

We are most pleased be able to offer the following article with insight on land ownership in the Kaszubian region. After all, Pomerania is the same region no matter how it is spelled. Used with the permission of both the author, in addition to the editor of *Die Pommerschen Leute*., which is a publication of California based organization. Their newsletter is highly recommended. More information can be found on their website **Pomeranianews.com**.

The Relationship between Nobility and Peasantry

by Alan Moll

In the Late Middle Ages, farming practices and land ownership in Pommern reflected the feudal society that encompassed much of Europe. Most of the land was under the control of knights and nobility, with peasant farmers leasing the land in exchange for a set rent and limited labor. It is difficult to generalize the relationship between the Pommern nobility and peasantry during this period. However, it is safe to say that prior to the 16th century there were more free farmers, more peasant farms, and greater peasant personal rights than in the following years.

In the mid-16th century, the Pommern nobility managed to acquire more and more land, removing thousands of peasants from their farms. This was called the *Bauerlegen* (to lay-down farmers). Much of the land that had been leased as peasant farms, became part of the landlord's estate.

During the 17th and 18th centuries most of the land was owned by these noble landlords (*Junker, Gutsherren*), although some was also owned by the church, the state, larger towns, and a relatively small number of free farmers (*Freibauern*). Villages were often designated as a noble village (*Adlige*) or royal village (*Königliche*), reflecting the type of ownership. In contrast, church land did not consist of entire villages, but often single farms throughout a number of villages.

Because of the different types of estates and differences in local rules and traditions, it is hard to describe a typical village. However, many villages consisted of the landowner's personal estate, with additional land set aside for use by peasant farmers. Most of the villagers were dependent people (*Leibeigene*), dependent on the landlord and bound to the land. In a typical village, 10 to 20 percent were farmers (*Bauern*), holding a relatively high social standing in the community, while the majority were landless agricultural workers. Even though the farmer worked the land, he did not own the land, its buildings, or his house. They belonged to the landlord.

The dependency of farmers in Pommern was the hardest in all Germany. The *Bauer-Ordnung* laws of 1616 and 1647 codified the rights of the noble landowner in relation to his dependent subjects:

- *The landowner was the unrestricted, absolute owner of the land.
- *The landowner had the right to take a farm away from a dependent farmer (although, he had to compensate the farmer and free him from dependency).
- *The dependent farmer had to pay rent/taxes on the land and provide statutory labor to the landlord. The landlord had the right to fix the amounts as high as he wanted.
- *The farmer was not allowed to leave his farm or sell any part of it.
- *The farmer had to ask the landowner for permission to marry.

Continued on page 5

Alan Moll can be reached at alanmoll@verizon.net

Die Pommerschen Leute offers the following suggestion: After reading Alan Moll's article about land in Pommern, refer to the website of Hauke Fehlberg where there is even more information on crops, history/maps, agriculture, and much more: <http://mitglied.lycos.de/Pomerania2>

Land Ownership continued from page 4

*The farmer had no right to pass on the farm to his son, although it was the normal practice for the landlord to transfer a farm from father to oldest son.

A farm could be taken from one family and given to another. For example, Ertmann Timmermann, a farmer in Gorkow, died in 1684 at the age of 35. His son was not old enough to take over the farm, so my ancestor Jurgen Molle and his family were moved from another village and assigned to the farm.

In a given village, all of the farms were normally the same size and could not be divided. The oldest son received the farm and the other sons became farmhands (*Bauknechte*) or day laborers. In some villages it was customary for the oldest son to receive the farm when he married, in others, the farm wasn't passed on until the father was old or deceased.

The concept of a Pommern farm was much different than its American counterpart. Most of the farm houses, barns, livestock, and farmyards were located in the village. The cropland existed outside the village, but a farmer did not farm a single plot of land. Instead, the land was divided into many long narrow strips, one strip per farmer, then the series of strips would repeat so that there was a better chance of each farmer getting an equal share of good and poor land. In addition, the land was divided into three sections according to the three-field method of crop rotation (*Dreifelderwirtschaft*). In a given year, one third was planted in summer crops, a third in winter crops, and the other third laid fallow. The following year, the fields were rotated so that a different third lay fallow. Some land was so poor that it was only planted every sixth or ninth year. When you spoke of someone's individual farm, you probably were referring to the farmyard and house in the village. The actual farming of the land was in many ways a community effort rather than the action of an individual farmer. Pastures, grasslands, and woodlands were shared among the farmers.

It wasn't until the early 1800s that significant land reform took place. *Bauernbefreiung* (liberation of farmers) laws of 1807 and 1811 freed the peasant farmers from subjection to the landlords, bringing an end to Pommern feudalism. The farmers now owned their farms, but the original landowner had to be compensated for the lost compulsory labor. As an example, in the village of Boock, the landlord was awarded half of the fields, grasslands, and pastures as compensation. The Boock farmers were allowed to buy back the land, but some needed more than 30 years to complete these payments. Although the peasants now owned the farms, it was only the fortunate farmer who had land. The farms still could not be divided and sold, leaving the majority of villagers with no opportunity to purchase land of their own. In addition, much of the land was still contained in the estates of the former landlords.

Since the farms were now hereditary property, a farmer could divide the farm among his heirs, giving rise to *Halbbauern* (half farmers), *Viertelbauern* (quarter farmers), etc. These divisions allowed more villagers to own land, but sometimes decreased the size of a farm to the point where it could not support a family.

Finally, based on a Prussian Law of January 1845, farms could be divided into smaller lots and sold to anyone in the village. These new small land owners (*Büdner*) were not farmers, but were farmhands, craftsmen, and laborers that now had the opportunity to purchase some land, own their house, and raise a garden and some livestock. A real-estate market was created and within decades the structure of many villages totally changed. Whole farms were split up and sold as small parcels of land. However, land ownership was still only a reality for those who could afford it and if land was available. Many chose to emigrate to American and other countries where large amounts of land could be obtained at a reasonable price.

The following is a case study of changes in land ownership in the village of Boock, Kreis Randow, over a three hundred year period. Boock was part of a large knight estate (*Rittergut*), consisting of several villages and owned by the von Eickstedt family.

Continued on page 9

LIFE and ADVENTURES of REMUS

By Aleksander Majkowski

Translators: Blanche Krbecek (editor) and Katarzyna Gawlik-Luiken

© 2004-05 B. Krbecek and K. Gawlik-Luiken

The beginning of Book II In Freedom and In Captivity

Chapter XVI In which Remus Becomes a Trader

After I crossed the river by the castle mountain, I went through the forest and into the world which was now standing wide open before me.

Fear and Hope walked beside me and whispered their usual chatter into my ear. They ran ahead of me when I saw a small man with a long beard in the distance. He was hunched over and had a sack on his back. Quickly it came to my mind, "This must be Gaba, the Jew!"

When we approached each other, the Jew greeted God in his peculiar way and then stood and looked at me. I stopped also and asked, "How have you been, Gaba?"

He recognized me because of my speech. He threw his sack to the ground and grabbed both my hands. He jumped and wiggled like a fool. After settling down a little, he started to shout, "Ah-ha! It is you, Remus, a farmhand from the *pustkowie* of Lipno, you who saved me from the wet water! Oj Vej! I am so happy to see you with my eyes! How big you have grown! You could carry me on your watch fob. Oj Vey, what fun! Holy Schmoly! My wife and my children know that you saved the dear father from the wet water. All of them—grandma, mama, grandpa—would let themselves be killed for you. And I have not seen you for so many years! Come! Let us sit on the grass and chat. That way we can talk to our hearts' content."

So I sat down with him, but I said, "It will not be easy for us to talk because you do not understand my garbled words."

Guessing, more than understanding, he answered, "So, I will speak. How many winters have passed over the world since that time when you and old Michôł guided me away from the hole in the ice? You were born big and strong. Let me guess this time—you are going to Lipno to pay to have the wedding banns announced so you can marry that beautiful girl for whom you bought a red ribbon from me."

I shook my head and said, "I am not going to pay for banns. I said 'good-bye' to the *pustkowie* and to all the people who live there because I am going into the world."

For a long time he sat quietly, looking intently into my eyes. Then he put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Remus, just remember what I told you back then in the stable."

"I do remember," I answered. "You said, 'Remus, one day we will make good business together, just the two of us. The horoscope written in your eyes says so. It is not written in the stars that you will wait for a gray head here in the *pustkowie* with the horses and the plow,' and I am surprised that you knew back then."

continued on page 7

Remus continued from page 6

Gaba nodded his head, "The old Jew walked around the world with his sack. He often looked into the eyes of people and listened to them talk. The Jew thought a lot, but would say nothing except what people were happy to hear because the Jew wants to make business and how could he make business if people were upset by what he had said? I knew right away that there was something different in your eyes than in the eyes of those hard working people in the *pustkowie*. I will tell you. You were wearing the clothes of a lowly farmhand, but your eyes were those of one with a higher calling. Well, do not be upset, Remus. I know it all. Sheep are drawn to sheep; the dog is drawn to its equal; the he-wolf is drawn to the she-wolf. Do you think that any farmhand would ever lift his eyes to the daughter of a lord? Oh, no! How could he even like her if he prefers, for example, his Karolina with an ample bosom and rosy cheeks? And you, Remus, almost lost your life for her. Such desperation you showed in the church during her wedding!"

At that moment such anger came upon me because the Jew had looked into the ashes of the temple of my heart. Without saying a word, I got up to leave. But like a frog, he clung to me and asked, "Oy, didn't I say you should not become upset. You see that I am right. Your wolf nature starts to storm. Sit down. Believe that I mean only the best for you. If not your father, but even your grandfather were alive, I would be his age. I do not want you to be angry with me, a poor Jew, because you saved my life. Sit down, Remus, otherwise you will feel sorry later that today you did not want to listen to an old Jew."

He was so funny that the anger left me and I sat down. When he saw that I was calmer, Gaba stood in front of me rocking and gently stroking his beard like a forest gnome. Finally he asked, "So what are you going to do in the big world?"

"I am going into the world!"

"Eh, what does it mean, 'going into the world'? The world is everywhere the same as this place in the forest. Nobody will let you eat or drink for free. You need to have a roof over your head at night, and need to make a penny. Do you want to start as a servant in the house of a master?"

"No."

"Do you have any money?"

"I have twenty *thalers*."

Hearing that, the Jew pondered a little. He put his finger on his long nose, opened his eyes wide as if he were to tell some great truth and said, "Now listen to me, because I know the world. Do not say anything. Just walk with me straight to Lipno. What did I tell you back then in the *pustkowie*?, 'We two will make business together.' Come. Leave it to me and everything will be fine."

Gaba stuck to me like a leech as he led me to the house of the teacher who lived in a tiny building that stood in a garden full of flowers. Across the garden on the other side of the road, there was a spacious manor house, the very same one where, a few years earlier, my young Queen had entertained me with wine that was red like blood.

I followed the Jew upstairs and into a small room. It had only one little window. When I looked out of it, hot blood gushed into my heart. Beyond the garden, my young Queen was walking, leading a small child along the path.

continued on page 8

Remus continued from page 7

The Jew smiled and asked, "Where will you stay for the night?"

"I do not know."

"But I know. In this room. This is where you will live also. What will you do tomorrow?"

"I do not know yet."

"But I know. You will purchase a wheelbarrow with one wheel. You will put your goods in it and you will go into the world from village to village. You will sell to the people beautiful books about Genowéfa, and to the women buttons and thread. And what will you do today?"

"I do not know."

"But I know! You will buy from the Jew Gaba the goods he has in his sack, as well as those he is storing here with Pan Teacher. After the teacher is done appraising them, you will pay whatever he asks for them. Now Gaba is growing old and his legs refuse to carry him any longer, so he will take his allowance and leave. He has walked so far for so many years! Also you will ask the teacher to sum up for you the goods which the Jew cannot sell—the holy books, the rosaries, and whatever else Kaszubian people might need. And what else will you do? You will rent this room, because every itinerant trader needs to have a home for his business."

It all happened just as the Jew said. The teacher came and said that the advice Gaba gave me was good. He told me to pay one half of my money for the goods. I agreed to everything, because I thought that walking around the world as a trader would be the best way to keep the word I had given to Pan Józef on his deathbed.

As we began to part, Gaba said, "Remus! There is an old custom among your Kaszubian people to drink a toast to seal an agreement. Oy, how are we to make a toast when you do not drink, when I do not drink and Pan Teacher does not drink. It will be better if we toast each other with a wise word. I did not take advantage of you and you paid me well. Everything is square and even. I will tell you this—your business will go well, only I am afraid that your wolf nature will cause you trouble, something that my Jewish nature would never do. But there is no help for that. The goose is ruled by a different law than the fox and the hawk."

Then he started to teach me my new trade. He gave me a calendar on which dates were recorded of all the *jarmarks* and *odpusts* where I was to trade my goods. He advised me not to carry my goods on my back, but to push them with a wheelbarrow, because it would make me look more respectable.

In the evening, when for the first time in my life I was preparing to sleep in the house of strangers, moonlight came into my room. On the other side of the village road it was reflecting from the windows of the manor in which my former young Queen was living. The time that had passed now let me think of her without pain in my heart. Over the manor roof, stars in the night sky were winking at me, the same ones that were over the *pustkowie* in the forest. As I looked at them, I knew I must follow the path that was written for me in those stars and I must fulfill the life's work given to me by them, because it is all the will of the Lord God.

Land Ownership continued from page 8

- 1597 – 18 Bauern (14 with 3 *Hakenhufen* of land, 4 with 2 *Hakenhufen*) and 2 Kössaten (small farmer).
1630 – All farms destroyed in the Thirty Years War by fleeing Emperor's troops, except for one barn and a small hut farm. The village was largely deserted from 1637-1643.
1693 – Rebuilt to 9 Bauern. Four were dependent farmers (*Tienstbönder*) and 5 were free farmers (*Frybönder*) who leased the land as tenants (*Pachtbauern, Pensionarii*).
early 1700s – The landlord expanded the amount of cultivated land to support 13 dependent farmers, and he eliminated the free farmers.
1779 – 13 Vollbauern (full farmer) and 1 Kössat.
1812 – 13 Vollbauern and 1 Kössat (the situation at the time the peasants were freed).
1822 – 11 Vollbauern, 4 Halbbauern, and 1 Kössat (beginning of hereditary divisions).
1827 – 9 Vollbauern, 8 Halbbauern, and 1 Kössat.
1836 – 7 Vollbauern, 12 Halbbauern, and 1 Kössat.
1864 – 1 Anderthalbbauern (1 ½), 1 Vollbauern, 15 Halbbauern, 3 Drittelbauern, 4 Viertelbauern, 48 small land owners (*Büdner, Eigentümer*). One of the farms had been completely divided into small parcels and no longer existed as a farm.

Because of very poor quality soil, the farms in Boock were much larger than in most of Pommern. A full farm was 340 Prussian Morgen (about 215 American acres). The Kössat farm was probably 20 to 30 Morgen, while the Büdner parcels were generally 2 to 10 Morgen.

In 1864, Boock had 126 families, but only 24, at most, had enough land to support a family. The 48 Büdner families had land for a garden to grow vegetables and fruit trees and to keep some livestock. Many of these small landowners were from the growing class of craftsmen, who were doing well enough to purchase property of their own. However, there were still 54 families that owned no land, but lived in the houses of other families (*Einlieger*). Most of these were day laborers, working on the farms on which they lived. Fifty years after the freeing of the peasants, almost half of the families in Boock had no land, either because it was not available or because they could not afford it. By the close of the 19th century, many of the farms had been sold, and Boock became known as a village of craftsmen instead of a farming village.

Pommern Land Measurement, addendum

When researching Pommern land records, the Morgen is the most common unit of measure. However, it is important to distinguish between the old Pommern Morgen and the Prussian Morgen (also called the Magdeburgische Morgen). The Prussian Morgen was 0.2553 hectare (about 2/3 American acre), but the Pommern Morgen was 0.655 hectare (about 1 and 2/3 acre). Therefore the Pommern Morgen was much larger, more than 2 and 1/2 Prussian Morgen. So if your ancestor owned 100 Morgen of land, this could be either be 63 acres or 162 acres, depending on the type of Morgen used. The Prussian Morgen was largely in use in Pommern by 1800, but I have seen records from the 1820s that used the Pommern Morgen.

Another distinction, especially when it came to calculating taxes, is the use of equivalent units of "first class land." Instead of taxing poor land at a lower rate, the number of Morgen was reduced. For example, if a person owned 20 Morgen of poor quality land, it might be listed as 10 Morgen of first class land for tax purposes. Your ancestor may have owned more property than what the tax records indicate.

Different Pommern historians have estimated the average size of the land farmed by a typical Pommern Bauer (full farmer). I have often seen 30 or 40 Morgen (but is that a Pommern or Prussian Morgen?). Actually, the amount varied greatly depending on the time period, location, and quality of land. As an example, a full farm in Gorkow, Kreis Randow, was about 375 Prussian Morgen in the late 17th century through the mid-19th century. This is much greater than the 30 or 40 "average". I encourage each researcher to find the specific details of their ancestral village.