

HAVREFOLKET

# Studier i befolknings- och marknadsutveckling på Dalbosläätten 1770-1930

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Akademisk avhandling för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i historia vid Göteborgs universitet som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Humanistiska fakultetsnämnden framläggs till offentlig granskning fredagen den 25 oktober 2013 kl 10.00, Lilla Hörsalen, Humanisten, Renströmsgatan 6, Göteborg.

## *Abstract*

THE OATS PEOPLE

Studies in Population and Market Development  
in the Dalbo plain, 1770-1930

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*In this thesis the relationship between the rapid demographic and economic development of agrarian Sweden during the 19th century is investigated. The area in focus is the Dalbo plain in the province of Dal in western Sweden.*

*In the 19th century, land was reclaimed to a great extent in the area. Soon it emerged as a centre of Swedish grain production, mainly of oats. At the same time, population growth was one of the high-est in Sweden. Furthermore, an ever more stratified society emerged.*

*In an effort to explain this transformation, this thesis examines institutional changes regarding land holding, viz. the enclosure of land held in common for grazing, as well as the organisation of labour, particularly the creation of crofts and cottages. It is argued that these new institutions of property and new class relations were of great importance for population growth and land reclamation.*

*Keywords: modern history, Dalsland, Sweden, north-western Europe, agricultural revolution, demographic transition, population growth, enclosure, market, long depression, depopulation, land reclamation, capital accumulation, fertility, proletarianisation, migration, religion*

*However, from around 1880 oats from the Dalbo plain was no longer competitive in the European market. Even more devastating, many of the landless and the young moved to emerging opportunities in America or urban Sweden. Labour shortages seem to have contributed heavily to mechanisation and an increased production of livestock.*

*To further examine the relationship between production and reproduction a family reconstruction is carried out. The results reveal that population growth in the early 19th century mainly was due to a rise in marriage frequency. In this respect, enclosure of the commons seems to have led to a pull-effect. In-migration was substantial, an increasing number of couples could marry and at a rather young age (e.g. 23 years for peasant wives), in spite of an ever lower mortality rate.*

*However, population growth was halted in the 1860s and from around 1880 depopulation followed. This, in turn, was due to a significant drop in the marriage rate and a substantial rise in the marriage age. Only later, at the start of the 20th century, marriage fertility began to fall, more distinctly among the land-less and, quite interestingly, also among secularised peasants. Thus, some demographic variables – migration, marriage rate and marriage age – seem to be quite heavily influenced by the economic and social development, while marriage fertility seems to be more loosely bound and also open to influence from cultural factors.*

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