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Géza SZABÓ,

*Wosinsky Mór Museum, Szekszárd, kaladeaa@gmail.com***EARLY ALAN TEXT ON JUG No 6
OF THE NAGYSZENTMIKLÓS TREASURE**

Research on the Hungarian-Alan relations is closely linked to deciphering the names and origins of the Jász people who moved into the Carpathian Basin in the 13th century [SELMECZI 1996: 62]. A decisive step in this direction was when in 1899 Vladimir Ivanovich Lamansky explained in the columns of the journal of the Moscow Archaeological Society that the Jász mentioned in the Russian medieval chronicles were the same as the Alans or the Ossetians, who had migrated westward with the Kuns and settled in Hungary [ЛАМАНСКИЙ 1899: 294–297]. And the descendants of the inhabitants of the former Caucasian Alania were already known to have preserved their Indo-Iranian language, inherited from the Scythians and Sarmatians [МИЛЛЕР 1881: II. 44–99]. The Russian findings gave a new impetus to the research of the Iranian relations of the Hungarian language¹, Bernát Munkácsi collected words of Caucasian origin in the Hungarian language, among which a striking number belonged to the Digor dialect of the Ossetian language [MUNKÁCSI 1901]. Those fragments of the Alans, which moved into the Carpathian Basin together with the Hungarians conquering their homeland, are supposed to have been among the Alans (Asii) who moved further north from the Caucasus foothills in the 8th century, whose memory in the Carpathian Basin is preserved in the place names Eszlar (Oszlár) and Varsány, among others [SELMECZI 1996: 75]. According to Vasili Ivanovich Abaev, the more than two dozen words he has studied also point to the specifically Ossetian connections of the Hungarian language (e.g.: missus: *asszony-aexisnae*; silver: *eziüst-aezist*; stench: *bűz-bud*; rich: *gazdag-gaezdyg*; bridge: *híd-xid*; sword: *kard-kard*; lad: *legény-laegaen*; guest: *vendég-faendag*; drunk: *részeg-rasyg*; green: *zöld-zaelda*, etc.) [ABAEV 1949: 250–252]. The people who could have

¹ In his work „De origine Ungrorum”, written in 1756, János Eberhard Fischer already drew attention to the fact that, according to him, among other things, the words of the Hungarian language ‘egy/one’, ‘ezer/thousand’, ‘isten/god’, are of Persian origin.

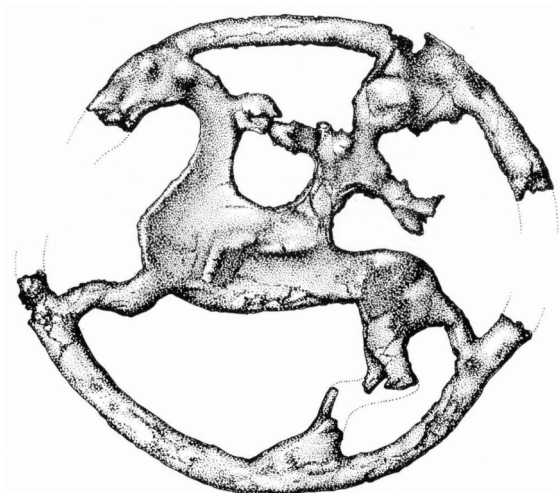


Figure 1. The disc from Tiszasüly
(based on Fodor 1980. Fig. 7)

Tiszasüly pierced disc (Fig. 1) depicting a horseman enclosed in a circular frame, the exact parallel of which he found in the material of the Pervomajskoye Alan cemetery. Maintaining his opinion later on, he saw the antecedents of the Hungarian conquest-era pierced discs in the 8th-9th century in the varied shapes of the pierced discs of the North Caucasian Alan and the Saltovo-Mayaki culture [FODOR 2014: 147; SZABÓ 2022b: 224–225].

In the process of research, a very special place is occupied by the Alan word, which was first highlighted by Gábor Vékony, among the Runic inscriptions of the treasure of 23 gold vessels found in 1799 in the village of Nagyszentmiklós [today, Sânnicolau Mare, Romania] [VÉKONY 1987: 218]. (Fig. 2) At the bottom of jug No 6, the same inscription with the meaning of ‘water’ can be read in four languages. (Fig. 3, 5) The three letters of the Alan ᚹᚹᚹ (dan) word², as it is, reflects the whole set of problems that have been discussed for decades by representatives of a wide range of disciplines, but which have not yet been addressed in a fundamental way (Fig. 4). The reconsideration of questions such as the position and role of groups with different languages, ethnicities, cultures and worldviews among the Hungarian conquerors in the 9th century, or the limitations of genetic studies and the usability of earlier historical, archaeological and even language-historical models cannot be postponed any longer. Based on the processes that have been going on for thousands of years with similar dynamics between

² The importance of the inscription is increased by the fact that it dates back several centuries earlier than the inscription from Zelenchuk.

transmitted the Ossetian words into the Hungarian language could only have been the Alans, in the area between the North Caucasus or the Volga-Don rivers in the 8th century [ABAEV 1949: 253]. According to the recently deceased István Fodor, the antecedents of a significant part of the 10th century Hungarian costume elements and decorative art are also to be found in the Eastern European steppe and grove steppe [FODOR 1973; Fodor 2014: 146; 1980: 201. 8. ábra 2; 1994: 56. 6. kép 3]. As an example of this, he mentions the



Figure 2. The Nagyszentmiklós treasure (Copy, exhibited in the Hungarian National Museum)

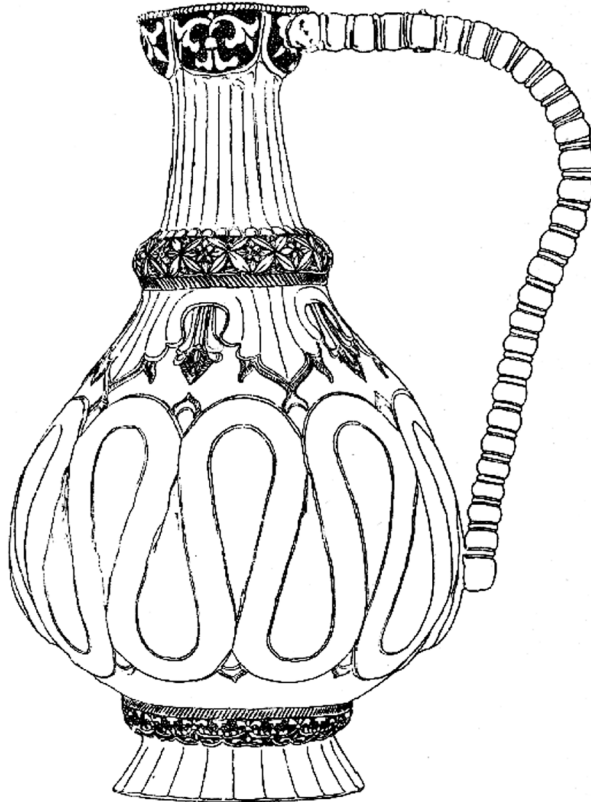


Figure 3. Jug No 6 of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure (based on Hampel 1884, Figure 9)



Figure 4. The Alan word dan/water at the bottom of jug No 6, on the edge of the inner side of the rim (based on Bühler, Freiburger 2018: Plate 141)

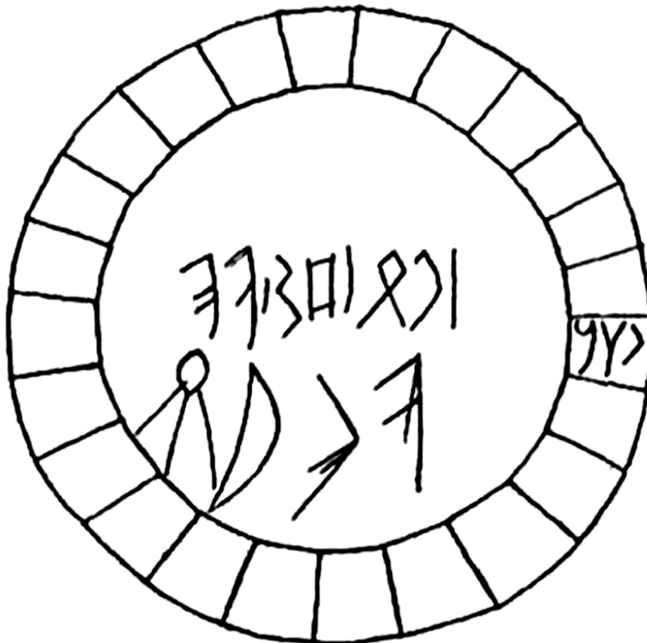


Figure 5. Quadrilingual runic inscriptions on the bottom of jar No 6 (based on Hoszú, Zelliger 2014, 186, Figure 3)

the Carpathian Basin and the Caucasus, I can only draw attention to the fact that very little research has been done on the close links to the distinctive Iranian cultural circle, including the Alans [SZABÓ 2017a; 2017b]. It would be important for targeted and complex research to become systematic as soon as possible in one of the most important contact zones for Hungarian prehistory.

The previous groupings and the determination of the chronology of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure have not taken into account essential phenomena related to the making and use of the objects. As far as production is concerned, for example, at least two groups emerge from the point of view of technique, but the objects of both were being produced over a longer period of time, suggesting identical workshop traditions rather than coherent sets [LÁSZLÓ, RÁCZ 1977; BÜHLER, FREIBERGER 2018]. The results of the archaeometric analyses [DAIM et al. 2015; BÜHLER, FREIBERGER 2018] carried out on the collection of finds suggest that the vessels may have been collected over a long period of time from different areas and subsequently adapted to a partially identical design [SZABÓ 2021: 209–210, 2. kép]. Some of the inscriptions are certainly not earlier than the 10th century [HOSSZÚ, ZELIGER 2014: 187], pyxis No 19 may have been made in the 9th century [WAMERS 2015: 107–108; SCHULZE-DÖRLAMM 2010: 138], the 9th-10th century conquest-period parallels of the subsequently attached buckle on bowl No 20 rule out exclusive use in the Avar period [SCHULZE-DÖRLAMM 2010: 135–136]. In contrast to the more recent Avar dating [GARAM, KOVÁCS 2002; BÁLINT 2004] the newer data point to the use of the vessels in the 10th-11th centuries, which had already been assumed, and to their hiding around 1028 [SZABÓ 2021a; 2022a; LÁSZLÓ, RÁCZ 1977; VÉKONY 1973; 2004; 2020; GYÖRFFY 1977: 175].

The wedding scene, which can be precisely interpreted on the basis of Caucasian ethnographic data, in the depiction of a bird of prey on jug No 2 and the Runic inscription in the Alan language on jug No 6 both point towards these areas, which are still hardly researched from a Hungarian point of view [SZABÓ 2021b; 2022b, 235–242]. This omission is also incomprehensible, because the Caucasian-Alan connection of the Hungarian conquest-era relics has long been known from both the linguistic and the archaeological side [MUNKÁCSI 1901; FODOR 1973; 2014]. From the diverse aspects of this topic, this time I would like to draw attention to only a few questions related to the chronological, historical and archaeological background of the artefacts, primarily those related to the quadrilingual Runic inscriptions of the 23.5 cm high, 1.25 l jug No 6 of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure [LÁSZLÓ, RÁCZ 1977: 142], arising in the light of recent research.

Jug No 6 in the light of recent archaeometric tests

Already at the beginning of the research József Hampel stressed that jug No 6 is the most beautiful object in the collection of artefacts, apart from the two vessels with figurative depictions, on which the most decorative and formal solutions can be observed. (Fig. 3) In addition to its shape similar to the others, the base is articulated with ribs, surmounted by a bulging ribbon with floral decoration. The latter is connected with a similar motif running along the rim of cup No 8, with a background punched with ring-ended embossing. There are drop-shaped ornaments in the gaps between the indented ribbons running down the belly of the vessel, and above them are leaves similar to those on jug No 5, but much more ornate and articulated [HAMPEL 1884: 20, 9 ábra]. Nikola Mavrodinov assumed a connection with jug No 2 based on the details and high quality of the decoration, and also with jug No 1 based on the pearl wire soldered to the mouth [MAVRODINOV 1943: 14].

Gyula László also considered jug No 6 to be a key object, which, according to him, connects the table set of the “prince” (3–6, 8–12, 15–17, 22–23) in the treasure trove he divided into two parts, and the “princess” (1–2, 7, 13–14, 18–21) through its similarities with jug No 1, which is about 4.4 litres in volume. In spite of the characteristic protrusion of one branch of the engraved-punched vines below the other, the prominent neck ring, the neck broken into grooves and the wide-hanging leaf wreath, he considered it justified to classify them into different groups on the basis of the Runic inscription on the bottom, the vine with the punched background, the “seamed” leaf wreath and especially the serpentine-pattern segmentation of the surface on both vessels. He also noted, however, that the vine designs on a punched background are primarily characteristic of the set he attributed to the prince, being present on vessels No 3, 6 and 8, while only on the foot of jug 7 of the other set. In connection with the latter phenomenon, on the basis of Sasanid vessels undecorated in the same area, he also suggested the possibility that the punched-engraved decoration was placed in the “empty” space as a secondary feature, which he believes is supported by the punched background handle subsequently placed on the bowl of cup No 8, which partially covered the Runic inscription [LÁSZLÓ, RÁCZ 1977: 142–147, 69–70. kép].

Csanád Bálint sees the parallels between the ribbon pattern and the drop-shaped decorative elements snaking around the belly of jug No 6 and the Byzantine ornamentation of the 6th-7th centuries, and thus dates the manufacturing of the object to the first half of the 8th century. He assumes that jugs No 1, 5 and 6 were made at the same time and in the same workshop, and that cup No 8 is of the same age as well, and considers their common feature of the vine decorations with ring-shaped punches as their age-defining feature [BÁLINT 2004: 447]. (However,

it is also clear from the examples he gives that the ribbon pattern snaking around and drop-shaped decorative elements were used in a much wider period.)

Matilde Schulze-Dörlamm paid special attention to the fine details of the palmettes decorating the four-ringed mouth of jug No 6. She has observed that in the fields of the rim divided into four parts, with their smooth, glossy surface, the eye is drawn from the background struck by a ring punch, to the vine decorations of two outwardly curving palmettes, held together by a shield-shaped knot, the straight base of which is further emphasised by a horizontal notch. The author draws particular attention to the fact that, in contrast to the cast metalwork of the Late Avar period, where the vines are held together almost exclusively by round or clamp-like curved knots, these shield-shaped knots were also typical decorations of the attachments of rich Moravian tombs from the 9th to the early 10th century [SCHULZE-DÖRLAMM 2010: 128–129]. The links leading towards the Moravian finds are not unknown to Hungarian research. About half a century earlier, Béla Szőke already drew attention to the connection between the carved, vine decorated Moravian finds with their punched background - which he linked to the Avars surviving in the 9th century — and the decorations of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure [BÁLINT 2004, 195. kép].

Most recently — and most thoroughly — Birgit Bühler, Viktor Freiburger and Mathias Mehofer examined jug No 6 (Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Antikensammlung, Inv. No.: VII B 28.) [BÜHLER, FREIBERGER 2018: 61–68, T. 131–154]. According to them also, it is the most complexly decorated object in the treasure trove, beside jugs No 2 and 7 with figural decoration. Its neck ring can also be found on vessels No 1, 2, 5 and 7, the row of scales closing the protruding structural element from the above is also visible on vessels No 2, 7, the cord pattern running at the bottom is apparent on vessels No 1, 5 too, and its main decoration hardly differs from that of vessels No 1, 5. The cannellure on its neck and foot is repeated on jug No 1, but there the base is undecorated. What these two vessels also have in common is that the four- and three-armed mouth parts are sealed with a pearl wire soldered to them. The ornaments decorating the mouth, which they consider to be lily-like flowers, are attached to the vine decorations on the rim of jug No 3 [BÜHLER, FREIBERGER 2018: 61]. The hanging acanthus leaves running around the upper part of the belly are also found on vessels No 1 and 5, and a reduced version of them on vessel No 7, while the indented ribbon decoration snaking over most of the body is similar in contour to the motif on vessels No 3 and 4, but there it is formed from interlocking chain links. Above the foot ring, the knotted vine ornament emerging from the background struck with a ring punch again links it to jug No 7, the motifs running around its bottom. The shape of its gold foil covered handle, copper inside and retrofitted, is similar to the handles of jugs No 3, 5 and 7. According to the

authors, the Runic inscriptions on the bottom of jug No 6 were scratched into the material [BÜHLER, FREIBERGER 2018: 61]. They highlight specifically the absence of seams at the bottom of jugs No 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, which indicates that the base and body of the vessels were fashioned from a single gold plate [BÜHLER, FREIBERGER 2018: 63]. They assume that the basic shape was produced in two stages, first the top part of the jug with a smooth base, a regular round mouth and smooth surfaces, and only then the base ring was formed. The order of making the decorations, which can be divided into seven zones on jug No 6 (four-ringed mouth with punched decoration; fluted neck; neck ring with embossed rosette and flower patterns; embossed leaf and flower motifs at the base of the neck; serpentine ribbon motif and drop-shaped decorations on the belly; surface protruding above the foot, decorated with plant patterns and ring punches; foot ring decorated with running flutes), cannot be precisely determined by the researchers, it can only be assumed. It is considered logical that the largest, most important surface, the belly, was decorated first [BÜHLER, FREIBERGER 2018: 63–64]. During the production technique experiments, they also proceeded in the same way, then they made the decoration of the neck ring, the lower parts, and finally the rim. Here, one of their most important observations was that the background of the plant ornamentation applied after the creation of the four-ring mouth was also made in two steps, first they omitted a band near the edge, which was only completely filled with ring punches after soldering the pearl wire [BÜHLER, FREIBERGER 2018: 65]. The possibility was also raised that perhaps the handle belonging to jug No 4 was secured on this vessel by mistake, which confirms that it was used as a bottle, which was already assumed based on its volume and shape [LÁSZLÓ, RÁCZ 1977: 142]. The Runic marks on the inside of the foot were scratched in with a metal needle [BÜHLER, FREIBERGER 2018: 65].

However, the extremely thorough recent investigations and observations also clearly point out that jugs No 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 made from a single piece, point to the closest possible connection between them from a technological point of view, and moreover to a fundamental sign that subsequent processing could no longer influence. The specific and rare workshop technique indicates that these vessels were most likely made at around the same time and became part of the treasure trove from the same place. At the same time, the fact that the order in which their ornaments were made cannot be established, and that they can be divided into clearly distinct units, as has been demonstrated by experiments, also allows for the possibility of a spatial and temporal delay in their making, which represents a fundamental change of approach in the further study of the artefacts of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure. In the light of this, for example, the question of the division into a “prince” and “princess” table set, raised by Gyula László [LÁSZLÓ 1970: 126; LÁSZLÓ, RÁCZ 1977: 28], but rejected by the research of the last

decades³, is put in a completely different light. (In this case, this is interesting for our topic because one of the criteria for grouping was precisely the presence or absence of Runic inscriptions on the vessels [LÁSZLÓ, RÁCZ 1977: 31]). Gyula László also assumed that the base of the jugs were fixed by soldering in the case of jugs No 3, 4, 5 and 6, which he also classified as belonging to the “prince” set [LÁSZLÓ, RÁCZ 1977: 138, 142]. By clarifying that the foot-ringed jugs were formed from a single piece, the delimitation of the area of spread of this particular workshop technique will provide an answer to the question of where this group of vessels within the treasure objects may have been made⁴. Another fact, interesting both from a technological and a chronological point of view, is the fact that on jug No 6 there are two decorations that indicate different workshop traditions: in addition to the highly embossed, plastic decoration, there are also flat nodular vines⁵ with a roughened background to increase the spatial effect — here struck with a ring punch - generally used in wood and bone carving⁶. The latter, moreover, are in a situation which, according to the experiments, was designed in a separate step, independent of the order in which the other elements were made.

The finding of recent archaeometric investigations that the surface and the foot ring of these jugs were also made of a single piece indicates that the division of the treasure trove by owner was only partially justified, and that the four jugs (3–6) are indeed particularly closely related [FREIBERGER, BÜHLER 2015: 11]. However, the technological argument against such a grouping is that there is an overlap between them through jug No 1 in the other set. Furthermore, if we look at the decoration that can be added afterwards, the ring punch used to enhance the spatial effect, then of the objects hammered out of a single piece of material in the same way, only jug No 3 has a similar decoration, so the connection with vessels No 2, 7, 8 seems stronger in terms of their number. Moreover, the identical size of the foot of jug No 7 and the handle of cup No 8 of the latter objects points to the use of the same tool, and the similar drop-shaped punch observed on jugs No 2 and 7 also links these two vessels even separately [Freiberger, Bühler 2015: 12]. It should be noted that recently the use of a similar

³ István Erdélyi did not consider the Nagyszentmiklós artefacts to be a set, but rather the objects of hoarded treasure. ERDÉLYI-PATAKY 1968; BÁLINT 2004: 83.

⁴ Those carrying out the examinations found no technological parallels between the archaeological finds. Freiberger, Bühler 2015: 11.


⁵ The role and presumed cultural background of the nodular vine, hops: SZABÓ 2018.

⁶ On the rim of jug No 2, the use of a ring punch can be observed on the background of the highly embossed, statuesque decoration, which is also without a nodule, and here the aim was obviously not to increase the spatial effect. The subsequent punching, which in this case can be considered only a visual element, was presumably intended to achieve a similar appearance with the apparently similarly decorated vessels (3, 6, 7, 8).

punch has been observed on jugs No 7 and 8, which were recently placed in a completely different time horizon [BÁLINT 2004: 561–564., 283. kép], and which are related to jug No 6 by the use of a ring punch, which indicates that at least their decoration is contemporary [FREIBERGER, BÜHLER 2015: 12].

The fact that all but the first of the five closely related jugs have a Runic inscription (3–6) further reinforces their association. However, looking at the treasure trove as a whole, it is clear that the Runic inscriptions [FEHÉR 2020: 133–152, 2–6, 8–11, 15–17, 22–23] apparent on the 14 vessels cannot be linked to a single group of objects in terms of their manufacture or even decoration, as they were already applied to a mixed assemblage of pieces.⁷ From a chronological point of view, this also means that the Runic inscriptions cannot belong to the period of the earliest objects of a continuously evolving group of artefacts. The web of relationships between the objects associated with jug No. 6, based on the particular technique used to make it, or the spatial effect increased by the ring punch in the decoration, also confirms that the individual objects in the collection of artefacts were related to each other in different ways and at different times during their own lives. What exactly was the occasional organizing force, the will, that linked objects for longer or shorter periods of time in terms of making, decorating, using, inscribing, could be constantly changing. The change may have been due to different craftsmen, different linguistic contexts, as well as the current owner's needs and cultural background. These aspects, in varying combinations and, in some cases, only affecting a part of the treasure trove, will be worth taking into account in further investigations and grouping experiments.

The quadrilingual Runic inscriptions

A On the bottom of jug No 6 there are four words scratched in different languages, whose reading is related to water in the same way in Ogur, Hungarian, Slavic and Alan languages. (Fig. 5) On jug No 5, also differently, there is an inscription in Ogur and Hungarian, which clearly shows that during the period of treasure accumulation, a multilingual environment is to be expected [VÉKONY 2004: 137–138]. This, based on the  apparent in the Slavic inscription on the bottom of jug No 6 [also on vessel No 23], which, according to Gábor Hosszú and Erzsébet Zelliger, originates from the early Cyrillic alphabet, the equivalent of which is X , the adaptation of which into the Runic alphabet of the Carpathian-basin could not have happened before the creation of the Cyrillic alphabet, i.e. before the period between 893 and 927 [HOSSZÚ, ZELLIGER 2014: 187]. Thus, regardless of the date of manufacture, there must have been a period or periods

⁷ Robert Göbl and András Róna-Tas have already shown that most of the inscriptions were applied to the vessels only subsequently: Göbl, Róna-Tas 1995. 31–35.

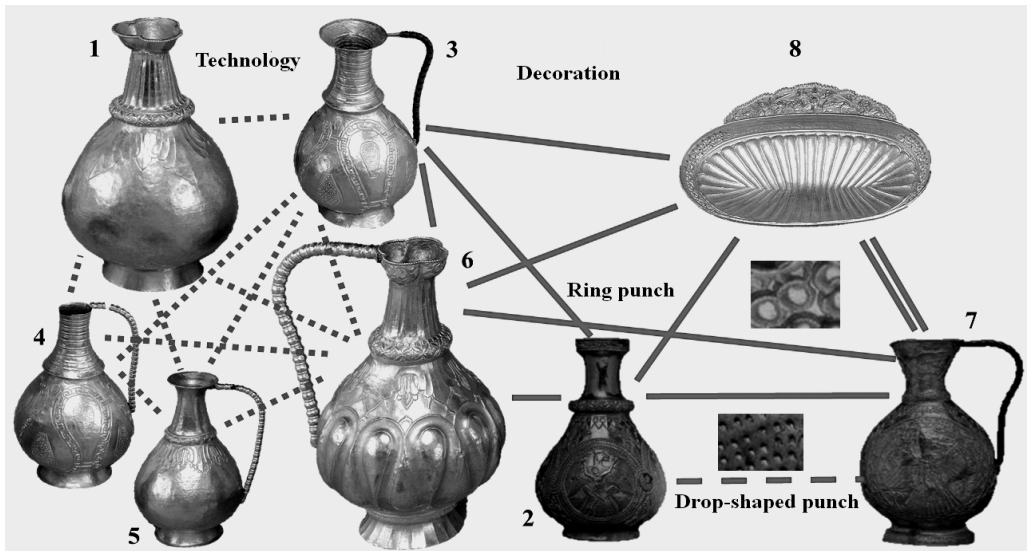


Figure 6. The relationship network of the jar No 6 of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure

no earlier than the first half of the 10th century when vessels No 1–5, 7–8, 23, which are related to jug No 6 in various respects, were used together in any combination, in whole or in part. This also means, of course, that the treasure could not have been hidden any earlier. (Fig. 6.)

The data reflected in Runic inscriptions, anthropological data, archaeological finds and customs, all pointing to the different origins of the ethnic groups in the age of conquest, inevitably raise the question: did several ethnic groups, several cultures, several origin myths, even several religious worlds belong to several languages within the same period?

In addition to the Slavs living here, the research also reckons with the continued existence of the partly earlier Sarmatian [FÓTHI 1991: 488; Istvánovits, KULCSÁR 2018: 433] and Turkish [RÓNA-TAS 1995: 274; 2001: 13; ERDÉLYI, PATAKY 1968] peoples in the Carpathian basin during the Hungarian conquest, which at first glance seems to be in line with the four languages of the inscriptions on jug No 6. According to modern genetic studies, the paternal lineages of the occupiers, based on Y-chromosomal studies, consist of several groups of different origins, including people from the Baikal-Altay, West-Siberia-South-Ural and Black Sea-North Caucasus areas [FÓTHI et al. 2020; SZÉCSÉNYI-NAGY et al. 2021]. Outside the Carpathian Basin, the most prominent and most researched line is traditionally the area of the South Urals and the Volga-Kama region, at the moment most of the genetic information is from here [CSÁKY et al. 2020]. However, unfortunately, despite the multi-faceted Alan-Caucasus relations, which have been on the agenda for a long time and almost continuously in the

research of the age of conquest, this intermediate area has so far been left out of targeted genetic studies, although perhaps a shift in this field is also expected [SZÉCSÉNYI-NAGY et al. 2021: 152]. Until then, based on the archaeological observations so far, we can only perceive the existence of the relationship in this direction, we do not yet see its genetic background and content. However, genetic studies, which now show much more dynamic and complex changes than the traditional language tree model, could help to shed light to the fact, for example, if based on the inscription of jug No 6, the Alan language was spoken by a part of the population of the Carpathian Basin at the time of the conquest, then was it necessary for our Iranian words to be adopted earlier at the steppes, or a part of it — even together with their linguistic development — could have been brought by the merging groups themselves.

In relation to the possibility of Sarmatian survival, which has arisen several times in recent times in Hungarian research, it cannot escape our attention that in the early medieval archaeological finds and burial customs there is no such phenomenon or custom that can be traced continuously up until the 9th century, which would verify the survival of the population of the Great Plain of Iranian language and culture of the Roman period. Despite the fact that the archaeological material of the Carpathian Basin clearly shows that from the Copper Age through the Regöly Pannons, the Scythian and Sarmatian tribes, to some of our conquerors or the arrival of the Jász in the 13th century, all peoples are ultimately united by a common cultural background [SZABÓ 2020a]. However, this did not directly go hand in hand with the survival of the population. Continuity was not territorial and ethnic, but was primarily realized in the context of cultural continuity in the presence of common traditions, ethnic foundations, elements of education [SZABÓ 2020b]. In its background, there are peoples with Iranian roots who broke away from practically the same cultural circle — mostly similar, but not necessarily genetically related ethnic groups — in new waves and settled in the Carpathian Basin and other parts of Europe at different times. Behind the Alan language inscription on jug No 6, such population can be expected, a short before the conquest, but, based on the archaeological parallels [M. LEZSÁK et al. 2018], arriving in our area at the same time. Thus, the Alan word 𐰇𐰏 dan/water, which can be read at the bottom of jug No 6, on the edge of the inner side of the rim, (Fig. 4) once again draws attention to the importance of the thread pointing to the peoples living in the foreground of the Caucasus, belonging to the Iranian cultural circle, connected in countless ways to our finds and customs from the time of the conquest [SZABÓ 2022b]. Based on the background made with a ring punch, the best and most helpful parallels for the interpretation of the bird of prey scene on jug No 2, which is also related to jug No 6, can be found just in this area [SZABÓ 2021a; 2021b].

Based on the Nart epic and customs of the Ossetians, the late descendants of the Sarmatians and Alans belonging to the Iranian peoples, still living in the Caucasus today, the tradition system can be easily followed, the characteristics of which give the unique formulation of the depictions of vessel No 2, which is also related to jug No 6.

In the same context, many popular decorative elements of our metalwork from the time of the conquest can also be well interpreted, such as the image of an eagle with a nodular vine in its beak and holding its young in its claws on the pair of hair braid discs in Rakamaz⁸ or the vine decorations, which refer to hops, seen on sabretache plates and sabers⁹. This also proves that the goldsmith did not just place simple decorative elements and scenes onto the objects just as an idea, but filled them with consciously designed content that was understandable in the given community — for which he had to at least know the world of the given community. In addition to the Alan language sample, the associated two jugs depicting figures, No 2, which also reflects the origin myth of the Árpád house in its details [SZABÓ 2021b], and No 7, which can be interpreted in the broader Iranian tradition system, draws attention to the duality which, during the research of our belief system and decorative art from the time of the conquest, we can continuously meet [MARKOV 2014]. István Dienes, in connection with the Ugrian-era relics of our mortuary customs, has drawn attention more than half a century ago to the Iranian origin of the phenomenon that can be observed in many areas of our heritage, also pointing beyond the Urals, in connection with the finds found around the eyes and mouth in grave 10 of the Bashalom cemetery, which are considered to be characteristically Hungarian. According to him, the shroud could have spread to the north to the for the Ob Ugrians from the southern civilizations *“since on the steppes of the Scythian and Sarmatian era, in Iran, among the late Alans, the use of eye and mouth plates was popular for a long time.”* [DIENES 1963: 110]. His early observation highlights the fact that our ancestors could have encountered Iranian influences already in the Ugrian era, they could even have brought the basic elements of this peculiar system of traditions from there, but during their journey they could also have had many

⁸ István Fodor rejects the possibility that some of our hair braiding discs could have originated directly from the North Caucasus, based on a number of arguments, including the lack of evidence that our ancestors and the Caucasian Alans were neighbours. This, however, is contradicted, for example, by a recently published palmette braid disc from a site in the north-western western Caucasus called Andreevskaya Shchel: M. LEZSÁK et al. 2018.

⁹ The identification of the vine plant with hops is demonstrated by one of the Permian silver bowls, which realistically depicts hop cones with bract behind an ibex (nehany-permi-ezust.png (nyest.hu) 2020. 02. 10.).

direct influences from the mentioned Caucasian Alans. Based on anthropological data and recent research, the emerging, highly mixed genetic picture of the conquerors shows that Hungarians were formed from ethnic groups that followed different paths, which obviously kept more or less different traditions and beliefs, and their origin myths may have differed.

Recent archaeometric results of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure, in particular the Alan word ᚢᚢ [dan] among the four-language Runic inscriptions on jug No 6, and the wedding scene on jug No 2 based on the Caucasian parallels sheds new light not only on Hungarian-Alan language relations, but also on the original myths of the Hungarian people [SZABÓ 2022b]. There are two known origin myths of Hungarians, which is why the fact that both are based on Iranian traditions is puzzling, their motif system, the related archaeological finds and the distribution of the phenomena to be taken into account are concentrated only in the smaller, north-eastern area of the Carpathian Basin, and even there in the graves of the Hungarian ruling [SZABÓ 2022b]. Hunor and Mogor, in the swamps of Meotis, while chasing the Mythical Stag, captured the two daughters of Dula, prince of the Alans, one of whom was married by Hunor and the other by Mogor, according to this, the Hungarians are descended from the latter lineage [Kézai 1.1.4]. The prince of the Hungarians who found a new homeland in the Carpathian Basin in the 9th century, the founder of the House of Árpád, was called Álmos, according to legend, because a turul bird landed on his mother, Emese, in her sleep and got her pregnant [Gesta Hungarorum]. Like the Mythical Stag, the myth of the two founding brothers is also ancient and widespread. Regarding the two heroes of the Nart epics which date back to the Bronze Age, Ahasartag and Ahasar and the Roman founders Romulus and Remus, George Dumézil saw in the phenomenon related co-adaptive elements that can be traced from the Caucasus through Italy to Scandinavia [DUMÉZIL 1968]. The mating of the woman and the eagle is also a widespread motif, from Sasanid vessels and Permian bronzes to Buryat and Hungarian folklore [LÁSZLÓ, RÁCZ 1977: 94–96]. However, both sagas contain, in addition to the general motifs, specific elements [the marriage of Mogor and the daughters of the Alan prince Dula; the mating of Emese and the turul bird] which can be linked to the Alans or to the Caucasus. Furthermore, the word “water”, which is written on jug No 6 of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure in the Alan language alongside the three languages [Ogur, Hungarian, Slavic], makes it clear that, in addition to the linguistic and archaeological connections already assumed earlier, among the conquering Hungarians in the 9th century Alans also lived in the Carpathian Basin, speaking their own language — and even then having their own written language.

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