

Studies in European History



MARKUS CERMAN

VILLAGERS AND LORDS IN EASTERN EUROPE, 1300–1800



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Villagers and Lords in Eastern Europe, 1300–1800

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To Dana.

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Editors' Preface

The Studies in European History series offers a guide to developments in a field of history that has become increasingly specialised with the sheer volume of new research and literature now produced. Each book has three main objectives. The primary purpose is to offer an informed assessment of opinion on a key episode or theme in European history. Second, each title presents a distinct interpretation and conclusions from someone who is closely involved with current debates in the field. Third, it provides students and teachers with a succinct introduction to the topic, with the essential information necessary to understand it and the literature being discussed. Equipped with an annotated bibliography and other aids to study, each book provides an ideal starting point to explore important events and processes that have shaped Europe's history to the present day.

Books in the series introduce students to historical approaches which in some cases are very new and which, in the normal course of things, would take many years to filter down to text-books. By presenting history's cutting edge, we hope that the series will demonstrate some of the excitement that historians, like scientists, feel as they work on the frontiers of their subject. The series also has an important contribution to make in publicising what historians are doing, and making it accessible to students and scholars in this and related disciplines.

JOHN BREUILLY
JULIAN JACKSON
PETER H. WILSON

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Glossary

cadastre	a tax survey for taxes based on landholding.
demesne farm	lords often directly managed land in seignorial property in demesne farms. These could be smaller – such as two to three times the size of full tenant farms – or large, latifundium-like units. Theoretically, they could be operated in three different ways: directly, with wage labour; with the help of the labour rents of tenants; or by means of a mixed system between these two modes. Demesne farms were part of the demesne economy.
estate	the unit of property holding of a landlord (identical with the notion of a manor used in a medieval context). An estate could consist of a single village or only a part of a village with only a few tenant households, but could be large enough to comprise many villages and towns and a few thousand tenant households. Richer lords and magnates often held more than one estate and administered their properties as a dominium or latifundium. The meaning of estate as a unit of property has to be distinguished from ‘Estates’ as a political (a limited form of territorial representative assembly) and social (noble and church landlords/dignitaries and free cities) concept in the late medieval and early modern period.

Glossary

forced labour services	see labour rents.
fullholding/ full tenant farmholding	a tenant farmstead of standard size within each region liable for full rents and services.
hereditary tenure	the predominant form of tenure for tenant farms, smallholdings and cottages. Tenants held permanent usufruct and mostly also full rights of disposal regarding cultivation, inheritance or sale (partly subject to formal seignorial consent).
hide	a measure of landholding widespread in medieval Europe, but also in parts of the early modern period in certain areas of Central and Eastern Europe, to delimit the size of a typical full tenant farmholding. The actual size varied greatly between different regions and territories. Mostly one hide consisted of between 14 and 25 hectares of land, but could be as large as 40 hectares.
labour rents	part of tenants' obligations to their lords, such as to send draught teams or workers on seignorial demesne farms, or to fulfil transport obligations.
latifundium	large-scale property of land. The term usually refers to the rural estate and property organisation in a Mediterranean context, but is sometimes used for the vast property of the richest noble and church landlords in early modern Eastern Europe.
subjection/subject	used as a translation for the legal status of villagers vis-à-vis their lords in a tenurial relationship; that is, based on the land/holdings villagers received as tenants from their lords. The dominion of lords over tenants was thus based on land lordship, but could be extended to other areas such as powers of legal jurisdiction. Though the status of subjection did not entail personal bondage, the stricter forms that evolved within demesne lordship could restrict certain personal liberties, such as freedom of mobility.

Glossary

tenant leasehold	used as a translation for the tenurial form of <i>Laßbesitz</i> . The lease was formally limited to a number of years or for life, thus tenants held more insecure property rights over their holdings than in hereditary tenure. Practices in this respect varied widely. Usually lords provided the initial investments for such farms and thus retained rights to claim the property.
terrier	a land survey of an estate that lists seignorial properties and rights and includes a survey or 'extent' of all those holding land from the lord, as well as the rents and services they owe.
village headman	used as a translation for the heads of village communities (German <i>Dorfrichter</i> , <i>Schulze</i> ; Czech <i>rychtař</i> ; Polish <i>sołtys</i>) who often held, together with village jurors, the right of lower jurisdiction in regular village court meetings. Often privileged, these positions could be held in a hereditary manner, or heads of villages could be elected by village communities or nominated by lords.



Map 1 East-Central and Eastern Europe towards the end of the seventeenth century

Key: C: Copenhagen

S: Schleswig

H: Holstein

M: Mecklenburg

WP: Western Pomerania.

1 Understanding Demesne Lordship

[i] Introduction

Historical research has long assumed that in the early modern period rural societies in Western and Eastern Europe evolved along different paths. As a consequence, the notion of a fundamental ‘agrarian dualism’ between ancien régime Western and Eastern Europe was established, in which the Western model came to represent liberal modernity and progress and the Eastern re-feudalisation and authoritarianism. Many aspects of this conceptualisation overlap with views of a more general ‘backwardness’ of Eastern European societies and economies since the early modern period. The historical roots of this thinking, which also relate to the ‘otherness’ of Eastern Europe, are quite deep and complex [53]. However, based on research emerging since the late 1980s, this book will challenge the view of Eastern European rural society as ‘backward’ and characterised by a poor, suppressed peasantry (‘serfs’) and their powerful overlords. Revising this image does not only result in a new account of rural economic and social development in Eastern Europe, but also in questioning the idea of an agrarian dualism between Eastern and Western Europe that is well established in past and current historiography.

[ii] The Historiography of Demesne Lordship

The roots of the concept that two different agrarian systems and an agrarian dualism evolved in early modern Western and Eastern Europe can be found in an authoritative study by Georg