



## **Crescent of a late Roman Intercisa helmet from Spijk (NL)**

**Wil Kuijpers**



**This paper is an English version of an article published in the Dutch 'Detector Magazine' November 2021. Translation with assistance of Deepl.**

**[wilkuijpers@gmail.com](mailto:wilkuijpers@gmail.com)**

## Crescent of a late Roman Intercisa helmet from Spijk (NL)

In Spijk (Zevenaar municipality in the province of Gelderland, NL), a crescent and ridge from a late Roman Intercisa helmet (dating: 250 to 449 AD) were found early in 2021. This is a very special find. Finds of (fragments of) Roman helmets are rare anyway, but especially so if they date from the Late Roman period. Detector-amateur Jasper van den Berg first found the ridge, the crescent itself was found elsewhere at the site by the author. The find and the find conditions are discussed in this paper. Other finds of Intercisa helmets in the Netherlands are also discussed. The appendix contains detailed photographs.



The crescent and ridge were found in residual material from dredged up sand and gravel. This material is loosened with brute force and then sucked up and passed through a suction cage with holes through which a maximum of one brick could pass. It seems that the crescent and ridge were originally connected but were separated by the violence of the dredging. No other parts of the helmet were found.

The crescent was slightly bent in some places. The ridge was complete but bent and twisted. Missing from the front is the part with the presumed Greek letters chi (X) and rho (P): the Christ monogram XP. Both parts have been professionally conserved (anti-bronze rot), restored and then reconnected. Both parts were gilded and the ridge was provided with silver rivets for attachment to the helmet cap. Remnants of silver are visible on the inside of the ridge. The crescent is listed on the website of Portable Antiquities of the Netherlands (PAN) nr. PAN-00083452.<sup>1</sup>

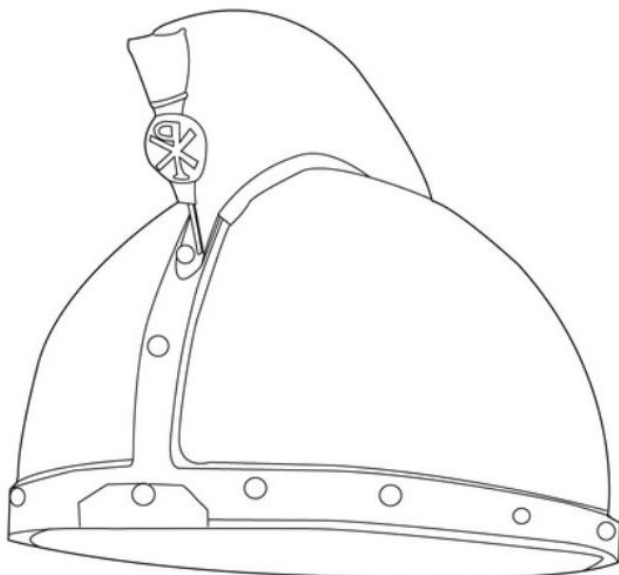
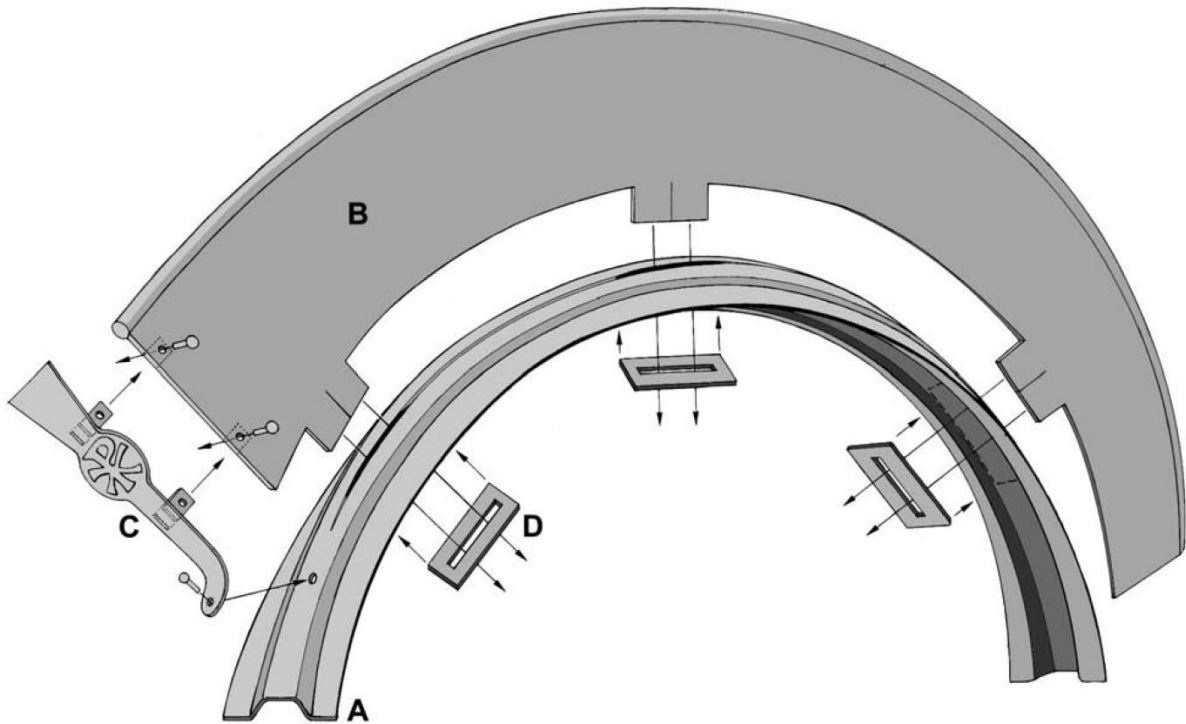


Illustration of a reconstructed Intercisa helmet. (PAN)

The restored crescent. The lower part of the silver Christ insigne is still present.



The construction of the crescent and ridge of an Intercisa helmet. (Miks 2008, 464)

## Spijk NL

The site of Spijk was recognised by the author in 2016<sup>2</sup> as a Roman site located near a former Roman Rhine branch. The site is located along the Limes near the German border. The work at Spijk is completed in the spring of 2021. The site has since been transformed into a nature/recreation area for walking and cycling.

The large amount of pottery, tuff and fragments of coarse ceramics point to the presence of a Roman complex/castellum, inhabited for several centuries.<sup>3</sup> The material may have come from a castellum at the junction of the Rhine and Waal rivers. The fork must have been in the immediate vicinity.<sup>4</sup>

## Intercisa

In the village of Dunapentele (Hungary) once lay the Roman army camp Intercisa. In the last century several excavations took place in Dunapentele. An excavating archaeologist found, in what presumably was a warehouse, fragments of 15 to 20 late Roman iron helmets. Because the building was destroyed by fire, the helmets were preserved. Only one piece still had remains of the former silver layer. These layers were probably deliberately and carefully removed before the used helmets were melted down. At least four crescent helmets could be reconstructed. The remains of the others were apparently lost after the find. The helmets from Intercisa date from the late 3rd/early 4th century.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to earlier Roman helmets, the hood of the helmet is composed of more than one element. Roman crescent helmets can be divided into two types of cap construction: bipartite and quadripartite, also referred to as the Intercisa type and the Berkasovo type respectively. The bipartite construction method is usually characterised by a two-part shell united by a central crescent with ridge running from front to back and small cheekpieces.<sup>6</sup>

Crescent helmets with a Christian monogram are found more often. Research has not (yet) shown that the wearers of these helmets belonged to a certain unit or held a certain rank.<sup>7</sup>



Intercisahelm from the village of Dunapentele in Hungary. (Miks 2008, 452)

## Intercisa helmets in the Netherlands

As far as is known, apart from the piece from Spijk, four parts of Intercisa helmets have been found in the Netherlands.<sup>8</sup> They are discussed below. It is remarkable that the chi-ro motif on these helmets is one of the earliest indications of a Christian presence in the Netherlands.

*Fragments of an Intercisa helmet from Kessel-Hout (NL)*

In 1994, a detector amateur found ten late-Roman gold coins, so-called solidi, in a field over a period of months. The field is located near Kessel-Hout, municipality of Peel and Maas. (Prov. Limburg/NL) The solidi were from Emperor Valens (364-367 AD) to Emperor Constantinus III. (408-411 AD). Some remarkable fragments were found. Initially, they looked like rubbish, but when cleaned, traces of gold and silver were clearly visible. When a silver chi-rho insignia was also discovered, it was clear that this was an Intercisa helmet.<sup>9</sup> A reconstruction with the found material gives an impression of this helmet. The complete find of solidi and helmet is listed as an ensemble on the website of Portable Antiquities of the Netherlands (PAN) nr. PAN-00011769.



Reconstruction of the helmet from Kessel-Hout. (Miks 2008, 457)

*Crescent and ridge from the Waal (NL)*

A crescent connected to a ridge was dredged up around 1900 somewhere in the Waal river near Noviomagus/Nijmegen and bequeathed to the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden in 1931<sup>10</sup>. The piece came, together with hundreds of other objects, from the estate of the Amsterdam collector P. A. Gildemeester. The presumed Waal context of the find is supported by the fact that one side of the object still shows traces of river sand. The total absence of rivets suggests that the original helmet has been deliberately dismantled.



Crescent with ridge dredged from the Maas. (Picture: Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden NL)

### *Chi-Rho insignes*

Finally, two chi-rho insignia have been found in the Netherlands.



Chi-rho insigne from IJzendoorn-Echteld NL (Collection Museum Het Valkhof, Nijmegen NL)<sup>11</sup>



Chi-rho insigne from Wijchen-Lienden NL (Collection Museum Het Valkhof, Nijmegen NL)<sup>12</sup>

### **Summary**

In Spijk (Zevenaar municipality in the province of Gelderland. NL), a crescent and ridge from a late Roman Intercisa helmet (dating: 250 to 449 AD) were found early in 2021. Both parts were conserved (anti-bronze rot) restored and then reconnected. It is the fifth find of a part of an Intercisa helmet in the Netherlands.

### **Literature**

Klumbach, H. (ed.), 1973. *Spätromische Gardehelme*. Münchner Beitr. Vor- u. Frühgesch 15 (München 1973).

Kuijpers, W.B., 2021a. *Detector Magazine, mei 2021, 26-34*. De verspoelde Romeinse vindplaatsen in de Gelderse limes.

An English version of the article is available at:

[https://www.academia.edu/49422189/The\\_washed\\_out\\_Roman\\_sites\\_along\\_the\\_limes\\_in\\_the\\_province\\_of\\_Gelderland\\_NL\\_Wil\\_Kuijpers](https://www.academia.edu/49422189/The_washed_out_Roman_sites_along_the_limes_in_the_province_of_Gelderland_NL_Wil_Kuijpers)

Kuijpers, W.B., 2021b. *Het castellum in de Loowaard. Een hernieuwde materiaalstudie en interpretatie van baggervondsten uit de Loowaard*. Boekenbestellen.nl., Zwaag.

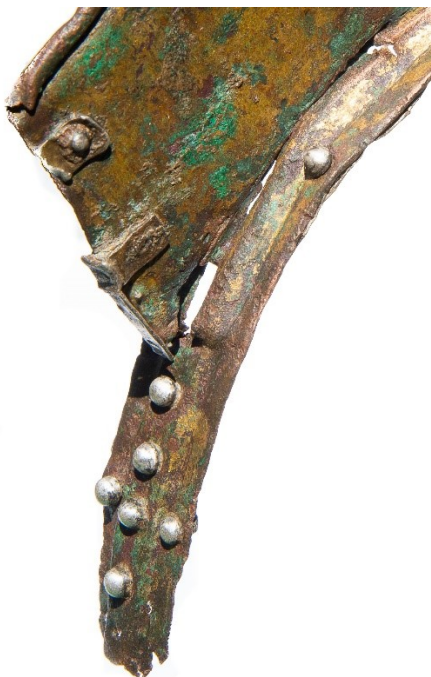
Kuijpers, W.B., 2021c. *Detector Magazine, november 2021, 179, p. 8-11*. Kamhouder en kam van een laat-Romeinse Intercisa helm.

Miks, C., 2008. *Spätromische Kammhelme mit hoher Kammscheibe*. Sonderdruck aus Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum Mainz 55. Jahrgang 2008.

Prins, J., 2000. *Bonner Jahrbücher, 200 (2000) 309-328*. The 'fortune' of a late Roman officer. A hoard from the Meuse valley (Netherlands) with helmet and gold coins. Bonn.

## Appendix

Pictures of the crescent from Spijk (NL)











---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.portable-antiquities.nl/pan/#/object/public/83452>

<sup>2</sup> A publication on the site and the find material is in preparation.

<sup>3</sup> Kuijpers 2021a.

<sup>4</sup> Kuijpers 2021b.

<sup>5</sup> Wiki-search: Kastell Intercisa

<sup>6</sup> ibidem

<sup>7</sup> Mijs 2008, 482.

<sup>8</sup> Van der Heijden & Koster 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Prins 2000, 309.

<sup>10</sup> Inventory number: RMO. e 1931/2.20.

<sup>11</sup> Inventory number Collection Museum Het Valkhof: 2013.20.

<sup>12</sup> Inventory number Collection Museum Het Valkhof: 2013.21.