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Editor's Note

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Editor's Note

Fall, 2018

This year's 48th Annual Conference of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations was held from June 14 to June 17, 2018, at the venerable Soochow University of China and proved to be a resounding success. The ISCSC gathering in China constituted a first-time venture into that powerful and huge country for the international organization, although there has long been vigorous participation by Chinese scholars in the intellectual and academic work of the body. At the end of the conference, following a grand banquet featuring a live performance of Chinese opera in addition to speeches and great food, the organization was invited graciously, and cordially, to return many times in the future to China.

Sponsored by the Center for Comparative Literature of the famed university's School of Liberal Arts and co-sponsored by its School of Foreign Languages, the session's meetings and lectures were held on the second floor of the attractive and spacious Chong-yuan Building, located near the center of the university's huge, beautifully manicured green campus. These original campus grounds themselves, while set in the middle of the city of Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China, and part of an economically burgeoning southeast region of China, somehow appear like a great American or European university, separated, conducive to contemplation, ivory tower, as if placed in the countryside somewhere.

Foreign speakers and conference attendees flew to Soochow mostly via nearby Shanghai and came from all over the world, as hosts Prof. Fang Hanwen, Prof. Zhu Xinfu, and Prof. Shi Yuanhui, organized the conference with extraordinary thoroughness and grace. They noted in materials distributed to all attendees that the Comparative Literature and Comparative Civilizations Research Center of Soochow University has carried out considerable work in the comparative study of civilizations, with nine academic monographs and more than 60 academic papers on the subject published since 2003. The faculty has trained students for master's and doctoral degrees in the comparative study of civilizations for eight years. The university itself was established in 1900 by Dr. David L. Anderson, a Methodist from the United States, serving as the first president, and the American origins are reflected in the architecture and layout of the main campus.

The conferees stayed in a lovely hotel on one of Suzhou's famed canals, located just blocks from the university. When Marco Polo passed through Suzhou in the 13th century, he labelled it "very great and noble" and commented favorably upon its canals, stone bridges, silk production and wonderful classic gardens, one of which, near to the university, has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. He also wrote in awe of the "many great philosophers" who lived in Suzhou.

Today it is not only an academic setting but also a location for bustling international and Chinese hi-tech firms, and over ten million people (including suburbs) call it home, half of that number within the city limits. The city is known as the Venice of the East, and it surely is that.

As the conference got underway, ISCSC President Lynn Rhodes offered keynote remarks, explaining the history of the organization, since many in attendance were from China and might be not fully acquainted with it.

The conference coordinators for the ISCSC were President Lynn Rhodes and Vice President Michael Andregg, and Prof. Andregg was also the ISCSC Program Chair. Both did a spectacular job.

One result of the conference was the development of a proposal to jointly offer the doctorate in comparative civilizational studies. This proposal was presented orally at Suzhou on June 16, 2018 and approved overwhelmingly by the Board of the ISCSC and the Chinese hosts and attendees.

Potential faculty members have already indicated interest and ongoing discussions indicate that there is a likelihood that this sixty-credit, three-year minimum degree might be offered in the United States, authorized by Soochow University, soon. However, final arrangements have not been reached as of the time of this writing.

A total of 21 points were included in the draft proposal. Among the most important are the following:

1. The curriculum will track the curriculum of the current Soochow University PhD in Comparative Civilizations.
2. Faculty members will include members of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations who possess the PhD, are knowledgeable in the field, and wish to participate; faculty members will also include those employed by Soochow University in the existing program.
3. Students who enter the program will include students who have completed the master's degree from an accredited university in the U.S. or abroad. Special encouragement will be given to those who are ABD, that is, who have earned transcript-recorded credits.

The program will accept credits in the social sciences and allied fields from such students. This should make the program very attractive to many individuals in the U.S.

4. The program will require a minimum of three years until conferral of the doctorate, consist of 60 credits, including "maintaining status" credits earned during the period when the student is working on the doctoral dissertation.

5. The curriculum offered will be blended-learning, cohort based. It will be offered on a trimester basis (spring, summer, fall terms).
6. Summer face-to-face residencies (held for one week two times in the three-year program) will be combined with online courses. A capstone course (during the student's second year) will round out the scholarly learning experience and prepare students for the period during which they write their doctoral dissertations.

Should any reader wish more details, the Board would be happy to send a full copy of the draft proposal. The goal is to develop the best possible doctorate in the field. Currently, programs offering the degree exist in Europe and Asia, but none appear to be ongoing in North America.

A second result of the conference was the adoption by attendees of a formal resolution recognizing the China Section of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations.

The following language was adopted by unanimous vote:

--RESOLUTION--

International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations
China Section

RESOLVED: It is hereby resolved that the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations recognizes the China Section of the ISCSC in a formal, historic and long-lasting partnership.

RESOLVED: The China Section has a long history of the study of civilization, its comparisons, professional, and scholarly endeavors.

RESOLVED: The mission, vision, goal and strategy of the ISCSC and China Section are in harmony.

RESOLVED:

The **Mission** is to provide means of cooperation among all persons interested in the advancement of the comparative study of civilizations.

The **Vision** is that Civilizations matter.

The **Goal** is to achieve scholar-recognition as a primary source of knowledge and wisdom on the comparative study of civilization.

The **Strategy** is organizing annual international conferences with scholar-leaders of the comparative study of civilizations and publishing the formal journal: *Comparative Civilization Review (CCR)*; conference proceedings; contribute to other professional journals and civilizational book series.

RESOLVED: The China Section of the ISCSC has shown great leadership in hosting and coordinating the 48th Annual Conference of the ISCSC in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, People's Republic of China at Soochow University. The Conference hosts, Professor Fang Hanwen (方汉文), PhD, President of the China Section of the ISCSC and Vice President of Coordination for China; Professor Zhu Xinfu (朱新福), PhD, Dean of School of Foreign Languages, Soochow University; and Professor Shi Yuanhui (史元辉), PhD, China Program Chair; university staff; and many officials showed great leadership to recognize the importance of the conference and support for the comparative study of civilizations.

A third development for the ISCSC occurred during the conference when the Pitirim A. Sorokin Foundation (named in honor of the first president of the ISCSC) sent greetings to ISCSC President Lynn Rhodes and Dr. Vlad Alalykin-Izvekov, ISCSC Representative and Programs Coordinator (Europe, Russia) on June 12 which stated that:

On the behalf of Dr. Sergei P. Sorokin and the Pitirim A. Sorokin Foundation I am honored to convey greetings to the Institution, which was founded with active support and involvement of Pitirim A. Sorokin.

One of the goals of founding the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations was better understanding and communication in the increasingly inter-dependent world. Such direction today has become more important than ever.

Your Society, as well as Pitirim A. Sorokin Foundation, share similar values in promoting and supporting social scientists and researchers who brings new knowledge by "standing on the shoulders of giants."

The letter of support came from Dr. Pavel P. Krotov, Executive Director of the Pitirim A. Sorokin Foundation.

Several of the papers from the conference are included in this issue. We are also creating for the first time a Proceedings section, containing, in particular, abstracts or summaries of foreign-language presentations from Soochow.

I would like to note that while working with students this past term, I have discovered that there are roughly 150 full text articles from CCR now indexed online via SocINDEX, a product of EBSCO.

Readers will observe that this issue carries presentations from two presenters who attended the Soochow University conference from Iran – a first for the society. Both scholars suggested that there was an interest in developing relations with international scholars in our field by their colleagues back home in Iran. The Board of the ISCSC will be considering possible future follow-up on these suggestions.

In Suzhou, it was announced that the next annual meeting of the ISCSC will be on the campus of California State University, Monterey Bay. More details will be forthcoming.

From June 16 to June 19, 2019, there will be a major conference at which this writer is scheduled to be speaking. The conference is entitled: From ‘Holocaust by Bullets’ to Auschwitz: Regional Dimensions of the Final Solution. It is going to be held at the Uzhgorod National University in the Transcarpathia region of Ukraine. The theme: to provide an integrated & multi-dimensional view of the evolution of the Final Solution, from “person-to-person” murder to industrial extermination, in the region of Central & Eastern Europe. While the main theme will focus on Ukraine, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, and Moldavia, there will be opportunities to discuss the full scope of the Holocaust. The conference will also coincide with the 75th anniversary of the Hungarian Holocaust. For details contact the Organizing Committee: education_pro@hotmail.com.

Finally, an innovation in this issue is the reproduction of color photographs from Soochow University and the conference, as well as on a few other pages. The building shown with attendees sitting and standing on the lawn is meters away from the one in which the conference was held. Thanks to those who made this picture possible, including the very kind official photographer.

Joseph Drew, PhD