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**MARIA RADNOTI-ALFÖLDI (1926-2022)**



*From a caricature by A. Bartoli of Maria R.-Alföldi and colleagues working in the coin cabinet of the Museo delle Terme, Rome, in 1985.*

Born in Budapest in 1926, Maria Radnoti-Alföldi was the only child of the doctor Geza Alföldi and his wife Olga. After graduating from high school in 1944, she studied ancient history, classical philology and archaeology at the University of Budapest until 1949, where, much influenced by Andreas Alföldi who supervised her doctoral thesis, she developed an early interest in numismatics and published her first numismatic articles with a focus on Late Antiquity. It was at university that she met her husband, the archaeologist Aladar Radnoti, another student of Andreas Alföldi, and they married in 1949. After university she took up a post at the Hungarian National Museum, and from 1950 also taught regularly at the University of Budapest.

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Her life was to change dramatically with the last days of October 1956, the Hungarian uprising, and subsequent Soviet invasion. With fighting raging in Budapest and the National Museum under fire, Maria R.-Alföldi and Aladar Radnoti helped to clear objects from the museum's galleries and bring them to the safety of the cellars. Already regarded with suspicion due to sharing the same name as Andreas Alföldi, who was regarded as a traitor for leaving the country for Princeton in 1947 and whose daughter some in authority thought she was, Maria R.-Alföldi recounted how one morning Aladar Radnoti went to work unusually early only to find a pistol in his desk, which he managed to remove just in time before the secret police arrived to search his office. The two realised they would have to leave the country, and when in 1957 Maria R.-Alföldi had an invitation to lecture in Vienna, it was made clear to her that she should stay. Aladar Radnoti planned to follow by walking through the forests and hills into Austria with their three young children, but in the end had to cross at night on his own. It was not until 1962 that the children were allowed to leave Hungary and follow them.

From 1957 until 1962 she worked as a research assistant at the newly founded project “Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Deutschland (FMRD)” at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, and in the summer of 1961 she successfully completed her habilitation in ancient numismatics there with the thesis “Die constantinische Goldprägung” (Mainz 1963), still a standard work today. The following year the couple moved to Frankfurt am Main when Aladar Radnoti was appointed to the chair for Hilfswissenschaften der Altertumskunde sowie Geschichte und Kultur der römischen Provinzen at the Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main. After he died suddenly in 1972, Maria R.-Alföldi succeeded her husband in 1973 to a chair that comprised the disciplines numismatics, epigraphy and papyrology, as well as the archaeology of the Roman provinces, a combination that was to be reflected in her academic output.

Together with her activities as professor, she directed the project “*Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Deutschland (FMRD)*”, which now had offices at the Goethe University and from 1971 was administered by the Römisch-Germanische Kommission. In 1985 she successfully had FMRD transferred from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft to the Akademie der Wissenschaft und der Literatur, Mainz, thus securing its longer-term future as “Fundmünzen der Antike”. Alongside the coin find inventories of the series FMRD, from 1979 she initiated the influential series “Studien zu Fundmünzen der Antike” (SFMA). The first volume, containing the papers from the FMRD-Methodencolloquium held in 1976 in Frankfurt am Main and Bad Homburg v.d.H., reflects her view of coin finds as an important integral part of the archaeological and historical record. It was during these years that the Seminar für Hilfswissenschaften der Altertumskunde, together with the Fundmünzen project, grew to become one of the most important centres of numismatic research worldwide.

When she retired as professor in 1991, the Berlin Wall had recently fallen, and Maria R.-Alföldi was very much involved in the restructuring of the German academic world that followed, in particular playing a leading role in the transfer in 1993 of the Griechisches Münzwerk, which had been founded by Theodor Mommsen, from the Akademie der Wissenschaften der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik in Berlin to the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Maria R.-Alföldi's academic interests extended beyond numismatics, and she saw coins as very much more than objects of purely antiquarian interest, more than a store of value or a means of payment, and coin finds as more than useful dating evidence for archaeological contexts. It was always important to her to combine the disciplines of numismatics, ancient history and archaeology and to see numismatics as more than the *Hilfswissenschaft* that traditional German academe often relegated the discipline to. Her writings reflect this broad view. If her habilitation thesis on the gold coinage of Constantine the Great was in the tradition of numismatic corpora, with *Antike Numismatik* (Mainz 1978) she presented a comprehensive introduction to ancient numismatics that is still valuable today, and covers the full range of methods and applications (Teil 1: Theorie and Praxis), as well as an extensive, structured bibliography (Teil 2). Throughout retirement she remained active and productive. Her first volume in the FMRD series on the coin finds from the Altbachtal temple precinct in Trier was followed in 2006–2008 by four more volumes covering the coin finds from the Roman city. The relationship between charisma and power was a particular interest and is a central aspect of “Bild und Bildersprache der römischen Kaiser” (Mainz 1999), which went well beyond the evidence of coins. The foundation myths of Rome and Constantinople were at the heart of “Phoenix aus der Asche. Die Liburna, ein Gründungsmonument von Constantinopolis” (Mainz 2004), which investigated the iconography the city, and “Die römische Wölfin. Ein antikes Monument stürzt” (Mainz 2011), together with Edilberto Formigli and Johannes Fried, which questioned the ancient origins of the famous bronze statue of the wolf with the twins, Romulus and Remus. The range of her interests is reflected in the titles of the sections of a collection of her papers on Late Antiquity: *Constantin, Trier, Römer und Germanen, Bilder, und Münzen* (Gloria Romanorum: Schriften zur Spätantike [Stuttgart 2001]).

Maria R.-Alföldi recognised at an early stage the role that computers, and in particular databases, were to play in numismatics. Understanding that coin find studies had to transcend national boundaries, one of the first events that she organised at the Mainz Academy was the international symposium “Elektronische Datenverarbeitung in der Numismatik” in 1985 to discuss standards for recording information on coins and coin finds, and how the exchange of data between databases could be facilitated. Other initiatives included the development of a database on complexes of coin finds, as well as the coin find database for the FMRD project that was to go online at the Mainz Academy as NUMIDAT.

A veritable polyglot – her introduction to the 13<sup>th</sup> Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary history, crossed four languages, before settling for a fifth, Latin – Maria R.-Alföldi engaged actively in academic exchange across geographical and political borders between Europe, America and Asia. As a member of the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur zu Mainz, and the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, she was active in the promotion of numismatics nationally and internationally. From 1971 to 1990 she was the first, and for many years the only female member of the governing board of the Römisch-Germanische Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts in Frankfurt am Main. The paradigm of the FMRD series was directly adopted for inventories of coin finds from Luxembourg, Slovenia, The Netherlands and Croatia, of which she was (co-)editor, and other countries such as Hungary and Italy were inspired to produce their own corpora. In spite of her efforts to secure their continuation, ultimately the Griechisches Münzwerk and Fundmünzen der Antike were wound up as centrally funded projects in 2003 and 2009. The legacy of Fundmünzen der Antike comprises an impressive 45 volumes of FMRD and 23 volumes of SFMA.

Recognition of her academic achievements is testified in a long list of honours from national and international societies. She was an honorary member of the Österreichische Numismatische Gesellschaft, the Ungarische Numismatische Gesellschaft, the Ungarische Gesellschaft für Altertumsforschung, the Société Française de Numismatique, the Società Numismatica Italiana and the International Numismatic Council. In 1982 she was awarded the honorary prize of the Gesellschaft für Internationale Geldgeschichte, in 1995 the medal of the Royal Numismatic Society, and in 2000 the American Numismatic Society awarded her the Archer M. Huntingdon Medal.

A devout Catholic, she was a volunteer at the Bahnhofsmission at Frankfurt central station, and in recognition of this engagement, as well as her academic achievements, in 1992 she received the Cross of Merit on Ribbon of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.

“Chefin”, as she was respectfully addressed by colleagues, shaped more than just a generation of numismatists, both in Germany and abroad. A festschrift for her retirement on her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, “Die Münze. Bild – Botenschaft – Bedeutung. Festschrift für Maria R.-Alföldi” (Frankfurt am Main 1991), includes contributions from 30 colleagues and former Frankfurt students. Perhaps remembered by some as stern and not always easy, she was forceful in presenting and defending her viewpoint, but discussion with her was open and fair. She had an understanding, charitable side and was supportive of her employees and students. She was still a visitor to the library of the Römisch-Germanische Kommission at the age of 95, still taking notes in the characteristic squared DIN A6 blocks that she had used for so long. She passed away peacefully on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022.