



## Introduction

- With its history of weaving, Württemberg in the 18th and 19th centuries is an excellent case study for the integration of its protoindustrial economy into world markets, as new fabric mixes from North America and Asia became increasingly important to local production by the late 18th century.
- The state of Württemberg was also unique in its recordkeeping: beginning in the 16th century, newly married couples were legally pressured into recording the entirety of the possessions that each partner brought into the marriage. By the 18th and 19th centuries, the government directly oversaw this accounting, resulting in a wealth of detailed dowry inventories.
- With the previous help of Professor Matt Nelson, the items included in a sample of notarized dowry inventories from two villages (Kaisersbach and Gruorn) in Württemberg were converted into a database; the original inventories are preserved in the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg.
- The purpose of this project was to draw upon these dowries for the village of Gruorn, which was transitioning from a predominantly agricultural community to a mix of proto-industrial linen production, handicrafts, and farming, to analyze the interactions between global markets and local socioeconomic patterns.

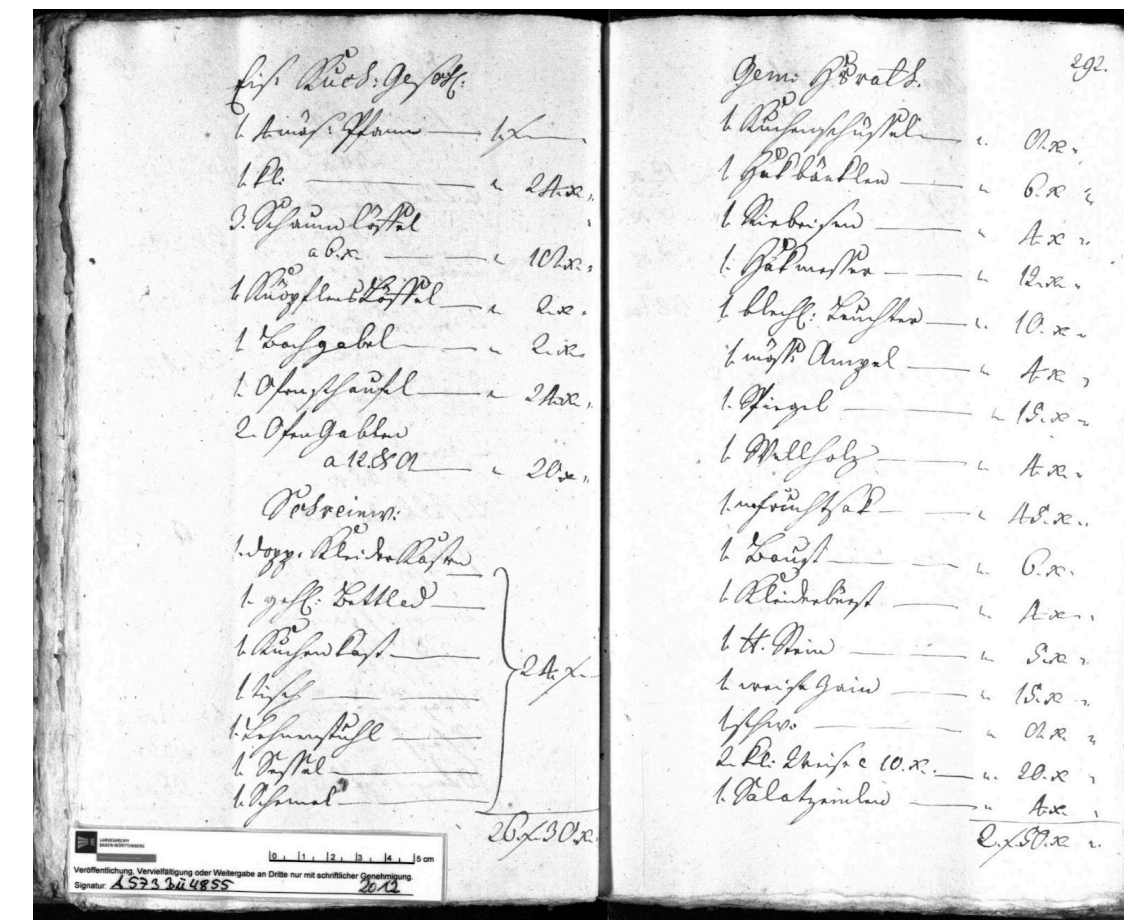


Figure 1. Sample inventory record

## Method

- For the purposes of this analysis, nine individual inventories across three eras were used: one of the largest, one medium-sized, and one of the smallest inventories from each of the mid-18th century, the late 18th century, and the early 19th century.
- For the purposes of this analysis, nine individual inventories across three eras were used: one of the largest, one medium-sized, and one of the smallest inventories from each of the mid-18th century, the late 18th century, and the early 19th century.
- These nine inventories, made up of 747 items, were then analyzed primarily according to four important variables:
  - Wealth of Owner (High, Medium, Low)
  - Fabric of each item
  - Item Type
  - Item value
- Using research already performed by Professors Maynes, Bruce, and Roubinek, the fabrics were also grouped by origin (ie. whether they had some component that was imported) for analysis.

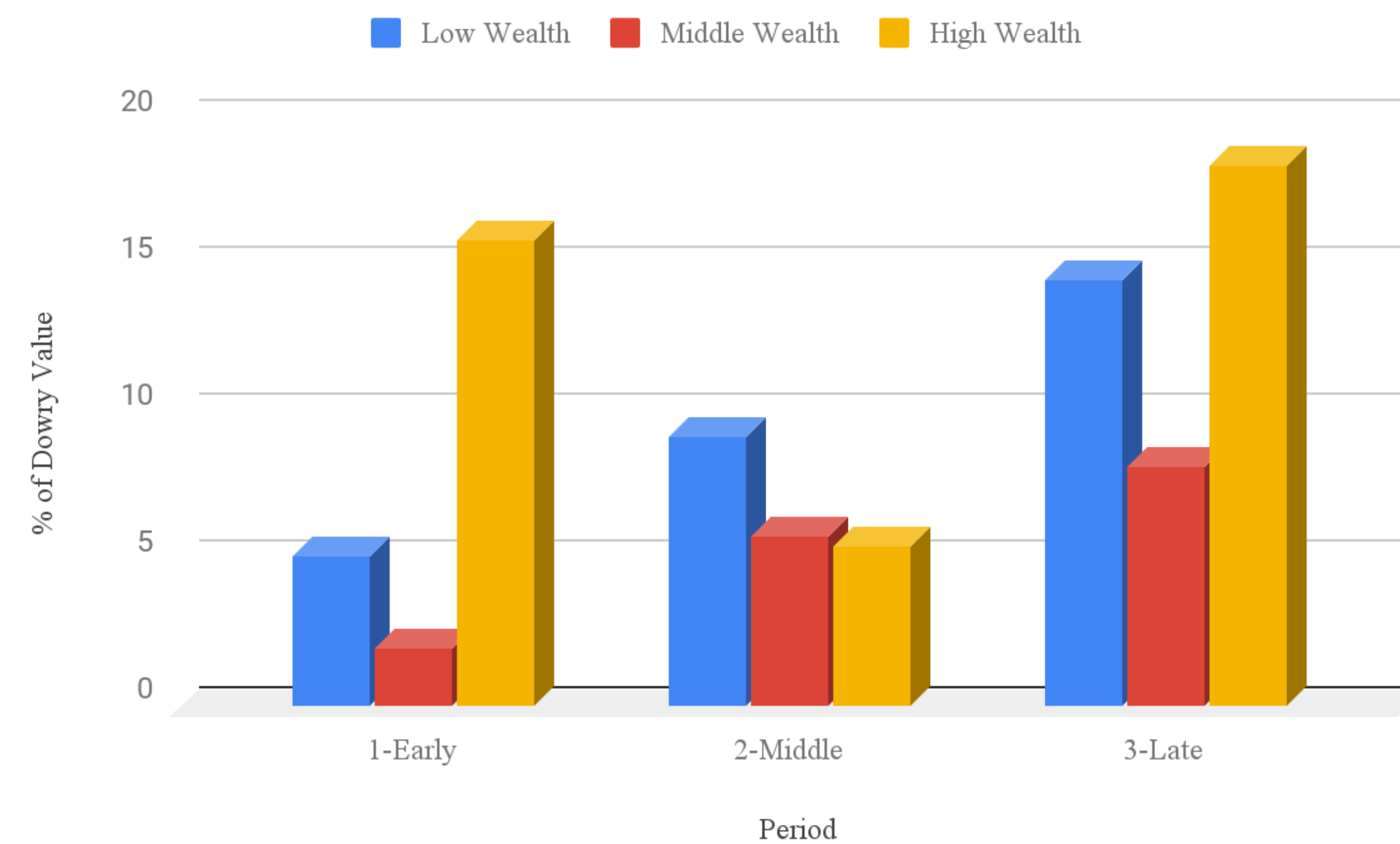


Figure 2. The average percentage of total dowry value of items containing imported fabrics, across the three periods and wealth groups.

Thank you to: Professor Mary Jo Maynes, my research mentor, to whom I am extremely grateful for her time working with me. Also to Professor Emily Bruce from the University of Minnesota - Morris and Professor Eric Roubinek from the University of North Carolina - Asheville for all their help and advice during my project and for allowing me to build on their existing work

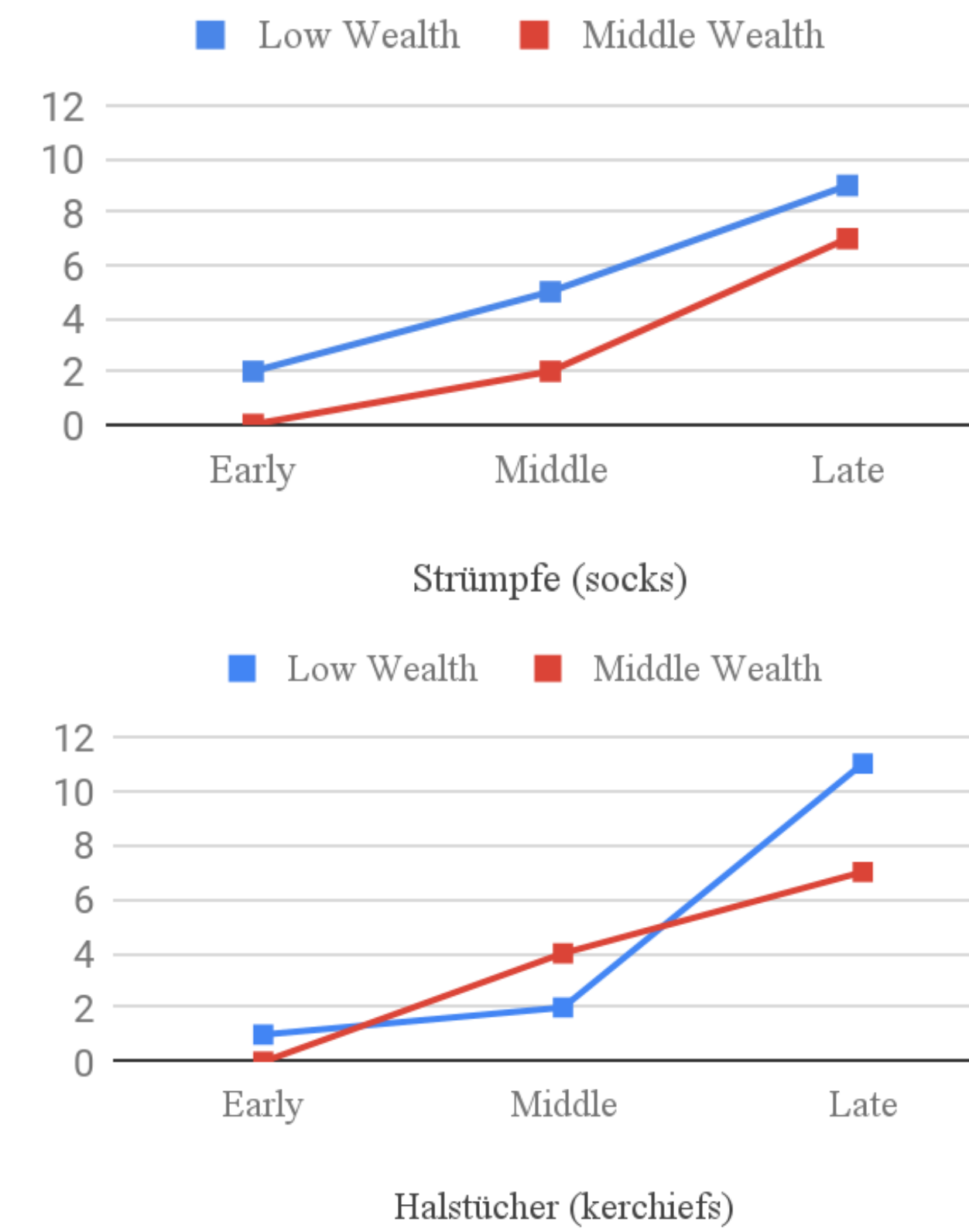


Figure 3. Counts of the number of items containing imported fabrics for two forms of accessories in inventories in the low and middle wealth groups

## Results

- As shown in Figure 2, although all wealth groups in Gruorn saw increases in the amount of wealth invested in items containing imported fabrics, the most consistent growth took place in the low wealth group.
- The low wealth group also saw considerable increases in the number of Halstücher and Strümpfe (Figure 3). These two items tend to be among the cheapest goods recorded– in the middle period, the median value of a kerchief was 0.3 florins, while the median value for a pair of socks was 0.4 fl.

## Discussion and Conclusions

- As expected, Württemberg's increasing integration into the global economy resulted in the entry of foreign fibers even into rural village economies like Gruorn's.
- Some of the most extreme increases can be seen in low wealth inventories, particularly in kerchiefs (Halstücher) and socks (note that unlike today, socks were a highly visible part of one's attire) with imported fibers. This sharp increase suggests that the rise in imported fabrics provided those in lower wealth classes a relatively inexpensive means of self-expression, through the purchasing of cheap fashion goods made of previously unheard of fibers.
- The number of kerchiefs and socks with imported fibers owned by the middle class also increased, but to a far lesser degree than for the lower class. Moreover, middle class inventories were larger than lower class inventories, so the increase in kerchiefs and socks was less relatively important to the middle class than it was to the lower class. This provides evidence for the idea that poorer classes were often quicker than classes to pick up on cheap new fashions that in some ways mimicked upper class fashion, in terms of color and 'look'.

## References

Maynes, Mary Jo. "Gender, Labor, and Globalization in Historical Perspective: European Spinners in the International Textile Industry, 1750-1900." *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 4 (2004): 47-66. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2004.0016>.