

Newsletter, September 2007

President's Report

This report is for those who "survived" encounters with the "mountain lions" at our 46th International Conference in beautiful Asilomar, CA-2007. The Conference was organized by Laina Farhat-Holzman and her team. Many thanks. I hope that you had a nice "rest of the summer" and will be ready for the 2008 International Conference in Saint John's, New Brunswick, Canada.

Saint John's is an interesting place, and is famous for the phenomenon of the Reversing Falls caused by the tremendous rise and fall of the tides of the Bay of Fundy, which are the highest in the world. The natural southward-facing opening of the Bay of Fundy receives the on-rushing ocean tides directly like a funnel, creating the Reversing Falls as the tide comes in and goes out.

The 2008 Saint John's Conference has a very energizing and contemporary theme and title:

Exploring Multiculturalism in Globalizing Civilizations.

Civilizations in the Americas

and around the World: Past, Present, and Future

Thanks to 2008 Program Chair—Steven Blaha; Ricardo Duchesne, Conference Chair; and Laina Farhat-Holzman, ISCSC Secretary General, we have a very intensive program. Look for our Call for Papers and Panels soon and please submit your contribution. To develop this program we spent almost the whole summer discussing and changing its many versions.

We are planning to have 100-300 participants in Saint John's. Thanks to Oleg Benesch and Jung Dong-Hyeon, both of whom provided 400+ names, we collected about 800 names and addresses to start our ISCSC communications database. We need about the same number of addresses from Latin America, Western, Central and Eastern Europe, India, Pakistan, Oceania and some from the Conference's local neighborhood. The latter will be delivered by Ricardo Duchesne.

It will take some time to update our database with these addresses and send out the Call for Papers and Panels, perhaps within 3-4 weeks.

We are going to advertise this Conference in several academic journals. The 2008 Call for Papers and Panels is included in our journal - ***Dialogue and Universalism***, distributed mostly in Europe. At the Conference we will have 100 copies of printed abstracts and two position papers from Asilomar-2007 for sale to members if they wish to buy them to send to our institutional sponsors, main American libraries, according to a list provided by our Communications Chair, Connie Lamb from Brigham Young University, Utah.

So far with some delay due to summer vacation and the beginning of the next academic year 2007-08, our website has finally been updated and I will be a webmaster using my University's server for free. Please explore this update and provide some comment on how to improve our presence on-line.

The new website is

www.wmich.edu/ISCSC

ICSCS Treasurer: Betsy Drummer (WMU-Kalamazoo) took on her new duties as treasurer, transferring funds from the previous account to our new account in Kalamazoo, Michigan. As promised, funds have been provided (new, but not large—about \$7,800) by WMU-Kalamazoo which can be spent according to the sponsors' wish to facilitate our 2009 Conference.

We are looking for some professional software to run our Society and I hope that this will be implemented by the end of 2007. In particular, it should help in membership management, accounting, and event management, and perhaps in web maintenance too.

Many thanks to Joe Drew, Thakur Pudasain (Joe's right hand), Norman Rothman, Oleg Benesch, and Betsy Drummer (among others). They have achieved the great goal of updating and correcting our membership list, essential information for our Society to work properly.

Good News!!! Michael Palencia-Roth has accepted my invitation to chair the ISCSC Past Presidents Advisory Council.

As you know, our 2009 conference will be held in the Midwest (US) – Kalamazoo Michigan at Western Michigan University (WMU). Every year WMU hosts about 4000 participants in a Medieval Studies Conference. So far we have a Local Committee working and a lot of ideas, which will be the subject to discussion within our chain of decision and consensus making. Our tentative theme is:

One More Chance for Civilization

Meanwhile, our new Board is working on the following issues for ISCSC:

- Stabilize our transferred offices and energizing membership-oriented committees
- Organize 47th Conference in Saint John, Canada
- Establish the Academy of Civilization
- Plan for Kalamazoo-2009
- Increase our presence in publications and among civilization-sensitive leaders
- Increase membership and funds
- Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of ISCSC in 2011 (we need some good ideas)
- Save civilization (can we do it?)

What do you think? Can you share your ideas and plans with our members?

Your input is welcome.

We are starting a feature of book recommendations submitted by our members above and beyond those in the Comparative Civilizations Review or our conference program. Please submit your suggestions to me at Lfarhat102@aol.com.

John Hord recommends:

Nicolas Ostler, *Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World*.

An ordinary history in its way, but it uses languages rather than people, countries, civilizations etc. as the units of study. It also has good pronunciation guides for most of them.

Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*.

This first attracted special attention because it's the first academic book I have seen to use a colloquial rather than an academic vocabulary. Which is odd in a way, since the bibliography says the author has been publishing for 20 years. A lot of it reads like a script for a soap opera; not for nothing does he compare late Rome to a one-party state for intrigue and assassination. But two chapters are particularly interesting, being analytical of the whole process rather than just of the particular ups and downs: "The Limits of Empire" and "The Fall of Rome." Those two I particularly recommend; they have stuff I have not seen elsewhere.

Laina Farhat-Holzman recommends:

Tom Standage, *A History of the World in 6 Glasses*, Walker & Co., 2005.

This fascinating book takes a spin through history through examining six major beverages that human beings have developed. As human populations expanded, there was always a problem of how to obtain water that was not polluted and dangerous. Aside from the ancient Romans with their system of aqueducts and the modern world with water purification, human beings had to develop other sources of liquid to drink. The six beverages that Standage covers are beer (from the Stone-Age through antiquity), wine in Greece and Rome, Spirits in the Colonial Period, Coffee in the Age of Reason, Tea and the British Empire, and Coca-Cola and the Rise of America.

Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam*, Oxford U Press, 1987 (Paper) first printed 1967.

This is an extremely interesting study of the first terrorist cult in the 11th century, the leader of whom was an Iranian Shiite, Hassan al Saba, also known as The Old Man of the Mountain. The similarities between his organization and today's Al Qaeda are more than coincidental.

Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia The Euro-Arab Axis: Land of Dhimmitude*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005-6.

This book is about the transformation of Europe into "Eurabia," a cultural and political appendage of the Arab/Muslim world. Eurabia is fundamentally anti-Christian, anti-Western, Anti-American, and anti-Semitic. The institution that has been responsible for this

transformation, and that continues to propagate its ideological message, is the Euro-Arab Dialogue, developed by European and Arab politicians and intellectuals over the past thirty years.

Born in Egypt, the author is a pioneer researcher on “dhimmitude” (the treatment of non-Muslims in the Arab-conquered lands). Her three major books translated from French are: *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam* (1985); *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude* (1996); and *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide* (2002). Her works are very readable, scholarly, historically sound, and extremely well documented.

James A. Mitchener: *Caravans*, published 1963.

When James A. Mitchener died, many of us remembered him for the pleasure and knowledge of our world that he gave us. His writing particularly pleased me, as an advocate of world history, because he gave us a cross section of a place on earth through time, going back to its primeval beginnings. This is a good, insightful way to look at the world.

Although this remarkable work suffered the ignominy of being made into one of Hollywood’s worst movies, it is certainly deserving of another read because it gives us a picture of a strange and troubled place, Afghanistan, that is a living time machine of man’s sojourn on earth. The fact that he wrote it over 40 years ago makes its truths even more impressive. His Afghanistan is stuck in a time warp.

Mitchener served as a U.S. cultural attache for a time in Afghanistan right after World War II. He describes the claustrophobia of the American and British consular staffs in a posting that is the proverbial end of the earth. They huddle together in winter to read plays and have amateur theatricals. As the play readers gather, they hear the keening of wolves running through the city, baying at the winter moon. That was certainly Kabul then, and, alas, now.

The story of *Caravans* is that of a young American upper-class woman who marries an Afghan architect whom she met at her university. Several years after they move to Afghanistan, her family loses track of her and recruits Mitchener to find out what happened to her. Was her husband abusive? Was she in purdah? Was she, perhaps, dead?

Mitchener seeks out the husband, who is innocent of any mischief, and then finds the wife, who has, for no apparent reason, run off with a savage tribesman and his migratory tribe. This is truly the case of the lady of the manor who ran off with a Gypsy! It has happened before, as folk songs tell us.

I know several intelligence officers, advisors to our own government, who have also run off with the Gypsies, or in this case, with the Mujahadin of Afghanistan. I don’t share their lust for primeval life. I don’t like living rough, being dirty, having the teeth rot in my mouth, living with tapeworm, catch-as-catch-can childbirthing, and as a punching bag for every male who feels cross. Mitchener's heroine excepted, women generally know better than to wish for such a life. But I have had endless arguments with educated Americans who love playing Errol Flynn with the boys with Kalishnakovs. (Do you remember Dan Rather’s transfigured face as he traveled in disguise to the Mujahadin for 60 Minutes?)

It is this very adolescent romance that had the U.S. arming the worst--and most hateful--factions of Afghan Muslim Fundamentalists in their war against Russia. What we didn’t see, and what Mitchener's *Caravans* could have told us, the war was only tangentially against Russia; it was really against modernization. These men want to remain as 15-year-old Bronze Age warriors

forever--but with better weapons.

They have given us a living laboratory of an almost modern state going back in successive retrogressions until it is virtually primeval. Armed tribal chaos rides herd over farms, towns, and cities. The victims are women with dead eyes looking out through dim veils. The favorite game, besides tribal rumbles, is Buzkashi--polo played with the beheaded carcass of a goat or calf, each man out for himself.

If you can find it, reread Mitchener's Caravans and see how wise he was.

Matthew Melko's General War Among Great Powers in World

History, which sold for \$120 when it was published in 2001, is being made available by the Edwin Mellen Press to readers of this website and attenders of the ISCSC meeting at Asilomar for \$30. The offer is good through July 31.

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Planning for Future Conferences

Now that sites for 2008 and 2009 are decided (see minutes of the Business Meeting, 2005), we will be seeking sites for 2010 and 2011. If you know of a good meeting site or can offer to host a meeting, please send me a message

Andrew Targowski, September 19, 2007

Letter from Atherton Press

Dear ISCSC members,

We are updating the website for Atherton Press, a publishing company founded by our late mother and long-time ISCSC member Corinne Lathrop Gilb. We are hoping to include a photograph of the late ISCSC member Boris S. Erasov on the web page featuring his publication *Holding Russia Together*. We do not have any photos of him in our files, or at least nothing identified as such. If you have a photo that you wouldn't mind loaning to us for this purpose, we could scan it and return it to you right away. Alternatively, digital photos would be welcome, sent to our email address, books@athertonpress.com. Our mailing address is: Atherton Press, 555 Bryant St. #600, Palo Alto, CA 94301. Thank you very much for your help.

—Lesley Gilb Taplin and Tyra Gilb, Atherton Press

Reitaku University Has New Homepage

CSC-R (Center for the Comparative Studies of Civilizations, Reitaku University, Japan) has just set up a homepage that should be of interest to your members. The URL is <http://csc-r.reitaku-u.ac.jp>. We would appreciate it if you could tell other members of ISCSC about our homepage during your upcoming conference.

Takao Inukai

(Associate Professor, College of Foreign Studies)
(Deputy Director, International Exchange Center)
Reitaku University,
2-1-1, Hikarigaoka, Kashiwa,
Chiba, 277-8686, JAPAN

Our late mother, Corinne Lathrop Gilb, a longtime ISCSC member, founded a small publishing company, Atherton Press, Ltd., before she passed away in 2003. In 2000 Atherton Press published former ISCSC President Roger Williams Wescott's *Comparing Civilizations: An Unconsensual View of Culture-History*, and in 1999 a pamphlet by Boris Erasov, *Holding Russia Together*. We assume that an announcement to the ISCSC was made at the time of first printings, but since all the parties involved passed away so soon after publication, we wanted to be sure everyone who wanted copies could have them, there aren't many left.

Roger Wescott's *Comparing Civilizations* is available in the U.S. for \$25, including shipping, tax and handling, and in all other countries for \$35. Boris Erasov's *Holding Russia Together* is available in the U.S. for \$10 and in all other countries for \$15. Please send checks or money orders in US dollars to Atherton Press, Ltd., 555 Bryant Street #600, Palo Alto, California, 94301. We will ship your order to you within two weeks of receipt of your check. If you are

interested in purchasing multiple copies, please email us at books@athertonpress.com to make arrangements.

—Lesley Gilb Taplin and Tyra Gilb May 25, 2005