

that it would be sufficient to do the trick. It makes sense that in some cases shareholders would blow the whistle on imprudent banking, but in others, as Turner's evidence on the City of Glasgow Bank shows, shareholders may miss the signs of imprudent banking or, I suspect, might be swept away by the same enthusiasms as managers. What looks like foolishness in hindsight may have often looked like financial genius before the crash. But whether or not one accepts his policy conclusions it is clear that Turner has written a timely and admirable book, one that belongs on the shelf (or in the Kindle) of all financial historians, and all policymakers involved in formulating regulations for financial institutions.

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Custom and Commercialisation in English Rural Society: Revisiting Tawney and Postan. Edited by J. P. Bowen and A. T. Brown. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2016. Pp. xiv, 310. \$37.95, paper.
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This book contains 11 essays all responding to the legacies of R. H. Tawney (1880–1962) and his student Michael Postan (1899–1981), leading scholars in the fields of early modern and medieval economic and social history, and early editors of the *Economic History Review*. In an excellent introduction the editors pay close attention to the meanings of the words “custom” and “commercialization” and briefly survey trends and findings in recent research on English agrarian history. Tawney was interested in crisis and response, through human agency, in relations between lords and tenants in early modern England. Postan focused on demography and statistical information illuminating the rise and decline of serfdom in medieval England. Both men were wide-ranging scholars who wrote on many topics, and they were committed to a style of economic history inseparable from social history.

In his lecture series on medieval English economic history, which Postan shared with Edward Miller, this reviewer heard him introduce the subject on 17 October 1974 by advising students to learn how to “eat the heart out of a book without reading it.” Given the high entry costs to the astonishingly rich and complex scholarship on English agricultural history, this comment was a big relief, but hardly suitable to the ostensible duties of a book reviewer. Christopher Dyer in his framing essay on their legacies feared that Tawney and Postan were not often read now, and that their reputations endured at second-hand. Dyer saw in Tawney the committed Christian socialist who brought to economic history a moral component imbedded in spiritual values. Postan liked big data and used it to study change over time, as in his famous work on the chronology of labor services, which he wished in another lecture that he had labelled “nff” (not for fools). This 1937 essay, not cited in this volume or included in the long bibliography, required an ability to understand tables and graphs too often lacking, along with even a rudimentary knowledge of economics, among his contemporaries. The contributors to this volume show no interest in econometrics and present their statistical findings in tables and figures uninfluenced by advances made over the last 50 years in presenting data.

The contributors set themselves the tasks of reuniting social and economic history, and extending the work of Tawney and Postan beyond the regions of England they

had studied. Such laudable curiosity did not include placing England in a broader European framework; only John Broad paid any attention to France in his big picture look at English agriculture in a European context 1300–1925. This is a pity because fine studies by David Weir, Philip T. Hoffman, and others published in this JOURNAL on early modern French agriculture and economy would have provided useful points of comparison to studies by Bruce Campbell and Robert C. Allen, whose work receives scant attention here. WWII doomed a planned collaborative work by Postan and Marc Bloch (1886–1944) on the French and English peasantry. But the aim of casting a wider net in England pays dividends. Alexandra Sapoznik explored the iron industry in Yorkshire, Kent, and other places to test Postan's ideas on medieval exploitation of marginal rural lands, in this case beyond agriculture. Sheila Sweetinburgh examined the marshlands around Romney in another case study of marginal lands, in this instance their reclamation. The study of prosperous peasants in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries engaged in these activities would have benefited from noticing contemporary Dutch practices in ditch drainage and collective actions.

James P. Bowen tested Tawney's thesis on competition over the commons in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Shropshire, where he found landlords competing with one another as much as with their own tenants. Enclosures remain central to any analysis of the commercialization of English agriculture, and the customary rights of the peasants usually suffered during this process which drew Tawney's censure. Bowen looks at the Elizabethan Poor Laws as institutional responses to rural poverty and emphasizes the paradox of lords paying less in poor rates as dispossessed tenants were settled in cottages on common lands, with the freeholders and copyholders paying the price in their diminished access to the commons and its wood, pasture, and other benefits. William Shannon looked at Lancashire and its woodlands, formerly in the hands of Furness Abbey before the Dissolution of the monasteries and the commodifying of their assets. Forests were vital to the iron industry in this region because of the vast amount of wood needed to produce charcoal. In Lancashire Shannon found tenants vigorously asserting claims against the Crown and others, while in the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire the tenants more closely resembled Tawney's downtrodden peasants. Broadening our understanding of different regional outcomes within England is one of this collection's many significant accomplishments.

Competing demands by lords and tenants over commons and customary rights intersected in the forests and their many resources. Coal, neglected by Tawney and Postan as a rural resource and item of commerce, mattered on the estates of Durham Cathedral priory from the fourteenth century. A. T. Brown found that the canons of Durham used coal from their pits in their great household and after the Dissolution of the monastic chapter the new dean and chapter leased coal pits to entrepreneurs who established a sea trade in coal. The new owners wanted income rather than payments in kind, and this suited the leaseholders and may have fostered among them a growing sense of civil society in opposition to the landlords.

Reinvigorating an older ideal, the unity of premodern social and economic history, another kind of discarded image, is a worthy goal which these scholars have certainly advanced. They have done so, however, by mostly asking the familiar questions of Tawney and Postan in new places in England and fresh archival sources. Hints of topics these men neglected, like coal, suggest other paths to exploring custom and commercialization outside the worthwhile but very familiar problem of the rise of capitalism.

Tawney and Postan did work worth remembering, and they too built on important predecessors like F. W. Maitland (1850–1906) and Paul Vinogradoff (1854–1925) at least equally forgotten today and not mentioned in this volume. What all these scholars, past and present, had in common was that they recognized the currents of their times and incorporated fresh ideas into their work

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The Baltic: A History. By Michael North. Translated by Kenneth Kronenberg. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015. Pp. 427. \$39.95, cloth.
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This long sweep begins in the tenth century with Viking forays and ends in the early twenty-first with problems of European integration. Geographically the range is from the upper reaches of rivers entering into the Baltic to the North Sea. Each of the ten chronological chapters begins with a page on some location that illustrates the principal trends of the period along with a somewhat informative map and often a relevant illustration. The effort is to be comprehensive so politics, the economy, social structure, and culture each get their turn for each phase in the history of the region. Cultural contact and exchange, especially through trade, receive outsized attention. The extensive range, topical and chronological, means that digging deeply into issues proves impossible. The tendency is to description rather than analysis, especially in discussing the economy. While that is understandable for the chapters on the Middle Ages and the Renaissance where sources are sparse and the period is not well known, for more recent centuries the lack of depth will detract from the value of the work for economic historians.

This is a history about the lands bordering the Baltic. All are included, though as with any work on a region the problems of defining the exact scope proves difficult. There are, the author sees, many “Baltics” constructed differently over time (p. 2) which creates license to expand and contract the geographical scope for each period. The changing boundaries of polities, emerging and disappearing, presents problems of description. The complex interaction of peoples and languages over the centuries makes the task even more difficult, the problems of what names to use for towns being the obvious example. The concordance, in 10 languages (pp. 331–336), of how people identified urban centers is a real asset. With the large states, Germany and Russia, their cultural nationalism had an indelible impact on the region in the last two centuries. Their interests, however, stretched far beyond the Baltic. How far inland the narrative reaches in dealing with them is an issue often avoided. The solution to the problem is a focus on just the portion of the German kingdom and empire with a Baltic coast and to give limited consideration to Russia.

The discussion of the shift to a form of serfdom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries does not serve to fully clarify what is a thorny historical problem. The claims for the importance of the development of the cog, a type of high medieval ship used by German merchants, in changing the commercial balance in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries does not take account of recent discussion of the emergence of the design. There is no concerted effort to draw conclusions to round out what is an ambitious study.

Translated comfortably from *Geschichte der Ostsee*, published in Germany in 2011, the work has been updated in the closing pages with events in the intervening years.