

Evelina Todorova

Trade and communications In the Northern Periphery of the Eastern Mediterranean: the Amphora Evidence from the Present Bulgarian Lands (7<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD)

The Byzantine amphorae from the present Bulgarian lands through the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries are the topic of a recently defended PhD thesis. For the purposes of the study, a working typology is created and XX amphora types are discerned. The chronology of the types is defined using information from both already published materials and well dated contexts from recent archaeological excavations in Bulgaria. While mapping the finds some peculiarity of the distribution patterns emerged that allowed the amphora types to be generally grouped in three parts. The amphorae from type I to VII (second half/end of the 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> century) are not numerous at all. They are found at some of the Western Black Sea sites and the Maritza River course. There is a huge concentration of VIII to XVI amphora types (second half and/end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century – beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century) in the Eastern part of the country – in almost all the Western Black Sea ports, the Lower Danube, North-Eastern Bulgaria and the Maritza River course, while the finds from Western Bulgaria are scarce. The XVII to XX amphora type (12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century) are located exclusively at the Western Black sea ports and just few of them come from the Upper reaches of the Danube River and those of the rivers Struma and Maritza.

In order to better understand the reason for this distribution of the amphora material, general distribution of the Byzantine amphorae in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea area and the historical and economical background of Byzantium and the Ancient world are taken into consideration. This historical and contextual analysis of the finds showed, that the main factor influencing their distribution is the trade with luxurious goods coming from the Far East. The shifts in the distribution patterns of the amphorae reflect the political and economical changes in Byzantium and her neighbours, which from their part are due to shifts in the big trade routes. In the case of the amphorae from present Bulgarian lands, they are found exclusively in territories that are under Byzantine rule that are close to those trade arteries and are almost absent in those that belong to the Medieval Bulgarian state. The amphorae are distributed through two main infrastructures – free trade and state control over the food supplies, the so called *annona*. The correlation between them changes according to the political and economical circumstances through the period under consideration.