

Single-chamber kilns for everyday ceramics firing from the territory of the First Bulgarian Kingdom: Typology and origin

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Статията представя част от пълна типология на пещите за домашна керамика открити на територията на Първото българско царство (края на VII–началото на XI в.), изработена от автора. Използваният метод се основава върху монографията на руския изследовател А.А. Бобринский. Еднокамерните пещи, които са обект на нашето внимание тук, се разделят на пет подтипа в съответствие с разположението на огнището и на два варианта, в зависимост от присъствието и типа на разпределение на топлинната енергия. Въз основа на това авторът се опитва да хвърли светлина върху произхода на еднокамерните пещи, датирани във времето на ранносредновековна България, чрез сравняването им с подобни съоръжения от късноримско време, а също така и с произхождащи от територията на ранносредновековен Крим, Пастирско-Пенковската и Ипотещи-Къндешу-Чурел култури.

Tracing the technological process and production of ceramic vessels is important for settling such issues like the origin, culture and economic development of a given ethnos. This approach has been used for a long time in the Bulgarian archaeological literature¹. However, for the time being the research of the very constructions for firing of ceramics is restricted to the existence of a series of heterogeneous typologies, some of them being incomplete (L. Doncheva-Petkova, J. Henning), other – too much general (J. Henning, Zh. Vuzharova) and third – limited within a specific territory (T. Balabanov, R. Vesselinovich).

This article aims at summarizing the so far existing material by using the methodology developed by the Russian scholar A.A. Bobrinskij, which is based on the technological features of the kilns². Bobrinskij considers each kiln as a system of three functional blocks: fireplace block (the place where the fuel, supplied through a refuel orifice, is combusted; there might be a chamber for initial concentration of heat energy, heat-energy distributors and an air-draught device), heat-duct distribution block (the so-called grate) and firing block. The chamber for arranging the items to be fired is a compulsory element of the kiln, while additional elements are – items charging orifice, air-draught device and observation device³. The types are specified based on the location of the fireplace as compared to the chamber of initial heat-energy concentration, while the versions are determined based on the absence, existence and kind of the heat-energy distributors (Plate I).

In this article we will consider the single-chamber kilns of Type I, originating from the territory of the Medieval Bulgaria. They are featured by the fact that their single-chamber is used as a place to locate the vessels to be fired, as a chamber for initial heat-energy concentration and, most often, as a fireplace. We specify the sub-types based on the location of the place for fuel combustion as compared to this chamber and the way the chamber orifice is shaped.

Sub-type 2, Variant 1 – the fireplace is located under the centre of the heat-energy distribution block

and towards the refuel orifice, with no heat-energy distributors (three kilns from the village of Kipra, Varna region (Plate III)⁴, two kilns from Calfa fortress, Novoanenskoe region, Moldova (Plate IV)⁵, two of the kilns near the village of Moshorin, Bostanishte locality, Serbia⁶). Except for the kilns from Kipra (which were fully sunk and with a bigger diameter)⁷, the remaining ones were presumably semi-sunk, while their smoke-offtake orifices were installed in the upper part of the dome. Charging of items was made through the refuel orifice, located in the chamber wall. The vessels were arranged alongside the walls⁸, while the fire was set up in the central part.

Sub-type 3, Variant 1 – the fireplace is displaced towards the refuel orifice and there are no heat-energy distributors (the kiln near the village of Boyana, Sofia region)⁹. The fire was kindled in the front part of the chamber, while the rear part was meant for the vessels. Vessels were charged through the refuel orifice.

Sub-type 4, Variant 1 – the fuel is partly burned under the heat-duct distribution block and partly in a peripheral channel (length not exceeding 0.25–0.30 m) and there are no heat-energy distributors (the kiln from dug-out No 8 in Bucov-Tioca, Ploeshti community, Rumania (Plate V)¹⁰. Vessels were charged through an orifice located in the upper part of the kiln, going out at the then land-surface.

Also the kiln from A room in Site No 31 in the External town of Pliska (Plate VI)¹¹ can be associated with the Sub-type 4. This kiln, together with kilns Nos 2 and 3 of the complex alongside the road to Patlejna

1 Дончева-Петкова 1977:15–32.

2 Бобринский 1991.

3 Ibidem:107–134.

4 Димитров 1984:37–39, Табла I–III.

5 Чеботаренко 1973:3, 12–23, 83–85, рис. 1, 64.

6 Веселиновић 1952:148, 153–156.

7 Димитров 1984: Табло II.

8 Чеботаренко 1973:84.

9 Димитров 1961:135–139.

10 Comşa 1978:55, fig. 17.

11 Михайлов 1948:206, обр. 32–34; Михайлов 1955:131–132, обр. 68.