

BOOK REVIEW

„...ÁLTALAD NYERT SZÉP HAZÁT...”

Studies in memory of István Fodor I–II

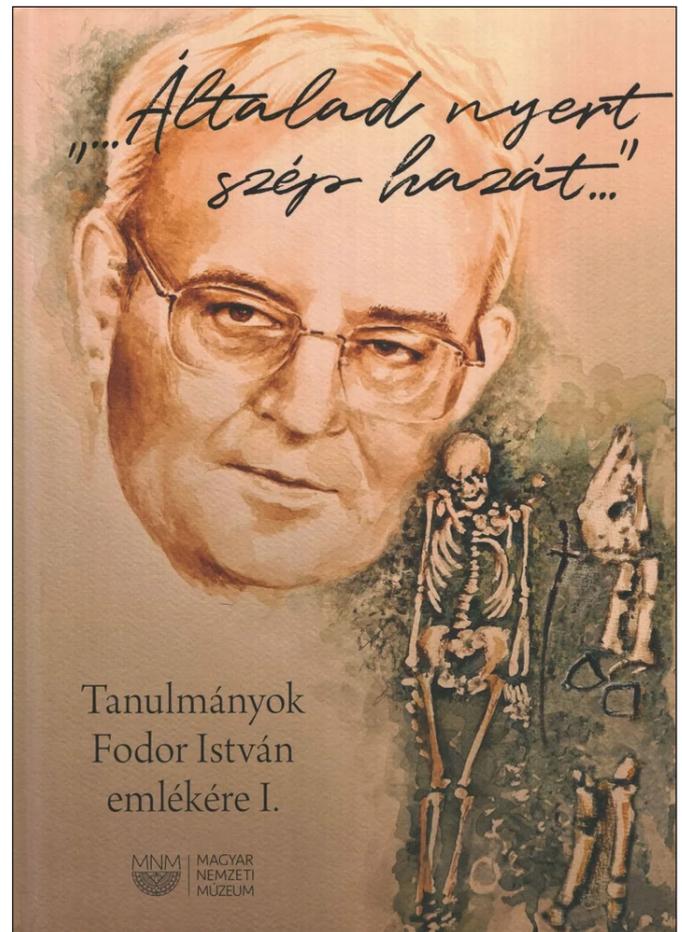
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Former students, colleagues and career companions honoured the memory of the recently deceased István Fodor (1943–2021) in two volumes of studies. Among the most important periods of his career were his studies in Moscow and his work as a lecturer and head of department at the József Attila University of Szeged. In addition, he played a leading role at the Hungarian National Museum, where he served as Director General and then as Titular Director General (RÉVÉSZ 2021).

The title of the book quotes one of the most famous lines of the Hungarian national anthem: “... *Általad nyert szép hazát...*” (“...by your grace, we bred a beautiful land...”). The quote can also be seen as a double reference, on the one hand it symbolises István Fodor’s valuable work in Hungarian prehistory and his research on the Hungarian Conquest Period. On the other hand, there is a reference to the exhibition entitled “...*Őseinket felhozád...*” (“...Our ancestors you led...”)—*The Ancient Hungarians*, also organised by István Fodor, which quotes the second verse of the national anthem (CATALOGUE 1996). This was one of the most visited exhibitions in Hungary and gained international recognition.

The volume starts with two forewords. Szilárd Demeter, then President of the Hungarian National Museum–Public Collections Centre, and editors Judit P. Barna and Csaba Szalontai commemorate the work of István Fodor and describe the circumstances of the volume’s preparation. This will be followed by the *Tabula Honoraria*, and then three more personal commemorations, starting with the written version of the obituary Péter Németh delivered at the funeral. He recalls their friendship, his personal experiences, and Fodor’s wide-ranging professional work, especially the excavations at Szabolcs and Hajdúdorog, where several archaeology students from Szeged became acquainted with fieldwork. István Zimonyi focuses on István Fodor’s work as a university lecturer, while Imre Szatmári remembers Fodor as a former student and publishes previous laudation that had been written for his 60th birthday, recalling both friends and students. From an editorial point of view, it would have been more convenient to arrange



Judit P. Barna & Csaba Szalontai (Ed).

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the commemorations in a chronological order, making last the one that was written actually for the volume. The commemorations are followed by a comprehensive bibliography of István Fodor's works compiled by Barbara Kocsis, which illustrates the diversity of his activity as a scholar and teacher.

The two volumes contain 43 studies on almost 900 pages. The majority of the papers are directly related to István Fodor's fields of research. The authors include former students, colleagues, friends, and researchers who wished to contribute to the memorial volume with their scientific results. The studies range from prehistory to the late Middle Ages, covering a broad spectrum of archaeological and historical research. Presenting all the works would exceed the frame of a book review, but at least some of the main themes can be highlighted. The first two studies are written by Péter Langó and István Zimonyi, and represent a transition from personal memoirs to articles. They both reflect their personal experiences with István Fodor, while at the same time summarising his work from an archaeological and historical point of view in relation to Hungarian early history.

Studies with a focus on prehistory are few in the volume. Judit Regenye writes about a unique Neolithic axe-shaped pottery object from Városlőd, parallels of which are unknown in the Carpathian Basin, and uses distant analogies for interpretation. Ágnes Somogyvári analyses Bronze Age moulds from Sükösd in the Danube–Tisza interfluvium, highlighting their significance for research. Among the articles on the Migration Period, the study by Andrea Vaday stands out. She describes the archaeological and metallurgical aspects of a unique crescent-shaped pendant discovered at Tiszafüred-Nagykenderföld. The origin of the gold *lunula* is investigated based on Germanic parallels, with a focus on the role of the Carpathian Basin and Black Sea coastal workshops. Ágota S. Perémi, Péter Straub and Bendegúz Tobias provide new data on Avar period East Alpine-type belt mounts, while Zsolt Gallina and Gyöngyi Gulyás analyse Avar ironworking through a case study, raising the question of regional and ethnic interpretation of workshop traditions. Among the studies on the Carolingian period, Gábor Kiss examines Szombathely's past using historical and cartographic data; the study is complemented with the archaeological perspective by Ildikó Katalin Papp. Róbert Müller presents a reassessment of the Balatonőszöd depot of iron tools, specifying its dating considerably. István Fodor's research on the microregion of Hajdúdorog is the subject of two papers highlighting the importance of his fieldwork. Géza Szabó examines the Iranian connections of the ornamental art of the Hungarian Conquest period, which was also one of Fodor's favourite research topics.

Studies focusing on the Middle Ages include a paper by Attila Czövek, who searched for traces of medieval fishing using metal detecting and surface find collection methods in the Danube floodplain in Tolna County. In the field of environmental history and landscape archaeology, Pál Sümegi's study on the Bodroglak in the 10th century is worth mentioning. His research shows that the region provided excellent fishing opportunities in the Hungarian Conquest period, which is also confirmed by Arabic written sources. The studies show that the Bodrog region was a sparsely inhabited, forested landscape before the Hungarian Conquest period, and it was gradually transformed by human activity: the mosaic character of the landscape was preserved, but fields, pastures, and meadows appeared. The results suggest that the Hungarians who arrived in the Carpathian Basin already practised advanced and diversified cultivation. Drawing on archival sources, László Gere and Márta Vizi present the history of the building of the Mór Wosinsky Museum in Szekszárd. Their study is not only of historical importance but may also be useful for future renovations.

Although the volume as a whole is an outstanding work, there are some shortcomings, especially in the chronological order of the studies. Langó's and Zimonyi's writings, being somewhat more personal in tone, were understandably placed after the commemorations. It remains a question, however, why Róbert Müller's work was placed among the last articles in the second volume and not alongside the other Carolingian essays. It also disrupts the editorial order that the penultimate essay takes the reader back to the Iron Age. A more consistent chronological or thematic organisation would have made the volumes easier to read. There may be questions about the cover, but they do not detract from the significance of the volume. The chosen painting is indeed a high-quality work – by András Szabó, a former student of István Fodor – but it would perhaps have been better to present it inside the volume. Also, the cover image – the reconstruction of a 10th-century warrior's grave with a sabre and horse, unearthed at Kolozsvár/Kenéz – is not even

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close to Fodor's work. A more appropriate choice would have been an artefact he discovered or researched. In general, the studies are all of good quality and with an appropriate number of illustrations, and the layouts are pleasing and well-designed. Although the volume is primarily intended for professionals, its language and themes may make it a valuable reading for those interested in archaeology and history.

The two-volume work not only brings together a collection of high-quality studies but also commemorates the oeuvre of István Fodor. The studies outline the main stages of his career and his professional legacy. The editors have done an excellent job in bringing together different generations of the profession and creating a volume that presents both the scientific work and the personality of István Fodor. The volumes not only present his scientific achievements but also give an insight into the ideas and influences that shaped his thinking and career. In this way, the volume not only presents the professional career of an eminent scholar but also brings the spirit of his thinking closer to the readers.

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