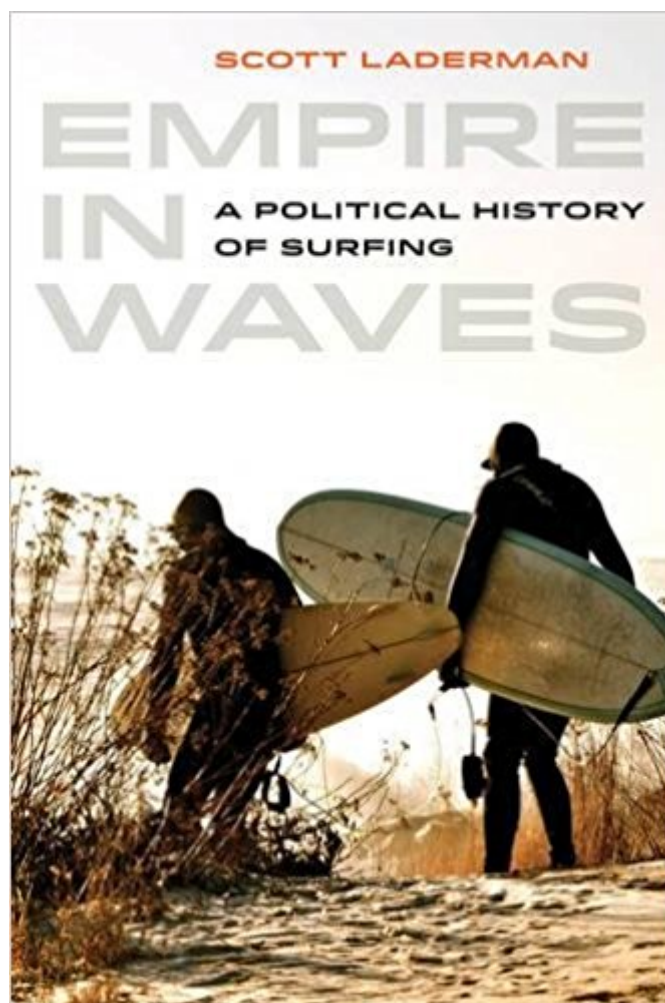


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# Empire In Waves: A Political History Of Surfing (Sport In World History)



## Synopsis

Surfing today evokes many things: thundering waves, warm beaches, bikinis and lifeguards, and carefree pleasure. But is the story of surfing really as simple as popular culture suggests? In this first international political history of the sport, Scott Laderman shows that while wave riding is indeed capable of stimulating tremendous pleasure, its globalization went hand in hand with the blood and repression of the long twentieth century. Emerging as an imperial instrument in post-annexation Hawaii, spawning a form of tourism that conquered the littoral Third World, tracing the struggle against South African apartheid, and employed as a diplomatic weapon in America's Cold War arsenal, the saga of modern surfing is only partially captured by Gidget, the Beach Boys, and the film Blue Crush. From nineteenth-century American empire-building in the Pacific to the low-wage labor of the surf industry today, Laderman argues that surfing in fact closely mirrored American foreign relations. Yet despite its less-than-golden past, the sport continues to captivate people worldwide. Whether in El Salvador or Indonesia or points between, the modern history of this cherished pastime is hardly an uncomplicated story of beachside bliss. Sometimes messy, occasionally contentious, but never dull, surfing offers us a whole new way of viewing our globalized world.

## Book Information

Series: Sport in World History (Book 1)

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: University of California Press (March 3, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0520279115

ISBN-13: 978-0520279117

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #336,027 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #80 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation > Surfing #800 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Water Sports #12990 in Books > History > World

## Customer Reviews

"What Laderman presents is a fascinating account of a sport whose proponents believed it to be apolitical, but facing the politics of a modern world." (H-Net 2015-01-15)"Laderman's

history offers intriguing moments in which he pulls together surfing narratives of soldiers and other state agents – illustrating the degree to which pleasure and power were intimately linked in the world that American foreign policy produced." (Vernadette Vicuna Gonzalez *The Journal of American History* 2015-03-01)"An authoritative account of the intersection of politics and surfing." (Brian Unger *The Surfer's Journal* 2015-04-01)"A richly documented and compactly written monograph." (Richard O. Davies *American Historical Review* 2015-06-01)"Well-written and engaging." (Glyn Ford *Asian Review of Books* 2015-10-22)"*Empire in Waves* deserves the widest possible audience. . . . An excellent example of entertaining writing from a scholar." (Ed Jaggard *Journal of Sports History* 2015-06-16)"*Empire in Waves* raises important and underanalysed issues in surfing history and culture. With its impressive notes and bibliography, it will contribute to university classrooms and aid academic research in future surfing scholarship." (*The Journal of Pacific History*)"*Empire of Waves* is the best (anti-)beach book I've read in a long time. I highly recommend taking Laderman on vacation with you – he'll absolutely ruin it." (Tim Paulson *Make Magazine* 2016-08-12)"Laderman's highly-readable and broadly-documented analysis of surfing's political history is a timely arrival, not only to the rapidly-evolving scholarly index of surf studies, but also to a contemporary waveriding culture forcefully embracing the political potential of surf-driven initiatives in the form of non-profits, *Enviro Business*, and drives for sustainability across the surfing world." (*Canadian Journal of History*)

"Laderman has joined a sophisticated discussion of the global history of surfing to a careful examination of its relationship to the cultural politics of United States engagement with the wider world. The chronological frame and impressive transnational source base he utilizes allow him to consider not only the long arc of surfing history but also to root his discussion of its relationship to American diplomacy and global politics in a deeper historical frame." #151;Mark Philip Bradley, *The University of Chicago* "Laderman's book provides a much needed ballast to the history of surfing, orienting it in a global historical context that allows us to gaze at the activity through the lens of the political. This is a much needed addition to the narrative surf canon that has largely overlooked the socio-political impacts of surfing as it has evolved into a multi-billion dollar global industry." #151;Cori Schumacher, three-time Women's World Longboard Champion and two-time North American Women's Longboard Champion "This book combines the rich detail of first-class historical research with the insight of a lifelong surfer, tracing the rise of surfing in the context of the rise of imperialism and global capitalism. In doing so, it exposes the darkness that often lay at the heart of the search for the perfect wave. This is a book that must be read by historians of leisure,

sports scholars and critically-minded surfers." #151; Tony Collins, author of *Sport in Capitalist Society: A Short History*

It was a little odd reading this and seeing formal documentation on just how not-so-innocent the sport I love is when it comes to profiting on and because of Americas sometimes less than idea behavior across the globe. Nonetheless, I love surfing however it is nice to also be aware of the context within which surfing culture thrives

Amazing book, should be required reading for all surfers.

This is a provocative book but it is more than just a book that includes a lot of surfing history. Laderman's interpretation is highly political. He writes that maintaining the pretense that surfing is just a sport has allowed surfers to ignore things like the 1965-66 massacres in Indonesia, Apartheid in South Africa, and the American annexation of Hawai'i. Laderman sees repressive governments as taking advantage of a kind of legitimacy provided by surfers, surfing events and tourism. Beaches, beautiful waves are a surface that may hide repression in some countries that surfers frequent. Laderman also points out that surfing was appropriated from Hawai'ians. I'm not clear on his basic point, so we realize this, then what? Surfers are not going to feel guilty or apologetic. I think his points are a bit overdone, but the point that sports do not exist in a social or political vacuum is an important one, although many sporting events do have the pretense that the world of sport is apolitical. If you can get through this, the book offers an interesting history of surfing, famous surfers and more.

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