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[Book review] Man ur huse: Hur krig, upplopp och förhandlingar påverkade svensk statsbildning i tidigmodern tid [Man ur huse: the impact of war, riots and bargaining on state formation in early modern Sweden] Mats Hallenberg & Johan Holm, Lund, Nordic Academic Press, 2016, 310 pp., 239 SEK, ISBN 9789188168702

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Man ur huse: Hur krig, upplopp och förhandlingar påverkade svensk statsbildning i tidigmodern tid

[Man ur huse: the impact of war, riots and bargaining on state formation in early modern Sweden]

Miriam Rönqvist

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Book Reviews

Man ur huse: Hur krig, upplopp och förhandlingar påverkade svensk statsbildning i tidigmodern tid [Man ur huse: the impact of war, riots and bargaining on state formation in early modern Sweden]

MATS HALLENBERG & JOHAN HOLM

Lund, Nordic Academic Press, 2016

310 pp., 239 SEK, ISBN 9789188168702

In their meticulously researched and well-written book, Mats Hallenberg and Johan Holm study the debated relationship between the political elite and peasants in Sweden and its influence on early modern state formation with the help of a vertical model. More precisely, they consider state formation to be a double-impacted process, influenced from above as well as from below, which they study over a long period of time.¹ In so doing, they are able to overcome the prevailing dichotomy that divided earlier research into ‘power state theoreticians’ (e.g. Sven A. Nilsson), those claiming that state building was implemented exclusively from above, and ‘interactionists’ (above all, Eva Österberg), who have emphasized the dialogue between the Crown and peasants.

Therefore, Hallenberg and Holm’s unique contribution to this discussion is twofold. First, instead of studying interaction and dialogue at the local level, they uphold the national focus by analysing cases from different parts of the empire.² Second, they focus on a longer period than most researchers have examined before, extending from around 1530 to ca. 1660. This particular timeframe grants the authors the opportunity to illustrate different dimensions of negotiation between the Crown and peasants. Their interaction consequently reveals itself to be non-static, marked by mutual compromise and shifting power positions, as opposed to being dictated solely by either side on the vertical scale. Therefore, Hallenberg and Holm depict the early modern Swedish state as a bargaining state (*‘förhandlingsstat’*) or a military bargaining state (*‘militärförhandlingsstat’*).³ They make it clear that the Crown was dependent on the peasant estate and internal stability in order to fulfil its political ambitions.

In the past, Swedish historiography focusing on (peasant) unrest has been criticized for methodological nationalism for claiming that the Dacke War (Dackefejden, 1542–1543) was the last peasant revolt in early modern Sweden, thus omitting the Club War (klubbekriget/nuijasota, 1596–1597), which occurred in the eastern part of the Swedish empire, Finland.⁴ For Hallenberg and Holm, though, the Club War is an integral and natural part of Swedish history. This is made evident from the very beginning of the book.

According to the authors, the political elite’s fear of peasant unrest was omnipresent.⁵ I believe that the authors are right in identifying fear as a motivator for the early modern political elite’s decision-making, but that it was not only the potential threat of internal revolts but also the knowledge of peasant unrest abroad that influenced the Swedish elite. Foreign revolts are often discussed in the council’s protocol that Hallenberg and Holm use in their book, and revolts were not isolated phenomena, but rather communicative events, as Malte Griesse has shown.⁶ Therefore, it would have been interesting to read more about horizontal information and communication spaces.

The fiery cross (*budkavlen*) as a means of communication plays a role throughout the study, but a more detailed exploration of these horizontal arenas, complementing the vertical analysis (the relationship between king/regency/queen and the peasants) and enabling a closer look at the fear of revolts, would have been fascinating. Apart from measures taken by the government, an analysis of language might have been interesting in order to define, localize, and depict the government's fear more closely.⁷

The study consists of nine chapters, of which three (introduction, the theoretical background to state formation, conclusion) are jointly written. In Chapters 3–5, Hallenberg focuses chronologically on the recruitment of peasants as soldiers from the reign of Gustav Vasa until that of Johan III. In the three ensuing chapters (6–8), Holm analyses the changing form of peasant riots and their influence on state formation from the Middle Ages to the first half of the 17th century.

To further analyse the state formation process, Hallenberg and Holm apply a threefold model consisting of *organization*, *legitimation*, and *interaction*, all of which are essential to a successful state formation process. In a valuable deconstruction of Sweden's era of greatness and the events leading up to it from the accession to the throne by Gustav Vasa, Hallenberg and Holm question the perception of the Swedish 'power state', which has often been reproduced by historical research as a self-evident success story.

Interestingly, Hallenberg and Holm take up the often-posed and often-answered question of why the extreme dissatisfaction of the Swedish peasants, who suffered from high taxes and conscription, did not culminate in a large-scale rebellion. They suggest that the freeholders' (*skattebönder*) political influence granted them the opportunity to interact with the Crown. Instead of violent revolts, they bargained or chose passive forms of resistance (such as tax strikes). Holm's analysis suggests that it was, rather, the marginalized groups and poor peasants, who were not represented at the Diet, who took part in the smaller riots throughout the first half of the 17th century. Holm makes the interesting observation that tumultuous Diets seemed to go hand-in-hand with a rather peaceful state throughout the country, whereas riots occurred when the course of the Diets remained peaceful.

Early modern (peasant) unrest has been a vivid field of international historical research for a long time, and has, in recent years, been examined in an international context.⁸ It is, above all, from an international point of view that Hallenberg and Holm's study completes a research desideratum, because it delivers the Swedish piece of an international puzzle that could be easily integrated into international studies. Therefore, the study would have benefitted from being in written English (even though it contains an English summary).

Man ur huse is well presented and introduces the reader pedagogically and thoughtfully to not only the historical context but also the central research and terminology, including the use of theory, the methods, and the source material.

Notes

For state formation as a process formed from above as well as from below, see Villstrand, *Sveriges historia 1600–1721*, 281. In his article 'Monolog eller dialog? – den tidigmoderna staten i möte med sina undersåtar', Villstrand provides an

overview over this debate and develops the critique of categorizing researchers according to only two categories. This is supported by his presentation of recent dissertations.

For a geographically broad perspective, Kepsu's dissertation *Den besvärliga provinsen* would have been rather beneficial, because it illustrates political action taken by peasants in Ingria (*Ingermanland*), although it falls outside of Hallenberg and Holm's timeframe. For a problematization of the power state interaction dichotomy, see e.g. Lerbom's dissertation *Mellan två rikén*, 227. Lerbom argues that the relationship between peasants and government often moves in a 'border zone' between the two theoretical 'poles'.

In congruence with Villstrand's depiction of the early modern Swedish empire as characterized by adaptation culture ("*anpassningskultur*"), see Villstrand, *Sveriges historia 1600–1721*, 288f.

See e.g. Larsson, *Historien om Småland*, 120; Larsson and Marklund, *Svensk historia*, 48. The Club War was indeed a rather complex revolt that involved different actors, consisting of different dimensions (e.g. religious, dynastic) and alliances over social borders, and thus extended arguably a 'mere' peasant revolt, but this could be elaborated on.

The political elite's fear of (peasant) unrest in early modern Swedish history is controversial. For a supporting view, see e.g. Englund, *Det hotade huset*, 100f., whereas Reinholdsson has considered this assumption exaggerated; Reinholdsson, *Uppror eller resningar?*, 10.

Cf. Griesse, *Frühneuzeitliche Revolten als Kommunikationsereignisse*; Griesse, *From Mutual Observation to Propaganda War*.

Regarding the analysis of language, the authors refer to Brilkman's study *Undersåten som förstod*.

Katajala, *Northern Revolts*. For transnational revolt communication, cf. Malte Griesse's project outline: Revolts as Communicative Events in Early-Modern Europe: Circulation of Knowledge and the Development of Political Grammars, <https://www.exzellenzcluster.uni-konstanz.de/fileadmin/all/downloads/stellenstipendien/Circulation-of-Knowledge-Early-Modern-Revolts.pdf> and Griesse, Barget, and de Boer, *Ink and Blood*.

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An Unholy Union? Eugenic feminism in the Nordic countries, ca. 1890–1940

MERLE WEßEL

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In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, eugenic thinking spread all over the globe. One of the main reasons for this was that it offered something to almost everybody. Various kinds of people supported it: experts as well as socially active laypersons, people on the Right wing as well as Left wing of the political spectrum, males as well as females, women's rights advocates as well as supporters of more conservative viewpoints.¹ This is evident above all in the most radical application of eugenics. Sterilization laws were passed in such places as the different US states and the Nordic countries with barely any resistance: on the contrary, there was widespread consensus that such laws were sorely needed.

The notion of *Eugenic Feminism* was used in British public discussion at the beginning of the 20th century.² It started to resurface in the research of scholars who studied female actors and writers of that era beginning in the late 1990s. Nowadays, the scope of the study of eugenic feminism covers such areas as literature, history, and law, and it is carried out particularly in North America and Britain. In her dissertation, 'An Unholy Union? Eugenic Feminism in the Nordic Countries', Merle Weßel uses the concept of eugenic feminism widely. According to her, eugenic feminism refers to the interest of feminists in eugenics during the early 20th century. For Weßel, 'feminist' or 'first-wave feminist' is a female who advocated women's rights.