

THE CAMBRIDGE WORLD HISTORY

*

VOLUME V

Volume V of *The Cambridge World History* uncovers the cross-cultural exchange and conquest, and the accompanying growth of regional and trans-regional states, religions, and economic systems, during the period 500 to 1500 CE. The volume begins by outlining a series of core issues and processes across the world, including human relations with nature, gender and family, social hierarchies, education, and warfare. Further essays examine maritime and land-based networks of long-distance trade and migration in agricultural and nomadic societies, and the transmission and exchange of cultural forms, scientific knowledge, technologies, and text-based religious systems that accompanied these. The final section surveys the development of centralized regional states and empires in both the eastern and western hemispheres. Together, these essays by an international team of leading authors show how processes furthering cultural, commercial, and political integration within and between various regions of the world made this millennium a “proto-global” era.

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THE CAMBRIDGE WORLD HISTORY

The Cambridge World History is an authoritative new overview of the dynamic field of world history. It covers the whole of human history, not simply history since the development of written records, in an expanded time frame that represents the latest thinking in world and global history. With over 200 essays, it is the most comprehensive account yet of the human past, and it draws on a broad international pool of leading academics from a wide range of scholarly disciplines. Reflecting the increasing awareness that world history can be examined through many different approaches and at varying geographic and chronological scales, each volume offers regional, topical, and comparative essays alongside case studies that provide depth of coverage to go with the breadth of vision that is the distinguishing characteristic of world history.

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THE CAMBRIDGE WORLD HISTORY

*

VOLUME V

Expanding Webs of Exchange and Conflict,
500 CE–1500 CE

*

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Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

In honor and memory of Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (1923–2010) and Sabine MacCormack (1941–2012)

Contents

List of figures xii
List of maps xiv
List of table xv
List of contributors xvi
Preface xix

I · Introduction I

BENJAMIN Z. KEDAR AND MERRY E. WIESNER-HANKS

PART I:
GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS

2 · Humans and the environment: tension and co-evolution 43
JOACHIM RADKAU

3 · Women, family, gender, and sexuality 70
SUSAN MOSHER STUARD

4 · Society: hierarchy and solidarity 94
SUSAN REYNOLDS

5 · Educational institutions 116
LINDA WALTON

6 · Warfare 145
CLIFFORD J. ROGERS

Contents

PART II:
 EURASIAN COMMONALITIES

- 7 · Courty cultures: western Europe, Byzantium, the Islamic world,
 India, China, and Japan 179
 PATRICK J. GEARY, DAUD ALI, PAUL S. ATKINS, MICHAEL COOPERSON,
 RITA COSTA GOMES, PAUL DUTTON, GERT MELVILLE, CLAUDIA RAPP,
 KARL-HEINZ SPIEB, STEPHEN WEST AND PAULINE YU
- 8 · The age of trans-regional reorientations: cultural crystallization
 and transformation in the tenth to thirteenth centuries 206
 BJÖRN WITTRÖCK

PART III:
 GROWING INTERACTIONS

- 9 · Trade and commerce across Afro-Eurasia 233
 RICHARD SMITH
- 10 · European and Mediterranean trade networks 257
 MICHEL BALARD
- 11 · Trading partners across the Indian Ocean: the making of
 maritime communities 287
 HIMANSHU PRABHA RAY
- 12 · Technology and innovation within expanding webs of exchange 309
 DAGMAR SCHÄFER AND MARCUS POPFLOW
- 13 · The transmission of science and philosophy 339
 CHARLES BURNETT
- 14 · Pastoral nomadic migrations and conquests 359
 ANATOLY M. KHAZANOV

PART IV:
 EXPANDING RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS

- 15 · The centrality of Islamic civilization 385
 MICHAEL COOK

Contents

16 · Christendom's regional systems 415
 MIRI RUBIN

17 · The spread of Buddhism 447
 TANSEN SEN

PART V:
 STATE FORMATIONS

18 · State formation and empire building 483
 JOHANN P. ARNASON

19 · State formation in China from the Sui through the Song dynasties 513
 RICHARD VON GLAHN

20 · The Mongol Empire and inter-civilizational exchange 534
 MICHAL BIRAN

21 · Byzantium 559
 JEAN-CLAUDE CHEYNET

22 · Early polities of the Western Sudan 586
 DAVID C. CONRAD

23 · Mesoamerican state formation in the Postclassic period 610
 MICHAEL E. SMITH

24 · State and religion in the Inca Empire 638
 SABINE MACCORMACK

25 · "Proto-globalization" and "Proto-glocalizations" in the Middle
 Millennium 665
 DIEGO OLSTEIN

Index 685

Figures

- 1.1 The Honkōji copy of the 1402 Korean Kangnido map of the world / Pictures From History / Bridgeman Images 3
- 1.2 Al-Idrīsī's world map, twelfth century (Bodleian Library, Ms. Pococke 375, fols. 3v–4a) 6
- 1.3 Pietro Vesconte's world map, c. 1321 (Bodleian Library, Ms. Tanner 190, fols. 203v–204r) 8
- 1.4 Giovanni Leardo's world map, 1448 (DEA Picture Library / Getty Images) 9
- 3.1 Prince Genji visiting his wife, from Genji Monogatari (The Tale of Genji) (The Art Archive / Alamy) 76
- 3.2 German family spinning, sixteenth century (Mary Evans Picture Library / Alamy) 78
- 5.1 Ruins of Buddhist university at Nalanda (photograph by Tansen Sen) 123
- 5.2 Elite boys enter a *calmecac*, from the Florentine Codex by Bernardino de Sahagun, c. 1540–85 (Ms palat. 218–220 Book IX. Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Florence, Italy / Bridgeman Images) 139
- 6.1 Bulghar warrior on a gold jug (or pitcher) from the Treasure of Nagyszentmiklós (Erich Lessing Culture & Fine Arts Archive) 148
- 6.2 Mongols and Japanese fight, in a scene from the Mōko Shūrai Ekotoba, a Japanese handscroll made between 1275 and 1293. / Pictures From History/ Bridgeman Images 168
- 6.3 The Battle of Avray in 1364, Master of Mary of Burgundy (fl. 1469–83) (Ms 659 f.271 r. Collection of the Earl of Leicester, Holkham Hall, Norfolk / Bridgeman Images) 173
- 7.1 Mahmud ibn Sebüktegin receives a robe of honour from the Caliph al-Qādir billāh in 1000, miniature from the '*Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*' of Rashīd al-Dīn, c. 1307 (vellum) (Ms Or 20 f.121r. Edinburgh University Library, Scotland. With kind permission of the University of Edinburgh / Bridgeman Images) 187
- 9.1 Bayon temple in Angkor, market scene (photograph by Benjamin Kedar) 240
- 12.1 Design for a Chinese water clock, by Su Song, 1088 CE (School of African and Oriental Studies, London, UK / Bridgeman Images) 325
- 12.2 Geometrical figures for construction, arches and man measuring the height of a tower (facsimile copy, pen & ink on paper), Villard de Honnecourt (fl. 1190–1235) (Ms.Fr.19093 fol.20v. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France / Giraudon / Bridgeman Images) 327

List of figures

- 15.1 Islamic coins (photographs by Michael Cook) 397
- 16.1 Ivory plaque with the Adoration of the Magi, Early Byzantine, early sixth century (©The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved) 423
- 16.2 The Holy Family, Joos van Cleve, c. 1485–1540/41, Antwerp (Metropolitan Museum of Art / © SCALA) 425
- 17.1 Buddhist figures, Longmen Caves, Henan Province (Private Collection © Leemage / Bridgeman Images) 456
- 17.2 Pensive Bodhisattva, mid seventh century, Korea (Metropolitan Museum of Art / © SCALA) 463
- 20.1 The Birth of the Prophet Muhammad, miniature from the '*Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*' of Rashīd al-Dīn, c. 1307 (vellum) (Ms Or 20 f.42r. Edinburgh University Library, Scotland. With kind permission of the University of Edinburgh / Bridgeman Images) 544
- 22.1 Illustration of Mansa Musa in detail from the Catalan Atlas, 1375 (vellum), Cresques Abraham (1325–87) (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France / Bridgeman Images) 601
- 23.1 Chronological outline for Postclassic Mesoamerica 617
- 23.2 Trends in Postclassic polities 629
- 24.1 Sacsayhuaman: Inca Ruins (Aivar Mikko / Alamy) 659

Maps

- 1.1 Eastern hemisphere, 500 CE 36
- 1.2 Eastern hemisphere, 1000 CE 37
- 1.3 Eastern hemisphere, 1500 CE 38
- 5.1 Universities in Europe 127
- 9.1 Major trade routes of Afro-Eurasia 1300 CE 234
- 10.1 European/Mediterranean trade in the thirteenth century 278
- 10.2 European/Mediterranean trade in the fifteenth century 280
- 11.1 Gujarat 289
- 14.1 Central Asia, c. 1000 CE 364
- 15.1 The Islamic world 388
- 16.1 Christianity in 406 CE 417
- 16.2 Spread of Christianity across Asia 439
- 17.1 The spread of Buddhism in Asia 449
- 17.2 Early Buddhist sites in Southeast Asia 459
- 17.3 The Three Kingdoms in Korea 461
- 19.1 Tang dynasty China 517
- 19.2 Xia, Liao and Song Empires 526
- 19.3 Southern Song, Xia, Jin and Dali 529
- 20.1 The Mongol conquests and the Four Khanates 536
- 21.1 Byzantine Empire at the time of Justinian, 555 CE 563
- 21.2 Byzantine Empire in the eleventh century 573
- 21.3 Byzantine Empire in 1350 CE 582
- 22.1 Ghana/Mali/Songhay 591
- 23.1 Maya sites 615
- 24.1 Inca expansion 652

Table

1.1 World population (in millions) by major regions, 500–1500 CE 19

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Preface

The Cambridge Histories have long presented authoritative multi-volume overviews of historical topics, with chapters written by specialists. The first of these, the Cambridge Modern History, planned by Lord Acton and appearing after his death from 1902 to 1912, had fourteen volumes and served as the model for those that followed, which included the seven-volume Cambridge Medieval History (1911–1936), the twelve-volume Cambridge Ancient History (1924–1939), the thirteen-volume Cambridge History of China (1978–2009), and more specialized multi-volume works on countries, religions, regions, events, themes, and genres. These works are designed, as the Cambridge History of China puts it, to be the “largest and most comprehensive” history in the English language of their topic, and, as the Cambridge History of Political Thought asserts, to cover “every major theme.”

The Cambridge World History both follows and breaks with the model set by its august predecessors. Presenting the “largest and most comprehensive” history of the world would take at least 300 volumes – and a hundred years – as would covering “every major theme.” Instead the series provides an overview of the dynamic field of world history in seven volumes over nine books. It covers all of human history, not simply that since the development of written records, in an expanded time frame that represents the newest thinking in world history. This broad time frame blurs the line between archaeology and history, and presents both as complementary approaches to the human past. The volume editors include archaeologists as well as historians, and have positions at universities in the United States, Britain, France, Australia, and Israel. The essays similarly draw on a broad author pool of historians, art historians, anthropologists, classicists, archaeologists, economists, sociologists, and area studies specialists, who come from universities in Australia, Britain, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. They include very senior scholars whose works have helped to form the field, and also mid-career and younger scholars whose research will continue to shape it in the future. Some of the authors are closely associated with the rise of world history as a distinct research and teaching field, while others describe what they do primarily as global history, transnational history, international history, or comparative history. (Several of the essays in Volume I trace the development of these overlapping, entangled, and at times competing fields.) Many authors are simply specialists on their topic who the editors thought could best explain this to a broader audience or reach beyond their comfort zones into territory that was new.

Preface

Reflecting the increasing awareness that world history can be examined through many different approaches and at varying geographic and chronological scales, each volume offers several types of essays, including regional, topical, and comparative ones, along with case studies that provide depth to go with the breadth of vision that is the distinguishing characteristic of world history. Volume I (Introducing World History [to 10,000 BCE]) introduces key frames of analysis that shape the making of world history across time periods, with essays on overarching approaches, methods, and themes. It then includes a group of essays on the Paleolithic, covering the 95 per cent of human history up to 10,000 BCE. From that point on, each volume covers a shorter time period than its predecessor, with slightly overlapping chronologies volume to volume to reflect the complex periodization of a truly global history. The editors chose the overlapping chronologies, and stayed away from traditional period titles (e.g. “classical” or “early modern”) intentionally to challenge standard periodization to some degree. The overlapping chronologies also allow each volume to highlight geographic disjunctures and imbalances, and the ways in which various areas influenced one another. Each of the volumes centers on a key theme or cluster of themes that the editors view as central to the period covered in the volume and also as essential to an understanding of world history as a whole.

Volume II (*A World with Agriculture, 12,000 BCE–500 CE*) begins with the Neolithic, but continues into later periods to explore the origins of agriculture and agricultural communities in various regions of the world, as well as to discuss issues associated with pastoralism and hunter-fisher-gatherer economies. It traces common developments in the more complex social structures and cultural forms that agriculture enabled, and then presents a series of regional overviews accompanied by detailed case studies from many different parts of the world.

Volume III (*Early Cities and Comparative History, 4000 BCE–1200 CE*) focuses on early cities as motors of change in human society. Through case studies of cities and comparative chapters that address common issues, it traces the creation and transmission of administrative and information technologies, the performance of rituals, the distribution of power, and the relationship of cities with their hinterlands. It has a broad and flexible chronology to capture the development of cities in various regions of the world and the transformation of some cities into imperial capitals.

Volume IV (*A World with States, Empires, and Networks, 1200 BCE–900 CE*) continues the analysis of processes associated with the creation of larger-scale political entities and networks of exchange, including those generally featured in accounts of the rise of “classical civilizations,” but with an expanded time frame that allows the inclusion of more areas of the world. It analyzes common social, economic, cultural, political, and technological developments, and includes chapters on slavery, religion, science, art, and gender. It then presents a series of regional overviews, each accompanied by a case study or two examining one smaller geographic area or topic within that region in greater depth.

Volume V (*Expanding Webs of Exchange and Conquest, 500 CE–1500 CE*) highlights the growing networks of trade and cross-cultural interaction that were a hallmark of the millennium covered in the volume, including the expansion of text-based religions and

Preface

the transmission of science, philosophy, and technology. It explores social structures, cultural institutions, and significant themes such as the environment, warfare, education, the family, and courtly cultures on both a global and Eurasian scale, and continues the examination of state formation begun in Volume IV with chapters on politics and empires in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

The first five volumes each appear in a single book, but the last two are double volumes covering the periods conventionally known as the early modern and modern, an organization signaling the increasing complexity of an ever more globalized world in the last half-millennium, as well as the expanding base of source materials and existing historical analyses for these more recent eras. Volume VI (*The Construction of a Global World, 1400–1800 CE*) traces the increasing biological, commercial, and cultural exchanges of the period, and explores regional and trans-regional political, cultural, and intellectual developments. The first book within this volume, “Foundations,” focuses on global matrices that allowed this increasingly interdependent world to be created, including the environment, technology, and disease; crossroads and macro-regions such as the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, and Southeast Asia in which connections were especially intense; and large-scale political formations, particularly maritime and land-based empires such as Russia, the Islamic empires, and the Iberian empires that stretched across continents and seas. The second book within this volume, “Patterns of Change,” examines global and regional migrations and encounters, and the economic, social, cultural, and institutional structures that both shaped and were shaped by these, including trade networks, law, commodity flows, production processes, and religious systems.

Volume VII (*Production, Destruction, and Connection, 1750–Present*) examines the uneven transition to a world with fossil fuels and an exploding human population that has grown ever more interactive through processes of globalization. The first book within this double volume, “Structures, Spaces, and Boundary Making,” discusses the material situations within which our crowded world has developed, including the environment, agriculture, technology, energy, and disease; the political movements that have shaped it, such as nationalism, imperialism, decolonization, and communism; and some of its key regions. The second book, “Shared Transformations?”, explores topics that have been considered in earlier volumes, including the family, urbanization, migration, religion, and science, along with some that only emerge as global phenomena in this era, such as sports, music, and the automobile, as well as specific moments of transition, including the Cold War and 1989.

Taken together, the volumes contain about 200 essays, which means the *Cambridge World History* is comprehensive, but certainly not exhaustive. Each volume editor has made difficult choices about what to include and what to leave out, a problem for all world histories since those of Herodotus and Sima Qian more than two millennia ago. Each volume is arranged in the way that the volume editor or editors decided is most appropriate for the period, so that organizational schema differ slightly from volume to volume. Given the overlapping chronologies, certain topics are covered in several different volumes because they are important for understanding the historical processes at the heart of each of these, and because we as editors decided that viewing key developments from multiple perspectives is particularly appropriate for world history.

Preface

As with other *Cambridge Histories*, the essays are relatively lightly footnoted, and include a short list of further readings, the first step for readers who want to delve deeper into the field. In contrast to other *Cambridge Histories*, all volumes are being published at the same time, for the leisurely pace of the print world that allowed publication over several decades does not fit with twenty-first-century digital demands.

In other ways as well, the *Cambridge World History* reflects the time in which it has been conceptualized and produced, just as the *Cambridge Modern History* did. Lord Acton envisioned his work, and Cambridge University Press described it, as “a history of the world,” although in only a handful of chapters out of several hundred were the principal actors individuals, groups, or polities outside of Europe and North America. This is not surprising, although the identical self-description of the *New Cambridge Modern History* (1957–79), with a similar balance of topics, might be a bit more so. The fact that in 1957 – and even in 1979 – Europe would be understood as “the world” and as the source of all that was modern highlights the power and longevity of the perspective we have since come to call “Eurocentric.” (In other languages, there are perspectives on world history that are similarly centered on the regions in which they have been produced.) The continued focus on Europe in the mid-twentieth century also highlights the youth of the fields of world and global history, in which the conferences, professional societies, journals, and other markers of an up-and-coming field have primarily emerged since the 1980s, and some only within the last decade. The *Journal of World History*, for example, was first published in 1990, the *Journal of Global History* in 2005, and *New Global Studies* in 2007.

World and global history have developed in an era of intense self-reflection in all academic disciplines, when no term can be used unselfconsciously and every category must be complicated. Worries about inclusion and exclusion, about diversity and multi-voice, are standard practice in sub-fields of history and related disciplines that have grown up in this atmosphere. Thus as we editors sought topics that would give us a balance between the traditional focus in world history on large-scale political and economic processes carried out by governments and commercial elites and newer concerns with cultural forms, representation, and meaning, we also sought to include topics that have been important in different national historiographies. We also attempted to find authors who would provide geographic balance along with a balance between older and younger voices. Although the author pool is decidedly broader geographically – and more balanced in terms of gender – than it was in either of the *Cambridge Modern Histories*, it is not as global as we had hoped. Contemporary world and global history is overwhelmingly Anglophone, and, given the scholarly diaspora, disproportionately institutionally situated in the United States and the United Kingdom. Along with other disparities in our contemporary world, this disproportion is, of course, the result of the developments traced in this series, though the authors might disagree about which volume holds the key to its origins, or whether one should spend much time searching for origins at all.

My hopes for the series are not as sweeping as Lord Acton’s were for his, but fit with those of Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, the editors of the two-volume *Cambridge Economic History of India* (1982). In the preface to their work, they comment: “We only dare to hope that our collaborative effort will stimulate discussion and help create new

Preface

knowledge which may replace before many years the information and analysis offered in this volume.” In a field as vibrant as world and global history, I have no doubts that such new transformative knowledge will emerge quickly, but hope this series will provide an entrée to the field, and a useful overview of its state in the early twenty-first-century.

MERRY E. WIESNER-HANKS