From Communal Economy to Economic Community

Changes in Moravian Entrepreneurial Activities in the Eighteenth Century

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Introduction
One of the most entrepreneurial religious groups of the eighteenth century were the Moravian Brethren (Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine). From modest beginnings on Count Zinzendorf’s estate in Herrnhut, Saxony where a group of religious refugees arrived in 1722, they rose to become a worldwide missionary movement with stations and outposts from Greenland to the Cape, and from North America to Australia. What they lacked in numbers, they made up for in willpower, mobility, and above all, an uncanny ability to anticipate and capitalise on global economic developments. This success of course did also not develop overnight but was in the making for decades.

In this article, I will focus on the Moravians’ economic practices in three different locations; namely, in relation to their early mission to Greenland in 1733, to their beginnings in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (1741), and in the foundation of one of their later settlements in Christiansfeld, Denmark in 1772. As the title indicates, a change takes place in Moravian economic practice, which I argue is connected to their respective local contexts. The change, or development, is thus both slow and experimental, which is a process that is sometimes lost in summaries of Moravian entrepreneurship, as in the following quote from Gisela Mettele’s important work on the global nature of Moravian Protestantism:

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1 This article is based on a conference paper at the conference ‘What Would Jesus Fund?: Financing Religious Enterprises in the Long Eighteenth Century’, organized by Renate Dürr and Lionel Laborie, and held at Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, 9-10 February 2017. The paper has been revised for this journal issue. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer and the journal editors for constructive criticism which helped improve a rather untidy argument.
the economic development of the Moravian Brethren was subordinate the planning and governance of the community leadership. With the missionary spread of the Moravian Brethren from the 1730s, it was no longer only about ensuring the economic survival of the individual settlements, but also about the financing and organisation of a worldwide mission and evangelisation-campaign.²

One could get the impression that the worldwide mission was organised and centrally financed, which it eventually was, beginning in 1762. Before then, it was a much more ad hoc affair, with actual instructions for missionaries only produced by Zinzendorf in 1738 and 1740,³ six and eight years after the first missions to the West Indies, and five and seven years after the first mission to Greenland. These are the years under scrutiny here in this article.

I will begin by looking at the early years in Greenland, and from there jumping 40 years ahead in time to the industrious nature of Christiansfeld. Then, I finish off in Bethlehem, since important developments took place there. The developments in Bethlehem can help clarify the extreme polarity between Greenland and Christiansfeld. My focus will be on the development of the choir-system as a mode of socio-economic organisation. Beginning in Herrnhut in the 1740s, the Moravian choir-structure became the main community organisation of the various congregations all over Europe and in some colonial settings, and was based on a segregation of the sexes, and subdivisions according to sexual maturity. One of the important effects of this structure and its dwellings was a significant workforce, which had an extraordinary effect of the productivity of the communities, and, I argue, was what gave them their economic edge and advantage in particular settings.

While Mettele argues for a trans-historical approach, which looks at the globalized network of the worldwide Moravian community, I want to balance this with a more local approach, by looking at a number of different communities. This local approach along with my focus on the Choir-structure, is part of my interest in the Moravians as participants in the transition to capitalism, and their shift to a more centralised and abstracted economy. The locations are chosen to highlight this shift in industry. The mission to Greenland was at an early stage, before the choirs, but also in a country with little scope for industrious development. Then in Christiansfeld, which was a settlement, not a mission, they raced ahead with tremendous zeal, establishing a host of industries within a very short time frame. To understand this transition, I turn to Bethlehem, which began as a mission, but became a settlement with the turn from communal to private economy.

I use both archival material and secondary material to present the argument here. In the case of Greenland, very little work has been done on the Moravian mission, which necessitates making use of archival material. In the cases of Bethlehem and Christiansfeld, more work has been done with economic focus, thus enabling me to draw upon this work to present the argument. In short, I present the early attempts at Moravian entrepreneurship and labour in different settings to understand the conditions of the time before the Moravian church commenced centralised financial planning.

Greenland

The Moravian Mission to Greenland was, as was the case with the West Indian mission, the results of Zinzendorf’s connections with the Danish

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4 The archival material is from the Moravian Archives in Herrnhut, prefaced by UA followed by the archival reference number. I mention the archival material from Bethlehem and Christiansfeld in footnotes 41 and 42 respectively. These collections have their own referencing system, as may be seen in the mentioned footnotes.

court. Through these connections, the Moravians gained access to the Danish colonies in the Caribbean and North Atlantic. Likewise, through Josef Spangenberg’s connections in the Netherlands access was gained to Surinam, and Zinzendorf’s cultivation of networks in England opened up possibilities in North America, first Georgia, and then Pennsylvania.6

Before the financing of a worldwide mission, the missionaries in the early eighteenth century were expected by the leadership in Herrnhut to enter into the forms of subsistence in various locations and to earn their bread through labour. This had different repercussions in the various locations in which they arrived. As Jan Hüsgen notes, “the economic activities in the missionary territory could develop quite differently depending on the respective geographical, climate-related, personal and political factors.” In Labrador, this meant trade; in Surinam, bakery and agriculture.7 It also depended on with whom they identified. In the West Indies, they entered into the plantation enterprise. Initially (1733) they managed plantations for Head Chamberlain von Plessen,8 and later turned to using slaves to create an income in their own plantations.9

Hüsgen mentions that multiple problems faced the first missionaries in the West Indies, in that the social and political conditions impeded not only access to the slaves, but also their possibilities for subsistence survival.10 The unrest among the enslaved population of the Caribbean meant that the colonial powers regarded the Moravian missionary activities among the slaves with suspicion. Walking this political tightrope was not the main issue in Greenland, however. Here, the possibilities for labour and subsistence were few. There was no wood to build houses,11 no soil to till, no animals to herd. In the beginning, the

6 Hüsgen, Mission und Sklaverei, 31.
8 Hüsgen, Mission und Sklaverei, 44, n94.
10 Hüsgen, Mission und Sklaverei, 41.
11 However, there was driftwood, and we hear of many expeditions to collect wood. See the Greenland diary (UA.R.15.I.b.I.1a), 18 August 1733, 9 September 1733, and 3 June 1734. Also, the Danish missionary Hans Egede sent a small boat and some sailors to
missionaries relied on food gifts, such as reindeer and seal from the Danish missionaries and the Greenlanders,\textsuperscript{12} supplies and the occasional gifts from benefactors in Europe, and whatever they could make as day-labourers, working as carpenters at the Danish colonies.\textsuperscript{13} Also, they took up spinning,\textsuperscript{14} and an account page from 1742 shows that they sold the products back to Herrnhut—certainly an extreme geographical expansion of the putting-out system.\textsuperscript{15} Because most of the Moravian missionaries were peasants and artisans, the transition to hunting for food at sea in kayaks would have been brutal and dangerous.\textsuperscript{16} Some of them did accompany the Danish missionary’s son, Paul Egede, on assist the brethren on a wood expedition on 23 August 1733, after their failed attempt a few days earlier, where they lost their boat and the wood they had collected in a storm. The boat was retrieved by some Greenlandic men from the colony. Finally, much wood was shipped from Europe to build their houses.

\textsuperscript{12} The first year shows multiple food gifts from Hans Egede, the Danish missionary. See UA.R.15.J.b.l.1a, 20 August 1733, reindeer meat and “kolkraut”; 5 and 20 September, 4 October, 19 December 1733, reindeer meat; 7 October 1733 he sent liver sausages, on 21 October 1733 some pork, 28 October 1733 and 20 December 1733 he sent beer, on the 21 and 30 December he sent ham. 30 January he sent a bit of milk and 2 birds, on 15 February he sent milk and fish and 1 May 1734 he sent a piece of fish. 12 April 1734 constitutes an exception in that it is mentioned that they bought food from Egede. He also sent a number of other things, coal and laths for their house (UA.R.15.J.b.l.1a, 24 September 1733).

\textsuperscript{13} On 5 August 1733 two of the brothers were hired to build the house for blubber storage at the Danish colony, a task they finished in 4 and a half days to everyone’s astonishment, not least their own. On 21 June 1734 Christian David travelled with the Danish ship up north to help build the second Danish colony of Christianshaab in Disco Bay. UA.R.15.J.b.l.1a, on 5 August 1733 and 21 June 1734.

\textsuperscript{14} The first mention of spinning is made in November, when they complain about how weak and ill they are, and that they can’t even spin. UA.R.15.J.b.l.1a, 7 November 1733. Then, on 5 December 1733, they begin to spin, after feeling a bit better. In 1734, there are frequent mentions of quiet evenings with the distaffs “Spinnrocken”. See UA.R.15.J.b.l.1a, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 January, 18, 19, and 20 February 1734.

\textsuperscript{15} UA.R.15. J.b.l. 32, 5. It is noted that in 1742 they had produced 13 pounds of flax, and 37 pounds of tow.

\textsuperscript{16} The diarist notes that “no German can emulate this, since one cannot catch seals except in those boats that they have” (“das kan Ihnen aber kein Teütscher ihnen nach thun, den die Seehunde kan nicht fangen ausser solchen botten wie sie haben”). UA.R.15.J.b.l.1a, 7 August 1733. However, on 12 March 1734, two sailors from the colony offered to sell the brethren a kayak, or “manßbot”. UA.R.15.J.b.l.1a, 12 March 1734.
hunting trips, and in time, they did get better at fishing. When the second mission, Lichtenfels, was established in 1758, the missionaries there discovered how to trap and kill seals in a small bay near the station. They were then able to sell 3-4 barrels of seal-blubber to the merchant. Their satisfaction at this accomplishment in the diary was obvious. Not until 1770 was a fixed ration of food from Europe guaranteed. Thus ‘financing the mission’ meant sending provisions (food, wood, tools, clothes), gifts, and encouraging letters, but not providing salaries to the missionaries.

In Neuherrnhut (New Herrnhut), as they had named the mission station on the outskirts of the Danish colony of Godthaab, things changed after 1736, when the missionary group had grown. Christian David, head of the Moravian mission to Greenland, returned to Europe, after two additional brothers had arrived in 1734, and in 1736, one brother and three sisters arrived. As Müller notes, this domestic reinforcement meant that the brethren were freer to attend to missionary activities. This would be practiced at a far larger scale in Bethlehem. Another significant milestone was the conversion and baptism of the first convert, Samuel, formerly known as Qajarnaq along with his wife and two children on 30 March, 1739. After this, the native congregation steadily grew, and in 1743 counted 93 members, which in 1749 had grown to 268 members.

One of these converts, the single sister Judith Issek, was one of a group of 5 Greenlanders who travelled to Europe in 1747. She, and two younger members of the group returned to Neuherrnhut in 1749. During her stay in Herrnhut, Judith had stayed in the house of the Single Sisters and been part of the Choir of the Single Sisters, and wanted to introduce these concepts to the Greenlandic congregation.

17 See UA.R.15.J.b.i.1a, September 17 1733 and August 1 1734.
18 Christian David, a carpenter, was one of the first group of refugees to land on Zinzendorf’s doorstep. He was regarded as a strong spiritual leader within the ethnic Moravian fraction of the early community in Herrnhut. Because of his strong personality, he did not get along with Zinzendorf. For a fairly recent biography, see Edita Sterik, Christian David 1692-1751: Ein Lebensbild des Gründers von Herrnhut und Mitbegründers der erneuerten Brüderunität, Herrnhut 2012.
20 Israel, Kulturwandel Grönländischer Eskimo, 179, appendix 1.
The Choir System

Greenland

In his book on the Herrnuter mission to Greenland, Heinz Israel notes that it would take 15 years from the institutionalisation of this choir-system in Herrnhut to reach Greenland.\(^{21}\) This assertion contains a popular assumption that we need to dispel. Israel assumes that the choir system began 15 years earlier, that is, in 1730, when ‘the young women united together into a ‘choir’, the choir of the Single Sisters’.\(^{22}\) Following Otto Uttendörfer’s study into the economic life of Herrnhut, Israel states that up until now (1744), the choir structure had ‘until now, not exercised any cataclysmic effect on the social relations of Herrnhut’,\(^{23}\) but that the decision of the leadership to strengthen the gender segregation meant a more invasive community arrangement.

The problem with this narrative is, that it rests upon a number of misconceptions. First, the ‘\textit{Banden}’ and ‘\textit{Gesellschaften}’ (groups and associations) of early Herrnhut (1727-1740) were a completely different mode of organisation than the choirs, as Gottfried Schmidt has shown in his analysis.\(^{24}\) One is voluntary and fluid (i.e. \textit{Banden}) and the other is hierarchical and rigid (Choirs).\(^{25}\) Schmidt argues that 1736 was a turning point in the role of the \textit{Banden}, and that the use of the term declines from here, which is connected to the banishment of Zinzendorf from Saxony.\(^{26}\) Nevertheless, as I have shown in my archival work of the

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\(^{22}\) Israel, \textit{Kulturwandel Grönländischer Eskimo}, 41.


\(^{25}\) Schmidt, ‘Die Banden oder Gesellschaften in Alten Herrnhut’, 204.

\(^{26}\) Schmidt, ‘Die Banden oder Gesellschaften in Alten Herrnhut’,192. Israel cites Schmidt for the point on Zinzendorf’s banishment. But where Schmidt is saying that the banishment meant a decline in the use of the \textit{Banden}, Israel interprets it to mean that
Herrnhut diaries, the use of choir in any “common” sense does not happen before 1742, and any consolidation in terms of overarching structure, symbolic value, and commemorative days, is not before 1744.\textsuperscript{27} The house that was built in Herrnhut for the single brothers in 1739 and taken into use in 1740, was expanded considerably in 1745 to make room for the various trades, which moved into separate rooms in October 1745. As Israel points out, one development of the choir-idea is the production of a trade enterprise within the Brothers’ house.\textsuperscript{28} The choirs and their houses were thus economic structures as well as units of faith and gendered devotion. They also functioned as a way of breaking with traditional household and kinship structures, redefining both to a more communal and largescale concept. This is their socio-economic function, in that this breaking down of traditional structures and the development of alternatives, echoed the movement of the emerging state structure and its redefined ideas of gender relations and family.

So, to return to Greenland, the first time we find “choir” mentioned in the Greenlandic diary is on 14 August 1745, when the first choir-communion took place.\textsuperscript{29} After Judith’s return to Greenland in 1749 the first choir-house was built there for the single sisters. The brothers’ house was built in 1753 and, several years later, the widows’

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\textsuperscript{27} I argue this in a larger monograph on Herrnhut and the Choirs based on archival sources from 1740-60. The book is under contract for Brill’s Historical Materialism series and is near completion.

\textsuperscript{28} Israel, \textit{Kulturwandel Grönländischer Eskimo}, 41.

\textsuperscript{29} UA.R.15.J.b.l.1b, “14 August we further had a Lovefeast and our first choir communion” (“14ten [August] hatten wir wieder ein Liebesmal und unser Erstes Cor Abendmal”) It seems that this was only for the missionaries. In his article on the Moravians in Greenland, Preben Andersen notes that the first communion was in 1747 with three Greenlanders, Preben Andersen, ‘Herrnhuterne i Grønland’, in: \textit{Tidsskriftet Grønland}, 2 (1969), 50-64, here 58. Upon further investigation, the diary tells that it was decided by lot on 25 October 1747, and then held on 28 October. Israel indicates that 3 August marks the first mention of the choirs, when it is noted that “Simon und Sarah bey einer kinftigen Gemein ein richtung vorstheuer sein sollen” (“Simon and Sarah were to be leaders in a future community arrangement”). Israel, \textit{Kulturwandel Grönländischer Eskimo}, 43.
house (and then also big girls and big boys houses).\textsuperscript{30} The pattern of living overlapped to some extent with traditional Greenlandic ways, in that it was normal for extended families and larger groups to live together, in order to share maintenance of equipment, hunt and the subsequent sharing, consuming, and storage of game during winter.\textsuperscript{31} However, in contrast to the Greenlanders’ longhouses, the choir-houses were not seasonal, but permanent. They were also bigger than was the custom in Greenland. Finally, the segregation of sexes was unusual in a Greenlandic context. Both Wilhjelm and Kleivan note, in passing, that the Moravians attempted to implement European style choir houses in Greenland, but that these houses were quickly abandoned because of their massive disruption to the traditional way of life in Greenland (Kleivan) and problems relating to trade and sexual behaviour (Wilhjelm).\textsuperscript{32}

The choirs, then, replaced the traditional community structures in hunting, gathering and fishing, and as such could be seen as an extension of the subsistence shared economy of the traditional Greenlanders. Also, the gender relations in respect to work did not shift much in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{33} What did change were the settlement practices, in that the tendency for the Moravian Greenlanders was to settle near the station. Before the advent of the Moravian missionaries, there had been arguments between the Danish missionaries from the Lutheran church, and the merchants. While the missionaries wanted to keep the Greenlanders close, to keep an eye on their converts, the merchants wanted them to carry on with their hunting, and thus wanted the Greenlanders dispersed, so that the profits would be bigger.\textsuperscript{34}

Because of the Danish mission’s dependency on the trade, the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{30} Israel, \textit{Kulturwandel Grönländischer Eskimo}, 43-44.
\bibitem{32} Kleivan, ‘Herrnhuterne eller Brødremenigheden i Grønland 1733-1900’, 228-29.
\bibitem{33} Wilhjelm, ‘Menneske først og kristen så’, 3. In another article on the surrender of the Moravian mission in Greenland in 1900, Wilhjelm more accurately notes that this practice was discontinued after ‘some decades’: ‘Brødremissionens Overgivelse’, in: \textit{Tidsskriftet Grønland}, 6-7 (2000), 203-244, here 207.
\bibitem{34} Israel, \textit{Kulturwandel Grönländischer Eskimo}, 73.
\end{thebibliography}
missionaries had to yield. The Moravian missionaries, however, were not beholden to the trade for their own mission, and thus keenly kept their converts close, which meant a high concentration of people in one spot in wintertime. The Danish trading company was not entirely impressed with these close-knit communities and their internal distribution, which they saw as cutting in on their profits. They finally managed, in 1777, to get a royal decree which forced the Moravians to disperse the populations of Moravian Greenlanders. Even though they achieved this,\textsuperscript{35} the Moravians maintained the choir houses. Due to other problems,\textsuperscript{36} these were eventually discontinued in 1783, although the choirs as church groups continued until the general dissolution of the choir-structure in the course of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{37} In the eighteenth century, then, the Choirs were never only dwelling patterns, but economic structures.

The choir-houses in Greenland did not have the same economic function as the choir houses in Europe did, since they did not contain industries, as the Single Brothers’ House in Herrnhut mentioned above. Nor were they places for work as such. Nevertheless, they did serve as units of production, albeit production as understood on Greenlandic terms and bearing the character of subsistence survival. While these houses were not successful in implementing European labour standards among the Greenlandic population, they influenced the socio-economic pattern of life for the Greenlanders in that they contributed to the change in dwelling patterns by concentrating hitherto unseen quantities

\textsuperscript{35} See Appendix in Israel, \textit{Kulturwandel Grönländischer Eskimo}, where he lists the various outposts and their populations. See also UA. R.15.J.a.17, 7 which is the response to the royal order from the Unity on 12 May 1777, in which Johann Friedrich Koeber assures obedience to the order. He also signals that he knows that the order is made at the request of the merchants, but because it comes from the king, and the Moravians recognise the king’s sovereignty over Greenland, they will obey.

\textsuperscript{36} Israel mentions that the Unity board early had reservations regarding the choirhouses. The Greenlandic winterhouses, which provided the model for the Greenlandic choirhouse were built to make the most of body heat. They were thus not big, and the Greenlanders slept closely together. It was estimated that six to eight barrels of blubber was needed to heat the large brothers’ house, and in the end, the brothers and boys moved out of the choirhouse and into the family houses instead. Israel, \textit{Kulturwandel Grönländischer Eskimo}, 46-47.

\textsuperscript{37} Israel, \textit{Kulturwandel Grönländischer Eskimo}, 47.
of people in several places, and by creating new forms of social relations, replacing the traditional Greenlandic ones.

**Christianfeld**

In 1771, the Danish minister of finance, Carl August Struensee, approached the Unity Board in Herrnhut and invited the board to build a settlement in the duchy of Schleswig. Struensee had been to a number of the Moravian towns in Europe, and had noted the entrepreneurial and industrious nature of the communities (especially Zeist). After negotiations between the Danish government and the unity, a concession was signed in December 1771. A couple of months earlier, the Unity Board had bought the estate of Tyrstrupgaard as the site on which to settle. The new government, on 13 August 1772, ratified the concession, and building commenced the following year.  

Christiansfeld was also built according to the Choir system, and still has well-preserved Brothers’, Sisters’, and Widows’ Houses to this day. The choir house pattern had two significant repercussions. First, this cohabitation of many single brothers and sisters in respective houses meant that it was possible to cultivate a gender-specific piety. Since the consolidation of the Choir structure in the early 1740s, choir-speeches had been a regular way of shaping the pious and gendered individuals. From the mid-1740s until his death in 1760, Zinzendorf used the more than 450 choir-speeches to articulate the relationship of the individual members to Jesus, as well as the relationship between Jesus and the

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40 Earning it a place on UNESCO’s World Heritage List in 2015.
various choirs. These speeches were (edited and) copied and sent out to various congregations. Bundles of choir speeches from the 1750s and 60s are found in Christiansfeld’s archives.

The second reason why the choir-houses were important is that they provided innovative opportunities for production. Because of the size of the Choir-house, the community could, at a very early stage, make the most of the putting out-system Verlagssystem (for example spinning in individual households), turning cottage-industry into larger industries (relative to general economic development). This enabled the Moravian communities to compete with the guilds and traditional workshop structures of masters and apprentices. After a series of start-up difficulties in Herrnhut, the brothers, and especially the sisters, learned to produce exquisite products. From the 1750s onward, entrepreneurship, product quality, and fixed prices became Moravian characteristics. Also in Christiansfeld where the leadership had received a ten year tax exemption, a huge flourishing of production in the town took place, such as wool- and cotton spinning, linen-weaving, sewing workshop and silk production in the Sister House, and the bakery, tannery, blacksmith and glassworks in the Brother House.

As Danish social historian, Thomas Bloch Ravn, has shown, the industrious nature of the Moravian community in Christiansfeld had a

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41 This is explored more fully in my forthcoming monograph on Herrnhut.
42 See for example the Bethlehem diary records readings of Zinzendorf’s speeches. See e.g. the diary of the Single Sisters’ choir (BethSS) under 23 May 1758, which reads (in German): “Br Petrus read us a wonderful choir-speech of the dear Jünger”. Also, on the 21 April 1761 we hear that they were read “our unforgettable Jünger’s last choir-speech from the 24th April 1760”.
43 Brotherhouse Archive (BA.I.R6), Sisterhouse Archive (SA.I.R5), and in the Preachers’ Archive (PA.II.R4.5). All from Christiansfeld.
44 See for example, the entry from the communal diary from Herrnhut on 27 April 1742, where it is noted that “count Pomnitz sent a wagon with flax, which should be spun and prepared here”, UA.R.A.b.15, 27 April.
significant impact, not only in the area and the close townships, but in the entire kingdom up until 1864.\textsuperscript{47} The invitation from Struensee to the Unity board had been an attempt at a different approach to encouraging industrial activity. Instead of the usual practice, which was to provide subsidies to aspiring entrepreneurs, Struensee decided to foster industry through privileges and concessions, and thus create the best conditions for industry in which to flourish, such as tax exemptions, freedom of trade (\textit{Gewerbefreiheit}), ten percent reimbursement on all new building activity, exemption from tolls, and a license, not only to import raw materials from abroad, but also in their distribution from the duchy of Schleswig to Denmark and to other areas. Some of these privileges were rolled back after 10 or 15 years, others were subsequently granted by law to the tradespeople and merchant in the rest of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{48}

This meant that at the beginning of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Christiansfeld had the same level of trade and economic life as the bigger towns in the kingdom in terms of range of professions and size of its industries.

In the lists of the choirs, we see the variation in industry in Christiansfeld in the two big choirs. Of the 95 members of the Single Brothers’ choir, we have 10 tailors, 10 shoemakers, 9 weavers, 6 carpenters, 5 soap boilers, 4 metalworkers, 3 tanners, 3 brewers, 2 potters, 2 bricklayers, 2 bakers, 2 tobacco workers, 2 dyers. Added to these the choir-specific tasks such as kitchen help, children workers etc. Of the 172 members of the Single Sisters’ choir, 36 are in service, 19 spinners, 14 seamstresses, 10 dressmakers, 10 laundresses, 8 knitters, 7 weavers, 6 carders, 5 glovemakers, 4 ribbon makers, 2 corset makers, and then come the choir-related tasks.\textsuperscript{49}

The reasons for their success were threefold, thus Ravn. First, at this time Christiansfeld had several professions represented that were not present in the neighbouring town of Haderslev, which had 4 times the inhabitants of Christiansfeld. The professions included linen weaving.

\textsuperscript{47} The second Danish-Prussian war after which the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein were cede by Denmark at the negotiations in Vienna. Mads Daugbjerg, \textit{Borders of Belonging: Experiencing History, War and Nation at a Danish Heritage Site}, New York 2014, 17-24.
\textsuperscript{49} These lists are reprinted in Pontoppidan-Thyssen, ‘Brødremenigheden i Christiansfeld’, 67.
stocking and ribbon weaving, starch production, soap- and candle production and confectionery (i.e. the famous Christiansfeld honey cakes). Turning to the size of the industries, and again in comparison with Haderslev, the average number of apprentices per master was 1.4, while in Christiansfeld it was 2.8 with considerable differences within the various trades. A master of carpentry in Christiansfeld would have had, on average, six apprentices, while in Haderslev he would have had only one. Finally, Ravn notes the market-oriented production of the Moravians. The usual practice of the time was to produce for the local area, but the Moravians produced to quote Ravn “for a larger, more anonymous market, which in principle was insatiable, if one produced the right commodities, as the industries in Christiansfeld apparently did”.

Ravn correctly relates the second point—that of the apprentice to master ratio—to the corrosion of the traditional guild order and its connection to the feudal estate system. With the rise of a market economy and the increase in production, this order was regarded (also by the Moravians) as an impediment to productivity and competition, and was thus expanded and restructured as one of employer/employee. Ravn notes that at levels of economic drive, organisation, and class, the economic life in Christiansfeld broke with the norms and traditions that had characterised tradesmanship, as well as “developed characteristics that clearly pointed towards the capitalist society, which arose in the duchies in the course of the second third of the 19. century”.

I would like to make two additions to this observation. The first relates to Ravn’s observation concerning the anonymous market for which Christiansfeld produced. This is connected to the particular socio-economic situation in which the Moravian Brethren arose; namely, the structure of the Gutsherrschaft, characteristic of Europe east of the Elbe River. This socio-economic formation is distinct from that of Western Europe, in that while the feudal structures continued in form, i.e.

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50 Ravn, ‘Håndværk og Fabriksvirksomhed’, 211.
52 See also Philipp, ‘Wirtschaftsethik und Wirtschaftspraxis’, 408-9.
enserfed peasants, estates and feudal lords, the market to which the estates produced was the larger market of an emerging global economy.\textsuperscript{55} Thus, when the Moravians arrived in Denmark, which at this time still was characterised by some variation of feudalism, they had the very precise know-how of these structures and how best to use them to their advantage, thus providing an unprecedented level of competition to local production.

My second point is to emphasise the role of the choirs in this process. Until 1803 the choir-houses were at the forefront of industry in Christiansfeld. This is an extremely interesting development, because in Herrnhut, in 1745 there was a significant conflict in the community because the elders wanted to move the workshops into the Single Brothers’ house and give each trade a separate room, thus separating the apprentices from their masters. The Moravians in Herrnhut were already in conflict with the established guilds because of their practice of bypassing the guild system.\textsuperscript{56} However, even though they were not part of the guild system, they had retained the workshop model of master/apprentice up to 1745. This next level, of separating the apprentices from their masters was regarded as an attack on this structure, or form of traditional workmanship. However, as Gillian Lindt Gollin points out, there was a logic to tying work to the choir-house, in that it firmly binds the economy to the social and religious life of the household.\textsuperscript{57}

However, as a description of the Single Brothers’ choirhouse from 1748 shows, the move went ahead, and the leader of the Single Brothers’ choir could show off the house to the government committee:

\begin{quote}
through the gallery of one house, where on both sides several large rooms full of skilled craftsmen, shoemakers, linenweavers, cabinetmakers, passementiers, each profession for itself, all fully occupied with work, the rooms incidentally, were very clean and in impeccable order. In the basement of this house is the single brothers’ bakery and other arrangements belonging
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{56} Philipp, ‘Wirtschaftsethik und Wirtschaftspraxis’, 409 and 41, n57.

to the household. On the second floor was found several more rather spacious rooms, within which a fair amount of tailors were all fully occupied [...] the committee was led through a covered walkway into the other building and gallery) where again on both sides, rooms in which craftsmen of all kinds such as watchmaker, seal-engraver, jeweller, coppersmith, wigmaker, whose cleanly work was especially noticed.  

In time, the rest of the world caught up with and overtook the Moravian enterprises. As Müller notes, “In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Brothers’ houses were brought down by the changes in modern economic life”. But for a significant time, the Moravians were at the forefront of industry and manufacture. The most astonishing leap, however, took place in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where the Brethren made the most of every opportunity that they had.

Bethlehem
Perhaps due to earlier experiences of the missionaries, the mission of Bethlehem in Pennsylvania was conceptualised differently than that of the mission in the West Indies and in Greenland. Its community structure was entirely based on its missionary activity, divided into a “pilgrim congregation” (Pilgergemeine), the members of which worked as missionaries, and a “house congregation,” which supported their material needs, as outlined in Josef Spangeberg’s “general plan” for


Bethlehem.\textsuperscript{60} One of the points in Spangenberg’s plan concerns the choir-structure. He states in point 4, that there shall never (\textit{nie}) be a Sisters’ house in Bethlehem, but probably (\textit{wohl aber}) a Brothers’ house. Indeed, the Brothers’ house was commenced on 30 July, 1744, and dedicated on 6 December that year.\textsuperscript{61} When the second Brothers’ house was completed in November, 1748, the Sisters took over the former house, which then became the Sisters’ house.\textsuperscript{62}

This second choir house was built because more room was needed for “large accessions expected from Europe in the course of the following few years, not only for dwelling, dormitory, and chapel, but also for plying the various handicrafts associated with their establishment”.\textsuperscript{63} Thus we here see the expansion of the Brothers’ house to make room for workshops within the house, as was the case in Herrnhut, and would become the case in Christiansfeld.

The five-hundred acres of land that the Moravians initially bought in 1740 had by 1761 been developed with over fifty buildings. Also, over two-thousand acres of land had been cleared and almost fifty smaller industries were up and running.

This scope of entrepreneurial activity is quite impressive. Compared to what was achieved in the first twenty years in Herrnhut and Greenland, this progress is almost staggering. One of the reasons for the dramatic escalation of production in Bethlehem could be that the community was not, as in Herrnhut, encumbered by the class structures and conflicts of the European socio-economic system and the feudal guild system.\textsuperscript{64} Nevertheless, there were restrictions, namely English colonial law, which meant that no large-scale industry could take place. In 1752, Zinzendorf had to intercede on behalf of the Bethlehem congregation because of their cloth-factory, which exceeded the limits

\textsuperscript{60} This ‘General plan’ for Bethlehem, drawn up on his trip from Europe to America in 1744. A printed summary is found in Joseph Mortimer Levering, \textit{A History of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1741-1892}, Bethlehem 1903, 178-79. The document is at the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem in Spangenberg Papers, Box II, 1a. I would like to thank Tom McCullough for finding, scanning, and sending it to me.

\textsuperscript{61} Levering, \textit{A History of Bethlehem}, 173.

\textsuperscript{62} Levering, \textit{A History of Bethlehem}, 199.

\textsuperscript{63} Levering, \textit{A History of Bethlehem}, 197.

\textsuperscript{64} See also Gollin, \textit{Moravians in two Worlds}, 177.
Clearly, the colonial context of Pennsylvania and the nature of the environment provided opportunities not available to the missionaries in Greenland. Perhaps unfamiliarity with the climate, the expenses necessary for expansion, and the constant threat of the Danish Trade played a role, or even the particular personality and drive of missionaries themselves also contributed to the entrepreneurial inefficiency of the Greenlandic mission. In any case, the success of the Greenlandic mission was only in regard to its actual missionary activity, and not in its economic advances. This was different from both Europe and Pennsylvania.

To expand or not to expand? Questions in Herrnhut
These years in Herrnhut are also very interesting, in that in the 1750s, the possibility of large-scale production was discussed intensively. To set the context, we will look at an entry from the Herrnhut Diary from 1741, where part of the entry from 21 August reads:

When we have paid Göbel the current debts, then all should be forgiven and he should be an example to others on debt, and be allowed to move to Berthelsdorf. We want to do something similar with the Hantzchens, as soon as he has sold his house, which is propositioned for Bruder Oertel and his factory.

It turns out that this Bruder Oertel’s life in the community provides an interesting insight into the economic practices of early industrialisation in the Moravian community.

According to his Lebenlauf, the personal memoir which all members were instructed to compose, he was born in 1714 in Steinkunzerdorf in Silesia and worked there as a clothmaker until his conversion experience and subsequent acceptance into the community

67 UA.R.22.109.9 and then also amended and printed in Nachrichten Aus Der Brüder-Gemeine, Gnadau 1825, 771-80.
(16 July 1741). Oertel returned to his hometown, was released by his landlord, wrapped up his affairs within four weeks, and left for Herrnhut. He arrived in Herrnhut ready to serve the ‘the Saviour’ with body and soul, and moved into the Brothers’ house immediately on the 16 August 1741. Note that the entry above from the diary mentions plans for him and a for a factory less than a week after his arrival in Herrnhut.

His own wish was to become a missionary, but the community leadership were more interested in his technical knowhow. After a series of events, he was called, in 1754 to Gnadenberg and was assigned the management of the Neusaltzer fabrique, which he did until 1759. He left with the rest of the community to Gnadenberg in 1759 (along with his wife, whom he married the previous year) and there established another factory, which prospered. But he did so reluctantly. In 1761 because of Russian expansion, they were all sent to Niesky, where he accompanied his wife and was allowed to stay with her. Then, at express orders, a “Manchester Fabrik” was to be established. This he did, but again, not with pleasure. This was to be the last factory that he established; he died in Gnadenberg in 1767 at 53 years old.

The German word for factory is Fabrik, which is derived from the French, fabrique, which is the spelling used in many of the documents from the Herrnhut archives. At this time the word could be used to signify workshops at all scales, for example those in the Brothers’ houses. On the other hand, there are examples of larger scale projects, such as the forty Brothers who work at the factory in Yorkshire, which was mentioned on the synod of the Single Brothers in 1752/3. Also, a quote from Zinzendorf in 1753 shows an even larger scale of production:

That [contact with outsiders] is precisely not my main aversion to the factories, rather, 300 people could live off one factory today, and when the

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69 Quoted in Uttendörfer, Wirtschaftsgeist Herrnhuts, 40. The archival reference is UA.R.2A.32b. Even though this was part of the Brotherhouse archive which is no longer extant, a copy of this has been retrieved from Niesky.
factory is stopped tomorrow, then all the people are without work, and have no bread. The factories have, in my opinion, no golden ground. The brothers and sisters for example in the choirhouses could thereby come in great need.\(^{70}\)

Zinzendorf was hesitant in regard to the implementation of factories, as the following discussion from the Synod conference in Autumn 1754 shows:

Johannes [von Watteville]: If there is no such factory in Herrnhut now, then the 1200 people who live there now will not easily endure, even Herrnhut could hardly have begun if there hadn’t been any wool manufacture.

Jünger [i.e. Zinzendorf]: I have nothing against the manufacture in the hands of the peoples of the world which would rather give work to the brothers rather than others, but I am against manufacture in the hands of the Brothers, because I am afraid that our neighbours will suffer under this. [337]

Johannes [von Watteville]: The people in the land suffer no damage from the Moravian factories.\(^{71}\)

There were then dissenting voices in regards to factory and work in the Moravian communities. One of these was Friedrich von Watteville, Zinzendorf’s close friend and adopted father of the above-mentioned Johannes. In a long appendix to the minutes of the Oberlausitz Provincial Synod, he set forth his argument for removing the apprentices from the


\(^{71}\) UA.R.2.A.No.35.b, 336-337. “Johannes: Wenn jetz nicht eine solche Fabrique in Herrnhuth wäre, so würden die da wohnenden 1200 Menschen nicht leicht bestehen können; ja man hätte kaum Herrnhuth anfangen können, wenn die Wollen-Manufacur nicht gewesen wäre.


Here it must be noted that in 1755 a number of Zinzendorf’s speeches were published which were prefaced by an introduction which insisted that the Moravian enterprise had brought devastation for local trade in the Oberlausitz. Christina Petterson, “A Plague of the State and the Church’: A Local Response to the Moravian Enterprise’, in: Journal of Moravian History 16 (2016), 45-60.
choir-houses, advocates factories, and rallies against the communal household (*Diakonie*), which he believed was stripping the capital from the community.\(^{72}\) It seems that we see the conflict between a conservative, aristocratic position, in which the lord saw it as his responsibility to ensure employment for all of his tenants and servants, and the position of liberalism, which operates with an economic rationality, in which the importance of the whole is downplayed, in favour of the individual.

Returning to Bethlehem, the General Economy, as the communal economy was known, was a massive enterprise, supporting a growing number of missionaries working among the Native Americans. In her analysis, Gillian Lindt Collin argues that the General Economy sustained around 1300 people in addition to the missionary enterprises among the Native Americans, and thus insists that the dissolution of the system cannot be because it failed in its purpose.\(^{73}\)

The General Economy began to come under pressure in 1758, but Zinzendorf was adamant that it not be touched. And then, in 1760, he suddenly died. After his death followed a period of serious economic unrest because Zinzendorf’s networks started calling in their debts. One fraction in Herrnhut eyed Bethlehem as not contributing as much to this as they could, and felt that if the economy were transformed to a private economy it would increase productivity and contribute to a larger community chest rather than to support missionaries and teachers.\(^{74}\)

The new economic system was introduced in April 1762, but the transition to a settlement proper was not really in place until 1771. But already by 1765, as Katherine Engel has shown, “Bethlehem’s pilgrim congregation had been eliminated, the house congregation dissolved, and the town stripped of almost all its ties to missionary work”.\(^{75}\)

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\(^{72}\) Partly cited and discussed in Uttendörfer, *Wirtschaftsgeist Herrnhuts*, 18-27. The archival reference is UA.R2.A.34.2.3.

\(^{73}\) Gollin, *Moravians in two Worlds*, 198-99. She points to increasing prosperity, lack of social cohesion within the choirs, the profit motive, and conflicts between the missionaries and the house congregation, which undermined it from within.


Engel, who has done the fullest analysis of this transition from communal economy to private economy, argues that what the main shift accomplished, was that the inhabitants went from having donated their labour to the General Economy, to working for cash. This transition was smooth, because it slipped, like hand in a glove into the market-oriented behaviour in the surroundings. Working for cash could mean either working in one of the industries the church held on to, from which the labourer then received a percentage of the profits as a wage, or labouring as an independent artisan in one of the privatised trades. Suggestions as to which industries to keep were provided by Herrnhut, namely “the farms with the mills, taverns, and the processing of their products, be that mowing, brewing, baking, slaughtering, candle making, tanning and tawry work, distilling, and brickmaking, also linen weaving, the store, the apothecary, the bookstore, the pottery house, the dye house, and the farrier and blacksmith, also builders and carpenters.” The artisans who could be set up by themselves included “the glovemaker, cooper, hat maker, furniture maker, tinsmith, nail smith, locksmith, gun stocker, stocking weaver, cobbler, tailor, turner, wagoner, saddle maker, haberdasher, watchmaker, silversmith”. The newly independent artisans had to pay 6 percent interest on their tools and supplies, rent for the workshop, and wages. The church thus earned a steady income, without having to worry about liabilities. On the other hand, concerning labour in the church industries, the leaders now had to determine the worth of the labour of each of their employees, and after having made that decision, pay the labourers from the profits of the business.⁷⁶

The single household of the General Economy was broken into many smaller households, which aligned more or less with nuclear families. The Single Brothers and Sisters’ choirs also had to be restructured into independent economic units, paying their own way, as was the mode of operation in Europe. As Engel notes, this was less of an issue for the Single Brothers’ choir. It did have serious consequences for the Single Sisters who, were more or less confined to their choir house because of the gender segregation and the limits this posed on what labour they could carry out. This had also been an ongoing problem in Herrnhut, and the leadership in Bethlehem shouldn’t have been surprised. As in Herrnhut, eventually it meant that the sisters’ labour was

⁷⁶ Engel, Religion and Profit, 173.
reduced to domestic tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, mending, laundry, and spinning.77

These were the first steps to incorporating market relations into the community fabric of Bethlehem. And once the community was separated from its missionary activity these forces of production contained in this small town could be unleashed and boom dramatically to the end of the century, by which time others had caught up with their industrial practices.

Conclusion

In this article, I have looked at some of the economic aspects of the Moravian Brethren in several different contexts, with special focus on their choir-system. I sought to demonstrate that the choirs should be seen as units of production, which was a crucial feature of Moravian communities since their consolidation in the first half of the 1740s. I also aimed to show how the choirs worked as living laboratories of social change. Both of these points are relevant in relation to the mission in Greenland. However, the economic possibilities of the choirs and the community really took off at an unprecedented level in Bethlehem to the detriment of their social function. Their success was due to the level playing field that the colonial situation offered to industrious entrepreneurs, and as the case of Greenland showed, the natural and social environment of the colony. We may speculate to what extent Christiansfeld would have been that competitive and successful without ten years of tax exemptions and economic concessions, and in an arctic climate. And what the mission in Greenland would have looked like had it received financial support from the early days. In any case, the events in Bethlehem brought a change of direction for the Moravians in that the mission was abandoned in favour of a new economic practice, which was part of the New World. From then on, the Moravians would be dancing to someone else’s tune while earning their own bread. In the meantime, the tight-knit choirs slowly unravelled, eventually being rolled over and surpassed by economic forces outside the control of anyone in Greenland, Herrnhut, Christiansfeld, or Bethlehem.

Summary

77 Engel, Religion and Profit, 178-79.
This article examines some of the economic aspects of the Moravian Brethren in several different contexts (Greenland, Christiansfeld, and Bethlehem), with special focus on their choir-system. I analyse some of the changes that took place in the economic practices of the communities and the development of the choirs as units of production, which were a crucial feature of Moravian communities and their entrepreneurial nature since the first half of the 1740s.

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