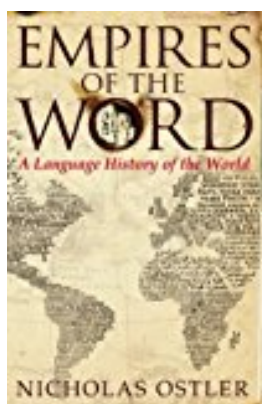


# [PDF] Empires Of The Word: A Language History Of The World

Nicholas Ostler - pdf download free book

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#### Books Details:

Title: Empires of the Word: A Language  
Author: Nicholas Ostler  
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#### Description:

**From Publishers Weekly** Ostler's ambitious and accessible book is not a technical linguistic study—i.e., it's not concerned with language structure—but about the "growth, development and collapse of language communities" and their cultures. Chairman of the Foundation of Endangered Languages, Ostler's as fascinated by extinction as he is by survival. He thus traces the fortunes of Sumerian, Akkadian and Aramaic in the flux of ancient Middle Eastern military empires. Ancient

Egyptian's three millennia of stability compares with the longevity of similarly pictographic Chinese—and provides a cautionary example: even a populous, well-defined linguistic community can vanish. In all cases, Ostler stresses the role of culture, commerce and conquest in the rise and fall of languages, whether Spanish, Portuguese and French in the Americas or Dutch in Asia and Africa. The rise of English to global status, Ostler argues, owes much to the economic prestige of the Industrial Revolution, but its future as a lingua franca may falter on demographic trends, such as booming birth rates in China. This stimulating book is a history of the world as seen through the spread and demise of languages. Maps.

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**From \*Starred Review\*** Caesar led his legions into battle for the glory of Rome--and the immortality of Greek. In the curious spread of Greek through Roman conquest, Ostler recounts one of the many fascinating episodes in the complex history of languages. The resources of the cultural historian complement those of the comparative linguist in this capacious work, which sets the parameters for a new field of scholarship: "language dynamics." By peering over Ostler's shoulder into this new field, readers learn how languages ancient and modern (Sumerian and Egyptian; Spanish and English) spread and how they dwindle. The raw force of armies counts, of course, in determining language fortunes but for far less than the historically naive might suppose: military might failed to translate into lasting linguistic conquest for the Mongols, Turks, or Russians. Surprisingly, trade likewise proves weak in spreading a language--as the Phoenician and Dutch experiences both show. In contrast, immigration and fertility powerfully affect the fate of languages, as illustrated by the parallel histories of Egyptian and Chinese. Ostler explores the ways modern technologies of travel and communication shape language fortunes, but he also highlights the power of ancient faiths--Christian and Moslem, Buddhist and Hindu--to anchor language traditions against rapid change. Of particular interest will be Ostler's provocative conjectures about a future in which Mandarin or Arabic take the lead or in which English fractures into several tongues. Few books bring more intellectual excitement to the study of language. *Bryce Christensen*

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