*Labour Services in the Thirteenth Century**

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The re-imposition of labour services in the "buoyant" economy of the thirteenth century is perhaps the most puzzling episode in the transformation of the English peasantry from serfdom to freedom. Much of the attention has focused on the work of M. M. Postan (1937) who documented changes in peasant status, measured in terms of labour services performed on the demesne of manorial lords. Postan found that beginning in the twelfth century, labour services were commuted for fixed-money payments and demesne lands were leased out; in the thirteenth century, lords re-instituted labour services and resumed direct farming; and from the second half of the fourteenth century through the fifteenth century, commutation and demesne leasing occurred on a vast scale. Manorial areas in France, west Germany, northern Italy and the Low Countries were also characterized by commuted labour services and demesne leasing in the twelfth century. The return to labour services and direct farming in the thirteenth century, however, was unique to England. Postan's initial assessment was that the English reversion was extensive in scope, constituting a country-wide trend. Subsequently he modified his view to suggest a more modest reversal, perhaps only a slowing down for a few decades of the "movement away from the demesne". [1] A related finding is that the return to labour services was more symbolic than

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[1] Postan (1972, 96). See also Postan (1955a, 316) where he directly alters his earlier conclusions:

"When Marc Bloch made his plans to come to England in 1939 to work together with us on the contrast between English and French agrarian institutions, both he and I were absolutely certain that there was a contrast: that whereas in France and West Germany labour services and the domanial economy had almost completely disappeared by the beginning of the XIIIth century, in England they were still intact. Now it is this contrast that we have now begun to have doubts about. It so happens that the monastic estates for which we have the best evidence contrast most with the estates abroad, but episcopal estates and two or three secular estates about which we know more, now, and even the closer analysis of some monastic estates, suggest that

real. Hatcher (1981, 11) reports that thirteenth-century reeves' and bailiffs' accounts show "only a portion, and often a small portion, of the services which the lord could exact were actually performed." Hilton (1983.32) concludes that "landlords had tended to maintain the theoretical apparatus of the labour-service system, organizing various forms of temporary commutation while in practice using hired labour for most of the work done on the demesne".

Our purpose is to explain why - in a period of increasing population and expanding markets (including markets for wage labour) - England experienced a reversion back to labour services in the thirteenth century. In contrast to existing explanations, we also explain why the reversion was unique to England, why the magnitude of the reversion was small, and why the nature of the re-imposed labour services was often "theoretical".

1. Existing Explanations of the Return to Labour Services

Current explanations of the return to labour services in the thirteenth century focus exclusively on the profitability to manorial lords of alternative choices on the demesne. The explanations can be classified into two groups: explanations based on farm profits in general and explanations specific to the effects of inflation.

Postan (1966, 581-87; 1972, 106-111) argues that poor economic conditions in the twelfth century motivated lords to lease out their demesne. Improved conditions in the thirteenth century resulted in a return to direct farming. The connection betwen this argument and the chronology of labour services is problematic. Demesne leasing required the commutation of labour services into a money payment when the land was parcelled out to individual peasants as no land remained on which labour services could be employed. When manors were leased as a whole, however, the connection to labour services disappears.[2] The explanation for the thirteenth-century return to direct farming requires an additional argument for re-instituting labour services, given the lord's alternative of using wage labour. Postan does not put forward such an argument. Moreover, his contention that the twelfth century witnessed relatively poor economic conditions has been disputed,[3] and the theoretical relationship between farm profits and direct cultivation in the thirteenth century is unclear.[4] Postan's argument for improved conditions in the thirteenth century rests heavily on data that show increasing agricultural prices relative to wages. He interprets these data to imply increasing farm profits. Since these data could also be explained by declining

over a greater part of England, possibly in the great majority of estates, labour services did not play an important part in the 13th century."
For other references to the small size of the thirteenth century reversion see Duby (1968, 261-4); Harvey (1973, 75); Hatcher (1981).

2 Faith (1994).

3 Miller (1971).

4 Reed and Anderson (1973, 134-5); Fenoaltea (1975b, 693-4).

labour productivity, Postan's conclusion requires holding constant the productivity of land and labour, a view inconsistent with his own characterization of the thirteenth-century as exhibiting diminishing returns to labour caused by population growth.[5] As a result, it is not possible to infer an increase in thirteenth-century farm profits (as opposed to land values) from price data alone. In sum, Postan's argument is unsatisfactory for two reasons. First, it is primarily an argument about demesne leasing versus direct cultivation, not about labour services versus commutation. Second, it rests on questionable assertions about movements in farming profitability.

Douglass North and Robert Thomas (1971, 796-7; 1973, ch. 6) contend that a "striking inflation" beginning at the end of the twelfth century caused the value of demesne leases to decline. At the same time population growth coupled with diminishing returns caused the value of demesne land to increase. North and Thomas assert that the leases, fixed by custom, could not be re-negotiated. In reaction the manorial lords were forced to return to direct cultivation as the only choice available to them for capturing the economic value of their land. North and Thomas attribute the decision to farm the demesne with labour services (as opposed to wage labour) to the depreciating effect of inflation on the real value of commutation payments relative to the value of labour services. [6]

Many aspects of the North and Thomas explanation have been criticized on historical and methodological grounds. [7] The following empirical problems are sufficient to reject their argument for the return to demesne farming and to cast doubt on their explanation for the re-imposition of labour services. Harvey (1973, 61-2) has pointed out that demesne leases were not fixed by custom. There is considerable evidence of short-term leasing in the thirteenth century. The leases were made short for the express purpose of

[5] Postan (1966, 550-9, 563-5).

[6] A more detailed exposition of this argument begins with the custom of the manor which specified that the serf owed the manorial lord either labour services or a money payment (commutation). The lord had the right to choose which of these alternatives to receive. In the thirteenth century, inflation reduced the value of the commutation payment, but diminishing returns reduced the value of labour services. North and Thomas assert that the inflation effect was larger than the diminishing returns effect, resulting in the rational choice of labour services over commutation. An empirical test of this argument involves the comparison of the commutation payment with the wage that would have to be paid if commutation were chosen instead of labour services. If the commutation payment more than covered the cost of wage labour, then labour services would be rejected. If the inequality went in the other direction, then commutation would be rejected.

[7] See Fenoaltea (1975a) who savages North and Thomas on logical, factual, and methodological grounds; and Field (1981) who confines himself to methodological concerns. See North (1981, 129-31) for a reaction to his critics. For a critique of Field's methodology see Basu, Jones, and Schlicht (1987).

allowing frequent re-negotiation in response to changing economic circumstances. The evidence on the relative value of commutation versus labour services is mixed[8] and difficult to assess. Attempts to evaluate the two forms of payment by the simple comparison of wages with commutation are complicated by the expectation of a higher labour productivity for wage labour than for peasants performing labour services; wage labourers faced the threat of dismissal as a deterrent to poor work effort; peasants performing labour services had a maximum incentive to shirk. Harvey (1973, 74) remarks that thirteenth-century "landlords clearly found it difficult to exact efficient labour services, and they were used only for the most unskilled work of the manorial demesne: the threshing, the ditching, the muck-carting, rather than the ploughing, the sowing or the keeping of animals." Duby (1968, 269) provides a quantitative illustration: "On the great Thuringian demesne the work done by a man subject to labour services was set as half, or even one-third, of that done by a paid worker." Thus even if commutation would pay for a smaller number of labourers than would be generated by the alternative choice of labour services, the higher productivity of the wage-labour employed could more than compensate for the decreased quantity of workers.[9] There is no empirical foundation for arguments that inflation-driven wage rates explain the return to labour services.

Stephano Fenoaltea (1975b) argues that the thirteenth-century reversion to demesne cultivation was a consequence of the onset of diminishing returns together with peasant resistance to experiment and innovation. Diminishing returns raised the net benefits of innovative activity in which the lords held an absolute advantage. To exploit this advantage, the lords resumed direct cultivation of their demesne. Both the extent of innovation and whether it was of the kind that necessitated direct supervision of the work force, however, can be questioned.[10] More to the point, contrary to Fenoaltea's fundamental assumption of peasant resistance to innovation, there is

[8] See Postan (1955b, 41-2) as opposed to Harvey (1973, 72-3).

[9] A bias in the other direction follows from the fact that money wages did not always constitute the whole of the payments made to hired labour. Yet another complication involves the cost of provisions (food, sheaves, etc.) to which tenants performing labour services were customarily entitled.

[10] For example, Hilton (1965, 213) summarizes his findings on agricultural investment, normally associated with technological change, as follows: "...it would appear that when land owners seemed to be most directly interested in production, that is, in the thirteenth century... the idea of reinvesting profit for the purpose of increasing production seems to have been present in few minds if any. In practice the minimum rather than the maximum seems to have been spent on those goods which go towards capital formation."
Postan, (1972, 44) finds that what innovation did occur was far greater in the management and arranging of fields than in the "implements employed in cultivation, or in the actual process of planting, manuring, weeding and reaping."

evidence to suggest that peasants played a substantial role in initiating agrarian change.[11] Fenoaltea's specific explanation of the re-imposition of labour services follows North and Thomas. Fenoaltea (1975b, 709) speculates that the thirteenth-century inflation "could make labor time more valuable than its customary money equivalent".

P.D.A. Harvey (1973) offers a variant of the North and Thomas analysis. He argues that "once rising prices had introduced a measure of long-term change into the local economy, making the established farms palpably unrealistic, it was very difficult to discover what new levels of rent would be fair to landlord and lessee alike." (pp. 62-3) In response to these negotiation costs, lords chose direct cultivation over leasing. Harvey also addresses the question of England's uniqueness: "the rise of prices was probably a purely English phenomenon, and it would satisfactorily explain why the adoption of demesne farming was a development peculiar to England." (p.61) His explanation for the reversion to labour services is the same as that put forward by North and Thomas and Fenoaltea.

Harvey's account of the reversion in the thirteenth century is unconvincing for several reasons.

(1) Although it is reasonable to accept the proposition that inflation increased negotiation costs, it does not follow that these costs became prohibitively expensive such that leasing was discarded in favour of direct management of estates. [12]

(2) Inflation in the thirteenth century was not confined to England.[13]

(3) Data limitations prevent an empirical test of the proposition that inflation made labour services more attractive than wage labour.

(4) Harvey's analysis implies that the reversion in the thirteenth century, like the inflation, should have been economy-wide in scope, and that there should have been a dramatic readjustment back to demesne leasing after

[11] Harvey (1989).

[12] For example, Duby (1968, 319) offers an illustration of versatility in farm leases at the monastery of St. Martin de Tournai. Not only did the monks of St. Martin require that the farm should be paid partially with cereals but "they also required their lessees and specified in the contract that the remaining sums should be calculated with respect to the market value of the currency and not merely to its legal value: a simple precaution against monetary instability."

[13] For France, Duby (1968, 238) notes that "in a period of continuously rising prices... the real value of money rents fell constantly in the thirteenth century." Boutruche (1970, 104-106) discusses a thirteenth-century rise in prices in the Western European manorial economy in general. Hamilton (1960, 146) states that "if the fragmentary prices collected for France by Vicomte d'Avenel... are accurate, it seems that the price level was around 14 per cent higher in the last decade of the thirteenth century than in the first quarter of the century and averaged about 16 per cent higher in 1301-1350 than in 1291-1300. Again if d'Avenel's statistics are reliable, French prices were about one-third higher on the average in 1301-1350 than in 1201-1225."

prices stabilized in the mid-thirteenth century. The evidence does not support these implications.

A significant feature of the existing explanations for labour services in the thirteenth century is that the arguments are advanced in two stages. The first stage explains the reversion to direct cultivation by manorial lords; the second explains the use of labour services on the re-claimed demesne. A different emphasis could reverse this sequence. Demesne farming does not necessarily imply labour services (given the availability of wage labour), but labour services require demesne farming. Thus increased benefits associated with labour services in the thirteenth century could explain their re-imposition, which in turn could explain the return to demesne farming. An argument along these lines is found in Harvey (1973, 77) who points out that it was "to the landlord's long-term advantage to have his villeins render labour services rather than money rents since this helped to identify them as unfree tenants." For Harvey this "long-term advantage" is part of a secondary argument for the return to labour services.[14] For us it is the basis of our primary argument.

2. A Legal Explanation of the Return to Labour Services

We propose a 'legal explanation' of the return to labour services and demesne farming in the thirteenth century.[15] Economic conditions at the end of the twelfth century dictated an increase in the size of the payment from serf to manorial lord, accomplished in large part through the imposition of heavy exactions in the form of "unassessed customs"[16] (payments received for "exercise of lordship"), rather than rent increases on peasant holdings. In England unassessed customs could *only* be levied on unfree tenants, and a prime court test for unfreedom was the obligation to perform regular labour services (week-work) on the lord's demesne.[17] Thus manorial lords were

[14] The complete argument is the following. Inflation increased the financial needs of manorial lords, thereby motivating them to press for increased payments from their villeins. The return to labour services lowered the cost of collection. In this way inflation "indirectly" caused the re-imposition of labour services.

[15] Property rights over this explanation are not well defined. Important aspects of the argument are found in Harvey and are cited in the previous section. Most of the essential elements, but not our conclusions, can be found in Hilton (1949, 1965, 1973, 1975, 1983). In any event, since the logic of the "legal explanation" will be shown to lead to views at considerable variance with current orthodoxy, we take responsibility for it.

[16] The most important of these payments were merchet (payment on the marriage of a daughter or son), heriot (death duty), leyrwite (a fine for unchastity), the annual aid or tallage, profits from manorial courts, payment for the exercise of rights on the commons, and profits arising from the monopoly of the mill. See Hilton (1975, 231-39).

[17] The classic legal reference is Pollock and Maitland (1895). See also Vinogradoff (1892); Poole (1946); Hyams (1980).

motivated to re-impose labour services for the purpose of legally establishing villein status (or of preventing peasants from establishing free status[18]) and thereby lowering the cost of extracting income from unfree tenants. The argument is unique to England. Only in England was there a connection between labour services and the right to collect unassessed customs.[19] The argument is consistent with the small size of the reversion: there were other court tests of unfreedom,[20] and the threat of peasant resistance through instigating costly legal proceedings could be expected to vary across manors and regions. The argument is also consistent with the "theoretical" nature of thirteenth-century labour services. What mattered to the lord was the establishment of villein status, and for that the obligation to perform labour services, not actual performance, was the legal test. The alternative view that labour services provided a low-cost means of producing crops on the demesne would seem to imply fully utilized services.

Why did the size of the peasant's payment to the lord increase in the thirteenth century? Why was the mechanism for the increased payment primarily through unassessed customs rather than a re-negotiation of the commutation payment?

[18] See Hilton (1965, 182) for specific emphasis on this aspect: "lords took care to prevent the permanent or long-term commutation of services into money rent from becoming a way to personal freedom."

[19] The French case is the most directly supportive of our argument. Hilton (1983) remarks as follows. "[A] special feature [of thirteenth century England] was that the principal hallmark of servility was... the performance of heavy labour services... On the Continent, the subordination to their lords of both *vileins* and serfs was primarily signified by their obligation to pay *formariage, mainmorte* and *chevage.* " (p. 20) While in England only peasants legally defined as villeins owed such obligations as merchet, heriot, tallage, etc., in France these payments were "required not only of serfs, but, by the twelfth century, of *vileins* of free status who were subjects of the *seigneurie banale.* This was a form of jurisdictional power which resembled English manorial jurisdiction, but subordination to the *ban* could be achieved without juridical selfdom" (p: 17) In a broader comparison, Hilton (1973, 60) observes a "common pattern of dependence" in thirteenth-century England and in most of France, western Germany, Spain and in many parts of Italy.

"In most cases the peasants who were subject to these widespread forms of obligation were regarded as unfree in terms of public law, and were excluded either entirely, or as regards their relations with their lords, from the courts of public law.... The three most common obligations, often used as a test of servility, were: a restriction on marriage outside the lordship, other than with the lord's permission; the right of the lord to take part or the whole of the tenant's chattels at death, thus emphasizing that an unfree person had no rights of ownership in property; and the payment of an annual tax, the *capitagium* or *chevage*, as a recognition of the tenant's perpetual subordination to the lord."

[20] Hilton (1965,180) remarks that merchet was "perhaps the most frequent test of unfreedom in the thirteenth century."

A simple bargaining model suggests that the size of the payment from peasant to manorial lord depended on the value of customary land, the monopoly power of the lord, and the cost of enforcing payment. Increasing land values, reduced competition over customary tenants, and declining costs of collection all imply increasing payments. Within this framework of analysis, the most obvious cause of heavier exactions in the thirteenth century was the increase in the value of land caused by population growth and a resulting increase in the labour-to-land ratio.[21] An alternative view is that the lords were driven to increase the size of the payment by adverse circumstances in the form of bad harvests, inflation, and the financial demands of the crown.[22] The bargaining model assumes: income maximization on the part of lords and serfs. The alternative analysis appears to be based on the notion of "satisficing": that lords only exhorted their peasants to a maximum when they faced external economic pressures, as opposed to maximum extortion all of the time. We find the traditional demographic explanation for increasing payments in the thirteenth century easier to accept, but we do not reject the satisficing alternative.[23]

Unfree peasants in the thirteenth century paid increased exactions in the following forms: entry fines collected when a new tenant took possession, increased labour services, and unassessed customs. Noticeably absent from this list is an increase in the commutation payment. As Harvey (1973, 72) remarks, "it is difficult to see why an authoritarian doubling or trebling of labour services should not be accompanied by an equivalent increase in the alternative money rent." Rather than explaining the observed forms of payment strictly in terms of the preferences of manorial lords, we argue that the alternatives chosen reflected the interests of the peasants. Entry fines, increased labour services, and unassessed customs provided greater security of tenure than would have been the case with an increase in money rents on customary tenements.

"In law the villein had no right to property. Both his land and his chattels belonged to the lord who could resume them at will and which in fact he resumed or pretended to resume at the end of each tenancy."[24] In actual fact, villeins enjoyed significant rights over property through the custom of the manor.[25] Hatcher (1981) provides evidence that thirteenth-century villeins paid less than market value for customary land, and that over the century, the

[21] Postan (1966, 608).

[22] Dyer (1989, 37).

[23] Note that these explanations are not mutually exclusive. It is curious that the satisficing argument is unique to the explanation of increasing payments in the thirteenth century. Declining payments in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are analyzed assuming maximization in a bargaining framework. See for example Dyer (1989, 194); Britnell (1990).

[24] Postan (1960, 112-13).

[25] Hatcher (1981, 8-10).

value of land increased more than the level of payments - the property right over customary land was shared between the lord and peasant. The source of the villein's right of ownership was the specification in the custom of the manor that money rents on customary land were fixed.[26] Money rents were common to both customary and demesne land. What distinguished the two was that money rents on customary land were inflexible (as were money rents on free tenures), while money rents on demesne land varied with market conditions. Our contention is that variable money rents on customary holdings would have made this land indistinguishable from the demesne. The final outcome could have been a transfer to the lord of exclusive property rights over customary land. To avoid this result, peasants resisted any change in the size of the commutation payment. They preferred to pay, in effect, higher money rents in the form of unassessed customs, which were interpreted as a tax, rather than explicit rent on landed holdings. The same argument holds for entry fines which were conceived of as a payment for the lord's permission to take possession of land rather than as a payment for the land itself. Similarly, the re-imposition of certain kinds of labour services was justified "as a subject's duty rather than tenant's rent."[27] Even where intensification of labour services was interpreted as an increase in rent, the peasant's security of tenure was not threatened. Labour rents were specific to customary holdings. Therefore increases in labour rents, in contrast to increases in money rents, did not blur the distinction between customary and demesne land.

An implication of our "legal explanation" is that labour services constituted an efficient method of securing customary holdings. The relative scarcity of land in the thirteenth century made property rights over customary land particularly valuable. Thus thirteenth-century peasants may well have deemed the increased security afforded by payments in the form of unassessed customs to more than compensate for inefficiencies generated by the return to labour services.

A second implication is that the thirteenth-century "descent into villeinage" was "chosen" by the peasants rather than the lords. Through their refusal to re-negotiate commutation payments, peasants forced rent increases to be transformed into unassessed customs. Given the legal peculiarities of England - that unassessed customs could only be levied on unfree tenants, and that the obligation to perform labour dues was an important court test of unfreedom - lords were motivated to prove their peasants unfree by re-imposing the obligation of labour services. This in turn necessitated a return to demesne cultivation.

[26] A modern-day analogy is the partial transfer of property rights from landlord to tenant as a result of rent control regulation.

[27] Hilton (1983, 13).

3. Bargaining Between Lords and Peasants

Critical to our analysis is the view that manorial custom reflected an underlying bargaining process. In Hilton's (1949, 53) words, "it must be realized that manorial custom was not fixed. It was in fact a shifting compromise between peasant resistance based on the mutual solidarity produced by common interests and a common routine of agriculture on the one hand, and the lord's claims on the other, more or less urgent as they might be, and backed up by more or less political and military power." The extent and force of peasant resistance is described in detail in thirteenth-century court cases and has been well documented.[28] Peasants claimed free tenure in the royal courts. They left the manor to escape fines. They remained on their holdings but refused, often collectively and often violently, to accede to the lord's demands. As an illustration of lord/peasant "bargaining", Razi (1983) has detailed struggles between the Abbots of Halesowen and their tenants. A sample of this evidence is presented below.

1273: The Abbot and the canons obtained permission from Edward I to fortify certain newly-built rooms within the abbey in "order to defend themselves against their tenants' fury". (p.160)

1275: a royal inquest initiated by tenants "found that the abbot and convent of the house of Halesowen increased the customs and services 'greater than they were accustomed to do in the time of King Henry'". (p. 160)

1276: "A writ was issued directed to the sheriff of Shropshire 'on part of the tenants of the abbot of Halesowen', requiring the sheriff to make an inquisition by jury into the wrongs complained of by the tenants. The inquest was held in June 1276 and drew up a list of customs and services which the customary tenants rendered in the time of King John before the foundation of the abbey. The jury ended their statement by declaring that 'the said King John granted the manor subject to the same services by which the lands were held of him.'" (p. 160)

1278: The abbot responded to the above legal action in court, "and in the plea roll of the easter term of the King's Bench in 1278 it was recorded that the abbot was allowed to go *sine die* because his tenants failed to appear to prosecute their writ against him."

Spring of 1278: the tenants "assaulted the abbot and a group of canons from the abbey near Beoley, possibly on their way back from Westminster to Halesowen." (p. 161)

December 1279: Roger Ketel (leader of tenants' resistance) "was fined five pounds in the manor court to be paid in five years. Despite the defeat in the royal court and the huge fine Roger Ketel had to pay, he did not give in, and did not pay a penny." (pp. 161-2)

1282: "...an armed group of canons and servants from the abbey seized Roger

[28] See for example Hilton (1949, 1965, 1973).

Ketel, John Edrich of Cakemore (who like Roger was a rich and obstinate villein) and another villein whose name is not given, and put them into the stocks. Alice, the wife of John Edrich, probably tried to resist her husband's arrest and as a result she was beaten and molested. The violence used by the canons and their servants caused the death of Alice, who was pregnant, and of Roger Ketel." (p. 162)

1292: Tenants initiated suit "before the royal justices in the Shropshire county court... The abbot and the canons were acquitted since they had acted against rebellious tenants. The canons had not used arms against the tenants, but according to the jurymen only axes and staves, which any person travelling through the countryside was allowed to carry." (p. 163)

It appears reasonable to conclude that peasants had sufficient bargaining power to affect both the size and form of payments. But because the peasants often lost in court,[29] it might be argued that their struggles are evidence of negligible bargaining power. This misses the point. All that is required is that peasants could (and did) inflict significant costs on manorial lords in the bargaining process. The relevant test is to compare the realized level of extortion with what would have occurred in the absence of resistance. In the case of thirteenth-century Halesowen, Razi (p. 46) concludes that "the peasants' resistance was not in vain, as the abbey had to be content with what it had achieved between 1243 and 1285. The court rolls show clearly that for a very long time after this date, not only were rents, services and other seigneurial exactions not raised any more, but also that the abbey had to lower fines and amercements considerably."

4 Concluding Remarks

Our explanation of the return to labour services and demesne farming in thirteenth-century England differs from the existing literature in fundamental ways. Peasants rather than manorial lords forced the return to labour services. The direction of causality runs from labour services to demesne farming, not the reverse. The analysis stresses the problem for the lords of capturing the increasing value of customary land as opposed to demesne land.

These differences should not obscure an underlying continuity with the literature. The exogenous source of change in our explanation is population increase resulting in rising land values (Postan). A critical component of our analysis is that there was bargaining between lord and peasant rather than unilateral exploitation on the part of the lord (Hilton). The bargaining took place within a legal environment in which labour services lowered collection costs for lords and indirectly provided increased security of tenure for peasants - thus placing our analysis in a 'transactions cost' setting (North and

[29] For an example of successful litigation see Carpenter (1992, 19-20).

Thomas, Harvey, and Fenoaltea). In a more specific context, our analysis supports Hatcher's (1981, 25) conclusion that "land shortage rather than unfreedom was the root cause of poverty before the mid-fourteenth century." His relative ranking of peasant alternatives in the thirteenth-century is the following: free tenure on large holdings was preferred to villeinage on customary holdings, but villeinage was preferred to a leasehold on the lord's demesne or being a 'free' small holder/wage labourer. We have argued that the return to labour services protected peasants from becoming landless tenants on the demesne or wage labourers.

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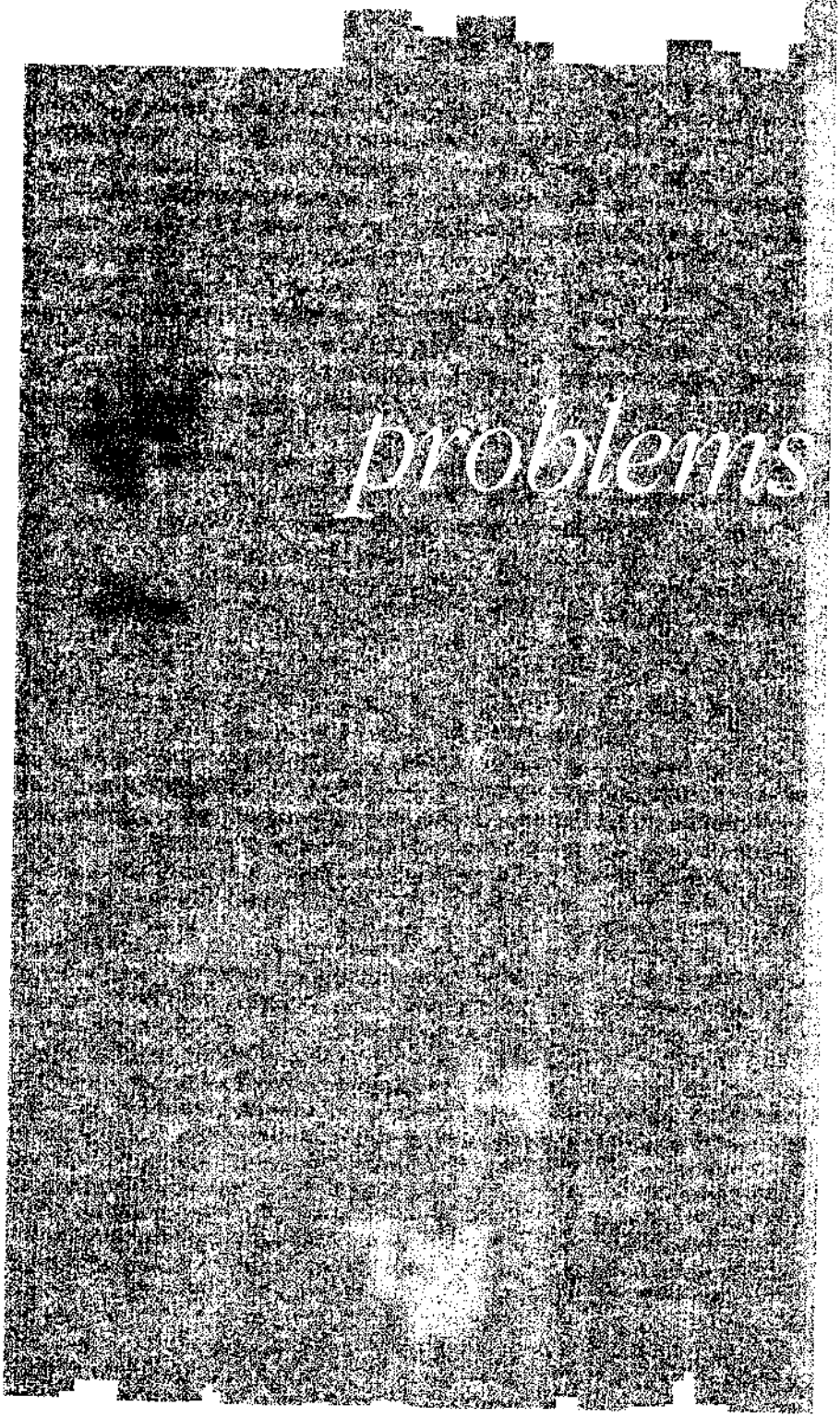
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