

“These were hard times for Skanderbeg, but he had an ally, the Hungarian Hunyadi”

Episodes in Albanian–Hungarian Historical Contacts



Edited by
Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics



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Hungarian Academy of Sciences
Research Centre for the Humanities

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Research Centre for the Humanities,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences

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Portraits of John Hunyadi and Skanderbeg in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Prizren (© Photo made by Jeton Jagxhiu)

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Archaeologia Hungaroalbanica. Connections between Hungarian and Albanian Medieval Archaeology



Miklós Takács and Péter Langó

Introduction

Albania's proverbial isolation often fuels stereotypical thinking, even about facts that have nothing to do with this geographical seclusion, the extent of which has varied from one historical period to another. Therefore, it is important to stress at the outset of our investigations that the Albanian lands have a rich archaeological heritage. Geographically speaking, the coastal region and the plain and hills of Northern Albania feature the highest number of sites, although certain river valleys in the mountains also have rich material. This fact alone could explain why Hungarian scientists and scholars started to research the Albanian archaeological material, especially the material dating back to the Middle Ages. Besides the abundance of artefacts and written records, there was, however, another cause of the Hungarian interest. Early on in the period of research, at the end of the 19th century, contemporary scientists observed a connection between artefacts found in the Carpathian Basin and in modern-day Albania. Similarly, another important factor was that in this period the nation states of the Balkans were born, which triggered the political activity of the era's great powers. And the political attention and interest of the great powers meant not merely gauging and influencing the aspirations of the region's small states, but also understanding the cultural characteristics and the past of the peninsula. As the representatives of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the contemporary Hungarian elite not only participated in these efforts but, in Albania, achieved some impressive results.

What supports the theory of the alleged medieval connections is the fact that the Albanian lands were not at all isolated during the Romans' rule and in its wake; the region was crossed by the Via Egnatia, which counted as one of the most important routes in Southeast Europe. Therefore, modern-day Albania was not isolated in the early Middle Ages. Quite the opposite: along the coast and inland, several other, major land routes and waterways crossed the country. From the perspective of antiquarianism, it meant that a precise knowledge of the history and cultural heritage of the Albanian territories was indispensable if one sought to gain a thorough understanding of the Roman and Byzantine Empire, the medieval countries of the Balkans or the Balkan countries restored in the 19th century.

The early medieval finds of coastal Albania have more remote connections, for example in the Carpathian Basin. Even though Albania's 20th-century history, especially the peculiar period after 1945, dimmed their earlier significance, it is beyond doubt that these land routes and seaways were important communication channels in previous eras.

The onset of research in the 19th century. The cult protectorate

In order to survey the activity of the Hungarian researchers who took interest in the antiquities of Albania, one must bear in mind two things. Firstly, the vast majority of researchers did not access the artefacts through the Hungarian institutional network; here, it will be necessary to make references to the Habsburg Empire. Secondly, it is important to note that in today's Albania, the first records of medieval artefacts were made centuries before the declaration of independence in 1912, and in the last decades of the 19th century major archaeological excavations were conducted in the region.¹

The history of Albanian archaeology was heavily linked with the Holy Roman Court and later with the Habsburg Imperial Court and the institution of the Habsburg cult protectorate.² Researchers investigating the history of the cult protectorate hold that it was in the provisions of the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) that the Sultan recognized the Emperor of Vienna as the protector of the Catholics living in the Ottoman Empire. The main grievances of the Catholic subjects of the Ottoman Empire resulted from the fact that they could not freely practice their religion or use their churches. As a consequence, the state of repair of the Catholic churches deteriorated, and attempts at restoration were obstructed. Therefore, 17–19th-century descriptions of the Catholic regions of the Balkans often contain

1 Bartl, Peter. *Albanci od srednjeg veka do danas*. Beograd: Clio, 2001. 138–145.

2 Deutsch, Engelbert. *Das k.(u.)k. Kultusprotektorat im albanischen Siedlungsgebiet*. Wien et al.: Böhlau, 2009. 30–31.

records on the deteriorating state of repair of the buildings of worship. In certain cases, researchers may draw important conclusions about the history of architecture or archaeology.³

A significant percentage of the North Albanian population was Catholic; therefore, important descriptions were given about the Christian churches of the region, thanks to the efforts of the Franciscan and Jesuit monks who were active in the region. The fact that the religious orders ran schools in the region, further facilitated the recording or the collecting of antiquities. Consequently, not only the monasteries, but also the schools run by these religious orders established collections. Such collections were established in the Franciscan and Jesuit monasteries in Shkodra,⁴ and in the school of Korça (in 1880, 1890 and 1887, respectively).⁵ Many members of the monastic communities felt attracted to the past and made it their personal mission to save and collect artefacts from bygone eras.⁶ Thus, the collections kept growing and the monks often took an active role in searching for promising finds: in the Shkodra region, for example, at the turn of the century, Franciscan monks opened up graves dating back to the Iron Age.

The avid interest in archaeological sites and finds had a “diplomatic” source as well. From the second half of the 18th century the Habsburg monarch, in his capacity as cult protector, founded several new consulates in the lands inhabited by Albanians. Many of the officials working at these consulates took an interest in collecting antiquities. On the other hand, as a peculiar, cultural by-product of the Napoleonic Wars in the early 19th century, West European travellers also started out to investigate the antiquities they hoped to find in coastal Albania.⁷

William Martin Leake, an English statesman and travelling antiquarian, visited the region in 1804. Originally, his task was to prevent the French from advancing in Albania. His descriptions inspired by his interest in topography and history were the first archaeological surveys of the region.⁸ Another account of the region’s ancient sites also arose during the French wars of the era. François Pouqueville, who had joined the French army in Egypt as a physician, started to write his memoirs about

3 The reports are published and evaluated here: Bartl, Peter. *Albania Sacra. Geistliche Visitationsberichte aus Albanien 1: Diözese Alessio*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007. 81–450.

4 The early medieval material of the museum was processed by Ferenc Nopcsa in 1912. T. Dobosi, Viola. ‘Nopcsa Ferenc és Albánia régészete.’ *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 123–124 (1996–1997): 203.

5 Adhami, Stilian. ‘Shtjefën Gjeçovi, një ndër pionierët e mbrojtjes dhe gjurmimit të monumenteve.’ *Monumentet* 2, (1981): 189.

6 Such monk was Shtjefën Gjeçovi, the father of Albanians’ folklore studies, whose collection was researched and used by Nopcsa as well. T. Dobosi, ‘Nopcsa Ferenc és Albánia régészete,’ 203.

7 Wilkes, John. *The Illyrians*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. 4–6.

8 Leake, William Martin. *Travels in Northern Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1835; Elsie, Robert. *Historical dictionary of Albania*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010. 20, 269–270.

his travels in the Ottoman Empire in captivity, and, similarly to Leake, he described the historical and archaeological sites of the region.⁹

West European interest in the region peaked again during the reign of Napoleon III. As at the time of the First French Empire, it became fashionable to investigate Roman history, which was commonly regarded as the forerunner of Napoleon's system. Research on the history of Ancient Rome, such as the discovery of the location of the battle between Caesar and Pompey in Dyrrhachium, once again drew the attention of Western intellectuals to the eastern coast of the Adriatic. Many French explorers, like Léon Heuzey, the discoverer of ancient Greek ruins, or Honoré Daumet, a treasure hunter and architect, investigated sites in Apollonia.¹⁰ To contemporary Western researchers, Albania, then merely a geographical concept, appeared to be an unknown world full of cultural treasures to be discovered. Several explorers, all hungry for success, planned expeditions, most of which failed or were only partly realized, either because of the state of affairs in Albania or because the initial expectations of the organizers were not met.¹¹

The period of the consulates

The formal archaeological research of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy was prepared with the help of the cult protectorate, especially after 1878 when several new consulates were established, because the lands inhabited by Albanians geopolitically appreciated and because from 1896 the Monarchy played an active and direct role in the Albanian nation and state-building processes.¹²

The officials of the reorganized Austro–Hungarian consulates performed certain archaeological and heritage protection tasks, which were not unique to the

9 Pouqueville, François Charles. *Voyage en Morée, à Constantinople, en Albanie, et dans plusieurs autres parties de l'Empire Othoman, pendant les années 1798, 1799, 1800 et 1801*. Paris: Gabon, 1805; Elsie, Historical dictionary of Albania, 365.

10 Heuzey, Léon and Daumet, Honoré. *Mission archéologique de Macédoine: ouvrage accompagné de planches*. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1876; Hodges, Richard. 'Introduction.' In *Byzantine Butrint: Excavations and Surveys*, edited by Richard Hodges et al., 1. Oxford: Oxbow, 2004.

11 Ferenc Nopcsa's travelogues give a plausible picture of the uncertain state of affairs. Nopcsa, Ferenc. *A legsötétebb Európa. Vándorlások Albániában*. Budapest: Utazások Könyvtára, 1911. The most well-known investigation that was planned but never happened was the case of Arthur Evans. In May 1877, he looked for the antique amphitheatre in Durrës, but his efforts were unsuccessful. It was a local archaeologist, Vangel Toçi, who finally explored the remains in the 1960s. Bowes, Kimberly D. 'The Main Chapel of the Durres Amphitheater: Decoration and Chronology.' *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome: Antiquité* 121, no. 2 (2009): 569–595. On Evans' research in Albania see Evans, Arthur John. *Antiquarian researches in Illyricum*. Westminster: Nichols and Sons, 1883–1885.

12 Csaplár-Degovics, Krisztián. 'Österreichisch-ungarische Interessendurchsetzung im Kaza von Tirana.' *Südost-Forschungen* 71 (2012): 129–182; Gostentschnigg, Kurt. *Wissenschaft im Spannungsfeld von Politik und Militär: Die österreichisch-ungarische Albanologie 1867–1918*. Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018.

Monarchy's consulates. The consulates of other great powers had similar tasks, and the diplomats often vied in researching sites and protecting archaeological heritage in coastal Albania; in Northern Albania, Austria–Hungary competed against France.

It is important to note that the mentioned consulates had a rather peculiar understanding of heritage protection in the Ottoman Empire. Their primary goal was to discover sites and start excavations and then to “remove” portable artefacts from the Ottoman Empire. This was the motivation behind the exploration of the most famous early medieval site in Albania at the end of the 19th century. Alain Degrand, the French consul in Shkodra organized the first excavations at the Dalmaca castle near Koman, the village that the Koman culture was named after, at the end of the 1890s.¹³

The organization of the consular network and the cultural missions symbolized the great powers' political advances in the region. A good example is the emergence of Italy and its growing influence in the region from the end of the 1880s. In the spirit of the concepts *Imperium Romanum* and *mare nostrum*, the Italian state founded schools where education was carried out in Italian, and with the help of Italian Franciscans Italy sought to increase its influence in the region. At the same time, Italian antiquarians also appeared on the eastern coasts of the Adriatic Sea.¹⁴

In the meantime, archaeology became a national science all over Europe and the artefacts from different eras were closely linked with the evaluation of the national past.¹⁵ This happened in Hungary, too, where scholars devoted close attention to artefacts that they believed had any national relevance or that allegedly were closely related to artefacts recovered in Hungary. In several cases, artefacts from the Balkans found their way into Hungarian museums; these items were sold by Albanian merchants to Hungarian public collections. Artefact trafficking and treasure hunting had reached Albania by the turn of the century. Besides the monks who took an interest in the antiquities and organized them in collections, there were adventurers

13 The first phase of the research of the graveyard is summarized by Spahiu, Hëna. ‘Gjetje të vjetra nga varreza mesjetare e kalasë së Dalmacës.’ *Iliria* 1 (1971): 230.

14 Csaplár, Krisztián. ‘Nopcsa Ferenc báró és a Monarchia albániai politikája 1910–1911-ben.’ *Fons* 8, no. 3 (2001): 313–314. It is important to note that the researchers whose mother tongue was Italian did not only investigate the Albanian antiquities in their capacity as archaeologists from the Kingdom of Italy; they also worked as the researchers of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, as demonstrated by the example of Paolo Orsi of Rovereto. Gilkes, Oliver. ‘The Trojans in Epirus: Archaeology, Myth and Identity in Inter-War Albania.’ In *Archaeology under Dictatorship*, edited by Michael L. Galaty and Charles Watkinson, 40. New York: Kluwer Academic and Plenum Publishers, 2004; Orsi, Paolo. ‘Iscrizioni dell’Albania.’ *Archäologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich-Ungarn* 7, (1883). About Orsi’s personality, see Maurina, Barbara. ‘Paolo Orsi nel ‘periodo roveretano’: gli anni della formazione.’ In *Orsi, Halbherr, Gerola. L’archeologia italiana nel Mediterraneo. Catalogo della mostra*, edited by Barbara Maurina and Agostino Rossella, 19–23. Rovereto: Osiride, 2010.

15 About how this process took place in the Hungarian research community at the end of the 19th century, see Langó, Péter. *Turulok és Árpádok*. Budapest: Typotex, 2017.

who raided and ravaged archaeological sites. The most famous treasure found in the era had many ties to archaeological research carried out in the Carpathian Basin.

The medieval find known as the Vrap or Avar treasure was found in 1901. Most of the items were acquired by Rémi von Kwiatkowski,¹⁶ the Austro-Hungarian consul in Durrës, who collected and took abroad the most significant treasure trove of the Northern Balkans.¹⁷ Although Kwiatkowski's action may be criticized from a number of aspects, it seems certain that had he not collected the items, many of them would have been lost. The trove consisted of 4 gold chalices, 3 gold and 1 silver drinking bowls, 1 silver bucket, 2 gold discs, 3 gold stripes, 8 gold bars and belt accessories.¹⁸ (The assumption appears to be proven by the fact that only 1 of the 8 bars was taken to a museum and one of the four chalices was separated from the rest of the ensemble. Also, in spite of Kwiatkowski's efforts, nobody knows anything about the copper pot in which the treasure was found.¹⁹)

Hungarian scholars showed a special interest in the ensemble even when it was found,²⁰ but it gained real significance only in the 20th century. To date, the find has been subject to various interpretations in Hungary, all connected to evaluations of similar early medieval artefacts found in the Carpathian Basin.

16 Strzygowski, Josef. *Altai-Iran und Völkerwanderung. Ziergeschichtliche Untersuchungen über den Eintritt der Wander- und Nordvölker in die Treibhäuser geistigen Lebens*. Leipzig: Hinrich, 1917. 1.

17 Strzygowski, *Altai-Iran und Völkerwanderung*, 1–40; Werner, Joachim. *Der Schatzfund von Vrap in Albanien. Beiträge zur Archäologie der Awarenzeit im mittleren Donauraum*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1986. 10–12.

18 It was common practice for consuls to make private collections from the recovered artefacts. Theodor Ippen and Alain Degrand had such private collections. The latter donated his collection to the Museum of Saint Germain-en-Laye; this is how artefacts of the Koman culture were taken to France. Degrand, Alain. *Souvenirs de la Haute-Albanie*. Paris: Welter, 1901.

19 The treasure has extensive literature; see Strzygowski, *Altai-Iran und Völkerwanderung*; Werner, *Der Schatzfund von Vrap in Albanien*, 66–69; Stadler, Peter. 'Ausgewählte awarische Bronzegüsse als Parallelen zu Gürtelbeschlägen von Vrap und Erseke.' In *Der Schatzfund von Vrap in Albanien. Beiträge zur Archäologie der Awarenzeit im mittleren Donauraum*, edited by Joachim Werner, 105–118. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1986; Stadler, Peter. 'Der Schatzfund von Vrap, Albanien.' In *Reitervölker aus dem Osten – Hunnen + Awaren*, edited by Falko Daim, 432–438. Eisenstadt: Amt der Burgenländischen Landesregierung, 1996; Garam, Éva. 'Über den Schatzfund von Vrap (Albanien).' *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 49 (1997): 23–33; Bálint, Csanád. *A nagyszentmiklósi kincs. Régészeti tanulmányok*. Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2004. 246–252.

20 The first Hungarian appraiser of the finds was József Hampel. Alois Riegl's work drew his attention to the "interesting gold jewellery found in Tirana". Riegl dated the jewellery to the 7th century and was certain of their Byzantine origin. Hampel accepted many of his arguments, but he assumed that the items were not from "central coastal factories", but that most of them were "items made in inland Pannonia". Riegl, Alois. 'Die Krainburger Funde.' In *Jahrbuch der K. K. Zentral-Kommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und Historischen Denkmale*, 1 (1903): 217–250.

Research in Albania on the Vrap treasure intensified after Joachim Werner, a German archaeologist specializing in the early Middle Ages, wrote a book on the ensemble in the 1980s (see below). His work was translated into Albanian as well.²¹

The research of Gyula Bornemisza and Ferenc Nopcsa

One of the Austro-Hungarian diplomats who worked as a consul prior to 1912 was the Hungarian baron, Gyula Bornemisza (1873–1925). He worked at the consulates of Shkodra, Durrës and Monastir (Bitola, present-day North Macedonia) between 1898 and 1913.²² The available sources suggest that he had considerable local knowledge and spoke Albanian.²³ Robert Elsie and Kurt Gostentschnigg found that Gyula Bornemisza took an active interest in history: twice he accompanied Austro-Hungarian scholars who later became renowned albanologists. In 1903 he escorted Ferenc Nopcsa when he travelled to Shkodra, Prizren and Üsküb (Skopje, present-day North Macedonia);²⁴ and in 1911 he travelled with Georg Veith, an Austro-Hungarian officer of the artillery and ancient historian who later became a chronicler of the Albanian events of World War I.²⁵ Veith visited the site of the Battle of Dyrrachium that took place in 48 BC between Caesar and Pompey. Of the two visitors it was Nopcsa who established a genuine archaeological interest in the region among Hungarian albanologists.²⁶

Ferenc Nopcsa based his Albanian activity on Austro-Hungarian scholarly and cultural sources; therefore, he represented Austria-Hungary rather than the Hungarian intellectuals.²⁷ His interest was greatly influenced by the lively intellectual

21 At an on-site interview conducted by Skënder Anamali (Albania), Joachim Werner (Germany) and Gunnar O. Svane (Sweden) on July 7, 1982, it turned out that the descendants of the finders can still recall certain details of the 1901 discovery. The three researchers talked with a respondent who had been born in 1903 and who was related to two of the finders. Although this person had not been born when the treasure was found, based on the stories of his relatives he could recall a plethora of details. Werner, Joachim. 'Aspekte të reja në lidhje me thesarin avar të Vrapit.' *Iliria* 13, no. 1 (1983): 181–201; Werner, *Der Schatzfund von Vrap in Albanien*, 10.

22 *Jahrbuch des k.u.k. Auswärtiges Dienstes – 1914*. Wien: K.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1914. 240–241.

23 Gostentschnigg, Kurt. 'Die Verflechtung von Wissenschaft und Politik am Beispiel der österreichisch-ungarischen Albanologie.' *Südost-Forschungen* 58 (1999): 231.

24 Elsie, Robert. 'The Viennese Scholar who almost became King of Albania: Baron Franz Nopcsa and his contribution to Albanian studies.' *East European Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (1999): 327–337.

25 Veith, Georg. 'Der Feldzug in Albanien.' In *Der Große Krieg 1914–1918*, edited by Max Schwarte. Vol. 5, 511–558. Leipzig: Barth, 1922.

26 Elsie, 'The Viennese Scholar who almost became King of Albania: Baron Franz Nopcsa and his contribution to Albanian studies,' 327–337; Csaplár, 'Nopcsa Ferenc báró és a Monarchia albániai politikája 1910–1911-ben,' 311–359.

27 Ferenc Nopcsa's interest in antiquities may have come from the family. His uncle (also called Ferenc) had taken an interest in history before his appointment as lord-lieutenant. Not only did he

atmosphere of turn-of-the-century Vienna where one could find the first workshop of modern Balkanology set up by the triad of Lajos Thallóczy, Milan Šufflay and Konstantin Jireček.²⁸ The members of this workshop, not quite independently of Vienna's political aspirations, took an interest in medieval Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia and Bulgaria but also in the geographical features, history and antiquities of the Albanian-inhabited lands.²⁹ It was partly owing to their scholarly inspiration that many expeditions set out to explore geographical Albania at the turn of the 20th century. The joint Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported these expeditions, and that was how Ferenc Nopcsa,³⁰ Georg Veith,³¹ Theodor Ippen and Carl Patsch³² travelled in the western parts of the peninsula.

The Hungarian Ferenc Nopcsa gained fame among professionals and among the general public interested in history on account of his adventurous life rather than of his paleontological and geographical research. He excelled in palaeontology and geography, but it was his heartfelt love for the Albanians that made him an important and romantic chronicler of contemporary Albanian folk life (folklore, cultural anthropology) and the archaeological heritage of the Albanian countryside.³³ He

have a massive book collection, but he also carried out archive research in Italy. At the onset of the "Archaeological movement" he was considered one of the greatest patrons in Hunyad county and he generously supported archaeological research in Transylvania. His nephew also dealt with certain geo-historical and stratigraphical questions which proved to be relevant to the analysis of the Transylvanian archaeological material. Gaál, István. 'Déva környékének földrajzi viszonyai a pleisztocén és ó-alluvialis időkben.' In *A Hunyad-megyei történelmi és régészeti társulat huszonegyedik évkönyve*, edited by Kristóf Tarján, 28. Déva: Hirsch Adolf, 1912.

28 Stadtmüller, Georg. *Geschichte Südosteuropas*. München: Oldenbourg, 1976. 409–410; Takács, Miklós. *A középkor régészete az észak-balkáni térségben – párhuzamos és összehasonlító vizsgálat*. DSc thesis. Budapest: MTA BTK Régészeti Intézet, 2012. 12, 69, 80.

29 Thallóczy, Ludovicus, et al. *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia 1–2*. Wien: Holzhausen, 1913–1918.

30 Tasnádi Kubacska, András. *Báró Nopcsa Ferenc kalandos élete*. Budapest: Franklin, 1938; Főzy, István. *Nopcsa báró és a Kárpát-medence dinoszauruszai*. Tatabánya: Alfadat-press, 2000. 7–9.

31 Veith, Georg. *Die Feldzüge des Julius Caesar Octavianus in Illyrien in den Jahren 35–33 v. Chr.* Wien: Holder, 1914.

32 Ippen, Theodor. *Stari spomenici u Albaniji*. Sarajevo: Zemaljska štamparija, 1900. 518–520; Ippen, Theodor. 'Alte Kirchen und Kirchenruinen in Albanien.' *Wissenschaftliche Mitteilungen aus Bosnien und Hercegovina* 7 (1900): 231–242 and 8 (1902): 131–142; Patsch, Carl. *Das Sandschak Berat in Albanien. Schriften der Balkankommission*. Wien: Holder, 1904.

33 Ferenc Nopcsa's recently compiled publication list consists of 191 (!) items, 4 of which fell into the category of archaeology. Nopcsa, Ferenc. 'Archäologisches aus Nordalbanien.' *Wissenschaftliche Mitteilungen aus Bosnien und Hercegovina* 9 (1909): 82–90; Nopcsa, Ferenc. 'Beiträge zur Vorgeschichte und Ethnologie Nordalbanien.' *Wissenschaftliche Mitteilungen aus Bosnien und Hercegovina* 12 (1912): 168–253; Nopcsa, Ferenc. 'Über seine archäologischen Funde in Nordalbanien.' *Sitzungsberichte der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft* 40 (1910): 31–32; Nopcsa, Ferenc. 'Zur vorgeschichtlichen Ethnologie von Nordalbanien.' *Wissenschaftliche Mitteilungen aus Bosnien und Hercegovina* 12 (1912). Nopcsa's above works focus on the remains of monumental architecture and on the Illyrian origin of folk tools used in the early 20th century. Nopcsa's travelogues also contain data relevant for medieval

was the first to draw the attention of his fellow scholars to the similarities between artefacts of the Albanian Koman culture and finds from the Keszthely culture around Lake Balaton in the Carpathian Basin. It is also important to highlight that he was the first to recognize the Byzantine items³⁴ of the Koman culture and he initiated the first excavations by Hungarians in Albania.³⁵

Nopcsa's above-mentioned contemporaries, Ippen, the diplomat, Veith, the soldier, and Patsch, the scholar, primarily collected folklore and mainly early medieval artefacts in Northern and Central Albania (Shkodra, Durrës, Berat).³⁶

The independent Albania and the Monarchy's Institute for Balkan Studies

There were in Vienna several scholars who took an interest in history, architecture, archaeology, folklore or palaeontology and who conducted research in the most underdeveloped region of the Balkan Peninsula. This, of course, was by no means an accident. The Monarchy had carefully worked out a strategy to survey Albania's natural resources and cultural goods, which was further proved by the establishment of an institution that is hardly known today. In 1904 the *Institut für Balkanforschung* (Institute for Balkan Studies) was established in the Sarajevo *Landesmuseum* (*Zemaljski muzej*) under the leadership of the already mentioned Carl Patsch.³⁷ This place of research might be called a "domestic" institute, as the Monarchy had occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 (its annexation then occurred in 1908). In fact, however, the Sarajevo institute focused its attention on Montenegro and on the geographical Albania rather than on Bosnia. We have no knowledge of any Hungarian scholar working for this institute.

Although the Albanian scholars of the Communist period tended to be overcritical when discussing the scientific and cultural activity of the Austro-Hungarian Balkanologists or the research conducted by the Austro-Hungarian geographers, art historians, medievalists and folklorists,³⁸ it is noteworthy that it was the data gathered by these scientists that was later used to establish modern Albanian historiography, art history and folklore. It is beyond doubt that the

archaeology. Nopcsa, *A legsötétebb Európa. Vándorlások Albániában*. A comprehensive work on his archaeological: T. Dobosi, 'Nopcsa Ferenc és Albánia régészete,' 199–205.

34 T. Dobosi, 'Nopcsa Ferenc és Albánia régészete,' 203.

35 Nopcsa, 'Beiträge zur Vorgeschichte und Ethnologie Nordalbanien,' 168–253.

36 Ippen, *Stari spomenici u Albaniji*, 518–520; Ippen, 'Alte Kirchen und Kirchenruinen in Albanien,' 131–142; Patsch, *Das Sandschak Berat in Albanien*.

37 Gostentschnigg, 'Die Verflechtung von Wissenschaft und Politik am Beispiel der österreichisch-ungarischen Albanologie,' 226–231.

38 Ibid., 221–245.

Monarchy's scholars conducted successful and significant exploration and research in the region.³⁹

Hungarian archaeologists also kept track of the work performed at the *Landesmuseum* and the *Institut für Balkanforschung*. The articles published there were discussed in the review articles of the *Archaeológiai Értesítő* (Archaeological Review), the most acknowledged archaeological periodical of Hungary.

The significance of Lajos Thallóczy's work

The most important Hungarian initiative to explore the Albanian historical past also started out from Vienna. Lajos Thallóczy, one of the founders of Hungarian Albanology, made a peculiar contribution to the exploration of the antiquities recovered from the lands inhabited by the Albanians.⁴⁰ Thallóczy's most important decision was when he gave up his promising career as a historian in Budapest and moved to Vienna in 1885. There, as the director of the archive under the control of the joint Ministry of Finance, he could pursue his interest in the medieval Balkan Peninsula, mainly by publishing document records and treatises analysing these records. Thallóczy is widely considered to be the founder not only of Hungarian Balkanology but also of Hungarian Albanology; yet, he was mostly interested in medieval Bosnia and Dalmatia and he started to deal with Albania only as a result of his medieval Bosnian studies.

Thallóczy's most remarkable contribution to albanology was the two-volume *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, a collection of studies published in 1916 and edited by Thallóczy himself.⁴¹ The authors of the articles were famous Austro-Hungarian Albanologists of the era such as Konstantin Jireček, Milan Šufflay, Theodor Ippen, Carl Buchberger (Karl Thopia) and Lajos Thallóczy himself. What further increases the significance of the *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen* was that after 1918 no similar work was published about Albanian history for decades.

The authors of the two volumes commemorated the archaeological finds and the listed artefacts of the now independent Albania, and interpreted their sources in a broader, North Balkanian and Mediterranean reference framework. (This

39 Prela, Zef. 'Aspekte ekonomike të depërtimit paqësor të Austro-Hungarisë në Shqipëri (1900–1912).' *Studime Historike* 3, no. 2 (1966): 77–104.

40 Juzbašić, Dževad and Ress, Imre. *Lajos Thallóczy, der Historiker und Politiker*. Sarajewo-Budapest: Akademie der Wissenschaften von Sarajewo and Budapest, 2010; Buchberger, Carl. 'Erinnerungen aus meinen albanischen Jahren 1911–1914.' *Studia Albanica* 10 (1973): 217; Csaplár-Degovics, Krisztián. 'Ludwig von Thallóczy und die Albanologie: Skizzen eines Experiments zur Nationsbildung.' In *Lajos Thallóczy, der Historiker und Politiker*, edited by Dževad Juzbašić and Imre Ress, 141–164. Sarajewo-Budapest: Akademie der Wissenschaften von Sarajewo and Budapest, 2010.

41 Thallóczy, Ludwig. *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen 1–2*. München-Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1916.



Árpád Buday (1879–1937) (University of Szeged, Klebelsberg Library)

perspective was made important by the Albanian isolationism of the Hoxha era.) On the other hand, however, this work shows that Thallóczy, even though he was deeply interested in the material culture of bygone eras and in linguistics, was still first of all a historian, who relied on available written sources when creating his analyses. Therefore, we must not be surprised that although Thallóczy was assistant editor for the *Archaeologiai Értesítő* from 1876 to 1880, he never gave a detailed analysis of the archaeological finds found in Albania.

Archaeological research in Albania in World War I

Albania gained independence in 1912–1913, and Austria–Hungary played a key role in the process.⁴² Ironically, during World War I, the joint Austro–Hungarian army occupied the majority of the Albanian-inhabited lands and introduced a military administration. The years between 1914 and 1918 were one of the most intense periods in the history of Austro–Hungarian albanological research.⁴³

Camillo Praschniker and Arnold Schober explored Northern Albania in 1916 at the request of the Austro–Hungarian military authorities; their goal was to list all archaeological sites they found along the way.⁴⁴ Árpád Buday, a Hungarian scholar, also participated in their mission.⁴⁵

He was professor of archaeology at the University of Kolozsvár (Cluj, present-day Romania) and began his research in Albania in the summer of 1917.⁴⁶ He mainly investigated the Dukagjin area, but he also travelled to Northern Albania where he explored the region around Hash.⁴⁷ He focused his attention on prehistoric finds and on describing and reconstructing the ancient Roman road network, as he taught provincial studies. He was the second and, to date, the last Hungarian professional archaeologist to undertake excavations in Albania; he explored a prehistoric barrow near Kruma with Lieutenant György Babócsay.⁴⁸ Upon his return to Kolozsvár, he published his findings in Hungarian and French in the periodical of the Transylvanian National Museum.⁴⁹

42 Bartl, *Albanci od srednjeg veka do danas*, 138–148; Löhr, Hanns Christian. *Die Gründung Albaniens. Wilhelm zu Wied und die Balkan-Diplomatie der Großmächte 1912–1914*. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2010. 55–70; Csaplár-Degovics, Krisztián. *Az albán nemzettévalás kezdetei (1878–1913). A Rilindja és az államalapítás korszaka*. Budapest: ELTE BTK TDI, 2010. 284–306.

43 Gostentschnigg, 'Die Verflechtung von Wissenschaft und Politik am Beispiel der österreichisch-ungarischen Albanologie', 234–235.

44 Gostentschnigg, 'Die Verflechtung von Wissenschaft und Politik am Beispiel der österreichisch-ungarischen Albanologie', 234–235; Praschniker, Camillo and Schober, Arnold. 'Bericht über zwei mittellalterliche Inschriften aus Albanien.' *Anzeiger der k. k. Akademie der Wissenschaften Wien* 56 (1919): 73–81; Praschniker, Camillo and Schober, Arnold. *Archäologische Forschungen in Albanien und Montenegro*. Wien: Holder, 1919; Schober, Arnold. *Muzakhia und Malakstra. Archäologische Untersuchungen in Mittelalbanien*. Wien: Holder, 1920.

45 Vincze, Zoltán. *A kolozsvári régészeti iskola a Pósta Béla-korszakban (1899–1919)*. Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, 2014. 119–120.

46 Ibid., 110–121.

47 Buday, Árpád. *Régészeti kutatás Albániában. Recherches archéologiques en Albanie*. Kolozsvár: Stief, 1918; Buday, Árpád. 'Régészeti kutatás Albániában.' *Dolgozatok az Erdélyi Nemzeti Múzeum érem és régiségtárából* 9 (1918): 1–71.

48 Ibid., 43–44, 93–94.

49 Ibid., 68–71.

Archaeological research in interwar Albania and its reception in Hungary

At the end of the 1918, the Austro–Hungarian, French and Italian occupation of Albania ended, but a new era of political uncertainty started that spanned over years.⁵⁰ The great protector, Austria–Hungary, was no more, and it took years of pressure from the League of Nations to force the Serbian and Greek armies that had occupied the northeastern and southern parts of the country to withdraw behind the internationally delineated borders. Furthermore, struggles within the domestic political establishment threatened to spark off a civil war. In the end, it was Ahmet Zogu, a politician raised and educated in Istanbul and Vienna, who brought stability. He was crowned king of Albania in Tirana in 1928.

The civil war conditions made it difficult to recommence archaeological research. Although the National Museum was established in Tirana in 1922, it was forced to close in 1925, at which time its collection was moved to the National Library.⁵¹

Despite the marriage between King Zog and Geraldine Apponyi in 1938, the interwar period halted the impetus of Hungarian Albanology. In part this was because the first generation of scholars – Lajos Thallóczy and Ferenc Nopcsa – had no Hungarian students who could have continued their work.⁵² Another important factor was that the international constellation in the aftermath of World War I radically changed which countries could conduct archaeological research in Albania.⁵³

The archaeological expeditions of the era were mostly led by Italian and French scholars and typically focused on exploring only single sites from the Roman period; no comparative archaeological work was done. Léon Rey's expedition carried out excavations from 1923 in the town of Apollonia, which had been abandoned by the end of Late Antiquity.⁵⁴ The Italian archaeological expedition led by Luigi Maria

50 Bartl, *Albanci od srednjeg veka do danas*, 162–218; Ruzicic-Kessler, Karlo. *Italiener auf dem Balkan: Besatzungspolitik in Jugoslawien 1941–1943*. Berlin–Boston: de Gruyter, 2017. 15–16.

51 Adhami, 'Shtjefën Gjeçovi, një ndër pionierët e mbrojtjes dhe gjurmimit të monumenteve', 190.

52 Csánki, Dezső. 'Thallóczy Lajos; gyászbeszéd, melyet a gyászszertartáson Dr. Csánki Dezső a Társulat elnöke mondott el.' *Századok* 51, no. 1 (1917): 1–4; Lambrecht, Kálmán. 'Báró Nopcsa Ferenc: Különnyomat, *Budapesti Szemle* 9 (1933).

53 Gilkes, 'The Trojans in Epirus: Archaeology, Myth and Identity in Inter-War Albania', 41–42; Lepore, Giuseppe. 'Italian Archaeological Missions in the twentieth century in Albania.' In *Skills and tools to the Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism Management*, edited by Sara Santoro, 54. Teramo: D'Errico, 2015.

54 Cabanes, Pierre. 'L'œuvre de Léon Rey en Albanie (1924–1939).' *Iliria* 31, no. 1–2 (2003): 15–30; Fenet, Annick. 'La création de la Mission archéologique française en Albanie (1922–1923), entre Armée d'Orient et modèles institutionnels.' In *Pour une histoire de l'archéologie XVIIIe siècle–1945. Hommage de ses collègues et amis à Ève Gran-Aymerich*, edited by Annick Fenet et al. Bordeaux: Ausonius Editions, 2015.

Ugolini started work in 1925.⁵⁵ They carried out large-scale excavations in two ruined towns: in 1925 in Phoenica, and from 1928 to 1943 in Butrint.⁵⁶ The size of the expedition reflected Fascist Italy's desire to express its power ambitions and to use the archaeological expeditions for political gains.⁵⁷ The Italian archaeologists continued their work even during World War II, until 1944.⁵⁸

Hungarian aspects of medieval archaeological research in the People's Republic of Albania

In the autumn of 1944, the Communists took over in Albania. The country fell into the Soviet sphere of influence, and the Communist party could retain power until the fall of Communism.⁵⁹ Enver Hoxha's party had close relations with Yugoslavia between 1944 and 1948 and with the Soviet Union after 1948. After 1961, however, the party aligned itself with China. At the end of the 1970s, relations with China also deteriorated and the country hermetically sealed its borders. Hoxha's one-party state expected Albanians to strictly adhere to the instructions of the party, and the dramatic changes in foreign policy greatly influenced the development of archaeology.⁶⁰ The first secretary, Enver Hoxha, collected his thoughts and ideological recommendations for archaeology in a dedicated book.⁶¹

Hëna Spahiu's life (1933–1993) demonstrates that science was wholly subordinated to party politics. She received her diploma in archaeology at Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest) in 1957. An obituary was published in 1993

55 Ugolini led the excavations until the mid-1930s. He passed away in 1936. After his death, the Albanian excavations continued. The Butrint excavations were led by Pirro Marconi from 1936 to 1938, and then by Dario Mustilli until 1944. Lepore, 'Italian Archaeological Missions in the twentieth century in Albania.'

56 Hodges, 'Introduction', 5, 7.

57 Ugolini, Luigi D. 'A legújabb olasz archeológiai kutatások Albániában.' *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 47 (1934): 1–4; Gilkes, 'The Trojans in Epirus: Archaeology, Myth and Identity in Inter-War Albania.'

58 Bartl, *Albanci od srednjeg veka do danas*, 218–231.

59 Ibid., 232–265.

60 Muzafer Korkuti's life may be the best example of how the political upheaval affected Albanian archaeology. Following Khrushchev's Albanian visit, Korkuti studied in Leningrad, but returned after the split; in 1965 he became familiar with the local results of Paleolithic research. Later he led excavations in Romania, and then when economic relations were considered with West European countries, he could conduct research in Italy; he also invited a French archaeological mission to Albania to continue the Apollonia excavations. However, in the period of complete isolation he also had to leave the capital and work in the countryside. Hodges, 'Introduction', 3–11.

61 Anamali, Skënder and Spahiu, Hëna. *Stoli arbërore*. Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë, Qendra e Kërkimeve Arkeologjike, 1988; Drini, Faik. *Bibliografi e arkeologjisë dhe e historisë së lashtë të Shqipërisë 1972–1983*. Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e RPS të Shqipërisë, Qendra e Kërkimeve Arkeologjike, 1985. 15–21.

commemorating her life and achievements in archaeology, but the author only briefly mentions Hëna Spahiu's studies in Hungary.⁶²

In the first years of the Hoxha era, Albanian archaeology had an institutional network and disciplinary system (divided by the periods to be researched) that followed the Soviet model.⁶³ Accordingly, the party established a central museum, an archaeological research institute and an archaeology department within the Historical and Linguistic Institute of the University in Tirana. Thus, Hëna Spahiu did not start her studies in Budapest because there was no possibility of studying archaeology in Tirana. Rather, she probably came to Budapest because countries belonging to the Soviet sphere of influence were expected to facilitate the development of Albanian archaeology as a gesture of "fraternal assistance". The Soviet Union certainly acted as a role model: in the late antique Byzantine town of Butrint, the excavations of the interwar period were resumed, albeit now as a joint Soviet–Albanian project. The Albanian party leadership held this excavation in such high esteem that even Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev was shown around upon his 1959 visit to Albania.⁶⁴ (By that time the ruins of Butrint had become the "showroom" of Albanian archaeology.)

Hëna Spahiu took interest in the Koman culture of the Migration Period and she enjoyed the full confidence of the Albanian party bureaucracy when in 1953 she started her studies in Budapest.⁶⁵ She chose Gyula László, a famous professor at Eötvös Loránd University, as her mentor. Spahiu's thesis on the Koman culture clearly demonstrates that she was fully qualified to become an expert of Koman–Avar relations and perhaps to lead research on the Vrap Treasure.⁶⁶ Her career, however, was cut short after the Albanian–Soviet split in 1961. As the country moved closer towards China and then shifted to isolationism, Hëna Spahiu could not stay in touch with her Hungarian colleagues,⁶⁷ even though in Budapest she had come to know Ilona Kovrig, another excellent researcher of the Avar era. Hëna Spahiu's Hungarian education was no longer considered an asset; the cultural bodies of the party state disregarded her even in the 1980s when, in return for financial compensation, the

62 'Hëna Spahiu – In Memoriam.' *Iliria* 23, no. 1–2 (1993): 297–299.

63 Takács, *A középkor régészete az észak-balkáni térségben – párhuzamos és összehasonlító vizsgálat*, 250–251.

64 Hodges, 'Introduction', 7 (figure 1.8).

65 We are greatly indebted to Dr. Éva Garam for sharing with Miklós Takács her memories about Hëna Spahiu, who was called Hanna in Hungary. There is a photo of Hëna Spahiu taken at her Budapest farewell party in 1959. In the photo she can be seen in the company of Gyula László and the archaeology students of Eötvös Loránd University. "Hanna" is standing to the right of the professor: *Thesaurus Avarorum. Régészeti tanulmányok Garam Éva tiszteletére*, edited by Tivadar Vida, 14 (figure 1). Budapest: ELTE BTK Régészettudományi Intézet, 2012.

66 'Hëna Spahiu – In Memoriam.' 297.

67 As told by Hëna Spahiu herself to Miklós Takács when the author met her in Győr in 1991.

country allowed some German and Austrian researchers to examine certain items of Albania's medieval archaeological heritage. She was also not selected when a group of Albanian archaeologists along with the already mentioned Joachim Werner were requested to authenticate the archaeological site of the Vrap treasure. It should be noted that Albanian archaeologists were never invited to participate in research projects on the Vrap treasure, apart from providing on-the-spot help to Werner during his field survey.

The Albanian doctrine of isolation did not leave untouched the historical periods to be examined by archaeologists. The focus shifted from the slave empire of Ancient Rome to the Illyrians, and archaeologists were expected to prove the existence of Illyrian continuity into the early Middle Ages. As a national ideology, Illyrism became the focal point of archaeology, and the sites of Koman culture were appraised accordingly. The efforts of local researchers were significantly hindered by the fact that both the Vrap and the Erseka treasures were taken abroad; therefore, the scholars could not scrutinize the finds.⁶⁸ (In this regard the scholarly community expects a change, because recent Albanian excavations and finds, for example the belt set found in Koman that dates back to the 8th century, have prompted Albanian researchers to join international research projects.⁶⁹)

The professional opinion represented by Skënder Anamali and Hëna Spahiu corresponded with the expectations of the party-state: the party considered the Koman culture as evidence of Illyrian–Albanian continuity.⁷⁰ The uniform and national theory of continuity was legitimized by two international conflicts before the fall of Communism. The first was that owing to the Albanian presence in Kosovo, Serbian and Albanian historiographers and archaeologists have “traditionally” bitterly criticized one another.⁷¹ The other was the disagreement between Albanian

68 The Vrap treasure was purchased by J. Pierpont Morgan and it was taken to the New York Metropolitan Museum. The Erseka treasure was placed in a private collection.

69 Nallbani, Etleva. ‘Early Medieval North Albania: New Discoveries, Remodeling Connections: The Case of Medieval Komani.’ In *Adriatico altomedievale (VI–XI secolo). Scambi, porti, produzioni*, edited by Sauro Gelichi and Claudio Negrèlli, 326–327. Venezia: Ca’Foscari, 2017.

70 Before the death of Enver Hoxa Albanian national archaeology focused on Illyrian materials and early medieval research, mostly because of the related ethnic identification and the resulting nation-centred isolationism that built on the principle of autochthony. Veseli, Sabina. ‘Archaeology, Nationalism and the Construction of National Identity in Albania.’ In *New Directions in Albanian Archaeology*, edited by Lorenc Bejko and Richard Hodges, 323–330. Tirana: ICAA, 2006; Bowden, ‘The Construction of identities in post-Roman Albania’, 57–58; Bekteshi, Arba. ‘Albanian Archaeology during Communism: Constructing the Illyrian Myth through Numismatics.’ *International Journal of Student Research in Archaeology* 1, March (2016): 31–33.

71 Митровић, Јован. “Улога археологије у спољној политици Србије почетком XX века.” Зборник Народног музеја. *Археологија* 23 (2017): 448–449. This of course meant a different interpretation for the Koman culture as well. Here is an example for a quondam Yugoslavian interpretation: Маленко, Владо. “Раносредновековната материјална култура во Охрид и охридско.” In *Охрид и*

and Romanian researchers of ethnogenesis over theories of continuity that have arisen in the two nations.

Ethnic continuity was interpreted by both Albanians and Romanians the same way: they identified the location of their own ethnogenesis with the lands their people inhabited in the modern era. What further complicated the question was that certain linguists noticed at the turn of the century that the Romanian and Albanian languages have a significant amount of shared vocabulary. Therefore, they concluded that in earlier periods there must have been intense relations between the two peoples.⁷² The problem is that at present the two nations live hundreds of kilometres from each other; if neither left their ethnic cradle, how could they develop a shared vocabulary? Besides the Serbian–Albanian debate, a Romanian–Albanian dispute also arose, with each side questioning the other's theory of continuity.⁷³ (International researchers, such as Hungarian and German Romanists, have proposed the idea of a peculiar territorial discontinuity, the so-called migrating Romanian homeland, for 150 years.⁷⁴ A similar theory with regard to the Albanians was put forward in the 1980s.⁷⁵) Therefore, the archaeologists of both nations are left with a Procrustean bed in which they have to try to force their early medieval finds.

As for Albanian–Hungarian archaeological relations, no on-site research was carried out after 1945, and scientific field trips were only sporadic.⁷⁶ Hungarian archaeologists mainly took interest in the early medieval artefacts and the Vrap treasure.⁷⁷ Due to the similarities between the mound lying over this treasure and

охридско низ историјата I, edited by Mihajlo Apostolski, 310–311. Скопје: Општинско собрание на град Охрид, 1985.

72 Interpretations dealing with the Romanian ethnogenesis have been watched closely by Hungarian archaeologists since the 19th century (Réthy, László. *Az oláh nyelv és nemzet megalakulása*. Budapest: Franklin, 1887.). A recurring topic in Hungarian archaeology is research on the Aromanian population in the Balkans and in Albania, their language and cultural relations and their role in the Romanian ethnogenesis. Vékony, Gábor. *Dákok, rómaiak, románok*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989.

73 Schütz, István. *Fehér föld a Balkánon. Bevezetés az albanológiába és a balkanisztikába*. Budapest: Balassi, 2002. 143.

74 The theory of the “migrating homeland” was finalized by: Tamás, Lajos. ‘Romains, Romans et Roumains dans l’histoire de la Dacie Trajane.’ *Archivum Europae Centro-Orientalis* 2 (1936): 245–250.

75 Schramm, Gottfried. *Frühe Schicksale der Rumänen. Acht Thesen zur Lokalisierung der lateinischen Kontinuität in Südosteuropa*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1987. 1–3.

76 András Mócsy conducted a long field trip in Albania in the 1950s. Tóth, Endre. ‘Mócsy András.’ *Archaeologiai Értésítő* 114–115, no. 2 (1987): 245.

77 Fettich, Nándor. *A bonfoglaló magyarság fémművészete*. Budapest: Magyar Történeti Múzeum, 1937. 115; Fettich, Nándor. *Das awarenzeitliche Gräberfeld von Pilismarót-Basabarc*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1965. 98–107; László, Gyula. *Études archéologiques sur l’histoire de la société des Avars*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1955. 172, 289–290; Bóna, István. *A népvándorlás kora Fejér megyében*. Székesfehérvár: Fejér megyei Nyomdaipari Vállalat, 1971. 39; Vékony, Gábor. ‘Zur Lesung der griechischen Inschriften des Schatzes von Nagyszentmiklós.’ *Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum*

other mounds found in the Carpathian Basin, and due to the ensemble's Avar relations, the Vrap finds have always piqued the interest of Hungarian Avar experts.⁷⁸ After Joachim Werner's work was published and the Erseka treasure (which was later also linked with Albania) was interpreted and appraised, the late Avar archaeologists in Hungary devoted special attention to these unsolved problems.⁷⁹ The majority of Hungarian experts, in agreement with other, primarily German experts, agree that the Vrap ensemble has a Byzantine background, and they assume a connection between the mounds of the Albanian treasure and those of the Velino finds in Bulgaria. By doing so, they identify these finds as a distinctive 8th-century archaeological horizon.⁸⁰

Besides the Vrap treasure, the other field of research that experts on the early medieval Carpathian Basin devoted their attention to was the Koman culture. Ferenc Nopcsa was the first to point out the similarities between the Koman culture and the Transdanubian Keszthely culture of the Avar period, which had similar late antique

Hungaricae 25 (1973): 304. The Hungarian interest in the Vrap treasure is symbolized by the fact that Joachim Werner dedicated his work on the ensemble to the memory of Nándor Fettich.

78 Garam, Éva. 'Über den Schatzfund von Vrap.' *Acta archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 49 (1997): 23–34; Garam, Éva. 'The Vrap Treasure.' In *From Attila to Charlemagne: Arts of the Early Medieval Period in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, edited by Katharine Reynolds Brown, 170–179. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000; Bálint, Csanád. 'Some Avar and Balkan connections of the Vrap treasure.' In *From Attila to Charlemagne: Arts of the Early Medieval Period in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, edited by Katharine Reynolds Brown, 180–187. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000; Bálint, Csanád. *Der Schatz von Nagyszentmiklós*, 272–290; Kiss, Attila and Garam, Éva. *Die Goldfunde aus der Völkerwanderungszeit im Ungarischen Nationalmuseum*. Budapest: Helikon, 1992. 105.

79 Werner, *Der Schatzfund von Vrap in Albanien*, 7–8; Stadler, 'Ausgewählte awarische Bronze-güsse als Parallelen zu Gürtelbeschlägen von Vrap und Erseke', 105–118. The Erseka finds are to be regarded as early medieval treasure in which Albanian researchers have so far showed little interest. The Erseka treasure may rightfully be called the most mysterious Southeast European ensemble of the Migration Period, because we have only uncertain data as to its discovery and whereabouts. Garam, Éva. 'Spätawarenzeitliche Goldgegenstände im Ungarischen Nationalmuseum.' *Folia archaeologica* 35 (1984): 98–100; Kiss and Garam, *Die Goldfunde aus der Völkerwanderungszeit im Ungarischen Nationalmuseum*, 114; Bálint, *Der Schatz von Nagyszentmiklós*, 290–292.

80 Fiedler, Uwe. 'Die spätawarenzeitlichen Gürtelbestandteile vom Typ Vrap-Erseke aus Velino (Bez. Varna, Bulgarien).' *Germania* 74 (1996): 248–264; Fiedler, Uwe. 'Die Donaubulgaren und die Mittelawarenzeit – ein Antagonismus.' *Antaeus* 29–30 (2008): 127–141; Daim, Falko. 'Byzantinische' Gürtelgarnituren des 8. Jahrhunderts.' In *Die Awaren am Rand der byzantinischen Welt*, edited by Falko Daim, 94–107. Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 2000; Bálint, *Der Schatz von Nagyszentmiklós*, 272–290; Szenthe, Gergely. 'Adalékok a Vrap–Velino kör tárgyainak és a Kárpát-medencei késő avar kori leletanyag kapcsolatahoz.' In *Avarok, bolgárok, magyarok: konferenciakötet*, edited by Csilla Balogh, 61–86. Budapest: Napkút Kiadó, 2009; Szenthe, Gergely. 'Contributions to the connections of the Vrap–Velino horizon and the Late Avar material.' In *Avars, Bulgars and Magyars on the Middle and Lower Danube*, edited by Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova et al., 61–70. Budapest: Archaeolingua Alapítvány, 2014. Another interpretation of the finds: Werner, *Der Schatzfund von Vrap in Albanien*; Stanilov, Stanislav. *Die Metallkunst des Bulgarenkhanats an der Donau (7.–9. Jh.)*. Sofija: IK „Klasika i Stil", 2006. 91–156; Bálint, *Der Schatz von Nagyszentmiklós*, 276–288.

features.⁸¹ What is more, the later archaeological horizon of the object types found in Albanian graves appears to be related with the 10th-century artefacts recovered in the Carpathian Basin. For those in Hungary who read Spahiu's thesis, the manuscript was a basic point of reference in their discussions of the Koman culture.

Recent interpretations of the Koman culture have abandoned the former ethnic approach and have started to investigate the early medieval finds from a broader geographic perspective. Substantive explanations were given as to how to interpret location continuity and how to reconcile the burial customs of the communities belonging to this culture with their Christian religion. Experts also succeeded in establishing what kind of relations these communities had with Byzantium and with the world beyond, ruled by barbarian (Avar, Slav, Bulgarian) power structures.⁸² It is in this regard that this culture became so important for Hungarian archaeologists. The Albanian sites that belong to this horizon and the similar Serbian, North Macedonian burial sites⁸³ may help scholars better understand the archaeological heritage and relation network of the Keszthely culture.⁸⁴ Recent excavations have provided an abundance of sources on the material culture, while an examination of the anthropological material marks the advent of research on the actual population behind the abstract cultural background.⁸⁵ Hopefully all this shall open up new possibilities for Hungarian researchers to once again actively participate in the interpretation of medieval Albanian finds.

81 Bierbrauer, Volker. 'A Keszthely-kultúra és a késő római továbbélés kérdése Pannoniában (Kr. u. 5–8. század).' *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 129, no. 1–2 (2005): 75.

82 Milošević, Ante. 'Komanski elementi i pitanje kasnoantičkog kontinuiteta u materijalnoj kulturi ranosrednjovjekovne Dalmacije.' *Diadora* 11 (1989): 347–359; Bowden, William. 'The Construction of identities in post-Roman Albania.' In *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*, edited by Luke Lavan and William Bowden, 57–78. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2003; Nallbani, Etleva. 'Urban and rural funerary practices in early medieval Illyricum. Some general considerations.' In *The Material and the ideal. Essays in Medieval Art and Archeology in honour of Jean-Michel Spieser*, edited by Anthony Cutler and Arietta Papaconstantinou, 47–62. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2007; Curta, Florin. *The Edinburgh History of the Greeks. C. 500 to 1050: The Early Middle Ages*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. 123–124.

83 Milinković, Mihajlo. 'Höhensiedlungen des 6. und 7. Jahrhunderts in Serbien.' In *Keszthely-Fenekpuszta im Kontext spätantiker Kontinuitätsforschung zwischen Noricum und Moesia*, edited by Orsolya Heinrich-Tamáska, 285–302. Rahden: Leidorf, 2011.

84 Heinrich-Tamáska, Orsolya. *Keszthely-Fenekpuszta im Kontext spätantiker Kontinuitätsforschung zwischen Noricum und Moesia*. Rahden: Leidorf, 2011; Nallbani, Etleva. 'Nouvelles formes d'habitat en Albanie du nord du VIIe–XIIIe siècle.' *Comptes rendus de l'académie des inscriptions et des belles-lettres* 1, janvier–mars (2014): 67–81.

85 Nallbani, 'Early Medieval North Albania: New Discoveries, Remodeling Connections', 311–346.

Contemporary medieval archaeology research in Albania

Albanian archaeology lost considerable leeway in the years following the end of Communism due to severe cuts in state funding.⁸⁶ The revolt after the 1997 pyramid schemes and the ensuing “Lottery Uprising” sparked off a months-long period of anarchy; the collapse of the state’s institutions resulted in ransacked museums. In the early 2000s state power was reconsolidated, yet only a part of the archaeological infrastructure founded in the second half of the 1940s has been reconstituted to date.

Nevertheless, Albanian archaeology has been recovering thanks to international expeditions. Today, British, American, Italian, French, German, Israeli and Greek missions explore Albania’s outstanding archaeological heritage. These missions are no longer motivated by ‘colonial aspirations’; their objective is to gain information about medieval Europe after its emergence from antiquity, and Albania’s rich archaeological heritage provides fertile ground for this enterprise.

We started our summary with Albania’s proverbial isolation. Recent archaeological research has proved that the Albanian region had a remarkable road network, in addition to the Via Egnatia and the other major Roman roads.⁸⁷ That is, there was a time when this part of Europe was not at all as secluded as it came to be as a result of its peculiar modern history.

In the new millennium Albania refuses to be locked up in its own national traditions; instead, the country is opening its doors to the world and to those who wish to research its rich cultural heritage. No Hungarian research project has joined the work yet, but several Hungarian archaeologists and students of archaeology have participated in heritage protection projects in Albania.

Hopefully someone will soon follow in the footsteps of Ferenc Nopcsa and Árpád Buday and participate in the survey and interpretation of the western and central Balkanian cultural heritage. This would certainly restore Hungarian archaeology’s place on the increasingly colourful map of Albanian and Kosovar research.

86 The process is analysed in detail by Takács, *A középkor régészete az észak-balkáni térségben – párhuzamos és összehasonlító vizsgálat*, 251.

87 Përzhita, Luan and Hoxa, Gëzim. *Fortifikime të shekujve IV–VI. në Dardaninë Perëndimore*. Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave, 2003.

