



Rassegna di Storia rurale

Raccolta periodica di recensioni e segnalazioni bibliografiche
a cura del gruppo RU-LAV Lavoro e lavoratori rurali di SISLAV

n. 1, gennaio 2016

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Marc Badia-Miró, Vicente Pinilla, and Henry Willebald, editors, *Natural Resources and Economic Growth: Learning from History*, New York, Routledge, 2015, xix + 374 pp. \$160 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-13-878218-1.

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http://eh.net/book_reviews/natural-resources-and-economic-growth-learning-from-history

Natural Resources and Economic Growth offers a timely and multifaceted look at the often double-edged relationship between natural resource wealth and long-term economic development. The volume's sixteen chapters, which range in format from single-country case studies to cross-national statistical analyses, address natural resource governance issues that have been encountered on each continent at various points in (generally post-industrial) history. Specific country cases include Australia, Botswana, Indonesia, Nigeria, Norway, Spain, the United States, and Venezuela. Contributors focus heavily, although not exclusively, on the political and economic challenges associated with the endowment of coal, petroleum, precious metals, and other coveted mineral assets. This makes the book an especially informative read in light of the ongoing slump of global commodity prices and the concomitant political fallout now being felt in many resource rich countries.

Broadly speaking, the volume's contributors take on two major propositions. The first is the existence of (or lack thereof) a "natural resource curse," as posited by Sachs and Warner (1995, 2001). This term refers to the hypothesized tendency of natural resource rich countries to underperform economically due to self-destructive governance patterns enabled by resource windfalls. The second is the ubiquitous claim that many of the negative externalities associated with natural resource-driven economic growth strategies can be mitigated through the development of effective political institutions, often those associated with democracy and the rule of law (see Acemoglu et al. 2001). The authors mostly re-affirm these positions but, at the same time, bring some much-needed context to the discourse.

The general consensus that emerges from the chapters of *Natural Resources and Economic Growth* is that abundant natural resources are "non-neutral" for economic development, but their precise effect on a given economy is heavily mediated by a myriad of intervening variables. This is spelled out clearly in the book's opening chapter by the editors, who write "History teaches us that (resource) 'curses' and 'blessings' are constructions — they are the result of the socioeconomic system" (p. 17). Moreover, several of the book's case studies demonstrate that, while good political institutions and public policies can certainly help countries manage natural resource wealth, such configurations are often embedded in unique national histories. This means that policy remedies that have proven effective in one setting will not necessarily work elsewhere.

One excellent example of the non-replicability of distinct natural resource governance schemes is found in the book's chapter on Norway (chapter 15), co-authored by Andreas R. Dugstad Sanders (of the European University Institute) and Pål Thonstad Sandvik (of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology). Dugstad Sanders and Sandvik, who reconstruct the evolution of Norway's natural resource regulatory regime over more than a century, portray the country's vaunted system of oil wealth management as the ultimate product of a complex set of political interactions between social democrat and conservative elements. Specifically, they argue that, while Norway's dominant Labor Party built the regime's edifice, its Conservative Party (which governed through much of the 1980s) placed crucial constraints on Statoil (Norway's state oil company) and other powerful industry players (pp. 326-27). This resulted in a robust yet constrained regulatory framework that, over time, closed off opportunities for rent seeking.

As a group, the authors do an impressive job of providing nuance to the instructive but oversimplified resource curse thesis. The book's second chapter, written by eminent development

economist Richard M. Auty, jumps out in this respect. Auty, who himself coined the term “resource curse” in his 1993 book *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies*, argues that “rent curse” is now a more appropriate term for the sharp boom-bust cycle that characterizes many resource rich economies. He holds that the deleterious macroeconomic effects catalyzed by natural resource windfalls can also be sustained by inflows of other types of rent, such as foreign aid and remittances. This happens when high rents encourage the ruling elite to pursue a course of immediate self-enrichment, versus the less expedient strategy of making the growth-promoting investments necessary to build a broad, revenue-generating tax base. Auty’s notion of a rent curse helps explain why the pattern of growth collapse exhibited by resource dependent economies can also be observed in several aid dependent countries, such as those in the largely barren Sahel region of Sub-Saharan Africa (p. 31). This more precise diagnosis of the problem at hand will ideally lead to a more effective course of treatment.

One small editorial note is that the volume’s chapters are somewhat lacking in coherence. The book’s final chapter, which examines the emergence of water scarcity as a source of political conflict in Spain, feels especially out of place. While water is unquestionably our most vital natural resource, the chapter clashes somewhat with the rest of the book’s focus on mineral resources. Moreover, the chapter’s authors (Ignacio Cazcarro, Rosa Duarte, Miguel Martín-Retortillo, and Ana Serrano) focus on the geographic and ecological dimensions of the issue, eschewing the macroeconomic perspective of the other essays. The book also suffers from the absence of a proper concluding chapter that could tie together several of the disparate insights offered by its contributors. These are, of course, minor drawbacks that do not take away from the quality of this highly informative and superbly crafted volume.

Natural Resources and Economic Growth is an authoritative text on one of the most vexing problems in development studies and a must read for academics, graduate students, and anybody interested the pivotal role that commodities play in the global economy.

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Gérard Béaur, Phillip Schofield, Jean-Michel Chevet & María Teresa Pérez Picazo (dir.), *Property Rights, Land Markets, and Economic Growth in the European Countryside (Thirteenth-Twentieth Centuries)*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2013, 535 p., ISBN: 978-2-503-52955-4.

«Histoire & mesure» [En ligne], XXX-1 | 2015, mis en ligne le 30 juin 2015, compte rendu par Juan Carmona, Université Carlos III, Histoire économique, Madrid.
<http://histoiremesure.revues.org/5150>

L’objectif de ce livre est d’opérer une critique des théories institutionnalistes, tout particulièrement le modèle défini par Douglass North (1973, 1989), qui met l’accent sur l’importance des institutions pour le développement économique ou le retard de l’agriculture. La disparition de l’ancien système d’accès à la terre et l’apparition de droits de propriété « parfaits » assortis d’institutions complémentaires auraient été les conditions nécessaires pour l’essor d’un marché foncier libre et actif qui, lui-même, aurait permis une réallocation plus efficiente des facteurs de production et donc

la croissance de la production agricole. Cette thèse est loin d'avoir perdu de son attrait, puisque qu'elle a été récemment reprise par Acemoglu et Robinson dans le très populaire *Why Nations Fail* (2012), dont le chapitre 7 reprend l'argument du rôle fondamental de la « Glorieuse Révolution » pour la transformation des droits de propriété en Angleterre et celui de l'importance des « enclosures parlementaires » pour son développement économique. Gérard Béaur et Jean-Michel Chevet, éditeurs et aussi auteurs de l'excellente introduction du livre se proposent de « prendre au sérieux ces théories qui attribuent la croissance aux changements institutionnels », en examinant la relation entre les droits de propriété, le marché foncier et la croissance économique d'un point de vue empirique. Le livre se compose de vingt-cinq travaux réalisés par trente auteurs sur onze sur l'Europe méridionale (Espagne, Portugal et l'Italie), quatre sur la France et la Belgique, trois sur la Scandinavie, quatre sur l'Europe centrale, deux sur l'Europe de l'Est, et une sur les Îles britanniques, ce qui donne une grande variété et une vision générale très complète.

2 Les chapitres s'organisent autour de trois thèmes principaux. La première partie, « Propriété imparfaite et changement économique », aborde la question du rôle négatif qu'aurait joué la propriété incomplète et les droits collectifs en bloquant le progrès ou le changement économique. Le chapitre de Rosa Congost sur la Catalogne, montre que, bien au contraire, la propriété imparfaite, l'emphytéose en l'occurrence, eut une importance décisive pour la privatisation des forêts et la transformation des systèmes de cultures. De même, selon l'étude de Philippe Jarnoux, le bail à domaine congéable breton constituait un excellent moyen de motiver les colons et de les pousser à procéder à des investissements. De même, encore, les communaux ne méritent pas la mauvaise réputation que leur prêtaient les physiocrates, comme le montrent Iñaki Iriarte et Jose Miguel Lana Berasain en Espagne, tandis que Paul Servais démontre que les ventes de communaux dans les Ardennes n'eurent qu'un très modeste effet sur la production.

3 La deuxième partie, « Propriétaires, marché foncier et droits de propriété » examine la relation entre une meilleure spécification des droits de propriété et l'apparition d'un marché foncier. Là aussi les évidences empiriques démontrent que le marché des droits de propriété existait bien avant l'apparition de la propriété parfaite. Et s'il est vrai qu'il existait de nombreuses contraintes, elles représentaient elles-mêmes une partie du prix et donc de la transaction. Les chapitres sur le Portugal (Jose Vicente Serrão et Rui Santos), la Toscane (Emmanuel Huertas), la Pologne (Piotr Guzowski), la Catalogne (Llorenç Ferrer, Rosa Congost) attestent que, du xvi^e au xviii^e siècle, il y avait bien un marché foncier « actif » des droits de propriété, avec des taux de rotation de la terre assez élevés (1-3,6 % comparé au 0,5 % du marché foncier espagnol aujourd'hui, par exemple). De la même façon, les ventes de biens communaux n'auraient pas dynamisé le marché foncier en Westphalie et dans le pays de Bade (Niels Grüne). C'est plutôt la pression de la demande, ou l'adaptation de la taille des fermes au cycle de vie des ménages et les modalités de l'héritage, comme le suggère Laurent Herment pour l'Île de France au xviii^e siècle, qui exercèrent un effet fondamental dans ce processus.

4 Finalement, la troisième partie, « Marché foncier et progrès économique », regroupe des travaux qui analysent l'impact d'un marché foncier actif sur le progrès agricole et se proposent de déterminer si ce marché, par la réattribution des droits sur la terre en fonction du degré de motivation des propriétaires, permet un usage plus efficient des biens fonciers et une meilleure allocation des facteurs de production. Quelques travaux montrent, d'un côté, que, dans leur désir d'augmenter leurs recettes fiscales, les États peuvent privatiser les propriétés sans créer pour autant un marché actif de terres, comme dans le cas des ventes de communaux (*baldíos*) en Espagne au xvi^e siècle (Alberto Marcos), ou dans l'Alentejo (Rui Santos et Jose Vicente Serrão). D'autres, d'un autre côté, certifient qu'en Suisse la libération du marché de la terre donna de bons résultats (Anne-Lise Head-König), et qu'en Espagne, la disparition de la très contraignante institution du « *mayorazgo* » eut des effets très importants sur la circulation de la terre en favorisant la vente des terres nobiliaires (Ricardo Robledo) mais aussi celles de l'Église (Jose Miguel Lana Berasain et Joseba de la Torre). Plus pessimiste, une troisième série de textes avance que le développement d'un marché foncier et un accès plus libre à la propriété ont pu stimuler le morcellement des

exploitations et la persistance de bas rendements (Bruce Campbell pour les cas britannique et irlandais), et même la multiplication des ventes par des micro-propriétaires en situation de détresse (Julie Marfany pour la Catalogne et Laurent Herment pour la France). La relation entre marché et progrès s'avère, finalement, malaisée à détecter comme le révèle la vision opposée de Patrick Svensson et de Mats Morell dans le cas de la Suède au xviii^e siècle, et cette difficulté se retrouve probablement dans la plupart des autres cas.

5 Les trois chapitres permettent de vérifier la complexité des problèmes abordés, et la difficulté de séparer les enjeux institutionnels des relations sociales, démographiques, techniques et même politiques. Par ailleurs, en se penchant sur le fonctionnement des systèmes d'accès traditionnels à la terre pendant l'époque moderne, ces travaux témoignent que les marchés, les incitations de toutes sortes, la circulation des biens, l'introduction des capitaux faisaient bien partie des institutions de l'ancien régime et que ces droits de propriété imparfaits réduisaient ainsi les coûts de transaction.

6 Bien que le titre du livre nous indique qu'il aborde le foncier jusqu'au xx^e siècle, aucune étude ne va au-delà des dernières décennies du xix^e siècle, c'est-à-dire précisément la période pendant laquelle culmine un droit de propriété absolu, se généralise le raccourcissement des baux de location, se produit la fin de l'emphytéose et la privatisation d'une grande partie des communaux en Europe. Le xx^e siècle est précisément une période extrêmement intéressante pour le débat dont traite ce livre, puisque c'est une période qui défait, en partie, l'œuvre libérale, par le biais d'une régulation des systèmes de location mise en place par les Etats européens (grâce aux nombreuses lois sur le fermage ou sur le métayage) dans le but de favoriser les investissements des exploitants agricoles. Ce processus s'accompagna d'une sécurisation des baux, de l'exigence d'une indemnisation des fermiers pour les améliorations introduites sur leur exploitation. Il coïncida, en somme, avec l'imposition de clauses de location qui limitaient à nouveau les droits attachés à la « propriété parfaite ». Parallèlement, plusieurs pays situés en Europe orientale et méridionale virent naître des réformes agraires en réaction à ce que de nombreux contemporains considéraient comme un échec des réformes libérales, jugées incapables de favoriser la croissance agricole. Ces deux évolutions autorisent à s'interroger sur la diversité des changements institutionnels suivis par les différentes régions européennes.

7 L'intérêt du livre va bien au-delà du cercle des historiens du monde rural, du droit ou des institutions. Les économistes du développement s'interrogent aussi sur le rôle des institutions dans le retard des pays pauvres aujourd'hui, sur l'importance de l'enregistrement des terres, d'une meilleure définition des droits de propriété pour favoriser le fonctionnement des marchés, surtout le marché de crédit, et sur la complexité des modes de faire valoir traditionnels pour résoudre les problèmes d'information asymétrique et les coûts de transaction en général. La superposition des droits sur une même terre est aussi commune dans certaines régions de l'Afrique occidentale que dans l'Europe moderne par exemple. Dans ce sens un dialogue entre l'histoire rurale consacrée au foncier et les recherches sur les institutions de la propriété dans les pays du Sud, favoriserait un échange très fructueux sur le plan des méthodes. Il permettrait, entre autres, d'incorporer le sens de la longue durée dans les travaux sur le foncier aujourd'hui, mais aussi de situer les travaux historiques, comme les études de cet excellent livre, dans un contexte beaucoup plus global et qui participe des mêmes inquiétudes.

Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2014, 640 pp., \$35.00, hardback, ISBN 978-0-375-41414-5.

Edward E. Baptist, *The Half has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, New York, Basic Books, 2014. 528 pp., \$35.00, hardback, ISBN 978-0-465-00296-2.

Reviewed for «Agricultural History» (Summer 2015) by Barbara Hahn, Texas Tech University and the University of Leeds.

http://www.aghistorysociety.org/journal/current/bookreviews/2015-07/Beckert_Empire_of_Cotton_A_Global_History_and_Baptist_The_Half_has_Never_Been_Told_Slavery_and_the_Making_of_American_Capitalism_by_Barbara_Hahn.pdf

A paradigm shift is underway in the historical profession. Suddenly the new generation is more interested in the history of capitalism than in the subjects that interested their advisors. That generation experienced the shift from social history to cultural history, as the voices of the inarticulate could suddenly be found in what they wore and sang and did more than in their actual scanty words preserved in the historical record. Now “the history of capitalism” is all over the media: featured in the *New York Times* and the *Nation*, its practitioners—mostly young but well-established—declare the originality of their endeavors in the *Journal of American History* 101 (sept. 2014). The topic is undeniably hot. Jonathan levy’s *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America* (2012) won several major prizes and thereby signaled the field’s arrival. At the moment that the profession has reached fatigue with its earlier topics, a new one has appeared to interest scholars and draw students into classes.

One salutary effect of the new paradigm has been to turn the historical gaze from the long-dominant twentieth century back to the nineteenth. In doing so, the field has done what seemed impossible: historians of capitalism have turned the history of slavery and the American South into the mainstream of American history. Once a separate chapter, a nearly colonial supplier of raw materials to the industrializing centers of business action in England and New England, the South now appears as a crucial component in the astonishing economic growth of the nation in the nineteenth century. Walter Johnson’s *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (2013) set the stage with its examination of the Mississippi River as the focus for planters’ dreams of both profit and mastery. Now two new books take the south as their subject, and together they form a useful introduction to both the triumphs of the new paradigm and its disappointments.

Among the most honored of the crop of new books is Sven Beckert’s *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (2014). Winner of the Bancroft Prize and widely promoted and positively reviewed, the volume has been awaited for more than a decade, promised by journal articles that announced its basic themes. While the sweep and scope of Beckert’s book eludes easy summary, here is a brief synopsis: Southeast Asia led the world in cotton production and processing, and sold it across Asia and into West Africa. Cotton cloth followed islam into europe by 950 CE, and in the seventeenth century, European merchant companies bought cotton cloth in India to trade for the spices they really wanted. Cotton proved to be a useful trade good. it paid for slaves in Africa that labored in North America, which by the nineteenth century was supplying fiber to the Industrial Revolution. Alongside cotton industrialization grew modern state formation, which aided entrepreneurs with property rights, military and market protection, and expansion into new territories. Merchants forced governments from protectionism into free trade. The US Civil War reorganized the global cotton business; then, standardization of cotton grades and contracts for future delivery of the goods allowed for financialization based on the fungibility of the fiber. As the twentieth century dawned, Japan grew the crop in korea, and Alabama helped shift it to Africa. The result was a global division into North and South, industrial empires and commodity-producing colonies, even as production shifted away from old imperial centers and capitalism abandoned its comfortable relationship with the nation-state.

This history is familiar from Giorgio Riello's *Cotton: The Fabric That Made the Modern World* (2013), which is a better book than Beckert's: more rigorous in its economic sensibility and more cultural in its emphasis on consumption and its use of actual cloth as evidence. The effort to be global leads Beckert into sidelines, as the same model of capitalism (industry in one place, raw material production in another) moves around the world. Each incident serves his framework in which labor exploitation and state formation work together to industrialize both agriculture and manufacturing.

Yet the model allows Beckert to avoid a pitfall of earlier historians of capitalism, a difficulty apparent in Joyce Appleby's *The Relentless Revolution: A History of Capitalism* (2010), which failed to distinguish capitalism from industrialization. Beckert accomplishes this task with what he calls "war capitalism," the economic system formerly known as mercantilism, now unmoored from its periodization as Beckert sees the two forms of capitalism co-existing side-by-side. "Imperial expansion, slavery, and land expropriations" characterize this accumulation scheme, rather than merchant investments and trade (52). The two types of capitalism interact, which makes Beckert's timeframe vague: Columbus in 1492 marked a "momentous" recasting of the world trade system—or did the shift take place after 1600 and the founding of the East India Company (31)? The inconsistencies pile up: were Europeans startled by the cotton they found in Mesoamerica, or had the cloth reached Europe six centuries earlier (8, 22)?

The text is sometimes contradictory, sometimes repetitive—perhaps deliberately so. If teachers wish to assign individual chapters, however, the book's imprecisions, stated with profound certainty, will mislead students. The chapter on the Industrial Revolution is an excellent example. Beckert repeats as fact that high wages inspired the mechanization of textile production, but this is a hotly contested point among economic historians. While his treatment of particular machines is graceful, the larger questions of industrialization, its causes as well as its effects, elude his grasp.

This is a larger problem within field of the history of capitalism. It is often imprecise and vague, and abstractions often drive the narrative. Claiming as they do that capitalism needs to be historicized, that it is not a natural human characteristic but rather a system that arose in particular places and times, historians of capitalism still struggle to understand any other mode of economic activity. If capitalism and the modern nation-state developed hand in glove, how did that connection emerge from or oppose the older relationship between guilds and local governments? "Capitalism" is not an entirely satisfactory answer. Surely safety-first agriculture involved risk, catastrophic risk—the danger appears even in the language that defines that mode of production. How did people organize production, trade, and consumption before capitalism? We rarely hear an answer. Would the scholars of capitalism prefer socialism? They do not say. How did slavery embody capitalism even as it drew on old hierarchies and structures?

The Half Has Never Been Told, by Edward Baptist, actually attempts an answer to the last question. He claims less for his book than does Beckert, but accomplishes more. He has not attempted a global history of cotton but has instead found a new frame for the history of antebellum cotton production in the United States. Noting that large-scale cotton crops were new after independence, his tale is one of expansion, both geographic and economic. He focuses on the internal slave trade rather than the plantation as a unit of production. Changing, moving, and growing, his slavery is on the march in coffles, rather than on the plantation in the slave quarters. Families torn apart, loss and despair, desperate survival in new communities, language, and music, link the slaves of his story. Restless and grasping, his masters (he calls them enslavers) innovate agriculture in the southwest. Their gang labor systems demanded efficiency with brutal whips and cold-hearted overseers.

The organization of the book is likewise fresh and new. Taking Ralph Ellison's metaphor of American history as the body of "a Negro giant," Baptist names his chapters for parts of the body, each part expressing a theme, even as the chapters move through the familiar chronology of antebellum history. Unusual juxtapositions result. "Right Hand" explores "the power of domination, kings, weapons, and the letter of the law," as "nerved by credit," from the Latin word

“credere,” to believe (90). “Left Hand” covers the brutal agricultural methods and record-keeping that permitted plantation expansion. The chapter “Seed” links cotton cultivation cycles to the sexual abuse of the slaves, the expansion of the white male franchise in Jacksonian America, the gold standard, and the destruction of the Bank of the United States with the rush of debt-issuing state banks into its wake. The last chapter, of course, is “Arms,” as the conflicts over the expanding slave power and the control of the federal government broke out into Civil War. Along the way, Baptist reminds us that the Louisiana Purchase was an outgrowth of the Saint-Domingue slave revolt; that the Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850 were not only conciliations but also deals to entrench economic growth; that “the whole history of the United States comes walking over the hill behind a line of people in chains” (xxiii).

Unlike Beckert, Baptist directly addresses paternalism and the once-lively side of the historiographical debates that argued for the pre-capitalist nature of plantation production and the slavery system. For Baptist this is nothing more than a fiction, perpetrated by slave-owners and perpetuated into the twentieth century by “an openly racist historical profession—and a white history-reading, history-thinking public obsessed with all kinds of race control” (xvii). This can be true and yet still the concept be worth exploring. Planters may have been acquisitive capitalists willing to wreak political power to achieve ends of growth, but they also often thought of themselves as paternalists: fathers and household heads responsible for their children, wards, wives, and slaves. Parenting is not always benevolent, it is about control and the perpetuation of social structure. Acknowledging the planters’ conception of their task does not mean accepting it. such acknowledgment does allow room, however, to explore the purpose of the ideology, its origins and its effects. Taking paternalism seriously provides an opportunity to understand how capitalism actually developed: how it drew on older social and economic systems even as it installed growth and risk and returns on investments to the detriment of older ways. This is not Baptist’s goal, however, and not the direction of his analysis. For him, pointing out the lie is enough.

Both books combine primary source research with synthesis, and both claim radical new reinterpretations of the past. Yet they present familiar stories, already accomplished elsewhere. Beckert’s book covers much the same ground as Riello’s, while the arguments Baptist makes first appeared (though less dramatically) in Gene Dattel’s *Cotton and Race in the Making of America: The Human Costs of Economic Power* (2009). Nonetheless, the two books represent a transformation in southern historiography and make obsolete the old debates about the nature of the region. no one would argue for the precapitalist nature of the plantation nowadays—not least because no one seems to have much idea of, or interest in, what other forms of economic activity looked like. Yet the familiar sensations of reading social history remain, especially the romanticized view of pre-capitalist behavior. Beckert has peasants maintaining “control of their land and labor” as late as 1850s india while “indigenous merchants” controlled the trade, for example (224). This is the way social historians viewed the world: what came before was always better. Similarly, historians of capitalism leave the pre-history unexplored and the causes of capitalism therefore unexplained.

Is the history of capitalism just old wine in new bottles? Time will tell. It may be that the field abandons abstractions to examine human behavior at moments when capitalism emerged. That would mean identifying those moments and carefully defining what is capitalism and what is not. Eventually scholars may turn their attention to older structures and how they changed or how they became the roots of the new system. For the moment, for all its promise, the field has only just begun to sprout.

Alex T. Brown, *Rural Society and Economic Change in County Durham. Recession and Recovery, c.1400-1640*, Boydell and Brewer 2015, 304 pp., ISBN: 978-1783270750.

<http://www.ruralhistory.eu/newsletter/2016/rhn-2016-008>

The book is study of how Durham's rural society survived the economic crisis of the late medieval period and how the end of the sixteenth century the development of the coal industry provided opportunities for investment and profit. It looks at the estates of the bishops of Durham and monks of Durham Cathedral Priory, and the emergence of the yeomanry as a social group.

Lourenzo Fernández Prieto, Juan Pan-Montojo and Miguel Cabo, editors, *Agriculture in the Age of Fascism: Authoritarian Technocracy and Rural Modernization, 1922-1945*, Turnhout, Belgium, Brepols Publishers, 2014, 261 pp. €64 (paperback), ISBN: 978-2-503-55248-4.

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http://eh.net/book_reviews/agriculture-in-the-age-of-fascism-authoritarian-technocracy-and-rural-modernization-1922-1945

Rural history and agricultural history are disciplines which have flourished in Spain in recent decades. Within the general framework of the Spanish Society of Agrarian History (SEHA) many works concerning the economic, social, and political history of agriculture and rural areas have been published. Thus, is not a surprise that three Spanish scholars (Lourenzo Fernandez Prieto and Miguel Cobo from the University of Santiago de Compostela and Juan Pan-Montojo from the Autonomous University of Madrid) have promoted and edited this collection of essays devoted to the analysis of agriculture in different countries in the so called Age of Fascism.

In this volume, thirteen specialists (including the three editors) analyze agrarian policies and their results in eight different countries with fascist political regimes mainly during the interwar period. Those countries are, in order of appearance in the work, Italy, Portugal, Hungary, Germany, Austria, Spain, Manchukuo state and Vichy France. In order to compare such different countries, the editors pose at the beginning a "fascist minimum" acting in the agrarian sphere. That is, they establish seven common features that, in their view, all the regimes considered sought with their agrarian policies. Those features are 1) strong ruralist ideological discourse with an alleged defense of peasantry and small land holders; 2) aggressive commercial policies trying to guarantee national self-sufficiency in food; 3) prevalence of state intervention to control agrarian markets; 4) preference for reforms that did not put into question land ownership and especially that did not disturb landed oligarchy; 5) application of corporate designs for social harmonization; 6) military discipline and hierarchy as institutional solutions also for agrarian policies; and 7) subordination of agriculture to the needs of other economic sectors, particularly armament.

Following this general scheme, in the different chapters one can verify some ideological links between different regimes. For instance, the idea of self-sufficiency in wheat proposed by Mussolini in the *Bataglia del grano* in 1925 was used also in the *Campagna do Trigo* of the Estado Novo of Portugal from 1929 to 1933 and reinvented again in the *Batalla del trigo* of the Francoist regime in Spain after the Spanish Civil War at the end of the thirties. Or in a similar way, the idea of *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) proposed by the Nazi Minister of Agriculture R.W. Darré at the beginning of the thirties as an expression of the union of peasant and land as the core of an indispensable foundation of the German State, was translated to Japanese and replicated as a part of the ruralist ideology in Manchukuo state some years later.

Of course similarities in the design of agrarian policies are combined with major differences affecting each country. Apart from the specific chronologies when fascist regimes flourished, the weight of the different economies and of the agricultural sector inside them also varied, both in terms of national GDP and population employed in the sector. Also the degree of modernization of the agricultural sector and rural institutions related to size of farms and land distribution could be very dissimilar. And of course, the implication of fascist regimes on war also differed. The importance of food for military expansion during World War II and the use of food (or its privation) as the “ultimate weapon of destruction” was usual, especially in the eastern front of Europe from 1941 on, as Gesine Gerhard points out in his chapter about Nazi Germany.

Differences were abundant, but the main proposal of the editors, shared by all the contributors, is that fascist regimes in the interwar period tried to implement a peculiar way to agrarian modernity, built against liberal and communist modernizing projects. That way was an authoritarian one in which the state was to promote technological change and control market integration. This, together with the union of peasantry and landed aristocracy in corporatist institutions, was supposed to overcome social conflict in rural areas and to promote agricultural modernization based mainly in technocracy. As Ernst Langthaler proposes for the case of Austria, the amalgam of modern and anti-modern elements and the contradictions between changes in the institutional matrix and bottlenecks in technological change probably thwarted actual agrarian modernization. But it was an irreversible step along the path toward a productivist food regime in post-war Europe.

Of course, as the editors state at the beginning, the emphasis on the modernizing character of fascism does not involve any attempt to rehabilitate it. Far from it, this sight tries to see fascist policies as a stage in the evolution of agricultural policies in the twentieth century and, apart from revealing interesting aspects for each country, also raises important questions for future research.

As happens in all collective books, the chapters are uneven in quality. Although all of them manage to draw the outlines of agrarian policies for their respective countries, some focus mainly on the ideological representation of the fascist discourse. More attention to the use of factors of production and to the level of productivity gains and its causes would have been desirable in some cases. Nevertheless, the overall assessment of the work has to be positive. We are dealing with an interesting book, useful not only for a better understanding of the agricultural policies of the interwar period but also for a deep knowledge of fascist ideology itself.

Tirthankar Roy, *An Economic History of Early Modern India*, New York, Routledge, 2013, x + 174 pp. \$53 (paperback), ISBN: 978-0-415-69064-5.

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https://eh.net/book_reviews/an-economic-history-of-early-modern-india/

The literature on Early Modern India is characterized by debates surrounding the decline of the Mughal Empire, the rise of the East India Company and the timing of when India fell behind Europe. Despite strong claims on each side, the evidence underlying the arguments is often weak because of insufficient or unreliable economic data. Against this backdrop Tirthankar Roy's book is a welcome addition to the field. It offers a measured assessment of the salient transitions in this important period of Indian history beginning with the death of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707 and ending in the early 1800s as the English East India Company came to control large territories including most of coastal India.

Drawing on an impressive reading of the primary sources and secondary literature, Roy's analysis moves away from traditional debates surrounding colonialism and draws cautious conclusions

about urbanization, living standards and agrarian conditions. His main argument is that political turmoil at the top between the different warring factions led to a general decline in public goods but did not substantially weaken peasant property rights. In India, many people could claim the final agricultural output ranging from military nobles and tax collectors at the top to landlords in the middle and finally peasants cultivating the land at the bottom. While states needed more public money to fund wars, Roy argues they were limited in their ability to coerce peasants because land was abundant and labor was scarce in the eighteenth century. In support he points to qualitative evidence of peasant communities moving and clearing forest for cultivation across many Indian regions. The available evidence on living standards also matches this account of peasant property rights. Based on a careful reading of the economic trends, Roy argues that agricultural production, crop yields and standards of living did not fundamentally change over the long eighteenth century. Roy begins by describing the process of state formation as new successor states wrestled power from the Mughal Empire in the first half of the eighteenth century. Success was contingent on the ability of these states to improvise old, or devise, new fiscal structures that could extract necessary revenues to support the military campaigns. By the end of the eighteenth century, the English East India Company emerged victorious signaling a fundamental break. Unlike former states, the Company employed its own standing army relying less on earlier forms of military-agriculture relationships with landlords and tax collectors. By eliminating such middlemen, the Company made tax collection more efficient.

As a successor state, the East India Company was also special because of its strong naval presence. This contributed to the coastal shift in business as the Company transitioned to a colonial state. Overland trade within India declined over this period as maritime trade increased. That said, maritime trade accounted for only a tiny share of the economy. Some groups with inland interests lost, while others that successfully transitioned to working with European firms gained. Roy argues that this change in orientation is also reflected in urbanization patterns. Agra, Delhi and Lahore among other interior towns of the Mughal Empire declined as the coastal towns of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras came to dominate the urban landscape. The latter were new industry hubs, which was as important in accounting for their rise as their status as colonial company towns. That said, there was no long run urbanization trend. Old centers of production tied to the Mughal Empire experienced decline but, this was balanced by the rise of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. This book has much to recommend itself. A newcomer to Indian economic history will appreciate the military-political history of the eighteenth century successor states, the nature of military-agriculture interactions and the organization of agricultural production. The chapters on urbanization and living standards are among the best I have read on the topic. They summarize the existing debates, describe the data and then draw sensible conclusions while acknowledging gaps in the literature. While general histories may overlook regional patterns, Roy gives the regional stories their due importance. My only quibble is the book shortchanges the story of the East India Company despite its presence in many chapters. The rise of the Company and its transition to colonial power deserves more attention. This book tells the story up to the early nineteenth century, by when it is clear that the East India Company will be dominant. Roy takes up the rest of the story in *The East India Company: The World's Most Powerful Corporation* (New Delhi: Allen Lane, 2012).