
The Heritage of VOLUME II
Since 1500

WORLD
Civilizations

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Preface

THERE has long been a need for world history text that would provide a balanced perspective on our present world situation—one that, while giving an exemplary treatment of Europe, does not treat the rest of the world as but a minor part of the human experience. Our goal has been to write such a book. No longer is world history mainly the story of separate civilizations or of Europe extending its influence to other continents. Today, the peoples and civilizations of the world interact and impinge on one another. The politics of oil highlight the importance of the Middle East and of tensions within modern Islamic states. Industrial and high technology exports from Japan, Taiwan, and Korea revolutionize world markets. Exploding populations aggravate famine in Africa and flood into the United States from Mexico and Latin America.

Our vision of world history begins in a few great river valleys where agricultural societies were transformed first by bronze and iron, and then by religions and philosophical revolutions of the era 600 to 300 B.C. Chapters 1 and 2 describe the major traditions that emerged in these ancient heartlands: Greek philosophy, Judaic monotheism, Hinduism and Buddhism, and Confucianism. Judaism and Greek philosophy then combined and recombined to form Christianity and Islam, each of which, like Confucianism and the religions of India, became the basis for a major world civilization.

Subsequent chapters trace each of these major civilizations as it developed and expanded across the globe. From North China Confucianism spread east to Korea and Japan, and south to Vietnam. Hinduism and Buddhism spread throughout the Indian subcontinent to East Asia. Christianity spread from the Mediterranean through Europe and eventually to the New World. And Islam, the last on the scene, expanded with tremendous force and vitality into Africa, southern Europe, and Asia. The juxtaposition and confrontation of these several streams was often dramatic: of Islam and Hinduism in India, of Buddhism and Confucianism in China and Japan, of Christianity and Islam in the Middle East. Amid the spreading tides of these world civilizations occurred the rise and fall of empires, the development

and spread of technologies, the growth of populations, and the rise of cities and commerce.

Finally came the modern era, say from the sixteenth century onwards. During this time, Europe, which since the fall of Rome had been relatively backward, became influential and powerful. Dynastic states became nation-states. Money and commerce transformed human relations. Technology created a new kind of power. Science and religion competed with one another, and various secular doctrines emerged from the conflict to challenge the world views of traditional civilizations. In some ways the old was superseded. Modern astronomy, for example, displaced prescientific views of the universe that were part of every world religion. At times political loyalties overrode those of religion. In other respects, the historical world religions resisted or adapted with remarkable tenacity. Even in the late twentieth century, it still means something to speak of cultures as Islamic, Hindu, Christian, or Buddhist. The extraordinary vigor of science-based secularisms in today's interdependent world may be only the most recent manifestation of concern for power and material goods that has always been a part of human culture.

The limits of this text are deliberate. We do not treat United States history—usually taught in detail in specialized course—nor do we treat every example of developments within the major world civilizations. For practical reasons we have also only touched on the high cultures of Meso-America and Africa for which historical materials are scant and which, lacking writing, never developed into world civilizations. But these limits have made possible what we regard as the central strength of our text: an extended and careful treatment of each major world civilization. Because we have aimed not merely to describe the several civilizations, but also to convey an inner sense of what each civilization meant to those who lived in it, each chapter includes several quotations from original sources—political manifestos, poems, and philosophy—that convey the feelings and goals of even ancient societies with immediacy and concreteness. The text has many illustrations, paintings, photographs, tables, and maps. Selective bibliographies at the end of each chapter include exciting and more comprehensive readings that students may use for papers or reports. □

New Haven and Cambridge

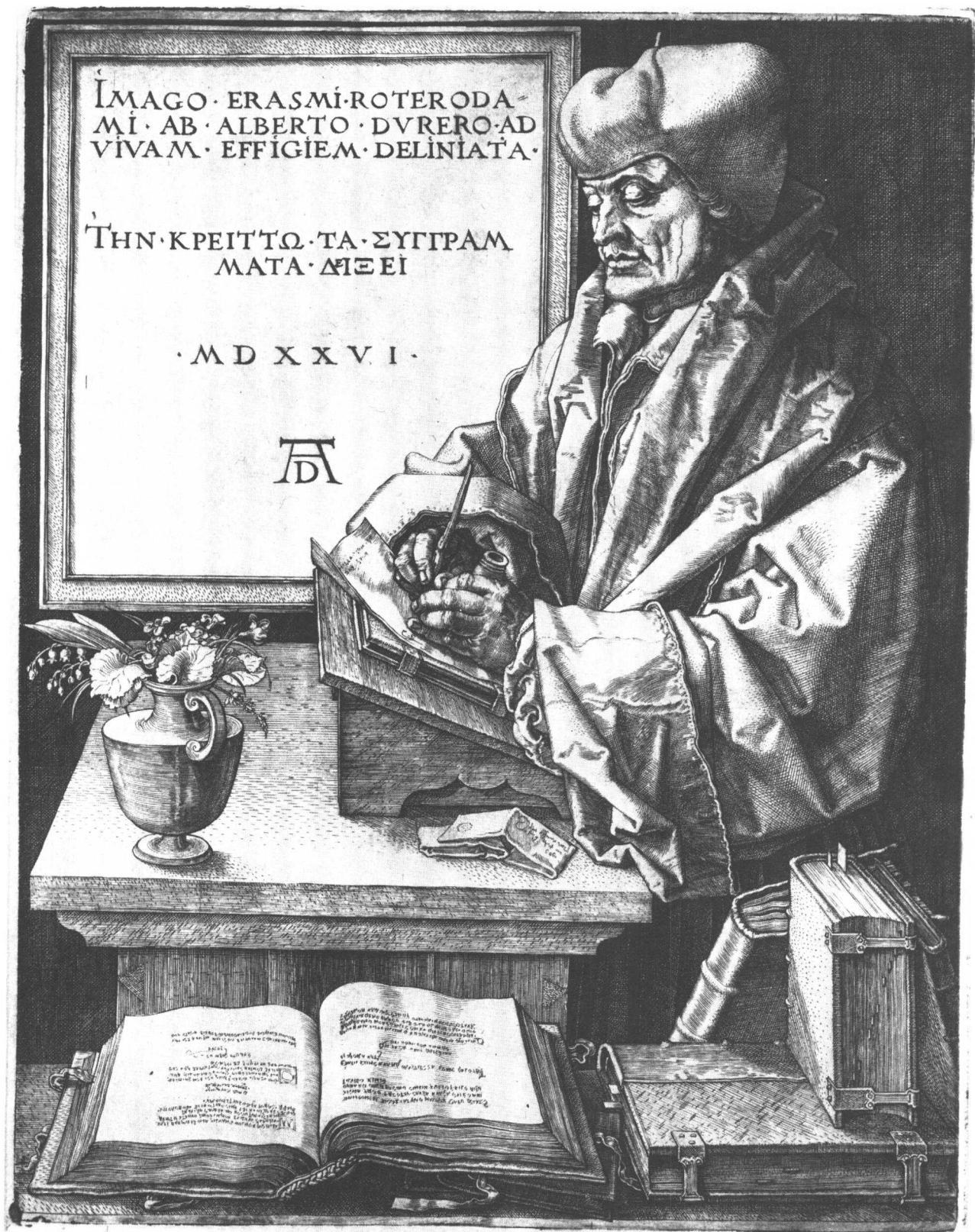
A.C.
W.G.
D.K.
S.O.
F.M.T.

Note that a Study Guide by Melvin T. L. Ang of Salisbury State College, and an Instructor's Manual by Lawrence Daxton of the University of Southern Colorado, are available as supplements to the text.

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Erasmus of Rotterdam in a 1526 engraving by Albrecht Dürer. Erasmus influenced all of the reform movements of the sixteenth century. He was popularly said to have "laid the egg that Luther hatched." [National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.]

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