

ART

UDC 5527

FOR THE DECORATION OF KUTAISI GLAZED CERAMICS

Kartsidze Nona Gramitonovna,

Ugrekheldze Irina Iosifovna,

PhD, Associate Professor

Kutaisi State Historical Museum

Akaki Tsereteli State University

Sarava Nino Davidovna

Kutaisi State Historical Museum

PhD student

Tbilisi State Academy of Art

Sulaberidze Davit Nodarievich

PhD in History

Kutaisi State Historical Museum

Kutaisi, Georgia

Annotation: the article discusses the issues of stylization of the glazed ceramics decorated with the image of birds preserved in the Kutaisi State Historical Museum. Attempts at bird identification are presented. A conclusion is made about the presence of local signs in the artistic ways of decorating ceramics in Kutaisi materials.

Keywords: glazed ceramics; ornament; bird; stylization

During the archeological expeditions led by Professor Omar Lanchava in the territory of Kutaisi old city in 1984-2010, along with other important artifacts, a large amount of glazed ceramic material of the Middle Ages was discovered [1, p. 304], which is currently an interesting and rich collection of the archeology fund of the Kutaisi State Historical Museum.

According to archeological studies, there were foundry workshops in the territory of Kutaisi old city, near which artifacts representing various productions and items for

preparing glaze powder were discovered [2, p. 129]. It is probable that ceramic vessels were made here.

The collection includes both materials made by local artisans and imported from other regions; At the same time, samples developed on the basis of foreign traditions are observed.

Attention attracts the ceramic material of glazed ceramic vessels painted with various ornaments. Although it is sometimes impossible to fully represent the plot and motif on the fragments, one thing can be said from the markings – the masters used a traditional set of ornamental motifs for decoration and the whole composition agreed with the type and shape of the vessel. There are geometric (stripes, rings, concentric circles, ovals), vegetable (stylized leaves, flowers, branches, fruits); plant-geometric; Glazed vessels decorated with zoomorphic (various birds, fishes, predatory animals), abstract ornaments and symbols (religious, solar disk and “Borjghali”- the drill-representing the symbol of the sun in Georgian art). Among them, there are noteworthy and diverse bowls with zoomorphic images, namely birds. Their number in the collection is 12 items.

According to the compositional distribution of the image, the technique of drawing, and the type of bird, we divided the samples into 2 groups:

– fragments of bowls with the image of an adult stylized bird, with polychrome (two or three colors) painting, the composition almost completely fills the bowl’s area (4 units);

– fragments of bowls with the image of a small bird, with monochrome (green, brown, yellow, greenish-brown) painting, which occupy only the central part of the bowl (8 units). The composition is made by scratching.

Bowls with the image of an adult stylized bird have already been discussed by us in the previous publication [3, p. 8], at this stage we will consider bowls with the image of a small bird, they are made by scraping or combined method (scratching-scraping), monochrome (green, brown, yellow, greenish-brown).

Bowl (Field register book of Kutaisi fortress №722.04) – a fragment of the base and side, brown-burnt, well-precipitated clay. Bilaterally covered with white engobe.

On the yellow-green background of the inside, at the bottom of the jar, the image of a bird is scratched. He is facing right and holding a worm in his beak, which is represented by curved lines. A large oval surrounds the bird's round eye; The head is elongated; The high neck has two collars at the head and bottom; beak hooked; tail expanded and divided into three at the end; one wing shriveled; The body is decorated with parallel semicircles and circles, and the wing with feather markings. The legs end with large claws. Scratched lines are filled with dark brown paint. Its covered with colorless crystal glass. Footprints of the chieftain's feet have been preserved. The foot has a low, raised heel.

Dimensions: heel diameter – 7.5 cm; heel height – 1 cm; thickness of the clay – 0.6 cm; The height of the bird is 4.6 cm. Discovered: Kutaisi old city, accidental surface find (Fig 1, 1).

Bowl (museum inventory book №10130 AA-842. Field register book of Kutaisi fortress №5932.87) – a fragment of the base of gray burnt, well-precipitated clay. Bilaterally engobed in white. On the yellow background of the inner side, at the bottom of the cover, the right profile of the bird is scratched. He is holding a worm with his beak, which is represented by squiggly lines; It has a large, round eye, a high neck and two collars at the bottom; wings spread, sickle-shaped; The body is decorated with parallel semicircles and concentric circles, and the tail and wings with forewings. The legs end with large claws. Scratched lines are filled with dark brown paint. Transparent glaze is brushed over dish. On the inner side, there are traces of the feet of the upper heel. The surface is covered with yellow, brown spots and a colorless glaze is applied. The foot has a low, raised heel.

Dimensions: heel diameter – 7.8 cm; heel height – 1 cm; thickness of the clay – 0.5 cm; The height of the bird is 5.7 cm. Discovered: Kutaisi old city (Fig 1, 2).

Another fragment of a vessel, on which only part of the body – the tail and legs – has been preserved is similar to the above-mentioned two bowls' images, in terms of compositional solution, character of stylization and performance technique.



Fig 1. Small-sized glazed bowls with images of birds from Kutaisi

Bowl (museum inventory book №10130 AA-842. Field register book of Kutaisi fortress №8023. 90) – a fragment of the base, gray-faced, covered with white engobe on both sides. On the green background of the inner side, a bird with a right profile is made by scratch technique. The remaining part of the body is decorated with parallel semicircles and circles, and the wing is decorated with forewings. The tail is spread towards the end. It is identical to the above-described bowl (Fig 1, 1) with the mentioned elements of the decor and the manner of displaying the claws. Scratched lines are filled with brown paint. Its covered with a colorless glaze. The remains of the upper base can be seen on the inner side. Bowl has a low, wide, raised heel.

Dimensions: heel diameter – 7.5 cm; thickness of the clay – 0.5 cm; heel height – 1 cm; Discovered: Kutaisi old city (Fig 1, 3).

The identity of the bowls (Fig 1, 1 and Fig 1, 3) and the manner of execution of the painting, especially the same method of stylization, the same shape of the feet and brackets, give grounds to assume that they are the work of the same master.

Based on the appearance and size of the bird, all the three bowls described above are likely to depict a laughing dove.

Bowl (museum inventory book №10130 AA-842. Field register book of Kutaisi fortress №5933. 87) – a fragment of the base, badly damaged, burnt red, engobed in white from the inside. On a mustard-yellow background is an incised bird in left profile, which is difficult to distinguish. Only the densely spaced curved lines and

claws indicative of feathers are noticeable. Scratched lines are filled with brown paint. Covered with transparent glaze. Engobe is also visible on the outer face, which is covered with brown and yellow glaze.

Dimensions: thickness of the clay – 0.7 cm; Discovered: Kutaisi old city (Fig 2, 1).



Fig 2. Glazed bowls with a fragmentary image of a bird

Bowl (museum inv. book №10130 AA-842. Field register book of Kutaisi fortress №5936. 87) – fragment of the base, burnt red. The inner edge is covered with white engobe. A bird in left profile is scratched on a yellow background. The body is preserved, without the head. The body is decorated with small, parallel curved lines representing feathers, and the wings are stylized as a rhombus mesh. Scratched lines are filled with brown paint. Covered with transparent glaze. The outer sides are painted in white and covered with brown and yellow glaze. Bowl's heel is wide open and pulled out.

Dimensions: heel diameter – 8.5 cm; heel thickness – 0.5 cm; Discovered: Kutaisi old city (Fig 2, 2).

Bowl (museum inv. book №10130 AA-842. Field register book of Kutaisi fortress №5937. 87) – fragment of the base, red-burnt clay. The glaze on the fragment is badly damaged, only a part of the head and body remain. The left profile of the bird is scratched on the yellow background of the whitely engobed inner sides. The body of a bird is decorated with small, parallel curved lines representing feathers, and the wings are stylized as a rhombus mesh. There is a collar-ring on the neck. The eye is given as two small concentric circles. The bird is holding a worm in its beak with 2 broken lines.

Scratched lines are filled with brown paint. The bowl is covered with transparent glaze. On the outside, the part of the heel has a white engobe and covered with brown and yellow glaze. The heel of the foot is wide open and pulled out.

Dimensions: heel thickness – 0.5 cm. Discovered: Kutaisi old city (Fig 2, 3).

It should be noted that the bird depicted on the last 2 images (Fig 2, 2 and Fig 2, 3) resembles both a rock partridge and a quail. Due to its small size, it should be assumed that this bird is a quail, the opinion is supported by the curved collar-ring at the beginning of the bird's neck, which is a characteristic sign of the quail. Both paintings are characterized by a similar manner of execution and the same stylization – it is possible that both were made by the same master.

Bowl (museum inv. book №10130 AA-842. Field register book of Kutaisi fortress №5939. 87) – a fragment of the base, red-burnt clay. Inner and outer mouth has a white engobe. On the green background of the interior, in the center of the image, there is a bird in left profile. Drops of "bird's milk" typical of pigeons and sparrows flow from its hooked beak; His body is wrinkled; The wings are stylized in the form of a rhombus grid. Around the bird, in the concentric circles made with a combined scraping saw, are inserted floral ornaments in the form of spirals. Scratched lines are filled with brown paint. The glass has been covered with transparent glass. The outer side is glazed in green and brown. The heel is thin, wide, drawn out.

Dimensions: heel height – 1.3 cm; thickness of the fold – 0.6 cm; Discovered: Kutaisi old city (Fig 2, 4).

Bowl (museum inv. book №9539 AA-764. Field register book of Kutaisi fortress 4290. 85) – fragment of the base, red-faced. The inner edge is covered with white engobe. On the yellow background of the inner side there is a scratched image of a bird in left profile. Only the head, part of the body and short legs have survived on the fragment. has a high neck. The body is covered with scratchy forepaws. The eye is depicted as two small concentric circles. Drops, probably the "bird's milk" characteristic of pigeons and sparrows, flow from the eagle-like beak. Colorless glaze is applied to the bowl. On the outside of the heel, traces of white engobe can be seen, as well as brown and yellow specks of glaze. The heel is drawn out, high, wide open.

Dimensions: heel height – 2 cm; Discovered: Kutaisi old city, the ruins of the "Kings of Lazs'" palace (Fig 2, 5).

The bird depicted on the last 2 bowls (Figs. 2, 4 and Figs. 2, 5) should probably be a laughing dove. The basis of this opinion is the drops from the beak, female laughing dove secrete milk from their crop, so-called "Bird's milk" with which it feeds the baby birds. Although the image of the bird on these two sets is very fragmentary, it firmly can be said that both of them belong to the same master. The opinion is supported by the identity of the oblong-oval head, hooked beak and legs (extended triangular shape), as well as the same way of depicting feathers.

The period of manufacture of all the above-described samples, according to the accompanying material found with it, is determined by the XII-XIII centuries [4, p. 134]. Glazed ceramics with similar decor found in other regions of Georgia date from the same period [5, p. 59].

In the Middle Ages decorating glazed dishes with the image of a bird was a widespread tradition, both in Georgia and in Eastern and Western countries. Medieval Kutaisi was an advanced urban center in Georgia, and the craftsmen here were not strangers to the achievements of both Eastern and Western cultures.

In addition, it should be noted that we have not come across a vessel identical to the Kutaisi bowl (with the image of small birds) anywhere. Here, the small birds have eagle-like beaks and claws, which is undoubtedly a kind of handwriting, artistic interpretation and imagination of Kutaisi masters.

As we can see, in the Kutaisi materials, the presence of local signs in the artistic ways of decorating ceramics is clearly visible, which is undoubtedly an indicator of the activity of the creative potential of the craftsmen.

This work was supported by Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia (SRNSFG) [grant number FR-21-8738]

REFERENCES:

1. **Lanchava O. 2015:** Archeology of Kutaisi. Kutaisi (in Georgian).
2. **Kartsidze N., Lanchava O., Ugrekhelidze I., Sarava N. 2023:** Artifacts Reflecting the Traditions of Producing Glazed Ceramics from the Kutaisi Historical Museum. “Proceedings of Georgian National Academy of Sciences, series of History, Archaeology, Ethnology and Art History”, №II).
3. **Kartsidze N., Ugrekhelidze I., Sarava N., Sulaberidze D. 2024:** Glazed Ceramic Vessel with the Image of a Bird From the Kutaisi Historical Museum. VII International Scientific and Practical Conference “Global Science: Prospects and Innovations” [in print].
4. **Kartsidze N. 2010:** Medieval Glazed Ceramics from Kutaisi. Dissertation with manuscript rights. Kutaisi (in Georgian).
5. **Mitsishvili M. 1998:** Glazed Ceramics of the Middle Ages (IX-XVIII Centuries) Dissertation Copyright. Tbilisi (in Georgian).