



Spanish lustreware from the western Black Sea coast, 14th–15th centuries

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents for the first time the imports of Spanish lustreware in Bulgaria. For a long time such ware remained neglected probably because there have been very few finds usually representing an insignificant segment of the ceramic assemblages from medieval settlements. However, to assume a supply of western goods is more than reasonable given the wide trade contacts of the Tarnovo Tsardom and the Dobruzha Despotate during the 14th c., and the dominant role of the Italian maritime republics in the Black Sea trading region. The targeted search for Spanish imports in several museum collections confirmed their presence in six settlements along the Black Sea coast: Sozopol, Varna, Kastritsi, Kaliakra, the fortresses of Rusokastro and Petrich near Varna. The pottery included in the paper illustrates the 14th to 15th c. imports of the following well known in the European studies subgroups of Valencian production: *loza valenciana malagueña dorada y azul*; *loza valenciana dorada Pula*; *loza valenciana dorada clásica*. The presence of some 16th c. post-Valencian products, most probably originating from the workshops of Muel, Saragossa, is also suggested.

Most of the examined finds show that Iberian imports, even though just a few, reached Bulgaria between the 1330s and the late 15th c., most likely due to Italian merchants. Numerous written sources prove that the main reason for the active policy followed by Genoa and Venice was the export of cheap cereals and raw materials. There is no explicit information about the import of ceramics but given the connections of the two maritime republics with Spanish ports, especially the Genoese ones, it can be assumed that they supplied luxury lustreware to both Bulgarian lands and cities on the North Black Sea coast.

KEYWORDS

import, Spanish lustreware, Medieval, Black sea, pottery, trade

Introduction

Spanish pottery decorated with cobalt and lustre is indisputably the most brilliant manifestation of European ceramic art during the 14th and 15th c., until the emergence of Italian majolica. Directly inspired by Islamic artistic traditions, this type of pottery was developed by the Moors using Oriental decorative techniques and ornamentation complemented by elements compatible with Christian aesthetics. This was how Iberian pottery became a luxury goods in great demand across Europe and the Mediterranean world.

The earliest evidence of lustre decorative techniques dates back to the 8th c., when they were used on glass in Egypt, Syria and Iran. In the 9th c., Abbasid potters in Basra, present-day Iraq, began decorating pottery in a similar way, ushering in the development of lustre pottery in the Middle East and Spain (Watson 2004, 38). Spanish craftsmen used light colored clays to make lustre vessels that turned beige to light pink after firing. After the first firing, vessels were dipped in a molten glaze,

consisting of lead, tin, salt and fine sand (Husband 1970, 13). In the course of drying, it formed a thick white coat that made a perfect background for drawing. Paints containing copper and silver were used to apply the overglaze decoration. Then followed another firing in a reductive atmosphere, during which ion exchange reactions occurred, resulting in copper and silver ions binding to the glaze. Depending on the chemical composition of the dyes used, the decoration acquired a metallic sheen after the last firing that resulted in different shades – from yellow, green and brown in paints with high silver content, to orange, red and purple in those with high copper content (Smith et al. 2006, 5353).

The earliest records of lustreware production in Spain include a text written by the Arab geographer Al-Idrisi in the mid-12th c. It mentions that the city of Calatayud in Aragon produced and exported gold-lustred pottery (Husband 1970, 12). In the early 13th c., the Andalusian poet, historian and geographer Ibn Sa`id al Maghribi wrote about the production of lustre-painted majolica in Malaga, Murcia and Almeria (Navarro-Palazón, Jimenez-Castillo 1995, 195). Malaga became the main production hub in the 13th and 14th c. The city was the most important port of the last Islamic dynasty of Spain, Nasrides, and exported wares to the western Mediterranean and northwards to central and northern Europe, all the way to Britain (Hurst 1977, 71; Hess 2004, 12 and references cited therein). Malaga products became widely known in Europe. In documents from the 14th to the 16th c., the terms “obra de málequa” and “de málichá” refer not only to Malaga-made pottery, but also to Spanish lustreware in general (Hess 2004, 12).

In the first half of the 14th c., the political situation changed and, under fierce competition from Christian countries, Malaga lost its leading position on the international markets. The subsequent migration of Arab potters to Christian territories in the north, mainly to the Valencia region, marked the beginning of new production centres in Paterna, Manises and Valencia itself (Hurst 1977, 71–72; Gutiérrez 2000, 24, 27; Hess 2004, 12; Coll Conesa 2017, 36–37). Written sources show that lustre vessels, adhering to Malaga’s artistic traditions and today classified as Malagan-Valencian lustreware (*LVMD*: *loza valenciana malagueña dorada*), were being made and traded in Manises in 1325. Since around 1333, potters started to add cobalt or safra accents to the main lustre decorations. This new decorative style, known as blue and gold lustreware (*LVMDA*: *loza valenciana malagueña dorada y azul*), became widespread in the Iberian Peninsula, Western Europe and the Western Mediterranean (Coll Conesa 2012, 313–314; 2017, 39). Its development was curbed prematurely by the 1348–1350 catastrophic plague epidemic and the subsequent depopulation of the first production hubs around Valencia (Coll Conesa 2017, 39).

The heyday of Valencian lustre pottery spanned the period from the second quarter of the 14th c. to the beginning of the 15th c. and is associated with the so-called “Pula type” (*LVD*: *loza valenciana dorada Pula*). This category received its name from a collection of ceramic vessels discovered by chance in 1896 during construction works to widen a road in Pula, a city on the island of Sardinia (Blake 1986, 366). The link of the Italian vessels to Valencian production was indisputably established by petrographic and neutron activation analyses comparing Spanish semi-finished products with Pula specimens that were published in 1992 (Blake et al. 1992, 202–225). Thanks to intense Italian trade in the 14th c., the range of lustre pottery significantly expanded to cover the entire European Mediterranean area. During that time, it reached the interior of the continent, the Netherlands, Russia and the Baltics, the Adriatic, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, North Africa and Asia Minor (Hurst et al. 1986, 40–42; François 1999, 83–84; Koval 2010, 103; Milošević, Topić 2012, 159–160; Coll Conesa 2017, 39). Around the mid-14th c., Pula-type lustre-decorated pottery also gained a foothold in the Black Sea region, with specimens currently known from port hubs on the Crimean peninsula (Teslenko 2004, 473 and references cited therein). A thorough analysis of the Pula collection conducted by Hugo Blake in 1986 substantiates the 1330–1420 chronology of this type recognised today, with its

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highest prevalence between 1330 and 1380 (Blake 1986, 375).

The development of Valencian lustreware in the 15th c. was exemplified by two new distinctly luxurious styles that became very popular in the homes of European aristocrats – classic Valencian lustreware (LVDC: *loza valenciana dorada clásica*) and silver lustreware (LVDCO: *loza valenciana dorada orfebre*). Particularly widespread was the classic Valencian lustreware, characterised by a variety of decorative patterns combining Islamic elements with Gothic motifs and nature-inspired floral ornaments (Coll Conesa 2017, 41).

In the late 15th c., the production of majolica emblematic of the Renaissance began to expand across northern and central Italy. With its rich colours and variety of decorative patterns and motifs, it was a direct competitor to Spanish lustreware, which had gradually begun to lose ground on the international markets. During the same period (the late 15th c.), groups of Valencian craftsmen moved north to establish new ateliers in Catalonia and Aragon (Hurst et al. 1986, 49). The major sources of lustre pottery in the period from the late 15th c. to the expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain in 1609 included Muel workshops in Saragossa, which developed under the direct influence of Valencian traditions (Gutiérrez 2000, 69–70).

The Bulgarian finds

The Hispano-Moresque pottery is still unfamiliar in Bulgarian archaeology probably because there have been very few finds usually representing an insignificant segment of the ceramic assemblages from medieval settlements. Therefore, researchers often ignore or dismiss them as insignificant, or at best treat them as an “exotic” addition to luxury imports. However, two Bulgaria publications illustrate fragments that can be indisputably associated with Spanish lustreware. A paper dedicated to the 1950s archaeological excavations of the Kavarna Fortress on Cape Chirakman, mentions four fragments, whose description completely matches the main features of the Spanish lustreware. Although not categorically, the authors link their origin to Eastern ceramics (Mirchev et al. 1962, 88, Table XIV: 3, 4, 6, 7). Three other fragments, identified as proto-majolica from southern Italy, are known from excavations of the medieval town of Trapezitsa hill – the second fortified core of Tarnovo, the capital of the Second Bulgarian Tsardom. According to the stratigraphic data, the chronology of the finds is set in the second half of 14th c. (Rabovyanov 2015, 289, Table 97: 1877b, 1878a, Plate 98A). Even just those two publications suggest that some imports from the Western Mediterranean reached Bulgaria in the second half of the 14th and the first half of the 15th c., albeit very few. This hypothesis is completely reasonable, given the wide trade contacts of the Tarnovo Tsardom and the Dobruzha Despotate during the same period. We should take into account also the dominant role of the Italian maritime republics in the Black Sea trading area, which during that time were the main suppliers of western goods to the Eastern Mediterranean. Targeted search for Spanish imports in several museum collections confirmed their presence in six settlements along the Black sea coast: Sozopol, Varna, Kastritsi, Kaliakra, the fortresses of Rusokastro and Petrich (fig. 1). In order to confirm the Iberian origin of the group discussed below, some sherds from Varna and Kastritsi were subjected to an X-ray fluorescence analysis (McIlpatrick, Manolova-Voykova 2021, 247–270).

It is noteworthy in advance that the specimens presented in this paper definitely do not exhaust the topic of Iberian imports to Bulgaria in the 14th and 15th c. Such finds should be expected in all major trade hubs of the Second Bulgarian Tsardom, especially in the Black Sea area and the capital Tarnovo.

Most vessels illustrated here come from old excavations without detailed information about their archaeological context. For this reason, they could only be classified and, accordingly, dated on the basis of similarities with other finds from Western Europe, the Mediterranean and the Northern

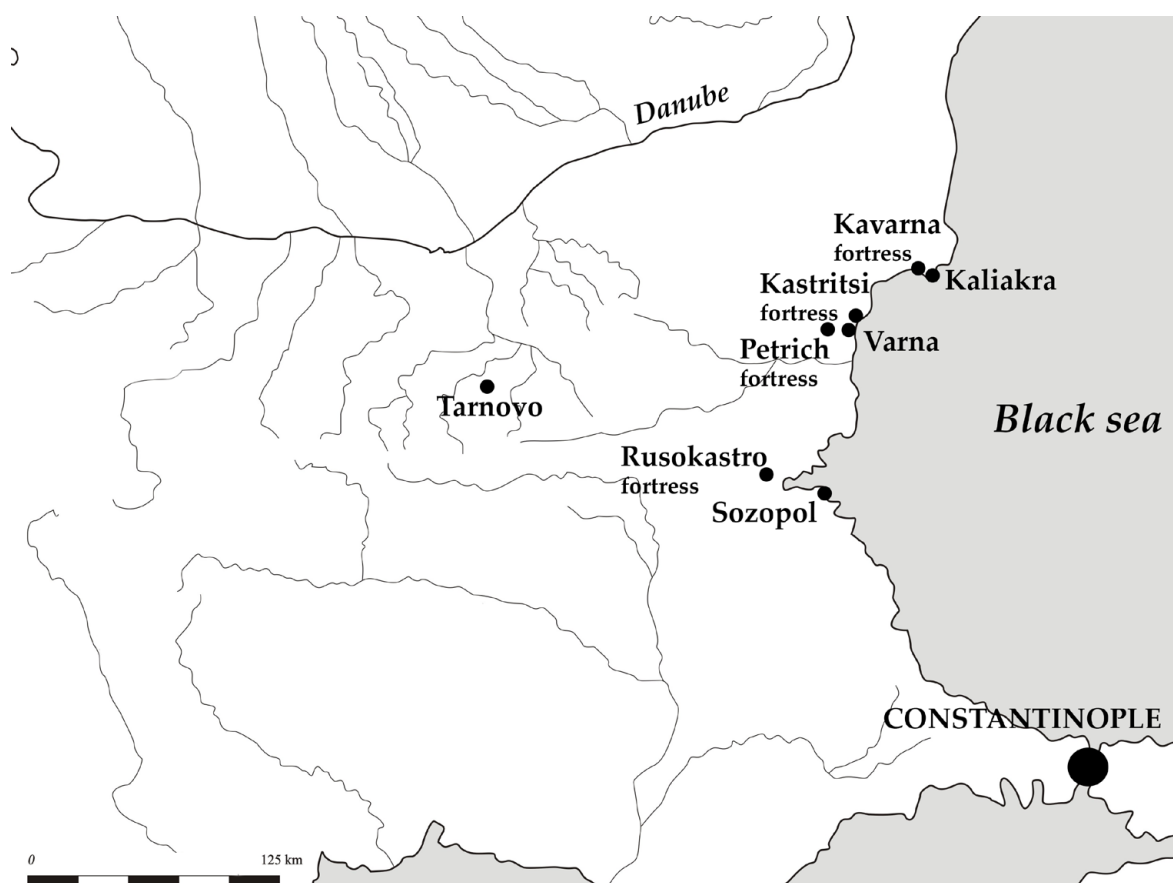


Fig. 1. Towns along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast with established import
 Обр. 1. Селища от българското Черноморие с установен внос

Black Sea published in previous papers.

Identification and classification of Bulgarian finds

Based on the characteristic features of the clay, glazes and type of decoration, representatives of four sub-groups of the Valencian production from the 14th–15th c. can be distinguished. These are accompanied by a small group of post-Valencian shards, most likely made in the workshop of Muel, Saragossa during the 16th c. The names of the classification groups adhere to the Spanish terminology widely accepted in the European pottery studies.

1. Loza valenciana malagueña dorada y azul

Part of a dish discovered during the excavations of the Varna Roman Thermae might be linked to early Valencian wares of the loza valenciana malagueña dorada y azul (LVMDA) type (fig. 2.1). It is made of pure light clay that has turned pale pink after firing. The decoration includes lustre elements on the inside and outside and cobalt blue accents on the front surface. The outer surface of the base has a Catherine wheel motif drawn in thin lines of lustre paint as is characteristic of Valencian production. At the centre of the decorative composition stands an eight-leaf rosette comprising four intersecting elongated ellipses. Similar motifs are found both in early Paterna ceramics from the 13th c. (García 2005, 13, fig. 8) and in finds dating from the second half of the 14th to the last quarter of the 15th c. from Malaga and Pula (Blake 1986, 383, 399, pl. 4.20, pl. 14. 2), Britain (Hurst 1977, 85–86, fig. 28, no. 21), Alexandria and Crimea (Teslenko 2004, 489–490, fig. 3; Teslenko, Mayko 2019,

288–289, 306, fig. 1.5). The lustreware microelements surrounding the central motif play a decisive role in the classification of the fragment from Varna. They are floral ornaments inscribed inside spirally twisted sprays with an exquisite pattern, which suggest a link with early Valencian production by the Malagueño Primitivo group, dating from 1333 to 1348 (Coll Conesa 2012, 315, 316, 329, fig. 7.15). Two more fragments of small bowls from the Kastritsi Fortress near Varna can be attributed to early Valencian production under the influence of Malaga (fig. 2.2, 3). One of them (fig. 2.2) has a characteristic frieze of twisted wavy lines with close parallels to Paterna finds dated to the 13th c. (Amigues 2002, 62; Gutiérrez 2000, 35, fig. 2.17:3).

2. Loza valenciana dorada Pula

The vast majority of imported lustreware found on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast falls into the Pula type, also known in global classifications by its Spanish name *loza valenciana dorada Pula* (LVDP). The group is diverse and includes relatively small, shallow bowls comprising a hemispherical body sitting on a low ring-shaped base and jugs with a spheroidal body and a high conical base. The dishes are completely covered in opaque white or pale yellow glaze, with the decoration combining elements painted in purple-blue or light blue paint and lustreware motifs of different colours – dark yellow, yellow-brown, different shades of brown, including olive and more rarely reddish-brown. Blue dye is present only in the decoration of the bowls' inner surface. Some separate linear elements are applied in lustre on the outside (Blake 1986, 368).

Many of the vessels illustrated here share similarities with the decorative features of the Pula group, as described by Hugo Blake (Blake 1986, 365–407). For example, the composition's typical division into radial sectors by solid blue lines can be traced to finds from Varna and the Petrich Fortress (fig. 2.4–8). One of those fragments (fig. 2.4) fully resembles the dishes used as architectural decoration (*bacini*) on the facade of the St. Andrea church built in 1348, facing the St. Giovanni Hospital in Rome (Blake 1986, 373, 400, pl. 15, no 2). Another two finds have a radial composition split into sectors filled with leaf motifs (fig. 2.9, 10). Leaf images are among the most popular themes in Pula-type decoration and can be found both in lustre (fig. 2.5, 9, 10) and blue elements (fig. 2.11). In many cases, they are the main focus of the decoration and have a geometric or even asymmetrical silhouette. The characteristic detailed representation of leaf veins is evident both in the fragments from Varna (fig. 2.9–11) and in already published specimens from Paterna (Amigues 2002, 62), Pula (Blake 1986, 378, pl. 1.1, 6, 380, pl. 2.7, 8, 10–12), Genoa (Blake 1972, 93, fig. 4.21), Milan and Varazze in Northern Italy (Blake 1986, 397, pl. 12.12, 18; 400, pl. 15.1517), Sicily (Blake 1986, 402, pl. 17.990, 991) and the northern Black Sea coast, specifically Caffa (Kravchenko 1991, 117, fig. 4.4) and Funa (Teslenko 2004, 480, 489, 490, fig. 3). Some of the finds (fig. 2.5, 7, 12; 3.1, 2) illustrate one of the most distinctive decorative patterns of Valencian Pula-type wares – small floral elements that “pierce” through the lustre's dark background and stand out with the whiteness of the base glaze (Blake 1986, 368). Two fragments from Varna (fig. 3.3, 4) have another distinct decoration – a lustre net that is duplicated in some cases by a larger one drawn with cobalt pigment.

Three partially preserved dishes from Varna, Sozopol and Rusokastro (fig. 3.5–7) feature a different, yet also typical of Pula decorative composition. The decoration is arranged in horizontal bands, centred around intersecting blue squares at the bottom. The best preserved specimen is the Varna one (fig. 3.5), which although lacking an exact analogue among the finds published by Italian researchers, has various decorative elements that are similar to the group's style, including white floral microelements that stand out through the lustre while at the same time serving as a background for the cobalt pattern, as well as intersecting blue squares in the centre (Blake 1986, 382, pl. 3.13–15). The exterior decoration of the vessel has an exact analogue in the Pula collection (Blake 1986, 386, pl. 6: 6, 10). The frieze under the rim is more distinct and is found in bowls from the last quarter of

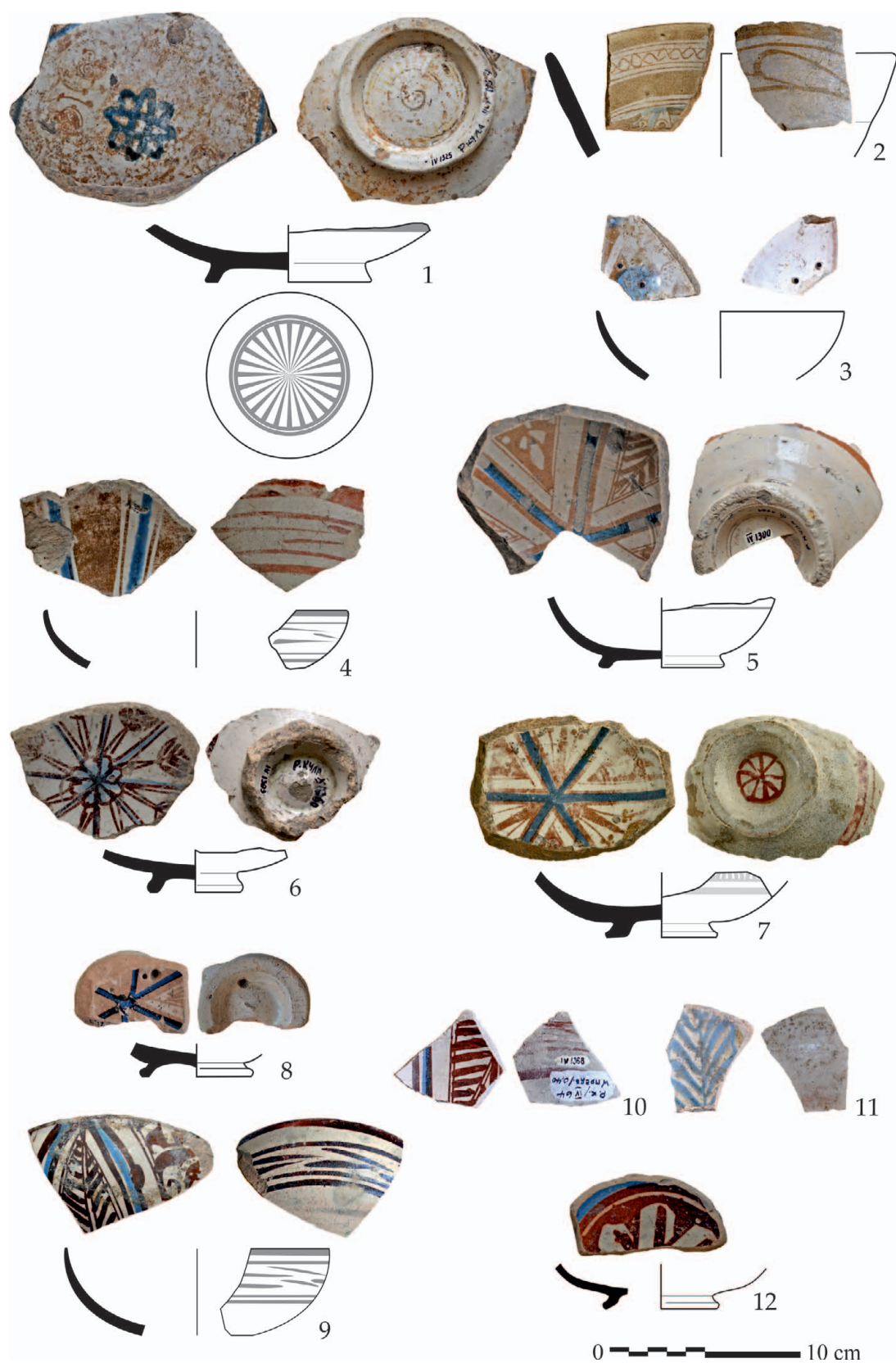


Fig. 2. Spanish lustreware type LVMDA: 1. Varna; 2, 3. Kastritsi; Spanish lustreware type LVDP: 4–12. Varna (AM Varna, author's photos and drawings)

Обр. 2. Испанска люстрова керамика тип LVMDA: 1. Варна; 2, 3. Кастрици; испанска люстрова керамика тип LVDP: 4–12. Варна (AM Варна, снимки и рисунки на автора)

the 14th and the first quarter of the 15th c. (Hurst et al. 1986, 40–41, fig. 17) to the second half of the 15th c. (Teslenko 2004, 480, fig. 3). The sample from the Rusokastro Fortress is in worse condition (fig. 3.6), but the similarity of the blue motifs with a Pula dish (Blake 1986, 382, pl. 3.15) suggests that the composition was centred around a square. Another characteristic feature of Pula-type decoration is the use of stylised Arabic letters, which are inverted in this case and represented as white microelements against a backdrop of brown lustre.

The most representative Pula-type finds come from excavations of the Kaliakra Fortress and the St. George Church in Varna (fig. 4.1, 2). The Kaliakra dish (fig. 4.1) was discovered in 2019 during excavations of the necropolis in the Inner town (Petrunova, Endarova 2020, 1154). Its decoration consists of floral and geometric elements applied with light brown lustre and white ones that stand out against the background of the lustre. The accompanying cobalt decoration is limited to one central quadrangular field and two symmetrically arranged leaf-shaped figures. The blue fields are filled with some of the most characteristic motifs of early Malagan and Valencian production – Arabic letters or imitating elements, as found in the finds from Pula (Blake 1986, 386). In this case, it is more of an imitation of an Arabic inscription than a real one.

Pavel Pavlovich made interesting observations on the cobalt decoration, some of which are referred to below. According to him, “the quadrangular field contains Arabic letters that are clearly written by a person who does not know Arabic. Hypothetically, the expression *bism* (بسم) – “in the name of”, the particle *illā* (إلا) – “except for”, which is part of the phrase “there is no deity but Allah”, and the word “deity” (*Ilāh* – الله) at the end can be read from right to left. This was probably an attempt to write the “only one” (*waḥdu-hu*: وحده) between “except” and “deity”. It is possible that the spelling of the name Muḥammad (محمد) is imitated in one of the leaf-like sectors, while the opposite leaf-like motif is completely decorative.

The manner of imitating Arabic inscriptions rather than writing true ones completely matches the evolution of lustreware, which moved away from its Arab roots over time. Valencian vessels were intended for Christians who could not read Arabic symbols and perceived them as decorative elements. For this reason, it was natural that the letters gradually lost their true form until they became an exotic ornament that is only reminiscent of the original Andalusian prototypes.

The Kaliakra dish is one of those rare archaeological artefacts that tell their own story. It has two openings on the periphery suggesting it was imported as a luxury item and originally decorated someone’s home. With the dish hung in the position indicated by the openings, the observer most likely perceived the decorative composition as an image of a cross. However, the cobalt motifs resembling an Arabic inscription would have remained odd and incomprehensible to the vessel’s owner. This must be why it was subsequently embellished by scratching a cross in the centre and the popular Christogram IC XC NI KA in the frame of the cobalt “cross”. In this form, the dish had become completely compatible with the Orthodox worldview, so it is not puzzling that it was later buried with its owner.

No less interesting is the bowl from Varna, which has a similar decoration to the previous find (fig. 4.2). Here, too, light brown lustre elements serve as a background for the cobalt decoration. The blue drawings, filled with fully stylised Arabic letters, are limited to one central quadrangular field and two elliptical ones (one of which is not preserved). The vessel was discovered in 1967, during the excavations of the medieval church of St. George located on top of the southwest part of the Roman Thermae. The find context of the dish is extremely important both for the history of the temple itself and for explaining how lustreware reached Bulgaria. Therefore a brief digression from the ceramics-specific analysis is beneficial to draw attention to key moments in the history of Varna in the mid-14th c. The notes of A. Kuzev, one of the excavation directors of the Roman Thermae in 1967, say that



Fig. 3. Spanish lustreware type LVDP: 1. Varna; 2. Kaliakra; 3–5. Varna; 6. Rusokastro; 7. Sozopol; 8. Varna; 9. Kavarna (AM Sozopol, Burgas, Varna and Kavarna, author's photos and drawings)
 Обр. 3. Испанска люстрова керамика тип LVDP: 1. Варна; 2. Калиакра; 3–5. Варна; 6. Русокастро; 7. Созопол; 8. Варна; 9. Каварна (АМ Созопол, Бургас, Варна и Каварна, снимки и рисунки на автора)

the lustre vessel was immured into the masonry of the church's western façade¹. This is confirmed by the mortar preserved on the reverse side of the dish. A. Kuzev briefly mentions the rich decoration of the St. George Church in his review article dedicated to the history of medieval Varna, and suggests that the bowls from the façade originate from the Middle East (Kuzev 1981, 299, 300)². It should be emphasised that the tableware immured into the walls of the Varna church is a precedent for the 12th–14th c. Bulgarian architecture and has no analogue amongst the artefacts we are aware of so far. It is logical to ask why this temple is decorated with glazed dishes, known in specialised literature by the Italian term “bacini”. Using “bacini” to decorate church façades and, more rarely, public buildings was characteristic of Italian architecture mainly from the mid-11th to the late 15th c. (Blake 1980, 93). There are few examples outside the Apennine Peninsula, and those can usually be explained by the direct influence of Genoese or Venetian trading colonies (Philon 1985, 313–314; Yangaki 2017, 157–158). It is reasonable to assume the finds from Varna have a similar link. Under the charter given by Tsar Ivan Alexander (1331–1371) to Venetians in 1347, they received the right to “buy and build a church and a lodge [seat] wherever they liked” (Petrov, Gyuzelev 1978, 248–249). We know from written sources that Venice set up a lodge in Varna, with Marco Leonardo as consul in 1352 (Gyuzelev 1981, 177–178). There is no information about a church, but it makes sense that Venetian merchants would also take advantage of the opportunity to have their own church. Its architectural plan or decoration should have characteristic features that have parallels with 14th c. Western European architecture. The only Varna church known so far to deviate from standard Bulgarian medieval decorations is precisely that of St. George. In the light of this, it can be assumed that the Venetian colony acquired an already existing temple, whose architectural decoration was complemented by easy to implement but distinctive elements, such as the “bacini” unknown to the local culture.

Let's return to the finds from the Pula group and note the rarer “closed” shapes present among them. Small fragments of jugs were found during excavations of the towns of Kaliakra and Kastritsi (fig. 4.3, 4). Only one vessel from Varna is almost completely intact (fig. 4.5). Its decoration combines two of the most characteristic Pula-type elements – a lustre net decoration on the neck and radial belts of alternating lustre, white and blue lines on the body.

3. Loza valenciana dorada clásica

The other artefacts found so far in Bulgaria Black Sea region are substantially different from the well-known features of the Pula group and can be linked to the 15th c., the classical period of Valencian pottery (Coll Conesa 2017, 41), classified as loza valenciana dorada clásica (LVDC). A small bowl with highly faded lustre decoration on the inside and a blue circle in the middle part of the body (fig. 5.1) comes from the excavations of Kastritsi. It appears that lustre paint wear is common in some series of classical Valencian production, because such specimens have been reported in Crimea and the Adriatic (Teslenko 2004, 478, 484, fig. 1.5; Milošević, Topić 2012, 174–176, fig. 30, 30a). Two fragments from Sozopol and Varna (fig. 5.2, 3) show one of the most common 15th c. decorative compositions where Andalusian motifs and Gothic themes are intertwined. The vessels are known as escudella. These are small hemispherical bowls with concave bottoms and two protruding triangular horizontal handles. The walls are decorated with alternating floral and geometric lustre motifs and two or three cobalt gothic roses (fig. 5.2). The bottoms are occupied by a pentagonal shield characteristic of Gothic art (fig. 5.3), outlined in blue paint or another heraldic symbol. The

1 Prof. Aleksandar Kuzev's field diary of the 1967 excavations. Scientific Archive of the Varna Regional Museum of History, unprocessed archival unit “Diary of Roman Baths 1964–1967”, p. 75 (back), p. 76, p. 80.

2 Together with the lustre dish, another faience vessel was immured into the facade of the St. George Church. It is on display today in the exhibition of the Varna Archaeological Museum, Inv. No. IV 3906.

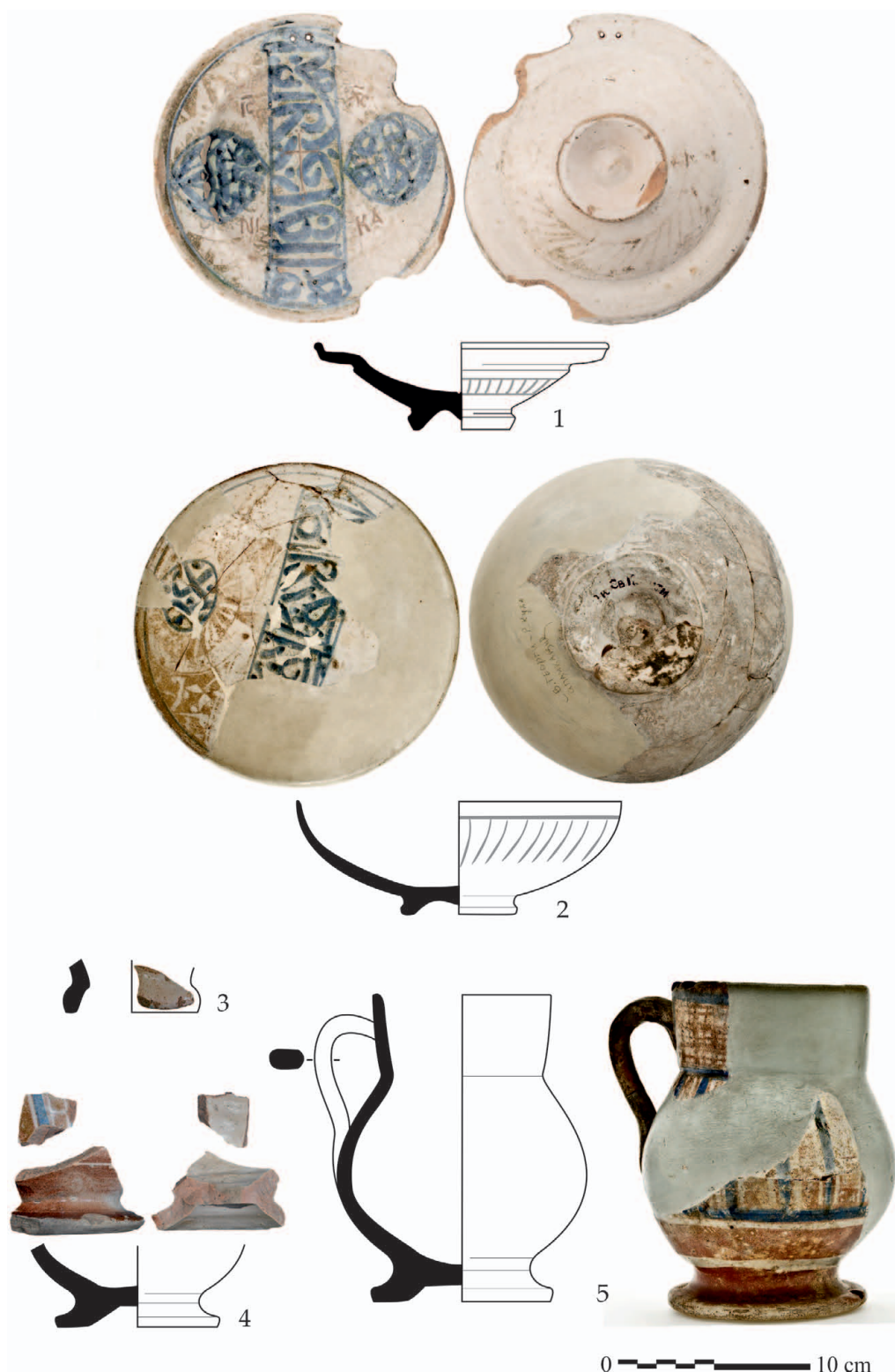


Fig. 4. Spanish lustreware type LVDP: 1. Kaliakra (AM Kavarna, photo T. Dimitrov, drawing V. Kiryakova); 2. Varna (AM Varna, author's photo and drawing); 3. Kaliakra (AM Kavarna, author's photo and drawing); 4. Kastritsi (AM Varna, author's photo and drawing); 5. Varna (AM Varna, photo R. Kostadinova, author's drawing)
 Обр. 4. Испанска люстрова керамика тип LVDP: 1. Калиакра (AM Каварна, снимка Т. Димитров, рисунка В. Кирякова); 2. Варна (AM Варна, снимка и рисунка на автора); 3. Калиакра (AM Каварна, снимка и рисунка на автора); 4. Кастрици (AM Варна, снимка и рисунка на автора); 5. Варна (AM Варна, снимка Р. Костадинова, рисунка на автора)

outer surface is decorated with fine lustre elements, including arched lines and stars on the walls and a Catherine wheel on the bottom. In another two fragments from Varna, belonging to the classical group of Valencian production, only some parts of the sectors with floral motifs are preserved, drawn with high-quality golden lustre (fig. 5.4, 5).

4. Post-Valencian products

The last three Varna shards (fig. 5.6–8) cannot be linked to any of the Valencian groups examined so far. They are made of clay with a small admixture of sand that has become white to light beige after firing. More unusual is the lustre decoration which covers only the inner surface. It is applied thickly and is now a deep iridescent orange red. The decoration must have been applied with a thick brush and, as far as one can judge by the preserved drawings, it constituted large floral motifs. It is currently difficult to classify and date the fragments due to their small number and poor condition. However, those clay and lustre characteristics suggest they were made somewhere else, not in Valencia, despite following similar trends. As already mentioned, in the late 15th c. Valencian craftsmen moved to Catalonia and Aragon, where they set up new workshops. Those production hubs were mostly active in the 16th c. and stopped operating when the Moors were expelled from Spain in 1609. The distinctive features of 16th c. Aragonese products are white or beige clay with admixture of sand (Hurst et al. 1986, 49), as well as large floral motifs or rough images of birds painted only with lustre (Hurst et al. 1986, 49; Zamora 1999, 61–62). The Varna specimens have similar features, and in theory could be linked to the production of Muel workshop in the 16th c.

Pottery and trade

The finds examined so far show that Iberian imports, even though few, reached Bulgaria between the 1330s and the late 15th c. Lustreware made the long journey from Spain to the Black Sea through mediation of the maritime republics. Italy had traditionally maintained close contacts with the Western Mediterranean, and numerous artefacts found in Tuscany and Lombardy prove Spanish items had been imported as early as the 10th and 11th c. (Hess 2004, 14). Written sources show that Florence, Pisa and Venice traded with Valencian pottery in the 14th and 15th c. (Wilson 1996, 36). As for its spread to the Eastern Mediterranean, Genoa and Venice were probably the key players. The Republic of Genoa received privileges to trade in Castile and its own base in Seville as early as 1251 (Blake 1972, 85). A number of researchers believe that, by the end of the 15th c., Genoa was trading in luxury ceramics not only between Spain and Liguria, but gradually expanding its range to Northern Europe and the entire Mediterranean, including the Black Sea region (Blake 1972, 85; Hurst 1977, 76).

Venice gained a foothold in the Black Sea area after Latin Christians conquered Constantinople in 1204. When the Byzantine Empire was restored in 1261, the Genoese managed to keep the Venetians away from the Black Sea coast for a long time. Under the Treaty of Nymphaeum, Genoa received exclusive privileges to trade and sail in the Black sea and its adjacent areas (Bozhilov, Gyuzelev 2004, 218; Gyuzelev 2009, 52–53). Byzantine-Venetian relations were governed by the treaties of 1302 and 1303, which again gave Venice access to the Black Sea market. Against the background of constant friction between Venice, Genoa and Constantinople, the Bulgarian Tsardom pursued a balanced policy, guided mainly by its economic interests. This is evidenced by the treaty with Venice of 1347, resulting in the founding of the Venetian lodge in Varna. The mention of a Genoese consul in Nesebar in documents from 1352 indicates that relations with Genoa were probably formalised at the same time (Gyuzelev 2009, 68).

Numerous written sources show that the main reason for the active policy followed by the two



Fig. 5. Spanish lustreware type LVDC: 1. Kastritsi; 2. Sozopol; 3–5. Varna; Spanish lustreware of Muel, Saragossa (?); 6–8. Varna (AM Sozopol and Varna, photos and drawings of the author)

Обр. 5. Испанска люстрова керамика тип LVDC: 1. Кастрици; 2. Созопол; 3–5. Варна; Испанска люстрова керамика производство на Муел, Сарагоса (?); 6–8. Варна (АМ Созопол и Варна, снимки и рисунки на автора)

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Italian republics in relation to Bulgaria was the export of cheap cereals and raw materials. However, it is still unclear what kind of goods they supplied to Black Sea cities. It is known that Venetian imports included fine fabrics, soap, jewellery, weapons, spices and fruits, whereas Genoa imported silk, game skins, wax, resins and paints (Gyuzelev 2009, 28, 46, 54). There is no explicit information about the import of ceramics. However, given the connections of the two maritime republics with Spanish ports, especially the Genoese ones, it can be assumed that they supplied luxury lustreware to both Bulgarian lands and cities on the North Black Sea coast.

It is worth mentioning one more, usually overlooked possibility for the influx of Iberian goods to the Black Sea region, namely through direct contact with Catalan merchants, who had their own consul in Constantinople since 1282. Around the same time, they sailed in the Black Sea Basin, reaching Caffa and Crimea (Ferrer 2012, 43). Between 1340 and 1372, Mallorcan merchants established contacts with the Tatars and Central Asia via the Black Sea route. Written records show that, in the second half of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th c., three or four Spanish ships docked at the port of Constantinople every year, and until 1420, Catalan merchants lived in the city itself (Ferrer 2012, 43).

The question of who carried Spanish imports to Bulgaria's Black Sea coast obviously cannot be definitively answered in this paper. It is much more important to emphasise that further evidence of the integration of Bulgarian territories in the interregional trade network of the 14th c. has been found. Thanks to this broad commercial system and the transport of goods, there was an active cultural exchange between remote parts of the Mediterranean, North Africa, The Levant and Europe.

Acknowledgements

This paper is the result of a targeted search for imported ceramics in the repositories of several museums along the Black Sea coast and systematic pursuing of ceramic materials discovered at recent excavations in the fortresses of Rusokastro and Petrich, and the port towns of Sozopol, Varna, Kastritsi and Kaliakra. I express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Pavel Pavlovich for his assistance. I express my deep gratitude to all colleagues who gave me the opportunity to work with the newly discovered materials and shared with me data from their field records: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Boni Petrunova – Kaliakra Excavation Director; Dr. Milen Nikolov, Rusokastro Excavation Director; Dimitar Nedev – long-time leader of excavations in Sozopol. And last but not least, I owe gratitude to the late Prof. Alexandar Kuzev. True to the meticulousness he was known for, he had left a box with the inscription “Lustreware and unidentified” in the medieval repository of the Varna Regional Museum of History. This box was what inspired me to start researching Spanish imports.

CATALOGUE

1. Dish, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: blue rosette, gold lustre ornaments. Exterior: pale lines, “Catherine wheel” on the bottom. Pale, pinkish fabric. Preserved h. 3 cm; foot d. 8.7 cm (fig. 2.1).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1954.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 1325.
Type: LVMDA
Date: 1333–1348.
2. Bowl, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: gold lustre ornaments, twisted rope border under the rim, blue stain at the lower part. Exterior: gold lustre arched lines. Pale, pinkish fabric. Preserved h. 5.3 cm; rim d. 19 cm (fig. 2.2).
Place found: Kastritsi, 2005, trench no. 7, field inv. no. 33/2005.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository.
Type: LVMDA

- Similar: Paterna (Amigues 2002, 62; Gutiérrez 2000, 35, fig. 2.17:3).
Date: 1333–1348.
3. Bowl, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: pale gold-brownish lustre ornaments, blue stain. Pale, pinkish fabric. Holes of vessel's amendment. Preserved h. 3.5 cm; rim d. 13 cm. (fig. 2.3).
Place found: Kastritsi, 2005, Sq. XXV/5, field inv. no. 45/2005.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository.
Type: LVMDA
Date: 1333–1348.
 4. Bowl, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: radial alternating lines of brownish lustre, cobalt blue and white. Exterior: lines of dull orange lustre. Pale, pinkish fabric. Preserved h. 3 cm; rim d. 16 cm (fig. 2.4).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1961.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 1308.
Type: LVDP
Similar: Rome, bacina on the erected in 1348 façade of church S. Andrea at S. Giovanni hospital (Blake 1986, 373, 400, pl. 15, no 2); Britain (Hurst 1977, 86–87, fig. 28, no. 22).
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
 5. Bowl, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: radially arranged composition of plant golden lustre motifs, and pierced white ornaments. The composition divided by blue radial lines. Exterior: a line of dull gold lustre. Beige fabric. Preserved h. 3.7 cm; foot d. 6.6 cm (fig. 2.5).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1961.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, inv. no. IV 1300.
Type: LVDP
Similar: Palermo, bacini of Palazzo Chiaramonte chapel (Blake 1986, 402, pl. 17:990, 991); Pisa (Berti, Tongiorgi 1986, 318, Tav. 2.7); Crimea, Caffa (Kravchenko 1991, 117, fig. 5.4)
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
 6. Dish, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: radially arranged composition of plant reddish-brown lustre motifs. The composition divided by blue radial lines. Exterior: a line of reddish-brown lustre. Beige fabric. Preserved h. 2.2 cm; foot d. 5 cm (fig. 2.6).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1960.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 1303.
Type: LVDP
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
 7. Dish, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: radially arranged composition of plant motifs of brown-reddish lustre and blue lines. Exterior: lines of reddish lustre, “Catherine wheel” on the bottom. Pinkish fabric. Preserved h. 3.4 cm; foot d. 5.9 cm (fig. 2.7).
Place found: “Petrich Kale” fortress, 2016, Sq. F7, surface layer.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, field inv. no. 273/2016.
Type: LVDP
Similar: Pula (Blake 1986, 378, pl. 1.2); Pisa (Berti, Tongiorgi 1986, 318, Tav. 2.12); Moscow (Koval 2010, 103, fig. 38.6)
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
 8. Bowl, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: radially arranged composition of plant motifs of brown lustre and blue lines. Pinkish fabric. Preserved h. 1.7 cm; foot d. 5.8 cm (fig. 2.8).
Place found: Kastritsi, 2012, Sq. XXV/11.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository.
Type: LVDP
Similar: Pula (Blake 1986, 378, pl. 1.2); Pisa (Berti, Tongiorgi 1986, 318, Tav. 2.12); Moscow (Koval 2010, 103, fig. 38.6)
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
 9. Bowl, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: radially arranged composition of plant motifs of reddish-brown lustre and blue lines. Exterior: horizontal lines of reddish-brown lustre. Beige fabric. Preserved h. 4.6 cm; rim d. 14 cm (fig. 2.9).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1964.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 1318.
Type: LVDP
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
 10. Dish, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: plant motifs of reddish-brown lustre and blue lines. Exterior: horizontal lines of reddish-brown lustre. Beige fabric. Preserved h. 4.4 cm. (fig. 2.10).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1964.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 1368.
Type: LVDP
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
 11. Dish, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: blue plant motif. Pale pinkish fabric. Preserved h. 4.8 cm (fig. 2.11).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1964.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 1307.
Type: LVDP
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
 12. Dish, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: reddish-brown lustre, white rosette pierced through it in a medallion

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- surrounded by blue circles. Beige fabric. Preserved h. 2.3 cm, foot d. 6 cm (fig. 2.12).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1964.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 1306.
Type: LVDP
Similar: Pula (Blake 1986, 383, pl. 4.23); Varazze, S. Ambrogio Bell tower built in the middle of the 14th c. (Blake 1986, 397–398, pl. 12.17, pl. 13.30).
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
13. Bowl, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: gold lustre, blue and white floral ornaments. Exterior: horizontal lines of reddish-brown lustre. Beige fabric. Preserved h. 3.9 cm, rim d. 16 cm (fig. 3.1).
Place found: Varna, “Morski zvutsi” str., 1964.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 1313.
Type: LVDP
Similar: Pula (Blake 1986, 378, pl. 1.1); Santa Casa, Loreto (Blake 1986, 404, pl. 19.426).
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
14. Dish, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: pale brownish lustre, pierced through it white floral ornaments, blue stains. Beige fabric. Preserved h. 2.9 cm, foot d. 6.4 cm (fig. 3.2).
Place found: Kaliakra, 2008, trench 8, fill of grave no. 8.
Place now kept: Historical Museum of Kavarna.
Type: LVDP
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
15. Bowl, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: grid pattern of yellowish-brown lustre, blue line under the rim border. Exterior: horizontal lines of yellowish-brown lustre. Dull beige fabric. Preserved h. 2.5 cm, rim d. 15 cm (fig. 3.3).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1961, premises no. 1.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 1304.
Type: LVDP
Similar: Pula (Blake 1986, 382, pl. 3.18); Varazze, S. Ambrogio Bell tower built in the middle of the 14th c. (Blake 1986, 398, pl. 13.30); Rome, S. Maria Maggiore (Blake 1986, 401, pl. 16.14); the church S. Francesco, Sarnano, prov. Macerata (Blake 1986, 404, pl. 19.115); Murcia (Ballesteros 2015, 520, fig. 1); Dubrovnik (Milošević, Topić 2012, 160, fig. 4, 4a); Crimea, Caffa (Kravchenko 1991, 117, fig. 4.1, 3); Moscow (Koval 2010, fig. 39.1).
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
16. Bowl, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: grid pattern of yellowish-brown lustre and blue. Exterior: horizontal
- and oblique lines of redish-brown lustre. Dull beige fabric. Preserved h. 2 cm (fig. 3.4).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1953.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 1305.
Type: LVDP
Similar: Pula (Blake 1986, 382, pl. 3.18); Varazze, S. Ambrogio Bell tower built in the middle of the 14th c. (Blake 1986, 398, pl. 13.30); Rome, S. Maria Maggiore (Blake 1986, 401, pl. 16.14); the church S. Francesco, Sarnano, prov. Macerata (Blake 1986, 404, pl. 19.115); Castle of Lorca, Murcia (Ballesteros 2015, 520, fig. 1); Pisa (Berti, Tongiorgi 1986, 321, Tav. 3.7, 9); Dubrovnik (Milošević, Topić 2012, 160, fig. 4, 4a); Crimea, Caffa (Kravchenko 1991, 117, fig. 4.1, 3); Moscow (Koval 2010, fig. 39.1).
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
17. Bowl, overall white glaze. Interior: pierced white plant ornaments and palmettes through light orange lustre; intersecting blue squares in a framework of blue circle on the bottom, blue rinceau under the rim. Exterior: horizontal and oblique lines of yellowish-orange lustre, rosette on the bottom. Dull beige fabric. Height 6.3 cm, rim d. 15.1 cm, foot d. 5.8 cm (fig. 3.5).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1964.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 1538.
Type: LVDP
Similar: Crimea, Caffa (Kravchenko 1991, 117, fig. 4.1, 3).
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
18. Bowl, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: pierced white palmettes and stylized arabesques through reddish-brown lustre, blue geometrical ornaments. Exterior: horizontal and oblique lines of brown lustre, partially preserved rosette on the bottom. Pale orange fabric. Height 6 cm, rim d. 15 cm, foot d. 5 cm (fig. 3.6).
Place found: Rusokastro fortress, 2021.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Burgas, field inv. No 98/2021.
Type: LVDP
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
19. Dish, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: pierced white plant ornaments pale brown lustre, blue lines. Exterior: horizontal lines of brown lustre, partially preserved rosette on the bottom. Pale pinkish. Preserved h. 3.4 cm, foot d. 4.5 cm (fig. 3.7).
Place found: Sozopol, 1995.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Sozopol.
Type: LVDP
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
20. Dish, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: radial lines of

- brown lustre. Beige fabric. Preserved h. 2.1 cm, foot d. 6 cm (fig. 3.8).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1959.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 1315.
Type: LVDP
Similar: Pisa (Berti, Tongiorgi 1986, 321, Tav. 3.11-13); Castle of Lorca, Murcia (Ballesteros 2015, 520, fig. 1); Azov region, Tana (Kravchenko 2017, 546, fig. 5.5).
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
21. Dish, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: ornaments with reddish-brown lustre and blue. Exterior: a line with reddish-brown lustre. Beige fabric. Preserved h. 3.4 cm (fig. 3.9).
Place found: Kavarna fortress, Chirakmana cape, 1955.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository.
Type: LVDP
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
22. Dish, overall white glaze. Interior: plant motifs of pale brown lustre and white pierced ornaments, one rectangular and two leaf-like two symmetrically arranged blue sectors with imitations of Arabic inscriptions. Exterior: horizontal and oblique lines of pale brown lustre. A cross in the center and “IC XC NI KA” scratched later over the original decoration. Above the inscribed cross, at the end of the periphery of the dish, two hanging holes are drilled. Pale orange fabric. Height 4.3 cm, rim d. 14.6 cm, foot d. 4.9 cm (fig. 4.1).
Place found: Kaliakra, necropolis in the Inner town, 2019, sector 87, sq. A1. The dish discovered in a secondary grave no. V, over a human skull.
Place now kept: Historical Museum of Kavarna, field inv. no. 20/2019.
Type: LVDP
Similar: Pula (Blake 1986, 379, 380, pl. 2.7).
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
23. Bowl, overall white glaze. Interior: plant motifs of pale brown lustre and white pierced ornaments, one rectangular and two oval (one preserved), symmetrically arranged blue sectors with imitations of Arabic inscriptions. Exterior: faded out decoration of lustre horizontal and oblique lines; traces of mortar. Pale orange fabric. Height 5.9 cm, rim d. 16.8 cm, foot d. 6 cm (fig. 4.2).
Place found: Varna, St. George church, 1967, immured in the western façade.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 6635.
Type: LVDP
Similar: Pula (Blake 1986, 379, 380, pl. 2.7, 8).
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
24. Jug, fr., overall white glaze. No decoration preserved. Pale pinkish fabric. Preserved h. 2 cm, foot d. 7 cm (fig. 4.3).
Place found: Kaliakra, Necropolis, 2018.
Place now kept: Historical Museum of Kavarna.
Type: LVDP
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
25. Jug, fr., overall white glaze. Exterior: brown lustre, blue and white lines. Pinkish fabric. Preserved h. 4.3 cm, foot d. 8.5 cm (fig. 4.4).
Place found: Kastritsi, 2014.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository.
Type: LVDP
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
26. Jug, overall white glaze. Exterior: grid pattern of brown lustre on the neck, alternating vertical lines and bigger sectors of brown lustre, blue and white on the body. Traces of lustre on the inner surface of the neck. Beige-pinkish fabric. Height 15.9 cm, neck h. 4.1 cm, foot h. 2 cm, rim d. 9.2 cm, maximal d. 9.2 cm, foot d. 9.4 cm (fig. 4.5).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1964, medieval house no. 3.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no. IV 6636.
Type: LVDP
Similar: Pula (Blake 1986, 385, 387, pl. 7.30, 31); Pisa (Berti, Tongiorgi 1986, 321, Tav. 3.4–6); Türkiye, Ayasuluk Castle (Yilmaz 2019, 203 fig. 10); Crimea, Soldaia (Teslenko, Mayko 2019, 287, 306, fig. 1.1); Crimea, Alushta (Teslenko 2004, 481, 483, fig. 4.1).
Date: 1330–1420 / 1330–1380.
27. Bowl, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: faded out decoration of gold lustre, a blue circle in the middle. Exterior horizontal lines of gold lustre. Pale orange fabric. Holes of vessel’s amendment. Height 5.6 cm, rim d. 13.6 cm, foot d. 5.7 cm (fig. 5.1).
Place found: Kastritsi, 2014.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no IV 1006.
Type: LVDC
Similar: Dubrovnik (Milošević, Topić 2012, 174–176, fig. 30, 30a); Crimea, Alushta (Teslenko 2004, 478, 484, fig. 1.5).
Date: 1400–1500.
28. Escudella, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: plant ornaments of reddish-brown lustre, blue, separated in four gothic rose. Exterior: arched lines and “stars” of reddish-brown lustre. Pale, yellowish fabric. Preserved h. 5.7 cm, rim d. 18.2 cm (fig. 5.2).
Place found: Sozopol, 1995.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Sozopol.
Type: LVDC
Similar: Castle of Lorca, Murcia (Ballesteros 2015,

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- 519, fig. 16); Barcelona (Ubero et al. 1994, 101, cat. No. 34); Paterna (Amigues 2002, 67, 74; García 2005, 15, fig. 15); Tuscany (Ward-Perkins et al. 1973, 98–100, fig. 31.219, 220; Francovich, Gelichi 1986, 302, Tav. VI.19); Pisa (Berti, Tongiorgi 1986, 330, Tav. 8.12, 13); Dubrovnik (Milošević, Topić 2012, 169–171, figs. 21, 21a, 22, 22a); Histria (Bradara 2003, 133, 140, 151, nos. 1, 13, 35).
Date: 1400–1500.
29. Escudella, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: faded out decoration of light brown lustre, partially preserved blue shield on the bottom. Exterior: Catherine wheel of light brown lustre. Bottom d. 6 cm (fig. 5.3).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no 1310.
Type: LVDC
Similar: Dubrovnik (Milošević, Topić 2012, 170, fig. 23, 23a).
Date: 1400–1500.
30. Escudella, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: plant motifs of gold-brownish lustre. Exterior: arched lines and “stars” of gold-brownish lustre. Beige fabric. Preserved h. 4.2 cm, rim d. 14 cm (fig. 5.4).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1961.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no 1317.
Type: LVDC
Similar: Paterna (García 2005, 15, figs. 14, 15); Barcelona (Ubero et al. 1994, 101, cat. Nos. 33, 34); Tuscany (Ward-Perkins et al. 1973, 98, 99, fig. 31.218, 224); Dubrovnik (Milošević, Topić 2012, 167, 168, figs. 18, 18a, p. 168); Crimea, Soldaia (Dzhanov 1998, 86, fig. 4.9; Teslenko, Mayko 2019, 289, 290, 307, fig. 2.1); Crimea, Funa (Teslenko 2004, 487, 488, fig. 1.2).
Date: 1400–1500.
31. Escudella, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: plant motifs of gold lustre. Exterior: arched lines of gold lustre. Beige fabric. Preserved h. 4.5 cm, rim d. 17 cm (fig. 5.5).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1961.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no 1365.
Type: LVDC
Similar: Paterna (García 2005, 15, figs. 14, 15); Barcelona (Ubero et al. 1994, 101, cat. Nos. 33, 34); Tuscany (Ward-Perkins et al. 1973, 98, 99, fig. 31.218, 224); Dubrovnik (Milošević, Topić 2012, 167, 168, figs. 18, 18a); Crimea, Soldaia (Dzhanov 1998, 86, fig. 4.9; Teslenko, Mayko 2019, 289, 290, 307, fig. 2.1); Crimea, Funa (Teslenko 2004, 487, 488, fig. 1.2).
Date: 1400–1500.
32. Dish, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: plant motifs of reddish-gold lustre. White, slightly sandy fabric. Preserved h. 3.5 cm (fig. 5.6).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1961.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no 1541.
Type: workshop of Muel Saragossa (?)
Date: 16th c.
33. Dish, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: plant motifs of reddish-gold lustre. White, slightly sandy fabric. Preserved h. 2.3 cm (fig. 5.7).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1961.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no 1320.
Type: workshop of Muel Saragossa (?)
Date: 16th c.
34. Dish, fr., overall white glaze. Interior: plant motifs of reddish-gold lustre. White, slightly sandy fabric. Preserved h. 5.1 cm, rim d. 26 (fig. 5.8).
Place found: Varna, Roman Thermae, 1964.
Place now kept: Archaeological Museum of Varna, Medieval repository, inv. no 1319.
Type: workshop of Muel Saragossa (?)
Date: 16th c.

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Испанска люстрова керамика от Западното черноморско крайбрежие XIV–XV в.

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(резюме)

Испано-мавританската керамика е все още непозната в българската археология, вероятно заради обстоятелството, че находките са малко и обикновено представляват незначителен сегмент от керамичните ансамбли на средновековните селища. Въпреки това, две публикации от България илюстрират фрагменти, които без съмнение би следвало да се отнесат към испанската люстрова керамика (Мирчев и др. 1962, 88, табл. XIV. 3, 4, 6, 7; Рабовянов 2015, 289, т. 97.18776, 1878а, т. 98А). Те насочват към предположението, че през втората половина на XIV и първата половина на XV в. до българските земи е достигал, макар и оскъден внос от Западното Средиземноморие. В потвърждение са представените тук образци от седем селища в Черноморския район: градовете Созопол, Варна, Кастрици и Калиакра, крепостите Русокастро, „Петрич кале“ и Каварна (обр. 1).

Към ранното производство на Валенсия, развиващо се под прякото влияние на Малага в краткия хронологически отрязък от 1333 до 1348 г., се отнасят няколко находки от Варна и Кастрици (обр. 2.1–3). Украсата им включва фино нанесени орнаменти със златиста или златисто-кафява люстра и акценти със светла кобалтова боя.

Преобладаващата част от испанския внос (обр. 2.4–12, обр. 3.1–9, обр. 4.1–5) се вписва в типа Пула, чието производство обхваща периода от 1330 до 1420 г., с пик на разпространение от 1330 до 1380 г. Групата се отличава с разнообразни декоративни композиции, сред които доминират растителни мотиви, нанесени с люстра и кобалт. Сред най-отличителните за групата орнаменти са стилизираните арабски букви и надписи, които издават връзка с първообразите на андалуската керамика. Подобна украса се открива върху двете най-представителни находки

от българското Черноморие – от Калиакра и от църквата „Св. Георги“ във Варна.

Калиакренското блюдо (обр. 4.1) е открито при проучвания на некропола във Вътрешния град (Петрунова, Ендарова 2020, 1154). Украсата му се състои от растителни и геометрични орнаменти, нанесени със светлокафява люстра и бели такива, които изпъкват през фона на люстрата. Съпътстващата кобалтова декорация е ограничена в едно централно четириъгълно поле и две симетрично разположени листовидни фигури, запълнени с арабски букви или имитиращи ги орнаменти. Два отвора върху периферията подсказват, че съдът е внесен като предмет на лукса и първоначално е украсявал нечий дом. При окачване в позицията, която сочат отворите, декоративната композиция е била възприемана от наблюдателя най-вероятно като кръстно изображение. Въпреки това, кобалтовите мотиви, пресъздаващи арабски надпис, са останали неразбираеми за собственика на съда, поради което е последвало издраскване на кръст в центъра и популярната формула IC XC NI KA в междурамията на кобалтовия „кръст“.

Купата от Варна има близка с предходната находка украса (обр. 4.2). Открита е при разкопките на средновековната църква „Св. Георги“ вградена в зидарията на западната ѝ фасада. Подобно използване на трапезни съдове за фасадна декорация е характерно за италианската архитектура от средата на XI до края на XV в. Примерите извън Апенините са малко и обикновено се обясняват с прякото влияние на генуезки или венециански търговски колонии. Напълно възможно е такава връзка да се проследи и за варненския храм. Според грамотата, която цар Иван Александър дава на венецианците през 1347 г., те получават правото да „купуват и да си съграждат църква и ложа [седалище], гдето им хареса“ (Петров, Гюзелев 1978, 248–249). От писмените източници знаем, че Венеция основава ложа във Варна. За църква няма сведения, но е логично италианците да са се възползвали и от тази възможност. Техният храм би следвало да има характерни белези, които отправят към паралели със западноевропейската архитектура от XIV в. С оглед на специфичната архитектурна украса, макар и хипотетично може да се допусне, че именно „Св. Георги“ е бил венецианският храм на Варна.

Притокът на испански съдове към българските земи продължава и през XV в., когато се разпространява керамика от класическия период на валенсианското производство (обр. 5.1–5). Съдовете са малки полусферични купи с конкавно дъно и две изтеглени триъгълни хоризонтални дръжки, а в украса им се вплитат андалуски мотиви и готически теми.

Няколко находки от Варна се отличават с по-грубо обработена бяла глина и специфична украса от едри люстрови орнаменти, които сега имат наситен оранжево-червен иризиращ цвят (обр. 5.6–8). Особеностите на глината и люстрата насочват към предположение за производство различно от Валенсия, каквото би могло да е това на Муел, Сарагоса от XVI в.

Анализът на известните до момента находки показва, че от 30-те години на XIV в. до края на XV в. в българските земи навлиза, макар и оскъден внос на иберийски изделия. Той най-вероятно е осъществяван чрез търговското посредничество на италианските морски републики.