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*Two hundred barrels of manure: short-term leasehold and care for the soil in Cambrésis, 1330-1400*

Within historiography, short-term leasehold is often strongly connected to the commercialisation of agriculture and short-term profit-seeking. Furthermore, as Kerridge and others state, the uncertainty of contract-renewal caused lessees to exploit the lands as much as they could in the span of the lease, in an attempt to turn a profit –neglecting the long-term health of the soil. The latter could be restored through fertilisation, but there was a chronic shortage of manure in the Middle Ages. As such, manure was an expensive commodity, and on top of that, it was a labour-intensive task to apply it. Consequently, the incentive for the lessees to actively apply manure was relatively low.

The short-term lease contracts of two institutions in 14th Century Cambrésis, however, shows a clear interest from the landlords in the maintenance of the health of the soil of their lands. Here, an analysis is made of these lease contracts and their accompanying notes, investigating the attitude of these landlords toward their tenants and the upkeep of their lands; whether small lessees were treated differently than large leaseholders, what the contracts and the notes reveal about soil upkeep, whether the contracts were followed up, and how this evolved through time.

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