

Summary of Chapter 5: Journeys of a thousand miles

Introduction: George Burdett and creating narratives

- An important proverb mentioned in this chapter "A journey of a thousand miles begins with just one step" (80)
Reconstruction of the history of George Burnett gave us the first step of a journey of creating historical narratives
- In creating a historical narrative, where information is lacking, we are left with speculation We are now in the process of filling in those certainties like a puzzle : The next step is to figure out how to integrate the larger amount of material and how to interpret the contours presented by the larger narratives
Many historians are still creating stories, while other historians are determining cause and effects, negotiating narrative accuracy

How narratives are made:

- Records of war are built up from surviving evidence
The evidence used will greatly influence the narrative that is created
- For example, the use of narrative accounts, royal documents, and parliamentary papers will result in a political narrative
- In the political narrative, change is driven by human competence or incompetence

Grand narrative:

- The definition of a great narrative includes very large stories spanning centuries

E.g. the development of parliamentary democracy

The meaning of the great narrative is often claimed such as the "superiority" of English political culture and this is expressed in the larger content of history

- Sometimes these meanings are explicitly stated, while other times they are hidden in the narrative structure and commentary

The grand narrative serves to clarify what happened and to convey the importance and content of the historical event

English civil war -one example of historical and political narratives:

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→ This led to the execution of Charles I in 1649

- England was ruled by parliament and Oliver Cromwell, then by Charles II in 1660

How historians analyze and interpret English civil war:

- Historians agree on many things when explaining the causes for this story, although their answers vary somewhat depending on their interests
- For example, Charles was incompetent King who failed to take direction from his lords; the system of having two major voices, the monarch and parliament, was a good balance, but there was tension between the opinions of the government; also, the influence of the foreign events. These possible causes are agreed upon by many
- Putting political historians in the same camp is unfair and inaccurate

Great men:

- The definition of great men is unclear
- At some point, greatness is lost and replaced by competence
- Three historical figures the author thinks they are "great man"

1. Anna Comnena

a. Wrote the Alexiad- most beautiful works of history

2. Mennochio

a. Going against with God and creation with his personal ideas

3. Emma Goldman

1. Achieves described her as "the most dangerous woman in America" (83)
2. Claimed "if there is no dancing, count on me" (83)

Who is actually a great man:

- Powerful individuals such as kings and political leaders are often called as great man since they are the one who is making the final decision, but are they the only one who is considered as great? Does that mean none of the ordinary people could possibly be called great?
- E.g. Battles might be won with the guidance of the leader. However, we cannot forget the people who were willing to fight and die for the team, and people who serve weapons, and the economic system. All of these supported the team, and it led to the victory of the team History is made by everyone, not just powerful individuals, it includes people in general This means that everyone who interacted with the historical event considered as great

Unintended consequences in history:

All the events from the past are made by people's decisions

Sometimes people get outcomes that they were not even aware of

- E.g. In 1517, Martin Luther put the ninety-five theses on the door of the church in Wittenburg

It is clear that he was intended to protest certain activities within the Catholic Church It is unsure that whether he wanted to attempt to change the religious form of Europe or to start countless religious conflicts between protestant and Catholics

How politicians interpret English civil war:

- Politicians analyze localized records to understand the general population's information
- Politicians get to know the social movements and economic changes through analyzing documents of tax returns, list of merchandise and sales, records of income and outgoing

Karl Marx's influence on economic history and historians:

- Encouraged historians to focus on economy changes
Class conflict between a rising "middle sort" and the established elite
- Advocated for a transition from a feudal society based on tradition and class system to a capitalist society focused on wage labor and individual profit
- Marx was mainly known as a political thinker, but he was also interested in explaining the changes of society and the mechanism with his partner Friedrich Engels
- Impact on historians regarding social economic and cultural issues
- Britain: Marxist historians such as Hobsbawm and Thompson began to spread the influence
- France and Italy: Greatly influenced to the social sciences
- Germany: Complex relationship with one of its famous sons
- Russia: Influenced on their historiography and other viewpoints got overshadowed

The importance of historical interpretation:

- Social and economic conditions influence people's thoughts and actions
- Individuals are not completely controlled by these factors, but it shows that the conditions do affect their behavior
- The interpretation of the English civil war emphasizes the importance of examining society and economics
- Historians focus not only on class and changes to capitalism, but also on the rise of specific groups
Social Historians consider the civil war as the economy changes rather than transition to capitalism
The economic shift created social inequality
- Influenced on political conditions

Research method:

Social historians examine not just politics but also the feelings and behavior of the general population

Anthropology and sociology have enabled social historians to investigate the daily life patterns

→ This brings up new questions to historians such as how come the patterns of marriage had been changed

Without significant societal changes, historical records are often overlooked

→ This makes historians create narratives of stable life

The interest in culture and anthropology:

- By the end of the nineteenth century, anthropology and sociology became professionalized, creating a division
- Recently they have been converging. Anthropologists analyzing historical events, and historians have research on anthropological theories
- The definition of culture here is not just about music or literature, but also the patterns of thoughts and understanding, the use of language, the way people lived, and the way of thinking
- Even in the field of cultural history, Marx's idea that economic conditions influence people's thoughts and behavior is used
- The way people think influence on their relationship with society and the economy

David Underdown's analysis of the English civil war:

- He investigated how different social groups viewed themselves
- He emphasized the contrast between traditional Protestantism and radical puritanism

Non-religious activities such as soccer became the symbol of social conflicts

He had concerns about gender roles and family stability

He sees the war as a struggle between different cultures and ideas

His views highlight the importance of combining economic, political, social, and cultural analysis

He emphasizes that seventeenth century society was fluctuated and divided rather than stable, focusing on elements of conflict

The complexity of historical narrative:

- Even a single historical event can include many stories: religious, political, social.
 - Past events are connected to future events
- These aspects making it difficult to think of a single origin

Colonization of America by Europeans:

○ Religious conflicts, economic factors, and ideological motivations were the cause of the colonization

Colonization is not a simple story, it has complex and diverse effects

• It includes the death of indigenous people, the development of slavery, the long-term decline of the British economy and the formation of new political ideas

Conclusion:

- Burdette implies history is shaped not only by great men but by the decision of ordinary people
- Past events (in this chapter English civil war) cannot be understood from just from a single perspective, we need to combine different historical interpretations to get a complete picture

Glossary:

1. Proverb- A well-known phrase or sentence that gives advice or says something that is generally true, for example 'waste not, want not.'
2. Wander-to walk slowly around or to a place, often without any particular sense of purpose or direction
7. Burity intay that is in and eat sery or bureaucras and involving complicated oficial rules which may seem unnecessary
5. Schematic- showing the main features or relationships but not the details

Reference:

1. Arnold, John. History: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford University Press, 2016. (80-93)
2. Oxford Learner's Dictionaries. www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com (Accessed October 15, 2024)