
AHEA Newsletter: June 2024

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June 2024 Newsletter

President's Corner

Dear Members and Friends of AHEA,

As we approach the end of the academic year, I'm thrilled to reflect on our many successes as a scholarly organization. Thanks to the hard work of many volunteers, we launched an Early Career Network to support junior scholars, gave out several presentation and scholarship awards, started a new fundraising program, grew our membership, edited a new issue of *Hungarian Cultural Studies* (forthcoming), and hosted two major conferences, which fostered invaluable networking opportunities. A special thank you to all who gave their time and energy, AHEA is a team effort!

Our next hybrid conference, organized by the Institute of English and American Studies at the University of Debrecen, in partnership with AHEA, will take place August 22-23, 2024 in Debrecen, Hungary. This international conference will mark the 100th Anniversary of the US Immigration Act of 1924, and will feature several AHEA members. AHEA members who are not presenting may attend the conference free of charge (in-person special events will have a guest fee). Instructions on how to join the online sessions will be posted on the conference website in August. For the full program see <https://konferencia.unideb.hu/en/conference-program-johnson-reed-100-years-later>

I wish everyone a restful and rejuvenating summer. Thank you to Andrew Behrendt for his tireless work on these newsletters! We look forward to reconnecting in September with more updates and insights.

Warm regards, üdvözléssel,

Helga Lenart-Cheng

President, AHEA

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2024 Scholarship Winners

In this final newsletter before our summer break, we're delighted to announce the winners of our prestigious [Várdy](#) and [Helena History Press](#) scholarship awards. Congratulations to all the winners and thank you to our review committee and sponsors!

Steven Béla Várdy and Ágnes Huszár Várdy Legacy Scholarship (\$2500): **László Ambrus**

Helena History Press Scholarship Award (\$2500): **László Stacho**

Helena History Press Merit Award (\$1000): **Thomas Szigeti**

Helena History Press Merit Award (\$1000): **Andrea Parapatics**

Help us Document AHEA History!

A call for memories, materials, anecdotes, stories, trivia

As part of our celebration of AHEA's 50th Anniversary, the Membership Development Committee, with the guidance of the Executive Board, is undertaking an **institutional history project**. We hope to preserve our organization's unique past by collecting contributions from its members.

We welcome anything that comes to your mind, but in particular:

- Photos / scans of AHEA **materials** (conference programs, meeting minutes, newsletters, etc.) and photos of AHEA gatherings
- Your **memories** of AHEA conferences and other events
- **Stories** that you want to be saved for future generations
- **Recollections** of colleagues who are no longer with us

Please send everything to **Andrew Behrendt** (behrendta@mst.edu) or aheanews@gmail.com. You are welcome to use whatever medium you like: text, audio, or video. We can also arrange for physical mail!

Along with your submission, please let us know whether you'd feel comfortable letting us quote you in items that might be shared with the public.

No contribution is too small or too large. Nothing is "unimportant" or "boring." Every moment you help us archive is snapshot of AHEA history -- and the history of Hungarian studies -- that you help save from being forgotten!

Member Spotlight

AHEA is a scholarly organization connecting a diverse set of educators, researchers, professionals, independent scholars and academics who come from many walks of life. Each month we highlight the academic and professional career of a different AHEA member.



This month's featured member is **Mátyás Mervay**,
visiting lecturer at New York University

Please tell us a little bit about your career arc, especially how you came to study late Habsburg colonial projects in East Asia?

It was not obvious that I'd end up researching Sino-Central-European relations in New York, but looking back, I can see the steps leading up to it. During my undergraduate years at the ELTE History Department, the language and history credits I took as an East Asian Cultures minor would betray my Oriental interests. But going to China was, of course, crucial. First, in 2012, on a shoestring, and then a year later, on a scholarship, I studied the language and the country's modern history in a former treaty port where Austria-Hungary had its only overseas colonial

possession.

Being awarded full tuition in a Chinese government-funded program convinced me against a previous plan to specialize in Russian history. After three years of coursework in Mandarin and researching Chinese, Austrian, and Hungarian sources, in 2017, I wrote my MA thesis at Tianjin's Nankai University about those hundreds of former Austro-Hungarian refugee prisoners of war who fled from Siberian captivity to the adjacent Chinese territories during and after World War One.

This unusual combination of archival and linguistic resources allowed me to enroll in and, in May 2024, complete a joint East Asian-Modern European History PhD program at New York University. As a graduate student in the US, I enjoyed tremendous academic opportunities that I couldn't possibly have in my native Hungary. My research and conference trips from Taiwan to Czechia and Chicago to New Orleans were generously funded by my now alma mater and various professional organizations.

At NYU, I developed a dissertation that combined separate fields to explain the diplomatic, personal, humanitarian, diaspora, and intellectual history aspects of how a non-colonialist community took its position in semi-colonial hierarchies. In "Habsburg Refugees in China: Postimperial Diaspora, Diplomacy, and Orientalism in the Republican Era (1918-1949)," I found transnational connections that tie together newly independent Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary with semi-colonial China. Some of my results include complicating the conventional understanding of China's internationalization process, nuancing the spectrum stretching between the colonized and the colonizer, and finding new evidence of Habsburg postimperial continuities. I can't wait to turn this study into a book, even though a bit of it is already out on the Hungarian trade market as *A cserben hagyott hazafi. Zsidómentés a háborús Sanghajban* (Budapest: Könyv Népe, 2023) and in the academic article "A Hungarian Old China Hand and the End of Empire. Loyalty Struggles in Interwar Shanghai's Migrant Community" (*Austrian History Yearbook* 2024).

How did you find out about AHEA, and what brought you to join?

I heard about AHEA in 2018 from Louise O. Vasvári (NYU), then editor of AHEA's *Hungarian Cultural Studies*, whom I met through the late István Deák (Columbia) at one of his famous, since relaunched lunch "roundtable" occasions in Manhattan's Upper West Side.

What impact has your involvement with AHEA made on your career and/or your work?

My application for the 2019 annual conference was accepted, and I went to Pittsburgh to present a paper on late 19th-century Hungarian missionaries' representations of China. Not only did I enjoy the other participants' talks, but I also benefitted from their feedback on my work. Importantly, a presenter's award covered most of my travel expenses.

Since then, still under Louise Vasvári's generous mentorship in English academic writing, in 2022, I published my first American scholarly article, "Toward a History of Interwar Sino-Hungarian Cultural Relations: Three Advocates of Kuomintang Soft Power, Hungarian Irredentism, and Pan-Danubianism," in *Hungarian Cultural Studies*.

Most recently, this year's AHEA conference at Rutgers University allowed me to present my new Hungarian book and sell a few copies from its exhibition table. Overall, AHEA impacted my American career with opportunities for scholarly networking, funding, and a platform to showcase my work, all of which I'm very grateful for.

Tell us, please, what you're working on right now.

With my co-editor Péter Vámos (Károli Gáspár University; HUN-REN RCH Institute of History), we're about to complete our project about the Shanghai Hungarian rescuer of Central European Jewish refugees during World War Two. *Paul Komor: A Righteous Hungarian in Wartime Shanghai. A Selection of Diaries and Correspondence*, Budapest: MTA BTKK, exp. 2024) will be the first English-language documentary collection that introduces the most important ego documents of a life that stretches from Habsburg-era Budapest to colonial Shanghai to postwar California.

I'm also very excited about a course of my own design that I'll teach as a Visiting Lecturer in the next academic year at NYU on the changing Western imaginations of China between 1600-2012. Besides preparing for that this summer, I'll be writing to academic publishers and starting to turn my dissertation into a book. That will be *the* big project that I hope will soon be supported by a long-term academic position!

Mark Your Calendars for June 2025: AHEA in Pécs!



We are thrilled to confirm that our 2025 flagship conference will be held in **Pécs, Hungary** on a weekend in **June 2025**. The precise dates will be announced soon.

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AHEA Early Career Network

The AHEA Board is pleased to announce the formation of the **AHEA Early Career Network**.

The goal of the group is to provide international networking opportunities, mentorship, and resources to students and early-career scholars in Hungarian studies as they navigate the challenges of publication, grant writing, job searches, independent scholarship, as well as contingent faculty positions.

We welcome PhD students and scholars **within 10 years** of receiving their PhD. Please [fill out this form if interested](#).

The network was launched at the May 2024 AHEA Conference at Rutgers University.

Questions and suggestions regarding the new group are welcome and may be directed to Sarah Lucas at sarah.lucas@tamuk.edu

Have a New or Upcoming Publication?

We would love to help share news of the impressive and diverse work that AHEA members are doing! If you have a recent book, article, or other scholarly/artistic work you would like your fellow members to know about, send a brief description/promotional blurb and a link to further information to aheanews@gmail.com. Requests will appear in the order in which they were received and may be edited for space.

The Newsletter is Going on Summer Break!

Our newsletter will be taking a summer pause in July and August. We'll resume in September with new Spotlights, conference info, President's Corners, and other exciting updates. Until then, *jó nyaralást!*



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