paste ware of the Golden horde (Коваль 2005: 77).

searching for alternative trade routes along the Western Black sea coast, because of the customs duty the Genoas merchants set down in the region of Crimea (Поляк 1964: 47—51). The embassy of 1330/1331 corresponds best to the date of the bowl from *Tsarevets* among all available evidences about Bulgarian-Egyptian relations at that period. Nevertheless linking the vessel to that particular historical moment would be speculative.

The very few examples that come from dated contexts do not allow us to answer the question when exactly the stone-paste ceramics appeared in the Second Bulgarian kingdom. It should be noted that the already presented material was found in 14<sup>th</sup> century layers. Probably it is not a casual fact and marks the better access this expensive luxury ceramics had, due to the presence of the new and not so distant production centres of the Golden horde on the Volga river basin<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> This corresponds to the fact that the mass production of stone-paste ceramics at the towns of the Golden horde started right in 14<sup>th</sup> century (Коваль 2005).

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