

## Werk

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## Obituary

### In memoriam András J. E. Bodrogligeti (1925–2017)

István Vásáry

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December 2017, Professor András J. E. Bodrogligeti passed away at the age of 92. Since 1972 he had been Professor of Turkic and Iranian Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, and with his death one of the outstanding scholars of Turcology left us.

His long and fruitful life began in 1925 when he was born in Tiszaigar, Hungary. After the elementary school he moved to Eger, an old town of north-eastern Hungary, and a centre of a Catholic Archdiocese. (Eger was among the first ten dioceses founded in 1001–1009 by St. Stephen I, King of Hungary.) He must have imbibed the historical atmosphere of the town, which prides itself on having a castle that in

1552 resisted the Ottoman siege for a long time, halting the Turks for a few decades. In the wake of the romantic historical novel “Stars of Eger” (1901) written by the Hungarian author Géza Gárdonyi, the siege of Eger has for every Hungarian school-boy become part of the national mythology.

During 1940–1943 he attended the Archiepiscopal Lyceum in Eger, then during 1943–1947 the Archiepiscopal Teachers’ Training Institute. Between 1947 and 1951 he continued his studies in Budapest at the Péter Pázmány University (after the forceful communist takeover, in 1949 renamed Loránd Eötvös University—ELTE). He obtained his MA in Indo-European Studies with a specialisation in English and German. During 1953–1955 he earned a new BA from ELTE in Oriental Studies with a specialisation in Iranian, Turkic and Arabic, and in 1958 he graduated from the same university in Iranian and Turkic languages and literatures, with a thesis entitled “Sayf-i Sarayi’s Turkic Translation of Sa’di’s Gulistan”. Later, in 1963, he became a so-called “candidate of sciences” at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, with his thesis “Preliminary Studies to the Exploration of Turkic and Iranian Linguistic Relations”. In 1971 he obtained the Doctoral Degree of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences with his thesis “The Persian Vocabulary of the Codex Cumanicus”. Needless to say he received all of his degrees with honours. His knowledge of and proficiency in languages were amazing; he was a real polyglot. In addition to his mother tongue Hungarian, he spoke and wrote in English, German, French, Italian, Russian, Persian and Turkic and knew a couple of other languages quite well.

In parallel with his academic work and achievements he occupied and made progress in different academic positions. During 1961–1964 he was assistant professor, and during 1965–1970 associate professor of Persian and Turkish at ELTE. Meanwhile, during 1964–1965 he taught courses in Modern Turkish Literature in Ankara, and during 1967–1968 at UCLA. His contact with UCLA became ever stronger because of his paternal friend Professor János Eckmann, who from 1961 was first a visiting then an acting associate professor at the Department of Near Eastern Languages at UCLA. In 1966 Eckmann became a full professor of Turkic Studies with a specialisation in Eastern Turkic language and literature. Bodrogligeti joined a common project on Chagatay language led by Professor Eckmann. In 1971, after Eckmann’s premature death, Bodrogligeti stood at a crossroads. The Hungarian authorities did not prolong his stay in the USA, and his choice was to stay. Within a year, in 1972 he was appointed Professor of Turkic and Iranian Studies at UCLA.

Now the second period of his career began, and this second part was also successful and productive. He was an active member of the university faculty who won a number of major academic grants for his research, among others for the projects “Islam Among the Turks of Central Asia”; “The Complete Works of Ahmad Yasavi”; “The Chagatay Language”; “An Academic Reference Grammar of Modern Literary Uzbek”; and “The State of Islam in the Ferghana Valley after the First Decade of the Post-Soviet Era”. The grants were well used, and upon their conclusion valuable monographs and publications were produced. András Bodrogligeti was a

member of several scholarly associations (American Oriental Society, Middle East Studies Association, Society for Iranian Studies) and was an Honorary Member of *Türk Dil Kurumu* [Turkish Language Society], Ankara. Between 1979 and 1993 he was Director of the John D. Soper Central Asian Language Institute, and from 1994 onward he presided over the Association for Central Asian Studies, USA. During 1979–1993 he was co-editor of the *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher* (Bloomington), and during 1993–1998 of its continuation, the *Eurasian Studies Yearbook* (Los Angeles & Bloomington, Indiana).

András Bodrogligeti was one of the outstanding figures of international research into the Central Asian Turkic language and literature. He became a worthy successor to János Eckmann's legacy, and the works of these two scholars of Hungarian descent made UCLA one of the leading centres in the field of Central Asian Turcology. His scholarly work embraces a wide range of themes of Middle Turkic philology. Before dedicating himself totally to the Central Asian Turkic language and literature, he dealt with the two pre-Chaghatay 14th-century monuments in his first books: *A Fourteenth-Century Turkic Translation of Sa'dī's Gulistān*, Budapest, 1969; *The Persian Vocabulary of the Codex Cumanicus*, Budapest, 1971. Both works are laudable presentations of important monuments. His virtue of making reliable and precise philological and linguistic analyses, amply demonstrated in his subsequent books and articles, is already present in these works.

During his professorship at UCLA he devoted himself mainly to Central Asian Turcology. He published a number of hitherto unedited Chaghatay works in an exemplary way. Suffice it to mention a few of them: *Ḥāliṣ's Story of Ibrāhīm. A Central Asian Islamic Work in Late Chaghatay Turkic. Edited with an introduction, a translation, and a glossary*, Leiden, 1975; "Muḥammad Shaybāni's Baḥru'l-Huda'. An Early Sixteenth Century Didactic Qasīda in Chaghatay", *UAJb* 54 (1982), pp. 1–56; "Bābur Shāh's Chaghatay Version of the *Risāla-i Vāliidiya*: A Central Asian Turkic Treatise on How to Emulate the Prophet Muḥammad", *UAJb* 56 (1984), pp. 1–61.

But the crown of his lifelong effort to better understand and describe the Central Asian Turkic literary language and its closest continuation, Modern literary Uzbek, are two monumental monographs that will long be the most detailed and standard works on the topic: *A Grammar of Chaghatay* (Languages of the World / Materials 155.) Munich: LINCOM Europa, 2001; and *An Academic Reference Grammar of Modern Literary Uzbek*. (Lincom Studies in Asian Linguistics 50) Munich: LINCOM Europa, 2003, vols 1–2. As one of his reviewers, Stefan Georg, put it: the latter is a "comprehensive and useful grammar, which will remain the Uzbek grammar of choice for linguists, Turcologists and students of Central Asian languages and cultures" (*Language* 82/4, 2006, p. 938).

The writer of this obituary had the privilege, as a student and young scholar, to personally know and learn from András Bodrogligeti. He was a very resolute man who always knew what he wanted to do and study. He was also a dedicated teacher ready to share his enormous knowledge with all his students. I owe much of my classical Persian knowledge to his practised expertise. Though he left a rich legacy

behind, his sorrowful demise is an irreparable loss for Turcology and Turcologists, especially for those of us who personally knew this brilliant scholar.