

work is also victim of these echoes because it shows a certain servitude to the theoretical hypotheses on which her account is based. Although it is a work which intends to escape from the structuralism inherent in social history according to which the structures determine – to use an enigmatic word – the interests and actions of the social actors, and although, by using the concept of experience of the past mobilization or of perception of the future political opportunities, the work comes close to more elaborate theories of collective action, it does not completely break with the dichotomous interpretation between structure and action that still reverberates with the echo of social history.

In other words, on ending as enriching a work as Souto's, you are left with the doubt of how, according to its author, the actors of the account perceived or interpreted the world on which they acted. Personally, it gives the impression that they do so from interests – derived from the structures – in such a way that the individuals and groups observed experience their situation from structured class positions, which represents a form of structuralist determinism which is, of course, nothing new in the forms of relating to the past from social history. This is a shame, because the work contains some allusions to another way of dealing with the experience and the perception which are moving toward post-social history and historical hermeneutics, and which would contribute to enriching an account which requires an explanation of why groups and individuals positioned economically in the same social classes perceived and experienced the past and present world so differently.

The onomastic and semantic analysis of the words prevailing in that Spain of the 1930s would undoubtedly allow us to explain in another way the divisions or alliances that characterized the working-class organizations of the period and which are at the core of Souto's work. However, this would represent breaking the old dichotomy between structure and action, positioning language at the centre of historical observation or considering it the constructor of the reality with which the social actors operate. It is true that, for many, a programme of this nature would represent a betrayal of a paradigm which at least fed the resistance in the face of positivism. Nevertheless, it is worth testing other forms of relating to the past, even if just to avoid the naturalizations that we make of it when we ingenuously use the concepts of social sciences as if they were not also historical categories which we can use to literally “reproduce” yesterday.

With her allusions to the enigmatic condition of words as determinant for the October events as “fascism” – which appears actively and passively in the documents researched –, Sandra Souto's work is also a starting point for those who are beginning to be more sensitive to the radical otherness of the language with which our ancestors made sense of their world, and less ingenuous with the use of a way of knowing that generally colonizes the past with stereotypes of ourselves.

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BROCKETT, CHARLES D. *Political Movements and Violence in Central America*. [Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics.] Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [etc.] 2005. xxi, 380 pp. £45.00; \$75.00. (Paper: £19.99; \$29.99). DOI: 50020859007053266

Anyone who has worked in Central America in the era of revolutionary politics and state violence has an archive of incidents that dramatize the central analytical question of this

book. One of mine comes from a highland *municipio* of Guatemala in the late 1970s. A charismatic Indian mayor is brutally assassinated by government-aligned forces; his family is devastated; one son soon joins the guerrilla, while other family members draw close to the military, who by now occupy the town. How do we make sense of these sharply divergent responses to the grief, anger and fear engendered by this terrible act? More broadly, when does state violence and repression against social movements give rise to greater militancy and mobilization, and when does it have precisely the opposite effect?

Charles Brockett, a senior scholar of Central America, has taken on this question, in an empirically rich study that covers Guatemala, El Salvador, and to some extent the rest of the region, during the entire span of the revolutionary era, from the early 1960s through to the end of the century. He traces the rise of social and political mobilization and documents cycles of protest and state repression, all of which comes under the general rubric of “contentious politics”, following the work of political sociologists such as Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, and political scientists such as Doug McAdam and Elizabeth Wood. The book promises to help us resolve what is known in that theoretical literature as the “repression–protest paradox”, drawing on recent Central American history, in which state violence abounds, but at times seems to fan the flames of protest and mobilization, while and at other times effectively to suppresses it.

The study is data-rich, and the author insists on complex and multi-dimensional analysis in addressing the topic. Through painstaking research, including considerable original archival work, Brockett has compiled month-by-month quantitative summaries of both “contentious acts” and acts of state-aligned violence in El Salvador and Guatemala. These data allow him to graph the ebb and flow of both, and to examine their relationship to one another. In addition, following his own theoretical commitment to a “political-process” approach to contentious politics, he examines the structures of opportunity for mobilization – factors such as inter-class alliance, unity and fragmentation among elites, possibilities for institutional politics, and intensity of repression. Finally, he weaves this quantitative and structural analysis into thorough narratives of political mobilization in each country, with detailed attention to myriad organizational actors (usefully referenced in fully five pages of acronyms!), and with attention to the subtle, often opaque relationship between civilian social movements and clandestine revolutionary organizing.

There are some points to argue with this empirical and analytical build-up; three came centrally to mind for me. First, there has been much careful thinking about the role of racism in Guatemala – as a factor in anti-government mobilization in the predominantly Maya highland, a major element in the brutal logic of state repression, and also an impetus for many Mayas to abandon the revolutionary Left, early in the process of its military demise. This analytical dimension is underplayed in the study, perhaps to highlight comparability between El Salvador (where the indigenous population was scarce) and Guatemala. Second, I had the strong sense that the author needed to downplay or even screen out the articulation between clandestine revolutionary organizing and civic social movements in his efforts of quantitative data collection, even as he attempted to build this complexity back into the political narrative. This left us with an overly dichotomous view of these two facets of contention, which raises doubts about the analytical conclusions drawn about one or the other. Finally, I was slightly perplexed by the methodological decision to place Nicaragua on the sidelines, given that history took such a different turn in this case. The few passages where Nicaragua’s experience comes into view, the purpose seems almost to explain it away, rather than building contrast fully into the explanation.

However, the study's ambitious scope and multidimensional approach give the analysis an open-ended character, which invites discussion of precisely this sort. I take this invitation to dialogue to be one of the study's greatest strengths.

Perhaps inevitably, given these very strengths, the study ends up presenting a story whose complexity far outstrips the explanatory power of the theoretical models employed, and concludes by transposing the repression–protest paradox rather than resolving it. Consider, for example, the nine “basic propositions”, listed in the concluding chapters, meant as a synthesis of what we have learned from the preceding pages. They have the feel of generic, sensible statements of causal relationships, which hold up pretty well – except under certain conditions, when the opposite outcome prevails. State repression quells protest, but when it takes place at the height of a “protest cycle”, it has the opposite effect; widespread repression swells the ranks of revolutionary movements, but at times (either simultaneously or sequentially) also yields demoralization and withdrawal; indiscriminate killing eventually quells militancy, but not always (witness Nicaragua), and not for as long as one might expect (witness the rise of Maya cultural activism, from the ashes of genocidal violence against Maya civilians).

To be fair, the notion of a “protest cycle” may well be an important contribution, both empirically and theoretically. But I am left straining to understand this notion as something more than a remote index for a dense conjunction of factors, which require exploration and explanation in their own right – effective political organizing, presence of an armed movement that promises protection, deepening commitment to a cause, strategic openings and opportunities – which together yield greater resilience in the face of repression. The author himself seems to concede this point in the culminating chapter, when he abruptly turns away from the nine propositions, to a fine-grained discussion of individual motivation in political activism (pp. 315–322), highlighting such factors as emotion, ethics and solidarity, all encapsulated in the immensely complicated enigma of an individual's response to the loss of a loved one at the hands of a repressive state.

To the great relief of this reviewer's anthropological sensibilities, the author dismisses rational-actor approaches to this enigma (it would, after all, border on the offensive to do otherwise, trying to cram responses to torture, disappearance, killing of a parent, sibling, or child into a cost-benefit framework). Yet by the book's end, this salutary discovery of the constituted subject remains largely disarticulated from the nine propositions, and instead yields a renewed, more nuanced and even more multi-dimensional restatement of the original paradox. The divergent responses of the mayor's children to their father's murder remains a troubling mystery, emblematic of the elusive complexity of the book's central problem.

Rather than a reiteration of the methodological-theoretical chasm between political science and anthropology, however, I wanted this review to emphasize bridges and I did find some. The skilled presentation of the study's central problem is one – this is clearly a topic that should concern us all. The long time-span quantitative data, a helpful corrective to anthropology's tendency for sole reliance on “thick” ethnographic data is another. The section on contradictory consciousness (pp. 148–162), which offers a resonant, promising analytical frame for a combined appreciation of individual motivation and broader socio-political process is a third.

Yet these achievements do not ultimately free the study from the horns of a debilitating dilemma: Brockett is compelled to jettison his chosen theoretical models, in order to capture the complexity of the story he wishes to tell, and yet he insists on defending these

models, pinning the study's broader contribution on their explanatory value. Perhaps, then, this study can also be appreciated precisely because the author has identified and grappled with this dilemma – certainly present, in some variant or another, to anthropology and other social science disciplines as well. A provocative assertion follows (even if it is not one that Brockett himself announces or intends): narratives that seek to explain political process need social theory, but they also inevitably disrupt the theory they invoke, wreaking havoc with its neat categories, overflowing its well-crafted propositions.

Brockett's study, in sum, has framed crucial questions, provided important new data and suggestive lines of analysis for addressing them, but ultimately has left us awaiting the next generation of historians (or social scientists with special reverence for ethnographic history) to provide comprehensive, context-sensitive answers.

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NOMANI, FARHAD and SOHRAB BEHDAD. *Class and Labor in Iran. Did the Revolution Matter?* Syracuse University Press, Syracuse 2006. xiii, 268 pp. \$49.95. DOI: 50020859007063262

This book provides a comprehensive examination of the changing class structure of the workforce in Iran over time and particularly in the post-revolutionary period. The authors sketch the trajectory of class changes in the last three decades and provide an insightful analysis of the subject that has long been over due. The book has a meticulous structure starting with a clear conceptual framework and theoretical base that provide an unambiguous context for statistical analysis of Iranian census data between 1976 and 1996. The authors recognize two distinct periods in the post revolutionary era. The first period began in 1979 and came to an end by the end of the 1980s corresponding, among other things, to the death of the Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989. The second period began with the death of Ayatollah Khomeini and is extending to the present.

The first period was a decade of revolutionary fervour, economic crisis, the Iran–Iraq war, and above all a decade of disruption in capitalist relations or production. There was a large-scale nationalization of modern manufacturing industries and the entire banking and the insurance system without provision of any compensation for their original private owners. That the revolutionary upheaval was accompanied by antagonism towards capital destabilized the sanctity of private property rights. The outcome of the post-revolutionary disruption in private property relations was a large capital and managerial flight, a severe disruption in production, a sharp decline in output, and above all a severe economic crisis that was further accentuated by the international isolation of the country following the American hostage crisis.

The second period was shaped by economic reforms and policies towards restructuring the economy *à la* the IMF and the World Bank to reverse the negative consequences of the revolutionary upheaval on the accumulation process. Even though the state's liberalization policies of reinvigorating the capitalist relations of production have been patchy, the second period, which extends to present, is a period of reversing the transitional changes in the 1980s.

The chart of the trajectory of class changes is then analysed in the context of these two periods. The authors employ the concept of *structural involution* and *deinvolution* as a basic framework. *Structural involution* is defined as a degenerative process that impeded