



SIXTH EDITION

THE
WESTERN
EXPERIENCE

VOLUME A
Antiquity and the Middle Ages

MORTIMER CHAMBERS ♦ RAYMOND GREW ♦ DAVID HERLIHY
THEODORE K. RABB ♦ ISSER WOLOCH

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THE WESTERN EXPERIENCE
Volume A:
Antiquity and the Middle Ages

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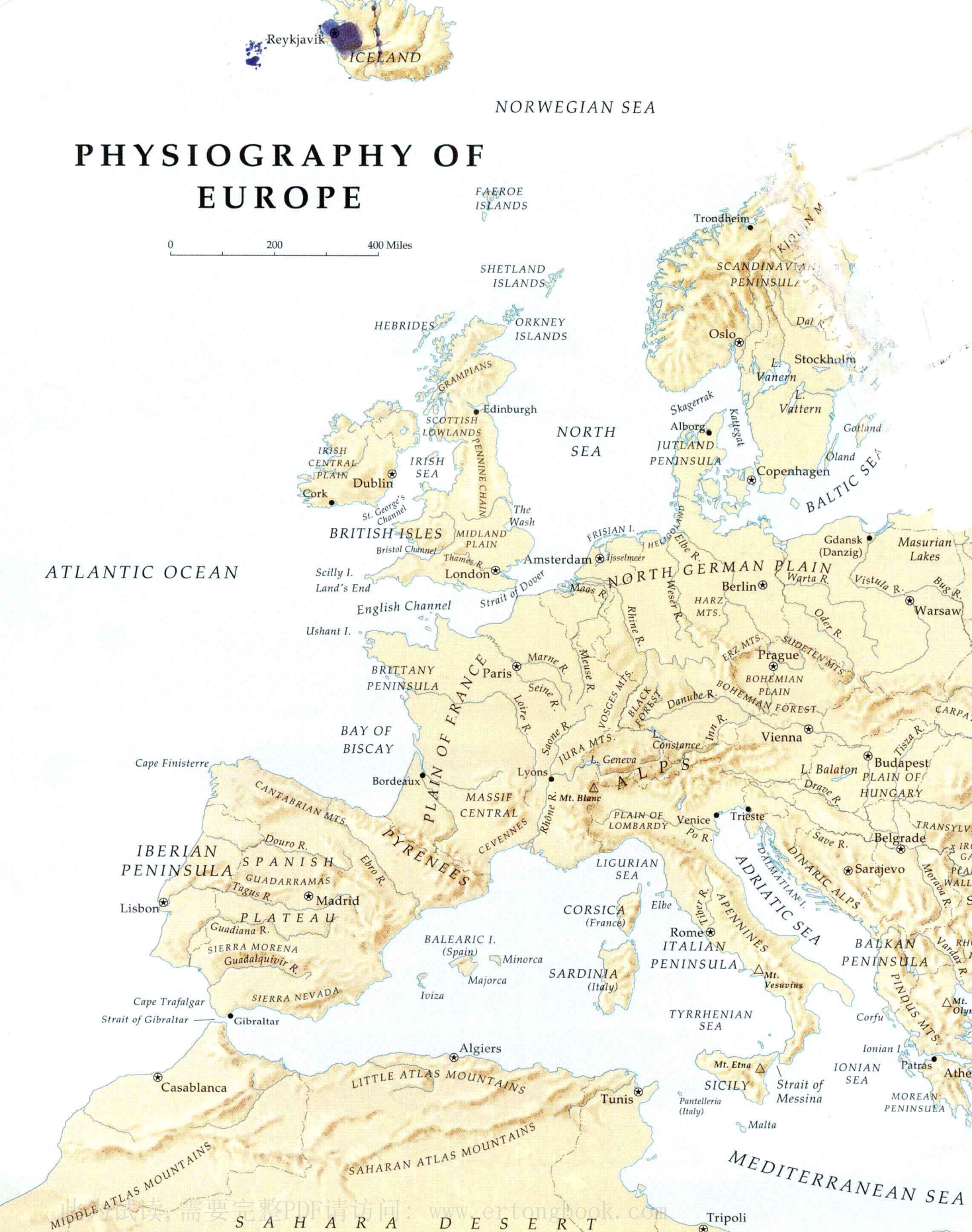


NORWEGIAN SEA

PHYSIOGRAPHY OF EUROPE

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ATLANTIC OCEAN





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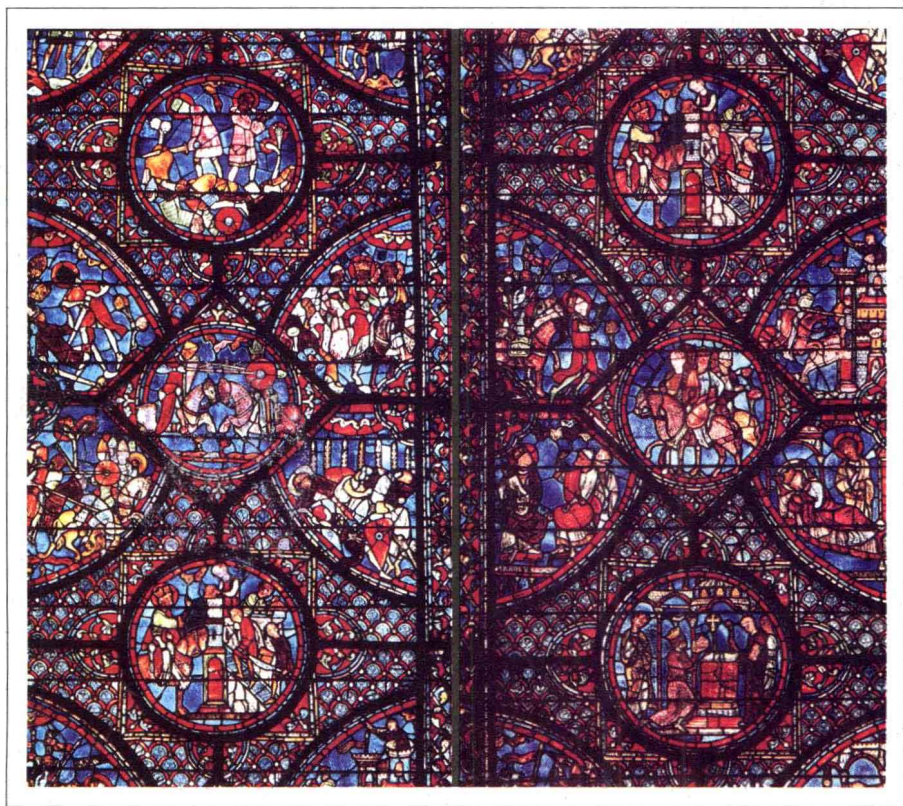


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*This book is dedicated
to the memory of David Herlihy
whose erudition and judgment
were central to its creation
and whose friendship and example
continue to inspire
his co-authors*

INTRODUCTION

[*Publisher's Note:* In order to provide an alternative to the hardcover edition, THE WESTERN EXPERIENCE is being made available in two-volume and three-volume paperbound editions, as well as a paperbound edition that runs from the Renaissance to the Modern Era. Volume I includes Chapters 1–17; Volume II includes Chapters 15–30 and the Epilogue; Volume A includes Chapters 1–12; Volume B includes Chapters 11–21; Volume C includes Chapters 19–30 and the Epilogue; the volume From The Renaissance to the Modern Era includes Chapters 12–30 and the Epilogue. The page numbering and cross-references in these editions remain the same as in the hardcover text.]

Everyone uses history. We use it to define who we are, to connect our personal experience with the collective memory of the groups to which we belong and to attach ourselves to a particular region, nation, or culture. We invoke the past to explain our hopes and ambitions and to justify our fears and conflicts. The Charter of the United Nations, like the American Declaration of Independence, is based on a view of history. When workers strike or armies march, they cite the lessons of their history. Because history is so important to us psychologically and intellectually, historical understanding is always shifting and often controversial.

Some questions must be asked repeatedly; some issues arise again and again. But historical knowledge is cumulative, for while asking new questions, historians integrate the answers learned from previous studies. History is not merely a subjective exercise in which all opinions

are equally valid. No matter what motivated a particular historical question, the answer to it stands until overturned by better evidence. We now know more about the past than ever before and understand it as the people we study could not. Unlike them, we know how their history came out; we can apply methods they did not have, and often we have evidence they never saw. This knowledge and the ways of interpreting it are the collective achievement of thousands of historians.

We also use history for pleasure—as a cultivated entertainment. The biographies of admirable or monstrous men and women, dramatic accounts of important events, and colorful tales of earlier times can be fascinating in themselves. Through these encounters with history, we experience the common human concerns of all people; and through the study of European history, we come to appreciate the ideals and conflicts, the failures and accidents, the social needs and human choices that formed the Western world in which we live. When understood in their historical context, the achievements of European civilization are all the more remarkable, hammered out among competing interests and burning controversies.

The Western Experience was designed to provide a reasonably comprehensive and analytic account of the various circumstances within which, and the processes by which, European society and civilization evolved. This is the book's sixth edition, evidence of a long life sustained with the help of prior revisions. Even so, this edition is more completely rewritten and recast than any of its predecessors—our response to changes in students and in historical study. Each cohort

of students carries different experiences, interests, and training into the classroom. These changes are easily exaggerated, but they can be important; and the women and men we teach have taught us enough about what currently engages or confuses them, about the impression of European history they bring to college, and about what they can be expected to take from a survey course to make us want to reconsider the way the book presented its material. This led to a rewriting and reordering that we think has made the book clearer and more accessible without sacrificing our initial goals of writing a sophisticated, interpretive, and analytic history.

Adapting the latest developments in historical understanding to a general work presents a problem of a particular kind. From its first edition, this book incorporated more of the results of quantitative and social history than general European histories usually did, an obvious reflection of the several authors' own research. Each subsequent edition provided an occasion to incorporate current methods and new knowledge, an opportunity to reconsider paragraphs, sections, and whole chapters in the light of new approaches and new research, sometimes literally reconceiving part of the past. Recent work—in demographic, economic, diplomatic, and intellectual history as well as social history, and most of all in gender studies and cultural studies—increases those opportunities, and we have sought to convey something of the excitement of this new understanding. At the same time, we have wanted to preserve a special kind of balance. The professional scholar prefers new perspectives to familiar information, but other readers are less likely to make such distinctions. For them, the latest interpretations need to be integrated with a presentation of standard controversies, of the people and events that are part of our cultural lore, and of the basic information necessary to build a framework for the historical understanding that they are beginning to form.

Other kinds of balance are important, too. We believe that this history must be interpretive but also that its readers—instructors, students, and general readers—should be free to use it in many different ways and in conjunction with their own interpretive approaches, their own areas of special knowledge, and their own diverse interests

and curiosity. Of course, there is no simple standard by which to judge when such a work is comprehensive enough to offer that freedom yet selective enough to be comprehensible. For this edition, the authors once again jointly planned revision of the entire volume, read and criticized each other's drafts, and benefited from the criticisms and suggestions of more than a score of other scholars and teachers. The book carefully includes evidence from which alternative interpretations can be formulated and a platform that allows classroom teachers of any period to emphasize social, political, cultural, economic, or institutional history in lectures and selected readings.

The use of color throughout the book and a new design obviously make it more attractive, and the maps have been completely redrawn. They convey more information more clearly and allow the basic geography of Europe a visual presence throughout the book. The greater range of illustrations has made it possible for them to be more fully integrated into the text than ever before. We have also adopted the common device of including selections from primary sources, choosing samples that expand points made in the text, provide some flavor of the period under discussion, and grant to the reader some of that independence that comes from personal engagement with historical sources.

Throughout the book, from the earliest civilizations to the present, certain themes are pursued. They appear most distinctly in the early chapters, in discussions of how the land is settled, divided among its inhabitants, and put to use; how production and the division of labor are organized and whether there are slaves, classes that do not work at all, and recognized specialists in fighting or crafts or trade; how the family is structured, the gendered roles within and outside the family, and the relationship of that to the overall social structure; how religion and belief systems are sustained and connected to power; how the political system operates, who participates in it, and how it maintains order and makes war; how the institutions of society and the system of law work to permit or constrain social change; and how the forms of cultural expression relate to the social structure and important issues of an era. Attentive readers will note that these themes, in-

troduced early, are then picked up in subsequent sections of the book as changes in these themes are important for understanding other eras of European history.

We think of that history as the history of Western civilization, but the very concept of a Western civilization is itself the result of history. The Greeks gave the names *east* and *west* to the points on the horizon where the sun rises and sets. Because the impressive Persian Empire and India lay to their east, the Greeks thought of themselves as living in the West, on the edge of the continent they called *Europe*. The distinction between Western civilization and others—ethnocentric, often arbitrary, and frequently exaggerated—continued even as that civilization changed and expanded with the Roman Empire, Christianity, and the European conquest of the New World. The view that this is one civilization, with America tied more closely to ancient Greece than Greece is to Egypt or Spain to Islam, can be easily challenged in every respect save cultural tradition.

The Western Experience gives primary attention to a small part of the world and in doing so honors that cultural tradition. The concentration on Europe includes important examples of city and of rural life; of empires and monarchies and republics; of life before and after industrialization; of societies in which labor was organized through markets, serfdom, and slavery; of cultures little concerned with science and of ones that used changing scientific knowledge; of non-Christian religions and of all the major forms of Christianity in action.

To discuss history in this way is to think comparatively and to employ categories of the social history that has greatly affected historical understanding in the last half of the twentieth century. The desire to broaden the scope of historical writing is not new. As early as the eighteenth century many historians (of whom Voltaire was one) called for a history that was more than chronology, more than an account of kings and battles. In the nineteenth century—even while historical studies paid dominant attention to past politics, diplomacy, and war (taking the evidence primarily from official documents found in state archives)—there were important and systematic efforts to encompass the history of intellectual and

cultural trends, of law and constitutions, of religion, and of the economy. Social history, as a field of study, emerged as one of these efforts at broader coverage. For some, it was primarily the history of labor movements. For others, it was the history of daily life—in ancient Rome or Renaissance Florence or old New York as reflected in styles of dress, housing, diet, and so on. This “pots and pans history” was the sort of history featured in historical museums and popular magazines. Appealing in its concreteness, it tended (like the collections of interesting objects that it resembled) to lack a theoretical basis.

Modern social history is more systematic. In the theories and methods it employs, it borrows from the social sciences—especially anthropology, sociology, economics, and political science. It seeks to compensate for the fact that most historical writing has been about the tiny minority of the powerful, rich, and educated (who, after all, left behind the fullest and most accessible records of their activities); and it aims to be mindful of popular culture as well as formal or official culture, as interested in the family and living conditions as in the state and political theory.

The growth of social history facilitated a remarkable expansion in the history of women. Stimulated by contemporary feminism as well as by developments within social history, the history of women has in turn grown into gender studies, a set of approaches that has proved enormously revealing about society as a whole, showing how politics and culture together with leisure and work, are shaped by and reproduce assumptions about gender. This new work has affected the historical understanding of every era and nearly every subfield of history. Gender studies have also tended to draw attention to social symbols and to the values expressed in social behavior, drawing history closer to the literary and philosophical theories underlying what is currently called *cultural studies*. These approaches, as well as the renewed interest in intellectual history, emphasize the role of interpretation over objective science and the relativity of all writing on culture and society.

Such interests, theories, and techniques have greatly expanded the range of useful historical sources and the range of issues historians must consider. They also make those mainstays of his-

torical organization—clear chronology and periodization—more complex. The periodization of history based on the rise and fall of dynasties, on the formation of states, and on the duration of wars and revolutions usually does not fit the periodization most appropriate for highlighting changes in culture and ideas, economic production, or science and technology. Historical surveys have therefore frequently been organized topically as well as chronologically, with special chapters on economic or intellectual developments, which can weaken awareness of interconnection.

In *The Western Experience* an effort has been made to combine the newer approaches with more established perspectives. The tradition of the introductory course in European history (and our cultural tradition as well) is recognized by keeping the book's chapters essentially chronological in sequence, sometimes using groups of chapters to cover a whole period. At the same time each chapter is presented as an interpretative essay, introducing a set of historical problems important to the understanding of the period treated. The information within a chapter serves as evidence to illustrate the interpretive argument, but it is also selected to meet the general requirements of a survey of European history, to provide the basis for constructing a coherent picture of the development of Europe, and to exemplify different kinds of historical interest.

Readers of this book may thus use it as an introduction to historical method, find within it a framework to which they can attach whatever else they know about Western society, and discover here some challenge to their preconceptions—about the past, about how societies are organized, and about how people behave. Historical study is an integrative enterprise in which long-term trends and specific moments, as well as social structure and individual actions, are brought together.

A college course is not the only way to build a personal culture. Nor is history the only path to integrated knowledge. Western history is not the only history one should know, nor is an introductory survey necessarily the best way to learn it. Still, as readers consider and then challenge interpretations offered in this text, they will exercise critical and analytical skills; and they

will find that the world beyond (and before) our own lives is relevant to our current concerns. They can acknowledge the greatness of their Western heritage and its distinctiveness, which includes injustice, cruelty, and failure. In doing these things, they will experience the study of history as one of those vital intellectual activities by which we come to know who and where we are.

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