

Prof. John H. Munro  
Department of Economics  
University of Toronto

[munro5@chass.utoronto.ca](mailto:munro5@chass.utoronto.ca)  
[john.munro@utoronto.ca](mailto:john.munro@utoronto.ca)  
<http://www.economics.utoronto.ca/munro5/>

**ECO 2210Y :**

**Topics in the Economic and Social History of Later Medieval and Renaissance Europe, 1260 - 1600**

**Topic No. 13: The Dynamics of Change in Late-Medieval Industry: Woollen Textile Manufacturing and the Cloth Trade in Western Europe, 1280 - 1500**

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<sup>1</sup> The entry on 'Scarlet' contains an unfortunate error, inserted by an ignorant copy-editor, long after the final text had been approved, on his own initiative, and without consulting either the editor or the author. In the second paragraph, first sentence, the subordinate clause 'that is, as yarn or fiber rather than as woven material' should be struck out, so that the sentence may properly read: 'While all medieval scarlets were dyed 'in the grain' with kermes, some also contained additional dyes, especially woad (blue), affixed first to the wools, and weld (yellow).' This error has been corrected both in the Errata of Vol. XIII (1989) and in the subsequent edition of this volume.

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## QUESTIONS

### **I. The Major Questions:**

In terms of secular trends and structural economic changes, the fundamental questions about the northern cloth industries in the period 1250-1550 are as follows:

- (A) Why were the woollen cloth industries the single most important form of manufacturing for medieval and early-modern commerce? How was the structure and organization of this industry related to foreign trade?
- (B) What structural economic changes did the European textile industries undergo -- in trade and production -- from the 13th to 15th centuries: during the late-medieval economic crises, especially during the so-called 'Great Depression'? Analyse the changes in Italy, France, the Low Countries, and England.
- (C) Why did the Low Countries (Flanders, Brabant, and Holland) and then Italy dominate the international production and trade in woollen cloths, until the mid-15th century; and how did England then come to displace them as the leading European manufacturers of luxury-quality woollen cloths?
- (D) How, where, and why did the *nouvelles draperies*, *draperies légères*, and *sayetteries* come to supplant the traditional urban *draperies de luxe* as the major form of textile manufacturing in the Low Countries by the late 15th and early 16th centuries?

### **II. Subsidiary Questions, and Issues**

1. Many of the errors in the literature have resulted from misunderstandings of the technology of cloth-making, producing a confusion in the meanings of the various textile terms and types of fabrics.
  - (a) Define the characteristics of and explain the technical differences between and among the three main branches of this textile industry: (i) woollens, (ii) worsteds or 'stuffs,' and (iii) mixed worsted-woollen products.
  - (b) For England, similarly distinguish between the products of (i) the Old Draperies and (ii) the New Draperies (which are not to be confused with the nouvelles draperies in the Low Countries).
  - (c) To which branch do the following draperies or cloth types belong? Draperies de luxe, broadcloths, Old Draperies, kerseys, nouvelles draperies, New Draperies, draperies légères (lichte draperie), draperie ointe (gesmoutte draperie = greased or 'wet' drapery), draperie sèche (drooge draperie = dry drapery), sayetteries, serges, bayes, perpetuanas, Spanish medleys?
2. Which of these draperies used the following wools: English, Scottish, Flemish, and German, and Spanish; long-stapled and short-stapled? Were these wools interchangeable? How were such wools

prepared -- the warp and weft wools -- in the corresponding draperies?

3. England is said to have produced Europe's finest wools in the medieval era: when, more precisely, where, and why? Were English wools of uniformly high quality? What constituted their fineness? How did that determine the quality of luxury cloths? What were the more important determinants of wool quality or fineness: heredity (i.e. breeding) or environment (climate, terrain, pasture types, etc.) Did the qualities of English wools change from medieval to early modern times? In particular, what effect did Tudor-Stuart enclosures have upon English wools?
4. What effect did English (royal) commercial, fiscal, and monetary policies have upon the English wool-export trade from 1272 to 1478? Especially from the onset of the Hundred Years' War? What consequences did such policies, and the effects on the wool trade, have upon the various cloth industries of England and the Low Countries?
5. What economic, social, and political factors determined an urban or rural location of the various cloth industries in England and the Low Countries? What were the relative advantages and disadvantages of such locations? What factors explain shifts in the locations of the cloth industries in both countries (or in regions of both) from medieval to modern times? Were particular branches of these textile industries ever completely urban or completely rural in either or both countries? Thus is it true that the English broadcloth industry became completely rural, or that the Flemish nouvelles draperies and sayetteries were 'rural' as opposed to 'urban' luxury draperies?
6. Explain the organization and functions of the 'Putting-out' or 'cottage' or 'domestic' system of cloth-manufacturing. What was the role of the draper or clothier in organizing and financing this system? What divisions of labour did it involve? What relationships did a rural putting-out system have to the agrarian economy and society of the region in which it was located? Could a putting-out system be urban? What were the relative advantages and disadvantages of the putting-out system?
7. Explain how the three main branches of the wool-based textile industry differed or came to differ in the following stages of production: wool sorting and preparation, combing and/or carding, spinning, weaving, fulling, tentering, shearing, dyeing, calendaring.
8. What technical changes occurred in these wool-based textile industries from the 13th to 17th centuries (i.e. in these stages of production)? In particular what mechanization or changes in implements occurred: when and where? What were the barriers to technical change and mechanization?
9. Explain the significance of the following factors for the differing fortunes of these textile industries in the Low Countries and England from 1350 to 1650 -- or rather, keep in mind the following factors and conditions:
  - (a) Supply factors: changes in supplies or costs of wools, dyestuffs, labour, working and fixed capital, entrepreneurship.
  - (b) Demand factors: structural changes in domestic and foreign markets, depressions and booms, development of foreign competition, introduction of substitute products, changes in fashion, social changes affecting consumption patterns.

- (c) Political factors: royal or national policies (such as mercantilist policies), warfare and the financing of warfare; urban and guild policies; consequences of warfare; consequences of politically-induced migrations.