Fourth International Conference 'Hierarchy and Power in the History of Civilizations' (Moscow, June 13-16, 2006)

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The Center for Civilizational and Regional Studies in cooperation with the Institute for African Studies (both under the Russian Academy of Sciences) and School of History, Political Science and Law of the Russian State University for the Humanities held in Moscow on June 13–16, 2006 the Fourth International Conference 'Hierarchy and Power in the History of Civilizations'. The Institute for African Studies, Russian State University for the Humanities, and 'Uchitel' Publishing House (Volgograd) supported the Conference financially. 145 scholars from 32 countries participated in the event. More than 150 papers were presented at the plenary session and 21 panels. The Conference book of abstracts was published by the Center for Civilizational and Regional Studies and Institute for African Studies as Volume 13 of 'The Civilizational Dimension' Series (Beliaev and Bondarenko 2006; Savateev 2006). The proceedings of the event (as well as the materials of two previous Conferences) are also available from the Center for Civilizational and Regional Studies' website http: //civreg.ru/.

The main goal of the Conference was to discuss the phenomena of hierarchy and power, including their spatial and temporal variations. This discussion promoted extension of knowledge of general tendencies and machinery of social transformations, of interrelationship and interaction between social, political, cultural, and economic sub-systems of society, as well as development of

research methodology of anthropology, sociology, history, political economy, philosophy and other disciplines.

The diversity of the panels that formed the Conference Program may be (though rather artificially and arbitrarily) reduced to the panels concerned with Pre-Modern societies, with Modern/Post-Modern societies, regional, and chiefly with theoretical issues.

A number of interesting panels represented the first group.

At the panel 'Structure of Power and Hierarchy in Chinggis Khan Empire: A Cross-Cultural Perspective' the structure of authority and hierarchy in Chinggis Khan empire, as well as the problem of why the Mongols grew from a small, little-known people into a powerful empire were discussed. The matters for discussion were as follows: What role has Chinggis Khan played in these processes? What were the reasons for creation of the Mongolian and other nomadic empires? What was the basis of Chinggis Khan's authority? What were the features of the hierarchy structure of the Mongols and other nomadic empires? Was the Mongolian empire a state or a chiefdom? What was the place of the Mongolian empire in the world-systems processes?

The goal of the panel 'Status, Socium and Accusation: Forms of accusation and inquisition from Antiquity to Renaissance period' was to indicate the specific features of the concepts of culpa and accusation. It intended to pay special attention to the secular and religious conflicts and the interests of the members of the *socium*. The task was to analyze the variability of the perceptions and the representations and the interaction of the secular and sacred components of these concepts, and also to demonstrate the role of the written and oral forms and performances of the process of the accusations and the possible data of the historical sources for the interpretation of the phenomena.

The session of the panel 'The Ruler and Socio-Cultural Norm in the Ancient and Medieval World' included a number of micro-historical studies of several basic themes: the phenomenon of hierarchy as a means of a society's (self)organization, redistribution of activities and competence (both nominal and real) between the rulers on the one hand and the whole society on the other hand, especially with respect to the problem of how social norms are maintained, modified and introduced. The panel's objective was a complicated but useful task to determine and understand nominal and

real limits of ruler's rights and opportunities. In this respect ancient and medieval civilizations share some specific traits: it is precisely at these stages of socio-cultural development that new-born hierarchies penetrate into the sphere of creation, manipulation and use of norms especially actively and in various ways; on the other hand, this problematics is thought over, realized and developed very eagerly, but the society (contrary to the modern period) usually does not codify or regularize the corresponding collisions; it defines only the recommended vectors of behavior for the situations when it deals with these collisions, but it does not create a system of concrete and formalized mechanisms, institutions, or rules for their resolving.

The thematic scope of the panel 'The Structure and Legitimation of Power in Ancient Societies of North-East Africa, the Near and Middle East' included the evidence from societies belonging to a single *Kulturkreis*. The scope of the panel comprised the extent of the area's ancient history, up to its early medieval period including the time after the Macedonian conquest when the area became a formative zone of the syncretic Hellenistic civilization (*ca.* 3rd century B.C.E. – 3rd century C.E.). Such chronological and territorial boundaries permit to study within the panel a vast variety of interrelations between societies of different types (all forms of social evolution in the Diakonoff's typology plus classical Greek city-states) and their respective ideologies and cultures in the sphere of construing and legitimating political structures.

The second group was also represented by a series of important panels.

The panel 'Hierarchy and Power before and after the Revolutions' dealt with the various types of state systems in which the main subject had always been the distribution of power. Various roles of different classes and strata either in supporting or opposing the ruling power which in its turn may have some relation to a particular context of social and economic power were discussed.

The panel 'Modern Mass Media and Public Sphere: New Challenges and Opportunities for Democracy' was dedicated to public sphere/public sphericules; modern mass media in maintenance the institutions of civil societies and democracy; public discourses, their competition and hierarchical relations. The questions discussed were as follow: What kind of public sphere can exist in

the situation of increasing influence of the state and of the economic interests on mass media? Where is the solution to overcome the elitist character of the public sphere? Does the progress of communications give new opportunities for people to overcome limitations and deficiencies, even social norms and social control? The many point out that new mass media are revolutionizing the nature of discourse. The crucial question is: Do people receive now more information than before? Do we have more zones for public discourse, than before? Are there any new possibilities for broad and unlimited freedom of expression, including critical to authorities?

The participants in the panel 'Transitions, Transformations and Interactions of Hierarchical Structures and Social Nets in the Late 20th – Early 21st Centuries' examined: the transference of a part of power functions from hierarchical structures to social nets; the institutionalization of subcultures and their subsequent transformation from net organizations into hierarchical structures; the pathways of hierarchies' and nets' transformations; the complimentary principle in functioning of the nets and hierarchical structures; global and local trends in formation and transformation of hierarchical structures and social nets.

The third group was represented by five panels, also rich in content.

The problematics of the panel 'Anthropology of Europe: The Limits of Political Centralization' was defined in the panel proposal as follows: 'Will the identities of each composite part and those common for the whole of Europe compete or coalesce? What is the socio-cultural character of the centre in Brussels and how does the periphery feel about the relationship between itself and the centre?' Both politicians and ordinary citizens have to face the issue of further expansion of the EU towards the East, which seems to display serious cultural challenges (Turkey, Ukraine, Croatia, Georgia, etc.). Increasing realisation of differences in political culture, which include election behaviour, attitudes toward authorities, populism and charisma, and a host of other features, make it necessary to analyse the potential for amalgamation and emergence of all-European values and attitudes ever more pressing.

The Panel 'Cosmopolitanism, Globalism, and Nationalism: (Un)Stable Identities in the Former Soviet Union and Former Yugoslavia' explored ideologies and everyday practices shaping

the cosmopolitan, global and nationalist identities in the two post-socialist regions characterized by recent state breakdown and multiple state-rebuilding, and ethnonationalist violence: former Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia. The goal is to analyze the sources and background of vigorous cosmopolitan or trans-national(ist) (or 'anti-parochial') cultural associations and movements in the two areas, while also analyzing political-institutional obstacles and theoretical limitations for recognizing them as advantageous forms of group identity and protourban association or ideological discourse.

Participants in the panel 'Europe as Political and Cultural Entity: Dialogue of Civilizations or Civilization of Dialogue?' analyzed the current enlargement of the European Union. The question had two dimensions: political and cultural. Dealing with both or any of the aspects presupposed choosing one of the two lines of reasoning: Europe may be considered either as a field of interaction of a number of civilizations or as one though internally highly diversified civilization. Finally, do the frontiers of Europe as a political and cultural entity co-inside with the continent's geographical borders?

Participants in the panel 'Power and Ideology in the Northern Maya Lowlands' explored roles of past ideologies in structuring and legitimizing power, the nature of political organization, and the purpose of economy in socio-political processes. While the past and present occupants of the Northern Lowlands are commonly referred to as the 'Maya', this label belies the cultural diversity within the region, as well as the enormous amount of cultural changes that have taken place during the approximately 2,500 years covered by studies in the region. One area in which these changes are most evident is that of ideologies, which have been continuously manipulated by a series of powers within the region, starting from the first kings through Spanish colonial times to the present. Even in those places where writing is not present, archaeologists have been able to call upon architecture, art, and the distribution of relatively common artifacts in order to make inferences about the cosmological programs of particular factions. Aspects of ancient symbolism and cosmology as well as religious ritual, illustrating the resilient nature of local populations in the face of foreign dominance were discussed.

The objective of the panel 'The Cossack Communities, Identity and Power on the Eurasian Space in the 16th – 20th Centuries' was the history of the Cossacks, predominantly in the context of the events in this or that separate region (Ukraine, the Caucasus, Siberia, the Far East) or in the context of military or socio-economic history. The main purpose of the panel was to accumulate papers on the history of the Cossacks given in the vein of the civilization approach and regarding the regional factor, implying the research emphasis on the interrelationship between the individual/community and the state, on the specific features of culture (in the ethnographic and civil-national meanings) and psychology, on spatial and symbolic geography, etc. within the chronological frameworks from stable Cossack communities formation in the 16th century to the 20th century, the period when the Cossacks existed in different language and cultural milieu (in the Soviet Union and in emigration) and enjoyed revival in the post-Soviet states.

The Panel 'Hierarchy, State and Civilization in the History of Africa' analized the dynamics of interrelation between state, traditional institutions and net communities in Africa during colonial, post-colonial periods and the present. The aims of the panel were the studying of traditional forms of social and political hierarchy in Africa and the analisis of the functioning of these forms in the circumstances of modernization.

The fourth group consisted of several following panels.

The Panel 'Human Rights in History of Civilizations' focused on exploring how the economic, political and socio-cultural factors influenced the conception, definitions and the emergence of human rights in history and civilization. The Panel participants dealt with the power strategies and ideological models that play a key role in setting limits to the understanding and exercising of human rights in different civilizations.

The Panel 'Interpreting Violence: The Confessional, the National, the Generational, and the Personal' was destined to analyze, on the one hand, the problems of the relations between faith and violence, and on the other hand, the interpretation of violence at different national levels. Elements intertwined in two parts are pertaining to the interpretation of violence through generational and personal angles. These are the examinations of imagined wars in Russian conservative utopias, the phenomenon of denunciation in

Stalinist Russia, the Great Terror in the Gulag, and the formation of state and political institutions in Russia and the Soviet Union alternately through consent and coercion respectively.

The Panel 'Networked Cultures: Negotiating Cultural Difference in Contested Spaces' aimed at discussing the dynamics and potentials of newly emerging socio-political network structures and the ways in which they re-conceptualise socio-political organisation through innovative forms of spatial practice. It dealt with contemporary spatial practices characterised by a dislocation and dispersion of contributors, participants and spectators, by the processes of fragmentation and multiplication, by a shifting of perspectives from dominant centralities to networked peripheries, clandestine economies and virtual sites. By doing this, the panel intended to question the ways in which the local is reinstalled as a new sphere of activities which can be understood only through its network of relationships with other localities.

The panel 'Power and Identity in Multicultural Societies' was dedicated to power and ethnicity interactions in political practice of contemporary multiethnic states and quasi-states. The following issues were to be discussed: the problem of ethnic groups as subjects of the law; collective rights of substantiated ethnic groups vs. the individual's right for free choice of ethno-cultural identity; political practice of the ethnic processes optimization in multicultural states; forms of realization of the individual's ethno-cultural identity in multicultural states; the ways of ethnicity's depolitization and politics' deethnization in multiethnic societies; paradigmatics of contemporary ethnological science and ideological substantiation of the ethnocratic regimes' legitimation; ethnic models of power legitimation in political practice of contemporary states and quasi-states.

The panel 'Social and Historical Dynamics: Patterns, Trends, Mechanisms, and Mathematical Models' was aimed at discussion of both the further ways of the introduction of scientific methods into the study of history, and the concrete results achieved within this direction by the moment. The panel addressed the issues of general theory of social evolution as well as its applied aspects. A special attention was paid to the mathematical models of historical processes.

The panel 'Power, Theory and Evidence in African, Ancient and Modern Slavery' examined issues of power and hierarchy in African, ancient, and modern (United States) slave societies, with particular focus on issues of authority and ideological hegemony and of challenges to power expressed through forms of rebellion and resistance, including slave revolt and social banditry. Theoretical issues involved in comparing slave systems across time and place and in situating literary expression in relation to historical evidence are also examined.

Philosophers, anthropologists, historians, and political scientists gave a number of interesting papers at the sessions of the 'Free Communication' panel. It was divided into two subpanels concerning premodern and modern societies. Their problematics varied from cultures of the neolith to current foreign policy of the USA.

To sum up, the Fourth International Conference 'Hierarchy and Power in the History of Civilizations' (as well as the two previous Conferences) was notable for its interdisciplinary character: anthropologists, historians, archeologists, philosophers, economists, political scientists, experts in many other fields took part in its work. The Conference organizers are right when regarding this issue essentially important for achieving a breakthrough in understanding the phenomenon of 'hierarchy and power'. What is also worth noting is that contacts between scholars from different countries, of various schools of thought are another important precondition for the achievement of this breakthrough which was fulfilled at the Conference, too.

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