



Increasing infrastructure: New roads in the former Electorate of Trier

At the end of the 18th century the last archbishop of Trier fell back upon soccage duties to finance new roads. Trier improved its system of roads and adopted the new French type of road.

Trierer peasants at work building roads and ditches

Göddertz family's heirloom record, Kruft, 1. half, 19th century



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On the basis of a regional study about the former Electorate of Trier the project analyses the forms of soccage that still existed during the 18th and 19th century. Soccage constituted a parallel to the obligatory payment of taxes, but it was highly flexible as different kinds of work (e.g. road construction, haulage service) could be demanded from the subjects.

A combination of a synchronic comparison (town-countryside) with a chronologic/ diachronic one (princely rule – French republican regime – Prussian royal government) will examine the transformation and conversion of soccage system between 1750 and 1850.

- Under the Ancien Régime the representative system of the estates that included the peasantry of Trier and the fiscal office of the court paid for road construction. But Clemens Wenzeslaus (1768-1801), last archbishop of Trier, fell back upon soccage duties to finance road projects. Peasants and townspeople alike were to work on the roads. In addition, the archbishop tried to establish a compensatory tax and road tolls.
- Under the French regime a regression back to a mixed system consisting of soccage duties and taxes for road construction took place.
- The Prussian government first adopted the French system and its laws for road construction, but established a special fund for road construction in 1819/22. Municipal roads were still maintained by soccage.
- Due to road construction landscape was modified. The new type of road used in France was adopted and the typical look of avenues came into existence.



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