

## The Újlak Bronze Mirror with Old Hungarian\* inscription

### Overview and Decipherment Attempt

**Written by: Friedrich Klára**

Újlak (Ilok) is a town in Croatia, in Vukovar-Srijem County. In its vicinity, a bronze mirror with the inscription was found with the aid of a metal detector. It is currently kept in the Vinkovci City Museum. The country's largest Avar-period collection is also housed there. The medieval name of Vinkovci was Szentillye, after the town's patron saint, St. Elias. The place name Vinkócz appears in the 16th century, when the church received a new patron saint, St. Vincent.

\*About the name of the writing system used for the inscription, see page 15.



The reverse side of the Újlak mirror with the inscription (Hetzmann R., Patriots)

The bronze mirror is also mentioned in studies and reports under the name Vukovar Mirror.

The Museum highly valued this important archeological find. It was restored, cleaned of deposits, and presented on a worthy, beautiful ceremonial occasion on International Museum Day in May 2026. **Hrvoje Vulić**, director of the Vinkovci City Museum, stated on that occasion that, since the inscription is in the Hungarian language, the local Hungarian community of Vinkovci was involved in the organisation, and a full-day Hungarian historical, ethnographic, tradition-preserving and gastronomic event was held.

Bronze mirrors were produced in large numbers in ancient times as well. They have survived not only in Scythian royal tombs in Russia, but also in the Carpathian Basin, for example at Tápiószele and Szécsény. Archaeologist Mihály Párducz shows 21 Carpathian Basin sites on one of his maps, where bronze mirrors were unearthed (Source: Ágnes Benedekffy).

Archaeologist Kornél Bakay: “On Scythian–Saka–Sarmatian–Xiongnu–Hun–Alan mirrors appear solar animals, stags, mountain goats, rams, horses, predatory /eagle/ birds, panthers, lions, saigas, griffins and other fabulous creatures. Human figures appear only rarely. Their dates range from the 7th century BC to the 6th century AD. There is as yet no explanation why metal mirrors are absent from the archaeological material of the Avars and Hungarians” (2005/274).

This is why the find is significant: if the mirror really dates from the 9th–10th century, as the reports claim, then this piece is now present in the archaeological material of the Avars or Hungarians as well.

Several thousand bronze mirrors have remained from the Etruscans. The reverse-side depictions are often connected with the love affairs of the Gods. *“Roman-period mirrors were typically made of high-tin (22 %), leaded bronze, in contrast to the low-tin Etruscan and Greek examples... Fine abrasives, for example plant ash containing silica, may have been used for polishing the mirror surface.”* (Dr. Anikó Bózsza)

Dimensions of the Újlak mirror: Diameter 6.5 cm, thickness 1.65 mm, handle 1.28 cm. Thus, it fits in a pocket.

The animal visible in the middle of the inscription is related to the mythical

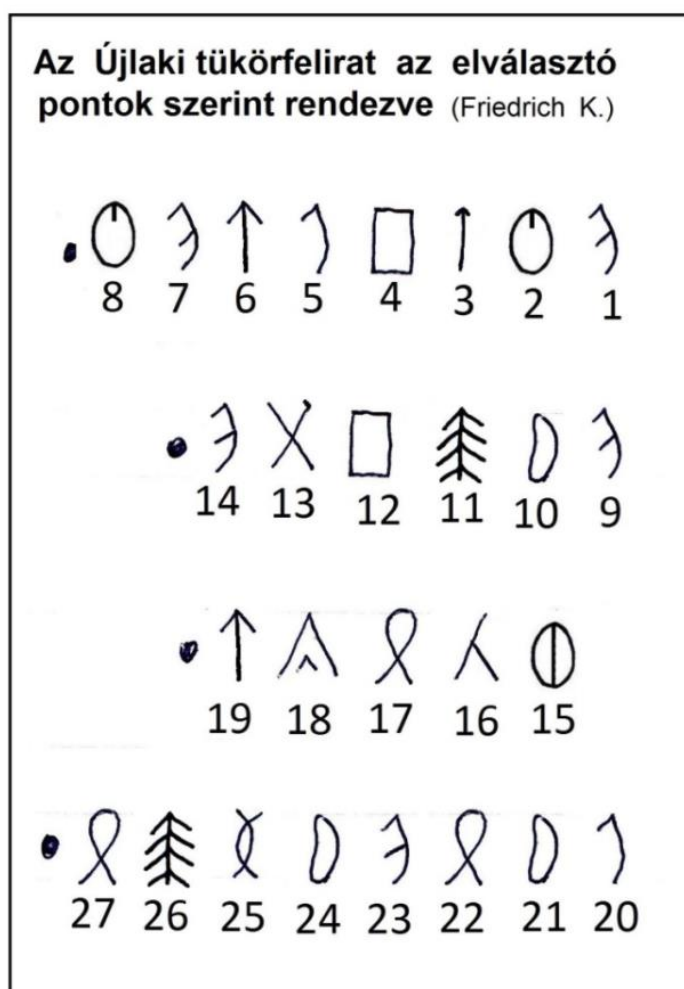
animal on jug No. 2 of the Nagyszentmiklós Treasure.

In the reports the age of the find is given as the 9th–10th century. I am not a professional archaeologist or historian, so I cannot determine the age of the mirror. On the basis of the parallels of the signs, however, I regard it as earlier, of Hun or Avar date. On the basis of Scythian–Hun–Avar–Hungarian continuity it belongs to the writing of the direct ancestors of the Hungarians.

Even simple visual inspection shows that several signs are similar or identical to those of the Nagyszentmiklós, Szarvas, Kiskundorozsma and Székely–Hungarian scripts. More distantly they resemble Etruscan and Greek letters, Germanic runes, and the Yenisei (Siberia), Orkhon (Mongolia) and Talas Valley (Açıktaş, Kyrgyzstan) signs.

## Tables:

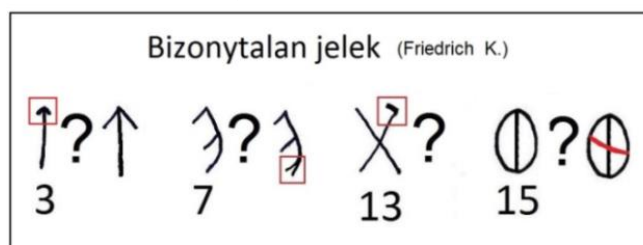
1. The signs of the Újlak bronze mirror inscription, starting from the point above the handle and proceeding to the right, arranged according to the separating dots:



**2. The character set** of the Újlak bronze mirror consists of 14 signs. (I removed the repeating signs from the inscription).



### 3. Uncertain signs



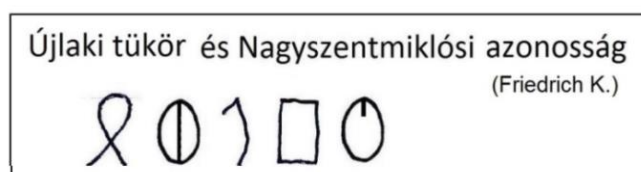
No. 3: may be **C** or **I**.

No. 7: uncertain line at the bottom.

No. 13: **B** or **B-I** ligature.

No. 15: because of the uncertain cross-line it may also be **F** (according to Géza Varga as well).

**4. Identical signs** of the Újlak bronze mirror and the Nagyszentmiklós treasure (the gold vessels of Nagyszentmiklós found in 1799, are of Hun or Avar date).



**5. Similar Signs** of the Újlak bronze mirror and the Nagyszentmiklós treasure, that are not completely identical.



**6. Identical signs** of the Újlak bronze mirror and the Szarvas needle-case (the latter was found in 1983 in a female grave of an Avar cemetery)

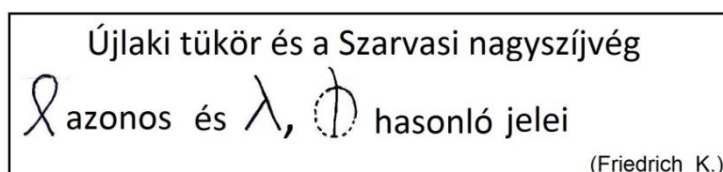


\* According to Gábor Vékony this sign appears on the Szarvas needle-case (Életünk, 1985/2.) \*\* On the needle-case it is visible without the secondary mark.

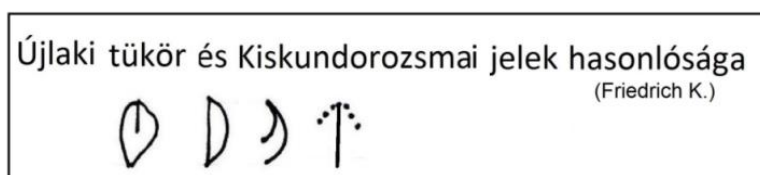
**7. Similar signs** of the Újlak bronze mirror and the Szarvas needle-case that are not completely identical.



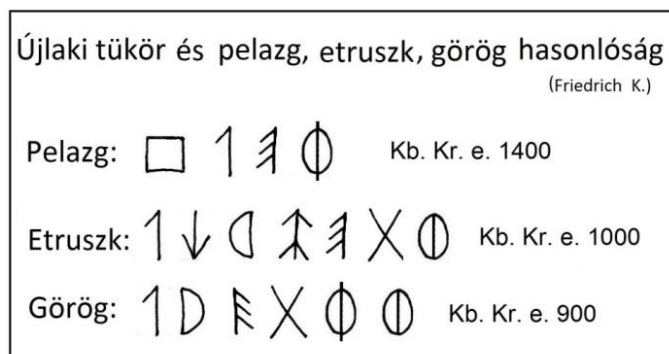
**8. One identical and two similar signs** found on the Újlak bronze mirror and the Szarvas strap-end. The bronze strap-end from an Avar cemetery, bearing approximately 18 incised signs, including combined characters. Thanks to Miklós Szondi for the photographs of the strap-end.



**9. Similar signs** of the Újlak bronze mirror and the bone plate belonging to the Kiskundorozsma Avar bow. The incised bone plate of Avar date was found during the archaeological excavation of the M43 motorway. (More in my book: Mély titkú rovással, 2017, p. 55.)

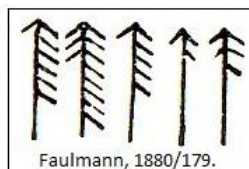
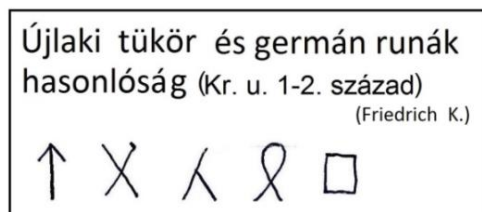


**10. Similarity of the Újlak mirror to Pelasgian, Greek and Etruscan letters.**  
How do these three scripts fit in here? Simply, because in the 19th century Ferenc Kállay and László Hódolý wrote that the Pelasgians took 16 Scythian letters down into the territory of Greece! So the Scythians were the transmitters.



## 11. Formal agreement with Germanic runes

The reason is that the Goths and Gepids adopted their writing signs from the Huns around the 1st–2nd centuries AD in the territory of present-day southern Russia.



As a parallel

for sign No. 11. Karl Faulmann published this rune variant in 1880, which, however, rather resembles the Celtic Ogham script.

**12. There are many formal agreements with the Orkhon (Mongolia) signs and with the Yenisei (South-Siberia) sign collection of the Russian historian and archaeologist D. D. Vasiliev, as well as with the signs in the table systematizing part of them by the Russian archaeologist I. L. Kyzlasov.** György Mandics presents roughly 50 find drawings with a large number of signs. These texts have also been deciphered into Hungarian by György Mandics and András Tisza.

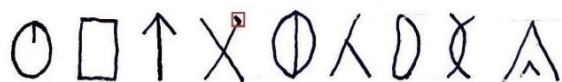
Similar signs likewise appear on the incised, engraved stick from the Talas Valley (Açıktaş, Kyrgyzstan).

Újlaki tükörfelirat és az orkhoni, jenyiszej-i,  
Talaszi völgyi hasonló jelek (Kr. u. 7. század)  
(Friedrich K.)



**Identical or similar signs of the Újlak mirror and Old Hungarian Writing.**  
(below: from the Nikolsburg alphabet).

Újlaki tükör és a székely-magyar rovásírás  
azonos vagy hasonló betűi. Alsó sor a Nikolsburgi  
Ábécé-ből (Friedrich Klára)



The identity and similarity may seem few, but we must not forget that the mirror's character set consists of only 14 letters; from this short text we therefore do not know its complete set, which may justifiably be assumed to contain 30–40 elements. These can be assembled from the other Scythian–Hun–Avar written monuments.

We thus see that the territory in which these letters and signs were used was enormous. But who may have been the creators and disseminators of this script? According to the sources this vast Eurasian area was ruled by the Scythians and later by the Huns. They also had writing, I will mention just three pieces of evidence here: 1. the conclusion of Ferenc Kállay and László Hódoly—mentioned in Table 10—regarding the 16 letters adopted from the Scythians, 2. the Scythian silver cup from the 5th century BC, from the Issyk burial mound, bearing 28 incised characters, 3. the signs of the Huns, used to mark the boundaries of their settlement areas from 1000 BC onwards (the source for the latter is István Kiszely).

These prove that the Scythians, Huns were the ones who handed over the characters, this writing system subsequently continued in Avar and Old Hungarian scripts. Many scholars from the 15th to the 19th century named the system of letters old Hungarian as a Scythian-Hun script.

## The decipherments known to me so far

**Géza Varga** – I first learned of the mirror from his study: A Vukovár area runed metal mirror, published on 29 August 2023. In it he presents abundant sign parallels. According to him the inscription consists of word-signs of the Hungarian hieroglyphic script with proto-religious references. His important statement: The Székely script and its predecessor were used not only by the Székelys but by the entire Scythian-Hun-Avar-Magyar continuum of peoples. His decipherment is available here:

[https://www.academia.edu/106502081/A\\_Vukov%C3%A1r\\_k%C3%B6rny%C3%A9ki\\_r%C3%A1s%C3%ADr%C3%A1sos\\_f%C3%A9lt%C3%B6lt%C3%B6r](https://www.academia.edu/106502081/A_Vukov%C3%A1r_k%C3%B6rny%C3%A9ki_r%C3%A1s%C3%ADr%C3%A1sos_f%C3%A9lt%C3%B6lt%C3%B6r)

**Csaba Antal's** first writing on the mirror appeared in September 2023; in it he also presented the sign parallels: Nagyszentmiklós, North Caucasus, Danube Turkic, Orkhon–Yenisei, Volga–Don variants. According to him pure Turkic (Altaic) words and the most ancient Hungarian/Finno-Ugric (Uralic) linguistic elements are present simultaneously in the inscription.

His decipherment can be read in the study published on 10 July 2026, with the presentation of the various sound values. Based on an analysis of the words, he concludes that the inscription points to a mixed dialect or mode of speech in which the languages of several different peoples have merged: *“The hard Guardian sets out on the road · He wanders around · He strikes the curse from below · Strong Father Arbazs writes it.”* Father Arbazs is a healer who confers protective power on the mirror, so that it protects its owner.

[https://csabavezir.blog.hu/2026/07/10/lecsap\\_az\\_atokra\\_egy\\_8-9\\_szazadi\\_kevert\\_nyelvu\\_varazsige\\_a\\_vukovari\\_tukormedalon](https://csabavezir.blog.hu/2026/07/10/lecsap_az_atokra_egy_8-9_szazadi_kevert_nyelvu_varazsige_a_vukovari_tukormedalon)

**Robert Hetzmann**, President of the Community of Hungarian Patriots, and members of the Community went on an professional study tour to explore historical landmarks. The main purpose of the tour was to view the bronze mirror at the Vinkovci City Museum. **Here** in an information booklet they found a decipherment of the text of the mirror, prepared by Vinkovci archaeologists, who regard it as the message of a priest of the ancient religion (táltos), who lived here 1200 years ago: *“The edge of the dense forest is stony / Oh, devil! / Foolish travelling companion / The young desire hunger (They desire to become hungry.”* In the case of this decipherment we do not know on the basis of which sound values it was produced. <https://patriotak.hu/itt-leszunk-meg-ezerketszaz-evig/>

## My own decipherment attempt

The text, running from right to left, begins at the handle and consists of 27 letters.

Table showing the assumed sound values of the mirror letters:

| Az Újlaki tükör feliratának feltételezett<br>hangértékei (Friedrich Klára)          |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ly-j,                                                                               | e-é,                                                                                | c,                                                                                  | i,                                                                                  | cs,                                                                                 | c,                                                                                  | ly-j,                                                                               | e-é,                                                                                |
|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 8                                                                                   | 7                                                                                   | 6                                                                                   | 5                                                                                   | 4                                                                                   | 3                                                                                   | 2                                                                                   | 1                                                                                   |
|                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
| e-é,                                                                                | bí,                                                                                 | cs,                                                                                 | l,                                                                                  | ny,                                                                                 | e-é,                                                                                |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
| 14                                                                                  | 13                                                                                  | 12                                                                                  | 11                                                                                  | 10                                                                                  | 9                                                                                   |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
|                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
| c,                                                                                  | ?                                                                                   |  | s,                                                                                  | ly-ny                                                                               |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
|  |  |  |  |  |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
| 19                                                                                  | 18                                                                                  | 17                                                                                  | 16                                                                                  | 15                                                                                  |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
|                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 27                                                                                  | 26                                                                                  | 25                                                                                  | 24                                                                                  | 23                                                                                  | 22                                                                                  | 21                                                                                  | 20                                                                                  |

For the decipherment attempt I use the sound values that I worked out for reading the inscriptions of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure and the Szarvas needle-case. Those studies were published in 2015 and 2017, but before that I had already experimented for several years, searching for parallels and sound values. On the basis of these two studies the sound values of the bronze mirror develop, in my opinion, in the manner shown in the table.

Important: the 11th and 18th (26th) signs of the Újlak bronze mirror are missing from the set of signs found in the Nagyszentmiklós and Szarvas texts!

**Deciphered text** (lower-case letters indicate missing sounds):

ÉJ, C\*, CS, I, C\* ÉJ  
 ENYeLeg, CSÁBít E  
 LYáNY SO ? C  
 INYOg ENYHül Ó

**Meaning:**

Night....night  
 flirts, entices this  
 girl, ....  
 tearing up, softens, oh!

The young woman flirts with the young man, who does not yield to the temptation. Therefore the girl weeps resentfully, but softens under the effect of the gift mirror.

The letters and the animal depiction were not produced by the hand of a trained goldsmith or artist, but by a young man who made the playful, propitiatory text for a girl.

**Explanation of a few signs:**

**Sign No. 2:** According to my research, in the writing of the ancestors of the Hungarians, there was no separate **LY** and **J** letter, only **LY**.

This **J** later developed from the Latin letter **I**. (More in my book Mély titkú rovással, 2017/100.)

**Signs Nos. 4 and 12:** they appear on the Nagyszentmiklós treasure and also on the Constantinople inscription with the sound value **CS**.

**Signs Nos. 11 and 26:** they somewhat resemble two Nagyszentmiklós letters, the **TPRUS** sign of the Nikolsburg alphabet and a rune variant. In my decipherment attempt they received the sound value **L**, which for the time being I can support only by the fact that the writer and local historian István

Halis in his 1902 work assigns the **L** sound value to the Nagyszentmiklós letter shown in the accompanying illustration.



István Halis's Nagyszentmiklós **L** letter

### Sign No. 13: B-i ligature

**Sign No. 15: LY – NY ligature.** It is visible in the Nikolsburg alphabet, which was recorded before 1483; its name that has passed into common knowledge is **US**, but in reality, it does not denote a sound value (Szelp Sz., M.Ny. 2011/421.). In my opinion its sound value is **NY-NY**, i.e. two NY, or a **NY-LY** ligature. Its meaning here: LYÁNY (girl). The spelling of “lyány” with **LY** also occurs in the Czuczor–Fogarasi dictionary and there is a reference there to a poem by Arany János: Buda’s Death.

**Sign No. 16:** Certainly, a sign of Scythian origin, because I saw it carved on a stone pillar and drew it at the 2009 Scythian exhibition in the Hungarian National Museum. It appears on several of our runic monuments, e.g. the Csíkszentmárton Inscription.

**Signs Nos. 17, 22, 27:** The reason for the formal agreement with Germanic runes is that the Goths and Gepids adopted their writing signs from the Huns around the 2nd century AD in southern Russia. That is why 25 of the 35 Old Hungarian characters are identical or similar in form to rune variants. The 17th, 22nd, and 27th character can also be found among the Hunnic signs. As a Germanic rune this sign is called Othila or Ethel, as my illustrations show. Its sound value is **O**. The Germans named one of their runes after Attila, King of the Huns out of respect. (I wrote about this in my book *Hunok–germánok, rovások, runák*, 2020/48). Bishop Wulfila created the Gothic script in the Carpathian Basin in the 4th century. Gyula László writes that larger numbers of Germans lived in the Carpathian Basin between the 3rd and 6th centuries: Sciri, Quadi, Ostrogoths, Gepids, Heruli. They were Attila’s allies at the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains (Maurica) as well.

**Sign No. 18:** of uncertain sound value. It looks like two **S**, but it cannot be **S**, because No. 16 is a securely valued **S**. Sign No. 18 appears twice on the Second

Margaret Island stone (More in my publication *Megfejtések könyve I.*, 2013/124.)

**Inyog, innyog:** I found this word in József Szinnyei's *Magyar Tájszótár*, a Szatmár County, Nagybánya dialect word. (Twenty-five years after Trianon the Romanians renamed this area Máramaros County.) I did not find the word "inyog" in other Hungarian linguistic dictionaries, e.g. Czuczor–Fogarasi, Ballagi, Kresznerics, the *Magyar Tájszótár* (1838, G. Döbrentei, F. Schedel–Toldy). Its meaning: Quietly weeping, uttering a sound only now and then.

## Summary

The Scythians themselves may have produced the bronze mirrors. Academic literature describes the Scythians, Huns, and Avars as nomads who did not engage in industrial or agricultural activities, and who acquired such goods either through plunder or by purchasing them with plundered money. This is refuted by Gábor Szakács's conversation with archaeologist Dr. Andrea Vadai regarding the extensive Scythian-era archaeological site in Salgótarján (*Magyar Demokrata*, 2001/51-52.) A large community here engaged in animal husbandry, agriculture, and the production of textiles and ceramics. Here appeared the foot-operated speed potter's wheel as a technical innovation. What's more, they even had a bronze-casting workshop, where they surely produced mirrors as well!

In my opinion, the Újlak bronze mirror was a mass-produced item bearing no inscription or animal depiction. Numerous other mass-produced pieces from the Scythian period have also survived—such as the Olbia-type mirrors.

Consequently, the inscription and the animal depiction were not the work of a skilled goldsmith or artist, but rather a handmade gift created by a young man for a young woman. Originally, there was no inscription on the mirror; the young man added it later. This is clearly visible in the photo showing the condition prior to restoration.

The interpretation of the symbols on the Újlak bronze mirror has confirmed that the sound values I established for the Nagyszentmiklós treasure and the Szarvas needle case may be correct.

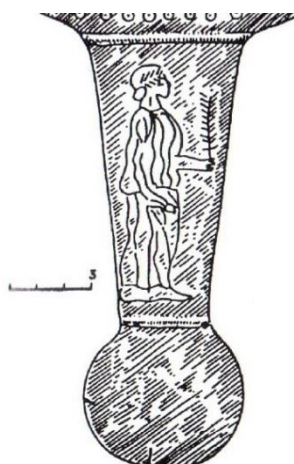
**My decipherment is not yet final, and the partial explanation still requires**

supplementation; however based on a few certain sound values, I consider it well-founded to interpret the text as being in Hungarian and as a gift from a young man to a girl.

A few pictures on the subject:



**Tabiti, the Scythian queen**, with a mirror in her hand, inaugurate the warrior drinking from the drinking-horn. 4th century BC, Kul-Oba (Scythian Gold Treasures, Hungarian National Museum, exhibition catalogue, 2009).



**Handle of a Scythian bronze mirror** (Kornél Bakay: Őstörténetünk régészeti forrásai III, 2005/275)



**Reverse of an Etruscan mirror, engraved scene.** Subject of the picture: the chains of the Italian goddess Juno are broken (Géza Kúr: Amit az etruszokk beszélnek, Warren, USA, 1964)



**Trilingual poster at the opening of the Vinkovci exhibition, May 2026.**

## \*The name of the writing system used for the inscription

The name of the writing system used for the inscription in Hungarian and in international bibliography is different. In the past centuries our chroniclers and historiographers called it Scythian-Hun writing.

Nowadays in the literature the following terms are common: Hungarian runic writing, Ancient Hungarian 'rovás' writing, Carpathian Basin Writing, Sekler-Hungarian rovás script...

In the international writing system standard-Unicode: **Old Hungarian script**.

## References

**Antal Csaba:** Rovásfeliratos bronz tükröt találtak Horvátországban

[https://csabavezir.blog.hu/2023/09/02/\\_rovasfeliratos\\_bronztukrot\\_talaltak\\_horvatorszagban](https://csabavezir.blog.hu/2023/09/02/_rovasfeliratos_bronztukrot_talaltak_horvatorszagban)

**Antal Csaba:** »„Lecsap az átokra” – Egy 8-9. századi kevert nyelvű varázsige a vukovári tükörmedálon

[https://csabavezir.blog.hu/2026/07/10/\\_lecsap\\_az\\_atokra\\_egy\\_8-9\\_szazadi\\_kevert\\_nyelvu\\_varazsige\\_a\\_vukovari\\_tukormedalon](https://csabavezir.blog.hu/2026/07/10/_lecsap_az_atokra_egy_8-9_szazadi_kevert_nyelvu_varazsige_a_vukovari_tukormedalon)

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**Friedrich Klára:** A Szarvasi Tűtartó megfejtési kísérlete (In: Mély titkú rovással, (2017/71)

**Friedrich Klára:** Hunok, germánok, rovások, runák (2020)

**Friedrich Klára:** Szkíta elődeink írásáról (MVSZ. kötet, XI. Világtanácskozás, 2024.)

**Gerhát Petra:** <https://divany.hu/offline/2026/06/07/legregebbi-magyar-felirat-nyelvemlek-rovasiras-tortenete-lelet/>

