Beyond the Trenches: Environmental Archaeology of First World War Battlefields in the Slovak Carpathians

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The contribution presents an environmental archaeological investigation of First World War military sites in the Slovak Carpathians. The research focuses on two areas associated with Austro-Hungarian infantry regiments recruited in the Czech lands: positions of Infantry Regiment No. 91 from České Budějovice in the Bukovské vrchy Mountains and positions at Kobyla associated with Infantry Regiment No. 81 from Jihlava. The research combines archaeobotanical and anthracological analyses with soil chemistry and spatial documentation of military structures. Plant macroremains reflect food consumption, plant use and the exploitation of local resources, while charcoal and preserved wood reflect the selection and use of woody vegetation for fuel and construction. The spatial distribution of phosphorus and other selected soil parameters reflects the intensity and character of human activities and may contribute to the identification of functionally differentiated areas within trenches, shelters and other military structures. These environmental proxies will be evaluated in relation to the spatial organisation of archaeological features and available historical sources. The integration of archaeobotanical, anthracological and soil data will enable the military positions to be investigated not only as battlefields but also as temporary settlement systems. Comparison of the two areas will focus on subsistence, resource procurement, spatial organisation and the environmental effects of intensive military occupation in the Carpathian landscape.