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Eco 301Y1: The Economic History of Later Medieval and Early-Modern Europe

Topic 2 [3]: The Problem of Serfdom in European Economic Development, II: The Spread of Serfdom in Eastern Europe, ca. 1400 - ca. 1700

Recommended readings: the more important ones are indicated by asterisks *

- * 1. Jerome Blum, 'The Rise of Serfdom in Eastern Europe', American Historical Review, 62 (July 1957), 807-36. Still, despite its age, the classic study that no student can ignore.
- * 2. Robert Brenner, 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe', Past and Present, no. 70 (February 1976), pp. 30-75: reprinted in T. Aston and C. Philpin, eds., The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe (1985), pp. 10 - 63. See also Brenner, 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe: The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism', Past and Present, no. 97 (1982), pp. 213-327; and Brenner's essay in the Bush volume, no. 5 below. Elaborates the Blum model (though without proper attribution) to provide the now standard view of eastern serfdom
- * 3. Markus Cerman, 'Demesne Lordship and Rural Society in Early-Modern East Central and Eastern Europe: Comparative Perspectives', in Markus Cerman and Richard Hoyle, eds, Demesne Lordship and Rural Society in Early Modern East Central and Eastern Europe, ca. 1500 - c. 1800. Special edition of Agricultural History Review, 59:ii (2011), 239-58. Offers a different perspective from that of Blum and Brenner (above). See also the other essays in this important volume; and the following book.
- * 4. Markus Cerman, Villagers and Lords in Eastern Europe, 1300 - 1800 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
- * 5. Michael L. Bush, ed., Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage (London and New York: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd., 1996): very valuable collection of studies on slavery and serfdom.
 - a) Michael Bush, 'Introduction', pp. 1-17.
 - b) Michael Bush, 'Serfdom in Medieval and Modern Europe: A Comparison', pp. 199-224.
 - c) Robert Brenner, 'The Rises and Declines of Serfdom in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', in, pp. 247-76.
 - d) William H. Hagen, 'Subject Farmers in Brandenburg-Prussia and Poland: Village Life and Fortunes under Manorialism in Early Modern Central Europe', pp. 296-310.
 - e) Steven Hoch, 'The Serf Economy and Social Order in Russia', pp. 311-22.
- * 6. Eric Hobsbawm, 'The General Crisis of the European Economy in the 17th Century: I', Past & Present, no. 5 (May 1954), 33 - 53; and 'The Crisis of the 17th Century: II', no. 6 (November 1954), 44 - 65. Republished as 'The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century', in Trevor Aston, ed., Crisis in Europe, 1560 - 1660: Essays from Past and Present (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 5 - 58. Reinforces the views found in the Blum-Brenner model. Focus only on the sections concerning the 'crisis in eastern markets', which is very relevant indeed to this current debate.

- * 7. Heide Wunder, 'Peasant Organization and Class Conflict in East and West Germany', Past and Present, No. 78 (Feb. 1978), pp. 47-55, reprinted in Aston and Philpin, The Brenner Debate (1985), pp. 91-100; see also Heide Wunder, 'Serfdom in Later Medieval and Early Modern Germany', in T. H. Aston, et al, eds., Social Relations and Ideas: Essays in Honour of R. H. Hilton (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 249 - 272. For Brenner's reply, see Aston and Philpin, eds., The Brenner Debate (1985), pp. 275-83.
- * 8. William Hagen, 'How Mighty the Junkers? Peasant Rents and Seigneurial Profits in Sixteenth-Century Brandenburg', Past & Present, no. 108 (August 1985), 80 - 116. See also his essay in the Bush volume, in no. 5 above).
- * 9. William W. Hagen, Ordinary Prussians: Brandenburg Junkers and Villagers, 1500 - 1840 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- * 10. Daniel Chirot, ed., The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe: Economics and Politics from the Middle Ages until the Early Twentieth Century (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
 a) Daniel Chirot, 'Causes and Consequences of Backwardness', pp. 1-14.
 b) Robert Brenner, 'Economic Backwardness in Eastern Europe in the Light of Developments in the West', pp. 15-52.
 c) Péter Gunst, 'Agrarian Systems of Central and Eastern Europe', pp. 53-91.
 d) Jacek Kochanowicz, 'The Polish Economy and the Evolution of Dependency', pp. 92-130.
- * 11. Evsey D. Domar, 'The Causes of Slavery or Serfdom: An Hypothesis', Journal of Economic History, 30 (Mar. 1970), 18-32. Focuses on eastern Europe, with a model originally proposed by Marc Bloch in 1941 with no reference to Bloch in his article).¹
12. Arcadius Kahan, 'Notes on Serfdom in Western and Eastern Europe', Journal of Economic History, 33 (Mar. 1973), 86-99.
13. Robert Millward, 'An Economic Analysis of the Organization of Serfdom in Eastern Europe', Journal of Economic History, 42 (1982), 513-48.
14. Michael North, 'Wage Labour versus Corvée Labour in East Prussian Agriculture, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries', in Michael North, From the North Sea to the Baltic: Essays in Commercial, Monetary and Agrarian History, 1500 - 1800, Variorum Collected Studies Series CS 548 (Aldershot: 1996), pp. 1-11.
15. Marion Malowist, 'The Problem of the Inequality of Economic Development in Europe in the Later Middle Ages', Economic History Review, 2nd ser. 19 (1966), 15-28. A classic study by an eminent Polish economic historian.
16. Jerzy Topolski, 'Economic Decline in Poland from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries', in Peter Earle, ed., Essays in European Economic History, 1500-1800 (Oxford, 1974), pp. 127-42. Also, see Jerzy Topolski, 'The Development and the Crisis of the Manorial System based on Serf Labour:

¹ See Marc Bloch, 'The Rise of Dependent Cultivation and Seigneurial Institutions', in J.H. Clapham and Eileen Power, eds., The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Vol. I: The Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages, 1st edn. (Cambridge University Press, 1941), pp. 224-77

- A Tentative Explanation', in P. Klep and E. Van Cauwenberghe, eds., Entrepreneurship and the Transformation of the Economy, 10th-20th Centuries (Leuven: 1994), pp. 135-46.
17. Sheilagh Ogilvie and Jeremy Edwards, 'Women and the "Second Serfdom": Evidence from Early Modern Bohemia', Journal of Economic History, 60:4 (December 2000), 961-94.
 18. Sheilagh Ogilvie, 'The Economic World of the Bohemian Serf: Economic Concepts, Preferences, and Constraints on the Estate of Friedland, 1583 - 1692', The Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 54:3 (August 2001), 430-53.
 19. Sheilagh Ogilvie, 'Communities and the "Second Serfdom" in Early Modern Bohemia', Past and Present, no. 187 (May 2005), pp. 69-119.
 20. Tracy K. Dennison and Sheilagh Ogilvie, 'Serfdom and Social Capital in Bohemia and Russia', The Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 60:3 (August 2007), 513-44.
 21. Tom Scott, 'The German Peasants' War and the "Crisis of Feudalism": Reflections on a Neglected Theme', Journal of Early Modern History: Contacts, Comparison, Contrasts, 6:3 (2002), 265-95.
 22. Paul Warde, 'Subsistence and Sales: the Peasant Economy of Württemberg in the Early Seventeenth Century', The Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 59:2 (May 2006), 289-319.
 - *23. Edgar Melton, 'The Feudal Revolution and the Agrarian Transformation of Eastern Europe, 1400 - 1600', in Troels Dohlerup and Per Ingesman, eds., New Approaches to the History of Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Selected Proceedings of Two International Conferences at the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters in Copenhagen in 1997 and 1999, Historisk-filosofiske Meddelelser 104 (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2009), pp. 273-300.
 - *24. F. L. Carsten, 'The Origins of the Junkers', English Historical Review, 62 (1947), 145 - 78. Though now a very old article, it does provide valuable additional information for a better perspective on the Blum article (no.1).

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the benefits and costs of serfdom for the manorial or estate landlord; and for the servile peasants. What are the benefits (if any) and costs for European economic development? Was serfdom a barrier to economic growth in eastern Europe, and a major factor that explains why eastern Europe lagged behind western Europe in modern economic development and industrialization?
2. What were the primary and secondary causes of the spread of serfdom into eastern Europe -- what is sometimes called 'The Second Serfdom'? Why did serfdom increase, expand its extent, in eastern Europe while it was dying out as an institution in western Europe?
3. Explain the regional variations in the spread of serfdom in eastern Europe, from the 14th to 17th centuries in East Prussia, Poland, Lithuania, Russia, Hungary, etc. Is there any common explanation for the spread of serfdom?
4. Discuss the Brenner thesis: how valid and valuable are demographic, commercial or market models

in explaining the expansion of serfdom in the East? What is the relevance of institutional factors, especially feudal and state or monarchical institutions in this debate?

5. Why did serfdom last so long -- until the mid to late 19th century -- in much of eastern Europe?