

CLAUS v. CARNAP - BORNHEIM and JØRGEN ILKJAER, Illerup Ådal. Die Prachtausrüstungen. 5 Textband; 6 Katalog, Fundlisten und Literatur; 7 Tafelband, Jutland Archaeological Society Publications XXV: 5-7. 1996. Aarhus University Press, 1996, S 486 + S 322 + Taf.254.

In 1950 H. Anderson begins the archaeological researches in the Danish bog of Illerup Ådal. Between 1950-1956 he led a succession of annual archaeological campaigns which resulted in the excavation of an area of 750 sq.m. and the discovery of more than 1,200 items. After a break of almost two decades, in 1975 J. Lonstrup and J. Ilkjaer resumed the diggings at Illerup. Until 1985, when their large-scale rescue excavations came to an end, an area of nearly 40,000 sq.m., about 40% of the Iron Age lake, threatened by the planned melioration works was uncovered and about 15,000 artefacts, most of them in exceptional good condition of preservation, were found¹.

The systematic publication of the researches at Illerup begins in 1990 with the comprehensive study of the lances and spears which offer the ground for a general chronology of the bog finds and weapon graves in Scandinavia². As for the Illerup bog itself there are stated four different deposit places lettered from A to D, dated between c. AD 200 and the early Germanic Iron Age, that is during the fifth century AD. Three years later, in the second section of the monograph, Ilkjaer analyses the personal equipment and discusses the origin of the warriors whose equipment items were deposited at Illerup³.

In 1996 the volumes 5-8 appear, dealing with the luxury equipment recovered from the deposit place A⁴. The decision to concentrate the whole range of luxury pieces in only one section of the Illerup series was taken primarily as their study gives the opportunity to investigate the social stratification and the organization of a northern Barbarian army during the Roman Age. Additionally, the collecting of all the polychrome items in only one lot was prerequisite for their illustration without exception by means of colour photographs.

The general title of the volumes 5-8 "Die Prachtausrüstungen" is somewhat misleading. Thus in this section of Illerup monograph, besides the luxurious shields, there are published all the horse harnesses, the sword belts and decorated sword handles, and not only those made of/or decorated with precious metals. In addition there are also included the golden necklaces and bracelets, the tools and discussions of the personal objects, the denarii, the items bearing rune inscriptions, as well as a thorough analysis of the use in Scandinavian bogs of the decoration utilising a string of pearls and stamped silver/gilded silver sheet (*Perldraht und Preßblech*). C. v. Carnap-Bornheim contributed with the investigation of the shields (ch. 4), the sword handles (ch. 6), the golden items (ch. 7) and the "*Perldraht und Preßblech*" (ch. 9), J. Ilkjaer with the horse harness (ch. 3), sword belts (ch. 5), the tools, luxury personal

¹ J. Ilkjaer, Illerup Ådal. 1. Die Lanzen und Speere. Textband, Jutland Arch. Soc. Publ. 25.1, Aarhus 1990, 13-25.

² J. Ilkjaer, Illerup Ådal. 1-2. Die Lanzen und Speere. Textband; Tafelband, Jutland Arch. Soc. Publ. 25.1-2, Aarhus 1990.

³ Idem, Illerup Ådal. 3-4. Die Gürtel. Bestandteile und Zubehör. Textband; Tafelband, Jutland Arch. Soc. Publ. 25.3-4, Aarhus 1993.

⁴ The 8th Illerup volume including the excavation drawings was not available to me.

objects, the rune inscriptions (ch. 8), and both with the discussion of the concentrations of the finds i.e. the contexts (ch. 2), the catalogue (vol. 6), the introduction and the conclusions (chs 1 and 10).

The authors themselves are well aware of the considerable extension of the contents of the third section beyond its title and explain their decision of putting so many different things together as all the topics grouped under the heading of "Prachtausrüstungen" offer the ground for a social interpretation of the Illerup bog finds.

In the first introductory chapter, one stresses that with c. 12,000 items deposited around AD 200, Illerup place A could be considered, as far as its chronology, as a huge closed find and it offers the opportunity to reevaluate the other Scandinavian bog finds of the 3rd - 5th centuries AD. Another important preliminary observation is that at Illerup were used three different methods of deposition. So the artefacts recovered from the finds concentrations were gathered in some recipients, probably bags, and dropped down from boats into the Iron Age lake. Then come a lot of wooden pieces with metal fittings, especially shield fragments deposited in the Eastern part of the excavated area and finally a few items thrown from the shore of the lake. Besides one states that the destroyed objects were deposited each in the same concentration and that there is not any concentration made only of luxury military equipment.

In agreement with the current interpretation of the bog finds one thinks that at Illerup A the natives offered the military equipment of a defeated invading army. Consequently these items should represent a sample of the equipment of a German army around AD 200. However, it is worth mentioning that as the stratigraphic contexts could not be undoubtedly related to one another nor the artefacts dated so closely, there is not enough straightforward evidence for the simultaneous deposition of all the finds assigned to place A. This means that the supposed contemporaneity of all the concentrations making up Illerup place A, even if most probable, is still far from certain. Moreover, in the interpretation of the Illerup finds one has to count that the ritual deposition or destruction of the captured weapons was a common custom in the antiquity but the spoils of war were deposited either on the battlefield as trophies or in temples or in other sacred areas like e.g. rivers. Thus it looks to me that taking into consideration only the archaeological evidence it is hard to specify if the arms offered at Illerup were captured by the natives in only one successful defensive battle fought in the vicinity of the lake or during an entire war implying perhaps even expeditions outside their country.

In ch. 2, the largest of the 5th volume (pp 21-246) are comprehensively described and discussed the finds concentrations and the isolated depositions which result in the identification of the items and the reconstruction of the ensembles: horse harnesses, shields, sword scabbards and belts. Each concentration is numbered by two figures giving its position inside the excavated area, the ensembles of pieces by a group of letters beginning with S and each item by other different groups of letters. This system of numbering using letters and combining the original recording with the one adopted after the study of the artefacts is enough complicated and it is not always easy to find one object in the volumes of the "Prachtausrüstungen" series. However this numbering has great advantages: it avoids both the possible mistakes due to the re-numbering of all the concentrations and items and also the overcomplication of the authors' task who dealt with an impressive amount of items. The description of every concentration is accompanied by a general plan marking its

location and by detailed plans showing the distribution of the finds inside the concentration. Besides all artefacts are illustrated by means of drawings with side views and sections which corroborated with the colour photographs from the 7th volume record all their features.

In chs 3-8 (pp 247-387) are thoroughly analyzed all the classes of luxury equipment. The Illerup A items are paralleled with the finds from the other Scandinavian bogs and graves but in some instances are also discussed similar objects from the Roman Empire or the rest of the European Barbaricum.

At Illerup the horse harness represents one significant category of finds. Many of the pieces are bronze or silver made and a few are plated with silver/gilded silver sheet which mirrors their importance as prestige goods. In the absence of the leather straps the reconstruction of the harness sets is based on the functional analysis of the items connected with the interpretation of the position in which they were found. The origin and the chronology of the harness is not discussed in this context with the exception of a rare type of container identified for the first time at Illerup. This kind of artefact probably used for keeping the bits and harness accessories is considered, with good reasons I think, to have had a limited diffusion in time and space (pp 260-263). From the few saddle fragments recovered I. suggests the reconstruction of an example with a wooden frame which should have been the oldest of this type in Northern Europe. An interesting case put forward is that of the six unpaired spurs, sometimes associated with scissors and drinking horns but not with harness sets.

The luxury shields from Illerup are spectacular finds and so far there are known only few similar fragments, all discovered in the Danish bogs at Vimose, Thorsbjerg and Nydam and the Norwegian graves at Jevnaker, Vestad and Br Steigen. Among this class of artefacts are ranged the pieces with components made of/or decorated with applications of precious metals. The stuff used for the bosses of the shields are predominantly silver and bronze, only three iron bosses out from c. 300 being associated with precious metal decorations. As the function of the bosses, handgrips and bindings is well-known, v. C.-B. has dealt with them cursorily. On the contrary, the mask-decorated appliqués and the conical mounts which are not present in the grave finds apart from the isolated pieces from Jevnaker and Vestad are thought worth more comment. All the shields were heavily destroyed before the deposition but fortunately the fragments of each example were usually placed in the same concentration facilitating their reconstructions. They were circular in shape, with a diameter varying between 98-112 cm, red painted and around the boss were placed the conical mounts and the mask-appliqués. The total amount of silver used at the making of luxury shields is impressive: the recovered five bosses weighing between 353-545 gs and the 27 conical mounts with 2860 profiled nails, 74 mask-appliqués and at least 1440 binding nails, all of silver, contain more than 2 kg of metal. All but one mask-appliqués are decorated with bearded male faces in a stylized manner characteristic of the native art. The exception is the piece PAO, depicting in a classical style a young male head with ram horns at the ears, undoubtedly identified with Alexander the Great represented as son of Ammon (pp 282, 439-440). The full discussion of the parallels from the Danish bogs and the Norwegian graves and of the differently shaped and decorated luxury shield bosses from the Western Barbaricum and late antique Gallia enable v.C.-B. to state that the shields decorated with precious metals represent a characteristic badge of rank of the German aristocrats from the 2nd half of the 2nd century AD, the date of Mu"ov grave, until at least the end of the 4th century AD. Besides, noting that the silver made or silver decorated bosses are absent in the

Roman military contexts of the 2nd - 3rd centuries AD one emphasizes the peculiar significance of the "silver" shields in the Barbarian social surroundings. Nevertheless, as the appliqué PAO was certainly a Roman artefact, and the author himself has no doubts on this matter, it means that the silver/gilded silver decorated shields were probably also used in the Early Roman Empire and consequently this kind of armour was more widely distributed as it seems from the available evidence.

The frequent association in the same concentration of sword scabbards or fragments of them with belt fittings permitted the reconstruction of c. 60 sword belts which are distinguished from the waist belts whose mounts are mostly iron made not only by the material they are made of but also by their larger width and a lot of differences in the shape of their fittings (p. 299). The sword belts are divided in six groups according to the material and the sort of their fittings: the first group includes the silver sets and the other five the bronze sets. The belts of the first four groups are German equipment items and the majority of those belonging to the fifth group and all from the sixth group are of Roman origin. One does wonder however if it was a good decision to propose a scheme of classification taking into consideration both the material and the shape of the belt fittings instead of trying to produce a functional typology. Moreover I have reservations on some particular questions. So the belts of group 4 with only one type of metal appliques, the ending mounts, look to have been sets recovered uncompletely and should be added to group 2 or 3. And it is worth noting that I. himself reasoned similarly when he ranged five belts formed by two silver ending mounts in group 1 together with the other much more complete sets. The examples attributed to groups 2 and 3 are also virtually identical, excepting the lack of buckles to the latter, a situation due probably to the fragmentary state of preservation of at least some of the pieces of the 3rd group as e.g. the set SACG including strap ends yet not a buckle usually met with this kind of accessories. From above it results that I. is certainly right stressing the remarkable unity in shape of the German belts but as well that no matter if provided with silver or bronze fittings they could be divided in only two groups: with and without buckles. Finally it seems inappropriate to put together in the same typology German and Roman equipment objects even if at Illerup the association in a few cases of strap ends of the types also common in the Empire with native belt mounts (SASE, SACB, SACH) suggests the existence of mixed sets or the influence of the Roman prototypes upon the Barbarian craftsmen. However the proposed classification did not affect significantly the discussion of the belt which concentrates on the parallels with the other Scandinavian bogs and graves and on their relationship with the scabbards and swords of native or Roman origin. The main conclusion reached by I. is that both the 31 German and 16 Roman sword belts are homogeneous and that this is due to their production within a short period of time.

Under the heading of luxury sword handles are collected all the pieces made of precious metal or ivory or decorated with wire of tin, lead-tin alloy or brass. Unfortunately the blades associated with these rich hilts are not discussed nor, at least, illustrated which is frustrating for the reader and makes difficult the use of the factual information on wider contexts. And the projected publishing in a separate volume of all the swords is not a valid reason to split the evidence by dealing with only parts of items. A striking characteristic of the Illerup A find is that there is not a single sword out from c. 100 examples deposited together with its sheath. So if the blades of the sumptuous swords are purposely let aside their scabbards are simply unknown.

The handles are provisionally classified according to the material they are made of

in two main series: assemblages with the handguard, handgrip and the pommel consisting of the same material (groups 1-4); assemblages with the constitutive elements made of different stuffs combined in more variants (groups 5-6). This classification is as mechanical as it covers all the possible combinations of materials to be used for the manufacture of a sword grip including even those unattested at Illerup (groups 2-3) but one has to expect that in the final publication of the swords it will be doubled by an appropriate typology accounting for the shape of the hilts. In fact, v. C.-B. deals with the shape of the handle assemblages too. Thus taking the stand in the observation of C. Engelhardt that the shape of the handguard and the pommel determined the length of the tang he analyses all the Illerup decorated pieces and concludes that there are a lot of typological features paralleling the material of the component parts of the handles: the leather handguards are lenticular and those made of wood or ivory are highly profiled; the leather pommels are similarly shaped with the handguards and the wooden and ivory examples are subspherical. Besides, the analysis in depth of the evidence offers enough results to allow the discussion of the origin of the items. Eight swords out of 14 certainly provided with decorated hilts have stamped names of fabrication and are identified as genuine Roman products. On the contrary the wooden handles of group 1 adorned with silver rivets like a lot of harness sets should be considered indisputable German items. The handles of group 4 made of leather and metal rings and ornamented with wire were recovered only due to the exceptional attention paid during the excavation works. They have few parallels all concentrated in Scandinavia and are thought to have been manufactured in a native workshop. The examples of group 5 which have ivory handguards and pommels obviously coming from the Roman Empire and handgrips of silver and gilded silver sheet met only in Barbaricum, are pieces of mixed origin. Together with the hilts of group 6, differing solely in the construction of the leather-made handguards and pommels, they have parallels at Thorsbjerg and Vimose.

Since the entire amount of blades is Roman but the handles of all the groups are of types unattested in the Empire, v. C.-B. supposes that the swords arrived unfinished in the Barbaricum and only there they were provided with handles and scabbards. Yet if it is clear that most of the sheaths of the swords were manufactured in Northern Europe the case of the grips seems to be more complicated. Thus the sword grips dated around AD 150-250 discovered in the Roman Empire are very few compared with the 1st century AD bone-made examples and the most reasonable explanation of this situation is that many of them were made of organic materials which were not preserved. Consequently it is possible that the wooden and leather handle assemblages from Illerup had in fact parallels or at least prototypes in the Empire.

At Illerup were found a necklace, a bracelet, a bar and a small fragment of sheet, all of gold weighing 250 gs and two gilded bracelets. v.C.-B. discusses besides their few Scandinavian parallels as well the similar pieces from the German and Sarmatian contexts succeeding to date them and even to specify their precise function: rank badges for the necklace and the bracelets, stock of precious metal for the bar; scrap awaiting recycling in the ownership of a goldsmith for the sheet of gold. Another significant statement is that the aurei or different German golden objects were smelted for storing the precious metal in the shape of bars.

The tools, the denarii and the rune inscriptions are a relatively poor source of evidence not to say that the reasons of their inclusion among the luxury equipment are not readily apparent. Nevertheless, they are studied in this section of the monograph because they are related to the hierarchic structures of the German army

whose equipment was deposited at Illerup. So e.g. the tools of a fine smith and the largest hoard of denarii containing 70 pieces were found in the concentration - 6/60 accompanying silver belt and harness sets characteristic of the élite of German warriors. At variance with these, the rune inscriptions appear not only on the rich arms but also on the common tools, testifying an almost unexpected large diffusion of the writing in c.AD 200 Scandinavia.

Ch. 9 looking at the pearled string- and stamped sheet decoration in the Southern Scandinavian bog finds represents the abridged revised version of the doctoral thesis of v. C.-B. He examines in detail this decoration on the classes of objects present at Illerup whilst the other Scandinavian items similarly ornamented - helmets, phalerae and brooches - are only described and included in the lists of finds. The extension of the inquiry to all the bog finds in Northern European Barbaricum and to the Roman parallels gives the opportunity to discuss and to contribute to the main issues of this specific ornamentation: origin, prototypes, matrices, workshops, dating, distribution.

Ch.10 synthesizes the main results achieved in the analysis of each class of objects and proposes a social interpretation of the rich military equipment. Among the numerous concluding remarks I shall mention a few, out of the most significant. So, no matter if the Illerup deposition is one of the largest close finds from the Roman period its interpretation is hindered at first because it was recovered incompletely, only 40% of the former lake being excavated, and then even by the characteristics of such a kind of deposit: it is hardly probable that all the equipment of the defeated army was captured and, anyway, the votive offerings should represent only a part, impossible to quantify, of the booty. From all the classes of items the proportion of the examples made of/or decorated with precious metal is the highest among the harness sets and the warriors owing these luxury cavalry equipment should be the same as the ones provided with the rich shields, swords and the silver belt fittings. The army whose equipment was deposited at Illerup had a clear hierarchical structure looking similar to the German armies of tripartite social/ranking division described by Tacitus and Ammianus Marcellinus and v.C.-B. and I. propose a ratio of *principes* to *comites* and *pedites* of 1:7 and 1:60 respectively. Since the military force at Illerup originates in Southern Norway and South-Western Sweden where the landscape is fragmented in small isolated regions, one supposes that it consisted of a coalition of several small armies, each of them led by its own prince marked by the possession of one of the five richest shields. The Roman imports are very few compared to the total amount of luxury military items: the harness, apart from a mixed set, and almost all the shields are German, as the majority of the belts and scabbards; only the sword blades are Roman but their handles are again of native manufacture. Accordingly the Roman objects are not compulsorily linked to the warriors' élite which is characterized by its expensive German harnesses and shields. However, the big number of Roman blades deposited at Illerup attest the necessity of a significant import of Roman weapons preliminary to the beginning of the military expeditions. Finally, the richness of the military accoutrements points out that the aristocracy who used them was a stable social class capable to fight large-scaled wars.

Vol.6 includes a detailed catalogue of finds grouped according to the concentrations they came from, lists of the Illerup items studied in the vol. 5-8 and of their parallels and the bibliography.

The proofs were carefully corrected yet for such a big amount of published text a number of printing errors are unavoidable and I shall mention four of them in vol.5: p.301, the sword belt SACT is attributed to an inexistant concentration 155/114

instead of the correct 155/117; p. 344, fig. 225, Vimose is wrongly located; p. 439, the description of the mask-appliqué SAVQ is made under the heading of PAO; p. 478, the milieu of the Thorsbjerg bog is written *basiche* instead of the correct *sauren*.

Vol. 7 consists of colour plates with splendid photographs of all the Illerup *Prachtausrüstungen* reproduced at concordant scales: 1:1 the objects; 2:1 the details; 1:4 the reconstructions of the shields. Hence this volume combines an art catalogue with a true archaeological book.

To conclude, the Illerup finds are stupendous, the excavation was impeccably executed and this section of the monograph, the same as the preceding ones, is both indispensable and invaluable. It is a work of reference very well produced which should provide a model for the publication of the largest assemblages of offered items and one has to thank the authors for their effort to deal in an exemplary way with such a large amount of information.