

24 April

The Social Origins of Democracy and Authoritarianism Reconsidered: Prussia and Sweden in Comparison

Erik Bengtsson (Lund University), co-authored with Felix Kersting (Humboldt University of Berlin)

This paper explores the political consequences of land inequality. We turn to the paradigmatic cases of Prussia as the locus classicus of the pernicious effects of landlordism and Sweden, often perceived to be Prussia's opposite with a farmer-dominated social structure leading to stable democratization during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Contrary to prevailing theories associating land inequality with anti-democratic attitudes, the results indicate no positive correlation between different measures of land inequality and electoral support for the conservative and Nazi parties. For our analysis, we collect comparable regional data on land inequality measures and voting outcomes for both countries.

8 May

Income Inequality in Imperial Austria, 1911

Michael Pammer (Johannes Kepler University Linz)

The paper examines income inequality in the Western part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1911. It estimates regional levels of income, gives an estimate of the regional income distribution, and explains the degree of inequality. The study relies on a mix of income tax data and a social tables approach. The tax statistics provide information on the sources of income, on the number of taxpayers in each of 18 tax classes, and the amount of tax paid. This information exists for each of the 400 districts of the country. The lower two thirds of the population did not pay any income tax. In order to include the lower income classes in the analysis, we group the population into occupational groups with typical maximum income similar to the upper limit of the income tax classes. Altogether, we arrive at grouped observations of annual income. In order to derive an estimate of inequality from grouped observations, we make assumptions about the form of the income distribution. For an explanation of the findings for median income and the degree of inequality, we use information on the sectoral structure of districts, their demographic characteristics, and data on various aspects of production.

22 May

Regional Variation of GDP per Head within China, 1080-1850: Implications for the Great Divergence Debate

Stephen Broadberry (Oxford University), co-authored with Hanhui Guan (Peking University)

We examine regional variation in Chinese GDP per head for five benchmark years from the Song dynasty to the Qing. For the Ming and Qing dynasties, we provide a breakdown of regional GDP per head across seven macro regions, establishing that East Central China was the richest macro region. In addition, we provide data on the Yangzi Delta, the core of East Central China, widely seen as the richest part of China since 1400. Yangzi Delta GDP per head was 64 to 67 per cent higher than in China as a whole for three of the four Ming and Qing benchmarks, and 52 per cent higher during the late Ming. For the Northern Song dynasty, although it is not possible to derive a full regional breakdown, we provide data for Kaifeng Fu, the region containing the capital city as well as the Yangzi Delta. GDP per head in Kaifeng Fu was more than twice the level of China as a whole and higher than in the Yangzi Delta. Combined with aggregate data for GDP per head, these estimates suggest that China was the leading economy in the world during the Song dynasty and that the Great Divergence began around 1700 as the leading region of China fell decisively behind the leading region of Europe. They are also consistent with a shift in the economic centre of gravity from the north to the south between the Northern Song and Ming dynasties.

5 June

TBC

The seminar meets **Wednesdays at 1:15 pm in Room 5** of the History Faculty and online on Zoom

<https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/81628787646?pwd=QkNCenBVd1JTbDExWEthU1FOY05zUT09>

We normally have dinner with the speaker afterwards, to which all are welcome.

Convenors: Aleksandra Dul [✉](#) Leigh Shaw-Taylor [✉](#) Alexis Litvine [✉](#)

The support of the Trevelyan Fund (Faculty of History) is gratefully acknowledged.