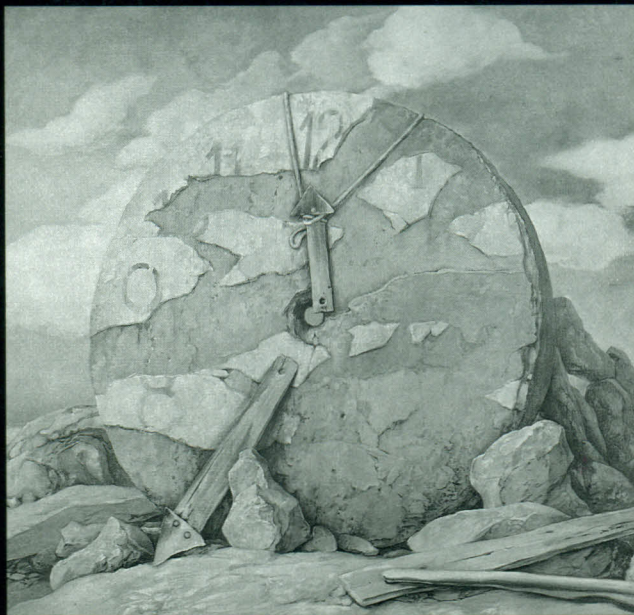


SOCIAL

A General Theory of
Historical Development



Stephen K. Sanderson



TRANSFORMATIONS

Social Transformations

*A General Theory of
Historical Development*

Stephen K. Sanderson



BLACKWELL
Oxford UK & Cambridge USA

Copyright © Stephen K. Sanderson 1995

The right of Stephen K. Sanderson to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 1995

Blackwell Publishers Inc.
238 Main Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142, USA

Blackwell Publishers Ltd
108 Cowley Road
Oxford OX4 1JF
UK

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purposes of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Except in the United States of America, this book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Sanderson, Stephen K.

Social transformations: a general theory of historical development / Stephen K. Sanderson.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-55786-403-9 (alk. paper). — ISBN 1-55786-404-7 (pbk.: alk. paper)

1. Social evolution. 2. Economic anthropology. 3. Capitalism.

I. Title.

GN360.S265 1995

303.4—dc20

94-36182
CIP

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the
British Library.

Phototypeset in Ehrhardt 11½ on 13 pt
by Intype, London

Printed in Great Britain by
Hartnolls Limited, Bodmin, Cornwall

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Contents

Preface	x
1 Evolutionary Materialism: A General Theory of Historical Development	1
The Theoretical Strategy of Evolutionary Materialism	3
Evolutionary Materialism and World History	17
2 The Neolithic Revolution	20
Hunter-Gatherer Societies Before 10,000 BP	20
The Worldwide Transition to Agriculture	23
Explaining the Worldwide Transition to Agriculture	34
Conclusions	49
3 The Origin of Civilization and the State	53
A Typology of Sociopolitical Evolution	53
The Origin of Civilization and the State as a Process of Parallel Evolution	58
Explaining the Origin of Civilization and the State	68
The Pace of State Evolution	86
Coda: Reconstructing Social Evolution Using the Comparative Method	88
4 Agrarian States and their Evolutionary Dynamics	96
Social Change in Agrarian States	98
Agrarian States as Precapitalist World-Systems	113
Social Devolution and the Collapse of Agrarian States	125
Conclusion: The Evolutionary Dynamics of Agrarian States	132

5 The Capitalist Revolution and the Beginnings of the Modern World	134
Feudalism in World History	135
The Nature of Capitalism	138
The Origins of European Capitalism	141
The Japanese Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism	147
Theories of the Transition to Capitalism	155
A New Interpretation	168
6 The Evolution of the Modern World, I: The Expanding and Evolving Modern World-System	181
The Structure and Dynamics of the Modern World-System	181
The Evolution of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1500–1995	186
Hegemony in the World-Economy	196
Development and Underdevelopment in the World-System	203
Some Test Cases	218
The Interstate System: The Political Side of the Modern World-System	235
7 The Evolution of the Modern World, II: The Emergence of the Institutions of Modernity	244
Industrialization in the West and Japan	244
The Rise and Demise of State Socialism	257
Stratification and Mobility in the Age of Modernity	270
The Evolution of the Modern State	285
The Emergence and Expansion of Mass Education	304
The Scientific Revolution and the Development of Modern Science	317
The Emergence of a Postindustrial Society?	332
8 The Question of Progress	336
Before the Rise of Modern Capitalism	337
After the Rise of Modern Capitalism	346
Conclusions	356
9 The Evolving Future	358
A Futuristic Scenario: W. Warren Wagar	359
The Challenges: Population Growth and Ecological Degradation	361

The Challenges: Nuclear War	367
The Challenges: A World State	369
The Challenges: Capitalism, Socialism, or Barbarism?	370
The Crisis and Collapse of Capitalist-Sensate Culture	375
Theoretical Reprise	381
ences	403
	438

Preface

This book is intended to finish the task begun in my *Social Evolutionism* (Blackwell, 1990). In that book, one of my main aims was to clear away a great deal of theoretical debris concerning theories of social evolution. In sketching and critically analyzing the historical development of evolutionary theories I hoped to show that many myths and misconceptions had accumulated in regard to them. I attacked these myths and misconceptions and tried to show that an evolutionary interpretation of world history was both possible and desirable. *Social Transformations* formulates such an interpretation, which I refer to by the name of evolutionary materialism, and applies it to what I regard as the world's most important historical transformations: the Neolithic Revolution, the origin of civilization and the state, and the transformation that ushered in the modern world, the transition from feudalism to capitalism in western Europe and Japan. Since this book's aim is that of articulating and empirically testing a general theory of social evolution, I have had to read extensively in the various literatures of the leading historically minded social sciences, mainly archaeology, history, and historical sociology. Unless one plans to spend the better part of a lifetime on such a project, one can attempt to cope with only so many historical details. Therefore, I hope that specialists in these fields and their many subfields will be tolerant of the inevitable limits of my knowledge of their particular specialty, judging the book in terms of the aim of producing a coherent picture of the general lines of world history rather than subtle and nuanced accounts of specific historical and prehistorical events.

The subtitle of the book, "A General Theory of Historical Development," was chosen in preference to the subtitle considered first

("A General Theory of Social Evolution") because I wish to emphasize that the book is concerned only with the broad outlines of social evolution (parallel and convergent evolution) rather than with divergent evolutionary processes. Nonetheless, the theory developed here may properly be regarded as a general theory of evolution that has applicability to all evolutionary processes.

I am grateful to many individuals who read and commented on various portions of the manuscript and who made helpful suggestions for improving it: Christopher Chase-Dunn, Randall Collins, Ray Scupin, Thomas Conelly, Victor Garcia, Christopher DeCorse, Peter Peregrine, Gary Leupp, Jonathan Turner, Immanuel Wallerstein, Walter Goldfrank, Thomas Hall, Larry Miller, and Dick Betlem. I express my thanks to my university, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, for granting me a sabbatical leave during the Spring 1994 semester so that I could devote myself full-time to finishing this book. I also wish to acknowledge Mary Sampson and the staff of the Interlibrary Loan Office at IUP. They acquired for me many books and articles necessary to the completion of this book, and they did so cheerfully and expeditiously. Finally, I am grateful to John Davey for agreeing to have another of my books published by Blackwell.

I have dedicated this book to Gerhard Lenski, Marvin Harris, and Immanuel Wallerstein, because they are the scholars who have influenced my thinking the most. Lenski first pointed me in the direction of doing sociology in comparative, evolutionary, and materialist terms. Harris then showed how such an approach could be developed in a very elaborate and detailed way. Finally, Wallerstein added a critically important dimension necessary to understanding the development of the modern world, that of the world-system as a single evolving unit.

Some of the materials in this book have been previously published. Most of chapter 1 appeared as "Evolutionary materialism: a theoretical strategy for the study of social evolution," in *Sociological Perspectives*, vol. 37, no. 1, 1994. Portions of chapter 4 appeared as "Expanding world commercialization: the link between world-systems and civilizations," in *Comparative Civilizations Review*, no. 30, 1994. Portions of chapters 4 and 5 appeared as "The transition from feudalism to capitalism: the theoretical significance of the Japanese case," in *Review*, vol. XVII, no. 1, 1994. I am grateful to the editors

of these journals for granting permission to use the contents of those articles in this book.

Figure 7.1 is reprinted from "The world-economy and the institutionalization of science in seventeenth-century Europe," by Robert Wuthnow, which appeared in *Studies of the Modern World-System*, copyright © 1980 edited by Albert Bergesen, with permission from Robert Wuthnow and Academic Press, San Diego, California.

Figures 9.1 and 9.2 are reprinted from *Beyond the Limits*, copyright © 1992 by Meadows, Meadows, and Randers, with permission from Chelsea Publishing Co., White River Junction, Vermont.

A note on chronologies: The expressions "BP," "BC," and "AD" are all used in this book. BP, which stands for "Before the Present," has become standard usage among archaeologists and is used to represent prehistoric dates. BC is most commonly used by historians and historical sociologists and is used when historical rather than prehistoric dates are being referred to. BC dates can be converted to BP dates by adding 2000, BP dates converted to BC dates by subtracting 2000.