

„Babeş-Bolyai” University, CLUJ-NAPOCA

Faculty of History and Philosophy

Doctoral School „History. Civilization. Culture”

Torma Károly(1829-1897). Life and work.

Summary

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Cluj-Napoca

2025

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Introduction

Until now, there is no synthesis, neither in Romanian nor in Hungarian historiography, about the life and academic work of Torma Károly, recognized at European level as the first archaeologist from Transylvania to carry out a systematic archaeological excavation. There are few works that deal with this subject, most of them being short excerpts from his scientific work or brief reviews of some publications of the Hungarian scholar. Through his numerous archaeological investigations, studies and publications in the field of Roman epigraphy, he became a personality who influenced not only the historiography of Roman Dacia, but also that of Pannonia.

Studies on the academic activity and biography of the first archaeologists in Transylvania, as well as concerns regarding the writing of syntheses on the history of archaeology, have only begun to appear in the specialized literature in the last two decades. The two categories generally focus on the history of archaeology, starting with the Posta Béla school or the interwar period, and on the professional activity of Hungarian archaeologists, concerned with a single archaeological site or a more geographically limited area of interest. The archaeologist Béla Cserni or more prominent archaeologists, such as Finály Henrik and Bodor András, have also received biographies. Although he rose far above the level of those mentioned above, the life and contribution of Torma Károly has not aroused anyone's interest until now. Several publications have appeared that deal with the academic correspondence of the Hungarian archaeologist, but apart from a single article of only a few pages, none of them focus on his results obtained in the field of archaeology. A single study resumes and discusses Torma Károly's first research, carried out at the Roman camp at Ilişua.

The major contributions of the thesis are related to the valorization of previously unpublished materials, discovered and investigated over the course of three years, after a disappointing two-year start, in which the National Archives and libraries in the country and those in Budapest were closed to the public as a result of the pandemic that struck the planet in 2020. Gathering the necessary materials represented a real challenge, because there is little information and personal documents available about this scholar within the Romanian National Archives. Thus, we had to look for evidence in the archives of specialized institutions in Budapest, where the Hungarian archaeologist carried out his scientific activity for 12 years. The time available allowed us to study the unpublished documents in the collections of the Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár) and the library of the Hungarian

Academy of Sciences (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia), which preserves over 3000 pages of manuscripts, letters and documents of Torma Károly.

The personal collection of Torma Károly kept at the library of the Hungarian Academy was the basis of this research. In this way, I would like to thank the director Dr. Babus Antal from the manuscripts department, who facilitated my access to documents and digital copies of some manuscripts. The digital copies were necessary because, in the absence of a scholarship, the consultation of these documents could not be extended to a period longer than 2 months per year, both for financial and professional reasons. Most of the information was extracted from the letters received by the Hungarian archaeologist, his manuscripts and travel diaries, which detail all the observations and investigations made, as well as maps and sketches. As part of the work, we will also present an unpublished map, made sometime between 1881-1883, during the research of the southwestern limes of Roman Dacia, but which due to its size could not be scanned, only photographed.

We tried to exhaust all possible avenues of investigation, and so, in addition to examining documents in the archives, we also contacted the direct descendants of the Hungarian archaeologist. The only direct descendant who could help us with some useful information was his great-grandson Miklós, the president and founder of the Castellum Association, which is concerned with organizing the historical Hungarian families of Transylvania, offering them and the Hungarian civil society, educational support for research and culture. But this approach was not crowned with success, due to the president's passing in 2005. His wife, Mrs. Dr. Katalin Rácz, confirmed our suspicions already established from our previous research, regarding the lack of personal or family documents. In the context of the evolution of the communist regime, the Torma family's possessions were confiscated by the Romanian State in the 1940s, and the family, robbed of their secular estates, took refuge in Târgu Mureș.

This thesis is not the first commitment to studying the life and work of Torma Károly. According to information from Professor Radu Ardevan, in the past this topic was adopted by a younger colleague, who due to health reasons that arose during the study, was forced to abandon the research. Years have passed and more than 127 years after the death of the great archaeologist, the pioneer in the field of archaeology in Transylvania, but also in the Hungarian one after Rómer Flóris, no one has dared to choose this research topic. For such a prominent personality for the history and archaeology of two nations, it is incomprehensible why a complete biography of the great archaeologist has not been published until now. The reasons why Torma Károly stood out among contemporary historians and epigraphers are numerous

and it is not necessary to present them in detail here. This will be revealed at length in this study. But at least for the history of Transylvanian archaeology, the name Torma Károly is synonymous with the first systematic archaeological excavations in the former Roman province of Dacia, carried out at the Roman camp of Ilişua, the northern limes of the Roman province, the collection of inscriptions for the volume CIL III and the main collaborator of Theodor Mommsen, two inseparable and unachievable subjects without the major contribution of the Hungarian archaeologist, then the investigation of the Roman earthworks in Banat, and for Hungarian colleagues it is also synonymous with the unveiling of the amphitheater and the civil settlement at Aquincum.

Torma Károly had a fascinating and adventurous life, starting from his childhood, when from an early age he was instilled with a love of history and archaeology by his father, then going through all the stages of his life, from his initiation and motivation for further archaeological research by Theodor Mommsen to his great professional achievements in the field of archaeology. However, like any great scholar or genius, he also had a weakness, which in the case of Torma Károly was highlighted by the poor management of his personal wealth and income, a weakness that accompanied him all his life, like a shadow. As soon as he got involved in politics, he began to stand out through various successful, but financially costly actions. He was a very good prefect and famous politician, who was involved in the political and cultural life of the city of Dej, a golden period in terms of Torma's political career, but which ended with the loss of a substantial part of his inherited wealth.

Leaving politics behind, through the systematic excavations carried out in the Roman fort at Ilişua, he spent a large part of his fortune on these researches. And here we do not use the term spent in a negative sense, because the Hungarian archaeologist justified every forint spent, but his main indolence was the neglect of the family fortune. He put historical research and archaeology above everything, like a true scholar passionate about the history of antiquity, perhaps even above his family. Thus, as he increasingly plunged into his studies and delved into the history of the Roman province, he no longer had time to count the immense expenses necessary for these studies, which involved various travel expenses, accommodation, fees for guards, "bribes" for some collectors to have access to some monuments on their property, fees for making paper casts of inscriptions, the purchase of volumes, maps and documents, etc. At some point he woke up, realizing that the situation wasn't exactly great, and after three years of emotional suffering he was reborn and was once again filled with motivation, a state of mind that accompanied him into old age. Financial problems plagued him even during his stay in

Pest, which motivated him to self-exile in Porto di Anzio, where he lived until the end of his life.

The large number of archaeological sites mentioned, the countless vestiges, lithic monuments and inscriptions discovered, are the testimony of the lifelong research activity of the Hungarian archaeologist, a true pioneer of archaeology in Transylvania, who deserves more appreciation and recognition for his contribution to the history and archaeology of Roman Dacia. At the same time, the mention, identification and description of settlements from various eras, before other contemporary archaeologists, should appear in all national archaeological repertoires, at least under the status of identified sites. In the case of many archaeological sites, records from the 2000s appear, as if they were new discoveries, although they had been known for at least a century. The results of this research are intended to pay tribute to the fame of the Hungarian archaeologist and to ensure his rightful place in the history of Romanian historiography, perhaps also a source for some institutions, to complete the digitized national repertoires with this useful information.

Chapter I - The Education and Training of the Historian Torma Károly

The first part of the thesis, entitled "The Education and Training of the Historian Torma Károly", aims to present the thorough training of the one who was to become the most famous archaeologist and epigrapher of the 19th century in Transylvania. Starting from his first contacts with Roman history and archaeology acquired in the family house in Cristești Ciceului, we aimed to delve into all aspects and stages of his professional and personal life, which formed the basis of his training as a professional, as well as the course of his evolution from amateur archaeologist to expert. We also dedicated several subchapters to his political career, but strictly limiting ourselves to the events that directed his steps towards research and the friendly ties established during this stage, such as the collaboration he had with the great German epigrapher Theodor Mommsen. The last part of the first chapter focuses on the Hungarian archaeologist's contribution to enriching the heritage of the Museum from Cluj and his first research in the field of Roman archaeology in Dacia.

Chapter II - Torma Károly's Research on the History and Archaeology of Roman Dacia

As Torma Károly himself praised, the beginning of his professional career in the world of archaeology took place only after Theodor Mommsen's visit to Transylvania. But the aspects of his contribution to the collection of Roman inscriptions for the CIL III volume were summarized in a few brief historiographical mentions, and in reality it materialized as a result of great sacrifices made by the Hungarian archaeologist, which took away several years of his life and a large part of his fortune. The unpublished primary sources consulted and presented in this chapter come to complete this period of the archaeologist's life.

II.2. Archaeological excavations at Ilișua

The name Torma Károly in the specialized literature is synonymous with the Roman castrum at Ilișua, where the Hungarian archaeologist began and completed the first systematic archaeological excavations in Transylvania. The present research brings new evidence regarding the archaeological research carried out at this point, thus completing the historical framework with unpublished sketches, numerous details and information relevant to the history and evolution of archaeological research in the Roman fort and the civil settlement.

II.3. Archaeological excavations and surveys carried out by Torma Károly in Transylvania

Torma Károly made a major contribution to the discovery of new Roman and prehistoric archaeological sites on the territory of our homeland, and following the investigation of his travel diaries, we identified other unpublished archaeological sites on the ground. Several subchapters follow the route followed by the Hungarian archaeologist in Transylvania and present his research methodology, as well as the results obtained.

II.3.1. Archaeological research undertaken by Torma Károly in the Someș Valley

The first archaeological excursions and trips carried out by the Hungarian archaeologist took place in 1855, at the age of 26. Since then, he has identified several archaeological sites located near his birthplace, but also in the Someș Valley. Whether we refer to the tumuli in Beclean (Bistrița-Năsăud) or the 5 prehistoric archaeological sites in the town of Bozieș (Bistrița-Năsăud), his discoveries and records bring new data even today, and in some cases we have managed to identify unknown and unmarked sites in the national archaeological repertoires. This category includes two prehistoric sites in Bozieș, a Roman tower on the Roman limes line from Negrilești (Bistrița-Năsăud) and the description of several Roman-era artifacts discovered in Cluj and Gherla.

II.5. Research and establishment of the southwestern limes of the province of Dacia

The Hungarian archaeologist set out to establish the route of the southwestern border of the province of Dacia since his youth, but he only succeeded towards the end of his career in the years 1880-82. This topic was very disputed at the time, which is why Torma Károly offered to elucidate this mystery, sacrificing three summers with field investigations. This subchapter deals with the research of the Hungarian archaeologist in the three investigation campaigns carried out on a huge geographical area, starting from the Danube to the upper course of the Tisza River. At the library of the Hungarian Academy in Budapest, in the personal collection of Torma Károly, three manuscripts made during the three archaeological investigation campaigns are kept. Over the course of three subchapters, we have followed and analyzed the Hungarian archaeologist's journey, with the aim of extracting new information and presenting the meticulousness with which he carried out this research. We have extracted and structured the data extracted from these diaries, in such a way as to synthesize and present them by research topics and subchapters.

II.5.1. The 1880 Campaign

Starting from the difficulties encountered in securing funding for investigations in Banat, this subchapter follows the Hungarian archaeologist's route through the 39 localities in Serbia and Romania.

II.5. 2. The 1881 Campaign

The second archaeological investigation campaign targeted the 37 localities that preserve traces of the Roman past. Along with the descriptions of the ruins and artifacts discovered during the research, Torma Károly's diary presents the state of preservation of some Roman camps at the time of his visit.

II.5.3. The 1882 Campaign

In this subchapter we aimed to extract from the diary of the Hungarian archaeologist the data of archaeological and historical value from the 25 localities subject to investigation. Torma Károly noted dozens of new inscriptions and newly discovered ancient objects, with the intention of recording and publishing them. The first epigraphic entries in the diary refer to the Banat area and the former Roman settlements located in the Mureș Valley and the Ampoi Valley, respectively, the last part refers to the localities in Hungary, where he mainly investigated the earthworks in Banat.

II.5.4. Roman roads in Banat

The identification of the route of the Roman roads was part of the methodology of Torma Károly's investigations. In this subchapter, we have compiled the data recorded by the Hungarian archaeologist to outline in broad outline the route of the roads confirmed on the ground, which we have corroborated with the map of the province of Dacia made by him.

II.5.4.1. Trajan's Road on the right bank of the Danube

In the summer of 1880 the Hungarian archaeologist, accompanied by Böhm Lénárt, investigated the "Trajan's Road" dug into the rock on the Serbian bank of the Danube. Along with mentioning the visible tablets on this route, the records also contain technical data regarding the wooden structure to support the Roman road.

II.5.4.2. The Lederata-Tibiscum Road

The Hungarian archaeologist's research on this road segment contains valuable information regarding the route of the Roman road, following his field observations and archaeological surveys carried out on the 5.8 km section between the localities of Bocşa Română and Biniş.

II.5.4.3. The fork of the road at Jupa

The data extracted from the Hungarian archaeologist's diary bring unprecedented data about the last segment of the Roman imperial road Lederat-Tibiscum. It concerns the branching of the two imperial roads in the locality of Jupa.

II.5.4.4. The Imperial Road Tibiscum – Sarmizegetusa -Apulum

The intermediate segment of the route of the Roman imperial road Tibiscum-Sarmizegetusa was identified by Torma Károly between the localities of Jupa and Voislova. His observations are relevant from an archaeological point of view, because currently a large part of the road is overlapped by the modern road.

II.5.4.5. The Imperial Road Dierna-Tibiscum

Important data and details about the Roman imperial road Dierna-Tibiscum were identified by the Hungarian archaeologist in 7 localities located on its route. The measurements made by Torma at various points support the fact that he covered a large part of the Roman road on foot.

II.5.4.6. The road on the left bank of the Danube

Starting from the hypothesis that similar to the line of Roman camps arranged in a mirror image on the line of the Danube limes, the Hungarian archaeologist tried to demonstrate that roads must also obey this rule. Similar to the "Trajan's Road" on the Serbian bank, Torma followed and managed to identify the road on the left bank of the Danube, between Lederata and Liubcova (Caraş-Severin).

II.5. 5. Roman camps in Banat

During the three summers between 1880-1882, spent on the southwestern territory of the former Roman province of Dacia, the Hungarian archaeologist documented several camps known until then, and through this commitment he managed to identify another 8 unpublished Roman camps.

II. 5. 6. Roman Waves in Banat

Countless studies and articles have been written about these linear earthworks in the last two centuries alone, being a challenging subject for many historians. However, most of the research was based on the study of written sources and old maps, not on archaeological field research, which could provide sufficient evidence to attribute them to a people and to clarify the questions related to their antiquity. So far, it has not been proven with concrete arguments when these lines of fortifications were built and by whom. In this subchapter, we aim to present the investigations carried out by the Hungarian archaeologist in the three archaeological research campaigns, as well as the final conclusions and hypotheses he issued about these earthworks. The information extracted from the diary, mostly unpublished, was analyzed individually and structured in such a way that we gave each earthwork a subchapter.

II.5.7. Result of Torma's research on the southwestern limes of Roman Dacia

The investigation of the southwestern limes of the province of Dacia represents a significant part of Torma Károly's professional activity and at the same time a major contribution to the research and exact establishment of the Roman border and its trajectory today. Among the conclusions recorded by the Hungarian archaeologist following the three research campaigns, we have also reproduced the text of the communication he gave to the Hungarian Academy in 1883.

II.5.7.1. Map of the Roman province of Dacia-1883

Following the archaeological investigation campaigns undertaken between 1880-82, Torma Károly synthesized all his discoveries on a map of the province of Dacia. This unique document marks the main Roman camps and cities in the province, the Roman roads identified on the ground, as well as the 4 earthworks in Banat.

II.6. Archaeological sites identified by Torma Károly in Dacia and Moesia Superior

During his campaigns, the Hungarian archaeologist identified several points where the ruins of buildings were located, such as the one at Căvăran (Caraș-Severin), about which he was unable to find sufficient details. However, his notes are relevant to the history of these disappeared monuments.

II.7. Roman inscriptions from Dacia published by Torma Károly

The objective of this study is not the inscriptions collected by the Hungarian archaeologist throughout his career, but only some details considered insignificant by the author and remained unpublished.

II.8. Torma Károly's research on the history and archaeology of Pannonia

Due to the large volume of information on the archaeological research carried out by Torma Károly on the territory of Hungary, we considered it appropriate to exclude this period from the doctoral thesis. His research here, as well as the unpublished data, may in the future constitute the basis of another doctoral thesis.

Chapter III. Self-exile in Rome and the last years of his life

The chapter briefly deals with the activity and personal problems of Torma Károly in the last decade of his life, starting from the self-exile imposed in Porto di Anzio until the last years of his life. We also revisit the issue of the volume „*Monumenta Hungariae aevi Romani epigraphica*”, which the archaeologist never managed to publish, as well as the “Torma school”. The Hungarian archaeologist managed to instill in many younger archaeologists a passion for researching the Roman limes, but also the network of roads and camps in Dacia.

Chapter IV. The academic correspondence of Torma Károly

The scholar Torma Károly carried on a rich correspondence at all stages of his life, starting from the beginning of his career as an amateur archaeologist, politician or renowned professor of archaeology, with great personalities from home and abroad. The young Károly had the privilege of being born into a family of educated people, dedicated to the study of

history, which not only guided him towards the profession of archaeologist, but also put him in contact with famous and important people. With his commitment to collect the inscriptions from Dacia for the volume CIL III, the Hungarian archaeologist became known and accepted overnight as the main collaborator in Transylvania of the German epigraphist, which in addition to fame brought him hundreds of new correspondents. The vast majority of them informed him about the existence of Roman monuments or about the archaeological remains in their locality, but also about their personal collections of antiquities.

Some of the letters received by the Hungarian archaeologist are preserved at the Hungarian National Archives, the Széchényi National Library and the Library of the Hungarian Academy. By consulting the collections of these institutions, we were able to identify several letters important for our study, mostly unpublished. From the preserved correspondence, we have chosen a few letters relevant to our study, from which we can see his archaeological, academic research activity or that relating to the last years of his life.

Chapter V. Publications of Torma Károly

The Hungarian archaeologist had a rich publishing activity that required the resumption and ordering of these publications by categories and publishers. During the investigations we managed to identify unpublished publications signed by the author or some that were published with an unknown author. Here we also presented the communications held by the Hungarian archaeologist, which were not published, as well as the existing bibliography about Torma Károly.

Final conclusions

Following the investigations carried out on the life and work of the Hungarian archaeologist Torma Károly, we have managed to know and present through this work some essential stages for the history and archaeology of Roman Dacia, but also for the historiography of archaeology in Transylvania. Even if it is almost impossible to understand, structure and compress a man's life and his professional activity within a few hundred or thousand pages, we believe that we have nevertheless managed to argue and illustrate, with the help of primary sources, Torma's contribution to the history and archaeology of Roman Dacia.

As we have shown in the chapters of this study, the name of Torma Károly remains synonymous with the Dacian *limes* and the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. Starting from a partially misread inscription, he first established the northern border of the Roman province of Dacia, also known as the Meseş *limes*, then after occupying the chair of archaeology at the University of Budapest, the Hungarian archaeologist began an almost impossible research, namely, the investigation and establishment of the southwestern *limes* of the Dacian province. This subject gave rise to continuous research, which has not been clarified even today. Numerous hypotheses have been issued about this border line, but the level of information available at present does not differ much from the research and results obtained following the investigation of the *limes* by Torma between 1880-1883. For this reason, his diaries provide new and useful data for a better interpretation of this subject, as many ruins have been permanently lost since then, falling prey to looters, and this study, we hope, will honor his name and reflect another more favorable light on this pioneer of archaeology in Transylvania and Hungary.

Torma's activity in the field of Roman Dacian epigraphy does not even need to be mentioned, this being known to everyone. Through our investigations, we tried to present both the working methodology and the conditions, the context of the search and documentation of all the inscriptions collected by him. Even though he became Theodor Mommsen's most important collaborator, thanks to his knowledge and the will to evolve, the Hungarian archaeologist reached that level also thanks to his informants. Being a true scholar loved by his compatriots, he was helped in this immense task by a great many people. His correspondents guided him to the existing ruins, and thanks to his knowledge and the dedication he showed, these clues opened the way for new discoveries. Thus, throughout his career as an archaeologist, Torma discovered new camps, identified and recorded various constructions from the Roman period, traced and mapped the route of Roman roads and, most importantly, tried and succeeded in saving as much of this rich heritage left to us by the Romans as possible. In this study, we did not aim to illustrate the work of archaeologist Torma, but to take a look beyond the facade of his publications, presenting everyday aspects and the difficulties encountered in achieving these goals during his research.

We cannot overlook the close collaboration of the Hungarian archaeologist with the representatives of the churches in Transylvania and beyond, who provided him with countless valuable information, which over time proved to be fundamental in choosing the research direction adopted by Torma. Their interest in knowing history and preserving the cultural values

of antiquity, even if they came from the Greco-Roman world and were largely the remains of pagan civilizations, must be recognized and appreciated. By simply recording inscriptions, mentioning and describing ruins, as well as by mentioning toponyms, they participated in the process of documenting the history of the Dacian province and at the same time in saving many archaeological sites, which in the meantime were massively plundered and destroyed by the locals. In happier cases, they were saved from destruction precisely by reporting these archaeological testimonies and transferring this information to competent people dedicated to history, such as Torma Károly.

For both his students and the following generations, Torma Károly was a role model, who gave birth to a school of archaeology that had as its basic criterion field research and systematic archaeological excavations. Even if Gábor Téglás himself, his most devoted disciple, criticized some of the research methods used by Torma, accusing him of marking segments of a road or a Roman earthwork without having seen them, none of his disciples ever surpassed him. We can state without mistake that in the four decades of activity archaeologist Torma investigated almost the entire province of Dacia, coming to know its history very well, and most of his works were based on the information gathered from the field.

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