

REVIEWS

Jerry J. Bentley. *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Conflicts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Pp. xi, 220. Cloth, \$35.00; paper, \$14.95.

In the last generation or so, any number of new approaches to the study of history—from Cliometrics to gender—have shown promise of new visions and new understanding. One of the richest of these new approaches is world history, dating in its modern incarnation to the 1960s. Today, the efforts of world historians are focused in the World History Association, with its newsletter and journal. Jerry Bentley, the author of *Old World Encounters*, is editor of that WHA journal, the *Journal of World History*. He is in the forefront of this new intellectual pursuit, in which a host of world historians are trying to put aside the distorting lens of traditional Eurocentrism (or even traditional Sinocentrism) and replace it with a truly global understanding.

In this monograph, Bentley looks at cross-cultural contacts and exchanges before Columbus. In actual practice, his study is of religious exchanges, with only passing attention going to technology, institutions, or art. Bentley further limits his study to the periods of time for which there are substantial written sources.

He focuses on large-scale religious conversions, which he classifies under three rubrics. First is conversion by voluntary association, that is, individuals choosing to change. Second is conversion brought about by political, social, or economic pressure. Third is conversion by assimilation, when a minority group slips into a majority's beliefs. No matter which form of conversion occurred, it was always accompanied by some degree of syncretism; no conversion took place without the convert retaining some elements of previous beliefs.

Bentley looks at four periods. First was the time of the ancient silk roads from 200 B.C.E. to 400 C.E. The decline of the Roman and Han Empires ended this period, and in about 600 the large imperial states of the Tang, Abbasid, and Carolingian Empires and the Indian Ocean's sea lanes tied the Eurasian landmass together once again. This second period blended into a new one after 1000, a period driven less by mercantile impulses than by the political and military expansion of the Mongols and Turks. The terrible plague of the Black Death disrupted that system, but by 1400 new technologies drove a reconstitution of the trade system.

In the context of these commercial and cultural contacts, Bentley looks at how the great world religions (and their heresies and offshoots) spread and gathered converts. He clearly recognizes, but may underestimate, the importance of the need for a common code of ethics and morality to carrying out long-distance trade. Bentley uses a wide range of sources, but he wears his learning easily, so that even beginning undergraduates can profit from this book.

University of North Texas

Bullitt Lowry

J. Kelley Sowards, ed. *Makers of World History.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. Volume I: Pp. xii, 302. Volume II: Pp. xii, 334. Each volume \$19.35.

Among Western Civ teachers, J. Kelley Sowards has been known for a long time as a provider of useful biographical supplements for basic textbooks. Now, as many of us adapt to the demands of *World Civ*, we have his *Makers of World History* to perform the same service. In both the Western and World courses, Sowards seems to assign a large role to "great men" and "great women" in the generation of historical forces. This runs against strong trends in basic

textbook publishing and other elements of the historical profession that favor "non-elitist social history" and guide readers' attention toward dynamic processes, groups, and categories. However, Sowards's selections do restore the universal concept of personal identity to college courses guided by texts crowded with lists, time-lines, and abstract phrases. This is particularly important in the World History courses, where even the best-known persons, places, and events are just foreign-sounding words to many students.

Makers of World History is a two-volume paperback that breaks around 1500. The volumes are the same in format and quality. Each volume contains fourteen 20-page sections, each of which presents the career of a historically important person through an autobiographical account or contemporary biography, an "orthodox" or influential interpretation, and a recent reinterpretation, plus a bibliographical essay for follow-up reading assignments. The persons selected are chosen because of their influence in their own and subsequent times and the inherent interest of their personalities. The first volume covers Akhenaton, The Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Alexander the Great, Asoka, Julius Caesar, Muhammad, Murasaki Shikibu, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Leonardo da Vinci, Martin Luther, Montezuma, and Suleiman the Magnificent. The second volume covers Akbar, Tokugawa Ieyasu Shogun, Shah 'Abbas I, Peter the Great, Napoleon, Shaka Zulu, Cecil Rhodes, V.I. Lenin, Adolf Hitler, Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, Mao Tse-tung (Zedong), Jomo Kenyatta, and Margaret Thatcher. Not all of these are recognized major causative figures in world history, and each of us may have persons we would prefer to see on the list, but almost all of these characters are prominent enough to qualify. They are chosen to supplement the organization of most world history texts and represent most of the important eras in all of the continents except Australia and Antarctica. As presented by Sowards's excerpts, all of the characters are fascinating persons.

These are not *the* most important 28 people in world history and the book could not be the basic text of a true World Civ course. The chapters in Sowards can be used to focus on a manageable number of themes in a course with a comprehensive textbook that may seem to lead one in all directions. These themes involve not only personalities but historical interpretations of them. The book deals with who interpreted whom in what way and why, so the names of the authors of each excerpt presented are important. But there are 84 excerpts and nearly that number of authors to keep straight and relate to the textbook and class notes. This will challenge abler students and cause others to seek help or lose interest. Sowards offers some features intended to help students use the book. He includes italicized introductory statements for each chapter and each excerpt and concludes each chapter with a set of "review and study questions." There is danger in this. As a rule, most American college students are familiar with study-guide questions at the end of each chapter in high school textbooks. If these questions are not very skillfully drawn or administered they lead students to start with the questions and "hunt and pick" through the chapters to find answers rather than to read in an orderly way for knowledge. We have to assume that a majority of college freshmen will approach study-guide questions with this in mind. Fortunately, Sowards's introductions and study questions are indeed well designed to provoke thought and to reward careful study of the excerpts. However, their message will reach only those students capable of independent analysis and willing to discover relationships between disparate texts where the best results are only judgments requiring substantiation and there are no pat "answers."

The book has other attractive features that can be used to lead students further into the intellectual benefits of historical study. The "suggestions for further reading" are quite sophisticated and should be made available in advanced courses as well as in introductory surveys. They discuss historiographic issues beyond the themes of the chapters, use periodical as well as book references, and suggest possible routes of further investigation. Departments planning "senior seminars" or other historical methods courses might profitably adopt *Makers*

of *World History*. Indeed, enterprising graduate students could impress comprehensive examiners by inserting bibliographical data from Sowards into their orals and writings.

Back to students in introductory courses, would *Makers of World History* combined with one of the 800-page, multi-faceted, World Civ textbooks be too heavy for entry-level college students? If it were just piled on top of other assignments without being integrated into daily and weekly instruction, yes. Mediocre students cannot handle it without clear direction from instructors and abler students will learn what they can of the data and consider their task accomplished until instructors lead them into higher levels of interpretation. Adoption of this book will entail hard work for all, but it will be worth it.

Georgia State University

Gerald H. Davis

Edmund Burke III, ed. *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993. Pp. xi, 400. Cloth, \$50.00; paper, \$16.00.

Charles D. Smith. *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. 2nd edition. Pp. xiii, 343. Cloth, \$45.00.

Both of these books deal with the theme of struggle in Middle Eastern society. The volume edited by Edmund Burke, a professor of history at the University of California, Santa Cruz, presents 24 short biographies, by 27 authors, of individuals struggling to survive the wide variety of economic, social, and political conditions of the modern Middle East. Charles Smith, a history professor at San Diego State University, focuses on the struggles between and among the Jewish and Arab populations of Palestine since ancient time.

Burke's goal is to encourage a rethinking of 19-20th century Middle Eastern history from the perspective of non-elites or ordinary people. In this "bottom up" approach, Burke presents both men and women working as peasants, weavers, labor organizers, domestics, and several other occupations (including a slave) residing in the countryside, village, and city from Morocco to Afghanistan and Turkey to Arabia. Burke begins with an introduction in which he argues the need for what he calls social biography and provides the historical context for the studies to follow. The book is then divided into three sections, each including eight biographies. Section one, "Precolonial Lives," examines the struggle against the encroachments of the world economy and Westernization in the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Morocco to World War I. "The Colonial Experience" deals with different responses, ranging from military resistance to cooperation, to European imperialism after WW I. The final section, "Contemporary Lives," treats the new set of struggles brought about by nationalism, independence, and economic development in the post-WW II era.

While one might quibble about how ordinary or non-elite individuals such as the Tunisian labor leader Muhammad Ali might be, Burke has collected an interesting and diverse group of biographies. Julia Clancy-Smith's account of Zaynab bint Shaykh Muhammad ("The Shaykh and His Daughter") is illustrative. Smith's description of Zaynab's efforts to resist French imperialism in Algeria through leadership of her father's *zawiya* exemplifies the kind of activity by a non-elite that is all too often ignored not just in general histories of the Middle East but also in more specialized works on North Africa and Algeria. The book is highly recommended as a supplement to a standard text in modern Middle Eastern courses.

Charles Smith's *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* is a more traditional history of the struggle between Palestinians and Israelis. Smith's goal is to provide a college text that places the struggle in its historical context while striking a balance between the conflicting interests.