

PREFACE TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

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This special issue is formed by a part of papers presented at the colloquium “Evolution and Forms of Socio-political Organization: Historical and Anthropological Approaches” organized by the International Center of Anthropology, School of History of the HSE University (National Research University “Higher School of Economics”). The colloquium took place on March 25–27, 2025 and welcomed thirteen extensive papers by historians and anthropologists followed by long discussions. The aim of the colloquium was to unite specialists in two disciplines in order to try to see, at least as a first approximation, how it can be possible to restore the connection between Anthropology and History. According to the conviction of the colloquium initiators and organizers (Prof. Ivan A. Ladynin and myself), a restoration of this connection is equally necessary, even vitally important for both disciplines. The organizers brought together experts in the history of the ancient world, as well as the early Middle Ages, and anthropologists who specialize in so-called archaic societies.

A part of papers and discussions at the colloquium concentrated on exact research topics fundamental for both History and Anthropology: general and specific features of socio-political evolution in different ancient and archaic societies, the typology of forms of pre-industrial socio-political organization, the criteria and definition of the state, the state or non-state nature of such distinctive forms of socio-political organization as Greek *polis* and Roman *civitas*, the degree of adequacy of the academic terms for different forms of socio-political organization to their names in the languages of respective peoples, etc. At the same time, more general, fundamental for the interaction between the disciplines of History and Anthropology, questions were also raised in papers and discussions: what prospective theories of social and political transformations are most actively developing in modern Anthropology and History? What place does the problem of forms of socio-political organization occupy in them? What are the current possibilities and limits of the applicability of the methods and categorical apparatus of Anthropology in the study of Antiquity and the early Middle Ages and, conversely, of the tools developed in these disciplines — in Anthropology? What is the potential of sharing the factual evidence accumulated by History and Anthropology for the solution of their scientific tasks?

For the colloquium organizers, there is no doubt that history and anthropology can be mutually useful in the study of societies of all eras and all types, including contemporary ones. However, this is most evident in the study of ancient and archaic societies. Therefore, the colloquium demonstrated the need and, hopefully, showed some possible ways of reuniting the disciplines of Anthropology and History with particular clarity.

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