

Reading THE GLOBAL VOLUME TWO PAST 1500 to the Present

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READING THE GLOBAL PAST

Selected Historical Documents

Volume II 1500 to the Present

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Cover Art: "Head of Victory," 1907 or after, by Augustus Saint-Gaudens (detail). Helen and Alice Colburn Fund. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Dance shield, early twentieth century (detail of back view). Kikuyu, Kenya. Photo by Heini Schneebeli. Courtesy of Marc L. Ginzberg.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 97-80446

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For information, write: Bedford Books, 75 Arlington Street, Boston MA 02116 (617–426–7440)

ISBN 0-312-17192-7

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READING THE GLOBAL PAST

PREFACE

he study of global history is made difficult by the magnitude of the subject. Modern human beings have been on the earth for about 100,000 years, and their ancestors can be traced back to a period over 3 million years earlier. There are six inhabited continents and thousands of inhabited islands. And whenever and wherever there have been people, their activities have comprised part of the composite past that is the subject of global history. Studying such a massive subject is daunting.

To make sense of this vast sweep of time and space, scholars have to find some way to select from the details of history and produce a simpler picture. One way to do that is to seek general patterns that recur at various times and places: that approach has guided the selection of documents in *Reading the Global Past*. Recognizing the impossibility of including every document of significance, we have focused on a few themes of special global significance and selected documents that shed light on those themes. As a result, some old standbys of world history anthologies have been left out, while some unusual documents have been included.

A textbook and an anthology serve very different purposes in a course on the global past. The job of the textbook is to make sense out of the bewildering welter of details that composes the raw material of history. Ideally, the picture presented in the textbook is coherent, consistent, and clear. The job of an anthology of readings that accompany a textbook, in contrast, is to reintroduce some of the detail and conflicting information that was de-emphasized in the textbook. These readings inject complexity and contradiction into the course, as well as life and interest.

The 96 readings that make up *Reading the Global Past* were selected to present a cross section of the major kinds of sources used in global

history. Each part contains mostly primary sources along with a few scholarly works. The primary sources present information through the words of participants in, or direct observers of, historic events or processes; they reveal the concerns and conceptions of the place and time in a more vivid manner than any later scholar possibly could do. They provide the raw material that can support minute reconstructions of the past and can give a "feel" for the period that usually is lost in the more sterile accounts of textbooks. The scholarly works are interpretations of historical or archaeological evidence by scholars at a later period; they provide a framework for the assessment and understanding of the primary sources.

The scholarly works we have selected cut across the disciplines that study the past. Many were written by historians, but others were written by archaeologists, anthropologists, geographers, sociologists, and economists. The study of the global past is too complicated and difficult to leave in the hands of any single discipline.

The readings in this anthology span the globe, treating the human past on all the inhabited continents. In recognition of the accomplishments of peoples around the world and of their contributions to the modern world, it is only appropriate that coverage should be truly global.

Finally, the readings have been selected with an eye toward readability. Readings should be understandable by the beginning history student, but in cases where technical vocabulary or other background might be required, we have added notes and introductory material to assist the student.

While *Reading the Global Past* can be used along with any world history text, it was designed to be used with *The Global Past*, the world history text written by the same authors. Accordingly, its emphases and organization are similar. Each part of the text (with the exception of the final part of each volume, which is given over to broad perspectives) has a corresponding part in this reader, with a common theme and title. Organizing the reader by part, rather than chapter, emphasizes thematic comparison among the geographical and cultural areas that form the basis for chapter divisions. The instructor's manual, *Teaching the Global Past*, provides suggestions on how the use of text and reader can be coordinated profitably.

Dividing the readings of each part into scholarly works and primary sources underscores how these two categories of documents differ from and complement one another. The scholarly works provide students with a framework in which they can evaluate and critically use the primary sources. The primary sources, in turn, shed light on the evidence that led scholars to their conclusions. Organizing primary sources into small thematic groups provides case studies of important issues that could be referred to only briefly in *The Global Past*.

Reading the Global Past was conceived with the intention of encouraging habits of good historical scholarship in students. A full bibliographic citation for each reading is included on its first page to encourage recognition of the obligation to cite one's sources. Each reading is introduced by a discussion of the author and, as appropriate, the circumstances of writing; these permit the student to exercise some evaluation of the source for bias and credibility. Each part ends with a set of questions to consider, which are designed to guide students toward a critical evaluation of the readings and a recognition of their significance.

For all these reasons, *Reading the Global Past* forms a valuable complement to a global history textbook, particularly *The Global Past*. The readings interject detail, controversy, and the personalities of writers who participated in some of the great events and processes of history.

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THE COLLISION OF WORLDS

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant processes of the centuries following 1400 was the expansion of European voyaging, which resulted in the reuniting of the peoples of the Old and New Worlds. Separated for tens of thousands of years, the peoples of the Americas had developed differently from the peoples of Eurasia and Africa. When they finally came into contact, each had developed distinctive ideologies, technologies, and cultural practices that seemed exotic and alien to the other. The collision of these two worlds, then, became in part an encounter of fundamentally different ways of life and the transmission of elements of those ways of life from one people to another.

The acquisition of cultural characteristics that results from contact with members of another society is called *acculturation*. There are various degrees of acculturation, ranging from complete replacement of one's traditional culture to merely a few trivial and superficial changes. The degree of acculturation usually is affected profoundly by the attitudes toward one another held by the participants in contact. *Deculturation*, in contrast to acculturation, is the simple loss of cultural elements as a result of contact with another society. Both of these processes were important in the collision of worlds that took place when the Old and New Worlds were reunited. While all parties in the interaction experienced some acculturation, acculturation of Native Americans typically was much more extensive, and deculturation as a result of this contact was largely restricted to Native Americans. Technology, religion, and ways of life all were profoundly changed by the processes set into motion by contact.

Additionally, the contact of peoples of the Americas with Europeans and Africans led to the transmission of diseases, which proved more disastrous for Native Americans than for the Old World peoples. Lacking genetic resistance to many devastating Old World diseases, American Indians died by the millions from smallpox, yellow fever, influenza, and other diseases introduced by explorers, colonists, and slaves. This de-

mographic collapse, coupled with conquest of Native Americans and their subsequent exploitation as a labor force, led to the destruction of much of Native American culture.

The process of interaction between Old World and New World peoples was shaped by a multitude of factors. The various colonial European powers had different agendas, different goals in their colonial enterprises; individual colonists accepted the official agendas to varying degrees, and brought personal agendas with them. The Native Americans, too, had a variety of goals in their interactions with colonists, ranging from an aim of expelling invaders to an aim of encouraging foreign trading partners. How well these goals were attained depended on many factors, particularly demography and access to economic and military resources.

The interaction between peoples that followed the European voyages to the Americas is a complex story, and the readings in this part of the book explore aspects of it. The first essay, by Herman J. Viola, provides an overview of some of the important issues and outcomes of contact between Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans in the Americas. The subsequent readings discuss the transportation of African culture to the Americas by slaves and its persistence there, Native American and European attitudes toward one another, incentives for European colonization, and the effects of contact between peoples from the two halves of the world. Confusion, miscommunication, and attempts to fit new information into old ideas plagues the individuals caught up in the contact; greed, self-preservation, ethnocentrism, and parochialism were among the factors that motivated the actions of these individuals.

SCHOLARLY WORKS

Seeds of Change Herman J. Viola

This essay by Herman Viola, a historian and curator at the Smithsonian Institution, was originally written as the introduction to the catalogue for an exhibit celebrating the five hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's discovery of the Americas. Here, it provides an overview of the complex interactions and large-scale contact between the Old World peoples of Europe and Africa with Native Americans. Viola finds the demographic and cultural effects of this contact to have been profound and predominantly negative for Native Americans.

Every schoolchild knows that in 1492 Christopher Columbus, a Genoese seaman sailing under the flag of Spain, captained a fleet of three tiny ships and discovered a land unknown to the peoples of Europe. His was a remarkable feat despite his inability, even after three more trips to the Americas, to comprehend the true significance of his explorations. He was not alone in this lack of understanding, of course, for it took decades for the peoples of Europe to appreciate the extent of his accomplishments. No better example of this need be noted than the failure of European cartographers to call these newfound lands Columbia, in honor of Columbus. Instead, they named them for Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine clerk with a yen for travel whose widely circulated letter *Mundus Novus*, written in 1503, publicized the discovery of the New World long before Columbus's journals were available to European readers.

Columbus did more than force the cartographers of Europe to revise their maps of the earth. His voyages of discovery were pivotal in world history. The Western Hemisphere was rapidly and profoundly transformed biologically and culturally by seeds of change—plants, animals, and diseases—that were introduced, sometimes deliberately, sometimes accidentally, by Columbus and those who followed him. Eventually the processes of encounter and exchange that Columbus initiated affected the Old World as well, altering flora and fauna, reordering the ethnic composition of countries, changing the diet and health of peoples everywhere. They continue to this day.

Columbus could not have sailed at a more opportune time. Affairs in Europe in 1492 were in disarray. At the head of the Catholic church, which dominated the political as well as religious life of much of Europe, was the corrupt pope Rodrigo Borgia. Bickering with the church as well as among themselves were the monarchs of England, France, Spain, and the Germanies. Peasants were crushed by a legacy of incessant warfare and excessive taxation. Intellectuals were drifting in a sea of restlessness and uncertainty, lacking the rudder of religious faith and royal authority that had characterized the Middle Ages but heeding the siren call of the Renaissance, which dared man to believe in himself, to create new art and question old gods, to seek knowledge based on facts instead of dogma.

The Renaissance was an unexpected legacy of the crusades, the failed attempt to wrest the Holy Land from its infidel occupants. Although the crusades had military and religious objectives, they produced marked and unexpected cultural, intellectual, and economic benefits for the people of Europe. Returned crusaders had been exposed to new ideas, unfamiliar technologies, strange foods. They had developed a taste for Eastern spices, precious gems, silks and satins, and other exotic attractions from the Orient. Contact with Arab civilization also inspired a revival of interest in other Mediterranean cultures, a rebirth of the classical learning of ancient Greece and Rome. The Renaissance promoted

the rise of nationalism, the growth of cities, interstate commerce, a monied economy, and a merchant class. Printing presses and universities flourished as did the teaching of subjects long neglected—astronomy, chemistry, cartography, and navigation. Newly built seaworthy vessels combined with the development of new navigational aids such as the compass, astrolabe, and quadrant, sailing charts, and a rising spirit of adventure and enterprise caused Europeans to break free of physical as well as psychological boundaries.

It was then that a united Spain burst upon the world scene, unleashing forces of radical change. In addition to sponsoring Columbus's first voyage of discovery, Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492 completed seven centuries of conflict on Spanish soil with the Moorish invaders by capturing Granada. Flush with patriotic and religious fervor, the monarchs chose to expel not only the Moors but also the Jews, thereby dispersing across Europe many of the people who were to become the intellectual architects, financiers, and artisans of the global transformation begun by Columbus and continued by Spain's rivals in the decades that followed.

What Columbus had really discovered was, however, another old world, one long populated by numerous and diverse peoples with cultures as distinct, vibrant, and worthy as any to be found in Europe. Tragically, neither Columbus nor those who followed him recognized this truth. The Europeans regarded the peoples whom they encountered in North and South America more as natural objects—another form of the fauna to be discovered and exploited—than as human beings with histories as rich and ancient as their own. They could not imagine that these peoples could offer anything of aesthetic or cultural value. Only recently, in fact, have we come to realize that what Columbus did in 1492 was to link two old worlds, thereby creating one new world.

Another tragedy of 1492 was the failure of the Europeans to recognize the fragility of the American environment. They set to work despoiling the resources of the New World as quickly as they began destroying its peoples. What had taken nature thousands of centuries to create was largely undone in less than five, beginning in September 1493, when the Admiral of the Ocean Sea returned to America at the head of an armada of seventeen ships. These disgorged on Hispaniola some fifteen hundred would-be empire builders and a Noah's ark of Old World animals and plants including horses, cows, pigs, wheat, barley, and shoots of sugarcane, which was, next to disease, perhaps the most detrimental contribution of the Old World to the New.

Sugarcane merits censure because it harmed both man and the environment. With sugarcane came the plantation system and the initial assault on the tropical rain forests of the New World. Sugarcane was a labor-intensive crop that absorbed huge human resources, beyond what was needed for altering the landscape, to make large-scale production

both possible and profitable. Although American Indians were readily enslaved, they just as readily died—in vast numbers from the diseases the Europeans introduced to the New World along with their plants and animals.

Consider, for example, what occurred on the island of Hispaniola, where Columbus established Santo Domingo, the first permanent colony in the New World. In neither Haiti nor the Dominican Republic, which share this island today, are there any descendants of the original Indian inhabitants. Indeed, the native peoples had disappeared by 1600. Although no one knows what their numbers were in 1492, current estimates range from sixty thousand to as many as eight million. Columbus himself remarked that "the Indians of this island . . . are its riches, for it is they who dig and produce the bread and other food for the Christians and get the gold from the mines . . . and perform all the services and labor of men and of draft animals."

If Columbus believed the Indians were the island's riches, he did little to protect Spain's fortune. Bartolomé de las Casas, the Dominican friar and polemicist, whose father and uncle had come with Columbus to Hispaniola in 1493, believed that three million natives had perished after little more than a decade of contact with the Europeans—the result of disease, warfare, forced labor, and enslavement. "Who of those in future centuries will believe this? I myself who am writing this and saw it and know the most about it can hardly believe that such was possible."

When there were no longer sufficient Indians to maintain the New World plantations, Europeans turned to Africa for labor. The exact number of Africans kidnapped and sold into New World slavery will never be known, but estimates range from ten to thirty million. Despite the enormous loss of life, both in the transatlantic passage and in the New World, that slavery entailed—perhaps the life of one slave for each ton of sugar produced—Africans not only made sugar production profitable but they also replaced Indians as the dominant ethnic group in the Caribbean. Ironically, it may have been maize, a New World food taken to Africa by Europeans, that underlaid population growth on that continent and enabled Atlantic slavers to keep the sugar, cotton, and tobacco plantations of the New World supplied with labor.

The real meaning of 1492 can be seen in Montserrat, a small Caribbean island a scant twenty miles from Antigua. When Columbus named it in 1493—after the Jesuit monastery in Spain where he had prayed a novena for a safe return from his second voyage to the New World—Montserrat was typical of Caribbean islands, a lush tropical rain forest providing shelter and sustenance to Arawak Indians.

The indigenous population and vegetation of Montserrat have disappeared. The Indians were replaced, first by Irishmen dumped there as a result of England's domestic policy and then by slaves from Africa; the

rain forests were replaced by sugar plantations. Indeed, the ruins of more than one hundred sugar mills still dot the landscape. Although much of Montserrat is rain forest once again, there is a major difference from 1492. Many of the plants on the island today were introduced by its European and African occupants.

The people, of course, are also different today, and this perhaps is the most enduring legacy of Columbus. The population of Montserrat is more than 90 percent black, with the parent stock largely West African in origin. Yet, ask a Montserratian his nationality and he is likely to say, "Mon, I'm Irish!" And why not? The spirit of those early Irish residents pervades all aspects of life on Montserrat. Not without reason is it known as the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean. Many of the place names are Irish as are the dominant surnames of its black residents, many of whom speak English with a touch of brogue. Traditional musical instruments on the island include the fife and drum; one of the folk dances bears a remarkable resemblance to the Irish jig; and island residents celebrate Saint Patrick's Day with exuberant festivities. This then is the true significance of 1492. It was as if a giant blender had been used to concoct an exotic drink, but the ingredients were the plants, animals, and people of two hemispheres, and the product was really a new world.

The continuing influence of Columbus's voyages is an important part of the "Seeds of Change" story. Five hundred years ago, people gave little thought to the environment. Today, acid rain, waste management, global warming, and similar environmental issues command concern the world over. Five hundred years ago tropical rain forests seemed an inexhaustible resource and an impediment to progress. They are now disappearing at the rate of thirty-five acres a minute. Today, rain forests are considered essential to human welfare and a resource to be treasured and husbanded. Not only may rain forests have a major influence on the world's climate, but they shelter plant and animal species unknown to science. The destruction of the rain forests is likened to the destruction of a vast library whose volumes remain unread and unappreciated because the languages in which they are written have yet to be translated.

The Columbus Quincentenary should be a time of contemplation. It is a time to think upon the achievements of those first adventurers who dared to challenge the mythical monsters that had kept Europe isolated by a moat of ignorance, doubt, and anxiety, but it is also a time to reassess and evaluate our options for the future. Ours is an era when decisions have instant ramifications around the globe. Man's continued achievements offer much promise for a healthier, happier future; but technological advances often have environmental implications. The forces of change and despoliation set in motion by Columbus have not abated; if anything, they are accelerating.