
In Memory of Professor Hans Claessen

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Some years back I had occasion to fete Hans Claessen on one of his birthdays. I identified him as a ‘scholarly gentleman.’ Hans was amused by the reference. But I meant it seriously. He was gifted with the ability to bring people together around a shared interest and make them feel as though they were participating in a grand scholarly endeavor. From Hans’s perspective this endeavor was the study of the ‘early state’, its origin, structure, and organization.

I met Hans at the 1973 meeting of the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (ICAES) in Chicago. I don’t recall how we met. But he was open and congenial and exuded a passion for the study of the early state that was contagious. By the end of ICAES meetings Hans had convinced a group of anthropologists to try to meet again to consider a panel on the early state at the Mexico ICAES four years hence. Toward that goal Hans helped attain funds for a meeting of twenty or so anthropologists to secure a panel on the early state for the Mexico venue.

This meeting occurred over three/four days at Leiden University and Hans’s residence in Waasenaar. On the final night of the meeting, we enjoyed a dinner Hans had catered and served at several tables in his home’s dining/living areas. About halfway through the dinner Hans interrupted the participants’ lively conversations by tinkling his glass with an eating utensil.

‘Look,’ he said once he had the attention of anthropologists from Mexico, Britain, India, eastern and western Europe and the United States (and I paraphrase a bit of the following commentary), ‘Just look at us,’ he insisted. ‘There are anthropologists from all over the world here eating, some with their forks, others with their spoons, some with their fingers, and others with breads. This is what anthro-

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pology is all about, bringing all the people of the world's states together in some form of peaceful harmony. Let's all drink to that,' and we did.

This meeting presaged several anthropology panels over the following years at ICAES venues around the world. Each meeting produced a volume dedicated to some aspect of the early state, its origins, economics, ideologies, politics, dynamics, and other assorted features. Few people during their lives can fulfill their most passionate interests. Hans was able to fulfill his. Perhaps more importantly he influenced the lives, careers, and intellectual pursuits of so many others who came to respect him and cherish their relationship with him. One must credit Dr. Hans Claessen for his scholarly contribution. Perhaps more important, we must credit Hans for the positive effect he had on the lives of so many anthropologists, some of whom were anthropologist refugees from eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. He will be missed.