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## A geographical study on the population of the Danish Northfrisian Islands.

By Aage Aagesen.

The islands in the Danish part of the Waddensea are: *Fanø*, *Mandø*, *Rømø*, *Langli*, and furthermore some sandbanks, which are uninhabited, and therefore without interest in this connection. The little island of *Langli* forms a part of *Ho* parish on the continent; it covers only 142 ha and has only 2 inhabitants (8 in 1921). The 3 bigger islands have the following size and population (lit. 1):

	Area in ha	Families 1950	Inhab. 1950	Inhab. 1945
Fanø.....	5570	876	2605	2575
Nordby parish.....	3811	708	2138	2128
Sønderho parish.....	1759	168	467	447
Mandø.....	603	50	174	172
Rømø.....	9974	226	703	747

The total area of the islands is thus 16147 ha with 3482 habitans in 1950 (3494 in 1945). The average density of population on the islands is thus 21.6 inhabitants per square km, against an average of 99.5 for Denmark as a whole. The distribution of the population 1945 will be seen on fig. 1, where each dot means 25 persons, while the circle for the little town of Nordby on Fanø means 1816 inhabitants (1838 in 1950). The scattered population, which is typical in great parts of Denmark, will not be seen on the Frisian islands. On *Fanø*, most of the population (88 %) will be found in the 2 agglomerations: Nordby and Sønderho, which both are old shipping places, having lost their importance by the evolution of the ships

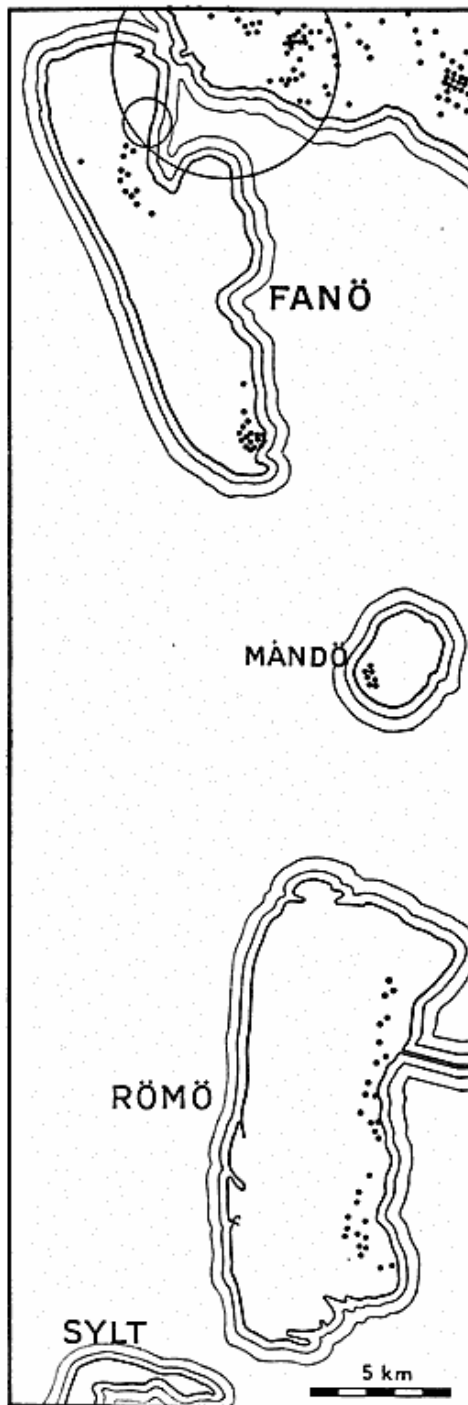


Fig. 1. The distribution of the population on the Danish Northfrisian Islands. Each dot means 25 persons. The circles for the bigger agglomerations Esbjerg and Nordby have areas corresponding with the number of dots, which they replace (see the text).

and of the sea-going transportation in the transportation in the 19th century. Only south of Nordby there is a little scattered population on the edge of the small stripe of marsh along the east coast. The major part of the island is covered with dune sand, with a sandy marine foreland on the coast in west and north. The only communication with Jutland is a ferry between Esbjerg and Nordby.

*Mandø* consists of marshland, and is surrounded by dikes. A little area of dune sand contains the little settlement on the island. The island is connected with Jutland by a bus line, traversing the wades by ebb tide. On *Rømø* there are only smaller tracts of marshland, while the island is covered with dune sand, forming dunes and plains. The population of *Rømø* stretches along a line in the eastern part of the island, and without greater agglomerations. An old ferry connection to Ballum on the coast of Jutland was in 1948 replaced by a dam with a motor road.

Shipping has always been of great importance to the population of these islands (lit. 2), and the modern technical system of transportation, with its need for well-built harbours, has meant a dreadful blow for the economic basis of the population. While in the last century the total

number of habitants in Denmark has increased about 200 %, the Danish Northfrisian Islands have lost a large part of their population (lit. 3). The islands have got no part of the new possibilities of the industrialization, and a certain part of the habitants have emigrated to Esbjerg, the new and modern port on this coast. So, in 1940, not less than 620 persons living in Esbjerg (= 2 % total population of the town) were born on the island of Fanø (lit. 4).

This emigration from the islands involves a decrease of their population, expressed in the following figures (lit. 1 and 5):

Inhabitants	1860	1901	1925	1950	1901—50
Fanø.....	2963	3177	2731	2605	÷ 18,0 %
Nordby.....	1927	2408	2184	2138	÷ 11,2 %
Sønderho.....	1036	769	547	467	÷ 39,3 %
Mandø.....	235	213	213	174	÷ 18,3 %
Rømø.....	1336	965 <sup>1)</sup>	766	703	÷ 27,2 % <sup>2)</sup>
Total.....	4534	4355	3710	3482	÷ 20,0 %
Esbjerg town.....	30	13355	27849	49506	+ 270,7 %

Before 1860 the population of all the islands was growing; in 1801 Fanø had 2230 inhabitants, and Mandø only 97. After the war between Denmark, Prussia, and Austria 1864 Rømø became a part of Prussia until 1920. The population of Rømø decreased rapidly after the war, mainly by emigration to Denmark; in 1871 there were only 1200 persons. In 1870 Fanø reached a maximum with 3259 inhabitants, and Mandø with 244. The decrease during the first half of our century has been most disastrous for the sailor-village of Sønderho, and less important for Nordby, which during the last years has partly developed into a place of residence for people working in Esbjerg. This development is still going on, so that we can prognosticate, that Nordby will become a suburb to Esbjerg after some time.

The classification of the population after occupation (p. 4) shows the following picture for 1940 (lit. 1).

The figures give as well the economic active as the inactive (children, wives, servants) population. A = agriculture, fishing, etc., B = industry, C = trade, D = transportation, E = immaterial occupations, F = without occupation or unknown occupation.

<sup>1)</sup> 1900. <sup>2)</sup> 1900—50.

	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	F.
Fanø: Nordby parish .....	360	463	175	451	120	467
Sønderho parish .....	59	103	28	98	33	149
Mandø parish .....	88	24	2	12	7	30
Rømø parish .....	316	160	28	64	26	119
The Danish Northfrisian Islands ..	823	850	233	625	186	765
% .....	24,3	22,2	6,9	18,5	5,5	22,6
Average for Denmark % .....	27,7	33,4	12,6	6,5	7,0	12,8

On the island of Fanø transportation (i. e. shipping) is still a very important occupation of the population, while agriculture dominates the economic life of to-day on Mandø and Rømø, although you here as well as on Fanø will find remnants from the glorious era of the sailing vessels. But the economic life in Nordby is to-day a rather modern one, and the main part of the population under point D is sailors etc., sailing on modern ships, mainly from Esbjerg.

In 1952—53 the parish of Nordby had 1.111 taxpayers, of which 127 had their occupation in Esbjerg, and only 428 in Nordby. The rest was without occupation or had their occupation elsewhere, mainly on board on ships.

For a further analysis of the peculiar conditions of the population on these islands, Nordby thus gives an untypical impression. And as Nordby is big enough to dominate the picture of the islands, I have cut this township off in the following investigations. My material hereby decreases to 1366 persons (1945). Perhaps this number seems to be too small for conclusions of common worth, but if we want to know anything about the special conditions of the island-population, we will have to work with this number.

	Born on the island, where they live		Born outside the is- land, where they live	
Sønderho <sup>1)</sup> .....	330	73,8 %	117	26,2 %
Mandø .....	128	74,4 %	41	23,8 %
Rømø <sup>2)</sup> .....	475	63,6 %	272	36,4 %

<sup>1)</sup> 311 persons or 69.6 % were born in Sønderho parish.

<sup>2)</sup> Rømø is divided in 3 units (ejerlav): *Juvre* on the north: 218 inhab. (62.0 % born on Rømø), *Kongsmark* in the central part: 272 inhab. (60.5 %), and *Kirkeby* on the south: 262 inhab. (67.7 %).

On the basis of the census papers for the year 1945 I have investigated some socialgeographic problems of the population of the parishes of Sønderho, Mandø, and Rømø. The birthplaces of the persons living here gives the following impression (p. 4 below).

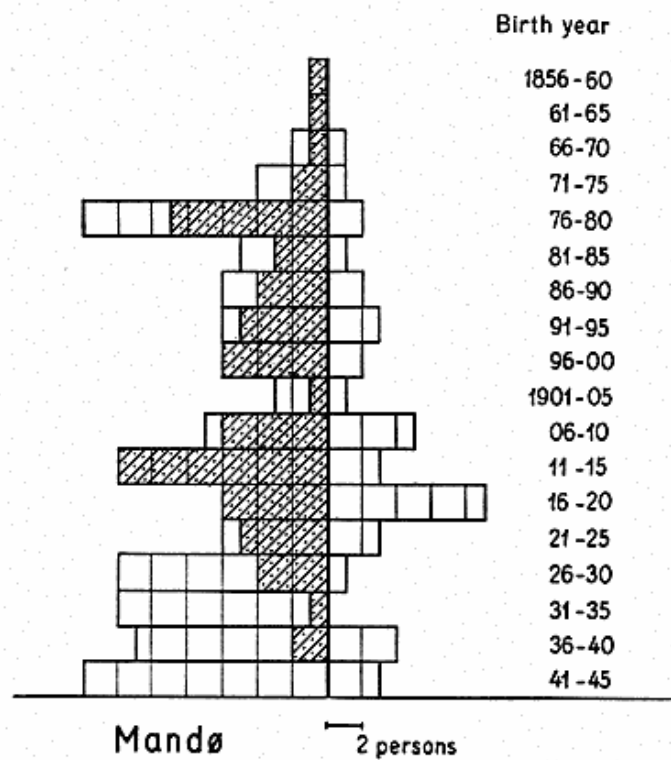
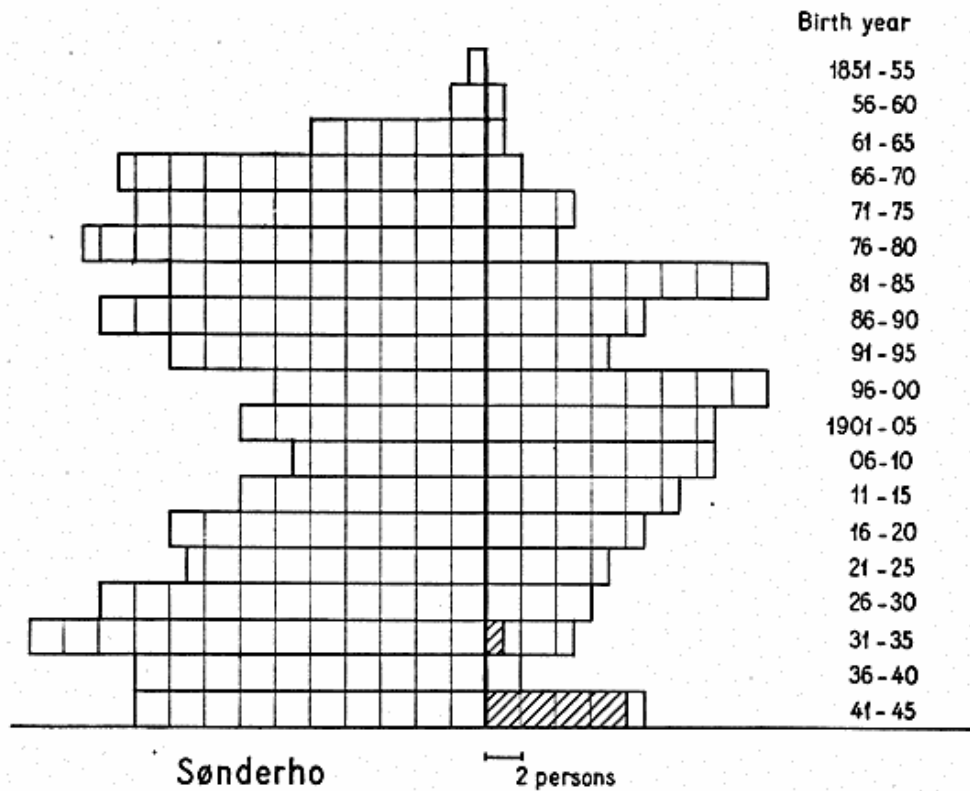
We have no knowledge of the birthplace for 3 persons on Mandø.

According to these figures it seems as if the main part of the people of the Danish Northfrisian Islands, and especially the people of Mandø, remains on the island, where they are born, where they live and die. Nothing can be more wrong. Let us regard the 172 persons on Mandø. 58 of these, or 34 %, have never lived for at longer time outside the island, but 70 of them, or 41 %, have left their home island for a time, very often for at lot of years, and have then returned to their island. We know their last living place before their return: the main part have lived on the continent, but within a radius of 30—50 km from Mandø. These persons are mainly farmers, seeking training and instruction in the marshlands in Jutland. Some of the temporary emigrants return from Esbjerg or Copenhagen, and 2 from U.S.A. Of the economic active population (61 persons) only 10 have never lived outside the island, where they were born.

The following form will inform you about the relation between occupation and birthplace according to Mandø (a similar material for the other islands is too incomplete to be used here):

Occupation	Persons total	Persons economic active	Born on Mandø	Born outside Mandø	Immigrated to Mandø		Never lived outside Mandø
					Total	Born on Mandø	
Agriculture . . . . .	89	36	72	17	58	41	31
Fishing . . . . .	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
Domestic service . . . .	9	9	7	2	7	5	2
Industry . . . . .	26	8	12	14	23	9	3
Transportation . . . . .	10	2	9	1	2	1	8
Trade . . . . .	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
Immaterial occ. . . . .	5	4	1	4	5	1	0
Without or unknown.	31	—	25	3	15	12	13
	172	61	128	41	111	70	58

More than half of the persons, who never have lived outside the island, were employed in agriculture, while the industrial and immaterial population mainly are immigrants to the island. As to Sønderho parish you find exactly the same line: 71 % of the indu-



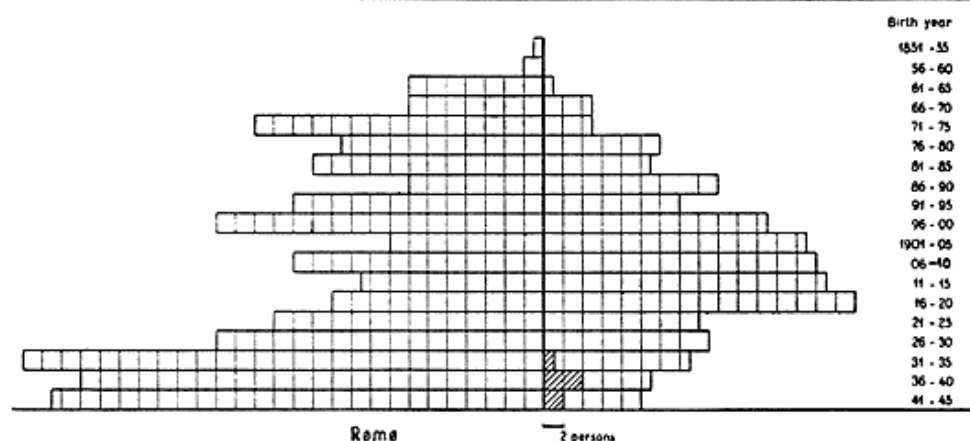


Fig. 4. Explanation: see the text.

strial and 76 % of the sailing persons are born on Fanø, but almost all of them have left Fanø for longer periods, while 30 out of 52 farmers never have lived outside the island.

An investigation on the marriage conditions will be of some interest:

	Sønderho	Mandø	Rømø	Total
Number of married couples ..	90	34	171	295
Married persons per 100 inhab.	40,2	39,6	45,8	43,2
♂ + ♀ born on the island...	49 54,4 %	14 41,2 %	52 30,4 %	115
♂ born on the island.....	15 16,7 %	9 26,5 %	40 23,4 %	64
♀ born on the island.....	10 11,1 %	7 20,1 %	35 20,5 %	52
None born on the island .....	16 17,8 %	4 11,7 %	44 25,7 %	64

As to Sønderho, 9 marriages consist of 1 person from Sønderho and 1 from Nordby on the same island. The figures tell us, that a great part of the marriages take place inside the small island communities. Less important is this problem for Rømø, where the infusion of new blood is quite large.

The diagrams fig. 2—4 show the distribution of the population according to year of birth. The persons registrated to the left of the vertical central line, are born in the parish concerned, while those to the right of this line are immigrants to the parish, and born elsewhere. On the diagrams of Rømø and Sønderho, the hatched areas is a correction for persons, born in maternity homes or hospitals and therefore registrated as born outside the parish, although they otherwise never have lived outside the parish. Regarding the persons born in the parishes, it is interesting, that



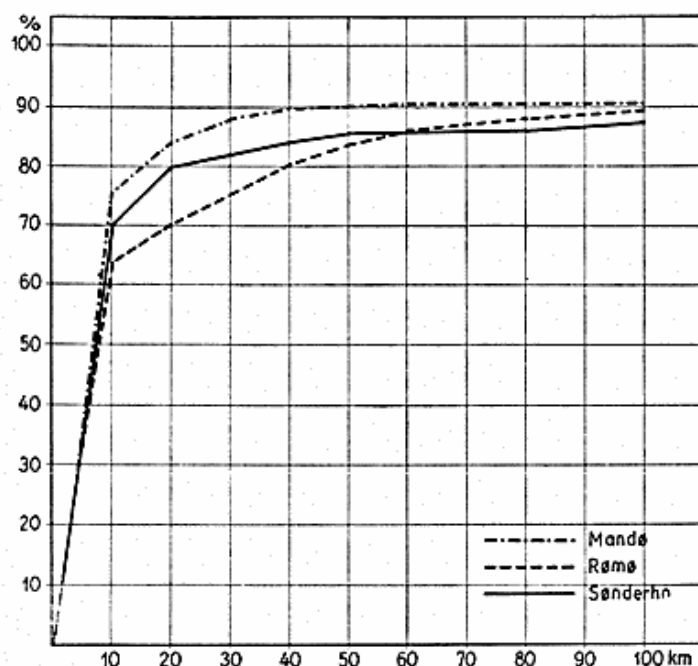


Fig. 5. The distance between the birthplace and the actual homes of the population in Sønderho, on Mandø, and on Rømø 1945.

the age groups, which are between 20 and 40 years old, as a whole are less represented than the older ones. The cause may be, that a certain part of the people between 20 and 40 is to be found in the towns, elsewhere on the continent or on the sea, while the older persons have returned to their native island. On the diagram of Mandø, the hatched part means persons born on Mandø and returned to the island after a temporary emigration to other places, inside Denmark or abroad. The immigrants to the parishes are mostly over 25 years old; they often marry a person from the parish, or they are functionaries transferred to the parish.

Fig. 5 shows the birthplaces of the population of Mandø, Rømø, and Sønderho. The migration from one of the islands to another is quite unimportant, 9 persons in all. The most important municipalities and parishes, where the immigrated populations of the 3 parishes are born, are the following:

Copenhagen .....	24	Tønder .....	8
Esbjerg .....	22	Oksby .....	8
Nordby, Fanø .....	21	Aarhus .....	8
Ballum .....	18	Højer .....	7
Tjæreborg .....	11	Skærbæk .....	6
St. Darum .....	11	Brede .....	6
Ribe .....	10	Guldager .....	6

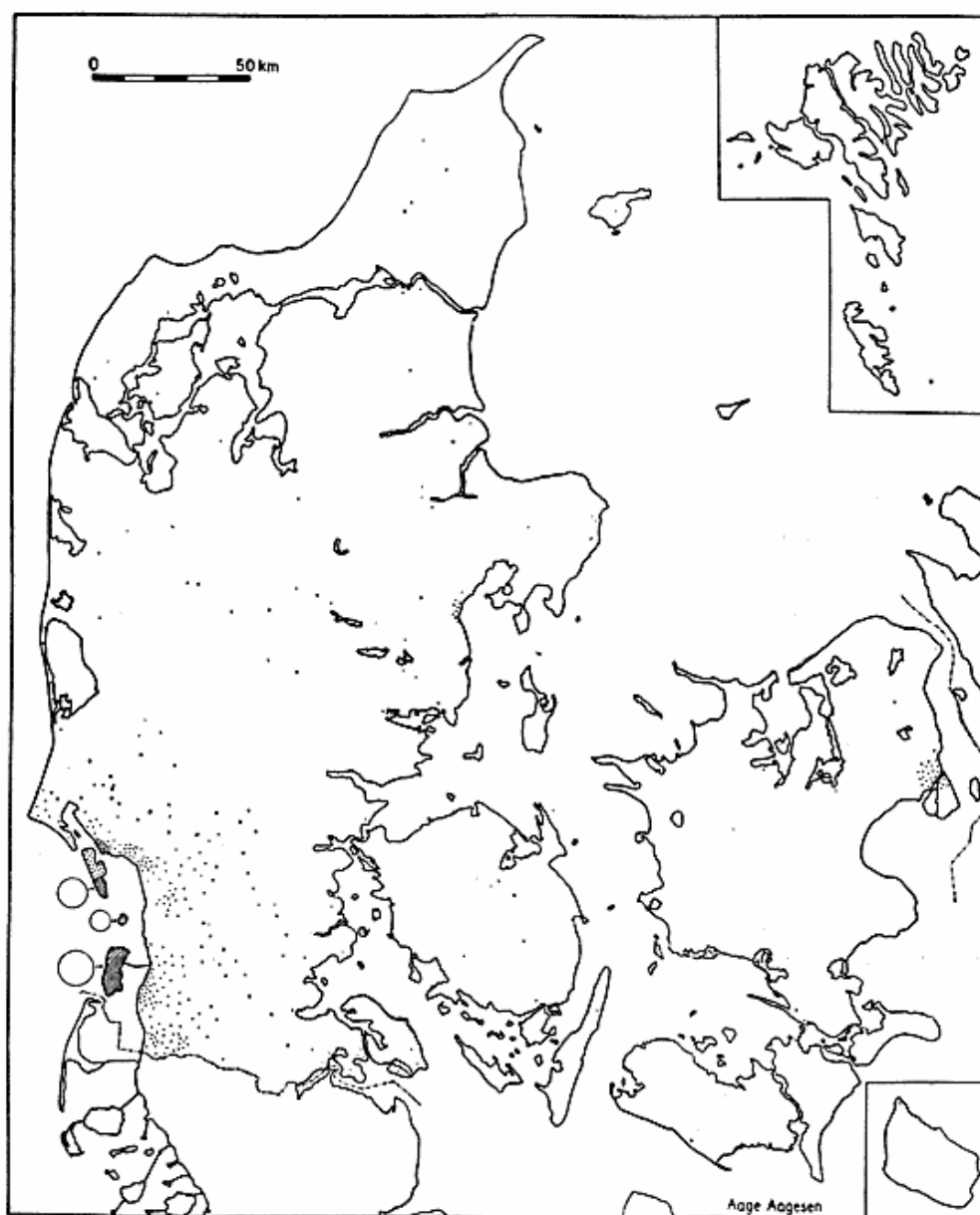


Fig. 6. The population of Sønnerho, Mandø, and Rømø, distributed after native parish 1945. Each dot means 1 person. The circles by Sønnerho, Mandø, and Rømø, stands for the native population born at the isles.

Except the 2 greatest towns of Denmark, Copenhagen and Aarhus, all these parishes and towns are situated by or near the Waddensea. 126 of the inhabitants are born in Ribe Amt (county). 94 in Tønder Amt. 945 or 69,2 % are born on the Danish Northfrisian Islands, 321 or 23,7 % in Jutland, 8 on Funen, 33 on Zealand. 1329 persons or 97,4 % are born in Denmark, 34 in foreign countries, and for 3 the birthplace is unknown.

Of the 34 foreign born persons 21 come from Germany, 5 from U.S.A., 2 from Norway and Iceland, 1 from Sweden, England, Canada, and India. We know the birthplace for 18 of the 21 german born persons: 5 from the German Northfrisian Islands, 7 from other places in Schleswig-Holstein, and the rest except 1 from the coastal district by the North Sea.

The distance between the birth place and the living place is shown for the said 3 parishes on fig. 6. This figure shows, that the average migration distance is biggest for the population on Rømø, which has had the most extensive communication to the continent, while Mandø as the most isolated of the islands gets its population from a short distance. In Sønderho, the most typical shipping community, not less than 13 % of the population are born more than 100 km away.

Compared with those parts of Denmark, where we know something about these relations, the population on the Danish Northfrisian Islands is remarkable steady, such as you would expect it on small, isolated islands. The decreasing importance of the islands during the last century also has prevented an immigration of new blood. On other small, Danish islands we often have similar conditions and problems, but never as distinct as here.

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