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**Article**

## Editor's introductory note

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Retrospective  
**Beyond the Manorial Economy:  
The Debate Continues**

# Editor's Introductory Note

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In this instalment of “Retrospective” we continue to debate the significance of the notion of manorial economy for the study of the agrarian history of early medieval Europe. Stefan Esders’ essay is a bold reconstruction of the evolution and functioning of the estates belonging to Staffelsee’s monastery, in Upper Bavaria, in the Carolingian and post-Carolingian Age. Esders’ local perspective yields a very different view of the emergence of what is often called the “Carolingian manorial system.” His minute investigation of the transition from civil obligations to royal service and manorial corvées, with a strange mixture of public and private burdens, reveals the shifting of important parameters in the sphere of the agrarian economy. To be precise, this entailed a renegotiation between free and unfree status that took place in the process of the creation of the *mansus* system, which also involved a re-organization of the relationships between the “state” and the “church”. Hence, Esders’ study is an important contribution to our collective attempt to rethink old research questions and terminology within a new perspective.

The Center for Advanced Studies in Migration and Mobility between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, based at the University of Tübingen and financed by the DFG, provided an instrumental platform for the development and refinement of the ideas behind this article as well as for the essays published in a previous issue of the *Journal of European Economic History* (No. 3/2019). I am grateful to all those at the Center who have contributed in various ways to this initiative (particularly to Steffen Patzold, but also to Mischa Meier and Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner), and to the editors of *JEEH* who continue to support my publishing forays into the “hostile” world of pre-industrial economic history.