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Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship, Inequality, and Difference: Historical Perspectives*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. The Lawrence Stone Lectures. v + 224 pp. Illustrations, notes, and index. \$29.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN: 9780691171845.

Review by Christopher J. Lee, Lafayette College.

Frederick Cooper needs little introduction, having authored, coauthored, or edited over a dozen books that stretch from coastal East Africa to West Africa and have spanned the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His widely read book *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*, coauthored with Jane Burbank, goes back even further in time to the Roman Empire and is equally expansive from a geographic standpoint with commentary on empires in Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere. Taken as a whole, his work has been attentive to a number of historical trends, whether the labor history of the 1970s, the cultural turn of the 1980s, globalization during the 1990s, or the new imperial turn after 2000. Yet he has often remained a skeptic amid such debates, expressing a commitment to empiricism over theory with the belief that ideas and methodological approaches to the past are always limited by what evidence can tell us. Strong ideas can inspire new work, but facts matter.

Politics also matter. *Citizenship, Inequality, and Difference: Historical Perspectives* is based on a series of addresses Cooper delivered as part of the Lawrence Stone Lectures at the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies at Princeton University. In a number of ways, it is a supplement to his two most recent books, *Empires in World History* and *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960*. But it also leans into the political present in a manner that his work does not often do. With the topic of citizenship and the emergence of nativism, xenophobia, and right-wing nationalism among the most important democracies on the planet—including India, South Africa, Germany, France, Great Britain, Brazil, and the United States—perhaps this attention is unavoidable. The status of and belief in citizenship has become something like the proverbial “canary in the coal mine”—a present day test of whether certain ideals of inclusion, equality, and suffrage that have been forged in early modern revolutions, civil rights movements, and liberation struggles around the world still garner the same respect they once had. This is not to say these ideals have been attained or evenly distributed in post-revolutionary or postcolonial societies, as Cooper himself underscores. Nonetheless, the erosion of principles like inclusiveness in favor of tightening visa restrictions, implementing travel bans, constructing detainment camps, and building walls all point to a dark turn in global politics whose endpoint is unclear. It is hard to look at. As Cooper intimates, history can offer another way of looking.

Citizenship, Inequality, and Difference is a short book, consisting of three chapters plus an introduction and conclusion. It ranges across space and time, and it touches upon ideas and situations that have been recurrent throughout Cooper's body of work. A key point he makes in the introduction is that citizenship as a status and state instrument has a long history, though modern citizenship as a *practice* is still a relatively new phenomenon in many parts of the world, given that many nation-states are still less than a century old. It remains an unsteady concept in motion, despite its relative universality. This perspective accords to his and Burbank's argument in *Empires in World History* that empires have been the predominant political unit in global history over time. With this general observation in mind, Cooper identifies two main themes for his book. The first is to acknowledge the range of political units in which to situate the question of citizenship—empires, federations, cities, and other forms of political community, in addition to the nation-state. The second is that citizenship rather than being a stable marker of equal status among members of a political community has instead been an unstable, even illusory, legal position that has been continually contested—whether reinforced or undermined—by competing sets of interests within and outside groups. In his words, citizenship is best approached as “a framework for debate and struggle” (p. 5) regarding the relationships and differences that constitute, or unravel, political belonging. As suggested earlier, citizenship is in many ways a litmus test signaling periods of affluence or crisis—a more open and permissive definition pertaining to the former and a narrower, more closed definition during times of the latter. Such flexibility can be difficult for states to manage from a constitutional standpoint, with immigration policies, visa denial, travel bans, or strenuous application protocols for residency employed as temporary measures to blunt more open criteria for citizenship, as seen all too clearly in our current political moment. This politics of exclusion is not the only kind, however. Though citizenship is a cherished aspiration for non-citizens, it can often be incomplete or unequal in scope among citizens—an internal, rather than external, politics of exclusion—depending on one's race, gender, class, religion, or other identity.

Citizenship has a particular currency for scholars of French history, of course, given the importance of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in 1789. As Cooper observes, similar declarations have been made before and since, with the edict of Roman emperor Caracalla in AD 212 being a foundational example and the French constitution of 1946, which extended citizenship across the French Empire, being a late attempt by France at juridical inclusion. The ambitions of the latter example failed almost immediately, given its approval in April and the start of the Vietnamese struggle against French rule in Indochina by the end of the year in December 1946—a good example of the limitations of citizenship status as an instrument for political appeasement. Nonetheless, imperial citizenship as pioneered by the Romans—the subject of chapter one—created a paradigm that has endured. As discussed by Cooper, citizenship was a dynamic concept designed to incorporate the diverse communities that fell within Roman imperial control. It enabled political and legal inclusion without asking for local cultural identities to be sacrificed. Furthermore, despite its broad application territorially, it did not encompass everyone internally: women and slaves remained without rights; class distinctions also persisted. This unevenness was subject to frequent debate by Roman intellectuals. As Cooper puts it, the Edict of Caracalla and Roman experiments with citizenship more generally are not important because they “set a pattern,” but because they “posed a possibility” (p. 39).

The second chapter addresses the question of citizenship in the early modern and modern empires of Europe. There is continuity between the Roman Empire and the Spanish, British, French, and Ottoman Empires in the sense of utilizing citizenship to incorporate or exclude people from

political and legal rights. However, in contrast to the top-down management approach of the preceding chapter, Cooper stresses how citizenship was equally a vantage point to make claims. The Cádiz Constitution of 1812 exemplifies yet another attempt by an empire to stabilize its control by extending citizenship across its territory—in this instance, Spain seeking to preserve its American holdings in the face of British and French losses with the American and Haitian Revolutions. Indigenous peoples were included in this new citizenship, though slavery continued. Free blacks had an ambiguous status, being considered Spanish but without citizenship rights (p. 48). This measure of appeasement through citizenship ultimately failed, with the rise of sovereign Latin American states in the 1820s and thereafter. Cooper then turns to the American and Haitian Revolutions, which preceded the independence movements led by Simón Bolívar and others, but underscore even more starkly how colonists and slaves, respectively, embraced the possibilities of citizenship to create new polities rather than consent to the dictates of an imperial metropole. The new imperialism of the late nineteenth century by France, Britain, and Germany introduced questions of application once more, this round being further complicated by the concurrent rise of modern nationalism and its ideas of inclusion and exclusion on the basis of culture, race, language, and other criteria. As Cooper writes, “citizenship in a nation and citizenship in an empire were in [an] ambiguous and often tense relationship to each other” (p. 78). Even the Ottoman Empire, which had endured for six hundred years by achieving a political equilibrium that balanced cultural difference with political integration, found itself unable to handle the new historical forces of nationalism and imperial competition, contributing to its demise in the early twentieth century.

If chapters one and two form a provisional dialectic, the former a thesis about states and the latter an antithesis about claim-making at the popular level, chapter three is something of a synthesis. Examining the twentieth century, Cooper finds concepts and practices of citizenship both proliferating and evolving. Citizenship was still a top-down, statist means of political consolidation and control, but it was also embraced and understood in a variety of new ways beyond its territorially aligned origins. The rights of women, stateless refugees, and the recognition of “minorities” within nations came into the foreground. The two world wars contributed to this inconsistent progression. The First World War and the establishment of the League of Nations in its aftermath resulted in the end of some empires—the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian among them—while enabling the continuation of others, despite a rhetoric of self-determination. This ambivalent outcome fostered an inconclusive middle path, with revised avenues to citizenship in some empires—as in the case of assimilation policies in parts of the French Empire—and the cultivation of more empowered forms of subjecthood, as with indirect rule in the British Empire. Neither proved enduring as a management style, though, as Cooper points out, they left legacies that can still be identified in the present. The Second World War ultimately broke the imperial framework, the consequence of a weakened Western Europe, growing demands among the colonized (partly due to war service), and the ascendance of the nation-state as a model—a result of irresolvable tensions in the intervening years between supporting self-determination as an ideal and continuing structures of empire in practice.

Cooper discusses how this paradox introduced a flurry of late innovations, including possibilities of imperial citizenship as introduced with the 1946 Constitution in France and Britain’s Nationality Act of 1948. Federations were also proposed and implemented in some cases—the British Central African Federation, for example, which lasted from 1953 to 1963—though many never left the realm of high-minded ideas and diplomatic boardrooms, as Cooper previously examined in *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation*. Gary Wilder has argued for the radical nature

of such a political enterprise—a chance to fundamentally redefine “France” from within—but this view is limited in his study to two figures, Aimé Césaire and Leopold Senghor, and, despite Wilder’s insistence, appears more reformist than revolutionary.^[1] The historical record speaks for itself. Cooper’s attention to grassroots suffrage and the limits of representation in West Africa demonstrates that popular opinion ultimately moved away from empire to try national citizenship. This aspiration for a new kind of citizenship is evidenced with even greater determination in Algeria and Southeast Asia, where armed struggle exemplified the political impatience with measures of reform. What could be more radical than choosing the then-unknown futures of national self-determination after a century (give or take) of imperial rule? Senghor would ultimately choose this route. Unlike Senghor and the early example of revolutionary Haiti, Césaire and Martinique chose France, despite his fiery rhetoric that would suggest otherwise.

Yet, as Cooper concludes, independence did not mean the end of interdependence, invoking a view of Senghor’s from the middle of the last century. Citizens and states alike stayed entangled in different ways to each other and to other communities. Decolonization raised new citizenship questions in relation to those who wanted to return or retain the benefits of former imperial ties. Colonial legacies of ethnic rule have shaped patterns of postcolonial citizenship in Africa through neo-customary practices of origin and ethnic belonging that have little regard for the protocols of national citizenship. The “thickening” of citizenship, by which Cooper means the attachment of economic and social rights to political notions of citizenship, was connected to the rise of the modern welfare state and, as a result of the latter’s decline, has subsequently shifted to a “thinning” of citizenship with fewer and fewer rights allotted. He consequently sees a “double challenge” for citizenship in the present and future (p. 146). First, the fateful triangle of territory, nation, and citizen remains a formula for exclusion and at times genocidal violence, even against internal communities that have been residents for centuries. Second, social citizenship—involving the right to fair labor practices, health care, and so forth—has been eroded at an escalating pace under the pressures of global capitalism. Whether political citizenship is enough is doubtful.

To summarize, this is a brisk book that encompasses a wide geography and synthesizes a number of histories as touched upon only briefly in this review. It condenses a number of issues of academic and present-day political importance with expert attention. Some readers may want more consideration of some areas, such as the role of modern technology and communication in circulating ideas and concepts of belonging—a matter that seems all too evident today, but could also inform the evolution and debate over citizenship and its possibilities since the nineteenth century. Given its origins as a lecture series, Cooper’s narrative style also wanders, at times, from place to place in a comparative mode rather than tracing direct causal connections or, alternatively, emphasizing a multipolar emergence of citizenship debates. These gray areas suggest a need for further research on the transfer points of ideas and debate, whether international conferences that sought to define rights and citizenship or the role of educational branches of social movements and liberation struggles, which could be crucibles for promoting new understandings of citizenship.

Nonetheless, Cooper’s main point regarding citizenship as a framework for claims, discussion, and debate is indispensable. Few historians are able to write with the kind of authority found here. There is an urgency to this issue at present, with this book offering vital assistance as to how to approach and think through this subject. Citizenship alone does not guarantee the end of hierarchies or difference in favor of equality. The horizontal and vertical dimensions of

citizenship, which define how we relate to states and how we relate to each other, are intrinsic to the concept itself, generating tensions of power that are difficult to resolve. Yet citizenship still remains a “useful fiction” for addressing and mobilizing against enduring forms of discrimination and social injustice (p. 150). Over the course of his career, Cooper has repeatedly asked what history looks like from the vantage point of the enslaved, the worker, the trade unionist, and the colonized. We can now add “citizen” to that list.

NOTES

[1] Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2015.

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