PRIKAZI NOVIH KONFERENCIJA I KNJIGA
REVIEWS OF NEW CONFERENCES AND BOOKS

A COLD WELCOME FROM OHIO

White, Sam. 2017. *Cold Welcome: The Little Ice Age and Europe's Encounter with North America*. Harvard University Press. 376.

In 2017, Sam White, associate professor at the Ohio State University's Department of History published a monograph about environmental circumstances during the colonization of North America, which received ample attention in American historiography and international climate and environmental history research. The American author examined the early period of North America's colonial history in the long 16th century, lasting from the disembarkation of Columbus in America in 1492 to the voyage of Mayflower in 1620, from a climate and environment history viewpoint. According to White's initial hypothesis, the climate deterioration of the Little Ice Age played an essential role in the colonial history of North America. This monograph fits well in a series of environmental history analyses, starting around the turn of the millennium, whose authors reflect on environmental factors in their historical narratives. While the presentation of how the green historical narrative emerges would demand a more extensive study, in this short book review it is worth mentioning John R. McNeill's monograph on environmental history of the 20th century, which was translated into many languages (e.g. into Hungarian); moreover, the monograph of Richard Hoffman, former professor of the Central European University (Budapest), on the environmental history of the Middle Ages.

Sam White's book belongs to this series: it is not an academic monograph reconstructing and interpreting environmental changes, but an environmental history narrative in which the physical environment, more precisely the climate changes of the Little Ice Age, becomes an active agent in historical events. The American author makes it explicit that he wrote his book with the intention of making scientific research results more accessible, and for that reason, he avoided the usage of academic jargon and technicalities.

When interpreting the effects of climate and environmental history factors, Sam White deals with two issues more profoundly. First of all, he defines the concept and time frame of the Little Ice Age, and secondly, he examines American colonial experiences of Europeans in the context of environmental history. The Little Ice Age lasted from 1300 to 1850, globally. The most critical indicators of cooling were the increase in the size of glaciers and the expansion of sea ice. In the coldest periods, the yearly average temperature could be even 2°C below the average of the 20th century reference period (1961-90). The period lasting from the last decades of the 16th century until the end of the 17th century is referred to as the "Super Little Ice Age", being the coldest period, a term introduced by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, the doyen of climate history research. White mentions that the long 17th century did not become a critical period in global history for the unprecedented intensity of cooling, but because the majority of contemporary societies were in a most vulnerable situation all around the world.

Intercontinental sea voyages contributed significantly to the development of sciences. Shipmen and travelers of the age of discoveries soon realized the indefensibility of the Ptolemaic world view. The commonly held view of the time was that latitudes determine the climate of a given area unambiguously, but explorers found different climatic relations on the same latitudes on the opposite shores of the Atlantic Ocean. European colonists had had no prior experience with the peculiarities of American weather such as hurricanes and tornados.

The discovery and colonization of North America started from two directions: from the South and the West. The Spanish organized expeditions to the north of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, and the first target was Florida. However, they encountered unexpected difficulties in Florida, which was a cold

northern country for them, where they had to reckon with frost and snowfall in winter, and the cold weather took its toll on the nearly naked native Americans used as porters in these expeditions. Spanish chroniclers agreed that Florida was unsuitable for settling because of its poor soil quality and its cold and extreme weather, and they recorded that local natives lived in immense poverty. The Spanish were not able to consolidate their supremacy in Florida even until the end of the 16th century. Due to the high expenses, King Philip III reduced the size of the military contingent on the peninsula. The royal council discussed the possibility of leaving Florida, but because of feeling responsible for Christian native Americans, the Spanish crown maintained its bridgehead.

From the West, the first explorer was an Italian shipman in French service, Captain Giovanni da Verrazzano. The French king, Francis I never accepted the validity of the Treaty of Tordesillas, in which the newly discovered world was divided between Spain and Portugal. Therefore, in 1524, the French king instructed Captain Verrazzano to explore the North American coast. Verrazzano traversed the Atlantic Ocean with one single caravel and landed somewhere on the coast of Carolina. The captain found the conditions favorable and informed the French ruler that extensive woodlands covered the coast and the natives there had never seen a European before. Driven by Verrazzano's report, French, English and Dutch sailors set sail to discover the eastern coast of North America in the 16th century. It also increased the appeal of North America that there was a smaller risk of confrontation with the Spanish army, which had a fearsome military reputation in the age of discoveries.

Three settlements of significance were founded in North America in the first decade of the 17th century: Jamestown (1607) by the English, Québec (1608) by the French and Santa Fe (1610) by the Spanish; and all of them managed to take root. The settlers' first-generation faced extraordinary difficulties as they had had no certain information on the natural conditions and the natives of the area where they arrived. Under such conditions, the settlers could follow two adaptation strategies: one was the method of trial and error, and the other was to learn the knowledge and expertise necessary for survival from the natives. A series of natural disasters made the life of European settlers even more difficult. The eruption of the Mexican Colima volcano launched an immense amount of dust-rich in sulphate content into the stratosphere in 1586. The examinations of the Greenland ice seed and documentary data prove that a volcanic eruption happened on 12th March, 1595. Finally, on 15th February, 1600, the Huaynaputina volcano erupted in the Peruvian Andes, and the great scale of the eruption was similar to the eruption of Tambora, which caused the infamous "summerless" years in Western Europe and North America after 1816. The climate-modifying effects of these volcanic eruptions strengthened each other, the volcanic dust and ash got into the stratosphere and shaded solar radiation; that is the reason for the fastest cooling process of the last five centuries in the Northern Hemisphere. Tree-ring analyses verified that in the 1590s and 1600s, the average summer temperature of Eurasia and North America was 1°*C* lower than in the reference period of the 20th century (1961-90). According to climate reconstructions, the summer average of 1601 was 1.8 Celsius degree below the temperature in the reference period on the Northern Hemisphere. According to our current knowledge, the summer of 1601 and the first decade of the 17th century were the coldest summer periods in the last two millennia.

Research findings of archaeology and environmental history play an essential role in the historical reconstruction of the early colonial period of North America. Tree-ring, pollen and ice seed examinations made an in-depth reconstruction of climate change possible, while archeological excavations proved that the climate deterioration caused supply problems not only for the colonial population but for the natives too. Pueblo Indians applied an adaptation strategy based on the diversification of agrarian production, accumulated more extensive food stocks, and intensified their trade with bison hunting nomadic tribes. According to contemporary documentary sources, native Americans resented European settlers mainly for three things: the appearance of missionaries, the spread of alcohol and European illnesses. However, in the first years, European settlers depended on the help of natives. The inhabitants of Jamestown or Québec could hardly have survived without the support of Native Americans living in the area. The settlers learned from the natives how to make suitable clothing and footwear and how to recognize the local edible and medicinal plants. Archaeological findings prove that the exchange was

mutual, and European impacts could be felt deep in the continental areas already in the first century of the colonial era. European influences are palpable both in the usage of and decoration on tools.

In Sam White's conclusion, the protracted colonization of North America had mainly environmental reasons. European settlers arrived in North America, which had a fundamentally different climatic and physical environment from their European experiences. The failures of Spanish colonizers in Florida indicate what kind of difficulties of adaptation Europeans had to face in an unknown landscape. However, English settlers' adaptability was significantly improved by the activity of the Virginia Company, which provided not only support of the mother country but systematically collected information and experiences about the New World. At the turn of the 17th century, the "Super Little Ice Age" struck on European settlers trying to survive in unknown American landscapes: storms, droughts and freezing winters tortured the inhabitants of the newly founded settlements. The increasingly scarcer natural resources most probably played a crucial role in the increase of conflicts between the native Americans and the European settlers. Finally, the Europeans walked the tough road of adaptation and learning successfully in the 17th century: they collected local information, compared it with their European experiences and looked for suitable solutions necessary for survival in their new homeland. And success prevailed.

Lajos RÁCZ

POSVET »OBISK GORA V ČASU PODNEBNIH SPREMEMB«, MOJSTRANA, SLOVENIJA, 20. JUNIJ 2020

O razsežnostih in posledicah podnebnih sprememb na obisk gora ter prilagoditvah za njihovo blaženje se v širši populaciji obiskovalcev gora govori le priložnostno. Povprečna letna temperatura 0 stopinj Celzija sega v gorah vedno višje, snežna meja v Alpah se bliža nadmorski višini 3000 m, krčijo se ledeniki, vse manj je stalno zamrznjenih tal ipd. Toda, kaj to pomeni za obiskovalce gora?

Da bi razširili védenje o tej problematiki, so ZRC SAZU Geografski inštitut Antona Melika, Gornjesavski muzej Jesenice oziroma njihova enota Slovenski planinski muzej, Občina Kranjska Gora, Planinska zveza Slovenije in Turistično društvo Dovje – Mojstrana organizirali posvet. Posvet je potekal 20. junija 2020 v prostorih Slovenskega planinskega muzeja v Mojstrani (slika 1).

Slika 1: *Slovenski planinski muzej v Mojstrani (fotograf: Matija Zorn).*

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Picture of Zadar from 1486 from the travelogue of Konrad von Grünemberg. View from the southwest. (From: Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe)

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