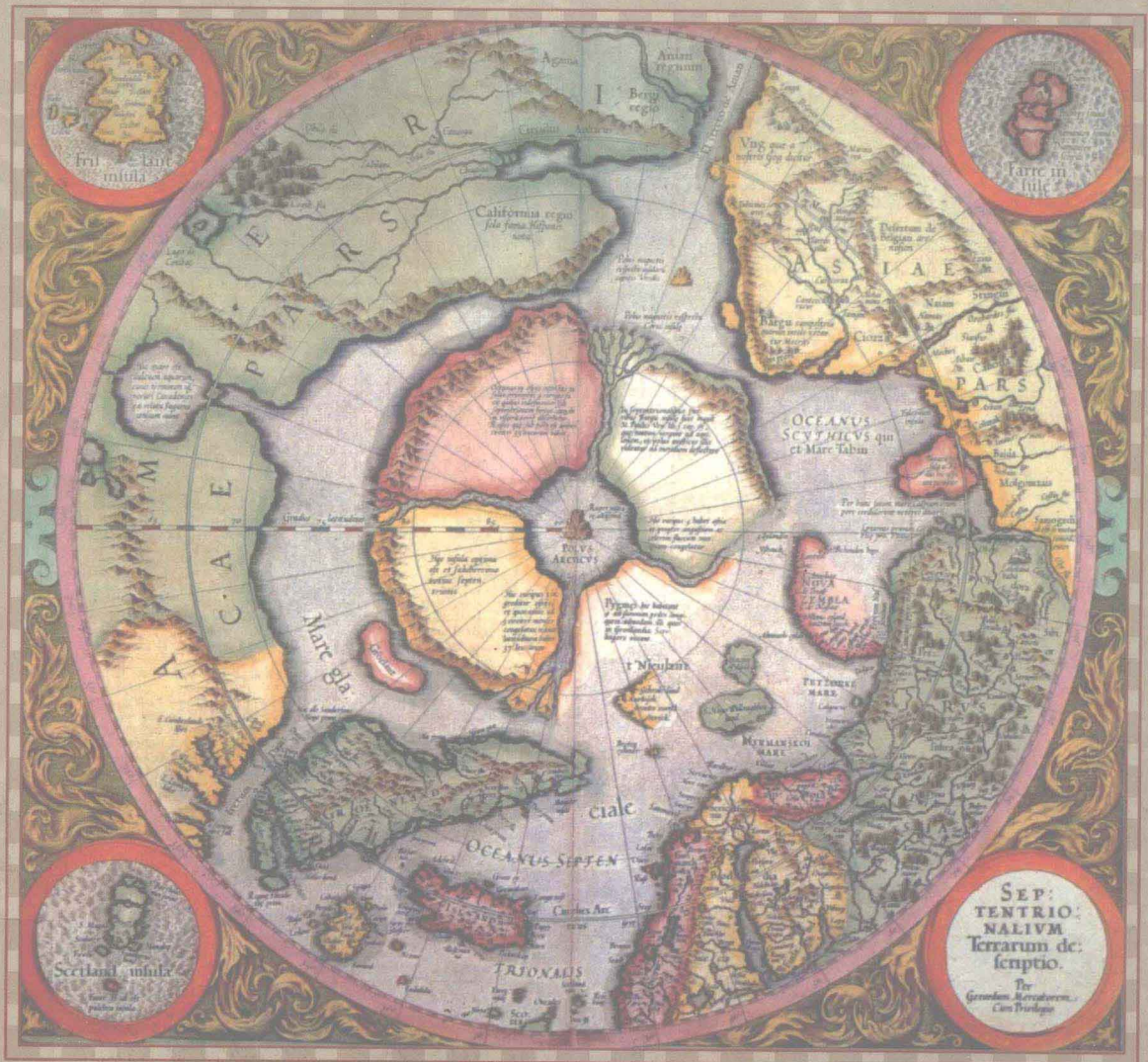


World History in Brief

VOLUME TWO SINCE 1450

Major Patterns of Change and Continuity

THIRD EDITION



Peter N. Stearns

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PETER N. STEARNS

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LONGMAN

An imprint of Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

New York • Reading, Massachusetts • Menlo Park, California • Harlow, England
Don Mills, Ontario • Sydney • Mexico City • Madrid • Amsterdam

Publishing Partner: Pam Gordon
Executive Marketing Manager: Sue Westmoreland
Supplements Editor: Jen McCaffery
Project Coordination and Text Design: Ruttle, Shaw & Wetherill, Inc.
Cover Designer/Manager: Nancy Danahy
Cover Illustration: Map of the Arctic by Mercator, 1595
Art Studio: Mapping Specialists Limited
Full Service Production Manager: Joseph Vella
Photo Researcher: Photosearch, Inc.
Electronic Page Makeup: Ruttle, Shaw & Wetherill, Inc.
Senior Print Buyer: Hugh Crawford
Printer and Binder: The Maple-Vail Book Manufacturing Group
Cover Printer: Coral Graphic Services, Inc.

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Library of Congress has cataloged the single-volume edition.

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ISBN 0-321-00223-7

2345678910—MA—010099

Preface

World history courses are becoming increasingly fundamental at the college level for several reasons. Most obviously, as global issues fill our television screens and newspapers, Americans must gain perspective on the dynamics of events and patterns and must understand the diverse societies around the globe that help shape our future. History—often, even history rather remote in time—explains how the world became what it now is, including why global influences loom larger than before. The United States itself is peopled by groups with different heritages, again from around the world. Finally, world history raises some classic issues of historical interpretation, allowing its students to sharpen their understanding of how to interpret change and historical causation and providing a rich field for comparative analysis. Some educators, to be sure, still prefer to concentrate on Western civilization, arguing that it lies at our origins and, sometimes, that it is measurably superior, but while the Western heritage must be included in a world history approach, it is increasingly clear that a purely Western overlay cannot describe the world as we need to know it.

World history demands a commitment to a global rather than a West-centered approach. This book seeks to show how different civilizations have encountered the various forces of contemporary life—for example, population growth, industrialization, and international currents in diplomacy and art. Western civilization is included as one of the great world societies, but the text also studies East Asian, Indian, Middle Eastern, East European, African, and Latin American civilizations in order to achieve a genuine worldwide perspective.

This is a relatively short text, designed to allow additional readings and analytical exercises. World history teaching must follow the precedent of other survey history courses in reducing the emphasis on coverage and sheer memorization in favor of materials that provide facts that can be used to build larger understandings. Overwhelming detail, therefore, is not the chief goal of this book, but rather the presentation of enough data to facilitate comparison and assessment of change and to highlight the major developments in the world's history. Students can readily refer to larger reference works if they wish to follow up on themes of special interest with greater factual detail. For their convenience, a list of suggested readings follows each chapter.

World history also demands a balance between the examination of individual societies, within which the lives of most people are played out, and attention to the larger interactions across regional boundaries. These global interactions include trade, cultural

contact, migrations, and disease. This text presents the major civilizations through a narrative overview combined with emphasis on leading political, cultural, social, and economic characteristics. Grasp of these characteristics, in turn, facilitates comparisons and assessments of change. Chronological divisions—the basic periods of world history—reflect successive stages of international contact, from relative isolation to regional integration to the formation of global systems. This periodization is not conveniently tidy for the whole of world history, but it captures the leading dynamics of change at the global level.

Using the civilization focus plus the international periodization, students can follow the themes of change and continuity across time. For example, we can track and compare the juxtaposition of the traditions and novel forces that have shaped the modern world; the response of China or Latin America to the issues of the modern state; or the conditions of women in developing and in industrial economies. How different societies respond to common issues and contacts, and how these issues and contacts change over time: this is the framework for grappling with world history. By focusing on these problems of comparison and assessment of change, the text uses the leading patterns of world history to provide experience in analysis that will apply to other historical studies beyond the survey.

Several changes mark this third edition, in addition to corrections and improvements throughout the text. Attention to periodization and interregional contacts has increased, providing a clearer basis for discussions of global change; there is also more explicit comparison. New biographical highlights have been included, adding additional emphasis on the human components of world history. “Focal Points” at the beginning of each chapter frame the chapter contents by raising key questions and thereby setting learning goals. “History Debates” sections highlight some crucial but contested issues of interpretation. Of course, the text has been updated to include the developments and shifts since the mid-1990s.

I must add a personal note. World history has been a late love for me. I was trained in Western history, with an education that encouraged, though it did not require (the fault was mine), a largely Western focus. I increasingly chafed against my ignorance not of current world events but of the perspective, the historical understanding, that would give such events meaning. Belatedly schooled in world history, I have found continued reading and teaching in the field an endless source of fascination, a perpetual window for contemplating the varieties and unities of the human condition. I can only wish the same pleasure for many others, colleagues and students alike.

SUPPLEMENTS

The following supplements are available for use in conjunction with *World History in Brief*.

FOR THE STUDENT

World History Map Workbook in two volumes. Volume I (to 1600) and Volume II (from 1600) prepared by Glee Wilson of Kent State University. Each volume includes over 40 maps accompanied by over 120 pages of exercises. Each volume is designed to teach the

location of various countries and their relationship to one another. Also included are numerous exercises aimed at enhancing students' critical thinking abilities.

Longman World History Atlas. This four-color atlas contains a wide variety of historical maps. It is available shrink-wrapped with *World History in Brief* at low cost

Mapping World Civilizations: Student Activities. A free student workbook by Gerald Danzer, University of Illinois, Chicago. Features numerous map skill exercises written to enhance students' basic geographical literacy. The exercises provide ample opportunities for interpreting maps and analyzing cartographic materials as historical documents

FOR QUALIFIED ADOPTERS

Instructor's Manual/Test Bank. Written by Peter Stearns, this useful tool provides a guide to using the text book, suggestions for structuring a syllabus for the world history course complete with assignment ideas, chapter summaries, multiple choice, short answer and essay questions, and map exercises.

TestGen EQ program. Written by Peter Stearns, this computerized test bank available for Windows includes multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The package includes the Quizmaster EQ program for networked testing.

Guide to Advanced Media and Internet Resources for World History by Richard M. Rothaus of St. Cloud University. This pamphlet provides a comprehensive review of CD-ROM, software and Internet resources for world civilization including a list of the primary sources, syllabi and article, and discussion groups available on-line.

Discovering World History Through Maps and Views, Second Edition, by Gerald Danzer, University of Illinois, Chicago, winner of the AHA's James Harvey Robinson Award for his work in the development of map transparencies. The second edition of this set of 100 four-color transparencies is completely updated and revised to include the newest reference maps and the most useful source materials. These transparencies are bound with introductory materials in a three-ring binder with an introduction on teaching history with maps and detailed commentary on each transparency. The collection includes source and reference maps, views and photos, urban plans, building diagrams, and works of art.

Longman-Penguin USA Value Packages in World History. Twenty classic titles from Penguin USA are available at a significant discount when bundled with any Longman world history textbooks.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people helped shape this book. I am grateful to Barry Beyer, Donald Schwartz, William McNeill, Andrew Barnes, Donald Sutton, Erick Langer, Jayashiri Rangan, Paul Adams, Merry Wiesner-Hanks, and Michael Adas, who aided my understanding of world history in various ways. Comments by Steven Gosch and Donald Sutton, and editorial

assistance by Clio Stearns, greatly aided in the preparation of this revised edition. Other colleagues who have furthered my education in world history include Ross Dunn, Judith Zinsser, Richard Bulliet, Jerry Bentley, and Stuart Schwartz. I also thank the various readers of earlier drafts of this manuscript, whose comments and encouragement improved the end result: Jay P. Anglin; Richard D. Lewis; Kirk Willis; Arden Bucholz; Richard Gere; Robert Roeder; Stephen Englehart; Marc Gilbert; John Voll; Erwin Grieshaber; Yong-ho Choe; V. Dixon Morris; Elton L. Daniel; Thomas Knapp; Edward Homze; Albert Mann; J. Malcom Thompson; Peter Freeman; Patrick Smith; David McComb; Charles Evans; Jerry Bentley; John Powell; B. B. Wellmon; Penelope Ann Adair; Linda Alkana; Samuel Brunk; Alexander S. Dawson; Lydia Garner; Surendra Gupta; Craig Hendricks; Susan Hult; Christina Micheltmore; Lynn Moore; Joseph Norton; Elsa Nystrom; Diane Pearson; Louis Roper; and Robert H. Welborn.

My gratitude extends also to Pam Gordon, Jessica Bayne, and Daniel Cooper, whose editorial assistance has been vital. Sincere thanks to Karen Callas and Cordelia Stearns for help with the manuscript. I have been taught and stimulated as well by my students in world history courses at Carnegie Mellon University. And thanks, finally, to my family, who have put up with my excited babble about distant places for some time now.

Peter N. Stearns

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The World in 1450

World history in 1450 stood on the brink of major change—not for the first time—but it also embraced powerful forces of continuity and tradition. One well-established component involved distinct civilizations, with particular definitions of political and social institutions and well-articulated cultures.

China had long been a dominant force in East Asia, emphasizing a strong state and Confucian beliefs in hierarchy and order, along with several religions including Daoism. India, the dominant society in Southern Asia, was politically unified less often than China. It derived coherence from majority adherence to Hinduism (though there was a strong Muslim minority) and from the caste system, which organized social inequality through traditional laws and rituals governing contact. Both India and China were active merchant societies, but Chinese merchants suffered, somewhat ironically given their importance, from low cultural prestige in the Confucian tradition.

The Islamic Middle East (including North Africa) formed the final major Asian center. It had for centuries been unified under the Arab caliphate, but this Arab government had collapsed in the 13th century as part of a regional decline. Islam remained a vigorous, unifying force, and in the 15th century a new Muslim group, the Ottoman Turks, were beginning to conquer large sections of the Middle East and Southeast Europe. Muslim trade routes continued to play an important role in the Indian Ocean and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Strong civilization traditions existed elsewhere. Major kingdoms in sub-Saharan Africa benefited from extensive trade and cultural contact with Islam, which was an important minority religion in West Africa and in the Swahili trading cities of the East African coast. Societies in Southeast and East Asia utilized cultural influences from India and China, while creating their own amalgams. Parts of Southeast Asia were Buddhist, though Islamic traders and missionaries were gaining ground in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the southern Philippines. Chinese influence predominated in Vietnam, Korea, and Japan—although local factors intermixed. Japan, for example, remained a feudal society, often wracked by internal warfare, despite its admiration for Chinese example.

European civilizations were Christian. This included an Orthodox Christian strand, long anchored in the Byzantine Empire but spreading to Russia and other areas, and Roman Catholicism that stressed the authority of the pope, the faith of Western and Central Europe. Much of Western Europe was also a feudal society, although with the power of rival monarchies gaining ground along with increasing merchant activity. Civi-

lization centers in the Americas, finally, included major Indian empires in Mexico/Central America plus the Inca domain that stretched down the Andes.

Along with particular civilizations and their characteristics, world history in 1450 embraced a host of international contacts. The Americas stood apart: They had no biological, cultural, or technological contacts with other world societies since the migration of Asians to these lands thousands of years before. But Africa, Asia, and Europe were joined by increasingly important trade routes, the cultural contacts brought by merchants and religious missionaries, and gradually shared technologies and not so gradually shared diseases. Shortly before 1450, in the 13th and 14th centuries, Mongol conquests in much of Asia and Eastern Europe had accelerated technological exchange, bringing knowledge of explosive powder and printing westward from the advanced technological areas of Asia. Intensifying exchange had also brought a major epidemic disease, Bubonic Plague, from initial centers in China to other parts of Asia, the Muslim world, and Europe. Cultural contacts persisted as well. Major world religions had carved out their regional holds earlier, which led among other things to vivid mutual hostility between Christian Europe and the Muslim Middle East—a hostility that had not prevented Europe from borrowing extensively from Islam. But there were still religious boundary changes on the margins, particularly with the continued advance of Islam in Southeast Asia. The rapid decline of the Byzantine Empire, in southeastern Europe and the northern Middle East, and the advance of the Turks were readjusting Christian and Muslim territories during the 15th century itself.

Both the framework of individual civilizations and the effect of international contacts affected ordinary people. In 1450, most people, in the world were peasants who depended on agriculture for their livelihood. But all major agricultural societies produced a surplus, which allowed for a minority of urban populations including merchants and craft producers. Other social groups in some regions included slaves, used in a variety of occupations including service in the government and army. Important regions were not primarily agricultural; Central Asia, for example, continued to host groups of nomadic herders, whose travels and invasions had frequently brought new contacts among bordering civilizations. Most societies were patriarchal and emphasized the primary domestic obligations and inferiority of women. But particular forms of patriarchy varied. The three major world religions—Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism—all emphasized women's spiritual potential but did not overturn patriarchal arrangements. India's gender traditions, firmly patriarchal, involved some cultural appreciation for women's cleverness as well as their roles as mothers, which differed from those of Confucian societies where deference and hierarchy were stressed—along with particular practices of subordination, such as footbinding.

International balances had shifted significantly in the century before 1450. Mongol dominance had come and gone, though a Mongol group still held on in Russia, which had experienced serious decline. Changes in Arab culture and politics, and the fading of the Byzantine Empire, opened the Middle East to new forces. Western Europe suffered from the effects of Bubonic Plague and the validity of the particular Christian culture that had flourished earlier was being questioned. The region also worried about its international position, eager for trade with Asia but without many sophisticated goods to offer in exchange, and anxious about the traditional power of Islam to its south. Yet growing politi-

cal sophistication and wider merchant activity expressed important strengths. China, briefly dominated by the Mongols, was in a period of renewed vigor. The Chinese had even ventured some massive trading expeditions in the Indian Ocean, until more traditional internal interests prompted a halt to this policy in 1433.

World history for the centuries before 1450 had been heavily shaped by growing international contacts; the spread of world religions; the particular importance of Arab Islam; and the extension of the forms of civilizations, such as organized states and more elaborate systems of social inequality, to new parts of Europe, Japan, Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Americas. These themes had taken shape after the collapse or readjustment of great classical empires—hence the designation of the 450–1450 period as “postclassical.” Postclassical themes did not end in 1450. Indeed, world contacts were about to be recast and intensified once again. But spreading religion became a less important force than before; Arab civilization no longer played its previously dominant role, despite its still important strength; and the spread of civilization receded in significance in part because so many regions of the world were already involved. At the time, people had some awareness of momentous changes, like the fall of Christian Byzantium to the Turks or the lingering effects of the Bubonic Plague. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see even more adjustments: world history in 1450 was on the verge of a set of sweeping redefinitions in basic themes and framework. Basic new periods in world history open rarely, but the mid-15th century ushered in one of those moments.

A New World Economy, 1450–1750



INTRODUCTION: THE NEW THEMES IN WORLD HISTORY

The defining features of the period in world history that began in the later 15th century involved a manifold transformation of the world network that had developed during the postclassical period. It should be no surprise that the leading society in the new international economy was Western Europe, rather than the Middle East or China. The rise of the West rested on several factors, but new naval technology ranked high among them. A second change involved the incorporation of the Americas in international exchange. This had immense impact on the Americas but also, particularly through the spread of American foodstuffs like corn and potatoes, on the rest of the world. A third change involved, quite simply, the growing importance of international commerce and the intensification of internal commercial exchange. Several societies saw their basic political and social structures altered by their place in world trade, while commercial relationships affected life in an even broader range of civilizations.

This new global age saw many other changes besides the redefinitions of the world economy. A host of new empires formed, not just the ones begun from Western Europe's new colonial outreach. Individual civilizations experienced significant innovations, like the new cultural influences in India or the expansion of Confucianism in Japan. Changes of this sort, including different patterns of dynamism during the period itself, left their mark even later on, defining varied opportunities in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The new period in world history is sometimes called “early modern” because of the importance of many of the new features, including the world economy, in setting a framework for developments in the past 200 years. The early modern period began with the rise of the West, the opening of the Americas to international contact, and the surge of several new Asian empires along with Russia—all taking shape soon after 1450. It ended around 1750, when the West began to experience a further transformation—known as the Industrial Revolution—that would alter world relationships yet again.