

LÁSZLÓ BARKÓCZI (1919–2017)



Dr. László Barkóczi was born in Berettyóújfalu on 20 May 1919.

In 1938 he received his degree (maturity exam) at Ferenc József Royal Catholic Secondary School in Budapest, 2nd district.

From 1938–1944 he studied at the Faculty of Humanities of the Péter Pázmány University of Arts and Sciences. His specialities were archaeology of the Hungarian land, classical archaeology and ancient Christian archaeology.

In 1941 he worked as aid to Professor András Alföldi and after completing his graduation in 1942 he became an assistant of Professor Alföldi, as well as an unpaid clerk in the Hungarian National Museum.

He carried out his first excavations in Szőny (Brigetio) and in Moigrad, Romania (Porolissum) in 1939–1942, together with Aladár Radnóti.

In 1944 he got his PhD degree for his dissertation summarizing the history of Brigetio. The dissertation surveys the Roman city's stone monuments in general and its inscriptions in particular.

The World War II brought an important change in his life. He completed his military service from 1944, became a prisoner of war in Strasbourg, France and returned to Hungary only in 1946. In the same year he started his regular work at the Hungarian National Museum.

First he concentrated on researching the Roman *limes*. He carried out excavations at Dunapentele (Intercisa) in 1949–1950, excavated the Roman military camp at Adony and several early Roman *tumuli* at Pusztaszabolcs in 1951. He invited Éva Bónis to join him at his digs and in publishing the results of his find material in Pusztaszabolcs.

In 1951 he also started a series of excavations at Fenékpusztá (Valcum) besides going on with his research in Brigetio and carried out several rescue excavations.

In 1955 he received the degree of a “kandidátus” (a former senior scholarly degree) of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. His dissertation was the summary of Intercisa's history.

He became the head of the Archaeological Department in the Hungarian National Museum in 1960.

In 1963 he was invited by László Gerevich to be the senior fellow of the Archaeological Research Group of the in Hungarian Academy of Sciences (in 1968 the Research Group was renamed the Archaeological Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, nowadays Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Archaeology) and László Barkóczi became the head of the Antiquities Department.

He was leading the excavations of the Hungarian expedition in Egypt in 1964, revealing the Coptic city of Abdallah Nirqi later flooded by the reservoir of the Assuan Dam.

In 1967 he also took part in an international excavation in Tunis.

In 1970 the Institute organized research teams to handle particular fields of the research and Dr. Barkóczi was appointed head of the one studying the “Peripheries of the Roman Empire”. In 1979 he became deputy director of the Institute. Not willing to become director he retired in 1982.

His scholarly achievements were acknowledged by the Silver (1976) and the Gold (1982) medals of the Order of Labour, by the Flóris Rómer medal of the Hungarian Archaeological and Art Historical Society (1980), the Pro Arte Vittraria medal by the Foundation of Mrs. Klára Tasnády-Marik (1990). He was awarded the István Schönvisner Prize in 2007 and the Knight’s Cross of the Order of Merit of the Hungarian Republic in 2008. In 2009 the city of Komárom honoured “Pro Urbe” prize on him.

Dr. László Barkóczi took an active part in the Roman-Period Sub-committee of the Archaeological Committee and in the Excavation Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

He was member of the Hungarian Archaeological and Art Historical Society, of the Classical Society, the Österreichische Gesellschaft für Archäologie and the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, an honorary member of the Association of Hungarian Archaeologists.

He took part in several national and international conferences, gave lectures in many countries e.g. in Austria, France, Italy, Romania, the former Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

László Barkóczi’s scholarly interest was manifold. His oeuvre embraces the chronological period from the La Tène period to the 6th century AD. He analysed historical-archaeological minor problems with the same expert knowledge, precision and thoroughness as monographic problems of wider range.

The Mommsen-type school of thought of Professor András Alföldi had a definite influence on him. In his early career he put emphasis on studying the *limes* of Pannonia, dealing first of all with military history and with epigraphy in general.

Besides the remarkable observation – developed together with Aladár Radnóti – that during the first half of the 2nd century on military diplomas of Pannonia Inferior the troops were enumerated in topographical order he also observed a similar order on diplomas of Pannonia Superior during the same period.

In the field of epigraphy he summed up and analysed Pannonian names of the 3rd and 4th centuries.

He was editor and co-author of the double monographic volume “Intercisa”. It was in these volumes he drew attention to the systematic occupation of Pannonia, north of the river Dráva, during the Claudian period. He succeeded in identifying, documenting and defining the structure of one picked-fence camp in Intercisa and several ones in Vetus Salina. In Intercisa he managed to point out the importance of the Constantine period, which later was also discovered all along the *limes*-line.

He was editor and co-author of the first three volumes of RIU (Die römischen Inschriften Ungarns).

He dealt with stone monuments in several studies, where he drew attention to their marked eastern–south-eastern connections within the Roman Empire. He also emphasized the fact that as late as the 4th century there was regular stone carving existing in Pannonia.

Regarding the Late Roman period, partly alone, and sometimes with Ágnes Salamon, he tried to define the survival of certain find groups and cemeteries in the late Roman period and outline the position of Pannonia during the 5th century. He also attempted to define the building chronology and survival of the fortified cities in the interior of the province in the same period.

For him theoretical work had the same importance as field work, such in case of the late Roman imperial–early Migration period surveys. Dr. Barkóczi excavated the *horreum* and a cemetery of the late 5th–early 6th century at Fenékpuszt. This cemetery turned out to be of key importance for the evaluation of the area’s post-Roman history.

In a monographic volume he surveyed Hungary’s glass finds from the Roman period. Considering both local glass-craftsmanship and glass commerce within the Empire he defined the current shapes of different periods. He also catalogued the ancient glass collection of the Museum of Fine Arts of Budapest originating from different provinces of the Roman Empire.

He was interested in every new research. Till his death he gave his younger colleagues and the undergraduates visiting him tireless and enthusiastic support.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to Dr. László Barkóczi for his remarkable contributions to the field of archaeology. His humour also helped him to radiate us his positive attitude even in difficult, many times crucial periods.

For our great regret he did not live to see his 98th birthday. On 26 March 2017 he gently passed. He had kept his vivid multilevel interest and youthful mentality contradicting his age until his last moment. The death of László Barkóczi means a great loss of Hungarian and international archaeology and we will always remember the colleague and friend who had never made wrong to anyone but helped everyone with his altruistic support. His fairness may be taken as a good example for future generations!

May he rest in peace, and his name is enshrined in our memory forever.

For the scholarly bibliography of László Barkóczi, see:

http://ri.btk.mta.hu/images/bibliografia/Barkoczi_Laszlo_bibliografia.pdf

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