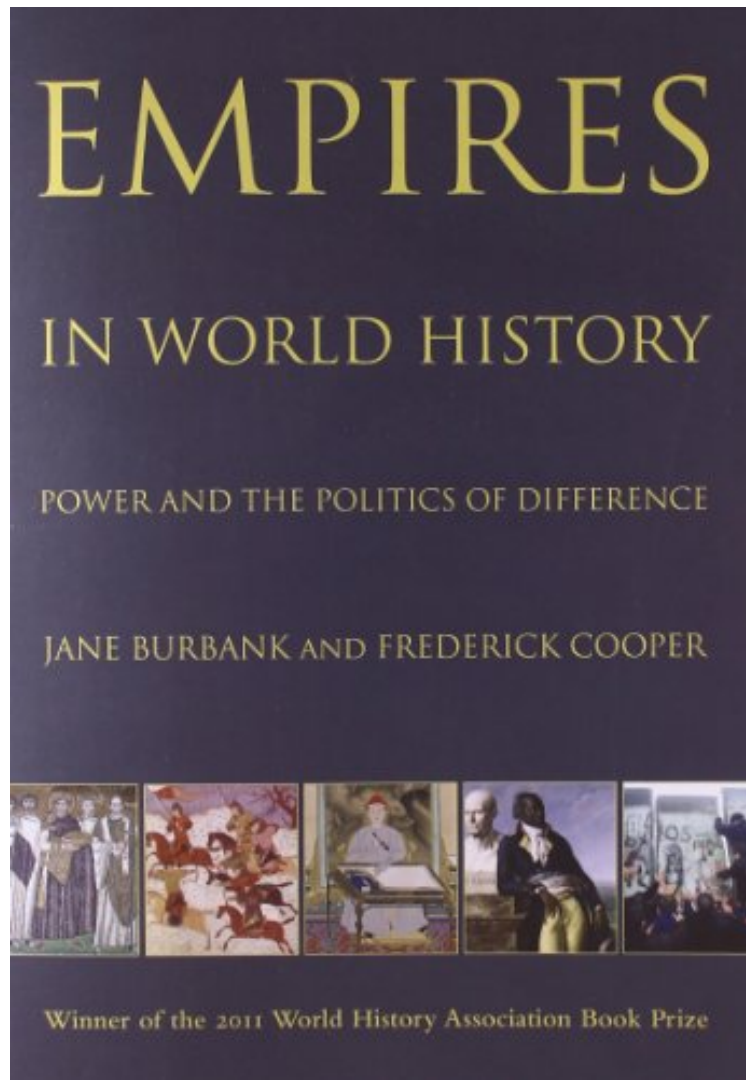


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Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference

Jane Burbank, Frederick Cooper

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Jane Burbank, Frederick Cooper : Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference:

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Empires and Power in World History By Shawn M. Warsawick Published in 2010, this award winning book is co-written by Jane Burbank, professor of Russian and Slavic Studies at New York University (Ph.D. Harvard 1981) and Frederick Cooper, a specialist in African history who is also currently at New York University (Ph.D. Yale 1974). In it the authors argue that, while today we see empires as passé and abnormal, the historical reality is that it is the nation-state that is a modern anomaly and empire is the most

common political form throughout world history. The book is loosely divided into two halves, with the first half setting up the theoretical framework the authors will use and focusing mostly on empires prior to the modern period (chapters six and seven deal with the early portion of what is traditionally seen as the modern era). Discussed in the first chapter, the conceptual framework is based on the idea that empires maintain distinction and modes of hierarchy as they incorporate new peoples. To prove their argument the authors use five themes: differences within empires (and how they deal with them); Imperial intermediaries (sent out to take charge of new territories); Imperial intersections (the relationship between and among empires); Imperial imaginaries (i.e. imperial context); and repertoires of power (empire, according to the authors, is an ambiguous type of state which can and often does redefine its allocation of power depending on the situation). The major criticism with this work is that while the authors have big ideas and patterns, these patterns are based on specific locations and interactions, thus fall apart when applied to locations outside of those chosen by the authors. The second criticism is that the authors do make mistakes when dealing with empires outside of their own areas. An example is when they suggest the Byzantine empire had an army of over 600,000 men. Modern scholars put the number at half of this, and this mistake makes one wonder if there were others in the book when dealing with areas outside of the author's expertise. The strengths of this book lay in its weakness: the big ideas and framework lend themselves to using this as the basis for a class comparing empires. The fact that it is broken down into 14 chapters even makes one wonder if perhaps they have done just that. Either way, even with its weaknesses, this book represents a great achievement and is an interesting read.

32 of 34 people found the following review helpful. *Empires Molders of Nation-States* By Serge J. Van Steenkiste Professors Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper deviate from the traditional narrative about the birth and development of the nation-state. Both authors contend that a world of bounded and unitary states interacting with other equivalent states dates from 1948 C.E. rather than 1648 C.E. and the Treaty of Westphalia. For this reason, professors Burbank and Cooper explore instead the rise and fall of specific empires, their imaginary, their interaction with each other, and their respective repertoires of power. Professors Burbank and Cooper demonstrate convincingly that throughout history, most people have lived in empires that did not aim to represent a single nation. Unlike nation-states that tend to homogenize those inside their polity, empires treat different nations within their polity differently. Conflicts among empires, resistance of conquered people, and rebellions of settlers were some key factors in any cost-benefit analysis of empire-building and sustenance. To their credit, professors Burbank and Cooper clearly explain the vertical nature of power relations within empires, as leaders try to recruit reliable intermediaries to manage distant territories and achieve contingent accommodation to their rule. Empires used a wide variety of repertoires of rule such as reliance on a class of loyal, trained officials, empowerment of (select) citizens, marriage politics, and tribal allegiances to secure these essential intermediaries. Both authors also explore in much detail how empires vied with each other to become or remain the top "dog" over time. Imperial strategies such as restriction of competitive empires' connections, imperialism of free trade, and alliance of different empires against one or more other empires were in use at the intersection of empires. In conclusion, professors Burbank and Cooper give their audience a great opportunity to broaden their horizon by considering an alternative read on the history of humanity. As a side note, History could produce a new series on empires, states, and political imagination as a complement to its existing series "Engineering an Empire."

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. *Empires in World History* By Larry While over the Xmas holidays I didn't have time to do a careful reading of this interesting book, my skimming scanning of it assures me that this book will satisfy my earlier expectations from other reviewers' comments. I would certainly recommend this scholarly work to anyone interested in understanding how empires have risen and fallen throughout historical period.

Empires--vast states of territories and peoples united by force and ambition--have dominated the political landscape for more than two millennia. *Empires in World History* departs from conventional European and nation-centered perspectives to take a remarkable look at how empires relied on diversity to shape the global order. Beginning with ancient Rome and China and continuing across Asia, Europe, the Americas, and Africa, Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper examine empires' conquests, rivalries, and strategies of domination--with an emphasis on how empires accommodated, created, and manipulated differences among populations. Burbank and Cooper examine Rome and China from the third century BCE, empires that sustained state power for centuries. They delve into the militant monotheism of Byzantium, the Islamic Caliphates, and the short-lived Carolingians, as well as the pragmatically tolerant rule of the Mongols and Ottomans, who combined religious protection with the politics of loyalty. Burbank and Cooper discuss the influence of empire on capitalism and popular sovereignty, the limitations and instability of Europe's colonial projects, Russia's repertoire of exploitation and differentiation, as well as the "empire of liberty"--devised by American revolutionaries and later extended across a continent and beyond. With its investigation into the relationship between diversity and imperial states, *Empires in World History* offers a fresh approach to understanding the impact of empires on the past and present.

Winner of the 2011 Book Prize, World History Association One of Choice's Outstanding Academic Titles for 2010 "This is a very big book on an enormous subject. For anybody who assumes imperial history is all about Britain,

with some 19th-century European imitators on the side, it will be something of a shock. For Burbank and Cooper, imperial history is world history. The authors also make a point popular among academics who hate the idea of borders keeping the underprivileged out of rich nations, that empires can be confederations of different peoples united by an all-encompassing ideal. 'Sovereignty can be shared, layered and transformed,' they write. Whether or not you agree with the implications of this argument, the weeks it will take bedtime history buffs to get through this book will be time well spent."--Stephen Matchett, *The Australian*"This exemplary work, clearly laid out and fluently written, is a must for every undergraduate library, though more advanced scholars will also find much in it."--Choice"A tour d'horizon through world history based on a stupendous knowledge of the literature, both authors take as their leitmotif the question of how empires have dealt with diversity and analyze the most varied constellations of imperial control."--Andreas Eckert, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*"Jane Burbank's and Frederick Cooper's *Empires in World History* is a very useful and impressive reference book."--Sheldon Kirshner, *Canadian Jewish News*"*Empires in World History* provides a powerful teaching tool for framing the sometimes fluid and complex relationships between empires and nation-states, subjects and citizens, inclusion and exclusion. . . . This book will likely prove most useful in graduate courses in empire and/or world history and to teachers who are seeking a way to teach about empire without simply jumping from one to the next."--Clif Stratton, *World History Bulletin*"A good read for those interested in any of the empires discussed or in the rise and fall of megastates."--A. A. Nofi, *StrategyPage.com*"*Empires in World History* is one of the clearest written surveys of empires available. It will serve well as an introductory text for university students and as a reference for scholars."--Michael J. Seth, *European Legacy*"*Empires in World History* . . . provides fresh insight into the strategies of imperial rule that have sustained empires over time. . . . It will be a useful text for both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as general readers interested in imperial histories."--Paula Hastings, *World History Connected*From the Back Cover"This is the single best book about the relationship of empires and nations that I can think of."--Kenneth Pomeranz, author of *The Great Divergence*"A major corrective to much of the literature about empire, this is destined to become a classic: it tackles a huge and topical theme, and moves at a fast pace, from Rome and Han Dynasty China, right down to the present. The coverage is sweeping and balanced. A stunning accomplishment."--Jeremy Adelman, Princeton University"Timely and important, this book stresses the durability of empires from early times, across diverse historical eras, down to the present. The authors blur the line between the premodern and modern, and de-Europeanize history by stressing the importance of non-Western imperial experiences."--Robert Tignor, Princeton University"This superb book redefines the field of empire and colonial studies. Careful not to reduce the complexity and variety of imperial experiences to fit a rigid or narrow definition, the authors find a fresh way to retell the story of empires, illuminating how they were maintained for such long periods, what made them, and why they collapsed. There is nothing comparable."--Ronald Grigor Suny, University of MichiganAbout the AuthorJane Burbank is professor of history and Russian and Slavic studies at New York University. Her books include *Intelligentsia and Revolution* and *Russian Peasants Go to Court*. Frederick Cooper is professor of history at New York University. His books include *Decolonization and African Society* and *Colonialism in Question*.