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Editor's Note

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Editor's Note

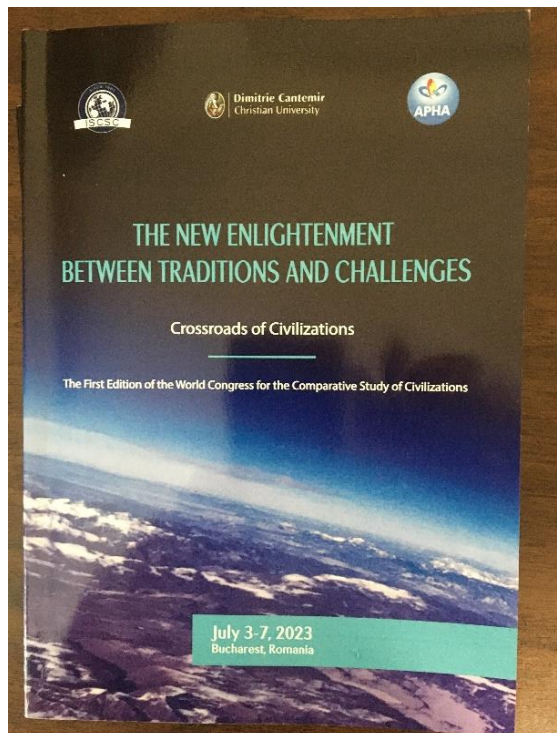
Claude-Henri, Comte de Saint-Simon, a father of modern sociology, observed that the history of the world alternated between two poles: organic periods (in which the social and political institutions are in harmony with the state of civilization), followed by critical periods, which are transitional and marked by conflict and destructive criticism.

He also wrote that “the crisis in which the European peoples are involved is due to the incoherence of general ideas: as soon as there is a theory corresponding to the present state of enlightenment, order will be restored, an institution common to the peoples of Europe will be reestablished, and a priesthood adequately educated according to the present state of knowledge will bring peace to Europe by restraining the ambition of peoples and kings.”¹

If we are now living through a Saint-Simonian critical period, one involving the conflict between civilizations, particularly between the Western Civilization and what the late Samuel Huntington labelled the Orthodox Civilization (“centered in Russia and separate from Western Christendom as a result of its Byzantine parentage, distinct religion, 200 years of Tatar rule, bureaucratic despotism, and limited exposure to the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and other central Western Experiences”), then there can be little doubt that the center of the battle is the war in Ukraine.²

Thus, it was fitting and appropriate that in July within an intellectual hub near the very forefront of this war, centered as in great measure it is on conflict between two contemporary major civilizations, there was convened at the Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University in Bucharest, Romania, the first World Congress for the Comparative Study of Civilizations.

The idea for the World Congress had arisen two years earlier, principally from the minds and discussions of several prominent leaders of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, the Asian Politics and History Association, and the university.



Among these progenitors were: Andrew Targowski, former president of the ISCSC; Lynn Rhodes, current president of the ISCSC; Michael Andregg, vice president; John Grayzel, member of the board; John Berteaux, member of the board; Robert Bedeski, president of the Asian Politics and History Association; and Corina Dumitrescu president of the Senate of DCCU and Alexandru Stefanescu, now Vice Rector of the university. A Council of Wise Civilizations was also established via a document signed at the same time.

The Congress this summer was replete with scholars in the fields of the comparative study of civilizations, cultural and social studies, history, humanities and science. Delegates hailed from all continents (save Australia). Titled “The New Enlightenment Between Traditions and Challenges: Crossroads of Civilizations,” the Congress convened at the university in conjunction with the celebration of 350 years since the birth of Dimitrie Cantemir and three centuries since his death in 1723.

As was noted in a number of significant and probing presentations, Dimitrie Cantemir was a philosopher, political leader, and author who represented the ideals of the Enlightenment and who created an intellectual bridge between East and West.

As the brochure describing the conference indicated, Dimitrie Cantemir “brought Oriental mysticism and wisdom into the patterns of Western Civilization.” Thus, the stated goal of this World Congress was to follow in Cantemir’s footsteps: to bring minds together to offer visions and responses to contemporary cultural challenges, and confluences, of civilizations, with the purpose of delivering humanity, as such study has done in the past.

Delegates lectured on many topics, and there were two major ceremonies, the awarding by the university of doctorates *Honoris Causa* to two leading comparative civilizationalists.

- The first awardee was Dr. Katherine Elizabeth Fleming; she is currently President and Chief Executive Officer of the J. Paul Getty Trust. She also holds the Alexander S. Onassis Chair of Hellenic Culture and Civilization in the Department of History at New York University, where she served as Provost from 2016 to 2022. An expert in Greek history, and widely honored, Prof. Fleming has been associated with the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, the University of Piraeus, the University of Macedonia, and the Ionian University, among others. Currently she is a co-Principal Investigator on an oral history / public humanities project in Greece.

Her laureate topic for the Congress was “How to Think About the Past.”

- The second awardee was Dr. Gombojav Mend-Ooyo, President of the Mongolian Academy of Culture and Poetry. He has not only written about Mongolian culture but has also been deeply involved in the recent revival of traditional script and artistic techniques. He has sought throughout his career to protect Mongolian nomadic herders, their culture and cultural knowledge. His works have been translated into over fifty languages. His efforts led to his selection as a Life Member of the World Academy of Arts and Culture. In 2008, he was named as Professor of Arts and Culture at the Institute of International Studies of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

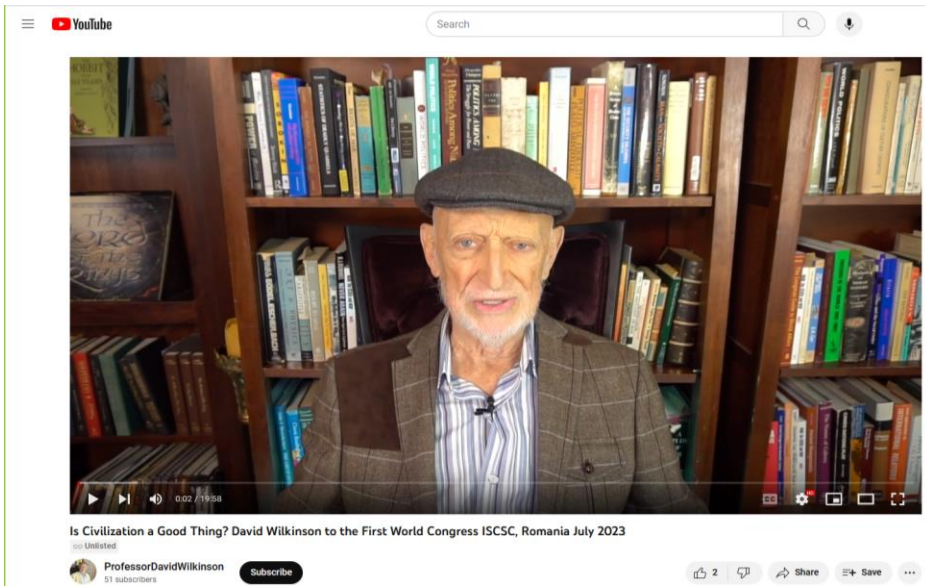
His presentations to the Congress were entitled “Culture and Poetry in Mongolia” and also “The Heritage of the Reincarnate Lama of the Gobi.”

The Congress was also honored with the active presence of the former President of Mongolia, Nambaryn Enkhbayar. President Enkhbayar has served, in addition, as Prime Minister and as Speaker of the Parliament, thus becoming the first person in history to have held all of the top three positions in the Mongolian government. A sizeable delegation of other prominent Mongolian scholars, business leaders and comparative civilizationalists accompanied Dr. Gombojav Mend-Ooyo and President Enkhbayar to the Congress.

Lectures to the Congress were delivered in a number of languages, including especially English, Mongolian, Romanian, Spanish, French, German, Italian, and Greek. Talks were presented in person, plus, from Andrew Targowski, Robert Bedeski, Robert Allison, and David Wilkinson (all American professors and scholars) over video. It is our hope to publish several of the studies in forthcoming issues of the *Comparative Civilizations Review*.

A special attempt was extended by the university, as well, to illustrate the origins and development of Romanian art and culture. There were a series of music concerts which highlighted the origins of Wallachian and Moldavian culture and displayed the Turkish influence on Romania, reflecting the excellence in Eastern music, art, general culture, and languages that Dimitrie Cantemir himself exhibited through his written works, including advanced work in preserving Turkish music for posterity.

One of the finest presentations ever delivered on comparative civilizations, in my judgment, was forwarded electronically to the Congress by Prof. David Wilkinson of the University of California Los Angeles. Regretfully, it is only available via YouTube at the following URL, which is surely well worth watching (about twenty minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Np030WrmWzY>



The paper is entitled “Is Civilization A Good Thing?” Prof. Wilkinson begins by asking what emotions does the idea of civilization create, evoke in us? Why are these emotions attached to that idea? What are the connotations of civilization, laudatory or derogatory? And why do we feel the way we feel about civilization? What makes us welcome civilization, fear civilization, want civilization or shun civilization?

His discussion, states Prof. Wilkinson, constitutes a dialogue with an article published by former IS CSC President Roger Wescott entitled “The Theoretical Status of the Concept of Civilization.” (We carry the Wescott paper below, with an introduction by Prof. Wilkinson.) According to Dr. Wilkinson, President Wescott was interested in the various meanings attached to “civilization.” Thus: Do we consider the idea of civilization to be primarily denotative, referential, objective, or do we use the word “civilization” in a way that is primarily connotative, subjective, in a way that tells others about our feelings on the subject? Dr. Wescott found a rich variety of meanings of civilization, both denotative and connotative, the latter of which Prof. Wilkinson addressed.

Are our opinions of civilization laudatory or derogatory? Do we approve of civilization, or do we despise it? The presentation is peppered with citations drawn from history, great literature, art, and music; I, for one, never thought of Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick* as being set in opposition to civilization, derogating the decadence of civilization. But, on reflection, it is clear that Dr. Wilkinson makes a trenchant point.

The Congress ended fittingly with a Culminating Debate, entitled “Are We on the Cusp of a New Enlightenment or the Death of Western Civilization?” After vigorous discussion, the delegates voted the following:

WHEREAS Romania is a perfect setting for a discussion on civilizations, and

WHEREAS The next World Congress is encouraged to be held in an Asian country. Each person has their own civilization. Hence, it would be encouraged to have translations in the participating languages, and

WHEREAS We continue to explore whether we are on the cusp of a new global civilization of new enlightenment or the death of civilization, and

WHEREAS We resolve that the participants of the First World Congress for the Comparative Study of Civilizations are now considered as part of the global think tank known as the Council on Wise Civilizations, it is hereby

RESOLVED: That the Council on Wise Civilizations has adopted the above resolutions.

Amidst this wealth of intellectual activity, the year's busy season for comparative civilizations continues. Our 52nd annual ISCSC conference for 2023 will be held from September 13 to 16 at the War Studies University in Warsaw, Poland. The title assigned is "Civilizational Security: Clashes of Civilizations, Clashes within Civilizations, and Stable Global Futures."

According to the outstanding team of organizers, this conference affords scholars the opportunity to reaffirm our vision that Civilizations Matter. As noted on the website dedicated to the conference (see iscsc.org), the goal is to encourage new research; to elicit new thoughts and approaches; to renew discussion of what makes a "civilization" and why some are resilient but some not, and to reach a wide range of disciplines.

The War Studies University has gone to extraordinary lengths to make the September conference a pleasant and productive one. Thus, following this Editor's Note, you will see an official letter of invitation to the ISCSC and to those who are drawn to study the concept of civilization. It is written by Brigadier General Robert Kosowski, PhD., the Rector-Commandant of the university. He writes that the university views the association as a partner and the goal "is to facilitate solutions to make the conference impactful, memorable, and internationally fruitful."

In the letter Rector-Commandant Kosowski also refers to a noted founder of the ISCSC, British historian Arnold Toynbee, and to his concept of borderlands, "marches," lands which lie on the periphery of contesting civilizations, and which are central to civilizational security. He observes that many in Poland, the Baltic States, and the rest of the Three Seas Region, outstretched between the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas,

have seen the tragedy of the Russian invasion of Ukraine coming and have not ignored “the insight provided by comparative civilizational frameworks.”

Concludes the Rector-Commandant,

In other words, we have retained what Vytautas Kavolis, a Lithuanian social scientist and the President of your distinguished Society in 1977-83, termed the “centrality of the concept of ‘civilization’ in debates on postmodern global conditions.”

The host for the conference will be Dr. Greg Lewicki of the War Studies University; he is a member of the ISCSC Board of Directors and a popular media commentator on security matters in Poland. He can be reached at g.lewicki@akademia.mil.pl. At the War Studies University conference, our Program Chair will be Dr. Michael Andregg, the distinguished ISCSC Vice President; he can be contacted at michael.andregg@iscsc.org.

Attendees will be housed by the War Studies University, and the entire cost of room and board there is only \$350.

This is a beautiful setting for our annual meeting. The program promises a fascinating array of interesting topics. And the location could not be more central, as we consider civilizational clash in the contemporary era. Please see the website (iscsc.org) for more details.



Note: According to the organizers,

- Suggested arrival Wednesday, September 13, 2023
- Conference Program 14, 15, & 16
- Field Trip and Banquet 16
- Suggested departure Sunday, September 17, 2023

Finally, recently our Online Content Manager, Ms. Ellen Amatangelo, of the Brigham Young University, kindly shared with the Editorial Board the locations of our leading journal downloads. The list is fascinating and contains the top 175 institutions.

In declining order of number of downloads, for the top 50, we have:

University of California Los Angeles
 Brigham Young University
 Binghamton University
 University of Cambridge
 University of Warwick
 Oxford University
 North Carolina Research and Education Network
 Michigan State University
 University of Toronto
 Chowan University
 Columbia University
 New York University
 The George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology
 University of Illinois
 Trade Center Management
 University of California San Diego
 University of California at Berkeley
 North West University
 University of Alberta
 University of Durham
 Bilkent University
 London Grid for Learning Trust
 China Digital Kingdom Technology Co. Ltd.
 Agis
 Yale University
 NUS
 Harvard University
 Pamukkale University
 Consortium GARR

Fundacao Para a Ciencia e a Tecnologia I.P.
Department of Education
Jawaharlal Nehru University
Stanford University
The University of Manchester
Boston University
Taiwan Academic Network
Kean University
Danmarks Tekniske Universitet
University of California Santa Barbara
University of Zambia
University of California Riverside
McGill University
Washington School Information Processing Cooperative
University of Pennsylvania
Georgia Department of Education
The University of St. Andrews
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
School of Oriental and African Studies
University of Washington
Elka Prakarsa Utama PT

On the list of the remaining 125 are to be found many additional distinguished institutions. What an honor for the *Comparative Civilizations Review*. Clearly, the journal is being widely read, both in printed format and via electronic download. Thanks to all our dedicated readers.

See you in Warsaw!

Joseph Drew
Editor-in-Chief

¹ From *The Founding Fathers of Social Science*, edited by Timothy Raison. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969. Pages 32 and 29. Steven Lukes wrote the selection on Saint-Simon.

² See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Touchstone, 1997. Pages 45 and 46.