

Fourth Edition

DOCUMENTS IN WORLD HISTORY

PETER N. STEARNS

STEPHEN S. GOSCH

ERWIN P. GRIESHABER



VOLUME 2

THE MODERN CENTURIES • FROM 1500 TO THE PRESENT

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The Modern Centuries: From 1500 to the Present

FOURTH EDITION

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PREFACE

This volume focuses on the major currents in the development of the modern world—not just the American or Western world, but the wider world in which we live today. It deals with the interaction between established civilizations and new forces of change, many of them springing from intensifications of international commerce and the results of industrialization. It also deals with the impact of change on loyalties and beliefs, on social institutions and the conditions of various groups such as workers and women, and on the activities and the organization of the state.

The book examines the formation of the modern world not through an overview or through scholarly interpretation, but by presenting primary sources—that is, documents written at the time. Such an approach is inherently selective, leaving many important developments out; and it is meant to be combined with some kind of textbook coverage. But primary source materials do convey elements of the flavor and tensions of history in the making that cannot be captured by a progression of names, dates, and main events or trends. The book presents what people—great and ordinary—expressed in various societies in the modern periods, and it challenges the reader to distill the meaning of these expressions.

The various documents offered illustrate characteristic features of key civilizations in the major modern stages of world history from about 1500 C.E. to the present. These documents were not written for posterity; some were not even intended for a wide audience at the time. They are collected here to raise issues of understanding and interpretation that can enliven and enrich the study of world history.

The book covers several key facets of the human experience, again in various times and places. It deals with the organization and functions of the state. It treats philosophy and religion and, at points, literature and science. It explores contacts among civilizations, particularly the diverse impacts of Western imperialism and international commercial expansion and heightened cultural interchange in recent centuries. It also deals with families and women and with issues of social structure.

The contents of this new edition include additional materials on Africa and additional attention to social history in each of the three modern world history periods. Additional materials on the 20th century help relate world history perspectives to recent developments. Revised introductions and questions encourage linkages between specific documents and some of the larger issues in world history, including comparisons and interactions with global forces. **Visual Sources** have also been extensively reworked.

The book's organization facilitates relating it to a core textbook. Major civilizations—East Asia, the West, India, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America—are represented with several readings. Thus a course can trace elements of change and continuity within each civilization. The readings are divided into three modern periods: 1500 to 1750, during which the rise of the West and diverse reactions to the rise formed a central thread in world history; 1750 to 1914, a period dominated by new patterns of manufacturing, new international technologies for transportation and communication, and new cultural forces such as nationalism; and the 20th and early 21st centuries, during which Western influence continued strong but the other major civilizations also began to find their own distinctive modern voices. The third principle of selection involves topics that can be coherently traced and compared both across different civilizations and across different time periods. A topical table of contents facilitates the ability to identify themes like religion, the family, or politics, and build readings and analyses accordingly.

The goal of the book is not, however, maximum coverage. Many interesting and significant documents are left out, of necessity. Readings have been chosen that illustrate important features of an area or period, that raise challenging problems of interpretation, and that express some human drama. The readings also invite comparisons across cultures and over time. **Chapter introductions** not only identify the readings but also raise some issues that can be explored. **Study questions** at the end of each chapter further facilitate an understanding of issues.

Dealing with documents in the world history context in fact involves several related exercises, and the study questions develop these exercises. First, of course, is what the document means—and meanings often have to be teased out of the literal words, as when a set of laws is “asked” about the nature of a social structure, which was not the explicit purpose of the document's author. Second is what relationship the document has to other features of the society or period in question—how representative it is, and what quirks it has. Third—and the study questions in the revised edition pay increased attention to this point: what is the document's relationship to larger world history themes, whether they be comparative or focus on change and continuity over time. Study questions in this revised edition have been reworked to provide a clearer basis for all the desirable levels of document analysis.

This book was prepared by three world history teachers at work in several kinds of institutions. It is meant, correspondingly, to serve the needs of different kinds of students. It is motivated by two common purposes: First, a strong belief that some perspective on the world is both desirable and possible as a key element in contemporary American education; and second, that an understanding of world history can be greatly enhanced by exposure not just to an overall factual and interpretive framework but also to the kinds of challenges and insights raised by primary materials.

Dealing with primary sources is not an easy task. Precisely because the materials are not written with American college students in mind, they require some thought. They must be related to other elements we know about a particular society; they must be given meaning; and they must be evaluated more carefully than a

secondary account or textbook designed deliberately to pinpoint what should be learned. By the same token, however, gaining ease with the meaning of primary sources is a skill that carries well beyond a survey history course into all sorts of research endeavors. Gaining such skill in the context of the civilizations that compose the world goes some distance toward understanding how our world has become what it is—which is, in essence, the central purpose of history.

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