

LAJOS BARTUCZ, THE OUTSTANDING PERSONALITY OF HUNGARIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

(Commemoration on the centenary of his birth)

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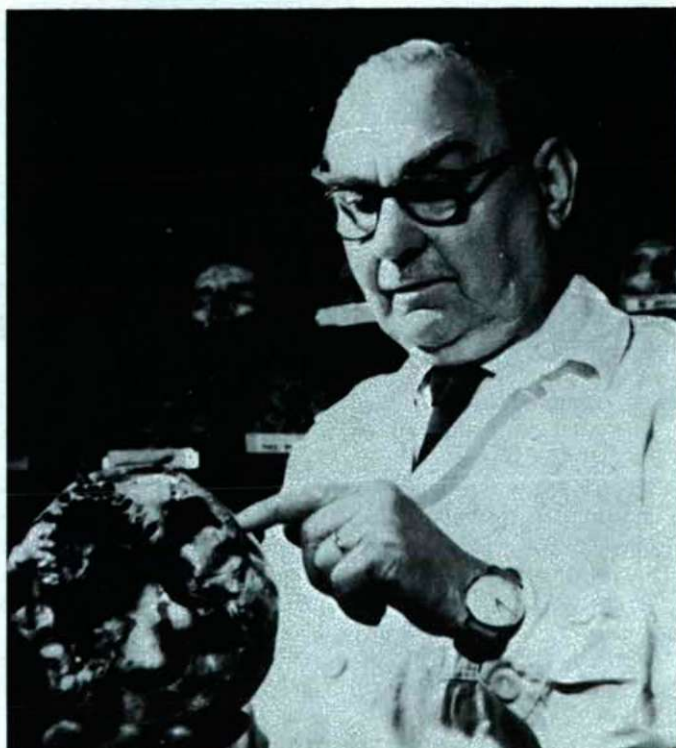
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Abstract

A review is given on the main events in the life of Professor DR. LAJOS BARTUCZ, including his public and scientific activities, the significance of his life-work and its effect on the development of Hungarian anthropology. The relevant bibliography related to LAJOS BARTUCZ and his scientific activities are also presented.

All this is in connection with the fact that the centenary of the birth of Professor BARTUCZ will be on April 1, 1985.

Keywords: LAJOS BARTUCZ, Hungarian anthropology, commemoration.



LAJOS BARTUCZ was born on April 1, 1885 in the village Szegvár located in Southern Hungary. He wrote in one of his biographies: "My father was a manorial servant at Mágoes, my mother was a peasant girl. With his ability and unwearied industry, my father attained becoming a fire-tender at the manorial heater and later he became a machinist. My mother inherited two acres of land so they became small land-owners at Szegvár".

He finished his primary school with excellent result at Szegvár. Then he was enrolled to the Piarist gymnasium in Kecskemét. During the Summer holiday he stoked the threshing-machine and took part in all kinds of agricultural work with his brother, who was a locksmith and machinist.

Since his father was unable to send him to school due to aridity lasting for several years, after finishing the VI. form at gymnasium he was put to the Piarists as a student. This is how he arrived at Vác and then in Budapest for finishing the VII.—VIII. forms of the gymnasium. In 1904 he passed his exams with very good results after which he matriculated at the PETER PÁZMÁNY University of Sciences in Budapest to the faculty of natural sciences and geography. He finished his studies there as a student between the years 1904 and 1908. He already dealt with anthropology as a first-year university student and since he did not want to become a monk, AURÉL TÖRÖK — head of the Institute of Anthropology in Budapest at that time — who saw his interest towards anthropology, appointed him to the university as an assistant, thus he left the Piarists.

Between 1905 and 1909 he worked at the Budapest University of Sciences as an assistant and in the first term of the 1908/1909 session while AURÉL TÖRÖK was ill — he held lectures for the students. His first scientific paper appeared in 1905.

In 1908 he passed his examination for doctorate in philosophy with "summa cum laude" on the subjects of anthropology, zoology and geology.

In June, 1909 he became a research student, then assistant from October 1, in the same year and assistant lecturer from June 16, 1914. He was qualified as lecturer and became the private-docent of anthropometry on August 4, 1914.

In 1919 he taught anthropology, social anthropology and origin of mankind at the MARX—ENGELS Workers' University. In June of the same year the People's Committee of Public Education of the Hungarian—Soviet Republic entrusted him with organizing a Department of Anthropology within the frame of the Museum of Natural Sciences. This brilliant plan, however, could not be realized during the short period of the Soviet regime. In the September of 1920, he was removed from his post as university assistant lecturer and he wasn't even allowed to enter the Institute to work.

From 1920 to 1926 were difficult years for LAJOS BARTUCZ. For several years he vegetated on manufacturing shoe-polish, floor-polish, dye for clothes and other housewares. During this period, however, he often went to the Museum of Ethnography where he was entrusted with arranging the anthropological collection and later with the organization of the Department of Anthropology. He was charged with the commission as professional clerk here on February 16, 1924, and became guard at the Museum from June, 1926. Later, in July, 1935 he became first-class guard, then acting director from February, 1936 and director of the Museum from June, 1938.

At the Museum of Ethnography he organized an anthropological collection

which by virtue of his methodologically collected findings, became famous throughout Europe.

During the years spent at the Museum of Ethnography he held a limited number lectures at the University as honorary lecturer and in 1933 — after the retirement of LAJOS MÉHELY — he was entrusted with holding lectures on anthropology as well as with the scientific leadership of the Institute at the University of Sciences in Budapest.

In 1936 he organized a Hungarian anthropological exhibition in Vienna, where he displayed the history of Hungarian anthropological researches, the composition according to race of the Hungarians and the people living earlier in the Carpathian-basin, and the significance of these researches from the point of view of the ethnogenesis of Eurasia. Although the foreign daily papers and scientific societies spoke highly of this exhibition, LAJOS MÉHELY — who was the chairman of the political screening committee in 1920 when LAJOS BARTUCZ was removed from his post — denounced him and balked his appointment to professorship, despite the fact that he was proposed for this post by the Budapest University of Sciences in 1939.

It meant a significant turn in the life of LAJOS BARTUCZ that on October 19, 1940, he was appointed to university professor and director of the Institute of Anthropology established at that time at the University of Sciences in Szeged. He founded the scientific institute at the Great Hungarian Plain in 1940, the objective of which was the scientific processing of the natural and ethnographic sources of the Southern Lowlands.

Following his appointment he received several assignments at the University. Thus he was the Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences in the 1943/1944, 1944/1945 and 1945/1946 sessions, member of the National Board of University Education between 1943 and 1949, president of the State Board of Examiners for Candidates to Secondary-Schoolmastership in Szeged from the 1945/1946 to the 1947/1948 school years, president of the University Screening Committee of the Trade Union in 1945/1946, and vice-president of the University Economic Committee between 1944 and November, 1946.

When due to the events of the war of 1944 the majority of the university teaching staff left for Budapest, he stayed in Szeged even in the most difficult periods, intensively taking part in the salvage of the University's properties and in the earliest possible recommencement of the lectures. The lines cited from the letter of LÁSZLÓ TÓTH, Rector of that time, written to LAJOS BARTUCZ on November 22, 1946 cast light on his activities: "On the occasion of the III. ordinary assembly held on November 19, 1946, the Council of our University was pleased to be informed from the official communication of the University's Economic Committee that during the Autumn of 1944, when the University was in critical situation due to events of the war, the Economic Committee constituted from the director of the Economic Office and the professors staying in Szeged did its best to ensure the life of the University even amidst the severe and many times insurmountable difficulties. It is particularly owing to the Professor, the vice-president of the Committee, that by his generous work, unsparing in efforts, the Committee was able to do this difficult work with excellent results and was capable of promoting the development of the University from its past futureless, often hopeless, situation".

Professor BARTUCZ was the leader of the Institute of Anthropology at the Szeged University till February 2, 1959, following this he was appointed to be the director of the Institute of Anthropology of the LÓRÁND EÖTVÖS University of Sciences in

Budapest. With this appointment he filled the leading post which was vacant since 1913. He worked here till his retirement on February 28, 1965.

He died in Budapest on June 4, 1966 at the age of 81.

LAJOS BARTUCZ did not belong to the "travelling scientists", nevertheless — especially in his younger years — he took part in foreign congresses despite his difficult financial conditions.

In 1915 he worked for three months with Professor PÖCH in Vienna, but he also went on study-tours in Munich at RANKE and in Zurich at SCHLAGINHAUFEN.

He held lectures at the Anthropological Congresses in Vienna (1927), Salzburg (1927), Paris (1931), Helsinki (1932), London (1934), Bucarest (1937) and Copenhagen (1938). In Prague, 1962, he participated in the Conference of the Preliminary Committee of the International Anthropological and Ethnological Congress held in Moscow (1962). He was asked by the Slovakian Academy of Sciences to deliver lecture in Bratislava on the life and activities of AURÉL TÖRÖK.

He was a member and functionary in several Hungarian societies; scientific secretary-general and managing chairman of the Hungarian Society of Ethnography, co-chairman and later honorary member of the Hungarian Society of Biology, vice-president of the General Committee of Anthropology of the Biological Section of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, president of the Anthropological Section of the Hungarian Society of Biology.

Among the foreign societies, his honorary membership in the permanent committee of the International Anthropological and Ethnological Congress should be mentioned (1962).

According to LAJOS BARTUCZ three conditions are necessitated for having a science revive in a country: a university platform where the subject is taught, a scientific society where the results are discussed, and a scientific periodical where these are published. LAJOS BARTUCZ did his best in the interest of having all three conditions realized in Hungarian anthropology. He started editing the periodical called Anthropological Periodicals (*Anthropologia Hungarica*) in 1923, and although not many volumes were published during its existence till 1939, several articles were published in them. Between 1940 and 1949 he was the editor of the Yearbook of the Scientific Institute of the Great Hungarian Plain and he was also a member of the editorial Board of *Acta Biologica Universitatis Szegediensis* and *Anthropological Communications*, in which many of his anthropological studies appeared.

His field of research was rather wide. Nevertheless, it could be said that he was firstly interested in historical anthropology, ethnical anthropology (the anthropology of the Hungarians), the growth and development of children and the origin of man. His educational activities were also outstanding. The intensity of his work is shown by 12 larger publications (university lecture notes, monographs, special anthropological books) and over 230 essays which refers to the fact that he published the results of his research with pleasure. When mentioning his name we cannot leap over such unique research as the exhumation of the bones MIHÁLY APAFI, the martyrs of Arad, IGNÁC MARTINOVICS and his companions, GÜL BABA, JÓZSEF KATONA and his family, IGNÁC SEMMELWEIS, TIVADAR KOSZKA CSONTVÁRI, SÁNDOR LÖWI martyr.

His activity was acknowledged by foreign as well as Hungarian orders. In 1931 he was awarded the BAUMGARTEN prize for the impartial representation of scientific justice and for the cultivation of popular science on literary level. In 1952 he obtained the degree of Doctor of Biological Sciences from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

as the acknowledgement of his activities. In 1960 he became Doctor of 50 years' standing and in 1965 — at the time of his retirement — he was awarded the Golden Degree of the Order of Labour by the Hungarian Government.

LAJOS BARTUCZ did not create a scientific school in the strict sense of the word, but his lectures held in captivating style and his lessons imbued with personal experience apprehended many students. It is not accidental that many regard him as their master from the outstanding representatives of Hungarian anthropology who have deceased since then (MIHÁLY MALÁN, MIKLÓS FEHÉR), or have retired (JÁNOS NEMESKÉRI, PÁL LIPTÁK), as well as from the present active representatives (GYULA DEZSŐ, the author of these paper); but he also had many followers indirectly. Beyond his lectures his extremely enjoyable style and his publications on a rather wide variety of topics captivated his listeners and so it could be said that the succeeding generations can respect him as one of the founders of today's Hungarian anthropology. The establishment of two collections is also linked to his name (one at the Anthropological Cabinet of the present-day Museum of Natural Sciences, the other at the Department of Anthropology of the ATTILA JÓZSEF University in Szeged which are also significant in Europa). FERENC MÓRA was of great help to him in this, who by handing over his collection of firstly prehistoric findings, established the today's collection at Szeged.

His disciples were fond of and respected him, they presented him with a memorial-plaque on the 80th anniversary of his birthday.

With this commemoration we wish to pay our respects to the memory of the great scientist of the Hungarians, the outstanding representative of Hungarian anthropology, on the occasion of the centenary of his birth.

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