Our Ancient Writings

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FOREWORD

While records of Hungarian writing in Latin script date back one thousand years in Hungary, there is also contemporaneous or even earlier evidence of writing in Hungarian and unknown languages from the entire territory of the Carpathian Basin, written in different scripts. For obvious reasons, these writings are of particular interest for the lay audience, but they are also of great significance for scientific research. It is therefore natural that many researchers focus on these matters, leading to many new discoveries. But it is still rare for researchers to think together, to share and to discuss their own conclusions. In 2018, the Hungarian Language Strategy Institute held a roundtable on the topic. The conference papers were published at the time these studies were written, with the title *Rovás – magyar nyelvtörténet – művelődéstörténet. (Runiform Script – Hungarian Language History – Cultural History)* (Ed. Erzsébet Zelliger; Institute for Hungarian Studies, Budapest, 2019). Based on this roundtable and with much more abundant contributions by participants and archaeologists, linguists and epigraphists, the Institute for Hungarian Studies organised a conference on 12–13 December 2019, the lectures of which were included in this volume.

This increased publicity and closer cooperation between researchers is sorely needed indeed, as the field is developing at a rapid pace. Forty years ago, roughly three dozen texts in all of the old scripts were known to us, and we did not always clearly perceive the differences between them. Today, at least three distinct types of the runiform script alone are known in Hungary, and every year, four or five new inscriptions are guaranteed to emerge. (This applies to Roman inscriptions as well, but in their case, a dozen new pieces of data represent 2‰ of the total volume, and they rarely tell us anything really new. However, for

us, almost every newly discovered runiform specimen reveals essentially new information!) There are only around 170 surviving inscriptions today, not to mention manuscripts. Compilation of the corpus is the next task at hand.

Perhaps the boundaries themselves have not been clearly drawn yet, and the scholars use different designations for their topics of research. The title "Our Ancient Writings" is not accidental. Every old, rare, unresearched and undeciphered inscription must be covered. We cannot narrow down the discussion to "runiform script" or "old Hungarian script", as we cannot truly understand them without the larger context. The very terminology itself is underdeveloped. Some engage in pointless debates on names, finding themselves in opposite positions even though their individual studies could benefit from cooperation (Szekler script or runiform script?).

Our original purpose was declaredly immodest: everyone should come together, and everyone who has contributed important new findings to our knowledge base should now think together. Of course, this ideal conference turned out to be less than ideal. Contributions from some of our colleagues are sadly missing from this volume, but at the conference – in what we can call a moment of grace – our greatest predecessors were there with us. We could listen to (and are now publishing) the posthumous lecture of an unpublished work by Gábor Vékony, who left us too soon. It was also the last opportunity to hear the lecture by the doyen of Hungarian runiform script research, István Erdélyi. This volume was in the editing phase when he departed. This work is dedicated to their memory and is in no way complete: we intend to continue and organise more conferences, more research, and more volumes. We have so many common tasks ahead, in linguistic deciphering, research methodology, documentation, and even popularisation.

Budapest, March 2020

The editors

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THE RUNIFORM SCRIPT FROM KÁPOSZTÁSMEGYER THAT NOBODY BELIEVED IN

BENCE FEHÉR

ABSTRACT: In 1971, two potsherds containing written characters in the Szekler runiform script were found in Káposztásmegyer (Budapest, District IV) while moving earth. Although they were identified as medieval products, the sherds have been regarded as forgeries ever since. However, the larger fragment was written before firing and is thus an original specimen. Although its exact origins are unknown, it is reasonable to assume that it is an artefact from the 15th or the early part of the 16th century. The first verse of the inscription is not intelligible, the second one says *[- - -]+uk rótʿam [- - -?]*. As it is a domestic product of inferior quality, the existence of the runiform characters is hard to explain (in all likelihood, it was made locally); most probably it can be linked to the cult of Szekler runes in the era of King Mátyás; it may have been the product of a potter who worked for an aristocratic or clerical landowner.
KEYWORDS: Káposztásmegyer, pottery graffito, runiform script

Inscriptions in Szekler runiform script in authentic contexts have so far only surfaced in Transylvania, with one exception dating before the foundation of the Hungarian state.[1] Territories outside Transylvania have given us both skilful and gross forgeries,[2] Latin inscriptions or decorative motifs misinterpreted as runiform script,[3] quite a few pieces of data that are uncertain, albeit not proven to be inauthentic,[4] and barely one or two discoveries that could possibly be interpreted as inscriptions in Szekler runiform script (the Suki chalice originates in Transylvania, but not the Szeklerland; we have a disputed stone inscription from Pécs, and one late specimen from Lőcse (today: Levoča, Slovakia) in historical Upper Hungary is at least not proven to be a forgery).[5] Precisely because they are sporadic and since other interpretations cannot be ruled out, most researchers exclude these from the category of authentic specimens and believe in principle that Szekler runiform script is indeed an exclusively Szekler speciality that was never used in other parts of the country.[6] (Of course, here

1 Bodrog-Alsóbű, early 10th century, see Vékony 1999.

2 To give just a few examples, here are some they attempted to present as being medieval: the memorial stone of Margit island (Erdélyi & Ráduly 2010, p. 114) or the so-called Turóc wooden book (Jerney 1840).

3 E.g. the inscription of the church gate in Felsőszemeréd (Erdélyi & Ráduly 2010, p. 53), an alleged pot fragment from Kupa (Erdélyi & Ráduly 2010, p. 113), a boulder inscription in Sály, the spearhead of Komárom (see Márk Haramza's study in this volume) or a memorial stone allegedly from Mezőkeresztes (Forrai 1994, pp. 340–341).

4 An amulet (?) from Tokaj, Csallány 1971, p. 130. no. 6; wooden sticks with allegedly runiform script from Nógrád and Turóc Counties according to Mátyás Bél (Bél 1718, pp. 15–16); most of the allegedly late inscriptions in runiform script from the Great Plain that were "researched" in the early 20th century, based on Mihály Tar's contemporary runiform activity (Jelentés 1903, pp. 30–47), cannot be considered seriously; only two specimens in Békés County do not seem to be excluded outright (while those from Kiskunhalas are common forgeries). Written stones found in Szokolya (Erdélyi & Ráduly 2010, p. 111): based on investigations I performed in 2019, there is no Szekler runiform script on them, but directional signs and pentagrams. However, I have not yet identified all of the stones mentioned; the boulder inscriptions allegedly from Upper Hungary are generally "ancient Slavic runes" forgeries by Slovakian nationalists, but not all of these could be discovered and examined.

5 See Pál 1966; Forrai 1994, pp. 285–289; Csallány 1971, p. 147; a summary in Erdélyi & Ráduly 2010. pp. 52, 112.

6 Summary: Sándor 2014. Gábor Vékony firmly believed the same; therefore he is the first researcher who consistently calls this script Szekler script (Vékony 1999, and later works), and he resolved the dilemma caused by the Alsóbű inscription by assuming a remnant Szekler population in the 10th century in Somogy.

we must disregard the early medieval written records that preserved signs of a specific script system often called "runiform", but which are certainly not identical to Szekler script, such as the so-called runiform rings.[7])

We must emphasise that the data so far support this conclusion, regardless of how we interpret the discovery in Alsóbű, which is an exception: as evidence of the Szeklers' presence in Western Hungary in the 10th century, or of the fact that the script disappeared in much of the territory of the country following the establishment of the Hungarian state.[8] Indeed, in both cases we can expect future discoveries of geographically scattered inscriptions of runiform script from the 10th–11th centuries, but any finds from later periods are improbable.

The inscription I present here only fits into this concept without reservation if it is a forgery, and indeed, to this day it has not been regarded as a specimen of Szekler runiform script, as its authenticity has been firmly rejected. Incidentally it was found in 1971, meaning that this opinion is almost half a century old.

It was first mentioned by István Vásáry in 1974, who said that at the school on Megyeri Road (on 27 May 1971) he saw hundreds of pieces of medieval potsherds that were discovered at the so-called "Megyeri Inn" during sewer excavation. Several of these bore fairly recent, obviously forged runiform script (to quote Vásáry: "the runes on the potsherds were evidently etched recently; the characters were nice and rigid, and Árpád's name was easy to read on one of them. Hopefully, these cheap forgeries will have no remarkable life...).[9] Since pottery graffito can easily be recognised as a recent forgery, and it is absurd to find an ÁRPÁD text among the medieval discoveries, we can safely presume it dates from the mid-1970s. It is common knowledge that excavation workers often play tricks on the lead archaeologist, or students on their history teacher, when they make these "inscriptions"; this situation was entirely obvious and nobody paid any more attention to these objects. It would have been difficult to in any case, because Vásáry was not aware that the objects were added to

7 See the study of Péter Langó in this volume.

8 This is suggested by the fact that some remains from the Late Avar period reveal sporadic occurrences of a script strongly resembling (or possibly a predecessor of) the Szekler runes in the entire country, see Fehér 2019, Fehér 2020.

9 Vásáry 1974, pp. 167–168.

a public collection. He did not describe them, and thus finding "a potsherd among hundreds of others" would be quite a feat for anyone.

In 2010, in his comprehensive, but rather disorganised collection of runes, György Mandics also mentions two fragments of pots with runiform script (including a drawing), which can be associated with Budapest District IV: based on their descriptions, Margit Torzsa identified them in the "Local History Collection" of Újpest.[10] According to the drawing, one of them bore the inscription [- - -]GAM, while the other had UK^{2}R^{1}OGyAM. However, there was no direct connection between these two objects and the unknown number of objects seen by Vásáry in 1971, even though an origin in Káposztásmegyer cannot be excluded entirely, and it was very likely that they too were forgeries, because 1) their text makes no sense whatsoever; 2) according to information to this date, District IV in Budapest is certainly not the place where runiform script could have been presumed either in the Middle Ages, or in the early modern ages. Obviously they cannot be the same, since the ÁRPÁD text was missing.

For these reasons, there was no hope of verifying Vásáry's data. Nevertheless, even though I thought the effort would be completely futile, I visited the Neogrády László Local History Collection in Újpest to look for the two items, hoping that the modest size of the collection would allow them to be found even without an inventory number. In fact, they feature in the permanent exhibition. At the very first glance, I discovered something unexpected: one of the inscriptions (Photo 1) is not a forgery – indeed it was not added subsequently, it was made before firing. (Assuming that the entire object was not made at the end of the 20th century; but I think it is not even worth considering that someone in the 1970s would have forged such a poor-quality, dark grey, manually or barely wheeled, late medieval-looking pot only to mislead a local historian.) The second item was engraved subsequently. In my opinion, not too long ago, so we can assume this to be a forgery inspired by the discovery and recognition of the first potsherd.

10 Mandics 2010, II p. 519.

Undoubtedly, the two belong together in the collection (inventory number 34/2019). According to inventory data, they originated from the territory of Káposztásmegyer-Waterworks (thus indeed from around the Megyeri Inn) and were retrieved from a medieval settlement during earthworks in 1971.

We can quickly dispense with the non-authentic, small fragment (Photo 2): two and a half signs survived, or more precisely, this is how many were made, because it seems the inscription was made after the vessel was broken (based on a careful study of the break area), from right to left, breaking through the top material layer. Several interpretations are possible: [- - -]LAM/GAM/?VAM. These do not seem to make any sense, unless we take it to be simple past tense; however, in our experience, the Szekler runiform graffiti always used the past perfect.[11] A much simpler explanation is that the other fragment was copied, and its antepenultimate letter was misread.

The other fragment is much more curious. At the top of it (see Photo 3), we see a rough drawing of a shield (perhaps an imitation of a coat of arms or a cross made unrecognisable due to subsequent damage; in any case, I believe it is a non-specific, non-existent coat of arms; perhaps it is a craftsman's mark). Below this, there is a thin, irregular engraved line with unclear letters (J?+PRA, but it may well be that the raised letters RA are in fact a new line[12]), and finally, a line engraved with a thick, dull instrument, roughly but in a straight line (see Photo 4), which is certainly truncated where it starts. The first surviving fragmented letter is impossible to discern. One and a half words are legible, and it is uncertain whether anything else followed (the word clearly ends).

11 Firtosvár: R[I]OT[A/M?] (for the interpretation, see Fehér 2019b), Berekeresztúr, SE wall: CS̩E̩NALL^TA (my interpretation based on an autopsy done by me), Bágy: CsNAL^TA, Csíkszentmiklós/mihály: Cs^JNAL^TAK[I], ⌈Cs^NA⌉L^TA, Constantinople: IR[I]^TAN. (Here, I disregard the Vargyas inscription, the interpretation of which is debated.) Not recognising this phenomenon has misled others, too; for example, Gábor Vékony's deciphering of the Dálnok inscription is certainly incorrect for this reason (as well) (Vékony 1987, p. 19).

12 The 2nd sign is probably J, A, or perhaps P.

But this is quite legible:[13]

[- - -]+UK^{2} R^{1}OT?AM [- - -?]

that is: *[- - -]+uk rót^{t}am [- - -?]*

Subsequent scratches make the two runes confusing, but these are also not modern.

The two objects are clearly the same ones noted by Mandics, but his drawing is inaccurate, which is why it was hard to read: the top line is missing in his work. So far, so good. The problem is that the second fragment is almost certainly the same one mentioned by Vásáry: indeed, the letters J?+PR^{1}A can relatively easily be interpreted as ÁRPÁD – should anyone read the Szekler script in reverse, from left to right! And, as I found out, the two sherds with the inscription had been to the Budapest History Museum in the early 1970s, where László Neogrády took them for identification. After they were identified as "authentic medieval" (which is rather hard to believe in the case of the first fragment), they ended up in Neogrády's local history collection.

It is a mystery how Vásáry could commit this series of mistakes. I assume he looked at the small forged piece first, and once he ascertained it was a forgery, he only looked at the second one briefly (still, it remains unclear why it was read from left to right). Due to this cursory approach, for forty years we believed a very interesting authentic piece to be a forgery.[14]

The text itself is not very interesting: on the one hand, it is unintelligible, and on the other hand, it is a rather common verb in inscriptions (although the fact that the verb *ró* /notch/ is indeed used to denote the action of writing runes and it is not only a late 19th-century technical term is a relatively new piece

13 In its first (?) sign, two vertical notches can be identified, which are of different depth, one perhaps involuntarily so; the 6th sign could be D, but probably only due to a subsequent breakage of the material; it is more likely that the original sign was T.

14 The whole sequence of events reminds us of a folk anecdote from the second half of the 20th century: a listener calling in to the radio show on Radio Yerevan asked whether indeed Rolls Royce cars were provided in Moscow. As you probably know, Radio Yerevan answered the news was in principle true, except that they were not provided in Moscow, but Leningrad, and not Rolls Royce cars, but Zaporozhets cars, and they were not provided, but plundered (on the role of Radio Yerevan jokes in the history of science, see Kovács 2013, p. 189, based on verbal communication by Barnabás Lőrincz).

of information; this was actually discovered in 2018 based on Inscription 1 of Firtosvár[15]). However, the circumstances of its discovery and presumably its manufacture are interesting. Unfortunately, we know little about the discovery, because it was not found in an excavation: little is known of the medieval context, and in the absence of a proper excavation, it is doubtful as well, since it could have been a case of burying or fill. However, the pot itself can be identified with slightly greater accuracy: it seems to be a late medieval, perhaps 16th-century piece.[16] We can think of no later than the middle of the 16th century, since in 1562 the village was already deserted.[17] The question is: who in the late Middle Ages or 16th century, and why, and how, crafted a piece of household pottery with runiform script which eventually turned up in Káposztásmegyer (I assume it was made there: it is not the sort of decorative item that would be worth importing, even from a neighbouring village[18]). As mentioned in the introduction, our information to date shows that in the 13th to 16th century this script is only characteristic of the Szeklerland.

A reasonable assumption of a link with Káposztásmegyer can only be made in this context if the runiform script is related to the "renaissance" of King Mátyás's court culture in the 15th century,[19] which means it is a scholarly creation, similar to the Nikolsburg alphabet.[20] This is not an impossible scenario: indeed, in the late 15th century the village was rather divided in terms of ownership: many lords and families from Buda had property here (e.g. János Ernuszt, along with some members of the middle nobility), as well as the provost of Buda (or

15 Fehér 2019a.

16 I thank Beatrix Romhányi for the identification of the fragment.

17 Fejes 1999, p. 2.

18 An exception to this assumption could be (as suggested verbally by Miklós Gálos) the case where the pot of a traveller crossing with the Káposztásmegyer ferry happened to break in this very place. However, even in this case we cannot assume a great distance, since the small pot was hardly a piece that anyone would use for transporting goods in long-distance trade.

19 Róna-Tas 1985/86; following this, it has become common knowledge, cf. Sándor 2014, pp. 333–334. Klára Sándor wrote a monograph on the topic: Sándor 2017.

20 Róna-Tas 1985, pp. 175–176; Vékony 2004, pp. 62–64, the author's definite identification: Szelp 2011, p. 412, pp. 418–419.

the chapter, who also had legal disputes).[21] Among these, many laymen and members of the provostry could easily learn and support the "Hun" script.

However, this does not solve the mystery, and if we look at the fragment, we can see why. Obviously, due to its low quality, it cannot be assumed to have been made on commission of the provost of Buda, or János Ernuszt, or someone of similar rank. Is there a mistake here, is the inscription not authentic? It seems the material itself does not support this assumption. I have no proof, but I can propose a few hypotheses that are at least plausible:

1) *Gesunkenes Kulturgut*. A landowner in Megyer, supportive of the runiform script, may have used or ordered such goods, which were then seen by his bondservants and became popular, and some learned how to make them and imitated them. In my opinion, this is unlikely, but cannot be ruled out entirely.
2) Workshop fragments. The presumed landowner ordered a set with runiform script, but the potter had to be trained to do it. The training process produced pieces of household pottery with more or less incorrect inscriptions, one of which survived. This possibility is more likely, and the illegible, tentative-looking 1st line supports this.
3) Speciality of the manufacturer. In this scenario as well, the landowner trained a potter to make his own (decorative) pots, and the craftsman later used this script, known only to him and the landowner, as some sort of trademark, to show the groups he supplied.

Whichever hypothesis is correct (I believe the second is more likely), the inscription of Káposztásmegyer is rather strange evidence of the runiform script cult that was so fashionable in the Buda court in the second half of the 15th century (or early 16th century, as long as there was a royal court in Buda, this was still a possibility). However, it does not lend itself to proving that the runiform script was continuously or widely known in medieval Hungary or the

21 Gárdonyi 1940, p. 15; Kubinyi 1975, p. 31: "At the end of the century, landowners included families from the upper nobility: Ország, Losonci, Thuz (pledge); middle nobility: Haraszti, Kálnai; and ennobled commoners (pledge): János Ernuszt and Kálmán Péter of Óbuda. The provost of Buda owned property here as well."

Buda and Pest region. But it does advise us to tread cautiously: this discovery is the very proof that at any time, anything could disprove our prior knowledge. Let us put it this way: as long as no other, more specific data is discovered in the area, it certainly does not prove anything.

PHOTOS

Photo 1: Pottery fragment with the authentic inscription of Káposztásmegyer (photo by author)

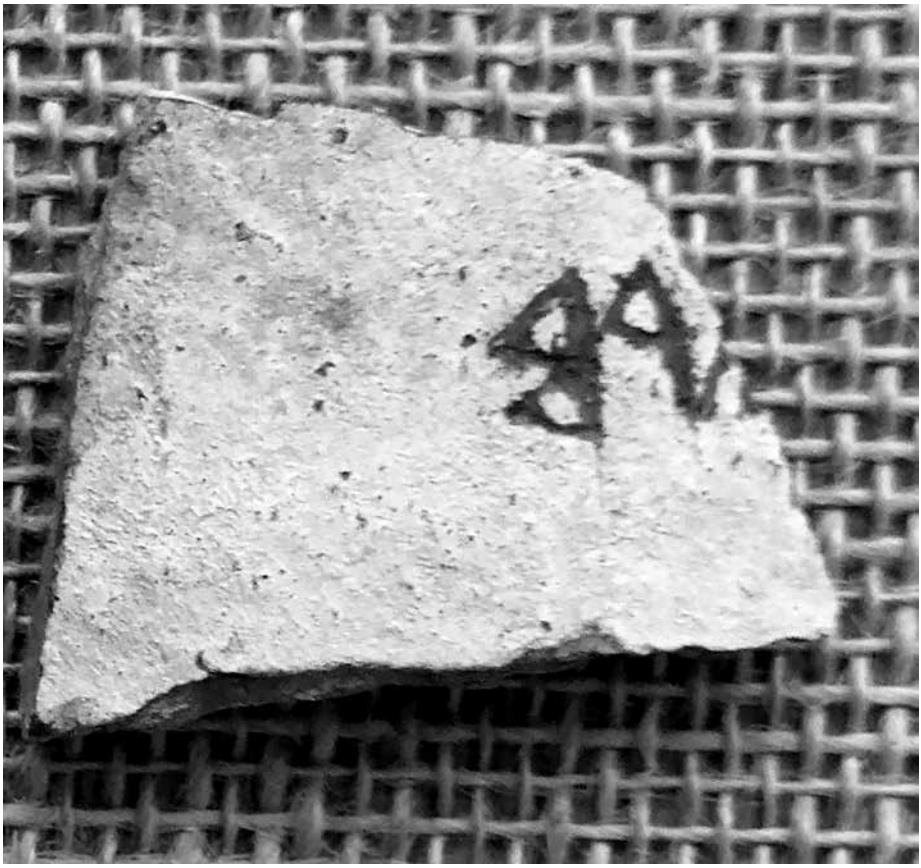

Photo 2: Pottery fragment with the forged inscription of Káposztásmegyer (photo by author)

Photo 3: Letters of the top line (photo by author)

Photo 4: Letters of the bottom line (photo by author)

Photo 5: Interpretation of the inscription (author's drawing)

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BENEDEK ILLYÉS, THE GRAFFITI VANDAL WHO DAMAGED A HISTORIC MONUMENT (15TH CENTURY?)

BENCE FEHÉR

ABSTRACT: A significant portion of the Szekler runiform church inscriptions must be classified as *hic fuit* inscriptions, that is, graffiti by visitors. Such an example is the inscription on the lower edge of the outer wall fresco of the Unitarian church of Sepsikilyén, which was inscribed among several Latin *hic fuit* graffiti. This inscription can be divided into a Latin part in fraktur letters and a Hungarian part in runiform script: *Scribsit (!)* BNDK^2 I[[L]]`Ly´ES. The Latin word and the orthographic emendation show that the author, named *Benedek Illyés*, was a man of higher education than the average: a fact which is also justified in several other inscriptions. This graffito probably erased the signo of the painters, but nevertheless belongs to a layer older than the later graffiti in capital letters and must therefore date to the 2nd part of the 15th century or to the beginning of the 16th century.

KEYWORDS: Sepsikilyén, *hic fuit*, graffito, runiform script

Late medieval church inscriptions in runiform script in the Szeklerland usually have a simple text. Most of them fall into one of two categories: inscriptions relating to construction (such as "made by X.Y."),[1] and the so-called *hic fuit* inscriptions (commonly occurring in Latin and in Latin-script Hungarian in the 16th and 17th centuries: *hic fuit N.N.*, i.e. "N.N. was here").[2] Of course, there are a few exceptions: the first is the set of long inscriptions of the church in Székelydálya, which have not been fully deciphered yet, but they certainly do not fall into either of these two categories.

These are mostly very brief inscriptions that leave one very important question unanswered: who made them, what else can we learn about the author besides his name? In the case of construction-related inscriptions, we obviously know the profession: a painter, a stone-cutter, etc. But in the case of *hic fuit* inscriptions, this too is unclear; we can only guess, or be grateful for cases such as in Gelence, where the engraver added his profession: *Pál the priest*.[3]

At the same time, it is somewhat common knowledge (but never proven) that the Szekler runiform script is the ancient popular script of the Hungarian nation, or at least of the Szeklers, which predates our Latin script; accordingly, writing it is a form of the people's literacy not taught in schools and not related to the usual

1 The inscriptions in Bágy, Csíkszentmihály/Csíkszentmiklós, Énlaka are clearly in this category. Many interpreters believe the Bögöz inscription to be such (Szigethy 1930; Németh 1934, n. 8; as an alternative explanation, based on Szigethy, also Forrai 1985, pp. 158–159), but a different interpretation is possible as well, and the author identification proposed by Szigethy is certainly erroneous, for reasons of chronology (Benkő 1994, pp. 164–165, however, he believes the inscription is roughly a hundred years younger than the fresco, and therefore implicitly a hic fuit inscription).

2 Two inscriptions in Berekeresztúr are obviously such (in the window recess of the 1st-floor tower: Ráduly 1992); moreover, these were inserted among roughly 30 hic fuit inscriptions in Latin, partially dated to the 16th or 17th century; so is one in Rugonfalva (Benkő 1991, p. 20); and a surviving inscription in Gelence (see next note). I found a hic fuit inscription in runiform script, not yet disclosed, on a supporting pillar in Székelydálya, which is significantly younger than the large wall inscriptions.

3 Kónya 1994; Ferenczi 1997, p. 20; Erdélyi & Ráduly 2010, p. 86; Sándor 2014, pp. 187–188, etc. The Gelence inscription is dated to 1497, which means it certainly has nothing to do with when the fresco was made (first half of the 14th century); chronologically, it falls in the middle of the Latin hic fuit inscriptions found in its proximity. Thus, it is very likely that it was written by one of the visitors, who was not related to the church in any way as a priest – not to mention that barely half a metre farther, Latin hic fuit inscriptions are lined up.

literate class. However, lately this assumption has been challenged with good reason based on the inscriptions known. It is mostly certain that starting from the second half of the 15th century a sort of a fashion for the script emerged among the literate, up to the royal court[4] (the Nikolsburg alphabet is acceptable evidence of this). We cannot claim that this fashion was related directly to the inscriptions of (often remote) churches in the Szeklerland, but we can indeed claim that the role of the church is obvious in many runiform inscriptions (especially in the case of the most famous and longest specimen, the Marsigli runiform rod), and it seems the Catholic church preferred this script to some extent in the 15th and 16th century. On the one hand, it is of course unlikely that a church construction inscription could have been made without the priest's consent, as in Bágy, the SE wall in Berekeresztúr,[5] Csíkmadaras (although we cannot read it, it is on the headsill of the front door), Csíkszentmihály or Csíkszentmiklós, Dálnok, and especially one of the oldest ones, in Vargyas, which is almost certainly on an object with a ritualistic function (baptismal basin or plinth?).[6] On the other hand, a priest is explicitly indicated in Székelyderzs and Gelence, and we now know the same was the case in Énlaka as well: György Dakó or Darkó of Musna was the priest of Homoródalmás.[7] I will not explore the issue of the Székelydálya inscriptions, but we can be sure the series of inscriptions covering roughly 9 m could not have been put on the front wall without the Church's consent.

This raises the possibility that the runiform writers of the period were typically from the more educated strata, rather than from the uneducated classes.[8]

4 Róna-Tas 1985/86; Sándor 2017.

5 Erdélyi & Ráduly 2010, p. 75. Neither they, nor others could provide an interpretation, but the surviving first letters seem to be part of the word ᑫsᛇᚿALL^TA.

6 The function of the object and interpretation of the inscription both stirred heated debate with no reassuring agreement; to cite a few of the more characteristic views: Ráduly 1995, p. 10, pp. 79–95 (essentially the same as: Erdélyi & Ráduly 2010, p. 64); Ferenczi 1997, pp. 18–19; Vékony 2004, 18–24; Szász 2007 (these two do not consider this to be an inscription relating to the construction, and offer a completely different interpretation than the others); Benkő 2014, pp. 317–318; Sándor 2014, pp. 180–182.

7 The most recent and most accurate summary is provided by: Fehér, J. 2017.

8 Sándor 2014a, pp. 329, 337.

I will now analyse an inscription which could only be covered partially by analyses so far because its meaning was completely uncertain (see Photo 1). The runiform inscription on the outer wall of the Unitarian church in Sepsikilyén has been known (perhaps) since 1978; the letters were revealed after the destruction from the earthquake in 1977 and were discovered by Ádám Kónya.[9] They remained undisclosed for a long time and to this day have not been properly published.[10] There is one researcher who made an attempt at an individual interpretation, János Ráduly; after him, his interpretation has essentially been reiterated. According to this, the inscription is a name: *B^{e}n^diko* or *B^{á}n^diko*.[11] If he is right, the text is regretfully unsuitable for further analysis: a name alone, especially a nickname (or a last name derived from a nickname, but in this case, with no first name), indicates nothing of the social origin, and it is possible that this small-type script on the edge of the fresco on the outer wall was added illegally, just like the Dracula statue on the Vajdahunyad fort wall in Budapest.[12] This interpretation, however, does not stand up to scrutiny.

On the southern outer wall of the nave, there is a series of late medieval frescos (presently restored). Later frescoes can be dated perhaps to the second half of the 15th century.[13] The frescos are surrounded by a dark red, plain painted strip frame; in the lower frame and underneath (even in the picture area) there are numerous scratches and inscriptions that cross each other. Quite a few of these are clearly *hic fuit* inscriptions in Latin, both in fraktur and capital letters. None is dated to a specific year; a dating can be attempted based on script style. The runiform inscription (***a***) falls in the category of the following inscriptions (Photo 2):

9 The frescos were first uncovered by J. Huszka in 1887; they were whitewashed again, and came to light once more in the earthquake in 1977; but Kónya (1982) does not mention the runiform script yet.

10 First disclosure: Ráduly 1993; Ráduly 1994. The following subsequent disclosures were made since then: Ráduly 1995, pp. 10, 34–49. (drawing, photo); Erdélyi & Ráduly 2010, p. 87 (upside down drawing!); Mandics 2010, III pp. 72–73; Fehér 2019, pp. 121–122. Mention in: Ferenczi 1997, p. 22 (photo 15); Benkő 2014, p. 322; Sándor 2014, p. 207; Tubay 2015, p. 156.

11 Ráduly all op. cit.

12 https://www.kozterkep.hu/1500/lugosi_bela_mellszobor_budapest_2003.html, https://index.hu/urbanista/2016/06/29/megoldodott_a_varosligeti_drakula-rejtely

13 Kónya 1978.

There are fragments of illegible fraktur script on the left edge of the frame (***b***: *B[-]+un[- - -]* 15th century?), underneath there are capital letters (***c***: *+++ hic fụịṭ Michạ[el - - -]* 16th century, 2nd half?), in the middle, on several illegible Gothic types a cross sign and capital letters were added later (***d***: *[- - -] hic [- - -*], ***e***: *Michaẹ[l - - -]*, 15th century/early 16th century?, ***f***: *[- - -]sumus[- - -]* 16th century, 2nd half?), and above the runiform inscription, fragments of illegible fraktur letters in the picture area (***g***).[14]

As I do not believe that the author changed his dialect while writing, my explanation for the correction is this: the phoneme-grapheme correspondences for the letters L/Ly had probably gradually grown distinct in Szekler script,[15] and our author was likely uncertain of the correct spelling. This does indicate he had some standards. But we learn more of his cultural expectations from the word to the left, which is indeed hard to read, but perhaps the picture shows that it is a Latin expression: ◦ *X ſcribſit (!)* ◦ Not quite academic Latin, of course, because he meant: *Scripsit B. I.*, written by B. I., but this does prove the author was educated. It is not unlikely at all that he too was one of our runiform script writers who were in the orders.

The cross-shaped stroke at the left margin of the inscription (it is a matter of taste whether we take it to be the beginning or the end) remains unexplained. It could stand for two things: a sign to draw attention, or a repetition of the name's initial letter (perhaps he could not make up his mind about which side of the Latin text he should continue the words with different writing directions).

14 We must mention that there are capital-letter engravings on the doorjamb of the church that were added later, certainly after the wall strokes (17th century?): **h** Iohanṇ[- - -], **i** [- - -]N MA[- - - a]ṇni X638, j hic fuiṭ PAIL, **k** h^(ic) fu(it) B ◦ TI.

15 Inscription 2 from Csíkszentmiklós/mihály contains the same name Eljás probably with the letters L + J, written etymologically, with Ly in the Marsigli calendar (675,1,4.); the inscriptions from Székelydálya (a teaser of my deciphering to be published soon) contain the word hely with an Ly on the inscriptions A and B, and with L on the inscription C; in the Vargyas inscription, the LyJ combination denotes the phoneme ly – the latter is the first-ever certified occurrence of the character Ly, while the use of the L can be traced back to the 10th century (Alsóbű: FOLK, see Fehér 2019a). Based on Vargyas and Alsóbű, it seems both signs initially stood for L, but palatalisation had certainly occurred by the Székelydálya period, that is, the early 15th century (there and thereafter, Ly has never stood for L anywhere).

Thus, the correct epigraphic transcript of the inscription is (Photo 4):

→ ◦ *X Scribsit (!)*◦ ← BNDK² I[[L]]`Ly´ES

Written by: *B^{e}n^{e}d^{e}k IIy^{ly}és.*

Albeit with some degree of inaccuracy, the age of the inscription can be determined based on its connection to the other inscriptions. It is obviously part of the earlier group, as it begins with a word in fraktur script, but even more so because it is overlapped by later strokes. However, it cannot date from the time when the fresco was made, although the old-style script could point to it being a made-by inscription, not a *hic fuit*. If we look at the signs very carefully though (they are letters 2.7–2.1 cm tall), we can see that they were written over some very tiny older fraktur-type marks (see Photo 5). Four of the letters with a general height of 0.45 cm can be deciphered: INXX. If we look for a meaningful text behind this, the word is probably: *[P]inxx(erunt) [- - - et - - -]*, 'Painted by ... and ...', which indeed was actually a made-by inscription by the fresco painters. We must probably date these to the mid-15th century; of course, it was rather unwise of the painters themselves, as medievally modest as they were, to write their names half a centimetre tall, really asking for their destruction. A bit later, the visitor Benedek Illyés, shamelessly (or ignorantly, because he might not have noticed the tiny inscription) destroyed the signature on the artwork by adding his graffiti, probably in the second half of the 15th century, or perhaps in the early 16th century, but in any case earlier than the capitalised graffiti nearby.

Of course, the "more educated" class that wrote the inscriptions must be criticised for scrawling over the frescoes without hesitation (in Gelence, priest Pál scribbled right in the elbow of the Holy Mother of God!),[16] but we have long known about this trend. There is a silver lining: this is how most of our runiform scripts were preserved, and they are much rarer than late-medieval frescoes, so their survival is even more important for us. This is what makes the Sepsikilyén inscription so significant for us: it is among the few inscriptions

16 Some say this is so unlikely that it even makes the authenticity of the inscription doubtful (Horváth et al. 2011, p. 77).

where the runiform script stands right next to the Latin text (in fact, there is another one in the Berekeresztúr tower, and the humanist-educated István Szamosközy and the scrivener of Marsigli B wrote a few Latin words using runiform script[17]), confirming the Latin-style and church-style literacy of the typical authors of runiform script.

17 Cf. Fehér 2019.

PHOTOS

Photo 1: Sepsikilyén, Unitarian church, fresco with inscription (photo by author)

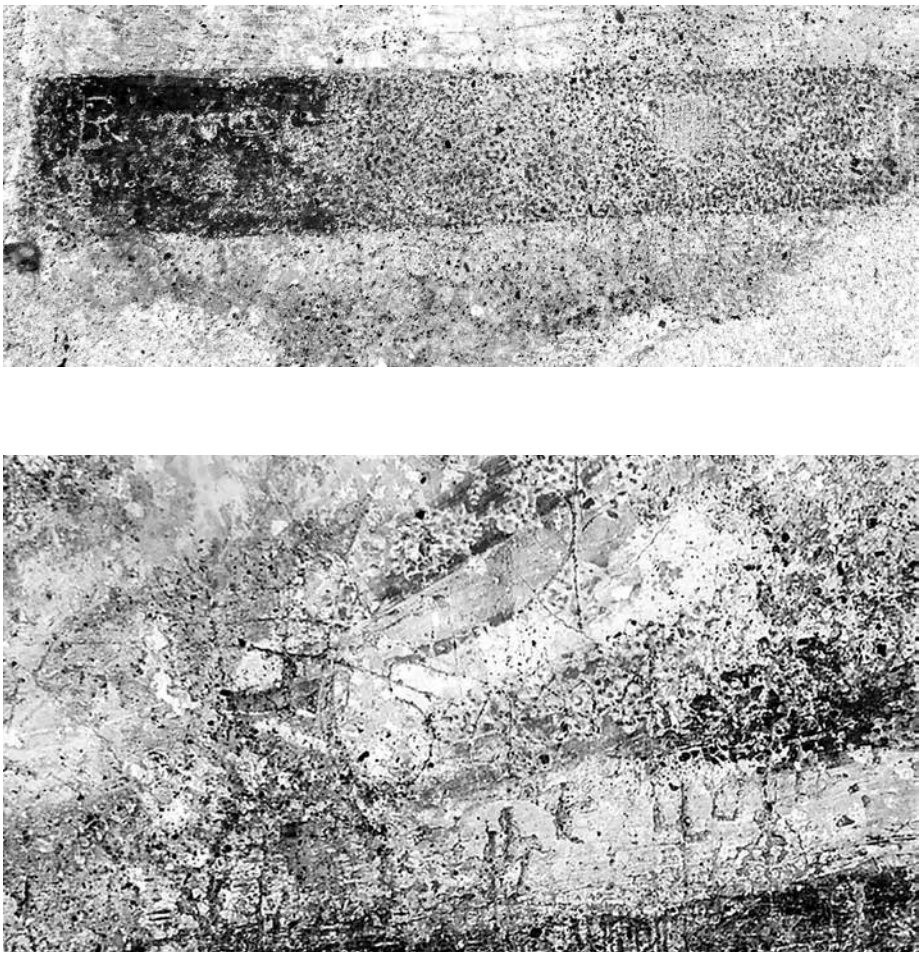

Photo 2: *Hic fuit* inscriptions at the bottom of the fresco (photo by author)

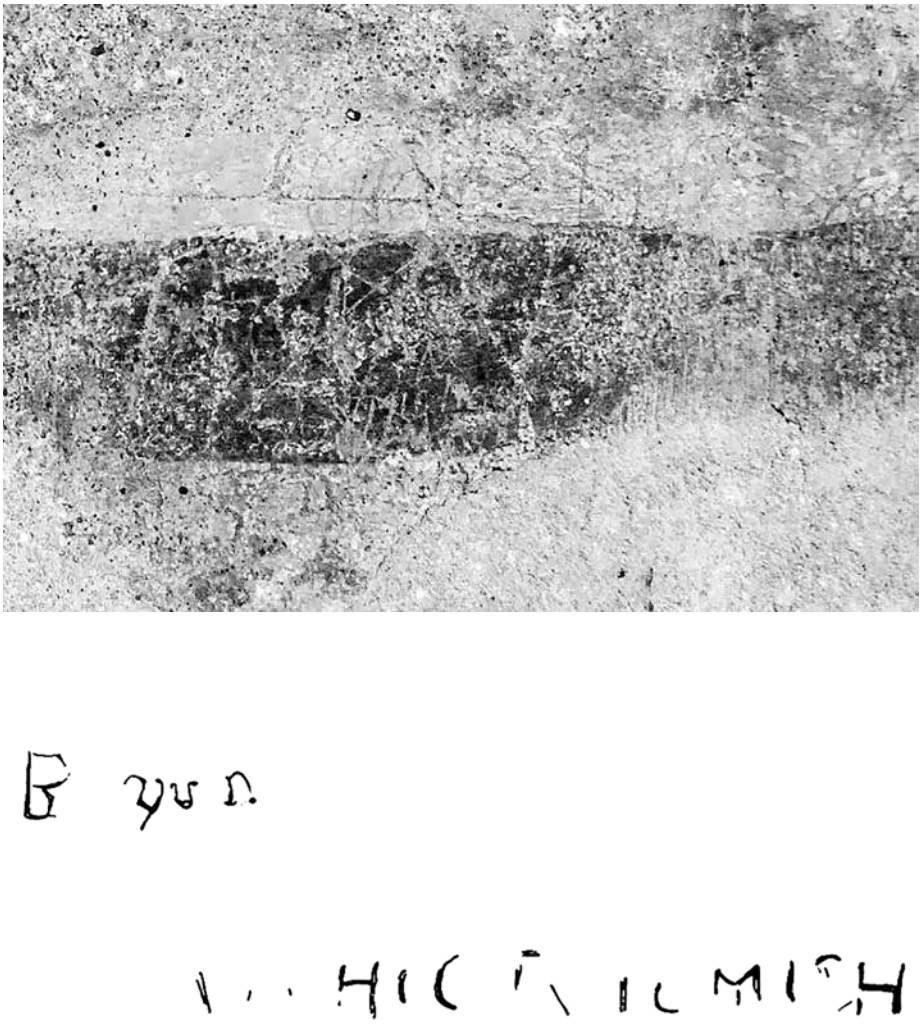

Photo 3: *Hic fuit* inscriptions at the bottom of the fresco (photo by author)

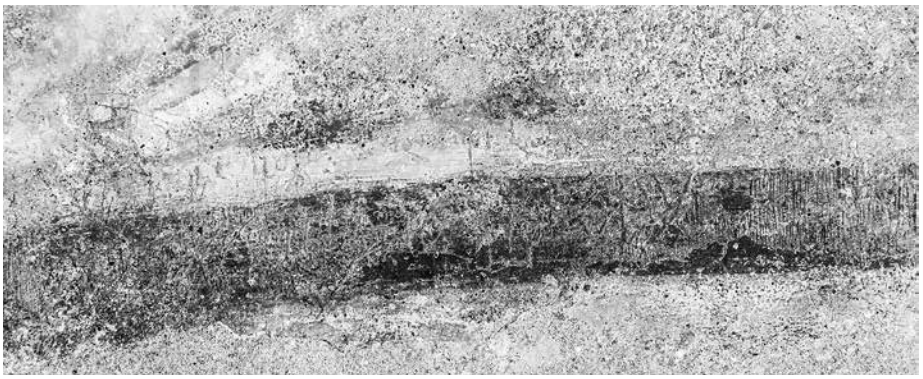

Photo 4: Inscription with runiform script (photo by author)

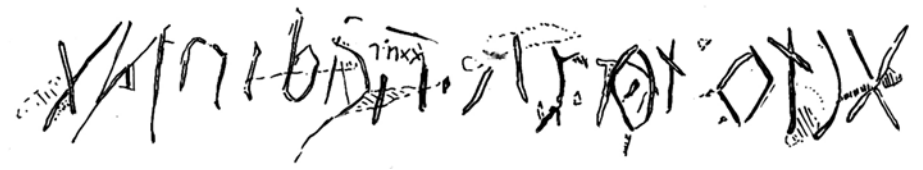

Photo 5: Inscription with runiform script (drawn by author)

Photo 6: Inscription with runiform script (photo by author)

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WEAPON INSCRIPTIONS IN LATIN SCRIPT FROM THE 9TH–12TH-CENTURY CARPATHIAN BASIN

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ABSTRACT: In the history of arms and armours, the study of various symbols, inscriptions or trademarks is of great importance both in determining the provenance and the development of weapons. Numerous weapon inscriptions – usually found on swords – are known from the 9th–12th-century Carpathian Basin. In addition to the prevalent Ingel-variants, we can expect the presence of various texts, letter combinations and letter-like characters in the region. This study provides a brief overview of these weapon inscriptions.
KEYWORDS: Carpathian Basin, sword, spear, inscription, Ingelri

Introduction

This paper was inspired by a stray spearhead[1] placed in the Dunamellék Museum of Révkomárom (today: Komárno, Slovakia) in 1903. The spearhead

1 Inventory number: III 445/OPM.

has a text engraved on the socket. The inscription was reinterpreted as part of the research conducted by Bence Fehér in his collection of runiform script specimens.

Considering the characteristics of the spearhead's form and the socket-blade ratio, the weapon is close to the Petersen G type, suggesting that it probably dates between the mid-10th century and third quarter of the 11th century, but we must definitely assume a wider time range. In his inventory of early medieval spearheads from the Carpathian Basin, Martin Husár[2] disregarded this stray spearhead. Moreover, it cannot be determined with certainty that this copy was included among the spearheads listed by Alexander Ruttkay, a collector of 9th–14th-century arms and riding equipment discovered in Slovakia.[3] In terms of its form, this discovery can be classified in Ruttkay's category IV (more strictly, the IVb which dates starting from the mid-9th century) and Husár's category BE. According to Husár, this category has links both to armoury in the Scandinavian and the Frank territories.[4] There are examples of spears with angular joggle-joints also among the pole weapons of the Avar Age. The appearance of the weapon in question is slightly similar to the wide triangular blades typically of the Late Avar Age, indicated by Gergely Csiky as a separate category.[5]

In the case of the weapon mentioned, the spine of the blade with a rhomboidal cross-section continues partially on the socket: the four sides of the socket, which becomes narrower near the blade, are decorated with three intact

2 Husár 2014.

3 Ruttkay mentions twelve spears of the Dunamellék Museum in his study, by inventory number: III–12; III–19; III–34 (presumably two under the same number); III–234; III–259; III–260; III–450; III–482; III–539. He mentions two others with no inventory number, and even indicates the absence of an inventory number in the case of one of the two. The description and poor-quality photo of the other piece can roughly be identified as the spearhead in question. If the correspondence is correct, Ruttkay registered the discovery in its earlier state, since which its socket has been dramatically reduced. Ruttkay 1975, pp. 204, 207. Abb. 31:27.

4 Ruttkay 1976, pp. 301–303; Husár 2014, pp. 59–63.

5 The cast foliaged belt complement found in the grave suggests the spear with wide triangular blade found in Grave 423 in the Tiszafüred-Majoros cemetery dates to phase I of the Late Avar period. We must also mention the spear in Grave 228 in Zsebes, the transition of which has a similar cross-sectional change as the piece in discussion, although the socket designs differ. Csiky 2009, pp. 98–99; Csiky 2015, pp. 139–141.

and one truncated plate inserts made of a copper alloy. On the two opposite sides, the rows of signs (4+6 engraved signs, from left to right) are roughly identical; Bence Fehér deciphered and interpreted them as follows:

→MA←N→E / ←N→ABIRE / ←N→AME / [←N→]ḀBIRE

"The inscription is certainly not Germanic runes (Erdélyi must have been misled by the fact that the calligraphy of the E at the end of the word resembles the K^G runes on plate 2, so the text resembles the characteristic [fuþa]rkg abc inscription initials), but it is not even runiform script, it is a meaningless (magical?) inscription with stylised Latin script. The letter N is inversed everywhere, in two cases it even has an additional vertical hasta; the letter A appears in two forms (with an upper serif and a fragmented midline)."[6]

Latin inscription on spearheads was by no means common practice in early medieval Europe, and the example above is a unique phenomenon in the region. However, inscriptions on swords were more common and are not unknown in the Carpathian Basin. Research on the sword inscriptions of the period studied has noticed several trends that can help interpret the inscription on the above-mentioned spearhead.

Sword inscriptions

Even the Celts were known to mark their swords by name,[7] but most inscriptions date in the 8th to 13th centuries. Examining them by weapon type, in most cases we see inscriptions on sword blades.

Inscriptions were made either by plain engraving or metal inserts. Damascening and inserts of non-ferrous metals (copper) and "black metals"

6 Fehér 2020, No. 126. But we must note that there are several copies of spears with runic inscription from the times of migrations in Europe. One of the most representative of these is the copy in Follingbo (Swedish History Museum, inventory number 15928), which was also featured in the Vikings: Lives Beyond the Legend exhibition of the Royal BC Museum in 2014.

7 Davidson 1988, pp. 42–43.

(iron-coal alloys) are both characteristic. In the latter case, the pre-shaped letters were fixed to the blade material by welding in fire. Metal inserts were homogeneous (in most cases, ferrophosphorus for contrast) or ornamentally forge-welded (damascened).[8] A general trend we can notice was that the finer inscriptions, craftsmen's signatures and other ornamental patterns on the blade gradually eliminated fire-welded metal inserts, a malleable kind of shaping which gave way to softer, precious metals and non-ferrous metals that are easier to handle. As the patterns grew more intricate, in the late Middle Ages milling became increasingly important in addition to engraving and insertion.[9]

The most well-known inscription is VLFBERHT and its variants. Most frequently, this inscription is interpreted as a Frankish proper name and it is assumed that it initially stood for the name of the sword-maker or workshop. Based on how it spread and the etymology of the name, it is commonly believed to originate from the Lower Rhine region, but most finds were discovered in Scandinavian territories.[10] Inscription variants with Ingel in the root (most commonly INGELRII, INGELRED) are also believed to designate the maker. Their dating is unclear, but most experts believe they were made until after the Vlfberht blades, up to the late 12th century.[11] Anders Lorange suggested the inscription might originate in England, based on the homonymous treasurer of Ethelred II (978–1016).[12] In this case, the inscription type can be assumed to date as early as the last quarter of the 10th century. In the case of most of the inscriptions with an Ulf- or Ingel- root, the text is most often paired with a geometrical pattern on the other side of the blade. Other frequent inscriptions were GICELIN and CIGELIN, and we can also find a smaller number of blades

8 Haramza 2017, pp. 105–106.

9 Milling was a frequently used method for bringing out patterns on composite or hypereutectoid (Wootz) steel arms, but separately made patterns became popular ornaments on larger steel objects (shields and armour) only starting from the late 15th century and early 16th century. Thiele & Haramza 2014, pp. 145–160; Halmágyi & Riedel 1986, pp. 63–64.

10 In her 2008 study, Anne Stalsberg counted 170 specimens of this type. Stalsberg 2008, pp. 89–118; cf. Haramza 2017, pp. 103–117.

11 Idem, p. 140; cf. Hoffmeyer 1954, pp. 112–113.

12 Lorange 1889, p. 16.

with the inscriptions LEUTLRIT and BENNO.[13] Besides the Latin-type sword inscriptions, the inscription "Людота коваль" occurred in Rus territories.[14]

Interpreting some inscriptions as names makes sense considering the inscription ME FECIT on the other side of the blade[15] or after the name, as its continuation[16] (or abbreviated or fragmented versions of this: FECIT, FIT). There are examples of Christian texts as well, such as the words of prayer *in nomine Domini* and *amen*. The text "in the name of God" could help understand the weapon inscription both in terms of its making and its use.

In addition to the above, letterlike and geometrical signs on the back side were frequent as well.[17] The most probable explanations for the stylised letters and changed letter order were related to the development of signatures and ornamental techniques, the hierarchic differences between makers or users, or the spread of some inscription types by copying or perhaps even forgery.[18]

Inscription types in the Carpathian Basin

In the Carpathian Basin, as far as we know, blades with inscriptions with an Ingel-root were most frequent. The swords discovered in 1962 in Érd-Dunameder and in 1971 in Abaszéplak (Krásna nad Hornádom) near Kassa (Košice) bear the inscription INGELRII.[19] This alone indicates that it took some time for the inscription to be made on the blades, since based on its fittings, the one in Abaszéplak is dated to the second half of the 10th century[20] – its decorative

13 Moilanen 2015, pp. 12, 143, 324.

14 Of the Ljudota swords, the most famous one was the weapon found near Hvoshcheve in Ukraine, on which Anatoly Kirpichnikov discovered a Cyrillic inscription. Kirpicsnyikov 1966, pp. 41–44; Androshchuk 2003, pp. 15–25.

15 Ruttkay 1976, p. 280.

16 +GICELINMEFECIT+, +NZOMEFECIT+, +BENOMEFECIT+, +INNOMEFECIT+ Such was the finding in Rovaniemi. Moilanen 2015, pp. 142–150.

17 Idem, pp. 151–171.

18 Haramza 2017, pp. 106–110; cf. Moilanen 2017, pp. 9–12, 30–33; Medgyesi 2012, pp. 59–63.

19 Kovács 1995, pp. 159, 160, photo 5.2, pp. 161, 165, photo 8.3, pp. 166, 168, photo 10.5, pp. 175–176; cf. Ruttkay 1975, p. 152. Nr. 79, p. 153. Abb. 8, p. 155. Abb. 9; Kalmár 1961, p. 115.

20 At the same time, we must mention that ceramics dated to the 12th to 13th century and

technique resembling the sword of the "Rus hero" found in Székesfehérvár-Bikasziget – while according to Kalmár the one from Érd definitely dates later, to the second half of the 11th century. According to Ruttkay, the inscription of the Abaszéplak sword begins with a + sign.

Ruttkay also mentions a sword with the inscription +NGEILRICENS in the Dunamellék Museum and a sword fragment from Miava with the inscription INGELRII, dating both of them around the 11th or 12th century, and believed the inscriptions to be forge-welded ornaments.[21] If the assumption is correct, these are relatively late examples of damascening.

Another later sword is the one discovered in the bed of the Sava at Bosanska-Gradiška, which, according to communication by János Kalmár in 1959, together with another sword, was among the "*artworks to be handed over to Yugoslavia under the peace treaties*". Its inscription is commonly identified as SINIGELRINIS or SINGELRINIS and dates probably around the 11th or 12th century.[22] A closer parallel is one of the auctioned items of the Frank Unrath collection, erroneously dated to around the mid-10th century and mid-11th century. The SINGELRINIS variant between cross signs appears on this sword as well.[23] Considering that the geometrical signs on the back side of the sword blade of Bosanska-Gradiška are also framed by S signs, it may well be that they are merely closing signs of the inscription on the front side too. The use of the

coins associated with István IV (1163–1164) were also found at this site. Ruttkay 1975, p. 152. No. 79. But any associations with the weapon come with reservations, considering the circumstances of the discovery.

21 Idem, p. 160. Nr. 103, p. 151. Abb. 7.4, p. 161, Abb. 10:2–3, p. 198. Abb. 25:4, p. 199. Ruttkay also suggested that the "CENS" end of the inscription variant from Révkomárom (Komárno, Slovakia) could be an abbreviation of the word census and designate the quality of the sword. Ruttkay 1976, p. 283.

22 National Museum of Bosnia (Sarajevo), inventory number: 6894. Kalmár associates the inscription with the military campaign of Saint László for no particular reason. Kalmár 1959, pp. 189–191; cf. Kovács 1995, pp. 159, 166.

23 https://www2.bonhams.com/auctions/20801/lot/188/ Another auctioned item with an Ingel inscription (side "A": +INGELRI+ side "B": +PREBM+): https://www2.bonhams.com/auctions/21639/lot/218/ (accessed on: 03.02.2020) SINGELRINIS swords have blades with similar sizes; the auctioned copy is 895 mm, while the Bosanska-Gradiška one is 835 mm (according to more recent measurements by Marko Aleksić, 830 mm). Kalmár 1959, p. 189; Aleksić 2007, p. 172. Nr. 297.

S sign and cross was not rare in the later centuries, either, as we can notice it in the "S+S" inscription of a blade discovered at an unknown place.[24]

It is interesting to note that in three of the five cases, the sword with an Ingel-root inscription was found either in a riverbed or nearby.[25] Although the low occurrence cannot justify any general conclusions, it is certain that swords with this inscription type were frequently found in river areas.[26] Husár draws attention to the same detail in the case of spears dated to around the 5th to 11th centuries, in the Western part of the Carpathian Basin. In his opinion, the spears may have ended up in the river for ritualistic reasons, showing several examples of how pagan sacrificial rites survived up to the 11th century.[27]

Due to its contemporaneous "use", of the VLFBERHT inscription blades, the sword kept in the Saint Vitus Cathedral in Prague and attributed to István I (Saint Stephen) may be associated with the region. Since the disclosure by German canon Franz Bock in 1870,[28] many researchers have studied the weapon more closely. In his report written in 1890, Ingwald Undset expressed theories and observations relating to the origin of the sword (Scandinavian territory, Lower Rhine region) and its technology (a "rammed" blade, that is, with a forge-welded decoration).[29] In the memorial book written on the 900th anniversary of Saint Stephen's death, Nándor Fettich examined the decorative

24 HNM, inventory number: 53.127. Another sword worthy of mention is the one found in the Köröstarcsa-Ürmös area, also in a riverbed (Kettős-Körös) dated around the 13th–14th century, whose blade has an S sign in concentric circles. Medgyesi 2012, pp. 57–58, 77–82, photos 6–8, 10–11.

25 According to Ruttkay, the weapon was found 150 m from the current bed of the Hernád. He also mentions another sword that was destroyed. The stray weapon found in Miava was not a riverside find: professor M. Gálik received it from a student who lived in one of the farms on the Miava hills (presumably the sword was found in the same region). We know even less about the sword with an inscription in the Dunamellék Museum: the weapon was in an older collection of the museum, seriously damaged in the fire of 1944, and the inventory book was also lost in the fire. Ruttkay 1975, p. 152, Nr. 79, p. 160, Nr. 130; p. 199.

26 The sword with an INGELRED inscription was found in the Isac at Nantes, while the one with the INGELRII inscription was discovered in the Thames.

27 Nevertheless, most sources mention wells and springs as places of rituals. Husár 2016, pp. 13–18.

28 Bock 1870, p. 14.

29 Undset 1890, pp. 164–166; Kovács 2003, pp. 342–345.

motifs of the Prague sword in more detail,[30] while Kornél Bakay paid more attention, among others, to a linguistic interpretation of the inscription.[31]

It is also important to note the symbols that are either too damaged to be properly read, or, as letterlike signs or imitations of letters, no longer convey the meaning of the original inscription, and differ from the original version for the reasons mentioned (copying, forgery, stylistic development).

László Kovács mentions other blades with inserts, such as the piece found in Malomszeg or the one in Detva. One side of the blade of the weapon found in Malomszeg has a bronze insert, while the other has an insert that can be read as an inscription fragment or letterlike back-side sign: …IIS…SI. Erwin Gáll read the inscription to be in the order "I–S–I reverse S and I–I".[32] Regarding the sword in Detva, Alexander Ruttkay comments that a damascened intarsia with a torsional pattern can be seen on the blade: an X sign between two opposing horseshoe shapes, and on the other side, a cross with equal sized arms and a circle.[33] But similar to the later sword of Köröstarcsa, this may be part of the craftsman's signature.

Back to the spear of Komárom

It follows from the above that most inscriptions are related to content associated with the weapon's maker, the making or its owner,[34] but religious words and symbols were frequently used as well. Therefore, we can assume the inscription on the Komárom spear has a similar content. The technique differs from sword

30 Fettich 1938, pp. 475–516.

31 In connection with his theory, Undset illustrated the use of European (Frank) workshop traditions on Scandinavian swords by dividing the inscription into two: Ulf (Scandinavian) and Behrt (Frank). Bakay 1967, pp. 167–170.

32 Gáll also draws attention to the fact that Malomfalva was erroneously regarded as the discovery site for a long time, as Sándor Ferenczi noted the name Malomszeg when it was found. Kovács 1995, p. 163. photo 7.5, p. 169; cf. Gáll 2013, p. 317.

33 Kovács 1995, p. 173. photo 13.2; p, 179; cf. Ruttkay 1975, p. 136, Abb. 2.4, Nr. 29, p. 137, Abb. 3.1; Haramza 2017, p. 110, no. 35.

34 The owner of the weapon (Rane) and its maker (Botfus) are assumed in the runic inscription of the Follingbo spear. https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/assets/Media-Images-We-Call-Them-Vikings-Final.pdf (accessed on: 20.02.2020).

blades; the inscription is not inserted directly in the blade material, but on a separate medium, on copper plates.

Considering the style of the inscription – extra notch, stylised, changed letter order –, a direct interpretation based on the visual order (such as a form of the verb "abeo") is not justified. Based on the above, the most probable explanation is that the letters of the prayer inscription AMEN were copied with no meaning and original order, that is, the stylised letters or letterlike symbols were marked. But the original, if there was any, of the fragment "N–ABIRE" is unknown. It cannot be excluded that a name was behind these letters, or perhaps a prayer or religious text relating to *amen*. But the weapon inscriptions of the probable period cannot answer this question.

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RUNIFORM SIGNS OR MEMENTOS OF CHRISTIANISATION?

Interpretations of rings from 11th-century villagers' graves in Hungarian archaeological research

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ABSTRACT: This paper reviews the research on a ring type appearing in Carpathian Basin cemeteries in the 11th century. In this paper, I present the early attempts to interpret the engraved signs on the rings and the related explanations. Following an overview of the historical developments, I make a brief suggestion that the signs on the rings were not always understandable; it cannot be ruled out that the makers of the rings may not have been able to write, while the customers could not read. This hypothesis would raise further considerations and possibilities when interpreting this group of artefacts.
KEYWORDS: strap ring, letter-like engraved signs, apotropaic inscription, research history, rings with 'runiform' signs

A story should be told from the beginning. Sometimes, however, storytellers start their stories at the end. And in some cases, the end and the beginning of a story may be linked together. What I have to say here is something like this. It is not complicated, of course, because I am not striving to write a postmodernist essay or develop a philosophical thesis; instead, I am merely briefly reviewing the phases of research and interpretation of a type of ring.

1. A treasure found in Germany[1]

In February 1898, an unusual set of items was found by a local farmer in Paußnitz, a village in Saxony near the Elbe River. In this village, which was then part of Prussia, Emil Schreiber was digging up the roots of a tree when he found the treasure. In a pot decorated with sets of wavy lines, roughly 500 coins and one ring were discovered. The silver coins – most of which were soon lost back then – were good indicators of when the hoard had been hidden: among them were silver coins minted between 1127 and 1156 by Konrad the Great, margrave of Meissen, of the House of Wettin, and the money of Udo, son of Thuringian Count Ludwig II and bishop of Naumburg, and his successor, Wichman. Many coins had been made in the mint at the nearby town of Strehla. Based on all of this, it was clear as early at the time of discovery that the treasure had been hidden there sometime in the early 1150s.

As was common even at that time, news of the find reached a large group of interested antiquaries, and thus private collectors, art collectors and major state collection managers all sought to acquire as much of the treasure as possible. Of course, their main goal was to buy the coins. When the local museum expressed its interest – considering that the region was within the collection range of the Halle Museum (Landesmuseums für Vorgeschichte Halle) – the set was already being bargained away. In March of that year, barely anything of the find was left in the owner's possession. The farmer could only hand over to the Halle collection, "out of patriotic duty", some coins and fragments of the

1 For a detailed presentation of the data, see Muhl 2019.

pot that held the treasure (fragments of its bottom and side, because the top of the pot had been lost by then). The finder of the treasure, Emil Schreiber, intended to keep the ring as a memento, even though the interim director of the Halle museum, medieval art historian Rudolf Kautzsch was rather interested in it. Eventually, Kautzsch cajoled him into selling it to the museum for 15 Imperial marks and managed to acquire it before the other suitor of the rarity, the Münzkabinet of Dresden.[2] Despite the initial interest, the item was eventually forgotten, for several reasons. Where to place the artefact and the difficulties of deciphering the inscription may have caused this, just as the fact that in November the museum's expert who played the lead role in the acquisition, Kautzsch, moved on to become head of the museum collection of book publishing in Leipzig, at the institution that covered his area of interest at the time, medieval book art (Deutsche Buchgewerbemuseum, currently Deutsche Buch- und Schriftmuseum). After that, the item was no longer in the focus of attention and even those who did look for it could not find it, believing it was lost. Research of the site at the time was abandoned as well, and interest was revived only decades later during the Weimar period. In March 1927, in an attempt to identify the exact site, only other similar fragments of ceramics from the 11th or 12th century indicated the broader location of the discovery, but no new information could be gathered on what object, what strata, and what other findings the curious discovery could be linked to.

Following this, the ring fell completely into oblivion until the 120-year jubilee of the Halle museum. The museum management then planned a celebratory exhibition for the anniversary, designed to highlight lesser known artefacts. This is when, in connection with the 120 items selected, the museum's hidden treasure was rediscovered, including the ring with its inscription rendered illegible by corrosion, in an exhibition entitled "Schönheit, Macht und Tod". The mysterious marks on the item attracted wide attention. Today the village of Paußnitz, known to be the place of discovery, uses it almost as a brand, proud of the unique artefact

2 Only a copy of the ring reached Dresden. For the dispute between the two museums and the background of how the item was acquired, see Muhl 2019, pp. 88–90.

uncovered from its earth,[3] while thousands of replicas on sale at the Halle museum have been sold to this day. And that was only the beginning of the attention the ring drew. Other research started to study the symbolism behind the marks on the outer side of the object and its origin,[4] a grandiose exhibition and conference were dedicated to this artefact,[5] where the historical role, the symbols of the object and generally of rings and the nuances of their significance in early and medieval cultures were examined in a wider context.[6] This research discovered that the closest relative of this piece of silver jewellery found in Paußnitz was from the Carpathian Basin, from Deszk in Csongrád County, Hungary. This find and its replicas had been the subject of attention of Hungarian archaeologists for a long time, who had published numerous valuable findings on this type of object. Indeed, the 11th–12th-century polygonal band rings with engraved groups of symbols were well-known artefacts in the Carpathian Basin.[7]

2. The ring of Deszk et al.

Research in the cemeteries of Deszk from the early Árpád Age started as early as the 1930s under Ferenc Móra.[8] The excavation of a significant part of Cemetery D was performed under his supervision as well.[9] Yet it was not he who published the ring found in Grave 87 of the site, but the later director of the museum of Szeged, Dezső Csallány, who pointed out that the discovery dated from the 11th

3 https://www.facebook.com/Paußnitz-1599158893532246/ (downloaded on 10 January 2020).

4 Muhl 2003; Muhl 2019; Röhrer-Ertl, F.U. 2003; Röhrer-Ertl, F.U. 2019; Röhrer-Ertl, O. 2003; Röhrer-Ertl, O. 2019; Saller 2003.

5 Meller, Kimmig-Völkner & Reichenberger 2019b.

6 Meller, Kimmig-Völkner & Reichenberger 2019a, I–II.

7 Muhl 2019, p. 82; cf. Kürti 2000.

8 Bálint 1991, p. 218; Balogh & Bende 2007, pp. 17–18.

9 The first 206 graves of the cemetery were excavated by Ferenc Móra between 29 August and 8 October 1931, and the dig was later resumed in 1937 by his successor, Dezső Csallány, who discovered ten other graves. Graves from the Avar period and from the 10th and 11th century were discovered at the site. From many graves in the cemetery, bracelets with animal heads, bangles with S-shaped ends, braided silver rings with bradded ends, and coins from the Árpád period (István I, András I, Béla I, Salamon, László I) were recovered. Cf. Csallány 1955, p. 82; Bálint 1991, p. 218; Balogh & Bende 2007, p. 17.

century when he presented the grave. The signs on the artefact were not visible for a long time and were discovered on the outer side of the object only during restoration in 1953.[10] We must mention this was not the first ring of this kind, as similar artefacts were discovered in the Carpathian Basin in the early 20th century. They were first analysed in the 1930s.

The earliest ring published and known to us was found in the early 20th century in Croatia, at the Svinjarevci site in Slavonia. The silver ring found in Grave 45 in the cemetery was easy to date based on the coin of King László I also found in the grave. Thus, this find, which was discovered in the early phases of research, was dated accurately to the 11th century.[11] However, neither the Croatian, nor the Hungarian researchers paid any attention to the ring type at that time. The artefact published by Josip Brunšmid was described in 1907 by another researcher, József Hampel, as a ring "*consisting of a closed-loop band with rectangular protrusions on its outer side*".[12] The question arises whether this is the only artefact of this early age in the collection of the Zagreb Museum. The village cemetery of the former Gorbonok township of Kapronca (today: Klostar Podravski, Croatia) was disturbed in the late 19th century. Of this site, only grave goods from the richer graves were kept together, while objects found in the other graves were thrown together. Among these stray artefacts there was one ring that might have fit this category. Unfortunately, no drawing was made of the ring and the description is not clear either,[13] and thus it is questionable

10 Csallány 1955, p. 59. In the tomb, a ring with an S-shaped end was placed underneath the chin, and two denarii minted under King László had been placed near the deceased as well.

11 Brunšmid 1904, pp. 88–89.

12 Hampel 1907, p. 194.

13 Brunšmid 1904, pp. 78–79. According to the description: "koja je izvna uresena kosim istockanim poteizma". It is unclear what the author meant by slanting lines. Unfortunately, the republication by József Hampel is also not helpful in understanding the decoration on the outer side of the ring: "An open-loop band ring with overlapping ends; along the outer side, it is decorated by longitudinal straight lines intersected by dotted slanting lines". Cf. Hampel 1907, p. 170. Making interpretation of the object more difficult, Brunšmid speaks of a silver (srebro ~ srebrni) ring (Brunšmid 1904, p. 79), while Hampel refers to a copper-based alloy – "made of yellow metal", (Hampel 1907, p. 170). For an independent interpretation of the ring, see Niederle 1913, pp. 673–674. In Niederle's opinion, in this case, there is a row of trapezoidal patterns on the outer side of the band ring.

whether the item can even be considered. The ring type, similarly to other ring shapes, attracted no attention during that period of the research, and this is obvious from the brief summary by József Hampel in his volume of 1907.[14]

The next similar find was also from the southern region of the country, in the territory of what was then Bács County. It came into the possession of Kálmán Gubitza in 1908 when – together with Béla Posta – he noticed a disturbed medieval village cemetery between Újgombos and Újpalánka. From the site disturbed by railway construction, a triple-fold braided torque with a hook clasp and a ring came into the possession of the Bács-Bodrog County Company. Unfortunately, the signs on the ring cannot be compared with the piece disclosed by Josip Brunšmid or any pieces found later.[15] Currently, the finding is in a collection at the Zombor Museum, but it also could not be clarified in its newer publication whether the signs engraved on the other side of the silver ring were different from those on other finds or of a similar design.[16] Based on a republication by Nebojša Stanojev, it can be ascertained that the title of Kálmán Gubitza's work, which refers to a cemetery from the "Hungarian Conquest period" (i.e. started in the early 10th century), might be misleading on first reading. But the author explains the title, highlighting that the findings at that site "*are closely related to artefacts from the Bijelo-Brdo peak*", and therefore he believes they might point to *"the presence of some Slavic tribe*".[17] The S-ended loop jewellery and rectangular cross-section bronze torques of the scattered artefacts also confirm what was clear from Gubitza's report: the remnants of a slightly later, late 10th-century or 11th-century village cemetery were discovered and the ring was probably part of them.[18] Shortly afterwards, Arnold Marosi published a study on the Maroshegy cemetery in Székesfehérvár in the journal *Archaeológiai Értesítő* [Archaeology News].[19]

14 Hampel 1907, p. 67.
15 Gubitza 1910, pp. 169–170.
16 Станојев 1989, pp. 22–23, No. 103.
17 Gubitza 1910, p. 172.
18 Gubitza 1910; Станојев 1989, pp. 22–23. Gubitza's description of the position and large number of the graves and scattered bricks seems to confirm that this was a village cemetery, as does the existence of graves of different depths. A curiosity of the cemetery is the fact that two crosses made of "silver plates" were found there, as well.
19 Marosi 1914.

In describing the graves of the disturbed cemetery that could be documented, Marosi mentions that a ring was found in Grave 6, "consisting of a silver band, the surface of which was decorated by notches reminiscent of runiform script".[20] Thus, he was the first to associate the object type with runiform script. However, he published no drawing or photo of the find in his first study, and so his contemporaries disregarded the comment hidden among his lines. Along with the ring, a string of beads, another ring, an S-ended loop jewellery, and a denarius coined by King András I were found in the tomb, and these together are good indicators of the age of this artefact.[21]

This early news was not followed up by any analyses covering the ring type and the signs on it. Although research into runiform script had started in the second half of the 19th century, a significant shift in emphasis occurred only from the 1910s when several prestigious experts started to pay attention to this topic.[22] However, until the 1930s, nobody noticed these rings and it was only then that Gyula Mészáros, a researcher of runiform script, looked into the issue. Contemporaneous archaeologists had also not studied the older discoveries in more detail. To complicate the situation, with the exception of the piece in Székesfehérvár, all of them were stranded abroad after the state borders were redrawn in the wake of WWI. Following József Hampel, there was no expert to offer any comprehensive interpretation of the 10th-century artefacts. This hiatus was filled in the 1930s by Nándor Fettich, although he was more interested in the early artefacts and less in the material found in the less well-furnished graves.[23] The group of items was also not covered in papers debating the Slavic ethnicity of the Hungarian Principality in the 10th–11th century,[24] while researchers'

20 Idem, p. 61. Cf. Csallány 1968, p. 294; Kornél Bakay only disclosed a profile photo of the ring in parallel with Csallány's publication, and his description ("Gegossener Bronzering mit Buckelverzierung") is unclear on whether there was any decoration on the object. Cf. Bakay 1968, p. 58. Unlike Csallány and Marosi, Bakay described the ring as a bronze ring.

21 Marosi 1914, p. 61; Bakay 1968, p. 58.

22 For the timeline of research, see Sándor 2014, pp. 299–306.

23 For the relevant issues of the history of research, see Langó 2017, pp. 43–45.

24 Richthofen 1926; Niederle 1926. Niederle knew and even later published similar polygonal rings with inscriptions from the Byzantine discoveries in Bulgaria. Cf. Niederle 1930, pp. 122–123.

interest was not roused either when Arnold Marosi published, this time with a drawing, the rings from Maroshegy, presenting a total of two artefacts: *"on one of them, notches reminiscent of runiform script, and on the other, which is thicker than the first, an intricate punched decoration"*.[25]

The first recognition and interpretation of the object type in Hungary occurred when Kálmán Szabó found rings with similar inscriptions[26] in 1932 in the cemeteries studied at the Kerekegyháza (Fülöpszállás) – Kunpuszta site (the medieval Hercegegyháza?),[27] and then in 1933 at Ladánybene-Templom-dűlő

25 Marosi 1922, p. 34, cf. p. 26. Table I photos 3–4. The signs on the ring among of the second scattered finds were noticed by Kornél Bakay as well, and according to his description: "Einfacher Ring mit Kopf aus einem 0,35 cm breiten Silberblech (Inv. Nr. ?), dessen Enden zusammengelötet sind. In den von Perlenreihen eingefassten Vierecken sind verschiedene". Bakay 1968, p. 59. Based on the same description, the stray ring published by Marosi was identified by Miklós Béla Szőke as well. Cf. Szőke & Vándor 1987, p. 71. However, Kornél Bakay only provided a top view of the ring in the table he published: Bakay 1968, Taf. XII.1. The picture of the ring from Grave 6 has an important and interesting detail: based on the drawing published by Marosi, it seems the signs were not framed on the ring from Grave 6, which is why Miklós Béla Szőke assumed, precisely based on the drawing published by Arnold Marosi, that "the signs were lined up one after another with no frame". See Szőke–Vándor 1987, p. 71. However, on the ring the signs were framed, as could be seen easily in the photo by Dezső Csallány (and not in the drawing that also did not show any frames). Cf. Csallány 1968, p. 294. All of this shows that earlier drawings are not always decisive in a matter, since in many cases they express an interpretation, as can be seen in Csallány's drawing, from which another scholar might draw the wrong conclusions. It is not easy to decide whether the stray find had any frames on it, as assumed by Miklós Béla Szőke from Bakay's description above. But there is a possibility to resolve the contradictions. At the time Bakay registered the discovery and documented it with photos, both rings were available, but Bakay incorrectly listed Figure 3 of Photo 1 in Marosi 1922 (cf. Bakay 1968, p. 58, n. 18.) under Grave 6 of Maroshegy, and in fact it was probably Figure 4 of Photo 1 in Marosi 1922 that pertained to Grave 6. But all of this is mere speculation. The opinion could be supported and Bakay's mistake could be indicated by the fact that the top-view photo of the ring from Grave 6 is identical to the similar view of the ring listed among the findings of the current Grave 6 (I had the opportunity to examine the ring personally in 2015). But we cannot be certain because unfortunately I could not find the other stray ring in the Székesfehérvár collection. Even if we accept the above assumption, the question remains whether we should attach more importance to Bakay's description above or the drawing published in Marosi's study, when it comes to whether the stray ring had any frames on it.

26 Szabó 1938, p. 32.

27 For issues relating to the identification of the site, see Siklósi 1999; Rosta 2014, pp. 55, 88–89.

(the medieval Beneszállás).[28] The significance of the rings was recognised by Turkologist Gyula Mészáros who had recently moved home and was the first to publish it, following a lecture on the topic held at the itinerant conference of the Szeged Commission for Research of the Great Plain in Kecskemét.[29] Mészáros defined the inscriptions as specimens of Cuman runiform script,[30] although he probably confused the two rings.[31] In Mészáros' interpretation, the discovery turned out to be a "sensation", because these would have been the first specimens of Cuman runiform script.[32] The results of Gyula Mészáros were accepted by Kálmán Szabó as well, but no other relevant contemporaneous opinions were expressed regarding the signs on the ring. As suggested by the review on Szabó's work by Alajos Bálint, the archaeologists of the period kept their distance from this topic.[33] Although similar finds were discovered as early as that period (more precisely, before the excavation by Szabó) by Ferenc Móra, in their primary presentation the archaeologist did not mention this curiosity (probably because the inscription was not legible before restoration).[34] A more detailed processing of the cemetery and the ring was hindered by Móra's long illness and death in 1934. Afterwards, Dezső Csallány was appointed as director of the Szeged Museum and he resumed the exploration of the Deszk cemetery in 1937.[35] The restoration of earlier findings was probably conducted in parallel with this.[36] However, another

28 Rosta 2014, pp. 201–203.

29 Anonymous 1936.

30 Mészáros 1936.

31 On the matter of confusion, see Kürti 2006, n. 19. However, it is not clear who made the mistake: Mészáros, who published the ring inscription as early as 1936 (Mészáros 1936, pp. 172–173), or Szabó, who published his book two years later, in 1938 (Szabó 1938, p. 33, photo 90–91). The identification by Mészáros was later followed by Dezső Csallány as well.

32 The current position on the research is that to this day we have no runiform scrip that can be associated with the Cumans. Here, I wish to thank my Turkologist friends, Balázs Sudár and Dávid Kara Somfai for sharing their knowledge in this matter.

33 Bálint 1938, p. 211.

34 Móra 1932.

35 Csallány 1943.

36 Csallány had no plans on excavating any graves later than the Avar Age; plans were that it would have been done by "the intern of the archaeological institute of the University of Szeged". Although Dezső Csallány mentions no names, he must have meant Márta Széll who had started a systematic processing of the digs conducted by Móra. Cf. Széll 1940; 1942; 1943.

global conflagration thwarted the processing of the Deszk cemetery. Following WWII, the scholar who published work on the early Árpád-period cemeteries discovered by Ferenc Móra, Márta Széll, moved to the USA; Csallány's career was disrupted, and he was only able to resume his work as an archaeologist in 1954 in Nyíregyháza, far away from his previous station.[37] During this time, Csallány began his activity with renewed zeal and picking up previously started work, his publications came out one after another, on artefacts of the migration period and the Árpád period, and on runiform inscriptions. His interest in the specific ring type was obviously aroused in a previous dig. As early as October 1939, Csallány was excavating in Klárafalva, in the garden of tavern-keeper György Faragó, where he exposed 11 (12?) graves from an Árpád-period cemetery.[38] In Grave 6 opened in the SE part of the cemetery fragment, a silver band ring was found, with signs engraved on the outer side that were noticed by Csallány even at the time of the discovery.

Eventually, reports on the Csongrád County finds were published in 1955. This is when he published what he knew of the ring type in question. The processing of the parallels was not only a development of earlier conclusions by Mészáros, but the beginning of his project that became an important part of his work:[39] an interpretation of early medieval and Árpád-period sign groups

37 A detailed report on the early Árpád-Age finds of cemetery D of Deszk has not been published to this day. More recent research found that a similar ring was in another grave (Grave 56) of the cemetery, but not even Csallány recognised it. Cf. Kovács 2015, n. 779.

38 Csallány 1955, pp. 83–84; Csallány 1968, pp. 293–294. In connection with the site, Csanád Bálint mentions only twelve graves. Cf. Bálint 1991, p. 236.

39 One commentator on the history of science attributed this interest of his to the speculation that "provincial solitude drove the old man to studying runiform script". Emphasising that I am not familiar with the habits of Dezső Csallány or with how bitter he might have grown during the stormy years between 1947 and 1954, I would only like to point out that perhaps this is not the only possible interpretation of this detail of his life work. His works published after his study of 1955, presented above, do not seem to support this explanation. Csallány published the first register of Avar discoveries in 1956. In parallel with his work on runiform script (or specimens to believed to be such), he published a series of summaries, used and cited to this day, regarding the 10th century (Csallány 1957; 1959; 1970), the Avar Age (Csallány 1956; 1958a; 1962; 1968c), research on the Gepids (Csallány 1961), Byzantine archaeology (Csallány 1957; 1962a; 1965) and the history of research (Csallány 1958; 1968b). (The references are not exhaustive, a large number could be added to them,

believed to be runiform script.[40] The paper was clearly a thorough work. Obviously, Csallány had studied and collected the related artefacts for a long time. Initially, he accepted the opinion of Mészáros and took the late horizon of the inscriptions to be Cuman runiform script; he believed the 11th-century artefacts to be traces of "*Christianised Pechenegs*".[41] He reported a total of six rings in his study, but also mentions a seventh (one piece in Székesfehérvár). Of the six rings, the artefacts presented above can be regarded as being from the 11th or 12th century. The ring from Battonya, included in the paper, is certainly an artefact that does not pertain to this category (he himself later partially solved the issue of its dating[42] when he discovered in the collection at the Esztergom museum and published the closest parallel of the Békés County artefact known only from a photo).[43] Even more questionable than the Battonya

as preferred.) In my opinion, these papers prove that Csallány had his Hungarian and foreign connections even during this late phase of his work, he was familiar with and used contemporaneous literature, and he does not seem at all to have been forgotten by scholars, locking himself up in his solitary provincial study to pursue eccentric interests. Cf. Bóna 1971; Németh 1977. His work on runiform script was born as a result of long-term scientific efforts, regardless of whether or not some of his findings were mistaken or erroneous. In my opinion, this type of work Dezső Csallány conducted could be compared best to the papers written by Gábor Vékony or János Harmatta on similar topics. In the case of the latter, their interest in the various scripts they thought they discovered on archaeological findings was not caused by any "provincial solitude", or any other negative "socio-psychological background". I cannot assume any lack of linguistic knowledge of sufficient depth (as expected by contemporaneous research) in Csallány's case, as no such complaint was raised in the case of the other scholars mentioned. I see no reason why we should judge him for daring to investigate the topic as an archaeologist. There are many contemporaneous examples of interest expressed by archaeologists in this field. Such was the significant debate on the interpretation of the inscriptions of Nagyszentmiklós, where archaeologists and linguists expressed conflicting opinions.

40 Csallány's last paper was also in this field. Cf. Csallány 1976.

41 Csallány 1955, p. 84.

42 This paper does not cover the rings of Battonya or Esztergom, because they cannot be seen as early Árpád-Age pieces, which is why I do not present them in detail nor wish to state how the groups of signs on the ring heads could be interpreted. I only want to point out that formal parallels of this ring type point to the 14th and 15th century in both cases, when (betrothal) rings with Cyrillic inscriptions and elements that seem to be similar groups of signs were generally known in the Balkans. Cf. Радојковић 1969, p. 195; Милошевић 1987, No. 209–213.; Бајаловић–Хаџи-Пешић 1984, Cat. 428, pp. 394, 568.; Ђуровић 2012, Cat. 70.

43 Csallány 1968, pp. 281–284.

ring head is how we should interpret the discovery of Pomáz. Not even a photo of the Pomáz ring survived,[44] and it was presented only based on a drawing known to him from a copy made by István Erdélyi and Sándor Sashegyi.[45]

In his later work, Csallány frequently returned to this issue and wrote larger summaries on the topics on several occasions, also covering the finds in Nagyszentmiklós.[46] He did not stop collecting finds and added another ring to the category of artefacts that might be included in the study. He was the first to present the artefact from Hódmezővásárhely and mentioned another find from Mezőberény, but it is very likely that – similarly to the Battonya ring – it does not fall within the scope of my study.[47]

Thus, thanks to Csallány's contribution, the topic attracted much attention and at the end of his activity, as many as six authentic artefacts were the focus of research (Deszk cemetery D, Grave 87; Ladánybene, Klárafalva – György Faragó's garden, Grave 6; Fülöpszállás-Kerekegyháza; Székesfehérvár-Maroshegy Grave 6; and Hódmezővásárhely-Kenyereéri-dűlő/Káposztásföld).[48] Nonetheless, the research of the scholar in Nyíregyháza into early medieval groups of signs and runiform script was mostly met with silence. His contemporaries, such as Gyula László, often helped him with data,[49] but they did not reflect on the merits of his findings. This reluctance speaks volumes, also because during that period some of the artefacts covered by Csallány (such as the treasure found in Nagyszentmiklós) were discussed in many papers.[50] The reason could be the fact that the contemporaries disagreed with Csallány on the dating and interpretation of the runiform script. The topic was not addressed by Béla Szőke in his overview

44 To my knowledge, the ring of Battonya was also not included in a museum.

45 On Sashegyi's work, see Kanyó 2012, while a relevant example of his knowledge of materials of Transylvania is: Erdélyi 2016.

46 Csallány 1968; Csallány 1968a.

47 Unfortunately, Csallány did not publish a photo of the find, and all we know is that it was in the possession of ethnographer Hajnalka Tábori of Debrecen. Cf. Csallány 1968, p. 299.

48 At that time, the finds that were added to collections in the territory of the then Yugoslavian state were not noticed by Csallány either.

49 Csallány 1968, p. 295.

50 For a summary of the history of research on the topic, see Bálint 2004, pp. 78–87.

that remains a field manual to this day,[51] nor was any interpretation of the rings provided by Kornél Bakay in his studies systemising the findings of the Székesfehérvár cemeteries.[52] The latter published both relevant findings in the case of the Maroshegy cemetery, but did not ascribe any importance to the groups of signs on the outer side of the rings, only mentioning the framed design in the case of the stray piece.[53]

In parallel with Csallány's aforementioned papers, pieces from Baranya County were published that represented progress in the research on this group of artefacts.[54] After the death of János Dombay, the excavation notes of the researcher and founder of the collection were published, which discussed the earliest artefacts of the early Árpád Age in Baranya County that were professionally excavated and processed. But the artefacts of the Ellend-Szilfai-dűlő site published as part of this work were not utilised by Csallány or any other researcher, and thus the analysis of the rings he published only started later.[55] Among the parallels published by Dombay were some on which the excavator identified clearly Latin-script inscription fragments,[56] while in other cases, he could only identify "*traces of script*".[57]

51 For a presentation of the rings of the early Árpád Age, see Szőke 1962, pp. 96–99.

52 Bakay 1965; Bakay 1968.

53 On the ring from Grave 6, the rectangular design of the object can be seen well even from the top-view picture: Cf: Bakay 1968, Taf. IX.8. The expression used in the text (Buckelverzierung) may also refer to the formal appearance of the ring: Idem, p. 58. Regarding the framed design: Idem, p. 59. But in this case, the band of the ring was not rectangular: Cf. Idem, Taf. XII.1. Obviously Bakay's description misled Miklós Béla Szőke, too, who later declared that the ring from Grave 6 of Maroshegy was lost. Cf. Szőke & Vándor 1987, p. 71. In 2015, I held the ring from Grave 6 in my hands and it certainly existed at that time, so probably (identifying the top-view picture of the ring based on Kornél Bakay's paper), the object was not lost earlier, either (without doubt the photo taken by Dezső Csallány was made in the 1960s as well; cf. Csallány 1968, p. 294.), what happened was simply that they attached no importance to the signs.

54 Dombay 1960; Dombay 1961.

55 Dombay 1960, pp. 152, 154. A ring such as this was found in both Grave 70 and 128 of the cemetery. Dombay's descriptions reveal a reserved interpretation, because he emphasises, in the case of both objects, that the signs that could be seen on them were: "engraved signs reminiscent of letters". Cf. Ibid.

56 Ellend-Szilfadűlő Grave 145: "On its outer side, there was an inscription in Latin script, with three consecutive letters that can still be recognised: OVN." Idem, p. 155.

57 Dombay 1961, p. 83.

Progress was made by Attila Kiss,[58] a younger colleague of Csallány and contemporary of Kornél Bakay. Kiss, who worked in the Janus Pannonius Museum at that time, conducted studies on the 10th century relating to the two aforementioned rings of the Ellend cemetery which had been discovered and published by János Dombay. Independently of Csallány (as suggested by his references), Kiss started to look into the ring of Hódmezővásárhely as well.[59] Kiss extended his research to the artefact from Grave 45 of the Svinjarevci cemetery, and mentioned the pieces found in the excavation conducted by Béla Horváth in Tiszaörvény.[60] The then-young researcher proposed a new solution to interpreting the object type. To interpret the signs on the ring in Grave 128 of Ellend, he asked for the help of the leading experts of the time, Orientalist professor Károly Czeglédy, Turkologist Gyula Németh, and Hebraist Sándor Scheiber. The renowned scholars believed the ring might have had Hebrew, perhaps Greek, and characters of an unidentified set of letters as well, but Attila Kiss thought he identified Hebrew and Latin letters in the case of the 70 badly preserved graves and the artefact from Hódmezővásárhely. According to him, the runiform marks were explained by the uninterrupted survival of the Hungarian culture of runiform script, while the Greek and Latin letters were explained by Christian evangelists who came from these places. He attributed the Hebrew characters to the Judaisation of the Khazars and the presence of such Khazars converted to Judaism in the Hungarian settlement in the Carpathian Basin.[61] He then proposed an ethnic interpretation of the rings, including toponymic data and assuming that these artefacts, e.g. in the case of

58 On the consultations between Attila Kiss and Csallány regarding the findings, see Kiss 1970, p. 345. no. 12.

59 In his paper, Kiss makes no references to Csallány's paper of 1968, and this is probably due to the fact that Kiss was not familiar with this article by Csallány and by the time it was published, he probably had already submitted his own manuscript to the editors of Acta Archaeologica, with no possibility to address the other one's conclusions. It must be noted that Kiss did mention how he consulted with Csallány in the case of the Hódmezővásárhely find, but even regarding this consultation there is no reference that he might have been familiar with Csallány's text from 1968 or the manuscript of the study.

60 According to a note by Kiss, two such rings were found at the Tiszaörvény-Templomdomb site in Grave 164 and 167. Cf. Kiss 1970, p. 344.

61 Kiss 1970.

Ellend, might have been brought by women from nearby Khazaria, as a sign of their religious and national affiliations. His ideas and proposals, however, did not trigger any debates and were left unanswered. Even if contemporaneous research had no appreciation for his conclusions, they were integrated into Hungarian research over time.[62]

After Kiss's work, no other scholars conducted any comprehensive research on the topic. The only comment Ágnes Cs. Sós made on a similarly designed piece found in Grave 76 in Csátalja was that it had "*engraved decorative lines*" on it,[63] while Gyöngyi Csukás continued to reference the finding of Sárosd as a piece with runiform script,[64] and Edith Bárdos only noted on the ring from Kaposvár that it was "*polygonal*", and published the inscription on a drawing with no comments and explanations.[65]

A new interpretation was provided only much later, in the 1980s, when Miklós Béla Szőke and László Vándor published on the cemetery from Pusztaszentlászló. In the analytical part of the monograph, a separate chapter discussed the ring type, of which six pieces were found in this 11th-century village cemetery.[66] Their analysis has been the basis of scientific analysis of the topic ever since, not only thanks to its sensible statements, but also because in this part Miklós Béla Szőke offered the most comprehensive collection of the object type to this day. They too asked Károly Czeglédy for help in this work, who reviewed the set of artefacts and – obviously in the light of the new sources found in such a large number – expressed a much more comprehensive opinion than previously on the Ellend ring. Based on these, in his opinion the set of signs on the object type is neither Inner-Asian, nor Khazar runiform script. The

62 Cf. Szőke & Vándor 1987, p. 70; Kovács 2015, p. 207. I can add personal experience to these references. In his series of university lectures on archaeological artefacts of the 10th–11th century (1996), professor István Bóna also sympathised with the solution that interpreted the ring inscriptions as Hebrew letters and, making reference to the proposal of Miklós Béla Szőke; he was inclined to take them as parallels of the magic rings with Hebrew inscriptions widespread in Western Europe at that time.

63 Cs. Sós & Parádi 1971, p. 114.

64 Csukás 1975, p. 368.

65 Bárdos 1978, p. 196.; Cf. XV.t. 14.

66 Szőke & Vándor 1987, pp. 68–73.

signs on the rings are not related to Szekler runiform script either. Nor can the signs be identified as letters of the Hebrew and Greek alphabet.[67]

In addition to the above-mentioned pieces, the authors collected many other artefacts and presented parallels of the object type from outside the Carpathian Basin as well. They collected and assessed 34 rings from a total of 24 sites. The wide-scale data collection also proved that this was not a phenomenon of the Carpathian Basin, but a specific object type that was widely present in Central Europe in the 11th to 13th centuries. The renowned scholar compiled a basic classification of the object type, distinguishing two types. In the case of type 1, the ring band was polygonal, as the signs were framed in a rectangle. In the case of type 2, the band was oval or circular, as the signs on the side of the ring were added one after another, with no frame. The finding type appeared in the Carpathian Basin probably in the mid-11th century (the earliest was Grave 6 of Székesfehérvár-Maroshegy, which can be dated using the András I coin), and can be dated to the middle third of the 12th century, based on graves that had coins in them (Grave 119 of Pusztaszentlászló, dated using a coin minted by Béla II). Szőke associated the signs on the rings partially with runiform script, and based on formal similarities he drew attention to the often polygonal Thebal rings meant to protect against trouble.[68] He also pointed out that in the case of the latter pieces, the eponymous word of the inscription, Thebal, originated in the Cabbalist Hebrew expression.[69] Following this wide-ranging study and analysis, Miklós Béla Szőke proposed an interpretation according to which we must assume a sort of a protective function of these rings, similarly to the Thebal rings, and the magical power of the inscriptions protected the owners of the rings from evil spirits which were bound by the meaning of the inscription. In this respect, it was beneficial that not all signs made sense, and this might have been the reason why the makers "*borrowed letters from various scripts and even invented new letterlike signs*".[70] He believed the rings were popularised by

67 Idem, p. 70.
68 Regarding the ring type, see Grohne 1956; Michelly 1987; Lorenzen 1997; Hermann 2009, pp. 226–227.
69 Szőke & Vándor 1987, pp. 72–73.
70 Idem, p. 73.

the missionary priests who "*often sold these rings to the believers who buried their dead near the church*".[71]

The findings of Miklós Béla Szőke were accepted by general scientific opinion. In his review of the book, the only addition László Kovács made was to present the Hungarian Thebal ring found in 1905, providing arguments for its authenticity.[72] He made no relevant comments to the ring type analysed above. In his later paper discussing the cemetery at the Tiszaluc-Sarkad site, he also accepted the position of Miklós Béla Szőke and in his opinion, on the ring he found that "*no meaningful text can be recognised in the mixed Latin, Greek, Hebrew, or unknown signs, it is very likely that the inscription-like decoration was believed to have magical powers*".[73] But László Kovács' paper also shows that the number of the known pieces of the finding type continued to increase recently, as new artefacts were added to the existing database. He also drew attention to the fact that the ring was present not only in the 11th century, but also in the 12th century, and in addition to village cemeteries that had no church, it was found in cemeteries around churches as well.[74]

Pieces found and published since then were added to the new list of sites by László Kovács, increasing it to 35. There are more than 50 artefacts which I have collected. All of this is indicative of the fact that this object type was widespread. More recently, the German researchers mentioned early in the paper also discovered this object type. When the artefact found in Paußnitz was published and analysed, not only were the magical rings brought to attention again (including an interpretation of the Thebal inscription,[75] and a study of other rings, e.g. with an Agla inscription and some decorated with the Tetragrammaton, etc.),[76] but the research also extended to the pieces

71 Ibid.
72 Kovács 1990, pp. 326–330.
73 Kovács 2015, p. 207.
74 Ibid.
75 On this, following an interpretation of the inscription, see a critique of Michelly (1987) for an interpretation of Grohne, and the proposal by Olav Röhrer-Ertl (2003, pp. 124–126, n. 100). Cf. also Grabowski 2002.
76 Lorenzen 1997; Hermann 2009.

from the Carpathian Basin.[77] Analysing these pieces, later studies mentioned another possible explanation in addition to the abstract magical substance: it is not impossible that the often meaningless set of signs on these rings was due to the fact that the ring makers were in fact illiterate, and so they decorated their goods with script-like symbols, to sell them to those who were illiterate themselves – letting the buyers to read whatever they wanted in the unintelligible inscriptions, or whatever the seller could make them believe was there. Craftsmen who used meaningless signs and incorrectly written letters were not rare and were known to exist and work in Antiquity as well.[78] This possibility is supported by several arguments. On the one side, many artefacts were found in places where runiform script was not used. Such was the case with the Kašić–Maklinovo brdo site,[79] Poznan, considered to be the birthplace of Poland, more specifically the early cemetery from Ostrów Tumski,[80] a grave with a ring in the 11th–12th-century cemetery of Masłowice,[81] or the discovery site of a 13th-century ring found in Norfolk, England.[82] The rings found in Poland also did not have any letters on them and only featured ornamental decoration or unintelligible signs, but the design and form of the rings was the same as the artefacts discussed above. Researchers believe the Poznan find was made clearly under Western influence, and they see no link between the "ornamental decoration" on the rings and runes or any other script.[83] Runiform script or runic script was also not assumed in the case of the artefact from England.[84]

77 Muhl 2003.
78 Among others, Mayor, Colarusso & Saunders 2014.
79 Belošević 1982, Y 271/2/2. photo 4. Cf. Petrinec 2009, p. 21.
80 Hensel & Žak 1964, p. 272.
81 Abramek 1980.
82 Hinds 2004, Cat. pp. 90–91.
83 Among the pieces found in the Carpathian Basin, the ring of Csátalja is more likely to have ornamental decoration on its side than an intelligible set of signs. Cf. Cs. Sós & Parádi 1971.
84 But it must be noted that runic script was used on magical rings. However, in this case we must emphasise that the use and spread of runic script was entirely different in medieval Scandinavian territories than that of the runiform script in the Carpathian Basin. Runes did not disappear at all, they were widely used up to the modern age and often even to record Christian texts. Cf. Lorenzen 1997.

We must point out that the rings associated with renowned personalities such as Lothar III[85] or the Hungarian house of rulers[86] generally contain intelligible abbreviations or inscriptions (using Hebrew, Greek or Latin letters). The Thebal rings or other mentioned magical rings can be interpreted similarly as well.[87] Thus, in the case of most finds discovered in Western Europe, the text consisted of intelligible letters (or at least contained legible characters).[88] A similar observation was made in the case of Byzantine rings with magical inscriptions: although some expressions were probably related to magical practices, the signs themselves were legible and intelligible.[89] So it seems that in territories with a more advanced culture of writing, it was rare, if at all, for signs to be used on the outer sides of rings that only resembled letters, while in fact they were not. Contrary to this, in territories where writing and reading were less universal, such findings were discovered more frequently. The phenomenon was not limited to the Carpathian Basin. Inscriptions that looked like script were discovered in many other places, but in most cases, the phenomena were not believed to be magical practices. It is important to emphasise that the sets of signs on the rings from the Carpathian Basin are not uniform at all. Renowned scholars have not reached a consensus on whether any sets of signs can be distinguished that can be explained clearly using one script or another (as opposed to the above-mentioned examples from abroad).[90] These arguments could be helpful in rethinking the matter and also in considering other and different possibilities of interpretation for the set of signs on the rings, as suggested above.

Of course, this does not dismiss the explanation suggested by Miklós Béla Szőke (namely that the objects were worn due to the magical powers attributed

85 A.B. 1995.
86 Kiss 2010.
87 Hermann 2009.
88 Muhl 2003.
89 Van den Hoek, Feissel & Herrmann 1994; Eger 2001, pp. 366–367. The same can be said about the Byzantine magical amulets. Cf. Spier 1993; Foskolou 2014; Bosselmann-Ruickbie 2017.
90 Lorenzen 1997; Hermann 2009; Röhrer-Ertl, F.U. 2003; Röhrer-Ertl, F.U. 2019; Röhrer-Ertl, O. 2003; Röhrer-Ertl, O. 2019.

to them), or that the objects were hoped to provide supernatural protection. A review of the possible new interpretations (such as, among others: inclusion of the recent analysis of research on the Thebal rings in the analysis of findings discovered in the Carpathian Basin; a study of whether the sets of engraved signs on the Carpathian Basin rings indeed contained only protective inscriptions, or the notch marks might have been used for other reasons as well; a comparison of the set of signs on the Hungarian rings and of rings from abroad that contained similar sets of signs, etc.) could widen the gate opened by the late researcher, Olav Röhrer-Ertl, regarding the old-new specimen found in Paußnitz.[91]

91 Regarding his person, see Meller & Reichenberger 2019.

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11TH-CENTURY NOTCH MARKS FROM THE OUTSKIRTS OF SARKADKERESZTÚR

PÁL MEDGYESI

ABSTRACT: Between 1989 and 1991, we excavated the graves of an 11th-century cemetery on the outskirts of Sarkadkeresztúr (on the Csapháti-legelő, next to the Barna farm). In this paper, I discuss the finds of Grave 81, where horse equipment and weapons were found. The bow found here has notch marks on the right side of the upper bow end bone. At first sight, the cemetery can be classified as one of the 10th–11th-century cemeteries, but – based on the thorough examination of the finds – it can be assumed that burials only started here in the 11th century. Thus, the notch-marked bow end bone found here may have been placed in the grave around the mid-11th century.
KEYWORDS: Sarkadkeresztúr settlement, grave find, bow bones, notch marks, 11th century.

Find site and how the finds were made

Between 1989 and 1991 on the outskirts of Sarkadkeresztúr[1] (Photo 1), on the Csapháti-legelő, I excavated graves in a cemetery from the 10th–11th century, near the Barna farm which was still standing at the time. We recovered a total of 133 graves, one of which was from the Celtic period. A few of the graves had been destroyed prior to the start of the excavation, but the rest of the cemetery was investigated.[2]

The discovery site is located south of Sarkadkeresztúr, at a distance of roughly 2 km, on a flat hill in the N–S direction. Here, near the Barna farm, lies the boundary between Sarkad and Sarkadkeresztúr, which crosses the southern part of the cemetery (Photo 2, 1–2). In the late 1970s, roughly three metres north from the boundary between the two townships, thus in the territory of Sarkadkeresztúr, a ditch was dug mechanically. As it turned out, a few graves were noticed even then, but nobody notified the museum. In 1985, following heavy rain, another grave was exposed in the ditch wall. The grave was unfortunately disturbed by the young shepherd who grazed his animals nearby, but the finds were transferred to the Mihály Munkácsy Museum (hereinafter: MMM). In the ensuing site visit, unfortunately I did not manage to find the bones from the disturbed grave, and the location was only shown approximately. The bronze torque brought to the museum and the fragment of a bronze bracelet suggested as early as that time that the cemetery was from the 10th –11th century.[3]

1 The village was first mentioned in 1333 as "Ecclesia S. Crucis" (Jakó 1940, p. 275, Hévvízi 1999, p. 292). It was also mentioned in 1403 in the form "Keresztur" (Csánki 1890–1913, I. p. 735, Hévvízi 1999, p. 292), and in 1552 as "Kerezthwr" (Jakó 1940, p. 275, Hévvízi 1999, p. 292). The toponym Keresztúr suggests the church of the village was consecrated to the veneration of the Holy Cross. As was customary during the Árpád period, not only the saints, but also the cross of Christ crucified was venerated as a lord (Kiss 1978, p. 48; Kiss 1988, I. p. 71. and II. 451; Hévvízi 1999, p. 292). The distinctive prefix "Sarkad" is related to being in the vicinity of Sarkad (Kiss 1978, p. 562; Hévvízi 1999, p. 292).

2 Medgyesi 1992, p. 58. Preliminary report on the dig: Medgyesi 1993, pp. 487–511; Medgyesi 2013, pp. 667–680; Medgyesi 2015, pp. 122–136.

3 Thanks to Mihály Nagy, then mayor of Sarkadkeresztúr, the findings were brought to the museum.

I conducted a dig at the site between 1989 and 1991.[4] In the early 20th century, the area was still surrounded by marshland and reeds, and currently it is alkaline grassland. So we had the opportunity to explore almost all of the graves in the cemetery on the small hillside.[5]

In total, we excavated 132 graves which seemed to date from the 10th–11th century (Photo 3).[6] In this paper, I discuss the grave goods from Grave 81 and the notch marks on one of the bow bones.

Description of Grave 81

Gender: male. Orientation: NW 294°. Grave length: 224 cm. Grave width: 47 cm at the head, 59 cm at the feet. Grave depth: 97 cm. Skeleton length: 171 cm. The skull was turned left, and the entire skeleton lay slightly to the left. The right arm was lying on the pelvis, while the left arm was extended along the body. The legs were outstretched. The bow covered with bone plates was placed next to the deceased, on his left foot. Underneath, partially on the left thigh and partially next to the body was his quiver; the stirrups and the bridle found at the feet suggest this was where the horse gear was placed (Photo 4).

Annexes:

1. *Bow-end bone* on the left side of the pelvis, in pieces. It was from the right side of the upper limb of the bow. It was made of bone-coloured, slightly arched buckhorn with string nocks. L: 23.8 cm W: 1.4 - 2.3 cm MMM inventory number: 96.3.148. 1 May 6, 3.
2. *Bow-end bone*. Forming a pair with the previous plate, next to it with its front side up. It is from the left side of the upper limb of the arch, and has a string nock. It was found in three pieces. Its lower side is notched and

4 In 1989, our dig was funded from the museum budget, while in the next two years, the excavation costs were borne by the Sales Cooperative for Sarkad and Surroundings ÁFÉSZ.

5 My workers who were born around 1930 told me that when they were children, a few children were lost in the reeds, and the whole village was looking for them.

6 Dig documentation: MMM RA 1873/1986, 2061/1990, 2075/1991, 2087/1992. In later archaeological topographic works, the site was marked as Sarkadkeresztúr–15.

nailed. L: 24.1 cm W: 1.5-2.4 cm MMM inventory number: 96.3.149. 2 May 6, 3.

3. *Bow-end bones.* Plates of the lower limb of the bow at the feet. Two pieces. Both have string nocks and are slightly arched. On one end, it is notched. L: 25.7 cm, W: 2.4 cm; and L: 22.9 cm, W: 2.0 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.150. 6.
4. *Quiver decoration bone plate* (upper edge plate) at the left-hand fingers. It covered the outer side of the quiver top plate. It is slightly narrower on one end, and its surface is covered by two rows of decorative circled dots. Originally, it was probably larger. L: 6.1 cm, W: 1.9 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.151. (Photo 7, 1.).
5. *Iron-plated bone plate of the quiver lip* next to the previous one. It is a thin bone plate, slightly convex on one side and flat on the other. On the convex surface, there is a row of decorative circled dots. There are traces of iron rust on one end. L: 9.8 cm, W: 0.8 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.152. (Photo 7, 2.). A small iron plate was tied to one end of the bone plate. L: 1.6 cm, W: 1.3 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.153. (Photo 7, 10.).
6. *Bone plate* next to the above. It is smooth on one side, rough and flat on the other. L: 2.8 cm, W: 1.0 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.154. (Photo 7, 3.).

7–12. *Arrowheads* at the quiver lip. Six pieces. They are made of iron and are rhomboid and diamond-shaped. They have a long point. L: 7.2 cm, W: 2.3 cm; L: 9.5 cm, W: 2.3 cm; L: 7.4 cm, W: 1.7 cm; L: 7.2 cm, W: 2 cm; L: 9.0 cm, W: 2.9 cm; L: 8.2 cm, W: 2.8 cm.. MMM inventory number: 96.3.155–160. (Photo 4, 1–2; Photo 5, 1–4).

13. *Quiver suspension tab* next to the left thigh bone, on the inside. It is made of iron, and its two widened bases are riveted. L: 7.2 cm, W: 1.2 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.161. (Photo 7, 7).
14. *Fragments of quiver reinforcement.* Four pieces. They probably stiffened the lower part of the quiver, on the side, and were connected. They were made of iron. The surviving widened and tapered end of the upper part is perforated by a rivet. On the lower fragment, it can be seen that the iron plate that surrounded the quiver bottom also fixed this stiffening rod, and

now they were corroded together. They are fragments. L: 3.4 cm, W: 1.0 cm. L: 2.4 cm, W: 0.5 cm, L: 1.7 cm, W: 0.5 cm, L: 3.7 cm, W: 1.4 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.162. (Photo 9, 4).

15. *Fragments of quiver reinforcement* on the outer part of the left leg. These are surviving fragments of the stiffening rods and stiffening plates of the quiver.
    a. *Two pieces of an iron band.* They are from the bands that reinforced the side of the quiver neck. L: 10.4 cm, W: 1.2 cm, Th: 0.15 cm; L: 4.1 cm, W: 0.3 cm, Th: 0.15 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.163. (Photo 9: 3, 5).
    b. *Fragment of an iron band.* A fragment of the band that reinforced the side of the quiver. L: 4.6 cm, W: 0.2-0.3 cm, Th: 0.15 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.164. (Photo 9, 2).
    c. *Fragment of an iron band,* broken into three pieces. Its end is flattened and tapered, and perforated by a rivet. It is a fragment of the band that reinforced the side of the quiver in the middle, below the neck. L: 5.9 cm, W: 1.3 cm, Th: 0.15 cm; L:1.1 cm, W: 0.4 cm, Th: 0.15 cm; L: 2.7 cm, W: 0.4 cm, Th: 0.15 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.165. (Photo 9, 1).
    d. *Fragment of an iron band.* Slightly widened on one end, with a rectangular cross-section. L: 7.2 cm, W: 0.8 cm, Th: 0.15 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.166. (Photo 7, 6).
    e. *Two fragments of an iron band.* A fragment of the band that reinforced the side of the quiver. L: 3.2 cm, W: 0.6 cm, Th: 0.15 cm; L: 2.4, W: 0.5 cm, Th: 0.15 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.167. 1 May 10, 1;
    f. *Fragment of an iron band.* A piece strengthening the side of the quiver, on the lower part a small fragment of the plate that surrounded the quiver bottom. It is perforated by a rivet, the direction of which suggests that the base plate reinforcement plate covered the lateral quiver reinforcement bands from the outside on the lower part. L: W: 8.9 cm, W: 1.7 cm, Th: 0.15 cm. Rivet measured L: 1.5 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.168. (Photo 8, 1).
    g. *Two fragments of an iron band.* Fragments of the band that reinforced the side of the quiver. L: 2.8 cm, W: 0.4 cm, Th: 0.15 cm; L: 1.8 cm, W: 0.4 cm, Th: 0.15 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.169. (Photo 10, 2).

h. *Fragment of an iron band.* Fragments of the band that reinforced the side of the quiver. L: 6.2 cm, W: 1.1 cm, Th: 0.15 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.170. (Photo 7, 5).

i. *Fragments of an iron band.* Four pieces of wider, strongly fragmented iron plate. Signs of a rivet running through are seen on one piece. These are remains of the plate that surrounded the quiver bottom and were collected together. L: 1.4 cm, W: 1.3 cm, Th: 0.15 cm; L: 1.1 cm, W: 1.3 cm, Th: 0.15 cm; L: 3.4 cm, W: 1.5 cm, Th: 0.15 cm; L: 2.6 cm, W: 1.3 cm, Th: 0.15 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.171. (Photo 8, 5).

j. *Fragment of an iron band.* A piece of the quiver base reinforcement plate. L: 2.9 cm, W: 1.3 cm, Th: 0.15 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.172. (Photo 7, 9).

k. *Fragment of an iron band.* Part of the quiver base reinforcement plate. L: 1.7 cm, W: 1.2 cm, Th: 0.15 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.173. (Photo 10, 6).

l. *Small fragments of iron bands.* They are from the bands that reinforced the quiver sides. L: 1.5 cm, 0.4 cm, Th: 0.15 cm; L: 1.0 cm, W: 0.4 cm, Th: 0.15 cm; L: 1.1 cm, W: 0.6 cm, Th: 0.15 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.174. (Photo 10, 3–5).

m. *Fragment of an iron band.* A small fragment of the plate that surrounded the quiver base and a small part of the upward reinforcing band, with rivet. L: 4.1 cm, W: 1.9 cm, Th: 0.15 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.175. (Photo 8, 6).

n. *Iron bands.* Reinforcing parts of the quiver. L: 3.7 cm, W: 0.7 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.181. (Photo 8, 2–4).

o. *Flattened end of the iron band reinforcing the quiver.* MMM inventory number: 96.3.181. L: 3.8 cm, W: 1.2 cm, Th: 0.2 cm, (Photo 7, 8).

16. *Bone tool.* Made from the femur of a large bird. It was found around the left wrist. It is light brown and hollow. One end is damaged, the other is bored through. The hole is slightly irregular and slightly worn on the two sides. This wear was caused either by the boring or by use. L: 11.5 cm, W: 2.8 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.176. (Photo 10, 7).

17. *Iron stirrup* at the foot end of the grave, reclining on the left-hand side of the grave, flap-side down. It is trapezoidal and has an arched pad. The pad is also arched laterally and one side of the frame is flat. H: 18.0 cm, W: 13.3 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.177. (Photo 11, 1).
18. *Iron stirrup* opposite the other stirrup, on the other side of the grave. Flap-side down. It is trapezoidal and has an arched pad. The pad is also arched laterally and one side of the frame is flat. H: 17.9 cm, W: 13.3 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.178. (Photo 11, 2).
19. *Iron bridle for young horse,* with two rings, at the foot-end of the grave. L: 23.5 cm, W: 4.8 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.179. (Photo 11, 3).
20. *Bone object.* Flat on one side and polygonal on the other. It was probably part of the quiver. Its surface is worn, and the flat side is notched. L: 4.5 cm, W: 2.0 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.180. (Photo 7, 4).
21. Fragments of *bow handle bone (?).* One side is convex and smooth, the other is slightly concave. Some signs of notches are visible on the concave side. L: 5.2 cm, W: 5.3 cm. MMM inventory number: 96.3.182. (Photo 6, 5).

Notch marks on the bow bone found in Grave 81

The arms of the bow found in the grave, that is the bow ends, were covered by bone decoration. One small fragment does not fit any of the bow ends, and might be a remnant of the bone plate that covered the handle. It is hard to determine the bow length, but it is obvious that the drawn bow was placed in the grave next to the quiver. This was determined based on the location of the nocks of the string. The location of the lower plates is slightly strange, as if they had shifted, because their angle with the bent arm of the bow seems to be too big. This could have been caused by animals meddling, but the bow may have been broken, too. Judging from its state at the time of the excavation, the undrawn bow had to be approx. 130 cm, but it is impossible to determine the exact size.

There are multiple notches on the right-side bone plate that covers the upper bow arm (Photos 12–13). One of them is at the end of the bow-end bone on the string nock side. The notch was made in a V-shape from two directions and forms a "Y" shape whose leg and one arm of the V-shaped upper part are

on the same line. I have some reservations about considering it a runiform notch sign, but it was clearly made intentionally (Photo 14).

The other is on the concave side of the bone, around the middle of the upper side of the string nock, near the edge of the bone. The cut was made from two directions on a relatively short section in "I" shape. Here the cut is wider compared to the length of the sign. I have some reservations about considering it a sign, but it was clearly inscribed intentionally (Photos 12 and 15). If it is a runiform notch sign it might be the sign for the letter "sz".

The next such part is at the lower third of the plate. Unfortunately, the plate is damaged and incomplete here, so we cannot see the whole pattern. What we can observe is a notch mark resembling two square brackets standing back to back. These signs are drawn differently than the previous one. The sides of the cuts are steeper and their base is flatter. It is hard to interpret the signs, but they are without doubt cut intentionally (Photo 12, 1; and Photos 16–17).

The fourth similar area is even further below, in the middle of the lower third of the bone plate. Here we see two signs cut with a much narrower and more slender technique than the first cut, but also in a V-shape. One of them is a straight line, the other resembles the Arabic numeral 1 (Photos 12, 16, 17, and 18). The two signs are clearly notch marks corresponding to the phonemes "i" and "s".

Earlier findings of bow bones decorated with runes are known in Békés County, in Békés which is roughly 20 km away from Sarkadkeresztúr. Ottó Trogmayer also found bow bones with notch marks in Grave 45 of the 10th–11th-century cemetery in Békés-Povádzug.[7] One was on the bone plate of the bow end, while the other was on the bow handle cover plate. The two notch marks are fully identical. István Dienes determined the signs were clan signs (tamgha) and found a completely identical parallel in a stone monument in Endzse.[8] Gábor Vékony believes the sign is either a tamgha or Turkish text that can be read in Hungarian as "shoot" [imperative]. He believes the signs are late

7 Trogmayer 1962, pp. 9–38, MRT IV/3. 81–87; Medgyesi 2013, p. 671.
8 Dienes 1962, p. 103.

specimens of the earlier runiform script of the Carpathian Basin, that is, the Nagyszentmiklós-Szarvas type (Photo 19).[9]

We must mention the cemetery discovered in the territory of Homokmégy-Halom in 1952, where eleven notch marks were found on the bone cover of the quiver lip from the time of the Hungarian Conquest. According to Gábor Vékony's deciphering, the Turkish inscription can be translated as: "Tíznyilas tegezzel győzz!" [Win with a quiver of ten arrows!]

In 1973–76, Béla Kürti excavated a cemetery dating from the Conquest period in Szeged-Algyő. The bow handle plate in Grave 11 had runes.[10] According to Gábor Vékony, the name "Győ", as in the toponym Algyő, explains the signs.[11]

In addition to the above, we have numerous bow remains with runiform signs from the period under study. The increasing number of findings suggests that it was not unusual to mark these weapons with runes.

The age of Grave 81

At first glance, the cemetery excavated at the Barna farm on the Sarkadkeresztúr-Csaphát grassland seems to be a 10th–11th-century cemetery. The earliest graves in the cemetery seem to be 12, 81, and 117, but we will see this is not so. A more thorough analysis of the findings suggests that the first burials in this cemetery were performed only as early as the 11th century.

We are familiar with the materials found in Grave 81. In Grave 12, bow bones, arrowheads, iron stirrups, and an iron clasp were found. In Grave 117, fragments of the ironwork of a quiver (?), an iron plate, silver coin, bronze buttons, an S-ended hair clip, a plain hair clip, two arrowheads, an iron clasp, stirrups, and bridle were found.[12] The silver coin is a denarius minted by András I (1046–1060), which means it was produced in the mid-11th century and the grave was probably dug then as well.

9 Vékony 1987, pp. 106–107; Vékony 2004, p. 111.
10 Kürti 1979, p. 340.
11 Vékony 2004, p. 110.
12 Medgyesi 1993, p. 488.

We have many finds and cemeteries that suggest that burials with horses and horse equipment could be dated from the 11th century. Ottó Trogmayer dates the use of the cemetery excavated in Békés-Povádzug to between the first third of the 11th century and the first third of the 12th century. In his opinion, graves with weapons and horses are the oldest among the graves in the cemetery, but he believes they are from the 10th century. These are Graves 45, 58, 85, 147 and 151. He points out that despite the indeterminable coin from the Árpád period found in Grave 58, the grave goods suggest the 10th century in the same way as the other graves with horses or weapons in the cemetery.[13] László Révész also dates the cemetery of Békés-Povádzug to between the first third of the 11th century and the first third of the 12th century. However, based on findings in the decades that have passed since then, László Révész also dated the early graves in Békés-Povádzug, presumably from the 10th century, to the 11th century. In his opinion, many such burials were performed in the first half of the 11th century.[14] On the Magyarhomorog-Kónyadomb hill in Hajdú-Bihar County, in Grave 25 an arrowhead, a bow handle bone, and an András I coin were found.[15] I have added another discovery to this line. Grave 3 at the Újkígyós-Skoperda farm site probably falls into this category as well. A plain hair clip, an arrowhead, quiver decoration (?), bow-covering bone plates, as well as an indeterminable pierced silver coin cut in half were found in the grave. We have only found coins of kings of the Árpád House in the cemetery, and therefore we assume this to be one as well.[16]

We can assume that all of the graves (considered early) in the cemetery excavated at the Barna farm in the Sarkadkeresztúr-Csapháti grassland, containing horse equipment, bow and arrows, were made in the 11th century, so we must date Grave 81 to the 11th century as well. It is likely that during the rebellions of the pagans many buried their dead following the old pagan rites.[17]

13 Trogmayer 1962, pp. 34–36, MRT IV/3. 81–87; Medgyesi 2013, p. 671.
14 Medgyesi 1993, p. 488; Révész 1997, p. 184; Medgyesi 2013, p. 637; Medgyesi 2015, p. 23.
15 Révész 1997, p. 184.
16 Medgyesi 1997, p. 76; Medgyesi 2013, p. 673; Medgyesi 2015, pp. 156–160.
17 Medgyesi 2015, p. 124.

Earlier, István Dienes,[18] Katalin Vályi[19] and László Révész[20] suggested that we should assume the survival of pagan customs in some parts of Békés County as late as the 11th century, which could well be reflected in their burial customs. László Révész underlines this by mentioning that written sources attest to the persistent survival of pagan customs in this region.

This also means that these are not necessarily the earliest graves in these cemeteries. In the case of Grave 117 in Sarkadkeresztúr, this is certainly true, because there were graves in this cemetery that were dated using early 11th-century coins. It is likely that Grave 81 and Grave 12 were also made during the pagan rebellions.

Based on all this, the bow bones with notch marks found in Békés-Povádzug and the Sarkadkeresztúr-Csapháti hills were probably placed in the ground in the mid-11th century.

18 Dienes 1962, p. 59.
19 Vályi 1994, p. 393.
20 Révész 1997, pp. 183–184.

PHOTOS

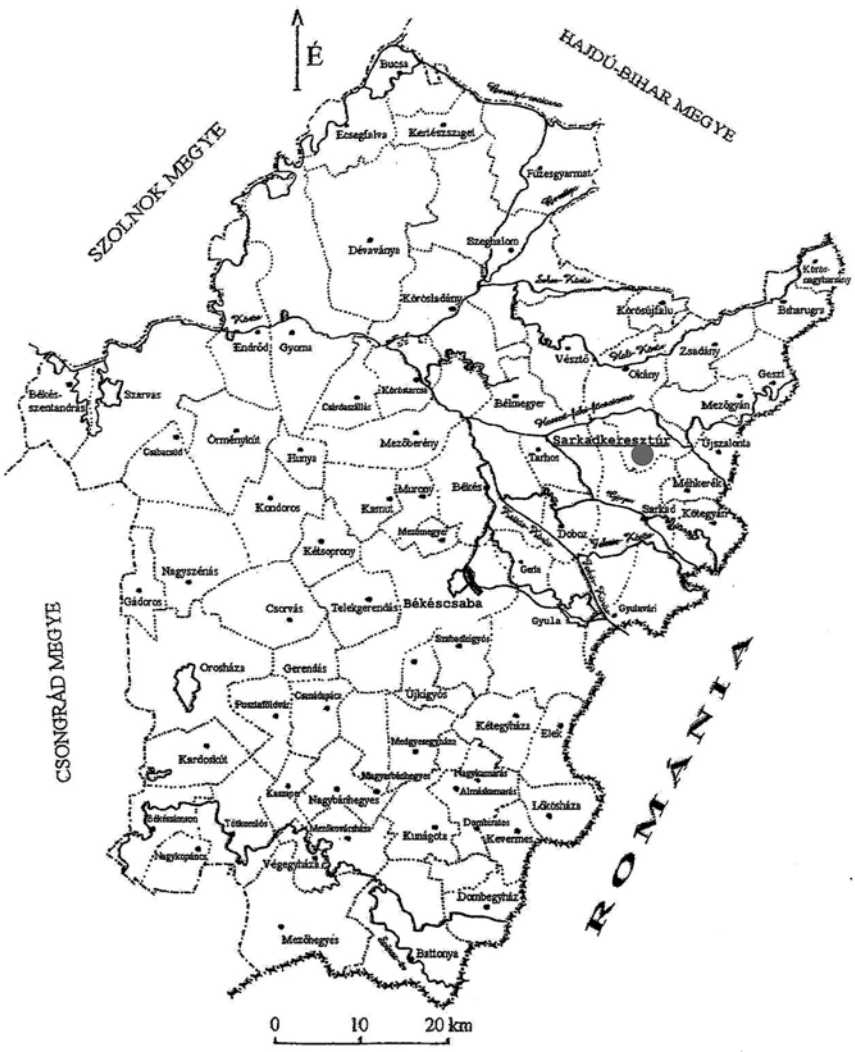

Figure 1: Map of Békés County (Drawing: Pál Medgyesi)

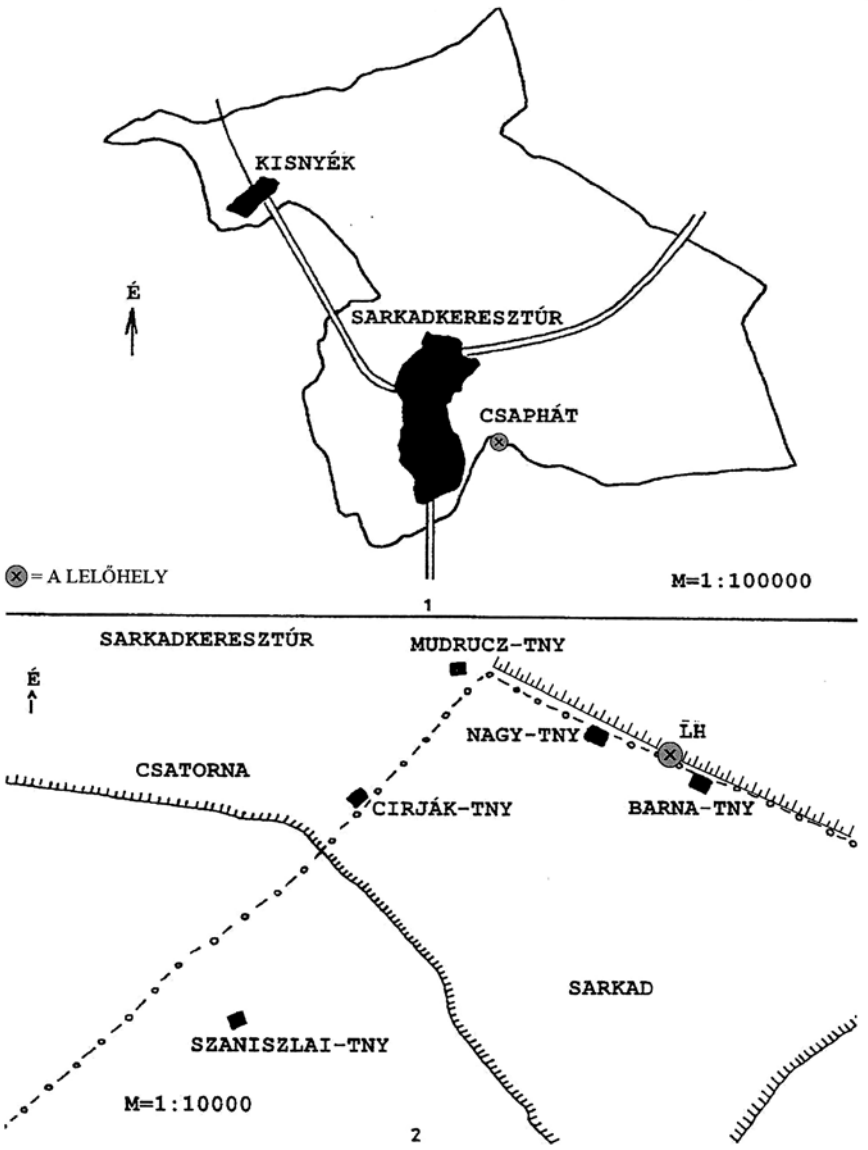

Figure 2: 1: Area of Sarkadkeresztúr. 2: Site area (Drawing: Pál Medgyesi)

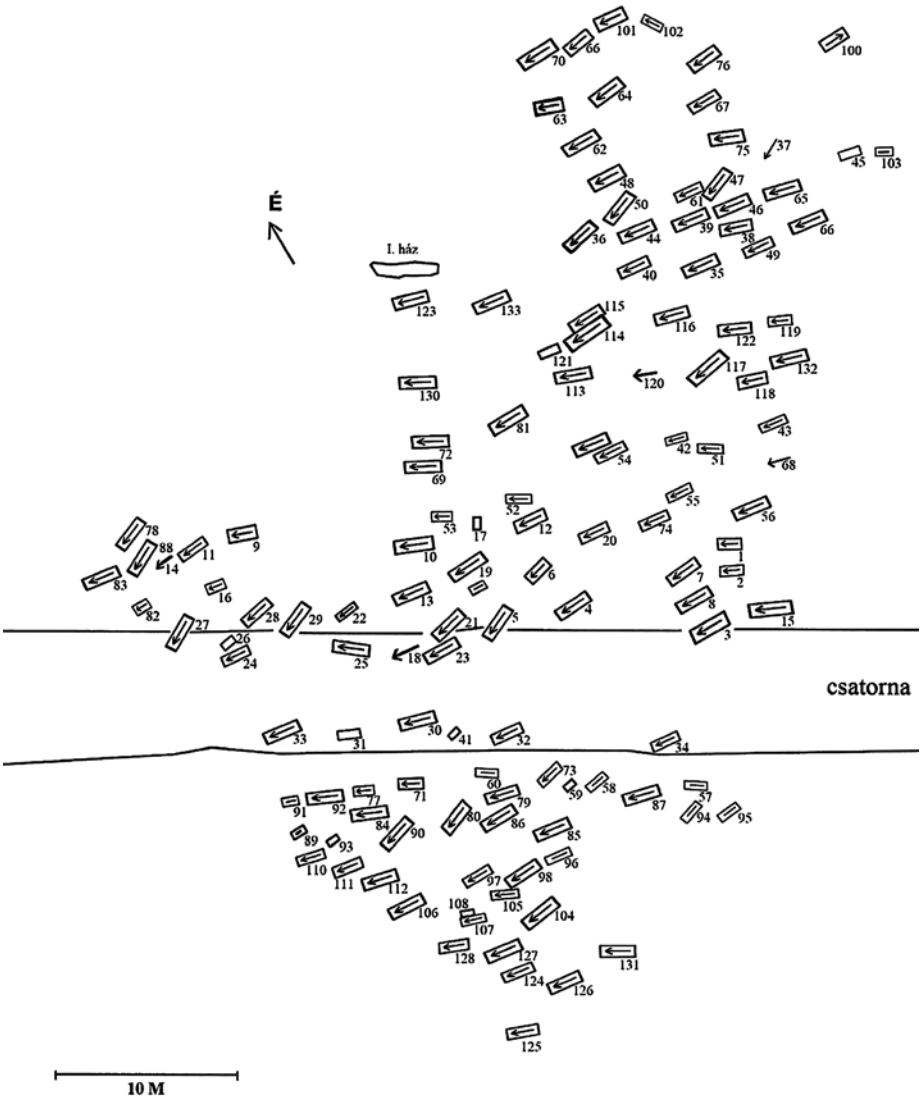

Figure 3: Map of the cemetery (Drawing: Pál Medgyesi)

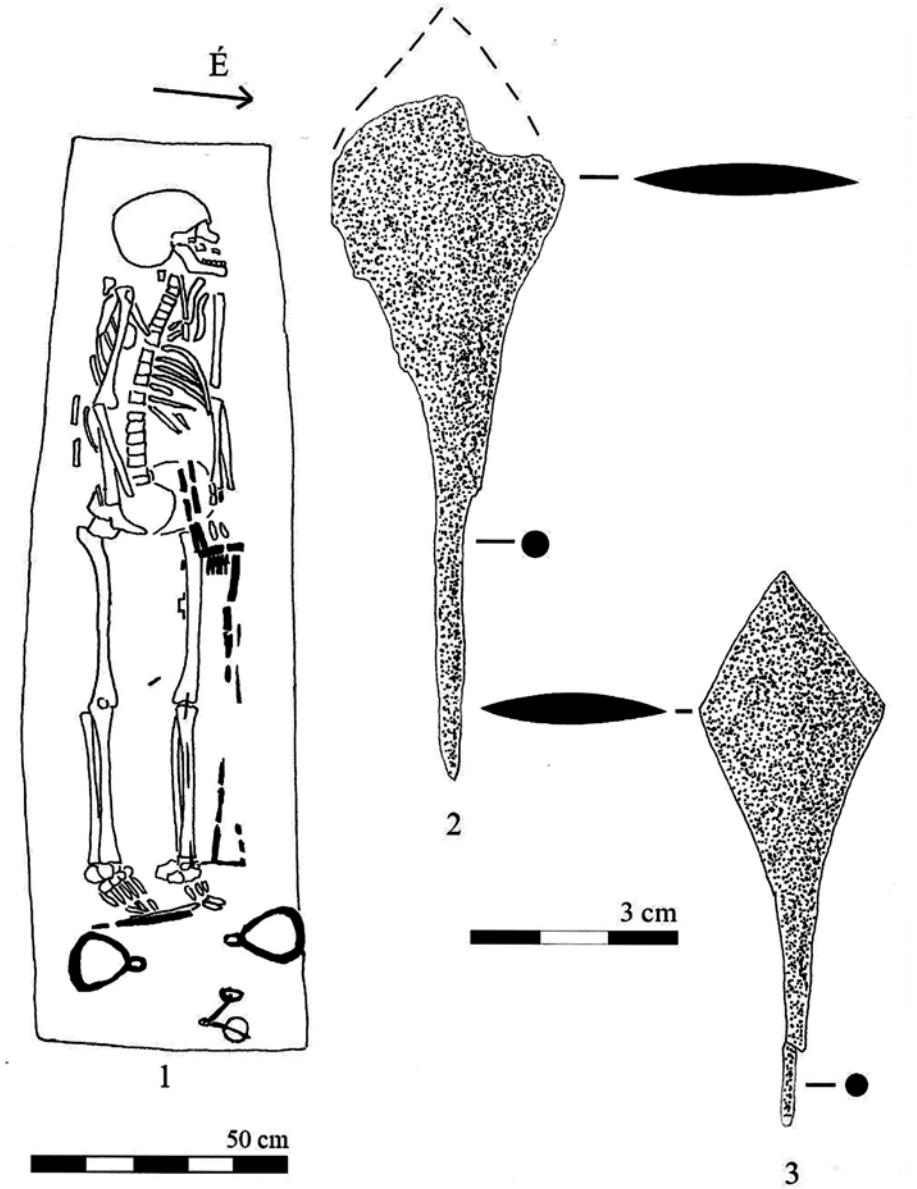

Figure 4: 1: Grave 81. 2–3: Arrowheads from Grave 81 (Drawing: Pál Medgyesi)

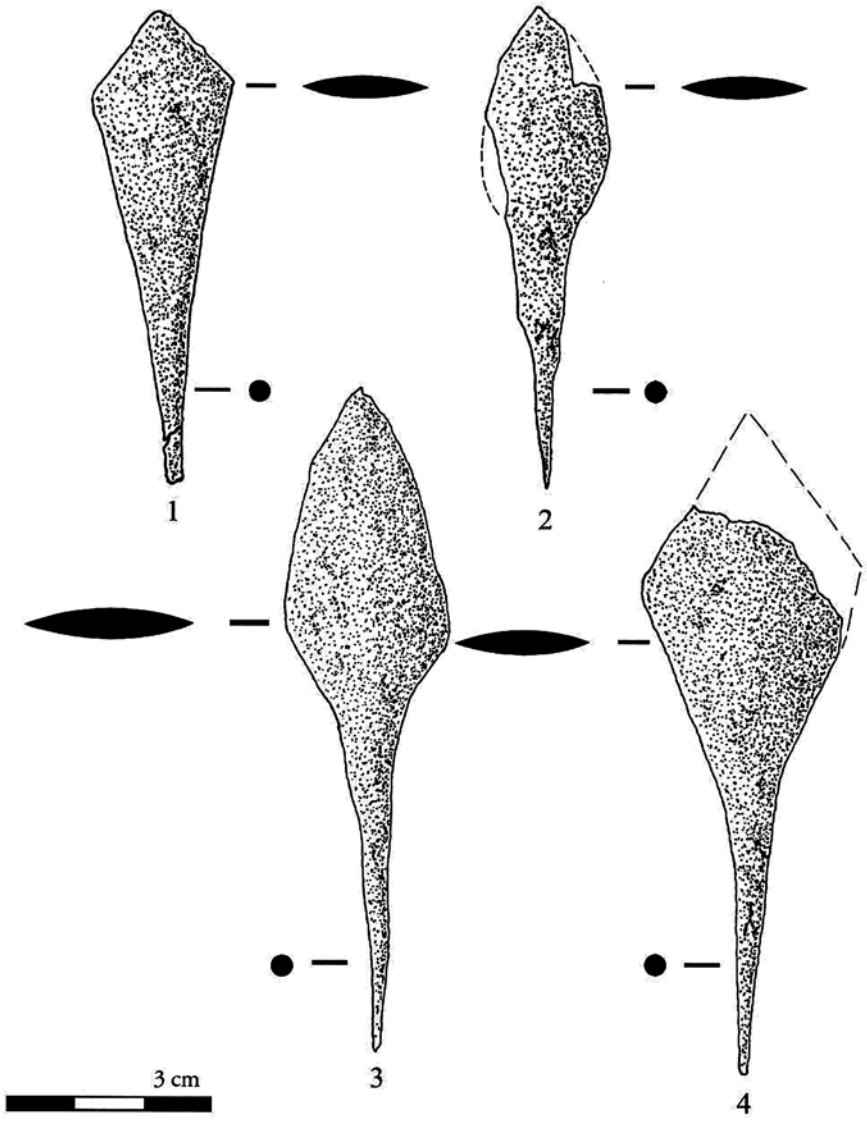

Figure 5: 1–4: Arrowheads from Grave 81 (Drawing: Pál Medgyesi)

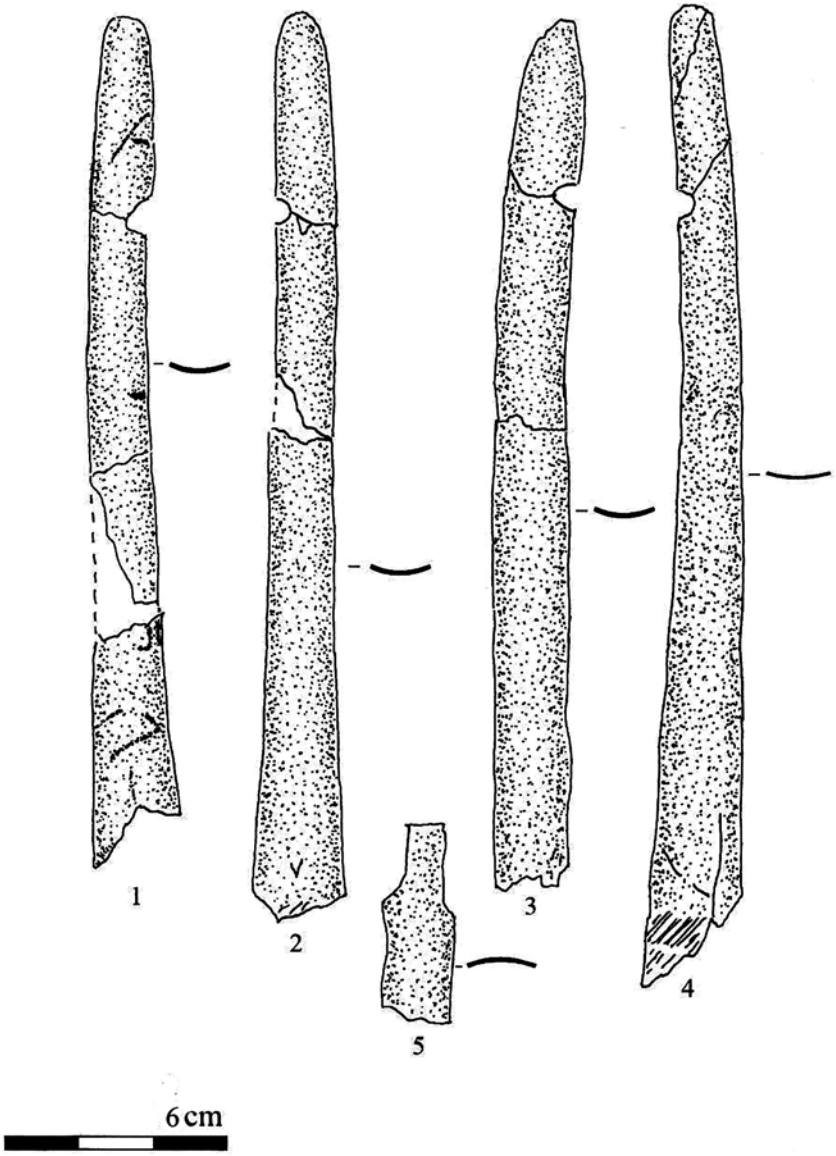

Figure 6: 1–4: Bow-end bones from Grave 81. 5: A piece of the bone cover of the bow handle (?). H: (Drawing: Pál Medgyesi)

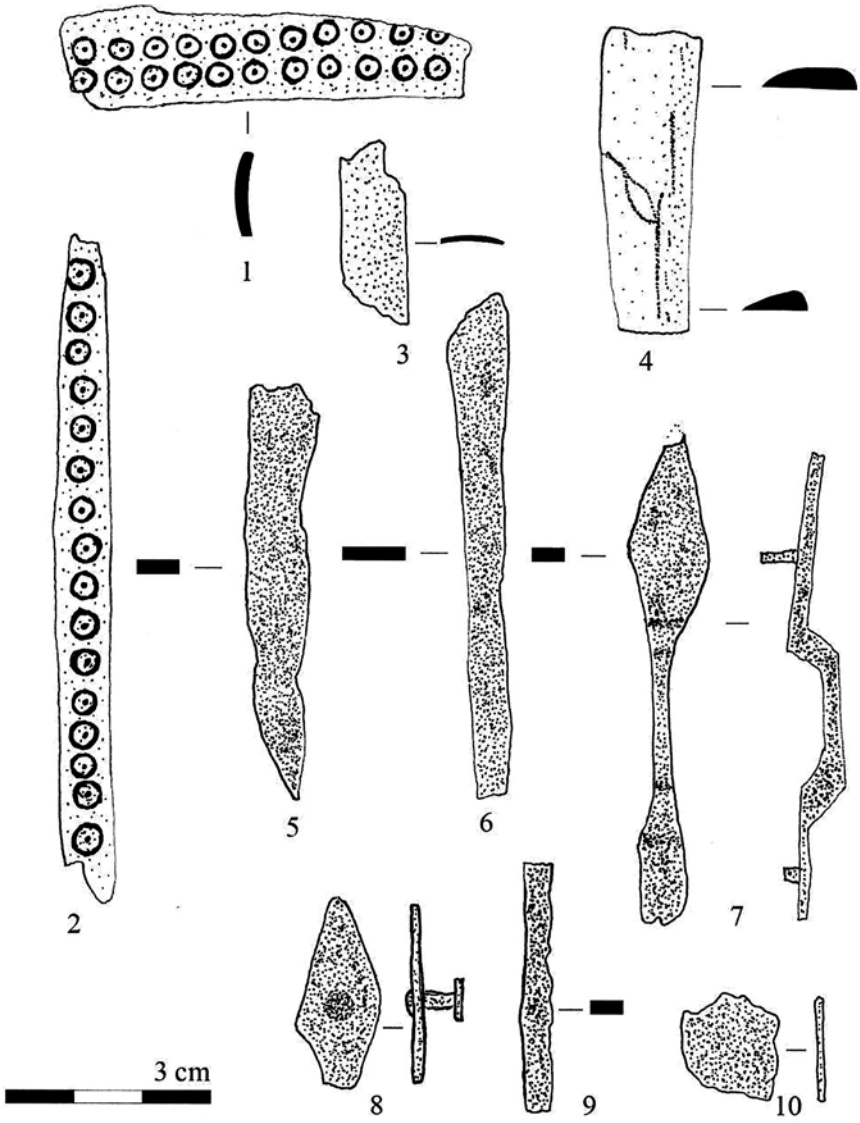

Figure 7: 1–3: Bone covers of the quiver lip. 4: Bone object. 5–6 and 8–10: Quiver ironwork. 7: Quiver tab (Drawing: Pál Medgyesi)

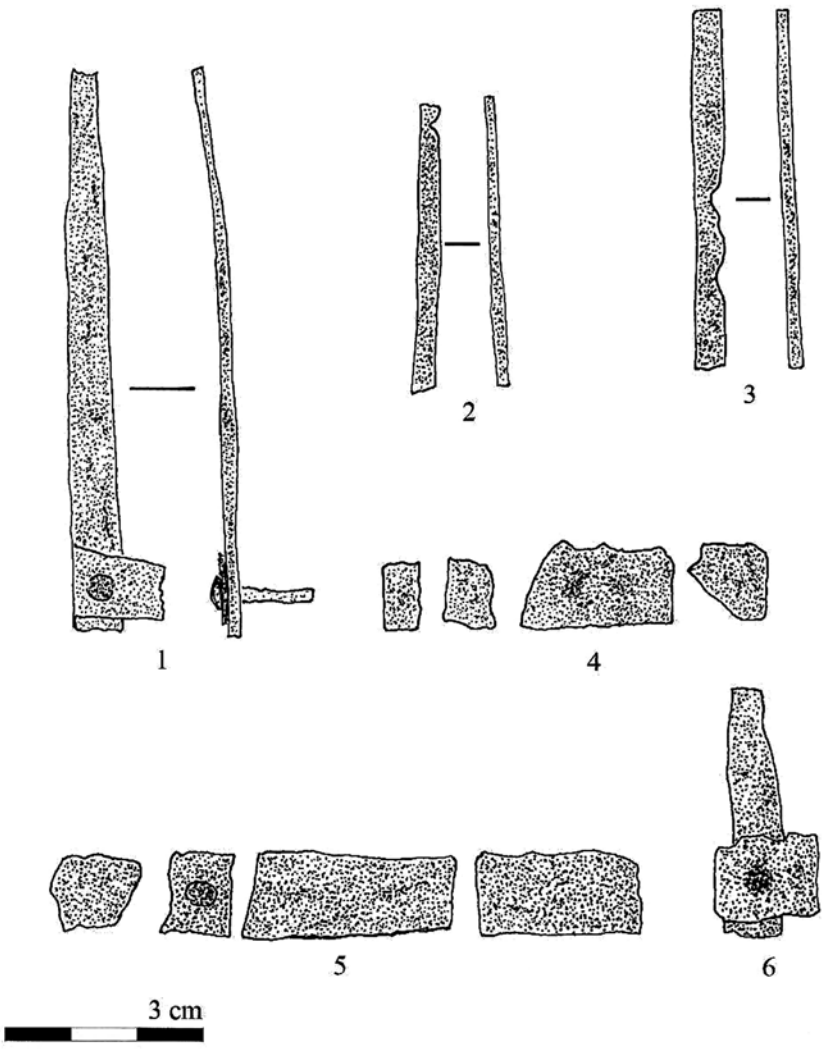

Figure 8: 1–6: Quiver ironwork (Drawing: Pál Medgyesi)

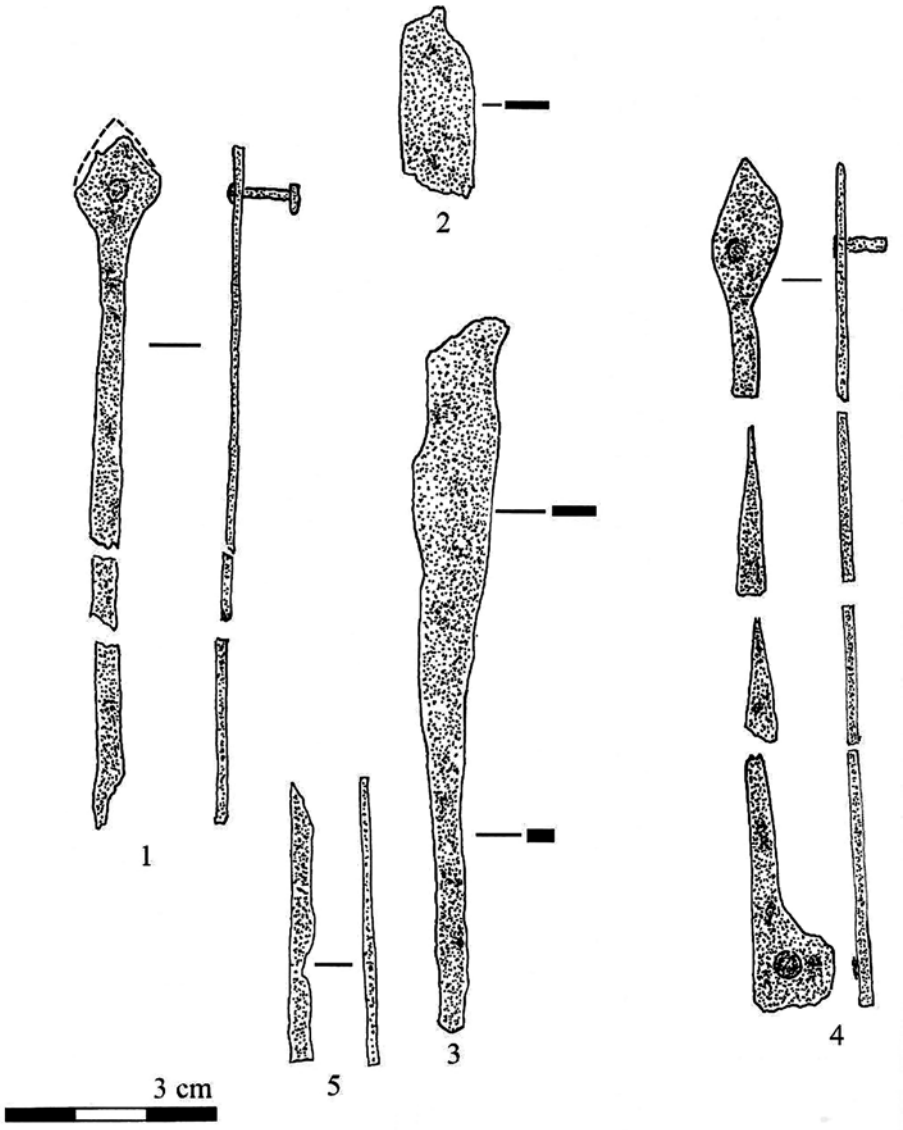

Figure 9: 1–5: Quiver ironwork (Drawing: Pál Medgyesi)

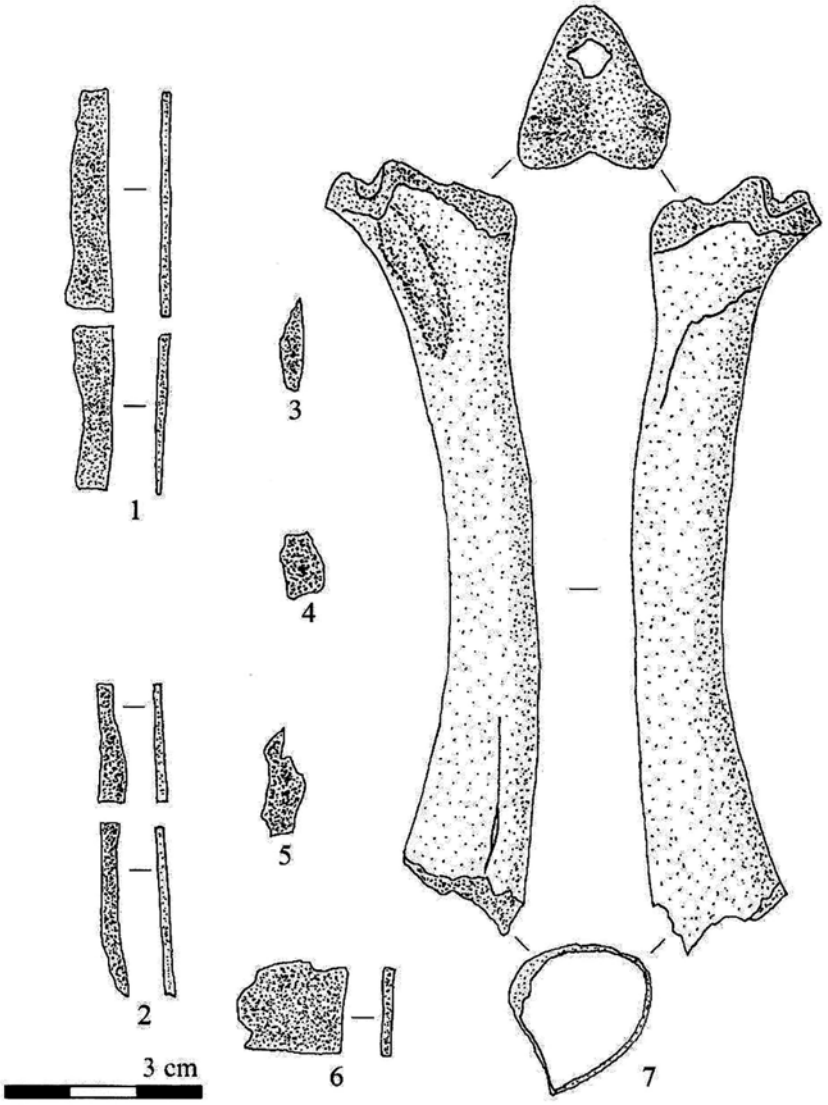

Figure 10: 1–6: Quiver ironwork. 7: Bone tool (Drawing: Pál Medgyesi)

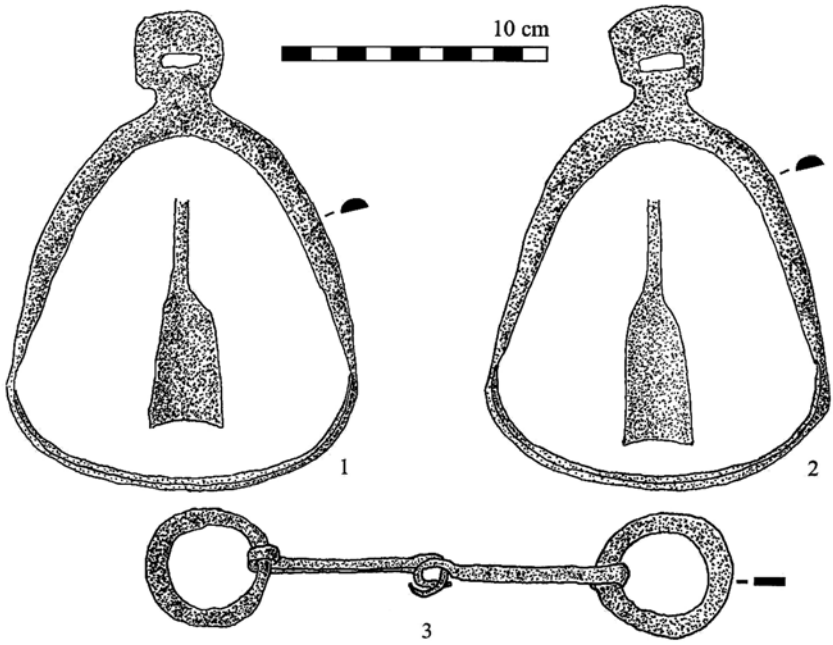

Figure 11: 1–2: Iron stirrups. 3: Iron bridle 4: Runiform sign on one of the bow bones (Drawing: Pál Medgyesi)

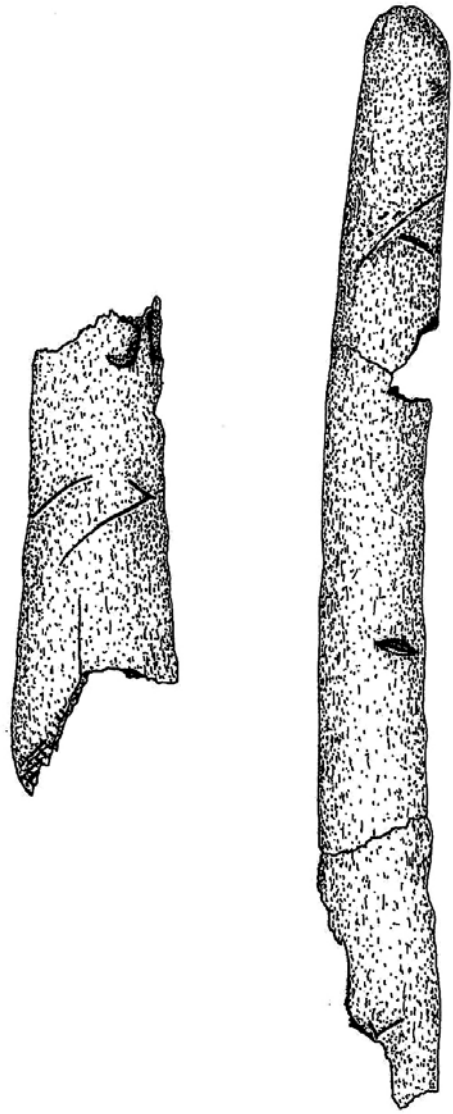

Figure 12: Drawing of the bow-end bone marked with runes (Drawing: Pál Medgyesi)

Figure 13: Photo of bow-end bone marked with runes, with runes highlighted (Photo: Klára Váncsa)

Figure 14: Upper end of bow-end bone (Photo: Klára Váncsa)

Figure 15: Engraving/rune at the upper end of bow-end bone (Photo: Klára Váncsa)

Figure 16: Runes at the lower end of bow-end bone (Photo: Klára Váncsa)

Figure 17: Runes at the lower part of bow-end bone (Photo: Klára Váncsa)

Figure 18: Runes at the lower part of bow-end bone (Photo: Klára Váncsa)

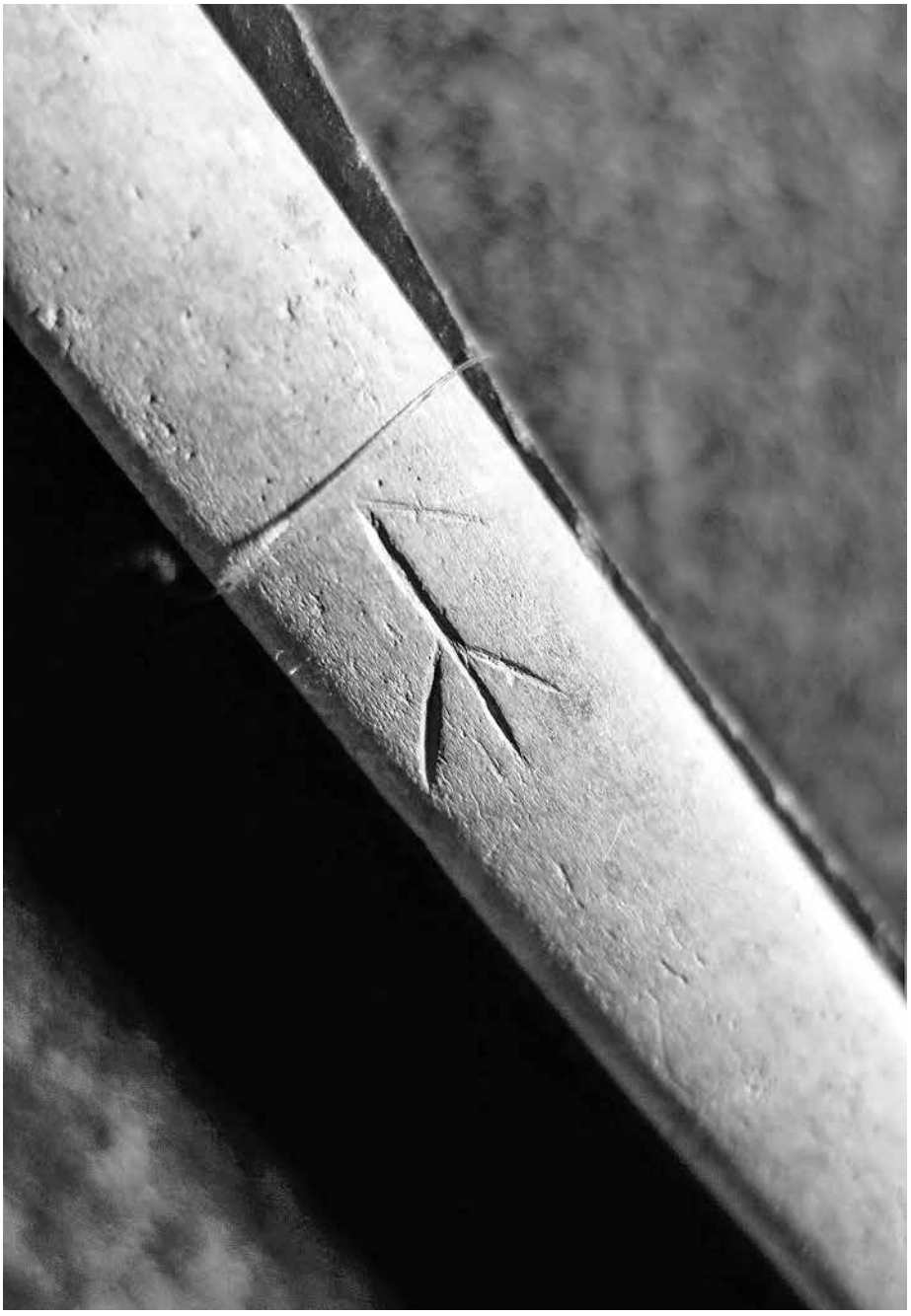

Figure 19: Tamgha/runiform letter from Békés-Povádzug (Photo: Pál Medgyesi)

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L = length
Inv. No. = inventory number
MMM = Mihály Munkácsy Museum
MMM RA = Mihály Munkácsy Museum, Archaeology Archives
W = width
Th = thickness

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POSSIBLE ANALOGIES OF THE WRITTEN STONES FROM THE TÁSZOK PEAK, IN PARTICULAR THOSE IN THE MOLDAVIAN AREAS

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ABSTRACT: The analogies of the written stones from the Tászok Peak can be found along the routes passing through the border areas of Transylvania and Moldavia, including the so-called Salt Road that connected the Salt Region (Sóvidék) in the district of Udvarhelyszék with the region of Moldvabánya (Baia) and the so-called Beszterce route connecting Beszterce (Bistrița) with Karácsonkő (Piatra Neamț). The third road connected Szászrégen (Reghin) with the region of Ditró (Ditrău), from whence the road lead through Pricske to Tölgyes (Tulgheș) and Moldova (Western Moldavia) and through the Tászok to Bélbor (Bilbor) and Bukovina. My observations suggest that the written stones found in the Szeklerland and the Moldavian areas are mainly connected to the Anjou-Era network of commercial roads used during the 14th–18th centuries between Transylvania and Moldova. The sites listed in this study are: Firtos (Firtușu) Peak, Szertő Peak, Bekecs (Bichiș) Peak, Kereszt (Crucii) Mountain, Salamás (Sărmaș) Creek, Tászok (Tasoc) Peak, Pricske (Prișca) Peak, Zsedán (Jedanu) Creek, Hajtó (Haita) Creek, Írottkő (Piatra Scrisă) Peak, Herla and

Radocsány (Rădăşeni). All of them can be associated with the commercial road network from the Middle Age and the Age of Principality, which partly remained in use until the 19th century.
KEYWORDS: written stones, road network, Tászok Peak, Szeklerland, Moldova

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In 2018, we conducted an archaeological assessment organised by the Márton Tarisznyás Museum of Gyergyószentmiklós (Gheorgheni, Romania) at the Tászok (Tasoc) Peak in the northern part of the Gyergyó (Giurgeu) Depression. Although the site had been known for about 105 years and officially registered as an archaeological site for roughly 20 years, thorough archaeological research had not been conducted until then. The study conducted by Iaşi professor Neculai Bolohan determined that the site dated mostly to the 18th–20th century, and was related mostly to the production of various natural resources requiring temporary presence.[1]

The Tászok Mountain is located in the Eastern Carpathians, in the Borszék (Borsec) Mountains that form the northern part of the Gyergyó Mountains. It is surrounded by the reservoir of the Maros (Mureş) River in the southwest and of the Szeret (Siret) River in the northeast. The Tászok Peak rises on the left side of county road J128 that leads to Borszék through the south-eastern branch of the mountains, the Halaság (Hălăşag) Valley, at a rough distance of 900–950 m from it. The archaeological site itself is at the boundary of the administrative areas of Ditró (Ditrău), Salamás (Sărmaş) and Borszék, and it lies roughly 15 km from Ditró, 30 km from Gyergyószentmiklós, and 10 km from Borszék.

The first to study the signs on the Tászok Peak stones was István Kovács (1880–1955), archaeologist of the Erdélyi Nemzeti Múzeum (Transylvanian National Museum), in August 1913, who also examined the two boulders that are currently in the Gyergyó Museum. Before they were brought to the museum in 1962 by

1 Bolohan & Puskás-Kolozsvári 2019.

Márton Tarisznyás, they had been lying in the courtyard of the Hodos (Hodoșa) primary school, abandoned there since WWII. The photos taken afterwards are still available in the local archives, but unfortunately no description made at that time survived. For the purposes of studying runiform script, the bigger one, numbered III by István Kovács, is worthy of our attention. The mentioned author states that its deep notches "especially can be seen as letters".[2]

At the site, we determined that the so-called written stones could be found almost exclusively along what István Kovács had described as the older carriage road of Borszék, on a route that can still be followed clearly. The stones studied in 1913 were lying along the two sides of this route.[3] The exceptions are the boundary stones we found in our research near the current administrative boundary of Ditró and Salamás – on one of them, we documented a property mark.[4] Otherwise, there is a clear connection between the written stones and the old boundary marks, especially in the places where boundaries of three towns met.[5]

We recorded the exact location of 14 stones, but it is very likely that there are more stones on this peak and its surroundings. On our summary map, we also indicated the probable locations of the eleven stones documented by István Kovács (Photo 1). We noticed that most stones were on the same line along a certain road that runs through the Tászok Peak, mostly along the administrative boundary of Salamás and Ditró. In the meantime, I ascertained that this road was not the same as the one indicated on the first military survey of Transylvania, the Josephine map made between 1769–1773.[6] Based on written data available to us, this cart road was actually made somewhat later, in 1782, because earlier than that the mineral water springs of Borszék could only be accessed by foot or on horseback.[7] On the aforementioned map, three watch houses (*Wacht*) were indicated around the Tászok Peak. These were clearly

2 Kovács 1914, p. 241.
3 Kovács 1914, pp. 233–234.
4 Bolohan & Puskás-Kolozsvári 2019, pp. 130–131, photo VI and pp. 157–158.
5 As for these, see: Takács 1987, pp. 16–19, 196–203; and Tóth 1996.
6 https://mapire.eu/hu/map/firstsurvey-transylvania/ (downloaded on 3 December 2019).
7 Endes 1938, p. 227.

related to the customs station in Pricske, to which they are connected via a forest road which was under military control.[8]

Antal Kémenes, who accompanied István Kovács to the Tászok Peak, mentioned two similar sites in the boundary region between Moldavia and Transylvania: on the side of the Tatár (Tătaru) Mountain, in the spring region of the Güdüc (Ghiduț) Creek, and at the boundary of Gyergyószentmiklós, at the spring of the Zsedán (Jidanul) Creek.[9] We can also see them well on the first military survey of Moldavia (1788–1790).[10] The Tászok Peak is near the Közrez Pass (Pasul Chiozrez), the spring region of the Güdüc Creek is close to the Pricske Peak, while the upper course of the Zsedán Creek is close to the Balázs (Balaj) Pass. So practically every site is connected to the border regions and roads that cross them.

According to the 1862 map of the Grand Principality of Transylvania, the most important transport route between Gyergyószék and the neighbouring regions of Moldavia ran near the Tászok Peak,[11] but prior to 1810 this still crossed the Pricske customs station. The Pricske customs station was first mentioned in 1607, but it was only in 1827 that it was moved permanently to Tölgyes (Tulgheș, Hargita County).[12] In 1760, a border dispute arose between Szárhegy (Lăzarea) and Gyergyó, following which boundary marks were placed, among others, in the spring region of the Güdüc Creek, using stones marked with the letters H and A (which signify: Határ Állás, i.e. the place of the border).[13] The road crossing the valley of the Zsedán Creek connected Békás (Bicaz) and Marpatak (Pârâul Mărului) and Tölgyes, which is to the north. In the old days, written stones were probably placed here, too, since this is a long-disputed border region between Moldavia and Szeklerland. Are they still there?

8 Bolohan & Puskás-Kolozsvári 2019, pp. 156–157.
9 Kémenes 1914, p. 117.
10 https://mapire.eu/hu/map/firstsurvey-moldva/ (downloaded on 3 December 2019).
11 Karte des Grossfürstentums Siebenbürgen, http://mek.niif.hu/05000/05055/html/ (downloaded on 3 December 2019) And: http://www.geo-spatial.org/download/karte-des-grossfuerstentums-siebenbuergen-harta-marelui-principat-al-transilvaniei (downloaded on 4 December 2019).
12 Demjén 2016, pp. 145–150.
13 Tarisznyás 1982, pp. 59–60.

Today, we find written stones in the Gyergyó Depression on the territories of Salamás and Remete (Remetea). The latter is now located in the courtyard of the Roman Catholic church, but it used to be along the road that crosses the Kereszt (Crucii) Mountain.[14] A similar written stone is located on the Szertő Peak,[15] near Felsősófalva (Ocna de Sus, Hargita County) and on the Bekecs Peak,[16] near Nyárádselye (Șilea Nirajului, Maros County). From what I observed, practically every such stone is located along roads that cross the passes. I will not present them in detail here, but for parallels with more accurate dates I must mention the stove tile found by archaeological excavation in the fill of the cellar of a 16th-century mansion in Székelykeresztúr (Cristuru Secuiesc, Hargita County) (Székelykeresztúr, Kriza János u. 23).[17] On the fragmented rectangular stove tile measuring 21.6 x 15.6 cm there are also a triangle, a pentagram, and a half-moon next to an "illegible" runiform script.[18] I should also mention the runes from the Firtos (Firtușu) Peak, found on a large boulder mostly covered by the ground, that have long been associated with the stones from the Tászok Peak.[19] On the same peak, there is a chapel made of stones on which there were stonemason marks cut evidently before the construction.[20] The chapel, which has a round-arched apse, was probably built in the 13th–14th century.[21] It seems it was only in the mid-15th century when a fort was built on the Firtos Mountain. Excavations made there returned ceramics and stove tiles suggesting a mansion, mostly from the 16th–17th century, that were added to the museum in Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc).[22]

Northwest from our area, in the southernmost part of Dornavátra (Vatra Dornei), in the reservoir of the Hajtó (Haita) Creek, a "megalith" marked

14 Lazarovici et al. 2011, pp. 59–60, photo 13.
15 Berta & Károly 2007.
16 Erdélyi & Ráduly 2010, p. 97.
17 Benkő & Székely 2008, p. 257.
18 An attempt at deciphering by János Ráduly: Ráduly 2011, pp. 32–34.
19 Ferenczi 1990, p. 18; Ferenczi 1997, p 17, Figure 10.
20 Ferenczi 1997, pp. 16–17, Figure 8–9.
21 Sófalvi 2017a, p. 131.
22 Sófalvi 2017a, pp. 132–133, photos 62–63.

with runes was discovered in 1987.[23] Its discovery site is called Gura Haitii – Valea Paltinu (Suceava County), where several written stones were found later. Although they were not published, based on photos available on the Internet[24] the marks on them are similar to those observed on the boulders from the Bekecs Peak and Tászok Peak. The discovery site of the boulders is close to the so-called Maria Theresa Road,[25] which was built between 1762–1786 to connect Transylvania and Bukovina.

To the south, in the Esztena-hegység (Munții Stânișoarei) there is the so-called Piatra Scrisă (Hungarian: Írott kő, English: Written Stone) Peak at 1150 m above sea level, northwest from the village of Cotârgași (Suceava County), close to the administrative boundary of Suceava and Neamț Counties. The marks on the large rock of 2.10 x 1.40 x 2.80 m[26] located here are also similar to those observed on the boulders on Tászok Peak. Its publisher, Dan Gh. Teodor, differentiated three types that consist of parallel lines (A), resemble runiform script (B), and use various (Cyrillic, Greek, and Latin) letters and Christian symbols (C).[27] Most of the signs he recorded probably date from the 14th–16th centuries, but he dated them, among others, by citing the parallels on the Tászok Peak, to the 9th–14th centuries.[28]

But one that is indeed probably earlier, from the 12th–13th century, is the runiform inscription consisting of seven signs found near Herla (Suceava County), on a stone of 0.60 x 0.28 m picked up from the bed of a periodic river.[29] In addition to the inscription of Turkic-looking letters, graphics of three weapons can be observed, too: bow and arrow, spear, and a slightly arched

23 Naum & Butnaru 1989, pp. 28–31.

24 http://heritage-ua-ro.org/ro/objects_view.php?id=SV184 (downloaded on 4 December 2019) And: https://rares19.wordpress.com/2010/07/05/mesaje-peste-milenii-i/ (downloaded on 5 December 2019).

25 Naum & Butnaru 1989, pp. 102–105.

26 Teodor 2003, pp. 789–793, photo 3–4. See also: https://sites.google.com/site/romanianatura66/home/carpatii-rasariteni/stanisoara/probabil-cea-mai-veche-scriere-din-lume-aflata-in-muntii-stanisoara-la-piatra-scrisa-a-fost-fragmentata-prin-dinamitare (downloaded on 21 November 2019).

27 Teodor 2003, p. 790, photo 5.

28 Teodor 2003, pp. 791–794.

29 Ursulescu 1991–92, pp. 81–83, photo 2–3.

sabre. Unfortunately, none of these can help us in the dating: only deciphering the inscription could give us some input for more accurate dating.

Much better known is the limestone axe of Radocsány (Rădășeni, Suceava County), a stray finding discovered at an ancient discovery site. The runiform script on it probably dates from the late 15th century, but Géza Ferenczi has doubts about its authenticity and believes it could be a forgery.[30]

Runes, in particular stonemason marks (*Steinmetzzeichen*) are also familiar from various Moldavian churches. Some of these were published as early as the late 19th century, for example the one on the church of Gura Humorului (Suceava County) built in the 15th century at the spring of the Hamar (Humor) Creek,[31] or those on the walls of the Suceavan churches of Saint George and Saint Demetrius (16th century).[32] The most recent inscription published is on the wall of a Franciscan monastery in Moldvabánya (Baia, Suceava County), and was dated to the first half of the 15th century.[33]

Displaying the aforementioned sites on a map, we can see that most of the written stones found in the Gyergyó Depression and around the Oriental Carpathians are on an imaginary axis pointing roughly in a SE-NW direction (Photo 2). Overlaying these points on the 1862 map of the Principality of Transylvania, it is rather obvious that they were probably closely related to the trade routes of the time (Photo 3). This reinforces our hypothesis that the so-called Salt Road was used as early as the late Árpád period,[34] connecting the Salt Region of Udvarhelyszék with the town of Moldvabánya (Stadt Mulda in German),[35] which was established by German settlers in the 13th century. A barbed arrowhead found at the boundary of Gyergyóalfalu (Joseni, Romania) provides archaeological evidence of the use of the route in the 13th–14th century.[36] Another object dating from the same period is a broadsword, a stray

30 Csallány 1960, pp. 109–110, photo 56; Ferenczi 1997, p. 23, footnote 93.
31 Romstorfer 1893, p. 68.
32 Romstorfer 1895, p. 143.
33 Ráduly 2006, pp. 146–147, Figure 1; Tánczos 2006, pp. 150–151, photo 1; Ráduly 2007.
34 Sófalvi 2016, pp. 296–267.
35 Iorga 1925, p. 78.
36 Sófalvi 2017a, pp. 57–58.

find near the road that leads from the Pricske customs station to the Tatárhavas (Tătaru) Pass.[37]

Another remarkable route of that time in the area I studied is the so-called Beszterce Road, the trade route that connected Karácsonkő (Piatra lui Crăciun, today: Piatra Neamț, Neamț County) through Tölgyes (Tulgheș) with Beszterce (Bistrița, Bistrița-Năsăud County), known by that name as early as the 14th century.[38] This road led south from Tölgyes along the Balázs Creek, which falls into the Putna Creek, through the Balázs Pass and the Zsedán Creek valley, to Békás, from where one could easily reach Karácsonkő. Its northern part led along the Kis-Beszterce to Bélbor (Bilbor), then followed the valley of Hajtó Creek, to reach the Beszterce region, but it is rather difficult to identify the exact route today.

The significance of these two medieval roads is explained by the trade relations established in the Anjou period. In 1335, the Congress of Kings in Visegrád agreed on setting up new trade routes to Bohemia and Poland. So in my opinion the written stones mentioned and other runiform mementos are probably related to the trade route network that connected Transylvania and Moldavia and was used in the 14th–18th centuries. In the territory I studied, in the north-eastern part of Transylvania, starting from 1368 it was controlled by Beszterce. Its main element was the Lemberg–Cetatea Albă (lit. "White Citadel", today: Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi, Ukraine)–Kaffa. In fact, the Transylvanian and Moldavian trade routes led to this. During the reign of King Louis I (the Great) (1342–1382), the port cities on the northern side of the Black Sea, such as Chilia at the influx of the northern arm of the Danube Delta, or Cetatea Albă on the right side of the Dniester delta, were actively connected to trade in Central Europe. This allowed "overseas" goods to reach Hungary and Poland by land.[39]

In the south-eastern part of Transylvania, the royal city of Brassó (Brașov, Romania) acquired a monopoly for trade in the direction of the Black Sea in 1358. This monopoly covered the region between the valleys of the rivers Bodza

37 Tarisznyás 1982, p. 187; Demjén 2016, p. 135.
38 Poncea 1999, pp. 162–163; Manolescu 1966, pp. 67–70.
39 Iorga 1925, pp. 43–48; Gorovei & Székely 2005, p. 38, footnote 28.

(Buzău) and Prahova.[40] This explains the rock art and runes noted in the region of Bodzaforduló (Întorsura Buzăului, Romania),[41] including the signs of the so-called Cave with Inscriptions found nearby Nucu (Buzău County). This area pertained to Szekler County of Wallachia which existed until 1845 and was also established during the Anjou period. The trade corridor emerging at that time was controlled by the city of Brassó.[42] Similar cave churches are found in Moldavian territories. However, due to multiple conversions and extensions, only the one in Őrhely (Orheiul Vechi, Moldova) can be dated; one of its inscriptions notes the year 1665.[43]

In 1469, in the north-western part of Moldova, the construction of the Putna monastery started during the reign of Ștefan cel Mare (1457–1504). Thanks to imperial support, it soon became an economic and cultural centre of the area. In this context, it might be relevant that in 1473 this emperor signed an agreement with King Mátyás which provided for mutual exemption from duty for Moldavian and Transylvanian traders.[44] In my opinion this explains the name "Putnaloka" mentioned in written sources in connection with the road that crossed Pricske in Gyergyószék, which is the same as Hágótőalja pertaining to Gyergyószentmiklós, based on Frigyes Pesty's compilation of toponyms.[45] According to Pál Binder, the Slavic word "put" in the name Putna means path.[46] Without doubt this route only permitted travel by foot or horse. But another argument to support this could be the fact that the road section crossing the Görgényi (Gurghiu) Plateau reaches the Gyergyó Depression via a ridge known as the Putna Pass.

There is no doubt today that in the Szeklerland, most of the earliest Szekler written records starting the 13th–14th century are from Udvarhelyszék.[47]

40 Sófalvi 2017, p. 61.
41 Lazarovici et al. 2011, pp. 71–72, 75.
42 Sófalvi 2017, p. 62.
43 Ghimpu 2000, pp. 133, 192.
44 Gorovei & Székely 2005, pp. 75–76, 84.
45 Csáki & Pál-Antal 2013, pp. 107–108.
46 Binder 1992, p. 106.
47 Benkő 2016, pp. 480–485.

Curiously, most of them are also related to churches, as in the case of the Moldavian regions. Otherwise, the early Moldavian churches are closely related to Transylvania, such as the one in Orheiu castle, or the fort chapel Soroca (Moldova) on the right side of the Dniester. The latter was built by masters from Beszterce.[48]

I should add that, to my current knowledge, Ditró (Ditrău, Harghita County) emerged in the early 15th century. Its German name Dittrichderf, "Dittrich's village" is probably a tribute to the first settler.[49] In any case, it is certain that starting from the first third of the 15th century Szászrégen (Reghin, Mureș County) was connected to trade with Moldavia and Poland. The Szászrégen road to the Moldavian border and Polish regions led through the Ditró region. Its significance was probably attributed to the fact that from there, through the Tatár Pass, one could reach Tölgyes, and via the Tászok Peak and Bélbor (Bilbor, Harghita County), Drăgoiasa in Suceava County,[50] but even the Borgó Pass (Pasul Tihuța), which connected Beszterce and Suceava. For a long time this Bélbor footpath was the shortest way to Moldavia and Bukovina.[51] Somewhere in the second half of the 16th century, the Remete settlement was established, opposite Ditró, on the other side of the Maros river. The older road was the one through Kereszthegy, which ran through Laposnya (Lăpușna) and the valley of the Görgény Creek, to Szászrégen.[52] This road appears on the first military survey of Transylvania,[53] which means it was still significant at the end of the 18th century.

From the early 17th century, Szentmiklós, one of the earliest settlements in the Gyergyószék region, became increasingly significant. Its geographical location made it easier for Szentmiklós to acquire market-town status, since it lies at the intersection of the main road connecting Gyergyószék to Csíkszék and the Salt Road crossing the Görgényi Mountains, which also included

48 Ghimpu 2000, pp. 95–96, 191–192.
49 Vámszer 2000, p. 143.
50 Orbán 1869 II, p. 141.
51 Benkő 1853 III, p. 156.
52 Vámszer 2000, p. 148.
53 https://mapire.eu/hu/map/firstsurvey-transylvania/ (downloaded on 6 December 2019).

the Pricske customs station.[54] As we can see on the first military survey of Transylvania, the road forked in three directions at the Pricske customs station, on Tatármező: to the south-east, it ran through the Lapos Mountain to reach Békás and Karácsonkő. To the north-east, it led through Tölgyes to Németvásár (Târgu Neamț) and Baia. The third branch to the north-west led to the Közrez Peak, from where one could easily access Borszék, Bélbor, Dornavátra and Beszterce.

The written stones presented in this paper are rather obviously connected to the Transylvanian trade route network in the Middle Ages and during the Principality, which was probably established in the Anjou period and was used more or less until the 19th century. At the same time, I must emphasise that we should not disregard a connection with the boundary marks of the time, since the two are complementary and not exclusive. In my opinion, a similar phenomenon can be observed today at the boundaries of towns, in the case of town name signs placed along the roads crossing them.

54 Demjén 2016, pp. 15–16.

PHOTOS

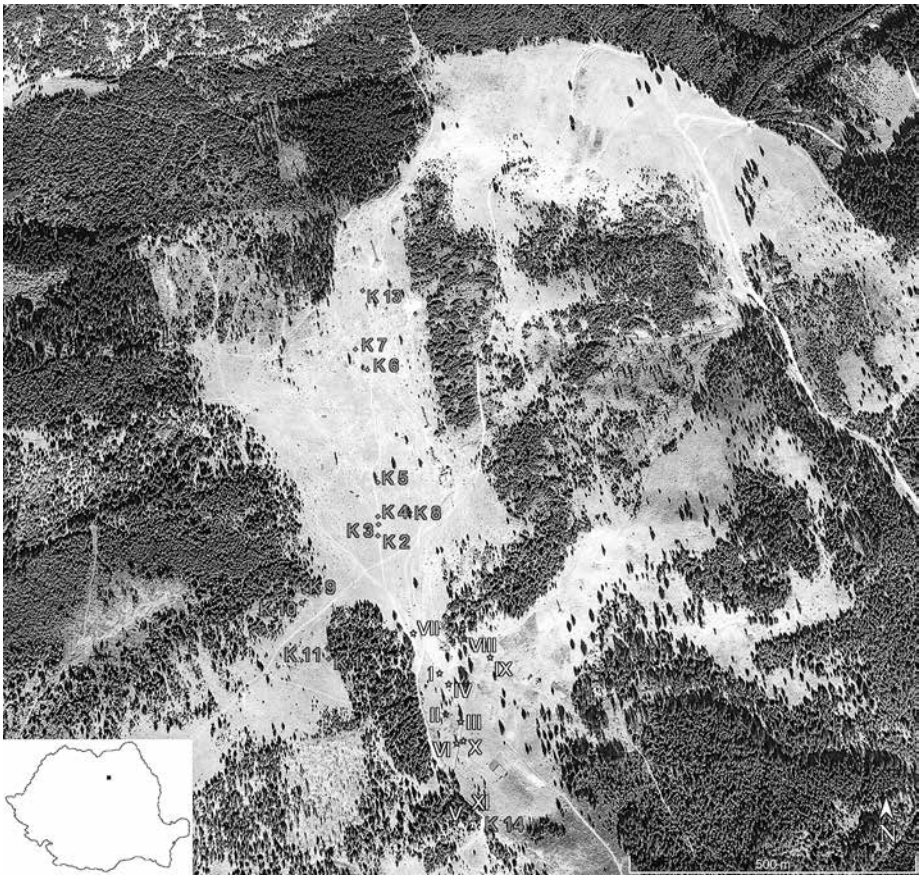

Photo 1: Written stones identified in 2018 on the Tászok Peak (K1–14, in red, source: Google Earth) and those found in 1913 (I–XI, in blue, source: Kovács 1914, Figure 2).

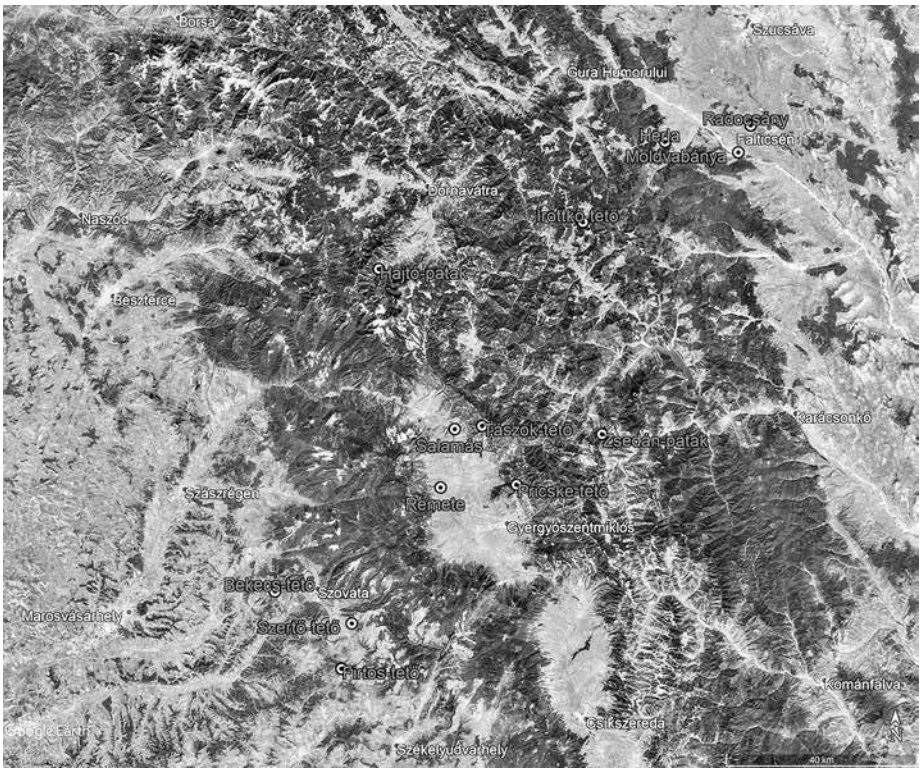

Photo 2: Locations with known written stones mentioned in this paper (source: Google Earth).

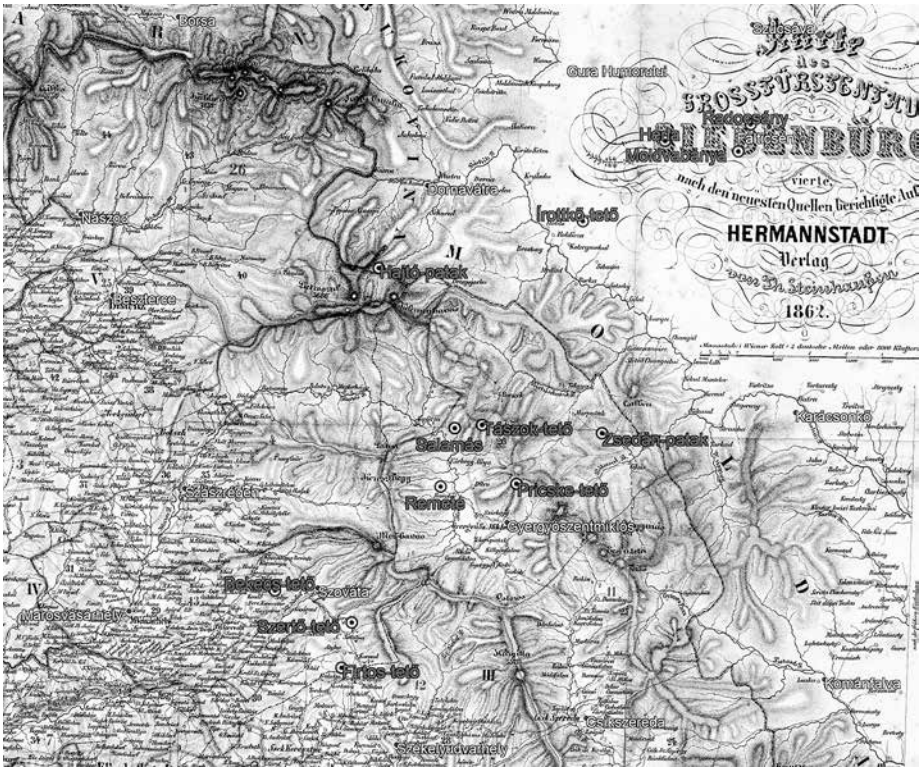

Photo 3: Discovery sites of the written stones overlaid on the 1862 map of the Principality of Transylvania (source: http://www.geo-spatial.org)

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VARIATIONS ON CONTINUITY IN LIGHT OF THE GRAPHEMES OF REGÖLY

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ABSTRACT: When examining continuity in the Carpathian Basin, it is particularly justified to highlight the line of the Iranian ethnic groups, especially as the names of Hungary's largest rivers may be attributed to them; we can follow the continuity of some of the geographical names from the Iron Age. Continuity prevailed not so much in the territorial or ethnic sense, but mainly through the presence of common traditions, ethnic bases or elements of civilisation, i.e. in the frames of cultural continuity. In the background, there are peoples with Iranian roots coming from virtually the same cultural sphere – mostly from similar ethnic groups which were not necessarily genetically related – breaking away in recurring waves and settling in the Carpathian Basin and in other parts of Europe at various times. The results of modern genetic, linguistic and other analyses are frequently conflicted due to the traditional approach built on local ethnic continuity and to the continuous cultural and often ethnic over-layering. It will be possible to interpret these analyses more accurately, adjusted to their higher resolution of information, if we take into consideration that the survival of the same ethnicity is not absolutely necessary in a specific territory for the continuous presence of certain cultural elements and if we also take account of the new waves of settlers coming from the same culture.

KEYWORDS: Pannons, graphemes, cultural continuity, Iranian effects, Rovash[1] scripts

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Until the last few years, writing in the Carpathian Basin was generally believed to have started in the Roman Age when the provinces were organised. Other than a few stray and uncertain traces, no authentic data on the Pannonian indigenous population were known to researchers. In addition to the numerous script fragments believed to be forgeries, Bence Fehér assumes that a few Pannonian word fragments surviving on an Azalus inscription dated to the late 1st century in Latin script are indeed related to the indigenous population.[2] Pot fragments with runiform script with clear links to the Pannonians were only discovered authentically in archaeological excavations a few years ago.

In 2011–2012, in an excavation of a tumulus dated to the last third of the 7th century BC on the Regöly, Strupka-Magyar estate, we found many customs and object types that were unknown before in the Carpathian Basin.[3] In addition to Etruscan and Hallstatt parallels, the complex connections between archaeological phenomena and finds pointed much more strongly to the southern branch of Cimmerians that set out from Middle Asia and crossed the Caucasus Mountains in the 8th century, to visit the regions of Urartu and Phrygia, which were under Median control. It was this detail that drew our attention to the fact that the settlement area of the Sigynnae – who declared themselves to be of Median origin and were mentioned by Herodotus – in the Tisza-Maros spring region[4] was in fact, according to the source, beyond the Danube in its southern part that reached the Venetics.[5] This is the area

1 The Hungarian word for runiform script.
2 Fehér 2019, p. 5.
3 The excavation was led by Géza Szabó, assisted by Mária Fekete; the finds are kept in the Wosinsky Mór Museum of Szekszárd. Szabó & Fekete 2011; 2014.
4 Trogmayer 1983.
5 Herodotus V.9: "… I can learn of no men dwelling beyond the Ister save certain that are called Sigynnae and wear Median dress. Their horses are said to be covered all over with

where the Regöly site is located and where later Roman sources mentioned the Pannonians as the indigenous population before the Celts. In several cases, we noticed notch marks on the ceramic fragments discovered. The form of some of these suggested they might be graphemes. One of the pieces we examined is a 3.5x4 cm fragment of the shoulder of a thin-walled pot decorated with a groove and a smoothed grid underneath, enamelled on the outside and burnt to a dark grey colour at a relatively low temperature (Photo 1). A sign consisting of three lines, engraved subsequently with a sharp tool, can be seen on it (inventory number: 2014.3.11.7.). Another find that is relevant to our topic is a 6x7 cm partially incomplete fragment of the bottom a small, well-burnt dark grey bowl of very fine silt, with an omphalos base and thin wall, polished with graphite glaze on the outside, the inside and its base – probably a phiale – and glued together from several pieces (Photo 2). The bottom was shaped in a way that the inner side of the 3.5cm diameter and 8mm deep omphalos is round, but on its outer side it resembles a curved rectangle. A sign consisting of three lines, engraved subsequently with a sharp tool, can be seen on the bottom of the pot (inventory number: 2014.3.13.107.). Our third object is a 2.5x4cm fragment of the bottom of a bowl of a very fine silt and is extremely thin, with a wall of only 2mm in some parts, polished with black graphite on the inside and brown on the outside with graphite granules and enamelled on both sides and on the bottom, probably a phiale (Photo 3). A sign consisting of three lines, engraved subsequently with a sharp tool, can be seen on the bottom of the pot. In two cases, the line is not perfectly straight and there is a minor deviation of the line (inventory number: 2014.3.20.236.).

Under the microscope, we can see clearly how the bottom of the lines' groove is uneven: it is made of alternating sections of roughly half a centimetre which are deeper on one end and shallower on the other. Where the sections meet, often smaller breaks can be seen in the side walls. To experiment, we

shaggy hair five fingers' breadth long, and to be small, blunt-nosed, and unable to bear men on their backs, but very swift when yoked to chariots. It is for this reason that driving chariots is the usage of the country. These men's borders, it is said, reach almost as far as the Eneti on the Adriatic Sea. They call themselves colonists from Media …"

drew lines with the tip of a knife on ceramic fragments. We found that holding the tool continuously on the ceramic fragment, we managed to draw the lines if we pressed stronger at every half-centimetre. A check under the microscope confirmed that the deeper parts were where the sections started, often accompanied by breaks, then the line's groove was shallower. Based on our observations, one can determine the direction of the engraving of the lines even on archaeological findings. In the case of the Regöly finds, there is no suspicion of forgery. For the sake of testing, we compared the excavated items and the experimental pieces. Based on observations under the microscope, the old and the recent engravings could easily be distinguished.

At our request, Gábor Hosszú analysed the finds. He believes there could be signs of letters among the engravings of the pot fragments from Regöly, but unfortunately nothing more could be determined about them because they are fragmented, and the phonemes corresponding to the graphemes are unknown. The parallel of the sign found on the grooved shoulder fragment (find No. 2014.3.11.7) and the formal parallels of the sign seen on the other finds (Nos. 2014.3.13.107 and 2014.3.20.236) are presented in Table 1. The parallel of the shoulder fragment sign is Cypriote-Greek (Paphos), while the shapes similar to the other two signs have parallels among Latin (epigraphic cursive), Lepontic, Gallic-Etruscan, Camuni, Carian, Lycian, ancient Greek, Lydian, SE Iberian, NE Iberian, Phoenician, ancient Aramaic, official Aramaic, Cypriote-Greek (early) and Celtiberian scripts. Analysing the notches from Regöly and similar, roughly contemporaneous ones found in Velem-Szentvid, Gábor Hosszú concluded that if an Italian import of these objects can be ruled out, then their makers knew a script that had the same origin as the Italian.[6] In the case of the finds in Velem-Szentvid along the Amber Road, a great deal of archaeological evidence points to strong, direct relations with Italy, but the same does not apply to the material found in Regöly where similarities are rather indirect and based on shared preliminaries.[7] For these purposes as well, it is very important

6 I express my gratitude to Gábor Hosszú for his definition and continuous support and advice as a colleague.

7 Fekete & Szabó 2015.

that the possible parallels of the graphemes studied point both to Italy and Asia Minor.

We found parallels for the set finds discovered in the mound exposed on the Regöly, Strupka-Magyar estate in 2011–2012 and dated to the last third of the 7th century BC mostly in areas where the Cimmerians were present (Photo 4). According to our information based on historical knowledge, one branch of the Cimmerians transited the Caucasus Mountains around 720 BC, invaded Urartu, and destroyed the country's northern and western parts. According to the testimony of specific finds that cover Europe's eastern and central regions, they were probably among the first intermediaries, besides the Greeks, of objects and cultures of the ancient East.[8]

The outer part of the Regöly mound was built of tamped clay, a practice previously unknown in Europe. Explorers of the field of graves at the ancient Phrygian capital Gordion noticed that the wooden-stone sepulchral chamber was not surrounded by soil, but a very hard layer of clay.[9] In Regöly, the tamped clay layers of the mound were observed up to the height of the sepulchral chamber. Interestingly, similarly to the MM mound, the inner walls of the sepulchral edifice consisted of rectangular beams bolted together.[10] In the roughly 13x13m central part of the Regöly mound, six lines each of nine columns, that is a total of 54 columns supported the roof. Parallels of this are noticed in the ancient East, in the flat-roof peristyle constructions in Altintepe, Persepolis, Godin Tepe, Hasanlu and Nush-i Jan.[11] Parallels and origins of many object types among the finds discovered in the Transdanubian region also point to Asia Minor. Among these, it was rather characteristic of the period and easy to see the use of the bronze bucket, the cist (Photo 5). The main characteristic of the cists discovered among the Regöly and the nearby Kurd treasures, the wall ribs running around, but also the pot type and its manufacturing technology were unknown and unprecedented in Europe in the early Iron Age. These

8 Бруяко 2005; Harmatta 1966; Ivantchik 1999; 2001.
9 Young 1981, pp. 2–4, 84, 191.
10 Young 1981, pp. 81, 88.
11 Stronach 1985; Stronach & Roaf 1978; Tourovets 2014, Fig. 2–4; Curtis 2014.

bronze buckets made with a special technology and the kettles assembled from serially manufactured parts with a double-cross suspension tab closely connected to them[12] were found at sites of the Hallstatt D period in Hungary[13] (Vaskeresztes, Debrecen) Italy[14] (Bologna-Arnoaldi, Central and Northern Italian finds), Austria[15] (Hallstatt Graves 574, 660, 769), the Czech Republic[16] (Býčí Skála), Poland[17] (Bobrowice, Kluczewo, Przedmiescie, Woskowice Male) and Slovenia[18] (Sveta Lucija / Most na Soci, Novo mesto Kandija-Nekropole, Novo mesto Malensek-Tumulus, Smarjeta, Dolenjske Toplice, Vace, Bohinj, Bitnje).[19]

For the complex connections of the Regöly finds, it is particularly important that illustrations of cylindrical-shaped bronze buckets were present in many forms as early as the 9th century BC in the ancient East, and have been widely used in Asia Minor from the Bronze Age to this day.[20] The reliefs of the feast held in 879 BC to inaugurate the Kalhu palace show how servants served to the guests drinks from the mixing bowl using small lion head buckets.[21] These buckets, often made of gold or silver with a lion, deer or buck head at their ends, were present in graves and treasure finds in Iranian regions (Photo 6) just as in the Gordion MM mound.[22] The buckets of Gordion also had ribs running around on the sides.[23] On the helmet of Sarduri I (760–743 BC) kept in the Hermitage, a specific sacral representation can be seen: the angel-winged priests gather the fruit of the tree of life in the cists they hold in their hands; they

12 Wosinsky 1885; 1896, pp. 519–533; Patay 1990, pp. 126–127.
13 Gozzadini 1887; Stjernquist 1967, II. Karte 1.
14 Prüssing 1991, pp. 325–327.
15 Parzinger et al. 1995, pp. 337–338.
16 Gedl 2001, Taf. 24–25, pp. 30–32.
17 Jereb 2016, pp. 180–200. Slovenia returned a surprising number of 21 cists in this region which according to Herodotus was populated by the Venetics.
18 Szabó 2009; Szabó & Fekete 2011, p. 39, Table 5; Prüssing 1991, pp. 69, 72; Parzinger et al. 1995, T. 39.
19 Gyöngyösi et al. 2019.
20 Bilgi 2004, pp. 86, 103; Özdem 2003, pp. 276–279.
21 Raczky et al. 2013, p. 30, photos 10–11; Botta & Flandin 1849, I. p. 76.
22 Bilgi 2004, pp. 110–111.
23 Young 1981, pp. 62–63; Szabó 2013, Fig. 12.

might be picking the cone-line fruit of the plant used for the ritual yellowish soma drink cooked in kettles. Similar scenes can be seen on many reliefs of the Kalhu palace. The fixed-structure ritualistic representations draw attention to the fact that their use is always based on a complete set of customs, lifestyle and worldview.[24] The closest parallel of the Regöly finds are the cylindrical cists with ribbed walls. Their importance and widespread use in the ancient East are shown by their presence even on reliefs in the Apadana of Persepolis. It is obvious in the audience scene that the people standing being King Darius are holding ribbed-walled buckets in their hands (Photo 7). The form is completely identical to that of the finds in Regöly and, as already mentioned, in Kurd, Vaskeresztes, Slovenia, Hallstatt, Býčí Skála, Poland, Bologna, etc.[25] The special form of the cists, the appearance and spread of the related customs and rituals in a relatively short timeframe in European areas suggest a close and direct ethnic connection with the ancient East that points well beyond trade. Based on this data, we concluded that in Regöly they buried one of the tribal leaders of the people known in ancient sources as the Sigynnae, the indigenous Pannonian population during the Roman Age. The new eating and drinking customs, the burial and construction traditions observed in the explored tumulus point to a cultural background unknown until now in the Carpathian Basin, that may have links to early Iranian people and the Mazda religion.[26] The signs with inscriptions in Regöly and their ties can be understood and assessed precisely on this historical and cultural background. The observations made in the Regöly excavations, the archaeological phenomena and objects together attest to a process that was well known along the coasts in Greek colonisation, but a parallel to this occurring inland was almost entirely unknown.[27] However, in the light of more recent data, we can and must reckon with the appearance of literacy even in our area, no later than from the last third of the 7th century BC, including everything it entails.

24 Fekete 2018.
25 Fekete & Szabó 2017a, Abb. 8.
26 Fekete & Szabó 2015.
27 Kimmig 1983; Szabó & Fekete 2011.

The historical background which can be sketched on the basis of the archaeological phenomena, observations and the finds of the Regöly excavation, and which is supported by scientific tests, also shed new light on a significant part of the remnants of early European scripts. Much more frequently than with Hungarian finds, the cists presumably manufactured in a Slovenian centre and the situlae discovered in cemeteries there have graphemes on them, and even larger or smaller inscriptions, such as the vessel found in Storcjan.[28] Gábor Hosszú believes that based on the signs the inscription is related to the Venetic and Raetic scripts. Of the Italian scripts, Venetic, its descendant Raetic, and the Leponti (near Lugano) are directly related and closely connected to Etruscan. The Etruscan script, however, is related to Lemnian, Lydian and Phrygian, but it is not clear how. Some believe the ancient Greek script emerged in Southern Anatolia, perhaps in the region of Cilicia. Anatolian alphabetic scripts (Carian, Lycian, Lydian, Phrygian) probably originated there, indirectly via ancient Greek intermediation or perhaps partially even directly.[29] The relationship of the scripts mentioned acquires a whole new meaning in the light of the connections and historical background we can draw based on the parallels of the Regöly finds, and allows for seeing a much more logical system of relations between them than previously. This becomes particularly important for assessing remnants of early scripts in the Carpathian Basin, including in the case of Pannonian word fragments in the Azalus inscriptions we have mentioned. For example, János Harmatta believes the Lepontic-style inscription engraved on a pot found in Tokod in an Azalus context is authentic,[30] while based on András Mócsy's opinion[31] most archaeologists believe it to be a forgery. Indeed, it is difficult to take any position without detailed analyses of provenance, but we must note that precisely András Mócsy's arguments pointing to an extremely careful and deliberate forgery[32] are the ones that give food for thought in the light of the historical background of the Pannonian finds in Regöly; the notches

28 Jereb 2016, p. 57, T. 103.
29 Hosszú 2017, pp. 227, 231.
30 Harmatta 1974.
31 Mócsy 1976.
32 Mócsy 1976, p. 102.

must be re-examined with equipment. Interestingly, it is easier to assess the notch marks noticed among Scythian finds in the Great Plain, collected by Bence Fehér, than the Transdanubian material. He noticed that a smaller part of the objects had groups of signs of 3–4 elements. He assumes they could be text which is impossible to decipher due to the scarcity of data. However, most signs are single-element marks engraved subsequently under the handle of the pot; the author understands these as symbols that could refer to the pot's serial number within a set or its content.[33] Although analysing the finds in the Great Plain he rules out the tamgha of nomadic cultures as a possibility, we must note that similar signs in the materials of the steppe are often believed to be tamgha.[34]

Ruling out the possibility of import from Italy, as mentioned before, the inscription finds of Regöly with their Asia Minor background also reveal how some phenomena that could not be connected earlier due to lack of data, despite the signs of kinship, could still have connections or kinship to scripts that originate in the same source as the Italian one and the proto-cuneiform script reconstructed so far. There may be a historical background which cannot be understood in most of the current, basically linear historical models. It is not without reason that Gábor Hosszú analysed the evolution of graphemes using computer-aided palaeography, one of the branches of applied information technology, and seeing the 3D development model appearing, he only commented discreetly: the historical background is sometimes incomplete.[35] However, the possible connections that present themselves regarding the Regöly finds, also possibly associated with the Cimmerian movements in the Gordion region, and particularly the graphemes, cover exactly the areas that the computer, based on the plain input data, identified as being close to the Phrygian script, regardless of historical situation and geographical location. Otherwise, this also has a surprising significance that points in an entirely

33 Fehér 2019.

34 The finds of the steppe provide rather similar formal parallels to the inscription signs found in Regöly (Ярыгин 2019).

35 Hosszú 2017, p. 179, Figure 4.

different direction, of particular relevance to later runiform notch marks. Leonid Marsadolov noticed that in the Altaic region at the turn of the 7th–6th century BC many phenomena appeared that had previously been noticed in burial mounds in the region of the Phrygian capital Gordion. In his opinion, the descendants of the Cimmerians that invaded Gordion migrated, fleeing the local wars, from the Middle East to the Altai Mountains where they formed the famous Kurgans of Pazyryk. Marsadolov speaks practically of the same starting point and causes that drove the settlers of the Kapos west, and, on its eastern branch, can be followed up to Pazyryk (Photo 4) – setting up the foundations of many subsequent cultural and ethnic influences in the Altaic region.[36] It is not irrelevant that it was at this time that certain characteristic rites appeared in both areas (under the influence of the Mazda religion), such as tumuli without skeletons or ashes at the Pannonians and in the Sargat culture.[37]

The connections that appear in the light of recent research and cover thousands of kilometres, the system of traditions with a common origin that can be linked to Iranian people, its survival and subsequent development on other paths raise many questions and shed new light on others. Of these, I would like to draw attention to a few opinions and new approaches to continuity which have only emerged recently, on many sides, based on the Regöly tumulus finds that are possibly related to Iranian people. Analysing continuity in the Carpathian Basin, it makes sense to point out the thread that is linked to Iranian ethnic groups because it is precisely the name of one of Hungary's largest rivers that can be tied to them, and it is from that time that we can follow the continuity of some of the geographical names. The name of the Danube is believed to originate from *don* 'water',[38] while of the Tisza is from the ancient Iranian words *sikvan* 'strong' or *taka* 'flow'. Hungarian researchers have long assumed the name-givers were a population that spoke an Iranian language, was related to the Scythians, and moved to the west.[39] Parallels of early Iron-Age and Scythian-Age finds in

36 Marsadolov 2000.
37 Szabó & Fekete 2017; Kroll 2000.
38 Абаев 1949, pp. 38, 162, 196.
39 Trogmayer 1983, pp. 95–97; Szádeczky-Kardoss 1953, pp. 109–111.

the Great Plain clearly confirm this. The connections of the Regöly tumulus that point to the steppe through Asia Minor[40] also link the Pannonian-populated significant southern part of the Transdanubian region, believed previously to have ties with the Hallstatt culture,[41] to an Iranian ethnic and cultural sphere.[42] According to István Tóth, the strong survival of the Pannonian local population of the Transdanubian region and its influence was also palpable in the Celtic and Roman Age.[43] This can be seen on the Roman lead votive plaques, whose representations are accurate reflections of the beliefs of the indigenous Pannonian population.[44] These customs have survived to this day and be seen in Iranian people where pot shape, certain meals, drinks, bones, numbers, and things that outsiders often see as insignificant, have specific meanings. The same can be said about the Sarmatians, also an Iranian people that settled in the Great Plain in the Roman Age. In their context, Valéria Kulcsár and Eszter Istvánovics suggest the possibility of survival and ethnic continuity, which in their opinion could have influenced Hungarian ethnogenesis as well. This could also be confirmed by the Alanian words found next to some Oghur and Slavic words on the mostly Hungarian inscriptions of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure and some of the representations.[45] Moreover, our most beautiful masterpieces of goldsmith

40 It is important to emphasise that before learning of the materials in the tumulus discovered in Regöly, Strupka-Magyar estate, it had not even occurred that there might be a possibility of direct Minor-Asian ethnic relations of the Carpathian Basin with the cultural background that has ties to the early Iranian people and the Mazda religion. Szabó & Czuppon 2014.

41 According to the traditional viewpoint, it is the Etruscan in Italy, and the Hallstatt culture in other parts of Europe, with strong orientalisation influences of local origin. That orientalisation might have a more significant role than previously assumed was already pointed out by Svend Hansen (Hansen 2011; 2017).

42 At the same time, those who settled in the south from the Bakony – assimilating the indigenous population of the southern Alpine Hallstatt culture of the early Iron Age, found here in the last third of the 7th century BC – have general European traits (Kürthy et al. 2013).

43 Tóth 2003; 2009; 2015.

44 Boruzs & Szabó 2009; Szabó 2017; 2018; 2018b.

45 Hosszú & Zelliger 2014. For example, the "heavenly rapture" scene of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure acquires an entirely different meaning in the light of the wedding between the antlered doe and eagle seen on the Sassanid bowl kept in the Hamadan Museum, pointing to the cultural and ethnic background of the Turul bird legend.

work from the Conquest Age, the decorations of the flat pouch plates and discs, can be understood precisely in the context of Iranian culture.[46] Moreover, the wondrous stag of the Hungarian origin legend can also be traced from the Caucasian Bronze Age.[47] The spread of finds of palm-leaf decorations inside the Carpathian Basin and their archaeological context point to the fact that some of the conquering Hungarians (and their very leaders) were of Iranian origin. But it is not only the large time gap between the Sarmatians and the conquering Hungarians, but also the intermediary period of our land with "hiatuses" full of migrations and amalgamation and assimilation that makes it unlikely that the remainder of the Sarmatians could have survived for almost a thousand years. An example from a later time, but nevertheless similar from many points of view, is a good indicator of how misleading it can be to evaluate parallels supported by archaeological parallels, as well as anthropological and genetic test results, in a traditional view of history that works essentially with linear development models. The Jassic settlement in the 13th century brought another significant Iranian influence to the Carpathian Basin.[48] In addition to their specific economic, social, cultural traditions, they preserved their own language for a long time, as attested by a list of words written in Digor dialect on the back of a charter dated 1422.[49] Features characteristic of Alanians essentially appear as an ethnic, cultural and linguistic unit in medieval Hungarian materials. It is only thanks to the relatively well documented historical and charter data that we have, almost from the very beginnings, information on the circumstances of their settlement and their independence within the Hungarians. So in the case of the Jassics it is easy to delimit the time period and area where the archaeological finds specific to their homeland and the appearance of traditions can be expected. In light of the archaeological finds in the Carpathian Basin, customs observed in their Caucasian relatives, the Ossetians, in almost unaltered form from the Bronze Age until the present and descriptions of the Nart sagas[50] clearly

46 Szabó 2018a.
47 Szabó 2019; 2019a.
48 Selmeczi 1992; 1996; 2005; 2007; 2012.
49 Németh 1959; Абаев 1960.
50 Нарты 1991.

point to how the people of the Regöly tumulus, the Scythian-Age and Sarmatian tribes, and some of the conquering Hungarians, to the Jassics, were essentially connected by a common cultural background. However, the evident survival of customs of Iranian origin, as reflected by geographical names we have from the Pannonians and observed in archaeological finds in many areas, does not necessarily entail the survival of the population, as we have seen in the case of the Jassics. Continuity did not take place in a territorial and ethnic framework, but primarily in the presence of the common traditions, ethnic bases, elements of civilisation, in the framework of cultural continuity. In its background are people of Iranian origin who broke from practically the same cultural sphere – from ethnic groups that were mostly similar, but not necessarily genetically related – in repeated waves and settled in the Carpathian Basin and other parts of Europe at different times. For thousands of years, the migrations triggered by similar causes – war conflicts that made life impossible, epidemics, natural disasters – have followed essentially the same patterns: on routes determined by the starting place, to certain destinations that were preferably suitable for pursuing the old ways of farming.[51] With a traditional approach based on local ethnic continuity, the regular cultural and often ethnic overlapping repeatedly causes inconsistencies between the findings of modern genetic, linguistic or other analyses. It will be possible to understand these analyses more accurately in the context of more detailed information, if we take into account that the continuous presence of certain cultural elements in a specific area does not necessarily require the survival of the same population, and if we reckon with the newer waves of settlers who come from the same cultural background. The finds, which, just like the Regöly inscription marks and their carrier objects, are difficult to decipher, can be understood successfully if we examine them not only in an ethnic context, but also a cultural one. If we depart from essentially linear development models and approaches, and we highlight the process dynamics, we might find points of reference for a better understanding and more accurate

51 It is probably no coincidence that the place where the most important Pannonian centre was formed in the late 7th century BC was the same place where almost a thousand years later one of the princesses of the Alanians was buried (Mészáros 1972).

assessment and explanation of the Iron Age and Roman period, but also later runiform notch marks in the Carpathian Basin. A more detailed exploration of the cultural and ethnic context of the graphemes engraved on the Pannonian ceramic fragments of Regöly could provide an important starting point in this endeavour.

PHOTOS

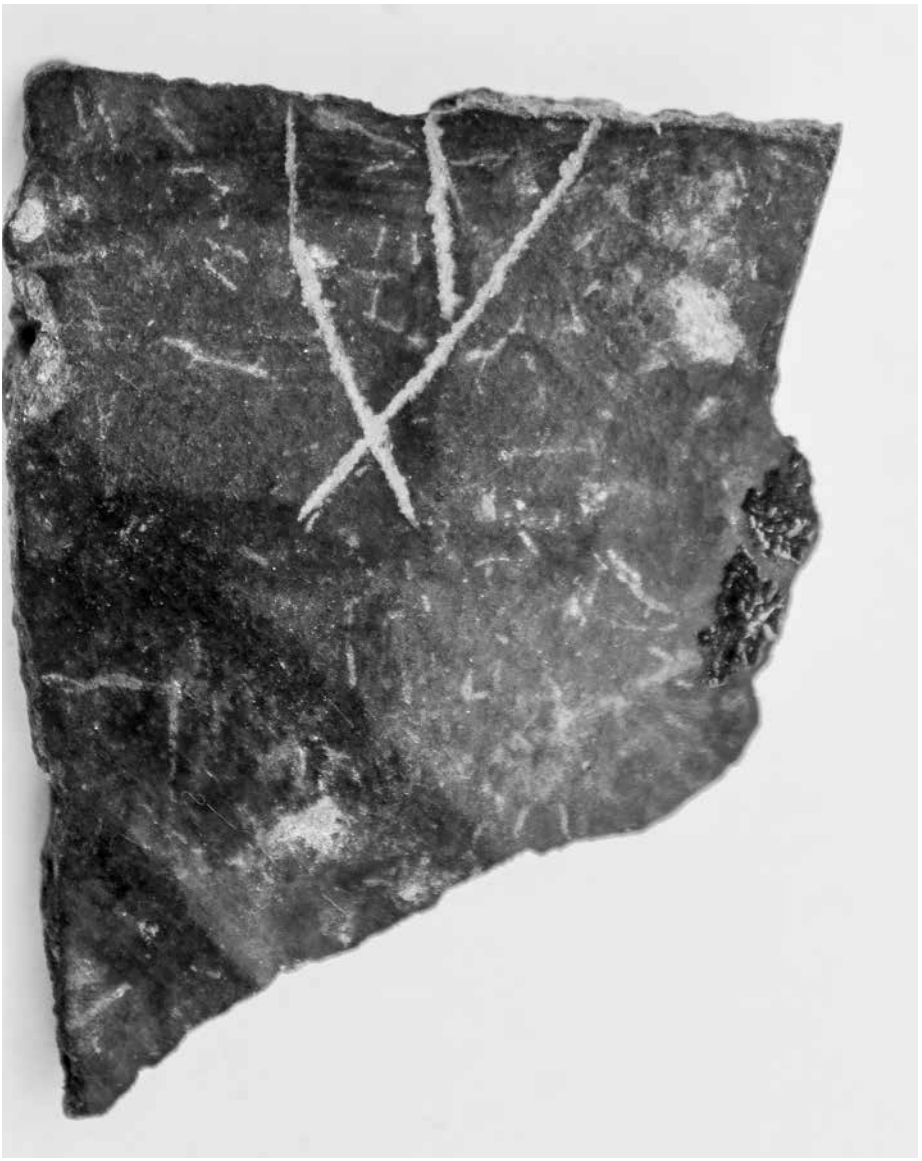

Figure 1: A) Grapheme engraved on the shoulder of a remaining vase

B) Traces of parallel finishes running around the inner side of the ceramic fragment can be seen (Regöly, Strupka-Magyar estate, inventory number: 2014.3.11.7.). (Photo: Géza Szabó)

Figure 2: A) Grapheme engraved on the bottom of a smaller bowl (phiale?)

B) Omphalos protruding into the inner side of the bowl (Regöly, Strupka-Magyar estate, inventory number: 2014.3.13.107.). (Photo: Géza Szabó)

Figure 3: A) Grapheme engraved on the bottom of a thin-walled bowl (phiale?) (Regöly, Strupka-Magyar estate, inventory number: 2014.3.20.236.). (Photo: Géza Szabó)

Figure 3: A) Grapheme engraved on the bottom of a thin-walled bowl (phiale?) (Regöly, Strupka-Magyar estate, inventory number: 2014.3.20.236.). (Photo: Géza Szabó)

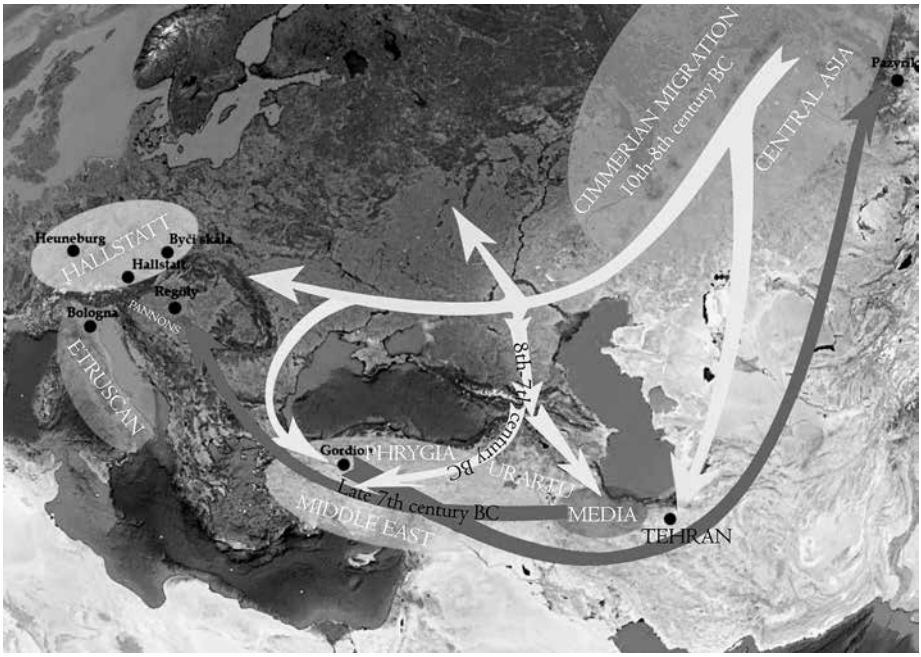

Figure 4: Cimmerian migration in the 10th–7th century BC (Graphic: Géza Szabó – Apollónia Sági)

Figure 5: Cists, ribbed-walled bronze buckets with false-twisted handles in the treasure found in Kurd, an exhibition of the Hungarian National Museum (Photo: Géza Szabó)

Figure 6: Ribbed-walled bronze bucket with false-twisted handles in the MM mound of Gordion, an exhibition of the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations in Ankara (Photo: Géza Szabó)

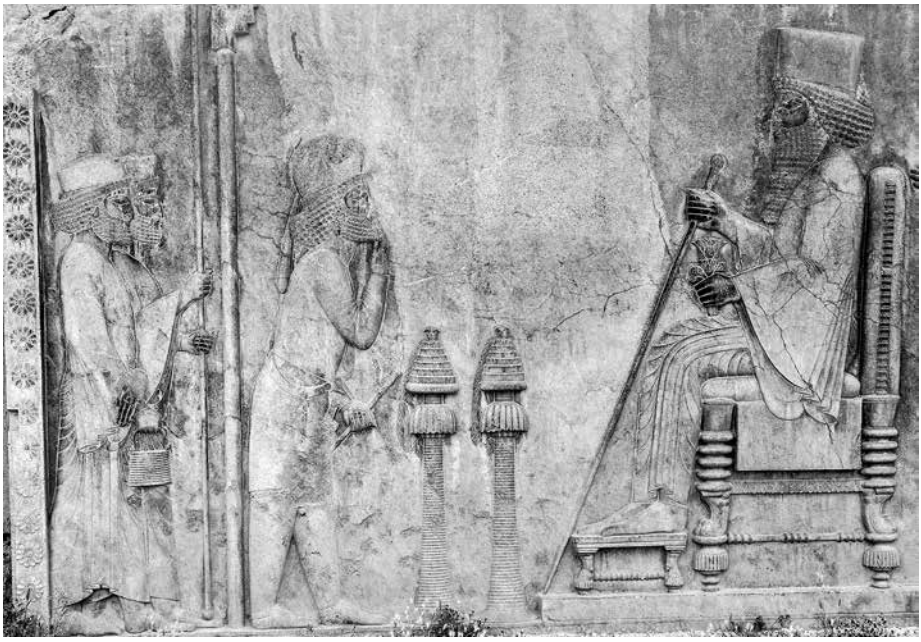

Figure 7: A–B) Audience scene in the reception hall of the palace of Persian King of Kings Darius I (522–486 BC) in Persepolis; a ribbed-walled bucket held by the attendants can be seen (Photo: Géza Szabó)

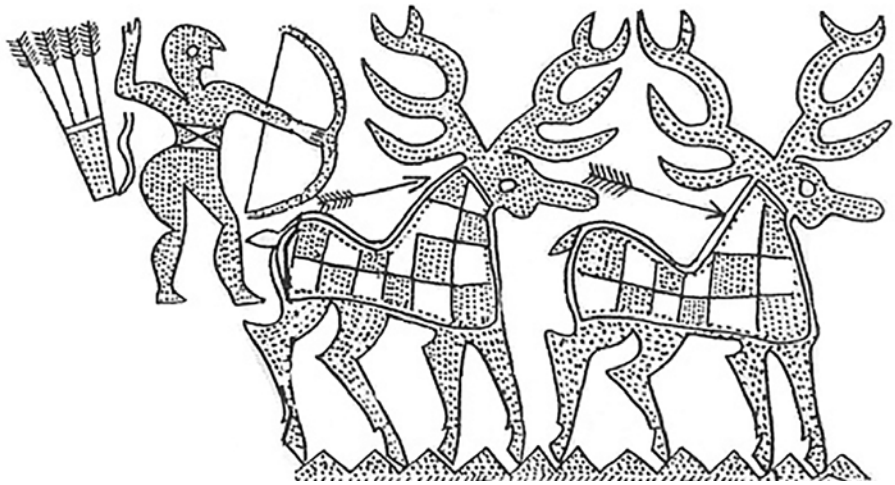

Figure 8: Representation of the chase of an antlered doe and wondrous stag on a plate belt of the Caucasian Koban culture, dated probably to the 7th century BC (Southern Ossetia, Tli Grave 350, based on Техов 2002)

Figure 9: Chase of the antlered doe in the Hungarian wondrous stag legend, by Gyula László (based on László 1982)

Figure 10: The wedding of the antlered doe and eagle on the Sassanid bowl draws attention to the real message and cultural-ethnic background of the Turul bird legend and the representation of what is believed to be the "heavenly rapture scene" in the Nagyszentmiklós treasure (Hamadan Archaeological Museum, Iran, photo: Géza Szabó)

Jel a feliratban	Hasonló jelek előfordulása különböző írásokban
2014.3.11.7. sz. lelet	ciprusi-görög *(páfoszi)* <wi>
2014.3.20.107. sz. és a 2014.3.20.236. sz. lelet	latin *(epigrafikus kurzív)* <a>; rét <a>; leponti <a>; gall-etruszk <a>; kamuni, <a>; kár <a>; lyk, <ā>; ógörög, , <ε>; lyd <ē>; ógörög <ϝ>; lyd <v>; DK-ibér <ga>; ÉK-ibér , , <ga/ka>, <ge/ke>; föníciai <h>; óarám , <h>; hivatalos arám , <h>; lyk <χ>; ciprusi-görög (korai) <ke>; föníciai <k>; kár , , <r>; föníciai <š>; óarám <š>; DK-ibér <tu>; keltibér <tu>

Table 1: Possible parallels of the signs found on objects with inscriptions in Regöly (Gábor Hosszú)

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR A HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE TREASURE OF NAGYSZENTMIKLÓS[1]

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ABSTRACT: We would better understand the historical background of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure if the Greek inscriptions on cups No. 9 and 10 could be related to historical events. The most promising solution so far is that of Géza Fehér, while the more recognised solution of Minns should be rejected, because he did not realise the *contractio* AE = ἄ(γι)ε. Fehér's solution, on the other hand, is probable at least regarding the section which ends with ἄ(γι)ε ’I(η)σ(οῦ), but we would expect a subsequent name (that he misinterpreted).

1 In 1971, Gábor Vékony prepared the first version of his article published in 1972, in a much more extensive format roughly two and a half times the size of the published article. However, after rejection by the reviewer György Györffy it could not be published in that form at that time. Györffy declared the second part of the article, which contained a historical review, unsuitable for publication, and recommended that the first part, on the inscriptions, should be revised with help from János Harmatta. We do not know whether Harmatta indeed contributed to it. In 1972 the section on the inscriptions was published with significant alterations that detracted from the essential novelty of the argumentation. Here we publish the first part of the article, which was essentially not rejected by György Györffy, in its unrevised original form. We thank Endre Tóth for permission to use and publish the unedited manuscript.

The correct name is Ἀχτο(νο)ν (in Hungarian: Ajtony) preceded by a baptismal name, which seems to be Ἰ(ωαννο)οῦ that also fits the historical context. In all probability, cup No. 10 must be related to the baptism of Duke Ajtony in the 10th century.

KEYWORDS: Nagyszentmiklós, Greek inscription, Ajtony/Achton, cups No. 9 and 10

Ever since it was discovered, the Nagyszentmiklós treasure, "Attila's treasure", has been one of the most frequently discussed and most variably interpreted set of finds in early medieval archaeology and art history. The development of such a wide range of interpretation was largely attributable to the inscriptions – heterogeneous by themselves – on the artefacts. K. Benda, who reviewed the status of the research on this treasure in 1965,[2] believed the deciphering and explanations provided by Minns[3] and Thomsen[4] were acceptable,[5] while in the case of the runiform inscriptions (citing an attempt by Németh[6]), he rejected the attempt so far most convincing.[7] Thus, he also rejected a deciphering of the Greek inscription of cups 9–10 offered by Géza Fehér[8] which sought (and opened up) new avenues.[9] Doing so and accepting the Minns version which was inspired by the Keil[10] interpretation, he narrowed down the historical positioning of the treasure (as the language of the inscription on Cup 21 was disputed) to a framework of stylistic criticism. Although assessments of stylistic

2 Benda 1965, 399 sqq.
3 Minns 1938.
4 Thomsen 1917, pp. 4–5.
5 Benda 1965, pp. 402–4.
6 Németh 1932, pp. 17–36.
7 Benda 1965, pp. 404–5. The above attribute referring to Németh's attempt is, of course, merely relative.
8 Fehér 1950.
9 Benda 1965, p. 403.
10 Keil 1887.

criticism have, since Mavrodinov's book,[11] determined the historical context and place of origin of the complex find, as well as the places of origin of its pieces with great certainty (and from this point of view, an essential addition was provided by Gyula László's study based on technical observations[12]), this method is not expected to provide, any time soon, the most important pillar for an historical evaluation, the determination of the treasure's age range. The difference of a few centuries between the most recent individual dating attempts clearly indicates this.[13]

Obviously, we would get much closer to positioning the Nagyszentmiklós find historically if we could approach it or connect it to the history of our medieval events based on the inscriptions and the two Greek-script inscriptions. In this case, naturally, we would have to revise the deciphering proposals offered for the inscriptions of cups 9–10, especially because of the concrete data suggested by Fehér's interpretation. Above all, this requires a review of how probable the versions derived from Keil's attempt might be compared to Fehér's interpretation. Let us examine the interpretation provided by Minns, perhaps still the most likely in this line of reasoning:

+ διὰ ὕδατος ἀνάπλυσον K(ύρι)ε εἰς ζωὴν (or βίον) ἀίδιον.

It is rather obvious that this interpretation (and thereby all interpretations of this type) fails because the two letters (AЄ) following the third word have a clearly marked *contractio* sign on top, in which case it can only be read as ἅ(γι)ε, meaning only a saint's name can follow, or a name addressed as ἅγιος. Obviously no other interpretation is possible here, such as κ(ύρι)ε, the letters are so clearly written that even if not so elsewhere in the inscription, here only this interpretation could be proposed. Otherwise, the Keil-type explanations do not really have any other rebuttal. Indeed, if we read the A and the *contractio* sign as the KЄ abbreviation, then the ЄIC preposition and the ZΩHN form could clearly follow (in this case, Fehér[14] is not right, contrary to Goschew,[15]

11 Mavrodinov 1943.
12 László 1957; László 1957a, 186 sqq.
13 Benda 1965.
14 Fehér 1950, p. 38.
15 Goschew 1940, p. 143.

because what he believes to be the CT ligature can indeed be compared to the Z of proto-Bulgarian inscriptions), and finally, the smaller-type text, too; one of the latter's signs allows for multiple interpretations, and fits the Minns interpretation. So the Keil-type interpretations can only be refuted based on the AE ἅγιε, which can be read clearly and in only one way, but in that way they must indeed be rejected.

Another possibility to explain the inscription was offered by Fehér, making the Nagyszentmiklós find such a valuable historical source as no other attempt had managed beforehand. Fehér reads the group of letters following the IC as CT(ΕΦΑ)NON, and this interpretation (disregarding the interpretation of the even more questionable and even unacceptable small-type text), as Altheim[16] and Kádár[17] have pointed out, is the most disputable part of his attempt. At the same time, without doubt (as Altheim confirms) here we should expect a proper name, but this group of letters is hardly an accusative of Stephanos. However, we must note that taking into account the whole group of letters there is no other name but Stephanos that we could acceptably use here. It naturally follows from all of this that the group of letters cannot be read as a monogram as Fehér assumed. So we should not be looking for a name in the *whole* of the group of letters, and this also means that the group of letters offers richer possibilities of interpretation than any attempts believed so far.

However, to indeed have a satisfactory explanation of the inscriptions of cups 9–10 in the Nagyszentmiklós treasure, it does not suffice to study the group of letters that follow the IC. Indeed, Fehér's interpretation of what is written up to the letters IC is likely, and it is precisely this interpretation that calls for a proper name in the group of letters following the IC. And since the group of letters does not suggest any probable proper name, we cannot accept without reservation the interpretation of the text preceding the IC either. A study of the whole inscription, as Fehér pointed out,[18] must start from the relation between the two cups. Fehér relies on Zimmermann who believes that cup No. 9 is a

16 Altheim 1951, p. 72.
17 Kádár 1959, pp. 111–2.
18 Fehér, 1950, p. 35.

copy of cup No. 10,[19] but he too notices that this does not apply in the case of the small-type inscription.[20] However, the relationship Zimmermann assumed is not likely based on the large-type inscription, either, because cup No. 10[21] has much more accurate and firmly written letters than the letter types of cup No. 9. The same can be said about the crosses of the two cups. While cup No. 10 has a regular cross with even arms, the arms on cup No. 9 are uneven and the omphalos of the cup is disproportionately small. So exactly the opposite is the case, at least when it comes to the inscriptions: cup No. 9 might be a copy of cup No. 10, so the latter should be our starting point when reading the text and this circumstance must be taken into account with particular emphasis in the case of the questionable letters.

First of all we must see to what extent we can observe a breakdown of the inscription into words. There is an evident space after the Ꝑ, but also after the next Δ, and even the separation between the Δ and the subsequent E is emphatic due to the empty space and the typical Δ. A separation can be seen clearly after the YΔATOC as well. In the only place of the text that can be established as a separation in sentence structure, there is no space before and after the AЄ. However, here – and we must emphasise this – the obvious reading makes a separation of the words redundant. Our observation also means that the initial Δ must be treated separately from the subsequent letters. Then, we must notice how the horizontal arm of the Δ is prominently extended: more precisely, its lower right corner is prolonged by a comma. This is particularly visible when comparing it with the δ of the YΔATOC, and such a separation following the sign is obviously not meaningless. Epigraphically, extending the arm (by a comma) could only be the *suspensio* sign, and in that case the meaning of the Δ can only be determined in light of the rest of the text.[22]

19 Zimmermann 1923, p. 90.

20 Fehér 1950, p. 35.

21 Mavrodinov 1943, t. XVII.

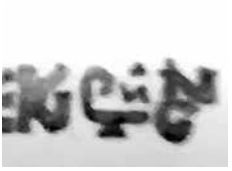
22 Abbreviation by the comma sign appears, in addition to the inscriptions, elsewhere too, especially on coins, cf. Moravcsik 1966, p. 75. It is noteworthy for our purposes that there are many similarities between the proto-Bulgarian inscriptions and manuscripts and coin inscriptions, see Beševliev 1963, p. 22.

A clear interpretation of the rest of the text requires, first of all, taking into account that the inscription also has signs that seem to be added subsequently. Altheim[23] and Fehér[24] believed only the signs on top and following the Ꝑ were such, but even Kádár[25] noticed that the *И* (?) preceding the ON is related to the smaller letters following the Ꝑ. However, on a more thorough examination of the inscription we could not fail to notice that the subsequently inserted signs have such a distinct form that the original text can easily be separated. While indeed the closure of the arms of the visibly original signs always bisects in a V-shape, the arms have an arched closure in the smaller letters (although that closure can be found in some of the inserted signs, too). Based on this characteristic, it is not only the *И* that connects to the subsequently inserted signs, but the Y preceding the CON letter group, too, whose bottom was ended visibly in an arch. The subsequent insertion of the Y follows not only from this formal characteristic, but also from the fact that on cup No. 10 there was no space initially for this sign. The subsequent insertion of the Y requires us to examine the preceding sign, which so far has been read as α or λ, but even Hampel would have preferred to see a ligature there.[26] As far as we can determine this from the photos we have, it is clear that the short lower right-side arm was added to this sign subsequently, modifying the original α into another sign (ligature?). This is the same α as the initial α of the letter group ANA-, so it is not particularly difficult to identify it. It is harder to decipher what letter they wanted to create by subsequently modifying the sign. First of all, we could think of λ, but a ligature is also possible, such as the α^λ or λ^α ligature.

According to the above, the inscription of cup No. 10 can be separated as follows (the thin-line drawings indicate the subsequent modifications): (Photo 1).[27]

23 Altheim 1951, pp. 74–76.
24 Fehér 1950, p. 40.
25 Kádár, 1959, pp. 111–2.
26 Hampel 1884, p. 58.
27 Photos 1 and 2 are not to be found among the manuscript variants, instead we annex the original drawing by Gábor Vékony, which, however, does not separately indicate the subsequent modifications he presumed were made (B.F.).

By doing so, clearly and obviously the original text should be read as follows (no explanation): (Photo 2).



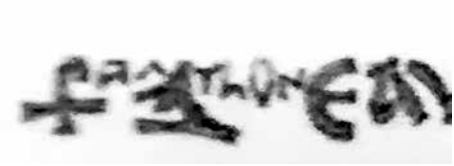
In this text the ἀναπάσον is obviously *participium futurum*, and we must expect a *praepositio* before the ὕδατος, which, according to the above, must begin with an ε. But the letter which most closely resembles an α makes it significantly difficult to determine this *praepositio*. Even Dietrich[28] thought it might be φ, but this is unlikely. We could read the letter as a π, but this is infirmed by the occurrence of the Π *maiuscula* in the text.[29] We might consider assuming a π^ι ligature, because in this case we could read ἐπὶ.

But in addition to the above, we could read our letter most probably as ξ. Since the letters are slanted to the left in the whole inscription, assuming a similar slant in the case of the initially anticipated ξ, we find something almost identical to our letter. The fact that in this case we cannot assume an α or a π, or a ligature thereof, is clearly indicated by cup No. 9 where the copier clearly did not intend to record α or π. Comparing our letters with various forms

28 Dietrich 1866, p. 180.

29 The text of the first manuscript variant: ... although we could again consider a "lapidarised" variant of a cursive form. However, reading the letter as a π^ι ligature seems to be the most likely option. The two vertical hastas connected at the bottom together with the line closing on top and shifting to a vertical could be a regular "lapidarised" version of a cursive π^ι formation (which is frequent especially in the case of ἐπὶ). But we must emphasise that the form of the preposition from the above possibilities can only be decided by the meaning of the word ΥΔΑΤΟC, and so the most likely interpretation of the part covered so far is: δ΄ ἐπ^ὶ ὕδατος.

of ξ, it becomes increasingly likely that we have here a late uncial ξ recorded in a distorted form (Photo 3).[30] Although we must emphasise that the clear



identification of the letter is only possible in the light of the interpretation of other parts of the text, it seems that ξ is the most likely interpretation.

As we have said before, it requires no particular proof that we must read AE as ἅγιε. And obviously it needs to be followed by a name. Fehér reads the group of letters IC as ᾽Ιησοῦ,[31] but even Minns[32] pointed out how this solution is disputable, since here we need to have a *vocativus*. Although the examples given by Fehér could evade the counterarguments provided by Minns, we see no *contractio* sign above the letter group IC, and this makes the interpretation questionable, to say the least. As the inscription seems to be consistent, the absence of the *contractio* sign above the letter group IC means that the letter group should not be treated as an abbreviated form. At the same time, we have no name that begins with IC that (in the *vocativus*) could convincingly and logically be read from the letters preceding the Ꝑ. Based on the initial letters of the word, we might consider a form of the name ᾽Ισαάκιος, but this is clearly not supported by the available letters (even assuming larger deficiencies). So the only possibility left is the *vocativus* of ᾽Ιησοῦς: ᾽Ιησοῦ. However, in this case, the absence of the *contractio* sign makes us look for the ending of the ᾽Ιησοῦ, that is the οῦ, in the sign that follows the C. To what extent this ending could be part of the specific sign following the letter group IC can only be clarified if we understand this sign. Even Goschew assumed this letter form to be a ζ,[33]

30 See Talbot Rice 1959, 95.t; 2; Idem 3; Idem 99.t; 4; Idem 124.t; 5; Beševliev 1964, ph. 246; 6. Idem ph. 252 — Photo 3 did not survive in the manuscript (B.F.).

31 Fehér 1950, p. 37.

32 Minns 1938, p. 123.

33 Goschew 1940, p. 143.

and, in opposition to him, Fehér's counterarguments[34] are hardly acceptable because our sign indeed resembles the ζ forms cited by Goschew.[35] So, the last word of the original inscription certainly begins with a ζ, and ends with a clear ν. Often the sign underneath the N was read as o, but this interpretation was opposed (in connection with Fehér's interpretation) by Kádár,[36] and indeed it is more beneficial to read our form as ω. But then reading the last word as ζων makes no sense in light of the text we have so far, which means this form has no reason to be here. In this case, we must notice how the sign that we have read as a ν is in fact the ligature I^N. Indeed, the left-side hasta of the N is raised, but it is not closed on top in the same way as the typical bipartite hasta closures of the original inscription that we can see in other occurrences of the letter. Reading the sign as a ligature is particularly evident if we compare it with the corresponding sign on cup No. 9, where a plain N was written and no indications of a ligature were highlighted in the sign. So the last word of our text can be read as ZωIN, and due to the frequent η~ι substitution of medieval Greek inscriptions, we must read it as ζωὴν.

After all this, let us return to the question of whether we should seek in the initial ζ the ending of the form ’Ιησοῦ, or we should take the letter group IC instead of ’Ιησοῦ as a mistake. If the initial ζ indeed contains the -οῦ termination, then we should assume an irregularity in our inscription, namely that the elements of two different words were joined. We do have data about parts of different words (of course, their initials and their terminations) ligatured,[37] and in our case, the lack of space contributed to why the inscription maker used a ligature to connect two words. Of course, this only allows for a mere possibility to look for the -οῦ termination in the specific form of ζ, because even if this were case, the η is still missing from the vocative form of the name. It seems that the absence of the η is due to simple linguistic reasons. As we will see later, the original inscription was made in the second half of the

34 Fehér 1950, p. 38.
35 Goschew 1940, t. XXXII. 4.
36 Kádár 1959, p. 111.
37 Beševliev 1964, Nr. 116. Z. 5: t. 43. 115; Nr. 213. Z. 1: t. 90.235.

9th century on Bulgarian territory, a place where medieval Greek pronunciation may have been influenced by Slavic particularities. Since the Slavs replace the *ji* sequence of the word ʾΙησοῦς with a palatal *i*, the ʾΙησοῦς name might have been written in the form ʾΙσοῦς in this territory. This means we shouldn't necessarily assume an error behind the absence of η, so we can legitimately expect the -οῦ termination to follow the IC letter group. But the O^Y ligature can only be discovered in one form in the initial ζ of the last word, meaning that if we rotate this sign 90° to the left, we find what we can call a regular O^Y ligature. Of course the question remains as to what extent we can assume that this ligature was written irregularly, rotated to the right by 90°. We have no data about similar cases, but we do know of letters rotated similarly,[38] and it is not to be ignored that the subsequent ω should be seen as a similarly rotated letter. This is indeed a regular ∪ form, only rotated 90° to the right. It is not to be ignored, for our purposes, that it is precisely at this place where an irregularly positioned letter was inserted in our inscription, because it suggests that the proposed way of noting the O^Y is indeed possible. Inserting the ligature this way in the inscription essentially follows from the fact that barely any space was left at the end of the inscription for the designed text. In any case, it is difficult to imagine any other form for the positioning of the O^Y in our inscription, but even if our assumption above does not hold, the particular ζ form must indeed contain the O^Y. It is unlikely that in this case we should assume a completely irregular IC ~ ʾΙησοῦ solution, and one that has no *contractio* sign.[39]

38 Beševliev 1964, Nr. 251. Z. 2: t.111.271.

39 Instead of the paragraph, the first version of the manuscript provides the following reasoning: So the only possibility left is the vocativus of IHCOYC: IHCOY. And then we must note that the T-like letter could be read as the O^Y ligature, especially when we notice how in the inscription in every case the upper part of the letters are decorated (except for the sign following the ΑΝΑΠ-, but that, as we will see, is also a ligature), and the short lower hasta of the T-like letter is particularly decorated. The C-like part on the left is a non-problematic O, if we take into account the shape of the O preceding the ₱ (in this case, we cannot agree with the explanations in Kádár 1959). So the T-like letter should be read as O^Y, and then this part of the text is ICOY, that is, an H missing from the IHCOY form. Such an error is possible, of course, but it is also possible that the absence of the H should be seen as a typographical error due to pronunciation. At the time of our inscription, the H corresponds to the phoneme 'i' and, as we will see later, the inscription was made in

So according to the above, the full interpretation of the original inscription is:

Δ ἐξ ὕδατος ἀναπάσ⌈ω⌉ν ἅ(γι)ε ’I(η)σ(οῦ) ζω(ή)ν·

In this text, the only questionable element is the explanation for the Δ. But the vocative case of Jesus’s name makes it obvious that in this case we must

a territory bordering on Byzantium (a border territory populated by Slavs) where the ji phoneme sequence was pronounced as a palatalised ’i (one could argue that in this case an H should be written before the C, but this is ruled out by the Greek-letter inscription). So following the AE we can (and due to the absence of the contractio sign, we must) read a somewhat regular ICOY, but the question remains as to why the sign had to be rotated 90° in the case of the O^Y ligature. Indeed, we can clearly see that the O^Y can be written easily even when marked regularly. The only explanation for the irregularity is that the ligature was not only meant to indicate the termination of I(H)COY. In this case, the O^Y ligature must be connected to the signs above it: ῎ι̂. Even Hampel (1884, p. 58) noticed that the small triangular sign indicates an abbreviation, but the lower letter is clearly H, as many have commented, so, in light of the above, we must read this as HO^Y. The meaning of this interpretation can only be decided by the subsequent part of the text. Indeed, we are not aware of any attribute of Jesus that would help identify HO^Y; on the other hand, even if there is one, it is unlikely that it would give us a grammatically correct text. Thus, the next word clearly starts with ON. The sign following the Ꝑ is almost certainly a ligature. Even Hampel correctly noticed the ligature between the μ and the α (op.cit. 59.), and the arched upper line of the letter clearly excludes any identification as π. As the slanted line denoting the α is connected to the right-side hasta of the μ, we must read the ligature as MA. It is very likely that these joined letters also mark the termination of the word, because the letter following the ligature should be read either as A or λ, and ON.MAA or ON.MAΛ; even with some additions, does not really make sense. Of course, interpreting this as ONMA makes no sense either, the ON.MA should be completed to form ONOMA, and then we have to notice that the second o of the word is indeed spelled out. Indeed, on a closer examination of the sign Ꝑ which has always been taken for an XP (following Dietrich), we notice that when this sign was made, first a regular cross with uneven arms was punched and then they subsequently added an open Ω-like sign to this cross (unfortunately, we can only claim this based on photos, but there are good photos in Mavrodinov op.cit. On cup No. 9 we can clearly see the upper closer of the vertical arm of the cross, to which, at a distance from the vertical axis of the cross, the Ω-like sign was connected). Even if we have no explanation for the execution of the Ꝑ, we still cannot take it for XP. In the latter case, it would indeed fit naturally in the inscription text, in which Christ’s name appears (disregarding that our sign is not a usual Christ monogram and in the age of the inscription it is unlikely that this rare form of XP was written). So, according to the above, an open O was added subsequently to the initial cross, that is, the word following the O^Y must be read as ONOMA. Accordingly (and this seemed probable even earlier) the HO^Y abbreviation should be read as a name, and since (precisely due of the contractio) it must be a generally known name, the abbreviation can be explained probably as H(OANN)OY = ’I(οάνν)ου (often in the name ’Ιοάννης the initial ι is replaced by η, cf. ...).

expect an imperative, and in light of the rest of the text, this has to be the imperative of the verb δίδωμι, that is:

Δ(ὸς) ἐξ ὕδατος ἀναπάσ⌈ω⌉ν ἅ(γι)ε ’Ι(η)σ(οῦ) ζω(ή)ν·

“From the water sprinkled, give life, Holy Jesus!”

This originally written text was corrected later with some insertions. As we have seen earlier, the correction is most clearly visible in the case of the word ἀναπάσον, where a υ was inserted between the α and the σ, and the preceding α was converted into a different letter, using a line, obviously into a λ, thus obtaining the word ἀναπλύσον, as Hampel[40] and Minns[41] read this word. Another correction can be seen at the end of the inscription, where a ῆ (η) with a *contractio* sign was inserted; finally, a continuous subsequent insertion is found at the beginning of the inscription, obviously relating to the termination of the inscription. The incription’s meaning, which was changed using the corrections, can be determined on the basis of the text inserted at the end. Here, we have to take into account that the original (general) ἀναπάσον is replaced in the later text by ἀναπλύσον, and this narrowing down of the meaning means that when the cup was used secondarily, the water’s role in the act was not determined by the verb (ἀνα)πάσσω. Washing “from water” (i.e. in water) probably suggests the baptismal ceremony, so the subsequent correction was made either to create a “regular” baptismal formula, or was made in connection with a specific baptism. The termination of the text is clearly -ON. The bottom of the O sign was extended with a short stroke. If this was not accidental (and it is probably not, because the extension is clearly visible on cup No. 9, too), we must read it as a regular *suspensio* sign. The sign preceding the O could be a majuscule Y, T or a cursive η-, ν. When trying to determine what this is, we must keep in mind that the text inserted afterwards is entirely in majuscules, so our sign is probably not η or ν. It cannot be that either because in our minuscular text both signs appear in a clear form. So, Y and T are left. Fehér[42] believed our

40 Hampel 1884, p. 58.
41 Minns 1938, p. 120 sqq.
42 Fehér 1950, p. 41.

sign was the first, while Hampel[43] believed it was the latter. Indeed, the υ of the later text is similar to our sign, but this identification is infirmed by the fact that the space here easily permitted writing a regular υ (V) connected at the bottom, and indeed we can see one in the original text. At the same time, this letter form can easily be taken for a τ, because its usual form could have hardly been inserted here. Moreover, in every υ in the inscription the left-side hasta arches backwards (even in the υ of the text inserted later), while in the case of the τ of the original text it is the right side of the horizontal top hasta that arches backwards. The same is the case in the letter we are examining now, which is why it is more likely we should read it as a τ. The form preceding the τ has been read in many ways so far. More recently, Fehér took it for ο^υ,[44] but in this case it is hardly likely that our sign was completed starting from the δ of the original text. It is likely that we have to look for a majuscule here. In this case, we can think of the letters κ, γ, χ. In the case of γ we might have a slightly tilted form, a κ would be very truncated, while the χ shape would be only partly truncated. Of these possibilities, the γ and the χ are more likely, but, for reasons to be explained later, we will work with the latter. Before the χ (the Δ of the original text) we could read an α, δ, λ, but, since we are expecting to have a vowel here, we will only reckon with α as a possibility. And here, besides the group of letters AXTON (Αχτο(- -)ν) we have read, we must note the clear hiatus between the A and the sign preceding it. This is obvious on the original cup No. 10, where the sign preceding the A is almost connected to the upper part of the Ꝑ, while it is separate from the A. This seems to be confirmed particularly when we note that for reasons of symmetry on cup No. 9 the sign preceding the A is separated from the Ꝑ form, which could only be the result of senseless copying. So the letter group AXTON must be read as a word; this word could only be a name, and due to the *suspensio*, it is certainly in accusative: ʾΑχτο(νο)ν. And we must identify this name as Ajtony, more precisely, we must take it to be that. Ajtony's name appears as Ohtum (< Othum) in Anonymus,[45] and in the greater Gellért

43 Hampel, 1884, p. 60.
44 Fehér 1950, p. 41.
45 SRH I 50, 89, p. 90.

legend, it appears as Achtum (Acthum).[46] Starting from the 14th century, this name was known as Ahton (Ahthon),[47] or Ohtun (Ohthunt)[48] in toponyms. The data from the Gellért legend is certainly closer to the original form (which in our inscription is Aχton).

If indeed we correctly read the accusative of Ajtony's name here, it is no longer a possibility that the later correction was aimed at creating a "regular" baptismal formula, because the inscription was corrected on the occasion of a specific baptism. In this case, the inserted text must contain Ajtony's baptismal name, and it makes sense to look for this in the η with the *contractio* sign, and, precisely because of the *contractio* sign, the text must contain the termination of the name starting with an H. We find this termination either in the ON preceding the ₱ or in the o^υ ligatured with the ζ. However, as a logical interpretation of the sign following the ₱ (so far unread) by itself is hardly possible, we must connect this sign with those that have become redundant before the ₱, which are O and N (ζ only appears as o^υ), and the termination of the subsequently inserted name is certainly -ου. Now if we begin with the fragmented sentence we have obtained: (δ(ὸς) ἐξ ὕδατος ἀναπλύσ⌈ω⌉ν ἄ(γι)ε Ι(η)σ(οῦ) ’Η- - - ου ον - - - - ’Αχτο(νο)ν), it is obvious that we must complete the word beginning with ON to ὄνομα. Even Hampel correctly noticed the ligature[49] between the μ and the α in the sign preceding the AXTON, and the arched upper line of the letter clearly excludes any identification as π. As the slanted line denoting the α is connected to the right-side arm of the μ, we must read the ligature as M^A, which means that even based on the ligature we will probably find the termination of the word ὄνομα. However, even so, we (and they) could only read an ὄνομα there if the upper closure of the ₱ was read as an o in the series of letters. Otherwise, we cannot rule out (but we also cannot prove) that this Ω-like sign was connected later to the cross which had marked the beginning of the original text, because this form is connected at a distance

46 SRH II 487, pp. 489–92, 505.
47 Györffy 1963, p. 846.
48 Ortvay 1891, p. 264. n. 2; Csánki 1913, p. 326.
49 Hampel 1884, p. 59.

from the vertical axis of the cross, to the latter. Either way, here we must read ὄνομα (with or without the later correction), and in this case, here is the text of the corrected inscription:

Δ(ὸς) ἐξ ὕδατος ἀναπλύσ⌈ω⌉ν ἅ(γι)ε Ι(η)σ(οῦ) Ἡ(- - -)οῦ ὄνομα Ἀχτο(νο)ν

that is: "Holy Jesus, in the washing by water, give the name H... to Ajtony!"

In this text, first of all we must explain Ἀχτο(νο)ν in the accusative instead of the dative. By the 10th century, the Greek dative was completely gone and replaced by the accusative and the genitive.[50] That in our case we must suppose an accusative is confirmed by the fact that in modern Greek, precisely the northern Greek dialect is characterised by the use of the accusative instead of the dative.[51] It is particularly relevant to our case that the proto-Bulgarian inscriptions replace the dative combined with the verb δίδωμι with the accusative case,[52] and the same applies to our inscription. Another objection could be the combined use of the pre-baptismal and baptismal name in the inscription, but it was precisely in the inscription of Bulgarian khan Boriš-Michael that his Christian and heathen name appeared in a similar combination.[53] An accurate parallel of the phrasing variant of the corrected inscription on the Nagyszentmiklós cup also relates to the baptism of Boriš, as reported by Georg(ios) Hamartolos: ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς (Michael III) τὸν μὲν ἄρχοντα αὐτῶν (Boriš) βαπτίσας καὶ δεξάμενος ἐπέθηκεν αὐτῷ τὸ αὐτοῦ ὄνομα (ed. Muralt 732). The above give us data for the previously mentioned assumption (together with earlier data) that our inscription, most certainly both the original and the corrected one, was made in Bulgarian territory, and this data determines the place where cup No. 10 was made.

Our text would not be complete if we did not attempt to answer the question of what baptismal name Ajtony was given. There are several names beginning with η we could think of; it seems Ajtony's Christian name was János (John). At the time of our inscription, the initial ι in the name Ἰωαννης often alternated

50 Dieterich 1898, pp. 149–152; Mirambel 1939, XVII; Humbert 1930; Hatzidakis 1892, p. 220 sqq.

51 Tzartzanos 1946–53, p. 95.

52 Beševliev 1963, §27, p. 32.

53 Beševliev 1963, p. 174 sqq. Nr. 15.

with η,[54] and this initial cannot be a cause for excluding the assumption. On the other hand, we must take into account some historical data. First of all, we learn from the greater Gellért legend that Ajtony built a monastery in Marosvár honouring Saint John the Baptist,[55] but this alone would not be sufficient for us to determine that Ajtony's Christian name was János. But our assumption is supported by the fact that the name János was rather frequent in the Ajtony clan,[56] so we can see it is one of the most typical names in the clan. At the same time, there is no other name in the naming practices of the Ajtony clan that could substitute the name in our inscription. Accordingly, the complete text of the corrected inscription is:

Δ(ὸς) ἐξ ὕδατος ἀναπλύσ⌈ω⌉ν ἅ(γι)ε Ι(η)σ(οῦ) ᾽Η(ωανν)οῦ ὄνομα ᾽Αχτο(νο)ν.

Additionally, there is another and more probable explanation for the corrected inscription. Indeed, the word we have read above as ᾽Αχτο(νο)ν can be read clearly and obviously as ἅγηον. As we have seen, the second letter (following the initial Δ) can be read most likely as γ, while the subsequent letter can be read as a cursive η. In this case, the last word is the attribute of the word ὄνομα, and structurally we get a sentence similar to what we found in the original inscription:

Δ(ὸς) ἐξ ὕδατος ἀναπλύσ⌈ω⌉ν ἅ(γι)ε Ι(η)σ(οῦ) ᾽Η(ωανν)οῦ ὄνομα ἅγ⌈ι⌉ον

"Holy Jesus, in the washing by water, give the holy name of János (?) to..." Of course, here again we obtain a text with a general meaning, more accurately, the sentence is missing the object at which the action is targeted. This is inexplicable, because even in this form the text could only refer to a single event, and this fact supports the solution we proposed earlier. At the same time, we must accept that epigraphically speaking, clearly our latter solution is the more likely one. However, this then annuls our data that the Nagyszentmiklós treasure could be related to Ajtony. Nevertheless, we do believe that even in the absence of such a specific piece of data we have reasons to believe Ajtony was the possessor, as

54 E.g. Rott 1908, p. 205; Czebe 1918, pp. 454–6.
55 SRH II 490.
56 Karácsonyi 1900–01, I pp. 91–4.

Moravcsik,[57] László,[58] and Györffy[59] assumed as well. As we have seen and will see, cup No. 10 certainly emerged in a Bulgarian environment, and baptism at the Bulgarians at that time can only be confirmed in the case of Ajtony (see below), and at the same time, the treasure was hidden on Ajtony's estate. Thus, whether or not we find it likely that the inscription contains Ajtony's name, we certainly must assume that the cup is related to Ajtony's baptism.

57 Moravcsik 1938, p. 405.
58 László 1969, p. 151.
59 Györffy 1959, pp. 108–9.

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Our Ancient Writings

While records of Hungarian writing in Latin script date back one thousand years in Hungary, there is also contemporaneous or even earlier evidence of writing in Hungarian and unknown languages from the entire territory of the Carpathian Basin, written in different scripts. For obvious reasons, these writings are of particular interest for the lay audience, but they are also of great significance for scientific research. This increased publicity and closer cooperation between researchers is indeed needed, as the field is developing at a rapid pace. Today, there are at least three distinct types of the runiform script known in Hungary alone, and every year, four or five new inscriptions are guaranteed to emerge.

The Institute of Hungarian Research organised a conference on 12–13 December 2019, the lectures of which are included in this volume. Our original purpose was declaredly bold: everyone should come together, and everyone who has contributed important new findings to our knowledge base should now think together. But this work is in no way complete: we intend to continue and organise further conferences, further research and further volumes. We have so many common tasks ahead, in linguistic deciphering, research methodology, documentation, and even popularisation.

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