The Principles of Interior Organization (A Kitchen in the middle ages of the 1st millennium B.C.)

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Abstract. *The present work is an attempt of analyzing the kitchen excavated on Grakliani Gora in 2014. The analysis consists of a detailed description of ceramics found in this area and also trying to find its analogies. Furthermore, the work looks at arrangement of the oven excavated on the territory of the kitchen and provides its comparison to the earliest ovens. Kitchen areas excavated both in the western world (Olynthus, Lefkada) and in the eastern world (Gonur Depe) are used for the research of kitchens and other agricultural dwellings as part of an interior. This is an attempt to determine the cultural affiliation of the kitchen found on Grakliani Gora. Given the fact that there are no such separated kitchen areas found among the sites on the territory of Georgia, this work will give us a basic knowledge to interpret future findings.*

Key words: Grakliani Gora, kitchen, pottery, Olynthus, Gonur Depe

Grakliani Gora settlement site and cemetery are situated in central Transcaucasia, Georgia, on the territory of Village Samytavisi, Kaspi District, on a hill rising on the right bank of the River Lekhura, immediately next to Tbilisi-Senaki-Leselidze highway. It dominates the area and is encompassed between two small rivers – the Lekhura and the Tortla [pl. 1]. The site yielded 11 cultural layers dating from the lower Paleolithic to the third-fourth centuries AD [Licheli 2014:2] [pl. I]

PL. I

In 2014, grid E5, situated in section 77 of the fourth terrace, yielded a structure with an oven in its north-east corner **[pl. II-1]**. The structure was dated to the fourth century BC based on the oil lamp. The oil lamp itself was evidenced on the floor level west of the oven **[pl. II-2]**. Typological analysis made it possible to draw parallels with the oil lamp excavated at Mukhatgverdi which falls in chronological group II and dates to the second half of the fourth century and beginning of the third century BC. It belongs to type V-2-2-1-2 **[pl. II-3]** **[Нариманишвили Г. 1991:21; рис.213]**.

PL. II
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As far as the oven is concerned, it is a rectangular construction. Only two façades (western and southern) can be identified, as the other two are attached to the wall. It is deformed and its southern façade is inclined from the north to the south. Four vessels and burnt animal bones were revealed on it [pl. III-1]. There is a platform west of the oven and a stone slab south of it which was used for screening the fire chamber in order to regulate temperature. The fire chamber was discovered above the platform. A big-size vessel which was probably used for keeping grains was discovered on the extension of the platform. However, it is impossible to find its analogs as it is badly damaged. A stone for supporting the pole holding the central roofing was found south of the platform [pl. III-2]. A tray was evidenced north of the oven. It is in such poor condition that it is impossible to restore its shape and, accordingly, to seek its analog.¹

PL. III

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¹ Description of the kitchen is provided by the author.

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As it has been mentioned above, four ceramic vessels were registered on the oven revealed on the territory of the kitchen. Vessel N1 is a tumbler with a perfectly profiled rim and a handle attached to the shoulder. The handle is decorated with a cross-like ornament² [pl. IV-1]. It can be compared to the tumbler discovered at Ghrmakhevistavi which belongs to chronological group I and dates to the fifth century BC and the first half of the fourth century BC. More precisely, the tumbler in question falls in typological group VI-2-1[pl. IV-2], which is characterized by unevenly baked pottery produced from dark clay [Нариманишвили Г. 1991:24; рис.684].

PL. IV

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² Description is provided by the author.

Vessel N2 is badly preserved; it has two handles that are attached immediately to the mouth. Blackish-greyish vessel N3 is also badly preserved. Vessel N4 has a handle; it is blackish-greyish, with an offset rim; badly preserved; it is decorated with an engraved wave-like ornament. Regrettably, it is impossible to estimate shapes and analogs of the rest of the pottery due to its poor condition³ [pl. IV-3].

A storeroom which was discovered next to the kitchen yielded five ceramic vessels that differ from each other [pl. V-1]. Vessel N1 is badly damaged and it is impossible to identify its shape. As for vessel N2, it was recovered east of vessel N1 and it lay immediately next to querns. It has one handle, no ornaments and represents a pot⁴ [pl. V-2]. It is possible to partly estimate its shape and, therefore, we managed to compare it to the pot revealed at Mukhatgverdi which belongs to chronological group II and dates to the second half of the fourth century - beginning of the third century BC, while in typological terms it falls in group VI-2-1 [Нариманишвили Г. 1991:24, рис. 655] [pl.V-3].

PL. V

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³ Description is provided by the author.

⁴ Description is provided by the author.

PL. VI

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As far as vessel N3 is concerned, it was dug out south of vessel N1. It is a single-handled, beige baked jug without ornamentation, with an offset rim; its handle is attached to the rim and body, and has knob-like applications at the meeting point of the handle and the rim. To some extent, it is possible to find its analogs⁵ [pl. VI-1]. In my opinion, it is analogous to the same kind of a single-handled jug discovered at Mukhatgverdi. The latter falls in chronological group II and belongs to the second half of the fourth century and the beginning of the third century BC. According to the typology elaborated by G. Narimanishvili, the vessel discovered at Mukhatgverdi falls in typological group IX-3-2-1-1-A [Нариманишвили Г. 1991:35-36; рис.538]

[pl. VI-2]. An extremely damaged vessel N4 was evidenced near vessel N1. Due to its poor condition, it is impossible to identify its shape. Vessel N5 was found south of vessel N1 and is also badly damaged.⁶

The kitchen area and the storeroom yielded a total of 12 vessels. They were distributed in three groups: kitchenware - in which the tumbler and the tray were united; household items - the two-handled vessel, a jar, vessel N4 revealed nearby, vessels N1 and N2 registered on the territory of the storeroom, and the jug; and the last, third group was made up of the rest of the ceramic products - the oil lamp, vessel N2 evidenced on the oven and ceramic vessels N4 and N5 re-

vealed on the territory of the storeroom. In percentage terms, 50% represent household items, 17% - kitchenware and the rest of the ceramic material makes up 33% [pl. VI-3].

Based on the material available to us, their analysis and analogs, the kitchen in question was destroyed in the fourth-third centuries BC.

Noteworthy are hand mills discovered at Grakliani Gora in large numbers. The kitchen area, in particular, yielded boat-shaped querns (upper and lower stones) [pl. VII-1]. Moreover, one of the structures on the third terrace revealed a mill

in which boat-shaped querns are used for grinding grain. In respect with the querns, I would like to emphasize the ones discovered in Greece. Two types of querns have been identified there: boat-like ones and so-called square ones (Hopper-Rubber). Boat-like hand mills were employed in the Neolithic epoch and they consisted of two main stones - the lower stone was rectangular, while the upper one was oval with grooved inner side which facilitated the process of

⁵ Description is provided by the author.

⁶ Description is provided by the author.

grinding grain. Quadrangular hand mills were characterized by a more complicated mechanism: they had a reservoir on the upper stone where the grain ready for grinding was accumulated. The upper stone had a handle which made it possible for the stone to move around. 39 of this type of querns and 15 saddle-shaped ones have been revealed at the city-site of Olynthus [Gahill N2002:163-164].

At first it was very difficult to identify quadrangular querns and interpret them as mill stones, which is why scholars identified them with sifts. The first archaeologist who considered them to be querns was Flinders Petrie, who linked this type of querns with the scene depicted on Megarian bowls of the third century BC, which fully explains the function of the Greek so-called quadrangular grinding stones Brasser J. P 2013:29-30] [pl. VII-3].

A similar kind of a Greek-type quern was discovered in Skurcha, Ochamchire District, in 1964. In general, such querns were in use from the fourth century BC to the third century AD. Fragment of a Greek type of mill stone has been discovered at Vani city-site too [Khotelashvili M. 1968:51-54] [pl. VII-2].

PL. VII

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As for the tradition of arranging ovens in the interiors of structures, we are going to discuss several sites where baking ovens have been evidenced in a specific place of the room.

Settlement-sites of the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age studied on the territory of Shida Kartli are characterized by arranging baking ovens in the left corner of the house. Analogous ovens have been discovered at Khovlegora, Treligorebi, Samtavro, Narekvavi settlement-site, Tskhinvali Natsargora, Mchadijvari, Ghrmakhevistavi, Katlaniskhevi and Aradeti settlement-sites, but in the later period its location changes which is affirmed by house N3 excavated at Uplistsikhe-Bambebi settlement-site: here a baking oven is arranged in the right corner (north-east), just like at Grakliani Gora.

It is also noteworthy that archaeologist Kiazio Pitskhelauri considers that presence of ovens of similar construction at the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age settlement-sites in Shida Kartli is the indication of ethnic unity of the population residing in the territory **[Davlianidze R. Sadradze V. 1993:27]**.

Such ovens had not been revealed prior to the excavations carried out at Khovle.

Here they excavated residential structures of a rectangular plan where ovens had been arranged in the north-west corner. The structures date from the 13th -6th cc BC. Equally interesting are the houses of the 12th -10th cc BC settlement north of the hill. The oven of the dwelling is square with the side measuring one meter. It consisted of two parts: a fire chamber (on the right) and the rest of the area (left of the fire chamber) was designated for an almost completely open baking chamber. On the east the oven had an ash pit **[Melitauri K. 1979:63-65] [pl. VIII-1]**.

An oven of similar construction was revealed at Treligorebi. In the Late Bronze-Early Iron Age (ca. the second part of the II millennium BC and the first half of the I millennium BC) it was a vast settlement for the time. Every residential house had an oven for making bread arranged in the north-west corner and low platforms with various kinds of sacrificial altars attached to the oven **[Abramishvili R. 1978:12] [pl. VIII-2]**.

Another settlement of the Late Bronze Age was revealed north-west of Samtavro Valley. Here one group of sites is represented with burials, and another – with houses. Three houses have been excavated. Let us discuss the second house which yielded an oven for making bread in the left corner. The oven is built of adobe and stone. It has two parts: a baking chamber on the left and a fire chamber on the right. The oven has an arched cover **[Apakidze A. 1978:115-116] [pl. VIII-3]**.

PL. VIII

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The next settlement-site where an oven was evidenced in a structure is Bambebi, where house N3 was recovered and which is better preserved than the structures excavated in previous years. Ruins of a 'Khovle'-type oven were excavated in the north-east corner of the house. Pieces of household pottery had been used in building of the oven walls [**Khundadze N. 1979:51-56**] [pl. IX].

Unlike the structures discussed above, the oven revealed at Bambebi settlement-site is documented in the north-east corner. Vakhtang Licheli points out that location of the oven can

determine whether it had a religious function or not. The place of its construction was determined by its specific function [**Licheli V. 2014:5**]. The oven of Grakliani Gora, like that excavated at Bambebi settlement-site, is an ordinary oven for baking bread. It does not have any religious function, unlike the ovens uncovered at Khovlegora, Treligorebi, Samtavro and Narekvavi settlement-sites.

PL. IX

It is important to look at the examples evidenced in both Greek and eastern worlds while examining principles of arranging kitchens. In particular, let us discuss kitchens and other household facilities revealed at Olynthus, Levkas and Gonur Depe.

Let us start with the structures revealed at Olynthus [**pl. X-1**]. Over a hundred houses have been excavated at Olynthus, which is more than at any Greek site. The structures exposed here date to the Classical epoch – 432-348 BC. A special architectural complex revealed here is associated with so-called kitchen complex. Half of the excavated houses – a total of 44 – yielded such complexes [**Cahill N. 2002:153-154**] [pl. X-2].

Generally, a kitchen complex consisted of a big-size room with an area of 4.6 – 5.6 sq. m and a stone hearth, as well as two small-size rooms - so-called flues and baths. Kitchens were often detached from flues by compactly arranged columns. This system of detaching is most often evidenced in the houses with the second floor. There is no doubt that these columns held the wall of the room on the second

floor (situated above the kitchen). As a rule, the flues did not have roofs, but the tiles revealed in these rooms prove that the structures in question were covered with tiles [Cahill N. 2002:80].

PL. X

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PL. XI

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One of the structures to discuss is a house of many colors situated between houses ESH 4 and ESH 5. It is best preserved regarding architecture. It was this structure revealed by Lloyd Dali in 1938 that Mylonas considered to be a typical house of Olynthus [Robinson M.D. 1946:183].

As for the kitchen itself, it was exposed in the south-west part of the structure. This part was formed by the unity of three rooms (k, g, h). In the center was a big room with a hearth which contained a big amount of ash, but no bones or ceramic products. Three amphorae that were recovered from the western part of the room were probably used for keeping water and other food products. The room in question was the main space for household activities where women and servants lived and spent most of their time spinning, cooking, etc. [Cahill N. 2002:89] [pl. XI-1-2].

Next to the kitchen is a long narrow room (h) which Graham considered to be designed for the flue. It was separated from the kitchen [Cahill N. 2002:89]. The room dedicated for the flue had an unusual plan. Apart from the fact that most of them yielded stone floors, it was the bedrock that was used as a floor. It was surrounded by a ditch running towards the center of the room. The ditch was full of rather thick layer of ash which yielded bones of different animals, like cow, goat, sheep, pig and deer. Archaeologist David Robinson presumes that here they mainly roasted meat and discovery of this number of bones must be associated with this fact. Consequently, the latter somehow supports the opinion according to which the room designated for the flue was the main space where food was made, while the hearth arranged in the big-size room was used for heating in the wintertime, which is why kitchenware was also evidenced here [Cahill N. 2002:89-90]. There is another opinion expressed about the room for the flue, according to which the room in question did not have the function of the kitchen, but it was used for keeping household and kitchen items [Cahill N. 2002:90].

There was a small room (g) between the ones

of the kitchen and the flue where excavations revealed fragments of the bath. The room yielded querns, an oil lamp, an olpe, a pelike, a black baked jug with a single handle, fragments of four looms, a jug with two handles, a saucer (tray) and a fragment of the head of a woman's statue [Cahill N. 2002:90].

As for the storeroom of the same house, it was located in the south-east corner of the structure (m) and was revealed at the depth of 0.9 meters from the surface. Based on four pithoi discovered here it can be claimed that it was used as a storeroom. The pithoi did not preserve any product, but scholars assume that they were mainly used for keeping grains. The cool underground room, as Xenophon pointed out, was best for keeping grains and wine. Such storerooms have been identified in almost every house of the settlement-site [Cahill N. 2002:92] [pl. XI-3].

While considering the kitchen area, interesting is the analysis of the houses and kitchen areas revealed on the island of Levkas. Let us discuss another Hellenistic period house All.6 revealed at Levkas. Analysis of the artifacts discovered here allow us to define functions of the rooms and the structure of household activities. In the room in question, conditionally room Q, was a kitchen with a hearth arranged in its corner. The area yielded flint fragments that point to the fact that they were used to light the fire [pl. XII-1]. A lot of ceramic products were recovered from the room – about 162 clay vessels (MNV 162), many jugs, amphorae, flasks which had been used for keeping food products and liquid. The room conditionally referred to as N yielded a pithos and was later identified with a storeroom. A big amount of kitchenware and tableware was evidenced in the same room (MNV 132) [Fiedler M. 2005:110-111].

As eastern impulses have significantly been evidenced on the territory of Grakliani Gora, it is necessary to consider hearths and ovens of this region as well. In this respect prominent is the site of Gonur Depe revealed on the territory of Turkmenistan. It was the capital of Margiana and dates to the first half of the II millennium BC [pl. XII-2]. It consists of two main parts: northern and southern Gonur Depe. The relatively small, southern Gonur is Temenos, a holy place where the temple and the houses occupied by those serving the temple was surrounded by strong walls. New settlers built a citadel with a palace and ritual facilities in the center of Gonur situated at the north [Rossi-Osmida Gabrielle: 19-21] [pl. XIII-1].

PL. XII

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A monumental construction, probably a temple where soma-haoma, a hallucinogenic drink was made, was situated in the northern part, at the northern façade of the palace. This opinion was expressed not only based on the planning of the structure, but also based on the artifacts revealed here. Specifically, they are stone mills, ceramic strainers and other objects connected to the drink [Sarianidi V. 2007:140-141].

The structure revealed in the central part of the temple yielded rectangular hearths similar to which have been discovered in the temples of Alalakh and considered to be altars. This type of hearth-altars have preserved burnt animal bones. A three-meter-high ash layer containing ceramic and bone fragments was documented outside Temenos. Beside these double hearths, the area has exposed pear-shaped hearths too which are divided into two parts. It is also remarkable that sheep and goat bones are encountered in the first type hearths, while ox and cow skulls have been revealed in a pear-shaped hearth. These hearths have been evidenced in the area that has been identified as a “place of public catering” [Sarianidi V. 2007:141-143] [pl. XIII-2].

PL. XIII

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Noteworthy are the ovens discovered here. In terms of construction, they look very much like those revealed on the territory of Georgia. Up to a hundred ovens documented mainly on the territory of northern Gonur have been excavated. Normally, there is one oven in a structure, but there are cases with 3 ovens (northern Gonur, Water Temple), and one room even yielded 4 ovens of religious function. The ovens in question have two chambers – one for fire and the other for baking [Сарианиди B. 2010:36] [pl.XIV]. Unlike the baking chamber, the fire chamber was extremely burnt inside, while the baking chambers sometimes were used for keeping animal bones for gods. The animal bones registered in these ovens point to the fact that the ovens had been used for sacrifice [Сарианиди B. 2010:36]. However, regrettably, it is not specified which part of the animal was offered. Notably, a manuscript from the Dead Sea Scrolls refers to which part of the animal (sheep, lamb) had to be sacrificed to Yahweh, God of the Israelites: the right leg, breast, jaw, stomach and shoulder [Сарианиди B. 2010:37-38].

PL. XIV

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The kitchen area revealed at Grakliani Gora can be considered a new phenomenon, because an obviously detached structure of this function has not been identified at the settlement sites uncovered in Georgia. The revealed material clearly shows that there existed a strict definition in respect with the kitchen area in everyday life of the community living at Grakliani in the fifth-fourth centuries BC and it seems they used a detached structure. Among the cited analogs the structure of Grakliani finds closest parallels with the kitchen area discovered at Gonur Depe, because one can identify presence of the cult of the fire at both sites, which is affirmed at least by open altars situated on the fourth terrace.

Regarding the kitchen areas revealed in the Greek world cited by me as analogs, I intended to emphasize the fact that using the kitchen area had great functional significance in the western culture as well. Given the above cited materials it is obvious that the kitchen of Grakliani belongs to the eastern culture.

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Description of the Plates

PL. I - Location of Gragliani Gora and aerial photo

PL. II - 1- Kitchen excavated on the fourth terrace

2- Lamp found to the west of the oven on the floor layer

3- Analogy of the lamp from Mukhatgverdi

PL. III - 1- Oven excavated in the kitchen

2- Platform, Pillar stone and smashed ceramic found to the west of the oven

PL. IV - 1- Tumbler found on the surface of the oven

2- Analogy of tumbler from Grmaghevisavi

3- #2- #3- #4 pottery on the surface of the oven

PL. V - 1- Store room excavated to the next of the kitchen

2- #2 vessel found on the territory of the store room

3- Analogy from Mukhatgverdi

- PL. VI** - 1- Jug excavated on the territory of the store room
2- Analogy from Mukhatgverdi
3- Percentage of the ceramics excavated on the territory of the kitchen and store room on Grakliani Gora
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