

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3098/ah.2015.089.3.445>*Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440-1660: Tawney's Agrarian Problem Revisited*. Ed. by Jane Whittle. Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2013. 256pp., \$29.95 paperback, ISBN 978-1-84383-850-0.

This nicely packaged volume, which is the first in a new series entitled *People, Markets, Goods: Economies and Societies in History*, celebrates the 100th anniversary of the publication of R.H. Tawney's now classic text, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*. The volume contains twelve chapters written by authorities in the area and the sum of the prose is nicely introduced and concluded by the editor. In the former Whittle is not slow to highlight the various flaws in Tawney's arguments but it is at the same time recognised that his was a book that has largely withstood the test of time. This collection of essays does not just reflect on Tawney's work, it also moves the arguments forward in a well-considered manner an attempt to make sense of the social and economic dynamics between landlords and tenants in rural Britain in the period before 1640.

There is no room here to go into detail about all twelve chapters but special mention should be given to Chris Dyer whose contribution looks at the period 1440-1520, broken into three themes of population and resources, markets, and peasant society. Those looking for an overarching narrative will be let disappointed but Dyer points the way for future research. A further three papers have a common theme: courts and the law. These range from Harold Garrett-Goodyear's work on manor courts in early Tudor England to Christopher Brooks evaluating the 'agrarian problem' in revolutionary England where he recommends a rather radical solution to the current debate. The third, and weakest, paper in this cluster comes from Julian Goodare who trawls Scottish material in search of a northern agrarian problem but who is (largely) betrayed by his unfamiliarity with the minutiae of estate papers.

One of the real strengths of this book is the collection of papers that focus on local case studies. It is in such exhaustive works that the complexities of society are often unravelled and seven chapters in this book are devoted to such cases. These range from enclosure disputes, Briony McDonagh in Yorkshire and Heather Falvey in Derbyshire, to Andy Wood's paper about the denial of common urban rights. Jean Morrin and Jennifer Holt have produced interesting papers that examine landlordly attempts to modernise customary tenure in north England, while Bill Shannon looks at an improvement case study in Lancashire that supports some of Tawney's claims. Finally, and in contrast to Tawney, Elizabeth Griffiths assesses three landowners in Norfolk who behaved reasonably as they modernised their estates.

Despite the excellence of many of the chapters in this book its coverage is a little unbalanced for a tome that claims to talk about 'Britain'. The solitary Scottish paper, for example, really stands out in this respect. But this minor criticism should not detract in any way from a collection of papers that provokes thought. On these topics there are no easy generalisations about the multi-faceted relationships between landlords and tenants and this book will serve well to remind us of this simple fact.