

Legionary helmets

Sakari Saaristo, 2017

Approximately in the middle of the Roman Republic, possibly somewhere in the 4th century BCE, Romans started to use a helmet type, which is now called by its first finding place (in Italy) as Montefortino. Montefortino-helmet was the most successful of Roman helmet types, and it was in use for many centuries from the mid-Republic to the start of the Imperial period.

Montefortino evolved from the helmet of the Celtic tribes (Veneti), who had moved to north Italy. They have been forged from bronze to hemispherical shape, and they rose from the top slightly upwards to form a knob for a helmet crest. The helmet had a small neckguard, a widening rim at the back of the helmet, and generally, but not necessarily always, cheekguards. There were many types of cheekguards and archeological typologies (types of groups) have been made of them, but I do not bother readers here with those. The cheekguards were, however, usually quite large and attached to the rim of the helmet with metallic hinges. The helmet was attached to the head with leather strips that ran from the rear edge of the neck guard to the cheekguards and under the jaw. Under the helmet a cushioning cap was always worn.

At the end of the Republic, the quality of Montefortino-helmets decreased somewhat, possibly due to the state mass production resulting from the **Gaius Marius'** reforms. After the military reform, 107 eaa. the state was obliged to provide all legionary equipment, when before the soldiers had bought it themselves. Late Montefortino-helmets often have their knob attached as a separate part, the decoration on the rim is more modest, even non-existent, and helmets are often made by pressure turning the bronze plate instead of forging it. In later models, the neckguard has developed a bit larger, and at the beginning of the Imperial times (first half of the first century) some of the Montefortino-helmets had tubes attached to the sides of the skull for attaching plume decorations.

The helmets were always polished to bright and reflective, so that the soldier gave the most spectacular, scrupulous and scary image of himself to his peers and enemies. The imposingness and the length of the man were increased with helmet crests that were by the historian **Polybios** (200-118 BCE) made out of three plumes about 45 cm long, which were either black or purple. The plumes were clamped together to a helmet knob with a hole, or a separate iron plume holder was attached to the helmet knob, which had three tubes slightly on the forehead side.

Another form of crest, known from the so-called **Domitius Ahenobarbus'** altars relief from about 122-115 BCE, may have been made from horse hair. It is also possible that this type of crest was also made of very long and fine birds' feathers. In any case, this crest falls behind the helmet to form a horse's tail-like decoration.

Caesar tells in his *Gallic Wars* that during the war, one time his soldiers were so suddenly ambushed that they didn't have time to remove the shieldcovers on their shields or to attach the helmet crests. The helmet crests were thus used also in battle, and not just in parades, as previously thought.

In Caesar's time, the legionnaires had adopted a more simple helmet model known as Mannheim, in addition to the Montefortino helmet. The Mannheim helmet had no knob on the skull, nor any kind of cheekguards, but perhaps metallic loops from which the helmet was fastened with a leather chin strap. The Mannheim helmet did not have any kind of attachment for helmet crest.



Montefortino-helmet

199,90 €, Battle-Merchant

<https://www.battlemerchant.com/Helmets/Romans/Republican-Montefortino-helmet-brass-circa-1-2-mm::24456.html>

189 €, Outfit4events

<https://www.outfit4events.com/eur/product/6382-republican-montefortino-helmet/>

Inside circumference: up to 70 cm
1,2 mm thick brass
Weight: 1,4 kg



Montefortino-helmet

155 €, Wulflund

<https://www.wulflund.com/armour/helmets/roman-and-celtic-helmets/celtic-roman-helmet-type-of-montefortino-brass-collectible-replica.html/>

177 €, Kult of Athena (~~309 €~~)

<http://www.kultofathena.com/product.asp?item=AH6050N&name=Roman+Montefortino+Helmet>

199 €, Armae

http://www.armae.com/Zenglish/greek_and_roman/antiquity_frame.htm

Manufacturer: Deepeeka (India)

Inside circumference: 62 cm
1,3 mm thick brass (18 gauge)
Weight: 1,3 kg



Montefortino-helmet

179 €, Via Temporis
Temporarily out of stock

https://viatemporis.net/epages/78d591ab-d6c8-4959-831e-d5f70ccf1236.sf/en_GB/?ObjectPath=/Shops/78d591ab-d6c8-4959-831e-d5f70ccf1236/Products/CROM02



Montefortino-helmet

169 €, Via Temporis

https://viatemporis.net/epages/78d591ab-d6c8-4959-831e-d5f70ccf1236.sf/en_GB/?ObjectPath=/Shops/78d591ab-d6c8-4959-831e-d5f70ccf1236/Products/CROM01



Montefortino-helmet

??? €, Daniyal Steelcrafts

<http://www.daniyalsteelcrafts.com/product-list/helmets/roman-helmets/montifortino-product-code-dsc-h113/>

Manufacturer: Daniyal Steelcrafts (India)

Can be orderer either in brass or bronze.



Montefortino-helmet

200 €, Res Bellica

Our of stock

<http://www.res-bellica.com/en/negozio/antichita/elmo-montefortino-4/>

Manufacturer: Daniyal Steelcrafts (India)

1,2 mm thick bronze

Weight: 1,6 kg



Montefortino-helmet

349 €, Medieval Fight Club (~~421€~~)

<https://www.medieval-fightclub.com.au/armour/helms-and-helmets/ancient-roman-helmets/montefortino-helmet.html>

Bronze?



Montefortino-helmet

330 €, Res Bellica

Our of stock

<http://www.res-bellica.com/en/negozi/antichita/elmo-montefortino-2/>

Manufacturer: Domus Artificis (Italy)

Bronze

Weight: 1,2 kg



Mannheim-helmet (Caesar's time)

159 €, Armae

http://www.armae.com/Zenglish/greek_and_roman/antiquity_frame.htm

Manufacturer: Deepeeka (India)

Inside circumference: 66 cm

1,3 mm thick brass (18 gauge)

Weight: 1 kg



Mannheim-helmet (Caesar's time)

149 €, Via Temporis

https://viatemporis.net/epages/78d591ab-d6c8-4959-831e-d5f70ccf1236.sf/en_GB/?ObjectPath=/Shops/78d591ab-d6c8-4959-831e-d5f70ccf1236/Products/CROM03

Brass



Mannheim-helmet (Caesar's time)

81 €, Medieval Fight Club (~~108 €~~)

<https://www.medieval-fightclub.com.au/armour/helms-and-helmets/ancient-roman-helmets/caesarian-coolus-helmet.html>

Brass



Mannheim-helmet (Caesar's time)

146 €, Soul of the Warrior

<https://www.soulofthewarrior.com/product-page/sotw-mannheim-coolus>

Manufacturer: Ideal Armory

Highly accurate