

Marian Rębkowski, *Średniowieczna ceramika miasta lokacyjnego w Kołobrzegu*. Kołobrzeg 1995, pp. 134, 42 figs, 72 tables.

Reviewed by Andrzej Buko

The book reviewed here is a monographic publication of the Medieval pottery from the early Medieval town founded on German Law at Kołobrzeg in the middle of Poland's Pomeranian coastline. It consists of seven chapters, the first "Introduction" (pp. 7–17) sets out the aim and scope of the work and the basic methods applied. The work covers the ceramics from Kołobrzeg of the period from the location of the town in the mid 13th century to the Medieval period (14th century). An important aim is the detection of spatial and socio-cultural differentiation within the distribution of pottery, including the differentiation of the local Slav population, and non-indigenous populations, mainly settlers from the area of present Germany. The author regards ceramics as an important indicator of the areas where these people settled, and also allows us to study long distance trade, elements of economic history and other aspects of daily life (p. 8). The area studied is restricted to the area within the walls of the located town. The author emphasises that his approach to the spatial and chronological distribution of ceramics from this site are strongly influenced by British examples (p. 14).

In the second chapter on the sources of information (pp. 19–65) the various categories of the vessels in use in the town in this period are presented: traditional wares (of Slav tradition), greywares, stonewares, imported glazed wares, polished wares and others. In chapter 3 (pp. 67–72) the author discusses the internal differentiation of these groups in terms of their functions and typology. The fourth chapter (pp. 73–85) is an attempt to determine, through the analysis of the spatial distribution of these ceramic groups the beginnings of the located town, its relation to the earlier Slav settlement, the boundaries of the Medieval town, the directions of its expansion, the local production of ceramics. Here the author discusses the possibilities of using ceramics as an indicator of socio-cultural changes. The fifth chapter (pp. 87–94) considers at some length questions concerned with ceramics used as a source of information on trade contacts, and here the structure and chronology of imports to Kołobrzeg are analysed, together with the provenance and function of the imports. The final chapter (pp. 96–105) considers ceramics in their sociotopographical aspect. Here are presented the interesting results of the quantitative-spatial analysis which demonstrates the possibility of the identification of zones of differential social status of the occupants of different plots within the town.

The importance of the monograph of Rębkowski, although concerning material from Kołobrzeg, goes far beyond the problems of that particular site. This is the first early urban centre of this type from the area of Poland where the source materials have been published enabling the demonstration of the presence of large quantities of qualitatively-differentiated western European ceramics, from The British Isles, Denmark, Holland, Flanders, Lower Saxony and especially Rhenish stonewares. Rębkowski shows that the scale of these imports is not negligible. In the course of the period analysed the frequency of imports reached 22% of the assemblages. A large proportion of these were Rhenish stonewares which in the second half of the 14th century formed a large proportion of the imported vessels. The author's studies have therefore extremely important consequences for the study of long-distance trade routes between Pomerania and western Europe.

It is also worth emphasising the results of the analyses which show the presence in early Medieval Kołobrzeg of different traditions of ceramic production, including north- and middle-East German, differentiated by specific characteristics of the so-called greywares. The so-called traditional wares represent a different tradition, which is a continuation of traits of earlier western Slavic potting techniques. The attempt to document the sociotopography of early Medieval Kołobrzeg using the ceramics is also of interest. The technique used by Rębkowski is to study the spatial distribution of the

imported ceramics, which he interprets as luxury items. Despite the fragmentary nature of the data, the author notes a clear quantitative and qualitative differentiation within the material, which he links with functional differentiation within the urban area. He demonstrates large concentrations of imports around the market place or along the streets linking the marketplace with the riverfront. At the same time a degradation of the plots to the northeast part of the town is visible, here the quantity of imports decreases with time.

An important factor limiting Rębkowski's interpretation of his results is the pioneer nature of his work and the limited degree to which the contemporary ceramics of Pomerania have been published, and the problem of imports has been – for various reasons – been accorded even less attention. The results of the analysis of the ceramics from Kołobrzeg can therefore only be confronted to an extremely limited degree with results of investigations of other Pomeranian towns such as Szczecin, Wolin, or Gdańsk. One may only suspect that as in the case of Kołobrzeg, in such centres, the proportion of imported ceramics is even greater than the presently-available publications would suggest.

A weaker side of the reviewed work is the rather schematic morphological analysis of the vessel form, which here is reduced to questions of the function of the vessels, which limits the possibilities of defining their stylistic characteristics, this particularly concerns the traditional wares and greywares. The author also did not take advantage of the possibilities offered by modern laboratory analyses of ceramics for the better interpretation of locally-made and imported pottery. Technical aspects of pottery production are in general treated rather marginally. The financial constraints which (according to the author, p. 110) led to this state of affairs is a weak excuse.

Despite these omissions, Rębkowski's monograph is undoubtedly an important event in the field of the publication of Medieval pottery from Poland. From the existing literature until the appearance of this work, it was possible to form the opinion that the development of coastal towns on the south coast of the Baltic occurred differently from that of other European towns. The author's work has demonstrated that such conclusions are incorrect and based on the state of research, and that material from other sites needs to be re-examined and republished, due to this publication, Medieval Kołobrzeg has been brought closer to Medieval Europe. Let us hope that this monograph will act as a creative challenge to other workers, and lead in the near future to the detailed publication of material from other coastal towns in the region.

Translated by Paul Barford