

# Innovative Feudalism.

## The development of dairy farming and *Koppelwirtschaft* on manors in Schleswig-Holstein in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

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### *Abstract*

Early modern Schleswig-Holstein saw the development of manorialism of the type, widespread in East-Elbian Germany and further east, of large demesnes farmed primarily with the labour services of dependant peasant farms and cottages. In traditional understanding, such manors are associated with a 'simple' production of grain, but in Schleswig-Holstein they developed a highly-regarded form of dairy farming and a new layout and usage of fields, the *Koppelwirtschaft*. The paper discusses the relation between these developments and the 'feudal' work organization of these manors and demonstrates that feudal demesne lordship could be combined with technical modernization. It also appears that the distinction between unfree labour service and paid work is not always a simple one to make.

Traditional accounts of early modern East-Central Europe emphasize the rise of *Gutsherrschaft* ('demesne lordship') and the so-called 'second serfdom'.<sup>1</sup> The region has been seen as consisting of estates with large demesnes producing grain for western European markets,

<sup>1</sup> The terms *Grundherrschaft* and *Gutsherrschaft* have played an important role in the German literature on early modern agrarian history for more than a hundred years, but the exact meaning and usage of the terms varies a great deal. A good survey of the literature on *Gutsherrschaft*, including theoretical positions relating to or definitions contrasting it to the term *Grundherrschaft* can be found in H. Kaak, *Die Gutsherrschaft* (1991). K. Schreiner, 'Grundherrschaft, Entstehung und Bedeutungswandel eines geschichtswissenschaftlichen Ordnungs und Erklärungsbegriffs', in H. Patze (ed.), *Die Grundherrschaft in späten Mittelalter* (1983), pp. 11–74, gives a good overview of the usages of the term *Grundherrschaft* among medievalists, which – alas – differ from those of early modernists employed here. My usage of the words owes much to the classic definition by G. von Below, *Territorium and Stadt* (1900), and is further discussed and explained in my dissertation: C. Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift, Godsstrukturer og godsøkonomi i hertugdømmet Slesvig* (2 vols, 2003), I, pp. 15–33. In my understanding *Gutsherrschaft* signifies the totality of a manorial system centered around demesnes which are to a significant degree farmed with the use of labour service, whereas *Gutswirtschaft* signifies labour service-based demesne farming as such. To avoid misunderstandings of the word *Grundherrschaft*, I prefer the more specific *Rentengrundherrschaft*, as suggested by F. Lütge in *Zur ostdeutschen Agrargeschichte. Ein Colloquium* (1960), pp. 83–84.

tilled by serfs performing unpaid labour service, while the peasants themselves have been conceived as living largely in a subsistence economy with poor market integration.<sup>2</sup>

Over the last few decades this view has been challenged by many historians, including those involved in the project led by Jan Peters, and in the studies of Lieselott Enders, William Hagen, and others.<sup>3</sup> According to these revisionists, the economy was less of a command economy than received wisdom suggested, market production was not limited to grain for Western Europe, peasants were, in many ways, more independent and far more market-oriented than traditionally assumed, and estates often employed paid labour. A prominent example of such views is Hagen's studies of Brandenburg. He further argues that demesne growth before the Thirty Years War mainly took the form of the reclamation of previously untilled land, and he sees the rising labour service as a trade-off for low rents.<sup>4</sup>

This paper does not add much to this area of revisionism. Rather it argues that dramatic contrasts in the social organization of rural society developed *within* the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, including manors with strong *Gutsherrschaft*. For these manors, my conclusions are in many ways more in line with the classic picture than with current revisionist views of labour service, the importance of serfdom, and the limited market role of the dependant peasants.

Instead this paper offers a different critique of the classic understanding, questioning whether large demesnes were inevitably managed along traditional, inefficient lines. Historians such as Michael North, Lieselott Enders, and William Hagen have emphasized the 'innovative' aspect of the creation of the large demesnes of the sixteenth century.<sup>5</sup> These demesnes were not a residue from the middle ages but represent a break with the past and reflect an increased market orientation. I have argued the same case for Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>6</sup> Here the argument shall, however, be taken further. Innovation in Schleswig-Holstein manors did not stop with the creation of large-scale, market-oriented demesnes. It also concerns the forms of production.

<sup>2</sup> Classical examples in the Anglo-Saxon literature include I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System* (2 vols, 1974–80), esp. I, pp. 15–17, 67–70, 876–129; R. Brenner, 'Agrarian class structure and economic development in pre-industrial Europe', *Past and Present*, 70 (1976), pp. 30–75, repr. in T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin (eds), *The Brenner Debate. Agrarian class structure and economic development in pre-industrial Europe* (1985). A grand survey of the German literature can be found in Kaak, *Die Gutsherrschaft* and for a critical review, W. Hagen, 'The descent of the Sonderweg. Hans Rosenberg's History of Old-Regime Prussia', *Central European Hist.* 24 (1991), pp. 24–50.

<sup>3</sup> Amongst many examples, J. Peters (ed.), *Gutsherrschaft als soziales Modell* (1995); J. Peters (ed.), *Konflikt und Kontrolle in Gutsherrschaftsgesellschaften* (1995) and J. Peters (ed.), *Gutsherrschaftsgesellschaften im europäischen Vergleich* (1997); W. Hagen, *Ordinary Prussians: Brandenburg Junkers and Villagers, 1500–1840* (2002); L. Enders, *Die Uckermark. Geschichte*

*einer kurmärkischen Landschaft vom 12. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (1992).

<sup>4</sup> W. Hagen, 'How mighty the Junkers? Peasant rents and seigniorial profits in sixteenth-century Brandenburg', *Past and Present* 108 (1985), pp. 80–116; id. 'Two ages of seigniorial economy in Brandenburg-Prussia: structural innovation in the sixteenth century, productivity gains in the eighteenth century', *Zeitenblicke* 4 (2005), <http://www.zeitenblicke.de/2005/2/Hagen>.

<sup>5</sup> Hagen, 'Two ages of seigniorial economy'; M. North, 'Die Entstehung der Gutswirtschaft im südlichen Ostseeraum', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 26 (1999), pp. 43–59; Enders, *Die Uckermark*. Hagen uses the term 'structural innovation'.

<sup>6</sup> C. Porskrog Rasmussen, 'Modern Manors? The character of some manors in Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein', in K. Sundberg, T. Germundsson and K. Hansen (eds), *Modernisation and tradition. European local and manorial societies, 1500–1900* (2004), pp. 48–77.

In his great synthesis, Wallerstein argued that the second serfdom of the East was attached to 'simple' forms of productions such as grain.<sup>7</sup> Certainly grain production for export was important in many of these areas, but Schleswig-Holstein manors of the eighteenth century were more renowned for their dairy products, which in Wallerstein's model is a 'sophisticated' form of production implying free labour.

In an article of 1990, the German historian Michael North tried to solve this apparent paradox. He saw the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as a period of crisis which landlords tried to meet in different ways. Of these, the enhancement of *Gutsherrschaft* with increased labour service did, according to North, not point forwards whereas the replacement of labour service with money dues and the transition to dairy farming showed the way out of the crisis.<sup>8</sup> The explanation is well in line with both classic 'liberal' interpretations and Marxist understandings. It also fits well with both North's own work and Hagen's on Brandenburg and Prussia, where changes in production in the eighteenth century were often accompanied by a transition to paid labour.<sup>9</sup>

It does, however, fit the Schleswig-Holstein reality rather poorly, not because landlords did not undertake the initiatives described by North, but because the relation between these differs from that suggested by his model. 'Innovative' dairy farming was generally not combined with commutation of labour dues but with their sharpening. Intensive *Gutsherrschaft* and technical modernization were not reciprocally exclusive alternatives but rather two sides of the same coin.

## I

Manors with *Gutsherrschaft* were only part of the very complex social reality of early modern Schleswig-Holstein. The twin duchies contained within their borders some of the sharpest contrasts of social organization of rural society to be found in such a small area anywhere in Europe. The case of Schleswig-Holstein shows that such contrasts could emerge within a political territory, not just between territories.

The area was divided into three main geomorphological regions: marshes along the North Sea in the far west, the sandy, so-called *geest* plains in the middle, and fertile clay soils in the eastern regions facing the Baltic. In the marshes almost all the land was used intensively for grazing or cultivation in the early modern period. In the *geest* regions cultivated fields and meadows only made up a small proportion of the land whereas the greater part was moors, heaths, or other types of land used for extensive grazing. In the east a high proportion of cultivated fields coexisted with woods, meadows, and other areas of grazing.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Wallerstein, *Modern world system*, I, p. 91.

<sup>8</sup> M. North, 'Die frühneuzeitliche Gutswirtschaft in Schleswig-Holstein. Forschungsüberblick und Entwicklungsfaktoren', *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte* 126 (1990), pp. 223–42.

<sup>9</sup> Hagen, 'Two ages of seigneurial economy'.

<sup>10</sup> The natural regions: D. Meyer, 'Sønderjylland fra

natur- til kulturlandskab' in Lennart S. Madsen and Orla Madsen (eds), *Det Sønderjyske Landbrugs Historie. Sten- og Bronzealder* (2000), pp. 11–62; for land use in the early modern period: C. Porskrog Rasmussen, 'Godsejermagt eller naturtilpasning? De regionale mønstre i det slesvigske landbrug i 1700-tallet og deres sammenhæng med naturforhold og godssystemer' in

The political landscape was just as varied. The Duchy of Holstein was a principality of the Holy Roman Empire and the Duchy of Schleswig was a Danish fief, but since 1375 the two had formed a political union. In 1460 they came under the Danish monarchy, but remained separate possessions in the conglomerate monarchy of the Oldenburg dynasty. In the periods 1490–1523 and 1544–1773, the Duchies were divided among two or more rulers, of whom the Danish king was always one. Each prince controlled a number of districts in which he was both prince and landlord, and the two or three ruling princes jointly exercised authority over noble estates. In reality princely power was restricted to the princely districts. Private manors were liable to taxation and conscription, but apart from that, princely authority over them was weak.<sup>11</sup>

Both natural and political divisions greatly influenced the agrarian society of Schleswig and Holstein. In the marshlands of the west a society emerged that was highly differentiated from the rest of Scandinavia but with clear similarities to those of the other marshlands adjacent to the North Sea. There were neither villages nor regulated farms, and virtually no feudal lordship. It was theoretically a society of freehold peasants, but there were social gulfs between large-scale farmers, small-scale farmers, and landless cottagers. Property rights gave the holder of land almost full control over it, and agriculture in the area was highly market-oriented, monetized, and productive.

Most other peasants in the duchies lived in villages with open fields, both in the *geest* and in the east. A substantial part of the peasantry were in principle freeholders, but since the late middle ages they had been under the lordship of the ruling dukes and were, in practice, not very different from tenants. Including the ‘freeholders’, roughly a third of all peasants in Holstein and over half of the Schleswig peasants outside the marshes were by 1524 under the direct lordship of the ruling princes. The proportion rose further after the Reformation through the confiscation of church lands and substantial purchases of noble land by the kings and a branch of the ducal family in North Schleswig. As a result, after the early seventeenth century, private manors comprised only about a third of Holstein and a sixth of Schleswig. They were, however, very unevenly distributed. In eastern Holstein and south-eastern Schleswig, which had been parts of the German *Ostkolonisation* of the twelfth century, private manors were already dominant before 1500 and became even more so in the course of the sixteenth century. In the other parts of the Duchies, most peasants were under the princes. Private manors in the east and southeast mainly consisted of whole villages, while the fewer manors in the central and western parts generally consisted of more scattered property.<sup>12</sup>

The lordship of dukes and nobles over peasants took several forms. First, nearly all peasants outside the marshes paid some kind of ground rent to their lords. Second, the lord of the peasants had the power to prosecute crimes and levy fines on miscreants. Third, peasants

Per Grau Møller and Mette Svart Kristiansten (eds), *Bygder. Regionale variationer i det danske landbrug fra jernalder til 2000* (2006), pp. 41–62, at pp. 45–6.

<sup>11</sup> See generally U. Lange (ed), *Geschichte Schleswig-Holsteins – von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Neumünster 1996, sec. edn 2004); H. Schultz Hansen, L. Henningsen and C. Porskrog Rasmussen (eds),

*Sønderjyllands Historie*, I, *Indtil 1814* (2008).

<sup>12</sup> For Schleswig, C. Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods oghovedgårdsdrift*, I, pp. 96–114; for Holstein, W. Prange, ‘Landesherrschaft, Adel und Kirche in Schleswig-Holstein, 1523 und 1581’, *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Schleswig-Holsteinische Geschichte* (1982), pp. 51–90.

were obliged to use the seigneurial mill. Fourth, peasants outside the marshes also paid certain dues that were not related to the size of their holdings, but at a flat rate: these can be seen as recognitions of lordship rather than rent. Fifth, peasants were in principle obliged to undertake some kind of unspecified labour service.<sup>13</sup> Considerable differences had emerged, however, in the use of labour service.

By the mid-sixteenth century, the dominant manorial form can be described by the classic German term *Rentengrundherrschaft* ('rent based lordship').<sup>14</sup> It was a system in which peasants paid rents to landlords but performed little or no labour service even though the principle of an obligation to serve was maintained. Demesnes were few and small. In the second half of the sixteenth century, landlords started to enlarge their demesnes and to demand more labour service from their peasants, just as happened in much of East-Central Europe in the same period. Ruling princes, cadet branches of the ruling house, and noble landlords, all followed this path. Their decision to do so followed the incentive of rising grain prices of the period, but also took advantage of a legal regime which regarded basic rents as fixed, but labour service as an unspecified – and so enlargeable – obligation of the peasant to his lord.

From the 1590s to the middle of the seventeenth century, a great divide was established. The kings and the other principal ruling house of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorf gradually reversed the earlier developments and replaced labour service with a considerably increased money rent, *Dienstgeld* ('service money') in most of their districts. This comprised over half of all peasants outside the marshland districts. The *Dienstgeld* represents in principle the commuting of labour service, but in reality it was a legal ruse for a rise in rents as it was also imposed upon those royal and princely peasants who had barely performed labour service before. It now became the norm that the theoretical obligation to serve should be satisfied either by actual service or the payment of 'service money'. A small number of private manors followed the same path, mainly those on the poorer soils of the western and central parts whose landholdings were often geographically scattered. For the majority of Schleswig-Holstein peasants, the manorial system reverted to a pure *Rentengrundherrschaft*. In the short and medium-term perspective this was a great success for lords and boosted their estate income. In the long run however, the 'service money' came to be seen as just as frozen as the old rents had been, and in the eighteenth century rents and dues from these areas hardly changed at all.

*Rentengrundherrschaft* was, however, not the only path. Virtually all private manors and a few princely possessions in the east, plus a few private manors in the west, continued to enlarge their demesnes and increase labour service after 1630, thus turning into pure *Gutsherrschaft*. Some of them stopped the expansion of demesne farming in the later part of the seventeenth

<sup>13</sup> C. Porskrog Rasmussen, 'Property rights in the duchy of Schleswig', in Tore Iversen and John Ragnar Myking (eds), *Land, Lords and Peasants. Peasants' right to control land in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period – Norway, Scandinavia and the Alpine region* (2005), pp. 259–70; id., 'Bønder under Gutsherrschaft og Grundherrschaft', *Scandia*, 68 (2002), pp. 219–47.

<sup>14</sup> This description is mainly based upon my disser-

tation: *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*. It does only cover Schleswig, but things were not so very different in Holstein, as can be seen from W. Prange, *Die Anfänge der grossen Agrarreformen in Schleswig-Holstein bis zum 1771* (1971), particularly pp. 19–26, 266–279, 370–397, 591–600; id., 'Das Adlige Gut in Schleswig-Holstein im 18. Jahrhundert', in C. Degn and D. Lohmeier (eds), *Staatsdienst und Menschlichkeit*, (1980), pp. 57–75.

century, finishing up with a sort of intermediate system, but most private manors south-east of the city of Flensburg, a few princely domains in the same regions, and a handful manors in the *geest* kept increasing the number and size of their demesnes until around 1720. By that time, demesnes covered roughly half the total farmland of these estates. The system changed little for the next 50 years. In 1770 the 56 private manors in south-eastern Schleswig consisted of around 100 demesnes, 700 tenant farms, and probably 1200–1500 cottages. In the three manorial districts of south-eastern Schleswig, demesnes covered respectively 51 per cent, 59 per cent and 59 per cent of the arable land and meadows of the manors, the tenant farms most of the remaining part, while most cottages had no land of consequence.<sup>15</sup> The structure was roughly the same in eastern Holstein, where noble estates were even more widespread. Only in some manorial districts of north-eastern Schleswig was a weaker form of *Gutsherrschaft* found, in which about 20–25 per cent of the land area was held as demesne.

Not only was the proportion of demesne land very high on the manors of the south-east, but so too were the labour service obligations of peasants. As a rule throughout most of the eighteenth century, each peasant farm had to present three or four people and four to eight horses for unpaid labour service on 300 days a year. This formal obligation was not completely met, but the reality did not fall far short of the formal prescription. According to Ulrik Wilkens' analysis of the manor of Schönweide, only 70 per cent of the potential number of services were actually performed. It was, however, mainly the younger hands who performed fewer days than they were formally obliged to, while the number of days performed by adult hands bringing horses was much closer to their total obligation.<sup>16</sup> Measured in value, the proportion of work and draught force delivered by peasants was thus considerably over 70 per cent of their formal obligation. My study of the manor of Buckhagen has shown that nearly all normative obligations were called upon by that estate.<sup>17</sup> Labour service was in reality very extensive. Furthermore, the vast majority of people living on these estates were serfs, under full manorial jurisdiction, and largely exempt from any public administrative control.

These estates are in many ways classic examples of what the East German historians Harnisch and Heitz termed 'extreme' or 'South-Baltic' *Gutsherrschaft*.<sup>18</sup> They are clearly similar to conditions in Mecklenburg and Pomerania and are more extreme than most manors in Brandenburg or the lands of the Bohemian crown.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Figures from Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*, I, p. 383.

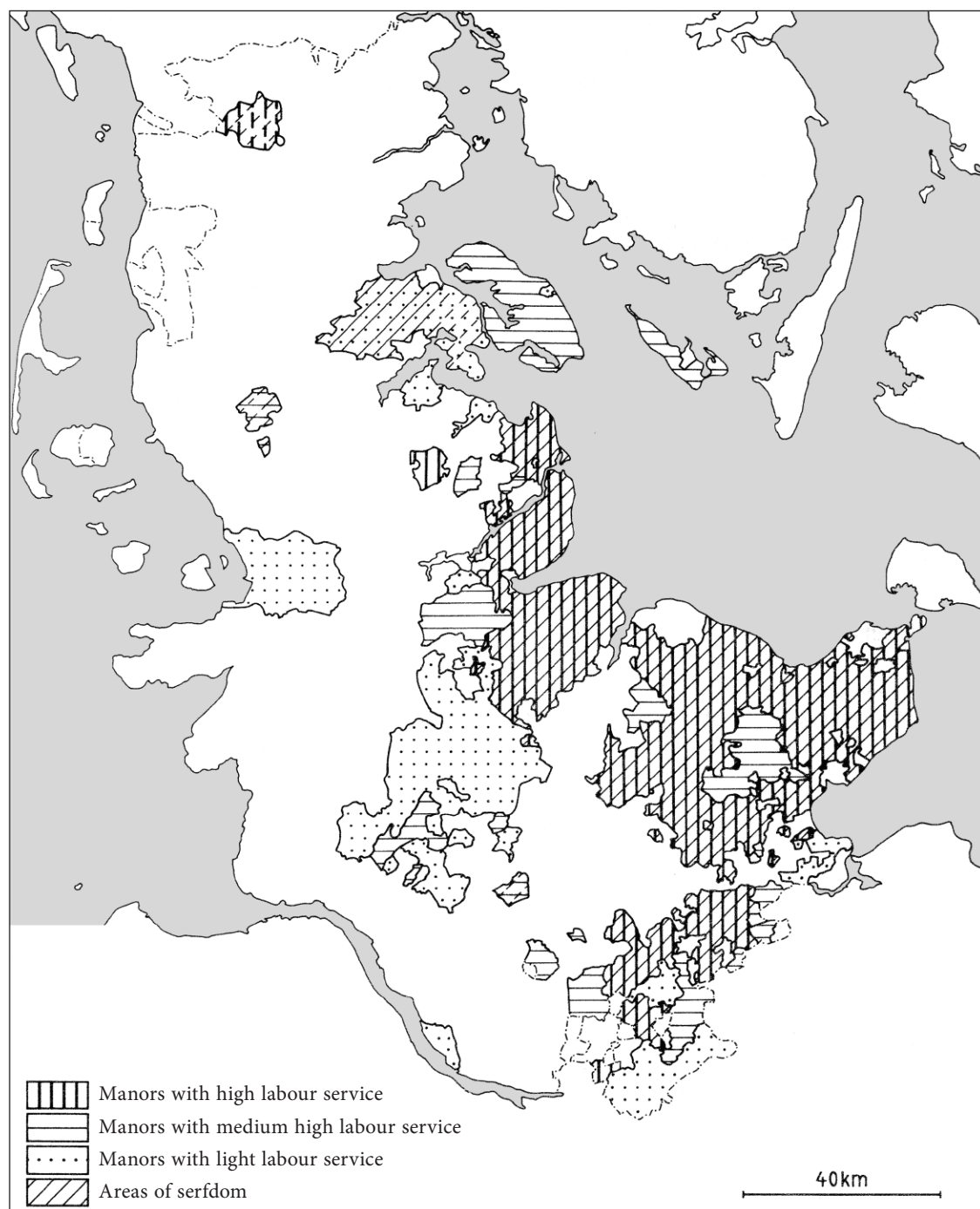
<sup>16</sup> K.-S. Kramer and U. Wilkens, *Volksleben in einem holsteinischen Gutsbezirk* (1979), pp. 218–20.

<sup>17</sup> C. Porskrog Rasmussen, 'Corvée and paid work. Work and workers at manors in Schleswig and Holstein in the eighteenth century' in Kerstin Sundberg (ed.), *Work and production on manors in the Baltic Sea region, 1700–1900* (2002), pp. 165–92, esp. pp. 175–79.

<sup>18</sup> G. Heitz, 'Die Agrarstruktur vor den bürgerlichen Reformen', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 25 (1977), pp. 910–27, here pp. 917–8; H. Harnisch, 'Probleme einer Periodisierung und regionalen Typisierung der Gutsherrschaft im mitteleuropäischen Raum',

*Jahrbuch für Geschichte des Feudalismus* 10 (1986), pp. 251–74, especially pp. 272–3.

<sup>19</sup> For Mecklenburg see T. Rudert, *Gutsherrschaft und Agrarstruktur. Der ländliche Bereich Mecklenburgs am Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts* (1995), pp. 90–99; J. Nichtweiss, *Das Bauernlegen in Mecklenburg. Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte der Bauernschaft und der zweiten Leibeigenschaft in Mecklenburg bis zur Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts* (1954), pp. 68–9; and for Pomerania, R. Schilling, *Schwedisch-Pommern um 1700. Studien zur Agrargeschichte eines Territoriums extremer Gutsherrschaft, Untersucht auf der Grundlage des Schwedischen Matrikelwesens, 1692–1698* (1989), pp. 18–21, 42–3 and 45–6.



MAP 1. The distribution of *Gutsherrschaft* (demesne lordship) in Schleswig-Holstein, 1730.

Source: Wolfgang Prange, *Die Anfänge der grossen Agrarreformen in Schleswig-Holstein bis 1771* (1971).

Schleswig-Holstein landlords chose the intensive *Gutsherrschaft* where conditions for it were good. Manors under private landlords, with good soils and tenant farms close to the demesnes, stayed on the road leading to extreme *Gutsherrschaft*. Princely districts and private manors with poorer soils and/or scattered possessions largely moved in the opposite direction. *Gutsherrschaft* was not the choice of a few conservative landlords, but the general choice of most private landlords.<sup>20</sup> And they stuck with it until the end of the eighteenth century.

The pursuit of this strategy was legally possible as the ruling princes declined to interfere in the internal affairs of private manors before 1795 – unlike the kingdom of Denmark. The original tax base was a standardized peasant farm, the ‘plough’, but in 1626 the tax base of each manor was frozen at a set number of ‘ploughs’. The landlords could continue to seize peasant holdings, but were then obliged to pay the taxes themselves.<sup>21</sup> This did not inhibit the expropriation of peasant land by demesnes. Indeed, Schleswig-Holstein landlords took over the payment of taxes not only from expropriated peasant farms, but also those which remained. This can be seen as a trade-off, but rather than seeing it as a concession to peasants, we should see it as a deliberate choice. So keen were landlords to expand the labour service-based demesne economy that they chose to divide the land of the manor into halves: one producing almost pure profit (including the state’s share) and one bearing the costs of labour and draught animals.<sup>22</sup>

The choice of path had considerable consequences for the peasant population. In areas of *Rentengrundherrschaft*, solid peasant farmers made up a considerably greater part of the population than in areas of *Gutsherrschaft*, where cottages outnumbered peasant farms. *Grundherrschaft* peasant farms were more market-oriented than those under *Gutsherrschaft* whose market production was limited by the amount consumed by the extra horses and servants they had to keep in order to perform labour. Furthermore peasants in the *Grundherrschaft* areas were more highly socially esteemed than those under *Gutsherrschaft*, and such peasants protested furiously in the few seventeenth-century cases when a transition to *Gutsherrschaft* was threatening (mostly when princely tenant farms were sold to private landlords).<sup>23</sup> In many ways the Schleswig-Holstein manors with *Gutsherrschaft* fit a classic image. They were feudal. And yet they became renowned for progressive innovations.

## II

Around 1600 the production of the demesnes conformed to the traditional image of East Elbian manors. Grain was the primary product of almost all demesnes. Besides grain cultivation, some manors were also engaged in dairy farming and cattle breeding. Producing these different products on a larger scale was, in the words of William Hagen, a ‘structural innovation’.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårds-drift*, I, pp. 564–69.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 365.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 476–491, 567.

<sup>23</sup> C. Porskrog Rasmussen, ‘Bønder under Guts-herrschaft og Grundherrschaft’; *id.*, ‘Godsejermagt eller

naturlilpasning?’ In the former article I explicitly argue against views of Edgar Melton expressed in his article ‘Gutsherrschaft in East Elbian Germany and Livonia, 1500–1800: A critique of the model’, *Central European Hist.* 21 (1988), pp. 315–49.

<sup>24</sup> Hagen, ‘Two ages of seigneurial economy’.

The adoption of these new forms of production was a natural step to take. Whilst the prices of grain and oxen rose considerably, the productive performance of the demesnes remained poor. By 1600 demesne farming excelled in little but scale. Crops and rotations were roughly the same for demesnes as for the adjacent peasant villages. Yields on royal and ducal manors were poor. Yields of 2½–4 times the grain sown were the rule, even though grain production was the main focus. Evidence from private estates points to higher figures – around three-fold for oats, 3½–4-fold for rye and four- to six-fold for barley, but these were still far from being impressive. In the field of husbandry, the ruling princes favoured a passive posture, hiring out resources for feeding oxen but investing little themselves.<sup>25</sup> This picture has much in common with the findings for other parts of East-Central Europe.<sup>26</sup>

Hermann Kellenbenz has argued that nobles were also engaged in other, arguably more innovative, economic activities.<sup>27</sup> Particularly in eastern Holstein, where forests were extensive, a number of estates established small industries needing firewood, most typically glassworks and brickyards.<sup>28</sup> There is, though, little indication that they were ever of substantial economic importance. The chief income from forests came actually from mast pigs – yet another extensive form of husbandry – while brickyards and glassworks were never more than rare and invariably small in scale.<sup>29</sup>

In the latter half of the seventeenth century, the production strategy of manors changed. The glassworks and brickyards largely disappeared, the forests diminished, and pigs and oxen stopped being forms of production of any significance for landlords. Instead the demesnes became specialized producers of dairy products and grain in new forms known as *Holländerei* and *Koppelwirtschaft*. Whereas the general increase of demesnes and labour service was a continuous process covering both the prosperous period up to 1640 and the crisis-ridden century thereafter, this transition is clearly connected to the latter period.<sup>30</sup> Price incentives seem to have furthered the transition. While grain and oxen prices fell after 1640, manorial income from dairy farming remained stable.<sup>31</sup>

Dairy farming was not new to the estates of eastern Holstein and Schleswig. Medieval manors had milk cows and produced butter and cheese, but on rather a small scale. From the sixteenth century, Dutch immigrants founded a renowned dairy sector, producing mainly cheese, in the rich marsh province of Eiderstedt. From c.1600, Dutch immigrants could also be found on some manors as dairy tenants. The word *Holländer* (literally Dutchman) for these tenants later ceased to reflect the origins of the individual tenants and evolved into an occupational term rather than a national description. The Dutch immigrants seem to have

<sup>25</sup> Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*, I, pp. 164–178 and II, pp. 401–426. This is based upon studies of a large number of royal and princely estate accounts and a somewhat small number of accounts from private estates.

<sup>26</sup> Hagen, 'Two ages of seigneurial economy'.

<sup>27</sup> H. Kellenbenz, 'Die wirtschaftliche Rolle des schleswig-holsteinischen Adels im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert', in D. Lohmeier (ed.), *Arte et Marte. Studien zur Adelskultur des Barockzeitalters in Schweden, Dänemark und Schleswig-Holstein* (1978), pp. 15–32.

<sup>28</sup> Kramer and Wilkens, *Volksleben*, pp. 23–38 and 177–79; G. Hanssen, *Agrarhistorische Abhandlungen* (1880), pp. 423–8, 463–4 and 471–5.

<sup>29</sup> Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*, I, pp. 409–26.

<sup>30</sup> Porskrog Rasmussen, 'Corvee and paid work', pp. 169–70; Kramer and Wilkens, *Volksleben*, pp. 23–38 and 177–9.

<sup>31</sup> Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*, I, p. 455.

TABLE 1. Number of milk cows at four manors, 1626–1744

| Gereby  |      | Bienebek |      | Nienhof |      | Schönweide |      |
|---------|------|----------|------|---------|------|------------|------|
| year    | cows | year     | cows | year    | cows | year       | cows |
| 1657    | 100  | 1626     | 60   |         |      |            |      |
| 1663    | 80   | 1641     | 124  |         |      |            |      |
| 1666    | 74   | 1653     | 50   |         |      |            |      |
|         |      |          |      | 1694    | 140  | 1680       | 99   |
| 1702    | 200  | 1715     | 270  |         |      |            |      |
|         |      |          |      | 1720    | 170  | 1720       | 350  |
| 1728–30 | 240  | 1720–28  | 415  |         |      |            |      |
| 1738    | 350  | 1731     | 356  |         |      |            |      |
|         |      |          |      | 1743    | 266  |            |      |
|         |      |          |      | 1744    | 312  |            |      |

Source: For Gereby and Bienebek, U. Bensen, *Die Entwicklung des Siedlungsbildes und der Agrarstruktur der Landschaft Schwansen von Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (1966), p. 204 and Porskrog Rasmussen: *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*, I, p. 448; Deutsch Nienhof: P. von Hedemann-Heespen, *Geschichte der Güter Deutsch Nienhof und Pohlsee* (3 vols, 1906), I, pp. 163, 178, II, p. 36; Schönweide: Kramer and Wilkens, *Volksleben*, pp. 195–6.

improved both livestock and production, and their methods were adopted by local people who spread the technology further. On most manors this was achieved by a symbiosis between the landlord, who made most of the investment in buildings, livestock, and equipment, and the *Holländer*, who provided expertise in the production and marketing of the produce. The limited investments on the part of the *Holländer* may explain why the leases were short – mostly annual lettings – but often renewed for many successive years.

Whilst the first advances in this sector occurred in the second half of the sixteenth century, when a herd of up to 100 milk cows per manor became normal, it was the years from 1660 to 1720 which witnessed a dramatic expansion in dairy farming.<sup>32</sup> This is illustrated by the figures from four estates, Gereby and Bienebek in south-eastern Schleswig, and Nienhof and Schönweide in eastern Holstein (Table 1).

Over a generation or two, the number of milk cows typically tripled. For around 1715 we have figures for the total number of dairy units and milk cows on private estates in both duchies although so far only those for Schleswig have been examined. On 46 manors in Schleswig, we can identify 91 dairy units with a total of 11,696 cows.<sup>33</sup> A few manors are not covered by the sources, so the actual numbers would have been somewhat higher. The herds of cows

<sup>32</sup> P. K. Iversen, 'Hollænderier i Sønderjylland I 1600-og 1700-årene', *Sønderjyske Årbøger* (1992), pp. 73–112, especially pp. 73–75 and 110–111; Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*, I, p. 407.

<sup>33</sup> Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*,

I, pp. 449–454. The study is based upon tax lists in the Rigsarkivet (The Danish National Archives), Copenhagen, Rentekammerets tyske afdeling, Ekstraskattekommissioner, G.74–79.

at the manors were divided into units of 100–200 heads each. In some cases there would be two separate units on the home demesne, but in the decades around 1700 the number of secondary demesnes grew through the partitioning of primary demesnes or expropriation of peasant land. Secondary demesnes were generally of 2–300 hectares which suited a dairy herd of 100–200 cows.<sup>34</sup>

Substantial as these numbers were, demesne cows were outnumbered by peasant cows. The total number of cows on peasant farms and cottage holdings in Schleswig outside the marshes can be estimated at 50–55,000.<sup>35</sup> The demesnes thus held almost 20 per cent of all cows in Schleswig's eastern and *geest* districts. Even though the proportion is not overwhelming, it is more than twice the proportion of land under demesne control. In Holstein, where demesnes were more numerous and covered a larger proportion of the area, no doubt the relative proportion of demesne cows was higher, probably over 30 per cent.

Above all, the demesne dairy farms adopted a much stronger market orientation than the peasant farmers. Dairy farming was very important in the marsh district of Eiderstedt which had an extensive export trade in cheese. But if we look only at peasants in the east and the *geest*, their dairy production seems to show only limited market orientation. Certainly peasants did sell butter, but judging from scattered evidence, it seems only in small amounts, and butter is not mentioned prominently among the products of peasants given by topographers of the time.<sup>36</sup> Unlike oxen and grain, for most peasants, dairy products were not a specialized market product, but were produced primarily for subsistence, with a small surplus for sale.

The creation of such large demesne dairy farms is remarkable. Given the technology of the time, advantages of scale in most forms of agriculture were quickly exhausted, whereas disadvantages of scale were quick to appear. Large farms meant long distances between fields and buildings and thus, for both people and horses, time and energy wasted. And, furthermore, size tended to increase the risk of disease. However, these dairies had proper advantages of scale compared to local peasant farms. The estate dairies had cool milk cellars, specialized dairy equipment, and a specialized staff for the production. As a consequence 'demesne butter' was seen as a superior product to 'peasant butter'.<sup>37</sup>

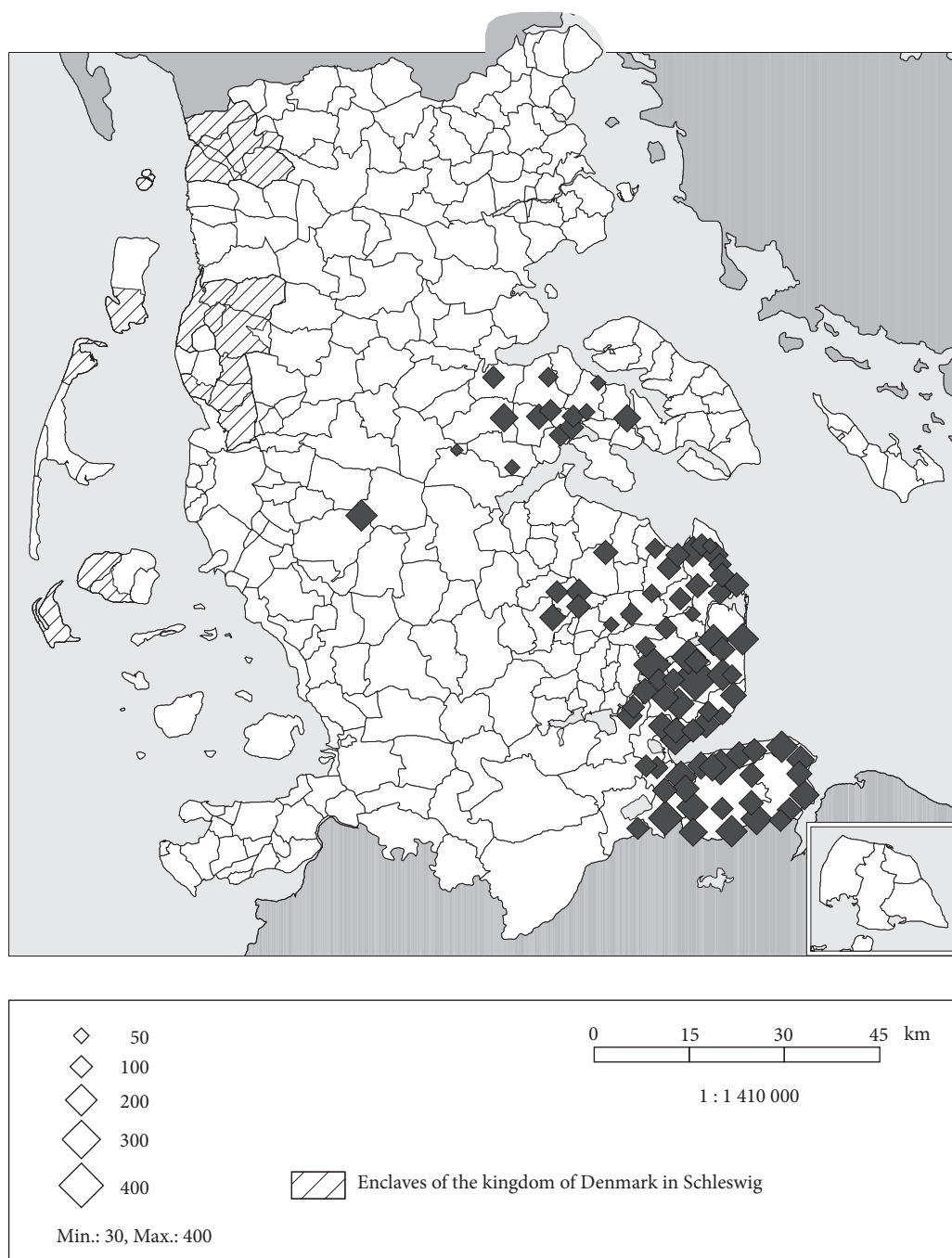
Still, it is striking that dairy units were much larger than in the Netherlands from where the technology was imported. Perhaps the large dairy units developed because they were a specialization within a demesne system already building upon large units and because the social forms existing in the area were either the traditional peasant farm or large demesnes. Still we must remember that secondary demesnes with 100–200 cows were systematically established. A herd of 100–200 cows might not necessarily have been the optimum size for a market-oriented dairy farm, but landlords must have believed that it was.

<sup>34</sup> Iversen, 'Holländerier', pp. 83–5; Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*, I, pp. 453–4.

<sup>35</sup> The estimate is based on a major study of peasant farming which I am currently undertaking. Figures from around half of the parishes outside the marshes total c.26,000 cows.

<sup>36</sup> See e.g. C. Danckwerth, *Neue Landesbeschreibung der zwey Herzogthümer Schleswich vnd Holstein* (1652). Danckwerth talks a great deal about grain and less about oxen and sheep, but dairy products feature only prominently in his description of Eiderstedt.

<sup>37</sup> Iversen, 'Holländerier', pp. 93–102.



MAP 2. Demesne dairy farms in the Duchy of Schleswig 1717, showing number of cows per dairy farm.

Adapted from an illustration first published in J. Ibs et al., *Historischer Atlas Schleswig-Holstein vom Mittelalter bis 1867* (2004), drawn by U. Schwedler from a sketch by the author.

## III

The preference for large farms may also be explained in part by the fact that they were not just dairy farms, but integrated dairy and grain farms. Grain production was not abandoned as dairies spread, but expanded. The arable acreage was increased, partly through the expropriation of land from the peasants of the estates, partly through the clearing of woods, scrubland and other land not previously ploughed. The organization of fields was also changed. Traditionally the agrarian system of most of Schleswig-Holstein was *Feldgraswirtschaft*, not unlike the up-and-down husbandry of northern England. It implied a very long rotation. Typically four or five successive years of grain cultivation was followed by an even longer period of continuous fallow. The main strength of the system was a better grass production on fields with a long period of fallow, quite contrary to the short fallow periods of the three-field system. In the kingdom of Denmark this system prevailed on the more sandy soils, where the longer periods of grass probably both prevented erosion and helped to increase the nutrient levels in the soil, whereas three-field or similar systems were preferred on good soils.<sup>38</sup> In Schleswig-Holstein, however, *Feldgraswirtschaft* was also used on good soils, probably because from an early date, a greater emphasis had been placed on good husbandry.

Around 1600 both peasants and manors in eastern Schleswig-Holstein often supplemented *Feldgraswirtschaft* with separate enclosures, *Koppeln*, mainly used for grazing. These were often clearings in the woods. In the course of the seventeenth century, manors developed a new system combining the best from the two and thus creating the famous Schleswig-Holstein *Koppelwirtschaft*. It meant the division of almost all the farmland of a demesne into some 10–14 fields (*Koppeln*) of regular size that were individually fenced, mainly with hedges. The total arable was expanded through the clearing of shrubs and stones, and – if possible – drainage. In principle all land except woods and dedicated hay meadows were included in the *Koppeln*.<sup>39</sup>

The *Koppeln* were used in a rotation which usually started with a year of rye or buckwheat, followed by a couple of years of rye and barley, two or three years of oats and five to eight years of fallow.<sup>40</sup> In itself this rotation was largely the same as the traditional *Feldgraswirtschaft* with the alternation between several years of continuous grain cultivation and a long period of fallow. The new aspects of this so-called *Koppelwirtschaft* were the individual enclosure of the fields, their regular size, and the intensified clearing of shrubs, etc. Sometimes the land in one *Koppel* was ploughed repeatedly one summer after the period of fallow and before the years of grain. The main advantages in comparison to the *Feldgraswirtschaft* were probably the inclusion of more land into the rotation and a better exploitation of the pasture. Instead of using all the demesne pasture for grazing at the same time, some fields could be used in the early summer while other fields could be used for hay. The many years of continuous pasture created a thick sward, and this, when it was ploughed, and combined with the abundance of

<sup>38</sup> K. E. Frandsen, *Vang og tægt* (1983), pp. 250–60.

<sup>39</sup> C. Porskrog Rasmussen, 'Koppelwirtschaft', in *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, VIII (2008), pp. 37–9.

<sup>40</sup> Examples: U. Bensen: *Die Entwicklung des Siedlungsbildes und der Agrarstruktur der Landschaft*

*Schwansen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (1966), pp. 209–15; P. von Hedemann-Heespen, *Geschichte der adeligen Güter Deutsch Nienhof und Pohlsee in Holstein* (3 vols, 1906), II, pp. 8–10 and 30–6; Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*, I, pp. 455–9.

manure from the dairy herd, permitted the estates to achieve higher yields than before – five- to seven-fold for barley, rye, and wheat; and three- to four-fold for oats, which were sown after the other grains on ground which was not specially manured.<sup>41</sup> Even though such yields are not impressive compared to those in England or the Netherlands, they were higher than those known previously on these estates or those estimated by contemporary observers for the peasant sector both in manors and the ‘free’ districts.

The integration of dairying and grain farming was crucial to the system. The better yields could not have been achieved without the manure from the cows, but the clearings and other improvements of land show that both sides of this integrated system were deliberately expanded. Economically, they were generally of almost equal importance, with dairy farming slightly in the lead overall.<sup>42</sup> Contemporaries appreciated how successful this integrated system was, and it inspired the Mecklenburg *Koppelwirtschaft* of the eighteenth-century, the key differences between the two being the greater weight given to grain production and the integration of sheep rather than cattle into the farming regime.

#### IV

Classic Marxist theory distinguishes between a ‘capitalist’ mode of production with ‘free’ tenants and paid workers and a ‘feudal’ one with legally dependant labour. At first glance the system of the Schleswig-Holstein manors was a mixture. A typical manor consisted of one or more demesnes, a number of peasant farms, and a larger number of cottages, mostly without land.

Labour service was mainly provided by the tenant farms. Typically in eastern Schleswig a tenant farm was obliged to provide two farmhands (one fully of age, one younger), a maid, and a team of four horses for six days work a week. In Holstein, obligations tended to be even higher. This meant that service was not so much a personal obligation for the farmer and his wife, but something performed by servants employed especially for that purpose. The peasant farmers would typically perform personal service a few days a year. It may have been of real importance, but may also be seen as a largely symbolic act. Cottagers typically performed personal service two or three days a week, but unlike the farmhands from the peasant farms, they had to make up for absences due to illness or other reasons by performing ‘schuldigen tage’ (days owed).<sup>43</sup> The people performing labour service did the field work at the demesnes, ploughing, sowing, harvesting, haymaking, spreading dung etc. They also performed the demanding task of maintaining the hedges and fences around the fields, they threshed, and finally some worked in the garden or undertook maintenance work.

Other than domestic servants, the owner of a manor generally had few direct employees: only administrative and supervisory staff, perhaps a few specialists. There was, however, a third workforce on the demesnes. The dairies were generally let to a tenant known as a *Holländer*, who employed and paid the workforce, which mainly consisted of milkmaids.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*, I, pp. 462–4.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 476–91 and 500.

<sup>43</sup> Porskrog Rasmussen, ‘Corvee and Paid Work’, pp. 172–80.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 180–82.

At first glance we have a 'feudal' sector – the grain production – and a 'capitalist' sector – the dairy production. If we analyse things in greater depth, the picture becomes more blurred. The only people personally performing labour service as a feudal due or rent for a holding were the cottagers, and the only true capitalist was the dairy tenant, who normally came from outside the manor and was personally free. If we look at the two main groups of people doing the work at the demesnes – on the one hand the field workers doing labour service, on the other the dairymaids – then we find they had much more in common than a first glance reveals. Firstly they were almost all serfs, recruited among the sons and daughters of the farmers and cottagers of the manor. Second, in reality they were all paid workers. The milkmaids were paid by the dairy tenant, the farmhands and other maids by the tenant farmers who were obliged to send them to work at the manor. And third they were unmarried. The farmhands and maids doing labour service lived in-house with the peasant farmers, while the milkmaids were seen as part of the household of the dairy tenant, but were not as integrated into it as were those living on peasant farms.

In fact, almost all the younger, unmarried people of the estate worked on the demesne. Most of the young men did so as farmhands employed by a peasant farmer, spending six days a week performing labour service on the demesne on the behalf of the farmer in whose house they lived. Some young women worked in the same way as the young men, whilst others were employed as milkmaids on the demesne. A gender balance was kept by the manor through compelling the tenant farms to send more male workers than female for labour service. The whole idea of the system was thus to reserve a large force of unmarried men and women in their prime for the demesnes.<sup>45</sup>

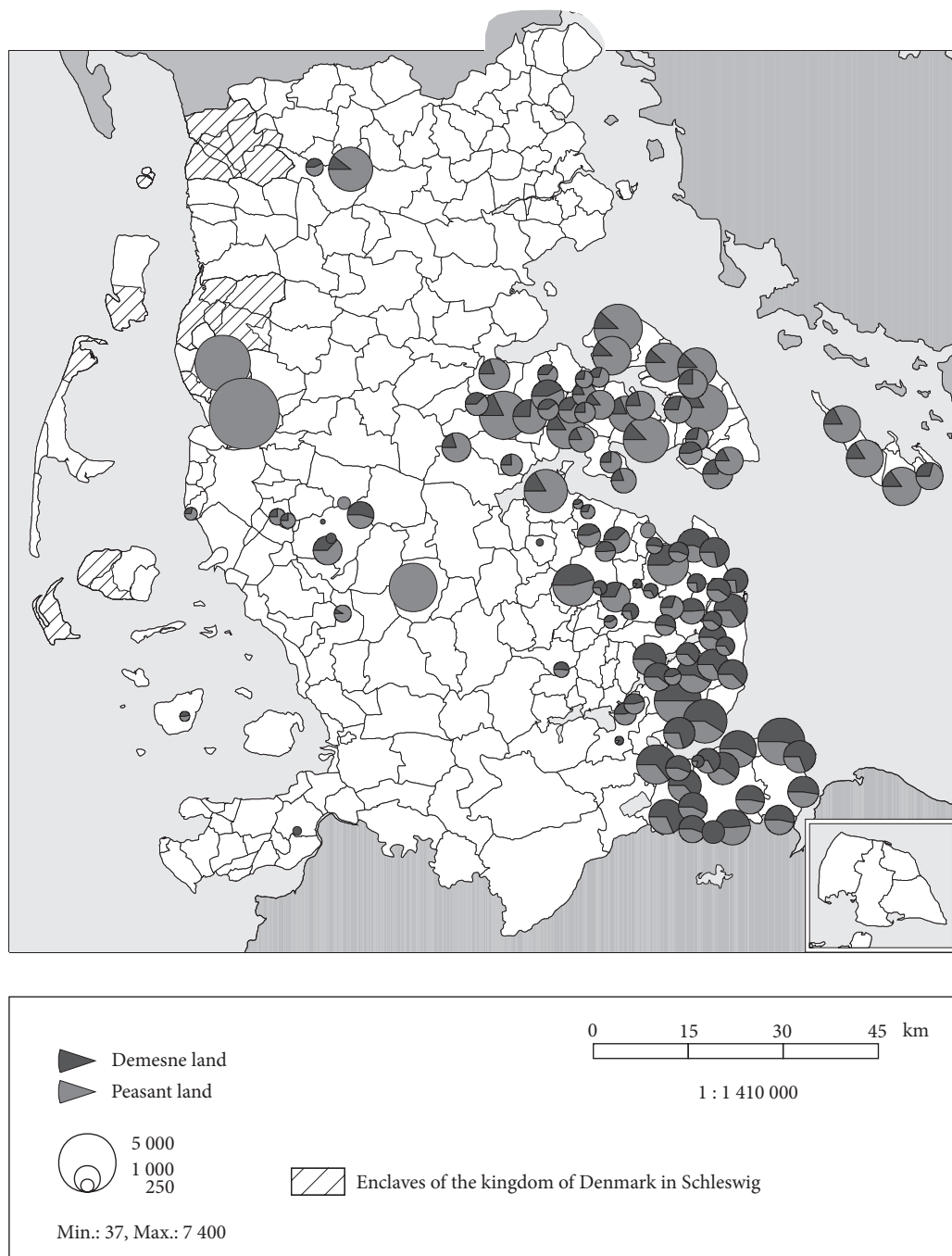
This social composition was the result of a transformation of manorial societies from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century. In the sixteenth century manors had comprised more tenant farms each with fewer co-resident servants. As demesnes grew and the number of peasant farms diminished, the social structure changed into one with few farms each with typically three or four servants on the one hand and a great number of cottages occupied by very small households on the other. Obviously this made prospects at manors less promising for young people and the manors tried to retain them via serfdom and the so-called *Gesindezwang*, which obliged them to work as a farmhand or maid till the lord permitted marriage. Some young people did elope to the marshes or the large cities of northern Germany where wages were known to be higher, but the strict system of supervision by landlords and the authorities meant that elopement only worked over longer distances and at the cost of breaking all ties with family and the natal village. Besides, the system at manors which guaranteed employment (even if at rather low wages) with some guarantee of a cottage later may well have seemed more appealing than risking everything in an unknown environment.<sup>46</sup>

This organization was pervasive on all the manors of eastern Schleswig-Holstein. Manors ceased demesne expansion at exactly the point where the remaining tenant farms could keep sufficient horses and servants for the field work. Only small manors which consisted solely of

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, pp. 184–186.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 185–86; Wolfgang Prange, 'Flucht aus der Leibeigenschaft', in K. Köstlin and K. D. Sievers

(eds.), *Das Recht der kleinen Leute. Beiträge zur Rechtlichen Volkskunde. Festschrift für K. S. Kramer* (1976), pp. 166–78.



MAP 3. Proportion of demesne to peasant land on private manors in the Duchy of Schleswig c.1760.

Adapted from an illustration first published in J. Ibs et al., *Historischer Atlas Schleswig-Holstein vom Mittelalter bis 1867* (2004), drawn by U. Schwedler from a sketch by the author.

demesnes and cottages were compelled to keep their own draught animals and workforce.<sup>47</sup> It resembles the systems of Mecklenburg and Pomerania, but differs from Brandenburg, where demesnes more often had a directly paid workforce.

It can seem illogical that the manors had their tenants pay and feed people who worked full time for them. The system may be seen as a recourse to a medieval ideal of trying to minimize cash costs, but it was also using known work relations in the local society. The system provided the demesnes with a workforce of young people in their prime who were cheap to employ as they still lived as unmarried in-house servants just like normal farmhands and maids at peasant farms. The possibility cannot be ruled out that such farmhands and maids were actually more cheaply fed and better disciplined in this way. Certainly landlords understood that it would be both more difficult and more expensive to provide the necessary workforce directly. They knew of alternatives. Large-scale dairy farming and *Koppelwirtschaft* spread also to some royal and princely demesnes run by capitalist tenants mainly using their own horses and personally free, hired labour.<sup>48</sup> We know little of the economy of such tenants, but the example tempted few landlords in the south-east.

In 1791 the links between large scale *Koppelwirtschaft* and dairy farming with serfdom and labour service was broken at the large estate of Rixdorf. Peasant farms were leased out on short leases for quite high rents, while the manor henceforth employed the necessary farmhands and maids directly. Cost-wise the solution was neutral, as the rents from the tenants equalled the new labour costs, but productivity rose enough to make the new configuration acceptable, and over the next couple of decades most owners of manors chose to adopt this system.<sup>49</sup>

This outcome does indicate that liberal critics were right in claiming that a feudal work organization was less efficient than a capitalist one. Probably it was, but the conditions for a transition from one to the other were far better in the 1790s than a few decades before. Steeply rising grain prizes made it possible for the tenants to pay a high rent, whereas a marked increase in rural population made labour abundant and relatively cheap. An earlier transition to such a system might perhaps have increased overall economic performance, but not necessarily lordly profits.

## V

For most of the eighteenth century, landlords had reason to be happy with the general arrangement. My studies indicate that lords' income was markedly higher from manors organized along the lines of *Gutsherrschaft* than from those of *Rentengrundherrschaft*. Per 'plough' (the tax unit of manors), *Gutsherrschaft* manors tended to yield a surplus of 70–110 rixdollars a year, *Rentengrundherrschaft* 40–60 rixdollars.<sup>50</sup> There are a few alleged success stories of lords lifting the labour service, parcelling out demesnes, and farming out the whole

<sup>47</sup> For Schleswig: Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*, I, pp. 501–2.

<sup>48</sup> Prange, *Die Anfänge*, pp. 258–59; 372–76; Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*, I, pp. 248–50, 314–5, 505–8.

<sup>49</sup> A. J. Cord, *Der Strukturwandel in der ostholsteinischen Gutswirtschaft um 1800* (1997).

<sup>50</sup> Porskrog Rasmussen, *Rentegods og hovedgårdsdrift*, I, pp. 444–45, 501–02.

area on long-term leases, and increased rents.<sup>51</sup> But only from about 1780 did these isolated examples become a trend. Keeping demesnes as capitalist units, employing free labour, became common only after 1791.

Comparisons with the kingdom of Denmark tended to convince the landlords of Schleswig-Holstein that their way was the better one. In Denmark a manorial system existed, which can be seen as either a third form combining aspects of both *Gutsherrschaft* and *Rentengrundherrschaft* or a milder *Gutsherrschaft*. It too was based upon demesnes and labour service, but the relative proportion of demesne land was only 15–20 per cent and not 50 per cent, and dependant farms provided less labour service than in Schleswig-Holstein, but then paid more rent and substantial state taxes. Demesnes were tilled in the traditional three-field rotation and with smaller cattle herds than in the Duchies.<sup>52</sup> It was far less profitable than the Schleswig-Holstein variety of *Gutsherrschaft*.

A simple example illustrates this. In 1762 Count Adam Gottlob Moltke sold two estates. The first, Niendorf, located just outside Lübeck, comprised a single demesne of about 300 hectares, ten tenant farms and eight cottages. The other, Lindenberg, in the kingdom of Denmark, comprised one demesne of about 200 hectares, some 75 tenant farms, a large number of cottages, and massive tithe incomes from several parishes. The total acreage of Niendorf all included was around 1,000 hectares, of which arable probably made up 500–600 hectares. Lindenberg comprised about 1,700 hectares of arable land plus an unknown area of meadows, grassland, woods, and waste – probably as much as 5–6,000 hectares in all. But Lindenberg was the less valuable of the two, worth 70,000 rixdollars versus 80,000!<sup>53</sup>

Some of the explanation for this disparity in price lies in higher levels of state taxation of Danish manors. It can be roughly estimated that state taxes equalled the landlord's profit in Denmark, whereas the 28 rixdollar basic ground tax per plough, plus a few extra taxes, only equalled a third of the landlord's profit in the duchies. But even if we capitalize that, the sum of profit and taxes is at least twice as high per hectare of arable in Schleswig-Holstein – and the difference is even greater for the gross acreage.<sup>54</sup>

There are several reasons for the higher profitability. The profit rate versus the rate consumed by peasant households was undoubtedly higher. But agrarian productivity was higher too. In fact, in 1761 Adam Gottlob Moltke was the first Danish lord to introduce the *Koppelwirtschaft* onto his vast estates south of Copenhagen.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Cases on private manors: Prange, *Die Anfänge*, pp. 189–255.

<sup>52</sup> A description is to appear in C. Porskrog Rasmussen, 'An English or a Continental way? The great agrarian reforms of Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein in the late eighteenth century', in R. Santos and R. Congost (eds), *Contexts of property: The social embeddedness of property rights to land in Europe in historical perspective* (forthcoming).

<sup>53</sup> For Niendorf: Bregentved Manor, private archives

of Count Adam Gottlob Moltke. For Lindenberg, L. Bobé, G. Graae, F. Jürgensen West, *Danske Len* (1916), p. 317. The calculation of acreage for Lindenberg is my estimate from data of total cadastre value and typical acreage of farms in the area.

<sup>54</sup> Soils of Lindenberg were somewhat poorer than those at Nienhof, but the picture still applies if we look at Danish manors on good soils.

<sup>55</sup> S. P. Jensen, 'Kobbelbrug, kløver og kulturjord', *Bol og by. Landbohistorisk tidsskrift*, 1998, pt 1, pp. 36–59.

## VI

The private estates of Schleswig-Holstein were known in the eighteenth century for a combination of two features which challenge many of our assumptions. On the one hand they represent the most extreme form of *Gutsherrschaft* with serfdom and some of the highest labour service obligations. On the other hand, these manors had developed ways of farming admired and increasingly copied by neighbours. Even if neither the technique for butter-making nor crops, rotations, and field preparation were in themselves unique, the scale and organization of the dairies and the field system of the *Koppelwirtschaft* are genuine local innovations which gave Schleswig-Holstein demesne farming a strong position compared to neighbouring north Germany or Scandinavia for a rather long time. Seen with the eyes of an eighteenth-century observer, such manors were indeed both feudal and innovative. In fact the paradox confronting eighteenth-century reformers in the kingdom of Denmark was that they wanted to copy the technical organization of this agriculture, but not the social one.

Dairy farming cannot wholly be seen as a 'capitalist' subsector of these 'feudal' manors simply because dairy work was paid work and not labour service. Rather this discussion shows that almost all people working on the large demesnes lived under conditions determined by the feudal character of the manor – notably serfdom – but were nonetheless paid. They were largely unmarried workers living in-house with either dependant farmers or the dairy tenant. In that, they followed customs of peasant society, both within and outside manors. If that leaves us with a seigneurial regime which is neither *Gutsherrschaft* nor *Grundherrschaft*, then so be it.