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Carpatho-Danubian Countries  
Vasile Pârvan  
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## *Chapter I*

### CARPATHO-DANUBIANS AND VILLANOVANS

**T**HE Danubian lands of Central Europe extend from the Austrian Alps in the west to the plateaux of Eastern Galicia and the steppe country of the Dobruja in the east. From the beginnings of proto-history in the Bronze Age down to the end of the Middle Ages, when the Catholic kingdom of the Hungarians fell before the onslaught of their near relatives the Ottoman Turks in 1526, this region exhibits a whole series of forms of civilization of which the territorial basis, as it were, was the high plateau land of Transylvania.

This great natural fortress is roughly in the form of a square, with lofty mountains on every side. It contains deposits of gold and silver, of copper, of iron and of salt. From the earliest neolithic times, inhabitants of the plains of Moldavia and South Russia, with their beautiful painted pottery, no less than wanderers from the thickly peopled plains of the Middle Danube and the highlands of Illyria, with their incised pottery, succeeded in overcoming all the obstacles of nature and penetrated, from the east and from the west, into this mountain fortress with its stores of gold. Here they settled down together, creating by their

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fusion a new civilization of their own. Its characteristics were mainly western, though with certain marked traces of eastern influences.

In the Bronze Age the Carpathians were the cradle of the virile and original civilization of what is called the 'Hungaro-Roumanian Bronze Age', with workmanship in bronze and gold which was unique in Europe. In the first Iron Age two civilizations used this same Carpathian region as a basis for expansion towards the west. First came the Cimmerians, who only remained a short time but brought with them a curious type of copper work modelled on Caucasian originals. Next came the Scythians, who remained for a very long period, and introduced naturalistic designs of Russo-Siberian type. Again, in the second Iron Age, the original inhabitants of this region, which we may now call by its proper name of Dacia, drove back Iranian invaders eastwards and Celts to the west, and founded the greatest barbarian empire ever known in this part of Europe. The Getic kingdom of Burebista included Bohemia and Western Hungary, as well as Bessarabia and Bulgaria, but the Transylvanian Carpathians remained the basis of its power. Even the Roman conquests beyond the Eastern Alps and the Adriatic were not complete until Dacia had submitted. Later emperors withdrew behind the

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Danube after little more than a century and a half of occupation, yet this Eastern Roman province, when it had once received the impress of Latin civilization, was the only one destined to succeed, in the face of the most severe trials, in maintaining its Roman characteristics right down to the present day.

A study of Danubian Europe in proto-historic and ancient times is therefore, above all, a consideration of the racial relationships, and an examination of the types of civilization which the Carpatho-Danubians of pre-Roman Dacia have to show us from about the end of the second millennium B.C., when these peoples begin to acquire names well-established in general history. It is not proposed, however, to advance hypotheses as to the nationality of the Carpatho-Danubians, but rather to let the facts speak for themselves. Let us begin, then, by describing this Danubian civilization as it was about the year 1000 B.C.

A careful archaeological study of the 'great period of the Hungaro-Roumanian Bronze Age' in Transylvania, as exemplified in innumerable hoards which were hidden first of all from Cimmerian invaders and then from the Iranians (that is to say, between 1000 and 700 B.C.), points to three important conclusions:

- (1) The third period of the Carpatho-Danubian

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Bronze Age is nothing more than a long preparation for the fourth period—the ‘Golden Age’—whose industrial products are a natural development from types of the preceding period. It really makes no difference whether we take the middle of the twelfth century B.C. (as Reinecke holds\*), or the end of the eleventh century B.C. (as we are inclined to think), as the dividing line between the two periods. In either case it is quite clear that the latter half of the second millennium B.C. was not disturbed by any invasion or devastation such as would bring about important changes in the ethnographic or cultural composition of the Carpatho-Danubian countries.

(2) The bronze hoards of Bohemia and Western Hungary exhibit the same cultural forms as we find in the Carpathians. As in the days of Caesar, there is direct continuity with the West.†

(3) The main characteristics of the industrial products of Dacia are derived from the west rather than from the east. In other words, there is a more clearly marked connection with the west of Central Europe, including Northern Italy, than there is with Eastern and Southern Europe or Asia Minor.

We know that the Iron Age began later in the

\* *Archaeologiai Értésítő*, 1899, p. 225 sqq. and 316 sqq.

† Caesar, *De Bell. Gall.* vi, p. 24 sq.

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Carpatho-Danubian region than in Noricum or in North-east Italy—that is to say, in those Veneto-Illyrian countries which controlled the overland route by which amber came from the Baltic as well as the maritime routes from the Adriatic to the Eastern Mediterranean. As in Western Gaul, the last period of the Bronze Age in the Carpathians lasted down to the end of the eighth century B.C. Yet the products of the Veneto-Illyrian lands in the second Iron Age and, more especially in the first half of this period, were by no means unknown to the Carpatho-Danubians. Just as the copper axe heads of Cimmerian type had long formed the object of a very active trade with Eastern Europe as far as the Ural Mountains and the Caucasus, so the beautiful bronze vases made in Italy at Ateste and Villanova, together with the helmets, breastplates, and greaves, which are technically the same type of product, spread through all the Carpatho-Danubian countries and even passed beyond the Dniester into Podolia. It is true that Cimmerian axe heads and Italic vases were imitated by the Dacians, and it is not always easy to distinguish between the foreign and the domestic product. The technique of making thin hammered sheets of bronze or gold, with repoussé or engraved ornamentation, was understood in Dacia as early as the third Bronze Age. Under

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Veneto-Illyrian influence, however, this type of work developed very greatly, and the decorative patterns of the fourth Carpathian Bronze period approximate very closely to the models coming from the south-west.

Let us now outline the geographical distribution of Villanovan and Atestine products in Danubian Europe and then proceed to consider them from the stylistic point of view.

The districts in immediate proximity to Italy are not of any great interest for our present purpose. Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Northern Dalmatia and even Western Hungary are a natural continuation of North Italic Venetia. It is therefore quite natural that we should find the products of the bronze-workers of Ateste and Villanova in these districts. What really establishes beyond dispute the essential unity of Danubian Europe is that similar products are discovered in very large numbers in Transylvania and in Galicia. These North Italic products are also found north of the Alps and even as far away as the Baltic coast and here they bear witness to that other great European unity, the Italo-Celtic, which penetrated far into Germanic territory. On the other hand, these products are virtually non-existent in the Balkan Peninsula, which, from this point of view, as from so many others, belongs

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to a different world. Here Greek, or, to speak more generally, Aegean influences are much more important than they are in the Danubian lands.

The region which lies between the great Hungarian plain of the Middle Danube and the plateau of Eastern Galicia abounds in North Italic products, which are usually found together with native products belonging to the fourth period of the Hungaro-Roumanian Bronze Age. Thanks to the existence, side by side, of these two varieties—the Carpatho-Danubian products on the one hand and the Italo-Venetian on the other—we are able to establish a fairly exact chronology. Reinecke, in his classification of Hungaro-Roumanian bronzes, also regards the fourth period of this Age as contemporary with western influences of the Italo-Hallstatt type, and distinguishes three phases or sub-periods. The first, which corresponds to the most ancient Villanovan period, would include the finds at Gușterița, Bundorf, Rus, Kaszapúsza and Hajdú-Böszörmény. The second phase, which appears to us difficult to separate from the first, since in these deposits we find exactly the same products of North Italic bronze-workers, would include the finds at Brăduț and at Kemece. The third, which, according to Reinecke, lasted down to the middle of the ninth century but which we think was much more recent and prob-

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ably continued so late as the year 700 B.C., is represented by the deposits at Șomărtin and, above all, by the valuable find at Fizeșul Gherlii. This last period would thus represent the transition towards the true Hallstatto-Carpathian type—approximately contemporaneous with the Scythian invasion—such as we find it at Aiud, Gyoma and elsewhere.\*

Of the metallic vases of North Italian origin—*cistae*, *situlae* and hemispherical cauldrons—the most widespread type found between the Middle Danube and the Dniester is the small cauldron with two movable handles and cruciform handle mounts. These found their way into Galicia and Podolia by way of trade. They were probably taken over the Carpathians by the mountain passes in what is now Slovakia. We know of five examples from Uniz in Galicia, and seven at Kungsoyce on the Dniester, and of others in Podolia. These cauldrons were the first North Italic vessels to circulate through virtually the whole of Central and Western Europe, from Gaul to Galicia and from Styria to Denmark, towards the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age. According to the proto-historic chronology of the Alpine regions, this would be between 1100 and 800 B.C. This conclusion also

\* These are referred to in the next chapter, p. 54 sqq.



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agrees perfectly with discoveries made in the Carpathian regions, since we find these cauldrons exclusively in the deposits of the fourth period, as we shall try to show later.

Such, then, are the geographic and chronological limits of Italic and Alpine infiltrations into the Carpatho-Danubian lands. We must now make a more detailed survey both of the location and of the style of the finds which establish the unity of cultural life in Danubian Europe during the Villanovan period. Among the most characteristic products of early Hallstatt industry is the *antennae* sword, an example of which was unearthed at Bundorf. This belongs, it is true, to the technique of the Bronze Age, but contains forms which already anticipate the first period of the Iron Age as known in the West. It was found side by side with two other swords belonging to the fourth period of the Carpatho-Danubian Bronze Age, and is the only specimen which has as yet been discovered to the east of the Middle Danube. The bronze-workers of the Carpathians never made *antennae* swords. This one must therefore have come through commercial channels. The period in which this type was manufactured in Switzerland, in the Alps and even in Italy was approximately the beginning of the first millennium B.C.

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To this phase of the beginning of the fourth period of the Carpatho-Danubian Bronze Age belong the gold treasure and bronze deposits of Brăduț. Side by side with socketed axe heads, sickles, sword fragments, and twenty-five gold rings with transverse incisions, which may perhaps have served as money, we also find two specimens, of different size and decoration, of the North Italic type of cauldron. Two other hemispheric cauldrons have been found at Vécs, and fragments of yet another at Alba-Iulia (the ancient Apulum)[2]. We shall have more to say later about other fragments discovered in the large deposits at Gușterița, which date from the beginning of the fourth period of the Carpatho-Danubian Bronze Age. A fine cauldron of the same type and in an excellent state of preservation was found at Kántorjánosi in the county of Satmar [2]. The two districts which border on Satmar and Bihar on the western side—the counties of Szabolcs and Hajdú—are also very rich in these cauldrons, which appear to be of Atestine and not of Villanovan workmanship. The bronze merchant who hid his treasure at Hajdú-Böszörmény was a specialist in swords, and twenty-seven of these survive. He also dealt, however, in the equally valuable North Italic vases, of which the following finds have been made: a fine *situla* [1], decorated