

Skiftenas skede

Laga skiftets handlingar som källmaterial
för byggnadshistoriska studier med exempel
från Småland 1828–1927

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THE ENCLOSURE PERIOD

Records of the Laga Skifte as source material for studies in vernacular architecture, with examples from Småland 1828–1927.

ABSTRACT

This thesis evaluates the archive records created in connection with the Swedish agricultural reform known as the Laga Skifte, the legislation for which was in force between 1828 and 1927. That legislation applied to the greater part of the country, but the analytical areas for the present these are located in the province of Småland. My main purpose is to investigate whether, and if so how, Laga Skifte documents can provide new information for settlement history research. In particular, over and above a basic source-critical discussion of the nature and reliability of the material, my interest focuses on two areas. Firstly, I analyse the different *types* of information which can be extracted from the source material, focusing on buildings and building. In this context the source character of Laga Skifte documents is discussed in relation to the character of other sources. Secondly, I explore the ability of the source material to shed light on relocations resulting from the Laga Skifte. The study is above all concerned with two questions, namely which households were obliged to move and which agents played a part in the work which relocation involved.

Three case studies are presented, by way of testing the reliability of the Laga Skifte records as a historical source. Very often the data in the different sources concur, and I take this to mean that the Laga Skifte records contain reliable information. In certain cases, though, this congruence is lacking. When the sources do not provide similar data, I class this as *omissions, inconsistencies or contradictions*.

I also examine the feasibility of using Laga Skifte records as a principal source for studies in vernacular architecture. A broad picture of the history of farm buildings is given, based on the Laga Skifte records. Each area of analysis is studied separately to begin with, using the building categories occurring on the farms. The investigation ends with two summaries. One of them is a synthesis of settlement, contrasting the characters of the different areas of analysis. The province of Småland, which has previously been portrayed as fairly uniform, turns out to include many different types of settlement. The second summary is a concrete comparison with previous research, and through this the potentialities and weaknesses of the Laga Skifte records can be made clear.

One chapter considers the information obtainable from the Laga Skifte records as to which households are relocated on account of the Laga Skifte and which agents take part in the relocations. Previous research argues that small farmers with poor buildings had to move out of the hamlets in connection with the Laga Skifte. My studies show that this was commonly the case but that there were many exceptions.

I open my discussion of who participated in relocations by considering the concept of day-works. Basically, they can be divided up into skilled day-works, done by professional craftsmen, and less skilled day-works which could be performed by the common man. Generally speaking, I conclude from the relocation costing estimates that unskilled day-works predominate in the early, pre-1850 redistributions, but that bricklayer day-works also occur. Bricklayers took part in the construction of chimneys and hearths for dwelling houses. After the mid-19th century it becomes common for other craftsmen also to be involved in house removals. Rural building, in other words, appears to undergo a gradual process of professionalisation.

A time-geographic study shows the time of year when building work was done, and suggests that the households in a hamlet were in a position to do much of the work of relocation themselves. Any external manpower engaged comes from the vicinity, i.e. from within the parish. A surviving day-work ledger compiled during the relocation of a hamlet in about 1880 suggests that relocation assistance was rendered by the neighbouring households and that external labour was used mainly for the skilled operations involved.

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