

## Reviews

---

BABAI, Dániel and MOLNÁR, Ábel and MOLNÁR, Zsolt: „*Ahogy gondozza, úgy veszi hasznát*” *Hagyományos ökológiai tudás és gazdálkodás Gyimesben* [Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Land Use in Gyimes (Eastern Carpathians)]. 2014, Budapest – Vácrátót: MTA BTK Néprajztudományi Intézet – MTA ÖK Ökológiai és Botanikai Intézet. 173. ISBN 9789639627758 (hardback)

---

Veronika Lajos

MTA-DE Ethnology Research Group, Debrecen

The authors of this book argue, joining forces with foreign authors, that in many cases ‘there is a need for closer cooperation’ between natural and social sciences (Babai et al., ‘*Ahogy gondozza...*’, 142) in order to solve conservation issues. It particularly applies to species-rich grasslands, as these habitats owe their subsistence and high biodiversity to human intervention (that is the traditional, local methods of farming), and their long-term existence presumably depends on these methods.

Almost uniquely in Europe, grasslands rich in species can still be found at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the *Gyimes* of the East Carpathian Mountains. In their work, the authors aim to systematically learn and process the knowledge gathered by the members of the local society on their close environment and on their wider natural environment.

The key concept of the book is that of the *traditional ecological knowledge*, based on the definition of Fikret Berkes (*Sacred Ecology. Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management*. Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis, 1999), one of the most renowned applied ecologists of our time. Here, the highly disputed term of ‘traditional’ does not refer to the commonly associated meaning of immutability and being static, but it works as an adjective of the ecological knowledge which ‘in fact is adapted dynamically according to the constant changes of the environment’ (Babai et al., ‘*Ahogy gondozza...*’, 15).

The book takes a matured position within the Hungarian scholarly scene in support of the appropriateness, or even necessity, of establishing cooperation between natural and social sciences (i.e. interdisciplinarity) already at the early stage of researching the afore-mentioned traditional ecological knowledge. During their research, the authors applied methods of both botanical-ecological (e.g. mapping habitats and taking chronological records), and of cultural anthropological (e.g. participatory observation and interviews) nature.

The book can be divided into two major parts. The first one provides a detailed introduction of the traditional habitats and production sites, with high-density coloured images on every page, and with the comprehensive description of one or two plants as well (local names, known locations of their habitats, known curative uses). The second part discusses the particulars of extensive farming in the forests and fields of *Gyimes* as a function of the seasons. As for the meadows, the reader is made familiar with the springtime works in the inner and outer hay meadows or the consequences of abandoning

the meadows, as well as the landscaping practices of the people of *Gyimes* (adjusted to the seasonal cycles), which they have applied on the pastures, in the forests and the arable land parcels. Such descriptions are enlivened by the consistent use of images from the lives of the locals, parts of interviews and folk taxa<sup>1</sup> which, in concert with the aims of the book, vividly illustrate how local traditional ecological knowledge, owned by the (mainly farming) people of *Gyimes*, operates here. Local names and designations used throughout the text are summarised in the Appendix, with one table consisting of all the plants' names in Latin and in the local *Gyimes* dialect, while the other consists of all the local names and descriptions of the habitats.

Traditional ecological knowledge is considered of key importance by the authors in making responsible decisions regarding the use of natural resources: the meadows, pastures or the forest types. They aim to highlight how the people of *Gyimes* not only perceive the changes of nature, but are also aware of the underlying causes triggering them, and how are they capable of effectively adapting to such changes within a short period time, or can correct faulty adaptation mechanisms on a community level.

However, it is formulated firmly in the book, that extensive land use practiced by the people of *Gyimes* is not the same as conscious conservationists behave, because biodiversity in itself has no special value for locals. Local farmers strive to ensure the proper functioning of their farms by producing hay of sufficient quantity and quality, and while trying to achieve this aim they become indirectly interested in maintaining the diversity of pastures and meadows. The authors believe that the main purpose of agricultural support programs which endorse conservationist aspects as well, should be to maintain this indirect interest. Thus they argue for the set-up of such a funding policy that – on one hand – assists in strengthening extensive local farming systems, while it also encourages family farms to adapt to the changing situations on the other.

One has to agree with the authors wholeheartedly that in shaping conservationist directives and agricultural support systems, the people living in the affected region have to be understood, in concert with the perspective of interdisciplinarity, within the complex context of their sociocultural determination and natural environment. This exemplary work of the “closer cooperation” of natural and social sciences can honestly be recommended to, beside ecologists and ecological economists, ethnographers, cultural anthropologists, agricultural professionals and experts in the fields of rural policies. Due to the brief English summaries, even foreign experts can find this book of use.

---

<sup>1</sup> In biological taxonomy, the category used for the classification of living creatures is called *taxon*. The *folk taxon* is, in other words, a category used for the classification of living creatures by the locals, that, in case of the wild plants of the *Gyimes*, includes the local, traditional name of a plant, as well as ‘the related biological content (of one or more plant species associated to the name)’ (Babai et al. 2014: 33). In 31% of the plant names in *Gyimes*, one name or designation refers to more than one botanical species.

---

MOLNÁR, Zsolt: *A Hortobágy pásztorszemmel. A puszta növényvilága* [Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Herders on the Flora and Vegetation of the Hortobágy]. 2012, Debrecen: Hortobágy Természetvédelmi Közalapítvány. 160. ISBN 978-963-08-3301-1

---

Gábor Máté

*University of Pécs, Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Social Relations, Department of Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology, Pécs*

György Jeney published a book in 1791 entitled *The World of Nature. The shepherd of Hortobágy and the natural scientist* which intended to educate its rural audience to the correct attitude towards nature and to raise their morals. The book is woven around the ‘meeting of two made up personalities’, the location is the Hortobágy, where a scientist polished in higher education and a former schoolmate who squandered his talents and became a shepherd are having a conversation. The dispute ends with a total victory of the natural scientist and the shepherd is abhorred from his own insensitive and stupid world view.

The book written by Zsolt Molnár is about the recent repeated encounter of the natural scientist and the Hortobágy shepherd. Roles are swapped, the position of the conversationalists is different and the transfer of knowledge goes the opposite direction: the scientist, instead of lecturing, collects local wisdom, systematises the information, providing enough room for the experiences and the personality of the shepherd. The purpose of the educational paper laid on proper scientific foundations is to disclose local information on the Pusta and its vegetation, to describe the role of pastoralism in maintaining the status quo of the landscape, to embrace and strengthen our ‘ecological knowledge of the country’.

Several attempts have been made in this country to collect vernacular terms for plants, but a lot less was endeavoured in the field of research into a shepherd’s vocabulary, the use of grasslands by the people and – due to its interdisciplinarity – the assessment of the traditional ecological knowledge or TEK. As a research fellow on the Ecological Research Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Zsolt Molnár approaches the scope of issues from the field of botany, with the knowledge of plants and traditional ecological knowledge in the focus of his scrutiny.

The book is meticulously built, based on data collected from 2008 up to 2012, showing 162 vernacular (plant) taxa on the basis of 5149 data, which can be corresponded to 243 scientifically determined plant species. Additionally, about 40 types of plant communities and habitats are drawn up from the collection work.

The book is written for a general audience, in colour print, hardback, designed as an album. Practically, it is bilingual, even though the English counterparts of the descriptions are condensed. The illustration material is extremely particular and reading is made more enjoyable by photographs of artistic quality. The pictures apparently make an attempt to introduce the plants from a view how shepherds can see these species. There are only a few technical terms and scientific interpretations. In many cases phrases from the local language or dialect are used, integrating not only specific expressions into the text but local knowledge constitute sometimes an integral and striking part of the accompanying

text in the form of ‘illustrative examples’. At the same time, impressive data collection, the level of evaluation, the very thorough-going knowledge of the terrain, furthermore the remarks on methodology and collection technique leave no doubt that the author put the educational genre on the foundations of solid science.

Let’s see now the construction of the book in a somewhat more detailed look. Following the dedication, introduction and acknowledgement parts, the volume introduces the history of Hortobágy as a landscape through the thoughts of the shepherds formulated in possession of several decades of experiences gained by grazing, and it substantiates the most up to date scientific view, the ancient origin of the ‘szíkes puszta’ (a way of spelling consistently adhered to by the author) or alkaline desert with its data. The most important lesson from this chapter is that the view of the landscape keeps on changing under the existing natural boundary conditions, in other words both variability and diversity are its constant features.

The backbone of the next chapter is provided by the presentation of the plant species well known by shepherds, specifying the habitat, synonyms (their occurrence), eventual reasons for naming, and various modes of its utilisation. Summaries on the various plants are very pleasant and enjoyable, showing local experiences in every bits and pieces. The chapter also contains a number of ‘ethnographic delicacies’. The healing power of the plant called *sóslórium* (*Rumex xx*) is illustrated for instance by the compendium with the story of one of the informants, who actually drank its juice when he was a prisoner of war in Russia, helping him to survive. The case of *spiny restharrow* (*Ononis spinosa*) presents a surprising way of taking advantage of it and local knowledge: wherever it grows, it is worth a try to dig wells, and it was also stated that it has such a strong root, even a cow tied up to its stem could not pull it out of the ground.

A further level of systematisation of the vegetation in Hortobágy relates to habitats, plant communities and landscape mosaics. It tells about the habitats providing the diverse surface of Hortobágy, their origin and the impact factors influencing them – or, to put it more accurately, about how shepherds talk about these features. You can learn about the development of typical topographic details, such as the wetland habitats constituting of the droppings of tussock worms, that of tussocks: ‘*the worm would go there to empty their bellies*’. A good point in this chapter is that the complexity of the landscape and the diversity of the adjacent habitat types are transformed into an easily overseen, transparent pattern.

The chapter on the science of grazing deals with the process of pasturing, how shepherds through considerate management of their livestock are able to influence the appearance of the landscape consciously, including the state of the vegetation. Grassland management methods are also discussed in this chapter, such as burning, manuring, and the seasonal time schedule of grazing patterns. The author points out that ‘pásztorítás’ (shepherding) is a work requiring serious amount of practical experiences, it is more like science of shepherding.

The book is far from lamenting on the doom of the shepherds’ world, it is more a guidance to those who want to do something in order to maintain and preserve the land and its dwellers, their prosperity. In the education of shepherds, intended to be relaunched in the future, this book may be useful as a textbook.

The book *Hortobágy through the eyes of herders* is the best example to show that experiences and procedures related to the natural environment constitute such a coherent

---

wealth of knowledge transposable into practice, which are indispensable for both nature conservation and sustainability of local husbandry.

---

KÓCZIÁN, Géza: *A hagyományos parasztgazdálkodás termesztett, a gyűjtögető gazdálkodás vad növényfajainak etnobotanikai értékelése* [Ethnobotanical Assessment of Traditionally Farmed Crop and Wild Plant Species of Traditional Peasant Economy and Gatherers, Respectively]. First unabridged edition. Ed. by Kóczyán, Zoltán Gergely. 2014, Nagyatád: Nagyatádi Kulturális és Sport Központ. 545., 22+60 photographs, (incl. appendix). ISBN 978-963-87468-4-9

---

Lajos Balogh

Savaria Museum, Szombathely

The oeuvre of Dr. Géza Kóczyán, who lived only 45 years, is of fundamental importance for the knowledge of the wealth of ethnobotanical and ethnomedicinal information in the Carpathian Basin, pointing however far beyond the region in its significance. His doctoral dissertation, completed in 1985 and published in its entire length in this edition, contains a major part of this oeuvre. The appendix complementing the body of the dissertation lists the key writings of the learned pharmacologist, references made to them, articles written about them, the foundation charter of the ‘Kóczyán Géza’ Table Society, and some sixty photographs related to his life-work in bibliographical details. The dissertation is introduced by biographic writings from Péter Babulka, István Gara, Zoltán Gergely Kóczyán, József Lipták, István Szabó and László Gyula Szabó and the foreword of the Table Society that acts like an excerpt for the contents of the image disc (DVD) compiled by Zoltán Gergely Kóczyán for the volume, which also contains a number of additional documents beside the dissertation itself, including some commemorations about the author, but also the findings of family history research. Géza Kóczyán (1942, Zalaegerszeg –1987, Nagyatád) received his diploma in pharmacology at the Semmelweis University of Medical Sciences in 1965. His human and professional capacities made him apt to work as a university research scientist, but his family obligation called him home. He operated as the head of a pharmacy in Nagyatád. His wife was Judit Papp and their son, Zoltán Gergely was born in 1983 – an exemplary administrator of the intellectual heritage of his father. Géza Kóczyán toured the neighbouring countries as early as in his years at the university. Due to his extraordinary language skills he spoke seven languages – mainly those of the surrounding peoples. He was attracted to folk botany and vernacular traditional medicine by his enthusiasm towards linguistics. He was busy collecting various dialectic versions of plant names, the different ways of their use, he identified the plants botanically and prepared a herbarium of them. He analysed the date in a quite modern approach compared to the era. He was the first internationally to classify medicinal herbs in terms of their efficacy, and he handled rational and irrational therapies separately, but not independently from each other, thus facilitating their critical evaluation. He got acquainted with one of his fellow researchers, one of his best friends, László Gyula Szabó during his years at the university, who

published his formerly unpublished articles after his death. Later on further colleagues joined the society of collectors, such as István Szabó, István Pintér and Miklós Gál. He collected data for a period of 20 years in his closer homeland, Somogy county; he did field research in Transylvania from 1973 (Kászon, Kalotaszeg, Gyimes, Máramaros, Erdővidék) as well, but his collections from the Hungarian mountain ranges and the Highlands are also of significance. Published works contain mainly the findings and the output from the Transylvanian collection works, which account for a lesser part of his oeuvre. However, the numerous works submitted to the voluntary tender announced by the Museum of Ethnography in the beginning of the 1950s and the 1045 pages strong doctoral dissertation published herein are such a wealth of information and data processing achievements, which represent irreplaceable value for both contemporary generations and further generations to come. The last sentence of Géza Kóczián's thesis goes like this: 'My work is not complete, yet it might serve as the basis for a more comprehensive summary of ethnobotany.' We believe, if he looks down from Heaven, which is even higher than the mountains of Gyimes, his hopes are seen to have been reinforced by the contemporary ethnobotanist generation of these days. A smaller group of them represented Hungarian (and partly of the Carpathian Basin) ethnobotany in Summer 2014 at the 14<sup>th</sup> conference of the International Society of Ethnobotany (ISE) among the majestic high ranging mountains of the ancient Kingdom of Bhutan.

---

HALÁSZ, Péter: *Növények a moldvai magyarok hagyományában és mindennapjaiban* [Plants in the Tradition and Everyday Life of the Hungarians in Moldova]. 2010, Budapest: General Press Kiadó. 516. ISBN 978-963-643-220-1

---

László Gy. Szabó

*University of Pécs Medical School, Department of Pharmaceutics and Central Clinical Pharmacy, Pécs*

The professional literature of Hungarian ethnobotany has been enriched with a high value monograph. The author of the paper with an extent of 516 pages – by the way, an agro-economic scientist as well – is a renowned research individual both in domestic ethnography and in the knowledge of our country, who has already searched the habits of the Csángó in Moldova when it was still a life-threatening activity. The diligence and fondness for the people of Péter Halász is characterised not only by his being the 'eternal' chief editor of the journal entitled *Honismeret* (knowledge of our land) (lately he handed it over to his successor), but the busy activity by which he expresses his attachment to the Csángó Magyar. (In this year, leaving Budapest behind, he moved to Gyimesközéplak, to be even closer to the clear source of the Tatros.) His animated, value rescuing work is heralded by the two books published by General Press recently on the belief systems and on the traditional animal husbandry of the Csángó Magyar of Moldova. This time – using the results of a nearly 40 years long collection work – he compiled a gap filling monograph on the vernacular knowledge of nearly 200 plant species. Publication of this kind is a current issue because it sets the role model and represents the foundations to the recently emerging and renewing research and evaluating analysis in ethnobotany.

It consists of two main parts. The first part is a description of the general aspects how traditional knowledge of plants can be presented, forms of plant knowledge, habitats of plants, their collection, the role of wildy grown plants and farmed crops in their own nutrition, medication and beliefs, as well as husbandry. The second part deals with the full knowledge base of 183 plants. The compendium contains the key findings of the relevant references and the description of the habits including a number of original citations. Many interesting folk songs, lyrics or ditties are included just as well. Beautiful coloured photographs provide an impression on the informants, the working process and the plants themselves. The plants discussed in alphabetic order of their respective Hungarian names are as follows: great burdock, honey-locust, apple tree, (woody) aloe, greater dodder, plume thistles and thistles, barley, blind nettle, beans, goat's beard, basil, peony, stinking night-shade, sorb apple tree, horse-weed, maid's tresses (algae), quince tree, elderberry tree, elderberry bush (bloodwort), burweed, peas, potatoes, wheat, beech tree, vetch or wild pea, yarrow, broomcorn, sugar beet, nettle, cherry tree, Jerusalem artichoke, savory, sow-thistle, nightshade, walnut tree, pigweed, tobacco plant, mulberry tree, centaury, beech-fern, alder, mistletoe, fir and pine trees, garlic, willow tree, thornapple, water melon, figwort, hedge-rose, hornbeam, bulrush, motherwort, lily-of-the-valley, toad flax, onion, dewberry, bluebell, lime tree, common sea buckthorn, snow-drop, hawkweed, helleboraster (purple hellebore), violet, eryngium, traveller's joy, maple tree, rattlepot, thyme, primrose, dill, chicory, club-rush, cabbage, fumitory, hemp, knotweed, viper's bugloss, hop, corn cockle, arum, blackthorn, millet, fennel, pear, stoncrop, ash tree, corn/maize, euphorbia, orache, oleander, peavine, lovage, lily, yellow pimpernel, bottle-gourd, clover, catnip, oxe-yes daisy, horseshoe, thorn-apple (*datura*), poppy, raspberry, mallow, sour cherry tree, mint (several species and varieties), hazelnut tree, geranium, common comfrey, deadly nightshade/belladonna, sunflower, reed, touch-me-not, poplar tree, birch tree, St. John's wort, mullein, scabious, eggplant, pepper, tomato, fern, agrimony, shepherd's purse, parsley, inula (and fleawort), potentilla, dandelion, buckwheat, leek, radish, mignonette, beetroot, greengage, rye, rose, lettuce, lesser celandine, honeydew melon, carrot, Star of Bethlehem (and/or wild garlic?), sedge, cornel-tree, melilot, garden sorrel (dock), immortelle/everlasting, globe-thistle, wild strawberry, soapwort, common larkspur, blackberry, chamomile (wild chamomile and scentless *matricaria*), elm tree, plum tree, grape-vine, morning glory, wild marjoram, stubble-field clover, horseradish, pumpkin, oak, cucumber, plantain, artemisia, crab apple, wild cherry, horse-chestnut, wild pear, wild carrot, tansy, common vervain, speedwell, great celandine/swallowwort, oat, hellebore, celery, sage, winter cherry, horsetail.

The book is concluded with a list of references, and a glossary including the plant names in dialects and colloquial Hungarian. Botany was reviewed by the academician János Péntek. He is a renowned authority on not only linguistics but – as 'disciple' of the biologist professor Attila T. Szabó – on biology. We are very grateful to the editor, József Hála for the exact and beautiful execution of the work. The book is an important standard in cultural botany as well, since it urges plant improvers searching local varieties to recognise that the Carpathian-European gene bank can still be and is worth to be enriched with a variety of different cultured fruit and vegetable plants even today. Relatively isolated areas where the Csángó Magyars of Gyimes and Moldova still embrace and take care of their knowledge and traditions on plants and crops together with their Romanian counterparts even today cherish as a keepsake very valuable additions to this endeavour.

---

SZILÁGYI, Miklós: *Zsákmányolók és zsákmányaik. Történeti-néprajzi dolgozatok a vadászatról-vadfogásról és a természetes hasznosítás egyéb formáiról* [Predators and Preys. Historical Ethnographic Studies on Hunting, Capturing Game and Other Forms of Natural Utilisation]. 2014, Budapest: MTA BTK Néprajztudományi Intézet. 248. ISBN: 978-963-567-056-7

---

Dániel Babai

*Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Ethnology,  
Budapest*

Ancient Hungarian aquatic life inspired the imagination of a number of landscape historians and ethnographers. Yet, exciting details of everyday life conducted by long and irretrievably vanished figures of the past (for instance marsh-dwellers, meadow people) seem to be lost in the mists of time. Available data are insufficient for the purposes of drawing up an accurate picture, and stereotyping narrative elements, recalling of fading memories not without exaggerations dominate the stories revoking this submerged world.

Miklós Szilágyi in his writings, however, makes concerted efforts to render the information related to the fishing, hunting and other modes of utilisation of the natural resources prevailing in this ancient water world more accurate, to allow the creation of a more realistic picture of the life of those living in the once vast expansion of the marshlands and swamps, by having a look behind the walls erected by stereotypes and vanishing memory.

Anevidence of this effort is the volume edited by Anikó Báti, which collects a bunch of the lectures and minor publications by Miklós Szilágyi on predators and their preys, compiling historical-ethnographic presentations and papers delivered and written in the topics of fishing, hunting and other kinds of uses from the aquatic world, such as gathering eggs.

The Hungarian ethnographic studies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century laying a great emphasis on fishing have never been continued by the research on hunting or gathering. The research of ‘ancient occupations’ gained momentum afresh in the 1930s to get out of the focus of ethnographic research again just in a couple of decades later. The oeuvre of Miklós Szilágyi however is a splendid evidence that may put issues related to the exploitation of the former water world and the use of its natural resources – once assumed to have been reassuringly arranged and systematised – into a new light by collecting and (re) interpreting both historical and current data.

In addition to issues well known to those interested in preying (for instance, the gathering of eggs from wild birds’ nests, fishing or laying snares) he also introduces seldom studied topics like the eating of bullfrogs and pond tortoises or issues related to the consumption of small mammals and the various fish species. These papers partly mitigate the soaring lack of species level data in the literature dealing with the lifestyles of fishers and marsh-dwellers (which kind of plant and animal species they gathered and ate, or used for medicinal purposes, etc.). Unfortunately, due to the insufficiency of the amount and depth of the sources, the deficiencies in the data associated with the traditional ecological knowledge and the traditional extensive husbandry methods exploiting the natural resources of former marsh-dwellers and fishermen can not be completed by these



---

studies, either. We have good reasons to believe that this part of gathering husbandry which requires an expressly strong biological background will never be possible to be explored entirely, there will be no more opportunity to learn about it more in details, at the species level and in the practical terms. Quite a number of descriptions have survived on the life of the ancient water world, which however are rather schematic in terms of information on collecting herbal plants and bird eggs, grazing on the islands, haymaking, without exciting details which could be taken advantage of in conservation practices. Unfortunately, they do not set forth the species and habitats involved in such gathering practices at all.

The express aim of Miklós Szilágyi – as emphasised and stated several times – was to refine the stereotypes related to the ‘ancient occupations’, which have been subjected to thorough changes after the dramatic transformation of the conditions of natural geography (river regulations). The aggressive rate of changes to the landscape which indeed substantially transformed local lifestyles, evoked accounts written in the mood of ‘looking back in history, everything was better before in the past’. Their correct interpretation and critical analysis enrich this much researched area of Hungarian folk culture with a number of valuable new findings. Collected in a single volume, these studies provide a lot of benefits indeed to both scientists and the interested reader.

A special feature of the book is the compendium of references, offering a number of lesser known, excellent resources to the reader and scientist who want to get absorbed in the topic.

Reading the great results presented in the volume they force us to reconsider the existing concepts related to the water world in many aspects. The sophisticated, sometimes historicising style of the author helps you to get absorbed in the ancient world, while his message points out just the opposite, trying to avoid the romantic presentation of the ancient water world, putting existing knowledge into a new light.

Miklós Szilágyi mentions several times that it was necessary to process this theme in a monograph with synthetic scrutiny. Writing of this kind of a work would be a worthy continuation of its author, we hope his health and spirit will allow to execute the great endeavour!

---

BORSOS, Béla: *Az új Gyűrűfű. Az ökofalu koncepciója és helye a fenntartható település- és vidékfejlesztésben* [The new Gyűrűfű. The concept and place of the eco-village in sustainable settlement and rural development]. 2016, Budapest: L'Harmattan. 248. ISBN: 978-963-414-087-0

---

*Judit Farkas*

*University of Pécs, Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Social Relations, Department of Ethnography – Cultural Anthropology, Pécs*

The subject of the work by Béla Borsos is made especially timely by the fact that Gyűrűfű eco-village was 25 years old in the year of its publication, in 2016. You can't imagine any more appropriate celebration than a book telling the story of the eco-village by one of its founders.

The author introduces and explains Gyűrűfű from the perspective of sustainable settlement development, looking for an answer on ‘how and how organically an eco-village in the capacity of a non-governmental civic initiative can be integrated into the Hungarian network of settlements under the current conditions and to which extent it meets the requirements of sustainable settlement and rural development.’ (10).

The work starts with an introduction to the theoretical background which is indispensable for a reader unfamiliar with these concepts and the underlying theoretical framework, and is useful for those who are, because it summarises the key points for them. The author positions the eco-village in the scope and theory of sustainable development, defining its place in the settlement types and the concept of bioregionalism. The eco-village concept, fundamental ideas and objectives are presented together with a number of Hungarian and foreign examples and the international organisation of eco-villages (GEN). In the same chapter, the social and community implications of existing eco-villages are covered as well.

In the chapter entitled *How to make an eco-village?* the author provides a summary on the fundamental principles to be considered when an ecologically sound settlement is to be designed. One of the most exciting part of the work is the actual design, that is the set up and implementation of Gyűrűfű eco-village. When the location was selected, the founders had to keep in mind that they endeavoured to test not yet established methods, which was of paramount importance and required thorough, considerate judgement even when selecting the appropriate site.

The chapter entitled *And how will it look on the ground?* describes the organisational framework and proprietary relations, the operation of the first entity, the foundation, administrative difficulties around the foundation and land use, etc. The families currently living in the village are introduced according to their respective occupations, education, professions and livelihoods. While the former chapter outlines the plans, in this section a detailed picture is given on the implemented technical solutions, energy supply, building technology, water supply, water management, waste water treatment, waste management, traffic and transportation, farming methods. This chapter (and the book as a whole, for that matter) can even be read as a kind of manual for those who think in terms of sustainable settlement development and foster similar plans.

Having read the background and history, the part on *How did it manage?* might be of real interest. An assessment is made on the enforcement of the ecological principles in the initial, experimental stage of the project, during the design phase and finally at the level of practical implementation. The results – both mistakes and successful aspects – are thoroughly evaluated. In the view of Béla Borsos the strength of the project is the well-established concept and thoroughness of the physical design. Additionally, the implementation of technical and technological design concepts are also seen as a success. However, a serious mistake is identified as well: ‘the concept and actual design plans failed to deal with community and ownership conditions, human relationships, division of roles and responsibilities, which was the source of serious difficulties in later stages’ (171.).

At the end of his book, the author places Gyűrűfű into a national and even wider context; he evaluates the project from the perspective of settlement development and rural development strategies and reviews the outcomes produced by the village in terms of sustainability metrics designed to measure ecological, economic, political and social

aspects. Then – in response to the problems analysed above and based on the experiences gained during the past 25 years – he summarises what has to be done next.

The survival of any human community depends on the adaptation capabilities it can demonstrate, that is how as a community can adapt to changing circumstances. Gyűrűfű still exists, demonstrating that however weak and fragile such an initiative seems, this village is able to adapt and survive. Beside the demonstrated adaptability, such a settlement bears a number of lessons for human sciences: even though the study of everyday life, subsistence strategies, community organisation, the setup of kinship and family, the traditions reveal a non-ordinary, specific settlement type, yet you must not forget that eco-villages exist embedded in wider social environment. On one hand, this type of living is a critical approach to society in itself and those living here are usually characterised by a strong inclination to reflect: to reflect to the things of the outside world, expression of one's opinion on current social issues (consumer society, globalisation, centralisation, environmental – economic – ethical crises, alienation, etc.). This view and attitude, however, is not their exclusive approach, you can see them in other worlds radically different from eco-villages. On the other hand, they also struggle with a number of problems which affect the outside world just as well. Due to what was said above, I think this alternative lifestyle is also an imprint of the wider society at the same time, which places the eco-village discourse into a broader context. Studying them may concern not only the people living here, but the Hungarian society as a whole.

Gyűrűfű is most probably a tiny, but multi-faceted player not only in the history of Hungarian eco-villages but also of the wider Hungarian history with a number of different meanings, therefore the book tells a variety of 'tales'. The basic idea was conceived in the mind of the founders back in the 1980s, and the settlement itself was started at the beginning of the 1990s. In other words, its story coincides that of the era of political transitions, and this is why it also tells a little tale of the change of the political regimes: Gyűrűfű in this interpretation is the reflection of a specific epoch and the thinking and world view of the players of the political changes, in particular that of the believers of the Third Way. Closely in connection with this, the Gyűrűfű-story is also a narration of extinction and resurrection: the story tells us that in the place of a tiny village, condemned to death deliberately by the former political regime, a new and viable settlement was set up by the settlers which intend to meet the ecological, social and economic challenges of the era. It also tells us the history of the Hungarian civil sphere, introducing the reader to the world of those who think differently from the mainstream, yet, to some extent it is also an imprint of contemporary Hungarian society. Readers are encouraged to discover further stories in the book for themselves.

DÉNES, Andrea (ed.) *Ehető vadnövények a Kárpát-medencében / Edible Wild Plants in the Carpathian Basin*. Dunántúli Dolgozatok (A) Természettudományi Sorozat 13. [Studia Pannonica (A) Series Historico-Naturalis 13]. 2013, Pécs: Janus Pannonius Múzeum. 102.

Dóra Czégényi

Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Hungarian Ethnography and Anthropology,  
Kolozsvár/Cluj

Familiarity with and utilisation of the natural vegetation constitutes an integral part of the specific knowledge accumulated by a community. In spite of the fact, that there are former records and works known about the role of *wild* growing and *collectible* plants played in the culture (of nutrition) as important edible or supplementary sources, the 13<sup>th</sup> thematic issue of the *Transdanubian Studies Natural Sciences Series* is a gap filling material.

As a result of the careful editorial work by Andrea Dénes the 102 pages long volume provides access to seven papers. The published articles are of paramount importance both in term of ecology, economy, nutritional biology and cultural history. The authors – Dániel Babai, Bálint Czucz, Andrea Dénes, Dávid Horváth, Géza Kóczyán†, Attila V. Molnár, Zsolt Molnár, Nóra Papp, Anna Varga, Zsuzsa Váróczi† – encompass multiple generations of research scientists. The writings provide information on the knowledge accumulated about and the use of edible wild growing plants once and now, covering several regions in the Carpathian Basin, based on the reviewed, systematised and/or used sources (historical data, botanical, ethnographic and ethnobotanical works, recent collections). The opening essay by Attila V. Molnár, who already processed the life and heritage of Pál Kitaibel in a monograph earlier on, assesses the scope of plant species and their ways of use in practice two centuries earlier, based on the travel journals of the outstanding scientist of the age, which were published in print at the time as well. The author, who undertakes the task to identify and describe 14 different applications of 55 sprouting plant species in 35 families, also calls the attention of the reader to a couple of data which can be regarded as ‘Hungarian specialties’ (such as the rhizomes of bulrush species eaten in the form of ‘bengyele’). The final conclusion – ‘the native flora played a much more significant role in the life of people two centuries ago than today’ (9.) – concurs with the tendency related to the traditional knowledge seen elsewhere, that is its almost complete disappearance.

The post-humus published excerpt of the 123 pages long work entitled *Nutrition of the Székely in Bukovina* written by Zsuzsa F. Váróczi who collected between 1958 and 1961 mainly among the Székely of Bukovina resettled in Tolna and Baranya counties (*Wild growing plants in the nutrition of the Székely of Bukovina*) is supplemented with the introduction and summary prepared by the editor of the volume, Andrea Dénes. According to the reports and evidences of the informants originating from the communities called Istensegíts, Fogadjisten, Józseffalva, Hadikfalva and Andrásfalva ‘the highest significance of gathered food was attached to mushrooms’ (17.). The material, which was recorded mainly by handwriting and to a lesser part by tape recorder, has both linguistic and ethnobotanical values (such as the dialectical denomination of plants collected and consumed as a supplement to nutrition, just as a *wish: csuszkor /*

blackberry/, *seggvakaró* /rose-hips/, *istengyümölcse* /thornapple/, or the preparation of *csügör*). Beside differentiating the three changes occurring in the nutrition of the Székely of Bukovina (Bukovina, Bácska, Hungary), in the passage on the gathering and use of 16 edible wild growing plants and 7 mushroom species as food, spices or drinks the late author also pointed out that ‘economic factors triggered changes in the nutrition of not only in individual periods, but within each social class’ (19).

Just like the former paper, the writing by Géza Kóczián is also a posthumous publication. The passage on wild growing food plants (*Ethnobotanical evaluation of wild growing food plants in gathering husbandry*) of the 1054 pages long treatise from the former pharmacist of Nagyatád, ethnobotanist and ethno medicine researcher completed in 1985 contains ethnobotanical data from several regions of historical Hungary (for instance from Abaúj-Torna, Borsod, Hargita, Máramaros, Somogy counties). A summary statement of the text which also emphasises the interethnic – Hungarian, Slovak, Slovenian (Wendic), Ukrainian, Romanian and Gypsy – aspects of the plants grouped according to their methods of use is that ‘the way of preparation for a large part of the dishes made of plant raw materials is identical with the way of preparation found in the cook books used for the purposes of comparison [...]’ (24.).

As a result of the joint efforts of five researchers (Andrea Dénes, Nóra Papp, Dániel Babai, Bálint Czúcz and Zsolt Molnár) of scientific and research historical significance, the paper entitled *Edible wild growing plants and their use among the Hungarians living in the Carpathian-basin based on ethnographic and ethnobotanical research* processes data of 73 ethnographic and ethnobotanical sources. The overview of the consumption patterns of 235 wild growing plant species from 67 plant families in the area under investigation (Transdanubian hills, Small Plain, Southern-Great Plain, Transdanubian and Northern Mountains, Gömör, Kárpátalja, Vajdaság, Transylvania and Bukovina) is supplemented by data series arranged in tables. The richly illustrated summary type study postulates the use of wild growing species as a function of ‘the natural conditions of the region, the economic situation of the community or family, and their capability to preserve traditions’ alike, that is a variable according to regions and ages. An eye catching feature of the *Introduction* – assuming the task of comparison with the Mediterranean and with countries from further North, as if putting an emphasis on the gap-filling nature of the volume – is the statement that ‘wide ranging research was conducted in several countries of Europe in the past 20 years to learn more about the use of wild growing plants’ (35.). The same can be said of the itemised emphatic formulation of the syncretic approach in the *Conclusions*: 1. traditional ecological knowledge is a part of our cultural heritage; 2. thorough learning of the relations between man and nature is justified for the purposes of future energy resources just as well; 3. the revoked knowledge has a powerful potential for new business enterprises (72.). An undisputable credit goes to the authors – who are well acquainted with both historical and current data – for the creative deployment of the interdisciplinary approach.

The next article included in the volume (*Contributions to the knowledge of edible wild growing plants and some other types of interesting plant uses in Hortobágy*) describes the part of the sophisticated natural knowledge of the Hortobágy herders which concerns the 77 used plant species of the 288 identified ones. In the course of the field work carried out since 2008, 92 herders were approached and interviewed by the botanist from Vácraót, Zsolt Molnár, who found 10 species used for games and plays, some for

certain working activities (such as tying, spinning, lime wash or heating) and 12 taken advantage of as decorations, in addition to the 18 edible plants and the 18 herbs used for healing. Compact presentation of the data are accompanied by the highlights of the words of the author's conversation partners.

Nóra Papp and Dávid Horváth conducted an ethnobotanical survey among the inhabitants of Homoródkarácsonyfalva, Transylvania during 2011–2012 and published their findings in the paper entitled *Wild growing edible plants in Homoródkarácsonyfalva – Transylvania* presenting 59 wild growing and 5 exotic plant species. Collection work was extended to gather information on the vernacular names, methods of preparation and ways of use of the plants playing a role in everyday nutrition and healing. The two authors – based on the knowledge of 25 informants – stress the 'research potential for further unrevealed data' in the region (90.).

The paper closing the issue written by Anna Varga and Zsolt Molnár entitled *Edible wild fruits and mushrooms collected on a wood pasture in the Bakony* puts wood pastures as agroforestry systems in the forefront of interest. The writing, stressing the benefits of traditional land use patterns, calls the attention to both the suppression of this habitat type and its economic use and utility. In the course of the collecting work, recording – among others – the knowledge of the farmers and herders/shepherds living in Olaszfalu, Veszprém county on the collection of wild fruits and mushrooms including their potential uses, the two authors concluded that 'traditional pastoralist animal husbandry and the gathering of wild fruits can be regarded as separated, yet organically connected activities' (98.).

The professional and scientific value of the published papers is further enhanced by the tables facilitating the reviewing of the data on the plants discussed in the volume and by the black-and-white and colour picture annexes illustrating the land, plant and man. The latter can be interpreted both as the recording of a traditional folk lifestyle and a document on the process of transformation. The reader rummaging the collection of studies might easily be reminded: just as gathering of plants might represent a given economic and social state, the enlivened research activities might also indicate the state of the current era. Modern man, who has long forgotten about food eaten in times of want, not knowing how to use berries, roots and bulbs, ignorant about water chestnuts and other delicacies, not eating wild fruits and beholding bark pots only in the museum, not tasting the sweetness of 'virics' can still read about the tasty, sometimes even lifesaving provisions in this volume of essays. Not necessarily as a relic.