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**HOPES AND FEARS**  
**FOR THE FUTURE IN EARLY MODERN**  
**SWEDEN, 1500–1800**



# HOPES AND FEARS

FOR THE FUTURE  
IN EARLY MODERN  
SWEDEN, 1500–1800

EDITED BY PETRI KARONEN

Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura • Finnish Literature Society  
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## PREFACE

The volume *Hopes and Fears for the Future in Early Modern Sweden* represents a joint collaboration between Finnish and Swedish researchers. The initial idea for the volume arose when researchers from the discipline of Finnish History at the University of Jyväskylä began to consider how people in early modern societies faced everyday challenges and coped with setbacks. Our late modern society has been characterized as a society of stress and angst, but historians of early modern society have recently noted that people's endurance and resourcefulness in past centuries, too, were tested by such situations as job advancement, social obligations, local power struggles, poverty, unpopularity, and violence. Yet the topics of fear, hope and self-interest among early modern inhabitants of the vast 16th–19th-century Swedish empire have never been studied directly. In this volume, fifteen articles address these issues from different empirical perspectives. The process of seeing this volume into print has been a long but fruitful one and it has been supported by the Academy of Finland as well as several other trusts and foundations. Gerard McAlester has proofread the book with skill and expertise. The editors want to thank all of those who have contributed to this project for their patience and enthusiasm.

In Jyväskylä 1.8.2009

Jari Eilola  
Marko Hakanen  
Petri Karonen  
Marko Lamberg  
Olli Matikainen

## INTRODUCTION

*Petri Karonen*

In *Hopes and Fears for the Future in Early Modern Sweden*, fifteen scholars present their views on different aspects of Swedish–Finnish society during the years 1500–1800. The work focuses on various events, processes and phenomena in the Swedish realm during this period, which is indisputably an important, perhaps indeed the most important, era in the development of what are today the independent states of Sweden and Finland.<sup>1</sup>

For the period under consideration, there exist source materials of exceptionally high quality at both the communal and individual levels, and these have enabled the writers to produce articles covering a wide range of subjects connected with people's fears and hopes in that age. It is particularly significant in the case of the Kingdom of Sweden that the very early centralisation of government required the subjects to draw up and keep records, which have been systematically stored over

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1 Major general works and collections of articles dealing with the history of Sweden during this period include: *Sweden's Age of Greatness 1632–1718*, Ed. by Michael Roberts, St. Martin's Press: New York, 1973; Michael Roberts, *The Swedish Imperial Experience 1560–1718*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; Michael Roberts, *The Age of Liberty. Sweden 1719–1772*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; David Kirby, *Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period. The Baltic World 1492–1772*, Longman: London, 1990; Arnold H. Barton, *Scandinavia in the Revolutionary Era 1760–1815*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1986; *The Riksdag. A History of the Swedish Parliament*, Ed. by Michael F. Metcalf, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987; Harald Gustafsson, *Political Interaction in the Old Regime. Central Power and Local Society in the Eighteenth-Century Nordic States*, Studentlitteratur: Lund, 1994; *People Meet the Law. Control and conflict-handling in the courts. The Nordic countries in the post-Reformation and pre-industrial period*, Ed. by Eva Österberg and Sølvi Sogner, Studentlitteratur: Otta, 2000; Carl Hallendorff and Adolf Schuck, *History of Sweden*, Transl. by Mrs. Lajla Yapp, London, 1929; Paul Douglas Lockhart, *Sweden in the seventeenth century*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2004; David Kirby, *A Concise History of Finland*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2006.

a long period of time, and these documents provide excellent source materials for research.<sup>2</sup>

Hopes and fears for the future are today studied with wide interest, and they are the focus of the present work not only because they are universal themes that have occupied people of all eras, but also because a great deal of attention was paid to them during the early modern age. Moreover, this period was a time of change, with the introduction of a modern, broadly individualistic way of thinking, which also makes the subject of considerable interest. In this light, the various coping strategies employed by individuals, communities, organisations and even states to come to terms with an uncertain future are important. The concept of strategy has been left relatively loose in this context: it is used above all to refer to planning connected with human activities, but it is not necessarily internally consistent or even rational, for as historians frequently notice in their research, decisions about awkward problems as well as everyday questions were made on an ad hoc basis. After the break-up of the Kalmar Union in 1523, Sweden rose in just over a hundred years (by 1640) to become the strongest state in northern Europe. The position of Sweden as a great power within the Scandinavian context was not shaken even by the Great Northern War (1700–1721), for most of the losses suffered by her went to Russia, which by around 1700 had come to represent one of the greatest threats to many subjects of the Swedish crown, especially those living in the eastern reaches of the realm.<sup>3</sup>

This introductory chapter, which focuses on outlining the long-term lines of development, deals with the subject in a way that is different from the approach of the articles themselves in that it proceeds mainly from structures to actors, in other words, from the macro- to the micro-level. Its intention is to offer a general picture of the foundations of Swedish society because references to generally known and easily accessible facts have been limited in the articles themselves in order to enable a more profound treatment of the subjects being dealt with. The following presentation therefore aims to provide a smooth introduction to the articles for

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2 Home pages of the National Archives of Sweden and Finland: <http://www.statensarkiv.se/default.aspx?id=2138> (17.3.2009); <http://www.narc.fi/Arkistolaitos/eng/> (17.3.2009); For further information on sources, see Samuel E. Bring, *Bibliografisk handbok till Sveriges historia*, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1934; Lars-Arne Norborg, *Källor till Sveriges historia*, Gleerups: Lund, 1968; Toivo J. Paloposki, *Suomen historian lähteet*, Gaudeamus: Forssa, 1972; *Suomen historian asiakirjalähteet*, Ed. by Eljas Orrman and Elisa Pispala, WSOY: Helsinki, 1994; Björn Asker, *Hur riket styrdes. Förvaltning, politik och arkiv 1520–1920*, National Archives of Sweden: Stockholm, 2007.

3 Map on p. 18 shows the central areas of the realm of Sweden with their administrative and other borders. Also indicated are all the major individual localities mentioned as major objects of research in the articles.

the reader. For example, the names of writers who in their own articles deal with, or touch on, subjects mentioned here are given in parentheses. This Introduction presents the hopes and fears of the period that is being studied.

## THE STATE AND THE REALM, STRUCTURES AND THE ECONOMY

People at the beginning of the modern age in Sweden believed that certain tasks belonged to the state – and only the state. First it was the sole duty of the *state*, or the King (and by metonymy the *Crown*), in whom the state had for long been personified, to use its penal authority, which included various measures connected with surveillance, the maintenance of law and order and punishment (the monopoly of violence), to defend the realm against internal and external enemies. Second, the state had to ensure the social promotion of members of politically privileged groups, or estates, which it did in practice by ennoblement; and third it had to take an active role in supporting and promoting economic activities. In this period, it was the Diet where political discussions were held, and where generally decisions were made. On the one hand, the state was personified in the ruler, but on the other, society was perceived collectively only through the state. The ruler was more than the king (as an individual), and the state was equated with the ruler.<sup>4</sup>

For a long time in the political history of Sweden, domestic policy was given precedence because it was thought that internal strength permitted an active foreign policy. In the following description, the realm of Sweden in the early modern age will be presented as a *single unit*, of which “Sweden” and “Finland” constituted the two main parts. This solution is necessary because the early modern age differed essentially from the periods that preceded and followed it. The era has been loosely defined in this book as a continuum stretching from the break-up of the Kalmar Union in 1523, which represented the end of the Middle Ages at the political and state level, to the Finnish War (1808–1809), which ended the joint history of Sweden and Finland, with the latter being annexed into the Russian Empire as an autonomous grand duchy. Certainly, there will also be references to earlier and later times, for previous experiences, structures and

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4 See Martin Melkersson, *Staten, ordningen och friheten. En studie av den styrande elitens syn på statens roll mellan stormaktstiden och 1800-talet*, University of Uppsala: Stockholm, 1997, pp. 81–2, 87; Petri Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta. Ruotsi ja Suomi 1521–1809*, WSOY: Porvoo, 2008, pp. 20–2 and the literature mentioned in it.

ways of doing things naturally had a significant influence on people's decisions and on their hopes and fears.<sup>5</sup>

During the period studied here, the realm of Sweden was built into a unified state governed from a single centre. Although this process had started earlier, it accelerated from the 1520s on and rapidly created a strong centralised administration. The structure of the Swedish state can be regarded as consisting of five elements: the king ("His Royal Majesty"), the nobles, the church, the towns and the "people", who were composed of what was by general European standards an exceptionally strong land-owning peasant population and a relatively small group who owned no land and often very little else. Of the "people", only the peasants had any opportunities to influence the course of affairs as decision-making was strictly linked to ownership and the ability to pay taxes. Be that as it may, a joint "authority" composed of these five elements determined the course of the state. The interests of the different groups in the realm of Sweden were surprisingly convergent, a situation that at least from the state's point of view was a fortunate one.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the period, His Royal Majesty was stronger than all the other groups combined. Although mediaeval law in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had stipulated that in theory the monarchy was elective not hereditary, both practice and the law gave the king a great deal of power and influence. These prerogatives passed in their entirety to Gustavus Vasa (regent 1521–1523, king 1523–1560), who skilfully and aggressively exploited them to benefit himself and his family. Thus when Sweden moved over officially to a hereditary monarchy in 1544, the institutional structures to support a strong monarchy were in place. Hereditary

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5 For an overall description of the kingdom, see e.g. Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta; Dialog och särart. Människor, samhällen och idéer från Gustav Vasa till nutid*, Ed. by Christer Kuvaja and Gabriel Bladh, Svenska litteratursällskapet: Helsinki, 2005. See also several articles in *Maktens mosaik. Enhet, särart och självbild i det svenska riket*, Ed. by Max Engman and Nils Erik Villstrand, Svenska litteratursällskapet and Atlantis: Helsinki and Stockholm, 2008.

6 On state-making, see Erkki Lehtinen, *Hallituksen yhtenäistämispolitiikka Suomessa 1600-luvulla (1600–n. 1680)*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1961; Sven A. Nilsson, *De stora krigens tid. Om Sverige som militärstat och bondesamhälle*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1990; Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta*; Jan Glete, *War and the state in early modern Europe. Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as fiscal-military states, 1500–1660*, Routledge: London, New York, 2002; Charles Tilly, 'Reflections on the History of European State-Making', in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe. Studies in Political Development*, Ed. by Charles Tilly. Princeton University Press: New Jersey, 1975; Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990*, Blackwell: Cornwall, 1990; Charles Tilly, 'Entanglements of European Cities and States', in *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe A.D. 1000 to 1800*, Ed. by Charles Tilly and Wim P. Blockmans, Westview Press: Oxford, 1994.

monarchy offered a significant competitive advantage in the foreign affairs of the realm in the sixteenth century because Sweden's fiercest enemies, Denmark and Poland, continued to be elective monarchies. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the hereditary ruler had become a symbol of national unity.

In practice, the ruler was the motor of government throughout the early modern period, in the minds of his subjects both a person and an institution, who was appealed to over all matters of greater and even lesser importance. The people of Sweden had enjoyed from time immemorial the formal right of access to the king in order to make him aware of various grievances and wrongs. Although the responses were by no means always to the advantage of the complainants, the right often offered concrete *hope* to people in distressed circumstances.

The nobility enjoyed a period of relative ascendancy for just a couple of decades in the first half of the seventeenth century. In itself, the position of the nobility was naturally strong because the rulers had traditionally chosen all or at least the majority of their advisers from this estate. The Council of the Realm (or Privy Council) was often the main executive authority, but it was rarely able to stand in opposition to the ruler or to make decisions that did not have the royal blessing. The further the eighteenth century progressed, the more insignificant became the role of the Council, and it was eventually abolished in the reign of Gustavus III (1772–1792).

In the initial phase of state-building, the heavy-handed introduction of the Reformation by Gustavus Vasa caused considerable political and economic damage as well as loss of prestige, particularly to the church and the clergy. This institution and its members recovered quickly, although it never again became the same kind of active “autonomous” actor that it had been in Catholic times.

In Sweden, the position and role of towns was different than in many other European states. In practice, all Swedish towns had originally been founded by royal decree, and the king granted and ratified their privileges. The Swedish towns were at no time capable of independent political activity; on the contrary, they actively sought the protection and support of the monarch. For the same reason, cooperation between the towns was rare; indeed, they rather regarded one another as rivals, and each one did its best to obstruct its neighbour, fearing that it might obtain greater privileges and better conditions. (Piia Einonen)

The significance of the common people in Sweden during the early modern period should not be underestimated, because it was they who actually ended up paying for all the costs of construction and indeed destruction. Particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Sweden actively took part in wars between the great powers despite the extremely underdeveloped nature of its economy. With the partial exception of the Thirty Years' War, its armies were recruited from Sweden itself because it was found that the use of mercenaries was attended with numerous problems. The possibility of domestic recruitment had been created by legislation in the 1540s, which stipulated that the armed forces were to be recruited from

among the peasants. This bound the ruler and the peasants, his most numerous group of subjects, ever closer to each other. The troops were conscripted from the peasant community, but it was more or less self-evident that their use was limited to a war of aggression or defence of the realm; it was not realistic to assume that they might be used against their compatriots. This amounted to a kind of “balance of terror” that forced the king and his advisors into an active dialogue with the peasants. (Börje Harnesk)

The relationship of interaction and subordination between the ruler and his subjects was obviously a viable one, because after the 1540s there were no major violent conflicts in the Kingdom of Sweden. One extreme exception to this rule was the so-called War of the Clubs at the turn of 1596 and 1597, in which as many as 3 000 peasants were slain, a considerable figure in terms of the population of the country. Although the Club War was intimately connected with an internal struggle for power in Sweden, it can be interpreted from the point of view of hopes and fears: this peasant revolt had been preceded by 25 years of warfare against Russia with all its concomitant burdens, and there seemed to be no end in sight.<sup>7</sup>

It was important for the unity of the country that there were only a few powerful noble families, and that the position of the burghers, who were also few in number, remained weak for a long time. The ruler was able to keep a tight rein on the activities of the noble families and to control the prosperity of the towns by granting privileges. Thus the nobility and the towns did not present a great threat to the exceptionally united front of the realm.

During the first years of the reign of Gustavus Vasa, the strings that bound the country were permanently tied to the capital, Stockholm. The reforms he created with the help of experts in administration and authorities on the Reformation summoned from Germany, were if anything *too* effective, and they caused considerable disturbances in parts of the Swedish side of the realm.

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7 The Club War is one of the most studied events in Finnish history. However, it has not been adequately examined as part of the general crisis that affected the *whole* of Sweden in the 1590s, and which had contemporary parallels elsewhere in Europe. On the debate, see esp. Eric Anthoni, *Konflikten mellan hertig Carl och Finland. Konflikterns uppkomst och hertigens seger*, Helsinki, 1935; Eric Anthoni, *Konflikten mellan hertig Carl och Finland. Avvecklingen och försoningen*, Skrifter utgivna av svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland: Helsinki, 1937; Pentti Renvall, *Kuninkaanmiehiä ja kapinointsijoita Vaasakauden Suomessa*, Tammi: Turku, 1949; Pentti Renvall, 'Ruotsin vallan aika', in *Suomen kansanedustuslaitoksen historia*, Vol. 1: *Suomen kansanedustuslaitoksen vaiheet 1850-luvun puoliväliin*, Eduskunnan historiatyöryhmä: Helsinki, 1962; Heikki Ylikangas, *Nuijasota*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Otava: Keuruu, 1996; Karonen, *Pohjoisten suurvalta*, pp. 106–21, also note 42; *Northern Revolts. Medieval and Early Modern Peasant Unrest in the Nordic Countries*, Ed. by Kimmo Katajala, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2004; see also *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Ed. by Geoffrey Parker and Lesley M. Smith, Routledge: London, 1997.



The systems of administration that were introduced had been designed for the small (if populous) areas of central Europe, and they were created above all to meet the exigencies of war. After the wars of the turbulent 1520s, Sweden did not seriously go to war again until after the death of Gustavus Vasa, and when it did, the new organisation showed its efficiency. Certainly, the latter half of the sixteenth century certainly did not pass without its problems, but even so the situation could have been a lot worse. The system had to be further developed in the seventeenth century when the state expanded and its administration became more complicated. (Mats Hallenberg)

The main development of the structures of the Swedish state took place during a few decades in the early seventeenth century. The numerous wars of that time forced Sweden to become a modern state that was capable of properly allocating its few material resources. War and preparation for it were central factors in the extensive reform projects of the era when Sweden was a great power. In practice, the tight control of the state reached into all areas of society. The intensification of control and surveillance together with an increase in the efficiency of the civil service led to an appreciable growth in the number of official posts and offices. In an agricultural country like Sweden, the Crown needed a massive fiscal administration and system of control, and it was not long before the state installed one. This system was probably the best in Europe at that time, and a little later it provided a model for such countries as Denmark and Russia. The centralised, simple and clear structure of the administration ensured from the beginning of the seventeenth century a relatively efficient flow of information and orders from the government at the top down to the remote regions and back. However, this machinery did not operate entirely without some friction, and this was a significant factor in the birth and exploitation of the client system, which was particularly important when it came to ensuring communication with the mighty of the realm.<sup>8</sup> (Ulla Koskinen, Marko Hakanen)

War and preparation for it constituted the single most significant factor in the formation of society and political life up till the mid-eighteenth century. The history of the years 1560–1721 is one of almost unbroken warfare, preparation for war or recovery from war. War was part of everyday life, not an exceptional situation, and for the new generations who grew up in those years, war was a normal condition that they took for granted. During the period between 1521 and 1809, Sweden was engaged in thirty different wars of some significance.

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8 Jan Lindegren, 'The Swedish "Military State", 1560–1720', in *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1985; *A Revolution from Above? The Power State of 16th and 17th Century Scandinavia*, Ed. by Leon Jespersen, Odense University Press: Odense, 2000; Glete, *War and the state*.

Of these, only eight were waged before 1560 or after 1721. For a long time, warfare shaped society and its structures. For the common people, a return to peace was a state of affairs that was desirable and hoped for, but among the ruling elite the difficulties it entailed caused fear and apprehension, for once peace came, it was time to settle the debts of war, both financial obligations and debts of honour.

In itself, it may seem contradictory that Sweden survived the war years of the seventeenth century with relatively little damage, but the society began to creak in the joints when the time came to move over from war to peace. The history of Sweden during its period as a major European power before the Great Northern War is made up of a series of problems connected with the restoration of peace after the wars – “crises of peace” they might be called – for those heroes who had distinguished themselves or sacrificed their lives on the field of battle and their heirs now had to be paid off, as had the bankers who had financed the state’s war. The two worst crises of peace were in fact experienced after Sweden had enjoyed notable successes: after the Peace of Westphalia (1648) that followed the Thirty Years’ War and made Sweden into a leading European power, and again after the Scanian War (1675–1679) against Denmark.

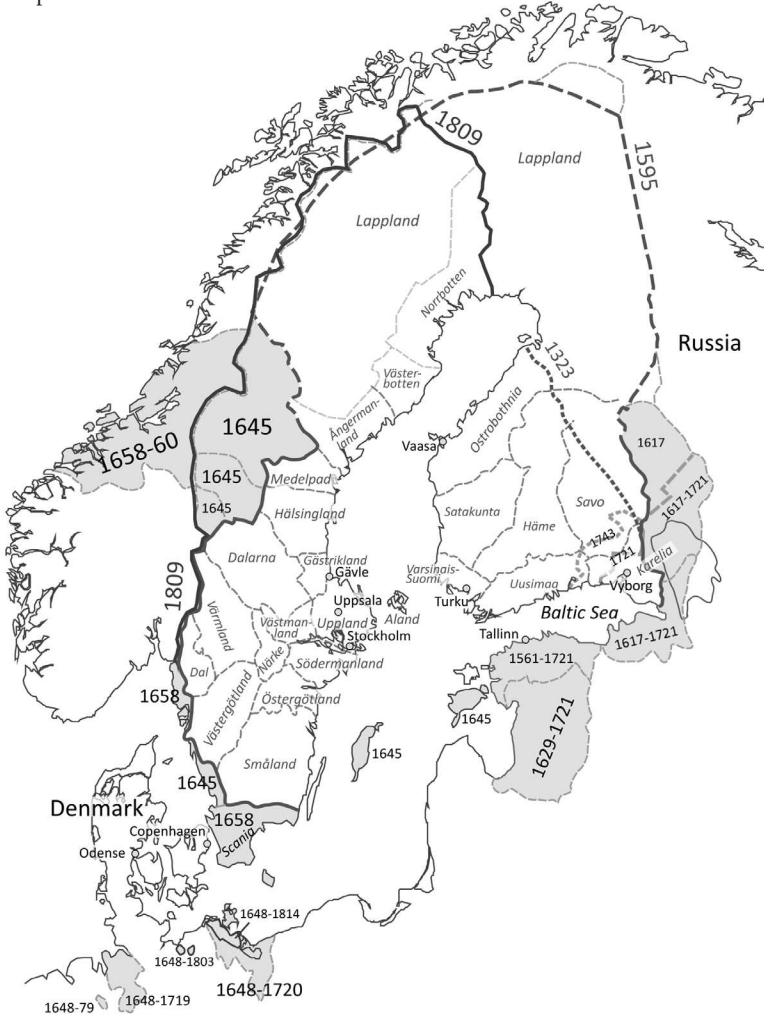
In the mid-seventeenth century, Sweden experienced perhaps its worst domestic political unrest of the early modern age, when the non-titled estates opposed the excessive bestowal of fiefs, privileges, ennoblements and other honours on the nobles. Despite the victories it had achieved by force of arms, the Swedish state was on the brink of bankruptcy – but, unlike several other major European powers of the times, it did not actually go bankrupt. In such a situation, in view of the agricultural nature of the country, the state had no other alternative but to distribute land to the war heroes and others who had distinguished themselves in the wars and were now awaiting their rewards.<sup>9</sup>

After the war against Denmark in the 1670s, King Charles XI and his closest advisers effected a coup: appealing to the massive problems caused by the restoration of peace and above all to the negligence of the aristocratic Council of the Realm, the king forced through a measure restoring most of the land that had belonged to the nobles to the administration of the Crown and made it subject to taxation. After this, the way was open for autocratic monarchy, a polity that prevailed in Sweden until the end of the Great Northern War. After its crushing defeat in that war, the state no longer had anything to distribute to anybody, so total this time was the catastrophe. Then the only came in the political system: autocracy made way for rule by the estates. (Petri Karonen)

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9 On the period generally, cf. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Economic Chance and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, Fontana Press: Glasgow, 1989.

During the period from the sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century, Sweden's borders were redrawn several times. The territory of Sweden expanded considerably, most notably in the seventeenth century, when in land area the realm was one of the largest in Europe. However, along with territorial losses in the years 1719–1721 and 1743, the area shrank to almost what it had been before the period of warfare.



The Swedish realm from the 16th century to the early 19th century

Around 1570, Sweden and Finland together were inhabited by fewer than a million people, in addition to which a quarter of a million people lived in the Baltic region, which at that time belonged to Sweden. The population of Poland was then about five millions and that of Russia around fifteen millions. With its policy of conquest during its period as a great power, Sweden obtained numerous new territories and their inhabitants from Denmark, Russia and Germany. The population of the state trebled in the seventeenth century. Around 1700, the King of Sweden had about 3.2 million subjects, of whom only a little over a half lived in Sweden and Finland. Two decades later, after the Great Northern War, the population had fallen to less than two millions as a direct result of defeats and territorial losses in the war. At that time, the population of Russia was still fifteen millions. It was not until 1800 that the population of Sweden rose to the level that it had been a hundred years earlier, which indicates just how *great* Sweden had been during its days as a great power.

Usually about nine tenths of the population lived in the countryside, so for example around 1720 the approximately one hundred towns that existed in Sweden were not in quantitative terms of very great demographic importance. On the other hand, their significance as communities, most commonly comprising 500–2 000 inhabitants, was considerable insofar as they were administrative, economic and cultural centres. The largest city was the capital Stockholm, which grew rapidly during the seventeenth century; in the 1630s, it had about 20 000 inhabitants, that is about four times more than the next largest cities of the realm. The growth in the population of Stockholm stopped in the 1690s at about 60 000 inhabitants, at which level it then remained for the next hundred years.<sup>10</sup> (Marko Lamberg, Kirsi Ojala)

Back in the Middle Ages, there had existed in Sweden both a capitalist model of production and one that was based on ensuring the livelihood of the individual and the household, and the latter ideology had continued to prevail. On the other hand, Sweden was not only an agrarian country, not *just* a land of peasants who tilled the soil; Commerce was conducted in the countryside as well – although it had been banned there in the Middle Ages – and handicrafts were produced there. Correspondingly, the inhabitants of the towns also tilled the land. Even so, a great deal of the economic activities of Sweden took place in the countryside.<sup>11</sup>

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10 Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth Century Europe 1700–1789*, Macmillan History of Europe. Macmillan: Singapore, 1990, p. 2; Thomas Munck, *Seventeenth Century Europe. State, Conflict and the Social Order in Europe 1598–1700*, Macmillan: Basingstoke, 1991, pp. 82–3; Richard Mackenney, *Sixteenth Century Europe. Expansion and Conflict*, History of Europe, Macmillan: Basingstoke, 1993, p. 51; Karonen, *Pohjoisen suurvalta*, pp. 33–40 and the literature mentioned in it.

11 Eli F. Heckscher, *Sveriges ekonomiska historia från Gustav Vasa*, Vols. 1–2, Bonnier: Stockholm,

Through the privileges it granted, the state regulated the relations of the towns with the surrounding countryside and with one another. Its policy of granting staple rights was an important way of differentiating different towns. This policy, which divided towns into those that were granted the right to engage in foreign trade and so-called “up-country towns” (Sw: *uppstäder*) that did not enjoy this privilege, was officially adopted at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Thus only staple towns might engage in foreign trade, and the policy of the authorities was strict about awarding staple rights, especially in the seventeenth century, when it was thought that centralisation would yield the best results in filling the seemingly bottomless coffers of the state that had been emptied by the continual warfare. However, apart from foreign trade, the principles of mercantilism were not particularly strictly adhered to during Sweden’s period as a major European power. Economic policy was tightened up in the early eighteenth century after the country’s collapse as a great power, and the state became more rigorous in its collection of revenues for the state treasury. It was for this reason, for example, that the exploitation of forest reserves, foreign trade and navigation began to be regulated by means of strict ultra-protectionist measures. Behind these lay the desire to bolster up the mining industry, which was vital to the economy of Sweden, for the smelting of iron still depended on charcoal.

In the eighteenth century, economic policy for a long time concentrated on trade and industry. Although over eight per cent of the population still earned their living from the land in one way or another, the position of agriculture remained subordinate to the two other sectors. Factories began to be favoured in the 1720s. The largest and most productive mills were those that manufactured textiles and various ceramic products; some of them have continued to operate down to the present day. Some companies were established in the countryside because their production needed natural resources like power from the rapids and timber from the forests. Some of the factory-owners also wanted to move their production as far away as possible from the urban centres, out of sight of the prying gaze of state surveillance. The industrial plants boosted the economic development of their surrounding areas significantly, although they also occasionally caused profound unrest among the local

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1935, 1936, 1949; Arvo M. Soininen, *Vanha maataloutemme. Maatalous ja maatalousväestö Suomessa perinnäisen maatalouden loppukaudella 1720-luvulta 1870-luvulle*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1975; Åke Sandström, *Plöjande borgare och handlande bönder. Mötet mellan den europeiska urbana ekonomin och vasatidens Sverige*, University of Stockholm: Stockholm, 1996; Lars Magnusson, *An Economic History of Sweden*, Routledge: London, New York, 2000; Jari Ojala and Petri Karonen, ‘Finnish Business: Rooted in Social Capital over the Centuries’, in *The Road to Prosperity. An Economic History of Finland*, Ed. by Jari Ojala, Jari Eloranta and Jukka Jalava, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2006, pp. 93–125, 316.

peasant populace because the mill-owners sometimes sought to acquire extensive areas of land and forest in order to ensure their supplies of energy.<sup>12</sup>

Although more laissez-faire ideas began to challenge this mercantilist economic policy mid-way through the eighteenth century, the government was not willing to renounce the main lines of its economic planning. However, agriculture began to receive more attention and support, and one can claim that this greatly benefited the general development of conditions in the realm; for example, the general redistribution of land in the late eighteenth century had the effect of attaching more people to the land. It also led to a diversification of agricultural production, which enabled a growth rate in the population of the Finnish side of the realm that was the fastest in Europe in the latter half of the eighteenth century. There was very little deterioration (proletarianisation) in the position of the landless population either in Finland or in Sweden proper during the period when the two countries belonged to the same realm.

## THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SOCIETY OF THE ESTATES

Equality was certainly not a prominent feature of Swedish society during the period under investigation. The so-called “society of the estates” was characterised by a hierarchical social order, inequality and the privileges that pertained to the different estates. Among the basic principles of the estate society were the various rights and duties assigned to each estate, which determined a person’s formal opportunities for acting in society. The authorities dealt with major infringements of these rights as soon as they became aware of them, although those who were excluded from some special privilege took it for granted that they could transgress the rights of others whenever the opportunity presented itself. At the same time, people were ready fight tooth and nail to defend their personal interests or those of their estate or interest group. Privileges were an inseparable element of all pre-modern societies, and Sweden was no exception.<sup>13</sup>

Thus privileges and other advantages were central elements in society at the beginning of the modern age. The society of the estates developed only during the period when Sweden was a great power, but the social, economic and political

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12 Markku Kuisma, *Metsäteollisuuden maa. Suomi, metsät ja kansainvälinen järjestelmä 1620–1920*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1993; Per-Arne Karlsson, *Järnbruken och ständssambället. Institutionell och attitydmässig konflikt under Sveriges tidiga industrialisering 1700–1770*, Kristianstad, 1990.

13 Gustafsson, *Political Interaction*, 49; Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta*, passim.

differences between different groups in society had already been considerable in the sixteenth century. Only the Crown could grant privileges. There was no feudalism in Sweden, and the king never surrendered his right of “ultimate veto”. His Royal Majesty could accomplish many things through favours and sanctions. Indeed, the state’s main tool of inducement was the distribution of privileges. Only those privileges that were awarded to the nobles had any individual significance, as no *individual* privileges were granted to members of the other estates. The clergy enjoyed hardly any other privileges than exemption from taxation; the peasants were for a long time without any privileges at all; and the ruler ratified the privileges *collectively* for the inhabitants of each town separately. (Charlotta Wolff)

Unlike almost every other country in Europe, Swedish society was divided politically and socially into four estates: the Nobles, the Clergy, the Burghers and the Peasants. In Sweden, nobles either inherited their titles or were ennobled by the King; a noble title could not be bought with money. In practice, only those men who had distinguished themselves on the field of battle and, to an increasing degree from the beginning of the seventeenth century, those who had won their spurs in civilian offices were elevated to the ranks of the nobility. The nobles began to take an interest in higher learning during the course of the sixteenth century. Education and refined manners came to rival military training as the ideal accomplishments, which is interesting if we take into account the long period of wars that began at that time, and in which the aristocratic officer corps played an important role. During the great power era, much greater demands began to be placed on churchmen as well. In order to ensure the continuation of a proper balance between supply and demand in this respect, the school and university system had to be developed. From these the enlarged administrative machinery got officials with sufficient training to do their jobs. Generally speaking, education, both higher and lower, made significant progress during the great power era.<sup>14</sup>

During this period, there was also a reasonable amount of social mobility, and the members of the untitled estates had at least some *hope* of rising in the social hierarchy. This was desirable because the nobility enjoyed both a personal exemption from taxation (albeit often only in principle in the seventeenth century) and the sole right to occupy the highest administrative posts. Although the number of nobles either born in Sweden or Finland or naturalised grew sixfold in the great power period, it still remained fairly small: in 1700 there were about 2 500 adult noblemen in the realm, and a hundred years later there were only about a thousand more, which is an indication that social mobility had slowed down.<sup>15</sup> Thus the

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14 Peter Englund, *Det hotade huset. Adliga föreställningar om samhället under stormaktstiden*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Atlantis: Stockholm, 1994 (1989).

15 Ingvar Elmroth, *För kung och fosterland. Studier i den svenska adelns demografi och offentliga*

government could not rely on the nobles alone, and in many matters it was necessary to involve the other three estates: the clergy were often significant actors in rural communities, the burghers handled the administration and dispensation of justice in the towns within the limits of local self-government, and the peasants played an influential role in the local administration and justice system of the parishes. Moreover, the peasants to a great extent supplied the tax revenues from the countryside and provided men for the army. They were themselves at least to some extent aware of their value, as is evident from the amount of say they were given in practice in state affairs. (Anu Lahtinen, Jan Samuelson)

The so-called “Age of Liberty” (1718–1772) was the golden age of the society of the estates, and at the same time it spelled its end. Social change made this period clearly different from the preceding one. Superficially, the society of the estates seemed to be flourishing, because the four Estates made the decisions about almost all political, economic and social questions in the Diet. However, the system of four estates underwent a violent upheaval as groups who were not represented in the Diet rose, or attempted to rise, to more important positions.

At the beginning of the Age of Liberty, the King’s right to award noble titles was reduced considerably by demand of the nobility. Especially the representatives of the clergy and the burghers opposed this erosion of the ruler’s sole prerogative and generally his possibility to ennoble his subjects. Ennoblement had previously served as a means of releasing social pressures, and decreasing it meant fewer opportunities for social mobility. The socially and economically most successful members of the three higher estates together with financiers and members of the intelligentsia who did not belong to the estates represented in the Diet constituted the upper stratum of society in eighteenth-century Sweden. Between the nobles and the clergy there appeared a new group of untitled gentry, what in modern parlance would be called the middle class. In addition to numerous civil servants, it included practitioners of free professions like doctors, lawyers and university and school teachers. By the mid-eighteenth century, its numbers exceeded those of the nobility and the clergy combined. The economic and social position of the untitled gentry was as high as that of members of the three highest estates, but they lacked the right to political representation in the Diet.<sup>16</sup>

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the role of state offices as a guarantee of income for members of the highest social groups became emphasised in quite a new way. Political appointments and the so-called “accord (or settlement) system”

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*funktioner 1600–1900*, University of Lund: Lund, 1981, p. 42.

16 Sten Carlsson, *Bonde – präst – ämbetsman. Svensk ståndscirkulation från 1680 till våra dagar*, Prisma: Stockholm, 1962; Kaarlo Wirilander, *Herrasväkeä. Suomen säätyläistä 1721–1870*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1974.



flourished in the eighteenth century. This system meant that a new official paid his predecessor a reimbursement for the post, which could be used either as a pension or as earnest money when applying for a higher post. The system did not necessarily take into account the ability and qualifications of the office-holder, and it thus gave rise to deep anger amongst those who failed to obtain posts. In addition to this competition for offices, another important factor behind the incipient break-up of the society of the estates was the fact that the nobility clung even more tightly to the privileges that they had obtained. With the channels for social advancement tightly blocked, dissatisfaction increased. No longer was there even any *hope* of rising in society; on the other hand, the nobility *feared* – and with good reason – for their own position. (Charlotta Wolff)

## PEOPLE'S WORLD VIEW, THE THREE-ESTATE DOCTRINE, PATRIARCHY, CONCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE

The foundations of people's view of the world and way of thinking in Sweden from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries were religious. Central to these were respect for old, well-tried precepts and laws, the demand for justice in accordance with one's estate and the requirements of collective communal life that the individual be of good standing. An extreme trust and respect for the person of the king united these factors into a single entirety, which the whole machinery of administration identified with.<sup>17</sup>

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, respect for the position of the monarch had come to be regarded as a matter of course, and disrespect a taboo. That had certainly not been the case not so long previously when Sweden broke away from the Kalmar Union; after all Gustavus Vasa rose to the throne of Sweden as the result of a rebellion against the ruling Danish king. For this reason the king's supremacy could not be taken for granted in the sixteenth century. The people were regarded as having the right to rise against a despotic monarch. There were three occasions, in fact, when usurpers successfully rose against the constitutional ruler of Sweden in the sixteenth century: Gustavus Vasa's example was followed by his two youngest sons. It was not until the beginning of the seventeenth century

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17 Sten Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria*, Vol. 1: *Medeltiden, reformationstiden*, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1975; Sten Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria*, Vol. 2: *Stormaktstiden*, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1975; Englund, *Det hotade huset*; Eva Österberg, 'Folklig mentalitet och statlig makt. Perspektiv på 1500- och 1600-talets Sverige', *Scandia*, Vol. 58, No. 1, 1992; Eva Österberg, *Mentalities and other realities. Essays in medieval and early modern Scandinavian history*, Studentlitteratur: Lund, 1991.

that a rhetoric that emphasised submission to the ruler's authority and a vocabulary of obedience came to prevail.

The implementation of the Reformation was a central factor in the building of a strong state and the creation and gradual shift of an ideology in the direction wished by the king. The realm of Sweden adopted a state church with the king at its head, and the Reformation was implemented from above; it was not a movement of the people. In Sweden, the Reformation started out with a determined reorganisation of the administration and economy of the church. The king appropriated the right to appoint bishops and thereby freed himself from the international control of the Catholic Church. He confiscated the church's "excessive" possessions for the Crown; strengthening the previously rather weak financial position of the latter was a central element in the birth of the new state. Only after these structural measures were implemented was attention paid to spreading the message of God. First "the pure word of God" was preached in Swedish churches, and soon thereafter this was done in the vernacular in accordance with the orders of a *Swedish* ruler who was now the head of the national church and no longer at the beck and call of the Pope. The pulpits became the most effective channel for disseminating royal propaganda in Sweden in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Reformation was finally installed at the end of the sixteenth century, and from then on the realm was united in religion to an exceptional degree by international standards.<sup>18</sup>

Like many of his subjects, Gustavus Vasa adopted the theocratic doctrine that Luther had developed from earlier Catholic dogmas. According to it, God held the supreme power in the state, and God elected the king to be His representative on earth: in other words, the king wielded divine power. The so-called "doctrine of two regiments" taught that the temporal ruler was the head of the spiritual authority, the church, as well as the political leader of the country. The earthly prince could punish sins on behalf of God. Lutherans should therefore support the ruling government, and rebellion was forbidden under any circumstances.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century at the latest, religious orthodoxy had established and strongly implanted in people's minds the doctrine of the three estates, a hierarchical view of the world, an idealisation of harmony and stability and a more explicitly defined theocratic conception of the ruler. To underpin them, the strict Old Testament commands regarding transgressions of the laws of God and Moses were adopted: the wages of sin is death, and an unexpiated sin brought God's wrath down upon the whole community. However, these norms were never

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18 On this, see e.g. *Dänemark, Norwegen und Schweden im Zeitalter der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung. Nordische Königreiche und Konfession 1500 bis 1660*, Ed. by Matthias Asche and Anton Schindling with Simone Giese, Druckhaus Aschendorff: Münster, 2003.

applied in their strictest form in Sweden, for this would not have accorded with the conceptions of justice of the people – not even those of the ruling groups. (Ulla Koskinen, Jari Eilola, Åsa Karlsson Sjögren)

As its name implies, the doctrine of the three estates distinguished three estates: the “learned estate” (the clergy); “the ruling estate” (the nobility); and “the economic estate”, to which concept belonged the burghers and the peasants. According to this doctrine, the three estates were dependent upon each other. The authority of the ruler was never questioned, and a hereditary monarchy was considered to be the best form of government. This structure was more than just a norm: it became a partial reality. The doctrine of the three estates became more of a political theory when it turned into the doctrine of four estates, which corresponded better with the actual situation in the kingdom and was also an indication of the great social significance of the common people.

Swedish society of the time can be considered patriarchal. Luther’s interpretations of the doctrine of three estates came to predominate, for by analogy with the definition of the relationship of authority between God and the king, God had deputed his authority over the household to the father of the family (the household). The father was expected to rule his subordinates, the members of his family, with a strict but loving hand.<sup>19</sup>

With regard to the concept of patriarchy, the most important normative text was indisputably the Table of Duties in Luther’s Small Catechism. At least some of the teachings of the doctrine of three estates had a real influence on the daily life of local communities and individual households, because material that supports this interpretation is to be found not only in the Table of Duties itself but also in sermons, for example. Despite its in-built inequality and tissue of different rights, the Swedish patriarchal concept of society emphasised the imperative necessity of doing one’s duty and taking responsibility. The norms stressed reciprocity (albeit asymmetric) and the responsible use of authority also because these virtues supported the idealised hierarchical order and attempts to achieve and maintain harmony.<sup>20</sup>

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19 Jussi Kuoppala, *Suomen papisto ja työväenkyisyys 1863–1899*, Suomen Kirkkohistoriallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1963, p. 22; Carl-E. Normann, *Prästerskapet och det karolinska enväldet. Studier över det svenska prästerskapets statsuppfattning under stormaktstidens slutskede*, Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelsens bokförlag: Lund, 1948, pp. 5, 11; Hilding Pleijel, *Från hustav-lans tid*, Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelsens bokförlag: Lund, 1951, pp. 19–20, 22, 24–5; Österberg, ‘Folklig mentalitet’, pp. 90–1.

20 Kustaa H. J. Vilkkuna, *Arkielämä patriarkaalissa työmiestyhteisössä. Rautaruukkilaiset suurvälta-ajan Suomessa*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1996; *Arjen valta. Suomalaisen yhteiskunnan patriarkaalista järjestyksestä myöhäiskeskiajalta teollistumisen kynnykselle (v. 1450–1860)*, Ed. by Piia Einonen and Petri Karonen, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2002; Börje Harnesk, *Legofolk. Drängar, pigor och bönder i 1700- och 1800-talens Sverige*, University of Umeå: Umeå, 1990. See Börje Harnesk’s critical views of the so-called inte-

Sweden was exceptional by comparison with other European states in that a uniform written law had applied to the whole country ever since the mid-fourteenth century. There were separate codes for the towns and the countryside, although they had numerous common features. The common law of the Kingdom of Sweden that was ratified in 1734 was to a great extent based on old decrees, and thus the intentionally slow reform of legislation is one of the main features of Swedish society. The same is true of “justice in accordance with one’s estate”, which was mentioned earlier. It was crucially important for peace in society that the representatives of all four estates felt that they were justly treated. In Sweden, most of the highest jurisdictional power had already belonged to the ruler in the Middle Ages, and this only increased in the early modern age. It can be claimed that this concentration of jurisdictional power greatly increased judicial security in the realm of Sweden, although the common law of 1734, which brought in the legal theory of proof, led to the acquittal of persons who were almost certainly guilty of serious crimes.<sup>21</sup>

In the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Swedish-Finnish society was composed of collective communities. In practice, the kin, the family and the individual functioned in a close interrelationship. Honour and reputation were largely decisive in determining the scope of each individual’s actions. A collective conception of honour prevailed in both the countryside and the towns. Honour was not the private preserve of any one person, although its significance for the individual was great, for without a good reputation and the respect of others one’s chances of survival in the community were reduced. Therefore, it was necessary to defend and cherish one’s honour jealously; a bad reputation could easily lead to one becoming an outcast from the community. One’s reputation was most easily spoiled by committing theft, a serious moral crime (especially adultery or prostitution), using witchcraft to harm another person, or a crime of planned grievous violence. On the other hand, a lesser crime of violence, and sometimes even manslaughter, did necessarily have a detrimental effect on one’s reputation.<sup>22</sup>

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ractive point of view in Swedish research in ‘Den svenska modellens tidigmoderna rötter’ in *Historisk tidskrift*, Vol. 122, No. 1, 2002; Börje Harnesk, ‘Konsten att klaga, konsten att kräva. Kronan och bönderna på 1500- och 1600-talen’, in *Maktens skiftande skepnader. Studier i makt, legitimitet och inflytande i det tidigmoderna Sverige*, Ed. by Börje Harnesk, University of Umeå: Umeå, 2003.

- 21 Österberg, ‘Folklig mentalitet’; Kimmo Katajala, *Nälkäkapina. Veronvuokraus ja talonpoikainen vastarinta Karjalassa 1683–1697*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1994; Heikki Pihlajamäki, *Evidence, Crime, and the Legal Profession. The Emergence of Free Evaluation of Evidence in the Finnish Nineteenth-Century Criminal Procedure*, Institutet för rättshistorisk forskning: Lund, 1997; Anu Koskivirta, *The Enemy Within. Homicide and Control in Eastern Finland in the Final Years of Swedish Rule 1748–1808*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2003.
- 22 Pentti Renvall, *Suomalainen 1500-luvun ihminen oikeuskatsomustensa valossa*, University of

(Marko Lamberg, Åsa Karlsson Sjögren, Jari Eilola)

Therefore, particularly during the great power era, disputes were avoided and consensus favoured in social debate. Above all in the sessions of the Diet and meetings of the government, the need for unity against enemies at home and abroad was constantly stressed. This aim was achieved: there were no disturbances of any great note, although there was no lack of short-lived minor instances of unrest or passive resistance. Sweden was certainly no haven of peace and harmony, but for a long time there were no disputes that tore the nation apart.

In the sixteenth century, natural law with its emphasis on rationalism replaced theocracy as the leading social theory. Above all, the strict division of the spheres of activity of the church and the state (the separation of temporal and spiritual power) made by the great theoretician of natural law, Samuel Pufendorf, was an important influence on both the formation of a modern world view and the slow progress of secularisation. Natural law gained ground in Sweden in the eighteenth century because it did not directly criticise the church, the clergy or Christianity. The philosophy of the Enlightenment in the form propounded by the German philosopher Christian Wolff could be adapted to the theology of the age, enabling a “harmonious” relationship between theology and rationalism in Sweden. (Jouko Nurmiainen, Pasi Ihalainen)

## THE POLITICAL CULTURE AND FORA OF INTERACTION

According to a general definition, political culture includes all matters concerning the administration of common affairs. This definition cannot, however, be applied to the historical situation in Sweden, because common affairs at that time usually

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Turku: Turku, 1949; Dag Lindström, Eva Österberg, *Crime and Social Control in Medieval and Early Modern Swedish Towns*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1988; Petri Karonen, ‘A Life for a Life Versus Christian Reconciliation: Violence and the Process of Civilization in the Towns of the Kingdom of Sweden, 1540–1700’, in Heikki Ylikangas, Petri Karonen, Martti Lehti, *Five Centuries of Violence in Finland and the Baltic Area*, With a Foreword by Eric C. Monkkonen, Ohio State University Press: Columbus, 2001; Olli Matikainen, *Verenperijät. Väkivalta ja yhteisön murros itäisessä Suomessa 1500–1600-luvulla*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2002; Jari Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla. Sallitun ja kielletyn määrittelyminen 1600-luvun jälkipuoliskon noituus- ja taikuustapauksissa*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2003; on the extensive Swedish and Finnish research based on the court record books in general, see Petri Karonen, ‘Perspektiv och metoder inom domboksforskningen i Sverige och Finland cirka 1990–2005’, in *Domboken som filologiskt och historiskt forskningsobjekt*, Ed. by Harry Lönroth, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 2007.

only involved “particular” groups. The principle that “he who pays decides” was generally accepted – at least those who paid were allowed to approve decisions that concerned themselves. It was typical of Sweden that the judicial and political fora were combined at the local level in numerous ways: the town court (from which the magistrates court became a separate forum for dealing with administrative affairs in the eighteenth century) and the rural district courts in the countryside handled both criminal cases and local administrative matters of importance, such as complaints made on behalf of the community to the ruler. Matters of varying degrees of importance also overlapped in the church and parish meetings chaired by the parish minister.

The political culture was above all a matter of negotiation between the various groups and the ruler, and the parties involved would sometimes stop at nothing to get their opinions heard. Most commonly, the final decision lay with His Royal Majesty. However, there was more to the political culture than mere ad hoc political manoeuvring. It also included the measures that determined the relations between all the different groups (for example, the estates and the parties) and their scope for action. The Diet, the Council of the Realm and, for example, the official administrative bodies of the local communities were essential elements in the system, as were the multifarious strategies and modes of presenting their demands and wishes. The latter included the drafting of complaints and passive (and indeed sometimes active) resistance. Despite this, Swedish political culture was still characterised by an emphasis on harmony and consensus. Conflict was not considered a desirable solution to a problem. This genuine avoidance of serious conflicts was Sweden’s real strength. The people played a significant role in decisions about important matters, which is why the importance of the Diet was so great.<sup>23</sup> (Börje Harnesk, Piia Einonen)

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23 On definitions of political culture, see Eva Österberg, ‘Bönder och centralmakt i det tidigmoderna Sverige. Konflikt – kompromiss – politisk kultur’, *Scandia*, Vol. 55, No. 1, 1989; Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; Kalle Bäck, *Bondeopposition och bondeinflytande under frihetstiden: centralmakten och östgötaböndernas reaktioner i näringspolitiska frågor*, LI: Stockholm, 1984; Gustafsson, *Political Interaction*; Pasi Ihalainen, *The Discourse on Political Pluralism in Early Eighteenth-Century England. A Conceptual Study with Special Reference to Terminology of Religious Origin*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 1999; Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta; The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts. New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte*, Ed. by Hartmund Lehmann and Melvin Richter, German Historical Institute: Washington, 1996; Österberg, ‘Folklig mentalitet’; *Riksdag, kaffehus och predikstol. Frihetstidens politiska kultur 1766–1772*, Ed. by Marie-Christine Skuncke and Henrika Tandefelt, Atlantis and Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland: Stockholm and Helsingfors, 2003; Karin Sennefelt, *Den politiska sjukan. Daluppröret 1743 och frihetstida politisk kultur*, Gidlund: Hedemora, 2001; Karin Sennefelt, ‘Frihetstidens politiska kultur’, *Signums svenska kulturhistoria, Frihetstiden*, Ed. by Jakob Christensson,

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the Swedish political system was very simple and the number of actors in it few in number. The political culture, on the other hand, continued to be many-faceted, offering active and determined individuals and groups numerous possibilities and channels to influence matters. However, the number of actors was small, which was the reason for Sweden's rapid development into a strong state.

In the sixteenth century, the four-estate Diet still had very little say in affairs of state. The old States General (of the three higher estates) and Assembly of the Commons gave way to the Diet in the sixteenth century, which entailed the participation of representatives of all the free groups in society (the nobles, the clergy, the burghers and the peasants) from all corners of the realm and allowed these estates to decide on matters freely, at least in theory.

The inhabitants of the annexed territories or Swedish subjects living in other lands conquered by Sweden (apart from the former Danish territories in what today is southern Sweden) did not have the right of representation in the Diet; thus only those members of the four estates who lived in the two "old" parts of the kingdom, present-day Sweden and Finland, enjoyed political rights.<sup>24</sup>

The development of the Diet and the concentration of decision-making was an outcome of the building of the state administrative machinery and the wartime growth in the need for resources, because usually it was the common people who had to provide the money and men for the wars. The earlier practice of making local agreements fell into disuse, and the decisions of the Diet came to be considered as binding upon all. This made it possible to implement the reforms and orders that the government deemed necessary swiftly and efficiently throughout the whole kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

Before the era of the estates, the Diet had had little theoretical political authority, because only in times of serious crises did various kings and regent governments fall back on the Diet to seek help in quashing their enemies or to obtain support for their actions. Nevertheless, the Diet was important for making decisions on legislation and taxation. In Sweden, the peasants were allowed to participate in, and give their assent to, decisions on taxes that would be collected from them, which is an indication of the strong juridical and social position of the Swedish

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Signum: Lund, 2006; Nils Erik Villstrand, 'Stormaktstidens politiska kultur', *Signums svenska kulturhistoria*, Vol. *Stormaktstiden*, Ed. by Jakob Christensson, Signum: Lund, 2006; Piia Einoon, *Polittiset areenat ja toimintatavat. Tukholman porvaristo vallan käyttäjänä ja vallankäytön kohteena n. 1592–1644*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2005.

24 Renvall, 'Ruotsin vallan aika'; *The Riksdag*, Ed. by Metcalf.

25 Nilsson, *De stora krigens tid*; Nils Erik Villstrand, *Anpassning eller protest. Lokalsambället inför utskrivningarna av fotfolk till den svenska krigsmakten 1620–1679*, Åbo akademis förlag: Åbo, 1992.

peasants. On the other hand, the fact that the peasants nearly always did give their assent to new taxes shows that they considered the sacrifice to be worth making. In this way, the state succeeded in legitimising its activities, although there were some problems: there were numerous knots in the relations between the king and the government on the one hand, and the Diet and the people on the other. However, the problems were not usually very serious. The relationship between the Crown and the Diet was based either on positive interaction and negotiation or the imposition of the king's authority. In practice, the relationship was a combination of both and varied according to the circumstances. During the period of intense conquest (approx. 1600–1660), the rulers were constantly obliged to turn to the estates with requests to levy new taxes and draft new men into the army. It was during the heaviest periods of warfare that the interaction between the monarch, or a regency acting for him or her, and the people became intense.

The importance of the Diet and particularly of the untitled estates began to grow just when the power to the high nobility was at its peak. This paradoxical situation arose from the fact that the real wielder of power – the king (Charles X) – had just died and the position of the regency that replaced him was much weaker than that of His Royal Majesty. Thus there was more power to be shared among other groups without tipping the “scales of power” out of balance. After a gruelling war against Denmark, there was a dramatic change in 1680. In the course of a couple of generations Sweden became an autocracy. Until 1718, the Diet remained the main instrument of representation for the subjects, but in practice, reduced to the Diet of the “Estates of His Royal Majesty”, it had little authority. Absolutism in Sweden was truly autocratic, for the highly efficient administrative machinery of the state managed to keep its hands on all the most important strings of power up to the end of the Great Northern War.

After the death of Charles XII in 1718, there was no undisputed heir to the crown. The king's younger sister was *elected* monarch by the Diet of 1719–1720. In a certain sense, Sweden returned to the elective monarchy of the Middle Ages. Autocracy turned into the power of the *estates*. This new polity that Sweden had chosen was too progressive for its time in Europe. The awkward situations in foreign relations that Sweden found itself in on numerous occasions in the eighteenth century were partly a result of the fact that the country was not an indisputable hereditary monarchy, as it had been during its heyday as a great power. Elsewhere the development had inexorably been in the direction of hereditary monarchies whose authority was more or less absolute. Sweden was the exception.<sup>26</sup>

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26 Werner Buchholz, *Staat und Ständegesellschaft in Schweden zur Zeit des Überganges vom Absolutismus zum Ständeparlamentarismus 1718–1720*, Almqvist & Wiksell international: Stockholm, 1979; Karonen, *Pohjoisen suurvalta*.



The groups that wielded influence during the Age of Liberty were in fact much the same as before. In many matters, decisions were based on old tradition or the practices of the era of autocracy. Even so, the focal point of power shifted downwards. According to the constitution, the monarch had to rule in accordance with the advice of the Council of the Realm and never act contrary to it. On the other hand, the Council was the delegated representative of the estates and answerable to them. This early form of parliamentarism was unknown elsewhere in Europe apart from Britain. Moreover, the Diet continued to represent a large part of the population (40–50 per cent).

In the course of the eighteenth century, there was a change in the political culture of Sweden. Previously the *national* interest, that of the whole realm, had been emphasised. Now *group* interests, those of one's own estate or family, began to be stressed rather than collective slogans. Unanimity remained a source of strength within one's own group, but it was no longer considered indispensable at the level of society as a whole. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, unanimous decisions began to be replaced in local communities by *majority* decisions based on a vote; the temporal power enjoined the peasants to make such decisions mainly in their own interests, as happened for example in connection with reforms in agriculture. (Pasi Ihalainen)

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This work has been divided into four chronologically and thematically overlapping parts dealing with the hopes and fears of people who lived in Sweden and Finland in the early modern age. In Part I, the focus is on the modes of action and the social ideals of representatives of the elite groups in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when it was mainly the representatives of the nobles who made their voices heard. Part II counterbalances this by introducing the perspective of the lower groups in the society of the estates, and of those who had dropped out of this society or never been in it, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Gendered structures, and the perspective of gender generally, play an important role in the interpretations in Parts I and II.

In Parts III and IV, the point of focus changes to an examination of “politics” from both a practical and a theoretical point of view. Almost all the articles deal with very long periods of time, and the range of locations and fora is extremely diverse: hopes and fears are examined in public debate, in the Diet, in the offices of government, in the town halls and in the local communities of the countryside.

PART I  
NETWORKS AND SOCIAL  
IDEALS OF THE ELITE



## HAPLESS HEROES

### Two Discourses of Royal Service in Sixteenth-Century Sweden

*Mats Hallenberg*

The sixteenth century saw the creation of a centralized state organization in rural Sweden. During the reign of Gustavus Vasa (r. 1523–1560) a national, hereditary monarchy was established after nearly a century of civil strife. His sons and successors, Eric XIV (r. 1560–1568) and John III (r. 1568–1592), further strengthened the Swedish armed forces military power and extended the domain of Swedish military power to the eastern shores of the Baltic.<sup>1</sup> During this period, the state organization became the most dynamic sector within the Swedish economy. Crown revenues were rising, and the state was engaging more people and resources for various projects. The peasantry had to play their part not only by paying more taxes but also by offering work and transport services. Over the course of the century, an increasing number of the people came to interact with the state organization, and the various office-holders (a term I use to cover both civil servants and military officers) who were dependent on the crown were multiplied.<sup>2</sup>

This whole process meant a fundamental change for the petty or non-noble local elites, who in the late Middle Ages had been dependent on the great provincial

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- 1 For a short presentation of the history of sixteenth-century Sweden and Finland see the introduction by Petri Karonen. General surveys are provided by Jan Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe. Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States, 1500–1660*, Routledge: London and New York, 2002, pp. 174–212; Michael Roberts, *The Early Vasas. A History of Sweden 1523–1611*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1968.
  - 2 Janken Myrdal & Johan Söderberg, *Kontinuitetens dynamik. Agrar ekonomi i 1500-talets Sverige*, Almqvist & Wiksell: Stockholm, 1991; Lars Magnusson, *An Economic History of Sweden*, Routledge: London and New York, 2000.

aristocrats to support their claims for social superiority. In the sixteenth century, such noble connections were no longer enough. Any man aspiring to social status now had to be well connected with the King, whether directly or indirectly. In one sense, the expanding state organization offered hope for a new generation of aspiring officials: a whole new range of career opportunities had opened up in both the civil and the military administrations. But in another sense, the new structure of the state also provoked fear as it posed a direct threat to the autonomy of local elites.<sup>3</sup>

How was this period of dynamic change perceived by those living at the very heart of the transformation: the local officials and military servants of the Swedish state? In this essay I will argue that the essentially non-bureaucratic character of the sixteenth-century state in effect created two distinct but overlapping discourses among royal office-holders: one confident and self-assertive, the other one whining and submissive. The first is to be found mainly in interaction with people outside the organization, as it is principally about asserting the authority of the King's servants over his subjects. But the other, and this is the discourse that predominates in the written correspondence, predominates in letters addressed to persons claiming a higher position in the hierarchy of office. I will also maintain that neither discourse was a case of mere rhetoric. Rather, they both reflected the vulnerable position of the royal servant in sixteenth-century Sweden, where the status one enjoyed today might easily be gone tomorrow.

## THE PATRIMONIAL CONTEXT: OFFICE-HOLDING IN EARLY MODERN SWEDEN

The Swedish state administration of the sixteenth century was not really a bureaucratic organization in the modern sense of the word. The administration was ultimately dependent on the personal leadership of the King. The authority of local office-holders was often diffuse and their jurisdiction badly defined. In many respects, this is an example of what Max Weber described as the principle of traditional authority. Weber, however, identified two distinct forms of this traditional authority. In *the estate-characterized administration*, the office-holders

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3 Lars Olof Larsson, *Det medeltida Värend. Studier i det småländska gränslandets historia fram till 1500-talets mitt*, Gleerup: Lund, 1964; Ole J. Benedictow, Troels Dahlerup and Kjell-Gunnar Lundholm, *Den nordiske adel i senmiddelalderen. Struktur, funktioner og internordiske relationer*, Copenhagen, 1971; Jonathan Dewald, *The European Nobility, 1400–1800*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996.

are local dignitaries whose ability to perform their duties is secured by their own personal status. They themselves also control the means of administration, which makes them fairly independent of the ruler. In a *patrimonial administrative structure*, on the other hand, the ruler commands a large staff of socially inferior servants, to whom he delegates military and/or administrative functions. This type of authority is less dependent on social tradition, and the office-holders are most often rewarded directly by the ruler with personal fiefs or gifts. This model corresponds fairly well to the type of administrative structure used by the Vasa monarchs.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, in the course of the sixteenth century, the Swedish state administration came to adopt some procedures reminiscent of a rational modern bureaucracy. Most importantly, a national system of keeping and auditing written records that facilitated the supervision of local office-holders was introduced. The Swedish state of the Vasa dynasty was thus constructed with a combination of traditional and modern devices.<sup>5</sup> This was, however, not entirely unique. Most European states during the early modern period were in practice pre-bureaucratic. They were all in the process of defining themselves more explicitly as public organizations, while still carrying with them the legacy of their patrimonial past.<sup>6</sup> In this context, it was seldom sufficient for office-holders to claim authority by acting in the name of the King alone. Their ability to command was also dependent on their personal status within the local community, and this in turn was shaped by their access to local networks of friendship and kin, as well as by their personal wealth. In practice, the King's servants had to abide by the norms and values that prevailed in the society they lived in.<sup>7</sup>

Michael Braddick, when discussing local offices in seventeenth century England, emphasizes the overall need for the legitimation of political power. The promotion of an ideology of public service – the duty to act for the public good – in effect placed a restriction on the freedom of office-holders to pursue their own interests. The legitimacy of government, however, also depended on the individual office-holder projecting an image of authority when entering the public arena. By presenting an impressive “self” when bargaining with the royal subjects, compliance could be elicited from them. Braddick stresses that while

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4 Max Weber, *Ekonomi och samhälle*, Argos: Stockholm, 1983–1987, Vol. 1, pp. 147–50; Vol. 3, pp. 58–95.

5 Mats Hallenberg, *Kungen, fogdarna och riket*, Symposium: Stockholm, 2001, pp. 127–31 and p. 408.

6 See the essays in *Power Elites and state building*, Ed. by Wolfgang Reinhard, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1996; Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan. Building states and regimes in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997, pp. 1–10.

7 Michael Braddick, *State Formation in 17th Century England, c. 1550–1700*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2000, pp. 68–85.

personal status and wealth were often necessary for such a presentation, this at the same time laid the office-holder open to accusations, for example of pursuing his private interests and neglecting the common good.<sup>8</sup> But how does this fit the office-holders in sixteenth-century Sweden? In what way did royal service in the patrimonial state structure of Sweden differ from the experience of the voluntary office-holders of Elizabethan and Stuart England?

Under the Vasas, it was the King's bailiffs who represented the backbone of the royal administration. They operated in all districts of the realm, collected taxes and land-rents for the King, and they negotiated with the tax-paying peasants. The bailiff was usually a person of petty noble or non-noble origins, but the authority of the royal warrant gave him full powers to act as the representative of the King. I have, in my dissertation, emphasized the deeply ambiguous character of the bailiff's position. He was temporarily entrusted with wide powers, but his time in office was often quite limited, and many bailiffs ended up personally in debt. In theory, the bailiff was a public servant promoting the common good and the wealth of the realm. But in practice, he had to seek his own advantage by all means available as his salary was as insecure as his future was uncertain.

During the course of the sixteenth century, the Swedish state administration slowly became more specialized, but uncertain conditions prevailed in all sectors of royal service. Office was held not for life but by the grace of the King, and it could be taken away for no apparent reason. In the following, I shall take the language of royal servants, be they civil or military office-holders of non-aristocratic origin, as being identical.<sup>9</sup> I will argue for a distinct discourse of self-assertion, designed to promote social advancement and to gain access to office. But once in office, a discourse of misery often prevailed as office-holders had to mediate the conflicting interests of the King and the local communities. First, however, I will discuss the official ideology of royal service, as expressed in royal warrants and the ordinances of military service.

## THE SETTING: AUTHORIZATION BY THE KING

Royal service began with a personal oath of allegiance to the monarch. The bailiff, like other officials, had to swear an oath in which he declared himself a loyal, faithful and honest servant. The bailiff swore his oath with God as his

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8 Braddick, *State Formation*, pp. 78–81.

9 In sixteenth-century Sweden, the distinction between civil and military office was very blurred; Mats Hallenberg, 'Militär eller civil', *Militärhistorisk tidskrift*, 2002, pp. 145–72.

witness, and on his personal honour as a Christian man. If he should fail in his mission he would have broken his pledge, not only to the King but also to God Himself.<sup>10</sup> In exchange for his oath, the bailiff received a royal warrant for his office. The warrant generally stipulated the extent of the bailiff's jurisdiction, as well as the taxes and obligations that he was to collect. This document also made him personally responsible for the public good and for the promotion of justice. Most importantly, the bailiff was held to account: every year he had to present his full records to the royal chamber court.<sup>11</sup>

The oath and the warrant thus promoted an official ideology of dependence and loyalty in all matters subject to the King. A similar oath of allegiance was taken by other officials: district court judges, chamber clerks, priests, soldiers and horsemen.<sup>12</sup> Both civil and military officials were subject to the same code of honour, *gårdsrätten*, which set them apart from local societies and placed them under the direct jurisdiction of the King. This was a means for creating a separate identity shared by all the King's servants, and although his followers were widely dispersed across the realm this ideal of service created an important sense of belonging.<sup>13</sup> The Vasa kings also issued special war ordinances in times of war. The code promoted the ideal of personal bravery and prowess while at the same time making the soldier subject to a whole range of draconic punishments. In essence, this ideal was the legacy of the violent culture of the late medieval *Landesknechte*. All the Vasa monarchs employed foreign mercenaries, and their reputation as elite soldiers set the standard for manliness and loyal service that all the followers of the King had to measure up to.<sup>14</sup>

The late medieval ideal of service had been one of reciprocity, where the lord offered protection and security for his servants, and they in turn had to serve the ends of their masters by all means available. This might entail providing military support with shield and sword, economic support by supervising the collection and distribution of land-rents, or political support by providing information and

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10 Hallenberg, *Kungen, fogdarna och riket*, pp. 97–101.

11 See the warrant for Bailiff Nils Persson, 4 April 1555, in Sandberg'ska samlingen, Vol. Å:6, No. 4814, Kammarsarkivet (KA), National Archives, Stockholm.

12 For the oath of high commanders, see Jerker Rosén, 'Slottsloven', in *Kulturhistoriskt lexikon för nordisk medeltid*, Vol.16, Stockholm 1971, pp. 224–7. Draft for the oath of German Landsknechte 1535, *Konung Gustaf den förstes registratur (GIR)*, Vol. 10, p. 355. Draft undertaking for court servants, soldiers and horsemen of 1568 by Duke Charles, Eder, Vol. 1, KA, National Archives, Stockholm.

13 Hallenberg, 'Militär eller civil?', pp. 147–50.

14 On the social culture of the *Landesknechte*: Herbert Langer, *Trettioåriga kriget. En kulturhistoria*. Transl. Paul Frisch, Natur och kultur: Stockholm, 1981, pp. 61–102; Gunner Lind, *Haeren och magten i Danmark 1614–1662*, Universitetsforlag: Odense, 1994, pp. 134–7, 386–7.



promoting the lord's interests locally.<sup>15</sup> In sixteenth-century Sweden, all this and more was expected of the King's servants, who also had to bear the burden of being directly subject to the ruler in all matters. Thus the Vasa monarchs seem to have supplemented the traditional ideal of service with a rhetoric of domination and subordination. But how did this situation affect the individual actors who were struggling to gain, and hold on to, the prize of royal office? Let us first take a look at the discourse of self-assertion.

## THE DISCOURSE OF SELF-ASSERTION

The language of confidence and domination is not easily tracked down in the written correspondence of local officials. The obvious reason is that such language was normally used in addressing people of the lower echelons of early modern society: peasants, clerks, common soldiers or even farm-hands. Women of non-noble origin were also commonly on the receiving end of this rhetoric. But this was the sphere of the spoken word, and there was seldom any point in writing down such language. There is also the problem of bias in the sources, since there are not many extant letters from office-holders at the local level, and information about their doings has to be found in the correspondence with the King himself. Therefore, this discourse has to be reconstructed from second-hand information: from the grievances of peasants, letters sent by rival officials, and from the discussions between the King and his administrative advisers. This calls for much caution, as the analysis has to read between the lines of allegations and insults often directly aimed at bringing one's rival down.

The questions to be answered are: How did people in sixteenth-century Sweden act to impress the monarch in order to secure their future careers as office-holders? And in what ways did the King's servants try to assert themselves in order to establish authority over the subjects, as well as to intimidate their rivals and peers?

### THE "HARD MAN"

Physical violence was the order of the day in sixteenth-century society. Students of crime all over Europe have pointed out that violence was inherent in both Medieval and early modern societies, and that the rates of murder and violent assault did

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15 Peter Reinholdsson, *Uppror eller resningar? Samhällsorganisation och konflikt i senmedeltidens Sverige*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1998, pp. 158–80.

not drop significantly until well into the seventeenth century.<sup>16</sup> Under the Vasas, violent political conflict was endemic as well. The Dacke rising of 1542–1543 was only the biggest of a series of peasant uprisings during the reign of Gustavus Vasa, and a similar scenario was repeated during the so-called War of the Clubs in Ostrobothnia (Fi. Pohjanmaa, Sw. Österbotten) at the turn of the century.<sup>17</sup> Conflict between rivalling branches of the royal dynasty (almost) escalated into civil war in 1563, 1568 and again in 1598. As if this were not bad enough, Swedish expansion in the Baltic, the Seven Years' War with Denmark, followed by the long conflict with Russia (1570–1595), made prolonged warfare the normal state of affairs during the latter half of the century.

Such a violent environment naturally helped to shape the mentality of the people living in it, and it also constituted the hard reality of office-holders wielding the flag of royal authority. Maria Ågren has described the mentality of rural Sweden by studying the traditional legal concept of immemorial usage (*urminnes hävd*). In a society where the court system was poorly developed, people had to look after their own interests. Any claims made for land and property had to be asserted physically, in public, to achieve legal validity.<sup>18</sup> I argue that this must have had fundamental consequences for the King's servants, appointed to enforce claims made by the King – claims which were often in direct conflict with local interests. As a result, office-holders in sixteenth-century Sweden came to nurture a “hard man” mentality, in which physical violence and open intimidation were central features. This might also be seen as a legacy of the medieval ideal of manliness, which cherished the physical aggression of the knight in armour.<sup>19</sup>

The image of the hard man is most evident in the countless peasant grievances against violent and abusive bailiffs. Many of them tell stories of royal officials

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16 *Crime and the Law. The Social History of Crime in Western Europe since 1500*, Ed. by V. A. C. Gatrell, Bruce Lenman and Geoffrey Parker, Europa Publications: London, 1980; Eva Österberg and Dag Lindström, *Crime and Social Control in Medieval and Early Modern Swedish Towns*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala 1988; Heikki Ylikangas, Petri Karonen and Martti Lehti, *Five Centuries of Violence in Finland and the Baltic Area*, Ohio State University Press: Columbus, 2001.

17 Kenneth Johansson, 'The Lords from the Peasants or the Peasants from the Lords'; Kimmo Katajala, 'The Changing Face of Peasant Unrest in Early Modern Finland'; both in *Northern Revolts. Medieval and early modern peasant unrest in the Nordic countries*, Ed. by Kimmo Katajala, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2004.

18 Maria Ågren, *Att hävda sin rätt. Synen på jordägandet i 1600-talets Sverige, speglat i institutet urminnes hävd*, Institutet för rättshistorisk forskning: Lund, 1997.

19 Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men. Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*, University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, 2003, pp. 20–66; Mats Hallenberg, 'De vilda vararna och 1500-talets aggressiva manlighetsideal', *Ad Familiaris*, no. 1–2, 2003–04, pp. 85–119.

assaulting peasants with slaps and blows, using abusive names and foul language, all in order to submit the subjects to the will of the King's representative. The most blatant cases even offer evidence of rape and sexual assault, which seem to have been part of a repertoire of bullying acts used by some bailiffs. Although the expression of such grievances might of course be heavily biased, repeated claims from a number of districts that the peasants did not dare to speak up against their bailiff for fear of retribution indicate that physical intimidation was a shared experience of many peasants who had dealings with representatives of the Vasa kings.<sup>20</sup>

Quite a few officials seem to have promoted the image of themselves as hard men in order to secure their right to office. Nils Persson (of the Silversparre family), a trusted servant, bailiff and military commander for both Gustavus Vasa and Eric XIV, was accused of boasting and bragging, proclaiming himself to be a "great fighter of this province", and physically assaulting a number of the King's servants from neighbouring districts in the province of Småland.<sup>21</sup> At roughly the same time, the secretary Gudmund Skrivare reported a host of misdemeanours from other local office-holders in the same province. One Jöran Fux was described as "a desperate thief", travelling around the district with his armed followers, forcing the peasants to empty all their stores on their arrival. An ex-bailiff Kristiern Ivarsson, it was said, incited the peasantry, claimed to be a better man than his rivals and tried to get himself back into office by force.<sup>22</sup> It is quite clear that physical aggression must have been adopted consciously by the royal administration to ensure compliance. King Gustavus himself preferred to use a discreet language when instructing his bailiffs to negotiate with the peasants. But reading between the lines, it seems clear that local office-holders were sometimes expected to promote law and order by intimidating unruly subjects.<sup>23</sup>

When reporting to their superiors, local office-holders did not boast about their aggressive powers in block letters. Like the King, they used a much more subtle language. For instance, Anders Nilsson, Bailiff of the Castle of Vyborg (Fi. Viipuri, Sw. Viborg), reported that he had ordered the bailiffs of the more remote districts to travel to Stockholm as soon as possible. If they did not heed his command, he would personally make sure that they would regret this very

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20 Hallenberg, *Kungen fogdarna och riket*, pp. 360–78. See also Mirkka Lappalainen, 'Den lokala eliten och uppkomsten av maktstaten. Egenmäktiga ämbetsmän och svag kunglig överhöghet i det tidiga 1600-talets Finland', *Historisk tidskrift för Finland*, Vol. 85, No. 1, 2000, pp. 1–30; Börje Harnesk, 'Fogdarna och vålder', in *Blickar bakåt. Elva uppsatser om ett förgånget nu*, Ed. by Christina Kjellson, Sven Olofsson and Per Sörlin, Institutionen för humaniora, Mitthögskolan: Härnösand, 2004, pp. 23–41.

21 Nils Birgersson to Gustavus Vasa 24 February 1552, *GIR*, Vol. 23, p. 431.

22 Gudmund Skrivare to Gustavus Vasa 5 August 1552, *GIR*, Vol. 22, p. 475.

23 See for instance Gustavus Vasa to Severin Jute 8 June 1545, *GIR*, Vol. 17, p. 368,

much.<sup>24</sup> Although this discourse of bravado and intimidation is not prominent in the plain writing of the office-holders themselves, I still argue that self-assertion through violence was an integral part of the identity of being a King's servant in sixteenth-century Sweden.

## THE WILLING HAND

In the written language of the royal administration, self-assertion by hard work is much more evident than the hard man mentality described above. Loyalty, diligence, and busy hands were the keywords in discussing the capabilities of local office-holders. Negligence and absence from office, on the other hand, seem to have been the chief sources of displeasure among their superiors. The general message from Gustavus Vasa to his bailiffs was to “deal with the peasants”. This meant that the local representatives of the regime had to negotiate with people in the district to achieve the expected result. In a way, this was a *carte blanche* for local office-holders – the King did not want to hear about the means as long as the results were satisfactory. But the monarch was at the same time wary of local protests, and habitually declared that the bailiffs must secure for him “a benevolent and loyal peasantry”.<sup>25</sup>

Negotiating successfully with the peasants was thus a way for local office-holders of proving themselves worthy. This was most important in times of unrest. Bailiff Jöns Olsson of Kalmar, for instance, immediately reported his actions when the uprising in Västergötland started in 1529. He wrote that he had first visited the district court meeting in Västbo, before travelling to the Hundred of Sunnerbo and thereafter to Uppvidinge. At all these meetings he had the King's letter read aloud, and he made sure that the peasants answered by pledging their loyalty to the regime. Olsson had also sent one of his servants to supervise another district court meeting in the Hundred of Västra, and he himself had conferred about the critical situation with the leading noblemen of the province.<sup>26</sup> Other bailiffs sent similar reports about how they had travelled around their districts, negotiating with the peasantry and defending the interests of the regime.<sup>27</sup>

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24 Anders Nilsson to Jöns Månsson and Peder Håkansson 8 April 1574, *Skrivelser till kam-maren och dess tjänstemän*, vol. 1:2, KA, National Archives, Stockholm.

25 For instance: Gustavus Vasa to Olof Jonsson 8 April 1543, *GIR*, Vol. 15, p. 222; to Rasmus Klott, May 1544, *GIR*, Vol. 16, pp. 300–1.

26 Jon (Jöns) Olsson to Gustavus Vasa 5 May 1529, *GIR*, Vol. 6, pp. 374–5.

27 Hemming Pedersson to Gustavus Vasa 13 May 1529, *Skrivelser till konungen* (Letters to the King), Gustav Vasa, Vol. 2, National Archives, Stockholm.

Dealing with the peasants did not necessarily entail a heartfelt respect for local opinion. On the contrary, the servants of the King sometimes bragged about how they could win people over by persuasion and sweet words, manipulating the supposedly feeble-minded peasants. Jakob Teitt, who in 1563 was ordered by Eric XIV to hear the grievances of the people of Sunnerbo, boasted that he could get them exactly where he wanted merely by promising to forward their complaints to the King. According to Teitt, it did not matter whether the peasants had prepared a strategy before coming to the meeting or not – their words would be of little consequence when Teitt countered them with his eloquence.<sup>28</sup>

Diligence, of course, was not all about using the right words. It also entailed gaining knowledge of the local situation and passing the necessary information on. A lack of information on local affairs was a serious problem, and bailiffs who failed to report continually were regarded as incompetent.<sup>29</sup> During the reign of John III, there was an ongoing discussion between the chamber servants responsible for supervising local office-holders about who was fit and who was not. Old age, alcoholism and wastefulness were important sources of criticism, as was failure to follow government instructions. A loyal servant always had to be busy protecting the King's interests. There seems to have been an open competition for offices, and perhaps the easiest way of proving oneself worthy was to criticize one's rivals as negligent and unreliable.<sup>30</sup>

Obviously, diligence and a strong sense of duty were important qualities for any man hoping for a career in the royal administration. But the social role of a local office-holder also demanded humility and respect towards his superiors. Therefore, self-assertion was seldom evident or aggressive in letters sent to the central authorities. In desperate circumstances, however, desperate means could become necessary. We will now turn to the most obvious case of self-assertion I have come across so far: the raving dreams of the unfortunate Henrik Nilsson.

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28 'Ett klagomålsregister från Småland 1563', *Historisk tidskrift*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 1895, p. 321–4. This is also observed by Sven A. Nilsson, *De stora krigens tid. Om Sverige som militärstat och bondesambälle*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1990, pp. 82–4.

29 Hallenberg, *Kungen, fogdarna och riket*, pp. 139–44.

30 Hans Hansson to Mats Törne, 5 November 1585, kammarens koncept (concept), Vol. 1, KA, National Archives, Stockholm; Erik Galle to John III, 26 November 1590, *Skrivelser till konungen, Johan III*, Vol. 3, National Archives, Stockholm.

## THE RAVING VISIONARY

For all its drawbacks, royal service in sixteenth-century Sweden did offer the prospect of a promising career and the chance of social advancement. Many were called, but few were chosen, and the implications of this are well illustrated by a letter from Henrik Nilsson to John III. In essence, the letter is a plea for help: Henrik Nilsson describes himself as a hapless victim of the tyrant Chancellor Jöran Persson, whose unjust rule during the reign of Eric XIV had driven Nilsson into exile. In his letter to John, who had deposed Eric to win the throne for himself, Nilsson offers his humble service to the new King, clearly hoping for some sort of office in the new administration.<sup>31</sup>

The story begins with Nilsson falling into disgrace because of his failure to finish the accounts of the County of Nyköping for the year 1562. Because of this negligence Nilsson was forced to join the Swedish army expedition against the Danish fortress of Halmstad the following year, where he was charged with supervising for the gaolers, a most degrading task. Somehow, he managed to escape to Denmark, where he was imprisoned for a whole year, before escaping to Brabant in the Netherlands. I have not been able to find any personal information on Henrik Nilsson. His fierce animosity towards the Chancellor – “that dreadful, Luciferian Jöran Persson” – suggests that he might have been a clerk working in the central administration. In any case he must have been a learned man, for his writing is punctuated by Latin expressions, obviously designed to impress the King by displaying a scholarly background. But Henrik’s main way of asserting himself was neither by scholarly eloquence nor by pointing out his experience as a chamber clerk. Instead he tried to present himself as a great warrior, whose knowledge of the martial arts would be of great service to John III.

The war between Sweden and Denmark, the latter supported by the once-mighty Hansa town of Lübeck, provides the basis for Henrik’s argumentation. From his position in exile Henrik proposed to deal a fatal blow to King John’s enemies. His first move would be to take Lübeck by deceit and set the town on fire, thus depriving the burghers of the means to continue their war on Sweden. Henrik then vowed to capture the many ships he claimed the enemy had been fitting out “in the western countries”. With financial backing from the King, Henrik would man his fleet with exiled English mercenaries from Ireland and proceed to take the Danish/Norwegian town of Marstrand by force.

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31 Henrik Nilsson to John III (no date), *Skrivelser till konungen, Johan III*, Vol. 3, National Archives, Stockholm. The letter must have been written in 1569 or 1570, after John’s succession to the throne but before the official peace treaty between Denmark and Sweden was made in 1570.

What started out as an honest petition for royal patronage thus turns into something more resembling of a free fantasy. Henrik Nilsson, the exiled chamber clerk, depicts himself as a great commander of forty or fifty warships, conquering towns and territory for King John. He also suggests a new military expedition against the Danish province of Scania, for Nilsson claims to have secret information about the fortresses of Helsingborg, Lagaholm and Halmstad that proves them all unable to withstand a concentrated military assault. If the Swedish troops could take these strongholds, Nilsson promised John III that he would have the whole province in his hands within a year.

After this belligerent outburst, however, the correspondent seems to return to reality. Nilsson pleads for the King to relieve him of the anguish he has suffered in exile, and promises to give his life for the King's cause at the first opportunity. In all modesty, he declares himself willing to serve in peaceful tasks as well. The letter thus ends on a more humble tone, praising King John and his right to rule, but also placing Henrik himself in a more proper and obedient light.

Henrik Nilsson must indeed have been a desperate man, and, it appears, quite insane. As there are no traces of a person by that name in King John's service in the following years, we must conclude that Nilsson's eloquent speech and fantastic plans did not impress the monarch. Nilsson had, like so many others, failed in service and does not seem to have been able to inveigle himself back into favour. Nevertheless, there are some important conclusions to draw from his letter. To achieve his purpose, Nilsson was clearly aiming at the moon. Boasting and bragging of imaginary warlike exploits was his way of asserting himself and proving himself worthy of being retained as a follower of the King. But Nilsson himself was, for all we know, not a military man at all. His preoccupation with war merely demonstrates the violent concept of masculinity that permeated the royal administration in sixteenth-century Sweden. The power to intimidate was an integral part of the identity of being a King's servant, and glory in war was the highest prize of them all. But the social role of addressing the King also required humility and moderation, and in this respect Henrik Nilsson seems to have failed miserably.

## THE DISCOURSE OF MISERY

When addressing the King, office-holders normally assumed the social role of the obedient servant, emphasizing their dependence and pleading for guidance. They also stressed the weakness of their position, often referring to a host of problems that they could not possibly manage on their own. In fact, the letters from bailiffs and other local office-holders are all composed in a discourse of misery. The

question is: What really made the self-assertive followers of the King go out of their way to appear as meek as lambs?

## A VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCE

Holding local office in the Vasa monarchy was all about being torn between conflicting interests. The King and his assistant clerks of the royal chamber wanted swift results: all the due taxes must be delivered on time, without delay. But resources were scattered and often stretched to the limit, and the King's subjects were seldom enthusiastic about having to contribute to the expanding state organization. Naturally, this placed the local representative of the King in an awkward position. Correspondence with the central administration consequently became an exercise in the fine art of reporting failure.

The servants of the King habitually portray themselves as hapless victims of forces beyond their control. Per Klemetsson, for example, a bailiff at the royal demesne of Linköping during the Seven-Years' War, complained bitterly about having to provide for a large company of soldiers when his stores were already dwindling. The bailiff reported that he had to suffer both abuse and violent assault from the soldiers, and threatened to resign from office if he was not aided with fresh supplies.<sup>32</sup> Evidently, there were quite a few local office-holders who had problems in exercising authority over the unruly bands of soldiers that were often garrisoned at the royal mansions. Mats Larsson, a bailiff at Orreholmen in the Province of Västergötland, claimed that the German horsemen stationed at the mansion openly upbraided him and disobeyed his orders.<sup>33</sup>

There were often problems with the peasantry as well. Bengt Småsven, a bailiff in the district of Tunalän in the Province of Småland, explained his failure to deliver his arrears by referring to the peasants as "a hard stock". This made tax-collection a difficult task, as some peasants were too poor to pay up and others were openly defiant.<sup>34</sup> Mats Nilsson, a bailiff in the northern Province of Dalarna some forty years later, had similar worries. The peasants were reluctant to accept his authority, and Nilsson had to watch over every transaction to make sure that the work was finally done: "Here in the province there is a crowd of refractory

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32 Per Klemetsson to Engelbrekt Andersson 23 December 1565, *Skrivelser till kammaren och dess tjänstemän*, Vol. 1:2, KA, National Archives, Stockholm.

33 Mats Larsson to John III 22 October 1560, *Skrivelser till konungen*, Erik XIV, Vol. 2, National Archives, Stockholm.

34 Bengt Småsven to Gustav Vasa, 23 April 1545, *Skrivelser till konungen*, Gustav Vasa, Vol. 4, National Archives, Stockholm.



peasants, and he who has anything to claim from them must not commit any delay or neglect.”<sup>35</sup>

Per Kristersson, a bailiff in the Province of Västergötland in the 1580s, gives a vivid account of the problem of asserting royal authority in local society. He seems to have been at odds with quite a few people in his district. One man prosecuted for adultery, had been fined fourteen *dalers* plus four silver spoons that Kristersson had placed in his private chest. When the bailiff went off to attend the district court meeting, the offender and some of his friends broke into the chest to steal all the goods paid as fines that were kept there. They also tore up all of Per Kristersson's accounts of his dealings with the peasantry. A peasant and a horseman who had been fined a horse each, had in their turn broken into the bailiff's stable to steal back their animals. The problem of acquiescence was not restricted to some local felons, however. Per Kristersson also reported that all the peasants had refused to swear an oath on their tithes at the last district court meeting, and that he had not been able to hold any more such meetings. The bailiff's biggest problem, though, was the fact that he had lost his office to one Albrekt Birgelsson, who was now using this position to promote his own interests.<sup>36</sup>

Per Kristersson may not strike one as a very successful representative of the King, but his report must have caught the eye of his superiors anyway, for within a year he was reinstated as bailiff, and Albrekt Birgelsson was dismissed. It is quite evident that he, like many of the King's servants, had a hard time projecting the “state magic”, the image of authority that Michael Braddick has identified as crucial for good performance in office. In early modern times this was often dependent on the office-holder's personal credit and repute. But personal status was extremely fragile under the Vasas because of the open competition for office that made every servant of the King a sitting target for his rivals.

## A TARGET FOR SLANDER

The expanding state organization naturally meant better career opportunities for the non-noble servants of the King. But there was also stiff competition for office, and this was increased by the fact that many office-holders, regardless of status, were dismissed after a few years and then had to start looking for better prospects.

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35 “Här i landet är en hop tredsk allmoge, den någon av dem skall fordra, han skall ingen dröjsmål eller försummelse företaga”; Mats Nilsson to Hans Hansson, 7 March 1587, Skrivelser till kammaren och dess tjänstemän, vol. 1:2, KA, National Archives, Stockholm.

36 Per Kristersson to John III (arrived 19 August 1586), Skrivelser till konungen, Johan III, Vol. 4, National Archives, Stockholm.

The correspondence of local office-holders gives ample proof that many were well aware of their vulnerable position. Quite often their worst rivals were close at hand. Bengt Nilsson, a bailiff at the royal demesne of Ekolsund, wrote to King Gustavus Vasa to defend himself against allegations from his own clerk Anders Skrivare. Anders contended that the bailiff had been collecting taxes from the city of Arboga for his own benefit. Bengt Nilsson countered these allegations by having three other bailiffs from nearby districts testify that Nilsson was an honest and scrupulous man, and that it was the clerk himself who had been known to neglect his duties.<sup>37</sup>

Although bailiffs sometimes sided together when one of their colleagues was in trouble, they were more likely to be at each other's throats, fighting for recognition from their superiors. But rumour could spread from many different sources. Sone Joensson, a bailiff in the Province of Närke during the Nordic Seven Years' War, declared himself slandered by a gaoler named Wicked Måns, who alleged that he had taken bribes to let some of the conscripted soldiers remain at home.<sup>38</sup> There also seem to have been plenty of conflict between bailiffs and parish priests.<sup>39</sup> In fact, a local office-holder in the Vasa monarchy was likely to be surrounded by rivals and unwilling subjects, and most of the time there was nowhere to turn for help. Bailiff Lasse Matsson seems to have had a particularly hard time countering fierce competition from Countess Ebba Lilliehöök, as well as from his predecessor Håkan Andersson, whom Matsson claimed was trying to buy the office back for himself. The bailiff complained bitterly over the vague and often contradictory instructions he was receiving from his superiors, and stated that he would rather lose his office than be used as a mere pawn.<sup>40</sup>

Under the Vasas, most office-holders came from humble origins, and many of them held office in districts well away from their home province. Therefore, the most dangerous slander was that which alleged negligence and disloyalty to the King, and the most common accusation was that of cheating in office in order to achieve personal gain. A letter from Bertil Eriksson to John III may illustrate this. Bertil Eriksson had started out as secretary when John was still Duke of

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37 Bengt Nilsson to Gustavus Vasa, 3 January 1556, *Skrivelser till konungen*, Gustav Vasa, Vol. 5, National Archives, Stockholm.

38 Sone Joensson to John III (no date), *Skrivelser till konungen*, Johan III, Vol. 5, National Archives, Stockholm.

39 See for instance the Priest Martinus of Börstil to Jöns Månsson, *Skrivelser till kammaren och dess tjänstemän*, Vol. 1:1, KA, National Archives, Stockholm; Hallenberg, *Kungen, fogdarna och riket*, p. 371.

40 Lasse Matsson to Jöns Månsson and Knut Persson 26 December 1573, *Skrivelser till kammaren och dess tjänstemän*, Vol. 1:2, KA, National Archives, Stockholm; to Jöns Månsson 16 May 1574, the same series, Vol 1:1.

Finland, and had risen to prominence through service as a district court judge in the Province of Raasepori. He married a daughter of the Mayor of Turku (Sw. Åbo) and was ennobled (Ljuster) in 1573. After serving as Bailiff of Turku Castle, he was transferred to the Castle of Vyborg near the Russian border in 1580. The following spring he wrote to the King concerning an evil rumour:

[...] that I, poor servant, have been proclaimed all over Finland [...] to be in disgrace with your royal majesty on account of some peasant grievances, and that your royal majesty will have me denounced in public as a tyrant, an unjust and violent person, to all the common people in Sweden [...]<sup>41</sup>

Bertil Eriksson pleaded for the King not to hold him in disfavour on the account of false testimonies. Instead, he blamed a man named Thomas Putu for slandering him and stated that the complaining peasants were simply lying. The bailiff referred to his many years of service and also produced a sworn testimonial from Infantry Commander Arvid Henriksson Tavast to further his cause. Bertil Eriksson probably had better contacts with the monarch than most local office-holders, but his desperate plea for royal patronage has something important to say about the political culture of the state administration: in the end personal status and wealth mattered little if you fell into disfavour with the King.

## WOEBEGONE WARRIORS

A fierce ideal of manliness is sometimes clearly discernible in the documents of the royal administration, and it seems probable that this warrior ideal remained in vogue for the rest of the century. Preparation for war was the dominating government concern during the reigns of Eric XIV and John III, and by 1600 the military sector was well on its way to replacing the civil sector as offering the most rewarding career prospects for ambitious men from all backgrounds.<sup>42</sup>

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41 "att jag fattige tjänare är utropat kringom hela Finland [...] det jag uti Ers Kungl. Maj:ts högste ogunst för några bönders klagomåls skull vara skall, och att Ers Kungl. Maj:ts skall hava mig uppenbarligen för en tyrann, orättfärdig och våldsverkare, för den menige man uti Sverige publicera låtit [...]"; Bertil Eriksson to John III 3 August 1581, Skrivelser till konungen, Johan III, Vol. 2, National Archives, Stockholm.

42 Gunnar Artéus, *Till militärstatens förhistoria. Krig, professionalisering och social förändring under Vasasönernas regering*, Probus: Stockholm, 1986. The warrior ideal is described by Göran Göransson, *Virtus Militaris. Officersideal i Sverige 1560–1718*, University of Lund: Lund, 1990. See also Ville Sarkamo, 'Karolinernas akillesval. Krigaråran inom den karolinska

Thus we might expect qualities like personal prowess and loyalty to King and country to be invoked more often in the letters. But the discourse of misery is as conspicuous in the correspondence of military commanders as it is in the writings of the civil servants.

Perhaps this should come as no surprise, for the realities of war were no more glamorous in the sixteenth century than they are today. Letters written at the front generally recount stories of hardship and express desperate pleas to be sent back home.<sup>43</sup> Seasoned warriors like Arvid Henriksson Tavast appealed to injuries sustained in battle or old age to escape the annual military expeditions during King John's reign.<sup>44</sup> Widows invoked the poverty and suffering of their fatherless children, and even a high commander like Erik Bertilsson Slang referred to the dismal situation of his family, "my poor wife and many small children", whom he could not possibly look after unless he was relieved from duty.<sup>45</sup> Tales of personal prowess are conspicuous only by their absence. It seems that military men seldom boasted about their brave deeds when addressing their superiors. They were caught in the discourse of misery as much as anybody, and rather tried to excite pity by describing their dismal present situation.

The soldiers fighting in the cruel war against Russia in the late sixteenth century obviously had plenty to complain about. The reports from Erik Bertilsson, Commander of the newly conquered fortress of Käkisalmi (Sw. Kexholm) in 1584, were typical. The promised supplies from Savo (Sw. Savolax) had not arrived, and while the stores were empty the soldiers had to make their bread from bark and roots. The result was that the whole garrison had become unruly: soldiers were refusing to work on the fortifications, there had been assaults on the local peasantry and two soldiers had even deserted to the enemy. The peasants in the area were destitute after years of military conflict and were in no position to provide any help. Erik Bertilsson therefore suggested that the region of Greater Savolax, in the eastern part of Finland, should be placed under his command to secure the necessary supplies.<sup>46</sup>

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armén under stora nordiska kriget (1700–1721)', *Historisk tidskrift för Finland*, vol. 90, no. 4, pp. 413–38.

43 See, for instance, the letter from the soldiers of Sigvard Jakobsson's regiment 23 July 1581, among several others in *Skrivelser till konungen, Johan III*, Vol. 1, National Archives, Stockholm.

44 Arvid Henriksson (Tavast) to John III 3 June 1583, *Skrivelser till konungen, Johan III*, Vol. 5, National Archives, Stockholm.

45 Erik Bertilsson to John III 24 July 1586, *Skrivelser till konungen, Johan III*, Vol. 2, National Archives, Stockholm.

46 Erik Bertilsson to John III 14 June 1584, *Skrivelser till konungen, Johan III*, Vol. 2, National Archives, Stockholm.

Like the bailiffs, military commanders were often at odds with each other over the scarce supplies. Gödik Fincke, Commander of the castle of Savonlinna (Sw. Nyslott), in his turn claimed that he could not possibly maintain the garrison there if more resources from Savo were allocated to Käkisalmi.<sup>47</sup> In a later moment of clarity he identified the problem as one of self-interest: The commanders of the border fortresses, Gödik Fincke stated, were all trying to protect their own garrisons to the detriment of the others, and constantly appealing to the King for intervention.<sup>48</sup> Slander and mistrust were, as always, sharp weapons wielded by office-holders competing with each other for recognition from their superiors. Joakim Didriksson of Käkisalmi simply declared that he would use the money consigned for restoring local fisheries to pay off his starving garrison instead. He firmly refuted allegations that his soldiers had been plundering the local people:

He who now whispers about it to promote himself and further his cause, let him then step forward and do it better than we others, [I ] beg your royal majesty in all humility to relieve me [of command], and to let those advisers come here in place of me and the many other good men.<sup>49</sup>

The situation facing military commanders and bailiffs were roughly similar: Both categories were trapped between the unrealistic demands of their superiors and the harsh local reality. There was little to do but try to shift the burden of failure onto somebody else's shoulders. The discourse of misery thus became the official idiom of the grim warriors as well as the bullied chamber clerks.

## CONCLUSION

I have argued here for two distinct discourses, both clearly discernable in the correspondence of local office-holders in sixteenth-century Sweden. The first one was a discourse of self-assertion, directed at the subjects of the King and at

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47 Gödik Fincke to John III 1 May 1586, *Skrivelser till konungen, Johan III, Vol. 3*, National Archives, Stockholm.

48 Gödik Fincke to John III 20 April 1590, *Skrivelser till konungen, Johan III, Vol. 3*, National Archives, Stockholm.

49 "Den nu därom vasker och gör sig god och slätt och smycker sin sak, måtte väl då stiga fram och göra det bättre än vi andre, och beder Ers Kungl. Maj:t i all underdånighet om förlossning, och de andragarna måtte bliva här i min och flera gode mäns stad"; Joakim Didriksson to John III 20 June 1581, *Skrivelser till konungen, Johan III, Vol. 3*, National Archives, Stockholm.

other persons of middling rank. This represented the language of hope: of a future career in royal service with all the social status that it carried. Manliness, the power to intimidate and a devoted loyalty to the monarch were the most important assets for an office-holder needing to assert himself in local society. The image of authority thus created seems to have rested equally on the King's warrant and on the personal power of the office-holder to command and be obeyed. There was also an ideal of diligence that compelled office-holders to prove their worth by regularly reporting the local state of affairs to their superiors. Most importantly, being a servant of the King meant embracing a military identity in which loyalty to the monarch came first, and the well-being of the subjects and of society at large came second.

This discourse of self-assertion, however, was not very often expressed clearly in writing. The written reports of local office-holders are instead permeated by a discourse of misery. This represented their fear of failure and of losing their privileged positions. Bailiffs and other servants of the King were torn between unrealistic orders from above and the subjects' stubborn recalcitrance from below. There was also an intense rivalry for office that made every office-holder a target for slander and criticism from his peers. On top of that, local representatives of the King had to compete for authority with the traditional elites – the nobility, the wealthy burghers and perhaps even the parish priests – and they often seem to have come out on the receiving end. Not even military service seems to have brought with it much glory, for the commanders and soldiers rather referred to misery and personal disability than to warlike exploits when communicating with the central administration.

In the official instructions there is a clear notion of a good and just society, but this concept of a *bonum commune* is largely absent in the day-to-day correspondence of the state organization. If there was a discussion of societal values it seems to have been a matter between the King and his subjects, and the office-holders were all but left out of it. How is this possible? I would argue that it was a direct consequence of the patrimonial character of the Swedish state organization. The local representatives of the King were generally men of humble origins, who quite often had weak links with the districts where they were active. Their authority rested more on their connection to the monarch than on their personal standing with the locality. The image of authority, so decisive for the ability to command, thus rested less upon ties *within* local society than on networks of contacts *outside* it.

But how can we be sure that the letters studied here are not merely displays of rhetoric, designed to conceal the actual power structures from the watchful eye of the central administration? I still maintain that there *was* a discourse of royal service, and that office-holders under the Vasa kings had little choice but to follow the path that was staked out for them: to flatter their superiors and to bully the

subjects, according to their current needs. Of course they were well aware of the prevailing rules of the social hierarchy, but in my opinion their correspondence should be understood as a matter of necessity rather than as an act of choice. The two discourses described here might even be interpreted as one and the same: the language of a hierarchy in which the life-coping strategy meant “licking upwards and kicking downwards”.

In essence, fear was only one side of the coin when it came to royal service – hope was the other. Many of the desperate men described here actually succeeded in establishing themselves as pillars of the state magic in local society. Meanwhile, the traditional elites used the discourses of self-assertion and misery in much the same way. The feeling of insecurity that seems to have prevailed was perhaps a dynamic force in a changing society where the old ways had to be abandoned and new ones staked out. I have not discussed the position of the aristocracy here, but it is a fair guess that even they felt the winds of change and had to accommodate themselves to the new conditions. This meant accepting a notion of a hierarchy where the King – or even the state – came first, and all other power relations had to be taken from there.

# “BENEVOLENT LORD” AND “WILLING SERVANT”

## Argumentation with Social Ideals in Late-Sixteenth-Century Letters<sup>1</sup>

*Ulla Koskinen*

### LETTERS AS A LANGUAGE GAME

My case study, Arvid Henriksson Tawast, was a nobleman whose collected extant letters<sup>2</sup> encompass a wide range of social relations, exhibiting a blurring of the borderlines between formal and informal interaction. Arvid Henriksson Tawast was born in the Finnish part of the Swedish realm around the year 1540 and died in 1599. He originated from a minor noble family but managed to advance into high positions in both the civil and the military administrations. Eventually he became one of the leading figures of the Finnish nobility. He was involved in politics and administration on the state level, serving as a commandant in various castles and as a commander of infantry in the 1580's. Due to his diverse duties, Tawast was engaged in wide-ranging correspondence with various officials across the realm.

Reading his letters, I have been over and over again amazed by the sophisticated ways in which social relations were expressed. Authors used fine, polite words when

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1 The article is based on a presentation delivered at the Sixth European Social Science History Conference in Amsterdam, 22–25 March 2006, and it has been written with the aid of funding from the Academy of Finland as a part of the research project “Politics of Brothers, Neighbours and Friends – Political Culture and Strategies of Influence in Early Modern Sweden c. 1500–1700”.

2 Svenska Riksarkivet (National Archives, Stockholm) (SRA), Arvid Henriksson Tawasts samling (AHTs), Vols. 1–3.



writing to each other. They might for example address each other as “Dear brother of my heart”. At the same time, it often seems that they were really seeking personal gain at one another’s expense. I believe this is familiar to all who have read early modern letters: people use elevated words but often act in less elevated ways. Equally familiar is the fact that personal relations and informal networks played a dominant part as supporting structures for individuals. But how were they maintained if the whole discourse around them was based on deception and duplicity?

This fascinating contradiction has led me to consider the study of communicative practices an elemental part of understanding social interaction. The correspondence between words and actions (or the apparent lack of it) has been discussed in various studies.<sup>3</sup> The basic question that has been addressed is whether the expressions of affection were sincere or whether they were just masks hiding self-interested aims. In my view, this question need not be fundamental. I approach social interaction as a kind of a language game<sup>4</sup> in which people used culturally coded words to represent themselves and others, defining each other’s social roles and creating an arena for social interaction. The polite, conventional words people used to describe social relationships in their letters were one element in this language game.<sup>5</sup> In a similar way, Arthur Herman has questioned the whole relevance of asking whether or not the polite language actually corresponded to reality. Basing his views on speech act theory, he sees language as a meaningful activity in its own right. According to him, participants in the game needed to employ conventional verbal formulae to describe their actions and intentions, irrespective of whether they meant what they said or not.<sup>6</sup>

The characteristics of the language game were shaped by the historical context in which it took place. The society of early modern Sweden depended heavily upon personal bonds. As in many other medieval and early modern societies, administrative and other institutions were not developed into bureaucratic systems, but were rather loose constructions based on personal bonds among the

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3 See Peter Burke, ‘Introduction’, in *The Social History of Language*, Ed. by Peter Burke and Roy Porter, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1987, pp. 1–20 and Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, Vol. 1: *Regarding Method*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002, pp. 1–7.

4 The first person to introduce the concept of language games was the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, although he offered more than one definition of the term, and later scholars have interpreted it in different ways. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1958, passage 7 (p. 5e).

5 The concept of language games has been used in a corresponding historical context by Arthur L. Herman, ‘The Language of Fidelity in Early Modern France’, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 67, No. 1, 1995, pp. 1–24 and Heiko Droste, ‘Språk och livsform. Patronage i 1600-talets Sverige’, *Scandia* Vol. 64, No. 1, 1998, pp. 28–54.

6 Herman, ‘The Language of Fidelity’, p. 6.

holders of state offices and between them and the king. The administration in all its simplicity consisted of men appointed by the king to take care of individual tasks. They each had a personal bond with the king. The administration was not arranged in a clearly hierarchical system. The rights and responsibilities of office-holders were not defined on a permanent basis nor were there clear regulations concerning co-operation between the holders of different offices.<sup>7</sup>

In the absence of an established, clearly defined system of administration, the positions of noblemen and holders of state offices were uncertain in the sense that they were not based on permanent rules but on personal allegiances that were prone to shift. Competition for economic benefits and social prestige was tough, and although the goal might be dictated by self-interest, it required the help of friends to achieve it. For instance, office-holders were greatly dependent on other people's reports of them to the king, and this underlined the importance of good relations.

In this framework, personal networks were the key to success in private and public life. It was important to maintain good relations in all directions. This is reflected in the language used in social relations, which emphasized good will, friendship and solidarity; in other words, a positive attitude towards other people. Maintaining social relations required that a person be considered trustworthy and know his own place – be “a good man”, as the contemporaries put it. This meant that the person had to conform to the conventions of social interaction. He needed to represent himself as an integrated part of the social unit, so that others might understand and accept his behaviour. Polite language was one means of achieving this.

This article proposes that one way to approach and map the controversial “landscape of social relationships” in written communication is to use the concept “social ideal”. I use this term to refer to the shared norms and notions that were attached to different kinds of social relations. The social ideal represented a socially acceptable way of behaviour.<sup>8</sup> Contemporaries recognised these norms and acted within the frameworks they constituted. I argue that they were also capable of manipulating the ways in which they acted in order to make their actions fit into the pattern of established social ideals.

I base my claim on a theory of representation according to which representations of social relations correlate with cultural norms and codes of action, which have also been called conceptual systems or shared meanings. People belonging to

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7 Pentti Renvall and John E. Roos, ‘Keskitetyn hallintolaitoksen kehitys’, in *Suomen kulttuurihistoria*, Vol. 2, Ed. by Gunnar Suolahti, Väinö Voionmaa, Esko Aaltonen, Pentti Renvall, Lauri Kuusanmäki, Heikki Waris and Eino Jutikkala, Gummerus: Jyväskylä, 1934, pp. 136–8.

8 Peter Reinholdsson, *Uppror eller resningar? Samhällsorganisation och konflikt i senmedeltidens Sverige*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1998, pp. 173–4.

the same culture are able to communicate because they share broadly the same conceptual systems.<sup>9</sup> When I talk about social ideals it is the shared meanings connected to different kinds of social relationships that I have in mind. I think this kind of approach might afford one way of explaining the apparent duplicity of early modern letters.<sup>10</sup>

## WORDS IN CONTEXT

My starting point was to observe the words authors used in expressing their relations with other people. The most obvious example is terms of address. These vary according to the author's status and the relationship between him and the addressee. In the letters sent to Arvid Henriksson Tawast, some correspondents called him "Dear brother of my heart"<sup>11</sup> or "Dear, gentle [...] good friend"<sup>12</sup>, and others "Benevolent, noble and well-born father"<sup>13</sup> or "Your Strictness"<sup>14</sup>.

It is important to note that these were not personal appellations but conventional ways of addressing people of a different social rank. Nor were the terms of address isolated expressions. The whole rhetorical repertoire was adopted to making the letter a coherent unity that corresponded in tone with the terms of address. I think a scrutiny of such expressions can reveal what was valued or considered appropriate in social interaction.

The importance of these conventions lies in their significance in the field of social interaction. To be able to interact successfully, it was important to possess a mastery of communicative practices. That meant knowing the conventions of the

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9 Stuart Hall, 'The Work of Representation', in *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Ed. by Stuart Hall, Sage: London, 1997, pp. 17–8.

10 Anu Lahtinen has presented a similar approach in her article 'Past events and historical backgrounds: persuasive narratives in Swedish 16th century family archives', in *History in Words and Images. Proceedings of the Conference on Historical Representation held at the University of Turku, Finland, 26–28 September 2002*, Ed. by Hannu Salmi, University of Turku: Turku, 2005 [available as an eBook at <http://www.hum.utu.fi/historia/2002>], pp. 9–15.

11 SRA, AHTs1, Arvid Eriksson Stålmarm to Arvid Henriksson Tawast, 20 May 1580: "Käre hertans Bror".

12 SRA, AHTs1, Erik Eriksson to Arvid Henriksson Tawast, 30 May 1590: "Khäre frome Aruedh Hendrichsson gode wen".

13 SRA, AHTs1, Henrik Jakobsson (Speitz) to Arvid Henriksson Tawast, 30 November 1593: "Gönstige Edhle och wälbornne fader".

14 SRA, AHTs1, Ambrosius Henriksson to Arvid Henriksson Tawast, 1583: "Edhers Strengheett".

written culture. Letter writing has recently become the object of various studies that emphasize its context-bound nature. Previously, letters traditionally served as informative sources for historians, as a pool of data. Scholars studying historical pragmatics, in particular, have stressed that letter writing is a situated activity. They have emphasized the fact that the material circumstances of letter writing, as well as its discursive practices, have changed with time.<sup>15</sup> This is of vital importance in using letters as sources. They cannot be read and utilised without taking into account the historical context in which they were written. Messages were expressed in culturally coded ways. Letter writing was a social practice with its own established and conventional ways of conveying meanings. This means that letters involved formulaic text that was loaded with shared values and attitudes.<sup>16</sup>

The letter was a written genre that had to be learned. That skill was called *ars dictaminis* in medieval times. Teachers compiled model letters that were copied and taught throughout Europe. Their principles can be traced back to Roman times. In the sixteenth century, newly rediscovered classical models were introduced, which led to a relaxation of the strict and formal rules of letter composition. Moreover, the social basis of the writers widened, and this in itself required new models. Advice on letter-writing began to appear in printed manuals written in vernacular languages, and there is evidence that these were also used in Sweden, although they were not available in Swedish until 1619.<sup>17</sup>

However, the impact of these collections of models on the actual practice of letter-writing is another issue entirely. The models were sophisticated and divided letters into various genres according to their principal purpose (for instance, letters of advice, letters of praise and letters of excuse).<sup>18</sup> The letters in the Tawast collection show much less finesse. Apart from the conventional formulae, their style is plain and simple, and matters are put down on paper with little rhetorical flourish. They contain hardly any reference to thoughts and feelings or plans about future strategies of action. Their tone is more matter-of-fact than polished. Their wordings speak of friendship and brotherhood, love and trust, common good and shared joys. This is the rhetorical landscape that the letters convey; it is the world of ideals that they reveal.

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15 Terttu Nevalainen, 'Letter Writing. Introduction', *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2004, p. 181.

16 For further discussion on the rhetoric of letters, see Marko Hakanen and Ulla Koskinen, 'From "friends" to "patrons": Transformations in the social power structure as reflected in the rhetoric of personal letters in 16th- and 17th-century Sweden', *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2008.

17 Stina Hansson, *Svensk brevskrivning. Teori och tillämpning*, University of Gothenburg: Gothenburg, 1988, pp. 15–24.

18 Hansson, *Svensk brevskrivning*, pp. 16–7.

The background to these ideals can be traced back to medieval times, when friendship, solidarity and comradeship along with the appropriate rhetoric to express them were, in the absence of official institutions, central to political life. Persisting medieval notions of friendship, courtly behaviour and chivalrous ideals were a blend of ancient philosophy, old Germanic and Scandinavian traditions and Christian ideals.<sup>19</sup> Even in the sixteenth century, political language and the rhetoric of friendship represented social norms in terms of which office-holders had to describe their mutual relations. This was a culturally coded, binding mode of writing.

Letter writers followed common guidelines in the composition of their writing. These seem to be “medieval” in essence with their repetitive phrases and structures, which created the framework of the disposition of a letter. Letters usually began with a salutation followed by an expression of thanks for “all the good things done for me” and a promise of services in return. After the actual subject matter, letters ended by wishing for God’s blessing on the recipient. The salutations and other formulae were not fixed word for word, but could be varied by the writers. For example, a high-ranking tax official (*räntemästare*) called Jöran Larsson Långe began his letter to Tawast: “My benevolent, kindly greetings [...] dear Arvid Henriksson, trustworthy good friend”,<sup>20</sup> but Lars Holgersson, who held the same office two years later, wrote: “My humble, benevolent greetings [...] dear clement Arvid Henriksson”.<sup>21</sup>

On the basis of such examples, it seems that terms of address and other formulae had defined schemas (for instance, if you were a non-noble bailiff and were writing to a noble Privy Counsellor, it was proper to address him respectfully), but within these limits, the writer had the liberty to choose the style he thought most appropriate. He could use a “friendly” style (positive politeness, as Jöran Larsson Långe did) or a more distant, reverential approach (negative politeness, like Lars Holgersson).<sup>22</sup>

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19 Julian Haseldine, ‘Introduction’, in *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, Ed. by Julian Haseldine, Sutton Publishing Ltd.: Stroud, 1999, p. xviii; Thomas Småberg, *Det stängda fräiset. Makt och eliter i det medeltida lokalsambället. Marks och Kinds härader i Västergötland ca 1390–1520*, University of Gothenburg: Gothenburg, 2004, pp. 203–6; Herman Bengtsson, *Den höviska kulturen i Norden. En konsthistorisk undersökning*, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien: Stockholm, 1999, pp. 22–3, 31. For friendship discourses in the Middle Ages, see Eva Österberg, ‘Vänskap – hot eller skydd i medeltidens samhälle? En existentiell och etisk historia’, *Historisk Tidskrift*, Vol. 123, No. 4, 2003, pp. 549–73 (with a summary in English).

20 SRA, AHTs1, Jöran Larsson Långe to Arvid Henriksson Tawast, 17 July 1580, Viborg, “Minn welwilige wenlige helssen [...] Käre Arffuidh Henrichson tilförlätelig godhe wänn”.

21 SRA, AHTs1, Lars Holgersson to Arvid Henriksson Tawast, 20 April 1582, Turku (Sw. Åbo): “Minn ödmiuke wäluillige helssenn [...] Käre fromme Aruedh Henrichsson”.

22 The concepts of “positive” and “negative” politeness are from Penelope Brown and Stephen

What the choice depended on is a matter that is perhaps impossible to pin down, but certain observations can be made. The use of positive politeness seems to be linked to relationships that were close, more informal, including perhaps kinship or other previous contacts. On the other hand, negative politeness seems to have been the norm in more formal relationships, when the correspondents did not necessarily have any previous contacts with each other. Two bailiffs writing to Tawast exemplified the difference with one word: one of them, who was related to Tawast, sent his “very benevolent and *loving* greetings”<sup>23</sup>, while the other, who had never met Tawast, sent his “very *humble* and benevolent greetings”<sup>24</sup>.

## SOCIAL IDEALS

How can these conventional terms of address and other context-bound wordings be analysed historically in a meaningful way? One possibility is to examine them as part of the creation of an arena of social interaction. Rhetoric was a way of drawing parallels between the social ideals and the social reality.

I will explain my approach with six points. First, I will define what I mean by the term “social ideals” and describe how they were manifested in correspondence. By compiling connected expressions I have constructed larger discourses representing social roles, and I call these discourses social ideals. Two examples of what I have interpreted as social ideals are to be found in the title of this article: “benevolent lord” and “willing servant”. Many others could be identified; it all depends on how their limits are defined. One could distinguish ideals attached to the roles of friend, husband, wife, mother, brother and so on. The discourses of different social ideals can contain similar features (for instance, the willingness to perform services was a virtue attached to both servants and friends),<sup>25</sup> and they could also overlap in the sense that the same person could be a lord to some people but a servant to other, higher-ranking persons. It should be noted that people of that age did not use the rhetoric of “lord” and “servant” only in the context of a relationship

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C. Levinson, *Politeness. Some universals in language usage*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1989, p. 70.

23 SRA, AHTs1, Joakim Bertilsson to Arvid Henriksson Tawast, 2 June 1590: “Mijn ganske wälluillgh, och kärlich helssn”.

24 SRA, AHTs1, Thomas Jöransson to Arvid Henriksson Tawast, 5 August 1590, Pedersöre: “Mijn gansche ödhmiuke och wälluillgh hälsen”.

25 Peter Reinholdsson has recognised an “ideal of service” (*tjänsteideal*), which was also embedded in friendship relations, as a characteristic feature of late-medieval Swedish society. Reinholdsson, *Uppror eller resningar?*, passim.

of service. The designations were used to refer to a general hierarchical setting between social inferiors and superiors.

Sometimes letter writers explained very explicitly how they understood their own social role. As an example, I take a deputy judge called Henrik Jakobsson (Speitz), who was suspected of some misconduct, and who tried hard to convince Tawast that he had done nothing wrong and had been an ideal servant. He described his role thus: “I am insignificant and simple-minded as well (a nobody). I am solely responsible as a servant to show obedience and loyalty to my master”. He also called himself “a poor (unworthy) servant” who has “whenever possible been helpful and willing to Your Excellency, as is my duty”. And typically he signed his letter “Your Excellency’s willing servant”.<sup>26</sup>

Such expressions manifest a number of values attached to the social ideal of a servant. Society was based on patriarchal values and an inbuilt inequality,<sup>27</sup> which was seen to extend even to the ideal characters of different agents, be they servants or lords.<sup>28</sup> According to Henrik Jakobsson Speitz, ideally a servant is not supposed to act on his own, only to follow his master’s orders. He is simple-minded to the extent that he is without significance on his own. He is worthy in relation to his master only as a helper and provider of services. He is bound by responsibilities to his master, and his highest aim is to be obedient, loyal, helpful and willing, in other words, to be useful and advantageous to his master.

This seems simple, but social ideals often contained inner contradictions. A servant was expected, on the one hand, to obey his lord without further thought and, on the other, to actively look after his master’s interests. Willingness (*villighet*) meant more than simple obedience; it implied vigilance. When Speitz wrote that a servant is an unworthy person only fulfilling his master’s will, he assured Tawast that he had not done anything wrong; how would he, a poor simple servant, have been able to? On the other hand, he was also a deputy judge, a post that required wide knowledge and an ability to make independent judgements. Even his honorific title used in official documents before his name was “sensible” (*välståndig*). So

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26 SRA, AHTs1, Henrik Jakobsson (Speitz) to Arvid Henriksson Tawast, 30 November 1593: “ther är Jagh ringh och oförmunstigh till, (Nemo) Allenisth plichtigh tienare min Herre lydhno och troo bewijsse”, “Jagh Arme (owärdigh) tienere”, “huar Jagh [...] haffr kunnedt [...] ware E:V: [...] till tienisth och wilie, thz haffuer Jagh giortt, ssäm och ähr plichtigh”, “Eders välbördigheettz wälluilligh Tienare”.

27 For an anthology of patriarchalism in its different forms in early modern Finland, see *Arjen valta. Suomalaisen yhteiskunnan patriarkalisesta järjestyksestä myöhäiskeskiajalta teollistumisen kynnykselle (v. 1450–1860)*, Ed. by Piia Einonen and Petri Karonen, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2002 (with summaries in English).

28 Cf. Kaarlo Wirilander, *Herrasväkeä. Suomen säätyläistö 1721–1870*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1974, pp. 36–45, concerning the varying temperaments associated to persons of different estates.

in respect of his post, Speitz needed to be sensible, but in his stance towards his master he represented himself as simple, trying by that means to win the other's trust. He must definitely not appear to be a threat, a clever agent scheming for his own good. The simplicity of a servant was something that Speitz thought others would regard as a good quality in these specific circumstances. The ideals were not necessarily absolute, but context-bound, and Speitz knew how to take advantage of this.

## SOCIAL CODING

Language can never be wholly a private game.<sup>29</sup> Cultural values and norms guided the expression of social interaction in correspondence. Anyone writing a letter needed to describe his actions in conventional expressions in order to make himself understood and accepted.<sup>30</sup> This leads to my second point: all kinds of social interaction had to be described to others with the language of social ideals; in other words it needed to be socially coded. Stuart Hall puts this well: "Our private intended meanings, however personal to us, have to enter into the rules, codes and conventions of language to be shared and understood."<sup>31</sup> For example, a servant had to use humble language no matter what his real thoughts were. He had to know the social ideals and to be able to convince others that his actions were in accordance with them in order to be socially acceptable.

This gives us an idea of some of the building blocks, or trump cards, that were needed in a successful language game: 1) a mastery of the conventions and practices of written culture; 2) knowledge of cultural values and norms and 3) a Bourdieuan "linguistic sense of place", meaning an ability to recognize the social context, your position in it and the socially acceptable usages of language in each communicative situation.<sup>32</sup>

As noted above, this is, of course, rhetoric, but it is intertwined with concrete action in the social arena. My point is that the coin has two sides. Both

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29 Hall, 'The Work of Representation', p. 25.

30 Hall, 'The Work of Representation', p. 25; Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, Vol. 1: *Regarding Method*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002, pp. 149–50; Herman, 'The Language of Fidelity', pp. 7–10; Linda A. Pollock, 'Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 2004, p. 573.

31 Hall, 'The Work of Representation', p. 25.

32 Pierre Bourdieu, 'Language and Symbolic Power', in *The Discourse Reader*, Ed. by Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland, Routledge: London, 1999, p. 508.



corresponding parties, the sender *and* the addressee, had to communicate with the language of their respective social ideals. For example, a master was expected to write as “a benevolent lord” towards his servants. Rhetoric was one part of the social game, and thus it was not detached from actions. The key word in all social relations was reciprocity. The basic rule (one could even say the unwritten law) of social interaction, familiar from the works of Marcel Mauss, was that if you performed a favour for somebody, you had the right to expect a favour in return.<sup>33</sup> This principle seems to have been so strong that it could be called a cornerstone of society.

In terms of social ideals, this meant that the services of a “willing servant” had to be paid back with the gratitude of a “benevolent lord”. And this inherent reciprocity gave the servant a chance to manipulate his master. He could in a discrete way tell his master what an ideal lord should do in a given situation and expect his master to follow the direction. This is my third point: social ideals could be utilised as a strategy of influence. There were limits to using this kind of strategy, however. Making use of social ideals to put pressure on other people required reciprocity. The strategy worked only if the agent was able to give the impression that he respected and followed the social ideals himself so that he could expect the same from others. Obligations of reciprocity were often clearly expressed, as in Arvid Tawast’s letter to a high-ranking nobleman: “I trust that Your Lordship will do your best to help me in this matter, having every confidence in Your Lordship’s goodness. In whatever way I can please Your Lordship with service and kindness Your Lordship will always find me willing”.<sup>34</sup>

Tawast asked for a favour and hastened to assure his addressee that for his part he was willing to give reciprocal services; in other words, he gave the impression that he was a “willing servant”.<sup>35</sup> I emphasize the word “impression”, because this was a matter of representation. To describe a certain action as benevolent or willing was an agent’s representation of what he had done, and there were countless possible ways of representing each action. My fourth point is that actions and attitudes could be represented in terms of social ideals regardless of what the actual intentions behind them were. As Arthur Herman has pointed out, employing

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33 Marcel Mauss, *Lahja. Vaihdannan muodot ja periaatteet arkaaisissa yhteiskunnissa*, Transl. by Jouko Nurmiainen and Jyrki Hakapää, Tutkijaliitto: Helsinki, 1999, pp. 112–3.

34 SRA, AHTs1: Arvid Henriksson Tawast to Claes Bielke, 30 January 1590: “föreseer iagh mig till E.H., att E.H. är här medh mig till thett bedzste förfordelig som Jagh E.H. om mykett gott betror, I huad motto iagh kan och förmö, ware E.H. medh all tienist och benegenhett till willie igen skull E.H. finne mig alltijdh goduillig till”.

35 I have treated this case in more detail in Ulla Koskinen, ‘Friends and brothers: Rhetoric of friendship as a medium of power in late-16th-century Sweden and Finland’, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 30, No. 3–4, 2005, pp. 243–5.

shared verbal conventions to represent individual actions was a means to evaluate and justify those actions.<sup>36</sup>

It was possible to try to manipulate social ideals rhetorically so that certain desired actions would fit within their framework better. Quentin Skinner has presented a group of possible strategies for labelling actions with values, like stretching the application of positive vocabulary to cover apparently questionable actions.<sup>37</sup> This was quite independent of whether the actual intentions behind the actions were in line with the positive values that were sought. Stretching social ideals is a demonstration of the need to represent actions within the framework of shared meanings. Individuals tried to provide their actions with positive rhetorical labels, even in situations where these labels seem far-fetched. In Arvid Tawast's letters, this could involve asserting that the author has behaved like a "willing servant". To put it simply: it was not important what you did, only that others got the right impression.

There are some concrete examples of attempts to label some seemingly very negative acts with positive or, at least neutral, labels in the Tawast letters. For example, Arvid Tawast tried to explain very earnestly that when he had taken some horses from his brother-in-law's mansion without permission, it had actually been an act of reciprocal friendship, because the brother-in-law's tenant had earlier caused the death of two of Tawast's foals. Tawast had now only followed what the rules of reciprocity demanded and taken his compensation. He added "the better I act, the less thanks I get for it", making himself out to be an innocent victim and turning the case around against his brother-in-law, who had earlier expressed his displeasure over the matter.<sup>38</sup>

To summarise so far: I understand social ideals as cultural norms of behaviour that were shared by a large group of people. They enabled them to give meaning to the world by constructing a set of correspondences between concrete actions and a system of concepts.<sup>39</sup> Because they involved notions of socially acceptable behaviour, there was strong social pressure to follow them. Therefore, they could be used and manipulated to exert influence.

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36 Herman, 'The Language of Fidelity', pp. 7, 10.

37 Skinner 2002, pp. 149–50, 151–3.

38 SRA, AHTs1, Arvid Henriksson Tawast to Peter Den, undated: "iw be[- -] gör, iw meer otack iagh theföre haff:r".

39 Hall, 'The Work of Representation', p. 19.

## ACTION, REPRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION

Although social ideals could be stretched to some extent, there were limits to what could be represented by means of them. If Arvid Tawast had felt lazy and ignored the king's orders to go to war, he could not have explained his actions in terms of willing service (at least not very easily or convincingly). My fifth point is that the vocabularies of social ideals also placed some restrictions on actual behaviour. The need to maintain consistency by means of the language game limited the range of possible actions.<sup>40</sup> Not just any kind of activity could be explained in terms of social ideals, because others would not accept it. In this respect, everyone had to take shared ideals into account in their actual behaviour. If too much at odds with the ideals, actions could not be justified by them. As Quentin Skinner says, actions had to remain compatible with ideals.<sup>41</sup>

Again, there are some explicit examples of taking the ideals seriously in the Tawast collection. The above-mentioned "unworthy servant" Henrik Jacobsson Speitz explained to Tawast, that "I would have been considered an unloyal servant and fallen into my master's eternal disfavour", had he not opened his mouth in court and mentioned some details that were in his master's interests but to Tawast's disadvantage.<sup>42</sup> Tawast himself wrote to a nobleman, who had sent his servant to borrow peas from him: "I could not send my brother's servant away from me with an empty sleigh." This despite the fact that he had already sent the peas in question with another servant. So he gave another two barrels as a demonstration of his good will.<sup>43</sup>

Here, too, the relationship between actions and ideals was not simple. The language game was a constant negotiation between actions, representations and interpretations. If a writer made a convincing representation of his actions as being in conformity with the ideal, the receiver could not reject it without good reason, even if he had personal doubts. When making his interpretation public, he himself entered the world of representations and cultural meanings and had to take into account how others would evaluate the situation.

If, for example, a servant succeeded in making a convincing case of being an ideal servant, his master was bound to act reciprocally as a "benevolent lord" because, if he did not, he would seem unfair in giving no reward for loyal service.

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40 Herman, 'The Language of Fidelity', p. 6.

41 Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, pp. 155–6; Herman, 'The Language of Fidelity', p. 6.

42 *Handlingar till upplysning af Finlands häfder*, Vol. 10, Ed. A. I. Arwidsson, Stockholm, 1858, p. 224: "Så hade iagh bliffuitt räknadt för enn otrogenn tienere, och hafft ewigh ogönsth vtaf min here".

43 SRA, AHTs1, Arvid Henriksson Tawast to Arvid Eriksson Stålarms 26 March 1590, Kurjala: "hafuer Jagh icke kunnedh min b. tienare ifron migh medh tom sledha sända".

Before he could legitimately discard the role of the benevolent lord, he would have to convince others that the servant had broken the rules of their reciprocal relationship. The language game with social ideals rested upon public opinion, collective honour and saving one's face. In a patriarchal society, this kind of informal social control was a functioning counter power to the arbitrary actions of those in official positions of authority.<sup>44</sup>

So my sixth and final point is that even if the language game did not result in the desired outcome, i.e. the addressee could not be persuaded to act in a desired manner, it still had served another purpose: in the process of unsuccessful argumentation, the player had made it legitimate for himself to stop acting like a "willing servant" or whatever his appropriate social role was. By representing himself as an unrewarded ideal servant, he had released himself from the social responsibility of continuing to maintain his ideal towards his counterpart. If the counterpart would not reciprocate, he had no responsibility to continue either. Playing the language game adroitly produced a convenient win-win situation on the moral level.

## ARVID HENRIKSSON TAWAST AS A LOYAL SUBJECT

So far, all this may have appeared somewhat theoretical. To anchor the different aspects of a language game to a concrete case, I take an example which I find covers to some extent all the above-mentioned points. It offers an overview of Arvid Henriksson Tawast playing the role of the loyal subject towards King John III. In terms of reciprocity, in late-sixteenth-century Sweden the king seems to have been no different from other noblemen as he, too, had to follow the ideal of the benevolent lord. At least that was what his subjects expected of him, and it can be seen clearly in Tawast's letters to him. On several occasions, Tawast made it clear what he expected from the King. He also clearly showed what he thought was appropriate to his role as a servant and pointed out that he had constantly followed those ideals.

Most of the letters date back to the year 1590, when Tawast was made Commandant of Narva Castle in Estonia.<sup>45</sup> In these letters, Tawast describes

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44 Petri Karonen, 'Patriarkaalisen järjestyksen monet todellisuudet', in *Arjen valta*, Ed. by Einonen and Karonen, p. 259.

45 Fifteen letters sent by him, alone or jointly with the other officers in Narva, to the King have survived in the Tawast collection or in the Livonica collection (II:1, 193) in SRA. Of four of the letters there are two copies: the original in the Livonica, and a copy in the Tawast collection. Six letters have survived only as drafts and five only as originals.

illuminatingly what he considered his and the King's duties. The fortress was situated on the Estonian and Russian border on a riverbank, and across the river lay the Russian fortress of Ivangorod. The distance between the fortresses was not great and the garrisons' forces could see and even hear each other. In addition to this precarious position, the situation of the Narva garrison was nearly disastrous. The troops had barely survived a siege early in 1590, and since then they had inexorably been running out of provisions. Along with hunger came epidemics. At the time of Tawast's appointment, half of the men were reported to be ill. Needless to say, the soldiers had not received any pay for years, and they began to be seriously recalcitrant and mutinous.<sup>46</sup>

During Tawast's command in the summer and autumn of 1590, the situation became worse and finally got totally out of control. An open rebellion broke out in September, Tawast was fired at, and he had to escape from the fortress to hide in the woods, from where he could return only after nightfall by sneaking inside the walls in disguise. The soldiers called out for peace, making it clear that they would not obey their officers, and it was feared that Russians on the other side of the river Narva could hear them and be encouraged to assault the fortress.<sup>47</sup>

It is against this background that Arvid Tawast's letters to the King should be viewed. He had strong motivation to make an effective appeal to the King for help for the troubled garrison, and, even more importantly, for release of his onerous appointment. In the following, I take Tawast's pleas for dismissal under closer scrutiny as examples of a servant's argumentation in addressing his lord. He sent altogether six pleas to John III, until he was finally relieved of his post in December 1590.

Tawast was the head of a group of four noblemen who were ordered by the King to take over the command in Narva; it was customary to appoint several commanders, one of whom held the highest authority.<sup>48</sup> It is clear from the start that Tawast did not want the commission, as he rejected it immediately in his letter to the King. He referred to social ideals to justify his rejection and to maintain his position as a loyal servant:

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46 Werner Tawaststjerna, *Pohjoismaiden viisikolmattavuotinen sota. Sotavuodet 1590–1595 ja Täysinän rauha*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1929, p. 33–4.

47 Tawaststjerna, *Pohjoismaiden viisikolmattavuotinen sota*, p. 89–90; Werner Tawaststjerna, 'Tietoja Arvi Henrikinpoika Tawastista', *Historiallinen Arkisto*, Vol. 31, 1924, pp. 22–3.

48 Originally, the order was sent to five noblemen and Arvid Eriksson Stålarms was designated for the command. He managed to get out of it because of his other pressing duties, and the job fell to Arvid Tawast. The other three, Henrik Abel von Minden, Erik Johansson and Nils Olsson, were to cooperate with him. – Tawaststjerna, *Pohjoismaiden viisikolmattavuotinen sota*, pp. 63–4; SRA, AHTs1, Arvid Henriksson Tawast to John III, 10 May 1590, Kurjala.

I have received today, which is the 10th May, Your Royal Majesty's letter [...] with the information that I along with other noblemen should be in Narva and take over the command there [...] I cannot withhold from Your Royal Majesty, as a most humble and modest answer, that if I, Gracious King and Lord, *were in possession of my health*, which is far away from me, *I would have fulfilled the call gladly* and done whatever was possible for a man, and fulfilled Your Royal Majesty's will, *if only it had been within my capabilities*.

For one who must occupy such high positions, needs to be a healthy and able-bodied man in every way, which qualities I have now lacked, God help me, *ever since I was in Nöteborg*, as I have written to Your Royal Majesty in my previous letter. Therefore I beg Your Royal Majesty most humbly and subserviently that *Your Royal Majesty be a benevolent Lord and King to me* and not commission me, poor servant, to do something that I am not able to do. But in all that is possible for me and I am able and capable of serving Your Royal Majesty with all humbleness in Your favour, as also my responsibility is, *I shall be found willing, honest and loyal, as long as blood is warm in me*.<sup>49</sup>

The fact that Tawast felt it was possible for him to refuse the king's appointment shows that he thought of their relationship not as a one-sided dominance but as a negotiable relationship, albeit in a clearly hierarchical setting. He expressed the view that he had the right to reject the order and justified this with what he thought as the most relevant reason, his illness. Knowing the situation in Narva, it can be conjectured that he had other reasons, too; in a later letter, the commanders actually wrote of the soldiers: "Nobody likes to stay here".<sup>50</sup> However, for his part, Tawast kept these thoughts to himself, as they would fit poorly with the

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49 SRA, AHTs1, Arvid Henriksson Tawast to John III, 10 May 1590, Kurjala: "iag hafuer i thenne dag som är then 10 Majj Bekomid EKM bref [...] och ähr theris innehåld, att Jag medh the andre Adels me– skulle blifue på Narfuen och hafue Stodhållare befalning [...] Så kan jag EKM, wdī all ödmuick, vnderdånighz för swar icke förhålle, der iag nw Nädige Konung och Herre, hadhe min helso, then mig longt ifron är, så wille Jag gerne ther om fulkomne, och beställe hwadh Menniskie mögeligit är, och fulkompned EKM:z willie om min macht hadhe så tilsagdt, Ty then som moste uara i sådane höge Embeter, skall han ware en hselosam och rörig Karll, wdhi alle sacher, thett mig nw feler thett gudh bettere alt sedan iag war wed nöteborgh sosome Jag och EKM senest i thett förrige brefuet tilskrifuid hafuer hwarföre beder Jag EKM ganske ödmuickeligenn och underdånigen, EKM will ware mig en gunstig herre och Konungh och icke mig fatige tienare thett opå leggie att beställe hwadh jag icke kann och förmå vträtte Men hwad mig mögeligit är iag kan och förmå tiene EKM, med all ödmuickheett till gagn och godo som iagh och plichtig är, will iag lathe befinne mig wälluillig rätträdig och trogen, så lenge blodet är varmt vdi mig".

50 SRA, Livonica II:1, 193: Arvid Henriksson Tawast, Henrik Abel von Minden and Erik Johansson to John III, 17 October 1590: "her will inge– gerne bliffue".

ideal of a loyal and willing subject. On the contrary, Tawast repeatedly assures the King that he would have answered the call, if only he had been able to. He swears his eternal loyalty and his willingness to sacrifice himself for his lord in other tasks, to which he was better suited. The rejection is clad in the rhetoric of willing service.

It is his limited abilities as a servant that Tawast mostly appeals to: he is not capable of doing this particular service, and the king should not demand it, in so far as he is a benevolent lord who pays heed to his subjects' well-being. Tawast had been wounded in battle when fighting for the King beside Nöteborg Castle in Ingria. It seems that he mentions the circumstances of his wounding exactly for this reason, although they were irrelevant to the actual subject-matter. He discreetly recalled that it was the earlier sacrifice that now hindered him from fulfilling the King's will, which was definitely something that a benevolent lord should bear in mind.

The rhetoric Tawast uses relates closely to the patriarchal values held in society. The power of a father over his family was a real factor, and it was consolidated in people's minds by Luther's Table of Duties.<sup>51</sup> The role of the king as a patriarch over his subjects was seen as a parallel of that of a *pater familias*; fathers were regarded as ruling their own mini-dominions.<sup>52</sup> Patriarchalism involved a personal bond between the patriarch and the members of his family, and this also extended to the relationship between the king and his subjects. Tawast's rhetoric shows exactly this: he clearly perceived his relationship with the king as a personal one and tried to manipulate it with the corresponding argumentation.

However, John III did not seem convinced. Tawast had not yet received a reply in July and he renewed his plea. He was still in Finland and he had already come up with new, compelling reasons for his discharge:

Most Gracious King and Lord, I beg Your Royal Majesty most humbly and subserviently that Your Royal Majesty would condescend to relieve me from the Livonian fortresses. I am not suitable *because of both the language* and the fact that *the Livonians have never thought anything good of me*. Also *because of my weakness* I am not the man to command such a fortress. But, Gracious King and Lord, I will be in attendance loyally and with good will elsewhere, as far as is possible for me, and *preferably here in Finland*.<sup>53</sup>

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51 Kirsi Warpula, "Honour thy father and thy mother." The formation of authority in seventeenth-century Sweden', in *Manslaughter, fornication and sectarianism. Norm-breaking in Finland and the Baltic area from mediaeval to modern times*, Ed. by Anu Koskivirta and Sari Forsström, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia: Helsinki, 2002, pp. 79–82.

52 Petri Karonen, 'Johdanto: moninainen patriarkkaalisuus – normien ja käytäntöjen solmukohdat', in *Arjen valta*, Ed. by Einonen and Karonen, p. 20.

53 SRA, AHTs1, Arvid Henriksson Tawast to John III, 3 July 1590, Grabbaka: "A.N.K. och

Tawast tried to find reasons that did not shatter the image of the ideal servant and chose circumstances that he could not be expected to be able to control. His lack of language skills (meaning German, which was widely used in Livonia) and the Livonians' dislike of him together with his health problems were all things that could not be rectified overnight and which could not simply be regarded as his fault. However, it is impossible not to detect some pursuit of personal convenience in the wish he expressed to have an office in Finland.

Tawast had, however, already proceeded “with my limited capabilities” to the coast of Finland to send some troops to Narva by ship. His plan was to stay there until he got “relief from his illness and a further answer and instructions from Your Royal Majesty”.<sup>54</sup> This act was in line with the rhetoric of a loyal servant. A further display of his willingness was the fact that he finally sailed to Narva later in July, when his health improved. He had probably lost hope of being released from his post, and maybe he even began to fear that the King had started to suspect his loyalty. Now he was able to depict himself as a truly obedient subject. He wrote to the King:

I have been ill for a long time, and because I, God be blessed, have been somewhat restored to my health again, I have according to Your Royal Majesty's gracious order betaken myself to Narva. There I have *to the best of my abilities and power* (along with the good men Your Royal Majesty has commanded there) *laboured to improve the fortress* [...]”<sup>55</sup>

In his long letter, Tawast invoked many things which helped to represent himself as an ideal servant. He had followed the king's orders about the re-deployment of some troops and given detailed information about the state of the fortress, the garrison and the enemy. These were both virtues of a good servant: he obeyed his lord and provided him with services, in this case information and news. A good servant was enterprising

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Herre beder iagh EKM ganske ödmuickeligen och vnderdånigen att EKM wille wärdiges skåne mig ifron dhe liflandske befästninger, Efter iagh är icke tienlig thertill bode för mäled skuld Så och the liflandske aldrig nogon god tyckio till mig haft hafue, Samaledis för min Suagheett att Jag icke är Man att förestå sådane befästning vthan N.K. och Herre, iagh will late bruke mig troligen och wälluilligen annorstedis så mykit mig mögeligit är och helst här i Finlandh”.

54 SRA, AHTs1, Arvid Henriksson Tawast to John III, 3 July 1590, Grabbacka: “Jag med then lille machten”, “nogon lijsa, af min siuckdoom och får wijdare Swar och besked ifron EKM”.

55 SRA, AHTs1, Arvid Henriksson Tawast to John III, 12 August 1590, Wesenberg: “iagh en long tijd haffuer warid siuckligh, och efter thett iagh, gud tess loff, är någreledis kommen till min helso igen, haffuer iagh effter EKM nådige befalning begiffuitt migh till Narf-fuen, der effter min ytterste macht och förmögenhett, (sampt dij godhe män EKM dher förordnedh haffuer) beflittet migh, att same befästningh är [...] förbätredh”.



in attending to his master's interests, and Tawast would not have been able to portray himself as such if he had not actually done things that were expected of him.

However, this did not mean that Tawast accepted and settled for his new job. He made two pleas in August, now suggesting that he could concentrate on his other post as an infantry commander:

The good men Your Royal Majesty has ordered to Narva are *well capable of taking care of the needs of the fortress without anybody else*. Therefore, I want to beg Your Royal Majesty humbly, that Your Royal Majesty would graciously relieve me from the post that I now have, because *I do not know the German language well*. If it pleases Your Royal Majesty most graciously, then *I will with pleasure place myself at [your] disposal on the battlefield with Your Royal Majesty's infantry* and not spare my life, property and blood for Your Royal Majesty and the Swedish Realm, as my oath and loyalty demand and require.<sup>56</sup>

Your Royal Majesty can see yourself that *it is impossible for me to hold both posts*. If it most graciously seems proper to Your Royal Majesty, *I would prefer to be at [your] disposal on the battlefield* and to offer there my courage and blood for Your Royal Majesty and my fatherland, as I am also duty-bound to do. However, *I leave this to Your Royal Majesty's gracious consideration*. [...] I will remain a humble and loyal subject of Your Royal Majesty and Your Royal Majesty's bodily heirs as long as I live, and not spare my life for the Swedish crown, as true as God help me.<sup>57</sup>

Tawast was now using more discreet tactics. He did not have as good reasons as previously – he was not ill anymore – and he only humbly suggested that he would like another task better, making no demands and leaving it finally up to the King. As a standard move in the social game, it would have probably been considered fair for the King to offer some kind of a counter service, even if only a symbolic one, like expressing his satisfaction with Tawast's efforts. But nothing

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56 SRA, AHTs1, Arvid Henriksson Tawast to John III, 12 August 1590, Wesenberg: "dij godhe Män som EKM hafuer förordnedh på Narffuen, kune ingen föruthan wäll beställe, huad som ther i befästningen behöffues, Will förthenskull ödmiuckeligen hafue beditt EKM, att EKM welle nådig:tt förskåne, migh medh then befalningh iagh nw haffuer effter iagh icke kan thett tydzske tunge wäll, om EKM så nådig:tt täckes, då will iagh gerne, medh EKM footthälck lathe bruka migh i Marcken och hafue ospart för EKM och Sueriges Rijkis skuld, lifff godz och blodh Effter som min Eed och troo hett fordrar, och kräffuer".

57 SRA, Livonica II:1, 193: Arvid Henriksson Tawast to John III, 28 August 1590, Narva: "Huilcket EKM siälff synes, effter mig är icke mögeligitt att ware wid båda kall, Och om EKM nådigest så synes, will iag heldzt bruke mig i marken, och ther wåge midt mood och blodh för EKM, och midt Fädernes landh, såsom iag och plichtig ähr, doch steller iag sådant wdj EKM nådige behagh. [...] Jagh will så lenge iag leffuer ware EKM och EKM Lijffarffuingers ödmiucke och trogenn wndersätte, och haffue mitt lijff ospart för Sueriges Chronen, Så sant mig Gud hielpe".

of this kind happened; there was not even a reply. Actually quite the opposite: the King confiscated Tawast's and the other commanders' landed properties as a sign of his mistrust. This was part of a collective punishment of the Finnish nobility for their part in political dissent the previous year.

The King's ungracious behaviour towards the commanders naturally came to the soldiers' attention in Narva. They were already unhappy, and this was likely to increase their mistrust. This, added to the lack of provisions, put the commanders in a really bad light in the soldiers' eyes. The King was angry with the commanders, who could not play their role as benevolent lords towards the deserving soldiers. In November, after the above-mentioned rebellion, Tawast and the other commanders used the soldiers' mistrust to justify their collective plea to be dismissed:

Most Gracious King, we have this summer pushed and pressed the soldiers to do a lot of work and always *assured them of money and provisions so that they would be all the more willing*. But they have received no information of any improvement [...] [the next few words are corrupted] and *they have heard that we are in Your Royal Majesty's disfavour*, which God forbid, and that Your Royal Majesty has therefore ordered us to this border fortress and taken from us our estates and income.<sup>58</sup>

The commanders explained that things had reached such a pass that they were not able to control the soldiers anymore. This was a serious threat in a border garrison, and made a good argument:

And because they are so ill-disposed towards us, it is to be feared that if there is a siege, *we cannot govern them more than they themselves allow*. Therefore our humble prayer to Your Royal Majesty is that Your Royal Majesty would graciously release us from here and appoint some other good men here who have not had to do with them before, and whom they would fear and obey more than us.<sup>59</sup>

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58 SRA, AHTs1, Arvid Henriksson Tawast to John III, 28 October 1590, Narva: "ANK medan wij hafue vdi thenne Somar- drifuit och kräffued knechtarne till stor arbeett, och ther hoos alltiid förtrösted them med pnr- och fetalie på thett the skulle ware tess willigere Men Effter the ingen bättring förnimm [...] [corrupted words] och latid sig höre att wij skule ware vdi EKM [...] forbiude så och EKM hafuer therföre förordned oss [...] på thette grentze hws Så och tagit ifron oss wår gårdar [...] vnderhåld".

59 SRA, AHTs1, Arvid Henriksson Tawast to John III, 28 October 1590, Narva: "Och mädan the hafue till oss sådan afuund är till befruchtande om någon belegring blifuer att wij icke rådhe meere med them än the sielfue wele Derföre är till EKM wår ödmiucke bönn att EKM nådig:t wille förlossa oss hedan, och hijtt förordne någre andre godhe Män som inthet hafue haft med them tilförenne bescaffo, them the hafue meere fruchtan före och är lydigere än oss".

The argument also reveals the practical importance of maintaining social ideals. The king had not answered the pleas sent to him nor rewarded his servants, but punished them by depriving them of their land. To the common soldiers, the logical conclusion seems to have been that the commanders had fallen into disfavour, which meant that their credibility suffered a decisive blow. Tawast wrote to the King that the soldiers had turned to blaming him for the war and for their missing pay: “[They] say that I am the reason for this long-lasting war, and that I have not obtained for them the sum they have earned. They have been threatening me these last few days, so that, to tell you the truth, I dare not move outside this fortress.”<sup>60</sup> Obviously, this was not an ideal state of affairs. Tawast hints that as the King had not fulfilled his part, the soldiers had turned against their immediate commanders.

The whole episode seems to have been frustrating, for, despite all the pleas, the King did not respond in the desired way. But as previously argued, the deeper meaning of the argumentation process lay not just in convincing the King, but in convincing others, too.

By diligent argumentation, the subjects had acquired a legitimate pretext for deviating from the social ideals, as they had released themselves from the obligations of reciprocity. It was no longer their duty to be ideal servants of their king, as he had turned out to be an ungrateful lord. One of the officers in the Narva garrison, Johan la Blanque, wrote: “It does not benefit the King that we, albeit innocent, should be murdered here, which I must fear every day. I declare that I will not go on any military campaign with the army, even if my refusal should cost my life.” He considered that his honour did not require him to act as a loyal servant any more.<sup>61</sup>

The common soldiers were of the same mind: they had been promised provisions and pay but they had got none, the war seemed to be never-ending, and the situation in the garrison was unbearable. They felt they had been abandoned to their own devices. So they refused to take further commands until they received some reciprocal services. The above-mentioned Johan la Blanque wrote: “The soldiers say that if they ever get back to Sweden again, His Royal Majesty will never again be able to get them away from there.”<sup>62</sup> The King had put himself in a difficult situation by not revealing himself to be a benevolent lord towards his subjects. It could be argued that by not playing the language game correctly, the

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60 SRA, Livonica II:1, 193: Arvid Henriksson Tawast to John III, 19 October 1590, Narva: “[...] föregifue, att iag skulle, ware orsaken till, thette longwarig krig och icke håller hafuer förfordrad them then deell sosom the förtientt haffue. såsom the och nw i tessse dagar hafue unsagdt mig att iag icke snarast sagdt tår röre mig vtur thenne Befästning”.

61 Tawaststjerna, *Pohjoismaiden viisikolmattavuotinen sota*, p. 95.

62 Tawaststjerna, *Pohjoismaiden viisikolmattavuotinen sota*, p. 96.

King exacerbated the difficult situation in Narva and damaged his own interests with regard to waging a successful war against the Russians.

Of course, this was not just a matter of language and argumentation. John III did not necessarily want to give the impression that he was an unfair lord or to deny the troops their remuneration and provisions. He was not in an easy situation either. The lack of resources was acute throughout the realm, and the location of Narva made it difficult for transports to reach it. Delays in communication were also great: in the autumn, it could take four months to exchange letters. But all this was irrelevant from the point of view of the Narva garrison. What mattered to them was the harsh facts and their interpretation of the situation. The important thing was that, for whatever reason, the King had given his subjects the impression of being an indifferent and unreasonably demanding lord. The subjects did not accept this as they considered that they should get reciprocal benevolence as a reward for their obedience. The King might have very different ideas about his role and appropriate ways of behaving but this was of no consequence if he could not get his subjects to share his ideas.

## THE OUTCOME

Tawast himself did not infringe the limits of willing service as he did not show any signs of disobedience, or at least we have no knowledge of such acts. In his rhetoric, he remained loyal. Perhaps he would have turned to other resorts had the situation continued, but, probably unexpectedly, in December 1590 he actually got the discharge he had longed for. However pleasant and welcome this news was to him, the reason for the dismissal seems not to have been so much Tawast's pleas but rumours the King had heard about him treating the troops harshly.<sup>63</sup> He fell into general disfavour and held no official duties for a couple of years. The King's answer to the commanders' collective complaints about their confiscated properties was curt. There was also a direct swipe at Tawast:

Concerning your estates there in Livonia that have been taken away from you, about which you have written to our beloved Privy Council: *you will get an answer in the future after we now see how loyally you will behave this winter and the spring to come.* But as for Arvid Henriksson's estate and property of Kundis, *a somewhat*

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63 SRA, Skrivelser till konungen, Johan III:s tid, Vol 5: Arvid Henriksson Tawast to John III, December 1590, Vesunta: "iag är förförder hoos EKM att iag skulle ware obarmhertigh moott EKM krigzfälck och latid falla Smedelig ord [...]".

*smaller one would have well suited him.* And we have now released him from his posts as commander of infantry and commandant as he has requested, and ordered him to come here to us, where he will himself get an answer concerning his estates and more.<sup>64</sup>

Here, in fact, we can see some clashing interpretations regarding social ideals. John III's interpretation of his role as king was in this case that he had the right to demand loyal service first and to give a reward later, if he deemed it proper. In the end, it was a question of whose arguments had the strongest force behind them, who was able to press his claim. The Narva case showed that the King had no monopoly of social ideals; it was the subjects' interpretation that mattered.

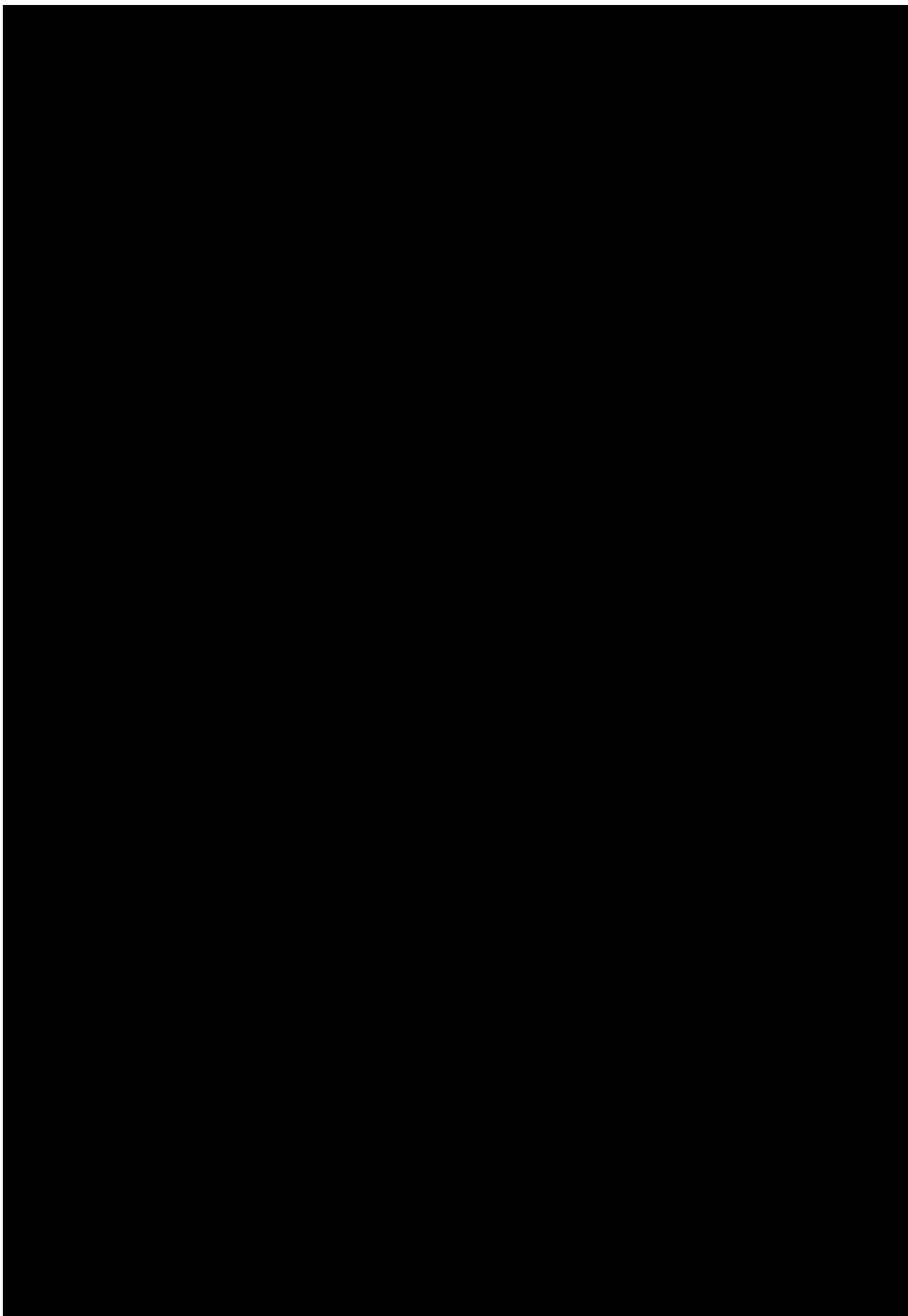
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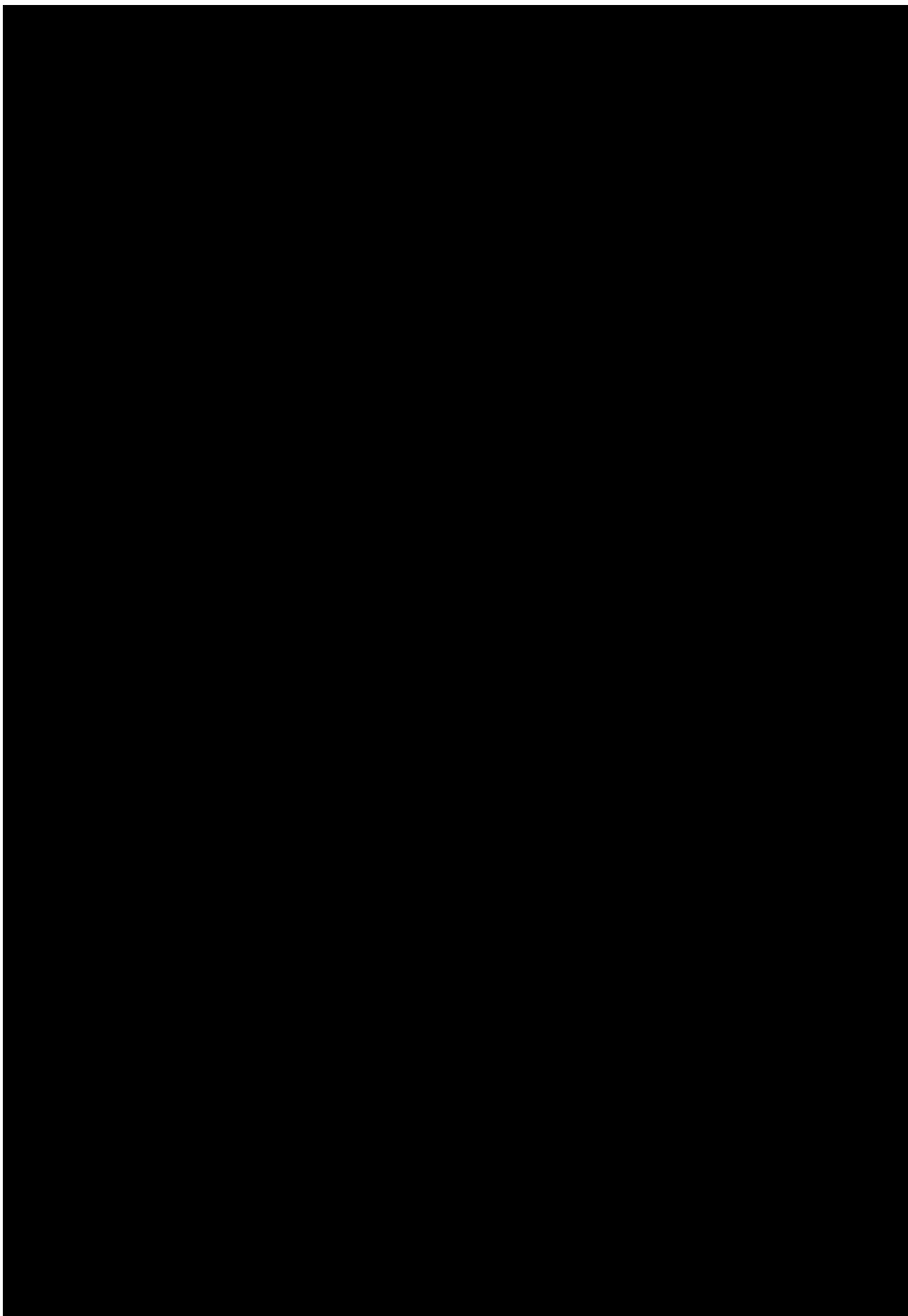
In this article, my claim has been that one way to approach life coping is to analyse sources from the point of view of social ideals. Early modern people described their actions with a vocabulary of shared norms and values so that others would understand them and consider that they were behaving in a socially acceptable way. Then they could reciprocally expect the same kind of behaviour from others. The actual behaviour could not differ too much from the norms, but this does not mean that people had no choice but to act according to the lofty social ideals.

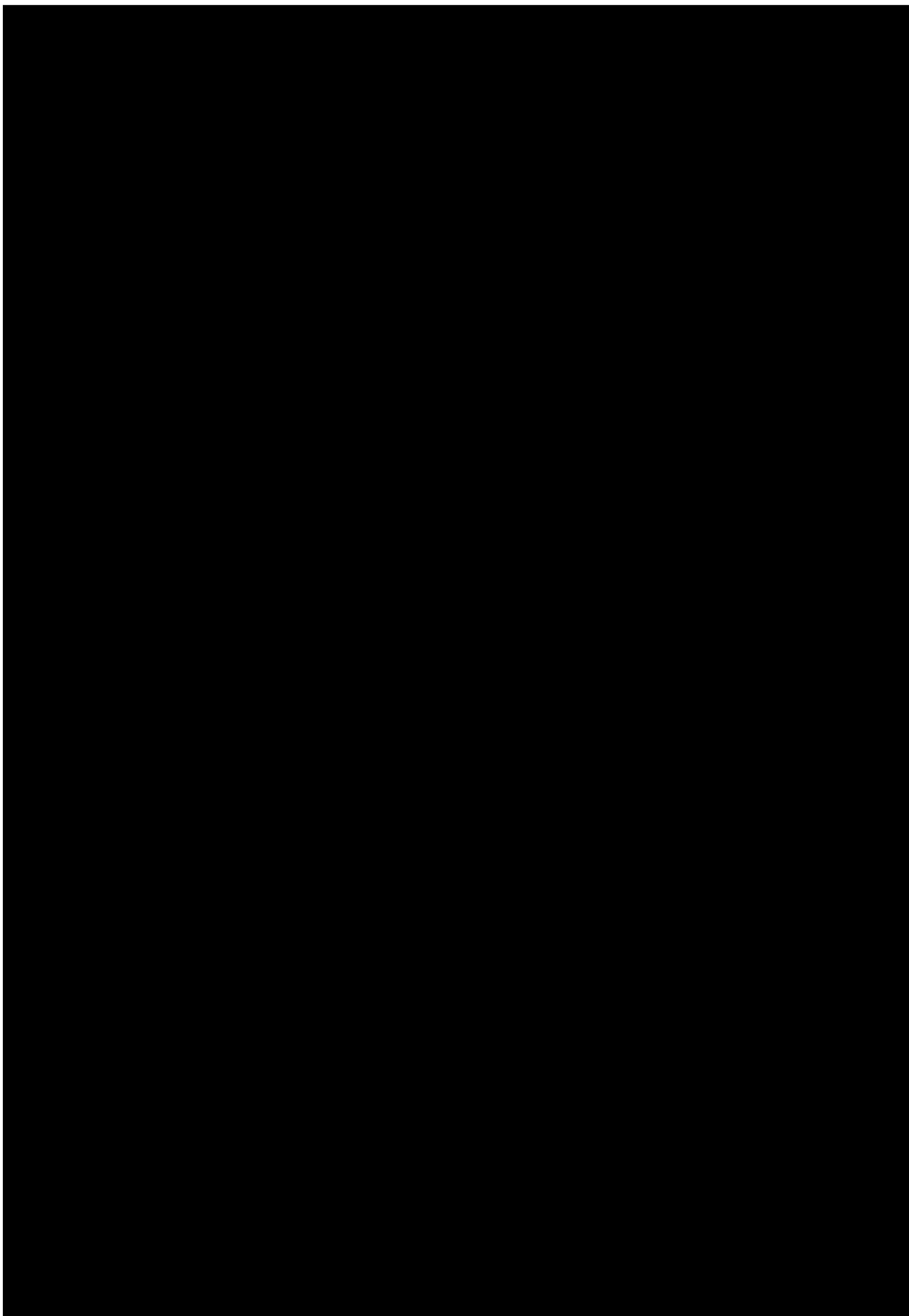
There were plenty of possibilities for a clever person to manipulate the verbal representations of his actions so that they would fit into the pattern of acceptable behaviour. If he succeeded, he was able to put strong pressure on his counterparts to act in ways that could be represented in an equally ideal light, or, in case this did not succeed for some reason, at least he would gain social approval for himself and disapproval for his counterparts. I think these matters can be regarded as one strategy of life-coping. They also offer one possible interpretation when one reads early modern sources and wonders why people over and over again write polite but seemingly meaningless and uninformative phrases.

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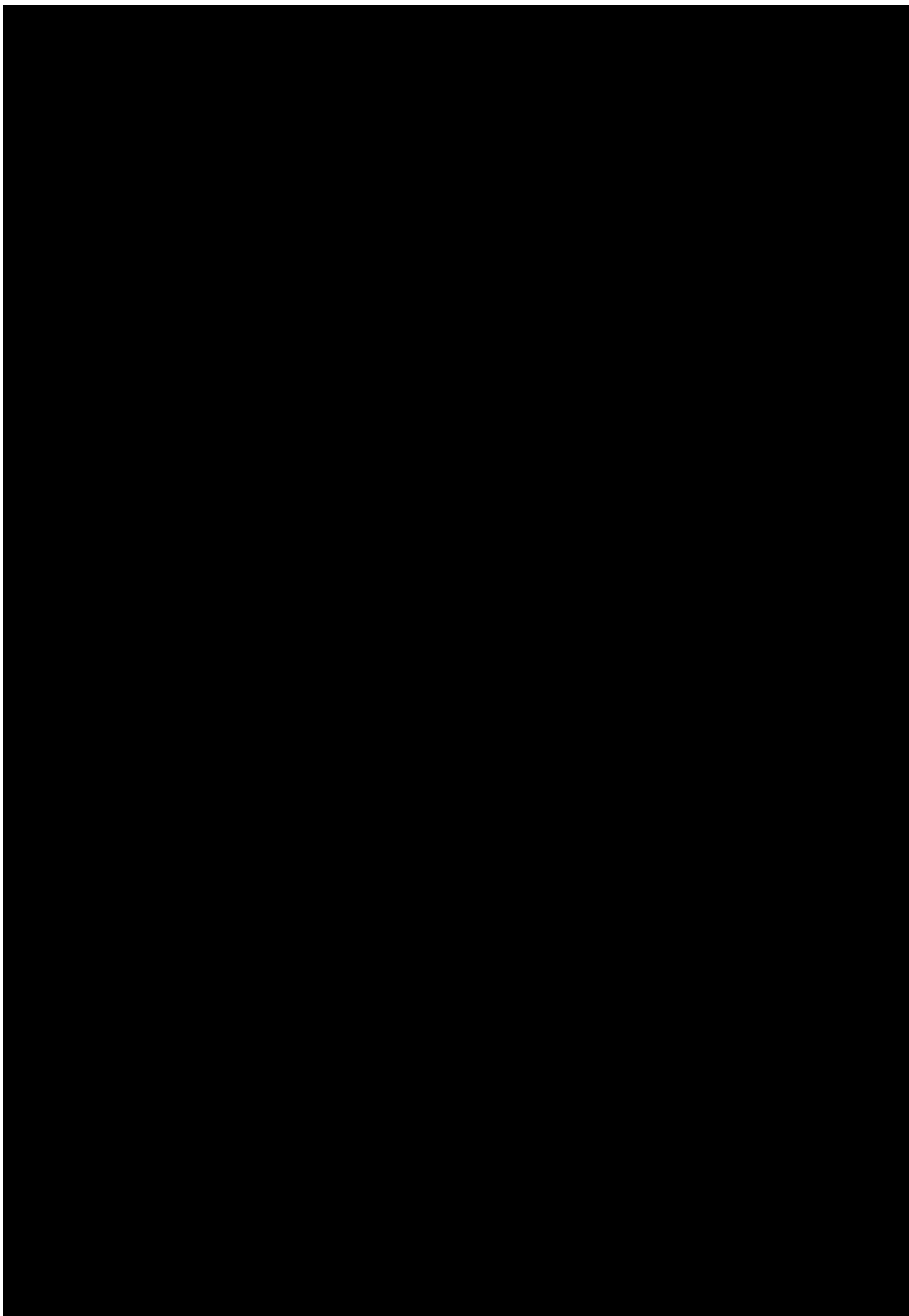
64 Uppsala University Library E 158 a: Oxenstjernska brevväxlingen I, f. 116: an extract of a letter by John III to the commanders of Narva, 14 December 1590, Uppsala: "Huad elliest edert godz tillkommer ther i Lijfland, ssom eder ähr ifrå kändz, och i hafue skrifuidt wårt Elskelige Rijks rååd till om, ther på kunne i wäll framdelis få suar när wij nu see huru troligenn i eder wdj thenne Winter och tillstundande whår, förhållandis warde, Men huadh Arfuedh Hindrichssons gård och godz Kundis tillkommer, hade honom wäll höffdz noget mindre ähn thz war, Och hafue wij nu förskonadt honom med Knicktöffuerste och Stårthollere Embetedt, efter hans begerann, och förskrifuidt honom hijt till oss, Her han sielf skall bekomme suar, om sama godz och Annadt mhere".

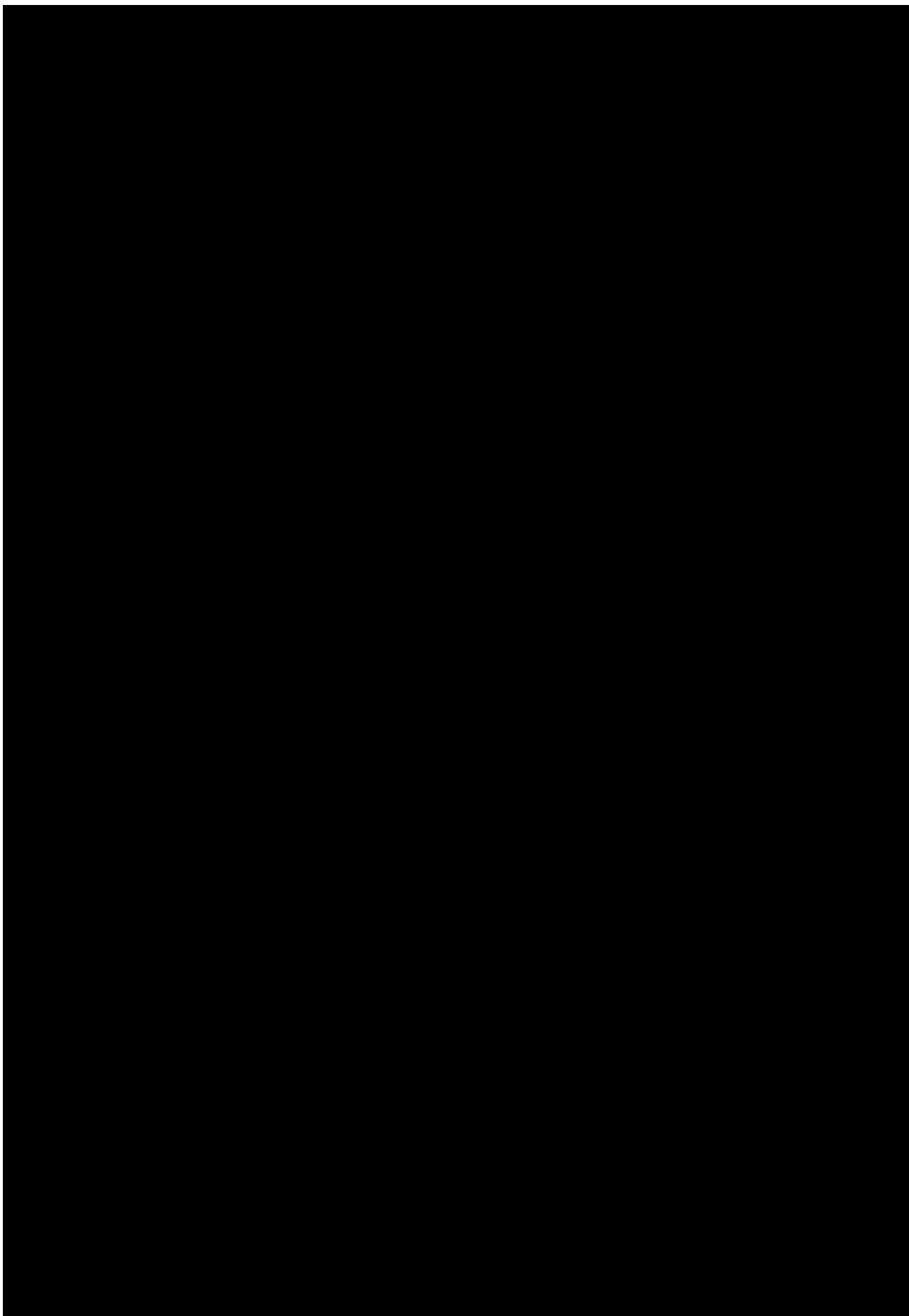


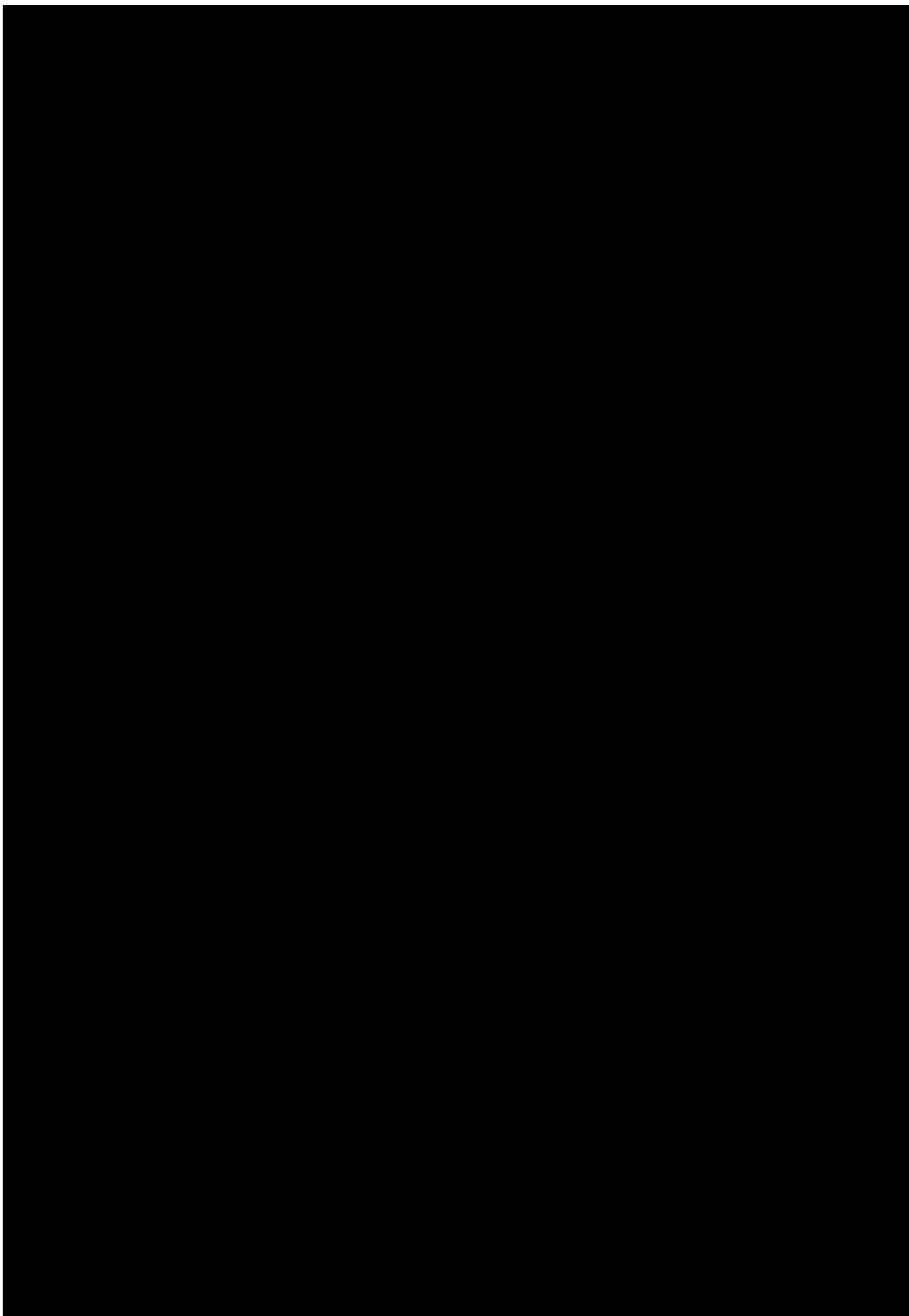


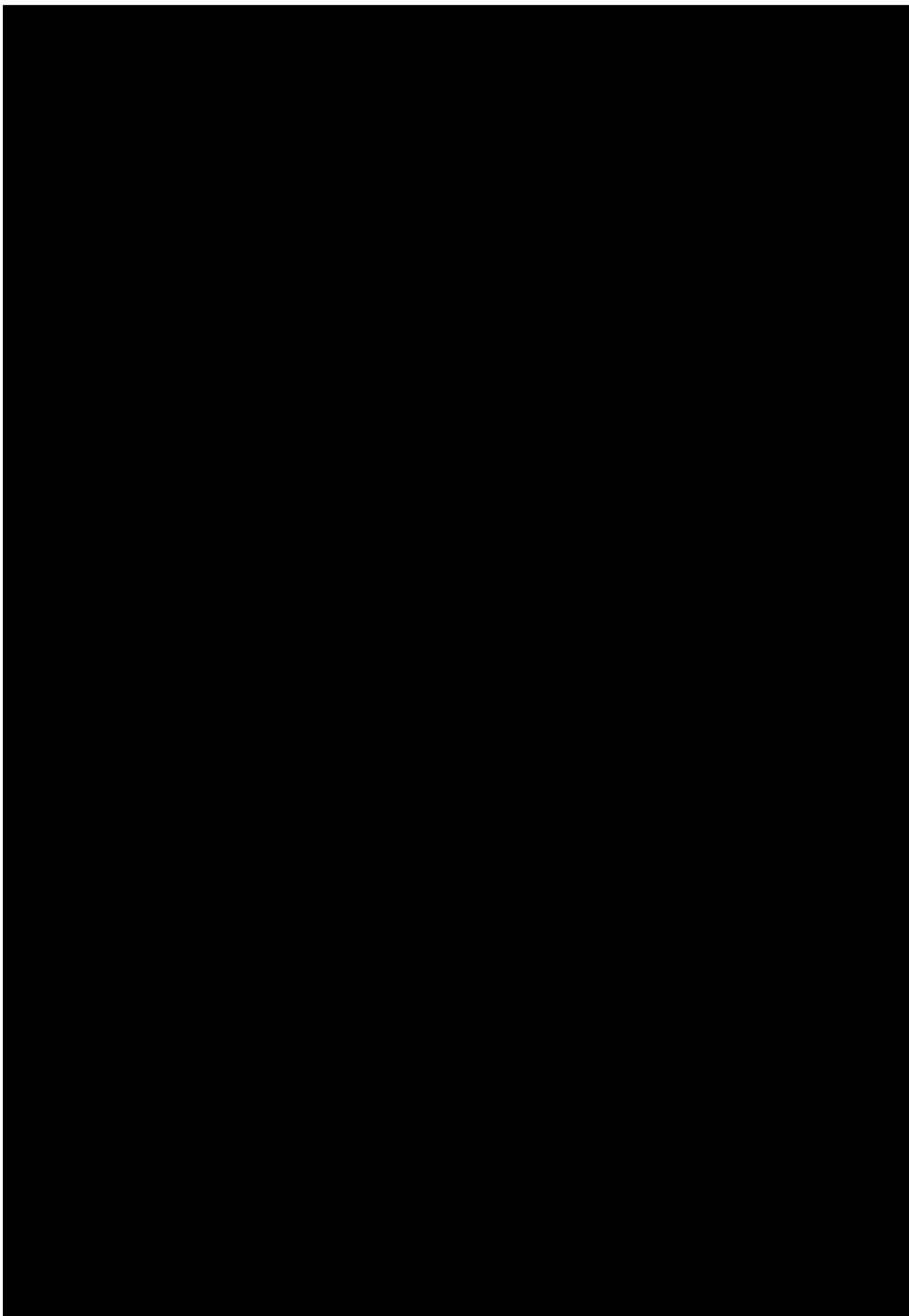


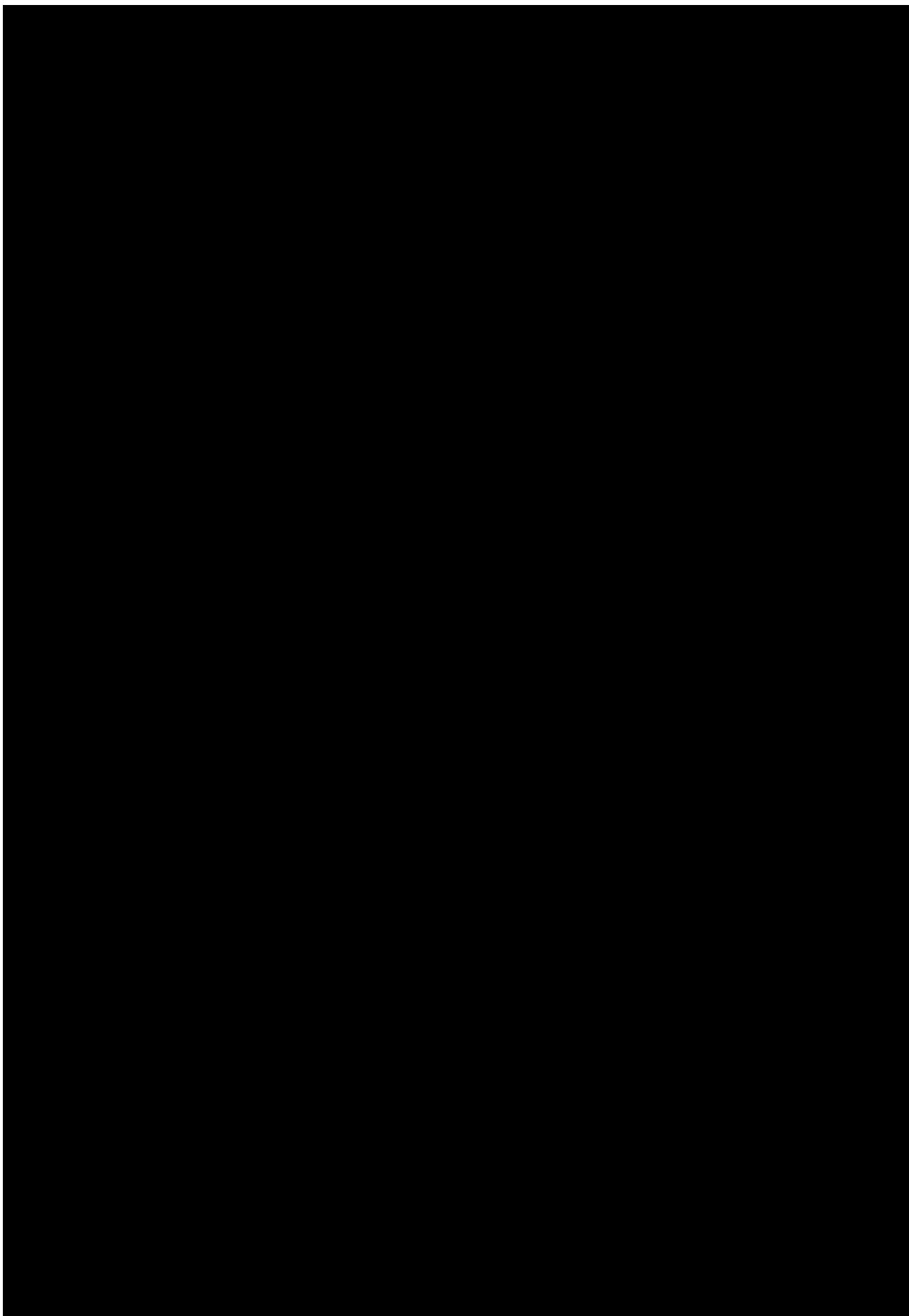


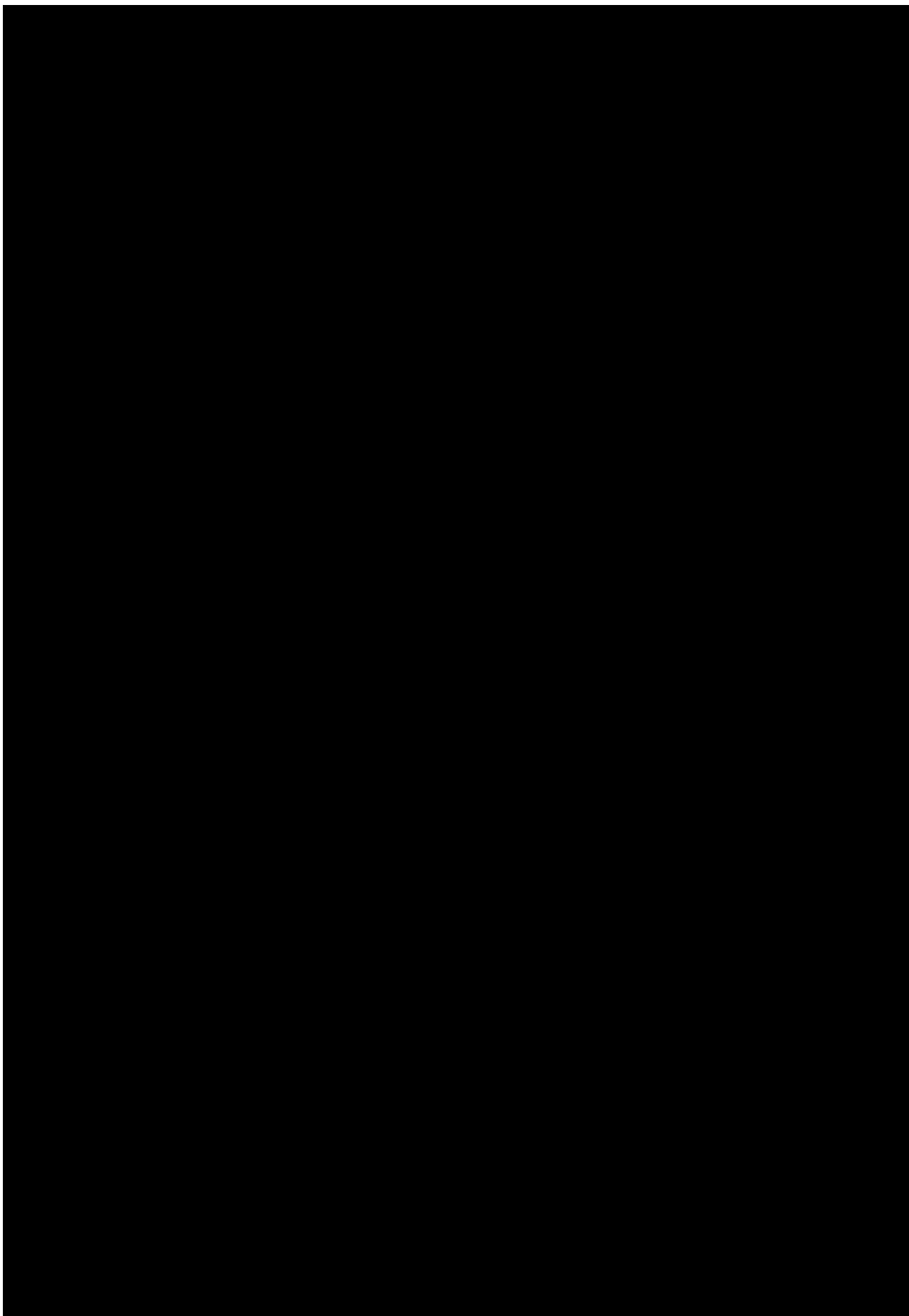


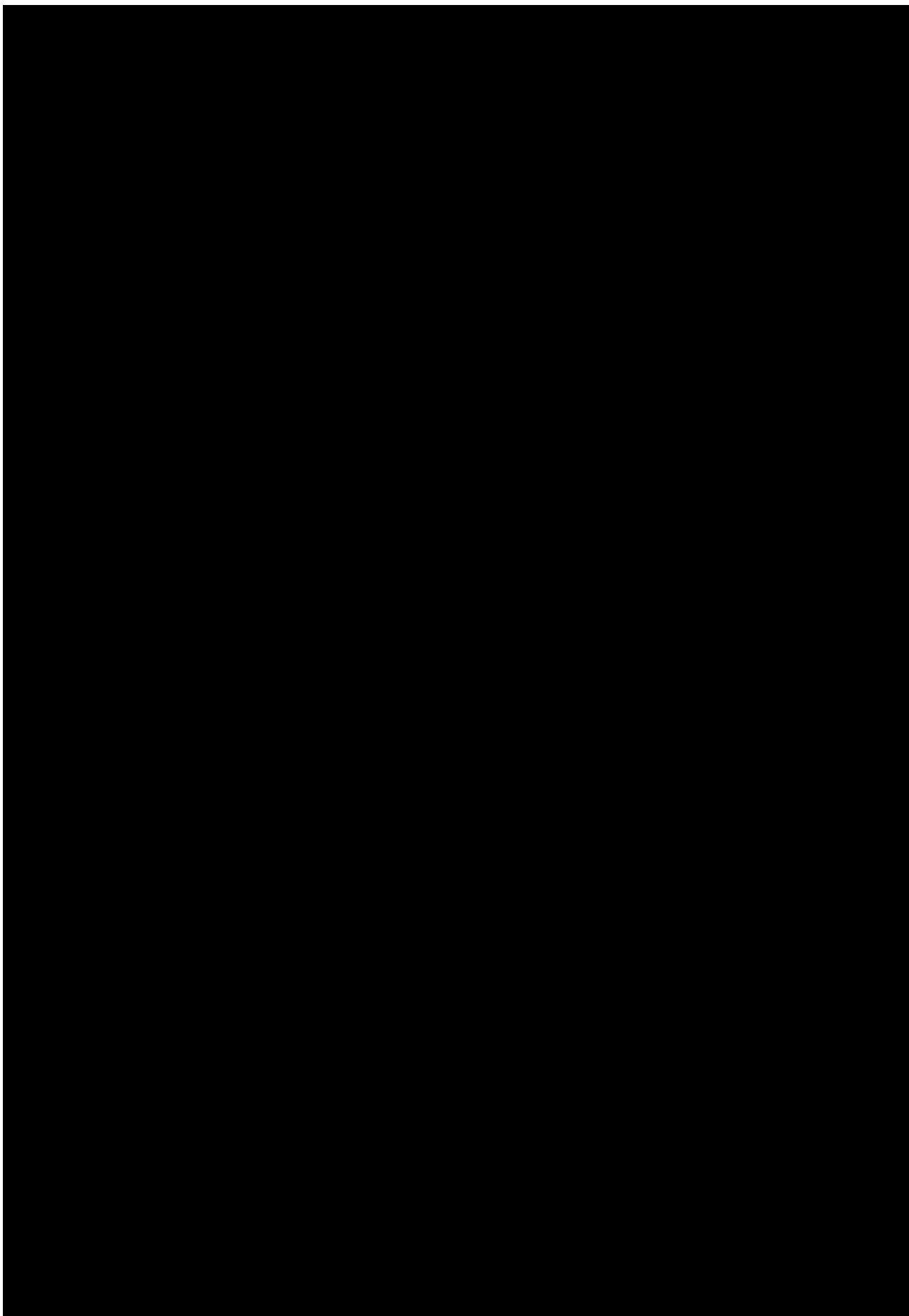


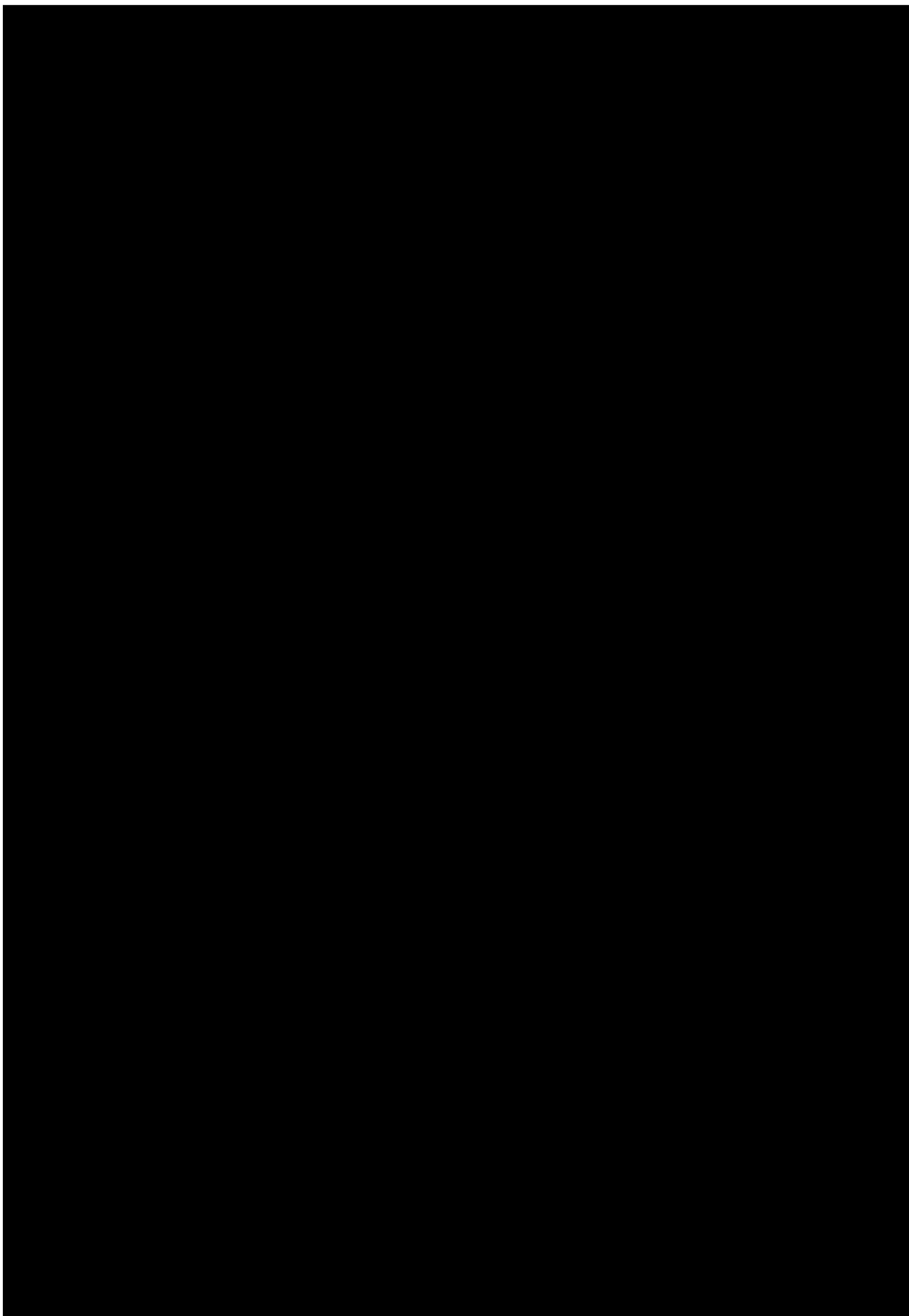




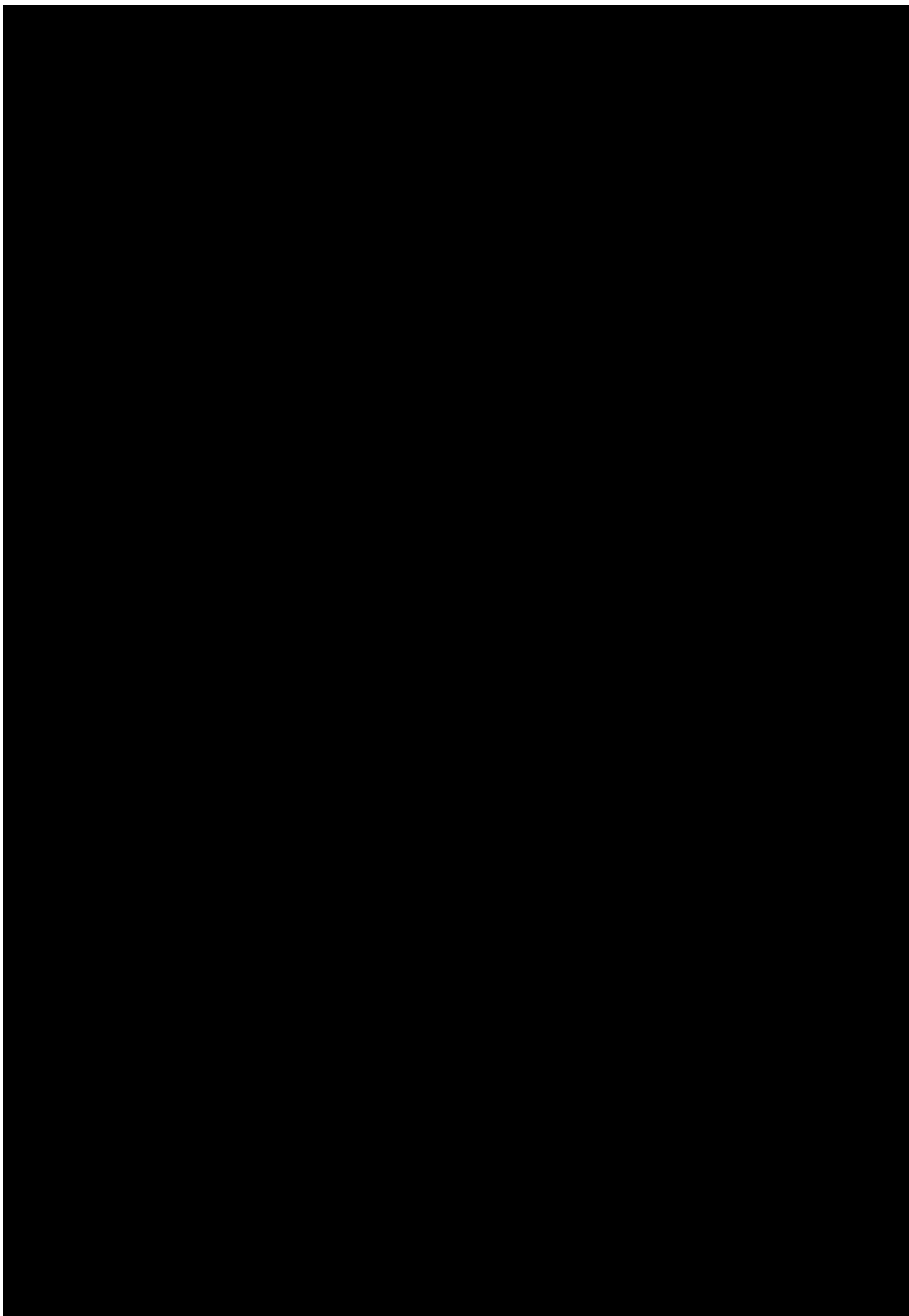


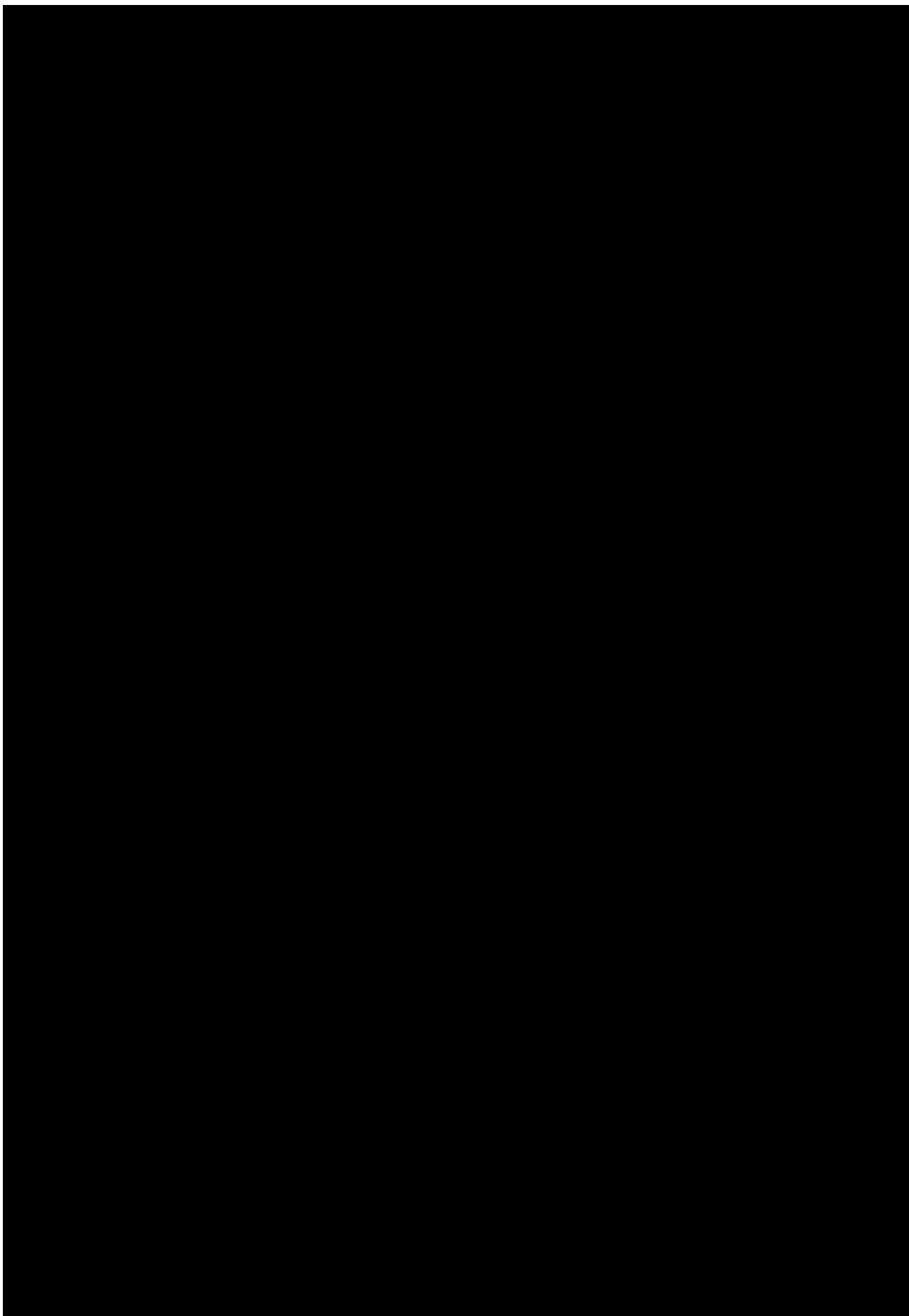


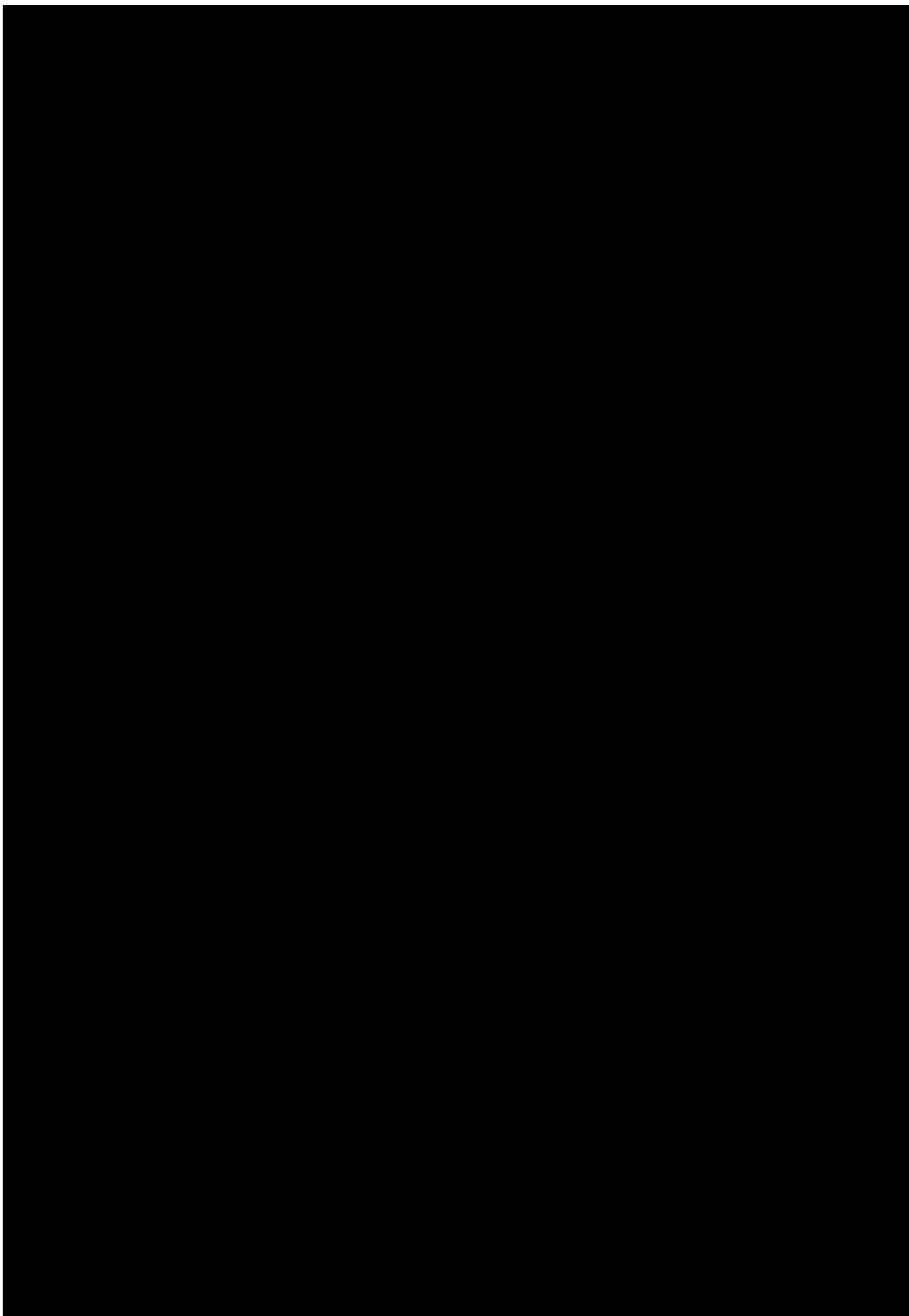


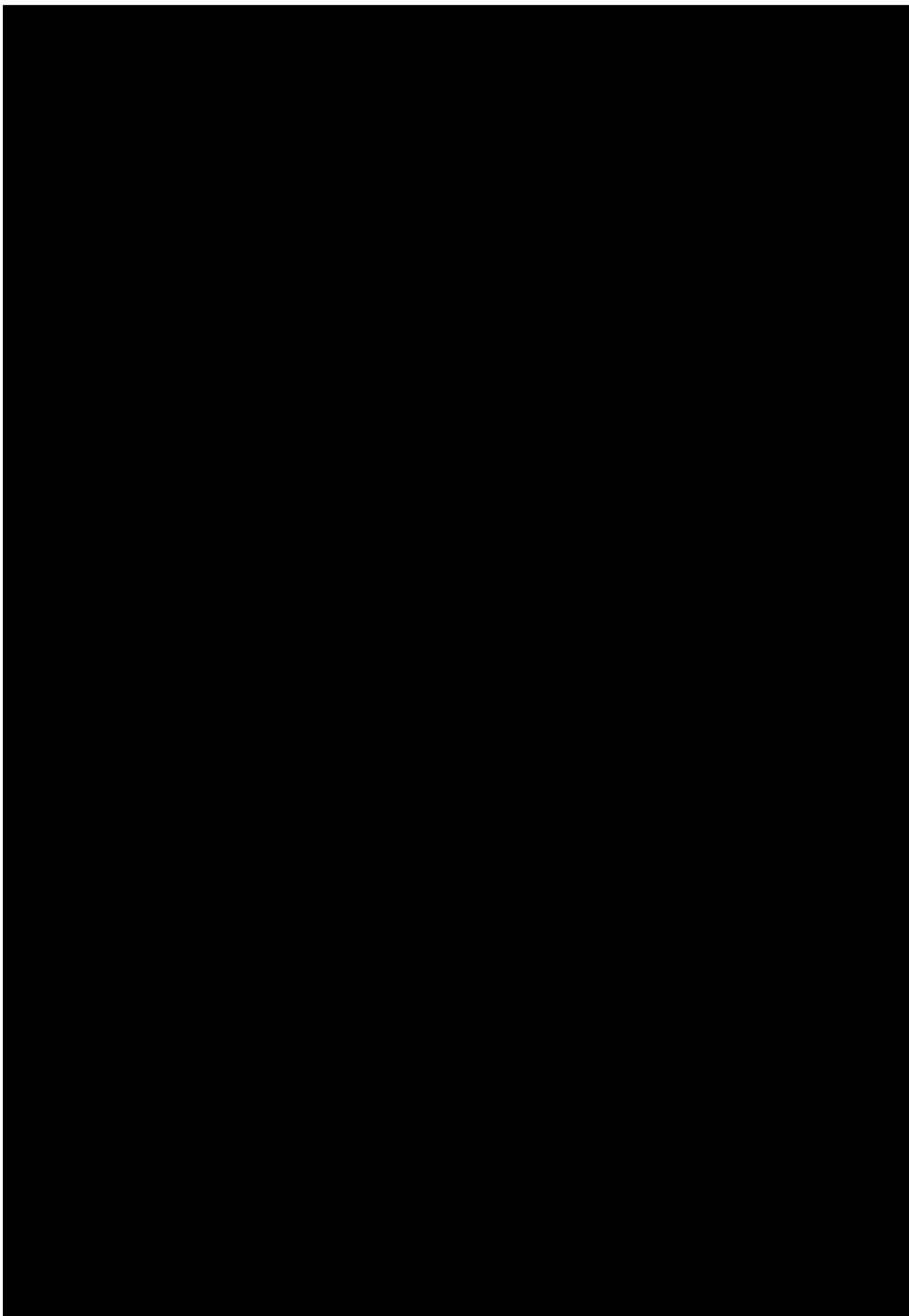


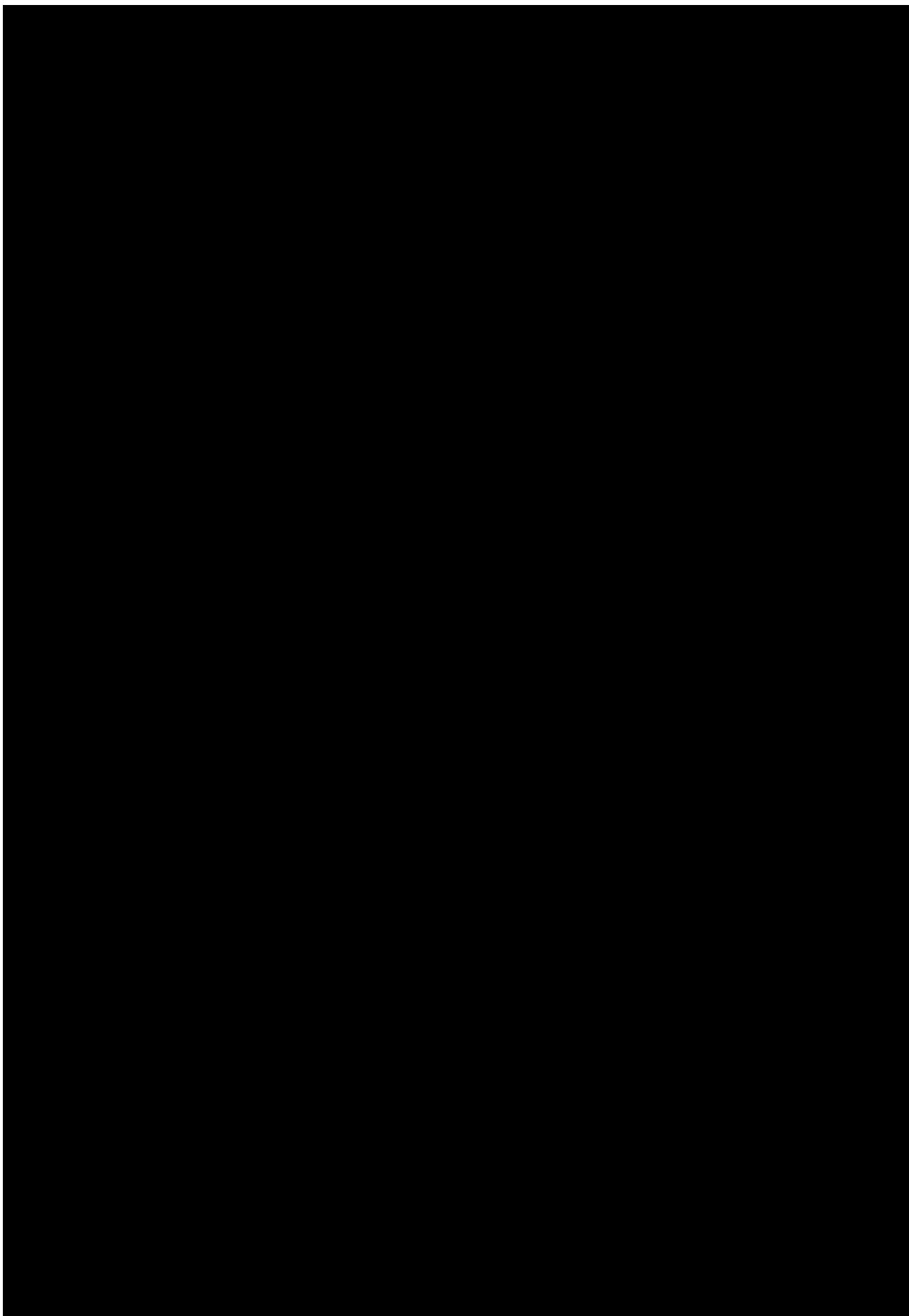


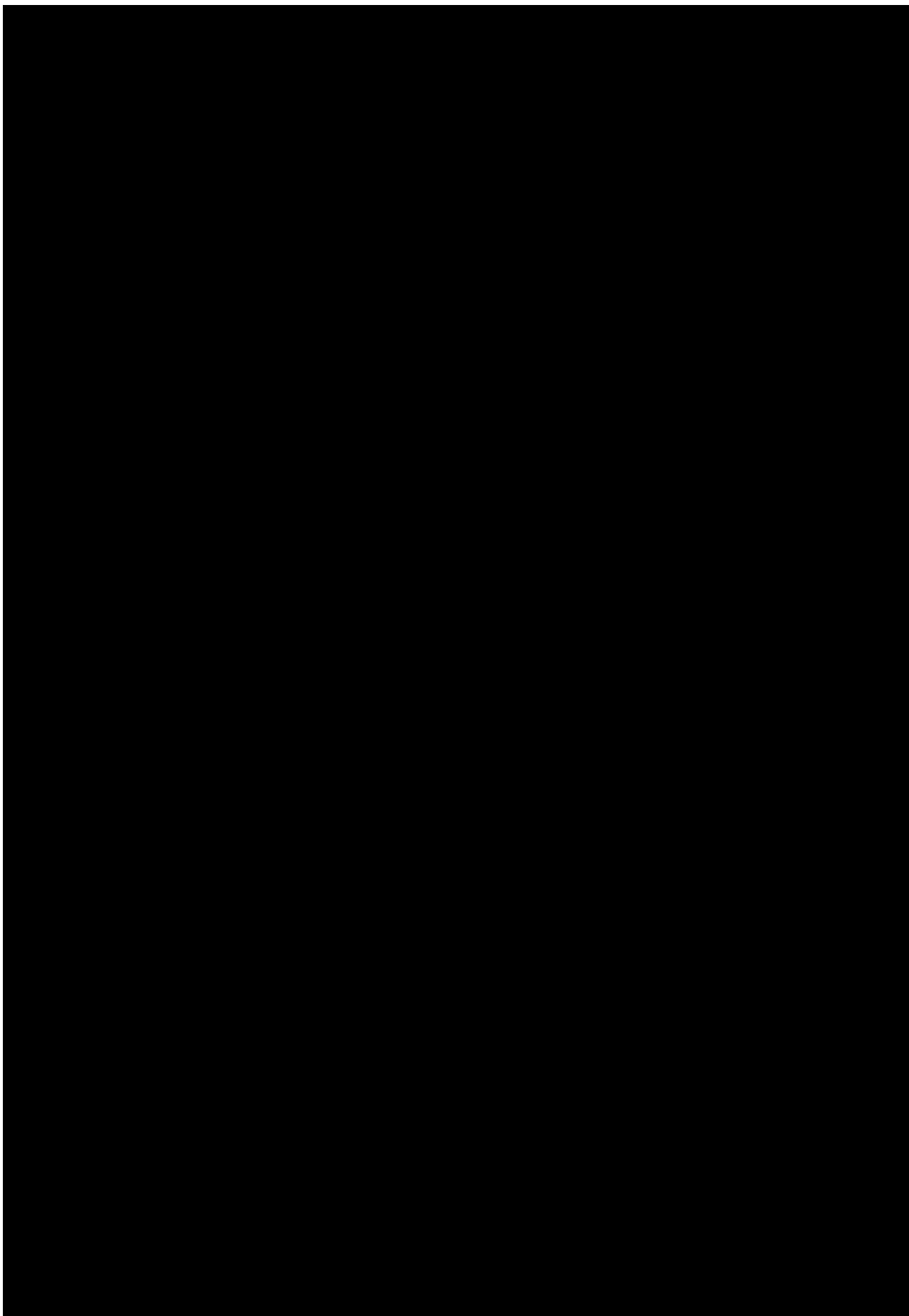


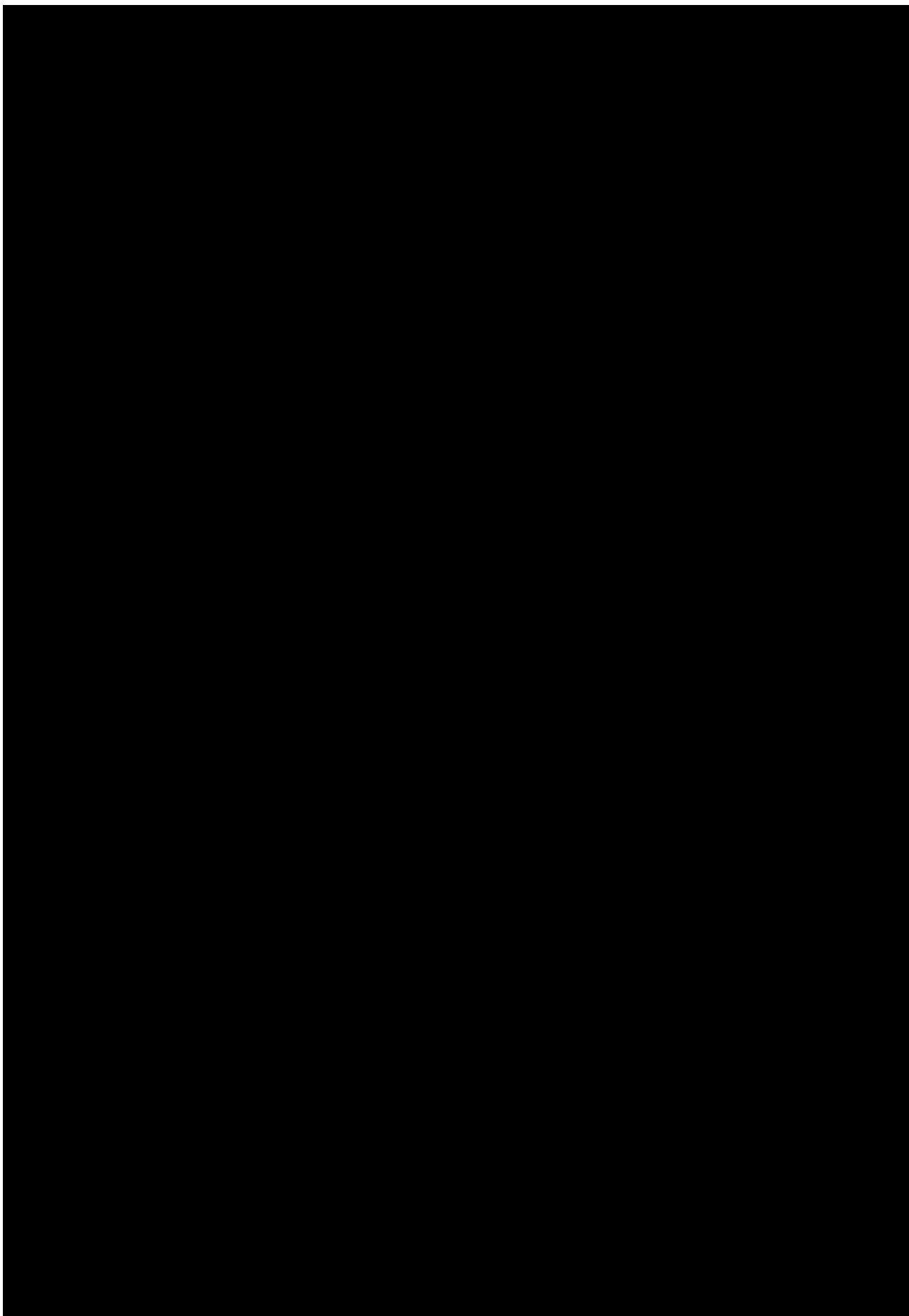


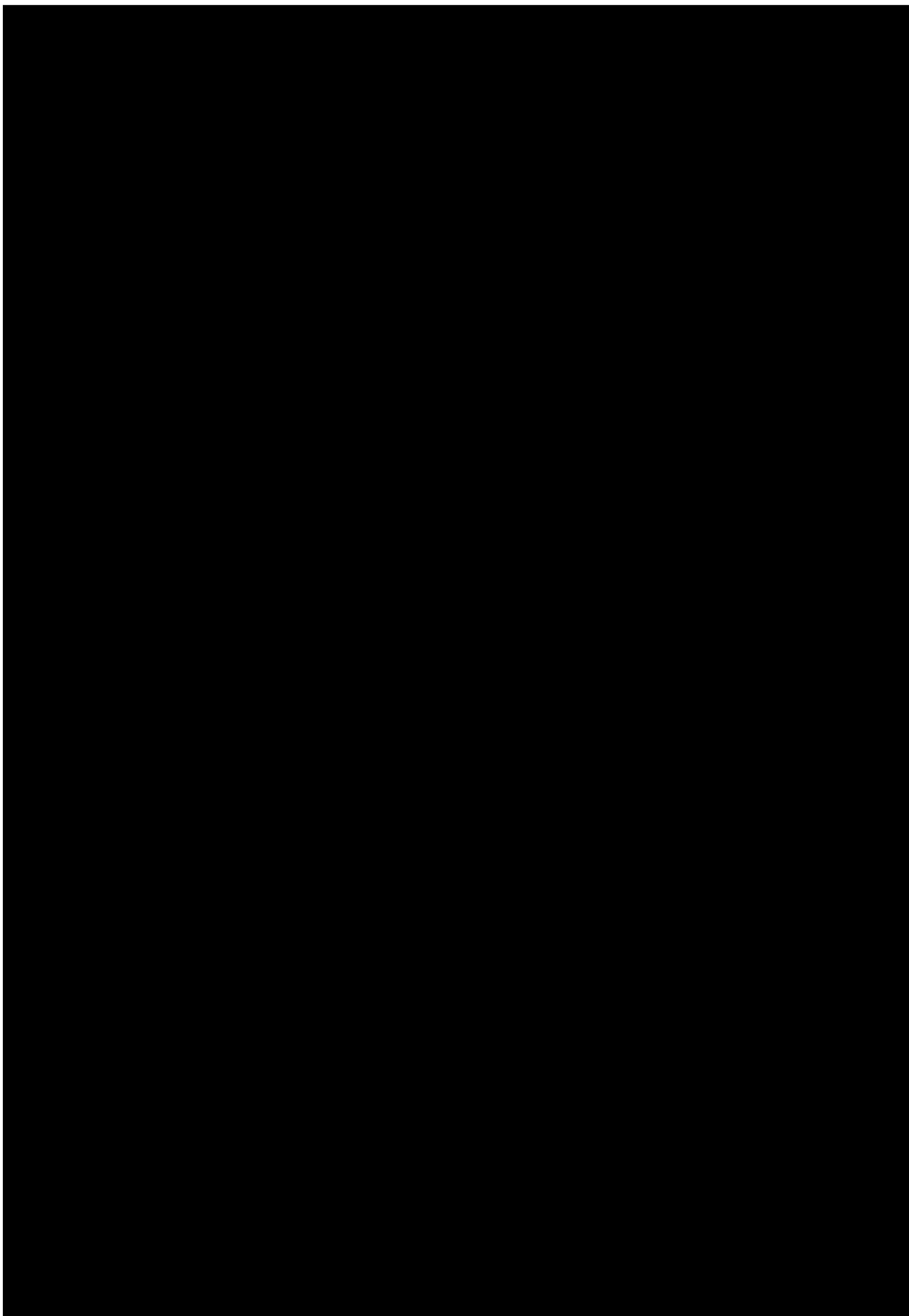




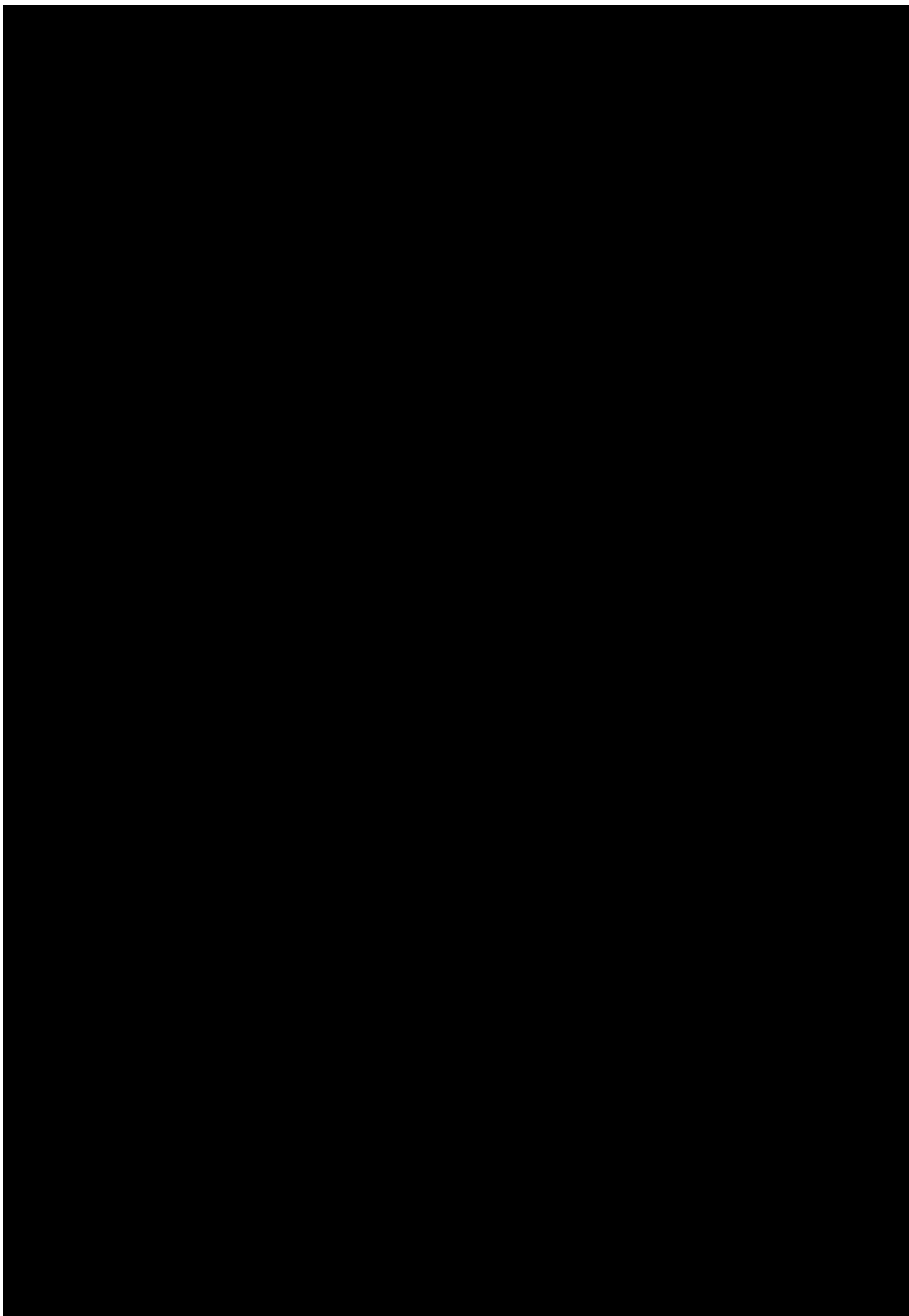


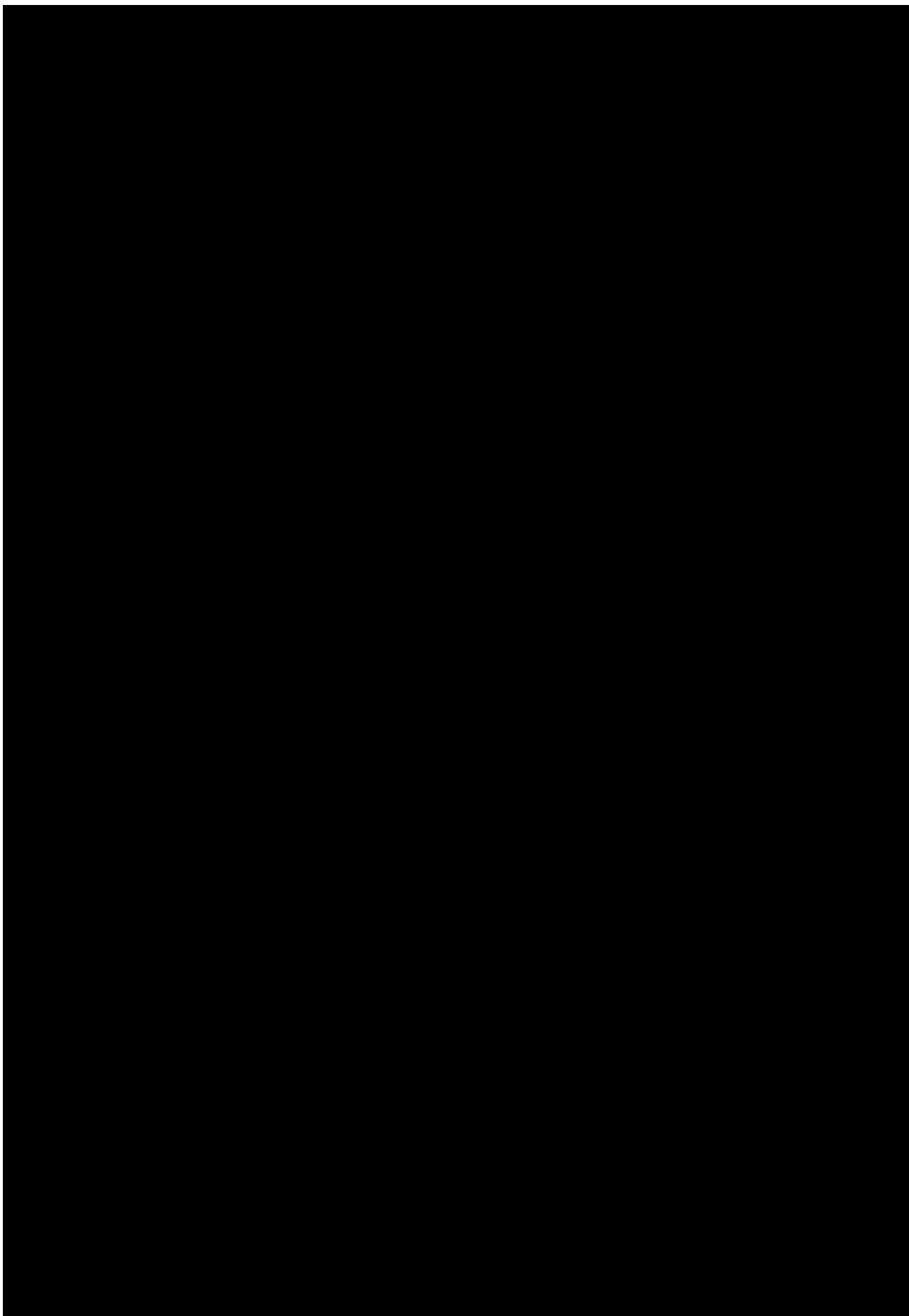












## CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

### Patron-Client Relations Used in Advancing Academic Careers

*Marko Hakanen*

## HOPES AND FEARS

Life in the seventeenth-century Swedish society of the Estates should have been simple. People were told that the station into which they were born was where they would stay for the rest of their lives; to do otherwise would be to disrupt the order ordained by God. This was the message conveyed by the Church, the government and all other formal and informal institutions. Everyone was expected to respect and be content with the social status conferred by the circumstances of their birth. Naturally, the reality was different, since humans are social animals able to achieve goals by cooperation,<sup>1</sup> purposive agents with reasons for their activities and able to elaborate discursively upon those reasons.<sup>2</sup> They harbour hopes and fears regarding the management of their everyday lives and dreams for the future.

The structure of societies has been a topic of interest in a number of intellectual fields. Philosophers, cultural anthropologists, sociologists and historians, among others, have noted the role of social structure in the search for the reasons behind human actions.<sup>3</sup> It is clear that if we want to understand the motives for human

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1 Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, Vol. 1: *A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1987, p. 5.

2 Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, Polity Press: Oxford, 1984, p. 3.

3 For a good overview of different views of agency theories see Ellen Messer-Davidov, 'Acting Otherwise', in *Provoking Agents. Gender and Agency in Theory and Practise*, Ed. by Judith Kegan Gardiner, University of Illinois Press: Urbana and Chigago, 1995, pp. 23–51.

activities, we must also understand the context in which human action takes place. In social theory, the notions of action and structure presuppose one another, even if it is possible to study these different aspects separately. From a functionalist point of view, social systems are reproductions of relations between actors and collectivities, organized in the form of regular social practices. These systems are structured and, taken together, the totality of systems of social interaction constitutes the structure of society. In these interactive social systems, an important role is played by social practices and the social actors who produce and reproduce the systems, and who at same time know a great deal about the institutions and practices which comprise them.<sup>4</sup>

Patronage as a system of practices and understandings played an important role in seventeenth-century Swedish society. It was a useful tool for maintaining power or gaining more of it, moving up the social ladder, and achieving goals and fulfilling hopes in everyday life. In this paper, my focus is on the agency that existed within the patronage system, and how this system helped the actors to achieve their goals. I take as my example the case of the Royal Academy of Turku (Sw. Åbo). Within the academic world, personal achievement and merit began to play an important role in career achievement sooner than in other social institutions. For this reason, an examination of how people advanced their interests within the context of the seventeenth-century university provides an unusually lucid window onto the ways in which individuals strategized and exercised their personal agency within networks which nonetheless arose within a fairly rigid social hierarchy.

When Anthony Giddens<sup>5</sup> writes about the structure of society and the social systems inside it, he emphasizes the significance of tradition. Particularly when social systems are changing, it is important to note that new systems are always linked to the past. On the other hand, we cannot regard social systems as progressing in a linear manner through time and space. Much of the time, new systems simply adopt parts of older ones and adjust them to the new values and practices of the contemporary society.

Clientage<sup>6</sup> flourished in seventeenth-century Sweden, but it did not spring from a void. Many things changed in Swedish society at the beginning of the century,

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4 Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory. Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*, Palgrave MacMillan: Haundmills and London, 1979, pp. 53–9, 66, 71.

5 Giddens, *Central Problems*, pp. 198–201; Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, pp. 236–43.

6 The word “patron” first appears in the Swedish language in the beginning of the seventeenth century and rapidly became a frequently used expression. See the entry under “patron” in *Svenska Akademiens Ordbok* (SAOB) (online: <http://g3.spraakdata.gu.se/saob/>); Heiko Droste, ‘Språk och livsform. Patronage i 1600-talets Sverige’, *Scandia*, Vol. 64, No. 1, 1998, p. 41.

and the changes created a need for patronage, but at same time there was a pre-existing tradition of social interaction based on friendship networks.<sup>7</sup> The rhetoric of friendship and brotherhood was used to reproduce the social order by including certain persons and excluding others. In this way, a social system was created and maintained in which different persons and social groups were expected to interact with each other.<sup>8</sup> Commoners and nobles alike turned to patrons because the latter had the power to influence people's lives. Patrons could offer support and protection to clients in exchange for favours. Unlike in modern times, patrons expected to be referred to as patrons and were proud of the title.<sup>9</sup>

Wartime conditions tend to affect peoples lives in a broadly sweeping sense, and this was especially true in the case of Sweden, because Sweden was almost constantly at war throughout the entire seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup> This meant that Sweden, which was chiefly agrarian and whose population was very small compared with those of other European powers, had to find more efficient ways to finance the costs of warfare. This was possible only by taxing its population more heavily and collecting the tax revenue more efficiently than before. The key factor in this solution was the administration and the ways in which it could be improved.

When Axel Oxenstierna became the Chancellor of the Realm, he together with King Gustavus II Adolphus started a campaign to overhaul the entire government administration. This meant reshaping old institutions and creating new ones to take care of more specific areas. In practice, this reform turned out to be more difficult to realise than they had expected, and in many cases they had to accept smaller changes. One of their problems was a lack of qualified candidates to fill the newly-created offices. High-level offices had previously been reserved for the members of the noble estate, but at the same time a military career was still

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7 Regarding the rhetorical expressions used in friendship and patronage networks see Marko Hakanen and Ulla Koskinen, 'From "Friends" to "Patrons". Transformations in the social power structure as reflected in the rhetoric of personal letters in 16th- and 17th-century Sweden', *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2009, pp. 1–22.

8 Ulla Koskinen, 'Friends and Brothers. Rhetoric of friendship as a medium of power in late-16th-century Sweden and Finland', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 30, No. 3–4, 2005 p. 246.

9 Three of the clients discussed in this paper referred to Per Brahe as their patron. See Skoklostersamlingen, E8159 and 8165, National Archives, Stockholm.

10 On the impact of wars on society see Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990*, Blackwell: Cambridge, 1990; Charles Tilly, 'Entanglements of European Cities and States', in *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe AD 1000 to 1800*, Ed. by Charles Tilly and Wim P. Blockmans, Westview Press: Boulder, CO 1994; Sven A. Nilsson, *De stora krigens tid. Om Sverige som militärstat och bondesambälle*, Uppsala universitet: Uppsala, 1990; Petri Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta. Ruotsi ja Suomi 1521–1809*, WSOY: Porvoo & Helsinki, 1999.

considered the most honourable career for young nobles. This situation created a difficult dilemma for the aristocracy. If they allowed non-noble persons to fill the new offices, there would be pressure to remove the aristocracy's privileges. The other option was to ennoble more people to meet the qualifications for the posts. However they looked at the situation, the options were distasteful. The aristocracy naturally wanted to retain the powers they had gained, and they did not like increasing the ranks of the lower nobility because in the end this group would start making more demands. One solution was patronage, in which men of power helped those from the lower ranks to get a job and thus, through the force of gratitude, retained a measure of control over them.

In attempting to unravel seventeenth-century Swedish patronage networks, personal correspondence provides useful source materials. In letters written by individuals, the line between the private and the public is thin. Letters are among the few surviving documents in which persons speak in their own voices and express their hopes and fears openly. The most solid conclusions, however, can be drawn by using as source materials both formal and informal documents which comment upon each other. In the case of the Academy of Turku, the most useful formal documents are the recorded minutes of the meetings of the Consistory.<sup>11</sup> All administrative decisions which concerned the Academy were decided at these meetings. By examining both personal correspondence and the records of formal meetings, it is possible to map out the actions taken by persons in both the private and the public realms and to reconstruct the personal motivations underlying these actions.

When men were appointed to offices in the seventeenth century, it was not always the most accomplished or capable candidate who was chosen. The idea of the modern professional was born in eighteenth century, but it was not until the nineteenth century that the practice of hiring the most qualified candidates became the norm. Even in government administration, persons without proper education or training could be appointed if they had other qualities viewed as desirable or had powerful patrons supporting them. In the seventeenth century, administration was still based on personal relationships, and the distinction between private and public was less clear. It was important to be skilled in the social practices that would help one to influence matters behind the scenes within formal institutional structures, because informal strategies were often more effective than formal ones.<sup>12</sup>

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11 The Academy Consistory consisted of all the professors, the Vice-Chancellor (the Bishop of Turku) and the Chancellor. They had jurisdiction over all matters concerning the Academy.

12 Anthony Molho, 'Patronage and the State in Early Modern Italy', in *Klientensysteme im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit* 1988, Oldenbourg: München, Ed. by Antoni Mańczak, pp. 241–2; Peter Englund, 'Om klienter och deras patroner', in *Makt & vargåd. Hur man styrde, levde*

Because of this, accessing informal power through social networks was often a way of advancing one's personal career and fulfilling personal hopes.

## FROM TREPIDATION TO TRIUMPH

Men born into powerful families were much less directly dependent upon informal strategies within social networks to advance their careers. But they, too, found it advantageous to use their social skills and contacts to work behind the scenes in order to advance their own interests. One of the chief ways in which they did this was patronage.

In patronage networks, patrons are partly able to control their clients' actions by admitting or denying grants, giving recommendations, arranging marriages, organizing opportunities for their clients to receive education or helping them to secure posts. In addition, patrons were expected to give clients protection against demands from persons outside their own patronage network. The relationship between patrons and their clients was not equal, but it was based on reciprocity. Both sides were expected to act as their roles demanded. All persons in the patronage network were constantly evaluated by their actions, and sometimes the last act was the one that counted. Building a good patron-client relationship took years of faithful interaction on both sides, but the relationship did not necessarily last a lifetime.<sup>13</sup>

Per Brahe (1602–1680) was a man born into power. His grandfather was among the first three men to be given the title of Count in the history of Sweden. The Brahe family was registered in the House of the Nobility as the first noble family.<sup>14</sup> Thanks to the eminence of his family, he was able begin his autobiography with a mention of the royal blessing at his christening.<sup>15</sup> The King saw that, unlike his brothers, Per was not best suited to army life and therefore steered him toward a

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*och tänkte under svensk stormakstid*, Ed. by Stellan Dahlgren, Stellan, Anders Flóren and Åsa Karlsson, Atlantis: Stockholm, 1993, pp. 90–7; Giorgio Chittolini, "The "Private," the "Public," the State", *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 67, No. S1 (S34), December 1995, pp. 40–1.

- 13 Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France*, Oxford University Press. Oxford, 1986, pp. 3–4; Svante Norrhem, *Uppkomlingarna. Kanslitjänstemännen i 1600-talets Sverige och Europa*, Umeå university: Umeå, 1993, p. 72.
- 14 Jan von Konow, *Sveriges adels historia*, Axel Abrahamsons Tryckeri: Karlskrona, 2005, p. 82.
- 15 Per Brahe, *Svea Rikes Drotset Grefve Per Brahes Tänkebok*, Ed. by D. Krutmejer, Carl Delén: Stockholm, 1806, p. 1. See also Jonas Nordin, 'Per Brahe d. y:s Tänkebok', *Personhistorisk tidskrift*, Vol. 88, No. 3–4, 1992, p. 82.

career as a civil servant. By the age of 28, Brahe had been appointed to the Privy Council, but soon after that his uncle, who was the Lord High Chancellor (*Drots*) of Sweden, died.<sup>16</sup> Per expected that this office would be his because of his family's position in the aristocracy. It was therefore a grave disappointment when Axel Oxenstierna's brother Gabriel Gustafsson Oxenstierna was appointed to the office.<sup>17</sup> After this Brahe became a stronger political opponent of the Chancellor's group. Later in the year of 1637, Brahe was made General Governor of Finland, which meant that he had to spend a lot of time away from Stockholm. Axel Oxenstierna was glad to see one of his most severe critics thus removed from the geographical and social centre of power.<sup>18</sup>

When Per Brahe arrived in Finland, he resurrected the old idea that Turku should have its own university. At the time, Sweden had two universities – in Uppsala and Tartu – and Brahe argued that the eastern part of the country (modern-day Finland) needed a university in order to train good civil servants in government administration. His hopes materialized in the year 1640, when the Royal Academy of Turku held its inauguration ceremonies. He was appointed Chancellor of the new university, and held that office until his death in 1680. In this position, he had the power to influence the career successes and failures of many persons inside the university.

In 1640 it was clear to everyone among the high nobility that government administration needed more well educated people than the noble estate had to offer. For Brahe, being the head of the university benefited him in at least two different ways. First, he could become acquainted with, and even train, clients from the beginning. Second, he possessed good candidates for placement within the administration. One of the purposes of building a clientele was naturally to gain more power. The larger the network to whose resources one has access, the more one can influence matters. From the patron's point of view, the key advantages of patronage include obtaining useful information and having loyal persons watching over one's interests in decision-making positions within the administrative system.

Mikael Wexionius (1609–1670) was a parson's son from Småland, and for this reason it was somewhat unexpected that he should attain the positions of Professor of Political Science, History and Law at the Academy of Turku as well as being ennobled with the new name of Gyldenstolpe. Ironically, originally he did not even want to be a professor at Turku, a place far away from his home and family.

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16 This office was second in rank after the King.

17 Brahe got what he wanted in 1641, when Gabriel Oxenstierna died, and the office was given to him.

18 Gunnar Wetterberg, *Levande 1600-tal*, Atlantis: Stockholm, 2003, pp. 79–83.



When Axel Oxenstierna realized that Turku would soon have its own university and that Brahe would be highly influential there, he strove to ensure that his own clients would have a foothold in the new educational establishment in order to prevent Brahe from gaining too much power. Oxenstierna turned to his own clientele to find suitable candidates for this purpose, and to Wexionius' dismay he was singled out by Oxenstierna. This was exactly what Wexionius had feared, the payback time for the debt of gratitude he owed to Oxenstierna.

Wexionius had studied at the University of Uppsala, and there he became a client of the king's half-brother, Karl Gyllenhjelm. Gyllenhjelm had founded a university scholarship for sons of the aristocracy and, of course, for his own clients. In order to show his gratitude to his new patron, Wexionius made two speeches in which he praised his patron.<sup>19</sup> Because Gyllenhjelm was Admiral of the Realm and Wexionius was in training for a civil career, Gyllenhjelm had no need for this kind of client, so he wrote a letter recommending Wexionius to Axel Oxenstierna.<sup>20</sup> Oxenstierna paid for Wexionius' studies abroad and afterwards placed him in the office of headmaster in a school in Växjö.<sup>21</sup> Wexionius enjoyed his life in Växjö, so that when his patron began to have other plans for him, he was not happy. Participation in the patronage network could fulfil one's hopes and dreams, but because of one's dependency on other persons, it could leave one virtually without recourse when one's fears turned to reality, and this is what happened to Mikael Wexionius.

Wexionius had settled down in Växjö and started a family there, so he experienced a shock when Oxenstierna told him that he wished him to move to Turku. Even when Wexionius knew he had to go, he tried to change his patron's mind. He travelled to Nyköping to meet Oxenstierna and asked his patron to release him from the appointment. However, Oxenstierna did not change his mind and made it clear that his decision was not a request – it was an order.<sup>22</sup>

Now Wexionius had no other choice: he had to sell all his possessions in order to move to Turku, and the actual move itself cost a substantial sum because Wexionius had to travel three times between Växjö and Turku. One of Wexionius' fears was the loss of familiar surroundings and social relationships. He was saddened that he had to leave behind his own and his wife's parents, siblings, other relatives, friends and the physical comforts of his home just because he owed a debt of gratitude to his patron.<sup>23</sup>

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19 A. A. A. Laitinen, *Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe*, Helsinki, 1912, p. 19.

20 *Axel Oxenstiernas skrifter*, Vol. 2:10, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1900, pp. 123–4; Carl Gyllenhjelm to Axel Oxenstierna 2 October 1632.

21 Laitinen, *Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe*, pp. 30–1, 49, 54.

22 Laitinen, *Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe*, p. 54.

23 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. II:1, Helsingfors, 1932, pp. 20–1: 5

Appointed to Turku, Wexionius left everything behind, and he and his family had to start over in a place which was, in their opinion, a provincial backwater with a suspect reputation.<sup>24</sup> Such dramatic changes in life were things that seventeenth-century people tried to avoid. They preferred to live in peace, harmony, and stasis. It was natural for Wexionius to want to ensure that his move to Turku would be permanent so that he could stay there for the rest of his life. The most secure way to do this was to find a new patron who could support him in his career at the Academy of Turku. The obvious choice was the head of the Academy, Per Brahe.

Two qualities that patrons wanted from their clients were reliability and loyalty. Patrons had to rely on their clients' gratitude to them, and they had no choice but to believe that their clients would act as they wished. The client in turn, was likely to respond in this way only if he believed that the patron rewarded all good deeds performed by the client for his patron. In the end, the relationship was continuously under re-evaluation. Patrons hoped that clients would serve them until they died, as the clients indeed promised to do in their correspondence, but clients were always looking for better opportunities from ties with more influential patrons, or in the end, seeking to become patrons themselves. However, if one continuously discarded old patrons or clients and formed relationships with new ones, the danger was that one's reputation for trustworthiness suffered. No-one wanted potentially beneficial patron or client candidates to turn them down in the search for trustworthy collaborators because of a tainted reputation.

A year after the grand opening of the new university, Wexionius congratulated Per Brahe on his appointment to the position of Lord High Chancellor (*Drots*) of Sweden. In the same letter he confirmed his earlier promises to Brahe, but stated that he needed Brahe's financial help, saying that prices in Turku were twice as high as they had been in Växjö.<sup>25</sup> This was a common way of approaching a new candidate patron. First one had to promise one's willingness to serve the patron and show what one's resources were. After the candidate client had undertaken some task to prove his good intentions, he could ask for favours in return. For Wexionius, five years passed before he felt that he had secured his position as a loyal client of Brahe.<sup>26</sup>

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November 1641.

24 Laitinen, *Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe*, p. 54.

25 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. II:1, p. 18: M. Wexionius to Brahe 19 July 1641.

26 He even refers to himself as a client in his letters to Brahe: *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. II:1, p. 22 and 27–8: Wexionius to Brahe 27 July 1642 and 22 April 1645. It must be noted that Wexionius used the word "client" for himself only when he used Latin (*clientulus*) in his letters, otherwise he used the word "servant" (Swedish *tjänare*

When Wexionius felt that it was the right time to ask for favours from Brahe, he had one special request in mind. In August 1646, Wexionius wrote to Brahe in very carefully composed language. He pointed out that Brahe was one of the most important patrons in Sweden, and he was very grateful that Brahe was his patron. At first, he wrote of ordinary matters, but then he brought up his family background, which on his mother's side could be traced all the way back to an old Småland family of nobles. Wexionius argued that the Småland family was in danger of dying out because there were no male heirs left. In order to make clear his own connection with the family, Wexionius mapped out his pedigree in the letter.<sup>27</sup> At this point Wexionius had set his goals higher than he could have aspired to in his previous position as a school teacher in Växjö, and he appeared to feel comfortable about them, because this was not the only favour he asked from Brahe.

In order to increase his income he also asked Brahe to help him obtain a second professorship.<sup>28</sup> This was not just a career move, it was primarily a question of money. Wexionius had complained frequently to Brahe that his expenses were high and his financial needs great. Brahe must have regarded Wexionius as an important client, because he supported him in both of the afore-mentioned cases. In 1647 Wexionius was appointed Professor of Law, his second professorship. And finally in 1650, he was made a noble with the new name of Gyldenstolpe.<sup>29</sup> It was characteristic of a patron's power that he was able to use society's resources to reward his clients simply because he could act on behalf of his clients in those areas where all the decisions were made.

Moreover, the work Wexionius had already carried out as professor made it easier for Brahe to reward Wexionius, because Wexionius had a good reputation as a university teacher and his publications were highly respected among other university members. The elites of the society, too, were pleased to see that in Wexionius' publications, he gave his full support and approval to the prevailing power structures of society.<sup>30</sup>

Many would have been satisfied with nobility and two professorships, but Wexionius had one more dream, one which he had harboured for many years. He

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or French *serviteur*). This gives us a hint as to how the word "client" entered the Swedish language in the seventeenth-century.

27 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. II:1, pp. 30–4: 13 August 1646.

28 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. II:1, p. 41: 9 July 1647.

29 Reijo Pitkäranta, 'Gyldenstolpe, Michael (1609–1670)', in *Suomen kansallisbiografia*, Ed. by Matti Klinge et al., Vol. 3, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2004, p. 378.

30 Sten Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria*, Vol. 2: *Stormaktstiden*, Norstedt: Stockholm, p. 358; Erkki Lehtinen, *Suomen varhais historian ja ristiretkikauden kuvasta uskonnonpubdistus- ja suurvalta-aikana*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1966, pp. 115–7; Laitinen, *Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe*, pp. 252–72.

wanted to be an assessor in the Turku Court of Appeal. He had failed in that aim earlier in 1646, when he tried to combine the offices of assessor and professor.<sup>31</sup> But now with a higher social rank, he considered that he had a better chance, and finally in the year 1657 he got what he wanted. The King signed the letter of appointment, which was dated 21<sup>st</sup> August, in Thorn,<sup>32</sup> and in February 1658 Wexionius began his work as an assessor in the Court of Appeal.<sup>33</sup>

The career of Wexionius ended on a high note, but there were certainly times, as we have seen, when he did not feel secure in his career expectations. In the beginning, he had many trepidations, but in the end, he gained much more than that he had perhaps originally hoped for. With the help of his patron, he was even able to arrange a good education for all his children, and all three of his boys made good careers for themselves. His eldest son, Nils, became a high-level diplomat. The second and third sons followed in their father's footsteps, Daniel becoming an assessor in the Court of Appeal of Turku and Samuel inheriting his father's position in the Academy as Professor of History and Politics. The youngest sons Carl and Gustav enjoyed successful military careers. All three of his daughters were able to secure good marriages.<sup>34</sup>

## A SHOOTING STAR

Institutions, even unofficial ones, cannot function without social actors who understand how they do so. Every member of society knows a great deal about its institutions and their workings, because that knowledge is necessary for the actors to operate in the society.<sup>35</sup> Patrons could be more passive than clients, because they had less immediate need for a patron-client relationship, having less to lose, while clients had to be more active in securing their futures.

Andreas Thuronius was the son of Curate<sup>36</sup> Thuro Teodori from Hämeenkyrö, in present-day Finland.<sup>37</sup> He was sent to the newly founded university to receive

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31 *Per Brabe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. II:1, pp. 30, 32–3; 5 June 1646 and 13 August 1646.

32 *Per Brabe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. II:1, p. 86; 27 August 1657.

33 Laitinen, *Michael Wexionius-Gyldenstolpe*, p. 89.

34 Pitkäranta, 'Gyldenstolpe, Michael', p. 379.

35 Giddens, *Central Problems*, p. 71.

36 Later he became Vicar of Hämeenkyrö.

37 Thuro Teodori was the only representative of the clergy from his parish to attend the inauguration ceremony of the Royal Academy of Turku. Heikki Impiwaara, 'Antti Thuronius kirjjeittensä valossa', in *Varsinais-Suomen maakuntakirja 7*, Ed. by Varsinais-Suomen

a good education and hopefully obtain a promising career. His father probably had high hopes for him, because Andreas had shown signs of intelligence at a very early age and done well in school.<sup>38</sup> Even the university's student register displays the following comment after his name: "sharp thinker".<sup>39</sup> Some might say that it was not unexpected that he became a professor of logic and metaphysics at the age of 23.<sup>40</sup>

From the beginning, his father had arranged good support for him from his home region.<sup>41</sup> And during his studies in the Academy, Andreas managed to obtain even better patrons to support his studies when he worked as a tutor to the sons of Count Wittenberg's sister.<sup>42</sup> After his studies, Andreas tutored a count's son in Stockholm. These were decisive turning points in his life, because to acquire an important patron usually required a lot of work and some measure of luck, especially if the social background of one's family was humble.

It was important for the client to demonstrate from the beginning that the patron could trust and rely upon his newly recruited client, but most relationships were formed only after years of reciprocal services from both parties. In Thuronius' case, he managed to build a solid relationship with his patrons in quite a short time. It is difficult to say whether this was due to his social abilities, or whether his intellectual skills were seen by his patrons as useful resources.

Thuronius' job as a tutor in Count Wittenberg's family was short-lived,<sup>43</sup> but he must have impressed the Count, for the latter recommended him to Per Brahe, who employed him as a private secretary.<sup>44</sup> He did not serve long at Brahe's court. After a year, Brahe transferred him to the Royal Academy of Turku.

Placing Thuronius in the Academy was a delicate matter. First Brahe had to make room for his client, and he moved Johan Pratanus, who was Professor of Philosophy, to the vicarage of Parainen (Sw. Pargas) parish, near Turku.<sup>45</sup> After this move he suggested to the Academy that a skilful, young person should be appointed to the vacant professorship.<sup>46</sup> Later Brahe mentioned in a letter to the Consistory that

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maakuntaliitto. Turun kansallinen kirjakauppa: Turku, 1940, p. 18.

38 Th. Rein, 'Andreas Thuronius', *Historiallinen arkisto* 18, SHS: Helsinki, 1903, p. 193

39 Vilhelm Lagus, *Åbo akademis studentmatrikel*. SLS: Helsingfors, 1889, p. 42.

40 Heikki Impiwaara, 'Antti Thuronius kirjeittensä valossa', p. 19.

41 J. Vallinkoski, *Turun akatemian väitöskirjat 1642–1828*, Helsinki University Library: Helsinki, 1962, p. 509.

42 Rein, 'Andreas Thuronius', p. 195.

43 Count Wittenberg had to leave Stockholm to go to the war front.

44 Carl Magnus Schybergson, 'Inledning', in Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi, Vol. 1, Helsingfors, 1922, p. X.

45 *Consistorii academici Aboensis äldre protokoller. Todistuskappaleita Suomen historiaan*, Vol. 2, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1887, p. 42: 14 November 1655.

46 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. 1, p. 40: Per Brahe to the Consistory 26

he would prefer Andreas Thuronius to be that young person<sup>47</sup>, but when the final decision was announced in the Academy Consistory on 23 April 1656, it came as a total surprise to most of the professors and even to the Rector of the Academy.<sup>48</sup> However, although the final decision upset some of the Academy personnel, nobody really challenged Brahe's decision. In May 1657, Thuronius presented his letter of appointment to the Professorship of Logic and Metaphysics signed by the King. At the same time he carried a letter from Brahe to the Consistory containing instructions to quickly integrate Thuronius into the Academy staff.<sup>49</sup>

In order to be a valuable client, one had to be able to offer the patron something in return for his aid. The most usual thing to offer was information. But in order to obtain information, one had to have a position in the administration. This is one of the reasons why patrons recruited or educated promising clients and placed them where they could gather information. Such information was vital to the patron's successful decision-making. Too little information was not always the problem, however: one could also have too much information, or the source of the information might be one-sided. In that case, it was useful to be able to rely on information supplied by a trusted client, someone from whom it was possible to request additional information.

In the summer of 1661, Andreas Thuronius witnessed some very peculiar events in the Academy when he returned from Stockholm. Henrik Eolenius, an Academy student, was accused of practising magic by the Academy's Consistory. Both the Rector and the Academy's Vice-Chancellor, who was also the Bishop of Turku, argued strongly for the death penalty. Some members of the Consistory agreed that Eolenius was guilty as charged, but thought that the death penalty was too harsh.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the influence of the Vice-Chancellor was such that, Eolenius was sentenced to death. However, before his sentence could be carried out, it had to be approved by the Academy's Chancellor, Per Brahe.<sup>51</sup> The final decision was his, and in serious cases such as this, he preferred to have as much information as possible. At stake was a matter of life and death.

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October 1655.

47 *Consistorii academici Aboensis äldre protokoller*, p. 42: 14 November 1655. Brahe's letter mentioned in the Consistory meeting has disappeared, but it was partly copied by J. Tengström in his book *Vita Rothovii*. In this letter Brahe probably mentioned Thuronius; at least the Consistory's minutes suggest this.

48 *Consistorii academici Aboensis äldre protokoller*, p. 48: 23 April 1656.

49 *Consistorii academici Aboensis äldre protokoller*, p. 97: 11 May 1657.

50 The case was dealt with in the Consistory eight times, before it was decided: 12 June, 22 June, 1 July, 5 July, 11 July, 23 July, 31 July and 28 August 1661. The final decision was made on 11 September 1661. See *Consistorii academici Aboensis äldre protokoller*, Vol. 2.

51 The Vice-Chancellor presented the case to Brahe in his letter dated 19 September 1661. See *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. 1, pp. 190–1.

Brahe's reaction was swift; he sent three letters to Turku in the hope of obtaining more information. To the Bishop, Brahe wrote that in the matter of the death penalty, there was no room for error. They had to be sure that Eolenius was guilty. Brahe requested copies of all official documents in the case, in order to review it more carefully. He also reminded the Bishop that he should work together with the Consistory. The Bishop had mentioned that the Consistory had been unable to come to a unanimous decision. This was not the whole truth, because most of the members of the Consistory were against the death penalty, but the Bishop did not mention this to Brahe. Instead, he lied that the majority of the Consistory shared his opinion.<sup>52</sup> Brahe probably suspected that the Bishop was not totally honest in the matter, so he wrote the same things in a letter to the Consistory that he had written to the Bishop. In this way, the whole Consistory came to know of Brahe's opinion in the case.<sup>53</sup>

The third and most important letter he wrote to his loyal client, Andreas Thuronius, and asked him directly what was happening in the Academy? Was the Eolenius case to be taken seriously? Brahe stated clearly that he wanted to hear Thuronius' opinion on the case and also wanted to have more information about Eolenius and his family. By providing this information, wrote Brahe, Thuronius would be doing him a great favour and would demonstrate his deep friendship.<sup>54</sup>

Thuronius quickly wrote back to Brahe and gave a full report. He said that he had heard about the case when he returned from Stockholm and had immediately read all the Consistory minutes and other material. After this, he had asked his colleagues why Eolenius had not been released, since there really was no case. His colleagues had said that the Bishop and the Rector were against the release. The last time that Eolenius was questioned by the Consistory, Thuronius was able to be present. To Brahe, he explained that the Bishop and the Rector did not allow Eolenius to defend himself properly at all. Eolenius was very depressed by his prosecutors' attitude and said only that the gentlemen must judge him so that they would be able to defend themselves before God. After that the Consistory voted, and Thuronius told Brahe how every person had voted and also whose vote was unsure even when they voted for the death penalty. In the end, Thuronius clearly told Brahe that in his own opinion there was hardly any case at all, and that the situation only damaged the reputation

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52 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. 2:1, pp. 188–191 and 199–200: Terserus to Brahe 19 September 1661 and 5 December 1661; *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. 1, pp. 75–6: Brahe to Terserus 4 October 1661.

53 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. 1, pp. 76–7: 4 October 1661.

54 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. 1, pp. 77–8: Brahe to Thuronius 4 October 1661.

of the Academy. He believed Eolenius deserved to be released immediately and all charges dropped.<sup>55</sup>

Brahe's decision was that the charges in the Eolenius case remained unproven and that he should be released immediately. Brahe also expressed his concern that in cases like this the Academy's reputation suffered a great deal. An interesting feature of Brahe's decision is that he repeated Thuronius' opinion nearly word for word. This indicates how much Brahe trusted in his client and how valuable Thuronius' information was to Brahe. All the official documents had supported the death penalty, but unofficial information from his own network had told a completely different story, and Brahe made his decision based solely on this one source of information.<sup>56</sup>

In the hierarchical world of the seventeenth-century, where social status was everything and strict rules of etiquette could make life complicated, good clients had to have good social skills and a wealth of social knowledge. To be a good client meant that every action counted, and that one's competence as a social actor was constantly judged by others. This created a delicate balance between patron and client. If the relationship was not strong on the personal level, the last act on either side set the tone for the whole relationship. From the client's point of view, his or her future could depend on each action taken.

As Brahe's client, Thuronius had acted in a way that gave him reasons to hope for a bright future. He had done favours for Brahe when he was needed, and he had also lubricated his relationship with Brahe through the giving of gifts.<sup>57</sup> Occasionally, Thuronius had asked Brahe to increase his salary, but Brahe had refused appealing to the wartime situation. Nevertheless, he promised that he would never forget his faithful client.<sup>58</sup> This turned out to be true, since only a couple of months later he appointed Thuronius to a second professorship.<sup>59</sup> Now Thuronius was Professor of Logic and Metaphysics and Professor of Physics. To reward his client in this way was natural from Brahe's point of view. He was very careful about spending money, so giving a second office to Thuronius also meant that he did not have to increase the Academy's annual budget.<sup>60</sup>

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55 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. 2:1, pp. 191–4; Thuronius to Brahe 17 October 1661.

56 After Brahe's decision most of the professors wrote a joint letter of apology to him on 27 March 1662. K. K. Tigerstedt, *Ur Per Brabes brevväxling*, Vol. 2: *Bref från och till Per Brahe*, Frenckell: Åbo, 1888, pp. 22–3.

57 Thuronius had made calendars for Brahe.

58 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. 1, p. 57; Brahe to Thuronius.

59 Carl Magnus Schybergson, *Per Brahe och Åbo akademi*, Vol. 1, SLS: Helsingfors, 1915, pp. 115–6.

60 There were nevertheless some protests against Brahe's decision when he appointed Thu-



Thuroniuss shared with his patron a passion for studying comets,<sup>61</sup> and this celestial phenomenon metaphorically sums up his entire career at the Academy, which advanced quickly and burned brightly before an abrupt end. Andreas Thuroniuss was only 33 years of age when he died and left his family in enormous debt. As a last favour to his loyal client, Brahe exempted his widow from tax payments for two years.<sup>62</sup> With Brahe's support, Thuroniuss received nearly everything he wished for. The only thing he never managed to achieve was nobility. He had asked this from Brahe and made a good case, but Brahe never showed any signs of acquiescence. Maybe Brahe had wanted to save this card to be played later, when he would need a larger favour from his client or wished to secure his services in the future. It would have been an appropriate reward for long loyal years of service. But one can only speculate on Brahe's intentions. Thuroniuss never lived to see what might have happened. Although his life was short, his published works were used long after his death in Swedish universities. He was an exceptional and broad-ranging thinker. He did not concentrate only on philosophy, but also published research in the field of economics and biology.<sup>63</sup>

## FIGHTING FOR A PLACE IN THE SUN

In everyday life, human agents are always involved with other agents. Individuals continuously monitor others and their activities in social and physical contexts and expect others to do same with regard to themselves.<sup>64</sup> In patronage networks, this kind of social knowledge was the key to the success of the cooperation, especially for persons who acted as brokers between the patrons and the clients.

The relationship between patron and client was possible only if both had interests and resources to offer in exchange. Sometimes to connect these resources it was necessary to rely on a broker's assistance.<sup>65</sup> Because of the nature of patronage, the motives of the broker were always personal. A broker could act

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roniuss to a second professorship.

61 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. 2:2, pp. 47–8 and 51–3; 4 March 1665 and 6 May 1665.

62 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. 1, pp. 158–9 and 164–5; Per Brahe to Herman Fleming 28 August 1667 and 11 October 1667.

63 Rein, 'Andreas Thuroniuss', pp. 205–6, 217–20.

64 Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, p. 5.

65 Sharon Kettering, 'Brokerage at the court of Louis XIV', *Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 1993, pp. 70, 73–4; Antoni Maczak, 'Patron, client, and the distribution of social revenue: some comparative remarks', *Studia historiae oeconomicae* 23, 1998, p. 48.

purely professionally only when he got paid for being broker.<sup>66</sup> Also he could act as a broker inside his own patron-client relationship when his actions were favours to the other party. Sometimes brokerage was just a way of supporting a good friend.

When the news spread that Michael Wexionius had been appointed Assessor to the Court of Appeal of Turku, two candidates began to compete for the professorship that he would vacate. Axel Kempe, the Academy's second assistant and librarian desperately wanted to advance in his academic career. He had previously twice applied for a professorship but failed both times.<sup>67</sup> This time he had good broker, Andreas Thuronius, to put in a good word for him with Brahe. Obtaining Thuronius' help was a stroke of good fortune for Kempe, because Michael Wexionius had plans to pass his professorship on to his brother, Olaus Wexionius.

Kempe got a head start in this race for the professorship job because Thuronius wrote to Brahe in mid-May 1657 and recommended Axel Kempe for the soon-to-be-vacant post. He knew that Brahe was willing to favour a person who knew the local conditions, and warned Brahe not to choose an outsider for the job.<sup>68</sup> This was a clever move, and it was directed specifically against Olaus Wexionius, who had a professorship at the University of Tartu in present-day Estonia. A month later, Michael Wexionius received the confirmation letter from King Charles X Gustavus regarding his appointment to the Court of Appeal, but he did not write to Brahe until the end of August, when he expressed hopes that his brother Olaus could follow him in his old office. He justified this merely by saying that his brother was qualified for the job.<sup>69</sup> It appears as if Michael Wexionius did not realize that there were other candidates who enjoyed strong support, but when he did finally realize it, he was ready to fight. The competition for the job became fierce, and in a very short time seventeen letters were sent back and forth between Brahe, the two candidates and their supporters.<sup>70</sup>

The decision process itself was highly complicated and lasted several years. Brahe's situation was a difficult one, because both Thuronius and Michael Wexionius were important clients of his. But like the experienced statesman he was, he found a solution which satisfied both parties, or at least did not leave them feeling badly treated. In the beginning, Michael Wexionius hoped that he could keep both his position as Professor of Law and his position as Assessor in the Court

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66 Kettering, 'Brokerage at the court of Louis XIV', pp. 70–1.

67 Pitkäranta, 'Gyldenstolpe, Michael', p. 103.

68 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. 2:1, p. 81: 14 May 1656.

69 *Per Brahe brevväxling rörande Åbo Akademi*, Vol. 2:1, p. 86: 27 August 1657.

70 Aeschillus Petreus, the Bishop of Turku, also supported Olaus Wexionius, because Olaus was his brother-in-law and was afraid that the job in Tartu was very insecure.

of Appeal concurrently. Brahe decided that Olaus Wexionius would receive his brother's position as Professor of Law, while Axel Kempe was to be appointed to Michael Wexionius' Professorship in History and Politics.<sup>71</sup>

Both Axel Kempe and Olaus Wexionius served the Academy until their death. For both of them, their appointment was the high point of their careers; they did not succeed in their offices like the brokers who had supported their appointments, but neither did they fail. Following their appointments, Brahe did not use either of them as clients, and that may be one of the reasons why their careers slowly faded into obscurity.

## ONE'S FUTURE ENABLED BY PAST REPUTATION

Just as they are today, networks of social contacts in the seventeenth century were part of people's everyday lives. But in the seventeenth century, the importance of social networks among the educated elite was far greater than in later centuries. To advance in one's career, it was important to find the right persons with power and influence. In practice, this meant that good social contacts were important, and people put great effort and energy into building them. Informal, behind-the-scenes relationship-building in seventeenth-century Sweden both constrained and enabled persons of different social ranks to channel their energies and talents into strategies which ideally made use of the social hierarchy to the benefit of both. Taken together, the sum total of these strategies comprised the patronage network.

Without the help of patrons, even well-educated persons found it difficult to fulfil their own aspirations and advance in their academic careers. As we have seen in all of the aforementioned cases, a patron's or broker's actions were crucial to social climbing. Without Brahe's help, Michael Wexionius, Andreas Thuronius, Axel Kempe and Olaus Wexionius would not have enjoyed the same success in their lives. Of course, with the help of other patrons, they might have found different ways to advance their careers, but participation in the patronage network was crucial. At the same time, a client's own initiative in finding a good patron, and building and preserving the relationship also played a decisive role.

The men who became patrons, clients and brokers all had one thing in common: participation in the patronage system gave all of them more agency, in other words enabled a greater scope of action than would have otherwise been possible. Patrons naturally had more power to act behalf of others, but the client's actions also made a difference. For clients, finding and serving with devotion a high patron opened

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71 Heikki Impiwaara, 'Antti Thuronius kirjittensä valossa', p. 24.

new opportunities to achieve their dreams of the good life and to secure a good position within society, one from which their descendants might be able to reach even higher. The patron, too, benefited in terms of social status by having a strong clientele and the possibility of influencing a wide range of matters through his clients. The first half of the seventeenth century was the golden age of patronage for the aristocracy. For them, it was a tool to extend their personal power to places where they could be neither personally present nor physically involved. It was also, in a sense, a means of buying time and trying desperately to keep their hands on the reins of power. Through patronage networks, the aristocracy did manage to stave off their decline for a time.

When we examine patron-client relationships through the prism of agency, we can see more clearly why relationships between patrons and clients could last a lifetime. Despite the social hierarchy which rendered the relationships unequal, patronage gave both parties so much that it was sensible to maintain the relationship as long as possible, and the longer it lasted the more personal it became. This was so in the cases of Thuronius and Wexionius, whose patron-client relationship with Brahe was a lifelong one, and the deeper it became, the more it gave all of them. And perhaps in the end it resulted in ties which were as close to real friendship as was possible between persons of different social ranks in seventeenth-century Sweden.

## USING HISTORICAL SYMBOLS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR FUTURE POWER

### The Swedish Nobility and the Struggles over the Right to Nominate Local Pastors

*Jan Samuelson*

In Swedish historical research, politics has for too long been associated exclusively with the central government, but in recent years researchers have paid greater attention to the localities. Here the parish church played a central role. On the local level, the church was important for the nobility both because it was here that local self-government was exercised, and because it was used to display social status. The choice of the clergyman was important, because he was the only person in the parish who had the same amount of education as the nobles, and he was also chairman of the “*sockenstämman*”, the local self-government institution of the parish. Politics are not just about power in the parliament and the central government; they are also about who can control appointments and decisions at the regional and local levels. In everyday life, local politics probably affect people more than the decisions made by the higher authorities. The Swedish parishes had a significant role in governance, and the peasants themselves could wield a great deal of influence. The peasants regularly assembled at parish meetings chaired by the vicar. Therefore, it is important to investigate the local influence exercised by the nobility.

In this article, I will study the importance of the churches for the nobility, and the struggles that took place for the right to nominate parish priests. I see these struggles not only as concerned with the existing power in society, but also as a sign of the importance of history in legitimising that power. In fact, the struggles were about the future. They were about different groups' hopes and fears about what was to come. Different social groups had different views about what was desirable in the future. History was used in the present, but it was also directed forwards, into the future. The right of patronage had some very important consequences. Since local politics was intimately connected with the church, and the pastor was

chairman of the parish assembly, the estate owners could wield considerable power over local life. Equally important was their symbolic power. However, I also would like to emphasize another point: one related to the debate about the didactics of history and the different uses to which history can be put. In addition I want to discuss the part noble women played in these struggles, and especially their role in upholding the family's reputation.<sup>1</sup> The women had an important part to play in the struggle over the future position of the nobility. I have chosen only a couple of examples in this article, but they are representative of many more cases.

There were three sorts of parish in Sweden, which we can call consistorial, royal and patronal parishes. It is worth mentioning that in most parishes the peasants themselves had an important say in deciding which priest to choose. Thus one can claim that the peasants in Sweden were in a unique position vis-à-vis the church, compared to most other countries. In some Swedish parishes, however, there existed a form of manorial patronage (advowson, *Jus Patronatus*), which meant that the owner of a manor, or sometimes a commercial enterprise, in the parish had the right to nominate the clergy in that parish. The justification for this right was that the owner of the manor, or some of the former owners, had made such a considerable contribution to the church or the vicarage that it also gave him the right to nominate the priest.<sup>2</sup> The principle was that the right of the parishioners was in proportion to their contributions to the church. Those who had contributed most also got the right to the best seats and burial plots. If somebody had made a special donation to the church, it also could give him the right of patronage.<sup>3</sup> Formally the law specified three reasons for the bestowal of those rights: the donation of real property to the church or to the vicarage, the provision of the clergyman's living, or the fact that the church had been built at an expense of the owner of the manor.<sup>4</sup>

Occasionally, there were conflicts about who possessed these rights to appoint the pastor. The conflicts were naturally important with regard to the contemporary power struggle in the local society, but I will argue that they were also about different social groups' hopes and fears, and their visions of their future roles in society. Let us now consider one example in greater detail.

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1 The article is written as a part of the project *Kvinnlig religiositet och maktutövning* ("Female religiosity and the exercise of power"), financed by the Riksbankens jubileumsfond.

2 On the emergence see Peter Landau, *Jus Patronatus. Studien zur Entwicklung des Patronats im Dekretalenrecht und der Kanonistik des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts*, Forschungen zur kirchlichen Rechtsgeschichte und zum Kirchenrecht: Köln, 1975.

3 Gunnar Suolahti, *Finlands prästerskap på 1600- och 1700-talet*, Schildts: Helsingfors, 1927, p. 135.

4 Arvid Bäckström, *Utredning rörande de i vårt land utom Skåne, Halland och Bohuslän förefintliga patronatsrättigheter och därmed jämförliga kalleelserätter*, Stockholm, 1914, pp. 13–14.

## THE DISPUTE ABOUT POWER OVER THE CHURCH IN HASSLE

The greater parish of Hassle in the Province of Västergötland in western Sweden together with its subordinate parishes had a common pastor who served in the churches with help of assistants. There were two local estates, Säby and Börstorp, one in Berga, the other in the parish of Hassle. Säby belonged to the noble Posse family.<sup>5</sup> In 1715 the owner was Nils Posse, who was absent much of the time, however, since he was governor of the island of Gotland.<sup>6</sup> Hereafter, therefore, we shall be dealing with his wife, Henrietta Beata Horn, who looked after the family's affairs locally.<sup>7</sup> She herself was also of high birth, the daughter of a baron who held high military and civilian posts.<sup>8</sup>

Börstorp in the adjacent parish had belonged to the Falkenberg family since 1625.<sup>9</sup> The former governor, Henrik Falkenberg died in 1691, and after that his widow from his second marriage, Christina Maria Kruse, possessed the estate until she died in 1727.<sup>10</sup>

In May 1715 the old pastor Anders Tvet passed away. He had served in the parish since 1705, and was 71 years old when he died.<sup>11</sup> The question now was who was to succeed him. Just a week after the pastor died, the Bishop Jesper Svedberg sent a letter to Christina Kruse.<sup>12</sup> He declared that he knew about their right of patronage, and requested that a new clergyman should not be appointed before the old one was in his grave. After that the Bishop promised that he would propose a pastor who would be to the liking of the noble lady. He also sent a letter to Nils Posse,

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5 Lennart Luthander, 'Säby', in *Slott och herresäten i Sverige. Ett konst- och kulturhistoriskt samlingsverk. Västergötland*, Vol. 2, Ed. by S. Artur Svensson and Sven T. Kjellberg, Allhem: Malmö, 1968, p. 73.

6 Gustaf Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, Vol. 6: *Posse-von Scheven*, Stockholm, 1931, p. 27.

7 Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, Vol. 6, p. 26.

8 Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, Vol. 2: *af Chapman-Fägerstråle*, Stockholm, 1926, pp. 676–7.

9 Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, Vol. 2, p. 645.

10 Luthander, 'Börstorp', p. 59; Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, Vol. 2, p. 646.

11 Johan Wilhelm Warholm, *Skara stifts herdaminne*, Vol. 2, Mariestad, 1874, p. 195.

12 I have not located this letter but its content is known through the resolution that the Kammarkollegium (the Swedish national judicial board for public lands and funds) eventually issued (in Skara domkapitel, i.e. cathedral chapter (GLA), EVI:40, Vol. 1: Hassle). Christina Kruse alludes to this letter in a later letter she sent to the bishop.

probably with the same content.<sup>13</sup> Fairly soon it became clear who he had in mind: his son-in-law Jonas Unge, who that year had married his daughter Catrina.<sup>14</sup>

I cannot go into all the details of this case, but suffice it to say that the two patrons were not of the same opinion as the Bishop. In August Christina Kruse declared in a letter to Svedberg: “The Bishop has been too hasty in suggesting a pastor without the knowledge of myself and the parish, and has thereby shown his adverse sentiment against myself and the parish.”<sup>15</sup> That was against the law, she declared; even though she was a widow she had her “*jus*”. She was also well aware of what had happened in other places and used this as a precedent in this case. She had chosen another candidate, Johan Tvet, the son of the former pastor. He was well educated and had served as a clergyman “more years than Master Unge had months”.<sup>16</sup> He now worked as a curate in another parish, but was well known to his father’s parishioners since he had worked as assistant there for a couple of years.<sup>17</sup>

After that she mentioned all the money that had been spent on the church in Hassle by her father-in-law and her late husband. The choir had been widened, and the church extended, and an altarpiece, a pulpit, a Bible, “almost all the vestments and ornaments of the church” and a lot of money had been donated to it. She therefore declared that she reserved for herself the right to appeal against the Bishop’s decision according to the law and statutes, “[...] otherwise remaining most willingly at the Lord Bishop’s service”.<sup>18</sup> Even in a letter like this it was important to keep a polite tone.

It is important to note the role of history in Lady Kruse’s arguments. The rights had been given to the estate because of what its owners had done for the church. She is arguing that there had been, and still was, a special relation between her, her lineage, the estate and the church. Especially her father-in-law had done a lot for the church in his time.

The other estate, Säby was also active. Since her husband was away, it was left to Henrietta Beata Horn to handle the affair. She had the same complaints as Lady Kruse: that the Bishop, during the absence of her husband, was trying to

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13 The letter is known through the same resolution as I mentioned in the footnote above.

14 Johan Wilhelm Warholm, *Skara stifts herdaminne*, Vol. 1, Mariestad, 1871, pp. 548–50.

15 Skara domkapitel (GLA), EVI:40, Vol. 1: Hassle. The letter is dated 18 August 1715. “H:r Biskopen sielf warit förhastligh att recommendera och föreslå kyrckioherde uthom min och församblingens ringaste wetskap och ty medelst wjsat sin obenägna affection emoth mig och församblingen.”

16 Ibid. “warit flere åhr Präst åhn Magister Jonas unge månader”.

17 Warholm *Skara stifts herdaminne*, Vol. 2, pp. 239–40.

18 Skara domkapitel (GLA), EVI:40, vol.1 (Hassle). The letter is dated 18 March 1715. “snart sagt all kyrckionnes skrudh och prydnat” and “och i öfriget förblifr H:r Biskopens tienst beredvilligeste”.



forcibly deprive them of their privileges, which “we and our late ancestors in this parish have acquired at great cost”.<sup>19</sup> History was important here as well. Horn supported the same candidate as Lady Kruse, Master Tvet, which shows that they had communicated with each other. This was, of course, important, since it gave them greater leverage in the power struggle between them and Bishop Svedberg.

There therefore existed two candidates for the post of pastor, the candidate of the estate-owners, Johan Tvet, and Johan Unge, the son-in-law of the Bishop. Johan Tvet probably had had good opportunities to promote his case, since his brother-in-law was a steward at Börstorp, the estate belonging to Christina Maria Kruse. Both candidates obviously were proposed as pastors through their respective networks.

One of the arguments used was that the parishioners were of the same opinion as the patrons. In this particular case, there are no indications to the contrary, but one must remember that consensus was the norm in the early modern Swedish political system. Thus it can often be difficult to detect the existence of a struggle between different candidates in the parishes.<sup>20</sup> When the conflict was about patronage, however, there are many examples indicating that the parishioners used the ensuing investigations to voice their own opinions.<sup>21</sup> Since the examination in this case was thorough, and nothing is mentioned to suggest that the peasants had a different view, probably they did not oppose the local estate owners. The fact that the latter had a long history in the area probably gave them a stronger position in the eyes of the common people. In this case, it should also be noted that even when the patrons insisted on their own rights, they found it expedient to take account of the opinion of the parishioners.

Both of the estate owners appealed to the Crown (*Kungl. Maj:t*), who referred it to the *Kammarkollegium* (today the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency) to investigate and decide on the matter. As was usual in these cases, the investigations were thorough, and the judgment therefore gives us a good picture of what was going on. The agency directed the regional governor (*landshövding*) to investigate and interrogate people in the parishes.<sup>22</sup>

In the judgment that the agency pronounced, about eight months after the controversy had begun, the aristocrats won their case. The Bishop had already

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19 Ibid. The letter is dated 18 March 1715. “wij oss och des framledne förfäder här wti församlingen kostbart förwärfvat”.

20 See Peter Lindström, *Prästval och politisk kultur 1650–1800*, University of Umeå: Umeå, 2003, on conditions in the Province of Hälsingland.

21 See e.g. Jan Samuelson, ‘Att rekonstruera ett ärendes gång – patronatsstriden i Dala och den begynnande frihetstidens förvaltning’, in *Information, förvaltning och arkiv – en antologi*, Ed. by Patrik Höij, The Provincial Archives of Härnösand: Härnösand, 2005.

22 I have not found this order in the sources, but it was the normal procedure.

acknowledged the estate owners' patronage in the letters he wrote to them, and there was plenty of evidence that they had obtained their right in the proper manner. The board concentrated on the rules stipulated by the law and found that the churches had benefited a lot from the donations of the estate owners. It was therefore beyond all doubt that the patronage belonged to these noble persons. The judgment was that the owners of both estates, Falkenberg and Posse, should elect pastors in turn.<sup>23</sup> That was the normal procedure in circumstances where a pastor had to serve several parishes. In this case, both the estates had the rights of patronage, so therefore they had to take turns.

Two other circumstances were mentioned in the inquiries. The governor Nils Posse had donated 100 *dalers* for the erection of a tower at Berga Church, and the timber was already waiting on Bromö, an island in Lake Vänern. Posse and his wife had promised to donate a church bell, and pay for it themselves.<sup>24</sup> It is important to note these promises. There was a demand that the possessors of patronage should take special care of the churches, but in practice this does not seem to have been important since the decision was made on the basis of formal criteria.<sup>25</sup> It was, however, an additional argument for the possession of those rights by the estate owners. That it was regarded as important is also obvious from the fact that there are no cases where the gifts to the churches are not mentioned. We will see more examples later in this article.

I have dealt with this case in some detail. What then is characteristic of it? It is now time to place it in some context. I will examine this case in the light of the ideology and historical consciousness of the nobles. Since there were many women involved in these struggles, I will also make some observations about the role of the noble wives and widows in maintaining the position of the noble families.

## THE NOBILITY'S USE OF HISTORY

For the elite, it was important to have an ancestry. It was worth a great deal of money to be able to trace one's roots back to ancient times. When power was assumed by a new dynasty, the kings took great trouble to show that their ancestry went far back in time. That was true, for example, of King Gustavus Vasa, the

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23 Bäckström, *Utredning*, p. 114. A copy exists in Skara domkapitel (GLA), EVI:40, Vol. 1: Hassle.

24 Skara domkapitel (GLA), EVI:40, vol.1 (Hassle). Letter from a person called Hellander to the bishop and consistory, Mariestad 28 September 1715.

25 Bäckström, *Utredning*, pp. 18–19.

founder of a new dynasty at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when he built Gripsholm Castle. The architectural style of its towers was old-fashioned by the standards of the day, but for the king it was important to portray the castle as his old family house, and thus it was important to use an dated style.<sup>26</sup> When the new house of Palatinate-Zweibrücken came to power with King Charles X in 1654, it used a similar strategy to establish itself. Queen Hedvig Eleonora, who outlived her husband, her son and almost her grandson, played a special role in this. She used the arts to reinforce the new dynasty, and we can see examples of this in her castles. It was important to show her and her family's position both to the nobility in Sweden and to foreigners.<sup>27</sup> Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, the Marshal of France in the Napoleonic wars, who became successor to the Swedish throne in 1810, and King Charles XIV John in 1818, also used history to legitimate his power. In the years after the loss of Finland in 1809, it became fashionable among the elite of society to hark back to ancient "Swedish" history, and the king let himself be portrayed as the old king (and God) Odin, who had arrived to Sweden to be the new ruler of the country. The message was obvious: Charles XIV John was the "new Odin", a foreigner who had been called upon to rule Sweden.<sup>28</sup> The connection between the actual situation with a new dynasty in power and the use of history to secure its future is evident. Fear for the future existence of the ruling family made it necessary to use history to defend its interests.

The same tendency is clearly discernable in the nobility. It is a fact that much of the ostentatious luxury was intended to display not only present but also past glory. Often the long history of the noble family was stressed in their buildings, which were frequently given characteristics that were deliberately dated.<sup>29</sup> In the buildings hung portraits of the estate owner's ancestors. The symbols and legends connected the nobles with the historical past.

It must be mentioned that the Swedish nobility very seldom used family names before the seventeenth century. That however changed during the following century. Names began to be passed on, and fixed names inherited from one forefather came into use. With the foundation in 1626 of the House of Nobility

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26 Armin Tuulse, review of Per Olof Vestlund, Gripsholm under Vasatiden, *Fornvännen*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1951, p. 191.

27 Torbjörn Fulton, 'Det karolinska Strömsholm', in *Strömsholms slott*, Ed. by Eva-Lena Karlsson and Rebecka Millhagen, Byggförlaget/Kultur: Stockholm, 2005, pp. 45–8.

28 See e.g. Jakob Christensson, 'Vad stort sker, det sker tyst', esp. pp. 23–7, and Göran Alm, 'Arkitekturen och inredningskonsten', pp. 68–70, both in *Signums svenska konsthistoria*, Vol. 9: *Karl Johanstidens konst*, Signum: Lund, 1999.

29 E.g. Fredric Bedoire, *Guldålder. Slott och politik i 1600-talets Sverige*, Bonnier: Stockholm, 2001, pp. 40–41, 43, 45 et passim.

(*Riddarhuset*) the noble families had to take family names.<sup>30</sup> Different lines, even if they had one common ancestor, could get their own names when they were enrolled in the House of Nobility. Thus we can find several Oxenstiernas, Posses, and so on among the nobility. The way to distinguish between them was to combine the family name with the main estate of that line. The old Posse family, for instance, had two lines one of which was founded by a count): Posse af Hedensund and Posse af Säby. Hedensunda was the place where the barony was situated, and Säby was an estate that belonged to the Posse family.<sup>31</sup> The noble families' habit of ascribing themselves to an estate did not become common until the sixteenth century, so it seems that the connection between a noble family and a particular place was becoming more important for the noble self-image at that time.<sup>32</sup>

This is connected with a change in attitude to the kinship system. The Swedish historian Christer Winberg has shown that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the kinship system changed from a cognatic into a patrilinear one.<sup>33</sup> The line was traced from a single forefather down to his descendants.<sup>34</sup> The practice of inheritance also changed. According to Winberg, the Crown was behind this development because it wanted to create a wealthy nobility who could serve as well-educated civil servants. In line with this was the development in Sweden of entailed estates (*fideikommiss*).<sup>35</sup> This is the same tendency as that which occurred in England, where the historian Eileen Spring has investigated aristocratic women and transfers of their property between generations. She argues that women in this social stratum inherited a relatively small amount of land, and certain rules that excluded women from inheriting, such as entails, were developed.<sup>36</sup> The tendency in Sweden against entailed estates was however limited. Normally, all the sons inherited from their parents, and a daughter inherited half as much as her brother.<sup>37</sup> In contrast to the English nobility, all the sons also inherited the noble title of their father.

The ideology that prevailed among the nobility in the seventeenth century had some stable characteristics and some that changed over the century, as

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30 Christer Winberg, *Grenverket. Studier rörande jord, släktskapsystem och ståndsprivilegier*, Institutet för rättshistorisk forskning: Lund, 1985, p. 32. See also his English summary pp. 233–4.

31 Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, Vol. 6, pp. 1–33.

32 Jan Eric Almqvist, *Herrgårdarna i Sverige under reformationstiden (1523–1611)*, Rättsge-netiska institutet vid Stockholms högskola, 3:1: Stockholm, 1960, p. 4.

33 Winberg, *Grenverket*, pp. 37–9.

34 Winberg, *Grenverket*, chapter 3.

35 Winberg, *Grenverket*, pp. 48–50.

36 Eileen Spring: *Law, Land & Family. Aristocratic Inheritance in England, 1300 to 1800*, University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1993.

37 Winberg, *Grenverket*, pp. 49–50.

shown by the historian Peter Englund. The nobility became more open to commercial activities, and more individualistic, but the ideal of the traditional society was still very dominant.<sup>38</sup> It is however important to note the high degree of ennoblement in that century, a development that totally changed the composition of the noble estate.<sup>39</sup> The changes in ideology that Englund finds are therefore a reflection of the entry of new groups of high-ranking military officers and civil servants into the estate. There is reason to believe that in that situation the landed gentry of the old nobility felt it even more important to stress their ancestry and historical role. In addition to obtaining an education suited to the new requirements, they used their ancestry and historical role as a weapon in the struggle for power.

The conspicuous consumption (to use the terminology of Thorstein Veblen) in the form of magnificent buildings, ostentatious equipages, splendid costumes, and so on, of the Swedish nobles as described by the historian Margareta Revera can be seen in this light. It was a way for the nobility to display their prominent position, and to have it confirmed. Following international research<sup>40</sup>, Margareta Revera sees conspicuous consumption as a part of the social struggle. It was necessary for the higher nobility, and it increased rather than diminished when the nobility felt that their position was threatened.<sup>41</sup> In several cases, the consumption was economically disastrous for individual noble families, and that was particularly the case for those who were engaged in major building activities.<sup>42</sup> According to Revera, this pattern of consumption did not become common outside the royal family until the 1630s.<sup>43</sup> Though Revera mentions funerals as important occasions where luxury was displayed and gives some examples of burial chapels, churches play only a small role in her arguments.<sup>44</sup> It is mainly the role of conspicuous consumption in the struggle for power at the national level that interests her, not manifestations of it on the local level. But the estate owners and iron works proprietors not only exercised their influence in the capital city; they also lived

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38 Peter Englund, *Det hotade huset. Adliga föreställningar om samhället under stormaktstiden*, 3rd edition, Atlantis: Stockholm, 1994 (1989), esp. chapters 8 and 9.

39 Ingvar Elmroth, *För kung och fosterland. Studier i den svenska adelns demografi och offentliga funktioner 1600–1900*, Gleerup: Lund, 1981, pp. 39–41 and chapter VIII.

40 Stone, Veblen, Elias, Kruedener.

41 Margareta Revera, 'En barock historia. Om den svenska 1600-talslyxen och dess plats i samhällsomvandlingen', in *Tre Karlar*, Ed. by Gudrun Ekstrand, Livrustkammaren: Stockholm, 1984, pp. 121–5.

42 Revera, 'En barock historia', p. 129. On insolvency among the Danish nobility, see Ole Fenger and E. Ladevig Pedersen, *Adel förpligter. Studier over den danske adels gældstiftelse i 16. og 17. århundrede*, Munksgaard: Copenhagen, 1983.

43 Revera, 'En barock historia', p. 122.

44 See e.g. Revera, 'En barock historia', pp. 122–4 on the funerals.

at home in their parishes on their estates or beside their iron works. Here the churches were important places for displaying their power.

As the struggle for power intensified, the display of luxury became more important, Revera maintains. Englund has shown that it was important to live a life befitting one's own estate. In addition to pomp and splendour, the nobles were expected to offer hospitality and entertainment.<sup>45</sup> He also emphasizes the fact that the proximity between different social groups made it all the more important to for them to distinguish themselves from one another. This was also the case in the small towns, as shown by the historian Gudrun Andersson in connection with the town of Arboga. The town dwellers used their buildings and the plots they stood on as social markers. Status was indicated by the location of the house, but hierarchies *within* the town elite could be exhibited through the buildings themselves.<sup>46</sup> Anderson also shows that certain persons within the bourgeoisie donated gifts to the town church. She interprets this as an intentional way of using the church as a place for making their social standing visible.<sup>47</sup>

## HOPES AND FEARS FOR THE FUTURE

The luxury was, however, to a great extent oriented towards the maintenance of power, or to gaining entry into the circles where one could find power and wealth. Thus this conspicuous consumption and use of history was in a sense oriented towards the future, even if the symbols it used were connected with the past. Earlier generations could be used in the actual struggle for power. As Robert Pogue Harrison puts it: "The dead are our guardians. We give them a future so that they may give us a past. We help them live on so that they may help us go forward."<sup>48</sup>

The nobility's use of history to emphasize their social position is clear, but it must be stressed that it was their power and position in the present and the future that was important, not just something that had happened in the past. History

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45 Englund, *Det botade huset*, pp. 78, 80–1.

46 Gudrun Andersson, 'Att bygga sig ett namn. Rumsliga hierarkier och strategier hos eliten i Arboga 1650–1770', in *Med börd, svärd och pengar*, Ed. by Gudrun Andersson, Esbjörn Larsson & Patrik Winton, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 2003, e.g. pp. 29, 34 et passim. See also Gudrun Andersson, *Stadens dignitärer. Den lokala elitens status- och maktmanifestation i Arboga 1650–1770*, Atlantis: Stockholm, 2009.

47 Gudrun Andersson, 'Att pränta in sitt namn. Arbogaeliten i kyrkorummet 1650–1750', in *Hembygdsföreningen Arboga Minne. Årsbok 2003*, p. 10.

48 Robert Pogue Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead*, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2003, p. 158.

was *used* to promote the interests of the aristocracy and allow them to proceed into an insecure future. Here there is reason to look at the researches carried out by scholars of the didactics of history who study the uses different persons and groups make of history, and the purposes that lie behind them.

The Swedish historian Klas-Göran Karlsson has created a typology in which he distinguishes in between seven different types of use of history, of which the academic is just one. Every use of history has its own purposes, users and functions. Besides the academic use, Karlsson mentions six more uses of history: the existential, the moral, the ideological, the “non-use”, the politico-pedagogical and the commercial.<sup>49</sup> These are, of course, not mutually exclusive, and they can be found in different combinations.<sup>50</sup> Of these, I want to accentuate the ideological and existential uses as especially fitting for describing how the aristocracy of the seventeenth century used history. The existential use of history is activated to remember (or forget), to orientate oneself in a changing society. It is of a private nature, and therefore it is difficult to find traces of it in the sources.<sup>51</sup> However, in my view, the symbols represented by the churches, recalling of the position of the estate owners in the parishes, could have filled such an existential role. The nobles had their sense of self and self-esteem reinforced by seeing these historical symbols. These psychological motives should not be forgotten when dealing with the aristocracy of the past.

On the other hand, the role of the ideological use of history is easier to establish. Karlsson deals with more or less present-day uses of history. He uses communism and nationalism as examples of how different ideologies make use of history.<sup>52</sup> History is used to legitimise a certain position of power, and to that end history is directed towards a future Utopia. For the Marxists this is the classless communist society, for the nationalists an ethno-national society.<sup>53</sup> In contrast to that, the Utopia of the aristocracy in the seventeenth century lay not in the future but in

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49 Klas-Göran Karlsson, ‘Historiedidaktik: begrepp, teori och analys’, in *Historien är nu. En introduktion till historiedidaktiken*, Ed. by Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander, Studentlitteratur: Lund, 2004, pp. 54–66, esp. tableau p. 56. For an English account, see Klas-Göran Karlsson, ‘The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture. Theoretical and Analytical Challenges’, in *Echoes of the Holocaust. Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, Ed. by Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander, Nordic Academic Press: Lund, 2003, pp. 38–43, where he does not, however, mention the commercial use of history, probably because he is dealing with the Holocaust in that article.

50 Karlsson, ‘The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture’, p. 41.

51 Karlsson, ‘The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture’, pp. 55–7.

52 See also Klas-Göran Karlsson, *Historia som vapen. Historiebruk och Sovjetunionens upplösning 1985–1995*, Natur och kultur: Stockholm, 1999, which deals with the use of history in late and post-communist society.

53 Karlsson, ‘The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture’, pp. 59–60.

a golden age of the past. In between, for the Swedish aristocracy, lay the chaotic years of the late sixteenth century, when Sweden was ravaged by a civil war. The only alternative to the established order was chaos, and the nobles were hostile to utopian thinking in the proper sense. The aristocracy clung to their time-honoured rights.<sup>54</sup> It is, however, important to note that the golden age of the past also had a sort of utopian function in the ideology of the nobility with regard to the demands of the times and the future direction of politics. The aristocracy feared for that its role would shrink even more in the future. The ideal was to restore the state of society that had existed in the past, before the deterioration had begun.<sup>55</sup> Changes, therefore, were not seen as something new, but rather as a return to old usages and customs.<sup>56</sup> However, as I must stress in conclusion, there *did exist* an ideal of what the future should be like, and in that ideal history had an important role to play. Here we clearly can see an example of the ideological use of history.

For the nobility, its ancestry was important. Every genuine noble family had to have sixteen pedigrees, i.e. every person to the fourth generation back from oneself should have been of noble birth.<sup>57</sup> If you did not have such an ancestry it was sometimes possible to forge one.<sup>58</sup> Being of an old family was often regarded as more important than holding the rank that went with a certain office.<sup>59</sup> In her study of the nobility's coats of arms in churches, the Swedish art historian Inga von Corswandt-Naumburg shows how important it was for the noble families to show their pedigrees at funerals.<sup>60</sup> The funeral services were held in the churches, and after them the weapons of the deceased noble were hung up on the church walls. It is important to stress this connection between the nobility, the churches and the display of noble status.<sup>61</sup> In this, the nobility's use of the church building deserves attention.

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54 Englund, *Det hotade huset*, pp. 111–8.

55 Englund, *Det hotade huset*, p. 111.

56 Englund, *Det hotade huset*, pp. 111–2.

57 Inga von Corswandt Naumburg, *Huvudbaner och anvapen under stormaktstiden*, Ödin: Visby, 1999, p. 80.

58 See e.g. Nils Ahnlund, *Nils Rabenius (1648–1717). Studier i svensk historiografi*, Geber: Stockholm, 1927.

59 Corswandt Naumburg, *Huvudbaner och anvapen*, p. 83.

60 Corswandt Naumburg, *Huvudbaner och anvapen*, p. 60.

61 See also Inga Floto, 'Döden i historien', in *Döden som katharsis. Nordiska perspektiv på dödens kultur- och mentalitetshistoria*, Ed. by Yvonne Maria Werner, Almqvist & Wiksell International: Stockholm, 2004, p. 22, and Birgitte Bøggild Johannsen, 'Kongebegravelsernes ideologi og kultur', in the same book, p. 96, 105.



## THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH FOR THE NOBILITY

Together with its service to the state, the nobility naturally also had local interests. The nobles spent a large share of their time on their estates, and we can assume that connections with the local community were important, especially where the estates had been in the same family for generations. On the local level, the gentry's position had to be exhibited to their neighbours.<sup>62</sup> In those days it was not possible to live in seclusion. Rather, power and prominence were preserved through spectacle and display, in what the German social scientist Jürgen Habermas has termed "representative publicity".<sup>63</sup> The church was important because it was the place where local politics were exercised, and one of the places where people's social and cultural standing was exposed to view. There the noble family could display its power in their family ceremonies such as marriages and burials.

This connection between noble families and local churches has also been noted in Norwegian research. The local church was filled with the symbols of honour of prominent families. The Norwegian cultural researcher Arne Bugge Amundsen claims that this trend intensified in the 1720s.<sup>64</sup> Several families bought the churches as well as the land they stood on. Bugge Amundsen does not believe, however, that this always was done primarily for economic reasons. The revenues were sometimes small, while the expenses for the maintenance of the churches were huge. The nobles also embellished the churches with numerous objects, and built their burial vaults in them. This is an example, in Bugge Amundsen's interpretation, of how the nobles' honour and right to speak could *be seen* in the shape of signs and symbols.<sup>65</sup>

Patronage brought political influence through the right to appoint the clergyman, but the symbolic significance of patronage was also considerable. It was important to mark the lord's or lady's symbolic presence in the church, even at those time when he or she was not there in person. In this light, where architecture and art become symbols of power, it is of particular interest to study the relations between the estate and the church, and to examine how the nobility used their donations to create a special relationship between the churches and themselves.

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62 See Peter Ullgren, *Lantadel. Adliga godsägare i Östergötland och Skåne vid 1600-talets slut*, Sisyfos: Lund, 2004, passim.

63 I have used the Swedish translation, Jürgen Habermas, *Borgerlig offentlighet. Kategorierna "privat" och "offentligt" i det moderna samhället*, 3<sup>rd</sup> revised edition, Transl. by Joachim Retzlaff, Arkiv: Lund, 1998, pp. 15–23.

64 Arne Bugge Amundsen, 'Det private kirkerom?', in *Menneske og bomiljø. Rapport fra et forskernetverk*, Ed. by Espen Johnsen, Morten Bing and Liv Hilde Boe, Norges forskningsråd: Oslo, 1996, p. 32.

65 Amundsen, 'Det private kirkerom?', pp. 32–9, esp. p. 39.

## THE ROLE OF GIFTS TO THE CHURCHES

The French sociologist Marcel Mauss has in his classic work about gifts discussed their functions, and the norms governing them. He stresses that even if a gift is given voluntarily, in practice it is strictly binding. Theoretically the gift is charitable and unselfish, but it has a selfish intention and thrusts itself upon the recipient.<sup>66</sup> A similar thinking lies behind the donations to the churches. A gift to the church gave certain rights in the church or the parish. A large gift, like a whole church or the land on which it was built, gave the donor power in the parish and a central burial place in the church, whereas lesser gifts could bring the right to put up a memorial inscription and have a prominent seat in the church. This has also been emphasized by the Swedish art-historian Peter Gillgren, who is of the opinion that the art of epitaphs has its origins in the traditional bestowal of gifts.<sup>67</sup> It is significant that the inscriptions often mention the high value of the gift. Its definition as a gift, argues Gillgren, gave its owner the right to a representative presence in the church space.<sup>68</sup>

Several historians have shown how important it was for the nobility to symbolically establish their positions in the local communities. The coats of arms and other heraldic symbols were one way to show this position, which also could be strengthened by the relationship that was established through all the donations to the church.

In almost every church in Sweden one can find objects that were originally donations made by a prominent local person. It can be a small candlestick, or a large pulpit, or something in between. In the southern part of the country, where large numbers of the nobility lived, that group gave many of those gifts. That the gifts were not completely unselfish can be seen from the fact that every donation was recorded in the church accounts. In every dispute about the right of patronage, the donations to the church were mentioned as a sign of how much the estate owners had taken care of the church. The American historian Natalie Zemon Davies, writing about the "gift fashion" in sixteenth-century France, maintains that this is typical of the liberal gift. It was not an anonymous one. "Rather one was to specify the gift, using the polite formulas of past service, present need and worth, and future gratitude". It was important to know who the donor was, and who the recipient.<sup>69</sup> Let me give some Swedish examples.

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66 Marcel Mauss, *Gåvan*, översättning: Marianne Ahrne, Argos: Lund, 1997, pp. 17–20.

67 Peter Gillgren, *Gåva och själ. Epitafiemåleriet under stormaktstiden*, Uppsala universitet: Uppsala, 1995, pp. 18–19.

68 Gillgren, *Gåva och själ*, pp. 72–3.

69 Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, The University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 2000, p. 19.

In Tådene (in the Province of Västergötland) in the 1690s the church was in a great need of repair. The patron Gabriel Lilliehöök declared that it was his duty to pull it down and rebuild it in an improved form if he was to be allowed to retain his old rights in the future. Otherwise, he said: “I believe that I and my ancestors have given and donated enough”. Therefore they who would deprive him of the right of patronage also had to get the money to build and repair the church.<sup>70</sup>

In a dispute about *Jus Patronatus* in connection with Bälunge Church in the Province of Södermanland, south of Stockholm, two countesses, Eva Lewenhaupt and Märta Elisabeth Oxenstierna, appealed to the Crown, giving their arguments about why they possessed the right of patronage. Some of the reasons they gave were in accordance with the law. Eva Lewenhaupt maintained that the church was located on her land: “Its [i.e. the estate’s] crops grow around the church”, and she had donated two crofts to the pastor. The whole choir had been widened and a new tower had been built for the church, all paid for by her father-in-law. These justifications are precisely of the kind that the law prescribed, and since the parish council corroborated this, it placed her in a strong position. But even in this case it seems to have been important to emphasize how much the estate owners had given to the church: silver vessels, a chasuble, an altar cloth and much more. Then came an interesting hidden promise: if the countess got the rights she claimed, she would give the church an organ “that already stands ready at Nynäs [her estate]”. The other countess, Märta Elisabeth Oxenstierna, used similar arguments. She also made a hidden promise: She had “a beautiful church bell at Helgö that she wants to give the church as long as she is given *Jus Patronatus*”.<sup>71</sup> In this example we clearly can see the implicit reciprocity between a gift and the rights it bestowed.

There are plenty of entries in the written sources about gifts to the churches that demonstrate the care that the owner of the estate had taken of the church. The act of giving cost money. In an attestation made by the parishioners of Floda (in the Province of Södermanland) everything that Agneta Ribbing had done for the church was itemised. The cost of the labour amounted to at least 10 000–12 000 Swedish *dalers*. She had also donated a farm to the church, and she “and Field Marshal Kagg himself” had the church decorated with paintings “whose value the parishioners do not understand, but have been told by others

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70 Skara domkapitel EVI:106, Vol. 1: Tådene, Äldre handlingar 1660–1857: Gabriel Lilliehöök to the bishop and consistory, Stockholm 27 October 1690. “så skulle iag tyckia det iag med mine förfäder hafwa redan för mycket gifwit”.

71 These examples are from Kammarkollegiet (National Archives, Stockholm), Första pro-  
vinskontoret, V: Handlingar, 4: Nummerserie, Vol. 157: Bälunge socken. “hwilket redan  
står på Nynäs färdigt” and “hafwa en wacker klåcka widh hellgö som hon ärnar förära till  
kyrkian så framt hon erhålla något Jus patronatus”.

that they are of great value". The couple had also donated silver objects and other items from their estate.<sup>72</sup> The connections between the nobles, the estate and the church were close, and to establish and maintain this relationship it was obviously important to place noble monuments and objects in the church. The nobility had a special relationship with the church, which was also demonstrated by their prominent seats in the churches.

## THE RELATIONS BETWEEN NOBLE WOMEN AND THE CHURCHES

The Swedish nobility was not numerous, but during the seventeenth century it grew considerably, and its economic and political power grew accordingly. At the beginning of the century there were about 550 adult noblemen, while 100 years later there were 2,000. This is due to the wide-scale ennoblement of high-ranking military officers and civil servants for their services to the state. Since the state had financial problems, it often had to remunerate its nobility with donations of land instead of money. As a result, in the middle of the century about two thirds of Swedish lands were in the hands of the nobility. Most of the nobles lived in the southern parts of the country.<sup>73</sup>

There were some estates, however, that were not in the hands of the male nobility. If we scrutinize the land ownership patterns of noble widows, we can fairly soon establish that they possessed a surprisingly large share of the noble lands. I have carried out some studies on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and on each occasion, I have noted that a large share of the land was owned by widows. This can be observed both in times of war and in peace time. The percentage varies, but it is safe to say that between a fifth and a third of all noble land was in practice owned by a widow.<sup>74</sup> In many cases, these women owned huge estates

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72 Kammarkollegjet. Första provinskontoret, V: Handlingar, 4: Nummerserie, Vol. 157 (earlier konvolut 44). Handlingar ang jus patronatus, Vol. 2: Södermanlands län. Agneta Ribbing was married to Field Marshal Lars Kagg; see Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, Vol. 4: *Igelström–Lillietopp*, Stockholm, 1928, pp. 86–7. "och feltherren Kagg sielf" and "hwars wärde Sochen männenne wäl intet förstå, men hafva af andra hördt berättas att dhe skola wara af ett stort prijs".

73 A short account of the nobility in Sweden can be found in Thomas Lindkvist and Maria Sjöberg, *Det svenska samhället 800–1720. Klerkernas och adelns tid*, Studentlitteratur: Lund, 2003, pp. 333–6.

74 Jan Samuelson, *Aristokrat eller förädlad bonde? Det svenska frälsets ekonomi, politik och sociala förbindelser under tiden 1523–1611*, Lund University Press: Lund, 1993, pp. 98–100; Jan

and there is copious evidence that they wielded much power in their respective parishes. Despite the patriarchal ethos of the age, there existed women with the economic means to exercise considerable power and authority. Therefore, it was also common in Sweden for women to exercise the power of patronage over the churches.

If we examine the gifts in closer detail, we can see that many of them were actually given by widows. For example, burial chapels which, according to the inscriptions, were given by a married couple, can be shown to have been given to the church after the husband had already died. Out of about thirty burial chapels in the Province of Södermanland in the seventeenth century, at least ten were paid for by widows.<sup>75</sup> I have made an inventory of about ten churches and found that a large proportion of the gifts during the seventeenth century were donated by women, but also that they were important donors both before and after that century. In Österåker Church in the Province of Upland, Baroness Brita Kurck donated a chandelier and baptismal font, as well paying for the complete renovation of the church around the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>76</sup> Two sisters, Sigrid and Maria Elisabet Kurtzel, made important donations to different churches in Södermanland during the seventeenth century. They were widows of two brothers called Ryning.<sup>77</sup> Maria Elisabet gave, among other things, altarpieces to the churches of Nyköping and Vadsbro, and she also helped to finance the extension of the latter church.<sup>78</sup>

As demonstrated above, gifts to the churches were of central importance for the manifestation of power on the local level. But here, too, the gender aspect must be considered, since women were given the chance to influence the symbolic arrangement of the church space and the graves. It is therefore important to study to what degree women were involved in the building, maintenance and embellishment of the churches, and whether women or men were more occupied with these matters. The fact that women held no public offices may have made them more inclined to display their position in another way, and the church offered a suitable place to do that. This is also valid for those churches

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Samuelson, 'En god och förnuftig matmoder. Adelskvinnor under stormaktsväldet', in *Jämmerdal & fröjdesal. Kvinnor i stormakstidens Sverige*, Ed. by Eva Österberg, Atlantis: Stockholm, 1997, pp. 293–6.

75 My calculation is based on Ivar Schnell, *Kyrkorna i Södermanland*, Södermanlands hembygds- och museiförbund: Nyköping, 1965.

76 Erik Vennberg, Erik Bohrn, *Kyrkor i Åkers skeppslag*, Generalstabens litografiska anstalt: Stockholm, 1950, pp. 584, 590, 596.

77 Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, Vol. 6, pp. 632–3.

78 Carl Gustaf Blomberg, *S:t Nicolai kyrka*, Södermanlands museum: Nyköping, 1976; Ivar Schnell, *Kyrkorna i Södermanland*, pp. 184, 207.

that did not receive patronage but were located in places where the estate held a dominant position.

The change from a bilateral to unilateral definition of noble families must, however, have had an effect on the role of women as well. This role must have changed in that now the children were reckoned as belonging to a different family from their mother. Yet noble women played a significant role in the above examples. How should we interpret this? First of all, of course, it was a time when there were many noble widows, or married women whose husbands were away. Sweden was at war and many men had died or were in the army. However, one may wonder whether the women did not play some special role in maintaining the noble lineages. Once married, they became members of a new family, and their children were the first who would continue the family line into the future. Therefore, the attempts they made to defend their interests can also be regarded as efforts to give their offspring a better future.

There were some contributions to the parish churches made by women that served as the grounds for claims to patronage rights made later on. In those cases where the rights were contingent on the donation of a new burial chapel, a widow very often built such a chapel. In 1722 Margareta Törnflycht requested from the King the right to nominate priests in the parish where she lived because in 1716 she had built a choir for her deceased husband. Moreover, she had donated the altarpiece and a chasuble to the church. The King granted her and her successors this patronage right. On her tombstone we can read: "What she has done for the house of God is best shown by this choir."<sup>79</sup> Another example is countess Agneta Horn, well known in Sweden even today thanks to the autobiography she wrote in the middle of the seventeenth century. When she became a widow, she extended and completely rebuilt Björklinge Church in the Province of Upland. The arms of her own and her husband's families were placed on the east wall of the church. She declared that she did this "to honour almighty God, and to the everlasting memory of her beloved husband."<sup>80</sup> History and the future are combined in this inscription.

The gender perspective thus makes it possible to further deepen the discussion about the donation of gifts to the churches and the nobles' relationship with them. If we look at the conspicuous consumption and gift-giving in that perspective, we can ask whether the women were not more closely involved with the church

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79 Robert Bennett: *Ösno kyrka*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Södermanlands hembygds- o. museiförbund: Nyköping, 1973. "Hvad hon Guds hus har giordt kan detta chor bäst viisa."

80 Bengt Ingmar Kilström, *Björklinge kyrka*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition, Ed. by Bengt Ingmar Kilström: Strängnäs, 1970, pp. 4–7, the quotation p. 7. "till Gud allsmäktig ära och till ett evigt minne av sin älskade make".

and local politics. Perhaps it is possible to make out a pattern from the different examples? Maybe the women were more active than the men just because the death of their husbands made it necessary to find worthy burial places for them. The life of a man from the higher nobility was spent on the national political stage, and his conspicuous consumption reflected his and his family's significance for the country. The local environment was, of course, important for the husband as well, but for the widow it was much more important since she possessed fewer alternatives to choose from. She had to cope with her life in a different way. It was to a considerable extent lived in a local environment, and therefore the parish church and local politics were much more important for her. But through power over such things as the appointments of clergymen and controlling the church and the local self-government, the widow could wield substantial political influence. If we look at the noble families rather than individual persons, the woman's role was in some respects as important as that of her husband. The nobleman secured his and his family's position on the national level by performing important services and receiving the concomitant income and gifts. His wife, and later on his widow, played a complementary role on the local level. As a wife, she was important as a broker of contacts, but probably she also had a big influence on the management of the estate. As a widow, this role became even more important, as she had to uphold the family's standing in the local community. It was important to maintain her and her husband's reputation, and to promote his bloodline in the future, and here church donations had an important role to play.

## SOME CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL THOUGHTS

In this article I have studied the noble ideology and the role in local society that this ideology gave to the nobility. The churches constituted an important institution for wielding power in local society. That makes it important to study how the nobles manifested themselves in the churches through different objects, and how they tried to control who should be a clergyman in the parish.

The noble ideology stressed the ideal of a traditional society. It looked back to a golden age. But the nobility also felt fear for the future because of all the changes taking place in the society they lived in. Other social groups were emerging, threatening the nobility's traditional role. As a reaction the nobility became more prone to display their social standing. Luxury increased in a situation when many nobles actually had less money to pay for it. The manifestations of noble influence can be seen in the churches.

The actual use that the nobility made of symbols was anchored in the past. But the purpose was oriented towards the future. Through the use of history the nobles maintain their power in the future too. This idea can be clearly seen in the disputes about the right of patronage, i.e. the right to nominate the parish pastor. Historical arguments were used in these clashes, but the real substance of the conflict was about the control of the local community. The right of patronage clearly gave the estate owner a real advantage in local politics, but the symbolic power it gave was at least as important.

The women had a special role in this struggle at the local level. They did not possess the same influence in the central corridors of power, but they too played an important role in furthering the nobility's position in society. As widows they often were active in the conflicts about the right of patronage. This was, of course, a struggle about the right itself, but the women were also fighting for their offspring. In that sense, the struggles were future-oriented.

The other parties in these struggles often were the bishop and other high ecclesial authorities. They fought to preserve their own power, insisting that it should lie with persons who had knowledge of theology. But it also was a struggle between two different views of society. In the emerging new social groups, competence and qualifications were emphasized. That could serve as an argument against the old nobility. This trend was also visible in the church. Therefore each small dispute about the right to nominate the clergy was also part of a wider struggle over the different groups' hopes and fears for their future roles in society.

This opposition, however, could sometimes cause problems in real life since contacts and networks were also important for the new emerging groups. The consistory secretary and senior master at Skara Gymnasium, Sven Hof, in his autobiography gives us an apt picture of the importance of good contacts and relatives if one wished to make a career in the diocese. He mentions all the important contacts he had made himself, but also unashamedly emphasizes his own role. It was thanks to him that his brothers-in-law had received good opportunities. That was possible, he says, due to "my own skill and expense".<sup>81</sup> Whether the claim is true or not, it shows how important it was to have good contacts and patrons when one was seeking a post. Let me conclude this article with an anecdote, connected with the dispute we met in the beginning of this article.

There is a story, written by Bishop Jesper Svedberg himself, about an event that happened four years later, when Svedberg was attending a session of the Diet in Stockholm. The Queen asked him about his family. He mentioned Jonas Unge, and

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81 *Sven Hof's självbiografi och testamente till biskopen och domkapitlet i Skara*, Föreningen för svensk undervisningshistoria: Stockholm, 1949, pp. 86–7. "med min både konst och kåstnad".



said that he was his assistant clergyman. The Queen was surprised and asked why he had not obtained any better position. According to his own account, Svedberg answered that Unge was well educated, had travelled a lot and was capable. But his misfortune was that he was Svedberg's son-in-law, since "the bishops always push their own, and so I have not wished to speak on his behalf". When the Queen offered an unoccupied parish, Svedberg insisted, by his own account, that he (Unge) must first preach in the Queen's presence.<sup>82</sup> Bishop Svedberg obviously wished to help his own family. Because the Bishop could lay himself open to accusations of nepotism, however, helping his own relative was obviously such a delicate matter that Svedberg in his own version emphasized his impartiality.

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82 Johan Wilhelm Warholm, *Skara stifts herdaminne*, Vol. 1, pp. 549–50. "Biskoparne draga alltid fram de sina; ty har jag ej velat tala för honom."

PART II  
SURVIVING IN  
THE COMMUNITY



# TRYING TO SURVIVE AS A HARLOT-THIEF IN AN EARLY MODERN URBAN COMMUNITY<sup>1</sup>

*Marko Lamberg*

## INTRODUCTION

Prostitution as a societal phenomenon attracted historians decades before it became a trendy affair to be “anti-elitist” and show a scholarly interest in the marginalized groups of past societies. Indeed, if we think about the structures and norms of early modern society, the prostitute, or at least the concept of the prostitute, combined several marginalizing features: womanhood, low social status and a way of life which was not only regarded as disreputable by contemporaries, who are depicted as utterly obsessed with the necessity of protecting personal honour and avoiding all sources of contagious shame, but who also made the prostitute into a threat against the patriarchal ideals of marriage, the family and male (self-) control. Consequently, the prostitute has been a recurring character, if sometimes only a subsidiary one, in works dealing with the history of the family, women, crime, human sexuality, gender roles or the social features of past communities. This also holds true for Nordic historical research, at least to some extent.<sup>2</sup>

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1 This essay is a part of my one man’s research project ‘Ethnicity, locality and integration in early modern urban communities’, mostly financed by the Academy of Finland.

2 See e.g. Eduard Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte: Renaissance*, Albert Langen: Munich, 1909; Troels-Lund, *Dagligt Liv i Norden i det sekstende Aarhundrede*, Vol. 12, Copenhagen, 1915; Morus [=Richard Lewinson], *Eine Weltgeschichte der Sexualität*, Rowohlt: Hamburg, 1965; Lujo Bassermann, *Das älteste Gewerbe. Eine Kulturgeschichte*, Ullstein: Frankfurt am Main & Berlin, 1968; Mary Elizabeth Perry, ‘Lost Women in Early Modern Seville. The Politics of Prostitution’, *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1978, pp. 195–214; Conny Blom, ‘Torsk-Margareta, Stumpefots-Karin och Tjocke-Sara. Om kvinnorna på samhällets botten’, in *Jämmerdal och fröjdesal. Kvinnor i stormaktstidens Sverige*, Ed. by Eva Österberg, Atlantis:

In Swedish urban communities during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a woman who was known to be involved in extramarital relationships was usually characterized by such terms as “loose woman” (*löskona, lös kvinna*), “infamous woman” (*berytad kvinna*), “harlot” (*sköka, bisläpirska*), “whore” (*hora, horkona*), “everyman’s whore” (*allemanshora*) or “pillory whore” (*kåkhora*). Of course, these terms were not reserved only for women who sold their sexual services for pecuniary compensation; they could also be applied to women who were depicted as morally loose or who had committed adultery – especially the word “whore” referred to adulterous relationships. There was also one term, “concubine” (*frilla*), which during the Catholic era was a quite neutral term describing a woman who was not a lawfully wedded wife (*bustru*) but who nevertheless lived in a permanent and tolerated relationship with a man, but especially in the vocabulary of the priesthood after the Reformation, the term took on a more negative connotation and came to signify a harlot.<sup>3</sup> However, despite this apparent richness of the vocabulary by which an early modern Swedish prostitute could be described, I would argue that she was basically designated as a thief (*tjuvkona*, literally “thief woman”): many, probably most, women sentenced for prostitution also committed thefts and were consequently also punished as thieves. Many harlots who are mentioned in court records are also characterized as thieves and vice versa. In fact, if a harlot was executed, most often the death sentence seems to have been motivated by her stealing, not her dissolute life style. That is why I have chosen to coin the term ‘harlot-thief’ to describe the object of my study.

In this chapter, I will mainly focus on prostitutes in one early modern Nordic city, Stockholm, during a period of approximately two hundred years between 1450 and 1650. At the beginning of this period, Stockholm was already one of the socially most heterogeneous towns in the kingdom of Sweden, and as time went by it grew to become the capital and the largest city in Sweden: it has been estimated that the number of inhabitants was approximately 5 000 in the fifteenth

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Stockholm, 1997, pp. 225–67; Timothy J. Gilfoyle, ‘Prostitutes in History. From Parables of Pornography to Metaphors of Modernity’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 1, 1999, pp. 117–41.

3 These pejorative terms can be found in extant court and chapter records (*tänkeböcker, domböcker, protokoll*) from Stockholm and several other early modern Swedish towns. The semantics of these terms can also be analyzed with the help of two important Swedish dictionaries, which are nowadays also accessible online: K. F. Söderwall, *Ordbok över svenska medeltidsspråket*, Vols. 1–2 & Supplement, Svenska Fornskriftsällskapet: Uppsala, 1884–1973 [also accessible online as a part of the database *Fornsvensk Lexikalisk Databas*: <http://spraakbanken.gu.se/fsvldb/>] and Svenska Akademien, *Ordbok över svenska språket*, The Academy of Sweden: Stockholm, 1870– [also accessible online: <http://g3.spraakdata.gu.se/saob/>].

century but over 35 000 during the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup> Besides the garrison and the representatives of the Crown, the members of the religious estate and the burgher households, which consisted of merchants or craftsmen and their families, apprentices and servants, the growing city of Stockholm was also home to groups who nowadays are labelled as marginalized: beggars, thieves, harlots, sacked or runaway servants, men and women who had lost their physical or mental health and other dregs of society. Although the main written sources were produced by those in the higher echelons of the burgher community, in the City Council and in the Consistory of the local clergy, all these other groups, too, found their way into written records, at least sporadically.

Indeed, with a lack of more personal and informal sources, research dealing with the forms and mentalities of every-day life has benefited considerably from such written records. Despite their partly fragmentary nature, the sources originating from early modern Stockholm make it possible to approach the grassroots level of society of that period from a variety of perspectives, which is actually rare in the Nordic context. The most important source material consists of the records of the City Council (*rådet*) which was to a great extent synonymous with the City Court (*rådstugurätten*). These records or books of minutes were usually called *tänkeböcker*, literally “notebooks”. From the late sixteenth century onwards, the minutes were kept in two different but partly overlapping versions: as preliminary drafts and as more finished transcripts. The earliest extant court records of Stockholm date from 1474, but there are several temporal gaps in the series: the longest gap concerns the years between 1530 and 1543. The records underwent several changes in terms of their contents, one major tendency being that the later entries are in general more detailed than the older, medieval ones, although several exceptions to this rule can be found. In any case, the court records offer us an important possibility to study social patterns at the grass roots level in a reliable way. The records of the lower court (*kämnärsrätten*) and the Consistory (*domkapitel*) of Stockholm can be utilized, although in their extant form both these series cast light only on the end of the period analysed here.<sup>5</sup>

The source material has certain limitations that must be elucidated first. Since the earliest entries are usually shorter than the later ones and especially those dating from the seventeenth century, crime cases are often described in a very laconic way in the late-medieval record books: most records contain only the name and

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4 Sven Lilja, ‘Swedish Urbanization c. 1570–1800. Chronology, Structure and Causes’, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 1999, p. 288.

5 The records of the lower court originate from 1603 onwards, and the earliest ones have been published together with the records of the City Court. The published series of *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker* goes currently up to 1633.

the place of birth of the sentenced person, the nature of the crime and the quality of the sentence. In later times it became customary to relate more about the backgrounds of the individual cases and even to record long statements made by persons questioned during the hearing. Thus it is debatable whether the category of stealing harlots actually existed during the Middle Ages despite the long history of prostitution in Stockholm: the earliest known harlot in Stockholm was a certain Margareta, who is mentioned as one of the objects of Saint Bridget's (Birgitta) miracles in fourteenth-century acts of canonization, and correspondingly the earliest extant fine rolls of the town from the 1460s and 1470s mention women who to judge from their names (like Countess, Parrot and Lady Venus) must have been prostitutes.<sup>6</sup> Although we meet both women who were characterized as harlots and women who were punished as thieves even in the oldest extant court records, quantitatively speaking any evidence pointing to the fact that these two categories could be conflated seems to date only from the early seventeenth century on. Likewise, as has already been noted by earlier research, the number of women sentenced for theft increased rapidly during the sixteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Of course, this may merely reflect the improved accuracy of the record keeping, but it should also be remembered that Swedish society waged a series of wars from the late sixteenth century onwards, especially during the first half of the seventeenth century, and that warfare seems to have caused a surplus of women, which may explain some features of female criminality during the 1630s and 1640s in the growing city.<sup>8</sup> However, according to certain estimates, male town-dwellers were already outnumbered by women in the Middle Ages.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, we do

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- 6 *Acta et processus canonizacionis beate Birgittæ*, Ed. by Isak Collijn, Uppsala: Svenska Fornskriftsällskapet, 1924–31, pp. 19, 585; *Stockholms stads skottebok 1460–1468 samt strödda räkenskaper från 1430-talet och från åren 1460–1473*, Ed. by Joh. Ax. Almquist, Kungliga Samfundet för utgivandet av handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia: Stockholm, 1926, e.g. pp. 385 and 469.
- 7 Dag Lindström, 'Crime and Control in the Capital. Stockholm 1475–1625', in Eva Österberg and Dag Lindström, *Crime and Social Control in Medieval and Early Modern Swedish Towns*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1988, pp. 115–6; Hans Andersson, 'Genus och rättskultur. Kvinnlig brottslighet i stormaktstidens Stockholm', *Historisk tidskrift*, Vol. 115, No. 2, 1995, pp. 144–9.
- 8 Rudolf Thunander, *Förbjuden kärlek. Sexualbrott, kärleksmagi och kärleksbrev i 1600-talets Sverige*, Atlantis: Stockholm, 1992, pp. 10–23; Seppo Aalto, *Kirkko ja kruunu siveellisyyden vartijoina. Seksuaalirikollisuus, esivalta ja yhteisö Porvoon kihlakunnassa 1621–1700*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 1996, pp. 82–90, 174–7. Nordic research on this topic has been summarized in essays published in *People Meet the Law. Control and conflict-handling in the courts. The Nordic countries in the post-Reformation and pre-industrial period*, Ed. by Eva Österberg & Sylvi Søgner, Universitetsforlaget: Oslo, 2000.
- 9 Andersson, 'Genus och rättskultur', pp. 138–43.

not have at our disposal any accurate population statistics for Stockholm during these times, which is why the question cannot be settled finally. We do know that harlots had to steal in order to survive in seventeenth-century Stockholm, as will presently be shown by means of detailed case study analyses, but we do not know if their predecessors had to do the same a century or so earlier.

Harlots and thieves have also been treated in earlier studies about early modern Stockholm. However, in these works the approach was from the point of view of the community at large, or its leaders, and thus the prostitutes were merely described as targets of suppression or exploitation.<sup>10</sup> Contrary to this general trend, I attempt to study the harlot as an active agent and as an individual who tried to plan her actions in order to survive in a hostile environment. This can be done in a way very similar to the research that focuses on the more “conventional” strata of society, i.e. by analyzing human interaction and social networks. Inspired by such works as Bronislaw Geremek’s study of lowlife in medieval Paris, Sharon Farmer’s treatise on networks between marginalized women in the same city, Franz Irsigler and Arnold Lassotta’s book on harlots and other outcasts in medieval and early modern Cologne and several other authors’ works dealing with the profundity of early modern poverty,<sup>11</sup> I try to explore how an early modern prostitute practised her profession and what were her ultimate goals and aspirations. What I am mostly interested in are her strategies and opportunities for coping in life, i.e. her chances to make plans for the future. In the following two sections, I seek to clarify why a woman became a prostitute and what her opportunities to change her career actually were. The third section deals with a more detailed case-study describing how

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10 E.g. Lindström, ‘Crime and Control in the Capital’, pp. 67–140; Andersson, ‘Genus och rättskultur’, pp. 129–59; Conny Blom, ‘Torsk-Margareta, Stumpefots-Karin och Tjocke-Sara’, pp. 225–67; Hans Andersson, ‘“Androm till varnagel...”’ *Det tidigmoderna Stockholms folkliga rättskultur i ett komparativt perspektiv*, University of Stockholm: Stockholm, 1998; Niklas Ericsson, *Rätt eller fel? Moraluppfattningar i Stockholm under medeltid och vasatid*, University of Stockholm: Stockholm, 2003.

11 Catharina Lis & Hugo Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-industrial Europe*, revised edition, Harvester Press: Brighton, 1982; Bronislaw Geremek, *The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1987; Franz Irsigler & Arnold Lassotta, *Bettler und Gaukler, Dirnen und Henker: Außenseiter in einer mittelalterlichen Stadt. Köln 1300–1600*, DTV: Munich, 1989; Bronislaw Geremek, *Den europeiska fattigdomens betydelse*, Ordfront: Stockholm, 1991; Robert Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1994; Sharon Farmer, *Surviving Poverty in Medieval Paris. Gender, Ideology, and the Daily Lives of the Poor*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca & London, 200. See also *Living Dangerously. On the Margins in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame (Ind.), 2007.



harlot-thieves tried to organize their lives and examining whether they could have any hopes for a better future.

I also hope to be able to nuance the concept of the marginalized individual: although the harlot-thieves belonged to the lowest stratum of society, they also interacted with persons other than criminals thanks to the blurred boundaries between the respectable and the disreputable. I may be accused of underestimating the rationality of the population I have studied or misinterpreting the nature of the available sources, but I will also argue that the life-coping strategies of early modern harlot-thieves were mostly constructed on an ad hoc basis: the women who committed thefts and sold their bodies did have hopes for the future, but their time perspective seems to have been narrow and the goals of their actions very concrete.

## BECOMING A HARLOT-THIEF

In order to cast light upon the harlot-thieves' survival strategies, it is naturally necessary to analyse how a woman became a prostitute and a thief. There may have been women who chose to be prostitutes, but because of the low social status of the harlot and the prohibitions which forbade her from wearing costly furs, garments or jewellery<sup>12</sup> as well as the suppression and the dangers she met almost constantly, the number of such women was certainly very small. We can assume that most harlot-thieves were what they were against their will, owing to a lack of alternatives.<sup>13</sup>

The court records do not make it possible to reconstruct the complete life histories of any of the individuals mentioned in their pages, but in the practice of official record-keeping it was customary to mention the places of birth of the

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12 This prohibition, which had an enormous significance in a society where social status was expressed by clothing, can already be found in the first extant charter of privileges in Stockholm dating from 1436 (published in *Urkunder rörande Stockholms historia*, Vol. 1, Ed. by Karl Hildebrand & Arnold Bratt, Kungl. humanistiska vetenskapssamfundet: Stockholm, 1913, pp. 6–7). Later it was repeated numerous times in various ordinances, decisions and sentences issued by the Council.

13 This view is also maintained in Jeffrey Richards, *Sex, Dissidence and Damnation. Minority Groups in the Middle Ages*, Routledge: London & New York, 1991, pp. 116–7 and Sharon Farmer, 'Down and Out in Thirteenth-Century Paris', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 103, No. 2, 1998, p. 355, whereas a picture of greater freedom of choice is given, albeit partly underestimating the role of poverty as a spur, in Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women. Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England*, Oxford University Press: New York & Oxford, 1998, p. 48.

accused and sentenced persons – sometimes the scribes even furnished the records with more detailed information about their social backgrounds. On the basis of such records, it can be concluded that the average harlot-thief seems to have been a fallen woman in social sense of the word as well: she had lost her place among the respectable as a result of some crime, usually theft or fornication, after which she had been obliged to support herself by means of prostitution and theft. In many cases, her background as an immigrant from another place and the correspondingly weaker social links with the respectable strata of the new local community explain why downward social mobility was so much more likely than upward – for example, the earliest known harlot in Stockholm, the above-mentioned Margareta, was an immigrant, originating from the province of Västergötland.<sup>14</sup> Without functional links with the respectable, the social fall could happen quickly, as we read in an entry concerning Annika Matsdotter, a Finnish immigrant who had arrived in Stockholm in autumn 1644: during her first six months in the city she had served as maid in a helmsman's house, but then for some reason she moved to a house of ill repute, where loose women used to dwell. There she came into contact with a group of harlot-thieves and almost worked as one herself. Her case was tried before the City Court in August 1645. The Court obliged her either to take up honest employment or move away from the town.<sup>15</sup> In principle, a decision made by the City Court in 1478 stipulated that all unmarried women who were exposed as 'tainted' should be banished, and that the banishment should be preceded by a humiliating procession led by the Executioner.<sup>16</sup>

On the basis of similar accounts, it can be concluded that the category of harlot-thieves was composed of women from several different groups, but the unifying factor was the absence of a legal male guardian: among them were widows, runaway girls from the orphanage and married women whose husbands were absent for some reason (either the man had fled or the wife had done so; many a woman also lost contact with her husband after he was enlisted into the army or fleet). Especially among the lower strata, where survival depended on a person's physical work potential, the death or absence of a husband could pose severe economic problems for a solitary woman. As suggested by Annika Matsdotter's case, unmarried maidservants, too, could easily lose their place among the respectable if they entered into an extramarital relationship or committed theft and got caught. Sometimes the hereditary nature of prostitution is also revealed in the sources:

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14 *Acta et processus*, pp. 19, 585.

15 The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, transcript, 13 August 1645.

16 *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker 1474–1483*, Ed. by Emil Hildebrand, Kungliga samfundet för utgivandet av handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia: Stockholm, 1917 p. 148.

some harlot-thieves learned their way of life from their mothers. It seems to have been impossible for such women to find a respectable burgher who would employ them or give them permanent shelter in his house.

One other thing that seems to have been impossible for marginalized women was to start an honest business on their own. Most of the lucrative honest trades were reserved for men or respectable widows – unmarried women were in fact prohibited from trading.<sup>17</sup> Most trades required capital and know-how, which often could be obtained only by the members of the merchant households or the craftsmen's guilds. Moreover, the rights to practice small-scale retail trade could be too costly for poor people. Most harlot-thieves mentioned in sources concerning early modern Stockholm appear to have been poor women. They must have belonged to the increasing herds of the potentially poor, as Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly characterize persons whose possessions were few, or the 'have-nots' who owned virtually nothing besides their physical work potential and the clothes they were wearing (and even the clothes might be stolen or bought with stolen money).<sup>18</sup> Under such circumstances, prostitution was a natural solution in view of an individual's need to survive.

However, the fact that so many harlots also committed theft reveals that offering sexual services alone was not a sufficient source of income. Certainly, there were women who admitted before the court that they been working in bawdy houses and that they had slept with more than twenty men. But there were also harlots who claimed that they had had illegal intercourse on only one, two or at the most three occasions.<sup>19</sup> Of course, some women may have sought a lenient punishment and simply lied about the real number, but nevertheless even twenty or so customers can be regarded as a very modest figure for a person who works in a brothel and tries to make it economically worthwhile. Regardless of the credibility of these

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17 On women's limited possibilities to participate in economic activities, see Eva Österberg, 'Svenska kvinnors ekonomiska ställning under medeltiden. Några frågor och metodproblem', in *Kvinnans ekonomiska ställning under nordisk medeltid. Uppsater framlagda vid ett kvinnohistoriskt symposium i Kungälv 8–12 oktober 1979*, Ed. by Hedda Gunneng and Birgit Strand, Kompendiet: Lindome, 1981, pp. 10–11; Bo Franzén, 'Femöresborgaren – en medeltida stadsbo mellan drängar och rika köpmän. besuttna och obesuttna bland Sturetidens Arbogabor', *Hembygdsvöreningen Arboga Minne – Årsbok* (1998), pp. 72–86; Bo Franzén, "Ej betalad." Borgerskor och borgare i Arbogas lägsta borgerskap 1455–1527', *Folkets historia – Årsbok*, Vol. 29, (2001), pp. 36–51.

18 Lis and Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-industrial Europe*, pp. 46, 78–9.

19 The City Archives of Stockholm, see e.g. documents related to the court minutes: a list of the persons in the town's prison (compiled after 22 December 1618) and the records of the City Court of Stockholm, transcript, 27 August 1642. Also the minutes of the Consistory of Stockholm occasionally mention women who were regarded as notorious 'every man's whores'.

estimates, there may indeed have been a real shortage of customers even in a big city like Stockholm because men in need of sexual services outside wedlock could also exploit other women than professional harlots: maidservants, female inmates in hospitals and low-status single women like widows or wives whose husbands were away. Especially the sad stories told by seduced or raped maidservants give us to understand that it was often cheaper or even gratis to exploit a maidservant than to pay a visit to a harlot working in a brothel, where the customer was expected to pay for the beer, too.<sup>20</sup> Rape was in fact more usual than cases where a man was tried before the court for sexual violence.

The restrictions regulating prostitutes' outward appearance must also have made it difficult to look attractive to men. As certain harlots' nicknames or documented life stories reveal, some women pretended to be noblewomen, apparently in order to make themselves more attractive to non-aristocratic customers, but such pseudo-aristocratic harlots seem to have faced the same kind of poverty as their 'plebeian' colleagues.<sup>21</sup>

From the point of view of a harlot-thief, there were many factors that made stealing more lucrative and profitable than prostitution. Firstly, the sums she received for her sexual services were often modest compared with the value of the items she could steal. There were also disappointed and even violent customers who had intercourse first but could not, or did not want to, pay afterwards. Of course, in that kind of situation a woman could try to exploit the harsh legislation concerning extramarital sex and blackmail her customer, especially if he was a married man, by threatening to reveal the matter to the authorities. In a rare case a 'loose woman' actually did so, after tracking him down in another town. Finally she actually sued her customer before the local court, but was wise enough not to tell to the judges that they had slept together; instead she tried to get money by claiming that the man had received a silver belt from her and demanded a compensation for it. However, it was easy – probably because of her "habitus" – for the authorities to deduce what it was really all about and as a result both she and her customer were condemned to death.<sup>22</sup>

If a prostitute's customer enjoyed high esteem among the burgher community, any public accusations against him were easily dismissed as lies, as we can see

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20 The Provincial Archives of Uppsala, The judgement rolls of the City Court of Uppsala, 5 April 1630; The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, transcript, 13 August 1645. The minutes of the Consistory of Stockholm mention thousands of 'tainted' women who had been abandoned by the men who had impregnated them.

21 The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, draft 3 February 1649, 14 March 1649.

22 The Provincial Archives of Uppsala, The judgement books of the City Court of Uppsala, 5 April 1630.

in a case of a certain Cristin, whose soubriquet “Brown and Blue” (*brunt och blath*) most certainly referred to her dress: she was punished with the pillory and banishment in 1490 because she had dared to claim that a member of the City Council had utilized her services. The accused councillor needed only four days to collect eleven men who together with him took oaths that led to his acquittal.<sup>23</sup> Likewise, prostitutes who contacted the secular or religious authorities in order to obtain compensation from a violent customer met with little success – they had either no respectable witnesses or the court concluded that intercourse with a harlot could not be regarded as rape.<sup>24</sup>

The uncertain and vulnerable nature of prostitution explains why so many harlots chose to steal despite the fact that stealing was a very risky business: according to the legislation applied in Swedish towns, theft should always be punished with death whereas fornication between unmarried persons entailed only a monetary fine, church penalty or banishment. However, if a harlot tried to find out whether her potential customer was married or not, she could never be sure that the man was telling her the truth. Especially during the seventeenth century, when both the state and the Lutheran Church followed the harsh norms of the Old Testament, adulterers were in principle always condemned to death regardless of whether the other party had any knowledge of the marital status of her or his partner. In practice, however, the consequences of prostitution and stealing could be quite similar. The courts were usually more lenient towards female thieves than was prescribed in the law book, and after the fifteenth century it is not recorded that any female thieves were buried alive as the law stipulated; instead they could be whipped, expelled or condemned to forced labour and marked by cutting off one or both ears, but capital punishment, which was then carried out with a sword instead of the horrendous punishment of live interment, was usually reserved for those who had caused considerable economic damage, or recidivist thieves. Likewise in adultery cases, the practice was more lenient than the records of the urban courts suggest, since the higher authorities seem to have spared many illegal couples from capital punishment.<sup>25</sup>

However, it is unlikely that harlot-thieves had time to ponder the risks and benefits of prostitution and stealing. As a harlot-thief who had frequently been expelled from the city, stated to her companion after they had sneaked back, they could not just let themselves starve to death. That is why the women then decided

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23 *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker 1483–1492*, pp. 430–1.

24 E.g. *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker 1605–1608*, Ed. by Göran Setterkrans, City Archives of Stockholm: Stockholm, 1963, pp. 96–7. See also Ericsson, *Rätt eller fel?*, pp. 114–5.

25 See also Lindström, ‘Crime and Control in the Capital’, pp. 109–16, 122–9 and Petri Karonen, ‘The Worst Offenders in the Provincial Towns. Serious Urban Crime and its Perpetrators in the Early Years of Sweden’s Period as a Great Power’, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 23, No. 3–4, 1998, pp. 217–8, 225–8.

to commit a burglary together.<sup>26</sup> This statement can also be held as further evidence of how much more profitable stealing was than prostitution.

Of course, the court and chapter records deal mostly with revealed norm-breaking behaviour – there may have been harlot-thieves who got never punished by the authorities, at least not the secular ones. Especially during the seventeenth century, the town grew so much that there may have been good chances of never getting caught, particularly in the suburbs. There may even have been successful full-time prostitutes like “Kastibrog, the old harlot” who lived in another Nordic town, Bergen: her bad reputation seems to have been publicly known since it is described in a local priest’s diary, but the same source presents her as relatively wealthy when she died – of natural causes – in 1563.<sup>27</sup> However, we do not possess a similarly private source concerning any sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Swedish town, and it is debatable whether women who are characterized as notorious whores in the records of the Chapter managed to support themselves with prostitution only. Nor do we know if they managed to reside and support themselves with prostitution in one and the same town until they died a natural death as happened to Kastibrog in Bergen. The court and chapter records from Stockholm do occasionally mention women who lived in more permanent monogamous relationships as priests’ or officers’ concubines, but they, too, could be abandoned.<sup>28</sup>

## REMAINING A HARLOT-THIEF

Especially the court records from the 1630s and 1640s refer to harlot-thieves who were expelled from the city, often after being pilloried and perhaps even whipped, but who returned time after time, committed new crimes, got caught and were expelled again. This pattern, the return of a woman expelled for fornication, can be established from the earliest extant court records from the late fifteenth century: they also contain references of a married wife who, after being convicted of adultery and expelled, returned and supported herself as a thief. In the context of Stockholm, this Ermegard also provides us with our earliest evidence of a

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26 The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, transcript, 27 September 1645.

27 Absalon Pederssøn’s diary in *Norske Magasin*, Vol. 1, Ed. by N. Nicolaysen, Oslo, 1858, p. 225.

28 The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, e.g. transcripts, 29 August 1643 and 18 August 1649 and the minutes of the Consistory of Stockholm, e.g. 19 July 1597 and 13 November 1598.

woman who had lost her honour and supported herself by stealing, although she was – at least originally – an adulteress, not a prostitute.<sup>29</sup> The frequent returns of the expelled women reveal that it was impossible for economically weak and marginalized women to move to a new community or, if they were migrants, to return to the towns and villages they had come from. Because the harlot-thieves were poor, they could not afford long journeys – for instance, those who had come from Finland or other areas over the sea, were most certainly ‘stuck’ in Stockholm.<sup>30</sup> This is indeed mentioned clearly in a case concerning three harlot-thieves who were arrested in 1646 after they had returned in the face of strict prohibition: when interrogated they said that they had indeed wanted stay out of the town and that they hoped to be able to sail to Finland or any other remote area but they had not been able to find shelter anywhere because they had been pilloried – their shame was somehow known to the people of the countryside, too, and thus people mostly shunned any contact with them.<sup>31</sup> It is significant that these harlot-thieves were anxious to get away to a remote place – they were not returning to their homes. Perhaps they and others like them did not even dare to show up before their relatives and friends with one ear missing or whip marks on their backs or an illegitimate child in their arms. Perhaps the fallen women knew or presumed that the inhabitants of their home places were already aware of their fates due to communication and visits between different areas. All this explains why the banished women so often had to return to communities which officially despised and persecuted them.

But since they had, or knew of, no other ways of supporting themselves, they had to persevere with prostitution and theft. Many seem to have been caught and banished time after time until the authorities finally had enough and executed them. For instance, Anna Hindersdotter, who originated from the southern coast of Finland, was a frequent guest in the town’s dungeon and also appeared on numerous occasions before the City Court from July 1644 on until the court sentenced her to death in October 1647.<sup>32</sup> Death sentences had to be approved by the Supreme Court, and especially in fornication affairs the higher authorities were often more

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29 *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker 1474–1483*, pp. 16, 21, 327.

30 Concerning the immigrant elements among the lowest urban strata, see Marko Lamberg, ‘Ethnic Imagery and Social Boundaries in Early Modern Urban Communities. The Case of Finns in Swedish Towns, c. 1450–1650’, in *Shaping Ethnic Identities. Ethnic Minorities in Northern and East Central European States and Communities, c. 1450–2000*, Ed. by Marko Lamberg, East West Books Helsinki: Helsinki, 2007, pp. 200–40.

31 The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, draft, 3 June 1646; transcript, 3 June 1646.

32 The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, transcripts, 6 July 1644 and 25 October 1647.

lenient than the town councillors at the local level.<sup>33</sup> However, it is probable that the capital sentences of harlot-thieves were actually put into effect, since after the sentences women who had sometimes been mentioned several times previously in the court records then disappear permanently from the sources. At least one persistent offender, a harlot-thief called Pillory Malin (Kåk-Malin), regarded the death penalty as the only way out. At the beginning of 1634, standing once more before the court accused of theft, she exclaimed: “God forgive the authorities who have not put an end to my days: I do not benefit at all from my stealing.”<sup>34</sup> Her wish, which can be interpreted as the abandonment of any hope, was granted by the court a month later.<sup>35</sup>

Some of those who were banished did move to new places, but the possibilities of social upward mobility seem to have been non-existent elsewhere, too, and that is why we can read for instance about a certain Karin Henriksdotter, born in Mynämäki (Sw. Virmo) in south-western Finland, who passed through Stockholm, Uppsala, Söderköping and Arboga (and perhaps other places) at the end of the sixteenth century. She was forced to remain a criminal vagabond because her only chance to support herself was to steal. However, despite her sad odyssey, her case shows that there was also a certain demand for stolen items, at least among the lower levels of the urban community, and even among burghers, and thus not even thieves can be regarded as complete outcasts. It is also interesting that Karin was spared the humiliating pillory in Söderköping because two local wives pleaded for her.<sup>36</sup> These women must have belonged to a respectable stratum of the community, since otherwise their plea would most certainly not have been heeded. Unfortunately, we do not know exactly what kind of relationship existed between Karin and these two burgher wives – everything is possible from friendship to pure human pity. In any case, the presence of these two good-hearted anonymous women in the Town Hall of Söderköping cannot have been just a coincidence; rather it is likely that the women had been somehow acquainted with Karin before her case was tried in court. Even if they merely felt pity for her sad fate, which may have been commonly known through rumours in the town after she had been arrested, there must have existed a common framework for a sense of solidarity across social borders. Sometimes gender, for instance, may

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33 Karonen, ‘The Worst Offenders in Provincial Towns’, pp. 225–7.

34 “*Gud förlåte Öfverheten som icke länge sedan hafwer låtet taga lifwet af mig, iag kan inthet niuta af mitt tyfwerij.*” The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, draft, 8 January 1634.

35 The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, draft, 10 February 1634; transcript 10 February 1634.

36 The Provincial Archives of Uppsala, the minutes of the Town Court of Arboga, 17 March 1597.



have been a far more important unifying factor between individuals than ethnic background or social status.

There also existed vagrancy that was slightly more voluntary than in Karin Henriksdotter's case: a harlot-thief could follow the royal court as it toured from one place to another. And, of course, the big annual markets in the vicinity of Stockholm offered lucrative possibilities for harlot-thieves, too.<sup>37</sup> But despite certain harlot-thieves' temporary economic success, there is no evidence of upward social mobility. Although some harlot-thieves said during questioning that they were married or widowed or abandoned by their husbands or vice versa, there is no indication of prostitutes who managed to get married thanks to the wealth they had gathered by means of their profession. Considering the role that reputation played in social life and in marriage decisions, socially marked harlot-thieves had no chance to advance (back) into the ranks of the respectable by means of marriage.

Such a return back to respectability had been possible in late medieval Catholic imagery: the harlot rescued by Saint Bridget was allegedly "led back to a praiseworthy and honest lifestyle" (*reduxit ad vitam laudabilem et honestam*).<sup>38</sup> This may also have happened in reality because Catholic society was generally speaking more tolerant of sexual sins than the strict post-Reformation age, and in many towns prostitution was at least *de facto* tolerated.<sup>39</sup> But in the light of the condemning attitude reflected even in the earliest extant court records, such social acceptance must have been very rare. As I mentioned earlier, at least in 1478 the City Court wanted to banish all 'tainted' unmarried women. Although Annika Matsdotter, a fallen maidservant, was given a choice between banishment and an honest way of life in 1644, as has been related above, we do not know how realistic this opportunity was: there may not necessarily have been any among the respectable town-dwellers who was willing to employ her – if there had been, she would not have any reason to come into contact with harlot-thieves in the first place.

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37 The Provincial Archives of Uppsala, The judgement rolls of the City Court of Uppsala, 5 April 1630.

38 *Acta et processus*, pp. 19, 353.

39 Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*, pp. 378–434; James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Society*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1990, esp. pp. 521–30; Richards, *Sex, Dissidence and Damnation*, pp. 116–31; Karras, *Common Women*, pp. 14–31, 135–6.

## SURVIVING AS A HARLOT-THIEF

Although by means of the court records we can know only of those harlot-thieves who succumbed in the hostile environment, their stories cast light on how the harlot-thieves attempted to organize and control their own lives. In this section, I shall analyse court records dealing with a small group of prostitutes who apparently cooperated with each other in order to survive. These were the women among whom the above-mentioned Annika Matsdotter found shelter after being sacked because of her illegitimate pregnancy. At first glance, these women, too, may appear as utterly wretched creatures, social outcasts and victims of their surroundings. But as the account below indicates, they were not necessarily mere passive victims but very active agents indeed.

In 1645, on Easter night, three harlots who had been held in the dungeon of the City Hall of Stockholm broke out. It was by no means extraordinary for prisoners to dig themselves through the porous walls of the dungeon, and all the women in question had done so at least two times earlier. However, after escaping from the dungeon, the runaways did not immediately flee back to the underworld of Stockholm; instead they took advantage of the dark of the night and ransacked the City Hall. First they broke into the room where the city scribe used to work, where they cut the gilt covers from a book and stole them together with a piece of veil and some coins and silver items which had been kept in locked chests. Then they went to either the room where the Council held its sessions or a room adjacent to it and again broke open a chest in which they found some clothes and added them to their loot. They then left the City Hall and directed their steps to a northern suburb of the city. All three were later caught by the authorities together with a fourth accomplice who had escaped earlier. Three of the group were sentenced to death, but one was a bit luckier: this time she was only whipped and expelled from the city under the threat of similar punishment if she ever returned. She did so at least a couple of times during the following autumn, and, she too, was finally executed.<sup>40</sup>

Another story about harlots doomed to perish? Yes, but on the basis of entries scattered here and there in the court records it can be deduced that these women did not simply wait for the authorities to act but took positive action in order to survive.

The imprisoned women had known each other even before their detention: Ingel (who also called herself Ingrid) Arvidsdotter came from the town of Vadstena, Margareta Hansdotter (who also was called Joansdotter) was born in the Swedish

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40 The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, draft 4 June 1645, transcripts 4 June 1645, 13 August 1645, 18 August 1645, 27 August 1645.

mining locality of Kopparberget, Little Lisa (Lilla Lisa, actually Elisabet or Lisbet Hindersdotter) had come from the city of Turku (Sw. Åbo) in south-western Finland. The fourth accomplice, who had escaped from the dungeon earlier, was Long Lisa (Lång-Lisa or Lisbet Simonsdotter). She originated from the town of Norrköping.<sup>41</sup> Thus a co-operative group of harlot-thieves could contain members from different parts of the realm.

These women shared a history which was short but contained many common experiences. Little Lisa had already been banished in 1642 – the records are contradictory over whether she already had been pilloried and if the banishment was preceded by a humiliating procession led by the Executioner. However, it is clear that she was subjected to this punishment at least a couple of times later and that she had worked in a brothel in a northern suburb of the city when she was expelled for the first time. The brothel was run by a certain Valburg Sigfridsdotter, who was also an immigrant from the Finnish part of the realm. Two other harlots working in the same brothel were also Finnish immigrants, while two others were born in Swedish towns. It was in that brothel at the latest that Little Lisa had got to know her namesake Long Lisa, who was also working there.<sup>42</sup> After the brothel was shut down by the authorities, both the expelled Lisas defied the prohibition and returned to Stockholm. They supported themselves by stealing and got caught “several times”, as is stated in records of the City Court. Once Little Lisa was apparently sentenced to forced labour, but usually she and her companions were expelled from the city by the Executioner. In July 1644 Little Lisa’s thefts were again tried before the court. Her namesake had managed to escape, but Ingel Arvidsdotter had to share the sentence of banishment – apparently the women had become partners in crime. They had certainly worked together in another brothel, which was situated in a southern suburb. On the very same day that Little Lisa’s and Ingel’s sentences were pronounced, several other female thieves were punished; among them Margareta Hansdotter. Even after that banishment the women paid several short visits to Stockholm.<sup>43</sup>

Margareta may have been a new acquaintance for Ingel and Little Lisa in the early summer of 1644, but the women must have got to know each other during their stay in the dungeon at the latest. Indeed, the interaction between harlot-thieves was not limited to the brothels, streets, alleys, harbours and market places

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41 Ibid.

42 The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, transcript, 27 August 1642.

43 The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, transcripts, 7 February 1644, 6 July 1644, 5 September 1646.

of the city because the authorities, by remanding persons in the dungeon to await their hearings, offered the members of the underworld the opportunity to establish relations with new acquaintances, and certainly also the chance to gather resources and plan future actions.<sup>44</sup> Harlot-thieves generally preferred to work together with at least one partner, and many worked in groups of several women. The structure of the harlot-thieves' groupings was in a state of continual flux, mainly because of the frequent banishments and executions. Even when a group was dissolved by the authorities, it could reform, or its surviving members could join other similar groups, as we have seen in the records concerning Little Lisa and her companions. Although these groups or networks may be compared with certain structures of the burgher community, for example the religious guilds which existed in Stockholm during the Catholic era or the craftsmen's guilds which continued their existence despite changes in religious thinking, they were more vulnerable to change owing to the smaller number of their members. In fact, the nature of the harlot-thieves' groupings and networks resembled more the familial patterns of the respectable strata of society: the burgher families, too, were in a state of continuous change as a result of frequent deaths and remarriages.<sup>45</sup>

The bonds between harlot-thieves seem to have been created in an informal fashion: women pushed to the margins of society seem to have made contact with each other easily and quickly, and thus pairs or even bigger groups were formed.<sup>46</sup> Because of this group formation, prostitution was not necessarily any more individualistic than the ways of life and forms of production of the rest of society. However, in one important respect there was a huge difference between the cultures of the burgher community and the harlot-thieves: the activities of the harlot-thieves were planned and carried out by women only. In the harlot-thieves' lives men appeared as prosecutors, customers, victims and sometimes also as partners in crime – after all, the “gangs” of male thieves were at least as numerous as the groups of the harlot-thieves, which allowed for at least temporary co-operation. Occasionally also disloyal servants and impressed sailors and soldiers could join more professional thieves and harlot-thieves in stealing.<sup>47</sup> But if a harlot-thief belonged to a unit which was – at least temporarily – centred around a procurer and a brothel, the procurer was nearly always a woman. Often she belonged to the

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44 See also The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, transcript, 10 February 1634.

45 Marko Lamberg, *Dannemännen i stadens råd. Rådmanskretsen i nodiska köpstäder under senmedeltiden*, Stockholmia förlag: Stockholm, 2001, pp. 85–114.

46 The City Archives of Stockholm, e.g. the records of the City Court of Stockholm, transcript, 27 September 1645.

47 The City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, e.g. transcripts, 8 January 1634, 25 February 1635, 10 July 1649.

lower stratum of the burgher community, which holds for the above-mentioned Valburg Sigfridsdotter, too. She was also an accessory to the stealing by receiving the items stolen by the harlot-thieves.<sup>48</sup> One of the rare male pimps documented was an old tailor who, because he was a man, was not expelled from the city together with his harlots when they were driven out in 1601. Instead, his case was referred to the religious authorities.<sup>49</sup>

The pimp owned a house which functioned both as an alehouse and as a brothel. In the seventeenth century, brothels tended to be situated in more peripheral suburban areas. In theory, bawdy houses were not tolerated by the burgher community at all, and already in the Late Middle Ages the authorities had prohibited “loose” and “infamous” women from keeping maidservants of their own and luring servants into alehouses.<sup>50</sup> However, the repetition of such ordinances over several decades can be interpreted as evidence of the presence of brothels or at least of groups of harlots during the latter part of the fifteenth century at the latest.

A relationship between a procurer-innkeeper and a harlot-thief could be established very quickly and in a quite informal way: for instance, at a certain phase of her life Long Lisa and her companion of that day, the sacked maidservant Annika Matsdotter, went to a certain Mistress Brita, who told them that if they wanted to come back they had to ‘push in’ men who were willing to spend money on beer.<sup>51</sup> A pimp can be seen as a structural substitute for a father, master, mother, mistress or any other guardian-protector known in the respectable households, although prostitution took place outside the patriarchal households and family structures.

Even in cases where no procurer is mentioned, there seems to have been an informal leader who took the initiative and decided, or at least proposed, what the group should do next. This can be seen for instance in the records dealing with Margareta Hansdotter’s role among the above mentioned women: in the dungeon it was she who began digging under the wall with some tools that a female

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48 E.g. *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker 1603–1604*, Ed. by Folke Sleman and Göran Setterkrans, City Archives of Stockholm: Stockholm, 1959, p. 262; the City Archives of Stockholm, e.g. the records of the City Court of Stockholm, transcripts, 28 June 1645, 30 June 1645, 13 August 1645; draft, 16 February 1646; transcripts, 16 February 1646, 5 September 1646.

49 *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker 1601–1602*, Ed. by Folke Sleman, City Archives of Stockholm: Stockholm, 1957, pp. 3, 13.

50 *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker 1474–1483*, pp. 446, 453, 462, 474, 482, 492.

51 “*Om j welen komme till mig igen måtte j skuffa in Mansfolk med eder som spendera kunna*”; the City Archives of Stockholm, the records of the City Court of Stockholm, transcript, 13 August 1645.

acquaintance had smuggled into the dungeon. Margareta was also clever enough to cover the hole with ashes during the daytime so that their attempt would not be discovered too early. It was also she who kicked the final stones away so that she and her companions managed to crawl through the hole.

From the point of view of the harlot-thieves, the most important bonds seem to have been those that connected them with other women: as we have seen, they earned their livelihood together with other women, allowed their lives to be coordinated by other women and received useful information and even the tools to escape with from other women. In order to get information about possible loot, it was from the harlot-thieves' point of view very advantageous to strike up alliances with sacked or disloyal servants. Thanks to the practice of dividing up the booty, less successful harlot-thieves received economic support from their more successful companions, which certainly explains why harlot-thieves tended to cling together in small groups rather than work alone. And as we have already seen in the records dealing with Karin Henriksdotter, there also seem to have been networks which connected marginalized women with the women of the more respectable strata of society. Consequently, when Ingel, Little Lisa and Margareta finally fled from the City Hall on Easter morning, they rushed to the door of a female acquaintance, the wife of a wagonner. The mistress of the house, Anna Persdotter, seems to have known the women and their habits well because she wanted to know whether they had broken out again. Although she was unwilling to let them come in, she was accustomed to buying stolen goods from them, and on this occasion, too, she bought some items which the runaways had stolen in the City Hall only a short time earlier. Anna must have known at least Margareta, who had earlier spent some nights in her house for a rent and had also received a customer there. It is hinted that Margareta had had a sexual relationship with the wagonner, although he had mistreated her, too. The relationship between Margareta and Anna, who belonged to the lower stratum of the burgher community, was thus a complex one: Anna and Margareta had mutual economic interests and can be regarded as business partners, but the wagonner's behaviour made the women sexual rivals. Awoken in the early morning with her husband out, Anna seems also to have felt a certain fear of Margareta and her companions since she stated to her maidservant that there was a risk that they would both be killed if the runaways were let in.<sup>52</sup>

If the bonds between harlot-thieves and burgher wives could be ambiguous, the same held true for solidarity between the harlot-thieves. The mutual support between the marginalized women seems to have easily broken down if one of

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52 The City Archives of Stockholm, e.g. the records of the City Court of Stockholm, transcript, 4 June 1645.

them was arrested: the court books mention cases where a harlot-thief informed on her companions and their crimes during questioning.<sup>53</sup>

## SEIZING THE DAY

The existence of marginalized women was sad and grim, but it was by no means completely dark or hopeless. First of all, harlot-thieves were not total outcasts despite their bad reputation and the fact that many of them were immigrants from other places. They, too, had a social niche in an urban community since it can be concluded on the basis of the court records that there was interaction across social boundaries, and not only in the form of providing sexual services or stealing money and other items. Especially the fact that stolen items had a market of their own proves that hidden networks could be built between the dregs of society and the burgher community. The official moral code was apparently followed less scrupulously among the lower stratum of the burgher community, and the economically or socially weaker burghers took gladly advantage of the opportunities offered by the thieving harlots.

It can be concluded on the basis of the entries in court records that many marginalized women seem to have been very active and gained at least temporary moments of success and perhaps even experience some happiness and pleasure on their criminal path. It was always possible to dream of a better future, for instance in a form of a generous customer or rich loot, and if a woman was quick and cunning, she could utilize each opportunity for profit in spite of the dangers of getting caught. Of course, it was impossible for these women to make any plans with a longer perspective; rather they had to construct their life-coping strategies on a more ad hoc basis – it was a question of daily survival. They literally had to follow an adage that was most certainly unknown to all of them but which best describes the nature of their efforts: “Carpe diem!”

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53 The City Archives of Stockholm, e.g. the records of the City Court of Stockholm, transcripts, 10 February 1634, 30 June 1645, 5 September 1646.

## GOSSIP, SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE, AND THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL STIGMATISATION

*Jari Eilola*

People need information about their neighbours and other people with whom they are dealing. This information makes it possible to anticipate what other people might do or to estimate whether they are trustworthy or not. In the seventeenth century, this information formed a collective store of social knowledge concerning the members of a community. Social knowledge included information about people's past, and it also shaped their future. This social knowledge also easily dovetails with the hopes and fears of the members of a community.

In this article, I will focus on rumours and gossiping as a means by which early modern people tried to control their own lives and shape the possible future. Firstly, I will analyse gossiping as a strategy. How did people use gossip and the information they got by gossiping? What were their aims? Secondly, I will study the means people used to defend themselves against gossip. Difficulties arose when these measures failed. This could lead to a situation in which a member of a community became a troublemaker and was marginalised. In this way, the community created its own threats and enemies.

There are numerous cases concerning gossiping and slandering in the town court records because the courtrooms were regarded as places where people could clear their names. These cases illustrate how people used social knowledge and dealt with rumours in practice. Sermons and some other ecclesiastic texts form the other group of sources in this article. These texts illustrate the moral and social norms people used when they were speculating about the morality of an individual. From this large body of source material, I have chosen those cases which best illustrate early modern people's methods for dealing with gossiping and their attempts to control their lives and shape their future.



## GOSSIPING AND SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE

The basic assumption of this article is the fact that people, wherever they live, indulge in gossiping,<sup>1</sup> that is talking about each other when the subject(s) of the conversation is/are not present. However, it is not just any kind of talk: it reports behaviour; it is based on evaluating reputations, but it is not necessarily idle.<sup>2</sup> Gossip plays an important role in the formation of the moral imagination and in the development of social processes.<sup>3</sup>

In the wider sense, gossip is comparable with rumours:<sup>4</sup> it reflects a human interest in knowing and understanding what is going on and what kind of people one is dealing with. Gossip is a form of narrative, which is a fundamental genre in that it is universal and learnt during the early phases of the human development. Gossip is born out of experience and simultaneously gives it a form. It is a way to give meanings to, and to impose order on, events and to create continuity between the past, present and future. Gossip shapes how one reacts to, and feels about, events. From this perspective, gossip is a version of culturally and personally constructed reality.<sup>5</sup> It was a crucial element especially in early modern societies, where most information was passed on by word of mouth, and it was difficult to distinguish between facts, rumours and gossip. In fact, they were all understood as news. Social or local information and, in some cases, prejudices also determined whether this news was taken as true.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, people,

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- 1 I understand “gossip” in terms of both culture and language as a set of practices that shape moral discourses and social relationships. Krista Van Vleet, ‘Partial Theories: On Gossip, Envy and Ethnography in the Andes’, *Ethnography*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2003, p. 492.
  - 2 Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires. Rumor and History in Colonial Africa*, University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 2000, pp. 60–1.
  - 3 Pamela J. Stewart & Andrew Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004, p. 4.
  - 4 Gossip is a form of unreliable oral information but it is more restricted than rumour. As Max Gluckman (‘Gossip and Scandal’, *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1963, pp. 307–16) noted, gossip usually takes place among close friends and is about close friends. Gossiping, then, is a privilege that demonstrates and reiterates affiliation with a certain group. Thus the subject of the gossip is secondary to the process of creating social boundaries. Thomas Paine, ‘What is Gossip About? An Alternative Hypothesis’, *Man, New Series*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1967, p. 278; White, *Speaking with Vampires*, pp. 56, 62.
  - 5 Elinor Ochs & Lisa Capps, ‘Narrating the Self’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 25, 1996, pp. 19–21, 24–5; Jerome Bruner, ‘The Narrative Construction of Reality’, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1991), pp. 4–7, 10–11, 18–20.
  - 6 Penny Roberts, ‘Arson, Conspiracy and Rumour in Early Modern Europe’, *Continuity and Change*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1997, pp. 11; White, *Speaking with Vampires*, p. 56; Jari Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla. Sallitun ja kielletyn määrittelemisen 1600-luvun jälkipuoliskon noituus- ja taikuustapauksissa*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2003, p. 50. There were also, of

did not have enough factual information, and in certain circumstances, usually in social crises (for instance during the so-called great witch-hunts in the 1660s and 1670s), they absorbed the information that fitted best with their fears. In such conditions, rumours spread faster and wider, and they became more and more fantastical and exaggerated.<sup>7</sup>

Gossip can collectively strengthen the symbolic values which constitute the core of a group's or a community's identity.<sup>8</sup> However, it is important to note that the identification or the feeling of sameness was not necessarily based on "real" phenomena. The unifying factor could also be imagined or desired.<sup>9</sup> At the same

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course, formal ways to pass on information (for example, the judgments of the town courts or the reading of official announcements in churches) but they were slow, and informal speculation often spread faster. Adam Fox, 'Rumor, News and Popular Political Opinion in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England', *Historical Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 1997, pp. 598, 601, 604.

7 For illuminating examples of the connections between rumours, prejudices and panic, see Gregory Evans Dowd, 'The Panic of 1751. The Significance of Rumours on the South Carolina-Cherokee Frontier', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 3, 1996; Fox, 'Rumor, News and Popular Political Opinion', pp. 599–600, 613–7; Stewart & Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip*, pp. 4–5.

8 Among other researchers, Max Gluckman ('Gossip and Scandal', pp. 307–16) and Robert Paine ('What is Gossip About?', pp. 282–3) have pointed out how problematic such concepts as the group or the community are because people belong to several different "we" groups at the same time. Many of these groups may have conflicting interests, or they may need information from outside. In this article, "group" and "community" refer to different but at least partly overlapping concepts. On the one hand, they refer to small town communities. On the other hand, they refer to the moral Christian community, or "good people". The town was regarded as a virtuous collective unit into which people were willing to be assimilated. However, this also implied an endeavour to marginalise or even destroy individual norm-breakers, or sinners – especially if they were judged to be incurably wicked in their characters. Kustaa H. J. Vilkkunen, 'Jumala elä rankase minua. Yksilöllisen subjektin synty', in *Siperiasta siirtoväkeen. Murrosaikoja ja käännekohtia Suomen historiassa*, Ed. by Heikki Roiko-Jokela, Kopi-Jyvä: Jyväskylä, 1996, pp. 74–6; Mikko Juva, *Varsinais-Suomen seurakuntaelämä puhdasoppisuuden hallitsemisena vuosisatoina (1600–1808)*, Varsinais-Suomen Historiantutkimusyhdistys: Turku, 1955, pp. 62–5. Cf. the concepts "moralized universe" in Bob Scribner ('Preconditions of Tolerance and Intolerance in Sixteenth-Century Germany', in *Tolerance and Intolerance in European Reformation*, Ed. by Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996, p. 43, also note 36) and "sacred society" in John Bossy (*Peace in the Post-Reformation. The Birkbeck Lectures, 1995*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1998, pp. 53–5).

9 Heikki Lehtonen, *Yhteisö*, Vastapaino: Tampere, 1990, pp. 24–8, 31–2; Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays*, Fontana Press: London, 1993, pp. 5, 10–13, 126–7; Ilkka Ruohonen & Teuvo Laitila, 'Tulkintojen ja symbolien ytimessä: geertziläinen näkökulma kulttuureihin', in *Näköaloja kulttuureihin. Antropologian historiaa ja nykysuuntauksia*, Ed. by Tapio Nisula, Gaudeamus: Helsinki, 1994, pp. 123–8; Veikko Anttonen,

time, gossip had also its negative side, and it could be used as means of social exclusion from a group. This could happen slowly in a process of stigmatisation, as members of the community, as a consequence of a series of continuing conflicts, gradually became aware that a certain person was incurably unsocial. From this point of view, it is obvious that the practice of gossiping was a mode of evaluating people and moralising about their actions. Discourses of morality are intertwined with culturally situated notions of sociality and personhood and historically mediated relationships.<sup>10</sup>

The notion “moral stance” draws on both sociological and philosophical studies about what human beings understand as good and proper, how they judge their own and each other’s actions, and according to what standards people might hold others accountable. Although a moral stance is a dimension of all narrative, it is a particularly significant dimension of oral practice in gossiping, configuring meanings that are simultaneously affective, social, and referential, and pointing to the significance of the specific histories of relationships between the interlocutors and the protagonists.<sup>11</sup> Thus gossip is a useful historical source because it traces the boundaries created by talking about someone. Through this talking, a universe of values and behaviour is constituted.<sup>12</sup>

It also seems clear that social knowledge accumulated through gossiping. It included information about the subject’s earlier way of life, and it influenced how his or her actions were evaluated in the present. Although these narratives focused on past events,<sup>13</sup> they also shaped expectations about the future: social knowledge explained what kind of behaviour people could expect from their neighbours. From this point of view, social knowledge had a binary function: it protected honourable people against false statements or idle talk, and on the other hand it tied dishonourable persons closely to their bad reputations.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, gossip not only created continuity, but it also gave more control at all three time levels, and above all it made the future more predictable.

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*Ihmisen ja maan rajat. “Pyhä” kulttuurisena kategoriana*, Finnish Literature Society; Helsinki, 1996, pp. 19–22, 31–3; Pekka Kaunismaa, ‘Keitä olemme? Kollektiivisen identiteetin käsitteellisistä lähtökohdista’, *Sosiologia*, Vol. 34 No. 3, 1997, pp. 220–1.

10 Gluckman, ‘Gossip and Scandal’; Fox, ‘News and Popular Political Opinion’, p. 601; White, *Speaking with Vampires*, pp. 61, 64–5; Olli Matikainen, *Verenperijät. Väkivalta ja yhteisön murros itäisessä Suomessa 1500–1600-luvulla*, Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2002, pp. 99–100; Van Vleet, ‘Partial Theories’, pp. 500, 503; Stewart & Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip*, p. 12.

11 Van Vleet, ‘Partial Theories’, pp. 505–6.

12 White, *Speaking with Vampires*, p. 64.

13 Ochs & Capps, ‘Narrating the Self’, pp. 24; Stewart & Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip*, p. 30.

14 Stewart & Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip*, pp. 30–1, 38–9.

People in small communities went about their everyday activities in constant awareness of the attention and talk of others. Gossip conditioned their actions and words, their postures and movements from one moment to another. Despite their everyday obligations and interactions, people attempted to shield themselves, their actions, their objects and their ideas from the views of others or from the criticism and envy of their neighbours.<sup>15</sup> Here, honour, a good reputation and reciprocity were crucial. I suggest that in the early modern society an honourable person had a status that was collectively recognised by the other members of his or her community. He or she had an obligation to reciprocate the respect they expressed. If people refused to do this, they snubbed the other party. If they continue to behave badly long enough, the other party was also freed from his or her obligation to respect them. This could lead to conflicts and more aggressive behaviour on both sides.<sup>16</sup> People not only evaluated each other by their outward behaviour, but they also speculated about one another's morality or, more precisely, about the goodness or wickedness of their nature. This kind of speculation was an important part of gossiping. In this sense, gossip was a search for the "truth behind the truth".<sup>17</sup>

It is important to note that, even though the ideological and moral evaluations of ordinary persons and the authorities coincided on many levels, there were also differences. The ideology of the Table of Duties (Sw. *Hustavlan*) was recognised by both sides, but there existed, for instance, certain recently forbidden old customs which people still adhered to as they had always done. Thus, the most fruitful way to deal with this situation is to understand it as two-way discourse in which local ideas and attitudes interplayed with state legislation and religious doctrine. The courtrooms were also places where the invisible was made visible, and where gossip was taken out of the household and other "private public arenas"<sup>18</sup> into the

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15 Van Vleet, 'Partial Theories', p. 496.

16 Frank Henderson Stewart, *Honor*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1994, pp. 13, 21–9, 39–42; Matikainen, *Vereperijät*, pp. 95–9; Petri Karonen, 'In Search of Peace and Harmony. Capital Crimes in Late Medieval and Early Modern Swedish Realm (ca. 1450–1700)', in *Crime and Control in Europe from the Past to the Present*, Ed. by Mirrka Lappalainen and Pekka Hirvonen, Academy of Finland: Helsinki, 1999; Kustaa H. J. Vilkkuna, 'Menneisyyden ihmisen todellinen unimaailma. Unet ja persoonallisuus historiassa', in *Huhut, unet, sodomiiitit, moraalinvartijat, elämäkerrat, puhuttelusanat ja ammattinimikkeet*, Ed. by Heikki Roiko-Jokela, Historical Association of Jyväskylä and Kopijyvä: Jyväskylä, 1997; Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Routledge, London, 2000, pp. 86–7, 101–2.

17 Stewart & Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip*, p. 38; Ilkka Pyysiäinen, *Synti – ajatuksin, teoin ja töin*, WSOY: Helsinki, 2005, pp. 24–6.

18 I use here the term "public" with reservation. It is a well-known fact that in early modern communities there were no private places in our modern or post-modern sense. However,

public sphere. In this sense, the town courts also defined the partly overlapping areas of control of the Crown, the Lutheran Church, the community and the individuals involved.

## NICKNAMES AND GOSSIP – UNCONTROLLED VOICES FROM THE PRIVATE PUBLIC AREA

Brita Eriksdotter, a burgher's wife, and her sister Anna had invented nicknames for several honourable townsmen. For this, they were indicted and sentenced to acquit themselves by swearing an oath of innocence. Anna was able to get the requisite six witnesses who would endorse her oath with their own word. But Brita was not so lucky. The town court condemned her to a public flogging and exile. The court took her misconduct seriously because it rejected her appeal even though she pleaded in the name of her under-aged children.<sup>19</sup>

Nicknames do not necessarily reflect the truth, but members of a community were able to read their meanings. One might say that it was the ideological and (personal) historical context rather than the words themselves that created their effect.<sup>20</sup> The case of Brita Eriksdotter above illustrates the ambiguous nature of nicknames as representations and forms of symbolic inversion in early modern European culture. They contrasted dramatically with official names because they often focused on the unfavourable and negative attributes of the referents. This was because, unlike the surname and, up to a point, also the first name, which belonged to the realm of the family, the nickname was connected with the community:

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if we think that the town courts constituted and controlled public knowledge, there were definitely times and places that were outside or only partly under its control. Bob Scribner ('Mündliche Kommunikation und Strategien der Macht in Deutschland im 16. Jahrhundert', in *Kommunikation und Alltag in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit: internationaler Kongress Krems an der Donau bis 12. Oktober 1990*, Ed. By Helmut Hundsichler, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Wien, 1992) refers these places as the "private public arena".

19 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 2: 5 August 1661, 17 August 1661, 19 August 1661, 9 September 1661, National Archives of Finland.

20 Kimmo Katajala, *Nälkäkapina. Veronvuokraus ja talonpoikainen vastarinta Karjalassa 1683–1697*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1994, p. 141; Stewart & Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip*, pp. 30; Kustaa H. J. Vilkkuna, 'Herotes oli koira. Humoristinen puhe rikoksena', in *Rikos historiassa*, Ed. by Olli Matikainen, Historical Association of Jyväskylä and Kopijyvä: Jyväskylä, 2000, pp. 241–6, 249–52, 254; Seppo Knuutila, *Kansanhuumorin mieli. Kaskut maailmankuvan aineksena*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 1992, pp. 82–4.

It was the free creation of the social group. The invention and dissemination of nicknames jumbled together the low and the rich, the notables and the rest of the community. But even if all the members of the community were thus mingled together, everyone was also identified. Nicknames signalled particular features and commented on demeanour and behaviour.<sup>21</sup> In the case of Eriksdotter, they did so in at least two different ways.

Firstly, some of them pointed to the deviant behaviour or a physical defect of the referent.<sup>22</sup> This is most evident in the case of Knut Matsson's wife. Eriksdotter explained that she had invented her nickname *Släpsko* (Shufflehoe) because she had long feet and she shuffled a bit. The characterisation of Bern Bertilsson's wife as a mare can be interpreted as reference to her outward appearance but it could also have alluded to her status as a mother and wife.

Secondly, some of these nicknames seem to tell us indirectly what these people "really" were as opposed to what they appeared or pretended to be behind their public masks. In this respect, nicknames can invert the world by describing honour in terms of dishonour, the upper body in terms of the lower, culture in terms of nature.<sup>23</sup> Therefore Eriksdotter hinted that Herman Jesenhausen, an honourable merchant and magistrate, who was also known to be the wealthiest man in Ostrobothnia, had syphilis. A "mash crook" was an implement that was used in brewing. Therefore, as a nickname of a clerk called Olof Larsson, it suggested that he drank too much.

There are numerous references to the destructive nature of idle talk or gossiping in sermons and other official writings. The Bishop of Turku (Sw. Åbo), Eric Ericus Sorolainen, for example, compared gossips to lepers in his Book of Homilies. They sowed disunity among their neighbours, and by doing so they polluted and spoiled their community. Their ill will was contagious, and it was transmitted like a disease.<sup>24</sup> Bishop Sorolainen, like other people of those times, believed that all the good or evil which touched a person also remained within him. Therefore he should seek the company of good and honourable people and avoid evil persons.<sup>25</sup>

The fact that ordinary conversation took place in face-to-face situations is significant. One necessarily spoke in circumstances where it was possible to

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21 Anton Blok, *Honour and Violence*, Polity Press: Oxford, 2001, pp. 156–7.

22 Blok, *Honor and Violence*, pp. 155–6.

23 Blok, *Honor and Violence*, pp. 157–8; Matikainen, *Verenperijät*, p. 98; Vilkkuna, 'Herotes oli koiraa', pp. 241–6.

24 Ericus Erici Sorolainen, *Postilla*, Vol. 2, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 1990 (orig. 1625), p. 898 [912].

25 Pentti Renvall, *Suomalainen 1500-luvun ihminen oikeuskatsomustensa valossa*, Turun yliopisto: Turku, 1949, pp. 99–100. Cf. also Marko Lamberg's article in this anthology.

evaluate whether the information could be trusted or not. Thus the intercourse came within the sphere of control. Gossip, on the other hand, worked covertly, outside the formal mechanisms of social control. Therefore it was difficult to check on or verify by explicit means whether the information conveyed by the gossip was true or false.<sup>26</sup>

The reader may have noticed that all the persons who were accused of inappropriate speech in the above examples were women. There are many references in the literature of the time that regard this kind of behaviour as peculiar to women. Bishop Sorolainen warned that women should not talk too much outside their own homes and enclosures.<sup>27</sup> His heir apparent, Johannes Gezelius Sr., explained that drinking and slandering were characteristic of widows and other old women.<sup>28</sup> And a vicar called Jonas Mennander stated that servant girls and young women were predisposed to malicious gossiping.<sup>29</sup>

These statements were based on the interpretations of the Table of Duties. The main idea was that a husband/ master administered the household, and the other members of the family were obedient to him.<sup>30</sup> He dealt with things outside the family unit, while the sphere of activity of both married and unmarried women was limited to inside it. Women were bound to their households in a spatial sense. Their husbands, fathers or masters controlled, at least in principle, their movements outside the family unit. The world outside was described as dangerous and sinister.<sup>31</sup>

In 1686, Vaasa (Sw. Vasa) Town Court dealt with a dispute between Matts Turja and his wife Margareta Henrikdotter. The court ordered that Margareta should no longer practise weaving around the town without her husband's approval and authorisation.<sup>32</sup> Bishop Gezelius Sr. wrote that the willingness of widows to slander people was a result of the lack of male control.<sup>33</sup> In many cases, nicknames and

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26 Renvall, *Suomalainen 1500-luvun ihminen*, pp. 142, 159, 162–3; William Ian Miller, 'Dreams, Prophecy and Sorcery. Blaming the Secret Offender in Medieval Iceland', *Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 2, 1986, pp. 101–2.

27 Sorolainen, *Postilla*, Vol. 2, pp. 819, 820 [832, 833].

28 Johannes Gezelius (Senior), *Yxi paras lasten tavara*, Turku, 1666, Chapter "Leskeille".

29 Jonas Mennander, *Huoneen peili*, Otava: Helsinki, 1998 (orig. 1699), pp. 128–33.

30 Hilding Pleijel, *Hustavlans värld. Kyrkligt folkliv i äldre tiders Sverige*, Verbum: Stockholm, 1970, Chapter 1; Kekke Stadin, 'Hade svenska kvinnorna en stormaktstid? Stormaktstidens svenska stat och konstruktionen av genus', *Scandia*, Vol. 63, No. 2, 1997. On the historical background of the concept, see Sirpa Aalto, 'Oikonomitraditionen och den lutherska husläran', in *Den problematiska familjen*, Ed. by Panu Pulma, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1991, pp. 74–5.

31 See, for instance, Sorolainen, *Postilla*, Vol. 2, pp. 819, 820 [832, 833].

32 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 5: 21 August 1686, National Archives of Finland.

33 Gezelius (Senior), *Yxi paras lasten tavara*, Chapter "Leskeille".

rumours spread when women from several houses gathered to work together. For instance in Vaasa, Brita Eriksdotter shared her suspicions with other women while they were distilling spirits together.<sup>34</sup>

As a social phenomenon, gossiping itself has never been gender-specific, but the image of it has always been so.<sup>35</sup> This explains why the clergymen quoted above described gossiping as a female characteristic. However, this is only a partial explanation. The concept “private public area” illustrates the deeper roots of the phenomenon. Historians such as Bob Scribner, Adam Fox<sup>36</sup> and Börje Harnesk (see his article in this anthology) have emphasised its importance in interaction between ordinary people on one hand and the difficulties that the authorities experienced when they tried to control the private public area on the other. The concept covers places like alehouses and homes, where people met each other and gossiped.

Men’s activities in social and economic networks outside the household unit were based on open talk. Networks based on trust and the sessions of the town courts constituted a public area,<sup>37</sup> where male speaking was controlled, and where its trustworthiness was evaluated.<sup>38</sup> Women, on the other hand, did not have the same kind of social position as men. Even though they could prosecute cases in court, and they were also heard there as witnesses, their conversations mostly took place outside or on the margins of the (masculine) public area. It did not matter what women said to each other as long as both they and their stories remained inside the household. If their talk became public, it was subject to the same kind of control mechanisms as male conversations. In other words, their discourse was required to be explicit and to be uttered in situations where it was possible to evaluate its reliability. That it was the duty of husbands to control their wives’

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34 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 2: 17 August 1661, 19 August 1661.

35 Chris Wickham, ‘Gossip and Resistance among the Medieval Peasant’, *Past & Present*, Vol. 46, No. 160 (1998), pp. 15–16; Nicholas Emler, ‘Reputation and Social Adaption’, in *Good Gossip*, Ed. by Robert F. Goodman and Aaron Ben-Ze’ev, University Press of Kansas, 1994, pp. 119–20.

36 Scribner, ‘Mündliche Kommunikation’; Fox, ‘Rumour, News and Popular Political Opinion’, pp. 607–9.

37 I understand “public area” as a sphere where communicative activities (for instance, speaking) were normatively transparent to everyone. It was a situation where private and even intimate issues were revealed and given to the public administration to deal with. Ferdinand Schoeman, ‘Gossip and Privacy’, in *Good Gossip*, Ed. by Goodman and Ben-Ze’ev, University Press of Kansas: Lawrence, 1994, pp. 73–7.

38 Alexandra A. Shepard, ‘Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England c. 1580–1640’, *Past & Present*, Vol. 48, No. 167, 2000, pp. 85–8; Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household. Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1991, pp. 93, 182; Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil. Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe*, Routledge: London & New York, 1997, pp. 45–6, 65–6, 228–9.



talk became apparent when conflicts between townsfolk occurred. For instance, the Treasurer's Court of Gävle ordered a goldsmith called Lorentz to see to it that his wife did not spread any more rumours.<sup>39</sup>

The need for social control was a result of the fact that communication consisted in verbal information. Official channels (for instance, public proclamations by the town courts and announcements during church services) disseminated information effectively, but they also left room for speculation. Consequently, there were situations where there was a social demand for gossips and rumour-mongers. Moreover, gossiping was not necessarily a social practice that only operated in the lack of real information. It also compiled various elements from the official sources and combined them into a new order of social reality. This process also modified the original intention of the gossip. These factors partly explain why the difference between facts and rumours or gossip became blurred.<sup>40</sup> Only a few persons had exact knowledge of how things really were, and especially in such an atmosphere of uncertainty people easily believed stories that fitted with their own desires and fears.<sup>41</sup>

The information that originated from the unofficial and private discussions of women created a process in which people's intentions and trustworthiness were evaluated and interpreted. When nicknames were invented or malicious stories were told in the absence of the referents, there were no restraining barriers.<sup>42</sup> Uncontrolled talk was dangerous because it could harm or even destroy a person's good name and scope for action in the community. In this sense, idle talk could be as harmful as verifiable disgrace.<sup>43</sup>

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39 The records of the Treasurer's Court of Gävle 24 February 1673, National Archives, Stockholm. It should be noted that a wife's reputation could prejudice a craftsman's status. Dag Lindström, 'Oärliga mästare och kivande makar. Ett och annat om rättskipning, kriminalitet och normsystem i 1500-talets Norden', *Historisk tidskrift*, Vol. 114, No. 4, 1994, pp. 536–7.

40 Despite the deleterious intentions, rumours concerning people were not automatically false or malicious. Ilpo Koskinen, *Väritetty totuus: Juurut arkielämässä*, Yliopistopaino: Helsinki, 2000, pp. 25, 37–8, 40–2; Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance among the Medieval Peasant', pp. 9–11; Emler, 'Reputation and Social Adaption', pp. 117–20; Steve Hindle, 'Shaming of Margaret Knowsley: Gossip, Gender and the Experience of Authority in Early Modern England', *Continuity & Change*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1994, pp. 400–1; Stewart & Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip*, pp. 45, 182.

41 Roberts, 'Arson, Conspiracy and Rumour', p. 11.

42 Koskinen, *Väritetty totuus*, pp. 33–4, 48–9; Stewart & Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip*, pp. 38–9.

43 Lindström, 'Oärliga mästare och kivande makar', pp. 537–8.

## SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE FLUID BORDER BETWEEN THE PRIVATE AND THE PUBLIC SPHERES

The word was going around in Gävle that Katarina Bure, the wife of the Vicar Peder Fontelius, had been a witch since her early childhood. The inhabitants of the parish of Nora, where she was born, had been aware of it, but they could not accuse her publicly because her father, too, was vicar. The source of the information was an itinerant tailor called Matts Hansson. He said that he had heard the story from his wife, who had lived in Nora, near the parsonage. Because there were other suspicions concerning Katarina Bure, the truthfulness of this rumour, too, had to be investigated.<sup>44</sup>

It was important to find the origin of a piece of gossip because the person at the beginning of the chain was accountable for the trustworthiness of the information.<sup>45</sup> Here the reputation of an individual played an important role. The tailor's wife did not support her husband. The jurors of Nora, who brought a certificate of good conduct for Katarina Bure, said that the tailor was known in Nora as "a wicked man and a grand calumniator who makes up slanders about honourable people". Hansson then changed his story. He said he had heard it from an old man called Anders Jönsson, who lived in Nora. Unfortunately, Jönsson had died some years earlier, and this is probably the reason why Hansson pointed the finger at him. For the same reason, Gävle Town Court would not accept this version of his story.<sup>46</sup>

Brita Eriksdotter's case also illustrates the importance of social knowledge in the evaluation of the reliability of people's talk. She had called one Anna Mickelsdotter a witch. Eriksdotter explained that she, Mickelsdotter and some other women had a common still, which was used by them in turn. Now, for two reasons, she suspected that Mickelsdotter had cast a spell over the still. First, her own distilling of spirits had failed twice in a row. She had not changed her working methods but on both occasions done everything as she always had. She suspected Mickelsdotter because both times the latter had been the one who had used the still before her. Second, Mickelsdotter had several times asked Eriksdotter about her working methods, which she considered suspicious.<sup>47</sup>

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44 The records of the Royal Norrland Commission 6 February 1675, 20 February 1675, National Archives, Stockholm; Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla*, pp. 268–9.

45 Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla*, pp. 268–70.

46 The records of the Royal Norrland Commission 20 February 1675, 3 March 1675, National Archives, Stockholm.

47 The Records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 2: 5 August 1661, 17 August 1662, 19 August 1662, National Archives of Finland.

What Erikdotter said was true, and in normal circumstances, this kind of evidence might have been enough for a conviction, but in this particular case it did not satisfy the town court. The Burgomaster and the magistrates knew that Erikdotter had invented nicknames for many honourable persons. They also knew that there were no signs of improvement in her behaviour. Then they considered what they knew about Anna Mickelsdotter. There were no previous suspicions of witchcraft against her. It seemed that she had lived her life according to the rules of society. Because Erikdotter did not have any witnesses to corroborate her allegation, the court based its judgment on the women's reputation and acquitted Mickelsdotter of the accusations.

These examples show that when members of a community tried to guess the intention behind the talk or actions of a single person, they did not look at his or her deeds as separate cases; rather their view was more comprehensive. There were several factors that influenced the process of scrutiny. Firstly, there were different kinds of cultural stereotypes and expectations of how, for instance, an honourable person or a witch should talk and behave.<sup>48</sup> Secondly, these stereotypes were compiled with the information that people had about the person in question. The personal history and the background of a person shaped his or her reputation. All these factors were moulded into collectively known (but not necessarily shared) narratives by gossiping.

Both Vaasa Town Court and the Royal Commission for Norrland<sup>49</sup> asked the townsmen present in the hearings of the cases of Brita Erikdotter and Katarina Bure for information concerning the suspected witches and their past. Those townsmen who were present at the trial of Erikdotter said that she had been circulating malicious nicknames for more than ten years. In the case of Bure, the townsmen did not just make random inquiries concerning her, but they tried to elucidate her history and background. On the other hand, this case in particular illuminates people's willingness to believe gossip and rumours that correlated with their own fears and preconceptions.<sup>50</sup>

When both parties had been born, or at least lived for a long period of time, in the same town, there was no need for a certificate of a good conduct. The reputation of the offended person was evaluated by the town court with the help of the community and its social knowledge. The situation became much

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48 Fox, 'Rumor, News and Popular Political Opinion', p. 617; Hindle, 'Shaming Margaret Knowsley', pp. 400–1; Eilola, *Rajapinoilla*, p. 267.

49 Bengt Ankarloo ('Sweden: The Mass Burnings 1668–1676', in *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, Ed. by Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1993) has closely analysed the roles of the Royal Commissions during the great Swedish witch-hunts (1668–1676).

50 Roberts, 'Arson, Conspiracy and Rumour', pp. 10–12.

more complicated when the court was dealing with vagrants or soldiers. In 1672 Vaasa Town Court dealt with a vagrant called Håkan Braddesson because he had run into debt. The court was curious to know who he was, and from where he had come to the town. Braddesson said that he had been a potter's journeyman in Stockholm. As evidence, he gave a permit which he claimed to have received from the elders of the guild. The town court was suspicious and asked for more information from Stockholm. The elders replied that they did not know Braddesson.<sup>51</sup>

The case illustrates how a craftsman's documents of identity, his permit and/or a letter from a guild or his master craftsman, were comparable with certificates of good conduct. But if there were reasons to suspect that these documents were falsified, it was not easy to check the information. Master craftsmen kept a book of qualified apprentices but not as systematically as they should have done. Therefore, some of the names were occasionally missing. There was even less information concerning journeymen because they wandered from one place to another and stayed only for short periods in one location.<sup>52</sup>

The case of Johan Abrahamsson was even more complicated. He claimed to have been born in Oulu but to have left the town 22 years previously and joined the army to serve under General Hans Ridder. In 1655 he was enrolled as a cavalryman. The troops had gone to Poland, where he was captured by the enemy. However, he had escaped and got to Kokenhusen, from where he had travelled through Wenden, Wolmar (Valmiera), Valka, Tartu, Narva, Nyenskans, Vyborg and Turku to Vaasa. He was a qualified weaver. In Vaasa, he was working for Olof Jakobsson in the hope of earning enough money to return to Oulu.<sup>53</sup>

Abrahamsson did not have any kind of documentation to confirm his story. The members of the town court tried to verify it by a thorough interrogation.<sup>54</sup> The court was interested in what kind of companions he had travelled with as well as the route he had taken during his journey. They also asked Abrahamsson to describe the towns he had passed through. In this way, the court was able to show that he was not familiar with the places he claimed to have visited. Abrahamsson was not embarrassed by these new developments in the course of the hearing; instead he made up a new story. The difference between fiction and facts became even more blurred than it was before.

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51 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 3: 17 January 1672, 15 April 1672, National Archives of Finland.

52 Anni Kallio, *Rääätälimestari yhteisönsä jäsenenä Turussa vuosina 1625–65*, University of Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä, 2000, pp. 22, 64–5.

53 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 2: 13 July 1663, National Archives of Finland.

54 Natalie Zemon Davis, *Martin Guerre's paluu*, Gaudeamus: Helsinki, 2001.

This “game” between Abrahamsson and the town court might have continued for a long time, but one day a certain Israel Klemetsson Posso, a tradesman from Turku, visited Vaasa Town Hall and recognised Abrahamsson. He reported that Abrahamsson had been sentenced to imprisonment for bigamy and had escaped from the jail in Turku Castle a year previously. Abrahamsson denied Posso’s story.<sup>55</sup> As it was a case of man’s one word against another’s, the town court believed Posso, whose identity was more certain than Abrahamsson’s. Posso was also able to give a detailed description of Abrahamsson’s case, reporting, for instance, what kind of clothes Abrahamsson had worn during his imprisonment. The details given by Posso made his story even more plausible. Abrahamsson tried to argue that the identification was not indisputable. He accused Posso of slandering him and claimed that he had to get to Turku to vindicate himself.

The above cases illustrate how the trustworthiness of an individual was linked to the social knowledge concerning him or her and his or her collectively recognised status or position as a member of a community or a social hierarchy. Usually it implied that a person had a position as a member of a community, a group of craftsmen or a family household. Above all, it meant that he or she had a permanent dwelling place. An honourable person was then bound to a place and a social rank. We can easily test the idea in the context of vagrants. Both the Swedish term *lösfolk* and Finnish word *irtolaiset* imply that they were somehow outsiders without any long-lasting connections to place or a group of people. They were also outside the four social estates. Consequently, their talk did not have any value in the public sphere because there were no guarantees of its reliability.<sup>56</sup> However, in the realm of gossiping, information provided by these marginalised people might be accepted as truth and be absorbed into the broad body of social knowledge.

In the end, the character of the utterer could be even more important than the content of his or her statements. Consequently, the word of a person of good standing could carry more weight than matters that were considered as facts. This did not apply only to the courtrooms.<sup>57</sup> Researchers of gossiping, too, have emphasised the fact that the reputation of the narrator was an important criterion in evaluating the reliability of information.<sup>58</sup> If the circumstances did not permit this, the capacity of the court or individual townsmen to ascertain the truth was very limited. In these cases, their interpretation of the truth was based only on

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55 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 2: 13 July 1663, National Archives of Finland.

56 Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla*, p. 239.

57 Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth. Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1995.

58 See for instance Van Vleet, ‘Partial Theories’.

the richness of detail in stories and testimonies. All they could do, in fact, was evaluate only how conceivable and probable the stories actually were.<sup>59</sup>

Both Johan Abrahamsson and Håkan Braddesson had shady backgrounds, which made it difficult to deal with them. These men were chameleons who, at least in theory, could change their identities at whim. Both men had also lived immoral lives: Abrahamsson had been accused of bigamy in Turku and Braddesson kept a concubine. This partly explains the urge of the town court to trace their original identities. Their immorality implied that there might be even worse sins concealed behind the facade of false identity. A sinner who was accepted into the community was dangerous in two ways. He or she not only demoralised and polluted the community but aroused God's wrath and led to collective punishment.<sup>60</sup>

Here the value of openness is apparent. Honourable person had nothing to hide. They were what they claimed to be. They did not try to hide their real identities by pretending to be someone else. The case of Olof Jakobsson, a weaver from Vaasa, illustrates this point. One evening in an alehouse, he fell out with Barber-Surgeon Samuel Golle. He called him to a tramp (Sw. *landlöpare*) and a vagrant (Sw. *lösdrivare*). By saying so he was drawing a parallel between Golle and people of low status or without any status at all. Golle presented his permit, birth certificate (*Geburtzbreff*), which was dated 1638 in Halle, and a letter from his master craftsman (*lärobreeff*), which proved that he was qualified. He asked Jakobsson to present him with his documents of identity. Jakobsson could present only a permit with the wrong name on it. In other words, it was not his permit, or then he was hiding his true identity for some reason. The town court was never able to resolve the issue because Jakobsson refused to tell. He only said that he had not killed anyone.<sup>61</sup> This question marked a turning point in Jakobsson's life, and he was exiled from the town shortly after the incident.

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59 On the importance of details, see Davis, *Martin Guerren paluu*; Vilkkuna, 'Menneisyyden ihmisen todellinen unimaailma'; Jonas Liliequist, "Att inte kunna förstå sig är att inte kunna leva." Om personlighet, identitet och kön i 1600- och 1700-talens Sverige', in *Individ och struktur i historisk belysning*, Ed. by Tom Ericsson and Agneta Guillemot, University of Umeå: Umeå, 1997, pp. 163–4, 168–9.

60 Juva, *Varsinais-Suomen seurakuntaelämä*, pp. 62–5; Vilkkuna, 'Jumala elä rankase minua', pp. 73–6; Petri Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta. Ruotsi ja Suomi 1521–1809*, WSOY: Helsinki, 1999, p. 118; Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla*, pp. 264–5.

61 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 2: 10 August 1659, 20 August 1659, 3 September 1659, National Archives of Finland.

## THE SPIRAL OF RECIPROCITY

People displayed their status by using symbols and by their behaviour. Mistresses of households, for instance, wore a bunch of keys on their waist and married women wore headgear, while spinsters went bareheaded. Again clergymen wore collars around their necks, and some other officials had their own badges of office. These symbols determined how these persons should be treated and received. When the symbols were recognised, people showed their respect for the bearer, which meant that they also accepted his or her status. It was also possible to deny the bearer's position or status. This could happen in a concrete way, when the badges were stripped from the bearers more or less violently.<sup>62</sup> However, slanders were a more common form of disrespect. They meant that a person's position was denied symbolically or verbally, without physical aggression.

In the case mentioned some paragraphs earlier, Barber-Surgeon Samuel Golle and Olof Jakobsson together with Mikael Olofsson, a bailiff, Joen Larsson, an excise clerk, Peter Haraldsson, a goldsmith, had gathered to play cards and to drink beer. Suddenly Olofsson said to Jakobsson that all weavers and hatmakers were dishonourable men and therefore they were not decent enough to sit at the same table with respectable men like himself. The barber-surgeon loudly agreed with Olofsson. Afterwards, the other players testified that Golle and Olofsson had only said that the weavers and the hatmakers made the cheapest products in Germany, which, as the matter of fact, was the truth. However, Jakobsson replied cleverly: "I have never seen any weaver hanged but I have heard that they have hanged bailiffs." This was too much for Olofsson, who took a tankard of ale and hit Jakobsson on the head with it.<sup>63</sup>

There were three ways of responding when someone questioned a person's social status. Firstly, one might do as Olof Jakobsson did and respond verbally. The idea was to impute that the slanderer's honour and status were lower than the slandered person's own social position.<sup>64</sup> The bailiff Mikael Olofsson had argued that weavers were dishonourable. When Jakobsson replied that they were not hanged like bailiffs, he insulted Olofsson by comparing him with criminals.<sup>65</sup>

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62 Asko Vilkuna, *Tavan takaa. Kansatieteellisiä tutkimuksia tapojemme historiasta*, University of Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä, 1989, pp. 3–13, 238–9; Stewart, *Honor*, pp. 13, 21–9, 39–42.

63 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 1: 22 November 1652, National Archives of Finland.

64 Jonas Liliequist, 'Violence, Honor and Manliness in Early Modern Northern Sweden', in *Crime and Control in Europe from the Past to the Present*, Ed. by Mirkka Lappalainen and Pekka Hirvonen, Academy of Finland: Helsinki, 1999, pp. 188, 193; Shepard, 'Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy', pp. 87–9.

65 Liliequist, 'Violence, Honor and Manliness in Early Modern Northern Sweden', p. 187.

Secondly, it was possible to react violently, as Mikael Olofsson did. Jakobsson's reply was too clever for him, and he could not think up a suitable rejoinder. It had become impossible for him to joke himself out of the situation. At this point at the latest, playful banter turned into slander. In the seventeenth century, legal practice equated slander with a bruise. Being drunk diminishes one's inhibitions and makes it easier to express one's aggressive feelings.<sup>66</sup>

Thirdly, it was possible to make the quarrel public and take a slanderer to the town court, which would then resolve the case. This was an official forum which offered opportunities for both parties to put their cases: a gossip or a slanderer had the possibility to prove his or her allegations or at least to say from whom he or she had heard them. An injured party could clear his or her name before the whole community. Usually small quarrels were reconciled. The process of reconciliation was one of the most important forms of communal conflict-resolution. It included a public pardoning, after which a state of balance was restored between the litigants. The resolution of the dispute was sealed and legitimated, not only by the law, but also certain rituals.<sup>67</sup>

## STIGMATISATION AND MARGINALISATION

Human behaviour was understood in the source material as based on a harmony or balance which lasted as long as people took care of their duties and remained in their own "compartments". On the other hand, there was a strong emphasis on reciprocity, and people were expected to reciprocate respect. But reciprocity could also take on negative forms. Let us take the case of two neighbours: if one of them did not follow the rules, then the other party was any longer bound by them either.<sup>68</sup> We can see a reference to this in slander cases where the injured party had replied,

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66 Satu Apo, 'Agraarinen suomalaisuus – rasite vai resurssi?', *Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja*, Vol. 75–6, 1996, p. 180; Heikki Ylikangas, *Metsä suomalaisen mentaliteetin kasvualustana. Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja*, Vol. 75–6, 1996, passim; Liliequist, 'Violence, Honor and Manliness', pp. 200–1; Satu Apo, 'Alkoholi ja kulttuuriset tunteet' in *Tunteiden sosiologia*; Vol. 2: *Historiaa ja sääteilyä*, Ed. by Sari Näre, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 1999, pp. 115–7; Cf. Shepard, 'Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy', pp. 87–9.

67 Karonen, 'In Search of Peace and Harmony', pp. 221–3, 229–30; Matikainen, *Verenperijät*, pp. 101–2, 153–4, 173–89, 226–9; Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla*, pp. 263–5, 274.

68 Both positive and negative reciprocity was based on the same mechanisms, but they worked in opposite directions. Positive reciprocity strengthened and restored the unity of the community and amicable relationships between friends, relatives and neighbours. Negative reciprocity meant a situation in which one responded to insults with insults, leading to a spiral of growing disagreement and aggressive behaviour.



for instance, “And you are a whore until you prove me to be a thief”.<sup>69</sup> There could be serious consequences if the process for resolving conflicts failed recurrently.

In 1658 Matts Påvelsson, an alderman, sued a weaver called Olof Jakobsson over a claim. The men had negotiated together but they failed to reach an agreement. They asked the town court to mediate. They ended with the following reconciliation (Sw. *förlikning*): Påvelsson would withdraw his suit, and Jakobsson would pay his debt in money. Both parties accepted the agreement, and they shook hands. But Jakobsson never paid anything. The weaver explained that because of his earache he had not heard properly what had been agreed in the reconciliation. Therefore, he had assumed that his debt was already settled.<sup>70</sup>

It is obvious that Jakobsson had not accepted the reconciliation between himself and Påvelsson, which meant that a state of imbalance remained in the relations between the parties. The situation was even more serious in Jakobsson’s case because he had pretended that he had accepted the reconciliation. Afterwards he had behaved as if he were still feuding with Påvelsson. In this way, he made himself guilty of double-dealing, which contemporary society deprecated. At the same time, he also questioned the authority both of the system of conflict-resolution and of the town court. When people recurrently rejected reconciliation in the fashion Jakobsson did, it gradually contributed to an unfavourable interpretation of their moral nature.

One might say that the process of stigmatisation began from gossiping in small circles of neighbours and friends. The suspicions of witchcraft alleged against the vicar’s wife Katarina Bure spread from the house of Burgomaster Carl Falk. His son Håkan told his mother in summer 1673 that the vicar’s wife had abducted him under the bell-tower.<sup>71</sup> In August, a land-surveyor from Hälsingland visited the Falks’ house. During the evening he and the Burgomaster smoked and discussed witch-hunts. Falk’s wife took part in the conversation, and later she told the visiting land-surveyor about Håkan’s experiences.

In the first phase, Burgomaster Falk and his wife talked about their suspicions concerning the vicar’s wife mostly with their neighbours and friends. These were also the first people who accepted their interpretation and supported it. At the same time, the children of these friends and neighbours began to tell stories of journeys

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69 Liliequist, ‘Violence, Honor and Manliness’, pp. 188, 193; Shepard, ‘Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy’, pp. 87–8, 102; Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla*, p. 274.

70 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 1: 10 August 1659, National Archives of Finland.

71 The records of the City Court of Gävle 6 May 1674; The records of the Royal Norrland Commission 19 February 1675; The records of the Royal Stockholm Commission, Acts in Fontelius’ wife’s case, Fontelius’ letter to Svea Court of Appeal 10 April 1675; all in National Archives, Stockholm.

they made at night to Blåkulla with the vicar's wife. At the time, there were also some other suspected witches in the town and the nearby parishes. Together these suspicions generated an atmosphere in which the witchcraft accusations became very plausible. Gossip concerning the vicar's wife spread further. Neighbours and friends of the Falk family were active in this. Furthermore, many people from the nearby parishes used to visit the Falks' house when they had some business in the town. The Burgomaster and his wife got thus an opportunity to talk about witchcraft and to tell about their suspicions to a relatively large group of people<sup>72</sup>. Falk had recently served as a member of the Royal Commission for Hälsingland, and thus he also had some special knowledge of witchcraft.<sup>73</sup>

Judgmental allegations made by single individuals turned into collective facts during the process of stigmatisation. This happened when people gossiped outside the courtrooms, and witnesses repeated what they had heard there in their testimonies. During these conversations, a person's own negative experiences concerning persons like Katarina Bure or Olof Jakobsson became conflated with stories told by other people. Interlocutors compared their own experiences with the information obtained from gossip. If the two fitted with each other, it made the gossip more reliable. Gossip was also used when people's earlier experiences concerning persons like Katarina Bure or Olof Jakobsson were interpreted. Therefore, the interpretation of a person's behaviour or motivation in the present could change the interpretation of his or her behaviour and motives in the past. In this way social information concerning a certain person and his or her reputation and (moral) nature accumulated.<sup>74</sup>

Even though gossiping concerned collectively shared values and fears, and it was at least partly collectively regulated, it did not automatically serve the best interests of the community. There was also the level of the gossipmonger's personal interests. In fact, gossip did not usually distinguish morality from self-interest but cast doubts on the abilities and achievements of the subject in order to serve the gossipmonger's own interests and improve his or her competitive claims to moral recognition.<sup>75</sup> In other words, morality was not the main point in these cases but a device to attain certain goals.

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72 In this phase we can talk about rumour rather than gossip because the speculations about Bure's evil character were not restricted only to her neighbours and townsmen, but they spread into the countryside to people who knew her only by name.

73 Jan-Inge Wall, *Tjuvmjölkeande väsen*, Vol. 1: *Äldre nordisk tradition*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1977, pp. 119, 182–4.

74 It is important to note that cultural material and stereotypes were used in this process of interpretation, for instance when people speculated about whether someone was a witch. Cf. Hindle, 'Shaming Margaret Knowsley'.

75 Paine, 'What Is Gossip About?', pp. 178, 281–2.

On the other hand, the aim of the gossipmonger was not necessarily malicious in nature. There is no doubt that Burgomaster Falk and his wife wanted to make people to aware of what they thought about the vicar's wife, but we can not be sure what their motivation was: Did they really believe that she was a witch, or did they only want to sling mud at her? I believe it is impossible to distinguish these two motives from each other.

On the other hand, gossip could develop in a different direction than the narrator had planned. Interlocutors could react unexpectedly. It might had happen, for example, that they refused to accept the story (perhaps they were loyal to the subject of the gossip), or perhaps they knew him or her to be a good and honourable person. The recounting of events and interpretations that occur in everyday interaction are more open-ended and embedded in the context of particular situations than our traditional notion of narrative would assume. From this perspective, gossiping is a creative endeavour in which relationships and meanings are negotiated between many co-authors who have specific histories of interaction with each other and with the protagonists of their stories. Herein lies the power of gossip: it thrives on uncertainty and speculation.<sup>76</sup>

It was characteristic of the process of stigmatisation that unfavourable information was not communicated to the subjects personally but was passed to almost any other persons in the community. Negative opinions were voiced directly to the subjects only in critical situations when the utterers lost their temper, or then in the courtroom when they wanted to clear their names. In this way, people isolated immorality to certain persons, houses or families, which were marginalised and treated as scapegoats. Other members of the community then tried to avoid these marginalised people, who were regarded as threats to the supremacy of communal life.<sup>77</sup> In principle, a community itself thus became guilty of the double-standards of which it disapproved as an individual strategy. In practice, however, the situation was different. The collective always represented virtue, uprightness and the truth in contrast to marginalising or marginalised persons<sup>78</sup>. The community was not obliged to explain its treatment of its individual members explicitly.<sup>79</sup>

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76 Van Vleet, 'Partial Theories', pp. 500–1; Stewart & Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip*, pp. 8, 44–5.

77 Satu Apo, *Naisen väki. Tutkimuksia suomalaisten kansanomaisesta kulttuurista ja ajattelusta*, Hanki ja jää: Helsinki, 1995, pp. 189–95.

78 Marginalised people lost their support networks in the community. Therefore, they had difficulties in making their voices heard, and they were often misunderstood. This at least partly explains the confessions of accused witches. Cf. Stewart & Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip*; Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla*.

79 Davis, *Martin Gueren paluu*, p. 78.

Social stigmatisation narrowed a person's scope for action in the community. Stigmatised people were not invited to feasts and ceremonies where the unity of the community and its members was reinforced and renewed. When a person was once categorised as a wicked person, it was thought to be an unchangeable state.<sup>80</sup> Continuing conflicts with other members of the community reinforced the impression. Other people knew that they could expect aggressive and norm-breaking behaviour in the future too. These expectations began to govern the ways in which they treated that person. Consequently, reciprocity became negative and gave rise to aggression on both sides.

Olof Jakobsson wanted to return to the community of his townsmen because there were no alternative groups which he could join, but he felt that he was rejected every time he tried to do so. The community of townsmen had defined a social role for Jakobsson that he could not accept. He was unable to come to terms with his dismissal from the community, and consequently he became even more frustrated and aggressive.<sup>81</sup> Thus during his last years in Vaasa before his exile, Olof Jakobsson behaved aggressively and violently. Once his sheep ran away, causing damage to some other people's fields. Jakobsson took his livestock back by violent means. The court advised him to take better care of them, but it did not punish him. Soon they ran away again, and this time the municipal officials confiscated them.<sup>82</sup> The conflicts between Jakobsson and other townsmen became more exacerbated and common. He did not pay his fines because he thought that he had been convicted unjustly. When a policeman (Sw. *gevaltiger*) came to seize the money, he upbraided him loudly. He also insulted some members of the Council, the Burgomaster and the local representatives of the administration of the county.<sup>83</sup>

Jakobsson also directed his aggression against other townsmen. One Israel Pedersson had purchased a piece of linen from Jakobsson on behalf of the wife of Chief Judge Jakob Hansson. They had negotiated a price, but afterwards Jakobsson claimed that Pedersson had paid him less than he had promised. He could not prove his claim, and the case was dismissed.<sup>84</sup> Conflicts of this kind

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80 Renvall, *Suomalainen 1500-luvun ihminen*; Apo, *Naisen väki*, pp. 189–95; Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 160.

81 Julia Kristeva, *Musta aurinko: Masennus ja melankolia*, Nemo: Helsinki, 1999, pp. 16, 23.

82 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 1: 21 June 1658, 7 August 1658. Armas Luukko, *Vaasan historia*, Vol. 1: 1606–1721, Vaasan kaupunki: Vaasa, 1971, pp. 352–3.

83 Vaasa Town Court discovered that the total amount of Olof Jakobsson's unpaid fines was 60½ *talers*. Additionally, Alderman Matts Pávelsson had sued him for eight *talers*. See the records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 1: 24 November 1658, 1 December 1658, 4 December 1658, 6 December 1658; v. 2: 4 February 1660; in National Archives of Finland.

84 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 1: 16 February 1659, National Archives of Finland.

led to a precipitous downslide in which Jakobsson's relations with the magistrates and other townsmen deteriorated. All these conflicts with Jakobsson reinforced his reputation as an incurably wicked person. The town court emphasised this when it decided to exile him from the town.<sup>85</sup>

The people who rejected Jakobsson became targets of his own projection of negative feelings.<sup>86</sup> Once he was summonsed to the town court because he had vilified on the street all the authorities who lived in Vaasa. He said that these men were all his enemies, and that they had previously summonsed him only because they were malicious. The town court had suggested that he could take a personal oath to free himself from the accusation, but Jakobsson did not accept the oath procedure because he thought that the accusation against him was groundless. He explained that he could not take such an oath because he had been too drunk to remember anything.<sup>87</sup>

Jakobsson's unwillingness to accept the oath procedure can be partly explained by the communal nature of the system. The idea was that an accused person got a certain number of people of good standing to endorse his or her oath. These established townsmen did not take a stand on the question of whether the accused person was guilty or not. By taking their oath they indicated that they trusted the person in question. They were regarded as representatives of common opinion, what the members of the community thought of the accused person.<sup>88</sup> Jakobsson was aware of the danger that he might not get enough persons to support him, which would amount to a vote of no confidence from the community.

It is clear that Jakobsson had great difficulties in controlling his behaviour and aggression. He emphasised to the court that he was an honourable man because he had not killed anyone. Rather, those others were rogues who had summonsed him to the court, always without any evidence.<sup>89</sup> The sentences that

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85 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 1: 3 September 1659, National Archives of Finland.

86 Juha Siltala, *Miehen kunnia. Modernin miehen taistelu häpeää vastaan*, Otava: Helsinki, 1994, pp. 443–8.

87 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 1: 4 December 1658, 6 December 1658, National Archives of Finland.

88 See closer, Renvall, *Suomalainen 1500-luvun ihminen*, pp. 168–70; Petri Karonen, 'A Life for a Life versus Christian Reconciliation. Violence and the Process of Civilization in the Towns of the Kingdom of Sweden during the Years 1540–1700', in *Five Centuries of Violence in Finland and the Baltic Area*, Ed. by Mirkka Lappalainen, Academy of Finland: Helsinki, 1998; Pia Letto-Vanamo: *Käräjyhteisön oikeus. Oikeudenkäyttö Ruotsi-Suomessa ennen valtiollisen riidanratkaisun vakiintumista*, University of Helsinki: Helsinki, 1995; Davis, *Martin Gueren paluu*, p. 98; Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla*.

89 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 1: 20 August 1659, 3 September 1659, 14

Vaasa Town Court had passed on him during recent years were read out to him. The paragraph in the law on which his exile was based was also explained to him. It did not make Jakobsson change his opinion, and when he left the Town Hall, he repeated that he was an honourable man. The others were rogues until they could prove his wickedness. Then he went to the alehouse where he declared several times that the Burgomaster and all the members of the magistracy were rascals and thieves.<sup>90</sup>

Jakobsson claimed that there were even worse rogues than himself, by which he meant two things. Firstly, he wanted to dissociate himself from them and make it clear that he was a respectable member of society. Secondly, he implied that the town court should focus its attention on those “real rogues”.<sup>91</sup>

Some of those people who were accused of witchcraft also behaved a similar way to Jakobsson. In doing so, they were trying to destroy what they hated in themselves.<sup>92</sup> The aggression of early modern people was first and foremost directed against other people because suicide was taboo and was believed to lead to damnation.<sup>93</sup> Thus marginalised people turned their aggression on other townsmen. Consequently the gulf between them and the community grew wider. The more negative feelings they had, the more aggressively they behaved. Their behaviour strengthened the interpretation that they were wicked persons, and this opinion became more and more widely known in the town.<sup>94</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Early modern people, especially clergymen and the authorities, feared dissent. They thought that disagreements easily escalated, and in the worst scenario they might lead to the collapse of the whole community. Therefore, there were certain practices which people used to try to control disputes. The most important was

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September 1659, National Archives of Finland.

90 The records of the City Court of Vaasa, v. 1: 3 September 1659, 14 September 1659, National Archives of Finland.

91 Siltala, *Miehen kunnia*, pp. 444, 447–8; Matikainen, *Verenperijät*.

92 Kristeva, *Musta aurinko*, pp. 16, 23; Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla*, pp. 300–2.

93 Arne Jansson, ‘Mörda för att få dö’, in *Människovärdet och makten. Om civiliseringsprocessen i Stockholm 1600–1850*, Ed. by Arne Jarrick and Johan Söderberg, Stockholm: Stockholm, 1994, pp. 25–8, 31–4, 47–9; Arne Jansson, *From Swords to Sorrow. Homicide and Suicide in Early Modern Stockholm*, University of Stockholm: Stockholm, 1998, pp. 65–7, 123–5; Renvall, *Suomalainen 1500-luvun ihminen*, pp. 99–100.

94 Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla*, p. 302; Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, pp. 168–9.

the process of reconciliation, during which people could clear their names and test whether the other members of the community still trusted them. The second was the marginalising of troublemakers. Troublemakers were also feared for the reason that they aroused God's wrath, and God punished not only individual sinners but also the whole community. Early modern people also thought that both goodness and wickedness were contagious by nature. Consequently, they did not want any sinners in their community.

A person with a collectively known bad reputation as one who spread evil gossip concerning his or her fellows and who recurrently transgressed the collective norms was regarded as a troublemaker. The key terms are "collectively known" and "gossip", which both refer to so-called social knowledge – the store of information concerning the behaviour of all the members of the community. The members of the community watched each other. They exchanged that information by gossiping, which in turn disseminated that information more widely through the community. At the same time, the information also accumulated. And people used this information when they evaluated the trustworthiness of their fellow men.

There are several problems connected with the concept of social knowledge. Firstly, it is speculative and moralising by nature. It does not necessarily represent the truth. And finally, social knowledge, or to be more precise, public opinion based on social knowledge, is open to more or less calculated manipulation. It does not necessarily make a distinction between the truth and false information but mixes them up with each other. Consequently, in the seventeenth century, there was a risk that a person's possibilities to live in a community became difficult because there existed false information concerning him or her. Therefore people worried about their good reputation. They reacted to slanders and nicknames easily because otherwise the false information could spread and turn into collective knowledge.

A collectively shared opinion that a person was a troublemaker was usually based on social knowledge which had accumulated over several years. The more people shared the opinion, the more reliable it was thought to be. At a certain phase, people began to avoid persons whom they thought were troublemakers. This was the starting point of the process of social marginalisation. People were expected to reciprocate respect, but when one party repeatedly defamed another one, the nature of reciprocity became negative: people reacted to the defamations and aggressive behaviour with similar acts. Consequently, the spiral of negative reciprocity became more precipitous, and relations between the parties became seriously inflamed.

Troublemakers behaved aggressively because they could only exist as a part of their communities. They wanted to return to them because there were no alternative groups. They felt that the other members of the community were

against them and therefore constantly rejected them. They did not accept their marginalisation and became more aggressive and frustrated. Every conflict with a troublemaker proved to the other members of a community that he or she was evil by nature. Consequently, his or her norm-breaking behaviour became intolerable.

Naturally, not all the conflicts between townsmen led to a process of social marginalisation. It happened when a person transgressed the collective norms repeatedly without any signs of remorse or improvement. There was also one important precondition for marginalisation: the failure of the reconciliation process. It was taken as a serious act of misconduct if an individual pretended that he or she had accepted the resolution of the process of reconciliation but behaved later as if there had not been any settlement. He or she thus questioned the process of reconciliation, which was the most important means of conflict-resolution in early modern Swedish towns. Moreover, he or she also impugned the authority of the town court, which usually mediated between the parties. Here, too, the fear that the unity and the good order of the community might collapse is an important background factor. There would be chaos if people did not respect the town court or the processes of communal conflict-resolution.

The cases analysed here clearly illustrate the fact that the process of social marginalisation meant a development in which communal processes of conflict-solving failed. In this sense, it was an unfavourable situation which was only partially controlled. One might say that marginalised persons lost almost all the prospects they might have. They were branded as “wicked”, and they lost their position as members of the community of decent folk. It was difficult for a person to win back a lost good reputation and earlier position in the community.



## HOPES AND FEARS OF MARRIAGE

### Violence, Ownership and Power in Early Eighteenth Century Sweden

*Åsa Karlsson Sjögren*

Early modern societies could be characterized as household-systems, both in practice and in theory. Almost all production and reproduction took place in households. The household was also the point of reference for norms, ideas and symbols relating to the state and society at large.<sup>1</sup> As Lyndal Roper has noted, the household system was centred on matrimony, and this is also true of seventeenth-century Swedish towns.<sup>2</sup> Matrimony was the basis of households, and matrimony was hierarchal.

Wives were under the legal guardianship of their husbands. At the same time, there were several other regulations in the law which gave women the right to enter into contracts and appear in court. Wives appeared *de facto* in the courts as plaintiffs, defendants and witnesses, but this was not always the case, and not in matters concerning real property. Wives could dispose of their personal property; they could buy and sell, contract debts and hire and dismiss servants. As long as it went unchallenged, it was taken for granted that when the wife entered into a contract, she was doing so with the approval and authorization of her husband, even when this was not explicitly expressed. However, wives did not always act in accordance with the wishes of their husbands, as is apparent in disputes in the courts.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers. Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1996, p. 4.

2 Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household. Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1991, pp. 7–55.

3 There have been some discussions in the 1990s among historians on how to interpret empirical results concerning gender relations in early modern Sweden. This paragraph is based on

In this text we will meet a married couple in the Swedish town of Gävle at the turn of the seventeenth century who did not correspond to the norm of a good husband and wife, and whose lives were exposed to numerous disputes in different judicial instances. The analysis of this individual couple's hardships aims at reaching a better understanding of legal protection and the stipulations of the law regarding women, and wives in particular. It also aims at elucidating and problematizing the importance of marriage for the reproduction of hierarchal gender relations. The third main point in this article concerns the different kinds of strategies used by the participants (the husband and wife and the witnesses) as well as the strategies used by both the ecclesiastical and the secular authorities.

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As a daughter city court judge, Helena Hansdotter probably did not have to fear that she end up a spinster for the rest of her life. She did in fact get married, in 1684, to the son of the mayor of a small neighbouring town, Olof Olofsson Ström. It was not a happy marriage. Not only did Olof drink, he was also violent and harassed his family and his servants in various ways. However, the church and society at large wanted married couples to stay together as long as possible, even when there were obvious conflicts. In this case there were such conflicts, and Olof and Helena's marriage therefore came to be dealt with by both ecclesiastical and secular courts. The reason for these authorities' occupation with a single couple could be explained by the concept of the household, whose ideology and ideals were based on Martin Luther's Table of Duties (Sw. *Hustavlan*), a collection of quotations from the Bible. From these biblical precepts, people were expected learn about the proper hierarchal relations in the household and in society at large, and to understand that these power relations were grounded in the Bible, that is in Gods' own words. In the household, the hierarchies between husband and wife, parents and children, master or mistress and servants were clearly stipulated. The

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results and discussions in my doctoral thesis. See references in Åsa Karlsson Sjögren, *Kvinnors rätt i stormaktstidens Gävle*, Swedish Science press: Umeå, 1998. See also for example: Maria Sjöberg, 'Kvinnans sociala underordning: En problematisk historia. Om makt, arv och giftermål i det äldre samhället', *Scandia*, Vol. 63, No. 2, 1997, Gudrun Andersson, *Tingets kvinnor och män. Genus som norm och strategi under 1600- och 1700-tal*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1998, Marja Taussi Sjöberg, *Rätten och kvinnorna. Från släktmakt till statsmakt i Sverige på 1500- och 1600-talen*, Atlantis: Stockholm, 1996, Malin Lennartsson, *I säng och säte. Relationer mellan kvinnor och män i 1600-talets Småland*, University of Lund: Lund, 1999, Anu Pyllkkänen, *Puoli vuodetta, lukot ja avaimet. Nainen ja maatalous oikeuskäytännön valossa, 1660–1710*, Lakimiesliiton Kustannus: Helsinki, 1990.

impact of these biblical words on everyday life has been discussed elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> Although the hierarchies were more complex and flexible in reality, the Table of Duties offered the basic model, and the authorities controlled its implementation strictly. This article will focus on gender-related relations within this hierarchal system; in other words, on the core of the household: matrimony.

The Ströms' conflicts clearly illuminate issues concerning the boundaries of power and responsibility between a married man and woman. Issues concerning ownership, work, authority and responsibility, violence and sexuality came to the fore. These issues will be analysed at several levels, partly in terms of how the legal instances of the town, the state and the church dealt with the conflict between Olof and Helena, and partly with regard to how the couple themselves acted and the arguments and strategies they used in attempting to attain their objectives. In Olof's case, it was primarily a matter of defending and explaining his behaviour, while Helena's aim was to protect her life, reputation and property.<sup>5</sup> These strategies were only partly the result of consciously made plans; partly they were shaped by coincidences or unexpected results of actions. Nevertheless, it is clear that the strategies were future-oriented and were made in order to obviate unfavourable outcomes. The use of a rhetoric that included collectively understood moralistic-religious meanings was also a strategic choice – especially in the early modern society, where being an honourable man was not only a matter of moral values, but indeed of fundamental importance for one's civil citizenship, social position and status.

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4 Hilding Pleijels' classic text on this issue (Hilding Pleijel, *Hustavlans värld. Kyrkligt folkliv i äldre tiders Sverige*, Verbum: Stockholm, 1970) has been discussed among Swedish historians since the 1980's. From a gender perspective, see for example Kekke Stadin, 'Hade de svenska kvinnorna en stormaktstid? Stormaktstidens svenska stat och konstruktionen av genus', *Scandia*, Vol. 63, No. 2, 1997.

5 This article is a revised text of Chapter 4 in my doctoral thesis, Karlsson Sjögren, op. cit. The case study is based on documents from the years 1696–1721 and 1745 from the following archives: The Provincial Record Office of Uppsala: The Archives of the Cathedral Chapter of Uppsala, Records, Copies of posted letters, Gefle 1, The Provincial Record Office of Härnösand: The Municipal Archives of Gävle, Court records, Small minutes ("småprotokoll"), Estate inventories, Accounts, The Gävleborg County Administrative Board, The County Secretariat, Letters from the Court of Appeal. The Gävleborg County Administrative Board, Land Book Verifications. The Research Archive of Umeå University: Microfiche: The National Archives, Stockholm, Svea Court of Appeal, restored court records of Gävle, The National Archives, Stockholm: The Judicial Revision: Diaries outgoing, Registry, Appeal and Application cases. Svea Court of Appeal, the Main Archives, Liber causarum, Judgment books. References in more detail to pages and/or dates in the source material can be found in my thesis.

## THE ASSAULT AND RECONCILIATION IN 1697

In the spring of 1697, Olof beat Helena black and blue with a stick so that she had to take to her bed for three weeks. The wounds and the bruises were examined by the town's doctor and barber surgeon. When asked if her life was in danger, they stated that the injuries were not fatal. Armed with a knife, Olof had earlier on threatened to kill and murder Helena. The clergyman was summoned, and the Magistrates Court conferred with him about what to do with Olof, who despite admonitions had not ended his "all too regrettable relationship" with his wife.

The injuries were not fatal, and the maltreatment was therefore referred to the Ecclesiastical Law's provisions on dissension between husband and wife. The Ecclesiastical Law of 1686 contained regulations about how the church and the court should act in such cases. Divorce could be granted in cases of adultery and wilful desertion. On the other hand, drunkenness, maltreatment and harassment were not grounds for divorce.<sup>6</sup> The church used every possible means to keep a failed marriage together. Admonitions and reconciliations under threat of a heavy fine were the foremost means to be used. If this was of no avail, the "preacher should [...] discern the cause [...] and make them realise how badly they were troubled by the Devil, how they quarrel and squabble with their own flesh and blood, and thus mutually ruin each other." If they continued to quarrel, the matter was to be settled by the Cathedral Chapter. The Ecclesiastical Law further provided that if this was of no avail, a secular court could sentence them to imprisonment. A last resort was separation of "contact, board, bed and residence".<sup>7</sup> In accordance with the law, the clergyman now turned to the Cathedral Chapter in Uppsala.

Even at this stage, certain features are revealed that were to be dealt with at various levels and in various judicial instances during the following decade. They concerned Olof's violence and drinking, his unfaithfulness and unwillingness to work as well as disputes about property. On 18 June 1697, the Cathedral Chapter summoned Olof and Helena to appear at its seat in Uppsala on 14 July. Nine days later Olof was summoned to the Magistrates Court, which exhorted him to live peacefully in his home. He defended his violence and his threats by claiming that Helena had not slept with him for one and a half years and that his mother-in-law had "provoked him and instigated something evil between them."

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6 A small number of Royal exemptions were made in cases of dissension, Ivar Nylander, *Studier rörande den svenska äktenskapsrättens historia*, University of Stockholm: Stockholm, 1961, pp. 114–20.

7 Johan Schmedeman, *Kongl. Stadgar, förordningar, bref och resolutioner ifrån åhr 1528 in til 1701*, Stockholm, 1706, p. 1031.

Olof and Helena never turned up at the Cathedral Chapter. On Olof's initiative and through the mediation of "good men and true", they were reconciled before the set date. Olof promised before God to lead a Christian and sober life in the future and not to "squander the assets his wife brought to their home, as in the past, but faithfully to provide and care, to support himself and his family as an honourable man [...]", and he asked the archbishop for forgiveness.

Having listened to these promises, Helena promised before God not to pursue the matter any longer. She would not report "all that had befallen her". My interpretation of this is that Helena promised not to report Olof's violent deeds to the Cathedral Chapter and the archbishop. Helena too admitted guilt for what had happened. As we shall see later, Olof accused Helena of having taken control of the whole household and not fulfilling her wifely duties to him. It was probably this she was referring to when she said that she was aware that her own actions were culpable, since she had not "behaved towards" her husband as an honest wife should. She did not use "culpable" in the sense of "publicly culpable" but in relation to her husband. For the future she promised "in good understanding to attain together with her husband a Christian, godly and loving married life."

Olof tearfully admitted that he had treated his wife "unfairly and unchristianly" and had violently assaulted her. His tears were seen as signs of sincere regret.<sup>8</sup> He also withdrew his accusation that he was not the father of their youngest son. He pleaded his drunkenness as an excuse for the accusation of infidelity. He also asked his mother-in-law to forgive him and promised to honour the contract he had set up with her. This was the only time that Helena admitted some responsibility for the conflict. It is possible that the words were put into her mouth, or that she was just saying what was expected of her at a reconciliation. It is clear that a wife was not allowed to exceed her authority without risking violence from her husband.

## OLOF'S "EXCESSES" – THE LIMITATIONS OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The conflicts continued. For several years Olof beat his wife and threatened her life, smashing windows, burning clothes and destroying property. During this period he had not been working and had been drinking most of the time. Helena had several times turned to the Mayor and the Town Court to get help, but the judicial system was more or less unable to take action against Olof's "excesses".

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8 Jonas Liliequist, *Brott, synd och straff. Tidelagsbrottet i Sverige under 1600- och 1700-talet*, University of Umeå: Umeå, 1992, p. 104.

Olof was arrested a number of times, but he was always released after some time, having promised to lead a quiet and sober life and not to cause any “offence”.<sup>9</sup>

In November 1701 the Magistrates Court dealt with Olof’s appeal to the County Governor, in which he requested to be released from his cell in the castle. Olof accused Mayor Salin of having placed him in custody unlawfully, without a legal summons examination or verdict and of having taken his “assets” from him. The Mayor was asked to submit an explanation, which he also did. With the support of a written apology from Olof, he claimed that “in his rage” Olof had called the Mayor and the Court thieves and rogues. At Helena’s request he also humbly petitioned that Olof should remain in custody in the castle. In the town prison it would be impossible to keep his “drinking mates” from “trying night and day to bring him aquavit by every conceivable means”.

Olof was summoned to explain himself. He asked for forgiveness and referred to the well-known fact that he was suffering from ill health and “was not in control of his head”. The court stated that Olof now “and always when he is sober, appears to be reasonable and good-tempered, but the drinking that he also indulges in is the cause”. The reason why he had been arrested without a trial and sentence was, according to the town guard, that Olof had “behaved horribly” towards his wife, who had then asked him for protection. Olof now withdrew his accusations against the Mayor and asked once more for forgiveness.

There were also conflicts between Helena and several members of the court, whom she distrusted. That the distrust was mutual became obvious when the court asked Olof who had been his adviser about the accusations against the Mayor. Olof claimed that he had made the allegation because of his own lack of common sense. As a follow-up question the court asked if his wife had “been the cause and advised him”. His answer was no. The castle warden said that Olof had behaved well in the cell, apart from the evening when his wife visited him.

The court stated that Olof had previously been regarded as insane, and that they had then excused his transgressions. The severe admonitions that were given had been in vain, since he had continued his wicked way of living. Nor could the court here “omit to mention” Olof’s behaviour towards Helena. “All degrees of admonitions prescribed by the Ecclesiastical Law” had been used – “all in vain.” According to the court, the cause was his daily drunkenness, which had led him to abandon his livelihood and compelled his wife to support him. She had often been forced to flee the house, and they had not lived as a married couple either, but *quoad torum et mensam*, (not sharing bed and board). No warnings thus seemed to be able to improve his way of living. One solution

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9 According to the Ecclesiastical Law, imprisonment could be used as a penalty (the Ecclesiastical Law of 1686 XVI.XI).

would be to “put him in some workhouse”. The case was submitted to the Svea Court of Appeal.

The Court of Appeal does not seem to have pronounced a final verdict in this case. It wanted Olof to submit a written explanation. When the Court of Appeal’s letter was read in the Magistrates Court on 25 February 1702, Helena was allowed to say whether he should be released; “God knows how gladly [I] want him back home”, she said, but she feared that “he will not do anything good, if he is released”. She was referring to what had happened over Christmas when her husband was free.

On 24 March, Olof was finally released from custody after a renewed appeal. The Court of Appeal’s verdict had not yet arrived, but the County Governor, the Mayor and the Court conferred and decided that Olof be released from custody for eight days on probation, provided that two “good men and true” granted a surety on his behalf.

Olof’s drunkenness is a recurring element when he tries to explain and mitigate the consequences of his actions. In early modern Sweden, intoxication was often regarded as an extenuating circumstance in cases of penal liability.<sup>10</sup> But Olof did not excuse his actions only by referring to his drunkenness: Helena’s (and his mother-in-law’s) actions against him were also stated as causes of his drunkenness. On certain occasions Helena is supposed to have denied him food and drink. Olof also accused her of having denied him sexual intercourse and of infidelity.

## HELENA – UNFAITHFUL?

In the reconciliation in 1697 Olof withdrew his accusations of not being the father of the youngest son. But when he was once more placed in custody in April 1703, he again started to accuse Helena of unfaithfulness. For many years Olof had “slept away from his wife, become impatient, and had cut through the door that was barred to him with an axe”. He claimed that it was her behaviour that had led to the “disturbance” between them. Some years ago, when they were in the small town of Söderhamn, she had left him in bed and gone to visit a bachelor. Of late she had had bachelors in her room. The latter statement was not, however, examined in detail by the court. But the accusations were more closely scrutinised when Helena’s extramarital relations were alleged to have led to pregnancy and

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10 Stig Jägerskiöld, ‘Straffansvar vid rus: En rättshistorisk studie’, *Svensk juristtidning*, Vol. 50, 1965, pp. 306–10.

a child. Olof now claimed again that their youngest was the issue of Helena's unfaithfulness in Söderhamn.

Through her legal representative, Helena demanded that Olof name the man she was supposed to have been unfaithful with. Olof claimed that it was one Hans Elis, by then a married burgher in Gävle – the same man who had vouched for Olof a year earlier. Elis denied the allegation, and Helena referred to the reconciliation in 1697. The court stated that they had previously regarded Olof as insane, but that they would in this case deal with the accusation, since it had been made before the court “in a sober state of mature consideration and common sense”, and because Olof mentioned witnesses.

This was the only occasion on which Helena was the defendant in the disputes with her husband. Her legal representative, Magnus Möller, was very active in his defence of her. He demanded that documents should be produced in order to be able to determine whether the witnesses were incompetent. He was exhorted by the court not to “distort the issue”, but to allow the defendant to answer for herself. Möller then left the court. But he was soon allowed to return at the insistence of Helena, who argued that she was “a simple woman”.<sup>11</sup>

Helena stated her reasons for alleging that the witnesses, the Public Prosecutor Gran and Magistrate Berggraf, were not competent, but in the next breath she withdrew her statements about incompetence and said that she could not think anything but well of the witnesses, and that they should testify on their souls' salvation and confess the truth. This might have been a conscious strategy: first raising a suspicion of incompetence in order to undermine the witnesses' credibility and then becoming compliant, since sufficient evidence was probably lacking.

Public Prosecutor Gran told a rather remarkable story. In 1689 or 1690 he had been staying with a smith in Söderhamn together with the Ströms, Berggraf and Elis. In the evening, when they had closed their sheds and were going to bed, Hans Elis had asked Olof what he wanted if he would allow him to share his wife's bed. Olof wanted some tobacco. Elis shared a bed with Gran, but Ström accidentally came to lie in their bed after he had first “[...] banged on the window so that it broke.” He remained lying there. Hans Elis moved into the other bed with Helena. Gran had then fallen asleep and not heard anything more. It is obvious that Olof was very drunk on this occasion. The court never asked whether the sobriety of the witnesses might affect the reliability of their testimonies. It is even more remarkable that the court did not examine closely the statement that Olof was willing to offer his wife's body for payment. This would have placed him in an unfavourable light.

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11 *Simple* means ‘ignorant’ here.



The accusations of adultery had been triggered by Olof being placed in custody. On 21 May, Olof was released because of the coming holiday. He promised to “behave quietly and peacefully in [his] house, and to change his former way of living, as he had been severely exhorted by the court to do.” The fact that Helena did not give him sufficient sustenance in the cell actually provided an argument that Olof was able to use in order to obtain his release.

It seems as if Olof had continued ill-treating Helena after he was released, or else she feared that he would do so. Once again the court exhorted Olof not to beat his wife and declared: “She is hereby taken into the protection and custody of the Crown.”

According to a written deposition, Helena then wanted to have three of the magistrates declared incompetent and to have new judges assigned to the case by the Court of Appeal. After that she refused to appear in court. This form of protest seems to have helped her. No sentence was passed in this case. Infidelity was, however, a serious crime, and it led the Magistrates Court to conduct extensive investigations. More witnesses were examined and the case went on until the beginning of June 1703. But the testimonies were never able to establish that Elis and Helena had really had intercourse with each other. Perhaps the court members began to see through Olof’s accusation during the examinations, realising that he was only using them to avoid being held responsible for his deeds against his wife. When asked if he had slept with her after the incident in Söderhamn, he answered yes, but that it had happened very seldom.

During the proceedings, Helena complained that she was getting a bad reputation. But if that was the case, it seems to have been temporary, at least to judge from the court records. She is never described in them in derogatory terms by others than her husband. On the other hand, she is not described as virtuous either, an epithet that was, however, unusual in the town’s judgment books. It is possible that gossip was rife in the town anyway, and that the inhabitants of Gävle saw Helena’s alleged infidelity, or her refusal to have intercourse with Olof, as a contributory reason for her husband’s deeds.

It is also remarkable that the court did not examine Gran’s statement that Olof had offered his wife’s body to another man for tobacco. If the statement was true, it put the ultimate blame for the unfaithfulness on Olof himself. His wife’s unfaithfulness was then more to do with her husband’s right to use his wife’s body as he pleased than with her betrayal of him. One may also wonder how Elis dared to ask him if he could sleep with Helena for payment. Such a request could also be perceived as an insult. There was possibly something special about the situation in Söderhamn and the persons involved. Olof was perhaps so drunk that his behaviour was excusable, and Gran was perhaps also so drunk that his testimony was not considered entirely trustworthy by the members of the court, even though they did not record their scepticism.

## COULD A MAN STEAL FROM HIS WIFE?

It was not only with Helena that Olof was in conflict. He was also something of a troublemaker in Gävle. In November 1705, Olof was sentenced for breach of the peace and abusive language to a heavy fine or 25 days' imprisonment.<sup>12</sup> Olof was now imprisoned on water and bread, but he had been in and out of jail several times during the last few years. A stay in jail on water and bread was a harsh sentence. After 22 days he was released and immediately got drunk. Helena was then on a journey to Stockholm.

When she came home, she discovered that a large chest had been stolen. It contained a lot of silverware, money, pewter dishes and pewter plates. Helena suspected that Olof was involved in the theft, since he had been released from jail a few days earlier than stipulated. It turned out eventually that he had broken into a locked shed and stolen the chest with the aid of two cronies.

Helena demanded that Olof be arrested, and her reasons concerned some technical details. Two magistrates, and later also the court clerk, inspected the door and were of the opinion that it was impossible to open it, at least when it was tightly closed. Olof swore that he was innocent. In tears he lamented over "being so harshly treated by his wife."

The Magistrates Court did not want to arrest Olof. By order of the County Governor, however, he was placed in remand for the theft while the Court of Appeal was dealing with Helena's complaints. She had turned to them to complain about the Mayor and the Court. The Court of Appeal declared them incompetent and consequently appointed a special extraordinary court.

As we shall see, it was not only Olof's violence against Helena that the legal system had difficulties in handling. In this case too, the specific charge was considered in relation to the letter of the law. How could a man steal from his wife? The case was first treated in the specially appointed court, then in the Svea Court of Appeal, and finally by the "Judicial Revision" (a body charged with the preliminary investigation of Supreme Court cases).

In its verdict, the Court of Appeal was of the opinion that the man had stolen from his wife, since she had kept the property under private lock and key. But the verdict was not unanimous and the members stated in a letter to the Judicial Revision that, in view of laws and ordinances, they could not consider that the man had stolen from his wife, since they were married and:

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12 He was sentenced with reference to the Crown's Knighthood and Nobility Privileges of 1617, the Magistrates' Section of the General Urban Law Code and the Rules for Judges.

[...] their property, kept separate, of which the husband is legally entitled to a half, and besides, as long as no separation has been made, he is entitled to have access to and administer all the property.

For this reason they considered that a stay in prison on water and bread would perhaps be a sufficiently harsh punishment, in particular since his wife had been pleading for him. It was a serious case of theft, which should really have led to capital punishment for all the culprits. The Judicial Revision thought that Olof could have been sentenced to death “as a warning to others”, but in view of his wife’s pleading for him, he was instead sentenced to running the gauntlet six times and to three years’ hard labour at Marstrand (Karlsten Fortress on the west coast of Sweden). The Judicial Revision thus found that Olof had stolen from his wife.

His two cronies got harsher punishments, running the gauntlet seven times and six years’ penal servitude at Marstrand each, but this may have been due to the fact that they had also cheated Olof out of some of the stolen property. Once again Olof’s drunkenness was regarded as an extenuating circumstance. He was supposed to have been enticed into committing the theft when he was drunk. Olof also argued that if he had been kept in jail during the whole term of imprisonment, Helena would have had time to come home from Stockholm when he was released, and then the theft would never have happened. Helena also used this as an argument when demanding that the town magistrates in Gävle should pay the special court’s expenses. But the Judicial Revision ruled that Olof should pay the expenses with his share of the estate.

In the law, the code on theft had provisions about “house theft”, but there is no mention of a husband being a potential criminal vis-à-vis his wife.<sup>13</sup> When in 1696 the law commission discussed this problem – it was called *bodräkt* (the removal of property from a joint estate) – they arrived at the conclusion that if a man deprived his wife of something in secret (or vice versa), and if the other party complained about this, then it was a case of theft.<sup>14</sup> The members asked themselves whether somebody else could pursue the claim in such cases but considered that this was not desirable. One argument used was a case in which the husband denied his wife the necessities of life for her and their children, and she used the joint estate for her upkeep.<sup>15</sup> The members’ decision was based on

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13 Magnus Erikssons Stadslag, the Larceny Code 10, Magnus Erikssons Landslag, the Larceny Code 29, Kristorffers Landslag, the Larceny Code 30.

14 Wilhelm Sjögren, *Förarbetena till Sveriges rikes lag 1686–1734*, Vol. 2, Uppsala, 1901, p. 63.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 73–4.

the husband's rights as a guardian. The purpose was to protect the woman. The consequences of the proposal could, however, have the reverse effect. Since only the wife could pursue the claim against her husband, nobody else who protected her and her children's rights could pursue such a claim. In the law of 1734 new provisions were also added: "If the husband secretly removes something from his wife; or the children from their parents, or those from each other, who share an estate", the injured party could sue the guilty party. The judge was then to impose a penalty according to the intent and the circumstances.<sup>16</sup>

The special court's assignment had not only been to deal with the theft. It had also examined several other issues; for example what to do about Olof's violence and threats against Helena, and how to handle a possible divorce. All these issues were submitted to various courts. The Court of Appeal eventually enjoined the Magistrates Court once more to examine and impose a verdict on the issue of Olof's "excesses" against Helena.

The Magistrates Court thought that Olof had already been punished for his violence against Helena, and that he should not be further punished. Whether on purpose or not, the members of the court then misconstrued the Court of Appeal's referral and also interpreted the theft as a part of "Olof's excesses against Helena". All of a sudden Olof was not to be punished for the theft. This was, however, noticed by the County Governor, who saw to it that Olof's three-year penalty was put into effect.

Helena used the Magistrates Court to recover as much as possible of the stolen property. The whole matter ended with Helena being ordered to pay 258 *daler kmt* (copper coins) in August 1710 for the special court's expenses. Her husband was the one who had been sentenced to paying with his share of the estate, but she retained undivided possession of it.

## HUSBAND AND WIFE – ONE FLESH AND BLOOD

While the theft was being examined, Helena and Olof's marriage was dealt with again by the Cathedral Chapter in Uppsala. The couple's way of life was closely scrutinized once more. Helena had at first asked the Court of Appeal to appoint an impartial judge who would be able "justly" to help her out of the "misery that her husband's harsh handling had landed her in". The Court of Appeal asked the Magistrates Court, which related that increasingly serious animosity had arisen between the two, "when the wife started to take control of the household, and

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16 The Law of 1734, the Misdemeanor Code 51.

he more and more to take to drink [...]” In this version, Helena is described as at least as responsible as Olof, if not more so, for his behaviour. She had treated him with animosity. She had not slept with him. After the reconciliation in 1697, she had kept him out of “all disposition of the home, and he had also continued drinking”. When Olof was drunk, he behaved and “raged like an insane person”, and his wife “is said” to have contributed to causing this.

As for the criticism that the court had not obeyed the Court of Appeal’s order or punished Olof sufficiently, it pointed out that he actually did not misbehave all the time, but could sometimes act “completely sanely”. He had apologized in the Town Hall on several occasions, and they had then hoped that he would improve. He had now and then quarrelled with his wife when he was drunk because she had denied him food and drink. Helena, for her part, used to claim that he had not made any contributions to the estate, and that she was therefore not obliged to fulfil any duty towards him. Then it usually ended with Olof being arrested. And so it went on. The court concluded by stating that there was unquenchable hatred and bitterness between Olof and Helena. The Court of Appeal decided to submit the case to the Cathedral Chapter in Uppsala.

The next letter to the Cathedral Chapter probably came from a clergyman in Gävle.<sup>17</sup> He stated that Olof had led an ungodly life with his wife for ten years. His wife Helena “may also have her faults like any human being, but she is sober, industrious, goes to church frequently and makes use of her means of salvation.” He described how she had often been forced to flee from her husband and found it unfortunate that she had got into conflict with the town administration. He cherished no hopes for Olof. All exhortations or words of God had been of no avail, and Olof had not taken communion for three years. He also expressed a warning to the Cathedral Chapter that they would be deceived by Olof when he talked “with great common sense”.

Helena and Olof were due to appear in the Cathedral Chapter in January 1706, but because of the theft, Helena asked that the hearing be adjourned for the time being since she feared that Olof would destroy all the property if he were released.

One year later, first Olof and then Helena filed for divorce. Olof argued that he had become insolvent through his wife’s “more than incredible malevolence”. She had promised to love him for better or for worse, but she had exceeded “everything that is decreed as reasonable and Christian by God’s natural and human law”. Helena, for her part, replied by submitting copies of the reconciliation in 1697, the minutes from the meeting of the Town Hall of Gävle on 5 November 1701 and the Court of Appeal’s verdict on the theft. Then she too filed for divorce on

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17 The sender’s name is difficult to decipher.

the grounds that Olof had threatened her life and she would never be able to live with him again.

When the Cathedral Chapter finally decided the issue in February 1707, they concluded that the couple could not be granted a full divorce only *separatio quoad torum et mensam*, “in the way in which they already have regrettably separated themselves”. None of the valid reasons had been fulfilled, neither adultery nor unlawful dispossession. The court stated that during the three years that Olof would serve his sentence, the couple would be even more separated than at present. The situation might also change during his term of imprisonment.

In the Ecclesiastical Law, a married couple is described as “one flesh and blood”. The argument of the law was that a person should not beat his/her own flesh and blood excessively since this meant self-destruction. Love was associated with living “Christianly” and not impiously.<sup>18</sup> But since in the formation of both secular and ecclesiastical legislation and norms, the husband was the woman’s head and guardian, and the woman should be obedient to him, one may wonder what such a message conceals. The wife should be an individual in her own right but a part of her husband’s “flesh and blood”. A wife whom the husband considered to have transgressed, or who in fact had transgressed, this boundary and acted on her own authority, could be punished by him. Jari Eilola, who has studied conflicts in the household refers to the Table of Duties and states: “For the wife, the Table of Duties meant foremost the fact that the husband/master was never so bad, or the wife so good, that she could be promoted over the man to run the household.”<sup>19</sup>

## HELENA’S WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

The circumstances had led to Helena taking over the responsibility for the upkeep of the entire household. It was she who kept control of the keys and could deny her husband food and drink. As we have seen, Olof also accused her of this. Indeed it was a recurrent theme when he blamed his crimes on her, and also when he was

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18 Malin Lennartsson, ‘Kärleksdiskursen bland kvinnor, karlar och ortodoxa präster’, in *Kjønn, makt, samfunn i Norden i et historisk perspektiv*, Vol. 1, Ed. by Berit Gullikstad and Kari Heitman, Senter for kvinneforskning: Dragvoll, 1997, pp. 235–44.

19 Jari Eilola, “Cuckoi päällä curjanakin; cana alla armaisnakin” – patriarkalisuus, puolisoiden välinen suhde ja auktoriteettien muodostuminen’, in *Arjen valta. Suomalaisen yhteiskunnan patriarkalisesta järjestyksestä myöhäiskeskiajalta teollistumisen kynnykselle (v. 1450–1860)*, Ed. by Pii Einonen and Petri Karonen, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2002, p. 294.

released from custody. The reason for these recriminations was that it was Helena's responsibility to provide for her husband when he was in custody, and when she did not do this well enough, he was released from custody — only to return after maltreating her once again.<sup>20</sup>

Helena ran an inn at Strömsbro outside Gävle. From more “everyday” conflicts we can see how Helena acted in financial matters. Like other wives, she made employment contracts and got into conflicts with servants. She did business and disputed with several men and one woman. Like other wives, she was often represented by a man, and on occasion she appeared in person in court. Unlike other wives, she was, however, never represented by her husband, but by a representative whom she had appointed. When her husband left Gävle, her legally competent son Olof was also able to represent her.

Despite all her responsibilities, the letter of the law was what counted in the end. It stipulated that the couple's property was joint property, and in her capacity as wife Helena was subordinate to Olof's actions and administration of the economy. It also seems that Olof kept control of the real estate as long as possible.

## JOINT OR PRIVATE PROPERTY?

The spouses were involved in another lawsuit in which the Magistrates Court regarded their property as joint property, whereas Helena considered and claimed that it was her own private property. In 1698 Olof was supposed to ship some goods from Härnösand to Gävle. But owing to bad weather the ship had drifted to Kristinestad in Finland. Olof had stayed there through the winter. A large part of the goods had then been used to make payments to several people and to pay for food and lodging. Olof had promised that he would be responsible for “all the consequences, and in Gävle compensate out of my own property for what is not my own of the listed goods”.

It was not possible to deliver all the goods to Gävle. Olof tried to put the blame on his wife, claiming that she had received goods transported on the ship without his knowledge. But Helena disclaimed all liability: it had been proved that Olof had received the goods, and that he had also squandered them through his “dissolute” way of living. The court was of the same opinion. They placed all

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20 No complete investigation has been made of the occasions on which the plaintiff was forced to pay for prison stays according to Swedish law. See Jonas Liliequist, *Kostnadsansvar för rättegångar, fängslande och bestraffningar i 1600- och 1700-talens Sverige. En preliminär skiss, Rettspraxis*, No. 2 (1994).

the liability on Olof and ordered him to replace all the missing goods, pay the customs duties in Finland, pay for the transportation from there, and pay the plaintiffs' court costs.

This did not indemnify Helena. Since the property was joint property, she was forced to pledge an allotment as collateral security for 900 *dalers* in copper coins. Helena argued that, because they were unfavourably disposed towards her, the Mayor and the Court had sentenced her husband while assuming that the payment would be made out of her property. She therefore appealed to the Court of Appeal and demanded that an impartial judge should be appointed. There she was the plaintiff and disclaimed all liability. She humbly asked the Court of Appeal to exempt her, "a poor, oppressed woman".

The defendants in the Court of Appeal argued through their appointed representative Sandberg: "[...] the wife's complaints cannot lead to any change in [this] verdict, because she is pursuing this case without her husband's authority..." Helena's legal incapacity was thus used here as an argument against her. But when the Court of Appeal did not abandon the case on the argument that Helena was acting without her husband's advice, Sandberg changed his argumentation. He claimed that it was true that the suit had been brought against Olof, but that this was due to the fact that, in his capacity as the guardian of his wife, he ought to speak for both of them. The situation was different now, however. Since Helena had pledged real property as collateral security for the debt and was also pursuing the case as the plaintiff in the Court of Appeal, she could self-evidently be considered liable and therefore be forced to pay for the transportation. In addition, no *separatio bonorum* (distribution of the estate) had been carried out.

The Court of Appeal found in Helena's favour. Its judgment was supported by a decision of the Council of State in 1678, in which the wife's approval of contracted debts was required. In its verdict, the court did not refer to the law but stated that the verdict should be "fair". Although the case was treated as a civil suit, Olof's actions were described as criminal. As long as it could not be proved that Helena had been involved, she was not liable for the debt with her property either. If nevertheless the defendants still wanted to sue her for having been involved, they would have to do so before impartial judges. In this case too, the Court of Appeal thus thought that there were grounds for Helena's accusations of incompetence against the Mayor and the Court in Gävle. In May 1709, Helena presented the Court of Appeal's verdict in the Magistrates Court. She then turned to the County Governor and petitioned that it should be executed.

After Olof was sentenced to hard labour at Marstrand, he sent letters to the town administration, in which he "poor and now utterly oppressed man" humbly requested that an inventory should be made of the couple's property. He wanted to protect his legal right to the matrimonial property "or half the estate". Helena protested, referring to the fact the divorce had not yet been granted by the



Cathedral Chapter. The spouses were never granted a full divorce. The estate was never distributed either, even after Olof Ström's death.<sup>21</sup>

As we have seen above, Olof seems to have been sent to Marstrand in the summer of 1707 to serve his three-year penalty.<sup>22</sup> From then on he was never heard of again in Gävle. When Olof Ström died, the estate had to be distributed and the inheritance he had left divided among his heirs. According to the law, all the property of the estate should be included, which was also the executors' wish and intention. Then the wife should receive her matrimonial inheritance (half of the estate) and the children should share the other part equally. The widow Helena Ström attended the execution of the division in January 1713 and argued that there could be no inheritance from her husband since he had not worked for 19 years, or as she put it, "had not contributed even half an *öre*", that he had cost her 600 *dalers* a year, and that he had taken part in a serious theft of her property. These arguments had no legal foundation, but Helena's requests were granted in the end, and she was allowed to keep all her property, since both her sons, Olof and Hans Ström, renounced all inheritance claims.<sup>23</sup>

## THE VALUE OF WORK, OWNERSHIP AND GENDER

Swedish law was different in urban and rural areas. In urban areas, sons and daughters had equal rights of inheritance, while in rural areas sons inherited twice as much as daughters. The same differences applied to rights to matrimonial property. While the whole estate was jointly owned in urban areas, the matrimonial property in rural areas comprised only personal property

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21 Ivar Nylander claims, "It seems that before the law of 1734, it was not uncommon for estate distribution to be made in connection with the separation of bed and residence [...]" He does not give any actual example to prove this claim. In Olof and Helena's case, the estate distribution was not an issue. Since this type of separation aimed at reconciliation, I find it hard to understand why any estate distribution should have been carried out. In the Law of 1734, estate distribution is not stipulated, but the non-erring party could remain in the home, take care of the children, and pay some maintenance to the guilty party, if s/he could not support herself/himself. If the husband/wife could support himself/herself, s/he had to pay maintenance to the partner and the children (Nylander, *Studier rörande den svenska äktenskapsrättens historia*, quotation from p. 73, p. 103.)

22 I have tried to find lists of prisoners in Karlsten Fortress in different archives, but I have not found any. Nor have I discovered when, where and how Olof Ström died.

23 The estate was valued at 5 643 *dalers*, of which the real property amounted to 4 320 *dalers*. The debts amounted to 60.14 *dalers* (the costs of the estate inventory) and 472 *dalers* (other debts).

and purchased land. This meant that the wife, on the one hand, probably had a stronger financial position in urban areas than in rural areas, but on the other hand she was more vulnerable if her husband for example did bad business and went bankrupt, or, as in Olof's case, squandered the estate's assets and did not bring in any new property. According to the law, the husband had the right to manage the estate, but the circumstances had led to Helena taking over the whole task and a large part of the responsibility. According to the law, the couple's property was joint property as long as there was no prenuptial contract to the contrary. It is obvious that Helena Ström nevertheless thought that the entire property was her private property. It is true that she had neither the law nor the local court on her side, but she received some sympathy and support from higher judicial instances. Her sons supported her when she demanded to be allowed to keep all the property at the distribution of the estate. In her argumentation she emphasized her *work*. It was through her efforts that she had brought resources to the estate, while her husband had only wasted their assets and depleted the estate. For this reason she thought that he had consumed his share and thereby his right to half the estate. Her arguments were not taken out of thin air. At that time, a person's work could be seen as creating value and giving her/him the right to own property.<sup>24</sup>

The fact that the estate was not divided and that it was also jointly owned had considerable financial consequences for Helena. In the matter of the theft, her husband was sentenced to hard labour for stealing from her, but she still had to pay the court costs. Helena also had to pay for her husband's upkeep during his various prison terms. For the goods that Olof had squandered at Kristinestad, the Court of Appeal found that he was liable with his share of the estate. This was possible because Olof's actions were labelled as criminal. But only half of Helena's demands had still been met since she thought that his legal share also belonged to her. When they were petitioning for divorce, Olof was interested in dividing the estate, but Helena refused.<sup>25</sup>

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24 Lars D. Eriksson, 'Om äganderättens motivering', in *Om äganderättens historia. Nordiskt rättshistoriskt symposium i Åbo den 1.–3.12.1983*, Ed. by Pia Letto-Vanamo, University of Helsinki: Helsinki, 1984, pp. 39–40.

25 Was Olof perhaps already planning to apply for divorce when he accused Helena of unfaithfulness in 1697? There are no indications that this was the case.

## SUBORDINATION, POWER RELATIONS AND STRATEGIES

### THE HUSBAND'S GUARDIANSHIP

It is possible that Helena realised that they did not have sufficient reasons for granting a full divorce. She did not primarily apply for divorce in order to protect herself and her property. Instead she used another strategy. She tried to find out whether Olof could be considered insane or not. This failed, however, and the question is what legal consequences it might have had. There are no explicit provisions stating that an insane person could be *deprived of* her/his authority in the then existing legislation, but it is clear that mad people did not manage their estates themselves.<sup>26</sup> It is important to point out that this is a matter not of the right of possession but of the right of management.<sup>27</sup> Legally incompetent and insane people were not allowed to control their property. Adult legally competent men and widows, and in limited areas, unmarried women and wives did, however, have this right. Helena demanded ownership but never mentioned any claim to be appointed the legal ward of her husband, and although changes in the law were being prepared regarding both ownership and the management of property, even later on such demands would not have received legal approval.

Changes were thus in the offing. With the aid of legislation, the State or the municipality came to regulate the management of estates to an increasing extent, and women thereby began to get better legal protection. By the law of 1734, Helena's property might have been protected even if Olof had not been considered insane. The law made it possible to place under guardianship "anyone who through insanity, wastefulness, or other causes cannot manage her/his property".<sup>28</sup> The law did not stipulate who should be the guardian. Legal practice in Gävle in 1745 shows that this provision was used by women in order to protect their property. Another solution for them might be to get a divorce. The legislation was also relaxed in this respect. In the mid-eighteenth century, mental illness began to be regarded as grounds for divorce, and in 1810 it was stipulated that wastefulness, drunkenness or a violent disposition as well as dishonourable crime could be

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26 Magnus Erikssons Stadslag, the Code of Land Laws 10.

27 See David Nehrman (Ehrenstråle), *Inledning till then Swenska processum civilem. Efter Sveriges Rikes Lag och Stadgar författad, samt ha å nyo ökt och förbättrad af David Nehrman, Den första Afdelningen hwad som fordras till ett grundligt Lag-Wett*, Lund, 1729, p. 116 § 4.

28 The Law of 1734, the Inheritance Code 19.4.

grounds for applying for divorce.<sup>29</sup> A third means of protecting the property that a wife brought to the estate was a prenuptial contract.

## MARRIAGE AND THE COURT

It was not very common for conflicts between a husband and wife to be dealt with in court. There are several reasons for this. The husband's superiority was sanctioned by law and gave him the right to exercise power, even by means of violence, over his wife. The fundamental view that it was legitimate to employ violence in the home has its origins in the view that violence could be used by whoever ranked higher in the hierarchy. The husband also had duties, but to a great extent these lay outside the law with regard to what was right and reasonable. The violence had to be kept at an acceptable level – the definition of which of course varied. Laura Gowing has pointed on how hard it was to define “extreme cruelty”, because of “its semi-legal status”, and because of that this kind of violence was also “much less discussed in contemporary culture”.<sup>30</sup>

Olof had transgressed the acceptability limit on several occasions. He used “excessive violence”, and Helena turned to the court. But the men in the local court were unable to protect her. Nor it seems did they want to, since the Court of Appeal considered them incompetent. They “forgot it”, when Olof was sentenced to hard labour at Marstrand by the Judicial Revision. In some respects they could also find support in the law for their judgments, for example their finding that the property was joint property. It is possible that the men in the Magistrates Court thought that Helena took excessive liberties and transgressed the existing gender boundaries.

Susan Dwyer Amussen considers that the husbands' violence against their wives was generally regarded as not being due to the rage of the former but as a consequence of the wives' own wrong behaviour.<sup>31</sup> Olof's defence strategies were connected with his wife's strength; she had exceeded her duty as his subordinate, and Olof described himself as an oppressed man; she had also asserted her right to her own body by refusing him sexual intercourse. She was further accused of having been unfaithful. Olof was capable of showing apparently sincere regret

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29 Nylander, *Studier rörande den svenska äktenskapsrättens historia*, pp. 190–6, Marja Taussi Sjöberg, *Skiljas. Trolövnin, äktenskap och skilsmässa i Norrland på 1800-talet*, Författarförlaget: Stockholm, 1988, p. 52.

30 Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 180

31 Susan Dwyer Amussen, “Being Stirred to Much Unquietness' Violence and Domestic Violence in Early Modern England”, *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 6, No 2, 1994, pp. 72–5.

for his behaviour. He blamed it on his drunkenness and was able to fool those around him. Helena also used various strategies. On the one hand, she described herself as weak, a miserable and oppressed woman. When accused of adultery, she pleaded ignorance (of the law) as a woman, and used an appointed representative to plead her cause. On the other hand, she emphasised her strength by pointing out her work, in particular when the disputes concerned property.

Helena was able to make use of the legal system and continue her litigation in the higher judicial instances. These higher courts could take into consideration the fact that the law conflicted with the common conception of morals and justice. Alexander Stromberg, who became County Governor in 1704, played an important role in helping Helena to obtain justice. He supported her over the theft in particular, as well as in the dispute over the consignment from Härnösand. Helena also received some support from the clergy. The fact that the Church assumed responsibility for the couple's married life may be explained by its extensive control of the institution of marriage. The clergy were supposed to do what they could to achieve reconciliation between a disputatious husband and wife.<sup>32</sup>

There are parallels here with the Magistrates Court in Stockholm in the 1750s. Christine Bladh explains the fact that they did not take action against violence towards women by arguing that loyalty between men was more important than protecting individual women. If one man were forbidden to use physical violence, all men would be forbidden to do so. It was the clergy that women could approach to get help.<sup>33</sup>

The State's reaction through the offices of the County Governor, the Court of Appeal and the Judicial Revision may be seen in the context of its efforts to discipline its subjects, and in this respect Olof's behaviour was unacceptable. The State's policies in the seventeenth century with its harsher legislation, wars and propaganda led to an increase in the subordination of women – in some cases the policies were indeed consciously misogynous. But the State had another side, which became clearer at the end of Sweden's period as a great power. It was the State that eventually began to react and intervene in gender relations, in the witch trials, and later on when men's domination of women began to be regarded as a problem, not least economically. Wives obtained stronger legal protection in their marriages and greater chances of getting a divorce. The law of 1734 also clarified the boundaries between the permissible and prohibited maltreatment of wives.<sup>34</sup>

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32 Nylander, *Studier rörande den svenska äktenskapsrättens historia*, pp. 81–92.

33 Christine Bladh, 'Kvinnors liv och arbete i 1750-talets Stockholm', in *Kjonn, makt, samfunn i Norden*, Ed. by Berit Gullikstad and Kari Heitman, pp. 292, 304.

34 The Law of 1734, the Misdemeanor Code. 36.

## MARRIAGE – THE FOUNDATION OF SOCIETY

If we merely count the number of occasions on which Helena appeared in court, either on her own or through an appointed representative, without considering the reasons, we might be able to argue that she was a surprisingly free and resolute person. If we ignored Helena's conflicts with Olof and only considered the other conflicts, we would notice how great her responsibility was. Women commonly appeared in court in this period and they were responsible for large parts of the economy.

The aim of this case study was to gain a deeper understanding of what the legal protection and the provisions of the law concerning women were like for a married woman. I chose to study a married couple, for whom these issues came to the fore on several occasions. The relationship of a couple and matrimony constituted a sort of foundation of society, and a woman's civil status was therefore important since she was always seen in relation to her husband. Because unmarried women were so financially and legally vulnerable, largely lacking any other opportunities than working for a living, it was in the woman's own interest to marry, in order to establish a household, raise children and achieve the status of a married woman. Matrimony was important for men, too, in order to make contracts and to acquire property, as well as to establish a household. Men's as well as women's sexuality was supposed to be expressed within the confines of marriage. Marriage was basically hierarchical, albeit built on an idea of consensus. A wife in an urban area was more closely bound to her husband than a wife in the country. At the same time, she enjoyed more liberty in certain areas such as business and trade. To be able to regard such relative freedom as something positive in a hierarchical relation presupposes that the husband performs his "moral" responsibilities, and that there is some kind of complementarity, a balance, perhaps trust and love between the husband and wife. This was the ideal, and there are examples of the existence of such relationships.<sup>35</sup> But in Helena and Olof's case it was just the opposite.

Legal security is generally taken to comprise protection of life and property, equality before the law, and predictability. If Helena had not been married to Olof, his violence against her might for example have been treated as assault and battery, and she would have had considerably stronger legal protection. In my opinion, marriage was of enormous importance in society for the preservation of the power relations between the genders in this period. This is the reason why married women had such poor legal protection. This is why Helena was not allowed to divorce her husband.

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35 Lennartsson, 'Kärleksdiskursen', pp. 223–30.

## OPPORTUNITY OR COMPULSION?

### Domestic Servants in Urban Communities in the Eighteenth Century

*Kirsi Ojala*

#### INTRODUCTION

“I am a poor servant girl who has only God in heaven to trust and a very old mother, whose livelihood as well as my own I have always earned by working as a humble servant girl [...] I have now been legally employed in Coppersmith Kursina’s house [...] but he has send me a message [...] that he does not need me and I should look to it to find another house [...] but as I believed the contract of employment to be settled by the retainer money I received [...] I have resigned from my previous service [...]”<sup>1</sup> For domestic servants, there were many crucial moments in their careers, and this servant girl was going through one of them, experiencing great concern about her own and her mother’s livelihood. How did she deal with this adversity?

This article deals with domestic servants of the burghers in Turku in the Finnish part of the realm of Sweden and Odense in Denmark<sup>2</sup> and their strategies for coping

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1 “Da ieg fattige pige barn, og tienniste bud der ingen haver, at forlade sig paa, uden gud i hiemmelen og 1 gammel snart udlewet moder [...] altid har wæret for og strobt, som et fattigt barn, at wilde see at tiene icke alleringeste mit lifs ophold, men wed og at see min gamle moder hielpe. Med hwad ieg af min Ringe tienniste og løn kunde indbringe, har ladet mig fæste til Daniel Kursina kaaber smed [...] ieg icke eenfoldig wiis, andet har forstaaet end at altig hafde sin rigtigheed [...] maar jeg dog u-beklageligen forrette, at Mester Kursina [...] udsend mig et bud [...] de behøwede mig icke, da ieg fattige barn hawde sickert i tance, at wilde gaee i min tienniste [...]” Dokumenter til politiprotokollen No. 5, 21 April 1770, Provincial Archives of Fyn, Odense.

2 Odense lies on the island of Funen in Southern Denmark. Turku (Sw. Åbo) is located in

with various events and incidents occurring in their period of service between 1720 and 1770. Turku and Odense have been chosen because of the source material available and their similar demographic characteristics. Turku was the biggest town in Finland, with approximately 7 000 inhabitants in 1749.<sup>3</sup> The number of servants there was approximately 650 in 1731.<sup>4</sup> Odense was the second biggest town in Denmark, after Copenhagen. The number of inhabitants was about 5 300 in 1769, of which servants accounted for about 600.<sup>5</sup> Both towns had a burgher population that was mainly composed of craftsmen and shopkeepers. Servants were on the lowest level of the social hierarchy, although their work made them indispensable. Their subordinate status brought various fears, but there were also various possibilities available to them.

Generally, there has thus far been little interest in research on urban domestic servants in the Nordic countries, in contrast to rural servants, who have been studied both in the Nordic context and in other European countries.<sup>6</sup> This article focuses on domestic servants in two urban societies in two Nordic countries. The

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south-western Finland. Present day Finland was part of the Swedish kingdom from the eleventh century to 1809. Thus Turku was a Finnish town in Sweden. The Danish names in the text are in Danish form and the Finnish names are in Swedish according to the sources. The patronymics in Swedish are: *dotter* (daughter) and *son* (son), e.g. Anna Jakobsdotter is Anna, a daughter of Jakob and Anders Göransson is Anders, a son of Göran. The Danish equivalents are *datter* (daughter) and *son* (son), e.g. Kirsten Andersdatter is Kirsten, a daughter of Anders.

- 3 Oskar Nikula, *Turun kaupungin historia 1721–1809*, Vol. 1, Turun kaupunki: Turku, 1970, p. 269.
- 4 Turku census lists 1739 (Turun henkikirjat (THK), micro film 1731:4759), National Archives of Finland.
- 5 H.C. Johansen, *Odense bys historie. Næring og bystyre 1700–1789*, Odense, 1983, p. 24. The number of servants is taken from the Odense census list in 1769 (Odense Magistrats arkiv, Folketællingsliste 1769).
- 6 E.g. Toivo Nygård, *Suomen palvelusväki 1600-luvulla. Palkollisten määrä, työ, palkkaus ja suhteet isäntäväkeen*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1989; Jorma Wilmi, *Isäntäväet ja palvelusväen pito 1600-luvulla ja 1700-luvun alkupuolella. Taloudellispohjainen tutkimus Turun ja Porin sekä Pohjanmaan läänien maaseudulta*, University of Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä, 1991; Börje Harnesk, *Legofolk. Drängar, pigor och bönder i 1700- och 1800-talens Sverige*. University of Umeå: Umeå, 1990; Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1981; Sarah C. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France. The Uses of Loyalty*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1983; Sølvi Sogner, 'Ut å tjene – om tjenerforhold i norsk historie', in *Valg og vitenskap. Festskrift til Sivert Langholm*, Ed. by Knut Kjeldstadli, Jan Eyvind Myhre and Tore Pryser, Den norske historiske forening: Oslo, 1997. About urban servants: Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender 1660–1750. Life and Work in the London Household*, Pearson Education Limited: Harlow, 2000; Also in *Emotions in the Household, 1200–1900*, Ed. By Susan Broomhall, Palgrave Macmillan: Hampshire, New York, 2008.



purpose of the article is to bring to light new aspects of the history of Nordic everyday life. There are similarities in the early modern Swedish and Danish societies, for instance in legislation, religion and culture. The set of social norms was the same, defined by the secular and ecclesiastical laws and everyday practice.<sup>7</sup> There are also parallels in the culture concerning domestic service: for example, the process of hiring domestic servants was similar in both countries, and a comparison of the information offered in the court records in these towns makes it possible to claim that certain aspects of everyday life were alike. The court records this article uses also show that the cases in which domestic servants were involved were similar, and that there were no great differences between Turku and Odense in the judgments that the courts made.

In the early modern age, there was a clear difference between townspeople and country dwellers, and this is another reason why the urban servants require closer study. Most members of the estates in towns were burghers, whereas in the Swedish countryside they were peasants. In Denmark most of the rural population was composed of landless people who were outside the estates. Only the members of the Estate of burghers – merchants, shopkeepers, retailers and craftsmen – had a permit to practise their trades in towns. A town was always separated from the countryside physically by gates with guards whose task it was to control people coming in the towns. There were also regulations about who could enter the town, and what these people were allowed to sell in the town. Obtaining a burger's rights or settling in a town was also regulated.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the difference between towns and the countryside, there were several similarities in rural and urban domestic service. The work periods and the work itself were very much the same in both towns and the countryside, since urban households also kept domestic animals and cultivated their fields outside the town. This was the situation in which urban servants worked and lived. Some of them originally came from the countryside, but often it is difficult to identify the origin of urban servants. In both the towns studied here, their places of origin were documented only occasionally in the court records. In addition, there are hardly ever entries about servants whose behaviour or actions reveal a rural background. Why then is it so important to study urban servants? The answer is that the environment, society and social hierarchy of the town make their daily life different from that of their rural counterparts. Research on servants in Turku

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7 On Nordic history generally, see T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*, Allen & Unwin: London, 1979. On comparisons of Nordic practices in early modern conflict resolution and social control, see *People Meet the Law. Control and Conflict-Handling in the Courts*, Ed. by Eva Österberg and Solvi Sogner, Universitetsforlaget: Oslo, 2000.

8 On Western towns, see e.g. Fernand Braudel, *Vardagslivets strukturer. Det möjligas gränser. Civilisationer och kapitalism 1400–1800*, Vol. 1. Gidlunds: Stockholm, 1982, pp. 465–70.

and Odense reveals a great deal about certain aspects of everyday life and also sheds light on hierarchical urban communities and their practices.

Before starting to study the hopes and fears of servants, it is essential to understand many aspects of domestic service. Its main characteristic was its temporary nature. For most servants, it was only one phase in their lives, usually the time before they got married. Since servants usually worked only for periods of half a year up to one or two years in one house and then moved to another or out of the locality, their personal relationships outside their workplaces can be considered stronger than their relations with their masters and other household members. However, in the patriarchal society of the eighteenth century, the importance of the master's supreme status in his household cannot be diminished. Servants were subordinate to their masters, who were supposed to provide them with subsistence comprising food, clothing and accommodation. In Sweden, the master also paid taxes on behalf of his servants. In addition, it was the master's duty was to teach and guide his servants and punish them in a paternal way if they were disobedient. At the same time, servants were supposed to obey and respect their masters. Diligence at work and good behaviour both in the household and in public guaranteed a servant the status of a person of good standing and a good servant.<sup>9</sup>

Servants were considered as members of the household they were working in, and, in principle, they always represented their employers outside the household. The set of social norms and the official rhetoric emphasised the importance of social relations inside the household, but despite their subordinate status, domestic servants were also independent agents. They had the same opportunities in their lives as anybody else on the same level of the social hierarchy. They could lead lives of their own beside their lives as servants. Although the concept of free or

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9 On patriarchal order and the Three Estate Doctrine: Bengt Ankarloo, 'Patriarkatet', *Scandia*, Vol. 65, No. 1, 1999, p. 9; Börje Harnesk, 'Patriarkalismen och lönearbetet', *Historisk Tidskrift*, Vol. 106, No. 3, 1986, p. 331; Börje Harnesk, 'Den föränderliga patriarkalismen', *Historisk Tidskrift*, Vol. 107, No. 2, 1987, pp. 235–8; 331; Harnesk, *Legofolk*, pp. 46–8; C.-E. Normann, *Prästerskapet och det karolinska enväldet. Studier över det svenska prästerskapets statsuppfattning under stormaktstidens slutskede*, Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelses bokförlag: Lund, 1948. Hilding Pleijel, *Från hustavlans tid. Kyrkohistoriska folklivsstudier*, Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelses bokförlag: Lund, 1951; Hilding Pleijel, 'Patriarkalismens samhälls ideologi', *Historisk Tidskrift*, Vol. 107, No. 2, 1987, pp. 221–34; Kustaa H. J. Vilkkuna, *Arkielämä patriarkalisessa työyhteisössä. Rautaruukkilaiset suurvalta-ajan Suomessa*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1996, pp. 10–11, 95–108; *Arjen valta. Suomalaisen yhteiskunnan patriarkalisesta järjestyksestä myöhäiskeskiajalta teollistumisen kynnykselle (v. 1450–1860)*, Ed. by Piia Einonen and Petri Karonen, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2002 (with an English summary: *The Power of Everyday Life. On the Patriarchal Order in the Finnish Society from the Late Middle Ages to the Eve of the Industrialization (1450–1860)*).

leisure time was unknown, and life equalled work, it can be argued that servants also separated their actual working hours from the moments when the work did not require their immediate attention or they were not working at all. As a saying from Funen in Denmark has it, the maid servants worked hard during the days, but the nights were their own (*Natten er vor egen*), or as a servant girl in Turku snapped at her mistress on Easter Sunday, she ought to be free of all work on a holiday, (*[hon] borde vara frij om en helgedag för alt arbete*).<sup>10</sup>

Although the legislation concerning domestic servants contains references to the need to control servants and laments the burden that having hired labour imposes on the masters, in everyday life, a master was not generally interested in his servant's individual life as long as it did not interfere with the household's internal relations or its standing in the neighbourhood and local society. Thus there were two kinds of legal cases in which servants were involved: first, suits where they actively presented their cases without their master's or mistress's support or presence, and second, cases where the head of the household was involved either as a plaintiff or as a witness defending his servant. These two types of court case reveal the two sides of a servant's life: one belonging to the household and the other their own. However, there were cases where a servant's "own" life was influenced by incidents at work and vice versa.

There are a noteworthy number of court cases in which servants act independently, and these show the importance of their relations outside the workplace. Since the time of working as a servant usually coincided with the time when they were looking for a future spouse, these relations had a significance for the servant's future plans. Often they also played a more important role than relations with the members of a particular work place. Nevertheless, work as a servant provided an opportunity to learn special working skills and thus opened up new employment opportunities. In addition, the work gave access to a potential marriage market.

Despite these possibilities, the future for servants seems to have been fairly uncertain, with short-term jobs, low wages and low social status. What were the future expectations of a servant? What were the fears? On the basis of the source material, this study tries to answer such questions as: What were the consequences when a maid servant punched her master or a male servant went on drinking binge in the town for two days? What were the reactions towards a servant who wanted to marry above his or her rank? Such cases will be analysed and discussed in this article. The main questions based on the chosen court cases are: 1) What opportunities did servants have to make their own decisions and take their chances, and how did these decisions affect their present and future situations? 2) Where in the hierarchical cultural framework was there an individual space for servants,

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10 TKO 1 April 1741: 319, National Archives of Finland.

and to what extent they were able to use it? Another question raised by the court cases involves the idea of a servant's personal strategy. Can it be argued that these strategies were conscious? And was it a question of strategies at all rather than spontaneous actions?

The study is based on court records from the lower (town) courts of Turku (Fi: *kämnerinoikeus*, Sw: *kämmersrätten*) and Odense (Da: *bytingsretten* and *politiiretten*). Together these comprise a large number of cases describing everyday life. A crime, a serious conflict or any other case requiring a court hearing was always an exception in everyday life. Even so, as a study of this kind of court material shows, the cases reveal a great deal about the common opinions, attitudes and beliefs, sentiments and even the unwritten laws of the society. It is also noteworthy that the courtrooms were not only juridical arenas but also a common forum for (re)conciliation and solving problems. The cases cover a wide range of subjects, and they also reveal a great number of personal feelings, ambitions and aims: in other words, hopes and fears.

## HOPING FOR THE BEST, FEARING THE WORST

Despite their low social status, servants had their strategies to achieve success in life. Their fears for the future could be averted mainly by acquiring a good and upright reputation. A good name helped in finding employment in a reputable house. One's personal reputation affected the way other members of society treated one, and what possibilities one had in the current situation and in the future.

The social network generally played an important role in the lives of people in the early modern age. It functioned as a kind of social security system. A circle of acquaintances with good names could for instance provide valuable information about job opportunities and speak for one in court, if necessary. Friends, acquaintances and family could also recommend a candidate servant on the employment market. In fact, the importance of the servants' social network emerges especially in the hiring process: news, rumours and stories about households spread among the servants, but often it was someone from a servant's closer social network who acted as an intermediary in getting the job for him or her. Naturally, this was not the only way of getting employed. Experienced servants, in particular, could find new places of employment on their own.

In Turku, it was usually job-seeker's mother or other, often elderly, female relative who knew the masters and mistresses and acted as an intermediary and recommended "their girl or boy" to certain houses. She passed on the message from the servant to the new masters and mistresses, who paid a retainer to the intermediary, and she then gave it to the person seeking employment. The

contract was valid if the money was not returned during the hiring market week,<sup>11</sup> after which the new servant was obliged to begin work. If better offers turned up after the servant accepted the retainer, it was her or his responsibility to return the money to the house. After being taken on and starting in a new house, a servant had to prove him- or herself as a skilful and hardworking servant and in addition convince the new master and mistress of his or her obedience and loyalty.<sup>12</sup>

Usually the relationship between employees and their employers was good: servants did their duty, and the masters paid their wages. If conflicts occurred, the servants' alternatives were to defend themselves verbally, to commit acts of violence and to runaway. If the servants hoped for help from their master and mistress, they had to have good relations with them. Their reputation and behaviour in the house were crucial. It was a good strategy to avoid conflicts with the master or mistress if one wanted to have a successful career as a servant.

Where there any independent ways of preparing for the future in servants' lives? – To certain extent, yes. For instance, servants had their own chests where they kept their belongings.<sup>13</sup> It can be argued that this chest symbolised and concretised their restricted freedom, which was controlled but not completely non-existent. A servant was taken into the house as a household member when the retainer was paid. The household took care of the servant's basic needs, but it also was a controlling, commanding and restrictive environment. The chest was the servant's private space, and not even a master or mistress could touch the chest without good reason. Usually, if the head of the household was interested in a servant's chest, it involved doubts about the servant's honesty.

The chest was also the place where the servant stored pieces of clothing and other items useful currently or in the future. It should be remembered that young

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11 The most common hiring market day was 29<sup>th</sup> September in Sweden (Finland) and Denmark but also any day between the 10<sup>th</sup> August and the 11<sup>th</sup> November were lawful dates in Finland, as well as any day between the 10<sup>th</sup> May and 15<sup>th</sup> June. In Denmark the spring hiring season was Easter. *Ruotzin Waldakunnan Laki. hyväxi luettu ja wastian otettu herrain päiwillä vuonna 1734, Kauppakaari XIV, 1§, 3§. (Swedish Law 1743); Kong Christian den V's Danske Lov 1683, Bind 1, Tredie bog, XIX. Cap., 9. art. (Danish Law 1683).*

12 TKO 3 September 1739: 707–712, National Archives of Finland. Anna Eskilsdotter and her mother had to find a servant maid for a linen weaver called Antti Holmberg, since Anna's mother had promised him that her daughter would work for him. The mother wanted to help Anna, who had talked about fining a new house to work in. Nevertheless, she decided to stay in her current job at Burgher Jutila's house.

13 On individuality and its expression among early modern commoners, see Kustaa H. J. Vilkkuna, 'Jumala elä rankase minua. Yksilöllisen subjektin synty', in *Siperiasta Siirtoväkeen. Murrosajoja ja käännekohtia Suomen historiassa*, Ed. by Heikki Roiko-Jokela, Department of History at the University of Jyväskylä and Kopijvä: Jyväskylä, 1996, pp. 71–88.

girls also had to prepare for a possible marriage and collect their trousseaus. These belongings were either bought or obtained as gifts, but pilfering was another, albeit illegal, way of obtaining useful or valuable things. Some of these objects also had status value; for instance, women's silk scarves or bonnets with silk ribbons or lace were defined as luxuries in the law on consumption and thus not suitable for commoners. Luxuries were only for the members of high society. However, maid servants did possess such items of clothing and wore them as well, which shows that they did not consider themselves worse than others. Naturally, there were risks in this kind of "showing off", since the bailiffs tended to pay attention to this offence. However, by procuring these clothes or other similar objects, servants could better themselves and their living standards with regard to their present situation or the future.

There were various other ways of making their existing situation more comfortable and enjoyable, at least momentarily. It is more than likely that servants were aware of the consequences when they decided neglect their duty and do what they wanted. Presumably, this was the case also with Advocate Ehrenmalm's servant Jussi Färdig. Färdig was sent to town to buy hop shoots. Instead of returning immediately with the hops, he chose to get heavily drunk, and, once started, he continued drinking for two days. What worsened his situation afterwards was first the fact that he stayed away for two days, and secondly that he happened to have the keys to the horse stable with him, which also shows that the master of the house actually considered him a trustworthy servant. The stable door had to be broken down in order to feed the horses, and, what was worse, Jussi had betrayed his master's confidence. For this short-lived period of liberty he was sentenced to corporal punishment.<sup>14</sup>

Drinking, gossiping, gaming, dancing and premarital sexual relationships<sup>15</sup> were not activities that the authorities approved of, yet they were part of everyday life – and by no means practised only among servants. Fulfilling these desires always involved the risk of being caught by one's master or mistress, or the authorities. Moreover, premarital relationships could also lead to having children out of wedlock, which was one of the greatest fears of women. Women, who gave birth out of wedlock, were officially not reputable. For some, this meant pressure to give up their work or being fired from it. One possibility was for the couple to get married after the child was born.

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14 TKO 21 January 1729: 11–13, National Archives of Finland.

15 These "activities" were not directly illegal, except in the case of premarital relations. However, they were usually mentioned when there were complaints about some person's behaviour. Staying out late or all night, gossiping, gaming, drinking and dancing were commonly accepted if no conflicts occurred. Thus, when for example a master wanted to complain about his servant, these activities were mentioned in court to support the plaintiff's case.

## GETTING EMPLOYED – A CRUCIAL MOMENT

“The poor servant girl” we met at the beginning of this article was Gunild Nielsdatter. She complained in Odense Lower Court that a coppersmith called Ernst Kursina had withdrawn his decision to employ her, even though he already had paid the retainer. Gunild had accepted the money and thereby confirmed the hiring contract. Gunild had an old mother to take care of, and without a new employment contract she would find herself in a difficult situation. When a contract of service was confirmed by the payment of a retainer and it was time to start the agreed work period, neither the servant nor the master was permitted by the law to break the contract without just cause. If either party did so, he or she was liable to pay damages. In Gunild’s case, the law was on her side, since she had been legally hired. Therefore, the coppersmith was sentenced to cover Gunild Nielsdatter’s loss of a half a year’s servant’s wages.<sup>16</sup> It can be argued that the first concern of a person seeking work as a servant was the fear of not finding a job, which usually meant difficulties in getting a living. In addition, the authorities considered unemployed people as vagabonds, who were not wanted in town.

When a servant accepted the work offer, he or she made a commitment to the new heads of the household to work there as its loyal member. Presumably, this could cause some nervousness in servants, since certain households were known for their harsh discipline; indeed, some masters and mistresses had the reputation of being violent against their subordinates. In fact, there was a real risk of physical punishment because it was the duty of the head of the household to educate and guide his servants. First they were supposed to be corrected gently but firmly. If this did not help, the head of the household was entitled to take physical disciplinary action. Unnecessary violence, on the other hand, was not acceptable.

However, unkind mistresses or masters also got to hire servants, even though their reputation was often known throughout the neighbourhood. This kind of reputation was sometimes used against them by other servants, who might slander them as a “short-tempered mother or father who could not get their servants to stay in the house”.<sup>17</sup> Fortunately, from the job-seeker’s point of view, there were not enough servants available in Turku during the 1720’s<sup>18</sup>. Naturally, with the supply and demand was out of balance like this, job-seekers had some freedom of choice of employment.

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16 Dokumenter til politiprotokollen, No. 5, 21 April 1770, Provincial Archives of Fyn.

17 Odense Byfoged, Tingbog 19 September 1729, fol: 277–8:1; Dokumenter til tingbogen, No. 24: 21 November 1729, Provincial Archives of Fyn.

18 On the labour shortage and hiring of servants, see Nygård, *Suomen palvelusväki*, pp. 102–3.

After applicants were employed as servants and members of a work place and household, they had to think not only of their own reputation but also of the name of the house they were working in. The head of the household, in theory at least, supervised their honour, and so did the neighbourhood and the local society.

Honour was based on a good reputation. In the eighteenth century, reputation and honour were not only individual but also collective. Honour was something one had to earn, even if it had been inherited in the form of an honourable family name. Thus, honour was something one could lose as a consequence of one's own actions or as a result of rumours or allegations spread in the local society. Nor was wealth alone a guarantee of honour.<sup>19</sup> And there was not just one kind of honour; it varied according to the context.

The honour of servants was like that of the other members of society. Their occupation was honest work, despite their low status. Threats to one's honour and reputation were: firstly dishonesty; secondly malpractice and laziness at work; and thirdly the dereliction of duties vis-à-vis the authorities and missing Holy Communion. In addition, there was one more threat to the honour of women: the Christian idea of sin made the woman responsible for her own sexual relations before marriage. Pre-marital sexual relations were considered a religious sin and therefore a threat to society.<sup>20</sup> Even the suspicion of promiscuity could constitute a serious threat not only to a woman's own honour but also to the honour of the household she was a member of. The master and mistress of a household were responsible for their household's reputation, but the neighbourhood also played a significant unofficial role in supervising its members. These fears of losing one's honour and thereby harming the honour of one's present or future place of work affected servants both when they were seeking jobs and after they had been taken on.

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19 E.g. J.G. Peristiany, 'Introduction in Honour and Shame', in *Honour and Shame. The Values of Mediterranean Society*, Ed. by J.G. Peristiany, Weidenfeld & Nicolson: London, 1966.

20 Generally on the importance of honour, see Gudrun Anderson, *Tingets kvinnor och män. Genus som norm och strategi under 1600- och 1700-tal*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1998; Tyge Krogh, *Oplysningstiden och det magiske. Henrettelser og korporlige straffe i 1700-tallets første halvdel*, Samleren: København, 2000. Jari Eilola, *Rajapainnoilla. Sallitun ja kielletyn määritleminen 1600-luvun jälkipuoliskon noituus- ja taikuustapauksissa*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2003.



## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

For female servants the usual way of moving on from domestic service was to get married. Married servants were not common, because many households did not wish to hire them. Servants were traditionally supposed to live in the house as household members, whereas married couples tended to establish households of their own. To get married one had to be reasonably confident about future income, and men tended to find other jobs before getting married in order to be able to better support their families and households.<sup>21</sup>

For women, a good marriage was worth pursuing for many reasons. Firstly, her status was more secure as a wife than as a single woman; then a wife with children had a higher status than a maid servant, even in the same social group. A wife's status depended on her husband's rank. Thus the marriage market could also offer maid servants a possibility rise into a higher estate, although traditionally only marriage within one's own estate was acceptable. However, there was no law against marriages between persons of different ranks. Usually it was families from the higher estate who opposed such marriages, as was the case in Turku with a scribe called Carl Gustav Rikneck and a maid servant Anna Jakobsdotter. They were working in the same household and fell in love. The couple got engaged, but Carl Gustav's parents did not approve of the relationship. His father was a sergeant, and the family considered themselves of a higher rank than Anna, who was "a lowborn, common servant girl, born into a peasant family in the countryside", as Carl Gustav's mother put it.<sup>22</sup>

The only official way to prevent the marriage plans was to prove in court that Anna was not an honourable woman. Carl Gustav's mother made an effort, declaring in the courtroom in Turku that Anna was luring her only twenty-year-old son away from an honourable Christian life into dissipation and disregard of God's words and attending church. However, there was nothing in Anna's reputation and honour that afforded a reason for stopping the marriage plans. When the parents could not show a blot on her reputation, they threatened to disinherit their son if he married the servant girl. Carl Gustav said that nothing could part him from her, and that he wanted to live and die with her (Sw: "[...] kan ingalunda bringa sitt sinne ifrån henne utan will lefva och dö med henne"). Anna and Carl Gustav got married in Turku three years later.<sup>23</sup>

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21 Male servants in Turku seldom got married: Turun suomalaisen seurakunnan Historiakirjat, vihittyjen luettelo 1700–1750. Turku Finnish Parish, wedded (male servants) 1700–1750. The total number of married male servants was 36.

22 TKO 5 April 1736: 291–5, National Archives of Finland.

23 TKO 5 April 1736: 291–5, National Archives of Finland; The Finnish Parish of Turku, married, 29 April 1739, The parish register and church records also available The Genealogical

Another way of bettering oneself, and one that offered perhaps the most concrete hope for both the present and the future was to be a good servant and in that way earn one's living and even save some money. Obviously, a hardworking and reliable servant found favour with the master, and it was useful to have good relations with the head of the household. In addition, a reputation as a good worker and someone who got on well with one's co-workers very probably made one's daily life easier. However, things did not always go smoothly, and there were conflicts.

## STRATEGIES TO COMBAT THE WORST

There were two options to choose from when the worst happened in servants' lives. They could fight back verbally or physically, or submit and put up with the situation. Submission and putting up with the situation was sometimes the only choice. This was the case with a butcher's servant in Turku in 1741. He had completely ruined his career as a servant. He had stolen some money and neglected to declare some cattle to the customs authorities. The claims for damages were so high that he probably could not pay them. This meant the end of his domestic service career, and his only alternatives were enlistment in the army and penal servitude.<sup>24</sup> There was little to defend in this case, since the acts of servant were clearly criminal.

Fighting back and aggressive self-defence in words or deeds against the head of the household demanded real strength of will in a servant as well as certainty about the validity of his or her case. Usually court cases in which servants demanded their rights were about unpaid wages. These cases generally ended up with the defendant agreeing to pay. Although the law stipulated many obligations for servants, it also guaranteed their right to receive due payment for the work they did.

Sometimes the relationship between servant and master or mistress could be conflictual. In such a case, the servant could either submit or defend him- or herself. One Katrina Henrikdotter worked in the house of a military judge (Sw: *auditeur*) called Nils Tammelin in Turku. She had heard from Tammelin's former maid servant that the lady of the house had accused a servant of stealing a silver spoon and demanded that the servant replace it. However, the spoon was later found.

Katrina was not going to be treated the same way. When her mistress asked her on Easter Sunday to put a salted fish to soak in water for the midday meal, she

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Society of Finland online from at <http://www.genealogia.fi/hiski?en>  
24 TKO, 18 April 1741: 408–13, National Archives of Finland.

replied that the devil might do it, since she ought to be free from all work on an Easter Sunday. This infuriated her mistress, and she took the water and poured it over Katrina, who then ran away out of the house through the gate and into the street. Katrina did not return until the evening, when she came to collect her belongings. The following day she said that she wanted to quit her work. Her mistress objected and added that on top of all the trouble she had caused she should replace a missing silver spoon. Katrina replied that it had happened before in the very same house that a missing spoon was found again. Madame Tammelin got furious, and Katrina ran out and locked herself in the cowshed. Her mistress called a servant called Fredrik to help her get the disobedient maid out. With his help they got the door open, and Katrina's mistress hit her with a dung shovel. Katrina cried out that the devil take a person who hit like that and struck her mistress back.<sup>25</sup>

In Katrina's case, she had defended herself against violence which was "unnecessarily brutal" as her fellow servants testified in court. However, she had infringed the hierarchical relationship between mistress and servant. According to the law, she should have thought about her actions and kept her mouth shut. On the other hand, the lady of the house had overreacted by pouring water over her and hitting her with a shovel. What is interesting here is that a maid servant, knowing the consequences, decided not to play the humble servant and submit to her mistress's temper but to fight back knowing that she would most likely lose her job. This might also possibly have been her way of getting out of employment in Tammelin's house even at the risk remaining of jobless.

Anna Pedersdatter, who worked in the household of a tobacconist called Pashau in Odense, was neither an ideal servant nor the kind of person to meekly submit; indeed, she was determined not to be exploited. She was asked to help the tobacconist's son and his male servant to bag some tobacco for sale. They were working when the mistress of the house called Anna to come inside the house and do her duty, which was cooking. Anna thought she could not be in two places at the same time and continued to help the men. Then another maid servant was sent to get her back in the kitchen, where Madame Pashau angrily asked her what she was doing with the men when the kitchen was her responsibility. Anna cursed her mistress, who tried to hit her with a bundle of keys. Anna threatened her with a misfortune if she dared to touch her. The mistress boxed Anna's ears, and Anna punched her on the nose. Madame Pashau called out, crying to her husband, who met Anna in the yard. He hit her first, but Anna quickly punched his nose too. This was a shock for Pashau, who shouted furiously "Wasn't it a servant girl who dared to hit me even before I hit her?" (*war det icke een pige hun torde understaae*

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25 TKO 1 April 1741: 314–323, National Archives of Finland.

*sig at slaae mig förend ieg slog hende*). After this Anna was thrashed by her master and mistress. She tried to escape into the street, but they caught her again and continued beating her until some peasant in the street asked them to stop saying, "Father, let the servant girl be." (*fader lade pigen were*)<sup>26</sup> In the court the both parties were given fines.<sup>27</sup>

If the conflict was not between servant and master but between a servant and a person outside the household, the servant could get help from his or her employer, former employers and other members of his or her social network. Hilleborg Dorothea Nielsdatter had worked in a couple of houses in Odense and was known as a hardworking and loyal servant. She and a certain town watchman named Christian Henrik Løye went together, and their friends and acquaintances considered them as a couple who were getting married in the not too distant future. The fact that they already had two children was accepted in the neighbourhood, but the authorities summoned Hilleborg to court to explain her immoral life. However, it was evident in the court, that Hilleborg had a good reputation despite her illegitimate children. Two honourable burghers testified that she was a respectable and good servant, and her current employer, a master painter called Getreuer, said that he knew about the children but he could not complain about her work.<sup>28</sup>

A servant called Anders Jöransson got also his master's support in court in a case concerning Lieutenant Abraham Hertman's violence against him. Antti was doing his duties as ordered by his master, a burgher called Kissala, when Hertman came in the house and ordered him to join the town guard for that night. However, Jöransson was not ready to go, since he had to finish his tasks and in addition he thought there was no pressing need to go, since he had been out as a guard earlier and done the agreed hours. The Lieutenant struck him and called him lazy. This was a mistake on the Lieutenant's part, since only the head of the household was entitled to punish servants. The incident was even more serious from Kissala's point of view, since it took place inside his house. Presumably, he would have

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26 Odense Byfoged, Dokumenter til tingbogen, No. 38: 19 January 1733, Provincial Archives of Fyn. As a result of the fight Anna left the house and the both parties were ordered to make a donation to the poor relief fund.

27 It is noteworthy that in both Katrina's and Anna's cases, the servants only got fined. According to the laws of Sweden and Denmark a servant was the judicial child of her or his master and mistress. Going against one's parents was a crime, and the criminal could be sentenced to death for it, although the sentence was often commuted to corporal punishment. E.g. Nygård, *Suomen palvelusväki*, pp. 111–2 and a case of a disobedient male servant in Odense: Odense byfoged, Tingbog, 6 August 1736, 547:1–548:1; Dokumenter til tingbogen 1736: I, No. 57, Provincial Archives of Fyn.

28 Odense byfoged, Tingbog, 5 December 1729, fol. 337:1–338:2, Provincial Archives of Fyn.

defended his servant in any case, but the fact that someone had dared to treat his servant as if he had the right to make decisions in the house assured his support for Anders Jöransson.<sup>29</sup>

If a servant's situation in the house became unbearable, one solution was to leave. This could take place legally or illegally. The legal way was for the servant to tell the head of the household about his or her plans to leave the house four to eight weeks in advance and then find a new house or other work.<sup>30</sup> The illegal option was to run away. Running away from the house was the last resort of servants when staying was completely out of the question. Then servants were usually fleeing from a violent master or a mistress or circumstances that were otherwise unbearable. Sometimes the servant's own situation made a risky getaway necessary.

Generally, runaway cases were rare; for instance, in Turku there were only four runaway cases between the 1720 and 1730. Two maid servants ran away from their violent masters, and one left because she was pregnant. One maid servant ran away while her mistress was absent and the journeyman in the house had punished her after drinking her mistress's spirits and pilfering food.<sup>31</sup> In Odense there were two runaway cases between 1720 and 1770, and they were similar to those in Turku: maid servants left their work out of fear of violence.<sup>32</sup> In none of these cases, did the servant girls return their workplaces, and they all had to pay compensation. Usually the only way to get out of a hard or troublesome household was to find and pay for a replacement. In cases where servants gave notice, they had to have a place to go to after quitting their jobs, since a person without a job or a master was considered to be a vagabond, who did not have a permit to stay in town.

Fighting back verbally and physically against the master and mistress and running away were probably not planned strategies but impulsive actions. Moreover, they were extreme exceptions in everyday life. Nevertheless, these actions reflect the attitude of servants who were not willing to submit to a situation they thought to be unfair. These extreme reactions took place in circumstances which arguably were the most feared situations in servants' lives: a conflict within the household. Disobedience was a way of expressing one's opinion, and perhaps

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29 TKO 23 July 1726: 736, National Archives of Finland.

30 Nygård, *Suomen palvelusväki*, p. 101.

31 Maria Mattsdotter TKO 31 March 1733: 47–51, 5 February 1733: 63–9, 12 February 1733: 85–8; Liisa TKO 13.3.1736:206–210; Anna Johansdotter TKO 14.12.1734: 891–6 and Liisa Johansdotter TKO 5 September 1737: 933–5, 14 September 1737: 952–7, 17 September 1737: 966–8, National Archives of Finland.

32 Dokumenter til tingbogen 1726: I, No: 34 28 January 1726 (Kirsten Andersdatter) and Dokumenter til tingbogen 1726: II No. 125, 9 September 1726 and Dokumenter til tingbogen 1727: I, No. 8, 4 November 1726, 25 November 1726, 9 December 1726 (Engel Katrine Nielsdatter), Provincial Archives of Fyn.

also a way out of the situation. Sometimes, in such cases, it was also a way out of domestic service altogether, at least temporarily.

Quite the opposite are cases where servants were supported in court by their masters and mistresses. These are the cases where somebody or something was violating the honour and status of the household by mistreating the servant. Thus, it was crucial for servants to have a good relationship with their employers in order to get the help in court and deal with the crisis.

## OPPORTUNITY OR COMPULSION?

Domestic service was probably the only choice for many young people who were looking for work in the eighteenth century. It can be argued that it was not necessarily seen as a constraint by people of that time, since one had to keep body and soul together in any case, and to do this it was necessary to work. As for the low social status attached to domestic service, it should be noted that social hierarchies were an inseparable part of the early modern society. Most likely, the problem did not even occur in the minds of early modern people, since social inequality was regarded as a matter of course. Most people were always subordinate to somebody else: even the nobles had the king over them and, generally, all people were subordinate to God.

What then were the obligations of domestic servants or candidate servants? If one could not pay one's taxes, the only possibility was to get a master who would pay it as a part of the wages. As the rhetoric of the time expressed it, all people should benefit the king and God by working. Where were there any other options apart from domestic service? Men could, of course, choose to join the army. Military service also threatened those men who failed to find employment as servants. For women who could not find a house to work in, the feared option was forced labour in the spinning house. The other alternative to domestic service was to sink into dishonour on the margins of the society, into a criminal or semi-criminal world. In this sense, obtaining employment as a servant can be seen as an obligation, but on the other hand it was not a poor alternative; on the contrary, domestic service was honourable work, and it gave one a low but official status in society.

Once one entered domestic service, there were numerous obligations that could not be questioned. Servants had to obey their masters, and their status was always the lowest in the household. However, they had their ways of coping with the low status. Servants had all kinds of possibilities to use the time of domestic service for their own benefit. In fact, they had all the same opportunities as other people in their social group. Domestic service as such did not disadvantage them as decent, honourable people. Rather, the work provided them with a chance to learn both

general and specific working skills in a household and the trade practised in it. The period of domestic service can be considered as a time of learning a future trade, and naturally also as part of the education for life. Working as a servant could also provide a future occupation for men, for instance as coachmen or general workers, and for women as wives and mistresses of the household.

Probably one of the most important advantages provided by servants' work was the good opportunities it offered for finding a spouse. Both of the towns studied here, Turku and Odense, attracted young people with their job opportunities. Thus the marriage market in them was also better than in the smaller towns and villages. Servants might meet fellow servants in the same house, but they also met servants and other people of their own age in the neighbourhood and in town when running errands and taking care of their other responsibilities.

Getting married was the most common reason for servants, especially women, to quit domestic work. Hence, married servants were not common. Men usually had to find other work before marriage, because a servant's wages were not enough to support a family. Arguably, the other reason why servants were usually unmarried is connected with the idea of the household. There could only be one master and mistress in a household, and they were married. If a master was not married, usually there was a female relative or a hired housekeeper to take care of the household affairs but she was not in a same position officially as a wedded wife and mistress of a house. Since servants were supposed to live in the households where they were working, and a married couple was supposed to establish their own household, the situation of being both married and a servant at the same time was a rather complicated one.

For most servants the period of domestic service was only one phase in their lives. Some could even benefit from it. For others, working as a servant was a calamity. The factors influencing this were connected to the servants' personal relations, behaviour, honour and reputation, as well as the internal relationships within the households where they worked, i.e. the relation between them and their masters and mistresses. Moreover, the ways in which servants acted were significant. The set of social norms and the social networks of servants and their masters and mistresses defined the limits of their freedom to act, but they also provided them with opportunities to go up in the world.

PART III  
PRACTICAL POLITICS





# TRADITION AND MEMORY IN SHAPING THE POLITICAL CULTURE

## Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Urban Societies in the Swedish Realm

*Piia Einonen*

### INTRODUCTION

The town clock in the tower of the courthouse set the pace for urban life. Timekeepers were not common in ordinary households in the late seventeenth century, so everyday life had its traditional course in accordance with the rhythm of the day, season, ecclesiastical year and year of service. The bells called the city guards to their duty in the evenings and released them in the mornings, and the town court was also convened by the ringing of bells. Like the peasants, the burghers too were tied to the calendar by their trade because of the navigation season and fairs, and the exact time did not play such an essential role. When a sea voyage from Turku (Sw. Åbo) to Tallinn lasted twelve days at best, merchants needed to make their long-term commercial plans a couple of years in advance. Information, which was essential to tradesmen, also moved slowly and compelled the merchants to adjust their trading to this pace.<sup>1</sup> Thus burghers experienced the

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1 On time, trade, information and burghers see for example Gabriel Lagus, *Ur Wiborgs historia*, N. A. Zilliacus' Tryckeri: Wiborg, 1893, pp. 148, 158; Armas Luukko, *Vaasan historia*, Vol. 1: 1606–1721, Vaasan kaupunki: Vaasa, 1971, p. 406; Lars Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater. Omvandlingen av Stockholms stadsförvaltning 1599–1637*, Stockholmia förlag: Stockholm, 1988, pp. 43–46; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic. Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England*, Penguin Books: London, 1991 (1971), pp. 742–745; Hannu Salmi, “*Atoomipommilla kuuhunt!*” *Tekniikan mentaalihistoriaa*, Edita:

present moment concretely as part of a continuous chain of years and generations, in which everyday life was interrupted only by events that stirred up people's emotions, like bloody disputes of succession or catastrophes sent by God.<sup>2</sup>

In the social culture, there existed a shared system of meanings, a cultural model on the basis of which individuals were able to act in society. As a part of their continuous interaction with the surrounding reality, they interpreted and modified their conceptions of the real world to control their lives and environment.

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Helsinki 1996, pp. 23–42; Mika Kallioinen, 'Varhainen ulkomaankauppa ja liiketoiminnan kustannukset', in *Uusi institutionaalinen taloushistoria. Jobdanto tutkimukseen*, Ed. by Juha-Antti Lamberg and Jari Ojala, Atena: Jyväskylä, 1997, p. 53; Jari Ojala, *Tehokasta liiketoimintaa Pohjanmaan pikkukaupungeissa. Purjemerenkulun kannattavuus ja tuottavuus 1700–1800-luvulla*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1999, pp. 133–135, 173–175, 226; Marko Lamberg, *Dannemännens i stadens råd. Rådmanskretsen i nordiska köpstäder under senmedeltiden*, Stockholmia förlag: Stockholm, 2001, esp. pp. 206–211; Petri Karonen, *Patruunat ja poliitikot. Yritysohjatijat taloudellisina ja poliittisina toimijoina Suomessa 1600–1920*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2004, pp. 152–154; John J. McCusker, 'The Demise of Distance: The Business Press and the Origins of the Information Revolution in the Early Modern Atlantic World', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 110, No. 2, 2005, pp. 295–321; Piia Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat. Tukholman porvaristo vallan käyttäjänä ja vallankäytön kohteena n. 1592–1644*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2005, esp. pp. 76–92, 223–224; cf. Mika Kallioinen, *Kauppias, kaupunki, kruunu. Turun porvareijhteisö ja talouden organisaatio varhaiskeskiajalta 1570-luvulle*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2000, p. 203, 238–239; Seija-Riitta Laakso, *Across the Oceans. Development of Overseas Business Information Transmission, 1815–1875*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2007, esp. pp. 9–10, 12, 21, 25 (concerning the nineteenth century); see also David M. Engel, 'Law, Time and Community', *Law & Society Review*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1987, pp. 610–611 (also concerning the nineteenth century).

- 2 Even if historians of the time did interpret the past, historiography and everyday uses of concepts concerning the past have different paradigms. Historiography has an informative and sometimes even an entertaining function, as in historical storytelling. In this article, the focus is on the ways in which burghers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries used references to the past in their argumentation. Therefore, historiography is omitted. See for example Warren I. Susman, 'History and the American Intellectual: Uses of a Usable Past', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Part 2: Supplement, 1964, pp. 243–263; Paul Connerton, *How societies remember*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1989, pp. 13–21; Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, Transl. by Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman, Columbia University Press: New York, 1992, esp. pp. 101–102, 105–106, 129; Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*. Polity Press: Cambridge, 1997, pp. 43–44; Kustaa H. J. Vilkkuna, *Viha. Perikato, katkeruus ja kertomus isostavihasta*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2005, pp. 275–277; Derek Fewster, *Visions of Past Glory. Nationalism and the Construction of Early Finnish History*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2006. See also Nils Erik Villstrand, 'Stormaktstidens politiska kultur', in *Signums svenska kulturhistoria: Stormaktstiden*, Ed. by Jakob Christensson, Signum: Lund, 2005, pp. 55–7; Mirkka Lapalainen, *Suku, valta, suurvalta. Creutzit 1600-luvun Ruotsissa ja Suomessa*, WSOY: Helsinki, 2005, p. 80 (on genealogical interests in the seventeenth century).

Individual and communal experiences of this interaction were organized by a shared culture, and they created a foundation upon which action became meaningful. These shared and intertwined values, ideals and memories formed a complex, which has often been described with terms like collective memory or social memory.<sup>3</sup>

Modes of action were crucially tied up with time and space. The burghers' understanding of the present moment was shaped by memories, so experiences of earlier events, the Crown's actions and their ancestors' reactions to the changing demands of their rulers constituted the empirical limits of their attempts to assert their rights.<sup>4</sup> In this article I will study how traditionalism played an essential role in early modern society in general and in the urban political culture in particular. The past was present in everyday life and politics, and also in institutional and organisational structures. The main question is: How was the past used to justify different political aims? Thus it is not so important what was remembered, or how things were recalled, but when and why the rhetoric of the past was used. It is not relevant whether the past events were recalled truthfully or not, because when memories were used as sources of political arguments, their power was based on their role as parts of the collective memory of the society.<sup>5</sup>

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- 3 Connerton, *How societies remember*, esp. pp. 1–6, 31; James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory. New perspectives on the past*, Blackwell: Oxford, 1992, pp. X–XI, 24, 26; Chris Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance among the Medieval Peasantry', *Past and Present*, No. 160, 1998, p. 11–12; Jari Eilola, *Rajajainnoilla, Sallitun ja kielletyn määrittelemisen 1600-luvun jälkipuoliskon noituus- ja taikuustapauksissa*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2003, p. 288; Heli Valtonen, *Minäkuvat, arvot ja mentaliteetit, Tutkimus 1900-luvun alussa syntyneiden toimihenkilönaisten omaelämäkertoista*, University of Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä, 2004, pp. 27–28, 82–84; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, p. 271.
- 4 On the significance of the past for the present and the future, see for example Susman, 'History and the American Intellectual', p. 255; Le Goff, *History and Memory*, p. 9; F. R. Ankersmit: 'The Sublime Dissociation of the Past: Or How to Be(come) What One Is No Longer', *History and Theory*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2001, p. 297; Villstrand, 'Stormakstidens politiska kultur', pp. 100–101; Robert F. Jansen, 'Resurrection and Appropriation: Reputational Trajectories, Memory Work, and the Political Use of Historical Figures', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 112, No. 4, 2007, pp. 959, 996–997.
- 5 Vilkkuna, *Viba*, p. 21; see also Michael Herzfeld, 'Segmentation and politics in the European nation-state: making sense of political events', in *Other Histories*, Ed. by Kirsten Hastrup, Routledge: London and New York, 1992, p. 79; Le Goff, *History and Memory*, pp. 67–68; Antoon A. Van den Braembussche, 'History and Memory. Some comments on recent developments', in *Jäljillä. Kirjoituksia historian ongelmista*, Vol. 1, Ed. by Pauli Kettunen, Auli Kultanen and Timo Soikkanen, Department of Political History and Kirja-Aurora: Turku, 2000, p. 76. Even the Crown frequently used arguments reminding the subjects of past events – often as warning examples (see for example Villstrand, 'Stormakstidens politiska kultur', p. 86). On the concept of collective memory, see Le Goff, *History and Memory*, pp. 94–99.

This study concentrates on the Swedish capital city, Stockholm. It is compared with an important mercantile and tar-exporting city in the Finnish part of the Swedish realm: Vyborg ( Fi. Viipuri, Sw. Viborg). Vyborg was a significant staple town, and in the eastern part of the realm it was the second biggest city after Turku. By studying and comparing these two cities, a broad picture of the meaning of traditionalism and social memory in seventeenth-century urban communities and of the life-coping strategies of individuals and different kinds of groups can be reached. Despite the chronological framework, the results of this research can also be generalised widely to apply to early modern cities as a whole.

When urban political culture is examined, it is essential to distinguish two levels of interaction: the first level was the interaction between the city council and the burghers; the second level the interplay between the city and the Crown. The speech and modes of action used inside the urban community differed from those used with the Crown and the central government. Naturally, interaction with the Crown was determined by a variety of formal and traditional procedures, but the personal characters of the rulers and the state of the kingdom also determined the town's capacity for action. To simplify, one can distinguish a development of a diminishing scope for action by the towns: when the ruler's status and the central government generally strengthened, the procedures available to the towns decreased.

## PRESERVING MEMORIES

Images of the past did (and still do) guide future action, and they were (and are) used to legitimise both the present and the future. People shared a world view, which was culturally constructed by their experiences, beliefs and knowledge of the past.<sup>6</sup> There were different grades of collectively shared memories. Natural phenomena and catastrophes, which were regarded as acts of God, halted the normal course of life and could therefore be later remembered as characterising a certain period.<sup>7</sup> Kings and their triumphs on the battlefield were firmly established in the collective memory of a nation, but rulers' political achievements could also

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6 Susman, 'History and the American Intellectual', pp. 244, 255; Vilkkuna, *Viha*, p. 28; Herzfeld, 'Segmentation and politics in the European nation-state', pp. 62, 78; see also Engel, 'Law, Time and Community', p. 606.

7 Börje Harnesk, 'Konsten att klaga, konsten att kräva. Kronan och bönderna på 1500- och 1600-talen', in *Maktens skiftande skepnader. Studier i makt, legitimitet och inflytande i det tidigmoderna Sverige*, Ed. by Börje Harnesk, Department of History at the University of Umeå: Umeå, 2003, pp. 61–62; Vilkkuna, *Viha*, for example pp. 38, 318–319.

be epochal; an example would be Gustavus Vasa and his heroic uprising against the Kalmar Union and later his administrative and political reforms.<sup>8</sup> While nationwide events were likely to remain in society's collective memory, it did not mean that local events were somehow less important. On the contrary, regional incidents could more easily be associated with known places and persons, and their familiarity strengthened the experience and hence also the memory. It is obvious that memories were crucially shaped by the ways in which the events were experienced; if the experiences were especially traumatic, joyful or otherwise moving, they left traces as individual memories. And if those feelings were commonly shared, they could become firmly established as social memories and part of the community's historical narrative. The individuals' roles in the course of the events and the place they accorded themselves in the narrative were also of central importance.<sup>9</sup>

When early modern individuals and communities are studied, it is obvious that the memories they collectively shared can be elucidated only indirectly – by occasional historical documents and court records. The main sources of this article are court records from seventeenth-century Stockholm.<sup>10</sup> In every town, various clerks spent their days writing down administrative details, and especially town clerks kept a precise record of events, as they wrote down all cases dealt with in the courthouse in the court records. Thus the preservation of memories was to some extent institutionalised. The court records were originally written up as memoranda in notebooks (Sw. *tänkeböcker*) for the city court, so that officials could later consult old cases if necessary, but later the Court of Appeal revised the records in order to control the judiciary. Thus several versions of the court record books existed. Reference was most often needed in disputes concerning financial settlements, real estate and trade. The clerks also documented various events which required handling in court, for example riots and disturbances. So the clerks wrote down a narrative of the course of events in the manner that it manifested itself

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8 For example Duke Charles to Stockholm 10 April 1598 (the burgomasters and magistrates had probably referred to Gustavus Vasa); Vyborg's complaint 3 December 1622 and (undated) letters to the Queen; see also K. E. F. Ignatius, 'Eräs Barthold Lacmanin kirje kuningas Kaarle X Kustaalle', in *Historiallinen arkisto* 7, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1881, p. 100; Herzfeld, 'Segmentation and politics in the European nation-state', p. 75; see also Le Goff, *History and Memory*, p. 10; Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, pp. 43–59; Alex Tuckness, 'Discourses of Resistance in the American Revolution', *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 64, No. 4, 2003, p. 555.

9 Braembussche, 'History and Memory', pp. 77, 79; Vilkkuna, *Viha*, pp. 18, 21–22, see also pp. 280–281, 286; cf. Connerton, *How societies remember*, pp. 21–25; Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, p. 48, 88, 113.

10 The court record books of Stockholm are published up to 1634 and the publishing continues.

in the eyes of burgomasters and magistrates. Probably the court records did not influence the collective memory, but the clerks' unconscious selection of words and events creates an accessible source of history for later generations. In any case, the court record books represent the burgomasters' and magistrates' comprehension of events and probably also manifest this group's collective memory concerning certain happenings.<sup>11</sup>

The burghers' interests and the town court in its role as the guardian of the town clashed from time to time, so the question is: did these groups also have different memories of the same events? Especially conflicts – like riots and other events experienced as crises – that were tearing the town apart most likely also assumed different forms in the collective memories of the two groups.

The town clerk's role was important: he formulated narratives for future generations, so in a way he can be seen as the “creator” and maintainer of the collective memory. The city clerk belonged to the respectable stratum of burgomasters and magistrates, in fact as an official he ranked higher than the ordinary magistrates. The city court's image of its responsibilities was included in its official ethos, which was tightly linked to laws, customs and inherited values. The significance of the notebooks was illustrated in 1630, when the members of the city court decided to return to an old governmental practice of their forefathers, which could be found in the court records (“[...] efter wårt förfaders plägesed dän wahna som man af Tänkeböckerne finner [...]”).<sup>12</sup>

The court records do not represent collective memory as such, but traces of social memory can be found in them. The urban community was diverse and both economically and socially fragmented – even in middle-sized towns. Just as there was no citizen body that included all the townspeople, so there was no common and undivided collective memory that was shared by everybody. Even if the memories and narratives of some events can be assumed to have been socially shared, the only real references to memories are to be found in the respect for the “old laws and customs”, in looking back at earlier times as golden eras and past rulers as

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11 Lamberg, *Dannemännen i stadens råd*, pp. 23–24; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 29–37; Vilkkuna, *Viha*, pp. 20–21, see also pp. 25–27; cf. Connerton, *How societies remember*, p. 36–37; Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, p. IX; Braembussche, ‘History and Memory’, p. 82; Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, pp. 44, 47; Steve Hindle, ‘A sense of a place? Becoming and belonging in the rural parish, 1550–1650’, in *Communities in Early Modern England. Networks, Place, Rhetoric*, Ed. by Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington, Manchester University Press: Manchester and New York, 2000, p. 109; Eilola, *Rajajinnoilla*, pp. 43–44.

12 Stockholm Town Court 23 June 1630, see also 25 May 1601 (p. 51); Paul Griffiths, ‘Secrecy and Authority in Late Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century London’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 1997, p. 932–933.

rightful and glorious<sup>13</sup>, and in the recollection of town's own history in defending its rights and interests at that time. The court records mostly include judgments and matters of everyday administration, whereas collectively remembered phenomena were more common and more significant in their nature. However, the notebooks are the only source that enables us to elucidate the values and meanings attached to concepts concerning the past by ordinary burghers.

Concepts were stratified expressions filled with hidden significances and values. Different concepts also maintained and carried over the historical meanings once embedded in them. A good example of such a concept is the Council of Elders, "de 48 äldsta" in Swedish. This administrative organ dated back to the Middle Ages and was originally established as a representative body for the burghers. Through the Council of Elders they could make their voice heard in matters concerning town government and their role as tax payers. In the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century this council was in reality more of an instrumental tool for the town court: the Council of Elders was easy to deal with, and it consisted of burghers with similar interests to those of the burgomasters and magistrates. Although craftsmen were represented in the Council of Elders, their presence was not required, and a deficient council could act as a mouthpiece for the burghers as a whole.<sup>14</sup> Though the Council of Elders had lost its influence as the central government grew in power, it nevertheless kept its traditional and legal status as a representative and authoritative political organ of the burghers of Stockholm.

Another way in which urban memories was passed on was in street names. In Vyborg, for example, the old monastery continued to exist in several street names, but the immense explosion that happened in Vyborg Castle in the late Middle Ages failed to register its importance, at least if measured by the names of the streets. This has been explained with memories: the monastery had an uncontested historical existence, but the castle explosion was a legend – albeit a lasting one, since it still exists – and the legend had not rooted itself in the collective memory of the society in the way that the historical reality had. Most street names were strictly connected with local history.<sup>15</sup>

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13 See also Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, p. 109.

14 Carl-Fredrik Corin, *Själustyre och kunglig maktpolitik inom Stockholms stadsförvaltning 1668–1697*, Stockholms kommunalförvaltning: Stockholm, 1958, pp. 30–32; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 109–106.

15 Lagus, *Ur Wiborgs historia*, pp. 104–105; see also Gunilla Harling-Kranck, 'Gatunamnen avspeglar vår historia', *Nordisk tidskrift för vetenskap, konst och industri*, Vol. 68, No. 2, 1992, pp. 181–187.



## TRADITIONALISM IN THE ESTATES

The society of the Estates was highly hierarchical and regulated. It was seen to be legitimated by an ancient order that determined different tasks and rights for the separate estates. Especially the “old” nobility cherished the idea of society as an unchangeable and harmonious entity. It is symptomatic that the most important and influential noble families were identified with the attribute “old”, which distinguished them from newcomers and upstarts. The status of the “old” nobility relied heavily on prestige, which, in turn, went hand in hand with the age of the families. The nobility was eager to proclaim the ideal of an unchanging and everlasting order in society, which was actually in the grip of rapid change. They defended their families’ supremacy with historical and ideological, more or less mythical, arguments.<sup>16</sup>

Emphasizing the importance of family and ancestors was one of the most essential features of the noble culture. Genealogical manifestations occupied a central role, for example, in funerals; in funeral sermons, the deceased’s descent from “ancient” noble families was described, and his/her ancestors many generations back were named. His/her heroic acts and merits were also enumerated. Funeral sermons were meant to influence future generations, and, like other rituals, they were instrumental in inculcating the social boundaries in the collective memory. So the past – with heroic ancestors and a noble genealogy – was used to inculcate future generations with a knowledge of their role as members of an historically important lineage. This strategy of transmitting historical knowledge to coming generations was a logical consequence of the nobility’s practice of anchoring their identity in the past.<sup>17</sup>

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16 Petri Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta. Ruotsi ja Suomi 1521–1809*, WSOY: Porvoo, 1999, p. 165; Mirkka Lappalainen, *Suku, valta, suurvalta*, pp. 47–51 (on different concepts and groupings within the nobility see pp. 14, 30–34, 62); Peter Englund, *Det hotade huset. Adliga föreställningar om sambället under stormaktstiden*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Atlantis: Stockholm, 1994 (1989), pp. 26–33. See also, for example, Jari Ojala, ‘Patriarkan kuolema’, in *Arjen valta. Suomalaisen yhteiskunnan patriarkaalista järjestyksestä myöhäiskeskiajalta teollistumisen kynnykselle (v. 1450–1860)*, Ed. by Piia Einonen & Petri Karonen, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2002 concerning “old” bourgeois families.

17 Englund, *Det hotade huset*, esp. pp. 108–10; Hindle, ‘A sense of a place’, p. 109; Lappalainen, *Suku, valta, suurvalta*, 337; see also Anu Lahtinen, *Sopeutuvat, neuvottelevat, kapinalliset. Naiset toimijoina Flemingin sukupiirissä 1470–1620*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2007, pp. 21, 108; Le Goff, *History and Memory*, pp. 144–145, see also pp. 85–86. Naturally, the lower estates also valued their collective traditions and ancestors and strove to establish continuity between existing and past generations. This was reflected, for example, in naming practices (cf. Lamberg, *Dannemännen i stadens råd*, pp. 115–121 concerning the burghers).

The clergy was an essential tool in controlling the people and mediating between local communities and the Crown, and the clergy were often confronted with the traditional customs of local societies.<sup>18</sup> The church has often been seen as a bastion of traditionalism, although it underwent a major transformation from Catholicism to Lutheranism in the Reformation during the first half of the sixteenth century. The old customs of the Catholic period were nevertheless deeply rooted and co-existed with the new religion for decades and even centuries. The Reformation held no brief for the past, which it saw as a return to Catholicism, and thus burdened with extraordinary and wrong beliefs.<sup>19</sup> Tradition and continuity played essential roles in the election of clergymen, in which the parish was governed by medieval conventions. “Good, old Christian customs” also guided the interaction between the members of the congregation and the shepherd of the fold.<sup>20</sup> The life strategies of some families included the idea that some of the sons were destined for the clergy and raised with their future role in mind.<sup>21</sup>

Burghers were a heterogeneous group of merchants, craftsmen and tradesmen working in towns of various sizes: the merchants of Stockholm had a few things in common with a shoemaker in Vaasa working in his small workshop. The burghers have often been represented as the purveyors of novel ideas and lateral thinking, but the change was slow, and most merchants could still be described as traditionalists. For example, the Hanseatic League was characterised by a conservative spirit. The aim was to maintain existing privileges and trade relations instead of trying to find new and innovative potential profit. Preserving the existing situation was reasonable for the merchants, because they were benefiting from the system.<sup>22</sup> The values of the burghers were in many ways convergent with those of the peasants, even if urban merchants extended their experiential environment beyond the limits of the peasant world. During the period when Sweden was a great power, a linear conception of time began to supplant the traditional, cyclical view, along with a more individual idea of man. The merchants were in the lead in advancing this process.<sup>23</sup>

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18 Gunnar Suolahti, *Suomen papisto 1600- ja 1700-luvulla*, WSOY: Porvoo, 1919, pp. 61–62, 67; Englund, *Det hotade buset*, pp. 30–31; Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta*, pp. 168–169, 243–248; see also Christopher Marsh, “Common Prayer” in England 1560–1640: The View from the Pew’, *Past and Present* No. 171, 2001, p. 67.

19 Suolahti, *Suomen papisto*, pp. 135–142, 149–152, 167–169; cf. Le Goff, *History and Memory*, p. 9, 68–73, 142–144.

20 Suolahti, *Suomen papisto*, pp. 53–57, 68–69, 73–74, 95, 98; Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta*, p. 56; Peter Lindström, *Prästval och politisk kultur 1650–1800*, University of Umeå: Umeå, 2003, pp. 41–43, 48, see also p. 83.

21 Suolahti, *Suomen papisto*, pp. 262–263.

22 Kallioinen, *Kauppias, kaupunki, kruunu*, p. 203; Karonen, *Patruunat ja poliitikot*, pp. 142–145, 152–153.

23 Karonen, *Patruunat ja poliitikot*, pp. 152–153.

Early modern people, especially the peasants, have often been described as traditionalists. Their mentality was characterized by conservatism<sup>24</sup> and respect for traditions, but these qualities must not be mistaken for idleness or backwardness. The actions and arguments used by the peasants in resisting the demands of the Crown have often been seen as reactionary, but the rhythm of life and conditions in the countryside made the conservative attitude expedient. Any reforms were a threat to the desired balance, and the economic measures of the Crown constituted such a menace. Thus, even if the rhetoric was traditionalist, it could be used for revolutionary ends.<sup>25</sup> The ideal of stability was connected with the general idea of a static order of things, which was widely held to in an early modern society. The scheme of things was ordained by God, so it not only represented “the highest good” but was also unchangeable.<sup>26</sup> Stability was the ideal, because it was thought that a stable society was most likely to provide a good and secure life.

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24 In this context conservatism and traditionalism are used almost as synonyms, but it must be remembered, that a clear distinction between these two terms is usually necessary. Conservatism has even been defined as “becoming conscious of tradition” (Ankersmit. ‘The Sublime Dissociation of the Past’, p. 303).

25 On “traditionalism” see for example Suolahti, *Suomen papisto*, p. 67; Nils Ahnlund, *Gustav Adolf den store*, 2nd edition, Stockholm, 1932, p. 237; Kerstin Strömberg-Back, *Lagen rätten läran. Politisk och kyrklig idédebatt i Sverige under Johan III:s tid*, Gleerup. Lund, 1963, p. 39; John Pocock, ‘England’, in *National Consciousness, History and Political Culture in Early-Modern Europe*, Ed. by Orest Ranum, Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore (Md.), 1975, pp. 67, 69, 105–106; Eva Österberg, ‘Bönder och centralmakt i det tidigmoderna Sverige. Konflikt – kompromiss – politisk kultur’, *Scandia*, Vol. 55, No. 1, 1989, p. 90; Englund, *Det hotade huset*, pp. 103–108; Kimmo Katajala, *Nälkäkapina. Veronvuokraus ja talonpoikainen vastarinta Karjalassa 1683–1697*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura: Helsinki, 1994, pp. 171–175; Michael Kwass, ‘A Kingdom of Taxpayers: State Formation, Privilege, and Political Culture in Eighteenth-Century France’, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 70, No. 1, 1998, p. 331; Karin Sennefeldt, *Den politiska sjukan. Daluppröret 1743 och frihetstida politisk kultur*, Gidlunds: Hedemora, 2001, pp. 165–166; Peter Henningsen, ‘Peasant Society and the Perception of a Moral Economy. Redistribution and Risk Aversion in Traditional Peasant Culture’, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 2001, pp. 271–274, 289; Kimmo Katajala, *Suomalainen kapina. Talonpoikaislevottomuudet ja poliittisen kulttuurin muutos Ruotsin ajalla (n. 1150–1800)*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2002, pp. 138–139, 202–203; Börje Harnesk, ‘Konsten att klaga, konsten att kräva’, p. 56; Harald Gustafsson, ‘The Nordic countries, so similar and yet so different’, in *Northern Revolts. Medieval and Early Modern Peasant Unrest in the Nordic Countries*, Ed. by Kimmo Katajala, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2004, p. 26; see also Andy Wood, ‘The place of custom in plebeian political culture: England, 1550–1800’, *Social History*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1997, pp. 46–60; Johannes C. Wolfart, *Religion, Government and Political Culture in Early Modern Germany. Lindau 1520–1628*, Palgrave: Houndmills, 2002, pp. 31–32.

26 Katajala, *Nälkäkapina*, pp. 172–173; cf. Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Scholar Press: Aldershot, 1994 (1978), p. 174.

Conversely, every change represented a step away from the ideal world of the past, so transformation was equated with decline.<sup>27</sup> This unwillingness to change also offered a means of legitimization which burghers used in political discussions: they argued and justified their viewpoint and actions by appealing to old rights and customs.<sup>28</sup>

Unwillingness to change is closely connected with social memory. Different social groups, like politically active burghers, created and maintained their own world view by sharing memories and thus reconstructing a consistent version of the past within the group. In this way, personal memories became social and shared memories that were relevant to this specific group of burghers. The significance of the memory did not depend upon its truth, because social memories consisted of widely accepted versions of actions, and as such they could be used as the basis of political actions and argumentation, and even of disputes. Almost all political rhetoric can be seen to have drawn its legitimization from the past in one way or another.<sup>29</sup> But even if the argumentation depended heavily on the past, the focus was firmly on the future.

The past, like history in general, was experienced and interpreted differently by the different estates. However, when an external threat hung over the community, the borderlines between the estates seemed to become blurred, and the experiences were shared commonly. This meant that narratives concerning the past also

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- 27 Englund, *Det hotade huset*, pp. 44–45, 104, 112; Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta*, p. 164; Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla*, p. 187; see also J. W. Ruuth, *Viborgs stads historia*, Första häftet, Viborgs stad: Viborg, 1903, pp. 416–417; Nils Erik Villstrand, *Anpassning eller protest. Lokalsambället inför utskrivningarna av folket till den svenska krigsmakten 1620–1679*, Åbo Akademis Förlag: Åbo, 1992, p. 29. The same kind of scheme of things is found in the early modern era in periods when society was returning to peace. These post-war periods were filled with nostalgia for the pre-war situation, when the reasons for the war could be annulled and peace could be secured (Esko M. Laine, *Yksimielisyys – sota – pietismi. Tutkimuksia suomalaisesta papistosta ja yhteiskunnasta kolmikymmenvuotisesta sodasta pikkuvihaan*, Helsinki, 1996, p. 60).
- 28 E. P. Thompson, *Herrojen valta ja rabvaan kulttuuri. Valta, kulttuuri ja perinnäistavat 1700- ja 1800-lukujen Englannissa*, Based on *Customs in Common* (1991), Transl. by Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen, Gaudeamus: Helsinki, 1996, p. 97; Harald Gustafsson, *Gamla rikens, nya stater. Statsbildning, politisk kultur och identiteter under Kalmarunionens upplösningsskede 1512–1541*, Atlantis: Stockholm, 2000, pp. 276–279; Henningsen, 'Peasant Society and the Perception of a Moral Economy', pp. 289–290; Lindström, *Prästval och politisk kultur*, p. 43; cf. Katajala, *Suomalainen kapina*, p. 203.
- 29 Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, esp. pp. IX–XI, 9, 25–26, 49, 73, 102, 109, 128; Herzfeld, 'Segmentation and politics in the European nation-state', p. 72; Braembussche, 'History and Memory', p. 80; cf. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, p. 261; see also Englund, *Det hotade huset*, p. 107; Tuckness, 'Discourses of Resistance in the American Revolution', pp. 555–556, 562–563.

became consistent when dangerous and hard times were described.<sup>30</sup> The popular understanding of time and history was like the story of a person's life: difficult and fortunate periods succeeded one another, and bore witness to the existence of the Almighty.<sup>31</sup>

## URBAN COMMUNITIES AND THEIR MEMBERS

Towns had a corporative status and a right to act as legal entities, as was confirmed in their specific privileges.<sup>32</sup> Thus towns appeared as collectives, and for example in letters to the Crown the demands and answers were signed by "us" – the townsmen as equals irrespective of their different social positions.<sup>33</sup> Unlike the countryside, the town was a bourgeois community, which was governed by a special urban law, the Town Law of King Magnus Eriksson, and its own customs and collective memories. The whole existence of the urban community and its understanding of history as well as of its own time was based on these three elements. At the same time, the law, custom and a common past defined the community and its borders. Traditionalism and stability were also esteemed in the administration of the town.<sup>34</sup>

The Town Law defined who could be a member of the urban community with its special rights and responsibilities. However, the individual's past was possibly a more important criterion in the acceptance of new burghers.<sup>35</sup> In early modern society in general, an individual needed the approval of the community in order to be recognized as reliable and honest, and thus to be able to act in society. In the local community – whether in the countryside or in town – people knew each other, and possessed important information about each other's personal histories; thus they knew how to cope with each and every member of the community. Knowledge about people was easily available in other ways, too. When people travelled to

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30 Vilkuna, *Viha*, p. 275; cf. Marsh, "Common Prayer" in England 1560–1640', p. 73. On traumatic experiences and memories, see also Ankersmit, 'The Sublime Dissociation of the Past', pp. 295–323.

31 Vilkuna, *Viha*, p. 328.

32 Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta*, p. 170; Kallioinen, 'Varhainen ulkomaankauppa', p. 58; Kallioinen, *Kauppias, kaupunki, kruunu*, p. 19; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 39–46.

33 Vilkuna, *Viha*, p. 276.

34 See for example Stockholm Town Court 25 May 1601 (p. 51).

35 See for example Stockholm Town Court 28 May 1600 (p. 67), 28 February 1627 (p. 24); Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 77–81; see also Connerton, *How societies remember*, p. 17.

other regions, they needed to have passports and certificates of their reputation from their original places of domicile. Thus, to become a fully authorized member of the community, one needed to have an authenticated history. An individual's status in the social hierarchy was ultimately tested in judicial trials.<sup>36</sup> Criminals were under constant surveillance, and their offences were scrutinised through the court record books. These entries in the records were taken under consideration whenever they committed new crimes. Information about them accumulated and was used as needed. For example, in London recidivists were labelled “ancient” and “customers”.<sup>37</sup> These epithets refer to the criminal past of the accused. In the same way, old offences were used against recidivists in Stockholm.<sup>38</sup> Thus the individual was in every way bound to his/her past, and the past was vitally important for the future: without an attested history, an individual's life-coping activities were at jeopardy.

Memories, knowledge and reliability were in many ways intertwined. On the individual level, trade of all kinds relied on trust, which was created by continuous partnerships and networks. Thus the history of these relationships was meaningful – the presence of the past created continuity and reliability. Merchants also worked to maintain these trade relations and aimed at establishing long-lasting

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36 For example Stockholm Town Court 4 March 1618 (p. 14), 9 October 1623 (p. 218), 26 April 1624 (p. 59), 8 July 1626 (p. 81), 5 May 1628 (p. 40), 10 March 1632, 27 April 1635, 31 March 1637; a passport issued by Stockholm Town Court on 4 January 1602; Stockholm Treasury Court 4 June 1644; Dag Lindström, ‘Öarliga mästare och kivande makar. Ett och annat om rättskipning, kriminalitet och normsystem i 1500-talets Norden’, *Historisk Tidskrift*, Vol. 114, No. 4, 1994: 4, p. 536; Paul Griffiths, ‘Overlapping circles: imagining criminal communities in London, 1545–1645’, in Alexandra Shepard & Phil Withington (ed.) *Communities in Early Modern England. Networks, place, rhetoric*, Manchester University Press: Manchester and New York, 2000, p. 116, 126; Olli Matikainen, *Verenperijät. Väkivalta ja yhteisön murros itäisessä Suomessa 1500–1600-luvulla*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki 2002, pp. 149–152; Jari Eilola, “‘Cuca tiesi cugin mielen? Kengä kenegän sydämen?’”, in *Sietämättömät ja täydellinen maailma*, Ed. by Jari Eilola, Historical Association of Jyväskylä and Kopijyvä: Jyväskylä, 2003, pp. 129–131; see also Hindle, ‘A sense of a place’, p. 97; Kallioinen, *Kauppias, kaupunki, kruunu*, p. 244; Marsh, “‘Common Prayer’ in England 1560–1640”, pp. 72–73; Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla*, pp. 263–264; Lindström, *Prästval och politisk kultur 1650–1800*, pp. 41–42; Jari Eilola & Piia Einonen, ‘Peukalot silkkirievussa. Ruumis ja ruumiinjäsenet noituudessa ja taikuudessa’, (forthcoming 2009). One Londoner demanded to be shown respect because of his “ancient” citizenship (Griffiths, ‘Overlapping circles’, p. 118), so this temporal epithet could be also used to emphasize an individual's social, political and financial status.

37 Griffiths, ‘Overlapping circles’, pp. 126–127.

38 For example, Stockholm Town Court 27 March 1617 (pp. 390–391), 9 October 1623 (p. 218), 16 July 1632, 22 August 1635, 1 February 1636, 3 May 1643; Stockholm town court's letter to Porvoo 11 November 1643; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 86–87.

connections.<sup>39</sup> In early modern society, communications were slow, which emphasized the role of functional networks.<sup>40</sup> In the urban sphere, knowledge circulated in table talk and encounters at the markets and in the streets. The circulating news shaped images and (social) maps, and at the same time collective memories were also lodged in people's minds.<sup>41</sup> Memories needed events and especially knowledge in order to develop and to exist.

One important task of town administrations was to minimize economic risks for their own burghers. The rhetoric of the past was in constant use when rights and terms of trade were negotiated between towns. When there were disputes in trade relations between Turku and the German city of Danzig (nowadays Gdansk) in the late Middle Ages, the burghers of Danzig requested Turku for the sake of "old friendship and neighbourliness" to give them special rights. Turku assented to this request and emphasized that the new terms were something previously quite unprecedented.<sup>42</sup> The turns of phrase used in correspondence, like "good friend", also referred to long-lasting networks. And these created reliability and continuity.<sup>43</sup>

## TRADITIONAL LAW AND CUSTOM AS FORMS OF LEGITIMATION

### ANCIENT TOWNS

Urban communities had long memories. When towns voiced their grievances to the King, eloquence was valued, and the whole arsenal of arguments was employed. The "good old law" and its loyal companion, custom, were important

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39 Ojala, *Tehokasta liiketoimintaa Pohjanmaan pikkukaupungeissa*, p. 312, 319.

40 Eilola, *Rajapinnoilla*, p. 265; McCusker, 'The Demise of Distance', pp. 295–296; Jon Stobart, 'Information, Trust and Reputation. Shaping a merchant elite in early 18th-century England', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 30, No. 3–4, 2005, pp. 302–304; Eino, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 154–155, 224.

41 Griffiths, Paul, 'Overlapping circles', p. 124.

42 For example Stockholm Town Court 10 August 1625 (p. 335), 22 July 1633; Kallioinen, 'Varhainen ulkomaankauppa', p. 60.

43 See for example Stockholm Town Court to Pädher Nilsson 22 June 1603 and to Caspare König 1629 (undated). On phrases of correspondence, see Ulla Koskinen, 'Friends and brothers: rhetoric of friendship as a medium of power in late-16<sup>th</sup>-century Sweden and Finland', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 30, No. 3–4, 2005; Lahtinen, *Sopeutuvat, neuvottelevat, kapinalliset*, pp. 30–31, 121–122; see also Karonen, *Patruunat ja poliitikot*, pp. 156–157.

and frequently used arguments in economic and political negotiations between the Crown and towns. Money was almost always the issue when the burgomasters and magistrates protested at the Crown's demands. In the seventeenth century, the Swedish state had – at least to some degree – stabilized its political status, and interest was directed to inner needs. The governmental system was reformed and modernized from the state level down to the local parishes, and the Crown's domination was extended to the realm as a whole. For the subjects, this tightening of political and social control meant increasing tax burdens and surveillance in every field of ordinary life.<sup>44</sup>

Every town had a different strategy in defending its traditional rights. The political status of towns relied heavily on their privileges. Sometimes, however, the rulers did not confirm earlier privileges, and from time to time the towns asked the King to ratify them. Privileges were the cornerstone of interaction between the Crown and towns, as was often evident in the grievances and petitions of the latter.<sup>45</sup> When Vyborg faced an economic decline in the latter half of the seventeenth century, the trading companies were blamed as the villains of the piece. In the burghers' fight-back for economic survival, they vigorously utilized the rhetoric of the past, and Vyborg's "ancient" privileges were defended. Vyborg was described as "an old, ancient staple town" ("såsom en gammal urminnes stapelstad"). The town fought for its old exporting privileges, and its age was underlined time and time again.<sup>46</sup> Thus the rhetoric of the past was harnessed to maintain the present economic circumstances and also to improve the trade conditions of the burghers in the near future. In economic decline it was natural to crave for lost affluence and whistle for past glory.

The Crown cemented its power and intensified the collection of levies in the seventeenth century by establishing new towns. The old towns often experienced these newcomers as usurpers of their traditional rights. This confrontation was manifested in the concepts: "the old towns" versus "the new towns". In a wider sense, too, the attribute "old" meant something good and preferable – whether

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44 See for example Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta*, esp. pp. 182–194, 248–271; Johan Holm, 'Härskarmakten och undersåtarna. Legitimitet och maktutövning i tidigmodern tid', *Historisk tidskrift*, Vol. 125, No. 3, 2005, pp. 375–397.

45 Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, pp. 81–82, 85–100; Einonen, *Politiiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, esp. pp. 39–46, 140–152; Holm, 'Härskarmakten och undersåtarna', p. 385.

46 Ruuth, *Viborgs stads historia*, p. 352; see also Vyborg's complaints (undated) to the Queen; on the concept "ancient" (Sw. *urgammal*) see Englund, *Det hotade huset*, p. 107; see also Le Goff, *History and Memory*, pp. 134, 145. Even in religious disputes, arguments revolved around age: Protestants were attacked by referring to the religion's novelty (Sena Margaret, 'William Blundell and the networks of Catholic dissent in post-reformation England', in *Communities in Early Modern England*, Ed. by Shepard and Withington, p. 62).



it referred to an institution, custom or a family. Stockholm used the law together with its privileges and customs in its quarrels with Norrmalm and the new towns in northern Sweden.<sup>47</sup> Especially in its dispute with Nevanlinna (Sw. Nyen[skans]) and its detrimental privileges, Vyborg used its status as an old and powerful mercantile town, even if its prominence had suffered in the whirlpool of economic fluctuations.<sup>48</sup> Vyborg's identity was founded on its status as the most important mercantile and tar-exporting city in eastern Finland, and the collective memory of the community had preserved this subjective conception of past importance for future generations.

Vyborg was devastated by repeated fires. This found expression in the letters of complaint. In 1640, the burghers were complaining about the costs of urban redevelopment and they compared the sums with those resulting from the great fires of 1627 and 1628.<sup>49</sup> This was an economic argument, as the costs of the regulation were argued to be less than expense of rebuilding the town, but it also describes how tragic events like fires were rooted in the collective memory.

When the Town Court of Vyborg tried to end the separate jurisdiction of the local academy (Sw. *gymnasium*), the collegium of the school defended its special right to deal with cases involving the institution. The main argument of the collegium was that its separate jurisdiction was just as old and justified as that of the city court. The history of the school had been well documented over the past 150 years.<sup>50</sup> The right to exist was thus justified above all by the age of the institution. It was also argued that the age of the school was well documented, and its privileges were presented as demonstrating the ancient origin of the right of jurisdiction. Even if age alone was often seen as a sufficient argument, the rhetoric of the past was more effective when hard evidence could be submitted. In general age was valued in political discourse as a tool of argumentation. The past and old practices were seen as favourable and worth preserving.

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47 Stockholm's appeal to the King 1604 (undated); Englund, *Det botade huset*, p. 107. Norrmalm was located on the outskirts of Stockholm, and originally it had belonged to the town, but from 1602 to 1635 it was a self-governing town, Norre Förstaden. These two towns were merged again in 1635 (Einonen, *Poliittisen areenat ja toimintatavat*, p. 18).

48 Vyborg's complaints (undated) to the Queen; Lagus, *Ur Wiborgs historia*, p. 93; Ruuth, *Viborgs stads historia*, p. 356; Kallioinen, *Kauppias, kaupunki, kruunu*, p. 184. In a same manner, Stockholm also protested against the new towns of Norrland and referred to the old and new privileges; see for example Stockholm Town Court 8 April 1594 (p. 203); Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, p. 147.

49 Lagus, *Ur Wiborgs historia*, p. 97, 101; see also Vyborg's complaint (undated) 1627.

50 Ruuth, *Viborgs stads historia*, p. 421.

## THE “GOOD OLD LAW”

Justice,<sup>51</sup> legality and custom were the most central elements of traditional urban administration and political culture in general. They were referred to when burghers defended their rights or expressed their own views concerning current issues. The law was the foundation of society, and it derived its legitimacy from religion, so it was at the same time both divine and secular. Moreover, in common thinking, “old law” was always regarded as the legal equivalent of “good law”, a part of eternal justice. The law was seen as an endlessly existing order. This law of God and the Kingdom of Sweden bound every subject. Custom was another frequently used term, and it referred to the undefined “good old law”. Sometimes they were even used as synonyms or equivalents. When traditional rights were questioned, or the communal understanding of prevailing conventions was transgressed, the subjects defended their interests by appealing to their “old customs”.<sup>52</sup> These customs did not need to be located in particular historical periods or to be explained in detail, but often they were equated with the law. In Vyborg, Burgomaster Hans Schmedeman invoked “the written law and old custom here in town”, when the resignation of magistrates was handled.<sup>53</sup>

The purpose of the subjects’ rhetoric was to influence the central government and the Crown, so it can also be interpreted as reflecting the values of the upper stratum of society. The rhetoric was always directed towards a certain public.<sup>54</sup> In

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51 Henningsen, ‘Peasant Society and the Perception of a Moral Economy’, p. 277.

52 Strömberg-Back, *Lagen rätten läran*, pp. 36–39; Pocock, ‘England’, p. 69; Paul Freedman, ‘The German and Catalan Peasant Revolts’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 98, No. 1, 1993, pp. 43–44; Sten Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria*, Vol. 1: *Medeltiden, Reformations-tiden*, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1997 (1975), pp. 313, 315; Englund, *Det hotade huset*, pp. 104–108; Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, p. 52; Wood, ‘The place of custom in plebeian political culture’, pp. 47–49, 54; Wolfart, *Religion, Government and Political Culture in Early Modern Germany*, pp. 31–32; Harnesk, ‘Konsten att klaga, konsten att kräva’, pp. 55–59; Gustafsson, ‘The Nordic countries, so similar and yet so different’, p. 26; Magne Njåstad, ‘Resistance in the name of the law. Peasant politics in medieval and early modern Norway’, in *Northern Revolts*, Ed. by Katajala, pp. 114–115; cf. Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, pp. 205–219. See for example Stockholm Town Court 17 September 1595 (p. 344), 14 July 1596 (p. 54). See also Ruuth, *Viborgs stads historia*, p. 363; Tuckness, ‘Discourses of Resistance in the American Revolution’, p. 562; Holm, ‘Härskarmakten och undersåtarna’, pp. 385–386.

53 Vyborg town court 24 November 1649; Hans Schmedeman’s letter to the Queen (undated). See also examples like “according to the Town Law and old custom” (Lagus, *Ur Wiborgs historia*, p. 69) or “against old custom, law and inquiry” (Harnesk, ‘Konsten att klaga, konsten att kräva’, p. 61).

54 Bo Lindberg, *Den antika skevheten. Politiska ord och begrepp i det tidig-moderna Sverige*, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien: Stockholm, 2006, p. 162.

the early modern political culture, the Crown was eager to legitimise its demands legally, and thus law and legality played a central role in the rhetoric of the central government. The burghers, for their part, used both legality and custom in their interaction with the Crown, even if for them custom often offered an even more fundamental justification than legality.<sup>55</sup>

In the seventeenth century, conventions coexisted with the statutory law of the realm. In addition, the medieval law codifications in Sweden followed in many ways the same principles as the earlier customary law of the clan society.<sup>56</sup> Even the Town Law of Magnus Eriksson was a compilation of earlier practices and provincial codes.<sup>57</sup> Thus the towns were governed according to traditions, and customary law functioned side by side with statutory law. Therefore, it is obvious that in everyday use the old customs were seen as equally important as the written laws.

In their legitimating argumentation, both the Crown and the burghers could also invoke promises that had been made.<sup>58</sup> This was closely associated with appeals to law and custom. When the arguments used were based on the law, the codified law texts could be referred to, but custom and promises had no such a normative anchor. For the burghers, custom was anyway comparable with the law. What generally was understood by promising is debatable: if the burghers did not object to a demand, was it interpreted as a promise of consent? Promises had an ability to unite communities just like oaths and collective concepts of honour, and their aim was to control an uncertain future. Pledges were sometimes even made like oaths. In 1588 the burghers of Stockholm vowed with their hands raised (*medh vprechte hender*) to obey a new edict concerning libel.<sup>59</sup> The essential point is that the invocation of the law, custom and promises reflects the bourgeois world of ideas, in which these elements constituted a legitimate and accessible framework for argumentation.

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55 Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 193–195.

56 Englund, *Det hotade huset*, pp. 111–112; Matikainen, *Verenperijät*, pp. 155–156; see also Heikki Ylikangas, *Valta ja väkivalta keski- ja uudenajan taitteen Suomessa*. WSOY: Juva, 1988, p. 9.

57 Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater*, p. 23, 83–101; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, p. 41 (see also the cited literature); cf. Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta*, p. 52.

58 For example, Stockholm Town Court 31 May 1603 (p. 81), 29 August 1604 (p. 295), 4 March 1622, (p. 15), 29 May 1622 (p. 39), 9 May 1629, 23 December 1629, 8 January 1630; Luukko, *Vaasan historia*, p. 365; Gustafsson, *Gamla rikens, nya stater*, pp. 279–280; Lindström, *Prästval och politisk kultur*, p. 40; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, p. 194.

59 Stockholm Town Court 4 March 1588 (p. 416); Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, with an Introduction by Margaret Canovan, second edition, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1998 (1958), pp. 237, 243–247; Holm, 'Härskarmakten och undersåtarna', p. 382.

The burghers were eager to refer to the law and the statutes, but they also used analogies between current situations and historical episodes to support their rejection of demands.<sup>60</sup> When an auxiliary tax and levy of gold were demanded from Stockholm in 1596, the burghers and the Council of Elders wrote to the Crown in answer, stating that their forefathers had never paid out any such annual tax of gold. They invoked Stockholm's privileges and custom as arguments against the payment. Nonetheless they promised to pay the auxiliary tax – as the other estates had promised.<sup>61</sup> Later the burghers added to their statement, pointing out that a sum paid in gold nearly ten years earlier (1587) had been a present (Sw. *föräringh*) to the King's son, Sigismund. They feared that the Crown might perceive this present as a tax, and at the same time also as a justification and precedent for the later tax of gold. As there was no tradition of such a payment, this was an obvious argument for rejecting the demands of the Crown. At the same time, the burghers once again used legality as an argument and appealed humbly to be relieved of new charges which contravened their privileges. Duke Charles himself as regent had promised to preserve the laws and privileges of the estates (*hålle alle ständer wedh lagh och theres priuilegier*). The basic idea of law-making was that old and respected laws should not be changed unless there was a compelling need for it.<sup>62</sup>

The administrative reforms of the seventeenth century permanently changed the traditions of government and incorporated the social hierarchy even more clearly into local administration, in addition to increasing the Crown's control over the subjects. The Crown's indirect authority in towns increased, and this process crucially influenced the urban political culture. The burgomasters and magistrates clearly adopted a role as the patriarchal authorities of the town vis-à-vis the burghers. The burghers' possibilities for political disputation were narrowed,

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60 Tuckness, 'Discourses of Resistance in the American Revolution', p. 555; see also Susman, 'History and the American Intellectual', p. 255.

61 Stockholm Town Court 13 March 1596 (p. 17), see also 11 February 1596 (p. 9); Stockholm's appeal to the king (undated); see also Holm, 'Härskarmakten och undersåtarna', pp. 385–386.

62 Stockholm Town Court 20 March 1596 (p. 21), 14 July 1596 (p. 54), 23 July 1597 (p. 147); Ahnlund, *Gustav Adolf den store*, p. 184. A levy of gold was also demanded from Stockholm at the beginning of the seventeenth century. At that time burghers' arguments were exactly the same: they invoked their ancestors, who had never needed to pay such a tax. The court record books were used to support their refusal (Stockholm Town Court 9 May 1604, pp. 198–199). For the burghers' answer in 1595 see Stockholm Town Court 17 September 1595, p. 344, when the tax was called, for example, for an "unusual, new" encumbrance. When an auxiliary tax and loan was demanded for the King's military expedition in 1627, it was emphasized that it was levied for this expedition only and it was not intended to be made into a custom ("*så at ingen wahna giörs der af[...]*") – Stockholm Town Court 3 September 1627 (p. 118).

and direct contacts with the Crown were channelled through the framework of the hierarchical organization of society and came under the control of the city council. The law was previously interpreted communally, but in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the authorities monopolized the role of guardians and definers of legitimacy. Along with this process, the burghers' possibilities for political argumentation diminished in Stockholm, and arguments invoking legality and the past were not presented in the courthouse as often as they had been still at the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>63</sup> Be that as it may, argumentation by appealing to the law, promises and custom still had the same purpose: to maintain or improve existing circumstances, and thus ensure life-coping, and even to hold out hopes for the future.

## CUSTOM AND ANCESTORS

If the law was the ultimate legitimating criterion of the towns' demands, custom<sup>64</sup> was often used in a similar manner when individual burghers defended their rights or established practices against the burgomasters and magistrates. Individuals strengthened their claims by referring to tradition and custom. The town court could also legitimise its decisions and different kinds of demands – for example, that the town needed to be guarded by burghers “as the custom has always been” – by referring to the law and old custom.<sup>65</sup> Thus both individuals and the

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63 Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 88–92, 140–152, 271–280.

64 In English political culture “Manorial, parochial and borough custom had long enjoyed a conflictual relationship with national, common law,” as Andy Wood (“The place of custom in plebeian political culture”, p. 47) writes. In Swedish political argumentation, custom was more or less a complementary and fundamental element of general jurisdiction.

65 For example Stockholm Town Court 11 November 1594 (p. 271), 4 January 1602 (p. 180), 15 April 1602 (p. 217), 25 April 1607 (p. 209), 25 November 1607 (p. 279), 27 August 1623 (p. 185), 7 June 1624 (p. 85), 24 January 1629, 21 April 1634, 20 August 1636, 18 February 1637; Stockholm Treasury Court 28 January 1624; supplication of the city of Stockholm to Duke Charles 13 May 1602; Duke Charles to Stockholm 10 April 1598; Stockholm's letter to the King 16 July 1616; Stockholm's letter to the government 3 October 1635 and 17 August 1636; Vyborg's complaint (undated) to the Queen; Harnesk, ‘Konsten att klaga, konsten att kräva’, pp. 44, 55–59. According to Börje Harnesk (pp. 56–57), tradition was especially a peasant argument, not universal or general like “the common good” – although it was also used by the authorities. Cf. Le Goff, *History and Memory*, p. 10; Simon Middleton, “How it came that the bakers bake no bread”: A Struggle for Trade Privileges in Seventeenth-Century New Amsterdam’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 2, 2001, esp. pp. 350, 361–364, 366, 370–372.

authorities used traditions and custom in their argumentation. The kings eagerly reminded their subjects of their predecessors when customs duties were claimed to be too high – even though Gustavus Vasa once stated that traditions and customs were irrelevant because times had changed.<sup>66</sup> The concept of custom was closely connected with social memory.<sup>67</sup>

Custom has been presented as a profound element in the peasant world of ideas, but similarly it played an essential role in the urban culture of early modern Sweden and Finland. Legitimation by tradition was a precondition for getting regular and repeated economic burdens accepted. In addition to financial demands, there were reforms and changes that touched upon old customs and created previously unknown and unjust practices. Sometimes the authorities were compelled to present novelties as long accepted and just hope that the old conventions had been forgotten.<sup>68</sup>

Custom was a useful argument when it furthered the interests of society, but it was also used to promote reforms. In demanding change, arguments presented reforms as righteous returns to an old order which had only been set aside for a while. These regular references to the “old law” indicate how strongly traditionalism was rooted in the early modern mentality; it was not merely a political strategy or form of opportunism. The people constantly aimed to improve their life, and they did so by taking social models that they considered worth pursuing from the past, and customs were interpreted as fragments of this otherwise unattainable ideal. Custom and tradition bore a mystical dimension, which elided the actual truth of the arguments. Tradition was itself a kind of a justice which existed above the historical reality.<sup>69</sup> Customs were crystallized conceptions of the course of life and interaction with the authorities.

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66 Answer to Stockholm's appeal 14 June 1603, 21 June 1616; Corin, *Själustyre och kunglig maktpolitik*, p. 41; Harnesk, 'Konsten att klaga, konsten att kräva', pp. 56–59.

67 Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, p. 9; see also Burke, *The Varieties of Cultural History*, p. 52; Wood, 'The place of custom in plebeian political culture', p. 47; Christine Shaw, 'Counsel and Consent in Fifteenth-Century Genoa', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 116, No. 468, 2001, p. 840.

68 Helmut Gabel, *Widerstand und Kooperation*, Tübingen: Bibliotheca-Academica-Verlag, 1995, pp. 352–554; Burke, *The Varieties of Cultural History*, pp. 58–59; Harnesk, 'Konsten att klaga, konsten att kräva', p. 56; cf. Stockholm Town Court 29 August 1618 (pp. 249–250), see also 30 October 1620 (p. 102), 3 January 1621 (p. 122), 7 March 1629. Note also the riot over tolls in Stockholm in 1623, when a new toll (*Sw. lilla tullen*, *Fi. pikkutulli*) infuriated the inhabitants (Piia Vuorela [Einonen], 'Pikkutullin voimaansaatamisen aiheuttamat konfliktit Tukholmassa 1620-luvulla', in *Rikos historiassa*, Ed. by Olli Matikainen, Historical Association of Jyväskylä and Kopijyvä. Jyväskylä, 2000; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 202–204).

69 Harnesk, 'Konsten att klaga, konsten att kräva', p. 56.

The significance of custom is clearly indicated in its everyday use in rural and urban communities. Often the disputes discussed in the courthouse were of such a nature that there was no written law to refer to, and invoking custom or the usages of the ancestors was a necessity.<sup>70</sup> Traditions, custom and conventions were all part of the collective memory, and correspondingly memories were redefined and reinterpreted according to traditions.

In the Finnish part of the Swedish Realm, Vaasa (Sw. *Vasa*) was a newcomer among the towns, being established only in 1611.<sup>71</sup> Thus Vaasa was in no position to defend itself by appealing to its “ancient” status as a mercantile town, but nevertheless the burghers needed to argue for their rights. When the peasants and burghers disputed over land use in Vaasa in 1661, and the burghers were accused of farming the peasants’ lands, they argued that their forefathers (Sw. *förfadher*) and earlier inhabitants of their residences had used the same fields without any complaints.<sup>72</sup> They did not mention any written documents, and probably it was a case of customary usage.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the compilation of the court records was under the strict scrutiny of the Crown, as was the drafting of other detailed written documents; the government and the legal system generally moved step by step over to a written administrative culture. In towns, registers of land property had already been compiled in the Middle Ages. This pre-empted disputes, and the need to invoke custom diminished. In the new bureaucratised administrative culture, burgomasters and magistrates also turned their thoughts to the future: the ethos of the officials included the idea that they must take care of their duties honestly in order to pass on a well-run town administration to their successors.<sup>73</sup>

“Custom” was also invoked when economic interests were at stake.<sup>74</sup> Likewise, by referring to the law, custom and their ancestors, the subjects could also cite former kings and their reigns as legitimating arguments or refer to periods of

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70 See also Keith Thomas (*Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 509–510) on understanding the past and ancestors.

71 The town of Mustasaari (Sw. *Korsholm*) received its charter of foundation in 1606, but Vaasa (Sw. *Vasa*), which a few years later replaced Korsholm, got its charter of privileges only in 1611 (Luukko, *Vaasan historia*, pp. 52, 54).

72 Luukko, *Vaasan historia*, p. 341, also 450; Hindle, ‘A sense of a place’, p. 103.

73 Stockholm Town Court 4 November 1618 (p. 157), 31 August 1618 (p. 253), 7 January 1622 (p. 10); Lamberg, *Dannemännen i stadens råd*, p. 24; see also Kallioinen, *Kauppias, kaupunki, kruunu*, p. 204; cf. Lagus, *Ur Wiborgs historia*, p. 189.

74 Stockholm Town Court 9 September 1623 (p. 365); Stockholm’s appeal to the King (undated); appeal by the burghers and merchants of Stockholm to the Queen 1 April 1638; Luukko, *Vaasan historia*, p. 270, 272; Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 253–254, 267; see also Suolahti, *Suomen papisto*, pp. 170–171, 174.

freedom, as when the peasants living around Stockholm complained about their transportation obligations and referred to the reign of John III, when they were free from this burden.<sup>75</sup>

In 1651, one year after he was appointed commander-in-chief of the armed forces in Finland, Gustaf Adolf Lewenhaupt (Leijonhufvud)<sup>76</sup> asked the burgomasters and magistrates of Vyborg for the accounts relating to the means available for the town fortifications. The members of the magistracy took exception to the enquiry and delayed answering as long as possible. Their first answer was an oral reply to the provincial governor, followed by a written statement sent to the same official. Finally, they were compelled to write to Lewenhaupt himself. In this letter, in an extremely harsh tone, the burgomasters and magistrates of Vyborg explained that no such means existed or were not at their disposal, although some taxes had been levied for the purpose. Therefore, they were not able to give him any accounts. The administrators also argued that their ancestors (*Sw. antecessors*) had not left them any information or accounts of funds for repairs of the fortifications. Because their predecessors had not passed this information to them, they could not respond to the request.<sup>77</sup> Administrative traditions based on the practices and experiences of the forefathers also guided the everyday business of the town courts. Knowledge was passed on both in written form and orally, and this could be expediently exploited for political ends when necessary. In their dealings with the Crown, the burghers used as arguments the practices of their ancestors, their knowledge of the law and traditions<sup>78</sup> and indeed their ignorance of the law.

## CONCLUSION

Life was experienced in periods. Individual existence passed through different phases, and likewise societies went through crises and times of prosperity.<sup>79</sup> These periods were regarded as ordained by the God, so they became rooted in the collective memory – sometimes as golden ages, sometimes as eras of divine punishment. Especially times of change were recollected through both individual and collective experience.

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75 Duke Charles to Stockholm 10 April 1598; the King to Stockholm's governors 25 November 1611; cf. Christine Shaw, 'Counsel and Consent in Fifteenth-Century Genoa', p. 847.

76 *Svenskt biografiskt handlexikon*, Vol. 2, pp. 41–42 (<http://runeberg.org/sbh/>); *Nordisk Familjebok*, pp. 294–295 (<http://runeberg.org/nfbp/>).

77 Lagus, *Ur Wiborgs historia*, pp. 84–85.

78 Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat*, pp. 193–195, 202–210.

79 Vilkuna, *Viba*, for example see p. 38.



For early modern people, the past was not merely a font of entertaining stories or warning examples, it was also the source of legitimacy, reliability and power. These three elements manifested themselves on all levels of society: the fundamental elements of social structures obtained their legitimacy from the past, and the past was an endless source of prestige and power. At the same time, the past was used to identify individuals, and, if they were known to be trustworthy and honest, they were recognized as accepted members of local communities. Individuals needed to have known histories in order to be approved as fully competent actors in the social, and especially the political, arenas of towns and parishes.

Political life in towns was in many ways connected with the past, but at the same time it was also forward-looking. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, judicial practice still relied heavily on traditional oral procedures and customary law, even if the general urban law (the Town Law of King Magnus Eriksson) and other ordinances regulating urban affairs constituted the foundation of social life in towns. The central concept of custom, which referred to past conventions and procedures, was a frequently used argument in politics in early modern towns when merchants or craftsmen defended their traditional rights. As politically active units subject to the Crown, towns could also use other arguments derived from the past: for example, if they had a long history, this could be emphasized.

Stockholm's position economically, politically and militarily as the most important city in the realm was widely recognized. Stockholm ranked first in the hierarchy of towns, and as the capital it was the home of the social and administrative elite. Stockholm's close physical connection with the central power enabled close communication over both formal and informal matters. For the town administration and judiciary, this meant that the central government could rule Stockholm through its own officials as well as through this administration. It was also possible for it to intervene through personal interaction without the need for countless orders concerning the smallest details. In this respect, Stockholm differed from other towns in the realm, for they were governed through written instructions sent to their administrating bodies to ensure that they would be effective local units in the eyes of the central government. Stockholm was the apple of the Crown's eye in every way. The increase in bureaucratisation in the seventeenth century emphasised legality, and the room for manoeuvre justified by appealing to tradition was narrowed.

Every town was a separate economic, political and social entity, which needed to be taken into consideration when the realm's system of towns was reviewed, and they were harnessed to serve the ends of the rising Great Power that Sweden was to become. Within the limits of the Town Law of Magnus Eriksson and other ordinances regulating town administration, each town built up a unique political culture. A comparison between two old cities, Vyborg and Stockholm, reveals enormous differences in the political conventions of these urban societies:

Stockholm was in general the paragon of a successful city, whereas Vyborg was undisciplined and recalcitrant in every way.<sup>80</sup> It was located far from the central government and capital city of Stockholm, so it could not be controlled as closely as Stockholm. Inner struggles between nationalities tore the town apart. Probably the problems in Vyborg were at least partially a consequence of the mixture of nationalities and cultures of its inhabitants. Thus, although Vyborg had a long and glorious history, the burghers did not have a collective and shared memory to build on.

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80 For example Lagus, *Ur Viborgs historia*, pp. 68, 81–83, 86, 102–103, 109; Ruuth, *Viborgs stads historia*, p. 320.

# EVERYDAY RESISTANCE AND THE HIDDEN TRANSCRIPT IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY SWEDEN

*Börje Harnesk*

Swedish and Finnish historians have pointed out that there were few major peasant rebellions in the Swedish kingdom in the early modern period. Only three seem to qualify: the Dacke War in the 1540s, the Club War in the 1590s, and the Dalecarlia Revolt in the 1740s. This relative scarcity of violent protests, paired with the fact that the peasantry enjoyed political representation in the four-estate Diet, has prompted a number of scholars to interpret the political culture as one of negotiation and compromise rather than conflict. The presumed willingness of the Crown to concede to the Peasants' demands in the Diet has led some historians to conclude that the subjects felt assured of a certain benevolence, and thus willingly abandoned the path of rebellion.<sup>1</sup>

It is not my purpose here to challenge that view,<sup>2</sup> but to shift the focus to other forms of protest than outright rebellion and political bargaining in the Diet. As the historian Martin Linde has pointed out, lower levels of everyday resistance should not be left out of the picture when the political culture of the period is under scrutiny.<sup>3</sup> One might argue that deep fears about the future with never-ending threats to the peasant economy and anger with government officials' intrusion into

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1 This view has been promoted most persistently by Eva Österberg, for instance in the introduction to *People Meet the Law. Control and conflict-handling in the courts*, Ed. by Eva Österberg and Sølvi Sogner, Universitetsforlaget: Oslo, 2000. For a somewhat different opinion, see Martin Linde, *Statsmakt och bondemotstånd. Allmoge och överbet under stora nordiska kriget*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 2000, pp. 25–6.

2 I have raised some concerns about the methodological laxness behind that interpretation in Börje Harnesk, 'Den svenska modellens tidigmoderna rötter?', in *Historisk Tidskrift*, No. 1, 2002,

3 Linde, *Statsmakt*, p. 20.

local society made actions of everyday resistance (albeit spontaneous and local) as important and effective as outright rebellion or parliamentary negotiations.

But let me first call attention to a painstakingly researched article by Johan Holm, who has, as the first and so far only Swedish historian, made a proper investigation of how the Peasants' demands were met by the Crown in the Diet. The time span is limited to 1560–1640, but Holm has produced a more nuanced picture than we have seen so far. He argues convincingly that three, rather than just two, parties should be accounted for, not only the Crown and the Peasantry, but also the Nobility. When the monarchs felt it necessary to hold the nobility back, peasant demands had a better chance of success. During Queen Christina's minority (1632–1644), when an aristocratic government ruled the kingdom (and, one must add, the strains caused by the war were increasing), the chances were much slimmer. By solid archival research, Holm has also shown that that even though the Peasants' demands were sometimes granted, taxes, duties and conscriptions were never actually abolished. The negotiations were limited to the ways in which they could be implemented.<sup>4</sup>

Even though the peasants could from time to time find sympathy through legal political channels, it was certainly not the case that they placed all their hopes for the future on the Diet proceedings. There are numerous examples of minor disturbances where violence and even killings of government officials took place, in the seventeenth as well as in the eighteenth century. And if the political culture was one of benevolence, good will and mutual understanding, the political elite did not seem to trust that it was of that nature. Fears of revolts were abundant and aired frequently in discussions among leading politicians. When the new office of provincial governor was set up in the 1630s, the new incumbents were instructed to keep an eye on instigators that threatened to inculcate "evil opinions" about the government. There was also an unmistakable and persistent nervousness in the Privy Council during the seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup> Axel Oxenstierna, the Chancellor and the most powerful of the high nobility during the Queen's minority, often argued at Council meetings that tax increases should be kept to a minimum, or otherwise a peasant rebellion was to be expected. As late as 1650, he confessed that fear of the peasants made him hesitate to visit his country estates, and in a

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4 Johan Holm, 'Härskarmakten och undersåtarna. Legitimitet och maktutövning i tidigmodern tid', *Historisk Tidskrift*, No. 3, 2005. See Also Holm's recent dissertation, *Konstruktionen av en stormakt. Kungamakt, skattebönder och statsbildning 1595–1640*, University of Stockholm: Stockholm, 2007.

5 See for instance Anna Maria Forsberg, *Att hålla folket på gott humör. Informationsspridning, krigspropaganda och mobilisering i Sverige 1655–1680*, University of Stockholm: Stockholm, 2005, pP. 68, 161, 282. See also, Linde, *Statsmakt*, p. 234, note 165 for bibliographical references.

moment of despair he thought that only force could stop them from revolting: “*Ferrum*, that is the only *consilium*.”<sup>6</sup>

Even in the next century, fear of peasant violence continued to bug the authorities, and not only in connection with the revolt of 1743 and the so-called Hoffman Revolt in 1766.<sup>7</sup> As soon as rumours of unrest were heard, they dispatched commissions or instructed provincial governors to extinguish whatever discontent might be simmering.

In the archives of *Justitierevisionen* is a series of documents concerning investigations about “peasant unrest” (Sw. *bondeoroligheter*). Between 1724 and 1774, there were 28 incidents of disturbances of various kinds, ranging from (to use the terms employed by contemporary civil servants) refusal to obey, illegal gatherings and contumacy to disturbances, mutiny and revolt. I do not want to imply that this is an indication of a peasant class on the brink of rebellion and revolt, but it hardly supports a view of the peasants as satisfied and content with seeking redress only through legal, political or administrative channels.

It is rather paradoxical that the only period when the authorities seemed to have little fear of revolts was during the latter half of the Great Northern War (1700–1721), even though the burdens and sufferings of the people were then perhaps greater than ever. The reason, convincingly argued by Martin Linde, was probably that the country was full of troops returning from the continent. The government counted on this instrument to subdue any sedition – and rightly so, in at least some instances. When some peasants in a part of southern Sweden killed a government official, troops were sent to restore order and make sure that some of the peasants were executed and others put to the gauntlet.<sup>8</sup>

There is a growing awareness among historians that violent revolt and rebellion perhaps constitute too blunt an instrument to be a standard measure for assessing popular resistance to early modern state power. The absence of open rebellion does not necessarily indicate consent and passivity in the population. I think it is fair to say that peasant protests could take place on four levels: outright rebellion on a grand scale, minor rioting, disobedience and – at the “lowest” level – small scale resistance organised by the “hidden transcript” (see below). A number of historians have focussed on the great rebellions, most recently in a study on peasant unrest in all the Nordic countries.<sup>9</sup> Some have charted minor riots and incidents of

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6 Michael Roberts, ‘Queen Christina and the general crisis of the seventeenth century’, in *Crisis in Europe, 1550–1660. Essays from Past and Present*, Ed. by Trevor Aston, Past and Present: London, 1965, p. 196.

7 Carl Gustaf Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia från konung Karls XII:s död till statsvälföringen 1772*, Vol. 5, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1900, pp. 364ff.

8 Linde, *Statsmakt*, pp. 234–5.

9 Recently in *Northern Revolts. Medieval and Early Modern Peasant Unrest in the Nordic*

disobedience, for instance Martin Linde's study of grass-roots politics during the Great Northern War.<sup>10</sup> Here, my main interest is focussed on the most mundane and seemingly insignificant forms of protest, those articulated according to the "hidden transcript" theory.

As interest has shifted towards less spectacular and less easily detectable forms of opposition and protest, towards the everyday forms of resistance that only to a limited degree left traces in the archives, theoretical inspiration has come from the anthropologist James C Scott, who invented the now famous concept of the *hidden transcript*. Under a calm surface – a public transcript – one can often find widespread discontent and resistance – a hidden transcript – that seeks less dangerous ways of attacking the authorities than open rebellion.<sup>11</sup>

The political activities of the lower classes in society consist only to a limited extent of open and collective challenges to the powers that be, but this does not imply total hegemonic obedience and deference. Between the extremes lies a large terrain of *infrapolitics*, according to Scott. Infrapolitics has many faces: arson, sabotage, theft, poaching, desertion, foot dragging, pretended ignorance, gossip, and even discontented mutterings.<sup>12</sup>

Everyday resistance, or at least some forms of it, uses methods that mask the intent, but at the same time send unmistakable signals to those in power. The purpose is to make the authorities realise that these signals represent an act of resistance, but at the same time to make them aware that they will have difficulty punishing it because of its masked character. A person might behave in a formally correct manner in the presence of a high official but simultaneously convey sarcasm, scorn or threatening hints: the message comes through, but it is masked, and it will be difficult to punish the messenger.

Scott stresses that the essence of everyday resistance is that the message is actually sent to the authorities: "[...] subordinate groups must find ways of getting their message across [...]".<sup>13</sup> This is the way I want to see it, too. Actions must take place in some kind of public arena or in direct communication with

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*Countries*, Ed. by Kimmo Katajala, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2004.

10 Linde, *Statsmakt*. Also Nils Erik Villstrand, *Anpassning eller protest. Lokalsambället inför utskrivningarna av fotfolk till den svenska krigsmakten 1620–1679*, Åbo Akademi: Åbo, 1992. See also *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society. Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland*, Ed. by Michael J. Braddick and John Walter, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2001.

11 James C Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance. Hidden Transcripts*, Yale University Press: New Haven (Conn.), 1990.

12 Scott, *Domination*, pp. 142ff, 154, 188, 198. See also James C Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Yale University Press: New Haven (Conn.), 1985, p. 29.

13 Scott, *Domination*, p. 138.

power-holders. This means that it is essential, in my view, to distinguish between resistance and disobedience. On this issue, I cannot but find Scott a little less convincing. Some of the examples he defines as acts of resistance would be better classified as disobedience, in my opinion.

Take poaching, for example. A poacher might, of course, justify his crime to himself by denying the morality of the law against poaching. In that sense, the illegal hunt has been an indication of a *hidden transcript*, an expression of the discrepancy between popular conceptions of what is just and the official norm, the *public transcript*. But if the poacher does not in any way try to communicate his opinions about the law but instead does whatever he can to avoid being caught – will he then have committed an act of resistance?

I would say no. Resistance should be limited to actions and behaviour that in some way aim to restrict the space of legitimate government. Resistance sends a message to power-holders and tells them where their authority ends. A person who tries to hide his crime does not send any signals, and acts only out of temporary personal interest.

I would like to argue that individual acts can be acts of resistance, but only insofar as they take place in some kind of public arena, when the purpose is to signal an alternative opinion and warning to an audience – normally the authorities, although, as I will argue shortly, that does not always have to be the case.

What, then, should be understood by public arena? The British historian Bob Scribner has argued for something he calls the “private public arena”, which on the face of it seems contradictory, but the connection with small-scale resistance to domination makes it viable in this context.<sup>14</sup> The concept refers to conversations, discussions and other acts that take place at inns, in families, in workplaces, et cetera. A person who criticises or ridicules the authorities in the private public arena, with only his neighbours or friends as listeners, is also questioning the limits of power. The immediate purpose would not, of course, be to tell a certain ruler

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14 Scribner's concepts of '*öffentliche Meinung der Geselligkeit*' and '*private öffentliche Meinung*' bear strong resemblances to Scott's hidden transcript, even though he gives no references. See Bob Scribner, 'Mündliche Kommunikation und Strategien der Macht in Deutschland im 16. Jahrhundert', in *Kommunikation und Alltag in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, in Harry Kühnel (ed.), *Kommunikation und Alltag in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, p. 184. Ulinka Rublack, 'Frühneuzeitliche Staatlichkeit und lokale Herrschaftspraxis in Württemberg', in *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, No. 3, 1997, p. 351, makes references to Scribner and uses the terms 'private Öffentlichkeit' and 'gesellige Öffentlichkeit'. This more or less corresponds, as far as I understand, with what Scott calls "the offstage world of subordinates". Scott writes: "It would be more accurate, in short, to think of the hidden transcript as a condition of practical resistance rather than a substitute for it." Scott, *Domination*, p. 191.

what he could or should do, but to undermine his authority among the subjects concerned. Here direct and obvious acts of resistance are prepared, and according to Scott, it is here that some persons aim to instil in others a less deferential and more aggressive attitude and behaviour towards the authorities.<sup>15</sup>

In what follows, I want to call attention to everyday resistance as an additional feature of the political culture, and argue that two structural elements of early modern administration were conducive to its use, from the subjects' point of view. First, the traditional hierarchy in the society of the Estates bred a constant contempt and suspicion of local officials in the Crown and the political elite. More than that, the attitude was demonstrated openly, even to the common people. This was especially notable in case of bailiffs, but local judges also suffered. Gustavus Vasa's intemperate verbal abuse of the bailiffs is well known, but his sons and successors to the throne, Eric, John and Charles, competed successfully with him in that field. On one occasion, John dispatched some specially appointed officers to the North to collect taxes. This was normally the bailiffs' task, but the king was convinced of their "disloyalty and neglect", and therefore the officers were ordered to instruct the peasants to give clear evidence about what they had paid to the bailiffs. Not even Gustavus Adolphus tried to conceal his contempt for local officials. In a general mandate to the people, he spoke of the bailiffs' "greed, lies and thieving ways", and exhorted the peasants to demand written evidence of how much they had paid over to the bailiffs.<sup>16</sup> By such and similar methods was the verbal abuse that the kings heaped upon their own civil servants, and the contempt they felt for them, made known to the common people.

The kings' practice of dispatching royal commissions with the task of investigating supposed mismanagement in local administration also had harmful consequences for the authority of the bailiffs and local judges, especially the former. Gustavus Vasa made frequent use of it, and so did his successors, particularly Charles IX and Gustavus Adolphus. The latter, for example, set up a major commission in 1616 that travelled around several counties in southern Finland, soliciting complaints about "the bailiffs, their bookkeepers, servants and tax collectors" from the peasants.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Scott, *Domination*, p. 191

16 Börje Harnesk, 'Fogdarna och våldet', in *Blickar bakåt. Elva uppsatser om ett förgånget nu*, Ed. by Christina Kjellson, Sven Olofsson and Per Sörlin, Mitthögskolan: Härnösand, 2004, p. 30. See also Mats Hallenberg, *Kungen, fogdarna och riket. Lokalförvaltning och statsbyggande under tidig Vasatid*, Symposium: Stockholm, 2001, p. 124; Alexander Jonsson, 'Försumblige i deres kall och ämbete... 1600-talets debatt om den nya regionalförvaltningen', in *Maktens skiftande skepnader. Studier i makt, legitimitet och inflytande i det tidigmoderna Sverige*, Ed. by Börje Harnesk, University of Umeå: Umeå, 2003, p. 137.

17 *Vuoden 1616 valitusluettelot*, Ed. by Jalmario Jaakkola and John E. Roos, Suomen historian



The commissions might have a wide range of matters to attend to, but on the top of the list was always the bailiffs' presumed abuse of power. They were suspected of embezzling tax funds and of mistreating the population, and their taken-for-granted dishonesty and disloyalty were always matters for the commissions to investigate. Through this method, the king sought to portray himself as the protector of the people against the "disturbing elements" lying between him and them, as local authorities were held to be in the general opinion of the time. And even though the whole thing was probably mostly a show intended to take the force out of popular discontent – for the tax burdens were rarely alleviated and many bailiffs remained in office, even though their abuse of power was established – the fact remains, in my opinion, that the political practice of dispatching commissions of this kind did much to undermine their authority.<sup>18</sup>

Local judges were perhaps not treated so harshly, but they were held to be ignorant of the law, and Oxenstierna once slammed them for erring severely in matters of law.<sup>19</sup> It is quite probable that this attitude at the top undermined the authority of local office-holders in the eyes of the common people, who could exploit the situation in instances of everyday resistance.

Second, we should take into consideration a structural characteristic of early modern administration that has a bearing on the conditions for everyday resistance. The need for an administrative system with clearly differentiated functions was only vaguely recognized. Two or more offices were often held by one and the same person, so that boundaries between the areas of the legitimate execution of power for government officials were very often blurred.<sup>20</sup> One of the main obstacles, claims the German historian Ulinka Rublack in her study of seventeenth-century Württemberg, for the early modern state in controlling and containing popular discontent was the frequent conflicts among local officials about jurisdictional rights. The result was a fragile local authority, in constant risk of breakdown.<sup>21</sup>

The problem with conflicts among local authorities over jurisdictional rights also made its presence felt in France in the seventeenth century, according to

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lähteitä: Helsinki 1936.

18 On commissions, see Sven A Nilsson, 'Statsmaktens närvaro. Lokalsamhället och rannsakningskommissionerna under 1500- och 1600-talen', in *Arkivet, historien, rörelsen*, Ed. by Carl Göran Andræ, Stockholm: Sober, 1987. Also Marie Lennerstrand, *Rättvisans och allmogens beskyddare. Den absoluta staten, kommissionerna och tjänstemännen, ca 1680–1730*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1999.

19 Rudolf Thunander, *Hovrätt i funktion. Göta hovrätt och brottmålen, 1635–1699*, Institutet för rätthistorisk forskning: Lund, 1993, p. 253.

20 Richard van Dülmen, *Entstehung des Frühneuzeitlichen Europa, 1550–1648*, Fischer: Frankfurt am Main, 1982, p. 337.

21 Rublack, 'Frühneuzeitliche Staatlichkeit'.

William Beik, who claims that the authority question is one of the most fascinating aspects of early modern society. Beik found several instances of local officials taking action in order to prevent a ruling by rival authorities from being carried out, and even cases of violence were not uncommon. Conflicts of this kind were “endemic”, and the stakes were public esteem, which it was essential for the local officials to possess because of the lack of force that was available to them.<sup>22</sup>

In this respect, Sweden was no exception to what seems to have been the general situation. There were no clear lines distinguishing between the authority of the fiscal administration and the courts, for instance. Swedish historians have called the Swedish situation one of “insecurity and confusion”, even though a few attempts were made to remedy the situation at the beginning of the seventeenth century. During the reign of Gustavus Adolphus (1611–1632), an ordinance was issued that forbade bailiffs and governors to “elevate themselves into judges and confound their own and the judges’ offices”. Even so, no strict boundaries between the spheres of authority of office-holders were defined.<sup>23</sup>

Cases are known where a tax-collecting bailiff at the same time presided as a judge in the local court.<sup>24</sup> This lack of clearly defined and demarcated boundaries of jurisdiction threatened to create rivalry and enmity between local officials, a situation that also could be exploited by the discontented people. And, as I shall try to show, this was actually what happened in the case that follows.

Here I want to survey, in a local context, some of the methods used by the peasants to resist, attack and undermine the authority of local officials. The place is the province of Medelpad in northern Sweden, the time the three first decades of the seventeenth century. The events took place earlier than the introduction of the new office of provincial governor, and apart from the parish clergy, there were just two local officials: the local judge and the Crown Bailiff, whose main task was collecting the taxes.

An extraordinarily good collection of sources makes it possible to follow the actions of the protagonists in some detail. Letters from the local officials to their nearest superior, the Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, in which they complain about the behaviour of each other and the local subjects, are preserved in the National Archives (Sw. *Riksarkivet*).<sup>25</sup> Records from the three royal commissions sent out to investigate the situation also survive in the National Archives.<sup>26</sup> And a transcript

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22 William Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-century France. State Power and Aristocracy in Languedoc*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1985, pp. 179–93.

23 Halvar G Sundberg, *Allmän förvaltningsrätt*, Norstedt: Stockholm 1955, p. 7.

24 See Harnesk, ‘Fogdarna och våldet’, p 23.

25 Oxenstiernska samlingen, Vol. E 61, National Archives, Stockholm.

26 Strödda domböcker och rättegångshandlingar, Vol. 10, National Archives, Stockholm; Sandbergsska samlingen, Vol. YY: 28, 23927, National Archives, Stockholm.

of the local court records is kept in the Regional State Archives (Sw. *Landsarkivet*) at Härnösand.<sup>27</sup>

The peasants frequently chose to direct their attacks against the officials' status and honour, sometimes in open confrontation when a person's anger made him forget to hide his aggression. On other occasions, the attacks were subtly masked, which made it difficult to retaliate. At still other times, probably most often, undermining the authority of the officials took place in the private public arenas, in the company of neighbours and friends. Even so, some of the incidents came to the attention of the local authorities.

It is not always possible to decide if incidents of slander or ridicule took place in the presence of, and eye to eye with, the authorities. Peder Månsson was the local judge in Medelpad between 1606 and 1646. He owned a large farm, became quite rich and also very unpopular with the local population. He had to put up with a great amount of direct verbal abuse and underground slander during his time in office, as did the bailiffs, and he duly noted this in the court records. It is difficult to tell whether one "Lasse from Byn", who was fined 40 marks for calling the judge "the god of Timrå" (Timrå being the parish where Peder Månsson lived), did so directly to his face, or just in the private public arena. It is also impossible to know whether Peder Nilsson who scornfully called the bailiff "One Horse Johnny" did so openly or behind his back. He nevertheless had to pay a fine.<sup>28</sup> Staffan Jonsson, who among other things, said that Peder Månsson "was more fit to be a hangman than for any other office" had apparently uttered his slander in the private public arena since he was sentenced to eight days in gaol "for having been in cahoots with some other seditious persons, conspiring to start a mutiny against the judge, and attacking his honour and honesty for no reason [...]".<sup>29</sup>

A vivid picture of what could transpire in the private public arena can be gained from an episode at a wedding party. Some time earlier, the judge had confiscated a sheep from one of the peasants, and it seems that he kept the sheep for himself. Apparently, in the area he was regarded as rather greedy. At the wedding, the host, Samuel Håkansson, served salmon to all the guests, and invited them to eat, saying "Eat my friends, because it is salmon and not sheep!" Some of the guests felt uneasy, and one of them begged him not to talk like that. The words came out, however, and Samuel Håkansson went to gaol for eight days.

The bailiff's assistant, his bookkeeper, was humiliated in a more sophisticated manner, and one that must have been the result of some planning and organisation.

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27 Avskriftssamlingen, Vol. 86, Provincial Archives of Härnösand.

28 One Horse Johnny (Sw. "Enspännarlasse") alluded to the poor messengers who travelled through the country with dispatches.

29 For legibility, I have not translated the quotes verbatim, only as condensed versions.

When the bookkeeper came to take his place in the church on Sunday, the men in the pew would not make room and forced him to leave the church in tears. The men admitted that they had planned it and declared that after their previous successful campaign against the bailiff, they now also wanted to shame his bookkeeper.

At this point, one observation can be made. Everyday resistance did not always aim at obtaining immediate relief from taxes and other duties. Very frequently the attacks were directed against the honour and prestige of the local officials. Through open insult, but also through slander and scorn in the private public arenas, efforts were made to undermine their authority, to the extent that they found it difficult to perform the duties that the Crown expected of them. The local officials did not suffer immediate harm, but they were perhaps in a worse position over the long term as a result of these small acts of subtle resistance.

The poorly defined boundaries of jurisdiction between local office-holders meant that conflicts between them were perhaps just as common as conflicts between them and the people, a situation that discontented local peasants could take advantage of. It is obvious that this was the case in Medelpad at the beginning of the century. There were long periods of enmity between the judge, Peder Månsson, and the bailiffs, and the peasants seem to have tried to use it to their advantage.

The first sign of hostility dates from 1613, when the bailiff, Karl Burman, accused the judge of having incited the peasants to complain about the taxes. In a letter to Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, Peder Månsson, the judge, explained that according to tradition, local judges were expected to record complaints from the people, and he had done only that. In a second letter to the Chancellor's wife, he portrayed the bailiff as an abusive and violent-prone tyrant who persecuted not only the local people but also him. The bailiff threatened him and his family, harassed people who wanted to ask him for legal advice, forbade servants to work for him, and so on. Peder Månsson was even afraid that Burman might kill him.

The letters came to the attention of the bailiff, who also wrote to the Chancellor. According to him, the problem was that the judge claimed to be his superior, and that he meddled in his affairs.

Apparently, Peder Månsson and the complainants won the day this time. When King Gustavus Adolphus travelled through the province on his way to Finland the following year, he learned about the conflict and ordered an investigation to be held. The bailiff was forced to resign, but tension rose again when a new bailiff was installed. This one also accused the judge of trespassing on the bailiff's domain: "When I call the people to meetings about the taxes, the judge immediately has them gathering at another meeting, rendering my decisions null and void [...]" Of course, the judge gave a diametrically opposed version: it was the bailiff who tried to interfere in matters of law, with which he had nothing to do.

The central authorities now deemed the situation to be so serious that new investigations were ordered, and the people of the province were invited to

voice their complaints. It is now that the hidden transcript becomes public. The accusations against the judge and the bailiff that now, during the hearings, were aired openly, reflect the discontent that earlier had been expressed in a masked, intangible form. The advent of the commissioners meant that it was now they who could set the agenda, and the peasants' resistance could no longer remain in the hidden transcript. The arena was now official and legal, and complaints had to be articulated according to what the law and court procedure prescribed. The peasants were forced to transform their discontent into concrete complaints and support them with evidence that the local office-holders had neglected to carry out their duties in accordance with the public transcript. The earlier everyday resistance which had been acted out on the people's terms, in the form of irony, ridicule, insults and gossip, were now forced out into the open and brought into the realm of law and legal procedure.

The peasants first attacked the bailiff, initially by not supporting his accusations against the judge, then by accusing him of having cheated them by using false weights and measures when taxes had been collected. The bailiff had also not only been violent, but had sent protesters to gaol – and at harvest time at that.

Peder Månsson, the judge, remained in the background during the hearings. Even though he undeniably had many enemies among the people, he managed to come out unscathed. The peasants even vouched for him when the bailiff accused him of taking bribes. It seems that the bailiff was the main enemy of both the judge and the peasants, and that some kind of alliance had been struck up between them. But that was not to last. A few years later, a new investigation took place.

This time, the judge suffered heavily. The people launched a stream of accusations against him, ranging from negligence in calling court meetings, bribery, and usury, to general complaints about harassing the people in a variety of ways. At the third and last hearing, the following year, Peder Månsson launched his counterattack, focussing on the verbal abuse he had previously suffered. To some extent, he was successful, because he managed to have a number of the insolent locals punished. And that seems to have been the end of a period of very sharp conflicts, both between the local officials and between them and the populace. At least, the sources from the years thereafter are notably more silent on such matters.

The king and the higher levels of state authority harboured a permanent contempt and suspicion of the state's servants at the lower and local levels, which most likely made the local administration less efficient than it could have been. Bailiffs and local judges would have been in need of better staffing and greater judicial authority to deal with contumacy, insolence and other forms of everyday resistance. That, however, entailed a risk of a stronger and more independent power position that the government was reluctant to accord. There was also a constant fear that local officials were pocketing resources that rightly belonged to the Crown. This resentment kept local administration understaffed, at least

until the new office of provincial governor was created. It is also fair, I believe, to assume that the attitude at the top to a certain degree weakened the authority and prestige of local officials. With weak authority, they constantly ran the risk of facing all kinds of everyday resistance. The Crown's tax collectors, the bailiffs, risked disobedience, foot dragging, insults and slander. The local judges could expect insolence at the court proceedings, refusal to pay fines, difficulties in collecting fees and salaries, and of course insults and slander. One "solution" to the problem was to adopt a violent and threatening attitude towards the local people, but this was probably not a very good solution at all, since the officials had insufficient resources to back it up.

However, the local officials could try other means. They could choose to cooperate and stand together against the opposition, or they could "abandon" one another and try to win popular support at the expense of the other party. When complaints against the bailiff were brought to the court, the judge could decide in favour of the plaintiff, and the bailiff could imply that the judge was negligent regarding the rights of the people, or look the other way when his authority was questioned. We can see one example of the latter when a man who was angry about a sentence passed by Peder Månsson began (as the judge noted in the records), "to use his evil mouth against the judge". Naturally, the judge expected help from the bailiff to arrest and punish the man, but that did not happen. Instead, he was forced to accept the fact that the man "walked away and was not punished", as he again noted.

Regarding the peasants, one can note two things. Firstly, that they acted rationally and to some extent in a planned way at the investigation hearings. They were aware of the enmity between the judge and the bailiffs, and chose to pick one target at a time. During the first investigations, they directed their accusations against the bailiff, and even supported the judge on some of the issues. Then in the last hearing, their charges against the judge were given free reign.

Secondly, it is obvious that one of the main weapons against local authorities aimed at undermining their honour and prestige. Through open insults and masked scorn and ridicule, the locals intended to undermine the officials' authority so much that the latter's power to carry out a policy against the interests of the peasants was weakened. The peasants of seventeenth-century Sweden thus in a way placed their hopes for the future not only on open rebellion or legal political negotiation, but also on a more mundane level of everyday resistance. Maybe they did not think of it so consciously and in such a long-term perspective, but the actions that surface as offshoots of the hidden transcript should be regarded, as Scott says, "as a condition of practical resistance rather than as a substitute for it."<sup>30</sup>

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30 Scott, *Domination*, p. 191.

# THE COUNCIL OF THE REALM AND THE QUEST FOR PEACE IN SWEDEN, 1718–1721<sup>1</sup>

*Petri Karonen*

## RESEARCH PROBLEM

War was in Sweden in the early modern era for a long time an altogether everyday and normal state of affairs. As a matter of fact warfare may have been for many groups and individuals even a *desired* situation but the Great Nordic War (1700–1721) forced in the last instance the society as a whole to ponder the rationality of the situation. It was high time to seriously tackle so rarely touched problematic of peace.

The Council of the Realm published in 1720 in the name of the King the customary declaration concerning the Days of Prayer to be held in the same year by “all the faithful subjects who live in our monarchy in Sweden and in the Grand Duchy of Finland as well as those who live under the rule of the Swedish throne in the countries that belong to it”.<sup>2</sup> As it was usual in these connections, so also at this time the people was frightened by the wrath of God and adjacent scourges attached to it which were in the doctrines dictated from above said to be consequent

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1 This essay is a part of an ongoing project *Post-war crisis in the Finnish Society: Government and local communities dealing with the aftermath of wars 1600–2000* (homepage: <http://www.cc.jyu.fi/rauha/indexeng.html>) mostly funded by the Academy of Finland.

2 “[...] Trogen undersåtare, som boo och byggja i vårt konungarike Sverige, Storfurstendömmet Finland, samt andre Sweriges krono tillhörige och dee under liggjande land och härtskapper”. Inrikescivilexpeditionen (1714) (1719–1809), Registratur 13 February 1720: 106–108v. (q. p. 106), National Archives, Stockholm; generally Tuija Laine, *Kolportööreja ja kirjakauppiaita. Kirjojen hankinta ja levitys Suomessa vuoteen 1800*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2006, pp. 132–3.

of the subjects' own misdeeds and sins of which they were collectively punished.<sup>3</sup> During the last quarter of the century, the inhabitants of the Swedish realm had got used to serious hardships. The period was characterized by continuous horrors of hunger, diseases, and above all, already over twenty years of the Great Nordic War in which not only the Baltic provinces but also Finland was being occupied by the Russians.

The fears of the leaders of Sweden of the Russian onslaught became evident in the cited letter of command for it referred exceptionally emotionally to the events of the year 1719 when the Russian fleet had completely destroyed the eastern coasts of Sweden. Even the ruler had had to leave the "heart of the realm", i.e. the royal castle of Stockholm, and get further away from the Russian rage. Therefore the Council of the Realm hoped with biblical phrases that God "would put a nose ring to the enemy and drive him beyond our borders".<sup>4</sup> Heavenly help was also in need as the Council hoped to gain a peace settlement with at least some of the enemies as well as "with others (enemies), in the hope of getting a happy success"<sup>5</sup>, and hopefully very soon in the ensuing peace negotiations.

On the ground of the above cited extract the supreme leadership of the Swedish realm had almost lost its grip of the steering wheel of the ship of the state in the last phase of the Great Nordic War. This shortly cited document, publicly read in all churches under the Swedish rule<sup>6</sup>, alludes undoubtedly to the fact that all was genuinely "in higher hands". Fears and hopes are connected only to God. This article purports to answer the question whether the situation was really so hopeless and also to study what the various documents tell about the theme. Of interest

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3 For the crumbling of this so called collective subject above all as a consequence of the Great Nordic War, see Mikko Juva, 'Varsinais-Suomen seurakuntaelämä puhasoppisuuden hallitsemina vuosisatoina (1600–1808)', in *Varsinais-Suomen historia*, Vol. 7: 3–4, Varsinais-Suomen historiantutkimusyhdistys: Turku, 1955; Kustaa H. J. Vilkkuna, *Viha. Perikato, katkeruus ja kertomus isostavivahasta*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2005. The idea that scourges were due to people's sins was not, however, that unambiguous among the Clergy in the end of the war since the Council worriedly listened to the stories according to which the Chaplain of the great church in Stockholm had soon after Charles XII's fall stated in his evening sermon that the ruler had died because of his "own, not because of our (subjects) sins". Rådsprotokoll 8 December 1718: 60–68 (q. p. 60), National Archives, Stockholm.

4 "[...] Sätt fienden en ring i näsan, och fört honom ifrån våra gränster tillbaka igen". – See also the concept "ring" at the *Svenska Akademiens ordbok* (SAOB) (online: <http://g3.spraakdata.gu.se/saob/>).

5 "[...] och underhandlingar med de öfrige, med god förhoppning om en lyckelig framgång anstälte."

6 Of Finland parts had in this phase been for over a decade occupied by the Russians. There the letter concerning the Days of Prayer expressing horrors of the enemy's cruelty had most obviously aroused bitterness since the subjects on eastern side of the Bothnic Gulf had had to get accustomed to all imaginable acts of terror under the Russian despotism.



here is the relation of the texts of the cited kind with the discussions and decisions of the Council of the Realm in its meetings. The author of the above cited text is most likely a person belonging to the Clergy but it was published in the name of the Royal Majesty which means that this kind of source material belongs to the group of official documents. Nevertheless, the internal information value of the texts produced by the same authority may vary and it is because of this variation that the matter has to be weighed from different angles.

What follows is a study of the activities of the leading authorities of the realm, namely the King, Council of the Realm and central administration in the last phase of the Great Nordic War and of their the fears and hopes they had in the quest for peace. The emphasis is laid the concluding process of the war between Sweden and Russia. This study deals with the highest authorities, i.e. the Council of the Realm (King and the Councillors) as a collective, with individual Councillors and the officials of the central administration as well as with their views of the possibilities of Sweden in the last phase of the Great Nordic War and immediately after it.<sup>7</sup> Previously the activities of the Council have not been studied in this way through its discussions. In order to gain a holistic view, the chronological approach, amazingly enough, turned out to be the most adequate without which it is difficult to envisage the processes of “hopes and fear”.

The question concerning the end of the war and the beginning of the peace is fundamental when studying the aftermath of the Great Nordic War. It is often difficult to differentiate war from peace and peace from war. The study of the wartime is usually necessary because the nature and special characteristics of a war – let alone the result – inevitably have an impact on the forms and possibilities of returning to peacetime. Here it suffices to point out that especially the end of the 1710s and the beginning of the 1720s is the appropriate period for even *officially* the transition from war to peace took several years.<sup>8</sup> Therefore what follows concentrates on the period between the death of Charles XII and the peace settlement of Uusikaupunki (Sw. Nystad), 1718–1721.

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7 This study does not concern the theoretical discussions of the problematic of returning to peace, neither does it deal with inner political and economic situation. On these themes the author has started a larger project (see <http://www.cc.jyu.fi/rauha/>); Petri Karonen, ‘Coping with Peace after a Debacle: the Crises of the Transition to Peace in Sweden after the Great Northern War (1721)’, in *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2008. On economic life and special questions of defense, see Einar W. Juvelius, *Suomen puolustuskysymys ison- ja pikkuviihan välisenä aikana*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 1919; Jean Häggman, *Studier i frihetstidens försvarspolitik. Ett bidrag till Sveriges inre historia 1721–1727*, Nordiska Bokhandel: Stockholm, 1922.

8 This prolonged return to peace was not a rare phenomenon for as a point of comparison and parallel to aftermath of the Great Nordic War it may be mentioned that the final solution to the Thirty Years War (won by Sweden in short run, though) was discussed for years.

The efforts of the King, Council of the Realm and the Estates, which practically now held the power, to gain peace in the last phase of the Great Nordic War have in previous studies widely attracted the attention of historians. From the end of the 19th century the thematic has been approached foremostly from the point of view of political history. Attention has been paid to the change of the form of government, i.e. the fall of absolutism with the fall of Charles XII<sup>9</sup>, to the internal politics of the Estates<sup>10</sup>, to the difficulties in the military and economic situation,<sup>11</sup> to the attempts of the state to gain peace in a difficult situation<sup>12</sup> and

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- 9 The debate dealt with, among other things, the question whether it was a revolution that happened in Sweden in 1719 or was it just a return to the period before absolutism. For the latter argument, see e.g. Fredrik Lagerroth, *Frihetstidens författning. En studie i den svenska konstitutionalismens historia*, Bonnier: Stockholm, 1915; Petri Karonen, *Pohjoinen suurvalta. Ruotsi ja Suomi 1521–1809*, WSOY: Porvoo and Helsinki, 2008. The argument for revolution has been put forward by a.o. Erland Hjärke, *Från Vasatiden till Frihetstiden. Några drag ur den svenska konstitutionalismens historia*, Geber: Uppsala, 1929; Lennart Thanner, *Revolutionen i Sverige efter Karl XII:s död. Den inrepolitiska maktkampen under tidigare delen av Ulrika Eleonora d.y:s regering*, Uppsala, 1953; Werner Buchholz, *Staat und Ständegesellschaft in Schweden zur Zeit des Überganges vom Absolutismus zum Ständeparlamentarismus 1718–1720*, Almqvist & Wiksell international: Stockholm, 1979; Michael Roberts, *The Age of Liberty. Sweden 1719–1772*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1986; Peter Ericsson, *Stora nordiska kriget förklarar. Karl XII och det ideologiska tilltalet*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 2002; See also for general developments e.g. Sven Grauers, 'Den svenska riksdagen under den karolinska tiden', in *Sveriges riksdag. Förra avdelningen. Riksdagens historia intill 1865*, Vol. 4, Sveriges riksdag: Stockholm, 1932; Pentti Renvall, 'Ruotsin vallan aika', in *Suomen kansanedustuslaitoksen vaiheet 1850-luvun puoliväliin. Suomen kansanedustuslaitoksen historia*, Vol. 1, Eduskunnan historiakomitea: Helsinki, 1962; Ulf Sjödel, 'Kungamaktt och aristokrati i svensk 1900-talsdebatt. En studie i svensk 1900-talsdebatt', in *Historisk tidskrift*, Vol. 85, No. 1, 1965; Göran Rystad, 'The estates of the realm, the monarchy, and empire, 1611–1718', in *The Riksdag. A History of the Swedish Parliament*, Ed. by Michael F. Metcalf, St. Martin's Press: New York, 1987.
- 10 Carl Gustaf Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia från konung Karl XII:s död till statsvälförningen 1772*, Vol. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1893; Ludvig Stavenow, 'Frihetstiden 1718–1772', *Sveriges historia intill tjugonde seklet*, Vol. 7, Stockholm, 1903; Lagerroth, *Frihetstidens författning*; Lagerroth, 'Svensk konstitutionalism'; Fredrik Lagerroth, 'Frihetstidens maktägande ständer 1719–1772', in *Sveriges riksdag*, Vols. 6–7; Sveriges riksdag: Stockholm, 1934; Fredrik Lagerroth, *Levande och dött i frihetstidens statskick. En principutredning*, Geber: Uppsala, 1947; Michael F. Metcalf, 'Parliamentary Sovereignty and Royal Reaction, 1719–1809', in *The Riksdag*, Ed. by Metcalf.
- 11 Juvelius, *Suomen puolustusksysymys*; Häggman, *Studier i frihetstidens försvarspolitik*; Einar W. Juva, *Suomen tie Uudestakaupungista Haminaan 1721–1808. Historiallinen tutkielma*, Otava: Helsinki, 1947.
- 12 Jerker Rosén, '1697–1721', in *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia*, Vol. 2:1, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1952; Olof Jägerskiöld, '1721–1792', in *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia*, Vol. 2:2, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1957; Roberts, *The Age of Liberty*; Tomi Kangas, *Uudenkaupungin "siunattu" rauha 1721. Suuren Pohjan sodan ja isonvihan päätös, Uudenkaupungin*

to the analysis of the activities of individual 'great men'.<sup>13</sup> Less attention, instead, has been paid to the plans, discussions and measures of the Council of the Realm in steering the realm through the difficult last phase of the war and its coping with the problematic of return to peace.<sup>14</sup> Carl Gustaf Malmström, Einar Carlsson and Göran Wensheim deal with the thematic of this study partly from a different angle. They are above all interested in general developments and in how and in

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- merihistoriallinen yhdistys: Uusikaupunki, 1996.
- 13 The President of the Chancellery, Arvid Horn, has been intensively studied, see e.g. Carl Lennart Lundquist, *Council, King and Estates in Sweden 1713–1714*, Almqvist & Wiksell International: Stockholm, 1975; Åsa Karlsson, *Den jämlike undersåten. Karl XII:s förmögensbeskatning 1713*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1994; Gunnar Wetterberg, *Från tolv till ett. Arvid Horn (1664–1742)*, Stockholm: Atlantis, 2006. See also e.g. Abel Helander, *Daniel Niklas v. Höpken 1669–1727*, Isaac Marcus: Stockholm, 1927. Einar Carlsson emphasizes in his *Freden i Nystad*, Vol. 1: *Fredrik I:s personliga politik och dess betydelse för förhållandet mellan Sverige och England sommaren 1720*, Uppsala: 1932 above all the role of the King Frederick I in the first phase of the peace negotiations; cf. Göran Wensheim, *Studier kring freden i Nystad*, Gleerup: Lund, 1973.
- 14 The research concerning the *wartime* in the Great Power period has been extensive in the Nordic countries. The so called power and military state -research has concentrated above all on the 17th century. On the other hand, there are a lot of studies concerning the (asymmetric) relations of local communities and the state. See e.g. Jan Lindegren, 'The Swedish "Military State", 1560–1720', in *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1985; Sven A. Nilsson, *De stora krigens tid. Om Sverige som militärstat och bondesambälle*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1990; Nils Erik Villstrand, *Anpassning eller protest. Lokalsambället inför utskrivningarna av föfolk till den svenska krigsmakten 1620–1679*, Åbo Akademi University: Turku, 1992; Jan Lindegren, "Om detta continuerar ett eller två år till, må vi säga att vi har vunnit land av androm och därutöver ruinerat vårt eget." Expansionspolitik i 1600-talets Sverige', in *Annales Societatis Litterarum Humaniorum Regiae Upsaliensis*, 1999; *A Revolution from Above? The Power State of 16th and 17th Century Scandinavia*, Ed. by Leon Jespersen, Odense University Press: Odense 2000; A summary of the ideas concerning interaction, see e.g. *People Meet the Law. Control and conflict-handling in the courts. The Nordic countries in the post-Reformation and pre-industrial period*, Ed. by Eva Österberg and Sølvi Sogner, Universitetsforlaget: Otta, 2000; see also for instance Martin Linde, *Statsmakt och bondemotstånd. Allmoget och överheten under stora nordiska kriget*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 2000; Jens Lerbom, *Mellan två riken. Integration, politisk kultur och nationella identiteter på Gotland 1500–1700*, University of Lund: Lund, 2003; Kimmo Katajala, *Suomalainen kapina. Talonpoikaislevottomuudet ja poliittisen kulttuurin muutos Ruotsin ajalla (n. 1150–1800)*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2002; *Northern Revolts. Medieval and Early Modern Peasant Unrest in the Nordic Countries*, Ed. By Kimmo Katajala, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2004; Piia Einonen, *Poliittiset areenat ja toimintatavat. Tukholman porvaristo vallan käyttäjänä ja vallankäytön kohteena n. 1592–1644*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2005. On the activities of the Council in the different phases of the Great Nordic War, see Antti Kujala, *Miekka ei laske leikkiä: Suomi suuressa Pohjan sodassa 1700–1714*, Finnish Literature Society: Helsinki, 2001; Ericsson, *Stora nordiska kriget förklarar*, pp. 33–7.

which order the leadership of Sweden gave the negotiating diplomats permission to give up some parts of the realm. These aspects have already been dealt with in detail and this article does not touch them.<sup>15</sup>

## THE STATE OF PEACE HAS TO REINSTATED – THE PEACEMAKERS AND THE WAYS TO PEACE

### PEACEMAKERS

Soon after the death of Charles XII the Council of the Realm commenced discussions about settling peace with the Russians. In the proposal the Russians forwarded already in September 1718 they had proposed to annex all Baltic provinces as well as Käkisalmi (Sw. Kexholm) and Vyborg (Fi. Viipuri, Sw. Viborg), compensated by some territories from Russian Karelia and exemption from customs duties in Livonia. Russia was ready to support Sweden's plans in respect of Norway, from where compensation could also be had. Georg Heinrich von Görtz who single-handedly and without keeping record negotiated with England and Hannover played the Russian proposals down both to the King and the Council of the Realm. In any case Charles XII turned the proposal which had been almost finalized by his trusted man down. The stories telling of the 'small-scale' demands of territory by the Russians nevertheless most obviously made their mark in the future in the hopeful goals of the Swedes in the question of reannexation, at least subconsciously.<sup>16</sup>

The Council of the Realm did not after the death of the ruler in the end of November 1718 at all trust the hated and envied von Görtz and he was duly locked up and executed after unclear court proceedings in winter 1719 which brought only shame to Sweden. The Council had to start soundings for peace practically from 'an empty table' for with the death of Görtz all previous knowledge of Russian demands, negotiation attitude and tactic was lost. What remained was a bunch of hopes, assumptions and dreams drafted on the writing board, on the basis of which greater part, if not all, of the territories lost to Russia in the war that lasted twenty years were thought to be regained. Russia had, however, in the negotiations with Görtz systematically clung to the gained territories in the Baltic whereas the Swedes

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15 Malmström *Sveriges politiska historia*; Carlsson, *Freden i Nystad*; Wensheim, *Studier kring freden i Nystad*.

16 Rosén, '1697–1721', pp. 152–3.

would have rather conceded it only patches of land around St. Petersburg.<sup>17</sup>

Of the necessity of peace, as it were, there hardly remained a shadow of uncertainty among any of the members of the Council after the death of Charles XII. During the period under scrutiny, most of them had made remarkable military careers, a part of them were closest men of the deceased King. It was pretty clear that the *return to peace* was not going to be easy, and therefore the Council was of the opinion that the taxes defined during the war should still be collected – at least until the next Diet. Accordingly, the so called ‘peace help’ (Sw. *fredzhjälpen*) was in use as late as in 1722 to compensate the payments of the war-prisoners returning from Russia.<sup>18</sup>

The role of the ruler has been the subject of study since the 19th century. The attitudes towards both Ulrica Eleonora (ruled 1719–1720) and Frederick I (1720–1751) have been contradictory. The Queen has been regarded as not very significant, Frederick I, instead, has been seen as a decisive agent in gaining the peace treaties. Yet the new constitutions of the era of Estates had taken the core of the power of the ruler away. In spite of this, both monarchs took part in the process of returning to peace with very interesting points of view, and they, for their part, cherished hopes and aroused fear at the top of the state administration.

On the basis of the minutes of the Council of the year 1719 in particular, the Council members were still tightly tied with the past. The change of the ruler or the new order of the state hardly changed their ideas of “Great Sweden”. Nevertheless, the Council had from now on to pay attention to the views of the Estates for the government was in many ways dependent on the decisions and direct orders put in questioning form by the Diet.<sup>19</sup>

The actual power had essentially shifted in 1719 to the Estates of the Diet, and in the 1720s this tendency was continuously strengthened by the 1720 Form of Government and the 1723 new Diet Order. Concerning the issues under scrutiny here, the most important organ of the Diet, the Secret Committee, was

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17 Rådsprotokoll 7 December 1718: 24–28, 8 January 1719: 372–380, National Archives, Stockholm. On negotiations led by Görtz, see esp. K. J. Hartman, *Åländska kongressen och dess förhistoria*, Vol. 1–5: 1–2, Åbo Akademi University: Turku, 1921–1931. On the rise of Görtz to become Charles XII’s most important aide, at first in inner politics and then in managing the foreign politics, see e.g. Rosén, ‘1697–1721’, pp. 142, 144–5, 148–50, 158; Sven Grauers, ‘Den åländska kongressen’, in *Historisk tidskrift för Finland*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1925, p. 137; Gösta Lindeberg, ‘Det partipolitiska maktspelet kring den Görtzka kommissionens tillsättande’, in *Gottfrid Carlsson 18.12.1952*, Lund, 1952.

18 Rådsprotokoll 6 February 1719: 543; Inrikescivilexpeditionen (1714) (1719–1809), Registratur 11 January 1722: 34–36, 30 January 1722: 115–115v; all in National Archives, Stockholm.

19 Cf. e.g. Lagerroth, *Levande och dött*, pp. 16, 18. According to Lagerroth it was the Council that was in power until the 1734 Diet.

in the centre, and the views of its members bore significance in the activities of the Council. In the Diet the proceedings of the Council were in the new situation brought under regular evaluation, which could not but affect the discussions of the individual members and of the Council collectively.

Already the 1719 Form of Government (14th and 34th §) referred to the accountability of the Council to the Estates. The Council was expressly responsible for the advice it gave to the ruler. The paragraphs 14 and 45 of the Form of Government accepted next year concretized the duty of the Diet to control the Council and to practice follow-up inspection of the minutes of the Council. It was in the 1723 Diet that the Secret Deputation (a subcommittee of the Secret Committee) was given the task to inspect afterwards from the minutes that the Council and various officials of the central administration had followed the orders of the Form of Government.<sup>20</sup>

#### COUNCILLORS LOOKING TO THE PAST – THE FIRST STAGES OF THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

One of the few real plans for the return to peace by the Council was connected to the idea that the enemies of the realm should be separated and an attempt to gain separate peace treaties should be made. In practice this meant that peace should have been made in succession with the enemies so that Russia – most dangerous and feared of them – would have been the last in row. The father of this plan was in all likelihood Arvid Horn who in many occasions has been deemed the most remarkable politician in the early times of the era of the Estates. The chosen line did not turn out to be successful since the result of the 1719–1721 peace negotiations was poor for Sweden. The Swedes had hoped for much but in practice the realm lost all what its enemies wanted.<sup>21</sup> In the prolonged last phase of the war the ravage by Russians on the east coast of Sweden caused considerable additional material and mental damages.

For the first time the matters concerning peace were thoroughly discussed in the Council half a year after the fall of the King, i.e. in May 1719. Then Nicodemus Tessin, who had been a very active and initiating member of the Council in first years of the era of the Estates, cast a wider view on the foreign political situation. The most concrete contribution was, however, made by otherwise rather silent

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20 Since the year 1734 there was in the Diet a deputation which checked the minutes of state officials and the chapter. *Frihetstidens grundlagar och konstitutionella stadgar*, Ed. by Axel Brusewitz, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1916, pp. 8–9, 18–9, 27–8, 41–2, 283; See also Lagerroth, *Frihetstidens maktägande ständer*, pp. 58–9, 199–200, 203–5.

21 Rådsprotokoll 6 February 1719: 546–548, National Archives, Stockholm; Helander, *Daniel Niklas v. Höpken*, pp. 100, 102; Rosén, '1697–1721', esp. p. 185.

Queen Ulrica Eleonora, according to whom “without sacrificing some territories we cannot achieve peace”. She proposed that cessions should include German provinces.<sup>22</sup> She was supported by the just recently nominated ex-Gouvernor of the Stockholm county, Axel Claesson Banér, who pointed out that the ‘sacrifices’ should be as far away as possible from “us”, and thus insignificant. Another new member of the Council, an officer and highly-reputed ex-President of the Bureau of Trade, Magnus Julius De la Gardie, evaluated the cessions as necessary but hoped that small ones would help to “regain all the rest”. Both the ruler and the Council rejected any cessions to the arch-enemy, Denmark. Banér and Carl Gustaf Dücker, who had recently risen to a highly respected position among the Councillors, proposed ceding Bremen and Verden to England on the condition that England would help Sweden to regain all other territories, and above all, to oust Russia from the Baltic Sea. This was supported by the Council. Realism was brought to the discussion by Tessin who feared that the realm might collapse before the treaty was ready and the arrival of English help. The discussion was closed for the time being by the opportune question of the ruler: “How do we execute a campaign as we know how miserable a condition the realm has been brought to”.<sup>23</sup>

22 In the beginning of the year 1719 there circulated in many European courts a leaflet titled “A proposal to gain peace in the North”. Its basic idea was that Sweden should regain both Livonia and Finland whereas it should jettison the German provinces since they were more harmful than useful to Sweden. See e.g. Henrik Grönroos, ‘England, Sverige och Ryssland 1719–1721’, in *Historisk tidskrift för Finland*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1931, p. 5.

23 The statements of the ruler: “Uthan någon sacrifice kunna wi ej få fred” (p. 1187), “hwarmed skola wi göra en campagne: ty wi weta i hwad uselt tillstånd riket är försatt” (p. 1193). Rådsprotokoll 11 May 1719: 1172–1201, National Archives, Stockholm; Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, p. 143; Data concerning the Councillors and their background in Sten Lewenhaupt, *Svenska högre ämbetsmän från 1634. Högre ämbetsmän och chefer för statliga verk inom central och lokal förvaltning m.m.: namn och ärtal*, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1962; *Svenskt biografiskt handlexikon. Alfabetiskt ordnade lefnadsteckningar af Sveriges namnkunniga män och kvinnor från reformationen till nuvarande tid*, Ed. by Herman Hofberg, Revised by Frithiof Heurlin, Viktor Millqvist and Olof Rubenson (Used here on the basis of <http://runeberg.org/sbh/> and *Svenskt Biografiskt lexikon* (SBL; used on the basis of CD-ROM): the authors of the SBL’s articles, in brackets the name of the Councillor: Erik Nauman (Banér), G. Wittrock (Bonde), G. Carlquist (Cederhielm), Herbert Lundh (Creutz), S. Grauers – Å Holmbäck (Gustaf Cronhielm), A. Munthe (Salomon Cronhielm), Tom Söderberg (De la Gardie), Samuel L. Bring (Dücker), G. Lindeberg (Ekeblad), Sven Grauers (Gyllenborg, Carl Gyllenstierna, Arvid Horn, Henning Rudolf Horn, Lagerberg), Gustaf Jonasson (Nils Gyllenstierna, Rehnschiöld), Gunnar Artéus (Lewenhaupt), Bernt Olsson (Leijonstedt, Lillienstedt), Alf Åberg (von Liewen), Hans Villius (Meijerfeldt), Björn Asker (Mörner). On Dücker, see also Häggman, *Studier i frihetstidens försvarspolitik*, pp. 32–3. On ceding lands from Germany, see e.g. Grönroos, ‘England, Sverige och Ryssland’, pp. 3, 5, 11–2.

The matter was newly discussed in the end of May 1719, when the representatives of the Estates of closing Diet put their views concerning the possibilities to return to peace to the trusted man of the ruler, Councillor Erik Sparre. In this situation the omnipotent representatives faced three questions: 1) do we wage war or make a peace? – the Estates answered ‘make a peace’, 2) can peace be achieved without loss of territory? – the answer was ‘no’, territories must be ceded, and 3) if territories are ceded, to whom? – to England. In view of all this, one can say that in Sweden there prevailed a rather ‘anglophile’ mood there. It was countered by almost as strong mood of antipathy towards the Russians, which was manifested in the unrealistic statements of many a Councillor, according to which all territories that had already for years been occupied by them, would be regained with the help of England.<sup>24</sup>

Among other things, the Council planned to squeeze from the English a guarantee to the effect that as a compensation for the Swedish losses in Germany, England should support Sweden at first against Denmark by acting as a mediator in gaining interim peace and armistice. Besides, it was hoped that England would give naval assistance so that Sweden would regain the territories lost to Russia. The usual realist among the Councillors, the President of the Chancellery<sup>25</sup>, Gustaf Cronhielm, who led the negotiations with England and Hannover reminded “that England should support us in gaining our provinces back in good shape, and in case the Russian (Peter the Great) should ruin and ravage them, he should pay recompense”. In this case wishful thinking reached its top for the best expert in juridical matters in the Council, Cronhielm as well as other gentlemen of Stockholm very well knew what the army of the Tsar had done, for instance, in Finland alone during the occupation.<sup>26</sup>

In this matter the change of mind was rather swift. Already in the beginning of June, Anders Leijonstedt, who had earlier served in remarkable posts as an envoy, surmised that the lost territories could not be regained even with the support of the King of England. Now also Gustaf Cronhielm put it forward that it was

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24 Rådsprotokoll 27 May 1719: 1724–1758, National Archives, Stockholm; Grönroos, ‘England, Sverige och Ryssland’; Rosén, ‘1697–1721’, passim.

25 Cronhielm acted in 1719 as the President of the Chancellery Bureau i.e. as a ‘foreign secretary’ of sorts. Also he entered into a conflict with the Queen and had to resign but returned to his office next year as a result of pressurizing on the part of the Diet.

26 “[...] påmint, at Engelland [!] skall garantera at skaffa oss våra provincier igen i godt stånd: ty i falla Ryssen skulle dem ruinera och ödeläggja, bör han skaffa oss satisfaction derföre” (s. 1777). Gustaf Cronhielm is still known, among other things, as the main drafter of the 1734 General Law which is still partly in force in Finland and Sweden. Rådsprotokoll 28 May 1719: e.g. 1771–1778, National Archives, Stockholm; Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, pp. 143–4, 186–7; Helander, *Daniel Niklas v. Höpken*, pp. 102–3.



high time to draft a plan concerning the territories to be ceded to Russia. In the same vein, the Councillors collectively observed that the English had already for a long time occupied Bremen and Verden, the territories which were thought to be utilized as barter for support against Russia.<sup>27</sup>

From the very beginning the Russians demanded Ingermanland and Käkisalmi, although for instance, Gustaf Adam Taube, who had been the High Governor of Stockholm and had considerable military merits, surmised that that was hardly enough for the Tsar. On this occasion, all Councillors emphasized the importance of peace. In all likelihood the stance of the Diet which supported peace, made them change their minds.<sup>28</sup> This atmosphere did not last long since the return to peace hardly interested anyone but the Councillors still hoped – at least in the long run – to regain *all* lost territories. It was most obviously in June 1719 that an opinion connected to conjunctures was expressed for the first time as Johan August Meijerfeldt weighed that it would be better for the realm to make peace soon than lapse into armistice that might last for years. For instance, an armistice that may last for ten years would, in his opinion, be cumbersome if the conjunctures would become so favourable that reannexation would become possible.<sup>29</sup>

These plans were frustrated by the information gained in summer 1719, according to which a huge Russian galley fleet was heading towards the Aland Islands threatening Stockholm archipelago and the capital itself. In this situation the only help was England and its navy since there was no sufficient certainty of the ability of the Swedish army to defend even the capital.<sup>30</sup>

More exact information concerning the Russian demands of territory was had in July 1719, at about the same time when the Russian galley fleet efficiently

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27 Rådsprotokoll 5 June 1719: 1988–2002 (q. p. 1989), National Archives, Stockholm; Helander, *Daniel Niklas v. Höpken*, p. 103.

28 Especially active in these cession plans was the State Secretary Höpken whose role in preparing the return to peace on the foreign political front is considerable in c. 1719–1721. Rådsprotokoll 8 June 1719: 2186–2190, National Archives, Stockholm; generally Helander, *Daniel Niklas v. Höpken*, esp. p. 104. On Russian demands, see also Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, pp. 190, 210.

29 Usually appealing to conjunctures is interpreted to have started a lot later. Rådsprotokoll 9 June 1719: 2216–2233, National Archives, Stockholm; cf. Einar W. Juvelius, *Suomen puolustusksymys*, p. 5.

30 Rådsprotokoll 7 July 1719: 29–34, 22 July 1719: 373–376, 23 July 1719: 402–416, National Archives, Stockholm; Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, pp. 157–73; Erik Jonson, *Skärgårdskriget. Rysshärjningarna 1719*, 2nd edition, Rabén & Sjögren: Stockholm, 1990 (orig. 1961); Magnus Mörner, 'Vår östersjökust nedbränd 1719–1721: terror avpassad för att framtvunga fred', in *Militärhistorisk tidskrift*, 2004, pp. 161–219; it was already in the 1710s that a Russian invasion was feared, see e.g. Kujala, *Miekka ei laske leikkiä*, pp. 273, 292–3.

ravaged the Swedish coasts. It was now known that the Tsar still intended to keep Ingermanland, Tallinn, Estonia, Vyborg, Karelia and Käkisalmi. Furthermore, the Tsar promised a money payment to compensate the loss of Livonia. As a replacement the Tsar mercifully promised to return the “whole” of Finland. The Councillors’ initial reactions were already submissive and somewhat fearful. This was witnessed by defiant Meyerfelt and Leijonstedt who had already earlier suspected the importance of English help. This time the Councillors could not, however, display a unanimous front for peace since, as Magnus Julius De la Gardie testified, the Estates now dissolved from the Diet would not have conceded to ceding both Vyborg and Tallinn to Russia. Keeping these two economically important towns was paramount to the Council, and not solely for the activities of De la Gardie who had recently been nominated as the President of the Bureau of Trade and who was thus largely responsible for the economy of the realm.<sup>31</sup>

Count Carl Gyllenborg, who had served as a diplomat for a long time and had taken part (but was kept aside) in the negotiations conducted by Georg Heinrich von Görtz in Aland Islands, weighed that the Russians wanted rather Ingermanland and Tallinn than Vyborg. In spite of this, he was not willing to give up either of the towns. Gustaf Adam Taube, the High Governor of Stockholm, hit the nail in saying that “Tallinn was the key<sup>32</sup> to Stockholm in the same way as Vyborg was the key to Finland”. In this discussion Gustaf Cronhielm confessed that Sweden could not successfully wage a war against such a formidable enemy. That is why peace *had to* be made.<sup>33</sup> Representatives of three Estates were quickly summoned to negotiate with the Council over the measures for the Estates had been dissolved already in the end of May. In this connection, merchant Wetterblad put the Russian demands succinctly in a few words by stating that “the Tsar would leave us the lock but keep the key to himself”. Also the representatives of the Estates hoped for a peace soon to be made with Russia by appealing to hard times and to the damages the Russians had just inflicted in the coasts of Sweden.<sup>34</sup>

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31 Also some insidious contemporaries referred to the point that the ones who strongly talked for retaining the Baltic lands are to found among those who had economic interests in the area. On the other hand, the Council could have done more to defend Finland already before the surrender of Vyborg (1710) and afterwards. Rådsprotokoll 19 July 1719: 264, 20 July 1719: 322, National Archives, Stockholm; Kujala, *Miekka ei laske leikkiä*, pp. 241–3, 249, 257–8.

32 “Key” as the tool of power and control but also figuratively as a ‘fortress’ in contemporary usage, see e.g. *SAOB*, “nyckel”, with numerous variants.

33 Rådsprotokoll 22 July 1719: 387–390 (Taube: “Reval är nyckeln till Stockholm, äfwensom Wiborg för Finland”, p. 388), National Archives, Stockholm. On role of Gyllenborg in Aland Island negotiations Rosén, ‘1697–1721’, p. 150.

34 “[...] czaren wille lämna oss läset, men sielf behålla nyckelen”. Rådsprotokoll 23 July 1719: 422–423 (q. p. 423), National Archives, Stockholm.

To cede both Tallinn and Vyborg was mentally very hard for the Council. Already the analogies of “lock and key” were repeated in many speeches as the Council took to formulating a counter-proposal to the demands of Russia on the very same day (23 July 1719). Nobody in the Council seemed to be worried about the threat posed by St. Petersburg to Sweden.<sup>35</sup>

The discussion moved on to dealing with the ceding of Vyborg. The council was almost unanimous in its opinion that Tallinn rather than Vyborg could be ceded. The necessity to keep Vyborg was, in the first place, grounded in the arguments on economic reasons, i.e. that the town was more important to trade than the old Hanse town, Tallinn. The members of the Council who originated from the eastern parts of the realm and who had worked there as civil servants or in the army already in the beginning of the discussion strongly opined against the ideas of ceding Vyborg that had been expressed during it. Councillors Nils Stromberg, Henning Rudolf Horn and Johan Creutz were very much in touch with the problems of the eastern border. Creutz was absolutely against the cession of Vyborg: with the town Sweden would lose an important fortress and the tar-trade of the eastern part so important for the realm would nearly come to an end. Only after a tight vote the Council decided to mention Vyborg in the answer to be sent to the Tsar but it was watered down by the proviso to the effect that the town with its surrounding territories would belong to Sweden in the future, too.<sup>36</sup>

If hopes had been high, it was crystal clear after the answer given by the representative of the Tsar that a lot of territory would be lost. The Russian demands stayed the same as before but in the Council some speeches were being given which pointed to the calamity of losing Vyborg because the town was, on one hand, “the key to Finland”, and on the other hand, “the key to Sweden”. Some of the Councillors did not lose their faith and proposed that Sweden would cede Tallinn *if* it was allowed to keep Vyborg.<sup>37</sup>

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35 The same rhetoric is being used still in summer 1721, when the situation was totally different. See e.g. Rådsprotokoll 8 June 1721: 257 (Johan Creutz), National Archives, Stockholm.

36 E.g. Magnus Julius De la Gardie was of the opinion that neither Tallinn nor Vyborg should be ceded to Russia but surmised hopefully that perhaps the cession of Tallinn may be enough for the Russians. On his part Baron Henning Rudolf Horn estimated the economic value of Vyborg to be greater than that of Tallinn. (p. 443). Rådsprotokoll 23 July 1719: 442–455, National Archives, Stockholm.

37 Rådsprotokoll 24 July 1719, e.g. 485–487 (Councillor Henning Rudolf Horn, Johan Creutz, Claes Ulfsson Bonde), 491 (Nicodemus Tessin), National Archives, Stockholm; Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, 190.

## FROM DESPAIR TO BELIEF IN CONJUNCTURES

Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie weighed the Russian conditions for peace to be disadvantageous to the realm. He believed the Generals of the field army who assured that the strength of the attacking Russians was *only* 25 000 men.<sup>38</sup> The Councillor nevertheless stated that in that case he would rather move away than become a “vassal of Russia”. This grim view was shared by Nicodemus Tessin whose overview and charting of the future situation was blood-curdling to read. Sweden had experienced one accident after another during the last ten years, i.e. after the crushing defeat in Poltava (1709): the realm had shrunk to half of its former size, and the navy and the army had suffered great losses in defeats and in great numbers of war prisoners. The ruler had died, the economic situation of the state and its munitions and maintenance were in bad state and the damages inflicted by the Russians were considerable. Besides, in the defense of the capital the Generals trusted mostly the “highest”. In Tessin’s view, Sweden had already lost the war. For the first time in the Council religious explanations were brought to the fore when Tessin pointed out that all this showed God’s punishment to the inhabitants of the realm.<sup>39</sup>

The President of the Chancellery, Gustaf Cronhielm explained in the same meeting of July of his negotiations with the representative of the Tsar, Henrich Johan Friedrich Osterman, who had been the responsible person in the negotiations with von Görtz in the Aland Islands and who later led the peace negotiations on the Russian side in Uusikaupunki. Cronhielm had introduced the counter-proposal of Sweden but the answer of the Russians was crushing: negotiations could be carried on only on the basis of the Tsar’s conditions. Discussions concerning the *exchange* of Vyborg with Tallinn were out of the question. Cronhielm was pessimistic over the continuation of the war for the Danes were on standby on the western border and the Russians harassed from the east. The Councillor suspected the willingness of the soldiers and especially of the civilians to continue the war since he reported that the latter ones had become restless and had started on the streets to demand peace with Russia. Cronhielm powerfully appealed for peace and in his opinion

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38 The hopefulness of De la Gardie’s statement becomes clear when we realize that the total strength of the forces on the Finnish side of the realm was in 1721 less than 2 000 men of whom all were not able to fight. Some ten years later the number was still only c. 8 000 men. Jan Lindegren estimates the total force in the realm in 1720 to have been c. 55 000 men but then the realm was still in war with Denmark. – Juvelius, *Suomen puolustusyksymys*, p. 41; Juva, *Suomen tie*, p. 82; Jan Lindegren, *Makstatens resurser*, Uppsala 1992 (handout), table 12.

39 Rådsprotokoll 26 July 1719: 515–522, 529 (q. pp. 515, 521), National Archives, Stockholm.

even an embarrassing peace was better than the present situation. The sounding of conjunctures already detected among the Swedish leading elite cropped up again. Cronhielm counted wishfully on the help of Holland and England for it was in the interest of these naval powers to promote trade, and therefore they would be interested in helping Sweden to regain the ports lost by it (among them Tallinn, Riga, Narva, Vyborg). Cronhielm opined that “it was better to lose only a part and easier to regain it than to lose everything”.<sup>40</sup>

Hopes to regain territories rekindled in the end of the year 1719. During the Russian attack in the summer Sweden had concluded a preliminary alliance with England, the significance of which remained mostly symbolic although England promised yearly subsidies. In this connection a plan to attack Russia was drafted but the fantastic plans – including 70 000 men and 40 liners – were dropped after autumn.<sup>41</sup> The Swedes greatly leaned on the English; actually there were no other earthly, noteworthy prospective allies around. Behind the hopes rekindled in November 1719 was the official envoy of Sweden, Councillor and Count Erik Sparre who wrote that he had negotiated in Hannover with the Foreign Secretary of England, Lord James Stanhope. Stanhope had seriously proposed that a peace with Russia could be achieved in which the Tsar would return to Sweden all, St. Petersburg and Ingermanland around it excluded. Thereafter warfare would be ended until the representatives of France, England and Prussia had accepted to become mediators. Gustaf Cronhielm again considered this idea unrealistic, in his opinion the Tsar would not give away any of territories he had annexed. Despite of this, he was still ready to hope a miracle to happen, in other words, if territories could be regained, the goal was to get Finland and the Baltic back, Ingermanland possibly excluded.<sup>42</sup>

When the Council resumed its meetings after a couple of days, Cronhielm was contented to sarcastically propose that only Sparre should be further notified and told to directly contact Russians. Tessin agreed but hoped that the Russians could be driven out of the Baltic Sea. In other words, wishful thinking cropped up again when possibility to it arose. One practical factor may have been the icing of the Baltic Sea which effectively hindered Russian galleys from hitting the coasts of Sweden. Tessin, however, was not, in spite of his bad reputation

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40 “Det är bättre att mista ock lättare att återtaga något, än allt”. Rådsprotokoll 26 July 1719: 523–528 (q. p. 526), National Archives, Stockholm. On early expression of politics of conjuncture, see e.g. Nicodemus Tessin’s extensive *pro et contra* memo on peace with Russia, see Rådsprotokoll 10 August 1719: 833–46 (esp. p. 838), National Archives, Stockholm. See also Helander, *Daniel Niklas v. Höpken*, pp. 114–6.

41 Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, pp. 201–2; Grönroos, ‘England, Sverige och Rysland’, pp. 16–7, 21–2.

42 Rådsprotokoll 25 November 1719: 887–889, National Archives, Stockholm.

only a builder of castles in the air for he, referring to the calculations of the next year's state budget made by the "Commission for Financial Administration" (Sw. *statskommission*), stated that the state could not afford a many years' war. Tessin was skeptical of the abilities of the English fleet on the Baltic Sea which was unknown to it. In any case, the peace negotiations should be started because they would take long.<sup>43</sup>

The foreign political position of Sweden was in the beginning of 1720 somewhat easier than year before. Peace treaty had been made with Hannover in November 1719 and in January 1720 with Prussia, and the war with Denmark was halted because of ceasefire. Also a treaty of alliance had been made with England in January 1720 and the final peace was concluded with Denmark in June the same year. It seemed as if the hopes of Sweden of pacifying other fronts and of the opportunity to concentrate on solving the problem of Russia very coming true. Hopes of a one front war had been revived by considerable territorial cessions and economic sacrifices.<sup>44</sup> Yet there were no signs of warfare or active planning of it. The peace negotiations with Russia were resumed seriously only in June 1720 – the Swedes had to listen to Tsar's proposal and start negotiations on that basis.<sup>45</sup>

Russian matters were consequently pushed to the background while a peace treaty with the Danes had to be concluded. In the negotiations the English gave practical help. To speed up the prolonged negotiations the withdrawal of the exemption of the customs duties of the Sound (Fi. Juutinrauma, Sw. Öresund), which had proved to be important, was pondered so that the unsatisfied Denmark could be soothed. That the matter was brought up was in itself a sign of gradual admission of the defeat for the above mentioned exemption had been of great help in bringing the products of the Baltic provinces to the West European markets. However, speculations over the conjunctures were started again. In Tessin's view, it was possible under better conjunctures to get the exemption back and of course with English support, although it certainly was not willing to give its support to the attempts of its economic rival to decrease the expenses but to get rid of them. The peace with Denmark was, however, most important for without it a war with Russia would not have been possible. Tessin regarded the sacrifices as necessary in order to "save the realm from total disaster and ruin". Anyhow, this point of view dominated the discussions of spring 1720 as it was considered that

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43 Rådsprotokoll 27 November 1719: 918–938, National Archives, Stockholm. On criticism of Nicodemus Tessin see Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, e.g. p. 220.

44 Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, pp. 203–8, 280–85; Grönroos, 'England, Sverige och Ryssland', pp. 57–8; Rosén, '1697–1721', pp. 163–7, 169–72; Wensheim, *Studier kring freden i Nystad*, p. 13.

45 Rådsprotokoll 9 June 1720: 941, National Archives, Stockholm.

a war of two fronts could not be continued and that war against Russia had to be waged in earnest.<sup>46</sup>

The English proposed in the end of the summer 1720 that Sweden should make armistice with Russia. The ruler regarded the proposal as good for the realm but all Councillors were not convinced. Tessin again came forward as a strong man of influence as he surmised that concluding a peace (not armistice) would make it possible that at least a part of the realm could be preserved before all would have been devastated. He no longer believed that all territories could be regained immediately but that perhaps this could be achieved later with allies. But Tessin was in the minority in the voting of the Council. The Council was bent on supporting an armistice to be continued until spring 1721, although it was at the same time realized that the position of Sweden had strengthened thanks to alliances and concluded peace treaties.<sup>47</sup>

#### BACK TO THE STARTING POINT BUT IN THE MIDDLE OF FEAR AND MUST

Regarding the territories possibly to be ceded to Russia the discussion reached a dead lock in August 1720, when the Council considered that there was no basis for particular compromises with Russia. Tessin, who had often been a pessimistic realist and led the Council in these matters, now emphasized that an attempt should be made to regain a part of the territories. He entertained hopes that Livonia and Finland could be regained, although in his last (and final) letter the Tsar had already stated that he would give Finland back. Tessin thought that other territories could be regained by force with allies later. Taube and De la Gardie repeated their joint view: the Tsar would get neither Tallinn nor Vyborg. They together feared above all the consequences of the loss of Tallinn to Sweden: with the loss of it “we”, i.e. Stockholm, would not be secure. Tessin reminded that Vyborg, the “key to whole Finland”, was more important to the realm than Tallinn. Possibly the best expert on eastern system of defense, the old trusted man of Charles XII, infantry General Hans Henrik von Liewen supported Tessin’s view. Both of them referred to the age-old position of Vyborg as a part of “Old Sweden”; it was not a conquered land and thus not to be ceded.<sup>48</sup>

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46 “[...] rädda Rijket uht totale ruin och undergång”. Rådsprotokoll 5 February 1720: 236v.–238v. (q. p. 237v.), 21 April 1720: 242–245, National Archives, Stockholm.

47 Rådsprotokoll 9 August 1720: 589–608, National Archives, Stockholm.

48 “[...] är den nyckelen till hela Finland”. Rådsprotokoll 10 August 1720: 632–655 (q. p. 636), National Archives, Stockholm. Usually the narrative on the peace negotiations is started from August 1720, but it leaves out the questions many times already touched on. Cf. e.g. Wensheim, *Studier kring freden i Nystad*. For a short narrative of negotiations, see

A momentary insight was to persuade Denmark to become an ally in a war against Russia. This idea forwarded by Tessin was soon actively forgotten and, as unrealistic as it was, it was no longer discussed. Instead, the role of St. Petersburg became a theme of thorough discussion only in August 1720 as Tessin again wrote in his report to the Council that so long as the Tsar had St. Petersburg, he was the master on the Baltic Sea. Tessin estimated also that to regain the Baltic lands some 50 000 men were now needed (cf. p. 276), out of whom 40 per cent could be recruited from “national” troops and the rest was optimistically thought to be allotted by Denmark and England. This plan did not win support among other Councillors and the Council turned without much ado and after a short comment from the ruler to questions that seemed more realistic.<sup>49</sup>

The Council realized the naval hegemony of Russia rather late but at the time fear of the consequences of Russia’s supremacy was all the more tangible. This was anyhow indicated by the worries about the consequences of losing Tallinn. As the end of the sailing season was drawing close in October 1720 information accrued that the Russians were building a huge invasion fleet in Estonia. In ruler’s view, the loss of Estonia and Livonia was a threat to Sweden just because Russia could attack from the Baltic with its powerful fleet whenever it liked. The proposals for measures by the Council remained feeble which was due to a wider understanding of the limitations of the economic resources. On one hand, an effective navy or galley fleet could not be build soon and, on the other hand, a combat-effective land army to defend Sweden did not actually exist in case the Russians invaded.<sup>50</sup>

When the Diet was convened also its role in planning the peace treaties was significant, although practical matters were decided by the Council and the high officials of the central administration. The orders of the Secret Committee to gain peace with Russia were read in the Council in November 1720. The cessions were to be as few as possible. As the Councillors discussed the matter, Tessin again brought Tallinn and Vyborg forward as alternative towns to be ceded. Again Vyborg featured as “the key to Finland”, this time by Johan Creutz and then by the war hero Carl Gustaf Rehnschiöld.<sup>51</sup>

The necessity to return to peace was mentioned in the beginning of 1721 more often than earlier. For instance, Arvid Horn, who gradually took the lead in the Council, stated that peace had to be concluded because the war could not be continued. He also referred to the report by ‘the Commission for Financial

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Rosén, ‘1697–1721’, pp. 174–86.

49 Rådsprotokoll 16 August 1720: 710–719, National Archives, Stockholm.

50 Rådsprotokoll 3 October 1720: 59–68, National Archives, Stockholm.

51 Rådsprotokoll 11 November 1720: 728–758 (q. pp. 734, 758), National Archives, Stockholm.



Administration' concerning the gloomy economic situation and to the statement of his colleague, Tessin, according to which the army regiments could hardly be maintained and that they could not take part in serious warfare.<sup>52</sup>

The dire situation in state's finances made all hopes to regain the lost territories and even to keep the possessed ones vanish in winter 1721, when the person responsible for finances, the energetic President of the State Treasury, from the year 1723 Councillor and a highly-merited officer from the close circles of Charles XII, Sven Lagerberg, introduced his plan for the budget. The budget for 1721 was thus drafted still in March, and the expenses for all the year were calculated to be more than 105 barrels of gold but income was optimistically estimated to be c. 69 barrels. The state budget showed over 35 barrel's deficit. Of the expenses three fourths went directly or indirectly to cover the needs of the military so that the situation was quite unbearable. Sweden could no longer finance its warfare and dangerous Russian incursions were to be expected immediately when the ice situation allowed. Temporary relief was gained by reducing salaries considerably: the military and the civil servants were paid half a year salary maximum. The development plans to build a galley fleet had to be dropped, and in general the situation in view of continuing the war seemed quite hopeless.<sup>53</sup>

The peace negotiations proceeded to concrete questions in early spring 1721 when the official Swedish delegation destined to Uusikaupunki, Councillor Johan Lillienstedt and County Governor Otto Reinhold Strömfelt were given instructions telling that in addition to the primary goal, namely peace, also an armistice as long as possible, lasting even decades came into question. Gustaf Cronhielm retorted, however, that in the latter case Russia could for a long time exploit the resources of all the conquered territories. Therefore he repeated his one and a half year old statement that it was better to conclude "an embarrassing peace" if only Finland could be immediately regained by it. Once again the Council collectively leaned towards a peace but in the end supported an armistice of a couple of years. The sessions were dealt with quite casually for Arvid Horn continued the discussions

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52 Rådsprotokoll 12 January 1721: 230, National Archives, Stockholm. *Statskommission* was established in the beginning of the year 1719 and its role was decisive in all state's questions of economy until 1726–1727 Diet. See esp. Häggman, *Studier i frihetstidens försvarspolitik*, pp. 60, note 2, 61–2; L. M. Bååth, Arne Munthe, *Kungl. statskontoret 1680–1930*, Kungl. statskontoret: Stockholm, 1930, pp. 36–7.

53 Still after the Great Nordic War the relative share of military of the budget remained high since in the first year after the peace (1722) it was 2/3 and in 1726 still 58 per cent. Rådsprotokoll 21 February 1721: 880–94, 2 March 1721: 1052–1067, National Archives, Stockholm; Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, pp. 312–3; Häggman, *Studier i frihetstidens försvarspolitik*, p. 78; Karl Åmark, *Sveriges statsfinanser 1719–1809*, Stockholm 1961; Wensheim, *Studier kring freden i Nystad*, pp. 144–5.

initiated by the ruler on the “possible” loss of Tallinn by stating that the present situation would not necessarily be the final. According to Horn, it was quite possible that the conjunctures would become advantageous to Sweden in the future. In view of the future security of the realm, it was in general most important to oust Russia from the Baltic Sea, although there were no forces to do it now. Cronhielm supported Horn’s proposal, all the other thirteen Councillors stayed silent.<sup>54</sup>

To conclude peace with Russia was the pivotal theme in spring 1721, and more so as the economic catastrophe of the realm was uncovered in its enormity. Sweden could not maintain its regiments all the year round, let alone to wage war efficiently. Still in the end of March the Councillors seriously discussed whether the plenipotentiaries destined to Uusikaupunki could be given the right to negotiate over the cession of Tallinn and with it over the cession of Estonia.<sup>55</sup>

Until April 1721 it had dawned on all Councillors who sat in ‘the Commission for Financial Administration’ how catastrophic the economic situation was, and it did not leave other alternatives than to conclude peace soon. Count Hans Henrik von Liewen, who had during the war served in Finland and been a trusted man of Charles XII, straightforwardly put that there were no chances to regain any of the lost territories. Field Marshal Carl Gustaf Dücker followed the tune but tried to speak for Vyborg: he wanted to have the possibility checked whether the monetary compensation to be had in exchange of Livonia could be exchanged to Vyborg because without it “we would not have a single fortress on that side”.<sup>56</sup> In this matter Tessin was consistent – still supporting the keeping of Vyborg. The musings of Councillors were most gloomy since the real intentions of the Russians now really frightened them. Gustaf Cronhielm even stated that “one could not believe or trust the Russians”, a fact that had been noticed in negotiating previous treaties.<sup>57</sup> However, everybody had by now realized that huge cessions were in any case coming. Wishful thinking was dissolved. Despair, fear, even an attitude of “let go” had taken it place.<sup>58</sup>

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54 Rådsprotokoll 17 February 1721: 810–827, National Archives, Stockholm; On Horn’s stance, see Wensheim, *Studier kring freden i Nystad*, p. 136. See also e.g. Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, pp. 304, 313.

55 Rådsprotokoll 28 March 1721: 1399–1426, National Archives, Stockholm; Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, pp. 314–5; Rosén, ‘1697–1721’, p. 181.

56 To the military fame of von Liewen and Dückerin interesting points are added by Antti Kujala (*Miekka ei laske leikkiä*, pp. 256–7), according to whom both of them were not willing to go to Finland to perform the task regarded as rather hopeless.

57 The supposed untrustworthiness of the Russians had been “known” in Sweden already for a century and as a matter of fact with about the same turn of words as Cronhielm put them. Kari Tarkiainen, ‘Faran från öst i svensk säkerhetspolitisk diskussion inför stolbovafreden’, in *Scandia*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 1974, pp. 36–9.

58 “[...] ty elliest hafwe wij ingen fästning på hela den sidan” (Dücker), “Rysserne äro ej att

The Council resumed discussions concerning the Russian demands of territory in the end of May. Nothing was written down in the minutes but the demands of the Tsar stayed exactly the same as they had been in the negotiations of the Aland Islands about three years earlier.<sup>59</sup> The Tsar intended to keep all other lands he had conquered but return Finland, “Vyborg excluded”. Councillor Axel Banér put it forward that a proposal should be made to the Tsar to pull down the fortress of Vyborg and make the town “an open one”. The majority of the Council, however, was of the opinion that Tsar would not accept it because he wanted to retain “the fortress as a buffer to protect St. Petersburg”. In this situation Arvid Horn, who had been born in Finland, asked his colleagues should the peace negotiators be allowed to make peace or should the Council trust the help of English fleet for Vyborg was certainly important to Sweden and “a key to whole Finland”. In Tessin’s and a few other Councillors’ opinion, the negotiators should be given powers to make peace according to their best understanding. In further discussions what was previously stated was now repeated, i.e. that the realm could afford only four months war effort. Until the beginning of June 1721 the mood in the Council was rather resigned. Erik Sparre summarised it by asking why to prolong the issue because peace was needed? Besides, the demobilisation of the regiments would somewhat alleviate the dire financial situation. However, the negotiators were sent in the beginning of June instructions telling that Vyborg, and as a matter of fact, the whole county of Vyborg should be retained.<sup>60</sup>

In the beginning of July 1721 the Council realized that the peace would practically be a dictated one. The Russian side had made its own stand consistently clear during the entire negotiations. The mood of the Council was now quite accurately reflected by Count Taube who had previously vehemently supported the continuation of the war and retaining all the territories. In his view the realm was in such a state that Sweden had to accept such a peace that was dictated (Sw. *förskriver*) by the Tsar. The Russians did not make any concessions. Also, for instance, the compensation of the loss of Livonia to Sweden was reduced to ten barrels of gold, i.e. about two million *riksdaler*. The Council regarded it as meager

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tro eller lita på” (Cronhielm). Rådsprotokoll 22 April 1721: 1795–1805 (q. 1798, 1799), 9 May 1721: 73–4 (summary of April discussions), National Archives, Stockholm; Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, pp. 315–6, 324; Wensheim, *Studier kring freden i Nystad*, ch. 4 and pp. 162–3, 204.

59 See for the peace conditions of Russians laid down soon after the defeat in Poltava (1709), Kujala, *Miekka ei laske leikkiä*, p. 239. Already then they demanded Ingermanland, Karelia i.e. Käkisalme county and Vyborg. Charles XII was not, however, willing to reduce the size of the realm.

60 Rådsprotokoll 25 May 1721: 167v.–168, 171 (q. 167v.); 27 May 1721: 192v.–193v. (q. 192v.), 8 June 1721: 255v.–259v.; cf. e.g. Wensheim, *Studier kring freden i Nystad*, p. 93.

which is easy to believe if one compares the sum with the deficit of the 1721 budget. Due to serious economic and military difficulties the proposal had to be accepted. Money was dearly needed and actually it was right away distributed to various targets, and partly already before it was in hand. And still the Council envisaged that if Sweden once more would rise, the compensation would be kept and the Livonia would be taken back. So some of the old defiance was still there, if not otherwise than on the level of rhetoric and to the joy of the inspecting members of the Estates who were to check the Council's minutes in due time.<sup>61</sup>

Defiance had disappeared in the beginning of September 1721 when the text of the peace treaty of Uusikaupunki, signed on the 30th of August, arrived in Stockholm. The Councillors as a body stated that the peace was a necessity to the realm. All the territories partly lost decades ago and the lands kept by the Tsar since autumn 1718 were written down in the final treaty. In the Council's opinion, the Russians should not be irritated, and the treaty was ratified on the basis of the Russian proposal. At the same time, the title of the Swedish ruler which was used in official occasions was changed in a way that the lost territories were no longer mentioned in it. Henceforth the ruler's letters and official documents bore the short phrase: "We N. N. the ruler of Sweden, Göta and Vend."<sup>62</sup> According to the peace treaty which was later published but not widely distributed, Sweden and Russia had struck *eternal* peace and friendship. Besides, the King of Sweden lifted all demands concerning the lost territories on his and his successors' account.<sup>63</sup>

That the Council feared Russians could be detected afterwards in many decisions it made. The memorandum by the Secret Committee, dated already 6th of July which gave instructions to the government after the peace treaty, was opened soon after the act of treaty. The Committee left it to the Council – actually ordered it – to discuss the reduction of the standing army by half immediately

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61 Rådsprotokoll 12 June 1721: 278v.–285, 1 July 1721: 387v.–389; Rosén, '1697–1721', p. 182; Aulis J. Alanen, *Suomen historia*, Vol. 9: *Suomen historia vapaudenajalla*, WSOY: Porvoo and Helsinki, 1963, p. 4.

62 For the change of titles from the end of the 17th century to the beginning of the 1720s, see *Sveriges regeringsformer 1634–1809 samt konungaförsäkringar 1611–1800*, Ed. by Emil Hildebrand, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1891, e.g. pp. 59, 86, 214; in detail Einar W. Juva, *Suomen suuriruhtinaskunta Ruotsin vallan aikana*, Otava: Helsinki, 1951; Leif Tengström, "Muschoviten... Turcken icke olijk". *Ryssattribut, och deras motbilder, i svensk heraldik från Gustav Vasa till freden i Stolbova*, Vol. 2, University of Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä, 1997, pp. 94–120; Torbjörn Eng, *Det svenska väldet. Ett konglomerat av uttrycksformer och begrepp från Vasa till Bernadotte*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 2001, pp. 207–13.

63 *Freds-Fördrag Emellan Hans Kongl. Maij:t vår Allernädigste Konung Friedrich den Iste Och Sweriges Rike Å den ena; samt Hans Czariske Maij:t Peter den Iste Och Ryska Riket å den andra Sijdan. Afhandlat och slutit uti Nystad I Stor-Fürstendömet Finland den 30. Aug. Samt Ratificerat den 9. Sept. Åhr efter Christi Börd 1721*, Stockholm 1721.

after the peace treaty. Carl Gustaf Rehnschiöld, who had gained fame in the war, doubted the rationale of the measure for, according to his view, the Secret Committee hardly had known how difficult the peace would be for Sweden. In Rehnschiöld's opinion the number of the regiments should rather be *increased* than reduced in the threatening situation. Finally the Council typically bypassed the issue, i.e. sent it to be inspected by the bureaus. The serious basic problems this stalling did not, however, alleviate.<sup>64</sup> In any case, the Council started only now concretely to discuss the problematic of returning to peace as an internal problem of the realm. Although demobilization was in this connection regarded as problematic the savings due to it were indispensable. Besides, the Council was of the opinion that it only fulfilled the hopes of the Estates. In the end, the reductions of troops were not as radical as the Estates had once proposed.<sup>65</sup>

## HOPES AND FEARS IN SOLVING THE PROBLEMS IN BUILDING PEACE

The basic result of the research is that it is difficult to speak of actual planning of the return to peace, rather the activity was *ad hoc* in which anticipation and estimations concerning the future leaned largely on hopes and fears. In spite of excellent and highly developed administration, the experiences of the situation after the peace of Westphalia (1648) were not utilized in Sweden. It was at the time when the country rose to be one of the great powers in Europe but even then there was not any consistent or clear policy line of how the realm could be steered to peace, although in hindsight it is easy to absolve the agents of the time since the return to peace was not particularly popular or necessarily even a desired state of affairs.

Until the ratification of the Uusikaupunki peace treaty, the Council paid amazingly little attention to anything else than foreign politics and its management. The main principle was that a peace had to be had – at least until the conjunctures would change the situation to become more favourable to the realm. Closing eyes from the problems of internal policy tells in its own way of the lack of planning

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64 Rådsprotokoll 4 September 1721: 13–37, National Archives, Stockholm.

65 Rådsprotokoll 27 October 1721: 755–759, National Archives, Stockholm; The memo of the Secret Committee (6 July 1720) printed in *Svenska riksdagsakter jämte andra handlingar som höra till statsförfatningens historia. Tidehvarfvet 1719–1800. Andra serien*, Vol. 1: 1719–1723, Ed. by Theodor Westrin, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1909, pp. 144–5; Häggman, *Studier i frihetstidens försvarspoliitik*, pp. 45, 78–9; cf. also Gottfrid Carlsson's review of Häggman's work in *Historisk tidskrift*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 1925, p. 87.

and plain despair in leadership. Issues were solely dealt with here and now, on *ad hoc*-principle. The Councillors hardly took a look into the future and their work was based on narrow wishful thinking of the conjunctures. Initiatives came usually from the outside; in addition to building an “enforced” peace, Sweden largely reacted to stimuli and did not act on its own. Seen from this basis, the return to peace or rather recovery from over twenty years of wartime can be regarded as a very good achievement because the realm did not fall apart, although its size was considerably reduced, and it could develop at least economically quite fast.<sup>66</sup>

The opinions of the Council analysed above may seem to be *only* opinions since no binding decisions were actually made by it on their basis. It is important to mention this as a point of source criticism but the analysis concerned the motives and views concerning future developments of the persons who were responsible for leading the realm. All Councillors were given the opportunity, and in certain critical voting situations a duty, to take part in making decisions. The Councillors undoubtedly represented the political and administrative elite of their times so that they were presupposed to work responsibly. Instead, the Queen Ulrica Eleonora or King Frederick I did not usually present their ideas in the Council, although the former dictated perhaps the most “sensible” comments for peace in the critical phase of 1719.

Especially when the negotiations of the Uusikaupunki peace were coming towards an end, many statements of the Council appear to a large extent be ‘talk to the minutes’. In practice the Councillors and Frederick I who ruled since 1720 have known about the earlier discussions or at least they should have known the earlier opinions. In this light, the snappish introduction of the same issues again and again appears peculiar. This can partly be explained by the dictates of the Forms of Government of the era of the Estates, according to which the activities of the Council were inspected afterwards in the Diet. In fear of misconduct it was reasonable to hold one’s tongue. The clear ‘twisting’ of the source material of the period under scrutiny does not, however, make it worthless to explain how the realm was led and to tell of the hopes and fears that the leaders of the state entertained in the beginning of the 1720s.

Notwithstanding, a surprisingly important factor in this connection seem to be the changes in the composition of the Council in the beginning of the era of the Estates. We saw in the analysis above how tiny the really active elite within the Council was. This relative scarcity of leaders is in itself an interesting fact in view of the research of ‘hopes and fears’. The changes at the very top of the Council were reflected in the continuous resumption of the discussion of the issues which in hindsight cannot be regarded as a particularly effective way to act. The change

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66 For more, see Karonen, ‘Coping with Peace after a Debacle’.

of the ruler in itself in autumn 1718 and in autumn 1721 (better to say in spring 1720) three times partly explains the “memory gaps” in the organization. Besides, the most respected politician of the period in early years of the era of the Estates, Arvid Horn, was absent from the foreign political leadership and from the activity of the Council almost a year from April 1719 until the beginning of 1720. The earlier strong man, Georg Heinrich von Görtz, had been eliminated already in the beginning of the period under scrutiny. In time, the man to replace Horn as the President of the Chancellery (a sort of “PM”), Gustaf Cronhielm, was dismissed from the Council by the Queen in December 1719 for half a year. In practice all key figures who knew of foreign politics or who were politically responsible for it were replaced in 1719–1720. In consequence, there was shortage of foreign political expertise what in part explains the groping activity in building peace.<sup>67</sup> The decision-making concerning the return to peace run in a circle. The use of the “knowledge of history” was thus almost non-existent when the Council concentrated in its meetings on listening to and accepting the minutes of the last session.

The long run memory of the organization suffered from bad amnesia since the leadership of the realm was completely carried away by the foreign politics for a long time. Therefore the religious rhetoric disseminated in the beginning in the name of the Council nicely reflects the general procedure and is a symptom of problems underneath the surface. Although the religiosity of the texts meant for people and importance of God were emphasized in the way presented in the beginning of this article, in the Council’s discussions arguments of the religious kind were rare. Pragmatic and day-to-day administration attracted all the attention. Nevertheless, the Councillors who mentioned God were undoubtedly the lights of the Council, like Nicodemus Tessin and Arvid Horn.<sup>68</sup> The religious argument was all the more visible in meager dissemination of information on the Uusikaupunki peace. The declaration of gratitude read in all churches of the realm on the 15th of December, 1721 hardly had anything else to say than eulogize the glory of peace and praise the great role the Royal Majesty played in achieving it. Instead, the concrete peace conditions or their severity were not even mentioned in the declaration.<sup>69</sup>

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67 On the nomination policy succinctly see e.g. Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, pp. 102–3, 110–1, 138–9, 186–7; also biographies of the Councillors mentioned in the footnote 23.

68 See for God’ wrath in the Council Rådsprotokoll 26 July 1719: 521 (Tessin), On Arvid Horn’s religious kind of statements Rådsprotokoll 16 January 1721: 295, National Archives, Stockholm.

69 *Lof- och Tacksäjelse-Skrift Öfwer Den genom Guds hielp och Bistånd lyckeligen erhåldna Freden, Med Czaren af Muscow, Uppå Hans Kongl. Maj:ts Nädigste Befällning Upläsen i alla Församlingar öfwer des Konungarike och derunder Liggande länder och Herrskaper den 15.*

Despite the abasement of the realm, hopes of regaining the lost lands and old great power position were not buried. This was to be seen in the titles of the officials<sup>70</sup> as well as, or above all, in the Vyborg question. Hopes to get the town and adjacent lands back lived long. The administrative organizations of the lost territories were for years after the peace settlement of the Uusikaupunki called “the Bishopric of Vyborg” or “Chapter of Vyborg”<sup>71</sup>. Peter the Great had already in October 1721 assumed the title of the “Emperor of the Whole Russia” and attempted soon to gain recognition for it, among others from Sweden. The issue was sensitive to the Swedish government but also in this connection Vyborg question surfaced. The Swedes wanted to exchange Vyborg to the recognition. The Russian envoy in Stockholm did not even consider negotiations on the matter. The matter was, however, so important to the Council that it continued seriously to discuss the regaining of Vyborg, although the marking of the border in the terrain (and consequently the sovereignty of the Swedish state) had not been completed and the Russian fleet maneuvered ominously in order to speed up the solving of the border issue.<sup>72</sup> In spite of the pious orders of the peace treaty and independent on the fear of Russians, the Council and the powerful Estates still clenched their fist in the pocket for they still believed in the coming of favourable conjunctures. So that still in the Diets of 1726–1727 and 1731 the Secret Committee gave powers to the Council to oust Russia from the Baltic Sea and restore the earlier power of the State when the situation was ripe for that<sup>73</sup> – “A new day can change everything”.

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*decembris år 1721*, Stockholm 1721; Kangas, *Uudenkaupungin “siunattu” rauba*, p. 153.

70 So e.g. the Councillor Count Carl Gustaf Dücker managed the Bureau of War responsible for the land-army over one decade as an official President of the Collegium because the ex officio office that belonged to him could not be handed to him since he had been nominated in last phases of the war the Gouvernor-General of Livonia which office he could not receive. In the same manner Councillor Hans Henrik von Liewen was nominated the President of the Tartu Court of Appeals. See also the paragraphs 38–39 of the 1719 Form of Government which declared how the privileges of the nobles of Estonia, Livonia and Germany were to be reinforced when the area “happily returns under the Swedish Crown”. *Frihetstidens grundlagar och konstitutionella stadgar*, p. 20.

71 See e.g. Rådsprotokoll 16 January 1723: 106–7, 1 August 1723: 68v, National Archives, Stockholm.

72 On the discussion e.g. Rådsprotokoll 9 June 1722: 397–398, 25 June 1722: 608–611, 649–652, 9 July 1722: 813–21, 17 July 1722: 870–877, 879–884, National Archives, Stockholm; Helander, Daniel Niklas v. Höpken, p. 159; Jägerskiöld, ‘1721–1792’.

73 E.g. Juva, *Suomen tie*, pp. 85–6; Jägerskiöld, ‘1721–1792’, pp. 40–1.





PART IV  
FRAGILE AND  
OPTIMISTIC FUTURES



# PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SWEDISH HISTORY WRITING

*Jouko Nurmiainen*

It is, as a matter of fact, for the service of the youth that this little work has been composed, and one supposes that some utility can be expected thereof, until something better on this subject may see the light of day.

Should this little draft be of the intended utility, one's wish has been fulfilled; even if one has given a reason for something better and more useful to see the light of day in the future, one is still completely satisfied.<sup>1</sup>

These words are borrowed from the introductory parts of *Sammandrag af Swea-Rikes historia*, a history book written for a general audience in the middle of the 1770s by a professor of the University of Lund, Sven Lagerbring. He was one of the leading experts of the time on medieval Scandinavia and one of the most influential academic historians in Sweden. During his last years, he also sought commercial profit with his works, together with a well-known Swedish Enlightenment publisher, translator and historian called Carl Christoffer Gjörwell. Although

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1 “Til Ungdomens tjenst är egenteligen detta lilla Arbeta författat, och man förmodar, at någon nytta därutaf kan wäntas, til des något bättre i detta ämne kan komma i dagsljuset.”; “Skulle detta lilla Utkast kunna göra den påsyftade nytta, har man wunnit sin önskan; om man ock gifwit anledning, at framledes något bättre och nyttigare kommer i dagen, är man ock aldeles förnögd.”, Sven Lagerbring, *Sammandrag af Swea-Rikes historia, Ifrån De Äldsta til de Nyaste Tider* [...], Stockholm, 1778, a foreword by the author to the first edition in 1775, the first quotation is from the first paragraph of the foreword of seven unnumbered pages; the second quotation is from the very end of the same foreword. – This essay has been written while working in the project “Enlightened Loyalties. The Conceptual Construction of National, Cultural and Political Identities and Loyalties in North-Western Europe, 1750–1800”, funded by the Academy of Finland.

his commercial success remained debatable to some extent, for instance when compared to that of the poet Olof von Dalin, who had published an extensive historical series some decades earlier, this smaller volume by Lagerbring that is quoted above did attract a certain number of readers, despite various problems connected with it.<sup>2</sup>

In these quotations, as generally in Swedish eighteenth-century history writing, attention is paid to the *benefits* of history for the youth and for generations to come. History was still perceived, according to classical models, as moral literature intended both to divert and to teach its readers (especially through *exempla*, as we shall see below). Anders af Botin, who in the 1760s had written an extensive series of works on Swedish history, summed up this dual principle in his strong criticism of Dalin's work by quoting Horace: *Omne tulit punctum, qui misquit utile dulci*. For Botin, this reflection – “He won universal approval who combined the useful with the agreeable” – was a good enough motto for any historian.<sup>3</sup>

This is a view that fits well with the general tendency in European eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century historiography, on one hand to confirm a belief in the possibility of change and even progress, and on the other hand to justify a certain historical optimism. According to Hayden White, this was an agenda that was possible for several historians of that time because their perception of the world was realistic rather than idealistic and could easily be reconciled with the idea of accumulating knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

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2 On the commercial success of works by Lagerbring, esp. by comparison with those of Dalin, see Peter Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty. Social Upheaval, History Writing, and the New Public Sphere in Sweden, 1740–1792*, University of Stockholm: Stockholm, 2003, pp. 96, 115–7; Erik Bollerup, ‘Lagerbrings Svea Rikes Historia: Tillkomst, utgivning, mottagande’, *Scandia*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 1970, pp. 306–9; Jakob Christensson, *Lyckoriket. Studier i svensk upplysning*, Atlantis: Stockholm, 1996, p. 82; Sten Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria*, Vol. 3: *Frihetstiden*, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1978, pp. 662–72 (Dalin), 678–87 (Lagerbring).

3 [Anders af Botin,] *Anmärkingar vid Herr Hof-Cancellerens och Riddarens Olof v. Dalins Svea Rikes Historia*, Stockholm, 1771; the volume was published anonymously, but Botin has been identified as its author; on Botin as a historian, see Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria*, Vol. 3: *Frihetstiden*, pp. 675–8. The major work of Botin, mentioned here, is *Utkast till svenska folkets historia*, Stockholm, 1757–1764.

4 Hayden White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1973, pp. 47–8. See also Ernst Breisach, *Historiography. Ancient, Medieval, Modern*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1983, pp. 205–17, in which progress in eighteenth-century history writing is discussed first, before analysing the boundaries of historical rationalism and then combining these factors together in the British historiography of this era; See also the analysis of the combination of universal history and eighteenth-century historical narrative; Johnson Kent Wright, ‘Historical Thought in the Era of the Enlightenment’, in *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, Ed. by Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza, Blackwell: Malden and Oxford, 2002, pp. 123–42.

In other words, the principles of history writing of this time included an emphasis on temporal, linear change, and also the presentation of these changes as positive and desirable. The difference between this and the kind of history writing that is often described as medieval, where the affairs of this world were either static or moving towards the end of time and life beyond death, and the morals of which mainly concerned the salvation of Christian souls rather than the success and happiness of earthly societies, was already significant in the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

In different parts of Europe, from the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century at the latest, a historical literature was developing in which the present was understood as being in a causal relation to the past and thus explainable through it. At the end of the eighteenth century, some representatives of this kind of history writing started to believe in progress in a new way that did not, however, challenge their own hypotheses or perceptions of the world, and in a “victory of reason” that would soon take place and towards which the world and its civilisations were progressing. The belief in historical progress was conceived by the philosophical avant-garde who wrote in the major languages of Western Europe. In terms of historiography, this phenomenon nevertheless has appeared rather strange to historians of later centuries. In the history of philosophy, it has been explained by Alasdair MacIntyre as a failed attempt of the Enlightenment to “justify morality”, or by R. G. Collingwood as a failure “to bring about a millennium in which the rule of reason shall have been established”.<sup>6</sup>

True belief in progress can be seen as an extreme manifestation of the rational conception of history characteristic of the Enlightenment. Correspondingly, there were also parallel historical interpretations that emphasised temporal change more moderately. Many eighteenth-century Swedish historians could be regarded as illustrative examples of this kind of view. The idea of change, even of some

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- 5 On medieval historiography in general, see e.g. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1946, pp. 52–6; Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986, pp. 206–7; Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen, ‘Lopun odotusten kesyttäminen ja keskiajan historianteologian synty’, in *Lopun leikit. Uskon, historian ja tieteen eskatologia*, Ed. by Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen, Gaudeamus: Helsinki, 1999, pp. 59–84; Gabrielle M. Spiegel, ‘Historical Thought in Medieval Europe’, in *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, Ed. by Kramer and Maza, pp. 78–98; Breisach, *Historiography*, pp. 121–70.
- 6 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory*, second corrected edition, Duckworth: London, 1985, pp. 51–61; Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp. 78, 84–5; see also White, *Metahistory*, p. 48. On the relation between *historia magistra vitae* and the new belief in progress during the age of the Enlightenment, see e.g. Kari Saastamoinen, ‘Eskatologia, edistys ja historia’, in *Lopun leikit*, Ed. by Lehtonen, pp. 108–17, esp. pp. 113–4.

kind of progress, is present in their texts without being actually explicated.<sup>7</sup> It is therefore interesting to ask what was changing, according to these historians, in the continuity formed by past, present and future, and how this change was happening. It is thus a matter of what could be deduced about the future from the past and the present, and how sure or clear such conceptions of the future were in relation to change and stability. Moreover, it is important to remember the above-mentioned dual function of history as offering both aesthetic pleasure and moral utility.

However, while the existence of history writing was motivated by its moral services to coming generations, it was becoming, in Sweden as elsewhere, a more and more political genre. Influential persons and politicians of various estate and party groups were able to ensure not only that their own actions were presented in the best possible light, but also that the history of the distant past was written in a way that was favourable to the groups they represented. Works of this kind became more common despite the consensual tendencies that dominated in Sweden. They emphasised the “official ideology” created by certain inviolable official values such as the liberty of the “Swedish men” and the teachings of the Lutheran state church. This ideology created a new basis for a conception of citizenship founded on liberty and consensus.

At the same time, however, this ideology also made it possible to use the rhetoric of the “sacred” values of the state to defame political opponents by means of partial history writing. Especially in Sweden of the end of the Age of Liberty and the Gustavian era, there were clear propagandistic attempts to influence the perceptions of the world of contemporaries and of coming generations through certain interpretations of the past. One illustrative example from 1769 is Johan Hartman Eberhardt’s anti-aristocratic work on the history of the Swedish nobility, but the same applies more generally to all works of history that were written in the 1770s with the support of Gustav III, the purpose of which was to present the party system of the end of the Age of Liberty in a very unfavourable light.<sup>8</sup>

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7 See Nils Eriksson, *Dalin – Botin – Lagerbring. Historieforskning och historieskrivning i Sverige 1747–1787*, Göteborg, 1973, pp. 208–19, which claims that this world view based on historical change was only a variety of the belief in progress that had not been formulated or elaborated (*ibid.*, p. 209). See also David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1990, pp. 301–2, *passim*, in which a parallel case of the eighteenth-century Scottish historians and their more cautious views about progress and its inevitability in comparison with their English colleagues is analysed.

8 On the final years of the Age of Liberty, see e.g. Johan Hartman Eberhardt, *Försök til en pragmatisk historia om frälse-ståndet i Sverige ifrån de äldsta til våra tider*, Stockholm, 1769; see Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, pp. 184–91; Peter Hallberg, ‘Den förlorade friheten. Historieskrivningen och samhällskritik under sen frihetstid’, in *Riksdag, kaffehus och*

There are numerous other examples, and this use of history for propagandistic political purposes is of course not only a Swedish phenomenon. For instance, J. G. A. Pocock refers to the hero of the Scottish Enlightenment, Adam Smith, and his very similar general concern about the role of “modern” history writing in debates and struggles, and the fact that this partiality constituted a threat to the usefulness of history. Instead of struggling, history should, according to Smith, present the real events of the past and their internal causalities.<sup>9</sup> It would be possible to find more views of this kind especially in the context of Scottish and English political culture,<sup>10</sup> in which pre-censorship did not regulate the forms and goals of literature to the same extent as in some countries of eighteenth-century continental Europe.

In the Age of Enlightenment, history was explored with a renewed interest, and this curiosity was dictated by both political and moral views, as well as by a genuine desire for knowledge about the past and its events. It is revealing that at least the Swedish history writing of the era could combine, side by side, elements of all these motives in one and the same volume. Thus interpretations that in the eyes of a twenty-first-century reader look clearly modern were combined with elements that are foreign to modern history writing. An example would be the above-mentioned work by Eberhardt, in which the past could be interpreted in a way that suited the interests of a particular political group, while the content of the historical outline confirmed generally accepted conceptions of the pre-eminence of the common good as the foundation of moral judgements, and the form of the outline followed the contemporary norms for a scholarly work of history.<sup>11</sup>

The historians used the past to explain both the positive and negative aspects of the present. This could be done by rhetorical means, including the use of

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*predikstol. Frihetstidens politiska kultur 1766–1772*, Ed. by Marie-Christine Skuncke and Henrika Tandefelt, Atlantis and SLS: Stockholm and Helsingfors, 2003, pp. 339–52, esp. pp. 346–51. On the Gustavian era, see Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, pp. 232–78.

9 J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, Vol. 2: *Narratives of Civil Government*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1999, pp. 325–6; Hallberg, ‘Den förlorade friheten’, pp. 340–1; Pocock’s analysis of Smith is based mainly on the volume *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, Delivered in the University of Glasgow by Adam Smith, Reported by a Student in 1762–63*, Ed. by John M. Lothian, Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale, 1971.

10 See e.g. Karen O’Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment. Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997, pp. 4–5, *passim*.

11 See Eberhardt, *Försök*, *passim*; its author uses footnotes more extensively than most of his contemporaries, and as his source material he uses the best Swedish history books then available; these include the works of Dalin and Botin and of Jacob Wilde, who wrote in Latin. On the use of sources in the Swedish history writing of the era, see Eriksson, *Dalin – Botin – Lagerbring*, pp. 54–79, 104ff, *passim*.



metaphors, parallels and irony.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, both Swedish and other historians considered that they were writing not only for their contemporaries but also for *future* readers, and they believed that they themselves constituted a part of the continuity of accumulating knowledge. This was the view of Sven Lagerbring, quoted above. Although eighteenth-century historical works (as is still the case) referred to the future only extremely rarely, it nevertheless appears that Swedish eighteenth-century historians in one way or another perceived the transition from the past to the future *via* the present as a causal, uninterrupted process.<sup>13</sup>

The aim of this study is to analyse the ways in which Swedish historians of the Age of Enlightenment conceived the future. In the light of what has been said above, it is necessary to begin with a detour, with some examples of what different eighteenth-century authors held to be progressive and reactionary features in past societies as well as in their own time. By mapping changes that were seen as having already taken place in the continuity of time, we can better understand the changes that the authors of historical works believed were taking place in their own society – in other words what the historians actually understood by the progress of societies, particularly with regard to the future.

After this, it will be possible to reflect on what eighteenth-century history books explicitly say about the moving forces of history and morality, and finally to estimate how certain and of what nature the future appeared to the authors. In other words, to what extent was the future seen as determined and to what extent was it an uncertain realm of hopes and fears?

The sources of this analysis are a selection of Swedish eighteenth-century history writing. It comprises historical works by the above-mentioned Sven Lagerbring, Olof von Dalin, Anders af Botin and Carl Christoffer Gjörwell. These works were united by their ambition to reach a wider, non-academic public including the higher social strata. They were also made important by their semi-official status: especially Dalin and Botin, but also Anders Schönberg, another historian, wrote their works under the protection of the state and even received financial support from it. Thus their interpretations of the past, the present and the future were not only random voices in the general noise of the epoch, but rather keys to the world as it was understood and recognised by the power elite – the administrators of the realm, as well as, in some cases, by prominent figures of the opposition.

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12 See White, *Metahistory*, pp. 45–80; this is what Collingwood calls “a backward-looking or more strictly historical development”, Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 78.

13 This conclusion has to be drawn by the reader him- or herself from the historical works themselves and from their narrative structure, since it was typical of Swedish eighteenth-century history that it did not deal explicitly with the theory or philosophy of history; these aspects were mentioned only briefly in the forewords of some larger historical works, see Eriksson, *Dalin – Botin – Lagerbring*, pp. 17–51.

## THE *PRIMUS MOTOR* AND DIRECTION OF HISTORY

In order to understand works of history as narratives structuring the past, perhaps the most important factor that shapes the point of view and stance of the works is what or who they talk about. With regard to the past–present–future temporal continuity, it is interesting to ask whether history is written from the perspective of individuals or of some kind of communities, and whether history books deal with the recent past or ancient times, long periods or rapid changes. If modern and eighteenth-century history writing are compared with each other, it is fairly evident that a much bigger part of Swedish eighteenth-century historiography was devoted to long periods and the destinies of entire peoples and realms with a perspective that went beyond the horizon of individual lives.

If we look at the choices of general themes, this kind of history writing closely resembled the Gothicist trend of the previous century, which made the ancient Goths the ancestors of the Swedes. In the spirit of its most famous representative, Olof Rudbeck the Elder, it made no distinction between reliable sources and fiction. Gothicist history was written to give the Swedish empire of the seventeenth century a mythical and magnificent past. This was already far from the traditions of medieval chronicles, in which history was mainly written shortly after the events had been personally experienced by the writers. In the 1670s, Rudbeck even tried to prove in his *Atlantica* that the Atlantis that had sunk into the waves had, in reality, been ancient Scandinavia. The importance of a critical use of the sources was, however, assimilated during the knowledge-oriented eighteenth century. This applied to historiography to the extent that various Old-Testament-style genealogies deriving the Swedish people from the sons of Noah were dropped from newer works or at least were replaced by a chronology of ancient Scandinavian rulers.<sup>14</sup>

However, the legacy of the previous century still appears in the Age of Liberty in the choice of subjects, in which the heroes of the stories were not yet particular kings or other national heroes but rather the entire Swedish people (*det svenska folket*).<sup>15</sup> In its structures and attitudes, this has common features not only with Gothicism, but also with the Old Testament and the history of the people of Israel that it contains, although the Swedish eighteenth-century historians, educated in the Lutheran tradition and rhetoric, do not seem to have made explicit parallels

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14 On Gothicism and seventeenth-century Swedish history writing in general, see Sten Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria*, Vol. 2: *Stormaktstiden*, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1975, pp. 284–305.

15 On the history of the Swedish concept *folk*, see Bo Lindberg, *Den antika skevheten. Politiska ord och begrepp i det tidig-moderna Sverige*, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien: Stockholm, 2006, pp. 124–70.

between the “chosen people” and the Swedes. Various prophetic heroes who rise from the ranks of the commoners to fight for their suffering people against the tyranny of foreign and selfish rulers – these included both the Danes and the Roman Catholic Church under the Pope – nevertheless start to appear in a new way in some works of history in the latter half of the Age of Liberty.

The most obvious example of such a work is Anders af Botin's *Utkast till svenska folkets historia*, published in the form of several separate leaflets from 1757 to 1764. Botin was a civil servant, an archive clerk in Stockholm, working outside the universities. In its structure, his work is a compromise between the traditional, extensive national history which proceeds from ancient to contemporary times and a collection of biographical anecdotes. The main part of the work consists of a very systematic presentation of the “periods” (*tidehvarf*) of Swedish history, from the mythical, obscure times of the ancient Scandinavian *fylke*-kings of Svea to the rise of Gustav I Vasa, at which point Botin's work ends. In addition to a systematic analysis of the shifts and turns in the history of the entire people, the work also contains small biographical sections with both favourable and very unfavourable characterisations of the most important persons in each period in Swedish history. It is illustrative how Botin, at the end of his book, condemns the deeds of Bishop Gustav Trolle in favour of King Christian II of Denmark against the Swedish nobles in the Stockholm Bloodbath at the beginning of the sixteenth century: “No one is to be found in Swedish history who has done the Fatherland more evil, who has done it with less reason, and who has done it with more obduracy than Gustav Trolle.”<sup>16</sup>

In a similar way, Botin elevates to the status of heroes unselfish persons who had been particularly willing to sacrifice themselves and give up their own interests and the idea of personal profit. One such is Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson, who became a hero because he rebelled against King Eric of Pomerania in order to defend the common good and to save his country from all forms of evil:

It was only his intention to avert the misery of the commoners, the oppression of liberty, and the general enslavement of the Swedish people; yet these were not mighty enough to move his weapons, the ultimate remedy, before everything else had been tried that might move King Eric either to compassion or to justice.<sup>17</sup>

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16 “Ingen kan upvisas i Svenska Historien, som gjort Fäderneslandet mer ondt i värdet, som gjort det med mindre skäl, och som gjort det med mer förhärdelse, än Gustav Trolle”, Botin, *Utkast*, p. 735.

17 “Allmogens elände, frihetens förtryck och Svenska folkets allmänna trældom, voro endast i hans afsigt att afvända; desse voro dock ej mäktige att röra hans vapen, såsom det yttersta botemedlet, innan alt annat vore försökt, som kunde röra Konung Erik antingen till medlidande eller rättvisa”, Botin, *Utkast*, p. 678.

Other examples might be quoted as well. Botin's melodramatic expressions contain a fair dose of patriotic rhetoric, but the emphasis is still on the clash between the common good and private selfishness and on teaching virtuous patriotism to the readers. In a way, it is all about the basic, official virtues of eighteenth-century Sweden, which fill almost every political text of the time regardless of the writer or the group he belongs to.

We shall return to the analysis of the morality contained in this way of thinking, but first it is important to note the role accorded by Botin and other historians to certain individuals as agents of historical change. Particular persons could, according to this view, be the cause of the sufferings of the people, just as they could be their saviours. The simplified definition of the good ruler as one whose virtues outweighed his vices fits this picture well. For instance, a nobleman called Anders Schönberg, who was for a long time the official historian of the realm (*historiographus regni*) in the second half of the eighteenth century, argued this way and also emphasised, in his history of the world, that it had to be this way because there were hardly any rulers who did not have any vices at all.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the freedom of movement that individuals, including rulers, enjoyed, like their weight in the general balance of history, was not seen as unlimited; rather the fates of realms and peoples seem to have depended, in one way or another, on various material and immaterial resources that were built into historical structures or communities.

Together with the common level of virtue, the economic resources, the size of armies that could be mobilised and the level of the arts and sciences were more important factors for success than the strength or weakness of individuals. This is shown by the following extract from Botin's reflections on the Kalmar Union, which he described as the misfortune of both Sweden and Denmark:

Far from obtaining respect in neighbouring countries and strength against its enemies, the North was never more despised, its weapons never less feared, the name of Sweden never in greater dishonour than during the time of the Union [...] The enemy which was not the equal of Denmark alone and which had been

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18 Anders Schönberg, *Hjältars Sammanliknande Historier, På Baron Holbergs Sätt*, Första Delen, Stockholm, 1756, p. 4: "Det wore en falsk beskrifning på en god Regent, at säga: det den endast borde så kallas, som ej ägde några fel eller swagheter. Då skulle deras antal wara altför ringa, så länge Regenter äro människor, hwilkas oföränderliga egenskaper är, at ei kunna befrias från swaghet och fel. Den förtjenat därföré likafullt namn af en god Regent, hwars dygder äro större än dess fel, då dess högsta åstundan under alt är, at fullgöra en Regents skyldigheter." See also Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, p. 77; on Schönberg's position as a politician and a member of the Hat party, see Gunnar Kjellin, *Rikshistoriografen Anders Schönberg. Studier i riksdagarnas och de politiska tänkesättens historia 1760–1809*, Lindstedt: Lund, 1952, *passim*.

crushed by Sweden alone, was dangerous, obstinate, victorious against the united North.<sup>19</sup>

The lack of strength and honour of the realms is in this interpretation linked to the aristocracy's appetite for profit and struggles for the Union crown, as well as to the Danes' general neglect of the well-being of the Swedish people, a situation that only got worse because of the power ambitions and treacherous attitudes:

The [Catholic] religion, selfish in its ambitions and preposterous in its doctrines, conquered the minds of the common people with ephemeral ceremonies, confounded reason with subtleties and quibbles, and sold the treasures of Heaven for earthly dross.<sup>20</sup>

Botin's interpretation of very central aspects in the transition between the Middle Ages and early modern times fits well with the official doctrines of eighteenth-century Sweden, including the use of Lutheran vocabulary. Historians indeed very frequently used it without any particular theological aims when it fitted their other ambitions. For instance, in the following enumeration the Reformation is but one of many turning points in secular history:

Moreover, during this Epoch, the foundation was laid for the very first change in the ways of thought and living that mankind ever has undergone, through four important inventions: Gunpowder, Printing, Luther's Reformation and the discovery of the New World.<sup>21</sup>

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19 "Långt ifrån att tjena till anseende hos Grannar och till styrka emot fiänder, var Norden alldrig mer föräcktad, dess vapen alldrig mindre frucktade, det Svenska namnet alldrig i större vanheder, än under förenings-tiden [...] Den fiände, som icke var vuxen Dannemark enskildt, som hade blifvit krossad af Sverige ensam, var farlig, trotsig, segrande, emot det förenta Norden", Botin, *Utkast*, p. 530.

20 "Religionen, egennyttig i sina afsigter och orimelig i sina Lärosatser, intog Menighetens sinnen med flygtiga Ceremonier, villade förnuftet med finheter och ordspel, sålde Himlens hälfvor för jordiskt slagg", Botin, *Utkast*, p. 569. About the negative influence of the Catholic church, see also other passages in Botin's work, e.g. *ibid.*, pp. 191–202, in which a three-phase plan of Rome to conquer the North is explained and analysed.

21 "Annars lades i detta Tidhvarfvet grunden till den allraförsta förändring i människoslägtets tanke- och lefnads-sätt, som den någonsin undergått, genom fyra viktiga Påfund, Krut, Boktryckeri, Luthers Reformation och Nya Världens upptäckande", Botin, *Utkast*, pp. 668–9, emphasizes by Botin. Cf. Christensson, *Lyckoriket*, pp. 41–2, in which it is emphasized that for many Swedish Enlightenment historians it was self-evident that a man became free only after and because of the Lutheran Reformation.

It can thus be argued that the historians of the Age of Enlightenment structured their works and their fundamental understanding of the past through major turning points in the millennial history of Sweden and Europe. In addition to Botin's works, a similar phenomenon is also visible in those of Dalin and Lagerbring. In their works, especially Botin's, individual stories and destinies as well as generally judgements about individuals' actions also play a significant role. However, the big changes that structured the history of realms and peoples do still appear in this interpretation, albeit only when periods longer than individual lives, the achievements of which overlap each other chronologically, are analysed.

In other words, there was a structural, meta-level temporal change in history, although for instance Botin does not provide any clear indications of it. By inverting Botin's view of the ancient Scandinavian societies as primitive and unhappy, we can still get an idea of how he understood long-term chronological change. Their conditions then appear as the opposite of those of Botin's own time:

A people that lived only by warfare and piracy, by hunting and agriculture; a people that knew no other honour than that won by a strong arm, no other exercises but those that required the qualities of the body; a people that lived only unto itself, cut off from all interaction with foreign peoples, and because of that, without the possibility to be enlightened by their example; and finally a people that did not have any amenities, necessary for the growth, functioning and persistence of science, had no Enlightenment to love, no occasion to learn, no time to practise the sciences.<sup>22</sup>

Historical change or progress does, however, not seem to have been a steady process. The conditions of the Swedish people appear to have been more difficult at times. Nevertheless, the majority of the changes can be seen as cumulative and irrevocable in nature, as when wicked ancient customs that constituted a threat to the well-being of the state, to religion, morals and manners and to reason itself were got rid of.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, a history of the Swedish people like Botin's

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22 "Ett Folk, som blott lefde af krig och sjöröfveri, af jagt och åkerbruk; Ett Folk, som ej vefste af annan ära, än den, som vans genom en stark arm, ej af andra öfningar, än dem, som fordrade kropps egenskaper; Ett Folk, som lefde innom sig sjelft, söndradt ifrån allt omgånge med främmande Folkslag, och således utom tillfälle att upplysas af deras exempel; och ändteligen ett Folk, som saknade alla beqvämlichkeiten, nödvändige till Vetenskapers uppmantran, drift och bestånd, hade ej nog upplysning att ällska, ej nog tillfälle att lära, ej nog tid att idka Vetenskaper", Botin, *Utkast*, p. 71.

23 On this, see Botin, *Utkast*, p. 66, including Botin's own illustration of a slow and gradual long-term change from the primordial, dark past to more modern and more enlightened times: "Vi få under de följande Tidehvarfven se, huru desse Svenska Folkets ällste häfder

obviously did not believe in the complete disappearance of gained knowledge and arts, and it considered knowledge itself a guarantee of progress, one of the moving forces of history. Even Olof von Dalin, particularly reactionary when compared to other Swedish historians of the eighteenth century, wrote the following in his great work, *Svea rikets historia*:

Thus many have believed that erudition, taste and wit have done the world more harm than good and even been the reason for the fall of nations. Far from it: they are innocent, although they have not had time to appear in the good and virtuous time. They may as little be blamed for causing something evil as the sun, when it shows the way for a malefactor by its light.<sup>24</sup>

The history of morals and virtues could, however, constitute an exception, advancing at its own pace among the disciplines of wisdom. This becomes clear when the focus is directed onto the most important fundamental values of Sweden under the rule of the Estates: liberty, bravery and patriotism, and their preservation and growth from one era to another. In Olof von Dalin's historical works, these virtues are present as the direct motors of history. On the varying strength of these virtues depended the happiness and misfortunes of mankind:

Mankind has sometimes been more virtuous and sometimes more wicked: great societies have been seen taking steps, through virtues and vices, towards transformations that are inevitable insofar as no event or rare person prevents them: a people has risen naturally through simplicity, honesty, honour, chaste manners, frugality, work, industry, strength, knowledge, light, courage and victories to glory and happiness, from where it has fallen through riches, luxury, vanity, concupiscence, pusillanimity, slackness, idleness, ignorance, poverty, mean minds and all kinds of vices, back into darkness, slavery and misery. Such is the upheaval of human nature.<sup>25</sup>

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först tjent till grund åt de första skrifne Lagar, och sedan efter hand blifvit ändrade, ökte och förbättrade. Vi får se, med hvad långsam möda de grymmaste och skadeligaste oseder blifvit utrotade, och att urgamle plägseder, ehuru skadeliga i sig sjelfva, ehuru stridande emot Statens välstånd, emot Religionen, Sedoläran och sjelfva förnuftet, dock ej på en gång kunna affskaffas, och sällan lyckeligen utrotas, utan det sker småningom och med mycken lämpa.”

24 “[S]å har mången trodt, at lärdom, smak och witterhet giordt i werlden mer ondt än godt och även warit orsaken til Nationers undergång: långt derifrån: de äro oskyldiga, fast de icke hunnit fram i den goda och dygdiga tiden: de böra likså litet skyllas för at orsaka något ondt som solen, då hon med sit lius wägleder en illgerningsman”, Olof von Dalin, *Svea rikets historia ifrån dess begynnelse til våra tider, Tredje delen, första bandet, som innehåller k. Gustavs och k. Eriks tider*, Stockholm, 1760, p. 5.

25 “Menniskliga Släktet har stundom warit dygdigare och stundom odygdigare: man har sedt

Dalin's history writing is in this respect easy to identify as a product of the same era as the "mercantilist" sumptuary laws. This talk about the corrupting effect of wealth on virtue should, however, not be interpreted as indicating that Dalin thought that the wealth and happiness of eighteenth-century Sweden would automatically lead to an unhappy future of poverty and slavery. It is rather a literary device for emphasizing the importance of moralising history writing for readers confronted with the caprices of fortune. In this respect, the Swedish history writing of the 1760s had more in common with earlier tendencies that had been in favour elsewhere in Europe in the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century than with the critical and philosophical historiography of the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

The history writing of the Age of Enlightenment also got its internal rhetorical tension from the direction that the progress of the common good and the success

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stora samhällen göra de steg genom dygder och laster til de omskiften, som äro oundgängeliga, så framt ingen särdeles händelse eller sällsynt person dem återhåller: Et Folk har stigit naturligt-wis genom enfaldighet, redelighet, ärlighet, menlösa seder, tarflighet, arbete, flit, styrka, kundskaper, lius, tapperhet och segrar til ära och lycka, hvarifrån det åter genom rikedomar, yppighet, högmod, wälluster, klenmodighet, weklighet, lättja, okunnighet, fattigdom, gemena sinnen och alla slags odygder fallit i mörker, trældom och elände. Sådan är mennisklige Naturens omhvälfning", Dalin, *Svea rikets historia, Tredje delen, första bandet*, pp. 2–3; an interestingly similar argument is found in Lagerbring, *Sammandrag*, the second unnumbered page of the preface by the author.

- 26 On the nature of European historiography during the eighteenth century, see e.g. Wright, 'Historical Thought', esp. pp. 132–3, 138; Breisach, *Historiography*, pp. 193–5, 199–205, 215–7; on the connections between "older French Enlightenment thought" and Swedish social philosophy of the mid-eighteenth century, see Arndt Öberg, *De yngre mössorna och deras utländska bundsförvanter 1765–1769. Med särskild hänsyn till de kommersiella och politiska förbindelserna med Storbritannien, Danmark och Preussen*, University of Uppsala: Uppsala, 1970, pp. 62–73. "Old-fashioned" rhetoric can also be noticed in other places in Dalin's text: e.g., Dalin, *Svea rikets historia*, pp. 4–5, in which, almost in an opposite way to the general ideals of the Enlightenment era that emphasized knowledge and erudition, he presents the following ideas, which bring the Sapiential Books of the Old Testament to the reader's mind: "Jag will icke härmed säja, at de mäst uplysta tider, eller då den bästa smaken regerat, warit de rikaste på dygder: tvertom, uplysningen i bokvett har ofta til innt annat tjent, än at wisa efterwerlden de lastbaraste åldrar: jag will blott säja, at Sanningen genom det Almännas omdöme har altid sina wissa tidevarf, at segra, dels i dygder, dels i snillegåfvor, fastän oftast händt, at de icke båda på samma tid inträffat." "I do not by this wish to say that the most enlightened times, that is when the best taste has reigned, have been the most virtuous; on the contrary, elucidation in literature has often no other purpose than to point out the most sinful ages to posterity: I will simply say that according to the judgement of the public, the truth always has its particular periods, when it prevails, partly through virtues, partly through talents of the mind, although it mostly has happened that they do not both coincide at the same time."



of nation were taking. From this point of view, the lesson of history should be that in addition to the happiness of individuals, also the happiness of entire peoples fluctuated, not necessarily in an unpredictable way, but rather in some kind of relation to the virtues that prevailed. This vision remains somewhat vague because it is unclear whose virtues were generally the most significant. At least in the light of the above quoted extracts of Botin's works, it nevertheless seems that a people with selfish rulers could lose its liberty and suffer misfortune. Nevertheless, it seems that such epochs had been experienced a rather long time before, and that by the "enlightened times" of the second half of the eighteenth century they had been shaken off, at least if we follow the interpretations of writers like Dalin or Botin, who were committed to the official ideology of rule by the Estates and supported by the central government in Stockholm.<sup>27</sup>

We should, however, bear in mind that the writers who took part in the debates on the privileges of the Estates during the last years of the Age of Liberty could very well interpret the past as well as the present as less than perfect if this was politically advantageous. In particular, there were attempts to prove that the status and privileges of the noble estate lacked historical legitimacy, and this in turn could be used by pamphleteers who demanded changes in the system of estate privileges.<sup>28</sup>

History writing thus became more polemical in the course of the eighteenth century, and not only in Sweden. According to Collingwood, who has described European historiography in general in the Age of Enlightenment, this was a

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27 This kind of official commitment was a typical feature of eighteenth-century Sweden generally, and authors were regarded as civil servants or as the servants of the state. The most concrete example of this was, of course, the office of the "official" historian of the realm, *historiographus regni*, and his deputies. On the official status of historiography in eighteenth-century Sweden, see e.g. Bo Bennich-Björkman, *Författaren i ämbetet. Studier i funktion och organisation av författarämbeten vid svenska hovet och kansliet 1550–1850*, Svenska bokförlaget: Stockholm, 1970, pp. 202–50, esp. pp. 225–38, see also Sven Delblanc, *Ära och minne. Studier kring ett motivkomplex i 1700-talets litteratur*, Bonnier: Stockholm, 1965, p. 81; Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, pp. 54–5, 101–2, *passim*.

28 See Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, pp. 184–204; Hallberg, 'Den förlorade friheten'; as an example of anti-noble history-writing see Eberhardt, *Försök*; on the pressure to change the privilege system and Alexander Kepplerus' memorandum on the so-called privileges of the *Odal* ('Allodial' or 'Yeoman') Estates and the pamphlet debate of the end of the Age of Liberty, see Alexander Kepplerus, *Borgmästarens och riksdags-fullmäktigens ifrån Lovisa stad, herr And. [sic] Keppleri Memorial, rörande privilegier för borgare- och bonde-stånden*, Stockholm, 1770; Jouko Nurmiainen, 'Gemensamma privilegier för ett odalstånd. Alexander Kepplerus som borgmästare och samhällstänkare', in *Riksdag, kaffehus och predikstol*, Ed. by Skuncke and Tandefelt, pp. 171–90; Jonas Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk. Nationell och politisk självbild i Sverige från sen stormaktstid till slutet av frihetstiden*, Symposium: Stockholm and Stehag, 2000, pp. 394–418.

matter of the polemical and not-back-but-forward nature of the Enlightenment itself, which was manifested by the fact that not even Voltaire or Hume truly reformed the methods of historical research, but relied on the critical method developed in the seventeenth century by the Bollandists and by Jean Mabillon for hagiographical studies. A part of the same phenomenon was the fact that, partly for political reasons, the thematic focus was starting to move away from antiquity to contemporary history and interpretations of history began to emphasise matters of contemporary debate instead of interpreting the past on its own terms. This did not mean, even to Collingwood, that history should not still be written with respect for the past. Rather, a dualism was appearing: “[A] backward-looking or more strictly historical development which should exhibit past history as the play of irrational forces, and a forward-looking or more practical or political development.” Examples of the former group were Gibbon and Montesquieu, and of the latter Condorcet.<sup>29</sup>

In its own context, the distinction seems very appropriate – we can but remember the already mentioned Adam Smith’s concern about the use of history in political struggles, which were about to threaten the usefulness of the entire discipline. When we reflect on the question of whether the politicisation of Swedish history in any way differed from the trends in history written in English or French, it becomes obvious from what has already been said that there were significant differences. In Sweden, history writing did not develop a scientific, critical attitude towards its sources before the second half of the eighteenth century. To exaggerate slightly: if elsewhere in Europe the past had been approached on its own terms since Giambattista Vico,<sup>30</sup> Swedish Gothicism still accommodated the kind of backward-looking historiography described by Collingwood. It is also clear that, by Collingwood’s definitions, the Swedish historians that have been presented here had more in common with Gibbon and Montesquieu than with more radical Enlightenment philosophers. In fact, Sweden was still writing medieval rather than contemporary history.

## MORAL EXEMPLA AND HISTORIA MAGISTRA VITAE

As has been suggested above, one of the fundamental tasks of history in Sweden of the latter half of the eighteenth century was to teach the readers and future

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29 Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp. 77–81.

30 Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 77; Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, pp. 202–8; Breisach, *Historiography*, pp. 187ff.

generations by *exempla*. This way of thinking stretches back at least to medieval Western historiography, but in Sweden in the Age of Enlightenment it seems to have come from the English philosophy of history of the early eighteenth century, as Sven Delblanc remarks in his study on eighteenth-century literature, quoting Bolingbroke: “History is philosophy teaching by example.” Delblanc also states that regardless of certain modern features in eighteenth-century history writing, like the critical method, the majority of historians of that time would have agreed with this statement, where history was seen as an inexhaustible source of examples, both cautionary and instructive.<sup>31</sup>

It is interesting that the most obvious Swedish representatives of this genre are from the 1750s and the 1760s. Among these historians, Peter Hallberg distinguishes especially Anders af Botin, Carl Christoffer Gjörwell and Anders Schönberg, the importers of historical biography to Sweden.<sup>32</sup> Botin’s work *Utkast till svenska folkets historia* has already been mentioned, and we have also seen examples of its moralising, judgmental tone in the extracts about Gustav Trolle and Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson. Gjörwell and Schönberg, for their part, both published their own versions and translations of the Norwegian-Danish Baron Ludvig Holberg’s very popular work on the lives of famous men and women, almost simultaneously in 1755 and 1756.<sup>33</sup> Among the biographical works that enumerate moral precepts, at least Johan Arckenholtz’s *opus major* on Queen Kristina in several volumes should also be mentioned. Arckenholtz, a royalist anti-French pamphleteer, who had fled Sweden – dominated by the Hat party – to Frederick I’s German principality of Hesse-Cassel, where he became court librarian, originally published his work in French. In 1760 Gjörwell published a shortened Swedish edition of it. Among other things, it contains a description of the qualities of a good ruler based on the example of Gustavus II Adolphus, in which once again the importance of a reasonable king is underlined as a guarantee of the happiness of the people.<sup>34</sup>

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31 Delblanc, *Åra och minne*, pp. 86–7; see Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, p. 68; Eriksson, *Dalin – Botin – Lagerbring*, p. 6; the quote from Bolingbroke is from the following text: Henry St. John, Viscount of Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, 1752, ed. in the book *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, Vol. 2, London, Henry G. Bohn, 1844, p. 177. On medieval history writing and *exempla*, see Spiegel, ‘Historical Thought’, p. 79.

32 See Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, pp. 73–80.

33 Anders Schönberg, *Hjältars Sammanliknande Historier, På Baron Holbergs Sätt*, Första Delen, Stockholm, 1756; Carl Christoffer Gjörwell, *Stora och namnkunniga människors lefvernes-beskrifningar och characterer*, Stockholm, 1755–1756. See also other books published by Gjörwell during the following decades.

34 See Johan Arckenholtz / Carl Christoffer Gjörwell, *Drotning Christinas Arbeten och Märkvärdigheter. Utgifne på Fransyska af Herr Johan Arckenholtz, på Svenska öfversatte, kortare sammadragne och med Tilökningar försedde af Carl Christoffer Gjörwell*, Vols 1–2, Stockholm,

Swedish eighteenth-century historians repeatedly defined morals and righteousness as being more important than the great deeds and transient glory achieved by kings and rulers. According to Sven Lagerbring, the purpose of history is precisely to reveal false objects of adoration whose virtues are not elevated enough to be models for young persons:

It is one of the duties of history to wipe the make-up off the painted idols and show them as they are in themselves, so that true virtue and merit may be engraved in young souls when they see that vice gets the dishonour that it deserves and virtue enjoys the fruit of its rightful state.<sup>35</sup>

It is thus a question of moral philosophy, where virtue is by its nature internalised and where external and superficial beauty is treacherous. This is even clearer in the following lines of the quoted text. There, Lagerbring explains that virtue is best rewarded by personal, inner conviction and satisfaction, which is born out of the individual's ability to do his duty. This moral philosophy fits extraordinarily well with Lutheranism and its conception of man, and also with the idea of *historia magistra vitae*: virtuous persons of the past were rewarded not only by the inner peace of their souls, but also by posterity, being remembered and revered as models for future generations.

In this sense, a good, sagacious historian becomes something of a judge, who has the power to condemn the infamous to oblivion and cherish the memory of those who are worthy of it. Botin expresses this idea, associated with reverence for God and the preservation of virtue, as follows:

Without reverence for God, without esteem for virtue, and without love of mankind, a historian has missed his purpose, and made something that is worse than nothing if his work does not encourage the understanding to reflection and enlightenment, the heart to improvement and comfort, the imagination to a heartening rest and useful pastime.<sup>36</sup>

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1760, e.g. Vol. 2, p. 171.

35 “Det är en ibland Historiens skyldigheter, at aftorka sminken från de målade beläten, och wisa dem sådana som de äro i sig sjelfwe, på det rätt Dygd och Förtjenst måtte inpräglas uti unga själar, då de se, at odygden får den wanheder som den tilhör, och at dygden njuter frukten af sit wärda förhållande”, Lagerbring, *Sammandrag*, the second unnumbered page of the foreword.

36 “Utan vördnad för GUD, utan aktning för dygden, och utan kärlek för människo-slägtet, har en Historicus förlorat sitt ändamål, och gjort något, som är värre än intet, om icke hans Arbete tjenar åt förståndet til eftertanka och uplysning, åt hjärtat til förbättring och hugnad; åt inbillningen til liflig ro och nyttigt tidsfördrif”, [Botin], *Anmärkingar*, pp. 3–5; see also Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, pp. 73–4. It belongs to the picture that the historian

As Botin sees it, the dual task of the historian both to divert and to disseminate knowledge emphasises morality in a way that was common in the latter half of the Age of Liberty in Sweden, which from a philosophical point of view remained a rather centralised and traditionalist country. Indeed, Peter Hallberg has stated that the capacity of history to advance the moral state of society, as the Swedish historians and also the Swedish Academy of sciences believed, was “distinctly anti-Rousseauan”<sup>37</sup> in a way that emphasised the use of all the sciences, including history, for the amelioration of general conditions and standards of living. A consensual civic morality based on the idea of a social contract and social progress seems to have been so self-evident in Sweden in the late Age of Liberty that philosophical tendencies which admired the original state of nature had to be resisted strongly.

This placing of history at the service of contemporary politics does not mean that Swedish historians were not truly interested in the past. For instance, Lagerbring especially emphasised that historical persons were to be judged by the conditions of their own times and contexts. In his own work, he clearly confesses that even good and cautious rulers were not always able to do anything about unfavourable circumstances, and that sometimes the only viable option was not to try to achieve something but rather to avoid the greatest misfortune:

When one carefully examines the hidden laws of Providence, one almost always finds that one has oneself been the cause of a less desirable fate, [...] however, with the exception of certain times, when no human prudence seems to be enough. Nevertheless, if one cannot always become happy through prudent circumspection, it is still a great achievement if the worst degree of misfortune is avoided. The law of nature and the wisdom of the state convince [us] of these truths.<sup>38</sup>

It remained the historian’s task to interpret the events of the past in a way that rewarded the virtuous with the acknowledgement they had deserved, and which, according to Lagerbring, was also due to them because it was a matter of truth comparable to the laws of nature or political wisdom.<sup>39</sup> This may sound a very strong

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who had committed these sins was, according to Botin, Olof von Dalin, whose *Svea rikets historia* was the original object of the heavy criticism in the initially anonymously published volume from which the quotation has been taken.

37 Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, pp. 52–6.

38 “[D]å man noga betraktar Försynens dolda lagar, finner man nästan alltid, at man sjelf varit orsak til et mindre önskeligt öde, [...] wissa tider likwäl undantagna, då ingen människlig försiktighet synes wara tilräckelig. Icke destomindre, om man intet alltid med eftertänksam försiktighet kan blifwa lycklig, är dock mycket wunnit, om högsta målet af olycka undwikes. Naturens lag och Stats klokheten öfwertygar om dessa Sanningar”, Lagerbring, *Sammandrag*, the second unnumbered page of the foreword.

39 See also [Botin], *Anmärkingar*, p. 3, where a similar moral thought is explained *not* through the laws of nature, but through the Divine Providence: “[I]ntaga på et angenämt sätt

thesis, as it suggests that the results of moralising history writing would resemble those of the exact sciences. The idea is less odd if we compare it to MacIntyre's and also to Collingwood's interpretations of the universalistic ambitions of eighteenth-century moral philosophy, mentioned at the beginning of this article.

The contemporaries of the Enlightenment did not yet pronounce such views, which would have relativised the possibilities of philosophy and history. Rather, Lagerbring, in his definition of morally elevating history, advanced practical arguments for why historical examples were particularly suited for the education of the youth:

History teaches through examples. This teaching has the capacity, even when reason has not, to understand the link between fundamental principles and their consequences. A child loves its parents before it knows why, and in the same way tender minds can be accustomed to love [their] King and Fatherland, before they can grasp the necessity thereof.<sup>40</sup>

The pedagogical significance of the patriotic virtues of history is thus multi-layered. According to Lagerbring, history taught love of the fatherland, even when the pupil could not understand why this love was necessary. According to this view, virtues were the pre-requisites of great deeds. The development of these virtues required moral righteousness, and there was no method more effective for the assimilation of morality than teaching by way of *exempla*, especially at the beginning of the process, in the training of the young, in other words posterity.

In this respect, history writing can, in fact, be seen as having repeated history, not only in the transmission of information and narration in a way that seems obvious at the beginning of the twenty-first century, but also by showing posterity what choices had been made in the past. Thus it became possible for new generations

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Läsarens inbillning och uppmärksamhet, inplantas tillika i hans hjärta kärlek för dygden, hat til lasten, vördnad emot GUDs Försyn: hans förstånd uplyses genom exempel af andras vett, varnas genom efterdömen af andras fåkunnighet.” On the idea of exploring the laws of history and the laws of nature, see Saastamoinen, ‘Eskatologia, edistys ja historia’, p. 115.

40 “Historien underwisar genom exempel. Denna underwisning har rum, äfwen då förnuftet intet är i stånd, at fatta sammanhanget imellan grundmeningarne och deras fölger. Et barn älskar sina Föräldrar, innan det wet hwarföre, och på samma sätt kunna späda sinnen wänjas, at älska Konung och Fädernesland, innan de kunna begripa nödwändigheten därutaf”, Lagerbring, *Sammandrag*, the second unnumbered page of the foreword. Cf. also Anders af Botin, *Af stora och namnkunniga svänska mäns lefverne första stycket. Om then kongl. prinsen Styrbjörn*, Stockholm, 1750, in which the history is defined as a science that tells us about the truth, *sanningen*, by using examples; *vetenskap, som skall uppbygga oss genom sina exempel*; see also Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, pp. 76–7, where this text by Botin is quoted.

and posterity<sup>41</sup> to make their own choices in the future on the basis of those values that these historians thought were the right ones – in other words, the purpose of history seen as the teacher of posterity was to ensure that the generations to come would assume their responsibility for preserving virtue. The right-minded should continue to do deeds that would be recorded in the annals of history. Thus the values of the future would, regardless of a rising philosophical belief in progress, remain similar to those of the past, and indeed of the present.

At the same time, the historians' own idea of the past world sometimes involved what looks like arrogant second-guessing. If the ignorant darkness of ancient times had at last been abandoned for the civilisation and light of the eighteenth century, would not the same process also continue after the eighteenth century? If the examples chosen from the past by the historians were very often *warning* examples, as we have seen above in the quotation about Gustav Trolle, why did historians themselves think that they could offer the future generations *models* to follow? The explanation lies in the paradoxical understanding of moral history as a discipline that was super-temporal and thus "a-historical".<sup>42</sup>

This intemporality of moral virtue was a different thing from the previously mentioned polemical tendency of history writing in the Age of Enlightenment, although both used history as a means to achieve goals that had little to do with the past.<sup>43</sup> The use of history as a source of *exempla* for the understanding and assimilation of universal morals did, however, contain a logic of cause and effect, as did the kind of history that was interested in the past on its own terms. In moral history, the continuities of cause and effect were not only temporal but also intemporal, from which we can deduce that they applied not only to the past but also to the present and the future. Lagerbring's advice on how history should be read underlines this intemporal nature of morality. The consequence was that at any rate it was not dates or years that made history valuable:

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41 On the concept of posterity, see e.g. Delblanc, *Åra och minne*, pp. 65–73.

42 See Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp. 83–5, where this philosophical problem of the Enlightenment historians is recognised.

43 The really new development was a history that believed in progress at all levels, and which was replacing moral history. This new way of thinking gave history a completely new temporal dimension, as Kari Saastamoinen has stated, see Saastamoinen, 'Eskatologia, edistys ja historia', p. 115–7. If the future was completely different from the present, the same thing must apply to the past as well. This, in turn, made human history so capricious that it was no longer possible to examine it in the same way as nature. According to this traditional view, the eras of the past had been regulated by their own principles, which made it impossible to compare them with the present and thus to learn from the past, and this in turn made the future uncertain and unknown. This is claimed by Saastamoinen to be a sign of a modern way of thinking, along the lines of Reinhart Koselleck.

History shall not be read only as a work of memory, or as a pleasant pastime. To know when a king or other famous man was born, when he died, when a battle was fought, and other things of that kind, although this information is not avoidable, makes the reader neither wiser nor more sensible.<sup>44</sup>

The analysis of events and changes pointed at the continuity and the intemporality of morals and virtues. The effective task of history in describing the temporal world and its events was in other words the preservation of its intemporality and thus the creation of a future similar to the present in its moral values, while at the same time the “applied” sciences and arts were expected to develop.

From this point of view, Swedish eighteenth-century history writing, which simultaneously believed in both change in the material world and the intemporality of moral virtues, can be described as progressive in its perception of the world but static in its perception of man. In the history of nations, there were periods when development or progress was faster or slower, but the process was inevitable. Certain unchangeable virtues, on the other hand, still remained worthy of being pursued in all ages – in other words, according to this view, the fact that the world changed did not mean that mankind had to change. Historical examples were tools with which historians felt they were teaching posterity, the future, about intemporal questions of moral philosophy that would continue to be of relevance. From this point of view, the world of eighteenth-century historians was, regardless of the changes that took place in it, complete in itself, and for this reason the future was not to be feared. It was only important that the *wisdom* accumulated over time was transferred to the generations to come, this being the obvious, indeed self-evident, task of history writing. As Schönberg put it:

To superficially treat the benefit and usefulness of history would be to say what everyone knows and no one denies. No one may doubt the benefit that the biographies of great men bring to history in general.<sup>45</sup>

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44 “Historien bör intet läsas, såsom et blott Minnes-Werk eller såsom et behagligt Tidsfördrif. At weta, när en Konung eller annan widfrågad Man är född, när han död, när et Fältslag blifwit hållit och mera dylikt, oaktat denna Kunskap intet kan ombäras, gör likwäl Läsaren hwarken klokare eller förståndigare”, Lagerbring, *Sammandrag*, the second and the third unnumbered pages of the foreword.

45 “At widlyftigt omröra Historiens fördel och nytta, wore at säga det, som alle weta och ingen bestrider. Ingen lärer äfwen twifla om det gagn stora Mäns Lefwernes-Beskrifningar tilbringa Historien i allmänhet”, Schönberg, *Hjältars Sammanliknande Historier*, foreword; see also Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, p. 77.



## CONCLUSIONS

Especially in very centralised countries like Sweden, history writing was to a large extent a tool for conveying the official ideology of the state, although in some cases it was also used as a weapon against it. The images of the past were loaded with values that reinforced the moral conceptions of what was good and important in the present. Above, we have traced Swedish eighteenth-century historians' characterisations of past societies and their virtues, which were significant with regard to the sense of historical change and its quality, as well as for people's possibilities to influence a changing world. Although these works of history speak directly about the future only very rarely – almost only when defining posterity as their audience – it is possible to deduce the main features of the authors' visions of the future from their attitudes to the past and the present.

In eighteenth-century Sweden, history was written in a way that presented the past as a continuity of causes and effects and no longer as a struggle determined by fortune and providence or as panoply of lofty genealogies. This meant that the present was seen as the result of past events, and this in turn implied that the future was viewed as the expected outcome of events in both the past and the present. By estimating whether history was regarded as static or as undergoing gradual sweeping changes, we can deduce whether Swedish eighteenth-century historians and those who commissioned their works (often the Estates of the Diet or the King) expected change or stability from the future. In other words, did history progress or not? And if it did, in what way, and was the process desirable or not, automatic or the result of purposeful efforts? And were the changes by their nature permanent and accumulative, or could the direction of the process change, and the happiness, wealth and glory of a people or realm not only grow but also diminish?

In the light of the sources that have been used here, it seems that there was indeed an idea of historical development or progress, which was manifested to some extent in the accumulating material wealth and the increased ease of life, and above all in the growth of political virtues and knowledge of them. On the other hand, the moral lessons remained the same, and mankind did not need to adapt spiritually to this external progress. This is significant with regard to the conceptions of the future, since insofar as the historians' conception of the future was static and intemporal, the future was logically defined as the image of the present, while insofar as history has a direction, it was necessary to know both the perceptions of the historical present and the way in which it was changing. Only then is it possible to obtain an idea of the historical perceptions of the future. Although the focus in Swedish historical works of the Age of Liberty was on the official self-perception of the state, there were differences in emphasis in the texts, depending on who was the author. The question to what extent it was

a matter of political and ideological differences between the writers and to what extent differences in the “scientific” aspects of the interpretations and even in the professionalism of the writers remains as yet without an answer and will require considerable further research.

Finally, it might be interesting to relativise the historians’ own opinions of history, its state and prospects in Sweden in the eighteenth-century by means of a brief glimpse of a non-historian’s view. In 1755 Baron Carl Fredrik Scheffer, an enthusiastic physiocrat, Sweden’s former envoy in Paris, who was soon to be given the responsibility the education of the Prince Royal (the future King Gustav III), made a speech at the Academy of Science in which he analysed the state and prospects of different sciences and disciplines in Sweden. In the part of his speech that deals with erudition (*vitterhet*) he states:

If we further cast our eyes upon history, we shall find practised pens, whose already given proofs should convince us that the future will not lack remembrance-books [histories] of past eras, nor lack in these remembrance-books the order and clarity, the discernment, the truth and the pleasant style of writing by which historians of other countries have made their names and the events they have written about immortal.<sup>46</sup>

In other words, an enlightened, cultivated amateur and patron of learning understood the tasks of history in almost the same way as the historians, but there are two significant differences. First, as befits a man of his standing, the noble writer emphasises personal honour and memory, in almost the opposite way to Lagerbring. Second, Scheffer does not seem to have shared the common inhibitions of historians with regard to speculating about a near future that included – not unexpectedly – the huge quantity and high quality of Swedish historical literature.

Indeed, it seems that at least at a general level, history writing in eighteenth-century Sweden did not have any particular reason at least to *fear* the future, although particular writers might have been worried about the future sales of their works. On the other hand, one can suppose that history writers did not have any particular reasons to place more *hopes* on the future of their country and its

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46 “Kaste vi vidare våra ögon uppå Historien, så finne vi dertil inöfvade pennor, hvilkas redan aflagde prof böra öfvertyga oss, at framtiden icke lärer sakna Minnes-böcker öfver de förlutne tider, ej heller sakna i desse Minnes-böcker den ordning och redighet, den urskilnings gäfv, den sanning och det behageliga skrif-sätt, hvarigenom andre Länders häfde-tecknare gjort deras namn och händelserne, de skrifvit om, lika odödellige”, Carl Fredrik Scheffer, *Tal, Hållit för Kongl. Vetenskaps Academien vid PRAESIDII afläggande, Den 2 Augusti, år 1755*, Stockholm, 1755, pp. 5–6.

people than what they anyway believed was their destiny. The rational belief in progress, characteristic of the period, did comprise a very optimistic conception of the future as not only advantageous, but also *certain*, and thus not an object for speculation.

## NEW VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

### Bodily and Mechanical Conceptions of the Political Community in Eighteenth-Century Sweden

*Pasi Ihalainen*

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, throughout Europe, the political community was still often described in fatalistic terms on the basis of analogies between the state and the inherently diseased human body. In the course of the century, more dynamic descriptions of the body and the state as constructed systems, the functioning of which the political agents could actively influence, emerged. In this chapter, I shall explore this modernisation in political analogies and mentalities that enabled contemporaries to view the future of their society in more optimistic terms. The transition was by no means a simple, dichotomous or linear one; the parallels of body and machine could be put to so many creative uses in different political contexts. Yet the linguistic expressions of this gradual transformation in political analogies and mentalities have received all too little attention in previous research on eighteenth-century Sweden, which provides the object of our study here.<sup>1</sup>

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1 One of the few extensive and analytical discussions of machine analogies (in the German principalities) is Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Der Staat als Maschine. Zur politischen Metaphorik des absoluten Fürstenstaats*, Historische Forschungen 30, Duncker & Humblot: Berlin, 1986, esp. p. 21. Related analogies have also been discussed by Gerhard Dohrn-van Rossum, 'Organ, Organismus, Organisation, politischer Körper', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Ed. by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze und Reinhart Koselleck, Klett-Cotta: Stuttgart, 1978, pp. 519–60, which summarises much of older scholarship in different languages, and by David Wootton in 'Liberty, Metaphor, and Mechanism: the Origins of Modern Constitutionalism', in *Liberty and American Experience in the Eighteenth Century*, Ed. by David Womersley, Liberty Fund: Indianapolis, 2006, pp. 209–74. For an analysis of bodily and mechanical analogies in English parliamentary and public debates, see Pasi Ihalainen, 'Towards an Immortal Political Body: The State Machine in Eighteenth-Century English Political Discourse', *Contribu-*

In order to increase our understanding of the modernisation of these key analogies of the political community, I shall analyse selected instances of them in Swedish political discourse in the Age of Liberty (1718–1772) and the Gustavian era (1772–1809). I shall focus on the use of analogies at the level of two elite groups, the leading Lutheran clergy and economic thinkers, which represent two extremes of political debate – that is the spiritual and secular intellectual elites of the realm.<sup>2</sup> The aim is to understand some basic assumptions of the eighteenth-century Swedish political culture as expressed through analogies that were shared by almost everyone within the elites. We are actually approaching a type of “political mentality”, or the ways in which the core of the political community and, in principle, the community as a whole conceptualised itself, still fearing collective “diseases” and other bodily weaknesses while simultaneously adopting new, more dynamic conceptions and strategies in collective “life coping”. Such a development made it easier to hope for a better future for the community. In the long run, changes in the normative ideology articulated by the political elites would also affect conceptions of the political community and strategies of “life coping” among the lower orders.

In Sweden, this transition was subtle, following general Western European trends and more particularly constitutional changes at home with some delay. The Age of Liberty was characterised by a considerable weakening in the position of the previously absolutist monarch as the head of state, the rise of the autocracy of the Diet of four Estates (Nobility, Clergy, Burghers and Peasantry), the emergence of an early form of representative government and the rise of political parties.<sup>3</sup>

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*tions to the History of Concepts*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2009, pp. 4–47. For Swedish developments in political and economic thought, see Sten Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria. Frihetstiden*, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1978, and Sten Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria. Gustavianska tiden*, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1981; Tore Frängsmyr, *Svensk idéhistoria. Bildning och vetenskap under tusen år*, Vol. 1: 1000–1809, Stockholm, 2000; Bo Lindberg, *Den antika skevheten. Politiska ord och begrepp i det tidig-moderna Sverige*, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien: Stockholm, 2006. – Research for this essay has been financed by the Academy of Finland.

- 2 I favour the technical term “analogies” to that of “metaphors” because the phrase “body politic” was so fixed in political theory that most writers regarded it rather as a concept than as a creative metaphor. They often truly assumed a connection between the contexts of nature and politics (or economics) and not merely alluded to similarities. Likewise, “machine” was understood as something more than just a metaphor in describing the functioning of the complex political system. See Dohrn-van Rossum, ‘Organ, Organismus, Organisation, politischer Körper’, p. 520, and Wootton, ‘Liberty, Metaphor, and Mechanism’, note 32; As to the concept of “the political community”, I am using it here to refer to an entire semantic field used to describe the state, realm and civil society. See Lindberg, *Den antika skevheten*, pp. 57–8.
- 3 Harald Gustafsson, *Political Interaction in the Old Regime: Central Power and Local Society in*

Such constitutional development meant that the political body could be seen in more pluralistic terms than before. This was an era of intensifying contacts with Western European Enlightenment discourses in science, medicine and politics. It was also an era of an emphasis on utility and potential innovation in political thought and practice. The Gustavian era, however, led to the reintroduction of an authoritarian monarchical government, which considerably retarded such modernisation in political thought and effectively restored bodily imagery, which actually had never been rejected in a Lutheran political culture extolling unity and consensus.

## THE SWEDISH MECHANISATION OF THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

In the early eighteenth century, bodily analogies were used widely to support traditional, stable and mostly monarchical conceptions of the political community. Classical political philosophy, which still guided academic teaching in politics everywhere in Europe, taught that the political community and the body were analogous and comparable in their structure and functions. The same was echoed by the Christian idea of the members of the congregation constituting the body of Christ – a body whose members were unequal and all had their proper functions, thus making schism unthinkable. Furthermore, medicine based on humoral pathology was seen as a practical art capable of explaining political diseases and providing analogous cures for them,<sup>4</sup> no matter how sceptical people may have been about the actual ability of early modern medicine to cure illnesses.

In the seventeenth century, René Descartes' mechanical theory of autonomously moving and machine-like animal bodies provided new possibilities for analysing the political community through a combination of bodily and mechanical language. Thomas Hobbes already saw the body politic as a kind of clockwork with wheels and springs, and soon the political system was being viewed not only as a body but also as "the machine of the state" or as "a political machine" (Germany 1673; England 1683). Mechanical parallels were used even if the correspondence was not very clear. This was the case in iatromechanics, a leading school in European medicine in the early eighteenth century, which considered the human body a

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*the Eighteenth-Century Nordic States*, Studentlitteratur: Lund, 1994, pp. 11–12, 157–8.

4 Dohrn-van Rossum, 'Organ, Organismus, Organisation, politischer Körper', pp. 522–4, 533, 549; Stollberg-Rilinger, *Der Staat als Maschine*, pp. 36–7; Lindberg, *Den antika skevheten*, p. 91.

machine. As no clear distinction between mechanical and living bodies was yet drawn, the mechanisation of all aspects of human life did not lead to a rejection of bodily analogies either.<sup>5</sup> However, the conception of the political system as a machine-like entity distanced itself from classical political philosophy and supported beliefs in the system as capable of achieving progress if effectively steered. Mechanical thinking thus allowed theorists to view politics as a linear rather than cyclical process, opening possibilities for innovation.<sup>6</sup> Once a clearer conceptual distinction between things ‘mechanical’ and things “organic” emerged towards the late eighteenth century, bodily analogies were replaced by more materialistic conceptions of political communities.<sup>7</sup>

In Sweden, the traditional bodily conception of society dominated for much of the eighteenth century. As Harald Gustafsson has put it, “[...] the official ideology was that the different limbs of the social body had different tasks but were still equally entitled to maintain their traditional rights and to enjoy the protection of the state.”<sup>8</sup> Different parts of the body were seen as incapable of replacing each other: the king as the head, the Council (the leading Nobles) as the abdomen, Lutheranism (the Clergy) as the thighs and agriculture (the Peasantry) and commerce (the Burghers) as the feet were all needed for the functioning of the body.<sup>9</sup> However, in the course of the century Swedish political discourse also began to incorporate elements of the new natural philosophy. The influence of Wolffian philosophy, iatromechanical medicine and English, French and German politico-economic thought all contributed to the rise of the mechanical language of politics. By the mid-1750s, the Royal Governor Carl Gustaf Tessin would thus advise Crown Prince Gustavus: “The three principal wheels by which a wise king gives motion to the great machine of government are thought, words, and

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5 Dohrn-van Rossum, ‘Organ, Organismus, Organisation, politischer Körper’, pp. 549–50, 555–8; Wootton, ‘Liberty, Metaphor, and Mechanism’, p. 216; Frängsmyr, *Svensk idéhistoria*, pp. 274–5.

6 Wootton, ‘Liberty, Metaphor, and Mechanism’, pp. 212–13, 265–8.

7 Dohrn-van Rossum, ‘Organ, Organismus, Organisation, politischer Körper’, pp. 521, 550, 557, 559–60.

8 Gustafsson, *Political Interaction*, p. 159; see also Lars Magnusson, ‘Den ekonomiska diskussionen under frihetstiden – ett framlängesperspektiv’, in *Riksdag, kaffehus och predikstol. Frihetstidens politiska kultur 1766–1772*, Ed. by Christine Skuncke and Henrika Tandefelt, Atlantis & SLS: Stockholm & Helsingfors, 2003, p. 36; cf. Per-Arne Karlsson, ‘Housekeeping Ideology and Equilibrium Policy in Eighteenth-Century Sweden: Socio-economic Theory and Practice prior to the Market Society’, *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 1989, pp. 51–77, which does not discuss the meaning of the bodily analogy.

9 György Nováky, ‘Den ansvarsfulla handelsmannen’, in *Makt & vardag. Hur man styrde, levde och tänkte under svensk stormaktstid*, Ed. by Stellan Dahlgren et al., Atlantis: Stockholm, 1993, pp. 216, 227.

actions.”<sup>10</sup> The radical phase of the rule of the Estates in the 1750s and 1760s opened possibilities for further reconceptualisations, but the reactionary Gustavian era together with the decline of mechanical language elsewhere brought this development to a sudden stop. The transition from bodily to mechanical parallels was thus not linear or total in eighteenth-century Sweden. The full mechanisation of political thought had hardly been realised before both the heyday of mechanical philosophy in European thought and the Age of Liberty were over.

To analyse this continuity and change in Swedish bodily and mechanical conceptions of politics, I shall explore politico-theological and politico-economic debates, addressing the following questions: How serious were the constantly used analogies between the political community and the human body? Were these merely traditional, or were they made more dynamic by incorporating elements of mechanical philosophy into them? Did analogies of the state as a machine support ideas of social and political progress? And did rival political groups use different analogies and hence draw different conclusions about the basic character of the community? I shall search for answers to these questions in the spirit of the linguistic turn in the history of political thought, contextualising speech acts by individual authors particularly when they appear to contain some exact point arising from the intentions of the author at the time of writing and revealed by the context. At the same time, I shall study commonplace and even unreflecting uses of these analogies and concepts at the more abstract macro-level of historical semantics.<sup>11</sup>

Two distinct genres of political discourse represent here the “extremes” of the Swedish public debate. Political sermons given by bishops to the Riksdag (Diet) or in connection with other national events illustrate the most traditionalist, albeit occasionally innovative, form of political discourse.<sup>12</sup> All major extant political sermons have been analysed, and 22 of them are cited below. Their contents are then contrasted with the potentially most innovative branch of secular public discourse – speeches, treatises and pamphlets on developing science and commerce written by academics, natural philosophers and practical businessmen. A wide selection of economic literature has been consulted and 33 titles are referred to,

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10 Carl Gustaf Tessin, *Letters to a Young Prince from His Governor*, London, 1755, pp. 82–3. Relevant biographical information is based on *Svenskt biografiskt lexicon*, Lindroth, *Frihetstiden* and Lindroth, *Gustavianska tiden*.

11 For methodology, see Pasi Ihalainen, ‘Between historical semantics and pragmatics: Reconstructing past political thought through conceptual history’, *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2006, pp. 115–43.

12 See Pasi Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined: Changing Perceptions of National Identity in the Rhetoric of the English, Dutch and Swedish Public Churches, 1685–1772*, Brill: Leiden, 2005.



including thinkers most frequently cited in histories of eighteenth-century Swedish economic thought. Such a study of two divergent genres of printed literature reveals both common features and differences in emphasis. The genres were by no means totally separated; a shared political mentality and physico-theological interests among theologians and economists ensured that they had much in common, particularly when using bodily parallels. Both discourses were influential in a country where the hold of Lutheran political theology was tight but where economics was also highly esteemed.<sup>13</sup>

## CONTINUITY IN LUTHERAN BODILY CONCEPTIONS OF THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY

In a uniformly Lutheran country, Lutheran political theology continued to influence political theorising and was only cautiously adapted to constitutional changes. In Lutheran political language, bodily analogies were powerful because they were *biblical* and concerned three systems at the same time: the natural bodies of the physical world, the religious body of the Christian congregation and the political body of the state. Luther himself had taught that the structure of the church as a spiritual body and that of the state were similar and comparable.<sup>14</sup>

State and church were seen as intimately connected and analogous, as Nicolaus Barchius put it in 1720 when preaching to the royal court: “We are not only limbs of the body of government (*regements kropp*), and of a civil society (*ett borgerligt samfund*), [...] we are all limbs of a spiritual body, the head of which is Jesus Christ.”<sup>15</sup> In 1723, Johan Possieth addressed the Riksdag as “members of the body of government of the Swedish realm” by reminding them of blood as a link within the body, the state and the church: “Threefold are the bands which hold the limbs of a human body connected: the blood, glands and sinews. Threefold are also the bands with which a blessed body of government (*regementskropp*) is held together: the blood, reason and Christianity.”<sup>16</sup> The connection of blood

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13 Lindroth, *Frihetstiden*, p. 91; Frängsmyr, *Svensk idéhistoria*, pp. 192–4, 281; Magnusson, ‘Den ekonomiska diskussionen’, pp. 25–38.

14 Dohrn-van Rossum, ‘Organ, Organismus, Organisation, politischer Körper’, p. 550.

15 Nicolaus Barchius, *En christelig upmuntring til inbördes frid och enighet, på tacksägelse-dagen, som firades år 1720. then 2. decembr. öfver friden [...] Thet kongl. hofwet förestäld*, Uppsala, 1721, p. 61; The conception of the political community as an entity consisting of limbs (*lemmar, medlemmar, ledamöter*) rather than of citizens (*medborgare*) predominated at least until the late Age of Liberty. Lindberg, *Den antika skevheten*, pp. 114, 190.

16 Johan Possieth, *Thet almenna bästa, wid riks-dagens begynnelse, then 24 januarii, åhr 1723[...]*

made the members of the political community love their brethren and advance the common good of the fatherland. Possieth illustrated the manner in which this was done with instances borrowed from the animal world. God-given reason also supported this. Christianity for its part created a connection between God and sinning mortals as well as between the members of the congregation, transforming them into “one heart and soul”.<sup>17</sup>

Such essentially classical and Christian analogies, frequently repeated at political forums, remained part of the official ideology of the Swedish state. They reinforced theocratic conceptions of the political system despite constitutional changes and supported traditional ideas of the political community as a bodily entity in which unity was essential and drastic treatment of particular members sometimes needed. The Estates obviously shared much of this way of thinking and allowed the bishops to preach and have their sermons printed for the public. In 1738, Andreas Rydelius wanted to make the political elite pray as “limbs not only of a spiritual but also of a political body (*borgerlig kropp*)”.<sup>18</sup> In 1743, Nils Lagerlöf led the Estates in prayer “with united hearts and mouths”, stating: “We [are] all like real limbs of a spiritual body, a Christian congregation, like members in a body of government (*Regements-kropp*), under a head and king, all as one man, all with one heart and one mind, all with one Christian faith and hope, [...]”<sup>19</sup> In the 1750s, too, the preachers emphasised the supposedly parallel and God-given connections between members in natural, religious and political bodies.<sup>20</sup> Such basic assumptions of parallel structures in nature, the church and the state led the Lutheran political community to esteem uniformity and harmony to the highest degree. This was something it could not achieve in an era of party strife, which led to visions of diseases corrupting the political community.

Bodily analogies also supported continuity by vindicating monarchical conceptions of the political body even in the times of a weak monarchy and rule by the Estates. At the time of Ulrica Eleonora’s coronation in 1719, the most

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*utbi Stockholms stoor-kyrkeio*, Stockholm, 1726, pp. 208–9, 219.

17 Possieth, *Thet almenna bästa*, pp. 209–11, 215, 219.

18 Andreas Rhyzelius, *Riksdagz-predikan som [...] Andreas Rydelius [...] ärnat hålla wid början af [...] riksdag anno 1738*, Lund, 1738, p. 28.

19 Nils Lagerlöf, *En kort predikan, [...] Hällen i slåtts-kyrkan [...] wid slutet af riks-dagen then 12 september 1743*, Stockholm, 1743, pp. 25–6.

20 Carl Edström, *Swea konungs, och desz trogna undersåtares, bittra död-klagan [...] på klago-dagen den 2 julii 1751. Uti Ulbricksdals slotts : kyrka*, Stockholm, 1751, pp. 34–6; Olof Osander, *Christelig böne-andakt, såsom et förträffeligt wälfärds medel för alla Swea barn, och hela Swea rike, [...] wid riks-dagens slut den 21 oct. 1756, [...] i [...] Stockholms stads stor-kyrko*, Stockholm, 1757, p. 6; Gabriel Timotheus Lütkeemann, *En inför Herranom gången eds rättva wård uti ett christeligt land och rike, på kongl. ordens-dagen [...], den 28 april 1759*, Stockholm, 1760, p. 5.

extensive form of rule by the Estates had not yet been implemented, the queen held absolutist views on the monarchy, and, with the country at war, the clergy avoided radical turns in political rhetoric. In the body of government (*regements kroppen*) as described by Torsten Rudeen, the monarch appeared as the head of a fully integrated political body which was described as identical with a natural one. The life and health of the limbs and the entity were dependent on the head: “The body gains its life, its power, its motion, government and decoration from the head.”<sup>21</sup> Even after the constitutional changes of 1720, Possieth saw the head as reigning over all other members of the body politic.<sup>22</sup> The preachers also maintained that mutual understanding, duties, services, support, good will, unity and harmony among the subjects should be parallel to that of the limbs of a natural body – be they the head, heart, mouth, tongue, eyes, ears, senses, lungs, stomach, liver, hands or feet.<sup>23</sup> Even on the day of mourning after the death of Frederick I (1751) – a king with very limited powers – the court preacher maintained that the king was “the head in the general body of government (*Regerings-kropp*)”, that it was absurd to imagine a body without such a head, and that the welfare of the limbs was dependent on that of the head.<sup>24</sup> The monarchy clearly continued to have its defenders among the clerics.

Descriptions of the collective illnesses of the political community were also frequent in this period, often presenting sin as the ultimate cause. Groups seen as guilty of causing illnesses in the political body might be attacked. Rudeen, for instance, criticised self-seekers as external causes giving rise to malformations in the body by draining “all nutritive juices” so that the body would languish if they were not “cut off and thrown away”.<sup>25</sup> Barchius attacked them as “the most harmful and dangerous limbs of the body of government [...] as they are like leeches, sucking all blood from the other limbs”, or like pernicious diseases destroying unity in the country.<sup>26</sup> During the Diet of 1746–1747 and in the context of the increasingly scandalous love affairs of the sickly old monarch, Andreas Olavi Rhyzelius preached about “the illnesses of the country” that arose from the sins of its inhabitants. With due reservations, he suggested that the German king – whose knowledge of Swedish was limited and who might miss much of the criticism even if he attended

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21 Torsten Rudeen, *Krönings predikan wid [...] Ulricae Eleonorae [...] krönings-act, [...] Upsala domkyrka, åbr 1719 den 17 martij*, Linköping, 1719, p. 28.

22 Possieth, *Thet almenna bästa*, p. 215.

23 Rudeen, *Krönings predikan*, pp. 29–30; Barchius, *En christelig upmuntring*, p. 56; Possieth, *Thet almenna bästa*, pp. 206, 208, 215, 224–7; Edström, *Swea konungs*, p. 34; Lütke mann, *En inför Herranom gången*, p. 5.

24 Edström, *Swea konungs*, p. 18.

25 Rudeen, *Krönings predikan*, p. 31.

26 Barchius, *En christelig upmuntring*, pp. 34, 37.

– was an embodiment of sin. Rhyzelius hinted that in Sweden, perhaps, “the whole head is sick, the whole heart has dried up.”<sup>27</sup> The “head” could be understood by the Estates to refer to the monarch, while they themselves as the “heart” were also accused of having aggravated the sickness with their political animosities and partisan adherences. The preacher urged the politicians to do their utmost to cure the sickness of the fatherland, the only capable physicians being God and Christ.<sup>28</sup> Rhyzelius thus introduced the traditional view of Christianity as a healing force into a debate which actually concerned the status of a weak monarch as the head of a body politic sick from party strife.

Some transition from purely organic to more contractual political notions did take place within political preaching. In 1741, Andreas Kalsenius defined the political community in Lockean terms as derived from a God-given inclination of people to unite “into certain special bodies and societies”.<sup>29</sup> He passed over bodily analogies but warned of sins as infectious diseases capable of afflicting the entire body of government if the rulers did not treat them with the medicine of reform.<sup>30</sup>

However, analogies between members of the body, the circulation of the blood and the digestive system on the one hand and political order and economic activity on the other prevailed in Lutheran language. Bishops, though aware of scientific discourse, actively applied traditional bodily imagery when preaching to the Riksdag. In 1760, Lars Benzelstierna used the occasion for examining by means of a biblical text “to what extent the wholesome and harmful limbs of the body of the realm (*Rikskropp*) are distinct from each other”. According to him, only Lutheran godliness demonstrated in unity could heal divisions.<sup>31</sup> Even Gabriel Rosén, though referring to some contractual ideas and “motion” within the body politic in 1762, emphasised the need for uncompromising patriotism with a bodily argument that still implied the possibility of an “amputation” of the harmful members of society.<sup>32</sup>

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27 Andreas Olavi Rhyzelius, *Ett syndasiukt lands christeliga helbregdande, in för hans kongl. maj:t och kärnan af rikens höglofl. ständer, under warande allmän riksdag, på kongl. huset i Stockholm, [...] år 1746*, Stockholm, 1747, p. 4.

28 Rhyzelius, *Ett syndasiukt lands*, pp. 4–8, 20–1.

29 Andreas Kalsenius, *En sann gudsfruchtan, såsom thet rätta befordrande medlet til rikens och nationers wälstånd och lycksalighet, [...] på rikens höglofl. ständer slöto sin allmänna sammankomst i Stockholm, [...] den 22 augusti 1741*, Stockholm, 1742, p. 12.

30 Kalsenius, *En sann gudsfruchtan*, pp. 13–15.

31 Lars Benzelstierna, *Ett rättfärdigt och syndigt, eller, ett wäl och illasinnadt folks, olika så beskaffenhets, som öden [...] wid riksdagens början, den 25 : octob. 1760*, Stockholm, 1760, pp. 5, 10.

32 Gabriel Rosén, *En medborgares löfte in för Gud, at bewisa kärlek emot fäderneslandet, på den femtonde kongl. ordens-dagen i Swerige, den 28 april, 1762 [...] uti kongl. slotts-kyrkan*,

[...] he is an unjust, unrighteous, yes, unnatural member, member who deserves to be separated off, who wants to live and be happy in the body but drains its juices of nourishment so greedily and excessively that the other limbs languish and are made to feel uncomfortable. We promise to remember that, as we support the most healthy and indispensable goal, so we must also provide the necessary means for achieving it, that one for all and all for one must live in a working motion.

By the late 1760s, some Lutheran bishops became openly royalist propagandists, using bodily analogies to reject party strife and to call for a unification of the political body by the traditional measures of royal healing. In 1769, Jöran Schröder considered “partisanship” a “destructive disease in a body of government (*Regements-kropp*)” which had led to “a society in which the body of the realm (*Rikskroppen*) begins to be divided among several powerful constitutions.”<sup>33</sup> This was a monstrous prospect, as traditional wisdom taught that each body could have no more than one constitution. Anders Forssenius’ sermon at the opening of the Riksdag rejected the existing strife between parties and the Estates by combining arguments from biblical texts, the Lutheran tradition of unity and older political theory and pointing out that parties and strife between the Estates were unthinkable in a healthy and highly integrated politico-religious system:<sup>34</sup>

Are we not, all of us, members of a spiritual body whose head is Christ? Are we not brothers and children of God through our faith in Jesus Christ? Are we not also members of a worldly society who constitute the body of the realm (*Rikskroppen*)? Must not the body be entirely destroyed if the members tear and hurt each other? If the hand tears out the eye and the mouth bites off the fingers, is not the whole body then destroyed? So it is also with the worldly body of the realm: if a member of the realm wants to destroy and oppress another, the extinction of the whole body of the realm is the necessary consequence.

Forssenius cited five biblical passages emphasising unity in religion and politics and reminding the Estates of traditional conceptions of the political community as a bodily entity. His implicit conclusion was that the Swedish version of rule by the Estates simply could not function. The same argument was further reinforced in the opening sermon of the Riksdag of 1771, when Gabriel Timotheus Lütkekmann

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Stockholm, 1762, p. 9.

33 Jöran Schröder, *Guds rätta sökande af et botfärdigt folk, [...] på första bönedagen år 1769, i Sanct. Nicolai kyrka*, Stockholm, 1769, pp. 12–14.

34 Anders Forssenius, *En christen medborgares skyldighet, at beförtra inbördes kärlek, [...] wid riksdagens : början i Norrköpings kyrko den 26 april 1769*, Norrköping, 1769, p. 21.

reminded the Estates that the ideal Lutheran society was the opposite of party strife. In a harmonious Lutheran community, “all the people work; all of them from the highest to the lowest compete with each other to promote the real good of the body of the realm (*Rikskroppen*) as a whole”. Only by working and by exercising Lutheran truth could “the true happiness of the head and the limbs” be achieved. Lütkemann’s royalist goal was to unite “head and limbs, the king and subject” in the name of the common good.<sup>35</sup> The bodily analogy, emphasising the position of the head within the political community, had clearly been restored in the middle of the stormy late Age of Liberty.

The longed-for unification of the head and limbs would take place in the royal coup of August 1772, albeit on terms set by “the head” that were hardly agreed on by all the higher “limbs”. In his thanksgiving sermon for the coup in Stockholm, Johan Gustaf Flodin explained the need for a change in the constitution by combining – for the first time in a Swedish state sermon – mechanical, biblical and bodily parallels. The preacher represented the serious malfunctions of the Swedish body politic which had necessitated the drastic intervention of the royal mechanic and healer:<sup>36</sup>

[...] the whole mechanism of government (*Regerings-verket*) was so smashed that it could not possibly function for long with its usual pinions and even less be restored to its original right condition. Discord and mutual divisions inevitably endangered the continuity of the realm. Because of this sin affecting all the members of the body of the realm (*Riks-kroppen*), it was necessary for some significant transformation sooner or later to take place.

All arguments – those of sin, medicine and mechanics – would do when the objective was to persuade the Swedish people to recognise an evident change in power relations. It was logical for Flodin to start with mechanical analogies as they were the most modern ones, had been favoured by the advocates of the Estates-centred political system as we shall soon see, and must have been familiar to him due to his previous stay in the British American colonies. Then it was time to recall the old Lutheran bodily analogies which emphasised the inherent sinfulness of human communities and the need for strong monarchs to keep human weaknesses under control.

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35 Gabriel Timotheus Lütkemann, *Et folk, som älskar sanning och frid, det lycksaligaste på jorden. Förestält wid riksdagens början den 25 junii 1771 [...] i Stockholms stor-kyrka*, Stockholm, 1773, pp. 14, 18, 22.

36 Johan Gustaf Flodin, *Wårt skyldiga nit emot lagens öfwerträdare, förehållit på tacksägelse-dagen i Stockholm 1772 [...] i stadens stora kyrka*, Stockholm, 1772, p. 18.

Mechanical parallels in favour of parliamentary government had been rejected. Yet some elements of modernity occurred in Lutheran political discourse in the Gustavian era. Developments in the natural sciences and commerce could be viewed optimistically both from the point of view of religion and from that of the material welfare of the realm. This trust in science could be derived from the Lutheran tradition of physico-theology, which saw it as a God-given duty of humans to reveal the laws of nature. Lutheran physico-theology combined this duty with the reinforcement of the idea of a universe and society in which all species and human beings had been put in their proper places and were hence connected by their common interests.<sup>37</sup>

Both modern and traditional ideas were advocated by the clergy. On the one hand, the clergy did their share to maintain bodily conceptions of the political community. Petrus Munck, for instance, commented on the murder of Gustavus III in Lund in 1792 by stating unoriginally: “The king is the head of the people; they are the limbs of the body of the realm (*Rikskroppen*), which he governs and reigns.”<sup>38</sup> With reference to the regicide, the bishop further expressed his concern about a threatening dissolution of the political body by calling the previous statement as “palliative” in the circumstances of Sweden in 1792.<sup>39</sup> Bengt Jacob Ignatius, a preacher from Turku (Sw. Åbo), represented Gustavus as a healing figure whom God had given the Swedes at a time when “a general confusion threatened to rupture even the intestines of the body of the realm (*inelfworne i Riks-kroppen*)”, this being once again a reference to the unhappy political divisions of the Age of Liberty.<sup>40</sup> The healer being lost, a new crisis threatened the sick political body of Sweden.

On the other hand, alternative scientific models for explaining the established political order were also emerging. Jacob Axel Lindblom by-passed both bodily and mechanical analogies when describing the monarchical system at the coronation of 1800 and referred, along with some rather theocratic views, to human reason and anthropological findings as arguments in favour of the monarchy. Lindblom expressed optimism over the constant growth of the sciences and the development

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37 See Petrus Filenius, *The rättfärdigas lefwande namn i ewigheten, efter theras seger i striden och frid i grafwen; [...] Tå [...] konung Adolph Friedrich [...] then 30 julii 1771 uti Riddarholms kyrkan i Stockholm, jordfästes*, Stockholm, 1772, p. 39, and Jacob Gadolin, *Predikan om en rättskaffens förtröstan på Gud, hållen wid riksdagens slut den 28 april 1789*, Stockholm, 1789, passim.

38 Petrus Munck, *En christelig predikan på den allmänna klagodagen, öfwer [...] konung Gustaf III:s [...] dödsfall. Hållen den 6 junii 1792 i Lunds domkyrka*, Stockholm, 1792, p. 6.

39 *Idem*.

40 Bengt Jacob Ignatius, *Swea folks klagan och tröst, wid [...] konung Gustaf den III:s död, förestälde [...] på Swea rikets allmänna klago-dag den 6 junii 1792. i Åbo dom-kyrka*, Åbo, 1792, p. 17.

of human abilities towards perfection.<sup>41</sup> His sermon illustrates the paradox of the Swedish Lutheran political culture retaining its inherited bodily conceptions of a harmonious political community while still believing in the progress that science would bring to human lives in the future. Political sermons given after the constitutional reform of 1809 were no longer built on early modern bodily analogies or on mechanical metaphors but used other means to describe the gradually modernising political community.<sup>42</sup> In Gustavian Sweden, a degree of modernity could be introduced even within the framework of the apparent continuity of Lutheran political theology. So was the pace of change faster in more secular political discourse then?

## THE GRADUAL MECHANISATION OF THE BODY POLITIC IN ECONOMIC LITERATURE

Around 1730, even secular authors were still using bodily language to describe social and economic problems. Anders Nordencrantz (Bachmanson), an admirer and populariser of the British mercantile and parliamentary system, echoed Charles Davenant by arguing that in law-bound governments, the ruler and the people constituted a body within which diseases among the lower limbs were likely to hurt the head as well. The commoners were “the stomach in the political body” which, in an economic crisis, might not be able to digest food properly and provide the other members of the body with their necessary nourishment.<sup>43</sup> The only apparent novelty in Nordencrantz’s approach was to see the system from the point of view of the political community as a whole (or at least the higher orders) rather than merely from that of the monarch, as was the case with the preachers. In that sense, bodily analogies, too, could support new views of the political and economic order.<sup>44</sup> Nordencrantz’s later writings demonstrate how the gradual mechanisation of these analogies would finally lead to quite radical conclusions.

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41 Jacob Axel Lindblom, *Predikan wid deras kongl. majestäters konung Gustaf IV Adolphi och drottning Fredrica Dorothea Wilhelminas höga kröning, i Norrköping den 3 april 1800*, Linköping, [1800], pp. 10–12, 22.

42 See Pasi Ihalainen, ‘Svenska kyrkan och det moderniserande nationella tänkandet 1789–1810’, *Sjuttonhundratalet*, Vol. 3, 2006/2007, pp. 25–37.

43 Anders Nordencrantz, *Arcana oeconomiae et commercii, eller Handelens och hushållningswärdets hemligheter*, Stockholm, 1730, pp. xxiv, 54. I am grateful to Jouko Nurmiainen for pointing out these arguments.

44 Cf. Frängsmyr, *Svensk idéhistoria*, p. 196, on Nordencrantz’s willingness to see individuals serve the nation.



The wave of mechanical philosophy in European thought was leading to the adoption of some mechanical conceptions of the body and society in Sweden as well. Olof Hamren's *Manufacturs spegel* from 1738 illustrates this tendency. While still building his argument on the traditional concept of the political body (*Regements Kroppen, den Politiske Kroppen*), Hamren saw both similarities and differences between political and natural bodies. The circulation of blood in the natural body and that of money in the body politic, for instance, were analogical phenomena, both giving life to the system. The analogy was also valid for the treatment of diseases in the two bodies. Just as anyone who wanted to cure diseases in the natural body had to be familiar with the anatomy of muscles, sinews and blood vessels, an understanding of the constitution and anatomy of the political body was needed to understand its state of health, growth and debilitation and to medicate it correctly in its diseases and frailties. It was the responsibility of the rulers to control the economic system so that the parts of the political body would function correctly, money circulates in a proper manner between these parts, and the political body remain correctly constituted and properly fed.<sup>45</sup>

What was new in the Swedish context was the extension of this theory with a mechanical analogy. Hamren compared the complexity of the political body with "a wonderful clockwork (*Urwerk*), consisting of many wheels and springs, [...] and requiring more than ordinary carefulness, as even the meanest inaccuracy can destroy the whole machinery and bring it to a stop."<sup>46</sup> Indeed the body of government was even more complex than the natural one as it consisted of thousands of different parts and thus required cautious nurture before the common good could be achieved. It was still a body perceived mechanically, as Hamren maintained that any disharmony within the body politic should be seen as a disease capable of destroying it. Rulers searching for an ideal harmony and "continuous motion" among the members of the body should act like "the soul in the natural body". This meant that they should ensure the functioning of justice and government, the growth of the arts and sciences, the foundation of new factories and workshops, the expansion of trade and shipping, and the support of all good means of livelihood.<sup>47</sup> A mechanised political anatomy of this kind was perfectly suited to the mercantilist economic policy of the dominant "Party of the Hats" after 1739.<sup>48</sup>

For this type of mercantilism, which called for a more efficient economic policy, the political body was a construction whose functioning the rulers could influence.

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45 Olof Hamren, *Manufacturs-spegel*, Stockholm, 1738, pp. 3–4.

46 Hamren, *Manufacturs-spegel*, p. 4.

47 Hamren, *Manufacturs-spegel*, p. 4.

48 See Frängsmyr, *Svensk idéhistoria*, p. 198.

It was clearly seen as a dynamic system, though not as a purely material one. The idea of the developing economy as the essence of “the large body of the realm or community” (*den stora Riks- eller Samfundets-Kroppen*) steered by a soul, which impelled the members to do their share for the constant maintenance of the power of the body, was central to the rhetoric of Magnus Otto Nordenberg as well.<sup>49</sup> In 1746, Jacob Faggot, a well-known land surveyor, compared the Swedish economic system with a machine. While this Hat emphasised the role of Stockholm and other towns in giving motion to the economic system, he also recalled the need to take care of the healthy condition of the rest of the body “so that the entire machine (*hela Machinen*) will regain true health and welfare”.<sup>50</sup> Faggot’s conception of the natural and economic bodies was mechanical: each city in motion served the surrounding country “like the heart which with the moving of the blood serves a living body.”<sup>51</sup> The Hat elite had been applying some mechanical conceptions to old bodily metaphors since the late 1730s.

The writings of Anders Berch, who was appointed the first Professor of Economics at Uppsala University in 1741, however, illustrate the relative strength of traditional bodily analogies side by side with such mechanisation. In 1750, Berch reinforced the Lutheran analogy between a God-created human body and a human society the members of which were unequal by nature:<sup>52</sup>

A living body cannot lose any of its limbs [...] as all [...] according to the Creator’s wise organisation, contribute to the qualities and capabilities which the body possesses, remaining in their Estate and taking care of the duties for which they have been chosen; yet all are not equally necessary for the body and hence are not evaluated as equals [...] Likewise in a civil society: it is a body consisting of many limbs, or people, all of whom must be appreciated but need to be evaluated according to the utility and benefit which each of them brings to the body as a whole.

The heart (the capital city), for instance, was valued only for its ability to nourish the rest of the body and the feet (agriculture and commerce) for transporting the body from place to place.<sup>53</sup>

Some Newtonian mechanics and Lockean contractual notions had also found their way into Berch’s theory of politico-economic systems. While the Creator had

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49 Magnus Otto Nordenberg, *Några anmärkningar öfwer åker-bruket i gemehn*, Stockholm, 1741, p. 20.

50 Jacob Faggot, *Svenska landtbrukets hinder ock hjälp*, Stockholm, 1746, p. 61.

51 Faggot, *Svenska landtbrukets hinder*, p. 62.

52 Anders Berch, *En bruks-patrons egenskaper*, Stockholm, [1750], p. 1; Lars Pålsson Syll, *De ekonomiska teoriernas historia*, Lund 2002, 54.

53 Berch, *En bruks-patrons egenskaper*, pp. 1–3.

given all natural bodies “a systematic order” identical with the balanced system of the heavenly bodies and thus impossible to disturb without the whole body suffering, the political body was essentially man-made and hence more variable in its membership, which made an ideal balance more difficult to achieve. Berch concluded that the constructed political body could hardly attain full perfection but was doomed to suffer from repeated diseases.<sup>54</sup> The remedy was to “organise all sources of livelihood according to their natural and free order” and “to retain a balance” by giving certain sources of livelihood to those members who could take care of them responsibly, in other words, by a combination of “free order” and a strict state control of the economic system.<sup>55</sup> In 1756, Berch represented political bodies as unions of members working for the same goals and emphasised the need for these bodies to move constantly and to maintain contact with other bodies by means of commerce. He considered it essential that commerce should be regulated in political bodies just as motion needed to be regulated in natural ones, the ultimate goal being to distribute the power originating from commerce equally throughout the entire body.<sup>56</sup> This was a Swedish Hat version of a mechanical philosophy combined with modified bodily analogies and based on the idea of the politico-economic system as a strictly regulated construction. It certainly provided a more dynamic and optimistic vision than the one advocated by the Lutheran (often Cap) clergy.

The old analogy between human and political bodies was reinforced by translations as well, often with a considerable lag after the original year of publication.<sup>57</sup> Swedish academics happily repeated what past continental authors had written about economics, including the relationship between the political and natural bodies.<sup>58</sup> Some translations contained radical elements, too, as was the case in a text admiring the English form of government because there it was the representatives of the entire nation that decided on taxation so that it would concern equally “each member of the body politic”. If the representatives failed to take care of their duties, the nation was capable of deposing them and restoring order in a revolution described in positively medical terms: “[...] as in the most healthy body, if detrimental fluids should be accumulated, they break out through a disease when they have reached a certain quantity, and the sick can only be

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54 Berch, *En bruks-patrons egenskaper*, p. 2.

55 Berch, *En bruks-patrons egenskaper*, p. 4.

56 Anders Berch, *Handels-compagnier, till inrättning och natur beskrefne*, Uppsala, 1756, pp. 2–3, 5.

57 See Jean François Melon, *Et politiskt försök om handel*, Stockholm, 1751, p. 220.

58 See Clas Blechert Trozelius, *Oeconomisk beskrifning på fabrikerne uti Göteborg*, Lund, 1761, p. 13; Magnusson, ‘Den ekonomiska diskussionen’, pp. 32–3.

helped through a violent turmoil.”<sup>59</sup> Traditional bodily analogies could thus also be turned into arguments justifying open challenges to the rulers.

Davenant’s writings on political arithmetic, inspired by physics and astronomy and full of analogies such as the machine of state, were translated into Swedish in 1756, nearly fifty years after their initial publication. The Swedes could now read about how the discovery of the circulation of the blood (in the 1620s) had made medicine more reliable and contributed to an understanding of the organisation, condition, growth, weakening, strength and frailty of the body of the state. It also helped in understanding commerce, the circulation of money and wealth, handicraft work, population and other “parts” which together constituted the body politic. It revealed the problems which weakened the entire body and helped in finding proper medicines for the illnesses of the political body. Suitably for Swedish purposes, Davenant accused political parties of contaminating the blood of the body politic, suggesting that some politicians had been so keen on letting blood that the whole body was weakening, and he also warned against excessively violent treatments of the body politic.<sup>60</sup> Side by side with such medical traditionalism, mechanical conceptions of the political system gained force. Davenant had written about a “great machine for the maintenance and employment of the poor” which could be “put upon its wheels”. He had argued that political liberty and legal rule could be “great springs” which “set in motion the engine of a commonwealth, though some other wheels may happen to be out of order”.<sup>61</sup> It is noteworthy that Davenant had drawn a distinction between the potential of human and political bodies. Whereas the weaknesses of a human body could only be medicated to a certain degree, the political body with a balanced constitution could flourish much longer and could even be made immortal if steered with the right policies.<sup>62</sup>

Such an optimistic belief in the human capacity to construct a constantly regenerating political system, together with the ‘parliamentary’ ideas and the realities of the rule by the Estates, opened new visions for Swedish thinkers as well. Anders Nordencrantz’s writings from 1759 demonstrate the increasingly dual nature of bodily analogies both as tools for the defence of the established order and

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59 Louis Joseph Plumard de Dangeul, *Öfversättning, af ängelska riddaren John Nickolls tankar om Stora Britaniens fördelar öfver Frankriket, i anseende til bägge desse rikens regeringssätt*, Stockholm, 1754, pp. 3–4, 19; Lindroth, *Frihetstiden*, p. 104.

60 Charles Davenant, *Davenants Afhandling, angående sätt och utvägar, hvarigenom et folk kan vinna uti handels-wägen*, Stockholm, 1756, pp. 6, 19, 40, 42, 79, 194, 221, 242; The application of Harvey’s theory of blood circulation to political phenomena was a further albeit dated way of making political theory mechanical. Dohrn-van Rossum, ‘Organ, Organismus, Organisation, politischer Körper’, p. 558.

61 Davenant, *Davenants Afhandling*, pp. 44, 141, 245.

62 Davenant, *Davenants Afhandling*, p. 143.

as ones which could be used in arguments challenging the Hat party and calling for reforms in favour of free trade. Addressing the Diet of 1760 with constitutional reforms (and his own financial losses) in mind,<sup>63</sup> Nordencrantz started speaking in a conventional manner about the difficulty of finding a proper medicine for widespread diseases in the blood both in the natural and the political body, referring to some extensive bank loans taken by the Hat government. Whereas the poisoning of the main artery could recover on its own, the poisoning of all the vessels of government – a reference to a financial crisis caused by a war – was hardly curable. Nordencrantz suggested a basically traditionalist yet modified treatment for the body politic: whereas the best way of reforming a corrupt state and restoring its original condition had conventionally been “to cut the corrupt parts out of the political body”, the solution should now be a “parliamentary” (*Parlamentariske*; a noteworthy early expression of parliamentarism) one. Nordencrantz reassured the Diet that the unable ministers would not lose their lives, only their offices, and that the Diet would ensure that their successors would not follow the same damaging policies.<sup>64</sup> The strengthening parliamentary tendencies of the Swedish estate system of the 1750s thus led to an entirely new application of a bodily analogy. The argument is noteworthy even though it may have been counterproductive, Nordencrantz’s book being received with fierce criticism by all four Estates.

In the heated debates between the Hat and Cap parties in the 1760s, the body still remained a shared metaphor. The need for a constant movement of trade and money within the body of the realm was emphasised, the risks caused by high interest rates lamented and strong medicines called for attempts to heal diseases such as a deficit in the budget. Not unlike in Lutheran political theology, the bad effects of political parties were explained with reference to the tendency of a whole governing body (*en hel Corps*) to have as many interests as it had limbs (*lemmar*).<sup>65</sup> The conception of the political community as parallel to the natural body and its

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63 Frängsmyr, *Svensk idéhistoria*, p. 209.

64 Anders Nordencrantz, *Til Rikens högloft. Ständer [...] en vördsam föreställning uti et omständeligit svar på de oförgripeliga påminnelser som uti Stockholms Post-Tidningar, den 25 Sept. 1758, kundgjorde blifvit*, Stockholm, 1759, pp. 292, 301.

65 See Pehr Wargentin’s answer to John Jennings’s *Tal om Trollhätte slussbyggnads öden, hållet för kongl. vetensk. academien, vid praesidii nedläggande, den 5 augusti 1761*, Stockholm, 1761; Clas Blechert Trozelius, *Academiskt snulle-prof om nyttan och nödvändigheten af strörensningen och canalers öppnande*, Lund, 1761, pp. 19–20; Anders Botin, *Förslag till en sådan förbättring i Svea rikets mynt- och finance-värk, som rikets närvarande tillstånd synes tillåta*, Stockholm, 1765, passim; Johan Clason, *Tal, om orsakerna til Sveriges handels omskiften, hållet för kongl. vetenskaps academien, vid praesidii nedläggande, den 2 augusti 1769*, Stockholm, 1769, pp. 32, 38; Carl Johan Stierngranat, *Ödmjukt memorial*, [Stockholm], [1769], p. 9.

diseases appears to have been shared by all the Estates, including the Peasants.<sup>66</sup> Even Anders Chydenius, the most outspoken advocate of the liberation of trade, speaking on behalf of his home community, relied on a modified version of the bodily analogy when arguing that Stockholm caused symptoms in the other limbs of the realm by its domination in economic life:<sup>67</sup>

Nature is always free and simple. When the blood may stream steadily in all the arteries, according to their size and power, the body feels best, but if we want to constrain too much of it to the heart and the lungs, with the intention of strengthening them, they suffer agony in their blood, other limbs languish away [...]

These arguments in favour of economic freedom achieved results at the Riksdag of 1765–1766, which suggests that bodily imagery, among other arguments, could still be successfully applied in the reform debates of that time.

Johan Fredrik Kryger, a Pommeranian and a commissioner for factories with an interest in natural theology and Wolffian natural law philosophy,<sup>68</sup> was another author who built on traditional analogies but also introduced some mechanical ideas, probably borrowed from German cameralism. For Kryger, the bodily analogy justified the established order as the natural, God-given one. Instead of merely emphasising uniformity, his application of the analogy recognised human diversity within the bodily entity's unity of interest:<sup>69</sup>

As difficult as it is for me to imagine a living body consisting of a mere head, hands and feet, so difficult is it for a civil society (*et borgerligt Samhälle*) to exist without a multitude of people who are different as to their temperament, abilities, understanding and affections. All of them are useful members in the body of the realm provided that they are guided and used for the duties for which nature has destined them.

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66 Frihetstidens utskottshandlingar, 1765–66, R3438, Expeditionsdeputationen, Vol, 143, f. 458v., National Archives, Stockholm. I am grateful to Jouko Nurmiainen for pointing out this instance.

67 Anders Chydenius, *Vederläggning af de skäl, hvarmed man söker bestrida Öster- och Vesterbottniska samt Vesternorrländska städerna fri seglation*, Stockholm, 1765, in *Politiska skrifter*, Ed. by E.G. Palmén, G.W. Edlunds förlag: Helsingfors, 1880, pp. 49–90, quote: § 52, p. 84. I am grateful to Jouko Nurmiainen for pointing out this instance; for the context see Pentti Virrankoski, *Anders Chydenius. Demokraattinen politiikko valituksen vuosisadalta*, WSOY: Porvoo, 1986, pp. 113–14, 133–4.

68 Syll, *De ekonomiska teoriernas historia*, p. 57.

69 Johan Fredrik Kryger, *Åminnelse-tal öfver framledne [...] Jonas Alströmer, hållit för kongl. vetensk. academiens den 16. sept. 1761*, Stockholm, 1761, pp. 4–5.

The tendency to mechanise the world is visible in the idea that the parts of a natural body with their “mechanical structure” and people in the civil society (*det borgerliga samhället*, *Sambäls-kroppen*) with their temperaments and skills were analogous and needed to be regulated in the spirit of the divine order so that the common good could be achieved.<sup>70</sup> Not unlike German thinkers of his time, Kryger spoke about commerce as “the mainspring” (*drif-fjäder*) of all industries. Such mechanisation had its limits, however. On a number of occasions, Kryger used the concept ‘machine’ in highly pejorative senses, referring to abuses of the state machine under absolute regimes, to the pitiful role of mistreated parts of the body politic as “unfeeling machines”, to the tendency of religious enthusiasts to think like dependent machines, and to what he saw as the deists’ untenable conception of their bodies as no more than strange machines.<sup>71</sup>

The incorporation of mechanics into bodily analogies did not thus go without opposition. Pehr Niclas Christiernin, a professor of economics and philosophy with a special interest in the interaction between the price level and the currency reserve,<sup>72</sup> distinguished between the regulation of the body politic and machines, maintaining that the former was not constituted like mechanical inventions, which allowed one of their wheels to be replaced by another. Such an attempt within the financial system of the body politic would lead to hazardous outcomes.<sup>73</sup> Christiernin rejected excessive state machine analogies and defended a bodily conception of the economic system, suggesting that wrong financial policies (be they those of the Hats or the Caps) should be seen as comparable to the effects of electricity in natural bodies.<sup>74</sup>

A further instance of politico-economic thought based on a combination of bodily and mechanical ideas is provided by a dissertation made by Fredrik Pryss and defended in Turku (Åbo) in 1764. This dissertation drew a distinction between political illnesses (*politiska sjukdomar*) and physical pains (*Physiska plågor*). The same division had been made by thinkers as diverse as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi. Pryss’ dissertation suggested that physical

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70 Johan Fredrik Kryger, *Åminnelse-tal öfver [...] Ulric Rudensköld, hållit för Kongl. Vetenskaps Academiën den 29 augusti 1765*, Stockholm, 1765, p. 4.

71 Johan Fredrik Kryger, *Tänkar wid lediga stunder*, Stockholm, 1761–63, pp. 9, 91, 207; Kryger 1765, pp. 4, 31; Johan Fredrik Kryger, *Åminnelse-tal öfver framledne [...] Claes Grill; efter academiens befallning, hållit på stora riddarehus-salen d. 16 martii 1768*, Stockholm, 1768, p. 21.

72 Syll, *De ekonomiska teoriernas historia*, pp. 58–9.

73 Pehr Niclas Christiernin, *Svar till några påminnelser, som utkommit emot hans föreläsningar, angående den i Svea rike upstigne växelkursen*, Uppsala, 1763, p. 67.

74 Pehr Niclas Christiernin, *Utdrag af föreläsningar angående den i Svea rike upstigne wexelkursen, til desz beskaffenhets, orsaker och påföljder, samt botemedel emot wexel-prisets ytterligare uplöpande*, Stockholm, 1761, p. 129.

diseases often began quickly and violently, were healed slowly and tended to leave behind a weak and powerless body. Political illnesses, in contrast, were contracted much more slowly and, despite being sometimes severe, were overcome as soon as their causes disappeared. This meant that a political community could soon regain both its health and its strength after suffering an economic crisis. What was more, while a human being would die sooner or later, a political body could be endlessly regenerated.<sup>75</sup> Such a dynamic interpretation of the body politic as a human construction certainly supported the rise of more positive conceptions of the prospects for the political community. Interestingly, the conception was more widely advocated in British political debate only in the following decade.

Anders Nordencrantz, an old advocate of British economic and political thought and a critic of current economic policies, went furthest in his use of mechanical parallels as alternative descriptions for the political community. The fashion of mechanising bodies made it logical to write at the same time about “the machine of government” (*Regements-Machine*) and about money as blood in the veins of the political body. Likewise, Nordencrantz referred to the need to cherish the body of the realm and to three divided powers which “like three particular forces in mechanics (*Mechaniquen*), together affect the direction of the machine of the realm (*Riks-Machinen*)”,<sup>76</sup> this being an obvious application of Montesquieu. By the late 1760s, Nordencrantz’s politico-economical language was turning overwhelmingly mechanical, to the extent that he pointed out that “the constitution of government” (*Regements-Constitutionen*) could be compared with “manifold small wheels which time after time have been added to the simple main wheel of government (*Regements-hjulet*)”. Mechanics rather than medicine provided the parallels as Nordencrantz commented on the Swedish political system as a construction. The distribution of honorific titles in “a free monarchy”, for instance, could be seen as giving rise to a competition within the nation that “gives the society life and power, sets all wheels of government (*Regements-hjulen*) in motion” and produces “many useful effects”.<sup>77</sup> Nordencrantz had started his economic commentaries in the 1730s by recycling Lutheran and Davenantian bodily analogies. By 1770, he was already interpreting the Swedish form of government in distinctly mechanical terms. His work illustrates the ongoing mechanisation of Swedish politico-economic thought in the late Age of Liberty, when both the international debate and the political circumstances of the day inspired innovative thinking.

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75 Fredrik Pryss, *Tankar om almenna hushållningen*, Åbo, 1764, pp. 23–4.

76 Anders Nordencrantz, *Bekymmerlösa stunders menlösa och owälduga tankar*, Stockholm, 1767–69, pp. 28, 42.

77 Anders Nordencrantz, *Undersökning om de rätta orsakerna [...]*, Stockholm, 1770, pp. 43, 228–9.



Nordencrantz was not alone in this mechanisation. In 1771, the *Proceedings of the Patriotic Society* wrote about the mechanical structure of the body politic, the balance of which had to be maintained. A failure to do so meant that “the political body must suffer constantly from uneven and dangerous pressure, under which the compressed parts, like elastic springs, always attempt to resist” and demonstrate “their violent effects with a rapid extension”.<sup>78</sup> Such a description of opposing forces and tensions within a mechanically understood political body could be interpreted against the background of current struggles between the parties and the Estates, particularly when printed in such a royalist journal. Many of its readers might gladly have seen the emergence of a mechanic who would ensure the balance of the system. Alternatively, he could have been seen as a physician, as bodily analogies had by no means fallen into disuse in Swedish political discourse.

## RESTORED BODILY ANALOGIES IN THE GUSTAVIAN ERA

The secular debates of the 1760s were leading towards an increasing though far from total mechanisation of Swedish political and economic theory. The development supported more dynamic and future-oriented conceptions of the political community as a construction. However, a reaction against the parliamentary experiment, the liberation of public debate and novel interpretations of the political system was already on the way, as we saw in the discussion on the clerical language use of the time. Royalist propaganda after the coup of 1772 would reject not only the political order but also much of the language of politics of the rule of the Estates or alternatively use it for new purposes.

After the royal coup, non-mechanical traditionalism dominated secular political discourse, too. The decreasing freedom of expression, the decline in the level of natural philosophy and increasing ideological isolation made the politico-economic debate considerably less intense and innovative than in the preceding decades.<sup>79</sup> A wider change in the direction of European debates may also have coincided with the Swedish coup. While ‘state machine’ had been a common metaphor in Germany in the 1750s and 1760s, it was increasingly criticised from the early 1770s on.

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78 *Svenska Patriotiska Sällskapets Handlingar*, Stockholm, 1771, p. 183.

79 Frängsmyr, *Svensk idéhistoria*, p. 342; Syll, *De ekonomiska teoriernas historia*, p. 143; Magnusson, ‘Den ekonomiska diskussionen’, p. 25.

The 1774 edition of the *Proceedings of the Patriotic Society*, unlike the volume of 1771, put forward a worldview in which the bodily analogy dominated the interpretation of nature and society. The authority of Cicero was used to support calls for proper medicines for the existing political diseases of the body of the realm, and the royal coup was legitimated in terms of the good health that it had brought to the system: “As the realm has regained its old, natural and blessed form of government, so also has the body of the realm obtained a more vital tenor.”<sup>80</sup> Inherited illnesses were now being actively healed: “Naturally, broken joints cannot be put together without the hand of the physician (*Läkare*) causing us some pain.”<sup>81</sup> Whatever painful measures the monarch as a “physician” took, these were all needed to treat the sick political body. The political community was viewed as an essentially bodily system:<sup>82</sup>

Consequently, if several citizens are well or unwell, it affects the community, as the condition of the community is theirs, and they are mutual limbs of one body. If several members gain an undue relation to, and influence over, the other members, the mutual beauty and harmony is destroyed; they become delirious from their suffering, and the suffering of all parts affects society or the body of the realm.

This bodily way of thinking – not unlike Lutheran political theology – led to traditionalist conclusions on economics as well: A mistaken policy was claimed to weaken both body and soul and to lead to a shortening of the lifespan of the community.<sup>83</sup> The optimism of the preceding decade withered away from theoretical discourse in the course of just a few years.

Yet the intellectual debate did not come to a complete standstill; the new circumstances just called for creativity in argumentation. Bengt Ferrner was a former royal governor and pensionary of the monarch but also an independent nobleman with concomitant pride in his estate. He was highly familiar with currents in European astronomy as well as with political debates in other mixed governments. When speaking in memory of Anders Berch in the presence of the monarch in 1776, Ferrner dared to emphasise a distinction between the management of political bodies and the mechanical bodies of the physical world – while by-passing the bodily analogies of monarchical propaganda. He maintained that the parts of the body politic needed to decide *themselves* on their cooperation

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80 *Svenska Patriotiska Sällskapets Handlingar*, Stockholm, 1774, pp. 42, 223, 340.

81 *Idem*.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 222.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 233.

and criticised too “mechanical” a monarchical rule (which had sometimes been justified by arguments referring to the harmony of the universe) and perhaps even defending a degree of parliamentary government.<sup>84</sup>

[...] a political body cannot be placed and held in a totally regular motion in the same manner as a mechanical one in which, if all the parts are matched, no more than one pulling force is needed. These parts obey without any option; but parts in a political body have the property themselves to choose between better and worse. No doubt they can be compelled by a superior force; but such a motion becomes feeble and inert, and does not lead to the best and happiness of society.

The point was clear within the tradition of describing political communities metaphorically: Absolutist interpretations of the political universe – be they bodily or mechanical – would not do. A political system based on the division of power and the voluntary cooperation of its members was needed and was in principle still in force under the reigning monarch.

Ferrner's text was an exception in printed literature, explained by the speaker's unique status as a former royal governor. Gustavian noblemen speaking in public chose rather the safe option and vindicated bodily views of the politico-economic system. Count Nils Adam Bielke, the highest officer in the mining industry and a member of a traditionalist family, repeated the commonplace that commerce was for the political body what the blood was for the natural one and warned about illnesses ensuing from the poor treatment of the blood. Illnesses comparable to those of the blood containing unhealthy humours would arise – including fevers, wounds, hematomas and incurable diseases.<sup>85</sup> In the 1780s, both the economic history and the current state of Sweden continued to be discussed in traditionalist terms of the health and diseases of the body of the state or community (*Stats-kroppen, Samfundskroppen*) even by men known for their interest in the French Enlightenment.<sup>86</sup>

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84 Bengt Ferrner, *Åminnelse-tal, öfver [...] Anders Berch, hållet, uti hans kongl. maj:ts höga närvaro, för kongl. vetenskaps-academien, den 20 januar. 1776*, Stockholm, 1776, pp. 11–12; cf. a reference to political lies as making the body of the realm slow in all its useful motions on p. 6.

85 Nils Adam Bielke, *Tal, om det första lyckliga tidevarf för Sveriges allmänna hushållning, under konung Gustaf d. I:s regering, hållet för kongl. vetenskaps-academien, vid praesidii nedläggande, den 27 april 1776*, Stockholm, 1776, p. 35.

86 Johan Henrik Kellgren, *Nya handels-bibliotheket*, Vol. 1, Stockholm, 1784, p. 52; Carl Daniel Burén, *Tänkar öfver landt-bruket, bergs-rörelsen, manufacturverne och handelen, m.m. til åminnelse af stamfadren herr Louis De Geer*, Stockholm, 1789, preface and pp. 5, 34, 126.

The overwhelming dominance of the bodily conception of the political system in late eighteenth-century Sweden is also illustrated by Christian Ludvig Jöranson's extensive survey of the Swedish economic system, written by this bankrupt merchant in the 1770s and published in the 1790s. While Jöranson did twice refer to the springs and wheels of agriculture that kept the clockwork of the realm (*Riks-Urvärket*) in constant motion, in his search for the right financial policy he mainly discussed the weight and blood circulation problems of the body of the state. Nor was it an innovation to write about social problems as a cancer or as a neurotic disease in the body of the realm.<sup>87</sup> Mechanical analogies were favoured only by a handful of authors. One of them was Edvard Fredrik Runeberg, a civil servant responsible for population statistics, who proposed, unoriginally, the industry of the multitude as the driving force of the motion of "the housekeeping machine" (*hushålls-machinen*) comparable to forces in "a mechanical construction" (*en mekanisk konstbyggnad*).<sup>88</sup> David Schulz von Schulzenheim, who had a medical background, wrote about the financial system in terms of both mechanical wheels (*Circulations-hjulet, Handels-hjulet*) and living bodies (*Riks-kroppen*) in the mid-1790s.<sup>89</sup>

Sources from the very beginning of the nineteenth century do not allow definite conclusions as to developments in descriptions of the political community. We can assume, however, that the traditionalist reaction, which strengthened during the French Revolution, hardly entailed any distinct break with inherited bodily conceptions before the change in the form of government in 1809. No doubt, nineteenth-century political writers would still make use of organic analogies but in a manner that no longer built directly on the biblical or humoral pathological or even openly mechanical traditions of using them. The emerging distinction between the mechanical and the organic in the modern sense made their analogies slightly less serious than the ones used in early modern societies.

## CONCLUSION

We can conclude that bodily analogies were used in abundance, and with utter seriousness, among all the Estates in eighteenth-century Sweden, although they

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87 Christian Ludvig Jöranson, *Försök til et systeme i Sveriges allmänna hushållning och penning-väsende*, Stockholm, 1792–98, Vol. 1, pp. 11, 102, 106, 339, 456, 524, 798; Vol. 2, pp. 823, 922, 1022; Vol. 3, pp. 1234, 1342.

88 Edvard Fredrik Runeberg, *Aminnelse-tal, öfver [...] Johan Fredric Kryger, hållet för kongl. vetenskaps akademien, den 15 novemb. 1780*, Stockholm, 1780, p. 29.

89 David Schulz von Schulzenheim, *Bref om rikets penninge-verk och allmänna hushållning*, Stockholm, 1794–96, Vol. 1, pp. 128, 137–8; Vol. 2, pp. 431–2.

could be employed to put forward diverse arguments depending on the political goals of the speaker. The large scale of the applicability of bodily analogies is noteworthy in itself. They provided a particularly important ideological tool for the Lutheran clergy – both Hat and Cap – in defending continuity in political values and criticising a number of political developments in a way that was shared by many of their contemporaries. The economic writers of the Hat elite, in contrast, followed general European intellectual trends and began to add mechanical elements to their mercantilist descriptions of the economic system from the late 1730s on, viewing the system as a body but also as a construction which they could actively steer. Distinctions between human bodies and the political body were increasingly emphasised. Foreign – mainly English – instances of viewing politics and the economy, but also the Estates-dominated political culture of the late 1750s and 1760s, induced Cap authors like Anders Nordencrantz to use bodily analogies to put forward innovative, even parliamentary, arguments. The inclusion of mechanical analogies by him and other secular economic writers made some descriptions of the political system as a construction increasingly dynamic and optimistic in the late 1760s. This opened up new hopes and visions for the future.

The 1770s, however, saw a quick restoration of traditional bodily analogies together with monarchical rule and decreased dramatically the frequency of machine analogies in secular economic literature as well. Only individual authors, both clerical and secular, dared to use new kinds of natural analogies to express their belief in future progress (Lindblom) or to defend some ideals of the lost mixed constitution (Ferrner). The political and intellectual elite, despite some modernisation of their political and economic conceptions in the late Age of Liberty, readopted a more traditionalist and pessimistic organic understanding of the political community. It was only in the early nineteenth century that alternative models of describing the political community started to appear more frequently, both in political sermons and in economic literature.

## LEGITIMISING PRIVILEGE

### The Future of the Nobility in Late-Eighteenth-Century Sweden<sup>1</sup>

*Charlotta Wolff*

The position of the nobility in society was changing after the rise of the absolutist state in seventeenth-century Europe. On one hand, the developing absolutist bureaucracies valued skills, money and bureaucratic efficiency more than birth, chivalry or other traditional noble values. On the other hand, the development of complicated court hierarchies and etiquette seemed to stress pedigree and lineage as the essence of nobility, thus apparently underlining the genetic aspect of a distinct caste at the same time as it closed the door to offices for many members of the obscure, rural nobility.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the changes in the definition of a nobleman as a servant of the state, the social legitimacy of estate privileges was questioned by writers, philosophers and pamphleteers in different parts of Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century. A common argument typical of the Age of Enlightenment was that social position should not be granted by birth but by natural inclination, personal merit or fortune. These discussions also concerned the nature, legitimacy and future of the traditionally privileged estates such as the nobility. For the contemporaries, it was evident that the nobility was the social

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1 This article has been written as a part of the project *Enlightened Loyalties. Conceptual Constructions of National, Cultural and Political Identities and Loyalties in North-Western Europe, 1750–1800*, financed by the Academy of Finland.

2 On nobility and early modern bureaucracies, see e.g. Arlette Jouanna, *Le Devoir de révolte. La noblesse française et la gestation de l'État moderne, 1559–1661*, Fayard: Paris, 1989; Mark Motley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat. The Education of the Court Nobility 1580–1715*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1990; H. M. Scott (ed.), *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Longman: London and New York, 1995, 2 vols.

group that had the most to fear from social change and the most to lose in the dismantling of the estate society, a prospect that still seemed distant in many parts of Europe.

From the 1750s onwards, the very essence and legitimacy of the nobility was questioned in public debate. The debate was lively particularly in France, a country characterised by royal absolutism and a centralised bureaucracy that stood as a model for other states. After the Fronde civil war (1649–1651) and the publication of Fénelon's *Télémaque* in 1699, Boulainvilliers' *Essais sur la noblesse de France* in 1732 and Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* in 1748, the role and mission of the nobility in society was openly debated in print.<sup>3</sup> It was above all a debate within the noble estate itself, but as time passed, the question of the nobility and its place in society became a larger issue challenging the fundamentals of the estate society itself, based as it was on hierarchy and distinction.<sup>4</sup>

Many of the contributors in the French debate on the nobility and its future drew attention to the poverty of the rural nobility, its lack of career prospects and its inability to live up to the expectations attached to noble privilege. The lack of career possibilities for the impoverished rural nobility in France was aggravated by a legislation that forbade noblemen to take part in commerce or other bourgeois activities if they did not want to lose their noble status. What was to be done with a multitude of "poor" or unskilled noblemen? Should they be employed in the military, or should they contribute to the development of commerce and trade, a field in which France was rapidly losing its former dominance to Great Britain? The ideological aspects of this social and highly political debate became most visible after the Seven Years' War, which was disastrous for the French, with the publication in 1756 of Abbé Coyer's *La Noblesse commerçante*, which criticised Montesquieu's position against noble trade, and the Chevalier d'Arcq's answer, *La Noblesse militaire*.<sup>5</sup> The Coyer-d'Arcq exchange provoked a broader debate on whether the future of France and its nobility was in trade or in the development of the military institutions. Another debate, raised by the reflections on the roles

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3 See Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined. The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca & London, 2005.

4 *Ibid.*, see also Jonas Nordin, 'Frihetstidens radikalism', and Jouko Nurmiainen, 'Gemensamma privilegier för ett odalstånd. Alexander Keplerus som borgmästare och samhällstänkare', both in Marie-Christine Skuncke & Henrika Tandefelt (eds.), *Riksdag, kaffehus och predikstol. Frihetstidens politiska kultur 1766–1772*, Atlantis & SLS: Stockholm & Helsingfors, 2003, pp. 55–72, 171–90.

5 Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, Paris 1748, XX, 21; [Gabriel François Coyer], *La Noblesse commerçante*, Londres, 1756; [Philippe-Auguste de Sainte-Foy, chevalier d'Arcq], *La Noblesse militaire ou le patriote français, s.l.*, 1756; [Gabriel François Coyer], *La Noblesse militaire et commerçante, s.l.*, 1756.

of the nobility, was to concern privileges and their legitimacy more generally. Should the privileges be modified, or were the new, capable commoners' elites to get privileges as well?

The French example is the most famous, but the role and legitimacy of the nobility was also debated elsewhere in Europe. The French debate on trading versus military nobility had immediate echoes in Germany, where Coyer's *La Noblesse commerçante* was translated in 1756 by von Justi (*Der handelnde Adel, dem der kriegerische Adel entgegen gesetzt wird*). There was also a Spanish translation of Coyer's pamphlet, as well as a Russian version of von Justi's translation.<sup>6</sup>

The debate on privilege and how to preserve the nobility also reached Sweden almost immediately; as a background, one may here recall Fénelon's and Montesquieu's importance among the political authors read by the Swedish nobility in the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Anders Nordencrantz, a Swedish economist who criticized the privileges and the restrictions on trade, for instance at the Diet of 1755–1756, also translated Coyer's pamphlet, probably for political use at the Diet, even though this translation was never printed.<sup>8</sup> At the same Diet of 1755–1756, there was also a memorandum by the historian and politician Anders Schönberg on the utility of family entailments for the preservation of noble estates and the subsistence of impoverished noble families.<sup>9</sup>

In Sweden, this debate on the nobility, the right to offices and the legitimacy of estate privileges in general became particularly acerbated during the last years of the Age of Liberty, from 1766, when the liberty of the press was established, until the royal revolution of Gustav III in 1772. The nobility was attacked by both the lower estates and by the King, who eventually reduced the political power of the aristocracy. There were numerous writings concerning noble privilege, both presented officially as memoranda to the Diet and anonymously printed pamphlets disseminated throughout the realm, several of which have been seen as very radical.<sup>10</sup>

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6 See, for instance, Ulrich Adam, 'Nobility and modern monarchy – J. H. G. Justi and the French debate on commercial nobility at the beginning of the seven years war', *History of European Ideas*, 29 (2003), pp. 141–57.

7 For instance, the House of Nobility had *Télémaque* printed for the instruction of all young noblemen in Sweden. See Matti Klinge, 'Télémaques budskap i Sverige', *Det roliga börjar hela tiden. Bokförläggare Kjell Peterson 60 år den 20 december 1996*, Clio – Den historiska bokklubben, 1996, pp. 137–52.

8 "Den handlande adelen", A. Nordencrantz arkiv, Börstorpsamlingen, vol. 78:3 (E 3023), National Archives, Stockholm.

9 "Tankar om Grunden till Adlens Wälmåg i Sverige samt de Medel Utom hvilka den ej kan winnas, af Anders Schönberg 1756", Uppsala University Library, ms F 278: Handlingar till Sveriges politiska historia, 1755–1758.

10 See, for instance, Jonas Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk. Nationell och politisk självbild i Sverige från sen stormaktstid till slutet av frihetstiden*, Symposium: Stockholm/Stehag, 2000,



The arguments against the privileged estate have been the object of historical research for several years.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the arguments used to defend the nobility in Sweden are less known but at least as interesting since they reveal the strength and the evolution of traditional conceptions of society based on hierarchy, distinction and privilege during the eighteenth century. Research on these arguments also reveals the capacity for adaptation of the social elite.<sup>12</sup> What were the prospects for the late-eighteenth-century Swedish nobility, an elite that was losing power, and whose very legitimacy – liberties based on a service to king and country that no longer was its exclusive privilege – was being questioned? What was the meaning of privilege in a society that was beginning to define itself by other criteria? Another aspect to examine in writings about the nobility is the patriotic discourse in the debates that followed the French (and Swedish) *debâcle* against Prussia in the Seven Years' War: to what extent did new conceptions of the relationship between the state and the subjects' loyalties towards it affect the noble identity?<sup>13</sup>

This article will analyse perceptions of the future of the nobility from three perspectives. In the first part of my analysis, I will examine some echoes of the Coyer-d'Arcq exchange in Sweden and the reactions of noble politicians to the rise of wealthy commoners and the appearance of a landed, non-noble elite. Secondly, I will examine how anti-aristocracy and threats to the privileged estate were experienced by the members of the nobility themselves. Finally, the focus will be on the answers of the nobles to the questions of privilege and of the legitimacy of the concept of nobility. The sources used here are two texts intended for the Diet, a personal diary from the period of bitter party struggles that split the nobility in the middle of the 1760s and a couple of the numerous pamphlets on privilege that were printed some years later. The combination of these three types of sources – semi-private, private and public – makes it possible to approach the problem of the social legitimacy of the nobility from slightly different angles. They all converge in their underlying anxiety about the future of the privileged estate.

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and Peter Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty. Social Upheaval, History Writing, and the New Public Sphere in Sweden, 1740–1792*, Stockholm Studies in Politics: Stockholm, 2003.

- 11 Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk*; Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*. See also Skuncke & Tandefelt (eds.), *Riksdag, kaffehus och predikstol* and Patrik Winton, *Frihetstidens politiska praktik. Näverke och offentlighet 1746–1766*, Uppsala universitet: Uppsala, 2006, which analyses political radicalism from the point of view of the clergy.
- 12 In general, newer research tends to argue that traditional elites have been successful in re-adapting themselves to the processes of modernisation. For an account of the Swedish case in an international perspective, see Göran Norrby, *Adel i förvandling. Adliga strategier och identiteter i 1800-talets borgerliga samhälle*, Uppsala, 2005, pp. 12–9.
- 13 This aspect has been proposed, in the case of France, in Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*.

## FEAR 1: THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE NOBILITY

Anders Nordencrantz, formerly Bachmansson, was a burgomaster's son who had been ennobled in 1743. A member of the Diet, he was one of the younger members of the oppositional "Cap" party that took an interest in the liberty of trade and the means to deal with inflation during the second half of the Age of Liberty. At the Diet of 1755–1756, he presented a memorandum against all forms of monopolies and restrictions on trade (*Påminnelser vid manufakturkommissariens Erik Salanders så kallade Genväg till slögder*).<sup>14</sup> It was probably in preparation for this memorandum that he had translated Coyer's pamphlet. At the same Diet, Anders Schönberg, also a nobleman but representing the party in power, the Francophile "Hats", whose economic policies were traditionally mercantilist, intended to present his memorandum on how to maintain the economic prosperity of the nobility at the same Diet, but he never did so because of the growing conflict between the Diet and the King and the abortive revolution that ultimately disrupted the work of the Diet from June 1756 until it broke up in October the same year.<sup>15</sup>

Both authors were familiar with Abbé Coyer's *La Noblesse commerçante*. Typically of the period, both advanced the economic interest of the country as an argument. However, they represented opposed views on the utility of preserving the nobility and its privileges. For Nordencrantz, great utility and a prosperous future could be found in the abolition of restrictions and obsolete privileges that prevented commerce from flourishing. Schönberg, for his part, represented a more defensive, conservative position, proposing restrictions and control in order to protect the interests of the privileged estate. Schönberg, who himself had strong family ties to the countryside and the rural nobility, shared Coyer's concern about the impoverishment of this group. Behind Schönberg's text, however, was perhaps not so much a desire to see noblemen become tradesmen, as a fear of successful tradesmen taking over noble property. Consequently, the text mainly focuses on the means by which the nobility could keep its estates in its own hands.

Politically, Sweden in the Age of Liberty was a rather aristocratic regime, a mixed government ruled by the four Estates, of which the Nobility was the most

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14 See Gunnar Olsson, *Hattar och mössor. Studier över partiväsendet i Sverige 1751–1762*, Göteborg, 1963, p. 45. On the younger Caps and Nordencrantz's economic writings, see also Arndt Öberg, *De yngre mössorna och deras utländska bundsförvanter 1765–1769. Med särskild hänsyn till de kommersiella förbindelserna med Storbritannien, Danmark och Preussen*, Studia historica Upsaliensia 33, Svenska bokförlag: Uppsala, 1970, pp. 69–84.

15 For a detailed account of the rebellion, see Carl Gustaf Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia från K. Carl XII:s död till statshöfvingen 1772*, vol. 4, Norstedt: Stockholm, 1874, pp. 192–236.

influential, an aristocratic Senate and a powerless king.<sup>16</sup> The aristocracy of the two dominating parties and of the court dominated higher administration and government offices. Nevertheless, the eighteenth century was also characterised by the gradual but steady rise of commoners. On the one hand, there was an increasing number of non-noble persons of standing (*ofrälse ståndspersoner*) who were not members of any estate and who did not necessarily fit into the traditional social hierarchy. On the other hand, rich bourgeois entrepreneurs who did not need noble status in order to be influential or to enhance their social status were establishing themselves as a socially significant elite. From the economic point of view, the one adopted by Schönberg, most challenging for the noble estate was the rise of ironmasters and entrepreneurs (the so-called *skeppsbroadel*, the non-noble financial elite of Stockholm) who, in competition with non-noble officers, civil servants, clergymen and peasants, were buying up noble manors. As a consequence, a non-noble landed gentry was making its appearance.

This was the impetus for Schönberg's memorandum. According to him, as to Montesquieu, Coyer and d'Arcq, the nobility constituted the strength of a country. An essential condition of nobility was a good education, which cost much money. Impoverished noblemen were not able to serve their country properly because of their lack of learning and thus constituted a danger for the fatherland, which they might betray for money. This, according to the historian Schönberg, had already happened in other countries such as Poland, with disastrous consequences. The nobility thus needed wealth to be able to reproduce itself. Those noblemen who enjoyed wealth and property were, Schönberg stated, fortunately more numerous.<sup>17</sup> But would their number remain stable?

To maintain the standards of nobility, Abbé Coyer had proposed the abolition of restrictions that prevented the French nobles from going into commerce. Schönberg did not reject trade as a new alternative for the noble estate. Quite the contrary, he even explicitly referred to Coyer's *La Noblesse commerçante* and to an article dealing with the matter in the periodical *Svenska Mercurius* of March 1756.<sup>18</sup> Further, he argued that a good example of how the nobility

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16 During the Age of Liberty, when contemporaries wrote about Sweden in Latin, French or English, the term "senate" was generally used to designate the old Council of the Realm or Privy Council. This change of terminology is significant since it drew a parallel with Ancient Rome and republican forms of government.

17 "Tankar om Grunden till Adlens Wälmåg i Sverige samt de Medel Utom hwilka den ej kan winnas, af Anders Schönberg 1756", 2, 3 §. On the costs and problems of noble education in late eighteenth-century Sweden, see, for instance, Jessica Parland-von Essen, *Behagets betydelse. Döttrarnas edukation i det sena 1700-talets adelskultur*, Gidlund: Hedemora, 2005.

18 "Tankar om Grunden till Adlens Wälmåg i Sverige samt de Medel Utom hwilka den ej

could benefit from trade could be found in contemporary Sweden, where those noblemen who had participated in the establishment of the Swedish East India Company and of various Swedish manufactories had earned good profits. The fact that both enterprises were part of the economic programme of Schönberg's own 'Hat' party was something that he did not find necessary to point out. In Sweden, engagement in commercial activities did not have a derogating effect on noble privilege, although trade and commerce were primarily seen as the domain of the Burghers' estate. The liberty to trade and obtain benefit from commerce was explicitly granted by the noble privileges of 1723.<sup>19</sup> To place one's children as apprentices in trading companies was in fact, according to Schönberg, the best way to ensure that one's investments would bear fruit, although Schönberg admitted that this was a means unavailable to most of the noble families because of the economic outlay that it required.<sup>20</sup>

The strongest basis of the wealth of the Swedish nobility was its possession of landed estates, which were freed from taxes and could not be acquired by the Crown or by commoners. The noble privileges of 1723 stated that only noblemen could acquire noble estates. However, commoners who already owned such estates were permitted to keep them and even pass them down to their heirs, but they could sell them only to noblemen. Noble-like persons, burghers and clergymen, but not peasants, could buy them if there was no nobleman willing to pay for them.<sup>21</sup> However, five per cent of all noble estates were already in commoners' hands, according to Schönberg.<sup>22</sup> Either the estates were bought under the cover of a third person, for instance in the name of a spouse or relative of noble birth, or they were mortgaged to a commoner and released only at a price that was higher than any nobleman could afford.<sup>23</sup> Inflation and the general rise of real

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kan winnas, af Anders Schönberg 1756", 3 §. From this we can conclude that Schönberg's memorandum was drafted after this date. Also Nordencrantz referred, in his translation, to the *Mercurius* of 1754.

19 "Tankar om Grunden till Adlens Wälmåg i Sverige samt de Medel Utom hwilka den ej kan winnas, af Anders Schönberg 1756", 3 §; Ridderskapets och adelns privilegier den 16 oktober 1723, 19 §, *Frihetstidens grundlagar och konstitutionella stadgar*, utg. Axel Brusewitz, Stockholm, 1916, pp. 116–7.

20 "Tankar om Grunden till Adlens Wälmåg i Sverige samt de Medel Utom hwilka den ej kan winnas, af Anders Schönberg 1756", 3 §.

21 Sten Carlsson, *Ständsamhälle och ståndspersoner 1700–1865. Studier rörande det svenska ständsamhällets upplösning*, Gleerup: Lund, 1973, p. 133.

22 Schönberg did not include outlying farms belonging to a noble manor that were possessed by commoners in this number, only the manors themselves, the selling of which was explicitly forbidden by the privileges of 1723. "Tankar om Grunden till Adlens Wälmåg i Sverige samt de Medel Utom hwilka den ej kan winnas, af Anders Schönberg 1756", 4 §.

23 "Tankar om Grunden till Adlens Wälmåg i Sverige samt de Medel Utom hwilka den ej

estate value aggravated the problem for the rural nobility, who could not buy noble estates for themselves.

To help the situation, Schönberg did not propose increased liberty of trade, but rather a tightening-up of the rules and privileges that already existed. He proposed that a Diet commission should examine suspected cases of illegal ownership of noble estates. He also required that all mortgages should be agreed in the presence of a judge and false contracts declared void. The same procedures of control were also to be applied to suspicious transfers of property disguised under the terms of lease.<sup>24</sup> For those who might argue that it was unjust that a citizen could not sell his own property to whomsoever he wished, Schönberg simply stressed that illegal procedures remained illegal and compared the case of a nobleman selling estates that conferred his social position to a priest selling his vicarage.<sup>25</sup>

Above all, the nobility should increase its wealth by preventing estates from falling into commoners' hands. This, Schönberg argued, could be done by constituting entailed estates. (Family entailments were making their appearance in Sweden at that time.) However, those who benefited from such arrangements should stay on their estates and devote their time to agriculture, so that there would be enough offices and positions for the younger and poorer noblemen who did not have any estates of their own. In order to satisfy the landed nobility's greed for titles, Schönberg proposed that there should be agricultural honours and titles such as "Country Councillor", as was already the practice in Pomerania.<sup>26</sup>

One could ask what the significance of Schönberg's memorandum was, since it was never presented at the Diet. Nevertheless, like Nordencrantz's initiatives, it tells something about the early reception of the Coyer-d'Arcq debate in Sweden in the mid-1750s. As we shall see, this was only the beginning of the debate on the fundamental legitimacy of noble privilege. Above all, Schönberg's memorandum and its defensive tone, clinging to privileges and articles of law, reveals the fears, impoverishment and other economic difficulties experienced by some members of the noble estate, even before the Seven Years' War. It is significant that Schönberg wished to present his concerns at the Diet, the main political body of the realm: the

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kan winnas, af Anders Schönberg 1756", 5, 6, §. See also Carlsson, *Ståndssambälle och ståndspersoner*, p. 135, who refers to an older study by Hugo Valentin based on Schönberg in *Historisk Tidskrift*, 1917.

24 "Tankar om Grunden till Adlens Wälmåg i Sverige samt de Medel Utom hwilka den ej kan winnas, af Anders Schönberg 1756", 7 §.

25 *Ibid.*, 9 §. The vicarages, with the adjacent fields, were an integral part of the Swedish allotment system and could not be alienated by a clerical office holder.

26 "Tankar om Grunden till Adlens Wälmåg i Sverige samt de Medel Utom hwilka den ej kan winnas, af Anders Schönberg 1756", 10–12 §.

question was highly political, since the erosion of the economic basis of noble power would undermine the foundation and future of the estate society in itself.

## FEAR 2: LOSS OF POLITICAL POWER

Despite the gradual rise of wealthy and capable commoners, the Swedish nobility maintained considerable political, social and economic power throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> Until the end of the Age of Liberty, it kept its dominance at the Diet as the first, and therefore the most prestigious and influential estate. The nobility also dominated all positions at court as well as most of the highest posts and offices in the army and the administration. In a society that nevertheless granted the non-noble estates representation at the Diet, and in which new groups of educated and capable commoners were becoming more and more visible and yet remained excluded from the highest offices and legislation, the problem lay rather in the existence of a distinction between noblemen, sometimes so poor that they could not make use of their privileges, and other able elite groups that did not have access to all political and administrative posts. The contemporaries were aware of this obvious paradox, and the end of the Age of Liberty saw an increased stream of anti-aristocratic pamphlets.

In eighteenth-century Sweden, as in classical political theory, the concept of aristocracy was above all understood as a regime. In many respects, Sweden of the Age of Liberty was a mixed monarchy with strong aristocratic republican elements, but this aristocratic element of the regime was not something that could be publicly acknowledged or celebrated. On the contrary, the concept of aristocracy as a regime and as a ruling class retained a very negative connotation in Swedish political language.<sup>28</sup> It was associated with oligarchy and all the vices derived from an excessive concentration of power – selfishness, corruption, nepotism and neglect – and was, strange as it might seem, perceived as being almost as tyrannical as monarchical ‘sovereignty’, i.e. absolutism. Hence accusations of ‘aristocracy’ or ‘aristocratic rule’ became frequent in Swedish political discourse during the Age of Liberty as real power was concentrated in the elite of the party in office. These accusations were not necessarily anti-noble, rather they were directed at the ruling political elite by the party in opposition and were used without any scruples by

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27 For a critical comment on the alleged decline of the nobility in the nineteenth century in Sweden, see Norrby, *Adel i förvandling*.

28 See, for instance, Hugo Valentin, *Frihetstidens riddarhus. Några bidrag till dess karakteristik*, Geber: Stockholm, 1915, pp. 90–5.

members of the high nobility themselves in order to discredit political enemies. In the late 1760s, however, attacks directed at the nobility itself and at the very existence of a privileged estate, started to appear. At the same time, as we shall see, criticism against noble privilege began to imply an indirect questioning of the form of government, which led to a confusion between traditional anti-aristocracy and attacks on the very idea of the estate society and of a hereditary nobility.

The public debate on privilege and inequality accelerated after the anti-French and pro-British ‘Cap’ party won the majority at the Diet in 1765, after 27 years in opposition, and passed a law on the liberty of printing in 1766. A testimony to the fears experienced by the Swedish aristocracy when its legitimacy was being publicly debated during the last years of the Age of Liberty is to be found in the letters and diaries written by Count Clas Julius Ekeblad in 1765–1770. Here, it is important to bear in mind that Ekeblad’s view represents only one side of the social confrontation, parallel to the party conflict, and that he had particular, personal reasons for feeling distressed. What makes his biased testimony interesting here is the coincidence of resentment felt by an ousted political elite and the feelings of imminent peril that were probably increased by the general anti-aristocratic ambience.

Clas Julius Ekeblad, born in 1742, was the son of one of the most prominent politicians and magistrates of the country Count Clas Ekeblad (1708–1771), who had been a senator and Chancellor of the Realm (*kanslipresident*) during the last four years of the rule of the Francophile ‘Hat’ party. This party, which had been in office for nearly thirty years, lost the support of the majority at the beginning of the Diet that opened in January 1765. The old Senate was dismissed and its members accused of aristocratic abuse and corruption. Young Ekeblad’s account of this period reflects both despair over the prospect of his father losing power to his personal enemies and being persecuted for his opinions, and fears for the future of a country where noble privilege more generally was being attacked in a somewhat chaotic public debate.

When the Diet opened on 15 January 1765, Ekeblad feared, in his awkward French, that it would be “the most disastrous that Sweden ever had”: senators would be dismissed, the Hat party would be crushed, the alliance with France broken, and “everything upset”. For Ekeblad, the Cap party was like “vipers” in the bosom of the fatherland, working fanatically for its destruction and breathing only hatred and vengeance.<sup>29</sup> According to Ekeblad, the Caps would “overthrow

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29 “[...] je crains que cette diette ne soit une des plus funestes que la Suede ait eut; On ne parle que de demettre une parti des Senateur, de faire Rubeck marechal de la diette, d’ecraser le parti des chapeaux, de rompre l’alliance avec la France en un mot de bouleverser tout. [...] O ma chere Patrie que vous êtes mal heureux, de conserver dans ton sein des viperes qui

Liberty” and “throw the fatherland into a void from which it can never rise again”. All news from the Diet seemed to be so bad that Ekeblad did not dare to think of politics.<sup>30</sup> Above all, he feared for his father, who would lose his office and his income, and he describes waiting for this destiny to be sealed in terms that express his distress. At the prospect of being dismissed, arrested and publicly put on trial, Senator Ekeblad resigned from his offices on 2 August 1765 and retired. During the following days, his adversaries seemed to be planning a confiscation of the former senators’ property, but did not get the required majority at the Diet. The destiny of his father made young Ekeblad reflect over the morals of history. He believed that posterity would eventually vindicate the righteous, God would punish his father’s enemies, and things would take a turn for the better under a new regime:

Perhaps a day will come when, under a new master, the Tyrants will face the same evil that they make us suffer; God does not fail sooner or later to avenge the innocent who are oppressed.<sup>31</sup>

There is a tone of fatality in this reflection. It is fascinating to note the ambiguity of the term “master”, which could be a king just as well as another Diet party – the Age of Liberty and its estate rule was to be brought to an end only seven years later by Gustav III, whom Ekeblad himself would serve faithfully.<sup>32</sup> Even more remarkable is the emphasis placed by Ekeblad on the judgment of “posterity”, which he mentions at least twice:

I do not know whether posterity will understand that Sweden has produced people cowardly enough to think thus, while our ancestors, so to speak, equalled the Romans in virtue [– –] I leave it to posterity to judge by the public papers [...].<sup>33</sup>

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travail de toute leurs forces pour hater votre ruine; [...] tous ceux qui compose le parti des Bonnets ne sont que des fanatiques qui ne respire que haine et vengeance.” Clas Julius Ekeblad’s diary, 15 January 1765, Royal Library of Stockholm, ms I e 14 VI.

30 “[...] ne tendent qu’à culbuter la Liberté, et chetter la patrie dans un neant d’où il ne pourra jamais se relever”; “Je n’ause plus songer aux affaires politiques, on ne nous donne que de mauvaises nouvelles de toute part.” *Ibid.*, 29 January 1765.

31 “[...] peut etre qu’un jour viendra ou nos Tyrants eprouverons sous un nouvel maitre le mal qu’ils nous font endurer; Dieu ne laisse point tot ou tart de venger l’innocent qu’on oprime.” *Ibid.*, 23 June 1765.

32 See Gustaf Johan Ehrensward, *Dagboksanteckningar förda vid Gustaf III:s hof*; Stockholm 1878, 2 vols, *passim*.

33 “Je ne sais si la posterite peut comprendre que la Suede est produit des gens asses laches pour penser ainsi, lorsque nos ajeux, pour ainsi dire egalloit les Romains, en vertu.” – “Je laisse à la posterité, de juger par les papiers publiqs qui paroissent tous les jours de la justice



In fact, the very first page of his diary for 1765 was marked *Pour la posterité*. This is very revealing of the common perception of history and time in the second half of the eighteenth century: history formed a continuum marked by events and eras that could be brighter or darker, where the virtues or vices of individuals defined their place in memory or oblivion.<sup>34</sup> Posterity and the future were far from the same thing. While the future was a more immediate prospect, forward-looking and possible to estimate, posterity would look back, its face “turned towards the past”, like an “Angel of History”, vindicating the truth.<sup>35</sup> In this particular case, the family’s immediate future seemed dark and dreadful, but the virtuous moral conduct of its members might grant them an august posterity.

While waiting, without much hope, for happier times, the Ekeblads tried to rest and take pleasure from the countryside at their family estates of Stola and Mariedahl, but the “sadness and horror” of the capital seemed to dog their thoughts. Walks in the surroundings and playing music did not really succeed in “killing time, which is beginning to feel very long”.<sup>36</sup>

In these sinister months of 1765, Ekeblad started to reflect on the possibility of leaving his country and going abroad for a change, after the French ambassador in Stockholm, the Baron de Breteuil, had suggested he could enter the French army. Although originally only a suggestion made by the foreign diplomat to the son of a man who up to 1765 had made great contributions to the close relationship between the two states, Ekeblad seems to have rather quickly pinned his hopes on this new prospect of a happy emigration that would turn despair into a once-in-a-lifetime chance. His hopes were realised at the end of 1766, when he left Sweden for three years. During his stay in France, he continued his diary and filled it with harsh reflections on the ungratefulness of his countrymen and his exaggeratedly pessimistic beliefs that he would never see his country again.<sup>37</sup> When he returned to Sweden in 1770, the situation had changed: the administration led by his father was returning to office, but this change was to be reversed only some months later. The entire regime was crumbling, torn apart by political and social conflicts between the parties and the estates.

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qui reigné dans ce procédé.” *Ibid.*, 2 April 1765, 23 June 1765.

34 See Jouko Nurmiainen’s article in this volume. See also Sven Delblanc, *Ära och minne. Studier kring ett motivkomplex i 1700-talets litteratur*, Bonnier: Stockholm 1965.

35 On the “Angel of History”, see Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, London 1973, p. 259.

36 “Au retour de cette promenade nous fimes un peu de musique, pour tuer le tems qui comense a nous devenir très long.” Clas Julius Ekeblad’s diary, 10 October 1765.

37 Clas Julius Ekeblad’s diary, 1766–1770, Engeströmska samlingen, ms I e 14.7, Swedish Royal Library.

### FEAR 3: PRIVILEGE, NOBILITY AND SOCIETY ITSELF ENDANGERED

The rule of the Caps that Ekeblad hated was no less aristocratic than that of the Hats, but their administration (1765–1769) coincided with the most virulent public debate on privilege and society ever heard in Sweden until then. The law on the liberty of printing, passed by the Caps, who hoped to encourage a debate that would defame the Hat party, and issued on 2 December 1766, flooded the country with anonymous anti-aristocratic pamphlets more radical than the Cap Senate could ever have dreamt of. The debate on privilege became extremely bitter, undermining not only the privileges, but also the philosophical foundations of nobility, distinction and a hierarchic society, thus fomenting rather revolutionary sentiments.

The debate on privilege was not really a surprise when it was widely publicised in the late 1760s. Its origins went back to a contradiction in the fundamental laws concerning the criteria of birth versus merit in appointments to public offices: while the constitution (*Regeringsform*, the instrument of government) of 1720 stated that public officials were to be chosen on the basis of their merits only, the privileges of 1723 reserved the right to the highest offices of the realm for the nobility.<sup>38</sup> The problem appeared again in 1756, when the decree on offices (*tjänstebetänkandet*) confirmed merit as the overriding criterion, although it was understood in practice as equivalent to seniority. From 1755 onwards, the question of privilege and the right to office reappeared at every Diet until 1771.<sup>39</sup> This recurrent debate over the problem of privilege, alongside a general interest in French political writings in Swedish elite circles, explains why the works of Abbé Coyer inspired members of the nobility to compose memoranda on related issues for the Estates.

With the liberty of the press, a new phenomenon appeared, when a small number of publicists with a political agenda of their own began to exploit the new “public space” offered by the freedom to print and to publish, and anonymous publications started to exchange ideas with each other in what seemed a rather uncontrolled way. Recent history writing has perhaps overestimated the extent of this publicity – the reading public was above all urban – but many of the texts were, nevertheless, radical both in their arguments and the concepts they used.<sup>40</sup>

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38 See *Frihetstidens grundlagar och konstitutionella stadgar*. The privileges had already been a seed of discord in 1723. See Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk*, p. 390 ff.

39 Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk*, p. 387; Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, p. 152.

40 This has been demonstrated by Jonas Nordin and Peter Hallberg. Jouko Nurmiainen has in

More significant than the degree of radicalism in the pamphlets themselves is perhaps the fact that contemporaries were hardly used to such vehemence in print and did not know how to handle it, which explains why the pamphlets provoked such fears and strong reactions.<sup>41</sup>

The debate of the late 1760s became vehement after the publication in 1769 of a couple of history works criticising the nobility: Johan Hartman Eberhardt's *Försök til en pragmatisk historia om frälse-ståndet i Swerige, ifrån de äldsta til våra tider* and Eduard Philipsson Ehrensteen's *Oförgripeliga bewis emot adelens rättighet öfwer skatte-gods*, the first printed edition of a hundred-year-old pamphlet written in 1669.<sup>42</sup> The commoners' right to office was also debated by the assembled Diet, particularly in the Burghers' estate, where the discussions and initiatives nevertheless advocated the extension of privileges to all four estates of the realm rather than the abolition of privilege. The most well-known of these initiatives was a memorandum presented by Alexander Kepplerus, the Burgomaster of Lovisa, a small town situated on the Finnish coast near the Russian border. His memorandum was presented in the Burghers' Estate in January 1770 and immediately printed, only some days before the Diet was due to close, and for this reason could not be thoroughly dealt with by the Estates.<sup>43</sup>

In the press and through pamphlets, the debate went on after the Diet had ended its work. During 1770, pamphlets were published that directly attacked the nobility, but they were presented as having been written by a nobleman.<sup>44</sup> The most important of them was the anonymous *En Adelsmans Tankar Om Frälse- och Ofrälse-Ståndens Rättigheter i Befördringsmål*, written by the commoner Jonas Hallström, a clerk in the National Archives. Formally, it was presented as a response to the non-noble estates' concern about public offices, but it also contained critical reflections on the moral legitimacy of hereditary privilege.

Hallström's pamphlet provoked reactions both printed and judicial. As Peter Hallberg has shown, the nobility could answer either by engaging in the public debate, or by taking legal action against the pamphlets that attacked its privileges.

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his article 'Gemensamma privilegier för ett odalstånd' shown that the debate on privilege was above all a movement to extend privilege to all social groups rather than to abolish the very concept of privilege.

41 This is a characteristic of undeveloped public spaces and the phase of birth of public opinion. See for instance Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane, Duke University Press: Durham, 1991, as well as the works of Robert Darnton.

42 See Peter Hallberg, 'Den förlorade friheten. Historieskrivning och samhällskritik under sen frihetstid', in Skuncke & Tandefelt (eds.), *Riksdag, kaffehus och predikstol*, p. 342.

43 For the most up-to-date account of this memorandum, see Nurmiainen, 'Gemensamma privilegier för ett odalstånd'.

44 This is another typical feature of eighteenth-century political pamphlets.

In both cases, the noble defence would argue that the privileges were part of the fundamental laws, and privilege should thus be regarded as an irrefutable truth, the questioning of which was equal to questioning the constitution.<sup>45</sup> An anonymous, apparently noble author who mistook Hallström's irony for a serious proposal, was answered by other pamphleteers with accusations of selfishness and lack of patriotism, claiming that the nation was divided by the inequality in people's rights. Now Hallström published the second part of his *Adelsmans Tankar*, which was even more radical, and where he among other things made a link between the Seven Years' War and the decadence of the nobility. This was countered by none other than Anders Schönberg.<sup>46</sup>

It is characteristic that only a few representatives of the nobility answered the challenges, and that the one who did was Anders Schönberg, who had defended the privileged estate back in 1756, and who was an intellectual and himself belonged to a noble family, albeit of rather recent advancement.<sup>47</sup> Schönberg's defence of the privileges was strongly legalistic, although Jonas Nordin has argued that the privileges themselves were not his main point.<sup>48</sup> The fundamental laws of the realm, i.e. the constitution, were perceived as inviolable. As the authors of the constitutions of 1719–1723 had been strongly influenced by natural law, the fundamental laws were also seen as a social contract, the altering or abolition of which would return society to its original, but chaotic and violent, state of nature. Consequently, noble privilege could not be abolished without abolishing the constitution, and abolishing the constitution would be equal to abolishing civil society.

According to Schönberg, this was what some people wanted (there had even been court cases concerning the use of the epithets “constitutionalist” and “assassin of liberty” in Hallström's pamphlet).<sup>49</sup> Schönberg's argument was that criticising the legitimacy of one estate or accusing it of oppressing another estate was contrary to

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45 Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, pp. 205–6.

46 Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk*, pp. 409–11.

47 Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, pp. 205–6.

48 Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk*, p. 411. His argument is that Schönberg gave the privileges a formal, but not practical importance. Nordin's interpretation is that this meant they could be abolished. Philosophically speaking, I am a little sceptical about this, since a civil society without privileges was not generally regarded as possible as long as the social contract included a division into unequal social groups. If a society without privilege had really been an alternative, Gustav III would probably have implemented it when he reformed the “social contract” in 1772.

49 *Utdrag af Stockholms Norra Förstads Östra Kämnars Rätts Protocoll för den 19 Junii 1770*, [Stockholm] 1770; according to Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, p. 207, these words were Schönberg's, but they were actually quoted from Hallström's *En Adelsmans Tankar Om Frälse- och Ofrälse-Ståndens Rättigheter i Befordringsmål*, first part, Stockholm 1770.

the spirit of the constitution, which protected every estate. Neither should certain individuals' possible lack of morality be generalised to an entire estate. Schönberg also accused the author of *En Adelsmans Tankar* of bringing about the same kind of discord between citizens and vice that he criticised the nobility for, although Hallström had cleverly denied such intentions.<sup>50</sup> In eighteenth-century Sweden, envy and discord were generally seen as the worst dangers that could threaten civil societies, especially republican or mixed governments like that of Sweden.<sup>51</sup> The same fears were expressed by Clas Julius Ekeblad in his diary, where he stated, in a comparison between France and Sweden, that “[in Sweden], confusion rules, people do not want to obey, and he who commands fears the one who is forced to obey and who does so only with regret since everybody think they are equals”.<sup>52</sup>

From the nobility's point of view, the worst was yet to come. In 1771, Anders Chierlin published a pamphlet called *Den Ofrälse soldaten*, which portrayed noble officers as vicious, cruel and despotic, and tyrannising commoners in the army. During 1772, the periodical *Den Swenske uppsynings-mannen* “specialised” in reporting iniquities, abuses and offences committed by the privileged estate, and of course the trial of Chierlin, who had been sued for his sulphurous pamphlet.<sup>53</sup> The very notion of privilege and hierarchy seemed to explode when during the Diet that convened in 1771 after the death of King Adolf Frederick, new memoranda were immediately presented demanding privileges for the commoners.<sup>54</sup> The conflict was partially resolved when in February 1772 the Estates finally agreed on a formulation in the coronation oath of Gustav III that gave commoners access to the highest offices of the realm. With the royal revolution of 19 August 1772, the King finally deprived the Estates and the aristocratic Senate of their power, strengthened his own grip, and put an end, at least temporarily, to the struggles between the estates.

It is obvious that by the early 1770s the Swedish debate on privilege had gone very far from the courteous exchange between Abbé Coyer and the Chevalier d'Arcq. In his response to Coyer, d'Arcq had presented the case of the nobility in terms of patriotism and martial honour, in a way that is easily associated with what

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50 Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, pp. 206–7.

51 Cf. Pasi Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined. Changing Perceptions of National Identity in the Rhetoric of the English, Dutch and Swedish Public Churches*, Brill: Leiden & Boston, 2005.

52 “[...] ches nous la confusion reigné, on ne veut obeir et celui qui commande craint celui qui est forcé d'obeir, et qui ne le fait qu'a regret puisque tout le monde se croit egal”; Clas Julius Ekeblad's diary, September 1769, Engeströmska samlingen, ms I e 14.7, Swedish Royal Library.

53 Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, pp. 158–65.

54 Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*, p. 154.

historians have called the *réaction seigneuriale*.<sup>55</sup> A possible answer to attacks on the nobility and its lack of virtue would indeed have been to describe the noblemen as the leading patriots, or to associate nobility with the defence of the fatherland. In Sweden, this had been made impossible once and for all by Hallström's pamphlet, which under the guise of a text written by a nobleman used this kind of rhetoric to criticise the privileged estate. In other words, at the beginning of the 1770s, the nobility itself was eventually accused of not being patriotic enough, and patriotism had become an argument against privilege.<sup>56</sup> That was also far from Coyer's argument, repeated by Schönberg in 1756, that the nobility constituted the force of a nation. In a mixed government, with educated and politically active commoners, "patriotism", which together with concern for the common good, was becoming one of the central political concepts of the period from the 1770s to the 1790s, was such a widely held sentiment that it could not be usurped by one single estate.<sup>57</sup>

## CONCLUSION: THE PROSPECTS AND ADAPTATION OF THE NOBILITY

Today, a common interpretation of the end of the Age of Liberty is that the regime succumbed to a social and political crisis, in which the question of privilege and moral corruption was central. However, it would probably be exaggerated to claim that the system was doomed to fall when privilege began to be questioned. The contradiction between the notions of privilege and merit was present from the very beginning of the Age of Liberty. Nevertheless, the memoranda that reached the Estates in the dispute on privilege in 1770–1771 did not question the idea of privilege as much as the fact that some estates did not have any privileges at all.<sup>58</sup> There were radical pamphlets that could be printed in huge numbers because of the liberty of the press, restricted again in 1774, but in the Diet, where all the Estates were represented, the goal of the politically active does not seem to have been the removal of distinction or privilege as such, but rather the defence of

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55 See, for instance, Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *La noblesse au XVIIIe siècle. De la Féodalité aux Lumières*, Paris 1976.

56 Cf. Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk*, p. 409.

57 Another way of putting what was happening would be to talk, like Marie-Christine Skuncke, about a "non-noble public sphere". Marie-Christine Skuncke, 'Medier, mutor och nätverk', in Skuncke & Tandefelt (eds.), *Riksdag, kaffehus och predikstol*, p. 286.

58 This is the position of Nurmiainen in 'Gemensamma privilegier för ett odalstånd'; see also Hallberg, *Ages of Liberty*; cf. Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk*, pp. 392–408.

particular, specific interests of certain groups and their legitimation in relation to others.

From the viewpoint of a nobility fearing for its future, another interpretation of the end of the Age of Liberty would be that the privileged estate was weakened by internal party struggles. However, in the end, the nobility does not seem to have been that weak. On one hand, the articulation of fears of chaos as a threat to civil society in the debate reveals the strength of traditional conceptions of the estate society. The debate on privilege also reveals the development of a strong legalistic rhetoric among the defenders of the privileged estate. This legalism, coloured with the rhetoric of classical republicanism, was a way of legitimating and keeping the aristocratic regime alive.<sup>59</sup> It was related to traditional aristocratic constitutionalism, which in the late 1780s would resurge in protest against the rule of Gustav III, after the nobility had lost its political power.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, in front of the mass of pamphlets on privilege, the nobility stuck to its exclusive stance and kept a rather low profile in the public debate, perhaps feeling that the entire idea of noblemen having to defend their privileges was somewhat absurd. Although the latter half of the eighteenth century was punctuated with challenges to the privileged estate, the nobility also had good reasons to place their hopes in the future. The immediate future was not as dark for them as the young Ekeblad had feared. The “new master” came, and ironically enough, rather than abolishing privileges, Gustav III consolidated social distinction by reintroducing a hierarchy within the House of Nobility at the same time as he strengthened the commoners’ rights. Gustav III’s reign also brought on a new rise of the court aristocracy. Anders Schönberg’s and Clas Julius Ekeblad’s destinies are in this respect significant; the historian was recruited for a rewriting of history that was part of the royal political propaganda, and the young officer became a member of the inner circle around Gustav III and, after a time, the commander of the Royal Guard (*Livdrabantkåren*).

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59 See Charlotta Wolff, ‘Pro Patria et Libertate. Frihetsbegreppet i 1700-talets svenska politiska språk’, *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*, 2007: 1, pp. 34–62.

60 On aristocratic constitutionalism, see Fredrik Lagerroth, *Frihetstidens författning. En studie i den svenska konstitutionalismens historia*, Bonnier: Stockholm 1915, and Michael Roberts, *On Aristocratic Constitutionalism in Swedish History 1520–1720*, Athlone Press: London 1966.

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