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Book of Abstracts

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Geographical Societies**

Geography in the Changing World

Košice, 7 – 10 September 2026

**Marián Kulla – Ladislav Novotný
Loránt Pregi – Katarína Onačillová (eds.)**

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Book of Abstracts: the 4th Joint Congress of the Czech and Slovak Geographical Societies – Geography in the Changing World

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A historical-geographical reconstruction of water bodies in the Lower Course of the Hron river based on the work of Matej Bel

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Keywords: Lower Hron River, historical water bodies, first half of the 18th century, geographical characteristics, narrated landscapes

The aim of the paper, prepared within the framework of the VEGA Project No. 1/0770/24 The Disappeared Landscape of Matej Bel (Reconstruction and Environmental History of the Historical Landscape in the Eighteenth Century), was to develop a historical-geographical characterization of water bodies based on a critical content analysis of Matej Bel's *Notitia Hungariae Novae Historico-Geographica* concerning Tekov and Esztergom Counties, as well as based on Samuel Mikovíni's maps and the maps of the First Military Survey. The descriptions contained in *Notitiae* were used as a narrative source and subsequently as original contemporary texts cited within a new methodological historical-geographical concept of narrated landscapes.

According to *Notitiae*, we identified and analysed three localities (river basins) in which water bodies (natural, human-modified, or artificial) and wetlands were concentrated along the lower course of the Hron River in the Danubian Lowland during the first half of the eighteenth century, as they were known and described by Matej Bel. Other sources further confirm that artificial water bodies were also constructed on three additional right-bank tributaries: the Lužianka, Nýrica, and Biňa.

The first of these were located on a left-bank branch of the Hron River (today known as the Perec) near Levice. In the Middle Ages, two large lakes were originally constructed there as part of the town and castle's northwestern fortification system. This fact is confirmed by the oldest preserved veduta from the territory of present-day Slovakia, dating from 1549, which depicts the castle, the town of Levice, and the surrounding landscape. By the first half of the eighteenth century, however, these water bodies had already become silted up and, according to Matej Bel, had turned into "deep" marshes.

Matej Bel described a cluster of five large water bodies along the Ket' Stream on the right bank of the Hron River. These extended from Farná to the stream's confluence near Biňa. Between the villages of Farná, Kuraľany, and Ket', there was an extensive marshland that had not been modified into a water body. Two of the water bodies situated along the lower course of the stream reached a length of approximately 1 km and a maximum width of up to 350 m. The last lake, located near Biňa, was known as Blatné jazero (Sáros Tó, "Muddy Lake").

The largest concentration of water bodies and wetlands, and the one described in the greatest detail by Matej Bel, was located along the Paríž Stream, which he referred to as Párkány. He recorded as many as eight interconnected water bodies, created by human activity by modifying natural depressions in the landscape. The water bodies were drained through a system of canals during the first half of the nineteenth century. The largest lake was situated in the area of the present-day Paríž Marshes, and was named after the village of Köbölkút (Gbelce). The other part of the lake belonged to the village of Kisújfalu (Nová Ves). The lake, which reached lengths of up to 3.5 km and widths of up to 600 m, was renowned for its floating islands, which Samuel Mikovíni also depicted on his Map of Esztergom County (1740). Matej Bel compared the lake's size, width, and depth to those of the nearby Danube River. The *Notitiae* also contain a detailed account of a "scientific" survey of the lake, focusing on the mapping of its largest floating island. This survey was most likely carried out in 1731 by Ján Matulai, one of Bel's collaborators. The largest floating island, which was circular in shape and had a circumference of approximately 600 m, is described in detail in terms of its morphology, movement across the water surface (in relation to wind conditions), vegetation,

and its use by local inhabitants as a meadow. The islands formed after the flooding of a marshland (peat bog) in the Middle Ages, when masses of peat, reinforced by vegetation, detached from the bottom and rose to the water's surface. Matej Bel also devoted attention in the *Notitiae* to a brief “geographical” description of the lake and its surrounding landscape. The present-day name of the Paríž Stream derives from a small left-bank side valley located north of present-day Gbelce, which in the eighteenth century was known as *Paríßska dolina* (Paris völgy, “Paris Valley”).

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