

HISTORY OF HUMANITY

Scientific and Cultural Development

Volume IV

From the Seventh to the Sixteenth Century

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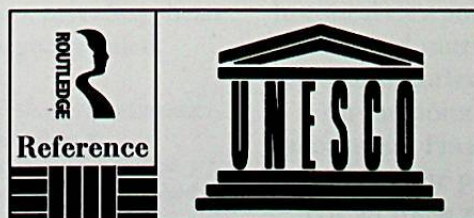
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History of Humanity

Scientific and Cultural Development

- Volume I *Prehistory and the Beginnings of Civilization*
ISBN 92-3-102810-3 (UNESCO)
ISBN 0-415-09305-8 (Routledge)
- Volume II *From the Third Millennium to the Seventh Century BC*
ISBN 92-3-102811-1 (UNESCO)
ISBN 0-415-09306-6 (Routledge)
- Volume III *From the Seventh Century BC to the Seventh Century AD*
ISBN 92-3-102812-X (UNESCO)
ISBN 0-415-09307-4 (Routledge)
- Volume IV *From the Seventh to the Sixteenth Century*
ISBN 92-3-102813-8 (UNESCO)
ISBN 0-415-09308-2 (Routledge)
- Volume V *From the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*
ISBN 92-3-102814-6 (UNESCO)
ISBN 0-415-09309-0 (Routledge)
- Volume VI *The Nineteenth Century*
ISBN 92-3-102815-4 (UNESCO)
ISBN 0-415-09310-4 (Routledge)
- Volume VII *The Twentieth Century*
ISBN 92-3-102816-2 (UNESCO)
ISBN 0-415-09311-2 (Routledge)

In memory of Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro,
President of the first International Commission
for a Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind
(1952-1969) and of the present Commission from
1979 to 1982

The publication of this volume of *History of
Humanity* has been made possible thanks to
the generous support of the World Islamic
Call Society

First published in 2000
by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
7 Place de Fontenoy, 75332 Paris 07 SP
and

Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

© UNESCO 2000

Typeset by Tek-Art, Croydon, Surrey
Printed in Great Britain by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

☺ Printed on acid-free paper

Index compiled by Leigh Priest

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The International Commission for the History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind bears intellectual and scientific responsibility for the preparation of this new edition.

Generic names containing the word 'man' should be understood to refer to both sexes of the species.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

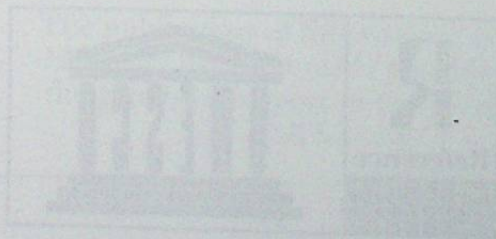
A catalogue record for this book is available on request

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been applied for

ISBN 92-3-102813-8 (UNESCO)

ISBN 0-415-09308-2 (Routledge)



PREFACE

by the
Director-General of UNESCO

'Our civilization is the first to have for its past the past of the world, our history is the first to be world history.'¹ Now that we have reached the year 2000, the phenomenon described over fifty years ago by Jan Huizinga becomes an ever more sensible reality. In a bounded and increasingly interconnected world, we necessarily find ourselves a part of that emerging global civilization that constitutes the matrix of our collective destinies.

The years immediately following the Dutch historian's assertion were indeed to illustrate, and in the most horrific manner, the interdependence of the world community. The planet on which millions of humans wished for nothing more than to live in peace and well-being presented the unnatural spectacle of a world at war. Land, sea and air routes were patrolled day and night by armadas venting fury on all that was most precious and vital to the inhabitants. The dreadful hurt that the populations sustained, physically and morally, dispelled *in perpetuum* a number of illusions and faced humanity with a stark choice – that of being, in the words of Albert Einstein, 'one or none'.

Thenceforth the grave danger attendant on inter-racial, and consequently inter-cultural, ignorance was conspicuous to thinking minds. A flawed consciousness of our common humanity must be incompatible with the survival of a world armed with knowledge of such awesome potential. Clearly the only course of action, the only way forward, lay in building bridges between peoples, in forging a resilient awareness of the unity inherent in human diversity.

Such was the background to UNESCO's decision in 1947 to produce a truly universal work of international co-operation that would provide 'a wider understanding of the scientific and cultural aspects of the history of mankind and of the mutual interdependence of peoples and cultures and of their contributions to the common heritage'.² That initiative, which was one of UNESCO's earliest projects, sprang from the Organization's fundamental principles and was widely acclaimed, although not a few saw in it a Sisyphean undertaking at which past attempts had signally failed.

Three years later, in 1950, the first International Commission for a History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind began the task of fashioning a history that – in the words of René Maheu – would 'present to man the sum total of his memories as a coherent whole'. As the distinguished international team of collaborators took shape and as the first results of its work began to appear in the Commission's review the *Journal of World History*, it became clear that new ground was being broken in pursuit of this ambitious goal. When some fifteen years later the first edition began to appear in six languages, the reception accorded to the work confirmed – some inevitable reservations apart – the success of this 'first attempt to compose a universal history of the human mind from the varying stand-points of memory and thought that characterize the different contemporary cultures'.

The compilers of the first edition of the *History of Mankind* were conscious that all historiography is 'work in progress', that in the continuous flux of history nothing is fixed, neither facts nor interpretations. In 1969, Paulo de Berrêdo Carneiro declared: 'The day will come when what we have written . . . will, in its turn, have to be replaced. I like to think that our successors will attend to this, and that a revised edition of the work we have begun may be published at the dawn of a new millennium.'

That day is now with us. The General Conference of UNESCO decided in 1978 that the work should be revised, and two years later the Second International Commission met to formulate its aims.

Much has changed since the publication of the first edition. In recent years, the historical sciences have been enriched by contributions from many disciplines, giving rise to new methods of investigation and bringing to light new facts, particularly in the realm of 'prehistory'. At the same time, a heightened awareness of cultural identity has intensified the demand for a corresponding decentralization of historical viewpoints and interpretations. UNESCO has both heeded and nurtured this trend by undertaking a series of regional histories, one of which – *General History of Africa*³ – is on the point of completion, while others are in active preparation. Finally, history itself has moved on, altering in the process the perspectives from which the past is viewed.

For all these reasons and to take account of some valid criticisms of the original version, it was decided that the new

¹ HUIZINGA, J. 1936. A Definition of the Concept of History. In: KLIBANSKY, R.; PATON, H. J. (eds), *Philosophy and History*. Oxford. p. 8.

² UNESCO. 1947. *General Conference; Second Session*. Paris. Resolution 5.7.

³ The complete version of *General History of Africa* has been published in Arabic, English and French, and the abridged version in English and French.

edition of the History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Humanity, to be called simply the *History of Humanity*, should not be merely a revision but rather a radical recasting of its predecessor. Its goal – to provide an account of the history of humanity in terms of its varied cultural and scientific achievements – remains unchanged, but the view it offers of its subject is – it is hoped – more detailed, more diverse and broader in scope.

Twenty years after the launching of the project, it is my privilege to present this new *History*, which has built upon and extended the pioneering work of those dedicated scholars responsible for the first edition. I should like to

express my admiration and deep gratitude to the members of the Second International Commission and to the some 450 distinguished specialists from all geocultural backgrounds who have contributed to this historic undertaking. Readers will, I feel sure, make known their own views in the years to come. In committing this work to their scrutiny, the International Commission – and, through it, UNESCO – is taking the final step in the task entrusted to it by the community of Member States represented at the General Conference. Each of us, I am sure, stands to benefit from this concerted testimony to our common past and act of faith in our shared future.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Every effort has been made to achieve consistency in the transliteration of non-western writing systems but this has not proved possible in every case.