

CONSIDERATIONS FOR A HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE TREASURE OF NAGYSZENTMIKLÓS¹

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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* $AE = \alpha(\gamma)\epsilon$. Fehér's solution, on the other hand, is probable at least regarding the section which ends with $\alpha(\gamma)\epsilon \text{ } \text{'}\text{I}(\eta)\sigma(\text{o}\ddot{u})$, 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 However, after rejection by the reviewer György Györffy it could not be published in that form at that time.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 Ἡ(ωανν)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.

KEY WORDS: 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 Minns³ and Thomsen⁴ were acceptable,⁵ while in the case of the runiform inscriptions (citing an attempt by Németh⁶), 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 Fehér⁸ which sought (and opened up) new avenues.⁹ Doing so and accepting the Minns version which was inspired by the Keil¹⁰ 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 observations¹²), 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 ἀνάπλυσσον Κ(ύρι)ε εἰς ζῶην (or βίον) αἰδίου.

It is rather obvious that this interpretation (and thereby all interpretations of this type) fails because the two letters (AΕ) following the third word have a clearly marked *contractio* sign on top, in which case it can only be read as ἄ(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 ΚΕ abbreviation, then the ΕΙC preposition and the ΖΩΗΝ form could clearly follow (in this case, Fehér¹⁴ 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 ἄγτε, 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(EΦA)NON, and this interpretation (disregarding the interpretation of the even more questionable and even unacceptable small-type text), as Altheim¹⁶ and Kádár¹⁷ 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. 10²¹ 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 P, 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. Altheim²³ and Fehér²⁴ believed only the signs on top and following the P were such, but even Kádár²⁵ noticed that the *И* (?) preceding the ON is related to the smaller letters following the P. 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 $\alpha^{\wedge}\lambda$ or $\lambda^{\wedge}\alpha$ 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

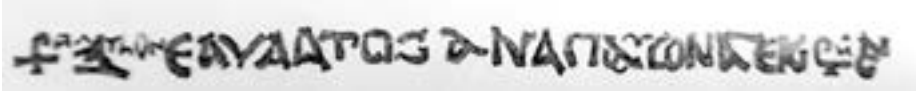
23 Altheim 1951, pp. 74–76.

24 Fehér 1950, p. 40.

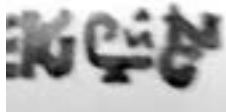
25 Kádár, 1959, pp. 111–2.

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).



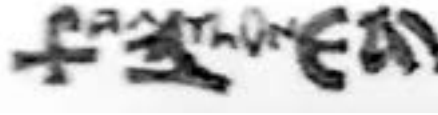
In this text the ἀνάπασον is obviously *participium futurum*, and we must expect a *praepositio* before the ὕδατος, which, according to the above, must begin with an ε. But the letter which most closely resembles an α makes it significantly difficult to determine this *praepositio*. Even Dietrich²⁸ thought 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 ἐπι.

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 ἐπι). But we must emphasise that the form of the preposition from the above possibilities can only be decided by the meaning of the word ΥΔΑΤΟΣ, and so the most likely interpretation of the part covered so far is: δ' ἐπι 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 ἄγιε. And obviously it needs to be followed by a name. Fehér reads the group of letters IC as Ἰησοῦ,³¹ but even Minns³² 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 P. Based on the initial letters of the word, we might consider a form of the name Ἰσαάκιος, but this is clearly not supported by the available letters (even assuming larger deficiencies). So the only possibility left is the *vocativus* of Ἰησοῦς; Ἰησοῦ. However, in this case, the absence of the *contractio* sign makes us look for the ending of the Ἰησοῦ, 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 counterarguments³⁴ 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 ο, 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 ΖωΙΝ, and due to the frequent η~ι substitution of medieval Greek inscriptions, we must read it as ζωήν.

After all this, let us return to the question of whether we should seek in the initial ζ the ending of the form Ἰησοῦ, or we should take the letter group IC instead of Ἰησοῦ 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 Ἰησοῦς with a palatal *i*, the Ἰησοῦς name might have been written in the form Ἰσοῦς 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 ~ Ἰησοῦ 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 ANAΠ-, 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 P (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 ἄ(γι)ε ᾿Ι(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: ^Λη. 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 P 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.MAAλ; 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 P 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 P, 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 = ᾿Ι(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 ἄ(γι)ε Ἰ(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 ν 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 Hampel⁴⁰ and Minns⁴¹ read this word. Another correction can be seen at the end of the inscription, where a ἦ (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 inscription’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. Fehér⁴² believed our

40 Hampel 1884, p. 58.

41 Minns 1938, p. 120 sqq.

42 Fehér 1950, p. 41.

sign was the first, while Hampel⁴³ 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 $\sigma^{\wedge}\upsilon$,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 ($A\chi\tau\sigma(-)\upsilon$) 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 P, 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 P 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: $\text{'}A\chi\tau\sigma(\upsilon)\upsilon$. 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 P or in the o^υ ligatured with the ζ. However, as a logical interpretation of the sign following the P (so far unread) by itself is hardly possible, we must connect this sign with those that have become redundant before the P, which are O and N (ζ only appears as o^υ), and the termination of the subsequently inserted name is certainly -ou. Now if we begin with the fragmented sentence we have obtained: (δ(ὀς) ἐξ ὕδατος ἀναλυσ[ω]ν ἄ(γι)ε I(η)σ(οῦ) 'H- - - ou ov - - - - 'Aχτο(vo)ν), it is obvious that we must complete the word beginning with ON to ὄνομα. Even Hampel correctly noticed the ligature⁴⁹ 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 P 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 Györfy 1963, p. 846.

48 Ortway 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 ἀναπλυσ[ω]ν ἅ(γι)ε Ι(η)σ(οῦ) ἼΗ(- - -)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 Tzartanos 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 ἀναπλῦσ[ω]ν ἄ(γι)ε I(η)σ(οῦ) Ἡ(ωανν)οῦ ὄνομα Ἄχτο(νο)ν.

Additionally, there is another and more probable explanation for the corrected inscription. Indeed, the word we have read above as Ἄχτο(νο)ν can be read clearly and obviously as ἄητον. 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 ἀναπλῦσ[ω]ν ἄ(γι)ε I(η)σ(οῦ) Ἡ(ωανν)οῦ ὄνομα ἄγ[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 Györffy⁵⁹ 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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