

Revised 29 August 2003

ECO 201Y1

**Topic 2 [2]: The Problem of Serfdom in European Economic Development, I:**

**The Decline of Serfdom in Late-Medieval Western Europe**

**A.. General and Theoretical Studies: for Medieval Europe, West and East:**

- \*\* 1. Robert Brenner, 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe,' Past and Present, no. 70 (February 1976), pp. 30-74, reprinted in T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin, eds. The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 10 - 63, including essays attacking or supporting his thesis.
- \* 2. Thomas W. Robisheaux, 'The World of the Village,' in Thomas A. Brady, jr., Heiko O. Oberman, and James D. Tracy, eds., Handbook of European History, 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation, Vol. I: Structures and Assertions (Leiden, 1994), pp. 79-112.
3. Marc Bloch, French Rural History: An Essay on its Basic Characteristics (1966), chapters IV and V, pp. 102-97; and Marc Bloch, Slavery and Serfdom in the Middle Ages: Selected Papers, trans. William R. Beer (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975).
4. Georges Duby, Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West (1962), pp. 232-59, 312 -57.
5. Michael M. Postan, ed. Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Vol. I: Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages, 2nd rev. edn. (Cambridge, 1966):
  - (a) Marc Bloch, 'The Rise of Dependent Cultivation and Seignorial Institutions,' pp. 235-89
  - (b) François Ganshof and Adriaan Verhulst, 'Medieval Agrarian Society in its Prime: France, the Low Countries, Western Germany,' pp. 305-39.
  - \* (c) Leopold Genicot, 'Crisis: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times,' pp. 660-742, especially pp. 725-38.
6. Douglass C. North and Robert P. Thomas, 'The Rise and Fall of the Manorial System: A Theoretical Model,' Journal of Economic History, 31 (Dec. 1971), 777-803; and Stefano Fenoaltea, 'The Rise and Fall of a Theoretical Model: the Manorial System,' Journal of Economic History, 25 (June 1975), 386-409. An attack on the North-Thomas model. See also: Stefano Fenoaltea, 'Authority, Efficiency, and Agricultural Organization in Medieval England and Beyond: A Hypothesis,' Journal of Economic History, 25 (Dec. 1975), 693-718.
- \* 7. Jerome Blum, 'The Rise of Serfdom in Eastern Europe,' American Historical Review, 62 (July 1957), 807-36. A comparative study: contrasting serfdom in eastern and western Europe.
8. Tom Scott, ed., The Peasantries of Europe: from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries (London and New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998).

**B. On Late-Medieval England:**

- \*\* 1. Rodney H. Hilton, The Decline of Serfdom in Medieval England (Studies in Economic History series, London, 1969), pp. 9-59.
2. Rodney H. Hilton, Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism: Essays in Medieval Social History (1985), especially: 'Peasant Movements in England Before 1381,' pp. 122-38; 'Popular Movements in England at the End of the Fourteenth Century,' pp. 152-64; 'Social Concepts in the English Rising of 1381,' pp. 216-26.
3. Michael Postan, The Medieval Economy and Society (1972), chapter 9, 'The Villagers: Serfdom and Freedom,' pp. 143-55. See also Michael Postan, 'Chronology of Labour Services,' and his 'Legal Status and Economic Conditions in Medieval Villages,' in Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 89-106; pp. 278-90, respectively.
4. J.L. Bolton, The Medieval English Economy, 1150-1500 (London, 1980), chapter 7 ('Crisis and Change in the Agrarian Economy'), pp. 207-45.
- \* 5. John Hatcher, 'English Serfdom and Villeinage: Towards a Reassessment,' Past and Present, no. 90 (Feb. 1981), 3-39. Reprinted in T. H. Aston, ed., Landlords, Peasants and Politics in Medieval England (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 247-84.
- \* 6. John Hatcher, 'England in the Aftermath of the Black Death,' Past & Present, no. 144 (August 1994), pp. 3 - 35.
- \* 7. Ambrose Raftis, 'Peasants and the Collapse of the Manorial Economy on Some Ramsey Abbey Estates,' in Richard Britnell and John Hatcher, eds., Progress and Problems in Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Edward Miller (Cambridge 1996), pp. 191-206.
8. J.R. Maddicott, The English Peasantry and the Demands of the Crown, 1294-1341, Past and Present Supplement no. 1 (Oxford, 1974), 75 pp. Reprinted in T.H. Aston, ed. Landlords, Peasants, and Politics in Medieval England (Cambridge, 1987).
9. Mark Bailey, 'Peasant Welfare in England, 1290 - 1348,' The Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 51:2 (May 1998), 223-51.
10. R.H. Hilton and T.H. Aston, eds., The English Rising of 1381, Past and Present Publications (Cambridge, 1984.)
11. J.M.W. Bean, 'Landlords,' and E.B. Fryde, 'Peasant Rebellion and Peasant Discontents,' in Edward Miller, ed., The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Vol. III: 1348 - 1500 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 526-86, 744-819.

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What specific economic, social, and legal conditions defined serfdom or villeinage in Western

Europe: with what regional variations? To what extent was serfdom a barrier to agrarian change and economic development? What were the costs and benefits of serfdom: for peasants and lords?

2. Explain the basic features and causes of the decline of serfdom in late-medieval western Europe. Compare and contrast that decline in England and in the north-west continent: in France, Low Countries, Germany. What explains the differences? Why was serfdom declining in some regions while being strengthened in others, in late-medieval Europe. What were the basic differences between western and eastern Europe concerning the institution of serfdom during the late medieval and early modern eras?
3. What impact did the Black Death and depopulation have upon the institutions of feudalism, manorialism, and serfdom in western Europe?
4. What were the various causes of peasant revolts in late-medieval western Europe?
5. Discuss the Brenner thesis and his critics. How have various historians used similar demographic, and/or market/commercial models to explain both the rise and the decline of serfdom, in both western and eastern Europe? How can such contrary uses of the same economic models be reconciled -- especially by including a subset of institutional models?