

DAVID CHRISTIAN**Professor at the Department of Modern History, Macquarie University**

David Christian (D.Phil. Oxford, 1974) is by training a historian of Russia and the Soviet Union, but since the 1980s he has become interested in World History on very large scales or Big History. He taught at Macquarie University in Sydney from 1975 to 2000 before taking a position at San Diego State University in 2001. In January 2009 he returned to take up a position at Macquarie University. From 2009 to 2013 he has held a position as a World Class Universities Distinguished Professor at Ewha Womans University in Seoul; and over the same period, he has also held a position as a James Marsh Professor-at-Large at the University of Vermont.

David Christian has written on the social and material history of the 19th century Russian peasantry, in particular on aspects of diet and the role of alcohol. He has also written a textbook history of modern Russia, and a synoptic history of Inner Eurasia (Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia) up to the time of the Mongol Empire. In 1989, he began teaching courses on 'Big History', surveying the past on the largest possible scales, including those of biology and astronomy; and in 2004, he published the first text on 'Big History'. He has also published a short history of humanity and, with Cynthia Brown and Craig Benjamin, has completed the first college-level textbook on big history. At San Diego State University, he taught courses on World History, 'Big History', World Environmental History, Russian History, and the History of Inner Eurasia. He is a member of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the *Koninklijke Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen* [Royal Holland Society of Sciences and Humanities], and a member of the editorial boards of the Journal of Global History and the Cambridge History of the World. He was founding President of the newly formed International Big History Association, and a co-founder with Bill Gates, of the Big History Project, a project that is building a free on-line high school syllabus in big history that will be released late in 2013. David Christian has given numerous talks and lectures on aspects of Russian, Inner Eurasian and world and big history, and in March 2011, he gave a talk on "13.7 billion years of history in 18 minutes" at the TED conference in Long Beach.

Publications include: 1) David Christian, Cynthia Brown and Craig Benjamin, *Big History: Between Nothing and Everything*, 2013; 2) "The Return of Universal History", *History and Theory, Theme Issue*, 49 (December 2010); 3) *This Fleeting World*, Berkshire Publishing: Great Barrington, Mass.: 2007. (A history of humanity in under 100 pages). 4) *Big History* a set of 48 lectures for the Teaching Company, 2008. 5) *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*.

Foreword by W.H. McNeill, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. (The first modern attempt by a historian to offer a coherent history of the entire past, beginning with the origins of the Universe; an attempt to explore how human history is embedded in the histories of the biosphere and the Universe; Maps of Time won the 2005 WHA History Prize for the best book in world history published in 2004); 6) *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia: Vol 1: Inner Eurasia from Prehistory to the Mongol Empire*, in The Blackwell History of the World. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. (The first synoptic study of "Inner Eurasia" from prehistory up to the 13th century; the first of 2 volumes.); 7) *Imperial and Soviet Russia: Power, Privilege and the Challenge of Modernity*. Basingstoke and New York: Macmillan/St. Martin's, 1997. (A textbook survey of Russian and Soviet history.); 8) *Living Water: Vodka and Russian Society on the Eve of Emancipation*, OUP, 1990. He is currently finishing the second volume of his History of Inner Eurasia.

Complexity and Big History

Big History surveys the entire history of the Universe, across many disciplines, from cosmology to history, and tries to place human history within that story. One of the core themes of most big history courses is the appearance of increasing complex entities, and modern human societies appear to be amongst the most complex of all. Complex entities appear to need large flows of energy to sustain them, so it makes sense to explore how such flows sustain increasingly complex entities, and how they can explain the evolution of such entities. It also makes sense to ask whether there may be a correlation between complexity and energy flows. If so, that is a conclusion of great interest for humans today!