

EUROPEAN-TYPE HELMETS IN UKRAINE DURING THE CIMMERIAN TIME

Danylo Klochko

PhD student, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy

The only eight Cimmerian time helmets which had been found in Ukraine as of now belong to three different types and have European analogies. Three of these helmets belong to the oldest type of metal helmets in Europe. There are two unique items, one probably being a transitional form between two subsequent types and another – the local imitation of foreign type. Generally, the presence of such findings in Ukraine indicate the lasting connections between peoples of the North Pontic Region and their western neighbors. The traces of damage on all eight helmets indicate their direct usage in combat.

Keywords: *Ukraine, Cimmerian time, helmets, Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age.*

Introduction

Among the currently known Cimmerian-time hoards (either of Chornohorivka or Novocherkaske groups), none had included the helmets. However there is an amount of helmets with European analogies which had been found in Ukrainian territory. They belong to different types and thus – to different time frames. Some of them are already known to scientists, while others are being published for the first time.

In this article we will analyze these helmets, based on their affiliation to different types, as well as individual features and locations where they had been found.

1. Helmets of Oranienburg type

This type is considered to be the oldest of European metal helmets. It has a somewhat stretched form, a knob on the top and a symmetrical belt of circles near the foundation. Until now there had been twelve known helmets of this type: one helmet in each was found in Greece, Poland, Germany and Romania; three appear in Slovakia and Hungary, the origin of two more is unknown (Mödlinger 2017, pp. 335–336).

© Danylo Klochko, 2023

Based on the reconstructed chronology, the Oranienburg type originated around the XV century BC at the Aegean coast of Greece, and was based on the local tradition of helmets made of organic materials, mainly – the bone. During the next two centuries it spread around Central-Eastern Europe. At some point this type crossed the Carpathian mountains from the south and reached Poland. Later from there such helmets came to Germany (Mödlinger 2017, p. 24). The three findings of Oranienburg type helmets in Ukraine extend this reconstruction by adding the new direction in which these helmets had spread: to the east of Carpathian mountains, in other words – to Ukraine.

Oranienburg type helmets in Ukraine were found in Ternopil, Kharkiv and Lviv regions. The helmet from Ternopil region (fig. 1: 1) is greatly damaged: the knob is absent (although it was present initially, which is indicated by the hole on the top), also there is a large breach in the upper part of the helmet, which was probably left by the strike with a blunt weapon. The belt of circles near the foundation is present.



Fig. 1. Oranienburg type helmets in Ukraine:
1 – Ternopil region; 2 – Kharkiv region; 3 – Lviv region

The helmet from Kharkiv region (fig. 1: 2) does not have a typical belt of circles at the foundation. Instead there is a double “belt”-like ornament, however it is located only on the part of the helmet and does not circle it completely. In fact, it can be the sign of some maintenance. Also in the middle and upper parts of the helmet there are slight but numerous traces of damage, caused either by time or ancient strikes.

At some point this helmet was smuggled from Ukraine and by the end of 2022 appeared at one of the British auctions. Its current location is unknown.

The third Oranienburg-type helmet (from the Lviv region) is also heavily damaged (fig. 1: 3). There is a breach at the upper part, also we can see

two bronze “stripes” which are peeling off the surface, which can indicate that they were not part of the original construction. Most likely they are the sign of an attempt to repair the helmet after it had sustained damage from the strike. There is also an ornament on the upper part, as well as the knob. Also, the belt at the foundation consists not of circles, but of “buttons”.

The ornamentation of the knob as well as the substitution of circles at the foundation are the features of the Paks type which is one of the evolved forms of Oranienburg type (Mödlinger 2018, abb. 3). However helmets of this type are much more ornamented and have more flattened form. Therefore the helmet from the Lviv region has the shape and size of Oranienburg type along with the ornamentation of Paks type. Based on this, we can view this finding as the transitional form between two types.

Since these three helmets belong to the oldest type of metal helmets in Europe, we can deduce that they are the oldest metal helmets in Ukraine and also some of the oldest in Eastern Europe.

2. Nagyteteny type helmet

This type is also a descendant of Oranienburg, and bears quite a resemblance to its “ancestor”, although has flattened form, as well as Paks. Currently there are five known findings of such helmets: one per country come from Croatia, Hungary and Ukraine, the origin of two others is unknown.

The exact origin of Ukrainian finding of this type is unknown either: two places are often named – Brody (Lviv region) and Ternopil (Mödlinger 2017, p. 56; Mödlinger 2018, abb. 12). The distance between these two cities is around 77 km. The helmet (fig. 2) has several traces of damage. For instance, the helmet was breached, most likely with the strike of a blunt weapon. Next to this hole, we see another trace, presumably left by the sword. The helmet was found in 2013, its current location is unknown (Mödlinger 2017, p. 56).



Fig. 2. Nagyteteny type helmet from Brody/Ternopil (Mödlinger 2018)

3. Italian crested helmets

In Ukrainian sources such helmets are usually called Proto-Etruscan or Etruscan ones (Klochko 2006, p. 203). This type is usually attributed to

the western branch of European metal helmets' typology, contrary to the Oranienburg type and its descendants, which are considered the eastern one (Mödlinger 2018, abb. 3). The name of this type comes from the fact that most of such findings come from Italy – around fifty helmets, several dozens of casting molds and seven figures “wearing” such helmets. Aside from Italy, stand-alone findings of such helmets come from Slovenia (2), Austria (1), Greece (2) and Ukraine. The total amount of the material depiction of such helmets (the helmets themselves, the casting molds and the figures) is 103 (Mödlinger 2017, fig 2.26). The findings in Italy are dated IX–VIII century BC (Mödlinger 2017, p. 132).

The main features of the Italian crested helmets are: large size, the crest, four lines of pearl ornament (two on the helmet itself, at the foundation, and two on the crest) and three “teeth” below the edges of the crest. It is unclear how exactly such helmets were worn: with the crest to front or to the sides. The images on the Iberian stelae depict warriors wearing similar helmets (Mödlinger 2017, fig. 2.16), however the exact manner remains unclear.

Currently there are four known helmets of this type, which have been found in Ukraine, which is a record for the country aside from Italy. Two of them come from the Chernivtsi region. The first one (fig. 3: 1) has traces of significant damage on both sides of the helmet, as well as the breach on the knob. It is most likely that such damage was inflicted by a blunt weapon, and then deteriorated with time.

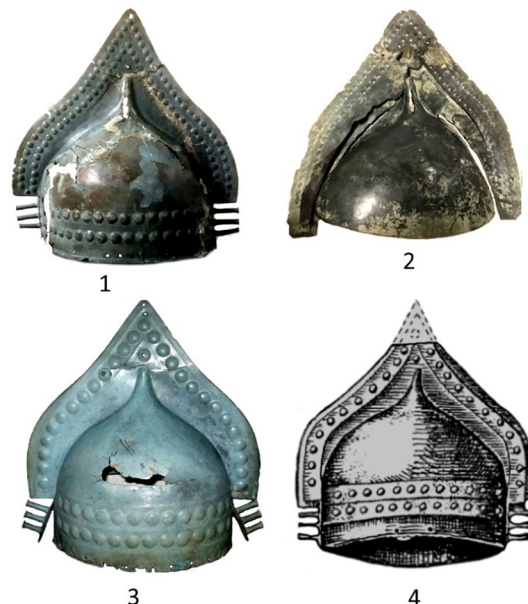


Fig. 3. Italian crested helmets from Ukraine:

1-2 – Chernivtsi region; 3 – Khmelnytskyi/Vinnitsia region; 4 – Zavadyntsi/Kamianka (Klochko 2006)

Another helmet from the Chernivtsi region is unique for this type (fig. 3: 2). It is visually smaller, also does not have “teeth” under the crest and the pearl ornament is present only on the crest. Also the edges of the crest are larger, compared to the crests of other helmets. In addition, this helmet is preserved considerably worse than the rest of the Italian crested helmets in Ukraine. All of the listed differences allow us to assume that this helmet was not brought to Ukrainian territory as a trophy or due to trade, but is rather an imitation of the type of Italian crested helmets. Also we can assume that this helmet was modeled not after another helmet itself, but rather after the casting mold. This is indicated by the fact that this helmet visually resembles those molds: the main similarity is the absence of “teeth” below the crest (Mödlinger 2017, fig. 2.31). Therefore it is possible that the master behind this helmet became acquainted with the casting mold of this type at some point and decided to recreate it. Unaware of the “teeth”, he did not include this component.

The third Italian crested helmet was found somewhere on the edge of Khmelnytskyi and Vinnytsia region (fig. 3: 3). Just like the rest of the helmets, presented in this article, it had sustained some damage: on the frontal side we see a breach from some blunt weapon. Above it – cuts, left, most likely, by the sword. Also there is a crack on the crest, above the knob. The helmet was presented with the dish and the elements of horse equipment – all made of bronze. Using this helmet as an example, we can see that the “teeth” were in fact a separate piece, added to the helmet after it was casted. As of 2018 this helmet is located at the Museum of the History of Religion in Lviv ¹.

The fourth of the Italian crested helmets in Ukraine is known for almost fifty years, initially appearing in “Prehistoric Russia. An outline” by T. Sulimirski in 1970 (Sulimirski 1970, tabl. XLVIII) (fig. 3: 4). Its origin is unknown: modern Ukrainian literature names Kamianka village of Khmelnytskyi region (Klochko 2006, p. 203), while Western European one – Zavadyntsi village of the same region (Mödlinger 2017, p. 129). The distance is around 50 km. The helmet itself is the common representative of its type. However in the picture we see that the knob is somewhat bent, which (if the picture is accurate) could indicate the productive flaw. The top of the crest is absent, though it is unclear whether it was lost

¹ <https://photo-lviv.in.ua/sholom-etruskoyi-roboti-pishno-dekorovana-fiala-ta-elementi-kolisnichnoyi-upryazhi-abo-beztsinni-popovnennya-lvivskogo-muzeyu-istoriyi-religiyi/>.

due to the strike or time. The circumstances of finding this helmet are unknown, as well as its current location.

Conclusions

As of today there are eight known helmets, which belong to European types of Late Bronze – Early Iron Ages. Three of them belong to the Oranienburg type – the oldest type of metal helmets in Europe. One is of Nagytetyeny type – one of the developed forms of Oranienburg. Last four are the Italian crested helmets of western European branch of metal helmets. The Oranienburg type helmet from the Lviv region has the features of Paks type – another “descendant” of Oranienburg, which allows us to view this finding as the transitional form between two types. One of the Italian crested helmets, found in Ukraine, has unique features, which can indicate that this helmet is a local (imperfect) imitation of the foreign tradition. The rest of the helmets are a clear indication of contacts between peoples of Ukrainian territory and their western neighbors on the edge of Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages. These contacts obviously lasted for at least several centuries, as the helmets present in Ukraine belong to different, subsequent types. The form of these contacts (trade, war etc.), however, remains unclear, although it is unlikely that they remained the same for the whole period. Therefore the circumstances of the appearance of these helmets in the North Pontic region remain unknown. Despite this, the damage, which the helmets had sustained from blunt and sharp weapons, indicates their direct usage in warfare.

Of all eight, only one was not found at the Right bank of Ukraine – the Oranienburg type helmet from the Kharkiv region. However the exact circumstances of the finding are unknown to either. Based on the supplementary material, the Italian crested helmet from Khmelnytskyi/Vynnytsia region was part of the hoard. There is information regarding the Nagytetyeny type helmet, that it was found somewhere in the forest, not far from a river (Mödlinger 2018, abb. 12). Despite this, we can use statistics of helmet findings in the rest of Europe: as usage (and thus – role) of such helmets in the North Pontic Region did not differ much from the places of their origin, it is safe to assume that their deposition was similar as well. About 40% of helmets in both Western and Eastern Europe are found in hoards, 28% are found in rivers or bogs, while for 23% of helmets the context is unknown; last 9% come from votive deposits and graves – the latter appear only in Greece (Mödlinger 2017, Tab. 2.1). As

we can see, two of eight helmets from Ukraine fall into this statistics quite well: one being found in the hoard, and another – near the river.

Based on this fact, it is possible that the context for the rest of such helmets from Ukraine is similar to its previously known counterparts as well.

References

Klochko, V. I. 2006. *Ozbroennia ta vijskova sprava davnioho naselenia Ukrainy (5000–900 rr. do R. H.)*. Kyiv.

Mödlinger, M. 2017. *Protecting the Body in War and Combat Metal Body Armour in Bronze Age Europe*. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press.

Mödlinger, M. 2018. Körperschutzwaffen der Europäischen Bronzezeit. In: *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen gesellschaft in Wien*. CXLVIII. Band. Vienna: Verlag der Anthropologischen gesellschaft. S. 81–99.

Sulimirski, T. 1970. *Prehistoric Russia an outline*. London.