Economics 201Y1: Economic History of Later Medieval and Early-Modern Europe

Topic No. 19:

Agrarian Changes in Early-Modern France, 14th to 18th Centuries:

The ‘Feudal Crises,’ Rural ‘Embourgeoisement,’ The Seigniorial Reaction, and the Beginnings of an Agricultural Revolution

Within each section, all readings are listed in the chronological order of original publication (when that can be ascertained), except for some collections of essays.

A. The Medieval Background and the Later Middle Ages (14th and 15th Centuries)


B. France: Demography and Population Studies up to the French Revolution


(b) Herbert Moller, ‘Population and Society during the Old Regime, c. 1640 - 1770,’


**Part I: General**


(e) J. Hajnal, ‘European Marriage Patterns in Perspective,’ pp. 101-46. [Original contribution.]

**Part III: Europe and the United States**


(b) Pierre Goubert, ‘Recent Theories and Research in French Population between 1500 and 1700,’ pp. 457-473. [Original contribution, translated by Margaret Hilton.]


(d) J. Meuvret, ‘Demographic Crisis in France from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century,’ pp. 507-22. [Original contribution, translated by Margaret Hilton.]


15. Jacques Dupâquier, La population française aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles (Paris, 1979);


   (c) David Weir, ‘Markets and Mortality in France, 1600 - 1789,’ pp. 201-34.


C. The French Economy and French Agriculture in the 15th, 16th, and 17th Centuries (chiefly to 1660): General Surveys


D. French Agriculture in the 16th and 17th Centuries, to ca. 1660: Particular Studies in Monographs, Essays, and Journal Articles


   (b) Jean Jacquart, ‘French Agriculture in the Seventeenth Century,’ pp. 164-84. From


* 22. Philip Hoffman, ‘Taxes and Agrarian Lands in Early Modern France: Land Sales, 1550-


(b) J.P. Cooper, ‘In Search of Agrarian Capitalism,’ reprinted from Past and Present, no. 80 (August 1978), 20-65.


E. Peasant Unrest in the 17th Century


   (c) David Weir, ‘Markets and Mortality in France, 1600 - 1789,’ pp. 201-34.

   (d) Roger Schofield, ‘Family structure, demographic behaviour, and economic growth,’ pp. 279-304.

F. French Agriculture in the Later 17th and 18th Centuries: to the French Revolution


(a) Georges Lefèbvre, ‘The Place of the Revolution in the Agrarian History of France,’ pp. 79-94. [Reprinted in translation from *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale,* 1 (1929).]


(c) Ernest Labrousse, ‘La repartition sociale de l'expansion agricole,’ in Part III, chapter 4, pp. 473-98.

(d) Pierre Goubert, ‘La société traditionelle,’ in Part IV, 567-600.


33. T.J.A. LeGoff and D.M.G. Sutherland, ‘The Revolution and the Rural Community in


41. J. W. Shaffer, Family and Farm: Agrarian Change and Household Organization in the Loire Valley, 1500 - 1900 (Albany, 1982).


G. The French Economy in the 16th, 17th, and 18th Centuries: to the French Revolution


(b) M. Reinland, ‘Elite and Nobility in the Second Half of 18th Century France,’ pp. 91-109. [Reissued in translation from ‘Elite et noblesse dans la second moitié du XVIIIe siècle,’ *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* (jan-mars 1956).]


52. Eugene White, ‘Was There a Solution to the Ancien Régime's Financial Dilemma?’ Journal of Economic History, 49 (September 1989), 545 - 68.


QUESTIONS

1. What significance has geography had for French rural history: in particular how did the nature, organization, and techniques of northern French agriculture differ from that of southern France, with the Loire as a rough boundary between the two zones? Did these regional differences remain a ‘constant’ in French rural history from medieval to modern times?

2. What changes occurred in French agriculture, rural society, the institutions of feudalism, manorialism, and serfdom during the Late-Medieval ‘Great Depression’: ca. 1350-1450?

3. In particular, how did the status of servile peasants change in France from the 14th to 16th centuries? What was the economic, social, and judicial status of the following in the 16th century: those descended from villeins libres, villeins serfs; those who were leasehold tenants, those who were métayers. How did métayage tenancies differ from traditional (medieval) manorial tenancies?

4. What varieties of land tenures, systems of land holding were to be found in 16th and 17th century-France? To what extent was French agriculture in its organization, social institutions, techniques, etc. still: ‘feudal’ or ‘medieval’; to what extent was it becoming ‘modernized?’ by the 18th century?

5. How valid is Marc Bloch's thesis that, as economic manorialism declined, the importance of seigniorialism increased? In Bloch's analysis, what was the difference between manor and seigneurie in France? Between the economic and political powers of the landlord and the lord of a seigneurie?

6. Was there a ‘seignorial reaction’ in the 16th and 17th centuries? What forms did it take; what consequences (if any) did it have?

7. To what extent was there rural ‘embourgeoisement’ from the 15th to 18th centuries: bourgeois acquisitions of lands, country estates; purchases of letters patent of nobility or of royal offices to which lands were attached? What effects, if any, did such bourgeois land acquisitions have upon the economic and social structure of French agriculture?

8. Does the history of the landed French nobility have any continuity from 1453 to 1789? [Distinguish between noblesse d'épée and noblesse de robe.]

9. What were the causes and consequences of French peasant unrest and revolts in the 17th-century? Were there social, economic, and demographic ‘crises de subsistence’? How significant an aspect of the ‘17th-Century General Crisis’ are the French peasant revolts of this era?

10. What were the chief commodities produced by French agriculture from the 16th to 18th centuries? How important were the grain and wine trades to the early-modern French economy?


12. Do regional variations in French agriculture -- especially comparing regions north and south of the Loire -- prevent us from making ‘national’ generalizations about trends in ‘French’ agriculture? What were the most advanced and least advanced regions of French agriculture on the eve of the
French revolution?
Table 1. Proportions of Total Populations Engaged in Agriculture: in England and France, 1500 - 1800

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>ENGLAND</th>
<th>FRANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Anthony Wrigley, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 1985  
Table 2. FRENCH AGRICULTURE IN THE 19th CENTURY

Distribution of Farm Lands by the 1881 Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Farms by Area</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Farms</th>
<th>Area in Hectares (2.47 acres)</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 hectares</td>
<td>1,866,000</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>5,600,000</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 20 hectares</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>12,300,000</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 40 hectares</td>
<td>296,000</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>8,400,000</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 40 hectares  (100 acres)</td>
<td>142,000</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>22,300,000</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3,504,000</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>48,600,000</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Over 20 hectares  | 438,000                 | 12.5%                     | 30,700,000                   | 63.2%                    |
Table 3. COMPARATIVE STATISTICS ON FRENCH AND BRITISH AGRICULTURE: from the Patrick O’Brien articles.

A. Demography and Agricultural Employment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FRANCE</th>
<th>FRANCE</th>
<th>FRANCE</th>
<th>BRITAIN</th>
<th>BRITAIN</th>
<th>BRITAIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population in millions</td>
<td>Agricultural Workforce</td>
<td>Percent of Total</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Agricultural Workforce</td>
<td>Percent of Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>19.11</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>27.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>8.29</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>20.95</td>
<td>17.92</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>21.46</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Agricultural Income in 1910:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agricultural Statistics</th>
<th>FRANCE</th>
<th>GREAT BRITAIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Employment and Related Occupations as Percent of Total Employment</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Income as Percent of NNI</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Farm Scales and Occupancy by Owners and Tenants in 1880:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agricultural Statistics</th>
<th>FRANCE</th>
<th>GREAT BRITAIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area covered by farms of 40 hectares (100 acres) or more:</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of lands worked by owner-occupiers</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of lands worked by tenants</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>