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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The notion of evolution is not popular in contemporary Anthropology. Many researchers do not use it preferring to write about transformation, transit, or change. Evolution for them is synonymous to dogmatic understanding of human history (Yoffee 2005; Pauketat 2008). However, even critics of evolutionism do not appear to reject the very fact of continuous social change. In prehistory people were hunters and gatherers and were integrated in small bands. Later some of them experienced sedentarization and transition to food production, began to found towns and invent complex tools. It would be ridiculous to reject such changes.

Another point is that contemporary vision of cultural transformations differs greatly from the naïve ideas of the 19<sup>th</sup> century evolutionists (see, e.g., Earle 2002; Claessen 2000; Carneiro 2003, Marcus 2008; Hanks, Linduff 2009; Earle, Kristiansen 2010 etc.). Contemporary approaches are more flexible and are based on a much more considerable set of evidence. That is why it would be wrong to criticize the scholars of the past for their knowledge of something worse than ours. They ought to be estimated in comparison with their contemporaries. So, we believe that the notion of evolution has a right to exist, and for already several decades we have been elaborating the ideas that can be called “new wave evolutionism”, or multi-evolutionism (non-linear evolution theory).

The first edition of the present volume was published over ten years ago, in 2000, in two languages, English and Russian (under the *Альтернативные пути к цивилизации* [Alternative pathways to the civilization] title given by the publisher for commercial reasons). It was the response of the then young generation of post-Soviet anthropologists in league with prominent Western and Russian scholars to dogmatic Marxist interpretations of older, Soviet ethnologists and archaeologists (see also Korotayev, Chubarov 1991; Kradin, Lynsha 1995). Several other collective edited volumes (Bondarenko, Korotayev 2000; Kradin, Bondarenko, Barfield 2003; Grinin et al 2004; Bondarenko, Nemirovsky 2007; Grinin, Beliaev, Korotayev 2008 etc.), monographs (Korotayev 1995; 1996; 2003; Bondarenko 2001; 2006; Korotayev et al 2006; Kradin, Skrynnikova 2006; Grinin 2007; Kradin 2007; 2010; Grinin, Korotayev 2009) and journal arti-

cles (Beliaev, Bondarenko, Korotayev 2001; Kradin 2002; Bondarenko, Korotayev 2003; Bondarenko 2007a; 2007b) have appeared since then.

Five “Hierarchy and Power in the History of Civilizations” international conferences held in Moscow and St. Petersburg between 2000 and 2009 turned out very important for elaboration of the non-linear socio-cultural evolution theory.

The *Social Evolution & History* English-language journal published in Russia since 2002 has become a venue for discussion of the non-linear evolution theory, ideas and evidence related to it. In particular, besides an impressive number of separate articles, the following special issues and sections, among others, have been published in it: *Exploring the Horizons of Big History* (2005, Vol. 4, No 1), *Thirty Years of Early State Research* (2008, Vol. 7, No1), *The Early State in Anthropological Theory* (2009, Vol. 8, No 1), *Analyses of Cultural Evolution* (2009, Vol. 8, No 2), *Urbanization, Regional Diversity and the Problem of State Formation in Europe* (2010, Vol. 9, No 2). One more discussion, *Chiefdoms in the process of social evolution: theory, problems and comparative studies*, is to appear in the Journal soon.

*Alternatives of Social Evolution* consists of five parts. The first part includes theoretical studies of non-linear evolution. Articles on the alternative pathways of the prehistoric societies’ evolution form the volume’s second part. The evolutionary pathways of complex societies and state origins are the topics of the volume’s third and fourth parts. The closing part is devoted to nomadic societies. We hope that the book has not lost its relevance and will remain in demand by readers.

*Dmitri M. Bondarenko,*  
*Andrey V. Korotayev,*  
*Nikolay N. Kradin*

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## EARLY STATE IN THE CLASSIC MAYA LOWLANDS: EPIGRAPHIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

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*Dmitriy Beliaev*

In the study of politogenesis and the history of early states, data from the New World always has a very important place. Like the Ancient East this area presents one of the rare examples of the pristine formation of complex sociopolitical organization. Major discoveries of the last decades in the archaeology and history of Southeastern Mesoamerica have greatly changed our understanding of its cultural development. It bears not only on the problem of the origin of complex sociopolitical organization, but also its further development in the Classic period (200/250 - 900/1000 A.D.).

Most significant is a revolution in Maya studies connected with the decipherment of Mayan hieroglyphic writing by Yu.V. Knorozov in 1952. A long and difficult process of incorporating the epigraphy into the circle of historical and anthropological disciplines was completed only in the 80-90-s. Even if hieroglyphic inscriptions are not applicable in for the study of socioeconomic structures, for political history and political organization of ancient Maya society they are invaluable. For no other archaic society do we have such an exact chronology. Detailed accounts of rituals, accessions and wars give us a complete picture of the work of Classic Maya political mechanisms. These data are also very important for our understanding of the image of power in the Classic period and the role of ideology in early state societies.

The Maya Lowlands is a vast area which includes southern Mexico (the states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche and Yucatan), the northern departments of Guatemala, Belize and a part of Honduras. It is a limestone

plain about 90-200 m above the sea level. The greater part is covered with humid tropical forests (selva). The main rivers flow on the west (Usumasinta), on the south (Pasion), and on the east (Hondo, Belize, Motagua), while the centre of the Maya area is full of swampy places and lakes. The Lowlands are divided into six large regions: 1. Peten or Central region (with the main sites of Tikal, Uaxactun, Calakmul, Naranjo, Motul de San Jose, Rio Azul); 2. Pasion River drainage (Altar de Sacrificios, Dos Pilas, Aguateca, Ceibal, Arroyo de Piedra, Tamarindito); 3. Usumasinta River drainage or Western region (Tonina, Palenque, Pomona, Piedras Negras, Yaxchilan, Bonampak, Lacanja); 4. Belize (Caracol, Altun Ha, Colha, Pusilha); 5. Motagua River drainage or Southeastern region (Copan and Quirigua); and 6. Yucatan (a lot of sites on the north of the peninsula).

The population belongs to the Mayan (Maya-Quiche) language family. According to linguistical reconstructions, in the 1<sup>st</sup> millenium A.D. it was an area of interaction of protoyucatecan (north) and protocholan (south) dialects with the wide buffer zone between.

In the history of Maya civilization we traditionally recognize three main periods:

1. Formative or Preclassic (1500 B.C. - 200/250 A.D.) which is divided into the early phase (1500 - 700 B.C.), middle phase (700 - 200 B.C.), late phase (200 - 0 B.C.) and protoclassic (0 - 200/250 A.D.).
2. Classic period (200/250 - 900/1000A.D.) with early phase (200/250 - 600 A.D.), late phase (600 - 850 A.D.) and terminal phase (850 - 1000 A.D.).
3. Postclassic period (900/1000 - 1530 A.D.) with early phase (900/1000 - 1200 A.D.) and late phase (1200 - 1530 A.D.)

There are currently two models of Classic Maya political organization widespread among the specialists. The first defends the existence of several large regional states with an administrative hierarchy characterized by first, second and third-level sites. It is based mainly on the archaeological data and a "conditional reading" of the hieroglyphic inscriptions. The most elaborated form can be found in the recent work of Joyce Marcus (1993). She proposes to create a model based on the Lowland Maya themselves" (1993:116), but in our opinion makes two important errors. First, she identifies the apogee of political organization with the large centralized polity and, second, she uses the pre-conquest situation as a pattern for her



reconstructions. Such an essay should be based primarily on the information of the Classic writing sources.

Although J. Marcus had earlier made a considerable contribution to the school of "conditional reading" in American epigraphy she is not a real specialist in hieroglyphic studies. Unfortunately she uses all the methods of the 1960-s and 1970-s - arbitrary interpretation of the separate glyphs without their context, the absence of real readings of the texts and so on. Marcus builds her construction of the regional hierarchies on the mentions of the "Emblem Glyphs" (see later) in the inscriptions of other sites. So, for example, she places Tonina in the regional state of Palenque, but Tonina records the name of an individual from the neighbouring town, not the town itself. As we shall demonstrate later the situation was quite the reverse.

Peter Mathews (1991) offered another model, which is supported by the other epigraphists - David Stuart, Steven Houston, as well as by the author of this article. The reading and study of hieroglyphic inscriptions and the supporting archaeological data give an opportunity to research the ancient Maya sociopolitical organization from different dimensions - from the "ideal image" of the system of titles, reconstructing political history and verifying the information of the writing sources with the help of archaeology.

The Classic Maya Lowlands consisted of several dozen different political units. The rulers of these polities had "Emblem Glyphs" - special titles which signified "a holy lord of X place" or "a holy X lord". According to this, originally all of them were equal. It is very significant that Mathews' list resembles the list of V.I. Guliaev, who used only archaeological traits (size, palace complexes, royal burials, monumental architecture and sculpture) (1979:120-126). The loss of independence was accompanied by the lost of "Emblem Glyph", as happened with Lacanha (Usumasinta valley). After its defeat by Yaxchilan in 727 A.D. this polity by 743 A.D. became a dependency of Bonampak. From this time the title "holy lord of Xucalna" passed to the Bonampak kings.

As with the Postclassic Guatemala Highlands, the Classic nobility were called *ahawoob* (plural from *ahaw* "lord"). This was noted by Knorozov and Ershova (1986) as well as by D. Stuart (1993:320). The real difference was between the *ahaw* elite and the holy king *k'ul/ch'ul ahaw*. The

prerogatives of using "Emblem Glyphs" were given only to the members of the royal lineage, including the king's daughters. The heir had the title *ch'ok ahaw* or "unripe, young lord". The supreme ruler was considered a personification of his deified ancestors and as a sacred person himself.

A number of works have demonstrated that there had been larger formations in the Maya Lowlands. They were created for short periods by conquest or interdynastic marriages (Houston 1993; Grube 1996; Schele and Freidel 1991:146-159, 165-215). Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube (Grube 1996 : 10-15) offered an hypothesis that is intermediate between those of Marcus and Mathews. According to them there were two giant political hierarchies with the capitals at Tikal and Uaxactun. In the VIth - VIIIth centuries A.D. they united all the important Lowland Maya cities.

In these cases subordinated rulers retained their autonomy and "Emblem Glyphs". Their ties with the hegemony are only the title *yahaw* "his lord" or "vassal" and the overlord's auspices of their enthronements. A typical example of such a hegemony in the Western region is the rapid growth of Tonina in the beginning of the VIII century A.D. In 711 K'an Hok' of Palenque was captured and, possibly, sacrificed. His architectural projects were finished by some nobleman who did not belong to the ruling dynasty, and the heir of the Palenque throne, Akul Anab (III) did not accede till 722. In 715 the Bonampak ruler, in his inscription, called himself *yahaw* of K'inich Baknal Chaak, holy lord of Tonina. But by the end of the 720-s there were no mentions of Tonina dominance in the hieroglyphic texts of the Western region. In the peak of it's expansion Tonina dominated it's rival and neighbour for 12 years and controlled the territory as far as the Usumasinta River (about 100 km to the east).

The question "Could these formations evolve to the large regional states?" still remains open, but I think we should not over-estimate their potential and stability. The same *yahaw* title was personal and described the relationship between two individuals, but not political structures. For example, in the inscription on the Stela 2 of Arroyo de Piedra (Pasión River region) the local ruler is called *yahaw* of the deceased king of neighbouring Dos Pilas.

Unfortunately the internal structure of the Classic Maya polities is not very clear. The most interesting writing evidence proceeds from the Western region but, in contrast, the best archaeological excavations were

realized on the opposite side of the Maya area - in the Belize River valley (Ball and Taschek 1991; Ford 1991). They revealed several territorial communities (150-300 sq.km each) with complex settlement and socio-economic patterns. A new settlement hierarchy was constructed on data from the Mopan-Macal valley (Ball and Taschek 1991).

- *Mound group* - the lowest element - consists of 5-20 households and probably reflects the community. They regularly include plazuela groups - community headmen's residential compounds. Associated artifacts (marine shell, ceramics etc.) indicate a higher status for their occupants than that among the commoners.
- *Plaza groups* are larger and architecturally more elaborated compounds which occur both in rural areas and in the urban centers. They are also characterized by restricted access from the countryside. The materials suggest high "absolute" status for their inhabitants but different "relative" positions reflected in a group's elaborateness and monumentality.
- *Regal-residential center* - isolated palace or acropolis-like complex in the rural area. Ball and Taschek describe them as "introverted" sites "of socioceremonial, funerary and devotional activities as well as residence" with a primary role as "rural, high-level, elite-residence complex" (Ibid:151). They also provide housing for the dependent serving, lower status population, but associated significant "town" is absent. In contrast, the capital of the Mopan-Macal valley community Buenavista del Cayo was a multifunctional "urban" settlement (*regal-ritual center*). About 7% of it's area was dedicated to craft activities including attached palace masters and non-elite urban specialists. These two last types also have from one to four special buildings of probable administrative/adjudicative functions (Ibid.:150-157).

We see a very similar picture in the neighbouring zones (El Pilar, Baking Pot, Pacbitun, Las Ruinas de Arenal). It seems that all of them were territorial, not political units, and some were parts of Naranjo polity. This is clear from the inscriptions on two polychrome vessels found in an elite burial at Buenavista. A text on the polychrome plate from Holmul (30 km to the north from Naranjo) tells that in the second half of the VIII century it was ruled by the son of the Naranjo king. Naranjo, Holmul and Buenavista form a single ceramic group (Zacatel series). Each of these towns had a proper "palace school" which used local clays and technical and stylistical

methods. It may be that subordinated lords had no right to erect hieroglyphic monuments and their ties with the overlord were reflected in the parade ceramics (Ball 1993:249-252).

The socioeconomic structure of Naranjo polity also was rather complex. The similarity of the burial patterns at the plazuela and plaza groups indicates that statuses of community leaders and secondary elite were very close. Such a "wealth" item as obsidian was found in 56% of all households in El Pilar "district". In the valley and uplands, where the majority of the population lived, the proportion is even higher - 78%. But the elite continued to control obsidian procurement (trade) and elaboration. A specialized obsidian-working complex, El Laton, was situated 4.5 km to the south of El Pilar and was dominated by the elite residential compound like the regal-residential centers of the Buenavista "district". In contrast, the pattern of chert production and distribution is highly decentralized - unfinished cores and hammers are mainly concentrated in the foothill zone. Probably chert tools - most important for the rural utilitarian and agricultural needs - were produced on the household level, not by full-time specialists (Ford 1991:37, 42). The same picture is seen in the ceramic industry - specialized workshops existed only in the large urban centers and they were connected primarily with the elite need for polychrome vessels. The rest of the society used the pottery made by non-attached craftsmen in the communities (Ball 1993:258-260). All this corresponds to the model of Prudence Rice (1987): a decentralized system where the central power controls only the "prestige" sector of economics. In the "commodity" sector there was no full-time, barrio-like specialization or hierarchical distribution. The main role was played by local exchange, kinship tie's networks and so on (Ibid.:76-80).

Thus, in the east of the Maya area we find a large polity with the centre at Naranjo. It consisted of 6 or 7 "districts" and occupied about 4000 sq. km. It has a five-level settlement hierarchy with three central-place settlements between the capital and local communities. We think that at least two elements of this hierarchy - regal-residential centers and plaza groups - were not connected with the local "natural" development of the political organization. Plaza groups do not have enough space to accommodate the rural population during religious ceremonies and all their ceremonial architecture is related only to ancestor rites of no more than one extended family. So it is more possible that plaza groups had only political-

administrative functions.

Territorial communities of the Belize River area strongly resemble "original" simple chiefdoms. We see the evolution of the Naranjo polity from such a chiefdom through the unification of neighboring chiefdoms and to the early state. The evidence for complex chiefdom organization include the first hieroglyphic inscriptions and construction of a new acropolis complex. In the beginning of its history Naranjo acted as a vassal of powerful Calakmul in its struggle with Tikal, but in 590 - 630 A.D. new polity also pretends to be a ruling power of the Peten region. At this time the history of the Naranjo dynasty was rewritten. In the large text on Altar 1 (CMHI 2 : 86-87) "Celestial Tapir" was proclaimed the official ancestor of the royal lineage who acceded in 21469 B.C. One of his descendants founded the city of Maxam (Naranjo) in 259 B.C. All these changes were made during the long reign of Ah...- sa (547? - 630?). The new conception of Naranjo history was emphasized by double genealogical tradition - he was named both 8<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> ruler of the dynasty. After the defeat of Naranjo by Caracol in 626-637 A.D. the Belize River chiefs regain their independence and we observe a short local flowering at Buenavista and Las Ruinas. Revitalization of Naranjo in the end of the VIIth century was accompanied by the establishment of new settlement patterns in the Belize valley and spreading of political frontiers of the Naranjo state.

Another important region of the Maya Lowlands is the Usumasinta River drainage. According to J. Marcus it consisted of two regional states (Palenque and Yaxchilan / Piedras Negras). This division really reflects two physical and geographical zones - Usumasinta valley and southeastern subregion but have nothing to do with the political structure of the Classic period. A number of epigraphic works in the 1960-s - 1980-s demonstrated that the region was shared among several polities, sometimes united in very weak hierarchies but mostly independent.

Late tradition attributes the foundation of the local dynasties to the IVth - Vth centuries A.D., but the hieroglyphic inscriptions, monumental sculpture and other indicators of complex sociopolitical structure appear only in the VIth - VIIth centuries. The main peculiarity of Usumasinta texts is their great attention to non-royal nobility. P. Mathews, D. Stuart and S. Houston revealed three types of titles of this social group - *sahal*, *ah k'ulna*, *anab* (Stuart 1993:329-332). The most interesting is *sahal* category.

These persons act practically like the supreme rulers - they accede, wage wars and so on. We know about 8 "seatings" or "enterings" to *sahalil* (*sahal* ship): 1) El Cayo (in 689, 729, 764 and 772 A.D.) an unknown town (730 A.D.) in Piedras Negras realm; 2) Laxtunich (in 786) in the Yaxchilan realm; 3) Lacanha (in 743) in the Bonampak realm. All this shows that *sahaloob* (plural from *sahal*) were a kind of subordinated rulers. But what kind? What were their relations with the supreme ruler?

I analyzed 32 inscriptions from Piedras Negras, Yaxchilan and Bonampak areas. The most frequent are mentions of *sahaloob* (74%), then comes *ah k'ulna'oob* (11%) and *anaboob* (15%). According to these records *sahaloob* existed not only in our 3 cities. As all three titles were used in possessive constructions "his X of holy king", it is clear that they have a lower status. Like *ahaw* they could be inherited only by the male line: we know about 3 *sahal* women and one *ah k'ulna*. The functions of *sahal* are the exact copy of the king's versions but on a smaller scale, while *anab* and *ah k'ulna* are mainly companions and subordinates of their lords. Very often they are the sculptors and scribes but *sahal* never was. It confirms that *sahaloob* were dependent "provincial" rulers; some of them could erect their own monuments. The difference with vassals-*yahawoob* is clear enough: there was no special "vassalship", they continued to be "holy lords".

The rank of provincial lord could also be inherited. Such dynasties existed at El Cayo (a.650 - 729 A.D. and 764 - a.800 A.D.), Lacanha (a.730 - a.760 A.D.). What was the level of control of the supreme ruler over his underlords? O. Chinchilla and S. Houston suggested that in the Piedras Negras polity they were replaced simultaneously and it could be timed to the king's accession. Also the post of *sahal* may not have been for life - for example El Cayo ruler Chaac Tun died in 4 years after the new inauguration (Chinchilla, Houston 1992:66-68). In the case of Lacanha, which was mentioned earlier, I see an example of the formation of a larger centralized polity - after the military defeat the city was joined to one of the neighbouring states and its *kul ahawoob* became the subordinated rulers.

*Sahaloob* of the Late Classic period strongly resemble *bataboob* of Pre-conquest Yucatan, but we see a considerable difference. It may be that for the Postclassic system, *batab* was the key figure, but this is not at all the case for the Usumasinta valley polities. The Late Classic title and post did

not exist independently, it was always connected with "holy king". We think that the institution of *sahaloob* was artificial in the ancient Maya political organization. They replaced a part of *yahpo'oob* (*yahawoob*) of the Early Classic and changed the character of the power structure. The data from Yaxchilan Early Classic "chronicle" on Lintels 60, 49, 37, 35 (CMHI 3:103,105,107; Tate 1992:170) may in some aspects reflect these processes. In this inscription the lords from other cities and from Yaxchilan are mentioned together. The first seven Yaxchilan rulers (320 - a.470) had dealings with the kings themselves, the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> (a.470 - a.550) - with their *yahpo'oob*. Nobody is named *sahal* - they appeared only in the VIIth century at Piedras Negras and in the VIIIth at Yaxchilan. The change in structure from a system of vassals toward that of controlled provincial rulers is evident.

The nature of the title *anab* is still unknown. It could pertain to the sculptors and underlords but this is all that we know. As for *ah k'ulna* we agree with its interpretation "courtier" (Houston 1993:130-131). *Ah k'ulna* depicted on Panel 3 of Piedras Negras was servant or, possibly, mentor of two little princes. At Tonina two courtiers evidenced the calendarical ceremony of the king; a courtier from Yaxchilan or Palenque was captured about 625 A.D. by the Piedras Negras ruler. It seems that a sphere of *ah k'ulna* functions was limited by the royal court and associated activities. The use of the members of the palace hierarchy in some extraordinary situations is a very common trait for early state organization.

In the VIIth-VIIIth centuries A.D. the polities of Usumasinta valley consisted of several "districts" which were governed by the hierarchical political-administrative apparatus. These "districts" coincide with the regal-residential centers of the Naranjo realm, but unfortunately, written sources do not mention the lower elements of the administrative system. There was also a parallel palace hierarchy which is represented by *ah k'ulna'oob*. The best evidence are from the Piedras Negras state. It consisted of 5 or 6 *sahaldoms* but we can identify only El Cayo. Moreover, another political structure existed in this realm. A companion of Piedras Negras heir Chaac Mo' (Panel 3) became a military chief 30 years later. On Stela 12 he is named *T'ultun ahaw* "a lord of T'ultun". Probably he was a king because he belonged to a lateral lineage of the ruling dynasty. So, the political-administrative organization of Piedras Negras was a mixture of three sys-

tems - apparatus of controlled underlords, kinship network and palace hierarchy.

Summing up we should identify Late Clasic Maya polities as early states. We understand early state as one of the variants of the complex sociopolitical organization of the hierarchic type which does not always precede the mature state. Rather they are different forms, their main distinction being in the role of territorial and kinship factors. This interpretation is based on those of Claessen and Van der Velde (1987) and Bondarenko (1997:13-14). In the Maya case, the early state is characterized by: 1) complex central political-administrative apparatus; 2) complex social stratification; 3) elite control over long-distance trade, and production and distribution of prestige goods; 4) dominance of lineage groups in the other sectors of socioeconomic subsystem. But we see no evidence for more detailed characteristics : from one side the level of the development of architecture, sculpture and writing closely link the Lowland Maya to the typical or even transitional early state, but the socio-economic structure is closer to that of the inchoate early state. It will not be possible to resolve this problem until we decide on what traits - political or socio-economical - are more important for the classification.

Maya polities present a common path of political evolution: simple chiefdom - complex chiefdom - early state. The main indicators of these changes are seen in hieroglyphic inscriptions and monumental architecture: their appearance signifies a transition to the chiefdom form and their institutionalization accompanies the institutionalization of early state organization. According to the hieroglyphic and archaeological data this process was similar to that of the Oaxaca valley - consolidation and centralization of power began on the high levels and then was distributed on the lower levels (Kowalewski et al. 1995:133).

There is a considerable difference between the Maya polities and Benin, which presents another variant of community and chiefdom development - mega-community (Bondarenko 1996). In the Maya system, supreme power does not imitate the community but on the contrary begins to restructure society. Secondary centers copy the capital with all its specific traits. Secondary rulers are organized like the overlords. As a rule such a "projection of the model of power" from above is typical for well-developed societies (see e.g. the description of stalinist USSR in Kalash-



nikov 1997), and the existence of this mechanism among the Maya is very significant. Also Bondarenko notes that only one real city could exist within a mega-community (1996:95-96). Other proto-urban centers after their defeat turned back in the rural sites. In the Lowland Maya settlement pattern two central-place settlement types - regal-ritual cities (capitals) and regal-ritual centers (provincial centers) belong to the urban category.

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## List of Contributors

- Prof. *Olga Yu. Artemova* Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, 32A Leninskiy Prospekt (korpus B), Moscow, 117034, RUSSIA E-mail: artemova.olga@list.ru
- Dr. *Maximilian O. Baldia*, Institute for the Study of Earth and Man, Southern Methodist University, 3225 Daniel Av., Dallas, TX 75275-0274, U.S.A. E-mail: mobaldia@onramp.net
- Dr. *Dmitri Beliaev* Faculty of History, Political Science, and Law, Russian State University for the Humanities, 15 Chayanova, Moscow, 125993, RUSSIA, E-mail: lakamha@mail.ru
- Prof. *Moshe Berent* Social and Political Science Department, The Open University of Israel, P.O. Box 39328, Tel Aviv 61392, ISRAEL E-mail: mosheb@oumail.openu.ac.il
- Prof. *Yuri E. Berezkin* Piter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Russian Academy of Sciences, 3 Universitetskaya nabereznaya, Saint-Petersburg, 199034, RUSSIA E-mail: berezkin1@gmail.com
- Prof. *Dmitri M. Bondarenko* Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 30/1 Spiridonovka st., Moscow, 103001, RUSSIA, E-mail: dmitrimb@mail.ru
- Dr. *Alex Brown* European University of Lefke Kyrenia, NORTHERN CYPRUS E-mail: singa@cc.emu.edu.tr
- Prof. *Robert Carneiro* American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79<sup>th</sup> st., New York, NY 10024-5192, USA E-mail: carneiro@amnh.org
- Prof. *Henri J.M. Claessen* Department of Anthropology, Leiden University, 52 Wassenaarseweg, P.O.Box 9555, 2300 RB Leiden, NETHERLANDS E-mail: hacla@xs4all.nl
- Dr. *Ben Fitzhugh*, Department of Anthropology, University of Washington, Seattle, WA. 98195-3100, USA E-mail: fitzhugh@u.washington.edu
- Dr. *Sergey A. Frantsuzov* Institute of Oriental Cultures, Russian Academy of Sciences, 18 Dvortsovaya nabereznaya, Saint-Petersburg, 191065, RUSSIA E-mail: invost@mail.convey.ru

- Dr. *Alexander Kazankov* A. I Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 30/1 Spiridonovka st., Moscow, 103001, RUSSIA,
- Prof. *Andrey V. Korotayev* Faculty of History, Political Science, and Law, Russian State University for the Humanities, 15 Chayanova, Moscow, 125993, Institute for African Studies and Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 12 Rozdestvenka st., Moscow, 103753, RUSSIA, E-mail: akorotayev@gmail.com
- Prof. *Stephen A. Kowalewski* Department of anthropology, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga 3062, USA E-mail: skowalew@arches.uga.edu
- Prof. *Nikolay N. Kradin* Institute of History, Archaeology & Ethnology, Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 89 Pushkin-skaya st. Vladivostok, 690950, RUSSIA, E-mail: kradin@mail.ru
- Dr. *Dmitri N. Lelioukhine* Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 12 Rozdestvenka st., Moscow, 103753, RUSSIA
- Dr. *Valeri A. Lynsha* Department of World History, Far-Eastern Federal University, 35 Nekrasova st., Ussuriysk, 692500, RUSSIA  
E-mail: linsha@mail.ru
- Dr. *Mohammed Maraqtan* Department of Anthropology, Friedrich Schiller University Jena, 24A Lobdergraben st. D-07743 Jena, GERMANY  
E-mail: maraqtan@mail.uni-marburg.de
- Dr. *Alexey V. Marey* Faculty of History, Political Science, and Law, Russian State University for the Humanities, 15 Chayanova, Moscow, 125993, RUSSIA
- Prof. *Victor de Munk* Department of Anthropology, State University of New York, NY 12651-2499, USA E-mail: victor@bestweb.net
- Dr. *David G. Robinson* Department of Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas 78712-1086, USA
- Prof. *Nikolay S. Rozov* Department of Philosophy, Novosibirsk State University, Pirogova 2, Novosibirsk, 690090, RUSSIA,  
E-mail: nrozov@inbox.ru
- Prof. *Richard P. Schaedel* Department of Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas 78712-1086, USA
- Prof. *Peter P. Schweitzer* Department of Anthropology University of Alaska Fairbanks, 310 Eielson Bldg, P.O. Box 757720, Fairbanks, AK 99775-7720, USA, E-mail: ffps@uaf.edu

Prof. *Tatiana D. Skrynnikova* Institute of Oriental Cultures, Russian Academy of Sciences, 18 Dvortsovaya nabereznaya, Saint-Petersburg, 191065, RUSSIA E-mail: skryta999@mail.ru

Prof. *Aidan Southall* Lisle 24350 Tocane St. Apree, FRANCE

Dr. *Charles S. Spencer* Anthropology Department, The American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79<sup>th</sup> St., New York, NY 10024-5192, U.S.A., E-mail: cspencer@amnh.org

Prof. *Vadim V. Trepavlov* Institute for Russian Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, 19 Dm.Ulyanova st., Moscow, 117036, RUSSIA  
E-mail: trepavlov@yandex.ru

Prof. *Leonid S. Vasiliev* Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 12 Rozdestvenka st., Moscow, 103753, RUSSIA

Dr. *Paul K. Wason* Bates College, Lewiston, Maine 04240, USA,  
E-mail: pwason@bates.edu