

ON THE NORTHERN BRANCH OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD: A CELADON DISH FROM THE EXCAVATIONS AT NOVGOROD THE GREAT

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Histories of the “Silk Roads” generally have devoted too little attention to evidence about Eurasian exchange found in the northern reaches of Eastern Europe. Much has been written about the significant flow of Middle Eastern and Central Asian silver into that region during the Viking Age without necessarily connecting it to broader aspects of Silk Road history. Other evidence—for example, textiles, glass, and ceramics—is rarer, but can reveal a great deal about interactions with the East involving medieval towns such as Novgorod, whose connections with the Hanseatic league form a significant chapter in the history of European trade. Even a single find, such as a Chinese celadon recently unearthed in the Novgorod Kremlin, sheds light on larger patterns of exchange, in this case ones dating to the period of Mongol rule over the Russian lands. The discussion here opens with an overview of Novgorod’s early history and the city’s important place along the trade routes, then proceeds to analyze in detail the celadon in order to pinpoint its origin, and concludes by contextualizing it with reference to other evidence about the dissemination of such celadons and the widespread interest in its decorative motif of two fish.

Novgorod in Early Russian History

Novgorod is one of the most ancient of Russian cities with a thousand-year history. It arose on the shores of the Volkhov River not far from its source at Lake Il’-

Fig. 1. The Novgorod lands in the second half of the 12th to the first half of the 13th centuries. (After: A. N. Nasonov “Russkaia Zemlia” i obrazovanie territorii Drevnerusskogo gosudarstva [Moskva, 1951]: foldout facing p. 96)

men in the northwestern territory of Ancient Rus [Fig. 1]. The location was a strategic one in the network of river routes and portages which provided access to the Baltic Sea in the West, to the Black Sea in the South, and to the Caspian to the Southeast (via the Volga River). The city is first mentioned in the oldest chronicles under the year 859 (NPL 1950: 106–7) in connection with the summoning of the semi-legendary Viking, Prince Riurik. However, the archaeological evidence from Novgorod proper provides dates no earlier than the second quarter of the 10th century. As the prominent archaeologist Evgenii Nikolaevich Nosov has now persuasively demonstrated from his excavations that date back over several decades, the “founding” settlement, probably the one established by Riurik, was just to the south of the current city at the hillfort site, which in the 19th

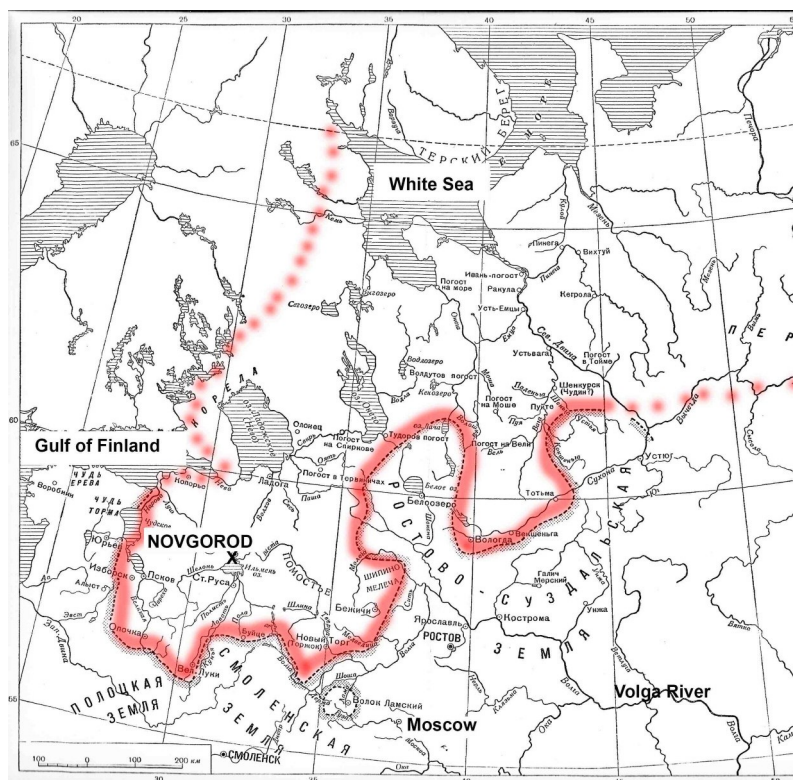




Fig. 2. View of Rurikovo Gorodische (lit. Rurik's Hillfort). (After: Agency «Sherif», www.novgorod.ru)

century came to be known as Riurikovo [Fig. 2]. In a region which by the 9th century had begun to be settled by Slavic tribes, Riurikovo was occupied by the social elite, including a contingent of Varangians (soldiers, traders, and craftsmen), and became the princely residence with military-administrative and trading and craft functions. In the 9th–10th centuries, the site was defended by wooden walls and moats, which, however, soon ceased to function when Novgorod proper was es-

tablished. The designation “Novgorod” (‘new town’) distinguished it from the “old” one of the Riurik hillfort (Nosov et al. 2017).

Novgorod’s subsequent development as a significant political, economic, and cultural center is to be connected with the place it occupied as part of what we call the Early Russian State, whose political and religious center was established in Kiev (Ianin 2013: 11). The conversion to Byzantine Orthodox

Christianity by Kievan prince Vladimir Sviatoslavich in the late 10th century led to the establishment of several bishoprics in the regional princely capitals, one of the most important of them being Novgorod, where the new location of the town was to be the Christian center. That location—the fortress—was one of the elevated areas on the left bank of the Volkhov, which, as archaeology has demonstrated, was already settled by the third quarter of the 10th century [Fig. 3]. The first

Christian churches appeared there in 989: the residential stone church of Ioakim and Anna and the 13-domed wooden cathedral of Sancta Sophia (the Holy Wisdom) (PSRL, 3: 208; Amvrosii 1807: 171; Makarii 1860: 40; PSRL, 7: 155). At the beginning of the 11th century, Prince Iaroslav Vladimirovich moved his residence from the hillfort north to the right bank of the Volkhov, where, from the first half of the 11th into the beginning of the 12th century, the princely court was located near the market [Figs. 4, 5]. Later, as the relationship between the

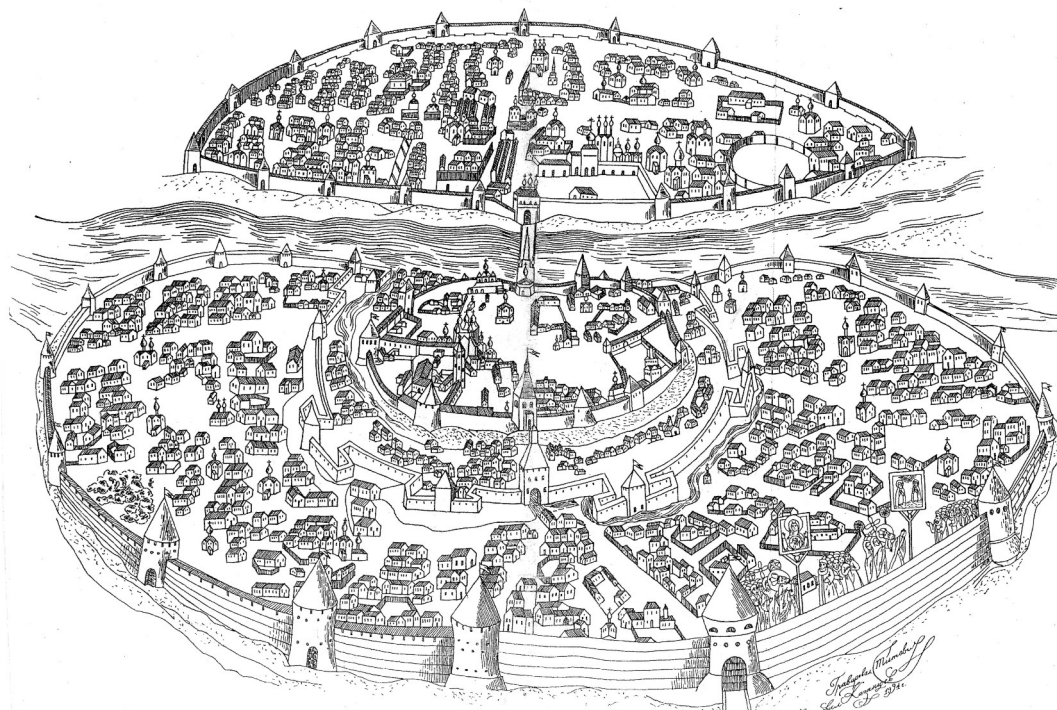


Fig. 3. A drawing based on the depiction of late medieval Novgorod on an icon of “The Sign of the Mother of God.” The Kremlin side of the city is below, with a double ring of fortifications, the inner one containing the archbishop’s residence and cathedral. The “trading side” of the city (east of the river) is at top. (After: A.F. Veltman, “O gospodine Novgorode Velikom” [About Novgorod the Great]. Moskva, 1834)



Fig. 4. Sunrise view across the Volkhov to the “trading side” of Novgorod, with the remains of the row of merchants’ shops built in the 18th century. The prince’s church of St. Nicholas, built in 1113, is in the upper center, shown here prior to its modern restoration. (Photo taken in 1968, courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh)



Fig. 5. The Church of St. Nicholas in the prince’s court, here restored to its original five-domed appearance. View from the southeast. The porch on the left was added in modern times. (Photo courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh)



Fig. 6. The Novgorod Kremlin at sunrise, view from the northeast looking across the Volkhov River in 1968. (Photo courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh)



Fig. 7. The Novgorod Kremlin from the air in 2003. (Photo courtesy of A.I. Orlov)



Fig. 8. The archbishop's chambers and bell tower. (Photo courtesy of A.I. Orlov)

princes and the city changed, the princely residence would return to the hillfort. Novgorod continued to develop after Iaroslav succeeded to the throne in Kiev. In 1044, fortifications (the Kremlin) were erected on the left bank of the Volkhov at the same time that the re-building of the Cathedral of Sancta Sophia as a stone structure began (NPL 1950: 181) [Figs. 6, 7]. The fortifications enclosed the archbishop's court, which adjoined the cathedral [Fig. 8].

Novgorod's hinterland extended way to the north and east, embracing resource-rich forested areas which were the source of furs, honey, and salt and where some agriculture could be developed profitably despite challenging ecological conditions. In the 11th and 12th centuries, Novgorod's position as the northern outpost on the "route from the Varangians to the Greeks" meant that economic ties with Kiev and beyond to Byzantium were especially important [Fig. 9]. The precise chronology which archaeology has documented concerning trade in such items as glass beads, bracelets, and walnuts illustrates the rise and eventual decline in this route. As early as the late 11th century, merchants from Gotland in the Baltic established an outpost in Novgorod; relations with the German trading cities that would eventually form the Hanseatic

league continued to develop and eventually were formalized with treaties (Rybina 2009). The trade with the West flourished in the 13th–15th centuries, despite the Mongol conquest of the other Russian principalities.

In the history of early Rus, Novgorod developed a distinctive set of political institutions, often termed a "republic". By the 12th century, princely power in the city was limited by treaty. The popular assembly (known as the *veche*) had some say in policy, but the real secular power came to be vested in an oligarchy of wealthy

families, from whose members the mayors (*posadniki*) of the city were selected (Ianin 2003: 7–8). Foreign and domestic politics were under the control of the archbishop, even though Novgorod was not a theocratic state. The Novgorod archbishop occupied a particularly prominent position in the Orthodox church hierarchy in Russia, contributing to the fact that, with the decline of the Kievan state, Novgorod would retain its independence down to the point when it was incorporated into

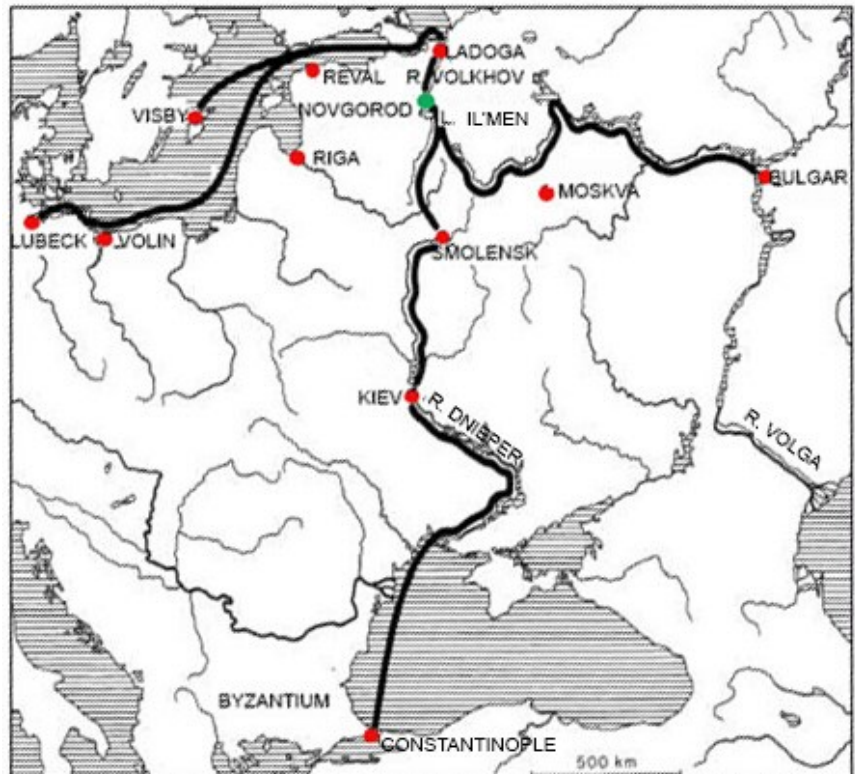


Fig. 9. The important trade routes of Novgorod. (After: Rybina 2009: 30)

Muscovy in the late 15th century.

Medieval Novgorod has always attracted the attention of scholars, in part due to the richness of cultural documentation, better preserved there than in any other prominent old Russian city. Since the city was never sacked by the Mongols, a significant portion of the manuscript books left to us from early Russia survived there, including the oldest dated book of the Gospels and the oldest manuscript of a Russian chronicle. Indeed, the extent and continuity of the tradition of chronicle writing in Novgorod are one reason we can document the city's history so precisely. Novgorod also is the location of the oldest preserved masonry church in Rus, the Cathedral of Sancta Sophia [Fig. 10]. A large number of other churches were still standing down into modern times, decorated in many cases with some of the best preserved mural paintings and from which some of the oldest and most important icons have survived. No other old Russian city has as complete a collection of monuments of architecture and monumental painting. Of all the buildings of An-



Fig. 10. The Cathedral of Sancta Sophia (1045-1050) from the east. (Photo courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh)

cient Rus of the 11th–15th centuries which have come down to the present, nearly half belong to the Novgorod school.

Arguably the most important contribution to our knowledge about Novgorod has come from archaeology [Fig. 11]. Novgorod has been studied more than any other early Russian city (Thompson 1967; Brisbane 1992; Brisbane and Gaimster 2001; Brisbane et. al. 2012). It became a kind of unique ar-



Fig. 11. The Trinity excavation of the early 21st century. (Photo courtesy of S.A. Orlov)

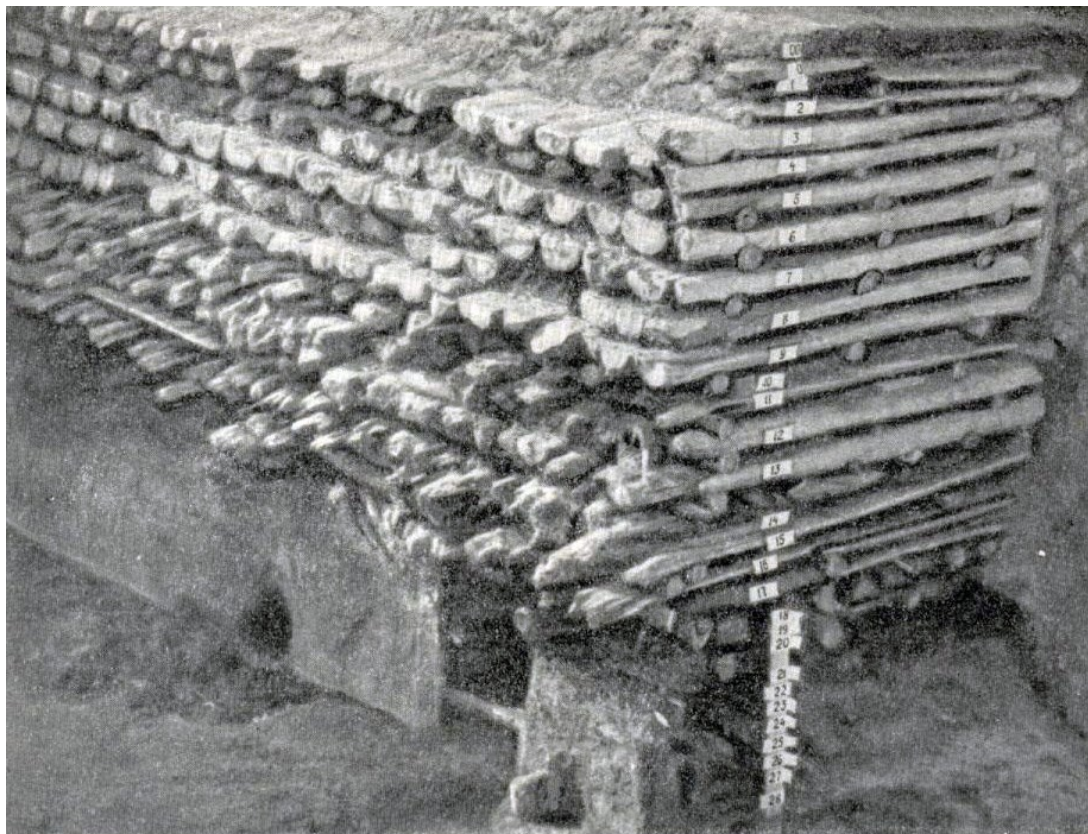


Fig. 12. Nerevskiy archeological dig of 1951-1962. Pavement cut of Velikaya street (After: B.A. Kolchin and V.L. Ianin, "Arkheologii Novgoroda 50 let" [Fiftieth anniversary of Novgorod's archeology]. Moskva, 1982: 30, fig. 9)

archaeological training ground where the methodology of excavation of urban settlements over wide areas was developed. The first regular excavations with the goal of a comprehensive scientific study of the cultural layer of Novgorod began in 1932. The richness of archaeological documentation is due to the fact that the water-saturated cultural layer, in some places as thick as 9 to 10 meters, has preserved beautifully organic materials. As was true of other medieval Russian cities, residential housing was largely made of wood; frequent fires (whose dates often can be established precisely from the chronicles) meant that houses were re-built on top of the remains of the earlier ones. As the level of debris in the streets rose, and given the muddy ground, Novgorodians laid down log walkways, which then were renewed every two or three decades [Fig. 12]. Analysis of tree rings for dating (dendrochronology) has thus made it possible to date more precisely than might be possible by other methodologies each of the nearly 30 strata in the deepest cultural layer of the city, starting in the late 10th century and going down into the 15th.

As a result, it has been possible to document how

the city grew. The material remains have provided some context to correlate with the changes in the political organization of the city, in which there were "ends" or districts which administered autonomous regions. Already in the 12th century the chronicles report the existence of three city "ends": Slavenskii on the trading side (east of the Volkhov), Nerevskii and Liudin on the Sophia (west) side (NPL 1950: 34), to which later were added two more—Plotnitskii and Zagorodskii. The streets of the city were oriented toward the main trading thoroughfare, the Volkhov River. As the inhabited area expanded, residential patterns changed: where earlier layers were occupied by often large residences presumably owned by the elite, the same plots later came to have more modest dwellings. In at least one case, what was probably the residence of one of the elite mayors had stone foundations, to support what probably was a multi-story structure. Wood paved the streets, was used to construct bridges, and also was the material used for the hydraulic system of water pipes and catch-basins.

The damp soil preserved a huge range of objects of everyday life: wooden dishes (some clearly turned on lathes) and table utensils, leather footwear, toys, chessmen, votive figurines, iron padlocks, and knives made of a sophisticated amalgam of hard and soft metal. Plant remains and animal bones provide a good idea of the local diet and how it changed over time, the evidence attesting in part to the importance of long-distance trade in valuable products not produced locally. While some of the most significant trade items (for example, the furs) are no longer extant, there is plenty

of evidence regarding commerce: scales, weights, and enough of the remains of boats to suggest that many of them had a very substantial cargo capacity.

Among the most spectacular of the archaeological finds are those related to writing. Beginning with the first discovery in 1951, more than 1,100 birchbark documents have been found, attesting to a much wider spread of literacy in the population than had been previously known [Fig. 13]. Not just the elite, but individuals in lower classes were literate. Women composed letters and received them; one set of the birchbarks illustrates the learning process of a child, who also, as children are wont to do, drew pictures and doodles. Taken together with the now meticulously documented graffiti scratched on the walls of the Cathedral of Sancta Sophia, the birchbarks attest to the wide range of functions for ordinary writing: personal letters, contracts, business correspondence, and much more. The birchbarks continue to be found in the ongoing excavations in Novgorod; their chronology can be established by the dendrochronology for the logs and beams of the layers in which they were preserved. The most striking recent find regarding writing in Novgorod was the discovery in 2000 of a



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Fig. 14. The tablet with the text from the Psalms inscribed with a stylus on wax. (Photo courtesy of S.A. Orlov)

Fig. 13. Birchbark document Nos. 963, 964, and 965, from the Kremlin excavation. No. 963 dates to 1416-1421 and is addressed to Archbishop Simeon, who occupied the see in those years. No. 964 is dated to the 1340s-1390s, and No. 965 to the period from 1349 to the 1360s. (After: Rodionova 2017: 79, fig. 30)

wax-coated tablet on which was inscribed a portion of one of the psalms [Fig. 14]. The find has been dated to the end of the 10th or beginning of the 11th century, thus making it the earliest relatively securely dated example of substantial writing to have been found in early Rus.

By any medieval measure, Novgorod was a large and rich city which traded with both East and West. In it, a distinctive Christian culture formed, nurtured by Slavic as well as Byzantine sources. It was a center of book learning which served the needs of the numerous churches and monasteries and became a treasure house of old Russian applied arts and monumental painting. The ongoing archaeology in Novgorod continues to document ordinary aspects of daily life as well as highlight unique objects that may shed light on the socially prestigious areas of the city. The next section of our article is devoted to just such a find.



Fig. 15. The excavation in the Episcopal court of the Kremlin. (Photo courtesy of E.V. Gordjushcenkov)

The Chinese Celadon Excavated in 2008

In 2008, an excavation within cultural layers of the 14th century in the Kremlin unearthed five charred fragments of a Chinese celadon vessel, which, referring to the find spot, we shall subsequently term “the dish of the episcopal court” [Figs. 15, 16, 17, 18]. While the range of distribution of Chinese medieval celadons is very broad (see below), Novgorod the Great is the northernmost location where excavations have uncovered such a ceramic. The previous finds of celadons in Novgorod consisted of small shards [Fig. 19] (Koval’ 1997a: 159, fig. 2; Rodionova and Frenkel’ 2012: 24, ill. 9; Rodionova 2017, fig. 149). The shards of this newly discovered celadon merit special attention, though, since it is possible to reconstruct the form of the dish and classify it with respect to existing typological schemes. Moreover, the context of the find



Fig. 16. The find spot of the celadon in the excavation. (Photo courtesy of E.V. Gordjushcenkov)

allows us to date when it entered the cultural layer, and suggests that the last owner of the dish was likely a member of the religious elite of medieval Novgorod.

The fragments of the celadon were found on the boundary of the second (1340–1360s) and third (1300–1340s) horizons of the medieval building of the episcopal court, under charred wooden planking. Four of the shards can be associated with a burned building (structures 9 and 10), which dendrochronology indicates was erected in 1300. A fifth shard lay in the same stratigraphic horizon, four meters to the south.

The juxtaposition of chronicle data about fires in the bishop’s court, the dendrochronological dates of the planks and building, the sphragistics (Iarin 1970) and numismatic finds makes possible an exact dating for the deposit of the celadon. In the fire of 1340, the celadon fell into the cultural layer; after some time the location of the fire of 1340 was covered by

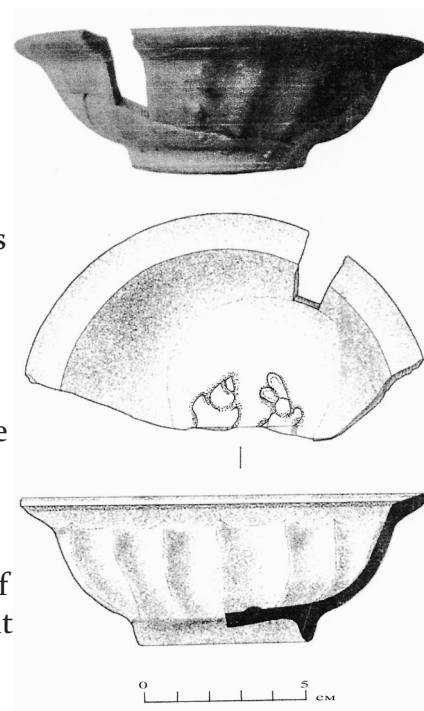


Fig. 17. The celadon dish from the episcopal court. Graphic reconstruction by L. A. Sokolova and T. V. Silaeva. (After: Rodionova 2017, fig. 143)

wooden flooring, which was subsequently damaged by fire in 1368.

The dish of the episcopal court is made of dense gray body and covered with a thick transparent glaze of a light gray-green color. The glaze does not extend to the bottom of the circular base which has a gray-brown color. X-ray analysis revealed in the body a high iron and titanium content. The glaze was made according to a lime alkaline recipe. The colorants were iron and titanium. The vessel has a broad horizontal rim and its bowl rests on a circular base. The exterior surface of the dish is decorated by poorly delineated vertical fluting, while the smooth interior surface of the walls is covered with dense crackle. In the central “medallion” (the inside bottom of the dish) is an underglaze relief depiction of two fish, placed head to tail to form a circle. There are various classification schemes which can be brought to bear in describing such celadons, beginning with observations about the external characteristics.

The diameter of the dish is a bit less than 13 cm, its height 4.5 cm., and the diameter of the circular base 5.5 cm. On the basis of the measurement formula devised by Evgeniia Ivanovna Gel'man, the dish of the episcopal court is to be classified as a dish of medium size designated by the generic term *bei* 杯 (“cup”) (Gel'man 1996: 12–13). In the dictionary of

Chinese ceramic terms, dishes analogous to the dish from the episcopal court are named *shuangyu xi* 雙魚洗 (“twin-fish washer”) (Wang 2002: 90). In the specialist literature such dishes also are known

as *shuaqing xi* 刷清洗 (“brush washers”), whereas the ones of larger size are *lianpen* 臉盆 (“wash basins”) (Zhu and Wang 1963: 38, fig. 12; Liu and Xiong 1982: 64; Yu and Mei 1989: 76; Gyllensvärd 1975: 104–5; Krahl 1994, 1: 299, No. 559). It is known that the Chinese art critic Wen Zhenheng 文震亨 (1585–1645) used such Longquan 龍泉 celadons with the *guan* 官 glaze for cleaning brushes (Kuz'menko 2009: 46).

The form of the given dish corresponds to the fourth type of the forms of dishes found in excavations of the medieval Longquan ceramic kilns in Zhejiang 浙江 province (Fang 1964: 558) [Fig. 20]. According to the work of Jan C. Wirgin (1970: 81, 83–84) about the decoration of medieval Chinese celadons, the surface decoration of the exterior and interior of the dish is characteristic for Longquan celadons of types Lc9 and Lc10. On the basis of classification

of Chinese celadons found in the Golden Horde city of Bolgary (Poluboiarinoва 2003: 155–59), the dish from the episcopal court is to be classified as semi-spherical, of small dimensions, with a broad flanged rim, variant 2, without incising, and with relief underglaze decoration.



Fig. 18. The celadon dish from the episcopal court: a) side view; b) views from above and below. (After: Rodionova 2017, fig. 144)



Fig. 19. Two celadon shards found in Novgorod: 1) from the Trinity excavation; 2) from the Nerev excavation. (After: Rodionova 2017, fig. 149)

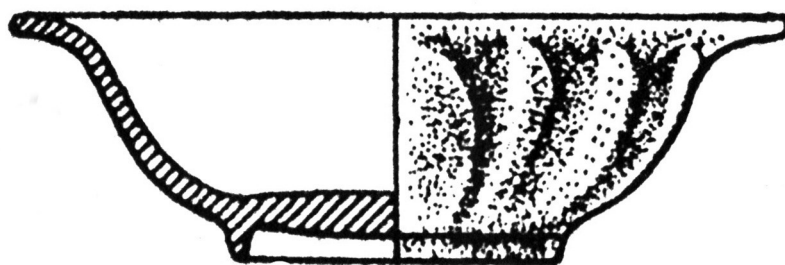


Fig. 20. A Southern Song celadon from Zhejiang province with the shape of that found in the episcopal court in Novgorod. (After: Fang 1964, 558, No. 4)



Fig. 21. Two examples of Liao period (ca. early 12th century) gilded silver metalwork with the “twin-fish” motif. Photographed in a special exhibition in the Hohhot Museum, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China. (Photos courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh)

The “medallion” of the dish of the episcopal court is decorated with an underglaze relief depiction of two fish. Such a technique in Chinese ceramic production is called *moyin tiehua* 模印貼花 (“molded decal”) (Wang 2002: 213). The figures are prepared in molds and then attached to the surface of the vessel with a slip, after which they are covered with glaze. This technique, applied to celadons of the Song era, is mentioned in the late 18th-century work of Lan Pu 藍浦, *Jingdezhen taolu* 景德鎮陶錄 (*Pottery Records of Jingdezhen*) (Stuzhina 1970: 62). The common name for all the possible compositions of the figures of two fish in Chinese art is *shuangyu*, or “twin

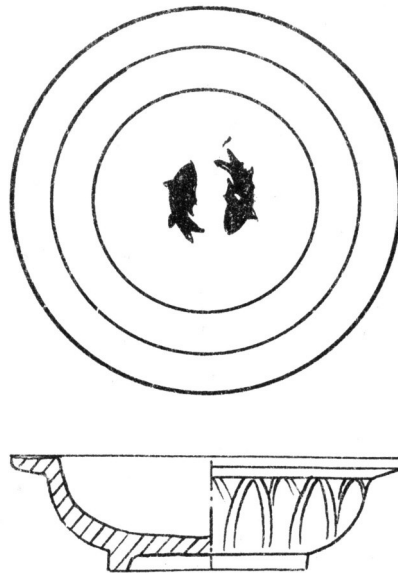


Fig. 22. The “twin-fish” motif in a celadon dish of the Longquan family. (After: Yu and Mei 1989, 78, fig. 11.1)

fish.” Such compositions in China indicate the wish for connubial bliss (Ayers 1985: 61; Krahl 1994, I: 299, No. 559; Vestfalen and Krechetova 1947: 37, pl. V) and numerous progeny (Lubolesnichenko 1975: 26), a belief that likely helps explain the popularity of the motif in the arts developed under the patronage of non-Chinese dynasties such as the Liao in north China [Fig. 21]. The centrally symmetrical scheme of the “twin-fish” motif is characteristic in particular for celadons of the Longquan family [Figs. 22, 23] (Wirgin 1970: 83–84; Ayers 1985: 61, No. 38; Krahl 1994, I: 299, No. 559; Wang 2002: 249) and become noteworthy from Southern Song times (Medley 1982: 150; Krahl 1994, I: 298, No.

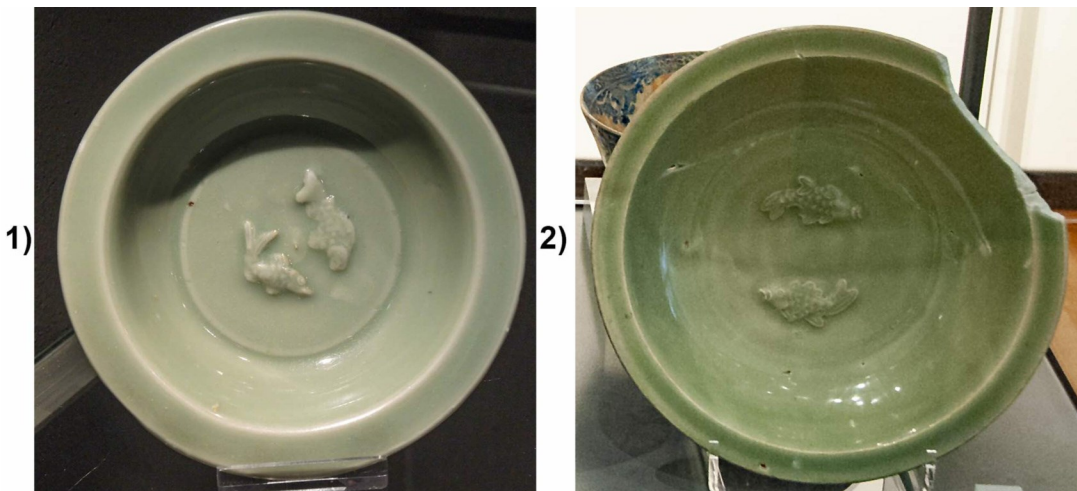


Fig. 23. Two Longquan celadons from Zhejiang province with molded “twin-fish” decoration: 1) from the collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, EA2008.16; 2) from the Macdonald Collection in the Durham (Eng.) University Oriental Museum, DUROM.1969.104.C. (Photos courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh)

558). Other variants, including compositions with four fish arranged in a circle head-to-tail, are also known among Longquan celadons [Fig. 24].

These external features then suggest that the celadon dish of the episcopal court corresponds most closely to the wares of the Longquan center of ceramic production in southwestern Zhejiang province in southern China (Wirgin 1970: 81–84; Wang 2002: 249). Moreover, analysis of the internal characteristics such as the composition of the ceramic body and the glazes offers further support.

The making of celadons in Longquan began in the Northern Song period (Valenstein 1989: 102) and in other provinces of southern China (Krahl 1986: 33; Medley 1982: 147; Ryōichi 1990: 184). Thus a huge family of southern Chinese celadons is to be attributed to Longquan and has stylistic associations with the aesthetic of Longquan even if not necessarily made in the Longquan kilns. The Longquan kilns have been extensively studied by archaeologists (Hobson 1924: 23; Palmgren 1963: 7; Zhu and Wang 1963; Li 1985: 53). These excavations uncovered many celadons close to the example from the episcopal court (Palmgren 1963: 113, No. 9; 116–117, No. 8; fig. 28: 26) [Fig. 25]; Zhu and Wang 1963: 37, fig. 12; Fang 1964: 558; Wirgin 1970: 83). Archaeometric methods make it possible to distinguish the production of locally situated kilns within Longquan, and to distinguish shards of the Song, Yuan, or Ming periods (Li 1985; Xie et al. 2009).

The ceramic body of Longquan celadons consists of a mixture of kaolin-content “Chinese stone” and high quality clay. Early Longquan celadons have shards of gray color. From the mid-Southern Song period, the majority of the Longquan kilns which have been studied produced celadons with shards

of white color, similar to porcelain (Arapova 1977: 31, n. 3; Gyllensvärd 1975: 94–95; Tokyo 1994: xvi). In the Yuan period, the shards of Longquan celadons again became primarily gray (Morgan 1991: 71), and under the Ming again approximated white (Fekhnner 1956: 94, n. 3). In the first half of the Qing period genuine Longquan production was in decline, although in China and Japan porcelain imitations of Longquan celadons were being made (Arapova 1977: 20; Kanevskaia 2004: 8; Wood 2011: 76, 80–81).

In the early Song period, Longquan glaze was alkaline; from the Southern Song time, it was prepared according to a lime-alkaline recipe composed of quartz sand, limestone, and organic ash (Valenstein 1989: 99; Wood 2011: 78). The composition of Longquan glazes has been frequently ana-

lyzed, with the indication that over time the components even of the lime-alkaline glazes changed (Li 1985: 59, tabl. 5; Wood 2011: 76, 78). Longquan glaze was transparent or translucent. The color varied from blue (“the color of a duck’s egg”) to green-blue (“an ocean wave”) and various shades of the gray-green spectrum (up to “olive-green”) (Wood 2011: 77–78). At first the blue shade predominated;

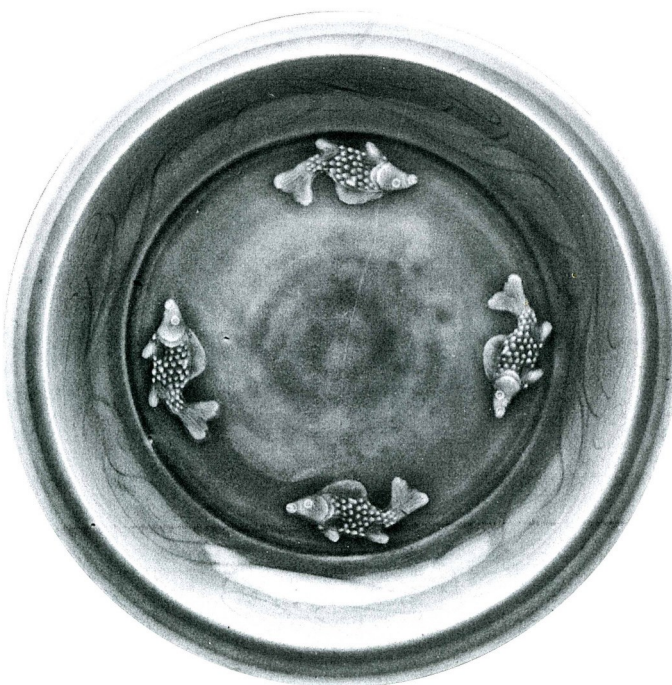


Fig. 24. A Longquan celadon dish with molded decoration of four fish. Late 13th or early 14th century. Topkapi Sarai Museum, Istanbul. TKS 15/209. (After: Regina Krahl 1986, vol. 1, 257: no. 65)

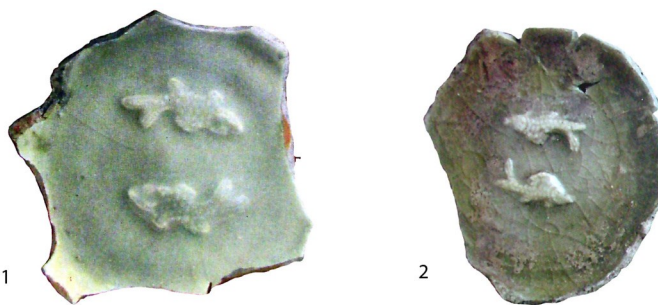


Fig. 25. Two Longquan celadon shards with the twin-fish motif from the excavations by Nils Palmgren in 1935–36. (After: Palmgren 1963: 113, ill. 9; 117, ill. 8)

later it came to be replaced with gray-green. At the end of the Southern Song and beginning of the Yuan period the so-called “plum-green” glaze was used (Wang 2002: 163). The colorants were iron and titanium (in the bluish glazes, titanium was somewhat less than it was in the gray-green). The slightly matte appearance of the glaze was created by the combination of phosphorus present in the ash and the bubbles which formed in the glaze. For the attainment of a decorative effect, the glaze sometimes was covered with a network of crackling.

These indicated characteristics of the ceramic body and glaze of Longquan celadons of the Yuan period are exactly those found in the celadon dish of the episcopal court, thus supporting the other evidence that it was made in the Yuan period. This analysis corresponds well with the chronology established from the archaeological context of the dish.

The Spread of Longquan Celadons across Asia

Celadons of the Longquan style—dishes of medium and large size, plates, and saucers—whose décor is similar to the décor of the dish from the episcopal court, were widespread. The chronology of the circulation of such dishes embraces the date of deposition of the dish from the episcopal court obtained from independent sources.

Such celadons are found in China in excavations of the Longquan kilns of the Southern Song and Yuan periods (Palmgren 1963; Zhu and Wang 1963). There are a good many such dishes in deposits of ceramics from the Yuan period in the regions close to the centers of production. Thus in Jiangxi 江西

province, we know of two such deposits of the late Yuan period: a deposit found in Gao'an 高安 district (Liu and Xiong 1982: 62, 64–66, 68, figs. 16, 20) and one found in 1984 in the vicinity of the city of Lean 樂安 (Yu and Mei 1989: 76, 78, fig. 11.1; pl. 7). Yet another deposit with such celadons of the Yuan period was found in the vicinity of the city of Taojin 淘金 in neighboring Hunan 湖南 province

(Zhang 1987: 21, fig. 1.10; 3, fig.10) [Fig. 26]. Moreover, the cargo of thousands of celadons in the cargo vessel that sank at Sinan off Korean in 1323 en route, apparently, to Japan included celadons of interest to us with the paired depictions of fish: “... pairs of fish in applique relief” (Ayers 1978: 80; Carswell 2000: 108).

Longquan celadons similar to the dish from the episcopal court were common not only in China during the Southern Song and Yuan peri-

ods but also widely across Asia and even into North Africa. Such celadons have been found in excavations in Karakorum in Mongolia (Evtukhova 1965: 245); in Khara-Khoto (Rodionova and Frenkel’ 2012: 16, fig. 7; Rodionova 2017, ill. 145); in Iran (Morgan 1991: 70; pl. IV-d: A-D; pl. V-a: B, E; fig. 8: 36–50; fig. 7: 36, 44–45); in Fustat (old Cairo) in Egypt (Gyllensvärd 1975: 104–105; pl. 15.5–8; 110–111; pl. 27.1, 2); and in Southeast Asia (Wirgin 1970: 83; Gyllensvärd 1975: 111). Wherever it is possible to speak of more or less precise dating, such celadons date either to the Yuan period, or, in the case of Fustat in Egypt, more broadly, from the Southern Song to the Ming period. We note that such a dating somewhat differs from the dating obtained in the first instance on the basis of stylistic analysis.

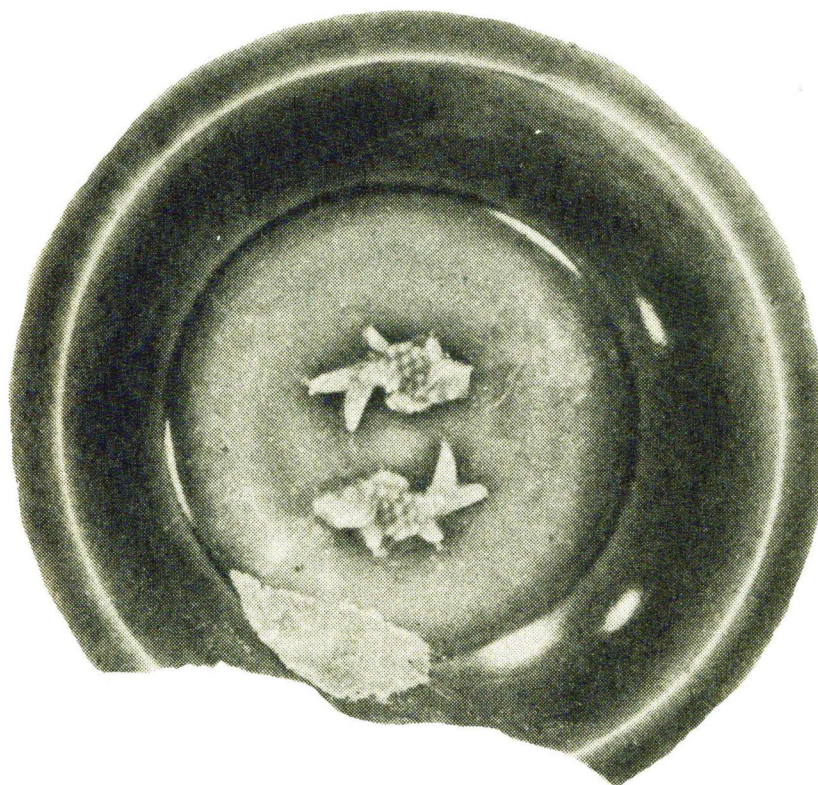


Fig. 26. A Yuan period Longquan celadon from a deposit found in the vicinity of Taojin. (After: Zhang 1987: 23, fig. 10)



Fig. 27. Middle-Eastern imitations of Chinese celadons with molded fish décor. Left to right: fritware dish, Iran, 14th century (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford: EA1978.2305); fritware, probably Iran, 14th century (British Museum: Godman Bequest, OA G284; OA 1931 2-17.1); fritware, possibly Nishapur or Tabriz (Iran), ca. 1450-1550 (Victoria and Albert Museum, London: C.10-1947). (Photos courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh)

Also known are pseudo-celadon imitations of such dishes made in the Near East [Fig. 27], where the evocation of the fish motif included stylistically similar versions with two, three, and even four fish. At least some of these probably were produced under the Mongol Il-khanids and their immediate successors in Iran.

Indeed, the range of distribution of Chinese medieval celadons, often with evidence for the impact they had on local ceramic production, is very broad—from the Russian Far East (Gel'man et al 1996: 166–67) to Indonesia and the Philippines in the southeast (Troinitskii 1911: 7; Kverfel'dt 1938: 189; Hobson 1924: 22), to the southwest in Africa south of the Sahara (Xia 1963: 17-19; Glukhareva and Denike 1948: 57; Carswell 2000: 64–65), to Western Europe (Kverfel'dt 1938: 191; Wood 2011: 80) and Ancient Rus in the northeast (Koval' 2017: 758).

Celadons in Western Eurasia and Eastern Europe during the Yuan Period

On the territory of the former USSR west of the Urals, the earliest celadons from the end of the first millennium have been located in Transcaucasia, where they circulated through all of the Middle Ages (Kverfel'dt 1938; Shelkovnikov 1954; Abilova 1956). The first celadons arrived in Transcaucasia most probably from the Near East, where they in turn had arrived from the end of the first millennium as a result of Arab maritime trade (Shelkovnikov 1954: 368; Poluboiarinova 2003: 155). On the east side of the Arabian peninsula, the first Yue-Yao celadons (Krahl 1994, 1: 180) appear in the 9th–10th centuries (Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens 1988:

91–92, 105). At that time Yue-Yao wares appear as well in Transcaucasia (Shelkovnikov 1954: 371–72). As early as 1911, Sergei Nikolaevich Troinitskii wrote (1911: 7) about the coincidence of the presence of celadons outside of China proper and the presence of Chinese coins of the 10th–11th centuries. Later, Ernest Kondratovich Kverfel'dt noted (1947: 27) that “Arab merchants already in the 11th century brought them [celadons] for the first time to Europe under the Arab designation ‘martabani.’”

North of the Caucasus celadons began to appear in large quantities following the Mongol conquest at the end of the 13th century (Poluboiarinova 2003: 163; Mazurov and Koval' 2004: 302), and the peak of their dissemination comes in the 14th to the beginning of the 15th centuries.

Yet an awareness of the fact that among the finds of Golden Horde and Early Rus cities of the late Middle Ages are celadons, and more generally Chinese imports, only gradually entered Russian scholarship. The first to discover Chinese ceramic imports in the ruins of Golden Horde cities in the 1840s was Aleksandr Vlas'evich Tereshchenko (1806–1865), a functionary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a member of the Archaeological Commission, and an extraordinarily accomplished amateur archaeologist. Beginning in the second half of the 18th century, scholars and administrators (e.g., Vasilii Tatishchev, Petr Rychkov, Samuel Gmelin, Ivan Lepekhin, and Johann Fal'k) had noted in the region along the Volga some grandiose ruins (Glukhov 2014: 92–93), which, as later became known, were the remains of Golden Horde cities. From 1843 to 1851, Tereshchenko, a graduate of Khar'kov University who held the rank

of “Actual State Counselor,” studied one of these locations, the former capital of the Golden Horde (Saray Berke), located on the lower Volga. As Svetlana Borisovna Adaksina has noted (1993: 47), “these were the first large-scale excavations in Russia of a medieval city.”

In one of the volumes of the *Notes of the St. Petersburg Archaeological and Numismatic Society* describing his excavations, Tereshchenko wrote (1850: 382, 385–86) that in 1846 he had found “... broken faience and porcelain dishes with depictions on them of flowers and birds; ... found under beams were faience and porcelain dishes, which, however, were already broken.” Apparently the following excerpt of his work pertains to celadon: “A faience dish of pale green color. It is noteworthy, as apart from its inherent distinction is the fact that until it was found, no complete objects of faience had been found which the Tatars must have obtained from China, with which they interacted. It is decorated with inscribed stripes and patterns ...” (ibid.: 408). The celadon finds from Tereshchenko’s excavations were published in 2005 (*Zolotaia Orda* 2005: 233–34, Hermitage Inventory Nos. Sar-144, Sar-145 and Sar-156).

One should note that Tereshchenko’s finds of Chinese porcelain and celadon in a Golden Horde settlement did not lead to general recognition of the fact that fine Chinese ceramics were imported into the cities of the Golden Horde. Thus, in the *Reports of the Society of Archaeology, History and Ethnography at the Imperial University of Kazan’* in 1878, appended to an article with the expressive title “On a remarkable Chinese coin of the end of the 10th or beginning of the 11th century, obtained in the village of Bolgary in August 1877,” was the following sentence from the pen of a professor of the capital’s university: “We have no information whatsoever regarding relations of ancient China with the lands that are Russia today” (Vasil’ev 1878: 123).

The situation began to change at the end of the 19th century. A deposit of Eastern dishes which included a whole series of celadons was discovered in the Moscow Kremlin under the floor of the Cathedral of the Annunciation (Fekhner 1956: 94). In a 1901 article about excavations at Akkerman (at the mouth of the Dniester River in Ukraine), Ernst Ro-

manovich fon Shtern (1901: 40) singled out “... two pieces of a dish of ancient Chinese greenish turquoise (‘meer-grun’) ‘celadon-porcelain’... which, as is known, rarely made its way to Europe and therefore was highly valued.” In 1911, describing the porcelain gallery of the Imperial Hermitage, Sergei Nikolaevich Troinitskii provided a precise description of a Chinese celadon, enumerated locations outside of China where such ceramics were found, and mentioned as well the Moscow deposit in the Annunciation Cathedral. In the section devoted to ceramics in the report about excavations by S. N. Pokrovskii at the Bolgar settlement site carried out just before the start of the First World War in July 1914, Mikhail Georgievich Khudiakov wrote (1916: 213): “A good many pieces of porcelain were found. They are covered in a greenish glaze, and on several shards can be seen a design in green, a delicate vegetal ornament; on one of the fragments are traces of some kind of raised depiction in red” In the conclusion to another work dedicated specifically to Chinese ceramics from the excavations at Bolgary, a major urban site prior to the coming of the Mongols and under their rule, located midway up the Volga River, Khudiakov indicated more precisely (1919: 119): “Relations of Bolgary with China, known from finds at Bolgary of Chinese coins and mirrors, have received new confirmation.” In his work published in 1923 about new excavations at Saray, the capital of the Golden Horde, Frants Vladimirovich Ballod (1923: 42) already wrote that celadon ceramics were found “in huge quantities.”

One notes as well that the first finds by Aleksandr Tereshchenko are related to the beginning of scholarly discussion about the importing of Korean celadons into the Volga cities of the Golden Horde. In 1969 N.M. Bulatov noted that one of the celadons found by Tereshchenko has analogies among Korean celadons of the Goryeo period (Bulatov 1969: 56–57, citing Kiuner and Dubrovina 1953). Mark Grigor’evich Kramarovskii (2005: 96, 98) mentions the presence of Korean celadons in Golden Horde cities as a proven fact. In 2011, a short report of a conference presentation even ventured (albeit cautiously and without supporting evidence) a Korean origin for “a not insignificant part” of the celadons found in the medieval monuments of the Caucasus and Eastern Europe



Fig. 28. Pseudo-celadon cup discards from unsuccessful firing in the kilns at the Selitrennoe hillfort. (After: Egorov and Pigarev 2017, 722, figs. 5.1, 2)

(Gadzhiev and Lim 2011). In 2013, Airat Maratovich Gubaidullin (2013: 193, fig. 5.7) published a celadon dish from the Golden Horde city of Bolgary on which is inscribed a Korean or Chinese character. He thus suggested a Korean provenance for the piece, an attribution that since has been disputed by Vladimir Iur'evich Koval' (2017: 758).

In the period of the Golden Horde, celadons produced in various Far Eastern ceramic centers are found in the cities of the Golden Horde located in the Black Sea region along the lower Dnieper, in Transcaucasia and the Northern Caucasus, in Moldova, and along the Volga. In the Golden Horde cities, celadons are found on the premises of the "rich residences, palaces and public buildings" (Tikhomilova 2002: 247). The celadons came into the Golden Horde along the Silk Road (Fedorov-Davydov 2001: 217) or by sea (Raby 1986). Attesting to the popularity of celadons in the Golden Horde is the appearance in Golden Horde cities of the production of pseudo-celadons—*kashin* ceramic dishes whose shape and glaze color imitate celadons (Bulatov 1968: 108–9; Fedorov-Davydov 1994: 134; Egorov and Pigarev 2017) [Fig. 28]. The celadons that came into Rus' must have traveled via the cities of the Golden Horde.

Celadons have been found in ten cities of Ancient Rus, located on the territory of Russia and Ukraine: Moscow, Tver', Kolomna, Riazan', Velikii Novgorod, Kiev, Chernigov, Nizhnii Novgorod, Vladimir in Volynia, and Lutsk (Koval' 2010: 134–36; 2017: 758–60). There are dozens of shards,

pieces estimated to have come from some 40 to 50 dishes. Among them, the dish of the episcopal court most closely resembles a fragment of the bottom of a dish found in Tver' [Fig. 29] (Koval' 2010: 136). The discovery of celadon in Novgorod was first reported in a short communication by Ernest

Kondratovich Kverfel'dt (1938: 188). Two small fragments of celadons from Novgorod, found in the strata of the mid-14th and second quarter of the 15th centuries in the Nerev and Trinity excavations, have since been published [Fig. 19 above] (Koval' 1997a: 159, fig. 2.9; Rodionova and Frenkel' 2012: 24, ill. 9). The topography of the find of the dish



Fig. 29. A fragment from a Longquan celadon dish with underglaze molded décor excavated in Tver'. (After: Koval' 2010: col. pl. 55:3)

from the episcopal court supports the idea that the celadon belonged to someone from the entourage of the Novgorod archbishop. The fire of 1340 occurred at the time of the archbishopric of Vasilii Kalika (1331–1350). Apparently the last owner of the dish was one of his staff.

How the Celadon Reached Novgorod

Found in a socially prestigious region of Novgorod, this dish most probably had traveled from a Golden Horde city via another old Russian city, Moscow being the most likely candidate. The association of celadon finds with church circles corresponds well with the circumstances of the celadon finds in Moscow (Koval' 1997b) and in other old Russian towns (Fekhner 1956: 94; Beliaev 2010: 25, n. 13; Mazurov and Koval' 2004: 302). To hypothesize that there might have been a connection of the celadon in question with the Moscow Grand Prince, Ivan I Kalita (1288–1340), fits with what we know about the role the Moscow princes began to play as representatives of the political power of the khans in Russian lands and as chief collectors for the tribute which was paid to the Golden Horde. Furthermore, the consolidation of princely power in Moscow was substantially aided by the princes' close relationship with the Orthodox hierarchs.

Novgorod had managed to escape direct interference by the minions of the Golden Horde in city administration as well as direct military contact with the Horde. The khans dealt but indirectly with the city via their vassals, the early Russian princes to whom they had delegated their military, fiscal, and in part diplomatic functions. Novgorodian merchants could act as middlemen in trade with the Volga region. While a substantial amount of Golden Horde ceramics have been found in Novgorod, dating to the middle and third quarter of the 14th century (Koval' 1997a: 165; 1998: 169), few of these vessels were the costly celadons imported from across Asia which would have merited special attention. And in fact the date of the deposit of the Longquan dish in the cultural stratum of the episcopal court in 1340 is somewhat earlier than the mass appearance in Novgorod of Golden Horde imported ceramics. The dish itself has to have been produced sometime prior to that year, and one thus has to wonder whether in fact it was an object of trade.

Among the other possible explanations for its acquisition might be river piracy, where Novgorodian river raiders (known as *ushkuiniki*) acquired a reputation for forays far to the south, in some cases in the vicinity of Golden Horde cities. But the peak of the activity of the *ushkuiniki* came in periods of political instability and military defeats of the Horde, that is in the last third of the 14th to the 15th centuries. By the last quarter of the 14th century, the quantity of ceramic imports from the Golden Horde in fact gradually diminishes, and none of the ceramic fragments include celadons. So one might think the *ushkuiniki* would not have valued as trophies such objects as large and heavy celadon vessels. Therefore, if our celadon from the episcopal court was neither a trade good nor a trophy, what other explanation might there be for how it arrived in Novgorod?

Might it have been a gift, in a culture where gifting was an important practice that cemented political and personal alliances? Here is one possible scenario, based on what we know from the chronicles. In 1335, Novgorod was visited for the second time by the Moscow Grand Prince Ivan Kalita. In the same year the Novgorod leadership, including the archbishop, visited Moscow on the invitation of Kalita. In the words of the Novgorod chronicle, "In the same year Bishop Vasilii traveled to Grand Prince Ivan in Moscow *to be honored*" (*PSRL*, 43: 111; emphasis added). Historians have noted that in Moscow the representatives of the Novgorod elite—the archbishop, mayor, leader of the thousand, and the elite nobles—were "treated with affection" by the Grand Prince (Solov'ev 1988: 229). It is possible that the celadon came into the hands of someone in the suite of Vasilii Kalika at precisely this moment, and that this person took it back to Novgorod, only to lose it to the fire five years later.

The interest of such a dish may well have derived from its decorative imagery rather than its exotic rarity. In the Old World, a composition such as that of the two fish is polysemic. From early times this composition was one of the signs of the Zodiac. In the Christian world, the depiction of two fish carries a different symbolic meaning, as is evident in the following New Testament quotation: "And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and *the two*

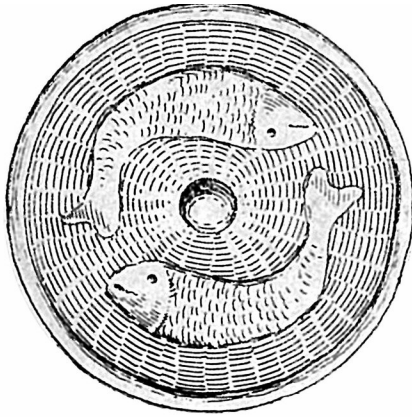


Fig. 30. A type of metal mirror from a nomadic grave, Golden Horde period. (After: Fedorov-Davydov 1966: 79, ris.13, H1)

fishes, and looking up to heaven ...” [Matthew 14:19, King James version, emphasis added]. In medieval Christian material culture, paired depictions of fish are known, among other places on ceramics. Nadezhda Iur’evna Vishnevskaja has shown convincingly (2009: 338) that “the motif of two fish on a dish is connected with the Gospel theme of the eucharistic feast.”

We have noted above the meaning of such a composition in China. But in the Golden Horde, too, the given composition was very popular. One type of Golden Horde copper coin has just such a depiction (Lebedev and Klokov 2010: 38, Nos. 125–27; 49, fig. 2/125–27). In the Golden Horde cities of New Sarai, Bolgary, and Biliar and in graves were found round metal mirrors with such a depiction of fish [Fig. 30] (Fedorov-Davydov 1966: 79, fig. 13; Valeev and Rudenko 2005: 178, fig. 6). Scholars have noted that paired depictions of fish on mirrors derive “from Chinese motifs” (Fedorov-Davydov 1994: 203). The precise semantic meaning of this symbol in the Golden Horde milieu is difficult to determine, but possibly might have been similar to the Chinese understanding. Mirrors with paired depictions of fish are known among the Jurchen. Given what we know about the dissemination of mirrors from the Far East in various periods, this suggests one possible mode of transmission of the motif to the Volga region.

We propose then that the presence of the dish with Chinese symbolism in the residence of the Novgorod archbishop can be explained by the Christian reinterpretation of a traditional Chinese symbol. The interactions between the Mongols and their Orthodox subjects in Rus occurred in

various ways. Prince Ivan I Kalita made several trips to the Horde in order to secure his position and a guarantee that his heirs would continue to enjoy the khan’s favor. The head of the Russian Church, Metropolitan Peter, who would end his days resident in Moscow, also visited Sarai, where the khan confirmed privileges granted to the Church. Some Russians, willingly or unwillingly, resided in the cities of the Golden Horde, and an Orthodox bishopric had been established there. There is good reason to think that the Mongols and the Russians would have developed some appreciation (if not acceptance) of each other’s cultural values. If “read” according to a Christian cultural code, a celadon that may have been understood very differently by the Mongols thus could have been perceived as having particular value for the Christian elite of the Russian principalities. So it is reasonable to hypothesize how it could have made its way to Moscow, and from there on to Novgorod, where its final owner was a resident of the episcopal court.

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