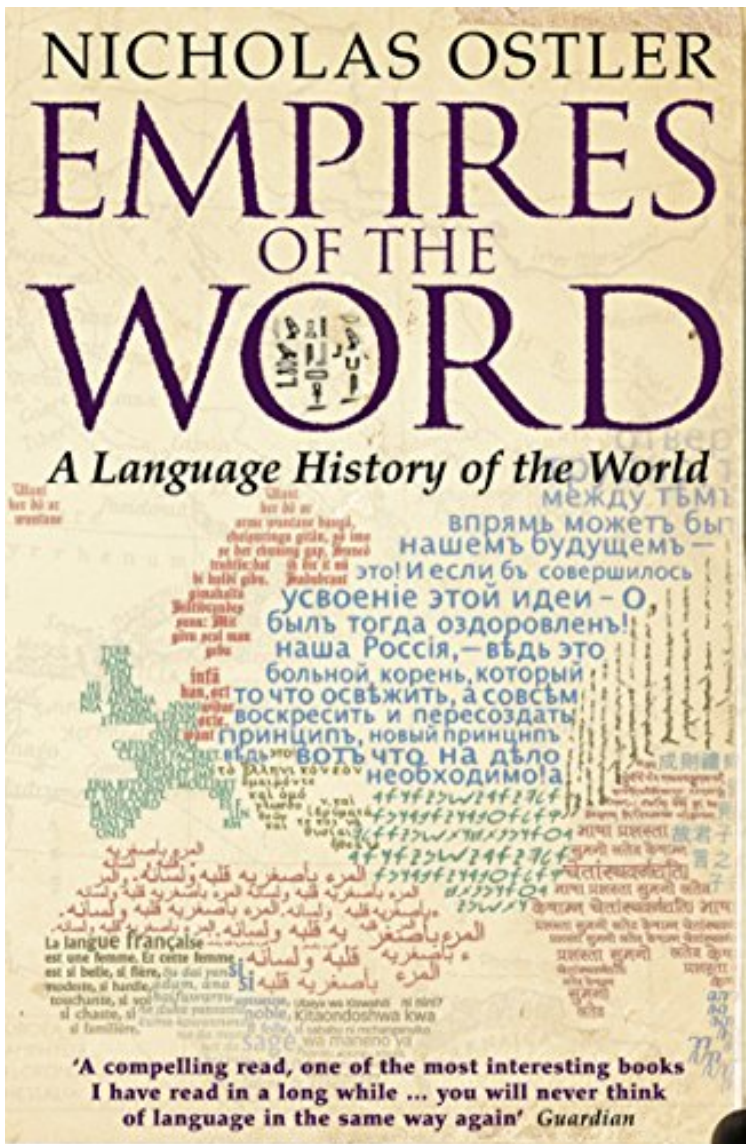


Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World



Par Nicholas Ostler
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devised by speakers in the Middle East; the uncanny resilience of Chinese throughout twenty centuries of invasions; the progress of Sanskrit from north India to Java and Japan; the struggle that gave birth to the languages of modern Europe; and the global spread of English. Besides these epic achievements, language failures are equally fascinating: why did Germany get left behind? Why did Egyptian, which had survived foreign takeovers for three millennia, succumb to Mohammeds Arabic? Why is Dutch unknown in modern Indonesia, given that the Netherlands had ruled the East Indies for as long as the British ruled India? As this book engagingly reveals, the language history of the world shows eloquently the real characters of peoples; it also shows that the language of the future will, like the languages of the past, be full of surprises.

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