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The Era of Civilizations in World History*

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The notion of civilization, of a multiplicity of civilizations, each different from the other but sharing certain common characteristics such as high skills and literacy, was perhaps the great intellectual creation of the first part of the twentieth century in macrohistorical thought. This idea replaced the eighteenth-century concept of a unitary civilization, unique to the West, whose culture was the standard of civilized life for the entire world. It has recently occurred to me that perhaps the twentieth-century notion of a civilizational unit that has a kind of cohesion and life of its own--pseudolife of its own--is best thought of as a time-bound phenomenon: that which happened when writing combined with animal transport, sail-powered ships, and the communication that this combination permitted. This civilizational unit created an outer boundary of the "us," the things that were shared, larger than most political units, and that is what is meant by civilization.

The definitions that have been offered for this twentieth-century concept of civilization vary greatly and are often made misty by historians. Arnold Toynbee referred to the state of the soul--collective soul, presumably. Gordon Childe emphasized metallurgy, writing, a state system, and specialized arts and crafts. These are perhaps two extremes, one the subjective, one the technological.

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China, Technology, and Change

Lynda Schaffer
Tufts University

Francis Bacon (1561--1626), an early advocate of the empirical method, upon which the scientific revolution was based, attributed Western Europe's early modern take-off to three things in particular: the printing press, the compass, and gunpowder. Bacon had no idea where these things had come from, but historians now know that all three were invented in China. Since, unlike Europe, China did not take off onto a path leading from the scientific to the Industrial Revolution, some historians are now asking why these inventions were so revolutionary in Western Europe and, apparently, so unrevolutionary in China.

In fact, the question has been posed by none other than Joseph Needham, the foremost English-language scholar of Chinese science and technology. It is only because of Needham's work that the Western academic community has become aware that until Europe's

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*This paper was adapted from an address given at the Rocky Mountain Regional World History Association conference "Technology in World History," at the Aspen Institute, Aspen, Colorado, June 1985

When I try to come to a definition of civilization I prefer the phrase "style of life" (deriving this basically from art history), because it seems to me to capture the ambiguity of civilization, which tends to fade out and disappear toward the margins geographically and also down the social scale. Recognizing a pattern in this kind of diversity is something human beings are extraordinarily good at, an eye skill. For example, in spite of ambiguities, a work of art can be consistently placed in the appropriate stylistic tradition by those who know something about art history. I think that recognizing civilization is something like that. It is a pattern of behavior, and what makes that pattern is shared symbolic discourse, especially words and the meanings we attach to words.

In the distant human past, language allowed our ancestors, through cooperation, to become so much more effective in their hunt for food as to raise themselves far above other forms of life on earth. Language allows humans to make sharp and clear differences in sensory perception. It also makes these perceptions communicable from one person to another. It allows response to environment to become precise and predictable. Simultaneously, it permits a cumulative cultural heritage that can change in a very much accelerated time scale, as against the slow-moving genetic changes of organic evolution. It creates, in short, a symbolic world which is poised on top of that ecological world in which human beings still, of course, have to live.

Presumably, in very early times, language groups remained quite small. Perhaps as local hunting bands subdivided, initially shared languages became mutually unintelligible. We simply know that surviving groups of hunters and gatherers often had very small linguistic communities-- sometimes a few hundred speakers only. This is what makes us human, and, in my opinion it is hard to exaggerate the importance of language in creating distinct human cultures.

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In the development of communication among human groups, the next obvious landmark was writing. This is the traditional horizon, the difference between historical civilizations and prehistoric societies--- and for very good reason, because while art styles, tool

forms, and other material remains are also patterned and can be used as indicators of civilizational boundaries, by far the most accessible is written discourse. Compare, for example, our knowledge of ancient Sumer, which includes such texts as The Epic of Gilgamesh with the dumb incomprehension with which we look at the remains of the Indus civilization, whose script we cannot read. This ability of writing to convey understanding across generations and distances permitted the durability and expansion characteristic of the great civilizations.

In its earliest phase, the most significant written discourse took the form of sacred scriptures. This established a close linkage between early civilizations and religions. We begin with an initial transition from sacred lore orally transmitted within a college of priests to written texts. This occurred in Mesopotamia, as a function of the arrival of the Semites. The newcomers did not know Sumerian and had to learn it in order to be able to speak to the gods. That meant it had to be written down. This is when civilization emerged from prehistory.

The next phase, I think, is far more significant. A new horizon point, alphabetic writing, was reached in something like the thirteenth century B.C. Alphabetic writing was comparatively easy to learn, as against the syllabaries and ideographic scripts, which were difficult to master and could never be shared by more than a small handful of experts. Now persons with no pretension to special learning could and did read and write.

This meant that the sacred scriptures could enter the common domain. The Jews first exploited this possibility to the full. They made it possible for ordinary males to learn the sacred texts, to maintain a religion independent of political regime, independent of place, independent of most secular patterns of life, supporting and confirming the diaspora phenomenon, which had arisen already on a very small scale as a result of trade. Now, with sacred texts and a portable religion, the coexistence of aliens was stabilized for an indefinite number of generations, and a patterned core of life could be built around religion. This core was in some degree separable from other aspects of everyday behavior as long as there was some system of instruction in the sacred scriptures, whether familial or more professionalized. The first charge upon the Jewish community was to support a rabbi. These institutions prolonged indefinitely the coexistence in the same geographic space of religiously and culturally different populations--the ghetto phenomenon, one might call it.

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Not very much later, other religions followed the Jewish example. Buddhists, Christians, Moslems, and Confucians, all built their religions around sacred texts and developed some quasi-private institutions to study, preserve, and transmit knowledge of the sacred texts. This is the horizon point of what have commonly been called the higher religions, universal in aspiration and quasi-independent of the secular environments in which their adherents lived.

The higher religions established what we may call "classical civilization" --classical not just in the Greek Mediterranean sense, but embracing the classical definitions of Chinese, Indian, and Middle Eastern civilizations. These civilizations extended beyond the state and were defined by a commercial network and by written texts that gave shared meanings, values, and life patterns to those who participated. (The Greeks, of course, lacked sacred texts, but they had Homer and other poets, and their writings played precisely the same role.)

There was a considerable compromise of the autonomy and separateness of different civilizations from about the Christian era, at the time when the Silk Road was regularly in operation. The development of a network of caravan supported by a caravanserais routes created a cosmopolitan spinal cord connecting the Old World civilizations from China to the eastern Mediterranean, along which different religions--Judaism, Manicheanism, Islam, and so forth--proliferated. Islam itself, I think, can be understood as a fusion of Judaism and Christianity, the product of conversations around the campfires on caravan routes in Arabia--filtered through the mentality of Mohammed, of course.

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This communication network was reinforced by shipping in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, as well, and went into much higher gear after 1000 A.D. when the commercialization of China got well underway.

This was followed, of course, by the opening of ocean shipping by the Europeans in the sixteenth century, intensifying the process of cosmopolitan interaction and blending, and bringing the Americas abruptly, and catastrophically, into the circle of interaction.

The autonomy of religion that could be maintained across generations, supported by written texts, sacred scriptures, and an educational system, implies an autonomy also for various forms of secular culture in the diaspora world. Consequently, within this cosmopolitan world there may also be perceived groupings that cut across the lines of religion and ethnicity. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there arose professions such as medicine, astronomy, law, theology, and eventually even journalism. This secular world began to explode with the modern intensification of communications, which dates from the middle of the nineteenth century, when instantaneous electrical communication began to annihilate distance.

Now we are surrounded by an amazing multiplicity and complexity

of communications nets. The most powerful is television, but in addition we confront vast information storage and retrieval systems. Does this mean the old civilizational boundaries, which I suggested were tied to a written literature, have been transcended and left behind? In some degree I would say yes, though there is a strong residual heritage from the more limited communications network of the past.

One sees the transcendence of civilizational boundaries in some rarified professional communities. Once, I went to Russia with a bunch of radio astronomers and found myself thrown in with people who were managing radio "dishes" at a time when new discoveries were coming almost monthly. If a man with a dish somewhere in Australia or in Greenbank, West Virginia, or in the Soviet Union picked up something new in the heavens he got on the telephone and called some of the other observers to verify his result. These people all spoke English--English was the language of radio astronomy--and they all knew each other by first name. Their horizons cut right across the political spectrum.

There is also that looser republic of letters that arose in Europe in the seventeenth and, especially, eighteenth centuries and has now become global. It is still usually tied to language. There is an English world of letters, a French world, a Russian world, a Chinese world, a Japanese world, a Spanish world, and, I suppose, some others of lesser geographic extent as well. However, the republic of letters runs far beyond the native lands of the English, the French, and so forth, because the verbal community in each of these languages has run so widely and intermingled geographically in so many parts of the world.

Still another way of assorting this cosmopolis is by ideology, faith, or religion, and this is certainly alive and powerful in the world today. We see it most vividly, I suppose, in the Moslem world, especially in the Shiite revival, where the world is divided into "us" and "them."

These various subgroupings--professional, linguistic, and ideological--struggle against political groupings, geographical propinquity, and residual civilizational boundaries. How this will all work itself out I do not think anyone can possibly imagine yet.

I would suggest that the concept of civilization, of the civilizational unit, needs amendment. Perhaps we ought to understand it as having been a passing phase in the organization of human beings, a response to a given pattern of communication. Before civilizations arose, what we had was primary communities, with face-to-face, largely verbal communication. The development of writing, combined with transport, facilitated communication and permitted the development of civilization. Then, a new kind of communication system, the instantaneous electrical/electronic communications network, established itself. We should expect new ways of human assortment to result, reflecting the operation of diverse communications networks, all coexisting in the same global space, and producing interaction, interference, deliberate efforts at insulation and preservation of at least quasi independence. In just what way it will work I do not know.

I do not think we will get anything that could properly be called a single global civilization. Rather we will have professionalized local subgroups with perhaps a very strong survival of what I called ideology-faith-religion---that is, the preservation in a ghetto environment of the cultural multiplicity of the deeper past. Now,

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you may say that that is what civilization has always been. Civilizations from the time of Sumer also were places of human pluralism, specialism, divergent life experiences. So you may say that it is just the same old thing, but now on a global basis. In that case, perhaps you should say that we will have a global civilization. But I think that that would be blurring the meaning of civilization in a way that perhaps we ought not to do. The old geographic limits on the diffusion of knowledge, shared values, shared meanings, symbolic worlds, have now been almost canceled—not completely, but pretty close to it. The new limits will be social limits—professional, linguistic, confessional—not geographic. The geographic cohesion of the old civilizations, therefore, is unlikely to be preserved into the future.

The diverse human responses that have occurred in the past to changes in nets of communication surely will continue, and no one doubts that communication nets have been drastically transformed, in our own generation and the preceding two generations. The exact human adaptation to this has yet to emerge, but a look at the past suggests that it will be epoch-making.

China Continued from page 1

take-off, China was the unrivaled world leader in technological development. That is why it is so disturbing that Needham himself has posed this apparent puzzle. The English-speaking academic world relies upon him and repeats him; soon this question and the vision of China that it implies will become dogma. Traditional China will take on supersociety qualities—able to contain the power of the press, to rein in the potential of the compass even to muffle the blast of gunpowder.

The impact of these inventions on Western Europe is well known. The printing press not only eliminated much of the opportunity for human copying errors, it also encouraged the production of more copies of old books and an increasing number of new books. As written material became both cheaper and more easily available, intellectual activity increased. The printing press would eventually be held responsible, at least in part, for the spread of classical humanism and other ideas from the Renaissance. It is also said to have stimulated the Protestant Reformation, which urged a return to the Bible as the primary religious authority.

The introduction of gunpowder in Europe made castles and other medieval fortifications obsolete (since it could be used to blow holes in their walls) and thus helped to liberate Western Europe from feudal aristocratic power. As an aid to navigation the compass facilitated the Portuguese-and-Spanish sponsored voyages that led to Atlantic

Europe's sole possession of the Western Hemisphere, as well as the Portuguese circumnavigation of Africa, which opened up the first all-sea route from Western Europe to the long-established ports of East Africa and Asia.

Needham's question can thus be understood to mean, Why didn't China use gunpowder to destroy feudal walls? Why didn't China use the compass to cross the Pacific and discover America, or to find an all-sea route to Western Europe? Why didn't China undergo a Renaissance or Reformation? The implication is that even though China possessed these technologies, it did not change much. Essentially Needham's question is asking, What was wrong with China?

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Actually, there was nothing wrong with China. China was changed fundamentally by these inventions. But in order to see the changes, one must abandon the search for peculiarly European events in Chinese history, and look instead at China itself before and after these break-throughs.

To begin, one should note that China possessed all three of these technologies by the latter part of the Tang dynasty (618--906)—between four and six hundred years before they appeared in Europe. And it was during just that time, from about 850, when the Tang dynasty began to falter, until 960, when the Song dynasty (960--1279) was established, that China underwent fundamental changes in all spheres. In fact, historians are now beginning to use the term revolution when referring to technological and commercial changes that culminated in the Song dynasty, in the same way that they refer to the changes in eighteenth-and nineteenth-century England as the Industrial Revolution. And the word might well be applied to other sorts of changes in China during this period.

For example, the Tang dynasty elite was aristocratic, but that of the Song was not. No one has ever considered whether the invention of gunpowder contributed to the demise of China's aristocrats, which occurred between 750 and 960, shortly after its invention. Gunpowder may, indeed, have been a factor although it is unlikely that its importance lay in blowing up feudal walls. Tang China enjoyed such internal peace that its aristocratic lineages did not engage in castle-building of the sort typical in Europe. Thus, China did not have many feudal fortifications to blow up.

The only wall of significance in this respect was the Great Wall, which was designed to keep steppe nomads from invading China. In fact, gunpowder may have played a role in blowing holes in this wall, for the Chinese could not monopolize the terrible new weapon, and their nomadic enemies to the north soon learned to use it against them. The Song dynasty ultimately fell to the Mongols, the most formidable force ever to emerge from the Eurasian steppe. Gunpowder may have had a profound effect on China—exposing a united empire to foreign invasion and terrible devastation—but an effect quite opposite to the one it had on Western Europe.

On the other hand, the impact of the printing press on China was in some ways very similar to its later impact on Europe. For example, printing contributed to a rebirth of classical (that is, preceding the third century A.D.) Confucian learning, helping to revive a

fundamentally humanistic outlook that had been pushed aside for several centuries.

After the fall of the Han dynasty (206 B.C. - 220 A.D.), Confucianism had lost much of its credibility as a world view, and it eventually lost its central place in the scholarly world. It was replaced by Buddhism, which had come from India. Buddhist's believed that much human pain and confusion resulted from the pursuit of illusory pleasures and dubious ambitions: enlightenment and, ultimately, salvation would come from a progressive disengagement from the real world, which they also believed to be illusory. This point of view dominated Chinese intellectual life until the ninth century. Thus the academic and intellectual comeback of classical Confucianism was in essence a return to a more optimistic literature that affirmed the world as humans had made it. The resurgence of Confucianism within the scholarly community was due to many factors, but the printing press was certainly one of the most important. Although the printing press was invented by Buddhist monks in China, and at first benefited Buddhism, by the middle of the tenth century, printers were turning out innumerable copies of the classical Confucian corpus. This return of scholars to classical learning was part of a more general movement that shared not only its humanistic features with the later Western European Renaissance, but certain artistic trends as well.

Furthermore, the Protestant Reformation in Western Europe was in some ways reminiscent of the emergence and eventual triumph of Neo-Confucian philosophy in the Song dynasty. Although the roots of Neo-Confucianism can be found in the ninth century, the man who created what would become its most orthodox synthesis was Zhu Xi (Chu Hsi, 1130-1200). Neo-confucianism was significantly different from classical Confucianism, for it had undergone an intellectual (and political) confrontation with Buddhism and had emerged profoundly changed. It is of the utmost importance to understand that not only was Neo-Confucianism new, it was also heresy, even during Zhu Xi's lifetime. It did not triumph until the thirteenth century, and it was not until 1313 (when Mongol conquerors ruled China) that Zhu Xi's commentaries on the classics became the single authoritative text against which all academic opinion was judged.

In the same way that Protestantism emerged out of a confrontation with the Roman Catholic establishment and asserted the individual Christian's autonomy, Neo-Confucianism emerged as a critique of Buddhist ideas that had taken hold in China, and it asserted an individual moral capacity totally unrelated to the ascetic practices and prayers of the Buddhist priesthood. In the twelfth century Neo-Confucianists lifted the work of Mencius (Meng Zi, 370--290 B.C.) out of obscurity and assigned it a place in the corpus second only to that of the Analects of Confucius. Many facets of Mencius appealed to the Neo-Confucianists, but one of the most important was his argument that humans by nature are fundamentally good. Within the context of the Song dynasty, this was an assertion that all men were morally equal, and that the Buddhist priests' withdrawal from life's mainstream did not bestow upon them any special virtue.

The importance of these philosophical developments notwithstanding, the printing press probably had its greatest impact on the Chinese political system. The origin of the civil service examination system in China can be traced back to the Han dynasty, but in the Song dynasty government-administered examinations

became the most important route to political power in China. For almost a thousand years (except the early period of Mongol rule), China was governed by men who had come to power simply because they had done exceedingly well in examinations on the Confucian canon.

Of course, an examination system cannot be truly a measure of talent alone unless all the aspirants have equal access to study materials. At any one time thousands of students were studying for the exams, and thousands of inexpensive books were required. Without the printing press, the examination system would not have been possible.

...China was the most democratic system in the world prior to the development of representative democracy and popular suffrage in Western Europe...

The development of this alternative to aristocratic rule was one of the most radical changes in world history. Since the examinations were ultimately open to 98 percent of all males (actors were one of the few groups excluded), it was the most democratic system in the world prior to the development of representative democracy and popular suffrage in Western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (There were some small-scale systems, such as the classical Greek city-states, which might be considered more democratic, but nothing comparable in size to Song China or even the modern nation-states of Europe.)

Finally we come to the compass. Suffice it to say that during the Song dynasty, China developed the world's largest and most technologically sophisticated merchant marine and navy. By the fifteenth century its ships were sailing from the north Pacific to the east coast of Africa and on into Portuguese ports; however, they had no reason to do so. Although the Western European economy was prospering, it offered nothing that China could not acquire much closer to home at much less cost. In particular, wool, Western Europe's most important export, could be easily obtained along China's northern frontier.

Certainly, the Portuguese and the Spanish did not make their unprecedented voyages out of idle curiosity. They were trying to go to the Spice Islands, in what is now Indonesia, in order to acquire the most valuable commercial items of the time. In the fifteenth century these islands were the world's sole suppliers of the fine spices, such as cloves, nutmeg, and mace, as well as a source for the more generally available pepper. It was this spice market that lured

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Columbus westward from Spain and drew Vasco Da Gama around Africa and across the Indian Ocean.

China also wanted to go to the Spice Islands and, in fact, did go, regularly-- but Chinese ships did not have to go around the world to

get there. The Atlantic nations of Western Europe, on the other hand had to buy spices from Venice (which controlled the Mediterranean trade routes) or from other Italian city-states; or they had to find the Spice Islands. It was necessity that mothered those revolutionary routes that ultimately changed the world.

Gunpowder, the printing press, the compass—clearly these three inventions changed China as much as they changed Europe. That changes wrought in China between the eighth and tenth centuries were different from changes wrought in Western Europe between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries should come as no surprise. It would, of course, be unfair and ahistorical to imply that something was wrong with Western Europe because the technologies appeared there later. It is equally unfair to ask why the Chinese did not accidentally bump into the Western Hemisphere while sailing east across the Pacific to find the wool markets of Spain.

Book Reviews

War Without Mercy: Race and Power In The Pacific War

By John Dower

New York: Pantheon Books, 1986

404 pp. Illustrations, Bibliography, Index

Hardback, \$22.50

This is a lively and groundbreaking study of racism in both Japan and the United States during the Second World War in the Pacific. Even for those of us who were old enough to follow or participate in that war, the data presented by Dower from both Japanese and Western sources is staggering in volume, grotesqueness, and implications.

The Japanese presented themselves as the leaders of a mutually beneficial Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. But in practise they proved to be at least as overbearing and harsh as the Westerners had been before them. Even first- and second-generation Koreans resident in Japan (nearly 2 million by 1945) were subjected to as much discrimination as Blacks in the United States. Chinese were referred to with racial slurs equivalent to "chinks", and were savagely mistreated wherever they offered resistance. Although the Japanese government admonished its citizens to avoid all manifestations of racial discrimination, secret official documents presented plans for "securing the living space of the Yamato race" and for preserving the purity of this "leading race." "Asia for the Asians" was a slogan aimed against Western imperial domination, but the Japanese Navy Ministry explicitly directed that the "southern areas" should serve as a "supplier of raw materials for our country and as a market for our products" and that manufacturing industries in occupied areas shall be discouraged." (p. 246) Thus Japan was to replace the Western powers as the "core region" of the Co-Prosperity Sphere, and no less than 14% of Japan's total populations was scheduled to establish "Japan-towns" in foreign lands, thereby creating a new world order and assuring the "long-term expansion of the Yamato race."

Racism was fully as rampant on the other side. Just as the Japanese assumed that their "spiritual strength" made them superior

to effete and self-indulgent Caucasians, so the latter looked down on their enemy as "monkeymen" or "Yellow monkeys", barefoot or wearing encouraging, however, is the fact that the hatreds did not vanish. sneakers, with horn-rimmed eyeglasses and buckteeth, lacking the eyesight to be good fighters, and the brains to do more than "borrow this and copy that." After the Japanese victories at Pearl Harbor, Manila and Singapore, the "little men" suddenly became supermen. Now they were depicted as Spartan, clever, dangerous, utterly ruthless, and cruel, and "born jungle and night fighters." Reports of Japanese atrocities were cited to justify retaliatory atrocities. Charles Lindbergh noted that some American units refused to take prisoners, while others systematically collected enemy ears, skulls, and gold teeth. Significantly enough, such barbarism was not practised on German or Italian corpses in Europe, just as German- and Italian-Americans were not molested in the United States, in contrast to the internment than because of Bushido.

An encouraging feature of this racism is the speed with which hatreds gave way to cordial relations once the fighting ceased. Less Rather they were directed against new "enemies" with the outbreak of the Korean War and the Vietnam War. Today the Koreans and the Chinese have been replaced on the enemy list by Russians and Arabs, so that denunciation of the "Evil Empire" and of "terrorism" is being substituted for rational foreign policy. And with the Japanese now looming on the horizon as new economic supermen and successful rivals, "Japan bashing" could once again become a national past-time, especially if American unemployment figures and trade deficits continue upward. Given these realities and prospects, the value of this study as a classroom resource is evident. Its value is enhanced by 20 pages of illustrative cartoons from both American and Japanese sources.

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Themes in African and World History

by George E. Brooks, Jr.

Bloomington, Indiana: African Studies Program

Indiana University, 1973/1978

THEMES IN AFRICAN HISTORY is a collection of three essays, each treating an important theme prominent in courses which include African History. Although they could be assigned as supplementary reading in such courses, their primary purpose is to assist teachers of world history in covering segments on Africa. Two of the essays first appeared as articles in the journal, THE HISTORY TEACHER in 1970 and 1969. First printed in 1973, the collection was revised and updated in 1983.

The first paper presents "A Schema for Integrating Africa into World History" by recommending and summarizing the following topics: (1) Paleolithic and Neolithic Times, (2) Egypt, the Nile Valley and the Horn of Africa, (3) West Africa and the Trans-Sahara Trade, (4) East Africa and Indian Ocean Commerce from

pre-Christian Times to the Portuguese, (5) African "Landlords" and Portuguese "Strangers," (6) The South Atlantic System from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries, (7) European Imperialism, Decolonization and Problems of Less Developed Countries. In the treatment of each of these topics, the material is clearly and logically presented enabling teachers to select readily appropriate portions for integration into their courses.

World History teachers seeking to emphasize the interaction of civilizations will welcome Brooks' regional rather than continental approach to certain topics. He includes pre-colonial East Africa as part of an Indian Ocean regional topic, and he treats South Atlantic trade from 1500 to 1800 as a unit. He also proposes that recent colonial rule and the resulting economic development problems, social impact, nationalism and independence movements be treated on a comparative basis with Asia and North Africa. When dealing with post independence Africa, he warns against overemphasis on coups, famines, wars and refugee problems and stresses understanding the forces of inevitable change at work in Africa and how Africans seek to serve their own needs in the contemporary world.

The second essay, "Tropical Africa: The Colonial Heritage," traces late Nineteenth Century and Twentieth Century colonialism and the revolutionary ways it has transformed African society and brought it into World History as never before in spite of its spanning less than a century of the history of tropical Africa. It explains the aims and policies of the colonial powers, especially their determination to make the colonies pay for themselves and how this drove Africans into the workforce of a European-established money economy. Especially valuable is the description of how European administration and economic activities led to the development of "core areas" of European activity within colonial territories. Here, within a generation, appeared urbanized Africans with European education and tastes along with nationalistic aspirations which would eventually lead to demands for full independence.

The division of African states into more developed cosmopolitan "core areas" and much less developed peripheral areas continued after independence as did in most instances, close economic and cultural ties with the former colonial power. The author does not minimize the lack of economic progress and political instability characterizing much of contemporary Africa, but he does warn against excessive pessimism and urges a long-range perspective. New mineral wealth may be discovered. More effective technical aid may promote greater agricultural activity, lower birth rates and elimination of livestock diseases. He calls attention to the rarely-publicized affiliation of many African states with the European Economic Community and is optimistic about its long-range effects.

The essay concludes with a useful bibliography including novels. There are also suggested research topics for short papers appropriate for a world history course and some essay questions for World History examinations.

The final essay, "The African Heritage and the Slave Trade" provides a useful and highly readable description of the Atlantic Slave Trade and effectively summarizes its influence on African society. It also shows how slavery and racism in the United States fostered ignorance and gross mis-conceptions about Africa among both Whites and Blacks. It concludes with a commentary on the struggle of American Blacks to attain equality through assimilation into

American culture and society while at the same time discovering and taking pride in their African heritage. A helpful bibliographical note is included.

These essays should be of great assistance to world history teachers. Because they assume knowledge of world history and use terminology and concepts still unfamiliar to many college freshmen; in most colleges they would be more appropriate as assigned reading for African or Afro-American history courses. Two technical criticisms might improve future editions of this admirable teaching resource: Some of the maps, being reproductions, are somewhat hard to read due to indistinct shadings and liens, and finally the binding is so fragile that when an overly avid reader bends the cover back beyond a certain angle all the pages fall out!

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The Spoils of Time

By C. V. Wedgwood, Garden City, NY:
Doubleday, 1985, 326 pages, notes, index. \$19.95.

THE SPOILS OF TIME is a stimulating account of world history up to 1550, written by a leading, much-honored English historian, the author of some fifteen books in her own right and translator of two others. Her work extends beyond straight history into the realms of the arts (e.g., MILTON AND HIS WORLD and THE POLITICAL CAREER OF RUBENS); and she is an activist in cultural organizations (arts councils, and PEN). As the latter point suggests, she is an admired writer.

In THE SPOILS OF TIME, Dame Veronica has made no effort to produce a textbook. Her relatively slim volume has no maps, no illustrations, no jazzy chapter or section headings, no tables of predigested dates and facts. There are footnotes, but they are few: some three-and-a-half pages, merely citing sources of direct quotations. The index too is lean and businesslike, mainly geographical and personal names, plus a few general subjects (e.g., "Agriculture", and "Writing"). The book is written for mature, literate readers who already know a good deal about the broad expanse of the history she covers -- enough to appreciate how she illuminates the great movements of time and of human creativity.

She is a story-teller from first to last, not an exponent of broad interpretive notions; and she says so straight away: "This book is essentially a narrative, not a philosophy of history. ... It ... contains, perhaps, lessons for our time, but if so, I leave them for readers to find for themselves." (page i) So we need not expect any "challenge-and-response" or patterns of emerging "ecumenes".

The book is of course a daring one. It is almost reckless for Miss Wedgwood to journey so far from her own turf: 1550 is in fact where her academic preserve commences. Almost any specialist in a non-European culture will find places where she has "put her foot wrong"; few reviewers have resisted the temptation to point them out. But this temerity should challenge those of us who teach world

history. We live, mainly, outside our own specialties. She challenges us to do it with style, superb organization, and irony.

What Dame Veronica has done here is to display the skills and the spirit of the transcendent student -- the one who can dig into the vast ore-hills of history, decide what the facts are, set them in order, and express them with confidence and grace. She obviously had marvelous fun writing this book. Any world historian will also have marvelous fun reading it. And inspiration.

A tiny sample is necessary:

The memory of a united India and of a great ruler remained, though centuries of division and recurrent invasion wiped out most of the evidence. Only in the twentieth century, when the rock-hewn edicts and inscribed columns were identified and deciphered, was the memory of Asoka restored. In 1947 the group of upright lions which crown the noble column at Sarnath was chosen as the emblem of independent India, thus associating its future with the memory and the ideals of a great ruler.

This is not the sort of style to go down well with a textbook editor. The Wedgwood voice is an organ tone, suitable for monumental structures, dignified and resonant. And the easy underlining of historical relevance, touching the after-echo that probably few Indians understand or bear in mind today, is something we can all use. Even if we can't all carry it off so neatly. Who of us, for example, would tempt a copy-editor with three uses of "memory" in less than eight lines of type?

Frank A. Kierman Jr.
Rider College

delineates the major political events of the area under discussion and then hones on the crux of the civilization's patterns and its hallmarks. Toward the end (eg. modern times), it lapses more into a review of important events. While the explanations are lucid and the student will clearly see the highlights, the text misses basic and deep understanding, and involvement. This is due to weak conceptualization and a tendency to tell rather than to delve.

Pedagogical aids and techniques in the book are fulsome and well-integrated. Each chapter ends with a two-page review including summary, vocabulary, identification and discussion questions, ideas for projects and a varied study skills section. More interesting are the feature sections scattered throughout which include original source material, landmarks in technology, and fascinating tidbits under the rubric "Linking Past and Present". In the latter section we learn about magic carpets of the Middle East, the British crown jewels, the Japanese kimono, "made in Hong Kong", and the countess and the cinchona tree, to name a few. In addition, there are numerous excellent pictures and maps well placed throughout the book. The vocabulary is explained within the text, and the end glossary, index and map section are of high quality. The student workbook offers additional devices to rework the information like crossword puzzles, word scrambles, and statistical interpretation charts, and the teacher resource book includes tests and activities..

This is a solid book of considerable merit. A student working through it will know much about the history of the world (though not world history). Whether he appreciates it, or is challenged and enlightened, is another question.

Marilynn Hitchens, Ph.D.
Wheat Ridge High School

A History of the World.

By Marvin Perry. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985. Pp. 896. \$18.48. Student workbook; teacher resource book, High School.

In the first two units and nine chapters, A HISTORY OF THE WORLD is a western civilization text. Unit three, then, catches the student up on the rest of the world to the Renaissance. In units four, five, six and seven, entitled "Transition to Modern Times", "Revolution and Nationalism in the Western World", "The Age of Imperialism", and "Civilization in Crisis" respectively, we once again see the world revolving around Europe. The last chapter, "The Contemporary Age" takes us on a continental tour of world events. Such a conceptualization is definitely not world history.

The narrative in this text is fairly straight-forward. While it does not project the drama of the human experience nor the artistry of a fine pen, it is not boring. This is probably due to careful interspersion of fact and idea, and to the approach whereby the author

TWO CHEERS FOR WORLD HISTORY

"World history", observed William H. McNeill, "was once taken for granted as the only sensible basis for understanding the past." Some historians want to make it so again. With the forming of the World History Association in 1982, the cause of world history in North America became a movement, committed in part to making world history the successor course to western civilization as the introductory history class in universities. Although world history is the oldest form of history in the west, the WHA has about it a vanguard spirit of change and renewal (most members of the association--now about 600 strong--are younger historians). Involved is more than subject matter. The movement is a form of protest against many things which disturb our profession: the reign of narrow fields of specialization, the perceived irrelevance of much of old Eurocentric history, the failure to educate youth for world citizenship, and the seeming insensitivity of historians to the rest of humankind. Christopher Friedrichs urged readers of this Newsletter (Spring, 1985) to hold to western civilization, a course which, for all faults, at least remains our history. Reply world historians: no longer. Other histories also have become our history, involving us

in the hopes and hatreds of other peoples, emotions as likely to affect our future as anything which happened in the western past. For better or worse, our history is now world history.

There is, however, a credibility problem here. Historians have long been taught to distrust world history, to view it as too vast for academic study, and to identify it with amateurism, moral preaching, and metahistorical prophecy. Indeed one of the first acts of professional historical associations in North America was to attempt to drive out world history from the schools because of its reputation for being extraneous and boring. Ironically, some historians now want to bring it back as a means to restore the appeal and relevance of history in the curriculum. Most older world history, they contend, was not world history at all. It was about the west and the westernization of other continents, always with Europe at the center, North America on the side, and the rest of the planet in limbo. Part of the romance of world history in the WHA, therefore, is the belief that this old subject, properly taught in global perspective (some prefer the space age title "global history"), is really something new and extraordinary. The existence of wider world--and its vulnerability to catastrophe--is one of the most revolutionary facts of contemporary life; the establishment of the history of this world in the curriculum, members believe, would be one of the most revolutionary achievements of the present generation of history teachers.

WHA President Ross E. Dunn describes his followers as "true believers" involved in a "crusade" for change in education. Academic wars, however, generally are won or lost outside the schools. The coming of the western civilization course after 1919, for example, was prepared by the spread of ideals from the west's "crusade for

democracy" in the First World War. In the same way, the cause for world history may benefit from present anxieties about nuclear war. From ethical origins in classical and Judeo-Christian thought, world history has an old and continuing connection with ideals of peace and world order. Concepts of world history as a form of education for international understanding, for instance, have been part of the faith of modern peace movements since their beginnings in the early nineteenth century. Greek philosophers said, "Know thyself". Peace educators say, "Know others."

Frankly, much of this is cant. For some reason, winged language and inflated claims for world history just seem to go with the territory. Important to future prospects for world history as a successful introductory course, therefore, is a realistic assessment of its own problems and limitations. To my knowledge, world history has never competed effectively in universities against western civilization courses. The original appeal of western civilization was in its organizing idea of western history as the evolution of liberty, an idea which gave meaning and drama to a perceived process of civilization from the ancient world to the modern west. Although this conception faded over time, western civilization maintained a form and content which was easy and familiar to teachers and students alike. In contrast, world history remains without backbone, without agreed concepts, and without common principles of selection. What the subject needs, above all, is what someone called "a simple, all-encompassing, elegant idea" which would unite the whole human past. Tall order.

Western civilization is a celebration of western culture, a rite of initiation for freshmen into a civic religion of the western world. World history, as a reaction against this form of narcissism, seeks a

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different perspective. Some want something radical, a view from the Third World, making world history into a critique of the human condition, a judgement upon the west, its imperialism, its economic hegemony, and its hold over the lives of other peoples. Leften Stavrianos, instead, proposes "a view from the moon", a higher, universal outlook upon humankind. Others want something more down to earth, kind of a son of western civilization, placing western history in the larger context of global development. In sum, the most important question for world historians remains open: what is world history?

Nevertheless, there is among WHA members a tendency to perceive themselves in the image of the old western civilization movement, promoters of a course which eventually will sweep the campuses. More likely, however, this challenging subject will remain an elective with appeal only to a minority of students, an option to mainline courses in national and western history. No wrong in this. North America is a society of variety and choice, and it is proper that variety; and choice should be the character of the curriculum as well. Anyway, status as an elective is probably as much world history--or any introductory course--deserves. World history, WHA member Joe Gowaskie commented recently, will not end wars, halt the arms race, promote world trade, improve academic performance, or rescue students from television. "Rather", he concluded, "taught successfully, world history can educate students and teachers to think about the development of human society in different times, and can lead to an understanding of the common and uncommon experiences of other peoples in other contexts." Not all bad. Therefore, two cheers for world history.

Gilbert Allardye
University of New
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NOTES

AFRICAN HISTORY CONFERENCE HELD AT USAF ACADEMY

The USAF Academy Department of History and the Rocky Mountain Regional World History Association co-sponsored a teaching conference on "Africa in World History," on 25-26 Apr 86. Funded by the Falcon Foundation, this conference was well attended by over 100 college professors and secondary school instructors from all over the country. It included papers on "One's Own Past: Perceptions of African History," by Jan Vansina (University of Wisconsin); "African History: New Perspectives for the non-Africanist Historian," by A. J. R. Russell-Wood (The Johns Hopkins University); "A Schema for Integrating Africa into World History Courses," By George E. Brooks (Indiana University); "The African Diaspora in World Historical Perspective," by Joseph C. Miller (University of Virginia); "Disease and Africa in World History," by Philip D. Curtin (The Johns Hopkins University); and, finally, "Africa and World History," by Major Bryant P. Shaw (USAF Academy). The conference concluded with a summary session led by R. Hunt Davis (The University of Florida) and a general discussion period.

In addition to the formal paper presentations, experienced college and high school instructors offered suggestions on ways the speakers' ideas could be integrated into world history courses. Throughout the two day conference, attendees spoke of a heightened awareness of the importance of Africa to the study of world history, and the corresponding need to find additional avenues to communicate this awareness to their students.

Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of the conference's proceedings should contact Major Spencer Way, Jr., HQ USAFA/DFH, USAF Academy, Colorado Springs, CO 80840



From left to right: George E. Brooks, Phillip D. Curtin, R. Hunt Davis, Joseph C. Miller, A. J. R. Russell-Wood, and Jan Vansina.

NOTES

RESEARCH AND TEACHING AIDS

Women in World Area Studies. For a catalogue describing various resources to assist in the teaching of the history of women, age by age, and culture by culture write to Glennhurst Publications, Inc., 6300 Walker Street, St. Louis Park, MN 55416.

Book Translations into English. Scholars who need books translated from some twenty languages into English, contact John Drury, 4010 Eoff Street, Wheeling, West Virginia 26003.

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1/4 page	1 time	\$80			
	2 times	@ \$75			
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Resources for Teaching World History

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) recently published three microfiche reports on the teaching of world history. These reports, originally produced by the Department of History at the United States Air Force Academy, are entitled **WORLD HISTORY IN LIBERAL MILITARY EDUCATION** (ERIC #ED 259 961), and **WORLD HISTORY WORKSHOP** (Colorado Springs, Colorado, July 13-15, 1983) (ERIC #ED 259 962). The December 1985 issue of **RESOURCES IN EDUCATION** contains abstracts of all three documents. Copies of the reports are in libraries and education agencies which subscribe to the ERIC Microfiche Collection. The microfiche reports may also be ordered (for a nominal charge) from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service, 3900 Wheeler Avenue, Alexandria VA 22304-5110.

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(Nominees for three council seats should send resumes to any one of the members of the Committee)

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Aspen, CO 81612

WORLD HISTORY MANUSCRIPTS

An invitation for manuscripts in world history for the special issue of the **RADICAL HISTORY REVIEW**.

This **REVIEW** will have an issue devoted mainly to world history. It invites articles in the period **AFTER 1500 A.D.** in one of the following three areas that

- 1) address global themes and transformations,
- 2) trace interactions among regions, or
- 3) discuss global themes in a context of a particular society.

Articles must be no longer than thirty pages. Deadline: 30 September 1986. Send to the **RADICAL HISTORY REVIEW**, 449 West 59th Street, New York, New York 10019, Phone: (212) 489-3698. This issue will appear in December 1987.

CONFERENCE

"World History: How to Organize the Course" will be a session at the Northern Great Plains History Conference, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, September 25-27, 1986.

Gary Kuhn, Department of History, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, WI 54601 will assemble the session and is interested in volunteers.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Rocky Mountain Regional World History Association will host a conference on "Women in World History: A Teaching Conference" at Colorado State University on May 1, 2, 1987. Please send your proposals for sessions or papers along with a paragraph description by February 1, 1987 to David McComb, History Dept., Colorado State Univ., Fort Collins, CO 80523. Suggestions concerning any aspect about the history of women will be welcome and seriously considered.

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