

## GOLDEN HORDE POTTERY DISCOVERED AT ISACCEA, TULCEA COUNTY

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**Abstract:** In this note we are presenting 7 fragments of ceramic moulds, an ellipsoidal vessel, a bowl (prepared for glazing) and 9 tripods that the Museum of History and Archaeology of ICEM Tulcea purchased in 2006 from a man from Isaccea. These ceramic items from Isaccea have common traits with similar finds from the centers of the Golden Horde - Sudak, Orheiul Vechi, Costesti, Akkerman, dated to the 14th century. The discovery of specific Golden Horde pottery proves not only the existence of a strong economic center in Isaccea, where a pottery workshop was operational, but also the presence of specialized craftsmen.

**Key words:** pottery, Golden Horde, Isaccea

**Cuvinte cheie:** ceramică, Hoarda de Aur, Isaccea

The Tatar invasion in Central Europe in 1241-42 has strongly marked the history and evolution of northern Dobrudja. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the region from the mouth of the Danube became an active area of international trade, especially after the Golden Horde settled here.

The Tatars' presence at the mouths of the Danube is a topic investigated by many Romanian historians, but it is still far from being clarified<sup>1</sup>, due to the limited number of historical sources, and to the lack of archaeological research, with the exception of some discoveries that have been reviewed and ascribed to the Golden Horde<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, the archaeological research from Tulcea<sup>3</sup>, Revărsarea–Dealul Tichilești<sup>4</sup>, Enisala<sup>5</sup>, Nufăru<sup>6</sup>, Păcuiul lui Soare<sup>7</sup>, the random discoveries from Jurilovca, Slava Rusă and Babadag<sup>8</sup> have revealed yellow, reddish or grey ceramic fragments, decorated with the wheel; they are typical to the material culture of The Golden Horde from the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>9</sup>.

The money circulation at the mouths of the Danube in the 13<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> centuries is the most eloquent testimony of the Tatars' presence in this area. Undoubtedly, at present the coins still

<sup>1</sup> For this issue, see: Brătianu 1935, 53-78; Brătianu 1999, 296-310; Spinei 1970, 607-610; Spinei 1975-1976, 34-37; Spinei 1982, 168-177; Spinei 1994, 253-255; Spinei 2006, 319-366; Papacostea 1993, 90-125; Ciocâltan 1998, 13-16; 129-259.

<sup>2</sup> Archaeological investigations at Tulcea, Revărsarea–Dealul Tichilești, Păcuiul lui Soare, Enisala, and accidental discoveries at Jurilovca, Slava Rusă and Babadag revealed yellowish, reddish or gray pottery fragments decorated with the wheel, which are typical to the material culture of the Golden Horde in the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1997, 93-94, 2; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2003, 67-68, note 2.

<sup>3</sup> Mănuclu-Adameșteanu 1983, 453, fig. 10/6.

<sup>4</sup> Simion 1998, 231-238.

<sup>5</sup> Unpublished materials, courtesy of O. Damian, to whom we express our gratitude.

<sup>6</sup> Unpublished materials, 2009 investigations, courtesy of O. Damian, whom we thank.

<sup>7</sup> Diaconu, Baraschi 1977, 65-66, fig. 46, no. 1-7.

<sup>8</sup> Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2003, 67-68, note 2. In the collection of the Museum of Archaeology and History of ICEM Tulcea, we identified materials found in Tulcea and Slava Rusă.

<sup>9</sup> It was V. Spinei who correctly identified the origin of this pottery. Spinei 1982, 44-48, 196-197; some materials have been published in: Spinei 2006, 348-349, fig. 8-9; 686, fig. 2; Spinei 1994, 253-255, fig. 36, 38, 39, 47.

represent the main documentary source for understanding the evolution of events and socio-economic area from the mouth of the Danube during the Tartar domination<sup>10</sup>.

In order to better understand the specific material culture of the Golden Horde, we should note that the medieval settlement of Isaccea was located on a promontory in the northwest of present-day town and very close to the well-known ford of the Danube from Isaccea to Orlovca.

Both Isaccea District, represented by the nowadays town, and the bordering area, which represented the administrative territory is known for housing remains assigned to different historical periods because the area was a crossing ford intensely used along history by various groups of people who came by.

The settling and control exercised by the Golden Hoard over the area from the mouth of the Danube were certainly complex, with different steps marked schematically by the literary and cartographic sources.

The monetary discoveries remain for now the main source of historical information on the Tatars, as well as on the political events and socio-economic development of the area at the mouth of the Danube during the Golden Horde's rule.

For the topic in question, two important archaeological points of interest are known: the fortress of Noviodunum and the city's north-eastern area.

In 2006, the Museum of History and Archaeology of the Eco-Museum Research Institute Tulcea purchased from Manea Mihai, resident of Isaccea town, his collection of archaeological and numismatic objects. Among the objects offered for acquisition there were 7 pieces of ceramic moulds, a vessel of ellipsoidal shape, hemispheric bottom, a bowl-vessel (ready for glazing) and 3 tripods. According to the person who collected these objects over a period of 10 years, they were found on his property:

- oval-shaped vessel, probably a pitcher, hemispheric bottom, reddish paste subjected to oxidizing firing, decorated with rosettes, missing the top; angoba, glazed in the upper half with white pearlescent enamel with greenish reflections. Diam. – 15.8; h – 9.5 cm;
- Ceramic mould (7) fragments, semicircular, rosettes  
Preserved L – 11.1; cm h – 8.5 cm;  
Preserved L – 10.2; cm h – 9 cm;
- bowl, reddish-yellow paste, angoba, prepared for glazing, stylized decoration: flower petals, tendrils.
- Tripods – 9 items.
- Coins – 3 items.

The pitcher is cast in compact, good quality mould paste and burnt in an oxidizing atmosphere. The moulds are also made of ceramic.

Both the patterns and the vessel present similarities regarding the decoration, with spheroconical vessels dated to the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, found in Tulcea County<sup>11</sup>. The decoration

<sup>10</sup> Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1985, 585-590; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1987, 245-258; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1989, 121-129; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1993, 291-304; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2003, 69-102. For the reassignment of Saqçy-Isaccea workshop, see: Nicolae, Costin 2003, 175-187.