

Ida Bobula: Historian, Professor, Sumerologist (1900-1981)

by: Klara Friedrich

*“Far across the ocean, under a bad star,
With unfailing loyalty, I continue to serve you.
I could not do much, never enough;
I fought for you, as long as I could...”*



During the Hapsburg and the Communist eras, there were very many victims, not just in politics but also in the field of the history of civilization. One such victim of the Hapsburgs was for example, Gergely Czuczor, who, because of his participation in the Freedom Fight of 1848, was first sentenced to death, but later was incarcerated in the prison of Kufstein. He was the creator of the pride of our nation, the Dictionary of the Hungarian Language, which was notably missing from the public libraries even in his day. Similarly, the Hapsburgs sentenced to death Antal Somogyi, a collector of books, whom we can thank for the preservation of the largest collection of texts written in the ancient Hungarian

Runic Script. Zsófia Torma, the greatest archaeologist of the nineteenth century, in international circles, although she was not sentenced to death, was silenced and that is a form of a death sentence. Unfortunately, we could fill volumes with the names of Hungarian personalities, who suffered the same fate.

Among them we should mention Ida Bobula. I first heard about her from the secretary of Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty, Dr. András Zakar, who was imprisoned and tortured by the Communists. He was a Catholic priest, who was highly cultured and who was interested in studying Sumerology.

At that time, it was not as easy to access the writings of Ida Bobula, as it was to obtain the prize-winning works of the sycophantic favorites of Kádár, that is in the state bookstores. When I attended a memorable lecture by Jós-Ferenc Badiny at the College of Physical Education, I was fortunate enough to buy one of her books from a bookseller, Edit Gedeon, who sold them from a secret box under the table. The lecture by Jós-Ferenc Badiny was not only memorable because people were sitting on the stairs, but because the ELMÜ, most likely on the orders of the Party, in the middle of the lecture, shut off the electricity in the building. Many people ran to get candles and the lecture continued in an unforgettable atmosphere.

Dr. Ida Bobula was born on February 27, 1900, in Budapest, into a family originating from Zagajov, Poland and Nagypiasz in Northern Hungary (Felvidék). Her father and grandfather were creative people, well-known builders, planners and founders of journals. She inherited her patriotism from them. Among other things, after the breakup of the country following Trianon (in 1920), her father organized a group of volunteers, with serious Polish help, to take back Northern Hungary.

Ida Bobula took part in the youth movement of the twenties, organized by the Association of Students of the Felvidék University and College. She represented the Hungarian youth at many congresses abroad. She was the President of the women's branch of the State Alliance of Hungarian University and College Students (MEFHOSZ) from 1920 to 1924. For her work in this alliance, she received the gold medal of the Pro Hungariae Juventute (For Hungarian Youth). Her first writings, which were poems, appeared in 1920.

In 1924, she received her Doctorate in Historical Science with Summa cum Laude from the Péter Pázmány University. The title of her doctoral dissertation was: *The*

influence of the reign of the kings of the Saxon ruling house on the break-up of Poland. According to László Árkay, researcher of Hungarian studies, she became a “Doctor of the King’s Ring”. This was a special distinction that the Jesuits introduced in the 17th century; the student worthy of it was presented with a valuable gold ring.

After this, she won a scholarship to Bryn Mawr College in America and continued her studies there for two years, where she was involved in the field of social organizations, mainly labor relations, and the area of Hungarian Americans. Here, she obtained her Doctorate in Sociology. The name “Bryn Mawr” is of Welsh origin, probably Celtic, and means “large hill”. The founder of Bryn Mawr College was Joseph Wright Taylor (1810-1880), a Quaker doctor from Pennsylvania. (The Quaker religion originated in England but spread its Christian beliefs mainly in communities in America. Their main characteristic is the forbearance of luxury.) One of the goals of the college was the education of women.

During her stay in America, she delivered lectures about Hungary in many cities.

After her return to Hungary, in 1926, Kunó Klebelsberg appointed her as lecturer in the Ministry of Religion and Public Education, at the University girls’ boarding school. Part of her area of work was the establishment of the participation of the rural homes for girls.

In 1933, she accepted the official post of administrator of the Catholic Sarolta College. She continued her work there until 1944. The owner of the College was the *National Association of Hungarian Women*. This association was founded by the writer, Cecile Tormay, and Ida Bobula was also a member. Apart from its work in social areas and the protection of children, this association, among other things, in English and French booklets, informed the women of the world about the lies written about Hungary. (Today, too, in 2019, there should be such informative booklets available.)

A clarification: The members of this association were not liberal feminists, but Hungarian women, mothers and scholars, who loved their homeland and therefore were willing to sacrifice. Because of their activities in 1919, or later during the Communist era, they were persecuted, and, in many cases, they had to leave their homeland.

Meanwhile, in 1939, she began her self-education in the new-age Hungarian cultural history. From 1939 to 1945, she taught at the István Tisza University in Debrecen. Her research took her to Italy, Germany, France, Poland, Turkey, Holland, Switzerland, Austria and Bulgaria. She published many articles, which appeared in numerous journals. She became joint editor of the journal called *Independent Education*. She became a member of the leadership of many social and scientific associations, including the American Society of Orientalists.

During the years that she spent in Hungary, she researched mainly the place of women in society, and published articles on this subject. For example, *Women in the Hungarian Society of the 18th century* (1933), or *The Journey of Women from the Matriarchal Society to the Present Times* (1938). She was not a feminist. If one did not marry and pursued scientific work, she was easily characterized as such, just like Cecile Tormay and more recently, in the 19th century, the female archaeologist, Zsófia Torma.

In her work in 1933, she emphasized the Hungarian values:

“When women in the largest part of Europe, according to valid legal concepts, for their whole lives lived under guardianship and were not allowed to freely manage either their person or their property, Hungarian law, -- even in the time of the emergence of the Tripartitum¹, -- recognized guardianship over only unmarried girls, and in this area surpassed the Old German, or rather the Scandinavian law, which was most favorable to women.” With the example of Sarolt, the wife of Prince Géza (945-997), she proved the equality of Hungarian women.

In a similar manner, she refutes the accusation of feminism with the following quotation, also from her work of 1933: ***“Finally in the history of the advancement of women, there is another uplifting lesson. In the cause of the advancement and liberation of women and their better more humane life, men – big-hearted, clear-seeing, leading minds, and simple but true-willed workers for the common good, -- in many regards have done more than the women themselves.”***

In 1947, on account of the Communist regime, she was forced to leave Hungary, but, in America, she continued her work for the recognition of her homeland.

¹ Tripartitum – a law-book compiled by István Werbőczy in the early 16th century

She found work at the Library of Congress in Washington, and later, she taught at the New Jersey College for Women.

Because of her exceptional organizational skills, between 1955 and 1957, she was honored with the position of administrator of the Hungarian Refugee Program, and so she moved to Philadelphia.

Again, she took up teaching and became Professor of French and German at Ricker College in Houlton, Maine, named after Joseph Ricker.

From here, she was called to help organize the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching profession, as head of the Information Section. She did this work between 1960 and 1967. She established an international organization, the WCOTP, which gathered the teachers of the world under its protective umbrella, in 1950. Its goal was the development of scientific and technical teaching, and the promotion of the respect for the teaching profession. It is certain that only a capable organizer, a person able to pull all the strings together, could be entrusted with such a task.

Finally, in her last place of work and residence, in South Carolina, in Gaffney-Limestone College, she taught history and sociology between 1967 and 1971

For a time, Ida Bobula's life was filled with achievements, successes and recognition, but all this crumbled for two reasons. The one: the hard boots of Communism trampled down all that her grandfather, father and she had built. The second "problem" was that she, herself, like everyone else, was researching the Hungarian ancient history and dared to presume, to investigate and to establish that which diverged from the school of thought of the Academy of Sciences.

Fleeing from Communism, she crossed the ocean, but she never rejected her inner motivation, the challenge to fight for "justice for Hungary, justice for the ancestors of the Hungarians", and she nobly fulfilled her responsibility, even among the shrieks of the fury of Hell.

We have to notice the similarities between Zsófia Torma and Ida Bobula. Both were intelligent, pretty, rich ladies, who brought with them from their homeland their patriotism. They both achieved new and important scientific accomplishments, for the greatest glory of their nation, yet they were ridiculed

and attacked and sacrificed their properties. Neither of them got married. It is not that they were feminists, as the liberals today would like to suggest, but because they did not have time to look for a husband, on account of the magnitude of the task they had undertaken. In spite of this, both of them had feelings for a male colleague. This was demonstrated in Zsófia Torma's case in some letters. In Ida Bobula's case, a poem at the end of her writing proves this. As a result of the attacks and the unscrupulous poaching of her findings, at the peak of her creative power, Zsófia Torma went to her grave at the age of 67. However, Ida Bobula, although she lived in "unbelievable poverty", fought for justice until she was 81.

Dr. Olivér Botár wrote the following in the "Magyar Múlt" (Hungarian Past):
"Zsófia Torma rose out of her ashes like a resurrected Phoenix bird and a few months later was reborn in the soul of Ida Bobula."

As a historian, already in Hungary, Ida Bobula had become aware of the theory of the Sumerian-Hungarian linguistic relationship, but she did not find that the Hungarian special literature presented enough proofs of its reliability to dispel her doubts. Most probably, the superficiality of the special literature was due to the "burning" Hunfalvy, who himself was "interested" in the Sumerian language, but only until he set fire to and eradicated all the books on this subject.

That Ida Bobula only began to publish her articles about Sumerology in America, is not because of the "emigrant psychosis", as Péter Hajdú, the founder of the Finno-Ugric Department and member of the Academy of Sciences, so unjustly and coarsely stated, supported by the agreement of the historian, Géza Komoróczy. Since Hajdú and Komoróczy were not able to offer scientific rebuttals, they described those who were researching Sumerology to be deranged, although they, themselves, were only dilettantes in the field of psychology.

The results of the research of Ida Bobula into the Sumerian-Hungarian relationship can be briefly summarized as follows:

The height of the Sumerian civilization lasted from 3000 to 2000 B.C. According to scholars dealing with the history of the ancient Eastern peoples, the Semites completely eradicated the Sumerians. There were, however, some groups of them, who emigrated; among them were many priestly dignitaries from the Sumerian temples. With them as leaders, this emigration lasted from 1200 to 1000 B.C. Their destination was the Carpathian Basin, where, in the preceding

centuries they had gone to obtain mineral treasures and gold. Those who emigrated from Mesopotamia, that is the ancestors of the Magyars (who were called Scythians in the intervening years), reached the Carpathian Basin. *“The returning Magyars brought with them the Scythian language out of Sumeria... Not only do the names appear similar, but there are thousands of examples of similarities between the Sumerian and the Magyar vocabulary, just as in the structure of the two languages.”*, wrote Ida Bobula.

As a historian who loved her homeland, she wanted to show the Americans and the scholarly world the suppressed merits of Hungary. Therefore, she wrote some of her works in English.

Ida Bobula’s talents, the results of her research, refuting the accusations that the Hungarians were barbarian, illiterate Finno-Ugric peoples, aroused jealousy and hate among the non-Hungarian spirited „scholars” raised from the ranks of the proletariat under the Communists and in the circles of their colleagues. Here are some examples:

János Lotz, professor of linguistics in America and Sweden, cautioned all foreign speaking, thus unsuspecting linguists, not to take into their hands any books by Ida Bobula.

Lázár Endre Bajomi, a left-wing writer and translator (therefore not an expert) wrote a scathing opinion of her.

The agitated young journalists of the Magyar Narancs (Hungarian Orange) a liberal newspaper, with their coarse upbringing and self-assured ignorance, in a series of articles attacked the non-academic researchers of ancient history, including Ida Bobula: *“Ida Bobula was the greatest “Sumerologist”, who as an immigrant in the West, wrote her famous English work: “Sumerian Affiliations”, which she sent to all the great libraries of the world, in a hand-printed format. “Auntie Ida” could be counted among the peaceful, well-intentioned fanatics: she was interested only in linguistics, was hardly anti-Semitic, and made every effort to be professional and precise – although she was an amateur. She lived in terrible poverty and isolation, somewhere in Ohio, and, until her death, she kept refining her theory and continued to search for Sumerian village names on the map of Hungary. She outlined the route of the emigrants from Mesopotamia to Hungary...”* (2004/44. Oct. 28)

Thank God, those people could not brand her as a dilettante, whose only “scholarly” goal was to do just that. They were not able to produce that weapon against her, because her university results, her doctoral diploma as a historian made this impossible. Of course, anyone who does not recognize the meaning of the word “dilettante”, like the archaeologist István Erdélyi, writes: *“The combination of her surprising dilettantism and suggestive lack of inhibition guarantees her success.”* **Here it is all about the agreement between the Sumerian and Hungarian words. It is remarkable that a member of the Hungarian Academy of Science, István Erdélyi, did not find the Finno-Ugric word agreements to be uninhibited.**

Let us neutralize these opinions arising from anti-Hungarian feelings and ignorance with some thoughts from Ida Bobula:

“When, in the fifties, I tried to publish the results of my Sumerian researches, I ran into the metal wall of the powerful enemies of the Hungarians. They influenced the editors of the emigrant newspapers, with high positions, money, promises, threats and losses, so that they would not publish my writings.”

“A whole chain of powerful interest-groups stands in the way of the new Hungarian truth. To fight against these, in such poverty and desolation, without any means and in such unfavorable circumstances as mine, is an impossible task.”

*“So then, can we presume that the present-day Hungarian language is related to the Sumerian, which was spoken five-thousand years ago in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers? This writer has been grappling with this question for an entire year. She sympathizes with everyone else, who also struggles with it. But she takes into consideration that, in the past century, the outcome of every archaeological and linguistic research has vindicated the two brilliant French scholars (**Oppert and Lenormant**), who were the first to announce that the Sumerian language, emerging from the thousand-year shadows, in its structure and vocabulary, resembles the Hungarian more than any other language.”*

“The fact that, among the Sumerian words, an exceptionally large number have remained in the Hungarian language, entirely unchanged, throughout

the millennia, can only be explained by the extreme conservatism of the Scythian peoples...”

“We should not forget that, although the Sumerian language was the language of mankind’s first high-level civilization, it consisted of only a few thousand words (4000, according to her). For it to be appropriate in the space age too, it must have developed into the extraordinarily rich vocabulary of the Hungarian language.”

“The question arises: Is the similarity between the name Hungaria and the ancient name of the Sumerian homeland – KIENGIRA – just pure coincidence?”

In connection with the ancient Magyar runic script, Ida Bobula writes about the perception of the Academy:

“Since (according to them) the Scythian relationship does not exist, and since the Hungarian language, according to them, is related to the primitive, inarticulate Lapp language, in ancient times the Magyars “could not have possessed” their own language. The people of Árpád (according to them) consisted of barbarian hordes. If they had admitted that these people had their own writing system, then they would have had to admit that they were civilized people. This is something that this scholarly institution could not allow. Therefore, the scholarly powers decided that the ancient Hungarians did not have their own writing – period! They branded every proof to the contrary as nonsense, or purposeful falsification.” (Ida Bobula, among others, is referring here to the declaration of the Academy of 1903, according to which the runic script does not exist among the Hungarian people.)

I have chosen to present here a few convincingly similar Sumerian-Magyar words from her very extensive collection (Sumerian words in capital letters): Bába-BABA (midwife), Csata-SATA (battle), Dalia-DELI (hero), Dézsa-DUSU (vat, tub), Kakas-GAGAZU (rooster), Kapa-KAPA (hoe), Kuruzsol-KURUS(lu) (practise quackery), Pohár-BAHAR (glass, cup), Út-UD (road, way) etc.

Ida Bobula died in America, in Gaffney, South Carolina, on October 24, 1981. This town of about 13 thousand inhabitants was built on Cherokee Indian land. Wikipedia lists the famous people of the settlement, but unfortunately, Ida Bobula is not among them. Perhaps a computer specialist will read my writing and

will place the name of the Hungarian lady-scholar among the increasing number of famous names connected to Gaffney.

I quote Dr. Olivér Botár: *“Ida Bobula was one of the most diligent, untiring researchers of our age, whose work encouraged at least 100 researchers to follow new paths in the research of the possibility of a Sumerian-Magyar relationship. She died unobtrusively, forsaken and alone... The time will come when shiny statues will be erected of Zsófia Torma and Ida Bobula.”* (A statue of Zsófia Torma has already been produced by a ceramic sculptor, Judit Józsa.)

In the hearts and souls of all Hungarians who love their homeland and appreciate her work, Ida Bobula is honored. On the world-wide web, her name and her poems can be found on nationalistic websites. Gábor Szakács, a writer and journalist, has set to music the poems: *Mada (Országok országa)* and *Bújdosok éneke* and, before our lectures or after them, he has performed them and spoken words of praise about her. The latest one was recorded in 2008, on our CD called *Rákóczi él.*

America is owed thanks for welcoming Ida Bobula and others like her, Hungarian scholars and other professionals, intellectuals, workers and athletes, when they could no longer remain in their own homeland because of the inhumane Communist régime.

I did not write this article as an expert in Sumerology, because unfortunately I am no such expert, but neither are the majority of those who criticize Ida Bobula. A small number of them represent the Finno-Ugric-Turkic relationship, encouraged by the Hapsburgs. So, I did not write this as a professional linguistic article, but as the thoughts of one who has read a lot “with her and against her”. For the descendants of the Scythian-Hun-Avars, the Finno-Ugric-Turkic relationship is untenable. On the other hand, the Sumerian relationship is the only acceptable theory. Not only Ida Bobula’s studies have convinced me, but also those of Dr. Viktor Padányi, historian, and Dr. László Götz, a medical doctor and historian. The example of their lives has also convinced me because, forced to live in foreign countries, in spite of the difficulties, they have served their homeland and the Hungarian truth.

I end my article with a touching poem that Ida Bobula wrote in her youth:

Perhaps...

When we were flowers, I know that sometime
Night embraced us.

When we were butterflies, in a multi-colored meadow,
We chased each other in the golden sunshine.

When we were birds, in the lap of the thick canopy,
You sang to me; I sang to you.

When we are stars, in the great eternity,
Perhaps again, together, we shall shine in the sky!

Her main works:

Versek (Budapest, 1920)
(*Poems*, Budapest 1920)

Az egyetemi nőkérdés Magyarországon (Hugonnai Vilma grófnőről, 1928)
(*The question of women at universities in Hungary -- About Countess Vilma Hugonnai*, 1928)

A nő a 18. század magyar társadalmában (Budapest, 1933)
(*Women in Hungarian society in the 18th century*, Budapest 1933)

Nők útja a matriarchatustól a mai társadalomig (Budapest, 1938)
(*Women's journey from matriarchism to the society of today*, Budapest, 1938)

Sumerian affiliations. A Plea for Reconsideration (Washington, 1951)
The Sumerian Goddess Ba-U (without place name, 1952)

Arany és cserép (cikkek, Warren, 1959-60)
(*Gold and pottery*, articles, Warren, 1959-1960)

Kölcsönöztük vagy örököltük? (Warren, 1960)
(*Did we borrow, or did we inherit?* Warren, 1960)

Sumerian Technology ... (Washington, 1960)

A sumir-magyar rokonság kérdéséhez (Buenos Aires, 1961)

(*The question of the Sumerian-Magyar relationship*, Buenos Aires, 1961)

Origin of the Hungarian Nation (Gainesville 1966)

Kétezer magyar név sumir eredete (Montreal, 1970)

(*Two thousand Hungarian names of Sumerian origin*, Montreal, 1970)

„Non omnis moriar” (*I am not completely dead*). Study by Ida Bobula, her letters to Mária Tóth Kurucz and Sándor Gallus’ work: „A magyar és sumir nyelv kapcsolatának lehetősége” (*The possibility of the relationship between the Hungarian and Sumerian languages.*) Compiled by Mária Tóth Kurucz, Cleveland, 1988)

It is certain than many more works remain in manuscript form, but we do not know what became of them.

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Bobula Ida: *Talán* (poem):

<http://viragoksmadarak.blogspot.com/2012/07/bobula-ida-talan.html>

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Kozák Péter: Bobula Ida <http://www.nevpont.hu/view/1809>

Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon <http://mek.oszk.hu/00300/00355/html/index.html>

The photograph is from the book: Tiamat (2008) by László B. Tarpai

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