

## RECENT CASES OF UNPROVENANCED ARMOUR IN THE ANTIQUITIES MARKET AND ITS CLIENTS

Over the last 15 years, a wealth of information has been published regarding the way looted antiquities were smuggled from their countries of origin, and »laundered« through repeated transactions between members of trafficking networks that include dealers, auction houses and private collectors, before they ended up in some of the most famous museums, against the guidelines of the 1970 UNESCO Convention and the articles of several national laws (e.g., Watson/Todeschini 2007; Gill/Chippindale 2006; 2007; Godart/De Caro/Gavrili 2008). So far, over 350 highly important – but looted – antiquities have been identified from confiscated dealers' archives (mainly from the archives of Giacomo Medici, Gianfranco Becchina and Robin Symes with Christos Michaelides) and were successfully repatriated to their countries of origin, as a result of lengthy negotiations with museum and private collectors (e.g., Felch/Frammolino 2011, 306-307; Tsirogiannis 2015, 200-201).

Despite the continuous identification of illicit material at the highest levels of the international market (i.e., the »reputable« auction houses and dealers, see Brodie 2014), unprovenanced antiquities with no proof of legal origin are repeatedly being offered by the same members of the market previously found to have been involved in illicit antiquities cases (Tsirogiannis 2015; 2016; 2019); ironically, these are the same members who claim that »incredibly thorough« due diligence is being conducted (Max Bernheimer, International Head of Antiquities Department at Christie's, in: Loader Wilkinson 2011). Furthermore, each time that antiquities are identified from their depictions in the confiscated archives, the members of the market employ the same excuse, that they do not have access to these archives (e.g., Alberge 2019). This argument is completely false since these dealers and auction houses methodically avoid contacting the relevant state authorities to check their merchandise with them (and their archives) before they even compile their next sales catalogue. It is, therefore, the market that chooses not to have access to the archives, not the authorities who are denying such access to them (Tsirogiannis 2016, 70).

At the same time, museum and private antiquities collections are full of unprovenanced and illicit antiquities, which are gradually being identified as such, as a result of relevant official investigations (see, e.g., Watson/Todeschini 2006, on the work of the archaeologists Daniela Rizzo and Maurizio Pellegrini on behalf of the Italian authorities) or academic research (Tsirogiannis 2019). Yet, museums, like the members of the market, are holding on to their acquisitions as long as possible. They do not clean up their collections since they do not initiate relevant research programmes in cooperation with the affected countries, especially with those who hold the confiscated archives (Italy and Greece). Even worse, some museums, previously identified as involved in acquiring illicit archaeological material in recent years, keep acquiring antiquities which lack a full record of legal documentation, creating an even bigger problem for themselves (see, e.g., Gill 2013, 74 and Litt 2018 on the case of the Cleveland Museum of Art).

For all these reasons, it is important for archaeologists who are studying ancient material that surfaces unprovenanced in the market or state and private collections, to bridge that gap by themselves conducting the extent of due diligence in provenance research that should have been provided by the market, to determine the true origin of these objects, including their authenticity. Any expertise on such objects that gains monetary reward has to be avoided and in academic publications, the unknown and/or dubious provenance has to be pointed out clearly.

Some institutions, such as the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), prohibit the academic publication of finds with dubious circumstances of acquisition and without firm provenances, or from private collections lacking the same information (Mödlinger 2017, 12). However, at the same time, it is academically important that researchers and the public are notified about the specific reasons that make such finds problematic, for any subsequent publication (academic or other) of these objects not to serve the needs of a criminal archaeological market, its clients and the academics who »launder« such finds with their expertise and publications. This is particularly important for artefacts poorly attested through archaeological recovery or rarely held in public collections, such as European Bronze Age helmets. Into this category fall at least 24 helmets which can all be traced back to private possession. These objects were usually sold and resold through different auction houses, despite their questionable provenance.

We clearly state that the illegal acquisition of archaeological material by state or private collections is in no way to be supported and that it is mandatory for any publication of such finds to indicate their doubtful provenance and/or illicit origin. We are also convinced that, given such framing, academic publication of such finds, including the objects here presented, does not encourage their illegal collection or curation, as directed by the statement of the Community on the Illicit Trade in Cultural Material of the European Association of Archaeologists (Mödlinger et al. 2016). Moreover, we strongly support the formation of databases on specific object groups (such as Bronze Age armour or weapons); see, for example, the one launched by the British Museum for pharaonic antiquities circulating on the market<sup>1</sup> and the Palmyra Portrait Project at Aarhus University<sup>2</sup> which aims to unify in a single corpus/database over 3000 portraits currently scattered across the world in different museum and private collections. The British Museum open-access semantic database on pharaonic antiquities will contain data of cultural heritage artefacts, each given a unique record and a reference to its collection history, which are circulating on the international art market. Information will be collected from auctioneers, dealers, collectors, government bodies, and others. Both databases indicate a shift of opinion on the risks and benefits of publication of antiquities on the market; additionally, active cooperation with law enforcement is kept by Circulating Artefacts.

Having identified where the problems are, the way forward is to identify the true provenance of unprovenanced antiquities in all stages of their movement, if possible: from their discovery and their appearance in the market, until they reside in museum and private collections. Since the antiquities market is traditionally dominated by the sale of vases, statues, figurines, busts and coins, other categories of ancient material (e. g. frescoes) are, by comparison, underrepresented, due to the higher amount of work required for them to be looted and smuggled, the greater likelihood of their being identified as illicit, etc., or simply because such material is less frequently discovered. This last is the reason for the underrepresentation of all types of armour; such material is (at least concerning the Iron Age in Italy) usually found in tombs of warriors, which are infrequent in ancient cemeteries and mostly expected to be discovered in ancient battlefields and their surrounding areas. Equally, the quantity of scholarship in this area is less, compared to the scholarship on more traditionally traded and desirable objects. Therefore, when it comes to academic research related to the way ancient armour has been trafficked in recent years, there is a considerable gap in knowledge which scholarship has only rarely tried to bridge (e. g., Gill 2014).

This study presents for the first time the proofs for a previously unidentified and legally questionable case of a group of a 5<sup>th</sup> century BC armour for horses, to illustrate an example of an unprovenanced and most likely illicit set of antiquities, sold by a notorious antiquities dealer to a prominent museum. As the dealer is convicted for involvement in illicit antiquities cases, and the museum is also proved to have acquired illicit and unprovenanced antiquities, this case of highly questionable material that the museum retains in its possession highlights the connection between the illicit market and the museums.

However, the main focus of this study is on various cases of armour (13 helmets and a pair of greaves from the European Bronze Age) that have been followed »from the ground« to their appearance in the market, through the Internet and other sources, usually before they become part of museum and private collections; these cases aim to illustrate how, on the one hand, the market is still dealing in unprovenanced objects, and, on the other, that it is possible for archaeologists to collect evidence that can be of forensic value to various state authorities, should they express an interest in following up these cases.

Finally, it is our aim to point out the dubious origins of the objects here presented. Evidence may provide grounds for repatriation claims to countries of origin or voluntary relinquishment by possessors.

We must also take into account that some of the pieces presented here may be forgeries, as most likely the helmet associated with Type Biebesheim (no. 8 here in this article), and the Bronze Age helmet Type Pişcolt published elsewhere by one of us (Mödlinger 2014, 177): no detailed archaeological or scientific analyses were published or could have been carried out by us on this, or any other object presented in this study. It is very rare that, as in the case of the helmet no. 2 presented in the second part of the study, the identity of the scientist, the laboratory, and the type of analyses carried out to certify its authenticity are mentioned in the object's lot description of the relevant auction. Usually, laboratories, scientists, or archaeologists carrying out such analyses or expertise are not keen on seeing their names in connection with objects of doubtful provenance; moreover, it is common practice for a non-disclosure agreement to be signed between a laboratory and a member of the antiquities market regarding the analyses carried out. This disables the possibility of future exchange of information, even between laboratories. Since such analyses and/or archaeological expertise supporting the authenticity of an object significantly raise its financial value, they also indirectly support the market. For this reason, the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) is currently developing a Code of Ethics for archaeologists providing their expertise and scientists and laboratories providing analyses for archaeological objects of doubtful provenance and/or objects from the market.

## CASE STUDIES

### A »Group of Armor for Horses« at the J. Paul Getty Museum

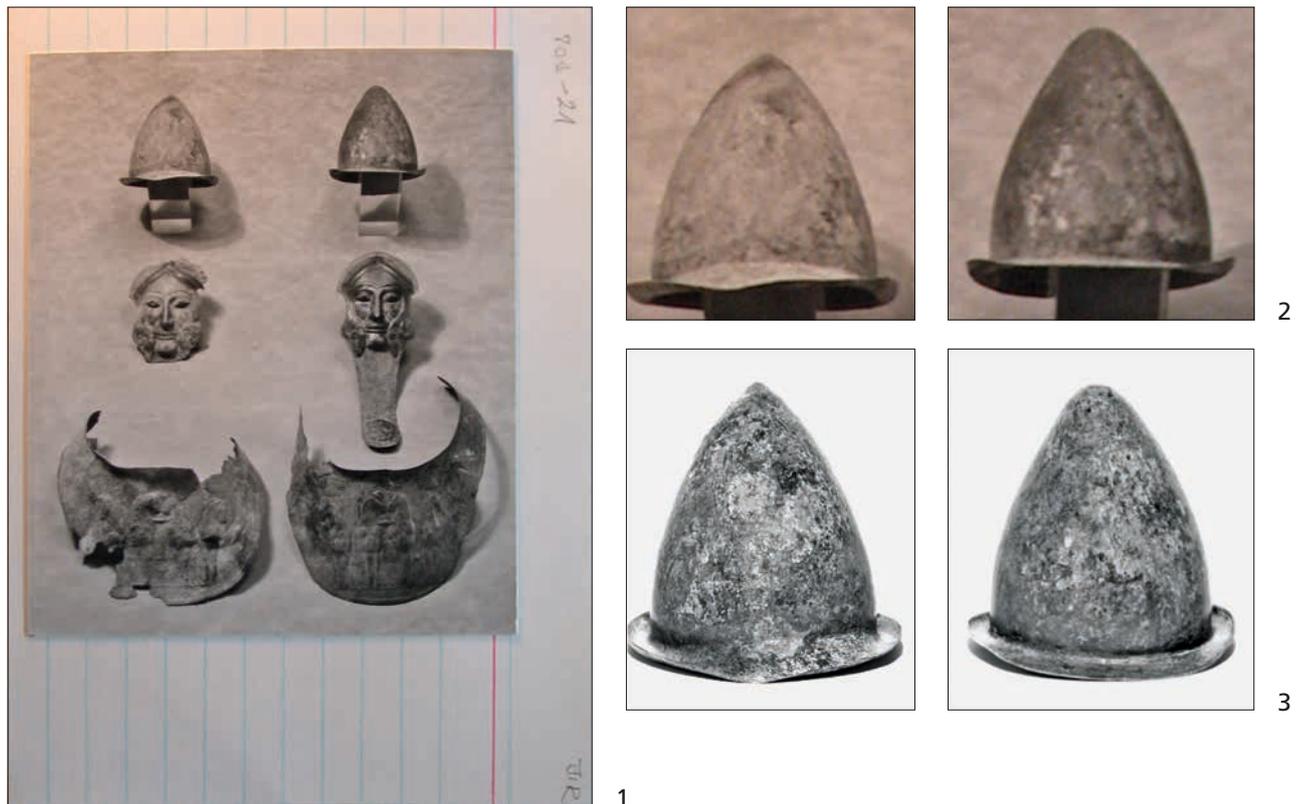
One of us (Ch. Tsirogiannis) has identified at the J. Paul Getty Museum a »Group of Armor<sup>3</sup> for Horses«; the group was acquired by the museum in 1983 and comprises two matched sets (**fig. 1, 1**), each of which consists of a bronze *prometopidion* (ancient Greek word referring to armour used for the protection of a horse's forehead, acc. nos 83.AC.7.1-2) and a bronze breastplate (acc. nos 83.AC.7.3-4). According to the Getty Museum's website, the upper part of the *prometopidia* that are decorated with a warrior's head is inlaid with ivory and amber. In the museum's website, one of the breastplates appears intact, decorated also with a *gorgoneion* at the end of its lower part, while the other is missing a big piece of the upper right part and pieces of the lower left part. Each of the breastplates is decorated with a similar scene: a four-horse chariot (quadriga), flanked by flying, winged figures; they hold, respectively, crowns and heralds' staffs, and a herald's staff and wreath, and they most probably depict Nikai. »The image of a chariot flanked by Nikai usually appears in Greek art in connection with victory in a chariot race. This elaborate armour probably had a ceremonial purpose, perhaps serving as a prize for a victorious chariot team« (text from the description of breastplate no. 83.AC.7.3 in the Getty website). The provenance that accompanies the four objects is identical and very short: »1983, Antike Kunst Palladion (Basel, Switzerland), sold to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1983«.



**Fig. 1** The »Group of Armour for Horses«. – **1** Depicted in four images at the Getty Museum's website. From left to right: A fully surviving *prometopidion*, the surviving upper part of a second *prometopidion*, an appearing as fully surviving breastplate and another breastplate missing its upper right and lower left parts. – **2** The same »Group of Armour for Horses« depicted in four images from the confiscated Becchina archive. Images in **fig. 1, 1** and **fig. 2, 3** are part of the Getty Museum's Open Content Program; the museum's website states: »The Getty makes available, without charge, all available digital images to which the Getty holds the rights or that are in the public domain to be used for any purpose. No permission is required«.

Also according to the museum's website, the group (dated to c. 480 BC), after its acquisition, became part of the exhibition »Beyond Beauty: Antiquities as Evidence« which was presented at the Getty Museum from 16 December 1997 to 27 January 1999. Finally, in the »Bibliography« section of the website, five publications appear, four of which (1984-2014) are by the museum itself, while the fifth is in *LIMC* (Moustaka/Goulaki-Voutira/Grote 1992, 859 no. 92). However, recent publications referring to these four objects (e. g., Graells i Fabregat 2019), are not (yet) included in the museum's »Bibliography« section. Although the four pieces are presented by the Getty as of »Greek (South Italian)« culture and South Italy is declared as the »Place created«, the most interesting information is provided at the end of the informative text: »Horse armor was widely used in the ancient Mediterranean world. Its use is well documented in the Near East and Cyprus, but less well understood in ancient Greece. The Greek colonies in southern Italy and Sicily produced all the examples of Greek horse armor still known today. Although no horse armor from mainland Greece has survived, writings by the Greek historian Xenophon verify its existence.« With this statement, the Getty Museum implies that the four unprovenanced pieces were produced in South Italy or Sicily, and tacitly indicates that they were most probably discovered in Italy.

However, the four pieces (**fig. 1, 2**) are depicted in 15 images in the confiscated Becchina archive and were identified by one of us (Ch. Tsirogiannis). The same four pieces were also identified, independently, by the pioneers of forensic archaeology in illicit antiquities, Dr. Daniela Rizzo and Maurizio Pellegrini. It is not surprising that these images were discovered in the Becchina archive since Gianfranco Becchina was the real owner<sup>4</sup> of »Antike Kunst Palladion« in Basel, that sold the objects to the Getty Museum; while the Getty accepts



**Fig. 2** 1 The two helmets, the two *prometopidia* and the two breastplates, depicted in the professional image numbered »704-21« from the Becchina archive; the six objects are depicted as one group comprising of two – not fully surviving – identical sets. – 2 The two helmets depicted in the Becchina archive (detail of fig. 2, 1). – 3 The two South Italian helmets as depicted at the Getty Museum's website.

that, it prefers in the »Provenance« section of its website to use the less harmful name of the gallery rather than the name of its real owner, recognisable as a notorious and convicted illicit antiquities dealer.

Furthermore, the 15 images are all professional; seven of them are in colour and eight are black and white. However, all the images in the Becchina archive depict the *prometopidia* and the breastplates before restoration: the fully surviving *prometopidion* is depicted before some of its original green patina was removed; the incomplete one is depicted missing pieces all around its surviving part, mainly from the top right and right sides; the fully surviving breastplate is depicted missing small pieces above the head of the left Nike and below her raised hand, and parts of the patina – which were later removed – are still present. Finally, the second breastplate is depicted as already having received some restoration (which is also visible in the images of the museum's website), but in the Becchina images, it is depicted with a heavily restored curved shoulder protection at the left side. In the Getty website image, this curve is missing. Therefore, the Becchina images of the four objects must predate the ones on the Getty website since the pieces are depicted in a worse condition while in Becchina's possession. It remains unknown if the pieces – after they were photographed for Becchina – received an additional restoration while they were still in Becchina's possession or after they were acquired by the Getty.

The black-and-white images are stuck on rectangular, numbered, lined cards (nos 704-21, as stated on one of them); however, only the cards which are numbered 705, 706, 707, 708, 710, 713, 717 are depicted in the Becchina archive, together with the one numbered »704-21«. This one also bears the note »JIR« on the opposite corner. This note refers to Jiri Frel, the former chief curator of antiquities at the Getty, who main-

tained a close friendship and professional relationship with Becchina (Felch/Frammolino 2011, 67) and was in charge of the museum's antiquities collection when this group of objects was acquired from Becchina's gallery. It is possible that the Getty Museum has in its archive the rest of the professional images which are missing from the sequence: sometimes, dealers would send professional images of the offered objects to the museums. After the acquisition of the object, the museums were keeping these images in the relevant objects' files.

However, the case becomes more complicated. Among the 15 professional images from the Becchina archive, there are three that present the four objects (the two *prometopidia* and the two breastplates) along with two warriors' helmets in groups. One image depicts all six objects (**fig. 2, 1**), and two other images each depict a different set of a helmet, a *prometopidion* and a breastplate. Ch. Tsirogiannis identified what appears to be the same two helmets in separate images on the Getty Museum website (**fig. 2, 3**; compared with detail of the helmets in the Becchina picture, **fig. 2, 2**; it is unknown if any restoration or cleaning has been applied to these two helmets after they were photographed while in Becchina's hands). The Getty Museum categorizes each of them as »Conical helmet in the shape of a pilos (felt hat)« and »South Italian«. On the museum's website, they appear with the same »Provenance« as the four pieces comprising the »Group of Armor for Horses« (»1983, Antike Kunst Palladion (Basel, Switzerland), sold to the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1983«), and they have sequential accession numbers (83.AC.8.1-2) very similar to the accession numbers of the *prometopidia* and the breastplates (83.AC.7.1-4), proving that the six objects were acquired in the same year and probably together as one group; however, the museum's website makes absolutely no association between the helmets and the other four pieces, or even between the helmets themselves.

Furthermore, while the museum's website dates all four objects of the »Group of Armor for Horses« to »about 480 B.C.«, the same website refers to the two helmets as of the »late 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.«. Such a chronological difference between the helmets and the rest of the Becchina group is slim (if it ever existed), but it is enough for the museum to further de-associate them, apart from the fact that they are not depicted in the museum's website as one group of six objects, as they are depicted in the Becchina images. Unlike the horse armour, the helmets are not on exhibition at the Getty Museum, making it less likely that a knowledgeable visitor would make the association between them. These facts (the objects' depiction as a group while in Becchina's hands, the sequential accession numbers at the museum and the museum's dating of the six objects) combine to suggest that there is at least the possibility that all six pieces were originally discovered in the same context, although there is, of course, no proof, at least not yet.

The six human and horse armour objects depicted in the confiscated Becchina archive are completely unprovenanced before 1983; the two helmets are still unpublished, except on the Getty Museum's website; the only known collecting history of all six objects, as given by the Getty Museum, is, in fact, Gianfranco Becchina, one of the most notorious illicit antiquities dealers, already convicted for similar cases (Papadopoulos 2018; 2019), while thousands of antiquities have been repatriated to Greece and – mainly – to Italy because proven to have passed illicitly through his hands (Albertson 2015). Most of these repatriated antiquities have been returned even if they were depicted, cleaned and restored, in only a few images. In this case, there are 15 images presenting at least four of the objects before and after restoration; therefore, there is already more evidence compared to the ones required for most of the already repatriated antiquities. Since the archaeological context of these objects has already been destroyed and their historical contribution to our knowledge is forever lost, the repatriation of these human and horse armour objects to Italy is the least that the Getty Museum should do.



**Fig. 3** Some of the helmets with unknown provenance discussed in this article. The numbers indicate the helmet numbers in the text. – Source of the images: **1** The permission for the publication of this photograph was obtained from the owner of the private collection the helmet is part of. – **2. 4. 11** All three helmets were published on swordmaster.org by different users (helmets 2 and 4: G. Sermanovich; helmet 11: Sharik). – **3** © Mediahaus Biering. – **5-6** The permission for the publication of this photograph was obtained from the owner of the private collection the helmets are part of. – **7** Photograph from catawiki, most likely taken by the seller balkan\_celts. – **8** © Pierre Bergé & Associés. – We are aware of the problems potentially arising publishing these images but decided nevertheless to do so in order to ease the identification of these helmets once they (re)appear on the market and to enable a secure identification of them.

### 13 helmets and a pair of greaves

Unfortunately, most recent finds of Bronze Age metal armour derive from unauthorised excavations (see Mödlinger 2017), without a known findspot or any information about their archaeological context. Hence, they cannot be studied in detail by archaeologists. As in the cases of the objects at the Getty Museum, the following cases of 13 helmets and one pair of greaves researched by one of us (M. Mödlinger) are only briefly described since the focus of this article is their provenance rather than their typical archaeological classification, especially since some of the helmets await detailed publication on their typology, etc. by other colleagues (such as nos 1, 9, 10, and 12) (fig. 3). The typological classification follows that recently published by one of the authors (Mödlinger 2017). The links mentioned in the text, referring to the various auctions, online forums, etc., are all available to the authors and ready to be shared with any state authorities who may be interested to follow up on these cases.

Since there is no evidence that the finds discussed in the following were legally excavated by authorised archaeologists, this discussion of their provenance should, at the very least, not increase their market value.

### 1 Helmet of Type Oranienburg fig. 3, 1

**Findspot:** Liptovský Hrádok, okr. Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovakia. – **Circumstances of discovery:** associated deposit. – **State of preservation:** almost complete helmet. – **Measurements:** unknown. – **Whereabouts:** private collection. – **References:** Ondrkál 2020; Ondrkál et al. in press.

The associated deposit was detected and excavated by metal detectorists at the Vislavce site, at 920m a.s.l., in the southwest of Liptovský Hrádok in 1993 (see also Ondrkál 2020; Ondrkál et al. in press). It was reported (Ondrkál et al. in press) that the finder tried to sell the hoard to the museum of Liptovský Mikuláš, which refused to buy it. The objects were allegedly discovered at 40-50cm depth. The associated deposit is said to contain ten bronze objects, amongst which were the helmet, a bird-shaped bronze vessel, c. 16cm × 11cm (possibly part of a *Kesselwagen*), bronze wheels with thickened spokes and (?) bird protomes, vessels, and bronze spiral diadems. The bird-shaped vessel is currently under study by F. Ondrkál at the Archaeological Centre Olomouc, Czech Republic. It was said (Ondrkál 2020; Ondrkál et al. in press) to have been placed on top of the other finds, with the feet pointing upwards. Today, the objects of the associated deposit are dispersed in various private collections; for instance, the bronze vessel is currently part of a private collection in Wiener Neustadt, Austria.

### 2 Helmet of Type Oranienburg fig. 3, 2

**Findspot:** unprovenanced, most likely Ukraine. – **Circumstances of discovery:** unknown. – **State of preservation:** complete helmet. – **Measurements:** height: 18cm; diameter: 22.3cm × 22.7cm; weight: c. 360g. – **Whereabouts:** private collection. – **References:** unpublished.

The helmet was sold at violity.com on 9 July 2017, and shortly after, on 13 July 2017, discussed in a well-known Ukrainian metal detectorist forum (swordmaster.org), where images of the unrestored helmet too were posted by G. Sermanowicz (who also published the first images of helmet no. 4, discussed below). Moreover, the poster noted that the helmet was restored by a professional restorer after the top of the helmet was destroyed during discovery; he also noted a steel hoop inserted inside the helmet to stabilize it. The helmet was then restored and sold at TimeLine Auctions in London on 4 September 2018 (lot 499) to the Austrian Galerie Kunst der Antike in Vöcklabruck, which sold it shortly after its acquisition. TimeLine Auctions indicated that the helmet was acquired in Germany after World War II, thence by descent 2006 to a lady living in Kent, United Kingdom.

A sample of the helmet was metallographically studied by B. Gilmore at the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and History of Art, University of Oxford (analytical report no. 114371/570). Inter-/intracrystalline corrosion is present, which supports the authenticity of the helmet,

though it seems somewhat over-restored. Notable are the riveted-on bronze patches that seem to be added to repair contemporary damage. The helmet most likely had originally eight rivet holes.

Investigations into suspected offences are ongoing in the United Kingdom and Ukraine.

### 3 Helmet of Type Oranienburg fig. 3, 3

**Findspot:** unprovenanced. – **Circumstances of discovery:** unknown. – **State of preservation:** complete helmet. – **Measurements:** height: unknown; diameter: 22cm. – **Whereabouts:** private collection. – **References:** Gorny & Mosch 2007.

The helmet was sold at the auction »Kunst der Antike 158« at Gorny & Mosch auction house in Munich on 22 June 2007 (lot 45). A small lateral crack is noted in the auction catalogue. No indications about its provenance were provided by Gorny & Mosch. Today, the helmet is in a private collection. It seems as if there was some sort of inlay or decoration added just above the rivet holes, all around the cap, which would make this helmet the second of its type with added decoration (for the first with boar-tusk decoration see Mödlinger 2017, cat. no. 1).

### 4 Helmet of Type Oranienburg fig. 3, 4

**Findspot:** probably Khmelnytskyi oblast, Ukraine. – **Circumstances of discovery:** unknown. – **State of preservation:** complete helmet. – **Measurements:** height: 23cm; diameter: 22cm; weight: 590g. – **Whereabouts:** private collection. – **References:** unpublished.

The helmet's current whereabouts are unknown. The helmet was sold at violity.com on 3 October 2017. It was discussed in a well-known Ukrainian metal detectorist forum (swordmaster.org) the same day. The poster, G. Sermanowicz – the same who posted images of helmet no. 2 above, in unrestored condition – notes that it was found by a friend with the metal detector and that the helmet was restored by »Master Max«.

### 5-6 Two helmets of Type Oranienburg fig. 3, 5-6

**Findspot:** near Lublin, Poland. – **Circumstances of discovery:** associated deposit. – **State of preservation:** two complete helmets. – **Measurements:** helmet A: height: approx. 20cm; diameter: approx. 20.5cm × 21cm; height knob: 2.2cm; diameter knob: 2.4cm; helmet B: height: approx. 22cm; height knob: 1.8cm; diameter knob: 1.7cm. – **Whereabouts:** private collection. – **References:** unpublished.

According to the finder, the helmets were discovered one inside the other in 2007/2008 close to a river (0.5-1 km) in what is today a clearing in the woods, about 5km from the findspot of the Dratów hoard (woj. lubelskie, Poland) (Gardawski/Wesołowski 1956). The pair of helmets is in excellent condition and barely corroded. The finder reported to have only washed the bronzes, no corrosion

was removed. Both helmets were placed with the knobs pointing upwards above a small cup of Type Fuchsstadt; all three bronze objects were placed inside the bigger cup of Type Fuchsstadt/Friedrichsruhe, which, then, was placed inside a clay pot. The outer corrosion of helmet A supports this arrangement, as the upper parts of the helmet are uncorroded on the outside, probably because the inner lining was still present during the deposition. Only the lower part of this »inner« helmet, which shows nine rivet holes, is corroded. Interestingly, the knob of this helmet shows a stepped base, which is unique for helmets of Type Oranienburg. Inside of this helmet, some organic material remained and provoked a different formation of corrosion. Helmet B has twelve rivet holes and shows an impression on the upper part of the cap, which probably occurred during the discovery of the deposit. The clay pot dissolved more or less during the discovery of the hoard. The handle of the bigger cup is riveted on and reminds of cups of Type Gusen. The ribbed part of the body instead resembles more cups of Type Blatnica or Kirkendrup.

### 7 Helmet of Type Montbellet fig. 3, 7

**Findspot:** unprovenanced. – **Circumstances of discovery:** unknown. – **State of preservation:** complete helmet. – **Measurements:** height: 15 cm; diameter: 19 cm × 23 cm. – **Whereabouts:** private collection. – **References:** unpublished.

The helmet was offered online at catawiki auctions by the seller *Balkan\_celts* twice without being sold (lot references: 24359335 and 25269317), specifying »Germany« as the origin of the helmet. In the end, it was sold on 3 August 2019, on catawiki by the seller *Balkan\_celts* (lot reference: 28396139). No further information is known about this helmet.

### 8 Helmet associated with Type Biebesheim fig. 3, 8

**Findspot:** unprovenanced. – **Circumstances of discovery:** unknown. – **State of preservation:** complete helmet. – **Measurements:** height: 25 cm. – **Whereabouts:** private collection. – **References:** unpublished.

The helmet, which is associated with helmets of Type Biebesheim, was allegedly part of an Austrian private collection until the year 2000 for at least 30 years, conveniently placing its acquisition before the 1970 UNESCO Convention; then it was put up for auction (lot 283) at Pierre Bergé & Associés in Paris on 10 October 2007. It was sold in rather poor, unrestored(?) condition at Deutsch Auktionen in Vienna on 29 November 2016 (lot 9), and then again at TimeLine Auctions in London on 23 November 2018 (lot 519).

The whole helmet closely resembles another unprovenanced helmet in a private collection, previously at the Axel Guttmann collection (Mödlinger 2017, cat. no. 100). Its wheel motif might connect it with the cheek plate from Podcrkavlje (Brodsko-posavska županija, Croatia)

(Mödlinger 2017, cat. no. 67), which bears similar decoration. However, it is worth noting that the helmet presented here has six rectangular(!) rivet holes which have no analogy in any other Bronze Age armour. Also, these rivet holes are too distant from each other to properly attach an organic cap, and make it impossible to attach cheek plates. Also, helmets of Type Biebesheim, as well as the aforementioned helmet from the previous Axel Guttmann collection, do not have any rivets fixing together the two metal sheets at the crest. According to M. Mödlinger's professional expertise and judging from the available images only, it appears that this helmet is most likely a forgery.

### 9-10 Two helmets of Type Lueg

**Findspot:** Trhovište, okr. Michalovce, Slovakia. – **Circumstances of discovery:** associated deposit. – **State of preservation:** two almost complete helmets with cheek plates. – **Measurements:** unknown. – **Whereabouts:** Východoslovenské museum Košice, no inventory numbers yet. – **References:** Gašaj 2019; a detailed publication is currently in preparation by Dárius Gašaj.

The associated deposit was discovered by mushroom pickers (Gašaj 2019) in September 2017 in the woods close to an old road connecting Trhovište and Pozdišovce. The finders reported it to the local museum, which bought the associated deposit. The deposit contains – besides the two helmets partly stuck one inside the other – two arm spirals and two pairs of cheek plates. Helmets, cheek plates, and arm spirals can be seen on the cover of *Historica Carpatica* 50.

### 11 Italian cap helmet fig. 3, 11

**Findspot:** unprovenanced. – **Circumstances of discovery:** unknown. – **Measurements:** unknown. – **State of preservation:** almost complete. – **Whereabouts:** private collection. – **References:** Tarbay 2018, 313-360.

A decorated Italian cap helmet, with or without socket or knob, said to have been discovered in the region of Ternopil, Ukraine, as mentioned by the finder in a Ukrainian metal detectorist platform. Pictures of the helmet were posted by user Sharik on 11 March 2016 in the swordmaster.org forum. The user refers to another post from a poster called »UFO« on the Russian-speaking metal detectorist forum domongol.org on 28 October 2016, who notes the find area of the helmet. The current whereabouts of the helmet are unknown. The helmet is incised with holes creating the shape of two waterbird heads, with the sun between them.

### 12 Italian crested helmet

**Findspot:** Ukraine. – **Circumstances of discovery:** associated deposit. – **Measurements:** not yet published. – **State of preservation:** Lviv Museum of the History of Religion, Ukraine. – **References:** a detailed publication is in preparation by Mikola Bandrivskij.

According to the information posted by the finder »Zone« in the forum of violity.com on 10 February 2015, the helmet was allegedly discovered together with a Urartrian(?) phiale and different parts of horse harness, including also several rings, by »a friend« of his at the border of the Vinnytsia and Khmelnytsky region, Ukraine. The helmet was sold via violity.com on 7 May 2015 (violity later deleted the link to the auction). Fortunately, the museum of Lviv managed to trace the find; today, all finds are in the museum of Lviv.

This helmet (together with the helmet from Zavadintsy [Hencken 1971, 122] or Kreimna, Horodozkyj rajon, Khmelnytskyi oblast, Ukraine [Bandrinski 2014, 264 fig. 133, 2]) is only the second Villanova helmet found in Ukraine (for parallels, see Mödlinger 2017, 126-136 figs 2.27-2.30; Iaia 2005). It shows two rows of big bosses on the lower part of the cap parallel to the rim; in between the bosses and the rim, there are two lines of cross-hatched triangles. Additionally, all along the rim, it bears – unlike other similar Villanova helmets – many rivet holes, indicating the permanent fixation of an organic cap inside the helmet. The horse or chariot harness parts are most likely of Cimmerian origin; similar rings, most likely connection rings, not necessarily cheek-rings, are well known from Ukraine (Mogylov 2008, pl. 182, 1; see also Skoryj 1999, 96 fig. 23, 1-5 for almost identical finds from Butenki, Dnipropetrovsk oblast, Ukraine [Erich 1994, 142-145 figs 4-6]).

Apart from the helmet from Zavadintsy and the Italian cap helmet presented here (helmet no. 11, see also fig. 3, 11), there is another indication of contacts between Italy and the southwestern part of today's Ukraine: a little bronze warrior figure from the village of Luzhany on the outskirts of Chernivtsi, Ukraine (Bandrinski 2014, fig. 69, 141). The figure resembles very much the Sardinian warrior figurines (Lilliu 1966).

### 13 Italian crested helmet

**Findspot:** unprovenanced. – **Circumstances of discovery:** unknown. – **State of preservation:** complete helmet. – **Measurements:** height: 32.5 cm. – **Whereabouts:** private collection. – **References:** unpublished.

An Italian crested helmet was on sale at Phoenix Ancient Art gallery (branches in Genève and New York) while the gallery participated in the Brafa Art Fair 2015<sup>5</sup> in Brussels with the helmet on their flyer. The 32.5 cm high helmet derives allegedly from the former G. Ligabue Collection (Florence, Paris). The top of the crest is broken. It has two rows of bosses on the cap and three rows of smaller bosses along the crest, which make it look very similar to another helmet (Mödlinger 2017, fig. 2.36 no. 7), except that the latter has three, and not two holes, on the sides to attach the chin straps.

### 14-15 Pair of greaves of Type Kuřim

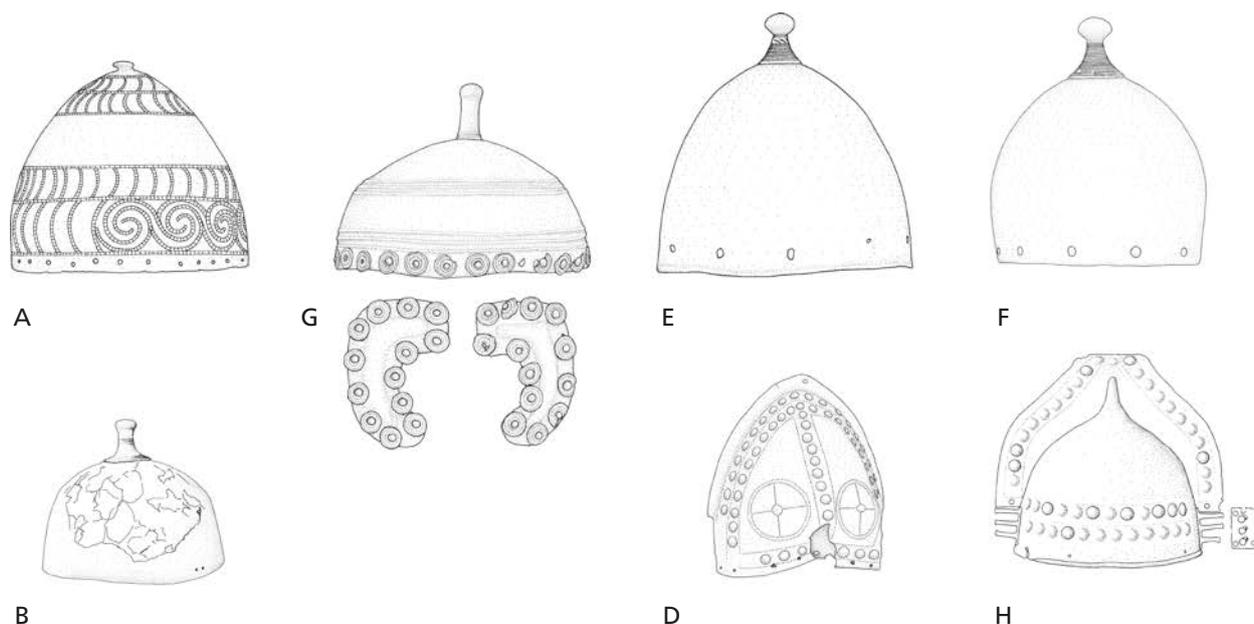
**Findspot:** unprovenanced; allegedly Lubny, Poltavska oblast, Ukraine. – **Circumstances of discovery:** associated deposit(?). – **State of preservation:** complete pair of greaves. – **Measurements:** height: 25.5 cm. – **Whereabouts:** private collection Platar, Kiev. – **References:** Bochkarev 2010, 208; Soroceanu 2008, 22 note 289; Collection 2004, 79; Kločko 2004, 76-82; 2003, 30-37.

The greaves were allegedly found before 2003 as part of an associated deposit. Find location and circumstances are unknown (Kločko 2003, 30-37; 2004, 76-82). The composition of the associated deposit is chronologically and geographically inconsistent (Soroceanu 2008, 22 note 289) since it includes central European, northern Pontic, and Caucasian-Asian finds, hence it is most likely a recent composition.

However, from a typo-chronological perspective, the following finds of this »deposit« may belong together: a *Kreuzattaschenbecken* and six Kirkendrup-Type cups, as well as the greaves and a spearhead (Soroceanu 2008, 22 note 289).

In conclusion, M. Mödlinger would like to point out the current whereabouts or most recent sales of further helmets in private ownership. These helmets are other than the ones mentioned above and have been recently published (Mödlinger 2017). All but two of the following helmets have an unknown findspot, unknown circumstances of discovery and a lack of provenance before 1970 (only the Villanova helmet found in Zavadintsy, and the helmet of Type Oranienburg with boar-tusk decoration have a collection history before 1970):

- The helmet of Type Oranienburg with boar-tusk decoration (fig. 4, A) (Mödlinger 2017, cat. no. 1) was donated by its previous private owner to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, United Kingdom (inv. no. AN2015.5).
- The Italian cap helmet published by M. Mödlinger (2017, 84-85 tab. 2.8 fig. 2.13.8) (fig. 4, B) is currently in a private collection in Berlin; it was sold at Gorny & Mosch, 16 June 2016, lot 401. It is said to derive from an Italian private collection and was bought on the art market in the 1980s.



**Fig. 4** Drawings of further helmets discussed in this article. All of these helmets are already published (see most recently Mödlinger 2017). Here, we discuss their current whereabouts and most recent sales. – (After Mödlinger 2017, pl. 1.1 [A]; fig. 2.13.8 [B]; pl. 17.100 [D]; pl. 7.52 [E]; pl. 8.53 [F]; pl. 3.21 [G]; fig. 2.27.1 [H]).

- A helmet of Type Biebesheim (Mödlinger 2017, 268) was sold at Hermann Historica, Munich, on 22 April 2016 (lot 4628). It allegedly derives originally from a Bavarian collector, who had bought it during the 1990s from an unknown collection/collector.
- The helmet associated with Type Biebesheim (**fig. 4, D**) (Mödlinger 2017, cat. no. 100), previously deriving from the Axel Guttman collection (inv. no. AG 1125), was recently sold at TimeLine Auctions, 23 November 2018, lot 519.
- A helmet of Type Pişcolt (**fig. 4, E**) (Mödlinger 2017, cat. no. 52), previously deriving from the Axel Guttman collection (inv. no. AG 1000), was put up for auction by Christie's in London on 28 April 2004 (lot 9, not sold), then sold on 19 October 2005 at Hermann Historica and again in 2007 by Royal-Athena Galleries. From there it passed to the Galerie Kunst der Antike in Vöcklabruck, Austria, then to an Austrian private collection and was sold in 2019 at Alexander Ancient Art, The Netherlands (stock no. C1092).
- Another helmet of Type Pişcolt (**fig. 4, F**) (Mödlinger 2017, cat. no. 53), sold at an auction entitled »Kunst der Antike« at Gorny & Mosch, Munich, on 13 December 2003 (lot 12), passed to the Galerie Kunst der Antike in Vöcklabruck, Austria, and is currently in the private collection of Dieter Schüssler, Graz, Austria. A notable feature of the helmet is an unrepaired, big crack, spanning from the rim to the upper half of the cap.
- A helmet of Type Paks (**fig. 4, G**) (Mödlinger 2017, cat. no. 21), previously deriving from the Axel Guttman collection (inv. no. AG 1126), is also currently in the private collection of Dieter Schüssler, Graz, Austria.
- The Villanova helmet found in Zavadintsy (or Kreimna, Horodozkyj rajon, Khmelnytskyi oblast, Ukraine) (**fig. 4, H**) (Mödlinger 2017, 134), was stolen from the Musée Massena, Nice, in the early 1990s. Its current whereabouts are unknown. The helmet was initially bought as part of the Poulaski collection, which was donated or bought by the Musée Massena. Before that, it was part of the Joubert collection (Anoutchine 1893, 341 fig. 1; Hencken 1971, 122).

Noteworthy as well is the recent appearance of two seemingly antique helmets in London in March and June 2020. The first helmet<sup>6</sup> is associated with helmets of Type Biebesheim, was allegedly part of a Cambridgeshire collection of ancient weaponry and art formed by the family since the 1970s. The helmet was sold at an auction from Pax Romana Auctions, London, United Kingdom, via liveauctioneers.com on 29 March 2020 (lot 0247). However, some peculiarities in its construction and corrosion, and, especially, its decoration (bird heads, sun symbols, rows of punched dots and bosses), raise serious doubts about its authenticity. The second helmet is an exact copy of the Pass Lueg helmet (Mödlinger 2017, 103-109). This helmet is said to derive from a collection from an art professional in the United Kingdom, who allegedly bought the helmet in the 1970s on the United Kingdom art market. It was planned to be sold at an auction from Pax Romana Auctions, London, United Kingdom, via liveauctioneers.com on 21 June 2020 (lot 0318). Also, this helmet shows peculiarities in its construction and corrosion which raises serious doubts in its authenticity. Interestingly, the helmet was withdrawn right before the auction date, and any referring links to it deleted. However, some images of the helmet still can be found online<sup>7</sup>.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has discussed several cases of unprovenanced European prehistoric metal armour that was discovered by metal detectorists (or mushroom pickers), surfaced in metal detectorist platforms online and/or the market before they ended up in private collections or museums. We have presented all available information that could be obtained and have reconstructed, wherever possible, the true provenance of these objects. Unfortunately, the archaeological contexts were destroyed during the discovery and in most cases, no information about associated finds is available either. Moreover, in most cases, it is impossible to determine the authenticity of most of the objects discussed here, as usually only photographs and no further information are available and no direct examination of the finds could take place.

Nevertheless, we see it as our aim and duty as archaeologists to publish these objects specifically pointing out their doubtful, and in most cases proven illicit provenance, and to notify colleagues of these objects, despite their having lost almost all of their archaeological context. By providing the truth regarding their provenance, a truth that is often contradictory to the largely beautified version usually given by the market, we hope to increase the probability of their restitution to museums in the countries in which they were found, as it already happened to the two helmets of Type Lueg briefly noted also here (helmets nos 9-10) and the helmet no. 12, today in the museum in Lviv.

With this study we aim to set an example for our fellow archaeologists regarding the only way in which they should publish unprovenanced archaeological material: by publishing, without any exception, all the available information, through which it is proved that the material is at least unprovenanced, if not illicit, before they proceed to any other academic discussions of the material they are studying. This kind of moral and legal approach supports and rounds out the idea behind the relevant guidelines of academic bodies (such as DAI).

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## Notes

- 1) Circulating Artefacts: a cross-platform alliance against the looting of pharaonic antiquities. [www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/cultural-protection-fund/projects/circulating-artefacts](http://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/cultural-protection-fund/projects/circulating-artefacts) (2.7.2020).
- 2) <http://projects.au.dk/palmyraportrait> (2.7.2020).
- 3) As an American institution, the Getty spells the word »armor«, and we use their spelling when quoting their presentation, but when discussing the objects in our voice, we use the British spelling.
- 4) Officially, the gallery appears to have been registered in the name of Becchina's wife, Ursula Rose Becchina. Her signature appears on official invoices and other documents of the gallery.
- 5) Advertisement video for the participation of Phoenix Ancient Art gallery at the Brafa Art Fair 2015: [www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=83&v=2Cr4BO9ikEs&ab\\_channel=Activ%27Company](http://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=83&v=2Cr4BO9ikEs&ab_channel=Activ%27Company). The helmet appears from 1:10 to 1:25 of the total 3:18 video (2.7.2020).
- 6) [www.liveauctioneers.com/item/81882522\\_rare-villanova-bronze-helmet-with-ducks](http://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/81882522_rare-villanova-bronze-helmet-with-ducks) (2.7.2020).
- 7) [www.alaintruong.com/archives/2020/06/14/38368543.html](http://www.alaintruong.com/archives/2020/06/14/38368543.html) (2.7.2020).

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## Online sources: objects at the Getty Museum

(All links below were visited on 2.7.2020)

- [www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/10384/unknown-maker-group-of-armor-for-horses-prometodpidia-2-and-breastplates-2-greek-south-italian-about-480-bc/](http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/10384/unknown-maker-group-of-armor-for-horses-prometodpidia-2-and-breastplates-2-greek-south-italian-about-480-bc/)
- [www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/14463/unknown-maker-prometopidion-greek-south-italian-about-480-bc/](http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/14463/unknown-maker-prometopidion-greek-south-italian-about-480-bc/)
- [www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/14464/unknown-maker-prometopidion-greek-south-italian-about-480-bc/](http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/14464/unknown-maker-prometopidion-greek-south-italian-about-480-bc/)
- [www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/14465/unknown-maker-breastplate-greek-south-italian-about-480-bc/](http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/14465/unknown-maker-breastplate-greek-south-italian-about-480-bc/)
- [www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/10384/unknown-maker-group-of-armor-for-horses-prometodpidia-2-and-breastplates-2-greek-south-italian-about-480-bc/?artview=dor674744](http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/10384/unknown-maker-group-of-armor-for-horses-prometodpidia-2-and-breastplates-2-greek-south-italian-about-480-bc/?artview=dor674744)
- [www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/10384/unknown-maker-group-of-armor-for-horses-prometodpidia-2-and-breastplates-2-greek-south-italian-about-480bc/?artview=dor674745](http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/10384/unknown-maker-group-of-armor-for-horses-prometodpidia-2-and-breastplates-2-greek-south-italian-about-480bc/?artview=dor674745)
- [www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/16201/unknown-maker-helmet-south-italian-late-6th-century-bc/](http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/16201/unknown-maker-helmet-south-italian-late-6th-century-bc/)
- [www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/16202/unknown-maker-helmet-south-italian-late-6th-century-bc/](http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/16202/unknown-maker-helmet-south-italian-late-6th-century-bc/)

### Prähistorische Schutzwaffenfunde ohne Provenienz: neue Fälle am Antiquitätenmarkt

Aus der europäischen Bronzezeit sind bisher weniger als 250 metallene Schutzwaffenfunde bekannt – eine geringe Zahl im Vergleich zu den mehreren Tausend zeitgenössischen Schwertern, Äxten und Dolchen. Wir kennen heute etwa 30 Panzer, 50 westeuropäische Helme und 70 osteuropäische Helme, während einige der bisher gefundenen ca. 75 Beinschienen der frühen Eisenzeit zugeschrieben werden. Leider befindet sich ein großer Teil vor allem osteuropäischer Helme in Privatbesitz und ist nicht öffentlich zugänglich. Dieser Artikel konzentriert sich auf zwei Themen: Zum einen diskutieren wir erstmals die Zusammenhänge im Fall von vier Pferdeharnischen und zwei Helmen, die in einem der beschlagnahmten Archive eines ehemals »seriösen« Antiquitätenhändlers identifiziert wurden. Alle sechs Objekte befinden sich noch immer im Getty Museum und wurden nicht restituiert. Im zweiten Teil beleuchten wir die ungeklärten Fundumstände und Provenienz von 14 weiteren Schutzwaffenfunden (13 Helme und ein Paar Beinschienen) und präsentieren eine Aktualisierung des Verbleibs anderer bronzezeitlicher Helme auf dem Markt. Auf der Grundlage der uns vorliegenden Informationen ist es wichtig, darauf hinzuweisen, dass keine der hier vorgestellten Funde aus einer offiziellen archäologischen Ausgrabung stammt.

### Recent Cases of Unprovenanced Armour in the Antiquities Market and its Clients

Hitherto, fewer than 250 finds of bronze body armour of various shapes and types are known from the European Bronze Age – a rather low number compared with the several thousands of contemporaneous swords, axes and daggers. Of these, roughly 30 cuirasses, 50 Western European helmets and 70 Eastern European helmets are securely dated to the Bronze Age, whilst some of the c. 75 greaves found to date are attributed to the Early Iron Age. Unfortunately, few of these finds are held by museums. This article focuses on two topics: Firstly, we discuss a case of four pieces of horse armour, together with two helmets, identified from one of the confiscated archives belonging to a previously »reputable« antiquities dealer. The horse armour was not associated with the helmets before this study and all six objects still reside at the Getty Museum. Secondly, we will discuss 13 further finds of Bronze Age helmets and a pair of greaves, mostly unpublished, and we present an update of current whereabouts of other Bronze Age helmets on the market. Based on the information available to us, it is important to point out that none of the newly presented finds derives from an official archaeological excavation.

### Cas récents d'armes d'origine inconnue sur le marché des antiquités et ses clients

On connaît jusqu'à présent moins de 250 pièces d'armures de différents types et formes pour l'âge du Bronze européen – un petit nombre comparé aux milliers d'épées, de haches et de poignards de la même période. On a pu dater avec certitude environ 30 cuirasses, 50 casques de l'Europe occidentale et 70 casques de l'Europe orientale, tandis que certains exemplaires des quelque 75 jambières datées sont attribués au début de l'âge du Fer. Malheureusement, bien peu de pièces appartiennent à des musées. Cet article aborde deux points: Le premier concerne quatre pièces d'une armure de cheval et deux casques identifiés à partir d'archives confisquées à un marchand d'antiquités, »honorables« autrefois. L'armure de cheval n'était pas associée aux casques avant cette étude et les six objets se trouvent toujours au Getty Museum. Le second point concerne 13 casques de l'âge du Bronze et une paire de jambières, non publiés pour la plupart, et présente la localisation sur le marché mise à jour d'autres casques de l'âge du Bronze. Les informations à notre disposition nous permettent de relever qu'aucun objet présenté récemment ne provient de fouilles archéologiques officielles.

Traduction: Y. Gautier

### Schlüsselwörter / Keywords / Mots clés

Bronzezeit / Schutzwaffen / Kunsthandel / illegaler Handel mit Kulturgut / Raubgrabungen  
Bronze Age / armour / art market / trafficking of Cultural Heritage materials / illegal excavations  
Âge du Bronze / armes / commerce de l'art / le trafic illicite de biens culturels / vol de fouilles

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