

Atlas of the Year 1000

We badly need more "wide history" as developed in this remarkable work by John Man. Rather than go linear, Man goes wide with a view of dispersed cultures interacting at one time—in this case in the year 1000. He shows what's happening during this "year" in each region of the planet (say, Tibet, Oceania, South America) and how events then resonate across the globe. The first millennium was the first era when most of the world was settled, and the first time immigration and travel created a robust communication network. Globalism, it turns out, was a medieval event. The picture I got from this book of diagrams was of a world far more sophisticated in its reach and depth than I knew.

—KK



It is often said that the year 1000 has no 'real' importance, that it acquires significance only from its zeroes, from our determination to read significance into birthdays and big numbers. Far from it: the time has a real historical significance, rooted in the way human society developed, from scattered diversity to today's 'one world.'

The significance is this: by pure coincidence, the year 1000, or thereabouts, marked the first time in human history that it was possible to pass an object, or a message, right around the world.

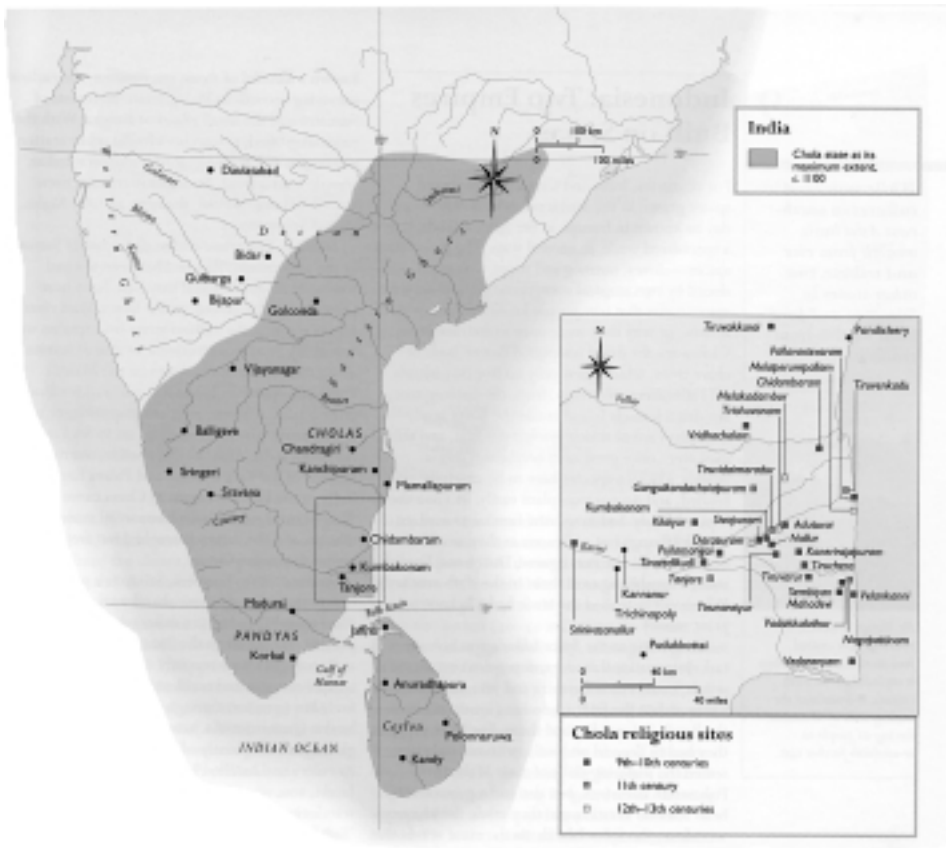
This is very different from history as written in Europe, China or the Islamic world, where the story of the past is in large measure rooted in human character—history as narrative. In the American drama, this element is missing. This section of the *Atlas*, like other sections on nonliterate cultures, necessarily has a wide focus. There are few incidents, few individuals—in all of North America around 1000 there was no native American whose name has survived.

Atlas of the Year 1000

John Man
1999, 144 pages
\$26
Harvard University Press

India: Fleeting Power, Enduring Glory

The Chola dynasty sprang from the rice-rich plain of the River Kaceri, today's Tamil Nadu. They had ruled here as minor chieftains for 800 years when, in the middle of the 9th century, they emerged as heads of a small independent state.



The Year 1000

What Life Was Like at the Turn of the First Millennium

A readable chronicle of what ordinary life felt like 1,000 years ago, in England.

—KK

It is a commonplace that slavery made up the basis of life in the classical world, but it is sometimes assumed that slavery came to an end with the fall of Rome. In fact, the Germanic tribes who conquered Rome captured, kept, and traded slaves as energetically as the Romans did—as indeed did the Arab conquerors of the Mediterranean. The purpose of war from the fifth to the tenth centuries was as much to capture bodies as it was to capture land, and the tribes of central Germany enjoyed particular success raiding their Slavic neighbors. If you purchased a bondservant in Europe in the centuries leading up to the year 1000, the chances were that he or she was a "Slav"—hence the word "slave."

Slavery still exists today in a few corners of the world, and from the security of our own freedom, we find the concept degrading and inhuman. But in the year 1000 very few people were free in the sense that we understand the word today. Almost everyone was beholden to someone more powerful than themselves, and the men and women who had surrendered themselves into bondage lived in conditions that were little different to those of any other member of the labouring classes.

There was no spinach. This did not appear in European gardens until spinach seeds were brought back from the Crusades in the twelfth century. Broccoli, cauliflower, runner beans, and brussels sprouts were all developed in later centuries by subsequent generations of horticulturalists. Nor were there any potatoes or tomatoes. Europe had to wait five centuries for those, until the exploration of the Americas, and though the recipe books describe warm possets and herbal infusions, there were none of the still-to-be-imported stimulants—tea, coffee, or chocolate.

The Year 1000

What Life Was Like at the Turn of the First Millennium

Robert Lacey and Danny Danziger
1999, 230 pages
\$23
Little, Brown

