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Wayne Te Brake. *Shaping History: Ordinary People in European Politics, 1500-1700.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998. xiii + 221 pp. $15.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-520-21318-0; $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-21170-4.

Reviewed by Jim Brown (Elon College)
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A frequent, and often justified, criticism of historical research is that it works within a single sub-field of history in investigating historical phenomena and thereby excludes some possibly significant aspects of its subject that lie outside the perceived boundaries of its sub-field. One valuable development in much recent historical research, however, has been the trend towards tying together various sub-fields. In *Shaping History*, Wayne Te Brake has done this with social, cultural, and political history, linking the actions of "ordinary people" with major political developments of their time. To do this, he uses a comparative social scientific approach of explicit theory construction followed by its application to particular cases of "contentious politics."

Te Brake investigates the major political upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He divides the period into three parts, with a chapter dedicated to each part: the initial phases of the Protestant Reformation in the first half of the 1500s (focusing on discontent in Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, and Scandinavia), the religious warfare of the later 1500s (with France and the Low countries as primary case studies), and finally the "crisis of the seventeenth century" (centering on the British Isles, France, and the Spanish in Iberia and Italy). These chapters are preceded by a chapter laying out the background and theory, while a concluding chapter looks at the period as a whole and summarizes the findings.

The explicit goal of the author is to give ordinary people agency in helping to determine their own political history in a period before the institutionalization of popular politics in modern parliamentary democratic states. He acknowledges his debt to the work of Charles Tilly, which also strove to join the macro with the micro through an often complicated bargaining process. He also builds on earlier work by authors such as Georges Rude who have given prominent place to the "crowd" in political history. Te Brake does not portray common folk as being engaged in a futile struggle against the endeavors of state-building rulers, nor were they invariably resistant to those endeavors. He does not look at developments in terms of the effects of "big changes" in politics on ordinary people, but rather at the actions of ordinary people in affecting major political developments.

In the author's view, historical development takes place through the interaction of claims and counter-claims occurring in the variable contexts and variable forms that existed in early modern "composite" states. The book identifies three primary political actors– "national" rulers, local elites, and ordinary people– though he admits that in some cases this oversimplifies the cast of characters. Different alignments among these actors led to different outcomes and consequences. (Te Brake illustrates the various types of coalitions and outcome using simple box diagrams.) While ordinary people's choices were certainly limited in various ways, there still remained to them room for maneuver, and maneuver they did. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, religion (the cultural dimension of this study) usually provided the opening for ordinary people into a political arena which was usually closed to them, a development Te Brake designates "breaking and entering." This approach places Te Brake in the camp of those whose views of the Reformation and early modern state building have shifted away from centering on elites. He also questions the impact on state building of the development of capitalism and of the military revolution, but without denying them any role. Thus rulers who needed resources to meet the changing requirements of warfare had to bargain with subjects over ways to meet those needs, often resulting in unintended consequences.

There is no attempt to be complete in investigating political changes during this time, but rather the author provides a broadly comparative account based on selected case studies drawn primarily from secondary works. While including such obvious choices as the English Civil Wars and the Fronde, he also looks at

less conspicuous developments such as the Comunero revolt in Spain, the Reformation in Denmark, and the seventeenth-century uprisings in Naples and Sicily. The chosen developments in the different periods of time did not exist independently of one another, but rather developments in earlier periods affected those in subsequent periods. Thus in sixteenth-century France, uncertainty about the continuation of the repression of popular Protestantism which had been imposed in the 1530s and 1540s led to popular uprisings in the 1560s as local Protestant elites joined with ordinary people to resist royal impositions. The harsh effects of continued warfare, however, led to a popular reaction in the 1580s and 1590s against a continuation of the civil war and resulted in the Edict of Nantes which put an end, albeit temporary, to the religious wars by the end of the century.

Te Brake accounts for varying outcomes of political upheaval by looking at the regionally varying alignments among the three principal political actors. This also allows him to account for the differing trajectories of political development in different regions. For example, in the southern Low Countries, in return for a recognition of local rights, local elites aligned with the ruling Catholic prince to crush popular Protestant uprisings militarily. In the northern Netherlands, however, local elites joined with the ordinary Protestant crowds to oppose impositions of the Catholic prince and successfully threw off the claims of princely rule. Te Brake points out that while ordinary people were not the "principal architects nor the primary beneficiaries of these cultural and political settlements" (p. 107), they nevertheless played an active role in them.

In his conclusion, Te Brake finds distinct variations in the outcomes of this period of political and cultural conflict. In the Netherlands and Switzerland, local elites in conjunction with ordinary people resisted attempts at territorial consolidation by the rulers of composite states and thus established new states, results that the author labels "turning Swiss" and "going Dutch." The more common outcome, however, was one in which the composite state remained in place, but local elites achieved the recognition of local rights and privileges by aligning with the prince against the ordinary people, as in the Holy Roman Empire and Catalonia, for example. The exact forms of these settlements varied from state to state according to often complex local contexts, but all shared the characteristic that ordinary people played significant roles in their establishment.

Certainly some will say that such a broad theoretical approach ignores the complexity of local historical developments. Critics frequently raise this issue in dealing with social scientific approaches that depend on overarching theories to provide their explanations. Te Brake's extensive reliance on secondary works also leaves him open to criticism of his selections. Such criticisms contain an element of truth, but Te Brake's work nonetheless offers a valuable tool for understanding the behaviour of ordinary people in a wide array of contexts in early modern Europe. He includes rather than excludes the variety of local conditions that led to a variety of local outcomes and varying paths of development. For instance, subsuming all political actors under only three cagetories certainly overlooks multiple and possibly conflicting group loyalties reflecting various local situations. But while acknowledging this fact, Te Brake asserts that no matter what the alignments, the fact remains that ordinary people played significant roles in political and cultural developments. Those roles could and did vary according to the local context, but the value of Te Brake's work is that he points out the role ordinary people played in helping to determine the outcomes. While not privileging the role of ordinary people, he shows that they were an additional element that must be taken into account in understanding historical developments in early modern Europe.

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