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The Organizational Activity of Cherkas Global University: the Annual International Contest *Slavery in the Past and Present*

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Abstract

This work explores the history of the creation and staging by Cherkas Global University of *Slavery in the Past and Present*, an annual international contest for the best scholarly work among academic/pedagogical workers.

The principal sources for this study are relevant published documents – above all, ‘Cherkas Global University (1992–2022): A Collection of Documents’, published in 2022 to celebrate the institution’s 30th anniversary.

The study’s findings revealed that the *Slavery in the Past and Present* contest, aimed at promoting research into slavery, was first held in 2020. The winning works would be published in the open-access thematic journal *Slavery: Theory and Practice*, produced by Cherkas Global University Press. The winners would each receive a cash prize and a diploma. The four annual events held between 2020 and 2023 each selected five winners, with these having represented the following nations: USA, Ghana, Ukraine, Slovakia, Uzbekistan, and Russia. The activities revealed a keen interest in the history of slavery among researchers from around the globe, which suggests optimistic prospects for the future of this contest. On February 14, 2024, the fifth *Slavery in the Past and Present* contest was declared open for entries.

Keywords: Cherkas Global University, annual international contest, *Slavery in the Past and Present*, year 2020.

1. Introduction

Many academic/educational institutions find it important to organize regional, national, and international contests for the best scholarly work on a topic that falls within the area they specialize in. One of such topics with Cherkas Global University is the history of slavery, with the Laboratory for World Civilizations being the unit therein concerned with such research. As a reminder, it is this unit that helped produce the fundamental 851-page collection of documents ‘The Circassian

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Slave Narratives', which describes slavery in Circassia in 1792–1861 based on an analysis of 1,200 documents (Cherkasov, 2020: 1415-2266). In 2020, to help increase interest in the history of slavery within the international academic/pedagogical community, Cherkas Global University launched *Slavery in the Past and Present*, an annual international contest for the best scholarly work (Cherkas Global University..., 2022: 164).

2. Materials and methods

The principal sources for this study are relevant published documents – above all, 'Cherkas Global University (1992–2022): A Collection of Documents' (Cherkas Global University..., 2022), published in 2022 to celebrate the institution's 30th anniversary, as well as information letters for the contest published on the organizers' websites.

This being the first attempt at exploring the experience of staging the *Slavery in the Past and Present* contest, use was made of the historical/chronological and source-studies methods. The use of these methods helped conduct an internal criticism of contest documents and bring to light various details regarding the contest's evolution (e.g., dating of major contest events or changes to the prize scheme).

3. Discussion

The historiography on the subject of this study is inseparably linked with the historiography devoted to Cherkas Global University. The first publication specifically focused on this organization came out in 2019 – in conjunction with the fifth anniversary of the International Network Center for Fundamental and Applied Research (Tarakanov, Ponomareva, 2019).

The period 2021–2023 saw the production of a whole host of publications devoted to Cherkas Global University. These include the summarizing work by I.Yu. Cherkasova devoted to the organization's 30th anniversary (Cherkasova, 2022), which does mention the staging of *Slavery in the Past and Present*, the work by K.V. Taran, which examines the history of Cherkas Global University in the period 1992–2014, i.e. before the establishment of the International Network Center (Taran, 2021), and the work by G. Rajović, which treats the newspaper *Vestnik Leib-Gvardii* as a historical source (Rajović, 2021). As a reminder, the above-mentioned newspaper was the first mass medium produced by the university's publishing house. In 2022, A.A. Cherkasova examined the history of the *Vestnik Leib-Gvardii* newspaper as well (Cherkasova, 2022a). At the same time, A.A. Cherkasova has attempted to paint a general picture of the work of the university's sports society – through the example of the Rifle Association (Cherkasova, 2022b) and the Hiking Club (Cherkasova, 2023).

In addition, there is a publication detailing the activity of the P.A. Cherkasov Fundamental Electronic Library over the period 1992–2023 (Cherkasova, 2023a), and there is one focused on the international activity of Cherkas Global University (Cherkasova, 2023b).

As regards the actual topic of this study, pieces about the results of the *Slavery in the Past and Present* contest in 2020–2023 were published in the journal *Slavery: Theory and Practice* (Cherkasov, 2020a; Taran, 2021a; Cherkasov, 2022; Cherkasov, 2023), generating a fair amount of media buzz around it.

4. Results

On July 10, 2020, Cherkas Global University declared the annual international contest *Slavery in the Past and Present* open for entries for the first time. The contest had several organizers: East European Historical Society, International Network Center for Fundamental and Applied Research (Cherkas Global University's predecessor; transformed into Cherkas Global University in 2021), and KAD International (Ghana) (transformed into the Center for Behavior and Wellness Advocacy in 2023) (Cherkas Global University..., 2022: 164). (This same organizer lineup has endured unchanged since the contest was first held in 2020 – as have Russian and English as the contest's working languages.) To provide participating researchers with some support amid the pandemic, a prize purse of \$2,250 was set up for the contest (Cherkasova, 2022: 1042). Initially, the prize purse was to be distributed as follows: first place – \$1,000, second place – \$750, and third place – \$500.

The admission of works to the first contest was to end on November 15, 2020, and the judges were to announce the results and the winners as early as November 30 (Cherkas Global University..., 2022: 164).

As of November 15, 2020, applications for the contest had been received from researchers based in five countries: USA, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine, and Ghana. The contest eventually would have not three prize-winning spots but five – with the prize purse getting distributed among the winners in equal amounts (\$450). The best works were published in *Slavery: Theory and Practice*, an open-access journal produced by Cherkas Global University Press (launched in 2016). It also ran a piece about the results of the competition (Cherkasov, 2020a).

The winners of the first contest included the well-known specialists in the history of slavery S.L. Dudarev (Russia), Yu.Yu. Klychnikov (Russia), M. Šmigel' (Slovakia), and A.Yu. Peretyatko (USA) (Cherkasov, 2020a: 3). Apart from the prize money, all five winners received a diploma.

Satisfied with the way the first *Slavery in the Past and Present* contest went, Cherkas Global University declared on February 14, 2021, the second such contest open for entries, with corresponding information letters posted on the organizers' websites, as well as distributed via a targeted mail-out. Entries for the contest would be accepted until October 15, 2021, with October 23 set as the date for announcement of the results (Cherkas Global University..., 2022: 167). While the prize purse remained the same (\$2,250), a change was being contemplated in the manner of distributing the prize money – selecting three best works and awarding the three winners with cash prizes of \$1,000, \$750, and \$500, respectively, as opposed to selecting five best works and distributing the prize purse among the five winners in equal amounts of \$450, as was done previously (Cherkas Global University..., 2022: 169).

The second contest featured participants from four countries: Russia, USA, Ghana, and Ukraine. The prize money was once again divided equally among the top five contestants (Taran, 2021a: 66). The winners were S.L. Dudarev (Russia), A.Yu. Peretyatko (USA), A.V. Goncharenko (Ukraine), I.A. rmachkov (Russia), and Ye.V. Kravtsova (Russia) (Taran, 2021a: 66-67). The winning works were published in *Slavery: Theory and Practice*. The tradition of publishing a winning work in that journal would carry on into the future.

On February 17, 2022, Cherkas Global University declared the third *Slavery in the Past and Present* contest open for entries (Cherkas Global University..., 2022: 172). While the deadline for receipt of applications was still the 15th day of the month (October 15), the date for announcement of the results this time was December 2, which had been planned to dovetail with the observance of International Day for the Abolition of Slavery (celebrated since 1949) (Cherkas Global University..., 2022: 172).

As of October 15, 2022, applications for the contest had been received from participants from four countries: USA, Uzbekistan (debut appearance), Ukraine, and Russia. On December 2, 2022, the judges announced the winners: S.L. Dudarev (Russia), A.Yu. Peretyatko (USA), A.V. Goncharenko (Ukraine), F.J. Tadjieva (Uzbekistan), and A.A. Golovlev (Russia) (Cherkasov, 2022: 96). Each of the winners received a cash prize and a diploma.

The fourth *Slavery in the Past and Present* contest was declared open for entries on February 17, 2023. The prize purse remained the same (Cherkasov, 2023: 87). Entries for the contest would, likewise, be accepted until October 15, with the date for announcement of the results being set for December 2, i.e. International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. Applications for the contest were received from participants from five countries: USA, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Slovakia, and Russia. The winners were F.J. Tadjieva (Uzbekistan), M. Šmigel' (Slovakia), V.M. Zavorodnia (Ukraine), S.N. Nikitin (Russia), and A.Ye. Lebid (Ukraine and USA) (Cherkasov, 2023: 87-88). The winning works were published in *Slavery: Theory and Practice*.

In January 2024, the journal *Slavery: Theory and Practice* was accepted to be indexed in EBSCO, which should help boost the recognizability of both the journal itself and works by *Slavery in the Past and Present* contestants published in it.

Lastly, on February 14, 2024, Cherkas Global University declared the fifth *Slavery in the Past and Present* contest open for entries. The organizer lineup and prize money remain the same. Entries for the contest will be accepted until October 14, 2024. (For details, visit the event's official page – <https://cherkasgu.net/news/the-5th-international-competition.html>.)

5. Conclusion

The annual international contest *Slavery in the Past and Present*, aimed at promoting research into slavery, was first held in 2020. The winning works would be published in the open-access thematic journal *Slavery: Theory and Practice*, produced by Cherkas Global University

Press. The winners would each receive a cash prize and a diploma. The four annual events held between 2020 and 2023 each selected five winners, with these having represented the following nations: USA, Ghana, Ukraine, Slovakia, Uzbekistan, and Russia. The activities revealed a keen interest in the history of slavery among researchers from around the globe, which suggests optimistic prospects for the future of this contest. On February 14, 2024, the fifth *Slavery in the Past and Present* contest was declared open for entries.

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