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DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY

**The contribution of the Hungarian
archaeological school to the research of Roman
Dacia**

Doctoral advisor:
Conf. univ. dr. habil. Florin Fodorean

Candidate:
Orsolya Szilagyi

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KEYWORDS

History of archaeology, Roman Dacia, Transylvanian archaeologists, Hungarian archaeologists, , professionalization of archaeology, early field research, archaeology in the first half of the 20th century

INTRODUCTION

Man's fascination with the past has constantly been present. The first ever documented archaeological excavations date back to the time of the ancient Egyptians, however it will be thousands of years before we can actually call this inherent curiosity towards the past as a fully-fledged scientific discipline. European antiquarians in the west started amassing significant collections, so-called *Kunstkabinett* and *Wunderkammer* by the 16th century, publishing volumes about them.

An important factor in how archaeology became a scientific discipline came from the natural sciences. There are frequent and large-scale excavations taking place throughout Europe by the end of the 19th century. The date of birth of archaeology varies depending on which nation we are talking about. In the case of Hungary and, separately, Transylvania, the era of professionalization was mainly the very end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th.

The glorification of the national past related to archaeology in Hungary was kick-started by the discovery of the graves of king Béla III and his wife in the December of 1848 by Érdy János. This was the very first time the grave of a royal couple from the Árpád-dynasty were identified *in situ*, with their inventory still present. Archaeology gained traction towards the 1890's, when the state was preparing for the Millennial Celebrations. Interest in prehistorical and classical history was quite characteristic for the 19th century; the movement being started by Kemény József and his contemporaries. This movement was intensified by the second half of the century, when antiquarians like the Torma siblings, the Téglás brothers and others started the painstaking work of recording and researching ancient finds. The 20th century starts with the professionalization of archaeology in Transylvania, after Pósta Béla is assigned as the head of the archaeology department at the Royal Hungarian Franz Joseph University at Cluj.

With archaeology being a discipline of such a long and attention-grabbing history, it's understandable that countless of works have tried to write its history, from the very first beginning up until the most state-of-the-art methods that are being used today. The first books discussing the history of the discipline appear during the first half of the 19th century, with a sudden increase from World War II onwards. However, concerning the evolution of the discipline have appeared only from the 2000's onwards in both Romania and Hungary, with the intensification of history writing in the last ten years or so.

The purpose of this thesis is to compile and analyse the research concerning Roman Dacia conducted by Hungarian archaeologists from the 19th century up until 1945. It would also like to affirm that the research of Roman Dacia, conducted by the early Hungarian antiquarians and, later on, by the members of the Hungarian archaeological school between the 19th century and the end of World War II reflects a non-linear progression, drastically shaped by changing political, societal, cultural and academic contexts, which also influenced the way the discipline evolved, and subsequently, how discoveries were interpreted.

METHODOLOGY

The thesis at hand focuses on the contributions of the Hungarian archaeological school to the research of Roman Dacia. The period which is analysed is from the beginning of the 19th century until the end of World War II. The reason for why these two markers were chosen to constrain the subject of the thesis is that Hungarian antiquarianism in Transylvania starts moving to more serious scholarship from the aforementioned century onwards, and the first personalities who had bigger impact on archaeological/Roman heritage research were active around this period. The end of World War II and the following political changes also had a profound influence on Hungarian scholarship in Transylvania, and it is believed by the author that it serves as an appropriate moment to delimit the period that is being analysed. Moreover, adequate time had passed since then for us to have a more detached view of the researches and their results.

The contributions that Romanian and Saxon/German archaeologists made during this period are only mentioned in passing however, the impact of their work on Hungarian scholarship would be analysed.

During the course of this work, the major literary sources that were written about the history of archaeology both in an international and local context were analysed in a qualitative manner. Source literature, like articles from the most prominent Hungarian journals of the time, written by antiquarians and early archaeologists were treated as data. The major journals reviewed in this case were: *Archaeologiai Értesítő*, *Archaeologiai Közlemények*, *Erdélyi Múzeum*, *A Hunyadmegyei Történelmi és Régészeti Társulat Évkönyve*, *Az Alsófehérvármegyei Történelmi, Régészeti és Természettudományi Egylet, Dolgozatok* just to name the more frequently used publications of the time. Large monographs written about the history of counties in Transylvania and published around the turn of the 19th century were also consulted, since these can oftentimes be considered as a culmination of the scientific work done by antiquarians and early archaeologists.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE DISSERTATION'S INDIVIDUAL CHAPTERS

The dissertation is composed of 12 chapters. **Chapter 2** (chapter 1 being dedicated to the methodology and literary overview) discusses the period between the beginning of the 19th century up until the Hungarian Revolution of 1848–1849. In the case of Transylvania there were a handful of antiquarians that were interested in Roman finds and even sites during the first half of the 19th century. The most notable out of them were probably Count Kemény József and Lugosi Fodor András. While scientific research concerning the remains of Roman Dacia from Hungarian scholars was quite reduced compared to the intense activity of the following decades, it also set up the means for further inquiries in the future. Torma József's surveys at the fort from Ilişua would serve as an example for his two children, Zsófia and Károly, the latter performing one of the very first documented archaeological excavation in Transylvania. On the other hand, Kemény József helped Neugebauer in his research concerning the archaeological sites and antiquities of Roman Dacia. Neugebauer's work would later on be referenced by several Hungarian antiquarians and archaeologists, becoming a point of reference in works concerning the history of Roman Dacia. The destruction of the two mosaics from Sarmizegetusa also underlines the fact that while there were already some people who were quite conscious of the fact that the remnants of the past should be protected, this was not a universal belief. Furthermore, there was no legislation that would

punish the plundering of heritage. The Revolution of 1848–1849 and the destruction of several monuments served as a painful reminder of the vulnerability that cultural heritage possessed.

Chapter 3 presents the period from the end of the revolution up until the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867. The tentative steps towards ongoing field research in Transylvania were made in the first two decades after the Revolution of 1848–1849. Transylvanian antiquarians like Torma Károly, Finály Henrik had their articles published in such important journals of the country like *Archaeologiai Közlemények* and *Archaeologiai Értesítő*. This also meant that their work was slowly being integrated into the scientific discourse of the time, further underlining the relevance of their findings. Theodor Mommsen's visit to Transylvania and his subsequent correspondence with Torma also serves as an important reminder of how relevant these years were to the evolution of Transylvanian archaeology into a discipline of its own merit.

The founding of the Transylvanian Museum Society in 1859 had also meant that there was finally a venue for local antiquarians to congregate, making Cluj an important scientific centre for archaeological research, the Society also funding personalities like Torma to continue their work. With the Society also having its own museum, the second such institution in Transylvania, there was also desire for establishing a relevant antiquities collection. This meant that they were not only buying antiquities from the market but, as we saw in the case of Torma Károly's excavations at Ilişua, they also funded excavations in order to obtain new and interesting finds they otherwise had no hopes of getting.

Chapter 4 touches upon the intensification of archaeological research that took place from 1867 up until the appointment of Pósta Béla as the head of the archaeology department at the Royal Hungarian Franz Joseph University at Cluj in 1899. The number of antiquarians who were interested in the scientific research of Roman Dacia had drastically increased towards the end of the 19th century. This increase can be attributed to several things: founding of historical societies and museums, the re-establishment of the university at Cluj and the need of data collection in preparation for the Millennial Celebrations.

The changing political tides had meant that the founding of societies became much easier than before, which in turn meant that countless historical societies were being created in the counties of Transylvania and Banat. The activities of these societies in turn caused an uptick in people who were interested in antiquarianism, kick-starting the archaeological research of several

micro-regions. The antiquities collections that these societies amassed would later on result in the founding of all the major provincial museums that exist even today.

The founding of the Royal Hungarian Franz Joseph University in Cluj brought major changes to scientific life in the city. Contemporaries lamented on the fact that the scientific output of the Transylvanian Museum Society had all but stopped because of the university. This shows that while even though the faculties of the university had brought several scholars and even more students to the city, not everyone was happy about the changes that this caused. Finály also urged the founding of an exclusivist scientific society, to which only renowned scholars could join, this was practically a response to the fact that by paying a membership fee anyone could join the Museum Society and thus diminishing its scientific value.

The desire for writing monographs pertaining to the archaeology of a certain region in Transylvania was something that many antiquarians were striving for. However, in order to realise these monographs, there was an inherent need for finding out as much about the ancient past as possible. This meant that field-research was of utmost importance, more and more antiquarians leaving the confines of their offices and actually mapping and excavating sites based on what they actually saw, rather than going by the descriptions of others. Thus, the amount of information that was acquired during this period concerning Roman Dacia was never seen before. Field-walks and excavations were taking place at almost every major Roman site towards the end of the 19th century, all thanks to the rigorous work of a handful of individuals.

Archaeology in Transylvania was set onto a path of professionalization and some scholars who started their research during the final decades of the 19th centuries would compete with each other to be the head of the new archaeological department at the university from Cluj, a process which ends in the appointment of Pósta Béla, an “outsider”, signalling a new chapter in Transylvanian archaeology and culminating in the rift between the so-called *grand amateurs* and the first professional archaeologists.

The period from the appointment of Pósta Béla at the forefront of the archaeology department in Cluj up until the end of World War I is at the base of **chapter 5**. The first 15 years or so of the 20th century is characterized by the parallel researches done by the *grand amateurs* and professional archaeologists. While a handful of the defining representatives of the previous era are still active (Cserni, the Téglás brothers, Finály Gábor), the amount of excavations being done by them decreases drastically. Téglás Gábor’s retirement and subsequent move to Budapest means

that the excavations at Sarmizegetusa are practically halted, Téglás diverting his attention mainly to *limes*-studies, especially concerning the eastern frontier of the province. Finally Gábor also moves to Budapest, the archaeology of Pannonia becoming the main area of his research.

Members of the Pósta-school are continuously dispatched to conduct excavations. However, their research in the case of Roman sites at least, is mainly focused on the area surrounding Cluj, which later on Paulovics István attributes to laziness from their part. Even so, they manage to procure funding for most of their excavations, while the Transylvanian Museum also starts taking tentative steps towards a more centralised and planned out research of the Roman *limes*, something that was never actually pursued in a more serious manner.

In the absence of the defining personalities of the provincial antiquarian movement, the excavations organized by historical societies are also halted. This, coupled with the increasingly present desire to make Cluj the capital of Transylvanian archaeology and the discouragement of “amateur” field research results in the end of antiquarianism as we know it and the definite beginning of professional archaeology in Transylvania.

Chapter 6 touches upon the period between the end of World War I to the end of World War II. The impact of World War I and its aftermath on the Hungarian archaeological school of Transylvania cannot be overstated. Major changes were made in both the faculty of the university and at the forefront of the museum. The Transylvanian Museum Society had to undergo a long legal battle, which also stunted research. Concerning the Hungarian Archaeological school, the Second Vienna Award had brought some changes, funds being allocated and new technologies being used for research even during World War II. However, these promising research advancements were suddenly halted due to the political changes brought by the end of the war, thus another chapter ending in the history of Transylvanian archaeology.

The effect of networking and personal relationships/rivalries on archaeological research are discussed in **chapter 7**. Antiquarianism and, later on, archaeology were always a discipline with a need for the maintaining of personal relationships. They shared their theories and results with each other, sometimes asked for their opinion or help in other regards. Records of correspondence between scholars had also shown that despite the large distances between countries, these individuals were able to consult with each other quite easily. Younger, more inexperienced antiquarians, like Lugosi Fodor András, could ask for the help of a well-respected colleagues, like Kemény József, to oversee the publication of their manuscripts.

The appearance of scientific journals and easily accessible newspapers have also facilitated the surfacing of reviews, in which antiquarians and archaeologists alike could critique each other's work more readily, oftentimes creating if not lifelong, but lasting conflicts in academia. The publishing of books could be postponed indefinitely; research topics could be abandoned because of a harsh review. But an open critique of one's work could also result in encouraging someone to re-visit their research and find more concrete evidence. Of course, the appearance of new, more well-rounded researchers in the midst of older scholars could also set the ground for conflicts, old and new methods clashing against each other. Contact with foreign scholars was also essential, since no discipline can evolve in pure isolation. The more international relations a researcher or even an institution had, the better they would be regarded by their peers. Needless to say, having this types of relations were a question of prestige which could sometimes be also used as a weapon of sorts.

Chapter 8 presents the various study trips antiquarians and archaeologists have made abroad, analyzing their impact on their research. The impact of study trips on the way individuals conducted their research is quite profound. Having access to literature and the collections of museums meant that scholars could find analogies faster and easier, which in turn meant that they could better focus their research on certain aspects and reach to important conclusions more readily. The recurring elements in the trips made by both Téglás and Buday allows us to make a certain amount of comparison between them. They both visited Germany in the same decade, surveying elements of the *limes* over there in order to do a comparative study of it with the one in Dacia. Téglás did his research in the last few decades of his life, as an already respected and well-established scholar. Meanwhile, Buday was at the beginning of his scientific career, the trip serving as a basis for his future *limes*-studies. While Téglás had to fund the trip out of his own pocket, Buday received a scholarship for his journey. The report that Téglás had made was panned by some of his contemporaries, and quite possibly also caused him to divert his attention from *limes* studies, while Buday's efforts were commended.

This example showcases the change that archaeology in Transylvania had witnessed during the turn of the century quite adequately. The efforts of antiquarians were not always funded by the government, while the new generation of freshly minted archaeologists was supported by the authorities in order to further their knowledge.

The importance of historical societies during this period and their impact on field research is stressed in **chapter 9**. The appearance of historical societies throughout Transylvania towards the end of the 19th century meant several things: there was a significant number of local intellectuals outside of Cluj, then considered to be a centre of scholarship, who had the desire to congregate and study the history, ethnography or natural history of their county in a more formal way. They were willing to sacrifice time and even money to pursue these endeavours, and also tried to use whatever influence they had in both the local and national government to procure financial and legal support. It is thanks to the tireless work of the members that some antiquities have escaped complete destruction, since there were times when local authorities, who were also members of said societies, have stopped villagers from destroying or re-using the finds. Thus, their mission was not only the documenting of sites and the collecting of antiquities, but also raising awareness about the importance of heritage.

Chapter 10 discusses the emergence of private and public antiquities collections throughout the years. The founding of museums from the beginning of the 19th century onwards meant a surge in interest about the past in the case of the public. Members of both the aristocracy and the middle class felt inspired to establish their own collections, a fraction of them later becoming parts of museums around Transylvania, some institutions being founded thanks to the large amounts of donated antiquities that entered the public domain. Even so, these private collections were quite vulnerable, in the sense that once the owner died, they could be sold off and end up abroad, if the heirs decided to do so, instead of offering it up to a public institution.

The fact that some of these private collections later on became public, was also thanks to the work that antiquarians and early archaeologists did. Their work in establishing societies would inspire private collectors later on to donate their antiquities to the public and thus assuring that they didn't end up abroad. Even though the Compromise of 1867 brought major political and societal changes to Hungary, the slight animosity that was felt by Hungarians towards the policies practiced by Vienna in the past did not dissipate even during the 1870's. There's also a complete shift towards how individuals that obtained antiquities into their private collections were perceived in the 20th century. With already well-established museums and archaeologists in Transylvania, it was no wonder that Pósta Béla did not condone the existence of such collections

Chapter 11 underlines the important role that antiquarians and archaeologists had in the protection of Roman heritage. Antiquarianism, archaeology and the research of Roman sites in

Transylvania had walked hand-in-hand with the heritage protection movement. If anything, we can also say that the work that the antiquarians had done from the 1850's onwards had contributed immensely to the lobbying power that had finally ended up with Article no. XXXIX being accepted by both houses of the parliament. From Kőváry László's outcry in the first edition of *Erdély régiségei*, to the first official list of protected sites being published at the turn of the century, the several decades of work that countless of individuals have put into the protection of sites finally bore fruit. However, it also has to be underlined that these sites needed constant monitoring, since their plundering went on even after the 1881. The members of historical societies, together with the representatives of the first generation of professional archaeologists were constantly trying to implement even stricter heritage protection through addressing the local governments, sometimes even succeeding in these pursuits.

In **chapter 12** several outside factors and their effect on the research of Roman Dacia are presented. As many scholars writing about the history of archaeology noted, it is imperative for one to consider all the outside factors, however small, that had influenced the evolution of the discipline. Only through this are we able to paint a true picture. In the case of Transylvanian antiquarianism and archaeology, we can pinpoint several happenings that had a direct and profound influence on the discipline itself and the research of Roman Dacia: development and the emergence of the antiquities market, the general assemblies of the Society of Hungarian Medics and Nature Explorers held in Transylvania, the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 and its aftermath, Theodor Mommsen's visit to Transylvania, the founding of the Royal Hungarian Franz Joseph University at Cluj, the Millennial Celebrations of 1896 and its effect on monography writing, the hegemony of the Pósta-school, the lack of a "*Limes Program*" and the development of photography and aerial photography.

CONCLUSIONS

As mentioned in the introduction, the purpose of this thesis is to compile and analyse the research concerning Roman Dacia conducted by Hungarian archaeologists from the 19th century up until 1945. It also wanted to affirm that the research of Roman Dacia, conducted by the early Hungarian antiquarians and, later on, by the members of the Hungarian archaeological school

between the 19th century and the end of World War II reflects a non-linear progression, drastically shaped by changing political, societal, cultural and academic contexts, which also influenced the way the discipline evolved, and subsequently, how discoveries were interpreted.

By looking at the works of both antiquarians and archaeologists during the above specified period, key personalities and moments can be pinpointed, all of which ultimately had led to a better understanding of the ancient past.

The beginning of the Hungarian Reform Era meant both political and societal change, which in turn kick-started the works of the very first serious Hungarian antiquarians in Transylvania: Kemény József and Lugosi Fodor András. They represented two different types of researchers, but essentially, they both tried to collect as much information about the past of Transylvania as possible, their ultimate goal being the publishing of a comprehensive book. While they were both interested in the Roman period, Fodor had collected more information related to it, mainly thanks to the fact that the area he lived in, Hunedoara county, was abundant in Roman sites. His manuscripts detailing the Roman history of Transylvania serve as important sources of information about sites and antiquities collections. The general assembly of the Society of Hungarian Medics and Nature Explorers at Cluj in 1844 served as important milestone in Transylvanian antiquarianism, the need for an archaeological society and more antiquarian work being underlined by those who attended.

These very promising beginnings were set to a pause due to the Revolution of 1848–1849, and the subsequent retaliations had paused any kind of antiquarian work indefinitely. It's only towards the end of the 1850's that newer members of the movement start their research, in part thanks to the visit of Theodor Mommsen. The most remarkable personalities of this time in Transylvania are Torma Károly and Finály Henrik, while Kőváry László can be considered as a proponent of heritage protection, which was ultimately the goal of every antiquarian and archaeologist. While this period is marked by the first well-documented excavations and the collection of data regarding the frontiers of Roman Dacia, the first monographs concerning the ancient history of Dacia were also published. However, the research concerning Dacia was not advanced enough for antiquarians to write a definitive history. With the lack of archaeological data, these writers like Vass, had the tendency to rely on the writings of ancient authors and on the marginal observations made by foreign authors.

The founding of the Transylvanian Museum Society in 1859 was an important moment in the progression of research, since it facilitated a venue for antiquarians to congregate, protected the antiquities of Transylvania by collecting and exhibiting them and also granted funding for research projects, such as Torma Károly's excavations at Ilişua and fieldwalks at the northern *limes* of Dacia. By being the only serious scientific and historical society that existed in Transylvania, it had regional but also national importance. Thus, we can speak about a certain degree of centralisation as well.

The Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 is another important milestone in the evolution of archaeology as a proper discipline. New personalities appear in Transylvanian antiquarianism, which means that the amount of research that is being done increases exponentially. The works of these new figures appear in the leading scientific journals of Hungary, and in some cases, Austria. The larger number of antiquarians outside of Cluj also causes the founding of several historical societies throughout Transylvania, subsequently meaning a kind of decentralisation in archaeological research. Leading figures of the antiquarian movement were documenting sites and conducting excavations at Potaissa, Apulum, and Sarmizegetusa. The antiquities of these excavations end up in the collection of these societies, founding the majority of those museums of regional importance that still exist today.

While the Royal Hungarian Franz Joseph University is founded at Cluj, the scientific activity of the Transylvanian Museum Society does not increase, in fact, the university has a negative effect on it. It would be almost three decades later when the actual archaeological department of the university is established, which means that research that was being done during this century is done by amateurs.

The amount of research that was done during this period and the volume of data that was collected throughout field-research had meant that the need for comprehensive works pertaining to the archaeology of Roman Dacia was becoming urgent. The publishing of small articles related to the finding of antiquarians was not enough to settle these needs, however these were enough to raise the awareness of foreign scholars about the work that was being done in Transylvania as well. The correspondence between these scholars, and their visits to Transylvania in order to collaborate with their colleagues means that the research being done by local antiquarians was becoming relevant by the day. It is evident, that concerning the unveiling of the history of Roman Dacia, the second half of the 19th century was the most frugal. And even though several questions were

answered concerning the Roman period in Transylvania, it has to be mentioned that there are certain issues for which we do not know the answer even today.

While several local antiquarians applied for the new position as head of the archaeology department at the university from Cluj, Pósta Béla, an “outsider” is appointed to the position. The Pósta-school’s importance in the professionalization of archaeology in Transylvania cannot be overstated, as well as the impact it had on the antiquarian research which was still ongoing. Cluj becomes a definitive research centre in Transylvania concerning archaeology, the first professionally trained archaeologists of the time making their debut in the first decade of the 20th century. This causes a conflict between representatives of the “unofficial” and “official” archaeology, also impacting the field research. However, this is also a time when much more attention is being paid on the cataloguing and processing of archaeological finds.

Seeing the results of the governmentally funded intensive *limes*-studies conducted by the Germans, archaeologists from Transylvania also motion for similar research projects. Some, like Téglás Gábor and Buday Árpád also partake in fieldtrips to Germany in order to observe more closely what’s being done there, even making suggestions for Hungarian authorities. However, it can be said that a complex, centrally operated and funded *limes*-study project never solidifies, and there are major setback also due to World War I.

The outbreak of World War I and its end have major consequences on Hungarian archaeology in Transylvania. Major figures like Buday Árpád leave indefinitely, limiting the research done by the Hungarian archaeological school at Roman sites. Another change comes with the Second Vienna Award, but these are thwarted again due to the outbreak of World War II and the definitive political change that is brought at its end. With that being said, the research conducted by the Hungarian archaeological school in Transylvania, concerning Roman Dacia will never see the same intensity as the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century did.

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