

An Introduction to Western Culture

西方文化概论

杨怀恩 编著

北京市教育委员会人文社会科学研究项目

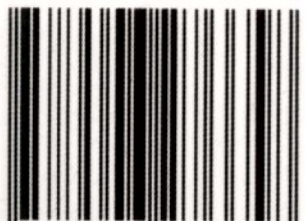


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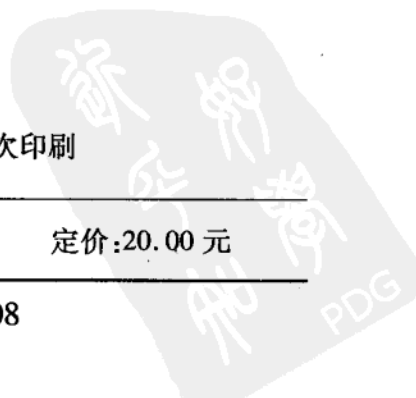
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前 言

语言既是文化的载体，又是文化的一部分。英语中有大量的成语、典故等是来自古希腊罗马的哲学、文学著作，圣经以及西方历史上的一些重要事件和人物等。若对西方文化知识知之甚少，无论是学习外语还是进行对外交流都会遇到许多意想不到的困难或问题。显然学习和运用外语必须了解与这种外语有密切关系的文化知识。

《西方文化概论》旨在系统地介绍涉及到西方文化的重大政治社会变化、历史事件、哲学思想、宗教信仰、文学艺术、科学技术、风俗习惯等方面的知识。本书集语言知识和文化知识于一体，语言简练，内容丰富，可读性较强，能有效地帮助读者提高思辨能力和文化素质修养，从而较容易地在中西文化之间进行有效地沟通交流。

本书采用历史叙述法，将主要内容按时间顺序编写：

1. 西方文化的起源
2. 古希腊文化
3. 古罗马文化
4. 希腊罗马神话
5. 基督教及圣经
6. 中世纪
7. 文艺复兴与宗教改革
8. 巴洛克时期
9. 启蒙运动与革命
10. 浪漫主义与现实主义
11. 现代主义

12. 西方的迷信

13. 西方的风俗习惯

在本书的编写过程中，作者参阅了大量国内外中英文资料，在书后附有主要的参考书目，在此谨向相关的作者们致以诚挚的谢意。由于本书作者水平有限，书中可能有一些不妥之处，望读者不吝赐教。



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Part One The Origin of Western Culture

西方文明诞生于古代近东地区。由于该地区无天然屏障，又位于农耕地区和游牧地区的交界处，各古代民族相继在此登台亮相，形成了特有的政治、经济制度和文化特色。

西方文化由古典文化（即古希腊罗马文化）和犹太—基督文化一道组合，完成了一种文化的融合和新生。作为人类文明的曙光，它的出现对西方文化的进程、对西方人的思维方式、行为模式、政治制度、哲学和文学以及法律体系都产生了不可估量的影响。这种影响超越了时间和空间的范围，遍及西方世界的各个角落，历经数千年的风雨而不衰。

European culture is mainly made up of two elements which are enduring over the centuries: the Greco-Roman^① element and the Judeo-Christian^② element.

However, when talking about the origin of Western culture, we should begin with the great river civilizations. It is understandable that the complex and stable societies should have grown up first in river valleys, as the land there was level and the soil rich and deep and water was available, therefore the conditions for the development of agriculture are ideal.

I. Mesopotamia^③

Archaeologists^④ generally agree that the earliest of these

civilizations began in the Tigris⁵ and Euphrates⁶ valleys of in what is now Iraq. Apparently the first permanent settlers in the valleys were called Subarians⁷, but they were conquered by the Sumerians⁸, who had a well-established and flourishing society before the end of the fourth millennium⁹ B. C. They founded a number of cities. Their system of agriculture, with its intricate¹⁰ irrigation systems, as well as their cities, in which trade flourished, required political organizations and the development of legal systems. The latter are summarized in the famous Code of Hammurabi¹¹, which dates from about 1700 B. C. but is a codification¹² of laws of earlier origin. We know much about the early history of Mesopotamia because the inhabitants of the valleys developed a form of writing on clay¹³ tablets¹⁴, called cuneiform¹⁵. Since the nineteenth century, thousands of these tablets have been discovered and translated.

Much of the early history of Mesopotamia is a record of turmoil as city-states¹⁶ strove with each other to dominate the rich land. But, with the passage of time, powerful leaders arose who created empires. During the course of about two thousand years, four major empires came to power and passed away. First was the Akkadian¹⁷ Empire under Sargon I¹⁸, with its capital city at Assur¹⁹ on the upper Tigris. This was followed by the Babylonian empire²⁰, founded by Hammurabi the lawgiver, its capital city being Babylon²¹ on the Euphrates. After a considerable lapse²² of time, a third empire, the Assyrian²³, arose with its capital at Ninevah, also on the upper Tigris. The final empire—one of the greatest in the history of the world—was the Persian²⁴, founded by Cyrus the Great²⁵ around 550 B. C. This empire, which was centered to the east of Mesopotamia in what is now Iran²⁶, rapidly expanded until it covered most of the Near East, extending as far east

as India. Under Darius I^② and later under Xerxes I^② the Persians moved westward, crossing the Hellespont^② and invading the Greek city-states. There the stage was set for one of the crucial military confrontations in history, whose outcome shaped the future course of civilization in the Western world.

II . Egyptians

The second important ancient river civilization arose along the banks of the Nile, which has its source deep in Africa, to flow northward into the southeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea^③. The Nile^④ overflowed its banks each year, enriching the soil, so the farms, and farming communities, which developed on the banks of the long river in the fourth millennium B. C and toward its end two kingdoms, Upper and Lower Egypt, had come into existence. According to tradition, about 3100 B. C. Menes^⑤, a strong leader, united the two kingdoms and inaugurated^⑥ the dynastic age, whose pharaohs^⑦ were to rule Egypt for millennia.

As it was not very hard to make a living, the Egyptian found it possible to turn his attention to other things. He was especially skillful in architecture. The buildings were massive and durable. The best example of this kind is the Great Pyramid^⑧, which is still standing, though built more than five thousand years ago.

In science, for a start the Egyptians did some wonderful things. Since the water for the farmer's fields came all at once, it was necessary for them to store a part of it for future use, so the Egyptians built reservoirs and canals and irrigated their land. The flood washed away their boundary lines each year, hence they had need of

geometry³⁹ and surveying in order to fix the line fences. The clear climate, the level plains and the punctual over-flooding of the Nile were favorable to a study of the heaven, hence they made advances in astronomy. They made the calendar⁴⁰, which with a few minor corrections, we use today. They used the decimal system, invented a system of weights and measures⁴¹. In arithmetic, they used Arabic figures as high as millions. Egyptians began to use written words, hieroglyphics⁴² (picture-writing) from the fourth millennium B. C. .

III. Chaldeans⁴⁰

The little tongue-shaped land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers was occupied in very ancient times by another important people, the Chaldeans, or the Babylonians as they are sometimes called. The civilization of Chaldea⁴¹ was much like that of Egypt. Agriculture was the main occupation and the land was made fertile by irrigation from rivers. Since they did not have stone for buildings, the Chaldeans used bricks almost entirely. Some of the bricks were dried in the kilns. The most noted of their buildings were the "Hanging Gardens", built by a king for the pleasure of his queen who was from mountainous areas.

In science, the Chaldeans were no less advanced. They divided time into years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes and seconds, and measured time by the sundial in the day time and by the water-clock or sand-clock at night which was later introduced into Europe and gave birth to the saying of "the sands of one's life" and "till the sands run dry". They used a crude kind of astronomy to do fortune-telling by means of the stars.