

**Toward the International Symposium
'Processes of Self-organization in Big History'
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**EXPLORING THE HORIZONS
OF BIG HISTORY**

Special Issue

Guest Editor
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EDITOR'S PREFACE

This special issue devoted to 'big history' reflects a growing international interest in this important subject. Why important? Some scholars, such as David Christian, have argued that big history provides 'context for our lives', a 'replacement for creation myths', 'intellectual coherence', and 'insights and perspectives'. Of course, big history does all these things, but it also does much more. Big history provides the basis for developing 'big theory'; and big theory provides not only a systematic explanation of the past and present, but also sensible predictions about the future. The pay-off is that we can ease our great journey through time by providing glimpses of what lies ahead and, thereby, preventing avoidable societal crises.

There are a variety of approaches to big/universal/global/macro history. These approaches are deeply rooted in the various disciplines in which scholars have been trained: in history, sociology, anthropology, economics, psychology, philosophy, and the natural sciences. Unfortunately, so far, there has been little interaction between them. Most discipline groups tend to be self-referential, ignoring the literature of competing groups. Curiously, scholars in the social sciences more readily embrace the theoretical conclusions of those in the natural sciences than those of their closer colleagues. It is hoped that this multidisciplinary issue of *Social Evolution & History* might encourage greater interaction between the disciplines of the social and behavioural sciences. Certainly, there is some evidence that this is happening informally between the contributors to this special issue.

The largest number of articles in this special issue of *Social Evolution & History* has been contributed by historians (David Christian and Fred Spier), one of whom was initially trained in biochemistry, and a historian of thought (Marnie Hughes-Warrington). The other three articles are from two anthropologists (Robert Carneiro and Akop Nazaretyan), and a historical political economist (Graeme Snooks).

Hence, this issue reflects, at least in part, the diversity of approaches to big history. While there is considerable discussion of the integrating role of big history in these papers, there are also signs of a degree of exclusiveness and trade-markism in the approach to this subject. It is essential for all of us to play our part in widening the intellectual horizons of big history, just as we have widened its temporal scope.

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