



**Panel** 10.4. This land is not quite your land: tenancy and leaseholding in the pre-industrial period. Part I

**Panel organiser:** González Agudo, David, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain // Vervae, Lies, Ghent University, Belgium

During the late middle ages and 16th century, the exploitation of landownership underwent drastic changes in various parts of Europe. These changes had long-range effects on the rural economy and on society, since they influenced the use rights to what was by far the most important production factor. Throughout this process, the emergence and spread of lease holding plays a pivotal role. According to the influential R. Brenner, lease holding played a key element in the emergence of agrarian capitalism. It implied that farmers no longer had direct access to the land, but instead were forced to compete permanently with each other for leases on the land. As a result of the fierce competition, farmers were often forced to reduce costs, to increase market orientation and to specialize. In the longer run this led to a significant concentration of land and to the rise of large tenant farms, operated in a proto-capitalist way, increasingly using wage labor instead of family labor. Recently, B. van Bavel and Ph. Schofield modified the thesis of R. Brenner, stating that the impact of lease holding depended on the exact arrangement of the system and the social and economic context in which it emerged. This could lead to differential regional impacts. According to these historians, lease prices must also be understood within the regionally divergent outcomes. While most historians recognize the importance of lease holding, the bulk of attention is still going to the “capitalistic” form of lease holding, which first emerged in Northwest Europe. Consequently, other forms of lease holding in other regions need more attention. While landlords applied the system of leasehold to manage their land all around the world, the outcomes could be radically different from region to region. With these insights, historians no longer can consider lease prices as the outcome of simple supply and demand. Several socio-economic and institutional factors influenced price-making. Above all, the importance of lease prices cannot be underestimated because it is substantially determined the income of peasants, farmers and large landowners in the pre-industrial area.

**Chair:** van Bavel, Bas J.P., Utrecht University, Netherlands

Thursday, 22 August 2013 // 1000 – 1200 // Session 10 – Room A 201

10.4.1. Long and short term tenancies. Catalonia and Valencia

Paper

**Garrido, Samuel, University Jaume I, Spain**

Robert Brenner's argument concerning competition among tenants implies that the landlords often changed tenants. Yet, in many areas of Europe it seems to have been common for tenant families to occupy the farms they rented from one generation to the next. In this paper my aim is to study that phenomenon by comparing the events that took place in Spain between the final phase of the pre-industrial period and the 20th century in two types of agriculture with very different characteristics, namely, the farming on irrigated land in the Valencia Region and that carried out in the vineyards of Catalonia. In the first case the usual practice was to rely on lease contracts, which were theoretically very short-term agreements, although they were normally renewed year after year for extremely long periods of time. In some areas, the leases eventually became de facto (although not de jure) arrangements similar to emphyteusis, and this made it easier for tenants to buy land at low prices throughout the 20th century. In the Catalan districts predominated by viticulture, a very common type of contract was the *rabassa morta*, which was a combination of sharecropping and emphyteusis that ensured long-term stability for the tenant. From the late 19th century onwards, however, simple sharecropping tended to be used instead and many tenants were replaced. In this paper special attention will be paid to studying the factors that determined why what actually occurred was so different from what was initially set out in the contract.

10.4.2. Sharecropping leaseholds organized by village communities in pre-World War II Japan

Paper

**Kanzaka, Junichi, Soka University, Japan**

In the late Tokugawa period, many Japanese peasants cultivated fields under sharecropping leaseholds. Furthermore, the Meiji government gave ‘modern’ property rights to landlords and denied, in principle, the *ei-kosaku* or perpetual lease, which some peasants had enjoyed based on their former contribution to reclamation or more than 20 years of customary tenancy. The landlords obtained ‘modern’ ownership of land and still took as high a percentage of product as in the Tokugawa period. Therefore, many Japanese scholars questioned whether their agrarian regime was truly modern and examined the development of modern property rights and leaseholds in Europe as compared with Japan. Their arguments are valuable to a pioneer comparative study of European and non-European land ownership and tenancy. In this argument, the economists and historians indicated that Japanese peasants were constrained not only by the landlord but also by the norms and customs of village communities. The restrictions were supported by the villagers’ common belief that they were not allowed to trade their land at will because each plot of land belonged to the village as well as to each holder. These feudal and communal constraints are widely regarded as obstacles to modern economic growth. By contrast, however, Ishikawa and Hayami insisted that the Japanese sharecropping leaseholders advanced vernacular agricultural techniques and achieved high productivity. The Japanese experience of and debate over sharecropping, therefore, exemplifies a different type of economic development based on leasehold organized by village communities.

10.4.3. Land rent and lease markets in Central Spain, 1500-1600

Paper

**González Agudo, David, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain**

Land tenure institutions are essential elements for understanding economic performance. In the Early Modern period these institutions varied considerably at the regional level, yet regional-level data is exceedingly scarce. I build a database of land rent paid on 100 representative farm estates belonging to the Cathedral Chapters of Toledo and Sigüenza, in New Castile, between 1500 and 1600. Using information on location, identity of the renter and the type of contract, I study the effects of the legal status of the land and its mobility over time. In spite of large institutional contrasts between these two land leasing markets, their differences did not seem to exert a significant influence on economic performance: farmland rent increased more than 60 per cent. It is more likely that more geographically concentrated phenomena, like the growth of nearby cities (Madrid and Toledo), exercised a major influence by increasing mobility on lease transfers.

**Participants**

**Garrido, Samuel**

Profesor Titular de Historia e Instituciones Económicas, Department of Economics, University Jaume I, Castellón (Spain). Research interests: Institutions, agrarian contracts, agricultural cooperatives, common-pool resources, social capital, and collective action. He has published articles in journals including *Economic History Review*, *Explorations in Economic History*, *Historia Agraria*, *Agricultural History*, *Rural History*, *Research in Economic History* and *Revista de Historia Económica*.

**González Agudo, David**

Ph.D. student. Topics: Land rents, agricultural contracts, Early Modern Castile. Presentations: “Land rent and lease markets in Central Spain, 1500-1600” (poster), *Economic History Association 72nd Annual Meeting*, Vancouver, Canada, September 2012. “What price a roof? Housing and the cost of living in 16th-century Toledo” (with Mauricio Drelichman), *Economic History Society Annual Conference*, University of Oxford, 2012. Visiting positions: Department of History and Art History, Utrecht University, April-July 2012. Department of Economics, University of British Columbia, February-May 2011.

**Kanzaka, Junichi**

Junichi Kanzaka is a professor in economic history at Soka University, Japan. He has studied the agrarian history of medieval England. His publications include ‘Villein Rents in Thirteenth-Century England: An Analysis of the Hundred Rolls of 1279–1280’, *Economic History Review*, 60–4, 2002. He is also carrying out research comparing the agrarian history of England and Japan.

**van Bavel, Bas J.P.**

Bas van Bavel is professor of Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages and head of the section of Economic and Social History at Utrecht University. His main research interests include long-run changes and divergences in economic and social development and long-run institutional change, mainly in a comparative perspective.

**Vervae, Lies**

Lies Vervae is research assistant at the Department of History at Ghent University, Belgium. In her PhD, she investigates the estate management of the Saint John's Hospital of Bruges, one of the major landowners of Flanders (supervisor E. Thoen). She focuses on the organisation of the leasehold system and on the organisation of rural labour in late medieval Flanders.