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THE PHRYGIAN HELMET IN BYZANTIUM:
ARCHAEOLOGY AND ICONOGRAPHY
IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT FINDS FROM BRANIČEVO

Abstract:

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During the excavations of the medieval archaeological site of Braničevo in 2007, in the location known as Mali Grad – Todića Crkva, two helmets were found inside the area of the Roman fortress of Viminacium. Fire had caused the helmets to become stuck together and were heavily corroded. The helmets, of the so-called Phrygian type, were discovered in a building – House 4, dated to the 12th century. The analysis of the finds by the authors of the present paper demonstrates that helmets of this type were an original form which came into being in the Greco-Roman Age and they became widespread in the Eastern Roman Empire throughout the 10th-12th centuries. They were not introduced to Byzantium from the West, but were possibly a further evolution of a helmet type which was originally born in the East.

Key words: Roman, Byzantium, Helmet, Weaponry, archaeology, Manuel Komnenos

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History of the site

The medieval town of Braničevo was built in the area of Roman Viminacium,¹ on the banks of the Mlava River, about 20 km from Požarevac. Two fortified units of the urban structure of Braničevo were situated in Mali and Veliki Grad (respectively the Small and the Large Town), located at the tip of Sopotska greda on the left bank of the Mlava, above the village of Kostolac (Fig. 1). Below, a spacious suburb extends eastward along the right bank of the Mlava, at the sites of Rudine and Svetinja (Fig. 2; Поповић, Иванишевић 1988, 128-166, сл. 2; Милошевић 1997, 122-123, 151-164).

Mali Grad was a natural fortification system that protected and controlled passage on the Danube, flanked by a branch of the Danube called Dunavac, with the Mlava River on the north and east sides respectively. Due to its exceptional strategic location, the site has been inhabited since the Eneolithic (Fig. 3; Nikolic, Ilic, Rogic 2013, 263; Spasić-Đurić 2016, 109).

In AD 1019, during the reign of Basil II, Braničevo became an Episcopal centre with jurisdiction over a number of towns in a broad area along the Danube and both banks of the Great Morava River, including the town dubbed “Moravski” i.e., Moravian (Komatina 2012, 51). In the 12th and early 13th centuries, the history of Braničevo was marked by frequent clashes between Byzantium and Hungary, Byzantium and Bulgaria, as well as by the passage of the Crusaders (*Византијски извори* IV, 17-22; Поповић, Иванишевић 1988, 125-127; Komatina 2016, 104-107). These events shaped the fate of the town, which, together with Belgrade, represented a key border fortress of the Eastern Roman Empire.

The first records about the remains of Braničevo are those produced by Count Marsigli in the 1720s (Marsigli 1726, II, Taf. V, Fig. 13; 1754, II: section XIII, tab. 15, section XVI, tab. 16), when he outlined two parts separated by the Mlava River – two “fortalitia” – one on

¹ On Roman Viminacium, its monuments and beautiful paintings from the graves, as well as its transformation in the Late Antiquity see Spasić-Đurić (2002; Спасић-Ђурић 2015, 17-45) and Korać (2000, 151-193).



Fig. 1. Location of Braničevo (Serbia).

Рис. 1. Lokalizacija Braničeva (Serbia).

the right bank, which he calls Brenincolatz (Braničevo, the ancient Brandiez), with an area of approximately 360×280 meters, and the other on the left bank, which he calls Castolatz. The area of the other part was approximately 300×240 meters. His map became a point of departure for the first researchers at the beginning of the 20th century and for those who followed in the 1980s and 1990s, allowing them to carry out investigations on a limited scale. Based on these investigations, Serbian archaeologists were able to propose a topographic reconstruction of the complex of the town of Braničevo and a basic stratigraphy of Mali and Veliki Grad (Поповић, Иванишевић 1988, 127-130, 133, сл. 2). The latest research, conducted since 2007 in the area of the Braničevo

fortress, at the site of Mali Grad-Todića crkva, shed new light on the significance of Braničevo under the Roman Imperial administration in the 11th and 12th centuries. So far, an area of 475 m² has been explored, mostly at the western perimeter of the site, and three cultural horizons have been identified: Hallstatt, Late La Tène-Early Roman, and Medieval (Васић 1904, 252, 255; Каруран, Bulatović 2012, 83; Спасић-Ђурић 2015, 17-22; Spasić-Đurić 2016, 109). The latest medieval horizon has been further divided into individual chronological phases following the development of the town of Braničevo (Spasić-Đurić 2016, 109-110).²

The best researched and most prosperous stage in the history of the town of Braničevo has

² The earliest medieval phase identified so far includes the last decades of the 10th and the 11th centuries. It has been isolated on the basis of anonymous Group A2 (AD 976? – ca. 1030/5) and Group C „follii” (AD 1042? – ca. 1050) and Hungarian coins minted by Coloman (AD 1095-1116). The horizon includes refuse pits of large dimensions (1120 m), various depths and construction, as well as floors of three hearths. The third and last phase of a prosperous development has been attested by Friesacher coins minted between AD 1170 and 1200 and a late issue by King Béla III (1172-1196).

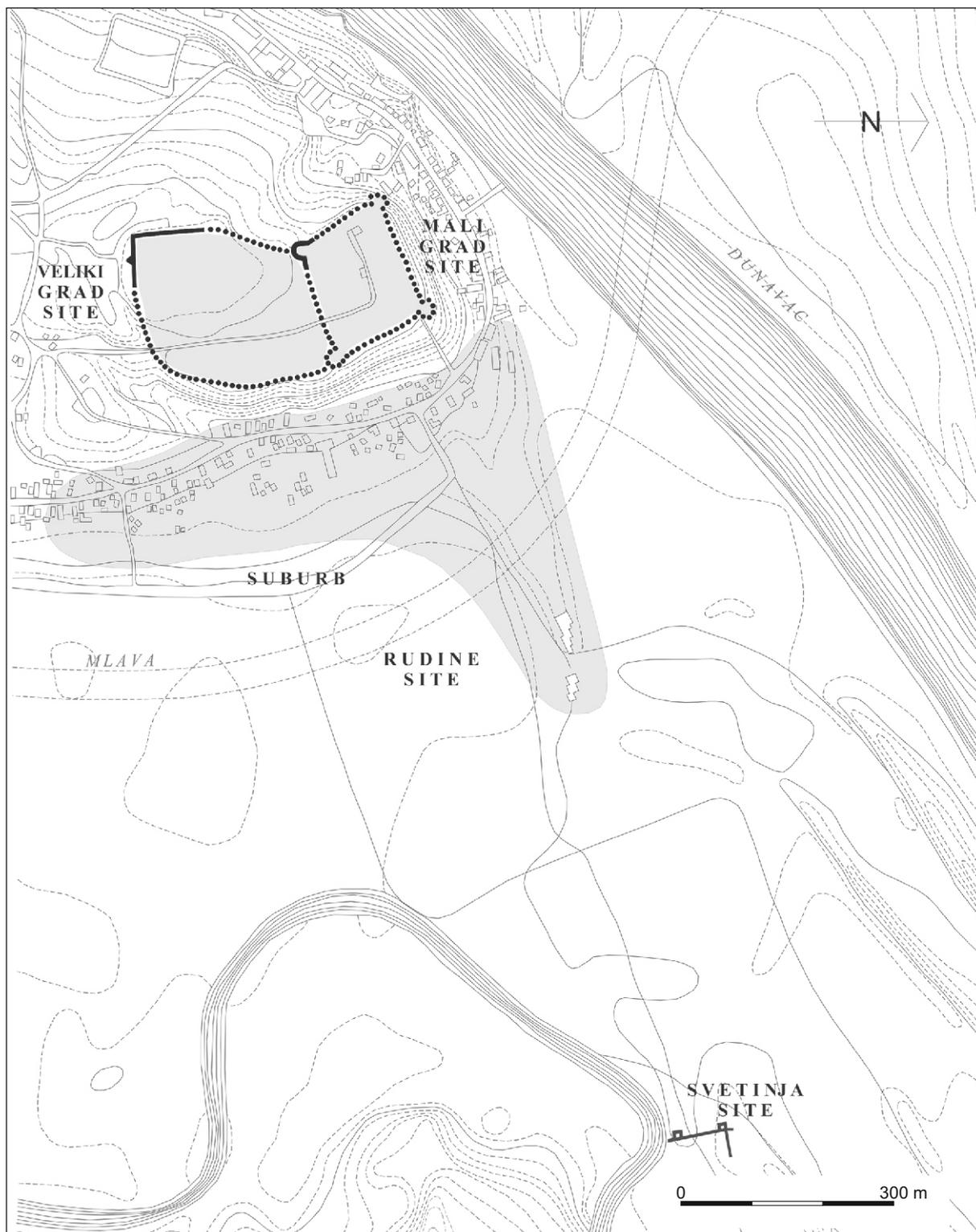


Fig. 2. Spatial layout of the medieval town of Braničevo: 1 – “Mali Grad”; 2 – “Veliki Grad” (after Popović, Ivanišević 1988, 129, sl. 2).

Ryc. 2. Rozplanowanie średniowiecznego Braničewa: 1 – “Mali Grad”; 2 – “Veliki Grad” (wg Popović, Ivanišević 1988, 129, sl. 2).

been dated to the 12th century, based on coins minted during the reign of the Roman Emperors

John II (AD 1118-1143) and Manuel I Komnenos (AD 1143-1180).³ House 4 belongs to this period.

³ The coinage of Byzantine Emperors near the area of Braničevo starts with Basil II (Stephenson 2003, 42; Radić 2010, 201 ff.) and continued at least to Isaac II Angelus (Stephenson 2000, 282).

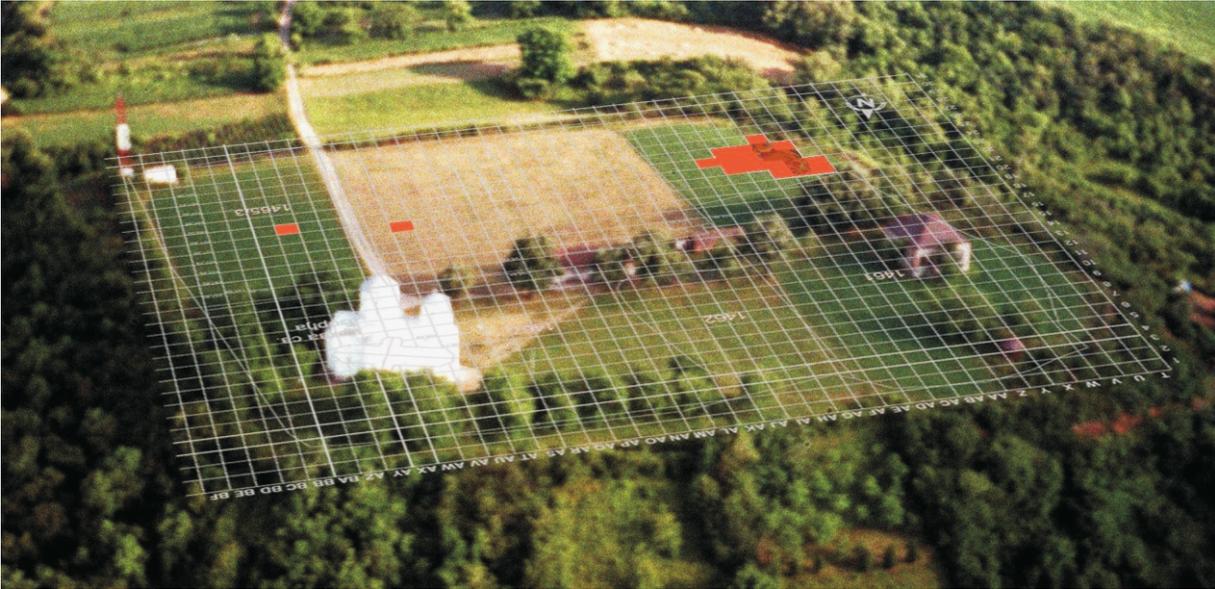


Fig. 3. Braničevo. Aerial view on Mali Grad, House 4 on right, marked in red. *Photo by D. Spasić-Đurić and S. Živanović.*

Ryc. 3. Braničevo. Widok z lotu ptaka na Mali Grad. Z prawej, oznaczony na czerwono Dom 4. *Fot. D. Spasić-Đurić i S. Živanović.*



Fig. 4. Braničevo. Mali Grad, House 4 (marked in red). *Photo by D. Spasić-Đurić.*

Ryc. 4. Braničevo. Mali Grad, Dom 4 (oznaczony na czerwono). *Fot. D. Spasić-Đurić.*

It was discovered at the western perimeter of the site and was researched between 2007 and 2011 (Figs. 3-4). House 4 was destroyed by a severe fire, whilst additional devastation of its layers dates from World War I.⁴ Nevertheless, based on a well preserved floor and its charred wooden structure, a basic architectural evolution of its shape has been traced. Five hearths have been found there – four of them in the ground floor and one in a half-story room (*ibid.*, 110-112, Figs. 53-54). A large number of utensils, namely 72 ceramic vessels *in situ* and fragments of a luxurious set of purple-coloured vessels were discovered in the floor of the house, in a layer of soot, ash and burnt soil (Figs. 5-7).

The archaeological context: history of the findings

In 2007, towards the end of the first campaign of archaeological investigations at Braničevo, two iron helmets were discovered on the floor along the remains of a wooden chest (Спасић-Ђурић 2011, 75-113; Spasić-Ђurić 2016, 109, 112-114, 115, Figs. 53-54, 58; 2017, 347-349, n. 8). While they were being unearthed, the top of the outer helmet was damaged. The upper part of the other helmet, which emerged from the outer one (Fig. 8), inclined the archaeologists to conclude that the find was a shell of a First War artefact, most probably a grenade. Although opinions on the findings varied, the claim that these were war munitions prevailed. For this reason, works at that layer were interrupted and temporarily suspended after the Municipal House of Požarevac had been informed about the discovery (Спасић-Ђурић 2011, 75ff.; Spasić-Ђurić 2016, 109, 115, Fig. 58).⁵ Controversial views and the arrival of the Požarevac police in the site resulted in a temporary discontinuation of archaeological works.⁶

Upon completion of the archaeological campaign, a demining team from Belgrade came to the site. A deeper pit was dug, the helmets were

removed and the National Museum in Požarevac was informed.⁷ Curators of the National Museum in Požarevac arrived in the site and correctly identified the find as helmets. This was confirmed by Dr Marko Popović; however, he believed that only one helmet had been found (Fig. 9; Spasić-Ђurić 2017, 347-349).

The continuation of the research from 2008 to 2011 defined the area where the helmets were found as a rectangular house with a length of 19.5-20 m and a width of 7-7.5 m, with an approximately NW-SE alignment, and a 5° deviation of the north-western part towards N. The building was burnt in a fire, along with its completely preserved finds (Spasić-Ђurić 2016, 110, 349, 366).⁸ The archaeological situation from 2007 was subsequently reconstructed on the basis of technical documentation and observations of one of the authors of the present paper. A further investigation of House 4 confirmed that the reconstruction was accurate, because remains of charred wood and straw were discovered during the cleaning of the layer. The helmets were recorded at a level of 0.45-0.55 m (107.78), in the vicinity of a longer charred beam that lay diagonally in NE-SW direction, which was also the north-western end of the building. They were packed into each other, while the remains of wood and straw (maybe fragments of the nose guard and helmet lining, or of the neck protection) suggest that they were kept in a wooden chest or chests (Spasić-Ђurić 2016, 114).⁹

In 2008, 20 ceramic vessels produced by different workshops were discovered near the helmets, on the floor and on the burning layer above it. Further finds also included military equipment. Among other artefacts there were a bone slat, probably part of a bow (Fig. 10:b, length – 25.8 cm), an iron arrow (Fig. 10:c, length – 5.5 cm), parts of a sword's belt buckle (length – 6.4 cm, height – 3.0 cm) and belt (Fig. 10:d-e; length 6.8 cm, width – 4.0 cm), a sword's pommel (Fig. 10:h, length – 5.5 cm,

⁴ In the course of the Mackensen Offensive in 1915, severe fights took place between the Serbian and Austro-Hungarian armies in the Small Town (Thomas, Babac 2014, 12; Милорадовић 2015, 23-37; for more details see Манојловић 2014, 202-208).

⁵ The archaeological research of medieval Braničevo in 2007 was led by the Archaeological Institute in Belgrade. Dr Vujadin Ivanisević was the head of the research, and his associates were Dr Perica Špehar, Dr Ivan Bugarski, Dr Dragana Spasić-Ђurić, Dr Nenad Lazarević and Dr Marija Medić.

⁶ This course of events negatively affected the archaeological context, which could not be thoroughly investigated. It is possible that remains of aventails, nasals or leather lay below or near the helmets.

⁷ This misunderstanding was mainly due to the conical shape of the helmet, which was emerging from the ground and could be easily interpreted as the top of an Austro-Hungarian bomb for a cal. 150 mm “bombarda” (cf. Longoni, Longoni, Longoni 1966, 8) or of a large shrapnel (Fig. 11; cf. Meschini 2015, 27-28).

⁸ Since 2008, the research on medieval Braničevo was led by the National Museum of Požarevac. D. Spasić-Ђurić was the research director.

⁹ A custom of keeping helmets one inside the other when they were not in use is archaeologically attested in Byzantium as early as the 6th century (cf. Biernacki 2012, 91, 95).



Fig. 5. Braničevo. Ceramic vessels from House 4, middle/second half of the 12th century. *Photo by D. Spasić-Đurić.*

Ryc. 5. Braničevo. Naczynia ceramiczne z Domu 4, połowa/druga połowa XII w. *Fot. D. Spasić-Đurić.*

width – 2.8 cm, height – 2.7 cm), a knife, a spear (Fig. 10:f, length – 17.3 cm), and a spur (Fig. 10:g, length – 12.0 cm, width – 7.0 cm). On the floor in the southeastern part of the

room coins issued by Manuel Komnenos in the period between 1143 and 1152 were found (Fig 10:a) (Спасић-Ђурић 2011, 84-91, Figs. 9-10).¹⁰

¹⁰ We are indebted for the information on the coins to Dr Vujadin Ivanišević. They came from the first issue of this ruler and are rather rare compared to those of his later issues.



Fig. 6. Braničevo, House 4. Vessels made of translucent dark-purple glass and decorated with marvered opaque white trails, middle/second half of the 12th century. *Photo by D. Spasić-Đurić.*

Ryc. 6. Braničevo, Dom 4. Naczynia wykonane z półprzezroczystego, ciemnofioletowego szkła, dekorowanego białymi, matowymi wzorami, połowa/druga połowa XII w. *Fot. D. Spasić-Đurić.*



Fig. 7. Braničevo. Porcelain plate and bowl found in House 4, middle/second half of the 12th century. *Photo by D. Spasić-Đurić.*

Ryc. 7. Braničevo. Porcelanowy talerz i miska odkryte w Domu 4, połowa/druga połowa XII w. *Fot. D. Spasić-Đurić.*



Fig. 8. Braničevo, House 4. Controversy during the discovery: a helmet or a grenade? *Photo by D. Spasić-Đurić.*

Ryc. 8. Braničevo, Dom 4. Wąpliwości w czasie badań: hełm czy pocisk? *Fot. D. Spasić-Đurić.*

Due to the severity of the fire and extremely high temperatures, the helmets were connected to each other by a thick layer of corroded metal. For this reason it was initially assumed that only one helmet had been found. However, the weight of the “single helmet” provoked doubts, and a preliminary hypothesis concerning the presence of two helmets was put forward before the conservation. This hypothesis was later confirmed (Spasić-Đurić 2017, 349).¹¹

Technical description of the helmets

The helmets are identical in shape, but of different dimensions: they are made in one piece, with skulls made of iron sheets, and some elements of copper alloy (edged band) and copper (rivets). They have tall pointed domes, with tops tilted forward in a way resembling Phrygian caps. Both are provided with iron nasals, made by forging, welding and riveting (Figs. 12-13, 16-17). Forge-welding allows for mechanical connection of iron

or steel parts when they are simultaneously heated to a very high temperature, by using heat and hammering. This method produces rigid joints (Dupras 2012, 68-69, 74, 192ff.). Even though this type of helmet is regarded as having been made from a single piece of metal (D'Amato 2015, 68), inside it one can observe a relief of continuous lines along the axis of the front and rear ridges. These lines are similar to a “stitch” created by welding, which is indicative of two-piece helmets. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that also the discussed helmets were manufactured by forge-welding of the left and right halves. This issue, however, can only be solved by X-ray examinations.

Larger (external) helmet (C-65)

The top part of the helmet's dome was damaged during the excavation (Fig. 8-9). Unlike the other find, this helmet was in a worse state of preservation and has been restored from fragments

¹¹ The conservation of the helmets was carried out by Milan Čolović, a conservator of the National Museum in Belgrade. A possibility of existence of two corroded helmets was suggested by Prof. M. Vujović, who believed that it was the only logical explanation of a great weight of the “single” helmet.



Fig. 9. Braničevo. Helmets after the discovery – condition before the conservation. *Photo by D. Spasić-Đurić.*

Ryc. 9. Braničevo. Hełmy tuż pod odkryciu – stan zachowania przed konserwacją. *Fot. D. Spasić-Đurić.*

after long and painstaking conservation. The helmet (Fig. 12-13) is 31 cm high, with the external diameter of 24.2 cm. Its thickness is 2-3 mm (except at the top). Along the outside edge of the dome runs a 1.2 cm wide copper alloy band (Fig. 14). Part of the band (approximately one quarter of the overall circumference) is missing. The band is attached to the dome with copper rivets of calotte-shaped heads, 8 and 9 mm in diameter respectively. Four rivets have survived, at uneven distances ranging between 6.2 and 12 cm. Between them there are also three riveted copper loops, also at uneven distances: two on the left side, approximately 7.5 cm apart, and the third one on the right side, between two rivets, the latter being around 5.5 and 7.3 cm from the loop respectively. Due to soil pressure, two of the loops are tightly pressed against the external and internal edges of the dome (Fig. 12:c). The loops were made from metal strips that were bent and folded, with their ends hammered and perforated so that each might be fixed to the internal edge of the helmet with a thin rivet (ca. 1 mm).

Remains of an iron nasal (Figs. 12:g-h), as in the case of a contemporary helmet from Pernik (Fig. 15:a) can be seen on the front of the skull. What remains is a nasal guard mount which is 6.8 cm long, 2.5 cm wide and 1.2 cm thick. It is attached to the inside of the dome with two rivets. The nasal itself has not survived, as opposed to that of the Pernik helmet (Figs. 15:a-c). Below the outer browband, there

is a metal strip of identical length to that of the inner mounting of the nasal. Together with the nasal mounting, it is fixed to the inside of the dome with two laterally positioned rivets, which do not penetrate the outer browband, thus allowing a greater flexibility of the nasal (Fig. 12:g). A central rivet on the axis of the front ridge additionally strengthens the entire nasal structure from outside (the browband, the inserted strip, and the inner mounting of the nasal). At the same time, it is a safety element that ensures the flexibility of the nasal.

Smaller (internal) helmet (C-65 a)

This helmet is 26.5 cm high, with the outside diameter (D) of 24 × 22 cm, and a wall thickness of 2 mm (Fig. 16-17). Two loops and a rivet are directly attached to the dome on the external browband. These parts are identical in shape to those of the larger helmet. On the right side of the helmet's back there are a copper rivet and two copper loops flanking it on the left and right, at an angle of 120° between them (Fig. 16:b-c, f-g). Due to soil pressure, the loops are deformed and tightly pressed against the edge of the dome. There are two small holes (1.5-2 mm) in the nape area on the skull's edge, approximately 10.5 cm apart. These holes are most probably related to destroyed loops or rivets (Fig. 17).

Horizontally, on the inside, along the axis of the front ridge, there are remains of a nasal structure. All that survives is the mounting of the nasal, also made of iron and 8 cm long, 2.5 cm



Fig. 10. Braničevo, House 4 – selected artefacts: a – coin of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1152; b – bone slat, probably part of a composite bow, mid-second half of the 12th century; c – rhomboid iron arrowhead, mid-second half of the 12th century; d – iron buckle for a sword's belt, mid-second half of the 12th century; e – iron belt fitting, mid-second half of the 12th century; f – iron socketed spearhead, mid-second half of the 12th century; g – iron spur, mid-second half of the 12th century; h – iron pommel of a sword, mid-second half of the 12th century. *Photo by D. Spasić-Đurić.*

Ryc. 10. Braničevo, Dom 4 – wybór zabytków: a – moneta cesarza Manuela I Komnena, 1143-1152; b – kościana listwa, prawdopodobnie element łuku refleksyjnego, druga połowa XII w.; c – romboidalny grot strzały z trzpieniem, druga połowa XII w.; d – żelazna sprzączka od pasa mieczowego, druga połowa XII w.; e – żelazne okucie pasa, druga połowa XII w.; f – żelazny grot włóczni z tuleją, druga połowa XII w.; g – żelazna ostroga, druga połowa XII w.; h – żelazna głowica miecza, druga połowa XII w. *Fot. D. Spasić-Đurić.*

wide and 9-11 mm thick. It is attached to the inside of the dome with two rivets (Fig. 16:a,d).

Both helmets are characterised by identical craftsmanship (the inner nasal structure, the shape of the rivets and loops). An exception is that the mounting of the nasal of the smaller helmet is simpler. It is attached directly to the dome with two lateral rivets and has no central rivet serving as a stop, however we cannot exclude that an extra-reinforcement rivet was conducted on the front part (cf. Figs. 19 and 21/right/).

In addition to the small holes, certain indentations might also be suggestive of the existence of other rivets and loops. These may have been used, as we will point later, for fastening of inner lining and of the aventail (Fig. 17).

It can be supposed that the respective nasal structures were made at the same time as the domes, but this cannot be reliably ascertained in the case of the loops of both helmets and the browband of the larger one. The mountings on the inside indicate that in both cases the nasals extended directly from the mounting (Fig. 18-21).



Fig. 11. Austro-Hungarian artillery shells, 1915 (courtesy photo Dr Andrea Salimbeti).

Ryc. 11. Austro-węgierskie pociski artyleryjskie, 1915 r. (zdjęcie udostępnione przez dr. Andrea Salimbeti).

Typological and chronological analysis – the Phrygian helmet in Byzantium: history, typologies and archaeology

On the basis of their technical construction and typological characteristics, the Braničevo helmets belong to Type II of D’Amato classification, that is, the so-called Phrygian-shaped or “fluted” helmet (D’Amato 2015, 34, 35, 74ff.; cf. also Nicolle 1999c, 256-257). The helmet’s basic feature is its tall conical shape with a top being pointed forward and tilted (Nicolle 1983, 70, Fig. 13), thus resembling that of old Phrygian caps of the Antiquity, a continuation of an old tradition in the Roman army since the Etruscan age (Dawson 2007, 21; Laguardia 2007, 130-139; D’Amato 2009, 10-11, Fig. 2). The tilted dome is presumed to have resulted from hammering, as the frontal area of the dome was thicker than the sides (Nicolle 1999a, Fig. 733:e; 1999c, Figs. 5:a-b,6:a-b; 2002b, Figs. 41:d,42).

Being derived from Neo-Hittite prototypes and being also related to caps worn by the Phrygians and traditionally attributed to the Trojans, the Phrygian

helmet (called Tiara-shaped helmet by Dintsis in his monumental work on Hellenistic helmets – Dintsis 1986, 23 ff., 47ff.) was already used in the Greek world since the 5th century BC. It spread especially among the Thracians, and in the Hellenistic Age it became in its many variants an extremely popular helmet of the Macedonian and Thracian infantry and cavalry. Very soon it became known in Etruscan and Roman armies, also in its lavishly decorated form (*ibid.*, Pl. 9-20). This helmet in the Etruscan and Macedonian variants was adopted by the Roman military tradition and became one of helmet types which was used by the Roman army. However, this has often been overlooked by scholars. Archaeological specimens are known from the period between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD: magnificent examples (among others) are the undated helmet from the Lyon Museum (Fig. 22), the decorated helmet from Ostrov (mid-2nd century AD, Fig. 23) and the helmet from Provincia Mesopotamia preserved in the Boston Museum (Fig. 24) and dated to the turn of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Its continuous use in the Roman Imperial army until the late 5th century is indicated by numerous depictions, such as the helmets on the heads of the “Secunda Parthica” legionaries on the Arch of Septimius Severus (Fig. 25), the helmet of an officer on the sarcophagus from Palazzo Mattei in Rome (Fig. 26) and the helmets of the 5th century Cataphracts from the Bagawat oasis (Fig. 27). It is worth noting that since the 4th-5th centuries AD this helmet is mainly associated with heavy cavalry.¹²

In the art of the Eastern Roman Empire the helmet continued to be represented also in the course of the so-called Dark Ages of Byzantium, which can be seen in the Chludov Psalter (folios 109vs., 110r, Figs. 28-29) from the 9th century, although in the last miniature the blue colour of the headgear of light cavalymen could also indicate felt caps (“καμελαύκια”, see D’Amato 2015, 134ff.). A widespread use of these helmets between the 10th and 12th centuries in Byzantium is made more evident by artistic representations coming from the territories of the Empire or from countries under strong Eastern Roman influence, especially South Italy. This is demonstrated by Cappadocian frescoes, such as that of “The Crucifixion” in Pürenli Seki Kilisesi in Turkey, dated to the 11th century, and the illuminations of South Italian “Exultets” (*ibid.*, 62, Figs. 33:1-3, 34:1-2; Димитров, Рабовянов 2016, 351, n. 57).

¹² Cavalrymen of the Pharaoh are represented as heavy Roman “equites” in the scene of the passage of the Red Sea: “catacombae” of Via Latina (cf. D’Amato, Negin 2016, Fig. 321) and on Mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome (cf. Wilpert ed. 1916, Pl. 18).

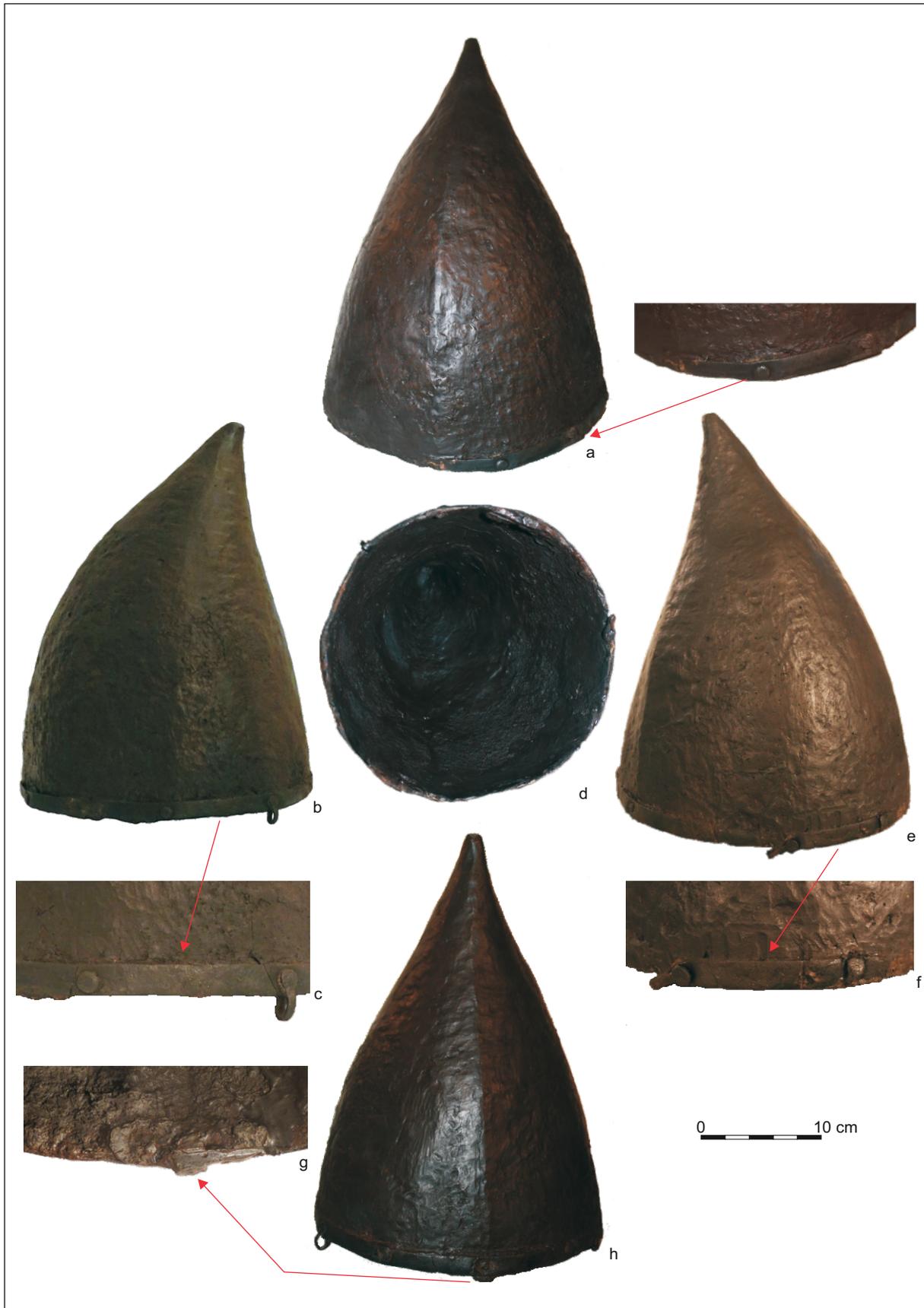


Fig. 12. Braničevo. External (larger) helmet (Inv. C-65). Photo by R. D'Amato and D. Spasić-Đurić.

Ryc. 12. Braničevo. Zewnętrzny (większy) hełm (nr inw. C-65). Fot. R. D'Amato i D. Spasić-Đurić.

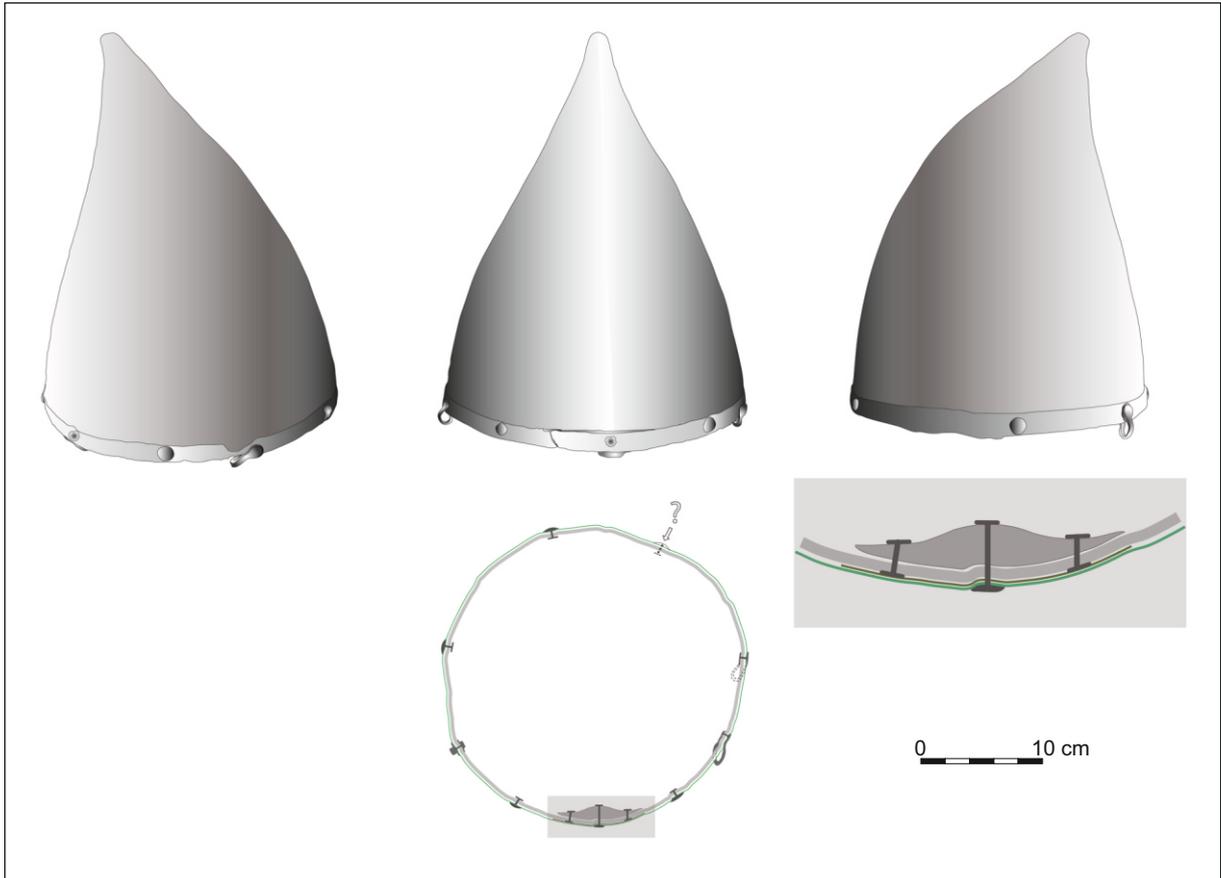


Fig. 13. Braničevo. External (larger) helmet (Inv. C-65) and details of its nasal construction. *Drawing by S. Živanović.*

Ryc. 13. Braničevo. Zewnętrzny (większy) hełm (nr inw. C-65) i szczegóły konstrukcji jego nosala. *Ryc. S. Živanović.*

With regard to these representations, it has already been said that the discussed helmet was a simplified form of its ancient archetype, forming a variant of one piece helmets. It is commonly referred to as “fluted” helmet, because (apart from their Phrygian shapes), many helmets of this category show embossed lines which converge towards the top (Fig. 30; Nicolle 1999a, Pl. 680:g-h; D’Amato 2015, Fig. 4). In this shape they are particularly well represented in monumental art of Norman palaces and cathedrals in Monreale and Cappella Palatina in Palermo (Hoffmeyer 1966, 32; Nicolle 1980, 87-103; 1983, 70, Figs. 13, 257, 290, 327, 337, 339) and are frequently depicted in miniatures and church’s reliefs in southern Italy (Fig. 31). Based on the thesis of David Nicolle (sometimes also confirmed by the iconography), the revival of this kind of low-domed helmets in Byzantium could be linked with the development of close rank couched lance cavalry tactics under Nikêphóros Phokás. The dynamic shape of these helmets and their construction represents an important component of the Kataphraktos “uniform”, which need to be compact and easy.

This tactics was associated with the use of kite-shaped shields (McGeer 1995, 301 ff.; Nicolle 2002a, 11; 2002b, 10-11). If this is the case, the helmet in question in its low-domed variant can be classified into the category of helmets called “κασίδα” according to the “Praecepta Militaria” of Emperor Nikêphóros Phokás (963-969 AD). In one instance the word “κασίδια” is reserved for helmets of heavy cataphracts (*Praecepta...* III, 34). For this reason D’Amato proposed a reconstruction of such helmets in two different versions (D’Amato 2012a, 35, Pl. D; 2012b, 26). However, the use of such helmets should not be confined to cavalry: in a 10th/11th century Octateuch of Smyrne they are depicted on the heads of heavy infantrymen (Nicolle 1999c, Fig. 17:a,k).

In the 12th century, this category of helmets began to widespread also in Western Europe (southern Italy, France, Spain, England). On the other hand, as we have already mentioned, they were particularly characteristic for the Norman army in southern Italy. The fact that Norman knights from the Bayeux Tapestry are not represented in such helmets, and that Phrygian-



Fig. 14. Braničevo. External (larger) helmet (Inv. C-65) – brass band. *Photo by D. Spasić-Đurić.*

Ryc. 14. Braničevo. Zewnętrzny (większy) hełm (nr inw. C-65) – mosiężna taśma. *Fot. D. Spasić-Đurić.*

shaped helmets which are known from early 11th century France (Nicolle 1991, 3-4) are clearly of Spangenhelm construction, can suggest that the Westerners adopted one-piece Phrygian helmets from Byzantium. The activity of the Normans could be of special significance there. The Normans initially fought as mercenaries for and against the Romans in South Italy (Nicolle 1999a, Fig. 690:ax,af, 700:a). In the course of the 12th century the one-piece Phrygian helmet was already well-known not only in Norman Italy but also in France and Spain (Nicolle 1991, 41-42, Pl. B-C). In some parts of North Africa (Tunisia), it can be found in iconography as early as the end of the 11th century (Nicolle 1983, 70, Fig. 130; 2002b, Fig. 31; Димитров, Рабовянов 2016, 351, 352, n. 57). This is a further possible consequence of the interchange of the military culture between Byzantium, West and Islamic powers (Nicolle 1980, 99, Fig. 4, 95; 1983, 60-62, 69, Figs. 245, 256, 257A-B, 258, 263, 289-290, 293-294; D'Amato 2015, 76). Mutual influences spread in Western Europe and the Islamic world via Byzantium (Nicolle, 2002b, 11; Dawson, 2007, 21; D'Amato 2012b, 25). This caused a further

development of the discussed helmet type. Apart from the low-domed skull, its shape also became elongated, as it can be seen in the finds from Braničevo.

This development was running in a parallel manner in the West and Byzantium. In western countries both long and low-domed Phrygian helmets are clearly visible in iconography of Norman England, just to mention the miniatures of the “Life of St Edmund” (1125-1150; Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, Ms. 736; cf. Nicolle 1987, 23), the “Bible of Winchester” (1150-1170, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, Ms. 619; *ibid.*, 9) or carved “Guards at the Holy Sepulchre” in the Burrell College in Glasgow (1140-1150, *ibid.*, 18). The long Phrygian helmet of Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou, depicted on its enamelled tomb (Fig. 32) is a western iconographic example which is more similar to the Braničevo helmets. Furthermore, it also suggests that skulls of such helmets may have been painted. In Spain, the Phrygian-shaped helmet is visible in the paintings of San Baudelio de Berlanga, Soria (today in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) dated to the 12th century (Nicolle 1988, 11). There is



Fig. 15. Pernik helmet (Bulgaria), second half of the 12th century, Pernik Regional Museum (Inv. No. A3692): a – front side; b – details of the nose guard fastening system in front view; c – details of the nose guard fastening system in side view (*a* – photo by V. Yotov /photo courtesy prof. Valeri Yotova/; *b-c* – photo by R. D'Amato).

Ryc. 15. Hełm z miejscowości Pernik (Bułgaria), druga połowa XII w., Muzeum Regionalne w Pernik (nr inw. A3692): a – widok z przodu; b – szczegół mocowania nosala – widok z przodu; c – szczegół mocowania nosala – widok z boku (*a* – fot. V. Yotov /dzięki uprzejmości prof. Valeri Yotova/; *b-c* – fot. R. D'Amato).

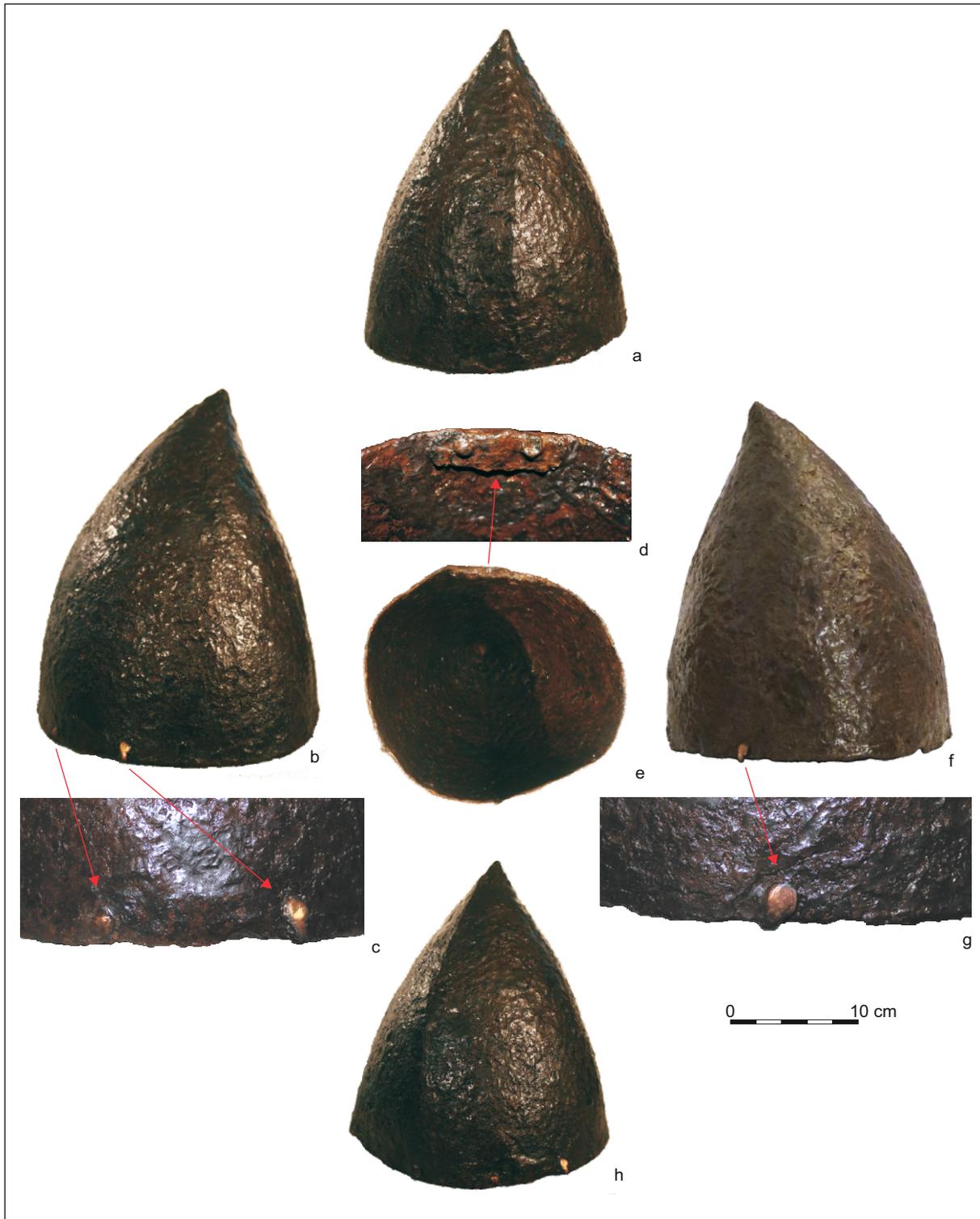


Fig. 16. Braničevo. Internal (smaller) helmet (Inv. C-65a). Photo by R. D'Amato.

Ryc. 16. Braničevo. Wewnętrzny (mniejszy) hełm (nr inw. C-65a). Fot. R. D'Amato.

evidence that such helmets might have been used at least until 1220 (miniatures of the “Beatus of Liebana”, Morgan Library, New York, Ms. 429; *ibid.*, 13; 2002a, Pl. VI (IV):F).

The most outstanding iconographic examples of employment of Phrygian helmets for the entire 12th century are known from the Holy Roman Empire. Although the late 11th century manuscript

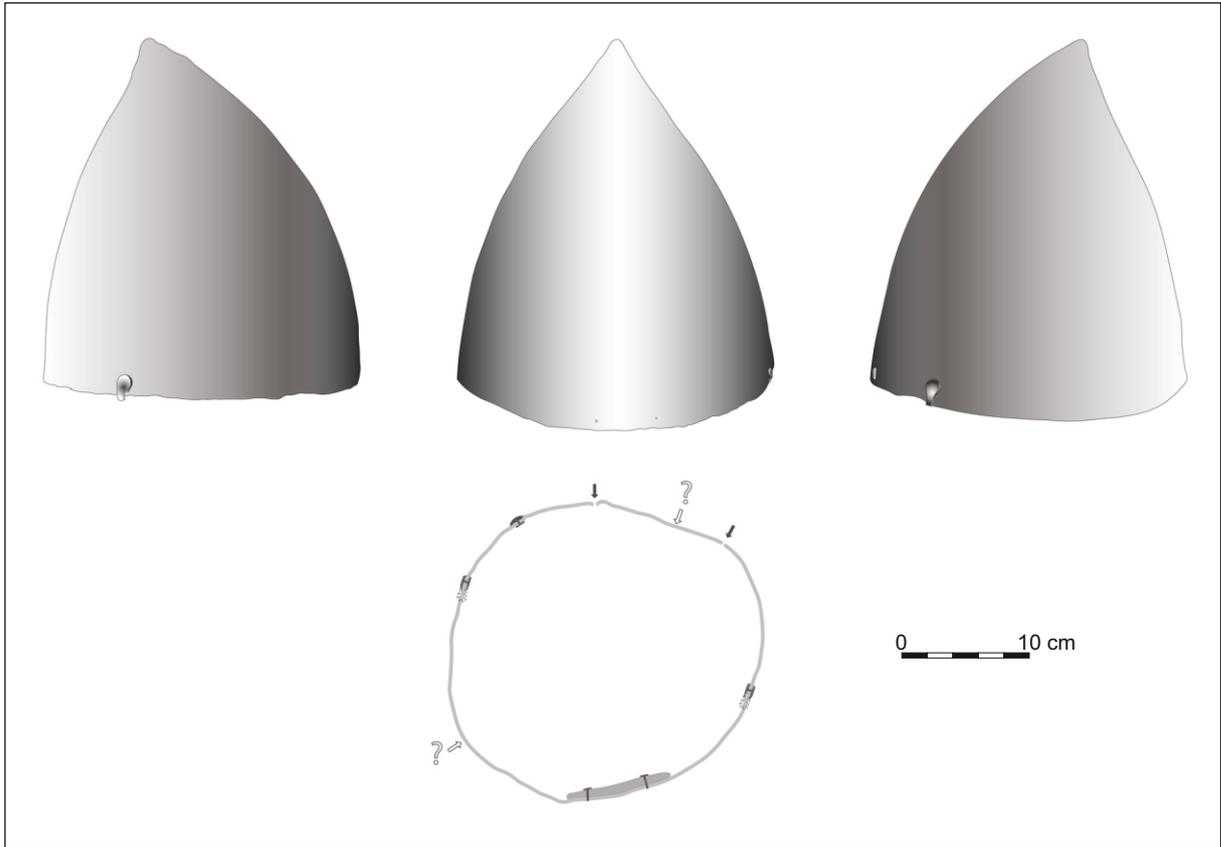


Fig. 17. Braničevo. Internal (smaller) helmet (Inv. C-65a). Drawing by S. Živanović.

Ryc. 17. Braničevo. Wewnętrzny (mniejszy) hełm (nr inw. C-65a). Ryc. S. Živanović.

from the Abbey of St. Evre-les-Toul (Upper Lorraine) still contains depictions of Phrygian shaped helmets which are Spangenhelm construction (Nicolle 1999a, 171, Fig. 420), the one-piece Phrygian skull is already visible in a decorated portable altar from 1100 (in situ in the Abdinghof Church, Germany, *ibid.*, Fig. 421). The same can be seen on an engraved copper altar front from Hildesheim, Saxony (ca. 1120, *ibid.*, 173, Fig. 427). In the late 12th century, apart from depictions of the low-domed helmet (an ivory jewel case from Cologne, *ibid.*, 175, Fig. 433:A-B), the “Hortus Deliciarum” manuscript (now lost) contains images of warriors wearing helmets which are pretty identical to the finds from Braničevo (Fig. 33:a-c; cf. Olejnik 1988, 8; Gravett 1997, Fig. 11).

In Italy, which was a territory divided between the Empire, the Pope and a still strong influence of Byzantium, and whose southern part was dominated by the Normans, the employment of such helmets is well attested in Rome in the so-called “Cero Pasquale”, or a carved stone candlestick made by Nicola D’Angelo and Pietro Vassalietto, ca. 1170 (Fig. 34; Nicolle 1999a,

Fig. 585:m). It is probable that soldiers depicted on this artefact belong to various Roman “militiae” who incessantly fought for power in the city. Alternatively, they could be papal mercenaries. All in all, in every part of Italy the employment of such helmets is well-confirmed (Nicolle 1999a, Figs. 574a-b; 576a-b; 581d-k; 586:a). The vicinity of the Normans and Byzantium made the diffusion of this helmet easy. On the other hand, variants depicted in iconography suggest the use of locally made forms. With or without a nasal, these helmets remained in use throughout the 12th century, only to be transformed in the late 12th and early 13th centuries into helmets with visors (Димитров, Рабовянов 2016, 351, 352, n. 57).

Due to her natural connections with Constantinople, Venice seems to have kept an especially strong tradition of Eastern weaponry, merging it with Western influence. Thus, the Phrygian helmet is well visible in the armament of militia of the 12th (Fig. 35) and 13th century (Fig. 36) illustrated on the mosaics of St Mark’s Cathedral. In this case, Eastern Roman style weaponry is clearly visible.

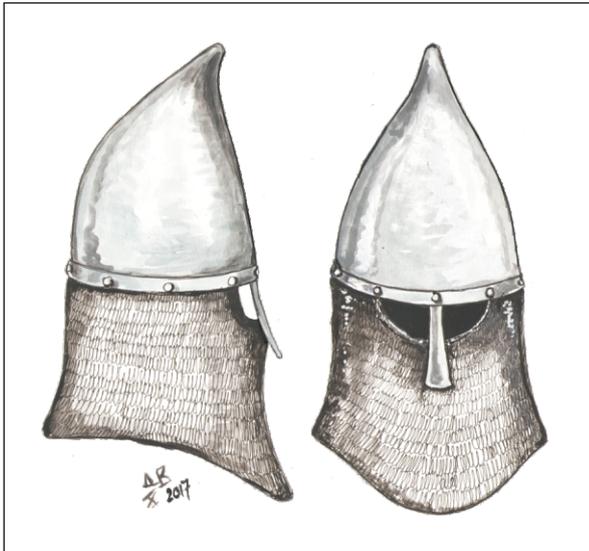


Fig. 18. Ideal reconstruction of larger helmet. *Drawing by D. Vasiljevic.*

Ryc. 18. Idealistyczna rekonstrukcja większego hełmu. *Ryc. D. Vasiljevic.*



Fig. 19. Ideal reconstruction of smaller helmet. *Drawing by D. Vasiljevic.*

Ryc. 19. Idealistyczna rekonstrukcja mniejszego hełmu. *Ryc. D. Vasiljevic.*



Fig. 20. Ideal reconstruction of the helmets' "peritrachelia". *Drawing by D. Vasiljevic.*

Ryc. 20. Idealistyczna rekonstrukcja tekstylnych i skórzanych czepców mocowanych do hełmów. *Ryc. D. Vasiljevic.*

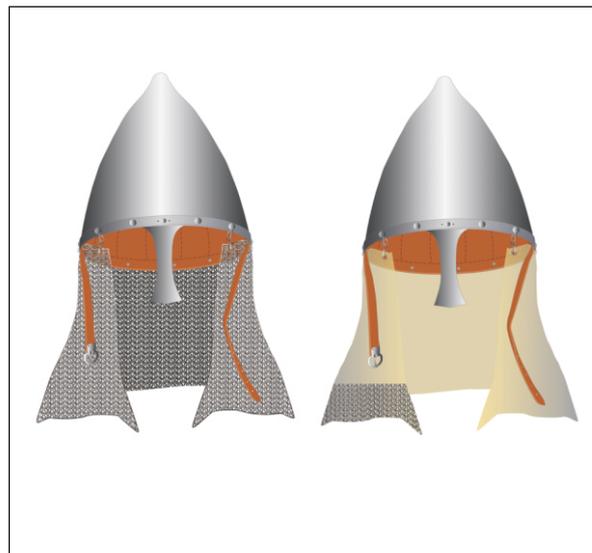


Fig. 21. Ideal reconstruction of both helmets. *Drawing by S. Živanović.*

Ryc. 21. Idealistyczna rekonstrukcja obu hełmów. *Ryc. S. Živanović.*

In the Eastern Roman Empire the Phrygian helmet appears widely in the 11th and 12th century iconographic records. The apex of the iconography (contemporary or slightly later than the finds from Braničevo) of such helmets is represented by the "Marciana Iliad" (Venetus A = Marciana 454 = 822). Its miniatures (12th century) display heavy "Kataphraktoi" in scale armour who wear fluted and Phrygian-shaped helmets (Fig. 37:a-e). The helmets are worn by all the warriors, included

the mythical Achilles and other infantrymen (Fig. 38) whose shield blazon, i.e., the dragon-lion could suggest an attempt at depicting the Varangian Guard of the late 12th century. These illustrations can be related to the famous image of a warrior saint dressed like a 12th century commander represented on a reliquary made in Constantinople and preserved in the treasury of St Mark's Cathedral in Venice (Fig. 39). The well-consolidated tradition of the Phrygian helmet



Fig. 22. Roman Phrygian helmet from Rodez, bronze, 1st-2nd century AD (?). Lyon, Musée de la Civilisation Gallo-Romaine, Inv. No. (1047) Br. 229. *Photo by R. D'Amato.*

Ryc. 22. Rzymski hełm frygijski z Rodez, brąz, I-II w. (?). Lyon, Musée de la Civilisation Gallo-Romaine, nr inw. (1047) Br. 229. *Fot. R. D'Amato.*



Fig. 23. Roman Phrygian decorated helmet from Ostrov, bronze, mid 2nd century AD. Constanța, Muzeul de Istorie Națională și Arheologie, Inv. No. 1681. *Photo by R. D'Amato.*

Ryc. 23. Rzymski hełm frygijski z Ostrova, brąz, połowa II w. Konstanca, Muzeul de Istorie Națională și Arheologie, nr inw. 1681. *Photo by R. D'Amato.*



Fig. 24. Roman or Western Parthian decorated helmet from Mesopotamia, bronze, 2nd-3rd century AD. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Inv. No. 1979.41. *Photo by Museum of Fine Arts.*

Ryc. 24. Rzymski lub wschodniopartyjski zdobiony hełm z Mezopotamii, brąz, II-III w. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, nr inw. 1979.41. *Fot. Museum of Fine Arts.*

continued in Byzantium in parallel to the West. However, it cannot be excluded that there was a reciprocal influence. On the one hand, this resulted in more developed ornamentation of models. On the other hand, it may have led to the manufacture of taller versions which were similar to Western ones. In works of art of the Crusader States, such as the cover of the “Psalter of Queen Melisenda” (Fig. 40), one can see “Superbia” wearing a fluted helmet and dressed as an Eastern Roman warrior. This vice is of course defeated by a personification of “Iustitia”. The 12th century sources refer to such helmets as “κόρυς”. This generally means a metal-made battle helmet, without a specific reference to its shape (Anna Komnena, I,162,9-12 [IV,6,8]; I,23,7ff; Nikephoros Bryennios, 273, 21ff). Another pretty general term is “περικεφαλαία”, which stands for metal headgear for war, or simply “κράνος”, i.e., “bowl helmet”, with a reference to a simple round or hemispherical helmet made of metal covering the head.¹³

¹³ The name itself means “skull” in Greek, so it cannot refer to a pointed helmet (Niketas Choniates, 92,38ff. – metallic “κράνος”; Kinnamos, 112,1ff.). See also a metal-made helmet of Emperor Manuel I, provided with a face visor of mail. It was reconstructed as Phrygian-shaped by Dawson (2015, Pl. 19, 274,16).



Fig. 25. Roman legionaries of Legio Secunda Parthica, Arch of Septimius Severus, 203 AD, Rome. *Photo by R. D'Amato.*

Ryc. 25. Rzymscy legioniści z Legio Secunda Parthica, Łuk Septymiusza Sewera, 203 r., Rzym. *Fot. R. D'Amato.*

Apart from iconographic depictions, archaeological finds are of utmost importance. At present, the only archaeological discovery which matches the Braničevo finds is known from an Eastern Roman fortress of the 12th century. This unique, well preserved example of helmet which offers the closest analogy to the Braničevo ones was unearthed in the medieval fortress of Pernik in Bulgaria in 1962 (D'Amato 2015, Pl. 7). It dates from the last quarter of the 12th century and was found in Building 54. The feature is believed to have belonged to the fortress commander (Чангова 1992, 179, 180, Figs. 163-164; Димитров, Рабовянов 2016, 350, 351, n. 57).

The Pernik helmet was forged from iron as well; it is of a tall, conical shape, with a forward



Fig. 26. Detail of the sarcophagus of a general with a depiction of a Roman officer, 3rd century AD, Palazzo Mattei, Rome. *Photo by R. D'Amato.*

Ryc. 26. Detal z sarkofagu generalskiego z przedstawieniem rzymskiego oficera, III w., Palazzo Mattei, Rzym. *Fot. R. D'Amato.*



Fig. 27. "Pharaoh's Army crossing the Red Sea", fresco from the Chapel of the Exodus in Al-Bagawat, Kharga Oasis, 5th century AD, Egypt. Photo by A. Nageh.

Рис. 27. „Armia Faraona przekracza Morze Czerwone”, fresk z Kaplicy Wyjścia w Al-Bagawat, Oaza Charga, V w., Egipt. Fot. A. Nageh.

tilted dome. It is 29.5 cm high and its diameter is 27.5 cm. An iron band runs around the edge horizontally to the nose guard, where two hinge-like metal parts are attached with two rivets to the upper section of the nasal. The rest of the nasal did not survive (Fig. 15). Holes at certain distances from each other which can be seen along the browband were used to attach a leather lining. A mail aventail which covered the neck and face was most probably sewn/fastened to the lining. Alternatively, a leather strap with an attached neck guard may have been drawn through them (D'Amato 2015, 68, 76, n. 47, Pl. 7; Димитров, Рабовянов 2016, 350, 351, Fig. 6:2-3).

In West European iconographic examples we have seen a certain number of artworks from the period between the 11th and 13th centuries which display conical helmets with tips being pointed and titled forward. Such helmets only have nasals, but no protection for the ears and neck (aventail), which was usually made from leather, cloth, mail or scales and sewn or attached to the lower edge or inner lining of the helmet (Nicolle 1983, Figs. 256, 260, 260:B, 263, 290;

Димитров, Рабовянов 2016, 350, 351, n. 57). In Western iconography these helmets are more often used in combination with a mail coif, i.e., a metal hood that covered the face in such a manner that upper part of the face was visible (Nicolle 1983, Figs. 255, 257:A, 293-294, 337-338; Димитров, Рабовянов 2016, 350, 351). On the other hand, on helmets from the "Iliad Marciana" such aventails are evident, as these protections were a typical fashion of the Eastern Roman military. The Pernik helmet underwent secondary modifications through the addition of a face mask, an aventail and an opening on the top for the crest. Based on West European analogies, it has been surmised that the nasal anteceded the face mask (Димитров, Рабовянов 2016, 351, 352, Fig. 6:2-3).

Several authors have proposed various interpretations concerning the origin of the Pernik helmet. Even though Iordanka Changova emphasizes its similarities to eastern helmets, she believes that it is a helmet of a Western type (Чангова 1992, 179). An opinion on its Eastern Roman origin has been expressed by one of the authors of this paper (D'Amato 2015, 74, 76).



A supposition that the helmet is directly related to a 13th century Cuman necropolis (Владимиров 2014, 249, Fig. 7; Димитров, Рабовьянов 2016, 351) must also be mentioned. Stanimir Dimitrov and Deyan Rabovyanov disagree with opinions on the eastern origin of helmets of this shape. According to them, depictions of such helmets are absent in Byzantine art, as opposed to numerous images of such artefacts in Western Europe in the 12th century (Димитров, Рабовьянов 2016, 351, 352). Iconographic depictions in sources from the Near East were produced both under Western and Eastern European influences, and it is difficult to determine whether they were illustrations influenced by the Crusaders or depicting the Crusaders themselves (Nicolle 1983, 70, Fig. 130). Certain similarities are encountered in helmets from graves of nomads in the steppes of Eastern Europe (Кирпичников 1971, 26). However, the examples from the “Marciana Iliad”

Fig. 28. “The justice of Phinehas”, “Chludov Psalter”, folio 109vs, 9th century, State Historical Museum, Moscow (photo courtesy B. Popovic).

Ryc. 28. „Sprawiedliwość Pinchasa”, „Psalterz Chludowa”, folio 109vs, IX w., Państwowe Muzeum Historyczne, Moskwa (fot. dzięki uprzejmości B. Popovic).



Fig. 29. “Israelites defeating the Canaanites”, “Chludov Psalter”, folio 110r, 9th century, State Historical Museum, Moscow (photo courtesy B. Popovic).

Ryc. 29. „Zwycięstwo Izraelitów nad Kananejczykami”, „Psalterz Chludowa”, folio 110r, IX w., Państwowe Muzeum Historyczne, Moskwa (fot. dzięki uprzejmości B. Popovic).



Fig. 30. The siege of Bari or Jerusalem, carved portal of the Saint Nicholas' Cathedral, Bari, early 12th century. *Photo by R. D'Amato.*

Ryc. 30. Oblężenie Bari lub Jerozolimy, rzeźbiony portal w Katedrze św. Mikołaja, Bari, początek XII w. *Fot. R. D'Amato.*

and other Eastern Roman works of art (Nicolle 1999b, 346, 349, 376-377, 379, Figs. 6:a-b, 17:k, 136:h,I, 141:a, 160:a) demonstrate that such helmets were well-known in Byzantium, while no helmets of a similar type have actually been found in nomad graves.

Moreover, there are chronological as well as typological and constructional-technical similarities between the Pernik helmet and the Braničevo ones, particularly in the case of the larger find from Braničevo, which is slightly taller than the Pernik one (Fig. 41). There are differences in the position of their nasals, because the mountings of the nasals on the Braničevo helmets are on the inside, whereas the hinge-like mechanism on the Pernik helmet is attached to the outside.

The existence of the aventail on the Braničevo helmets is strongly indicated by the rivets and loops. However, their number and irregular distribution, particularly in the case of the loops, raise dilemmas and make a reliable reconstruction difficult. We assume that the rivets were used to fasten the browband and the leather lining to which leather straps for keeping the helmet in place were firmly sewn. The position of the loops on the browband of the larger helmet suggests the existence of an aventail, either in the form of mail or as a combination of leather and metal

strips, which would require a larger number of loops (Fig. 21). Viewed from the nasal, the first loops on the left and right sides are placed too close together to be used for fastening the helmet on the head. Even if we assume that this was the case, the function of the third loop at a distance of approximately 7.5 cm from the nearest one



Fig. 31. Centaur, carved portal of Barletta Cathedral, Barletta, Italy, second half of the 12th century. *Photo by R. D'Amato.*

Ryc. 31. Centaur, rzeźbiony portal w Katedrze w Barlecie, Włochy, druga połowa XII w. *Fot. R. D'Amato.*



Fig. 32. Enamel effigy of Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou (1113-1151), Le Mans, France (photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons).

Ryc. 32. Emaliowany nagrobek Godfryda V Plantageneta, księcia Andegawenii (1113-1151), Le Mans, Francja (fot. dzięki uprzejmości Wikimedia Commons).

remains unclear. The aventail may have been attached directly to the loops or to a leather strap that was drawn through the loops. Such a solution can be proposed also for the Pernik helmet.

The flexibility of the nasal structure and the existence of the small holes laterally from the front ridge indicate that a mail coif may have been attached to the helmet (Fig. 18). As the larger helmet was reconstructed from fragments, some loops were most probably damaged.

An identical dilemma is raised by the two preserved loops on the smaller helmet. Their asymmetrical position in relation to the ridge and the nasal (at an angle of 120°) rules out a possibility that the leather straps for fastening

the helmet on the head were drawn through them. In this case a larger number of loops in certain positions are also required to indicate the existence of an aventail, either in the form of a chain mail or as a combination of leather and metal strips, or felt (Fig. 21). Viewed from the nasal, the first loops on the left and right sides are too close to each other to be used for fastening the helmet on the head. Even if we assume that this was the case, the function of the third loop is not clear. The way in which the aventail was attached to the helmet may have been analogous to that of the Pernik find.

An interpretation of the Braničevo helmets: traces of the Imperial presence in 12th century Serbia

The surviving remains of House 4, particularly the character of its furnishings, provide totally new data on the architecture and material culture, making this structure a valuable historical source. House 4 represents the first structure of importance within the core of the town of Braničevo. As a closed whole, its size and movable inventory make it substantially different from modest, one-room structures in the Braničevo suburb which were investigated previously. Together with features in Mali Grad, it allows for a precise dating and provides new elements of significance for subsequent processes of diffusion of the material culture of Byzantium in the area of the Danube valley during the 11th and 12th centuries. The finds unearthed in it represent an invaluable testimony to Braničevo's contacts and highly developed trade with the central parts of the Empire, areas along the Black Sea, the Middle East and the Muslim world (Spasić-Đurić 2016, 113-115, Figs. 54-57)

The location of the house, its architectural features and prestigious furnishings are indicative of its special purpose and the status of its owner (Спасић-Ђурић 2011, 110; Spasić-Đurić 2016, 112–114). The substantial accumulation of wealth in the form of numerous expensive vessels is suggestive of the structure's residential character. Functionally, based on its interior and exterior elements, House 4 can be interpreted as a temporary Imperial residence inside the war camp of Emperors John II and Manuel I Komnenos during their armed conflicts with Hungary (Spasić-Đurić 2017, 361).

Of extraordinary importance in this context are the helmets. The tall conical helmets with their tops being pointed and tilted forward which belong to the so-called "Phrygian" variant are strongly represented in 12th century West European



Fig. 33. "Hortus Deliciarum", Hohenburg Abbey, Germany, 1185 (19th century copy /1818/ from the lost original): a – "Joshua defeats the people of Ai", fol. III-C; b – "Siege of a city", fol. III D; c – "Wearing the helmet", fol. III E (photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons).

Ryc. 33. "Hortus Deliciarum", Opactwo Hohenburg, Niemcy, 1185 r. (XIX-wieczna kopia /1818 r./ zaginionego oryginału): a – "Zwycięstwo Jozuego nad ludem Aj", fol. III-C; b – "Oblężenie miasta", fol. III D; c – "Zakładanie helmu", fol. III E (fot. dzięki uprzejmości Wikimedia Commons).

sources. For this reason most scholars believe that they are of West European origin (Nicolle 1983, 70, Fig. 130; Димитров, Рабовянов 2016, 351, 352; Spasić-Đurić 2017, 359, 360). However, we have already indicated that this category of protective armament did always exist inside the Roman Empire and that they are often depicted in Byzantine iconography. According to one of the authors (D. Spasić-Đurić), the discovery of the helmets of the same shape in the Eastern Roman fortress of Pernik in Bulgaria and the Eastern Roman fort of Braničevo in Serbia (Fig. 41) still does not provide enough evidence that this type of

helmets should be interpreted as made by Imperial workshops. On the other hand, according to the other author (R. D'Amato) this is yet another piece of evidence that all three helmets were made in Byzantium. In both cases, there is no doubt concerning the provenance of influences which are evident in 12th century Roman military equipment. Based on West European iconographic representations and the military and political context of the period from Alexios I to the death of Manuel I Komnenos, it has been proposed that the Braničevo helmets are of Western European origin and were produced in a workshop in southern Italy



Fig. 34. Carved stone candlestick made by Nicola Angelo and Pietro Vassalletto, detail. Basilica of Saint Paul, Rome, ca. 1170. Photo by R. D'Amato.

Рис. 34. Резбљени камени свјецњик ауторства Никола Анђело и Пјетро Вассалетто, детаљ. Базилка św. Петра, Рим, ок. 1170 р. Фот. Р. Д'Амато.

(*ibid.*, 359). The hypothesis of the West European origin of these helmets is based on Roman-Hungarian clashes at Braničevo, where Western knights served as mercenaries on both sides (*Византијски извори* IV:9, 49, 52, n. 8; 111; Spasić-Đurić 2017, 360). During the reign of Manuel I, the greatest stress among foreign troops was put on heavy cavalry, composed of Italian Normans, Frenchmen, Germans and Lombards (*Византијски извори* IV:55, 56, n. 130, 131; Драшковић 2006, 467-470; 2012, 151-160). Of particular significance was hiring of West European knights by John II and Manuel I, aimed at improving Roman tactics and efficiency in battle during their dramatic clashes with the Hungarians (*Византијски извори* IV:9, n. 8,3, 51, 127-132). Finds of remains of a cavalry sword, of a spur and a spear can confirm that cavalry troops operated in Braničevo in the Emperor's service.

On the other hand, it cannot be excluded that these helmets are a simple continuation of an old tradition in the Roman army. Fluted or Phrygian helmets spread in the Mediterranean again since the 10th-11th century thanks to Byzantium, which is proved by their earlier depictions. The Normans took this type of armament from Italian provinces under Eastern

Roman control or influence, and popularised it in Western Europe. But in Byzantium the tradition continued and the Phrygian helmet was perhaps manufactured taller, conforming to new developments brought by Latin mercenaries. However, the idea of surrounding the helmet with a protective curtain for the neck, the "peritrachelion", was distinctively Roman (D'Amato 2015, 46ff.).

Subsequent alterations and modifications of the Pernik helmet, which should by no means be ruled out in the case of the Braničevo helmets, were probably made due to local needs and in local workshops (Spasić-Đurić 2017, 360). In this period, the state had only limited jurisdiction over the production and distribution of military equipment. This was because of the fact that from the 9th century onwards provincial military commanders and their officers were in charge of procuring arms and equipment (D'Amato 2015, 38, 39). The aventails in the form of mail curtains or leather straps on the Pernik and Braničevo helmets (Figs. 21 and 41), no matter whether they were made at the same time as the helmets or were added later, could be interpreted as a kind of Balkan peculiarity resulting from local needs. This supposition may be confirmed or disproved by new archaeological finds.



Fig. 35. Mosaic in St Mark's Cathedral, Venice, Italy, second half of the 12th century, details: a-b – “Martyrdom of St Matthew”; c – “St Peter in front of Herod Antipas”. Photo by R. D'Amato.

Ryc. 35. Mozaika w Katedrze św. Marka w Wenecji, Włochy, druga połowa XII w., detale: a-b – „Męczeństwo św. Mateusza”; c – „św. Piotr przed Herodem Antypasem”. Fot. R. D'Amato.



Fig. 36. "Abraham and Melchisedec". Mosaic in St Mark's Cathedral, Venice, Italy, mid-13th century. Photo by R. D'Amato.

Ryc. 36. „Abraham i Melchizedek”. Mozaika w Katedrze św. Marka w Wenecji, Włochy, połowa XIII w. Fot. R. D'Amato.

Historical and functional context: traces of Imperial presence at Braničevo in the 12th century

We have seen that the helmets were found in House 4, which was destroyed by a severe fire. Based on the finds of coins minted by John II and Manuel I Komnenos, the construction of House 4 has been dated to the end of the 1120s and the reign of John II, but it was also in use during the reign of Manuel I. Its demolition by fire most probably occurred during an unexpected Hungarian assault (1182-1183), provided that the fire was not a matter of accident. The helmets were packed one inside the other, which is indicative of an unexpected event. Important in this context is the fact that, as already mentioned, five hearths for heating and cooking were discovered within the structure of the building (Spasić-Đurić 2016, 111, Fig. 54, 114; Спасић-Ђурић 2017, 361, 362).

The discovery of the helmets must be seen within the context of historical events on the macro- and micro-scale. The 12th century was a time when Hungarian and Roman interests in the Balkans were constantly at odds. Apart from Belgrade, Braničevo was also at the centre of the conflict, either as a field of battle or a main war camp during Roman campaigns against Hungarian Haram, Belgrade, Zemun and Syrmia or during Hungarian attacks on Braničevo and Belgrade (*Византијски извори* IV:45, n.100, 92, n. 257). Its geostrategic location at the intersection of the Morava and Danube roads, in close proximity to the thoroughfare running from the Morava valley southward and, across the Danube, northward towards the Carpathians (Fig. 1), as well as to the main highway ("via militaris") which runs from Mali Grad (via Niš, Sofia and Edirne) to Constantinople, made Braničevo one of key pillars of Eastern Roman defence on the Danube in the 12th century.¹⁴

¹⁴ The site of Mali Grad, also known among the locals as Todića crkva, is located on the right bank of the Danube, at the top of Braničevska (Sopotska) greda. Its height varies from 80 to 122 m and the angle of inclination of its slopes exceeds 50%. It is a broad plateau overlooking the left bank of the Mlava River, about two hectares in area and an altitude of 100 m above the sea level. The bank of the Dunavac below Mali Grad is exceptionally high and steep, making the natural defensive potential of the site evident at first sight.



Fig. 37. "Iliad Marciana", Ms. Venetus A, Biblioteca Marciana, Venice, Italy, second half of the 12th century: a – "Helen of Troy and Greek warriors", fol. 6; b-d – "Greek warriors at the Trojan War", fol. 8; e – "Helen of Troy", fol. 6. Photo by R. D'Amato.

Ryc. 37. „Iliada”, Ms. Venetus A, Biblioteca Marciana, Wenecja, Włochy, druga połowa XII w.: a – „Helena Trojańska i wojownicy greccy”, fol. 6; b-d – „Grecy w trakcie Wojny Trojańskiej”, fol. 8; e – „Helena Trojańska”, fol. 6. Fot. R. D'Amato.

In Anna Komnene's "Alexiad", Braničevo is mentioned in the context of the Cuman invasion of 1114, which impelled Alexios I Komnenos to station his armies, among other places, in the *theme of Niš up to Braničevo on the banks of the Danube* (Komatina 2016, 104, 105).

During Hungarian conflicts with Byzantium, Braničevo features strongly in the works of Roman historians Iohannes Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates, who frequently mention it and stress the need to reinforce it. The historical events within the context of these conflicts at Braničevo and the



Fig. 38. "Achilles". "Iliad Marciana", Ms. Venetus A, fol. 4, Biblioteca Marciana, Venice, Italy, second half of the 12th century. Photo by R. D'Amato.

Ryc. 38. „Achilles”. „Iliada”, Ms. Venetus A, fol. 4, Biblioteca Marciana, Wenecja, Włochy, druga połowa XII w. Fot. R. D'Amato.

latter's role as a transit point during the Crusades required the presence of Emperor John II and thereafter also Emperor Manuel I in the fort. According to Kinnamos and Choniates, it was there that their respective war camps were situated (*Византијски извори* IV:7-10, 13, 14, 16-22, 43-45, 50, 117, 118, 120-126, 137, 159; Бикић, Поповић 2012, 661; Komatina 2016, 105-107). It is therefore highly possible that House 4 was a temporary Imperial residence in the war camp

of both John II and Manuel I (Spasić-Đurić 2017, 361). Situated at the site's western perimeter, next to the western rampart, House 4 fully met not only all of the military-strategic but also residential requirements (Fig. 2). Its location allows for a total control of the Danube river, its Dunavac branch and Dunavska ada,¹⁵ and for visual communication with Belgrade and Rama. Furthermore, it offers a full view of the spacious plain (Stig) in the east (Spasić-Đurić 2016, 110).¹⁶

¹⁵ Dunavska ada is an island between the Danube and its branch Dunavac; it is also called Kostolačko ostrvo.

¹⁶ A negative image of the western rampart can be seen on Figs. 1 and 2 on the western side next to the edge.



Fig. 39. Incensory, Constantinople (?), 12th century. Treasury in St Mark's Cathedral, Venice, Italy (photo courtesy A. Babuin).

Ryc. 39. Kadzielnica, Konstantynopol (?), XII w. Skarbiec w Katedrze św. Marka, Wenecja, Włochy (fot. dzięki uprzejmości A. Babuina).

An Imperial war camp – as a command centre – and the presence of a temporary Imperial residence imply the presence of “strategoi” and warriors, officials of the Braničevo military and civic authorities, including the “dux”, as well as members of the Imperial retinue and guards. A certain Curticius is mentioned as a military commander of the town during the reign of John II (*Византијски извори* IV:13, 14) and Andronikos Komnenos as the “dux” of Braničevo and Belgrade in 1153. In 1154, the latter attempted to depose Manuel with the aid of the Hungarian king (*Византијски извори* IV:47-49, n. 105; Komatina 2016, 106).

During his military campaigns, Manuel was often accompanied by prominent personages, some of whom were also his relatives, such as the said Andronikos Komnenos, Andronikos Doukas, the Hungarian Prince Béla-Alexios, a brother of King Stephen III, Constantine Angelos, Theodore Vatatzes, Alexios Kontostephanos, Andronikos Kontostephanos and others (*Византијски извори* IV:24, n. 43; 40, 81, n. 214; 95, 137). Inevitably, there were also renowned military commanders, such as Andronikos Lapardas, Michael and Alexios Vranas (*ibid.* IV: 19, 61, 96-98, 141, n. 118; 152, n.153). This retinue also included the emperor's personal bodyguards, whom sources from the Komnenian era describe as Nordic and thereafter as Anglo-Saxon mercenaries, better known as Varangians (“Βάραγγοι”). They accompanied the emperor and provided physical protection for him

by forming a ring around him with their bodies. John Kinnamos mentions such a formation when he describes Manuel I's triumphal entry into Antioch (1159). The Varangians also accompanied the “vasilèfs” on his military campaigns and guarded his tent, likewise in a circular formation (D'Amato 2010, 18-19; Драшковић 2012, 152, 153).

The Crusades of 1072, 1147 and 1189 also coincided with the Hungarian conflicts with Byzantium. Those participating in them sailed on the Danube to Braničevo, where they left their ships and continued their journey by land (*Византијски извори* IV:17-21; 120, 122; Поповић, Иванишевић 1988, 127).

The construction of the Imperial camp with a temporary Imperial residence at Braničevo was directly linked with events and severe clashes that took place in the area of Braničevo and Haram (present-day Banatska Palanka, on the left bank of the Danube) between 1127 and 1129 and also continued during the reign of Manuel I. When describing Romano-Hungarian battles in the former period, John Kinnamos states that the fiercest clashes occurred in the areas of Braničevo and Haram, which coincided with the direction in which Emperor John II and his troops were moving. Massive preparations that included assembling of troops and ships preceded two military campaigns against Hungary: one in the area of Haram and the other on the Roman soil, at Braničevo. Most probably two years after the Hungarian victory and the demolition of Eastern

Roman fortresses on the Danube in 1127, John II succeeded in recapturing what had been lost. The peace agreed on “Dunavska ada” at Braničevo, mentioned by Choniates (*Византијски извори* IV:17, n. 25), allowed for a long term stabilization of the military situation. Activities aimed at protecting and fortifying Braničevo commenced in 1128 and were resumed in 1129. In all likelihood, they dragged on for some time, because they had not been completed when the Eastern Roman army withdrew again (*ibid.* IV: 13-16, n. 23; Поповић, Иванишевић 1988, 126).

The situation did not essentially change during the reign of Manuel I. Braničevo and Belgrade remained the pillars of Constantinople’s defense on the Danube and the protection and fortification of Braničevo was a priority among the Emperor’s military endeavours. For this reason, he stayed at Braničevo on frequent occasions (*Византијски извори* IV:61, n. 144; Komatina 2016, 106).

During the offensive on Syrmia in 1151, Braničevo was the main war camp, where preparations were made for the campaign. There, military forces were consolidated and supplies restocked after combat. According to Choniates, Manuel set off on his campaign against Hungary from Constantinople in 1151 through Sofia, Niš and Braničevo, down the famous Constantinople Road, and from there he continued his march towards Belgrade. After he had won a great victory and taken rich spoils, he heard that “ban” Beloš was about to attack Braničevo. Therefore he left Syrmia and *having arrived at Braničevo, he camped there. A little later, he decided to procure fodder and sent men to another part of the Hungarian land, where there is Mount Temisis (Τεμισίς), as it is called by the local people, with troops led by Boris* (*Византијски извори* IV:39-44, n. 94).¹⁷ The above events indicate that Manuel stayed at Braničevo for some time and devoted himself not only to consolidating his army and restocking supplies, but also to fortifying Danubian towns in the areas bordering on Hungary, with Kinnamos here probably implying Belgrade and Braničevo (*ibid.* IV:41-45, n. 98, 99).

Manuel I was again at Braničevo probably in 1152, because of an offensive launched by Géza II. However, the two armies did not engage in battle

as peace was concluded (*ibid.* IV:45, 46, n. 100). A new Hungarian attack on Braničevo in 1154/1155 again brought Manuel I to the Danube valley. The attack was fended off owing to his military cunning and authority (*ibid.* IV:51).

In 1154, Byzantium was on the defensive, and Braničevo did not fall only due to extreme efforts of Emperor Manuel. The following year, 1155, Manuel launched an offensive and set off for the Hungarian-Byzantine border, but again peace was agreed (*ibid.* IV:54, 55).

In the battles on the Danubian border between 1162 and 1167, Braničevo again served as a main war camp for attacks on Hungarian Haram and its ramparts were being reinforced (Komatina 2016, 106). Regardless of differences in the descriptions of certain events by Kinnamos and Choniates, both authors ascribe equal importance to Braničevo as the main camp for army consolidation before and after offensives on Hungary. They also mention construction works aimed at reinforcing the defenses of the northern borders. Braničevo is however not mentioned in the major Roman offensive on Syrmia, because Manuel assembled his army in Sofia and crossed into Zemun over the Sava and Danube Rivers (*Византијски извори* IV:95, 145).¹⁸

A new Hungarian attack on Braničevo occurred in 1182, but Béla III decided to move on, because in 1183/1184 Alexios Vranas was left there with an army after Andronikos Lapardas had withdrawn in late 1183 (*ibid.* IV:150-152, n. 156; 153, n. 160). It is unclear whether these generals were sent to the area of Braničevo while Emperor Manuel was still alive or after 1180 (*ibid.* IV:52, n. 157).

In 1189, Emperor Frederick Barbarossa came to Braničevo with the Crusaders and was welcomed by the Roman military commander of the town (Поповић, Иванишевић 1988). The last trace of the presence of Roman power there can be found in a charter issued by Emperor Alexios III Angelos (1195-1203) to the Venetians in 1198. This charter also mentions *the province of Niš and Braničevo (provincia Nisi et Vranisove)* among the provinces of the Empire.

After being dominated by Hungary and the restored Bulgarian empire during most of the 13th century, Braničevo became part of the Serbian state in 1292 (*ibid.*, 127; Komatina 2016, 107).

¹⁷ This pillaging raid took place in the area of the Tamiš River. Having arrived there, Boris Kalamanos looted rich settlements and returned to the camp at Braničevo with loads of plunder.

¹⁸ Choniates complements Kinnamos’ statement that at the end of the battle the army crossed to the “opposite bank”, i.e., to the Roman territory, in ships. Kinnamos says that the army withdrew to their camp, but fails to mention its location, whereas Choniates specifies that the army left Syrmia (cf. *Византијски извори* IV:143, n. 129).



Fig. 40. Ivory cover of the "Psalter of Queen Melisenda", 12th century. British Museum, London, England (courtesy photo D. Nicolle).

Ryc. 40. Okładka z kości słoniowej z „Psałterza Melisandy”, XII w. British Museum, Londyn, Anglia (fot. dzięki uprzejmości D. Nicolle’a).

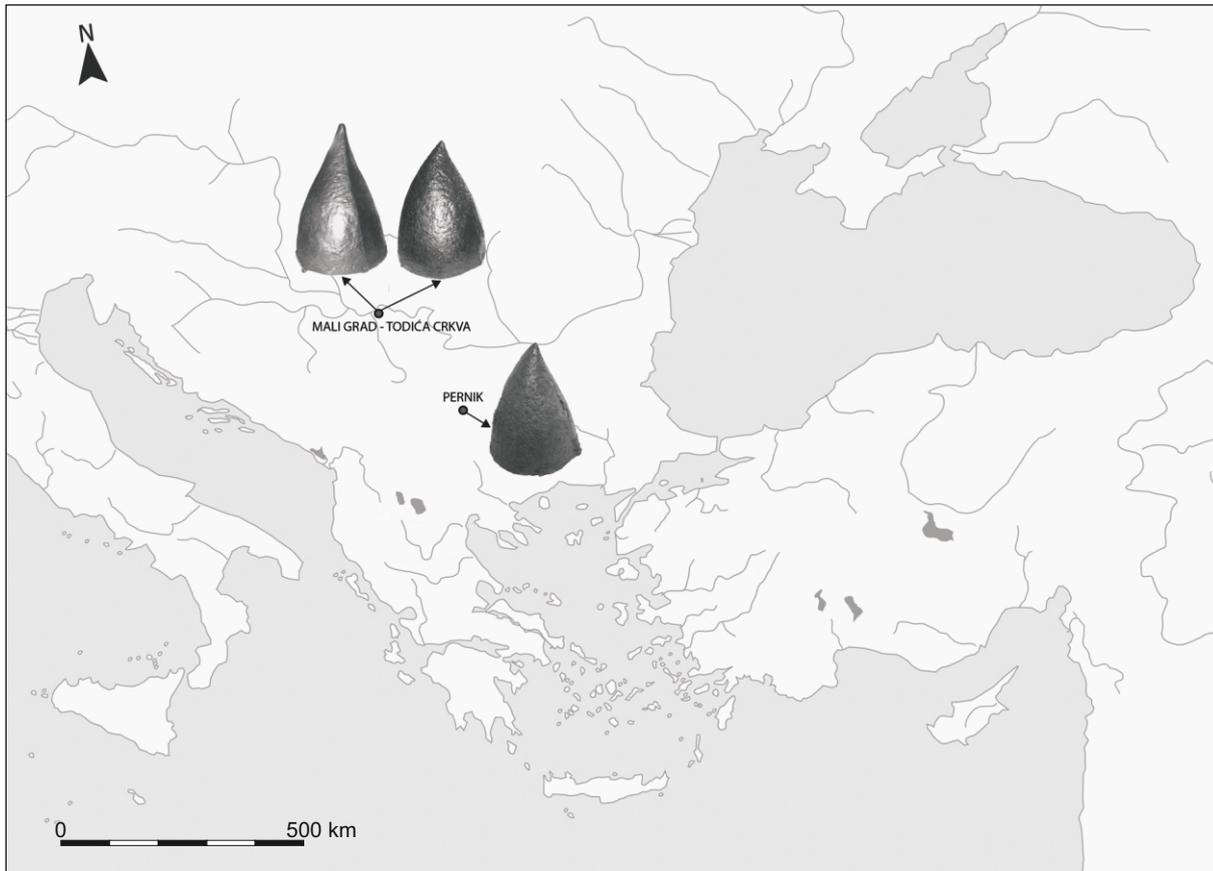


Fig. 41. Sites with “Phrygian-style” helmets: Mali Grad – Todića Crkva, Kostolac (Serbia) and Pernik (Bulgaria). Drawing by S. Živanović.

Ryc. 41. Stanowiska, na których odkryto hełmy frygijskie: Mali Grad – Todića Crkva, Kostolac (Serbia) i Pernik (Bułgaria). Ryc. S. Živanović.

Even though the information provided by Kinnamos and Choniates unambiguously demonstrates the importance of Braničevo during the Romano-Hungarian conflicts, it primarily refers to military campaigns and construction works rather than to other public and private activities of John II and Manuel I. The work on the construction and restoration of the Braničevo ramparts probably refers to Veliki Grad, a fairly large fort of a polygonal ground plan, bordering on Mali Grad in the south. According to preliminary archaeological investigations undertaken in 1983-1984, a reinforcement in the form of a deep-founded wall mass of 0.90 m in width and a small triangular turret from the same period was observed on the southern rampart of Veliki Grad, which is about 2.5 m wide. The erection of Veliki Grad has been dated to the 12th and the early 13th century (Поповић, Иванишевић 1988, 129, 132, 133, Fig. 2).

In these dynamic circumstances of military, diplomatic and construction activities, the Imperial war camp at Braničevo was of great military and residential importance, as it provided conditions

for the emperor’s private and public activities during his stays there. With regard to its physical structure and functionality, the provisional imperial residence contained furnishings fit for a ruler. Due to the fierce fire that consumed House 4, with the exception of wooden pieces of furniture, whose existence is indicated by their charred remains, not much can be said about its furnishings and decoration. We can only hypothesize about expensive fabrics and covers, such as those snatched from John II’s tent by the Hungarians during a battle at Haram (*Византијски извори* IV: 17). However, numerous cooking and dining vessels and large quantities of archaeological remains are indicative of the dynamics of life in House 4 and preparations of rich feasts. In addition to the flesh of domestic and wild animals, the diet also included various kinds of fish. The most common seem to have been those belonging to the family of Acipenseridae, such as sturgeon and beluga. Their flesh was a regular feature on the menu at the Imperial court and in noblemen’s houses and monastic refectories (Марковић 2015, 403).

By its high technological and aesthetic value, the movable furnishings, particularly the exquisite vessels (sgraffito, champlevé, marbled, painted, celadon and copies of celadon-Longquan ones) from Syrian and Egyptian workshops (Figs. 4, 6) as hallmark of social elites, confirm the character of House 4 (Spasić-Đurić 2016, 112-114, Figs. 55-57). Particularly outstanding is a set of glass vessels of purple colour, the so-called “marvered vessels” (Fig. 6) (made of translucent dark-purple glass and decorated with marvered opaque white trails – Spasić-Đurić, Stamenković 2018). Some of the ceramic vessels were also painted purple. Among other things, purple colour, as an indicator of special status, a symbol of “aristocratic blood” and Imperial dignity, is suggestive of the highest status of the residents and implies Imperial presence in House 4 (Spasić-Đurić 2017, 361).

With their effective decorations and aesthetic sophistication, the marvered vessels of purple glass are rather impressive, emphasizing the gap between aristocracy and the lower ranks of society and the emperor’s power and sovereignty. In addition to purple attire, other purple-dyed objects were generally used by high-ranking families of the most powerful people in society, who were also closest to the emperor’s inner circle (Giner 2013, 81).¹⁹ Besides their practical use (for toilette or cooking), the vessels also had a strong role as symbols of status and ideology, with the effect of their colour being of foremost significance.

The ancient phenomenon of purple as a symbol of ideology and as a marker of secular and religious elites retained the same connotations in Roman Empire and in Byzantium. However, in Byzantium it was expanded with the term “porphyrogenesis”, which refers to the birth of an heir to the throne whose father was the reigning emperor and wore purple (*ibid.*, 92). In the era of the Komnenoi, the notion of Imperial legitimacy that was being continuously pursued throughout the 11th century was even more linked to the phenomenon of the birth in purple of the heir to the throne (Станковић 2006, 49, 96).²⁰ Thus the phenomenon of “porphyrogenesis” became the supreme criterion for assessing members of the Byzantine elite and an element of dynastic legitimacy in the

Komnenian period. “Porphyrogenesis” (from the moment Alexios Komnenos came to power) would detach the Komnenos dynasty from the preceding period of the Empire (*ibid.*, 97).

Therefore, the set of marvered vessels has to be viewed in the context of the Komnenian ideology and the emphasis on the “genos” of the Komnenoi, with “porphyrogenesis” being the trademark of the ruling family and of its distinctiveness from other families (*ibid.*, 235). The vessels were produced in Syrian or Egyptian workshops, whence they were brought to Braničevo, either as made to order or as a specially selected set, directly or through Constantinople, which was the main distribution centre of Oriental commodities (Spasić-Đurić 2016, 113). The set of marvered vessels is one of the most important markers of social identity and, together with the expensive ceramic vessels, confirms the residential character of House 4 (Spasić-Đurić 2017, 361).

The helmets, as another important marker of identity, reflect a military dimension, closely linking the owners with the military-political events in the history of Braničevo during the reigns of John II and Manuel I Komnenos. The question of the identity of the owners of the helmets is directly linked with the character and function of the building, i.e., that of the temporary imperial residence that accommodated the military establishment close to the emperor or the “Vasilèfs” himself, together with his retinue and bodyguard. It may be surmised that the owners of the helmets were persons from the high-ranking structures closely linked with the emperor, “strategoï” or mercenaries in the Imperial guard, that is, those on whom both the safety of the emperor and of the fort of Braničevo depended (*ibid.*, 361).

This temporary Imperial residence of John II and Manuel I Komnenos was characterized by exceptionally abundant and luxurious mobile furnishings. As expensive pieces of military equipment, the helmets represent a strong marker of the military elite in the closest circle of John II or Manuel I Komnenos and its participation in the events related to the defence of the northern border of the Empire. The marvered vessels of purple glass, as symbols of Imperial dignity,

¹⁹ The purple colour contains complex spiritual meanings symbolized by the colour since the time of the Minoan civilization, such as the blood and souls of those at the top of the social ladder. Namely, in the course of time, the aristocracy of the Eastern Mediterranean decided to identify the best quality purple, that of a bluish tint, with the blood of their warriors, that is the blood from the wounds of warriors, which, when dried, was of the same shade as the cloaks they wore. It was different, sublime and closer to the gods than the blood of other mortals.

²⁰ Descent from a “porphyrogenetos” represented the basis for the social position and ideology of a family branch and the highest hierarchical degree it could reach. Kinship to or descent from a “porphyrogenetos” was impossible to fabricate, and great attention was paid to establishing how far a person was removed from the “porphyrogenetos” as a true standard of their status in the Eastern Roman society.

promote “porphyrogenesis” as the supreme ideological principle of the Komnenos dynasty.

The entire assemblage from House 4, both as individual finds and as a whole, has a particular functional and symbolic value. Bearing in mind its precise chronological determination, it can be said that it provides new important data for tracking the process of diffusion of the Constantinopolitan material culture in the area of the Serbian Danube valley in the 12th century. The helmets, ceramic and glass vessels, as well as other archaeological finds from House 4 of the war camp, indicate that the military-administrative elite, whose economic potentials were directly related to the military-political importance of Braničevo in the key events of the 12th century, had a primary role in the process of such diffusion and urbanization. Massive spoils of war (*Византијски извору* IV:100, 101, n. 294)²¹ and the transit role of Braničevo during the Crusades contributed to an accumulation of capital and the economic strengthening of the military spheres.

Conclusions

The importance of the Braničevo helmets is manifold. First of all, they represent an extraordinary discovery, given the scarcity of findings of artefacts such as iron helmets of the medieval period, especially in a such good state of preservation. Secondly, the helmets are a further confirmation, solid and concrete, of how Phrygian-style helmets were used in the Eastern Empire, in a military context linked to the Emperor's circle and perhaps closely related to its high command. Analogies between these helmets and the helmet of Pernik are a confirmation of Eastern Roman origin of the latter, undermining the theories that these helmets may have come

from the nomadic cultures. A concrete fact is that three helmets of the same type and chronology (second half of the 12th century) were found inside two fortresses belonging to the Roman Empire. A question remains whether such helmets were produced in the Roman territory or were imported from other areas, such as the Norman South Italy or the Holy Roman Empire, where coeval iconography confirms that they were used extensively. However, even if one accepts this last hypothesis, a continuous use of the Phrygian helmet in the Greco-Roman world over the centuries would suggest that the West took inspiration from Byzantium in the creation of such military headgear. Therefore, the Western and Eastern Europe, as well as the Islamic Mediterranean, mutually influenced each other in the use of this military headgear, developing autonomous variants although interconnected with regard to their use and function. Further excavations in the area of Braničevo, which hopefully will be conducted as soon as possible, will probably yield other finds related to military archaeology and material culture that will throw new light on the discovery. The fact is that the Braničevo helmets are a milestone in the Byzantine military archaeology (understood in a purely modern sense), whose wealth, made up of thousands of finds from the Balkans and Turkey, is still largely unknown for many scholars.

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²¹ After a major victory in Syrmia in 1167, Choniates mentions huge spoils of war that included two thousand armors and countless helmets, shields and swords.

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HEŁM FRYGIJSKI W BIZANCJUM: ARCHEOLOGIA, IKONOGRAFIA I NOWE ZNALEZISKA Z BRANIČEVA

Streszczenie

W czasie badań archeologicznych prowadzonych w 2007 r. na stanowisku Mali Grad – Todića crkva, leżącego w obrębie średniowiecznego Braničeva, w obrębie budynku mieszkalnego nr 4, datowanego na drugą połowę XII w., odkryto dwa żelazne hełmy. Hełmy włożono jeden w drugi, stąd początkowo wydawało się, że odkryto tylko jeden egzemplarz. Po konserwacji okazało się, że są to dwa hełmy typu frygijskiego, zaopatrzone pierwotnie w donitowane nosale oraz czepce. Na podstawie XII-wiecznych przedstawień ikonograficznych i analogicznie dato-

wanego znaleziska z miejscowości Pernik w Bułgarii uznano, że hełmy te mogą być produktami warsztatów bizantyńskich działających w czasach panowania Jana II i Manuela I Komnenów. Jest bardzo prawdopodobne, że znaleziska te należały do wysokiego urzędnika wojskowego z otoczenia cesarza (członka imperialnej straży), który stacjonował wraz z oddziałem na terenie Braničeva, pełniącego wówczas funkcję cesarskiego obozu wojskowego na czas wojen prowadzonych przez Bizancjum z Królestwem Węgier.