

# Metal Axes of the Kolontaiv-Corbaska Type of Ukrainian Catacomb Culture Circle and Its Connections to Helladic Area

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**Abstract:** In 1970 A. Vulpe described the new type of copper axes, which were found in Central Europe – it was given a name Veselinovo. This type is identical to the late variants of Kolontaiv-Corbaska type of the Catacomb culture of South-Eastern Europe. The complete classification of said type was recently developed by myself. The recent findings in so-called Rodotopi hoard in Ioannina include the axes of the late variant of this type. The spectral analysis of axes in both hoard of Rodotopi and Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes coming from archaeological memorials of Catacomb culture in Ukraine shows that raw materials of both groups of items are similar. These axes, in my opinion, are the markers of connections between North Pontic Region and the Mycenae Greece during the Catacomb period of Bronze Age. In this article I describe axes of different-time Kolontaiv-Corbaska type variants, which were found in Catacomb culture memorials in Ukrainian territory. Secondly, I analyze late variants of Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes and recently discovered findings from the hoard of Rodotopi using the comparing method. As the result, the following hypothesis is suggested: during migration processes, which took place in the end of third – beginning of second millennia BC, the Indo-European peoples from Southern Ukrainian territories, migrated south to the modern Bulgaria and Northern Greece, where they participated in the formation of Mycenae Greek culture.

**Keywords:** Ukraine, Helladic Area, Bronze Age, Catacomb Culture, Metal Axes, Kolontaiv-Corbaska, The Hoard of Rodotopi

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## 1. Introduction

Recently Christos N. Kleitsas published the hoard of Rodotopi in Ioannina (Epirus, NW Greece) – a set of four cast copper single-edged shaft-hole axes, which were attributed to the type with the conventional name Veselinovo [15, 4] (Figure 6: B). In my classification this type reflects the late variants of Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes of the Catacomb culture of Ukraine [9] (Figure 6: A).

## 2. Kolontaiv-Corbaska Type: Name and Origin

The axes of middle (classical) and late periods of Catacomb culture are called «axes of Kolontaiv type» after

the hoard which was found near the village of Kolontaiv of Krasnokhytsk district of Kharkiv region [11, 9]. They are casted in “closed” two-flap ceramics casting molds. In Central Europe these very axes are called «Corbaska type» [15]. The name comes from the “hoard” which was found in Corbaska commune of Bacău district in Romania. This complex includes: copper eyelet axe, copper adze with collapsed bushing, two small stone flat axes and the template for flint dagger (Figure 1).

Most likely it is an inventory from the destroyed Budjak culture burial (Yamna culture of North-Western Pontic Region) or Catacomb burial – the axe and the adze are of Catacomb types, while stone items resemble the objects of Corded Ware cultures, which are common for Budjak culture burials. Corbaska type axes are widely spread in Central Europe as well as their casting molds [3]. For instance, such casting mold

was found along the Kozarac-Stublo axe casting mold of Corded Ware Culture on Zok settlement in Hungary and was attributed to Vucedol culture [11] (Ryc. 24) (Figure 2: 1-2).

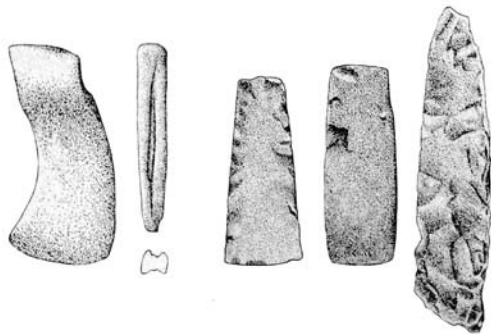


Figure 1. The Hoard of Corbaska [12].

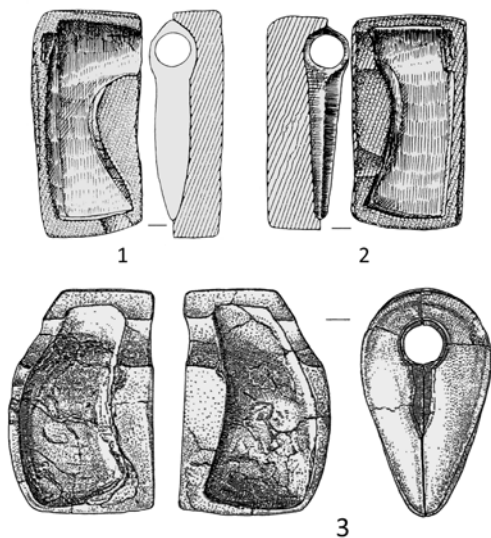


Figure 2. Casting molds: 1-2, Zok settlement [11]; 3, Burial in Lugansk city [5].



Figure 3. Map of Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes area.

Therefore, Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes were spread all over the large territory of Europe, from river Don basin on the east to river Danube basin on the west (Figure 3).

### 3. Oldest Kolontaiv-Corbaska Axes in Ukraine

In Ukraine the oldest of Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes are those of Bilovodsk variant – those are the massive items casted in semi-closed and closed ceramics casting molds like the one found in the burial in the city of Lugansk (Figure 2, 3). Such axe was found in the burial 9 of kurgan 9 near Bilovodsk village of Lugansk region along with the adze with collapsed bushing, the chisel and the short knife. This burial was attributed to the Donetsk Catacomb culture [9] (Figure 4: 1-2).



Figure 4. "Bilovodsk" version Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes: 1. Lugansk city [5]; 2. Bilovodsk, kurgan 6, burial 9 [1]; 3. Pryluky; 4. Kharkiv; 5. Lubny; 6. Chernivtsi; 7. Chernihiv; 8, 9. Poltava region; 10. Kelmenets district; 11. Lypovets [5]; 12. Sumy region; 13. Poltava region; 14. Kyiv region; 15. Lubny.

Such axes were found near Pryluky city of Chernihiv region, city of Kharkiv, Lubny city of Poltava region, cities of Chernivtsi and Chernihiv, in Poltava region, in Kelmenets district of Chernivtsi region, the village of Lypovets of Kaharlyk district of Kyiv region, in Sumy region and in Poltava region [9]. Conditionally the axe from Kyiv region was included into this group. Generally, in resembles Kolontaiv type axes, however it is made in technology typical for Banyabyk type axes of early stage of Yamna culture – in two-flap casting mold with open "tummy" [9]. Overall these big tools can be considered "woodcutter axes". The Bilovodsk variant axe with flutting backside comes from city of Lubny [9] (Figure 4: 1-15).

### 4. Classical Kolontaiv-Corbaska Type Axes

As "classical" Kolontaiv-Corbaska type metal axes of Catacomb culture can be considered those casted in "closed"

molds. They include: the axe from burial 2 of kurgan 6 near Bilovodsk village of Lugans'k region, from the hoard from Cybli village of Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky district of Kyiv region, from Kyrylivsky vysoty hoard in Kyiv, from Skakun hoard in Kharkiv region, from Kyiv region, Vinnytsia region, Velyke Sadove hoard, Bakhchysarai district in Crimea [8], Chernihiv region, Sumy region, Khmelnytsky region, National Museum of the History of Ukraine, Sherly in Vinnytsia region, Kyraz monastery near Kharkiv, Kluchnyky near Kyiv, Kropyvnytsky region, Zabara village of Kalynivka district of Vinnytsia region, Kurylivtsi village of Zhmerynka district of Vinnytsia region, Corbaska hoard, Poltava region, found between Sinapne and Verhorichia villages of Bakhchysarai district of Crimea, from Ternopil region [9] (Figure 5: 1-25).

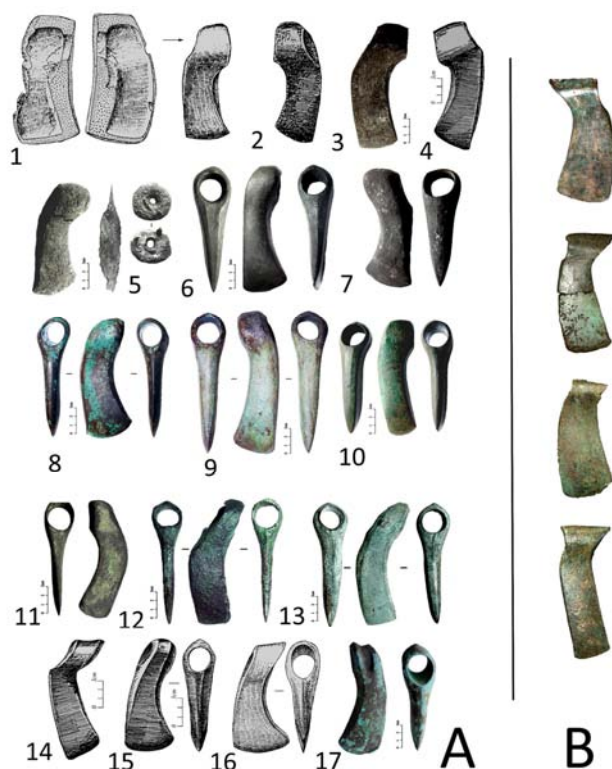


**Figure 5.** “Classical” Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes: 1. Bilovodsk, 6/2 [1]; 2. Tsybli hoard; 3. Kyrylivsky vysoty hoard; 4-6. Skakun hoard; 7. Kyiv region; 8. Vinnytsia; 9, 10. Velyke Sadove hoard; 11. Chernihiv region; 12. Sumy region; 13. Khmelnytsky region; 14. Chernivtsi region; 15. National Museum of Ukrainian History; 16. Sherla; 17. Kuriazh monastery; 18. Kluchnyky; 19. Kropyvnytsky region; 20. Zabara; 21. Kyrylivtsi; 22. Korvaska; 23. Poltava region; 24. between Sinapne and Verhorichia villages; 25. Ternopil region. Sosnytsia version: 26. Vinnytsia region; 27. Sosnytsia hoard; 28. Chernivtsi region; 29. Vinnytsia region, 31. Hodorkiv. With fluting edge: 30. Mykhailivka [8].

“Classical” Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes, aside from Kolontaiv hoard are represented by the findings from Donetsk Catacomb culture burial 2 of kurgan 6 near Bilovodsk village of Lugans'k region, in the hoard near Cybli village of Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky district of Kyiv region, in Velyke Sadove hoard of Bakhchysarai district of Crimea, Kyrylivsky

vysoty hoard in Kyiv, from Skakun hoard in Kharkiv region, Sosnytsia hoard, found between villages of Sosnytsia and Slobidka of Mensk district of Chernihiv region [9]. These complexes represent the items typical for middle – beginning of late period of Catacomb culture on Left-bank Ukraine – chisels, adzes, knives, hooks, dartheads, silver temple pendants which were found along the Kozarac-Stublo type axes of Corded Ware cultures and items imported from East Mediterranean, dating the middle of III millennium BC [14, 9].

Separate *Sosnytsia variant* consists of axes with wide blade (woodcutter axes) found in Vinnytsia region, from Sosnytsia hoard, found between villages of Sosnytsia and Slobidka of Mensk district of Chernihiv region, Chernivtsi region, Vinnytsia region, origins of Irpin river near Hodorkiv village of Popilnia district of Zhytomyr region [9] (Figure 5: 26-29, 31). Classical variant Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axe with fluted backside comes from Mykhailivka village of Dnipro region [9] (Figure 5: 30).



**Figure 6.** A: Late variants of Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes. Pokrovka-Volyntseve version: 1. Pokrovka; 2. Derevyane; 3. Mohyliv-Podilskyi; 4. Volyntseve; 5. Velyka Bahachka hoard; 6. Dnipro; 7. Cherkasy region; 8. Poberezhka; 9. Vyryvka; 10. Skelya-Podilska. Late appearances of Sosnytsia version: 11. Border of Vinnytsia region and Odesa region; 12. A. V. Kozymenko collection; 13. Ahtyrka; 14, 15. National Museum of Ukrainian History; 16. Simpheropol; 17. Cherkasy region. [8]. B: The Hoard of Rodotopi [4].

## 5. Late Variants

One of the late variants of Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes of Catacomb culture is represented on the casting molds from Lugans'k city [5, 6], the burial of Donetsk Catacomb culture late stage Pokrovka 4/3 in Donetsk region and Volyntseve

settlement in Chernihiv region (reconstruction [5, 9] (Figure 6: 1, 4) — Pokrovka-Volyntsevo variant. Such axes come from Derevyane village of Kamianets-Podilsky district of Khmelnytsky region and Mohyliv-Podilskyi city of Vinnytsia region [9] (Figure 6: 2-3). The axe of this type was found within the Velyka Bahachka hoard from Poltava region along with leaf-shaped knife and Abashivka type metal disk-shaped bit shank with thorns [9] (Figure 6: 5). Such ancient bit shanks for the bridle are made of bone and horn, except the Abashivka culture burials of river Don, were found in Syntashta type burials to the east of Ural and in mine burials of Mycenae.

More stretched axes of this type were found in Dnipro city, in Cherkasy region, near Poberezhka village of Bohuslav district of Kyiv region, Vyrvivka village of Konotop district of Sumy region, Skelya-Podilska village of Borshchiv district of Ternopil region [9] (Figure 6: 6-10).

The axes of late occurrences of Sosnytsia variant of Catacomb culture, similar to the axes from Poltava hoard, were found on the border of Vinnytsia and Sumy regions, from the collection of A. V. Kozymenko in Kyiv, Akhtyrka of Sumy region, National Museum of the History of Ukraine [9] (Figure 6: 11-14). As the latest of Catacomb tradition axes can be considered findings from National Museum of the History of Ukraine, Simferopol and Cherkasy region [9] (Figure 6: 15-17) (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Map of late variants of axes of Kolontaiv-Corbaska type.

The late variants of Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes are found in several complexes. Those are: the burial 8 (late stage of Donetsk Catacomb culture) in kurgan 11 near Pryvillia city of Lysychansk district of Lugans'k region [1] (Figure 8: 1). Based on C14 S. N. Bratchenko dates the late stage of Donetsk Catacomb culture as the end of III millennium BC [2]. The Hodosovychi burial, Moshka land in kurgan 10/1 of Middle Dnipro Corded Ware culture in Belarus dates 200–1700 BC

[12]. In the hoard from Poltava region the late variant Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axe was found along the Rybakovka variant axe of Kostroma type of Babyno culture of the beginning of Late Bronze Age [9] (Figure 8: 3). Which means that such axes of late variants of Catacomb type “live” until at least early Babyno stage, until the beginning of II millennium BC. It was the period of disintegration of Yamna and Catacomb cultures of Early Bronze Age and the formation of the new cultures of Late Bronze Age, the period of migration from Ukrainian territories to the north, east and south.



Figure 8. Complexes with late variants of Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes: 1. Pryvillia burial 8/11 (after Bratchenko/Sanzharov, 2001); 2. Hodosovychi 1/10; 3. Hoard from Poltava Region. [8].

## 6. Raw Material

Metal axes of the Kolontaiv-Corbaska type of the Catacomb culture, are usually made of As-bronze [9], as well as the axes from Rodotopi hoard [4].

## 7. Conclusion

Metal axes of the Kolontaiv-Corbaska type of the Catacomb culture as well as axes Kozarac-Stublo of Corded Ware cultures [10], and of Banyabik Yamna culture [7] are the markers of Indo-European migration in Central and Eastern Europe. And the late variants of the Kolontaiv-Corbaska type axes (type Veselinovo) reach northern regions of Greece. In my opinion, this indicates the participation of North Pontic Region peoples in the formation of Mycenae Greece culture.

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