

CHANGING PATTERNS OF AGRICULTURAL
SETTLEMENTS IN DENMARK

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Geographical-historical research into rural settlements and their development has a long tradition in Denmark and Sweden. The principal reason for this is no doubt to be found in the fact that European standards quite rarely to be found in the after European standards quite source material comprises a completely preserved entire survey of all cultivated land in the kingdom from the 1680's with recordspanied by maps, although the construction of such is to some extent possible.

On the other hand, there are maps on the scale of 1:4, 000 covering the whole country from the years around 1800. Practically all these maps, which were drawn up partly in connection with the enclosure the enclosure movement /after 1769/, and partly for use in the assessment of land tax that came into force in 1844, have been preserved and are easily available for research. On these oldest detailed maps, the agricultural settlement in the greater part of Denmark appears as manor estates and closely built villages. No final solution has yet been found to the question of whether scattered or concentrated settlement is oldest in Denmark. But at least from the beginning of the Christian Era to around the year 1800 the village was the traditional

form of settlement in most parts of the country. The widely varying shape and size of the villages as well as their localization generally indicate their dependence on or adaptation to local agricultural conditions, surface relief, the shape and extent of the meadows, the possibilities for tilling, the ground water level, the presence of suitable drinking-water, the possible danger of flooding, and probably also economic, social and political conditions.

There has however always been scattered habitation, single farms, particularly in the meagre or strongly undulating regions of the country or where there is most widespread forest.

Fig. 1, which has been produced on the basis of parish statistical returns from King Christian Vth's land tax in 1688 illustrates how the situation was until immediately before the exchange of strip holdings and scattering of farms around 1800. On Bornholm, most farms were situated near the coast on the slopes of the rift valleys, while the interior of the island was common. In West Jutland, the farms were often situated in open rows along small rivers and meadows with the heath as common /fig. 2,3/

Fig. 4 is an example of the settlement structure prior to the scattering of farms from the village of Sänder Vestud on the island of Mön in South East Denmark. All the farms and houses stand concentrated in the village. On 5 we see a neighbouring village, Alebäk, with the manor farm Alebäckgard, where their farmers carried out villein service.

The dissolution of the open field system resulted partly in an exchange of strip holdings with a redistribution of land, a process which was concluded in the course of a few decades, partly in a successive scattering of rural habitation from the closed settlement clusters into the previously uninhabited fields /6/. This picture is not wholly typical of the scattering process which took place in Denmark, in as much as all the farms here moved out simultaneously. It will be seen that the smallholders received small parcels of land on what was formerly the common. After the exchange of strip holdings with the farms situated in the middle or at the edge of their fields, the village has no longer any natural function as a habitational pattern in the Danish cultural landscape; it has gradually changed character. The number of craftsmen increased and the character of the settlement was eventually altered; the village became a service town for the surrounding locality /fig. 7/.

Some villages completely or almost completely disappeared as a result of the scattering of farms; a few, as this one /fig. 8/, were left entirely intact as settlements by the exchange of strip holdings, which incidentally was incomplete in precisely this village.

As a result of favourable trade conditions for Danish agricultural goods, there was a shortage of labour in agriculture in the 1890's; an act was therefore passed making available Government loans for the setting up of farm workers' cottages with rapidly reached saturation point as a result, and with a renewal of the act every 5th year the limit to the size of the farms was steadily extended. The aim quickly became the independent farm large enough to keep a family. In accordance with the new laws relating to the parcelling out of estates passed in 1919, the Government

was to acquire land and pass it on to state tenants; this was the case with the parcelling out of glebe and with the transition of majorats to free property in return for the surrender of a part of their lands for parcelling out. Majorats were estates which were exempt from taxation and which passed on within certain families; if the family should die out, the estate would fall to the Crown./

At the top of fig. 9 we can see farm workers' cottages resulting from the act of 1899; below is to be seen Bjernede Farm fully parcellled out after the act relating to the conversion of entailed estates into fee simple. And on fig. 10 we see a group of smallholders' colonies, a characteristic piece of cultural landscape having arisen in this century.

In the Middle Ages, Spanager was a village, but no map from the time has survived. 5 farms were merged into one home farm by royal concession in 1688. Fig. 11 shows this home farm's fields in 1808 with the names and the soil quality from that time. And on the next picture /12/ we see its parcelling out at the conversion of 1923 traced on to an ordnance map with the 45 new farms. But practice has for many years worked counter to the parcelling acts; thus the number of farming properties in Denmark as a whole was less in 1960 than in 1900, although 30,000 state holdings were set up in this period when amalgamation and discontinuation were in conflict with the act.

Figure 13 shows the situation in the same area in 1969, when 26 original farms were run by 13 farmers, in addition to which 3 other farms were leased by farmers outside the area.

Alebäk Farm, which I have mentioned earlier, and which was set up in 1769 on the lands of 14 farms, was parcelled out into 16 state holdings in 1922, which again were reduced to 11 in 1969.

Two other manor estates, both of which were set up on the basis of land from village farms in the 1500's have been investigated with respect to parcelling out and later amalgamation: Lindersvold on Zealand, which was parcelled out into 40 smallholdings in 1922, but which only comprised 29 farms in 1970, and Nislev Farm on Funen, which was parcelled out in 1925 into 37 farms and 8 market gardens; in 1969 the 37 farms had been amalgamated into only 26. The buildings from the discontinued farms do not of course all disappear, but they are no longer occupied by farmers.

All in all, the greatest metamorphosis of the habitational landscape occurred without doubt as a result of the enclosure movement, and it is interesting to compare this map of the individual farms as a percentage of the total number of farms in 1930 with the corresponding map for 1688; the number has risen from a few percent of individual farms to around 50 % /fig. 14/. Fig. 1 was prepared by Professor Axel Steensberg, fig. 14 by Lars and Axel Steensberg.

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F i g u r e

- Fig. 1. Scattered farms as a percentage of all farms in each parish 1688
- Fig. 2. Scattered farms in Jutland about the year 1800.
- Fig. 3. The same area as shown in fig. 2, but 1970
- Fig. 4. Concentrated village on Mön 1802.
- Fig. 5. Alabäk and Alebäckgard about 1800
- Fig. 6. Buildings in the same village as shown in fig. 4, 1970. Shaded area: The old common from before 1802
- Fig. 7. The same area as in fig. 5, 1970.
- Fig. 8. Concentrated village 1970. Reersö.
- Fig. 9. Top Map: Parcelling out according to the act of 1899. Below: Fully parcelled out according to the act of 1919.
- Fig. 10. Several small holders colonies.
- Fig. 11. Spanager manor about 1800
- Fig. 12. Spanager manor parcelled out 1923
- Fig. 13. The original farms from 1923 have by amalgamation and discontinuation been reduced in number.
- Fig. 14. Scattered farms as a percentage of all farms in each parish 1931

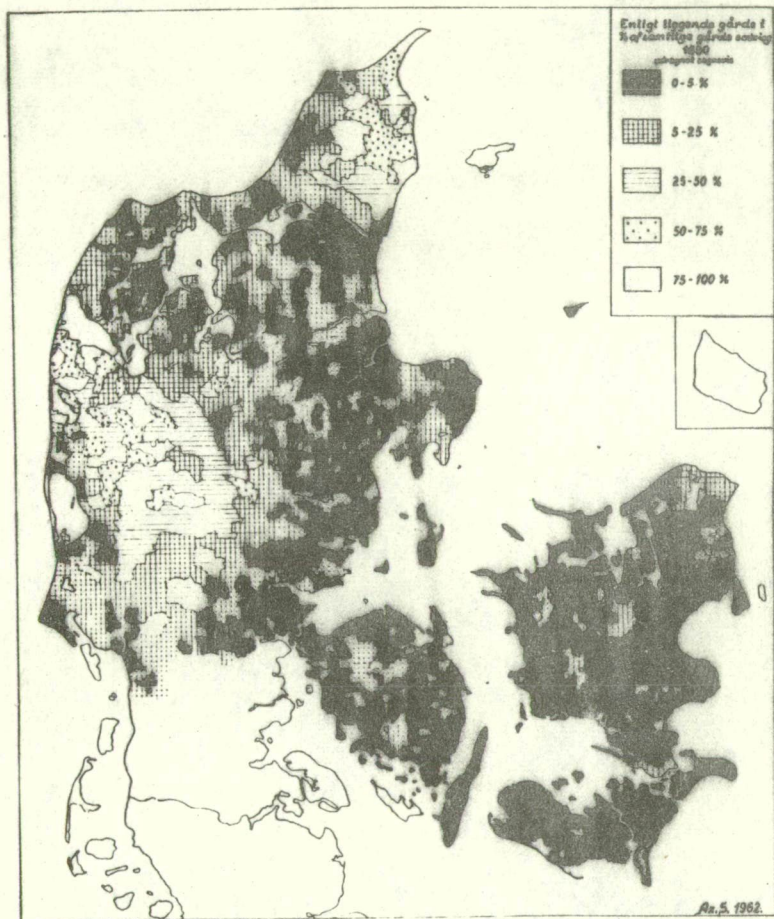


Fig. 1.

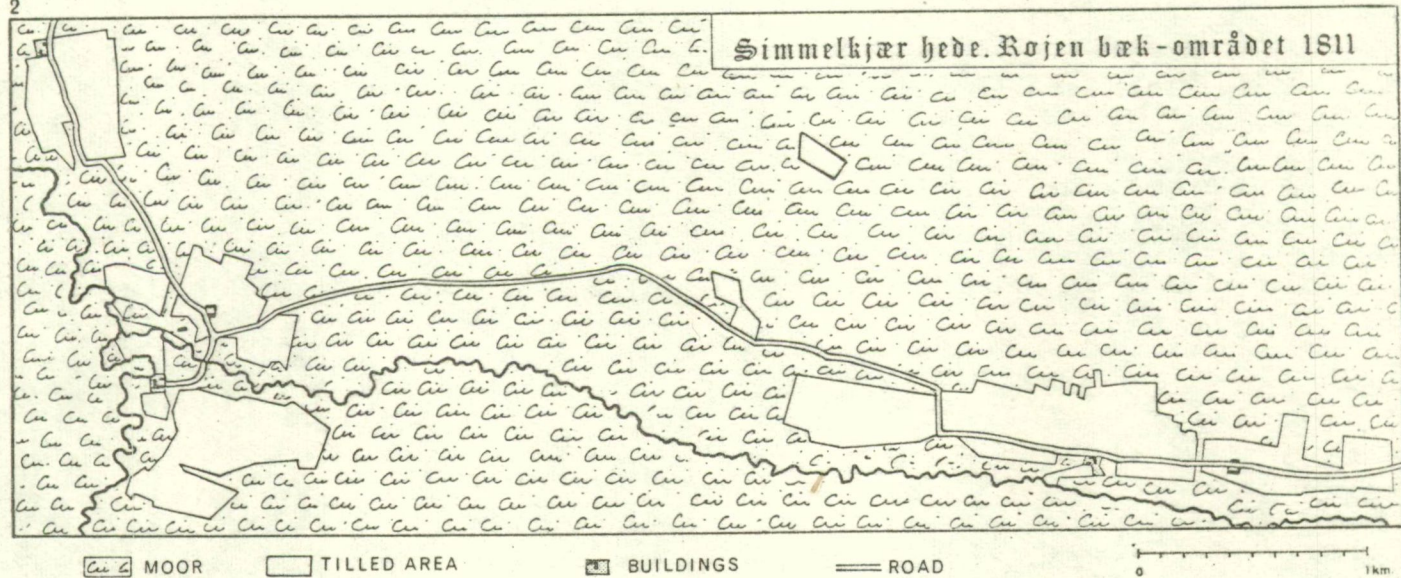


Fig. 2.

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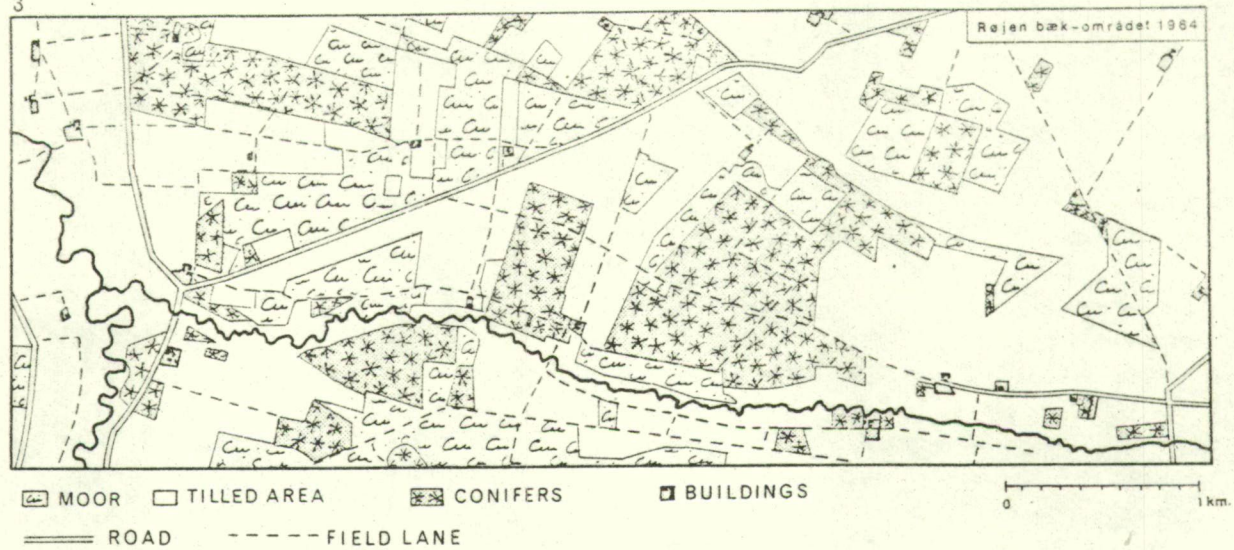


Fig. 3.

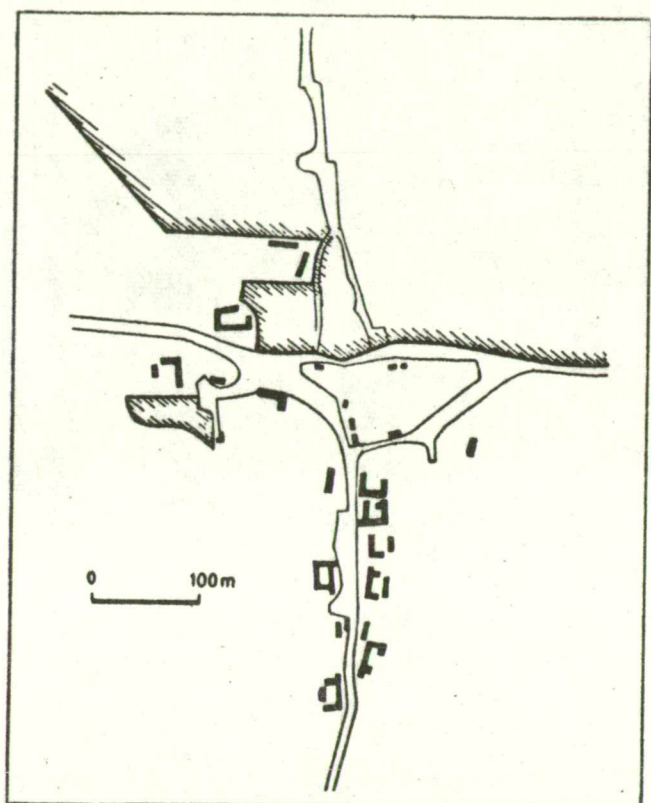


Fig. 4.

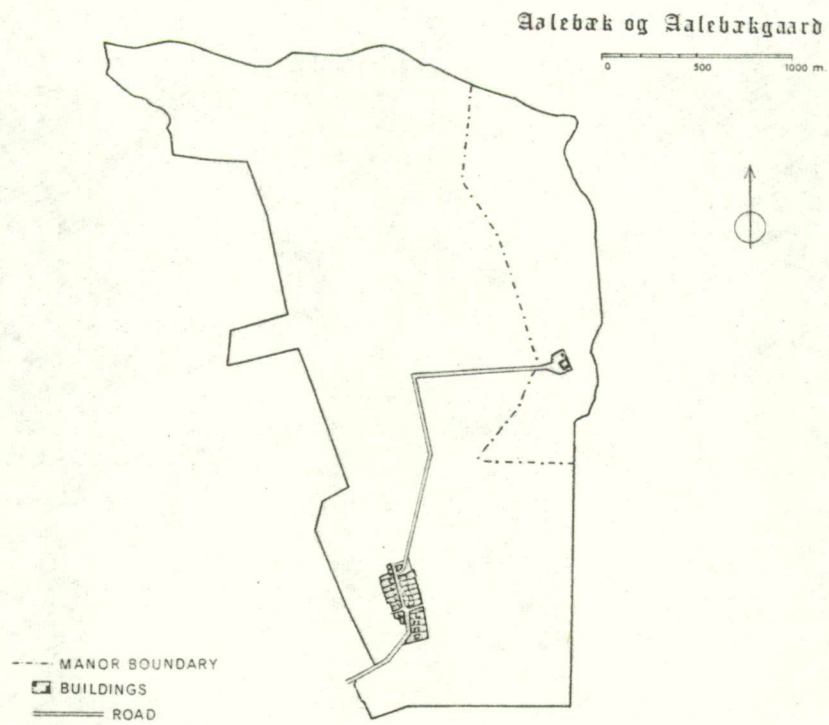


Fig. 5.

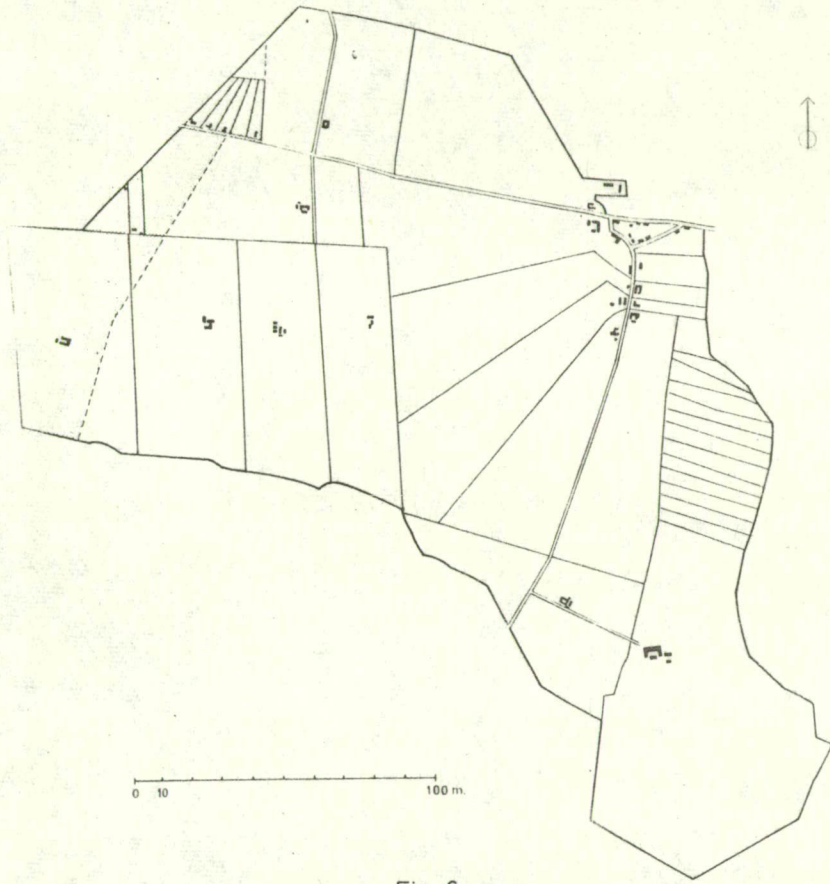


Fig. 6.

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Fig. 7



Fig. 8.

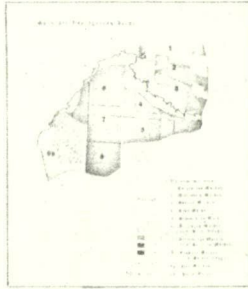


Fig. 9.



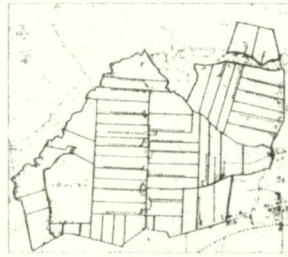
Fig. 10.

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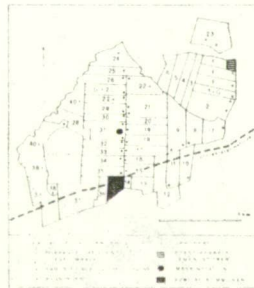
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Fig. 11.



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Fig. 12.



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Fig. 13.

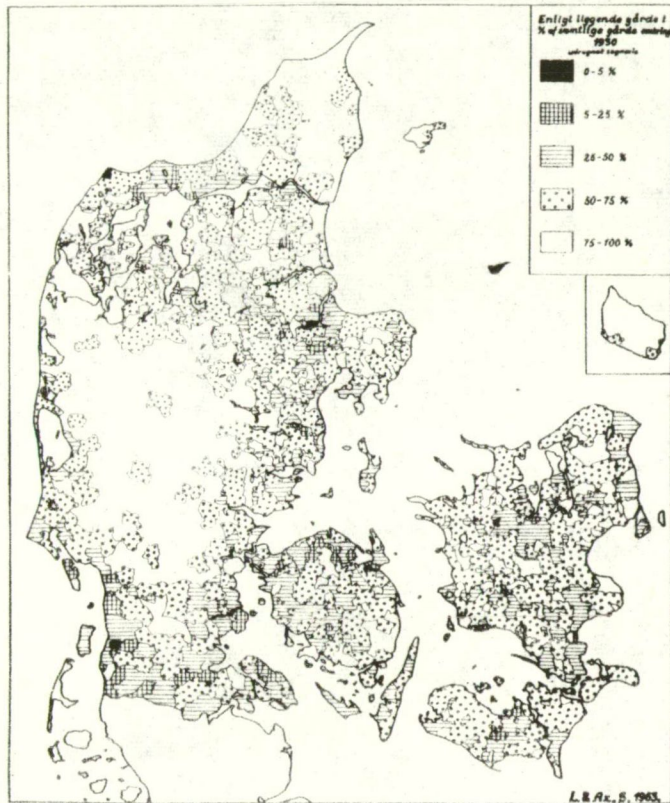


Fig. 14.