

The Early Neolithic settlement Slatina in Sofia: second building horizon (preliminary report, part I)

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The remains of the Early Neolithic settlement Slatina are situated in the eastern part of Sofia. The cultural layer in the northwest periphery of the site is some 4.20 m thick and comprises at least six building horizons, the upper four of which belong to the Kremikovtsi cultural group, and the lower two, to the Slatina group. The cultural layer of the second (from the bottom upwards) building horizon was excavated over an area of about 700 square meters between 1989 and 1991.

Architectural remains. Remains of nine buildings were registered in the excavated area. Six of them were completely excavated. Three of the buildings yielded evidence of partial or total destruction by fire. The houses are concentrated in the western part of the excavated sector, in two clusters. The western one comprises three, and the eastern - six buildings. Some 5 m wide not built-up area stretching from the northeast to the southwest separates both clusters. No precise general layout seems to have existed. The buildings are situated in a close juxtaposition to each other. They have rectangular or slightly trapezium-shaped ground plan. There is no regularity concerning the orientation of their longer axes. The entrances are mainly built on the southeastern or southwestern side. The dwellings are comparatively big, with a total area ranging from 40 to 70 square meters. They are built in the traditional building technique of the time. The floors have the appearance of solid platforms made of rammed clay. Three of the buildings are single-roomed. The inner space of other three is divided into halves by partition walls. Small rooms have been added later to two of the initially single-roomed buildings. Each house is supplied with at least one big vaulted oven. There also are smaller fireplaces in two of the buildings. Remains of yet other installations are registered in most of the houses: a granary, a big platform of rammed clay, built at place bins of different shape and size. The already ascertained practice of per-

forming a building sacrifice before starting the construction activities has got further proof.

A burial. A burial of a woman at an age of 41 or 42 years, some 1.55 m high, has been found near the northern wall of the house with no traces of burning. The deceased was buried in a contracted position to the left side, with her head to the north and facing to the east. There were no grave goods.

The archaeological excavations yielded a great amount of small finds: more than 900 complete or fragmented artifacts made of stone, bone, antler or clay. All the groups of finds, traditionally recovered from Early Neolithic sites, are attested. Tools are most numerous.

Cult plastics. It includes anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations made of clay or bone. Clay figurines depict a standing female with outlined genitals. Although rarely, there are anthropomorphic applications on the walls of certain pots. A standing female figure is sketched with wine-red paint on the wall of an orange-slipped pot.

The zoomorphic figures are made of clay. These artifacts represent four-legged animals in static position. There is a partially preserved arched bone object ending with a zoomorphic head.

Small altars. Most of them are triangular, with a dish modeled into it, which either repeats the shape of the artifact or has a hemispherical shape. The quadrangular altars have three major variants: with a concave, hemi-concave or attached to the upper surface dish.

Four-sided vessels. They have the shape of a shallow square or slightly rectangular tanks with flat bottom.

“Ornaments”. A bead with more or less cylindrical shape is made of a *Spondylus* shell. There are also a few bone rings of different size.

A clay stamp-seal has been found among the ruins of one of the houses.