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*A Scandinavian pot from a grave at the Viking
age settlement Timerevo, Russia
- a study of the ware as a contribution to the
interpretation of the pot*



Kontoret för Keramiska Studier

Ceramic Studies, Sweden

Report 8, 2007

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Vadensjö 2007

Innehåll

Introduction	s. 5
Methods	s. 6
Results	s. 6
Literature	s. 10

Introduction

The Viking age settlement Timerevo was one the most important outpost for the Vikings in 9th and 10th centuries. It was situated quite a distance from the major water route the Volga. Nevertheless, several finds and structures have shown that the site was of major importance during several hundreds of years. Among other things, Scandinavian graves have been found at Timerevo (Sedyh 2000).

Timerevo lays seven kilometres from the city of Yaroslavl, which lies 250 kilometres northeast of Moscow.

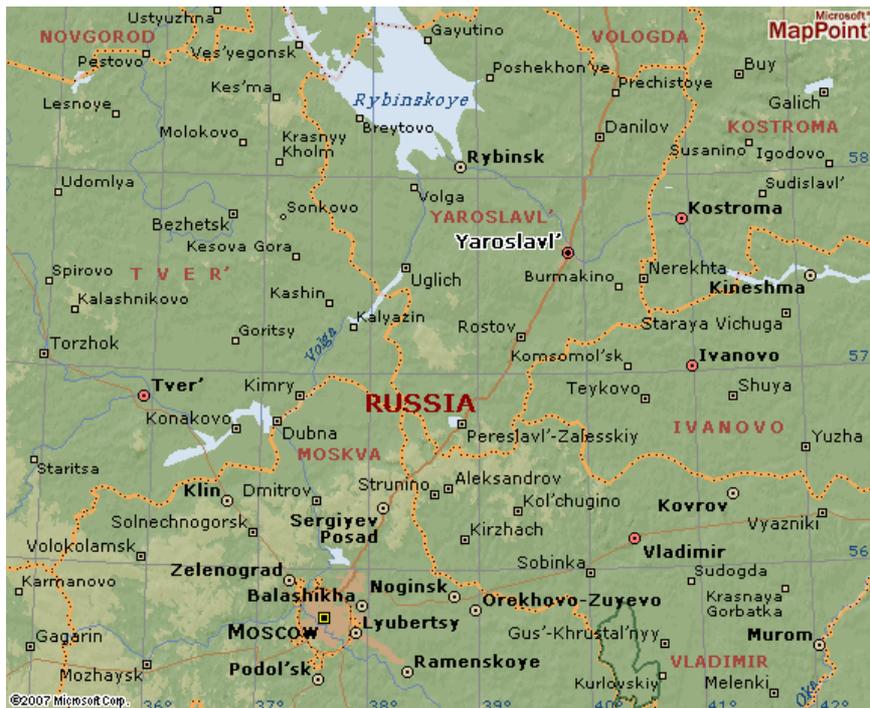


Fig. 1. Timerevo is situated about 250 kilometres northeast of Moscow, close to the city of Yaroslavl.

A Scandinavian pot was found in a grave during excavations in 1976. The grave has been named structure No. 19. The pot is a biconical pot with an inturned rim and no decoration appear on the surface. The vessel may, according to the system worked out by the Swedish archaeologist D. Selling, be classified as AIV:3a1, mainly dated to the 9th and 10th centuries (Selling 1955, p. 167 ff). According to the graves and the settlement at Timerevo, this type of pottery have been dated from late 9th century to the first quarter of the 11th century (Sedyh 2000, Fig. 6).

In order to study as much as possible of the vessel, a ware analyses was performed. The main question is to discuss where and how the pot was made. The analysis was performed by Ceramic Studies in Landskrona, Sweden.

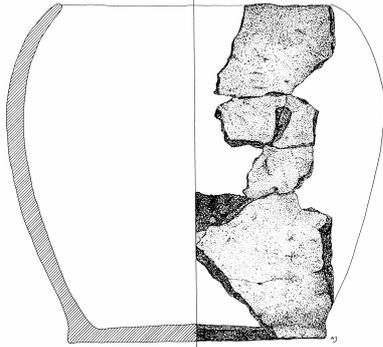


Fig. 2. A pot of Sellings AIV:3a1 (Brorsson 2002, Fig. 24, drawing A. Jeppsson).

Method

A thin section was made from the shard. In order to be used for comparative studies a thin section is made according to a standardised thickness of exactly 0.03 mm. In a polarising microscope it is possible to identify minerals in the silt- and sand fractions. The microscopy is not only a petrographic study, but it also involves other aspects of the pottery craft. It is possible to study different structures in the ware, such as vessel forming techniques, clay type, to distinguish added and natural temper as well as the amount and grain size of this material, organic matter e.g. diatoms and plant material etc. Particular observations of specific minerals and other features of the temper and clay have been noted.

Results

The pot is made out of sorted fine clay, without any presence of sand or silt (table I). Crushed granite in proportions of 16% of the ware was used as temper material. Maximum grain has been measured to 1.8 mm. Organic material, which most likely is grass, has been identified in the ware.

Table I. Result of microscopy of ceramic thin section from Timerevo.

Abbreviations: ++=very rich amount, +=rich amount, *=normal amount, -=low amount, x=presence, n.o= not observed

Thin section	Site	Vessel type	Sorted (S) / Unsorted (U)	Temper / Medium coarse / Coarse	Sand	Silt	Mica	Iron oxide	Iron hydroxide	Diatoms	Organic material	Calcium carboante	Temper material	Temper amount	Maximum grain size	Notes
1	Timerevo	Scandinavian	S	Fine		x	*	+	x	n.o.	x		nite	16	1.8	

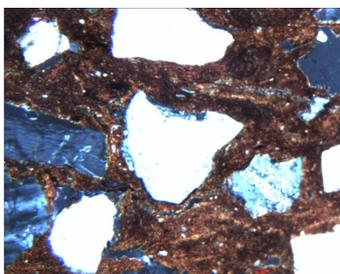


Fig. 3. Thin section of the Scandinavian pot from grave No. 19 at Timerevo. The pot was made out of fine clay and tempered with crushed granite. Photo: T. Brorsson

The pot was made in a very common method. The fact that the potter used a fine clay and tempered it with crushed granite shows that he or she made the vessel after a method that have

been used during thousands of years. It was a method that was used in former Russia as well as in Scandinavia.

The mineralogical composition of the ware cannot point out where the pot was made. Furthermore, the reference material is very limited and it is difficult to identify its origin.

Analyses of Ladoga vessels as well as Scandinavian vessels from Ryurik Gorodishche near River Volkhov showed that the different vessel types were made by same methods. The mineralogical composition of the wares was also the same. The presence of diatoms in the Scandinavian pots was used to point out that these pots were locally made in Gorodishche (Brorsson 2001, Tab. 1). It was most likely made by Scandinavian potters.

The analysis of the pot from Timerevo just shows how the pot was made, and that it was made by same methods as the Ladoga and Scandinavian vessels at Gorodishche. No diatoms were found in the vessel from Timerevo.

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|------|--|
| Nr 1 | Godsanalys av keramik från sju lokaler inom Naturgasprojektet i Bohuslän, samt från Tega Prästgård i Ytterby sn. – en studie av framställningsteknik och kärlgods under senneolitikum, yngre bronsålder och äldre järnålder. |
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| Nr 3 | Lerbottnar från 1100- och 1200-talen. Analys av rålorer som ett bidrag till lerbottnars funktion. Kv. Liljan, Malmö, Skåne |
| Nr 4 | Gudomliga skärvor – en inblick i ett andligt mellanolitikum. Analys av keramik från gånggriften i Västra Hoby, Kävlinge, Skåne |
| Nr 5 | Termiska analyser av bränd lera från ugnar i Norra Hyllievång, Malmö, Skåne |
| Nr 6 | Hällristarnas keramik – en inblick i keramiken från hällristningen samt boplatsen i Tossene, Tossene sn. Sotenäs kn, Bohuslän |
| Nr 7 | Termiska analyser av sandprover från gravfältet i Odberg, Larvik kommun, Vestfold, Norge |
| Nr 8 | A Scandinavian pot from a grave at the Viking age settlement Timerevo, Russia
- a study of the ware as a contribution to the interpretation of the pot |