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Eco. 301Y1: Economic History of Late-Medieval and Early Modern Europe

Topic No. 8 [17]: 'The Rise of the Gentry' Debate: Landlords, Social Change, and the Rise of Agrarian Capitalism in Tudor-Stuart England, 1540 - 1640

READINGS:

A. The Original Debate about the 'Rise of the Gentry'

- **1. R.H. Tawney, 'The Rise of the Gentry, 1558-1640', Economic History Review, 1st ser., 11:1 (1941), 1-38. Reprinted with a postscript (1954) in E.M. Carus-Wilson, ed., Essays in Economic History, Vol. I (1954), pp. 173-214; and excerpts in Stone (1965), below, no. 13.
- * 2. R.H. Tawney, The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century (London, 1912; reissued London and New York, 1967). Introduction to the 1967 edn. by Lawrence Stone, pp. vii-xxii. See Part I, Introduction, pp. 1-18; and Part II, chapter 1, 'The New Rural Economy', pp. 177-230.
- * 3. H.J. Habakkuk, 'English Landownership, 1680-1740', Economic History Review, 1st ser., 10:1 (Feb. 1940), 2 - 17. Provides the mirror image of Tawney's analysis, for the post 1660 period; and note that it was published in the year preceding the publication of Tawney's famous essay.
- **4. Hugh R. Trevor-Roper (Lord Dacre), The Gentry, 1540-1640: Economic History Review Supplement, no. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1953), pp. 1 - 55. Tawney's chief opponent; and also the chief opponent of Lawrence Stone. Excerpt in Stone (1965), below, no. 13.
- * 5. Lawrence Stone, 'The Anatomy of the Elizabethan Aristocracy', Economic History Review, 1st ser., 18: 1 -2 (1948), 1-53. A Tawney, supporter, essentially if not entirely. Excerpts in Stone (1965), below, no. 13.
6. H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'The Elizabethan Aristocracy: An Anatomy Anatomized', Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 3:3 (1951), 279-98. A vigorous (indeed savage and heartless) attack on Stone, reprinted in part in Stone (1965), below, no. 13.
7. Lawrence Stone, 'The Elizabethan Aristocracy: A Restatement', Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 4:3 (1952), 302-21.
8. Lawrence Stone, The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641 (Oxford, 1956). Excerpts in Stone (1965), below, no. 13.
- * 9. Jack Hexter, 'Storm Over the Gentry', Encounter, 10 (1958). Reprinted in J.H. Hexter, Reappraisals in History (London, 1961); and in Stone (1965), below, no. 13.
10. Perez Zagorin, 'The English Revolution, 1640-1660', Cahiers d'histoire mondiale, 2 (1955).

11. Perez Zagorin, 'The Social Interpretations of the English Revolution', Journal of Economic History, 19:3 (Sept. 1959), 376-401; and, in part, in Stone, below no. 13, as 'Critique of the Trevor-Roper Thesis'.
- * 12. J.P. Cooper, 'The Counting of Manors', Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 8:3 (1956), 377 - 89.
- * 13. Lawrence Stone, ed., Social Change and Revolution in England, 1540-1640, Problems & Perspectives Series (London, 1965). Part I consists of articles and essays (usually condensed by the major participants in this debate about the 'Rise of the Gentry' and the Origins of the Civil War:
 - a) Lawrence Stone, 'Problems of Historiography: Introduction', pp. xi-xxvi.
 - b) R. H. Tawny, 'The Rise of the Gentry', pp. 6-18
 - c) H.R. Trevor Roper, 'The Decline of the Mere Gentry', pp. 19-32.
 - d) J. H. Hexter, 'The Military Decline of the Aristocracy', pp. 33-44.
 - e) P. Zagorin, 'Critique of the Trevor-Roper Thesis', pp. 45-59.

Part II consists of 'Select Documents' from Tudor-Stuart England

B. The Subsequent Literature on the 'Rise of the Gentry, 1540 - 1640'

- * 1. Peter R. Coss, 'The Formation of the English Gentry', Past & Present, no. 147 (May 1995), pp. 38-64.
2. Peter R. Coss, The Origins of the English Gentry (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- * 3. George E. Mingay, The Gentry: The Rise and Fall of a Ruling Class (London, 1976), especially chapters 1 - 3, pp. 1-79. One of the best modern studies on this subject.
4. Alan Simpson, The Wealth of the Gentry, 1540-1660 (Chicago, 1961).
5. Julian Cornwall, 'The Early Tudor Gentry', Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 17:3 (1965), 456 - 75.
- * 6. Robert Brenner, 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe', Past and Present, no. 70 (Feb. 1976), 30-75. Republished in T. H. Aston and C.H.E. Philipin, eds., The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe (Cambridge, 1987). Collected essays on this debate, beginning and ending with Brenner's articles (1976-82). See in particular in this volume, the reprint of: J. P. Cooper, 'In Search of Agrarian Capitalism', Past and Present, No. 80 (August 1978), 20-65.
- * 7. Robert Brenner, 'The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism', Past and Present, No. 97 (Nov. 1982), 16-113. A rather lengthy reply to all of his critics, republished in Aston and Philipin, The Brenner Debate (1987) .
- * 8. Gordon Batho, 'Noblemen, Gentlemen, and Yeomen', as chapter V, Part B, in Joan Thirsk, ed., The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Vol. IV: 1500-1640 (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 276-305.

9. Christopher Clay, Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700, Vol. I: People, Land, and Towns (1985), chapter 5, 'The Landlords', pp. 142 - 64.
10. J. T. Cliffe, Puritans in Conflict: The Puritan Gentry during and after the Civil Wars (London: Routledge, 1988).
11. Julian C. K. Cornwall, Wealth and Society in Early Sixteenth-Century England (London, 1988).
12. Stephen Hipkin, 'The Structure of Landownership and Land Occupation in the Romney Marsh Region, 1646 - 1834', Agricultural History Review, 51:i (2003), 69-94.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who were the English 'gentry': how were they distinguished from the aristocracy and the ordinary commoners?
2. Discuss the Tawney-Trevor Roper debate. Were the English gentry 'rising' or 'falling' in the century 1540 - 1640; and why? When did the English gentry first emerge as a distinct social grouping? When did they achieve their major gains in economic, social, and political power? Is a purely economic interpretation possible?
3. What major changes occurred in English landholding in the 16th and 17th centuries in terms of: aristocracy, crown, Church, gentry, yeomanry?
4. Did the English aristocracy (titled nobility) make a 'comeback', particularly in landed economic power after the 1660s? Discuss the Habakkuk thesis.