

# THE FIRST THREE DECADES OF HUNGARIAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

## PRVA TRI DESETLJEĆA MAĐARSKE POVIJESTI OKOLIŠA

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### Summary

*The antecedents of Hungarian environmental history research can be traced back to the 1980s. The first Hungarian historian to apply ecological viewpoints in her analyses was Ágnes R. Várkonyi. Hungarian environmental historians participated in the foundation of the European Society for Environmental History in 2001 and even served on the board of the Society. The social and natural scientists who were involved in Hungarian environmental history research have organized several conferences and published a number of study volumes and monographs for three decades. The researchers of Hungarian environmental history have achieved significant results and participated in international research as well. However, they haven't been able to build up an institutional framework for environmental history research and education in the Hungarian university-academic world. An account of the first three decades of Hungarian environmental history research can best be written following the milestones of environmental history conferences and research volumes.*

**Key words:** environmental history, historical ecology, climate history, historical ecosystem, Hungarian historiography

**Ključne riječi:** povijest okoliša, povijesna ekologija, povijest klime, povijesni ekosustav, mađarska historiografija

### INTRODUCTION

Environmental history research, beginning to take shape in the latter half of the 1960s, was first established in the United States with the foundation of the American Society for Environmental History (aseh.org) in 1976. Rachel Carson<sup>1</sup> was instrumental in ensuring that the seed of ecological thought fell on fertile ground in American historiography, as it was due to her work that, in the American academic and public sphere, ecology – formerly a sub-discipline of biology – could emerge as a global current of thought during the 1960s. The paths then diverged over the next decade with one direction being environmental movements and ecopolitical organisations, and the other being the disciplines reflecting on ecological thought, thus creating environmental economics, environmental sociology, environmental philosophy and environmental history. At the same time, using the global impact of the ecological thought, research communities made some attempts at loosening or reshaping the disciplinary structure. With respect to the development of environmental history, it meant that environmental history would become a new multidisciplinary field or a “green” historical narrative with a disciplinary view being more open than usual. Nevertheless, there is a general understanding that environmental history examines the interactions between humans and the natural environment in a historical context, devoting

<sup>1</sup> Carson, Rachel. 1962. Silent Spring. New York. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

special attention to environmental changes and their effects.<sup>2</sup> Representatives of Hungarian historical research were involved in the founding of the European Society for Environmental History in 2001, which took place at the Society's first conference in St Andrews, Scotland, where the Austrian environmental historian Verena Winiwarter was elected as the founding president. So Hungarian environmental researchers did indeed actively participate in establishing environmental history in Europe. Let us now examine what scientific heartland they had when doing so.

## THE BIRTH OF HUNGARIAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY RESEARCH

From the mid-1980s to the end of the 1990s, Hungarian scientific life experienced a most vibrant and open period. The idea of ecology was in the air, and, at the same time, a narrow Hungarian academic elite, mostly rooted in academic institutions and integrated into the network of international scientific life, was able to emerge and confidently follow the currents of international scientific thought. Agrochemist István Láng<sup>3</sup> was one of the 23 members of the UN-initiated Brundtland Commission, which constructed the concept of sustainable development in 1987, and Budapest was chosen as the venue for one of its regional meetings. The convergence and alliance of environmental movements and the world of academia manifested itself in the Danube Circle, founded in 1984 in opposition to the Gabčíkovo–Nagymaros Waterworks Project. The most important advocate of the idea of ecology among Hungarian historians in the 1980s was Ágnes R. Várkonyi<sup>4</sup>, who not only reflected on environmental issues in her analyses of economic and art history but also incorporated relevant research findings from related disciplines – such as ethnography, anthropology and geography – into the historical discourse.

It was an important axiom at the change of regime that it was necessary to follow Western models, which encouraged Hungarian researchers to join the international scientific community, and the opening of borders created an opportunity to do so. In the 1990s, research results in the field of environmental history and in climate history in particular, were published for the first time for a wider audience, supporting the concept of contemporary global warming – which at that time still existed as a mere hypothesis – from various aspects. Following the change of regime, members of the scientific community and policy-makers expressed benevolent interest in colleagues arriving from behind the Iron Curtain. At that time, it was relatively simple to receive some Western scholarship as an environmental historian, while obtaining a position at the academy or at a university in Hungary was far less easy.

A new discipline – and environmental history was no exception – has to go through three developmental stages in its institutionalisation. First, researchers in the field that is becoming a new discipline need to engage in naming and staking out the territory of the new discipline through publishing in manuals, research volumes and newly founded journals. In the second stage, university departments, academy research groups and institutes are established which specialise in the discipline. Finally, educational programmes in the new discipline are accredited at universities, and graduates with bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees enter the labour market in pursuit of a promising career. This process has been completed in the United States, where environmental historians make up about 10% of the historian community. Countries at the forefront of environmental history (Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries) are in the second stage: there are numerous environmental history research groups, university departments and institutes, but the full spectrum of environmental history education hasn't appeared yet. Hungarian environmental history research and education, despite the promising beginnings, have remained in the first stage of development. Hungarian environmental historians founded the Hungarian Chapter of the European Society for Environmental History, however, for the time being, its mailing list has only twenty-some members.

<sup>2</sup> Hughes, J. Donald. 2006. *What is Environmental History?*. Cambridge. Polity.

<sup>3</sup> István Láng (1931-2016.) Hungarian agro-chemist, professor of University of Agriculture, between 1985 and 1993 the secretary-general of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. His researched field of the opportunities of the sustainable development of agriculture.

<sup>4</sup> Ágnes R. Várkonyi (1928-2014), Hungarian cultural historian, professor of the University of Eötvös Lóránd (Budapest), the researcher of the early modern Hungarian history and the historical ecology.

Consequently, the environmental history paradigm has only been appearing at thematic conferences and research volumes in the academic life in Hungary. In my view, an account of the first three decades of Hungarian environmental history research can best be written following the milestones of environmental history conferences and research volumes.

### ÁGNES R. VÁRKONYI AND THE FAMOUS GARDEN OF EUROPE

Ágnes R. Várkonyi (1928-2014), Head of the Department of Early Modern History at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) and a revered scientist was the first historian to include ecological aspects in her analyses of early modern history. Her personal friendship and professional relationships with Júlia Lendvai and Béla Horgas, founding editors of the ecology and literature periodical *Liget* (ligetmuhely.com) played a decisive role in scholarly essays on ecology regularly appearing in *Liget*, which adds an interesting subplot to her works. Her volumes of historical ecology studies, *Pelikán fiaival* and *Tűzvész tanúi* were both published by Liget Műhely.<sup>5</sup> In 1992, Ágnes R. Várkonyi decided to put together a volume of studies by Hungarian researchers who had been investigating the coexistence of humans and the natural environment from a historical perspective. The volume, which she co-edited with the ethnographer and art historian László Kósa, was published in 1993 with the title *Európa híres kertje* [*The Famous Garden Of Europe*] and the subtitle *Történeti ökológiai tanulmányok Magyarországról* [*Studies In Historical Ecology From Hungary*]<sup>6</sup>. As for determining the discipline, various names were at play at the time in the Hungarian research community: Ágnes R. Várkonyi was dedicated to using the term historical ecology, while Ferenc Glatz, President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Head of the Historical Institute committed himself to the name of natural history, but both of their concepts corresponded to what we call environmental history in the international world of science. The academic background of the 12 authors of the volume is rather different. The introduction, entitled “A legfiatalabb tudomány” [“The Youngest Science”], giving an overview of the history of Hungarian science, was co-authored by the editors. The medievalist Ilona Jónás Sz.’s study on the history of technology reflected the fertilizing influence of the French Annales school on Hungarian scientific life<sup>8</sup>. András Pálóczi Horváth, as the first representative of environmental archaeology in Hungary, reviewed the ecological aspects of medieval research in his study<sup>9</sup>. Gábor Várkonyi, researching the early modern era, wrote a study on 17<sup>th</sup> century thermal waters and baths<sup>10</sup>. István Imreh, a lecturer at the University of Babeş-Bolyai (Cluj, Kolozsvár), analysed the environmental aspects of the Székely regulations<sup>11</sup>. Éva S. Lauter<sup>12</sup> analysed

<sup>5</sup> R. Várkonyi, Ágnes. 1991. *Pelikán fiaival* [*Pelican with her sons*]. Budapest. Liget Műhely; R. Várkonyi, Ágnes. 1995. *Tűzvész tanúi* [*The witnesses of a conflagration*]. Budapest. Liget Műhely.

<sup>6</sup> R. Várkonyi Ágnes-Kósa László eds. 1993. *Európa híres kertje: történeti ökológia tanulmányok Magyarországról* [*The famous garden of Europe: studies in historical ecology from Hungary*]. Budapest: Orpheusz Kiadó.

<sup>7</sup> R. Várkonyi Ágnes-Kósa László. 1993. *A legfiatalabb tudomány* [*The youngest science*]. In R. Várkonyi Ágnes-Kósa László eds. *Európa híres kertje: történeti ökológia tanulmányok Magyarországról* [*The famous garden of Europe: studies in historical ecology from Hungary*]. Budapest: Orpheusz Kiadó.

<sup>8</sup> Sz. Jónás Ilona. 1993. *Természet és technika a középkori Európában* [*Nature and technique in medieval Europe*]. In R. Várkonyi Ágnes-Kósa László eds. *Európa híres kertje: történeti ökológia tanulmányok Magyarországról* [*The famous garden of Europe: studies in historical ecology from Hungary*]. Budapest: Orpheusz Kiadó. 24-43.

<sup>9</sup> Pálóczi Horváth András. 1993. *A környezeti régészet szerepe Magyarországon a középkor kutatásában* [*The role of the environmental archaeology in Hungary in the research of the Middle Ages*]. In R. Várkonyi Ágnes-Kósa László eds. *Európa híres kertje: történeti ökológia tanulmányok Magyarországról* [*The famous garden of Europe: studies in historical ecology from Hungary*]. Budapest: Orpheusz Kiadó. 44-66.

<sup>10</sup> Várkonyi Gábor. 1993. *Hévizek és fürdők a 17. századi Magyarországon* [*Thermal waters and baths in 17<sup>th</sup> century Hungary*]. In R. Várkonyi Ágnes-Kósa László eds. *Európa híres kertje: történeti ökológia tanulmányok Magyarországról* [*The famous garden of Europe: studies in historical ecology from Hungary*]. Budapest: Orpheusz Kiadó. 105-121.

<sup>11</sup> Imreh István. 1993. *A természeti környezet oltalmazása a székely rendtartásokban* [*The protecting of the natural environment in the Székler regulations*]. In R. Várkonyi Ágnes-Kósa László eds. *Európa híres kertje: történeti ökológia tanulmányok Magyarországról* [*The famous garden of Europe: studies in historical ecology from Hungary*]. Budapest: Orpheusz Kiadó. 122-140.

<sup>12</sup> S. Lauter Éva. 1993. *Főúri kertek és reprezentáció a 17. században* [*Aristocratic gardens and representation in the 17<sup>th</sup> century*]. In R. Várkonyi Ágnes-Kósa László eds. *Európa híres kertje: történeti ökológia tanulmányok Magyarországról* [*The famous garden of Europe: studies in historical ecology from Hungary*]. Budapest: Orpheusz Kiadó. 87-104.

the gardens of stately homes in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and Eszter Magyar the forestry in Hungary in the 18<sup>th</sup> century from an ecological point of view<sup>13</sup>. István Hiller, who later (also) entered politics, examined the ecological aspects of the curriculum of the Selmezbánya Forestry Academy<sup>14</sup>. Sándor Oroszi, senior researcher at the Museum of Agriculture, reviewed the prehistory of nature conservation<sup>15</sup>. There were two studies representing the aspect of sciences in historical ecology: a Transylvanian biologist, János Rab compiled an ethnobotanical study of Gyergyó<sup>16</sup>, and I contributed a climate history overview<sup>17</sup>. The volume met with a lukewarm reception from the research community, the reason being – in my view – that the research methods and narratives requiring a background in sciences did not appeal to Hungarian historians who mostly engaged in political history narratives, whereas scientists would rather keep some distance from the relativism of memory politics.

Ágnes R. Várkonyi, however, was not discouraged by the quiet reception of the first historical ecology volume, and at the end of the 1990s, she convinced Osiris Publishing House, the most significant publisher of science, popular science and scholarly literature in Hungary, to issue a new, larger-scale volume of studies. The volume, published in 2000 with the title *Táj és történelem [Landscape and History]*, was edited by Ágnes R. Várkonyi alone<sup>18</sup>, and there were five authors (Ágnes R. Várkonyi, András Pálóczi Horváth, Sándor Oroszi, Eszter Magyar, and Lajos Rácz) from the previous volume who contributed their studies. The number of authors and thus the number of studies increased to 19, which were arranged into four thematic units: there was a chapter on forestry, one on waters, one on the relationship between humans and nature, and one on environmental research methods.

The two studies that generated the most vivid response as novelties were written by Károly Takács and András Gryneaus. Based on his research findings, the archaeologist Károly Takács revealed and described the existence of a canal network and water management system operating in a unified system on the royal estates covering more than two-thirds of Hungary's territory in the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>19</sup>. The publication of the study sparked a long-lasting debate among archaeologists and historians, which definitely made environmental history somewhat more visible. András Gryneaus's dendrochronological and dendroclimatological study drew attention to a new group of sources which provided results of fundamental importance for various disciplines from archaeology to climate research<sup>20</sup>.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY – VOLUMES 1 AND 2

In Hungary, it was scientists who responded first to the European establishment of environmental history and the influence of an intellectual workshop in the international research community in the 2000s. In 2006, the geologist Miklós Kázmér, Professor at the Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences

<sup>13</sup> Magyar Eszter. 1993. *Erdőgazdálkodás a 18. századi Magyarországon [Silviculture in 18<sup>th</sup> century Hungary]*. In R. Várkonyi Ágnes-Kósa László eds. *Európa híres kertje: történelmi ökológia tanulmányok Magyarországról [The famous garden of Europe: studies in historical ecology from Hungary]*. Budapest: Orpheusz Kiadó. 141-163.

<sup>14</sup> Hiller István. 1993. *Ökológiai ismeretek és ökológia szemlélet a Selmezbányai Erdészeti Akadémián [Ecological knowledge and ecology view on Academy of Forestry in Selmezbánya (now Banská Štiavnica, Slovakia)]*. In R. Várkonyi Ágnes-Kósa László eds. *Európa híres kertje: történelmi ökológia tanulmányok Magyarországról [The famous garden of Europe: studies in historical ecology from Hungary]*. Budapest: Orpheusz Kiadó. 141-163.

<sup>15</sup> Oroszi Sándor. 1993. *A természetvédelem előzményei [The antecedents of the environmental protection]*. In R. Várkonyi Ágnes-Kósa László eds. *Európa híres kertje: történelmi ökológia tanulmányok Magyarországról [The famous garden of Europe: studies in historical ecology from Hungary]*. Budapest: Orpheusz Kiadó. 164-183.

<sup>16</sup> Rab János. 1993. *Az etnogeobotanika - mint történelmi ökológiai segédtudomány [The Etno-Geo-Botanyics – as auxiliary science of historical ecology]*. In R. Várkonyi Ágnes-Kósa László eds. *Európa híres kertje: történelmi ökológia tanulmányok Magyarországról [The famous garden of Europe: studies in historical ecology from Hungary]*. Budapest: Orpheusz Kiadó. 223-257.

<sup>17</sup> Rácz Lajos. 1993. *Éghajlati változások a középkori és kora újkori Európában [Climate Changes in the medieval and early modern Europe]*. In R. Várkonyi Ágnes-Kósa László eds. *Európa híres kertje: történelmi ökológia tanulmányok Magyarországról [The famous garden of Europe: studies in historical ecology from Hungary]*. Budapest: Orpheusz Kiadó. 67-86.

<sup>18</sup> R. Várkonyi Ágnes. 2000 *Táj és történelem [Landscape and history]*. Budapest: Osiris Kiadó.

<sup>19</sup> Takács Károly. 2000. *Árpád-kori csatornarendszerek kutatásáról [The research of Árpád age drainage systems]*. In R. Várkonyi Ágnes. ed. *Táj és történelem [Landscape and history]*. Budapest: Osiris. 73-106.

<sup>20</sup> Gryneaus András. 2000. *Új forráscsoport? A dendrokronológia eredményei és a történettudomány [New source group? The results of the dendrochronology and the history]*. In R. Várkonyi Ágnes. ed. *Táj és történelem [Landscape and history]*. Budapest: Osiris. 305-325.

at ELTE (Budapest), organised the first conference on environmental history in Hungary with the title *Environmental history – Environmental events of the last 500 years in the light of historical and scientific sources*<sup>21</sup>. More than 40 speakers took part in the two-day conference, however, the conference proceedings were published only 3 years later, in 2009, by Hantken Publishing House. The introductory paper, entitled “Geology, archaeology and history – the sources of environmental history” was written by the conference organiser Miklós Kázmér<sup>22</sup>. The author of the second paper in the volume was Ágnes R. Várkonyi’s work on the subsistence crisis in Hungary in the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>23</sup>. This study was Professor R. Várkonyi’s last major paper on historical ecology, and as such, its publication also marked her passing of the baton for researching and coordinating historical ecology/environmental history. At the same time, the “network” brought to life by R. Várkonyi was represented by only three researchers (András Pálóczi Horváth, András Grynaeus, and myself). However, several researchers debuted at the conference who have been key figures in Hungarian environmental history research ever since. Péter Szabó, originally a historian, compiled a comprehensive historical analysis on forestry in the early modern era for the volume<sup>24</sup>. Later on, he became an internationally renowned researcher of vegetation history at the Institute of Botany of the Czech Academy in Brno, and from 2017 to 2019 he was President of the European Society for Environmental History. Péter Szabó’s career is a fine example for how “susceptible” the Hungarian world of academia and university was to environmental history. The paper the biologist Marianna Bíró and Zoltán Molnár compiled on the great plain forests of the traditional era show how fruitful their collaboration was<sup>25</sup>. By today, they both have become distinguished researchers of vegetation history in the Carpathian Basin. The geologist Zoltán Kern contributed two papers on dendroclimatology to the volume<sup>26</sup>. He is the first author of the paper on the climatic history of the Kelemen Hills, and he published another paper as a single author on the climatic history of the Lake Balaton Highlands. Zoltán Kern’s dendroclimatological and oxygen isotope climate reconstructions represent an exceptional landmark for researchers of the climate history of the Carpathian Basin. The closing paper in the volume was András Takács-Sánta’s overview of the biosphere-altering activities of humanity over the last half millennium<sup>27</sup>. András Takács-Sánta’s contribution was especially significant because as a lecturer at the Human Ecology Master’s Programme at ELTE, he represented a school of thought which could establish and maintain a bridgehead for ecology within social sciences education in the world of academia and university. The founder of the human ecology programme was András Lányi film director, philosopher,

<sup>21</sup> Kázmér Miklós. 2009. *Környezettörténet: az utóbbi 500 év környezeti eseményei történeti és természettudományi források tükrében* [Environmental history. Environmental events of the last 500 years in the light of historical and scientific sources]. Budapest. Hantken Kiadó.

<sup>22</sup> Kázmér Miklós. 2009. *Geológia, archeológia és história - a környezettörténet forrásai* [Geology, archaeology and history - the sources of the environmental history]. In Kázmér Miklós. 2009. *Környezettörténet: az utóbbi 500 év környezeti eseményei történeti és természettudományi források tükrében* [Environmental history. Environmental events of the last 500 years in the light of historical and scientific sources]. Budapest. Hantken Kiadó. 11-20.

<sup>23</sup> R. Várkonyi Ágnes. 2009. “A természet majd az értelemmel”— Történeti ökológia és a XVIII. századi Magyarország környezeti válsága [“Then nature with the help of reason.” Environmental history and the environmental crisis in 18<sup>th</sup> century Hungary]. In Kázmér Miklós. 2009. *Környezettörténet: az utóbbi 500 év környezeti eseményei történeti és természettudományi források tükrében* [Environmental history. Environmental events of the last 500 years in the light of historical and scientific sources]. Budapest. Hantken Kiadó. 21-54.

<sup>24</sup> Szabó Péter. 2009. *Erdők a kora újkorban: történelem, régészet, ökológia* [Woodland in the Early Modern Period: history, archaeology, ecology]. In Kázmér Miklós. 2009. *Környezettörténet: az utóbbi 500 év környezeti eseményei történeti és természettudományi források tükrében* [Environmental history. Environmental events of the last 500 years in the light of historical and scientific sources]. Budapest. Hantken Kiadó. 137-156.

<sup>25</sup> In Kázmér Miklós. 2009. *Környezettörténet: az utóbbi 500 év környezeti eseményei történeti és természettudományi források tükrében* [Environmental history. Environmental events of the last 500 years in the light of historical and scientific sources]. Budapest. Hantken Kiadó.

<sup>26</sup> Kern Zoltán. 2009. *Balaton-felvidéki tölgyek évgyűrűszélességének kapcsolata a Balaton vízszintingadozásával* [Relationship between fluctuation of lake level of Balaton and ringwidth of oaks from Balaton Highland, Hungary]. In Kázmér Miklós. 2009. *Környezettörténet: az utóbbi 500 év környezeti eseményei történeti és természettudományi források tükrében* [Environmental history. Environmental events of the last 500 years in the light of historical and scientific sources]. Budapest. Hantken Kiadó. 357-366.

<sup>27</sup> Takács-Sánta András. *Az elmúlt 500 év nagy ugrásai az ember bioszféra-áralakító tevékenységének történetében* [Major transitions in the history of human transformation of the biosphere in the last 500 years]. In Kázmér Miklós. 2009. *Környezettörténet: az utóbbi 500 év környezeti eseményei történeti és természettudományi források tükrében* [Environmental history. Environmental events of the last 500 years in the light of historical and scientific sources]. Budapest. Hantken Kiadó. 465-484.

founder of the Danube Circle and Védegyelet [Association of Protection] and whose biography is intertwined with the history of ecological movements and ecological thinking<sup>28</sup>.

After the publication of the first conference volume and its positive reception, in 2010 Miklós Kázmér organised another conference on environmental history at the Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences of ELTE entitled *Environmental History 2 – Environmental events from the conquest of the homeland to the present day in the light of historical and scientific sources*<sup>29</sup>. This conference was smaller scale than the previous one, and it was a rather different list of speakers who participated. The “early history” of environmental history was represented by three researchers: the dendrochronologist András Gryneaus, the forest historian Eszter Magyar and myself. Three researchers debuted with their papers, who went on to become key figures in Hungarian environmental history later on. Andrea Kiss was a lecturer at the Geography Institute of the University of Szeged at the time, and she presented about the floods of the late Middle Ages<sup>30</sup>. Since then, she has pursued an international academic career as a researcher of medieval and early modern climate and environmental history, and she is a Hungarian researcher who is currently most integrated in international environmental history research. András Vadas analysed the environmental crisis in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1310s<sup>31</sup>. Later, he also examined the climate history of the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, but the main focus of his research became the use of the environment during the period of the Turkish wars (1526-1699). Zsolt Pinke analysed the demographic conditions of the medieval Hortobágy-Sárrét region in his conference presentation. In the following years, as a member of landscape and agricultural history research groups, he published significant research findings on the changes of late medieval settlement networks caused by the wet climate of the Little Ice Age and on the ambiguous environmental, economic and social impact of water management in the Modern Era<sup>32</sup>.

### ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY – VOLUME 3

It took until 2019 for the third conference on environmental history, hosted by the Faculty of Humanities of ELTE and funded by the European Society for Environmental History, to be organised. The conference proceedings, entitled *Environmental history 3 – Environmental processes from the conquest of the homeland to the present day in the light of historical and scientific sources*, were published in spring 2021 by Research Centre for the Humanities<sup>33</sup>. The first editor of the volume was Gábor Demeter, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of History, but Zoltán Kern, Zsolt Pinke,

<sup>28</sup> Lányi András. 2010. Why is sustainability unsustainable? The chances of environmental farming and community enterprises in a micro-village region. *Szociológiai Szemle*. 16:1. 78-116.

<sup>29</sup> Kázmér Miklós. 2011. *Környezettörténet 2: környezeti események a honfoglalástól napjainkig történeti és természettudományi források tükrében* [Environmental History 2. Environmental events from the conquest of the homeland to the present day in the light of historical and scientific sources]. Budapest. Hantken Kiadó.

<sup>30</sup> Kiss Andrea. 2011. Árvizek és magas vízszintek a 13-15. századi Magyarországon az egykorú írott források tükrében [Floods and high water levels in Hungary in the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century in the mirror of the contemporary documentary sources]. Kázmér Miklós. 2011. *Környezettörténet 2: környezeti események a honfoglalástól napjainkig történeti és természettudományi források tükrében* [Environmental events from the conquest of the homeland to the present day in the light of historical and scientific sources]. Budapest. Hantken Kiadó. 43-56.

<sup>31</sup> Vadas András. 2011. Az 1310-es évtized környezeti krízisének megjelenése Kelet-Közép-Európában és a Kárpát-medencében [The appearance of the environmental crisis of the 1310s decade in East-Central Europe and the Carpathian Basin]. Kázmér Miklós. 2011. *Környezettörténet 2: környezeti események a honfoglalástól napjainkig történeti és természettudományi források tükrében* [Environmental events from the conquest of the homeland to the present day in the light of historical and scientific sources]. Budapest. Hantken Kiadó. 57-78.

<sup>32</sup> Pinke Zsolt. 2011. Adatok és következtetések a középkori Hortobágy-Sárrét demográfiájához [Data and conclusions to the demography of the medieval Hortobágy-Sárrét]. Kázmér Miklós. 2011. *Környezettörténet 2: környezeti események a honfoglalástól napjainkig történeti és természettudományi források tükrében* [Environmental events from the conquest of the homeland to the present day in the light of historical and scientific sources]. Budapest. Hantken Kiadó. 79-118.

<sup>33</sup> Demeter Gábor-Kern Zoltán-Pinke Zsolt-F. Romhányi Beatrix-Vadas András-Bíró László. eds. 2021. *Környezettörténet 3. Környezeti folyamatok a honfoglalástól napjainkig történeti és természettudományos források tükrében* [Environmental History 3. Environmental Processes from the Hungarian Conquest to the Present in the Light of Historical Sources and Scientific Evidence]. Budapest. Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont.

Beatrix F. Romhányi, medievalist archaeologist, András Vadas, regional representative of the European Society for Environmental History, and László Bíró, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of History, were involved as co-editors. The introductory paper by Miklós Kázmér took over the traditional role of passing on the baton<sup>34</sup>. The earlier generation of environmental historians are represented by four researchers in the volume: András Gryneaus, Zoltán Kern, András Vadas and Lajos Rácz. It was in this volume where Sándor Rózsa first published as an environmental historian on floodplain farming in Nagykunság<sup>35</sup>, Éva Bodovics debuted with her analysis of the subsistence crisis in Borsod and Zemplén Counties in the 1870s<sup>36</sup>, and Róbert Balogh with his study on the use of the borders in Szatmár (Satu Mare County, now part of Romania) at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>37</sup> and the pine plantation programme in Vas County in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>38</sup>. An important study of the volume is the environmental-historical and environmental-archaeological analysis of the most important battle site of the Tatar period, the Sajó valley, by the authors József Laszlovszky and Balázs Nagy, who were unfortunately forced to emigrate<sup>39</sup>. The range of institutions involved in the conference and in publishing the volume (the Institute of Historical Studies at ELTE and the Institute of History of the Faculty of Humanities) indicates that decision-makers in the field of historical studies in Hungary did consider environmental history to be of importance, which is – regarding the international context – a belated but nevertheless positive development. In the light of this, it is of no surprise that the 2021 thematic volume of the Hungarian Economic Yearbook was titled *Environmental History-Historiography*, nor that there was a considerable overlap of the editors and authors<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Kázmér Miklós. 2021. *A természet is ismétli önmagát. Előszavak a Környezettörténet 3. kötetéhez [Nature repeats itself. Forewords to the environmental history 3 volume]*. In Demeter Gábor-Kern Zoltán-Pinke Zsolt-F. Romhányi Beatrix-Vadas András-Bíró László. eds. 2021. *Környezettörténet 3. Környezeti folyamatok a honfoglalástól napjainkig történeti és természettudományos források tükrében [Environmental History 3. Environmental Processes from the Hungarian Conquest to the Present in the Light of Historical Sources and Scientific Evidence]*. Budapest. Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont. 7-12.

<sup>35</sup> Rózsa Sándor. 2021. *Az ártéri gazdálkodás mérlege. A nagykunsági települések gazdasági kondíciója az első kataszteri felmérés alapján [Floodplain farming of the settlements of Nagykunság based on the first cadastral survey]*. In Demeter Gábor-Kern Zoltán-Pinke Zsolt-F. Romhányi Beatrix-Vadas András-Bíró László. eds. 2021. *Környezettörténet 3. Környezeti folyamatok a honfoglalástól napjainkig történeti és természettudományos források tükrében [Environmental History 3. Environmental Processes from the Hungarian Conquest to the Present in the Light of Historical Sources and Scientific Evidence]*. Budapest. Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont. 39-64.

<sup>36</sup> Bodovics Éva. 2021. *Éghajlati anomáliák és gazdasági következményeik. Ínség Borsod és Zemplén vármegyében az 1870-es évek végén [Weather Anomalies and Their Economic Consequences: Penury in Northeastern Hungary in the 1870s]*. In Demeter Gábor-Kern Zoltán-Pinke Zsolt-F. Romhányi Beatrix-Vadas András-Bíró László. eds. 2021. *Környezettörténet 3. Környezeti folyamatok a honfoglalástól napjainkig történeti és természettudományos források tükrében [Environmental History 3. Environmental Processes from the Hungarian Conquest to the Present in the Light of Historical Sources and Scientific Evidence]*. Budapest. Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont. 65-94.

<sup>37</sup> Balogh Róbert. 2021. *Kárpát-medencei antropocén történelem. Erdők, legelők és társadalom Szatmár vármegye keleti területein, 1880–1919 [Historicizing the anthropocene in the Carpathian Basin: forests, pastures and society in the eastern part of former Szatmár county in Northeastern Hungary, 1880–1919]*. In Demeter Gábor-Kern Zoltán-Pinke Zsolt-F. Romhányi Beatrix-Vadas András-Bíró László. eds. 2021. *Környezettörténet 3. Környezeti folyamatok a honfoglalástól napjainkig történeti és természettudományos források tükrében [Environmental History 3. Environmental Processes from the Hungarian Conquest to the Present in the Light of Historical Sources and Scientific Evidence]*. Budapest. Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont. 95-124.

<sup>38</sup> Balogh Róbert. 2021. *A személyes történelem, a transznacionális kapcsolatok és a hidegháború szerepe az erdészeti kutatásban. Bánó István és a fenyőprogram Vas megyében, 1954–1975 [The role of personal history, transnational relations and cold war in forestry research. István Bánó and the pine research programme in Vas county, 1954–1975]*. In Demeter Gábor-Kern Zoltán-Pinke Zsolt-F. Romhányi Beatrix-Vadas András-Bíró László. eds. 2021. *Környezettörténet 3. Környezeti folyamatok a honfoglalástól napjainkig történeti és természettudományos források tükrében [Environmental History 3. Environmental Processes from the Hungarian Conquest to the Present in the Light of Historical Sources and Scientific Evidence]*. Budapest. Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont. 243-260.

<sup>39</sup> Laszlovszky József-Nagy Balázs. 2021. *Új földrajzi, környezettörténeti és régészeti kutatások a muhi csataterén és a Sajó mentén [New geomorphologic, environmental history and archaeological research at the battlefield of Muhi and along the River Sajó]*. In Demeter Gábor-Kern Zoltán-Pinke Zsolt-F. Romhányi Beatrix-Vadas András-Bíró László. eds. 2021. *Környezettörténet 3. Környezeti folyamatok a honfoglalástól napjainkig történeti és természettudományos források tükrében [Environmental History 3. Environmental Processes from the Hungarian Conquest to the Present in the Light of Historical Sources and Scientific Evidence]*. Budapest. Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont. 139-160.

<sup>40</sup> Demeter Gábor-Kövér György-Pogány Ágnes-Weisz Boglárka (eds.) (2021): *Magyar gazdaságtörténeti évkönyv. Környezettörténet – historiográfia [Hungarian economic history yearbook. Environmental history – historiography]*. Budapest. Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont.

## AND WHAT HAS BEEN LEFT OUT

In the above, I made an attempt at defining the main – albeit not too thick but continuous – line of Hungarian environmental history research as it is drawn by the environmental conferences and study volumes. However, it is also important to cover – at least briefly – those conferences and workshops on landscape history, historical geography and environmental geography that have produced relevant and important research results from the perspective of environmental history.

Historical geography is perhaps the most closely related discipline to environmental history, and I do not experience it challenging to identify as a historical geographer. The doyen of Hungarian historical geography is – both as a researcher and as a scientific organizer – Sándor Frisnyák, and the conferences he organized in Nyíregyháza, Szerencs and Sárospatak provided an excellent overview of the trends and research results of Hungarian historical geography. What is more, Sándor Frisnyák, demonstrating his wide-ranging interest, also presented at environmental history conferences from time to time<sup>41</sup>. A similarly distinguished figure of landscape history research was György Füleky, Professor at the University of Agriculture in Gödöllő and the organiser of many a conference on environmental studies<sup>42</sup>. The most significant researcher dedicated to environmental history in landscape research conducted at the University of Agriculture was Dénes Saláta, who was the regional representative of the European Society for Environmental History for two terms<sup>43</sup>. The third important intellectual hub was the Archaeological Institute of Research Centre for the Humanities, where between 2014 and 2019 a research programme entitled *The Environmental History of the Medieval Carpathian Basin* was carried out under the leadership of Academician Elek Benkő and with the participation of 19 researchers. A summary of the research results was published in 2021, edited by Elek Benkő and Csilla Zatykó, with the title *The Environmental History of the Carpathian Basin in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period*<sup>44</sup>. Some of the studies are to be particularly noted: the pollen-based reconstructions of medieval cereal production by Tünde Törőcsik and Pál Sümegi<sup>45</sup>, the early modern forest history analysis by András Vadas and Péter Szabó<sup>46</sup>, and the medieval fauna reconstructions by Erika Gál<sup>47</sup> and László Bartosiewicz<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Frisnyák, Sándor. 2017. *A föld erejéből élünk: történeti földrajzi tanulmányok [We live on the strength of the land: historical-geographical studies]*. Nyíregyháza. Nyíregyházi Egyetem Turizmus és Földrajztudományi Intézet.

<sup>42</sup> Füleky György, eds. 2014. *A táj változásai a Kárpát-medencében: A vízgazdálkodás története a Kárpát-medencében [The changes of the landscape in the Carpathian Basin: The history of the water management in the Carpathian Basin]*. Gödöllő. Környezetkímélő Agrokémiáért Alapítvány.

<sup>43</sup> Saláta Dénes-Krausz Edina-Reményi Lujza- Kenéz Árpád-Pető-Pető Ákos. 2014. Combining historical land-use and geoarchaeological evidence to support archaeological site detection. *Agrokémia és Talajtan*. 63/1. 99-108.

<sup>44</sup> Benkő Elek-Zatykó Csilla, eds. 2021. *A Kárpát-medence környezettörténete a középkorban és a kora újkorban [Environmental history of the medieval and early modern Carpathian Basin]*. Budapest: Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont.

<sup>45</sup> Törőcsik Tünde-Sümegi Pál. 2021. Gabonatermesztés a Kárpát-medencében a népvándorlás korától a középkor végéig (Pollenalapú rekonstrukció) [Cereal cultivation in the Carpathian Basin from the migration period to the end of the Middle Ages (Pollen-based reconstruction)]. In Benkő Elek-Zatykó Csilla, eds. *A Kárpát-medence környezettörténete a középkorban és a kora újkorban [Environmental history of the medieval and early modern Carpathian Basin]*. Budapest: Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont. 17-70.

<sup>46</sup> Vadas András-Szabó Péter. 2021. A fától az erdő? A török-kori háborúk és a dunántúli erdők [Not seeing the forest for the three? Ottoman era wars and forests in Transdanubia]. In Benkő Elek-Zatykó Csilla, eds. *A Kárpát-medence környezettörténete a középkorban és a kora újkorban [Environmental history of the medieval and early modern Carpathian Basin]*. Budapest: Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont. 147-188.

<sup>47</sup> Gál Erika. 2021. *Háziállatok és vadászott állatok a középkori Kárpát-medencében [Domestic and hunted animals in the medieval Carpathian Basin]*. In Benkő Elek-Zatykó Csilla, eds. *A Kárpát-medence környezettörténete a középkorban és a kora újkorban [Environmental history of the medieval and early modern Carpathian Basin]*. Budapest: Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont. 189-250.

<sup>48</sup> Bartosiewicz László. 2021. *Halfogyasztás az esztergomi érseki rezidencián [Fish consumption at the Esztergom archbishopric]*. In Benkő Elek-Zatykó Csilla, eds. *A Kárpát-medence környezettörténete a középkorban és a kora újkorban [Environmental history of the medieval and early modern Carpathian Basin]*. Budapest: Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont. 435-463.

## HOW TO GO ON?

The fact that in the Hungarian research community and scientific audience there has been a growing interest in interdisciplinary approaches – such as environmental history – is due to a number of reasons, some of which do not come from sciences. It is clear that the most important global-scale environmental problem of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is likely to be the issue of global warming. However symbolic and largely ineffective international resolutions and programmes on the issue may be, it is a widely accepted axiom of the climate change discourse that environmental changes fundamentally determine how humanity can live in the future. The study of historical ecosystems has the potential to add considerable temporal depth and perspective to the study of the relationships between humans and the natural environment. We can count on the international public and the support of the scientific community in the future as well. With such tailwind, and the work of the academic and scientific world as it is in Hungary today, we may have a department of environmental history at one of our universities in ten years. But I may be too much of an optimist.

## SAŽETAK

Začetci istraživanja povijesti okoliša u Mađarskoj mogu se pratiti od 1980-ih godina. Prva mađarska povjesničarka koja je u svojim analizama primijenila ekološka gledišta bila je Ágnes R. Várkonyi. Mađarski povjesničari okoliša sudjelovali su u osnivanju Europskog društva za povijest okoliša (European Society for Environmental History) 2001. godine te su bili zastupljeni i u upravnom odboru Društva. Društveni i prirodni znanstvenici uključeni u istraživanja povijesti okoliša u Mađarskoj tijekom tri desetljeća organizirali su niz znanstvenih skupova te objavili veći broj zbornika radova i monografija. Istraživači povijesti okoliša u Mađarskoj postigli su značajne rezultate i sudjelovali u međunarodnim istraživačkim projektima. Međutim, unatoč tim uspjesima, nisu uspjeli uspostaviti stabilan institucionalni okvir za istraživanje i nastavu povijesti okoliša u mađarskom sveučilišnom i akademskom sustavu. Prikaz prvih triju desetljeća istraživanja mađarske povijesti okoliša stoga je najprikladnije oblikovati kroz ključne prekretnice znanstvenih konferencija i objavljenih istraživačkih zbornika.

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