

## Summaries



Curt Weibull

### Contribution to the Interpretation of Canute the Holy's Deed of Gift to the Cathedral of Lund in 1085

Leading historians of an earlier period accorded only local importance to King Canute the Holy's deed of gift of the year 1085. The saintly king was considered to be no more than the founder of the Lund cathedral's greatness. In an article in 1924 on the deed of gift, Lauritz Weibull broke with this interpretation. He claimed that the deed of gift was one of the foundation stones in Denmark's and Scania's history. "Probably for the first time," he wrote, "a sure light falls over a Nordic state and a Nordic society's structure, king and people, estates and classes". Lauritz Weibull's interpretation was not generally accepted in research immediately. This would not happen definitively until a half-century later in Aksel E Christiansen's 1977 history of Denmark.

In the deed of gift can be found a purely personal statement by King Canute. It has gone unnoticed in research until now. The king says, "After having taken over the kingdom (Denmark) through inheritance from my father". The statement is incorrect. At the time of King Canute Denmark did not have an hereditary monarchy; it had an elective one. Furthermore, according to both the oldest narrative source and to a later one, King Canute was *elected* as Denmark's king. When he concealed his election as king and says that he was an hereditary monarch, he renders himself guilty of a pure falsehood. Without doubt the reason for this lies in the difference in power which existed in the medieval conception between an hereditary and an elected king. The former's power was much greater than the latter's.

The power which was due an elected king in Denmark was quite severely limited. He possessed no legislative rights, and least of all any right to enact laws of the kingdom. Law was made by the Things of the different Danish lands and applied only to them, not to the kingdom as a whole. According to three narrative sources basic to his history, however, King Canute did enact laws of the realm. In so doing he committed a crime against existing law.

King Canute sought to take power in Denmark. He declared that he was Denmark's hereditary king. He did not shun to break the law. Conservative leading men and farmers in Jutland could not bear that, no more than they could his seeking to introduce the church tithes and his demanding fines of those who had not fulfilled their military obligations towards England. For these Jutlanders he was an oppressor, a tyrant. They rose up against their king. They drove him from Jutland. In their hatred they chased him over the Little Belt to Funen (*Fyn*). They and the natives of Funen killed him in a church, St Albans church in Odense.

Priests and monks in Odense, of whom one certainly, another likely, were Englishmen, made the king, who was killed by natives of Jutland and Funen, into a saint, into Canute the Holy. His brother, King Erik Ejegod, was able to have him canonized through the envoy to Rome and Pope Paul II. At an ecclesiastical synod he was admitted to the church's list of saints. At the same time miracles were attributed to him. According to Ailnoth, these were such that the blind, the deaf, those who stammered, had withered hands, were lame or leprous regained their health. This had happened through King Canute's intercession with God. All these were pure phantasies, invented by priests and monks in Denmark and spread by them and other churchmen throughout Denmark and to other countries as well.

King Canute's slayers did not give in, however. Saxo relates of their understanding of things during the 12th century and up to his own time. He says,

“As the number of omens rose, the utterly envious men were forced to concede the power of miracles and could no longer refuse belief in them; but they still continued to defend the slaying; they well admitted his holiness, but maintained that this was due less to his deeds in life than to his penitence in death. In so doing they transformed the slaying into a just cause, and yet accorded the fallen person all honor: they said that the king was justly felled, but sanctified by his tears of remorse, and they claimed that his heart was set more upon greed than piety.”

The same opposition in the interpretation of King Canute which Saxo reports 800 years ago still prevails in contemporary research. One school sees in King Canute an oppressor and a tyrant, who was slain by his own people. Another sees in him a king of Denmark whose life was worthy of a saint. At present a certain religious historical writing has sought to blow life into this latter school. The attempt, however, has required the concealment and the explaining away of source material of decisive importance. As part of this, the saintly legends about King Canute are considered to have “the character of chronicles” and to be reasonably spoken of as “works of history with certain legendary features”. By using historical methods of this kind this religious interpretation has become scholarly worthless.

*Translated by Joseph Zitomersky*

Uffe Østergård

## Analysis and Synthesis in the Era of Post-Modernism

Despite the fundamental reflection on the scholarly basis of the historical profession that was undertaken in the 1960s by Nordic historians such as Ottar Dahl, M P Clausen, Rolf Torstendahl and Pentti Renvall, no success was achieved in overcoming the distinction between historical research and historical writing which Kristian Erslev felt himself forced to establish in 1911. Many have tried to bypass in their writing the epistemological problem, but it is constantly with us. This had led to a new orientation within the international historical profession, and somewhat corresponding efforts can also be found in the Nordic countries. The following is a survey of central aspects of this interdisciplinary epistemological discussion and an internal historical pleading for reflection on the fundamentally narrative character of historical scholarship *as well as* historical writing.

The American historians of science Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra criticize the historical discipline as follows: "When historians claim that history is a combination of science and art, they generally mean that it is a combination of *late-nineteenth-century* social science and *mid-nineteenth-century* art," that is, ideals dating from before the modern breakthrough in literature, "the linguistic turn" in textual analysis, and relativity and quantum theory in the natural sciences.

This critique is both right and wrong. Right in the sense that the description in fact covers very well the naive self-conception found among most practicing historians, even in Denmark, where otherwise the demand for epistemological knowledge and reflection has occupied a central place in the organization of study since 1970. But the claim is wrong in the sense that modernism actually *has* come to the profession. It came precisely in the form of the methodological consciousness that induced Erslev in 1911 to introduce the distinction between methodologically assured simple results, historical science or *analysis*, and the narrative of the larger course of development, historical writing, which we nowadays call *synthesis*. That this took place on an obscure evolutionary and scientific basis is of less importance in this context. The historical profession is not quite so naive as Hayden White claims. The problem is just that the profession has not drawn the right consequences of the modernistic penetration. Therefore the critique of its practice is fully legitimate and utterly needed, even if, in my view, it does not necessarily lead us to the same relativistic conclusion.

This is not the first time that the problem has been raised. In the method conscious 1960s a new generation, who are now "the elder statesmen" in the profession, began to import explanatory theories from the systematic social sciences. This happened particularly in Sweden, with the result that the historical profession there never really seems to have overcome the chock assault made on its identity-giving humanistic central nervous system. In Denmark the reconsideration quickly took quite a different direction for reasons relating to the sociology of knowledge, which would take us too far afield to present here. Here the great critical sweep dominated in a search for *the* scholarly synthesis, chiefly on a marxistic basis (I know, for I myself have written reams of such manifestos).

But aside from the English marxist historian E J Hobsbawn, and rather few others, it must be conceded that the hopes were greater than the results. This has led those who were disappointed to hunt for real people and good stories in the past under such headings as "the whole way of life," historical anthropology and the history of mentality, again with Denmark at the head in importing "the latest and the hottest" — this time especially from

France (although the best translations of the French classics have come out in Swedish and the best historiographic surveys in Norwegian). In the English-speaking world this has been picked up and brought to a head by the untiring Lawrence Stone, who is always good at taking the pulse of the time. That he did in 1979 under the successful heading "Revival of the Narrative". The article is as much a symptom as an analysis, and Stone himself is not particularly good at narrating. But that he said the right thing at the right time can be seen in the speed by which the dictum has spread.

It is with this background that I have undertaken the study presented here. In the first instance I try to show that the historical profession particularly and the humanities in general are in no way unique in having to construct their "reality". This is naturally true for the social sciences, but more interesting is the fact that it is also the condition of the natural sciences after Einstein and notably Bohr. This we already learned in school, but it is only within the last few years that the natural sciences really seem to be drawing the consequences of quantum theory and all the other modern breakthroughs. In one sense or another every science always has to (re)construct its reality. But this does not necessarily mean that "anything goes," as the anarchistic American theorist of science Paul Feyerabend has claimed. There are rules for science, but so too for narration. And it is these last that I have taken upon myself to investigate somewhat more closely.

It is difficult to come much further than Aristotle's formulation in the *Poetics*, where what is demanded is an introduction and a conclusion and something in between. But one can still say a little, and this I do with the Danish philosopher Peter Kemp and the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur in hand. My most essential illustrative example is the narrative techniques which the film media demands — and makes possible — as distinguished from traditional progressive prose, the realistic novel of the 1840s or trivial literature, which we are accustomed to using when we narrate. This happens especially on going over Natalie Zemon Davis's work in connection with the model historical film, *Le Retour de Martin Guerre*.

One can say that this attempt to make the historical narrative modernistic — but not exactly post-modernistic, if that is at all possible — is basically only an attempt to bring the historical profession on a level with its own time, that is, to make it realistic. This does not concern me. What is in question is to "de-scientify" history and to make the profession conscious of its cultural and humanistic scholarly basis without its losing its anchoring in the artefacts of the historical reality, the "sources", with the aid of the historical method — well aware the sources, of whatever kind they are, are always "texts," not "reality," and that the (re)construction of "reality" is never an epistemologically unproblematical undertaking. But all the same we are to try the impossible and narrate history in the form of *histories*.

*Translated by Joseph Zitomersky*

Eva Österberg

### Compromise, conflict, political culture

## Contacts between the state and local peasant communities in early modern Sweden

The main focus in the article is on the following questions: How was the relation between the local agrarian community and the central government in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, when new taxes were levied, when soldiers had to be enlisted to defend the Crown's ambitious foreign policy, or when the agrarian society was transformed by new industries and agricultural reforms? Is it possible to identify any patterns by which people arrive at political and social solutions; patterns that change so slowly that they do not fit into a history of events of the kind the *Annales* tradition has opposed?

Referring to works by researchers such as Peter Blicke, David Sabean, Otto Brunner, N Demertzis, the author starts by discussing the concepts of "*communalism*", the *state*, *local community*, *interaction* and *political culture*. She then goes on to present a preliminary synthesis of the relationship between the state and the local peasant communities in the early modern period, drawing on empirical results from investigations by L-O Larsson, Kalle Bäck and the Nordic project on the decision-making processes in the Scandinavian countries in the eighteenth century, Sven A Nilsson, Claes Pettersson, as well as earlier works by herself. Those studies have concerned areas that were of decisive economic importance for both the peasantry and the state, and where patterns for arriving at solutions must have been developed through the interaction of different interests and negotiating positions. Combining the empirical results, the following conclusions emerge:

- a) During the long period of "communalism," here studied from the mid-sixteenth century to the nineteenth century, the Swedish peasants appear to have had channels by which they could reach the Crown, whether to protest or to cooperate. They were even represented in the parliament.
- b) Throughout this period many decision-making processes important to the peasant economy were placed on a local level, based on the collaboration of the parish or hundred representatives.
- c) When the peasants sought to gain a hearing for their views about tax relief, corrections to enclosure plans, and the like, they often succeeded in their aspirations.
- d) In this context the term peasants means the masters of the farmsteads. It was chiefly their interests and those of their households that were satisfied by the local institutions and their representatives. The homeless, lodgers, servants and other unpropertied people had difficulties in asserting their interests. What they could hope for, was that the heads of the households and the representatives of self-government had a sense of responsibility for the welfare of the whole population. If this responsibility was not shown, they remained outsiders, and their reaction to authority was probably a protest through silence, mockery, going slow, or petty criminality.

In the final part of the article, the author discusses the alternative ways of protesting against the authorities that were available to the peasants. The alternatives fall into two main categories:

*illegal* means to exert pressure: revolt, riot, strike, tax evasion, etc.

*legal* means permitted by the system: via political institutions or via administrative channels.

The question that must be asked is when one or the other course of action has been chosen, and with what result. A clear picture of Swedish history in this perspective cannot be painted in a few swift strokes. The author wants nevertheless to urge a specific approach, based on the theoretical assumptions and empirical results presented in the article, and on some comparisons with conditions in other European countries as well.

There certainly were bloody revolts among the peasantry in Sweden during the early modern period. Compared with Germany and France, however, Sweden had few peasant uprisings after the 1540s. When all is said and done, the prevailing pattern for contact between the authorities and the local peasant community appears to have been interaction through legal channels. This pattern can be understood in the light of 1. the structure of *mutual dependence* between the Crown and most of the producers in a society that was still predominantly agrarian, 2. a *traditional ideology* of the kind that for instance E P Thompson has talked about; an ideology which presupposed a degree of mutual solidarity, 3. *the institutionalization of political practise which the organizations of self-government brought about.*



Roger Kvist

### Social Processes in the Nomadic Reindeer-Pastoralist Society

This paper examines social processes in the nomadic reindeer-pastoralist society with special reference to the Tuorpon and Sirkas communities (lappbyar) in Jokkmokk parish during the period 1760–1860. The starting point for discussion is a decrease in population through migration to Norway, from 667 in 1781, to 353 in 1868.

The primary cause was the ecological instability of reindeer herding with recurring crises caused by poor grazing, adverse snow conditions, epizootics and predators. The stability in reindeer herding is finally determined by the ratio between the numbers of grazing animals and the capacity of the pastures. A disturbance in the balance between people and animals could occur if competition from the settlers limited available pastures, or the government through taxes appropriated so much of the surplus that the subsistence level was markedly increased. A closer examination reveals, however, that no outside influence can be indicated as being responsible for the population decline.

Attention must thus be directed towards the inner social processes of this reindeer pastoralist society. The proportion of reindeer owners among Saami households in Jokkmokk parish diminished between 1805 and 1840, from 80 % to 58 %. The proportion of tax-paying families diminished between 1781 and 1868, from 72 % to 43 % in Tuorpon, and from 58 % to 47 % in Sirkas. While the reindeer herding population diminished, the total number of reindeer remained on a relative constant level. The resulting process of accumulation consolidated the reindeer into the hands of fewer owners.

While these conclusions indicate an economically differentiated society, the marriage pattern in Tuorpon shows that the social distance between the economic groupings was very small. Marriage were mainly concluded independently of economic status. Members of the reindeer pastoralist society therefore identified each other as social equals and with common social and economic interests.

Among the out-migrants there was a correlation between low economic status over several generations and migration. Among the remaining reindeer nomads there was a correlation between high economic status and permanence in the parish. Each well-off family did not, however, have children that necessarily remained in Jokkmokk. Among the descendants of each sibling group there were persons that migrated to Norway. The process of exclusion operated in each generation and each sibling group.

By promoting economic differentiation, trade had an important potential as agent of social stratification in reindeer pastoralist society. This potential was, however, not fully realized. The equalizing factors in the pastoralist society were stronger than the differentiating forces.

Social proximity and the ensuing equal marriage pattern constituted the factor that made it possible for underlying social processes to cause exclusion and migration in each generation. As the marriages were largely concluded without regard to the economic position of the spouse's family, the probability of maintaining the accumulated reindeer wealth into the next generation was greatly reduced. The existing consolidation of reindeer that occurred on a societal level was, therefore, not repeated on the family level. A permanent economic stratification could not occur, and thus a lasting social differentiation did not take place.



Hans Albin Larsson

## Between Reality and Research — Theories on Agrarian Women and Politics

It is a common premise in research in women's history that working life was more equal in agrarian society than it became in industrial society. The *organization of production* in industrial society is seen to be the reason for women's altered role. According to this view, women's lot came to be that of taking care of reproduction, childrearing and household tasks. Women in agriculture, who are normally counted within the producing part of the population, have seldom been given attention in women's history analyses. If one assumes that it was the change in production in industrial society that changed women's role from production to reproduction, and that this in its turn limited women's ability to make themselves felt politically, it is of the greatest interest to analyze agrarian women and their political organization. The object of this article is 1) to analyze the political organization of women in agriculture and 2) to show that women's political mobilization did *not generally* depend on whether they participated in production or not.

Modern research in women's studies contains a number of models and theories which seek to explain women's participation in political life. These base themselves principally on historical investigations of "working class women" or "bourgeois women" or on investigations of contemporary conditions, that is, on a limited foundation. It is important therefore to test whether they are also able to be used to explain the political behavior of women in agriculture. Agrarian women have often been underestimated in employment statistics. Yet, as late as 1930, they still numbered c. 800 000, or a quarter of all employed people. This underscores the importance of taking into account this female category as well in any theory building that applies to production, reproduction and political behavior. In this article research has been made on politically organized women in agriculture during the period from the introduction of women's right to vote until the 1960s, that is, up to the time when the breakthrough of women on the labor market took place and the basis for the modern women's debate was laid.

The Swedish Rural Women's Association (*Svenska Landsbygdens Kvinnoförbund* or *SLKF*) was established in 1932—1933. It was a part of the total mobilization of the agrarian population that took place in the years 1929—1933 as a consequence of the acute agricultural crisis then existing. SLKF quickly developed into a large organization despite the declining number of women in agriculture. As far as one can judge, the reason behind this was the orientation which the association gave to its activities. SLKF came to fill several functions for rural women. It was at once a "trade union," a political and a social organisation.

The increased labor burdens to which the structural transformation of society gave rise meant that agricultural women were more tightly bound to their role as doubly working producers-reproducers. The male dominance of "external life," of politics and nominations, did not give women any opportunity to establish themselves politically. The existing patriarchy, however, was not able to hinder the organization of women once that had well gotten underway. On the contrary, the organizational work went very quickly. The need for women to seek collegial support increased naturally enough, inasmuch as the labor hardships increased in parallel with an awareness that other groups in society had it better. The patriarchy was thus not able to assert itself as an obstacle to the organization of women, but it could prolong women's political breakthrough for a long time. The social

and trade union orientation of the women's organization was its basis. Through it constantly recurring demands were made for increased political participation and its own party organization could be influenced to act on questions that were particularly important from women's point of view. Men's acceptance of the women's organization was a precondition for the agrarian women's political activation, but this also had a dynamic effect. The right to vote made women politically important and through it they could make political demands.

The development, and the reasons for it, that have been sketched above is not to be found in women's history surveys. The connection so commonly drawn between women's changed role and industrialization is not especially suitable as a direct explanation for women in agriculture. Even less suitable as an explanatory model is the oppositional condition of production-reproduction. Industrialization of course affected agrarian women's situation also but with a later and different effect than it did for working class or bourgeois women. A discussion of distinctiveness or similarity becomes almost irrelevant if it is connected to participation in production and agricultural women are a subject in the discussion. It was not participation in production that gave entry into politics. Agrarian women, like most other women, occupied a special position in respect to reproduction, a position which created problems for participating in political life inasmuch as it went parallel with a shared responsibility for production. For other female groups this special position made for problems to participate in production. Consequently, it was not isolation from or participation in production which affected women's political behavior but their particular position in respect to reproduction. The situation of women in agriculture supports the correctness of this view. Inasmuch as significantly more of them clearly were employed than what women's studies most often suppose, any history that disregards that appears halting and incomplete.

*Translated by Joseph Zitomersky*



