

POTTERY FUNCTIONS AND SUBSISTENCE PATTERN IN PREHISTORY (RUSSIAN FAR EAST AS A CASE OF STUDY)

Irina Zhushvikhovskaya

Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnology of Peoples of Far East

Research area is southern part of Russian Far East including mainland territories (Primorye and river Amur basin) and insular territory (Sakhalin island). Pottery-making was important activity in Far Eastern prehistoric communities. Main factors determining the structure and image of pottery production were: natural conditions, cultural changing, subsistence pattern.

Report's subject is the relationships between subsistence pattern and pottery functions during the Neolithic and Paleometal period in mainland and insular territories. Pottery function identification is based on the complex of characteristics: vessel's shape and size, qualities of production technology, decoration, use-wearing traces, archaeological context.

In mainland regions the Neolithic (8 – mid. of 2 mil. BC) was the time of predomination of hunter-gatherer subsistence base (land hunting, river and coastal fishery, land and marine gathering). The mode of life was characterized by strong tendency to sedentary living. Hunter-gatherer pottery has not the evidences of functional differentiation. The vessels are characterized by low degree of shape and size variability. Dominant model was conical-shaped unrestricted flat-bottomed vessel.

In Late Neolithic phase (mid. of 3 – mid. of 2 mil. BC) primitive agriculture was invented causing significant changes in pottery production and function patterns. First evidence was the appearance of table serving vessels (bowls) and vessels with clear orifice restriction in pottery-making of Late Neolithic settlements.

Archaeological records of Paleometal period (end of 2 mil. BC – beg. of 1 mil AD) reflect the increasing role of agriculture in subsistence pattern and development of pottery functions differentiation. Storage, cooking, table serving and ritual vessels are indicated basing on morphological, technological, decorative features.

In Sakhalin island the subsistence of Neolithic cultures (7 – 1 mil. BC) was based on hunter-gatherer branches corresponding to mobile and semi-sedentary mode of life. Pottery assortment was poor and invariable in

technological, morphological and size indexes reflecting undifferentiated functional pattern.

Paleometal period (1 – beg. of 2 mil. AD) was marked by significant subsistence changes: land hunting and gathering were replaced by sea mammal game corresponding to sedentary living. Main innovation in pottery production was the increasing of vessels size range. Use-wearing traces show that ceramic containers were used for cooking and storage of sea mammal products while technological, morphological and decorative features do not reflect functional differentiation.