

“DOUBLE-BEAKED” EARLY MEDIAEVAL WAR HAMMERS FROM BULGARIA¹

Stoyan Popov

Abstract: *The article is devoted to one of the lines of development of war hammers in the early Middle Ages. These are weapons in which two opposing beaks protrude from the sleeve. The present work introduces 5 more exemplars into scientific circulation. The new artifacts are stored in the Vatevi collection in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. The information about their location is limited to the region of Northeastern Bulgaria. The weapons found in the Avar necropolises from Central Europe are the basis of the simplest type I and date back to the second half of 7th – early 9th century. Next are the representatives of type I, found on Bulgarian territory, but with more complicated structure (downward beaks and sleeves with vertical ears). They can be placed within the 9th– early 10th century. Next are the warhammers with intermediate characteristics of type I / II. Type II hammers have a larger curve of the beaks, several types of embossed ornaments and different shapes of the impact part of the beak. These additional characteristics are probably a further development of the Bulgarian type I. Based on a purely logical basis, the author assumes that type II war hammers can be attributed to the 10th century.*

Keywords: *blunt weapons, early mediaeval war hammers, double-beaked war hammers.*

War hammers are part of the armament of the warriors who inhabited Central and Eastern Europe. Their distribution covers the huge period between 7th – 17th c.

As mentioned elsewhere (Popov 2021: 218 – 219), there are three directions in the development of war hammers. The first (but not in chronological order) direction consists of weapons in which on one side of the sleeve for the wooden handle comes a curved pointed beak with various sections, and on the other side there is a hammer-shaped striking part. These war hammers were used during the period 15th – 17th c. (Popov

2012). The other two lines of development occupy the first centuries of the Middle Ages (7th – 11th c.). One is represented by weapons, designated in the Romanian scientific literature as “Danube type axes”, and in the Bulgarian – “spear-shaped war hammers” and is placed in the chronological segment of the 10th – 11th c. (Blăjan, Stoicovici 1980: 179 – 181; Йотов 2004: 106 – 107; Ciupercă, Mirea 2015: 167 – 178; Băcuț-Crișan, Băcuț-Crișan: 2017: 557 – 564; Popov 2021).

The next direction of development of the war hammers consists of weapons in which two opposite beaks protrude from the sleeve (Йотов

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2004: 106). The body of the beaks of the specimens I know has a multi-walled (eight-walled) section. The beaks end in prismatic-multi-walled or biconical-multi-walled striking parts. The present work is dedicated to the hammers of this line of development, introducing 5 more specimens into scientific circulation. The new artifacts are stored in the Vatevi collection in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. The information about their location is limited to the region of Northeastern Bulgaria. Thus, as far as I know so far from publications, the number of these weapons on the territory of modern Bulgaria becomes 8.

An attempt to classify these weapons was made by the Hungarian researcher F. Szücsi, who considered only the first early medieval type (according to the numbering given here) – double-beaked hammers without ornamentation. He examines them together with axes and ax-hammers, typologically according to the shape of the percussion parts and the sleeve. According to its typology, the war hammers considered here are denoted by V-G-V and V-G-I, where V denotes the beak – slightly curved downwards, with a rounded percussion part, with I – horizontal beak, with a straight cut percussion part; with G is marked a sleeve with a rectangular profile, without vertical ears (Szücsi 2010: 128). These

weapons appeared in Central Europe on the territory of the Avar Haganate in the Middle Avar period – towards the end of 7th – beginning of 8th c. They spread until the end of 8th – beginning of 9th c., and originated from Avar graves (Szücsi 2013 – 2014: 133).

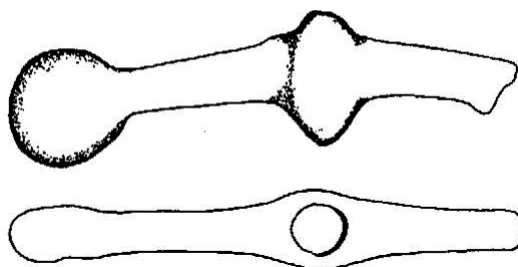
To the thus distinguished features of the war hammers from the territory of the Avar Haganate, namely straight or slightly curved undecorated beaks with a multi-walled cross-section; spherical percussion parts and sleeves without ears, the characteristics of hammers originating in Bulgaria must be added. All weapons of this type known to me, found in today's Bulgarian lands, have bent down beaks and sleeves that have vertical ears. Of the “Bulgarian” specimens – 6 have a relief decoration of the beaks (cat. № 1, 2, 3, 4; Abritus (Ill. 1), Northeastern Bulgaria (Ill. 2) (Йотов 2004: обр. 58, кат. №№ 641, 642, табл. LIII)), 2 are without such decoration (cat. № 5; Ruino (Ill. 3) (Йотов 2004: кат. № 640, табл. LIII)). At 4, the percussion part is shaped like a dodecahedron (cat. № 1, 3; Abritus; Northeastern Bulgaria (Йотов 2004: обр. 58, кат. №№ 641, 642, табл. LIII)), at 2 it is a spherical polyhedron/bipyramidal rounded polyhedron (cat. №4, 5), at 1 – disc-shaped (Ruino (Йотов 2004: кат. № 640, табл. LIII)), and at 1 – a sphere (cat. № 2).



Ill. 1. War hammer. Abritus.
After V. Yotov, cat. No 641.



Ill. 2. War hammer. Northeastern Bulgaria.
After V. Yotov, cat. No 642.



Ill. 3. War hammer. Ruino. After V. Yotov, cat. No 640.

Another feature characteristic of the considered war hammers, originating from the territory of present-day Bulgaria, is the presence of decoration. It is located on the surface of the beak of the weapon. In 3 of the specimens, the beaks are separated from the sleeve by a vertical, embossed, rounded line (cat. № 1, 3, 4). The next type of decoration of the beaks is embossed rings with different layouts. The first type of ring is rectangular, flanked on both sides by a smaller ring with a rounded surface. We see such decoration in 2 hammers (cat. № 1, Northeastern Bulgaria (Йотов 2004: обр. 58, кат. № 642, табл. LIII)). In the first, the ring is located next to the sleeve, and in the second – near the impact part of the beak. The decoration of 2866 is similar, but the middle ring is shaped like 8-walled truncated pyramids adjoined to their big bases. This decoration occupies the surface of the beaks near the impact part. These condtype of ring-shaped decoration of the beaks consists of one ring with a rounded surface. This can be seen in two of the "Bulgarian" specimens (cat. № 2; Abritus (Йотов 2004: обр. 58, кат. № 641, табл. LIII)). In both hammers, these rings are located in the middle of the beaks. Embossed rounded rings separate the percussion multi-walled part of some hammers from the rest of the beak. There are such at 15 and 2866.

Based on the published findings, two types of war hammers can be distinguished from this direction of development. The first type is characterized by simply modeled, without embossed ornaments, beaks. The percussionparts are shaped as bipyramidal multi-walled widenings with rounded impact surfaces (cat. № 5, graves 170 and 616 from the Zelovce necropolis (Szentpéteri 1985: abb. 3; abb. 7), grave 3 from the Bóly necropolis (Szücsi 2010: 3. ábra 8), grave 192 from the Mosonszentjános necropolis (Szücsi 2013 – 2014: II. tábla: 3)) or disc-shaped (Ruino(Йотов 2004: кат. № 640, табл. LIII)). The second type of war hammers are characterized by embossed beaks. The percussion parts are an

elongated dodecahedron with a rounded percussion surface (cat. №1, 3; Abritus; Northeastern Bulgaria (Йотов 2004: обр. 58, кат. №№ 641, 642, табл. LIII)). There are also two specimens that combine the characteristics of the two types, which can be considered to be a transitional type (cat. № 2, 4).

Regarding the origin of these war hammers, I believe that there is no doubt about their Avar roots. More problematic are their possible dating of the individual types and the ways of occurrence in the lands of present-day Bulgaria. The characteristics of hammers, in my opinion, can point indirectly to presumed chronological boundaries. The questioned weapons found in the Avar necropolises of Central Europe are the basis of the simplest type I and date from the second half of the 7th – beginning of the 9th century (Szücsi 2013 – 2014: 133). Next are the representatives of type I, found on Bulgarian territory, which, however, have a slightly more complicated lay-out (downward-pointing beaks and sleeves with vertical ears). In my opinion, they can be placed within the 9th – early 10th c., based on the dating of the hammer from Ruino (Йотов 2004: 107; Атанасов 2000: 185, кат. № 40, табл. XII-40) and the alleged weapon from grave 10 of the necropolis in Kecskemét (Hungary) (Hampel 1905: 636; Hampel 1905a: Taf. 423/5). The hammers with intermediate characteristics of type I/ II follow. Type II hammers have a more complex shape – a larger curve of the beaks, several types of embossed ornaments and different shapes of the percussion part of the beak. These additional features, in my opinion, are a further development of type I. Based on a purely logical basis, I assume that type II war hammers can be attributed to the 10th c. (Table I). This assumption, however, is only a working one and needs to be confirmed or rejected, which can be done with the acquisition of new finds from dated complexes.

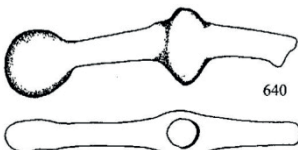



At this stage of the state of the research, the available information does not allow to make assumptions about the appearance of the consid-

ered weapons in today's Bulgarian lands. Perhaps the way of penetration should be sought in the contacts with the Avar Haganate and the role of the Bulgarian state in its end. Whether the first specimens penetrated our lands as booty from the border clashes or with the accommodation of some small Avar population on the territory of the Bulgarian Khanate cannot be said. Information about allied military relations of the Bulgarian state with Avar contingents can be found in historical sources². Both records are about the beginning of the 9th century, during the reign of Khan Krum. The first is in the Anonymous Vatican Narrative (ГИБИ 1961: 13) and is related to the battle in the Varbishi Pass on July 26,





811. Then "the Bulgarians hired the Avars for a salary." The second record is related to the great campaign prepared by Khan Krum against Constantinople in the spring of 814. Scriptor incertus says that: "then he was informed by hearsay that Krum had set out on a campaign, gathering a large army – both the Avars and all the Slavs." (ГИБИ 1961a: 23).

In my opinion, with a slightly greater dose of certainty and the need for more reliable evidence, it can be assumed that this line of battle hammers received further development after its disappearance from the Central European lands, on the territory of the First Bulgarian State in 9th – 10th c.

Table. I. *Early medieval double-beaked war hammers from the territory of present-day Bulgaria*

TYPE	ILLUSTRATION	DATING	FINDING PLACE/PLACE OF KEEPING/LITERATURE
I		9 th – beginning of 10 th c.	Ruino/Атанасов, Г. Клады земледельческих орудий из Южной Добруджи (X – начало XI вв.). – Stratum plus, 5, 2000, табл. X-41. Йотов, В. Въоръжението и снаряжението от българското средновековие (VII – XI в.). Велико Търново, 2004, с. 106 – 107.
		9 th – beginning of 10 th c.	North-eastern Bulgaria/Vatevi collection, Plovdiv, Bulgaria
I/II		9 th – 10 th c.	North-eastern Bulgaria/Vatevi collection, Plovdiv, Bulgaria
		9 th – 10 th c.	North-eastern Bulgaria/Vatevi collection, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

² I thank my colleague Assoc. Prof. Dimitar Dimitrov, PhD for the consultation on this issue.

II		10 th c.	Abritus/Historical museum – Razgrad, Bulgaria/ Йотов, В. Въръжението и снаряжението от българското средновековие (VII – XI век). Велико Търново, 2004, с. 106 – 107.
		10 th c.	North-eastern Bulgaria/Archaeological museum – Varna, Bulgaria/ Йотов, В. Въръжението и снаряжението от българското средновековие (VII – XI век). Велико Търново, 2004, с. 106 – 107.
		10 th c.	North-eastern Bulgaria/Vatevi collection, Plovdiv, Bulgaria
		10 th c.	North-eastern Bulgaria/Vatevi collection, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

CATALOGUE

1. Inv. № 15

War hammer. Double-beaked. The sleeve has strongly pointed, close to a triangle ears, protruding above and below, limited from the beaks with embossed vertical edges. The beaks are in the shape of an octagonal prism. In the middle and the second half they have three embossed rings. The beaks are directed slightly downwards. Finish with a 12-wall widening (dodecahedron). The hole of the sleeve is round.

Total length 18 cm; beaks width x height at the sleeve 1.5x1.2 cm; dodecahedron sleeve out. diam. 2.4 cm; int. diam. top x bottom 1.7 – 1.9x1.7 – 1.8 cm

Weight: 188 gr



III. 4. War hammer. Inv. № 15.
Vatevi Collection, Plovdiv

2. Inv. №290612-2

War hammer. Double-beaked. The sleeve has ears protruding from the top and bottom. The beaks are in the shape of an elongated truncated octagonal pyramid. They are directed slightly downwards. They end with a biconical, almost spherical widening. In the middle they have a vertical convex ring. The hole of the sleeve has a flattened-round shape.

Total length 13.8 cm; sleeve width x height out. 2 – 2,1x3,7 cm; Beaks – to widenings long. x height (base-end) x width (base-end) 4.3x1.8 – 1.3x1.8 – 1.3 cm; beaks biconical widening d 2,2x1,8 cm; Sleeve d hole 1.3x1.5 cm

Weight: 206 gr



III. 5. War hammer. Inv. № 290612-2.
Vatevi Collection, Plovdiv

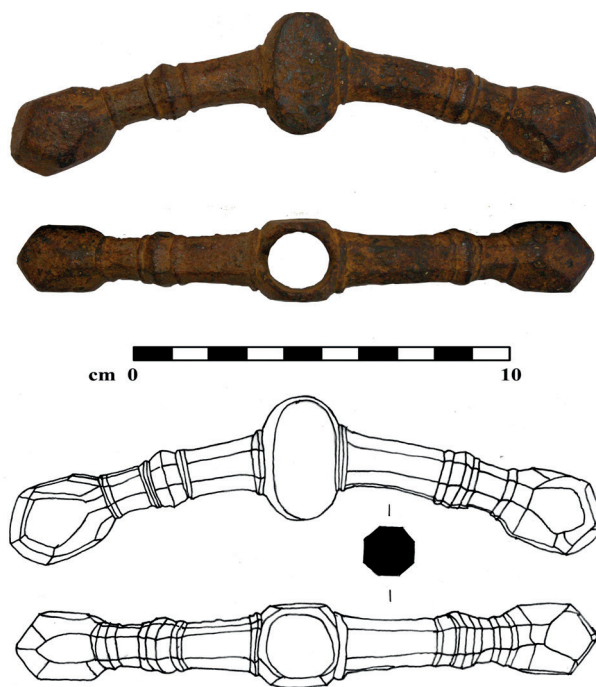
3. Inv. №2866

War hammer. Double-beaked. The sleeve has semicircular ears protruding from the top and bottom, limited from the beaks with embossed indentations. The beaks are in the shape of an

octagonal prism, composed of narrow and wide walls. In the middle they have 8-wall, bipyramidal widenings, ending on both sides with a relief edge. The beaks are directed slightly downwards. Finish with a 12-wall widening (dodecahedron). The hole of the sleeve is round.

Total length 15.3 cm; Sleeve width x height out. 2.1x3 cm; Beaks long. x height x width 6.9 and 7.2x1.3x1.3 cm; beaks walls with width 0.5 cm and 0.7 cm, beaks multi-walled length x height x width 2.7x2x2 cm; Sleeve d hole 1.6 cm

Weight: 210 gr



III. 6. War hammer. Inv. № 2866.
Vatevi Collection, Plovdiv.

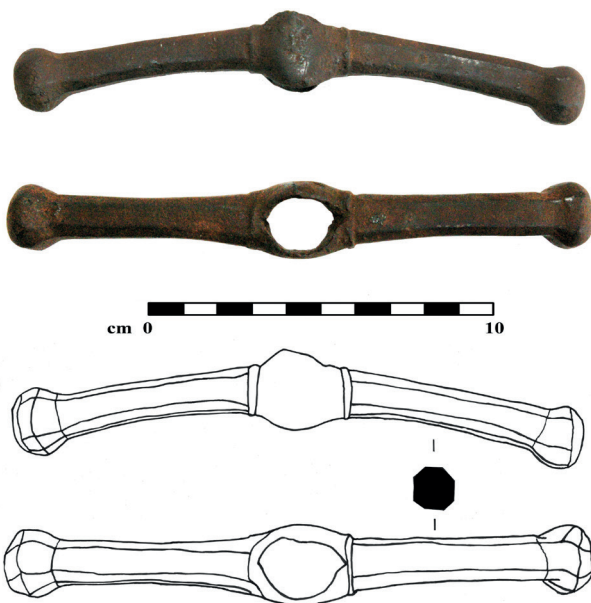
4. Inv. №2795

War hammer. Double-beaked. The sleeve has ears protruding from the top and bottom, limited from the beaks with embossed indentations. The beaks are in the shape of an octagonal prism, composed of narrow and wide walls. They are directed slightly downwards. They end

with a biconical, eight-walled widening. The hole of the sleeve is elliptical in shape.

Total length 15.5 cm; sleeve width x height out 2.9x2.3 cm; Beaks long. x height x width 6.6x1.3x1.3 cm; beaks walls with a width of 0.3 cm and 0.6 cm; Sleeve d hole 1.4x2 cm

Weight: 164 gr



III. 7. War hammer. Inv. № 2795.
Vatevi Collection, Plovdiv.

5. №061011-19

War hammer. Double-beaked. The sleeve has ears protruding from the top and bottom. The beaks are in the shape of an elongated truncated octagonal pyramid. They are directed slightly downwards. One beak ends with a bipyramidal (truncated pyramids) widening, and the other with a biconical widening. The hole of the sleeve has a flattened-round shape.

Total length 13 cm; sleeve width x height out 2.7x3.2 cm; Beaks to widenings long. x height (base-end) x width (base-end) 3.7x1.4 – 1.2x1.8 – 1.4 cm; beaks widenings –bipyramidal basex height 1.9 – 1.9x1.5 cm; biconical basex height 2 – 2.2x1.7 cm; Sleeve d hole 2x1.9 cm

Weight: 172 gr



III. 8. War hammer. Inv. № 061011-19.
Vatevi Collection, Plovdiv

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Assoc. Prof. PhD Stoyan Popov,
Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv,
stoyan_popov@uni-plovdiv.bg

„ДВУКЛЮННИ“ РАННОСРЕДНОВЕКОВНИ БОЙНИ ЧУКОВЕ ОТ БЪЛГАРИЯ

Стоян Попов

Резюме: Статията е посветена на бойни чукове от Ранното средновековие, при които от втулката излизат два срещулежащи клюна. Настоящата работа въвежда в научно обращение още 5 екземпляра, които се съхраняват в сбирка Ватев в гр. Пловдив, България. Информацията за местонамирането им се ограничава до района на Североизточна България.

Оръжията, откривани в аварските некрополи от Средна Европа, стоят в основата на най-опростения I тип и се датират във втора половина на VII – начало на IX в. Следват представителите на I тип от българска територия, които обаче са с по-усложнено устройство (насочени надолу клюнове и втулки с вертикални уши). Те могат да бъдат поставени в рамките на IX – нач. на X в. Следват чуковете с междинни характеристики от тип I/II. Чуковете от тип II са с по-голяма извивка на клюновете, няколко вида релефни украси и различно оформяне на ударната част. Тези допълнителни характеристики вероятно са по-нататъшно развитие на българския тип I. Стъпвайки на чисто логическа основа, предполагам, че чуковете от тип II могат да бъдат отнесени към X в.

Ключови думи: ударни оръжия, ранносредновековни бойни чукове, двуклюнни бойни чукове.