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An Oirat Sphero-Cylindrical Helmet and Arming Cap from the Central State Museum Collection of the Republic of Kazakhstan

We describe an unusually shaped riveted sphero-cylindrical iron helmet and an accessory arming cap made of fabric (Cat. No. 2067/8), owned by the Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan. On the basis of museum documents, we reject the former geographic attribution—Semirechye, southeastern Kazakhstan. Instead, we demonstrate that the items come from the former Cossack village Magnitnaya (presently Magnitogorsk, Southern Urals). Typological analysis indicates that the helmet falls within the interval between the 1610s to early 1700s. The closest parallels are from Western Mongolia, Tibet, and Southern Siberia. We hypothesize that artisans who manufactured such helmets were inspired by the idea of the Buddhist stupa (“suburgan” in Kalmyk). The likely customers were Oirat Buddhist warriors. This is the first helmet of such type that may be attributed to the Volga Kalmyks—people of the westernmost Oirat enclave in Eurasia. This modifies our views on the Kalmyk armor of that period. The specimen could have got to the Southern Urals as a trophy, diplomatic gift, or barter. It could also have belonged to a Kalmyk warrior who had settled in the land of Bashkir or Kazakhs. The accessory headgear, with a white woolen padding, is shown to be an arming cap. This is the only known original Oirat headgear of such type, dating to the 17th or 18th century.

Keywords: *Kalmyk Khanate, Dzungaria, Oirats, Oirat armor, Kalmyk armor, Kalmyk helmet.*

Introduction

The historical period spanning the 17th century to the first half of the 18th is often called in academic literature the period of the small Mongol (Oirat) invasion (Kocheviye imperii Yevrazii..., 2019: 365). For a century and a half, the tribes of the Western Mongols—the Oirats, who were known as Olyots in China, as Kalmaks among the Turkic

peoples, and as Kalmyks among the Russians, played an important role in the life of the peoples inhabiting the Great Steppe. In the 17th century, the Oirat expansion spread to the steppes of Eastern Europe, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia, as well as the Northwestern Caucasus, Southern Siberia, Eastern Turkestan, and Tibet. In the middle of that century, four main military and political groups of the Oirats emerged: the “Kalmyk” (with the

center in the Northern Caspian Sea region), “Chakar” (in the south of Western Siberia), “Khoshut” (on the Kukulnor Plain) and “Dzhungar” (in Southeastern Kazakhstan and Western Mongolia) (Bobrov, Ryumshin, 2015; Kocheviye imperii Yevrazii..., 2019: 365–367).

The military and cultural heritage of various Oirat groups has not been studied equally. The weaponry of the Dzhungars, Chakars, and Khoshuts of Kukulnor has been studied in sufficient detail, while the study of the weaponry and armor of the Volga Kalmyks has just begun. In this regard, one of the important tasks is to describe the Kalmyk weaponry kept in Russian and foreign museums, as well as in private collections. Without its comprehensive analysis, it is not possible to identify the main trends in its evolution, regional features, or the general dynamics of weaponry development among the Mongolian-speaking nomads of Eurasia during the final period of its existence as an independent military and historical phenomenon.

The collection of the Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan contains an iron riveted helmet of unusual spherocylindrical shape and a quilted headgear lined with wool (Cat. No. KP 2067/8). Although its images (drawings, photographs in one projection) and brief descriptions have been published before (Akhmetzhan, 2007: 153, fig. 131, 7; 154, fig. 132, 2, d: 155; 2015: 78; Bobrov, Hudiakov, 2008: 445, 460, fig. 190, 4), this combat helmet has not yet become the object of focused scholarly research. Information about the headgear stored together with the helmet is introduced for the first time.

This article provides a detailed description of the helmet's design, and clarifies the place of discovery, date, and attribution of the helmet and cloth headgear from the collection of the Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Fig. 1, 2).

History of research into the helmet

Information provided in the literature about the helmet under discussion was given by a Kazakhstan scholar, K.S. Akhmetzhan. He attributed the helmet to a special group of headpieces, “the crown of which was made of eight plates, which overlapped each other... The upper part of the top and the bottom of the helmet's crown are attached together with narrow fittings” (Akhmetzhan, 2007: 155). The description was illustrated with a small photo and a drawing of the piece of protective armor (Ibid.: 153, fig. 131, 7; 154, fig. 132, 2, d). Akhmetzhan identified the helmet as a “Kazakh military headgear” (Ibid.: 132).

In 2008, the helmet from the collection of the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan attracted the attention of Russian scholars L.A. Bobrov and Y.S. Hudiakov. In their monograph on the weaponry and tactics of the nomads of Central Asia and Southern Siberia in the Late Middle

Ages and Early Modern Age, the helmet was discussed together with other spherocylindrical headpieces (Bobrov, Hudiakov, 2008: 445, 460, fig. 190, 4). It was established that such helmets were used by the Oirat nomads in the period under consideration (Ibid.: 440–445, 459–461, 722, 725). According to scholars, the original helmet from the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan could have been “provided with a simple or ‘box-shaped’ visor and aventail” (Ibid.: 445). The headpiece was dated to the 16th–18th centuries and attributed to the weaponry complex of the “Western Mongolian” (Oirat) warriors (Ibid.: 445). The description of the helmet was illustrated by its drawing (Ibid.: 460, fig. 190, 4).

In 2015, Akhmetzhan resumed his research on helmet KP 2067/8 from the collection of the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan. He noticed that some mausoleums in Western Kazakhstan had a dome, whose shape resembled the helmet under consideration (Akhmetzhan, 2015: 78, fig. 32, 4). Generally, Akhmetzhan agreed with the opinion of Bobrov and Hudiakov that helmets of similar designs belonged to the Oirat weaponry complex, but believed that helmets resembling in shape the domes of Kazakh mausoleums could also have been made by the Kazakhs themselves (Ibid.: 75). Akhmetzhan attributed the headpiece under discussion to “remodeled Dzhungar helmets used by the Kazakh warriors in the past” (Ibid.: 78, fig. 32, 1).

Thus, helmet KP 2067/8 had already attracted the attention of scholars in the past. However, detailed photos and sizes have not been previously published. The helmet was discussed in the context of military headgear used by the Central Asian nomads, but never became the object of a special scholarly study. Further, the place where this item of protective weaponry was discovered and its “museum history” have not been reliably established, although this information is very important for dating and attributing the headpiece. Finally, the first publication about the helmet did not take into consideration the headgear associated with it, which is of undoubted scholarly interest.

Description of the helmet and arming cap

In terms of its material, the helmet belongs to the class of iron helmets; in terms of the design of the crown, to the class of riveted helmets; and in terms of the shape of the dome, to the class of spherocylindrical helmets. Its height is 25.5 cm. Since the helmet is relatively strongly deformed (see Fig. 1, 1–4), the frontal-occipital diameter of the headpiece (19.5 cm) is much smaller than the temporal (22 cm) diameter. Before the damage to the crown, the diameter of the helmet could have been about 20–21 cm. The weight of the headpiece (excluding the missing pommel, visor, and aventail) is 0.92 kg.



Fig. 1. Oirat helmet, Central State Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan (KP 2067/8), 1610s to early 18th century. Photo by L.N. Agibaeva, D. Kezdikbaev; drawing by L.A. Bobrov.

1 – front view; 2 – left side view; 3 – right side view; 4 – rear view; 5 – pommel, top view; 6 – junction of the helmet hoop.

The helmet top was riveted of eight S-shaped sector-plates, including four main plates and four onlays, which are almost similar in size. The upper ends of the plates on the crown did not survive (see Fig. 1, 5). However, we can assume that initially, the onlays had elongated trapezoid shapes, and main sector-plates were elongated subtriangular. Judging by other helmets of this type, pointed blades of the plates, bent at a right angle, served as a base for a lid-shaped interior part* of the pommel in the headpiece (Bobrov, Orlenko, 2020a: 75, 86, 89, 93; 2020b: 1195, 1200). This shape and the S-shaped profile of the crown plates allows the assembled helmet to have a sphero-cylindrical shape.

Notably, the plates forming the crown of the helmet were placed in a peculiar way. On most other sphero-

*This was a plate-base used for fastening and attaching the plates of the crown in their upper part, and for attaching a tube-socket for the plume.



Fig. 2. Arming cap. Photo by L.N. Agibaeva, D. Kezdikbaeva.

1 – general view; 2 – bottom view.

cylindrical headpieces, onlay-plates were arranged symmetrically on four sides of the dome, along the forehead-ears-occiput line (Bobrov, Orlenko, 2020b: 1192, 1193, 1196, 1197). Not onlays, but the main plates of the helmet's crown were placed on four sides of the helmet under discussion, which contributed to the distinctive appearance of the headpiece.

Each onlay-plate slightly overlaps the edges of two adjacent plates and is connected to them using two pairs of symmetrically located iron rivets with rounded caps 0.3 cm in diameter. Some rivets have been lost (see Fig. 1, 3).

The main holder of the plates in the lower part of the crown is a wide iron hoop fastened to the back of the helmet with three vertical rivets*. The short edge of the hoop was decorated with an angular cut (see Fig. 1, 4).

*The lower rivet could have been inserted into the hole much later than other rivets.

The helmet was crowned with a pommel, of which only the interior metal plate-base of a distinctive lid-like shape has partially survived. The central (flat) part of the base has been lost (see Fig. 1, 5). A horsehair tassel was inserted into the hole (4.8 cm in diameter)*. The vertical ledge of the base was supplied with a convex band along the lower edge. The top of the helmet was connected to the base with iron rivets.

The surface of the crown is covered with rust, cracks, scratches, abrasions, and holes. Some rivets are missing. The edges of onlay-plates on the forehead part of the helmet (see Fig. 1, 1), as well as the upper edge of the hoop in the headpiece (see Fig. 1, 1, 4), have been partially broken. The lid-like base has survived fragmentarily. The occipital part of the crown suffered the most: it has a through hole with torn edges (see Fig. 1, 2, 4). Currently, most of the helmet is covered with rust, which gives the crown a dark color. However, in the places where the rust has been removed, a light gray iron surface is clearly visible (see Fig. 1, 2, 4).

Rounded through holes were punched along the lower edge of the helmet hoop. Rivets with flattened caps were pegged into some of them. Initially, these holes were probably used for hanging the aventail, which protected the ears and neck of a warrior.

A visor of conventional or “box-like” design (a “box-like” visor consisted of a horizontal “shelf” and vertical “shield”) was often an important element of helmets similar to the one under consideration. The helmet from the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan shows two holes punched in the temporal zones of the hoop. In the original configuration of the headpiece, the holes could have served for fastening the rivets, which connected the crown with the side panels of the visor. Currently, a rivet is inserted into the right hole; the left hole is empty. We can assume that, at the final stage of its operation, the helmet no longer had a visor. During this period, the holes could have served for attaching chin straps.

Together with the helmet, the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan collection contains a headgear, which can be identified as an arming cap (see Fig. 2). A low rounded crown (17 cm high and 22 cm in diameter) was made of two layers of fabric, with fine milk-colored wool placed in between. The “cover” of the headgear was made of a faded light yellow canvas-like fabric of fine weave (see Fig. 2, 1). Expert restorers of the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan D.T. Ibraeva and O.B. Perova identified traces of rust on its surface (probably resulting from the contact with the inner surface of the helmet dome). The headband is lined with terracotta-colored and light brown

cotton velour. Both the “cover” and lining were sewn of four triangular wedges; the lining was quilted with small, frequent stitches (see Fig. 2, 2).

Dating and attribution

It has been previously established that riveted spherocylindrical helmets composed of four main plates and four onlay-plates were atypical of the Central Asian nomads of the Early and Advanced Middle Ages, but quite commonly occur among the evidence of the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Age (Bobrov, Orlenko, 2020b: 1198).

On the basis of its combination of features, helmet KP 2067/8 can be attributed to a special group of headpieces exhibited in Russian and international museums and private collections. We are currently aware of 14 such helmets. The crowns of all these spherocylindrical headpieces were riveted of S-shaped sector-plates. Their joints were covered with onlays with smooth edges. Numerically, wide onlays, which are practically no smaller than main plates of the crown, are predominant. However, there are also narrower samples supplemented by reinforcement ribs. Most helmets in this series are provided with a hoop and visor of a box-like design. The pommel usually consists of a lid-like base, socket for the plume, and figurate pieces, which adorn the dome and at the same time connect the crown with the base of the helmet's top. All headpieces of the series belong to protective armor of the Oirat nomads of the 17th to mid-18th centuries (Bobrov, Hudiakov, 2008: 440–445, 459–461; Bobrov, Orlenko, 2020b).

The closest parallels to our helmet are the “small Kolmyk cap” (Or-4645) from the Moscow Kremlin Museums (Fig. 3), and the helmet (VO-69) from the arsenal of the Tatar servicemen Kulmametyevs, which is kept in the collection of the Tobolsk Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve. All the three headpieces are not only similar from the structural point of view, but also have almost the same weight and size. The helmet from the Armory Chamber corresponds to the Oirat armament complex and dates back to the 1610s to mid-1680s (Bobrov, Orlenko, 2020a: 74, 90, 91). The headpiece from the Tobolsk Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve was ordered by a wealthy Oirat warrior of the 17th–early 18th centuries. The helmet possibly reached the Tobolsk Tatars as a military trophy, diplomatic gift, or commodity brought for trade exchange (Bobrov, Hudiakov, 2008: 441, 442, 460, fig. 190, 3). The certain typological similarity of these helmets with the headpiece from the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan suggests that they all were made approximately in the same historical period.

*According to the available information, the tassel was inserted into the hole at a time when the helmet was already in the museum's collection.

The reasons that prompted the craftsman to give the helmets of this series an unusual jug-like shape are of interest to our discussion. Experimental studies have confirmed the validity of the previous assumption that a sphero-cylindrical crown has no noticeable functional advantages over sphero-conical or hemispherical crowns. Moreover, in the case of a strong horizontal blow, it creates additional risks for the helmet user (Bobrov, Orlenko, 2020b: 1208–1209). The main functional advantage of a high sphero-cylindrical helmet was its visibility on the battlefield*. A unit commander wearing such helmet was clearly visible to his subordinates during fast-moving cavalry battle, which probably made it easier to control the unit during the fight (Ibid.).

Extensive use of such headpieces among the Oirats in the 17th to 18th centuries could also have resulted from cultural and religious considerations. In the second half of the 16th to the early 17th century, Buddhist teachings spread among the Mongols and Oirats, which led to important changes both in the spiritual life and in the material culture among the nomads of Central Asia. Buddhist symbols became increasingly widely used in the design of the Mongolian and Oirat protective armor (LaRocca, 2006: 75–78, 80–81, 83–84, 88–91; Bobrov, Hudiakov, 2008: 433, 440–446, 452, 454, 460–462; Bobrov, Ozheredov, 2010; Bobrov, Orlenko, 2020b: 1209). In our opinion, the phenomenon of the Oirat sphero-cylindrical helmets should be viewed in this “religious weaponry” context. As a special study has shown, the silhouette of the sphero-cylindrical headpieces resembles traditional Buddhist stupas known among the Mongols as *subarga(n)*, or *suvarga*, and among the Kalmyks as *suburgan*. It is one of the important symbols of the “yellow faith” (Mongolian *shar[a] shashin***) and the Buddhist doctrine in general. This assumption is confirmed by the similarity of ornamentation on sphero-cylindrical helmets and Buddhist stupas of the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Age (Bobrov, Orlenko, 2020b: 1209–1212). It is possible that such a “suburgan” helmet not only indicated the adherence of its wearer to the precepts of the “yellow faith”, but also was meant to protect the warrior from hostile magical influences.

The helmets of this series are a variety of the highest combat headgear of the Oirat nomads. The total height

*We should recall that the height of our helmet’s crown reaches 25.5 cm. Taking into account the length of the unpreserved tube-socket, as well as the feather sultan, small flag, or tassel inserted into it, the total height of the headpiece could have reached 35–45 cm.

***Shar[a] shashin* is the Mongolian name for the tradition of Buddhist monastic education and ritual practice, which is also known as the Gelug (Gelugpa) School. It was founded in Tibet by Lama Je Tsongkhapa (1357–1419). When adopting Buddhism, the vast majority of the Oirats became the followers of the Gelug School.



Fig. 3. Oirat helmet, Moscow Kremlin Museums (Or-4645), 1710–1780s (Bobrov, Orlenko, 2020a).

of some of them (including the plume socket) reached ca 0.5 m (Bobrov, Orlenko, 2020a: 86–87). It cannot be ruled out that precisely such helmets were compared by Kazakh storytellers to *mūnara*—a minaret or high and narrow tower (Bekmūhametov, 1977: 121). For example, a description of the appearance of the mighty “Kalmak” (in this case, “Dzhungar”) warrior Sharysh—the opponent of Sabalak (the future Khan of the Middle Zhuz Ablai)—mentions: “A wrist-thick braid wound around the waist; his helmet looks like a *mūnara*” (Babalar sözi, 2006: 31)*. In another legend, a “helmet similar to a *mūnara*” is mentioned as a combat headgear of the “Kalmak” Khan Karanai (Babalar sözi, 2010: 112). The high cylindrical part of the crown in the helmets of this type might have resembled a tower or a minaret for the Turkic nomads. Notably, both the minaret and *suburgan* belonged to cultic religious structures.

Note that the Oirats, who lived in various regions of Eurasia, used sphero-cylindrical helmets similar in design and decoration. Quite similar headpieces originate from the south of Western and Central Siberia, Southeastern Kazakhstan, Western Mongolia, Tibet, etc. (LaRocca, 2006: 88, 89; Bobrov, Hudiakov, 2008:

*Hereinafter, translation from the Kazakh language into Russian by U.M. Agatai.

433, 440–446, 452–454, 460–462; Bobrov, Orlenko, 2020b: 1199, 1202). In this regard, for the attribution of our helmet, it is very important to establish the place of its discovery. The main difficulty is that the available information is contradictory.

In the second half of the 2000s, the employees of the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan told one of the authors of this article that the helmet was “found near Malaya Stanitsa of Alma-Ata (Verny)”. The same information was provided in the catalog of weaponry stored in the museum’s collection* and in the monograph “Combat Helmets of the Kazakhs” by Akhmetzhan (2015: 75). However, this information is refuted by the documentation of the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan. The text of the museum inventory, dated March 26, 1999, indicates that helmet “2067(8)... was found in the area of Magnitnaya Stanitsa” (Central State Museum of Kazakhstan. Main Cat. Book No. 2 of the main collection, p. 106). This refers to the fortress (since 1743) and Cossack village (since 1865) of Magnitnaya in the Southern Urals (presently, the city of Magnitogorsk). The fortress was founded on the initiative of I.I. Neplyuev, the Governor of the Orenburg Governorate, near Mount Magnitnaya (Atach), where rich deposits of iron ore were discovered. Taking into account this information, the museum history of our helmet may be reconstructed as follows. After it was discovered near Magnitnaya Stanitsa (that is, in the southwest of the present-day Chelyabinsk Region of Russia), the headpiece was sent to the nearest major museum collection—the Museum of the Orenburg Territory (founded in 1830). In the 1920s, a part of its collections was transferred to the Kazakh Central Regional Museum (founded in 1920). Initially, the museum was located in Orenburg, but in 1929, it was moved to Alma-Ata, the new capital of the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. According to U.A. Ashim, the Head of the Department for Collection Storage at the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan, our helmet was one of the items transferred to the Kazakh Central Regional Museum (currently the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan).

If helmet KP 2067/8 indeed came from the area near the village of Magnitnaya, it could have belonged to the complex of protective armor of the Volga or Chakar Kalmyks. The helmet could have appeared in the Southern Urals as a result of one of numerous clashes, between the Kalmyks and either the Bashkirs or the Kazakhs, from the 1620s to the first third of the 18th century. During the warfare, the Bashkirs captured a large number of trophies, and our helmet might have been one of them. It is also possible that the headpiece belonged to one of the Kalmyk warriors who lived in a Bashkir or Kazakh ulus. In the second half of the 17th to the first third of

the 18th century, individual groups of Kalmyks were becoming a component of the Bashkir people. For example, in the early 18th century, a fairly large group of the “Ayuka Kalmyks”* settled in Tersyak Volost, in the eastern outskirts of historical Bashkiria. Over time, the Bashkir clan Kalmak emerged on the basis of this group (Istoriya..., 2017: 31–35, 188–190).

The assumption about the use of sphero-cylindrical helmets in Western Kazakhstan can indirectly be confirmed by the domes of local mausoleums of the 17th century, whose outlines resemble the headpieces similar to our helmet (Akhmetzhan, 2015: 75, 78, fig. 32, 4). Such helmets were possibly worn by the Oirat migrants, who took service with the local Turkic rulers after settling in this region.

The classification of the helmet from the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan as a combat headpiece of the Volga Kalmyks corrects the prevailing perception of the panoply used by this westernmost group of the Oirat nomads. Taking into account this attribution, it can be argued that even after settling in the steppes of the Northern Caspian Sea region, the Kalmyks continued to use defensive armor of the Central Asian type. The high degree of similarity between the helmets among the Mongol-speaking nomads of the Volga region, Western Mongolia, Southern Siberia, and Tibet suggests a certain typological proximity of weaponry and armor complexes of the Oirat nomads inhabiting various regions of Eurasia at the initial stage of the “period of the small Mongol (Oirat) invasion” in the 17th to the first half of the 18th centuries.

At present, the main hypothesis is the Kalmyk origin of the helmet from the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan. However, if, contrary to the data of the museum inventory of 1999, the headpiece was found in Semirechye (as was previously thought), it might have belonged to the armor complex of the Dzhungars—the eastern relatives of the Kalmyks. In any case, the helmet was originally made for an Oirat Buddhist warrior between the 1610s and the first third of the 18th century. The lower chronological boundary is associated with the beginning of the widespread dissemination of Buddhism among the Oirats; the upper boundary is associated with the structural features and design of helmet’s crown.

The arming cap of the headpiece under discussion is of considerable interest, since original arming caps

*The name comes from the name of the Kalmyk ruler Ayuka (1672–1724). Most likely, the emergence of the group of “Ayuka Kalmyks” among the Bashkirs was associated with the migration of Sandzhip, the son of Khan Ayuka, to Dzungaria in the early 18th century. About two hundred Kalmyk wagons were intercepted by the Bashkirs and began to roam with them (Istoriya..., 2017: 32).

*As far as we know, this catalog has never been published.

of the Mongolian-speaking nomads of the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Age were known before only from the written and visual sources*. In terms of cut and color solution, our arming cap differs significantly from its Qing counterparts. Its cut generally corresponds to the description of an arming cap of the former Muslim vassals of the Oirats from Dzungaria, which was given at the beginning of the second half of the 18th century by the Qing authors of “Qingding Huangyu Xiyu tuzhi”: “Duyulega (Mongolian *duulga*, Kalmyk *duulkh*) is a helmet. Inside, there is a cap (which) covers (the head) from the front, reaches the forehead, spreads out from behind, reaches the neck hanging down from the left and right, and reaches both ears. It is called tu-bo-bei-er-ku (Turkic *töbe börük*)” (Bobrov, Pastukhov, 2021: 203). Considering the size of the arming cap from the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan, its lower edge ran along the line of forehead-ears-back of the head, as was mentioned by the compilers of the Qing source.

The color palette of the arming cap from the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan is hardly accidental. A yellow-and-red palette was typical of the headgear of the Oirats in the 17th–18th centuries. The crown of the Oirat caps and hats (as in the items under consideration) was traditionally covered with yellow cloth, while the tassel *ulan zala*, and sometimes lining, were made of red cloth (Bobrov, Ozheredov, 2021: 185, 186–187, fig. 90, 1).

Conclusions

The analysis of museum documentation has revealed that the helmet KP 2067/8 does not come from Semirechye, as it had been previously thought, but from the area of the village of Magnitnaya in the Southern Urals. Considering their state of preservation, the helmet and cloth headgear associated with it were not found at archaeological sites nor belonged to accidental finds. Most likely, they were purchased from the members of a family of local nomads who kept these items for several generations. Initially, the combat headpiece entered the Museum of the Orenburg Territory, from where it was transferred to the Kazakh Central Regional Museum.

The helmet from the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan is a part of large series of Late Medieval Oirat sphero-cylindrical headpieces. The craftsmen who forged the helmets of the series under consideration probably wanted to render the image of a Buddhist stupa known among the Kalmyks under the name of *suburgan*. It is probably this kind of Oirat headpieces that was mentioned in Kazakh folk tales as a “Kalmak”

helmet, similar to a *mūnara*—a narrow and high tower or minaret. Unlike other sphero-cylindrical headpieces, the helmet from the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan retained the original arming cap made of organic materials.

The structural features and design of the helmet make it possible to date it to the 1610s to early 18th century. This determination is confirmed by the dates of sphero-cylindrical helmets with similar design from the Moscow Kremlin Museums and Tobolsk Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve. Judging by the place of discovery, the headpiece was made for an Oirat Buddhist warrior from among the Volga or Chakar Kalmyks. The Dzhungarian origin of the helmet is less likely. It could have reached the Southern Urals as a military trophy, diplomatic gift, or a commodity brought for exchange. It is also possible that the helmet belonged to one of the Kalmyk warriors who settled on the territory of the Bashkir or Kazakh possessions in the mid-17th–first third of the 18th century.

Helmet KP 2067/8 is of interest to historians of weaponry, military historians, and ethnographers, as well as religious scholars and culturologists studying the military and cultural heritage of the Eurasian nomads. Its scholarly value derives from the fact that this is the first sphero-cylindrical Oirat helmet, most likely associated with the armor complex of the Volga Kalmyks. This significantly expands our understanding of the panoply among the westernmost group of the Oirat nomads who moved to the Northern Caspian Sea region in the first half of the 17th century. The arming cap, which was a part of the set with the combat headpiece, is the only example of an Oirat arming cap from the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Age known today.

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*Mongolian arming caps of the 18th–19th centuries from the museum collections of Mongolia and China were made by the Qing craftsmen or local artisans according to Qing models.

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