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978-0-521-53036-1 - *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830*

Victor Lieberman

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Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830

Volume 1: Integration on the Mainland

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“Strange Parallels will certainly be seen for decades to come as one of those intellectual enterprises that helped define a generation of thinking about a particular time and place, in novel and often wonderful ways.”

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University of London

“Let me say again that this [book] is a masterpiece. . . . It is extremely important and will, I predict, become a landmark not only in the study of Southeast Asia but also in the study of early modern world history.”

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Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830

*Volume 2: Mainland Mirrors: Europe, Japan, China, South Asia,
and the Islands*

Blending fine-grained case studies with overarching theory, this book seeks both to integrate Southeast Asia into world history and to rethink much of Eurasia's premodern past. It argues that Southeast Asia, Europe, Japan, China, and South Asia all embodied idiosyncratic versions of a Eurasian-wide pattern whereby local isolates cohered to form ever larger, more stable, more complex political and cultural systems. With accelerating force, climatic, commercial, and military stimuli joined to produce patterns of linear-cum-cyclic construction that became remarkably synchronized even between regions that had no contact with one another. Yet this study also distinguishes between two zones of integration, one where indigenous groups remained in control and a second where agency gravitated to external conquest elites. Here, then, is a fundamentally original view of Eurasia during a 1,000-year period that speaks to both historians of individual regions and those interested in global trends.

Both a specialist in precolonial Burma and a comparativist interested in global patterns, Victor Lieberman graduated first in his class from Yale University and obtained his doctorate from the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. His publications include *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580–1760*, which won the Harry J. Benda Prize from the Association for Asian Studies; *Beyond Binary Histories: Re-Imagining Eurasia to c. 1830*, which he edited and an earlier version of which appeared as a special issue of *Modern Asian Studies* devoted to Lieberman's scholarship; and *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830, Volume 1: Integration on the Mainland*, which won the World History Association Book Prize. He is the Marvin B. Becker Collegiate Professor of History and Professor of Southeast Asian History at the University of Michigan.

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Volume 2

*Mainland Mirrors: Europe, Japan, China,
South Asia, and the Islands*

VICTOR LIEBERMAN

University of Michigan



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To Sharon, forever

Jessica and Brad

Emily and Jeffrey

Marc

Elias

Elijah, Keren, Isaac, Julius, Adira, and Elia

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AC	Anthony Reid, <i>Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce</i> , 2 vols. (New Haven, 1988, 1993)
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
BEFEO	<i>Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient</i>
BKI	<i>Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i> , University of London
CASS	<i>Canadian-American Slavic Studies</i>
CC	<i>Climatic Change</i>
CEHI	Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, eds., <i>The Cambridge Economic History of India</i> , Vol. 1: c. 1200–c. 1750 (Cambridge, 1982)
CHAC	Michael Loewe and Edward Shaughnessy, eds., <i>The Cambridge History of Ancient China</i> (Cambridge, 1999)
CHC, vol. I	Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, eds., <i>The Cambridge History of China</i> , Vol. 1: <i>The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 BC–AD 220</i> (Cambridge, 1986)
CHC, vol. III	Denis Twitchett, ed., <i>The Cambridge History of China</i> , Vol. 3: <i>Sui and T'ang China, 589–906 AD, Part 1</i> (Cambridge, 1979)
CHC, vol. VI	Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, eds., <i>The Cambridge History of China</i> , Vol. 6: <i>Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368</i> (Cambridge, 1994)
CHC, vol. VII	Frederick Mote and Denis Twitchett, eds., <i>The Cambridge History of China</i> , Vol. 7: <i>The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 1</i> (Cambridge, 1988)

Abbreviations Used in the Notes

CHC, vol. VIII	Denis Twitchett and Frederick Mote, eds., <i>The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 8: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 2</i> (Cambridge, 1986)
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CHJ, vol. V	Marius Jansen, ed., <i>The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 5: The Nineteenth Century</i> (Cambridge, 1989)
CHSEA	Nicholas Tarling, ed., <i>The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol. 1: From Early Times to c. 1800</i> (Cambridge, 1992)
CIHC	Patricia Buckley Ebrey, <i>The Cambridge Illustrated History of China</i> (Cambridge, 1996)
CIHMA, vol. II	Robert Fossier, ed., <i>The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Middle Ages, Vol. 2: 950–1250</i> (Cambridge, 1997)
CIHMA, vol. III	Robert Fossier, ed., <i>The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Middle Ages, Vol. 3: 1250–1520</i> (Cambridge, 1986)
CSSH	<i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i>
EAH	Ainslie Embree, ed., <i>Encyclopedia of Asian History</i> , 4 vols. (New York, 1988)
EHR	<i>Economic History Review</i>
FH	<i>French History</i>
FHS	<i>French Historical Studies</i>
FzOG	<i>Forschungen zur Osteuropaischen Geschichte</i>
HJ	Conrad Totman, <i>A History of Japan</i> (Walden, MA, 2000)
HJAS	<i>Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies</i>
HM	Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Andaya, <i>A History of Malaysia</i> (2nd ed., Honolulu, 2001)

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HMI	M. C. Ricklefs, <i>A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1200</i> (3rd ed., Stanford, 2001)
HUS	<i>Harvard Ukrainian Studies</i>
IBE	Catherine Asher and Cynthia Talbot, <i>India Before Europe</i> (Cambridge, 2006)
IESHR	<i>Indian Economic and Social History Review</i>
IHR	<i>International History Review</i>
JAH	<i>Journal of Asian History</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JAS	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i>
JEEH	<i>Journal of European Economic History</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Economic History</i>
JEMH	<i>Journal of Early Modern History</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
JfGO	<i>Jahrbucher für Geschichte Osteuropas</i>
JGH	<i>Journal of Global History</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Japanese Studies</i>
JMBRAS	<i>Journal of the Malay Branch, Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JMH	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JSEAH	<i>Journal of Southeast Asian History</i>
JSEAS	<i>Journal of Southeast Asian Studies</i>
JSH	<i>Journal of Social History</i>
JWH	<i>Journal of World History</i>
LCH	Sheldon Pollock, ed., <i>Literary Cultures in History</i> (Berkeley, 2003)
LIC	<i>Late Imperial China</i>
MAS	<i>Modern Asian Studies</i>
MN	<i>Monumenta Nipponica</i>
ms	manuscript
NCHI	<i>The New Cambridge History of India</i>
NCMH, vol. II	Rosamond McKitterick, ed., <i>The New Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. 2, c. 700–c. 900</i> (Cambridge, 1995)
NCMH, vol. VII	Christopher Allmand, ed., <i>The New Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. 7, c. 1415–c. 1500</i> (Cambridge, 1998)
n.d.	no date
pers. commun.	personal communication
PP	<i>Past and Present</i>

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Abbreviations Used in the Notes

PPP	<i>Paleogeography, Paleoclimatology, Paleoecology</i>
RH	<i>Russian History/Histoire Russe</i>
RR	<i>The Russian Review</i>
SEAR	<i>South East Asia Research</i>
SEER	<i>Slavonic and East European Review</i>
SP	Victor Lieberman, <i>Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830, Vol. 1: Integration on the Mainland</i> (Cambridge, 2003)
SR	<i>Slavic Review</i>
SYMT	Paul Jakov Smith and Richard von Glahn, eds., <i>The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition</i> (Cambridge, MA, 2003)

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Preface

Not unlike Michel de Montaigne, I found that the more I ate, the bigger my appetite became.¹ Originally I intended to write a one-volume history of mainland Southeast Asia from c. 800 to 1830, with a concluding chapter suggesting similarities to premodern Russia. But as I read, I began to sense that mainland Southeast Asia shared critical developmental features not only with Russia but with other far-flung sectors of Eurasia, and that analysis of those features could help to free Southeast Asia from the historiographic ghetto in which it had long been confined. I resolved therefore to supplement mainland history with Eurasian comparisons. Rather than try to cover Eurasia at large, I decided to develop case studies of Russia, France, and Japan, for it seemed that the history of those regions, focusing on cyclic-cum-linear state consolidation under indigenous elites, stood closest to patterns in mainland Southeast Asia's principal realms, namely, Burma, Siam, and Vietnam.

I still assumed that this would be a one-volume work, albeit a rather long one. But eventually it became clear that a single volume could not contain the necessary argument and documentation. With the deeply appreciated support of Frank Smith, Editorial Director for Academic Books at Cambridge University Press, I therefore separated the comparative material on Europe and Japan to form a second volume.

The matter, however, did not rest there. When Volume 1 appeared in 2003, the Preface said that Volume 2 would cover Russia, France, Japan, and island Southeast Asia. As research for those chapters proceeded, I began to realize that mainland Southeast Asia, most of Europe, and

¹ Albert Thibaudet and Maurice Rat, eds., *Montaigne: Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1962), 952.

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Japan together constituted part of a distinctive Eurasian subcategory that I term “the protected zone” and the coherence of which becomes apparent only when contrasted with another subcategory that I term the “exposed zone.” Defined primarily by subjection to Inner Asian conquest elites, the latter zone includes Southeast Asia’s principal neighbors, China and South Asia, together with most of Southwest Asia. Accordingly, Volume 2 now has been expanded to include substantial chapters on China and South Asia.

Thus, for better or worse, what began as a modest study of mainland Southeast Asia has become a history of much of the premodern world. In undertaking this expansion, my comparative goals are several. By showing how ostensibly unconnected peoples on the fringes of two continents experienced broadly comparable political and cultural trajectories, governed by a similar constellation of forces, with coordinated rhythms of cyclic and secular construction, I seek to demonstrate that these societies constituted variations on a hitherto unrecognized, thousand-year-long Eurasian pattern. At the same time I argue that the protected zone as a whole differed substantially from China and South Asia, most notably in the relation between indigenous and external agency, but also in developmental chronology. That is to say, because of its position along Eurasia’s periphery, the protected zone not only remained more insulated from Inner Asian conquest, but also generated charter civilizations appreciably later than much of the exposed zone. These protected-zone features in turn often were associated with smaller-scale, more manageable demographic and political units. I considered dividing the present volume into two sections, one on the protected zone, and the second on the exposed zone, but ultimately declined to do so for fear that by masking overlapping similarities, such an approach might tell in favor of replacing the old European/non-European dichotomy with a no less deceptively reified bifurcation. Still, I shall be pleased if others are inspired to substantiate, refute, or modify the protected-zone thesis. Finally, I attempt to show – somewhat counterintuitively – that broad Eurasian parallels can enrich local understandings. If we recognize, for example, that for much of the period c. 900 to 1800 mainland Southeast Asia, China, parts of South Asia, and much of Europe experienced coordinated demographic, and by extension political, rhythms, we are obliged to consider what common elements – climatic, epidemiological, commercial, intellectual – were at work. Explanations of local change framed entirely in terms of idiosyncratic cultural or social traits become *prima facie* suspect. If

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we consider that Japan's demographic/economic rhythms frequently diverged from those in Europe and Southeast Asia, the isolation of key variables becomes yet more feasible.

Yet although my geographic coverage has mushroomed, the Southeast Asian roots of this project remain much in evidence. Reconceptualizing Eurasia as a coherent, interactive ecumene and assessing Southeast Asia's place within that ecumene I see as complementary tasks. Hence this volume's subtitle: *Mainland Mirrors*. A Southeast Asian focus, in fact, governs three aspects of my presentation. First, specific conceptual categories – including the protected zone, charter civilizations, postcharter collapse, politicized ethnicity, and political cycles punctuated by ever less disruptive interregna – derive initially from my study of the mainland, whose experience in some ways provides an analytic template. By extension, discussions of other realms, particularly in Chapters 2 to 4, regularly consider similarities and differences with mainland Southeast Asia. Second, I have grouped societies in concentric circles defined not by geography, but by thematic proximity to mainland patterns. Volume 1 was specifically about the mainland. The case studies of this volume begin with the protected zone, whose patterns most closely resembled those of the mainland, before moving to exposed-zone regions, whose developmental affiliations were less close. Moreover, my choice of China and South Asia, rather than, say, the Ottoman empire, to illustrate exposed-zone patterns in Chapters 5 and 6 reflects my desire to examine areas in closest physical and cultural proximity to Southeast Asia. Third, having examined non-Southeast Asian realms, I circle back, as it were, in the last chapter to consider archipelagic Southeast Asia's relation to continental patterns. I conclude that for most of their history the islands' role was much like that of the mainland, but that starting in the 16th century and with increasing force to the end of the period under review, European interventions in the archipelago in some ways resembled nomad interventions in Asia's great agrarian heartlands. (Having finally satisfied my comparative appetites, I might add that my forthcoming research will return to precolonial Burma to reexamine some of *Strange Parallels'* larger theses in a controlled local setting.)

If non-Burma specialists helped me with Volume 1, for the current book, given that I have conducted primary research in none of the realms under review, my debts are yet more numerous and substantial. Often I have benefited from the collegiality of historians whom I have yet to meet in person and several of whom volunteered to read Chapter 1 as well as the chapter of their own expertise.

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For Russia my chief guide has been my Michigan colleague Valerie Kivelson, whose enthusiasm for all aspects of Russian history infected me some 15 years ago. Her comments on various drafts of Chapters 2 and 3 and her suggestions for further readings proved indispensable. Marshall Poe also advanced my understanding of pre-Petrine military and administrative history, while Richard Hellie provided an extremely helpful line-by-line critique of all pre-1620 Russian material in Chapter 2.

My writing on pre-1350 France profited from perceptive, detailed critiques by Patrick Geary, David Potter, and my Michigan colleague Paolo Squatriti. Paolo has done his best to keep me abreast of developments in medieval research. For help with Renaissance and Reformation France I am grateful for careful, thoughtful commentary by Mack Holt and Michael Wintroub, while my drafts on Bourbon and Revolutionary France benefited from the astute insights not only of my Michigan colleague Dena Goodman but of David Bell, William Beik, and Michael Kwass. The willingness of these non-Michigan scholars to share their knowledge at length with a virtual stranger has been remarkable.

A similar altruism enriched the Japan chapter. Philip Brown, whom I met when he served as a visiting professor in Ann Arbor, carefully critiqued my first draft of Chapter 4 and responded with patient detail to subsequent e-mail inquiries. My Michigan colleague Tomi Tonomura also read a draft of Chapter 4 and addressed a stream of e-mail and verbal questions. Conrad Totman (whose *A History of Japan* became my early guide), Lee Butler, Matthew Stavros, Jonathan Zwicker, and Peter Shapinsky provided helpful comments on all or part of early versions of Chapter 4. The final draft drew on generous reviews by Karen Wigen, David Howell, and Anne Walthall, all three of whom went to considerable trouble on my behalf. Professors Brown, Howell, Wigen, Butler, and Stavros also gave me offprints and/or manuscripts of recent and forthcoming publications. William Wayne Farris supplied painstaking commentary on my pre-Tokugawa efforts and graciously allowed me to read in manuscript his forthcoming book *The Population of Ancient Japan*. That work, in combination with his commentary and his recently published *Japan's Medieval Population*, utterly transformed my view of pre-1400 Japan. Ken Ito and Joan Piggott helped me with specific inquiries. Memorable conversations some years ago with Mary Elizabeth Berry informed my early understandings of Japan and alerted me to some of the pitfalls that comparative inquiry into Japanese history was likely to create.

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The vastness of Chinese historiography and the multiple incarnations through which Chapter 5 evolved mean that my debts for that chapter are no less extensive. Michigan scholars C. S. Chang – whose two-volume *The Rise of the Chinese Empire* is only the most tangible of his many forms of generous assistance – Marty Powers, Miranda Brown, James Lee, and Ernie Young helped me with both overviews and specific problems. John Wills, Jr. (a man of contagious intellect and affability), Li Bozhong, William Atwell, Tonio Andrade, and Christian Lamouroux carefully critiqued early drafts and reshaped my approach to controversial issues. Li Bozhong kindly let me read several unpublished manuscripts. In addition, Mark Elliott, Peter Perdue, and Patricia Buckley Ebrey each supplied commentary on the penultimate version of Chapter 5, spotting questionable claims and interpretations, alerting me to new publications, and pushing me to a level of historiographic awareness to which I could not have aspired on my own. To say I am deeply grateful is inadequate.

Early drafts of Chapter 6 on South Asia benefited from reviews by my Ann Arbor colleagues Tom Trautmann, Barbara Metcalf, and Farina Mir. Through extended correspondence, Alan Strathern also critiqued this chapter and led me to rethink big issues of cultural transfer and integration in South Asia and Eurasia generally. I benefited from discussions with Richard Eaton on Indian Islam and from conversational insights and an unpublished paper on the Marathas provided by Stewart Gordon. The final version of Chapter 6 reflects penetrating comments by Cynthia Talbot and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, both of whom rescued me from factual errors and challenged me to rethink assumptions and terms of reference.

For Chapter 7 I was fortunate to draw on insightful critiques by Merle Ricklefs, Barbara Watson Andaya, Leonard Andaya, and Will Redfern, each of whom approached island Southeast Asia from a slightly different geographic and thematic perspective. Professors Ricklefs, Watson Andaya, and Andaya also provided forthcoming essays in manuscript. Greg Bankoff kindly reviewed my Philippine material, whereas Jan Wiseman Christie answered inquiries and provided me with invaluable unpublished papers on early Java.

With problems of economic theory, David Hancock; with epidemiology, Marty Pernick; and with Chinese climate reconstructions, Pao K. Wang assisted me. Rudi Lindner answered my quixotic queries on Inner Asian and Ottoman history, as did Juan Cole on Indian and general Muslim history, and Carla Sinopoli on both Asian and European archeology.

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Roger Albin, a generous polymath in the University of Michigan Medical School, provided a well-informed critical reading of the entire manuscript. As external reviewer for Volume 2, Barbara Watson Andaya offered welcome suggestions for strengthening my Conclusion and general presentation. I have profited too from editorial assistance by my lifelong friend Charles Berman and from extended historiographic discussions with my close friend and Michigan colleague Todd Endelman.

Strange though it may sound, rarely, if ever, did two readers of the same material offer the same criticisms. I have therefore had an abundance of input from a wide variety of angles. If, despite this multifaceted support, inaccuracies, dubious interpretations, and other deficiencies remain, the fault is entirely my own.

This research benefited from the following grants and fellowships: a Social Science Research Council/American Council of Learned Societies Research Grant; a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for University Teachers; a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend; and from the University of Michigan, a Horace H. Rackham Faculty Fellowship, an Institute for the Humanities Fellowship, and publication subventions from the Office of the Vice-President for Research to produce maps and charts. The latter were skillfully prepared by Malgorzata Krawczyk. For permission to incorporate their research findings in Figures 2.3a to 2.3f, I thank Michael Aung-Thwin, Bob Hudson, David B. Miller, Hugh D. Clout, and Peter Turchin, and for permission to use material in Figure 6.2, Jillian Luff.

A word finally about sources. With some exceptions, I stopped reading new literature for Chapters 2 and 3 in 2005 or 2006, and for Chapters 4 to 7 in 2006 to 2008. I appreciate as keenly as any scholar the value of a bibliography, and originally I intended to list at the end of Volume 2 all sources cited in the footnotes. It turned out, however, that this would have added 130 pages to an already ponderous text. A bibliography for both volumes is therefore available online at <http://www.umich.edu/~eurasia/strangeparallels/bibliography.html>. To facilitate identification, the first time each item appears in the footnotes of a new chapter in this volume, it receives a full citation.

V.L.

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