

## **West Slope pottery from Bulgaria (Abstract)**

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The article is the first overview of the West Slope style ancient pottery, discovered in the territory of Bulgaria. The analysis comprises finds from throughout the country and is based both on published materials and materials that were studied by the author at first hand. The text is structured in the following large parts: places of discovery (contexts); Attic type of West Slope pottery; Asia Minor type of West Slope pottery; West Slope pottery with conventional decoration; West Slope pottery from Southwestern Bulgaria with parallels in the Northern Aegean and ancient Macedonia; “Pontic type” of West Slope pottery.

Within these parts, where possible, the specimens are presented as morphological groups. The group of Attic specimens (or vases of Attic type) is distinguished with all necessary cautiousness, as there are no analyses of the clay. The risk of incorrect identification was the reason for setting apart the group of West Slope pottery with conventional decoration, comprising vases of various styles and uncertain manufacture, some of them possibly of Attic origin. The conclusion summarizes the data from the analysis. In chronological terms, it is established that vases of the West Slope type appeared early, in the very beginning of their manufacture, and not only along the Black Sea coast, but also in the Thracian interior. In the later stages of the Hellenistic Period (after the middle of the 3rd c. BC), the imports (and the manufacture?) of West Slope pottery increased, but it is concentrated mainly on the Pontic coast and less along the major rivers (respectively major trade routes) – in Kabyle on Tundzha, Ruse on the Danube,

Koprivlen and other sites on Mesta. Vases with West Slope decoration persisted longest in the Black Sea poleis (Mesambria) and were both imported (from Asia Minor) and of local, Pontic origin. In the territory of present-day Bulgaria, West Slope vases, manufactured in various workshops in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea area, were found.

The variety of stylistic groups is due entirely to the geographic distribution of the finds. In the Black Sea area and the interior of Eastern Thrace that was related to its markets, those stylistic groups predominate that were typical of the Pontic region as a whole – Attic (and imitations), Asia Minor (and imitations), and local Pontic. To the west, this cultural community is manifested to the region of Chirpan (Halka Bunar at Bratya Daskalovi) and Ruse. However, the finds from the area of Plovdiv are stylistically related to the group from the reaches of Mesta and Struma and one more time indicate the stability of the trade routes through the Rhodopi Mountains to the Thracian Plain and the relations of Thrace with manufacturing centres in ancient Macedonia. The whole pattern of distribution of West Slope pottery indicates a good reception among both the customers in the Pontic colonies, where higher quality specimens from Attic ergasteria were also imported (finds from Nesebar and Varna), and the Thracian population in the interior. The presence of specimens of “Pontic” manufacture in Ruse and Kabyle (and probably other places) indicates uninterrupted contacts with the colonies in the Middle and Late Hellenistic Period.