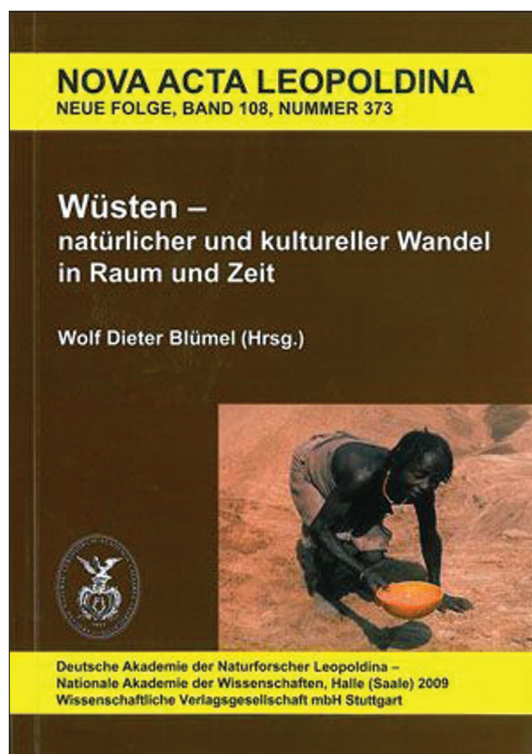


LITERATURE

Hungarian Geographical Bulletin 60 (1) (2011) pp. 101–104.

Blümel, W.D. (Hrsg.): Wüsten – natürlicher und kultureller Wandel in Raum und Zeit (*Deserts – natural and cultural change in space and time*). Nova Acta Leopoldina, Neue Folge, Band 108, Nummer 373. Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina in Zusammenarbeit mit der Gesellschaft für Erd- und Völkerkunde zu Stuttgart e. V. Stuttgart, 2009. 259 p.

Volume 108, No. 373 of the series „Nova Acta Leopoldina“ contains 259 pages and includes 12 papers preceded by an introduction and welcome speech. The topic is up-to-date and important, for deserts belong to the most problematic regions of the Earth. The papers published in this volume were presented at the Leopoldina Meeting, 2–3 May 2008 in Stuttgart, organized by the German Academy of Natural Scientists Leopoldina in cooperation with the Geographical Society, Stuttgart.



The introduction by BLÜMEL, W.D. gives a concise summary of the topic. The main issue is whether climate change and its consequences will further complicate the problems of the deserts putting more and more pressure on the poorest regions of the world.

The first introductory paper by BOLLE, H.G. characterizes arid regions as risk areas and it focuses on the question how people and social groups handle risks. The second contribution by GIESE, E. and SEHRING, J. presents an analysis of environmental changes in Central Asia from the aspect of potential conflicts.

The authors distinguish anthropogenic reasons of environmental change from global climate change. Nevertheless, they seem to forget that climate change is also due to anthropogenic reasons. The importance of the interactions between environmental changes and socio-economic disparities is emphasized in the paper.

SUCCOV, M. and THEVS, N. take the example of the Taklamakan to present a paper on the danger of extinction of the Tugai vegetation which has been characteristic for winter cold deserts and semi deserts, the author say "formerly". This is a statement pointing to the fact that Tugai is a vegetation of former times already. Climate change, land use change, desertification and salinization are mentioned in relation to the processes having endangered Tugai vegetation.

High mountain deserts of Central Asia are the subject of the paper by KREUTZMANN, H. As in most of the publications in this volume, the importance of the activities of human society is emphasized both in this article as well as the next one by MÄCHTLE, B. and EITEL, B.

The Namib Desert is one of the most attractive areas of Southern Africa. The paper of BLÜMEL, W.D., EBERLE, J., HÜSEL, K. and EITEL, B. discusses climate and land use changes in the Holocene era. ¹⁴C-datings allow for the reconstruction of climatic fluctuations in the Middle Ages (1000–1350 A. D.) and in the Little Ice Age (1500–1850 A. D.). According to these datings the period between 1000–1250 A. D. was so humid that parts of the desert were transformed into a savanna-like ecosystem, while during the Little Ice Age hyperarid conditions prevailed. These changing climatic conditions triggered landscape changes, especially along the desert margins.

The topic of CLAUSSEN'S, M. contribution is similar to the previous one. The author investigates the dynamics of the Sahara during the Middle and Late Holocene times. Focusing on the Sudanese Desert KRÖPELIN, S. reports on the reconstruction of the environment and on the cultural history of the Sahara.

The following paper by BREUER, I. and GERTEL, J. leads the reader to the field of social problems at the edge of the Sahara, i. e. in Morocco. There is a switch from the social problems to the highly current activity in the region, to tourism in the deserts of Northern Africa. These areas are easily accessible, especially in Morocco and Tunisia. The appearance of tourists requires newly established infrastructure. The construction of an asphalt road leading directly to the Erg led to serious damages so that this kind of development can not be considered sustainable.

Talking about deserts one should not forget about the highly developed parts of the world. SCHMID, H. gives an interesting paper on Dubai and Las Vegas. The success attained by these centres can not make us forget the negative effects on the environment.

The last paper of RADTKE, U., HILGERS, A., HÜLLE, D., LOMAX, J. and RITTNER, S. is more or less a synthesis of the reconstruction of landscape history of drylands. The method of Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) is mentioned as a tool for paleoenvironmental reconstruction. The authors propose to apply this method for the assessment of the sedimentation history of the whole Quaternary period.

The volume of *Nova Acta Leopoldina* is an intriguing work providing a huge amount of information about deserts and their development. It is very remarkable that environmental change of the deserts is presented not only as a natural process but also as a socio-economic one. The contributions deal with the deserts in a global dimension so that the reader can get a very good overview of contemporary research on the drylands of the World.

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