
ABSTRACTS

Zsombor Bódy: Socialist Pilgrims in the “Mecca of Revolution”: Encounters Between the Carpathian Basin and Postcolonial North Africa

Drawing on narrative sources, the study examines the experiences of Hungarian professionals working in Algeria during the 1960s and 1970s. Following a brief overview of methodologies in global history, it explores reports by state security agents and memoirs about the work of Hungarian specialists who lived in Algeria. The analysis demonstrates how narrative sources can broaden the perspective of historiography focusing on the elite’s global navigation, while adding social historical depth to studying the interactions between state socialist countries and the Global South. Solidarity between state socialist countries and the “Third World” was ostensibly grounded in their joint opposition to the West and shared peripherality relative to core states. However, both retrospective personal accounts and reports collected by state security authorities show that this solidarity functioned more as an element of ideologically framed political discourse. Bringing narrative sources into the analysis reveals that Hungarian professionals did not interpret their Algerian experiences through this ideological matrix. Instead, their perceptions were shaped by prior knowledge, as well as their typically Central European life trajectories and identities. Highlighting local experiences, the study adds a hitherto unexplored social-historical layer – shaped by longer-term dynamics – to our understanding of Hungary’s relationship with the Global South.

Keywords: global history, state socialism and the Global South, alternative globalization, travel literature, narrative sources

Gábor Czoch: Global History, Microhistory, Global Microhistory

Since the 1990s, global history has gained increasing prominence in international historiography. However, by the mid-2010s, this momentum appeared to slow down, and criticism began to mount. The critiques have focused on the wide variety of works grouped under the label of global history, the lack of clarity regarding its methodological and theoretical foundations, its deterministic and teleological view of history, its disregard of individual agency, and the marginalization of primary sources. One possible response to these challenges is the emerging approach of global microhistory, which seeks to combine global and microhistorical perspectives. The present study offers an overview of current international discourse surrounding the reconciliation of global history and

microhistory, and the potential of global microhistory as a new direction. Special emphasis is placed on the issue of scale in historical analysis. The discussion is based primarily on two thematic journal issues: the 2018 special section of the French *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, and the 2019 special issue of the British *Past and Present*, addressing this topic. Other key works related to this debate are also considered in order to chart earlier developments and thereby situate ongoing discussions within a broader historiographical context.

Keywords: global history, microhistory, global microhistory, playing with scales

Péter Granasztói: From Hanswurst to Nick Carter. Popular Entertainment in Budapest from the 1860s to the Early 20th Century

In contrast to the general chronology of Hungarian social history research, the analysis and interpretation of urban culture – and specifically of mass culture as defined in opposition to elite culture – began surprisingly early. This study aims to explore the transformations of one of the most traditional and widely popular forms of mass entertainment among the urban lower classes: the Vurstli, a fair-ground-style amusement venue located in Budapest's City Park. Focusing primarily on press sources that reflect contemporary experiences, the paper offers a content-based analysis of popular entertainments from the 1860s through the early 20th century. It traces the evolution of these amusements in the context of Budapest's rapid transformation into a modern metropolis. Particular attention is given to the thematic shift in entertainments – from folkloric and rustic spectacles to narratives reflecting urban concerns and global cultural influences. This includes the emergence of Americanized content and the eventual rise of an entirely new form of mass entertainment: the cinema.

Keywords: Americanization, City Park, Vurstli, mass culture, cinema, entertainment

Gábor Kármán: Ferenc Rákóczi II, Prince of the Holy Roman Empire?

It is a common claim in historical literature on the leader of the early eighteenth-century Hungarian uprising against the Habsburgs, Ferenc Rákóczi II, that prior to his election as prince of Transylvania in 1704, he bore the title princeps Sacri Romani Imperii, a title allegedly granted to his family in a 1645 peace treaty between King Ferdinand III of Hungary and his great-grandfather, György Rákóczi I, prince of Transylvania. The present study proves that this tradition was based on a mistake by Leopold I's court historian, Galeazzo Gualdo

Priorato, used by Ferenc Rákóczi in repeated requests to have his assumed title confirmed between 1694 and 1700. Close analysis of his arguments reveals that they were based on erroneous historical evidence and a voluntarist interpretation of some basic rules of inheriting princely titles. Rákóczi also wrote letters asking for support among the elite of the Holy Roman Empire, attaching copies of the 1650 marital contract between his grandfather's brother, Zsigmond Rákóczi and Henriette, daughter of Frederick V of the Palatinate. This agreement displays the title S.R.I. princeps next to each member of the Rákóczi family, which would be a convincing piece of evidence, if the same information was not missing in all surviving mid-seventeenth-century copies. Ferenc Rákóczi II appears to have been firmly convinced that he had a rightful claim to this title, just as his predecessors had. He was also able to convince many about his truth, except for the Viennese court; as a result, the charter he had aspired to was never granted. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the Hungarian elite seemed content to acknowledge his claim and refer to him as prince; especially, as the princely title, typically granted externally by Transylvania or the Empire, conferred no particular privileges in Hungary.

Keywords: Ferenc Rákóczi II, promotions, princes of Transylvania, princely title, Holy Roman Empire

András Keszei: From Mentality to Representation: There and Back Again

From the 1920s onward, the history of mentalities gained widespread popularity through the influence of the Annales School. Alongside the impersonal forces of society and economy, the forms and content of thought – the mentalities of past societies – came to play a central role in these historical explanations. After the mid-1960s, however, the concept of mentality appeared to have lost its substance. Critics argued that it had become too rigid, too all-encompassing, and that the existence of the monolithic mindsets it attributes to historical eras is unsupported by empirical evidence. From the 1990s onward, Roger Chartier, Bernard Lepetit, and later Paul Ricoeur recommended that historians replace the unified, fixed, and finite notion of mentality with the more flexible concept of representation. This shift allowed for the interpretation of social categories in ways that aligned with new developments in social action theory. Even so, overarching unified interpretive frameworks continue to persist, transcending the diversity of disparate situation-bound representations. These frameworks, although not in the “closed” manner proposed by the monolithic concept of mentalities, can nonetheless expose some consistent patterns in mental phenomena.

Keywords: history of mentalities, mentality, representation, collective representations, social action

Gábor Koltai: “We Complain, Therefore We Are”: Letters of Complaint to the Socialist State on the Cusp of the Regime Change

How leaders of the socialist regime gathered information about the true sentiments of the population has been a relatively underexplored question in Hungarian contemporary history. By focusing on letters of complaint addressed to representatives of state power, the present study contributes to a research trend that is by now well established in the international scholarship, mainly by scholars such as Sheila Fitzpatrick and more recently Martin K. Dimitrov. My recent research primarily relies on letters written to the Budapest branch of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) during the 1980s. According to Dimitrov, one of the key reasons that enabled one-party communist dictatorships to stay in power for decades was their ability to accurately gauge public sentiment and needs. They actively encouraged citizen feedback, primarily in the form of letters of complaint. Dimitrov has shown that the loosening grip of dictatorship was indicated by a decline in complaints rather than their increase. The preliminary results of my research corroborate this thesis in the Hungarian context: from 1985 onwards, the steady decrease in complaint cases reflected the citizens' waning trust in the system. Furthermore, even at this early stage of the research, it has become evident that non-party members also actively participated in this institutionalized culture of complaint. This not only contributed to the regime's stability well into the 1980s but also suggests that many still hoped that the ruling party could improve their situation. The findings reveal a practice in which those in power and their supporters co-managed the system with non-party members. In this context, the bureaucracy of complaint handling was used as a safety valve to release the pressure of social tensions without violence. Both the party apparatus and non-members participated in this cooperation and used it to their own ends, and the system endured as long as the harmonization of these goals remained viable.

Keywords: socialist regime, letters of complaint, institutionalized complaint culture, everyday history, archival ethnography, “dictator's dilemma”

István Lengvári: Erzsébet Herzog, a Medical Doctor of Aristocratic Descent

A small but all the more interesting group of university students in the first half of the twentieth century were those Hungarian students who did not choose university studies in order to achieve social advancement, expected financial benefits or prestige. It is probably almost impossible to fully map out the reasons, but we will attempt to do so in the case of Erzsébet Herzog, using the available mosaic of data. Born into a family of barons, she carried out her studies

in Switzerland, and then following her graduation from the Faculty of Medicine of the Erzsébet University, she started working in Budapest. Her work is of outstanding importance in terms of professional interest and social responsibility; she is also a unique example of female doctors – specifically of those of aristocratic descent – in Hungary between the two world wars.

Keywords: higher education, medical training, aristocracy, psychology, Horthy era

Orsolya Ring: The Politicization of Culture: The History of the József Hajnóczy Literary Ensemble in Tiszaföldvár (1965–1967)

This study explores the history of the József Hajnóczy Secondary School's literary group in Tiszaföldvár between 1965 and 1967. It investigates how a seemingly harmless extracurricular literary initiative evolved into a phenomenon that drew the attention of the highest levels of cultural policymaking and was eventually banned. The research is based primarily on contemporary state security surveillance documents and oral history interviews conducted in 2024. *Óriástök* (Giant Pumpkin) and especially *Görgös eke* (Roller Plough) were performances loaded with thinly veiled political commentary, which became increasingly difficult to ignore and elicited overly direct responses. The group was not prohibited through open repression but rather through a gradual process of administrative obstruction characteristic of the Kádár era. The story of the Tiszaföldvár ensemble transcends the local level: it serves as an example of cultural practices under the Kádár regime that created spaces conducive both to the accumulation of cultural capital and to the articulation of social and political concerns – at least so long as these activities did not become too conspicuous for the authorities to tolerate.

Keywords: Kádár regime, cultural policy, Hajnóczy Literary Group, cultural capital, hidden transcript, oral history, Tiszaföldvár

Csaba Sasfi – Ildikó Husz: The Social Determinants of Final Examination Results in a Buda Secondary School (1900–1914)

The study examines the final examination performance of students attending a state secondary school for boys. The multivariate analysis of the grades of more than 500 students over a period of fifteen years has yielded significant findings. On the one hand, contrary to national trends, students belonging to the Reformed Church achieved the highest results at this institution. On the other hand – perhaps less surprisingly – the sons of higher-status parents performed significantly better in their examinations. Another important outcome is that the longer a student studied at the school where the final exam was held,

the greater their chances of graduating with outstanding results. These findings highlight the distinct character and formative role of individual schools as institutions of education and cultural transmission, which suggests that this institutional function should be considered as an independent factor in future analyses of similar datasets.

Keywords: secondary school final exam, academic achievement, denominational distribution of students, parental social status, the formative and cultural role of schools, early 20th century