

## BOOK REVIEW

**Gábor FODOR (ed.) 2022.** *Macar Türkologlar. Küçük Biyografik Ansiklopedi*  
[Hungarian Turkologists. A short biographical encyclopaedia].  
Ankara: Türksoy. 254 pp. ISBN: 978-605-71326-2-8

Reviewed by *Sebastian CWIKLINSKI*\*

Published Online: June 2, 2023  
© 2023 Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest



For many reasons the Turkic peoples and their languages and cultures always were of special interest for Hungary, and accordingly the Central European country played an important role in researching them: in search for their historical ancestors, Hungarian discoverers and scholars went to various regions of the Russian Empire and Central Asia and soon were confronted with representatives of Turkic peoples. The Hungarians' curiosity for these peoples quickly turned into a scientific endeavour. Until now Hungarians, working in various fields and being interested in many aspects of the languages, history and cultures of Turkic peoples, take a central place in the world of Turkology, and this brought up the idea of compiling a biographical encyclopaedia of Hungarian Turkologists. The encyclopaedia is the work of Hungarian authors and has been edited jointly by Türksoy, the International Organization of Turkic Culture based in Ankara (which also initiated the project), the Hungarian Embassy in Turkey and the Liszt Institute – Hungarian Culture Center Istanbul.

The encyclopaedia covers the lives and works of Hungarian Turkologists who worked and work both in Hungary and abroad, beginning with the founding fathers of Turkology in the 19<sup>th</sup> century until now. Each Turkologist is given an own entry, covering his or her life, area(s) of interest and the most important publications. Apart from this, the entries assess the importance of his or her research for the development of the area the Turkologist was working in. An exemplary look at two entries, the one on Hermann Vámbéry (1832–1913), one of the founding fathers of Turkology not only in Hungary, but in general, and on one contemporary Turkologist might illustrate the way the encyclopaedia works.

The entry on Vámbéry (pp. 240–243) relates his life, starting with his stay in Istanbul in the late 1850s when he got to know not only the Ottoman Empire, but several Turkic languages and

---

\* Corresponding author. Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. E-mail: sebastian.cwiklinski@web.de

dialects as well. It mentions his subsequent famous travel through Central Asia and rightfully calls him the first European expert on Central Asia, while in Ottoman history there had been forerunners like the Austrian Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856) and others. The founding father of Turkology wanted this science to cover the cultures of all the Turkic peoples, not limiting itself to the Ottoman Empire or the Turks proper. Apart from this, the article mentions his pioneering role in the development of the philology of Chagatay Turkish (mentioning his *Čagataische Sprachstudien* from 1867) and of Turkmen, but does not remain silent about controversial issues like Vámbéry's involvement in the dispute over the ancestors of the Hungarians, his role in the Great Game, his Orientalist and pro-British Empire views and rightfully states that the Turkologist might be called a child of his time. The article is completed by a bibliography, covering both his major works and the secondary literature on him. Similar to the article on Vámbéry, the entry on László Károly (\*1974, pp. 122–123) lists the steps of his academic career and names his main research interests: Turkic sources in runic script, the philology of Yakut, Turkic loanwords in Hungarian and the medical history of the Turkic peoples; like the Vámbéry entry, the article on Károly is completed by a bibliography.

Thanks to the fact that the encyclopaedia has been written and compiled by Hungarian Turkologists, *Macar Türkologlar* is a complete and up-to-date reference work for anybody who needs concise information on the lives and works of Hungarian scholars working on the languages, the cultures and the history of the Turkic peoples, starting with founding figures like Vámbéry and his contemporaries, but covering the entire 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well. It is a great advantage that the reader can now find information on the lives of outstanding representatives of Turkology like Ignác Kúnos (1860–1945), Gyula Németh (1890–1976), Lajos Ligeti (1902–1987), György Hazai (1932–2016), Mária Ivanics (\*1950) and many others in a nutshell. The editors of the encyclopaedia took the right decision of applying a broader concept of Turkology, including any scholar interested in the languages and cultures of the Turkic peoples. So the reader will find information on the lives of philologists in the classical sense of the word like Hazai, but also on folklorists like Kúnos, ethnologists like Ildikó Bellér-Hann (\*1956), historians and many others – provided he or she is able to read Turkish. This last remark leads to the wish that this useful reference work on the lives of Hungarian Turkologists be translated into English as soon as possible in order to make it accessible to a broader readership.

