

**Trading Peasant Land: Patterns and Strategies of Land Transactions in Late Medieval Central Europe and Northern Italy**

**Veranstalter:** „Busy Tenants“ Project, Department of Economic and Social History, University of Vienna

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Reflecting the transmission of landed property in rural areas has been an inherent part of pre-modern economic and social history for many decades now. The evaluation of administrative and legal documentation has answered and raised multiple questions on acting parties, their motives and strategies. Agency within differing inheritance patterns, land markets and mortgages have been subjects discussed in many conference panels, bringing together research clusters from all over Europe. Debates and approaches often have originated from the North-West. However, since the first international conferences on land transactions and land markets, the scope has been at least pan-European. In the meantime, the number of case studies from Southern, Central and Eastern Europe has further increased and the regions are to be considered in comparative approaches. Only two months after the comprehensive workshop on „Land Market, Credit and Crisis in the Late Middle Ages“ in Girona – where an impressive width and quality of Iberian research was presented – this workshop addressed the state of research for Central Europe and Northern Italy. Geographically, the presented case studies reached from Prague to Treviso. The focus was laid on the late Middle Ages but was contextualised by perspectives from the high Middle Ages, the early modernity as well as from an extra-European point of view.

RICCARDO RAO (Bergamo) chaired the opening session with three Eastern Austrian contributions:

JOHANNES KASKA (Vienna), whose research is based on an extensive register of issued deeds recorded by the Upper Austrian monastery Lambach in the mid-15th century,

deduced a model of varying normative and practical forms of divisions and joint-tenancy out of his extensive body of sources. His cases show a variety of practices and land transactions resulting from a system of partible inheritance, which he categorised and exemplified as ‘distribution’, ‘division’ and ‘sharing’.

SAMUEL NUSSBAUM (Vienna) critically discussed the quantitative approaches within the famous ‘land-family bond’-debate. Doubting their value for measuring emotional bonds and individualism, he emphasized their benefit beyond the initial subject of the controversy. Applied on his case of 15th and 16th century wine growing villages near Vienna, documented by the archives of the monastery of Klosterneuburg, the methods yield trans-regionally comparable results on tenurial continuity and land transfers.

THOMAS ERTL (Berlin) continued with vineyards in the Vienna area. He assessed the economic importance of vineyard possession, vine production, consumption and export among the city dwellers. The 15th century tax registers provide evidence on the professional and financial involvement of urban and suburban residents. For the earlier times around 1400, Ertl consulted charters and wills, of which half comprised vineyards (usually more than one). According to him, this shows the significance of vineyard possession and along with other criteria determines Vienna as a ‘wine city’ as early as for the Middle Ages.

Panel 2 was chaired by MARIO RIZZO (Pavia). It drew a geographical line from north-western Bohemia to southern Tyrol:

TOMÁŠ KLÍR (Prague) presented his extensive study on mid-15th century Egerland in Bohemia. Deriving from archaeological studies on rural settlements, he expanded his research far into the field of economic, social and agrarian history. His main investigation on the mobility of the rural population includes analyses of households, wealth and land transfers. Drawing on regional and communal tax registers, continuously preserved from the late 14th century, Klír answered questions differentiated by agricultural zones and social strata. He described a predominantly local migration and frequent economic advancement. Desertion and abandonment was on-

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ly a phenomenon in peripheral locations.

BIRGIT HEINZLE (St. Gallen) announced a 'land market among locals' in her title. For a somewhat remote mountainous region in Upper Styria her sources – preserved by the monastery of St. Lambrecht – revealed an active land market with no restrictions regarding access and with a wide variety of participants. While half of the transactions were linked to inheritance and marriage, a third were sales. At the same time, the practice of impartible inheritance constituted extensive debt among family members. In her observation period of almost sixty years (15th–16th century), most of the actors appeared just once on the land market. Protagonists that were more active predominantly belonged to elite families.

JANINE MAEGRAITH (Vienna, Cambridge) is investigating diversified holdings in Tyrol's Puster Valley. Her research focus is on wealth as a 'constitutor' of social spaces, namely kinship. By reconstructing the transaction history of several farms in the timespan from 1560 to 1590, Maegraith uncovered a seesaw of purchases and sales among a relatively small group of people. The tenurial history illustrates a dynamic land market without inhibiting restrictions and a flexible use of legal instruments including exchanges and mortgages. Simultaneously inheritance and marital property law heavily structure the transactions, forming spheres of action determined by kin, neighbourhood and court.

AMAR S. BAADJ (Trier) chaired the third and final panel, introducing two more case studies south of the Alps:

THOMAS FRANK's (Pavia) case – the tenants of the hospital Santa Maria dei Battuti in Treviso – shows a development of a decreasing number of families, holding on to their tenures for an increasing number of years. The tenants were granted short-term lease contracts of five or nine years. While a certain number of local tenant families were able to extend their tenures on a regular basis, migrants had less stable tenurial relationships. Based on taxation sources, Frank also assessed the overall dependency of tenants on the hospital's land, showing that not more than about a third of them – the locally rooted wealthier families – were able to maintain a

certain economic autonomy from the hospital.

MATTEO DI TULLIO (Pavia) opened the scope towards early modern developments. Looking back to the Middle Ages he interpreted sales of landed property mostly as consequence of obligations coming along with inheritance and to a lesser extent as market activity. In his study, he analysed different locations with varying agrarian and geographical preconditions in the Milano area. Over time, he observed an increasing pressure on the rural population resulting in early 'capitalistic' concentration processes concerning the possession of means of production including land.

The time schedule of the workshop allowed not only for a detailed and sometimes animated discussion of each paper, but also for a final discussion, where AMAR S. BAADJ (Trier) granted insights into his research on land tenure in western to eastern Maghreb from the year 1000 to 1500. Scholars in that field have yet to work on fundamentals: based on chronicles and legal texts on norms and contracts, research is now describing the big trajectories in different geographical regions and through different dynasties.

A high medieval perspective was introduced by EMMANUEL HUERTAS (Toulouse). He looked back to the big conferences on medieval land markets in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Back then, research even on the 12th and 13th centuries stood under the strong influence of modernists and economic anthropology. British research has been dominant since the beginning but now the interest in the subject has spread and new impulses have been given from different regions, as, for example, from Central Europe. Summarising the Workshop, Huertas empathised three points: (1) The comparison of different sources is an ongoing challenge; (2) terminology still varies among different historiographies; and (3) he encouraged the research on the geographical distribution of legal tenancy rights.

Thomas Ertl observed an (almost) common sense among late medievalists, that active land markets were widespread. He recognised a variety of different sources, each asking for different research questions and methods. Terminology and connecting the micro and macro levels still pose challenges. Over-

all, the workshop papers brought many insights: They illustrated complex transaction practices and forms of possession within normative boundaries. They empathized commercial activity within the family and contradicted the separation of family and market. They assessed old concepts and linked approved methods with new perspectives. They showed assets and drawbacks of quantitative analysis, gave insight into sophisticated administrations, a variety of contracts and economic performances. They showed urban investment in suburban and rural areas, proto-capitalistic structures and growing inequality, and they recognised the legal frame as a stabilising and driving force for the land market. Overall, the papers presented many 'busy tenants' in late medieval times.

#### Conference Overview:

Thomas Frank (Pavia): Introduction

##### Panel 1

Chair: Riccardo Rao (Bergamo)

Johannes Kaska (Vienna): The Influence of Lambach's System of Partible Inheritance on Land Transactions Among Siblings. Mid-15th Century

Samuel Nussbaum (Vienna): The 'Land-Family Bond' in Wine Growing Villages Near Vienna, 1454–1513

Thomas Ertl (Berlin): Vienna's Wine. Citizens and Their Vineyard Investments Around 1400 AD

##### Panel 2

Chair: Mario Rizzo (Pavia)

Tomáš Klír (Prague): The Transfer of Peasant Land in the Cheb Region Around 1450 (Czech Republic)

Birgit Heinzle (St. Gallen): A Land Market Among Locals – Land Transactions in the Afenz Estate (Upper Styria), 1494–1550

Janine Maeagraith (Vienna): Selling, Buying and Exchanging Peasant Land in 16th Century Southern Tyrol

##### Panel 3

Chair: Amar Salem Baadj (Trier)

Thomas Frank (Pavia): The Lease Market in

the Region of Treviso: The Tenants of the Hospital Santa Maria dei Battuti, 15th–16th Century

Matteo Di Tullio (Pavia): Capitalism and Peasant Economy. Agrarian Contracts, Socio-Economic Stratification and Household's Organisation in the Early Modern Lombardy

##### Final Discussion

Thomas Ertl (Berlin) / Emmanuel Huertas (Toulouse)

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