# The World Imagined

Taking an inter-disciplinary approach, Spruyt explains the political organization of three non-European international societies from early modernity to the late nineteenth century. The Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal empires; the Sinocentric tributary system; and the Southeast Asian galactic empires, all which differed in key respects from the modern Westphalian state system. In each of these societies, collective beliefs were critical in structuring domestic orders and relations with other polities. These multi-ethnic empires allowed for greater accommodation and heterogeneity in comparison to the homogeneity that is demanded by the modern nation-state. Furthermore, Spruyt examines the encounter between these non-European systems and the West. Contrary to unidirectional descriptions of the encounter, these non-Westphalian polities creatively adapted to Western principles of organization and international conduct. By illuminating the encounter of the West and these Eurasian polities, this book serves to question the popular wisdom of modernity, wherein the Western nation-state is perceived as the desired norm, to be replicated in other polities.

Hendrik Spruyt is Norman Dwight Harris Professor of International Relations at Northwestern University. Among his publications are: *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (1994), winner of the J. David Greenstone Award; *Ending Empire: Contested Sovereignty and Territorial Partition* (2005); and, with Alexander Cooley, *Contracting States: Sovereign Transfers in International Relations* (2009).

*LSE International Studies*



This series, published in association with the Centre for International Studies at the London School of Economics, is centred on three main themes. First, the series is oriented around work that is transdisciplinary, which challenges disciplinary conventions and develops arguments that cannot be grasped within existing disciplines. It will include work combining a wide range of fields, including international relations, international law, political theory, history, sociology and ethics. Second, it comprises books that contain an overtly international or transnational dimension, but not necessarily focused simply within the discipline of International Relations. Finally, the series will publish books that use scholarly inquiry as a means of addressing pressing political concerns. Books in the series may be predominantly theoretical, or predominantly empirical, but all will say something of significance about political issues that exceed national boundaries.

Previous books in the series

*Culture and Order in World Politics* Andrew Phillips and Christian Reus-Smit (eds.)
*On Cultural Diversity: International Theory in a World of Difference* Christian Reus-Smit

# The World Imagined

## *Collective Beliefs and Political Order in the Sinocentric, Islamic and Southeast Asian International Societies*

Hendrik Spruyt
*Northwestern University*

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108491211
DOI: 10.1017/9781108867948



First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow Cornwall

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-108-49121-1 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-108-81174-3 Paperback

For Lucy Eleonore Lyons,

*mijn levensgezel*

# Contents

# Figures

# Preface

This book is a book of trespass. Taking to heart Max Weber's exclamation that he was "not a donkey and did not have a field," I admittedly trespass across fields. (I will remain mute on the other element of his quip.) Interdisciplinary work across fields, often advocated and extolled, in practice encounters numerous barriers in its transversal attempts. Where one reader finds too much social science and not enough history, another will decry too much history and too little science. Anthropologists uneasily engage with historians,[1] political scientists decry the lack of rigorous causal explanations in historical studies, and so on. Even within the same disciplinary fields, multiple perspectives and intellectual orientations abound. One person's icon is another's *bête noire.*[2] Methodological and epistemological proclivities diverge, compounded by variant political views. Thus, even my field (if I had to pick one simply based on the origin of my wages), the field of international relations, is populated by Realists, Liberals, Constructivists, Post-Modernists, and numerous variations thereof.

Nevertheless, I make no apologies for my trespass. I start from the premise that we write for each other in the broadest sense of our common intellectual pursuit. Scholarship should not confine itself to a small group of professional academics working in minutely defined subfields. For that reason as well, I make no apologies for working largely with secondary materials rather than attempting to delve deeply into primary sources. Interdisciplinary approaches must, and gladly, avail themselves of the extraordinary work of historians, anthropologists, and others who have mastered Sanskrit, Ottoman, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Manchu and who know how to evaluate the credibility of the "official" histories of the Ming Dynasty or the Ottoman records. I assume as well that the specialists in

[1] See Geertz's remarks regarding the disquietude in anthropology. Geertz 2000, 89–97.
[2] To stay with Geertz as an example, his book *Negara*, an account of the theater state in Bali, is widely acclaimed, though others, such as M. C. Ricklefs, himself an acknowledged scholar of Indonesian history, considered it doubtful that "it would be regarded as making a serious contribution." Ricklefs 1983, 185.

those fields aim to write for scholars who are not conversant in those languages, or less adept in navigating the archival records.

This book focuses on two major issues. First, I aim to demonstrate how collective beliefs influenced the political organization of several early modern, non-Western, international societies. In the process, I suggest how collective belief systems should be studied by looking at their material manifestation in rituals, dominant narratives, architecture, and institutions. Second, I discuss how these societies conducted their interpolity relations and how they confronted the European powers and the Westphalian state system.

To address these issues, I have inevitably been drawn into discussions of what it means to do "global history." What are the epistemological and methodological quandaries one has to address? And what choices does one have to make? As a result, the project has also become a self-reflection on the very concepts and tacit knowledge that we deploy to understand our own world. In illuminating the means by which we designate others as different, or uncivilized, we shed light on our own preconceptions.

These reflections also altered the initial sentiments with which I approached the questions at hand. While my previous work made me well aware that the Westphalian state system certainly did not arise in its final form, adult at its birth as it were, I had not paid sufficient attention to how the articulation of difference from the conceptualized Other (defined in multiple ways) influenced the development of the Western state system in its current form. Indeed, the differentiation from this Oriental and Islamic Other provided the means to exorcise the hybrid forms of rule that had populated Europe itself. The encounter of the West and "the Rest" was not an encounter of two rigidly defined systems but a dyadic encounter in which both came to redefine their identities and the political and social expressions of those identities.

# Acknowledgments

In the course of this work, I have incurred multiple debts to colleagues and students, and I have made many friends in the process. The idea for this book first emerged in conversations with my friend Kaya Şahin, now professor in history at Indiana University. We both firmly believe in the invaluable cooperation between historians and social scientists. A workshop on imperial administration at Northwestern University's Buffett Center started us on a course of collaboration that continued in the Inter-Asian IV Connections workshop at Koç University in 2013. I thank the participants at the workshop for their comments, particularly Cemil Aydin, Chris Atwood, Ji-Young Lee, and Ted Boyle.

An invitation by Tim Dunne and Chris Reus-Smit to participate in a workshop at University of Queensland in Brisbane and again at an International Studies Association workshop in New Orleans gave me another opportunity to explore the comparative history of Eurasian empires. They and the other participants provided invaluable feedback on some ideas that became a chapter in their edited volume *The Globalization of International Society*. The spirit of that book informs my research as well.

Furthermore, I owe special thanks to Saeyoung Park, who organized a symposium on David Kang's work at a conference of the American Association for Chinese Studies. That symposium culminated in a special issue of the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*.

Various parts of my work were also presented at International Studies Association panels and at the Buffett Institute. I thank my colleagues on the panels and the audience for their views.

Years ago, Maris Maeve O'Tierney approached me with a request to be my research assistant as she commenced her undergraduate studies. Lucky for me, I recognized incipient talent. Over the course of writing this book, she has gone on to acquire an advanced graduate degree and develop her multidimensional talents in the social sciences, humanities, and arts. Throughout this period, she was far more than a research assistant, and she provided key insights and critiques of her own.

Interdisciplinary work that covers lengthy historical periods and multiple regions requires a considerable investment of time and energy. I am thus deeply grateful to the deans of Weinberg College and the administration of Northwestern University for providing me with sabbatical leaves to develop my thoughts. During these leaves, colleagues at Sciences Po, Cambridge University, and the London School of Economics and Political Science were gracious hosts who provided me the opportunity to do research in some of the most stimulating intellectual climates anywhere.

The list of colleagues and friends to whom I owe debts of gratitude is a lengthy one. Should an attentive reader fail to see one's name, please ascribe this to feeble memory rather than a sin of commission. Kaya Şahin, Lerna Yanik, Ayşe Zarakol, and Saeid Golkar provided me with key comments on the Islamic empires. Ji-Young Lee, Saeyoung Park, David Kang, and Prasenjit Duara were extremely helpful in their remarks with regard to my work on the Sino-centric order in East Asia. My department colleagues Elizabeth Hurd and Michael Loriaux likewise provided trenchant critiques and valuable suggestions. Jason Sharman, besides being one of the most prolific authors I know, was incredibly generous with his time and input. While I did not inflict my chapters on George Lawson and Barry Buzan, I greatly benefitted from their suggestions in the conversations we had about my work while I was at the London School. Naturally, the work of all these colleagues has greatly influenced my own thoughts.

Last, but certainly not least, I owe my sincere gratitude to the anonymous referees who read this manuscript. I was impressed by their keen insights, suggestions, and profound views. While all were positive and encouraging, needless to say, points of difference remain. If some fail to see all their recommendations in this book, it is not because of inattention but in the hope that we can continue to articulate our various intellectual positions in future discussions.

My most profound debt, however, as always, goes to Lucy Lyons, my spouse, sounding board, critic, supporter, and life partner. Besides reading every chapter multiple times and providing comments and suggestions, she reminded me of perhaps the most critical step in research: get it out there. Books, although completed, are never finished; they simply are steps in an ongoing and shared journey of discovery.

# A Note on Transliteration

Every author who studies the history of multiple regions confronts a challenge in the conversion into English of proper names, terms, and geographic identifications. Among the Islamic empires, names and terms vary across multiple languages, such as Persian, Arabic, Ottoman, and Hindi. Even within the same empire, multiple languages could be used, as was the case for the Ottoman Empire. The same is true for names and terms across East and Southeast Asia. Conflicting schemes in transliteration complicate matters further, and the specialist scholars often acknowledge the choices they have had to make in their efforts.

Consequently, I have opted for a minimalist transliteration scheme emphasizing simplicity and consistency. I use few diacritical marks, except when quoting works verbatim or when such marks are commonly used. Terms and names that have become familiar in their anglicized version are given without italics. Less common terms are italicized. For the Romanization of Chinese names, I have followed Pinyin, except where the Wade–Giles transliteration has become entrenched or when I cite a particular author using that system. My hope is that the general reader will sufficiently recognize the names and terms across the inevitable variations in order to follow my argument.