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**1. Introduction.** This document responds to a number of claims made in N4183 about a “family” of related scripts which its author believes should be encoded in the UCS. The author of N4183—an electrical engineer at the Department of Electron Devices at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics—claims the presented views to be the current scientific *opinio communis*, which cannot be farther from the truth. The views reflected in the proposal appeared in a number of books which are essentially self-published by the author of N4183 (Hosszú–Rumi–Sípos 2008 and Hosszú 2011). It must be pointed out that these works were never *meant* to be scrutinized: this is the reason why the work was never presented to the Hungarian scientific community, why no paper detailing these has ever appeared in a peer-reviewed journal, or why his books were not submitted to or accepted by a known publishing house.

**2. Notes on Terminology.** What the author of N4183 calls “Khazarian Rovas” is known in international science as two potentially-related scripts, designated as the *Don–Kuban* and the *Volga groups* (Kyzlasov 1994) of the Eastern European scripts (Róna-Tas 1988: 488). What the author of N4183 calls “Carpathian Basin Rovas” is in international science known as either *Szarvas–Nagyszentmiklós script* (Göbl–Róna-Tas 1995) or the *Tisza group* of the Eastern European scripts (Kyzlasov 1994). It is crucial to note that “Eastern European scripts” here is a *polyphyletic* designation; it does not imply genetic relationship, but is merely an areal grouping. In this areal sense, of course, Old Hungarian is also one of the Eastern European scripts (Róna-Tas 1988: 490).

The author of N4183 claims that *rovás* is a category name for these two scripts and the Old Hungarian script (called “Hungarian Rovas” in his proposal). This is counterfactual. “*Rovás*” literally means ‘incision, tally’ in Hungarian; in scientific literature the term “*rovás*” by itself is the designation in Hungarian for ‘tally-sticks’, that is, for an accounting method. The examples brought by the author of N4183 for the use of the term from neighbouring languages all refer to this tally system (cf. even the title of Schubert (1999), the ultimate source of his list). The term “*rovásírás*”, literally ‘incision script’, is sometimes used to refer to the *typological* category of “runiform scripts” in general. (Examples are *török rovásírás* ‘Turkic runiform script’ and *kelet-európai rovásírás* ‘Eastern European (runiform) script’). (NOTE: The title of Sebestyén (1909) “*Rovás és Rovásírás*” corresponds to the two parts of the book, Part I dealing with the *tally systems* (an ethnological study) and Part II with the *runiform scripts* Old Hungarian, Old Turkic, and the Germanic runes.)

In various documents, the author of N4183 asserts with spurious arguments that “Old Hungarian” script is an inadequate terminology for the script proposed by Michael Everson and myself (N3697), and argues for “Hungarian Rovas” a term championed by his quasi-self-published works, and in particular by his

flood of SC2/WG2 documents. For the script in question, the preferred term in current Hungarian scientific literature is “*székely írás*” i.e. ‘Szekler script’ (e.g. Róna-Tas 1988:497; Vékony 2004 etc.). The preferred *international* name is *Old Hungarian script*, *Altungarische Schrift* (in use since the early 18th(!) century, as in “*Alt ungrisch a.b.c.*” in *Der Ungarische Sprachmeister* (1729) of Meliboeus [Matthias Belius]), *древневенгерское письмо* (*drevnevengerskoe pis'mo*). The reason for the deviation between the preferred Hungarian and here preferred international term is that *Szekler* (an ethnic subgroup of Hungarian) would be difficult to identify for general script historians (that is, non-specialists in Hungarian Studies). Another reason is that all the monuments (except those where it has been used as a cypher for Medieval Latin) were written in Hungarian.

One of the particularly specious arguments of the author of N4183 against the use of the internationally common and accepted name “Old Hungarian script” is the false claim that the term would be “incorrect” based on the fact that “Old Hungarian” is the term for a certain historical stage of the language (like “Old High German”). The second claim is true, but the assertion as a whole is not. While a certain ambiguity cannot be denied, the term is in fact not confusable (as scripts are *in genere* not named after language *stages*), and certainly not “incorrect”, as the segmentation is not [(Old Hungarian) script], but obviously [old (Hungarian script)], a mere descriptive terminology, the “new Hungarian script” being the Latin (with Hungarian-specific extensions).

An analogy may help make this clear. If, let’s say, *futhorc* (Anglo-Saxon runes) had been only found in the county of Kent, they might well have been called “Kentish script” or “Kentish runes” in English literature—but they would be equally validly (and more aptly) called “Old English script” (as there was no other particular non-Latin English script) in other languages and international literature.

**3. The Don–Kuban and the Volga groups** are indeed closely related; they even might turn out to be variations or stages of one script. This is however difficult to establish definitely, since they are as-yet undeciphered. (There have been some wildly divergent attempts at decipherment, with scholars often designating their attempts as simply such). Because there is no verifiable decipherment (Róna-Tas 1988: 491–2; Kyzlasov 1994), the character repertoire of these writing systems cannot be established yet. I.e. we cannot know whether certain similar signs are independent characters or allographs/glyph variants. Neither do we know whether the scripts are unifiable with each other or with other scripts. (As Róna Tas 1988:493 says, “We do not even know whether we are confronted with one or with several different scripts, which may or may not pertain historically together.”) The tables in Kyzlasov (1994) illustrate well that the character repertoire is neither closed nor determined with sufficiency.

Monuments of the Don–Kuban and the Volga groups (which I will treat here together for simplicity based on their apparent closeness as the “Don–Volga group”) were found at the plains around lower reaches of the Don (corresponding historio-geographically approximately to *Megálē Boulgaría* or the western part of the later Khazaria), and around the mid and upper reaches of the Volga (corresponding historio-geographically to Volga Bulgaria), and furthermore in the Talas valley and in the south Yenisey valley (Kyzlasov 1994). (NOTE: These finds are *not* to be confused with the Old Turkic monuments which were also found in the Talas and Yenisey regions (apart from the well known findings from the Orkhon valley and the Tarim basin). Examples of the Don–Volga scripts in these eastern (Asian) parts are distinct, belonging without question to this group, and remain *undeciphered* (Kyzlasov 1994)—unlike the Old Turkic inscriptions of the same area which have long been deciphered and read.)

**4. The Szarvas–Nagyszentmiklós script** has only two monuments: the Treasure of Nagyszentmiklós (admittedly, this consists of many inscriptions, but most of them only one or two words long), and the needle-cache of Szarvas. The character repertoire here, again, is not established (Róna-Tas 1988: 491–2; cf. Göbl & Róna-Tas 1995, the most accurate palaeographic analysis to this day), the script is

undeciphered (again, wildly divergent readings by serious scholars emphasize the fact that these are “first attempts”, or educated guesses); for instance, Róna-Tas 1988:502 said “In a paper ... *I proposed with great hesitation and very hypothetically*, a deciphering of the Szarvas inscription” (my emphasis). It is my view, based on the graphic repertoire, that the “Szarvas–Nagyszentmiklós” script *might* be related (but not identical) to the Don–Volga script, but this must be seen as an educated guess. In the absence of a decipherment of either, that is, without knowing the sound values, of course one cannot say anything for sure. (NOTE: Apart from this script there exist a number of inscriptions on various objects from Avar tombs (Vásáry 1972), which fit to the geographic description of “pertaining to the Carpathian Basin”. These “inscriptions” (many from Vásáry’s catalogue were found to be mere scratches or non-existent by others, e.g. Vékony (2004)) usually consist of 3–5 letters in length. Due to the bad condition of the objects and because “any attempt at reading ‘texts’ consisting of 3–5 letters remains unsuccessful *ab ovo*” (Róna-Tas 1988: 494), they must be disregarded here.)

**5. The Old Hungarian script** is—quite clearly—not related (directly or closely) to either of the two above-mentioned scripts. Its nearest relative is Old Turkic. Their close relationship has been established in science since the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries and has been elaborated on further ever since. The relation between Old Hungarian and Old Turkic has *never* been challenged in the scientific community. Questioning that relationship is only common among some laymen. (NOTE: I do not delve further into the details of the Old Hungarian script apart from its naming and terminology. Details of my views about other aspects of the encoding of Old Hungarian can be found in documents N3483, N3531, N3615, N3697, and N4042.)

**6. About the alleged readings.** In his document, the author of N4183 presents readings of monuments of the Volga–Don group of scripts (in N4183 idiosyncratically called “Khazar Rovas”) and of the Szarvas–Nagyszentmiklós script (called, again idiosyncratically, “Carpathian Basin Rovas”) in an attempt to make a point about the stability of the character sets and the encodability of the scripts. In fact, it *appears* that the author of N4183 gives Vékony’s work primacy in the provision of readings for these two scripts. But Vékony’s is only one of the attempts at decipherment, and cannot be viewed as a final or valid reading. It is quite telling that the author of N4183 completely ignores other decipherment attempts, including that of the famous Turkologist, Julius Németh (1932; revised and in English 1971). Furthermore—to put the work the alleged decipherments are based on in perspective—Vékony (2004) is a book published posthumously which did not receive adequate editorial care, and as such is difficult to work with. (Previous education in Turkic, Slavic, and Hungarian historical linguistics is necessary to use it to its full potential). Vékony does present radical ideas, including some compelling arguments. He builds an impressive framework, and tries to decipher examples of the Don–Volga script, and also of Szarvas–Nagyszentmiklós. However, his is just one attempt of many, and because of the high amount of speculation and interpolation and the scarcity of data, it can at most be taken to be yet another of the equally-valid (or, rather, equally-unproven) attempts at decipherment. But even if one accepted Vékony’s decipherment attempt, his tables (2004: 314–5) convince us that the character repertoire of the Don–Volga and the Szarvas–Nagyszentmiklós scripts are not well established yet.

**7. Conclusions.** The “Khazarian Rovas”—so-called, idiosyncratically, by the author of N4183—(that is, the Don–Kuban and Volga groups of the East European scripts) is, in its current state of study *not* encodable, as neither its sound values, nor its character repertoire have been conclusively established. It is never called “*rovás*” in scientific literature. It is usually not even called “Khazarian”. (NOTE: Ligeti proposed using the term Khazar for this group in 1986, but it doesn’t seem to have caught on.)

The “Carpathian Basin Rovas”—so-called, idiosyncratically, by the author of N4183—(that is, the Szarvas–Nagyszentmiklós script or the Tisza group of the East European scripts) is, in its current state of research *not* encodable, as neither its sound values, nor its character repertoire could be established in a

convincing way. It is never called “rovás” in science. And it is also not designated as “the Carpathian Basin”. The usual name is Szarvas–Nagyszentmiklós script. (NOTE: Róna-Tas uses a chapter heading “*The findings in the Carpathian Basin*”. He subsumes the three distinct scripts of Szarvas–Nagyszentmiklós, the Old Hungarian Script (= Szekler script) and the finds of the late Avar period under this heading, using it for *geographical* grouping.)

Nor is The Old Hungarian script ever called “rovás” (which is the name for an accounting method). The term “rovásírás”, literally ‘incision script’, the Hungarian scientific term for *runiform script*, i.e. a *typological* category name is sometimes used in elision for “Székely rovásírás”, literally ‘Szekler runiform script’ when there can be no ambiguity about the exact script meant. In current Hungarian scientific literature “*székely írás*” ‘Szekler script’ is preferred. The preferred English name is *Old Hungarian script* in line with other major European languages and for reasons detailed further above in this document.

One gets the overall impression, that the motivation of the author of N4183 to propose “Khazarian Rovas” and “Carpathian Basin Rovas”—two essentially undeciphered and clearly unencodable scripts—seems to be to make it seem as if “rovás” is a common scientific term in general, and to make it seem as though it is the common scientific name for the Old Hungarian script itself. It is not, and it has never been. Its use cannot be demonstrated in scientific literature. (NOTE: Colloquially, in informal speech or informal mail, a scholar might abbreviate (*Székely*) *rovásírás* by elision to *rovás*, but this is a different matter entirely.)

The author of the present document holds a degree in Hungarian linguistics, and is currently in the Ph.D. program at the University of Vienna, studying the Old Hungarian script. His philological study on the authorship and creation date of the Nikolsburg Alphabet (one of the most important monuments of the Old Hungarian script), is being published in the 4th booklet of the 2011 issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Magyar Nyelv [Hungarian Language]*, a publication of the Hungarian Linguistic Society edited by the Faculty of the *Institute of Hungarian Linguistics and Finno-Ugristics* of the Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest (Szelp 2011).

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