

The development of the Northwest German hall houses and the oldest layers of the inventory – Indicators for an agraric revolution in the Middle Ages?

Die Entwicklung der nordwestdeutschen Hallenhäuser und die ältesten Schichten des Inventars
– Indikatoren für eine agrarische Revolution im Mittelalter?

Développement de la maison de halle en Allemagne du Nord-Ouest et les couches
les plus anciennes de l'inventaire – indicateurs d'une révolution agraire au Moyen-Âge?

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In North West Germany and the Eastern Netherlands, the oldest farm buildings are from the 14th and 15th century. Comparison with younger buildings evidences alterations, which can very well be explained by simultaneous changes in economy and property relations. Facing these hitherto scarcely noted findings, younger hypotheses about the transition from earthfast to not earthfast buildings are critically discussed.

Farm house research as a new subject and present state of survey in Northwest Germany

Systematic investigation of ancient rural buildings is a relatively new subject in European ethnological research. Although there are some interesting attempts to understand the development lines even in the 19th century - especially in Northern Europe - just since the late 30ies of 20th century systematic research is done in a wider scale. The most powerful tool was then the investigation of the timbered frame structure of the mostly wooden framework buildings. This survey was most intensively elaborated in Germany as the so called "Gefügeforschung" (timbered frame investigation), regarding the structure, the dimension and the joints of the frames in very detail. Since it is an approach driven by intensive observation of the object alone, this method is quite archeologic and, thus, deductive. However, to give all the findings a historical chronology and an evolutionary schedule without the modern scientific methods of dating, some inductive thoughts are necessary. Regrettably, several researchers did not always omit attempts to try to "interpret" certain constructions on the base of unproven assumptions of what should be "older" and "younger" types and failed. Still worse was the attempt to interpret relations between different types of houses, not older than about 400 years, in the light of suspected tribe structures of the migration period, at least without any approval for historic lines between then and the middle ages.

In the Lower German "Hallenhaus", mostly two very different types of frames are observed: The anchor beam construction vs. the so called „roof beam“. In an over-hasty interpretation of his observations during several journeys through the upper Weser area, *Josef Schepers* (1943; 1960) postulated the genesis of the so called "roof beam

construction" in this area and its spreading from there over the greatest part of Lower Germany, leaving some remote areas untouched like islands. Although *Gerhard Eitzen* (1954) criticized Schepers's opinion with good arguments as early as in the late 1940ies, and Josef Schepers himself noticed in his late life in the 1980ies, that he had been wrong, the original ideas of Schepers were cited so often, that at the moment it is still much easier to find any citing of the "Upper Weser theory" in the literature than the in between well proven ideas of Eitzen, that the anchor beam in the greatest part of the "Hallenhaus" region was quite late taken over from Vlanders, France and the Rhine area. We must confess, that Eitzen with his unique view on frame structures developed an excellent feeling of development lines.

Since the 70ies, dendrochronology enabled researchers to date buildings precisely. This led to essential corrections in our picture, when we learnt, that there are much more buildings from the late middle ages existing than was supposed before. This stimulated an intensive search for older buildings leading to very interesting results. I shall present some of them here.

In Northern Germany, there are only few institutions doing systematic house research. Much work is done mainly by - more or less - amateurs. Therefore, the status of inventory depends on the presence of a researchers in the respective region and is thus regionally quite different. Nevertheless, research must urgently be intensified because just at that moment, where we can safely date most of them, the old houses are tied down with increasing rate.

The main focus of my lecture, however, is the information content of our houses beyond the typology of the framework. Not only the carpentry developed, but also the structure of the houses themselves. Some of these constructive changes are supposed to have been

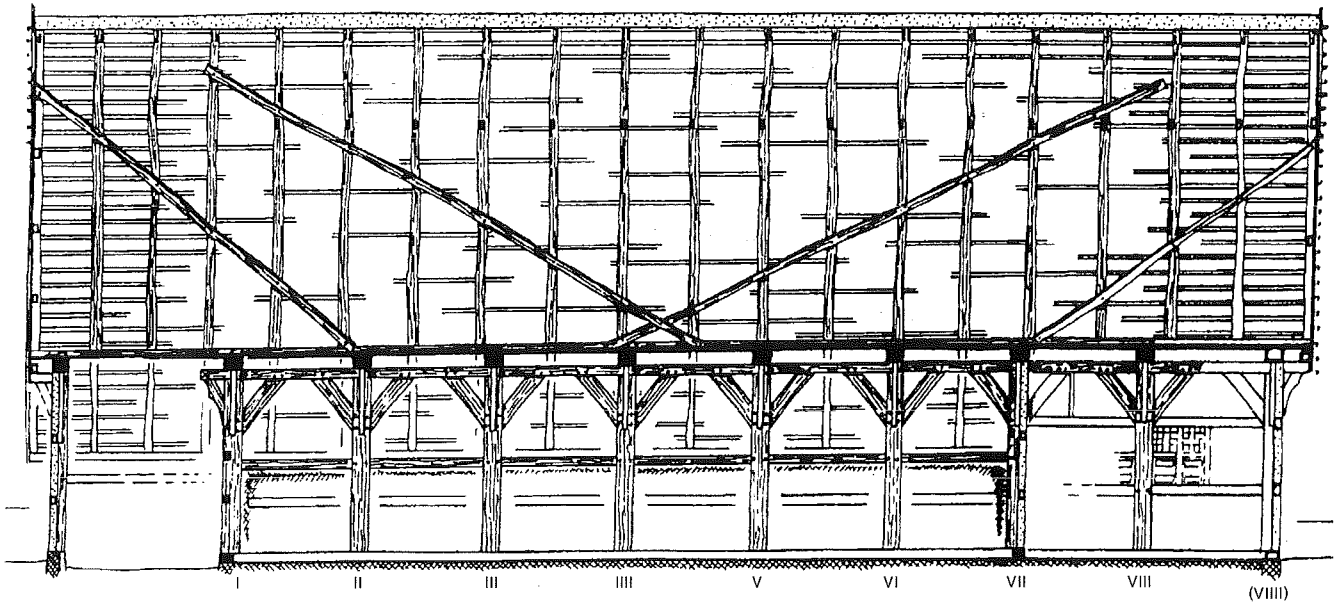


Fig. 1. Longitudinal section through the main house of the farm Kraesgenberg in Losser (The Netherlands), close to the German border in the region "Twenthe" with a strong Westfalian character. The house is dendrochronologically dated 1610 with a front extension (left) from the mid of the 18th century. That it is really a later addition with a different type of construction, is only to be seen from the frame, not from the ground plan.

released by economical or agricultural changes. The examples that I show are from a distinct region, where I did most of my research, coarsely described as the triangle The Netherlands - Westfalia - Lower Saxony and from the Dutch province of Drenthe.

What do I mean with "indicators of agricultural change"?

I shall explain this phenomenon with an early 17th century farm house (Kraesgenberg in Losser) from the Dutch province of Twenthe. The house was built 1610/11 (d) in the 12 year pause of the 80 years Dutch independence war, and it was situated only

about 200 m from the Dutch-German border. Looking at the longitudinal section (Fig. 1), in the upright frame we can easily see a prolongation of the building at the front end (left). In the ground plan (Fig. 2); however, it is not visible: Most younger houses have the same extended plan, but that part added here is genuine there. The older form showed the big door directly in the front gable, in the younger form it is secluded forming the so called "Vorschauer". At both sides of the doorway, we find the horse stables. Cause for the extension of the house must thus have been the integration of the horses into the house. They must have been kept outside before. The reason for that is not clear, but undoubtedly it is agricultural change.

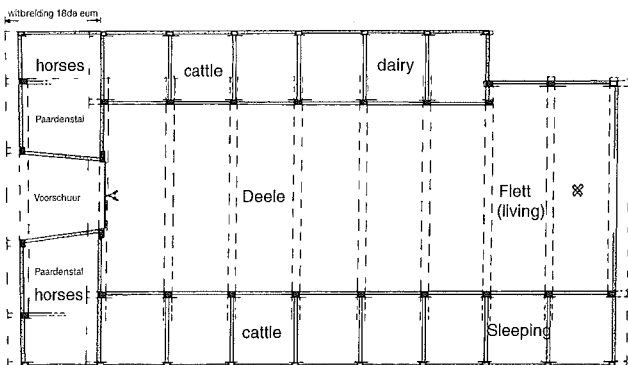


Fig. 2. Ground plan of the same house as in. In the later extension we find the stables for horses. Before that, there was no room inside the house for them. The extension of the house is thus not only an enlargement, but also an indicator for changes in agriculture (integration of the horses into the house).

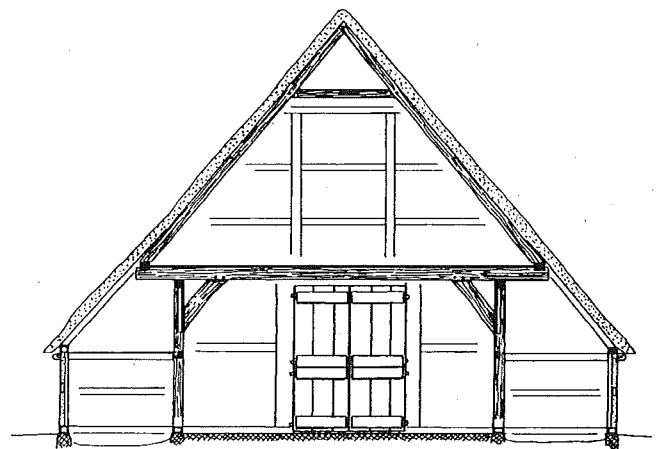


Fig. 3. Cross section of the same house as in. The frame is that of a fully developed Lower German "Hallenhaus". The breadth of the side aisles is about 2,1 m and thus sufficient for the full length of normal cattle, which from the beginning was place "head to inside" in the aisles. Typical construction of "aufgelegter Dachbalken" (laid-up roof beam).

An other aspect concerns the cross section of the "Hallenhaus". The above mentioned house shows a quite developed form of the "roof beam". Thereby, the beams project several dezimeters over the longitudinal wall formed by posts and plates (Fig. 3). The joint is done as "aufgelegter Dachbalken mit Ständerzapfen" (uplaid roof beam with tenon from post through the plate into the bottom of the beam). The rafters are standing on a separate plate ("Sparrenschwelle"), their distance does not depend on the distance of the posts or beams. The breadth of the "Kübbung" (the outer annex with only about 1.8 m high external walls) was about 2.1 m, sufficient to place the cattle "head-to-inside" in that annex.

When we compare this to the oldest preserved frame of this region, the Smoes farm house from Nordhorn from 1468 (d), the longitudinal section (Fig. 5) shows not such big differences, except that the "Sparrenschwelle" was missing until the 18th century and subsequently added with narrower arrangement of the rafters. The original position of the rafters was on the

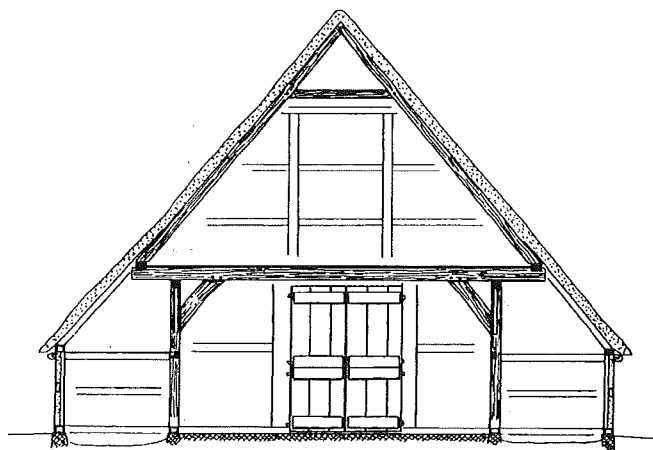


Fig. 4. Farm house Kraesgenberg (see): Scheme of the joint between post, plate and beams. "Dachbalken mit Ständerzapfen" (Roof beam with tenon from post through plate).

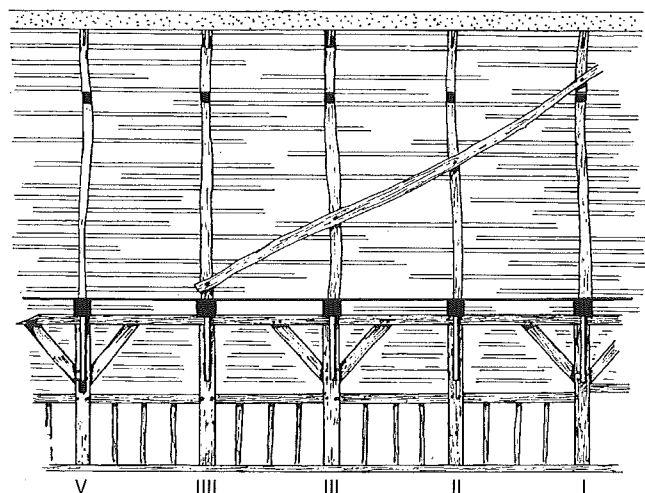


Fig. 5. Farm house Smoes in Nordhorn, county of Bentheim, close to the Dutch-German border. Preserved section of the oldest known Western German farm house, dated 1468 (d).

end of the beams. More essential, however, is the missing projection of the beams over the longitudinal walls in the cross section (Fig. 6). Reconstruction of the "Kübbung" leads to a breadth of only about 1.5 m, which may not be sufficient for stalling the cattle. We suggest therefore, that we are doing with agricultural change also in this aspect.

The oldest houses in Northwest Germany and the Northeast of the Netherlands

Introducing into the theme, I just presented two quite old buildings. In the following I shall present some further aspects of the oldest buildings.

Some features of old framework

Although there are some older sections of houses (for example the a.m. Smoes farm house in Nordhorn) the oldest hitherto quite completely recon-

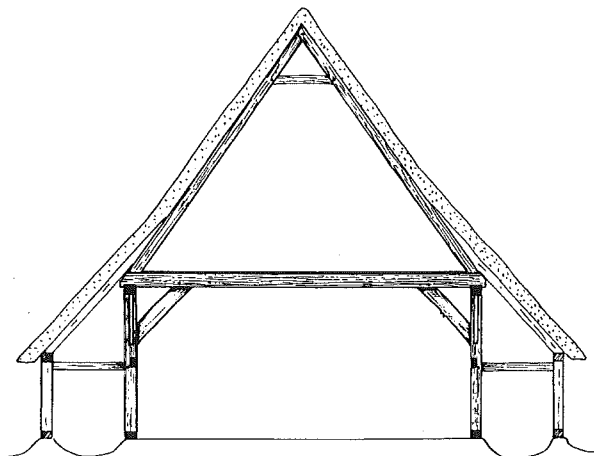


Fig. 6. Farm house Smoes (see), cross section of the preserved medieval section from 1468 (d). Cogged roof beams ("aufgekämmte Dachbalken"). The roof is reconstructed from the original rafters, which had been placed on a separate sill in the 18th century. Neither are the side aisles preserved nor is anything known about their original breadth. A reconstruction assuming a construction similar to later ones leads to a section of the roof line with the (safely reconstructable) aisle beams at an aisle breadth of only 1.5 m. This may not be sufficient for stalling cattle in full length in the aisles. Something may have been different from the later way of cattle stalling at that time.

structable house is that of the Rolink farm near Nordhorn (Fig. 7, Fig. 8, Fig. 9). It has been dendrochronologically dated from 1515. The longitudinal section show interesting features like the plate becoming thinner towards the front end, not regular application of braces in the longitudinal walls and the joint between plate and beams constructed as "aufgekämmte Dachbalken" (cogged roof beams), like at the Smoes farm from 1468. The rear gable has only one rail forming quite large frames. Most exciting is the safe and proven reconstruction of the so called "Lucht" in the living end of the house, where the very long braces look a little strange. The braces themselves have not been not preserved,

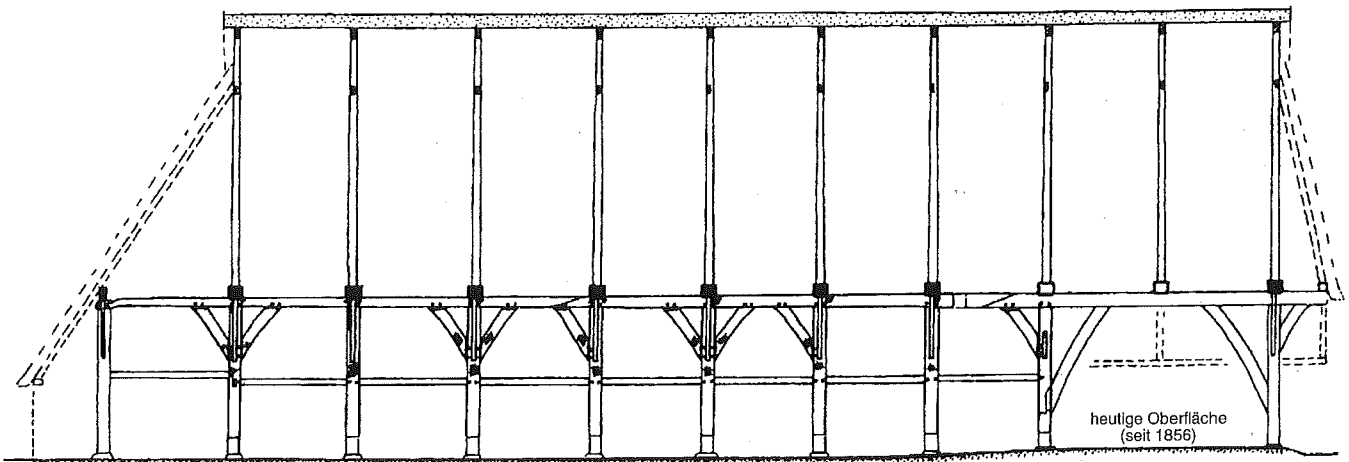


Fig. 7. Longitudinal section of the Rolink farm house in Nordhorn, dated 1515 (d). The living part (at the right) was demolished in about 1970 and reconstructed from posts and other parts found in an excavation in the ruin in 1986. Remarkable is the size of the plate, beginning very thick at the right and becoming continuously thinner towards the front. The reconstruction of the long braces in the so called "Lucht" at the right first was quite safe, but also very astonishing, because this type of construction seemed to be restricted to much more Eastern parts of Lower Germany.

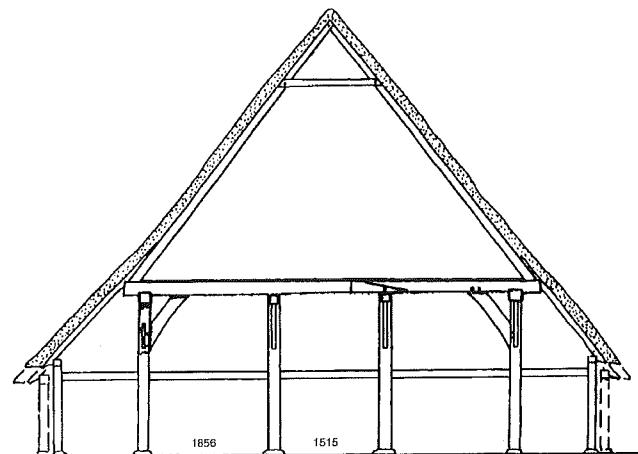


Fig. 8. Rear end of the Rolink farm house from Nordhorn (see). Only one rail is present. Originally the walls were made in wattle-and-daub-technique.

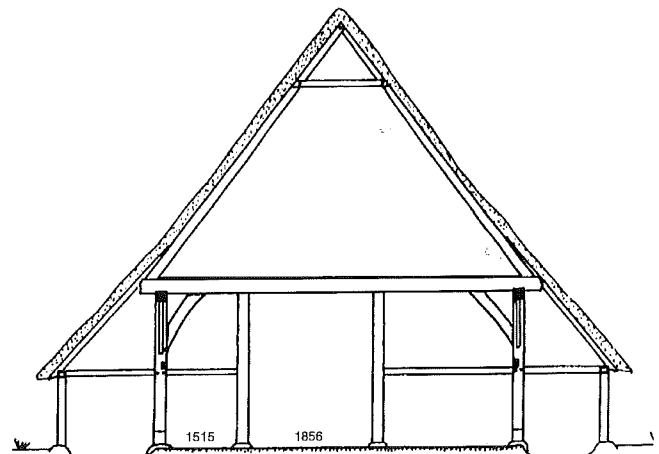


Fig. 9. Front section of the Rolink farm house.

because the construction of the "Lucht" had been changed in the 18th or 19th century.

From the Dutch province of Drenthe, several very old sections of farm houses are known since the excellent survey by Frank van der Waard (VAN DER WAARD 1996), like the Anderen farm (Fig. 10). The house at all consists of two essential parts:

- The medieval living end ("Flett") in cogged roof beam construction ("aufgekämmt Dachbalken"); this part of the building has not yet been dated dendrochronologically, but by C14 as "about 1360" and is thus surely the oldest existing relic of a "Lower German Hall house", and the
- Economical end in anchor beam construction, dated 1595 and thus even one of the oldest preserved anchor beam constructions in that region. This house is thus an absolutely unique monument.

Quite similar appears to be a house from Witterhaar, also in the Dutch province of Drenthe (Fig. 11). Its living part section from 1481 (d) is well preserved (Fig. 12).

The economical part is here from 1731 (d), later on at the rear end a solid building from 1766 (i) was added.

Both houses from Drenthe appear to have been fundamentally altered in post-medieval times. Frank van der Waard (1998) has convincingly proven that the incentive therefore must in general have been the demand for more harvesting space, creating the so called "verdieping" as enlarged sollar in the anchor beam construction, but in special there must have been reasons to maintain the old living end. The meaning of this will become clearer when we refer to some similar cases in Germany.

Aspects of law

The Ahlers farm house from Klein Haddorf is located in the Northern Münster area in Westfalia. In 1982-85 it was translocated to the village of Wetrtingen, which allowed a very detailed analysis of the construction. The cross section of the house (Fig. 13) shows only a

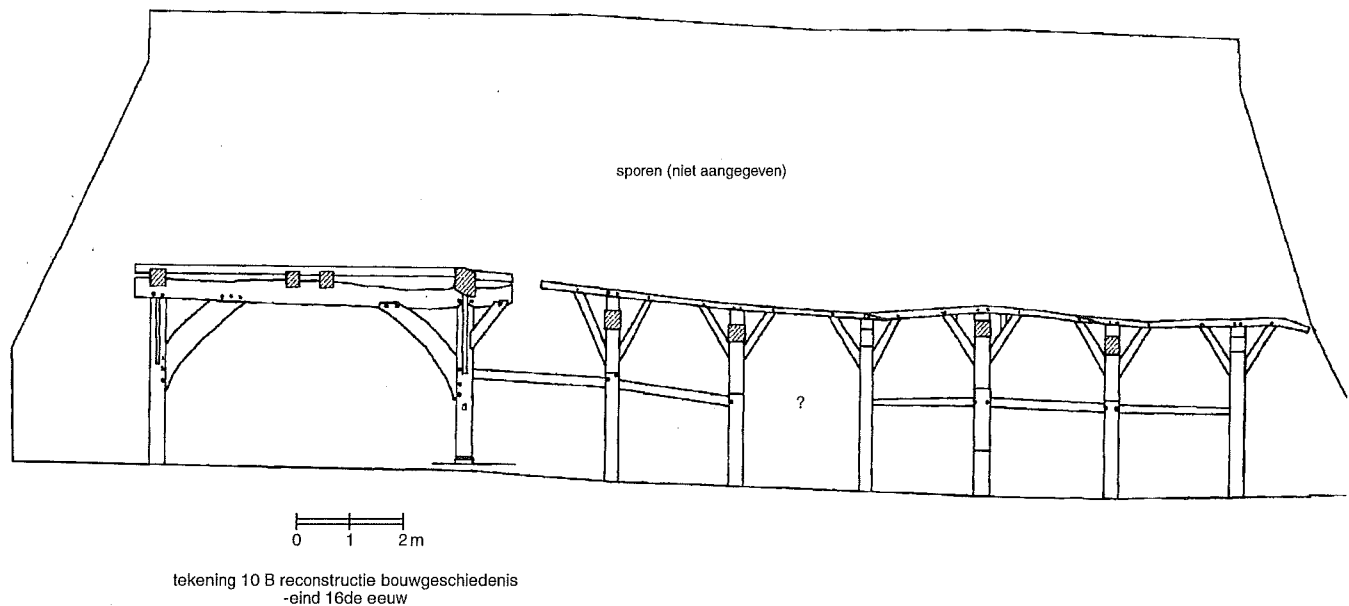


Fig. 10. Longitudinal section of a house from Anderen, Dutch province of Drenthe (courtesy Frank van der Waard). The house evidently consists from two parts, a very old uplaid beam construction (left) from about 1360, and an also quite old anchor beam construction (right) from about 1590 (d). The replacement of the uplaid beam construction with the anchor beam is a quite universal phenomenon in Lower Germany. It is suspected to be initiated by changes in harvesting demands. The preservation of the older living part is probably an indication of different ownership, which can be concluded from medieval laws: The economical part belonged to the (mobile) farmer, whereas the living part was owned by the land owner (landlord).

small projection of the beams beyond the posts, indicating a quite old, late medieval frame, which was dendrochronologically confirmed. Schepers has published this very interesting building earlier (Schepers 1960) with a much younger typologic dating, but the drawings contain a lot of errors. The so called "Lucht" in this house is a later alteration from about 1800, before that date it had not any. The most essential feature that Schepers had overlooked is the complete division into to parts: A living end of two yokes and an economical part of 4 yokes length (Fig. 14), that is $1/3$ by $2/3$. Since both section are equally aged and also exactly identical concerning carpentry features, the division may have other reasons.

This is confirmed by at least one further example for such a division, the Greiwe farmhouse in Dumpte, which is documented also by Schepers (1960) (Fig. 15). Because the house was demolished before 1976, we cannot further investigate, whether the state shown in Schepers's drawings is the product of more or less severe alterations in post-medieval times. In the text, he noted interesting findings at the walls, which we interpret safely today as the relicts of a former vertical plank cladding of the walls. Certainly the room compartment at the rear end was altered, but nothing is known about the age of the "Lucht". Essential for our consideration, however, is, that the house is also divided into two sections without any timbered connection.

H. H. Meyer (1994) in his survey on a house from Bremen, exhaustively discusses the change in the Lower German Law concerning the property of the farm

houses in the late middle ages. He found several proofs for the interesting feature, that in some regions the property of the house as divided: The economical part was owned by the farmer, and he was allowed to take it with him when he left the farm, whereas the living end was owned by the (mostly feudal) land owner. Remarkable in this context is the fact, that in the northern Münster area several farm houses have been used as border demarcations (at the northern and the German-Dutch border). In each case the border point is in the middle of the "Flett" or the living end, exactly at the former hearth place. This does not only prove, that all these farms are older than the border (which is not surprising), but that the living ends must have an immobile character at the time, when the border was fixed (13th/14th century). This indicates an essential influence of the landowner concerning the location of the living end, conforming to Meyer's theses.

Construction of the outer walls

As a last item I shall discuss the change in frame types as well as the method to construct the walls of the house during the middle ages, the formation of the "Vierständerbau" and the abandoning of the planking of walls.

In the south of the Hallenhaus area, the "Vierständerbau" is dominant over the "Zweiständerbau". With identical ground plan (!), the "Vierständerbau" has a much bigger cross section and thus more space under the roof for storing the harvest (Fig. 16). At feudal farms or courts, separate barns were also erected in this

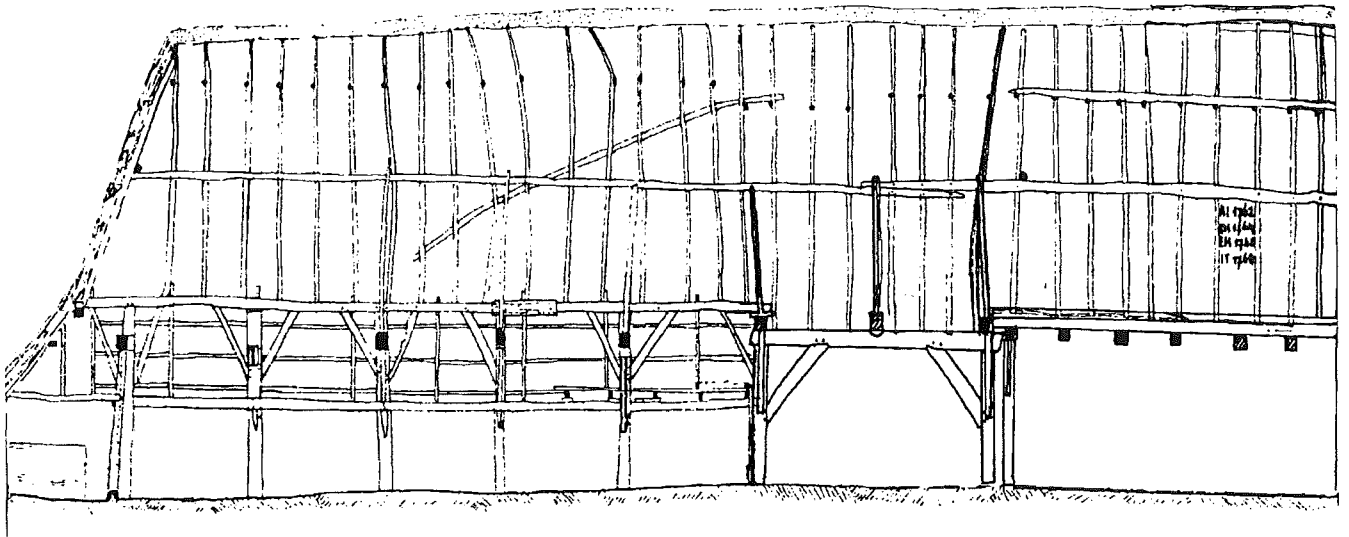


Fig. 11. Longitudinal section of a farm house at Witterhaar, Dutch province of Drenthe (courtesy Frank van der Waard). Again the living part (middle) is the oldest section, dated 1481 (d). To the left, an anchor beam economical section from 1731 (d) is to be seen, to the right a solid brick-built room section was added in 1766 (d,i).

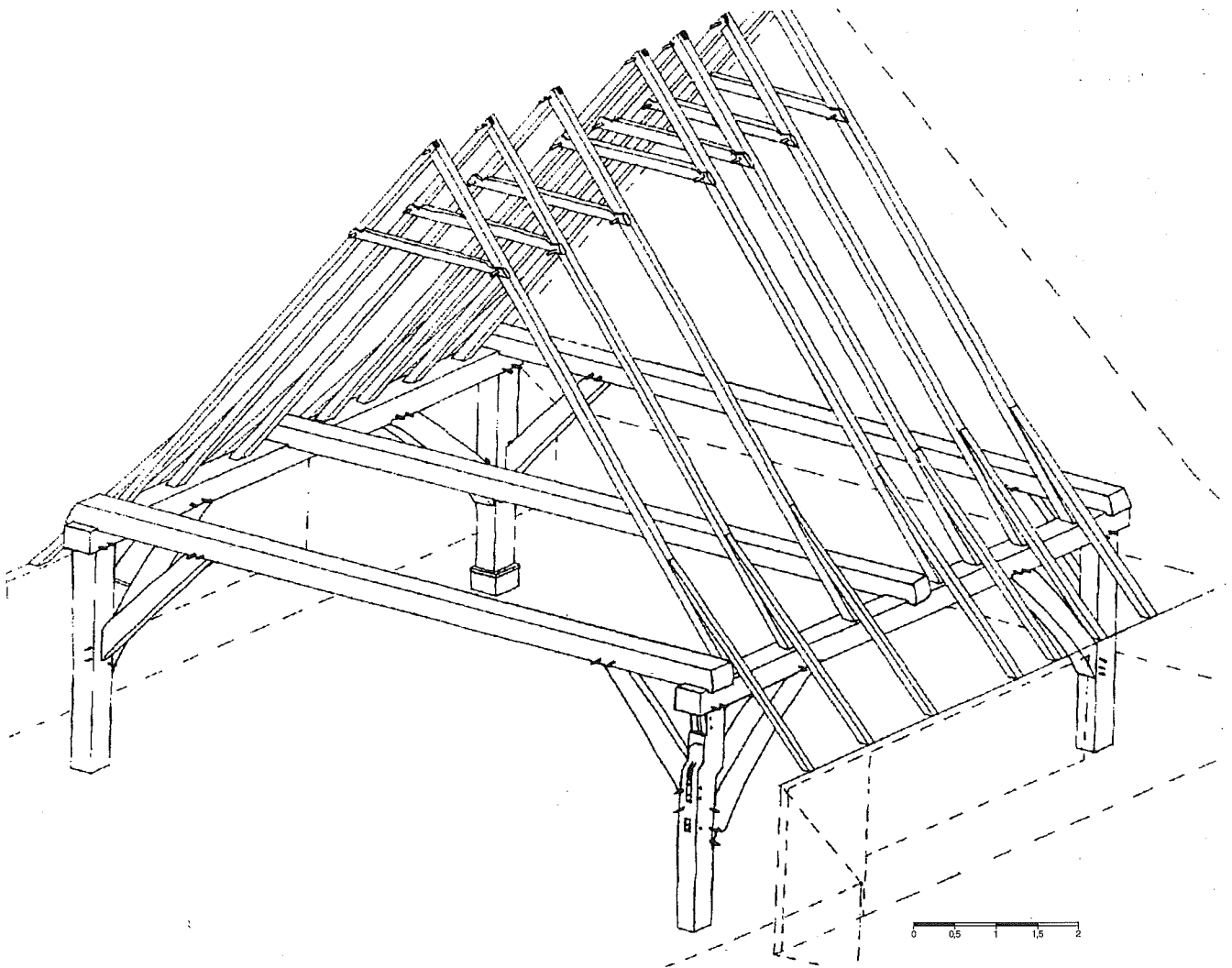


Fig. 12. Reconstruction of the medieval living section of the Witterhaar house.

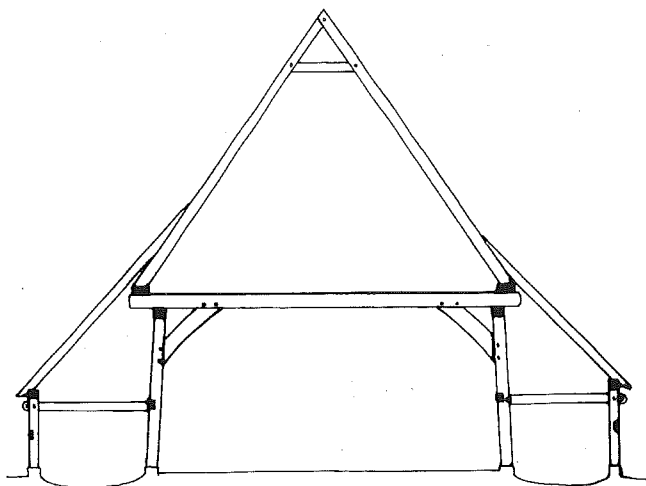


Fig. 13. Cross section of the Ahlers farm house from Klein Haddorf (Northern Münster region in Westfalia), shown in the last state after some alterations about 1700, with the later added rafter plate ("Sparrenschwelle").

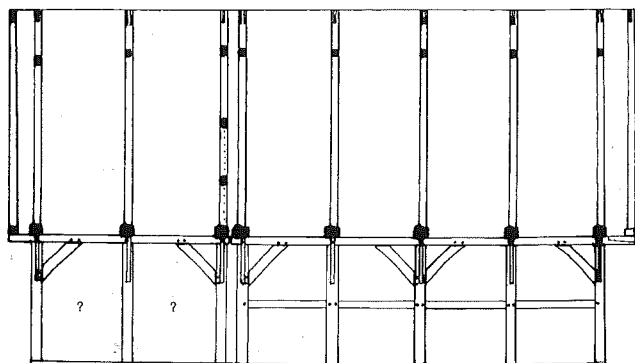


Fig. 14. Longitudinal section of the Ahlers farm house (see), shown as reconstruction of the original state (about 1530, d). Remarkably the house consists of two absolutely self standing sections without any timber connection. Since this is not necessary from constructive purposes, there must be other reasons. One such could be a different legal status of the two sections.

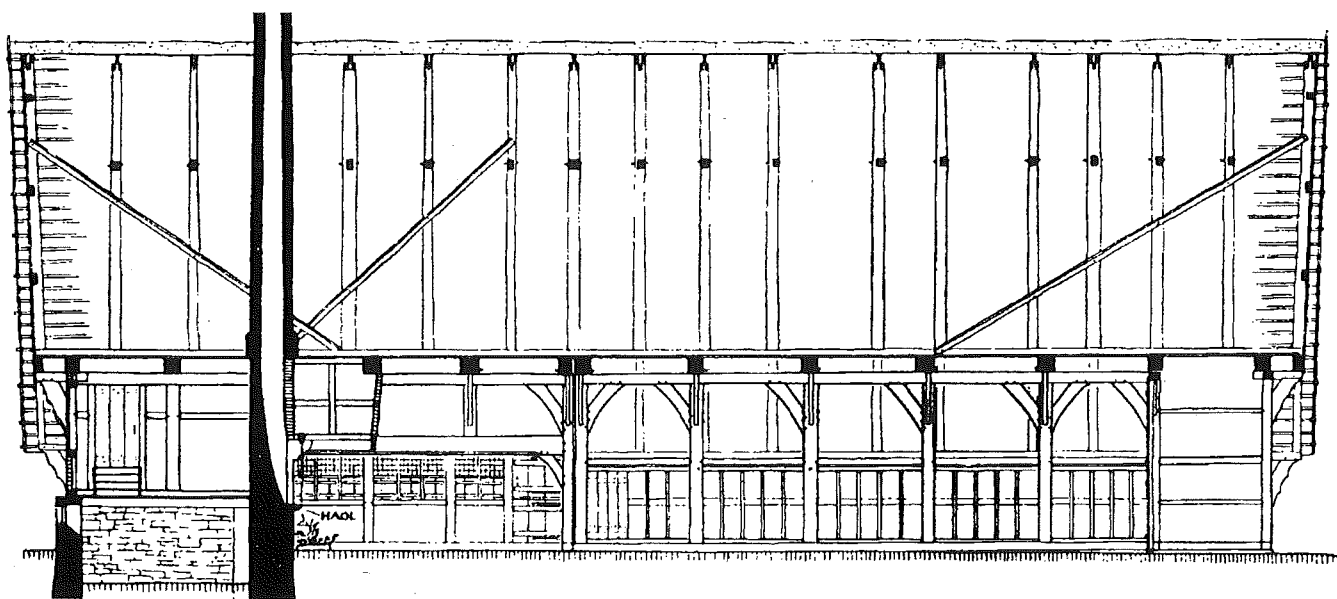


Fig. 15. Longitudinal section of the Greiwe farm house from Dumpte (Northern Münster region in Westfalia) after Schepers 1960. The division in the middle recognized at the double beams.

construction. Here I show a longitudinal section of the former Meyerhof barn in Messingen (Fig. 17). The development of this big type needs experienced and skilled carpenters, since for the erection of the frame and especially the roof (with mostly a height equal to the breadth of the house, with large building thus up to 14 m!) any primitive crane seems to have been necessary. So we can suppose, that this type was developed in the late middle ages under the influences of feudal barns (tythe barns) and farm houses ("Bauhäuser") as well as skilled houses in the cities. Just by there very enlarged storage volume they indicate an immense intensification of the agriculture.

But there is still another feature with the older of these buildings. Many of them appear to have been clad with vertical planks, thus not showing any framework from outside (Fig. 18, Fig 19). Later, much of this cladding was replaced with wattle and daub or brick fillings of the frames, so that only few examples are preserved now. There are, however, with most of the building unambiguous traces of that cladding, because the rails are not in one plane with the surface of the posts, but are lying about one inch, the thickness of a plank, back. The planks together with the similarly broad posts formed a uniform impression of a wall from vertical timbers like a "Stabbau", with which this construction may have common roots. "Stabbau" is also a technique for the construction of buildings with higher social rank. The end of that wall type may have been caused by an increasing lack of good timber - another indicator of agricultural change.

In the Münster area, also quite common farm houses are built as "Vierständerbauten", one of the oldest preserved is the Brathe farm in Dülmen-Daldrup (Fig. 20), which may be one of the latest examples in that region with completely planked walls. In this house, there is no (more) division into several sections. The house has the most features of the later ones. The both side aisles are of different breadth according to

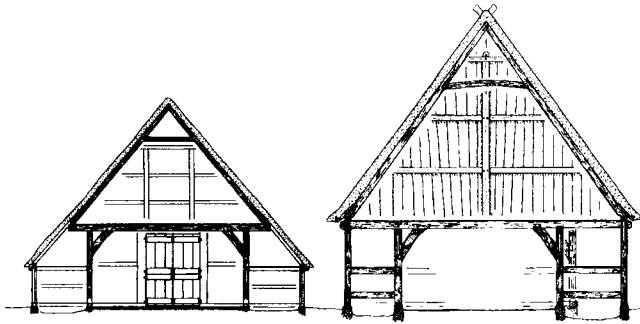


Fig. 16. Comparison of the "Zweiständerbau" (left, two bearing posts in the cross section) to the "Vierständerbau" (right, four bearing posts in cross section). The huge enlargement of the harvesting volume with the "Vierständerbau" is evident. Initiator for the development was evidently the demand on more harvesting capacity.

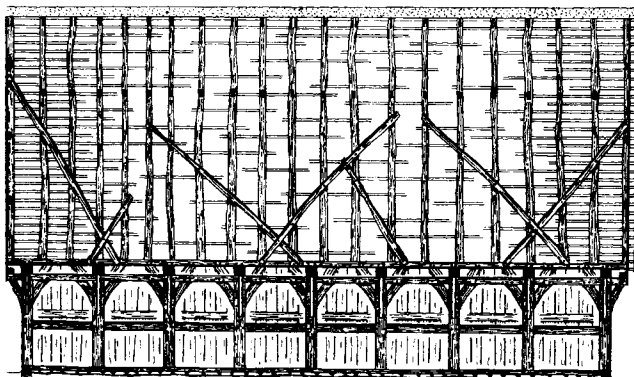


Fig. 17. Longitudinal section of the Meyerhof barn in Messingen (1598 d).

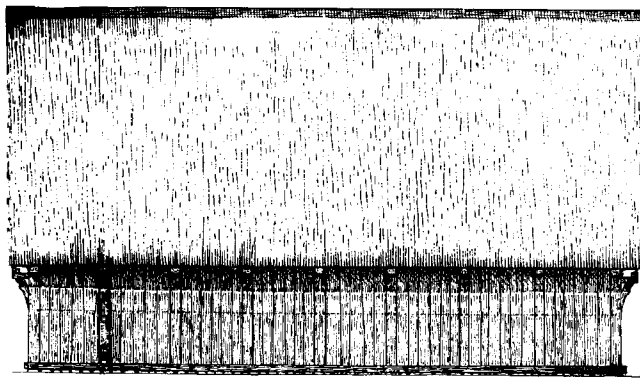


Fig. 18. Exterior of the Meyerhof barn (see).

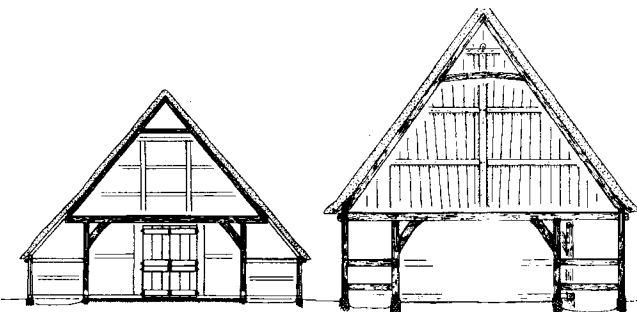


Fig. 19. Front gable of the Meyerhof barn (see). Only vertical plan claddings.

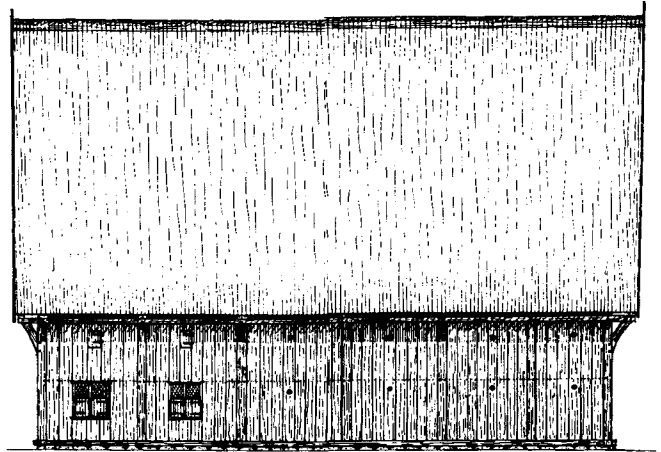


Fig. 20. Exterior of a "Vierständer" farm house (Brathe farm) in Dülmen-Daldrup (Western Münster region in Westfalia), 1578 (d). Originally completely clad with planks.

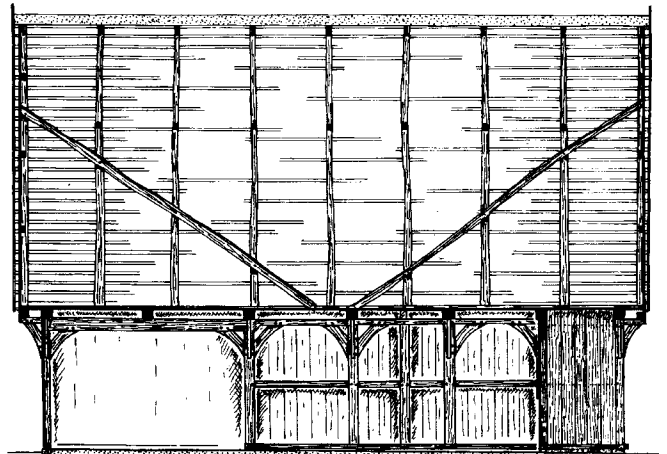


Fig. 21. Longitudinal section of the Brathe farm house (see).

the local denomination as "cow-side" (small) and "horse-side" (broader). This indicates an early integration of the horses into the farm house in this region, in contrast to the situation only 60 km north from there (Kraesgenberg house, Fig. 1). This may have been steered by different demands on working animals. Although the Brathe house has a "Vorschauer" (Fig. 21), the stables are not aside of it, but in the normal side aisles. The different configuration of the stables must be seen in connection with the much bigger storage volume - obviously indicating, that grain production played a much bigger role on the heavy soils of the Münster area than on the sandy ridges along the rivers in the north and west of it, where cattle played a more dominant role as production factor.

There are indications, that the vertical planks were originally not fixed by nails, but by wooden pegs. Beside some archeologic finds of such timber, there are two buildings known -both probably from the 15th century - with peg holes in the rails (Fig. 23).

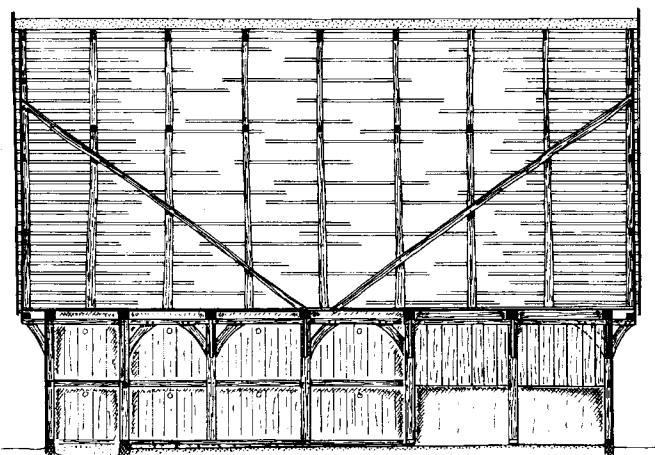


Fig. 22. Other longitudinal section of the Brathe farm house.

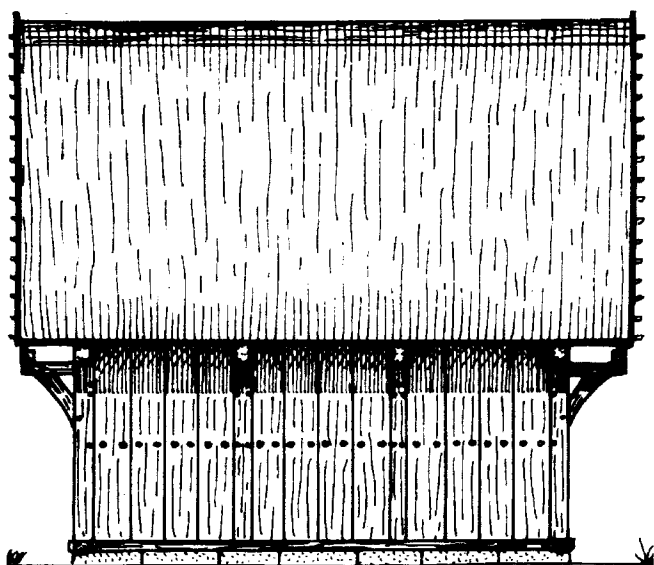


Fig. 23. Bentheim county sheep shelter supposed 15th century (Röling, Drievorden).

Therefore a rigorous change of the landscape is concluded:

- "Grassing" of the river valleys
- Change to "permanent rye cultivation",
- Fertilizer cumulation on the "Plaggenäcker", beginning devastation of the heath
- Wood consumption exceeding production – Disappear of forests
- New settlements in forests and on heavy grounds

In the economy, these changes are common:

- Increase of monetary management
- Disappearance of "Eigenwirtschaft" (Villications of monasteries and castles)
- Social descent of the "villici" ("Schulden"- and "Meyerhöfe")

Indicators for agricultural changes from other sources (II)

Also in our field systems, we can recognise proofs for an increase of the grain production:

- Cultivation trenches under present "Esch" fields
- Introduction of long parcels with modern plough (Pflugbeete – plough beds)
- On the farms, we find that large storage barns were built

Cattle is more and more breded, feral forms of breeding disappear:

- For the collection of sheep manure, sheep were held in sheep shelters
- In the 17th century, the driving of big cattle herds minishes (e.g. the of oxen herds from Scandinavia to the Netherlands)
- Increase of use of grass instead of loaf for hay production
- Increased use of horse power in agriculture instead of oxen, end of many wild horse herds and intensification of horse breeding
- Beginning domestication of the swine, but still kept outside the farm (pig shelters are found not earlier than about 1650)

Changes to be postulated for farm houses in the 12th-15th century

From this, we can conclude that the following changes in farmhouse use must have taken place before the oldest preserved houses were erected:

- Agricultural:
 - Start of manure collection in the stables ("Pottstall")
 - Rearrangement of cattle positioning in the stables from head outside to head inside
 - In-house storage of unthreshed grain upon the beams
 - Closure of the ceiling above the "Flett" with a sollar
- Technical:
 - Transition from earthfast towards not earthfast buildings
 - Change from "Stabbau" to framework
 - Broadening of the houses, introduction of the "Vierständerbau" – possibly following models from cities, monasteries and castles

Indicators for agricultural changes in the high middle ages from other sources

In the section before, I showed that old houses are quite valuable sources of information. The question is, whether the information is so dense, that it is a real proof for some hitherto unidentified changes in society, law, economy and agriculture? From my experience, I shall further present some theses concerning the predecessors of our oldest existing farm houses.

Indicators for agricultural changes from other sources (I)

Pollen analysis shows

- increase of open meadow indicators (plantago, rumex)
- and also a strong increase of rye and decrease of wheat during the middle ages

Can we find these changes in the passed-on medieval farm houses?

- Agricultural:
 - Rearrangement of cattle probably recognizable in oldest buildings (before 1500) by smallness of "Kübbungen"
 - No houses seem to exist without ceiling above the "Flett" or "Hohwand" (living end)
- Technical:
 - Transition from earthfast towards not earthfast buildings is proved to have taken place very early (before 1350) in the Münster area and Drenthe, but essentially later in e.g. central Lower Saxony
 - The principle to construct outer walls with planks (reminding to "Stabbau" tradition) survived at barns and gables up to the 18th century, otherwise were given up around 1600
 - Oldest buildings in the "Münsterland" from beginning 16th century are perfect "Vierständerbauten" – evolution of that type must have been finished before 1500.

Some theses and antitheses

In this concluding part of my contribution, I shall discuss some theses comprehensively describing the opinion of several acknowledged researchers and answer them with some antitheses to stimulate the discussion

1. Thesis: Before about 1550 the farm houses in Lower Germany were mainly earthfast and have not survived.

In western Lower Germany, excellent examples exist of not earthfast farm buildings from 15th or even 14th century, so this assumption may only be valid in certain regions.

2. Thesis: The older houses were not built as solid as later, because they were partially movable goods. Not earthfast buildings were always destined to stay at the farmstead.

Undoubtedly, most of the farms in Lower Germany were only temporarily taken in lease by farmers up to the late middle ages, when the families stayed more and more permanently. Corresponding limitations of the lease time were active up to the 19th century. But this does in not predestinate the buildings to be necessarily "cheap" and designed for a limited life time: Some examples of precious buildings from the late middle ages (with obviously very long life time) exist with separation between "farmers section" and "landlords section", both of equal and high quality, in no way different from later, suggested "living longer" ones. These "divided" houses indicate the validity of the "Sachsenspiegel" regulations with their erection (14th to 16th century), where the agricultural section of the house was property of the farmer. Not earthfast buildings were thus also provided for occasional moving.

3. Thesis: Older houses in Lower Germany (in contrast to other regions) are not preserved because the earlier ones were of inferior quality, caused by a "wandering farmers" lack of interest in building houses for essentially more than one lease period.

We have to respect that 500 years are an enormous age for an agricultural building. Phases of economical wealth always extinguished primarily the oldest ones. To find rests of medieval buildings is thus also a statistical question. The relicts of the oldest ones have a carpentry quality comparable to later houses, and: What do people expect even more than houses from the 14th and 15th century, which do by all means exist!

4. Thesis: Before about 1550 the farm houses in Lower Germany were mainly earthfast and have not survived.

Contrary to that opinion, I hope to have shown, that in Western Lower Germany, excellent examples exist of not earthfast farm buildings from 15th or even 14th century, so this assumption may only be valid in certain regions.

5. Thesis: The older houses were not built as solid as later, because they were partially movable goods. Not earthfast buildings were always destined to stay at the farmstead.

Isn't this thought too shortly? Undoubtedly, most of the farms in Lower Germany were only temporarily taken in lease by farmers up to the late middle ages, when the families stayed more and more permanently. Corresponding limitations of the lease time were active up to the 19th century. But this does not predestinate the buildings to be necessarily "cheap" and designed for a limited life time: Some examples of precious buildings from the late middle ages (with obviously very long life time) exist with separation between "farmers section" and "landlords section", both of equal and high quality, in no way different from later, suggested "living longer" ones. These "divided" houses indicate the validity of the "Sachsenspiegel" regulations with their erection (14th to 16th century), where the agricultural section of the house was property of the farmer. Not earthfast buildings were thus also provided for occasional moving.

6. Thesis: Older houses in Lower Germany (in contrast to other regions) are not preserved because the earlier ones were of inferior quality, caused by a "wandering farmers" lack of interest in building houses for essentially more than one lease period.

But we have to respect that 500 years are an enormous age for an agricultural building! Phases of economical wealth always extinguished primarily the oldest ones. To find rests of medieval buildings is thus also a statistical question. The relicts of the oldest ones have a carpentry quality comparable to later houses, and: What do people expect even more than houses from the 14th and 15th century, which do by all means exist!

Zusammenfassung

Bestehende Bauernhäuser in Nordwestdeutschland und den angrenzenden Niederlanden reichen bis in das 14. und 15. Jahrhundert zurück. Ein Vergleich mit späteren Bauten offenbart signifikante Veränderungen, die sehr gut mit Veränderungen der wirtschaftlichen und rechtlichen Verhältnisse erklärt werden können. Angesichts dieser wenig beachteten Befunde werden jüngere Hypothesen zum Übergang vom Posten- auf den Ständerbau und die mutmasslichen Gründe hierfür kritisch betrachtet.

Résumé

Dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Allemagne et l'Est des Pays-Bas, les maisons rurales les plus anciennes sont originaires du 14^{ème} au 15^{ème} siècle. En comparaison de maisons plus jeunes, on reconnaît des changements qu'on peut expliquer avec des altérations de l'économie et de la propriété. En vue de ces états de lieux peu considérés, les hypothèses plus jeunes sur la transition de la construction sur poteaux plantés à cette sur poteaux non plantés et les raisons pour cela, est examinée critiquement.

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