

**IV: LATE MEDIEVAL EUROPEAN
AGRICULTURE: Changes in Agrarian
Societies, West and East,
1280 - 1500**

**A. Late-Medieval Serfdom: Its Decline
in Western Europe and its Rise in
Eastern Europe**

revised: 23 October 2013

Manorialism & Serfdom as Barriers to Markets and Economic Growth: 1

- (1) **Peasant conservatism:** need for **communal consent to all major changes (village elders)**, with a rational mentality of risk aversion
- (2) **Absence of centralized manorial control over the village economies** – even in medieval England (with more commercialized lords)
- (3) **Low productivity of manorial farming:**

Manorialism & Serfdom as Barriers to Growth 2

- (4) **Peasant immobility & disguised unemployment** → **inelastic labour supplies**
- **economic growth** requires fluid, elastic labour supply
- (5) **Manorial economy was generally unresponsive to market forces:**
- **virtual impossibility of mortgaging communal lands** (though feudal manors could be mortgaged)
- (6) **Manorial lords: unproductive use of manorial surpluses** (economic rents), spent on **conspicuous consumption and warfare**

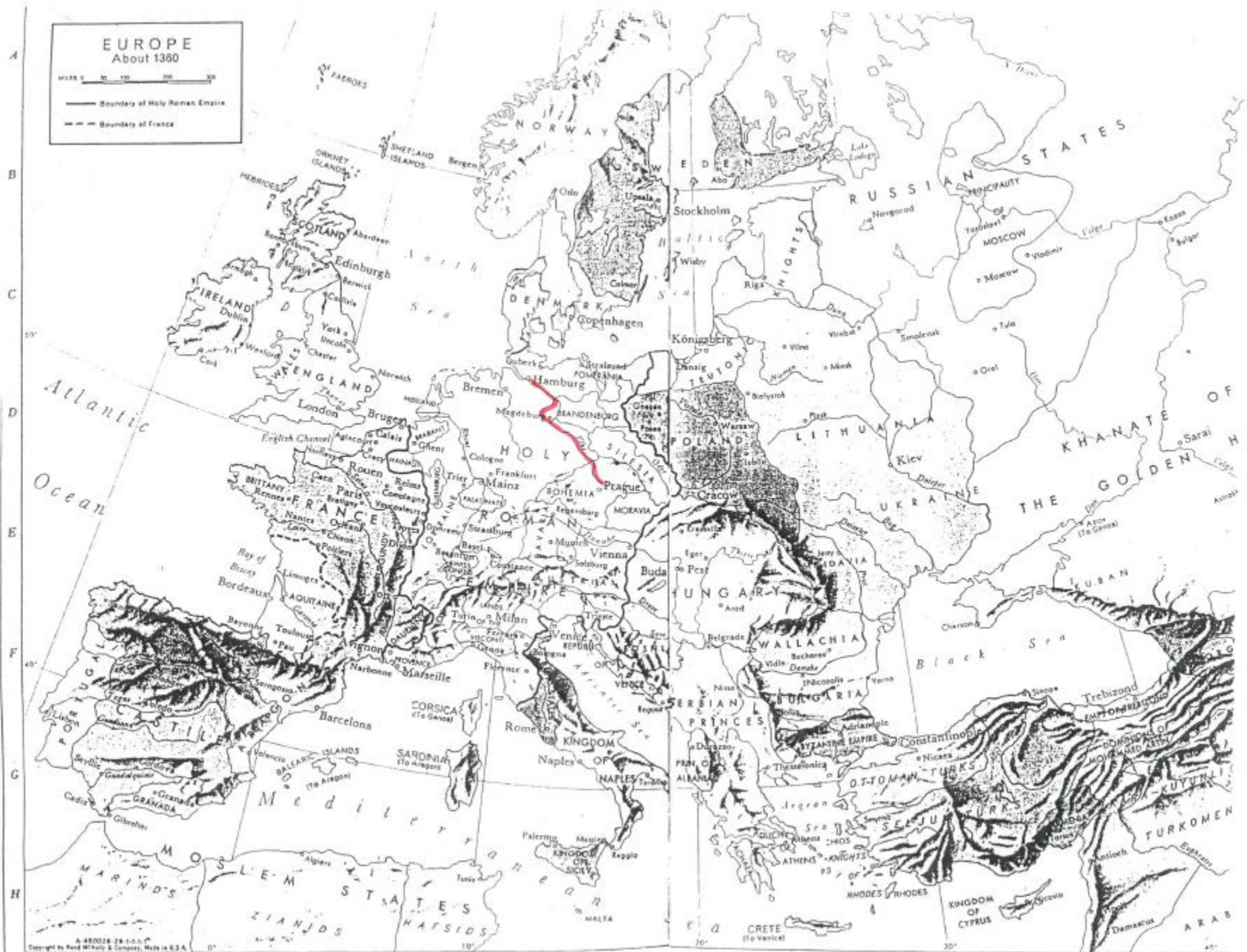
Mirror-Image changes in history of European Serfdom

- (1) **Mirror Image dichotomy between West & East:**
- - **the decline of serfdom in western Europe:** from 13th – 16th centuries
- - **the rise of serfdom or the 'Second Serfdom' in eastern Europe:** from later 15th/16th centuries to the 18th century: **East of the German Elbe River:**
- - Mecklenburg, Pomerania, Brandenburg, Prussia, Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Russia, Bohemia, Hungary
- (2) **Major factor explaining East-West economic differences:** why western Europe overtook and then widened the economic gap with eastern Europe

EUROPE About 1360

Scale 0 50 100 200 Miles

— Boundary of Holy Roman Empire
- - - Boundary of France



The Decline of Serfdom in Medieval England

R H Hilton



Decline of Western Serfdom: Economic Factors pre 1348: 1

- **(1) Population growth during 12th & 13th centuries:**
reverse image of the Bloch model: supply of excess labour
- - **no longer a necessity to bind labour to the soil**
- - growing supplies of landless labour willing to work for low wages

- **(2) Expansion of landed settlements east of the Elbe river:**
- **Colonization:** by offering full freedom to peasant settlers
- **Argument:** a magnet enticing western settlers forced manorial lords to offer own tenants better conditions
- **But a weak,** and often contradictory argument

Decline of Western Serfdom: Pre-1348 Economic Factors- 2

- (3) **Western urbanization:** new or growing towns
- Also offered a 'magnet' for settlement, since western towns grew only from rural immigration ($DR \geq BR$)
- **Towns offered full freedom** to serfs (after one year)
- (4) **Growth of monetized town markets:**
- **Promoted growth of commercialized agriculture:** → promoted surplus production
- **Peasants selling crops for cash:** → able to *commute* labour services into money payments

Decline of Western Serfdom: Pre-1348 Economic Factors- 3

- **(5) Commutation and cash: temporary conversion** of servile labour rents to full money payments
 - - But not on a permanent basis: often revoked
- **(6) Manumission: permanent, irreversible** purchase of full freedom without services
- **(7) many lords also used cash payments to hire free labour:** demographic growth
 - increased labour supplies → lower wages

Decline of Western Serfdom: Pre-1348 Economic Factors- 4

- (5) **Rising demand for cash by feudal lords**
- **Because of rising costs of military and court services**
- **Most feudal nobles were cash-hungry:** eager to increase cash incomes from peasant rentals
- **Leasing out the demesne lands:** leases with fixed-term, fixed-cash rental payment & NO labour services
- **loss of labour services** → increased hiring of landless free wage-labour: part-time work (harvests)
- **Remaining demesne lands:** often added to open fields and intermingled with tenants' plough strips

Decline of Western Serfdom: Pre-1348 Economic Factors- 5

- (6) **Growth of Peasant Land Markets**
- **Servile peasants both leased and bought free-hold lands**
- **free peasants bought or leased servile tenancies** (even with attached labour services)
- **Added to confusions** about the real nature of peasant tenancies, undermining concepts of serfdom, making enforcement difficult

Decline of Serfdom: Institutional Factors

- (1) **The Church: western Catholic church**
- **Priests, clerics, monks, etc.** always preached against slavery – and viewed serfdom as not much better than slavery
- **no one could enter the church who was unfree**
- **Church was a major factor in ending slavery in western Europe**
- **But the Church also facilitated the spread of serfdom –**
- as preferable to slavery
- **Church: largest single landowner in western Europe:**
- **serfdom was more widespread, more intense on ecclesiastical estates (bishops, abbots) than on lay (secular) estates**

Decline of Serfdom: Institutional Factors 2A

- (2) **Role of Royal and Manorial Courts**
- (a) **France:** Royal Courts: the *Parlement de Paris* - sought to undermine manorial (seigneurial) courts by hearing appeals on property issues: from reign of Philip II (r. 1180 – 1223)
- **Almost invariably Parlement ruled** in favour of the peasant tenants to undermine both economic and judicial powers of the feudal nobility
- **But the Parlement de Paris** had limited regional jurisdiction: see the map



Decline of Serfdom: Institutional Factors 2B

- (b) **England: royal courts:**
- **earlier establishment of national unity** and a system of national 'common' law under king **Henry II (r. 1154-89)** – after ending baronial wars
- **involved a 'trade-off': by which royal justice stopped at the gates of the manor:** so that manorial courts had exclusive jurisdiction over peasant tenancies in terms of property rights
- **English kings**, as major landowners, did not royal courts interfering with their manorial powers

Decline of Serfdom: Institutional Factors 2C

- (c) **English manorial courts**
- - **consequence of this difference:** that serfdom (villeinage) remained more deeply entrenched in feudal areas of England (Midlands) than in France
- **BUT, manorial court decisions based on historic precedents:** served to erode the conditions of English serfdom: made it less arbitrary
- **Customary law:** ‘the habitual practice and custom of the manor so long that no man present has any memory of the contrary’

Decline of Serfdom: Institutional Factors 2D

- **d) Importance of customary law:** customary rents that came to be permanently fixed, and in money-of-account terms
- - **allowing peasant 'customary' tenants to capture the Ricardian economic rents** on land, with rising agricultural prices -- and not the manorial lords,
- - **Overall impact: reduced ability of manorial lords** to extract arbitrary rents, dues, and services from servile peasants:
- ***Voluntas vs. Consuetudines***

Long 13th century: 1180 – 1320: a reintensification of serfdom 1?

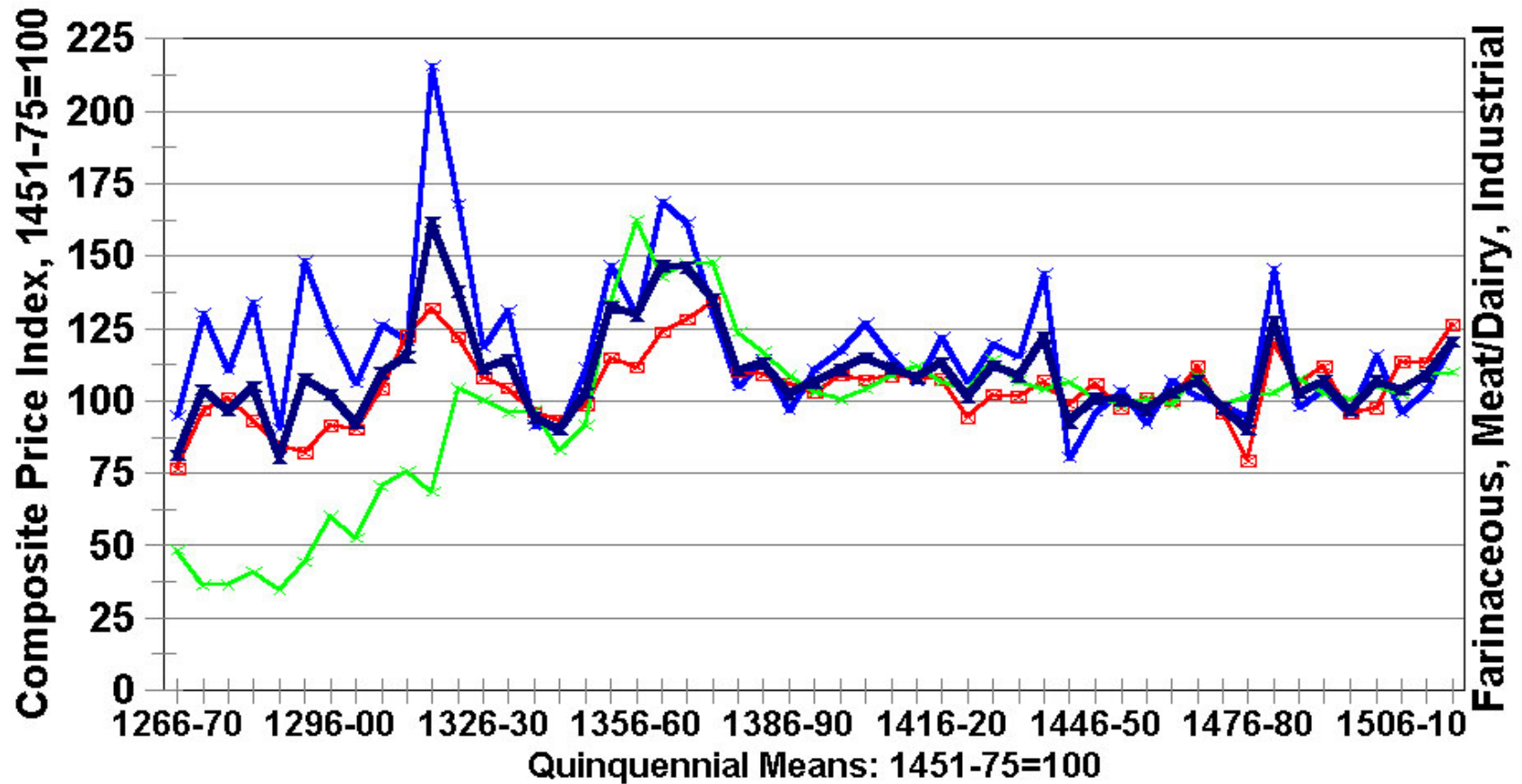
- (1) **Was there a Shift from Grundherrschaft to Gutsherrschaft:** with an intensification of serfdom, based on?:
- (a) **profitability of manorial demesnes** in selling grains and wools, with rising real commodity prices (**population growth**)
- (b) **combination of inflation and fixed customary rents** – so that peasants captured most of the **Ricardian economic rents**

Long 13th century: 1180 – 1320: a reintensification of serfdom 2?

- (c) **reaction of some manorial landlords:**
- - **unable to increase money rents**, they increased rents in **labour services**: to work the demesnes:
- - believing that servile labour was cheaper than wage-labour (but was it??)
- (d) **Problem: Most historians deny that any such shift to Gutsherrschaft** took place
- - **though it certainly prevailed ca. 1300** (in my view)
- - **Read the debates in the lecture notes** – especially on the Postan and Reed-Drosso models

English Price Indices, 1266-1520

Farinaceous, Meat/Dairy, Industrial



Farinaceous Index

Meat/Dairy Index

Industrial Goods Index

Composite Price Index 1451-75=100

Bruce Campbell on English Serfdom ca. 1300 (1)

- (1) That in 1300: serfdom (villeinage) was far less widespread than is commonly assumed
- - that overall, free peasants tenants provided 43% of total rental incomes on lay manorial estates
- so that servile or customary tenants (villeins) provided 57% of total manorial rental incomes
- (2) **BUT his survey includes only lay lands:**
- **general agreement** that the proportion of servile tenancies was far higher on ecclesiastical estates

Bruce Campbell on English Serfdom ca. 1300 (2)

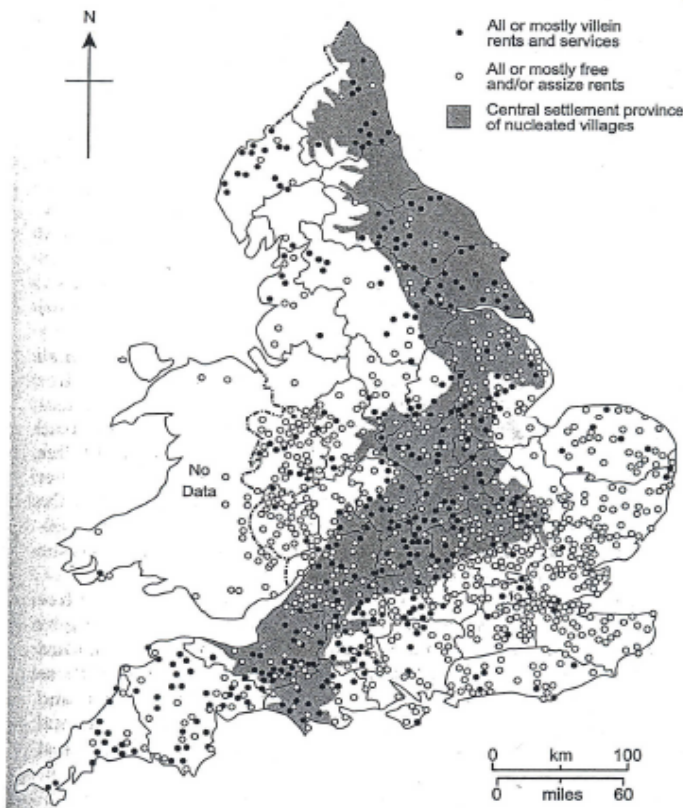
- (3) **Size matters:**
- a) **on larger lay estates, majority of money rents came from villeins tenancies:** 62% on manors worth £50 or more a year
- b) **ecclesiastical estates much larger** than lay estates
- (4) **Campbell's Conclusions:**
- a) **freehold land constituted about 60% and thus**
- **villein land 40% of the total manorial tenancies**
- b) **that villein rents double free rents** per acre of land
- c) **thus (again) 57% of manorial rents came from villein tenancies** and 43% came from free tenancies

Free and Villein Rents on English Lay Manors, 1300-1349

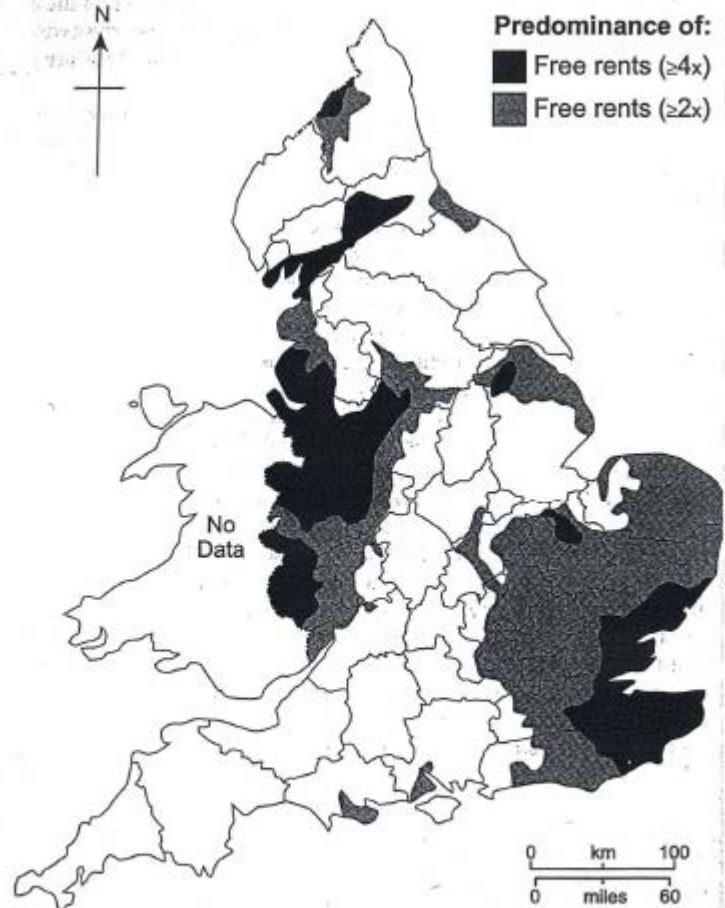
Type of Rents	Small Manors under £10 yr	Large Manors over £50 per yr	All Manors
Total Free Rents	55.00%	37.90%	42.90%
Total Villein Rents and Labour Services	44.90%	62.20%	57.20%
Mean value of rents	£2.30	£38.20	£9.30
Percentage Free land (by area)	70%	55%	60%
Percentage Villein Land (by area)	30%	45%	40%

Bruce Campbell on English Serfdom ca. 1300 (3)

- (5) **labour services:**
- **less onerous than commonly assumed**
- **Only about 1/3rd of total population** ca 1300 was servile
- **money rents ca. 1300 four times more valuable** than labour rents (but how is this calculated?)
- **Labour services accounted for only 12%** of total manorial incomes: but NO ecclesiastical manors in his survey
- **higher proportion on larger** than on smaller lay manors
- (6) **lay manors with free tenants very widespread:**
- - West Midlands, East Anglia, parts of Lincolnshire, Home Counties (but many of these were never really feudal)



MAP 3
LAY MANORS WITH EITHER MOSTLY FREE OR MOSTLY
VILLEIN RENTS 1300-1349
 Source: IPM Database



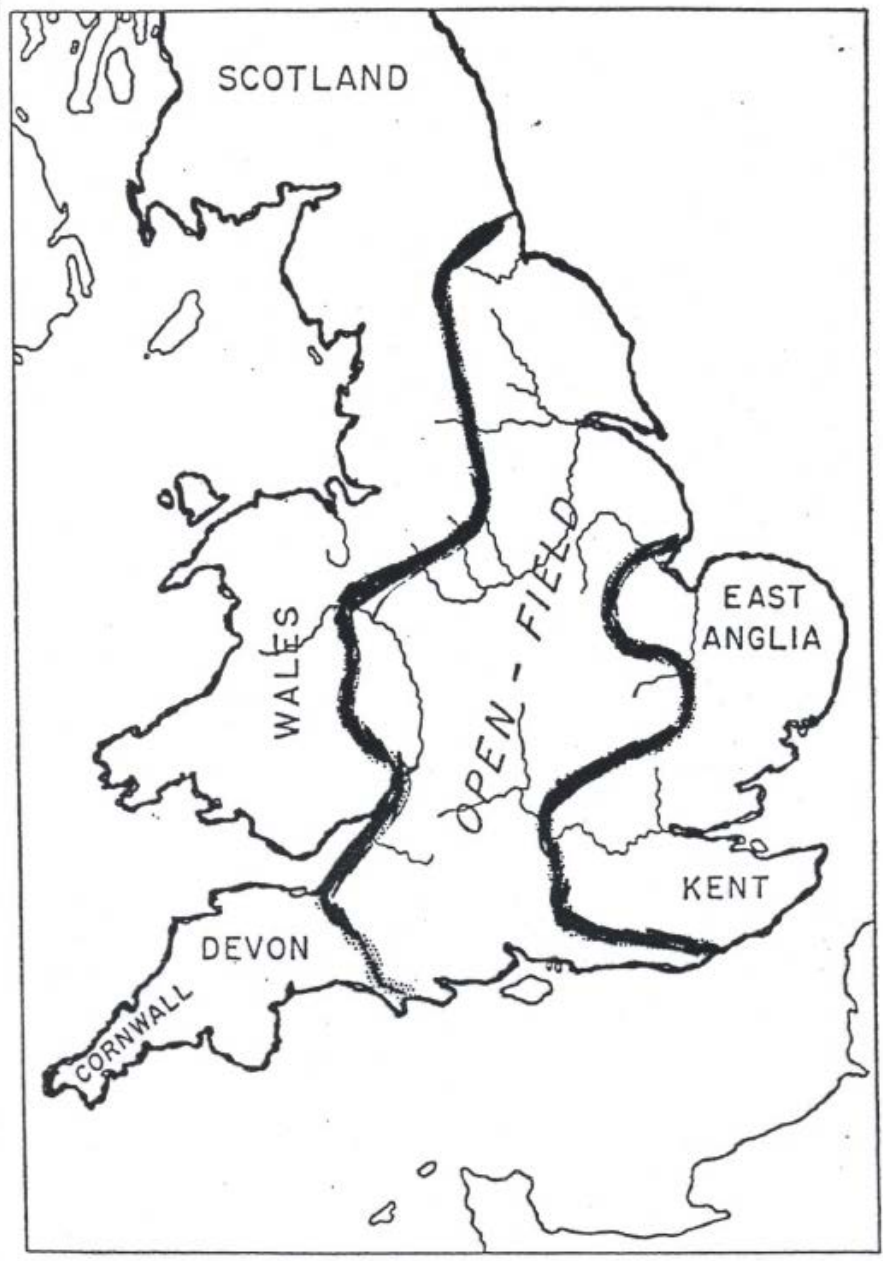
MAP 1
THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF FREE RENTS
ON LAY MANORS 1300-1349
Source: IPM Database

Customary (servile) vs Freehold rents - 1

- (1) **Customary (servile, villein) rents ca. 1300** were generally well below free-market rents on new 'assarts' – or cleared lands
- (2) **But rents on hereditary freehold lands** were even lower
- (3) **Freehold rents on free hereditary lands** were, per acre, about half those paid on customary (villein) lands:

Customary (servile) vs Freehold rents - 2

- (4) **freehold lands were more subject to partible inheritance (equally subdivided among sons)**
- thus over time (by 1300) they tended to become **smaller**: but more viable because they paid lower rents per acre
- (5) **Servile or customary (villein) lands were generally subject to the rule of primogeniture and impartible inheritance (eldest son only):**
- **Especially in the feudalized Midlands**



THE BOUNDARIES OF THE OPEN-FIELD SYSTEM

Feudal Landlord Incomes as percent of national incomes

- (1) **Campbell's estimates feudal landlords manorial incomes:** accounted for a surprisingly small share of English national incomes in 1300: far less than at time of Norman Conquest (1086):
- (2) **Declined from 25% in 1086 to 14% in 1300**
- (3) **But aristocracy regained a larger share in early modern times,** as shown in this table:

Estimated Seigniorial Incomes 1086-1801

Year	Seigniorial Incomes in £ (millions)	Estimated National Incomes in £ (millions)	Seigniorial as percent of national incomes
1086	0.10	0.40	25%
1300	0.54	3.85	14%
1688	9.46	54.44	17%
1759	12.39	66.84	19%
1801	29.35	198.58	15%

**Estimated Seigniorial Landlord Income as Shares of National and Rural Incomes,
1086 - 1801**

Year	Estimated Population in millions	Estimated Seigniorial Income in £ sterling	Estimated National Income in £ sterling	Estimated Rural Income in £ sterling	Seigniorial Income as percent of National Income	Seigniorial Income as per cent of Rural Incomes
1086	2.25	0.10	0.40	0.38	25%	27%
1300	4.25	0.54	3.85	3.03	14%	18%
1688	4.90	9.46	54.44	28.02	17%	34%
1759	6.00	12.39	66.84	40.68	19%	30%
1801	8.70	29.35	198.58	83.84	15%	35%

Bruce Campbell, 'The Agrarian Problem in the Early Fourteenth Century', *Past & Present*, no. 188 (August 2005), Table 2, p. 15.

Estimated Revenues of English Landlords, ca. 1310

Social Group	Number of Households	Mean Annual Landed Income per Household in £ sterling	Total Landed Income per Group in £ sterling	Percentage of Total Landed Incomes
LAY LANDLORDS				
Crown	1	13,500	13,500	2.5%
Nobility				
Earls	13	1,600	20,800	3.8%
Barons	114	260	29,650	5.5%
Noble Women	22	255	5,600	1.0%
Gentry				
Knights	925	40	3,700	6.8%
Lesser Gentry	8,500	15	127,500	23.6%
Gentry Women	1,675	11	18,300	3.4%
Total Lay Landlords	11,250	22	252,350	46.6%
ECCLESIASTICAL LORDS				
Archbishops, bishops	17	1,590	27,000	5.0%
Religious Houses	826	194	16,000	29.6%
Parish Clergy	8,500	12	102,000	18.8%
Total Ecclesiastical	9,343	31	289,000	53.4%
ALL LANDLORDS	20,593	26	541,350	100.0%
Summary				
Crown	1	13,500	13,500	2.5%
Nobility	149	376	56,050	10.4%
Greater Clergy	843	222	187,000	34.5%
Gentry	11,100	16	182,800	33.8%
Lesser Clergy	8,500	12	102,000	18.8%

Estimated Composition of Seigniorial Incomes in Early Fourteenth-Century England

Type of Manorial Landlord	Income from Demesne Lands: percent	Income from Tenancy Rents: per cent	Profits from Lordship (Banalités): per cent	Income from Tithes: per cent	Total Revenues in £ Sterling
Crown and Nobility	27	49	24	0	69,550
Greater Clergy	22	39	19	20	187,000
Greater Landlords	24	42	20	14	187,500
Gentry	45	47	9	0	182,000
Lesser Clergy	20	5	3	72	102,000
Lesser Landlords	36	32	7	26	284,800
ALL LANDLORDS	30	37	13	20	541,350

Bruce Campbell, 'The Agrarian Problem in the Early Fourteenth Century', *Past & Present*, no. 188 (August 2005), Table 3, p. 19.

Decline of Serfdom after the Black Death (1348)

- (1) **Ricardian argument dominates current literature:**
- **that the drastic fall in population** from plagues (and warfare, etc) → ultimately led to the **collapse of demesne agriculture and serfdom** (i.e., with labour services):
- i.e., **shift from Gutsherrschaft to Grundherrschaft**
- (2) **But in England did a Feudal Reaction postpone the inevitable**, for a quarter-century: to 1370s?
- (3) **Question is important:** because **collapse of English demesne farming** took place only from 1370s

The Feudal Reaction Thesis - 1

- (1) **a repeat of the Bloch model:**
- **That drastic change in the land:labour ratio** provided peasants with **increased bargaining power to bid down rents & bid up wages**
- **Hence a feudal reaction to prevent such free-market operations:** to control wages and to increase servile labour exactions
- (2) **English legislation:** Ordinance of Labourers (1349) and Statute of Labourers (1350):
- **Fixing wages at pre-Plague levels:** unusually low wage levels of the early 1340s

The Feudal Reaction Thesis - 2

- (3) **Evidence on declining arable productivity after the Black Death:** suggests, possibly:
- **an increased incentive** to exact increased labour services
- **with the consequences of increasing shirking** by unhappy, rebellious customary (servile) tenants

Official Money Wages for Building Craftsmen for the Kingdom of England and the City of London: by Parliamentary Statute or Ordinance, for the Summer and Winter Seasons, in pence sterling, 1290 - 1495

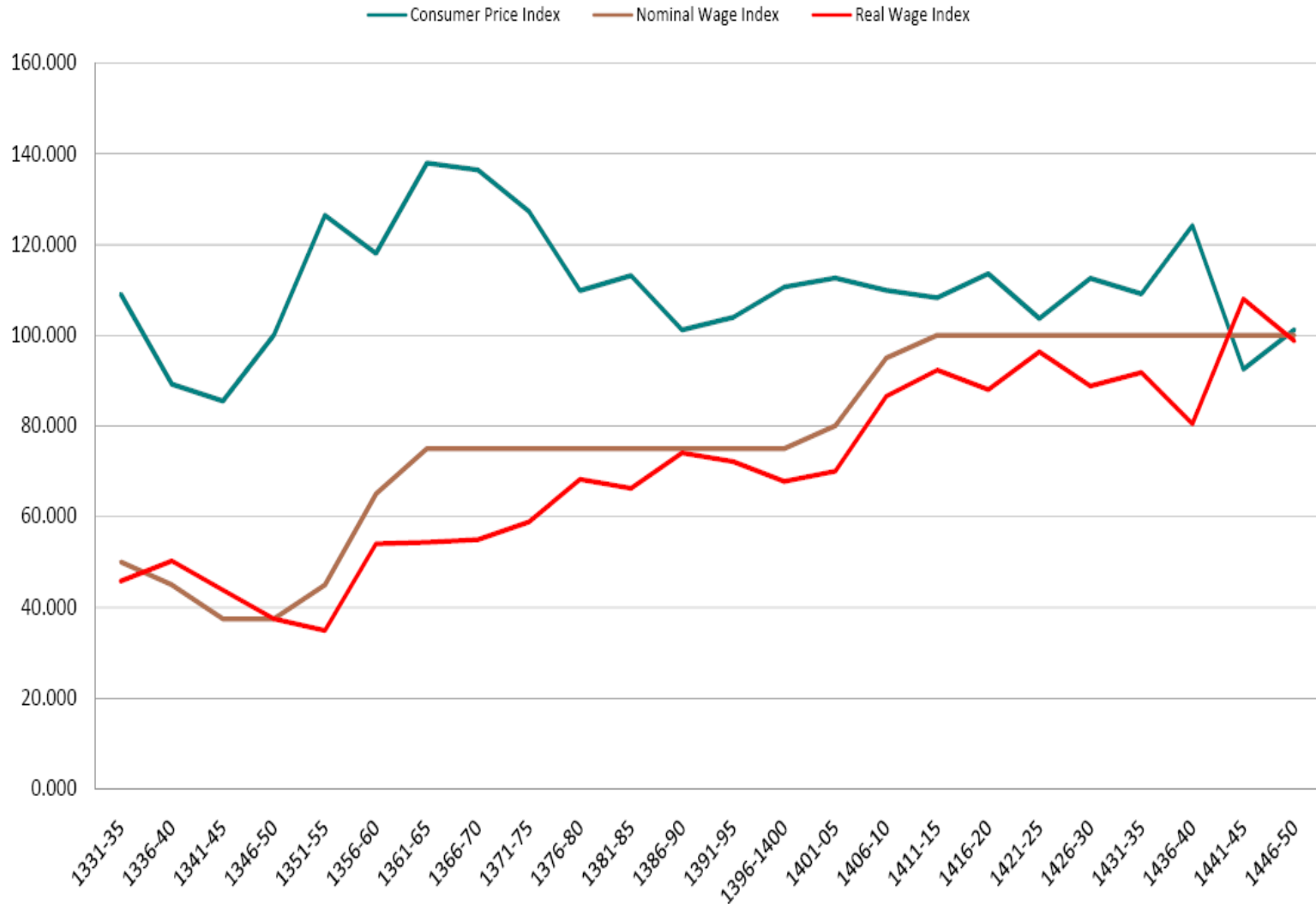
Summer Season: Easter to Michaelmas (29 September), 'without meat and drink'
Winter Season: Michaelmas to Easter, 'without meat and drink'

Year	LONDON Summer	LONDON Winter	NATIONAL Summer	NATIONAL Winter
c.1290	5d ^a 4d ^b	3d ^a 4d ^b		
1349-51	6d	5d	3d 4d ^c	^c
1360			4d ^d	[not stated]
1362	6d	5d		
1372	6d	5d		
1378	6d	5d		
1382	6d	5d		
1444			5½d ^e	4½d ^e
1495			6d ^f 7d ^g	5d ^f 7d ^g

Builders' Labourers: Nominal and Real Wages

1331-35 to 1446-50 in 5 year means

mean of 1451-75 = 1



Feudal Reaction: Peasant Revolts?

- (1) **Contention that any such Feudal Reaction proved futile**: in provoking costly rebellions
- (2) **Examples**
 - - **the English Peasant Revolt of 1381**: Wat Tyler
 - - **the French *Jacqueries* of 1358 and 1382**
- (3) **Revolts were crushed by royal power –**
 - - **English & French landlords won only a Pyrrhic victory** - because the crown refused thereafter to use royal military and judicial powers to protect the landed feudal nobility –

Feudal Reaction: Peasant Revolts 2

- (4) **Consequence:** peasants now freer to **bargain:** to bid down rents, bid up wages,
- (5) **Real reason for the end of any feudal reaction was more economic:** the various factors that led to the collapse of demense farming, especially in England, from the 1370s
- (6) **This shift from Gutsherrschaft to Grundherrschaft, from 1370s to 1420s:**
- will be analysed in next day's lecture

From Serfdom to Copyhold - 1

- (1) **By the late 15th, early 16th century serfdom had virtually disappeared from most of western Europe – certainly in England & France**
- (2) **In England, the slow decay of serfdom, with greater peasant freedoms, exacted a cost in peasant property rights**
- (3) **Shift to Copyhold tenures:**
- **The term means: ‘tenure by copy of the court rolls according to the custom of the manor’**
- **While serfdom (bondage to the soil) had guaranteed inheritance rights, copyhold tenure did not.**

From Serfdom to Copyhold - 2

- **Most copyholders (of servile origin) were defined by terms of 'lives':** one, two, or a maximum of three lives, originally meaning generations
- **many manorial courts came to define a 'life' as 7 years:** meaning a maximum tenure of 21 years
- **So such copyholders could be evicted** after 21 years
- **Copyholders-at-will:** had the least secure property rights, for they could be evicted at will by the landlord (though only rarely).

SPREAD OF SERFDOM INTO EASTERN EUROPE: East Elbia

- (1) **Origins: Germanic 'Drang Nach Osten':**
- **the Germanic conquest and colonization of Slavic and Baltic lands** to the east of the Elbe -
- in Mecklenburg, Pomerania, Brandenburg, Prussia, Poland, Lithuania, and the Courland
- (2) **Many Slavic princes and the Church had invited westerners** (chiefly Germanic) to settle these eastern lands: with full economic and social freedom: cash quit-rents

SPREAD OF SERFDOM INTO EASTERN EUROPE: East Elbia- 2

- (3) **Settlements of both villages and towns undertaken by Germanic law:**
- *by locatores* who organized the colonizations and settlements
- acted as private entrepreneurs to attract western settlers and organize settlements.

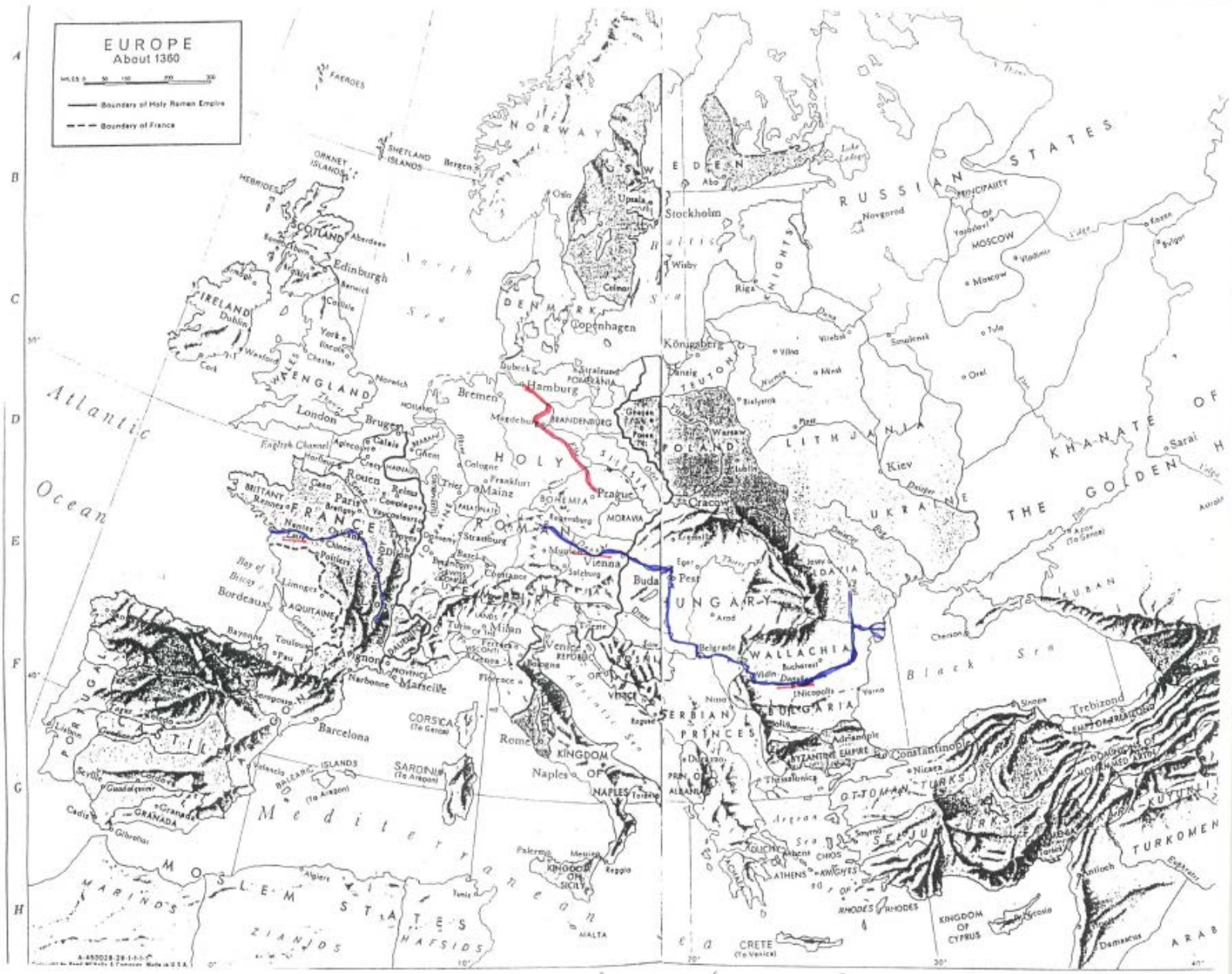
SPREAD OF SERFDOM INTO EASTERN EUROPE: 3

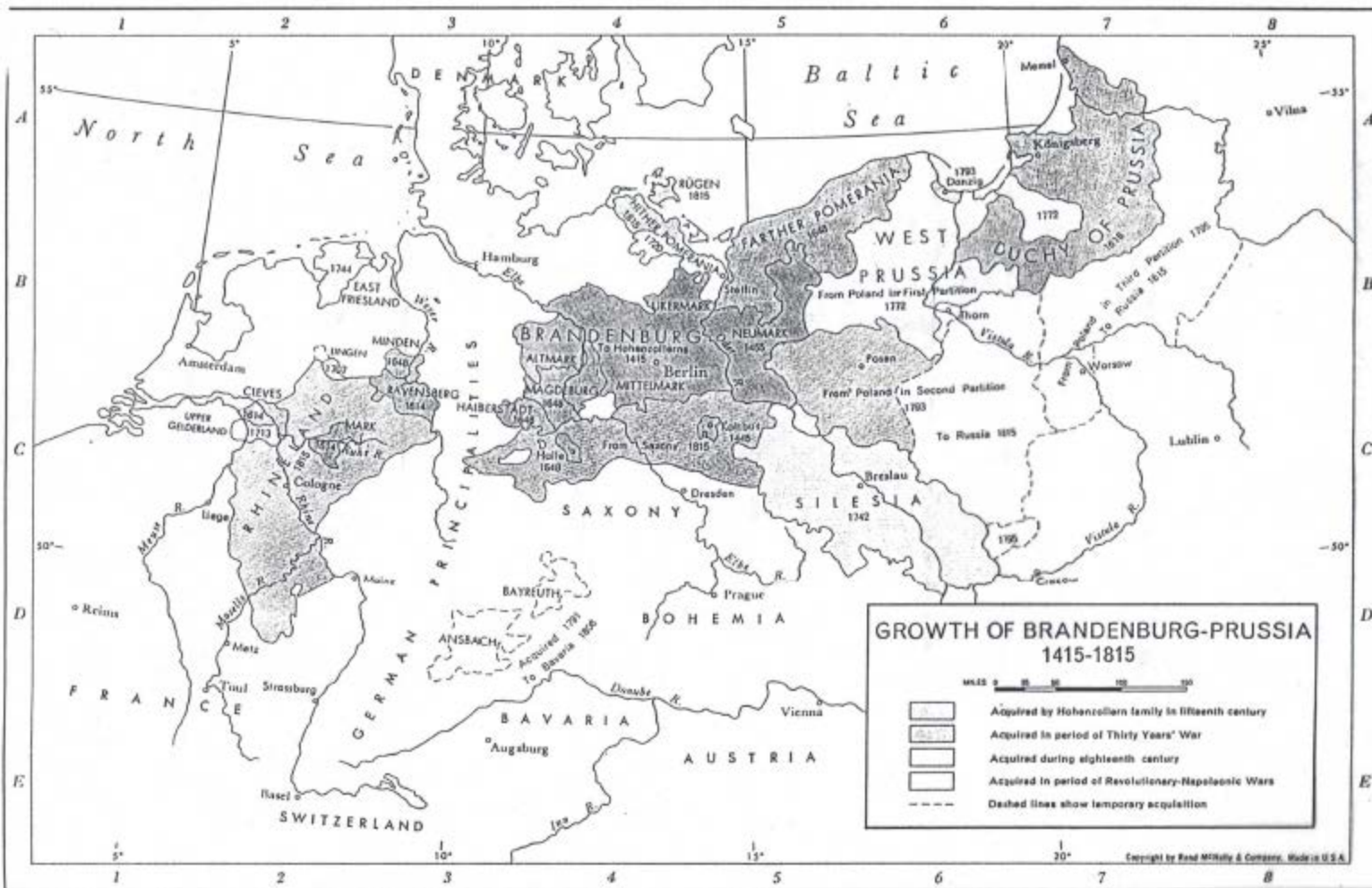
- (4) **‘Drang Nach Osten’**: eastern colonization movement had come to an end by about 1320: virtually no new settlements thereafter
- (5) **From the later 15th century, these Germanic and Slavic settlements suffered a severe reversal:**
- **as former freedoms were extinguished under an increasing spread and stain of the Second Serfdom, though by no means all at once: continuing to the 18th century**

EUROPE
About 1360

MILES 0 50 100 200

— Boundaries of Holy Roman Empire
- - - Boundary of France





North Sea

Baltic Sea

GROWTH OF BRANDENBURG-PRUSSIA 1415-1815

- Acquired by Hohenzollern family in fifteenth century
- Acquired in period of Thirty Years' War
- Acquired during eighteenth century
- Acquired in period of Revolutionary-Napoleonic Wars
- Dashed lines show temporary acquisition

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SERFDOM IN EASTERN EUROPE (4)

- (1) **By the 17th century, serfdom in eastern Europe had become more widespread, deeply entrenched, and harsher** than that found in western Europe (from Carolingian times)
- (2) **The longevity of eastern serfdom**
- **parts of Germany and Poland**, serfdom ended only with Napoleonic conquests (up to 1812)
- **Prussia**: serfdom ended with with abortive 1848 revolution and Prussian Emancipation of 1850
- **Russia**: abolition of serfdom under Czar Nicholas II in 1861 (1863: Lincoln in US abolished slavery)

'Second Serfdom': Jerome Blum

- (1) **virtual absence of effective monarchy or centralized gov't**: Prussia, Poland, Russia (which had strong czars, but ruled only with co-operation of feudal boyars): the key
- (2) **economic decline of towns**: especially with decline of Germanic Hanseatic League (later)
- (3) **Feudal landholding aristocracy that expanded its power relentlessly** at expense of monarchs and towns
- (4) **shift in economic orientation of landlords: from Grundherrschaft to Gutsherrschaft**, extracting labour services from a peasantry that became chiefly servile

Second Serfdom: Robert Brenner

- **Cogently critiqued commonly used economic models by which various historians have sought explain:** both decline of western serfdom and rise of eastern serfdom
- **Models:**
 - (1) **Demographic growth:** used to explain both
 - (2) **Commercial expansion:** used to explain both
 - (3) **Institutional models:** not properly used, according to Brenner

Example of the Hobsbawm Model

- (1) **Eric Hobsbawm: 'General Crisis of the 17th Century'**: - argued that spread of serfdom east of the Elbe was due to two four related factors:
 - a) **population growth** → increased western urban demand for grain
 - b) **thus rising grain prices**: esp during Price Revolution
 - c) **expansion of Dutch trade into the Baltic**: controlling the grain export trade from Danzig, at estuary of the Vistula river in Poland
 - d) **Incentive for Prussian (Junker) & Polish landlords to organize their manorial estates**: for grain exports using large gangs of supposedly cheap servile labour

Hobsbawm Model: problems

- 2) **But similar demographic-commercial models:** were used to explain decline of western serfdom
- 3) **Hobsbawm's model similar to Postan's model:** for England's return to serfdom from 1180s to 1300
- 4) **Obvious Problem:** demographic & commercial models **cannot** be used to explain both/either decline of serfdom or rise or return to serfdom
- 5) **Finally:** Hobsbawm model applicable **ONLY** to **Brandenburg-Prussia** and parts of Poland

Second Serfdom: Robert Brenner 2

- **'class struggle' provides core thesis: the question of feudal landlord power** and why that power was more effective in the East than in the West: why it had waned in the West
- **Brenner: faulted for ignoring his real debt to Jerome Blum on this very issue: growth in feudal power** at the expense of the central governments (monarchs or princes).
- **Faulted also for his cavalier disregard** of economic models.

**Composition of the Capitalized Market Value
of the Stavenow Manorial Estates in Brandenburg (East Germany)
in 1601**

ASSETS	Value in Gulden	Percent Subtotal	Value in Gulden	Percent of Total
Manor: House and Demesne Farm Buildings			5,813	8.66%
Manorial Forest: Income from Demesne Production			15,552	23.16%
Grain Sales: income from	12,104	45.44%		
Livestock Production: income from sales	10,917	40.99%		
Fisheries and Gardens: income from	3,615	13.57%		
Sub-total of Demesne incomes	26,636	100.00%	26,636	39.66%
Manorial Jurisdictions and Properties				
Manorial Courts and Jurisdictional Fees	4,400	72.74%		
Manorial Mills: rental incomes	1,649	27.26%		
Sub-total of Manorial Jurisdictions	6,049	100.00%	6,049	9.01%
Peasant Rents: Servile Tenancies				
Labour Services	8,454	79.06%		
Rents in kind: in grain	1,375	12.86%		
Rents in cash: money payments	864	8.08%		
Sub-total of Peasant Rents	10,693	100.00%	10,693	15.92%
Foreign Peasants': Short Term Rents				
Labour Services	1,609	66.68%		
Rents in kind: in grain	804	33.32%		
Sub-total of 'Foreign Peasants' Rents	2,413	100.00%	2,413	3.59%
TOTAL VALUES			67,156	100.00%

The Blum-Brenner Model to Explain the Differences between Western and Eastern Feudal-Manorial Power Structures and the Changing Fortunes of Serfdom

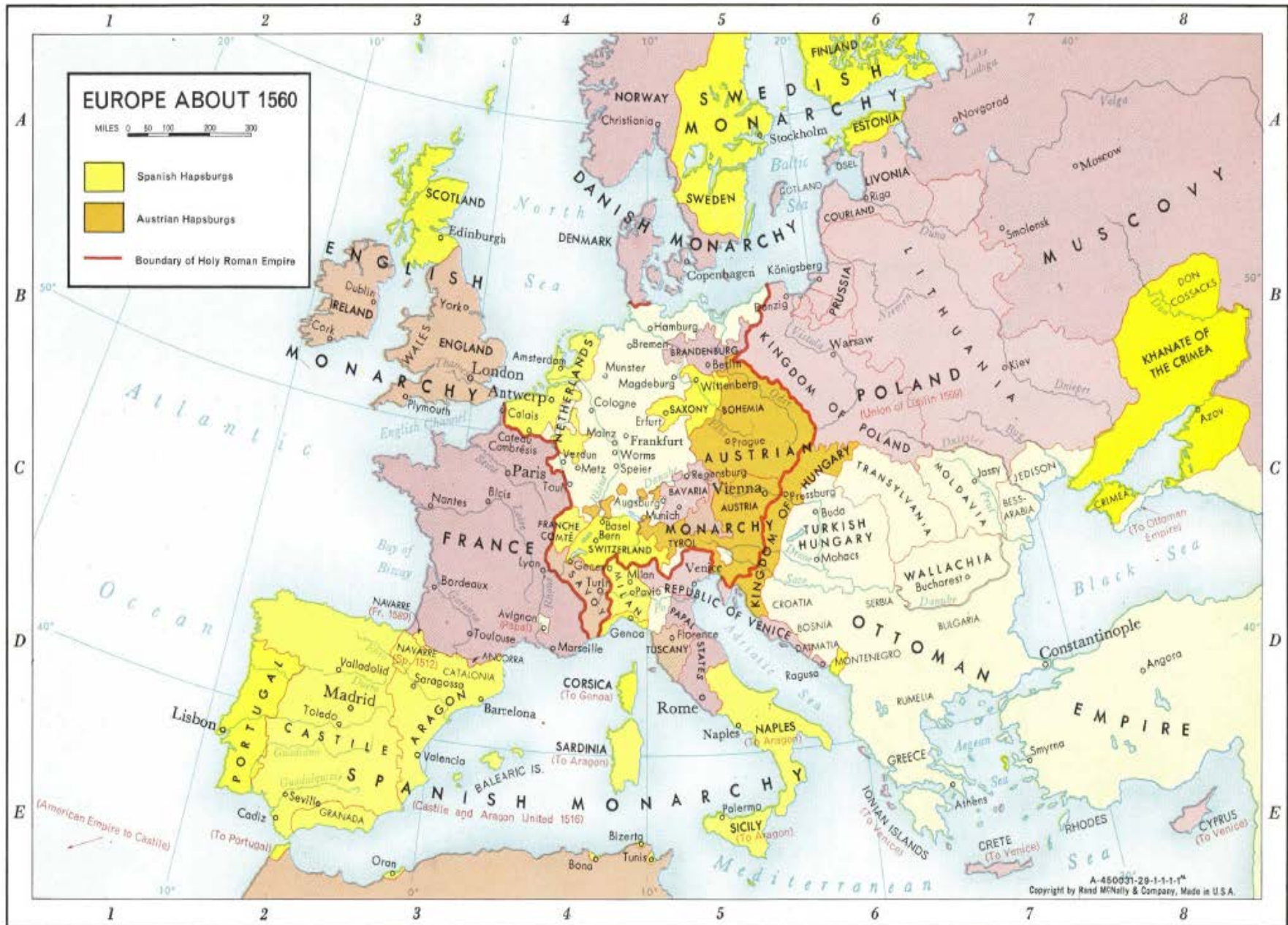
FEATURES	Western Europe	Eastern Europe
Villages	divided lordships; thickly settled; peasant charters; and manorial court rolls	single lordships; thinly settled; no, few, or weak peasant charters
Field Systems	Common/Open Fields with scattered interspersed strips and communal village regulations	Common fields with more consolidated family holdings; weak village authority, subject to feudal-manorial lords
Village governments	peasant villager councils and manorial reeves from the villages govern the village economy.	village government by <i>schultz/schultheiss</i> mayors appointed by feudal lords
Central governments	strong, more centralized national monarchies; or strong territorial princes.	weak monarchical governments; elected monarchies
Aristocracies	weak nobilities, especially at the baronial & knight levels	powerful and increasingly stronger feudal nobilities
Courts	Royal courts expanding their powers at the expense of manorial/seigniorial courts; manorial courts that entrench customary rights of the peasant tenants, fixing rents & entry fines	weak or non existent royal courts; powerful and independent feudal/manorial courts that do not recognize peasant tenancy rights, or conditions of tenures
Rents	customary, fixed rents, increasingly in fixed nominal cash payments	more arbitrary rents, more in labour services and kind
Towns	Strong, independent towns, with vibrant urban economies	Weak and small towns, with dependent economies

From Grundherrschaft to Gutsherrschaft in Prussia - 1

- (1) **Population Growth, Price Revolution and coinage debasements: from 1520s to 1650s**
- **meant not only general inflation, but an even greater rise in the (real) prices of agricultural commodities and timber products**
- **customary rents on peasant tenancy lands denied most landlords any increase in rental incomes: a fall in real terms, with inflation**
- **peasants thus captured Ricardian rents**

From Grundherrschaft to Gutsherrschaft in Prussia - 2

- (2) **Landlord's Solution:** if the peasants could not be evicted (no Enclosures), then use judicial and military force to reduce their status **from free to servile**
- **Choice of rents:** exact most of the peasant rent in the form of labour services on the demesne lands: devoted to the commercial exploitation of grain, livestock products, and timber product:
- **services often extracted up to 3 days a week**
- (3) **Commercial factors:** the German Hanseatic League and then the Dutch, from 15th century, vastly increased the export of grains and timber products: **via Danzig**





IV: LATE MEDIEVAL WESTERN AGRICULTURE:

**B. Responses to the later-medieval
crises in the Mediterranean: Italy,
Southern France, and Spain**

Benefits and Objectives of Agrarian Changes: late-medieval Europe

- (1) **To reduce the size & scope of the agrarian sector:** to liberate inputs (resources) to be more productively employed elsewhere
- i.e., land + resources, labour, and capital
- Especially re-employed in commerce & industry
- (2) **To liberate agrarian society from any remaining feudal bonds:** feudalism, manorialism, serfdom, and the Church
- (3) **Thus to increase agricultural productivity:** in terms of land, labour, and capital:
- **To supply towns with labour, foodstuffs, raw materials**
- **To increase economic rents for reinvestment** as industrial and commercial capitals.

Agrarian Changes in late-medieval ITALY

- (1) **Grain Farming:**
 - - **Sicily still main granary** for Italy (as in Roman era)
 - - **two field system** with winter wheat
- (2) **Livestock: sheep and cattle**
 - - **chiefly migratory**, itinerant flocks & herds
 - - totally divorced from arable agriculture
- (3) **Other non arable:**
 - **vineyards (wine) and olive groves** (oil: in place of butter)
 - **capital intensive** agriculture

Price & Wage Movements -1

- (1) **Wheat prices:** few prices, except Tuscany
- - falling but then rising again before the Black Death,
- - brief fall with the BD, but then steeply rising after the Black Death to 1390s: plagues, warfare, coinage debasements
- falling by late 14th, early 15th century
- **Supply exceeding demand:** as grain was being produced on more productive lands
- whose production fell less than the population

Wheat prices in late-medieval Tuscany

Prices of a Staio of Wheat at Pistoia, Tuscany

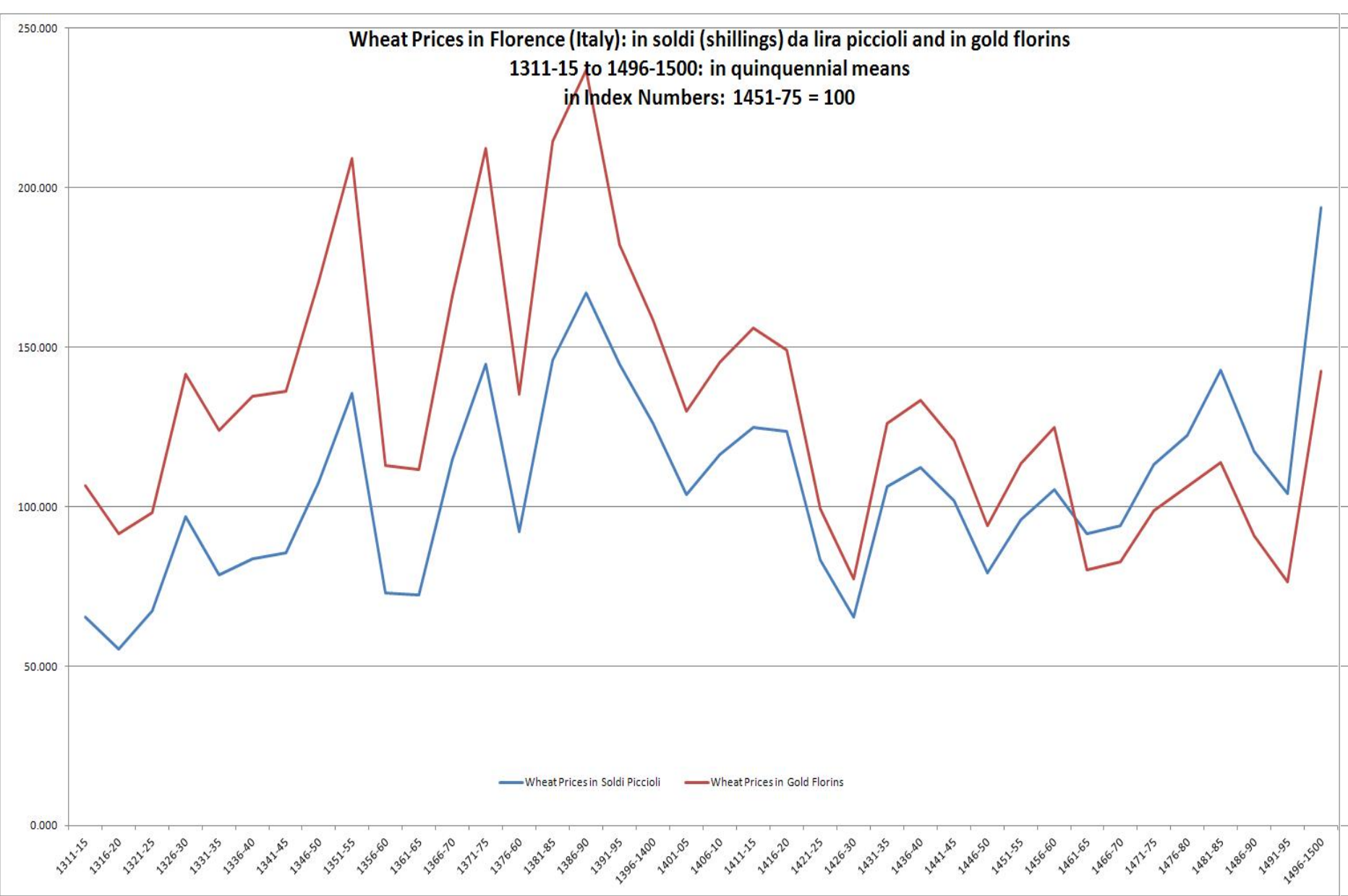
1201-25 to 1427

Mean of 1201-25 in Gold Prices = 100

Quarter Century Period	Gold Price Index: based on the florin
1201-25	100
1276-1300	204
1301-25	170
1326-50	125
1351-75	146
1376-1400	150
1401-25	134
1427 (one year only)	67

1 Staiao of wheat = 25.92 litres or 0.73 bushel

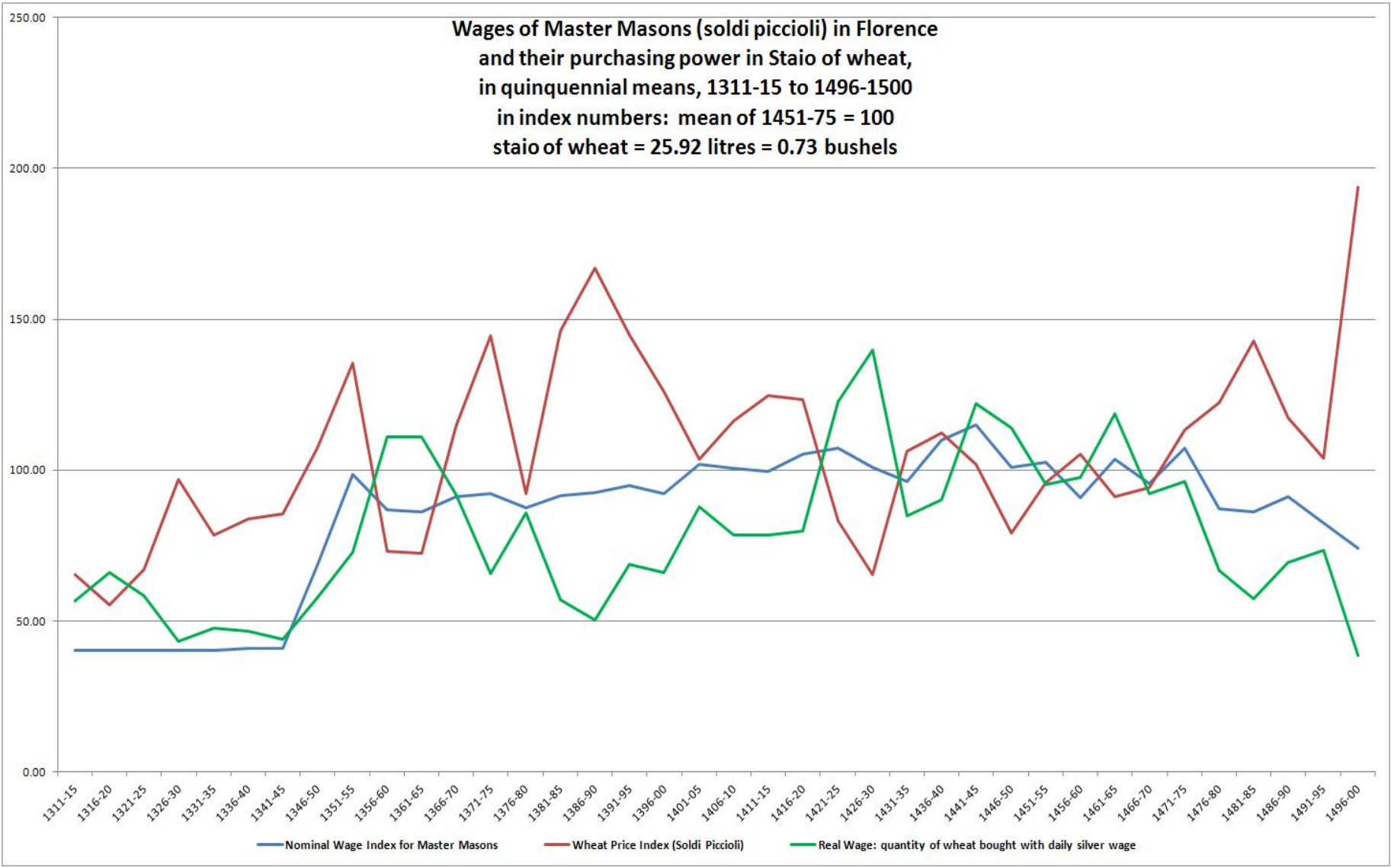
Wheat Prices in Florence (Italy): in soldi (shillings) da lira piccioli and in gold florins
1311-15 to 1496-1500: in quinquennial means
in Index Numbers: 1451-75 = 100



Price & Wage Movements - 2

- (2) **Rising real wages from late 14th century, until about the 1460s: graph on masons' wages**
- - **wage stickiness**: wages not fall with deflation
- - **rising productivity of labour?** $RW = MRP$
- (3) **Consequences for consumption**
- - **Engels law**: income elasticity of demand for grains is low: so that as real incomes rise, smaller proportion of incomes spent on grains
- → **More spent on non-grains**: meat, dairy products, wines, sugar, fruits, textile products

**Wages of Master Masons (soldi piccioli) in Florence
and their purchasing power in Staio of wheat,
in quinquennial means, 1311-15 to 1496-1500
in index numbers: mean of 1451-75 = 100
staio of wheat = 25.92 litres = 0.73 bushels**



Results of Price-Wage Changes

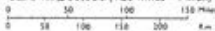
- (1) **Shift away from grain production in 15th Cent to:**
- **viniculture (wines), olive groves, fruit orchards, sugar production, rice cultivation**
- **livestock raising:** sheep (wool), cattle (leather), and dairy products
- **Textile production:** including **silkworm** cultivation (mulberry groves for sericulture)
- (2) **Sicily:** marked shift from grains into **sugar production and viniculture**
- - **Portuguese competition in both sugar (Atlantic & African islands) and wines** after 1500: **injured Sicily**



ITALY
DURING THE RENAISSANCE
 in the XV and Early XVI Centuries
 Scale 1:5,000,000 (80 miles=1 inch)
 Scale in Miles: 0 20 40 80
 Boundaries are given as in 1454
 Legend:
 Yellow: Papal States
 Red: Lands claimed by the Pope
 Green: Smaller independent states

ITALY, c.1500

Scale 1:7,500,000 (120 miles = 1 inch)



Papal States
 Lands claimed by the Pope

Smaller independent states
 Boundary of the Empire

GROWTH OF FLORENCE TO 1454

Scale 1:5,000,000 (80 miles = 1 inch)



Florence 1400
 Acquisitions 1297-1454
 Acquisitions 1300-1340
 Protected states



Price-Wage Changes 2

- (3) **Tuscany and Lombardy: northern Italy**
- - **demographic growth** from mid 15th century
- - **Florence**: from 37,225 in 1427 to 42,000 in 1488
- - **increased real incomes from commercial and industrial expansion** in Tuscany: textiles, trade
- **Promoted expansion in commercialized agriculture in Tuscany**: especially in **viniculture, sericulture (silk), rice cultivation, textile products (flax for linen; dyestuffs)**
- **Tuscan & Milanese (Lombard: Visconti, Sforza) state investments** in **canals, irrigation, drainage, land reclamations**: especially in Lombard plains

Population of Florence (Tuscany)

Date	Estimated Urban Population
1300	100,000 to 120,000
1338	90,000
1349	36,000
1352	42,250
1373	60,000
1380	54,757
1427	37,225
1488	42,000
1526	70,000

Changes in landholdings:

Mezzadria - 1

- (1) **Rise of Mezzadria:** sharecropping contracts
- **Incentive: to cope with drastic fluctuations in prices, and harvests:** with plagues, warfare & debasements
- **Peasant's rents:** paid to the landlord in kind:
 - **normally half the harvest**, irrespective of the size & value of harvest
- (2) **For capital intensive agriculture:** viticulture, sericulture (silk), livestock raising.
- (3) **Urban merchants:** increased investments in rural lands, including land purchases from feudal nobles or peasants

Changes in landholdings:

Mezzadria - 2

- (4) **A risk-sharing contract:** risks of price changes and harvest failures: shared by peasant tenant and the landlord
- (5) **For the landlord: his benefits**
- **Obviated monitoring costs:** if & when rents paid in **fixed money terms or fixed** amounts in kind
- **Obviated problem of shirking:** since peasant had incentive to produce as much as possible in order to increase his half-share of the output.

Capital and Mezzadria contracts

- (5) **landlord supplied all the land and all the capital:** both fixed and working capital
- (6) **Capital investments in vineyards, olive groves, orchards, mulberry groves (silk: sericulture), livestock herds (cattle, sheep):**
- **very large capital stocks:** with a return often only after 10 years
- **at which time the land was leased out to landless share-cropper peasants**

Capital and Mezzadria contracts 2

- (7) **Benefits for the peasant share-cropper:**
- a) **landless peasants** able to obtain lands
- b) **received capital:** all fixed and working capital needs from the landlord
- c) **risk sharing:** protected from rapid changes in prices and partly from poor harvests
- d) **received protection** and personal security

Mezzadria (Share-cropping) in late-medieval Tuscany

Mezzadria (Share-cropping) in late-medieval Tuscany

Mezzadria Lease Contracts in Pistoia, 1300-1425

Quarter-Century Period	Proportion of Agricultural Leases in the form of Mezzadria Contracts
1301-25	5.6%
1326-50	45.7%
1351-75	55.0%
1376-00	54.7%
1401-25	66.7%

France: Métayage

- (1) **Spread of share-cropping, as Métayage, in southern France:** during 14th century
- (2) **Almost never found in France north of the Loire:** not compatible with seigniorial agriculture (manorial)
- (3) **Métayage (mezzadria): applied only to privately leased plots of land:**
- **totally incompatible with northern communal farming (Open Field):** for obvious reasons
- (4) **Chiefly for capital intensive forms of agriculture:** livestock raising, vineyards, olive groves, orchards, etc.

The Census: Italy, France, Spain

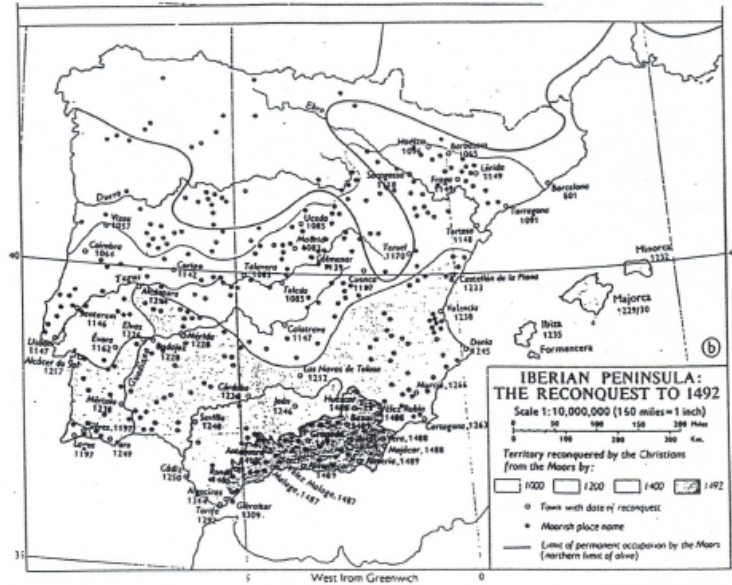
- (1) *Census*: or cens (in French)
- another important agricultural-financial contract:
- **found only in Mediterranean world** (Italy, France, Spain), but not in northern Europe
- **applicable only to privately held**, individually operated agricultural lands
- **again incompatible with communal farming**

The Census: Italy, France, Spain 2

- (2) **Functions of the Agricultural Census Contract**
- a) **an urban merchant with funds to invest** makes a contract with a peasant farmer: perpetual contract
- b) **Invests, say, 100 florins (ducats)**, which capital sum the peasant farmer never has to repay, though having the right to redeem the census later: at par, in cash.
- c) **merchant receives a perpetual rent (annually)**: either in kind (specified quantity of agri produce) or in money
- d) **in order to get back his capital**, the merchant had to find some third party to buy his *census* contract from him: and that party would then receive the annual rental income

LATE MEDIEVAL SPAIN: Agrarian Changes 1

- (1) **The Spanish *Reconquista***: reconquest of the Iberian peninsula from the Muslims: kingdoms of Portugal, Castile, Aragon (with Catalonia)
- (2) **15th century: only one Muslim emirate remained: Granada**, in the south (Andalusia)
 - which fell to Spanish armies in 1492
- (3) **1492: formal unification of the kingdoms of Castile (Isabella) and Aragon (Ferdinand)** into Kingdom of Spain – who sponsored Columbus
- **but Castile and Aragon** remained quite separate administrative units to 19th century



LATE MEDIEVAL SPAIN: Agrarian Changes 2

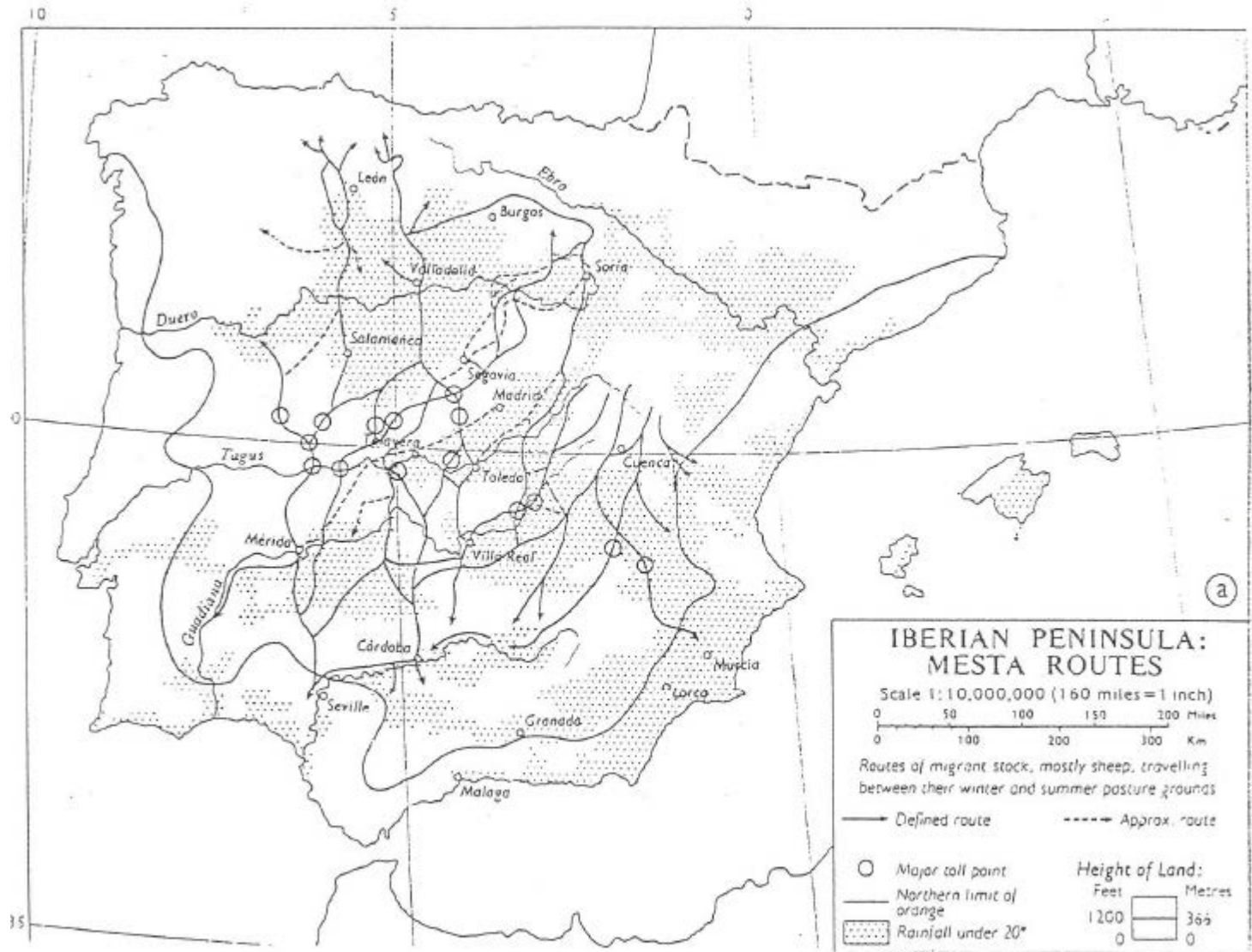
- (2) **Muslim agricultural heritage:**
- **a potential blessing for Christian Spain:** because Muslim agriculture had become so much more advanced, productive than that found in the Christian parts of Spain (or southern France)
- (3) **Extensive irrigation, hillside terrace farming,** fertilized lands: for sugar, rice, citrus orchards, olive groves, etc., figs, dates, almonds
- (4) **But arable and livestock raising remained totally separate:** as elsewhere in Mediterranean

LATE MEDIEVAL SPAIN: Agrarian Changes 2

- (5) **Valencia, Grenada, Andalusia:**
- retained some benefits of Muslim agriculture, which elsewhere the Christians either neglected or destroyed
- (6) **agrarian diversification in south:** away from grains into more specialized cash crops
- (7) **Elsewhere: the Reconquest led to agrarian setbacks:** as agriculture became subjected to militaristic Spanish feudalism

LATE MEDIEVAL SPAIN: Agrarian Changes 3: the Mesta

- (1) **The Spanish Mesta and wool production:**
- (a) **1273: Castile: royal establishment of the Mesta**, as official organization or guild of sheep-farmers, given monopoly rights over transhumance grazing routes:
- (b) **Transhumance**: the grazing of migratory sheep flocks over hundreds of kilometres, from north to south and back
- **at expense of any arable agriculture** along these transhumance grazing routes



(a)

Spanish Merino Wools 1

- (1) **Merino Wools:**
- - **a new type of wool** that, by the 16th century, surpassed English wools in quality (next day) to become the world's finest wools
- - **Spanish merino sheep are also the ancestors of the sheep** -- first in Saxony, later in Australia that, to this day, still produce the world's finest wools
- - **The Mesta was not the originator of these sheep and their wools:** as late as the mid 14th century, Spanish wools were commonly regarded as amongst the very worst in Europe

Spanish Merino Wools - 2

- (2) **Origins of the Merinos:**
- - **from North African Berber Marinid tribal group: Marinids in 13th century** created most powerful Muslim emirate in North Africa (Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco)
- - **Invaded Iberian peninsula in 1291:** and not defeated until 1340: **Castilian victory at Battle of Rio Salado** – which ended Muslim threat forever.
- - **Robert Lopez:** contends that not until after this victory, with restoration of commercial relations, were **Marinid sheep imported into Spain.**

Spanish Merino Wools 3

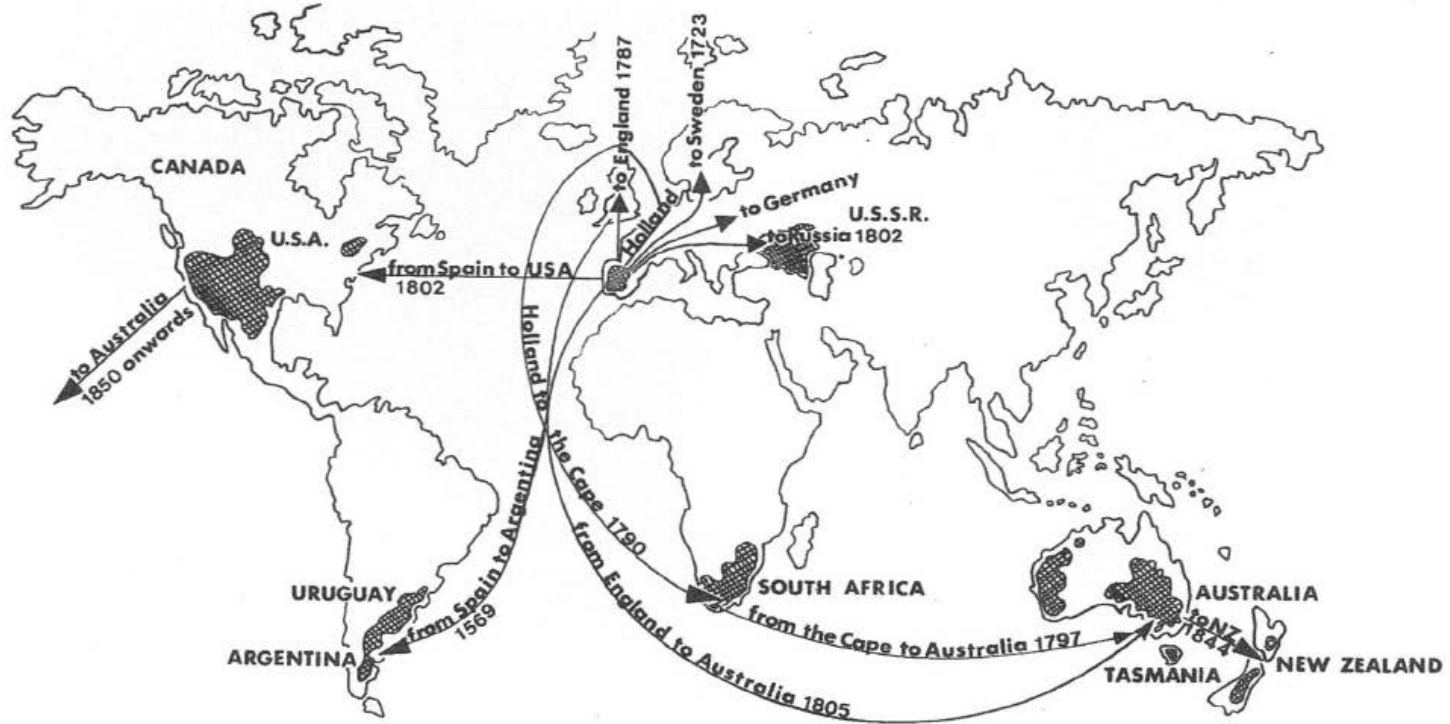
- (3) **The victory of Merino wools:**
- a) **remarkable story: cross-breeding North African and domestic Spanish sheep**, both producing low quality wools, resulted, over many successive cross-breeds, far superior wool:
 - possibly from interaction of **recessive genes**
- b) **Sheep management and improvements in the annual Transhumance important:** how sheep are fed often as important as how they are bred

Spanish Merino Wools - 4

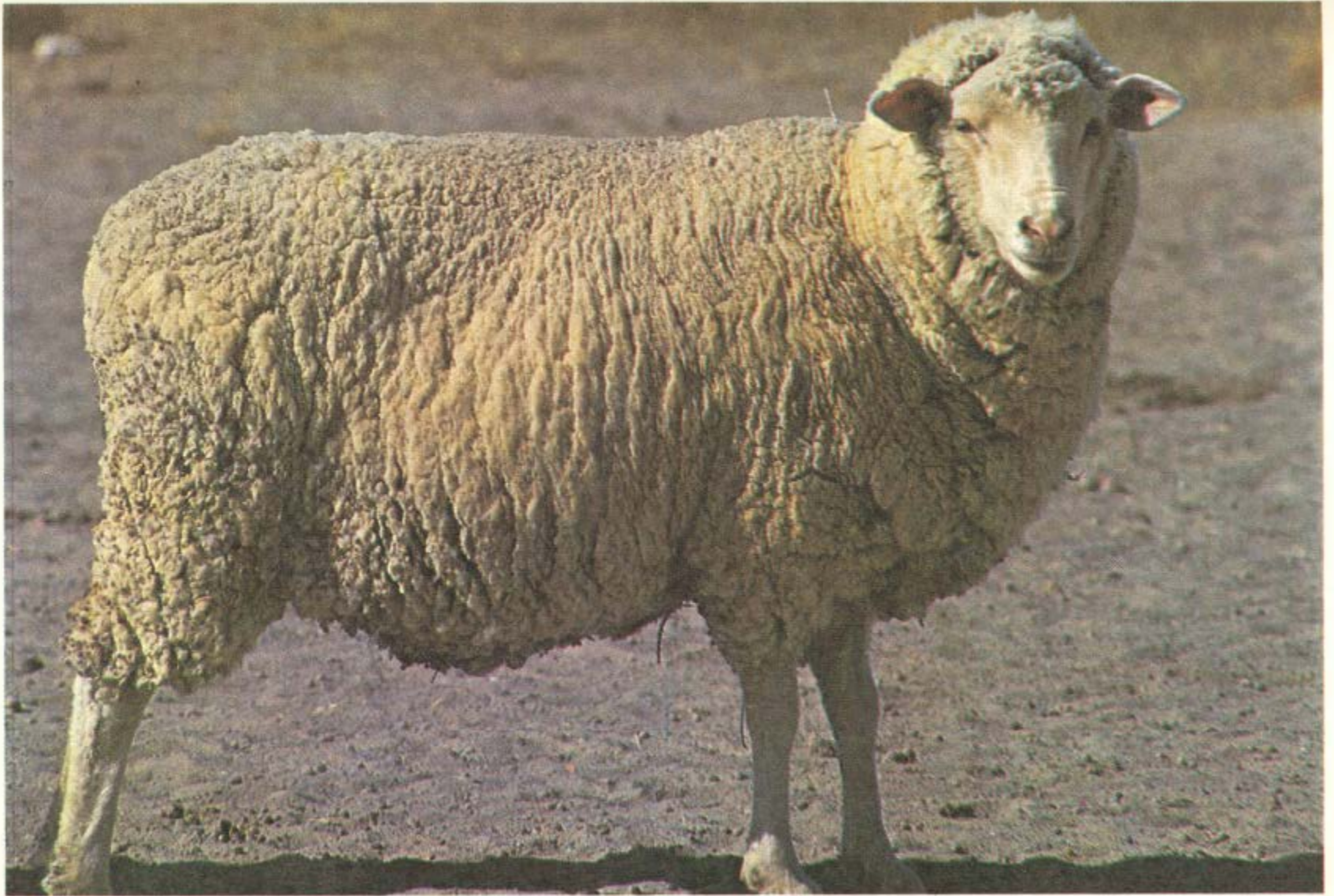
- c) **My own research shows Italian imports of merino wools** (Tuscany) from late 14th century
- d) **Low Countries: From 1430s, Low Countries began importing Spanish merino wools** (despite bad reputation), when English wools becoming too costly: though the two were often mixed
- e) **By mid 16th century, Spanish merinos were superior** to all but the very best English wools;
- **by 17th century, merinos were best in the world**

World-wide diffusion of merinos

28



KEY  Main centres of Merino breeding



3 Australian Merino Sheep.



4 South African Merino.



5 Fleece of South African Merino showing the fine, dense fibres.

C. NOTHERN AGRICULTURE: Late-medieval Low Countries

- **No slides for this topic:**
- **read this part of the lecture online, for yourself**
- Indeed, I have not had time to give this lecture in class, for many years.

**The Low Countries
in the
Late 15th Cent.**

