How to Use this Book

The atlas consists of 49 chronologically organized political maps, each followed by a timeline, together with six more specialized maps displaying world religious, writing systems, trade routes or migrations at a particular date. All maps are somewhat stylized to give graphic emphasis to salient features. For any given year the reader may like to study the political map with its introductory text, noting for instance how the geographical extent of more complex societies has increased from the previous map. The timeline on the following two pages then yields information on the specific events and developments in the world’s cultural evolution during the year, decades or centuries leading up to the highlighted year in question. Each timeline is illustrated with works of art and monuments from that era. Further background information about particular peoples, cultures and nations shown on the maps or mentioned in the introductory texts and timelines can be found in the reference section at the end of the book.

AD 200

The first century ad saw the world at peace. India, the great Asian state had already adopted Buddhism, which had been spread from the Ganges valley by Alexander the Great. The Roman Empire was in the process of expansion, having just annexed Britain. The Chinese Empire, the world’s greatest military power, had already begun to expand its influence into Central Asia.

The conquest of the Islamic world by Genghis Khan in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had brought together under a single flag all the peoples of the steppes of Central Asia. The Muslim world was expanding to the west and the south, but its expansion was checked by the power of the Christian states in Europe. The Islamic world was the first to develop a printing press and it was the last to develop a state organized on the Christian model. The Islamic world was the first to reach the modern age.