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Charles Tilly. *Roads from Past to Future.* Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997. ix + 430 pp. $28.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8476-8410-6; $101.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8476-8409-0.

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Innovation and Historical Continuity

During most of this century, social science research has focused, in one way or another, on questions of continuity and change and the relation of the individual to society. In the last decade such questions have been enmeshed in the growing interest in narrative and the discussion, in anthropology in particular, about how we know our subject. Combined with an interest in history, the inquiry has often focused around the degree to which structures are persistent, what confluences cause change, and to what degree individual actors influence the direction of change. In anthropology the role of culture–the importance of root paradigms or a focus on the structures of the conjuncture–has generally produced studies of the cultural foundations of historical actors rather than the history of social institutions. Historical anthropologists working in European societies have tended to focus on local areas, on the daily lives of people, and on such topics as marriage, family life, ritual, witchcraft, and material culture. By contrast, historical sociologists like Charles Tilly have focused on major transformations and political struggles as they have evolved over decades or even centuries.

This book of essays by Charles Tilly, most of which have been published elsewhere, is a good choice to lead off a new series, Legacies of Social Thought, edited by Charles Lemert. Beginning with the premise that the previous history of an activity strongly limits what can happen next, Tilly skillfully addresses questions about history and social interaction, focusing his attention on European social institutions, in particular in France and Britain. The book does not include the complete works of Tilly, but it concentrates on four areas which have preoccupied him during his career: ways of knowing, contention and social change, power and inequality, and population processes.

Tilly outlines the central features of his approach in the opening three chapters: "Social Itineraries," "Future Social Science," and "Invisible Elbow." Tilly's approach is to look at long term patterns, at processes which can be generalized from a specific case in order to formulate general comparative statements. He carefully outlines his position, as well as his disagreements with those who focus only on local narrative to explain social processes. Narrative is, for him, not an adequate representation of causal processes but can be best understood as an interactive device, the way in which people create and transform social relations. His essays therefore "chronicle a long encounter with network thinking and an earnest effort to specify relational content and causal mechanisms" (p. 10). In several areas where Tilly has focused his attention–such as the relations between state formation and the organization of coercion, the regularities in revolutionary processes, the network settings of collective interaction, and the differences between indirect and direct rule–he has been concerned to show "how historical experience leads to shared understandings about future possibilities that then guide current social interaction" (p. 12).

While Tilly's focus is on institutions and social processes, culture is an essential ingredient. Social interactions for Tilly range across a continuum, from "thin ritual," where there is little shared knowledge between the actors, to "intense ritual," where there is abundant local knowledge shared by the actors. "From one end of the continuum to the other, social interaction operates within limits set by culture, uses culture, and transforms culture. By 'culture' I mean shared understandings and their representations" (p. 5). This culture, however, allows for improvisation by the actors "within historically accumulated constraints" (p. 6). Tilly's is not "an irrationalist model of social life"; rather it recognizes unanticipated events and consequences, and most importantly–following Goffman–the possibility for error correction and quick responses to unexpected outcomes (p. 39). There is always, at the core of his analysis, a recognition of the impact of history on the activities of

the present and on conceptions of the future.

Part II, Contention and Social Change, consists of three articles on modernization and revolution in France: "The Modernization of Political Conflict in France," "Does Modernization Breed Revolution?," and "Cities, Bourgeois, and Revolution in France." All three articles elaborate on the theme, with ample empirical data, that modernization is a "broader, longer, more complicated set of changes" than urbanization or industrialization (p. 51). All three are concerned, in one form or another, with processes of state formation, increasing political participation by the rising bourgeoisie, and collective action in response to this. Part III, Power and Inequality, has three chapters which focus on the evolution of power in the making of the nation state: "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," "Democracy Is a Lake," and "Parliamentarianization of Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758-1834." This last article is vintage Tilly, where he argues that "collective learning and memory strongly limit the claims that people make and how they make them" (p. 220). He shows how popular politics made a shift from the local to the national scale, with a concomitant change in the participation–and in the concept of citizenship–of ordinary people. Part IV, Population Processes, reflects his work in demography and contains three chapters on "Population and Pedagogy in France," "Migration in Modern European History," and "Demographic Origins of the European Proletariat." We are reminded again of the importance of long term structures in attitudes, and of the centrality of reproduction in relation to capitalist relations of production. In a comparative look at migration and population growth in Europe, he demonstrates "how critical relationships link fertility, marriage and the availability of employment" (p. 333). Tilly reiterates, "Ordinary life histories would not yield much direct information on changes in deeply held attitudes; life histories would only display their results" (p. 262). Over and over, he argues persuasively for the importance of long term structural factors, for situating actors within structures of the *longue duree*.

This book demonstrates how Tilly's approach can be applied to different problems relating to modernization, class structure, and state formation in Europe. The essays are grounded in the belief that there are processes which we can study empirically, from which we can make comparative generalizations. Rather than becoming lost in questions of situated knowledge, Tilly argues that we should roll up our sleeves and get to work (p. 32). For that reason the book–and Tilly's work in general–serves as a prototype for what can be done in contemporary European ethnography. Because anthropologists increasingly utilize historical documents and individual memory, these issues are topical.

Tilly should be read for the possibilities and the gaps. For example, there is little development of theory or recognition of macrostructural change in the generally local studies by historical anthropologists. On the other hand, one can be critical of Tilly's use of culture. While it is a central component of his approach, it is not highly developed in any of these essays. We do not get an adequate picture of how social interaction "uses culture and transforms culture," as promised. This is an obvious area where the local knowledge of anthropologists could contribute to understanding processes of social change. For example, more work can be done on the degree to which central cultural concepts persist and become modified over time; to what extent key metaphors feature in the narratives of people and become replicated through the generations. Individual narratives or written texts often reflect collective representations. The anthropology of Europe, as anthropology elsewhere, must take into account history and problems of continuity and change. And here Tilly's book is crucial. The book can be read as a model for placing the local into larger structures. At the same time, anthropology, by using primary and narrative sources, and by including contemporary field research, offers a more complex picture of how the individual becomes linked to larger structures–for example, how an individual comes to believe in the nation or participates in violent activities–and how such positioning is not simply a response to popular rhetoric (see [1], [2]). Tilly, with his appreciation of innovation and jazz, might agree that individual narratives in this sense–linked to collective memory and cultural metaphors–is a possibility for future research.

References

[1]. Feldman, Allen. *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

[2]. Herzfeld, Michael. *Portrait of a Greek Imagination: An Ethnographic Biography of Andreas Nenedakis.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

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