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12 The Fortress of Çoban Kalesi, Late Medieval Ceramic and Small Finds

The fortress of Çoban Kalesi (S32) is situated on the Black Sea coast to the north of Cide and near the modern village of Çayyakka (Fig. 12.1). The Medieval *kale* is located on a small rocky peninsula with steep slopes, which is presently connected to the mainland by a small land ridge on its southern side (Fig. 12.2), each side is flanked by a small, sheltered bay, where ships could probably moor.

In the course of the Cide Archaeological Project, fortresses such as Çoban Kalesi were investigated as part of the project's targeted reconnaissance activities (section 4.3.2). This involved the production of a basic map, the description of the site, its surroundings and any extant architectural features as well as the collection of surface artefacts.

The fortification walls of the castle are placed directly on top of the northern sloping bedrock and run from the eastern to the western edge of the small peninsula (see also Belke 1996: 185). They are built in straight segments, interspersed at regular intervals by two round towers at the outer edges, four rectangular towers in between, and a number of smaller triangular towers/buttresses (Fig. 12.3). A rectangular

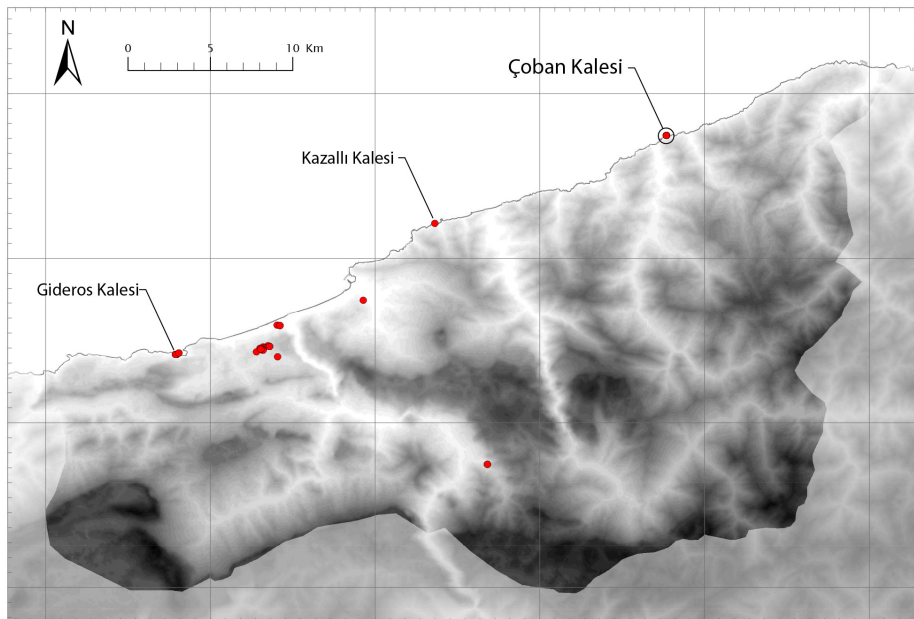


Fig. 12.1: Map showing the location of Çoban Kalesi (S32) in relation to other kales and contemporary sites. Produced by Toby C. Wilkinson.



Fig. 12.2: Schematic plan of Çoban Kalesi (S32). Produced by Victor Klinkenberg.



Fig. 12.3: A view of the fortifications of Çoban Kalesi (S32) (CAP-P2/198).

structure, probably a cistern, measuring circa 7 x 4m, can be distinguished at the top of the fortress. The walls (120cm wide) are made of flat squared stones in horizontal layers that are interspersed with thick layers of very hard mortar. No ceramic tiles or brickwork, typical of Byzantine building techniques, were used in the construction of these walls. Instead, unworked rubble set in a hard whitish lime mortar with fine aggregate (stones up to 1cm in size) would point towards a Genoese building technique (Crow and Hill 1995: 258-9).

The total amount of surface material collected at Çoban Kalesi consists of approximately 30 pieces, the majority of which derive from the round western fortification tower and its surroundings. Among the finds are glazed and unglazed wares as well as a few small finds made of glass and metal.

12.1 The Glazed Wares

The glazed pottery fragments from Çoban Kalesi include mostly open vessels, such as small-sized bowls for food consumption/distribution. They all have a thick whitish slip (or *engobe*) on the interior and on the upper part of the exterior surface. This white slip is often incised before firing with a fine sharp potter's tool in order to get a delicate thin-lined decoration. Furthermore, the slip can be gouged with a blunt or broad-bladed tool for thicker engraved motifs.

Two joined body fragments (C341) and one body fragment (C3200) are part of a so-called Monochrome Sgraffito bowl with a straight divergent upper body and straight symmetrical rim.¹ Their fabric colour is reddish yellow (5 YR 7/6) to red (10 R 5/8); the lead glaze on the interior and exterior surfaces of these sherds has a pale yellow (2.5 Y 8/4) to greenish-yellow tinge (5 Y 7/8) (Fig. 12.4). All three pieces have an incised decoration on the interior, showing a combination of finely engraved and gouged lines. The design is abstract and simple. It consists of concentric gouged circles at the centre and under the rim, which are filled in with vertical groups of fine straight and wavy lines.

The three fragments belong to the 'Zeuxippus Ware Family (IA)' and are variants of the so-called 'Zeuxippus Ware', a type of 13th-century AD glazed pottery with incised decoration that was first recognised during excavations at the Baths of Zeuxippus in Constantinople, modern Istanbul (e.g. Megaw 1968; Waksman and François 2004-2005; Vroom 2003: 164-5; 2005: 108-11; cf. for a similar shape, Inanan 2013: 76, table II-1, no. 6). The type of incised decoration on the three sherds is further known as '*motifs à rayons*', and it is sometimes alternated with S-shaped designs (François 1995: pl. 16a).

¹ The term 'Sgraffito' derives from the Italian word *sgraffiare*, which literally means 'scratching' (Vroom 2005: 203).

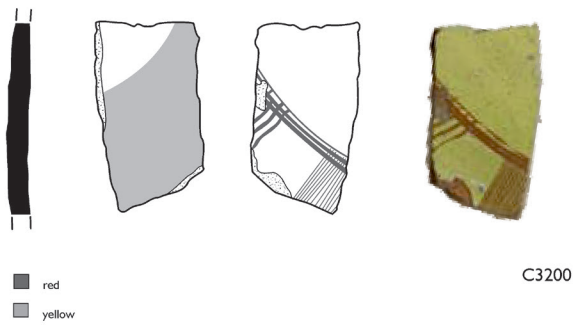
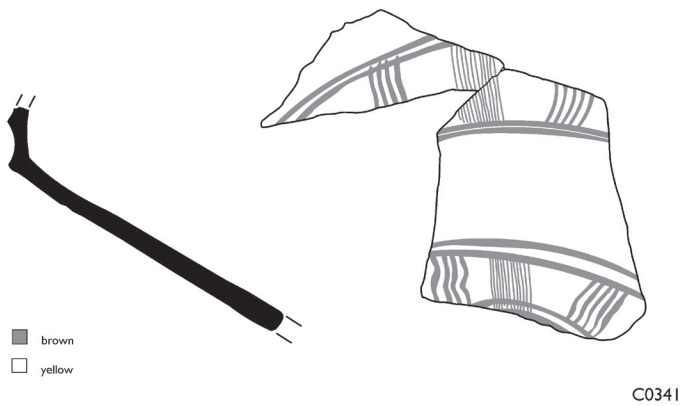


Fig. 12.4: Sgraffito sherds from Çoban Kalesi. Produced by Lorraine McEwan.

This decorative style is common on Late Medieval/Late Byzantine ceramics found on sites in Romania, Bulgaria and along the Black Sea coast (Nicolescu and Popa 1965: 313). We may notice similar-looking abstract motifs on pottery finds from Turnu-Severin, Zimnicea and Curtea de Argeş (Nicolescu 1960-61: fig. 20), from Pacuiul-lui-Soare (Nicolescu and Popa 1965: figs. 3, 4b *'l'onde exéctée au peigne'*), from Carevgrad Târnov (Georgieva 1974: 71, pl. V, 81, fig. 55), from Drastar (Koleva

2010: pl. I, nos. 17-200), from Chersonesos (Romancuk 2003a: figs. 62, no. 198, 63, no. 201, 183, no. 494, 185, nos. 499; 2003b: fig. 4, no. 3, fig. 9, no. 2; 2005), and finally from Azak (Bocharov and Maslovskiy 2012: fig. 1, nos. 16-7, group 2). A few fragments with such an incised decoration were also found in northern Greece (Thrace) and in Ilion on the western coast of Turkey (Böhlendorf-Arslan 2004: pl. 46, nos. 16-7 for Thrace, pl. 84, no. 246 for Ilion). As yet, however, we do not know the provenance of this type of glazed decorated ware.

These glazed engraved bowls can be generally dated in the second half of the 13th to the early 14th centuries AD (François 1995: 102). They were imported in various decorative styles and in substantial quantities to the northeastern Black Sea region and to the northern Azov region (especially to the site of Azak) from the middle to the third quarter of the 13th century AD. Apparently, towards the end of the 13th century AD, their import ceased entirely in both regions (Bocharov and Maslovskiy 2012: 272).

The survey at Çoban Kalesi also yielded other, contemporary, glazed wares. These include, for instance, a rim fragment (C3207) and a body fragment (C3204) of Monochrome Sgraffito Ware. The fabric of both pieces is dark red (10 R 5/4 to 2.5 YR 6/6) and covered with a white slip (5Y 8/1). The lead glaze on top of the fabric and slip has a dark olive to light green-yellowish colour (5 Y 4/4 to 8/2). Gouged concentric circles may be recognised on the interior upper part or below the rim of the sherds.

In addition, there are more finds of Monochrome Sgraffito Ware in various lead glaze colours, such as a body fragment (C3202) with a light red fabric (2.5 YR 6/6) and an olive greenish glaze (5 Y 5/6), and a rim fragment (C3203) of a dark red fabric (10 R 5/6) and a yellow glaze (5 Y 8/6). They all belong to the same date range as the above-mentioned fragments of the 'Zeuxippus Ware Family (IA)'.

An exception, however, is a rim fragment (C335) that is covered with a white slip in and out. Its shape is different from the rest, as it has a convex divergent upper body with a straight rim. This piece can probably be dated in the late 12th to early 13th centuries AD. Its fabric colour is brownish (10 YR 5/3); its lead glaze pale yellow (5 Y 8/4). In terms of its shape, this piece seems to belong to the so-called 'Incised Sgraffito Ware' group that can be dated in the late 12th and early 13th centuries AD (Vroom 2005: 90-1). This date would fit well with two late 12th to early 13th century AD Günsenin 3 amphora body fragments also from Çoban Kalesi.

12.2 The Unglazed Wares

Examples of unglazed utilitarian pieces from Çoban Kalesi include mainly closed vessels, such as jars and pots that are probably used for cooking. We can distinguish a rim fragment of a thin-walled cooking pot with an everted rim and a straight convergent upper body (C3201). Its fine fabric has a reddish brown colour (2.5 YR

4/4). Its shape is typical for Late Medieval cooking pots/jars found in the Black Sea region and in the northern Azov region. We see similar forms, for instance, in Chersonesos (Golofast and Ryzhov 2003: fig. 4, no. 1) and in Azak (Belinski and Maslovski 2005: pl. 7, no. 20), both situated on the northern shorelines of the Black Sea.

The pottery assemblage includes another rim fragment of a thin-walled jar (C3206). Its fine fabric has a light brown colour (2.5 YR 7/6), and its shape is related to Late Medieval pots recovered at the Genoese castle of Cembalo in Balaklava, on the southern coast of the Crimea (Adaksina *et al.* 2005: fig. 97, 1, 1).

Other pieces of Late Medieval unglazed cooking pots are also worth mentioning. Two fragments have perforated holes either in the rim below the handle (C334) or in the broad oval-shaped handle itself (C342). Their fabric is medium and has a reddish colour (10 R 6/6 to 5/3). Their form is analogous to pots/jars recovered at sites on the northern littorals of the Black Sea region, such as Cembalo/Balaklava and Azak (cf. for shape, Adaksina *et al.* 2005: fig. 97, 1 (1); Belinski and Maslovskiy 2005: pl. 7, no. 1 and Bocharov and Maslovskiy 2012: fig. 2, no. 17, Azak group 4, dated in the third quarter of the 14th century AD). The same handle shape can be detected in another cooking pot handle (C333), although its fabric is finer and has a light orange colour (7.5 YR 8/3).

Finally, I mention here a rim fragment with an applied 'pie-crust' decoration (C3205). The fabric is fine and has a light brown colour (2.5 YR 5/6). This piece has a convex convergent body with a flattened rim. A rim diameter of only 18cm suggests a use as a lid, perhaps for a large storage jar. In fact, we can recognise similar Late Medieval/Late Byzantine lids from Lusta in the Crimea and from Carevgrad Tărnov in Bulgaria (cf. for shape, Mytz 2002: fig. 22, no. 2 from Lusta; Georgieva 1974: figs. 34-5, 37 from Carevgrad Tarnov; Busuioc 1975: fig. 50, nos. 2-5.). The latter examples are generally dated in the 14th-15th centuries AD.

12.3 The Small Finds

Among the glass finds, we can distinguish a ring base fragment of a green glass vessel (F13) as well as a body fragment with an applied knob or droplet (F31) (Fig. 12.5). Both pieces probably belong to Late Medieval/Late Byzantine glass beakers with applied small droplets (or 'prunts') on the outside. Unfortunately, the pieces from Çoban Kalesi are quite small, but they look very similar to prunted beakers from Corinth (Greece), from sites in southern Italy and in the Near East, and in particular to vessels from Anaia/Kadı Kalesi (nearby Kuşadası, in western Turkey) and from the Seljuk Palace inside the inner Citadel of Alanya (in southern Turkey). The parallels from these sites can all roughly be dated to the 13th and 14th centuries AD (e.g. Davidson 1952: fig. 14, nos. 742, 744, 746; Bakirer 2009: figs. 1-9; Oral Çakmakçı 2013: 139, fig. VIII-4).

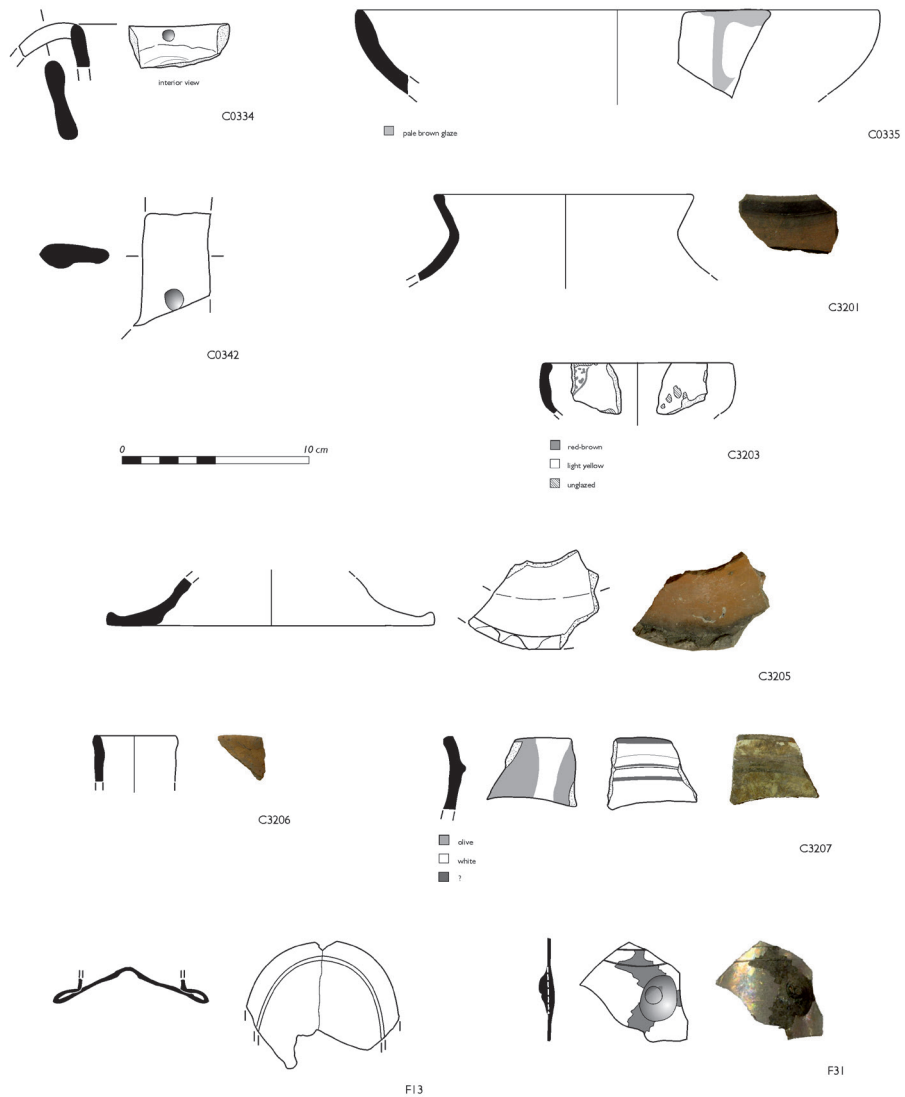


Fig. 12.5: Selected sherds and small finds from Çoban Kalesi (S32). Produced by Lorraine McEwan.

12.4 Some Concluding Remarks

To conclude, most of the surface finds from Çoban Kalesi can be dated to the Late Medieval/Late Byzantine period and especially in the 13th-14th centuries AD. Both the ceramic and the glass finds suggest that the Genoese fortification on the peninsula was in use only for a relatively short period. The only exceptions are a slightly earlier

glazed rim fragment of the late 12th-early 13th century AD and an unglazed lid fragment that can be dated in the 15th century AD. For the table wares, the most common glaze colours are yellow and olive green, mostly covering red-bodied fabrics and white slipped surfaces. The decoration of these glazed fragments mainly consists of incised abstract designs, such as concentric circles. On the basis of these characteristics, a few fragments can be identified as 'Zeuxippus Ware imitations' (or 'Zeuxippus Ware derivatives').

Pottery similar to the glazed decorated sherds from Çoban Kalesi has been found at several sites around the Black Sea, for instance in Bulgaria, Romania and along the Crimean coast, especially at Chersonesos and Azak. Both the glazed and unglazed pottery show that Çoban Kalesi was closely connected with other parts of the Black Sea region, and that these wares were imported from overseas. The fabric, style and date of the surface finds match the period in which - in my assessment - the Genoese fleet was very active in the Black Sea area and Genoese merchants were operating in many of the coastal markets in this region.

By the 12th century AD most of inland Anatolia (including the Byzantine province of Paphlagonia) had come under Seljuk control and only a narrow coastal strip with natural strongholds along the Black Sea coast remained under Byzantine overlordship between AD 1181 and AD 1282 (Booth 2004: 59 and map 4). Once coastal Paphlagonia was cut off from its interior agricultural hinterland and only accessible from the sea, towns and castles were forced to import grain and goods from elsewhere, and Venetian and Genoese merchants were often involved in their transportation (Karpov 1993: 57). Cities and fortresses now became increasingly isolated and were gradually constructed in a more defensive mode, as was obviously the case at Çoban Kalesi. It is therefore not entirely surprising that the fortification walls on the peninsula were constructed using Genoese building techniques.

The 13th-14th centuries AD is also the time in which Çoban Kalesi is described in Late Medieval portolan charts (navigational maps) as the station 'Gira Petra', although some scholars alternatively identify the site as 'Docastelli' (Belke 1996: 185). Whatever its Medieval name, it is perfectly plausible that the site was used in this period by the Genoese as a small trading post for a modest fleet of small- or medium-sized ships practicing cabotage navigation. This enabled the regional distribution of goods by petty merchants between harbours at short- or medium-range distances (Jacoby 2001: 229). Small boats with limited tonnage could moor quite easily in the sheltered bays south of the fortified *kale*. More generally, it is quite certain that harbours on the western coast of the Black Sea region such as Caffa/Feodosija and Cembalo/Balaklava were used by Italian traders as protective transit and transshipment stations for the stocking of provisions, money transactions and banking, as well as for ship repairs (François 1995: 143; Jacoby 2001: 229).

Although the Black Sea was known as a hazardous water to navigate, the exchange of goods in the region was based on seafaring throughout the centuries (securely attested from the Iron Age to Ottoman times and beyond). It is therefore

important to note that Çoban Kalesi is situated at the point where the western, anti-clockwise Black Sea current trends northwards, and facilitates a swift crossing of the Black Sea to the Crimea, and from there to Romania, Bulgaria and the Bosphorus (see section 2.2.1, this volume, and especially Fig. 2.5 for the Black Sea currents).

For the Italian maritime powers, the Byzantine province of Paphlagonia was an important region. Not only was it a strategic location for navigating the Black Sea, but also a major source of agricultural produce that was exported to Constantinople/Istanbul, the Crimea and other places in the Black Sea region. The shipping of agricultural products across the Black Sea is well documented at this time. It is well-known, for instance, that by the end of the 1280s AD the Genoese were involved in substantial grain exports from the northern parts of the Black Sea (e.g. Crimea) to the southern parts of the region (Karpov 1993: 59). Apart from grain, there was also intra-regional trade and transportation of textiles, wax, honey and slaves between the Crimea (Caffa) and Constantinople/Istanbul (Jacoby 2001: 227).

In short, the architecture and surface finds with parallels from the western and northern shores of the Black Sea and the northwest Aegean, as well as available historical information, seem to suggest that Çoban Kalesi was part of a Genoese intra-regional distribution system of commodities in the Black Sea area.

Catalogue of Illustrated Artefacts

Ceramics

- C334. S32. Rim fragment with handle attachment and perforation below handle. Red medium fine paste with some calcareous temper, sparse quartz and some brown grits. Oxidised firing. Wheelmade. Fabric 10 R 6/6, surface 10 R 6/6. D= 9cm.
- C335. S32. Rim fragment of bowl with glaze. Brownish medium fine paste with sparse calcareous and quartz inclusions, and some grit. Exterior and rim in part covered by glaze. Oxidised firing. Wheelmade. Fabric 10 YR 5/3, glaze 5 YR 8/4. D= 30cm.
- C341. S32. Sgraffito body sherd with carination. Brownish red fine paste with calcareous and sparse grog inclusions. Glazed with incised decoration. Oxidised firing. Wheelmade. Fabric 5 YR 5/6, glaze 10 YR 8/6.
- C342. S32. Handle fragment with perforation. Greyish brown paste with calcareous and mica inclusions. Differential firing. Wheelmade. No Munsell recorded.
- C3200. S32. Sgraffito body sherd. Brownish red fine paste with calcareous and sparse grog inclusions. Glazed with incised decoration. Oxidised firing. Wheelmade. Fabric 10 R 5/8, glaze 5Y 7/8.
- C3201. S32. Rim fragment of jar/cooking pot. Brownish red hard paste. Some smudging on rim. Oxidised firing. Wheelmade. Fabric and surface 2.5 YR 4/4. D= 14cm.
- C3203. S32. Glazed rim fragment of bowl. Dark red fine paste. Glazed. Oxidised firing. Wheelmade. Fabric 10 R 5/6, glaze 5Y 8/6. D= 10cm.
- C3205. S32. Pedestal base with impressed decoration. Light brown paste. Finger impressed decoration. Oxidised firing. Wheelmade. Fabric and surface 2.5 YR 5/6. D= 18cm.
- C3206. S32. Rim fragment of jar/jug. Light brown paste with dense black grit. Oxidised firing. Wheelmade. Fabric and surface 2.5 YR 7/6. D= 4cm.

C3207. S32. Glazed rim fragment. Dark red medium fine paste. Glazed decoration with decoration in reserve. Oxidised firing. Wheelmade. Fabric 10 R 5/4, glaze 5 Y 4/4. D= unknown.

Objects

F13. S32. Fragment of pedestal base of glass vessel. Very light yellow-brown colouring, oily patina. Folded ends. D= 8cm. 3mm thick.

F31. S32. Fragment of glass vessel with a knob attached. 1mm thick.

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