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Conference of Environmental Archaeology Crosses Czech Borders

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At the beginning of this millennium, bioarchaeology and environmental archaeology in the Czech Republic went through a period of dynamic development. Archaeobotanists, zooarchaeologists, anthropologists and geoarchaeologists active at this time worked at various departments of biology, life sciences, or geology, and rarely they were rarely employed by archaeological institutions. The possibilities of sharing their results with other archaeologists were rather restricted. Their work was often considered as just a supplementary service to the archaeology.

All this changed in 2005, when Petr Pokorný, Jaromír Beneš and other colleagues founded an annual meeting where environmental specialists cooperating with archaeologists in the Czech Republic could meet and share the results of their work. This meeting was called at the beginning “The Archaeobotanical work group”, later from

2010 *Konference environmentální archaeologie, KEA* (Conference of Environmental Archaeology, CEA), and although it started more as a working-group round table, it grew in time into a regular conference. More and more specialists have joined in, the scope of the presented topics has widened and people from across the border, mainly from Poland and Slovakia, have become regular attendants of this conference.

On the 6th and 7th February 2017, the 13th CEA took place in Nitra in Slovakia. This was the first time in its history the venue for the CEA was outside the Czech Republic. As our journal is one of the co-organizers of CEA, some of the IANSa editors presented there the results of their work, and the IANSa Editorial Board meeting followed immediately after the conference. Below we would like to inform you about the progress of this annual meeting.

Figure 1. Conference of Environmental Archaeology in Nitra. The excursion prior to the conference. The southern slopes of Zobor Hill are home to the northernmost enclaves of the Pannonian steppe vegetation. Photo by Mária Hajnalová.





Figure 2. Conference of Environmental Archaeology in Nitra. The auditorium in the Constantine the Philosopher University main building, 6th February 2017. Photo by Zuzana Borzová.

This year's CEA was hosted by the Department of Archaeology of the Faculty of Arts, of the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, and the organizing team was led by Mária Hajnalová and Noémi Beljak Pažinová from the host institution. The international community of 93 scientists from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland met in Nitra to debate the main conference topic of "*Man and the Landscape*". A total of 28 presentations and 20 posters mainly discussed the theoretical and methodological approaches to the integration of archaeological and palaeoenvironmental data, human adaptations to landscape change, and the resistance of the landscape to human impact. The papers were presented in Slovak, Czech and English. Some of these papers are going to be published in the IANSa Journal.

The conference was preceded by an excursion to the Zobor Hills, which rise above the town of Nitra, and led through to the northern-most stretches of the Pannonian steppes and onto the slopes of the Bronze and Iron Age hill-fort on the summit of the Zobor Hill, and then to the Romanesque church in Dražovce.

The next CEA will take place in Modena in Italy with English as the conference language. We would like to invite all the readers of this journal to participate in this event.

Concerning this IANSa issue, it contains another five scientific papers, one thematic review, one book review and one project report. Some of them were already presented at previous Conferences of the Environmental Archaeology. Alexandra Bernardová *et al.* summarize their results from macroremains and xylotomy analyses of samples from a



Figure 3. The Conference of Environmental Archaeology in Nitra was followed by an IANSa Editorial Board meeting. Photo by Ondřej Mlejnek.

former oxbow lake near Náklo in central Moravia. Their study has confirmed the long-term human impact and the important influence that human activities had on the alluvial floodplain vegetation, especially during the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. The analysis of wood has confirmed the presence of an alluvial forest with a dominance of willow, poplar, elm and alder.

Andra Simniškytė-Strimaitienė *et al.* present a paper based on geochemical analyses of soil samples from the prehistoric Lithuanian hilltop settlement of Bėčionys. The aim of their research was to describe the soil properties from different contexts in order to determine possible anthropogenic indicators at this locality, and to assess what are the differences in the properties of soil taken from features with artefacts and those containing no artefacts.

In the third paper Hossein Sarhaddi-Dadian and his team present the results of X-Ray Fluorescence analyses of pottery shards from the Achaemenid settlement of Dahan-e Ghulaman, inhabited during the 6th and 5th centuries BC, and located in the Iranian province of Sistan. These analyses proved that most of the studied pottery was made locally.

Jan Horák and Tomáš Klír describe the results of the geochemical analyses of soil samples from the deserted medieval village of Spindelbach in northern Bohemia. Their results show that multi-elemental analyses of 14 different elements, measured by portable ED-XRF, provide body of data which could be used for detecting the ancient, long abandoned plots of arable land in the landscape, for reconstructing the past management practices applied on detected fields and finally for estimating the intensity and spatial patterning of applied practices within individual plots.

Jan Frolík *et al.* present the results of their archaeological, anthropological and genetic research of six graves excavated in the suburb of Český Brod in central Bohemia, which were dated back to the second half of the 15th century. The anthropological study has identified six men of different age with many post-traumatic changes on their bones, excessive physical strain, and numerous other pathologies. A DNA-based examination ruled out the possibility that they

were members of a minority group (e.g. Jews or Gypsies). The people buried on this site were thus interpreted as being people from a marginal position in their contemporary society.

In a thematic review section, Ladislav Šmejda presents a methodological article discussing the two contrasting approaches to archaeological survey using aerial reconnaissance (vertical versus oblique photography). The more traditional strategy is to look for interesting spots in the landscape with a highly-concentrated archaeological record. These are usually called “sites”. This concept is still used in everyday practice despite its long-standing problematic character. The opposing approach divides the studied region into analytical units, which are sampled for evidence in a standardized manner and the information collected being interpreted only subsequently. Hence the varying densities of recorded facts across space are studied as opposed to the binary categories of “on-site” and “off-site”.

Jaromír Beneš has prepared a book review of the monograph written by Peter Poschlod titled: *Geschichte der Kulturlandschaft. Entstehungsursachen und Steuerungsfaktoren der Entwicklung der Kulturlandschaft, Lebensraum- und Artenvielfalt in Mitteleuropa* (History of Cultural Landscape. Causes of the Origin and Driving Forces of Landscape, Habitat and Species, Diversity Changes in Central Europe). The author of this interesting book describes the development of the Central European landscape from the archaeobotanical point of view from the Neolithic to the Middle Ages.

Finally in the Backstory section, Mária Hajnalová *et al.* present their “*Hic sunt leones*” bilateral Slovakian-Austrian mobility project under the title *Hic sunt leones? The Morava valley region during the Early Middle Ages*. The main aim of this project is to facilitate interdisciplinary, early medieval, archaeological research in the region along the lower course of the Morava River.

As described above, this generally focused IANSA issue presents a group of interesting submissions, which surely deserve your full attention. We hope you will find here much new information important for your work.

