

Abstract

Anders Simonsen, *Bland hederligt folk. Organiserat sällskapsliv och borgerlig formering i Göteborg 1755–1820*. (Avhandlingar från Historiska institutionen i Göteborg, 27, Göteborg 2001) 215 s. In Swedish with an English summary. [*Honourable People. Organized social life and the making of the bourgeoisie in Gothenburg 1755-1820.*] ISBN 91-88614-35-2; ISSN 1100-6781.

This thesis deals with orders, clubs and societies and their impact on the making of the bourgeoisie in Gothenburg during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Clubs and societies worked as platforms for the articulation of the collective experiences among merchants, public officials, army officers, civil servants, and just as important their daughters and wives.

In Gothenburg, a third of the members in the societies were merchants. Their domination was especially significant in the Order of Amaranth and the masonic lodge. After merchants, women were the second biggest group, followed closely by military officers. The conclusion of this dissertation suggests that the formation of the bourgeoisie in Gothenburg was characterized by a strategy of abolishing gender borders among the families in the higher ranks. The value system of the bourgeoisie was implemented, not only by the father in the typical family, but also by the wives, sons, and daughters.

The societies gave new possibilities and short cuts to enhance what Pierre Bourdieu describes as the symbolic, social and cultural, capital to its members, used by the members to create a new bourgeoisie identity. Another main component in this construction was political capital. An analysis of the parliamentary elections in this dissertation shows how societies and fraternal orders from the late 1760s started to work as meeting ground for the political elite of Gothenburg. Due the societies ambitions to resemble a political structure, the members were early to develop a political consciousness. In this dissertation, I maintain that the city administration of the City of Gothenburg was populated with people who had experience of the meeting structure and organisation from the various fraternal orders. The structure of the city administration got its bourgeois character as more and more people with experience from the societies gained seats within the administration. Within the organisation of the civil societies and the local political environments, such as the parliamentary elections or the institutions of the city administration, the experiences of the society members were articulated and expressed. Thereby, a political identity was created by bourgeois experiences.

Key words: Clubs, societies, fraternal orders, freemasonry, class, gender, bourgeois public sphere, parliamentary elections, symbolic capital, social capital, cultural capital, political capital, bourgeois identity