

# International Big History Association

Volume 1 Number 3

## IBHA Members Newsletter

July 2011

### Volume on Evolution

Just published is *Evolution: A Big History Perspective*. 2011. Leonid Grinin, Andrey Korotayev, Barry Rodrigue (editors). Volgograd (Russian Federation): Uchitel Publishing House (English language, 300 pages, illustrated and linked to an online edition).

This edition of the almanac, *Evolution*, is especially devoted to Big History. It features over 20 essays by Big Historians from around the world and from a variety of disciplines. It was produced especially for release at the World History Association's international conference in Beijing – with 6 Big History panels and 2 Big History roundtables! It is also the debut publication of the new Eurasian Center for Big History & System Forecasting (Russia), in cooperation with the International Big History Association.

Among its authors are David Christian (Australia), Alexander Mirkovic (United States), Akop Nazaretyan (Russian Federation), Esther Quaedackers (Netherlands), David Hooles (England) and Paula Metallo (Italy). The subjects range from those of Eric Chaisson on Cosmic Evolution; Walter Alvarez, Roland Saekow, David Shimabukuro and Alessandro Montanari on deep geological time; Fred Spier on research in Big History, and Nigel Hughes on the important contemporary

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### Big History Center In Russia

On May 25 of this year, three members of the IBHA, Professors **Akop Nazaretyan**, **Leonid Grinin**, and **Andrey Korotayev**, established a Center in Moscow for the study of Big History and Systems Forecasting as a part of the Institute of Oriental Studies (Russian Academy of Sciences), directed by Dr. Vitaly Naumkin. The Eurasian Center for Big History & System

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*This IBHA Members Newsletter highlights the work being done on Big History at the Eurasian Center for Big History & System Forecasting (ECBSF) of the Academic Council of the Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences.*

Forecasting (ECBSF) seeks to develop a unified and interdisciplinary history of the Cosmos, Earth, Life and Humanity. It also seeks to develop system forecasting of social, political, demographic, ethnic and cultural processes at regional and global levels.

Its tasks are:

1) To conduct research in the following fields of study:

- \* Big History, as defined by the International Big History Association: “The attempt to understand, in a unified and interdisciplinary way, the history of the Cosmos, Earth, Life and Humanity”;
- \* Systems forecasting of social, political, demographic, ethnic and cultural processes at regional and global levels;
- \* Evolutionary and mega-evolutionary processes: regularities, mechanisms and trends;
- \* Cyclical processes in nature and society;
- \* Socio-environmental history;
- \* Psychological and sociological aspects of social evolution;
- \* World history and global processes.

2) To promote collaborative work of scholars and scientists from different countries and with various specializations who are working within an evolutionary paradigm, as well as teachers, NGO organizers and workers, politicians and political consultants.

3) To unite researchers, teachers and political participants in forming a humanistic world view, based on the latest scientific achievements, especially among the younger generations.

4) To enhance methodology and practices of system forecasting, as well as humanitarian technologies in the management of political, economic and social development.

The academic activities of the ECBSF include:

1. Research: Conduct research as specified in the Center’s task list.
2. Publishing: The Center publishes a number of international academic and scholarly peer-reviewed journals in English and Russian: *Social Evolution & History*, *Journal of Globalization Studies*, *Историческая*

психология и социология истории, *История и современность*, as well as the *Evolution almanac* and volumes dedicated to the study of Big History, world history, and system forecasting.

3. Organizing: Organization of international seminars and conferences in connection with the activities of the Center, including various phases of Big History, social history and prehistory, as well as regional and global forecasting. We plan to conduct these seminars and conferences in cooperation with other academic organizations and media groups, in order to reach a wider audience.

4. Education: The preparation of courses and textbooks on Big History, socio-environmental history, cultural anthropology, political psychology and system forecasting in the universities of Moscow, Russia and the CIS; promotion of courses in Big History at universities and schools.

5. Political Consulting. System monitoring, analysis and forecasting of political situations, training workshops, etc.

The Center staff includes the research professors of the Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences: Akop Nazaretyan (Director), Leonid Grinin (Vice-Director), Andrey Korotayev, Eduard Kulpin and Yuri Lyubimov. The Center also has members that include a number of prominent Big Historians and specialists in evolution and systems forecasting from all over the world.

The Center’s activities are conducted in cooperation with a variety of organizations, including the “Uchitel” Publishing House, the

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Please plan to participate in the IBHA conference, August 3 - 5, 2012 at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. More information is at <http://ibhanet.org/>

International Big History Association, the “Education” TV Channel, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, the International Foundation for the Survival & Development of Humankind, and the Faculty of Global Processes at Moscow State University.

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**Leonid Grinin**, a philosopher of history and sociologist, is one of the founders of the ECBSF. Born in Kamyshin (the Volgograd Region), Grinin attended Volgograd Pedagogical University, where he got an M.A. in 1980. He got his Ph.D. from Moscow State University in 1996. He is a Research Professor and Director of Volgograd Center for Social Research, a vice-editor of the journals *History and Modernity* and *Philosophy and Society*, and a co-editor of the *Social Evolution & History* and *Journal of Globalization Studies* and co-editor of almanacs *History & Mathematics* and *Evolution*. Grinin is the author of 18 books and over 200 other scholarly publications dealing with his research interests.



*Professor Leonid Grinin*

#### *Major Contributions*

Leonid Grinin's current research interests include globalization studies, economic cycles, the long-term trends in the cultural evolution and evolution of technologies, periodization of history, political anthropology and long-term development of the political systems, world-systems studies.

#### *Periodization of history*

Grinin suggests a four-staged periodization of historical process. The transition from one stage to another is the change of all basic characteristics of the respective stage. As the starting point of such a change Grinin proposes the production principle that describes the major qualitative stages of the development of the world productive forces. Grinin singles out four principles of production: Hunter-gatherer;

Craft-Agrarian; Industrial; and Information-Scientific. To clear up the chronology of the beginning of each respective stage he proposes the three production revolutions: the Agrarian or Neolithic Revolution; the Industrial Revolution, and the Information-Scientific Revolution.

#### *Development of political systems*

Grinin insists that the two-stage scheme of the state macroevolution (Early State – Mature State) proposed by Henri Claessen and Peter Skalnik is not sufficient, and suggests that it should be modified as “Early State – Developed State – Mature State”, emphasizing that the differences between developed and early states are no less pronounced than the ones between the former and the mature states.

#### *Globalization and sovereignty*

In the world political science the subject of change, ‘diffusion’, or ‘disappearing’ of national sovereignty is widely debated. Grinin argues that on the whole globalization contributes to the change and reduction of state sovereign powers, and he investigates the reasons and consequences of the deliberate voluntary reduction of sovereign prerogatives as most states voluntarily and deliberately limit the scope of their sovereignty.

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**Andrey Korotayev** is an anthropologist, economic historian, and sociologist, with major contributions to world-systems theory, cross-cultural studies, Near Eastern history, and mathematical modeling of social and economic macrodynamics.

Born in Moscow, Andrey Korotayev attended Moscow State University, where he received a B.A. degree in 1984 and an M.A. in 1989. He earned a Ph.D. in 1993 from Manchester University, and in 1998 a Doctor of Sciences degree from the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Since 2000, he has been Professor and Director of the Anthropology of the East Center at the

Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, and Senior Research Professor in the Oriental Institute and Institute for African Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences. In 2003-2004, he was a visiting member at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ.

He is co-editor of the journals *Social Evolution & History* and *Journal of Globalization Studies*, as well as *History & Mathematics almanac* (together with Leonid Grinin and Arno Tausch).

Together with Askar Akayev and George Malinetsky he is a coordinator of the Russian Academy of Sciences Program "System Analysis and Mathematical Modeling of World Dynamics".

Korotayev is a laureate of the Russian Science Support Foundation in "The Best Economists of the Russian Academy of Sciences" nomination (2006).

Korotayev claims that the present-day world-system ("the World System"), which in the 2nd millennium CE encompassed the whole globe, originated in the 9th millennium BCE in direct connection with the Neolithic revolution. According to Korotayev, the center of this system was originally in West Asia.

In general, Korotayev and his colleagues have suggested a rather novel approach to the world-system analysis. Within this approach the main emphasis is moved to the generation and diffusion of innovations. If a society borrows systematically important technological innovations, its evolution already cannot be considered as really independent, but should rather be considered as a part of a larger evolving entity, within which such innovations are systematically produced and diffused. The main idea of the world-system approach was to find the evolving unit. The basic idea was that it is



*Professor Andrey Korotayev*

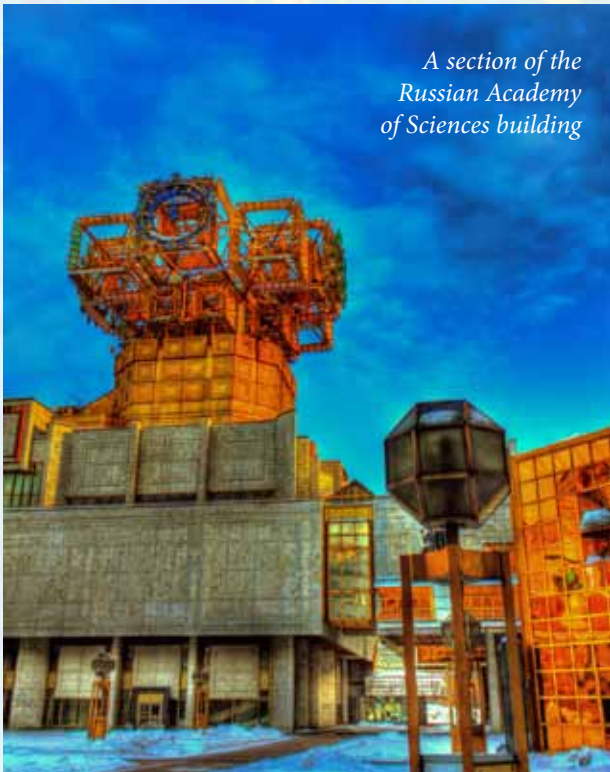
impossible to account for the evolution of a single society without taking into consideration that it was a part of a larger whole. However, traditional world-system analysis concentrated on bulk-good movements, and core – periphery exploitation, somehow neglecting the above-mentioned dimension. However, according to Korotayev, the information network turns out to be the oldest mechanism of the World System integration, and remained extremely important throughout its whole history, remaining important up to the present.

This is of importance for core – periphery exploitation. For example, without taking this mechanism into consideration it appears impossible to account for such things as the demographic explosion in the 20th century, whose proximate cause was the dramatic decline of mortality, but whose main ultimate cause was the diffusion of innovations produced almost exclusively within the World System core. This also suggests a redefinition of the World System core. Within the approach in question the core is not the World System zone, which exploits other zones, but rather the World System core is the zone with the highest innovation donor/recipient ratio, the principal innovation donor.

Korotayev suggests that the hyperbolic trend

observed for the world population growth after 10000 BCE does appear to be primarily a product of the growth of the World System. The presence of the hyperbolic trend itself indicates that the major part of the entity in question had some systemic unity, and Korotayev insists that the evidence for this unity is readily available. Indeed, he shows that we have evidence for the systematic spread of major innovations (domesticated cereals, cattle, sheep, goats, horses, plow, wheel, copper, bronze, and later iron technology, and so on) throughout the whole North African – Eurasian Oikumene for a few millennia BCE. As a result, the evolution of societies of this part of the world already at this time cannot be regarded as truly independent. By the end of the 1st millennium BCE we observe a belt of cultures, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with an astonishingly similar level of cultural complexity characterized by agricultural production of wheat and other specific cereals, the breeding of cattle, sheep, and goats; use of the plow, iron metallurgy, and wheeled transport; development of professional

*A section of the  
Russian Academy  
of Sciences building*



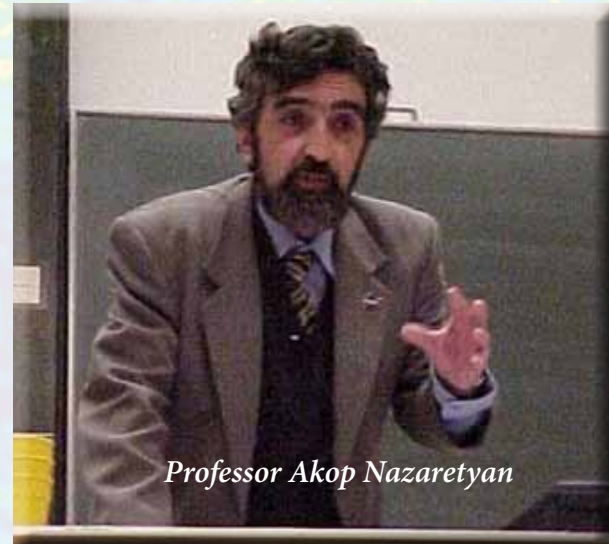
armies and cavalries deploying rather similar weapons; elaborate bureaucracies, and Axial Age ideologies, and so on – this list could be extended for pages. A few millennia before, we would find another belt of societies strikingly similar in level and character of cultural complexity, stretching from the Balkans up to the Indus Valley outskirts. Korotayev interprets this as a tangible result of the World System's functioning.

In addition, it appears necessary to maintain that Korotayev's theory of the World System development suggests a novel approach to the formation of a general theory of social macroevolution. The approach prevalent in social evolutionism is based on the assumption that evolutionary regularities of simple systems are significantly simpler than the ones characteristic of complex systems. A rather logical outcome of this almost self-evident assumption is that one should first study the evolutionary regularities of simple systems and only after understanding them move to more complex ones, whereas Korotayev's findings suggest that the simplest regularities accounting for extremely large proportions of all the macrovariation can be found precisely for the largest possible system – the human world, and, hence, the study of social evolution should proceed from the detection of simple regularities of the development of the most complex systems to the study of the complex laws of the dynamics of simple social systems.

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**Akop P. Nazaretyan** is Senior Research Fellow of the Oriental Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences and Professor of the Moscow State University. He is author of over 300 scholarly publications, including 'Anthropology of violence and culture of self-organization: Essays on evolutionary historical psychology' (Moscow: LKI, 2008, in Russian) and 'Evolution of non-violence. *Studies in*

*big history, self-organization and historical psychology.* Saarbrücken: LAP, 2010, *Civilization Crises within the Context of Universal History. Self-Organization, Psychology, and Forecasts* (Moscow: Mir, 2004, in Russian), “Fear of the dead as a factor in social self-organization” (Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour 35 [2005]: 155–169), “Western and Russian traditions of Big History” (Journal for General Philosophy of Science 36[2005]: 63–80), and *Intelligence in the Universe: Sources, formation and prospects*, (Moscow: Nedra, 1991, in Russian).



*Professor Akop Nazaretyan*

## Evolution: Big History Almanac

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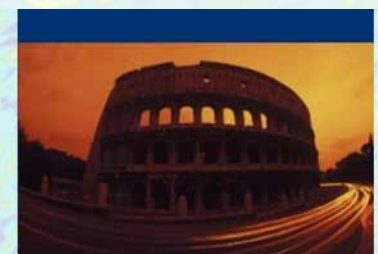
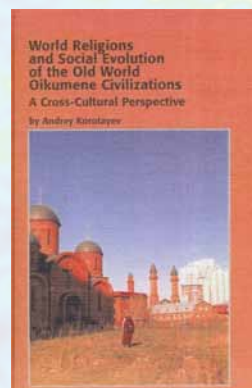
lessons of Big History. These are not just scholarly productions! This volume includes creative works on poetry (Gary Lawless) and children’s stories (Erika Gronek), as well as personal reflective pieces about life (James Tierney) and elementary school teaching (Jos Werkhoven).

The almanac is produced by Uchitel Publishing House in Volgograd (Russian Federation), which publishes a number of scholarly Russian and English language journals and has featured productions on Big History in past. For example, in 2005, *Social Evolution & History* 4 (1) produced a special issue, *Exploring the Horizons of Big History*, with guest editor Graeme Snooks (Australia). The sponsors of this production were the Eurasian Center

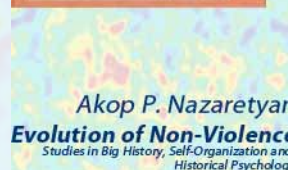
for Big History & System Forecasting (Russian Academy of the Sciences), the Faculty of Global Processes at Lomonosov Moscow State University (Russian Federation), the Volgograd Center for Social Research (Russian Federation), the International Big History Association, and the Collaborative for Global & Big History at the University of Southern Maine (USA).

The cost of the Almanac will be US\$20 including shipping. To order, please email Kseniya Biryukova at [k.bir@mail.ru](mailto:k.bir@mail.ru).

The views and opinions expressed in the International Big History Association newsletter are not necessarily those of the IBHA Board. The IBHA newsletter reserves the right to accept, reject or edit any material submitted for publication.



**Leonid Grinin**  
**The Evolution of Statehood**  
*From Early States to Global Society*



**Akop P. Nazaretyan**  
**Evolution of Non-Violence**  
*Studies in Big History, Self-Organization and Historical Psychology*



*“Teaching and Researching Big History:  
Exploring a New Scholarly Field”*  
**Call for Papers; IBHA Conference, August 3 - 5, 2012**  
Grand Valley State University

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The IBHA will be hosting the first ever international big history conference on August 3 - 5, 2012 at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The conference, whose title is “Teaching and Researching Big History: Exploring a New Scholarly Field,” will be the largest gathering of big historians ever assembled. Participants will be housed in the Meijer Honors College on campus, and will participate in a range of panels, roundtables, lectures, pedagogical workshops, and other collegiate activities. At its conference and its other activities, the IBHA seeks not only to discover and create new knowledge, but to shape a future in which humanity understands its common origins and its common destiny.



*On GVSU campus.*

To submit your paper proposal or a panel proposal online, please click on the “Conference” link on <http://ibhanet.org>.

Or please mail your proposal to:  
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## Benefits of Membership

- Opportunities to share and develop curricula for all levels: US high schools, secondary schools, colleges, and universities
- Eligibility to chair panels, serve on IBHA committees, stand for office in the IBHA.
- Outstanding international networking and collaboration
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- IBHA Members Newsletters highlight members' activities in Big History.

## Join the

### International Big History Association

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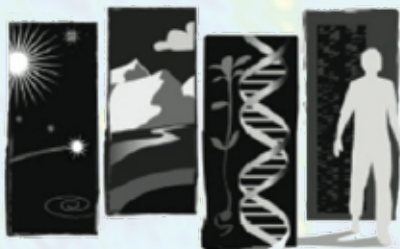
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