Selected Works of Pál Miklós

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Kapujanincs átjáró. Kínai csan-buddhista példázatok [Wumen guan. Chan Buddhist parables]. (Ed., trans., foreword) (Prométheusz Könyvek 16). Budapest, Helikon Kiadó. In Memoriam László Kákosy

The obituary reads too laconic and indifferent: László Kákosy, corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and of the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, chairman of the Academy's Committee of Ancient History, member of the Academy's Committee of Orientalists, councillor of the International Association of Egyptologists, chairman of the Hungarian branch of the same association, retired university professor at the Egyptological Department of Eötvös Loránd University, chairman of the Society for Antique Studies, former member of the editorial board of Antique Studies, director of the archaeological mission excavating the tomb of Djehutimes at Thebes, board member of the Hungarian-Egyptian Friendship Society, awarded with Széchenyi-prize, Academic-prize, Maróth Károly-prize, Kuzsinszky-medal, and Ábel Jenő-medal, passed away on 29th of January in 2003, aged 71.

The Roman Catholic funeral service, celebrated in Latin by the parson of the cathedral, Géza Szabó, took place on 21st of February in 2003, in the chapel of the Holy Right of our first king, Stephanus Rex, which proved to be rather small for the large crowd of those willing to pay their last respects. The ashes of László Kákosy have been interred in the crypt of the same cathedral. László Kákosy, whose quiet, self-controlled appearance masked his ultimately impulsive personality, conducted a puritan, almost ascetic life. He was a man who could easily do without the everyday delights. He used to start his day at 5 early morning, and 10 in the evening usually found him in bed. Nothing on earth could change his daily routine. Once, deeply engaged in working on a manuscript, he set his stint at five pages of typescript a day. EGYPTOLOGY, his beloved discipline meant the world to him.

It was well known that sweets were his weakness. In fact, when I visited him in the hospital – and he had been suffering from loss of appetite for weeks – a bar of chocolate, some Somlói gnocchi or chestnut puree served well enough to get him excited again.

Regarding the family residence in Csaba street, I should also mention the small but remarkable observatory on the roof, which made it possible for the professor to investigate the starry sky. He was a real fan of the stars: when he prepared to leave for Qurna, he never forgot to put a small telescope into his baggage to be able to study the Egyptian sky.

It was only a few people who knew about his other favourite pastime: Saturday and Sunday mornings he used to attend the chess-parties under the shady trees of Városmajor, either as a kibitzer, or as a player. He was an excellent chess-player.

His fragile physique, originally dark-brown, thick hair which gradually turned into grey as years went by, his characteristic posture due to carrying his leather briefcase, always stuffed with a lot of heavy books, or the typical tone and intonation of his voice – bits of him, we could not forget.

László Kákosy was born on 15 August 1932, so a Leo by his birth. He obtained his matura in 1951 in the Rákóczi Secondary Grammar School in Buda, and graduated as an archaeologist from the Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities in 1956. Still being a university student, he became captured by Egyptology, and as soon as he finished his studies, became accepted as a candidate by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. By the order of the Academy, László Kákosy spent the following three years in the Egyptological Department of the Hungarian Museum of Fine Arts, which was dominated at that time by Vilmos Wessetzky, keeper of the Egyptian collection, and Aladár Dobrovits, who took part in the educational work of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern History, too. In 1960, after years of hard and resolute work, László Kákosy handed in his candidate's dissertation (Ancient Egyptian Myths of the Golden Age and their Social Impacts) and simultaneously took up teaching as an assistant lecturer in the university's Egyptological Department, headed by Aladár Dobrovits. In 1961 did he receive his candidate's degree, the same year when I, as a newcomer student, first entered the university's building in the Pesti Barnabás street. I consider this as the starting point of our personal relationship: in the beginning as his student, later on, after the death of professor Dobrovits in 1970, as his young colleague on the department. Within the last forty years, his continuous support meant a lot to me.

Since 1972 has he been head of the department, first as associate professor, then from 1976 as university professor.

In 1974 did he take his so-called academical doctorate (Religious Policy and Ideology during the New Kingdom and Late Period in Egypt). Since the end of 1950s, one of the central topics of his research has been the effect of social changes and transformations on ancient Egyptian religion, and within the last fifteen years he has devoted his efforts to dealing with problems concerning Egyptian religion in the Ptolemaic and Roman epoch as well as certain historical-philosophical issues in relation with them. The political and religious history of the New Kingdom also belonged to professor Kákosy's main field of research. His bibliography includes general and synthesising works on the history and culture of ancient Egypt, magic practice in Egypt, he touched on the topic of astral conceptions in the Egyptian and Classical cultures and covered gnosticism, too.

László Kákosy's essays and articles, which he always meticulously registered, numbers approximately five hundred items, the majority of them is naturally written in one of the foreign languages. The series of popular books intended for Hungarian readers began with *Magic in Ancient Egypt* (1969) and *A Thousand Years in the Nile Valley* (1970), the latter written together with Edith Varga.

His thick monograph, entitled *The Sons of Ra* (1979) has been twice re-published since then, and is still the basic work for everyone in Hungary with a wish to become acquainted with the various sides of ancient Egyptian history and culture.

There is no time here to list all of his well-received works written for the wide international public, so it seems advisable to mention by title only those which I consider the most im-

portant ones. These are the numerous entry articles composed for the volumes of Lexikon der Ägyptologie, the essay of 155 pages under the title Probleme der Religion im römerzeitlichen Ägypten in the series of Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt (1955), and the book Egyptian Healing Statues in Three Museums in Italy, published in 1999 as the catalogue of the Turin museum.

Obituaries, in my opinion, cannot aim at evaluating the life-work of deceased colleagues just a couple of weeks after their interment. But I believe, on the other hand, that the academic and teaching activities of László Kákosy, to which his sudden and unexpected death put an end, do seem to be *a whole and complete one*.

In 1998 he was elected to be a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. His inaugural, *Thebes in the Ptolemaic and Roman Period* outlined the final era of the former Egyptian capital's ancient history. In the last twenty years of his life, professor Kákosy, spent three months on the west bank of Thebes annually, directing the excavation of the tomb-complex of Djehutimes (TT 32) and the documentation of the finds. It is very regrettable for all of us, who have participated in this gigantic project, that László Kákosy could not live to see the first two volumes of the forthcoming publication, due in the second part of this year.

It was professor Kákosy again, who created the basic conditions for training such young Egyptologists who, owning another diploma in archaeology, are capable of joining foreign missions working in Egypt, besides their participation in the Hungarian excavations. From the year of 1983 on, when professor Kákosy and some of us removed the very first cubic metre of debris from the area of Djehutimes (who was an important figure in managing the estate of the Amun-temple at Thebes under Ramesses II) and his wife's tomb on the Khokha-hill, the site becomes full of Hungarians twice a year; as

conventionally spring and autumn is the time for our annual archaeological activity. Besides the exploration of TT 32 and its surrounding area, three other Theban rock-tombs has been subjected to ongoing excavations on part of me and my colleagues (TT 65, 184, – 61 –), moreover, one of them carries out epigraphical and archaeological research at a site in the Eastern Desert, currently known as Bir Minayh.

László Kákosy deeply committed himself to creating the conditions of proper education. His efforts proved to be especially effective. He was extremely persistent in organising the graduate and postgraduate educational system for Egyptology. He was one of the first to accredit his PhD course, which has been integrated into the faculty's Historical Doctoral Training since then, as an independent course. Five of our former PhD candidates obtained a doctorate within the last ten years, and other six completed their doctoral studies.

It is to my greatest regret that we were not given a chance to celebrate László Kákosy with all due solemnity, who retired from active teaching at the end of December 2002. Some days before he left us, I was sitting at his bed in the hospital and he started talking about the lectures and seminars he had planned to give in the following semester. At that moment I did not even have the slightest idea that my beloved teacher would pass away.

The death of László Kákosy is a great loss for both the community of Hungarian scholars and the international society of Egyptologists. However, I truly believe that his life-work and teaching activity forms a solid base which is suitable for erecting the tower of Egyptology upon with earthquake-proof walls. Being the next generation of Egyptologists, it is our duty to resume this construction, till we can pin up the green bough on the pediment in the topping-out ceremony.

Ernő Gaál