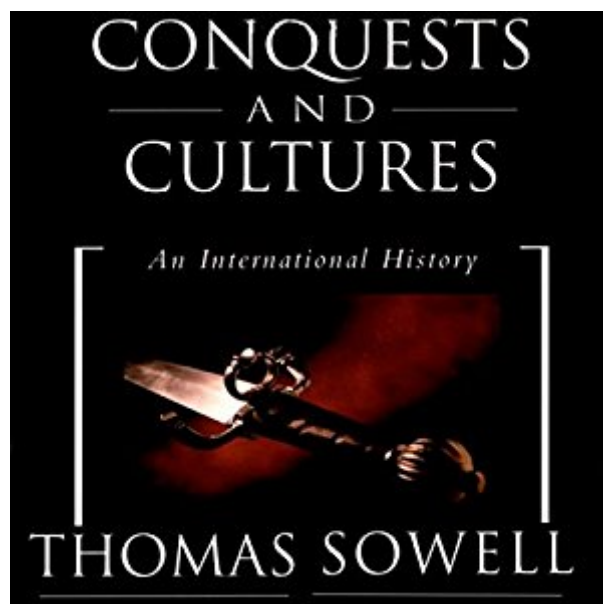


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Conquests And Cultures: An International History



Synopsis

This book is the culmination of 15 years of research and travels that have taken the author completely around the world twice, as well as on other travels in the Mediterranean, the Baltic, and around the Pacific rim. Its purpose has been to try to understand the role of cultural differences within nations and between nations, today and over centuries of history, in shaping the economic and social fates of peoples and of whole civilizations. Focusing on four major cultural areas (that of the British, the Africans (including the African diaspora), the Slavs of Eastern Europe, and the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere); *Conquests and Cultures* reveals patterns that encompass not only these peoples but others and help explain the role of cultural evolution in economic, social, and political development. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a remarkably thorough, well-researched work on major regions and civilizations around the world -- African, Aztec, Inca, Slav, (native) American Indian. Sowell documents the case of how geography (harbors, arable land, navigable rivers, freedom from monsoons and tropical disease) and ideas (fundamental beliefs and principles widely shared or disseminated) combine to make the world what it is today. "Culture" triumphs if it is sustainable and based on a credible concept that can be embraced by others. Other "cultures" fail or disappear when they are conquered by more dominant cultures or collapse from within due to a fundamental weakness or failure to transmit the

culture across people and generations. Much like David Landes' "Wealth and poverty of nations", Sowell shows that societies or cultures that can produce things of value, that educate their young, that innovate, and that encourage personal freedom, initiative, private ownership and advancement based on merit, these cultures are more likely to survive. Sowell dispels myths about racism, diversity and the equality of all cultures. His research is encyclopedic and well-documented. An excellent book for a university course on culture, diversity and global development.

I can't think of anything that I've read like it before or since. Essentially, it does the job of filling in some of the details about what happened after some of the conquests of one group by another. It was not a text that evaluated whether conquests were "good" or "bad," but about the actual results of what happened. For example: He details at some length the differing responses to colonization of Irish and Scottish people (the former didn't take to it well while the latter did). This is something that goes a long way to explaining why Ireland became a separate country and Scotland stayed part of the Kingdom. It was well worth reading because it gave CONCRETE information about what actually happened in many of these cases rather than babbling about "colonial powers" or "rights of self determination."

It's always delightful to read cogent, well-thought-out and carefully written books. This is no exception, as Dr. Sowell continues to apply a broad education and extensive experience to derive insights that, once made, are startlingly clear and obvious. Unlike several of the prior reviewers, who seem to feel that their unworkable personal ideology or limited ability to think actually have relevance in a review, I read this book to gain information and insights supported by impeccable research from an intelligent source. It may offend those with little or no education or experience, because it does not run along the same track as their favorite hobby horse(s), but then, reality and truth rarely do. (i.e., if you don't like accurate statistics, nor agree with a sequenced and relevant portrayal of factual information, don't read this book. It might upset any sense of "oughta be this way", or "I wanna believe X -- in contrast to actual events"). Dr. Sowell's insistence on his statements having a factual basis and extensive examples to support his conclusions can be daunting, nonetheless, as with any exercise (mental or physical, for that matter), the more effort you put into something, the greater the result. Highly recommended, as are all of his books.

This book has several threads that interact. One is that the geography of a country has a strong effect on its history. The western hemisphere did not have beasts of burden until Europeans arrived

and therefore stayed in a primitive culture. England had iron ore near coal and both near the seacoast which provided cheap transportation. Another thread is that some cultures learn from contact with other cultures and some do not. Scotland was invaded by England and when the English left Scotland outclassed the English in engineering and medicine even though they were behind in the beginning. Earlier the Romans invaded England and improved conditions. When the Romans left the English retrograded for centuries. Another thread is that human nature is the same all over the earth. All nations have dominated other nations and mistreated them.

Despite their best efforts, those who reviewed this book negatively or dismissed it as "been there, done that" expose that either their own preconceived notions ran afoul with Sowell's book. Or, their sacred cows were stripped down to expose the cheap hamburger of ideas. As usual Sowell writes another well-crafted, researched, and documented book. He makes NO conclusions but rather, lets his reader form their own conclusions. As evidenced by the fact that none of the so called "Politically Incorrect" panel shows NEVER invited Sowell on because no one on the left can counter Sowell's ease of analysis and myth-shattering and that includes lofty lefties like Hitchens, Chomsky, Schlesinger, and Cockburn...so goes the list of those who rail at the idea of a free-thinking minority having the audacity to stray from the Liberal Plantation (Not that Sowell was ever on the plantation in the first place). A good measured read with plenty to challenge the reader (who doesn't wear ideological blinders). A good book to add to your library.

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