

## FROM UKRAINE TO THE ISLAND OF SARDINIA (ONCE AGAIN ON THE “SEA PEOPLES”)

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The article is dedicated to the mysterious resemblance between bronze warrior figurines (the *bronzetti*) from the island of Sardinia and Ukrainian finds from the Late Bronze Age. The explanation of this phenomenon is provided within the context of the participation of inhabitants of southern Ukraine in the “Sea Peoples” activity in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as trade contacts between the regions.

I began using the *bronzetti* from the island of Sardinia in my initial works on the relations between the inhabitants of the North Pontic region and the “Sea Peoples” of the Eastern Mediterranean. The analogy was viewed skeptically for a large duration of time, along with the very concept of people of Noua-Sabatynivka participating in the incursions to the Eastern Mediterranean. The situation changed drastically after the discovery of bronze warrior figurines near the Luzhany village in the Chernivtsi region and the city of Odesa. Said figurines are similar to the *bronzetti*, which come from the island of Sardinia.

As I have written before, the peculiar connection between Sardinia and North-Western Pontic region is most likely the result of the small group of “Sea Peoples” migrating to this island after being dismissed from a paid service in the Egyptian army during the Libyan war of Ramesses III. They are the ones who brought to the island the tradition of the *bronzetti*, bearing details of weaponry common among the southern Ukrainian cultures of Late Bronze Age. The Levantine tradition of bronze miniatures could have come to southern Ukraine as early as second millennia BC due to trade

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connections. Within the Noua-Sabatynivka culture, this tradition was adapted, and brought to the Mediterranean during the “Sea Peoples” incursion. In my opinion, such an anabasis of this group of people from southern Ukraine is worthy of further study.

**Keywords:** bronzetti, Sea Peoples, Buh trade route, Noua culture, Sabatynivka culture, island of Sardinia, Bronze Age of Ukraine.

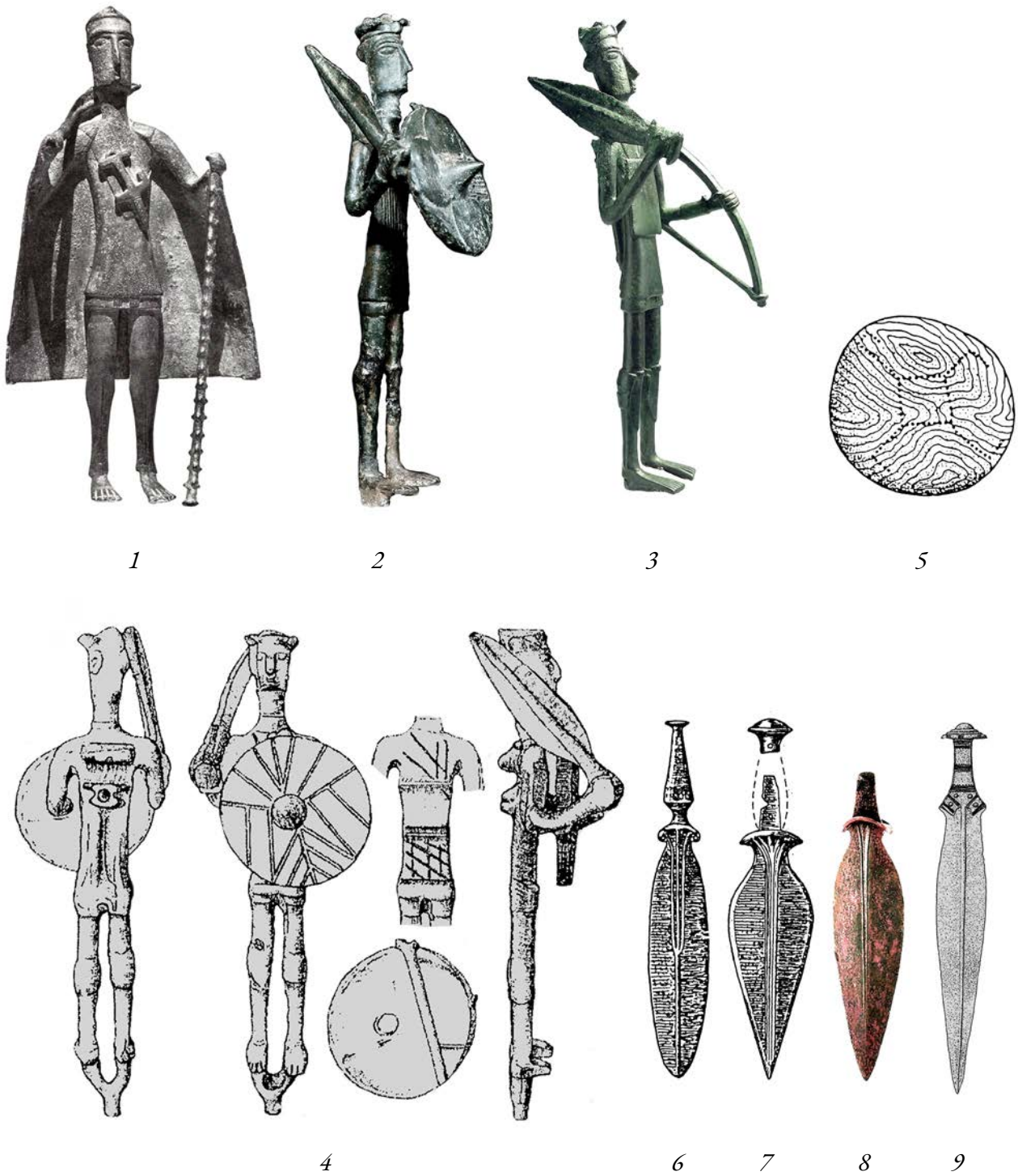
In my initial works, dedicated to the relations between the inhabitants of the North Pontic region and the “Sea Peoples” of Eastern Mediterranean region, I began using the bronze warrior figurines (the bronzetti) from the island of Sardinia as illustrative material (Klochko 1990, 1993, 2001, 2006). For a long period of time my colleagues had been skeptical about such analogies, as well as the very idea of people of Noua-Sabatynivka culture participating in the raids of inhabitants of Central Europe to the Eastern Mediterranean region. The situation changed drastically after the discovery of the warrior figurine (which is similar to the Sardinian bronzetti) near the Luzhany village of Kitsman district of Chernivtsi region (Ilkiv 2007, pp. 244–259; Bandrivskyi 2014, pp. 141–142; Otroshchenko 2018).

The figurine from Luzhany depicts the warrior wearing a helmet and armed with a round shield with a geometrically ornamented umbo in the left hand and short sword with a broad, leaf-shaped blade in the right (Fig. 1, 4). The similarities between this figurine and some of the Sardinian bronzetti (Thimme 1983, Fig. 7; Gonzalez 2012) are peculiar — especially the forms of helmets, shields, and swords (Fig. 1, 1–3). They, in turn, are similar to the weapons of the Noua-

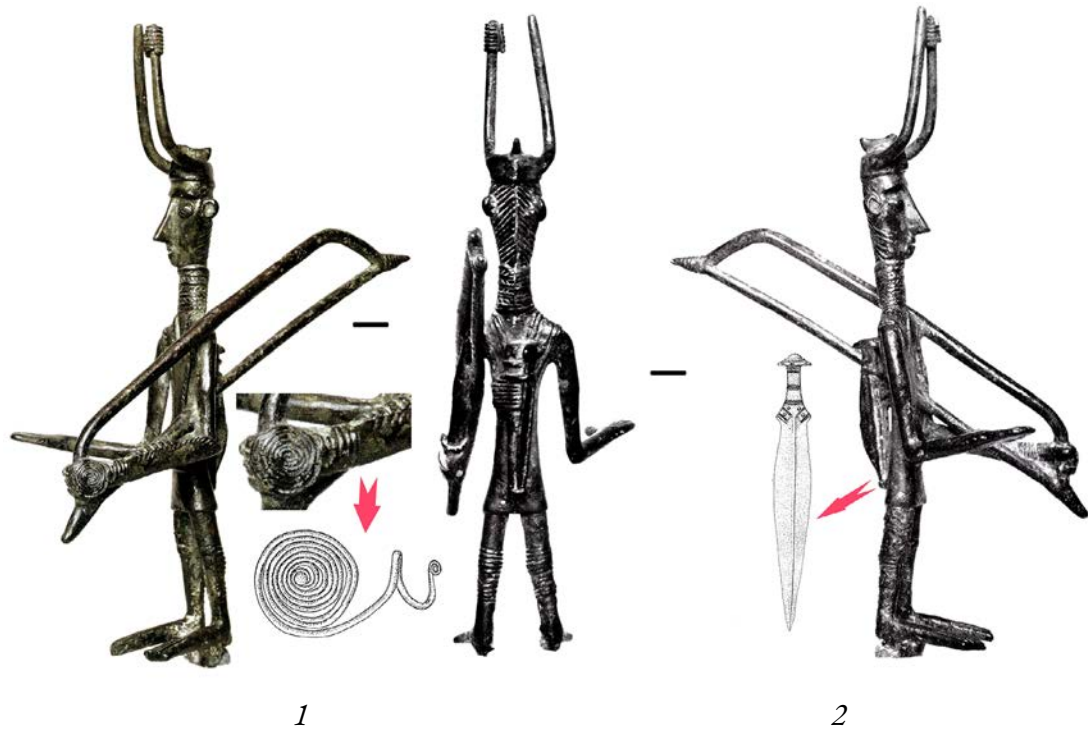
Sabatynivka culture of North-Western Pontic and Carpathian regions. For example, the shield and sword from the Borysivka grave in the Odesa region (Klochko 2001, Fig. 88, 6, 8; Klochko 2006, Fig. 81, 6, 8) and the swords from Ingulets (Klochko 2001, Fig. 85, 6; Klochko 2006, Fig. 80, 6), Kherson 2017 (Klochko 2023, Fig. 4, 1) and Chudlov (Kobal’ 1997–1998, Tafel I: 1–3) hoards (Fig. 1, 5–9).

The circle of such analogies can be broadened. For instance, on the left arm of the archer from Sardinia (Thimme 1983, Nr. 19) (Fig. 2) we see a Carpathian-type armband, and behind the back, near the quiver with arrows – a Carpathian-type sword – both items are similar to the finds from Chudlov hoard in Carpathian region (Kobal’ 1997–1998, Tafel I: 1–3; II, 4). The bronze axe-celt with two eyeholes, found on the island of Sardinia (Thimme 1983, Nr. 72) (Fig. 4, 1) is typical for the cultures of Late Bronze Age in Central and Eastern Ukraine. The axe-celt from Kharkiv region (found 10.02.2019) may serve as one such example (Fig. 4, 2).

During construction work in Odesa in 2021, a bronze figurine of the archer in a horned helmet was found 40 cm underground (Fig. 3, 1). To some extent it resembles the bronzetti from the island of Sardinia



**Fig. 1.** Bronze figurines from Sardinia (1–3) Luzhany village (4), and analogies of Sabatynivka weaponry: the shield from the Borysivka grave (5), and swords from Inhulets (6), Kherson (2017) (7), and the Chudlov (9) hoards



**Fig. 2.** Bronze archer figurine from Sardinia and analogies within Noua-Sabatynivka weaponry: armband (1) and sword (2) from the Chudlov hoard



**Fig. 3.** Figurines of archers from Sardinia (1) and Odesa (2)

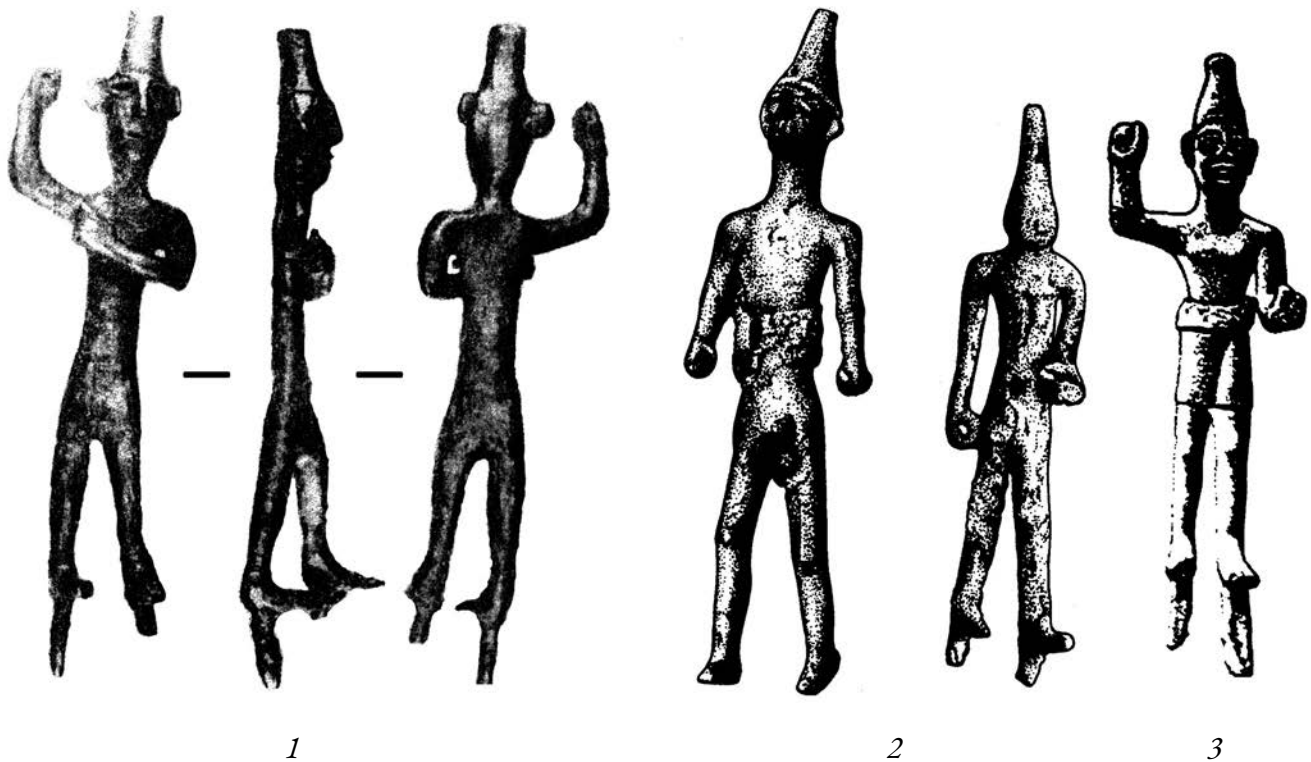


**Fig. 4.** Axe-celts from Sardinia (1) and the Kharkiv region (2)

(Thimme 1983, Fig. 32) (Fig. 3, 1). This new find shows that the Luzhany item is not unique to Ukrainian territory.

I have written before that such strange connection between Sardinia and North-Western Pontic region could have been the result of migration of the small group of “Sea Peoples” to the island after serving as mercenaries in the Egyptian army during the Libyan war of the pharaoh Ramesses III (Klochko 2001, p. 283; Klochko 2006, p. 250). They are the ones who brought to the island the tradition of bronze miniature sculptures, which are generally native to the Eastern Mediterranean (Gonzalez 2012), although with a Ukrainian “flavor”. It includes weapons that were common among the cultures of the Late Bronze Age, in the south of Ukraine. I believe that such an impressive anabasis merits further research and recognition.

It is important to ask when and how did the Noua-Sabatynivka culture adopt the warrior cult tradition, which appeared in the form of bronze figurines, cast using the lost-wax method. My hypothesis about the Buh amber trade route may offer the answer. This trade route connected Ukraine with the Eastern Mediterranean as early as the Middle Bronze Age, when the bronze warrior figurines from the Levant region had appeared in Eastern Europe (Klochko 2007). The bronze warrior figurine from Šernai near Klaipėda in Lithuania (Dąbrowski 1968, Taf. XXII) resembles the figurines from the hoard found in the Temple of the Obelisks in Byblos, Syria (Müller-Karpe 1974, Taf. 260–262) (Fig. 4, 1–2). These figurines are the crude copies of the images of either an Egyptian god or a pharaoh, for example from the temple in Kamed El Laouz, Lebanon (Müller-Karpe 1980, Taf. 153.3) (Fig. 4,



**Fig. 5.** Bronze figurines of warriors: Šernai (1), Byblos (2), and their Egyptian prototype (3), second millennium BCE

3). The Baltic-type amber (succinite) was found in the Temple of the Obelisks, which demonstrates the significance of these finds as evidence of trade relations between Eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. The Temple of the Obelisks in Byblos is dated according to the Egyptian items with the names of the pharaohs of Twelfth Dynasty — Amenemhat I, Amenemhat II, and Senusret I who ruled from 2000 to 1785 BCE (Müller-Karpe 1980, p. 845). Therefore, the Buh trading route, which I initially noted in the context of the Hordiivka gravefield from the Late Bronze Age (Trostyanyets district of the Vinnytsia region) (Klochko 2011) had already existed at the beginning of the second millennium BCE,

at the times when the Noua-Sabatynivka cultural circle was forming, which passed through its territory. Within these cultures the Mediterranean cultural and technological traditions had most likely been adapted to the indigenous warrior cult. This is represented in the depictions of locally-styled weapons on the figurines.

Therefore, the “bronzetti” from Ukraine and Sardinia can serve as the iconographic sources for studying weapons and armor of the peoples of southern Ukraine during the Late Bronze Age. In addition, the Ukrainian history gains further evidence of cultural and trading contacts between the ancient peoples of Ukraine and the Eastern Mediterranean.

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## З УКРАЇНИ ДО ОСТРОВА САРДИНІЯ (ЩЕ РАЗ ПРО НАРОДИ МОРЯ)

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В статті розглянуто загадкову подібність бронзових статуєток воїнів (bronzetti) з острова Сардинія та знахідок доби пізньої бронзи з України (з села Лужани, з Чернівецької області та Одеси). Запропоновано пояснення цього феномену в контексті участі народів Півдня України (носіїв культури Ноуа-Сабатинівка) у навалі «Народів Моря» на Східне Середземномор'я та торговельних зв'язків між регіонами. На думку автора, подібна анабаза групи мешканців Північного Причорномор'я заслуговує на подальші вивчення.

**Ключові слова:** bronzetti, Народи Моря, Бузький торгівельний шлях, культура Ноуа, сабатинівська культура, острів Сардинія, бронзова доба України.

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