

REVIEW

István Kovács: Klaniczay Gábor: A boszorkányüldözés története. Balassi Kiadó. Budapest. 2022. 423 p. (Vallásantropológiai Tanulmányok Közép-Kelet-Európából 13) / Klaniczay, Gábor: The History of Witch-Hunting. Balassi Kiadó. Budapest. 2022. 423 p. (Religious Anthropological Studies from Central-East Europe Vol. 13)

The topic of Gábor Klaniczay's volume have been playing a quite important role in the authors academic work. The aim of the book is to compile the author's publications on the topic of witches, witchcraft, and witch-hunting written in Hungarian for the professional audience and the general public alike. The results have been available also in English in this bilingual publication, so to the international academic community.

The volume is structured in four sections, supplemented by an essay: the first section deals the 'General Framework' (p. 11–84), i.e., the theoretical background followed by a discussion of the dynamically changing roles of the religious and magical figures of saints, shamans, witches, and devils (p. 85–210). The third section entitled 'Witch-hunts in Hungary and Central-Europe' (p. 211–316), considers the official and spontaneous 'popular' responses to the phenomenon. Closely related to the third one, the last section summarizes the results of the research on witch-hunting in Hungary (p. 317–364). Finally, the author re-publishes his article from 2011 on the 'philosopher scandal' (p. 365–372). The main part of the volume is followed by a selected bibliography (p. 373–409), which covers the sources and the secondary literature as well as the index and an appendix of pictures (p. 410–420).

The very first paper was originally published in the magazine of popular science in history 'Rubicon', which is intended to attract the attention of the reader who is not familiar with the scientific literature on the topic. Two of the first section's studies were published originally in foreign languages. The first relevant and well-argued paper guides the reader through the fundamental questions such as 'who were the witches' (p. 14–15), 'how the attitude of the medieval church turned from initial scepticism to cruel persecutions' (p. 16–17) and 'how the mythology of the devil's coven and the witches' Sabbath formed' (p. 17–20), 'the difference between saints and witches' (p. 20–22), and 'the religious and social causes of the great European witch-hunts' (p. 22–26). The studies in the first and second sections, although not exclusively addressing the issues raised here, have in common that they all refer to interrelated problems. The author provides a thorough overview of the history of witch-hunts in Europe, well complemented with the knowledge and methodology of the auxiliary and related sciences of history. The twentieth century bring several approaches to the phenomenon of witchcraft. The rapid growth of social science knowledge and methods provided researchers with a newer and more comprehensive perspective than ever before and has produced remarkable results. These perspectives are particularly evident in the chapter entitled 'The Witches' Sabbath – Anthropological, psychological, linguistic, pictorial, and historical explanations' (p. 50–83).

The second section includes five studies focused mainly on the duality of the sacred and the profane and sinner, using the theoretical knowledge highlighted above. Gábor Klaniczay's approach to the study of the cult of the sacred is innovative but it is still in line with the findings of (the secondary) literature. Furthermore, the author asks questions about the medieval and early modern phenomenon of witchcraft and witch-

hunting which are helpful to uncover the structural roots of this practice, which became a widespread practice legitimised by the courts.

The canonisation process of Elizabeth of Hungary (1207–1231) is of particular importance. The case of the princess of the Árpád dynasty created a new category of saints, and her canonisation trial became a kind of prototype for the new style of the process. Its significance is shown by the fact that it was not the Árpáds but the princess' immediate entourage who initiated the process, i.e., the reasons for canonisation were to be found in the sanctity of the life of the daughter of King Andrew II rather than in well-perceived political interest.

The case of St Margaret of Hungary (1242–1270) differs from this in several aspects: on one hand she was not canonised until the twentieth century, and on the other hand, the research can rely on the abundant sources regarding of a saint who lived in the Kingdom of Hungary and intervened in its political struggles. Klaniczay, analysing one of the miracles of St Margaret, points out that the stories are often telling more than just the miraculous powers of the saint, and have complex social and even metaliterary implications. In addition, the author analyses the structure of the story (p. 89), compares it with common model of anathema narratives (p. 90) and, based on the findings of André Vauchez and Pierre André Sigal (p. 98), constructs an idealised schema of the miracle story (p. 98).

The third and fourth blocks of studies summarise the regional (Hungarian and Central European) specificities of witch-hunting and the results of research on the phenomenon in Hungary. In the third section, we find both discussion-starting papers on the topic and those experimenting with research methodology ('Witch-hunting in Central and Eastern Europe' 'Sketch for a comparative overview' p. 213–233), focusing on the structural causes of conflicts in Hungary ('Witch-hunting in Hungary: social or cultural tensions?' p. 234–255), or even micro-historical studies ('The witches of Halas and the new cultural history' p. 294–316). The variety of the papers is due to the wide time spread of their creation (1989 and 2011), which makes them respond to different challenges in the history of research.

Today it is hardly possible to support the view that witchcraft did not exist in Hungary at the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries. This would have been based on the decree of Kalman that "There shall be no provision for witches, for there are none." (*De strigis vero que non sunt, ne ulla question fiat*) has long been prevalent in the region's history of witches. The phrase would suggest that the region, and the Carpathian Basin in particular, had escaped the waves of classical witch-hunts. It is true that, in the light of the 'witch hysteria' of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period, the 'wise ruler's' provision certainly seems enlightened, but the text of the law itself was not meant to deny the social threat of magical harm, and even sanctioned its use (p. 213–214). This is a starting point for the author, who is looking for the origins of witch-hunts in the Middle Ages and then describes the waves of aggression against those who were marginalised. The legal background to the atrocities, their religious aspects and, of course, their social causes are also described, and the study concludes with a comparative examination of archaic and modern memories of supernatural powers of destruction.

The paper that examines the causes of the pogroms in Hungary also attempts to give two current explanations for the phenomenon, which had intensified between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, to explore whether social or cultural tensions played a decisive role in the escalation. It can be said that the brief historical overview of the topic, together with the questions posed by auxiliary and co-studies (family history, gender studies, community studies etc.), may indeed help to provide a more

thorough understanding of the reasons for the 'popular anger' against witches. While the complexity of the problem is not questioned anymore, the approach to the topic in the latest academic tendencies offer an exciting perspective, and the methodology adopted must have been very innovative at the time of the original publication of the study (1989).

In a case study in the section ('The witches of Halas and the new cultural history', p. 294–316), the author applies the methods of investigation he has previously discussed, focusing on the witch-hunt in Halas in detail. After a sensuous introduction of the text of the death penalty, the reader is given an insight into the history of the local pogroms. The passages sometimes paint a starkly raw picture of the personal levels of the witch-hysteria unfolding in the centre of the Hungarian Great Plain. The data on mentality, occupation, various aspects of social and local history that emerge from the source excerpts provide an exciting new perspective and are also excellent snapshots of local social organisation at the time. Klaniczay argues convincingly that economic, social, and cultural roots did not rival, but complemented each other in the spread of local witchcraft accusations.

The final section consists of a couple of various texts presenting domestic historiographical milestones in the field. The first is reflecting to a book which summarise Éva Pócs' research (p. 319–335). The review contains important information on the professional collaboration between Klaniczay and Pócs and gives a key of the former's knowledge through number of intertextual references and the contextualisation of Pócs's volume.

In the following article, Klaniczay once again demonstrates his expertise and precise method of analysis 'from the global to the local' perspective. Here he refers to the examinations of Gustav Henningsen, Norman Cohn, Carlo Ginzburg, Paul Boyer, and Stephen Nissenbaum. He also discusses the work of Keith Thomas, Alan Macfarlane, Christina Larnert, and others, which have not been published in Hungarian yet. Hungarian historiographical achievements can be well outlined around the work of the research group established by Éva Pócs and Gábor Klaniczay. The article reviews two monographies: the results of Péter Tóth G.'s book 'Witch Panic and Superstition' (p. 352–358). The second reviewed book by Judit Kis-Halas (p. 358–363) is similar to the previous one, but also uses two new ethnographic and anthropological aspects for the analysis. One of them is the problem of folk medicine, which focuses on the fact that the practice of witchcraft was in fact part of the wider toolkit of medicine. From another point of view, the options available to those seeking healing were so broad that they had a 'market of their own'.

The last, originally a publicist (opinion) article in the volume ('Philosophers' Witch-Hunt in Hungary in 2011', p. 367–372) somewhat tends to shade the positive tone of the celebration of scientific achievements, as the author considers the philosopher scandal that broke out in 2011 to be nothing more than a witch-hunt. Without going into the details of the specific case, we can certainly agree with Klaniczay, that the smear campaign that has been going on for more than a decade – and the increasing number of similar character assassinations of scientists around the world – has many parallels to the 'press' of witch-hunts in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Times. This recognition should be a warning to contemporary scholars, since the 'accusation' was often followed by 'action'.

The volume's rich annotations as well as bibliography, its sensitively selected illustrations, and its research methodology should prove an excellent starting point for readers of any level of interest in the subject. Even so, the four-decade interval covered by the first publication dates of the studies, the numerous translations, and the frequent

changes of style due to the different genres of the studies can sometimes throw the reader off the track. However, readers will conclude the volume with satisfaction, as they have been able to discover several research results that were previously difficult or impossible to access for the Hungarian audience. Along with this, they will gain insight into the most important results of interdisciplinary research in the best sense of the word, which can be summarised as witchcraft research, and which is taking place in Europe and Hungary.



Gergely Kiss – István Kovács:

**Héloise (European Network on Digital Academic History) Workshop in Pécs
(31 August 2023)**

A unique workshop discussion was organised by the Centenary Programme Management Committee of the University of Pécs, the Department of Medieval and Early Modern History of the University of Pécs, the Working Committee on Church History of the Pécs Regional Committee II of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Héloise (European Network on Digital Academic History). The event took place in the Lajos Tivyi Hall of the building Pécs Regional Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on 31 August 2023.

The participants of the workshop were welcomed by Márta Font, Professor Emeritus of the PTE BTK, who in her opening remarks underlined the importance of the current forum for professional discussion and the genre in general. According to Professor Márta, the event, which grew out of an idea by Bálint Gergely Kiss (Professor, Department of Medieval and Early Modern Studies, University of Pécs), offers a great opportunity for researchers involved in similar research projects to share their methodological and scientific discoveries on a common platform.