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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSEMBLAGE WITH A SPANGENHELM FROM SOUTH-WEST RUSSIA*

Abstract:

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This paper is devoted to the analysis of warrior's and horseman's equipment from the final stage of the Migration Period (first half of the 6th century). It was accidentally discovered in the Klimovo District of the Bryansk Region in Russia. The archaeological assemblage consists of parts of a Spangenhelm and a bridle manufactured from iron, gilded silver and bronze. These artefacts reflect an invasion of the Middle Desna Region by a small group of Germanic tribes (probably the Ostrogoths, the Heruli or the Gepids). Earlier on, these tribes were part of the Hunnic Empire or were in contact with them.

Key words: Migration Period, Middle Desna Region, Klimovo District, Spangenhelm, bridle

Almost all stages of the Migration Period are reflected in archaeological artefacts from South-Western Russia (Kursk and Bryansk Regions). This paper focuses on finds of the 6th century armament and horse harness from the area of the Bryansk Desna Region close to the Belarusian border.

The artefacts were found in the Klimovo District by local citizens during agricultural works. Later on these artefacts were bought by the war-historical Search Team 'B', who conducted further exploration of the part of the field where the artefacts had been found. There were no traces of a burial ground or a cultural layer. The finds were originally intended to be delivered to the State Historical Museum in Moscow, but this has never been done. At present, a majority of the assemblage belongs to a private collection in Bryansk, and the cheek-piece is in the school museum of Dobrun. The exact place of discovery is located in the backyard of the village of Zabrama (Klimovo Region), on the right bank of the Snov river which runs into the Desna river near Chernigov. There is a monastery near the village and six or seven kilometres westwards there is the multilayer archaeological site of Khoromnoe, situated in the present-day Russian-Ukrainian border.

The information about this assemblage and the circumstances of its discovery as well, as some photos were obtained in 2012. The assemblage includes fragments of a Spangenhelm type helmet, a mouthpiece, a cheek-piece and other parts of riding harness. The artefacts were dispersed all around the previously ploughed field.

The iron two-pieced mouthpiece with the figured bronze cheek-piece (Fig. 1) is analogous to late Scytho-Sarmatian artefacts and to various early medieval ones, not only those used by nomadic peoples. However, the cheek-piece is unique and has no analogies. It is an octal bar with a stylised head of a bird of prey with huge eyes on one of the ends. On the other end there is a small plate, extending to the edge. Between these two parts there is a waist. It is roundish in cross-section and it is separated from the other parts by ledges. The iron ring of the mouthpiece is placed on this waist. Looking towards the side of the bird of prey's head there is a loop in the shape of a horse. Its legs are connected with the ledges. The head and body of the horse are hexagonal in cross-section, the back-end is rounded, and the chest projects slightly forward. On the horse's head there is a point in a circle which imitates the eyes and a little ledge which imitates the ears.

* Due to the scientific value of this find, the editorial board have decided to accept this paper, even though the quality of pictorial material is very poor.



Fig. 1. Two pieced iron bar-bit with figured bronze cheek-piece from Klimovo district, Russian Federation.

Ryc. 1. Dwudzielne, żelazne wędzidło z brązową pobocznicą oraz figuralnymi elementami ogłowia z okolic Klimowa, Federacja Rosyjska.

Two bronze plates, each of its own form, are fastened to the horse's croup by bronze rings.

One of the plates represents a rounded tongue with a ribbed border on the edge and a bold groin in the centre. The second plate, though of the same size, has a completely different shape. If we have a look at it from one angle, it looks like a high boot with an expanding top. From another angle, it looks like a stylised bird of prey with a short triangle and rounded wings, a cambered neck and an arched beak.

In order to correctly identify this artefact in the chronological and ethno-cultural sense, we should analyse common forms and details of 'animal style' decoration. According to A. K. Ambroz's typology, such artefacts can be attributed to Group 1 of mouthpieces, Type G-shaped (Амброз 1981, 14). On the other hand, such G-shaped mouthpieces are made entirely of bronze, while mouthpieces of Group 1 are usually forged from iron and have a faceted knob on top of the bar. Furthermore, mouthpieces of Group 1 do not have 'animal style' decorations. However, lacking any better analogies, we can classify the Klimovo mouthpiece as belonging to Group 1. As such, it could be dated to the 5th century (*Евразийские стелы...* 1981, Fig. 3).

Mouthpieces which are similar to the Klimovo artefact can be found on the opposite edges of Europe – in Untersiebenbrunn (East Austria) and in the North-Western Caucasus. Here they are called forged stalky mouthpieces whose ends are flattened on one side and are arcuate on the other side. They

sometimes have a conic thickening (Амброз 1981, Fig. 3:2-3). They are usually classified as Snaffle Type III, and are dated to the 4th-5th centuries (Воронов, Шенкао 1982, 134, 136).

A look on the map of distribution of such cheek-pieces allows for marking the European outer edges of the Hunnic Empire. The Hunnic Empire was multinational and consisted not only of the Huns themselves, but also of Iranian and Germanic tribes, and different groups of Romanised and Hellenised population. Besides, the 'animal style' was not typical for the Huns, who preferred ornaments with geometrical inlays of red stones. Furthermore, the Klimovo artefacts are decorated with the bird of prey and the horse.

As for the bird of prey's heads (which resemble eagle heads in the first instance), they are typical for Eastern Germanic tribes of the 5th-6th centuries: the Goths (the Ostrogoths, with special reference to the Gothic culture of Crimea of the 6th century – cf. Kazanski, Soupault 2000, Fig. 11; Kazanski, Treister 2000, Figs. 1, 3) and the Gepids, but they can be found also among the Franks, the Burgundians, etc. On the other hand, they usually decorate belt buckles (Амброз 1988, Fig. 1; Bóna 2002, 81), scabbards (Lebedynsky 2001, 111), or fibulae, but not cheek-pieces (Escher 2006, 149-151, 154, 190-191; *Эпоха Меровингов...* 2007, 459, 464). The Gepids used this style since the beginning of the 6th century (Escher 2006, 71) while the Goths, at least the Crimean ones, adopted eagle-head buckles only in the 5th-6th centuries (Амброз 1988, 10).



Fig. 2. Frankish eagle-shape fibulas, the 6th century (after *Эпоха Меровингов...* 2007, 458, 464).

Рис. 2. Франкиские fibule в kształcie орлих głów, VI w. (wg *Эпоха Меровингов...* 2007, 458, 464).



Fig. 3. A fragment of bronze bird of prey head-shaped onlay. Pogar district of Bryansk region, Russian Federation.

Рис. 3. Fragment brązowego okucia w kształcie głowy drapieżnego ptaka. Okolice Pogaru, obw. briański, Federacja Rosyjska.

The Huns had constant contacts both with the Gepids and the Goths in Transylvania, Pannonia, Crimea and, perhaps, in the North-Western Caucasus (*Евразийские степи...* 1981, 92). This can explain why eagle-head decorations spread not only among the population of the North-Western Caucasus (like the Circassians), but also among the Alans of Northern Ossetia (*ibid.*, 64). Typical Frankish armament, such as the so-called ‘francisca’ throwing axe can also be found in the Western Caucasus (Воронов, Шенкао 1982, 136, 138-139, Fig. 7, 9). However, burials of warriors where these ‘franciscae’ were found are dated to the 3rd-4th centuries (*ibid.*, 136, 139) and are connected not with the Hunnic overlordship, but with the Roman military presence.

As for the horse figure, only two regions may have influenced the decoration style of the Klimovo cheek-pieces. These are 5th century Western Pannonia (Шаги 1982, Fig. 3:2, 4) together with 6th century Lombard Italy (*Эпоха Меровингов...* 2007, 556-558, 562), as well as the South-Western Ural region (Turbaslin and Bachmutin Cultures) (*Евразийские степи...* 1981, Figs. 12:57, 13:40-41). Among the Alans of the Pontic steppes and the Caucasus such horse figures did not appear until the 8th century (*ibid.*, Fig. 37:64).

In the ethnical sense 5th century Pannonia and 6th century Italy were partially Germanic territories (occupied by the Ostrogoths and the Lombards). This can be a reason for the presence of ornaments shaped as heads of birds of prey, which are clearly of Germanic origin. As for the Hunnic mouthpieces from Untersiebenbrunn, they were found in the same region (though in the territory of another Germanic tribe, that of

the Rugii) and could have been influenced by the Germanic settlers.

Therefore, the bird-shaped decoration of a frog on the carrier of the bridle straps, which is attached to the horse-shaped part, could appear either in Pannonia or in Eastern Europe. They can be compared with Frankish eagle-shaped fibulae (Fig. 2), which are dated to the 6th century (*Эпоха Меровингов...* 2007, 458, 464). In this case the Pannonian synthesis of the Germanic ‘animal style’ and Hunnic cheek-piece seems more likely. It is interesting that in the territory of the Bryansk Region another relevant artefact was found. It was made of bronze and was in the shape of a bird of prey’s head, neck and beak (Fig. 3). This belt buckle (?) in the shape of a simple elongated spike with a rounded end, a ribbed border on the edge and a ridge in the centre has some analogies among artefacts of the Northern Pontic region (*Евразийские степи...* 1981, Fig. 6:8-9). They are dated to the 5th century (*ibid.*, 98).

It is worth comparing the Klimovo cheek-pieces with artefacts of different type, which are ornamented with a distinct bird of prey’s head on the end. They can be dated to the end of the Hunnic Period – for instance, artefacts from the Kuban Region (Ахмедов 2009, Fig. 4:7) and Kabardino-Balkariya (Казанский, Мастыкова 2010, 95, Fig. 3:4). Artefacts from these regions are called cheek-pieces of the Bosporan style. They were indeed spread over the North-Western Caucasus and in Crimea (Bosporan crypts). On the other hand, these cheek-pieces are made of iron and the bronze bird of prey’s head on their end is a direct extension of a tubular part of the cheek-piece, while this part is bent in the case of the artefacts from Klimovo. The bar of the cheek-

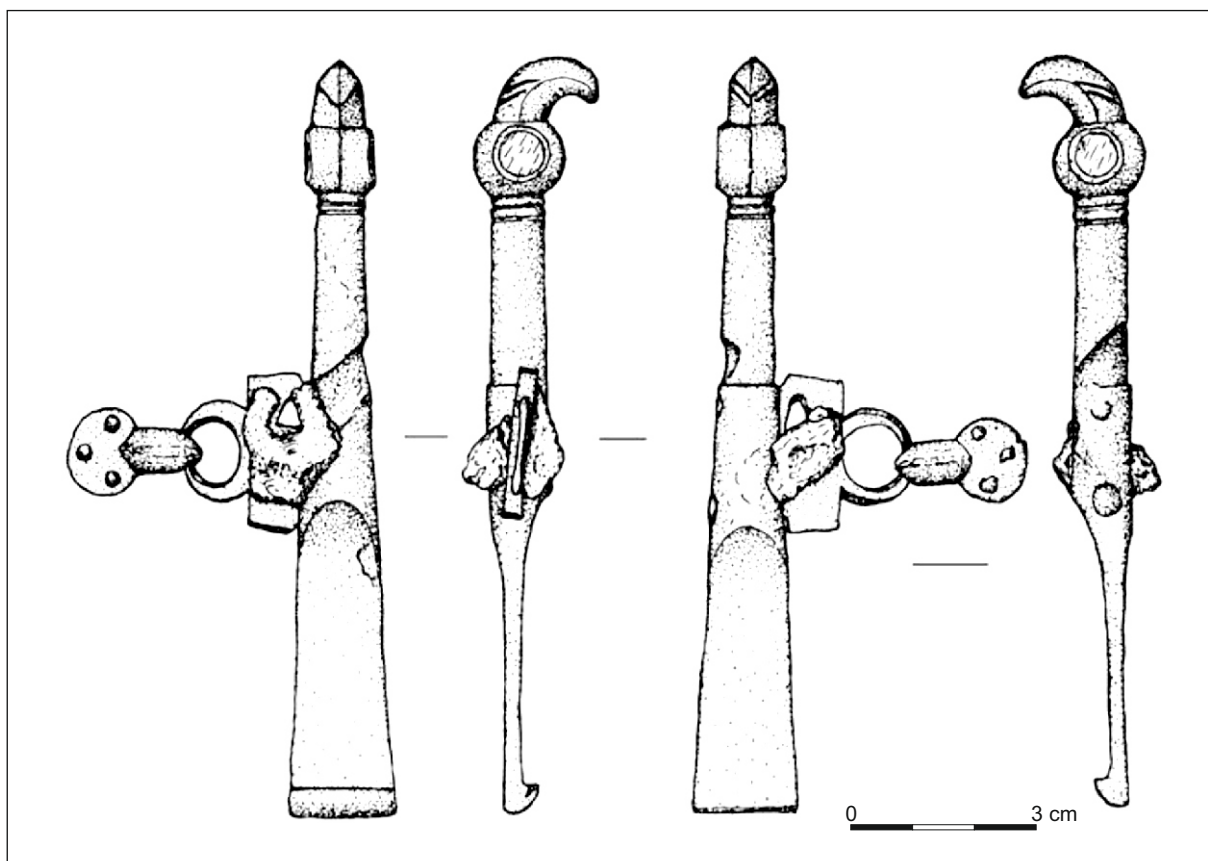


Fig. 4. Iron cheek-piece with bronze head of eagle from Kuban region (after *Ахмедов 2009*).

Ryc. 4. Żelazna pobocznicza wędzidła z brązowym zakończeniem w kształcie orlej głowy odkryta w okolicach Kubania (wg *Ахмедов 2009*).

piece is round in cross-section and not polygonal, as in the case of the finds from Klimovo. The heads of the Kuban artefacts are more elaborate and their eyes are decorated with red almandine. Eventually, the bird of prey's heads of the Kuban cheek-pieces are located on the same level as the laminated part of the cheek-piece, while in the Klimovo find they are placed in perpendicular to it (Fig. 4). However, the dating of the Bosporan cheek-pieces in the Caucasus corresponds to the chronology of Klimovo type cheek-pieces from Pannonia and Abkhazia, which is usually between the mid-5th and the early 6th century.

Taking into account a possibility of certain Frankish influence on the details of the form and semantics of the figures on one of the bridle strap's bars from the Klimovo cheek-piece, we should mention cheek-pieces with floral decorations from north-eastern France (*ibid.*, Fig. 3:16). Such finds are dated to the end of the 5th century (Perin 1998, Fig. 4, 7-8), or 480-520 (Dekan 1976, 539; Menghin 1983, 54-55, 58-59). Bridle plates with animal heads in the shape of a bird of prey were also found in 'princely burials' in Natangia and Transylvania. The first one belonged to

a Balt chieftain, whose grave was furnished with 'Germanic-like' grave goods, and the other one to a chieftain of the Gepids (Новаковский 2007, 151, 152, Fig. 8). The latter find is dated to the last quarter of the 5th century (*ibid.*, 152). Stable contacts between the Gepids and the South-East Baltic region are proved by finds of pottery with 'Gepid' ornament along the Amber Road (*ibid.*, 150). Furthermore, some elite artefacts (eagle-head buckles, dated to the 6th-7th centuries) of Gepid or Gothic origin were found in the Germanic South-East Baltic region (*ibid.*, 150-151, Fig. 7). Prussia and Masovia were a crossroads between the Rhineland and Transylvania, the Franks and the Gepids.

If we consider the hypothesis of a possible Frankish or Gepid impact on the iconographic details of the Klimovo cheek-pieces, it seems that they can be dated to the beginning of the 6th century, or to the last quarter of the 5th century, but not earlier. The theory of Rhineland roots of the Klimovo artefacts could also be supported by an axe-shaped pendant for belt of the harness (Fig. 5). This plated pendant has the closest analogies in finds from Volhynia in Ukraine



Fig. 5. Gilded pendant of bridle from Klimovo district, Russian Federation.

Ryc. 5. Pozlacane okucie ogłowia końskiego z okolic Klimowa, Federacja Rosyjska.

(Fig. 6). The Volhynian harness assemblage was found together with women's adornments and has analogies in finds from Untersiebenbrunn (Austria) and from South Sweden (Кухаренко 1982, 240).

Comparing the artefacts from Volhynia and Untersiebenbrunn and other similar artefacts and harness details (including finds from Jakuszowice in Poland), we can conclude that they could have been made with the use of punching technique in workshops of the Rhine region and North Gaul (Tejral 1973, 13). In this case the Frankish impact is quite obvious, because this population occupied the Rhine-North Gaul region in the Late Roman Period and later. It is also possible that Roman

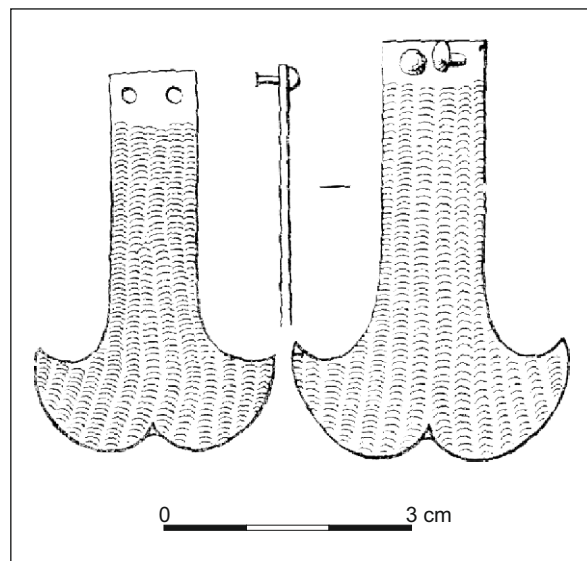


Fig. 6. Silver pendants of bridle from Kchin in Volhynia, Ukraine, the 5th-6th centuries (after Кухаренко 1982, 240).

Ryc. 6. Srebrne okucia ogłowia końskiego z miejscowości Kačín na Wołyniu, Ukraina, V-VI w. (wg Кухаренко 1982, 240).

workshops worked to meet demand of barbarian kings and chieftains. Another thing is that the production of these workshops was distributed not only among the Franks. The Untersiebenbrunn region could belong to the Rugii (Werner 1960, 25, 178) and the Volhynia artefacts are related to the Gepids and the Goths (Кухаренко 1982, 243).

Other items from Klimovo are related to the areas of the Goths (West Pannonia, Illyricum, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Italy), the Gepids (East Pannonia), the Franks (the Rhine region), the Vandals (North Africa) and other Germanic tribes. We consider these artefacts as a fragments of Spangenhelm of Type Baldenheim (Figs. 7-9). The origin of this type of helmets was rather unclear for a long time. Thanks to extensive studies of Steuer (1987) and Werner (1988), it was proved that helmets of such type were manufactured in Imperial workshops. According to their opinion, the Spangenhelm was a form of Late Roman helmet, which passed to the barbarians in different manners and ways. They were booty of war, gifts or donations to Germanic leaders or warriors, who fought for the Roman Empire, or commerce. Our point of view differ slightly from these opinions: 'classic' Spangenhelms of Type Baldenheim are closely related to Late Roman helmets – such as early Spangenhelms (without any decorations) and are known since the 3rd century (Негин 2010, 353).

There is still no objective and comprehensive classification of Type Baldenheim Spangenhelms which would be based on mathematics, typology



Fig. 7. T-shaped, gilded, copper ridges of Spangenhelm from Klimovo district, Russian Federation.

Ryc. 7. Wykonane z połączonej miedzi T-kształtne okucia hełmu typu Spangenhelm z okolic Klimowa, Federacja Rosyjska.

and unification of their characteristics. However, some attempts at proposing such a typology were made earlier. For example, H. Steuer mentioned several variants of helmets' decoration, isolated on the basis of Christian symbolism (Steuer 1987, 91-97). D. Quast created a classification of Type Baldenheim helmets according to some details of construction and decoration (Quast et al. 1993). A dual empirical typology of Spangenhelms on the basis of decoration and the shape of the helmet's skull is also worth mentioning (Böhner 1994). The helmet under consideration in this paper fits within Type Narona/Baldenheim (Cambi 1980, 148, 153, Fig.31).

Based on the number of bands, M. Vogt (2006) isolated Spangenhelms of different origin – Eastern (Iranian), Late Antique and local Central European. He considered Spangenhelms of Type Baldenheim with four or six bands and plates between them (as it is the case with the finds from St. Vid/Narona), as local or 'true' Spangenhelms (ibid., 64). It is clear that the Spangenhelm from Klimovo falls into this type, though it was clear without M. Vogt's classification. Almost all traits (four out of five) of Type Baldenheim can be seen in the case of the Klimovo Spangenhelm.

On the other hand, its fifth trait – bracing of the cheek-plates and a neck-flap attached to the helmet's skull – is doubtfully 'universal' (ibid., 78). A typology proposed by D. Glad (2009) is the latest and the most elaborated one; furthermore, it is also empirical. It is based on the shape of details of individual integral parts and on ways in which they are attached to each other. According to different traits, the helmet from Klimovo corresponds to three types of D. Glad's classification: 'F' (Batajnica – see Vinski 1984, 176 ff., Pls. 21-22), dated to the end of the 5th – mid- 7th century (Glad 2009, 108-110); 'G' (Krefeld/Tsaritsin Grad /Serbia), dated to the 6th-7th centuries (ibid., 110-111) and 'H' (Narona/Baldenheim), dated to the end of the 5th – 7th century (ibid., 112). This classification includes a type called 'Narona' by M. Vogt, but also newly discovered helmets from Tsaritsin Grad (Prima Iustiniana) (Bavant 2008, 327-353), which were completely manufactured in the town's workshops for the needs of the Imperial army.

Concerning Type 'F' (Batajnica), on the basis of M. Vogt's typology (Vogt 2006) O. Y. Radyush noticed a similarity between the details and parts



Fig. 8. The upper, bronze and gilded round badge of Spangenhelm from Klimovo district, Russian Federation.

Ryc. 8. Wykonane ze złożonego brązu górne, koliste zwieńczenie hełmu typu Spangenhelm z okolic Klimowa, Federacja Rosyjska.



Fig. 9. The copper gilded plate of the lower part of the helmet from Klimovo district, Russian Federation.

Ryc. 9. Wykonane ze złożonej miedzi dolne okucie hełmu z okolic Klimowa, Federacja Rosyjska.

of the Klimovo helmet and the classical example of this type – the helmet from Batajnica itself (Радюш 2014, 43). However, different traits of the Klimovo helmet allow us to relate it to both variants from Dolné Semerovce. The first of them can be associated with Type ‘F’ (No. 44, which is similar to Type Narona/Baldenheim as well – Glad 2009, 109), while the other can be associated with Type ‘G’ (No. 47, dated to the first half – mid-5th century). The similarity concerns the T-shaped

bands, which are analogous to those on the first helmet, and the round metallic plate with a prong for the crest, which is identical to that on the second helmet. The lands in which these two helmets were found could belong to the Suebi at that time, and later on – to the Heruli (Herules), but we cannot exclude a temporary presence of Eastern Roman troops in the area. A further similarity of the T-shaped bands of the Klimovo helmet to those of the helmet from Torrichella-

Peligna (M. Glad's Type 'F'), found in an area linked to the Roman-Gothic War of the 6th century in Italy, should also be taken into consideration.

The helmet from Torricella Peligna belongs to M. Glad's Type 'F': its four-part construction, the shape of the edges and the round metal plate with the prong are similar to the Klimovo helmet. Torricella dates back to the first third of the 6th century. Furthermore, with regard to the helmets of M. Glad's Type 'G' it is important to note a similarity of details between the Klimovo helmet and the Spangenhelm from Burial 40 in the burial ground of Sentesh-Berekhat (No. 51 according to M. Glad's typology). It can be dated to the 6th century on the basis of accompanying grave goods (ibid., 111). In this case, the similarity concerns the parietal plate, the cheek-plates, and the camail (mail neck-flap). A certain similarity of details to Type 'H' can be seen in Variant Tsaritsin-Grad-II. This variant was first isolated in 1990 by B. Bavant, and proved to be a product of factories of the Eastern Roman Empire. The same can be seen concerning earlier finds from Germany, first of all the Baldenheim helmet itself (Bavant et al. 1990). Anyway, the greatest similarity can be seen as regards Type 'F' (Batajnica), which was also a helmet belonging to an Eastern Roman officer.

It is worth noting that there are several maps related to the diffusion of Spangenhelms. A map from 1971 (Schlette 1980, Karte 7, 98) displays 15 find places for 17 helmets. On a map from 1987 (Steuer 1987) their number increased to 31 from 27 find places. The reason for this increase were new discoveries from Scandinavia, from the lands of the Franks and the Alemanni, from Macedonia, North Africa and Hungary. M. Vogt takes into account 35 specimens, and D. Glad notices about 40 find places of Spangenhelms in Europe and the Near East (Glad 2009, 134). However, D. Glad considers not only Spangenhelms of Type Baldenheim, but also earlier bipartite ones belonging to Type Bandhelm according to M. Vogt. This fact could negatively impact the relevance of the map with regard to the distribution of Types Baldenheim. D. Glad also points out 12 find places of Type 'Narona-Baldenheim' Spangenhelms on another map, but this one concerns South-Eastern Europe only (ibid., 135).

Now this data can be updated. For example, all the helmets from Sveti Vid in Dalmatia, dated

to the 5th century, do not fall into the category of Spangenhelms, but into that of the Bandhelms. Otherwise, according to S. Popov, four helmets from Bulgaria can be with certain reservations related to the Ostrogoths¹. The United Kingdom can also be included in the area of distribution of Spangenhelms, on the basis of fragments of copper gilded ironwork with characteristic ornament, found in Dumfriesshire (De Paor 1960-1961). With these corrections and taking the finds from Klimovo into consideration, the total number of find places of Spangenhelms of Type Baldenheim would increase to 31 and the number of helmets themselves – to at least 33.

As for the main attributes of Spangenhelms, they possess five obligatory details, which makes them different from Iranian, Late Roman/Early Byzantine and Kamian, or Vendel helmets. These are:

1. The helmet is made of four or six parts (T-shaped ridges), which are four or six iron triangular or almond-shaped plates.
2. Overlap and fastening of the lower ends of ridges/edges by a copper gilded band with ornament (plants, animals and Christian symbols).
3. Presence of a vertical prong (for the plume), which also fastens the upper ends of ridges and plates.
4. Punched or engraved geometrical ornament.
5. No noseband or facemask.

There are only some exceptions known, but all of them were found at the same sites as classical Spangenhelms. More than a half of such helmets have cheek-plates and some also have camails. At least seven helmets are gilded and have various ornaments (finds from Monte-Pagano, Morken, Silistra, Bitola, etc.).

The helmets from Monte-Pagano (Ostrogothic, Italy), Silistra (Bulgaria; perhaps Ostrogothic but manufactured in a factory in the Eastern Roman Empire) and Bitola (Ostrogothic or Eastern Roman, Macedonia) differ from others with the lavishness of decoration. The latter contains hunting scenes, pictures of a fish, a horse, big cats, a man with two fish, birds pecking fish, etc. On the helmet from Silistra the scenes are not very clear. Anyway, one can see depictions of humans, horses, big cats, as well as and floral motifs. The Bitola helmet is decorated with Christian symbols (Christ blessing two people), Imperial medallions and has a Greek inscription addressed to God (Манева 1986, 71-88;

¹ There are two helmets of Type St. Vid/Narona from the 'Vatevi' collection (Plovdiv, Bulgaria), which have not been published yet. Another one of the same type was found near the village of Voivoda, Shumen Region. It is now kept in the Regional Museum of History – Shumen (Vagalinski 1998). The fourth helmet, first published here (Fig. 10), was found to the south of Silistra, Bulgaria. It is of Type Baldenheim and is kept in the 'Vatevi' collection.



Fig. 10. Helmet from Silistra region, Bulgaria. 'Vatevi' collection (personal archive of S. Popov).

Ryc. 10. Hełm z regionu Silistra, Bułgaria. Kolekcja „Vatevi” (archiwum prywatne S. Popova).

Ольховский 2001, 83-93). According to Macedonian scholars, this helmet could have been produced in Constantinople especially for the Ostrogothic King Theodoric between 494 and 523. This is however a mere hypothesis, as the helmet was found in the cultural stratum formed as a result of fire, most likely related to barbarian invasions (considering the period of use of Type Baldenheim helmets) in the second half of the 5th century (Ostrogoths and Sarmatians) or in the second half of the 6th century (Slavs). Judging from the Greek inscription on the helmet, its owner was most likely a Late Roman (Byzantine) officer, presumably a garrison commander.

The helmet from Dolné Semerovce has T-shaped ridges, which are decorated with a scaled ornament with fish and crosses. The same ornament

is visible on the helmet from Krefeld-Gellep upon the Rhine. The T-shaped ridges of the Silistra helmet are decorated with triangles and the plates of the skull have scale ornamentation.

We have suggested that the cheek-pieces and the other parts of the bridle from Klimovo were of Hunnic and Late Roman origin. As for the Spangenhelm, it is obviously of Eastern Roman origin. It may have belonged to a Germanic chieftain from Pannonia or Italy, which were the realms of the Ostrogoths and the Gepides.

It can be remarked here that the most lavishly decorated helmet from Bitola (Glad 2012, Fig. 7) was made in a Byzantine workshop and has a rare (perhaps early) characteristic – a four-part skull. The same characteristic can be seen concerning the helmet from Klimovo, which can be said on



Fig. 11. Bronze buckles for harness from Klimovo district, Russian Federation.

Ryc. 11. Brązowe sprzączki od rzędu końskiego z okolic Klimowa, Federacja Rosyjska.

the basis of the preserved T-shaped ridges. The framework of the ridges is axe-shaped or lens-shaped. The ridges are connected with the iron plates of the skull by six rivets on the lower part of the framework, by three rivets from each side of the upper edge, and by four (or five in one case) – on each edge of the copper ridge. The surface of the T-shaped ridges is gilded and decorated with tubular punches. The number of crosses reaches five on the longest ridge (Fig. 7). One of the crosses resembles a cross pattée (there is a similar cross on the frontal part of the horizontal band of the Silistra helmet). There is also a sign resembling either a stretched bow with an arrow or Greek letters Tau and Phi.

The upper round badge of the helmet is made from gilded bronze and has four holes for fastening the iron plates. Between the holes there are two triangles composed of 17 circles each. Other triangles are drawn around a tubular boss, which was outlined by a ridged border. The upper edge of the tube is surrounded by a plain border. The tube has a hole for the plume (Fig. 8).

A band can be seen on the copper gilded plate of the lower part of the helmet (Fig. 9). It is decorated with various Christian symbols such as trees (cypresses or fig-trees), birds, fish, grape-vines etc. These emblems are particularly evident on the Naron helmet (Vinski 1984, Fig. 2, Pl. VII:2), and on two Spangenhelms found in Saône. The first one (today in the Metropolitan Museum) is divided into four segments and the other (today at the Hermitage, see: Escher 2006, 173-174) is divided into six segments. The Spangenhelms of this form are attributed to Germanic (Frankish or Burgundian) or Roman (e.g. from the 'realm' of Syagrius) warriors, but their origin is Roman. There is a ridged bead on the lower edge of the Klimovo band and holes for the cheek-plates and camail attachment in the lower part. Analogous decoration

can be found on a few other Spangenhelms, such as the luxurious helmet from Monte-Pagano (De Paor 1960-1961) and the find from Dolné Semerovce.

As regards the motifs and the punching technique, almost all ornaments on Spangenhelms contain triangles. It is possible that this figure had not a sacral, but a symbolic meaning. It can be found among Late Roman helmet ornaments. Crosses can be seen on a half of known helmets. Sometimes they are placed on the front part of the iron plate, and in other cases there is one cross (but of a more complex shape) on the crown of the helmet and two simple crosses on the postcranial ridge. In other instances there are two crosses on the crown's plate and two on the side ridges.

Christian symbols, especially crosses, may have played the same role for Christian warriors as amulets or talismans did for the Pagans. They could also have another meaning, as it was the case with Sarmatian tamgas on Germanic weapons: *The Germanic victors used the tamgas of the defeated Iranians. Defeating the Spali, the Goths and the Vandals decorated the weapons with their symbols [...] to display them as trophies* (Воронятов, Мачинский 2010, 70, 71). In this case the crosses on the helmets could stand for the victory of the Germanics over the Christians. However, this interpretation can hardly be accepted, because the earliest Spangenhelms of Type Baldenheim appeared in the end of the 5th century, when the majority of the Germanic tribes (except the Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians) were already converted to Christianity. It is of course possible that some of these rich decorated helmets, which were ornamented with Christian symbols were worn by Eastern Roman officers.

As for the Germanic-Sarmatian conflicts, they are not manifested in the shape or ornamentation of the Spangenhelms. There are no Sarmatian tamgas on them, either. The bow-shaped sign on the Klimovo helmet rather represents Greek letters Tau and Phi, without analogies among symbols of the nomad world, either Sarmatian, or Turk (Ольховский 2001). Only a Proto-Bulgarian tamga or a rune F from Murfatlar and Pliska (De Paor 1960-1961) slightly resemble it, but this rune first appeared in the 7th century. The most probable explanation of the sign on the Klimovo helmet is an abbreviation of a Christian Greek monogram or name.

On the other hand, on some Germanic weapons (Воронятов, Мачинский 2010, Fig. 5:7) there is a picture of a tree or spike with ten branches, similar to one of Sarmatian tamgas. This element is original and was not added later. Probably is hardly

a Sarmatian tamga, but rather a Christian symbol – the Tree of Life. The same ornament can be found on the Spangenhelm from Stossen.

In conclusion, we can state that the Klimovo Spangenhelm falls into the category of early four-part helmets of East Roman (Byzantine) origin. It could have been produced in the end of the 5th or in the beginning of the 6th century and it perhaps belonged to an Ostrogothic, Herulian or Gepid king or chieftain. The ornament and Christian symbols speak for such interpretation. On the other hand, we also cannot exclude that it was taken from the “Byzantine” Romans through commercial or military activity.

The helmet has a non-symmetrical skull and a camail. The cheek-plates, decorated with a scale-shaped ornament, were found later on. The owner of the helmet was probably a prince of recent investiture, or originally a Roman soldier recently enlisted in the army. This could be supposed on the basis of the crosses and letters Tau and Phi, which could mean ‘Theophania’ – ‘God comes.’

The Klimovo artefacts also include two bronze buckles of square and oval shapes (Fig. 11). It is difficult to date them and define their ethnical attribution, due to the lack of direct analogies.

There are three possible ways of explanation how all these artefacts found their way to the Klimovo District of the Bryansk Region. According to the first one, it was a result of Gothic migrations in Eastern Europe from the Baltic region to the basin of the Oka and the Middle Volga. These migrations resulted in the emergence of the Ryazan-Oka and the Imenkovskaya Cultures (Матвеева 1986, 159; Ахмедов, Казанский 2004, 171-174, 177-179). The southern flank of this movement may have passed through the Desna basin. A weak point here is that the time of this Germanic migration is some decades earlier than the proposed chronology of the Klimovo artefacts.

The second interpretation is a backward movement of the Huns and their Germanic and Alanian subjects and allies from Pannonia to Eastern Europe after their defeat at Nedao (453) and the fall of the Hunnic Empire. The Hunnic and Germanic artefacts which are dated to the end of the 5th – beginning of the 6th century can be found

on the Upper Don (*Восточная Европа...* 2007, 24-30, 33-37) and in the North Caucasus (Glad 2012, Fig. 62). Their route there may have passed through the Desna basin as well and some migrants perhaps went upstream the River Snov to the region of Klimovo, where they met their end in the lands of the Veneti. The process of the Germanic and Sarmatian influence began earlier and it can be traced through finds of lamellar helmets of Iranian origin. Another impact is connected with the Hunnic invasion and the fall of the Gothic Kingdom of Ermanaric in 375, when some Sarmatian and Gothic groups moved northwards.

Rare and dispersed finds of Germanic sword-shaped spearheads from Krasnie Dvoriki (Bryansk Region) (Шинаков et al. 2009, 86-87, Fig. 2:2) and Kvietun near Trubchevsk (ibid., 91, Fig. 3:6), of a “spatha” and a warrior’s belt from the basin of the River Navlja can offer us a new perspective with regard to the Romano-Germanic artefacts in Klimovo. Their closest analogies can be found in an Alemannic burial in Baden-Württemberg and in Ostrogothic Italy (from Bergamo) (*Эпоха Меровингов...* 2007, Pl. VI:8.2, VIII:10.1), both dated to the 6th century (Dekan 1976, 553). Other analogies are known from Lithuania (Казакювичус 1988, Fig. 15) and from East (Ostrogothic) Crimea (Мыц 1981, 133). In this case we can suggest that a small group migrated through East Lithuania or from Ostrogothic Crimea to the Desna basin. On the other hand, this was perhaps not a direct migration or invasion, but cultural and trade contacts of the population of the Desna basin with the tribes of the afore-mentioned regions.

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ARCHEOLOGICZNY ZESPÓŁ Z HEŁMEM ŻEBROWYM (SPANGENHELM) Z POŁUDNIOWO-ZACHODNIEJ ROSJI

Streszczenie

W trakcie prac rolnych prowadzonych we wsi Zabrama w okolicach Klimova (Federacja Rosyjska), na prawym brzegu dopływu Desny, rzeki Snov, dokonano niezwykłego odkrycia. Miejscowy rolnik natrafił na zespół zabytków, w skład którego wchodziły fragmenty hełmu, wędzidło i elementy uprzęży końskiej. Zabytki te zostały sprzedane do prywatnej kolekcji, a w 2012 r. w ręce autorów trafiły niezbyt dobrej jakości fotografie zabytków i informacje dotyczące okoliczności ich odkrycia. Niestety, same artefakty są obecnie niedostępne dla dalszych studiów.

Zabytki odkryte w okolicach Klimova, ze względu na swe charakterystyczne cechy, mogą być wiązane z horyzontem chronologicznym datowanym od końca V po początek VI w. Żelazne wędzidło z brązowymi pobocznikami, zdobionymi figurkami koni oraz głowami drapieżnych ptaków, ma bliskie analogie głównie wśród znalezisk z V stulecia, natomiast elementy zoomorficzne są charakterystyczne dla zdobnictwa kultur wiązanych z Germanami i były wykorzystywane jeszcze w VI stuleciu. Interesujące są również ozdobne okucia uprzęży, mające swe analogie na Wołyniu, a także w Austrii i w południowej Szwecji.

Najwięcej jednak emocji wzbudzają bogato dekorowane okucia oraz tuleja hełmu żebrowego (niem. Spangenhelm), w typie Baldenheim. Hełmy takie, wywodzone od form późnorzymskich, mają szerokie rozprzestrzenienie, ale jak się wydaje, po-

wstawały w warsztatach bizantyńskich. Na podstawie analogii można przyjąć, że omawiany zabytek wykonano w końcu V lub w początkach VI w. i najpewniej należał do wysoko postawionego – ostrogockiego, herulskiego lub gepidzkiego – arystokraty. Widniejący na nim znak krzyża zwieńczony greckimi literami Tau i Phi może wskazywać, iż pierwotnie był przeznaczony dla oficera armii bizantyńskiej.

Istnieją trzy prawdopodobne wyjaśnienia faktu znalezienia się tych zabytków w okolicach Klimova. Jednym z nich jest gocka migracja z północnego zachodu w dorzecze Oki i środkowej Wołgi. Słabym punktem tej hipotezy jest fakt, iż migracja ta miała miejsce kilka dekad wcześniej, aniżeli datowane są interesujące nas przedmioty. Druga teza wiąże te militaria z odwrotem na wschód Hunów i sprzymierzonych z nimi plemion germańskich z Panonii po porażkę w bitwie pod Nedao (453). Niewykluczone, że mała grupa migrantów mogła trafić także nad Desnę i jej dopływy. Inną perspektywę wyznaczają najnowsze znaleziska wiązanych z Germanami militariów odkryte w bliskim sąsiedztwie Klimova. Wskazują one na migrację małej grupki ludzi z terenów wschodniej Litwy lub – z przeciwnej strony – Krymu. Nie możemy jednak wykluczyć hipotezy, że zabytki te należy wiązać z kontaktami kulturowymi pomiędzy ludnością zamieszkującą dorzecze Desny, a ludami znajdującymi się na zachód lub południe od tego regionu.