

Ancient roof tiles from Tatul (Abstract)

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The present report studies a complete assemblage of archaeological material - roof tiles from the Thracian sanctuary near Tatul, Momchilgrad Municipality.

The study is based on 22 large fragments of Corinthian and Laconian roof tiles. All of them were found in front of the northern and southern walls of Building No. 1, or within the building. The latter is the main cult building of the heroon in Tatul that was built in the Early Hellenistic period – late 4th or early 3rd c. BC - and functioned until the middle of the 1st c. AD, after some reorganisations and reconstructions.

The roof tiles are divided into three major groups - Corinthian pan tiles, Laconian pan tiles and Laconian cover tiles - the so-called semi-cylindrical kalypteroi.

Type I. Corinthian pan tiles (fragments Nos. 1-5). They were found in Building No. 1 and behind it (to the south) in 2004. Stratigraphically, they belong to the Early Roman Period (fragment No. 1), but also to the pre-Roman complexes (fragments Nos. 2-3).

These details feature a longitudinal central ridge and very interesting shaping of the side edge. A particularly characteristic slanting is seen on fragment No. 3. All Corinthian roof tiles from Tatul have a slip.

Type II. Laconian pan tiles (fragments Nos. 6-10). They are most numerous in Building No. 1. They are found in front of the building, and, in particular, in Square B 8/9, where there is clear stratigraphic evidence for levels from the Early Hellenistic Period.

There are four sub-types of Laconian pan tiles. Two of them have an oblique side edge, while the other two have a straight edge. There is also a difference in the convex curve of the end of the tiles. Two of the types have a gentle and gradual

curve, while the other two have a clearly carinated profile.

Type III. Laconian cover tiles (kalypteroi) (fragments Nos. 11-21). Three of them present almost complete details (fragments Nos. 11-13) and provide the opportunity for a full reconstruction. At Tatul, there are both Early Hellenistic and Early Roman Laconian cover tiles. They also come from Building No. 1. There is one very interesting fragment (No. 22) that most probably was part of a sima. However, this is not completely certain, having in mind that the façade has no decoration.

Almost all roof tiles from Tatul have a high-quality slip, with colours varying from light beige-brown to deep red and wine-red. Corinthian flat tiles are particularly well decorated and some of them have fingerprints. There are also dark-brown, light-reddish, and even pink-red slip.

In all cases, the technological characteristics are very similar. The clay is tempered with quartz, organic material, mica, and even small pebbles. The paste of the Early Hellenistic details is finer and purer.

In conclusion, it must be mentioned that Building No. 1 of the heroon at Tatul had at least three different roofing systems in the time it was in use – from the late 4th or early 3rd c. BC until mid-1st c. AD. Naturally, this means that there were three construction periods or reconstructions. The first one and the last one were already dated by stratigraphic and archaeological data to the Early Hellenistic Period (late 4th – early 3rd c. BC) and Early Roman Period (the first half of the 1st c. AD). The identification of the intermediate period is still problematic, since there are roof tiles that belong neither to the first, nor to the third building period. The roofing system of Building No. 1 from the heroon in Tatul

was purely Laconic in the Early Hellenistic Period and of mixed type - Corinthian pan

tiles and Laconian cover tiles - in the Early Roman Period.