

Origins

The Bulletin of the International Big History Association
Volume VI Number 7



The Third
International
Big History
Conference,
University of
Amsterdam,
July 14 - 17

Announcing the first issue of the

Journal of Big History

in January 2017

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Origins. ISSN 2377-7729

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Thank you for your membership in the IBHA. Your membership dues all go towards the administration of the association, but do not by themselves cover our costs. The only paid position is a part time administrative assistant. Other costs are for our website, for example. [Please consider a tax deductible \(in the US\) gift](#) to our 501(C)3 and please consider remembering the IBHA in your will.



Announcing the first issue of the **Journal of Big History**

The International Big History Association is pleased to announce the publication of its *Journal of Big History*, the first issue of which will be available in January of 2017.

All members of the IBHA will receive the journal, which will present scholarship in the emerging field of big history. This is the most recent effort of the IBHA to promote, support, and sponsor the diffusion and improvement of academic and scholarly knowledge in the scientific field commonly known as Big History. Big History seeks to understand the integrated history of the Cosmos, Earth, Life, and Humanity, using the best available empirical evidence and scholarly methods.

This emerging field is characterized by a synthesis of disciplines. Geologists, astro-physicists, biologists, and others in the natural sciences have revolutionized our understanding of the entire known past. They learned how to read the historical narrative told by light, rocks, bones, blood, and genes. Humanists read written texts to develop new analytical syntheses. Together, professors and researchers in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities are augmenting and revitalizing knowledge in universities throughout the world.

Members of the IBHA have interests that go beyond our own planet and species. They may include the possibility of a multiverse, planets and astronomical bodies other than Earth, death and extinctions as well as life, and life forms other than humans. The big history of the past moves through the present into reasoned analyses of possible futures.

One practical value of big history research may be to nurture a cosmopolitan politics that seeks to help secure the environment from which we have evolved and which sustains us.

We invite your submission of original research to the *Journal of Big History*. You may format your article according to the Chicago Manual of Style. You may also use the format commonly used in your discipline. Manuscripts will normally be under 12,000 words, including endnotes and bibliography. Please attach high-resolution files of any images used for which you hold the copyright or legal permission to use. We use a double blind review process for research articles. Please submit your articles in a Word document to Lowell Gustafson, editor, at ibhanet@gmail.com. Book reviews may be sent to Cynthia Brown or John Mears at the same address.

Origins will continue to appear periodically to present articles about the activities and reflections of members and interested parties.

We look forward to your contribution to our common effort to explore big history.



Introduction

This paper, which I'm presenting in Amsterdam, is taken from the materials of the Environmental Planning and Landscape Architecture seminars that I held at the University of Venice some years ago. Those seminars resulted in a book from which I'm extrapolating some pages that I will illustrate by a Power Point presentation.

In Italy it is necessary to make a historical analysis of all aspects of a site before a project can be accepted. Therefore, the highlight of the seminars I gave was how to study history. The language and the different methods that I discussed can be also applied to studying history within a Big History context.

What is History?

It seems like a banal question, but it is actually a complex concept. A simplified formulation can be:

"History is the narration of facts that appeared in the past for which we've developed a suitable description and interpretation".

For each fact, we can apply the following equation:

$$\text{Historical fact} = [\text{Events} + \text{Processes}]$$

where each event is a single, punctual phenomenon, while the processes are the way by which all the events develop through time. Therefore, to understand what history is, we have to think of events in a chronological sequence that give origin to processes within a relative context of time/space. The emergence of complexity is a criterion by which the processes can be classified.

To study a historical fact means to apply three actions:

1. **Description.**
2. **Interpretation (hypothesis and trends).**
3. **Narration (a synthesis).**

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{Historical narrative} & = & \text{Objective description} + \text{Subjective interpretation} \\ \text{(a story)} & & \text{of events} \quad \quad \quad \text{of processes} \end{array}$$

Therefore, to understand what history is, we have to think of events in a

chronological sequence that gives origin to processes within a certain context of time/space.

Of course, it is impossible to take into account all the phenomena of the universe; therefore, only the most meaningful will be considered. Thus, history can be divided by themes and by definite periods of time.

The Three Contexts

We can distinguish three contexts: the cosmological, the biological and the anthropological. What we underline is their different nature and the kind of transformations that occur within each of them.

The cosmological context, which includes the other two as in a “Chinese-case pattern,” is characterized by matter and energy. Biological evolution acts within the second context, and the anthropological context features the appearance of *Homo sapiens*.

Furthermore, we notice that the anthropological context is involved in two kinds of development: the material activities of individual and societies and the cognitive emergence of the human’s mind production (the culture).

Aspects of the events and processes included within the three contexts:

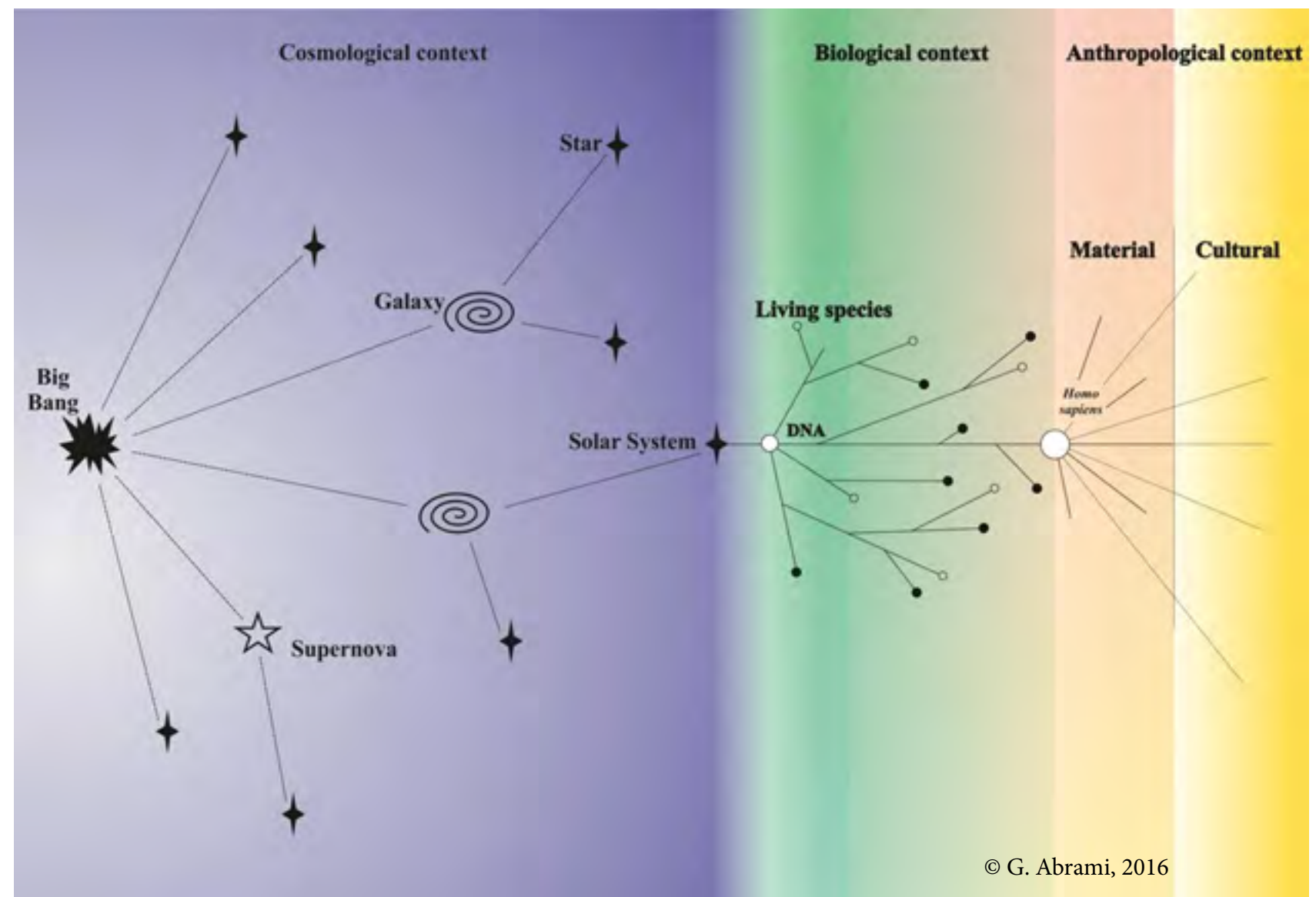
Cosmological context: Changes in the physical/ chemical composition of matter/energy - The gravity force in action - All forms of energy in action (dark energy ?) - etc.

Biological context: Evolution of the DNA

structure of organisms and populations - The appearance of new species - Expansion of ecosystems and of the larger biotic communities - etc.

Anthropological context

- a) **Material aspects: The development of concrete tools and buildings - Organization of spaces - Production and transformation of different materials - etc.**
- b) **Intellectual aspects (the culture): Thought – Knowledge – Consciousness - Memory - Values and Beliefs – Imaginations – Creativity - etc.**





Why Big History?

Big History takes into account the entire “time of being”: from cosmological transformations, through biological evolution, until human development.

Furthermore, while it is essential to dig deeper into scientific rigor with the analysis of historical facts, Big History helps to overcome the boundaries of specialized disciplines.

Some of the criteria considered:

- a) **All kinds of events and processes are studied considering their interdependence.**
- b) **The integration of the specialist disciplines involved in the historical research is essential; therefore, mutual interaction among them has to be encouraged.**
- c) **History makes humans aware of their place in the universe, on Earth**

and in society, while providing a cultural basis for all the people.

- d) **The facts of the past and their implications for the present highlight the social responsibility of historians.**
- e) **Historical knowledge is functional to a global ethic and to the growth of a common responsibility of all human beings for the future of our planet.**

A new system of periodization

A definition of periodization can be given as follows:

“Periodization is a system of classification by which history is divided into arbitrary segments of time”.

Each segment that represents a given process can be subdivided in discrete units. Then, for each of them, an event of origin (a turning point) and an ending event can be identified.

The choice can change according to the geographical area and to the prevailing cultural interest of the historians.

What we propose is a classification based on processes, determined by one specific event of origin that fits for one of the three considered contexts. Within this system the continuity and the homogeneity of all the events have a crucial relevance.

We give some examples of a new periodization for the cosmological, the biological and the anthropological contexts. The last one deals only with the history of Europe and of the Middle East:

THE COSMOLOGICAL CONTEXT			
PERIOD	The event of origin	EPOCH and processes	Transformations occurred
THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS	The Big Bang (B.B.) (13.8 billion years ago)	Matter/Energy formation (from a fraction of seconds after the Big Bang)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Formation of protons and electrons -Formation of atoms of hydrogen and helium -The cosmic background radiation
		The Cosmos lights up (12.7 billion years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stars appear after hydrogen atoms begin to fuse. -Formation of chemical elements -Explosion of the dying stars and the formation of supernova
		The shaping of Galaxies	-Billions of stars cluster into galaxies because of the gravity force.
		The settlement of Solar System (4.5 billion years ago)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Solar system is formed of the debris of older stars. -Formation of planets and of other celestial bodies
		The strengthening of planet Earth (from 4.0 billion years ago)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Big changes occur involving the atmospheres and the Earth's crust. -The breakup of Pangaea massive continent

THE BIOLOGICAL CONTEXT			
PERIOD	The event of origin	EPOCH and processes	LIFE EVOLUTION
APPEARANCE OF LIFE (from 3.5 million years ago)	The first cells with DNA (3.5 billion years ago)	Emergence of Prokaryotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blue-green bacteria spread out - Appearance of bacteria able to fix nitrogen from the air
		Evolution of Eukaryotes (from 1.5 billion years ago)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arising of nucleated cells with the DNA within chromosomes - Appearance of sexual reproduction
		The Cambrian explosion (600 million y.a.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Metazoan evolved from a common ancestor. - The diversity of life began
		The Reign of Dinosaurs (from 210 million years ago)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cretaceous, Jurassic and Triassic eras of dinosaurs - Presence of the biggest Brachiosaurus species
		Rise of Mammals (from 65 million years ago)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Several little mammals were hunting at nighttime. - Aquatic mammals, flying m., rodents and primate appear
		The development of Hominini (from 7 million years ago)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appearance of Australopithecine - Homo erectus recorded in Eurasia contemporary with different species of Hominini

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONTEXT			
PERIOD	The event of origin	EPOCH	Transformations occurred (In blue ink the cultural context)
PREHISTORY	The appearance of <i>Homo sapiens</i> (ca. 250.000 years ago)	Archehistory (after 200.000 years ago)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Development of burials -Development of language -Development of parietal art
		Protohistory (after 35.000 years ago)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Emergence of abstract/imaginative thinking -Emergence of mythology -The agriculture revolution -Development of fortified villages and of megalithic construction -Emergence of the Town/State -Development of the first pictographs
NEOHISTORY	The arising of the cuneiform characters of writing (5.300 years ago)	Ancient History (after 3800 years ago)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use of the writing for civil codes and for religious texts -Development of empires -Expansion of Indo-Europeans -Peculiarity of the Axial Period -Affirmation of the Roman Codex -Development of the critical thinking
		Middle Ages (after 380 CE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The consequences of the Edict of Thessaloniki -The spread of Islam -The epic of the Crusades -The expansion of feudalism in Europe -The fall of Constantinople -Petrarch and the rise of the Renaissance
		Modern Age (after 1492 CE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Development of travels after the discovery of America -The emergence of nation states -Galilei and the progress in astronomy -Descartes and modern western philosophy -The spread of the Enlightenment -Affirmation of Newton's law of universal gravity
		Contemporary History (after 1760 CE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Development of the industrial revolution -Affirmation of Darwin's theory of evolution -Freud and the emergence of the studies on psychology -Einstein's Theory of General Relativity -The consequences of the two world wars -The discovery of DNA and studies on the genome

The Mission of the Big History

We can say that Big History can provide a global insight in the transformational processes acting in particular on our planet. The historical narrative can also help to envision the possible connections between the past and the future evolution of reality.

At this point one could ask: who will make the narration? Different levels of knowledge are implemented. Firstly, there are the specialists in the different fields of research; secondly, there could be a review of all the scientific contributions; thirdly, there could be an integration among the different topics considered; fourthly, a final narration could be given as an interpretation and a synthesis of the collected data, using an appropriate language.

Then the basic knowledge given by the Big History could be spread out among all the people. This fact will improve the cooperation needed in order to achieve a better world for the next generations and for the survival of the existing natural environment with its living beings.



“Why study the ancient past? Because it gives us perspective and humility. There are an infinite number of stories that we could’ve had. We only get one, and wow, did we ever get a good one.”

Kenneth Lacovara, *Hunting for Dinosaurs*

From TED TALKS, 30/04/2016

The cyclic perception of time.

“In archaic time human beings focused on the contemplation of the Sky, searching for signs of the cosmic order and for the divinities that ruled it. Megaliths, pyramids and temples were erected attempting to get closer to the gods trying to steal their secret of immortality.

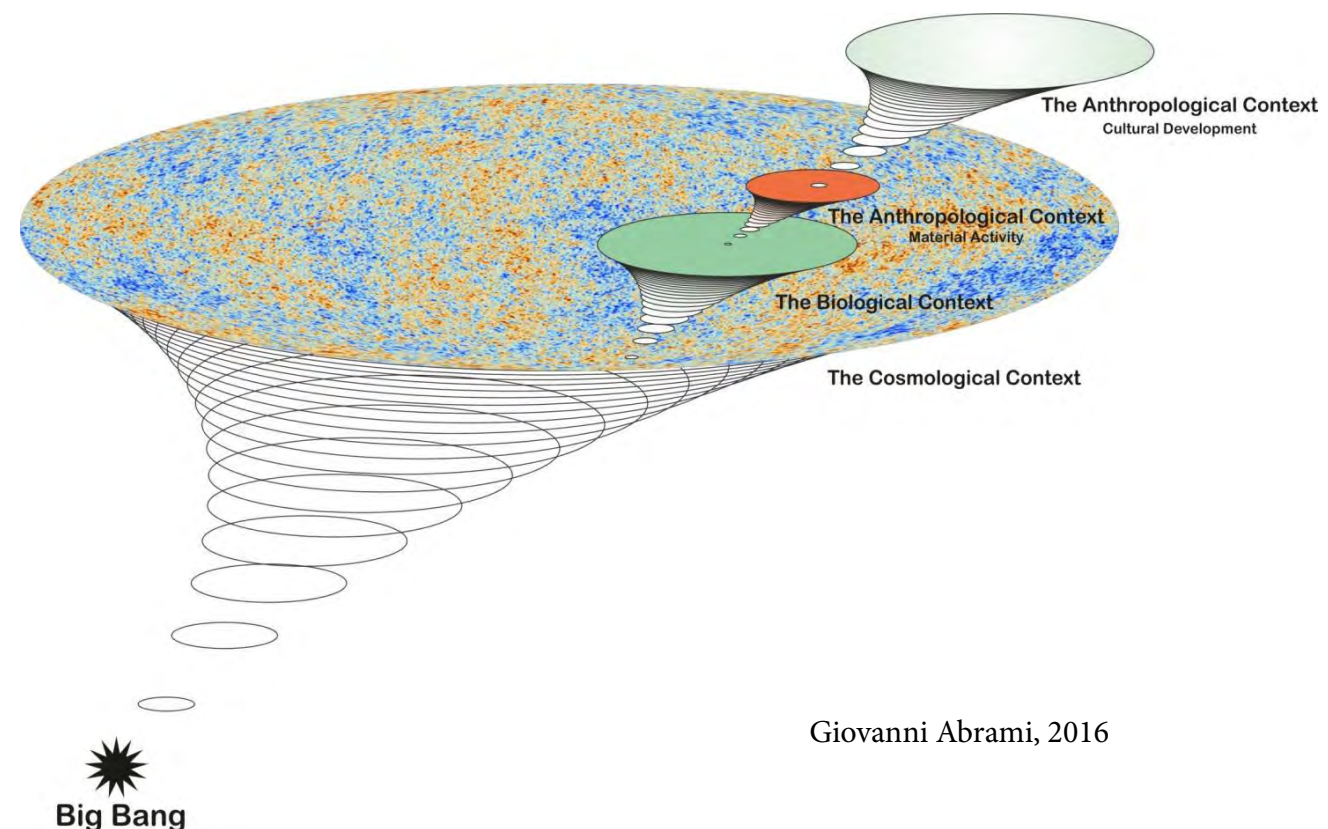
In ancient Greece philosophers developed a new understanding of the world

explaining nature for what it really is: a matter made of atoms!

During the Renaissance the attention was directed towards the human being. Magnificent mansions were surrounded by large gardens intended as a model of the Paradise on Earth. At the same time, the perfect human body became an object of study for painters and sculptors, and soon after for newcomers looking for objective knowledge: the scientists.

Darwin revealed the basic process by which living beings become suited to the environment. After that, there was the discovery of an helix that proves how the “selfish gene” programs the structure of our organism.

In present times a new growing interest is targeted again towards the sky. Thus we understand more and more about the story of the “creation”, at the same time we are just waiting to discover other planets and some life signs, which could drive us through the immensity of the cosmos. When this circle will be closed, a whole unique history of the world will become evident to all the people.”



Giovanni Abrami, 2016



BIG HISTORY, SMALL WORLD

CYNTHIA STOKES BROWN

BERKSHIRE

Big history becomes engaging and personal in *Big History, Small World* by Cynthia Stokes Brown, the only guide in English to a new approach to history that has been specifically designed for high school students. It's also ideal for the general reader who shares Bill Gates's fascination with this new blend of history and science, and it fits neatly with the free curriculum available at the Big History Project, co-founded by Professor David Christian and Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft. *Big History, Small World* is organized into twelve chapters. In the first chapter, Brown discusses the scientific method. In the last chapter she discusses the different ways people interpret big history and find meaning in it. The other ten chapters are based on eight major turning points, or thresholds, in the cosmic story. One threshold, the emergence of life, gets two chapters, while a discussion of the future fills chapter eleven. This book is not formatted as a traditional textbook, although it can easily be used as one. Each chapter has questions on the frontier of knowledge, as well as suggestions of how the content applies directly to the reader, to answer the perennial question: "Why do I have to learn this?" There are illustrations, charts, diagrams, a glossary and timeline, and short biographies of scientists and historians who have been influential in developing big history.

Cynthia Stokes Brown has taught world history in high-school and trained high-school teachers at Dominican University of California, where she piloted big history courses and helped initiate the big history program now required for all freshmen. She is the author of the general-interest book on big history, *Big History: From the Big Bang to the Present* (New York: New Press, 2nd ed. 2012) and also wrote a university-level textbook with David Christian and Craig Benjamin, *Big History: Between Nothing and Everything* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2014). She is a founding member of the International Big History Association and associate editor of its forthcoming *Journal of Big History*.

9781614720317

June 2016

Ebook editions available via all major distributors, and at the [Berkshire website](#).

New and Returning IBHA Members

One of the key purposes of the IBHA is for those of us who are interested in Big History to have a place to associate. It is a place to learn of other members' Big History activities and thoughts. So we are delighted to welcome new members to the IBHA – and by the vote of confidence and recognition of the value of our association by those who have renewed their membership. It is a pleasure to have each of you with us.



Larry Arnhart

Gabriel Gromadzyn

Dwight Collins

Allison Hopper

John Cox

Andrey Korotayev

Joshua Fisher

Cadell Last

Robert Flanagan

Judit Petenyi

Elizabeth Fraser

Peter Rathmann

Anton Grinin

Pedro Russo

Leonid Grinin

N Jacob Wamberg

IBHA members are from:

Argentina
Australia
Austria
Bahrain
Belgium
Brazil
Canada
Chile
China
Denmark

France
Germany
Hong Kong
India
Ireland
Italy
Japan
Korea
Netherlands
Nicaragua

Norway
Peru
Russia
Serbia
South Korea
Spain
United Kingdom
United States



Third IBHA Conference

July 14 - 17, 2016

Amsterdam

INTERNATIONAL BIG HISTORY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

July 14-17, 2016

The University of Amsterdam

The Netherlands

Building Big History: Research and Teaching

The International Big History Association (IBHA) defines its purpose as “to promote, support and sponsor the diffusion and improvement of the academic and scholarly knowledge of the scientific field of endeavor commonly known as “Big History” by means of teaching and research and to engage in activities related thereto.”

Article 2 of the IBHA Articles of Incorporation.

The theme for the 2016 conference is “Building Big History: Research and Teaching.” The conference seeks to present the latest and the best in Big History research and teaching, while creating a forum for the articulation and discussion of questions that are central to Big History. Among the topics that are to be addressed at the conference through a series of panels, roundtables, and discussions, are: Approaches to Big History; Big History research agenda; Scholarship contributing to Big History; Big History teaching at universities, secondary, and primary schools; achievements and challenges; Little Big Histories; Reactions to Big History.

All presenters at the conference must be members of IBHA. Presenters may become members at www.ibhanet.org and will need to do so prior to registration for the conference.

The IBHA Conference will convene on premises of the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, located in the center of this beautiful European city. Attendees will have the option of selecting from one of several hotels in Amsterdam and the surrounding area with whom special conference arrangements have been made.

For all things Amsterdam, you can go to <http://www.iamsterdam.com/en/>. For a complete guide to the Netherlands and its many attractions, you can visit <http://www.holland.com/us/tourism.htm>. If you have more time to explore the larger area, similar websites exist for nearby Belgium, France, Germany, and Great Britain. Please find more details on the conference at www.ibhanet.org. We very much hope that you can join us at the 3rd IBHA conference.

Program Committee: Jonathan Markley (chair), Cynthia Brown, David Christian, Lowell Gustafson, Andrey Korotayev, Esther Quaedackers, Fred Spier, Sun Yue.

The conference will take place at the Oudemanhuispoort (Old Man's Home Gate). Part of it was built, as the name implies, as a home for poor old people in the early 17th century. In the late

19th century the University of Amsterdam started to use the building. Around that the same time book traders also moved into the little shops that line the main hallway of the building. The book traders are

still there. Fred Spier started teaching a Big History course in Oudemanhuispoort 20 years ago. It ran there for 10 years.



Oudemanhuispoort (Old Man's Home Gate)

We have retained two hotels – [IBIS Amsterdam Centre Stopera](#) within a 15 minute walk to the University of Amsterdam, and the [Volkshotel](#) (<https://www.volkshotel.nl/>, use code “IBHA” for discounted rate) within a 15 minute metro ride to the University. The two hotels are totally different types of hotels; Check the great reviews of these hotels on [tripadvisor](#) (<http://www.tripadvisor.com/>). Please start planning to join us in Amsterdam in July of 2016!

For more information, please contact Donna Tew at tewd@gvsu.edu. IBHA Office Coordinator.

Before and / or after the conference

Since you'll be in one of the world's great cities for the IBHA conference, you'll want to take advantage of its museums, quirky festivals, theatre, live music, laid-back bars and delightful restaurants. A few of the most popular museums are located together on Museumplein, such as the [Rijksmuseum](#), [Van Gogh Museum](#) and [Stedelijk Museum](#). Equally unmissable are the [Anne Frank House](#), [Hermitage Amsterdam](#), [EYE Filmmuseum](#) and [Foam](#).



You may wish to take a [canal boat tour](#) of the city. With its sense of style, Amsterdam inspires [shopping](#). You'll want to enjoy the city's [cuisine](#) and [nightlife](#).

What a great location for our conference!



Big History (and the IBHA Conference) at the University of Amsterdam

The next and third IBHA conference will be held from July 14th to July 17th 2016 at the University of Amsterdam.

The University of Amsterdam has a long history. It was founded as the Atheneum Illustre in 1632, during the Dutch Golden Age. The prosperous city of Amsterdam wanted and needed a university to educate its citizens about the riches of the world. Yet the central government did not allow it to have one, since a university had already been established in nearby Leiden in 1575, possibly as a reward for that city's successful resistance against the Spanish. Amsterdam, however, was not discouraged and simply established an educational institution under a different name. It subsequently hired a number of internationally renowned scientists and scholars and started teaching from the Agnietenkapel, a former nunnery. This chapel, which currently houses the university museum, is right around the corner from the IBHA conference location.

The university's slightly anarchistic nature never quite disappeared. After almost 400 years and numerous upheavals, some of which led to major university reforms, the institution still identifies with its somewhat rebellious roots. Even today, one of its three core values is a form of determination, described on the university's website as "inherent to any Amsterdam citizen who looks at the world from an independent, critical and self conscious perspective. University of Amsterdam researchers, teachers and students are competent rebels who, boldly yet responsibly, choose their own paths and set trends."

Partly because of its history and identity, the University of Amsterdam was one of the first in the world to adopt the groundbreaking and unconventional approach to history that was being pioneered by David Christian at Macquarie University in Sydney in the early 1990s. After visiting David in 1992, University of Amsterdam professor Johan Goudsblom brought the syllabus of the big history course that was being taught in Sydney home and decided to set up a similar course at his own university. He did so together with his former Ph.D. student Fred Spier, who after Goudsblom's retirement in 1997 became the course's main organizer.

The new course proved to be a big success. About 200 students attended its first run and hundreds of students have registered for the course each year ever since. Within the university, the course's success occasionally led to some resistance, mainly from faculty members who deemed the big history approach to be too broad. But thanks to student engagement and the strong support of a number of the university's most prominent scientists a semi-permanent position in big

history was created for Fred Spier in 1997 and was turned into a permanent position in 2006.

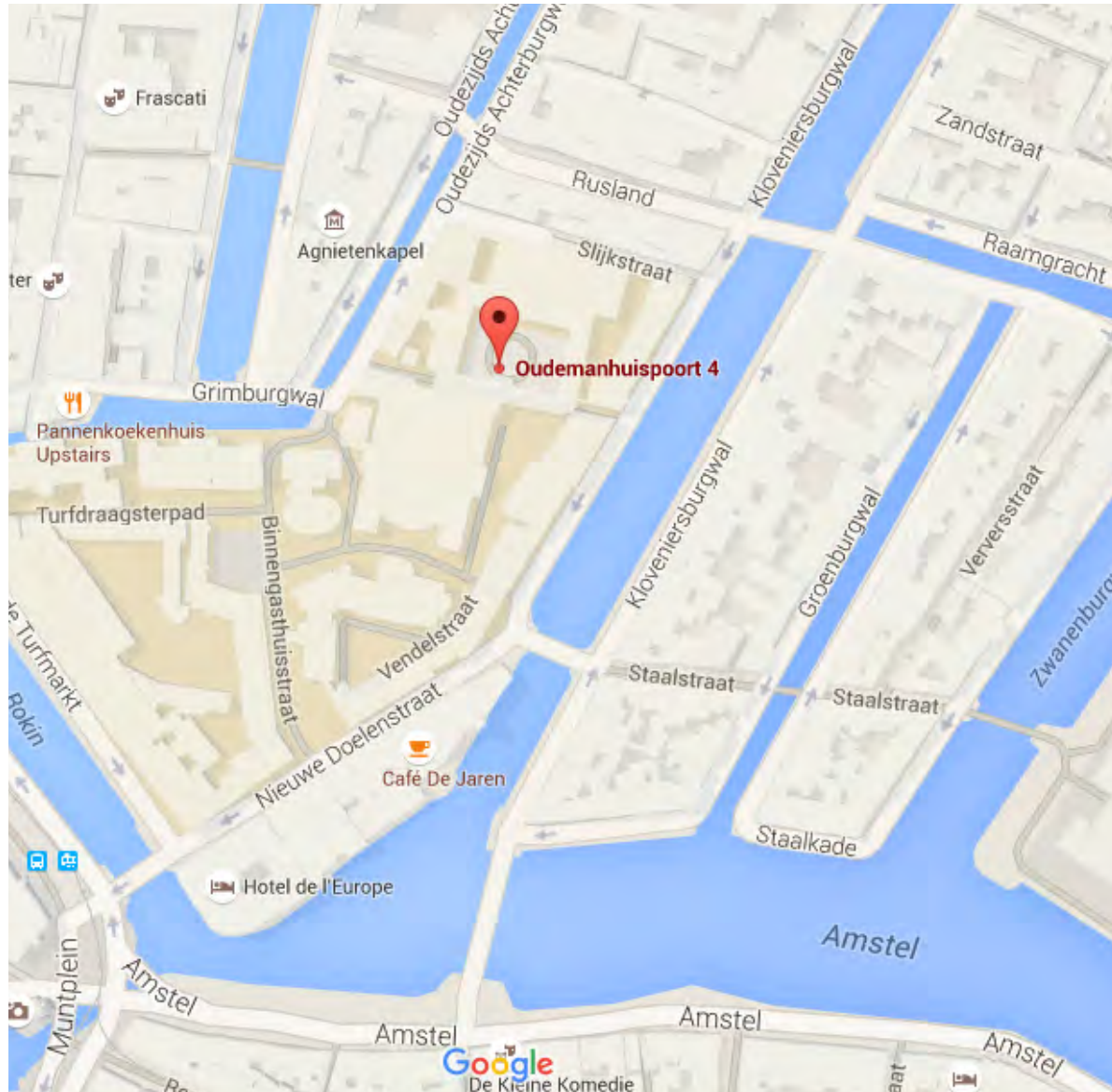
Meanwhile, new big history courses, aimed at slightly different student populations, were established both within the University of Amsterdam and outside the university. The university started to function as a kind of big history course contractor, which in turn made it possible for the university to develop into a regional big history hub. The university's latest efforts to create a big history MOOC that will be published on Coursera in early 2016 (alongside Macquarie's big history MOOC that will be published on the same platform in the upcoming months) neatly fits into this pattern.

All of these developments have led to the creation of another permanent position in big history in August 2015, which will be filled by Esther Quaedackers. These developments have also enabled the University of Amsterdam offer to host the 2016 IBHA conference. This offer has been accepted by the IBHA, which, given the university's dedication to big history, deemed it to be a suitable place to hold its first conference outside of the US.

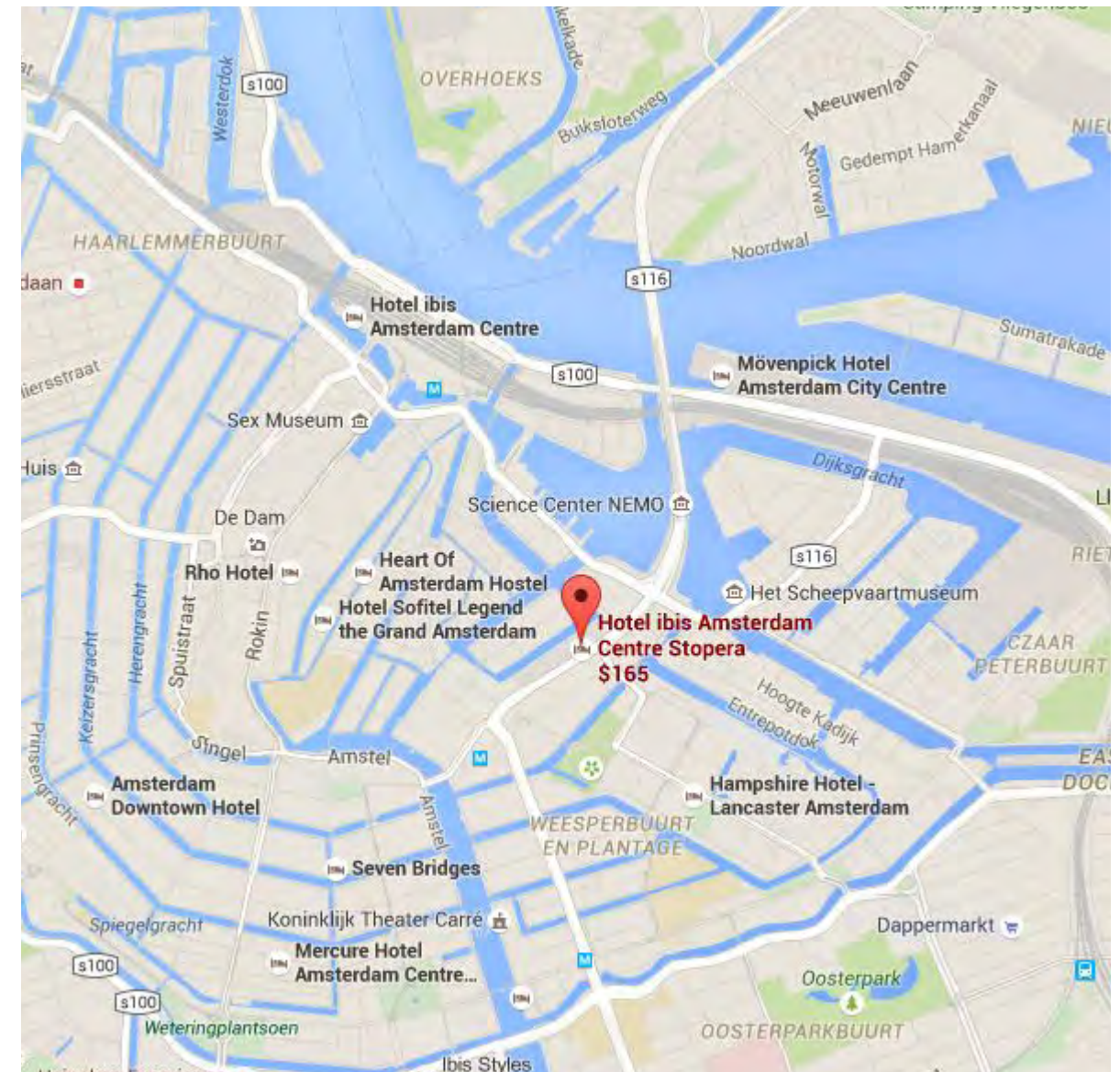
For more information on the history of big history at the UvA, you can also read Fred Spier's [The Small History of the Big History Course at the University of Amsterdam](#) that appeared in World History Connected in May 2005.

The Agnietenkapel
(source: Wikimedia Commons)

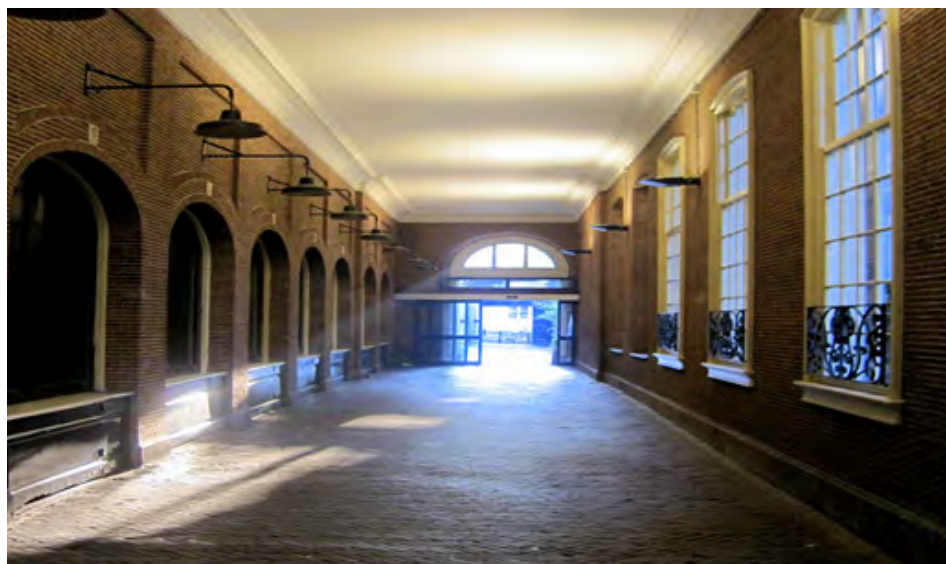


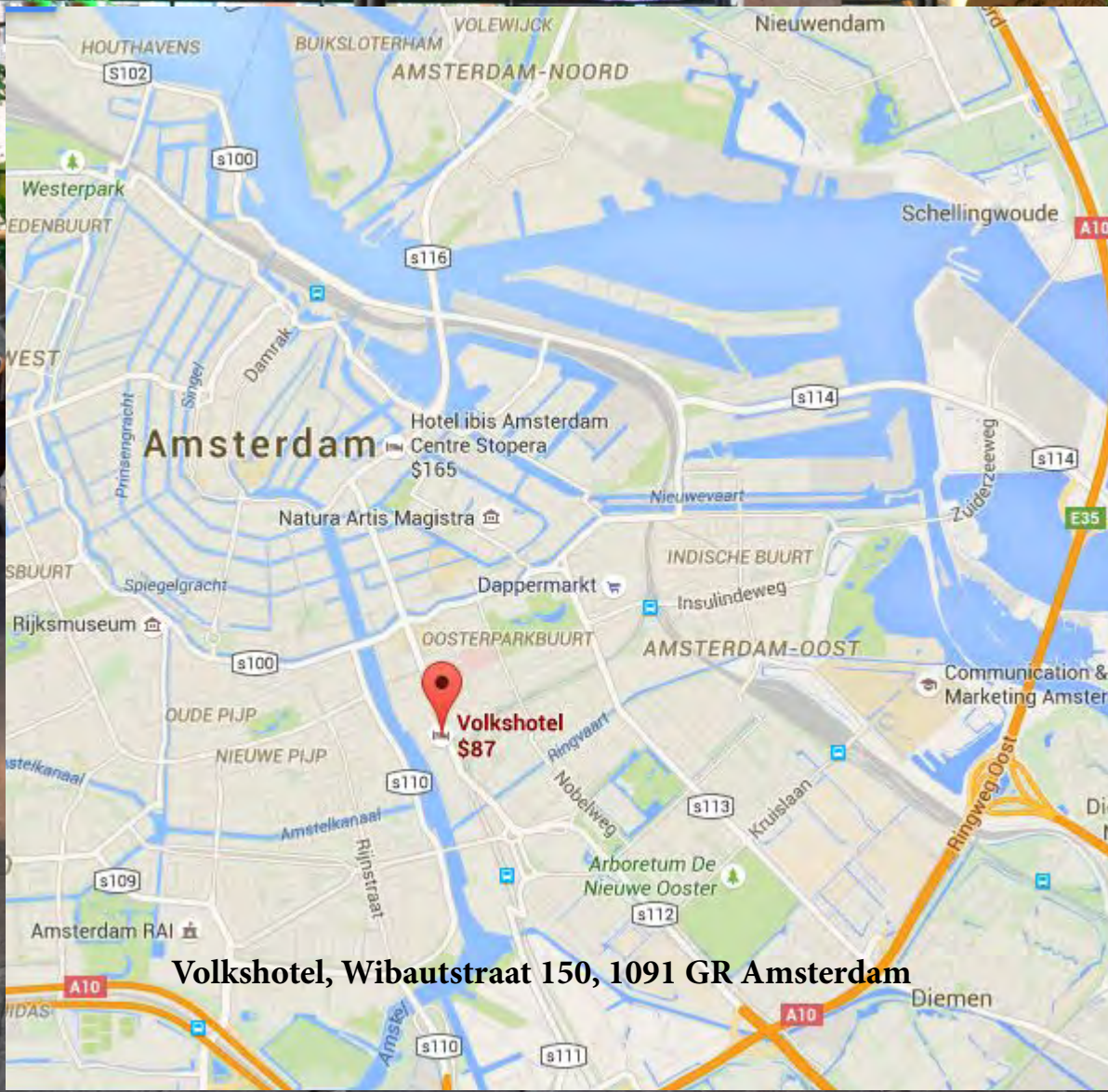


Location of Conference: Oudemanhuispoort 4-6, 1012 EZ Amsterdam



Hotel ibis Amsterdam Centre Stopera, Valkenburgerstraat





Volkshotel, Wibautstraat 150, 1091 GR Amsterdam

The Amsterdam Conference Schedule for **IBHA 2016 has gone mobile!**

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<https://guidebook.com/g/ibha2016/>

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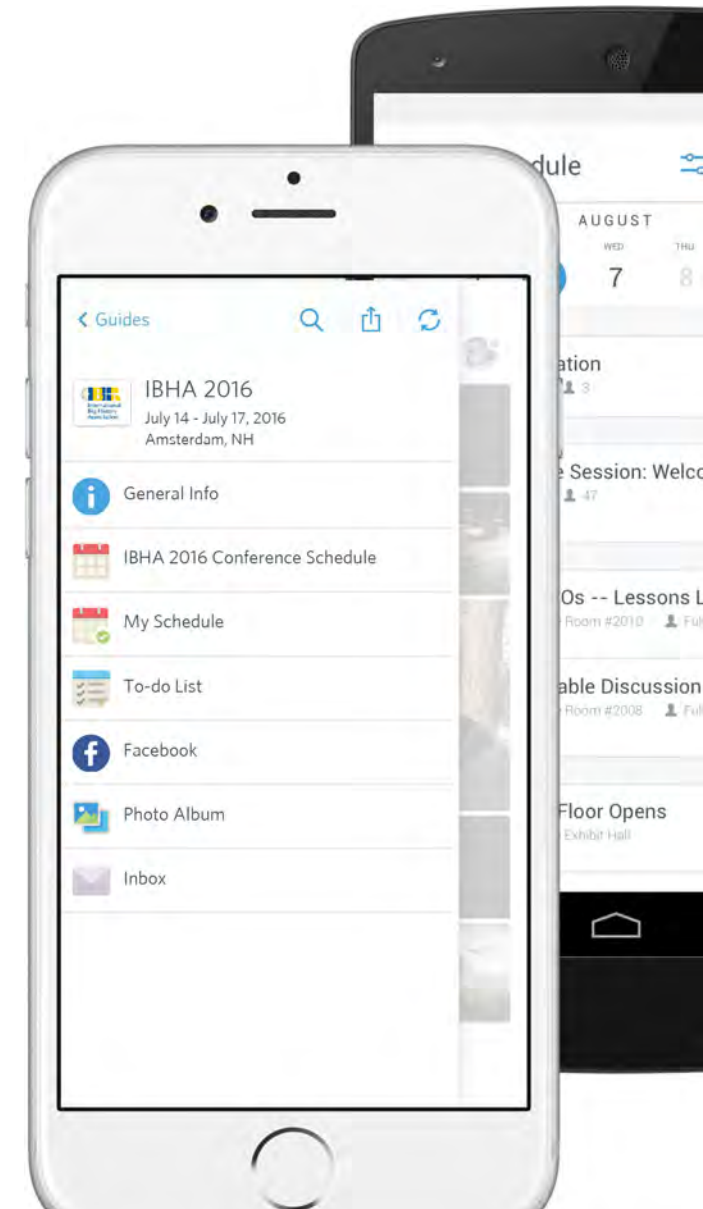
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IBHA 2016

.....

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On your laptop or PC, please go to
<https://guidebook.com/guide/69996/>



Nominations for IBHA Board of Directors

The members of the IBHA Board of Directors hold staggered three year terms. Each year, a few seats become open. This year, four seats become open. Since the IBHA was founded, there have been a number of Board members who have cycled off the Board, a number of new people who have joined it, and a number who have stayed on. In the interest of serving the purpose of the IBHA while fostering both continuity and change, the IBHA selects Board candidates in two ways:

- (1) the existing Board proposes a list of names; and
- (2) IBHA members may identify additional names

An electronic election for new Board members began on June 1, 2016, and end on June 30, 2016. Members of the IBHA were sent an email from simplyvoting.com on June 1 with instructions for how to vote.

The new Board will be announced in July.

We welcome your active engagement in this important process.

Barry Rodrigue is an archaeologist, geographer and historian. His technique of telescoping local, regional, global and universal studies into a unified context made him an early advocate of micro/macro studies. A founder of the International Big History Association (IBHA), he serves on its Board of Directors as International Coordinator. He is also a founding member of the Eurasian Center for Megahistory & System Forecasting (Russian Academy of Sciences), in which he is a research professor, as well as of the Asian Big History Association. He organized the big history sessions at the 2011 WHA conference in Beijing, the 2012 Global Futures 2045 conference in Moscow, and the 2015 International Congress of Historical Sciences in Jinan. He serves on the board of the Network of Global & World History Organizations as an IBHA representative. His latest production is the three-volume collection, *From Big Bang to Galactic Civilizations: A Big History Anthology*, which includes articles by 100 scholars from 25 nations.

John Mears is a member of the history faculty at Southern Methodist University for forty-nine years, is retiring this spring as professor emeritus. A specialist in early modern Europe, he received his undergraduate education at the University of Minnesota and his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. He began to study what we now call big history in the 1980s after he joined the World History Association, ultimately serving as the association's president. His scholarly work increasingly involved giving conference papers as well as publishing article and essays that placed topics of persistent concern within the framework of cosmic evolution. He is currently writing what has become a two-volume work tentatively entitled *TO BE HUMAN: A PERSPECTIVE ON OUR COMMON*

HISTORY in which he sets forth an interpretation of the human experience viewed as an integral dimension of the epic of evolution. As a member of the IBHA board, he would hope to encourage the elaboration of interdisciplinary approaches that would tighten connections between the natural sciences and humanities.

Lucy B. Laffitte: My education and experience are detailed in my nomination announcement so I thought I would share what shaped my journey to Big History here. My intellectual north star aligned early on with big thinkers like Rachel Carson (the narrative of ecosystems), David Attenborough (the narrative of evolution) and Carl Sagan (the narrative of the cosmos). I sought to build a bedrock understanding of “natural history” as an undergrad—taking astronomy, geology of the solar system, physical geography, paleontology, evolution, biogeography, ecology, climatology, and meteorology. Bolstering this with a PhD in environmental history, environmental decision-making, and institutional systems thinking, I came away curious about the relationships between ecosystems, human institutions, and the status of human dignity. When my practice as a science educator introduced me to the work of Chaisson, and then Christian, Spier, and Brown, I felt a jolt, knowing I'd found an intellectual home. I would be honored to contribute my services to an organization that supports the growing group of scholars, teachers, writers, and researchers that fuse scientific evidence and the arrow of time into narratives that edify the socio-ecological system that is now planet Earth.

Andrey Korotayev: My original research interests were in Ancient Yemen and

general theory of social evolution. When I first heard about the Big History idea in the mid-1990s, this idea appeared very attractive for me immediately, as it implied the possibility to find some meaningful patterns that could be relevant for a few types of evolution. In 2000s together with Alexander Markov and Leonid Grinin I have undertake a few attempts to identify patterns that are common for the biological and social phases of the Big History and to demonstrate that they could be described with similar mathematical models. Finally, I hope to contribute to a general theory of universal evolution that could serve as a sound theoretical basis for the Big History. With respect to the IBHA activities I hope to contribute to the integration of a rather substantial Eurasian Big History community into the global community of the big historians. I also hope to contribute to the publication activities of IBHA - first of all to the publication of scholarship from the forthcoming Amsterdam IBHA conference and additional research by Big Historians. I promise to contribute to this as much effort as possible.

Lowell Gustafson: I have appreciated being secretary and vice-president of the IBHA, as well as editor of *Origins*. It has been a great intellectual adventure to learn from so many of the brilliant people who have developed this new field — and such a pleasure to see how students from preschool to graduate school, academics, professionals, retirees, and citizens of nations from around the world share a passion for exploring the evidence based narrative of the entire known past. My modest contributions include chapters such as “From Particles to Politics,” “Big Politics,” web publications such as “Nature and the Imagination,” academic papers such as “Science, the Deep Past, and the Political,” and other publications and presentations. I am a professor of political science at Villanova University in Pennsylvania, USA, with a PhD in Government and Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia. Goals that I share with others include developing an IBHA academic journal that will publish scholarly articles about Big History, inviting more people to participate in the IBHA, and to watch how the field of Big History develops.

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**IBHA Board
Election
Runs from
June 1 - 30, 2016**
(look for instruction email from
simplyvoting.com)

World History Conference

July 2 - 5, 2016 in Ghent, Belgium

Craig Benjamin, current Treasurer of the IBHA and outgoing President of the World History Association, wants to remind members of the IBHA that the World History Association will hold its 25th annual conference in Ghent, Belgium from July 2-5, 2016, ten days before the IBHA Amsterdam Conference. The WHA conference will be held in Het Pand (right), the historic cultural center of Ghent University. Het Pand is an old Dominican monastery located in the heart of the city on the banks of the river Leie, near the medieval port. If any IBHA members planning on attending and presenting at Amsterdam are also interested in attending and perhaps presenting at the WHA Conference in Ghent, please contact Craig Benjamin who can assist in organizing designated Big History panels. Craig's email is: benjamic@gvsu.edu



Big History in India

The Big History Association of India (BHAi) has just formed. Its President is Shweta Sinha Deshpande (an archaeologist) and its vice president is Rana P.B. Singh (a geographer). The BHAi will be based at Symbiosis International University (SIU) in Pune, in the Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts (SSLA), where Professor Deshpande is also Deputy Director, with SSLA Director Anita Patankar. SIU is a modern and forward-thinking institution with a student population of 27,000. Its vision incorporates the Indian belief of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam – the World as One Family. In this way, Big History has a very appropriate home. For some background, we include below Professor Deshpande's essay, 'India: Evolving a Big History', which is a chapter in the new volume of *From Big Bang to Galactic Civilizations: A Big History Anthology*, Volume II, *Education and Understanding: Big History around the World*, Delhi: Primus Books, 2016. The launching of the three-volume Big History anthology will take place at the Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts in December, and many members of the BHAi are authors in this important global collection.

India: Evolving a Big History

Shweta Sinha Deshpande

Symbiosis International University

When we attempt to answer the question, What is history?, our answer, consciously or unconsciously, reflects our own position in time, and forms part of our answer to the broader question, what view we take of the society in which we live.

Edward H. Carr, *What is History*, 1967: 5.

In our era, as the world is shrinking in response to virtual connectivity and global trade, as ideologies influence individuals as much as nations, Big History's all-encompassing and interlinked picture is not only valid, but necessary. This chapter considers the traditional Indian form of Big History, which calculated cosmic cycles of universes created and destroyed every 8.64 billion years. We see how this universal cosmic history devolved and was replaced by a fragmented Western

model of macrohistory over the last two centuries. Now, as a result of a newly developing macrohistory, as well as the field of Big History, India has the potential to evolve an independent and historically corroborated idea of its prehistoric and historical development. This is a process that holds the promise for validating perspectives of a global and a cosmic scale, and for uniting peoples instead of dividing them. In this way, the best parts of globalization can become antidotes for its worst parts.

The Evolution of Indian Macrohistory

India is a country that thrives on its rich heritage. It's a place where the archaeologist's spade is often a tool for proving the credentials of an epic hero and where an understanding of the big perspective has always been important. India has continuously defined its historical and social past with its grand epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. These literary classics have had a pervasive influence on India's people, catering to intellectuals and common folks alike. As an archaeologist, with first-hand data of important cultural markers within our civilization, I realize the responsibility that we shoulder in terms of a nation's and a people's identity. I've also come to realize how our interpretation of the larger context also shapes these identities.





Shweta Sinha Deshpande (centre foreground) and archaeological field crew,
Ahar Chalcolithic Excavation, Gilund, Rajasthan, India, 1999.
Source: Sanjay Deshpande.

Modern archaeologists and historians in India, as well as globally, have tended to focus on conducting microstudies aimed at scientifically understanding the details of socio-economic and political phenomenon within their own historically restricted timescales. Though very important, such works have often failed to relate their results to a bigger picture, while, at the same time, macrohistorians have failed to incorporate such focused studies into a new macrosynthesis. Thus, I've come to realize that we are prisoners of an unrelated, detailed and antiquated history. In the case of India, the people are presently connected to either a traditional folklore history or an out-of-date identity, one first developed during British rule and then adjusted during the Nationalist movement that followed. A perspective linking new data to a new overview is what is needed today.

Prior to the nineteenth century colonial phase, India, while not united politically, had a broad historical canopy that defined its people and their origins. This narrative was passed down orally and then written down as religious texts, such as the *Vedas*, *Epics* and *Puranas*. With a traditional religious history

of our country going back millions of years in the four *Yugas*, or eras, and with an exact number of years assigned to each, it is not surprising that these religious texts were understood as excerpts of past events.

Satya Yuga	1,728,000 years
Treta Yuga	1,296,000 years
Dwapara Yuga	864,000 years
Kali Yuga	<u>432,000 years</u>
	4,320,000 years Mahayuga Cycle
Day of Brahma	4.32 Billion Years
Day and Night of Brahma	8.64 Billion Years

The events within these documents were interlinked to form a macrohistory, which, in turn, formed the identity of the country and its people. It was to these texts that the eighteenth century British turned, in order to enlighten their understanding of India's past, in the absence of historical records from before the Persian (600 BCE) and Greek (325 BCE) invasions.

In their efforts to seek an understanding of the Indian people and their macrohistory, scholars, like Sir William Jones (1746–1794), were able to link the ancient Indian Sanskrit language, and hence the people who used it, to European languages, such as Latin and German, and propose a common ancestry. As Jones wrote:

The *Sanscrit* language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the *Greek*, more copious than the *Latin*, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologist could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists...¹

This idea of a mother culture beyond the sub-continental cultural boundaries of India was instrumental in introducing to the Indian people the notion of a foreign and superior origin that later was used to justify colonial rule.

However, this crafted and seamless association of a colonized population with their colonial rulers was disrupted in the 1920s with identification of the Harappan

(Indus Valley) civilization. Larger than the Egyptian and more civilized than its Mesopotamian counterparts, the Harappans had amenities like sewage and storm-water management systems, standardized weights and measurements, and well laid-out and planned cities. It was dated to the third millennium, at least a thousand years earlier than the often quoted ‘prescribed date’ for the *Vedas* by nineteenth century philologist Max Müller.²

The Sanskrit language, and its shared origin with Latin, helped to elevate the status of a colonized population, while the Harappan civilization deepened their roots within the Indian soil. It was the discovery, understanding and propagation of both these facts that was used to create a new macrohistory for the people of India during the first few decades of the twentieth century. With this historical restructuring, India came to be seen as a nation of two distinct groups – Aryans in the north and Dravidians in the south. However, there was a cost for this new conceptualization.

In this new schema, the Dravidians were seen to be descendants of the Indus valley people who had been defeated by the Aryans and relegated to the southern parts of India. This new macrohistory obliterated the socio-religious-cultural unity of the Indian people and replaced it with a history of two distinct groups – 1) A superior and victorious fair-skinned population, and 2) An inferior vanquished darker population. Today, it has resulted in a dichotomy of possible Indian identities via the medium of constructed Aryan and Dravidian ‘races’.

Vincent Smith, like most other European scholars of the period, was a firm believer in the superiority of Western civilization, and therefore thought that the finer attributes of Indian civilization had been derived from Greek influence, as a result of Alexander’s invasion. In his *Early History of India* (1924), he defined only the great rulers, heroes and empires as worthy of consideration by historical scholarship.³ Emperors like Ashoka, Chandragupta II and Akbar were identified as representing the glorious periods of Indian history, while the intervening periods of small kingdoms were classified as dark ages, along with the days before the Persian invasion of India.

Similarly, archaeologist V. Gordon Childe (1892–1957) identified the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates as the cradle of civilization – from where the ‘idea of Civilization’ travelled to different parts of the old world through diffusion and migration. When I, as an archaeologist, try and understand the philosophy of the theories put forth in the early decades of the twentieth century, I wonder how much

of it was directly related to or influenced by the Biblical history of the Old Testament. What is even more interesting is that even Indian cultural history was not untouched by this Western-style macrohistory.

John Marshall (1876–1958) was one of the first archaeologists to excavate and study the remains of the Harappan civilization at many sites like Mohenjo Daro, Chanhudaro, and Harappa. Although he identified it as a distinctive and indigenous development, and as comparable with but not related to the contemporary Sumerian civilization, others failed to heed his evidence. A later archaeologist, Mortimer Wheeler, wrote:

But it can at least be averred that, however translated, the idea of civilization came to the Indus from the Euphrates and Tigris, and gave the Harappans their initial direction, or at least informed their purpose.⁴

In this regard, the present-day Indian diplomat and author, Pavan Varma, in a recent book about imperialist power and colonies, states:

... empires of the past were not only about the physical subjugation of peoples. Their real strength lay in the colonization of minds ... Colonialism is studied for its political and economic impact, but rarely deeply investigated for its cultural and ideological consequences that continue to hold formerly subject people in thrall.⁵

This is an apt description of the Indian macrohistory that today needs to free itself from an identity forged from Western research that began over two centuries ago under the light of Western supremacy, racism and despotic orientalism. The celebrated Indian historian, Romila Thapar, observed this need decades ago, as she saw the ‘Indian past was understood as a lost wing of early European culture, and the Aryans of India were regarded as the nearest intellectual relatives of the Europeans’ based on similarities between Sanskrit and Latin languages.⁶

During the post-independence period (1947+), the need to newly understand, develop and interpret Indian civilization led to large investments by the government and the people. However, the shadow of colonial interpretation still hovered over these Indian scholars. Their macrohistory, with ideas of Aryan supremacy and Western cultural values, was still a prism or kaleidoscope through which to view

cultural development on the Indian sub-continent.

As a result, later cultures, like the Ahar in south-east Rajasthan or the Malwa in central India, were associated with displaced Harappans, who were interpreted to have moved eastward as 'post-Harappans', due to the Aryan invasion. Or, these later cultures were thought to have been derived from or under the direct influence of societies in West Asia or the Iranian cultural milieu. For example, archaeologist Hasmukhlal Sankalia (1908–1989), while studying shapes and motifs on the pottery of Navdatoli, in Madhya Pradesh, emphasized its West Asian and Iranian influences.⁷

Thus, politically dominant scholarship interpreted the end of the Harappans as coming about as a result of an invasion from the north by the fair-skinned, horse-riding, iron-weapon wielding and Sanskrit-speaking Aryans. The Dravidians were pushed to the southern parts of the sub-continent from their original homeland in the Indus-Saraswati region. This event put in place a racial divide, one that is perceived as continuing today and seen in linguistic differences. Surprisingly, the traditional canopy of Indian socio-religious beliefs, though still very strong and identical in both North India and South India, has been side-lined by this new colonial interpretation of our heritage. As a result, most Indian people have come to erroneously identify themselves as descendants of either an external Harappan or an external Aryan immigration. It is therefore often mistakenly reported that only about eight per cent of the population in the subcontinent today have deep historical and local roots.

The next phase of interpretation saw an effort being made to 'aryanize' the macrohistory of Indian civilization, by identifying several sites mentioned in the Hindu epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. For example, the capital city of Delhi, on the river Yamuna, has been related to Indraprastha, the capital of the Pandavas, thus institutionalizing the historical and epic traditions.

As a student of history, I learnt that history is not about the facts of a civilization but is an interpretation of the events that occurred, by the researcher or historian studying it.

History consists of a corpus of ascertained facts. The facts are available to the historian as documents, inscriptions and so on, like a fish on the fishmonger's slab. The historian collects them, takes them home, and cooks and serves them in whatever style appeals to him ... The belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy, but one which it is very hard to eradicate.⁸

Things started to change, in the 1970s, with excavations at the site of Mehrgarh, dated to the seventh millennium BCE, on the Kachi plains of Baluchistan. This research brought forth the identification of a culture, now shown to be the source for later developments and culminating in the Harappan civilization. Moreover, it established the indigenous origins of the Harappans.⁹

In a recent study conducted on microliths (starch grain analysis) from the Mesolithic site of Bagor, in northwest India, it is possible to identify a sedentary lifestyle of the fifth millennium BCE (as against the earlier belief of a hunting and gathering economy).¹⁰ The sedentary revolution is considered a precursor and prerequisite for Neolithic agricultural revolution and, hence, with indigenous evidence of sedentism and plant exploitation, we no longer have to look to the West for the seeds of agriculture and civilization. Both are found in India.

A further breakthrough was the pushing back of the date for the Ahar culture by 2000 years, confirming it to be contemporary with Early Harappan and Harappan civilization. It now appears that cultures in western India had participated in cross-cultural interaction and trade networks, which lead to growth and culmination in Harappan urban culture.



Shweta Sinha Deshpande (centre) in an archaeological field camp, Ahar Chalcolithic Excavation, Gilund, Rajasthan, India, 1999. Source: Photograph by Sanjay Deshpande.

In addition, a lot of attention has been paid to the Aryan invasion theory, by conducting skeletal, linguistic, geological and cultural research. In the absence of scientific data to support such an invasion and the presence of verses describing ships and urban settlements in the Vedas, many scholars are today moving towards identifying the so-called nomadic Aryans as being the urban Harappan's themselves.

If generally accepted, the rewriting of India's demographic history – not in terms of Aryan immigrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus but as an indigenous population with its roots within the larger Indian subcontinent – has a potential for dramatically reuniting the ancient traditional macrohistory with the macrohistory currently being excavated. Politically and culturally, this new concept will go a long way in assimilating and propagating an all-encompassing identity that does not owe its roots to foreign invading and migrating populations. It also redresses the conflict of the north and south Indian divide, both of which that associate themselves with divergent groups of displaced native (Dravidian) or culturally superior Vedic Sanskrit speaking (Aryan) people.

It is in this aspect of recent studies that we scholars have failed to do justice, in terms of connecting with the larger public. Ultimately, such historical facts belong to the people. All disciplines have academic and applied fields. The applied field of history, as well as topics relating to a population's identity and relationship with other communities, lies in its capacity to educate ordinary people about realities as understood by researchers. This is sorely inadequate in India today.

In contrast, if we take a look at traditional historical models for India, it is easy to see that there had not been a disconnection between prevalent ideas and peoples' identities. This is true whether it was the socio-religious history of indigenous origin, the ideas of a foreign implant as the source for India's civilization put forth by European scholars, or even nationalist ideals of a superior identity from Aryan origins. The macrohistory of each period was neatly put together for people to know, understand and identify with. However, this is not so today.

We are a country with 92 per cent of our people seeing themselves as ‘immigrants’ – like the non-indigenous population of the United States who all came from ‘somewhere else’.¹¹ The Indian people have been told over the last two centuries that their ancestors came from western Asia, the Iranian plateau, or the northern steppes of Eurasia. This is erroneous in the context of constructing recent identities, as described above. India did not develop in isolation but rather flourished as a result

of improvements made by its own resident people as well as by later in-migrating communities of traders and conquerors. This exciting, new macrohistory is being presently generated by our archaeologists, anthropologists and historians, but popular culture does not reflect these facts and so the Indian people remain largely ignorant of them.

In recent years, our academicians seem to have isolated themselves within ivory towers, enjoying little association with the people whose history and identity they are trying to unravel from the mists of the past. Evolving a new macrohistory for India needs to be a priority. In my understanding, histories – big or small – have a role to play in every society, by narrating the ‘who, what and why’ of our existence. It is the people's roots in their past that determine their present and future.

Big History and the Road Ahead

The challenge that we archaeologists face in India, and around the world, is to identify the many complex interrelationships that have helped create the events that we now use to define our history. These interrelationships can only be studied through Big History's inclusive approach of integrating often apparently unrelated fields. Thus, we find that geology, climatology, physics and chemistry help us identify individual elements, from copper deposits to salt licks, the levels of flow in rivers along which cities were built, wild grasses capable of harvesting, etc. These integrated observations also help us to define and divide time to create microhistory and macrohistory.

As seen by the sequence of Indian historiography outlined above, the interplay of microhistory and macrohistory, as well as open dialogue, not only between scholars but also with citizens, builds a climate of trust and evolving knowledge that has the potential to unify instead of continuously divide people. Within the Indian caste system, the migrant population has often been blamed for the social discrimination and economic disparity of underprivileged sections of Indian society. Social reformers like Mahatma Jyotiba Phule (1827–1890) associated the invading Aryans as the subjugators of the original Indian inhabitants who were the underprivileged. The newly developing macrohistory helps to displace the notion of a demographic dichotomy within Indian society, which is a major hindrance in current socio-economic growth of the nation.

A Big History approach gives us an opportunity to break artificially created boundaries that give an impression of events occurring independently of events preceding them. It allows us a way to develop more detailed understandings. In a strange way, we find ourselves today back with the ancient Indian concept where everything is interrelated and we are a product of all the actions that preceded us.



Shweta Sinha Deshpande (right) with students in the field.
Ahar Chalcolithic Excavation, Gilund, Rajasthan, India, 2000.
Source: Photograph by Sanjay Deshpande.

Notes

1. William Jones, ‘On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India’, *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 1, 1788.
2. Max Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, Varanasi: Sanskrit Series Office, 1968; repr. 1891.
3. Vincent Smith, *Early History of India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924.
4. Mortimer Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 135.
5. Pavan Varma, *Becoming Indian: The Unfinished Revolution of Culture and Identity*, New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2010, p. ix.
6. Romila Thapar, ‘Interpretations of Ancient Indian History’, *History and Theory*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1968.
7. Hasmukhlal Sankalia, ‘New Light on the Indo-Iranian or West Asiatic Relations between 1970–1200 BC’, *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 26, 1963.
8. Edward Carr, *What Is History?* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967, p. 12.
9. Jean-François Jarrige, ‘Mehrgarh Neolithic’, *Pragdhara: Journal of the Uttar Pradesh State Archaeology Department*, vol. 18, 2008.
10. Shweta Sinha Deshpande, Vasant Shivram Shinde and Yoshinori Yasuda, ‘Human Response to Holocene Climate Changes in Western India between 5th and 3rd Millennium BC’, in *Monsoon and Civilization*, ed. Yoshinori Yasuda and Vasant Shivram Shinde, Singapore: Luster Press, 2004; Vasant Shivram Shinde, ‘Cultural Development from Mesolithic to Chalcolithic in the Mewar Region of Rajasthan, India’, *Pragdhara: Journal of the Uttar Pradesh State Archaeology Department*, vol. 18, 2008; Shweta Sinha Deshpande and Vasant Shivram Shinde, *Mesolithic Bagor: Independent Beginnings of Sedentism and Ceramics, a Prelude to the Ahar Culture of South East Rajasthan*, India, London: British Association of South Asian Studies, forthcoming.
11. Speech delivered by Justice Markandey Katju, Chairman of the Press Council of India at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India, 14 November 2011.

CALL FOR APPLICANTS

Anthropocene Cotutelle PhD Scholarships

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We invite applications from current and prospective PhD candidates to apply for a Big History Institute Anthropocene Scholarship. In 2016, ten scholarships will be awarded. Big History Institute Scholars will pursue a Cotutelle PhD on a transdisciplinary theme. We encourage you to forward this to your networks.

Under the Cotutelle model a PhD student is/will be enrolled at both Macquarie University and an international university. Both universities will appoint at least 1 of its staff as the supervisor and these supervisors will jointly guide the research. At the conclusion of the research a single thesis is prepared that is submitted for individual examination by both universities.

You can find out [more information on Cotutelle programs here](#).

PhD candidates will receive funding for their tuition while at Macquarie University, a living stipend to enable full time research, and air travel funding.

Research Topics

PhD candidates will pursue research topics pertaining to the major issues facing humanity in the Anthropocene. The transdisciplinary research will cut across any 3 or more fields/disciplines. Co-supervisors will be selected from Macquarie and our international partners who are from differing fields to best complement the nature of the project. Candidates currently studying their PhD are also eligible to apply and will be assigned the corresponding supervisor(s). Candidates are encouraged to propose their own topics but candidates wishing to explore research agendas identified by the Big History Institute are also strongly encouraged to apply.

The research undertaken will explore topics arising from Macquarie University's [Big History Anthropocene Conference: A Transdisciplinary Exploration](#).

Prospective research agendas may include, but are not restricted to:
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FOUR: SECURE PLANET – Sustaining our interdependent world and exploring our place in the universe

FIVE: INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES – Advancing our interconnected world with frontier technologies, systems, designs, and creative practice

Students are encouraged to collaborate with the Big History Institute during the application process to identify and develop their research topic.

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The Big History Institute Scholarships are Cotutelle scholarships that include:

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PhD candidates must be engaged in a full-time research workload.

The scholarship is for Cotutelle research between Macquarie and an existing or prospective partner institution. At least 1 supervisor will come from Macquarie, at least 1 supervisor will come from the partner institution, in addition to an associate

supervisor from the Big History Institute.

Candidates are welcome to propose an interested supervisor from a university outside Australia. Alternately applicants can apply for a scholarship without a proposed international supervisor and the Big History Institute will assist in the process of securing a supervisor from a university outside Australia whose expertise best suits their project.

For Macquarie supervisors, the student is welcome to suggest whom they would like or the Big History Institute will similarly assist on securing a supervisor whose expertise is most appropriate for the project.

PhD candidates must be academically qualified to enroll for a PhD at both Macquarie and the selected partner institution.

Application Process

The Big History Institute is currently seeking expressions of interest in the scholarship from current and prospective PhD candidates. PLEASE NOTE: students who are currently PhD candidates at an international university are also eligible to apply.

Expressions of interest should include: details on academic background, research interests, and an attached Curriculum Vitae and list of any publications. Attachments should be in word or pdf format.

Please email expressions of interest to Dr. David Baker at david.baker@mq.edu.au

Following the reply to your expression of interest, you may be asked to send along a draft project proposal outlining (1) the significance of the topic; (2) the major research questions; (3) the methodological and theoretical approaches; and (4) a three-year progression plan. While these aspects do not have to be worked out in their entirety, and many of them can be developed in conjunction with the Big History Institute, preliminary ideas are highly sought after and valued.

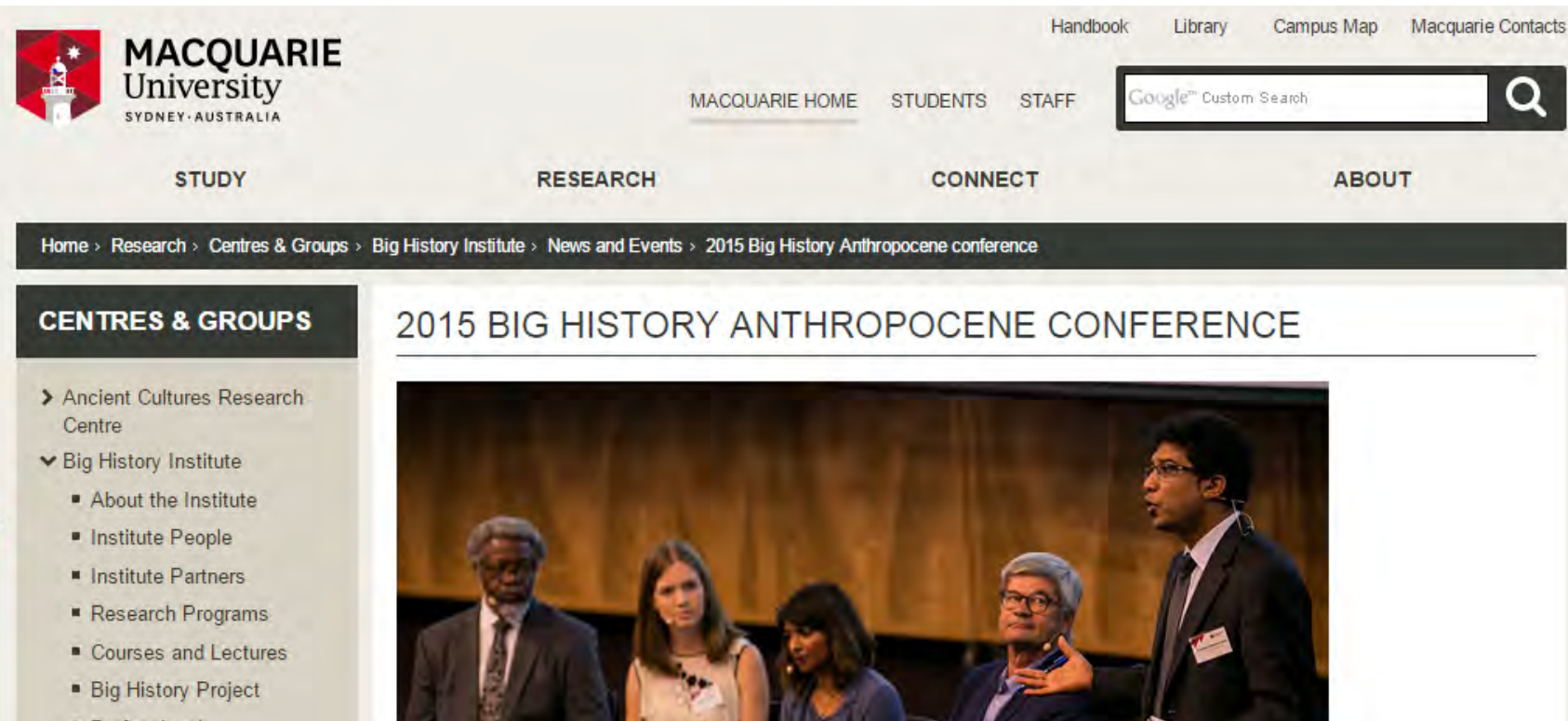
Following these discussions, you may be directed to begin the formal enrollment process.

The deadline for expressions of interest is: 31 July 2016

Contact

If you have any questions about the scholarships, research topics, or any other concerns please contact:

Dr. David Baker
Associate Lecturer
Big History Institute | Building W6A Room 436
Macquarie University, NSW 2109, Australia
david.baker@mq.edu.au | mq.edu.au



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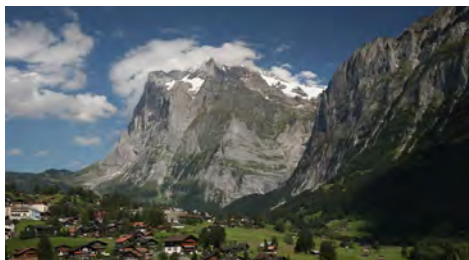
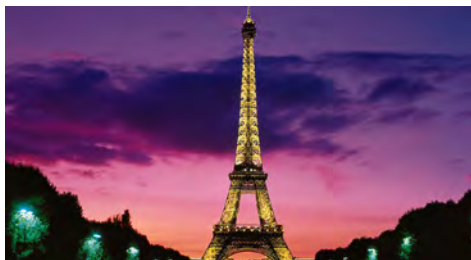
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Overview

A TASTE OF EUROPE



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- Guided sightseeing and select entrance fees

Your tour highlights

- World-class museums and beautiful gardens in Paris
- Magnificent architecture and rich history at Château de Chenonceau
- Stunning replicas of Paleolithic art in the Lascaux II Cave
- Sweeping, mountainous landscapes in Auvergne
- Impressive scientific technology at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research
- Medieval castle views in the UNESCO-recognized Rhine River Valley
- Daily lectures by leading historians

Where you'll go

OVERNIGHT STAYS

2 nights • Paris
2 nights • Dordogne Region
1 night • Geneva
2 nights • Grindelwald
2 nights • Heidelberg



Price is on a sliding scale for 20-40 travelers - \$3439-\$3139.

Paris | 2 nights**Day 1: Arrival in Paris**

Welcome to France! Say goodbye to some of your fellow conference-goers and hello to your Tour Director as you transfer from Amsterdam to Paris by deluxe coach. Stop en route in Ypres, Belgium, which was a site of heavy fighting during the 1916 Battle of the Somme.

- Tour the In Flanders Fields Museum, which focuses on the futility of war
- Visit the Menin Gate, a memorial to British and Commonwealth soldiers whose graves are unknown

Later, enjoy free time to explore and eat lunch in Ypres before continuing on to Paris. If time allows, additional stops will be made in Antwerp and Amiens.

Day 2: Sightseeing tour of Paris & the Musee d'Orsay

Included meals: breakfast, welcome dinner

Paris was central to the French Revolution in the late-eighteenth century and largely rebuilt under Napoleon III in the 1860s. A guided tour introduces you to the architecture and history of the City of Light's neighborhoods, called *arrondissements*.

- Drive down the sycamore-lined Champs-Élysées to view the famous Arc de Triomphe, a tribute commissioned by Napoleon
- Pass Pont Neuf and the Notre-Dame Cathedral, located on the Seine River
- Make a photo stop at the Eiffel Tower viewpoint to see the wrought-iron landmark
- See the opulent Palais Garnier opera house, Hôtel des Invalides and Place de la Concorde, the city's grandest square

Later, enjoy the Musee d'Orsay Museum's rich collection.

- Enjoy free time for lunch in the afternoon and tonight, sit down with your group and your Tour Director at a welcome dinner.

Dordogne Region | 2 nights**Day 3: Périgueux via the Loire Valley**

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Transfer to Périgueux in the Dordogne Region today. Stop along the way in the Loire Valley, which produces world-class wines and was once known as France's "Playground of the Kings." You'll learn more about the area's royal past on a guided tour of the extravagant Château de Chenonceau.

- Explore the interior and gardens of the castle, which sits on the River Cher and is a famous late-Gothic/early-Renaissance architectural gem
- Discover how it got the nickname "Château de Femmes"—some of its famous female residents included Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de' Medici

Take free time for lunch at the chateau and then continue on to the Dordogne Region for an included dinner this evening.

Day 4: Lascaux II Cave & Les Eyzies-de-Tayac-Sireuil

Included meals: breakfast

Explore the Dordogne Region to discover prehistoric remnants, ancient history and spectacular Paleolithic art, and then eat lunch during free time.

- Follow a guide as you marvel at the reproductions of Paleolithic paintings in the Lascaux II Cave, a 39-meter replica of the original cave
- Transfer to the village of Les Eyzies-de-Tayac-Sireuil this afternoon, where you'll enter the National Prehistoric Museum and see awe-inspiring archaeological finds from some of the most famous excavation sites in the Vézère Valley

Geneva | 1 night**Day 5: Geneva via Auvergne**

Included meals: breakfast

Make your way to the historic city of Geneva, Switzerland today, stopping along the way in the mountainous region of Auvergne.

- Take in scenic surroundings as you drive through the Auvergne Volcanoes Regional Park, a well-preserved site that boasts stunning landscapes, beautiful villages and 10,000-year-old volcanic peaks
- As you drive through the park, stop for photo ops at the Puy de Dôme, a large lava dome, and the Puy de Sancy, the highest volcano in France
- Revel in the park's beauty as you enjoy free time for lunch

Grindelwald | 2 nights**Day 6: Grindelwald via CERN**

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Today, explore the European Organization for Nuclear Research, known as CERN. Follow a CERN staff member on a guided tour of the laboratory, where scientists do groundbreaking research on particle physics.

- View the Large Hadron Collider, a massive particle accelerator that is responsible for some extraordinary discoveries, including the pentaquark

Later, take free time to eat lunch and explore CERN's permanent exhibitions before continuing on to Grindelwald for tonight's included dinner.

Day 7: The Bernese Oberland & Jungfrauoch

Included meals: breakfast

Today, head into the Bernese Alps and discover the UNESCO World Heritage site of Jungfrauoch, a windswept mountain pass known as the "Top of Europe."

- Ride a railway car to the Jungfrau plateau, where you can enjoy free time for lunch 11,617 feet above sea level
- Take a train to view the Sphinx Observatory and enter the Ice Palace

Later, enjoy a spectacular hike on the trails below these formidable mountains.

Heidelberg | 2 nights**Day 8: Heidelberg via Basel & Strasbourg**

Included meals: breakfast

Transfer to Germany today, making a brief stop for free time in Basel, Switzerland's third-largest city. Then, continue on to Strasbourg, the capital of France's Alsace region and the official seat of the European Parliament. Take a guided tour of the city's Parliament building and eat lunch during free time. Then, make your way to Heidelberg, which has a history of human occupation dating back at least 200,000 years and is home to one of the most influential universities in the world.

Day 9: Wine Tasting & Rhine River Cruise

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, wine tasting, farewell dinner

Start your day with a guided tour of Bopparder Hamm, the largest wine vineyard in the Middle Rhine Valley.

- Tour the cellar and vineyards before sitting down to a lunch accompanied by a tasting of some signature vintages
- Enjoy magnificent views over the Rhine valley as you learn about the cultivation of wine in the region

Later, take in the spectacular sights of the UNESCO-recognized Rhine River Valley on a scenic cruise from Boppard to St. Goar.

- Marvel at breathtaking landscapes and fine architecture of the Middle Ages
 - View medieval castles along the river, including Kurtrierische Burg in Boppard
- After disembarking, say goodbye to your group at a farewell dinner.

Day 10: Amsterdam via Cologne

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Make a brief stop in Cologne, home to a UNESCO-listed cathedral, before transferring back to Amsterdam with your group.