ECO 301Y1

The Economic History of Later Medieval and Early Modern Europe, 1250 - 1750

Topic No. 1 [1]: The Black Death, Famines, and the Late-Medieval Demographic Crises: the Late-medieval Standard of Living Controversies

READINGS: arranged, by topic section, in the chronological order of original publication. The more important are indicated by asterisks *

A. **Demography: General and Methodological:**


* 5. Carlo Cipolla, Jan Dhondt, Michael Postan, and Philippe Wolff, ‘Rapports collectif’, IXe congrès international des sciences historiques, Paris âout - septembre 1950, 1 (1950), 225-41. Michael Postan's contribution was revised and subsequently published as the following:

** 6. Michael Postan, ‘The Economic Foundations of Medieval Society’, *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie*, 161 (1951); and:


both reprinted in his *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 3 - 27; and 186 - 213 (the latter, with the revised title of ‘Some Agrarian Evidence of Declining Population in the Later Middle Ages.’)


   ** (b) J. Hajnal, ‘European Marriage Patterns in Perspective’, pp. 101-46.


* 27. J.D. Chambers, *Population, Economy, and Society in Pre-Industrial England* (London,

29. Frederick Cartwright, Disease and History (New York, 1972).


* 42. L. R. Poos, ‘The Historical Demography of Renaissance Europe: Recent Research and


B. Demographic Crises in the Late Middle Ages: General Features


* 10. David Herlihy, Medieval and Renaissance Pistoia, 1200-1430 (New Haven, 1967), chapters 3 - 5, pp. 55 - 120; see also pp. 271-82. See also below, section E. nos 3-4.


e) Andrew Cunningham, ‘Disease: Crisis or Transformation?’, pp. 397-415.


C. Famines and Problems of Malnutrition in Medieval Europe:


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D. **Plagues and Other Diseases in Late-Medieval Europe**


31. David Amundsen, ‘Medical Deontology and Pestilential Disease in the Late Middle Ages’,


36. Michael Flinn, ‘Plague in Europe and the Mediterranean Countries’, *Journal of European Economic History*, 8 (1979), 131-48. Largely a review of Biraben’s two volume study (no. 17); but also a fascinating review of the general European literature on the plague, much of it beyond the period of this topic.


40. Andrew Appleby, ‘The Disappearance of Plague: A Continuing Puzzle’, *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 33 (1980), 161-73. Also chiefly beyond the period of this topic; but it raises very important issues on the biological nature of the late-medieval plagues; and should be read in conjunction with Flinn, Biraben, Davis, and Slack.


   c) Christopher Harper-Bill, ‘The English Church and English Religion after the Black Death’, pp. 79-123.


76. Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., ‘The Black Death: End of a Paradigm’, *American Historical Review*, 107:3 (June 2002), 703-36. Challenges the now traditional orthodoxy that the late-medieval Black Death was bubonic plague -- or that it resembled the modern form of bubonic plague transmitted by rat fleas.

** 77. Samuel Cohn, Jr., *The Black Death Transformed: Disease and Culture in Early Renaissance*


* 81. Susan Scott and C. J. Duncan, Return of the Black Death: the World’s Greatest Serial Killer (Chichester and Hoboken, N.J: Wiley, 2004). They also doubt that the Black Death was bubonic plague.

82. Wendy Orent, Plague (New York, 2004). Defends the view that the Black Death was bubonic plague.


See my review (somewhat negative) in EH.NET BOOK REVIEW, < eh.net-review@eh.net> 13 March 2006. It also ignores Cohn’s publications.


A response to Cohn: Contends that the Black Death was indeed bubonic plague, but in a form very different from the contemporary forms of plague (from the outbreak of the Third Pandemic, in 1897).


86. Ethne Barnes, Disease and Human Evolution (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005).


This article is, in fact, relevant to the debate about the nature of the late-medieval plagues: bubonic on pneumonic – arguing that both were pneumonic?


What is known as the ‘Justinian Plague’ or the First Pandemic: the predecessor of the late-medieval Black Death.

** 90. John Theilmann and Frances Cate, ‘A Plague of Plagues: The Problem of Plague Diagnosis
A review article on recent publications concerning the Black Death. Like Kelly, these authors also agreed that the Black Death was indeed plague caused by *Yersinia pestis*, but in a form very different from the much milder version that evolved by the time of the Third Pandemic (1894-1947); and they also believe that pneumonic plague was a major factor as well (denying the arguments set forth by Cohn); and finally, that the death toll was magnified by other factors.


93. Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., and Guido Alfani, ‘Households and Plague in Early Modern Italy’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 38:2 (Autumn 2007), 177-205.


f) Thorkild Kjaergaard, ‘An Unnoticed Example of How the Black Death Altered the Course of History: Why America was Discovered from Spain and not from Scandinavia’, pp. 269-77.

g) Yassir Benhima, ‘Epidémiés et mouvements de population au Maroc (XIVe - XVIe siècle)’, pp. 269-85.


k) Tim Soens and Erik Thoen, ‘Vegetarians or Carnivores: Standards of Living and Diet in Late Medieval Flanders’, pp. 483-515.

l) Aysu Dincer, ‘Disease in a Sunny Climate: Effects of the Plague on Family and Wealth in Cyprus in the 1360s’, pp. 531-40.


102. G. Morelli et al., ‘Yersinia pestis genome sequencing identifies patterns of global phylogenetic diversity’, Nature Genetics, 42:12 (Dec 2010), 1140-41


Part I: The Medieval Demographic System

Ole Benedictow, ‘New Perspectives in Medieval Demography: The Medieval Demographic System,’ pp. 3 - 42.


Maryanne Kowaleski, ‘The Demography of Maritime Communities in Late Medieval England’, pp. 87-118.


D. Climate, Environment, and Demography


E. The ‘European Marriage Pattern?’: Demography, Family Structures, Marriages, and Medieval Fertility


f) Margaret Spufford, ‘Peasant Inheritance Customs and Land Distribution in Cambridgeshire from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries’, pp. 156 - 76.

g) Joan Thirsk, ‘The European Debate on Customs of Inheritance, 1500 - 1700’, pp. 177-91.

h) J. P. Cooper, ‘Patterns of Inheritance and Settlement by Great Landowners from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries’, pp. 192 - 327.


26. David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, Mass. 1985), chapters 4, 5, and 6 (pp. 79 - 156), for the later Middle Ages (on marriages, parenthood, childhood, etc.).


34. Frances and Joseph Gies, Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages (New York, 1987).


39. Walter Prevenier, ed., Marriage and Social Mobility in the Late Middle Ages/ Mariage et mobilité sociale au bas moyen âge, Studia Historica Gandensia no. 274 (Ghent, 1989).


52. Merry E. Wiesner, Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe, New Approaches to European History 1 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).


60. David Nicholas, ‘Child and Adolescent Labour in the Late Medieval City: A Flemish Model in Regional Perspective’, English Historical Review, 110 (November 1995), 1103-1131.


63. Richard Adair, Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996). Although this study concerns the following period (and will appear in the bibliography on early-modern demography), its methodology is useful for this medieval topic.

64. John M. Riddle, ‘Contraception and Early Abortion in the Middle Ages’, in Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage, eds., Handbook of Medieval Sexuality (New York, 1996), 263-


67. Trevor Dean, ‘Marriage and Mutilation: Vendetta in Late Medieval Italy’, Past & Present,
no. 157 (November 1997), 3-36.


F. Particular Demographic and Plague-Related Social Studies on England


** 3. Michael Postan, ‘The Economic Foundations of Medieval Society’, *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie*, 161 (1951); and:


both reprinted in his *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 3 - 27; and 186 - 213 (the latter, with the revised title of ‘Some Agrarian Evidence of Declining Population in the Later Middle Ages.’


45. Richard M. Smith, ed. Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle (Cambridge, 1984): collection of essays. See especially the following:


   
   a) D. W. Robertson, Jr., ‘Chaucer and the Economic and Social Consequences of the Plague’, pp. 49-74.
   
   b) John B. Friedman, ‘He Hath a Thousand Slayn This Pestilence’: Iconography of the Plague in the late Middle Ages’, pp. 75-112.
   


60. Nils Hybel, Crisis or Change? The Concept of Crisis in the Light of Agrarian Structural Reorganization in Late Medieval England (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1989). For discussions of the literature on demographic changes, see: 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 especially Chapter VIII.4-15, pp. 261-97.


* 73. Mark Bailey, ‘Demographic Decline in Late-Medieval England: Some Thoughts on Recent


   c) Christopher Harper-Bill, ‘The English Church and English Religion after the Black Death’, pp. 79-123.


G. Demographic Changes in Continental Western Europe: Italy, France, Spain, and the Low Countries


13. Philippe Dollinger, ‘La chiffre de population de Paris au XIVe siècle: 210,000 ou 80,000?’ Revue historique, 216 (1956), 35-44.
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30. Willem Blockmans, ‘The Social and Economic Effects of Plague in the Low Countries, 1349-


H. Population, Labour, and Real Wages: Social Unrest and the Standard of Living Controversies, Before and After the Black Death, 1300-1500

(i) General and Continental European:


* 2. Robert Lopez, ‘Hard Times and Investment in Culture’, in:


5. Herman Van der Wee, ‘Typologie des crises et changements de structures aux Pays-Bas,


(a) D. W. Robertson, Jr., ‘Chaucer and the Economic and Social Consequences of the Plague’, pp. 49-74.

(b) John B. Friedman, ‘He Hath a Thousand Slayn This Pestilence’: Iconography of the Plague in the late Middle Ages’, pp. 75-112.


34. Samuel Cohn, Jr., ‘The Black Death and the Burning of Jews’, *Past & Present*, no. 196
(August 2007), pp. 3-36.


ii. On England:


23. Christopher Dyer, ‘Changes in the Size of Peasant Holdings in Some West Midland Villages, 1400 - 1540’, and,

Christopher Dyer, ‘Changes in the Link between Families and Land in the West Midlands in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries’, and also:

Bruce Campbell, ‘Population Pressure, Inheritance, and the Land Market in a Fourteenth-Century Peasant Community’,


25. Christopher Dyer, Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England


* 38. John Munro, ‘Before and After the Black Death: Money, Prices, and Wages in Fourteenth-Century England’, 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


(iii) On Wages, Prices, and Income Distributions: Statistical Sources and Studies


* 5. E. H. Phelps Brown and Sheila Hopkins, ‘Seven Centuries of Building Wages’, Economica, 22 (1955); and

E. H. Phelps Brown and Sheila Hopkins, ‘Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables, Compared with Builders’ Wage Rates’, Economica, 23 (1956):


A republication in translation (with graphs, but without the long statistical appendices of the original): ‘Prijzen en lonen als ontwikkelingensvariabelen: Een vergelijkend onderzoek tussen Engeland en de zuidelijke Nederlanden, 1400 - 1700’, in Album aangeboden aan Charles Verlinden ter gelegenheid van dertig jaar professoraat (Ghent, 1975), pp. 413 - 47.


QUESTIONS ON DEMOGRAPHY

1. When did the general growth of European population, the demographic upswing that commenced in the 10th-11th centuries, cease? In the later 13th century? In the early 14th century? Not until the Black Death of 1348? Or later? WHY and HOW?

2. Did climatic changes have any influence on demographic changes: in terms of agricultural output, nutrition (and thus resistance to both famine and disease) and the biological transmission of diseases?

3. What brought about the drastic demographic declines in 14th and 15th century Europe? Did a ‘Malthusian Crisis’ trigger that population decline? Or was the demographic decline chiefly the result of Plague? Were the causes of European population decline essentially endogenous or exogenous to the functioning of the European economy?

4. What relationships were there, in the 14th and 15th centuries, between/among: famine, warfare, and disease?

5. What was the Black Death? What forms did it take? How was it introduced into Europe? How did it spread? What determined or influenced the mortality rates from the Black Death and succeeding plagues?

For a vivid contemporary, first hand description of the plague in the reign of Byzantine or East Roman Emperor Justinian (r. 527-565), by his Prefect of Constantinople, the historian Procopius, see H.B. Dewing, ed., Procopius History of the Wars, Books I and II, in Greek and English translation (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 450-73. Note the actual use of the word ‘bubonic’ in this description: βονβωνων (pp. 460-61).

6. The current debate about the biological nature of the Black Death: was it bubonic plague, and was it transmitted (as the bacillus Yersinia pestis) by rat borne fleas? Or was it some other disease?

7. What other factors determined high death rates in late-medieval Europe, in rural and urban areas?

8. What factors influenced changes in birth rates? What was the more powerful factor in determining demographic changes and population levels: the birth rate or the death rate? How were the two related?

9. What is the ‘European marriage pattern’? What influence did it come to have on European birth and death rates? When did it commence -- in the Middle Ages, or later, in the early-modern era? Is there any evidence for a European marriage pattern anywhere in medieval Europe?

10. Why did the population decline continue for so long, into the 15th century? When, where, how, and why did that population decline come to a halt? What brought about the beginnings of population recovery?

11. What were the general economic and social consequences of population decline in late medieval Europe?

12. Discuss the relationships between living standards and population levels, demographic change.

13. Did population decline – from plagues, famines, wars, etc – lead to a rise in productivity and thus real-wages in later-medieval western Europe. What factors determined the levels of and changes in real wages and other real incomes?

14. Did demographic decline produce economic decline, or stagnation; or did it foster change and new economic growth?
15. What were the regional variations in demographic change in medieval Europe: what regions experienced long term demographic and economic decline, and which ones experienced population and economic growth?