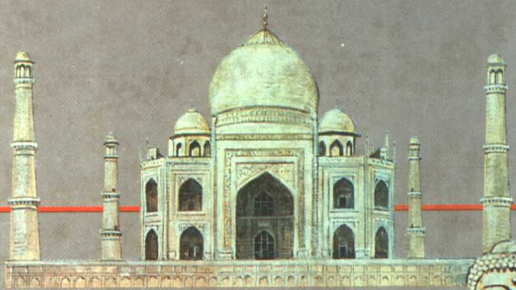


A HISTORY OF THE WORLD

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Preface

In this book we have tried to provide a basis for year-long courses in world history. Our intent has been to present a global perspective rather than a history of the West with chapters on other cultures added for comparative purposes only. Out of 46 chapters, 18 are devoted to nonwestern cultures—China, Japan, India, Islam, Africa, pre-Columbian America, and Southeast Asia. Only when we deal with the period of European domination of the world (from the seventeenth century through the nineteenth) do we focus on the West.

The writing of a new world-history textbook is a difficult task. We have tried to provide a framework of political history while primarily giving the reader an idea of the character and dynamics of different civilizations. To accomplish this we have tried to show the interrelationships of the artistic, intellectual, economic, social, and political life of cultures. Recognizing that the major world civilizations did not develop in isolation, we have examined the relationships among cultures, as well.

In the modern period the various parts of our globe have become so closely interconnected that we may say that modern history *is* world history; but we may also say that ancient history began as world history. The earliest discernible stage in the development of culture was common to human communities wherever they existed. Only later did geographical and political isolation produce the characteristics

of distinctive cultures. The first chapters of the book are, therefore, worldwide in vision and approach. They treat both the development of human beings and their culture and the origins of civilization. The chapters that follow trace the history of individual civilizations—Greece, Rome, Islam, China, Japan, India. The later chapters, which discuss the seventeenth century and after, then show how European domination integrated world civilizations and, slowly, created our current world in which all regions are now interdependent.

It is natural that the measure of detail is greater in the later chapters than in the earlier ones. We have been concerned with showing how earlier civilizations shaped and influenced later ones—in other words, how the past shaped the future. Our historical interest in change and cross-cultural influences becomes increasingly specific as we approach the present. Although we are interested in the general sources of medieval European religious institutions and those of classical Chinese philosophy, we want to know the specific sources of twentieth-century fascism and independence movements. Because of this natural intensification of interest in the history of modern events and movements, the pace of treatment slows as we approach the present, and the chapters cover their subjects in greater depth than do earlier chapters.

This book is merely a starting point for the study of history. We hope that it

will stimulate readers to explore the reference works cited at the end of each chapter, and even to enroll in additional specialized courses. As an introductory work, this book is *about* history, as well as *of* history. It tells something of the story of the past, but it also treats historical method and introduces the reader to problems of historical evidence and interpretation.

We have been fortunate in being able to base this book on the successful work *The Mainstream of Civilization* and, where appropriate, *A Brief History of Chinese and Japanese Civilizations*. *Mainstream* gave us a framework for developing the new book, and we owe thanks to Joseph Strayer for permission to use it.

We would also like to thank the following scholars, who read the typescript of *A History of the World* and gave us valuable advice and suggestions: Edward Anson, University of Arkansas, Little Rock; Lester J. Bilsky, University of Arkansas, Little Rock; Margery Ganz, Spelman College; Choyun Hsu, University of Pittsburgh; Peter Mellini, Sonoma State University; Robert Roeder, University of Denver; and Joseph E. Schwartzberg, University of Minnesota.

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Introduction

The study of history is an intellectual activity based on the common ways that we explain ourselves and relate to others. How often do we explain what we have done or said by referring to something that happened in the past? How often do new acquaintances exchange life stories as they get to know one another? Such actions reveal an assumption—very widespread in our culture—that to know and understand a person requires a knowledge of his or her past. At least with individuals, we assume that knowledge of the past is necessary for explaining the present, and our expectations of people rest on what we know of their past. Unexpected behavior is surprising because it contradicts this historical knowledge. It usually leads us to look again at what we know of a person's past.

This interest in the life histories of individuals also forces us to gather information about the collective past of the people who make up our community. This broader historical knowledge makes it possible for us to judge the commonness or uniqueness of a person's life experience.

Thinking in historical terms, therefore, is common to everyone. The historical work of everyday existence is one of the foundations of our dealings with others and with the world at large. Our basically historical mindedness is what makes news gathering a good business. We continually read newspapers and listen to news programs on radio and television because we as-

sume that knowing the immediate past is the best way to understand the present and to prepare for the future.

This interest in news falls between the informal collection of information about the past of other individuals and the formal study of history. News reporters usually reveal the sources of their stories, but sometimes they do not. The formal study of history as an academic subject focuses our attention not only on the story of the past, but also on how we know it—on the sources of our knowledge. In the study of history, the commonplace gathering of historical information becomes an intellectual activity in which we think about what we want to know about the past and how we are going to learn it.

The study of history sharpens intellectual skills that we use in many parts of our lives. It forces us to realize that how we tell a story depends on the purpose it is to serve. What details must we include to make the story coherent and effective? Judgment and choice are essential to learning anything. Given a library of historical documents, what we might read depends on our preconceptions of the subject—that is, on what we want to know. These preconceptions provide us with questions and preliminary ideas about how to answer them. As we read, our conception and questions lead us from one body of material to another until we form an account of the subject that appears to be true and coherent—that is, understandable by others. This is a basic pattern of intellectual work.

Once we have become aware of how we know things and of our own role in shaping that knowledge, we become cautious about what we know. Historians are always conscious of the evidence they lack. A political historian may have an account of events from one side of a conflict, but not from the other. An economic historian may have accounts of wheat sales, but no way of knowing what the terms of measurements or monetary units mean. Much of the progress in historical studies is made by scholars who discover or point out the distortions in the evidence used less perceptively by earlier scholars. A new view of the evidence may produce a new interpretation or a search for material that can remedy the defect in the foundation of knowledge about the subject.

The progress of historical scholarship has tended to emphasize the relationships of all aspects of human existence. Early histories relied on narrative sources, such as chronicles and annals, and focused on political events and personalities—the things the chroniclers wrote about. In the twentieth century, historians have learned to use a wide variety of evidence. Estate records, tax rolls, records of law cases, kitchen accounts—all have served as the basis for histories that provide the social and economic context of political events. These works also show how political, economic, and social conditions influenced one another and shaped human affairs. Furthermore, recent works have shown how these conditions affected intellectual activity. They have elucidated the sociology, economics, and politics of art and scholarship and, conversely, the influence of artistic and intellectual culture on society, economics, and politics. Historical studies give us, therefore, an opportunity to think formally about the interrelationship of all human activities.

The study of history also has a social purpose. It not only teaches us how information is gathered and used, but

gives us the independent power to judge the quality of historical information put forth by governments or other social agencies. To those who want to manipulate information to their own advantage, the study of history is a dangerous activity.

It is clear why studying a country's or region's history is socially and politically useful, but why should we study world history? The daily news provides one answer: The world's populations are economically interdependent and tied together by light-speed communications, effective and fast transportation systems, and international political organizations, such as the United Nations. But this has not always been true. For most of recorded history, people have been limited by the horizons of their own particular culture.

The study of world history provides us with an opportunity to enrich our mental lives by expanding our own cultural horizons beyond the specific time and place of our own physical circumstances. More than that, studying world history provides an essential perspective on what it means to be a human being. We are all shaped by the culture into which we are born. Clearly, if we are to understand the human animal, we must study its cultures.

Although cultures differ very much from one another, they share certain basic characteristics, and understanding these similarities is crucial for understanding humans themselves. The study of world history is a comparative study of cultures. Anthropologists engage in this comparative study by going from culture to culture to distinguish the universal from the particular. But cultures exist in time as well as in place, and the present and immediate past make up only a tiny fraction of the life of human cultures. To discover basic patterns of culture and to see culture in all its variety, we must study the life histories of cultures. In its fullest form, this must be a study of world history.

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