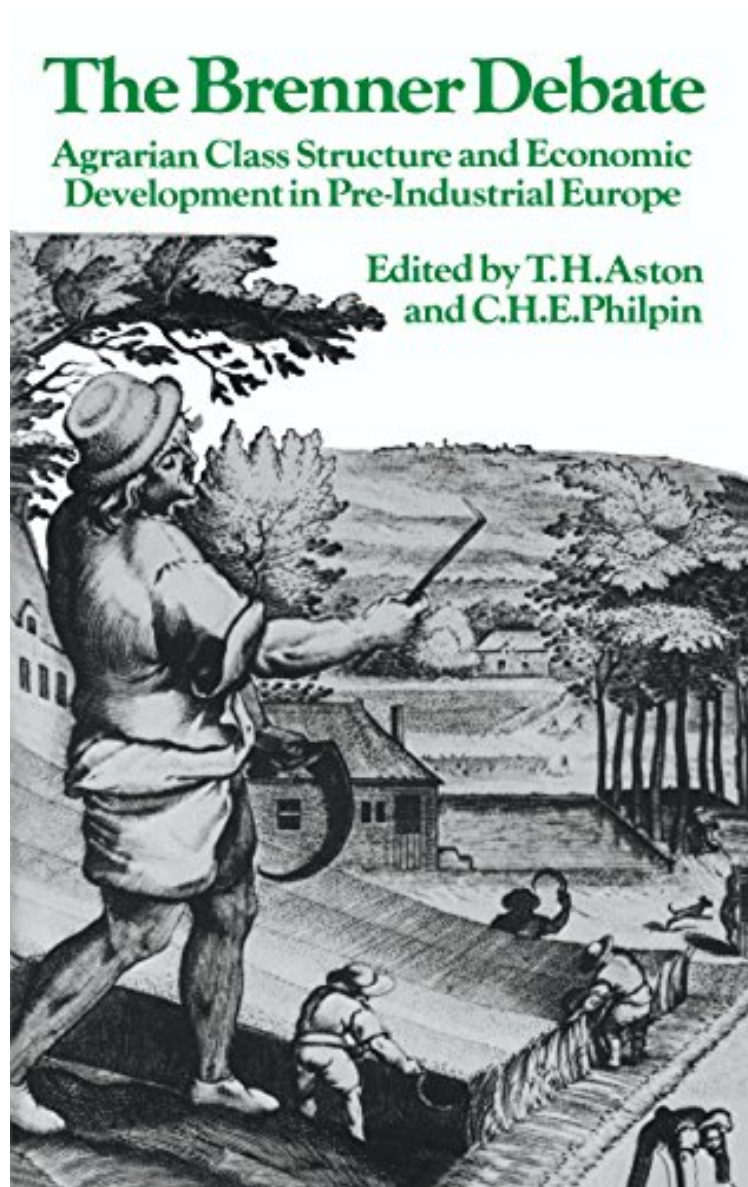


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The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe (Past and Present Publications)

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From Cambridge University Press : The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe (Past and Present Publications) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and

Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe (Past and Present Publications):

9 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Exactly what the title promises
By Roberto
If you're interested in a formative debate on the key trends that led to the transition from a fundamentally feudal economy to one that was recognizably capitalist, this is your book. Essentially, the collection of articles constitutes an argument against the conventional wisdom at the time (that demographic declines and surges were the key drivers of change) by using examples that were similar in terms of population changes but resulted in radically different outcomes. This provides room for an analysis founded on the relationship to social class that local institutions had as the key driver in how that evolution to capitalism manifested. It's problematic, as as many bold arguments are, in that it overemphasizes its own Big Idea not just against the existing orthodoxy but also presumes a great deal against other countercurrents (including ones not yet imagined when it was written) less founded in a Marxist analysis of historical cause and effect. But that's about the worst thing I can say about the content. In terms of readability it is a work that is condemned to be skimmed rather than read by all but the most dedicated readers, and that is unfortunately what relegates it to the status of background reference if you're interested in the field rather than something you would be likely to read in its own right or, god forbid, for pleasure.

Few historical issues have occasioned such discussion since at least the time of Marx as the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Western Europe. The Brenner Debate, which reprints from *Past and Present* various articles in 1976, is a scholarly presentation of a variety of points of view, covering a very wide range in time, place and type of approach. Weighty theoretical responses to Brenner's first formulation followed from the late Sir Michael Postan, John Hatcher, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Guy Bois; more particular contributions came from Patricia Croot, David Parker, Arnost Kligrave; and Heide Wunder on England, France, Bohemia and Germany; and reflective pieces from R. H. Hilton and the late J. P. Cooper. Completing the volume, and giving it an overall coherence, are Brenner's own comprehensive response to those who had taken part in the debate, and also R. H. Hilton's introduction that aims to bring together the major themes in the collection of essays. The debate has already aroused widespread interest among historians and scholars in allied fields as well as among ordinary readers, and may reasonably be regarded as one of the most important historical debates of prevailing years.

'In their brief editorial introduction to this volume, Aston and Philpin remark: 'The Brenner Debate ... may justifiably lay claim to being one of the most important historical debates of topical years, and goes back, in one form or another, to at least the time of Marx'. The republication of the debate, as it appeared in the journal *Past and Present* from 1976 to 1982, together with a fresh, short introduction by Rodney Hilton, is therefore to be welcomed. For a debate as important and wide-ranging as this is, publication in one volume is vital.' *Journal of Historical Geography*