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Rätt till jakt

En studie av den svenska jakträtten ca 1600-1789

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with an English summary



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

Akademisk avhandling för avläggande av filosofie doktorexamen i historia vid Göteborgs universitet, som med tillstånd av humanistiska fakultetsnämnden, kommer att offentligen försvaras fredagen den 20 april 2012 kl 13.15 i Stora hörsalen, Humanisten, Renströmsgatan 6, Göteborg, av Ulf Nyren, Institutionen för historiska studier.

ABSTRACT

Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden 2012

TITLE Rätt till jakt: en studie av den svenska jakträtten ca 1600-1789

ENGLISH TITLE Game Laws in Sweden: a study of the hunting laws circa 1600-1789

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This thesis studies the restrictive and segregated hunting laws in Sweden during the early modern period and its effects on the population. Restrictions from 1647 and 1664 prohibited the peasantry to hunt, even on their own land. However, long before that, the crown had claimed monopoly on their own land as well as over species such as swan and roe deer. The rigorous laws in Sweden were no different from the legislation in other European states. However, there were other differences between this distant kingdom in the far north and more developed states with resource-rich elites. Even the Swedish peasantry has traditionally also been seen as more independent than in other nations. They had a unique representation in the *Riksdag* (parliament). Sweden was also sparsely populated with vast forested areas. This study deals with this problem: why did the elite introduce such strict laws when, at first glance, hardly any domestic need can be seen for maintaining such a monopoly – and how did the peasantry react to the loss of its ancient hunting rights?

The history of hunt is a rarely studied field by Swedish historians. This thesis is the first to convey new knowledge about the situation in Sweden and to bring it towards a European context where hunting rights often were the cause for open conflicts and serious disruptions between classes. However, this study shows that the restrictions in Sweden did not cause any rebellions and the political protests were few and weak. Instead, the peasantry chose another alternative: silent resistance by inconspicuous actions. The laws were unfair and were not respected. The population violated the laws by poaching. Hunting was a means of displaying authority and a manifestation of power. Even Sweden, albeit a peripheral kingdom, could compare itself with other states by enforcement of segregated laws as well as investment in expensive deer parks. It was a form of conspicuous consumption. The Swedish nobility imitated the royal concept, defended it stubbornly in the *Riksdag*, but in daily life, hunting was a pastime far from the importance and impact it had for e.g. the English gentry.

KEYWORDS conspicuous consumption, game laws, hunting, inconspicuous actions, legislation, nobility, peasantry, poaching, repression, Sweden