The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands

This book explores the Eurasian borderlands as contested “shatter zones” which have generated some of the world’s most significant conflicts. Analyzing the struggles of the Habsburg, Russian, Ottoman, Iranian, and Qing empires, Alfred J. Rieber surveys the period from the rise of the great multicultural, conquest empires in the late medieval/early modern period to their collapse in the early twentieth century. He charts how these empires expanded along moving, military frontiers, competing with one another in war, diplomacy, and cultural practices, while the subjugated peoples of the borderlands strove to maintain their cultures and to defend their autonomy. The gradual and fragmentary adaptation of Western constitutional ideas, military reforms, cultural practices, and economic penetration began to undermine these ruling ideologies and institutions, leading to the collapse of all five empires in revolution and war within little more than a decade between 1911 and 1923.

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The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands

*From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the End of the First World War*

Alfred J. Rieber
To Marsha: “... like gold to airy thinness beat ...”
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Acknowledgments

All books have histories; big books have long histories. Thinking back I uncover shards of memories scattered over a lifetime. A grandfather’s tales of visits to the sites of ancient empires; the discovery of Owen Lattimore and undergraduate papers on the Crimean Tatars, Afghanistan, and Mongolia, Manchuria and the Soviet Far East as a regional system; Halil Inalcik’s first lecture course in the United States; the Interdisciplinary Seminar on Multicultural Societies at the University of Pennsylvania inspired by Lee Benson; seminars on the Comparative History of Bureaucracies with Martin Wolfe and Robert Hartwell; supervising graduate students at the Central European University from the borderlands, Croatia to the Buryat Mongol Republic. All of it pieced together with generous support as University Research Professor at the Central European University from the Open Society (Soros) Foundation in New York. In addition, I benefited from a fellowship in the History of Comparative Empires at Glamorgan University, Wales; brief teaching stints back at Penn and at the University of Maryland; a term as Senior Research Fellow at St. Antony’s College, Oxford; and as IREX Senior Exchange Fellow in Russia. My thanks also to the staff of the library of the Central European University for their invaluable assistance in ordering books and obtaining materials through inter-library loan.

Parts of the book were read at different stages by Fikret Adenir, Virginia Aksan, Charles Ingrao, Andreas Kappeler, Michael Khodarkovsky, Alexei Miller, Christine Philliou, Evelyn Rawski, and Richard Wortman, all of whom deserve my thanks for their critical comments and helpful suggestions. Two anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press stimulated me to make extensive revisions. I am grateful to Emily Gioielli and Lyn Flight for help in preparing the manuscript. Michael Watson of Cambridge University Press was most supportive of the project. I bear sole responsibility for any errors that may remain.

My gratitude to Marsha Siefert, hinted at in the dedication, extends to all aspects of our shared intellectual life: her patient listening to often half-formed ideas, helping them to take shape, rescuing me from
computer-induced despair, tolerating the personal idiosyncrasies that arise during long immersion in writing, and for just being there.

I am grateful to colleagues for invitations to explore some of these themes at the universities of Chicago, Carnegie-Mellon, Loyola (Chicago), Michigan, the Harriman Institute at Columbia University, the University of Cambridge, St. Antony’s, Oxford, and the University of Zagreb. David Cox transformed my rough sketches into excellent maps.

Note on Romanization

In wrestling with this perennial problem, I offer solutions that will surely not satisfy everyone. The Library of Congress system has been followed in general for Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Ottoman Turkish, and Persian. The pinyin system has been adopted (reluctantly) for Chinese. I have retained diacritical marks in Hungarian, Polish, and Romanian. When the same term appears in two languages, such as qizilbashı (Turkish) and qizilbashi (Persian), I have tried to use one consistently, in this case Persian, reflecting the primary cultural context in which the subject appears. The spelling ulama has been used throughout, reflecting its Arabic origins. Exceptions abound, mainly due to the frequency with which words have become familiar in English language texts. But this too is rather arbitrary. In transliterating Ukrainian names I have generally used the Russian spellings of place names to acknowledge the imperial structure, and Ukrainian spellings of individuals to acknowledge ethnic identities. The exception is Map 6.1 showing the independent Ukraine after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, where I have retained the Ukrainian spellings of place names.