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Merchants and agricultural activities in pre-industrial Germany: The Wupper Valley from the 16th to the 18th century.

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The problem

Herbert Kisch characterizes the first phase of economic development in the Wupper Valley in the Lower Rhine region as a <balanced economy>. “The successes of Wupper Valley commerce were achieved because, not in spite of, the simultaneous continuation of agricultural activities” (Kisch, 1972, 334). Rich merchants did not hesitate to engage in agricultural activities (Kerst, 1960, 21). Engaging in both commerce and agriculture was a tradition that was observed until the first quarter of the 18th century (Murayama 1990, 41-42/187-188). Agricultural activities (Allen, 1998) were in decline while urbanization (Fields, 1999) and industrialization were taking place. Almost all of the historical studies on the transition from an agrarian to industrial society fail to analyze what was happening agriculturally while the first phase of industrialization was occurring (Köllmann, 1960). Kisch’s argument is a rare example that mentioned agricultural activities. However, the causes for the disappearance of agricultural activities in the Wupper Valley are not clarified in his study. This essay will focus on the specific relation of this institutional setting of the communal economy to industrialization as a declining process of agricultural sectors.

Some of the evidence Kisch presented for the change in the economy of the Wupper Valley came from the work of early researchers who had visited the area at different times throughout the 16th to 18th centuries.

(1) E. P. Ploennis, in his topographical notes from 1715, described Elberfeld, one of two major settlements in the Wupper Valley, “as a town of <distinguished merchants ... and considerable trade...>” (Kisch 1972, 342). Commenting on “Amt Barmen”, another settlement, Ploennis observed the “<numerous bleachgreens where yarn is bleached with which, in turn, traders, for the most part residing in Elberfeld, carry on an extensive business. In addition, there are many here who make a living by combining

agricultural pursuits with weaving linen ribbons>” (Kisch 1972, 342).

(2) Fourteen years later, in 1729, Court Councilor Wülffing said that Elberfeld, “<by virtue of its world commerce, might be legitimately referred to as a small Amsterdam. There are merchants here whose wealth and business acumen can be compared to that of the Dutch ... and adjacent to the famous town of Elberfeld is the equally pleasant locality of “Amt Ober- und Unter-Barmen,” consisting for the most part of linen yarn bleaching establishments and merchants of all kinds ...>” (Kisch 1972, 342).

(3) During the years 1773 and 1774, one of the Duchy’s senior officials, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, prepared a report on the state of the Jülich-Berg industries (Kisch 1972, 367-373). According to Jacobi, “<until recently, Elberfeld’s vegetable gardens sufficed to feed the local burghers, now, twice weekly, scores of peasants from the Düsseldorf district travel there to sell their products. Also, most of the rye consumed in Elberfeld gets there via Düsseldorf ...>” (Kisch 1972, 371).

(4) “Jacobi’s reactionary and pseudo-aristocratic biases are reflected in his distaste for the rising merchants, who were to concentrate in their hands ever-larger aggregations of capital. Jacobi senses that the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth is a byproduct of progress” (Kisch 1972, 372). Jacobi was particularly incensed about two bachelor brothers (the brothers Wichelhaus), who are discussed in detail below, residing in Gemarke, who “<virtually own the whole district> and supposedly exploit their monopolistic position when selling off individual lots to potential house owners” (Kisch 1972, 372).

In his article Kisch used a number of local studies, but made insufficient use of original sources such as population registers, taxation records, and parish registers. The social change from a monopoly to a laissez-faire economy is his most important concept. The economy of the Wupper Valley was founded in a period of communal economy under the monopolized privilege of yarn bleaching in Berg, the so-called *Garnnahrung*, after 1527 and up to the 18th century. What we intend to explore here is the specific relation of this institutional setting of the communal economy to industrialization as a declining process of agricultural sectors.

The Wupper Valley

The Wupper Valley had a population of 3,700 persons around 1600, and after a decrease and stagnant period during the Thirty Years War, the population increased rapidly in the

latter half of the 17th century, reaching about 5,500 persons at the beginning of the 18th century. Subsequently, the population increased more rapidly, to 8,500 persons in the middle of that century, and in the latter half of the century and in the 19th century, much more dramatically, to 24,872 persons in 1792, 40,716 in 1816, and 63,231 in 1840 (Murayama 1990, 132).

The Wupper Valley had two settlements, Elberfeld and Barmen, which were referred to as twin cities in the nineteenth century. Around 1700, however, they were more differentiated localities; Elberfeld was an urban settlement and Barmen a rather rural one. In 1698, Barmen had a population of 2,134, the number of households was 430, and the size of the average household was 4.96. In 1703, the city of Elberfeld had a population of 3,050, 768 households, and one poorhouse, where 22 persons lived. The size of the average household, except for the poorhouse, was 3.94 (Murayama, 1990, 209). This difference between the settlements is the result of there being a greater number of one-person households in Elberfeld, and also proportionally more households of young couples without children. In Barmen, fifty years later, the same configuration of households was observed, with a population register of 1745 showing a large increase in the number of one-person households. The average household size was 4.11 by this time, and the proportion of one-person households increased from 1.9 percent to 10.4 percent. In 1698, there were two large households, each of which had approximately 20 members, but in 1745 no households this large existed.

Based on a population register for 1702/03 (*Verzeichnis*), we know the employment structure at that time in the city of Elberfeld. The city was a normal one, with many craftsmen and also many workers in the textile industry, and the ten wealthiest export merchants were the leaders and movers of the Wupper Valley economy. In Barmen, in 1709 (Langewiesche, 1863, 228), there were 55 individuals engaged in agriculture, 8 day labourers, 15 merchants, 41 master bleachers, 21 journeymen bleachers, 4 linen weavers, 48 ribbon weavers, 2 twiners, 3 shoemakers, 3 bakers, 3 blacksmiths, 3 thimble makers, 6 joiners, 9 publicans, 6 petty traders, 3 coopers, 1 roofer, 3 pig dealers, 1 miller, and 40 paupers. The number of workers and labourers in the textile industry continued to increase, and Gemarke, one of the twelve constituent localities of Barmen, eventually became the hub of the boom, primarily because of its central location and its proximity to a bridge spanning the Wupper. While in 1698 Gemarke contained 13.4 percent of Barmen's total population, its share rose to 21.7 percent by 1747. The total population of Barmen rose from 2,134 to 3,790 persons (Murayama, 1990, 209). In the

middle of the eighteenth century, Gemarke could claim all the attributes of a city centre.

The origin of economic development

Various textile industries developed in the Wupper Valley, and their origin was a business that bleached flaxen thread and exported bleached thread. In 1527, a territorial prince granted the special privilege of monopoly to the common people who lived off of this business, which utilized the water of the Wupper River and the fertile plain beside it. This special privilege of monopoly was called *Garnnahrung*, and it was granted to city inhabitants, the peripheral inhabitants of the city, and to the inhabitants of Barmen, next to the city of Elberfeld. The privilege was given to the general populace of the Wupper Valley as a communal interest. In this sense, the whole community became one fixed management body. It was also a privilege of economic self-government. However, this cooperative character disappeared gradually, especially after a large fire occurred in 1687.

This large fire broke out on in Elberfeld on May 22, 1687, and nearly destroyed approximately 300 houses (Kollekte 1687). Possibly about 1,500 persons were burned out of their homes. The city of Elberfeld was a center of Calvinism. The city community was united with the church community, and the mayoral elections were held at a church. Of course, no social insurance system like that presently found existed. After the fire, the city authorities requested that the territorial prince grant an exemption from land taxes. On July 10, less than three weeks after the fire, the feudal lord withdrew an ordinance of land taxation for Elberfeld, effectively creating an exemption.

This exemption, good for 20 years, was granted to people who wanted to move to the city of Elberfeld (Goebel 1966, pp.29-30). Thanks to this 20-year exemption, people flocked to the city. As a result of this immigration, the religious constitution of the city changed greatly. Whereas almost all of the inhabitants of the old city had been Calvinist, throughout the 18th century more and more Lutherans and Catholics came to live in the city. At the end of the 18th century, 45.8% of the inhabitants were Calvinist, 44.3% were Lutheran, and the remaining 9.9% were Catholic (counted in Wiebeking 1793).

The socio-economic change that occurred in the 16th and 17th centuries was characterized not only by this religious reconfiguration, but also by new class

formations. As a result of the Ducal Privilege, by 1527 the economic subjects in the Wupper Valley were regarded as *Haußmänner* (= Patriarchs) (*Privilegium*, 1527). They changed by mutual edict in the local governance of *Garnnahrung* to *Garnnahrungsverwandte* (relatives of *Garnnahrung*) at the beginning of the 17th century (*Ordnung*, 1602; *Garnordnung*, 1608), and then to *Handelsgenossen* (merchant companions) at the end of the 17th century (*Garnordnung*, 1698). In the 16th century, the Privilege allowed for a corporate character consisting of “Heads of Households”, but subsequently the character of a communal economy was emphasized in the *Garnnahrung*, and this changed gradually in the 17th century into a class economy that distinguished between merchants and wage bleachers (Murayama 1995, 129-153). This change of economy empirically supports the argument of Winfried Schulze, who characterized the 16th and 17th centuries as a transitional phase in the economy from public good to self-interest (Schulze 1986).

The privilege of *Garnnahrung* arose from the medieval conception of a static society, which sustained the policy of restrictions on the quantity of production in order to realize “corporate ideals regarding a stable, and above all, an egalitarian income for all concerned” (Kisch 1972, 309). Such a corporate economy changed gradually into a class society. This type of corporate economy changed gradually into a class society.

Merchants’ marriage network in the period of mortality crises

The burial records of a reformed church in Elberfeld of the Wupper Valley in the lower Rhine region show that there were some remarkably high rates of mortality in the seventeenth century. Two-hundred and twenty-one human deaths can be confirmed in 1597, just preceding the start of the seventeenth century, and 321 persons died in 1613, 593 persons in 1630, 558 persons in 1636, and 321 persons in 1676. The average number of deaths during other years of the century was less than 100 per year.

< Fig. 1: Macro-statistical changes in the number of burials, baptisms and marriages >

The parish of the reformed church in Elberfeld included the city of Elberfeld and two nearby farm districts. The population of this parish is estimated to have been approximately 2,000 persons at the beginning of the seventeenth century and approximately 3,400 by the end of the century. Although the population increased

gradually throughout the century, a mortality crisis resulted in the loss of about 25 percent of the population in one year, and such a situation occurred two times during the period of the Thirteen Years' War. Since the feudal lord of this district had taken a neutral position in the war, there was no direct war damage. However, the spread of epidemics resulted in serious mortality crises.

Using these parish registers, many local historians have tried to reconstitute the genealogical lines of several families, including the family of Wichelhaus, the family of Wuppermann, and others. Edmund Strutz, one of the most famous local historians, has, according to such genealogical studies and his own works, published a comprehensive genealogical study on the families of "Elberfelder Bürgermeister und Stadtrichter von 1708-1808" (Strutz, 1963), which includes more than 700 families with about 4000 family members. Strutz traced families to before the 16th century. Choosing from among these families, we examined 47 couples who married in the seventeenth century. The birth, marriage, and death dates of those couples were in almost all cases recorded exactly. The marriages were the first for both partners of each couple. All of these families were propertied elite in the Wupper Valley.

< Table 1: 47 couples and their events >

Since 47 couples is too small a number for us to generalize our observations statistically, a qualitative analysis rather than a quantitative one was carried out to focus on individual marriage behavior. We used not only information about the family reconstitution of the 47 couples, but also information about their parents and grandparents to clarify the timing of the marriage in relation to the death of parents and the change of cohabitation. We paid special attention to the courtship process (Hudson & King, 2003, 166).

Important information for our analysis was also derived from the poll tax recorded in 1663 and 1673 (*Rechnungen*, 1662-1673), which charged the city inhabitants in Elberfeld. There was a ten year interval between these poll taxes, in which almost the same information was obtained, and the differences in this information was used to clarify the changes in families and cohabitation through identification of the names of the persons taxed. Moreover, in the poll tax in 1673, the amount of tax was classified, and the occupation of household representatives clarified. Poor people, who could not pay tax, were also recognized.

Since the list of those historical materials of poll tax is not a population register, children under the age of 15 were probably not recorded. Even though poor families were recognized, and in some cases a note was included that stated that children had been sent out to be beggars, it is not always clear how many children there were. Small children and infants were clearly excluded. However, we were able to figure out the number of children in some households by comparing the poll tax information with the family reconstitution information, which includes information about land ownership and the succession of property. By using and comparing the different information derived from two different sources, we were able to clarify the influence of the mortality crises on marital behavior.

< Table 2: Anton Schlösser and his family >

Table 2 shows that Anton Schlösser (No. 11: 1609-1665) married four times. Hr. Schlösser's first wife died in 1630, and the second in 1636. Terrible mortality crises occurred in the Wupper Valley during both 1630 and 1636. Schlösser's first wife, Anna Braus (No. 11: 1607-1630), was 23 years old when she died, and his second wife, Anna Siebel, was 28 years old when she died. His third wife, Eva Katharina Holerhoff, died at the age of 38 in 1652, a year when there was also a small mortality crisis.

Since Anton died in 1665, his name can be found in the poll tax list of 1663. At that time he had a wife, a daughter named Helena, a servant, and a maid. His wife was Eva Katharina, his 4th marriage partner. They married in 1653 and had a son, Johannes, who was 14 years old in 1663, and a daughter named Eva Katharina, who was 9 years old at that time. These children do not appear in the list of 1663.

By the time Anton died in 1665, the family situation had changed a great deal from earlier years. At 16, Johannes was still too young to marry. His elder half-sister Helena was 23 years old, of marriageable age. She was a daughter of Anton's former wife, Anna Siebel. Her stepmother was Eva Katharina, who, three years after Anton's death, married for the second time. Her new husband was Johannes Cappel (?-1679), whom she married in 1668. This was Hr. Cappel's second marriage. He does not appear in the list of 1673. His trade activity was carried out in Benrath, although his family had emigrated to Elberfeld later. The son of Johannes Cappel and Eva Katharina, Johann Peter Cappel (1668-1725), served as the mayor of the city of Elberfeld in 1715, and

Johann Kaspar Cappel (1710-1764), who was their grandchild, became the mayor in 1754.

Because of her stepmother's remarriage, Helena's family relations changed greatly during the period in which she was being courted. Four years after Helena's stepmother remarried, in 1672, Helena married Andreas Siebel (No. 32: 1642-1710), when both were 29 years old.

< Table 3: Helena and Johanness Schlösser >

Not only Helena, but also Johannes, had a good relationship with the family of Andreas Siebel, whose father was also called Andreas (= the father Andreas). Johannes, who was a young journeyman, appears in the list of 1673 as a household head. He was 24 years of age. Before his nomination to the list, Andreas Siebel and his wife Helena were registered. It is possible that Johannes had a business relation with his brother-in-law. Johannes married Gertrud Wülfing (No. 37: 1657-1734) in 1684. He was 35 years old, and his partner was 27. His partner, Gertrud, was the daughter of Gertrud Teschemacher (1626-1703) and her first husband, Gottfried Wülfing. After her first husband's death, Teschemacher married Andreas, who died in 1684. Shortly before the death of Andreas, Johannes married Gertrud. Gertrud's mother, also named Gertrud, lived with her daughter and her husband Johannes after their marriage.

Johannes's sister-in-law was Eva Katharina (No. 38: 1654-1734), whose mother, mentioned before, was also named Eva Katharina. Johanne's sister-in-law Eva Katharina was married to Bernhard Meyer (No. 38: 1657-1730), who was a pastor. Eva Katharina married Bernhard Meyer in the same year, 1684, as Johannes married. Mayer had been a pastor of the reformed church in Urdenbach since 1683, in Mülheim a. d. Ruhr since 1689, and in Duisburg since 1703, and had become a pastor of the reformed church in Elberfeld in 1703. The couple married in Urdenbach. The fact that these two marriages occurred in 1684 is not just a curious coincidence. I think that the father Andreas Siebel may have acted as a parent to Anton Schlösser's children, because they were so young at the time of Anton's death.

The dense kinship relations probably spurred Anton's three children into getting married. The timing of the death of the father Andreas was especially crucial for the two younger children, who experienced the absence of their father and a change in their family

during the time of their courtship processes. This timing of the courtship of the two younger children's stepmother, Eva Katharina, probably lengthened the time of the children's own marriage.

Anton's family was directly influenced by mortality crises. Not only did the children experience deaths in the family, they were also likely influenced by remarriages, because the courtship process of younger children is known to be affected by the death of parents and remarriage of the partners.

< Table 4: Benjamin Teschemacher and his family >

We might contrast these life stories with those of the family of Benjamin Teschemacher (No. 20: 1619-1681). According to Table 4, Teschemacher's family shows a marriage pattern typical of the wealthiest families in the Wupper Valley. Benjamin married Katharina Schlösser (No. 20: 1630-1717) in 1649, when he was 29 and Katharina 19. In the list of 1663 they appear as marriage partners, but no children were recorded, while in the list of 1673 they have two sons and three daughters. In 1663 their children were too young to be registered.

According to the family reconstitution information, Benjamin and Katharina's children's marriages, except that of Helena, advanced smoothly. At the time of marriage, Anna Maria (1652-1683) was 23 years of age, Katharina (No. 33: 1654-?) was 20, and Susanna (No. 45: 1670-1744) 24. Anna Maria's husband, Johannes Conrads (?-1708), seems to have been born in Dortmund, but exactly when is not clear. Therefore, the couple is not listed in Table 1. Johannes moved to Düsseldorf, returned to Elberfeld, and served as mayor of the city in 1700.

Benjamin was 6 years old when his father Johannes (?-1625) died. His mother, Helena Lüttringhausen (?-1627), died two years later, when Benjamin was 8. Johannes served as the mayor of the city in 1616. His family was wealthy. It is possible that Benjamin was the couple's last son. It is not clear who acted as a parent for Benjamin. Benjamin married Katharina Schlösser (No. 20: 1630-1717) in 1649. Katharina's parents were Andreas Schlösser (No. 5: 1593-1672) and Anna Plücker (No. 5: 1595-1655). This Andreas was an elder brother of Anton Schlösser. If Benjamin had known the family of Andreas Schlösser from early times, it is possible that he witnessed the deaths of Anton's first, second, and third wives.

Benjamin's wife was Katharina, who was born in 1630 and died in 1717, when she was 87 years of age. According to the population register of the city of Elberfeld of 1703 (*Verzeichnis*, 1702/03), she was recorded as a widow, because Benjamin died in 1681. She was 73 years of age at that time, but the record shows that she was still active as a merchant.

The mean age at marriage of the women in the 47 couples was 22.2 years. The distribution of age at marriage is also narrow. Hudson and King stress in their study of two English townships of the eighteenth century that there existed a clear relationship between female marriage ages and kinship density (Hudson and King, 2003, p.175). Our sample of 47 couples showed a dense kinship relation, which correlated to early marriage.

Historical-demographic data for seventeenth-century Germany are scarce. For example, there is only one set of data for the city of Gießen (Imhof, 1975) for the entire century. But it is suggested from the data of other communities that the distribution of female marriage ages had a wider disbursement in the first phase of the early modern period than later on. In contrast to the females' case, the ages of males at first marriage were dispersed from 18 to 41 years of age throughout the period.

< Table 5: Distribution of age at first marriage of 47 couples in Elberfeld in comparison with the case of Gießen >

< Fig. 2: Distribution of age at first marriage (in %) >

It is not surprising that the females of some homogeneous marriage couples married between 19 and 22 years of age. A specific class seems to have had such a custom. However, some families, like the Schlosser's family, were older at marriage.

By using the family reconstitution information about 47 couples and linking this information to the poll tax lists, we were able to determine that the death of parents caused fundamental changes in family relations. All of the wealthiest couples had dense kinship relations with each other, and female marriage ages were low, although this custom was often disturbed by the death of parents. The mortality crises had serious effects on family relations, and for newcomers presented an important opportunity to enter the small, wealthy family groups in the Wupper Valley. These wealthy family

groups were continuously renewed by the newcomers. However, it is crucial to note that the family line, which survived in this period and inherited agricultural estates, formed central figures in the elite class in the Wupper Valley.

Family Property of Johannes Plücker (1656 – 1709)

In contrast to Barmen, a relatively agricultural district in the Wupper valley, we have only scarce information about the inhabitants of the city of Elberfeld because its historical materials were damaged by fire, or disappeared during the Second World War. The city-like settlement that had already developed in the late 15th and 16th centuries was granted its administrative privileges in 1610, and then its city court privileges in 1708. It was a relatively newly developed city in Germany. For my research, I was able to use an inventory put together by a rich merchant in Elberfeld, Johannes Plücker (Schell, 1913). He was born in 1656 and died in 1709. In 1679 he became the mayor of the city, and again in 1688. According to his inventory he was a merchant, but also tried agricultural activities. His enormous assets were divided within two years after 1709 among his 6 children, because his wife, Anna Maria Sibel (1663-1709), also died in the same year, in 1709. In 1709 there were six surviving children. The oldest daughter was Anna Maria (1681-1736), the second-oldest daughter was Rosina (1686-1733), the oldest son was Johann Kaspar, the second-oldest son was Karl Jakob (1689-1741), the third-oldest daughter was Elenora (1691-1768), and the fourth-oldest was Charlotte.

<Fig. 3: Genealogy of Johannes Plücker's Family>

Genealogical and personal research on the families of all of the mayors of the city of Elberfeld after 1708 was completed by Edmund Strutz (Strutz 1963). We can reconstruct their families and life-courses without arduous work using parish registers. In Strutz's survey, there was concrete information about all of the children of Johannes Plücker except Johann Kaspar and Charlotte. According to the inventory, Johann Kaspar obtained an estate in Barmen, and the population register of 1745/46 shows that he was possibly a lay magistrate in Barmen. It was only regarding the fourth daughter, Charlotte, that we were unable to obtain special information.

The husband of the eldest daughter, Anna Maria, was Johann Kaspar von Carnap (1669-1714), who was the first mayor after the acquisition of the city court privileges. He was

the mayor in 1707 and 1708. The husband of the second daughter, Rosina, was also the mayor of the city in 1718 and 1725. His name was Wilhelm von Carnap (1680-1749). In addition, the husband of the third daughter, Elenora, Johann Jakob Siebel (1679-1743), acted as mayor in 1711. These three daughters married young; Anna Maria was married in 1702 at 21 years, Rosina in 1705 at 19, and Elenora in 1709 at 18. These marriages and also the marriage of Karl Jakob were all arranged by their father before his death.

Before the deaths of his parents, the oldest son, Johann Kaspar, had already moved to Barmen, and after his parents' deaths, the estate, "*Haus und Hof*", was inherited by the second son, Karl Jakob. This inheritance was completed before the description of the inventory that dealt only with mobile properties. Karl Jakob was not ever elected Mayor of the city, although he was a candidate two times, in 1717 and 1740. However his son, Johannes (1711-1780), was an unsuccessful candidate in 1764 but was elected Mayor in 1767.

The inheritance tables show that the monetary value of all of the commodities of the parents which were considered to be property was calculated. It is well known what was considered to be property at that time. Although it is clear that land and houses were the most important property, other commodities such as tableware, clothing, bed-related articles, and books, especially Bibles and other sacred books, were also understood to be important property. Moreover, because Johannes was involved in commercial endeavors, there were many commercial goods, such as saffron used for coloring, which were also assigned a monetary value. A record was also made of the amount of money advanced to the governor of the territorial state which had not been repayed.

As stated before, the starting point of the industry in Wuppertal was a business that bleached flaxen thread and exported bleached thread. The list of thread owners for 1606 is still in existence. This list contains the names of the generations which preceded Johannes the grandfather. According to this list, the family of Johannes was never in the upper bracket of taxpayers. The amount of thread that they possessed was small in comparison with other thread owners (Dietz 1957, 59). It is interesting that the boy ("*Knab*" Johann) is also indicated to be an owner of 8 *Zentner*, although his father, Jaspas, possessed the thread of 8 *Zentner*. Both the father and his son are registered separately, which means that each obtained the profits separately. In 1656, the son of Johann, Father Johannes (1628-1680), was one of the two "*Garnmeister*" who generalized "*Garnnahrung*" (Dietz 1957, 65). He was also the mayor of Elberfeld in

1679 (Strutz 1963, 120). The Plücker family rose economically and socially as a family in the 17th century.

Johannes' inventory focused on private property. The question then arises: From what point in history can such private property really be studied? The various historical records show that the household was not the unit in a controlled society before the 16th century. Instead, the farm was the standard unit of all management organizations. However, this unit gradually loosened with the development of the new bleaching industry. Farms were divided, and estate-owning families appeared. However, they were not totally fragmented because their ownership was concentrated in a specific class. As remarked on with respect to Austria (Rebel 1983), the inhabitants were divided into two classes, a propertied class and a proletarian class. The former had a permanent residence, and the latter did not own a house or land.

Private property accumulated by small groups

Aue, a local district in Barmen, is nearest to the city of Elberfeld. A taxation record from 1738 (*Gewinn- und Gewerbesteuerzettel*, 1738) shows the structure of the occupations of its inhabitants in detail. Proportionally, more weavers lived in Aue. Most weavers' families did not own property. The tax register indicates whether a taxpayer inherited any property. In the register, such inherited households are distinguished as "*Beerbte*," which means "inherited". Weavers who inherited property represented only 5.4 % of all weavers. Also, 25.1% of knitters inherited property, and 43.1% of bleachers did (Table 6).

<Table 6: Inheriting knitters, weavers, and bleachers in Barmen in 1738)

For the most part, merchants such as Hochstein and Wichelhaus controlled the weavers. They often owned the houses in which the weavers lived. The weavers did not inherit their own family property. There is considerable reason to believe that in the middle of the 18th century, relations between merchants and weavers were fairly amicable. Many weavers came to live in the Wupper Valley. In the latter half of that century, however, the merchants began to scout for cheap labour. The prices in the Wupper Valley, including wages, had steadily increased. The non-inheriting families of weavers survived only on their wages. The weavers in the Wupper Valley had established a guild

in order to defend their position. However the guild provided insufficient protection. In the 1780s, the conflict between weavers and merchants became violent, and had to be mediated by the state army (Murayama 1990, 47).

<Table 7: Inheriting craftsmen and manufacturers as a fraction of taxpayer contributions in 1643 and 1738>

The number of inheriting households as a proportion of the total number of craftsmen and manufacturers decreased from 59.1 % in 1643 (*Steuerrepartitionen und Steuerzettel*, 1643) to 19.3 % in 1738 (Table 7). The change rate differed among localities. The official head of Aue, G. Bieler, classified the households in 1746 into three classes, as follows: 1) those of inheriting families, 2) persons who were dependent solely on wages, and 3) poor people. He described this system of classification in the register (*Grundsteuer*, 1747). Unfortunately, such detailed registration was performed only in Aue. Aue had 67 households in 1746. Of these, one household had no marks, 18 households (26.9%) were made up of inheriting families of the first class, 45 households (67.2%) belonged to the second class, and 3 households (4.5%) belonged to the third class.

What types of changes in family property can be observed during these centuries? To answer this question, the “Hebezettel” (= Holdings register) from 1643 and that from 1778 can be referenced. The amount of property in all localities increased approximately ten-fold. The taxpayers in 1643 and also those in 1778 were classified into the following classes: the rich class, made up of the highest 25 persons of taxpayers, the poor class, made up of the lowest 25 persons, and the middle class, made up of the others.

<Table 8: Proportion of property>

Table 8 shows that there was almost no class change among taxpayers. This is because in the two years of 1643 and 1778 the fraction of the total taxes by the upper class, taxpayers of the middle class, and the lower class shows very little change. However, the estimated population of Barmen during these two years changed from around 2,000 to around 10,000. If the average household size was five persons in 1643, there would have been about 400 representatives of household units, whereas if the average household size was about 4 in 1778, there would have been about 2,500 household

heads. Since 253 persons were taxpayers among 400 household heads in 1643, the ratio of taxpayers to household heads was about 63%. In 1778 there were 344 taxpayers among 2,500 heads of household, for a ratio of about 14%. Although these are round numbers, they provide a frame of reference for comparing the two years.

Although the gap between wealth and poverty did not show a big change, the number of individuals regarded as non-tax payers increased greatly. Although the ratio of non-taxpayers was, according to my estimation, 37% in 1643, it was 86% in 1778. A fundamental change took place in the type of the property of each household. As occurred previously with weavers, the classes completely unrelated to real estate clearly increased in size. In 1778, the local resources in Barmen, especially the estates, were much more concentrated among a small circle of individuals.

Each locality shows a different trend in terms of the concentration of property. The social structure in Loh did not change dramatically in terms of the concentration of local wealth. In Gemark, the number of large property-owning households decreased, and the number of small property-owning households increased. The latter increase was caused by the population increase during the urbanization in Gemark. In Aue, the same trend was also recognized. The case of Wülffing differed; the proportion of middle class households increased. In Höchst and Heckinghaus in 1773, there were no taxpayers who paid more than 30 Rthl. However, such a classification is not very significant for estimating the family property, because the property of a family was of course not limited to one locality.

Jacobi reported that the two bachelor brothers who resided in Gemark, the brothers Wichelhaus, “virtually own the whole district”, which indicates that their property was not limited to Gemark. Evidence in the holding register of 1778 suggests their monopolization. They possessed property worth duty amounts of 33Rthl.15Alb. in Loh, 62 Rthl. 66 Alb. in Wülffing, 40 Rthl. 13 Alb. 8 H. in Bruch, and 69 Rthl. 12 Alb. 8H. in Gemark. The family Wichelhaus was not the only family to own property in diverse locations. Many local properties were concentrated in some families, who can be traced genealogically to the period at the beginning of Garnnarhung and were mostly established in the 17th century. Kisch insists that “by the late 18th century this mercantile elite had become a close-knit oligarchy, entry into which became increasingly difficult” (Kisch 1972, 387). In 1775, to underscore as it were their preeminence, Elberfeld’s most prominent men of affairs decided to establish a club, the

so-called *geschlossene Lesegesellschaft* (= a closed reading society) (Kisch 1972, 387).

Concluding Remarks

Jacobi, an observer at that time, notes as a corollary to soaring food prices that in the Wupper Valley, <the value of an ordinary peasant holding increased by 50 per cent after the years 1740-1750 ..., since the end of the war, 130 new houses were built in Elberfeld and Barmen ...>. Quite obviously, these developments were in large part responsible for the soaring price of real estate. This is why, according to Jacobi, <progress in the Berg area is no longer feasible. Population must either stagnate or emigrate>” (Kisch, 372). In the latter half of the 18th century, the property of several families increased enormously in value. According to the report of the Chronicle writer of the Wuppertal, Johann Merken, beginning around 1760, the lifestyles of the population changed dramatically, from a simple lifestyle to a luxurious one, within a period of 50 to 70 years (Kerst, 35-38).

The development of a market economy on and after the second half of the 15th century also determined the difference between the class that accumulated private property and the other non-propertied class. The starting point of this change in the Wupper Valley was the local predominance over the natural environment. Second, the continuous development of the local economy was based on the concession policy of a pre-modern territorial state dating from the 16th century. The third factor stimulating the development of a market economy was the witness-management of the merchant class, which was coordinated with some localized manufacturing industries.

While the possession of land, houses, and savings as general properties was concentrated specifically in the upper class, non-propertied people’s lives were mostly dependent on the economic performance of the propertied merchants. Until the second half of the 18th century, the merchants had taken a risk on mercantile activities under the guarantee of sustainability of agricultural activities using their own estates. However, the concentration of landed property in small family networks and the rising value of their estates fundamentally changed the mechanism of the “balanced economy.”

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