Beyond Marx and Hintze? Third-Wave Theories of Early Modern State Formation

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The Limits of Royal Authority. Resistance and Obedience in Seventeenth-Century Castile, by Ruth McKay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

The Power of Kings. Monarchy and Religion in Europe, 1589–1715, by Paul Kléber Monod (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

Transformations of Patriarchy in the West, 1500–1900, by Paula Miller (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998).

Shaping History. Ordinary People in European Politics, 1500–1700, by Wayne te Brake, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

In 1993, John Foran argued that theorizing about social revolution was entering into a "fourth wave." What distinguished the new wave from its predecessors, he said, was its emphasis on culture and contingency, and its critical stance towards class-based and structuralist accounts. The books reviewed in this essay suggest that a similar trend may now be underway in work on early modern state formation. Until quite recently, research in this area was completely dominated by neo-Marxist and neo-Hintzian scholars, who emphasized the impact of economic and/or geopolitical factors on the structure of early modern states and regimes and saw state power in purely fiscal and military terms, i.e., as a function of taxes and soldiers (Anderson 1974; Wallerstein 1974; Tilly 1975; Brewer 1989; Tilly 1990; Downing 1993; Bonney 1995; Ertman 1997; Barbera 1998; Bonney 1999; Brewer and Hellmuth 1999). Over the last decade, however, a growing number of sociologists and historians have begun to criticize these theories as too narrow and one-sided (Gorski 1993; Adams 1994; Ikegami 1995; Wilson 1995; Mukerji 1997; harbingers of this shift included Vann 1984 and Corrigan and Sayer 1985). Drawing on a variety of theoretical perspectives, including Foucauldianism, gender theory and cultural sociology, they have argued that there is more to state power than coercion and extraction, and more to state formation than economics and geopolitics. The books reviewed here continue the revisionist trend towards more nuanced understand-

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ings of state power and less deterministic accounts of state formation. They suggest that a third wave of theorizing has begun.

Before examining the third-wave theories in more detail, it will be useful to review some of their more prominent predecessors from waves one and two. The first-wave theories emerged out of the neo-Marxist movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. They attempted to explain the structure and strength of early modern states in terms of socioeconomic factors. Thus, for Perry Anderson, the early modern period was an "age of absolutism" founded on a quid pro quo between landed nobles and centralizing monarchs in which control over the peasantry was exchanged for control over the state. While Anderson emphasized class relations, Immanuel Wallerstein focused on "exchange relations." With the emergence of the "first European world system" during the sixteenth century, he argued, the terms of trade were dominated and defended by a small group of "core states" in North Atlantic Europe, which became rich and powerful (e.g., the Netherlands and England), and imposed upon the "peripheral states" of the non-Western World and the "semi-peripheral states" of Central and Eastern Europe, which remained economically backward and politically weak, at least in comparison to the core.

The first swells in the second wave can be traced back to the mid-1970s (e.g., Tilly 1975; Evans, Rueschmeyer and Skocpol 1985), but they did not reach full size until the early 1990s. The common denominator amongst these theories is their focus on the impact of war and geopolitics. Hence, for Brian Downing (1993), the structure of early modern states is determined by rulers' responses to the "military revolution" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Because the military revolution increased the costs of warfare, and hence of geopolitical survival, says Downing, it placed early modern rulers under enormous fiscal pressures. Some rulers responded by dismantling representative institutions (i.e., the Stände or estates), establishing centralized fiscal machinery, and levying direct taxes. There, the result was "military-bureaucratic absolutism" (e.g., in France and Prussia). Others sought their revenues from indirect or nondomestic sources (e.g., capital markets of foreign conquest). In these cases, there was no need for a centralized fiscal bureaucracy, and "medieval constitutionalism" was preserved (e.g., in the Netherlands and England). The problem with this account, argues Thomas Ertman, is that absolutist monarchies were not always bureaucratic (e.g., in Spain, France, and Italy), and that constitutional regimes were not always patrimonial (e.g., in England); hence, the analysis of "regime structure" (absolutist vs. constitutional) must be distinguished from the analysis of "administrative infrastructure" (patrimonial vs. bureaucratic). Ertman argues that variations in administrative infrastructure can be largely (if not wholly) explained in terms of another variable: "the timing of the onset of sustained geo-political competition." Where geopolitical competition began before 1450, state-builders were forced to rely on powerful social elites and "proprietary models of office-holding," and the result was patrimonialism. Where it began after 1450, by contrast, they could draw on the growing supply of "trained jurists" and new, nonproprietary models of office-holding, and the result was bureaucracy (for a further discussion and empirical critique, see Gorski forthcoming). By combining this and several other variables, argues Ertman, "most of the observed variation" in the structure of early modern states can be explained.

As the foregoing summaries make clear, there are significant differences both between and within the first two waves. Each wave focuses on a different set of explanatory factors—socio-economic in the one case, geopolitical in the other—and each theorist conceives the key factors in a particular way: Anderson focuses on class relations, Wallerstein on exchange relations, Downing on elite responses to military competition, Ertman on the timing of military competition. That said, there are also some important similarities. All four theories purport to offer comprehensive explanations of early modern state formation; all four focus primarily on the coercive and extractive capacities of the state—on the state as fiscal and military "machine"; and all four highlight structural factors and/or elite actions.

By contrast, all of the books reviewed in this essay challenge first- and second-wave theorizing in at least one of the following ways: (1) *methodologically*, by questioning the possibility of an all-encompassing explanation of state formation; (2) *theoretically*, by emphasizing the regulatory dimension or negotiated character of state power; and (3) *empirically*, by underlining the impact of historical contingency and popular mobilization. There is also one more similarity between these books which bears mention: of the four authors, only one (Paula Miller) is a social scientist; the others are all historians. This stands in sharp contrast to waves one and two, which were dominated by social scientists. Let us now examine each book in greater detail.

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Of the four, Paul Kléber Monod's book, *The Power of Kings*, is at once the most ambitious and the most problematic. Its ambition, as the author explains, is to trace out the changing relationships between monarchy, the sacred, and the self during the early modern era. The central thesis is relatively straightforward: As late as 1589, says Monod, the Medieval tradition of sacred monarchy was still alive and well, and the power of kings still rested on a sense of supernatural awe. But by 1715, he argues, this had been supplanted by the modern ideal of the rational state, in which the power of the kings rests on a religiously based obedience to an abstract, unitary human authority, combined with a deepened sense of individual moral responsibility—in short, sovereignty plus self-discipline (p. 3). A sacred and supernatural form of monarchy had given way to a secular and rational one. Monod argues that this transition occurred in five, discrete steps, which form the subject of the book's five core chapters. In Chapter 2, The Sickness of the Royal Body, 1589–1610, Monod argues that the assassination of Henry III of France (1589) marked the height of a crisis in the Renaissance

conception of sacred monarchy, whose cause was a revived preoccupation with the religious purity of the Christian self (p. 35). Reformed religion—whether Protestant or Catholic—was incompatible with sacred monarchy. In Chapter 3, The Theatre of Royal Virtue, 1610–1637, Monod argues that Ferdinand of Bohemia invented a new kind of monarchy, confessionalized monarchy, whose power was founded on moral purity rather than physical sanctity. But the hotter sort of Protestants—and Catholics—yearned for an unmediated relationship between the sacred and the self, and came to see monarchy as an obstacle along the path towards the new Jerusalem: they wanted no king but King Jesus. It is against this background, Monod argues in Chapter 4, that the revolutionary upheavals of the mid-seventeenth century must be seen. What the revolutionaries wanted, he says, was a fundamental change in the collective idealization of authority known as the state (p. 170). What they got, however, was chaos and strife. Godly monarchy came to appear more attractive once again, and in the second half of the seventeenth century, Monod contends, religious reformers decided to throw in their lot with pious kings. But the alliance was short-lived. By the late seventeenth century, the kings and their advisers were beginning to articulate a royal language which transcended the embrace of strict confessionalism, and conceived of the state in fully abstract and secular terms, as something separate from the body of the monarch and the laws of the church. Chapter 6 opens with the parting words of Louis XIV, spoken shortly before his death in 1715: Je m'en vais, mais l'État demeurera toujours (p. 273). In Monod's view, the dying words of the Sun King mark the christening moment of the modern state, secular and rational.

What makes this argument so problematic is the very breadth and depth of its claims. For Monod is not merely arguing that the discourse of sacred monarchy became gradually less important, while the discourse of the rational state became gradually more important; rather, he argues that the discourse of sacred monarchy died at a very specific point in time (1589), that the discourse of the rational state was born at a very specific point in time (1715), and that the transition between them occurred in four, discrete steps—in 1610, 1637, 1660, and 1715. Moreover, he is not content to argue that sacred monarchy and the rational state were mere discourses which played some role in legitimating the power of kings; instead, he wishes to argue that they were collective idealizations which were accepted and internalized not only by rulers and elites, but also by their subjects and subordinates. These are extraordinarily bold claims, and they are not easy to defend. Certainly the discourse—and practice—of sacred monarchy did not disappear in 1589. If Marc Bloch (1924) and Roger Chartier (1991) can be believed, they were still alive and well in eighteenth-century France and were not killed off until the Revolution. Nor was sacred monarchy entirely incompatible with reformed religion. In the seventeenth-century Netherlands, for example, it was the hotter sort of Protestants-the Anti-Remonstrants or orthodox Calvinists—who supported of the House of Orange and first propagat-

ed a discourse of royal election (Gorski 2000), all in the course of those revolutionary upheavals which putatively involved a rejection of sacred monarchy and royal mediation. No doubt, there are many other cases which do not fit Monod's story-line particularly well. Of course, this does not imply that the other discourses which Monod identifies—e.g., confessionalized monarchy and the rational state—did not exist; Monod provides plenty of ritual, visual and textual examples which suggest that they did. But the real question is: how influential were they? To answer this, Monod would have needed to place his sources in their social context, looking at who produced them, how widely they circulated, and how they were received. This he does not do, at least not in any consistent or systematic way. In fairness, it should be emphasized that Monod is not entirely incognizant of these issues. While he tends to wave the exceptions away, he does acknowledge that there were divergent cases which do not fit neatly into his story line. And in the closing two chapters, he does make some effort to address the problems of provenance, circulation, and reception for some of his sources. But he never addresses the issues head on. Instead, he seeks refuge in a half-articulated neo-Hegelianism, which insists upon the autonomy of the ideal, and treats historical actors and events as manifestations and moments in a grand dialectic between sacred monarchy and the Christian self, whose Aufhebung is the modern state. Sympathetic as I am to the new cultural history as practiced by Lynn Hunt and others, I, for one, am too much of a materialist to be persuaded by arguments of this sort. That said, Monod's book remains a useful starting point for anyone interested in representations of monarchy in early modern Europe, and his thesis regarding the shift from religious to rational forms of legitimization is worthy of further investigation.

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Wayne te Brake's ambitions are somewhat more modest than Monod's, but also more fully realized. Whereas Monod attempts to develop a grand narrative spanning the whole of Europe and most of the early modern era, te Brake presents us with a series of discrete and comparative case studies. The purpose of these case studies, however, is not to build an exclusive theory of early modern state formation like Downing's or Ertman's, but rather to offer a challenge and corrective to theories of this sort by putting ordinary people back into the equation, and challenging overly monolithic conceptions of the early modern state. Te Brake sets the stage for this analysis by distinguishing between three different political actors and two different political spaces: ordinary subjects, local rulers, and national claimants to power, on the one hand, and composite states (J. H. Elliot) and local sovereignties, on the other. He then uses this schema to distinguish three, basic patterns of political contention, each of which has a distinctive outcome: (1) Ordinary subjects and local rulers ally with one another against national claimants to power. In these cases, the outcome is usually a consolidation of local sovereignty. Te Brake suggests that the Protestant-inspired revolts against the Habsburgs (e.g., the princely reformation in Germany, and

the Dutch Revolt against Spain) might be described in these terms. (2) Ordinary subjects ally with national claimants to power against local rulers. Here, the outcome is usually the consolidation of power at the territorial level. Te Brake argues that the English and Scandinavian Reformations can be seen in these terms, as could Counter-Reformation coalitions within the Empire. (3) National claimants to power ally with local rulers against ordinary people. In these instances, the result is a consolidation of elite power. The repression of the Revolution of 1525 and the Revolt of the Communeros were based on coalitions of this sort. In the core chapters of the book, te Brake uses this basic framework to analyze three cycles of political contestation and account for the various outcomes which they produced. Chapter 2 examines Revolution and Religious Reformation in the World of Charles V; Chapter 3 looks at Religious Dissent and Civil War in France and the Low Countries; and Chapter 4 focuses on The Political Crisis of the Seventeenth Century. These chapters do not contain any original research, and early modernists and area specialists will not glean any new facts from them. But te Brake does present some very illuminating syntheses of existing work, which may stimulate some readers to rethink received interpretations of important events in a new light. Highlights include a synthetic analysis of city reformations in the Empire, a close comparison of the Dutch Revolt and the French Wars of Religion, and a panoramic overview of the great revolts and rebellions of the mid-seventeenth century, which juxtaposes cases rarely discussed together (e.g., England and Naples) in a skillful and revealing way. In the conclusion, te Brake revisits the revisionist themes adumbrated in the introduction, arguing that early modern states were much less unitary and uniform than Bodin and Bossuet have led us to believe, and that the degree of unity and uniformity in any given state was not simply a product of elite actions or structural factors but of ongoing contestation involving ordinary people.

Like any approach, te Brake's does have its limitations. Most of his models hinge at least partly on the comprehensiveness of political alliances and the integration of political institutions—i.e., on the social breadth and emotional depth of mobilization processes and the reach and grasp of state institutions. Te Brake is not unaware of these problems. To his credit, he repeatedly stresses the role of religious ideology in the formation (and dissolution) of alliances, and argues that contestation must be seen within a broader context. But his focus on groups and alliances inevitably pushes cultural and structural factors into the background, in much the same way that the impact of ordinary people and fragmented sovereignty is obscured by the elite-centered and structural accounts.

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Though her starting point is quite different, Ruth McKay's main arguments are remarkably similar to te Brake's. Through a rich and detailed case study of military conscription in seventeenth-century Castile, McKay is able to show just how layered and fragmented political sovereignty really was, even in the dy-

nastic heartland of a (putatively) absolute monarchy such as Habsburg Spain, and also to demonstrate the ways in which ordinary people were able to exploit this situation to their advantage. The jurisdictional cacophony of juntas, councils, corregidores, and courts, all wielding royal warrants, meant that it was never really clear who spoke with the most authority in a given situation . . . in seventeenth-century Castile (p. 59). And this jurisdictional muddle also made it possible for ordinary people not only to evade military service, and royal authority more generally, but to do so openly and in the King's name. Many a royal command was met with some variant of the following response: Obedézcase, pero no se cumpla (to be obeyed, but not complied with). What has come to be known as Spanish absolutism, McKay concludes, did not conform to any of our available models, and leads her to suggest not that Spain was an exception but rather that the models are deficient (p. 2) insofar as they assume a direct correlation between the military revolution, absolutism and bureaucracy (p. 175). In one sense, her claim is undoubtedly right: the Spanish monarchy was clearly not as absolute as Downing, Ertman and other scholars of state formation have generally believed. In another sense, however, she is clearly misinformed: as we have seen earlier, none of the neo-Hintzians claim that war always leads to bureaucracy, and one of them (Ertman) does not even claim that Spain was bureaucratic. McKay has obviously not engaged with the social-scientific literature to the degree that te Brake has.

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The last book in the quartet, Paula Miller's Transformations of Patriarchy in the West, is the most wide-ranging and, for that reason, also the most disjointed. Drawing on an eclectic blend of theoretical traditions (e.g., feminism, Foucauldianism, Weberianism, and Marxism) and historical literatures (e.g., on economics, population, the family, women, education, and religion), she weaves together a series of loosely unified case studies whose principal themes are the complex interplay between patriarchy, politics, and discipline. The first three chapters take up an important but well-worn topic: the connection between patriarchal and political power in early modern Europe. What distinguishes Miller's analysis from previous treatments (e.g., Pateman 1988) is her attention to the tensions and contradictions between, and even within, private and public patriarchy. The problem, she argues, is that the patriarchal claims of absolute monarchs came into conflict with the patriarchal independence of male householders, whose private autonomy was threatened by the intrusion of public power. These problems were replicated within the household as well, in the tensions between fathers and masters, on one hand, and adult sons and journeymen on the other. In her view, the internal contradictions of patriarchal rule helped to spark the great revolutions of the late eighteenth century, which resolved them through a new gender regime which emphasized the equality of all men, and the rule of men over women—fraternalism. In the next four chapters Miller shifts her focus to the problem of politics and discipline, without losing sight of their connections with patriarchy. Building on the theorizing of Elias, Weber, and Foucault, and on recent histories of the middle classes, Miller argues that the early modern period gave birth to a new ethic of self-mastery and selfdiscipline whose chief inspirations were courtly ritual and ascetic Protestantism. Initially, she says, self-control was—or was seen as—a middle- and upperclass phenomenon; ordinary people were believed to be lacking in discipline. By the eighteenth century, however, educational reformers and state-building rulers had concluded that mass discipline was essential to political stability and embarked on a project to instill self-mastery into the faceless masses. Following Gerhard Oestreich (1968), Heinz Schilling (1981, 1994) and others (e.g., Hsia 1991; Gorski 1993, 1996), Miller argues that state-building and socialdisciplining went hand-in-hand. Unlike previous analysts, however, Miller then goes on to look at how these reforms were received by ordinary people. She concludes that their effects were not as great as is often believed, not only because ordinary people often resisted the disciplinary campaigns of dominant elites, but because they often invented their own forms of counter-discipline, the party discipline of the socialist movement being but one example. Another distinctive feature of Miller's analysis is her emphasis on the relationship between social discipline and patriarchal domination: the lower classes were not the only targets of disciplinary ideologies and practices; women were also implicated.

The main strengths of this book lie in its theoretical ecumenicism and historical breadth. They are closely connected to its chief weakness: a collage-like structure in which summaries and glosses of various theories and literatures are pasted onto a broad thematic background and connected together with vague and repetitive bridging sections. That said, the collage does have a certain unity, and few readers will be familiar with all of its constituent parts. For those looking for theoretical inspiration or broader horizons, it is well worth the read.

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Diverse as these works are, they do evoke some common concerns. In closing, I would like to highlight two such concerns and some of the questions which they raise. The first has already been touched on above: the character of state power. As we have seen, previous work in this area has defined state power as a function of class relations, economic resources, fiscal capacities, military strength, or some combination of these factors. By contrast, theorists of the third wave tend to be skeptical about theories which focus solely on the impact of dominant groups, formal organization, or threats of coercion. They insist that subordinate groups also have an impact on state structures (te Brake), that such structures are subject to resistance and negotiation (McKay), and that the success of state-building depends also on processes of social regulation (Miller) and cultural legitimization (Monod). If they are correct, then early modern states were less unified and monolithic than has been believed, but perhaps also

more effective at securing the cooperation and consent of the governed than neo-Marxists and neo-Hintzians have thought. These critiques raise various questions regarding the interconnections of different forms of state power. Juxtaposing McKay, Monod, and te Brake, for example, one might ask how resistance was legitimated, and whether the efficacy of resistance was influenced by the ideology of resistance. Were the strategies and ideologies of resistance identified by McKay specific to Spain, or could they be found elsewhere? And why did resistance to authority in Spain take a more passive and subterranean form than it did elsewhere? Was there something peculiar to the ideology surrounding the Spanish monarchy, or was it a matter of alliance and mobilization? In short, were there any broader patterns in the interplay between state structure, political discourse, and popular mobilization in early modern Europe, and, if so, what impact did they have on the structure and strength of states and regimes? Alternatively, one might ask whether the kinds of power emphasized by wave three (i.e., regulatory and cultural) had any impact on the kinds of power emphasized by wave two (i.e., fiscal and military). Did more disciplined societies produce more disciplined armies and bureaucracies? Were there any systematic connections between religious ideology on the one hand, and military and administrative efficacy on the other? And how were state discourses received by ordinary people?

The second thread which runs through most of these works is religion. The theorists of waves one and two had remarkably little to say about the Reformation. If they mentioned it at all, it was only as an ideology in the service of material or political interests. By contrast, several of the wave-three theorists incorporate religious factors into their historical accounts, whether as a source of state legitimization (Monod), popular mobilization (te Brake) or social regulation (Miller). In doing so, they follow the dominant historiographical trend of the last decade, which has recast the early modern period as a Confessional Age, in which conflict between Lutherans, Calvinists and Catholics is seen as the driving force behind religious, social, and political development, and, indeed, behind modernization itself. Advocates of the confessionalization paradigm usually argue that the Reformation era was a period not only of change but also of convergence, and the works reviewed here follow their lead by emphasizing the similarities between the various confessions qua religious ideologies, social movements, and political agendas. Perhaps it is time for us to begin questioning this assumption. After all, there is some evidence of real differences between Lutheran, Calvinist, and Catholic societies. Is it a coincidence that Catholic societies typically had more lavish and more fully developed systems of courtly display than their Protestant counterparts? Or that the Protestant states of Northern Europe (e.g., England, Scandinavia, and Prussia) gave rise to more fully bureaucratized administrative systems than the Catholic states of Southern Europe (e.g., Spain, France, and Italy), which were hobbled by venal officeholding? And might one not argue that Calvinism was more frequently associated with revolution than were Catholicism and Lutheranism? Perhaps questions such as these will be the making of the fourth wave.

NOTE

1. Of course, historians have written numerous books and articles on economic, social, military and administrative history; without them, the grand syntheses of the first-and second-wave theorists would hardly have been possible. And a few have even written general works on the early modern state. Nonetheless, the works reviewed here are still unusual in their willingness to apply social theory and the comparative method to the problems of historical interpretation and explanation.

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