

CHAPTER ONE

A Far Promontory

Southeast Asia and Eurasia

1. RETHINKING EURASIA

Between 1240 and 1390 the principal realms of mainland Southeast Asia collapsed. The same was true of France and Kiev, whose political and economic travails merged with a general European crisis. After a political revival that started in most cases in the mid-1400s and continued for a century or so, in the late 1500s the chief kingdoms in what are now Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Vietnam, France, and Russia again fell apart, this time more briefly. For a second time political fortunes then stabilized, aided in each case by administrative and military reforms. Yet in the second half of the 18th century a third round of warfare and disorder spread across mainland Southeast Asia and, from its French epicenter, across Europe. And once again, in both regions these disturbances ushered in a phase of renewed consolidation and effective reform.

Other than by sheer coincidence, how can we explain these correlations between regions with no obvious cultural or material links? Why in each realm did successive interregna tend to grow less prolonged and dislocating? Conversely, in these far-flung Eurasian areas – as well as in Japan, China, and European states whose chronologies did not match exactly the cyclic pattern just described – why should movements toward administrative integration have become increasingly successful over the long term? And why did sustained consolidation characterize some sectors of Eurasia, but not others?

This is the second book in a two-volume study designed to address these and similar questions. As a specialist in Southeast Asia, I seek

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Victor Lieberman

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in the first instance to connect my region to world history and thus to breach that encapsulation which, I suggested in Volume 1, has long characterized regional historiography. Typically, scholars of the precolonial era saw Southeast Asian development, such as it was, as dependent on external maritime contacts. Either because Southeast Asians lost control over the main lines of trade in the mid-1600s, or because even before that date external stimuli actually had only a superficial impact on intensely conservative cultures, historians posited a high degree of precolonial inertia – which contrasts with the restless dynamism of Europe.¹

Without eliding differences between regions, I attempt in this volume to balance those differences against overarching, hitherto ignored, traits that linked Southeast Asia to Europe and other sectors of Asia during roughly a thousand years. In so doing, I hope not only to recontextualize Southeast Asian historiography, but to influence far broader discussions that began in the late 20th century about the long-term relation between white-skinned peoples and the rest of the world generally. That is to say, in enfeebling Orientalism, sustained comparisons promise to weaken Orientalism's inseparable twin, European exceptionalism.

A regnant trope from the 1700s until the 1990s and still deeply influential both in the academy and among educated nonspecialists, European exceptionalism claims that Western economic and military dynamism – Europe's escape from a relative immobility that was the fate of the rest of mankind – derived from a distinctive complex of physical and cultural features that, in some versions, appeared as early as the middle ages. As explicated in E. L. Jones' oft-cited *The European Miracle*, Europe, or more accurately its western half, benefited from contingent synergies between advantageous geography – dispersed agrarian cores favoring multistate competition, low man-to-land ratios, extensive coastlines, access to New World wealth – and cultural patterns unusually conducive to innovation.² According to David Landes, who places primary stress on cultural entelechy, by the 15th century, if not earlier, a contrast loomed between self-limiting West European regimes and Asian political forms less sympathetic to mercantile and urban autonomy and market competition. Refined in later centuries, the Western emphasis on contractual government, individual and corporate autonomy, secure property rights, and empirical inquiry produced those twin glories of

¹ See discussion at *SP*, 5–21.

² E. L. Jones, *The European Miracle* (rpt., Cambridge, 1993).

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Excerpt

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the modern world, political democracy and industrial capitalism.³ In perhaps the most arresting recent formulation of such views, Jack Goldstone argues that the steam engine, which he sees as the central prerequisite for industrialization and modernity itself, derived not from general European culture, but from a confluence of specifically British factors in the late 1600s. These included the Glorious Revolution's promotion of secular, pluralist, liberal ideals; the triumph of Isaac Newton's epistemology based on experiment and universal laws; the popularization of Newtonian perspectives with support from the Anglican church; and the practical application of such views by British technicians and entrepreneurs within a culture of "engine science" committed to innovation and pragmatic inquiry.⁴

Three Critiques of European Exceptionalism

As an Italian historian quipped long before postmodernists began to theorize subjectivity, ultimately all history is contemporary.⁵ The *sine qua non* for European exceptionalism's intellectual appeal – an appeal, by the way, that extended well beyond colonial sympathizers to many

³ David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (New York, 1998). Similar analyses, albeit informed by a more sophisticated knowledge of non-Western cultures, underlie Jan Luiten van Zanden, "The Road to the Industrial Revolution," *JGH* 3 (2008): 337–59; and Tirthankar Roy, "Knowledge and Divergence from the Perspective of Early Modern India," *JGH* 3 (2008): 361–87, which emphasizes the unique ease with which technical knowledge diffused both geographically and socially in early modern western Europe. See too the emphasis on cultural determination in Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington, eds., *Culture Matters* (New York, 2000).

⁴ Jack Goldstone, "The Rise of the West – or Not? A Revision to Socio-Economic History," *Sociological Theory* 18 (2000): 175–94; idem, "Neither Late Imperial Nor Early Modern," in Lynn Struve, ed., *The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), 242–302; idem, "Europe's Peculiar Path: Would the World Be Modern if William III's Invasion of England in 1688 Had Failed" (ms); idem, *Why Europe? The Rise of the West in World History 1500–1800* (New York, 2008), 150–61. Goldstone's work builds on Margaret Jacob, *The Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1988), esp. ch. 5, and Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs and Margaret Jacob, *Newton and the Culture of Newtonianism* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1995). For other recent expressions of European, West European, and/or British exceptionalism by prominent academics, see sources cited in SP, 66–69; n. 3 *supra*; David Levine, *At the Dawn of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2001); R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution* (Oxford, 2002), esp. 193–98; idem, "The Transformation of Europe as a Eurasian Phenomenon," in Johann Arnason and Bjorn Wittrock, eds., *Eurasian Transformations, Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 2004), 77–98; Robert Brenner and Christopher Isett, "England's Divergence from China's Yangzi Delta," *JAS* 61 (2002): 609–62; and sources in n. 13 *infra*.

⁵ Benedetto Croce, *Theory and History of Historiography* (London, 1921), 11–15.

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Marxists and resolute anti-imperialists – was Western political and economic dominance from the late 18th to the late 20th century. But starting as early as the 1940s and with particular force during the last two or three decades, the collapse of European colonialism, Asia's remarkable economic dynamism, and the emergence of India and China as major political/military actors have combined to render the intellectual climate ever less sympathetic to notions of entrenched Asian deficiency. Although by itself this shift in historiographic sensibility has attracted remarkably little analysis, it has given the search for antecedents to contemporary Asian vigor an emotional impetus, an intellectual sanction, an operational space that were quite absent during the era of unquestioned Western dominance. More or less unself-consciously, many historians now seek to do for Asia what Jones, Landes, and others did for Europe, namely to provide a suitable historic pedigree for current success. After all, one could hardly tell a nobleman, even a parvenu, that his ancestors were beggars.

In practice, revisionist views of European exceptionalism's foundational insistence on East-West incomparability have assumed three principal guises. First, scholars have tried to find Asian analogues to specifically European sociopolitical institutions, among which the two most popular candidates, arguably, have been feudalism⁶ and the public sphere. On the whole, these inquiries bore modest fruit – and in many cases, have been abandoned – because the terms of reference proved too narrow. As regards the public sphere, for example, although scholars of precolonial India and post-1600 China and Japan have argued for local analogues to that European arena of discourse analyzed by Jurgen Habermas, in no Asian society apparently do we find the same institutional safeguards, the same critical surveillance of government and society, or the same habitual assertion of civic power against the state as were central to Habermas' concept. If after 1600 many of the most advanced sectors of Asia supported a growing density of communications and public commentary on intellectual, aesthetic, and literary issues, such developments said far less about the possibilities of European-style democracy in Asia than about more general, politically neutral processes of commercialization and rising literacy.⁷

⁶ See, e.g., Edmund Leach et al., *Feudalism: Comparative Studies* (Sydney, 1985); John W. Hall and Marius Jansen, eds., *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan* (Princeton, 1968), 3–51; Peter Duus, *Feudalism in Japan* (New York, 1993).

⁷ Cf. Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA, 1989); C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information* (Cambridge, 1999), ch. 5; "Symposium: 'Public

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A second, more promising line of inquiry has sought to compare family structures and demography in Europe and Asia. From Thomas Malthus to John Hajnal to E. L. Jones, many argued that one secret to Western economic success lay in northwestern Europe's system of delayed marriages and frequent celibacy, which depressed childbearing and favored capital accumulation within the stem family. This low fertility, low mortality regime is said to have contrasted with the high fertility, high mortality regimes of China and India. For pre-1800 China, at least, this dichotomy has now collapsed. James Lee and others have shown that, in reality, abortion, female infanticide, adoption, low rates of male marriage, chaste widowhood, and greater spacing between births combined to depress Chinese marital fertility to levels far below those in Europe, while keeping overall Chinese growth rates between 1400 and 1800 at about the same level as in Europe. In other words, whereas the European family system limited fertility by controlling access to marriage, China achieved the same result by controlling fertility within marriage. Furthermore, since Chinese could adjust family size to changing circumstances, mortality responses to short-term pressures were no more, and in many cases less, severe than in northwestern Europe.⁸

Given industrialism's centrality to modern narratives, it is hardly surprising that the third line of inquiry, which compares industrial potential in pre-1850 Europe and Asia, has generated the most lively interest. The thrust of these revisionist efforts has been to expand the lineage of modern economic growth and thus to deny exclusive European parentage. Because Japan was Asia's first success story, it was to be expected that earliest efforts would focus on that island realm, where Tokugawa

Sphere' / 'Civil Society' in China?" *Modern China* 19 (1993): 107–240; R. Bin Wong, "Great Expectations," *Chugoku Shigakkai* 3 (1993): 7–49; Frederic Wakeman, "Boundaries of the Public Sphere in Ming and Qing China," *Daedalus* 127 (1998): 167–89; Eiko Ikegami, *Bonds of Civility* (Cambridge, 2005); Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Japan in Print* (Berkeley, 2006).

⁸ On comparative demography, John Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective," in D. V. Glass and D. E. Eversley, eds., *Population in History* (Chicago, 1965), 101–40; Jones, *European Miracle*, 15–21; James Lee and Wang Feng, *One Quarter of Humanity* (Cambridge, MA, 1999); James Lee et al., "Positive Check or Chinese Checks?" *JAS* 61 (2002): 591–607; Tommy Bengtsson et al., *Life Under Pressure: Mortality and Living Standards in Europe and Asia, 1700–1900* (Cambridge, MA, 2004). But see Philip C. C. Huang, "Development or Involution in Eighteenth-Century Britain and China?" *JAS* 61 (2002): 501–38 for a more Malthusian paradigm. In Japan the importance of fertility control has long been recognized.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)*Strange Parallels*

organization, once denounced as an impediment to growth, is now generally credited with laying the foundation for Japan's rapid textile-led expansion after 1880.⁹ Subsequently, historians of precolonial South Asia also discovered trends toward commodification, agricultural specialization, even protoindustrialization that bore at least a superficial similarity to early modern Europe.¹⁰ Most shocking, given China's geographic and cultural centrality, have been assaults on the venerable notion of Chinese economic failure vis-à-vis Japan and the West, an assault led most ably by Kenneth Pomeranz. According to that brilliant and indefatigable scholar, until c. 1800 labor productivity, living standards, consumer culture, resource constraints, and market efficiency in the Yangzi delta, China's economic core, were actually quite comparable to patterns in England, Europe's most advanced sector. Ultimately England alone escaped from an ecological cul-de-sac as a result of three structural factors, all heavily influenced by geography: a) British trade with Eastern Europe and America favored a higher degree of core-periphery specialization, favorable to industrialization in the core, than was possible in China, where manufacturing advances diffused more easily from advanced districts to outlying areas. b) By providing vast quantities of cheap foodstuffs and timber, the New World's "ghost acreage" allowed Britain to transcend ecological limits in a fashion impossible in China. c) Britain was uniquely blessed with abundant and accessible deposits of coal.¹¹

Pomeranz' views have not won universal acceptance. The Europeanist Robert Brenner and China historians Philip Huang and Christopher Isett have disputed his central claim that labor productivity in early modern China and England was comparable. In their view, whereas large farms, mixed cropping, and animal husbandry placed

⁹ See Thomas C. Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan* (Stanford, 1959); idem, *Native Sources of Japanese Industrialization 1750-1920* (Berkeley, 1988), ch. 1; and sources in Ch. 4 *infra*.

¹⁰ Frank Perlin, "Proto-Industrialization and Pre-Colonial South Asia," *PP* 98 (1983): 30-95; Prasannan Parthasarathi, "Rethinking Wages and Competitiveness in the 18th Century: Britain and South India," *PP* 158 (1998): 79-109; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ed., *Merchants, Markets and the State in Early Modern India* (Delhi, 1990); Jack Goody, *The East in the West* (Cambridge, 1996). See too discussions of maritime-dependent economic growth in Southeast Asia in *AC*; plus my "Secular Trends in Burmese Economic History, c. 1350-1830," *MAS* 25 (1991): 1-31.

¹¹ Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence* (Princeton, 2000); idem, "Political Economy on the Eve of Industrialization," *AHR* 107 (2002): 425-46; idem, "Beyond the East-West Binary," *JAS* 61 (2002): 539-90. Cf. Andre Gunder Frank, *Re-Orient* (Berkeley, 1998).

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Excerpt

[More information](#)*A Far Promontory*

England on a path of growing capitalization and declining labor inputs per land unit, which freed labor for an urban-based industrial revolution, the Yangzi basin's small-farms, crops-only regime moved it in the opposite direction toward rural labor intensification and involution.¹² Others have emphasized less geographic and economic than cultural and political differences. C. A. Bayly and Patrick O'Brien, for example, have called attention to the advantages that western Europe in general, not merely Britain, derived from the impersonal, transgenerational character of commercial enterprise; from the peculiarly European ideology of progress and techniques of protoscientific inquiry; and from a vigorously critical and increasingly patriotic public opinion. Such sentiment was a precondition for timely public investments, in particular for those massive Hanoverian commitments to naval and military power that allowed Britain to reap hugely disproportionate rewards from agricultural intensification in Asia and the Americas.¹³

This diversity of opinion among Pomeranz and his critics (to which we shall return in Chapter 5) should not blind us to overarching agreements. Many historians now assign a relatively late date, the 17th or even the late 18th century, to Britain's divergence from "normative" Eurasian patterns, while attributing that escape to contingent, multifactoral synergies rather than to legacies of medieval origin. Moreover, virtually all scholars now reject binary contrasts between an economically dynamic West and a preternaturally stagnant East. Brenner and Isett do so because they split off the English farmer from his less market-responsive counterparts elsewhere in Europe as well as in China. Most

¹² Huang, "Development or Involution"; Brenner and Isett, "England's Divergence." Likewise van Zanden, "Road to Industrial Revolution," 342, 344, 348 argues that appreciably higher interest rates and a far lower incidence of wage labor in China than in western Europe point to less efficient market integration by the 17th century, if not earlier. Cf. Pomeranz' reply to Huang, "Beyond the East-West Binary," and discussion in Ch. 5 *infra*.

¹³ C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914* (Malden, MA, 2004), 58–83, 312–15; idem, "South Asia and the 'Great Divergence,'" *Itinerario* 24 (2000): 89–103; Patrick O'Brien, "The Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Reconfiguration of the British Industrial Revolution as a Conjuncture in Global History," *Itinerario* 24 (2000), 117–34; idem, "The Foundations of European Industrialization," in Jose Casas Pardo, ed., *Economic Effects of the European Expansion 1491–1824* (Stuttgart, 1992), 463–502. Also P. H. H. Vries, "Governing Growth," *JWH* 13 (2002): 67–138, esp. 112–14. To be fair, Pomeranz, *Great Divergence*, 194–206 also emphasizes coercion in the Atlantic economy but ties it less closely to broad cultural and political differences.

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Victor Lieberman

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Strange Parallels*

others do so because they see in various parts of Eurasia not only “extensive growth” but bouts of “Smithian growth” lasting anywhere from 75 to 200 years.

In extensive growth, output expands through the sheer addition of production units, but in Smithian growth wider exchange (instigated by growing demand), greater specialization, and commercial economies of scale reduce transaction costs and thus improve productivity and income within a conservative technological framework.¹⁴ Plausible claims for Smithian growth have been made not only for medieval Europe, early modern England, and Holland, but also *inter alia* for Angkor, Tokugawa Japan, Mughal South Asia, and Song and Qing China.¹⁵ In a word, much recent economic, like demographic, research is inclined to regard premodern Eurasia as a zone not of opposed dichotomies but of potentially comparable sites. The same point has been made by John F. Richards, whose recent study of agrarian and maritime expansion between 1500 and 1800 argues that key sectors of Europe and Asia exhibited similar patterns of frontier settlement, resource scarcity, and energy constraint.¹⁶

¹⁴ Smithian refers to the growth process envisioned by Adam Smith. The other chief types of growth are “involutionary,” of the type Huang posits for Qing China, wherein labor productivity and income decline through demographic pressure on a static resource base; and “modern,” of the type Britain enjoyed after 1850, in which labor productivity and per capita income grow continuously within a constantly expanding technological frontier. Needless to say, many hybrid cases defy these ideal types. See Victor Lieberman, “Transcending East-West Dichotomies,” in Lieberman, ed., *Beyond Binary Histories* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1999), 53–54 and sources therein; O’Brien, “Reconstruction, Rehabilitation,” 126–30; and S. R. Epstein, *Freedom and Growth* (London, 2000), 7–11.

¹⁵ Previous notes on Asian economies, plus *SP*, chs. 2, 3; E. L. Jones, *Growth Recurring* (Oxford, 1988); Jack Goldstone, “Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History,” *JWH* 13 (2002): 323–90; Li Bozhong, *Agricultural Development in Jiangnan, 1620–1850* (New York, 1998); Timothy Brooke and Gregory Blue, eds., *China and Historic Capitalism* (Cambridge, 1999).

¹⁶ John F. Richards, *The Unending Frontier* (Berkeley, 2003). All three critiques of European exceptionalism – the search for similarities in sociopolitical institutions, in demography, and in economic/industrial potential – are examples of comparative history, that is to say, investigations of structural similarities between societies regardless of chronology or physical linkages. As such, they may be distinguished from connective history, which may be defined as inquiry into contacts between geographically distinct but contemporary societies regardless of structure. For notable examples of the latter, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (New Delhi, 2005); idem, *Explorations in Connected History: Mughals and Franks* (New Delhi, 2005); John Wills, Jr., *1688: A Global History* (New York, 2001); William McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Garden City, NY, 1976); Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony* (New York, 1989); Jerry Bentley, “Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization

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Excerpt

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Building on Volume 1, this book develops a fourth axis of Eurasian comparison: long-term trends to political and cultural integration. To be sure, we already have a modest comparative literature on pre-1850 Eurasian state formation.¹⁷ But earlier research differs from the present effort in theme, chronology, and geographic scope.

Previous writers have compared the institutional workings and economic impact of early modern states. For example, R. Bin Wong, using Chinese and West European norms to interrogate one another, contrasted Chinese and European policies toward elite autonomy, social welfare, and taxation. Goldstone examined the contribution of ecological strains to state breakdowns in early modern England, France, Turkey, and China. P. H. H. Vries compared European, Qing, Ottoman, and Mughal fiscal policies in order to determine whether, as is often claimed, peculiarly European patterns of mercantilism and warfare boosted early modern economic growth.¹⁸

Yet no scholar has considered the central questions of this volume: Why during at least a thousand years did regions on the far reaches of Eurasia, with distinctive social and economic systems and little or no contact, experience parallel consolidations? Why not uninterrupted

in World History," *AHR* 101 (1996): 749–70; idem, *Old World Encounters* (Oxford, 1993); William Atwell, "Time, Money, and the Weather," *JAS* 61 (2002): 83–114; Geoffrey Gunn, *First Globalization* (Lanham, MD, 2003); J. R. McNeill and William McNeill, *The Human Web* (New York, 2003). On the distinction between comparative and connective histories, see too *SP*, 14. As will be seen, this volume employs both comparative and connective approaches.

¹⁷ Following Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1900* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), 1, "state" is here defined as a coercion-wielding organization that is distinct from household and kinship groups and that exercises priority over all other organizations within a substantial territory. Insofar as many pre-1800 states, esp. in Southeast Asia and India, necessarily tolerated, in theory as well as deed, the use of force by highly autonomous subordinate groups, the former description seems more widely applicable than Max Weber's definition of the state as a community that claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within a territory.

¹⁸ R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed* (Ithaca, 1997), chs. 4–6; Jack Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley, 1991); idem, "Efflorescences"; Vries, "Governing Growth." On comparative state formation, see too Cemal Kafadar, "The Ottomans and Europe," in Thomas Brady, Jr., et al., eds., *Handbook of European History 1400–1600* (Grand Rapids, 1994), 589–635; Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation* (Chicago, 1995), pt. 1; "Early Modernities" issue of *Daedalus* 127 (1998); essays in Lieberman, *Beyond Binary Histories*; Peter Turchin, *War and Peace and War* (New York, 2006), focusing on ethnic competition as a goad to state formation; Peter Turchin and Sergey Nefedov, *Secular Cycles* (forthcoming).

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construction in one region, permanent collapse in another, and random, directionless oscillations in yet a third? Why, as noted, did interregna in diverse realms become ever less disruptive (an interregnum I define as the temporary collapse of effective central power), and why did such disorders correlate ever more closely between regions? Why in each realm over several centuries did capital and elite norms of language, religion, social organization, and ethnicity tend to modify and displace provincial and plebeian traditions? In other words, why did local ethnicities and dialects coalesce into more coherent imperial or kingdom-wide cultures? Could political integration proceed in the absence of cultural consolidation – or vice versa? Can we distinguish between uniquely Asian and European political and cultural trajectories, or did intracontinental differences in some respects exceed those between Asia and Europe? Most basic and curious, what factors governed Eurasian coordination? What was the relation, for example, between agrarian growth, long-distance trade, technological diffusion, and interstate pressures – and how did those relations change by time and place? Why in much of Eurasia did the pace of integration accelerate markedly between 1500 or 1600 and 1800 – and does that acceleration in itself justify the term “early modern” as a Eurasian-wide periodization?¹⁹ How shall we relate European, mainland Southeast Asian, and Japanese patterns to the experience of China, Southwest Asia, South Asia, and island Southeast Asia, in all of which integration relied more heavily on external agency and in most cases followed a different chronology? In brief, in what ways and to what extent can we regard premodern Eurasia as a coherent ecumene?

Whereas most other comparative studies have adopted a limited time frame, commonly the 17th to early 19th centuries or some fraction thereof,²⁰ I am convinced that the sustained character of Eurasian parallels, in particular the declining duration and severity of successive

¹⁹ On use of the term “early modern,” cf. John Richards, “Early Modern India and World History,” *JWH* 8 (1997): 197–209; Anthony Reid, ed., *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era* (Ithaca, 1993); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions* (Ann Arbor, 2001), 261–65; *SP*, 79–80, esp. n. 117; and discussion *infra*.

²⁰ S. A. M. Adshead, *China in World History* (3rd ed., New York, 2000), and to a lesser extent, Wong, *China Transformed* are exceptions. See too the essays by R. I. Moore, “Transformation of Europe”; idem, “Feudalism and Revolution in the Making of Europe,” in M. Barcelo et al., eds., *El Feudalismo Comptat I Debatut* (Valencia, 2003), 19–34. Although concentrating on a more narrow period than my inquiry, Moore considers the same conundrum of far-flung coordination c. 900 to 1300, which he compares *en passant* to the Axial Age of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.E.