

Theme 3

Kilns, Workshops and Productions

AT THE THRESHOLD – POTTERY KILNS FOR SGRAFFITO WARE AND GÜNSENIN IV-LIKE VESSELS (LATE 14TH – EARLY 15TH C. AD) FROM URDOVIZA (KITEN) ON THE WESTERN BLACK SEA COAST

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Medieval Urdoviza (Kiten, SE Bulgaria) was of importance for the international maritime trade since it was mentioned in all Italian navigational maps from the 13th – 15th c. AD. The fortress often changed hands and was part of either the Byzantine Empire or the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. It was conquered by the Ottoman Turks in the 15th century. The recently discovered pottery kilns, dated in the late 14th – early 15th c. AD, were constructed partly using the medieval fortification that was no longer in use. They had two chambers and were vaulted, with a central pillar or arches supporting the grill. Ceramic tripods and cones were used to separate the pottery during firing. Unfinished sgraffito ware and a misshaped two-handled flat-bottom vessel, an imitation of a Günsenin IV amphora, were found inside the kilns.

The discovery is important because of its precise date, allowing a glimpse into the transition between the 14th and the 15th century pottery at a time when the surrounding lands were already under Ottoman rule. Ceramics from the kiln were used as a representative sample in distinguishing local from imported ware on a small-scale, regional level, showing the traditions and influences of pottery production. The information will enable other scholars to identify products of Urdoviza in case they were exported to other Black sea ports as part of local or international trade. Another important contribution is the identification of a production site of Günsenin IV-like vessels, a shape mainly connected with Byzantine tradition and represented on sites along the Black Sea Coast.