

# WESTERN CIVILIZATION

*A Social and Cultural History*

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*Volume 1: Prehistory–1750 ♦ Brief Edition*



MARGARET L. KING

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A Social and Cultural History

BRIEF EDITION

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VOLUME 1: PREHISTORY–1750

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# PREFACE

When I teach the introductory history course at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, I start each semester by asking my students, "Where is the West?" I send an unfortunate individual to the global map mounted on the back wall of the room. A finger roams around the continents of the globe. The class suggests many possibilities: Western Europe? the Western Hemisphere? the Wild West? The search goes on all semester—a search of special complexity for the many students who, together speaking tens of languages, professing all the world's major religions, and hailing from all its inhabited continents, have no association by birth with Western civilization.

This brief edition of *Western Civilization* must begin with the same question. To embark upon the study of "Western Civilization," we must first ask where, or what, is the West.

## WHERE OR WHAT IS THE WEST?

The West should not be understood to be the Western Hemisphere, the North American West, or Western Europe. It is not, in fact, a place. Nor is it a specific people, race, or set of nations. It is, rather, a body of ideas, values, customs, and beliefs forged over centuries on the continent of Europe, which lay to the west of the then more advanced civilizations of the East. In the centuries of European expansion—from approximately 1000 to 1900 of the Common Era (C.E.)—these Western values flourished, following Western merchants, travellers, armies, and governors into every corner of the inhabited globe. They are what the West means, and they are the meaning of the West.

Here are a few of the many concepts that have made the West what it is today and that constitute its soul and core meaning:

**human dignity:** the principle that all human beings are equal in worth (if not in talents, beauty, shape, or size); that they possess fundamental rights which cannot be taken away; and that to the greatest possible degree they are free

**justice:** the idea that no person should be unfairly privileged above another

**democracy:** the belief that the power to shape the future of a community belongs to its people as a whole and not to arbitrarily selected leaders

**rationalism:** the assumption that all phenomena

(even those pertaining to God, essence, or spirit) may be subject to the critical scrutiny of the human mind  
**progress:** the inclination to work toward goals to be achieved in the future

**self-examination:** the encouragement of human beings to examine themselves seriously and often in order to test whether they have fulfilled their promise and their responsibilities.

## THE WEST AND THE REST OF THE WORLD

We learn more about the Western world when we also examine the rest of the world. Some features of Western civilization are not unique to the West. They appear also in the cultural systems of other people around the globe, although not all of them appear in the same way in any other civilization. In many cases, particularly in the era of its origins, the West borrowed customs and ideas from the civilizations of Asia and Africa. More recently, a fully developed Western culture has lent, shared, or imposed its values on those civilizations and the newer ones of the Western Hemisphere.

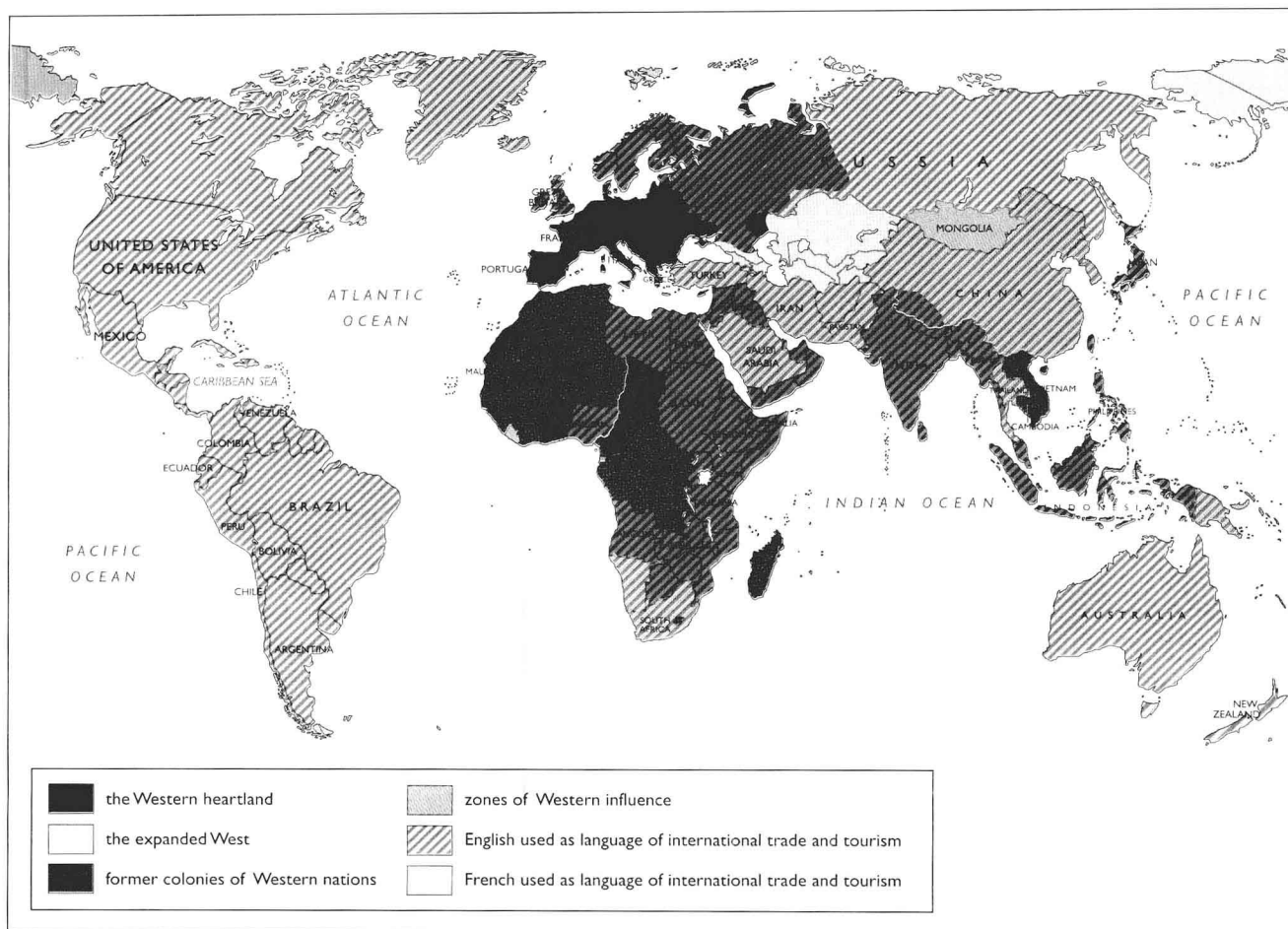
This book frequently pauses in its narration of Western development to consider key aspects of non-Western civilizations, both past and present. It makes no sense to isolate the West from other regions that have helped shape it, and upon which it has impacted, especially in an age that is now no longer dominated by the West but is truly global.

A global perspective transcends any claims for the superiority of one civilization to another. The civilization of the West is the focus of this book not because it is better (which is arguable) or because it is ours (it is not "ours" to many Americans by virtue of birth), but because it embodies principles of permanent value that will survive as long as there are those who learn them, reflect on them, and teach them to future generations, both in the West and elsewhere in the world.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

If the West is not a place but a collection of ideas, values, customs, and beliefs, we still need to understand its development. How did it arise? Who were its main architects? Where did it begin its journey, and where did it travel? When did it begin, when did it





**Where Is the West:** Shown here is one way of thinking about the West geographically. Its heartland is Europe, where the cultural, social, and political traditions of the West developed their modern form after about 1000 c.e. 'The expanded West' includes regions of European settlement, where Western civilization was transplanted from Europe after 1500 but where it has since developed in modified form because of contacts with other peoples. 'Former colonies of Western nations' include those regions where Western civilization was imposed upon other nations, nations now largely liberated from colonial rule but still retaining some features of that civilization. Finally, areas designated as 'zones of Western influence' have been largely free of any period of direct domination by Western nations, but have to a greater or lesser extent adopted selected Western political and economic institutions.

crystallize, and when was it most challenged? Why did it emerge as it did, and why is it important for us to know these things? These are the kinds of large questions posed by history that lie behind the smaller ones: Why did this king follow that one? Who opened up this pass or invented that tool? How did that army triumph or that book win notice? Where did those people live? When did disease or starvation claim the most lives?

This book explores these questions, in a way perhaps different from that of history books which students have used before. It looks at the story of nations, rulers, and wars, as histories have always done. But it looks more than most at the story of reli-

gion and ideas and the arts, those areas of human thought and imagination in which the ideas and values that distinguish the West have taken form.

It also looks closely at societies and households, the daily lives of parents and children, men and women. In these settings Western values were born and nurtured. Yet in these contexts, the principles defined above as Western—especially those of human dignity and justice—were often violated. Such contradictions are a central part of the story of the West.

Because this book gives special attention to the history of culture and society, its organization is topical. Some chapters focus on politics, others on society, others on religion or ideas. Often two or three

chapters in succession will deal with the same historical period, but from different topical vantage points. The chapters on the Middle Ages, for instance, examine the whole of that thousand-year period, stressing first politics and society (Chapter 9), then religion and ideas (Chapter 10), then commerce and urbanization (Chapter 11). A topical division has the virtue that students are introduced systematically to the variety of ways in which historians study the past.

## FEATURES OF THE TEXT

Since the focus of this book is on society and culture, it is important to orient the reader to the framework of time and space. Each chapter opens with a **timeline** charting the major events and processes that are discussed in the pages that follow. **Key Topics** are also outlined at the beginning of each chapter as preparation for what lies ahead.

The aim of this book is to tell a story—an engaging and important one—not only from the author's perspective but also through images and voices, witnesses, from the past. Examples from the visual arts appear not only because they are beautiful, but because they illumine the past. In the same way, historical voices have their place in this narrative because they can convey more authentically than any modern author the perceptions that people had long ago of the world about them. These **Witnesses** boxes converse with one another throughout the text: poets and scientists, historians and merchants, warriors and saints. Readers are invited to pause a moment—even though it may be late, a paper is due, or an examination looms—and listen to these faithful witnesses to the evolution of the West.

Numbers and statistics are important in contemporary civilization. We use such data to measure health (rates of mortality), education (years of study or test scores), and welfare (standard of living), as well as population and wealth. This book draws attention to such measures of human prosperity in the past. **Color maps** throughout the book supplement this material and provide a geographical context.

At the end of each chapter, a **Conclusion** box condenses the major themes and issues discussed, while **Review Questions** stimulate critical thought and understanding. For further study, readers are directed to the **Suggested Readings** section at the end of each chapter.

## WITH GRATITUDE

The single name of the author appearing on the title page disguises the reality that I have had many guides and helpers in the creation of this book. I am grateful to the staff at Calmann & King (Nell Webb, Lee Ripley Greenfield, Peter Kent, Laurence King, Richard Mason, Judy Rasmussen, and Melanie White) and former staff member Rosemary Bradley, who have had confidence in the project, assisted it in every way, and alternately soothed and bullied its restive author. My colleagues in the History Department at Brooklyn College—especially Bonnie S. Anderson, David Berger, Philip Dawson, Paula S. Fichtner, Philip Gallagher, Donald Gerardi, Leonard Gordon—have contributed ideas and criticisms for which I am immensely grateful; as has former colleague Michael Mendle, now in the History Department at the University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa), and former student and associate Michael Sappol, now at the National Library of Medicine (Bethesda, Maryland). Special thanks go to Brian Bonhomme, now in the History Department at the University of Arkansas, a young scholar whose insight and imagination have contributed greatly to all the chapters of the second volume.

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Margaret L. King  
Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center  
City University of New York  
June 2000

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

The *Instructor's Manual with Test Item File* by Dolores Davison Peterson combines teaching resources with testing material. The *Instructor's Manual* includes chapter outlines, overviews, key concepts, discussion questions, and audiovisual resources. The *Test Item File* offers a menu of multiple choice, true-false, essay, and map questions for each chapter. A collection of blank maps can be photocopied and used for map testing or other class exercises.

*Prentice Hall Custom Test*, a commercial-quality, computerized, test management program is available for Windows and Macintosh environments. This allows instructors to select items from the *Test Item File* in the *Instructor's Manual* and design their own exams.

The *Study Guide* (Volumes I and II) by Paul Teverow provides, for each chapter, a brief overview, a list of chapter objectives, study exercises, and multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions. In addition, each chapter includes a number of specific map questions and exercises.

The *Documents Set* (Volumes I and II) by Arlene Sindelar and Mary Chalmers is a collection of additional primary and secondary source documents that underscore the themes outlined in the text. Organized by chapter, this set for each of the two volumes includes review questions for each document.

The *Companion Website* ([www.prenhall.com/king](http://www.prenhall.com/king)) works in tandem with the text to help students use the World Wide Web to enrich their understanding of Western civilization. Featuring chapter objectives, study questions, web links, and new updates, it also links the text with related material available on the Internet.

*Understanding and Answering Essay Questions* suggests helpful analytical tools for understanding different types of essay questions, and provides precise guidelines for preparing well-crafted essay answers. This brief guide is available free to students when packaged with *Western Civilization: A Social and Cultural History*.

A *Transparency Pack* provides instructors with full-color transparency acetates of all the maps, charts, and graphs in the text for use in the classroom.

*Themes of the Times* is a newspaper supplement prepared jointly for students by Prentice Hall and the premier news publication, *The New York Times*. Issued twice a year, it contains recent articles pertinent to historical study. These articles connect the classroom to the world. For information about a reduced-rate subscription to *The New York Times*, call toll-free: 1-800-631-1222.

*History on the Internet* is a brief guide to the Internet that provides students with clear strategies for navigating the Internet and World Wide Web. Exercises within and at the ends of the chapters allow students to practice searching for the myriad of resources available to the student of history. This supplementary book is free to students when packaged with *Western Civilization: A Social and Cultural History*.

*Reading Critically about History* is a brief guide to reading effectively that provides students with helpful strategies for reading a history textbook. It is available free to students when packaged with *Western Civilization: A Social and Cultural History*.

The *Hammond Historical Atlas of the World* is a collection of maps illustrating the most significant periods and events in the history of civilization. This atlas is available at a discounted price to students when packaged with *Western Civilization: A Social and Cultural History*.

*Digital Art Library: Western Civilization* is a collection of the maps, charts, graphs, and other useful lecture material from the text on disk for use with Microsoft Powerpoint™. The material can be used in a lecture or as a slide show.

*World History: An Atlas and Study Guide* is a four-color map workbook that includes over 100 maps with exercises, activities, and questions that help students learn both geography and history.

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