

TRANSITIONS TO THE BRONZE AGE

**Interregional Interaction and Socio-Cultural Change
in the Third Millennium BC
Carpathian Basin and Neighbouring Regions**

**Edited by
Volker Heyd, Gabriella Kulcsár and Vajk Szeverényi**



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Front Cover

M. C. Escher's "Day and Night" © 2013 The M.C. Escher Company-The Netherlands
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Back Cover

Interior decorated bowl fragments from Somogyvár-Kupavárhegy, Hungary
(photo by Fanni Fazekas)

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Editorial

Transitions from one major period of human history to the next can be very diverse: from smooth, gradual and hardly perceptible when it happens to fast, sudden and revolutionary. In the case of prehistoric transitions, the latter often can be detected only with great difficulties, while longer term processes – or the long-term results of sudden transformations – are perhaps more readily recognizable.

The transition from the Copper to the Bronze Age in east-Central Europe was among the most important ones in prehistory, with implications for the whole Continent. But how do we define the character of this transition? What changed? What makes the Bronze Age distinct from the Neolithic or the Copper Age? Obviously many answers will be found in this book, but one interesting feature should be highlighted here, which certainly indicates a change of paradigm: 20–30 years ago half of the contributions would have dealt with the emergence of tin-bronze technology. In this volume no-one has actually looked at this question. Although this may be regrettable from a certain point of view, it also shows that nowadays' scholars find other aspects of this transition more interesting and more defining. These now seem mostly to include new relationships between human beings and material culture, new forms of consumption, and a re-arrangement of interregional contacts. Another important issue that has re-entered the discussions about major transitions, and is dealt with in this volume as well, is mobility and the migration of smaller or larger groups of people – now obviously based on different kinds of evidence than 20–30 years ago.

The meetings of the most significant archaeological association in Europe, the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA), provide each year an outstanding opportunity for dialogues between scholars of various countries and backgrounds. At the 16th meeting, held in September 2010 in The Hague, The Netherlands, Volker Heyd, Gabriella Kulcsár and Vajk Szeverényi organized a full-day conference session focusing on interregional contacts and social, economic and cultural change in the third millennium BC in and around the Carpathian Basin. The session turned out to be a great success with many interested and renowned specialists in attendance. Encouraged by this success, and understanding the long-standing need of tackling the question of the emergence of the Bronze Age in this region, we prepared this volume based on the papers given at the session. The 13 articles, all written in English, discuss problems of transition and change from the Late Copper to the Early Bronze Age, more than a whole millennium from the later 4th to the end of the 3rd millennium BC. The volume highlights various aspects of the structure and temporal and spatial dynamics of interregional interactions of the communities of the Carpathian Basin in the third millennium BC. Traditional typo-chronological issues are accompanied by the results of absolute dating, anthropological and biochemical investigations, statistical analyses, and contribute a great deal to our knowledge of the long-distance interaction zones and communication networks of the period.

Volker Heyd sets the over-arching theme and gives a wide-ranging review of the beginnings of the Bronze Age in Central and southern Europe identifying important social processes that define this period. Gabriella Kulcsár and Vajk Szeverényi focus more narrowly on the Carpathian Basin and examine the terminological and chronological framework, investigate the issue of (dis)continuity and also identify various social changes during this crucial transition. Marzena Szmyt, Yuri Rassamakin and Elke Kaiser investigate various parts of, and aspects in, the North Pontic steppe and forest-steppe region: while Szmyt focuses on interactions between steppe and forest-steppe communities characterized by eastern Globular Amphora and Yamnaya type materials, Rassamakin gives a review of the current knowledge about the emergence of the Yamnaya and various pre-Yamnaya societies in the Ukraine emphasizing changes in burial rites and material cultures; Kaiser finally examines the famous *kurilnitsy* of the steppe and the Caucasus foreland, and their relationship with the interior decorated pedestalled bowls of the Carpathian

Basin. Back in the Carpathian Basin, Tünde Horváth and her colleagues, as well as Claudia Gerling and Horia Ciugudean, concentrate on mound burials in eastern Hungary and western Transylvania and their possible interpretations, the latter with reliance on stable isotope analyses. János Dani highlights metallurgical production throughout the transition with special attention to early copper shaft-hole axes. Manfred Woidich and Alexandru Szentmiklósi follow by publishing new evidence on the beginnings of the Early Bronze Age from the Romanian Banat area, while Jaroslav Peška and Miroslav Králík provide a sophisticated statistical analysis of the wide-spread “Nagyrev jugs” – characteristic one-handled jugs in Moravia and Hungary from 2600 to 2200 BC. Staying roughly in the same period, Róbert Patay presents a first overview of the important new Bell Beaker burial site of Szigetszentmiklós in Central Hungary. This is complemented by Péter Csippán who studies economic change through the transition by comparing Late Copper and Early Bronze Age patterns of animal husbandry at a Central Hungarian settlement. Finally, Neculai Bolohan and Andrei Asăndulesei investigate the Early to Middle Bronze Age transition directly east of the Carpathians through the study of Costișa type material and their settlements.

We are grateful to all these colleagues, working in seven European countries, not only for their efforts in bringing their ideas down to paper but also for their patience with us and their help and support during the editing process.

The publishing of the book was, as always, in the good hands of the Archaeolingua Foundation and Dr Erzsébet Jerem. We wish to thank her and Gergely Hős, our desktop editor, for their patience and perseverance with the text, figures and our many requests over the last months.

This book would not have been possible without the financial support of the National Cultural Fund of Hungary. It was also supported by a János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences for Gabriella Kulcsár, and by a research leave for Volker Heyd granted by the School of Arts at Bristol University. We all are grateful for this support.

We think nothing describes better the theme of TRANSITIONS than the wonderful woodcuts and lithographs of the Dutch artist Maurits Cornelis Escher. Also as a reminiscence for Den Haag, where we could visit the Escher in Het Paleis, we chose his famous picture “Day and Night”, created in 1938 at the twilight of a terrible time when such kind of scholarly cooperation would not have been possible, to perhaps serve as an inspiration, or at least to consider the various aspects of perspectives, perception and geometry of transitions. We are thus also very grateful to *The M.C. Escher Company – The Netherlands* for allowing us to reproduce this masterpiece.

Bristol, Budapest & Szeged, in November 2013

Volker Heyd, Gabriella Kulcsár and Vajk Szeverényi