

# Sviad, Prince of Colchis



By Pearce Deacon



# ***Sviad, Prince of Cholchis***

*A Short Story of the Bronze Age*

*By*

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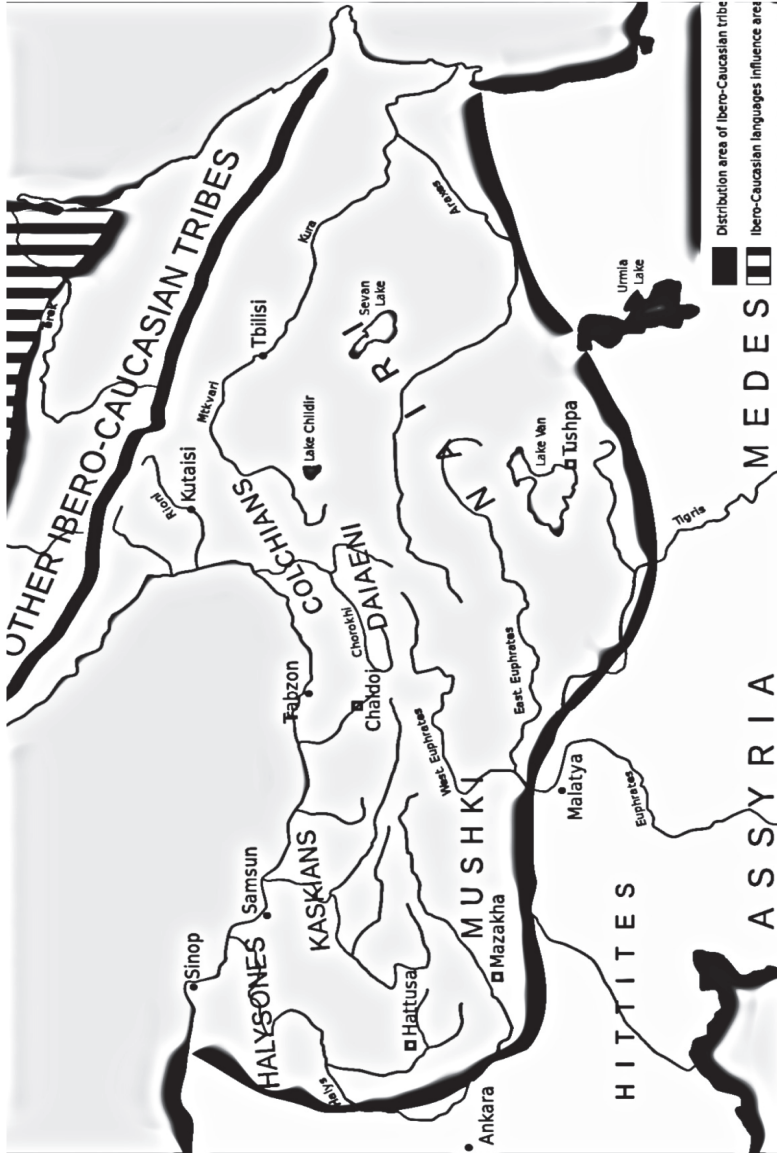
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# Map of Urartu and Cholchis



## ***Act I: Sviad Enters Tushpa, Capital of Urartu***

The Prince of Colchis, Sviad, eldest son of Irakle, King of Colchis, approached the mighty city of Tushpa, and was amazed by the impressive walls which were visible from miles away. Sviad had been sent by his father on a diplomatic mission to safeguard the continuing good relations between Colchis and Urartu. Colchis was a rich Kingdom with rivers filled with gold and valleys covered in vast vineyards producing some of the best wines in the world, but Colchis was also small and surrounded by enemies, and could not risk offending the powerful King of Urartu, the overlord of Colchis and its neighbor to the south. As long as Urartu maintained its protection upon Colchis, Colchis would be safe.

Sviad traveled with half a dozen men on foot with a large wagon being pulled by an ox.

“Have you ever seen such an amazing sight?” Sviad asked Melkhiaz, his father’s best friend and chief of his bodyguards.

“No, my Prince,” responded the older man, “Many years ago I visited Tushpa, but it was a small town without walls. Not the grand city we see before us.”

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The small party approached the gates, and the guards called out to them, “Halt and state your business.”

Sviad pulled out from his purse hanging from his belt a pass embossed with the Royal Seal of Urartu that had been presented to his father many years before when his father swore loyalty to the King of Urartu. The guards looked at the object made of hammered silver and inlaid with precious stones, and they bowed to Sviad.

“Please enter and wait in the room to the left.” the chief of the guards stated, “I will see that food and drink are brought to you immediately, and an officer from the palace will soon come and lead you to your quarters.”

Sviad and his party entered the welcoming gallery for honored visitors, and admired the brightly painted walls with images of dancing men and women cavorting through a forest. The tall vaulted ceiling kept the hall cool in the heat of the day. They sat down upon sumptuous pillows and soon were sipping upon chilled wine, from Colchis Sviad thought to himself, and eating dainty tidbits of sweet meats and candied fruit. It seemed that all too quickly this pleasant rest was interrupted by the arrival of the officer from the palace.

“Welcome to Tushpa, Seat of the Mighty Emperor Ishpuini of Urartu, Victorious Against Assyria, Conqueror of Musasir, and King of the land of Nairi! I

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am Rusa, the humble servant of the Mighty Ishpuini. Please follow me. Your accommodations are ready for you, and I have servants who will bring all your belongings to your quarters.”

The weary travelers happily followed Rusa, and were amazed at the size and splendor of the rooms they had been given.

“My father’s grand new house could fit into this hall set aside for visitors!” Sviad exclaimed.

“Nothing is too grand for the honored guests of Ishpuini,” affirmed Rusa, “We are glad that you are pleased with your accommodations. Servants are preparing your bath, and a meal will be provided afterwards. Tomorrow morning we will bring you new clothes, and present you to the Mighty Ishpuini.”

“Excuse me sir,” asked Sviad as the officer prepared to leave, “What of the goods in our wagon? They contain gifts that are intended to be given to your Emperor tomorrow.”

The officer clapped his hands and servants bearing the goods in question delivered them and placed them next to the door.



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“Tomorrow morning I will arrive with servants who will carry the gifts you wish to present to Mighty Ishpuini. Is there anything else you may require?”

Sviad shook his head, and smiled as the officer left the apartments.

The next morning, true to his word, Rusa gently tapped upon the door and wished Sviad and his friends good morning. The party from Colchis looked splendid in the new clothing that had been given to them. Servants came in and carried the gifts intended for Ishpuini, and the party proceeded through long corridors to the throne room of the Emperor. They stopped outside the entry way that lead into the massive hall and throne room. The opulent hall had soaring ceilings held up by massive stone columns, and the walls were painted with scenes of the many victories of Ishpuini against the enemies of Urartu. At the other end of the hall was a huge throne made of brightly polished black stone that seemed to be seamless in its construction and that sat upon a platform of finely cut stone blocks.

Sitting upon this throne was the Emperor Ishpuini clothed in fine linen, and wearing a heavy necklace of hammered gold and inlaid gems. The secretary standing next to Ishpuini saw the party and waived for them to enter. Rusa lead them through the entry way and bowed deeply, and then fell on the ground in prostration before

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the throne. Sviad and his companions also bowed deeply, but did not prostrate themselves – it was not the custom of free men of Colchis to prostrate themselves before anyone.

Rusa looked at them from the floor, and then realized they were not going to prostrate themselves before Ishpuini. He quickly rose and lead them to stand before the Emperor some distance away from the base of the stairs leading up to the throne.

Ishpuini was a young man, well built with broad shoulders, dark hair, piercing dark eyes, and a ruddy complexion. He smiled at them and waived them forward. They approached the stairs and stopped at the base of the platform.

“Welcome Sviad, Prince of Colchis, Son of Irakle, King of Colchis, our beloved friend and ally!” called out the secretary, “We are thankful that you come to visit your overlord, the Mighty Emperor Ishpuini of Urartu, Victorious Against Assyria, Conqueror of Musasir, and King of the land of Nairi!”

Sviad had no idea what to say. He had planned to say many things, but it was all forgotten and all that came clumsily out was, “Oh mighty Emperor, I come with gifts from my father and family. I am told to reassure you that my father and all of Colchis is loyal to you.” Sviad

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looked to Rusa, and the officer waived to the servants who brought into the throne room the gifts that had been transported from Colchis in the wagon. The first items that were laid down before the Emperor were casks of the finest Colchis wine, and then a large exquisitely carved wooden chest was placed beside the wine.

“Emperor, my father presents to you the finest wine from Colchis, grown in his own vineyards that were laid down by my great grandfather. We pray that it satisfies the Emperor’s palate.”

One of Sviad's men took out a gold chalice from a finely inlaid wooden box he was carrying, and filled it with the rich red wine of Colchis and presented it to the Emperor who had the secretary bring it up to him on his throne. The Emperor took a sip of the wine and smiled as he examined and regarded the golden chalice.

“You bring us rich gifts from the heart of your father. Thank you so much.”

Then Sviad opened the large wooden chest and removed a heavy bundle of cloth. He unwound the cloth and the light of the rising sun struck the weave, and everyone realized this was cloth of gold, perhaps more valuable than all the wine of Colchis produced in a year.

“Emperor, this gift is from my noble and honorable mother and my devoted and innocent sister who

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personally made this cloth spun with gold thread mined from my father's lands. They spent many long months making this cloth, but did so happily in the expectation that their work would please your Highness."

Servants of the Emperor then brought the heavy and shimmering length of cloth up to the throne, and the Emperor looked at it with wonder.

"This is indeed a kingly gift that your mother and sister have fashioned for me! Such artistry is rare, and for it to come from such noble makers honors me and fills me with gratitude. Thank you Sviad, Prince of Colchis. Clearly Urartu is fortuitous to have such friends as you and your father."

Sviad and his company bowed before Ishpuini, and the Emperor himself stood up holding the golden chalice filled with the wine of Colchis and declared a toast:

"Here is to Irakle, King of Colchis, to his noble wife and daughter, and to Sviad, Prince of Colchis. May you all live long and happy lives, and may your lands prosper forever!"

He took a great gulp of the fine wine, and sat down upon his throne.

"How can Urartu be of service to you and your father good Sviad?" Ishpuini asked.

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Sviad looked down nervously, and said, “My father requests that you keep me in your court in order to train me in the ways of leadership and rule so that I may become a better king when it is my time to take the throne of Colchis.”

“Done,” bellowed the Emperor Ishpuini of Urartu, “Is the High Priest Hivite available?”

From behind the throne steps out a tall thin man of indeterminate age wearing simple but elegant robes, and a large gold medallion around his neck.

“I am always ready to serve your Highness.” responded Hivite.

“Very well then! Hivite you now have a new student. Please teach Sviad, Prince of Colchis, whatever you think he may need to know when he becomes King of Colchis!”

Hivite bowed low to Ishpuini, and then approached Sviad and they both bowed to each commencing their relationship as teacher and student.

## ***Act II: Sviad Learns of his Father's Death and Leaves for Colchis***

Sviad had spent a year in Tushpa learning many things from Hivite, High Priest of Shivani, the sun god, and from others in the court of Ishpuini. He improved his ability to read and write, and he mastered the art speaking in public in a commanding and convincing manner. He was trained in the art of horsemanship, and honed his skill with the spear, the sword, and the shield under the tutelage of the finest warriors of Urartu.

Then Sviad received a terse message from his uncle informing him that his father, Irakle, King of Colchis, was dead, and that he must return to Colchis immediately. Sviad's first impulse was to rush back home, but he decided to first consult with his mentor, Hivite, who Sviad had come to regard as one of the wisest of men he had ever met.

Hivite read the short note, and looked troubled as he considered the news. "We do not know the situation in Colchis," he said, "The message you received seems very strange to me. It is rushed, and lacks important information, nor does it treat you with the proper dignity of a Prince who presumably will soon become the King. Sviad, I advise you to show great caution in this matter.

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Travel under a disguise. Perhaps as an itinerant penitent priest? And if you wish, I will go with you as a guide, as an advisor, and as a friend.” Sviad accepted the generous offer from Hivite.

Hivite obtained two dirty cloaks that were commonly worn by such itinerant penitent priests and two wooden walking staffs. The two men stripped off their fine clothes and jewelry, and stood naked as the servants unhappily placed the filthy cloaks upon them. They then secretly left Tushpa and traveled together so disguised.

They had no problems in their travels until they approached the borderlands of Colchis near the head waters of the Phasis River. There they were set upon by highwaymen.

“We are just penitent priests with no property for you to steal. Let us pass in peace, and we will pray for your souls.” Hivite offered to the outlaws.

But Sviad recognized most of the men as his father's most loyal retainers, members of the bodyguard. Many were the same men who had gone to Tushpa with him a year ago. Specifically he recognized the leader of the band of outlaws, Melkhiaz, his father's most trusted friend and chief of the bodyguard. Melkhiaz recognized Sviad as well.

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Melkhiaz explained why his men were now outlaws:

“When your father died, I believe by poisoning, I refused to serve your uncle who immediately claimed the throne. I did not rebel I simply refused to go into your father's house and swear loyalty to your uncle. Your uncle then declared me and my men outlaws. Since that was my profession before your father became my friend, and I became his loyal servant, I decided to follow your uncle’s wise advice and returned to my prior life of crime!”

When the outlaws realized that Sviad was not only their old friend from childhood, but the rightful heir to the kingdom of Colchis, they bowed to him and expressed their happiness at his arrival. They all sat down and shared a meal by the open fire. Sviad savored the simple but filling food of his homeland. Sitting by the fire, telling stories, exchanging elaborate toasts with the excellent wine from his father’s vineyards; it all reminded him of the happy carefree days of his youth.

“My men and I will happily guide you to the borders of Colchis proper if that is what you wish,” offered Melkhiaz, “But I dare not approach your father’s house since my men and I will be killed on sight.”

And so the band of outlaws brought Sviad and Hivite to the outskirts of his father’s land, and as they saw the



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smoke rising from the Hall of Irakle in the distance, the two travelers parted ways with their guides.

“Thank you for your kindness, but most of all for your loyalty.” Sviad said, “If I survive this day you will be welcome to return to the service of my house if you wish, and of course you will be pardoned for all your many crimes!”

Melkhiaz laughed and embraced Sviad and kissed him on both cheeks, and then bowed down before him. “There is nothing I long for more! As long as you live you are my king!”

The two then made their way to the recently completed grand Hall of Irakle. Sviad struggled to remain calm even though he was filled with worries and apprehensions.

### ***Act III: Sviad Enters his Father's Hall***

The two travelers dressed as penitent priests approached the grand Hall of Irakle. Sviad saw the guards at the gate, but did not recognize them. They did not even appear to be men of Colchis, but some foreign mercenaries.

However, the two men were treated politely and allowed to enter into the main hall.

As they entered the hall Sviad stopped and his jaw dropped in horror at what he saw. To his disgust the large bed that his father had built for his mother from prized aromatic Lebanese cedar logs that had been placed in the private bed chambers of his parents, was now in the center of the hall. Inside the bed was his mother and his uncle having sex in front of everyone. At the end of the hall, opposite from his father's throne, was another less grand bed where his younger brother and younger sister were similarly occupied. On the floor were his uncle's men, many of whom Sviad recognized and some he did not, rolling about with the young female servants of the household.

Then the oldest of his father's servants approached the two travelers, and whispered into Sviad's ear, "My Prince, did you think you could trick your old servant, Merzo? I heard you walk your first steps when you were just a toddler. I may be old and blind but I know the

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sound of your steps. You could never sneak about without me knowing! It is good that you are back although I wish it was under better circumstances my Prince. How can I serve you?”

Sviad looked down upon the old servant and smiled. Sviad knew what had to be done even if he did not want to do it.

“Bring me my father's war club.”

Merzo smiled and nodded, and then shuffled off. A few minutes later the old man returned and handed the club to Sviad. It was made from a massive piece of walnut root that his father had carved into the heavy club now held by Sviad. Sviad’s father had taken the life of many a brave warrior in battle with this club. As the orgy continued in the hall no one noticed as Sviad examined the club with a grim expression.

“Now Merzo,” Sviad instructed the old man, “go collect the loyal servants that remain. Arm them with the weapons in the guardroom and await my signal at the back of the hall. You will know what to do and when!”

Sviad nodded to Hivite and placed the war club under his tattered cloak. Then he approached his uncle and his mother in the bed at the center of the hall. He stood there quietly and waited for his uncle and mother to notice him.

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It took some moments as the two were passionately fornicating in front of him, and with each passing second Sviad became more enraged. Finally his uncle noticed Sviad standing there, but did not recognize him in the tattered cloak, and with his head covered by a hood.

“What do you want beggar?” his uncle asked, “Can you not see I am busy?”

Seething with anger Sviad responded, “I see you are a useless shit who has spoken his last word and who has drawn his last breath!”

Sviad threw off his meager cloak, and standing tall and naked before all he lifted his father's mighty war club, and savagely brought it down upon his uncle's head. There was a sickening cracking sound that rang through the hall as the death blow struck. Then Sviad pounded his uncle's head over and over with many more crushing blows smashing his uncle's head into an unidentifiable bloody pulp of broken bones, brains, and blood that splattered across the bed, upon his mother's naked body, and even upon Sviad himself.

The shrieks from his mother broke Sviad's furious concentration upon his murderous task, and he stopped clubbing the bloody remains his uncle's skull. Now covered in the blood and brains of his uncle he went to

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the bed containing his brother and sister, and did the same to his younger brother.

Satisfied that both his uncle and his younger brother were now dead, Sviad walked towards his father's throne.

Naked, his body painted in the avenging blood and gore of his uncle and brother, Sviad sat on his father's throne holding the war club dripping blood before him.

“Who else offends the honor of this house and my family?”

Several drunken men rose up, mostly naked, and they looked around confused. Then one approached Sviad with a knife in his hand and was quickly struck down by Merzo, now armed with a shield and a spear. Merzo, although old and blind, expertly gutted the drunken fool where he stood, and the man's entrails poured out of his belly and onto the floor before him. Then out of the shadows came four more armed servants and they proceeded to slaughter the remaining men of Sviad's uncle.

Sviad sat on the throne and watched with satisfaction as the murder of his father and the disgrace of his family was avenged. As the blood flowed like water across the floor, the hysterical screams of the women pealed through the hall.

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“Tie up the women and bring them before me!” Sviad ordered, “And that includes my mother and sister!” His loyal servants obeyed.

The naked women were brought before Sviad, and he stared at them. In the front stood his mother and sister covered in the blood and gore of their lovers.

“What do you have to say for yourselves faithless whores?” Sviad screamed.

Both women fell on their knees and begged for mercy.

“At least you two understand your situation.” Sviad declared, “Hivite, can you take these two women to the temple of Shivani where they can spend the rest of their days in prayers of forgiveness, and working in the temple in the hopes of finding some shred of absolution for their sins?”

“Yes, my Lord Sviad. It shall be done.”

Sviad pointed the gory war club at his mother and sister, and yelled, “If I hear that for even one day you fail to properly pray as I have instructed I will come and smash your skulls with this club, and then I will feed your carcasses to dogs!”

Sviad looked at the other women, “The rest of the women shall be sold into slavery.”

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“Merzo, have my father's bed taken apart. Give the gold and silver trimmings to Hivite for the costs of providing for my mother and sister,” Sviad commanded, “and have the wood used to build a platform to display the bodies of my uncle, brother, and the other dogs who have disgraced this hall, and let them rot out in the sun for all to see.”

Sviad then stood up before them all, naked and covered in blood, yet commanding and stunning in his form and demeanor, “I declare myself rightful heir to all that my father possessed. Let anyone who objects come forward and challenge me!”

No one came forward.