

ECO 2210Y

Topic No. 2: Medieval European Demography and the Economy (2): Did Late-Medieval Population Growth Produce a Malthusian Crisis by c.1300?

1. J. C. Russell, 'Population in Europe, 500 - 1500,' in Carlo Cipolla, ed., Fontana Economic History of Europe, vol I: Middle Ages (1972), 25-70. See also J.C. Russell, Late Ancient and Medieval Population (Philadelphia, 1958).
2. Karl Helleiner, 'The Population of Europe from the Black Death to the Eve of the Vital Revolution,' Cambridge Economic History, Vol. IV (1967), pp. 1 - 95, especially pp. 5-19, 68-95. Chiefly beyond this topic, and more relevant to the next; but it still has important insights.
3. Richard M. Smith, 'Demographic Developments in Rural England, 1300-48: a Survey,' in B.M. Campbell, ed., Before the Black Death: Studies in 'Crisis' of the Early Fourteenth Century (Manchester, 1991), pp. 25 - 78. See also Richard Smith, 'Human Resources,' in Grenville Astill and Annie Grant, eds., The Countryside of Medieval England (Oxford, 1988), pp. 188-212.

J.C. Russell and His Critics [see Postan in the following section]:

4. J. C. Russell, 'The Pre-plague Population of England,' Journal of British Studies, 5 (1966); see also J.C. Russell, British Medieval Population (Albuquerque, 1948); and those cited in no. 1 above.
5. J. Krause, 'The Medieval Household: Large or Small?' Economic History Review, 2nd ser. 9 (1956), 420-32.
6. Goran Ohlin, 'No Safety in Numbers: Some Pitfalls of Historical Statistics,' in R. Floud, ed., Essays in Quantitative Economic History (1974), pp. 59 - 78.
7. J. Z. Titow, English Rural Society, 1200-1350 (1969), pp. 64-96. See below, next section.

The Postan Thesis, Its Defenders, Critics, and Other Historians:

8. Michael Postan, The Medieval Economy and Society (1972), pp. 27-40, with a compelling critique of Russell. See also the following:
9. Michael Postan and J.Z. Titow, 'Heriots and Prices on Winchester Manors,' Economic History Review, 2nd ser. 11 (1959); M.M. Postan, 'Some Economic Evidence of Declining Population in the Later Middle Ages,' Economic History Review, 2nd ser. 2 (1950), 130-67; and M. M. Postan, 'The Economic Foundations of Medieval Society,' Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie, 161 (1951): all reprinted in his Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 150-85, 186 - 213, and 3 - 27, respectively.
10. J. Z. Titow, English Rural Society, 1200-1350 (1969), pp. 64-96. A trenchant, hostile critique of both Harvey and especially Russell, and a defence of Postan. See above, previous section.
11. H. E. Hallam, 'Population Movements in England, 1086 - 1350,' Agrarian History of England and

- Wales, vol. II: 1042-1350 (1988), pp. 508-93. His lengthy postscript seems to agree with Postan.
12. Edward Miller and John Hatcher, Medieval England: Rural Society and Economic Change, 1096 - 1348 (London, 1978), chapter 2, 'Land and People,' pp. 27-63. A modified defence of Postan.
 13. Norman J.G. Pounds, 'Overpopulation in France and the Low Countries in the Late Middle Ages,' Journal of Social History, 3 (1969-70), 225-47. Agrees with Postan's views for this region as well.
 14. Bruce Campbell, 'Population Pressure, Inheritance, and the Land Market in a Fourteenth-Century Peasant Community,' in Richard Smith, ed., Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle (1984), pp. 87 - 134.
 15. L. R. Poos, 'The Rural Population of Essex in the Later Middle Ages,' Economic History Review, 2nd ser. 38 (November 1985), 515 - 30. See also his monograph: A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex, 1350 - 1525 (Cambridge, 1991), part III, pp. 89-130. Provides good support for Postan's views.
 16. Zvi Razi, Life, Marriage and Death in a Medieval Parish: Economy, Society, and Demography in Halesowen, 1270-1400 (1980): chapter 2, 'The Population of Halesowen 1270-1348,' pp. 27-98.
 17. Barbara Harvey, 'The Population Trend in England Between 1300 and 1348,' Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th ser. 16 (1966), 23-42. Opposes Postan's thesis of a pre-plague population decline, supporting Russell. But see her most recent views in:
 18. Barbara Harvey, 'Introduction: the 'Crisis' of the Early Fourteenth Century,' in Bruce Campbell, ed., Before the Black Death: Studies in the 'Crisis' of the Early Fourteenth Century (1991), pp. 1 - 24. See also Barbara Harvey, Living and Dying in England, 1140 - 1540: The Monastic Experience (1993), section IV. Mortality, pp. 112-45.
 19. Pamela Nightingale, 'The Growth of London in the Medieval English Economy,' in Richard Britnell and John Hatcher, eds., Progress and Problems in Medieval England (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 89-106. Challenges Postan's and Hallam's population estimates for England c.1300.
 20. Ian Kershaw, 'The Great Famine and Agrarian Crisis in England, 1315-1322,' Past and Present, no. 59 (May 1973), 3 - 50.
 21. William Chester Jordan, The Great Famine: Northern Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). Introduction and conclusions.
 22. Nils Hybel, Crisis or Change? The Concept of Crisis in the Light of Agrarian Structural Reorganization in Late Medieval England (1989). Chapter I.1-8, pp. 1-14; Chapter IV.1-5, pp. 105-17; Chapter VI.1-6, pp. 178-90; Chapter VII.6, pp. 228-30; and Chapter VIII.4-15, pp. 261-97.
 23. Ronald Lee, 'Accidental and Systematic Change in Population History: Homeostasis in a Stochastic Setting,' Explorations in Economic History, 30:1 (January 1993), 1 - 30. See in particular 'The Origin of Long Swings in Historical Populations,' pp. 21-28.

QUESTIONS on the two debates: Postan, Titow, and Hatcher vs. Russell and Harvey

1. What were the chief determinants of European population growth size in the Middle Ages?
2. How large did that population become: in western Europe as a whole, and within England? when did it cease growing? Did western Europe or England in particular suffer a Malthusian crisis by the end of the 13th or the beginning of the 14th century? If so, was the onset of a demographic crisis an

immanent and endogenous feature of the late medieval European economy and society? Or did European society manage to control its population growth before a crisis could ensue? Discuss the Postan thesis and its critics.

3. How reliable are demographic statistics; how useful are the demographic estimates in this era? What criticisms have been levied against the statistical methods of J.C. Russell; and how have demographic historians revised his estimates of later medieval English population?
4. How convincing are Postan's arguments for a demographic crisis c.1315-20 that 'sent population figures tumbling down?' How sound are his statistical methods?