

In October 1961, in Salzburg, Austria, an extraordinary group of scholars gathered to create the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations. Among the 26 founding members from Austria, Germany, France, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Spain, Italy, England, Russia, the United States, China and Japan were such luminaries as Pitirim Sorokin and Arnold Toynbee.

For six days, the participants debated such topics as the definition of “civilization,” problems in the analysis of complex cultures, civilizational encounters in the past, the Orient versus the Occident, problems of universal history, theories of historiography, and the role of the “human sciences” in “globalization.” The meeting was funded by the Austrian government, in cooperation with UNESCO, and received considerable press coverage. Sorokin was elected the Society’s first president.

After several meetings in Europe, the advancing age of its founding members and the declining health of then president, Othmar F. Anderle, were important factors in the decision to transfer the Society to the United States.

Between 1968 and 1970 Roger Williams Wescott of Drew University facilitated that transition. In 1971, the first annual meeting of the ISCSC (US) was held in Philadelphia. Important participants in that meeting and in the Society’s activities during the next years included Benjamin Nelson (the Society’s first American president), Roger Wescott, Vytautas Kavolis, Matthew Melko, David Wilkinson, Rushton Coulborn and C.P. Wolf. In 1974, the Salzburg branch was formally dissolved, and from that year to the present there has been only one International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations (ISCSC).

The presidents of the ISCSC are, in order: In Europe, Pitirim Sorokin and Othmar Anderle; in the United States, Benjamin Nelson, Vytautas Kavolis, Matthew Melko, Michael Palencia-Roth, Roger Wescott, Shuntaro Ito (from Japan), Wayne Bledsoe, Lee Daniel Snyder, Andrew Targowski, David Rosner, Toby Huff, and current president Lynn Rhodes. To date, the Society has held annual meetings, most of them in the United States but also in Salzburg, Austria; Santo Domingo, The Dominican Republic; Dublin, Ireland; Chiba, Japan; Frenchman’s Cove, Jamaica; St. Petersburg, Russia; Paris, France; New Brunswick, Canada; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Suzhou, China; and Bucharest, Romania.

More than 30 countries are represented in the Society’s membership. Its intellectual dynamism and vibrancy over the years have been maintained and enhanced through its annual meetings, its publications, and the participation of such scholars as Talcott Parsons, Hayden White, Immanuel Wallerstein, Gordon Hewes, André Gunder Frank, Marshall Sahlins, Lynn White Jr., and Jeremy Sabloff.

The Society is committed to the idea that complex civilizational problems can best be approached through multidisciplinary analyses and debate by scholars from a variety of fields. *The Comparative Civilizations Review*, which welcomes submissions from the Society’s members as well as other scholars, has been published continually since its inaugural issue in 1979.

Prof. Michael Palencia-Roth

Membership Information

If you are not a member of the ISCSC please consider joining. The \$70/year membership fee, plus \$8/year postage for international shipping provides members with a one-year mailed paperback subscription to this journal, and the opportunity to be directly involved with the workings of the society. Membership is open to all interested in the comparative study of civilizations. Please visit www.iscsc.org for more information.

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**International Society for the
Comparative Study of Civilizations**