



Postgraduate/Distance Learning Assignment coversheet & feedback form

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For completion by the student:		
Student Name: José Antonio López Sabatel		
Module code: HPHI7003 Module title: Research Methodology for Historians	Student ID number: 1903071	Educational support needs: Yes/ <u>No</u>
Module tutor: Janet Burton		
Assignment due date: 25 Jan 2020		
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Assignment Mark

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It is difficult to add something new to what has already been said and written about Marc Bloch because Marc Bloch was a historian, medievalist, researcher, prolific writer, professor, academic, co-founder of *Annales* journal, father of six children, decorated veteran of two world wars, French citizen, Jew in territory occupied by the Nazis, regional leader of the French Resistance and national hero. This historian who achieved great national and international recognition in life¹ was also greatly honoured after his death as evidenced in the communications held on the occasion of celebrating the centenary of his birth in 1886.²

Perhaps Bloch is the best possible starting point for the budding medievalist when approaching the study of feudal Europe, especially, as regards its social and rural history and, for this reason, it is so pertinent to carry out a detailed analysis of his bibliography and his legacy in the subsequent historiographic production. After all, here is where Bernard de Chartres' quote "We are like dwarves standing on the shoulders of giants"³ becomes ever so important because all knowledge in general and the historical in particular is formed as a long chain of multiple links that give meaning to its existence, making the awareness of the preceding ones, essential to understand the whole as a whole.

A strong link in this chain is embodied by Bloch and the School that he co-founded whose original purpose was to offer an alternative to the dominant historiographic practice, overcoming the narrow political, diplomatic and military approach in favour of other fields of research by applying to them methodologies from diverse disciplines such as sociology, demography, geography, linguistics, archaeology and economics. *Annales*,

¹ Maybe the best example of this with respect to the Anglo-Saxon world is found in the following words of Eric Hobsbawm: "When Marc Bloch came and talked to us in Cambridge –I can still remember this as the great moment it then seemed it was –he was presented to us as the greatest living medievalist, quite rightly I think", Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (New York: The New Press, 1997) p. 179.

² Compiled in André Burguière & Hartmut Atsma, *Marc Bloch Aujourd'hui. Histoire Comparée & Sciences Sociales. Colloque International De Paris* (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1990).

³ In turn, quoted by his disciple John of Salisbury "we are like dwarves standing on the shoulders of giants: we see more and farther than our predecessors not because we have sharper vision or greater height, but because we are raised up and borne aloft on their gigantic stature." In Alex J. Novikoff, *The Medieval Culture Of Disputation: Pedagogy, Practice, And Performance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) p. 62.

in short, wanted to put the study of economic, cultural and social phenomena before the old institutional and legal history based on the account of events, using for this end, an innovative way to explore, select and examine primary sources.⁴

Marc Bloch's bibliography is so extensive that for reasons of space it would be impossible to reproduce it in its entirety here. However, the best account of his writings from 1911 to 1960 (including those published posthumously) can be still found in the volume II of his *Mélanges historiques*.⁵ As far as I am concerned, I have taken the liberty of selecting the three works that, in my opinion, were more representative of their career as a medievalist. Hence, I proceed to set out the main titles in their original French first editions accompanied by a brief analysis of their content.

Les Rois Thaumaturges. Étude sur le Caractère Surnaturel Attribué à la Puissance Royale, Particulièrement en France et en Angleterre (Strasbourg: Fac. des lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg, 1924) (The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France)

It deals with the belief in the healing power of the kings of France and England from the year 1000 to the 19th century. Renew political history by showing how symbolism and ritual (as in the so-called primitive societies) are great instruments of power and how collective psychology is an essential field for understanding the history of societies. He affirmed himself as a pioneer in both the study of long-term historical processes⁶ and comparative history as a historiographic method.⁷

Les Caractères Originaux de l'Histoire Rurale Française (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1931) (French Rural History: An Essay on Its Basic Characteristics)

Published as a result of conferences held two years earlier at the Institute for the Comparative Study of the Civilizations of Oslo is a long-term analysis from the Middle Ages to the French Revolution in which renews the history of the countryside, using sources unexplored (land registries and cadastres), the analysis of techniques and

⁴ Enrique Moradiellos, *Las Caras De Clío. Una Introducción A La Historia* (Madrid: Siglo XXI Editores, 2001) pp. 200-202.

⁵ Marc Bloch, *Mélanges Historiques*, Tome II (Paris: École Pratique des Hautes Études, 1963) pp. 1032-1104.

⁶ Aaron Guriêvitch, *A Síntese Histórica E A Escola Dos Anais* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2003) p. 45.

⁷ Carlos Alberto Ríos Gordillo, *Las Formas De La Comparación: Marc Bloch Y Las Ciencias Humanas. Ensayo De Morfología E Historia* (Méjico D. F: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa/Siglo XXI Editores/Anthropos, 2016) pp. 210-211.

landscapes and the "regressive" method (going back from the present to the past). In a certain way, it is the transcription of Durkheim's "Social Fact" since, heuristically, the study does not focus on legal texts but agricultural praxis, giving prominence to the anonymous and repetitive structures of agrarian communities.⁸

La Société Féodale: La Formation des Liens de Dépendance (Paris: Albin Michel, 1939) / *La Société Féodale: Les Classes et le Gouvernement des Hommes* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1940) dans Bibliothèque de synthèse historique. L'Évolution de l'humanité. dirigée par Henri Berr, N. ° 34 et 34 bis) (Feudal Society)

Undoubtedly his masterpiece. It is an ambitious synthesis that covers about four centuries of European history, from 900 to 1300, with a wide variety of topics, many of which had been treated in other places, such as servitude and freedom, sacred royalty, techniques and inventions, importance of money, shapes of the fields and rural landscapes, etc. In this sense, the book summarizes the life-long work of Bloch.⁹ Perhaps the most remarkable insight to obtain is the primacy given to social history as a total history¹⁰ and the interest shown by the history of mentalities as object of study.¹¹ Two classic references that, along with the analysis of the long-term processes, characterized the historiographic production of the School of the Annales.¹²

As is known, the influence of the work of March Bloch on later historians was enormous. Thus, the study of the rural world and peasant societies, mentalities as an object of interest, comparative history, interdisciplinary approaches (especially with regard to the field of anthropology), were, all of them, inherent features of both the second generation as well as the third one.¹³ Among the first, Duby and Le Goff stand out.¹⁴

⁸ Juan José Carreras Ares, *Razón De Historia: Estudios De Historiografía* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2000) p. 116.

⁹ Peter Burke, *La Revolución Historiográfica Francesa. La Escuela De Los Anales: 1929-1989* (Barcelona: Editorial Guedisa, 1996) p. 31.

¹⁰ Martin Nodl, "Trois Notions Au Coeur De La Réception De l'Historiographie Française Dans Le Contexte Tchèque: Histoire Totale, Longue Durée, Mentalités", *Cahiers du CEFRES*, 29 (2003), 1-27 (p.4).

¹¹ This point is especially remarkable in two chapters of the first volume, under the titles "ways of feeling and thinking" and "collective mentality". Spanish edition; "formas de sentir y de pensar" and "la memoria colectiva" in *La Sociedad Feudal* (Madrid: Akal Ediciones, 2002) pp. 94-123.

¹² For a complete review of the historiography and bibliography produced by the School of the Annales: Jean-Pierre V. M. Herubel, "The "Annales Movement" And Its Historiography: A Selective Bibliography", *French Historical Studies*, 18(1) (1993) pp.346-355.

¹³ Francisco Ruiz Gómez, *Introducción A La Historia Medieval. Epistemología, Metodología Y Síntesis* (Madrid: Editorial Síntesis, 1998) pp. 130-132.

¹⁴ Other great historians of this generation were R. Fossier, J. Heers, B. Guenée, L. Genicot...

While Duby continued with the regional-based agrarian history, the comparative methodology and the study of mentalities¹⁵, Le Goff, more eclectic, relied on ethnology, sociology or anthropology in order to achieve a full understanding of society by analysing the interaction between the individual and the collective. His subjects of study covered social, economic, cultural, religious, intellectual and everyday life history.¹⁶

The interest shown by Bloch in the birth and evolution of the feudal society extended to a third generation of historians who, through regional studies, analysed the different conditions that led to the formation of feudalism.¹⁷

To conclude this exercise, simply point out that even after seventy-five years of his death, the example and figure of Marc Bloch, as well as his methodological and historiographic work, are still projecting a valuable lesson worth recovering.

¹⁵ As for the agrarian history and comparative methodology one must emphasize *L'Économie Rurale Et La Vie Des Campagnes Dans l'Occident Médiéval* (Paris: Aubier, 1962) (Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West); regarding the study of mentalities it is mandatory to refer to *Les Trois Ordres Ou l'Imaginaire Du Féodalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978) (The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined).

¹⁶ Maybe the most representative works of all these lines of research are:

Marchands Et Banquiers Du Moyen Age (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1956) (Merchants and Bankers in the Middle Ages).

Les Intellectuels Au Moyen Âge (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957) (Intellectuals in the Middle Ages).

La Civilisation De l'Occident Médiéval (Paris: Arthaud, 1964) (Medieval Civilization 400-1500).

La Naissance Du Purgatoire (Paris: Gallimard, 1981) (The Birth of Purgatory).

La Bourse Et La Vie: Économie Et Religion Au Moyen Âge (Paris: Hachette, 1986) (Your Money or Your Life: Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages).

¹⁷ It must be highlighted the research of G. Bois for Burgundy-Franche-Comté (France): *La Mutation De l'An Mil. Lournand, Village Mâconnais, De l'Antiquité Au Féodalisme* (Paris: Fayard, 1989); J.P. Poly for Provence (France): *La Provence Et La Société Féodale 879-1166* (Paris: Bordas, 1976); P. Toubert for Lazio (Italy): *Les Structures Du Latium Médiéval: Le Latium Méridional Et La Sabine Du IXe Siècle À La Fin Du XIIe Siècle* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1973); and P. Bonnassie for Catalonia (Spain): *La Catalogne Du Milieu Du Xe Siècle À La Fin Du XIe Siècle. Croissance Et Mutations d'Une Société* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1975-1976).

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