

With Their Backs to the Mountains

A History of Carpathian Rus' and Carpatho-Rusyns

Paul Robert Magocsi

WITH THEIR BACKS TO THE MOUNTAINS

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A HISTORY OF CARPATHIAN RUS'
AND CARPATHO-RUSYNS

Paul Robert Magocsi



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Contents

List of Maps	xiv
List of Tables	xvi
Introduction	xvii

Chapters

1. Carpatho-Rusyns and the land of Carpathian Rus'	1
Human geography	
<i>No shortage of names</i>	
Physical geography	
<i>A borderland of borders</i>	
2. Carpathian Rus' in prehistoric times	15
Earliest human settlements	
The Iron Age and the Celts	
<i>Early peoples in Carpathian Rus'</i>	
The Roman Empire and the Dacians	
3. The Slavs and their arrival in the Carpathians	23
The Huns and the displacement of peoples	
The origin-of-peoples fetish	
<i>Is DNA the reliable way?</i>	
The Slavs and Carpathian Rus'	
<i>Dwellings of the early Slavs</i>	
The White Croats and the Avars	
4. State formation in central Europe	33
The Pax Romana and the Byzantine Empire	
Greater Moravia	
Saints Constantine/Cyril and Methodius	
<i>Christianity becomes "our" religion</i>	

<i>Who among the East Slavs first received Christianity?</i>	
<i>The Magyars and Hungary</i>	
<i>Historical memory and political reality</i>	
<i>The rise of Poland</i>	
<i>Kievan Rus'</i>	
<i>The Great Debate: the origin of Rus'</i>	
5. Carpathian Rus' until the early 16th century	53
The formation of the Hungarian Kingdom	
<i>A medieval Carpatho-Rusyn state: fact or fiction?</i>	
The Mongol invasion and the restructuring of Hungary	
The Vlach colonization	
Kings, nobles, and the implementation of serfdom	
Poland: administrative and socioeconomic structure	
The fall of Constantinople and the decline of Orthodoxy	
6. The Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, and Carpathian Rus'	74
The Ottoman Empire in central Europe	
The Protestant Reformation	
The Catholic Counter-Reformation	
Poland and church union	
Transylvania and church union in Hungary	
<i>The Union of Uzhhorod</i>	
<i>Uniates/Greek Catholics: A new church or a return to the old?</i>	
7. The Habsburg restoration in Carpathian Rus'	88
Rákóczi's "War of Liberation"	
Habsburg Austria's transformation of Carpathian Rus'	
The Bachka-Srem Vojvodinian Rusyns	
Poland and Galicia's Lemko Region	
8. Habsburg reforms and their impact on Carpatho-Rusyns	97
The reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II	
Uniate/Greek Catholics and the Enlightenment in Carpathian Rus'	
Carpatho-Rusyns become an historical people	
9. The Revolution of 1848 and the Carpatho-Rusyn national awakening	107
The multicultural Austrian Empire	
<i>Kakania's emperors and kings</i>	
<i>What is nationalism and what are national movements?</i>	
Nationalism in Hungary	

	<i>From inferiority to superiority: the transformation of a dangerous complex</i>	
	Revolution in the Austrian lands and Hungary	
	The Carpatho-Rusyn national awakening: politics	
	<i>The first Carpatho-Rusyn political program</i>	
	The Carpatho-Rusyn national awakening: culture	
	<i>Did Carpatho-Rusyns really love the Russians?</i>	
10.	<i>Carpathian Rus' in Austria-Hungary, 1868–1914</i>	129
	The Dual Monarchy and Austrian parliamentarism	
	In search of a Rus' national identity	
	The national awakening in the Lemko Region	
	Hungary and its magyarization policies	
	<i>Magyarization despite the letter of the law</i>	
	<i>Carpatho-Rusyns in Hungarian politics</i>	
	Carpatho-Rusyns and national survival	
	Socioeconomic developments	
	<i>Was life in pre-World War I Carpathian Rus' so destitute?</i>	
11.	<i>Carpatho-Rusyn diasporas before World War I</i>	151
	Migration to the Srem, Banat, and Bachka	
	Emigration abroad to the United States	
	Rusyn-American religious and secular organizations	
	Rejected Greek Catholics and the "return" to Orthodoxy	
	<i>"You are not a proper priest"</i>	
	"Ruthenians" become Uhro (Hungarian)-Rusyns, or Russians, or Ukrainians	
	Rusyn Americans and international politics	
12.	<i>Carpathian Rus' during World War I, 1914–1918</i>	167
	The end of civilized Europe	
	World War I in Carpathian Rus'	
	The war against Carpatho-Rusyn civilians	
	Magyarization reaches its peak	
13.	<i>The end of the old and the birth of a new order, 1918–1919</i>	175
	National self-determination and socialist revolution	
	Rusyn Americans mobilize politically	
	Political mobilization in the Carpatho-Rusyn homeland	
	Hungary's autonomous Rus' Land	
	The Ukrainian option	
	<i>The meaning of Ukraine</i>	
	Carpatho-Rusyns on the international stage	

14. Subcarpathian Rus' in interwar Czechoslovakia, 1919–1938	191
Czechoslovakia and “Rusyns south of the Carpathians”	
Borders and the autonomy question	
<i>Carpatho-Rusyn national anthems</i>	
Hungarian irredentism	
Political life	
Socioeconomic developments	
<i>Subcarpathian Rus': Czechoslovakia's architectural tabula rasa</i>	
Education and culture	
Churches and the religious question	
<i>Orthodoxy: the jurisdictional problem</i>	
The nationality and language questions	
<i>The language question</i>	
15. The Prešov Region in interwar Slovakia, 1919–1938	219
Borders, schools, and censuses	
<i>The problem of statistics</i>	
Carpatho-Rusyns and Slovaks	
Socioeconomic developments	
Education	
The religious question	
The nationality question and cultural developments	
16. The Lemko Region in interwar Poland, 1919–1938	233
Poland, its Ukrainian problem, and the Lemko Region	
Socioeconomic status of the Lemko Rusyns	
Religious and civic activity	
The Lemko-Rusyn national awakening	
17. Carpatho-Rusyn diasporas during the interwar years, 1919–1938	241
Romania and Hungary	
Yugoslavia—the Vojvodina	
The United States	
<i>Marriage and property: two sticking points</i>	
18. Other peoples in Subcarpathian Rus'	253
Magyars	
Jews	
<i>Relations between Jews and Carpatho-Rusyns</i>	
Germans	
Romanians, Slovaks, and Roma/Gypsies	
Russians, Ukrainians, and Czechs	

19. <i>Autonomous Subcarpathian Rus' and Carpatho-Ukraine, 1938–1939</i>	269
The struggle for autonomy during the interwar years	
Nazi Germany and the Munich Pact	
Autonomous Subcarpathian Rus'	
From Subcarpathian Rus' to Carpatho-Ukraine	
Alternatives to the Ukrainian national orientation	
Carpatho-Ukraine's road to "independence"	
20. <i>Carpathian Rus' during World War II, 1939–1944</i>	279
Nazi Germany's New Order in Europe	
The Lemko Region in Nazi Germany	
Carpatho-Rusyns in the Slovak state	
Subcarpathian Rus' in Hungary	
The apogee of the Rusyn national orientation	
Opposition to Hungarian rule	
21. <i>Carpathian Rus' in transition, 1944–1945</i>	291
The Soviet Army and Ukrainian nationalist partisans	
Rusyn/Lemko Americans and the war in Europe	
The Soviet "liberation" of Subcarpathian Rus'	
Transcarpathian Ukraine and "reunification"	
<i>The act of reunification</i>	
Czechoslovakia acquiesces to Soviet hegemony	
<i>Why did Czechoslovakia give up Subcarpathian Rus'?</i>	
The new Poland and the deportation of the Lemkos: Phase one	
22. <i>Subcarpathian Rus'/Transcarpathia in the Soviet Union, 1945–1991</i>	305
Subcarpathian Rus' becomes Soviet Transcarpathia	
The Soviet socio-political model	
<i>Totalitarian time</i>	
Forced collectivization and industrialization	
Transcarpathia's new peoples	
Revising the past and reckoning with "enemies of the people"	
<i>How Carpatho-Rusyns were declared Ukrainians</i>	
Destruction of the Greek Catholic Church	
Transcarpathia's new Soviet society	
<i>Love of the East</i>	
23. <i>The Prešov Region in postwar and Communist Czechoslovakia, 1945–1989</i>	321
Postwar politics: the Ukrainian National Council	
Population transfers and the UPA	

Communist Czechoslovakia according to the Soviet model	
Carpatho-Rusyns are ukrainianized	
The Prague Spring and the rebirth of Carpatho-Rusyns	
Soviet-style political consolidation and reukrainianization	
Socioeconomic achievements and national assimilation	
24. <i>The Lemko Region and Lemko Rusyns in Communist Poland, 1945–1989</i>	335
Poland reconstituted and reconstructed	
The deportation of the Lemkos: Phase two	
Greek Catholic and Orthodox Lemkos	
Lemkos as Ukrainians	
<i>Lemko fear and anxiety</i>	
25. <i>Carpatho-Rusyn diasporas old and new, 1945–1989</i>	343
Soviet Ukraine (Galicia and Volhynia)	
Czechoslovakia (Bohemia and Moravia)	
Romania (the Banat and Maramureş Regions)	
Yugoslavia (Vojvodina and Srem)	
The United States	
<i>We want to know who we are</i>	
26. <i>The revolutions of 1989</i>	355
Transformation and demise of the Soviet Union	
The end of Communist rule in central Europe	
Carpatho-Rusyns reassert their existence	
One people despite international borders	
<i>Proclamation of the First World Congress of Rusyns</i>	
The autonomy question again	
27. <i>Post-Communist Transcarpathia—Ukraine</i>	363
Unfulfilled political expectations	
Ukraine's "Rusyn question"	
Carpatho-Rusyns in the international context	
Socioeconomic realities	
A failed or incomplete national movement?	
Traditional religious and secular culture	
<i>Protestantism and Carpatho-Rusyns</i>	
28. <i>The post-Communist Prešov Region and the Lemko Region—Slovakia and Poland</i>	379
Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution	
Censuses confirm nationalities	
Independent Slovakia and the European Union	

Prešov Region Carpatho-Rusyns reaffirm their existence	
The Greek Catholic Church: a positive or negative force?	
Nationality assertion and assimilation	
<i>Codification of a Rusyn literary language</i>	
Poland's three Lemko-Rusyn communities	
Lemko Rusyns or Lemko Ukrainians?	
<i>The Vatra: a symbol of national and political advocacy</i>	
The attraction of Polish assimilation	
29. Other Carpatho-Rusyn communities in the wake of the revolutions of 1989	393
Ukraine	
The Czech Republic	
Hungary	
Romania	
Yugoslavia—Serbia and Croatia	
The United States	
Canada	
30. Carpathian Rus'—real or imagined?	407
Carpathian Rus': a reality or an idea?	
Carpathian Rus' beyond Carpathian Rus'	
Enemies as friends	
A movement of women and young people	
Education and national self-confidence	
Notes	413
For further reading	433
1. Reference works and general studies	
2. Prehistoric times to the 16th century	
3. The 17th and early 18th centuries	
4. The reform era and Habsburg rule, 1770s to 1847	
5. The Revolution of 1848 to the end of World War I	
6. The interwar years, 1919–1938	
7. International crises and World War II, 1938–1945	
8. The Communist era, 1945–1989	
9. The revolutions of 1989 and their aftermath	
Illustration Sources and Credits	477
Index	479

List of Maps

1. Ethnographic divisions in Carpathian Rus'	4
2. Carpathian Rus': a borderland of borders	8
3. Geographic features of Carpathian Rus'	10
4. Archeological sites in the Upper Tisza and Lemko Regions	16
5. Central Europe, 5th century	20
6. Central Europe, ca. 750	30
7. Central Europe, 9th century	34
8. Early medieval kingdoms, ca. 1050	44
9. Hungary in the 11th century	54
10. Carpathian Rus', 13th–14th centuries	58
11. Hungary and Poland, 14th–15th centuries	62
12. Central Europe, ca. 1480	68
13. Central Europe, ca. 1570	74
14. Transylvania and Royal Hungary, 17th century	80
15. Austria and Hungary, 18th century	88
16. Austrian Empire, 1848–1849	110
17. Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1867–1914	130
18. Carpathian Rus', ca. 1900	142
19. Southern Hungary, ca. 1900	152
20. Carpatho-Rusyn communities in the United States	155
21. Greek Catholic eparchies in Carpathian Rus' before World War I ..	164
22. World War I in the Carpathians	168
23. Carpatho-Rusyn councils and republics, 1918–1920	180
24. Political claims in Carpathian Rus', 1918–1919	188
25. Carpathian Rus', 1919–1938	192

26. Religious institutions in Carpathian Rus', 1935	226
27. Magyars and Jews in Subcarpathian Rus', ca. 1930	254
28. Other peoples in Subcarpathian Rus', ca. 1930	262
29. Subcarpathian Rus'/Carpatho-Ukraine, 1938–1939	272
30. Central Europe during World War II	280
31. Central Europe after World War II	302
32. Carpatho-Rusyn diasporas after World War II	344
33. Carpathian Rus' today	364
34. Vojvodina, Srem, and the Banat today	400

List of Tables

1.1 Number of Carpatho-Rusyns, ca. 2012	1
10.1 Carpatho-Rusyns in the Hungarian Kingdom, 1840 to 1910	141
14.1 Schools in interwar Subcarpathian Rus'	205
16.1 Nationality composition of the Lemko Region	234
18.1 Nationality composition of Subcarpathian Rus', 1921 and 1930 ..	253
23.1 Census data on East Slavs in Slovakia, 1900 to 1991	329

Introduction

In 2006, I published a small illustrated book titled *The People from Nowhere*. Meant to be a reader-friendly, heavily illustrated introduction to the history of Carpatho-Rusyns, it seemed to fulfill that role not only through the English edition but also through editions in several other languages (Croatian, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Rusyn, Slovak, Ukrainian, and Vojvodinian Rusyn), which made the book accessible to readers in countries where Carpatho-Rusyns traditionally live.

Some readers were taken aback by the title of the book, a light-hearted paraphrase of a statement attributed to the most well-known person of Carpatho-Rusyn background, the American artist and cultural icon of the late twentieth century, Andy Warhol. It seems Warhol's irony, reframed as "the people from nowhere," did not sit well with overly sensitive—and usually recently reborn—Carpatho-Rusyn patriots, who seemed personally insulted that "their" ancestral people might have no real roots and concrete origins like other respectable peoples.

To be sure, *The People from Nowhere* made clear in its very first pages that Carpatho-Rusyns did, indeed, come from somewhere and that they did have a historic homeland which over the centuries spawned a distinct and respectable culture. Aside from its easy-to-read narrative, *The People from Nowhere* fulfilled another important function: it provided the conceptual framework and methodological approach to writing about a people which never had its own state. Many readers got the message about the existence of a distinct Carpatho-Rusyn people and historic homeland (especially critics who do not accept the very premise of the message), but some were still displeased that the text was too short. Brevity, of course, was the point of writing a popular book. The author knew all along that a fuller, more comprehensive history was in the making, and that version is in your hands: *With Their Backs to the Mountains: A History of Carpathian Rus' and Carpatho-Rusyns*.

What is the implication of the metaphor couched in the title of this book? Perhaps an even better title would have been: "no friends but the mountains." But that formulation was already used in a book about the Kurds, also a mountain people who in recent decades have been compared to

Carpatho-Rusyns. The point is that neither of these mountain-dwelling peoples has ever had their own state, and that the various states in which both have lived more often than not have had a negative impact on Carpatho-Rusyn or Kurdish society and culture. In the case of Carpatho-Rusyns, they have through assimilatory pressure since the nineteenth century been pushed gradually back from the lowlands and foothills toward the mountains, and on the northern slopes they have, in the twentieth century, been forcibly driven away. At best, then, the mountains have been a kind of protective shield and refuge in the sense of that turn of phrase used by people who speak of having their back covered.

The book's subtitle suggests two important elements: land and people. As elaborated in the chapters that follow, there is an historic territory in Europe called Carpathian Rus', a concept known to some of its inhabitants even though it is not to be found on most maps past or present. That land has been inhabited in large part, although never exclusively, by Carpatho-Rusyns. On the other hand, there are also Carpatho-Rusyns who have lived—and still live—beyond the territory of Carpathian Rus', whether in neighboring countries or farther away, such as Serbia, the United States, and Canada. Therefore, this book is about Carpathian Rus' the land as well as about Carpatho-Rusyns the people, wherever they may have lived or still live.

With Their Backs to the Mountains began in a manner not atypical of many scholarly books; that is, as a series of lectures for a university course, which were subsequently revised and reformatted into a book. The original lectures were written in the spring of 2010 for a 30-hour course on the history of Carpatho-Rusyns given at the newly established Studium Carpato-Ruthenorum, the first international summer school in Carpatho-Rusyn Studies organized at the University of Prešov in Slovakia. I subsequently used the lectures in a year-long course, titled "The People from Nowhere," taught for the first time in 2011–2012 at my academic base, the University of Toronto in Canada.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the format of *With Their Backs to the Mountains* is somewhat similar to that of a university textbook used in history survey courses. The 30 chapters follow a basically chronological order, tracing historic developments from prehistoric times to the present. A concerted effort has been made to provide a balance between political, socioeconomic, and cultural (especially religious) developments. Also, in keeping with the didactic mode of university texts, many chapters begin by placing Carpathian Rus' in the larger context of the countries which ruled its territory as well as developments within Europe as a whole. Hence, the reader will be exposed to the history, however brief, of Hungary, Poland, the Habsburg Empire, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union, as well as to contextual explanations of larger pan-European phenomena, such as the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, nationalism, and sociolinguistic issues.

In a conscious effort not to interrupt the flow of the narrative, the only footnotes are those which provide sources for direct quotations and statisti-

cal data. This means that there are no explanatory footnotes of a definitional or historiographical nature that frequently accompany scholarly texts.

There is, nevertheless, in any survey that covers over two millennia of history, a need to provide explanations for certain terms, events, and social phenomena beyond what is possible to include in a readable narrative. To fulfill that need, I have adopted a practice used in other historical surveys that I previously published. I am referring to the so-called text inserts, which explain certain historiographical problems, elaborate on the contemporary significance of specific past events, and provide the texts of documents or illustrative explanations by other authors, whether scholars, journalists, or belletrists.

For those wanting to know more about a particular aspect of Carpatho-Rusyn history, an extensive section, **For further reading**, is appended. Couched in the form of a bibliographical essay, this section is arranged according to nine sub-sections which basically follow the chronological and thematic content of the book's narrative. Although most of the sources cited are in English, also included are a select number of the best works on a given topic, most of which are in Slavic and other languages of central Europe. The decision to include such works is based on the fact that many potential readers of *With Their Backs to the Mountains* will be in central Europe, where an increasing number of people, in particular younger generations, have at least a reading knowledge of English. Hence, they in particular may be able to make use not only of English-language sources, but also of the often excellent scholarly works in other languages noted in the **For further reading** section.

Geographic place names and to a lesser degree personal names pose a problem for any book dealing with central and eastern Europe. For geographic names I have followed the principles outlined in my *Historical Atlas of Central Europe*, 2nd rev. ed. (University of Washington Press, 2002). Villages, towns, and cities are given in the official language of the state in which they are presently located: Ukrainian for places in Ukraine, Slovak for Slovakia, Polish for Poland, etc. In a few cases where there is more than one form used in a given language (for example, the Ukrainian Mukacheve, Mukachiv, or Mukachevo), I have opted for the commonly accepted local variant, in this case, Mukachevo. In many instances, previous names may appear in parentheses the first time a place is mentioned—Mukachevo (Hungarian: Munkács), Uzhhorod (Hungarian: Ungvár), etc. Names of historic countries, regions, and provinces are given in their common English-language forms—Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealths, Galicia, Transylvania, Little Poland, etc.—as found in the *Historical Atlas of Central Europe*. Names of pre-World War I Hungarian counties are given in Rusyn, the districts of Austrian Galicia in Polish.

Personal names and names of organizations are given in the forms found in the *Historical Atlas of Central Europe*; the *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture*, 2nd rev. ed. Paul Robert Magocsi and Ivan Pop, 2nd rev. ed. (University of Toronto Press, 2005); and *The YIVO Encyclopedia of*

Jews in Eastern Europe, 2 vols., ed. Gershon David Hundert (Yale University Press, 2008). Transliterations from Cyrillic alphabets follow the Library of Congress system (without diacritical marks/elisions) for Russian, Rusyn, and Ukrainian.

No book, and certainly a general historical survey such as this, is the result solely of its author. I am particularly grateful to my long-time friend, Christopher Hann, who made possible my appointment as historian-in-residence at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle an der Saale, Germany. It was in the spring of 2010, during my fifth two-month residency in that intellectually inspiring and peaceful environment, that I was able to write the first draft of the 30 lectures which form the basis of this book.

I am also grateful to the many students of all ages and various ethno-cultural backgrounds who heard these lectures during four summer-school courses at the University of Prešov's Studium Carpato-Ruthenorum (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013) and at the University of Toronto during the academic years 2011–2012 and 2013–2014. Aside from honing my own limited presentational skills, the students posed numerous poignant and insightful questions which helped to improve the narrative of the book and often determined which subjects should be given further treatment in the text inserts.

I am particularly indebted to my inputter (I still write manuscripts—by hand!), Nadiya Kushko of the University of Toronto. Her wide-ranging knowledge and interest in prehistoric matters, East Slavic cultures, and Carpathian Rus' during the Soviet era has been of enormous value in enriching the content of *With Their Backs to the Mountains*. Finally, my appreciation goes out to several colleagues, who read all, or parts of the manuscript and graciously shared their specialized knowledge which certainly has enhanced the quality of the final text: Piotr Bajda (Cardinal Wyszyński University, Warsaw, Poland), Olena Duć-Fajfer (Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland), Bogdan Horbal (New York Public Library, USA), Maciej Janowski (University of Warsaw, Poland), Patricia A. Krafcik (The Evergreen State College, USA), John Righetti (Pittsburgh, USA), Endre Sashalmi (University of Pécs, Hungary), and Raz Segal (University of Haifa, Israel). Despite all these efforts, there are likely to be factual errors and other shortcomings which, to be sure, are the responsibility of me alone.

PAUL ROBERT MAGOCSI
Roquebrune-Cap Martin

Carpatho-Rusyns and the land of Carpathian Rus'

Carpatho-Rusyns have never had their own state, but they have for centuries inhabited a land called Carpathian Rus', which today is found within the borders of Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, and Romania. Carpatho-Rusyns are also found in other countries, whether in compact communities or in isolation, to which their ancestors emigrated for the most part during the past two centuries. The present-day countries with immigrant or diasporan communities are mostly in Europe: Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, and the Czech Republic; and in North America: the United States and Canada.

TABLE 1.1
Number of Carpatho-Rusyns, ca. 2012¹

Country	Official data	Informed estimate
Ukraine Transcarpathia (773,000) resettled Lemkos (80,000)	10,100	853,000
United States	12,900	620,000
Slovakia	55,500	130,000
Romania	250	35,000
Poland	10,500	30,000
Serbia	14,200	20,000
Canada	—	20,000
Czech Republic	1,100	10,000
Hungary	3,900	6,000
Croatia	2,300	5,000
Australia	—	2,500
TOTAL	110,750	1,762,500

Human geography

Being a stateless people, it is difficult to determine with any precision the number of Carpatho-Rusyns. According to the most recent official governmental census data, there are 104,000 Carpatho-Rusyns worldwide. Other informed sources suggest that the number could be as high as 1.7 million. (See Table 1.1)

According to linguistic criteria and certain cultural features, Carpatho-Rusyns belong to the Slavic group of Indo-European peoples. More specifically, they are classified among East Slavs because they speak a language which is structurally related to other East Slavic languages: Russian, Belarusian, and most especially Ukrainian. Carpatho-Rusyns have, however, traditionally lived along an ethnolinguistic borderland that intersects with several other related and unrelated languages. These include linguistically related West Slavic languages (Polish and Slovak); an unrelated Romance language (Romanian); and a Finno-Ugric language that is not even within the Indo-European linguistic family (Hungarian).

Spoken and written Carpatho-Rusyn have been influenced in varying degrees by all these languages, which is one of the reasons it is different from closely related East Slavic languages and, therefore, is considered by an increasing number of linguists as a distinct Indo-European Slavic language.² Carpatho-Rusyn is generally written in the Cyrillic alphabet, which with the exception of a few letters is similar to the alphabets used in other East Slavic languages. Aside from language, another cultural feature that links Carpatho-Rusyns to other East Slavs is their traditional Eastern-rite Christian religion, which has taken the form of either Orthodoxy or Byzantine/Greek Catholicism.

The historic homeland of Carpatho-Rusyns, referred to in this book as Carpathian Rus', has never existed as a distinct administrative entity; nor has it had independence or, in its entirety, ever had political autonomy. Rather, it is like many other historic regions in Europe—Friesland, Wallonia, the Basque Land, Kashubia, among others—which have functioned as historic homelands in the minds of their inhabitants and in some cases may even be perceived as such by outsiders. The defining feature of these and other historic homelands is that the majority of their inhabitants belong to a distinct people or ethnolinguistic group, whether Frisians, Walloons, Basques, Kashubians or, in the case of this book, Carpatho-Rusyns.

NO SHORTAGE OF NAMES

Carpatho-Rusyns may never have had their own state, but they and their historic homeland have had no shortage of names. Such a phenomenon is not uncommon among many of Europe's peoples, whether they have had their own states, have

lost their statehood, or have never had an independent state. The basic problem concerns nomenclature, or how a given people has been called by its own members and by outsiders in the past, and how and when its present ethnonym, or national name, was adopted and accepted as the current norm.

East Slavs inhabiting the Carpathian region have traditionally associated themselves with the name Rus', a concept that has been expressed in formulations such as: the people of Rus' (*rus'ki liudy*), the people of the Rus' faith (*rus'ka vira*), or the nominative forms *Rusnak* or *Rusyn*. The concept of Rus' should not—as is often done in western and even Slavic sources—be confused with the geographic term *Russia* and the ethnonym *Russian*.

Admittedly, the term *Rus'* and its adjectival derivative *Rusyn* are rather vague, since in medieval times Rus' referred to the lands inhabited by all East Slavs (modern-day Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, as well as Carpatho-Rusyns). Moreover, the term *Rusyn* (in English: *Ruthenian*) was also the common self-designation for Belarusians and for many Ukrainians until the outset of the twentieth century.

In order to be clear about the specific people that is the subject of this book, we should add a geographic prefix resulting in the ethnonym *Carpatho-Rusyn*; that is, the Rus' people whose traditional homeland is in and near the Carpathian Mountains. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that outsiders writing about the group as well as group members themselves have used terms which refer to geographic location, such as *Carpatho-Ruthenian*, or *Carpatho-Rusyn*; or, if the object is to promote a certain political agenda, *Uhro-Rusyn* (i.e., Hungarian Rusyns), *Carpatho-Russian*, or *Carpatho-Ukrainian*.

Traditionally, the most widely accepted self-designation used by the people themselves was the ethnonym *Rusnak*. This form can still be heard as a self-designation in parts of Carpathian Rus', and it is the formal ethnonym for Rusyns (i.e., *rusnatsi*) living in the Vojvodina and Srem regions of modern-day Serbia and Croatia. Finally, there is another regional term that is of recent origin but that since the early twentieth century has become the primary self-designation among Rusyns living north of the Carpathians in what is today Poland. The term is *Lemko*, or the variant, *Lemko-Rusyn*.

There have also been a whole host of other names applied to Carpatho-Rusyns who inhabit certain areas in Carpathian Rus'. Among the best known of these regional ethnographic terms are Lemko, Boiko, and Hutsul, although there are several others, including Krainiaky, Bliakhy, Dolyniane, and Verkhovyntsi. Some of these terms were not used by group members themselves, but rather by their neighbors or by scholars (especially ethnographers and linguists) seeking to devise a classification schema that might provide some order for their scholarly analyses.

It is perhaps not surprising, however, that scholars disagree about the boundaries between the various Carpatho-Rusyn ethnographic groups. Particularly controversial—among scholars, that is, not among the people themselves—is the farthest eastern extent of the Lemko component of Carpatho-Rusyns. Some scholars (especially linguists) fix the eastern "boundary" of Lemkos between the Wisłok and Oslawa Rivers on the northern slopes of the Carpathians. Ethnographers tend to push the Lemko boundary a bit farther east to the Solinka River and almost to the

mouth of the San River. Still others push the Lemko boundary southward to include all of the Prešov Region in northeastern Slovakia as far as the Uzh River valley in Ukraine's Transcarpathia/Subcarpathian Rus'.

Aside from the fluidity and vagueness of these scholarly ethnographic constructs, designations such as *Lemko*, *Boiko*, and *Hutsul* have taken on a political function. Ideologists of pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian orientation are especially fond of applying the Lemko-Boiko-Hutsul schema to East Slavs living on both the northern and southern slopes of the mountains, thereby "proving" that Carpatho-Rusyns are an extension of either the Russian or Ukrainian nationality. Put another way, for these ideologists, whether civic activists or scholars, there is no Rusyn nationality; rather, there are simply Lemkos, Boikos, and Hutsuls who are ethnographic groups of either Russians or Ukrainians.

The tripartite Lemko-Boiko-Hutsul schema, as applied to East Slavs living on both the northern and southern slopes of the Carpathians, does not, however, respond to reality on the ground. For example, Carpatho-Rusyns on the southern slopes of the mountains have never referred to themselves as either Lemkos or Boikos, while the area inhabited by self-designated Hutsuls is for the most part outside Carpathian Rus'. Only 17 villages on the southern slopes of the mountains (a mere 3 percent of the total number of villages in historic Carpathian Rus') are inhabited by persons who may use *Hutsul* as a self-identifier. On the other hand, the name *Hutsul* has taken on a broader and vaguer meaning. Especially in today's Ukraine it is used as a kind of term of endearment to describe *all* the inhabitants of Ukraine's Transcarpathian oblast, who are viewed with nostalgia as pristine mountaineers that ostensibly embody and preserve the best qualities of traditional Ukrainian culture.

The territorial homeland of Carpatho-Rusyns has also had several names. *Carpatho-Ruthenia*, *Carpatho-Russia*, *Carpatho-Ukraine*, *Rusinia*, *Subcarpathian Ruthenia*, or simply *Ruthenia* or *Subcarpathia* are among the most common that are encountered in the literature. This book will use the form *Carpathian Rus'*, which suggests both a geographic location (territory in the Carpathian Mountains and its foothills) and the ethnic affinity of the majority population (East Slavic inhabitants whose self-designation, *Rusnak/Rusyn*, derives from the noun *Rus'*).

Since Carpathian Rus' never functioned as a distinct political-administrative entity, how does one determine its boundaries? In short, Carpathian Rus' is where Carpatho-Rusyns have historically lived. One needs to stress the adverb *historically*, since in the course of the second half of the twentieth century the extent of Carpatho-Rusyn inhabited territory has been reduced, either because of physical displacement (both voluntary resettlement and forcible deportation), or because of national assimilation. Therefore, our understanding of what constitutes Carpathian Rus' derives from a historic period before physical displacement and large-scale national assimilation took place.

With that context in mind, the boundaries of Carpathian Rus' encompass a contiguous territory comprised of settlements in which at least 50 per-

cent of the inhabitants (and more often a much higher percentage) described themselves as Carpatho-Rusyns in the censuses of 1900, 1910, and 1921. At that time, there were 1,093 settlements (mostly villages with an average between 300 and 1,800 inhabitants), which could be classified as Carpatho-Rusyn.³ It is, therefore, conditions during the first two decades of the twentieth century which determine the boundaries of Carpathian Rus' as the unit of analysis in this book. As in historical writing about many European states and historic territories, so too is the concept of Carpathian Rus' as defined above used anachronistically to describe a specific land that before and after the period 1900–1921 may not have been inhabited by a majority Carpatho-Rusyn population or, for that matter, inhabited at all.

Where, geographically, are those villages, and what constitutes the historic territory of Carpathian Rus' in present-day political terms? Carpathian Rus' straddles the borders of four countries, and because of this political reality one may speak of it as divided into four regions: (1) the Lemko Region in present-day southeastern Poland; (2) the Prešov Region in northeastern Slovakia; (3) Subcarpathian Rus', or the Transcarpathian oblast of far western Ukraine; and (4) the Maramureș Region in north-central Romania. It is in these four regions where, until the mid-twentieth century, Carpatho-Rusyns lived in settlements located in a contiguous or geographically connected territory. Like many other historic territories in Europe, Carpathian Rus' has never been ethnically homogeneous. In other words, other groups, including Slovaks, Magyars,⁴ Jews, Germans, and Roma/Gypsies among others, have lived in varying proportions in villages throughout Carpathian Rus' where otherwise the majority of inhabitants are Carpatho-Rusyns.

Although Carpatho-Rusyns have traditionally lived in rural villages, they have been drawn to several towns and small cities just to the north (Nowy Sącz, Gorlice, Jasło, Krosno, Sanok) and to the south (Stará Ľubovňa, Bardejov, Prešov, Humenné, Michalovce, Uzhhorod, Mukachevo, Sighet). Until the twentieth century these places had on average only 12,000 to 18,000 inhabitants. Despite their small size, they at least since the outset of the nineteenth century served as the administrative centers for local Austrian Galician districts and Hungarian counties, where buildings housing offices for local government, courts, police, and other civic functionaries (notary publics, lawyers, physicians, newspaper editors) were to be found. Some of these towns had the only secondary schools (*gymnasias*, *seminaries*) for Carpathian Rus', as well as the administrative seats of the various churches serving the region. For all these reasons Carpatho-Rusyn villagers and their children would likely at some point in their lives be drawn to these towns, even if only on a one-time basis for a specific purpose.

The towns themselves were a world removed from the rural environment of Carpatho-Rusyn villages. Not only did they have paved (or more likely cobble-stoned) streets and a variety of small shops with goods not available in the village, but the vast majority of each town's inhabitants were of a different nationality and religion. On the northern slopes of the Carpathians those "other" town dwellers were likely to be Roman Catholic Poles; on the

southern slopes, Roman Catholic and Protestant Slovaks and Magyars. In earlier centuries Germans were likely to live in the inner core of some towns, while from the nineteenth century all of them included a high number of Jews, who in some cases made up a plurality of the inhabitants. As for Carpatho-Rusyns, those living in nearby villages (nearby implying access by foot or horse-cart) came to these urban centers primarily to trade or to buy manufactured goods, or in a few instances to work at the limited number of jobs that were available, mostly as day laborers or as domestic servants. Gradually, in the course of the twentieth century, political and socioeconomic changes allowed for a greater number of Carpatho-Rusyns to leave permanently their villages in order to settle and work in these and other cities nearby.

Aside from urban areas, there were and still are pockets or islets of rural settlements outside Carpathian Rus', where Carpatho-Rusyns have formed the majority or a significant portion of the population. These islets were—and in some cases still are—located just north of the Lemko Region in southeastern Poland, south of the Prešov Region in eastern Slovakia, in northeastern Hungary, and farther afield in the Banat Region of Romania, the Vojvodina of Serbia, and the Srem in Croatia.

Physical geography

Carpathian Rus' extends about 375 kilometers/232 miles from the Poprad River valley of Slovakia and Poland in the west to the Ruscova/Ruskova River (a tributary of the Vișeu, then Tisza/Tysa) of Romania in the east. This territory, which covers 18,000 square kilometers/7,020 square miles (about the size of the state of New Jersey in the United States) and is only 50 to 100 kilometers/30 to 50 miles in width, encompasses several mountain ranges (mostly the Beskyds) of the Carpathian Mountains and its lower foothills.

A BORDERLAND OF BORDERS

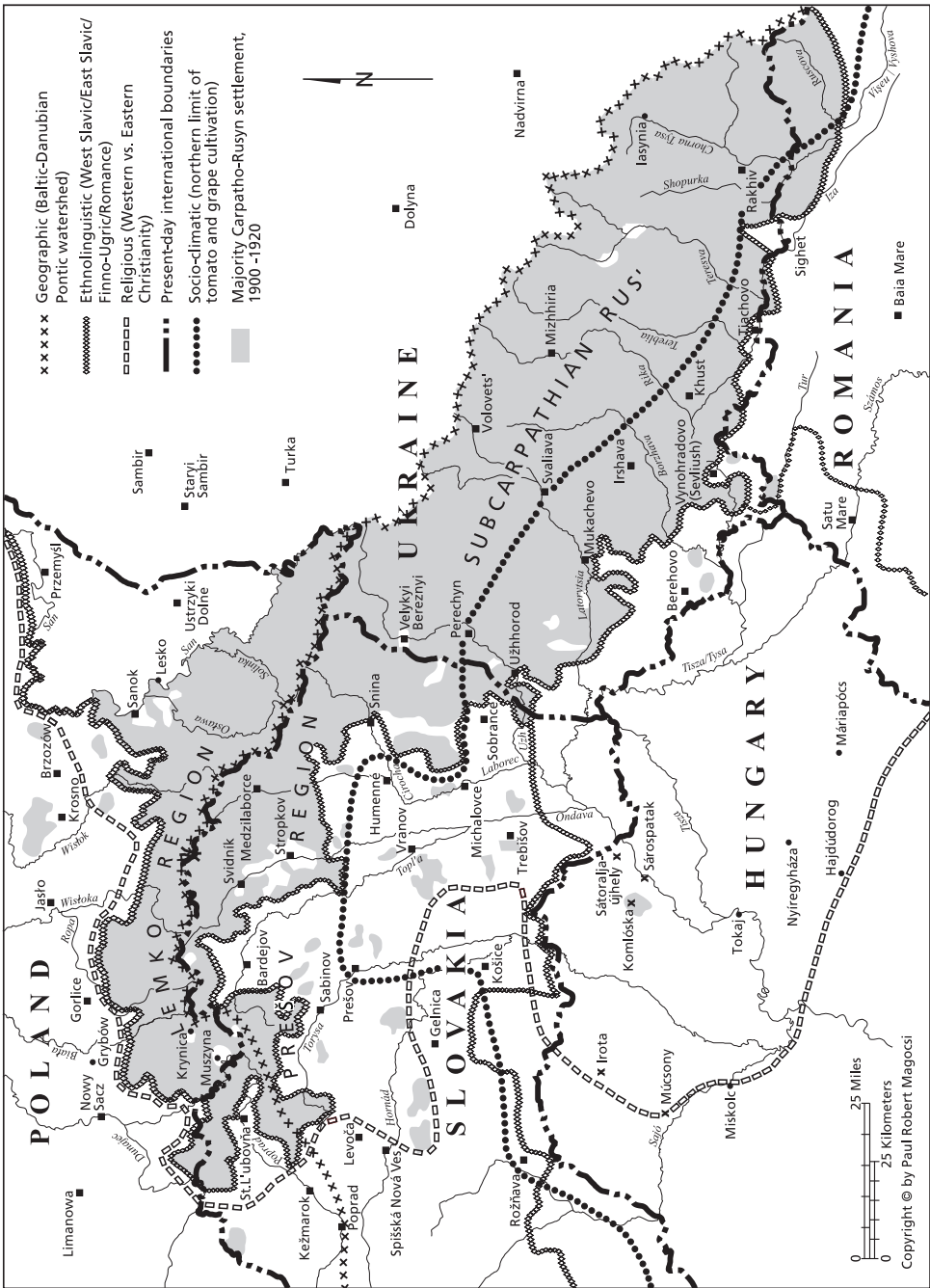
Carpathian Rus' is a borderland of borders. Through or along its periphery cross five types of boundaries: geographic, political, religious, ethnolinguistic, and socio-climatic.

Geographically, the crest of the Carpathian Mountains forms a watershed, so that the inhabitants on the northern slopes are drawn by natural and man-made communicational facilities toward the Vistula-San basins of the Baltic Sea. The inhabitants on the southern slopes are, by contrast, geographically part of the Danubian Basin and plains of Hungary.

Politically, during the long nineteenth century (1770s–1914), Carpathian Rus' was within one state, the Habsburg Monarchy, although it was divided between that empire's Austrian and Hungarian "halves" by the crests of the Carpathians. Since 1918 its territory has been divided among several states: Poland, Czechoslovakia,

MAP 2

CARPATHIAN RUS': A BORDERLAND OF BORDERS



Romania, the Soviet Union, Ukraine, and Slovakia, and for a short period Nazi Germany and Hungary.

Carpathian Rus' is located along the great borderland divide between Eastern and Western Christianity, spheres which some scholars have described as *Slavia Orthodoxa* and *Slavia Romana*. Most of the region's Carpatho-Rusyn inhabitants fall within the Eastern Christian sphere, although they are in turn divided more or less evenly between adherents of Greek Catholicism and Orthodoxy. The religious landscape is not limited, however, to Greek Catholic and Orthodox Christians, since traditionally within and along the borders of Carpathian Rus' have lived Roman Catholics, Protestants (Reformed Calvinists and a lesser number of Evangelical Lutherans), and a large concentration of Jews of varying orientations: Orthodox, in particular ultra-conservative Hasidim, as well as Reformed or Progressive Neologs.

All of Europe's major ethnolinguistic groups converge in Carpathian Rus', whose territory marks the farthest western extent of the East Slavic world and is bordered by West Slavic (Poles and Slovaks), Finno-Ugric (Magyars), and Romance (Romanians) speakers. The Germanic languages have as well been a feature of the territory's culture, since until 1945 ethnic Germans (Spish and Carpathian Germans) and many Yiddish-speaking Jews lived in its towns and cities and also in the rural countryside.

Finally, there is another boundary running through Carpathian Rus', which to date has received no attention in scholarly or popular literature but is nonetheless of great significance. I refer to what might be called the socio-climatic border or, more prosaically, the tomato and grape line. It is through a good part of Carpathian Rus' that the northern limit for tomato and grape (wine) cultivation is found. Whereas south of the line tomato-based dishes are the norm in traditional cuisine, before the mid-twentieth century that vegetable was virtually unknown to the Carpatho-Rusyns and other groups living along the upper slopes of the Carpathians.

The absence of grape and wine cultivation north of the tomato-grape line has had a profound impact on the social psychology of the inhabitants of Carpathian Rus'. A warmer climate and café culture has promoted human interaction and social tolerance among Rusyns and others to the south. By contrast, those living farther north are apt to spend less time outdoors, and when they do interact in social situations the environment is frequently dominated by the use of hard alcohol that in excess provokes behavior marked by extremes of opinion, short tempers, and physical violence. Like all attempts at defining social or national "characteristics," the above assessment is based largely on impressionistic observation and, therefore, is liable to oversimplification. Nevertheless, further empirical research should be carried out to define more precisely the exact location of tomato and grape cultivation, to describe the resultant interregional differentiation in food and drink, and more importantly, to determine how those differences affect the social psychology of the Carpatho-Rusyns and other inhabitants of Carpathian Rus'.

SOURCE: Paul Robert Magocsi, "Carpathian Rus': Interethnic Coexistence without Violence," In Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz, eds., *Shatterzone of Empires* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2013), pp. 450–452.

Since the Carpathian mountain crests form a major European watershed, the rivers in the Lemko Region of Carpathian Rus' (the Biała, Ropa, Wisłoka, Wisłok, Oślawa, and Solinka), flow northward as part of the Vistula-Baltic Basin. By contrast, most rivers on the southern slopes of the mountains (the Torysa, Topl'a, Ondava, Laborec, Uzh, Latorytsia, Borzhava, Rika, Tereblia, Teresva, Ruscova/Ruskova, and Vișeu) flow directly or via tributaries into the Tisza River, which in turn is part of the Danubian Basin. An interesting exception is the Poprad River, whose source is on the southern slopes of the Carpathians, but which flows northward "across" the mountains and empties into the Vistula-Baltic Basin. This seeming geographical anomaly underscores the fact that the Carpathian Mountains are at their lowest in the western part of Carpathian Rus', something that over the centuries has made communication easy and relations close among Carpatho-Rusyns in the Lemko Region and those in the Prešov Region.

The mountains do get higher the farther one moves from west to east through Carpathian Rus'. In the western areas that straddle the Lemko Region and Prešov Region (the present Polish-Slovak border), the highest peaks are about 1,000 meters, while the several easily accessible passes (Tylicz/Tylić, Beskydek, Dukla/Dukl'a, Palota) are only 500 to 700 meters above sea level. But farther east in Subcarpathian Rus' the mountains are much higher, with several peaks over 2,000 meters in height and with passes (Uzhok, Verets'kyi, Torun'/Vyshkiv, Iablunets'/Tatar) that average between 900 and 1,000 meters above sea level. This geographic factor in large part explains why contact between Subcarpathian Rus' and the adjacent region of Galicia north of the mountain crests has historically been more difficult, resulting in greater isolation of this part of Carpathian Rus' from lands and cultures to the north and east in present-day Ukraine.

The northern ranges (Beskyds, Bieszczady) of the Carpathian Mountains—covered as they are in rich foliage and in general absent of sharp rocky outcroppings—at first glance remind one of the Green Mountains in the state of Vermont. There are, however, some differences. In western Carpathian Rus'—the Prešov Region in Slovakia and the Lemko Region in Poland—the slopes are indeed low and covered for the most part with forests even at highest elevations. Farther east, in Ukraine's Subcarpathian Rus'/Transcarpathia, the mountains may be gradually higher but the forest cover is often less dense. In fact, it is not uncommon to find rounded mountain tops completely denuded of trees. Even the highest mountains with thicker forest cover are frequently interrupted with open spaces at high elevations, the so-called *polonyny* or high mountain pastures. The major reason for the absence of a thick forest cover in the eastern part of Carpathian Rus' has to do with the extensive and unregulated cutting of trees, most especially during the second half of the twentieth century.

Until that time, however, the mountain forests of Carpathian Rus' (mostly beech, oak, fir, and spruce) provided the region with one of its most important natural resources—wood. Other resources included salt (especially in eastern Subcarpathian Rus') and mineral water. Whereas in recent decades

salt extraction has ended, the numerous mineral water springs continue to be the basis for a network of spas and health resorts as well as bottled drinking water for domestic consumption and export. On the other hand, there is no significant winter sport industry built around skiing on the mountain slopes that are located within Carpathian Rus'.

The predominant livelihood for Carpatho-Rusyns from early modern times until well into the twentieth century has been agriculture, animal husbandry (in particular, sheep), and forest-related work. Of these three branches of economic activity, small-scale agriculture became the primary livelihood for the vast majority of Carpatho-Rusyns from late eighteenth century. Productivity was always a problem, however, since most of Carpathian Rus'—in particular the Lemko Region, the Prešov Region, and the highlands of Subcarpathian Rus'—is located in what geographers call a hardscrabble belt. This is a landscape characterized by a broken terrain of mountains and hills intersected by river valleys, where crops are sown on limited arable land comprised of sterile soils and a climate marked by excessive cloudiness throughout the year. The higher the elevations, the less favorable are the conditions, so that in the mountains there are generally only two warm summer months (often accompanied by frequent rainfall) while the mid-winter temperatures are well below freezing, sometimes as low as -34° Celsius.

The settlement and field patterns in Carpathian Rus' are typical of those found throughout Europe north of the Alps. Carpatho-Rusyns created so-called street villages, where homesteads were located in a line alongside a single road which more than likely ran parallel to a small river and adjacent tributaries. Such prime location provided a source of water for livestock and for more mundane activity such as washing clothes. The fields were outside the village proper and located adjacent to the river or along low hillside slopes. Generally, the fields were laid out in parallel strips which made it easy to plow in a long single line without the necessity of too much turning, a technique most suitable to the draft animal of choice—oxen. Not only were the strips of land owned or rented by the peasant agriculturalist outside the village proper, they most often were not adjacent to each other. Hence, it was common for a villager to walk to work (usually not more than a kilometer or two) to one or more of his or her strips of land located in various places beyond the village.

Because of the relatively poor soil and limited sunshine that characterized much of Carpathian Rus', only the most hardy grains (rye, barley, oats) and garden vegetables (potatoes, cabbage, beans) could be sown, yet even these yielded only a limited output. The one exception to this agricultural pattern is in the foothills and lowlands of Subcarpathian Rus', just south of its main cities Uzhhorod and Mukachevo. This area is really an extension of the lowland Hungarian plain, where the climate is significantly warmer with long summers and mild temperatures in winter that hover around or above 0° Celsius even during the coldest months (December to February). The favorable climate with its more sunny days and the area's fertile soils have been able to provide not only for the needs of an individual village fam-

ily, but also to produce surplus yields from the vegetable farms, vineyards, and orchards for sale and extra income. Technically, the area is only partially within Carpathian Rus', since most of the inhabitants have traditionally been—and still are—Magyars, not Carpatho-Rusyns (see Map 1).

In effect, throughout much of their history Carpatho-Rusyns have only been able to practice subsistence farming; that is, to realize a level of crop production that at best can support a single family with little or no real surplus to sell for profit. In order to survive, therefore, most villagers have had to engage in animal husbandry.

The most favored animals of Carpatho-Rusyn herder-farmers have been cows which pasture in and around the village, and sheep which for several cycles each year are driven up the mountains and pastured in the highland *polonyna*. As with agriculture, the products derived from animal husbandry (milk, butter, cheese, wool) have been used to fulfill individual family needs with little or no surplus to sell for extra income.

It is this traditional subsistence-level lifestyle which preoccupied the everyday existence of Carpatho-Rusyns for much of the year, except in the coldest winter months (November to February) when the frozen land was impossible to till. This was a time when handicrafts flourished—weaving and colorful embroidery among females and wood carving and metalwork among males. Activities such as these, often done in common, encouraged singing and recitation of folk tales that remain among the important achievements of Carpatho-Rusyn culture. Whereas peasant parents were not adverse to sending their children to school, they often balked at doing so during the early spring sowing and the early summer and early autumn harvest. It was therefore not uncommon for children, who were needed in the fields, to be frequently absent at the end (April and May) and beginning (September and October) of each school year.

The annual agricultural cycle and the concrete demands of a peasant-based rural society that was concerned primarily with physical survival continued to determine the cultural values of Carpatho-Rusyns even after their socioeconomic conditions began to change slowly in the course of the twentieth century. The gauge for determining the success of an individual remained the same: it was usually associated with one's material and financial achievement. Such attitudes in large measure explain why the group's few leaders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries found it so difficult to mobilize their Carpatho-Rusyn constituencies to be concerned about such "esoteric" issues as one's national identity, native language, or participation in civic and political life—unless, of course, there might be some concrete material gain that would be accrued from such otherwise unproductive activity.

Two final points about the physical and human geography are worth keeping in mind. The first is that in purely geographical terms, Carpathian Rus' is located in the heart of Europe. In fact, scholars already in the late nineteenth century pinpointed the geographic center of Europe to be just outside the village of Trebushany (today Dilove) along the Tisza River in

far southeastern Subcarpathian Rus'.⁵ Yet despite its pan-European geographic centrality, Carpathian Rus' has always been a peripheral part of the various states which have ruled the area. Being on the geographic periphery has inevitably had an impact—and often a negative one—on the political, socioeconomic, and cultural life of the region. Put another way, the lands of Carpathian Rus' have always been a kind of underdeveloped backwater, neglected or forgotten by central governments that were otherwise in control of this historic territory.

The second point is that Carpathian Rus' has geographically always been part of central Europe. Consequently, its political orientation, cultural life, and trade patterns have—at least until the mid-twentieth century—been directed toward and determined by the lands of the Danubian Basin and the urban centers that belong to central Europe, whether Budapest, Vienna, Prague, or to a lesser degree Cracow and L'viv. It is that central European reality which has determined the historical fate of Carpatho-Rusyns and their homeland, Carpathian Rus'. And it is to that history which we are now ready to turn.

Carpathian Rus' in prehistoric times

Much of Carpathian Rus', in particular the lands on the southern slopes of the mountains, were in prehistoric times part of a somewhat larger territory which archeologists refer to as the Upper Tisza Region. This includes the area drained by the upper reaches of the Tisza River and its tributaries, which in modern-day terms means the Transcarpathian oblast of Ukraine, eastern Slovakia, northeastern Hungary, and northwestern Romania. Since pre-historic times the Upper Tisza Region functioned as a contact zone connecting the peoples and cultures of the Danubian Basin and Balkan Europe in the south with the inhabitants beyond the Carpathian Mountains to the north, i.e., the Lemko Region in modern Poland.

Earliest human settlements

Thanks to archeological discoveries, mostly in the twentieth century, it is known that the Upper Tisza Region was inhabited as far back as the Eolithic, or earliest period of the Stone Age. In fact, the oldest site of human habitation throughout central Europe and Ukraine, which goes back over one million years, was near the Subcarpathian town of Korolevo along the valley of the Tisza River. The most important development during these prehistoric times came during the Stone Age's Neolithic period; that is, from 5000 to 3000 BCE, when the inhabitants of the Upper Tisza Region evolved from being primitive hunter-gatherers to sedentary agriculturalists. They lived in semi-underground dwellings and were able to support themselves from the crops they grew. Over 200 sites from the Neolithic period have been uncovered in the Upper Tisza Region and have been classified according to various archeological cultures (Kiresk/Kress, Alföld, Bükk, Samosh-Diakovo). It is also from the Neolithic period that the earliest archeological finds have been uncovered in the Lemko Region, on the northern slopes of the Carpathians, in particular in the valleys of the upper Ropa River (Blechnarka, Hańczowa, Uście Gorlickie, Gładyszów, among others). Most of the Neolithic finds consist of stone adzes, flint axes, sickle-like knives, and in the case of the Upper Tisza Region on the southern slopes of the mountains, extensive remnants of decorated pottery.

The next archeological phase, known as the Eneolithic or Copper Age (ca. 3000–2000 BCE), witnessed the gradual transition from stone to metal implements and also the introduction of cattle-breeding, all of which enhanced the quality of life and longevity of the inhabitants. Those inhabitants also gradually consolidated into clans made up of several families and eventually into larger tribal groups, which began to stake out certain territories they considered their own.

Toward the end of the Copper Age, other Indo-European tribes began to arrive in the Danubian Basin as far as the Upper Tisza Region. They came from the south, in particular from the Balkan peninsula, sometime around 2000 BCE, and they brought with them new and profoundly influential technological changes. What followed was the Bronze Age, which was to last for a thousand years (1900–900 BCE). Familiar with the civilizations surrounding the eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Sea, these Indo-European newcomers from the south introduced into the Upper Tisza Region bronze implements, harnessed horses, and use of the plough in agriculture.

The various cultures identified with the Bronze Age in the Hungarian plain and foothills of the southern Carpathian slopes were the Nyírség (2000–1700 BCE), Otomani (1700–1550 BCE), Wietenberg (1400–1300 BCE), and eventually Stanovo (1200–1000 BCE). The Stanovo culture was best known for its varied and original forms of pottery and agricultural implements subsequently uncovered throughout large parts of central and eastern Europe. The Stanovo dwellers also interacted with peoples on the northern slopes of the Carpathians, with the result that bronze artifacts have been discovered in several Lemko Region villages from the far west (Szlachtowa, Wysowa) to the San River valley in the east (Czerteż, Międzybrodzie). Among the artifacts are those uncovered from the remains of a settlement at what later became the town of Sanok.

It was not long before the technological advances connected with the Bronze Age promoted the consolidation of one or more tribal groups into unions and the subsequent appearance of hill-forts, later known as *horodyshche*, to house the families of the tribal elites and to provide a protected center for trade and small-scale handicrafts (pottery and metal implements). In the Upper Tisza Region, the earliest of these hill-forts were located above the valley of the Hornád River in eastern Slovakia (at Gánovce, Žehra, and Spišský Štvrtok) and in the lowlands near the Tisza River in Subcarpathian Rus' (at Dyida).

Tribal leaders were, not surprisingly, concerned with controlling the agricultural lands surrounding the hill-forts. Such efforts at extending their authority in order to access food supplies from farmers at times caused friction and armed conflict with neighboring tribal unions who may have claimed the same territory. Aside from conflict between local tribal unions, the Upper Tisza Region was always open to new invasions from peoples from the north, south, and east.

The Iron Age and the Celts

This brings us to about the year 800 BCE and the beginning of the Iron Age, which was to last in the Upper Tisza Region until about the middle of the first century BCE. The beginning of the Iron Age was complex and was associated with the arrival of a wide range of invaders from the south (proto-Thracian tribes), the north (tribes connected with the Lusatian culture), and the east (Scythians and Sarmatians). These various tribal groups merged in the Upper Tisza Region to create a new symbiosis, which is described by archeologists as the Kushtanovytsia culture, named after an archeological site near Mukachevo.

The Iron Age Kushtanovytsia culture existed in the Upper Tisza Region from the sixth to third centuries BCE and was characterized by the ability of its inhabitants to smelt iron ore. Iron-smelting allowed for the large-scale production of stronger and more malleable household wares, farming implements, and weapons. Not only did such technological advances contribute to creating favorable conditions for more permanent settlements, they also put weapons into the hands of larger numbers of people, and that both allowed and encouraged increasing conflict and warfare. It is no coincidence, therefore, that during the Iron Age tribal leaders built larger and stronger hill-forts throughout the Upper Tisza Region, specifically near and within Carpathian Rus', ranging from Ganovce, Spišské Podhradie, and Vel'ký Šariš in the west, to Nevyts'ke and Ardanovo in the center, and to Solotvyno, Bila Tserkva, and Sighet in the east.

EARLY PEOPLES IN CARPATHIAN RUS'

300 BCE–60 BCE	Celts Teurisci Anartii
60 BCE–106 CE	Dacians/Getae
106 CE–250 CE	Costoboci ("free" Dacians), Carpi
250 CE–400 CE	Vandals/Asdingi, Visigoths, Gepids
400 CE–450s CE	Huns, Gepids
460 CE–570 CE	Gepids, Slavs
570 CE–800 CE	Avars, Slavs (White Croats), Onogurs
800 CE–900 CE	White Croats

Accounts of European prehistory refer to the Iron Age with its common technological and social characteristics as being part of the Hallstatt culture. This culture derives its name from a place in modern-day Upper Austria where objects characteristic of the early Iron Age (circa 1100 BCE) were first found. A later phase of the Hallstatt culture, which in the Upper Tisza Region encom-

passes chronologically the third to first centuries BCE, is known as La Tène culture, from the name of an archeological site in modern-day Switzerland. La Tène culture is primarily associated with tribes known as Celts, who in the mid-fifth century BCE had come into contact with—and were influenced by—peoples of the Mediterranean world (Greeks and Etruscans).

Today most peoples associate Celts with the Irish, Scots, Welsh, Cornish, and Bretons, who live along the far western fringes of the British Isles and Brittany in France. But during the millennium before the Common Era, Celtic tribes inhabited much of Europe north of the Alps. Centered in modern-day western Switzerland and eastern France, they spread westward to the Atlantic coast of France and eastward into Austria, the Czech Republic, and the Danubian Basin of Hungary. Their presence in these regions over two thousand years ago is still remembered by place names, such as Bohemia (from the Celtic tribe Boii) and Carpathian, both of which are of Celtic origin.

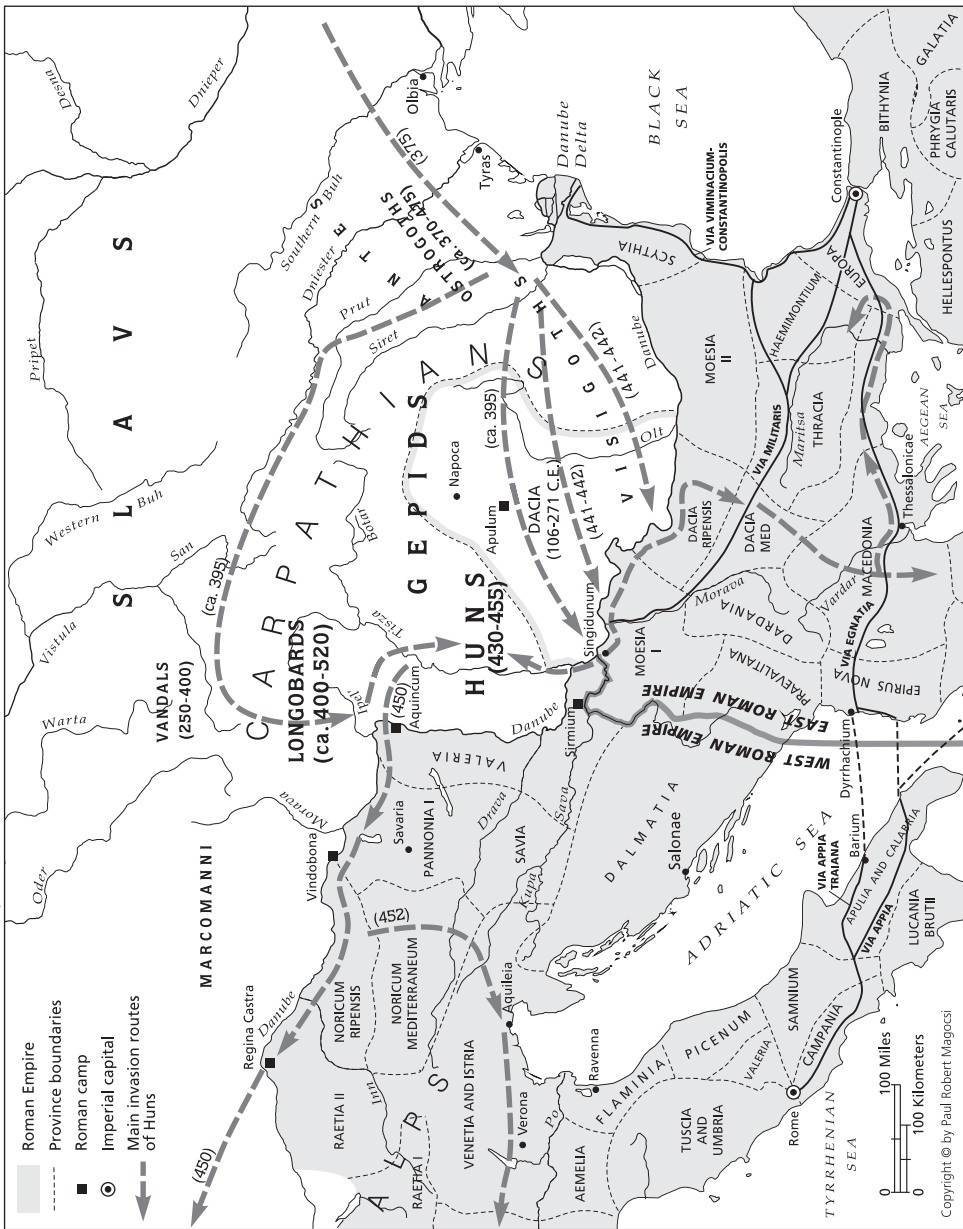
About 300 BCE, Celtic tribes (the Anartii and much later the Teurisci) began to make their way into the Upper Tisza Region. They even went further north beyond the low Carpathian ranges into the Lemko Region, where they inhabited a cluster of small settlements in the upper Wisłok and San river valleys. For the next two centuries, these Celts of La Tène culture were the most important inhabitants in Carpathian Rus'. At Novo-Klynovo and at other nearby settlements along the banks of the Botar River, a southern tributary of the Tisza River in Subcarpathian Rus', the Celts built major ovens to smelt iron. Eventually, the largest Celtic settlement was at Galish-Lovachka, two small hills near present-day Mukachevo. It was there that the iron processed in the Botar River valley was transformed into tools, utensils, and weapons and sold to other peoples in the Danubian Basin. Galish-Lovachka may also have been an *oppidum*, the term used by the Romans to describe a fortified town that functioned as a provincial military center, in this case for local Celtic tribal leaders.

The Roman Empire and the Dacians

While the Celts were establishing their control throughout Europe north of the Alps, much more monumental developments were occurring farther to the south in the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. In the course of the first millennium BCE, the city of Rome on the Italian peninsula became the capital of a powerful empire, which by the outset of the Common Era had come to control all the lands surrounding the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, from modern-day Spain and Morocco in the west to Turkey, Syria, and Egypt in the east. The northern frontier, or *limes* of the Roman Empire stretched from the North Sea mouth of the Rhine River in the west to the delta of the Danube River as it flows into the Black Sea in the east. During certain periods, however, Roman rule extended beyond this traditional *limes* to include England in the far northwest and the Crimea along the shores of the Black and Azov Seas in the far northeast.

CENTRAL EUROPE, 5th century

MAP 5



Throughout this vast territory, numerous and diverse peoples were exposed to the civilization of ancient Rome, which was characterized by the rule of law; by long periods of economic prosperity and social order; by the development of art, literature, and learning that built upon and refined further the traditions of classical Greece; and eventually by the adoption of Christianity as the state religion. In short, large parts of Europe, northern Africa, and the Middle East were for nearly five hundred years directly or indirectly part of, or drawn into, the *Pax Romana*—the Roman Order.

Carpathian Rus' was never directly within the Roman Empire, but it did develop certain ties with the *Pax Romana*, both in economic and, as we shall see later, religious matters. The initial Carpathian-Roman connection was the result of the appearance of a group known as the Dacians. The Dacians were a tribe of Thracians, originally from the southern part of the Balkan peninsula, who about 60 BCE moved northward across the Danube River and the southern ranges of the Carpathian Mountains to settle in Transylvania; that is, in what is today western Romania. Under the leadership of powerful chieftains, who in some sources are referred to as kings, they created a proto-state called Dacia.

In the first century BCE under the powerful chieftain-king Burebista (82–44 BCE), Dacia extended westward to the Danube River in present-day Hungary and southward to the Black Sea coast of Ukraine and Bulgaria. From Transylvania, where they exploited the silver mines and developed a flourishing iron industry, the Dacians expanded northward toward the foothills of the Carpathians in the Upper Tisza Region. They quickly subdued the Celts living there (the Anartii and Teurisci) and drove out or assimilated any survivors. The Dacians under Burebista proceeded to build their own fortified centers at Solotvyno, Mala Kopania, and Bila Tserkva in Subcarpathian Rus' and at Zemplín in eastern Slovakia. These centers were intended to protect the trade routes that ran from north of the Carpathians through their territory and on to the Roman Empire south of the Danube.

More often than not, Dacian relations with the Roman Empire were marked by conflict and extensive warfare, especially during the reign of their dynamic king Decebal (r. 87–106). The Roman-Dacian conflicts culminated with a decisive victory over Decebal by Emperor Trajan at the outset of the second century CE (105–106 CE). Almost immediately the Transylvanian heartland of the vanquished and largely dispersed Dacians was transformed into the Roman province of Dacia. This meant that for nearly a century and a half (formally until 271 CE), the *Pax Romana*, as represented by the province of Dacia, was on the doorsteps of Carpathian Rus'. That portion of the defeated Dacians who were not captured or subdued by the Romans, the so-called free Dacians (known also by the tribal name Costoboci) went farther north and settled in Carpathian Rus'. There they renewed the old Celtic iron works in the Botar River valley (at Diakovo) and they also built a major pottery-making center in the area around what later became the city of Berehovo. It was these "free Dacians" who before long were able to renew trade between the Upper Tisza Region and the Roman Empire throughout its nearby province of Dacia.

Roman rule north of the Danube depended on the ability of the empire to protect itself against invading warrior tribes. Among these were the Dacians, whom the Romans were eventually able to defeat, although only after extensive investments in money and troops. Against other northern warriors, in particular Germanic tribes, the Romans were ultimately less successful. By the third century CE, Germanic tribes were becoming ever more aggressive, and in 271 they forced the Romans to abandon the province of Dacia. While during the next century the Romans were able to defend their empire along the traditional Rhine-Danube border (*limes*), at the same time Germanic tribes like the Carpi, Vandals-Asdings, and Gepids, as well as the Jazyges of Sarmatian-Iranian origin were able to pass through the Upper Tisza Region and, in the case of the Gepids, to settle more permanently in the Danubian Basin. From there these tribes interacted with the Roman world to the south and west of the Danube *limes* in a relationship that was marked in varying degrees by conflict, alliances, and peacetime trade. This delicately balanced and often precarious situation for the Pax Romana was to change—and decisively so—in 395 CE, the year that marked the first incursions against the Roman Empire of a new warrior people from the east—the Huns.

The Slavs and their arrival in the Carpathians

What do the Huns, a nomadic-pastoral people from central Asia, have to do with the Slavic peoples? And, what is the relationship of the Slavs to Carpathian Rus'? About the year 375 the Huns arrived in the steppes of southern Ukraine, where they dispersed the Germanic Ostrogoths living there at the time. The Huns were masterful warriors on horseback who seemed invincible against whichever sedentary and nomadic people, tribal union, and proto-state crossed their path. Fearful of the destructive fate that was likely to befall them from any military encounter with the Huns, Germanic and other tribes hoped to seek refuge by moving westward, crossing the Danube frontier (*limes*), and settling in areas under the protection of the Pax Romana.

The Huns and the displacement of peoples

It was the Huns, then, who set in motion two phenomena beginning in the late fourth and continuing into the fifth century: (1) the so-called displacement, or "wandering of peoples" throughout much of the European continent north of the Danube River; and (2) the further weakening of the Roman Empire which, in turn, was the result of the conflict and instability caused by the Germanic Goths clamoring to settle within its borders. About 375 the Huns destroyed the Gothic proto-state in the Ukrainian steppelands north of the Black Sea, and from there they moved farther westward toward the Roman Empire. By the last decade of the fourth century, the Huns and the Ostrogoths subordinate to them had reached the Roman frontier (*limes*) along the lower Danube River. From there they attacked Roman settlements beginning at Singidunum (modern-day Belgrade) and continuing throughout the Balkan peninsula. In 424–425, Hunnic forces under a chieftain named Ruga turned northward into the former Roman province of Dacia, where they subjected the Germanic Gepids they encountered (see Map 5).

The Huns continued to arrive in the lower Danube valley during the 440s. Under Ruga's successor, a charismatic leader named Attila, the Huns attained after 445 their greatest power. Their main encampment on the lowland plains just east of the Tisza River as it flows into the Danube (near

the border between present-day Hungary and Serbia) formed the heart of what some sources refer to as the Hunnic Empire. Attila's domain stretched from the Caspian Sea in the east, through the open steppe and mixed forest-steppe regions of modern-day Ukraine and southern Russia, and in the west encompassed most of the rest of the European continent north of the Roman Empire's Rhine-Danube frontier (*limes*). This vast territory was at the time inhabited by a wide variety of Slavic and Germanic tribal groups who were subjugated by the small Hunnic ruling and military elite. From their base along the lower Tisza-Danube plain, the Hunnic elite directed attacks in search of whatever precious metals and other luxury items they could extract from the Roman Empire both east and west.

Most of the troops fighting under Attila and his Hunnic generals were drawn from the Germanic (Ostrogoths, Gepids, Heruls) and, in some cases, the Slavic tribes that they had subjugated. The ongoing terror that the Huns inspired throughout much of the Roman world seemed at the time unstoppable. It did, however, come to a rather abrupt end following the death of Attila in 453. Within two years, the Huns left the Danubian Basin and effectively disappeared, with some joining the armies of their former enemy, Rome, and others returning to the steppes of southern Ukraine whence they came.

The power vacuum in the Danubian Basin following the departure of the Huns was filled in the late 450s by the Germanic Gepids. The Gepids had settled in the plains just south of Subcarpathian Rus' two centuries earlier (ca. 269) when the Roman province of Dacia was in dissolution. The Gepids, who reached an accord with the Huns, fought alongside them in campaigns throughout Europe. After the death of Attila and the demise of the Hunnic Empire, the Gepids were able to restore their rule from the northern to southern ranges of the Carpathians (modern-day eastern Hungary and western Romania). For over a century (455–567) the Gepid Kingdom, also known as Gepidia, flourished in the plains of Hungary east of the Danube River, including the Upper Tisza Region and Transylvania. The rest of the Danubian Basin west of the Danube River, the area known as Pannonia (present-day western Hungary), came to be settled somewhat later (the mid-520s) by another Germanic tribe, the Longobards.

Among the peoples who were either subjugated by the Huns or who were dispersed in the late fourth century as part of the movement of the peoples were the Slavs. Since Carpatho-Rusyns are Slavs, the fate of that Indo-European group is of particular interest. But before turning specifically to developments among Slavs, a few general conceptual matters are in order. These have to do with the question of the origin of peoples and the problem of historical continuity.

The origin-of-peoples fetish

Because humankind is endowed with memory, most individuals have a desire to know where they come from; that is, who are their ancestors? Some also wish to know to which ethnic or linguistic group those ancestors

belonged, in order that they may be able to define themselves according to one or more ethnic or modern-day nationality labels. It is interesting to note that states, too, have what could be called a fetish-like concern with origins, something the Ottoman scholar Bernard Lewis has termed "the foundation myth." According to Lewis:

Most countries and peoples and powers arise from humble origins, and having risen to greatness seek to improve or conceal their undistinguished beginnings and attach themselves to something older and greater. Thus, the Romans, rising in power, felt themselves upstarts beside the Greeks, and therefore tried to trace their pedigree from the Trojans. The barbarian peoples of Europe, ruling over ruins of the Roman Empire, again sought to provide themselves with noble and ancient ancestries, and [they] produced a series of mythical Roman, Greek, or Trojan founders for the various barbarian tribes.¹

Lewis then goes on to give other examples of historical mythology. One example he does not provide, but which has general relevance for our subject is that of István Horvát. Horvát was a Hungarian historian who, at the very beginning of the nineteenth century during the height of the Romantic era, published a two-volume history of Hungary, in which he unabashedly claimed that the Magyars were associated with most of the great achievements in world civilization (including the building of Egypt's pyramids) and that they were the subject matter of Homer's epics.² It is true that by the end of the nineteenth century, and under the impact of the philosophic movement known as Positivism, serious writers removed from their national histories the most extreme examples of self-serving mythology. Nonetheless, many myths still remained, in particular the almost fanatical desire to prove one's present existence by seeking to identify the oldest and most distinguished origins.

Since we know that Carpathian Rus' was never an independent state, the concern with origins has not focused on some political entity, but rather on the ancestors of the people we today call Carpatho-Rusyns. Aside from fulfilling the general human desire to know one's own individual ethnic origins, the questions of where and when a given people has first made its appearance have taken on as well a political dimension. Generations of scholars and patriotic writers have striven not only to determine the earliest appearance of a specific people on a given territory, but also to argue on the basis of historical continuity that they are the supposed ancestors of the nationality or ethnic group living presently on that territory. Therefore, national homelands must have one group which can claim to be the "original," the indigenous, or the autochthonous inhabitants. This indigenous group then proclaims the right to rule a given territory because of its alleged "historic precedence."

One could argue that the concepts concerning the origins of peoples and historical continuity are just that: concepts or intellectual constructs, which have been formulated in modern times by professional scholars or by amateur writers. Hence, they should, at best, be considered hypothetical expla-

IS DNA THE RELIABLE WAY?

In the ongoing search to determine the origins of peoples, including Slavs, among the most recent hypotheses are those based on the results of geogenetic research drawn from the new scientific discipline known as genomics. This research involves DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), the master genetic molecule that determines what a cell is and does. Samples of DNA taken from blood, hair roots, or placentas found in medieval graves are compared with samples of such matter taken from the present-day inhabitants of a specific territory. Laboratory analysis of the resulting data allegedly can determine the origins of a given modern-day people or individual. Some Carpatho-Rusyn writers, enamoured with these new “scientific proofs,” have recently postulated the genetic make-up of present-day Carpatho-Rusyns as being 37 percent Slavic, 25 percent Celtic-Romance-Germanic, 9 percent Adriatic-Balkan, and 8 percent Scandinavian.^a

The science of genomics is, however, still in its early stages. Much larger DNA samples from the ancient past and present need to be gathered and analyzed before humanistic scholars can hope to make convincing arguments based on genetic evidence. Until that time we are left with often scanty archeological and linguistic data as the main sources for determining the origins of peoples.

^a Data taken from Dymytrii Pop, “Tsy mav ratsiiu rusyns’kyi iepyskop Tarkovych, avad’ novi aspekty v teorii slovianstva,” *Rusyns’kyi svit*, VIII [78] (Budapest, 2010), p. 10.

nations of the past, not absolute truths. Put another way, there is no way to be certain about the origins of any given people, and that all arguments about the continuity of peoples or states from earliest times of recorded history to the present are intellectual constructs that can—and more than likely will—be challenged by often equally convincing counter-arguments and alternative intellectual constructs. In that context it would not be amiss to quote the first definition of history found in *Webster’s Third International Dictionary*; that is, “a narrative of events connected with a real or *imaginary* [author’s emphasis] object, person, or career.”³ With that in mind, the following should be considered only one of several possible versions regarding the origins of the Slavs and their relationship to Carpathian Rus’.

The Slavs and Carpathian Rus’

There exist several conflicting and at times complementary explanations about the origins of the Slavs. Nevertheless, there is today somewhat of a consensus among many—but certainly not all—specialists on this problem that the earliest ancestors of the Slavs, described as proto-Slavs, lived on lands stretching from the northern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains to the marshes formed by the valley of the Pripet River. In modern-day terms this constitutes southern Belarus, western Ukraine, and eastern Poland (see Map

5). The proto-Slavs are said to have been in these territories already in the period about 1200–1000 BCE. They were predominantly a sedentary people living in small settlements along river valleys and supporting themselves by agriculture and animal husbandry, especially cows and in some cases sheep.

DWELLINGS OF THE EARLY SLAVS

Archeological sites from the sixth and seventh centuries reveal a somewhat common pattern for domestic dwellings among the Slavs. The vast majority were so-called sunken structures, that is, dwellings partially dug into the ground, usually less than one meter (three feet) deep. The sunken pit was rectangular in shape and covered by a gabled roof made of wood. Pit sizes ranged from 4 to 25 square meters (14 to 80 sq. feet) with less than 15 square meters (50 sq. feet) being the most common size. This would allow for a family of no more than five persons. The important characteristic of these sunken buildings was a stone oven placed in one of the corners and built directly on the floor.

The stone oven was used for cooking as well as for heating during the long winter months. The partially below-ground dwelling helped provide insulation against the exterior cold. The walls above ground were often of wooden logs filled in with clay and/or reeds. Considering the size of the sunken dwellings and the number uncovered at various archeological sites, these early Slavic settlements from the sixth and seventh centuries were usually located along river valleys and were small in size, consisting of between 50 to 75 inhabitants.

The Slavs also developed a pagan belief system, which despite the diversity and large territorial extent of different tribes had certain common features. Among those features were a series of gods representing various forces of nature: Svaroh the god of heaven; Dazhboh the god of sun; Svarozhych the god of fire; Stryboh the god of wind; Volos the god of cattle, wealth, and the underworld; and Perun, the god of thunder. Among some tribes, especially West Slavs living in areas close to Carpathian Rus', there was a belief in the ultimate "god of all gods," Sviatovit/Sventovyd.

Aside from these gods, who were believed to control the main forces of nature, there were other gods and goddesses like Iarylo, who was connected to the rebirth of spring; Kupalo the god of water, grass, and flowers; Lada, the goddess of love and family; and Mara, the goddess of death. On the darker side were several dangerous supernatural creatures, the best known of whom were the *rusalky*, beautiful female water sprites (allegedly the souls of young girls who drowned themselves or the souls of unbaptized infants) who attracted young men to the water and drowned them.

For the most part, the Slavic pagans did not have any elaborate religious structures, but they did have priest-like figures who intervened with the forces of nature and who performed rituals such as nonhuman sacrifices before various rustic stone or wood-carved statues (idols) representing var-

ious gods. Even more widespread were self-proclaimed sorcerers, who convinced many people that through their personal intercession with the forces of nature they could predict the future, influence the weather, help young girls attract boys to fall in love, and heal sicknesses (in particular help barren women to become fertile).

Many beliefs of the pagan Slavs were transformed and retained in the new religion of Christianity when missionaries brought it to central and eastern Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries. Pagan rituals persisted, however, and were adopted to the new faith. This was one of the reasons why Christianity was accepted. While the church did try to suppress pagan beliefs, it had only limited success. The role of sorcerers has in particular persisted and is widespread in both rural and urban areas still in the twenty-first century.

For much of their early history during the first millennium of the Common Era, the Slavs in general lacked their own strong military leaders and, instead, they tended to attach themselves as vassals to more organized tribal groups, in particular those led by nomadic warrior peoples from the east. Sometime during the first century BCE the proto-Slavs began to move out of their original homeland between the Carpathians and the Pripet River valley in several directions, in particular toward the east, west, and south. This brought them into contact with Germanic and Celtic peoples in central Europe, some of whom eventually were assimilated by the Slavs and their way of life. The Slavs also encountered Iranian and Turkic warrior peoples from the east, among whom were the Scythians, Alans, and later the Antes, Croats, Serbs, and Bulgars.

It is important to understand what was meant by the names used or applied to these various warrior peoples. Very often the nomadic Iranian and Turkic peoples from the east, who were given names like Scythians, Sarmatians, etc., by classic Greek, Roman, and later Germanic writers, were actually not one group but rather a heterogeneous mix of peoples of differing cultures and languages. The name for the entire mix, however, was that which represented the military elite, often small in number but strong enough to dominate large areas of mixed nomadic and sedentary populations. For example, the northern Iranian tribe of Scythians, who for nearly half a millennium dominated the steppes of Ukraine and the Crimea, were for the most part comprised of Slavic agriculturalists. Sometimes the Slavic "majority" would assimilate the Iranian and Germanic, or later Turkic ruling tribal elite but, nevertheless, retain for themselves the name of that elite. Hence, the Irano-Alanic Antes, Croats, and Serbs, or the Turkic Bulgars based in central and eastern Europe all bequeathed their names to populations that were already or which became Slavic.

The White Croats and the Avars

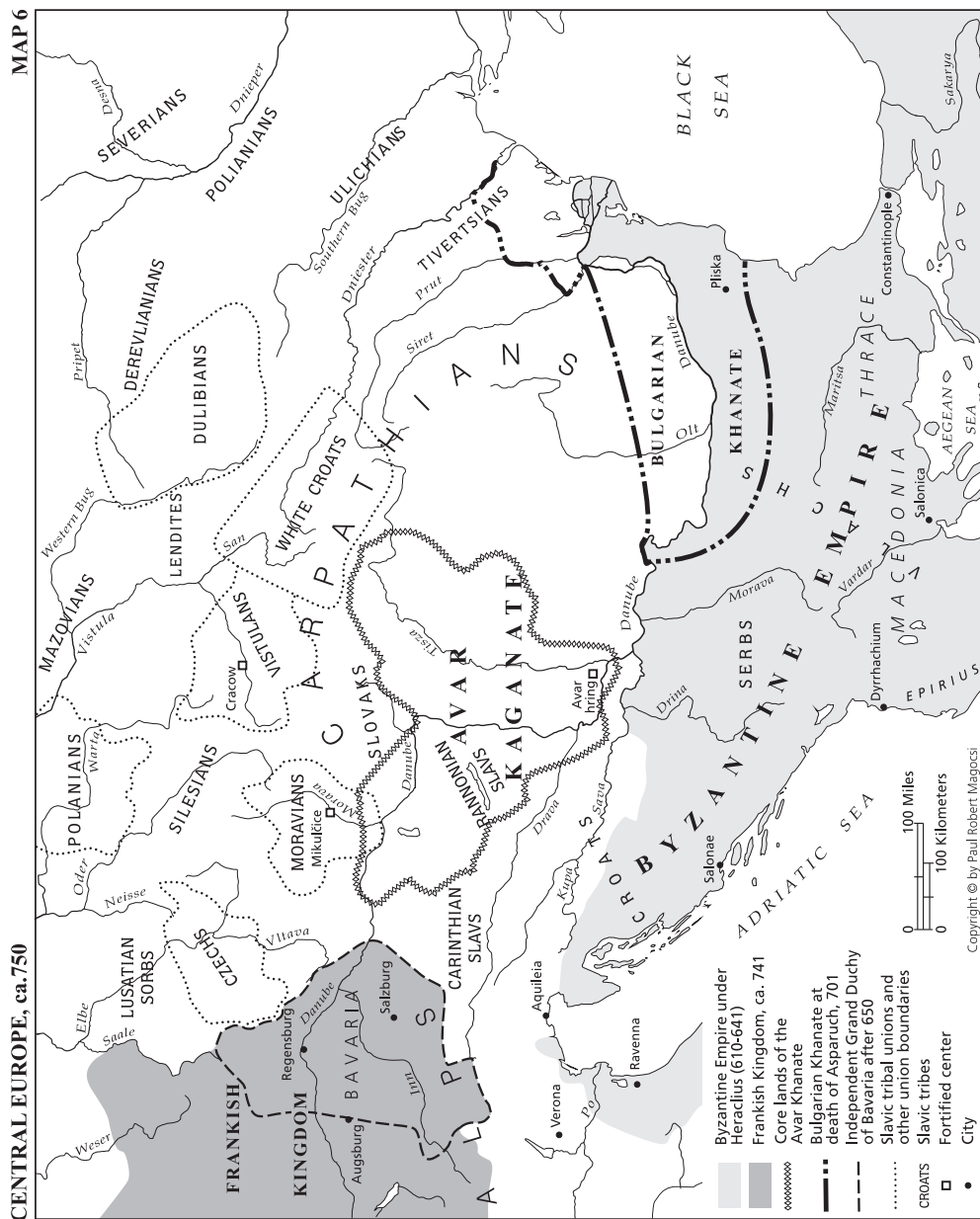
Following the disappearance of the Huns in the second half of the fifth century, one of the Iranian nomadic tribes from the steppes of Ukraine known as Croats moved westward. They brought under their control Slavic seden-

tary agriculturalists and livestock breeders living north of the Carpathians from Galicia westward to Silesia, Lusatia, and parts of Bohemia. The result of this interaction was the formation of a large tribal union (encompassing the Vistulans, Silesians, Lusatian Sorbs, and some Czech tribes) that was referred to in early written sources as the lands of the White Croats and White Croatia. Some scholars believe that by the sixth century the Slavic White Croats (Slavic: *Bilý khorvatŭ*) gradually extended their control over Carpathian Rus', at first along the northern slopes of the mountains (the Lemko Region) and then along the southern slopes in the Upper Tisza Region. The origins, ethnic composition, migrational patterns, and the very existence of the White Croats remain a source of controversy, but because of their suspected presence in the Carpathians, many histories of Carpathian Rus' consider the Slavic White Croats to be the earliest ancestors of the Carpatho-Rusyns, in particular the Lemkos.

While the White Croats were establishing a powerful tribal union north of the Carpathians, a new people from central Asia came onto the scene. These were the Avars, nomads of Mongolian or of Turco-Ugric origin, who were part of the large Hunnic domain until they were pushed out of their original homeland in northern Kazakhstan. The Avars eventually made their way to central Europe, and in 568 they entered the Danubian Basin. There they dispersed the Germanic Gepid and Longobard "kingdoms" that had flourished for a century after the demise of the Huns. The Avars proceeded to set up a proto-state known as the Avar Kaganate. From their capital, or *hring*, in the lowlands where the Tisza River flows into the Danube, the Avar rulers or kagans controlled most of the Hungarian plain west and east of the Danube River, as well as Transylvania, and the Upper Tisza Region encompassing eastern Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus'.

Like the Huns before them, the Avars brought to the Danubian Basin Slavic tribes that they had conquered while moving across the steppes of Ukraine toward the Carpathian foothills. It is as a result of the invasions of the Huns in the fifth century, but most especially of the Avars in the sixth century, that increasing numbers of Slavs settled in the Danubian Basin and the Upper Tisza Region; that is, in Carpathian Rus' on the southern slopes of the mountains. Finally, around the year 700 other Turkic tribes from the east known as Onogurs, who were related to the Bulgars, arrived in the Danubian Basin. Therefore, the Avar Kaganate was composed of a Turkic Avar military elite which ruled over the remnants of Germanic and Romanized peoples already inhabiting the Danubian Basin, as well as more recently arrived Pannonian, Danubian, and Carpathian Slavs and the so-called late Avars—the Turkic Onogurs. Actually, the Slavs were among the most numerous of the tribal groups living in the Danubian Basin at the time, so that in the core of the kaganate there developed a kind of symbiotic relationship in which Slavs served as vassals and armed mercenaries of their Avar overlords.

From the outset of their arrival in the late sixth century, the Avars made several attempts to expand beyond the plains of Hungary. Like previous



nomadic peoples from the north and east, they were drawn to the civilized world of the former Pax Romana beyond the Danube and Rhine Rivers, in particular southeastward into the Balkan provinces of the East Roman (Byzantine) Empire. Beginning in the 580s, attacks by the Avars with their Slav mercenaries against Byzantine lands increased in intensity, culminating in a major attack (eventually beaten back) against the imperial capital of Constantinople in 626. During the conflicts against the Avars in the first decades of the seventh century, the Byzantines allied with the White Croats beyond the Carpathians on the northern flank of the Avar Kaganate. In appreciation of their support, the Byzantine emperor (Heraclius) invited the White Croats to settle along the northern frontier of the empire in what is today Croatia and Serbia. Many White Croats accepted the invitation, bequeathing their name to modern-day Croatia and the Croatians. Other Croats remained behind, however, where they continued to rule parts of Carpathian Rus' on both slopes of the mountains.

Despite the White Croat alliance and reinforcement of the Byzantine imperial armies, the Avars continued their raids throughout the late seventh and early eighth centuries against the empire's territory in the Balkan peninsula. Most of the kaganate's soldiers were actually Danubian and Pannonian Slavs who engaged the Byzantine Empire well into the Balkan peninsula. When the Avar military elite returned home to the Danubian Basin after battle, some of the Slavic soldiers remained behind, and it is in this way that much of the Balkan region, as far south as the Peloponese in the heart of modern Greece, was settled by Slavs during the seventh and eighth centuries.

The Avars were ultimately less successful in their incursions toward the west, where they were blocked by the increasingly powerful Germanic Frankish Kingdom. Under that kingdom's greatest ruler, Charlemagne (reigned 771–814), the Franks destroyed the Avar Kaganate during the last decade of the eighth century. The result was a power vacuum in the heart of the Danubian Basin where the Avar Kaganate was replaced by two new spheres of influence: to the west of the Danube River was Charlemagne's Frankish Kingdom; to the east was the expanding Bulgarian Empire which encompassed the entire valley of the Tisza River including the southern fringes of Carpathian Rus'. Within this power vacuum, in particular along the old Frankish-Avar borderland, the first lasting state structure among the Slavs of the region came into being. That state came to be known as Greater Moravia.

State Formation in central Europe

The ninth and tenth centuries proved to be an important turning point in the history of central and eastern Europe. This is because during that time several state structures came into being, some of which have survived in one form or another until the present-day. For Carpathian Rus', the most important of these new states was Hungary and Poland. But there were other states which also had a direct or indirect impact on the region: Greater Moravia, the Bulgarian Empire, Kievan Rus', and the East Roman or Byzantine Empire.

The Pax Romana and the Byzantine Empire

The previous discussion of the Roman Empire (in Chapter 2) concerned developments in the late fourth and fifth centuries, when the arrival of the Huns in the steppes of Ukraine pushed Germanic tribes westward into the Roman sphere. The arrival of the Germanic tribes provoked military clashes and further political instability, so that the Pax Romana was being shaken to its core. The imperial capital of Rome itself was attacked by the Germanic Visigoths in 410, and just over a half century later the last emperor of Rome was deposed (476). These catastrophic events did not, however, mean the end of the Pax Romana that for centuries had brought political stability and economic prosperity to much of Europe and the Mediterranean world. At least one part of the Pax Romana was to survive for another thousand years in the eastern half of the empire.

Already at the end of the third century CE, the Roman Empire had adopted the practice of rule by two emperors, one for the West based in the city of Rome, and one for the East based in the city of Byzantium. Located along the straits of the Bosphorus which separates Europe from Asia, Byzantium was inaugurated as the capital of the East in the year 330 during the reign of the Emperor Constantine. In honor of its founder, Byzantium, the center of the New Rome, was renamed Constantinople.

The border between the West Roman and East Roman Empires was in the Balkan peninsula, running more or less through modern-day Bosnia-Herzegovina (see Map 5). For much of its early existence, the Eastern Roman

Empire maintained control not only of the Balkan region south of the Danube River (the traditional Roman *limes*), but also of Asia Minor and the Near Eastern Mediterranean lands. Three basic components characterized the Eastern Roman Empire: (1) Roman political tradition—with its heritage of written law and authority centralized in a supreme ruler, the emperor; (2) Hellenic culture—which carried on the tradition of classical Greece and was expressed in the Greek language, not Latin, as in the West Roman Empire; and (3) Christian belief—which used Greek instead of Latin and followed the Eastern, or Byzantine rite that differed from the Latin, or Roman rite practiced in the West Roman Empire. Finally, the citizens of the East Roman Empire always called themselves Romans (in Greek: *romaios*), and they were called such by outsiders as well (for instance, *Rûm* and *Rumeli* in Turkic languages). Sometime in the Middle Ages, however, European writers began to use the term *Byzantium* when referring to the East Roman Empire. Henceforth, this book will use the terms *Byzantium* and *Byzantine Empire* when speaking of the East Roman world.

As the inheritor and continuer of the Pax Romana, the Byzantine Empire remained a source of attraction for many peoples living beyond its borders, especially in central and eastern Europe. Byzantine influence was especially strong among the Slavic peoples, who by the ninth century were among the most numerous inhabitants in the region. For millennia the Slavs had been vassal-like subordinate peoples who were pressed to fight in the ranks of tribal federations headed by eastern nomadic military elites, such as the Scythians, Alans (Antes), and more recently the Huns and Avars. By the ninth century, however, the Slavs began to form their own political entities.

Greater Moravia

The first of these entities arose along the Frankish-Avar borderlands in the valley of the Morava River in the eastern part (Moravia) of the present-day Czech Republic. There, in the 830s, a West Slav leader (Mojmír) founded a state, which under his successors (Rastislav, r. 846–869, and Svatopluk, r. 870–894) developed into what became known as the Greater Moravian Empire. By the last decade of the ninth century Greater Moravia had come to include what in modern-day terms is the Czech Republic (Bohemia and Moravia), Slovakia, southern Poland (Silesia, Little Poland), as well as parts of Germany (Lusatia) and western Hungary (Pannonia). In the northeast, the Greater Moravian sphere reached as far as Cracow and near Przemyśl along the San River; that is, lands inhabited by remnants of the White Croats on the northern slopes of the Carpathians. Whereas Greater Moravia did not reach quite as far as Carpathian Rus' on the southern slopes of the mountains, it was to have a profound impact on that region and its inhabitants.

Greater Moravian political influence did not go beyond the middle Danubian valley, because to the east an even more powerful state had reached the height of its power in the ninth century—the Bulgarian Empire. Originally based on both banks of the lower Danube River (present-day

southern Romania and northern Bulgaria), the Turkic Bulgars, who by this time had been assimilated by the local Slavic inhabitants, created a large state that covered much of the Balkan peninsula and that included as well Transylvania and the Tisza River valley as far north as Carpathian Rus'. The Bulgarians were particularly interested in controlling the salt trade from mines in Transylvania and the Tisza borderland with its rich deposits at Solotvyno.

Even though Greater Moravia had no direct political influence over Carpathian Rus', it did have a lasting cultural impact on the region, specifically in the realm of religion. The ultimate source of Moravia's religious influence was the Byzantine Empire. Ever since the Roman Empire had adopted Christianity as its official state religion—a decision implemented by the founder of Byzantine New Rome, Emperor Constantine—the Church was actively concerned with converting to Christianity the various pagan peoples throughout Europe who resided within and beyond the borders of the former Pax Romana. Byzantium's rulers fully supported the goals of the Church, since Christianization might not only save souls, it could also help secure the empire's borders and enhance trade with its new Christian neighbors.

Between the fifth and tenth centuries, most of Europe's Celtic, Germanic, and Slavic peoples living beyond the northern borders (*limes*) of the old Roman Empire were converted to Christianity. Those conversions were often initiated and carried out by self-sacrificing missionaries from either the Western Latin-oriented Christian Church based in Rome, or by the Eastern Byzantine Greek-oriented Christian Church based in Constantinople. At the same time it was not uncommon for states that had themselves become officially Christian to initiate the conversion process of others either by peaceful or forceful means. Whenever states became involved in this process, political concerns often took precedence over spiritual ones. It is, therefore, not surprising that state-inspired proselytizers representing the Western and Eastern variants of Christianity became rivals in wanting to convert the pagans to their own variant of the faith. Such West-East rivalry was particularly evident in the Church's efforts to convert the Slavs.

Saints Constantine/Cyril and Methodius

For its part the Byzantine Empire was consistently active in trying to forge alliances and maintain peace with its neighbors to the north, among whom the Bulgarians in the nearby Balkan peninsula were the most powerful and threatening. Hence, conversion to Christianity became an integral part of Byzantine diplomacy. In the mid-ninth century, Greater Moravia's rulers sought to enhance their state's political fortunes by seeking an alliance with the Byzantine Empire. Byzantium responded by sending in 863 a diplomatic mission to Moravia headed by two Greek missionaries, Constantine and his brother Methodius. During their mission, which lasted nearly five years (863–867), the Moravians and other Slavs living within Greater Moravia followed their ruler and were converted to Christianity. Aside from conversion, the Byzantine Greek brothers created an alphabet called Glagolitic,