

HELMET OF THE CHALCIDIAN TYPE

Greek, 4th century B.C.

Bronze

Height: 25.5 cm (10 in)

Reference: 27673



This piece of ancient Greek armor is remarkable for its preservation; the quality of bronze and exquisite decorative elements applied by engraving and relief demonstrate the supreme workmanship. The helmet belongs to the Chalcidian type of which the oldest examples are testified by their depictions in the black-figured vases also designated as "Chalcidian" and dated back to the third quarter of the 6th century B.C. The

creation of the type responded the demand for the lighter armor which would allow the warrior more flexibility by providing with wider view and adding the ear aperture; it could be that the change in design was specifically developed for cavalry or infantry facing cavalry. The name of this type of helmet comes from Chalcidice, a region in the Northern Greece close to Macedonia. However, it may be that the production of helmets (same for the vases) did not originate from this area. It has been suggested that the western Greeks of Sicily and southern Italy contributed to the creation of it as most of the finds were made there. The historians of Greek arms and armor distinguish five major types among the helmets of the Chalcidian type. The present piece belong to the last one, its most characteristic feature is the hinged cheek-pieces. With a shallow curve at the brow, cut-away ear recesses and a curved neck-guard, this type is shaped with the domed crown with median ridge and carinated perimeter. The narrow, arrow-like nose guard is connected to the brow. The entire helmet except for the cheek-pieces was hammered from a single sheet of bronze. The paragnathides (cheek protectors) were attached by hinges: they would have been raised in a "pause" position to uncover the face when relaxing or lowered and fastened under the chin when fighting.

The crest was mounted on top of the helmet and held in place by an attachment system, of which the marks are still visible on the surface, and a hook at the back is still preserved. The cap is rounded and features a ridge that encircles the helmet and separates the upper and

lower parts of the head. At the front, the decoration is composed of a relief that repeats the pattern of the eyebrows and two friezes of fine incisions. The upper frieze consists of languettes and the lower one of locks of hair; they terminate in two palmettes, large and small, at the ear aperture on each side. At the back, the helmet descends low covering the neck, at the same time it is arched and flared outwardly to ease the movements of the warrior. Several holes line the lower edge indicating the place where the leather lining was attached to the interior of the helmet.

Compared with its Corinthian counterpart, the Chalcidian helmet should be considered as its natural evolution and a lighter version; in the more recent types, like here, the paragnathides are articulated with hinges at the temples. The examples of the 4th century B.C. are most elaborate; the paragnathides decorated with figures in relief (most often with the ram's heads), volutes on the temples, composite crests, etc., especially those found in the necropolises of the colonies of Magna Graecia and of the Italic cities. As for the depictions of the Chalcidian type in the Attic vase painting, most frequently it is found as an attribute of Athena, the goddess of war.

CONDITION

Both cheek-pieces are absent; surface is cleaned with some remains of soil deposits; an indentation filled with soil on the right top side; one hole is torn at the lower left back edge; traces of ancient soldering and modern glue on the marks of the crest attachments.

PROVENANCE

Ex- Giancarlo Ligabue private collection, collected before 1970;

French Art Market, 2012.

EXHIBITED

TEFAF, New York 2017

FRIEZE, London 2017

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Antike Helme: Sammlung Lipperheide und andere Bestände des Antikenmuseums Berlin, Mainz, 1988, pp. 137-150.

EVERSON T., Warfare in Ancient Greece: Arms and Armor from the Heroes of Homer to Alexander the Great, Sutton, 2004.

SNODGRASS A. M., Arms and Armor of the Greeks, Baltimore, London, 1967, pp. 69-71.