

ON THE AGE OF SOME GOLD ARTEFACTS FROM THE KRAISHTE REGION IN SOUTH-WEST BULGARIA

Martin Christov

National Museum of History, 1618 Sofia; martohristov@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT. Some long ago published gold finds from the region of the Kraishte in South-West Bulgaria are discussed. A date in the Early Bronze Age III – or most generally in the second half of the III mill. BC – is offered on the basis of their parallels from Troy, Poliochni, Eskiapar in Turkey and the ritual structures near Dubene, Karlovo Region in Bulgaria. At the same time, a hypothesis is brought up that these gold artefacts present the earliest manufacture of such artefacts in that part of Bulgaria.

The present report was provoked by several gold artefacts that were originally published in the first half of the 1990s. Their provenance is from the region of Kraishteto, Kyustendil District. Part of them were photographed by Dr. Zdravko Tsintsov (Senior Research Scientist at the Central Laboratory of Mineralogy and Crystallography "Acad. Ivan Kostov", Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) (Tsintsov, 1992; 1993a; Bachmann, Tsintsov, 2003) and were then interpreted as artefacts with no attempt to date them more precisely on the basis of their typology.

Other similar gold finds were later published and they are now part of the collections of the National Museum of History. On the basis of some archaeological finds these were most generally dated in Prehistory (Tsintsov, 1993b) or in the Early Bronze Age (Tsintsov, 2005).

The problem with their precise dating became solvable just after the discovery of the gold artefacts from the ritual structures and necropolis near the village of Dubene, Karlovo Region (Christov, 2005; 2007; 2008). Their number exceeds 21000 and they present good basis for both dating and defining of typology, thus also concerning the finds from the Kraishte.

General typology of the gold artefacts from the Kraishte

Type 1. Thick round beads of significant thickness or not and of small outer diameter. The cross-section of the wall is rectangular (Tsintsov, 1993a, Fig. 1 and front cover) (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Thick and small beads

Type 2. Small round beads with incised and ornamented periphery. The cross-section of the wall is square (Tsintsov, 1993a, Fig. 1 and front cover) (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Small bead with incised ornament along their periphery

Type 3. Round beads of considerably larger diameter. The cross-section of the wall is either rectangular or square (Tsintsov, 1993a, front cover) (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Large beads

Type 4. Spherical beads of diameter up to 7mm (Tsintsov, 1993a, Fig. 2) (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Spherical bead

Type 5. Beads in the shape of a prism (Tsintsov, 1993a, Fig. 2) (Fig. 5).

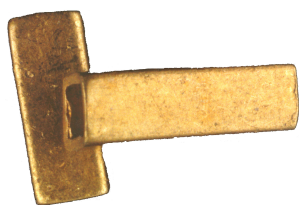


Fig. 5. Prismatic beads

Parallels of the gold artefacts from Kraishte

Type 1. Closest to these beads are those from treasures A and D of the Schliemann's excavations of Troy (*Der Schatz...*, 1996, 118). They were dated in Troy IIg (Trejster, 1996). Eventually treasure A was dated in early Troy II, while treasure D was dated again in Troy IIg (Sazci, Treister, 2006, 215). Similar beads are to be found among the gold ornaments from Poliochni, which are also referred to the same time (Bernabò-Brea, 1976, tav. CCLII – 5-10). In Bulgaria, similar artefacts come from ritual structures N2, 3 and 5 of Dubene, Karlovo Region. These were dated on the basis of the accompanying ceramic vessels in the Early Bronze Age III (Christov, 2005, 129-130; 2007, 227). Thus, on the basis of the pointed out parallels this type of beads may most probably be dated in the Early Bronze Age III.

Type 2. This bead type also finds parallels in treasures A and D from the Schliemann's excavations of Troy (*Der Schatz...*, 1996, kat. 78-101, 117), which are dated in Troy IIg. (Trejster, 1996). Eventually treasure A was dated in early Troy II, while treasure D was dated again in Troy IIg (Sazci, Treister, 2006, 215). It also finds parallels among the artefacts from Troy that are kept in Athens, which were also defined to belong to Troy IIg (*Troy, Mycenaean...*, 1990, cat. 8). Similar beads are to be found among the beads from Poliochni that also refer to the same date (Bernabò-Brea, 1976, tav. CCLII-22). In Bulgaria, similar artefacts come from ritual structures N2, 3 and 5 of Dubene, Karlovo Region. These were dated on the basis of the accompanying ceramic vessels in the Early Bronze Age III (Christov, 2005, 129-130; 2007, 227). Thus, on the basis of the

pointed out parallels, this type of beads from Kraishte may also be dated in the Early Bronze Age III.

Type 3. Closest to this type of beads are those from treasures D and J of Troy (*Der Schatz...*, 1996, kat. 119, 162) that were dated in Troy IIg (Trejster, 1996, 208-212) but eventually treasure J was dated in Troy IIc (Sazci, Treister, 2006, 215). These are also close to some of the materials from ritual structure N2 of Dubene, Karlovo Region (Christov, 2005, 129). Despite the possible earlier dating of treasure J of Troy, and having in mind the closest territorially parallel of beads type 3, one can be inclined to accept a date for this type sometime in the Early Bronze Age III (in accordance with the Bulgarian periodization), which does not differ much from that in Troy.

Type 4. The beads of this type have their parallels among the artefacts in treasure D of Troy (*Der Schatz...*, 1996, kat. 117), which was referred to Troy IIg (Trejster, 1996, 208-212; Sazci, Treister, 2006, 215), among the beads of Poliochni (Bernabò-Brea, 1976, tav. CCLII-19) and probably among the materials from Eskyapar, which were also dated in the Early Bronze Age III (Özgüç, Temizer, 1993, Fig. 32). These give enough reason to date the beads from Kraishte in the Early Bronze Age III.

Type 5. This type of prismatic beads has parallels in the treasure A of Troy (*Der Schatz...*, 1996, kat. 15-16, 82-83, 86, 88, 90, 92-95) that was dated in Troy IIg (Trejster, 1996, 208-212), but eventually was re-dated in the Early Troy II (Sazci, Treister, 2006, 215). The artefacts from ritual structure N5 of Dubene, Karlovo Region, which were dated on the basis of the accompanying ceramic vessels in the Early Bronze Age III (Christov, 2007, 227), present the territorially closest parallel of the type 5 beads from the Kraishte.

Discussion

The parallels pointed above and their chronology give enough reason to accept a date in the Early Bronze Age III, or most generally in the second half of the III mill. BC, for the artefacts from Kraishte. The fact of finding in these places also of miniature gold spheres is of importance. According to Tsintsov these artefacts are result from the processing of gold in the region, an opinion I fully share. In this case this should have been the second manufacturing center for gold artefacts, having in mind the other one that had been connected to the numerous gold finds from Dubene, Karlovo Region (Christov, 2005, 134). The closeness of the gold-bearing Stryama River and its tributaries present an indirect proof (Avdev, 2005; Tokmakchieva, Daskalov, 2005). Thus, the exploitation of the placer gold and the manufacture of gold artefacts in South-West Bulgaria should be placed for sure as early as in the Early Bronze Age III but this do not exclude an earlier date for such activities.

Accepting that for now the manufacture centres are at least two, the opinion of some specialists that the Anatolian gold was of Bulgarian origin becomes fully understandable and do have reason (Leshtakov, 2006, 169; Bachmann, 2006, 74; Yakar, 1985, 28-29). At the same time the new finds from Dubene, as well as those from Kraishte in South-West Bulgaria, change the claims of some scholars that the gold had disappeared after the end of the Chalcolithic Age and reappeared as late as the Late Bronze Age (Cernykh, Avilova,

1991, 252; Chernykh, 1992, 144), an opinion that was most of all due to the lack of archaeological research.

Acknowledgement. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Zdravko Tsintsov for supplying me with photos of the finds and for the additional information.

References

- Avdev, S. 2005. *History of Gold Production in the Bulgarian Lands*. Sofia (in Bulgarian).
- Bachmann, H.-G. 2006. *The Lure of Gold*. New York – London.
- Bachmann, H.-B., Z. Tsintsov. 2003. Placer gold in SW-Bulgaria: past and present. – *Gold Bulletin*, 36, 4, 138-143.
- Bernabò-Brea, L. 1976. *Poliochni città preistorica nell' isola di Lemnos*. II, 1-2.
- Chernykh, E. N. 1992. *Ancient Metallurgy*. Cambridge.
- Cernykh, E. N., L. I. Avilova. 1991. Anatol and the Balkans: models of development of ancient metallurgy (V-II mill. BC). – *Terra Antiqua Balcanica*, 6, 249-254 (in Russian).
- Christov, M. 2005. Necropolis from the Early Bronze Age at Dubene, Karlovo District (preliminary report). – *Archaeology*, 1-4, 127-137 (in Bulgarian).
- Christov, M. 2007. Investigation of ritual structures and necropolis from the Early Bronze Age III in the Balinov Gorun area near Dubene, Karlovo District. – In: *Archaeological Discoveries and Excavations in 2006*. Sofia, 226-228 (in Bulgarian).
- Christov, M. 2008. Archaeological investigations of ritual structures and necropolis from the Early Bronze Age III in the Balinov Gorun area near Dubene village, Karlovo District. – In: *Archaeological Discoveries and Excavations in 2007*, Sofia, 114-119 (in Bulgarian).
- Leshtakov, K. 2006. The Bronze Epoch in the Upper Thracian valley. – *Ann. Univ. Sofia, Fac. Hist.*, 3, 141-216 (in Bulgarian).
- Özgüç, T., R. Temizer. 1993. The Eskiypar treasure. – In: *Aspects of Art and Iconography: Anatolia and Its Neighbors. Studies in Honor of N. Özgüç* (Eds. M. J. Mellink, E. Porada, T. Özgüç). Ankara, 613-628.
- Sazci, G., M. Treister. 2006. Troias Gold. Die Schätze des dritten Jahrtausends vor Christus. *Troia* (Ed. M. Korfmann). 209-216.
- Der Schatz aus Troja. Schliemann und der Mythos des Priamos-Goldes*. 1996. Stuttgart – Zürich.
- Tokmakchieva, M., T. Daskalov. 2005. Typomorphic features of the placer gold from the Panagyurishte region. – *Minning Affair and Geology*, 8, 36-40 (in Bulgarian).
- Trejster, M. J. 1996. Die trojanischen Schätze. – In: *Der Schatz aus Troja. Schliemann und der Mythos des Priamos-Goldes*. Stuttgart, Zürich.
- Troy, Mycenae, Tiryns, Orchomenos. Heinrich Schliemann. The 100th Anniversary of his Death*. 1990. Athens.
- Tsintsov, Z. L. 1992. Unique finds of golden articles in alluvial placers. – *Compt. Rend. Acad. Bulg. Sci.*, 45, 6, 59-61.
- Tsintsov, Z. 1993a. The alluvial gold treasures of Bulgaria. – *Priroda (Nature)*, 1, 43-52 (in Bulgarian).
- Tsintsov, Z. 1993b. Study of archaeological gold by mineralogical methods. – *Minning Affair a. Geology*, 3, 21-23 (in Bulgarian).
- Tsintsov, Z. 2005. Gold artefacts from the alluvial sediments of Bulgaria – indicators for gold mining and metallurgy during the Bronze Age. – *Proc. Ann. Intern. Sci. Conference "80 Years Bulgarian Geological Society", 2005, Sofia*, 217-229.
- Yakar, J. 1985. Regional and local schools of metalwork in Early Bronze Age Anatolia. Part II. – *Anatolian Studies*, 35, 25-38.