The views of english historians in the second half of the nineteenth century on issues in agrarian history

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Abstract. Issues in agrarian history and the community have been and remain of great interest to researchers. In investigating into this subject, researchers refer to various scientific schools that have made a substantial contribution to the development of this theory. Among them, of particular note are representatives of English medieval studies in the 2nd half of the 19th century. English medieval studies occupy a leading position in the foreign historiography of the medieval history of Western Europe. Seebohm, Maine, and other authors proved that Anglo-Saxon England was dominated by communal relations and communal land law, which were long practiced in medieval England as well.

Introduction

There are two important components crucial to the study of historical issues in any country: a wide range of sources and an entrenched historiographical tradition. Without the knowledge of the latter, the historian will find it extremely hard to sort out the essence and nature of processes that were once taking place within particular communities. And the farther from us the epoch, the greater the dispersion of opinions and concepts in expert studies.

The history of medieval Europe, and that of Anglo-Saxon Britain, in particular, is no exception here. By now, a huge array of scientific literature dedicated to it has been amassed. However, the major set of issues that experts on Anglo-Saxon England have been grappling with remains virtually unchanged.

The reason behind that protracted a debate is that researchers are forced to work with quite a limited range of sources, which oftentimes prevents them from drawing unambiguous conclusions on particular issues in Anglo-Saxon history. Various hypotheses and concepts can sometimes directly contradict each other, and our job is to sort these contradictions out. One of such issues is the issue of the community. In English, just like in European, medieval studies this issue has divided historians into two camps: proponents versus opponents of community theory. The major aspects of community theory have been addressed in the works of representatives of English medieval studies. In conjunction with this, an attempt was made in this article to look into the primary, and topical, issue in English medieval studies – the issue of the community in the 2nd half of the 19th century.

English medieval studies occupy a leading position in the foreign historiography of the medieval history of Western Europe. All the more just is what has been said in respect of the early-medieval history of England, the origins and evolution whereof, quite naturally, are one of the primary subjects of special studies by English and American scientists.

On the cusp of the 19th and 20th centuries, contrary to concepts propounded by Whig historians, there emerged the "theory of the nobility state", which is rightfully considered to be founded by F. Maitland and H. Chadwick. These researchers denied that the state-political structure of early-medieval England possessed any democratic or constitutional qualities and, on the contrary, accentuated the state's aristocratic nature [1]. F. Maitland called for developing special topics and for local studies and himself provided a specimen of this kind of research in the form of an account of the history of the Manor of Wilberton [2].

In the second half of the 19th century, English medieval studies developed quite successfully. There was ample headway made in terms of publishing government archive materials, which had begun back in the late 18th - early 10th centuries by the Archive Commission. Starting in 1869, the Archive agency was engaged in publishing numerous private collections. Prior to that, starting in 1856, they had been publishing registers ("Calendars") of government papers, royal letters, ordinances, etc. [3].

In the second half of the 19th century, English medieval studies split into several strands: 1) political; 2) historical-legal; 3) historical-economic,

and 4) cultural-historical synthesis. Each of the strands was distinguished by its specific views.

The political strand in English mediaeval studies in the second half traced its origins to the first half of the 19th century. The two major schools within this strand are: the Whig School headed by E. Freeman and the Tory School represented by T. Carlyle and J. Froude.

Members of the Whig School in the political strand championed the idea of the national exclusiveness of the English and the antiquity of constitutionalist institutes on English soil and asserted the notion of the peaceful, non-confrontational nature of the development of English political history. All these ideas gained a foothold in the political strand's Whig medieval studies back in the 1st half of the 19th century and were first reflected in the works of Henry Hallam (1777-1859), "A View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages" [4] and "The Constitutional History of England from the Accession of Henry VII to the Death of George II" [5]. Hallam considered the history of England during the Middle Ages a paragon for all nations, for the process of formation of a "limited" or "mixed monarchy", which began in the 13th century, led to the creation of the best form of the state in the country, which would protect it both from despotism and anarchy. Hallam considered the "Great Charter of English Liberties" one of the major stages in the development of England. Edward Freeman (1823-1892) was the continuator of Whig traditions in the political strand. He wrote "The Historical Geography of Europe", which was as one of the first works on the subject in literature, and a work on methods for the study of history – a course of lectures he commenced his activity in Oxford with [6]. However, Freeman's primary interest as a researcher lay in investigating the history of Anglo-Saxons and the Norman conquest of England, to which he dedicated "The History of the Norman Conquest of England" and its continuation in "The Reign of William Rufus" [7].

In the context of this concept, the Whig Freeman acts as an inveterate conservator; he sees the progress of England's political development not in moving to new forms but a direct return to the spirit of the most archaic political institutions. He finds this retrogressive movement one of the major strengths of English history. The Norman conquest of England, according to Freeman, was a turning point in the history of the English nation – not the beginning of English medieval history. The major idea he developed was the continuity of Anglo-Saxon institutes and traditions, whose progressive development was disrupted by the Norman Conquest

and which were restored by the start of the reign of King Edward I [8].

The second important strand in English medieval studies was the historical-legal strand. The historical-legal strand also had direct predecessors in the 1st half of the 19th century – in the persons of historians Francis Palgrave and John Kemble.

Palgrave's major historical composition, "The Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth", which is the first special work on the history of English state institutions, was finished by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period. The underlying consideration in Palgrave's examination of the issue was to him the evolution of law, which he traced across the sources and from which he headed for the history of state institutions. He dated the emergence of the English limited monarchy, just like Freeman did later on, to the Anglo-Saxon epoch but maintained that the creation of the monarchy involved two legal traditions – the Roman tradition, which had laid the foundation for strong monarchical power, and the German one, which the principles of self-government and freedom dated from [9].

A major success in English medieval studies was the opposite, extremely Germanistic, concept of the origins and development of Anglo-Saxon law proposed by John Kemble (1807-1857). His six-volume "Codex Diplomaticus Saxonici" (1839-1848) contains 1500 documents written over the period from the late 6th century to the Norman conquest. On the strength of these sources, Kemble wrote his major work, "The Saxons in England". Kemble was the first English medieval studies scholar to espouse community theory, maintaining that during the period of their settlement in England the Anglo-Saxons' entire social system relied on communal land tenure.

Kemble associated their transition to feudalism with the fact that most of the unsettled communal lands ended up in the hands of magnates. The bulk of the population had to take land parcels from them, which drew them into dependence and deprived them of liberty. At the same time, Kemble was one of the first historians to note the slowness and gradualness of this process in England and saw in that a distinctive characteristic of Anglo-Saxon development compared with continental one, although his explanation of it was wrong and purely nationalistic [10].

Kemble's Germanistic concept had a major impact on English medieval studies in the 2nd half of the 19th century – particularly, on the representative of the historical-legal strand of this later period W. Stubbs. Stubbs maintained that the social order of ancient Germans, described by Caesar and Tacitus, was common to the subsequent history of not only England but Germany, France, and Spain in the early

medieval period. Stubbs saw the primary merit of this order in the existence of communal organization with ancient Germans, democratic institutions of local self-government associated with it, as well as the presence, from the very beginning, of limitations imposed on the monarchy by the "national council". In accordance with the English Whig tradition, Stubbs brought to the fore "limited nature" of royal authority with ancient Germans – not its "strong stateness".

Subsequently, destiny started to send different German people separate ways. All of them experienced a transition from "personal to territorial organization", which Stubbs construes as the process of feudalization. However, in England the process was, in his view, much slower than with continental Germans, and ancient institutions perdured up until the Norman Conquest. He considered the Norman Conquest a great boon. It was in the process of Anglo-Norman synthesis that the entire subsequent constitutional history of England would develop. During the first period following the Norman Conquest, it was about balancing between the "popular freedom" of the Anglo-Saxon tradition and the "administrative pressure" of strong Norman statehood, which at times bordered on tyranny. "The Great Charter", which Stubbs, just like Hallam and Freeman, considered the first English constitution, amplified the meaning of the principle of "popular freedom". Of even greater importance in this regard were the "baronial war" of the mid-13th century and the activity of Simon de Montfort. At the end of the 13th century, royal authority was mindful of the lessons learned from this struggle between "freedom" and "tyranny", and during the reign of Edward I the synthesis of the two systems finally resulted in the creation of the parliament. In the emergence of this institution Stubbs saw not the exclusiveness of English history but the overall logicalness of the social-political development of most Western European nations during that historical period [11].

Having thoroughly analyzed the process of the genesis of feudalism, Stubbs came to the conclusion that feudalism is a particular social system that formed in and dominated early medieval societies of continental Europe, and its primary characteristic was the system of nominal holdings and vassal-liege relations, via which all landowners were bound to each other through service and patronage obligations. It was this feudalism system, according to Stubbs, that was brought over to English soil as a result of the conquest.

A major place in 19th century English medieval studies is reserved for the historical-economic strand. The historical-economic strand emerged in English medieval studies at the end of the 60s, and in the 80-90s it became highly popular. In England, just like in Germany, the major social-political factor to bring this new strand into being was the exacerbation of capitalism's social contradictions, which demanded that bourgeois ideologists seek a means to overcome them and prevent a brewing social explosion. In this regard, T. Rogers wrote in 1888: "With every passing day, I get more and more convinced that our time's political and social problems are increasingly becoming economic, that those who want to facilitate the maintenance of grandeur and further progress of nations must aspire towards sorting out for themselves the economic aspect of those problems, which are pressurizing us, and look into the issue of the best ways to ensure a harmony of various interests on an egalitarian basis" [12]. The founder of the historical-economic strand in England was Thorold Rogers (1823-1890). Rogers wrote numerous works on the economic history of England. His primary work is his monumental eight-volume study into the history of agriculture and prices, spanning the period between the 13th and the 18th centuries [13]. The major facts and inferences of this study were summarized by Rogers in his more popular work "Six Centuries of Work and Wages: The History of English Labor", which covers the period between the 13th and the 19th centuries [14]. In 1888, they published his lectures on the economic history of England, delivered in Oxford, "The Economic Interpretation of History". T. Rogers's last major work, "The Industrial and Commercial History of England", came out after his death already [15].

At the origins of the special study of the agrarian history of medieval England stood the peculiar figure of F. Seebohm. He earned acclaim for his comparatively late works on the agrarian history of medieval England and Wales, and, above all, his book "The English Village Community", which made a stir at its time [16].

F. Seebohm belonged to the historical-economic strand. In the foreword to "The English Village Community", he directly calls himself an "explorer of economic history" and asserts that a correct apprehension of English economic theory should be viewed as the "genuine basis of the entire practical policy for the future". Calling for "strict economic research", which as if implied full scientific objectiveness, Seebohm, however, states right in the first lines of his book that he undertook the study with a particular political interest – to learn the meaning of the ancient order of things with its "communal organization" and "equality" as a key to the proper comprehension of the new order of things with its contrasting individual freedom and inequality. Seebohm stresses that a particular way of

resolving this historical problem should define further paths in the evolution of the modern world – towards freedom and democracy or "materialism" and "communism" [16, pp. 5].

Although Seebohm's book is called "The English Village Community", it is resolutely aimed against classic Mark theory by Maurer and Maine. At the first glance, Seebohm provides his solution to the problem of the genesis of feudalism as applied to Western Europe as a whole in the spirit of the theory of German-Roman synthesis. However, he especially persistently stresses continuity in the evolution of society from the late Roman Empire to the Middle Ages. In his view, "German heirs of Roman owners of villas, became, in turn, owners of medieval estates, whereas "coloni", "liti", and "tributarii" must, without any substantial changes, have turned where they stayed on the same soil into the community of serfs – that is, the outcome of the conquest was just a change of masters without any substantial changes in the organization of land tenure and the nature of land property. Seebohm, in essence, is inclined toward a Romanistic interpretation of the issue – whereby he sort of dismantles the problem of the genesis of feudalism as a new social order. Seebohm applies this common concept of the genesis of feudalism almost without reservation to England.

Seebohm did not deny the existence in Dorian and even Post-Roman Britain of the free community and its perduring in the West of the country during the medieval period as well. However, he associated it ethnically only with Celts, while, economically, with the most primitive level of a half-nomadic economy. Whereas starting from the time of their settlement in England, Anglo-Saxons always had, according to Seebohm, just the village community of serfs, which corresponded to sedentary farming. The community of this kind mainly perdured in the Eastern, the most developed, part of the country. The village community of serfs, which was part of the manor, had constantly been streamlined until it turned into the English medieval village community, which consisted of peasants who were under the authority of a lord, held the land at his will, and had no right to inherit land parcels. During the Middle Ages, this community slowly yet unswervingly evolutionized in the direction of personal emancipation of its members, which, in the end, led to a "new" order of things and in conjunction with this the liquidation of the community. Whereas the free Celtic tribal community, due to the stagnancy and slowness of the economic development of Celtic nations, almost did not change during the Middle Ages. It always stood on the path of public progress and establishing a "new order" [17].

Seebohm's work at issue was the first to give manorial theory, which his predecessors, English historians-economists, addressed only generally, a more complete embodiment and forcible argumentation as applied to the 11th-14th centuries. F. Seebohm shares with P.G. Vinogradov the "honor" of creating this theory. Relying upon a wide range of various manorial sources and state cadasters, Seebohm came to the conclusion that over the period between the 9th and the 14th centuries England was dominated by the "manorial system of the economy" – the entire country was divided into economically isolated manorial complexes which relied on the community of serfs and lived on the labor of dependent peasants who were part of this community. Seebohm sketched in wide strokes the typical, in his opinion, structure of these manors, which is the division of land in them into two major parts, demesne and villein, demonstrated the nature of manorial production, having emphasized its natural-economic basics, and described the village community of serfs in that period. He also traced the interrelations between the manor and the community, placing a major emphasis, in the spirit of his concept, on the personal dependence of serf commoners on the feudal and the considerable burden of conscriptions they had to deal with. Seebohm's manorial theory, just like patrimonial theory in general, was quite lop-sided. It mainly relied on material for large, predominantly church, manors and fit under this type all patrimonial complexes in medieval England, ignoring, in particular, the role of small patrimonial estates and free peasants in its agrarian development. Seebohm schematized in this way agrarian relations in the 11th-14th centuries and subsumed them under one single type without considering local and temporal characteristics. Yet, his characterization of a large feudal, especial church, patrimonial estate, proved, in large part, scientifically valid, as subsequent research revealed. Seebohm's biasedness, however, went beyond the one-sided selection of sources, when he examined the issue of the genesis of feudalism. He tried to examine and assess the agrarian evolution of England from the Roman times from the standpoint of manorial theory [18].

The fourth strand in English medieval studies in the 2nd half of the 18th century was cultural-historical synthesis. Especially in the last third of the 19th century, along with the augmentation of the specialization of historical studies, there was a trend towards the creation of a more complete synthetic picture of English history from the earliest times. The first attempt was made by John Richard Green. In 1874, Green released "A Short History of the English People" in three volumes [19; 20]. Later on, he considerably expanded it with new material, and in

1877-1880 he released "A History of the English People" in four volumes, which went on to be republished in multiple editions. Besides, J.R. Green created several more specialized works, but it was his first popular set of works that he earned his acclaim for. Green sought to illustrate in them the major aspects of the economic, social, political, and cultural development of England from the Roman times to 1815 and establish the interrelationship between various aspects of life in society. He aspired to provide not the "history of English kings and English conquerors, but that of the English people", and cover England's political, social, and spiritual progress, in which the "history of the people is reflected the most".

Another specimen of applying the idea of cultural-historical synthesis to the history of England is the six-volume collective work "Social England" by H.D. Traill and J.S. Mann. This work covers the history of England from the Dorian times to 1885. It aims to examine, mainly, various aspects of the country's public and social life, in which the authors include: 1) civil organization; 2) religion; 3) science and natural science; 4) literature; 5) art; 6) commerce and industry; 7) mores. Particular chapters inside each period, which are dedicated to various aspects of "social history", are written by different authors – experts on the issue. Among them are a number of major historians of the time – F.W. Maitland, F.Y. Powell, H. Hall, H.D. Traill and J.S. Mann themselves, O.M. Edwards, and others. Throughout the work, certain common principles are observed, which are set out by H.D. Traill in a vast foreword to the entire publication. He points out that out of all possible ways to provide an account of England's history, the authors chose the one that handles the nation's history as a social organism – not as a political one or a state among states [21].

Written in the spirit of concepts by Stubbs and Green, this large collective work can be quite rightfully considered the consummation of the works of several generations of English bourgeois historians of the Victorian age, which were dedicated to working out a national-liberal interpretation of the history of England.

Thus, English medieval studies in the 2nd half of the 19th century had specific distinctive characteristics. There were 4 clear-cut major strands within English medieval studies, which addressed in depth issues of the community and the genesis of capitalism through the example of England and the history of Germans and other peoples of the early Middle Ages. Furthermore, on the whole, the overall trend in the development of the entire English historical science in the 2nd half of the 19th century led to a substantial expansion in terms of topics it would bring up – particularly, the study of social and economic history, the search for empirical methods for research, and the discovery of new kinds and types of sources.

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