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AN UNKNOWN 14th CENTURY GOLDEN HORDE BOWL (PIYALA) FROM THE MONASTERY OF VATOPEDI, MOUNT ATHOS, GREECE*

The monasteries of Mount Athos (Greece) are renowned for their Middle and Late Byzantine art and architecture. The small chapel of Hagioi Anargyroi in the courtyard of the athonite monastery of Vatopedi, was constructed around 1370 by the Serbian Despot of Serres Jovan Uglješa (†1371)¹. This church, a three aisled, timber-roofed basilica, has an external tripartite apse and was covered by a thick layer of red plaster (fig. 1) which was hiding its masonry. In the north side of the apse is embedded a hemispherical bowl of the Pula type (fig. 2)².

Some years ago, after the removal of the plaster in the apse of the chapel (fig. 3, 4) there was also discovered another unknown fragmentary bowl (fig. 5), as well as the holes in which were once placed bowls of unknown types which do not survive anymore.

Glazed bowls and other vessels immured in the façades of churches, the so-called $bacini^3$, are also recorded in Greece, where this decorative practice is attested from the middle-byzantine period onwards⁴.

^{*} I am indebted to the Brotherhood of the Monastery of Vatopedi from giving me the permission to study the bowl, as well as to the architect-restorer Ploutarchos Theocharidis for his kindness to provide me photographs of the bowl in its initial position.

¹ V. Djurić, "Freske Crkvice Sv. Besrebrenica Despota Jovana Uglješe u Vatopedu i Njihov Značaj za Ispitivanje Solunskog Porekla Resavskog Živopisa", Zbornik Radova Vizantolog Instituta (= ZRVI) 7 (1961), 137; D. Korać, "Sveta Gora pod srpskom vlašcu (1345-1371)", ZRVI 31 (1992), 192; P. Theocharidis, "Το συγκρότημα του περιβόλου", in Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίον, Mount Athos 1997, 155-157; E. Tsigaridas, "Τα ψηφιδωτά και οι βυζαντινές τοιχογραφίες", in Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίον, 280-284. For Despot Jovan Uglješa (he was slaughtered with his brother, the Serbian King Vukašin and their army on 26th September 1371, by the Turks in the battle of Marica (Evros) river and his body was never found) see B. Bojović, L'Idéologie Monarchique dans les Hagio-Biographies Dynastiques du Moyen Âge Serbe, Roma 1995, 107, 110, 111, 190, 593.

² K. Tsouris, "A bowl embedded in the wall of the chapel of the Hagioi Anargyroi in Vatopedi monastery", *Balkan Studies* 39.1 (Thessaloniki 1998), 5-16.

³ G. Berti- L. Tongiorgi, *I bacini ceramici medievali delle chiese di Pisa*, Roma 1981.

 $^{^4}$ A.H.S. Megaw, "Glazed bowls in Byzantine Churches", Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας, per. 4, vol. 4 (1964-1965), 145-162; G. Nikolakopoulos, Έντοι-



Fig. 1: Chapel of Hagioi Anargyroi, monastery of Vatopedi, Mount Athos. Eastern wall and apse with the bowl of Pula type



Fig. 2 Bowl of the Pula type next to the Golden Horde bowl (phot. P. Androudis) Сл. 2 Здела типа Пули поред посуду златне Хорде (фото. С. Андроудис)

Сл. 1 Капела Светих Врача, манастир Ватопед, источни зид и апсида са посуда типа Пула

> χισμένα κεραμεικά στις όψεις των μεσαιωνικών και έπι Τουρκοκρατίας έκκλησιών μας, vol. I. Εἰσαγωγή, vol. ΙΙ. Τὰ κεραμεικὰ τῶν Άγίων Θεοδώρων, Athens 1978; G. Nikolakopoulos, Έντοιχισμένα κεραμεικά στις ὄψεις τῶν μεσαιωνικῶν καὶ ἐπὶ Τουρκοκρατίας ἐκκλησιῶν μας, vol. ΙΙΙ. Τὰ κεραμεικὰ της Παναγίας του Μέρμπακα της Ναυπλίας, Athens 1979; G. Velenis, Ερμηνεία του εξωτερικού διακόσμου στη Βυζαντινή αρχιτεκτονική, PhD Dissertation (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), Thessaloniki 1984, t. I, 194, 195 (note 1), 267, 270; H. Philon, "Thessaloniki, Andalusia and the Golden Horde", Balkan Studies 26.2 (1985), 299-319; K. Tsouris, 'Ο κεραμοπλαστικός διάκοσμος των ύστεροβυζαντινών μνημείων τῆς βορειοδυτικῆς Έλλάδος, PhD Dissertation (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), Kavala 1988, 113-116, pl. 3; G. Nikolakopoulos, "Εντοιχισμένα κεραμεικά ἐκκλησιῶν", Αρχαιολογία 33 (1989), 66-71;
> B. Papadopoulou- K. Tsouris, "Late byzantine Ceramics from Arta: Some examples", La ceramica nel mondo bizantino tra XI e XV secolo e i suoi rapporti con l'Italia (Atti del Seminario, Certosa di Pontignano (Sienna), 11-13 Marzo 1991), Firenze 1993, 241-261; K. Tsouris, "Glazed bowls in the Late Byzantine Churches of North-Western Greece", Archeologia Medievale XXIII (1996), 603-624. K. Tsouris, A bowl embedded, 614, 620-621; P. Androudis, "Ο ναός της Κοίμησης της Θεοτόκου στην Επισκοπή Άνω Βόλου και ο εντοιχισμένος γλυπτός του διάκοσμος", Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας, period D', 28 (2007), 91-92; L.A. Beliaev, "Bacini: glazed household pottery in Late Byzantine architecture" (in russian), Rossiiskaya arkheologiya 3 (2007), 133-140; A. Yankaki, "Εντοιχισμένα πινάκια σε εκκλησίες της Κρήτης: μία ερευνητική πρόταση", in: M. Andrianakis- I. Tzachili (eds), Αρχαιολογικό Έργο Κρήτης 1. Πρακτικά της 1ης Συνάντησης, Ρέθυμνο, 28–30 Νοεμβρίου 2008. Rethymnon 2010, 827, 837-839; A. Yankaki, "Immured Vessels in Churches on Crete: Preliminary Observations on Material from the Prefecture of Rethymnon", Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας, period D', 34 (2013), 375-384; A. Yankaki, "Πρώτη θεώρηση των εντοιχισμένων εφυαλωμένων αγγείων σε ναούς της επαρχίας Αμαρίου", in: S. Manouras (ed.), Πρακτικά του Διεθνούς Επιστημονικού Συνεδρίου Η Επαρχία Αμαρίου από την αρχαιότητα έως σήμερα (27-31 August 2010), t. 1, Athens 2014, 313-339; P. Androudis-A. Yangaki, "A Fragment of the "Pula type" of lustreware immured at the exonarthex of the Katholikon of the Monastery of Hilandari (Mount Athos peninsula)", Zbornik Matice Srpske za Likovne Umetnosti 42 (Novi Sad 2014), 51-60.

The bowl from Vatopedi is a 14th century Golden Horde Khanate production and is one more item to be added to the two already known examples from Thessaloniki (fig. 9, 10). Its publication will certainly contribute to the discussion and dating and spread of this special and very rare kind of bowl in the late 14th century Byzantine Macedonia and mainland Greece.

The ceramics

The Golden Horde bowl from Vatopedi (fig. 5-8), is of hemispherical form, with a height of 8, 5 cm and a diameter of 18 cm (the diameter of the foot is 7 cm). It is a small bowl, known as *piyala*⁵. This vessel, which is not preserved intact, is of curvilinear shape and made from white clay. It is covered with polychrome under glaze painting. Its decorative elements are outlined by a black and greenish line. They stand in a thick white slip, so they appear floating under the luminous transparent and clear glaze that covers the bowl. Our vessel conserves only a small part of its decoration, which was fulfilled with a thin brush.

The rim of the bowl has a row of blue dots (fig. 6, 7). Below the rim, there was painted a band with a blue cross-hatched pattern. Six sixpetalled rosettes or wheel-patterns (three of them still survive) outlined in a fine greenish-black line, embellish the cavetto and once encircled a central motif (it does not survive as well) which was occupying the well. These rosettes are framed by a white circular band, while on each petal was painted a black dot. The surviving interstices of the cavetto are decorated above with four-petalled flowers and lower with circles containing a dot. The rest of the space of the interstices is filled with small dots.

The exterior design of our bowl (fig. 7, 8) has double vertical lines of black color imitating lotus petals, with a central vertical line and cobalt dots. All these lotus petals form an arcaded exterior decoration.



Fig. 3 Chapel of Hagioi Anargyroi, monastery of Vatopedi, Mount Athos. Eastern wall and apse after the removal of the plaster (photograph: P. Theocharides)

Сл.3. Капела Хагиои Анаргирои, манастир Ватопеди, апсида након уклањања малтера



Fig. 4 The same wall. Bowl of the Pula type next to the Golden Horde bowl (phot. P. Theocharides)

Сл. 4 Исти зид. Здела типа Пули поред посуде златне Хорде

⁵ This is the Russian term for the bowl.

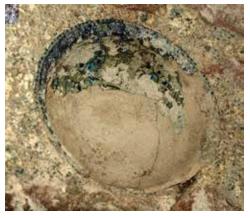


Fig. 5The immured Golden Horde bowl (phot. P. Theocharides)
Сл.5. Златна Хорда посуде (фото. С. Тхеоцхаридес)



Fig. 6 The Golden Horde bowl (*piyala*) after its removal from the wall Сл.6. Златна Хорда посуда (пиала) након његовог уклањања из зида

Dating the bowl

The Mongols of the Golden Horde conquered an area from the Black Sea to the east of the Aral Sea, during the second quarter of 13th century and they formed an independent state (Khanate)⁶. Their two capitals, Saray Batu (= Old Saray) and Saray Berke (= New Saray), both built on the Volga, were famous as great commercial centers, visited by Europeans, Arab and Persian travelers and merchants⁷. Saray Batu was founded by Batu Khan (1224-1255), sometimes before William of Rubruck's visit in 1254, while its earliest minted coins date from 1266. Saray Berke is usually credited to Berke Khan (1255-1266), though the city appeared to become important only after Özbeg Khan (1313-1341), who made it the capital

On the Mongols of the Golden Horde see: J. von Hammer-Purgstall, Geschichte der Goldenen Hordeim Kiptschak, das ist der Mongolen in Russland, Pesth 1840; B. Grekov-A. Iakoubovski, La Horde d'Or. La Domination Tatare au XIIIème et au XIVe siècle de la Mer Jaune à la Mer Noire, Paris 1939, 54-57; B. Spuler, Die Goldene Horde. Die Mongolen in Russland 1223-1503, Leipzig 1943; J. Richard, "La conversion de Berke et les débuts de l'islamisation de la Horde d'Or", Revue des Études Islamiques 35 (1967), 173-84 [Reprinted in J. Richard, Orient et Occident, London, 1976]; M. Berindei et G. Migliardi O'Riordan, "Venise et la Horde d'Or (fin XIIIe-début XIVe siecle). À propos d'un document inédit de 1324," Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique 29 (1988), 2: 243-256 ; T. Allsen, Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia, Cambridge 2001; M.G. Kramarovsky The Golden Horde. History and Culture, St Petersburg. 2005. For the Mongols in the region of Black Sea and their commercial relationships with Western European merchants see N. Di Cosmo, "Mongols and Merchants on the Black Sea Frontier in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: Convergences and Conflicts», in: R. Amitai and M. Biran (ed.), Mongols, Turks and Others. Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World, Leiden-Boston 2005, 392-396, 398-399, 401, 404, 406-407, 412-417; V. Ciocîltan, The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (translated in English by S. Willcocks), Leiden-Boston 2012.

⁷ F. Balodis, Alt-Sarai und Neu-Sarai, die Hauptstädte der Goldenen Horde, Riga 1926.

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of the state sometime between 1320 and 1330. Saray Berke under Özbeg Khan and his successors prospered up to 1395 when the city was sacked by the Mongol Khan Tamerlane and the capital of the Khanate became again Saray Batu.

Russian excavations in both sites have revealed among other imported ceramics, vessels of local manufactures⁸. Characteristic shapes are curvilinear bowls and dishes decorated with concentric bands framing a centrally placed

design situated at the well; their reverses are usually decorated with a degenerate form of petal panels. Common are floral and epigraphic motifs, though birds also appear⁹.

Parallels of the decorative patterns of our Vatopedi Golden Horde vessel can also be attested on Golden Horde ceramic wares which were unearthed at Saray Batu and Saray Berke, as well as to a bowl immured in the south wall of the 14th century byzantine katholikon of the Vlatadon monastery in Thessaloniki. The latter was published together with another Golden Horde bowl of the same type (piyala) by Helen Philon (fig. 9, 10)10.

The white clay pottery became very popular in South-Eastern Europe after the establishment of the

Golden Horde. It was produced from stony rock which was grinded into powder and then received additions of glue.

The six petal rosettes or wheel-patterns on our piyala can be found in many vessels which were excavated in Golden Horde sites. For instance we find it in the



Fig. 7 The same bowl. Profile Сл.7. Иста посуда, профил



Fig. 8 Fig. 8: The bowl and its bottom Сл. 8. Посуда и дно

⁸ S. Bocharov- A. Maslovski- N. Iudin, "Pottery as the integration factor in Culture of the Golden Horde", *In and Around. Ceramiche e comunità. Secondo Convegno Tematico dell'AIECM3*, Faenza 17-19 Aprile 2015 (summary). For the Russian excavations at Saray Berke which have provided abundant evidence for ceramic production see G.A. Fedorov (Fyodorov)-Davydov, *The Culture of the Golden Horde Cities*, BAR International Series 198 (Oxford, 1984), 143 ff.

⁹ A. Lane, *Later Islamic.Pottery*, London 1971, 13-15; G.A. Fëdorov-Davydov, *Iskusstvo Kochevnikov I Zolotoi Ordy*, Moscow 1976, figs 102, 117; N.M. Bulatov, "A classification of red-bodied wares from Golden Horde urban sites" (in Russian), in: *Srednekoviye pamyatniki Bovol'zh'ya*, ed. A.P. Smirnov and G.A. Fëdorov-Davydov, Moscow 1976, 101; L.P. Matveyeva, "Glazed tiles from Bolgary on the Volga" (in Russian), *Sovetskaya Arkheologiya*, 1985/2, figs 2-3.

¹⁰ H. Philon, Thessaloniki, Andalusia and the Golden Horde, 299-319.



Fig. 9 Katholikon of the monastery of Vlatadon, Thessaloniki. South wall. The first to the left Golden Horde embedded bowl

Сл.9. Катхоликон манастира Влатадон, Солун. Јужни зид. Први на леву златној Хорди уграђена посуда



Fig. 10 Katholikon of the monastery of Vlatadon, Thessaloniki. South wall. The second (to the right) Golden Horde embedded bowl.

Сл. 10 Катхоликон манастира Влатадон, Солуна. Јужни зид. Други (десно) златна Хорда уграђена чинија.

neck of a Golden Horde jug (or jar) which was unearthed at Mizdakhkan¹¹, as well as in a bowl fragment from Saraichik (fig. 12)¹². It is noteworthy that the decoration of a series of rounded rosettes is known from other Golden Horde wares, now exhibited in the Museums¹³, as well as from excavated material at Selitryonoye¹⁴.

As for the cross-hatched pattern in blue it is not only recorded in Golden Horde vessels, but also on other wares produced in Syria and Egypt, usually credited to the 14th century¹⁵. In Saray Batu it was unearthed a vessel which is decorated with radiating twigs bearing six petal rosettes and a cross-hatched pattern in blue just below the rim¹⁶.

The arcaded exterior decoration of our bowl is typical for the bowls of Golden Horde Khanate productions. We find almost identical arcaded decoration on a small bowl which was excavated by N. Veselovsky in 1896^{17} , on a small

¹¹ R.A. Wade Haddon, Fourteenth Century fine glazed wares produced in the Iranian World, and comparisons with contemporary ones from the Golden Horde and Mamlūk Syria/Egypt, PhD dissertation, 2vols, Department of Art and Archaeology, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, London 2011, II, 113, no 2.1.12; M.S. Kdyrniyazov-A. Kdirnyazov "Excavations in the Southern quarter of Mizdakhkan" (in russian), Arkheologicheskiye Issledovaniya v Uzbekistane 2003, 315.

¹² R.A. Wade-Haddon, Fourteenth Century fine glazed wares, II, 112, no 1.4.11b.

No 594 in Kazan catalogue. See R.A. Wade-Haddon, Fourteenth Century fine glazed wares, note 421.

¹⁴ R.A. Wade-Haddon, Fourteenth Century fine glazed wares, II, 112, note 310.

¹⁵ P. J. Riis- V. Poulsen, *Hama: Fouilles et Recherches 1931-1938: les Verreries et Poteries Médiévales*, vol. 4/2, Copenhagen 1957, fig. 746. For Golden Horde examples see G.A. Fëdorov-Davydov, *Iskusstvo Kochevnikov I Zolotoi Ordy*, fig. 108, 111, 112.

¹⁶ G.A. Fëdorov-Davydov, *Iskusstvo Kochevnikov I Zolotoi Ordv*, fig. 106.

¹⁷ See R.A. Wade-Haddon, Fourteenth Century fine glazed wares, II, 110, no 2.1.2b (no

piyala unearthed at Saraichik¹⁸ and on two vessels also discovered during excavations at Saraichik (one rosewater bowl¹⁹ and on the fragment of a small bowl, see fig. 12²⁰).

The grid pattern embellishing the rim of vessels is recorded on other Golden Horde ceramics, as well as on Egyptian wares, the latter dating from circa the middle of the 14th century onwards.

As it was already noted, the white clay pottery in the western regions of the Khanate of the Golden Horde (from the basin of river Dniester to the basin of the Lower Don) presented certain characteristics before the end of the first third of XIV century²¹. Among it typical elements we could enumerate the huge rosettes (or wheel-patterns) at the center, the knots of vertical lines, the vegetable leaves. The painting of the vessels was made with thin brush.

But how this Golden Horde *piyala* reached the Vatopedi

monastery on Mount Athos? Thessaloniki in the Palaiologan era was an important economic metropolis²², inhabited not only by Greeks, but also by several ethnic and religious minorities, especially Genoese and Venetians, with close commercial relations with their co-religionists in other parts of the world. Products from the Balkans and the Black Sea arrived there to be bought or exchanged by others imported by Spanish, Genoese, Venetians,



Fig. 11A vessel of the Pula type

Сл. 11. Посуда "пила" типа



Fig. 12 Golden Horde bowl fragment from Saraichik with exterior arcaded decoration (R.A. Wade-Haddon)

Сл. 12. Фрагмент посуде златне хорде из Сарајчика са спољашњом декорацијом уз аркаду (Р. А. Вејд- Хејдон)

Syrians, Egyptians, etc²³. According to H. Philon, the Golden Horde bowls immured in the katholikon of Vlatadon monastery were inserted in the church be-

⁵⁵⁴ in the Kazan catalogue). See M.G. Kramarovsky The Golden Horde History and Culture, 144.

¹⁸ R.A. Wade-Haddon, Fourteenth Century fine glazed wares, II, 110, no 2.1.6a-b.

¹⁹ R.A. Wade-Haddon, *Fourteenth Century fine glazed wares*, II, 110, no 2.1.7; Z. Samashev- O. Kuznetsova- V. Plakov, *Ceramics of Saraichik Hill Fort*, Almaty 2008, 210.

²⁰ R.A. Wade-Haddon, Fourteenth Century fine glazed wares, II, 110, no 2.1.8; Z. Samashev- O. Kuznetsova- V. Plakov, Ceramics, 215.

²¹ See S. Bocharov, A.N. Maslowskiy, A.G. Sitdikov, "The White Clay Pottery in the Western Regions of Golden Horde", 10th International Congress on Medieval pottery in the Mediterranean, 22-27 October 2012, Silves (Portugal), abstract of paper.

 $^{^{22}}$ Α. Laiou, "Η Θεσσαλονίκη, η ενδοχώρα της και ο οικονομικός της χώρος στην εποχή των Παλαιολόγων", in Διεθνές Συμπόσιο Βυζαντινή Μακεδονία, 324-1430 μ.Χ (Thessaloniki 1995), Thessaloniki 2002, 183-194.

²³ See in particular D. Jacoby, "Foreigners and the Urban Economy in Thessalonike, ca. 1150- ca.1450", *DOP* 57 (2003), 85-132, with all related bibliography.

tween ca. 1350 and ca. 1370²⁴. Similarly, the bowl from the chapel of Hagioi Anargyroi at Vatopedi must have been immured around 1370. Of major importance is the presence in both churches of Spanish Moorish ceramic vessels (fig. 2 and 11). According to H. Philon the Spanish ceramics in Vlatadon (fig. 11) were brought there by Catalan traders who used Thessaloniki as a stopover in their sails to Constantinople or Levantine ports²⁵. We should not exclude that the three *piyala* bowls were once part of the same collection.

Conclusion

The Golden Horde bowl (*piyala*) from the chapel of Hagioi Anargyroi in the monastery of Vatopedi, Mount Athos, is a very rare and important ceramic vessel of its kind and a very special find in Late Byzantine world. Its polychrome underglaze decoration presents many similarities with the decoration of the two other bowls of the same type embedded in the katholikon of the monastery of Vlatadon, Thessaloniki and they probably were made in the same workshop. The bowl in Vatopedi came probably from Thessaloniki and its use is another proof of the commercial relations of Thessaloniki or its foreign merchants with Constantinople and the ports of the Black Sea and the Khanate of the Golden Horde in the second half of 14th c.

Пасхалис Андрудис (Аристотелов универзитет у Солуну) НЕПОЗНАТА ПОСУДА ЗЛАТНЕ ХОРДЕ (ПИЈАЛА) ИЗ XIV ВЕКА ИЗ МАНАСТИРА ВАТОПЕД, СВЕТА ГОРА; ГРЧКА

Циљ рада је представљање посуде из XIV века која је припадала монголском канату Златна хорда. Посуда је откривена отклањањем слоја малтера у апсиди мале капеле Светих Врача у светогорском манастиру Ватопед. Ова капела је изграђена око 1370. године и њен ктитор је српски деспот Сера Јован Угљеша (†1371). Поменута посуда ті. пијала је редак пример посуда која се може придружити двема пијалама из Солуна (анализирала их је Хелен Филон). Посуда је сферног облика, висине 8,5цм, пречника 18цм. Произведена је од беле глине а прекривена је полихромном бојом која није у потпуности очувана. Орнаменти су изведени црном и зеленом бојом. Изведени су тако да пружају илузију транспарентности у посуди. Испод је нацртан мотив укрштања двеју трака. Од орнамената се могу издвојити још и шестолатични цветови. Врло вероватно је и централни мотив био флораног типа али није очуван да би се о њему могло говорити са сигурношћу. Простор између орнамената је попуњем тачкастим орнаментима, док вертикалне линије обојене црном бојом опонашају латице лотуса. Посуда из Ватопеда је вероватно донета из Солуна или од неких страних трговаца са Цариградом где су се заустављали товари посуда пореклом из Златне хорде монголско-туркијске државе у другој половини XIV века.

²⁴ H. Philon, *Thessaloniki*, *Andalusia and the Golden Horde*, 299-303 and 307-320.

²⁵ Ibidem, 303-306 and 312-314.