

BOOK REVIEW:

“Enough of small talk!” In memoriam András Figler (1956–2010)

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This volume, written in memory of archaeologist András Figler, who died too early at the age of only 54, on the occasion of what would have been his 70th birthday, contains the traditional thematic and formal elements of commemorative volumes. At the same time, through its introduction and reminiscences, it seeks to evoke the memory of a respected and beloved colleague who passed away sixteen years ago, drawing on memories that now belong to a distant past.

The idea for the commemorative volume came from archaeologist Gábor Ilon, who was a close friend and colleague of András Figler. Their friendship was further strengthened by the similarities between the defining stages of their lives, until it was abruptly cut short by András Figler's death. The present volume may serve as proof that true friendship can outlive us and perhaps bind us together forever by an invisible thread. His good friend did not forget what would have been the 70th birthday of his equally workaholic former colleague. Gábor Ilon ensured that András's distinctive personality, figure, smile and character are captured for those of us who knew him: everything that brings him back to life when we see a good photograph or hear a lovely story. The book clearly seeks to offer even more than this, as it also addresses those who never had the opportunity to meet András Figler in person. They can come to know him through the writings published here, through his work, his spirit and his professionalism. In reading these pages – both the personal reminiscences and the scholarly studies in his honour that constitute the other major part of the volume – the interested reader encounters dedication to not only science, but to the archaeological profession.

This short review is not intended to provide a detailed presentation of the contents of the commemorative volume, but rather to draw attention to it. Those who have the opportunity are encouraged to read it, browse through it, and make use of its scholarly publications. Nevertheless, I feel it necessary to provide a brief, fact-based account of András Figler's professional career so that interested non-archaeologist readers of Hungarian Archaeology Online can also become acquainted with it.



Caption: Gábor Ilon (ed.):

„Elég volt a fecsegésből!”

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András Figler was born in Győr, and his professional career was also closely connected with this region. Between 1983 and 2000, he worked as an archaeologist at the Hanság Museum in Mosonmagyaróvár, serving as its director from 1986 to 1990, before becoming head of the West Transdanubian Office of the National Office of Cultural Heritage in Szombathely. He played a significant role in developing professional methods and procedures for heritage protection and preventive archaeological excavations, prioritising scientific considerations. He advocated the creation of regional and national archaeological databases and played a pioneering role in initiating the use of GIS methods in archaeology. Several hundred excavations are associated with his name, and the documentation, artefact drawings and scholarly articles he produced remain important resources for researchers even today. Following the ‘Foreword’, the ‘Introduction to the volume’ and Gábor Ilon’s reminiscences, the volume naturally also includes a bibliography of Figler’s publications compiled by Dorottya Perjés.

Accordingly, the first section of the volume focuses on the personality and character of András Figler. Alongside Gábor Ilon, the reminiscences are written by literature historian Balázs Füzfa, engineer and monument protection specialist Erika Erős, and archaeologist Máté Losonczi. Their contributions are lively and enjoyable, almost impossible to put down, as one might say of a good book. This is a credit to the authors and also evokes the cheerful personality of András Figler and his dedication to his profession. A key element of this section is the selection of photographs compiled by Gábor Ilon, Erika Erős and Katalin T. Biró, presenting some of the most important recorded moments of András Figler’s life.

The scholarly contributions in the book are organised around archaeology, history and ethnography. The articles cover a range of research fields, from archaeozoology and various archaeological periods to nineteenth-century estate inventories. Each author contributes a previously unpublished scholarly study based on new research results. The eight archaeological, two historical, and two ethnographic studies form a coherent whole within the volume: although they address different periods, they are linked by place and region – the area around Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár – and by the person of András Figler. Within the Archaeology, History and Ethnography sections, the studies are arranged alphabetically by author.

László Bartosiewicz’s thought experiment, ‘*The call of the wild*’, uses the Copper Age clay horn from Mosonszentmiklós as a starting point for observations based on archaeozoological evidence. Katalin T. Biró presents the analysis of the lithic material from the prehistoric site at Győr–Szabadrét-domb, publishing the results of an earlier collaborative project. This primary assessment of the finds highlights the need for further publication of the entire site. This point applies equally to other sites and assemblages in András Figler’s archaeological legacy. Tamás Czuppon, director of the Hanság Museum, discusses a site at Hegyeshalom reported first by András Figler, where a cemetery consisting of 64 graves belonging to the Gáta–Wieselburg culture has been uncovered in recent years. The author also reports on Roman-period settlement features at the site. The personal anecdote involving András Figler at the end of the article offers another very charming glimpse into the past. The joint publication by Dávid Czigány and Gábor Ilon presents and analyses, in the form of a classical scholarly paper, a burial with exceptional grave goods from the Late Bronze Age site at Farád. In their summary, they raise important questions and outline possible solutions regarding graves containing weapons of the late Tumulus–early Urnfield period.

In András Figler’s archaeological legacy, Teréz Csécs discovered traces of the archaeological collecting activities of Flóris Rómer and a local collector, János Modrovich, the county auditor – a “master of small matters”, as the author emphasises in the title – as well as correspondence between these two influential figures concerning Roman-period finds discovered in the area of Rajka. This publication is followed by Gábor Ilon’s study analysing and interpreting artefact drawings from the Győr–Szabadrét-domb site made by István Ughy for András Figler’s OTKA (National Scientific Research Fund) project. He succeeded in identifying and linking radiocarbon dates to the illustrated idols from this outstanding Copper Age site. His work has thus brought these important artefacts back into research and made them available for renewed interpretation, something for which András Figler unfortunately no longer had time... For the same OTKA project, András Figler also commissioned drawings of the Mosonszentmiklós–Pálmajor assemblage, including the Copper Age clay horn. The author notes that the later publication of the clay horn failed to acknowledge the

work of both István Ughy and András Figler. Attila Mrenka's study of geophysical and GIS-based research at Sopron–Várhely continues the database-building and GIS-based site surveys advocated by András Figler. By recording the metal-detecting surveys conducted between 2021 and 2025 in a database and plotting their results on topographic maps, the study provides a clear and readily usable assessment of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age sites within the Sopron microregion. Éva Szakos and Andrea Vaday examine the spindle whorls and iron distaffs recovered from Hegyeshalom–Holdas-szántó. Their paper focuses on identifying characteristic Late Roman artefacts found in female graves uncovered during rescue excavations conducted by András Figler. They review the scholarly debate about the identification and interpretation of these artefacts, as well as the precise distribution of these object types.

The volume also contains interesting and important studies in the fields of history and ethnography. Péter Dominkovics's study, *'Data and questions concerning the characteristics of Early Modern Age aristocratic society in Moson County'*, pays tribute to the outstanding social value of the archaeological, ethnographic and anthropological camp at Kajárpéc, organised over several years by András Figler. The author participated in and assisted the work of the camps as a librarian at the Rómer Flóris Museum in Győr. József Horváth's paper, *'Bertalan Istók, Józsi Kocsis, Kati Kovács and the Others: The fates of orphans in Kajár during the 1830s'*, examines surviving estate documents from the 1830s relating to the circumstances of underage orphans in Kajár. As a result of András Figler's invitation, József Horváth gave his first lecture at Kajárpéc on seventeenth-century wills from Kajár. Tibor Kottmayer's work, *'Folk architecture of Kispéc, Felpéc and Kajár – paying off a debt'*, is also a valuable contribution to this commemorative volume. As a university student, the author took part in the archaeological camp at Kajár, or more precisely, carried out ethnographic survey work there. Illustrated with survey drawings and coloured photographs, the study genuinely fills a gap in our knowledge of the region's folk architecture. Gyula Perger's study entitled *'The toolkits of households in Kajár and Kispéc in the light of 19th-century inheritance inventories'* also provides important information for scholars dealing with ethnographic material culture. Tibor Kottmayer's study reveals that Gyula Perger also participated in the Kajár camp, so there are several reasons why his contribution found its place in the volume.

One of the major strengths of the published volume is that most contributions are available in full English translation, while substantial English abstracts accompany the studies. The opening pages explain that, for environment protection, the volume was not published in print; instead, it is freely available online at <http://www.ace.hu/figi70/index.html>.

“Enough of small talk!” I recommend the volume to every researcher looking for new scholarly results from the Copper Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman period, Early Modern period and Modern period, as it offers a wealth of valuable information. I recommend it not only to people from Győr, Ménfőcsanak, Kajár, Mosonmagyaróvár and Szombathely, to Transdanubians, archaeologists, historians and ethnographers, but also to interested readers who, in learning about the stages of an honourable life and career cut tragically short by illness, may pause to reflect and, in doing so, remember... In memoriam András Figler (1956–2010).