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## Book Review of Law and Politics: A Cross-Cultural Encyclopedia

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490. Strouthes, Daniel P. **Law and Politics: A Cross-Cultural Encyclopedia**. Santa Barbara, Calif., ABC-CLIO, 1995. 301p. illus. index. (Encyclopedias of the Human Experience). \$49.50. ISBN 0-87436-777-8.

This concise encyclopedia aspires to define important concepts of law and politics while emphasizing similarities and differences among different legal and political entities. The alphabetically arranged entries, which range in length from 100 to 3,000 words, cover the rather specific (“servitas” and “legal

fiction”) to the very broad (“natural law” and “jurisprudence”). Strouthes’s goal “is to provide a precise and accurate definition for an important concept, as well as some concise background detail and discussion, using data gathered from a variety of legal and political systems around the globe” (p. xi). Many definitions include illustrative examples from U.S. law and contrasting examples from other legal systems. *Law and Politics* concludes with a 250-entry bibliography of articles and books, and a subject index.

This reviewer found it hard to get a handle on what this book is. Strouthes may have intended to create a smaller encyclopedia that grew somewhat unwieldy. But he also may have had in mind a grander work—perhaps an Oxford-like encyclopedia of law and politics—that proved to be a larger bite than one person could reasonably chew. Users end up with a work that struggles to be all things to all people, and which in the end is difficult to classify. It is not easy to find the connection between “Big man,” “Black market,” and “Canon law”—all of which are defined in the encyclopedia.

It is probably impossible to create a cohesive cross-cultural encyclopedia of law and politics in approximately 300 pages, but Strouthes gave it a shot. *Law and Politics* offers interesting definitions that may benefit some researchers, particularly college students. However, libraries not having this volume on their shelves will not be doing their patrons too much of a disservice. [R: BR, Sept/Oct 96, p. 58; Choice, June 96, p. 1624; SLJ, June 96, p. 160]—**James S. Heller**