

VOLUME B: FROM 1000 TO 1800

TRADITIONS & ENCOUNTERS

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE PAST

JERRY H. BENTLEY
HERBERT F. ZIEGLER

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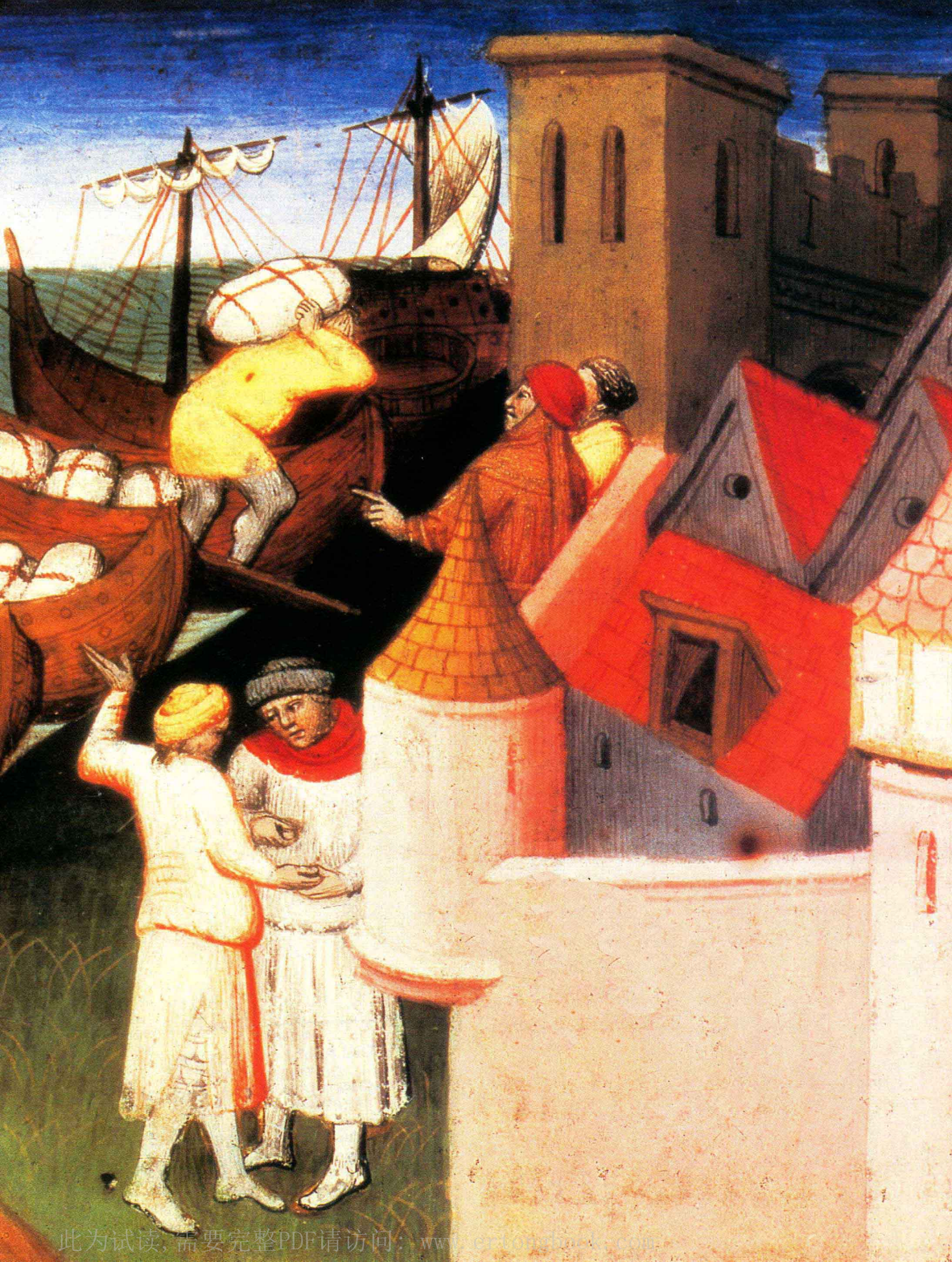
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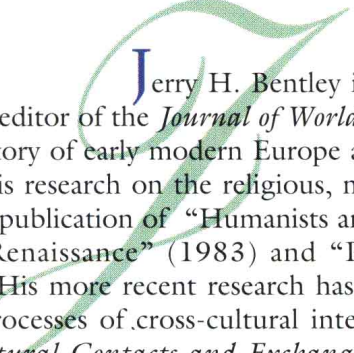
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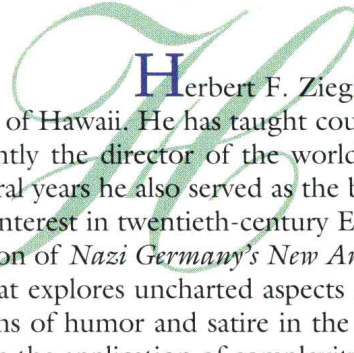
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PREFACE

During the 1990s the term *globalization* entered the vocabulary of politicians, journalists, scholars, and others who commented on the increasingly tight connections linking the world's lands and peoples. By the late twentieth century, global transportation and communication networks had become more intricate than ever before, and they supported voluminous trade and systematic interaction among peoples throughout the world. Global links brought problems as well as opportunities: pollution, environmental change, ethnic tensions, political conflicts, and weapons of mass destruction loomed as potential threats to all peoples. Yet even though they are more prominent today than ever before, global interactions and global problems are by no means new features of world history. To the contrary, there is a long historical context for contemporary globalization, and only in the light of past experience is it possible to understand the contemporary world.

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE PAST



Our purpose in this book is to offer a global perspective on the past—a vision of history that is meaningful and appropriate for the interdependent world of contemporary times. During an era when peoples from all parts of the earth meet, mingle, interact, and do business with each other, a global perspective has become an essential tool for informed and responsible citizenship. Because global interactions profoundly influence the fortunes of peoples in all lands, it is impossible to understand the contemporary world by approaching it exclusively from the viewpoint of western Europe, the United States, Japan, or any other individual society. And it is equally impossible to understand the world's history by viewing it through the lenses of any particular society.

A global perspective on the past calls for analysis that respects the historical experiences of all the world's peoples—not just one or a few—and that examines the roles of all in the making of a world inhabited by all. A global perspective calls also for analysis that goes beyond the study of individual societies to examine their larger regional, continental, hemispheric, and global contexts and to explore the structures promoting interactions between peoples of different societies. By bringing this kind of global perspective to world history, we hope to offer an understanding of the past that places the contemporary world in meaningful historical context.

At first glance, *Traditions and Encounters* might look similar to several other books that survey the world's past. Like the others, *Traditions and Encounters* examines the historical development of societies in Asia, Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Oceania. But *Traditions and Encounters* differs from other works in two particularly important ways. First, in addition to charting the development of individual societies, it focuses attention systematically on interactions between peoples of different societies. And second, it organizes the human past into seven eras that represent distinct and coherent periods of global historical development.



THEMES: TRADITION AND ENCOUNTER

How is it possible to make sense of the entire human past? The study of world history is exhilarating, but given the range of human diversity, it also presents a daunting challenge. Human communities have adopted widely varying forms of political, social, and economic organization, and they have elaborated even more diverse cultural, religious, and philosophical legacies. Given the manifold diversity of human societies, it might seem that masses of unrelated detail threaten to swamp any effort to deal with all the world's history.

In this book we concentrate on two main themes—tradition and encounter—that help to bring order to world history. These two themes bring focus to some of the most important features of human experience on the earth. In combination, they account for much of the historical development of human societies.

The theme of tradition draws attention to the formation, maintenance, and sometimes collapse of individual societies. From their earliest days on earth, human groups have generated distinctive political, social, economic, and cultural traditions that have guided affairs in their own societies. Some of these traditions arose and disappeared relatively quickly, while others influenced human affairs over the centuries and millennia, sometimes up to the present day. Thus one of our principal concerns in this book is to examine the development of political, social, economic, and cultural traditions that have shaped the lives and experiences of the world's peoples. Individual chapters explore the traditions that different people relied on to organize and sustain societies in Asia, Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Oceania. Emphasis falls especially on the large, densely populated, complex, city-based societies that have most deeply influenced the course of history for the past six thousand years, but smaller and less powerful societies also receive their share of attention.

While elaborating distinctive political, social, economic, and cultural traditions to organize their own affairs, the world's peoples have also interacted regularly with one another since the earliest days of human history. The theme of encounter directs attention to communications, interactions, and exchanges that have linked individual societies to their neighbors and the larger world. By systematically examining encounters between peoples of different societies, we draw attention to processes of cross-cultural interaction that have been some of the most effective agents of change in all of world history. In the form of mass migrations, campaigns of imperial expansion, long-distance trade, diffusions of food crops, the spread of infectious and contagious diseases, transfers of technological skills, and the spread of religious and cultural traditions, these interactions have profoundly influenced the experiences of individual societies and the development of the world as a whole. Thus, while paying due attention to individual societies and their traditions, chapters of this book also discuss interactions that linked the fortunes of peoples from different societies. Many chapters also examine the large-scale structures of transportation, communication, and exchange that supported interactions among the world's peoples.



ORGANIZATION: SEVEN ERAS OF GLOBAL HISTORY

While focusing on the themes of tradition and encounter, we seek to bring additional clarity to the human past by organizing it into seven eras of global history. These eras, treated successively in the seven parts of this book, represent coherent

epochs that form the larger architecture of world history as we see it. The seven eras do not reflect the particular experience of any single society so much as the common experience of societies engaged in cross-cultural interaction. Thus our seven epochs of global history owe their coherence particularly to networks of transportation, communication, and exchange that linked peoples of different societies at different times in the past. Even in ancient times these networks supported interactions that shaped the experiences of peoples from different lands, and with the development of increasingly effective means of transportation and communication, interactions grew more frequent, systematic, and intense. By situating the development of the world's peoples in the framework of the seven eras of global history, we seek to offer meaningful comparisons between different societies and also to highlight the role of cross-cultural interactions in shaping the experiences of individual societies and influencing the development of the world as a whole.

Thus from the beginning to the end of this book we focus on the twin themes of tradition and encounter, which in combination go a long way toward accounting for the historical development of the human species on planet earth, and we place the experiences of individual societies in their larger regional, continental, hemispheric, and global contexts. By bringing a global perspective to the study of humanity's common historical experience, we seek to offer a vision of the past that is both meaningful and appropriate for the interdependent world of contemporary times. We hope that *Traditions and Encounters* will enable readers to understand the development of world history and to place the modern world in its proper historical context.

A BRIEF NOTE ON USAGE

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This book qualifies dates as B.C.E. (“Before the Common Era”) or C.E. (“Common Era”). In practice, B.C.E. refers to the same epoch as B.C. (“Before Christ”), and C.E. refers to the same epoch as A.D. (*Anno Domini*, a Latin term meaning “in the year of the Lord”). As historical study becomes a global, multicultural enterprise, however, scholars increasingly prefer terminology that does not apply the standards of one society to all the others. Thus reference in this book to B.C.E. and C.E. reflects emerging scholarly convention concerning the qualification of historical dates.

Measurements of length and distance appear here according to the metric system, followed by their English-system equivalents in parentheses.

The book transliterates Chinese names and terms into English according to the *pinyin* system, which is increasingly displacing the more cumbersome Wade-Giles system. Transliteration of names and terms from other languages follows contemporary scholarly conventions.

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