

**Jost Dülffer, Robert Frank.** *Peace, War and Gender from Antiquity to the Present: Cross-cultural Perspectives.* Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2009. 282 S. paper, ISBN 978-3-8375-0214-5.



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“Entering into conflict,” “fighting a war,” “being at peace,” “signing a truce,” “attaining a cease-fire” –the conditions of war and peace can be very complex. This complexity lies at the center of Jost Dülffer and Robert Frank’s recent anthology *Peace, War and Gender from Antiquity to the Present*. It brings together sixteen case studies presented at the 20th International Congress of Historical Sciences hosted in Sidney in 2005. Including examples from 700 B.C. Greece, medieval Ireland, twentieth century Africa and Europe, this compilation of case studies seeks to demonstrate the diverse and relational nature of war and peace. The individual articles show how different governments and societies in history defined, valued and maintained peace, in contrast with how they perceived, justified and fought wars.

Following a general introduction by Joan Beaumont and the two editors, the individual articles are grouped in two sections: “Concepts of Just Wars and Lasting Peace” and “Gender and Violence.” The anthology concludes with comprehensive thoughts by historian Robert Frank on the question of identity, universality and democracy

in relation to war and peace. Focusing predominantly on the ways in which different governments and societies between the Ancient and the Modern period sought to make and maintain peace with their respective enemies, the first set of case studies sheds light on changing perceptions and definitions of peace and war. Among these articles, the study by historian Hans van Wees demonstrates the importance of language in the process of peace making. Even though peace was not always considered to be the ideal form of living, as Ancient Egypt, Greek and Roman leaders regarded war as a source of prestige, wealth and power, historian Hans van Wees shows that these leaders nonetheless sought to form peaceful relations with other states. Van Wees demonstrates that these relations were often framed in the language of “friendship,” “international kinship” or “brotherhood.” But in other instances, words alone would not do. The articles in part one highlight furthermore the importance of specific practices in the process of peace making. Discussing how medieval Islamic and Christian rulers sought to make or restore peace with their respective enemies, Yvonne Friedmann shows that peace

agreements were supported by specific gestures and rituals such as the proper exchanges of gifts or the shaking of the bare, right hand. In addition to the language and practices of peace making, the first eight case studies also reveal the changing prerequisites that governments and societies judged necessary to achieve and maintain peace. Arguing that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe saw the emergence of a new liberal and democratic concept of peace, historian Gottfried Niedhart discusses the changing preconditions that Modern European governments judged indispensable to achieving a stable peace in Europe. Driven by the changing social and political conditions wrought by the Industrial Revolution in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European leaders began to debate free markets, international trade and commerce as important factors in fostering peace. Subsequently, in the wake of the First World War, public thinkers and politicians – most notably Woodrow Wilson – argued that without stable democracies lasting peace could not be achieved.

In contrast to the first eight articles, the second set focuses predominantly on the ways different societies and cultures went to war. While seeking to provide a gendered analysis of war and warfare, most articles limit themselves to an analysis of the different roles women played during wars. Yet, this limitation allows a close look at the diverse and instrumental roles women played in warfare. Looking at medieval and early modern Ireland, for instance, historians Diane Hall and Elizabeth Malcolm reveal that women were not only defenseless victims of violence in war, for some elite women also took on roles as counselors, translators and advisors to their husbands. Furthermore, the second part of the anthology illustrates how the presence of women at the front line could both challenge and reaffirm traditional gender norms. Analyzing two mobile field hospitals during the First Balkan War and the First World War, Jean Quataert shows, for instance, how the work of female nurses problematized the

notion of war as an all ‘men’s business.’ Finally, some of the articles shed light on the different ways in which women’s participation in war was remembered afterwards. Analyzing the Mexican Revolution and Paraguayan War, Barbara Potthast demonstrates that women could be important for peacetime memory. Potthast shows that while in Paraguay women could become the symbol of national strength, in post-revolutionary Mexico the contributions of female camp followers were erased from public memory.

This array of case studies represents an engaging starting point for further investigations into the discursive and relational character of war and peace. On the one hand, it highlights that peace and peace-making could be a multifaceted processes. On the other, the anthology successfully questions definitions of war and warfare as an all men’s business. Yet, despite these strengths, the editors were only partially successful in turning this disparate set of conference papers into a successful anthology. The greatest obstacle is that the two parts of the book come across as two discrete entities. Despite the general introduction and the concluding remarks, the connections between the two sections are not always clear. The split between war and peace seems too great. This divide could have been bridged, for example, if a critical gender analysis had not only been applied to the study of war and warfare, but also more directly to the study of peacemaking. For example the equation of “great peace” and “great brothers” [p. 37] or the image of two male leaders kissing in order to seal a truce suggests that the making and maintaining of peace was also a highly gendered process. Notwithstanding these obstacles, the anthology offers valuable inside for military historians as well as scholars engaged in peace studies.

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