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# World Civilizations

The Global Experience

Volume 1



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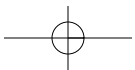
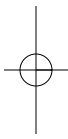
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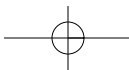
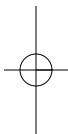
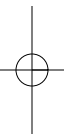
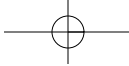
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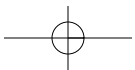
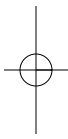
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# Preface

World history explores the human past, around the globe, to help us understand the world we live in today. It seeks to identify how major forces have developed over time, like patterns of migration or world trade. It explores the cultures and political institutions of different regions, to help explain commonalities and differences. World history builds on a growing amount of historical scholarship, some of which has truly altered the picture of the past. It involves a rich array of stories and examples of human variety, intriguing in themselves. It helps develop skills that are vital not just to the history classroom, but to effective operation in a global society—skills like comparing different societies, appreciating various viewpoints, identifying big changes and continuities in the human experience. Always, however, it uses the past as a prologue to the present. World historians argue that no one society, past or present, can be understood without reference to other societies and to larger global forces. They argue, even more vigorously, that the present—which clearly involves relationships that embrace the whole world—cannot be grasped without a sense of the global historical record.

From its first edition, *World Civilizations: The Global Experience* has aimed at capturing a truly global approach by discussing and comparing major societies and focusing on their interactions. The goal is to present a clear factual framework while stimulating analysis about global contacts, regional patterns, and the whole process of change and continuity on a world stage. This kind of world history, focused on the development over time of the forces that shape the world today, helps students make sense of the present and prepare to meet the challenges of the future. It is hard to imagine a more important topic.

Embracing the whole world's history obviously requires selectivity and explicit points of emphasis. This text gains coherence through decisions about time, about place and about topic. In all three cases, the book encourages analysis, relating facts to vital issues of interpretation. Through analysis and interpretation students become active, engaged learners, rather than serving as passive vessels for torrents of historical facts. Underpinning analysis, the issues of time, place, and topic are the three keys to an intelligible global past.

## Decisions about Time: Periodization

This text pays a great deal of attention to periodization, or the identification of major points of change in the global experience. This is an essential requirement for coherent presentation—going well beyond the one-thing-after-another type of chronology—and ultimately a precondition of relating the past to the present.

*World Civilizations: The Global Experience* identifies six periods in world history. Each period is determined by three basic criteria: a geographical rebalancing among major civilizational areas, an increase in the intensity and extent of contact across civilizations (or, in the case of the earliest period, cross-regional contact),

and the emergence of new and roughly parallel developments in many major civilizations. The book is divided into six parts corresponding to these six major periods of world history. In each part, basic characteristics of each period are referred to in chapters that discuss the major societies in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas, and in several cross-cutting chapters that address larger world trends. Each period offers a distinctive set of themes, or Big Concepts, that are defined in general terms and then explored in terms of particular regions. Part introductions identify the fundamental new characteristics and new levels of interaction that define each period.

Part I, *Early Human Societies, 2.5 Million–1000 B.C.E.: Origins and Development*, sketches the hunting-and-gathering phase of human existence, then focuses on the rise of agriculture and the emergence of civilization in parts of Asia, Africa, Central America, and southeastern Europe—the sequence of developments that set world history in motion from the origin of the human species until about 3000 years ago.

Part II, *The Classical Period, 1000 B.C.E.–500 C.E.: Uniting Large Regions*, deals with the growing complexity of major civilizations in several areas of the world. During the classical period, civilizations developed a new capacity to integrate large regions and diverse groups of people through overarching cultural and political systems. Yet many regions and societies remained unconnected to the increasingly complex centers of civilization. Coverage of the classical period of world history, then, must consider both types of societies.

The period covered in Part III, *The Postclassical Period, 500–1450: New Faith and New Commerce*, saw the emergence of new commercial and cultural linkages that brought most civilizations into contact with one another and with nomadic groups. The decline of the great classical empires, the rise of new civilizational centers, and the emergence of a network of world contacts, including the spread of major religions, are characteristics of the postclassical era.

Developments in world history over the three centuries from 1450 to 1750 mark a fourth period in world history, which is covered in Part IV, *The Early Modern Period, 1450–1750: The World Shrinks*. The rise of the West, the intensification of global contacts, the growth of trade, and the formation of new empires define this period and separate it from the preceding postclassical period.

Part V, *The Dawn of the Industrial Age, 1750–1914*, covers the period of world history dominated by the advent of industrialization in western Europe and growing European imperialism. The increase and intensification of commercial interchange, technological innovations, and cultural contacts all reflected the growth of Western power and the spread of Western influence.

*The Newest Stage of World History: 1914–Present*, the focus of Part VI, defines the characteristics of this period as the retreat of Western imperialism, the rise of new political systems such as communism, the surge of the United States and the Soviet Union, and a variety of economic innovations, including the achievements of Japan, China, Korea, and the Pacific Rim. Part VI deals with this most recent period of world history and some of its portents for the future.

## Underlying Issues

Two related themes and one standard historical complexity rise above the six-stage world history periodization. The first involves the interaction between tradition and change—and in recent periods, modern change. Many societies established key ideas and institutions early on, at least by the classical period. These traditions would then condition responses to change and modernity. Elements of this interplay become visible from the post-classical period onward; the tradition-change encounter remains vivid in the 21st century, though in forms very different from a thousand years ago. Each world history period involves important shifts in the interaction between change and tradition.

Theme two involves divergence and convergence. Societies emerged separately in many parts of the world, though the process was almost always affected by some wider contacts. This is part of the first phase of the human experience. Separation, or divergence, did not always mean difference, for many societies solved key problems in similar ways; but it did tend to produce separate identities. With growing contacts over time, opportunities and pressures produced various forms of imitation and convergence. The interplay between divergence and convergence is lively in the 21st century, but its shape has changed greatly over time. Here, too, each period involves a different statement of the balance between divergence and convergence.

Periodization emphasizes change, including changes in the basic frameworks in which traditions interacted with new forces and in which separate identities confronted new levels of convergence. Always, however, change must be complicated by recognition of key continuities from the past. At various points in human history, including recently, huge new forces prompt some people to claim that “everything has changed.” In fact, strong traces of the past always linger. The challenge is to figure out how the balance works.

## Place: Regions and Civilizations

Usable world history requires decisions about coherence in place as well as time. Even in the present day, and certainly in the past, key developments did not occur evenly across the whole globe: regional conditions always come into play. At the same time, not every definable society can be encompassed—early hunting-and-gathering bands of humans, after all, could number no more than sixty people. No world history survey can even approach that level of detail. World history seeks legitimate ways to define larger regions and societies that serve as the basis for meaningful contacts and reactions to global forces.

Major regions of the world depend on a combination of geography and historical developments in the form of shared institutions and beliefs. This book uses several regions as frameworks for discussing patterns of activity and larger interactions: East Asia; South and Southeast Asia; the Middle East, ultimately with the addition of North Africa; sub-Saharan Africa; Europe, often with some division between eastern and western; and the Ameri-

cas. Australia and key island groups, and also patterns in central Asia, must be added in as well.

In several regions, beginning in key cases several thousand years ago, major civilizations helped organize and define regional characteristics. East Asia, to take one example, would be profoundly shaped by emerging features of Chinese civilization. Civilizations used economic surpluses, beyond basic survival needs, to generate relatively elaborate political institutions, cities, and trading networks. They also emphasized particular kinds of institutional arrangements and value systems that would provide a recognizable identity, differentiating their civilization from other societies. Using, but also debating, the concept of civilization helps organize the geographical foundation of world history, by introducing not only key regions, but regional characteristics and identities. Civilizations provide the basis for key comparisons, with each other and in terms of regional reactions to larger forces for change. The internal developments in major civilizations, along with mutual interaction and responses to broader factors like migration or missionary religions form much of the stuff of world history for the past 5000 years. At the same time, other types of societies, including nomadic groups played a vital role throughout world history, particularly as they long dominated strategically vital regions like central Asia. Most of these other societies were smaller than civilizations, in terms of population, but they played crucial functions in world history and developed successful cultural and institutional forms.

Attention to the major regions of the world does more than set the stage for comparative analysis, in each of the chronological periods in world history. It also promotes a sense of geographic balance that is vital to the field. Many earlier historical efforts understandably focused on developments in one’s own society, assuming that the rest of the world was unimportant or somehow revolved around what was happening nearer home. Until recently, many Americans were urged to pay primary attention to the history of Western Europe and the expansion of Western civilization across the Atlantic. These remain valid themes, but in the world history context they become only a part of a larger and more complicated civilizational pattern. The transition from Western to world history is still under discussion, but the global context gains ground steadily because it more accurately mirrors the world around us today. This book, paying attention to Western developments as part of the larger world story, and showing their interaction with other societies and other influences, strives to distribute appropriate attention to all the major regions and to their changing roles in the larger global story.

## Topics and Themes

A final way to focus world history, intersecting with decisions about time and place, involves the kinds of human and social activities that are highlighted. The first theme follows obviously from the uses of periodization and the need to deal coherently with world history over time: *World Civilizations: The Global Experience* deals consistently with change and continuity and with

the causes of basic changes in global dynamics from one period to the next.

Interactions among the major regions and societies, the second theme, focus attention on the ways individual regions and civilizations were shaped by contacts with other areas. Contacts include trade, of course, but also war, diplomacy, and international organizations from religious entities to the multinational companies and global agencies of more modern times.

A cluster of factors deal with economic activities and population patterns as they affect people, societies and the environment. Technology has a key role here, but also population structures and disease, labor systems, migrations, plus manufacturing and agriculture. Each civilization must be discussed with these patterns in mind, as well as the broader diffusion of trade, technologies and population exchange as they formed core parts of the larger patterns of interaction.

Each society featured characteristic social and gender structures that organized and tried to justify various systems of inequality. Dealing with how social systems changed over time and comparing them from one region to the next are core features of world history; social systems could also be affected by changing patterns of contact.

The fifth thematic area clusters around culture—belief systems, values, and artistic styles—as these emerged in religions, intellectual systems, and science. Here too, change over time and the results of interactions among societies form key elements in the cultural dynamics of world history.

Finally, politics demands emphasis: the functions and structures of states, as they formed and changed, along with ideas about politics and political identity (political culture). In modern centuries, this topic embraces the emergence of nation states and also their limitations in global context.

The topical themes of this book help organize discussions of change over time but also the possibility of developing comparisons from one society to the next. Interactions among the themes—how new trading patterns affected, and were affected by, cultural systems, for example—help structure more challenging analytical efforts.

## Features

The features in *World Civilizations: The Global Experience* have been carefully constructed and honed over the course of six editions. Our aim has been to provide students with tools to help them learn how to analyze change and continuity.

### What's New in This Edition?

**New!** The most consistently novel feature of this sixth edition involves the enhanced focus on the evolution of interregional and ultimately global contacts. Each Part Opener clearly discusses the nature of contacts in the time period involved, and from the postclassical period onward this involves also the assessment of basic systems of interaction and exchange. This theme is recaptured in chapters on individual societies but also in the Part Retrospective.

**New!** Each Part Opener clearly identifies leading themes and Big Concepts, and chapters on the major regions allow the concepts to be explored more fully and compared across regional lines.

**New! Chapter Updates** 20th century materials have been substantially revised, with particular attention to greater clarity and emphasis on the end of the Cold War and ensuing developments. The emergence of globalization, and resistance to globalization, have also been reexamined. All of the other chapters have been reviewed and updated as necessary.

**New! In-text Pronunciation Guide** New to the sixth edition is a pronunciation guide, which is intended to help familiarize students with new terminology by providing in-text pronunciations of key words and phrases that will help students become comfortable when discussing text passages. Pronunciations are also included in the glossary at the end of the text.

**New! Complete Redesign** The sixth edition of *World Civilizations: The Global Experience* has been thoroughly redesigned. The student-friendly text, maps and global orientation help students easily recognize and distinguish geographical features and areas. Maps in the part introductions highlight major developments during each period and familiarize students with all areas of the world. Full-color photos help bring history to life.

## Other Key Features

### Part Introductions

Part introductions, reviewed for this edition, discuss the conditions that set the stage for the developments that define each new period in world history. They identify the characteristics of the period of world history covered in the part, and recap the continuities that exist from one period to the next. Two world maps at the beginning of each part introduction provide a graphic reference for the major changes of the period. Part timelines list the major events of the chronological period covered.



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### Part Retrospectives

Following the final chapter in each part is a retrospective essay that recaps the dominant cross-civilizational (or cross-regional) contacts and divisions that occurred during the era under examination. These sections encourage analysis of the dominant contact patterns in the period as well as the relationship to them of major individual societies.



### Chapter Introductions

Each chapter introduction tells a compelling story about a particular pattern, individual, or incident to spark students' interest and introduce chapter material in an engaging and dramatic way. The opening story concludes with an explanation of how the story relates to the chapter content and the key themes and analytical issues that will be examined in the chapter.

### Timelines

In addition to the timeline in each part introduction, each chapter includes a timeline that orients the student to the period, countries, and key events of the chapter.



### Section-Opening Focal Points

Focal points listed below each main chapter heading identify for the student the principal points to be explored in the section.



### Visualizing the Past

The Visualizing the Past feature of each chapter supports visual literacy by showing students how to read and analyze visual material such as maps, charts, graphs, tables or photos to interpret historical patterns. Text accompanying the illustrations provides a level of analysis, and a series of questions draws the students into providing their own analyses.



### Documents

Substantial excerpts from selected original documents put students in contact with diverse voices of the past, and many have been re-written for this edition. We share a firm commitment to include social



history involving women, the non-elite, and experiences and events outside the spheres of politics and high culture. Each document is preceded by a brief scene-setting narration and followed by probing questions to guide the reader through an understanding of the document and to encourage interpretive reflections and analysis.



### Thinking Historically

Each chapter contains an analytical essay on a topic of broad application related to the chapter's focus but extending across chronological and geographical boundaries. Critical thinking questions at the end of each essay prompt the reader to think beyond the "who, what, where, and when" of historical events and consider instead the far-reaching implications of historical developments.



### Global Connections

Each chapter ends with a Global Connections section that reinforces the key themes and issues raised in the chapter and makes clear their importance not only to the areas of civilization discussed in the chapter but also to the world as a whole.

### Further Readings

Each chapter includes several annotated paragraphs of suggested readings, substantially updated for this edition. Students receive reliable guidance on a variety of books: source materials, standards in the field, encyclopedia coverage, more readable general interest titles, and the like.

### On the Web

Each chapter ends with a list of Web sites with annotations to give students the key words necessary to search for similar sites.

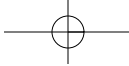
### Glossary

The comprehensive glossary is another feature that sets this book apart. It includes conceptual terms, frequently used foreign terms, and names of important geographic regions and key characters on the world stage. Much of world history will be new to most students, and this glossary will help them develop a global vocabulary.

### Icons

Throughout the text are icons that lead students to additional resources—documents, images, maps, and case studies—found on the *Myhistorylab* website that relate to the text they are reading.





## Acknowledgments

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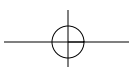
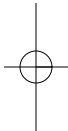
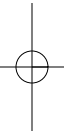
Christopher J. Ward, Clayton State University

Peter N. Stearns

Michael Adas

Stuart B. Schwartz

Marc Jason Gilbert



# Supplements

## For Students



*Myhistorylab* offers instructors and students the best multimedia solutions in one easy-to-use place. This state-of-the-art interactive instructional solution for World History course is organized according to the contents of *World History: The Global Experience*. *Myhistorylab* is designed to be used as a supplement to a traditional lecture course or to administer a completely online course. *Myhistorylab* provides helpful tips, review materials, and activities to make the study of history a successful and enjoyable learning experience.

*Myhistorylab* includes the following features:

- Pre-Test and Post-Test Quizzes and Individualized Study Plan
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- History Toolkit
- Map Room
- Chapter Review Materials
- Chapter Exams
- Pearson E-Text
- Writing Resources
- Research Navigator

To learn more about this unique learning management system, take a tour at [www.myhistorylab.com](http://www.myhistorylab.com) or contact your local Pearson/Prentice Hall representative.

## For The Instructor

### Instructor's Manual

ISBN: 0-20-565967-5

This teaching resource includes chapter summaries, discussion suggestions, critical thinking exercises, map exercises, primary source analysis suggestions, and term paper and essay topics. A special "Instructor's Toolkit" includes audiovisual suggestions.

### Test Item File

ISBN: 0-20-565960-8

Over 2000 multiple-choice and essay questions are referenced by topic, type, and text page number.

### MyTest Online Testing System

[www.pearsonmytest.com](http://www.pearsonmytest.com)

This flexible, easy to use website includes all of the items in the printed test item file and allows instructors to select specific questions, edit existing questions, and add their own items to create exams.

### Instructor Resource Center

[www.pearsonhighered.com/educator](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/educator)

This website provides instructors with additional text-specific resources that can be downloaded for classroom use. Resources include full-color transparencies of the maps included in the textbook that can be downloaded to create transparency acetates, Powerpoint™ presentations that include text and visual Y Powerpoint™ slides, and the test item file of the text.

## Supplementary Materials

### Prentice Hall/Penguin Program

The Prentice Hall **Package a Penguin** program provides instructors an opportunity to receive significant discounts on Penguin World History titles when ordered and bundled with *World Civilizations: The Global Experience*. For more information about available titles and this unique program, contact your local sales representative.

### Library of World Biography Series

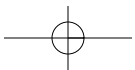
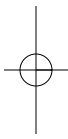
This series of biographies focuses on figures whose actions and ideas significantly influenced the course of world history. Pocket-sized and brief, each book relates the life of its subject to the broader themes and developments of the times. For more information about bundling these titles with *World Civilizations: The Global Experience*, contact your local sales representative.

### Titles include:

- *Ahmad al-Mansur: Islamic Visionary*, Richard L. Smith
- *Alexander the Great: Legacy of a Conqueror*, Winthrop Lindsay Admas
- *Benito Mussolini: The First Fascist*, Anthony L. Cardoza
- *Fukusawa Yūkichi: From Samurai to Capitalist*, Helen M. Hopper
- *Ignatius of Loyola: Founder of the Jesuits*, Patrick Donnelly
- *Jacques Coeur: Entrepreneur and King's Bursar*, Kathryn L. Reyerson
- *Katō Shidzue: A Japanese Feminist*, Helen M. Hopper
- *Simón Bolívar: Liberator and Disappointment*, David Bushnell
- *Vasco da Gama: Renaissance Crusader*, Glenn J. Ames
- *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433*, Edward L. Dreyer
- *Wu Zhao: China's Only Female Emperor*, N. Harry Rothschild
- *Chinggis Khan*, Ruth Dunnell
- *Emperor Qianlong: Son of Heaven, Man of the World*, Mark Elliott
- *Sun Yatsen: Seeking a Newer China*, David B. Gordon
- *Martin Luther: A Life Reformed*, Paul W. Robinson

### Connections: Key Themes in World History

- *The Globe Encompassed: The Age of European Discovery (1500 to 1700)*, Glenn J. Ames
- *Captives as Commodities: The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, Lisa A. Lindsay
- *First Horseman, The: Disease in Human History*, John Aberth
- *Trading Tastes: Commodity and Cultural Exchange to 1750*, Erik Gilbert and Jonathan T. Reynolds



# About the Authors



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Peter N. Stearns is provost and professor of history at George Mason University. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard University. Before moving to George Mason University, he taught at Rutgers University, the University of Chicago, and Carnegie Mellon, where he won the Robert Doherty Educational Leadership Award and the Elliott Dunlap Smith Teaching Award. He has taught world history for more than 15 years. He currently serves as chair of the Advanced Placement World History Committee and also founded and is the editor of the *Journal of Social History*. In addition to textbooks and readers, he has written studies of gender and consumerism in a world history context. Other books address modern social and cultural history and include studies on gender, old age, work, dieting, and emotion. His most recent book in this area is *American Fear: Causes and Consequences of High Anxiety*.



## Michael Adas

Michael Adas is the Abraham Voorhees Professor of History and a board of governor's chair at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Over the past couple of decades his teaching has focused on patterns and processes of global and comparative history. His courses on race and empire in the early modern and industrial eras and on world history in the 20th century have earned him a number of teaching prizes. In addition to texts on world history, Adas has written mainly on the comparative history of colonialism and its impact on the peoples and societies of Asia and Africa. His books include *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*, which won the Dexter Prize, and the recently published *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission*. He is currently writing a global history of the First World War.



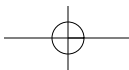
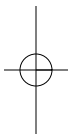
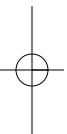
## Stuart B. Schwartz

Stuart B. Schwartz was born and educated in Springfield, Massachusetts, and then attended Middlebury College and the Universidad Autonoma de Mexico. He has an M.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia University in Latin American history. He taught for many years at the University of Minnesota and joined the faculty at Yale University in 1996. He has also taught in Brazil, Puerto Rico, Spain, France, and Portugal. He is a specialist on the history of colonial Latin America, especially Brazil, and is the author of numerous books, notably *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society* (1985), which won the Bolton Prize for the best book in Latin American History. He is also the author of *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels* (1992), *Early Latin America* (1983), and *Victors and Vanquished* (1999). He has held fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton). For his work on Brazil he was decorated by the Brazilian government. His recent book *All Can Be Saved* (2008) won the Bolton Prize as well as three awards from the American Historical Association.



## Marc Jason Gilbert

Marc Jason Gilbert is the holder of the National Endowment for the Humanities Endowed Chair in World History at Hawaii Pacific University in Honolulu, Hawaii. He is a former University System of Georgia Distinguished Professor of Teaching and Learning. He was a founding member of the World History Association and one of its initial elected officers. He also founded two currently active WHA regional affiliates (Southeast and Hawaii) and is editor of the WHA-affiliated journal, *World History Connected*. He has attempted to bring a global dimension to Asian history in numerous articles, including "Chinese Tea in World History" and in books, such as *Why the North Won the Vietnam War*.



# Prologue

The study of history is the study of the past. Knowledge of the past gives us perspective on our societies today. It shows different ways in which people have identified problems and tried to resolve them, as well as important common impulses in the human experience. History can inform through its variety, remind us of some human constants, and provide a common vocabulary and examples that aid in mutual communication.

The study of history is also the study of change. Historians analyze major changes in the human experience over time and examine the ways in which those changes connect the past to the present. They try to distinguish between superficial and fundamental change, as well as between sudden and gradual change. They explain why change occurs and what impact it has. Finally, they pinpoint continuities from the past along with innovations. History, in other words, is a study of human society in motion.

World history has become a subject in its own right. It involves the study of historical events in a global context. It does not attempt to sum up everything that has happened in the past. World history focuses on two principal subjects: the evolution of leading societies and the interaction among different peoples around the globe.

## The Emergence of World History

Serious attempts to deal with world history are relatively recent. Many historians have attempted to locate the evolution of their own societies in the context of developments in a larger “known world”: Herodotus, though particularly interested in the origins of Greek culture, wrote also of developments around the Mediterranean; Ibn Khaldun wrote of what he knew about developments in Africa and Europe as well as in the Muslim world. But not until the 20th century, with an increase in international contacts and a vastly expanded knowledge of the historical patterns of major societies, did a full world history become possible. In the West, world history depended on a growing realization that the world could not be understood simply as a mirror reflecting the West’s greater glory or as a stage for Western-dominated power politics. This hard-won realization continues to meet some resistance. Nevertheless, historians in several societies have attempted to develop an international approach to the subject that includes, but goes beyond, merely establishing a context for the emergence of their own civilizations.

Our understanding of world history has been increasingly shaped by two processes that define historical inquiry: detective work and debate. Historians are steadily uncovering new data not just about particular societies but about lesser-known contacts. Looking at a variety of records and artifacts, for example, they learn how an 8th-century battle between Arab and Chinese forces in central Asia brought Chinese prisoners who knew how to make paper to the Middle East, where their talents were quickly put to work. And they argue about world history frameworks:

how central European actions should be in the world history of the past 500 years, and whether a standard process of modernization is useful or distorting in measuring developments in modern Turkey or China. Through debate come advances in how world history is understood and conceptualized, just as the detective work advances the factual base.

## What Civilization Means

Humans have always shown a tendency to operate in groups that provide a framework for economic activities, governance, and cultural forms such as beliefs and artistic styles. These groups, or societies, may be quite small; hunting-and-gathering bands often numbered no more than 60 people. World history usually focuses on somewhat larger societies, with more extensive economic relationships (at least for trade) and cultures.

One vital kind of grouping is called civilization. The idea of civilization as a type of human society is central to most world history, though it also generates debate and though historians are now agreed that it is not the only kind of grouping that warrants attention. Civilizations, unlike some other societies, generate surpluses beyond basic survival needs. This in turn promotes a variety of specialized occupations and heightened social differentiation, as well as regional and long-distance trading networks. Surplus production also spurs the growth of cities and the development of formal states, with some bureaucracy, in contrast to more informal methods of governing. Most civilizations have also developed systems of writing.

Civilizations are not necessarily better than other kinds of societies. Nomadic groups have often demonstrated great creativity in technology and social relationships, and some were more vigorous than settled civilizations in promoting global contacts. Moreover, there is disagreement about exactly what defines a civilization—for example, what about cases like the Incas where there was no writing?

Used carefully, however, the idea of civilization as a form of human social organization, and an unusually extensive one, has merit. Along with agriculture (which developed earlier), civilizations have given human groups the capacity to fundamentally reshape their environments and to dominate most other living creatures. The history of civilizations embraces most of the people who have ever lived; their literature, formal scientific discoveries, art, music, architecture, and inventions; their most elaborate social, political, and economic systems; their brutality and destruction caused by conflicts; their exploitation of other species; and their degradation of the environment—a result of changes in technology and the organization of work.

The study of civilizations always involves more, however, than case-by-case detail. World history makes sense only if civilizations are compared, rather than treated separately. Equally important, civilizations (and other societies) developed important mutual contacts, which could have wide impact in reshaping several societies at the same time. And civilizations responded to still wider forces, like migration, disease, or missionary activity, that could reshape the frameworks within which they operated. Civilizations in these wider contexts—as they changed through internal dynamics, mutual interactions, and responses to broader forces—form the basic patterns of world history for the past 5000 years.