

## **Table ware with plastic zoomorphic decoration from 13th century Preslav**

**Snezhana Goryanova**

Several new articles were added to the collection of pottery vessels with plastic zoomorphic decoration from Veliki Preslav. They were found in garbage pits, which - to judge from the coins and pottery - date back to the 13th century AD. One of them is a rim sherds of a jug (4.6 cm high) with a spout shaped as a bird's head, most probably a rooster or an eagle. A couple of sherds belong to a ceramic aquamanile with a barrel shaped body (minimal diameter 7 cm), two rounded legs and a spout shaped as a bull's head with long and strong horns. Both vessels are slipped and covered with olive-green colored glazes. The jug is thin-walled and the clay of the sherd section has a uniform light red color due to firing. The aquamanile was slipped and 1/3 to 1/2 of the sherd section thickness beneath the slip is grey colored. Similar vessels with zoomorphic decoration were found in other Bulgarian sites, medieval Chersoneses (Ukraine), Central Asia, Transcaucasia, Central Europe and in the Mediterranean. Technologically, the sherds published here belong to a ware, which is typical for the entire Bulgarian territory in 12th and 13th century AD. The typical features of the

sherds - clay, firing, quality and colors of the slips and the glazes, and the location of the plastic decoration - relate the ware to the typical pottery production of 13th century Preslav and to the relevant archaeological evidence yielded by the area of the destroyed royal buildings. The zoomorphic decoration was very popular in the pottery production and the arts in all historic periods on a vast territory. In the early Middle Ages, the zoomorphic decoration in Bulgaria is usually on the jug handles or bodies. In 13th and 14th century AD the zoo- and anthropomorphic decoration more often turns into a functional element of the vessel. Such examples are found at Pernik, Kyustendil, Silistra and the village of Vetren, near Silistra. While in the Early Medieval period the animal representation was related to the totemism, in the Christian period it assumed a new meaning. Animals embodied various spiritual identities: Virgin Mary as the rooster, a bearer of Vigilance and Good Advice, and Jesus Christ as the calf, „a sinless sacrifice”. Although the suggested interpretations are only hypothetical, the apotropaic functions of such images have deep roots in the traditional culture.