Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper. *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. Pp. 511. Paper $29.95.

Jane Burbank, Professor of Russian and Slavic Studies at New York University, and Frederick Cooper, Professor of Decolonization and African Societies at New York University, examine how geographically and historically separate empires successfully conquered, subjugated, and assimilated diverse populations during their long-lasting reigns throughout human history. Discussing the correlations shared amongst ancient medieval, and modern powers—mostly from a Eurasian viewpoint—the authors analyze imperial rule from the foundation of Rome until the decolonization of the European powers. Expanding upon a plethora of studies focusing on individual empires, this book attempts to conglomerate their commonalities to better define "empire" and elaborate on the benefits the political structure has offered throughout history. The authors comparatively analyze Eurasian histories of various empire bureaucracies, expansionist military policies, and the successful incorporation of diverse subjugated peoples into their political machine.

This book's chronological and thematic structure explores similarities of imperial rule over various empires in Eurasian history. Although themes of empire formation, aggressive expansion, incorporation of conquered peoples, and political frameworks are commonalities amongst each imperial example used, each chapter deeply elaborates on specific empires and illustrates how differing governance structures ultimately led to similar outcomes in geographically distant regions.

Burbank and Cooper elaborate in the introductory chapters about varying imperial themes and discuss how empires consolidated power, formulated strategies to govern their conquered neighbors, and maintained relatively stable institutions that spanned many centuries. They argue that imperial power flourished stably for thousands of years. The authors elaborate on commonalities that various empires utilized to expand their control with repertoire of power emerging as the main common factor. Repertoires of power were flexible political, economic, and military forces used to better govern and expand their influence. Empires established differing repertoires that conformed to their regional demands with flexible bureaucracies ensuring the longevity of their political dominance.

The book's lens of examination encompasses Eurasia, spanning from the Pacific to the Atlantic oceans. Although different bureaucratic structures and strategies on the correct way to utilize them were created, each empire successfully reached their expansionist goals. The Romans embraced territorial annexation and incentivized citizenship hierarchies, which led to loyal and almost unlimited manpower for their government and military. On the other hand, the Chinese focused on Confucianism teachings of loyalty and honor for bureaucratic work, which led to patriotic government workers, but faltered when imperial succession was questioned. The Byzantine and Ottoman Empires embraced monotheistic religions, deviating from polytheistic worship, to validate their right to rule and homogenize their citizenry under a religious banner. The Mongolian hordes dominated the Asian steppes with their strong kinship ties, which created a strong unified family to rule over their ethnically and religiously diverse world.

During the age of European colonial expansion and the modern post-WWII era, empires used both military and political supremacy to extend their imperial ambitions. Among those powers, the Russians and Americans emerged as superpowers during the post-WWII era. America's administration embraced universal laws for all citizens, rigorous citizenship incorporation, and a democratic checks and balances system. Alternatively, the Russian Empire embraced royal authoritarian rule under the Tsar, welcomed cultural diversity of populations they either conquered or annexed, and wrote different regional laws based on ethnic and religious needs.

Today the face and role of empires has shifted considerably from historical examples, although sovereign and politically equal countries remain under coercive imperial control. The strongest nations no longer spend exorbitant amounts of resources to conquer entire territories, but economically strategize to benefit themselves disproportionally from the smaller nation-states. This originally British style of imperial rule exercises power through economic and small-scale military interventions. Although empires have proved stable political machines throughout history, the nation-state is a relatively new style of governance that will have to prove whether it is a temporary political experiment or the future of international relations.

This book is a welcome addition to the study of empires and asks comparative questions regarding population incorporation, governance, and the cost to benefit analysis of

imperial rule in world history. An important strength is the comparison of successful administrative frameworks that built and sustained these large political machines. However, one glaring weakness is the unfortunate misrepresentation of the pre-Columbian Americas and African kingdoms in favor of a Eurasian perspective. Overall the authors provide a compelling overview of empires throughout world history, and progress the discussion regarding this resilient political form.

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