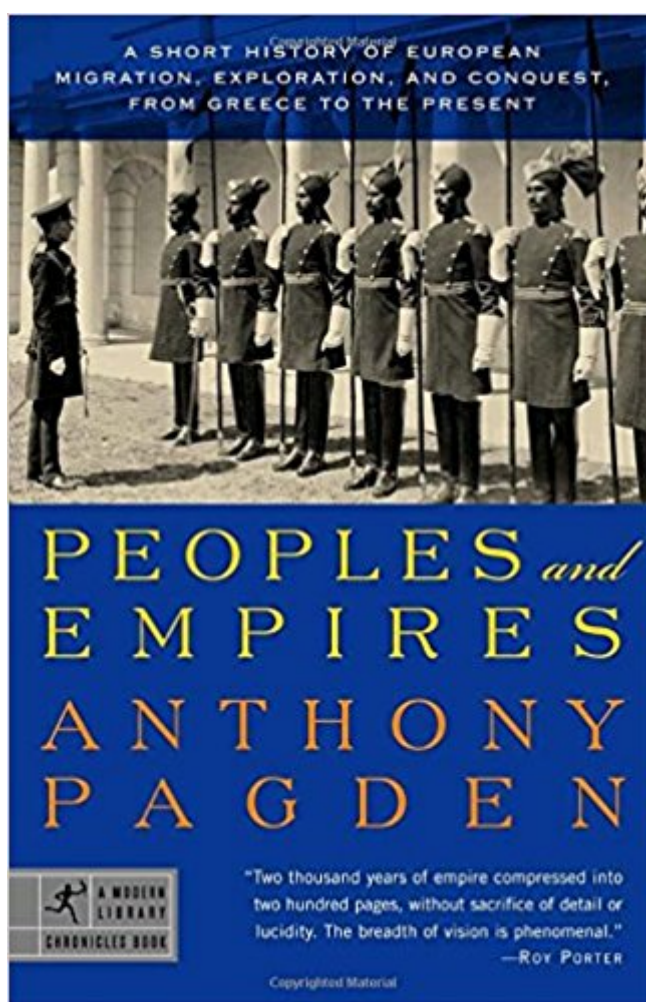


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Peoples And Empires: A Short History Of European Migration, Exploration, And Conquest, From Greece To The Present (Modern Library Chronicles)





Synopsis

Written by one of the world's foremost historians of human migration, *Peoples and Empires* is the story of the great European empires—the Roman, the Spanish, the French, the British—and their colonies, and the back-and-forth between “us” and “them,” culture and nature, civilization and barbarism, the center and the periphery. It's the history of how conquerors justified conquest, and how colonists and the colonized changed each other beyond all recognition.

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Customer Reviews

This addition to the Modern Library Chronicles series is described by the author as "a very short book on a very big subject." Happily, Pagden handles the topic with skill, learning, wit and balance. A professor of history at Johns Hopkins, Pagden has written extensively on empires, imperialism and human migration. His new offering is an overview summarizing the influence of empires on the development of civilization. Beginning with the first empire in European history, that of Alexander the Great, which was also the first empire to claim a universal scope, Pagden goes on to examine the land-based empires of Rome and the Hapsburgs that gave way to the seagoing empires of England and the Netherlands. The author makes much of the fact that these last two commercial empires were founded to be "empires of liberty," but derived much of their wealth and power from the exploitation of slave labor. Pagden has not written a screed against European hegemony, though.

He knows full well the good and the bad of these institutions ("Most empires have offered their subject peoples a combination of opportunities and restraints"), and he impressively illustrates the ways in which the history of empire has for many centuries past been in fact the history of the human race. (on sale Apr. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Pagden's (Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France 1500-1800; European Encounters with the New World) elegant series of essays, connected by his theories on European efforts at empire, does not so much define empire as discuss the evolution of the phenomenon. Pagden looks at our needs for travel and for cities, needs that he sees as necessary requisites of an empire. Alexander the Great created Europe's first empire, which was held together largely by his personality. In trying to imitate Alexander, the Romans created the model for all time. Politically, all European countries with ambitions of empire have imitated Rome, and the Catholic Church reinforced this model in the spiritual realm. Pagden's chapters on the Spanish Empire are exemplary, yet the chapter on slavery and the admission that this institution irreparably stains Europe's empires allows him to discuss the demise of empire, the rise of nationalism, and the directions in which these developments could take civilization. Recommended as a good overview for general readers. Clay Williams, Hunter Coll., New York Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I don't know about the other readers, but my high school world history teacher was the swim coach. Let's just say I know a lot about the fortunes of a certain swim team from Connecticut circa 1967. If PEOPLES AND EMPIRES has achieved little else, it has plugged the gaping holes in my education and pulled three ensuing decades of idiosyncratic, untutored reading into context. For that it gets the 5 stars. The Modern Library Chronicles are intended to be short works to serve as general introductions or refresher courses. When covering more than two millennia in less than 200 pages (it is 167 pages plus introduction and addenda), choices have to be made in what to keep, what to skip. Pagden's focus is the concept of empire and how it was adapted and revised over time to shape European civilization as it gradually circled the globe, then ebbed. There are entire wars, events and personalities that are left out because they do not directly relate to the conceptual development of empire. You will not find the Crusades in this text (though noted in the chronology) nor the Spanish Armada. You will find a detailed, charged discussion of slavery and its role in empire development. Likewise, you will find an energetic account of the conquistadors. Pagden's

prose is always lucid and level, but in those chapters he shines. This is the second Chronicles volume I've read. The series editor displays a knack for identifying authors who infuse their topics with voice, vision and heart. The books are well documented with indexes, chronologies and bibliographies. While seasoned historians may debate their perspective or find the content too general, it is just what a mainstream reader needs.

I just finished Pagden's little gem. Tired of the neo-con's oversimplification and the post-modern's blather? Treat yourself to an 180 page antidote. His coverage of such a vast field is beautifully conceived and his his prose is a joy. He is justly critical of the way the West violated its core values and its own best instincts along with the rights of the people it dominated during the colonial era. But he is much more interested in analysis than judgment - a virtue fast becoming extinct in today's "academy". Pagden is one of a vanishing breed, a serious scholar who knows that truth and fairness are the key virtues of the historian. His critique of Islamic reactionaries in the Epilogue is worth the price for the book. Clearly stated, immanently fair, and devastatingly true.

A concise, readable account, not just of empires and immigration patterns, but of the sweep of world history in general. I would be hard put to imagine how one could do as much as Mr. Pagden has done in as few pages. It includes a chronology of key events, and a description of central historical figures. This is a great book to read prior to or in conjunction with more in-depth surveys of world history. Pagden notes some watershed transformations including, (1) the empire of Charles V and its maritime reach, (2) the role of the Netherlands both within Europe and in the Asia-Pacific arena, (3) slavery and its long history from 1444 to approximately 1870, (4) the "scientific" justification for colonization and/or indirect rule from mid-18th to early 20th century, and (5) the current view of empires today, which negates the distinction, held somewhere in the West (and in China and Japan as well) since the Greek polis, of citizens and barbarians. Mr. Pagden has given us a fast, smooth and informative trip through a central facet of global, historical evolution.

A very well researched and written work on a subject of immense scope and importance.

Great book that I purchased for a History class and it was not a bore to read as it was also not too long so it never feels like the end never comes.

After all the fragments, the history classes, this book helped me put the pieces together.

after reading Pagden's "Lords of All the World" this book sounded like a good idea. but after reading this book, it seems strange that the same person could have written them both. where the former was articulate and interesting, this book goes through a narrative that blends myth, history, and politics and ends up not doing justice to the blend or the parts. i read this book in a reading group along with several others- most of who had read "Lords...", and no one found much to like about it. if your goal is to compress european imperialism into a very short form, perhaps for an undergraduate or high school course, then it might work for you, so long as you make sure to comment on the strange discrepancies Pagden gives rise to. if you're looking to increase your understanding of the subject, however, read something else.

This short work is simultaneously breathtaking in its reach and simple in its execution. Herein, Professor Pagden gives a conceptual history of western empires: from Hellenistic Greece to late Western European colonial empires and their aftermath. Giving a bare minimum of dates and battles (the usual fodder for history books), the book explains the concept of empire, and its execution, as it evolved over millennia. This is a fascinatingly different way to look at history. While not providing specifics (date and battles), it does give the reader a remarkably profound understanding of forces of history and their meaning. I recommend this book to both readers of history, and those who have always found such books boring.

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