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BOOK REVIEWS

A GRAND TOUR OF MEGALOPOLEIS

F. Roy Willis. *World Civilizations*. 2 vols. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1982. \$22.50.

World Civilizations, a 2-volume textbook by F. Roy Willis, is intended for use in a college-level two-semester introductory world history course. The volumes begin with the Paleolithic age and end in 1981. To give the volumes structure and a theme, Willis focuses on 20 world cities, each at the height of its cultural achievement. This approach has been used a number of times before in monographs on individual cities. Willis discusses Sumerian and Assyrian cities and Babylon; the cities of the Indus valley; Athens at the time of Pericles; Republican and Imperial Rome; Pataliputra under the Mauryas; Chang'an; Justinian's Constantinople; Muslim Baghdad, Toledo, and Córdoba; Nara, Kyoto, and Edo in Japan; the cities of Africa between 1000 and 1800; Venice, Florence, Calvin's Geneva, medieval and 18th century Paris, Lisbon, Madrid; Tenochtitlán and Mexico City (but not Chan Chan or Cuzco, nor Teotihuacán or Mont Alban); Ming Peking; Muslim Delhi and Agra; Rembrandt's Amsterdam; Tudor London; Quaker Philadelphia; St. Petersburg; cities of the American revolution; Manchester; Metternich's Vienna; Calcutta; Bangkok (not Malacca); Sydney; Timbuctu; Canton, Shanghai; Victorian London; Imperial Berlin; Communist Moscow; and New York City, more or less in that order. When an aspect of world history cannot be presented through focus on a single city, the books' urban focus is more generalized.

The textbook emphasizes high culture and the institutions that shape lifestyles and values—hence the word “civilizations” in the title. The chapter on Athens deals with Greek philosophy and drama; the one on Ch'ang-an, with Chinese painting and poetry; later, schools of Chinese philosophy are presented and various Indian religions. Other great religions are explained. In the chapter on Byzantine Constantinople, law codes, literature, historical writing, and poetry are discussed. There is a general discussion of baroque style. Shakespeare, Descartes, Voltaire, Copernicus, Galileo, the physiocrats, and French encyclopedists are all presented. So are various forms of 19th century radicalism. In a chapter on Metternich's Vienna, much is said about music as well as politics. In the chapter on Kaiser Bill's Berlin, Willis discusses Richard Wagner, Berlin drama, and German poetry and painting, as well as the situations that led to World War I. There is a survey of science, technology, literature, music and painting in Europe at the end of the 19th century. George Orwell, existentialism, and Arab nationalism are among the many 20th century topics. A book with such coverage cannot be faulted for its omissions.

Within the guidelines it sets for itself, this is an admirable textbook:

lucid, urbane, with maps, charts, numerous illustrations, and excerpts of poetry that are integral with the text. There are city street maps. For key cities, principal buildings are listed, figures are presented on the city's area and population. There is a capsule summary of the government and economic base, religion, forms of public entertainment, and noteworthy intellectual leaders of each great city. Willis asks how the cultural and scientific achievements of a city reflect its citizens' conceptions of human nature, God, and beauty.

Willis is not a civilizationist in the ISCSC sense of the word. ISCSC members would doubtless include some ancient civilizations Willis omits, and would probably not characterize the various epochs of European cultural history as separate civilizations.

Books like this one often assume that a "peak" regime is one that has expanded its spatial dominance to the maximum so that its rulers and elites have surplus income for expenditure on buildings, luxuries and the arts. The word "great" turns out to be synonymous with powerful and rich. In the realm of culture, this leaves out such popular cultural artifacts as Shaker furniture or Appalachian quilts, and it has no room for Emily Dickinson. The defect of Willis' focus on high culture is that it fails to acknowledge that poverty is not always merely deprivation; it sometimes has valuable cultural qualities of its own.

When the subject is the style of cities, Willis fails to note the difference between when a particular style is conceptualized and when it is fully applied. Sometimes this involves a time lapse of several hundred years. The baroque style of the 17th century was not fully manifest in Paris until mid 19th century. The particulars of the early 19th century plan for Washington, D.C. have still not been fully applied. There are cycles of revival of a particular style. Willis does not acknowledge this. Since buildings persist, people of one era are living with the style of quite different eras.

Willis mentions in his introduction that he feels it is important to examine the impact of population growth, the occupational structure of a city at varying stages in this development, how great cities produced and spent their wealth, what social relation and family structure were in a city, its larger political system, and its environmental impact. Willis is aware of the perspectives of the various social sciences, but he is by and large a conventional historian. He does not ask the kinds of questions archaeologists and anthropologists ask about civilizations and cities. He does not apply geographers' theories. He is no Cliometrician, and he does not apply systems analysis. The assumption appears to be that if students are required to take one general education course it should introduce them to the peaks of high culture, something like the "Grand" Tour of Europe upper class British and Americans used to take.

To my taste this textbook does not sufficiently spell out the unanswered questions. It gives no sense of controversy among scholars. It is so smooth and polished, it does not sufficiently convey to students a sense that knowledge about the past is in a constant state of revision,

that pursuit of knowledge demands curiosity and the courage to think differently. It treats the past like a collection of family heirlooms. There is little sense of a world yet to be made. The student is expected to be an appreciator, not entrepreneurial.

There are excellent essays at the end of each chapter giving suggestions for further reading, or viewing, or musical listening. There is little on varying methods of analysis or the problems of evidence. The book does not encourage students to approach the past critically but rather deferentially. If students have only one course in common in their college years, is this attitude of deference what we want to be taken as the mark of an educated person? For myself, I say no.

Corinne Lathrop Gilb

CIVILIZATIONAL ARTICLES OF A NEW WORLD SPECIALIST

Gordon Randolph Willey. *New World Archaeology and Culture History. Collected Essays and Articles*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990.

This book is a collection of articles published from 1945 to 1986, arranged by subject, with added discussions before each group of articles giving Willey's present opinion on that subject. The age of some of these articles makes them very debatable reference sources, but even the older articles do provide one source of information that can be useful both to outsiders and to specialists; Ideas which now seem dated may turn out only to be unfashionable. If they are not precisely correct, they may still be the inspiration for new approaches to stubborn problems, and such collections as this one thereby become useful outside the normal relevance of such articles. The book is not complete (for example, most of Willey's articles about the Maya were published elsewhere), and it says next to nothing about the areas north of the Rio Grande and very little about those east and south of the Inca Empire. Otherwise, the breadth of coverage is about as much as one could ask for, from the high civilizations of Mesoamerica and Peru to the "intermediate" areas of Central America and the islands, from standard archaeological discussions to points of religion and ideology seldom seen on a library's archaeology shelves. Willey's point of view, stated on the first page of text, is also of direct relevance to this Society's purposes:

I am inclined to think that one either basically approves or disapproves of comparative analyses of the developmental trajectories of civilizations. I have always counted myself among the "approvers"; and, as the first essay of this group indicates, I seem to have been of this turn of mind early in my career.

One may suggest that the Americas are a natural laboratory for the comparative-civilizationist, much more so than any parts of the Old World, because of one straightforward study aid. There is a base line for