

The Concept of Labour in the Danish Medieval Wall-paintings

Martin Bo Nørregård

Throughout the Middle Ages, the main part of the population was occupied with cultivating the soil. But our knowledge of the attitude towards labour at the time is very scarce. Furthermore, the little knowledge we do have is dictated by written sources, and hence by the few persons that could write.

In Denmark, the written sources concerning agriculture are either legal or fiscal.¹ If one wants to examine the attitude towards labour, it is therefore necessary to look for other sources. Such sources are to be found in the Danish churches, in which a large quantity of medieval wall-paintings have survived till today. Through this material it may be possible that another and less elitarian attitude towards labour than is found in the written sources will appear.

Pictorial material is used by historians as illustrations, and seldom as actual sources to our knowledge of the past. When they are used as more than mere illustrations, it is often to throw light on the material conditions of a specific age.² Another use, however, might be possible.

The wall-paintings in the Danish churches are by and large religious, their purpose is to illustrate the religious texts. But a text does not tell everything, it leaves space for the painter to fill out: How for example is Adam to till the ground? The filling out of this space would be entirely up to the painter, but he is actually defined by the commissioner, the iconographic tradition and by the time and society, of which he is a part. The space left by the text is in that respect almost completely filled out, but for that very reason it, and thereby the picture, can be used as a source for the period of the painter.³ The problem and the challenge is to identify and interpret the space left by the text.

¹ Erland Porsmose, *Det danske landbrugs historie 1* (ed. Claus Bjørn), 1988, p. 212-213.

² ex. Niels M. Saxtorph, "Kalkmaleriets kildeværdi", *Fortid og Nutid XXIV*, 1970, p. 211-229; Rikke A. Olsen, "Bäuerliche Sachkultur Dänemarks im Spätmittelalter", *Bäuerliche Sachkultur des Spätmittelalters*, 1984, p. 219-233; Erland Porsmose, *Det danske landbrugs historie 1* (ed. Claus Bjørn), 1988, p. 294.

³ Axel Bolvig, *Billeder - Sådan set*, 1974, p. 30.

To do so one must compile all the knowledge available about the period of the picture. Any attempt to interpret the painting without such knowledge would be reckless. It is also necessary to know the text to which the picture relates, and the tradition of depicting that specific text.⁴ Is it known who the commissioners, the painters and the spectators of the pictures were, and are the text and tradition known, it is possible to go beyond the religious universe of the wall-paintings? If one juxtaposes the compiled knowledge with the picture, accordances and discordances or perhaps both will appear.⁵ The simple ascertainment of either one or the other is a statement about the time of the picture. But especially discordances between picture and knowledge demand the use of one's knowledge to interpret the meaning of the statement.

Thus, it is necessary to find out what the written sources can tell us about the attitude towards labour, before we can use the picture as a source to the past.

The attitude towards labour in the written sources of the Middle Ages can be found in a theological context, that is to say the commentaries of the Bible, monastic rules, or in the discussion of these; but also in a profane context, most outspoken in the theoretical works about society, though also in literature and legislation. The attitude towards labour was of course neither constant nor unequivocal, the huge timespan of the period alone denies the possibility.

The attitudes were rooted in a number of traditions, none of which had an unambiguous attitude towards labour. Both the Greeks and Romans and later the invading people of Europe felt contempt for labour, because of the discrimination between the free and unfree, but they did however respect the crafts. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, Adam was punished with labour, but in the Creation God himself laboured, though how he did it was disputed. In the New Testament, Jesus seems to be against labour when beholding the fowls of the air and considering the lilies of the field, whereas Saint Paul takes the view that one must labour to eat.⁶

This ambiguity disappeared in the monastic rules of Saint Benedict from the beginning of the sixth century. Labour and prayer were to him the

⁴ Rainer Wohlfeil, "Methodische Reflexionen zur Historische Bildkunde", *Historische Bildkunde – Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* Beiheft 12, 1991, p. 31; Axel Bolvig, *Billeder - Sådan set*, 1974, p. 52.

⁵ Rainer Wohlfeil, "Methodische Reflexionen zur Historische Bildkunde", *Historische Bildkunde – Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* Beiheft 12, 1991, p. 33.

⁶ Jacques LeGoff, *Time, Labour and Culture in the Middle Ages*, 1980, p. 73 ff; Georg Ovitt, *Restoration of Perfection*, 1985, p. 57 ff; Herbert Applebaum, *The Concept of Labour*, 1992, p. 180-194.

central parts of monastic life. Manual labour was seen as something good, especially because it prevented loitering, but also because it made alms possible and was an expression of humility.⁷ Saint Benedict's rules had an enormous impact on the monastic communities which followed, and manual labour was held in respect because of them.⁸ But one must always be careful to adopt the attitude towards labour by monks as the one which was not done by monks. Monks' labour was part of a strictly regulated religious devotion, and that determined the attitude towards their labour. But opposite to Saint Benedict's rules, the more physically tainted labour had a tendency to disappear completely from the monks' daily schedule. This was partly because the monks became occupied with other things, as well as because the majority of monks belonged to the upper strata of society.⁹ Labour was then either taken care of by tenants, as on a normal estate, or left to the so called *conversi*.¹⁰ Furthermore, the theoretical tripartition of society also seems to have had an impact on the monasteries. Theory distinguished between the clergy and the labouring groups, and hence dismissed manual labour as a necessary part of the religious life.¹¹ The appearance of the Mendicant Orders in the late Middle Ages can be seen as an expression of this, even though they felt sympathy for the labouring.¹²

The tripartition of society was common from about the beginning of the twelfth century. It was a theory which distinguished between three orders of society: those who prayed, those who fought and those who worked.¹³ It appears that labour primarily meant manual labour, though it, at times, also did cover labour less physically demanding, as, for example, trading and teaching.¹⁴ Since, furthermore, the main part of the manual labour was done by peasants, it is difficult to tell difference of the attitudes to labour from that towards the peasants.¹⁵ The fact that those who worked are mentioned at all can be taken as recognition of their

⁷ Herbert Appelbaum, *The Concept of Labour*, 1992, p. 202.

⁸ Jacques LeGoff, *Time, Labour and Culture in the Middle Ages*, 1980, p. 81.

⁹ H.-W. Goetz, *Leben im Mittelalter*, 1986, p. 69, p. 73 & p. 113.

¹⁰ Herbert Appelbaum, *The Concept of Labour*, 1992, p. 204.

¹¹ Georg Ovitt, *Restoration of Perfection*, 1985, p. 156-157.

¹² Georg Ovitt, *Restoration of Perfection*, 1985, p. 160; Herwig Ebner, "Der Bauer in der mittelalterlichen Historiographie", *Bäuerliche Sachkultur des Spätmittelalters*, 1984, p. 95-96.

¹³ Otto G. Oexle, "Tria Genera Hominum", *Institutionen. Kultur und Gesellschaft in Mittelalter* (eds. L. Finske, Werner Rösner & Thomas Zotz), 1984, p. 494.

¹⁴ Jacques LeGoff, *Time, Labour and Culture in the Middle Ages*, 1980, p. 78; Jacques LeGoff, "Arbeit und Arbeitsteilung im sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Wandel", *Lexikon des Mittelalters* I, 1, 1980, S. 873.

¹⁵ Jacques LeGoff, *Time, Labour and Culture in the Middle Ages*, 1980, p. 78 & p. 79.

importance, but there was no doubt about their position at the lower part of society.¹⁶ It is one thing to recognize the importance of labour, another and wholly different thing to look positively upon those who labour. The peasants' labour was recognized as important, but it was looked upon with contempt.¹⁷ But the lack of discrimination between the peasant and his labour came to mean that it was the peasant who was held in contempt and not so much labour *per se*. The Danish bishop Absalon would not be looked down upon for chopping wood in his idle hours, just as the knight could perform his extremely physical task with great honour.¹⁸

In Denmark the elite must have had much the same attitude towards labour, but the written sources cannot shed light on these matters because of their legal and fiscal content (except of course Saxo's note about the wood chopping Absalon). But if the written sources cannot tell us about the attitude to labour in the Danish areas, they can give important information about medieval society.

Denmark was like most European countries at that time an agricultural country. The larger part of the population were peasants, who as tenants tilled the soil of their lord, i.e. the king, the aristocracy or the clergy. In the late Middle Ages the soil was divided into medium sized tenant holdings, which had superseded the big estates, and small tenant holdings that had earlier been plentiful in numbers.¹⁹ The transition to the average sized holding is possibly an effect of the decrease in population experienced over most of Europe in the fourteenth century.²⁰ A consequence of this decrease was a lack of manpower, which forced the landowner to increase the size of his tenant holdings, if he wished to keep his land cultivated. This increase in land per tenant probably led to better conditions for the average peasant, because the size of the holding was now more viable. But lack of manpower also led to a tightening of the legal restrictions. A peasant had much less chance of leaving his holding, and on Zealand, Møn and Lolland-Falster even villeinage was introduced.²¹ The increased legal restrictions were not necessarily simply a

¹⁶ Jacques LeGoff, *Time, Labour and Culture in the Middle Ages*, 1980, p. 86; Helmut Hundbichler, "Arbeit", *Alltag im Spätmittelalter* (ed. Harry Kühnel), 1984, p. 190-191.

¹⁷ Helmut Hundbichler, "Arbeit", *Alltag im Spätmittelalter* (ed. Harry Kühnel), 1984, p. 192; Herwig Ebnert, "Der Bauer in der mittelalterlichen Historiographie", *Bäuerliche Sachkultur des Spätmittelalters*, 1984, p. 95.

¹⁸ Saxo Grammaticus, *Saxonis Gesta Danorum* (eds. Jørgen Olrik & H.Ræder.), Liber Decimus Quartus XXV 11., 1931, p. 429.

¹⁹ Erland Porsmose, *Det danske landbrugs historie 1* (ed. Claus Bjørn), 1988, p. 341-343.

²⁰ Kai Hørby, *Dansk socialhistorie 2*, 1980, p. 246.

²¹ Rikke A. Olsen, "Bäuerliche Sachkultur Dänemarks im Spätmittelalter", *Bäuerliche Sachkultur des Spätmittelalters*, 1984, p. 221; Kai Hørby, *Dansk socialhistorie 2*,

direct consequence of the shortage in manpower, but can be seen as a means to control a less humble peasantry, possibly a result of the new conditions.

To say anything further about the conditions of the peasantry is rather difficult. The land of each village was probably cultivated in an open-field system, and the long strips of field indicate the use of heavy tools using a lot of tractive force (i.e. the wheel plough). But rules for the open-field system and field shapes are primarily known from later times.²² As for the size of the animal husbandry at an estimate, the average holding in about the year 1300 accounts the animal stock to consist of two horses, two oxen, two cows, ten sheep.²³ It is not known whether the peasant owned his plough himself or whether the village as a whole owned one or more ploughs, nor the amount of tractive force needed, and therefore not if the two horses of the average holding were enough to pull the plough.²⁴

Though not much is known about this, the increasing number of medium-sized holdings would indicate a higher and more equal living standard in the peasantry as a whole. The larger but fewer holdings did not lead to an increase in the amount of poor and landless, because the population had decreased and, therefore, there was more land to be divided among fewer people.

During the same period, the peasantry must have begun visiting the village church more often. In the early Middle Ages the village church was mainly reserved for the landowning part of the population. The number of free landowners was small, and the organization of the church room is marked by that fact.²⁵ But from the beginning of the fourteenth century the organization of the church room was changed, the brick-built interior was removed, and many churches were enlarged. The enlargement of the church room cannot be explained by an increasing population, because the population, as mentioned, decreased. But it is natural to connect the upcoming of the average tenant holding with the changes in the church room. One might argue that the village church became "democratized"²⁶.

1980, p. 228; Erland Porsmose, *Det danske landbrugs historie I* (ed. Claus Bjørn), 1988, p. 397-398.

²² Erland Porsmose, *Det danske landbrugs historie I* (ed. Claus Bjørn), 1988, p. 266, p. 284-285 & p. 364-365.

²³ Erland Porsmose, *Det danske landbrugs historie I* (ed. Claus Bjørn), 1988, p. 292.

²⁴ Erland Porsmose, *Det danske landbrugs historie I* (ed. Claus Bjørn), 1988, p. 282; Jean Gimpel, *The Medieval Machine*, 1992, p. 40-41.

²⁵ Axel Bolvig, *Kirkekunstens storhedstid. Om kirker og kunst i Danmark i romansk tid*, 1992, p. 76-89.

²⁶ Axel Bolvig, *Bondens Billeder. Om kirker og kunst i dansk senmiddelalder*, 1994, p. 60-74.

At the same time a change took place in the style of the wall-paintings; it became more plain, more popular and thereby less aristocratic. Does this change in style indicate that the peasantry took over the commission of wall-paintings as well as the church room or is it a result of an elite to adjust to a new situation?²⁷ The founders or commissioners known from the late Middle Ages are mainly aristocratic, but not entirely, and in most cases nothing is known about them.²⁸ Only few of the painters are known by name, and they are all Danish. The inscriptions which they are part of are in Latin, however, and that seems to indicate a connection with the elite. Nevertheless, the painters claim to have done the labour with their hands, and that means that they, unlike the elite, laboured manually.²⁹

It is extremely difficult to find out who commissioned the pictures: the sources are simply too few to give a clear picture of who did it and why. This, of course, makes it difficult to use the wall-paintings as sources to the attitude of labour in Denmark. Nevertheless an amount of knowledge has been compiled; sufficient or not, it is now time to return to the pictorial material itself.

The Danish wall-paintings depict several kinds of labour: craftsmen building the tower of Babel and Noah's Ark, farm labourers in The Miracle of the Cornfield, while churning is seen in The Legend of the Milk Hare. Most frequently depicted is peasant labour, as seen in Adam and Eve's Life on Earth.³⁰ Adam and Eve's Life on Earth is not only the most frequently depicted motif, but the sort of labour they are doing is what the majority of the population did. It is therefore natural to use this motif as a source for studying the attitude towards labour in medieval Denmark.

In the Bible Adam and Eve's Life on Earth is a consequence of the Fall of Man. Eve is punished by having to bear the manifold increased burden of pregnancy, and the rule of her husband. Adam has to labour the cursed ground and eat his bread in the sweat of his face. Before they were driven from the Garden of Eden, God clothed them in coats of skins.³¹ The

²⁷ Axel Bolvig, *Bondens Billeder. Om kirker og kunst i dansk senmiddelalder*, 1994, p. 87-89; Søren Kaspersen, "Om folkelighed og ufolkelighed i senmiddelalderligt vægmaleri", *Kunst, Samfund, Kunst - En hilsen til Broby*, 1987, p. 10 & p. 28.

²⁸ Ulla Haastrup (ed.), "Danske kalkmalerier 1375-1475", *Danske kalkmalerier* Vol. 4, 1985, p. 36-38; Ulla Haastrup (ed.), "Danske kalkmalerier 1475-1500", *Danske kalkmalerier* Vol. 5, 1991, p. 48-49; Ulla Haastrup (ed.), "Danske kalkmalerier 1500-1536", *Danske kalkmalerier* Vol. 6, 1992, p. 72-75.

²⁹ Ulla Haastrup (ed.), "Danske kalkmalerier 1475-1500", *Danske kalkmalerier* Vol. 5, 1991, p. 13, p. 19-20.

³⁰ See table 1.

³¹ Genesis 3, 14-24.

Bible says little more about Adam and Eve: they had Cain and Abel, and after Cain killed Abel they begot Seth.³² Adam is, therefore, normally depicted tilling the soil, either with a pickaxe, a spade and, at times, even with a plough. Sometimes he is helped by Eve, though she is usually depicted while spinning surrounded by children.³³

In the old Danish area 47 churches are known to have wall-paintings of the Life on Earth. 31 of them date back to 1425-1536, which roughly equals the late Middle Ages in Denmark. 11 of the motifs date back to an earlier period, i.e. from c. 1200 and onwards, and six to a later period, that is to say after the Danish Reformation in 1536. Only the pictures of the late Middle Ages will be used here as source material, because of the relative large amount of wall-paintings within a relatively short period. But not all 31 churches can be used for an analysis. Some of the wall-paintings are badly preserved, others only known from drawings or from written descriptions. Which wall-paintings can be used and which cannot must be decided by the form of analysis.

A reading of the unsorted material shows that the main part of churches depicting the Life on Earth is situated in the dioceses of Lund and Roskilde, with respectively 15 and 11 churches, the last 5 are found in the dioceses of Odense, Viborg and Århus. This distribution in the different dioceses almost equals the general distribution of known wall-paintings in Denmark³⁴. How important the dioceses were for the wall-paintings has not yet been properly examined, though it seems that the dividing water of the Great Belt was of greater importance than the dioceses. But until this examination has been done, the dioceses represent a feasible way of grouping the material.

Adam and Eve's Life on Earth is most often placed in vaults together with other motifs from the beginning of Genesis, thus they form part of a pictorial narrative. The Life on Earth is seldom placed near wall-paintings depicting devils or other motifs that could have a negative connotation (see table 1) – in opposition to the Churning where the woman churning often is assisted by one or more devils. The Life on Earth is seldom placed as a secondary motif in a pendentive, often it is the main motif in its own vault cell, but just as frequently it shares the vault cell with another motif (table 2³⁵).

³² Genesis 4, 1-3 & 25.

³³ Louis Réau, *Iconographie de L'art Chretien* Vol. II., 1957, p. 91-93.

³⁴ Jesper Jacques Borrild, <http://www.kalkmalerier.dk/feature/chart/2/2.htm>

³⁵ Column: place in vault cell.

Table 1: Motifs appearing in the same vault as The First Labour

Related to Genesis	Motif	Number of motifs	% of number of motifs	% of number of churches
*	The First Labour	31	14,1%	100%
*	The Expulsion	24	10,9%	77%
*	Creation of Eve	21	9,5%	68%
*	The Fall	19	8,6%	61%
*	Kain and Abel	17	7,7%	55%
*	Creation of Adam	13	5,9%	42%
*	God warning Adam and Eve	11	5,0%	35%
*	Adam and Eve provided with tools/clothes	9	4,1%	29%
*	The Creation	8	3,6%	26%
	Saints	7	3,2%	23%
	The life of Christ	5	2,3%	16%
*	The Temptation	4	1,8%	13%
*	God bringing Adam and Eve together	4	1,8%	13%
	Drolleries	4	1,8%	13%
	The Childhood of Christ	4	1,8%	13%
	Unidentified Saints	4	1,8%	13%
*	Adam and Eve grieving	3	1,4%	10%
	Judgment Day	3	1,4%	10%
	Unidentified Scenes	3	1,4%	10%
*	God condemns Adam and Eve	2	0,9%	6%
	Devils	2	0,9%	6%
	Fables	2	0,9%	6%
	Man shoeing cat	2	0,9%	6%
	Man with crossbow	2	0,9%	6%
	Owl	2	0,9%	6%
*	Adam praising his Creator	1	0,5%	3%
*	The Death of Adam	1	0,5%	3%
*	The 7th day	1	0,5%	3%
	The Prayer of the Rich and the Poor Man	1	0,5%	3%
	Fabulous monsters	1	0,5%	3%
	Plaited Cross	1	0,5%	3%
	Inscription	1	0,5%	3%
	John the Baptist	1	0,5%	3%
	Man crushing claws of Cat	1	0,5%	3%
	The Purification of Mary	1	0,5%	3%
	Building of the Ark of Noah	1	0,5%	3%
	Pelican	1	0,5%	3%
	Tree	1	0,5%	3%
	Unidentified Morality	1	0,5%	3%
	Total	220	100,0%	

The motifs are generalized (ex. The Miracle of the Cornfield and The Presentation and Christ in the Temple are changed to The Childhood of Christ) and reduced (i.e. a motif is only registered once even it covers more severies of the vault).

Notes to Table 2:

This diagram represents the attempt to textualize the wallpaintings. Each post of the diagram represents a depiction of Adam or Eve or both, each church has a number and the decimals denote that there are more depictions in the same church.

Abbreviations:

ADAM: *Work:* d=driving hay, 2h=with 2 horses, pl=ploughing, tie=tie sheafs, sow=sowing, ch=chopping, dig=digging, ha=hacking, 2o=with 2 oxes. *Beard:* no=none, b=with beard. *Feet:* f=foot-wear, na=naked. *Clothes:* c=coat, b=blouse. *Legs:* t=trousers, na=naked. *Other:* w=whip, h=hat, s=stick, p=purse, ba=bareheaded, a=axe, k=knife, ho=hood.

EVE: *Work:* har=harvesting, s=spinning. *Feet:* NoV=not visible, na=naked. *Clothes:* dr=dress. *Head:* wi=wimple, ba=bareheaded. *Other:* pi=seated on pillow, fo=seated on footstool, be=seated on bench, in=inside, si=sickle, pi=pithfork.

CHILDREN: the number before colon is the complete number of children. he=helping with whatever follows after the colon, d=driving, pl=ploughing, cr=in cradle, ch=chopping, sw=in swaddling-clothes, la=in Eve's lap or skirt, ri=riding hobbyhorse.

PLACE IN CHURCH: N=nave, Ch=church, C=chancel, W=wall, V=vault and the number (1., 2. etc) before denotes vault, numbers starting from east, es=east severy, ns=north severy, ss=south severy, ws=west severy, e=east, n=north, s=south, w=west.

PLACE IN VAULT CELL: Ch=fills half a vault cell, C=fills whole vault cell, Wp=fills part of Wall, P=in pendentive.

WORKSHOP: B=Brarup, E=Elmelunde, Ev=Everlöf, F=Fjälkinge, I=Isefjord, O=Ottestrup, aK=as in Kirke Saby, aÖ=as in Ö. Ingelstad, V=Vittskövle, Å=Åle.

generally: -=nothing is missing, ?=uncertainty/unknown, *=indistinct.

Sources: Nationalmuseets Ikonografiske registrant; The iconographic database (<http://www.kalkmalerier.dk/>); Medieval Danish Wallpaintings Database (<http://www.kalkmalerier.dk/>); Danske kalkmalerier Vol. 4-6 (ed. Ulla Hastrup), 1985-1992; A catalogue of wall-paintings in the churches of medieval Denmark 1100-1600 Scania Halland Blekinge Vol. II-III (ed. Knud Banning), 1976.

Table 2: The Life on Earth in details.

Diocese	Nr	Church name	From year	Till year	Adam						Eve				
					Work	Beard	Feet	Clothes	Legs	Other	Work	Feet	Clothes	Head	Other
Lund	1,1	Benestad	1500	1500	d 2h	no	?	c	?	w	-	-	-	-	-
	1,2	Benestad	1500	1500	pl 2h	no	?	c	?	w	-	-	-	-	-
	2,1	Emmislöv	1450	1475	tie	b	?	?	?	h	har	NoV	dr	wi	-
	2,2	Emmislöv	1450	1475	pl	b	?	?	?	h, s/w?	s	NoV	dr	wi*	pi,fo
	2,3	Emmislöv	1450	1475	sow	b	?	?	?	h	-	-	-	-	-
	3	Everlöv	1500	1500	ch	no	?	c	na	p	-	NoV	-	-	-
	4	Fjälkinge	1430	1460	pl 2h	b	f	c	?	ba,a,s	s	NoV	dr	wi	be, in
	5	Fultofta	1475	1525	pl 2h	b?	na	c	na	s	-	-	-	-	-
	6	Gladsax	1475	1525	pl 2h	b	f	c	t	h,s	s	NoV	dr	wi	-
	7	Hästveda	1500	1500	pl 2h	b	f	c	t	ba,k,p,s	s	NoV	dr	wi	-
	8	Kävlinge	1500	1500	pl 2h	b	?	c	na	-	s	?	dr	ba*	-
	9,1	Linderöd	1498	1498	-	-	-	-	-	-	s	?	dr*	wi	-
	9,2	Linderöd	1498	1498	pl 2h	b	f	c	t	w	-	-	-	-	-
	10,1	N. Strö	1450	1475	-	-	-	-	-	-	s	NoV	dr	wi	be
	10,2	N. Strö	1450	1475	tie?	s*	?	c*	?	h	har	NoV	dr	wi	-
	10,3	N. Strö	1450	1475	dig	b	f	c	t	h	-	-	-	-	-
	11,1	Nymö	1450	1500	-	-	-	-	-	-	s	NoV	dr	wi/ha	be
	11,2	Nymö	1450	1500	pl?	?	?	c*	?	s?	-	-	-	-	-
	12,1	Rinkaby	1450	1500	-	-	-	-	-	-	s	NoV	dr	wi	be
	12,2	Rinkaby	1450	1500	tie	b	f	c	t	h	har	NoV	dr	wi	si
	12,3	Rinkaby	1450	1500	d 2h	b	f	c	t	h	har	NoV	dr	wi	pi

Table 2: The Life on Earth in details.

Diocese	Nr	Church name	From year	Till year	Adam					Eve					
					Work	Beard	Feet	Clothes	Legs	Other	Work	Feet	Clothes	Head	Other
Lund	12,4	Rinkaby	1450	1500	pl 2h	b	f	c	t	h,w,ba	-	-	-	-	-
	13	Silvåkra	1500	1525	?	?	?	?	?	-	s	NoV	dr	wi	fo?
	14	Äspö	1500	1500	pl 2h	b	na	b	t	-	s	?	dr	wi*	be?
	15	Ö.Herrestad	1450	1475	dig	b	f	c	t	-	s?	NoV	dr	ba	-
Odense	16	Tågerup	1500	1520	ha?	b	f	c	t	ba,a	s	NoV	dr	wi	be
Roskilde	17	Elmelunde	1499	1507	pl 2h	no	f	c	t	ha	-	-	-	-	-
	18	Hjembæk	1500	1500	dig	no	f	c	t	-	s	NoV	dr	wi	-
	19	Herlev	1480	1480	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	20	Højelse	1430	1430	dig	b	na	c	na	-	s	NoV	dr	wi	-
	21	Kværkeby	1500	1500	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
	22	Kgs. Lyngby	1500	1500	dig	no*	f	c	t	-	s	NoV	dr	wi	fo?
	23	Lynge	1450	1480	ha?	no	?	c	?	-	s	na*	dr	wi*	-
	24	Nr. Asminderup	1450	1480	dig	no	na	c	na	-	s	NoV	dr	wi	-
	25	Ottestrup	1500	1500	ha	b	na	c	t	-	s	NoV	dr	wi*	be
	26	Over Dråby	1460	1480	ha	no	na	c	na	-	s	NoV	dr	wi	-
	27	Vallensbæk	1450	1480	ha/ch	no	na	c	na	ho	s	NoV	dr	wi	-
Viborg	28	Lihme	1525	1525	ch	?	?	?	?	-	s	?	dr*	ba	-
Århus	29	Gjerrild	1500	1500	pl 2o & 2h*	b	f	c	t	w	s	NoV	dr	wi	fo
	30,1	Hyllest ed	1500	1520	ch	b	?	c	t	-	s	NoV	dr	wi	be
	30,2	Hyllest ed	1500	1520	pl 2o & 2h	b	f	c	t	h,w,ba	-	-	-	-	-
	31	Tamdrup	1500	1500	-	-	-	-	-	-	s	NoV	dr	ha	fo

Table 2: The Life on Earth in details.

Diocese	Nr	Church name	From year	Till year	Children	Place in church	place in Vault Cell	Workshop	Condition	Inscriptions
Lund	1,1	Benestad	1500	1500	1: 1 he: d	N 2. Vws n	Ch	Ev		indsk: HUIST, HO, FRAM, SO BATH, ADAM
	1,2	Benestad	1500	1500	1: 1 he: pl	N 2. Vws s	Ch	Ev		
	2,1	Emmislov	1450	1475	-	N 2. Ves n	Ch	V		
	2,2	Emmislov	1450	1475	2: 1 cr, 1ch	N 2. Vss	C	V		
	2,3	Emmislov	1450	1475	-	N 2. Ves s	Ch	V		ved Adam: SWA : NEY : FRAM
	3	Everlov	1500	1500	1: 1 he	A 2. Vss	C	Ev		
	4	Fjalkeinge	1430	1460	3: 1 cr, 2 ch	N 2. Ves	C	F		
	5	Fultofta	1475	1525	-	N 4. Vns	C	-		
	6	Gladsax	1475	1525	-	N 2. Vns	C	V		"HUIST HVO_DO. HAT ADAM"
	7	Hastveda	1500	1500	-	N 1. Vss w	Ch	Ev		
	8	Kavlinge	1500	1500	1: 1 sw	ChnWw	Wp	-		
	9,1	Linderöd	1498	1498	2: 1 cr, 1 tr	N 2. Ves s	P	-		
	9,2	Linderöd	1498	1498	-	N 2. Vss e	P	-		
	10,1	N. Strö	1450	1475	2: 1 sw, 1 ch	N 1. Vns e	P	V		
	10,2	N. Strö	1450	1475	-	N 1. Vws n	P	V		
	10,3	N. Strö	1450	1475	1: 1 he: ch	N 1. Vns w	P	V		
	11,1	Nymö	1450	1500	1: 1 cr	N 2. Vss	C	V		
	11,2	Nymö	1450	1500	-	N 2. Ves	C	V		
	12,1	Rinkaby	1450	1500	3: 1 cr, 2 ch	N 2. Vss	C	-		
	12,2	Rinkaby	1450	1500	2: 2 he: h	N 2. Vns	C	-		
	12,3	Rinkaby	1450	1500	-	N 2. Vws	C	-		

Table 2: The Life on Earth in details.

Diocese	Nr	Church name	From year	Till year	Children	Place in church	place in Vault Cell	Workshop	Condition	Inscriptions
Lund	12,4	Rinkaby	1450	1500	-	N 2. V es	C	-		HUIST HOC FRA(M) SAA BAD ADA(M) og VAL OP TU MA VARTH
	13	Silvåkra	1500	1525	-	N 2. V ns m	Ch	-		
	14	Åspö	1500	1500	2: 1 cr, 1 he: ha	C 2. V ws m	C	Ev		
	15	Ö.Herrestad	1450	1475	-	N 2. V ws s	Ch	aÖ		
Odense	16	Tågerup	1500	1520	3: 3 la	N 1. V ns e	Ch	B		
Roskilde	17	Elmelunde	1499	1507	-	N 3. V ns e	Ch	E		Indsk: HPSIH, HOO, FREM, SOO..
	18	Hjembæk	1500	1500	1: 1 cr	TrV ns e	Ch	aK		
	19	Herlev	1480	1480	-	C 1. V ws	Ch	-	+	
	20	Højelse	1430	1430	-	C 3. V ns e	Ch	-		
	21	Kværkeby	1500	1500	?	N 2. V ws	C	-		
	22	Kgs. Lyngby	1500	1500	3: 2 ch, 1 ri	C 2. V ws n	Ch	B		
	23	Lyngø	1450	1480	1: 1 la	Ch V ws n	Ch	I		
	24	Nr. Asminderup	1450	1480	1: 1 cr*	N 2. V ws	Ch	-	+	
	25	Ottestrup	1500	1500	-	N 1. V ws	C	O		
	26	Over Dråby	1460	1480	-	Ch V ns w	P	I		
	27	Vallensbæk	1450	1480	1: 1 cr	N 2. V ns w	P	I	+	
Viborg	28	Lihme	1525	1525	2: n: 1 ch, 1 ri	Ch V ss w	Ch	-	+	
Århus	29	Gjerrild	1500	1500	1: 1 la	N 2. V ws	C	B		
	30,1	Hyllest ed	1500	1520	-	N 1. V ss	Ch	B		
	30,2	Hyllest ed	1500	1520	1: 1 he	N 1. V ss	Ct	B		
	31	Tamdrup	1500	1500	-	Ch V ws s	P	Å		

To make a juxtaposition between the textual knowledge and a picture possible, it is necessary to textualize the picture. This is done by describing the picture.³⁶ When one is concerned with more than one or two pictures, it is necessary to systematize the material and to emphasize the more general features.

The actual labour done by Adam and Eve is a general feature. Eve is always spinning, only in the more extensive scenes in Ennislöv, Norra Strö and Rinkaby churches is she seen partaking in other tasks. The children sometimes help with ploughing and wood chopping, but more often they are seen with the spinning Eve either in their cradles or just around her. Adam's labour is much more varied: he is chopping, hacking,³⁷ digging,³⁸ ploughing,³⁹ sowing, gathering the harvest or perhaps even fishing as in the church of Herlev. But most frequently he is ploughing. All in all he does that in 14 of the churches, 11 of which are situated in the diocese of Lund.⁴⁰

Another general feature are the clothes worn by Adam and Eve, and here the text is more specific than about the type of labour done. As mentioned above, Adam and Eve were given coats of skins, but it is very seldom that they are dressed in anything that can be identified as skincoats. Eve is always wearing a dress and is only seldom with out a wimple.⁴¹ Adam is often dressed in some sort of coat, but never as explicitly depicted in skins as is the case in an earlier depiction in the church of Nødebo (c.1350-75).⁴² In most cases Adam wears shoes and trousers, but naked feet and legs is not unusual.

There are no conspicuous discordances found juxtaposing the text/knowledge and the wall-paintings, though certain tendencies have emerged. However, because of the small amount of wall-paintings, the tendencies must be used with great precaution. On the other hand one should not abstain from using the patterns that emerge.

It is very interesting that ploughing is the dominant type of labour done by Adam, and even more so because it almost only seems to appear

³⁶ Axel Bolvig, *Billeder - Sædan set*, 1974, p. 85-86.

³⁷ <http://www.kalkmalerier.dk/english/search.htm> search the pictures: SH/ 552, 9/ 65.

³⁸ <http://www.kalkmalerier.dk/english/search.htm> search the picture: SH/ 24.

³⁹ <http://www.kalkmalerier.dk/english/search.htm> search the pictures: SH/ 315, SH/ 316 & 20/ 90.

⁴⁰ Table 2, column: place in vault cell.

⁴¹ Table 2, column: Eve, *Head*. church nr.: 8; 15; 23.

⁴² Depicted in Sissel F. Plathe, "Eva Spinder", *Danske kalkmalerier* Vol. 4 (ed. Ulla Haastруп), 1989, p. 150.

in the Danish wall-paintings.⁴³ If the peasants commissioned the wall-paintings in just a few of the churches, it is understandable that they would prefer to see their *alter ego*, i. e. Adam, ploughing, the plough being the biggest and most valuable tool that they possessed, whether they owned it themselves or just simply provided tractive force. Normal self-assertion would partly explain why the plough dominates.

But to explain the predominance of ploughs with self-assertion causes problems. Most of the ploughs depicted are not wheel or mouldboard ploughs, but ploughs of a simpler type. Were the peasant only self-asserting up to a certain point? Perhaps one should not put too much emphasis on the actual execution of the plough, a plough is a plough, and together with Adam it fulfills its role as a manifestation of Life on Earth. The theory of self-assertion is also problematic, if one leaves the diocese of Lund and turns to the diocese of Roskilde. Only in one of the churches in that diocese Adam is seen ploughing, in all the other depictions of Life on Earth he is either digging, hacking or chopping.⁴⁴ Either the peasants in the diocese of Roskilde were less vain, or perhaps they had a different attitude towards their labour. The last could be explained with the villainage introduced on Lolland-Falster, Zealand and Møn, the two latter constituted the diocese of Roskilde. Perhaps it was easier for the peasants on Zealand to understand the wrath of a lord and master because of their legal situation. But it does not explain the non-ploughing Adams outside Zealand or the one ploughing scene on Møn. And if the peasants commissioned the wall-paintings why would they want to be depicted in that way? One should rather suspect a higher rate of self-assertion and further more so, if the increased legal restrictions was a result of a more self-conceited peasantry.

If the pictures were not commissioned by the peasantry as assumed above, but by the clergy or aristocracy, the ploughing Adam can be understood as a good example for the peasants as well as a reminder of their God-given place in society.⁴⁵ Then perhaps the ploughing Adam can be seen as a pictorial attempt to control the peasantry,⁴⁶ an alternative to

⁴³ Michael Camille, "'When Adam Delved': Labouring on the Land in the English Medieval Art", *Agriculture in the Middle Ages. Technology, Practice, and Representation* (ed. Del Sweeney), 1995, p. 258.

⁴⁴ Table 2, column: Adam Labour.

⁴⁵ Michael Camille, "'When Adam Delved': Labouring on the Land in the English Medieval Art", *Agriculture in the Middle Ages. Technology, Practice, and Representation* (ed. Del Sweeney), 1995, p. 260 & 270.

⁴⁶ Jane W. Williams, "The New Image of Peasants in the Thirteenth-Century French Stained Glass", *Agriculture in the Middle Ages. Technology, Practice, and Representation* (ed. Del Sweeney), 1995, p. 299.

the villainage in the diocese of Roskilde. If so, no chances were taken on Møn. But a hacking or chopping Adam would be able to express such messages just as well, except if the plough was something exclusively held by the landowners. If, however, the peasants owned their own ploughs, whether individually or together, the point would be lost.

Perhaps the predominance of ploughing scenes is a consequence of only one workshop painting them. Many of the wall-paintings in churches with ploughing scenes are not ascribed to any workshop, while the others are attributed to four different workshops. Most of these workshops have also depicted Adam doing something else but ploughing.⁴⁷ When Adam is seen ploughing, it is therefore not caused by that specific workshop's preference to paint Adam like that. Another way to explain the choice of a chopping or hacking Adam instead of a ploughing one could be lack of space. But even if the ploughing Adam is most often the main motif in the vault cell, Adam is seen ploughing in the vault cells shared with other motifs as well as in the pendentive.⁴⁸

If the predominance of ploughing scenes cannot be explained by referring to the preference of the workshop or the lack of space, then the choice of Adam ploughing must be due to something else. But whether it expresses the taste or type of the commissioner, the temperament of the painters, model books or something else is difficult to tell.

Apart from the majority of ploughing scenes it is interesting that Adam and Eve are not dressed in coats of skin. It is anyway a departure from the Bible, if not so much from the iconographical tradition. In *The Life on Earth* Adam and Eve are clothed plainly and not in rags, as it is the case with the poor in *The Prayer of the Rich* and the Poor Man in the churches of Elmelunde and Keldby. But they are not clothed as well as the rich man.⁴⁹ Nor are Adam and Eve dressed as comically as *The Sheperds in the Field*, who in the churches of Tuse and Mørkøv do their labour with sagging stockings⁵⁰. Adam and Eve resemble more closely the peasants seen harvesting in *The Miracle of the Cornfield*.⁵¹ Adam and Eve are dressed as one could expect the tenants of medium sized holding to be. The situation between the rich and the poor dresswise can be understood as a dissociating one from both groups, and thereby an assertion of one's

⁴⁷ Table 2, column: Workshop. church nr.: 3; 10,3; 16; 30,2.

⁴⁸ Table 2, column: Place in vault cell. church nr.: 1,2; 7; 9,2; 17.

⁴⁹ <http://www.kalkmalerier.dk/english/search.htm> search the picture: 30-2/ 81.

⁵⁰ <http://www.kalkmalerier.dk/english/search.htm> search the pictures: 9/ 34 and 30-3/ 81.

⁵¹ <http://www.kalkmalerier.dk/english/search.htm> search the pictures: SH/ 44, SH/ 45 and SH/ 388.

own position. Through their clothes Adam and Eve are characterized as average peasants, and not as the wretched losers of a paradise.

In connection with the dressing of Adam and Eve it is difficult to assess the importance of naked feet and legs. But in view of the Danish climate naked feet seem either to depict the conditions of the first humans or the less well-off amongst the peasants. One could also, as was the case with the plough, interpret footwear as an expression of self-assertion. If that is the case, it is interesting that in 14 of 35 instances Adam is wearing some sort of footwear, while only in seven instances he is without⁵². But it will be difficult to explain, why the ploughing Adam is not always wearing shoes of some kind.⁵³ He ought to, if footwear and plough both can be taken as expressions of self-assertion. But nothing can be stated for certain, because the material is too small and the doubtful cases are too many.

The different interpretations of dress rest on the assumption that it was the peasants who commissioned the wall-paintings. But there need not be any self-assertion connected with simple clothes. The simple clothes can in both cases merely be based on the painter's observations of peasants in the field.

The relationship between the painter and the commissioner has been a recurring problem in the reflections about Adam and Eve's Life on Earth: Whose expression is painted on the vaults?

It was always the painter who held the brush and, therefore, in the end he who gave the message its pictorial form. Whatever the demands of the commissioner as to the motif, the painter himself would always have to realize the demands unless he was following a model (i. e. a print).⁵⁴ Many of the details used in this article as indicators of the attitude towards labour should therefore be taken more as an expression of the painters' attitude to labour than that of the commissioners. The peasants may have found that the wall-paintings of Adam and Eve both in regard to the labour depicted as well as the clothing were a fitting representation of peasantry. But that does not mean that they commissioned the wall-paintings. Therefore, it is interesting to note the relationship between the painters and the peasantry.

It has already been mentioned that all the few known painter names are Danish, and that some of the painters stressed that they were working with their hands. These things suggest a connection between the working people and the painters. Therefore it seems significant, when Adam in five

⁵² Table 2, column: Adam, *Footwear*.

⁵³ Table 2, column: Adam, *Footwear*: church nr.: 5; 14.

⁵⁴ Axel Bolvig, *Billeder - SÅdan set*, 1974, p. 51.

churches is shouting to his team in Danish.⁵⁵ It is the language of the peasants one hears above the draught animals and not Latin, as in the other religious motifs. The linking of the labour of the peasant with the language of the painter depends on the assumption that the mother tongue is used on what one likes best. But the use of Danish can have been caused by the lack of text in the models used, and thus simply compensate for the missing Latin.

Whether the painters were connected with peasantry or not, they very rarely had the chance to depict Adam and Eve's Life on Earth. Only 31 of 619 churches with known wall-paintings from the late Middle Ages give space to this motif. This fact seems a bit strange, if the peasants commissioned the wall-paintings and if they thought themselves represented in Adam and Eve's Life on Earth; but not less strange if it was propaganda commissioned by the aristocracy or clergy, the same which in this period tightened the legal restrictions for the peasantry.

Adam and Eve do not look as if they are working the accursed land, both are neatly dressed, and Adam is steering the plough. Perhaps he is not always ploughing, but there is none of the wretchedness in the situation as it is in the case in the Expulsion from Paradise or in the grief after the Expulsion.⁵⁶ This suggests a positive view on labourers and their work, a view which the elite or aristocracy according to written sources did not share. The wall-paintings could, therefore, be claimed to express the view of the broader population. But using the material in an attempt to examine the attitude towards labour in the Danish wall-paintings is problematic. It is in several respects very limited: Only Adam and Eve's life on Earth has been included, and a very small amount of pictures. A more thorough investigation of the theme would demand the use of many more wall-paintings, but also other forms of pictorial material, and not only from Denmark. Easy access to such a vast material is not yet available, but through the setting-up of databases with free and quick admission hopefully this will soon be the case.

⁵⁵ J. Brøndum-Nielsen, "Den pløjende Adam", *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* Vol. 24, 1960; Niels Hastrup, "Huist hoo fram, saa bad adam", *Danske kalkmalerier* Vol. 6 (ed. Ulla Hastrup), 1992, p. 98-101; table 2, column: Inscription, church nr.: 1,5; 4; 7; 14; 17.

⁵⁶ <http://www.kalkmalerier.dk/english/search.htm> search the pictures: SH/485, 17/59 & Koll4.

MEDIUM AEVUM
QUOTIDIANUM

39

KREMS 1998

HERAUSGEGEBEN
VON GERHARD JARITZ

GEDRUCKT MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG DER KULTURABTEILUNG
DES AMTES DER NIEDERÖSTERREICHISCHEN LANDESREGIERUNG

Titelgraphik: Stephan J. Tramèr

Herausgeber: Medium Aevum Quotidianum. Gesellschaft zur Erforschung der materiellen Kultur des Mittelalters, Körnermarkt 13, A-3500 Krems, Österreich. Für den Inhalt verantwortlich zeichnen die Autoren, ohne deren ausdrückliche Zustimmung jeglicher Nachdruck, auch in Auszügen, nicht gestattet ist. – Druck: KOPITU Ges. m. b. H., Wiedner Hauptstraße 8-10, A-1050 Wien.

Inhaltsverzeichnis

Vorwort	5
Axel Bolvig, Danish Wall-paintings – an Introduction.....	7
Axel Bolvig, <i>Ars longa – vita brevis</i>	9
Jesper Jerre Borrild, Medieval Danish Wall-paintings – an Internet Database	21
Annedorte Vad, Devils here, there and everywhere	37
Steen Schjødt Christensen, Mysterious Images – Grimacing, Grotesques, Obscene, Popular: Anti- or Conunentary Images?	55
Martin Bo Nørregård, The Concept of Labour in the Danish Medieval Wall-paintings	76
Axel Bolvig, Images of Late Medieval ‘Daily Life’: A History of Mentalities	94
Annamária Kovács, Costumes as Symbols. The Pictorial Representations of the Legend of King Ladislás of Hungary	112
Anca Golgăţan, Family, Patronage, and Artistic Production: The Apafis and Mălâncrav (Almakerék, Malmkrog), Sibiu District, in Transylvania	138

Vorwort

Medium Aevum Quotidianum legt mit Heft 39 einen Band vor, welcher sich schwerpunktartig mit der Analyse von Bildquellen, vor allem Wandmalerei, auseinandersetzt. Die Autoren der Beiträge stammen aus zwei Institutionen, in denen Bilddokumentation und Analyse konzentriert betrieben werden: dem Department of History an der Universität Kopenhagen und dem Department of Medieval Studies an der Central European University, Budapest. Das erstgenannte Institut ist besonders durch seine Digitalisierung des Gesamtbestandes dänischer Wandmalerei bekannt geworden, der über das Internet allgemein zugänglich geworden ist und als Basis für umfassende qualitative und quantitative Bilduntersuchungen herangezogen werden kann. Das Department of Medieval Studies der CEU konzentriert sich in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften auf die Sammlung, Katalogisierung, Dokumentation und Analyse zentraleuropäischen Bildmaterials. Die Verfügbarkeit des aufgearbeiteten Bestandes via Internet ist in Vorbereitung.

Medium Aevum Quotidianum ist nun auch mittels Internet erreichbar (<http://www.imareal.oeaw.ac.at/maq/>). Im Augenblick bieten wir das Inhaltsverzeichnis aller seit unserer Gründung im Jahre 1982 erschienenen Bände. Aktuelle Informationen, Links zu anderen, uns wichtig erscheinenden Websites sowie Berichte werden in Zukunft das Service-Angebot erweitern.

Gerhard Jaritz, Herausgeber