

**Eurasian Parliamentary Practices and Political Mythologies: Imperial Legacies, Diversities, and Representations in the 20th and 21st Century**

**Veranstalter:** ERC Project ENTPAR – Entangled Parliamentarisms: Constitutional Practices in Russia, Ukraine, China and Mongolia, 1905–2005

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**Bericht von:** Irina Sodnomova, Historisches Seminar / ZEGK, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg

The second Workshop of the ERC project (made possible by the European Research Council) took place at the *Internationales Wissenschaftsforum Heidelberg* (IWH). It focused on the historical and reestablished institutions of collective decision-making on the territories of the former Russian, Qing, and Ottoman Empires, as well as adjacent regions of Eastern Europe, Inner and East Asia. One of the principal ideas of the workshop was to take the discussion about parliaments out of a Eurocentric perspective and showcase the history of other regions.

The first speaker of Session 1 was EGAS MONIZ BANDEIRA (Autonomous University of Madrid) who presented a case study on the transition from Absolute to Representative government in the Russian, Persian, and Ottoman Empires. Within a short period of time there appeared constitution projects in different places and the speaker showed that this was an interconnected process within a wider constitutionalisation in the 1900s.

The second speaker ŞENER AKTÜRK (Koç University) gave insight into the political representation and ethnic and religious confrontation of interests in Ottoman Imperial and Tsarist Russian parliamentary experience. Both cases were characterised by ethno-religious and sectarian contestations. The speaker also noted that the study of the Tsarist State Duma and Ottoman Parliament has present-day significance because today some Western democracies face similar cultural and humanitarian challenges to liberal democracy.

KYONGHEE LEE (University of Heidelberg) gave a presentation on autonomy and

governance in Colonial Korea, focusing on the Village-Compact (*hyang'yak*) and self-governance narratives. This concept dated back to the 11th century and discussion about it reemerged in the need of reforms in the 18th century. The speaker argued that the idea of governance in this context meant that a state was governed regardless of whether there was an actual ruler and represented a combination of governance and autonomy with the rural village community as a significant political unit.

OLGA VELIKANOVA (University of North Texas) opened the first panel of Session 2 with her presentation on the Soviet Constitution of 1936 in the context of Russian-Soviet constitutionalism in the 20th century and its „sham“ nature in historical and national contexts. Internal communication showed that the government introduced the Constitution in order to achieve international, political, and ideological goals. The sham nature of the Constitution and the Supreme Soviet originated in the incompatibility of the utopian ambitions of the Bolsheviks and Stalinists with the reality of a „backward“ population and economy, unmanageable local officials and a frightening international environment.

HENRIKE RUDOLPH (Friedrich–Alexander University of Erlangen–Nürnberg) gave a presentation on the first Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference and its transfiguration. In the summer of 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) invited prominent people from China’s civil society to participate in a constitutive gathering that would bestow legitimacy on the new political system. Rudolph demonstrated how the first Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference became a cornerstone of the founding myth of the People’s Republic and remained a potent symbol of the inclusiveness of the government ever since.

CLEMENS BÜTTNER (Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main) gave a presentation on Communist State- and Nation-Building during the Great Leap Forward Campaign in China. In 1959 a newly established „People’s Militia“ represented an expression of Chinese nationalist thinking, namely its strong militaristic inclination (militaristic nationalism). Büttner argued that this thinking was char-

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acterized by a high degree of continuity. He then explained in detail the development of militaristic nationalism after the 1911 Revolution, militaristic nationalism in the Communist base areas, accompanied by the militarization of the worker and peasant masses and the establishment of Red Defense Detachments. The speaker also reflected on the nation-wide militia, concluding with reasons why the „militia nation“ idea and the whole movement ended in failure.

Session 3 was opened by RENÉ TRAPPEL (University of Freiburg) who presented a paper on the transformation of governance in modern rural China. The speaker regarded the Chinese politics of optimizing the rural population with two rationalities: neoliberal rationality (case: new actors in agriculture), and the Socialist rationality (focused on collective; case: new urbanities). According to this rationale the rural population is divided into two groups: a new-type professional farmers with project-based management, and new urbanites who are people who are not needed in farming. Trappel concluded that the rights of neo-liberal governmentality are moderated by assisting socialism rationality.

RUSTAMJON URINBOYEV (University of Lund / University of Helsinki) gave a presentation on community-based parliamentary practices in Post-Soviet Muslim Societies with a case study of *mahalla* (local community) institutions in Uzbekistan. *Mahalla* existed along with the Communist institutions. The speaker talked about its post-Soviet transformations in Central Asia in the political sphere, highlighting the importance of micro-level social processes and structures. Urinboyev studied community-based parliamentary practices through the ethnographic study of *mahalla* institutions in Uzbekistan, both in historical and contemporary context, defining them as alternative, indigenous forms of collective and deliberative decision making in post-Soviet Muslim societies.

NIKOLAY TSYREMPILOV's (Nazarbayev University) presentation was devoted to the role of Buddhist Monasticism in Buriat-Mongol Self-Organization. Up to the late 19th century the Buriats were organized in Steppe Dumas that were weakly connected with each other. This fragmentation contrasted with the

centralized religious administration, and the speaker argued that the Buddhist monastic network was the only alternative organizational matrix that united the majority of the Buriats in administrative practice. *Sugundy* was the most representative Buriat religious congregation for the discussion of important issues and for taking decisions outside Steppe Dumas. The *sugundy* of 1860-1917 played an important role in the later Buriat political self-organization and rise of their national awareness.

The Keynote Speech of the first day was given by JOHN FUH-SHENG HSIEH (University of South Carolina) who shed light on the history of Legislative Yuan institution (LY) in Taiwan within the process of an Institutional Change in an emerging democracy. A democratic transition took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s and was associated with a pluralistic social order or civil society and a large middle class. The speaker concluded that this democratic transition changed the LY from a rubber-stamping institution to the democratic legislature.

Session 4 was devoted to concepts of Parliamentarism and Anti-Parliamentarism. OLGA SEVASTYANOVA (Orthodox Research Institute of St. John Chrysostom) opened the fourth session by giving insights into Novgorod *Veche* (an assembly) as a Political Mythology. The speaker analysed the development of political structures and the ways in which they were mythologized and evolved in modern Russia. For centuries of existence of *Veche* was sometimes regarded in opposite views, for example in the XVIII century – as an opposition to the grand prince and as a sign of struggle for independence, whereas in Communist time Novgorod was no longer seen as the Golden Age of history and was regarded as a place exploited by boyars (high rank feudals) who used the *Veche* as a place to lobby their interests.

In the next presentation KUZMA KUKUSHKIN (Peter the Great Polytechnic University, Saint Petersburg) focused on *Zemskii Sobors* (assemblies) and their evolution. The speaker regarded cases that illustrated main approaches to studying assemblies, discussed the origin of the term „*Zemskii Sobor*“ and its history. *Zemskii*

*Sobor* (Assembly of the Land) was a concept described by Nikolai Karamzin in the *History of the Russian State* (1826–1826). *Zemskii Sobor* existed in 1549–1684; participants were tsar, boyars, gentry, clergy, „commoners“, merchants, townspeople. Initiators were the Tsar, Patriarch, and Boyar Duma. Quantity and form of the representation varied. The speaker also described a typology of *sobors* and concluded by naming three main points in a current discussion about *sobors* in historiography.

The third paper of this panel was given by IVAN SABLIN (University of Heidelberg) who focused on the Duma institution in Russia 1905–1917 and discussions circulating around the idea of parliamentarism. These discussions were held between people who were for parliamentary universalism (Liberals and Socialists) and between those with anti-parliamentary ideas (Far-right and far-left wings of political forces, radical Russian nationalists and anarchists.) Lenin and Bolsheviks gave up the idea of parliamentary universalism in April 1917. Initially Bolsheviks and Mensheviks agreed that Russia needed a Parliament. But in 1917 when anarchist ideas were very popular, Lenin said that this institution in Petrograd was something for the future of the world, and since April 1917 he outlined an ideal socialist state which contradicted what the Soviet state actually was.

In his keynote speech CHRISTOPHER ATWOOD (University of Pennsylvania) gave a historical overview of Mongolia's consultative polity from Empire to post-colonial modernity. The speaker gave detailed information about all types of assemblies that took place throughout Mongolia's history, starting with the country's deep past. Atwood ended his presentation with notes on Mongolia's 1990 Democratic Revolution which was Mongolia's first procedural revolution intended in the name of constitutionalism and democracy. Just like 1905–1912 Revolutions, it was simultaneous with massive political economic changes.

Session 5 was opened by JOSHUA HILL (University of Ohio) who gave insight into elections and historical analogies in Late Qing and Early Republican China. Hill examined

China's history of elections from the perspective of intellectual and cultural history. The speaker demonstrated that elections in 1912 and 2013 went successfully for a country where elections had never existed before. They could be seen as foundations of early Chinese democracy; however, the observers saw them as a failure.

ALEXANDER BALISTRERI (University of Basel) talked about different types of assemblies in Turkey in 1918–1920 reflecting a transition from an Ottoman assembly to a Turkish assembly. The speaker unveiled discussions around drafting the first Constitution, the article in it referring to the role of the Parliament and to the issue of representation. Balistreri defined assemblies as institutions characterized by mutual influence and competition. He argued that in 1918–1920 there existed different models of bodies of collective decision making; they coexisted, influenced and competed with each other.

The final talk was given by ELLINOR MORACK (University of Bamberg) who talked about parliamentary practice in the Turkish Great National Assembly (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*) in the 1920s during the transition from the late Ottoman period to the early Republic. Morack looked at the Turkish Great National Assembly in three different electoral periods, focusing on the ways they operated, procedural rules (taken over from the Ottoman Parliament), and discussed the case of the proclamation of the Republic in 1923.

The 6th session was opened by the presentation of OLIMPIA DRAGOUNI (Humboldt University of Berlin). This presentation was dedicated to political institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina from the Late Ottoman State to Yugoslavia in the context of existing Islamic discourse and multiple power struggles with constant shifts in alliances; at the same time there was a consolidation of power within Muslim parties and a provisionalization of politicians. Dragouni concluded that political organizations were tools and means of renegotiating power relations in a post-Ottoman context.

The next speaker, OLEKSANDR POLIANICHEV (Centre for Advanced Study, Sofia) gave a presentation on the history of

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self-governance attempts in a settler colony of Ukrainian/Little Russian Cossacks in the North Caucasus. In the wake of the revolution of 1905 there appeared the first and only assembly (called Rada) which was sanctioned by the emperor and endorsed by local authorities; the speaker showed that Rada triggered discussions about the traditions of self-governance and cultural distinctiveness of the Ukrainian-speaking Cossacks.

IVAN PESHKOV (Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznan) focused on discourses and practices of Cossack Self-Government in Inner Asia, namely in Siberia and Northern China. The speaker talked about the Cossacks' self-government system, which was part of a complex network organizing self-government rights and emancipation of minorities. He also gave insight into parliamentarism and ideas about autonomy-building of the Cossacks and the legacy of Ataman Semenov.

The Muslim Central Executive Committee (MCEC) of Crimea was the focus of the last presentation by MARTIN DORN (University of Heidelberg). This institution was formed soon after the 1917 revolution and became a Provisional national government of the Crimean Tatars. Dorn stated that this Committee led the foundation not only for the self-proclaimed independence of the People's Republic of Crimea with its progressive Constitution, but also for the communication of Kurultai, as its elections were organized by the Committee.

The two-day workshop initiated a dialogue between historians, political scientists, anthropologists, and other scholars who discussed institutions of collective and deliberative decision making in indigenous, imperial, and post-imperial contexts. The workshop contributed to the history of concepts and the study of contemporary political mythologies and practices in both theoretical and empirical terms by bringing the material in a variety of non-European languages into the international academic discussion and tracing the exchange in practices and ideas across Eurasia.

#### **Conference overview:**

##### *Introduction*

Ivan Sablin (University of Heidelberg)

##### *Session 1. (Post-)Imperial Entanglements*

Chair: Joachim Kurtz (University of Heidelberg)

Egas Moniz Bandeira (Autonomous University of Madrid) – „Frail Like Piles of Eggs?“ China and the Transition from Absolute to Representative Government in the Russian, Persian, and Ottoman Empires

Şener Aktürk (Koç University) – Democracy and Multiculturalism: Political Representation of Ethnic and Religious Groups in the Ottoman and Tsarist Russian Parliaments

Olimpia Dragouni (Humboldt University of Berlin) – (Dis)continuities of Ottoman Religious Self-Government: Political Institutions (sabor, vijeće, skupština) for Bosnia-Herzegovina from the Late Ottoman State to Yugoslavia

##### *Session 2. Political Practices in One-Party Regimes*

Chair: Marina Shcherbakova (University of Heidelberg)

Olga Velikanova (University of North Texas) – Soviet Constitution of 1936: Sham Democracy in Stalinism

Henrike Rudolph (Friedrich–Alexander University of Erlangen–Nürnberg) – Founding the Myths of a Republic: The First Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and its Transfiguration

Clemens Büttner (Goethe University of Frankfurt) – „The Whole People in Arms:“ Communist State- and Nation-Building during the Great Leap Forward Campaign

##### *Session 3. Rural and Religious Governance in Eurasia*

Chair: Tanja Pentter (University of Heidelberg)

René Trappel (University of Freiburg) – Optimizing People and the Ways to Govern Them: The Transformation of Governance in Rural China

Rustamjon Urinboyev (University of Lund / University of Helsinki) – Community-Based Parliamentary Practices in Post-Soviet Muslim Societies: Case Study of *Mahalla* Institutions in Uzbekistan

Nikolay Tsyrempilov (Nazarbayev University) – The Cradle of Nation: The Role of Buddhist Monasticism in Buryat-Mongol Self-Organization

*Keynote Speech*

Chair: Aurel Croissant (University of Heidelberg)

John Fuh-sheng Hsieh (University of South Carolina) – Institutional Change in an Emerging Democracy: The Case of the Legislative Yuan in Taiwan

*Session 4. Concepts of Parliamentarism and Anti-Parliamentarism*

Chair: Maria Ukhvatova (Saint Petersburg State University)

Olga Sevastyanova (Orthodox Research Institute of St. John Chrysostom) – Novgorod Veche as a Political Mythology

Kuzma Kukushkin (Peter the Great Polytechnic University, Saint Petersburg) – *Zemskii Sobor*: Historiographies and Mythologies of a Russian „Parliament“

Ivan Sablin (University of Heidelberg) – Was *Duma* a Parliament, and What Were the Alternatives? Russia in the Global Parliamentary Moment, 1905–1917

*Keynote Speech*

Chair: Jargal Badagarov (University of Heidelberg)

Christopher Atwood (University of Pennsylvania) – Assembly and Autocracy: Mongolia's Consultative Polity from Empire to Post-Colonial Modernity

*Session 5. (Post-)Imperial Regimes and Representation*

Chair: Henning Sievert (University of Heidelberg)

Ellinor Morack (University of Bamberg) – Parliamentary Practice in the Turkish Great National Assembly (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi) in the 1920s

Joshua Hill (University of Ohio) – Elections and Historical Analogies in Late Qing and Early Republican China

Alexander Balistreri (University of Basel) – Parliaments and Quasi-Parliaments in Anato-

lia, 1918–1920

*Session 6. Multilevel Self-Organization in and after Empire*

Chair: Aysegül Argit (University of Heidelberg)

Kyonghee Lee (University of Heidelberg) – Autonomy and Governance: Village-Compact (*hyang'yak*) and Self-Governance Narratives in Colonial Korea

Oleksandr Polianichev (Centre for Advanced Study, Sofia) – The Rada of Empire: Invented Traditions and a Cossack Experiment in Self-Governance in the Kuban Region, 1906–1907

Ivan Peshkov (Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznan) – Between Tradition and Invention: Discourses and Practices of Cossack Self-Government in Inner Asia (Siberia and Northern China)

Martin Dorn (University of Heidelberg) – Crimea in the Imperial Crisis of 1917: The Muslim Executive Committee between Liberalization, Secularization, and Modernization

*Concluding Remarks*

Ivan Sablin (University of Heidelberg)

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