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Εξαρτήματα ιπποσκευής από το πριγκιπάτο της Αχαίας (1205-1428)

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RIDING EQUIPMENT
FROM THE PRINCIPALITY OF ACHAEA (1205-1428)

The use of the horse in pre-industrial societies improved a series of human activities, including production processes, transportation, and military activities. Recent excavations at two important sites in the Principality of Achaia (1205-1428), the castles of Chlemoutsi and Glarentza in Western Peloponnese, revealed a significant collection of riding equipment. The collection consists mainly of spurs for the citizens of Glarentza who held the status of knight, as well as horseshoes for war horses and pack animals.

Keywords
Frankish period, horses, spurs, horseshoes, Western Peloponnese, Chlemoutsi, Glarentza, Principality of Achaia.

The Principality of Achaia was the largest of a series of states formed in Greece after the Fourth Crusade in 1204, which resulted in the sack of Constantinople by the knights of Western Europe. The castles of Chlemoutsi and Glarentza, which were constructed in the 13th century at the westernmost tip of the Peloponnese, were the Principality's administrative and economic centres (Figs 1, 2).

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Fig. 1. The castle of Chlemoutsi, aerial photograph.

Fig. 2. The castle of Glarentza, aerial photograph.
In the 13th century, when the Principality was run by the Villehardouin family from Champagne, the court of Achaea, described as “nova francia”, was thought by the contemporary Westerners to capture the chivalric ideas that are reflected in the main written source of that period, the Chronicle of Morea, a verse narrative about the conquest of the Byzantine Peloponnesse by the Franks, which survives in four language versions. According to the information drawn mainly from the Chronicle, the cavalry was a key part of the Principality’s Frankish army. Additional data derived from sigillography indicate that horses symbolised the strength and dominance of its ruling class (Fig. 3).

Horse equipment during the Late Middle Ages included direction and control gear (mouthpiece, bridles, spurs), gear used by the rider (saddle, stirrups), protective gear for the animal (armour) as well as various decorative elements (fittings, bells). The horse’s gear entailed a great cost. Leather and iron were the most preferred materials and were used in different variations depending on the economic strength of the horse’s owner. Precious metals, which may be suggested by the iconography or referred to in sources, were not found in the excavations, meaning that they were most probably recycled. The use of various metal objects (buckles, fittings, bells, rings, decorative mounts) which may be connected to the horse’s equipment as well as to the rider’s attire, is also difficult to determine.

The excavations that took place between 2000 and 2005 in the castles Glarentza and Chlemoutsi by the Archaeological Service of the Greek Ministry of Culture, under the supervision of the archaeologist Dr. Demetrios Athansoulis revealed, amongst other things, a set of objects associated with the gear and control of the horses, hence confirming the close relationship that medieval knights had with them, also established from the chivalric romances of the time.

The finds included sets of spurs, spur buckles and fittings excavated from the funerary ensembles of the

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Chronicle of Morea, op.cit. (n. 4), ver. 858, 1069, 1145.


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Glarentza cathedral, from a pottery depository found at the eastern gate of the city as well as from the site of its fort (Fig. 2). Spurs and additional fittings are dating from the late 13th to the early 15th century, as established by the excavation context and the secondary finds mainly coins and pottery shards. Most horse-shoes were excavated from the inner enclosure of the Chlemoutsi castle (Fig. 1). However, no information could be drawn regarding the horses’ armour, probably because of the main use of organic materials which were more suitable in hot climates.

The use of spurs while riding was ancillary and is linked to the growing use of horses and the finalisation of saddlery equipment by the 9th century. During the Late Middle Ages, in addition to serving the practical needs of the rider, spurs indicated social status and, if clad with gold, were also seen as chivalric symbols. The raising of the stirrups, which were not yet set in the 9th century, was needed for the horseman to enjoy a good view of the enemy. The stirrups were already supported by the saddle pommel. By the 10th century, spurs were already set and the stirrups and saddle pommel were already aligned. Spur sockets were already linked to the stirrups, and only the copper ones were still used, while the bronze ones only appeared in the 11th century.

Iron spurs, today in the Byzantine Museum of Athens, were excavated from the medieval site of Akra’inon in Boeotia, Greece, and are dated to the end of the 13th century. By Kolias, «Αρχαίος Πόλεως Μεσαιωνικό κάστρο» (n. 7), 136. Iron spur, today in the Byzantine Museum of Athens, was excavated from the medieval site of Akra’inon in Boeotia, Greece, and is dated to the end of the 13th century. Ch. Kolias, «Αρχαίος Πόλεως Μεσαιωνικό κάστρο», n. 7, 136. According to the Chronicle of Morea the rival troops were striking the enemy with spurs originating from several sites of Western Europe appear of modest dimensions, rather thin, with deeply curved sides and small rows. See G. Masson, «Horse Management in Medieval Ranaissance Italy», Country Life Annual 1952, 188. B. A. Ellis, «Spurs and spur fittings», The Medieval Horse and its Equipment, ed. J. Clark, (Medieval Finds from Excavations in London, London 1995 (repr. Woodbridge 2004), 128. N. Morgan, Early Gothic Manuscripts (1) 1190-1250. A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, London 1982, 130-133 no. 85, fig. 282. The same type of early rowel spurs was depicted in illuminated manuscripts created in Acre and Lombardy and dating to the last quarter of the 13th century, J. Folk, Crusader Manuscript Illumination at Saint-Jean


12 During the Middle Byzantine period the horses were protected in the vital parts of their bodies with pieces of felt, iron, leather or horn. J. F. Haklon, «Some Aspects of Byzantine Military Technology from the Sixth to the Tenth Centuries», Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies 1 (1975), 20, 22, 38. T. G. Kolias, Byzantine Waffen. Ein Beitrag zur byzantinischen Waffenkunde von den Anfängen bis zur letztenen Eisenzeit (Byzantina Vindobonensia 17), Vienna 1988, 51-55 1d, «The Horse in the Byzantine World», Le cheval dans les sociétés antiques et médiévales, ed. S. Lazaris, (Bibliothèque de l’Antiquité tardive 22), Paris 2012, 92 Babuin, «Σπόροι», op.cit. (n. 7), 139. According to the Chronicle of Morea the rival troops were striking the enemy with spurs originating from several sites of Western Europe appear of modest dimensions, rather thin, with deeply curved sides and small rows. See G. Masson, «Horse Management in Medieval Ranaissance Italy», Country Life Annual 1952, 188. B. A. Ellis, «Spurs and spur fittings», The Medieval Horse and its Equipment, ed. J. Clark, (Medieval Finds from Excavations in London, London 1995 (repr. Woodbridge 2004), 128. N. Morgan, Early Gothic Manuscripts (1) 1190-1250. A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, London 1982, 130-133 no. 85, fig. 282. The same type of early rowel spurs was depicted in illuminated manuscripts created in Acre and Lombardy and dating to the last quarter of the 13th century, J. Folk, Crusader Manuscript Illumination at Saint-Jean


14 A set of twelve spurs, recovered primarily from burial layers in the graves of Glarentza, are important examples of riders’ gear and demonstrate that the graves of the cathedral were intended for the members of the Principality’s upper classes who had attained the status of knighthood. These spurs were mostly made of gilded iron (Figs 4, 5). Two intact copper alloy samples were also found (Figs 6, 7).

All the excavated spurs are variants of the same type, with a revolving six-point or eight-point rowel, a type which according to the information gathered so far, was found in Greece by the end of the 13th century onwards. The iron spurs are a little smaller compared to the copper ones, with a length ranging from 11.3 cm to 12.65 cm and a plate thickness of 1.2 to 1.8 cm. The respective bronze ones have an average length of 14.2 cm and are thinner, with an average plate thickness of 0.7 cm. Almost all of them have copper fittings (hooks)
and small buckles that attach them to the rider’s shoes (Figs 4, 6-13).

Regarding the spurs found in Glarentza, it can be traced a typological development in the way the strap was attached, which also constitutes a chronological evolution. More precisely, from the end of the 13th to the mid 14th century, the spur shanks ended in a circular and a rectangular hole respectively (Figs 4, 5). Two small rivet attachments joined to the circular hole (Figs 4, 12). The attachment located on the exterior side of the foot, retained the leather strap. The strap went around the rider’s footwear, passed through the rectangular hole of the other shank and fastened with a buckle. The buck-

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d’Acre, 1275-1291, Princeton 1976, 188-192 no. 10, 199-200 no. 19, figs 71, 188.
le was suspended from the second rivet attachment of the circular hole. The majority of the iron spurs from Glarentza was of that particular kind, and could hence be dated from the late 13th century (Figs 4, 5).

However, from the mid 14th century onwards, most spurs had two leather straps, passing over and under the footwear of the rider and joined themselves to the shanks with separate rivet attachments. This marked a change in the edges of the shanks, each of which now included two small holes alongside one another (Figs 6, 7). The one hole restrained the small buckle. Intact bronze spurs of Glarentza fall in this category, hence indicating that they date from the mid 14th century.

Predominantly iron rowel spurs are often found in excavations in the Eastern Mediterranean dating from the late 13th century onwards. Gold-plated and decorated spurs were an indispensable complement to the upper class, making attire during the Late Middle Ages and are depicted in various forms of art.

88 Ellis, «Spurs», op.cit. (n. 15), 127-130, fig. 95, 133-134 no. 323, fig. 91.
91 The rowel spur can be traced in the art of the Angevin kingdom of Naples as well as the regions of the Greek peninsula under Latin occupation, by the first third of the 14th century. J. Ward Perkins, «Some Fourteenth Century Neapolitan Military Effigies», Papers of the British School at Rome 24 (1956), 172, pl. 16
92 Ellis, «Spurs», op.cit. (n. 15), 127-130, fig. 95, 133-134 no. 323, fig. 91.
95 The rowel spur can be traced in the art of the Angevin kingdom of Naples as well as the regions of the Greek peninsula under Latin occupation, by the first third of the 14th century. J. Ward Perkins, «Some Fourteenth Century Neapolitan Military Effigies», Papers of the British School at Rome 24 (1956), 172, pl. 16

Fig. 8. Glarentza, from the graves of the cathedral. Spur buckle, copper, late 13th – early 15th century, drawing (Inv. Number: HM484).

Fig. 9. St. Nicholas at Trianta, from the graves of the nave. Spur buckle, copper, late 13th – early 15th century, drawing (Inv. Number: HM489.β).
In most cases, individual small buckles and rivet attachments, which served to fasten the spur to the rider’s footwear, were also found together with the spurs. The buckles excavated at the Glarentza cathedral are all made of copper and are a variation of a simple type with an elongated attachment shank and a circular or oval frame on which a thin pin is attached (Figs 7-10). The larger buckles usually have rectangular attachment shanks which are fastening to the leather straps through pins or hooks.

Spur equipment also includes the different strap attachments, which fall into two categories: those that join the spurs’ metal shanks to the straps (Figs 4, 11, 12), and those that are placed at the end of the leather strap to protect it from getting worn out (Fig. 13).

The simple typology and the strong similarity observed between most of the copper spur attachments that were excavated at Glarentza, along with the need to immediately repair those objects that were of great practical utility, leads us to the assumption that the simplest among the rivet attachments could have been produced locally. Gilded iron spurs from the same funerary ensembles of the cathedral must have come from the same workshop, as well as the buckles and the attachments associated with them. The buckles and the fastening accessories with rosette decoration possibly belong to the same pair of spurs (Figs 10, 12).

By the first decade of the 15th century, the neck of the rowel spurs starts to become longer and thinner.20

The long neck of the rowel spurs was probably meant to help in the control of the armored horses, as it could slip under the joints of the armor, Dictionary of the Middle Ages, 3, «Cavalry, European» (C. M. Gillmor). R. Emmerson, «Design for mass production: monumental brasses made in London ca. 1420-1485», Artistes, artisans et production artistique au Moyen Âge, Colloque international, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Université de Rennes II - Haute-Bretagne, 2-6 mai 1983, ed. X. Barraut, III, Paris 1990, fig. 20-23, 25. Εἰρηναῖον Εἴρηνα, Εἰρήνη καὶ Ημέρας στο Βυζάντιο, Η Πολιτεία του Μυστρά, Μυστράς, 2011.


Although more practical spurs with short necks also existed during that period, the absence of spurs with long necks in the burial layers of Glarentza is an additional clue which establishes their upper date limit maximum circa 1400, evidence which coincides with the historical inference regarding the town’s decline during the first quarter of the 15th century.

Iron horseshoes adapted with nails to protect the horse’s hoof, were an important innovation allowing for a safer tread on uneven ground and thus improving travelling conditions, allowing heavier cargo to be carried at a greater distance, increasing performance in agricultural activities and ensuring greater security when conducting military operations. The first reference to the use of iron horseshoes is made in an anonymous military handbook of the 6th century Byzantine period, although their use became widespread during the 9th century.

Twelve horseshoes that came mostly from excavation sections at the castles of Chlemoutsi and Glarentza are divided in two categories based on their typology. The first category includes compact «oriental type» horseshoes, used until recently in Greece for the shoeing of mules (Fig. 14). Similar horseshoes, dating from the 9th century onwards, originated in Greece and the Balkans. Semicircular horseshoes, used on horses, were much more widespread (Figs 15-18). The subsidiary pottery finds allow us to date them from the late 13th to the early 15th century.

In the eastern Mediterranean, during the Late Middle Ages, we come across a type of semicircular horseshoe of rectangular section, made of heavy iron plate. At least two attachment holes are arranged along the shanks. These horseshoes often had thicker or fold-


ed edges which formed a heel at the back of the hoof, hence facilitating the animal’s gait, an element which was used progressively less after the end of the Middle Ages. Similar horseshoes were found at the same time The Vršac Castle, Belgrade 2009, fig. 49.1-2. Horseshoes of similar typology with those from Elis province were found during excavation works in two locational sites under the administration of the Duchy of Athens, Kolákov, «Αχαϊα», op.cit. (n. 14), 106-108, pl. 6b. S. E. J. Gerstel – M. Munn – H. E. Grossman – E. Barnes – A. H. Rohn – M. Kid, «A Late Medieval Settlement at Panakton», Hesperia 72/2 (2003), 147-234, 165 no. 25, fig. 14. 26 Rosen, «Ḥorbat Bet Zeneta», op.cit. (n. 25), 100 fig. 30.10-11. 3. Clark, The Medieval Horse and its Equipment c. 1150-1450 (Medieval Finds from Excavations in London 5), London 1995 (repr. Woodbridge 2004), 75-123, 87, 89. D. Rabovyanov, Archaeological Studies in the Southern Section of Trapezitsa, 1: The Medieval Town, Veliko Turnovo 2015, 614-616 no. 1470, 1479-1486, 1503-1508, 1524, 1534. 27 D. Jacoby, «Aspects of Everyday Life in Frankish Acre», Crusades 4 (2005), 92 and n. 96. in Western Europe, forming a group whose typology is characteristic of the Late Middle Ages.

The horseshoes of the Frankish sites in the prefecture of Achaea in Western Europe, forming a group whose typology is characteristic of the Late Middle Ages.
of Elis that have survived almost intact can give us some indication as regards the size of the horses that were used. However, these conclusions should be treated with caution, as studies on modern horses have proven that there is no distinct proportion between the height of the horse and the size of their hoof. Pack-horses with a bigger build usually have larger hooves than those of taller riding horses\(^1\). With these facts in mind, we observe that the maximum width of the opening in the aforementioned horseshoes ranges from 8.1 to 14 cm, with an average of 10.87 cm (Figs 15-18). Measurements taken from contemporary horses, which are roughly between 1.52 and 1.68 meters tall, showed that the width of their hooves is around 12 to 14 cm, leading to the conclusion that only larger-sized medieval horseshoes could meet the needs of a typical modern horse\(^2\). Consequently, most medieval horses must not have been taller than 1.50 m. The measurements of horseshoes used by the Franks in the prefecture of Elis support similar experimental finds, leading to the conclusion that the medieval horse would be considered, based on current data, relatively small.

The adaptation of saddlery equipment comprises buckles and fittings usually made of iron. Two finds from the castle of Chlemoutsi were probably used to secure the leather harness that crossed the horse’s belly and chest.

An iron buckle stands out because of its large dimensions and, according to the subsidiary pottery finds, dates from the late 13th-14th century (Fig. 19). The identification of the buckle’s use as a probable piece of saddlery equipment is mainly based on its dimensions but also on the material from which it is made. Since Roman period and the Late Middle Ages, works of art depicting riders illustrate how large buckles were used to fasten the saddle straps, passed across the horse’s belly\(^3\). This is relevant in demonstrating the diachronic use of riding equipment that adequately covered functional needs and become standardized.

Another hasp, made of a rectangular section iron plate, is roughly triangular in shape with bevelled corners (Fig. 20). It served as sliding clasp, ensuring flexibility in adjusting leather straps or hooks while the horse was in motion\(^4\).

Riding was, among other things, an element of social

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\(^2\) Ibid, 29-32, 97-100.


distinction and as a result the Frankish upper classes spent large amounts of money for the purchase and maintenance of horses\textsuperscript{12}. Hunting activities and chivalric contests (joust and tournament) were part of the court's etiquette and complemented every major celebration\textsuperscript{12}.

The war horses used by the knights of the Principality fall into two categories. Firstly, imported European horses that were tall, strong and corpulent, in comparison with eastern standards, and which were renowned for their aggression and stamina\textsuperscript{12}. According to the Chronicle of Morea, during the battle of Prinitsa, in 1263, the Frank commander, Jean de Catavas, raised the spirits of his troops by claiming that their horses equalled fifteen Byzantine horses\textsuperscript{15}. The element of exaggeration demonstrates the crucial role played by horses during that period in respect to the outcome of a battle.

However, the passing of time affected the Principality's lightly-armed horsemen, whose equipment and organisation was, according to the limited data available, similar to the one used by the Muslim cavalry of the Middle East and the Byzantine cavalry. These corps probably used indigenous flexible, medium-sized and strong horses, which cost less to purchase and train compared to European horses\textsuperscript{16}. Finally, horses of medium size as well as mules and donkeys were indispensable in all transportation activities.

Throughout the 13th century, the Principality of Achaea imported horses and horseshoes from the suzerain kingdom of Naples, as domestic breeding was not sufficient to meet supply needs. In the archives of the Anjou rulers of Naples many references are made to the transportation of war horses and pack-animals from southern Italy to Glarentza, and these increase considerably in the last decade of the 13th century\textsuperscript{17}. Furthermore, Charles I of Anjou (1267-1285), following a well-established tradition in the French kingdom as well as in Sicily, created horse-breeding farms in the Principality of Achaea\textsuperscript{18}. Besides, in the fertile plains of Andrivida, the breeding of horses, widely known from the Byzantine period, has been a timeless occupation.


The daily cost of living of a horse was particularly high and it can be compared with the daily food consumption of four manual workers. B. S. Bachrach, «Animals and Warfare in Early Medieval Europe», L'Uomo di fronte al mondo animale nell'alto medioevo (Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo 31), Spoleto 1985, 718-719, 750 A. Karpoullis, «Realtà in Bizantino Epistolography XIII-XV c.», BIZ 88 (1995), 69-70.

\textsuperscript{13} Chronicle of Morea, op. cit. (n. 4), ver. 2409, ver. 3368-3369.


\textsuperscript{15} Le voyage d'Outremer de Bertrand de la Broquière, ed. Ch. Schefef (Recueil de voyages et de documents pour servir à l'histoire de la géographie XII), Paris 1892, 62.

\textsuperscript{16} «Τὰ ἄλλα βαράντο έχουν, ἀλλὰ ὁμοιότατα εἶναι, ἐνὸς φιλίου μας ἐφὶ φιλίαν μετὰ ἄλλων ἄλλων», Chronicle of Morea, op. cit. (n. 4), ver. 4729-4730.

\textsuperscript{17} Actes relatifs à la Principauté de Morée 1289-1300, eds C. Perrat – J. Longnon, Paris 1967, 55 no. 45-46, 64 no. 58, 77 no. 77, 90 no. 85, 126 no. 132.


\textbf{Provenance of figures}

Figs 1, 2: Athanasoulis, «The Triangle of Power», op. cit. (n. 2). Fig. 3: Schlumberger – Chalandon – Blanchet, Sigillographie, op. cit. (n. 6), pl. XX1.2. Figs 4a, 6, 15, 19, 20: Eleni Barmparitsa. Figs 4b, 5, 7-14, 16-18: Archaeological drawings by Aca Djordjević.
Το κάστρο Χλεμούτσι και Πλαρέντζα, κτισμένα κατά τον 13ο αιώνα στο δυτικότερο άκρο της Πελοποννήσου (Εικ. 1, 2), αποτέλεσαν για δύο περίπου αιώνες το διοικητικό και οικονομικό κέντρο του Πριγκιπάτου της Αχαΐας (1205-1428).

Κατά τον 13ο αιώνα, όταν τη διοίκηση του Πριγκιπάτου ασκούσε η οικογένεια των Βιλλε αρ δουίνων από την Καμπανία, η αυλή της Αχαΐας θεωρείτο ότι εξέφραζε τον επιπλέον προορισμό του Φραγκικού στρατού του Πριγκιπάτου και σύμβολο δύναμης και εξουσίας της άρχουσας τάξης του (Εικ. 3).

Δύο δέκα επιχειρήσεις που προέκυψαν κυρίως από ανασκαφικές θέσεις κατά το διάστημα 2000-2005, στα κάστρα Πλαρέντζα και Χλεμούτσι (Εικ. 1, 2), από την τότε 6η Εφορεία Βυζαντινών Αρχαιοτήτων, επέλεξε στον επιπλέον προορισμό του Φραγκικού στρατού του Πριγκιπάτου και σύμβολο δύναμης και εξουσίας της άρχουσας τάξης του (Εικ. 3).

Τα ευρήματα περιλαμβάνουν, μεταξύ άλλων, ομάδες σπιρουνιών, πετάλων, πορπών και συνδέσμων και χρονολογούνται από τα τέλη του 13ου αιώνα (Εικ. 4-20).

Τα σπιρούνια αυτά ήταν στην πλειονότητά τους από σίδηρο επιχρυσωμένο (Εικ. 4, 5). Υπάρχουν επίσης και δύο ακέραια δείγματα από κράματα χαλκού (Εικ. 6, 7). Όλα τα σπιρούνια ανήκουν σε παραλλαγές του ίδιου τύπου με περιπλέκοντας επιχρυσωμένες σελήνες.

Δώδεκα σπιρούνια που ανασύρθηκαν κυρίως από στρώματα ταφών στο εσωτερικό του καθεδρικού της Γλαρέντζας, πιστοποιούν ότι οι νεκροί ήταν μέλη των ανώτερων κοινωνικών τάξεων του Πριγκιπάτου και είχαν την ιδιότητα του ιπποτή. Τα σπιρούνια αυτά ήταν στην πλειονότητά τους από σίδηρο επιχρυσωμένο (Εικ. 4, 5). Υπάρχουν επίσης και δύο ακέραια δείγματα από κράματα χαλκού (Εικ. 6, 7). Όλα τα σπιρούνια ανήκουν σε παραλλαγές του ίδιου τύπου με περιπλέκοντας επιχρυσωμένες σελήνες.

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