

UKRAINIAN-ITALIAN CONNECTIONS DURING THE EARLY IRON AGE AND HOW THESE ARE DESTROYED BY ILLICIT EXCAVATIONS AND THE ART MARKET

Southwestern Ukraine seems to have been well connected to Etruria during the Early Iron Age, as several older and also recent finds indicate. In the following, we will focus on bronze finds, namely armour. Unfortunately, most of these finds lack any information about their findspot and their general archaeological context; only in some cases information emerged through a direct contact with the finder. In any of the presented cases, the circumstances of how they appeared online indicate clearly a findspot in southwestern Ukraine. Further knowledge of the Ukrainian-Italian connections is, besides the currently ongoing war, severely hindered by continuous looting in the area. Consequently, we are only aware of a few finds as a testimony of such connections but do not know much about their context and, in most of the cases, their previous and current whereabouts. In this paper, we present shortly all so far known Late Bronze and Early Iron Age helmets and the available information concerning their find circumstances and current whereabouts. User names and links mentioned in the text are all available to the authors and will be shared with any state authorities who may be interested to follow up on these cases.

As one of the most known finds, we may note the crested helmet from Zavadintsy or Kreminna (Horodozkyj district, Khmelnytskyi obl./UA) (Hencken 1971, 122; Bandrivskyi 1994, 87. 96 fig. 41, 1-2; Bandrivskyi/Krushelnycka 2012, 131 fig. 42; 134 fig. 43, 1-2; Bandrivskyi 2014, 264 fig. 133, 2). The helmet was first noted as part of the Joubert collection (Anoutchine 1893, 341 fig. 1), then as part of the Poulaski collection, before it entered the Musée Masséna, Nice. Unfortunately, it was stolen from there in the early 1990s. Its current whereabouts are unknown (Mödlinger/Tsirogiannis 2020). Even though not being bronze armour, we would like to mention here also the accidental find of a bronze warrior figure from the village of Luzhany on the outskirts of Chernivtsi (Chernivtsi obl./UA) (Bandrivskyi 2014, 141), resembling very much the Sardinian warrior figurines (Lilliu 1966), or actually deriving originally from there, strengthening the Ukrainian-Italian connection (**fig. 1a-b**).

However, it was only recently that further significant armour finds came to light: unfortunately, none of them was found during a licenced archaeological excavation, and all were on sale online and/or discussed on Ukrainian metal detecting platforms. In the following, we present shortly the most recent helmet finds connecting Ukraine and Italy, as well as two new Bronze Age helmets, which appeared in May 2022 on the Ukrainian internet auction platform Violity. The authors have secured all necessary information such as links, pictures and user names.

1) Crested helmet 1

Findspot: Lityn district, at the border of the Vinnytsia and Khmelnytskyi oblast, Ukraine

Circumstances of discovery: associated find

State of preservation: almost complete crested helmet

Measurements: diameter: 20 cm × 24 cm; height: 31 cm; side pieces: 6.2 cm × 3.6 cm

fig. 2 Whereabouts: Lviv Museum of the History of Religion

References: detailed publication in preparation by M. Bandrivskij

As already noted briefly by M. Mödlinger and Ch. Tsirogiannis (2020), another crested helmet was discovered after the find of the crested helmet from Zavadintsy or Kreminna. Further details emerged only recently: the hel-

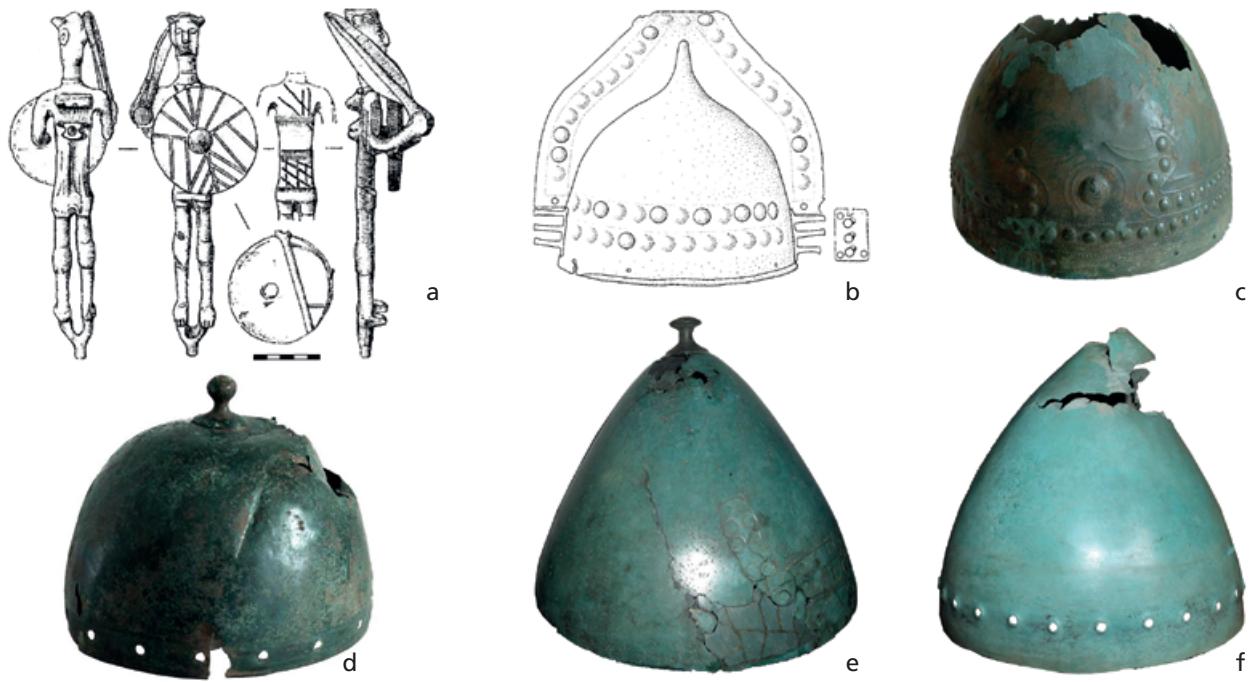


Fig. 1 a Warrior figurine, Luzhany (Chernivtsi obl./UA). – b crested helmet, Zavadintsy/Kreminna, Horodozkyj district (Khmelnyskyi obl./UA). – c Italian cap helmet (cat. 4). – d Bronze Age helmet Type Nagytétény (cat. 7). – e-f Bronze Age helmets Type Oranienburg (cats 8-9). – (a after Bandrivskyi 2014, fig. 69; b after Mödlinger 2017, fig. 2.27.1; c-f after Mödlinger/Tsirogiannis 2020, fig. 3). – Not to scale.



Fig. 2 Crested helmet 1 (cat. 1) and associated finds, Lityn district (Vinnytsia obl./UA). Currently in the Lviv Museum of the History of Religion. – (Photo M. Bilyk / M. Bandrivskyi). – Not to scale.

met was found in the Lityn district; also, one of the authors (M. Bandrivskyi) was informed that the helmet was discovered by a resident in 2014 in a swampy area, ca. 300 m a. s. l., at a depth of 40-50 cm. Next to the helmet,

the bowl and parts of a horse gear were found. Ten bronze phalerae were found a few days later about 20 m next to the first associated deposit in 90-100 cm depth; one of them is now in the Museum of the Shevchenko Scientific

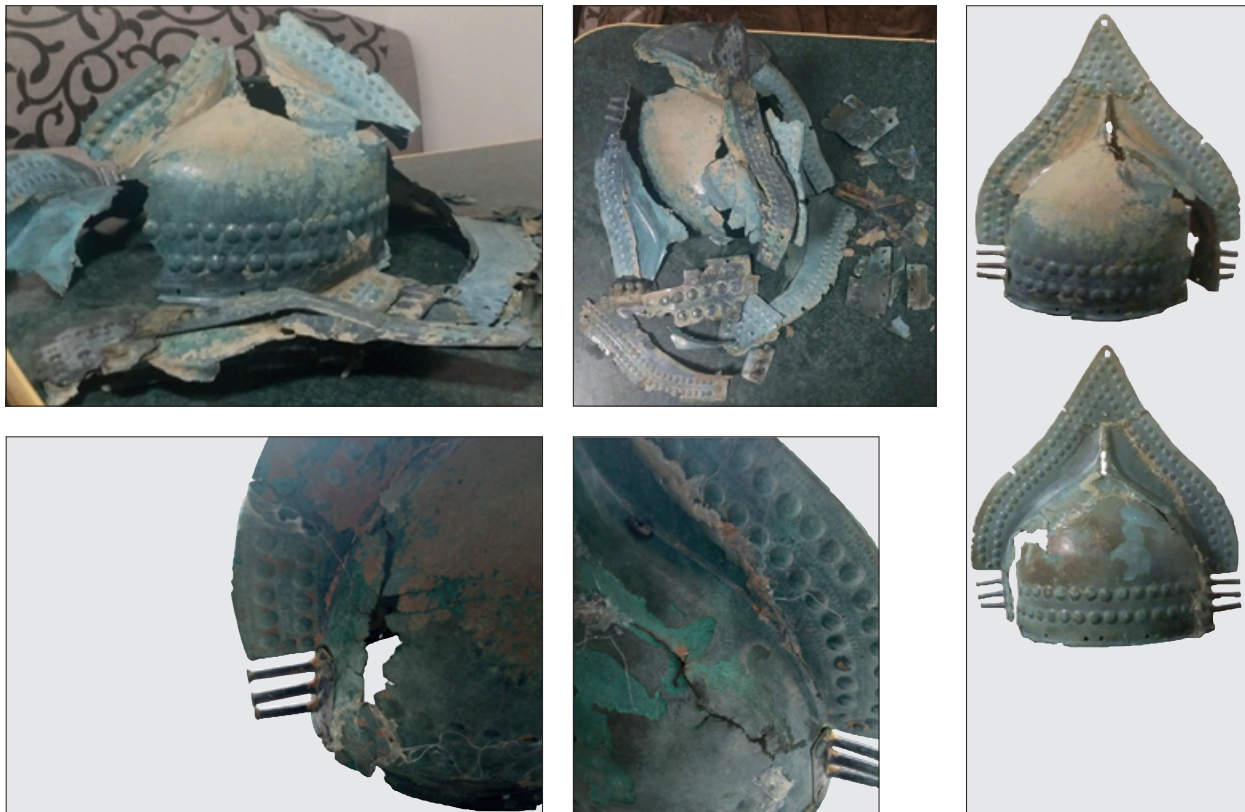


Fig. 3 Crested helmet 2 (cat. 2), Borshchiv district (Ternopil obl./UA). As sold on 25 December 2020, via the online auction platform Violity. The fragments were glued together by the finder with a hot-melt gun. – (Photos after violity.com). – Not to scale.

Society in Europe in Lviv; moreover, in 25-30m distance a third associated deposit with bit shanks was found.

The helmet was put on auction and sold via Violity on 7 May 2015, and discussed in the forum of Violity on 10 February 2015. Luckily, the Lviv Museum of the History of Religion managed to trace the find as well as the associated finds; they were put on display in the Museum for about two years; at the beginning of the current war in Ukraine, all were brought to a safe place. The finds are supposed to be part of a new exhibition at the archaeological department of the museum.

2-3) Crested helmets 2 and 3

The helmets were found together in the Borshchiv district of the Ternopil oblast, Ukraine; both were put up for auction at Violity by the same user on different dates in December 2020: 14 and 20 December (then the fragments were glued together with a hot-melt gun) 2020 for the crested helmet 2 and 26 December 2020 for the crested helmet 3.

The crested helmet 3 was bought by a patron for the Museum of the Shevchenko Scientific Society in Europe in Lviv under the condition that it will be put on display; the helmet is currently being studied by one of the authors (M. Bandrivskyi). The helmets were part of an associated

deposit containing also a long, thin iron object (potentially a sword?) and a gilded horse harness.

Crested helmet 2

fig. 3

Findspot: Borshchiv district of the Ternopil oblast, Ukraine

Circumstances of discovery: associated find

State of preservation: almost complete crested helmet, heavily fragmented

Measurements: unknown

Whereabouts: unknown

References: unpublished

Crested helmet 3

fig. 4

Findspot: Borshchiv district of the Ternopil oblast, Ukraine

Circumstances of discovery: associated find

State of preservation: almost complete crested helmet, fragmented

Measurements: will be available after restoration

Whereabouts: Museum of the Shevchenko Scientific Society in Europe in Lviv

References: detailed publication in preparation by M. Bandrivskyi

4) Decorated Italian cap helmet

(fig. 1c)

A user in a Ukrainian metal detecting forum noted a decorated Italian cap helmet said to have been found in



Fig. 4 Crested helmet 3 (cat. 3), Borshchiv district (Ternopil obl./UA). Currently at the Museum of the Shevchenko Scientific Society in Europe in Lviv. As sold on 26 December 2020, via the online auction platform Violity. – (Photos after violity.com). – Not to scale.

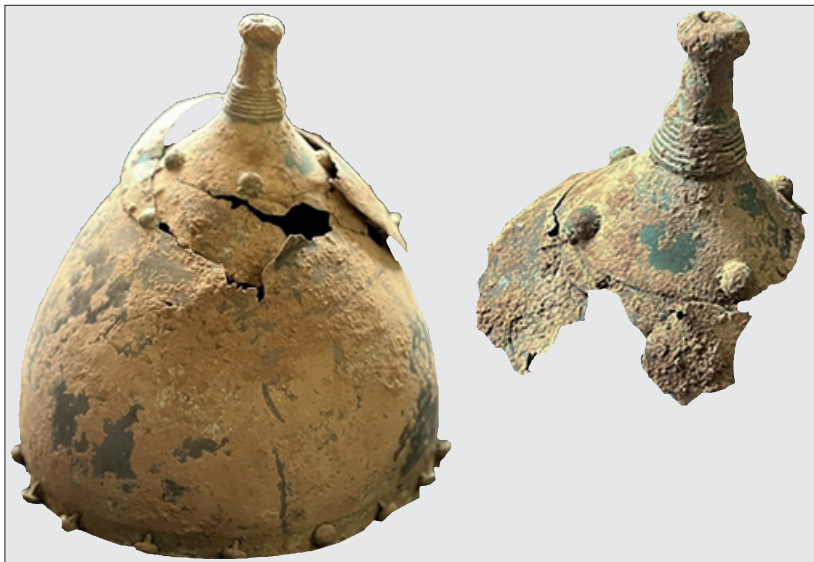


Fig. 5 Variant of a helmet Type Pişcolt (cat. 5), probably Lviv obl./UA, with detail of the upper part of the helmet. On sale in May 2022 via the online auction platform Violity. – (Photos after violity.com). – Not to scale.

the oblast of Ternopil, Ukraine. The helmet is incised with holes creating the shape of two waterbird heads, both framing a sun. Pictures of the helmet were posted by a user on 11 March 2016 in the swordmaster.org forum. This user refers to another post on the Russian-speak-

ing metal detecting forum domongol.org on 28 October 2016, which notes the find area of the helmet. The current whereabouts of the helmet are unknown (cf. Mödlinger/Tsirogiannis 2020; see also Tarbay 2018, 313-360).



Fig. 6 Knob of a yet unknown helmet type (cat. 6), probably Khmelnytskyi obl./UA, on the right the inner side of the top of the helmet's cap. On sale in May 2022 via the online auction platform Violity – (Photos after violity.com). – Not to scale.

5) Variant of a helmet Type Pişcolt

Findspot: probably Lviv oblast, Ukraine
Circumstances of discovery: unknown
State of preservation: almost complete helmet
Measurements: diameter: 21 cm × 22.8 cm; thickness rim: 4 mm; weight: over 985 g
Whereabouts: unknown
References: unpublished

The helmet was put on auction via Violity on 19 May 2022; the auction ended on 20 May 2022, with the helmet unsold. The helmet has a riveted-on knob with the typical, horizontal line decoration of helmets Type Pişcolt. It still has all rivets, which match those of the knob. Additionally, it shows traces of ancient repair: a bigger part of the upper half of the cap is missing; it was covered with another bronze sheet, which was riveted on the helmet's cap. Those rivets are not preserved.

fig. 5

6) Helmet knob, yet unknown Type

Findspot: probably Khmelnytskyi oblast, Ukraine
Circumstances of discovery: unknown
State of preservation: complete helmet knob
Measurements: diameter: 8.3 cm; height: 6 cm; weight: 273 g
Whereabouts: unknown
References: unpublished

The knob of the helmet was discussed and published with some pictures by a user in the swordmaster.org forum in January 2022. The helmet was already put up for auction at Violity in November 2021; one might eventually note that the helmet is still on sale (2 June 2022) without anyone bidding. The knob is undecorated and shows four hemispherical rivets; it is hollow. The helmet's cap is still attached with the rivets to the base of the knob. The rivets are holding together the knob and the cap with round lining discs. Hammering traces are still visible on the inner side of the cap.

fig. 6

Moreover, the authors would also like to point to further finds of Bronze Age helmets from Ukraine with doubtful origin, whose current whereabouts are unknown:

7) Bronze Age helmet, Type Nagytétény

Reference: Mödlinger 2017, cat. 37
 Said to have been found in the forest near Brody, Ternopil oblast, Ukraine, close to a river, at a depth of ca. 80-100 cm, as a single find. Also, this helmet was put on auction at Violity (November 2013), but as the seller broke the auction guidelines, the sale was closed.

fig. 1d

Sold at Violity (9 July 2017); right after it was discussed in a well-known Ukrainian metal detecting forum (13 July 2017). At the same forum, images of the unrestored helmet were posted by the same user who also published the first images of the helmet discussed below.

The helmet was then restored and it was sold on 4 September 2018 (lot 499) by TimeLine Auctions in London (it was accompanied by a fake provenance »Property of a lady living in Kent, UK; formerly part of her grandfather's collection; acquired in Germany after WWII; thence

8) Bronze Age helmet, Type Oranienburg

Reference: Mödlinger/Tsirogiannis 2020, helmet no. 2

fig. 1e

by descent 2006») to the Austrian Galerie Kunst der Antike, Vöcklabruck, which sold it shortly after its acquisition.

9) Bronze Age helmet, Type Oranienburg fig. 1f

Reference: Mödlinger/Tsirogiannis 2020, helmet no. 4
Put up for auction at Viology and sold on 3 October 2017. Also, this helmet was discussed in a well-known Ukrainian metal detecting forum the same day. A user noted that the helmet was found by a friend with a metal detector and that the helmet was restored by »Master Max«. Recently, further information emerged concerning the helmet. According to the finder, the helmet was found in the Kamiyanets-Podilsky district of the Khmelnytskyi oblast, Ukraine,

in the woods on top of the cliffs above the Smotrych River, in about 35-45 cm depth, in autumn 2017. The finder informed one of the authors (M. Bandrivskyi) that he put up the helmet for auction at Viology. According to available information, the helmet is allegedly held in a private collection in Kamyianets-Podilsky, Khmelnytskyi oblast, Ukraine.

10) Helmet

The finder of the helmet Type Oranienburg (Mödlinger/Tsirogiannis 2020, helmet no. 4) mentioned moreover that five years earlier, in 2012, at a distance of about 50 m from the site of the first helmet he found with his metal detector another helmet; however, this helmet was heavily fragmented so he threw it away.

Unfortunately, the current whereabouts of the Bronze and Iron Age helmets, except the two now situated in the museums in Lviv, are unknown. It will likely take years if not decades to trace them down, waiting for them to reappear on the market. Consequently, the authors would appreciate any information about their whereabouts in order to ease repatriation.

CONCLUSION

This study has discussed several cases of unprovenanced Late Bronze and Early Iron Age helmets discovered by metal detectorists, which later surfaced in metal detecting and auction platforms online. Two of the helmets presented are already in local museums, while the other helmets ended up in private collections and/or will reappear during the following years at international auction platforms, as it was already noted about a similar Ukrainian Bronze Age helmet (Mödlinger/Tsirogiannis 2020, helmet no. 2), and is as up to date as ever: In July 2021, a collection of Ukrainian early medieval jewellery has been seized by the UK Border Force at Gatwick airport; it is due to be restituted to the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in Kyiv (Bailey 2020).

In this paper, we have presented all available information that could be obtained up to now. The true provenance of the objects was reconstructed as far as possible. Further information about the findspot and associated finds could be retrieved only in four cases. We would like to point out that despite the finds housed now in museums, no direct study of the objects could be carried out, i. e. the determination of the authenticity of most of the objects discussed here relies on the published photographs only. Forgeries cannot be excluded.

Concluding, we hope that this study will enable the future repatriation to Ukraine and we want to underline that their scientific examination and publication are absolutely required, also in order to hinder the argument of »buying in good faith«. From an archaeological point of view, we would like to inform our colleagues about the existence of otherwise unknown connections between Ukraine and Italy during the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age. This information may become the base for future cooperation and research.

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Zusammenfassung / Summary / Résumé

Ukrainisch-italische Verbindungen in der frühen Eisenzeit und wie diese durch illegale Ausgrabungen und den Kunsthandel zerstört werden

Mehrere Bronzehelme aus der südwestlichen Ukraine deuten auf enge Verbindungen dieser Region mit Italien, insbesondere mit Etrurien, in der späten Bronze- und frühen Eisenzeit hin. Es ist darauf hinzuweisen, dass keiner dieser Funde aus einer offiziellen archäologischen Ausgrabung stammt. Gerade in den letzten Jahren wurden in der Ukraine vermehrt Helme mittels Metalldetektor gefunden und auf einer lokalen Online-Auktionsplattform zum Verkauf angeboten. Mit Ausnahme zweier Stücke, die mittlerweile in lokalen Museen sind, werden die hier vorgestellten Helme voraussichtlich bald auf dem internationalen Markt auftauchen. Es ist das Ziel dieser Publikation, einerseits die Funde vor- und ihre Fundumstände klarzustellen sowie eine spätere Repatriierung zu erleichtern, und andererseits anhand von Bronzehelmen einen Einblick in die Verbindungen zwischen der Ukraine und Italien während der frühen Eisenzeit zu gewähren und einen Überblick über weitere illegale Helme aus der Ukraine aus der späten Bronze- und frühen Eisenzeit zu geben.

Ukrainian-Italian Connections during the Early Iron Age and How These Are Being Destroyed by Illicit Excavations and the Art Market

Several finds of bronze helmets from the south-western Ukraine indicate close connections between this region and Etruria in Italy. Unfortunately, none of these finds derive from licensed archaeological excavations. Especially in recent years an increasing number of helmets have been found by metal-detecting in the Ukraine and offered for sale on a local, online auction platform. With the exception of two helmets now housed in local Ukrainian museums, the helmets presented here will likely soon appear on the international market. The aim of this paper is, on the one hand to present the finds and to clarify their contexts as well as to facilitate their future repatriation, on the other hand to provide an insight into the connections between the Ukraine and Italy during the Early Iron Age based upon the bronze helmets and give an overview of further illicit finds of helmets of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age from the Ukraine.

Les liens entre l'Ukraine et l'Italie au début de l'Âge du Fer et la manière dont ils sont exploités par les fouilles illégales et le trafic d'art

Plusieurs découvertes de casques en bronze provenant du sud-ouest de l'Ukraine indiquent des liens étroits entre cette région et l'Étrurie, en Italie, à la fin de l'Âge du Bronze et au début de l'Âge du Fer. Il convient de préciser qu'aucune des découvertes présentées ici ne provient d'une fouille archéologique officielle. Ces dernières années justement, un nombre croissant de casques ont été découverts avec détecteur de métaux et mis en vente sur une plateforme locale de vente aux enchères en ligne. À l'exception de deux casques qui se trouvent désormais dans des musées locaux, les

casques présentés ici devraient bientôt faire leur apparition sur le commerce d'antiquités international. L'objectif de cette publication est, d'une part, de présenter les découvertes et de préciser les circonstances de leur découverte et de faciliter leur rapatriement ultérieur et, d'autre part, de donner un aperçu des liens entre l'Ukraine et l'Italie au début de l'Âge du Fer à travers les découvertes de casques en bronze et de fournir un aperçu d'autres découvertes illégales de casques en Ukraine à la fin de l'Âge du Bronze et au début de l'Âge du Fer.

Schlüsselwörter / Keywords / Mots-clés

Ukraine / Bronzehelme / Kunsthandel / illegaler Handel mit Kulturgut / Raubgrabungen
Ukraine / bronze helmets / art market / trafficking of Cultural Heritage materials / illegal excavations
Ukraine / casques en bronze / trafic d'art / trafic illicite de biens culturels / fouilles clandestines

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