Special Section 'Evolution and Forms of Socio-political Organization: Historical and Anthropological Approaches. Colloquium Proceedings'

Evolution and Forms of Socio-Political Organization: Historical and Anthropological Approaches (Introductory Remarks)

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It is no coincidence that history and socio-cultural anthropology have the same progenitor. We all know from childhood that Herodotus is the 'father of history'. But he should also rightfully be considered the 'father of anthropology.' In his work 'History', already in the fifth century BCE, he formulated a number of most essential for anthropology questions and to address them used methods and hypotheses that became classical for anthropological science many centuries later (Hodgen 1964: 20–28). Thus, already two and a half thousand years ago, in one of the greatest creations of ancient culture, the fruitfulness of the union of 'the muse of history and the science of culture' (Carneiro 2000) in solving the problems of both disciplines was demonstrated.

In the middle and second half of the nineteenth century, when anthropology was forming as a special science, in the minds of its first classics – Adolf Bastian, Edward Tylor, Lewis Morgan, John McLen-

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nan, Julius Lippert and others – it resonated with historical science quite clearly. They saw the meaning and purpose of anthropology as being a replacement for history for nonliterate peoples – those whose past cannot be studied using written records. After all, historians have always had a cult of written source as the only material basis for reliable reconstruction of the past events, and therefore, peoples without writing systems were perceived as 'the people without history' (Wolf 1982). But these were peoples precisely without written history, full of events, with dates and names – the one to whose study historians initially reduced their task. A reconstruction of the eventful history was indeed impossible for nonliterate peoples (at least for the time before they entered into active interaction with peoples who had writing systems), but anthropologists saw their mission in restoring their socio-cultural history, or more precisely, in including the cultures of these peoples in the general scheme of the cultural history of humankind.

Nonliterate societies were of interest in themselves, but within the framework of the evolutionist worldview (and anthropology was formed as an evolutionary science), reconstruction of the socio-cultural past of 'civilized peoples', primarily modern Europeans, and of all humanity – its single culture in its temporal dynamics perceived as universal and unidirectional – was seen as an even more important task. This vision of the socio-cultural process assumed that the cultures of all peoples develop in the same direction (from simpler to more complex forms, from lower to higher), only at different pace. Therefore, it was argued that by studying 'modern savages', one can see what the culture at the time of the 'childhood of mankind' was like, the starting point on its path 'from savagery through barbarism to civilization', and in particular what the cultural appearance of today's 'civilized nations' once was.

It is worth noting, however, that a potential conflict between anthropology and history was inherent from the start. After all, anthropology was understood as a science that studies cultures that exist today, although archaic in type. The emphasis on this became especially pronounced in the early twentieth century, when, thanks to Franz Boas in America and Bronisław Malinowski and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown in Europe, anthropology began to be clearly positioned as a field discipline. As for history, it is a science about the past. However, this conflict was by no means insurmountable. Rather, it can serve as a driving force for the development of both disciplines. This is evident, in particular, from the emergence of an anthropological sub-discipline called historical anthropology that studies archaic cultures of the past basing on available written sources (*e.g.*, Dube 2007), and from con-

sidering archaeology (primarily in North America) as part of anthropology within the framework of the 'four-field approach' to the latter (*e.g.*, Hicks 2013). Yet the most striking evidence of this is James Frazer's 'The Golden Bough.' Wanting to understand a specific historical fact – claiming that 'The primary aim of this book is to explain the remarkable rule which regulated the succession to the priesthood of Diana at Aricia' (Frazer 1963: V) – he created one of the greatest anthropological masterpieces.

It is remarkable that, at about the same time, in the middle – second half of the nineteenth century, historians began to actively study the past of 'historical' peoples not only as a chain of events but also as a series of long-term phenomena that flow from one another – as a socio-cultural process that took the form of the birth and transformation of social institutions that form societies. The works of the classic scholar Numa Fustel de Coulanges were of particular importance in this regard.

It should be noted that the philosophical basis for all sciences of that era – natural, social, and humanities – was Modern European rationalism, rooted in ancient worldviews, developed in the philosophical thought of the Middle Ages, and fundamentally transformed during the Renaissance and Reformation, which flourished in the philosophy of the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries and reflected the general character of the worldview of the era in the West in the nineteenth century. This worldview affirmed the belief in the cognizability of the world by the power of human reason, as the world itself was seen, if created by God, then not by arbitrariness, but by logic, which found expression in the universal laws of the universe. These laws were seen as objective and immutable, *i.e.*, embodied uniformly and inevitably always and everywhere, beyond people's will and desires.

It is especially important that the human and society were perceived as an integral part of the universe – of Nature with a capital letter, subject to the same laws as everything else in the world. That is exactly why Tylor and after him many other anthropologists of the first generations, insisted that cultures should be studied using the methods of natural sciences, and that cultural elements should be treated in the same way as biological species in natural science. Both the first anthropologists who studied 'primitive culture' and the first historians who began to study the past of 'historical' peoples as the unfolding of socio-cultural processes in time, understood their activities as an analysis of manifestations of the global laws of the universe (Nature) in human societies – past or present, nonliterate or with writ-

ing systems – and ultimately in humanity as a single whole, existing in historical time and geographical space.

The history of science is a part of intellectual history, which in turn is directly linked to the course of socio-economic and political history. The First World War marked the end of the 'optimistic era' of Western history – the era of unbridled faith in scientific and technological progress, supposedly naturally leading the entire world along the path towards 'civilization' under the leadership of peoples who had already achieved it. This path was initially understood as a movement not only from the lower to the higher and from the simple to the complex, but also from the worse (less moral humans and societies) to the better (more moral ones). The Great War clearly demonstrated the illusory nature of faith in the moral power of scientific and technological progress perceived as social progress: it led not to improvement of the human being and society, but rather to the invention of more sophisticated means of killing each other. The First World War was not only the first war in scale, but also in the use of tanks, military aircraft, and poison gases. Symptomatically, in 1920, the historian John Bury published the book titled '*Idea of Progress'* which he precedes by the dedication and epigraph: 'Dedicated to the memories of Charles Francois Castel de Saint-Pierre, Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat de Condorcet, Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, and other optimists mentioned in this volume. *Tantane uos generis tenuit fiducia uestri?*' – 'Did your confidence hold those of your kind to such an extent?' (Bury 1920).

However, the most sensitive minds felt the approaching end of the 'optimistic era' even before the Great War. In 1888, Friedrich Nietzsche (1931: 44; emphasis in the original. – *D. B.*) wrote: 'Mankind surely does *not* represent an evolution toward a better or stronger or higher level, as progress is now understood. This "progress" is merely a modern idea, which is to say, a false idea.' In philosophy, the approaching end of the 'optimistic era' was expressed in the emergence and gradual spread among the intellectual circles from the last decades of the nineteenth century of trends that no longer saw humanity as subject to the impact of general and inexorable laws of the universe. For the history of science, the classification of sciences by the founders of the Baden school of neo-Kantianism, Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert, was of particular importance. They divided sciences into two types: those designed to discover general laws – nomothetic (generalizing) and describing events – idiographic (individualizing). They classified natural sciences as the former, and the humanities and social sciences as the latter. That is, they proceeded from the idea that the entire universe is

not subject to the impact of objective laws, but only the world of nature (with a lowercase letter); the world of humans, their society and culture changes as a result of individual events that have no internal interconnection and are not determined by any general laws.

Naturally, history and anthropology found themselves among the idiographic sciences. In anthropology, the first major relativistic (anti-universalistic) teaching – diffusionism in its versions put forward by Fritz Graebner and Franz Boas – was directly based on a neo-Kantian, completely different from the evolutionist, understanding of the essence of the phenomena it studied and of itself as a scientific discipline. Precisely with the establishment of postulates about the lack of universality and regularity in the world-historical socio-cultural process, when each society began to be seen primarily as a unique entity at each moment in time, rather than as a local manifestation of socio-cultural unity among humanity, and when the sense of internal connection not only between different societies, but also between different periods in the history of a single society was lost, a break occurred between anthropology and history.

And in the first decades of the twentieth century, Boas and his students called for studying cultures only as we see them today (Averkieva 1979: 75–77, 106–107), while Malinowski wrote directly that history is useless for anthropologists, since knowledge of the past of cultures is unable to provide anything for understanding their present (Tokarev 1978: 235–236). For most of the twentieth century and a quarter of the twenty-first century, anthropology and history have been increasingly moving away from each other to the point of almost mutual ignorance within the framework of the currently dominant postmodernism, which asserts the absolute uniqueness of each society (and, consequently, the inadmissibility of using the comparative-historical method) and denies the very possibility of objective knowledge of anything related to human and society, including history and culture. In the mid-1990s, a representative large-scale survey of historians and anthropologists from many countries demonstrated a 'conflict of paradigms' between the two disciplines, showed that 'historians and anthropologists had different agendas … and these agendas were in fact anchored in the internal dynamics of their disciplines and to their respective responses to wider societal change' (Kalb *et al.* 1996: 8, 9).

The nowadays obvious gap between history and anthropology has extremely negative consequences for both disciplines. For history, they are expressed, in particular, in the fact that, when dealing with topics to which anthropologists have made a great, fundamental contribution (*e.g.*, such as the institution of community or the phenome-

non of sacralization of power), historians do not rely on it, do not use it to the extent necessary, and often simply ignore it. In anthropology, the feeling of the approaching end of the dominance of postmodernism is slowly but surely growing, and, accordingly, the question becomes increasingly acute: what will happen to the discipline, what will be its theoretical and methodological foundations after the end of the period of domination by the postmodern extreme relativism, which denies the legitimacy of creating any general theories, and ultimately denies the very possibility of cognizing cultural phenomena.

As long ago as in 1968, David Bidney (1968: 248) argued that 'The lesson to be derived from a study of modern anthropological thought is that a science of cultural anthropology must be historical if it is not to be reduced to a brunch of psychology or sociology'. Over the course of more than five and a half decades since these words were written, re-historicizing anthropology has become an increasingly urgent necessity for its development as a theoretical and concrete scientific discipline (which has led to the appearance of several notable publications on the topic since the early 2000s [Carneiro 2000; Whiteley 2004; Kalb and Tak 2005; Tagliacozzo and Willford 2009; Cowan 2012; Stewart 2016; Roque and Traube 2019]). Moreover, bringing a historical perspective into anthropological studies of industrial and post-industrial societies, which are most often the focus of attention of anthropologists in our time, turns out to be no less necessary than for the successful study of archaic societies (Bondarenko 2022).

Restoring the connection between historical and anthropological knowledge offers the prospect of not only giving a new impetus to anthropological theoretical thought, but also deepening historians' understanding of past phenomena. One of the most direct and promising ways to reunite history and anthropology is by studying the relationship between the historical past, social memory, and contemporary cultural identities (Yelvington 2002). It is no coincidence that the 'memory boom' in anthropology that occurred at the turn of the millennium was directly linked to the 'memorial turn' in historical science (Berliner 2005; Krause 2007). However, the connection between anthropology and history needs to be restored, not simply at the level of studying specific scientific topics, and those related not only to cultural memory, but also to the entire spectrum of issues covered by these disciplines, including the study of a wide range of social, economic, political, and cultural phenomena and processes of the past and present. It is necessary to restore the connection between anthropology and history at the theoretical and methodological levels. This is possible, on the one hand, if anthropology is understood as a science that is

fundamentally and essentially historical, which in turn presupposes the recognition of the existence of socio-cultural processes unfolding in historical time at the global, regional, and local levels. On the other hand, the reunification of anthropological and historical sciences, fruitful for both disciplines, is possible if historians, especially those studying not specific events but fundamental historical phenomena and deep historical processes, stop consciously or unconsciously perceiving anthropological issues, theories, and methods, *etc*. as alien to them, as belonging to a completely different field of knowledge and in no way capable of helping them in their research.

Our colloquium is an attempt to unite historians and anthropologists in order to try to see, at least as a first approximation, how it is possible to restore the connection between anthropology and history, which, according to the conviction of its organizers, we emphasize once again, is equally necessary for both disciplines. We have brought together experts in the history of ancient world, as well as the early Middle Ages, and anthropologists who specialize in so-called archaic societies. There is no doubt for us that history and anthropology can be mutually useful in the study of societies of all eras and all types, including contemporary ones (Bondarenko 2023). However, this is most evident in the study of archaic and ancient societies. Therefore, we hope that our colloquium will demonstrate the need for and show possible ways of reuniting the disciplines of anthropology and history with particular clarity.

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