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Poverty of a Beggar and a Nobleman:  
Experiencing and Encountering Impoverishment in  
Nineteenth-Century Finland

Guest Editors  
Pirita Frigren and Tiina Hemminki

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## EDITORIAL

We are pleased to present to our readers this latest theme issue, entitled *Poverty of a Beggar and a Nobleman: Experiencing and Encountering Impoverishment in Nineteenth-Century Finland*. The guest editors, Pirita Frigren and Tiina Hemminki from the University of Jyväskylä, have compiled a fascinating collection of articles about poverty in Finland during the 1800s. The contributors to this volume approach the topic from a number of different perspectives, showing how poverty in nineteenth-century Finland could afflict anyone, regardless of social status—from the landless poor to the merchant and the aristocrat. The authors weave together stories of individual tragedies caused by unfortunate circumstances: the Great Famine, the death of a caregiver, the birth of an unwanted child, business failure, or the Great Fire of Turku. We also learn about tax exemptions, petitions to the tsar, and other options and hopes for survival in dire situations. We learn about the Ahrenberg siblings, who were fortunate enough to be able to work their way out of poverty, and we read about members of the bourgeois who plunged into it.

Most importantly, these articles tell us about a society without a reliable safety network—of mothers and fathers who frantically kill their children because they cannot feed them, servants who steal in order to survive through tomorrow. But we also learn about incredible resilience.

The chapters are thoroughly researched and well presented, with meticulous archival work backing up the facts and individual histories. Professor Antti Häkkinen from the University of Helsinki has written the afterword. We recommend this collection warmly to anyone interested in the life of nineteenth-century Finland, a place that many left—because of poverty. If your ancestors lived in that world, you will possibly learn about their Finland, their lives, and their struggles. Reading through the chapters, I felt I was getting in touch with my own great-great-grandparents, people who saw the world of which *Poverty of a Beggar and a Nobleman* tells. They knew a life without health insurance, school lunches,

investment funds, summer vacations, social security, meals-on-wheels, retirement savings, and burial accounts. Our great-great-grandfathers must have known the desperation when summer frost descended on the fields and killed the harvest. Our great-great-grandmothers may have added pine bark into their dough. The chapters here make us appreciate what we have. May they also inspire us to work for a world where no child, woman, or man has to worry about where the next meal will come from.

*Helena Halmari*



**I**  
**INTRODUCTION**



# EXPERIENCING AND ENCOUNTERING IMPOVERISHMENT IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FINLAND

*Pirita Frigren, University of Jyväskylä*  
*Tiina Hemminki, University of Jyväskylä*  
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## ABSTRACT

The nineteenth century in Finland was characterized by significant societal changes. Since 1809 a Grand Duchy of imperial Russia, Finland began to transform from an early modern society of estates to a modern civic society. The end of the nineteenth century was characterized by significant economic growth. Despite this general development, for many people this era signaled impoverishment and downward mobility that affected even the next generations. A fresh look at the economic threats on various societal layers is called for. In this theme issue we are concerned with socially varying dimensions of destitution, its manifestations, and the ways in which it was experienced and repelled. We explore the manifold and fruitful sources available, some of which are as yet little explored, while others afford novel approaches to the history of poverty.

## POVERTY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FINLAND

In Finnish history, poverty and impoverishment, as personally experienced and lived through, have so far been paid only slight attention to when it comes to early modern society and especially to its various social segments. This has partially been the result of a lack of biographical or autobiographical sources and other documents that might yield detailed, personal depictions of individual struggle.

Nonetheless, the era between the early modern and the modern age, the nineteenth century, and especially if understood as a “long century” from the late eighteenth century to the First World War, appears a highly relevant period to explore experiences of poverty among various social groups. Little by little, the social order

that was based on the different judicial positions and economic privileges of the four estates, the nobility, the bourgeoisie, the peasantry, and the clergy—with the majority of the people belonging to the commoners outside all the estates—was in decline. A new hierarchy between the heterogeneous gentlefolk (Swe. *ståndspersoner*) (including the nobility, civil servants, entrepreneurs, clerks, and the like) and the populace was taking shape. However, the social division into gentry and common people was not congruent with the difference between rich and poor. Despite his style of living, education, and genealogical pride, a member of the gentry could live on more modest means than an uneducated rural peasant or skilled laborer who could advance in his career by education. One of the most crucial effects in the long run was that material wealth, power, and, in practice, the whole life course were no longer determined by the individual's family roots and estate to the same extent as once was the case (Jutikkala 1968; Wirilander 1982).

The interest in the poor in history has usually been synonymous with an interest in the lowest strata of society. The fact that since the turn of the twentieth century there has been a clear increase in the material produced and narrated by poor people themselves has undoubtedly influenced the emphasis of this era as regards the perspective *from below* on the history of poverty and marginality (Häkkinen, Pulma, and Tervonen 2005; Peltola 2008; Stark 2011; Halmekoski 2011). Much of today's understanding of the history of the poor from the viewpoint of their own agency is owed to these studies. Antti Häkkinen has recently considered broadly the question of inheriting poverty (Häkkinen 2013).

The focus in the long tradition in research on poverty has been on the history of poor relief, its forms, ideas, and changing policies—the historical roots of social work (e.g., Helsingius 1899; Louhivuori 1915; Piirainen 1958; Soikkanen 1966; Pulma 1994). The Lutheran ideas behind the poor relief provided by the Church and welfare states have likewise been specially considered (Mäkinen 2002; Arffman 2002; Mustakallio 2002; Markkola 2011; van Kersbergen 2011). On the other hand, we perceive the existing research of this field as a story of charity, philanthropy, their evolution into vocational professions, and their (gendered) role in the making of the civil society at the end of the nineteenth century (Ramsay 1993; Jordansson 1998; Jordansson and Vammen 1998; Markkola 2002; Annola 2011). Owing to this valuable work we have reached a comprehensive understanding of the history of poverty from the viewpoint of those who helped and fought to alleviate poverty, and the ideology that motivated their actions. Instead, those who were helped have

been studied mainly from a structural macro perspective, which is why they have remained more or less anonymous masses and humble recipients of aid.

Häkkinen (2004) suggests that a structural perspective is only one way to approach poverty in history. Alongside the structural perspective, Häkkinen highlights the importance of the cultural, political, and action-focused dimensions of poverty, that is, how poverty was actualized in people's agency. All these are crucial here, but we are especially interested in the cultural perspective because we still lack research on who the poor really were, how their poverty was defined, experienced, and endured by themselves in those economic, social, and cultural frameworks that determined their lives. This perspective is furthermore widened to a consideration of how poverty manifested in practice in society and daily life and what can be regarded as its defining features. In addition to pursuing the experiences of the poor themselves, we try to reach the contemporary witnesses, what was said about the variously impoverished people and why. This theme issue provides articles that analyze the coeval public discussion.

In order to widen the social and temporal scope of the work accomplished on the poorest social groups and their poverty at the turn of the twentieth century, our version of the *from below* perspective comprehends here both privileged and underprivileged people. As the common denominator for the perspective we see the goal of accessing people's *experiences*. The underlying principle is to consider both lower and upper social groups as highly heterogeneous entities in terms of their inner hierarchies and livelihood circumstances. Factors such as gender, regional differences, and uneven distribution of inherited land, and the gentrification of the old privileged positions (e.g., after the 1810 abolition of the Finnish Army) are taken into account.

We argue that, because of the lack of a wider view of the various kinds of impoverishment destinies in estate society and the excluded viewpoint of those who virtually experienced destitution, the multifaceted and complex concept of "a poor person" has remained too limited and inadequate. The concept has mainly been restricted to fulfilling the criteria of a poor-relief dependent: needy children, disabled adults, and other people to whom relying on charity appeared as the last resort or a manifestation of the failure of all the other safety nets. Wider consideration for the term *poor* instead of *poor-relief dependent* was already called for in the 1960s by Pekka Haatanen (1968), who was interested in how the rural proletariat was depicted in older social science and fiction (69–70).

The role of a poor person cannot be regarded as that of merely a passive recipient of aid and control operations. To understand this, one has to look at poverty as an outcome of an impoverishment process. Impoverishment and economic threats force individuals and families to develop many kinds of survival strategies. This theme issue therefore poses the following questions: (1) How can we study impoverishment and people's agency in these processes instead of focusing only on the causal outcome, poverty, and that in its narrowest sense (i.e., poor-relief dependents)? (2) In what ways did poverty appear in both the lower and upper orders of society? What we call for is an understanding of what happened in those cases where people never received poor relief but coped with poverty in other ways. Was the term "poor" something that was attributed to low social position or could, for instance, even a nobleman—or woman—be "poor" in the eyes of contemporaries?

In this introductory article we consider the circumstances of material wealth and approximate income level in nineteenth-century Finland. As impoverishment or the threat thereof gave rise to preventive action, we argue that poverty in various levels of society can be identified by tracing coping strategies. That way, we provide an analysis of cultures of coping, both among nobility and beggars alike. This enables us to reconsider the concepts of *poverty* and *the poor*, as they were understood both by contemporaries and the previous research. Finally, we take a glance at the source material available for such an approach.

### **THE CENTURY OF UNEVENLY DISTRIBUTED MATERIAL WEALTH**

The constitutional amendment in Sweden and Finland of 1789 gave freeholder peasants almost unlimited rights of possession and disposal of taxable land. It practically allowed the society of four estates to assume its purest form in Sweden and Finland, as freeholder peasants' privileges were formulated alongside those of the three other estates. This widened the gap between landowning and landless population in rural Finland, but then on the other hand strengthened the Finnish economy, which in the first part of the nineteenth century was still predominantly agrarian (Jutikkala 1968, 174–75). However, this era witnessed the decline of many early modern structures, and indeed of the four estates, in the face of modernization.

As suggested earlier, the nineteenth century was far from a consistent time period, especially from the economic point of view. Actually the first decades were more unstable and the economy declined more than in the latter part of the century. Still, by the 1850s, the level of the approximate real wage was similar to that in the late eighteenth century. Somewhat sporadic growth started only after that. The

economy started to grow, albeit discontinuously and unevenly (Figure 1). As we will see, however, not all people could take advantage of this development.

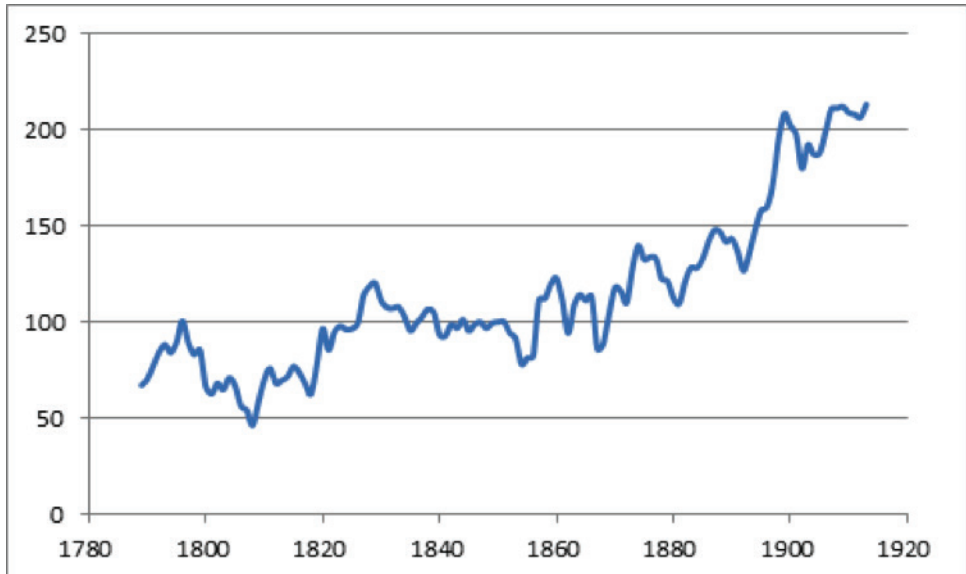


Figure 1. Real wage (marks) in Finland 1789–1913 (1850 = 100). Source: Heikkinen, Hjerppe, Kaukiainen, Markkanen, and Nummela 1987, 69.

Compared to Western Europe, nineteenth-century Finland was a peripheral, undeveloped, and economically insignificant country. In the long run this changed, and by the twenty-first century Finland had become one of the richest countries in Europe. Yet at the beginning of the nineteenth century economic growth was slow, and periodically negative. As late as the 1860s, Finland still suffered from severe crop failures, and during the famine of 1867–68 more than 150,000 people perished (Hjerppe and Jalava 2006, 45–55; Häkkinen 1992, 125–26; Koskinen and Martelin 2007, 171).

The Grand Duchy of Finland was first and foremost an agricultural economy. Primary production (agriculture, forestry, hunting, and fishing) still employed more people than did secondary (e.g., manufacturing) or tertiary production (services). However, the proportion of manufacturing and services was growing faster than the above mentioned areas of primary production, and little by little Finland was industrializing. During the period 1860–90, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita grew annually an average 2.2 percent. The secondary section grew faster (3.8 percent) than the tertiary section (2.6) or primary production (1.5). After this, in the 1890s, the economy grew even faster than before. Yet the GDP per

capita during the 1890s was still a mere seventy-five percent of that of Sweden. Hjerppe and Jalava (2006) argue that the growth of the Finnish economy from the mid-nineteenth century was the result of labor input, that is, an increase in hours worked, especially in manufacturing. This was possible because of new and better technology and production methods (Hjerppe and Jalava 2006, 45–55; Heikkinen et al. 1987, 76–77; Heikkinen 1992, 151–52; Eloranta, García-Iglesias, Jalava, and Ojala 2006, 22, 27).

Economic growth in Finland, especially during the late nineteenth century, included various structural and societal changes. Not all of these were positive, like the phenomenon of social downward mobility, which also occurred in Sweden, where it was connected to a new kind of impoverishment. In Finland and Sweden, the proportion of landless people certainly grew, as freeholder peasants' children could neither inherit nor claim taxable land as often as before (Winberg 1975, 17; Söderberg 1978, 126; Pulma 1994, 51–55). The material wealth was often distributed unevenly between the siblings: the youngest children of freeholder peasants could hardly expect the same living standard as their parents once had. As Häkkinen (2013) argues, referring to his large social-demographic database of Finnish families from the early eighteenth century to the early twenty-first century, the generation born in the period 1821–50 faced even more insecure life paths than their parents and grandparents. The family roots could influence them for better or for worse (13–35).

Despite the indisputable social downturn, Heikkinen (1992) argues that, actually, absolute, rural poverty did not spread during the nineteenth century in Finland because real wages grew in all rural groups. However, the growth rate varied considerably between population groups, and thus differences between social groups' standards of living became more apparent. Among the upper strata wages grew faster than among the lower strata, which meant that as the proportion of lower social groups was growing, the lower standard of living among the lower strata was emphasized (158). Especially on the local level differences could become notable and, compared to previous centuries, particularly in rural areas, the gap between freeholder peasants and the landless population grew dramatically (Lento 1951, 50; Haatanen 1968, 73; Soininen 1974, 370–71, 389; Heikkinen et al. 1987, 86–87; Heikkinen 1992, 158).

Even with these apparently opposite views, both are defensible: the number of poor people increased and, in the late nineteenth century, real wages grew. Yet the latter concerns only those persons who actually earned a salary, while the first



viewpoint (i.e., the increasing numbers of the poor) could concern varying societal segments.

Scholars have defined the concepts of poverty and the poor, and recently there has been a call to extend these definitions beyond pure, absolute poverty in order to be more culture-specific. Besides this initiative, the concept of vulnerability has been recognized as a useful tool in understanding poverty and people's varying risks of losing livelihood. Vulnerability is not connected only to external hazards but also to more detrimental risks. Poverty and vulnerability go and interact hand in hand, and may even be mutually reinforcing (see, e.g., Engberg 2006, 31–32; Voutilainen 2015, 126–27).

In Finland, the growth of real wages or GDP per capita did not improve everybody's material wellbeing. As early as in 1913, Kilpi underlined that the proportion of those who could not maintain themselves and were dependent on poor relief grew. Recipients of poor relief were a heterogeneous group, which is also apparent in the statistics. The so-called F3 population in official population statistics included those supported by poor relief, prisoners, elderly persons, or people who had resigned their posts—groups of people who could not support themselves unaided. During the nineteenth century the burden of poor relief increased (137). As table 1 indicates, the percentage of people receiving the poor relief was minimal. The proportion of them was, however, rising especially during the late 1860s Great Finnish Famine.

Province	1845	1850	1855	1860	1865	1870	1875
Uusimaa	2,246	2,313	2,811	2,818	2,797	3,261	2,610
Turku and Pori	4,299	4,289	6,271	6,062	6,823	8,380	5,964
Häme	3,171	3,345	-	-	4,408	5,162	-
Viipuri	-	2,914	3,600	3,354	3,452	3,506	3,450
Mikkeli	2,355	-	-	-	3,819	4,421	-
Kuopio	2,763	2,885	4,173	4,466	5,068	5,017	5,693
Vaasa	3,856	4,003	6,368	7,722	10,005	9,221	6,307
Oulu	4,242	4,561	6,416	7,650	11,440	12,761	12,080
Total	22,932	24,310	29,639	32,072	47,812	51,729	36,104
Percent of total population	1.5	1.5	1.8	1.8	2.6	2.9	1.9
Total population	1,547,700	1,636,900	1,688,700	1,746,700	1,843,200	1,768,800	1,912,700

Table 1. Population and the number of people living with support from poor relief 1845–75. Source: Finnish population statistics in Kilpi 1913, 113; Vattula 1983, 18. For provinces, see Map 1 (Appendix 2).

The proportion of people supported by poor relief was slowly growing but still marginal, at most three percent of the whole population. An obvious question is whether this picture is actually too narrow to describe poverty. For instance, Engberg (2006) discovered that in nineteenth-century northern Sweden not all needy people actually received poor relief (32, 45–47). According to the population statistics, the proportion of people supported by poor relief grew in Finland during the period 1845–70 and decreased thereafter (see table 1 above). Since the statistics are not complete, the proportions should be higher in those years when some information is lacking. Both temporal and spatial variations have to be read here with extreme caution. The statistics were compiled by the local clergy, with no strict rules to follow. These numbers are more or less subjective interpretations.

The reasons explaining the growing burden of poor relief could be many, not only a growing number of needy people. In the course of slowly evolving and growing wealth, there probably was more to hand out to the needy. On the other hand, there was also the effect of the changing legislation. The new Poor Relief Act of 1852 raised the number of those eligible for poor relief, as from then on the able-bodied poor could also apply for poor relief (Pulma 1994, 48–49, 59–60).

The growing burden of poor relief gave rise to discussions among contemporaries. Johan Wilhelm Rosenborg, who in his 1858 doctoral thesis on pauperism as a societal problem argued for reformist and deregulated labor politics in the Finnish circumstances, was among those who regarded poverty as inextricably linked to the restrictions on trade and lack of education. This was decidedly radical compared to the still prevalent mercantilist labor policy.

The more liberalistic ideas gained ground the more this generously provided aid was criticized. Throughout the Nordic countries the poor-relief legislation moved close to the spirit of *laissez faire*; relying on poor relief should be made as difficult and as undesirable as possible. In Finland the reform took place in 1879, the same year as the liberalization of trade. As the liberalization of the economy and trade provided opportunities to advance and make a living, all people should be responsible for making their own fortune (e.g., Rahikainen 1992, 68–69; Markkola 2008, 218–20).

Contemporary authors also participated in this discussion in their literary depictions of the poor. As appears in Henrik Forsberg's article in this volume, late nineteenth-century authors defined needy people during the famine of 1867–68 as masculine and heroic victims who sacrificed themselves for the good of the nation. In other stories, authors pointed to the nobility's impoverishment and accused them of

living beyond their means. That is, contemporaries had varying ideas about poverty and impoverishment. Furthermore, the authorities, the state, and the Lutheran Church also had their own definitions.

Besides poor-relief statistics, tax records are widely used sources in the history of poverty, and these studies usually analyze the proportions and characteristics of tax exemptions in defining the phenomenon. Lundsjö (1975), for instance, has defended the use of fiscal sources in the analysis of poverty, arguing that a person is poor when he or she lacks surplus. Everything is used for basic daily needs, and a person cannot afford to pay even the smallest taxes (39). With that definition in mind, Lundsjö found that during the mid-nineteenth century in southern central Sweden, the proportions of the poor according to fiscal sources could actually exceed thirty percent of the population (82).

Poor relief concerned fewer people than tax exemption numbers would show because a person could be exempted from tax for reasons other than poverty or infirmity. A person might be exempted from paying tax because of old age or a large number of children in the household. And, naturally, the nobility was exempt from paying tax. These reasons did not necessarily mean that a person was poor; however, as Engberg (2006) argues, the main reasons for tax exemption were poverty or infirmity. Thus, it is reasonable to analyze the aggregated data of people exempted from tax as a general poverty rate in a region. Analyzing both poor-relief documents and fiscal sources, Engberg found no specific connections between them. In other words, it was always the more personal matters that pushed the fiscally poor person over the edge into dependence upon poor relief. Neither was the dependency always permanent, as the reasons for poverty varied from case to case (38, 52). As for fiscal poverty in nineteenth-century Finland, tax records are studied in Miikka Voutilainen's article appearing in this theme issue. Voutilainen found that in Finland structural poverty was much wider than if defined merely as people living on poor relief: small farms and households headed by women in particular suffered from poverty. Fiscal sources thus give a more profound estimate of the number of the most disadvantaged and encourage scholars to approach the history of poverty from new viewpoints.

Poverty concerned all members of society, crop success could not be predicted, and accidents might unexpectedly ruin any individual's economy. People were very vulnerable, and they knew it. As the case of Henric Lindberg in Maare Paloheimo's article shows only too well, even a burgher could fall fast from a high social status in consequence of an accident, in this case the Great Fire of Turku in 1827.

## TOWARD THE CONCEPT OF POVERTY RELATED TO SOCIETAL RANK

In the articles at hand, poverty and impoverishment are taken as relative and multi-faceted concepts. On the one hand, we pay attention to the heterogeneity of different social groups; on the other hand, to the insecurity in the face of sudden external crises common to all social groups. Even the most underprivileged and vulnerable people, who were the first to suffer from catastrophes such as crop failures and forced to rely on poor relief, varied in terms of social background, gender, social networks, geographical area, and general living standards. The nature of poverty was related to the social standing of the poor.

The poverty of the higher orders was an acknowledged phenomenon throughout pre-modern Europe. The concept of *pauvres honteux* (distressed gentlefolk), those who were ashamed of their poverty, referred to poor people of elite background, which made their external signs of impoverishment more embarrassing than the poverty of those who were already on the lowest rungs of the social ladder. For these distressed gentlefolk, impoverishment was a stigma caused by their having lost the battle to preserve status, respectability, and the lifestyle required by their social rank (e.g., Tepstra 2000, 1077). In total contrast to the depictions of the decline and degeneration of the noble estate (Vuorinen 2010) and its self-inflicted impoverishment caused by excessive extravagance analyzed in Marja Vuorinen's article, here, the *pauvres honteux* were seen as persons of class who were not the cause of their own misery (Broomhall 2004, 457). For example, gentlewomen's failure to marry was seen as this kind of risk of impoverishment that increased during the nineteenth century (Häggman 1994, 148).

For the *pauvres honteux*, the notion of submitting to public investigation at the hands of the parish poor relief and letting their names appear on the charity rolls was intolerable (Weiss 1983, 48). The ultimate difference between them and the laboring poor was that their high social rank debarred them from physical manual work, which was often required of the parish poor since public poor relief was allocated against "payment" and that way set as a part of the prevailing barter economy. This referred to the initial meaning of the term *the poor* in the Anglo-Saxon world: the poor were those whose survival was dependent on their physical labor input instead of land, personal property, or position (Van Leeuwen 1994, 590–93, Fontaine 2014, 15–18). In the context of the estate society, paid manual labor was in general the watershed between independent gentlemen and dependent commoners (Häggman 1994, 61). Because of this, *pauvres honteux* also referred to the way in

which poor people of “quality” were assisted: in secret and usually with much more generous sums (Lander 1902, 197; Pugh 1974, 1980; van Leeuwen 1994, 593).

Discreetly assisting needy peers in the upper classes was something very typical for early modern societies. Van Leeuwen (1994) attaches the motif of providing aid for *pauvres honteux* to the attempts at perpetuating the God-given social order and combating the social decline of the upper social orders. Keeping the mechanisms of helping them and the less elevated poor separate maintained the social order. Thus it was necessary to provide different sums, different hospitals, and other institutions for people from different social groups (Van Leeuwen 1994, 593).

Poverty related to social rank was alleviated most of all through mutual help. According to the long tradition of mutual aid funds of artisan and trade guilds, people from different trade groups, especially in urban centers, voluntarily joined a fund where, against a membership fee, they and their family members could be entitled to loans or relief in case of sickness and widowhood, and also for funeral arrangements. In the nineteenth century these funds expanded to include factories and workers’ societies (Markkola 2008, 221–22). This system worked independently from poor relief and was crucial to many people who, because of their slightly more elevated social status, could not be seen to turn to the public charity of parishioners. On the other hand, for the most aristocratic families, it was possible to receive His Majesty the Tsar’s favor in the form of a grant proposed for the education of young family members or similar purposes, as we can read in Irene Ylönen’s article. This example suggests that it is reasonable to trace poverty related to social rank by concentrating on coping strategies. In the following these estate-related means of alleviating poverty are attached to the cultural framework of avoiding impoverishment.

## **CULTURES OF COPING**

Not all people’s initiative and actions, whatever their social standing, can be understood as a serious and conscious fight against poverty and impoverishment, but merely as culturally and socially shared practices. Nevertheless, two kinds of coping strategies can be traced: those accomplished in the long run and those that helped to survive until the next day.

Overall in nineteenth-century Finland, to the majority of the common people, landless as they were, life in their local community was much more dominated by the principle of managing day by day (Heikkinen 1988, 70). Those who owned immovable property were less vulnerable than landless people. Landowning rested

on estate privileges, and people's vulnerability in the face of sudden accidents and crises revealed their state of material wealth. The fewer resources people had, the greater was the effect of economic fluctuations on mortality and fertility. As Dribe, Olsson, and Svensson (2012) have found, the manorial system could provide only short-term help for its inhabitants. These people usually lived hand-to-mouth, and their abilities to save for future needs were thus few (292–94; also Engberg 2006, 31).

Ownership of land and movable property provided a living. Land and property could also be mortgaged if investment loans were needed. Movable property was crucial because it was usually the means by which people tried to earn extra income and achieve a better standard of living, or simply to maintain the standard they had. In early modern times, this kind of investment was usually impossible if the person did not own land or enjoy crucial privileges. This became a serious problem for increasing numbers of people. As a result of population growth, more and more people, especially daughters, lost their generational link to landownership and inherited cash (Ågren 2009). The time of estate society was a time of privileges, also other than landownership. Merchants' and artisans' privileges were applied for from local authorities, and after approval the applicant was allowed to carry on the business in question. However, not all applications were successful (Keskinen 2012, 47; Uotila 2014, 122–31). During the nineteenth century these restrictions lost their relevance because of the liberalization of trade and the abolition of the early modern guild system (Appendix 1).

Coping strategies were shared by people from separate social layers. Borrowing is a very good example of this, since all population groups were involved in lending practices. In general the value of debts and credits was dependent on the level of debtors' or creditors' assets; in other words, the wealthier the person was, the larger were the sums lent or borrowed (Markkanen 1977; Nummela 1990, 289; Hemminki 2014, 135, 163).

In general, lending and borrowing—from small loans to larger sums for investments—were an everyday occurrence between ordinary people. Practices of borrowing and lending were in many ways also connected to monetary circumstances. Until the time when Finnish *markka* (mark) became official currency in 1860 (in use from 1863), both Swedish and Russian currencies were in use in Finland (Ojala 1999, 369–70). Because of a persistent lack of cash on the markets, most of the trade was barter and credit sales. However, borrowing practices also changed as modern banking and other financial institutions developed. Informal

lending between individuals still continued, but as late as in the early twentieth century the role of banking and other financial institutions grew more important than informal means (Markkanen 1977; also Nummela 1990, 288).

The founding of formal banks offered a new kind of saving option. The first savings bank in Finland was opened in Turku in 1823, but the breakthrough of this business took place in towns in 1840–60 and in rural areas in 1860–1918. Eventually, savings banks were one reaction to the increasing problem of poverty, and the goal of establishing them was to improve living conditions among the urban working classes, and not primarily among rural people (Kuusterä 1995, 17–20, 42, 55–58, 85–88). People gradually learnt to take advantage of saving for a rainy day. As Johanna Annola points out in her article, wage earners like the poorhouse directress Elin Ahrenberg used to put money from their salary aside in bank accounts. Yet, changing savings practices were not only dependent on formal or informal practices: the life expectancy was from thirty to forty years before the 1870s, when it started to lengthen (Koskinen and Martelin 2007, 171). Thus, the need to save cash in bank for future need was questionable.

Informal lending was typically local and based on mutual trust, that is, it was a result of reciprocal and trustful relationships in local communities. People living in the same neighborhood, village, or parish were more or less obliged to cooperate in various situations of everyday life. As dependent as they were on one another, it was advantageous to think about the common good and not only about one's own best interests. Social relationships could be formed both horizontally and vertically since the elite and common folk interconnected with each other on the local credit market and within the micro economy of lending, pawning, and exchanging. Kinship is also usually known as an example of trustful relationships that could help people (Levi 1992, 131–32; Fuchs 2005, 6; Piilhti 2007, 269–72; Häkkinen 2013, 22–23; Hemminki 2014, 213; Fontaine 2014, 26, 95–127). Lack of such networks could have direct consequences in extreme situations, as in the case of poor and desperate parents who ultimately took their children's lives, as we can read in Anu Koskivirta's article. It seems clear that social networks and the immediacy of social ties emerge as most important and ultimate resources for both higher and lower social groups. This conclusion is also highlighted by earlier research (see, e.g., Levi 1992, 67, 77, 131–32; Häkkinen 2004, 156–57; Ojala and Luoma-aho 2008, 750).

Informal networks, trust, and reputation are also known as social capital, the theory that underlines the meaning of these intangible assets. Social capital should not be considered as equivalent to economic capital, as it cannot be “saved in a bank”

like money because it has to be maintained, or otherwise it may decline. Social capital can be used to gain economic capital, and, especially in an age without adequate social care, possession of social capital was crucial. The role of social capital in history has been observed and acknowledged, and the theory helps to understand relationships, economics, and actions in the past (Müller 1998, 31–33; Ogilvie 2004, 343–44; Laird 2008; Ogilvie 2010, 321). In the face of impoverishment, it was also intangible assets that mattered. Trustful relationships and networks could provide loans, gifts, or any kind of support in more or less desperate times. Gift giving has a long tradition in various primitive cultures and is traditionally reciprocal (Mauss [1950] 1999). A gift could be almost anything; the gesture was more important as it “oiled the social wheels” (Einonen 2011, 139–41). Gift giving was also a means to help someone who was struggling with impoverishment. This was the case in the noble family of Cedercreutz/Aminoff, analyzed in Irene Ylönen’s text: other nobles gave gifts to the relatively impoverished family. It was a question of the honor and dignity of the whole estate, setting it apart from the lower estates and groups.

In early modern times, education was connected with estates and privileges. In rural areas children were educated in “ambulatory schools” that were still significant in some areas in Finland even after the 1866 Decree on Elementary Education (Kotilainen 2013, 114). Basic education used to be the parishes’ responsibility before 1866, when it was transferred to the municipal authorities. The purpose was to develop education especially in rural areas, where most of the people still lived (Buchardt, Markkola, and Valtonen 2013, 10–11). There was a strong will to improve education in all social groups, and one of the ideas behind the struggle to develop an education system was to smooth out the differences between social groups and estates (Ikonen 2011, 219–20). In this volume, Johanna Annola analyzes how Elin Ahrenberg climbed the social ladder by educating herself and how she is an example of a woman who achieved a better living standard than the previous generation. Earlier, this had been restricted to a minority of people outside the nobility, clergy, and bourgeoisie.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century more than 350,000 people left Finland with dreams of a better life in North America (Kero 1996, 54). Yet moving as a way of coping was not solely oriented abroad: migration was also remarkable within the country, with St. Petersburg and its employment opportunities a major destination for many poor Finns. This burgeoned especially in the late nineteenth century, as agriculture could employ fewer people than before because of an intensification of production and increased job opportunities in factories and



towns. However, migration was oriented not only to the towns; migration between rural parishes also increased in the late nineteenth century (Lento 1951, 44–53, 55–57, 106). The aforementioned Elin Ahrenberg is a good example of this, too: she moved many times within Finland in pursuit of work. Work-related migration was common even before the reforms in the freedom of movement in the late nineteenth century.

In spite of migration both to urban and rural parishes, better opportunities for social advancement were available in towns than in the rural areas (Haapala 1986, 96–98). During the years 1800–1900, the population in Finnish towns grew from 46,600 to 339,600, a more than sevenfold increase. Despite this urbanization, the majority of the population was still living in rural areas, in 1900 more than 2,372,900 persons, almost seven times as many as in towns (Vattula 1983, 25–26).

Sometimes casual actions were seen as reciprocal: by offering his labor, a poor person might obtain food, shelter, clothes, or money. Besides being a temporary supply of labor and other things, itinerant people were important connectors: they passed on the latest news and gossip. Odd jobs, debts, gifts, and poor relief are examples of legitimate means of survival; even begging was accepted with special restrictions (Fuchs 2005, 6; Pulma 2009, 77). Before the new poor-relief regulation of 1852, begging was considered one form of parish poor relief and was thus condoned only in the beggar's home parish. After 1852, begging was forbidden (Pulma 2009, 73–75).

Also higher social groups relied on moving and going around. Unmarried aristocratic women, for instance, could survive by staying with various acquaintances and family members. In this theme issue, we can read about people who stood on different rungs of the social ladder. For several of them, being mobile was crucial. Additionally, it was not only the wealthy who knew how to exploit their relationships. Lacking such relationships was equally disastrous for all.

There were also illegitimate ways of avoiding poverty or the threat thereof. The most severe was manslaughter, murder, any kind of homicide, or violence. In her work on nineteenth-century European poor women Rachel G. Fuchs (2005) has portrayed the vast *culture of expediencies*—as she calls the spectrum of legal, semi-legal, and illegal means of survival that underprivileged women relied on in their constant struggle in a *climate of calamities*. Fuchs highlights that this individual behavior and restricted freedom that was exercised within the limits of the prevailing social order reaches the term of agency. It was not similar to the higher social groups, but of its own kind, agency in a nothing-to-lose-context (15–17).

However, illegal survival strategies were used by various social groups and they cannot always be separated from the legal ways of coping. From the viewpoint of estate society and the distinctions between the different social strata, it is even more interesting to note that many well-to-do people facing the threat of impoverishment relied on the same expediciencies as the most wretched. Some merchants, for example, resorted to the black market after bankruptcy, as Riina Turunen writes in her article. During the years of the Finnish famine 1867–68, the number of burglaries and other crimes also increased (Häkkinen 1995, 134–35).

### **DIFFERENT WAYS OF APPROACHING THE STUDY OF POVERTY**

In this collection, we introduce little used sources on impoverished people from different social ranks, their agency in the frameworks of economic threats, and upward and downward social mobility. On the other hand, we operate with documents that are already widely used by Finnish historians such as census sources, mainly poll tax and parish records. What we seek is new ways of analyzing and testing these sources by asking how and by whom poverty was experienced.

First we come to the question of the scarcity of sources on underprivileged people. After looking for “normal exceptions,” that is, individuals or events giving rise to numerous documents because of their exceptional nature in their own spatial and temporal context, microhistorical tradition has come to the point where it tries to reach “typical types,” those among the millions of anonymous ordinary people, usually understood as homogeneous masses (Peltonen 2006, 161–65). Because it is extremely difficult to find source material where the chosen individuals appear as actors as such, all possible and additional information about the world and circumstances surrounding the individual must be collected. Usually this is done with the help of parish and tax records, but virtually any available official documents produced by secular and ecclesiastical authorities in their administrative and judicial practices are included as our source material. Eventually, the person may still be the missing piece of the puzzle so that very little personal information is acquired. What we achieve then is a cross-section of contexts all the way from micro- to macro-level in time, culture, and space. This method of individual-motivated contextualization leads us to speculative history. With the help of the contextualization, we have to construct what kind of life was likely for the person in question. Excellent examples include Alain Corbin’s (2001) experimental study of an early nineteenth-century clog-maker in his work *Life of an Unknown* and Irma Sulkunen’s (1999) book on the late eighteenth-century shepherd Liisa Eerikintytär (Liisa, Erik’s daughter), whose

evangelical awakening probably caused mass-scale revivalist movements in western Finland.

In Finland, sources such as oral history, letters, diaries, and memoirs produced by ordinary people but even by the elite are extant only in fragments and until the twentieth century were confined to private and public archives (on oral history, see, e.g., Thompson 2006, 27–28). Some rare exceptions have found their way into edited books and into the hands of scholars (Ivendorff 2006; Kauranen 2009, 2013). In addition, expressing oneself in writing, especially in Finnish, was democratized only after the reform of the primary school system and as writing skills began to appear as a civic skill equal to literacy, which in turn had been demanded by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland since the days of the Reformation. The nineteenth century was an era of changes, but besides the economic and social upturns it was a melting pot of an old and new communication culture, a gradual transformation from an oral or semi-literate culture to a literate culture (e.g., Kauranen and Kuismin 2011). This affects what sources we have today.

If the poor appear as narrators of their lives only seldom, this is very different from their portrayal at the hands of the elite and societally active penmen. Contemporary attitudes toward poverty are thus amply represented in the coeval literature and newspapers. Two contributors of this issue, Henrik Forsberg and Marja Vuorinen, discuss fiction, nonfiction, national history, newspapers, and other literary narratives that can be regarded as more or less public discussion and well-known national narratives. To some extent these narratives color our conceptions of the past even today. As mentioned, at the end of the nineteenth century literary tradition was still weak in Finland. These narratives were used for nation-building and generating collective memory. In this process of “making our history,” poor people from different social ranks had surprisingly many symbolic and also gendered roles, from the ideal and humble deserving poor to despised spendthrifts who in their degenerateness appeared as impediments to nation-building and cultural development.

When we seek for the viewpoint of the poor and their own experiences, we are largely dependent on official documents. There is one particular type of official document that has been inexplicably under-utilized in nineteenth-century history, namely court records. They are typically used for studying everyday life and mentalities in early modern times, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Perhaps their infrequent use among historians studying the nineteenth century is the result of their actual content, the crime data, which is more easily available

from statistical sources during that era. On the other hand, depictions of everyday life during the nineteenth century are thought to be better reached in other kinds of source materials than during earlier centuries. Yet, if we want to acquire at least some information on the most underprivileged people, the records of court proceedings with their testimonies and “between the lines” information are almost the only way to form a picture of such people’s private lives and to glean hints of individual experiences.

Anu Koskivirta in her article examines court records to reveal such poor and desperate parents’ own voices and their own interpretations of the extreme situations which reduced them to killing their own offspring. These horrifying statements provide a unique perspective on the most disadvantaged people, especially single women. Yet, these “own voices” that spoke in court and were committed to paper by a clerk of the court cannot be regarded as autobiographical to the same extent as letters, diaries, or memoirs. Those were the words said aloud in court, in a public situation where people stood accused of the severest of crimes, homicide. However, what was said in court by the accused and witnesses may reflect the culture and mental climate with regard to poverty in general. Non-neonate infanticides and filicides most often coincided with crop-failures and other economic distress, such as the period immediately following the Finnish War (1808–09). That way, extreme crimes in extreme times unmask such extreme attitudes toward the poor and their own coping strategies that would not occur in less dire situations. Bankruptcies appear as a complex phenomenon that manifested in both late nineteenth-century burgeoning business activities and growth opportunities but also in personal crises caused by uncertainty for small-scale entrepreneurs in particular, as Riina Turunen points out in her article.

Bankruptcy documents include records of court proceedings and their appendices (bankruptcy files). The appendices may contain many kinds of information on debts and claims, both from the debtor’s and creditor’s standpoint. However, in order to get at the background stories which drove individuals into bankruptcy, especially in the case of small entrepreneurs, one has to outline their social and economic position in the local community by utilizing other robust source material, as Turunen shows in her article.

One such additional source material is probate inventories. These were written as a legal requirement after a death. All the immovable and movable assets of the estate were listed, as were also possible claims on the estate and debts. Thus probate inventories can be used both for examining the consumption habits and

material wealth of different social groups and debt relationships between economic actors (e.g., Lindgren 2002). Petitions and registers of petitions in turn represent the old Swedish tradition, according to which all subjects of the King of Sweden were allowed to petition and appeal to the sovereign. It was also the last judicial option to appeal against verdicts or judgments handed down by lower courts. Typically more well-off people petitioned for licenses for their business transactions while less advantaged groups appealed directly for monetary aid (Paloheimo 2012). However, in this issue we can read in Maare Paloheimo's article that this was not always consistent.

These sources are analyzed here, considering both aristocratic and bourgeois families, both singly and interspersed with other sources. Cross-reading of the probate inventories and private letters of a noble family, as Irene Ylönen does in her article, reveals that the struggle against impoverishment was continuous, and that this struggle was specifically the task of the female members of the family, whom we tend to think of as excluded from the public sphere. The higher the social position, the more likely it is that some personal documents are today extant in public or private archives. However, reaching nineteenth-century people of higher social standing is not necessarily any easier than reaching the common people of that period. Successfully locating the probate inventory deeds according to a person's place of death may prove difficult because of the mobile lifestyle of older aristocratic individuals. Collating different sources and pieces of information is thus equally indispensable in the experience-oriented approach to the impoverishment of upper social groups as they are in the case of lower social groups.

As such, poverty caused by sudden, external crises could afflict almost anyone. On that account, impoverishment should be visible in the basic mechanism of the fiscal state, namely citizens' ability to pay their mandatory taxes. Tax records are very often used in population history in the same way as the ecclesiastical census sources (i.e., parish records), as a basic starting point to gather personal and genealogical data on people, their social positions, and connections, before researchers investigate other source material. Such usage fails to exploit fully other important information that taxation documents may yield, namely, what kinds of sums were actually paid in taxes, what taxpaying reveals of material wealth, social positions, regional variation, and, of greatest relevance here, what tax exemptions granted on grounds of poverty reveal about individuals and households facing impoverishment. Miikka Voutilainen seeks to utilize fiscal sources from this rather little applied perspective (see also Engberg 2006).

## THE SPECTRUM OF POVERTY IN HISTORY

Poverty and impoverishment in nineteenth-century Finland cannot be understood without taking a look at those who lived through it. Poor relief can show us only the tip of the iceberg of poverty; yet, this was the most severe part. Neither can one be satisfied with approximate numbers of general levels of material wealth, notwithstanding the fact that these are unquestionably relevant in identifying overall and relative trends. Poverty, however, is concealed behind these averages and needs to be dug out with more detailed and case-specific tools. The reason for this is quite obvious. First of all, the poorest people rarely left behind individual documents. Second, regarding upper-class poverty and its victims known as *pauvres honteux*, one has to be very sensitive when identifying experiences of poverty. People from the upper orders did not easily admit to poverty. It is more like pursuing indications of calamities by scrutinizing ways of coping. As we suggested, cultures of coping were partly connected to needy persons on all levels of society.

The structure of this volume is the following: first, we concentrate on the analyses of how contemporary authors characterized poverty, its manifestations, causes, and effects in nineteenth-century Finland. Henrik Forsberg concentrates on fictional texts in order to discover how these writers perceived poverty, especially during the great Finnish famine 1867–68. Second come three articles that describe poverty experienced and grappled with by people on the lower levels of society. In this section Miikka Voutilainen studies tax exemptions in mid-nineteenth-century Finland and provides a unique overview of a hitherto less studied field in Finland. This is followed by Anu Koskivirta's article, where she analyzes the extreme conditions that led some poor and desperate parents to kill their own offspring. This phenomenon of homicides of no longer infant children has likewise been little studied in this context. However, poor and wretched origins did not necessarily mean similar outcomes, as the third article in this section shows. Johanna Annola's article about a poorhouse directress shows that people in nineteenth-century Finland could indeed succeed in climbing the social ladder. Yet, feasible ways of coping—including informal networks and relationships—were crucial, and lack of them could be disastrous.

The last section includes four articles and concentrates on impoverishment and poverty among the upper echelons of estate society, in this case both the nobility and bourgeoisie. Poverty among the nobility was not unknown, and it can be traced by analyzing personal letters and probate inventories, as Irene Ylönen's article shows. Impoverished noblemen and noblewomen tried to keep up appearances according

to their estate and were thus obliged to solicit loans and gifts, while trying to maintain their reputation and trustful relationships. Marja Vuorinen concentrates on poverty among the nobility from another perspective. She analyses contemporary stories regarding the general decline and degeneration of the nobility in late nineteenth-century fiction, newspapers, and other texts. After this, two articles analyze how merchants faced impoverishment. Throughout the nineteenth century, merchants (especially small scale entrepreneurs and newcomers) might face serious problems when sustaining losses resulting from accidents or bankruptcy. However, this kind of misfortune was not necessarily handed down to future generations as Maare Paloheimo's article here proves: the son of an unsuccessful father could indeed succeed in business. Riina Turunen's article, then, describes what kinds of social ramifications a bankruptcy could have for an individual, not only with a reduction in economic prospects but also with significant social implications. Antti Häkkinen's afterword concludes this theme issue.

No one was immune to the threat of impoverishment during the nineteenth century in Finland. Of course, privileged groups had considerable advantages compared to the unprivileged, but ruin could afflict anyone. Good advice was precious, that is, each had to have some means of coping in case of hard times, either material or more immaterial.

**APPENDIX 1**

**CHRONOLOGY OF THE LONG NINETEENTH-CENTURY FINLAND**

- 1734 Code of Swedish Law
- 1746 First census in Sweden (and Finland)
- 1789 Constitutional reform, almost unlimited rights of possession and disposal of taxable land
- 1805 Hired labor act (males and females without property were obliged to go into service)
- 1808–09 The Finnish War
- 1809 The Diet in the town of Porvoo. Finland became a Grand Duchy of the imperial Russia
- 1810 Practical Abolition of the Finnish Army
- 1812 Old Finland (annexation to Russia in the peace treaties of 1721 and 1743) became attached to the Grand Duchy of Finland.
- 1812 Helsinki made the capital city (previously Turku)
- 1826 Abolition by the Tsar of capital punishment in Finland for all non-state crimes (the amnesty procedure commuted all death penalties to corporal punishment combined with hard labor)
- 1827 The Great Fire of Turku
- 1830s Major famines and cholera epidemics
- 1852 New Poor Relief Act, Hired Labor Act
- 1854–55 The Crimean War
- Late 1850s Major famines
- 1856 Completion of the Saimaa Canal
- 1857 Steam Sawmills Act
- 1859 Freedom of Land Trade Act
- 1862 The first railway track completed between Helsinki and Hämeenlinna
- 1863 The first Diet of the four estates after 1809
- 1863 The Finnish *markka* (mark) becomes the official currency
- 1864 Incorporated Company Act
- 1865 Abolition of Hired Labor Act
- 1865 Poll tax reform: lower age limit 16 years, reform of exemption basis
- 1866 Primary School Act
- 1866 Transformation to municipal administration (rural parishes)
- 1867–68 The Great Finnish Famine



*Experiencing and Encountering Impoverishment in Nineteenth-Century Finland*

- 1868 Abolition of the Guild System and liberalization of industries
- 1868 The Bankruptcy Act
- 1873 Transformation to municipal administration (towns)
- 1878 Compulsory military service
- 1879 Freedom of Movement Act
- 1879 Freedom of Profession Act
- 1879 Poor Relief Act
- 1899–1905 The first era of Russification policy in Finland
- 1899 His Imperial Majesty's Manifesto (known as the Manifesto of February)  
*(Hans Kejslerliga Majestäts Nådiga Manifest)*
- 1899 The Great Address against Russification policy
- 1905 The General Strike
- 1906 Universal suffrage in elections for men and women aged over 21 years
- 1908–17 The second era of Russification policy in Finland
- 1917 The Russian Empire was overthrown in the February and October  
Revolutions in Russia
- 1917 Finland declared as an independent state
- 1918 Civil War

**APPENDIX 2**

**MAIN TOWNS AND PROVINCES IN FINLAND (1830s)**



Provinces: 1 = Uusimaa (Nylands län), 2 = Turku and Pori (Åbo och Björneborgs län), 3 = Häme (Tavastehus län), 4 = Viipuri (Viborgs län), 5 = Mikkeli (St. Michels län), 6 = Kuopio (Kuopio län), 7 = Vaasa (Vasa län), 8 = Oulu (Uleåborgs län). Towns: Helsinki (Helsingfors), Turku (Åbo), Hämeenlinna (Tavastehus), Mikkeli (St. Michel), Hamina (Fredrikshamn), Viipuri (Viborg), Pori (Björneborg), Tampere (Tammerfors), Savonlinna (Nyslott), Jyväskylä (Jyväskylä), Vaasa (Vasa), Kokkola (Gamlakarleby), Kuopio (Kuopio), Kajaani (Kajana), Oulu (Uleåborg). Swedish names in parentheses.

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# MASCULINE SUBMISSION: NATIONAL NARRATIVES OF THE LAST GREAT FAMINE, c. 1868–1920

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## ABSTRACT

In this article I will present how the Finnish famine in the 1860s was incorporated into the national narratives from 1868 to the 1920s, and how its public deliberation contributed to the nation-building project and, in particular, how it symbolized a peculiarly masculine form of national identity. The variety of sources includes textbooks, historiography, famine literature, and newspapers, all of which represented, re-interpreted, and re-narrated a more-or-less publically accepted narrative of the famine. Interestingly, these narratives stand out in international comparison, where an increasing awareness of the “feminization of famine,” pioneered by Margaret Kelleher, has gained ground. Finland, in contrast, presents a different set of gendered tropes, a much more masculine and militaristic way of narrating the famine in public discourse, despite the fact that during the famine there had been no politically organized violence or rebellious movements.

## INTRODUCTION

National narratives in general are inclined to be gendered in one way or the other, as much of the literature on nationalism and nation-building has in recent years proven (Isaacs 2001; Berger and Lorenz 2008; Blom, Hageman, and Hall 2000). It is widely acknowledged that nations are often represented via a female symbol, like Marianne, Suomi-neito ‘Finland-maiden,’ the Maid of Erin, Britannia, etc. (Valenius 2004). Moreover, it is crucial to communicating a national identity that the past is personified in role models, real or mythical, and never more so than in classrooms and history textbooks, but also through historical novels and other forms of commemorations (Andersson 1983; Berger, Eriksonas, and Mycock 2008;

Fewster 2006; Hall 1997; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Hogan 2009; Noack, Janssen, and Comerford 2012). The personification of national history has long educational roots and has been studied at length, but what is essential for this article is that any kind of personification necessarily includes a gendered role-model. For example, when the purpose of national education was to cultivate national virtues and foster a national identity, the history curriculum proved useful because it provided a wide array of historical/mythical role models (on the history of Finnish education, see Andersson 1979, 192–242; Ahonen 2003, 18–68; Heikkinen and Leino-Kaukiainen 2011; Kiuasmaa 1982).

In the study of national representations of famine or in the national narratives that reflect famine suffering, famine has been claimed to be overwhelmingly feminized (Kelleher 1997; Edgerton-Tarpley 2008; Fegan 2002; Ó Grada 2009). Female victims are highly overemphasized in famine representations as compared to actual statistics of famine casualties, the latter of which would suggest that women actually have a better chance of survival in situations where food is scarce (Ó Grada 2009, 98–102). Margaret Kelleher's book *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?* (1997) highlights the repetitions of a certain type of gendered tropes suggesting, for instance, that women's suffering carries a more emotive appeal for aid than men's suffering. On the other hand, the shock effect of a mother's inability to function biologically as nature intended removes the immediacy of suffering to an unnatural curiosity that can more easily be sidestepped. Furthermore, it could be argued that feminization aimed at depoliticizing the famine since women are typically represented in the context of private spheres and men in public and political spheres (Kelleher 1997). More recently, Kelleher has argued for why gender matters in famine studies and how it can be used as a scale of enquiry, which, as this article will show, should not only be applied to the feminine tropes but to the masculine tropes as well (Kelleher 2014). In light of Kelleher's study, how should we then reconsider the gendered narratives about the Finnish Famine in the 1860s?

One of the key events in the history of Finnish poverty is the famine of the 1860s. The decade's most disastrous year was 1868, when around 138,000 people, amounting to nearly 8 percent of the population, succumbed to hunger and disease. The background was a series of harvest failures year after year, beginning in 1857, of which the harvests of 1862 and 1865 caused severe hardship, and the crop failure of 1867 dealt the final blow. As 90 percent of a population of around 1.8 million relied directly on agriculture for their subsistence, the whole national economy was heavily dependent upon a smoothly functioning rural economy. Needless to say,

it was not functioning well, and a low level of employment opportunities and the Senate's strict fiscal policy to preserve the recently launched currency, the Finnish *markka* (mark), together with the increased subsistence farming of rye, made matters worse. This might not have been a problem if only the yield per field could have been raised apace with population growth. Instead, more frost-prone areas were taken under cultivation and so the risk of harvest failures increased until the total collapse in 1867. Contemporary accounts from that period speak of staggering numbers of beggars across the country in search of food or work and shelter from the cold (Curran, Luciuk, and Newby 2015; Häkkinen 1992; Häkkinen, Ikonen, Pitkänen, and Soikkanen 1991; Myllyntaus 2009; Pitkänen 1987; Solantie 2012; Turpeinen 1986, 1991).

From the 1860s onwards, much of the cultural, economic, and political progress has usually been attributed to the regular re-convening of the Diet of the Four Estates. Among the many reforms were the establishment of a countrywide primary school network, municipal reform, and a new appreciation of the Finnish language in the public sphere. The main political division primarily concerned the status of the Finnish language, with the Liberal party (from which the Svecomans, "Pro-Swedish," later broke away to form the Swedish People's Party) taking a moderate stand against the more progressive Fennoman ("Pro-Finnish") party. This political division persisted until the so-called period of Russification beginning in 1899, which split the Fennoman party. Meanwhile, the workers began to mobilize under the banner of social democracy in the 1890s, with the political breakthrough of the movement in the parliamentary elections of 1907 (Liikanen 1995; Mickelsson 2007).

Alongside this development, as both the cause and the consequence, we can see the rise of an exclusive Finnish, geo-politically but not linguistically, demarcated public sphere and a nationally oriented mental framework for understanding and acting in society. As the literacy rates rose, so also rose the market for print capitalism and, with that, narratives where agency began increasingly to take its place in a nationally framed setting (e.g., Jalava 2013).

The choice of famine texts for analysis here reflects that development in various literary forms (reminiscent of Marja Vuorinen's article in this volume): history textbooks, newspapers, and historical novels, while acknowledging that some clearly had a greater public impact than others. For example, I have chosen works by the self-educated author Pietari Päivärinta and other common folk writers not because they represent a supposedly common way of thinking, but because they represent a

particular type of literary tradition that was publicly approved and admired. These texts help to contextualize the historical debates within a nationally framed public literary sphere. Ultimately, what all these sources have in common is their authors' desire to narrate for a national public a recent historical episode still vivid in the collective memory that was of tremendous political significance at the time, i.e., how the famine *could* be publicly portrayed, not necessarily how it was perceived.

My approach is to highlight certain texts and their potential for identity construction, leaving the actual appropriation of narratives for political psychologists to unveil (e.g., Hammack and Pilecki 2012). This article does not represent the history of mentalities; nor do I claim that these texts represent a widely shared way of thinking about famine, gender, and nationality, although in some cases they reflect that, too. The so-called folk writers and their representativeness of a certain widespread peasant mentality, which Laura-Kristiina Moilanen (2008) has studied at length, is not really what is at stake here (for peasants receiving and interpreting national ideals especially in terms of gendered work roles, see Östman 2000). Unlike Moilanen, I merely suggest that the texts are representative of the ways these issues could and would be discussed openly in the public and connected to nationality and, therefore, to gender as well.

Thus, this study bears closer kinship to studies on public discourse about national identity (see, e.g., Stenius 1999; Häkkinen 1999, 112–30; Nieminen 2006). As Juntti (2011) has presented in her study on mid-nineteenth-century public debate, the limits of the national debate on nationality followed a clearly prescribed gender demarcation—including the Finnish male and excluding the Finnish female.

This article is about the public representations and can be seen as a chronological sequel to Juntti's (2011) study. Recently, Heikki Ylikangas has made the case that Finnish historiography and public history, especially on the big issues, often confines itself uncritically to the notion that one and only one explanation as established in and supportive of the views held by the political leadership of the time can be regarded as true (Ylikangas 2015, 231–35). The following debate expressed some of the fears regarding public debate which continued in the same gendered tradition but also revealed how discussing famine in public on a national level was extremely one-sided and linked with a Fennoman national narrative in defense of the philosopher, chief ideologue of the Fennoman movement, and senator, Johan Vilhelm Snellman, and his administration's relief measures during the famine.

## FROM SELF-SUFFICIENT ECONOMY TO THE NATURALIZATION OF FAMINE

In October 1869, the historian Yrjö Koskinen, later Senator Yrjö-Sakari Yrjö-Koskinen, wrote in the newspaper *Uusi Suometar* about the “lessons” to be learned from the previous years’ hard times. Although he welcomed the generous famine-relief donations that had been gathered in Russia for the Grand Duchy of Finland, he also regretted the fact that the Russian newspaper *Golos* had apparently assumed that Finland, in compensation to its benefactors, should give up its “most revered—even more highly revered than the spirit and life itself—its national status” (Koskinen 1869a, 1).<sup>1</sup> In Koskinen’s view, it was a mistake to assume that Finnish reception of aid included a comparable notion of loss of sovereignty, and he, therefore, referred to the well-known biblical story of Esau and the loss of his birthright, saying that “we have never, in the manner of Esau, exchanged our human dignity for the price of a bowl of pea-soup” (Koskinen 1869a, 1). The conclusion in future dealings in foreign relations (including the Grand Duchy’s relations to the Russian Empire) should, according to Koskinen (1869a), be that, whatever the circumstances, Finland should never again accept help from others. “While many people are willing to sacrifice their lives and blood for national pride and independence, so are even the people of Finland used to another kind of battle; that is hunger and deprivation” (Koskinen 1869a, 1). The metaphorical use of military rhetoric is noteworthy. Consequently, Koskinen proposed that the country choose economic self-sufficiency as a national goal to avoid any dependence on the benevolence of other powers. He wanted his readers to acknowledge that a devastation like that of 1867–68 might recur at any time, and therefore “the country should prepare itself economically, and if this were to fail, even to *manly* die without lament” (Koskinen 1869a; italics added).

This was in stark contrast to the debate in the early 1860s when newspapers spoke in a much more pragmatic way on how to fight poverty. It was evident that poverty, vagrancy, and starvation were not only regarded as a form of divine retribution, at least among the more fortunate classes, but of social and economic shortcomings that should and could be addressed or at least relieved through some kind of political measures. There was a clear understanding on the basis of the debate, mainly between the newspapers *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* and *Helsingfors Dagblad*, that the problems were also about unemployment, indebtedness, and agricultural underdevelopment, and about the form in which various relief measures should be provided to the distressed, in cash or food handouts or loans, and, if loans, then to

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1 All the primary source translations from Finnish and Swedish into English are by the author.



whom (see, for instance, *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, October 9, 1862; September 10, 1867; *Helsingfors Dagblad*, September 11, 1862; September 24, 1862; September 27, 1862; September 30, 1862; *Suometar*, September 19, 1862; *Uusi Suometar*, September 20, 1869; October 4, 1869; October 7, 1869). However, as the crisis receded, in public there began a process to naturalize the famine, or what Kelleher calls feminization, as an act to “depoliticize” it, which is quite similar to what Antti Häkkinen (1992, 126–27) has described as famine memory attaching myth-like overtones.

One way of naturalizing famine was to emphasize the part played by night frosts. This, of course, suited all sorts of nationalists and patriots, because focusing on frost created a link between contemporary history and the nation’s mythical forefathers’ long struggle in a hard climate. Frost was an element that everyone could easily relate to as a politically neutral concept that did not challenge the political authority in any regard. This was most clearly manifested in Topelius’s *Boken om vårt land* [The book of our country], the first edition of which was published in 1875.

In *Boken om vårt land*, Zachris Topelius re-inforced Koskinen’s “lessons,” albeit with a more morally educative tone, since his book was aimed to be read in primary schools and in every home (on the masculine narratives in the book, see Tuomaala 2004, 301–15). *Boken om vårt land* continued to be staple reading matter at schools right up to the 1950s.

Here nature is a strict mother. She does not cherish her children with idleness and abundance. She demands of them hard work, much patience and self-denial. If they do not want to work and suffer, they must starve and die. But as a reward comes a steely and a healthy body, a brave and an enduring mind. (1875, 71)

Clearly, Finns are what they are because of the forces of nature that have molded the land and its people for centuries. Using the typical nature-as-mother metaphor, Topelius touches upon the idea that Finns had been born from this particular soil. The mother metaphor, however, should not be taken as an attempt to feminize famine, but more as feminizing nature (see Wenk 2000, 66–67).

In Topelius’s account of the 1690s and the 1860s famines, he highlights the extraordinary virtues of Finns as a law-abiding and God-fearing nation. No social upheavals are to be seen as “always” had been the case in other countries. The crimes committed are the work of only a few “half-dead wretched creatures,” while the majority of the poor die of “heroic deprivation” as they did not break down the gates of the privileged elite. Speaking more specifically of the 1860s famine, and again

supporting Koskinen's interpretation, he concludes that it had been unfortunate that Finland was to be portrayed as "Europe's poorhouse," referring to the major help and loans that had been received from banks, governments, and private endorsements abroad (Topelius 1875, 352–54, 435–39).

But Topelius included a more symbolic element in Finnish poverty and misery (for an in-depth discussion, see Rantanen 1997, 202–24). He incorporated Johan Ludvig Runeberg's poem *Bonden Paavo* (Farmer Paavo from Saarijärvi), originally published in 1830 and later republished several times in different collections, which described how night frost was the ultimate nightmare in the layman's mental landscape. The poem, although predating the 1860s famine, forms the cornerstone of Finnish national narratives, and its main character, Paavo, is the ideal Finnish peasant: hardworking, God-fearing, and generously sharing his meager harvest with his neighbor in times of need (Topelius 1875; Mylly 1985). Moreover, viewed from a gender perspective, Paavo is also the dominant force in the household, keeping his nagging, suspicious, and hysterical wife under control.

Furthermore, frost symbolizes a perpetual threat that has shaped the national character through centuries, and 1867 represented its latest dreadful visitation (Topelius 1875, 97–102). Since frost is associated with this soil, and every peasant has a personal recognition of it, a respect for and fear of it, frost was a vivid symbol that connected the people to this particular land, the past with the present, and an event from the realm of private memory into a nationally framed myth conceived of as a part of the national history (see also Tuomaala 2004; Hogan 2009). But most important of all, night frost as a natural enemy did not challenge the power relationships in society and family, and thus it could easily be supported by the elite. Essentially, this was a discourse led by upper-class men and aimed at pacifying lower-class peasant men, for frost was a natural element and a threat confined to outdoor field work, the masculine domain and a source of pride and self-respect for men, and much less a threat to women's indoors and dairy responsibilities (see Östman 2000; Juntti 2011). Women were not so much excluded as, in fact, disregarded when it came to public discussions about the effects of frost.

Indeed, frost constitutes a recurring theme in the Finnish famine literature. The word evokes fear and dread in the works discussed in detail below, but also in other Finnish literary classics such as Ilmari Kianto's *Punainen viiva* (1909, The red line) and Väinö Linna's *Täällä Pohjantähden alla* (1959–62, *Under the North Star*). Frost is the perpetual threat to all Finnish peasants and their wellbeing. It has retained this meaning in Finnish to this day through idioms like *tehdä hallaa*, to cause harm to

something or someone, literally translated as “to make frost,” reflecting its malevolent character. Night frost was to be feared equally by tenants, freeholder peasants, landowners, crofters, and rural laborers alike, and it thus bridged rural class differences. It is symptomatic of this metaphorical adaption that from 1899 onwards, when the Finnish elite eventually clashed with the demands of Imperial Russia about the autonomous status of the Grand Duchy between 1899 and 1905 and again between 1908 and 1917, a period known as the Russification of Finland also became known, in Finnish, as *Routavuodet*, literally translated as “Years of Ground Frost.” Thus, the Finnish nationalists in their mobilization of Finnish resistance, through this metaphorical connection, tried to re-direct these presumably inherited fears of a natural threat to a political threat.

### **FAMINE HEROISM**

In 1892, Agathon Meurman (1826–1909), a freeholder peasant and representative of the peasants’ estate in the Diet, was the first person to publish a historical and accurate account of the famine, *Nälkävuodet 1860-luvulla* (The years of hunger in the 1860s). He was the owner of the grand Liuksiala estate in Häme and thus not really a typical freeholder peasant, because of his wealth and education. He was not a trained historian, but his little book of seventy-seven pages became a staple work of reference for any subsequent historian researching the subject. In fact, it took nearly a century before historians in the 1980s resumed the scrutiny of famine studies without referring exclusively to Meurman. To some extent this is understandable, since from a historian’s perspective Meurman’s work is surprisingly coherent and trustworthy. He presents an economic background to the events of 1867, the responses of the administration and the public to the crisis, explanations for why not more could be done, and how people adapted to the dismal state of affairs. He substantiated his argument with official statistics, newspaper sources, and, more than anything else, with his own first-hand experience, and he was cautious about drawing anachronistic conclusions, for instance, pointing out that the growth of the sawmill industry only began in the 1870s. Consequently, it was a little book of tremendous authority.

However, Meurman’s work deserves a critical historiographical reading and an understanding of its broader historical context. Meurman’s interpretations of the causes and consequences of the famine and especially his representations of its victims and heroes are fascinating, as is how these representations reflect his ideology of a particular type of national identity. Commenting on Johan Vilhelm

Snellman's responsibility as the vice-chairman of the Exchequer during the famine, he concluded:

When the commander in the midst of a fierce battle is forced to give the order: You shall die here! to a minor part of his troops in his efforts to secure the overall aim, hesitation would be detrimental. [. . .] The vanguards of Finland's people understood this order, and they fell in their positions. We grieve their fate as we grieve for our war heroes, and we give them our highest praise: they have given their lives for the preservation of the fatherland. (Meurman 1892, 77)

Understandably, not every literary text on famines can have a feminizing aspect attached to it. However, what is striking in this particular passage is not its lack of femininity, but its overwhelming masculinity, indeed its militancy. Apparently, Meurman needed to portray the victims as the nation's martyrs, almost equal to soldiers who have fought and died for their country. But how was it possible that people like Meurman himself, who had witnessed it first hand, now tried to attach a new meaning to the victims, to beggars, who at that time had not received more than the coldhearted urging to continue their beggars' journey to the next possible shelter (Meurman 1892, 51), and now suddenly merited them the status of national heroes?

Clearly, Meurman would have preferred to forget the years 1867–68, since they had for him painful memories and probably also raised morally disquieting questions of responsibility, and thus he preferred to proclaim the controversial railway track between Riihimäki and St. Petersburg as a “monument to famine victims.” The railway construction had caused some public anxiety as the contractors had been rewarded with extra bonuses for completing it below the original budget, while mortality rates among the workers was exceptionally high due to insufficient wages, poor diets, hard labor, and lethal epidemics (Turpeinen 2004, 21–22).

Their courageous fight on the killing fields has produced a more enduring victory than any other of history's great [military] victories [. . .]. Our people could not have raised a more valuable memorial than the Riihimäki-St. Petersburg track to honor our unsung heroes. (Meurman 1892, 43–44)

It seems that the “narratives of progress” that are so inter-twined with national narratives may also be linked to a particular type of survival guilt (Morash 1995, 11–29; 46

see also Schneider 1975; Zerubavel 2003). For even though the track may have been built by undernourished workers, for Meurman, it symbolized the self-sacrificing character of the people, their will to secure future generations' wellbeing, and a manifestation of the people's spiritual progress towards nationhood. If the memory of famine had to be addressed, then Meurman chose the self-congratulatory way of emphasizing its achievements.

However, Meurman was following a tradition of a particular type of argument, or rather, he was trying to incorporate the famine and its victims into an already established national narrative that had recently come under attack. His book was a moral rebuttal of accusations coming from the novelist Karl August Tavaststjerna. Meurman's account was intended to repudiate the "wrong," "disgraceful," and "rumor-based" picture presented by Tavaststjerna in his novel *Hårda tider* [Hard times], originally published in Swedish in 1891 and subsequently translated into Finnish by Juhani Aho, although the Finnish translation was a sanitized version, omitting the most vehement attacks against the church and government. Why the Finnish reading public was not allowed to read the same book as Swedish readers remains an intriguing mystery that still awaits a proper study. Nevertheless, the novel told the story of Ostrobothnian itinerant rural workers trying to make a living in the province of Häme, starving individuals, one of whom, in a moment of desperation, commits murder. This brutal image of despair is contrasted with the opulent lifestyle of the upper classes, symbolized by the wealthy landowner and noble Captain Thoreld (see also Vuorinen in this volume). The narrator, moreover, criticizes the government's supposedly slow and useless policies in 1867–68. According to Meurman, the way the people were represented in Tavaststjerna's novel was "untrue" for it failed to respect the memory of those "who lived, suffered and acted throughout the year of sorrow 1867," and who preferred to remember it as the last of the "heroic battles" in the nation's history, nor did it stand up to the Finnish idolized peasant stereotype of *Bonden Paavo*. On the contrary, it contradicted it. The peasant portrayed was selfish and opportunistic, and the very opposite of a good role-model (Meurman 1892, 3–6; Jalava 2013, 287–90).

At the end of the novel, Captain Thoreld, the stereotype of the modern positivistic capitalist in a post-famine era, concludes wishfully in a speech at the funeral of Mrs. von Blume, the self-sacrificing philanthropist, that the new age symbolized by the railway track had been "built upon the poverty and bodies of nature's victims" and that it "hopefully will provide a better future than all the armies fighting against hired murderers" (Tavaststjerna 1891, 187) after which the Captain was

congratulated by the sheriff and the Councilor of War (in Swedish *kriigsråd*) for his splendid speech (Tavaststjerna 1891, 188). More than just describing the rapid modernization of the period, he apparently also included this as an ironic statement about the official and state-sanctioned rhetoric with regard to the commemoration of famine victims. A year later, Tavaststjerna, in a defensive article published in *Finsk tidskrift* (Finnish periodical), acknowledged that his portrayal of the wealthier classes was by no means flattering, nor was it meant to be so. According to him, it was the elite, unmoved by the famine, who had afterwards started unjustifiably to apply the high-minded, self-sacrificing, and altruistic Paavo-myth to themselves (Tavaststjerna 1892).

Both in Runeberg's poem of *Bonden Paavo* and Tavaststjerna's novel women are marginalized. Agency and rationality are exclusively reserved for the men. The exception is Mrs. von Blume, but even she is only a symbolic substitute for Paavo, a sort of silly idealist, a hero from a bygone age who moreover succumbs to famine disease. This can be read as Tavaststjerna symbolically proclaiming the end of national romanticism and the beginning of modernity.

The Meurman-Tavaststjerna debate is interesting because through it we are confronted with many of the complexities regarding the definitions and demarcations of memory and history, the extent of reality in realism and naturalism, social awareness and political responsibility, and the construction of national martyrs in an age of rapid change and nation-building. As Kelleher (1997) has aptly noted, "literature playing the role of history, and history, on occasion, deemed fiction, the relation of past and present also increases in complexity" (110). This debate took place in the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland, but astonishingly avoided putting the blame on policy choices made in St. Petersburg, or the Russians in general, or the mainly Swedish-speaking upper class. Tavaststjerna in his novel mocked the Finnish authorities' allegedly slow responses to the nation's suffering, and this point of view was unacceptable for a Fennoman and cultural conservative like Meurman. For Meurman, literature and art could not possibly be real unless they communicated atonement and elevated the national spirit, which modern realism, according to him, failed to do. Not surprisingly, his distaste for realism as a genre was not solely aimed against Tavaststjerna but also extended to include Aleksis Kivi, Juhani Aho, and Minna Canth (Jossas 1990, 106–17; Lappalainen 1999, 8–42).

To understand Meurman's approach to the famine, we need to consider that the famine, although socially and humanely an enormous disaster, had occurred during a time when the idea of the Finnish state was taking shape and being symbolically

created, that is, during a time that the elite perceived as an overwhelmingly progressive era. At least this is the picture conveyed by the history textbooks used during the period of 1868 to 1900 (Forsberg 2011). The reforms were extolled in the history textbooks from the 1870s to the early twentieth century and were the predominant feature marking the 1860s as a positive watershed in the national narrative.

Very much in line with Heikki Ylikangas's (2015) analysis of Finnish historiography, as adhering to one school of thought only, the majority of professional historians and other intellectuals approved, contributed to, and advanced the glorification of J. V. Snellman, and consequently also the Fennoman interpretation of the famine. Even the contemporary Swedish-speaking historian M. G. Schybergson, who generally remained reserved towards the Fennoman project, commented that Snellman's patriotism and good intentions were universally acknowledged, but that political challenges ultimately got the better of him, which was a reference to his sacking by Governor-General Count Adlerberg in 1868 (Schybergson 1889, 437). After the publication of Meurman's famine account in 1892 and Th. Rein's two-volume biography of Snellman in 1895 and 1899 (Rein 1905), Schybergson rewrote the chapter on famine and Snellman, and adjusted the judgment of Snellman's statesmanship in a much more lenient tone, much in line with Meurman and Rein's praise. Consequently, when Snellman and Tsar Alexander II were publicly celebrated, the famine was likely to be ignored, or, when the famine was publicly commemorated, then their actions in the face of intolerable circumstances were usually highly praised.

Snellman's status, for instance, became that of a (sort of) tragic hero (Meurman 1892; Rein 1905, 634–38; Schybergson 1903). Moreover, Tsar Alexander II was also extolled but mainly for supporting the country's legal and national development during his reign (see, for instance, Topelius 1875). This is especially interesting given that it was on their watch that over 100,000 people died, and yet nationally minded historians carefully avoided any critical examination of the period and its leaders. Some editions of school textbooks, authored by the professional historian Senator Yrjö-Koskinen, even claimed that the introduction of the domestic currency Finnish *markka* had had a decisive role in helping the country to overcome the crisis (Yrjö-Koskinen 1893, 84–85), a statement that could be regarded as highly controversial in light of complaints from contemporary businesspeople and modern economic scholarship (Kuusterä 1987; Kuisma 1993, 221–27).

Both the Finnish and Swedish-speaking elites shared the view that the famine had been an unfortunate and regrettable outcome of poor weather, i.e., naturalizing the famine, but nevertheless a seemingly important lesson to the layman that he could not and should not rely “on handouts from the Tsar,” a constantly recurring trope in the historical literature (Schybergson 1889, 437; 1903, 477–79; Koskinen 1869b, 561–63; Meurman 1892). In the national historiographies, the question of culpability was left unaddressed, which should not be taken to indicate that local grievances were non-existing (Moilanen 2008; Helsti, Stark, and Tuomaala 2006; Jussila 2013), only that they were not given an explanatory context with a national framing. If anyone nevertheless deserved to be blamed, it would be those who had become too accustomed to a comfortable lifestyle and who had not learned to adjust their spending accordingly, thereby inflicting an excessive burden of debt on the state and the people (Koskinen 1869b, 561–63). For the Fennomans, and for Yrjö Koskinen and Agathon Meurman in particular, with ambitions to reach out to the people or actually to represent it, this was an interesting interpretation (for a broader context, see Liikanen 1995). It must have been an inconvenient truth that their political mentor, Snellman, had been conducting the relief policy during the worst famine years, although they tried to overcome this by shifting the blame onto the previous governments’ (i.e., pre-1865) excessively generous relief policies.

In contrast, the previously mentioned Swedish-speaking Finnish historian M. G. Schybergson, who was rather less involved politically, in his historical narratives, accorded less space to the famine. After all, for him it was mainly a natural hazard; he called it *missväxtår* (i.e., years of poor harvests), underlining its natural causes. Therefore, blame for the famine was not even an issue to be addressed, and, consequently, the overall official assessment as reflected in the schoolbooks was that it had been a natural disaster and not man-made (see also Forsberg 2011, 271–74).

This was a form of naturalizing the famine, or, if we want use Kelleher’s concept, *depoliticizing* it, and it was discernible in other historiographical works as well. One is easily struck by the overwhelmingly deterministic way of explaining the famine purely as a matter of crop failure. It featured in agronomist Gösta Grotenfelt’s (1898) article examining the relationship between “Our agriculture during the years 1867 and 1868” and the famine. Here he presented some statistics about the harvest failures and grain imports, and pondered on the modernization of the rural economy, mainly the shift towards dairy farming that came in the aftermath of the famine, although he never really fully explained how the “new” agriculture differed from the “old” and how the shift to a greater focus on dairy production and forestry



could have occurred so rapidly during one single year (1898, 436–59). The historical encyclopedia *Oma maa* [Own land] in 1910 took the naturalization to a whole new level. Its entry on the impact of harvest failures on the population reflected on the one hand a total disregard for the famine's social-economic or political aspects and addressed it exclusively in terms of correlation between crop failures and demographics. The wellbeing of the nation was equated with the wellbeing of a human body that naturally needs nourishment, and therefore the nation's wellbeing could be measured according to the country's agricultural yield. The soil was the sole provider of life and bread, and man could do little but learn to harness the land as effectively as possible (Ignatius 1910, 80–86; see also Eilola and Valtonen 2015).

### THE FOLK WRITERS AND THE FENNOMAN IDOLS

Meurman's personal favorite author was Pietari Päivärinta (1827–1913), a self-educated writer and churchwarden from Ylivieska, Ostrobothnia, and also a member of the Diet from 1882 onwards (Jossas 1990, 115). In 1893, he published his own memoirs of the famine years, *Pikakuvia 1867 katovuodesta ja sen seurauksista* [Vignettes from the 1867 crop failure and its consequences], which were also translated into Swedish. The book was probably inspired by the Tavaststjerna-Meurman debate. It included twelve stories based on the author's personal encounters with distressed people—mostly sad, but occasionally displaying great optimism and compassionate understanding for their plight. He did not condemn the people for falling into such an appalling state of poverty, their depression, or the occasional theft in such difficult times, but tried to teach his readers the benefits of a moral life, hard work, and temperance. Moreover, the government's actions were also portrayed in a positive light. He described his encounter with an undernourished and physically weak ploughman in the spring of 1868, who, in spite of his poor conditions, still had some hope for a better future. Thanks to the seeds that had been provided by the government's relief measures, he could give his field one last chance to provide some food. Weakened by hunger, he kept falling in the course of his work, but he always got up again (Päivärinta 1893, 54–56).

Despite Päivärinta being labeled as a “folk writer” with a background in the common people and communicating with the common people, it is nevertheless clear that such authors as Päivärinta, Santeri Alkio, and others also wrote in a national-romantic and idyllic fashion similar to that of their predecessors, Runeberg and Topelius. It was only their choice of topic that was more familiar to the rural people and their ordinary lives; in other words, more down to earth (Lassila 2008,

67). However, their rise to prominence was linked with Fennomanian cultural policies and supported through the foundation of the *Kansanvalistusseura* [The Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation] in 1874, a rebuttal of two ongoing, undesired literary trends: the traditional broadsheet smallprint literature, and, from the 1880s onwards, the aforementioned influence of foreign realism and naturalism, both of which supposedly conveyed destabilizing virtues, and were thus seen as a threat to social cohesion (Lassila 2008, 75–80, 101–24; Liikanen 1995, 307).

The didactic tone was strong in Päivärinta's work. The last story in his memoir described how a poor family managed to survive and even to fare better in the needy times. Their secret was the household's literate and self-educated housewife, who had learned to use natural substitute ingredients like lichens and mushrooms, and who had a high standard of cleanliness (Päivärinta 1893, 59–68). It is quite a rare feature in the Finnish famine literature to find a self-confident woman who refuses to give in to become a victim of poor circumstances, and who, with unprejudiced determination, fulfills her role as a model housewife. Moreover, on closer inspection, we can see this woman in Päivärinta's depiction as an idealization, and that she represents an enlightenment ideal: family values of bourgeois origin, but in a rural setting (see Nieminen 2006, 89–90). Furthermore, to the extent that she uses her educational pursuits to improve her family's living conditions, she remains within the private (i.e., female) sphere and does not cross over to the public sphere (man's world). She uses her medical skills, but they, too, are not for the general public good, but for her neighbors' private good, and she does not receive the public recognition that she deserves, or so we are told, which is also to her credit since it illustrates her humility and meekness, typical of the Runeberg-Topelian virtues. In this story, we could be witnessing an explicit Finnish example of Kelleher's framework, the feminization of famine aimed at depoliticizing the famine, for she is basically an apolitical person, and the only politics she conveys is the Fennoman enlightenment project of pursuing self-improvement, taking government advice to heart, and not causing any public offense to anyone. But she remains a rare exception in the Finnish famine literature.

In 1896, Santeri Alkio published his famine year novel *Murtavia voimia* (Forces of change), which was a sequel to his earlier work *Puukkojunkkarit* (Knifefighters) of 1894. This book was not as controversial as Tavaststjerna's had been, but resembled in many respects its famine literature predecessors, like Runeberg, Topelius, and Tavaststjerna. His depiction in particular of the first sunbeams rising over the fields in the morning after the first frosty night in September 1867 is very similar to

Tavaststjerna's, although without the narrator's bitter critique of a lethargic government. Furthermore, the novel was praised for depicting "the true Ostrobothnian characters" and explaining the famine as a great force bringing a much needed change to the degenerate and corrupt habits on the local level (*Pohjalainen* 1896, 2). The plot focuses on the rivalry of two freeholder peasants for wealth, power, and the preservation of status in an Ostrobothnian village during the years 1867–68. Hautalan Janne is the main character, a stereotypical Bonden Paavo. But he is also strongly contextualized with the fast-changing, contemporary world through his skepticism regarding his son's desire for education and a good level of literacy. However, ultimately it is precisely this "treacherous" skill that saves Hautalan Janne and his family from falling into the clutches of Siikalahden Mikko, who represents the illiterate, deceitful, and selfish peasant speculator. The novel includes many characters and episodes of different sorts, but basically the plot is about the village that has run increasingly into debt after many poor harvests and is slowly falling under the domination of a handful of self-seeking and corrupt individuals. Hautalan Janne tries his best to help his impoverished tenants and community by lending more and more from his own meager stock, but eventually even his own grainstore runs out, and he is forced to seek help, for himself and his local community, by appealing to the provincial governor in person. The governor's response to Hautalan Janne's traveling companion crystalizes the novel's moral education: "I'll say to you and to all you younger ones, that if you inherit this fellow's character and pass it on to your children, then the people of Finland shall never collapse, not even in the face of hunger" (Alkio 1896, 220). Even though Hautalan Janne is eventually struck down by famine fever and dies, symbolically his legacy lives on through his modern and literate son Matti.

In spite of the novel also being a very Topelian-Runebergian adaption, it does contain elements of social conscience and modern rationality, which probably can be accounted for by the fact that Tavaststjerna in his own unnerving style had earlier gone against this tradition and simultaneously paved the way for other writers to follow in a supposedly more moderate way. For instance, in Alkio's novel, there are occasional allusions that the famine cannot be a part of God's plan because poverty only impacts poor and decent people while the evil ones seem to become richer and richer (Alkio 1896, 163, 233). This could be read as quite a daring utterance at the time, but the difference from Tavaststjerna was that Alkio presented the famine and the state's growing importance as a forceful *lesson* and *inspiration* for *improvement*. In particular, the new sheriff Grönberg brings new order, vigor, and lawfulness to the

village community, which paraphrases how the state, the rule of law, and a national spirit in the 1860s entered decisively into the village communities by force. Alkio could be seen as a moderate modernist, yet respectful of the Fennoman narrative with regard to the famine.

*Murtavia voimia* presented no straightforward militant interpretations, but, read with a gender perspective, it represents again an exclusively male-dominated world. Women are not implicitly absent, but it is the men who are in focus. Women are once again absolved from agency; they only react to the men or the circumstances. Thus, given that the work carried a strong moral message, as did Päivärinta's book, there should be no doubt that this message was targeted at men. Hautalan Janne was an upgraded version of Runeberg's *Bonden Paavo*, and his determination, goodwill, and readiness to submit to hunger, but not indulgence, became an example for the ordinary male peasants. In the words of Juhani Mylly, he was a "breadmaker man" (Mylly 1985, my emphasis). Weakness, moral or physical, does not follow any kind of gender-based distinction. In fact, as characteristics that are in any sense problematized, they are only seen in men, which leads to the conclusion that humble starvation, in the manner of *Bonden Paavo*, Hautalan Janne, and all the other 138,000 real human victims of the famine, could or should be regarded as expressing manly virtues for every Finnish man to emulate.

## CONCLUSION/EPILOGUE

For many elite members of Finnish society, the famine of the 1860s seems to have confirmed that the national-romantic ideal peasant as portrayed in Runeberg's poem *Bonden Paavo* did indeed typify the common people. On the other hand, this national-romantic idealism hindered them from paying the necessary attention to the stress and worries of the laboring poor. Nothing is more striking than the manner in which the senator and statistician August Hjelt (1918), who during the last days of the Civil War in 1918, as a part of the fifty-year commemoration of the famine contended: "Unforgettably beautiful was the moral strength and sublime submissiveness in which our people bore their misfortunes, without complaining and never straying from the path of honesty" (70–71). This quotation was, of course, more a comment on contemporary events, that is, how the people had failed in their moral obligation when taking the law into their own hands in the Socialist uprising. But if we excuse Hjelt for his biased hindsight toward the issue at stake, we can nevertheless see that he was following a narrative tradition deeply embedded in the Finnish historical scholarship.

A few years earlier, Jaakko Forsman (1912) had analyzed in his essay, “the causes for the spread of socialism among Finland’s rural population,” and in it he distinguished the mental, economic, and social transformation that occurred among the population some time after the famine and that had subsequently paved the way for the spread of socialism. The famine, however, exemplified an old fatalistic mentality, based upon a strong conviction of the righteousness of the existing social order that had led the people to submit and to passively face its crude destiny without rebellion (16–17). The spread of socialism proved that a social and mental change indeed had occurred. Forsman, too, was following this scholarly tradition, and, as should be clear by now, it all goes back to the national-romantic idealization of Finnish manhood and its submissive character (see also Vuorinen’s article in this volume).

What is striking, however, is that this narrative represented the very opposite to the Socialists’ interpretation of the events of the 1860s, for whom the famine was a lesson of the “capitalists’ whip.” In fact, the historical statistician and Socialist politician Edvard Gylling published an article in the 1917 *Workers’ Calendar* that was a grim analysis of the political background of the famine and its consequences and should be seen as an attempt at a historical justification of the Socialist movement’s militarization and political demands (see also Häkkinen et al. 1991, 260–66; on Gylling, see Jussila 2015). Interestingly, even if he viewed the famine through Socialist lenses, he backed up his narrations and his criticism of the “bourgeois government” by quoting Tavaststjerna’s novel *Hårda tider* (though avoiding any direct reference) and even accused Snellman’s government of allowing grain to be exported during the famine (Gylling 1917, 110–21).

Clearly, during the years 1916 to 1918, the fear of hunger was widespread and, accompanied by a rhetoric of starvation, it exacerbated public disillusionment (Siltala 2009, 135–36, 143–72; Häkkinen et al. 1991, 250–72). Gylling was certainly not alone in evoking famine memories. The annual journal *Nuori Suomi: Joulualbumi* (Young Finland: Christmas album) from 1917 included an article entitled “The return of the barkbread,” which evoked famine memories through its reference to the most famous subsistence food: barkbread (bread baked with flour scraped from the bark of the pine tree), a further indication that the fear of starvation was a real fear (Paulaharju 1917). It is, therefore, not difficult to imagine that among the lower classes there probably lurked a somewhat latent anxiety and fear of hunger, that, irrespective of its real historical justification, could easily seek inspiration from any kind of interpretation of 1867–68 (Häkkinen et al. 1991, 264–66). Even

Meurman in 1892 had referred to rumor as Tavaststjerna's main source (Meurman 1892, 6), and Gösta Grotenfelt had cautiously written about "wounds from 1867–68" and "their healing," though not specifying whose wounds he was talking about (Grotenfelt 1898). Whatever the content of these rumors, it was difficult for them to be given any sort of public expression or recognition until the social-democratic movement could provide a suitable narrative framework with hunger seemingly becoming a potential threat once again.

The narratives about the famine that received publicity and recognition between 1868 and 1920 had to conform to a male-centered narrative, where submissiveness and respect for the law were key characterizations, and they had to approve the government's relief measures as at least well intended. This was basically a Fennoman interpretation for the sake of elevating or guarding Snellman's status as one of the great Finnish men as well as the nation's story of progress, which, in due course, received broad intellectual support. A feminization of famine was not needed, since the Finnish public sphere was already dominated by masculine values and narratives. Female narratives were not imbued with national importance or meanings, since they were essentially issues of domestic and private concern. All that was needed was to make sure that masculine submission would be presented as one form of Finnish peasant masculinity and something to admire. In some cases, the need to stress the Finnish man's masculinity went so far that even military attributes were adapted to the struggle against famine. This added a heroic touch to the narratives of mass starvation. This militarization of famine rhetoric may possibly have contributed to the actual militarization of Finnish society on all sides, since in a similar vein, if the famine had proved that the Finnish man would dare to willingly die from starvation, then he would certainly make a fine soldier as well.

It seems that Margaret Kelleher's *feminization* of famine is not an accurate description of the Finnish famine representations. However, gender is definitely something that is used as a scale of enquiry: presenting famine as manifesting masculine heroism sidesteps all the complex questions involved and trivializes the anxiety of the event. This was not necessarily used in a conscious way by the contemporaries, but still in a way that limited and directed the topics raised for national deliberation. Moreover, the stress on masculinity and submission was one form of depoliticizing the famine, since it prevented many other complex social issues and grievances from gaining any significant recognition and deliberation in public.

Consequently, it seems more appropriate to assume that the feminization of famine has been more normal in efforts related to appealing for aid or sympathy,

an element that is completely lacking in these texts. Perhaps such phenomena could be found in appeals for famine relief somewhere abroad, but then again that kind of international representation would have very little to do with studying the appropriation of national identity by Finns themselves. Nonetheless, women's roles in the public sphere, as agents and symbols, was very limited, mostly restricted to the symbolic feature of the Maiden of Finland, which also was a male construction—gazed upon, protected, and violated by men (see Valenius 2004). Furthermore, the Maiden of Finland was essentially a symbol adapted in discourses regarding Finland's foreign relations, that is, a symbol for the domestic public that represented the nation outwards. Had then the suffering and starvation by women received more extensive recognition in the national limelight, for example, by utilizing the image of a starving Maid, then the failure of the Finnish man and the national fathers to protect their women would probably have also received even international overtones. This could have been perceived either as an international humiliation of the Finnish man (remember Topelius's concern about Finland being the poorhouse of Europe) or as an insinuation that someone else is responsible for the plight of the Maid of Finland, which might well have strained Finnish and Imperial Russian relations even further. Nationally, however, this latter option would have also implied recognition that during the 1860s the Finns were not in control of their own affairs, and thus that the Grand Duchy's much acclaimed autonomy was mere window-dressing.

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**II**  
**THE LANDLESS POOR**





# POVERTY AND TAX EXEMPTIONS IN MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY FINLAND

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## ABSTRACT

The topic of this article is the nature and social character of Finnish rural poverty during the early stages of industrialization. Specifically, I analyze households exempted from two separate taxes in order to locate and study the rural poor. Contrary to several previous considerations deeming taxation sources unreliable in poverty studies, it is shown that under controlled settings tax exemption information does display promising features. These include a high exemption percentage of households without adult male members, small average household size of the tax exempted and a clear concentration of the exemptions on the lower rural social classes. My findings also highlight the fact that conclusions on the usability of the exemption information depend heavily on the selection of the tax studied. Taxes levied at individual level were not necessarily dependent on the households' economic status, and similarly household level taxes may have been independent of the inhabitants' social and economic conditions. On average, the exemption rates are in line with several accounts from pre-industrial Western Europe.

## INTRODUCTION

In this article, I study the extent and social characteristics of the Finnish rural poor using household level micro-data. Through problematization of methodology and theory, an attempt is made to assess the contemporary concepts of poverty and deprivation by focusing on one often used poverty measure, tax exemption. Using data from rural Finland in 1865, I examine the nature of tax exemptions and the social standing of their recipients, seeking answers to the following questions: 1.

Who were defined as poor in pre-industrial societies? 2. How uniformly is poverty presented in the various fiscal sources? 3. Is tax exemption a valid instrument for measuring poverty? Answering these questions serves to quantify and generalize what attributes were deemed important in defining an individual or a household as poor in the Nordic pre-industrial agricultural context.

In his seminal study Seebohm Rowntree defines poor as those whose incomes fall below the minimum required “for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency” (Rowntree 1901, 86). Contemporary to this study, the Finnish J. W. Rosenborg stated in his doctoral thesis that poverty is “lack of means of sustenance, resulting in inability to take care of life’s basic needs” (Rosenborg 1863, 6). Both of these nineteenth-century scholars define poverty in a manner reminiscent of today’s capability failure, an idea most importantly put forward by Amartya Sen (1981). This stance accentuates that individual welfare has to be understood in the context of capabilities, involving various functionings—people’s achievements, what they manage to do or be, and what they can *potentially* achieve when the freedom to choose between different ways of living is acknowledged (Sen 1981, 1–8; Kuklys and Robeyns 2005, 10).

According to McIntosh (1998), pre-industrial poverty was largely defined through one’s (in)ability to work, which highlights the traditional dichotomy of the supporters and those supported (see also Vikström 2006, 227; Pulma 1994, 49, 56–59; Kilpi 1913, 1915). This was reflected in pre-industrial characteristics almost uniformly associated with poverty throughout Europe: sickness and incapacity were two of the most important variables attached to inclusion in the poor censuses (King 2002, 51–54). Accentuating this, Jütte (1996, 21, 24) emphasizes that even though tax exemption and poor census inclusion criteria varied, the role of sickness and old age was commonly accepted (see also Engberg 2006, 37).

By virtually any modern standard the pre-industrial world was wretchedly poor, although the very application of these modern conceptions of poverty in historical instances has aroused considerable debate. In England, estimates of the extent of the pre-industrial poverty varied from “a third to a half [of the population]” (Beier 1983, 5) to accounting it as a “massive and permanent element” (Wrightson 1982, 148), whereas more positive estimates still yielded poverty rates between 15 and 25 percent (Hoskins 1957; Lindert and Williamson 1983). Arkell (1987) downgraded these estimates: according to his revised figures, British pre-industrial poverty extended to about “one quarter” in general, and about 15 percent of the population lived in the destitution of absolute poverty (47).

According to Swedish tax exemption figures, depending on the geographic region, some 10 to 30 percent of the Swedish adult population were exempted from the lowest of personal taxes during the 1800s (Söderberg 1978; Lundsjö 1975). Juxtaposing these figures with official Swedish poor-relief rates yields results aligning with the general consensus that fiscal sources (i.e., tax exemptions) tend to suggest higher historical poverty levels than what can be obtained from poor-relief censuses (Jütte 1996, 47; Engberg 2006, 39): only a few percent of the Swedish population were entitled to poor relief during the 1800s (Bengtsson 2004, 138–42). In Finland the proportion of the population eligible for poor relief was roughly similar, about 3 percent in 1865, ranging from some 2 percent in the southern parts of the country to 6.3 percent in the province of Oulu (Kilpi 1913, 1915).

This paper introduces further evidence from Finland to the discussion. The structure is as follows: in the next section, I present the context of nineteenth-century rural Finland and review the literature concerning the living standards of different rural social groups. The third section presents some international literature on the usage of tax exemption data in poverty studies, and the fourth section presents the source material and necessary source history in order to assess the sources critically. In the fifth section regression models are run in order to explain the emerging patterns of exemption. The sixth section brings the discussion into conclusion.

### **SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND LIVING STANDARDS IN 1860S RURAL FINLAND**

Finland remained an undeveloped agrarian country right until the early 1900s. Scarcity of production factors, excessive dependence on agriculture in adverse climatic conditions and low connectivity to European trade are generally considered to explain the absence of growth and the low level of average income in Finland in comparison to the rest of the Nordic countries. Late industrialization meant that during the mid-1800s Finland fell behind the other Nordic countries in economic terms. Finnish gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in 1820 was 12 percent lower than that in Sweden, which in turn had about half of the GDP per capita of the leading economic power of the world at the time, the United Kingdom. The Finnish disparity to Sweden and to the rest of the Scandinavia grew during the 1800s: by 1870 the Finnish GDP per capita was 15 percent, by 1900 20 percent lower than that in Sweden (The Maddison-Project 2013; see also Eloranta, García-Iglesias, Ojala, and Jalava 2006, 27). The Finnish urbanization rate exceeded 10 percent only as late as the early 1890s, reflecting the predominance of the

agricultural sectors of society. Similarly, up to 75 percent of the labor force was tied to agricultural livelihoods until the late 1800s (Vattula 1983; Hjerppe 1988). Because of the persistence of rural living, the macro-social structure in Finnish society changed relatively little during the nineteenth century.

	Gentry	Freeholder Peasants	Whole Farm Renters, etc.	Croft Farmers	Rural Laborers	Farm Servants	Lodgers
Percentage of total population	2.0	38.4	4.0	21.0	15.9	5.4	4.6
Total number (in thousands)	36	694	72	378	286	97	83

Table 1. Social structure in rural Finland in 1865. Source: Modified from Rasila (2003). Note: Only the most prominent rural social groups presented. Percentages calculated from rural population (c. 1,840,000). Urban population constituted 6.7 percent of the total population.

Traditionally, Finnish social and agricultural historians have claimed that the single most crucial divide in the agrarian society lay between the rural landowners and the rest of the agricultural population, and Haatanen (1968), for example, states that “let it be a cottage or a piece of land . . . telling poor from poorer” (40). The landowning group can be divided into different cadastral categories (see, e.g., Gadd 2000; Jutikkala 2003), but it has been typologically customary to treat the landowners as a monolithic group forming the highest of the agricultural classes. Its actual composition varied from landowning nobility to small-scale independent farmers. The rural gentry, consisting of the nobility and high ranking officials, were typically landowners, even if the proportion of those actually engaging in agriculture was low (Soininen 1974, 28–29; Wirilander 1974, 119–24; Jutikkala 2003, 447). The size of the uppermost social segment was small: of the 1.8 million people living in Finland at the time, only 2 percent (including children) can be considered to have been part of the gentry (see Table 1). The considerably more visible group among the landowning segments were the freeholder peasants. The Finnish freeholder peasants cultivated the land they owned or over which they had legal control. In the taxation registers, the landowners can be located using the *mantal* subscription. *Mantal* was the major assessment for taxation in Finland until the 1900s (Huuhka 1999, 65–75; Lappalainen 2006, 161–63). Like the English *hide*, it was conceptually the amount of land needed to support a peasant family; thus it was a unit of land assessment for purposes of taxation. The acreage constituted by a *mantal* varied according to, for instance, geographical location and the quality of the land, but generally, the freeholder peasant farms’ *mantal* rates rarely exceeded one, while manorial demesnes

could be assigned substantially larger mantal rates (Olsson and Svensson 2010, 283).

The remainder of the farmer population constituted the rental class. The so-called whole farm renters (Finnish: *lampuodit*) rented a mantal farm in its entirety. A significantly larger and more prominent in the rental class were the crofters (Finnish (=f.): *torpparit*, Swedish (=s.): *torpare*), who cultivated some section of a mantal farm. The lowest of groups within the rental population were the cottagers (f. *mäkitupalaiset*, s. *backstugusittare*) who, unlike crofters, had no real arable land but instead small plots for staple crops. The wealthiest of the rental farmers have traditionally considered being on par in economic terms with many of the freeholder peasants, some being even wealthier. At the lower end, it is difficult to draw a sharp boundary between the cottagers and crofters, especially as there were cottagers owning their housings and crofters cultivating extremely scarce lands.

The so-called life-cycle service (e.g., Moring 2003) was typical throughout the Nordic countries. The most significant feature in this system was that young unmarried sons and daughters signed up by the year to work as farm laborers. For the contract year, these people were employed full-time and received the bulk of their wages in kind. With the increase in downward social mobility during the 1800s, a growing proportion of people remained as farm laborers even after marrying and starting a family (f. *muonamiehet*, s. *statare*). Their tenures as farm laborers became lifelong instead of constituting merely a phase in their lives. The lowest segment of the rural society was constituted by the lodgers (f. *itselliset*, s. *inhysesjon*), a highly heterogeneous group of people, the majority of whom lived in small huts or spent an unsettled life traveling from one house to another and mainly working as seasonal laborers on farms. A clear distinction between cottagers and lodgers is difficult to make: for example, in the rural municipality of Leppävirta in eastern Finland, in the early 1900s lodgers were considered to include all those with a house or room of their own to live in, but with no distinct acreage to cultivate (Haatanen 1968, 45; for examples of the lodger group and its economic situation see Anu Koskivirta's article in this issue).

It is important to note that the social class division as presented in the pre-industrial fiscal sources is mainly indicative. Three critical points are worth highlighting:

1. The legislation concerning the rural underclass was reformed in the early 1850s, which increased the number of people subject to so-called legal guardianship and placed landless population segments with no permanent source of income under the supervision and employment of the

landowning classes (see the Introduction to this issue). In practice, however, few landowners needed these new laborers. Instead of these people being entered in the taxation records with their actual social class, the legislation was often circumvented by registering them as farm laborers and crofters in the tax registers (Pulma 1994, 61).

2. Terms used to denote different social groups most likely had regional variation, and therefore the concepts used in the registers did not unambiguously indicate the actual ownership and social status (see, e.g., Rosenberg and Selin 1995, 118).

3. Not all those people listed as belonging to a household were necessarily actual residents; households were partly compiled for taxation purposes and may not reflect the actual prevailing family structures.

The division described above reflects the generally accepted ordering within the Finnish agricultural sphere. There are, however, relatively few studies trying to assess rural welfare beyond these formal categories. On the basis of probate inventories, Markkanen (1977) places gentry and freeholder peasants well above the rest of the rural population segments in terms of wealth (see also Rosenberg and Selin 1995, 119–20). The only available uniform source to assess income levels between social groups in the 1860s Finland is the income tax (*suostuntavero*) collected from 1865 to 1885. The lower income boundary for the mildly progressive tax was set at 500 Finnish *markka* (marks), which has been considered being quite high, duly corresponding to 2.7 times GDP per capita. The taxation information has raised very little interest and because of this we lack detailed studies on social group specific incomes (however, see, e.g., Jutikkala 1991; Kaarniranta 2001; see also SVT IV: 1). Some rough data have been published, and these would suggest that a majority of farmers and practically all the gentry were indeed taxed (Jutikkala 1991; Pitkänen 1992); that is, their yearly income exceeded the lower limit of 500 marks.

In a society close to subsistence level, with low wage level and with low adaptation rate of monetary economy, income is rather difficult to operationalize as a welfare measure. A comparative benchmark is needed. Vihola (1994) has presented information on the yearly wages of male and female farm laborers in southwest Finland in the 1860s. A wage paid in kind consisted of grain, dairy products, meat, and fish, but an additional monetary wage was also provided. On average, a male laborer received a yearly income of 250–300 marks, women about 70 percent of

this. Thus in a farm laborer's household the yearly income might range between 430 and 520 marks. Because of the common history of Sweden and Finland, the 1845 Swedish wage recommendation for a *statare*, a farm laborer with a family, is a practical point of comparison (Gadd 2000, 226). When converted into Finnish prices at the 1865 price level using the market price scales published in Vattula (1983), we end up with a yearly household income of about 450 marks. A later Finnish assessment is provided by Vennola (1909), suggesting, during the period 1907–1908, a yearly income of 922 Finnish marks for a male agricultural laborer with a family. When this is back-projected with real wage index provided by Heikkinen et al. (1987) to 1865, we end up with yearly income of about 480 marks.

To shed light on this, income tax registers of the parish of Saarijärvi in Central Finland were inspected as an example. Of the 436 households taxed in 1865, 78.2 percent were freeholders and 12.6 percent were crofters. Only two households of rural laborers with family were taxed (0.5 percent) and only one lodger household. Thus it would appear that normally the lowest of the agricultural social classes dropped below the 500 marks of yearly income. According to Haatanen (1968, 43), laborers with family occasionally received higher wages, reflected in their appearance in the income tax registers. Taken together, however, these considerations suggest that even if we are able to gauge the annual income with some confidence for certain social groups, the income tax registers represent much too high yearly incomes to be useful in a study interested in the lower end of the income distribution.

## **METHODS: USING TAX EXEMPTIONS IN POVERTY STUDIES**

Currently available poverty statistics for nineteenth-century Finland are insufficient for describing the extent and nature of actual rural poverty. Income tax registers fail to include the lowest end of the income distribution, local poor-relief registers are too exclusive and include only the most clear-cut cases of poverty, and usage of contemporary social groups as they are presented in various fiscal sources risks enforcing historical stereotypes and disregarding intra-class variation in economic conditions. Finnish social and economic history has made scarce use of tax exemption data, scrutinized here in greater detail.

Poverty and tax exemptions not only have a long historiographical linkage (dating as far back as Gregory King), but taxation data have been favored in studies of this sort for a variety of reasons in their own right, most importantly because tax records are generally compiled systematically, which is helpful in the construction of

large data sets. Although tax exemptions could be easy to operationalize as a welfare measure, the dichotomous nature of their (assumed) information (poor/not-poor) may yield an overly simplistic picture of a heterogeneous rural reality.

Had the exemption criteria been transparent and the procedure clearly documented, the tax exemption data could easily be turned into a measure of social structure and welfare. Unfortunately this rarely is the case. The grounds for tax exemption were typically discretionary even *de jure*; in other words, very few taxes were so clearly based that the contemporary state could actually exercise “total” control over the contributors. If not sex-based (as even age could be contentious, e.g., Sirén 1999, 176), the most explicit of bases (such as income levels in income taxation) could hardly be more than estimates and agreements by both parties, the tax authority and the taxpayer. The extent to which these peculiarities have been considered to pose real problems varies from one research setup to another. Jütte (1996) has considered that strict concepts deduced from economic theory and modern poverty measurements are “unrealistic and lack a consistent historical perspective” and that measuring historical poverty “must proceed within the context of contemporary sources and not within a general theory of basic needs [...]” (45, 46).

Macro(-economic) studies in particular have often been less sensitive to the local aberrations of the fiscal sources. In the Swedish case, Lundsjö (1975) and Söderberg (1978) used directly the inability to pay the smallest of personal taxes (the hospital tax, s. *kurhusavgift*) as an indication of poverty. According to Söderberg, the exemption from the hospital tax “constitutes a precise operational definition” for rural poverty (1978, 13). Lundsjö makes the reservation that while the whole group of the exempted may not be considered deprived, the genuine poor of interest have to be included “among the exempted” (1975, 48). A more recent Swedish application of a similar approach is that by Engberg (2006), who asserts that the poor were those “whose economic situation was so bad that they could not pay even the most basic taxes,” even though she also points out that it is difficult to draw any sharp boundaries between different types of poverty presented in different sources (32, 48). Taking a more cautious approach, Castenbrandt (2012) considered the Swedish local poor-relief registers far more applicable in measuring poverty than tax exemption records (160–62). A combination of sources was used by Schellekens (1995), who strives to locate “poor low-class households” with the poll tax and poor-relief records in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Holland.

In addition to the question whether the tax exempted were actually poor, four contextually important source-critical issues encountered by research using



taxation data are recognized. First, because of the modern perspective, taxpaying is often seen as a personal endeavor. This view disregards the possibility that someone else may be paying taxes that the historian may consider to be subjective (with reference to wage arrangements, see, e.g., Wilmi 2003, 230; Sirén 1999, 177–78).

Second, studying the taxpaying ability of a household and its eligibility for poor relief through a single measure overlooks the phenomenon of an overlapping poverty explored among others by Arkell (1987) and King (2002). Arkell argues that different definitions were applied to people unable to pay different kinds of taxes, whereas King points out that in seventeenth century Bolton, England, there was a substantial proportion of the population not paying taxes and still not appearing in the poor-relief registers (Arkell 1987, 32–38; King 2002, 48–50; see also Hoskins 1957, 202; and Johanna Annola's article in this issue). It has also been observed that late-seventeenth century British poor censuses omitted a significant number of families with large numbers of children, which were not considered poor enough to be included (King 2002, 54), highlighting what Engberg labels “living on the edge” (Engberg 2006).

Third, taxation records are likely to be skewed to include upper income groups and subject to deficiencies at the lower end for a variety of reasons. It is important to acknowledge that tax registers display contemporary perspectives concerning a sort of institutionalized social status thus partially reflecting expected ability to pay taxes instead of actual ability. King argues that social ties (i.e., “local social citizenship”) to the community were important for people to be listed in the poor-relief registers. This aligns with Arkell's interpretation of the nature of the “deserving poor” (King 2002, 54; Arkell 1987; Vikström 2006, 227). The old Finnish tax legislation also reflects this phenomenon: people not paying taxes could effectively be categorized in two ways, those included in tax registers but exempted and those not included at all. Thus people like vagrant beggars are generally not recorded in the registers, and this contributes to an underestimation of the full extent of poverty and makes the data deficient at the very lowest end (Sirén 1999, 177; Vikström 2006, 232). Jütte (1996) has added that the majority of taxation records from the pre-industrial period reflect the wealth rather than the yearly income of taxpayers and thus the exempted should not automatically be considered to have zero income (46). To make things more complicated, taxation registers may also display errors resulting from moral hazard embedded in the implementation of taxation: for example, in the old Swedish law poll tax collectors (*mantalsskrivar*) were entitled to keep 1 percent of the taxes collected, possibly increasing the willingness to include poor people among the taxed

(Lext 1967, 249).

Fourth, while poverty has often been an explicitly stated criterion for tax exemption, generally no effort has been made to assess whether or not the contemporary *concept* of poverty varied between regions and subsequent socioeconomic contexts—whether or not people with similar characteristics were treated identically and independent of the region of residence. In the English context, Arkell states that although England had a nationwide establishment of poor relief, decisions on who were helped and who were not were often made inconsistently and generally in an attempt to match local resources to local poverty (Arkell 1987, 39; see also Lees 1998, 29–30). Arkell argues that poor-relief and tax-exemption data provide information concerning poverty serious enough to be deemed locally as in need of alleviation (Arkell 1987, 39; Engberg 2006, 52–53), or, as Vikström (2006) puts it, at least being given priority (225).

If the tax legislation was vague, it is tempting to believe that local communities exercised their own judgement and used their experience in classifying an individual as poor. As Engberg (2006) puts it, “[i]n the absence of formal criteria to determine who was entitled to exemption [...], the decision seems to have been a matter solely for the local fiscal authorities” (37–38). Kuusterä (1989) has emphasized that the formal legislative frames of Finnish state taxation remained largely intact throughout the era of Russian rule (1809–1917) (147) and this relative stagnation of the tax legislation may have emphasized local conventions in the application of the tax code. On the basis of the seventeenth-century British sources, King (2002, 51) suggests similarly a slow adaption to the formalizing poor-law system. Engberg (2006, 43) shows clear discontinuities resulting from the Swedish tax reforms in the nineteenth century.

In light of these accounts, it would seem reasonable to believe that local sources tell more about local administrative decisions and conceptions concerning poverty than about the actual poverty level in society (Lees 1998; Jütte 1996, 46). Shortcomings such as these have led Jütte to argue for using taxation data mainly to order regions in relation to one another (Jütte 1996, 47). King (2002) has pointed out that the process of the eradication of regional peculiarities is relatively unknown (43), which brings about the crucial need for a regionally comparative study of tax exemptions: no one region or even several are representative enough if exemption criteria varied extensively between regions (see also Goose 2001, 45). Although laborious, the task is not as problematic as suggested by Jütte, who concludes that we should give up the idea of estimating the national extent of poverty from local

sources (see also Arkell 1987, 45; Jütte 1996, 50; Goose 2001, 58), as the following sections endeavor to demonstrate.

## **SOURCES AND DATA**

In order to understand the logic of exemptions and their association with poverty, I have undertaken a quantitative assessment of their nature and have studied the exemption processes of two different direct state taxes, one levied on the household, one on the individual, both recorded in annually compiled poll tax registers. The usage of exemptions from two different taxes will not only reveal patterns and similarities, but may also unearth inconsistencies shedding light on the contemporary conceptions of economic well-being.

In international comparison, it is justified to say that Finnish poll tax registers have reasonably extensive coverage. According to valuations conducted by Kaukiainen (1979), poll tax registers are fairly incomplete before the 1820s, but after that they seem to converge in information with general population registers, which are considered reliable. Using the municipality of Lohja as an example, Kaukiainen shows that poll tax registers display a deficit of 7 percent in comparison to population registers in 1830, but of only 2.5 percent in 1850 (Kaukiainen 1979; see also Jutikkala 1957; Palm 1993, 90–91). Kilpi (1913) shows that at the level of the whole country poll tax registers lacked about 19 percent of people included in the church registers in 1805, but only 5.8 percent and 4.9 percent in 1830 and 1860 respectively (110). These figures are in stark contrast, for example, to British hearth tax lists, which have been estimated to lack up to 40 percent of the actual population, leading Husbans (1984) to warn that hearth tax exemption figures “will not throw much light on poverty and pauperization” (46–47).

Orrman (1980) states that the Finnish poll tax registers are far more complete in the years following legislative reforms and tend to deteriorate over time (see also Jutikkala 1957). This forms the crucial reason for using a relatively late sample in this study. As the data used are collected from poll tax registers after a major reform (1865), it is reasonable to believe that the data not only record contemporary conditions in rural Finland fairly accurately (i.e., include the majority of Finns), but also that the tax exemption code had been simplified and homogenized sufficiently in order to use the taxation registers to assess the living standards and social status of exempted social groups.

The person-specific tax used in this study is the poll tax (*f. henkiraha, s. mantalspenningar*), the first legislation dating back to 1609 (*s. hjonelagspenningar*, in 1622

s. *quarntulls mantalpenningar*), originally targeting people older than twelve, although in 1652 the lower age limit was raised to fifteen and an upper age limit of sixty-three years was introduced. These age limits lasted until a reform in 1865, when the lower limit was raised to sixteen, the upper remaining unchanged (Imperial Statute, 20.2.1865; Von Bonsdorff 1833, 582–99; Lext 1967, 43–47; Orrman 1980; for similar content of Dutch poll tax registers, see Schellekens 1995, 200–201). The reform also abolished the majority of earlier bases for exemption, several of which had a distinct feature of “social steering”; people (for example, soldiers, industrial owners, and urban migrants) were granted exemption as a concession after services to the community. The nobility were exempted from all forms of taxation during the early modern era. Inability to work was vaguely incorporated in 1660, and in 1693 the subject’s poverty was acknowledged for the first time, but with no exact criteria defining when a poor person was entitled to exemption (Jutikkala 1957, 159–61; Orrman 1980; Sirén 1999, 171–73). After 1865 the only legal reasons for exemption included particular age groups (under 16, over 63), the number of children (three or more under the age ten or five or more under the age of sixteen), or a person’s status as a care-giver of a sick or elderly relative. Some special groups (such as low ranking military personnel) also retained the right to exemption. Poverty remained a stated ground for exemption, but still without an explicit definition. All those exempted for reasons other than age were listed in poll tax registers under the category “*för andra laga orsaker*” (for other reasons), comprising a wide array of people from nobles with many children to the poor and disabled living in shanties. Those men not exempted were obliged to pay an annual tax of two Finnish marks; women paid one mark. This corresponded to 14.6 and 7.3 liters of rye at 1865 taxation prices, respectively (Vattula 1983, 437).

Independent rural households were obliged to maintain local judiciaries, a liability funded through two separate annual taxes (f. *laamannin- ja tuomarinvero, käräjäkapp*, s. *lagmans- och häradshöfdingeräntan, tingsgästningspengar*), both of which were levied on a household according to similar criteria. These obligations were composed of some of the oldest taxes levied in the Kingdom of Sweden, first enacted in 1602 and adjusted through the centuries. The exemptions were detailed in 1741 and remained effective until the late 1800s. As with the poll tax, the exemptions focused mainly on the upper social strata but also on certain rental farmers cultivating gentry lands. In 1743 poverty was acknowledged as a cause for exemption, being tied to the inclusion in poll tax registers, and the unit of taxation, that is, an independent household (*rök*), was tied to a livelihood from agriculture. In the third

decade of Russian rule, 1829, the exemption legislation came to distinguish certain rural social groups which were by definition exempted from the obligation to pay. The formal reasoning behind their exclusion was that they were not recognized as being independent households in the strictest sense (von Bonsdorff 1833, 614–20). The last pieces of legislation effective in 1865 were codified in 1858, and they also stipulated that the first part of the household tax was twenty-five kopeks of silver and the second some twenty liters of grain (Imperial Statute, 12.4.1858. Technically tax was four *kappas* of grain, one kappa being equivalent to c. 5.5 liters). The latter followed a long tradition: after varying legislation, in 1773 it was determined that the household tax had to be paid in kind, in grain. Several taxpayers wanted to pay the tax in money, which was seemingly easier to obtain and featured lower opportunity costs than grain. The fact that paying in grain caused problems suggests that getting an exemption was related to a household's (scarce) agricultural output. According to contemporary perception, the exemption was difficult to obtain and the tax collection practices were often criticized. Complaints were filed especially because household tax was levied on households regardless of whether the inhabitants were eligible for public poor aid or had already been granted exemption from another tax (Nevanlinna 1907, 499–501; *Uusi Suometar* 24.10.1872, 1.11.1872).

The 1858 household tax reform separated the tax obligation and agricultural livelihood and simultaneously increased the number of rural households liable to pay the tax. The size of the tax remained the same after the poll tax reform of 1865, when at the same time the first part of the household tax (f. *laamannin- ja tuomarinvero*, s. *lagmans- och häradshöfdingeräntan*) was abolished. On macro level, the 1865 tax reform effectively widened the tax base and subsequently cut taxes from certain groups at the lowest end of the income distribution.

The empirical section of this article is based on household-level micro-data gathered from the poll tax register of 1865. Only heads of household (frequently men) were systematically listed in the Finnish poll tax registers. Wives and children were also relatively often mentioned by name, but others (such as servants) only sporadically. Because of this practice, comprehensive individual level data are extremely difficult to construct, and therefore the statistical unit I use is a household. The household level measurement is followed as part of a wider tradition (e.g., Arkell 1987, 45), which makes the results suitable for international comparison, but also because household level has been considered to be a better statistical unit in the measurement of individual entitlements to welfare (Sen 1997, 386; see however Deveraux 2001, 252–54).

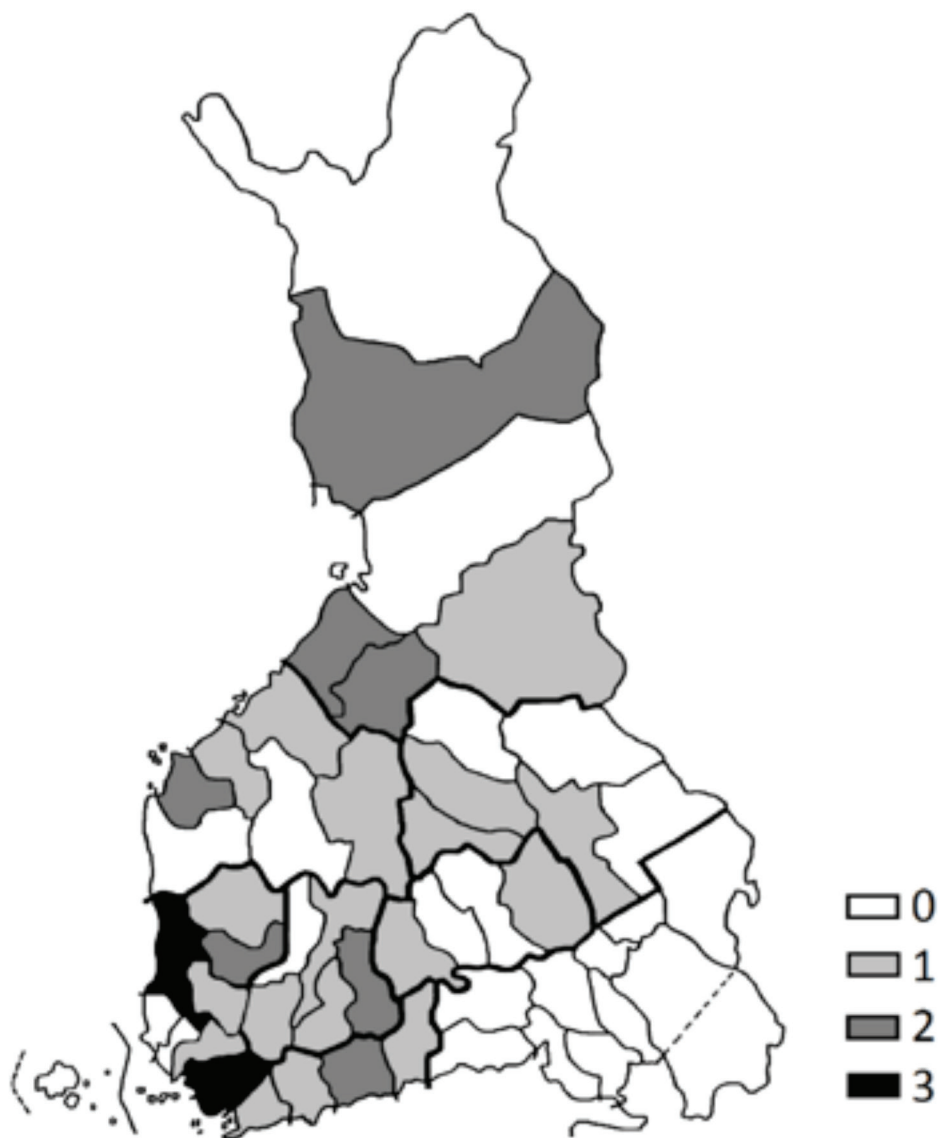
Because of the laborious nature of the data collection task, in the first stage 50 parishes were randomly selected, from each of which data concerning 50 households were gathered. The Province of Viipuri in the southeast and the northernmost district of Lapland were not included in the sampling population for reasons of data availability. Nine parishes had to be excluded as a result of data restrictions. This left 41 randomly assigned parishes and a cross-section of 2,050 households (see Map 1). The 50 households gathered from each parish were selected in listing order starting from the beginning of each register. As these registers were compiled so that villages were listed in alphabetical order within each parish, and households according to their addresses, there is no reason to believe that this procedure would yield a biased sample in the sense that we would end up with biased data because we selected the households from villages with initials at the start of the alphabet.

Some additional data elimination had to be done. Of the households selected, 229 (11.1 percent of the total sample) were excluded because of reasons of data quality (mainly because the taxation information was not provided), which left a total of 1,821 households, corresponding to 11,428 inhabitants (approx. 0.7 percent of the total population in the region studied). A control analysis was conducted with the whole sample included and no qualitative differences were found in the results presented, which underscores the quality of the original sources and robustness to possible outliers.

Table 2 (below) presents tax exemption percentages deduced from the household data in comparison to the whole sampling population; the total number of people and households is easy to obtain for the information is summed up in the registers. No systematic differences are evident, the main exception being the eastern Finnish province of Kuopio, where the sample yielded fairly low exemption estimates. Overall, however, the exemption rates deduced from the micro sample and the actual population rates correlate highly ( $r_{\text{poll tax}} = 0.79$ ;  $p = 0.033$ ,  $r_{\text{household tax}} = 0.87$ ;  $p = 0.012$ ) with modest qualitative differences.

## **MODELING EXEMPTIONS**

Two kinds of dependent variables are used in the following regression analysis: (1) If a household was exempted from household tax ( $n=452$ ) and (2) If a household accommodated an adult (i.e., between ages 15 and 63) exempted from poll tax ( $n=413$ ). Both of these variables score dichotomous values 1, if the household was exempted/there was an adult exempted, otherwise 0.



Map 1. Locations of the sample parishes in administrative districts. Note: Number of parishes included in the sample per administrative district (f. *kihlakunta*).

Province	Household sample		Whole country	
	Poll tax exemption rate (%)	Household tax exemption rate (%)	Poll tax exemption rate (%)	Household tax exemption rate (%)
Uusimaa	4.5	19.4	5.4	35.4
Turku and Pori	9.6	25.0	9.9	22.9
Häme	7.4	51.0	9.4	44.0
Mikkeli	14.1	14.4	13.2	13.4
Kuopio	13.5	2.2	22.8	9.9
Vaasa	10.0	13.7	8.8	15.4
Oulu	16.0	27.6	16.6	34.2

Table 2. Comparison of household sample and the total sampling population. Sources: Household micro data, poll tax registers (1865).

*Note:* As, e.g., in Söderberg (1978, 14), the denominator used in poll tax exemption rate is the adult population, here those between ages 15 and 63. The number of households is gathered from poll tax registers.

Figure 1 (below) plots tax exemptions by selected social group where the social status information was available (72 percent of cases were assigned to the six groups presented here). It features two distinct trends: (1) Exemption from household tax decreases as a function of land control and (2) Exemptions generally became rarer as a function of land control. Only 6 percent of all freeholder estates (hereafter also including the gentry) were exempted from household tax, while 31 percent of the rest of the rural households were exempted. The poll tax exemption is considerably more typical among freeholders, with about 20 percent of households accommodating at least one exempted adult. Close to 75 percent of freeholders and slightly over 62 percent of croft farmers were not exempted from either of the two taxes.

The two a priori poorest of the social groups, cottagers and lodgers, are also evident in the tax exemption figures. Close to 45 percent of cottager households and almost 30 percent of lodger households were exempted from both taxes. Even if tax exemptions seem generally more common among the farm servants with family, their households were typically exempted only from the household tax.

The initial social group-specific exploration confirms some preliminary considerations about the social stratification prevailing in rural Finland. In order to shed further light on the social characteristics of the tax exempted, logit-estimated logistic regression analyses were run explaining the event of gaining exemption from the taxes. These results are presented in Table 3. Regional control dummies, fixed



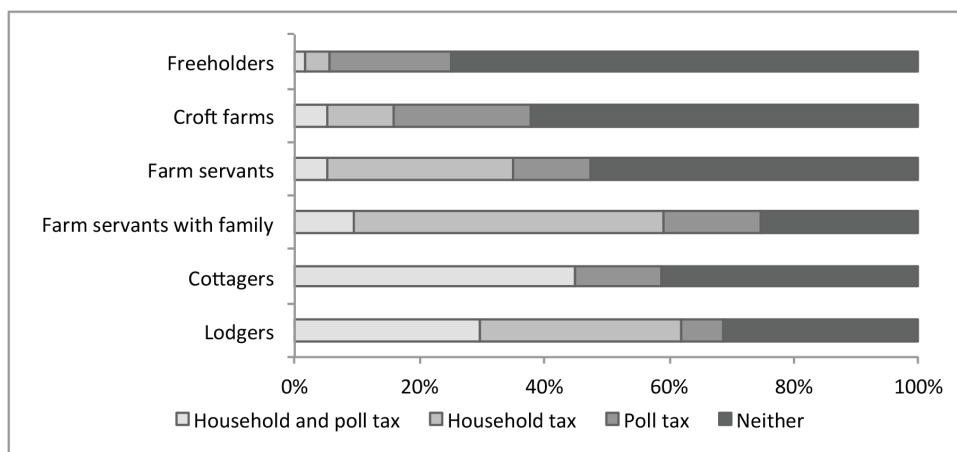


Figure 1. Exemption percentages from the taxes studied by social group. Source: Household micro data.

effects, were introduced on province-level in order to capture the region-specific sources of variation, such as differences in climate, soil, social structure, economic activity, and taxation practices. Moreover, the crop failures at the beginning of the 1860s (Pitkänen 1993, 54–55) could be suspected of affecting at least the short-term regional patterns of tax exemptions.

*Social groups.* The first variables introduced to logit models were the social groups displayed in Figure 1. As can be seen in Table 3, in the case of household tax exemption, the ordering of the social groups is similar regardless of the control variables: freeholders and croft farmers are the most likely not to receive exemption. Farm servants with family were the most likely group to be granted exemption, preceded by farm servants without family and lodgers.

If we compare these results to the a priori assumption deduced from the earlier literature mentioned above, it seems that the order of the lodgers and farm servants with family is reverse; lodgers have traditionally been considered to constitute the lowest of the rural social classes. The reason for the observed ordering is threefold. First of all, it may be that lodger households more typically cultivated a plot of land (even a small one) and thus practiced some form of farming livelihood, whereas farm servants mainly received their wages from their employers. Such wage arrangements could contribute to interpretations about whether or not farm laborers were considered to form an independent household obligated to pay the tax. Secondly, it was stipulated in the law that laborers and rental farmers of certain categories of the rural gentry were entitled to exemption. Farm servants with

family concentrated in the southern parts of Finland, where the largest of the gentry's estates were also located. This could mean that these servant households were often set on land entitling them to an exemption, which suggests that the poverty connectivity of the household tax exemption may be obscured by differences in the land tenures and in the employment contracts. Thirdly, the lodger group is admittedly more heterogeneous than that of farm servants. The rural social grouping was conducted on the basis of rural land ownership and labor conventions, which left vast numbers of people outside these categories. This opens up the possibility that the lodger group as it appears in tax registers includes people and households that were relatively well off.

In the case of the poll tax, the social classes yield ambiguous results: both the lower and the upper social classes had households where at least one person was exempted from poll tax for reasons other than age. In order to understand this result, we have to keep in mind that the dependent variable measures whether the poll tax registers listed at least one exempted person residing in the household in question. The poorer households most likely were poor not only in terms of agricultural output (reflected in the household tax exemption) but also on the individual level. Wealthier households, on the other hand, were able to accommodate and employ especially lodgers who were unable to set up a household of their own. This property suggests that poll tax exemption can effectively pinpoint households with stratified socioeconomic structure but these households do not necessarily have to be poor. The interpretation is strengthened by the fact that the effect persists after it has been controlled for number of children and poll taxed men, both more abundant in the upper social groups.

*Demographic composition.* Finnish surveys of the poll tax records of the pre-industrial era have generally concluded that information on women's social position and even their numbers is poorer than that on men (Piilahti 2007, 41; Happonen 2009, 37; Miettinen 2012, 80–81). The pattern of excess female representation in poor-relief registers is widespread throughout pre-industrial Europe (Jütte 1996, 40; Vikström 2006, 227–28) and, according to Jütte, a distinct structural feature of the poverty of people roughly between the ages of thirty and fifty was a rather high proportion of widows and other women-headed households with children. Engberg (2006) has reported similar results from Sweden (41).

Poverty and Tax Exemptions in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Finland

	Household tax exemption					Poll tax exemption				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Freeholder	-2.42 (0.24) <sup>a</sup>	-2.40 (0.25) <sup>a</sup>	-2.38 (0.25) <sup>a</sup>	-1.75 (0.29) <sup>a</sup>	-1.77 (0.29) <sup>a</sup>	0.25 (0.16)	-0.06 (0.17)	-0.08 (0.18)	0.88 (0.22) <sup>a</sup>	0.91 (0.23) <sup>a</sup>
Croft farm	-0.87 (0.17) <sup>a</sup>	-0.86 (0.17) <sup>a</sup>	-0.85 (0.17) <sup>a</sup>	-0.70 (0.18) <sup>a</sup>	-0.72 (0.19) <sup>a</sup>	0.58 (0.16) <sup>a</sup>	0.48 (0.17) <sup>a</sup>	0.48 (0.17) <sup>a</sup>	0.99 (0.20) <sup>a</sup>	1.01 (0.20) <sup>a</sup>
Farm servants	1.35 (0.42) <sup>a</sup>	1.36 (0.42) <sup>a</sup>	1.37 (0.43) <sup>a</sup>	0.94 (0.44) <sup>b</sup>	0.97 (0.44) <sup>b</sup>	-0.07 (0.55)	-0.09 (0.55)	-0.10 (0.56)	-0.93 (0.59)	-0.99 (0.59) <sup>c</sup>
Farm servants with family	2.54 (0.35) <sup>a</sup>	2.53 (0.35) <sup>a</sup>	2.58 (0.35) <sup>a</sup>	2.93 (0.37) <sup>a</sup>	2.90 (0.37) <sup>a</sup>	0.64 (0.33) <sup>*</sup>	0.76 (0.33) <sup>b</sup>	0.78 (0.34) <sup>b</sup>	1.38 (0.40) <sup>a</sup>	1.27 (0.41) <sup>a</sup>
Cottagers	0.59 (0.39)	0.59 (0.38)	0.62 (0.39)	0.34 (0.42)	0.33 (0.43)	1.12 (0.38) <sup>a</sup>	1.17 (0.39) <sup>a</sup>	1.17 (0.38) <sup>a</sup>	0.92 (0.46) <sup>b</sup>	0.91 (0.47) <sup>c</sup>
Lodgers	1.47 (0.21) <sup>a</sup>	1.46 (0.21) <sup>a</sup>	1.48 (0.21) <sup>a</sup>	1.14 (0.23) <sup>a</sup>	1.14 (0.23) <sup>a</sup>	0.87 (0.21) <sup>a</sup>	0.98 (0.21) <sup>a</sup>	0.99 (0.21) <sup>a</sup>	0.32 (0.24)	0.26 (0.24)
Children under age 15 >2 in the household		-0.04 (0.26)	-0.07 (0.26)	-0.27 (0.28)	-0.29 (0.28)		0.43 (0.20) <sup>b</sup>	0.42 (0.20) <sup>b</sup>	0.42 (0.22) <sup>b</sup>	0.43 (0.22) <sup>b</sup>
Number of boys under age 15		-0.01 (0.08)	0.02 (0.08)	0.05 (0.09)	0.05 (0.09)		0.13 (0.06) <sup>b</sup>	0.13 (0.06) <sup>b</sup>	0.14 (0.06) <sup>b</sup>	0.14 (0.06) <sup>b</sup>
Number of girls under age 15		-0.02 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.08)	0.04 (0.09)	0.04 (0.09)		0.12 (0.06) <sup>b</sup>	0.12 (0.06) <sup>b</sup>	0.11 (0.06) <sup>c</sup>	0.11 (0.06) <sup>c</sup>
Elderly household			0.52 (0.35)	-0.60 (0.36) <sup>c</sup>	-0.52 (0.38)					
People over age 64 in the household			0.03 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.18)	-0.11 (0.18)			0.09 (0.14)	-0.23 (0.15)	-0.23 (0.15)
Female household				1.78 (0.21) <sup>a</sup>	1.69 (0.24) <sup>a</sup>				2.96 (0.21) <sup>a</sup>	2.89 (0.22) <sup>a</sup>
Male household				0.50 (0.28) <sup>c</sup>	0.50 (0.28) <sup>c</sup>				-0.81 (0.42) <sup>c</sup>	-0.84 (0.42) <sup>b</sup>
Widow				-0.39 (0.37)	-0.38 (0.37)				-0.37 (0.36)	-0.35 (0.36)
Number of poll taxed men				-0.02 (0.09)	-0.03 (0.09)				0.12 (0.06) <sup>b</sup>	0.12 (0.06) <sup>b</sup>
Exemption from poll tax					0.16 (0.19)					
Exemption from household tax										0.21 (0.27)
Province dummies	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
N	1821	1821	1821	1821	1821	1821	1821	1821	1821	1821

Table 3. Logit-estimated logistic regression analysis results for tax exemptions.

<sup>a</sup> Indicates statistical significance at the 1%, <sup>b</sup> at the 5%, <sup>c</sup> at the 10% level. Standard errors in parentheses. *Note: The dependent variable is dichotomous ("household was exempted"/ "was not exempted" - 1/0) and the estimated coefficients show the effect of the variable on the probability of being tax exempted. The actual probability is calculated from exponential distributions' cumulative distribution function (e.g., Stock and Watson 2003, 307–8).*

The introduction of the dummy variable “Female household,” which designates households without an adult male, considerably lowers the estimated effect of the social classes (especially lodgers), farm servants with family being an exception: their estimated effect increases with the introduction of the variable. The households headed by women were remarkably often exempted from both of the taxes: 58.4 percent of these were exempted from household tax, 53.3 percent had at least one adult exempted from poll tax (as an example of such a case, see Annola’s article in this issue). The corresponding percentages in the sample for the rest of the households are considerably smaller: 16.1 percent and 15.0 percent.

Contrary to the increased probability of exemption of female-headed households, the same does not apply to households without an adult woman. This is designated as the “Male household” variable. The estimated effect is weakly positive in the case of household tax exemption but negative in the case of poll tax. The *number* of tax paying men per household did, however, increase the probability of poll tax exemption. There are considerable differences between social classes in the average number of adult men per household. On freeholder farms there were on average 3.2 tax paying men, whereas lodger households only had 0.6 tax paying men on average. The number of adult men is suggested to capture the socioeconomic status of a household in greater detail than does simple division by social group. As was the case with the freeholder estates, the number of poll taxed men seems to designate the *possibility* that the household accommodated someone exempted from the poll tax, that is especially poor lodgers. This may stem from the possibility that the number of poll tax paying men indicates the labor demand of the household and thus its larger economic output.

The “Widow” variable did not yield significant results: a household headed by a widow did not increase its probability of exemption. Adding to this, even if supporting an elderly relative was a poll tax exemption criterion based on law in Finland, it does not seem to coincide with an increased probability of exemption. This may be the result of the ineffectiveness of the particular piece of legislation, or it may show the relative rarity of such a relation. The limitations in the data have to be considered here, too: the data do not allow us to distinguish between residence and support of the elderly in a household. Furthermore the “Elderly household” variable, which designates households where all the adults are over 63 years old, was only weakly associated with household tax exemption. This leads us to conclude somewhat confidently that old age does not seem to be an important determinant of the fiscal poverty analyzed here.

*The number of children.* The association between the number of children and the household's welfare has been an especially debatable topic. On the basis of Swedish data, Lilja and Bäcklund (2013) have argued that children provided households with cheap and flexible labor, leading them to conclude on a positive association between the number of children and the household's welfare. According to Markkola (1994), income brought in by children was an important part of urban working-class households' budgets during the late nineteenth century in Finland, and using French data Fauve-Chamoux (1993) could find no evidence for a negative relationship between the number of children in a household and its living standards. In my data, the number of children does correlate positively with the probability of exemption from poll tax, but not from household tax. The households which were exempted from household tax were considerably smaller than those paying the tax: the mean household size of the household tax exempted was 3.95 and 7.04 for others ( $p < 0.001$ ). This difference is largely a result of differences in the number of under 15-year-olds in households ( $p < 0.001$ ), whereas the difference in the number of people over 63 was smaller ( $p = 0.0145$ ). The finding concurs with previous Finnish assessments concerning age at marriage and mean household sizes of different social classes: according to Moring (2003) and Kaukiainen (1979), the lowest of Finnish social classes tended to have small mean household size. This resulted from high age at first marriage, which in turn contributed to fewer births.

The relationship between number of children and exemption from poll tax is the opposite. This is hardly surprising: the number of children constituted an exemption criterion in law. The tax registers do not, however, allow for exact age-level differentiation, and therefore we cannot precisely detect different poll tax exemption criteria (three or more children under the age ten or five or more children under the age of sixteen). Furthermore, we cannot establish whether those under fifteen years of age registered in a certain household were actually the children of the householders—we only know that they resided there. These source restrictions reduce the effectiveness of the estimation.

The fact that we observe no association between the number of children and household tax exemption suggests that children did not contribute decisively to the household's ability to pay the tax. This contrasts with findings on Dutch data. Schellekens suggests that 8-to-15-year-old daughters especially caused an economic burden on the family because they had few work opportunities (Schellekens 1995; see also Vikström 2006, 228). Both Moring (2003, 83) and Kaukiainen (1979, 22) have suggested that Finnish women were actually in a better position than men in

rural labor markets because of the range of tasks in which they could be employed (see also Wilmi 2003; Rahikainen 2006).

*Other variables.* The qualitative results were robust to the introduction and removal of province dummies. The removal of the dummies lowered the estimated effects, but did not alter any of the statistical significances in the case of the household tax. In the case of the poll tax, lodger households exhibited an increased risk of exemption when province dummies were not included, although only at the 10 percent level. Taken together, the results are roughly identical regardless of whether the regional controls are taken into account or not.

In an uncontrolled bivariate setting, the two exemptions were strongly associated. This effect, however, vanishes with the introduction of social control variables. These results suggest that households were not characterized with a general “taxpaying ability.” Paying the tax or applying for an exemption may have been decided one tax at a time. This has been suggested in the earlier literature with the idea of “overlapping poverty.”

## **CONCLUSIONS**

When scrutinizing pre-industrial welfare in and beyond Finland, scholars often have to face the fact that on the basis of the data currently available we cannot attach income levels to every household. This concerns especially the lower section of income distribution. In order to measure and understand historical poverty, we therefore have to approach welfare indirectly.

In this article we used exemptions from two different taxes to study the social characteristics of the households considered poor in fiscal terms. Even if it may seem close to tautological, it needs to be emphasized that using of different taxes for these purposes yields different results. Exemption from household tax follows quite closely the a priori social demarcation lines, poll tax exemption on the other hand is less dependent on the household’s social status. These results suggest that taxes levied on individual level were not necessarily dependent on the households’ economic status, and similarly household level taxes may have partially been independent of the inhabitants’ social and economic conditions.

Of the two taxes studied, the household tax is undoubtedly more useful as a poverty indicator, though not exactly a perfect measure. This is because, first of all, household tax is related to land tenure contracts which, even if indicative, are not necessarily connected to a household’s welfare. Secondly, while those exempted include the majority of the rural underclass, notable sections of the rural gentry are

also included. On macro level, however, the size of the gentry was small enough not to confound the regional aggregate rates (Table 1).

The results presented here suggest a clear connection between household tax exemption and lowest social groups. In this respect these findings concur with those from Sweden as presented by Vikström (2006, 232–33). As the lowest of social groups produced staple crops practically only for subsistence purposes, it is not surprising that the household tax (paid in grain) has a clear socioeconomic gradient. This contrasts with some of the previous considerations suggesting that tax exemptions were local interim solutions to occasional deprivation—the household tax exemption is clearly structural. The conclusion about the nature of household tax is in line with Goose’s (2001) and Spufford’s (1962) conclusions about the English hearth tax that it “can be used [. . .] to indicate relative social status [but] cannot be taken as a general guide to levels of wealth, even if it does faithfully reflect the shape of local social structures” (Goose 2001, 58, 59) and “may be used as a guide to status and wealth in general, [but] it may not safely be used in any individual example” (Spufford 1962, 58).

In addition to the social group connectivity, the following can be concluded on Finnish poverty on the basis of the tax exemption data analyzed here:

1. Regardless of whether we used social groups or tax exemptions as a measure, households considered to be poor had considerably smaller mean household sizes. This was a result of a smaller number of under-aged children but also of the smaller number of adult men.
2. Households without an adult male, that is, those headed by a woman, were very often exempted from taxes even when social group was taken into account.
3. The extraction of regional control variables did not affect the statistical significance of variables designating law-based exemption criteria or those reflecting social ordering. It thus seems that Finland was relatively homogenous with respect to tax legislation, which contradicts some assessments inclined to favor heterogeneous, locally constructed conventions.
4. The two tax measures used here are conditionally independent. That is, after controlling for a variety of social characteristics, exemption

from one tax is not associated with an increased probability of exemption from another. This shows that these exemptions featured the overlapping poverty phenomenon, as suggested on the basis of English evidence for instance by Arkell (1987) and King (2002).

From a methodological point of view, the results presented here are in contrast to Lees's (1998) account that the "best that scholars can do today is to estimate an order of magnitude for the problem [regional differences and extent of poverty] and note large-scale variations over time" (45–46). Although the source critical dilemmas are far from resolved, it is reasonable to argue that, at least in the Finnish case, carefully used taxation records do have relevance in the assessment of poverty. While this relevance may be distorted by obscurities in regional practices and loopholes in the legislation, there is more to taxation than meets the eye, much of which does indeed serve as a reasonable source for assessing pre-industrial poverty.

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# CRIMES OF DESPERATION: POVERTY-RELATED FILICIDES 1810–1860

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## ABSTRACT

Using Finnish upper court records as a source, this article is concerned with parental child homicides, newborn infanticides excluded, committed in Finland in the period 1810 to 1860. It focuses on the development in the rate and geographical distribution of these crimes, as well as the social and gendered distribution of the perpetrators. This information forms the basis for analyzing the connection between the motivation for the crime and the pauperization that culminated in these decades as a result of a rapid population growth, which manifested itself in an increase in the landless agrarian proletariat. Dire economic distress over subsistence was a motive for over a half of all filicides. Such crimes of desperation took place especially in periods of crisis: in the years following the Finnish War (1808–09) and after crop failures in the 1830s and the late 1850s. Filicides where the victim was older than a newborn child were, however, as an object of the authorities' concern, overshadowed in the public debate by neonaticides and other major contemporary social problems.

## INTRODUCTION

Concerning the history of Finland, the nineteenth century, especially its later decades, is usually perceived as a period of industrialization and of national revival. Even so, the era has also been characterized by more sinister traits: the social historian Antti Häkkinen has described the 1800s as the century of poverty, and the legal historian Kaijus Ervasti as the century of neonate infanticide (hereafter neonaticide). The main factor underlying both phenomena was the marked population growth, which, until the 1870s, in Finland almost exclusively increased the

numbers and shares of the rural landless population (Häkkinen 2004; Ervasti 1995). The so-called period of knife-fighters, continuing from the late eighteenth century until the 1880s, was a temporally and spatially limited phenomenon associated with rapid economic and social change, whereas neonaticides constituted a more universal and long-term social problem which, in the nineteenth century in particular, has been regarded as one consequence of proletarianization (see, for example, Dickinson and Sharpe 2002; Ervasti 1995; Ylikangas 1998).

Both the Ostrobothnian knife-fighters and unmarried young women as perpetrators of neonaticides were already subjects of drama, fiction, and poetry in nineteenth-century Finland (Juteini 1827 [2012]; Canth 1895; Alkio 1894 [1981]; Järviluoma 1914 ). These crimes, however, do not present the whole picture of nineteenth-century homicide in Finland. For example, parental child murders where the victim was older than a newborn infant have not been a subject of historical research in Finland, nor is there much international research available. This is likely the result of both their much lower incidence and their more heterogeneous nature as compared to neonaticides. Parental child homicides were, and still are, extreme, albeit rare acts. In Western societies, the sanctions against such crimes have been based on Christian ideas concerning the value of human life, and their reprehensibility has been emphasized with arguments appealing to the innocence of the victim and the natural obligation of parents to take care of their offspring. It has thus been regarded as an unnatural crime, and such an extreme act is often seen as a consequence of particularly powerful motives. Frequently such cases have been viewed as a result of perpetrators finding themselves at an economic or social impasse and seeing no way out (Lehti, Kääriäinen, and Kivivuori 2011, 4–5, 16–18; Pitt and Bale 1995, 375; Resnick 1969, 325–34; Stroud 2008; West 2007, 49–51; Bergenlöv 2005). Actually, this was also how the Finnish writer Sara Wacklin portrayed the motives of an Ostrobothnian mother who killed her three sons in 1826 to save them from their drunken and violent father, the story being so far the only known contemporary description of parental child murder in early Finnish literature (Wacklin 1899; Joki 1996).

One of the most important of the numerous generalizations that have been made worldwide about child homicides committed by parents is their classification into three groups according to the age of the victim, based on historical and contemporary observations made by the child psychiatrist Phillip Resnick, for whom the motivational basis of child homicides varies with the victim's age. The first category of child homicide is the killing of a newborn (neonaticide), an act



that is virtually without exception committed by a mother who has concealed her pregnancy. The second group consists of crimes involving victims older than twenty-four hours but less than one year. Resnick's third category is filicide, in which the victim is between one and fifteen years of age. Here, the older the victim is, the more often the crime is committed by the father (Resnick 1969; Koenen and Thompson 2008; West 2007, 49–53). The need to focus on the differences between *neonate* and *non-neonate child homicides* makes it most expedient to refer here to both infanticides and filicides (in Resnick's terms) as filicides.

The social historian Randolph Roth, who has collected by far the largest corpus of data on child murders from the seventeenth to the late-nineteenth centuries, has compared the incidence of all kinds of child murders to fluctuations in fertility, abortion, illegitimacy, and also to other types of homicide in New England. This material indicates that both murders of neonates and of older children increased markedly from the 1820s onwards as a result of a social development that caused mothers or fathers of the lowest strata of society to regard their children as economic or emotional burdens (Roth 2001).

The causes and prevention of neonaticide were among the most prominent themes of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century social debate in Europe (Bergenlöv 2002, 237, 264–65). In the northern Protestant societies, where individual responsibility for one's actions was strongly emphasized, the reprehensibility of the crime was underlined by its nature as a double crime: the motive for the murder of an innocent child was considered to be the mother's desire to hide a previous act of fornication (Rautelin 2009; Ransel 1988; Bergenlöv 2005). In addition to the shame and fear of the reactions of parents and household masters to the illegitimate pregnancy of a lower-class servant woman, the growing incidence of neonaticide in the nineteenth century has commonly been explained by pauperization. For example, Richter (1998, for part of Germany), Ervasti (1995, for Finland) and Johansson (2006, for Sweden) see poverty as the strongest motive for nineteenth-century neonaticide, pointing to the fact that increasing rates of neonaticide trials in the first half of the century coincided with the most marked phase of population growth, which was concentrated largely among the most disadvantaged social groups. The Danish scholar Grothe Nielsen (1999) also connects the motives for neonaticide in the nineteenth century primarily to the difficult life situations of lower-class women, as well as the severe punishments incurred for the crime of fornication (see also Kilday 2007).

As was the case in many other parts of Europe, the number of neonaticide trials in Finland peaked around the mid-nineteenth century. The background factors were mostly societal. Until the 1870s, Finland had been a predominantly agrarian country. Between 1810 and 1860, the population of Finland doubled, as happened in many other Western European countries, but unlike in more developed European areas, owing to the limited extent of industrialization in Finland, this was manifested in an increase only among the landless agrarian proletariat. Thus, the landless population had even fewer economic opportunities to marry, and the subsequent increase in the rate of illegitimate births (the annual level of which was 6 to 7 percent between 1810 and 1860) in turn created an environment in which neonaticide was also liable to increase (Ervasti 1995, 75–76; Miettinen 2012, 163, 172; Turpeinen 1981, 13–16). Alongside this development lay the problem of pauperization, which was itself aggravated not only by population growth, but also by technical changes in agriculture. The most significant of the latter was the transition from slash-and-burn cultivation to field cultivation in the province of Savo from the 1830s onward, which reduced the demand for agricultural labor. One consequence of the development was local hunger crises in the early 1830s and late 1850s, finally culminating in the last peacetime famine in Europe, which occurred in Finland in 1862 and between 1866 and 1868 (Ervasti 1995, 72–75; Häkkinen 2004, 149–52; Markkola 2008; Pulma 1994, 51–55).

### **THE FOCUS AND DATA**

As the increase in neonaticide rates was largely connected with child support problems, it could be assumed that the impoverishment of the masses was reflected in the rates of murders of older children, too. This fact motivates the focus of this article on economic distress as a reason for parental child homicide in Finland between 1810 and 1860, especially in the cases of filicides of non-neonates where the perpetrators were unmarried mothers. At the time of committing the filicide, the mothers of older children lacked the main motivation for neonaticide: *concealment of an illegitimate pregnancy and avoidance of the ensuing shame*. What then *were* their motives for killing their children?

If neonaticide in nineteenth-century Finland was a crime typical of single, lower-class women, how common then were other parental child homicides? And, if subsistence difficulties were one main cause of neonaticides, it is also necessary to ask whether they were a significant motive for filicide committed by other (married or widowed) parents, too. Was the growing mass poverty also reflected somehow in

paternal filicides? To sum up: what was the general distribution of the class, gender, and marital status of the perpetrators, and that of the geographical and chronological incidence of filicide (of non-neonates)?

The period of this study is 1810 to 1860, at the beginning of which Finland was recovering from the Finnish War (1808–09), as a result of which the areas of the Kingdom of Sweden east of the Gulf of Bothnia were detached from the mother country and annexed to the Russian Empire to become the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland in 1809 (Kirby 2006, 68–104). The examination ends before the exceptional period of the famine years in the 1860s because the machinery of social control, which in fact produced the judicial sources, was disrupted by the crisis at that time (Häkkinen 2006). With the exception of killing an illegitimate new-born infant, Swedish criminal law (known as the Code of 1734), which was in force in Finland throughout the period of interest, did not differentiate between filicide and other killings of close relatives, regardless of whether the victims were born in wedlock or not. According to the law, it was punishable by a qualified death penalty (Sveriges Rikes lag, gillad och antagen på riksdagen 1734, Missgärnings Balk 14:1, cf. cap. 16). However, after 1826, when the Tsar in practice abolished capital punishment in Finland for all non-political crimes, the amnesty procedure commuted all death penalties to corporal punishment combined with hard labor. In the harshest sentences, the culprit was deported to perform hard labor in Siberia (Ylikangas 1998).

In addition to that, Chapter 30 of the Penal Code also distinguished between three types of unintended child homicide: involuntary manslaughter (§ 1), suffocation (§ 2), and lethal chastisement (§ 3). Of these crimes, many historical studies (e.g., Bergenlöv 2004; Frykman 1977) regard suffocation as a relatively mildly sanctioned means for mothers, whether single or married, to terminate the life of an unwanted child.

The trial material from 1830–60 shows thirty-six cases of unintentional suffocations which are excluded here; only intentional suffocations that were treated as homicides of a close relative are included in the research data. Most of the cases of (non-neonate) filicides were prosecuted as homicides of a close relative. As a whole, the source material comprises records of 130 filicides committed by 119 main perpetrators in the Grand Duchy of Finland from 1810 to 1819 and 1830 to 1860. The material consists of trial records of the state courts: the Courts of Appeal in Turku, Vaasa, and Vyborg (est. 1839) and the Justice Department of the Governing Council, renamed the Senate in 1816. In the later period, the trial material of all

Courts of Appeal is preserved and the material thus covers the whole area of the Grand Duchy of Finland while in the earlier period only the trial material of Vaasa Court of Appeal, the contemporary upper court for Northern and Eastern Finland, has been preserved.

It is obvious that a large number of filicides may not have come to the attention of the authorities since the deaths of older children were easy to conceal in the nineteenth century. The death of an identifiable child could always be explained as the result of disease or accident (see also Roth 2001, 101–3; cf. Sharpe 1981, 33).

The crucial links in the chain for exposing a filicide were the local pastor and the district police chief, who decided whether or not a forensic post-mortem examination should be performed (Koskivirta 2003, 85–87). The high infant and child mortality rates of nineteenth-century societies—in Finland, for example, about 10,000 out of nearly 60,000 babies born annually in the 1850s did not survive their first year—created opportunities for the concealment of filicide since the sparse network of district doctors had neither the means nor the resources to undertake comprehensive investigations of infant and child deaths. Drowning, suffocation, and strangulation, which in this material were the most common methods employed in reported filicides, did not necessarily leave the victim with any visible injuries (see also Roth 2001, 101–2). It was even more difficult to detect a homicide if a child died as the result of an induced illness, for example, by leaving it outside in bitter cold weather to die of hypothermia. Probably there were also several intentional manslaughters among the deaths caused by drowning, smoke, or fire, for example, that in the courts were deemed to be accidents. Because of the underreporting, the figures presented here can be regarded as minimum estimates. However, on the basis of the court material used here, the motivations and the nature of the crimes can be evaluated more reliably—with the exception of the cases where the accused denied all charges.

## **THE CHANGING FORMS OF FILICIDE**

### *Key Features and Comparisons: Gender Distribution, Social Status, and the Victim's Age*

In mid-nineteenth-century Finland, there were in most years more neonaticide trials than all other kinds of homicide trials put together. For example, 740 neonaticide trials were held compared to 665 trials for murder and intentional manslaughter in the rural courts of Finland in the period 1850–59 (Prokuraattorin toimituskunnan arkisto: Prokuraattorin kertomukset, tilastotaulukot 1850–1859). Thus, neonaticides were far more common than any other kind of intra-familial homicides, too.

How much less frequent, then, were other parental child homicide trials compared to neonaticide trials? In the 1850s, for example, on average, seventy-four unmarried women were convicted of neonaticide in Finland every year, while typically only five to seven were prosecuted and one to three parents were annually sentenced for other types of child homicide (except for 1857, when the number of child victims rose to eleven). It can be estimated that in the Finnish trial material from the period between the 1810s and the 1860s, neonaticide trials were about fifteen to twenty times more common than trials for other types of filicide; the difference between the rates was broadly comparable with those in late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century New England (Roth 2001, 108). Moreover, trials involving unmarried women accused of other filicides made up not even 2 percent of the equivalent figure for neonaticides (during 1850–59, twelve cases of filicide committed by single mothers, and 740 neonaticide trials).

The proportion of female perpetrators of filicide in pre-modern times was, and still is, much larger than that in other types of homicide (Kauppi 2012; Lehti, Kääriäinen, and Kivivuori 2011; D’Cruze and Jackson 2009, 47–48). However, filicide in the nineteenth century was not a particularly gender-oriented crime. Excluding five cases where both of the victim’s parents were accused of filicide, 60 percent of the accused in this research material were females, but of all legitimate child victims, over two-thirds (45 children out of a total of 65) were killed by their fathers, stepfathers, or foster fathers. Married mothers, instead, had only a fairly marginal role as perpetrators (21 of the total of 119 accused). The gender distribution of the victims is even more even: of the cases where the gender of the victim is reported, 62 of the victims were female and 65 male children.

The regularity in the gender distribution of the perpetrators of parental child homicides according to the age of the victim detected by Resnick (1969) also holds for nineteenth-century Finland, with fathers rarely being prosecuted for killing a child under one year old (5 of the total of 38 paternal child homicide victims in years 1830–59). Conversely, they still constituted the majority of those accused of the filicide of older children (18 of the total of 27 parental homicide victims over the age of three in 1830–59) (see also Lehti, Kääriäinen, and Kivivuori 2011, 14–18).

A distinctive feature for both genders, however, was that the perpetrators of filicide mainly came from the lower orders of society: half of the male and over 60 percent of the female perpetrators were servants, cottagers, former soldiers or their wives, dependent lodgers, or vagrants. The only exception to this was married

mothers (18 mothers and 3 stepmothers) as perpetrators of filicide, most of whom were freeholder peasants' and crofters' wives.

One-third of the paternal perpetrators of filicide had to support themselves and their children solely by casual work. This mobile stratum of the population was not only in apparent economic difficulties, but also became a subject of particularly strict social control. Moreover, not only vagrants and dependent lodgers, among whom former soldiers were decidedly overrepresented, but also married farmhands killed their offspring relatively disproportionately to their share of the population; this was a group to whom their growing broods were a significant financial burden. Their status was reflected in something the witnesses at one filicide trial in North Karelia reported the accused farmhand to have said to his pregnant wife: "If you are going to give birth to twins, one of them needs to be killed at birth" (VHO. Alist. as. päätöstaltiot and alistusakti 83/1831).

All in all, comparing the social composition of the nineteenth-century perpetrators of filicides to modern ones, one difference is crucial: a typical perpetrator of nineteenth-century filicide was of lower social strata than those of other kinds of homicides, whereas in relatively prosperous modern Finland their social composition is more middle-class than that of other homicides (Lehti, Kääriäinen, and Kivivuori 2011). Actually, in the nineteenth century, the lowest social groups were thus under some pressure to commit the crime, but these pressures were subsequently resolved. I shall next turn to these issues.

*A Rising Phenomenon: The Infanticide of Illegitimate Non-Neonates*

The most striking feature of nineteenth-century filicide is the significantly large proportion of unmarried women among the perpetrators. In over one-third (42 out of 119 perpetrators) of all cases reported, the perpetrators were the unmarried mothers of the victims, and they committed two-thirds (42 out of 63 cases) of all reported maternal filicides. It should be mentioned here that single mothers were also accused in two-thirds of all suffocation trials in Finland between 1830 and 1860.

In the material that I used for my earlier study (Koskivirta 2003), which dealt with homicidal crime in Eastern Finland during the years 1748 to 1808, there were only two cases of unwed mothers killing their (non-neonate) children and ten other types of filicide. In the 1810s alone, there were six filicides of the former type in the same area (Koskivirta 2003; see also Rautelin 2009, 278). This was probably the result of the exceptional situation after the Finnish War, since by the 1830s at

the latest the violence had abated there, and the filicide statistics were headed by the region of Päijät-Häme in Central Southern Finland (bordering areas of the counties of Mikkeli and Häme).

Compared with these restricted data available for parental child homicide in Finland in the eighteenth century, the proportion of single mothers as perpetrators of filicides seems to have increased noticeably in the nineteenth century, partly reflecting the growth of this population group. Moreover, the context of maternal filicide changed: the main motive in the eighteenth-century court material was marital conflict, but in the following century, the most common background factor was difficulties in providing for the child, which were somehow present in over half of the filicide cases in this research material (for those cases where the motives for the crimes can be evaluated), and especially in cases of filicide committed by unmarried mothers.

The typical form of (non-neonate) filicide committed by single mothers was, in Resnick's terms, infanticide: in the period 1830–59, nearly two-thirds of the victims of unmarried women (21 out of 35) were below the age of one, and only three victims were over the age of three. On the other hand, the court records indicate that for cases involving filicides of children under three years old, unmarried mothers were tried seven times more often than were their married counterparts even though their share of maternal population was only 6 percent. The victimization of the youngest children in Finland seems to have been mainly the result of the single mothers' employment and subsistence difficulties during the children's first years of life. For those children whose murders were motivated by difficulties in providing for the child, the oldest children were aged four. A majority of the unmarried mothers were in dire economic distress at the time of their offenses (on economically distressed women in nineteenth-century Finland, see Miikka Voutilainen's article in this volume).

Livelihood problems in her first year as a mother sealed the fate of the child of a 22-year-old soldier's daughter, called Anna G., in Tyrnävä, Northern Ostrobothnia, after the Finnish War. In June 1810, she drowned her four-month-old illegitimate son in a ditch. Anna's child was conceived when she was serving as a maid to a widow, whose manservant had promised to marry Anna and had entered into a sexual relationship with her. However, after Anna became pregnant, the manservant disappeared from her life in the autumn of 1809. Anna, for her part, gave up her job at the end of her pregnancy with the permission of her mistress and moved to her mother's cottage. Unfortunately, her mother could not help her adult daughter

because she was a poor soldier's widow, who herself had two small children as dependents.

In mid-February, Anna gave birth to a son, and within four weeks, she had used up the money she had saved from her wages. In late March, she had to go out on the road with her child and start begging for subsistence in neighboring villages and parishes. The journeys were long and the people of the region far from generous. At the end of June, Anna met a woman who was a dependent lodger (a person with no land or home of her own) and complained to her that she could not afford to support herself and her son. The woman replied to Anna that she, too, had an illegitimate child, but if she, like Anna, did not have the means to feed it, she would rather drown the child than drag him from one place to another. Anna said that back on the road, she remembered the woman's words and decided to kill her son, believing that they would both otherwise starve to death. Without thinking about the consequences, Anna threw her son into a deep ditch and went on her way. That very same evening Anna came to a farm where she was asked to stay and work for the summer. She told her masters that her child had died in a neighboring parish, and nobody suspected the story because the child had been very ill as a result of his living conditions.

Recent Nordic studies have stressed that the fate of unwed mothers was not as grim as it is presented in folklore or fiction. Although the expenses of the child's maintenance inevitably weakened the mother's economic situation, in the nineteenth century, the safety nets provided by their own parents and other relatives ensured that the vast majority of unmarried mothers still survived moderately well. In many cases, the mother and the child received a minimum standard of security as poor-relief beneficiaries of the parish or, working as housemaids in towns, could afford to pay for childcare somewhere in the countryside. Some of the mothers also eventually married—either their child's father or someone else (Lindstedt Cronberg 1997; Markkola 1986, 80–82; Miettinen 2012, 252, 254; Saarimäki 2010, 108–12; see also Johanna Annola's article in this volume). However, it did not turn out so well for all mothers. The economic situation of single mothers changed decisively at the end of the eighteenth century. In eighteenth-century Finland, it had still not been difficult for mothers with illegitimate children to find employment on farms because of the lack of manpower, but in the early nineteenth century the rapid population growth began to create a surplus of labor. Therefore, a farm no longer needed to engage a maid who had an illegitimate child to look after. For some single mothers, begging remained the only way of supporting themselves and



their children, and around garrison towns they risked drifting into prostitution. However, there were no mothers living by prostitution among those accused of filicide, a fact which may suggest that prostitutes could afford to support their children or that they had more expert ways of concealing filicide. Even if illegitimate fertility was also at a high level among industrial workers (which itself was a rather small group in Finland in the research period), none of them was accused of filicide in the trial material studied here.

Two illegitimate children aged two became victims of filicide after their mothers had had to withdraw them from childcare because of lack of money. Both mothers said they were going to give their child to the poorhouse in Helsinki, but instead ended up drowning them on their way. Actually, paid babyfarms were far from safe places for children, and occasionally the nurses were accused in court of manslaughter. Actual murder prosecutions of children in care were, however, rare (THO. Alist. as. päätöstaltiot, 25/1845, 89/1847; 17/1842; March 19, 1818, May 8, 1839).

In court, Anna G. was not asked why she had not sought help from the poor-relief system of her home parish. On the other hand, begging in one's home parish was also an integral part of the official poor-relief system in Finland, especially at a time when the other sources of aid were overloaded, as was the case at the time of Anna G.'s crime owing to the Finnish War, which had recently ended. For example, the disbanding of the Swedish army conscripts in Finland in 1809 deprived more than 10,000 soldiers and their families of their source of livelihood, and the resulting social problems that impinged widely on society were also reflected in the incidence of filicide (Danielson-Kalmari 1896; Niemelä 1990, 161–74). In all six filicide trials in the years 1810–12 that were referred to the Governing Council, the accused was a former soldier or a member of a former soldier's family, as in the case of Anna, who was a soldier's daughter. One of the basic messages of Christianity was the idea of charity: "For ye have the poor always with you" (cf. Matt. 26:11; Mark 14:7; John 12:8).

The attitudes towards beggars had previously been merciful, but they harshened as the poverty of the masses started to escalate in the early nineteenth century (Pulma 1987, 32–53; 1994). This change impinged first on people whose own way of life could be blamed for their needy fate, and many included single mothers among them.

Anna confessed to her crime immediately after the child's body was found in the water. She said in the criminal investigation that she had killed her child when she realized that there was no way she could cope together with him since it was his

existence that prevented her from supporting them. Anna said that after her deed she had suffered from constant remorse and contrition—like many of her contemporaries who shared her fate elsewhere in the Western world (Roth 2001).

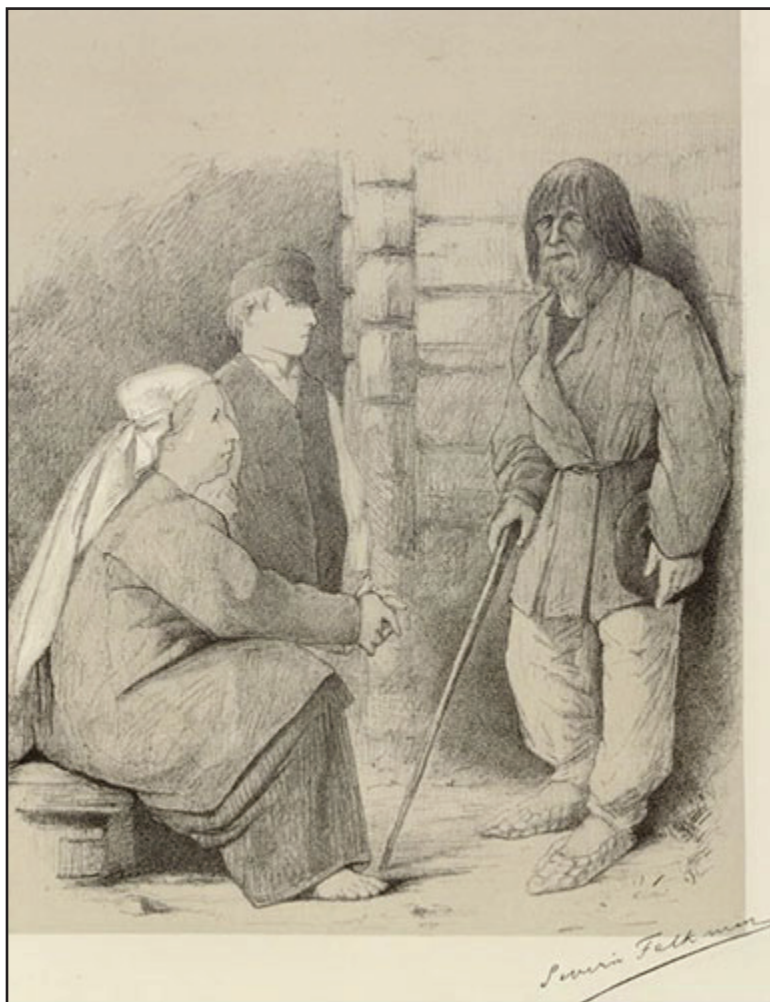


Figure 1. A farm mistress, a boy, and a beggar. A sketch by Severin Falkman 1882. Source: *I Östra Finland* (Falkman 1882, 24).

The detailed investigation continued from one district court session to the next because the court wanted to ascertain whether the child's father and the dependent lodger woman whom Anna had met were implicated in the crime. Although Anna herself had asked in court that the trial should not be protracted because she had confessed to her crime and was ready to face the consequences, the proceedings dragged on because the judge and lay jurors were obliged to identify and investigate

any circumstances that might mitigate Anna's guilt.

Even so, since Anna's crime fulfilled the specific criteria of homicide of a close relative, and the prison physician regarded her as *compos mentis*, the district court and the court of appeal had no choice but to sentence her to death. The verdict was sent via the Governing Council to the Tsar for ratification. Although the Criminal Code, the Bible, and the popular sense of justice of the time required a life for a life, the Tsar had the power to commute a capital sentence if the crime was committed in strongly extenuating circumstances (Koskivirta 2003, 36–37). The wording of Anna's plea to the Tsar for clemency indicates that the pastor who had composed her letter felt compassion for her fate. She asked for pardon because she had committed her crime in an unfortunate situation in which she was obliged to choose between two inescapable alternatives: either starving to death together with her child or saving him from suffering a long and painful demise. By killing the child, she could at least save one life: her own.

Justice was tempered with mercy, as the Governing Council and the Tsar commuted Anna's capital sentence on the grounds of particularly extenuating circumstances. Anna was sentenced to atone for her crime by suffering corporal punishment and by serving a sentence of six years' hard labor (Senaatin [hallituskonseljnin] oikeusosasto. Anomus- ja valitusakti SOO Ea 10/1811. Pääöstaltio Da2: 288/1811). However, in the following comparable case, clemency yielded to deterrent control policy. In Southern Ostrobothnia, Lovisa B., exhausted from supporting herself and her three-year-old illegitimate son by casual work and begging from house to house and having ended up killing him, atoned for her crime with the death penalty in 1812 (Senaatin [hallituskonseljnin] oikeusosasto. Anomus- ja valitusakti SOO Ea 66/1813. Pääöstaltio Da5: 435/1814).

In the period of this research, the mental distress caused by the social conditions in which unmarried mothers lived was not medicalized to the same extent as in parts of the English-speaking world, where the plight and suffering of poor unmarried mothers were increasingly viewed as factors affecting their mental state that could diminish their criminal responsibility (cf. Roth 2001; Rabin 2002). This seems to be one reason why sentences for filicide in the English-speaking world were often much more lenient than in the Nordic countries. In Britain and New England, mothers in distress were typically released after no more than a few weeks or months in prison, while in Finland the minimum sentence in specifically extenuating circumstances was six years' hard labor combined with a half of the maximum prison sentence (which was twenty-eight days) on bread and water. Although in the

broader context of Western Europe the penal policy seems harsh, it was milder than for other forms of homicide in Finland (and presumably also in Sweden, where the same criminal legislation remained in force until the 1860s).

*The Chronological and Regional Incidence*

The fluctuations in the rates of filicides in Finland followed the results of Roth's comparative analysis of early modern child murders, including neonaticides, in New England. All kinds of child murders first decreased in the eighteenth century as food supplies increased and the agricultural economy stabilized, only to increase dramatically from the 1820s onwards. Roth sees the nineteenth-century growth of neonaticide and infanticide rates as a result of a complex social development, which included intensifying pressures on young unwed mothers, the decreasing proportion of women who married, the declining value of children as a productive resource, the rising costs of raising them to maturity, and the declining quality of life for most children from the 1820s on. In New England, new revivalist movements also exacerbated the situation of unwed mothers by stigmatizing extramarital sexual relations and the pregnancies resulting from them (Roth 2001, 119–20; for Sweden, Bergenlöv 2009, 202–26). Despite the great geographical distance between Finland and New England, the same economic factors characteristic of the nineteenth-century Western world may partly explain the parallel development in Finland, where the number of filicides rose in the provinces of Savo and Karelia in the 1810s. The connection between filicide and the economic situation of the population can also be observed in wider geographic areas in the 1830s, from which a comprehensive body of trial material concerning the whole of Finland is preserved (see appendix 1, tables 1a–1e).

Although homicide rates in general usually fall in times of economic depression, the number of all kinds of filicides tends to increase. Many studies have shown a connection between famine and filicide, or child abandonment, and the same link also seems to have existed in nineteenth-century Finland (Conley 1999, 75; Howarth and Leaman 2004). The reasons for filicide during the years of crop failure are obvious: the weaker the overall nutrition situation was, the more difficult it became to feed offspring (cf. Roth 2001, 109–14).

In times when the harvest was normal, and thus the price of food and the demand for labor were reasonable, problems in providing for children appeared only occasionally as a motivation for crime. Thus, there was a plateau period in filicides from the early 1840s until the mid-1850s (see appendix 1, tables 1c-1d).

On the contrary, most of these crimes were concentrated in three periods of crisis: the years following the Finnish War of 1808–09; the early 1830s, when there was a severe hunger crisis in Eastern and Northern Finland; and the winter and spring after the crop failures and epidemics of 1856.

In the period 1807–13, the nutritional situation was especially weak in Central and Northern Finland because of a series of crop failures (Turpeinen 1991, 310–31; Kauranen 1999, 16, 93). As a result, there were dramatic cases of filicides in Ostrobothnia and Northern Karelia where actually all parental child homicides reported from 1810s were poverty-related, if the latter is defined as filicide committed by the lowest strata of the society or the same crime with the motivation of economic distress (see appendix 1, table 1a). The situation of Southern Finland cannot be studied since no homicide trial material from the 1810s has survived. The most severe hunger crisis of the period of this study took place in Northern Finland in 1832 and 1833, resulting locally in an even more dramatic rise in mortality than in the years of the great famine of the late 1860s (Kauranen 1999, 16). The period of crisis is reflected in the numbers of filicides, which peaked in Finland in the 1830s. It is still paradoxical that there were only three trials of parental child homicides in the province of Oulu in Northern Finland in the 1830s; furthermore, trials where unmarried mothers were charged with filicide were lacking both there and in the province of Vaasa. This may have been because of high mortality among single parents themselves, and, very likely to underreporting of the crimes as local authorities had more acute larger-scale problems to solve than individual violent crimes within the family. Instead of that, the typical filicide of the early 1830s (like the late 1850s) was committed by parents who, debilitated by hunger and disease, had acted in the throes of delirium or were suffering from an aberration triggered by malnutrition (thirteen cases in the 1830s, and five cases in the years 1857–59 in Finland) (e.g., VHO. Alist. as. päätöstaltiot Jan 16, 1834; Feb 11, 1834). An example in this sense was the case of Gabriel V., a tailor in Heinola in Southern Häme, who, because of a severe food shortage in the spring of 1857, had to work on the railway construction site in order to be able to feed his family. The man had had to work hard even when he had fallen victim to pneumonia, but finally he had had to stay in his cottage. There, while hallucinating because of a high fever, he had wounded his two small children with tailor's scissors. When people from the neighborhood came to help, he told them with his face shining with joy that he had served the Savior by dispatching his beloved innocent children to heaven. After that, the tailor lost consciousness and had to spend one month in a hospital to recover. Similar family tragedies also

took place in the province of Savo, and even on the southern coast of Finland (THO. Alist. as. päätöstaltiot; alistusakti 34/1857). Nearly two-thirds of the reported filicides of the decade were related to poverty (see appendix 1, table 1b).

In the period 1856–57, a large proportion of the population of Finland was suffering from malnutrition. Most maternal and paternal filicides took place then in the province of Savo, crofter areas of the province of Häme, and in Helsinki, where many underemployed landless people and single mothers ended up after seeking permanent work opportunities elsewhere, often without success. In the 1850s, over three-quarters of filicides were poverty-related (appendix 1, table 1d). Around the same time, neonaticides likewise increased, finally peaking before the great famine of 1867–68 (Ervasti 1995, 72–74).

The hard times following the mid-1850s were also reflected in the deaths of some illegitimate children in Helsinki, now the capital of Finland. At the end of April 1855, Maria Lovisa L. drowned her three-month-old illegitimate son Gustav. She had been in deep distress when she committed her crime. After giving birth to her son, she had tried to make a living as a seamstress, but she failed to earn enough money to support herself. According to witnesses, Maria was so poor that even the clothes she wore were borrowed. At the end of April, Maria asked her son's father, who had previously given them some support, for help. This time, however, he refused. After returning home, Maria's landlady, who had been looking after her son, reproached her for being away too long. Dismayed by two consecutive setbacks, Maria said that she had come to the conclusion that it would be better to save the child from continuing distress and hunger. She went to the seashore and drowned him. That same afternoon, she got work in a laundry and moved to a new abode arranged by her employer, whom she had told that she had found a place in the countryside where her son would be taken care of. However, an infant was later found in the water and was identified as her son (THO. Alist. as. päätöstaltiot; alistusakti 42/1855).

The case was not unique in Helsinki in those years. For example, in spring 1857, a twenty-three-year-old woman called Erika Sofia A. drowned her two-year-old illegitimate son in a puddle in the woods in the Kallio area. Erika had walked nearly sixty-five miles with her child to the capital to look for a job and a livelihood after her poor parents' food stocks had run out in the spring. However, she could not find any employment, and to get by with her son, she was reduced to begging and selling sticks gathered from the woods. Since Erika and her son had to spend the night during the late spring in the forest, Erika began to fear that she would be

apprehended by the police as a vagrant. When she thought about her own situation, she started to feel that her son was actually the only obstacle preventing her from gaining access to a more regular life. Consequently, she ended up drowning him just before Midsummer's Day in 1857 (THO. Alist. as. päätöstaltiot ja alistusakti. 62/1857). As in the cases of Anna G. and Lovisa B. in the 1810s, the recurrence of two very similar and almost simultaneous crimes within the same region in the 1850s also resulted in a more severe sentence for the perpetrator of the latter crime. The Justice Department of the Senate sentenced the seamstress Maria to hard labor for six years, while Erika's sentence was for sixteen years. This may indicate that the sentences passed for recurrent cases at some level also reflected the deterrent objectives of the control policy.

Attitudes toward unwed mothers who killed their non-neonate children were twofold. Although giving birth to an illegitimate child in principle damaged a woman's reputation, they were not considered to be as morally degenerate as murderers of neonates (cf. Bergenlöv 2002, 256–57). Unwed mothers nevertheless had borne the legal and economic responsibility for their act and also had had to endure the social opprobrium brought about by the Church's statutory ritual shaming practices. They had tried to cope in their lives regardless of the difficulties they had to face as a result of single motherhood (Frykman 1977, 134–58). Although single mothers had had to endure the disgrace attached to their illicit sexual relationships and to put themselves at the mercy of others, the limits of their tolerance of shame were often exceeded if they faced the risk of being caught up in the system of societal disciplinary sanctions. For example, Erika Sofia (above), who was forced to live with her son in the woods outside Helsinki, became afraid of being apprehended as a vagrant and ended up killing the child before the threat of being sent to a hard-labor institution (the sanction for vagrancy) was carried out. One of the motives for some paternal filicides was actually the same.

Where did the filicides committed by distressed parents take place? Paternal child murders were mostly concentrated in North Karelia, while the cases with single mothers as perpetrators came to light throughout the province of Häme in central southern Finland and in the capital, Helsinki, in the province of Uusimaa, and in a lesser extent also in the provinces of Southern and Northern Ostrobothnia in the west and north-west of Finland (see appendix 1, table 1e). In Häme and the nearby region of Helsinki, the crimes were connected with high levels of illegitimate fertility (Ervasti 1995, 76–79; Miettinen 2012, 156–57; Turpeinen 1981, 14–15), and near the towns of Vaasa, Kuopio, Hämeenlinna, and Helsinki, some

single mothers were also prosecuted for lethal child neglect (THO. Alist. as. päätöskaltiot 45/1839; 12/1841; 45/1841). Of all cases of filicides studied here, 22 out of a total of 130 took place in towns or parishes in their immediate neighborhood.

Province	Unwed Mothers	Poverty-Related in Total	Filicides in Total
Uusimaa	9	10	16
Turku	1	4	10
Häme	9	11	19
Heinola / Mikkeli	5	10	13
Kuopio	3	12	14
Vaasa	4	10	17
Oulu	2	7	10
Vyborg	2	10	10
All counties in total	35	74	109

Table 2. Filicides committed by unwed mothers / All poverty-related filicides / Filicides in total in Finland by location in 1830–59. Source: The verdicts and files of the Turku, Vaasa, and Vyborg courts of appeal, and the Senate, 1810–19, 1830–60.

In Southern Ostrobothnia, where violent crime of all kinds was at an exceptionally high level during the first half of the nineteenth century, the number of marital murders and fratricides was many times higher than in the rest of Finland (Ylikangas 1998, 11–43, for example). However, the difference in filicides was not nearly as pronounced even if they were not an unknown phenomenon there. This may indicate a certain level of underreporting of filicides because of extremely high rates of other homicides, for at least the perpetrators of reported child homicides in Ostrobothnia had lived, on average, in harder circumstances than the perpetrators elsewhere in Finland. In Southern and Northern Ostrobothnia, where the rate of illegitimate births and neonaticides was low (Ervasti 1995, 76–79; Turpeinen 1981, 14–15), it seems that the attitudes toward single mothers were especially deprecatory. For example, in May 1838, the dean of Southern Ostrobothnia, Erik Johan Snellman, was harsh in his treatment of Margareta H., who had given birth to an illegitimate son only five days earlier. Walking a route of sixty-five miles to meet her son's father, she visited the parsonage in Alavus with her newborn son in her arms. However, the vicar not only refused to let her and her child spend the night at the parsonage, but also refused to confirm the emergency baptism given for her son, who was ill. Next day on the road, not having eaten, Margareta had taken fright as the child seemed to have stopped breathing, and drowned him in Kangasjärvi



Lake, where she also tried to drown herself (THO. Alist. as. päätöstaltiot 62/1839; 98/1840). In addition, Anna G., who wandered around Northern Ostrobothnia begging with her sick child in 1810, stated in court that the local people usually gave her nothing. And in Southern Ostrobothnia, Anna H., the mother of a one-year-old daughter, wanted to move back to her birthplace in Sweden to avoid the shame that she had had to face in the locality on account of her illegitimate child. After giving birth to her daughter, she had been forced to quit her job as a housemaid, and, subsequently, without a job or source of livelihood, had lived in destitution with her relatives. She tried to escape from the dire situation by poisoning her daughter with nitric acid. The shame she claimed to have faced was probably a reference to the disapproval of the local community. In fact, the reason for her deed was again the lack of available work opportunities resulting from the fact that she was responsible for taking care of her child. Problems of this kind often diminished as the child grew older, but in this case the mother had totally exhausted her savings on the child's maintenance (VHO. Alistusakti 92/1840; alist. as. päätöstaltio 11/1846; Miettinen 2012, 260).

It is noteworthy that filicide trials of unmarried mothers were most rare (only one case) in Southwest Finland (Province of Turku), which was the most prosperous area of the country. Such crimes were perhaps prevented there by the existence of a more advanced poor-relief system than was the case in the rest of Finland (Pulma 1994, 48–49). Still, begging for their children's living seems to have been considered especially humiliating there since two other parental filicides were motivated by the stress and anxiety that begging had caused (e.g., THO. Alist. as. päätöstaltio 67/1837).

On the other hand, filicides committed especially by unmarried mothers were not a feature of Finland's poorest regions, either. There were only a few filicide trials where mendicant mothers were accused in Savo and Karelia in Eastern Finland, although the poverty of the landless proletariat there reached its nadir suddenly as the labor-intensive slash-and-burn method of cultivation started to tail off in the 1830s. Unlike Western Finland, where the agrarian proletariat lived in separate cottages, the under-privileged of Eastern Finland lived as dependent lodgers in the porches and saunas of farmhouses and were, therefore, more tightly bound to the large households of landed peasant farmers (Pulma 1994, 51–55). Single mothers, too, would seem to have been protected by such patriarchal bonds. At least there were always eyes to watch over an illegitimate child when its mother had some casual work to do.

There was one other factor that alleviated the situation of unmarried mothers in Eastern Finland: St. Petersburg, with all the opportunities it offered, was not far away. It was possible to seek a new life there; for example, a single mother could work as a wet nurse for the city's foundling hospital (Pulma 1987, 36–38). Nevertheless, walking there with a child to carry was burdensome, and not all the mothers who undertook the journey reached their destination. One of them was a tenant farmer's widow called Valborg H. from Mäntyharju in Southeastern Finland, who was carrying her nine-week-old illegitimate twins on the road to St. Petersburg in August 1842. In Muolaa, on the Karelian Isthmus, she buried the twins under a fallen tree. However, the bodies were found, and the mother was indicted for the murder of her children (ViHO. Alist. as. päätöstaltio 24/1844). There is no doubt that Valborg had become exhausted carrying her twins on the 200-mile journey. In some nomadic cultures, twins are commonly killed for similar reasons (Ball and Hill 1996).

*Paternal Filicides: Contrasting Ideals and Realities*

Before industrialization, which started in Finland in the 1870s, the cornerstone of society was a patriarchal family unit headed by a landed freeholder peasant master in which he and the mistress of the farm each had their own responsibilities. The master's duty was to provide a livelihood for the family, raise the children, and instill in them a sense of order and fear of God, while the mistress, for her part, had to take care of the household duties and the well-being of its members (Pulma 1994; Hanska and Vainio-Korhonen 2010). The system was supported by informal social safety nets, communities of relatives and the neighborhood that, for example, ensured the survival of single mothers, and of motherless or fatherless children. As the demographic focus shifted to population groups below the landed peasants, an increasing proportion of the adult population was separated from this patriarchal lifestyle and its safety nets, many ending up pursuing an itinerant life as vagrants, dependent lodgers, or single mothers, and more and more children as beggars. Coincidentally, attitudes toward the proletariat became less compassionate, as happened elsewhere in Europe, too. This was reflected, for example, in the fact that the marriages of dependent lodgers started to arouse moral indignation from the 1840s onwards because their child support became the responsibility of their home parishes (see, for example, the texts of J. V. Snellman in the newspaper *Saima*, Snellman 1845; 1846a-c; Häkkinen 2006).

In fact, the precarious situation of dependent lodger families made them one of the major sources of filicides in nineteenth-century Finland. Thus, closer scrutiny gives rise to a hypothesis that the patriarchal bonds of large freeholder peasant households prevented filicide from being one-sided. The children of the landless proletariat typically became victims of homicide when the perpetrator and her child ran the risk of being excluded from the community of the farm household rather than after this had already happened. An example of this is the case of a family of dependent lodgers in Nilsia in Northern Savo in Eastern Finland. The parents reacted to their eviction from the sauna in which they had lived in the middle of the freezing cold of February by opening up the entrance to the sauna to create a draught, in which they then left their scantily clad five-month-old daughter for several hours. The child soon caught a fever and died, and the parents were prosecuted for manslaughter (ViHO. Alist. as. päätöstaltio 38/1856).

Although by the 1830s begging children had become a common and permanent phenomenon in Eastern Finland, some parents preferred to sacrifice their children's lives rather than put them on the road to beg for charity. The obligations of patriarchal bonds—that is, the responsibilities not only of heads of households but also of fathers regardless of their social position—are also reflected in the fact that all the paternal multi-victim filicides to be found in the research material were carried out in a situation in which the father feared that his child or children would starve or be homeless. Paternal filicides were often preceded by a distraint or an eviction order, especially in North Karelia, and also both of the crimes of this type committed in Eastern Finland between 1748 and 1808 were motivated by economic distress (Koskivirta 2003; 2009).

Paternal multi-victim filicides were undoubtedly crimes of desperation in their most extreme form. In 1833, in Liperi, after a distraint, a father of eight children, the cottager Anders R., killed his wife, three of his children, and a tenant who had lived in his cottage. The Senate, however, regarded his acts as the result of a mental aberration. Unlike him, Elias N., a tenant farmer and dependent on poor relief in Jääski, killed four of his children with an axe while drunk just before Christmas 1849 and was held fully responsible for his crime. Right before his act, the creditors had commandeered the family's last sheep, and the parish authorities threatened the family with eviction. Elias himself had been afraid that his children would become itinerant waifs (VHO. Päätöstaltio Di 98 6/1834. Senaatin oikeusosasto SOO Ea 1055; ViHO. Päätöstaltio 17/1853).

Dependence on other people's charity was perceived as particularly shameful to able-bodied fathers and was a background factor for a filicide committed by a recently widowed former soldier, Anders T., in March 1811. Anders, who was known to be hard-working but bibulous, had, after the Finnish War, roamed the roads of Northern Finland with his twelve-year-old daughter, looking for job opportunities and had stolen grain from farm storehouses in order to survive. In late autumn 1811, the absence of the daughter from the company of her father attracted the attention of the local people in Kiiminki, and Anders explained that Maria was with relatives in Kemi. However, the local authorities became curious of Maria's fate after Anders had tried to sell his daughter's clothes, and, moreover, had told some men of the village who had asked about her that they could be sure that Maria would never again open their doors to beg for her morsels (of bread). In the interrogation, he confessed to having beaten his daughter to death on the road in October 1811 (VHO. Alist. as. päätöstaltio 45/1811; Senaatin [hallituskonseljin ] oikeusosasto 1812/SOO Ea77a).

The case of Anders reflects not only the difficult situation of the former soldiers after the Finnish War but also the parental challenges of landless widowed men. It is significant that nearly 40 percent of all reported filicides in this nineteenth-century trial material were committed by single parents of both sexes since the offspring of widowed men also ran the risk of becoming victims of filicide. This may be a phenomenon characteristic of the nineteenth century because studies of eighteenth-century homicides in Finland do not reveal such crimes. This development reflects the worsening opportunities for the lowest stratum of society to marry (or, in this case, remarry), with the result that children were seen as a greater obstacle than before to a new marriage. The harshness of everyday realities was present in the fate of the one-and-a-half-year-old daughter of a widowed farmhand, Heikki Ä., in Pielisjärvi, North Karelia. After his wife's death in 1830, he proposed to a housemaid serving in the neighborhood, but she did not want to commit herself to a man who already had children. Then Heikki answered her by telling that his children would not live long, and soon after that, he was accused in the local court of child homicide (VHO, päätöstaltio; alistusakti 83/1831).

The large share of widowed men among the perpetrators of filicide also reflects the difficulties experienced by single men without land of their own in taking care of their children alone. On the other hand, the fact that social support was available for the children of widowed mothers, whose predicament raised compassion in

society, probably prevented them from resorting to filicide (only one trial, which resulted in acquittal).

Irrespective of the sex of the perpetrator, many homicidal acts were connected with the perpetrators' dependence on the goodwill of their freeholder peasant masters. For example, the crying of a sick child could cause fear of eviction. This fear was often justified, as is exemplified in the case of a former soldier, Olli K., who, after the Finnish War, had become a dependent lodger. In the autumn of 1811, he, his wife, and their four children had to move to a new place in North Karelia because their crying infant had annoyed the masters of the farm. As the loud crying continued in their new dwelling place, and as his wife had moreover told him that she had to go with their children to beg for their living, Olli, when drunk, stabbed his eighteen-month-old son to death (VHO. Alist. as. päätöstaltio ja alistusakti 24/1812).

Infectious diseases also raised the fear of exclusion among parents who were dependent on their hosts. This was the cause of the extreme act of one Eva S., a dependent lodger who drowned her sick three-year-old illegitimate daughter in a well. She had concealed her daughter's illness as she feared that, if it were discovered, they would be driven off the farm where they were living and would become homeless vagrants. Eva managed to give the impression that her daughter's death was an accident, as she was known to love the child very deeply (ViHO. Päätöstaltio 6/1855).

The more the rural proletariat increased, the greater the share of the population excluded from the socialization and care that had taken place in freeholder peasant household units (Pulma 1987, 1994), and such a fate also was feared by landless parents.

### **SOME SOCIETAL REACTIONS**

As in many Western European countries, there was a lively discussion about neonaticide in the press in Finland, especially in the late 1850s. However, child homicide in which the victims were not newborns was not recognized as a social problem in Finland because it was overshadowed by the more acute issue of neonaticide. In addition to neonaticides, two maternal filicides of illegitimate children that took place in Helsinki the latter half of the 1850s (see above) may have inspired Tsar Alexander II to propose that the neonaticide problem be solved by building a network of foundling homes in Finland, following existing Russian and Western European examples. Especially in the eighteenth century, such homes had been

established in Eastern, Central and Southern Europe partly to prevent infanticide (neonaticide) and partly to protect the honor of families whose daughters had given birth to illegitimate children (Ransel 1988, 8–105). Resulting from extreme economic exigencies, married couples also had to abandon their children to foundling homes in nineteenth-century Russia and Southern Europe (Fuchs 2005, 230–31).

The Tsar's proposal, however, was abruptly rejected by the Finnish debaters as having a morally corrupting effect on lower-class women, an argument typical of northern Protestant societies, whose value systems stressed individuals' own responsibility for their actions. The foundling hospitals were also alleged to be unlawful as they offered an opportunity for unwed mothers to conceal their crime of fornication. Another reason for rejecting these institutions was that they had caused severe problems elsewhere since child abandonment had increased to vast proportions in countries where these institutions had been established—for example, in France, Italy, Ireland, and Russia. Moreover, the high mortality in these institutions was the main argument evinced to oppose their establishment in Finland (Ransel 1988, 30–105). In the United Kingdom, a bare subsistence for poor single mothers was also provided in austere workhouses (Bartley 2000, 105), but similar institutions in Finland were mainly associated with penitentiaries and thus shunned by many single mothers who did not want to lose what was left of their respectability by being designated as vagrants, which would be a legal ground for committing them to such an institution.

In the Finnish public debate of the late 1850s, the (assumed) free sex lives of proletarian women were seen as a greater moral threat than the occasional loss of innocent lives, and raising the people's moral standards was regarded as the only way to prevent neonaticide. The corruption of sexual morals, which in fact was a result of the reduced economic ability of members of the landless proletariat to get married, was blamed not on such structural factors but rather on the immorality of the individual perpetrators and the liberal law reforms of the Swedish King Gustav III in the late eighteenth century, which had aimed to reduce the public humiliation that illegitimate mothers had to endure after giving birth (newspaper articles about foundling homes and neonaticides: "Om hittebarnshus," *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, No. 126, June 4, 1858; "Landsorterna," *Helsingfors Tidningar*, No. 44, June 4, 1858; "Hittebarnshus utan prydnad," *Vasabladet* No. 26, June 26, 1858; "Ett och annat om Barnhus," *Åbo Underrättelser* No. 51, July 2, 1858; "Något om barnamord," *Åbo Tidningar*, No. 56, July 20, 1858; "Om barnhus," *Åbo Tidningar*, No. 89, November

12, 1858; [untitled], *Åbo Tidningar*, No. 93, November 26, 1858; also Lindstedt Cronberg 1997).

It is obvious that the extent of child abandonment was not as great in Finland as in countries with foundling hospitals, but the price for this was undoubtedly paid in the numbers of neonaticides and filicides. Child beggary also increased to become a visible social problem in Finland, a development that also hardened common attitudes toward the rural underclass. For example, there were cases where orphaned children under seven years of age were left on their own to survive by begging from house to house at the mercy of local people in order to avoid burdening the parish poor-relief funds (VHO, *alistusakti Ece* 28:1849).

Instead of establishing foundling homes, Tsar Alexander II issued a decree aimed at the prevention of neonaticide in May 1861 (“Hittebarnshus i Finland,” *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, No. 126, June 4, 1858; “Åtgärder förekommande af barnamord,” *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, No. 128, June 5, 1861). The new element in this provision was that the responsibility of families and midwives to supervise unmarried women was in principle extended from the pre-natal to the post-natal period. Families and midwives were ordered to inform the poor-relief authorities if a parturient lacked a source of livelihood. It is very possible that the Tsar’s decree was also an expression of his desire to prevent the filicides of older illegitimate children; at least he was acquainted with the tragic histories leading to up these crimes from dealing with clemency pleas relating to them.

## CONCLUSIONS

In pre-industrial Europe, a child homicide victim was most often an illegitimate newborn infant who was murdered or abandoned by its mother. Homicides in which the victims were older children of the perpetrators have been overshadowed by these neonaticides, both in terms of the concern that they caused to contemporaries and as an object of systematic research. The marginality of the murders of non-neonate children is reflected in the fact that, for example, in Finland in the 1850s, the reported parental child homicides of victims over twenty-four hours old, here referred to as filicides, accounted for only 5 percent of the sum total of neonaticides.

The source material of this study consists of 130 non-neonate filicide trials from the 1810s to the 1850s in Finland. Although these crimes were rare, the changes in the nature of filicide reflected the increasing social problems in pre-industrial nineteenth-century Finland. Over half of both maternal and paternal offenders

came from the lowest strata of society. Moreover, unlike in the eighteenth century, unmarried mothers were accused in court not only of neonaticide but also increasingly of the filicide of their non-neonate children. In a third of all filicide cases and in two-thirds of maternal filicides, the perpetrator was a single mother, and the main motivation for the crime was overwhelmingly economic. The reasons for the development were population growth and the proletarianization undermining single mothers' opportunities to earn a living for themselves and their children.

Owing to the large number of non-neonate infanticides and filicides committed by single mothers, maternal filicides accounted for a majority (60 percent) of all child victims in this material, while as many as two-thirds of the *legitimate child victims* were killed by their fathers. The age of the victims of paternal filicide was noticeably higher than that of the victims of maternal filicide, and particularly of those killed by single mothers, whose victims were mostly under three years of age.

However, difficulties in supporting the children as well as the diminishing opportunities for marriage were reflected not only in filicides committed by single mothers but also in those perpetrated by widowed fathers. Even more dramatic consequences of a dire economic situation were the simultaneous filicides of more than one victim committed by fathers who were crofters or dependent lodgers under threat of eviction following distraint or in a delusional febrile state caused by malnutrition. All in all, the livelihood problems of one or both of the parents were a background factor in half of the filicide cases in this research material, and nearly 40 percent of the reported perpetrators were single parents.

Crimes of desperation of this kind, that is, child homicides motivated by dire distress over the livelihood of the members of the family, took place in periods of crisis and were, therefore, overshadowed by contemporary social problems on a larger scale. Consequently, the filicide of older children did not arouse moral panic or concern among the authorities, nor, unlike neonaticide, was the phenomenon discussed in the press. Moreover, non-neonate filicide committed by unmarried women was not seen as a matter of sexual morality on the same scale as neonaticide. Although they were unmarried, women who committed non-neonate filicide had not concealed their pregnancies in order to avoid the judicial and economic consequences of their illicit extramarital relationships, nor had they used murder as a tool to maintain their virtuous reputation. Rather, their acts of filicide were most often the result of a dire situation following their unsuccessful attempts to live up to their responsibilities in supporting their children.

Even so, apart from the attempt to conceal the shame ensuing from an



extramarital pregnancy, many of the background factors that were present in neonaticide also lay behind the filicide of older children committed by unmarried mothers. The loss of work and social isolation, the fear of which motivated many neonaticides, had also become everyday realities for some single mothers who committed non-neonate infanticide or filicide. Mainly because they feared that they would have a corrupting effect on the sexual morality of proletarian women, the authorities, who stressed individuals' responsibility for their actions, refused to create specific forms of social support for mothers of illegitimate children, a measure which might have prevented not only neonaticide but also other types of filicide. This is demonstrated by the fact that reported filicides committed by poor widowed mothers, whose dire situation usually aroused compassion in their communities and whose moral right to poor relief was not questioned, were extremely rare.

## APPENDIX 1

Tables 1a–1e: Filicides in Finland: three types of poverty-related filicides and total number of filicides, chronological and regional incidence in years 1810–19 (district of Vaasa court of appeal, including three provinces), and years 1830–59 (Grand Duchy of Finland, i.e., the jurisdictional districts of Turku, Vaasa, and Vyborg courts of appeal including seven provinces).

Province / Type of Poverty	Um**	OP	O	PRF Total	Fil. Total
Kuopio	6	1	0	7	7
Vaasa	1	1	0	2	2
Oulu	1	1	1	3	3
Total, Provinces	8	3	1	12	12

Table 1a. Filicides in 1810–19, District of Vaasa court of appeal.

Province/Type of Poverty	Um**	OP	O	PRF Total	Fil. Total
Uusimaa	3	0	1	4	7
Turku	0	2	1	3	4
Häme	4	1	0	5	8
Heinola/Mikkeli	2	1	0	3	5
Kuopio	2	4	0	6	8
Vaasa	1	0	1	2	7
Oulu	0	2	0	2	3
Vyborg	0	0	3	3	3
Total, Provinces	12	10	6	28	45

Table 1b. Filicides in 1830–39, Grand Duchy of Finland.

Province/Type of Poverty	Um**	OP	O	PRF Total	Fil. Total
Uusimaa	2	0	0	2	3
Turku	1	0	0	1	5
Häme	2	1	0	3	5
Heinola/Mikkeli	2	1	0	3	5
Kuopio	1	0	0	1	1
Vaasa	1	2	1	4	4
Oulu	0	1	1	2	3
Vyborg	2	0	0	2	2
Total, provinces	11	5	2	18	28

Table 1c. Filicides 1840–49, Grand Duchy of Finland.

Province/Type of Poverty	Um**	OP	O	PRF Total	Fil. Total
Uusimaa	4	0	0	4	6
Turku	0	0	0	0	1
Häme	3	0	0	3	6
Heinola/Mikkeli	1	1	2	4	3
Kuopio	0	1	4	5	5
Vaasa	2	0	2	4	6
Oulu	2	0	1	3	4
Vyborg	0	5	0	5	5
Total, provinces	12	7	9	28	36

Table 1d. Filicides 1850–59, Grand Duchy of Finland.\*

Province/Type of Poverty	PRF**	Fil. Total
Uusimaa	10	16
Turku	4	10
Häme	11	19
Heinola/Mikkeli	10	13
Kuopio	12	14
Vaasa	10	17
Oulu	7	10
Vyborg	10	10
Total, provinces	74	109

Table 1e. Number of poverty-related filicides and all filicides, Grand Duchy of Finland 1830–1859.

\* Poverty-related filicides (PRF) here: verdicts being passed on single mothers, farmhands, cottagers, dependent lodgers, former soldiers and their wives, vagrants, and beggars. Crofters, freeholder peasants and craftsmen and their wives are not considered to be poor except in cases where economic distress or hallucinations due to disease caused by malnutrition were a background factor for their crimes. Figures are based on the number of victims.

\*\* Um: Unmarried mothers, OP: other poor, O: Other filicides with a background of economic distress, Fil. Total: total number of filicides.

In the figures presented elsewhere in this article, filicides motivated by other reasons than economic distress even if the accused was a member of the poorest population groups are excluded when dealing with the proportion of poverty-related filicides compared to all filicides.

Sources for tables 1a–1e: The verdicts and files of Finnish courts of appeal and the Senate, 1810–20 (Vaasa court of appeal), 1830–60 (Turku, Vaasa, and Vyborg courts of appeal). In addition to the figures shown in tables 1a–b, the figures of this article include two cases of filicide from the district of Turku court of appeal committed in the 1810s, material which was found in the archive of the Senate. It also includes six cases of filicides committed in the 1820s, the verdicts on which were given in the 1830s.

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# OUT OF POVERTY: THE AHRENBURG SIBLINGS, 1860–1920

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## ABSTRACT

This article discusses how three illegitimate children of a poor maidservant built their lives in Finland at the end of the long nineteenth century. The eldest followed in her mother's footsteps by becoming a maidservant with an illegitimate child of her own, but the two younger ones cut loose from the traditional setting of the family, both geographically and socio-economically. They joined the middle class, which was then emerging and taking shape at the turn of the century. This article shows how the rise of the younger Ahrenberg siblings was made possible by the new social structures in Finnish society: increasing educational openings for common people; economic liberalization; and the emergence of new career opportunities within the expanding field of public sector social work. The article also analyzes the impact these changes had on the self-understanding of the siblings. Moreover, the article sheds light on the means of mutual assistance by which the Ahrenberg siblings helped each other seize the new opportunities and fight the insecurity of Finnish society at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

## INTRODUCTION

The article discusses the Ahrenberg family from Kisko parish, Southern Finland. The family members include Edla Ahrenberg (1846–1924), a crofter's daughter, and her three illegitimate children, Olga Maria (1868–1915), Mauritz Johan (1874–1916), and Elin Alina (1883–1923). Elin Ahrenberg changed her name to Aarrevaara in 1907. Here, her original family name, Ahrenberg, is used throughout the article, with the exception of the references.

The article's point of departure is the downfall of Edla Ahrenberg: as a young maidservant, she committed a crime and was sentenced to imprisonment. Within a short period of time, this maidservant of good reputation became a poor and a shunned vagrant—a breakdown of her social status among the landless people of Kisko parish. The term *landless people* refers here to the group of non-land-owning rural people who were living outside the traditional system of four estates (nobility, clergy, bourgeoisie, freeholder peasantry). The group consisted of tenant farmers, rural wage earners, and casual laborers who were usually hired at farms during the busy summertime but left unemployed in the winter.

The article analyzes the ways in which the three children of Edla Ahrenberg built their lives. The eldest, Olga Ahrenberg, followed in her mother's footsteps by becoming a maidservant and having an illegitimate son. She lived her life in Kisko and the neighboring parishes. The middle child, Mauritz Ahrenberg, volunteered for the Finnish Guard, and after serving as a regular for a couple of years, he started a family and a business of his own as a rural tradesman in Western Finland. The youngest, Elin Ahrenberg, attended Kisko elementary school, achieving excellent grades, and eventually became a municipal poorhouse directress. Her longest post, nine years, was in Lempäälä parish, Southwestern Finland. The article seeks to answer the following question: why and how were the two younger children able to cut loose from the socio-economic status of the family and make their way to the threshold of the emerging middle class?

Methodologically, the article is a biographical case study. The case-study method has been chosen because it is the best way to access individual lives in depth. At the same time, the research subjects are approached as “bookmarks of their time” (Florin 2014). This means that the Ahrenberg family members will be bound to the world they lived in. They are analyzed in relation to the values, practices, and ways of life that were commonly favored in their own society. In other words, the role of that particular society in enabling the particular kind of lives becomes visible (Schaser 2008; Caine 2010; Possing 2012).

In this article, the term *socio-economic status* refers to conditions that “determined the access to economic resources, thereby reflecting group-specific differences in the standard of living in terms of nutrition, housing, and vulnerability to economic hardship” (Dröbe and Lundh 2010, 348). The term *middle class*, in turn, refers here to the new social middle group of Finnish society, emerging outside the four estates towards the end of the nineteenth century. The group consisted of artisans, farmers, lower officials, and civil servants, and the petit bourgeois of the cities,

all more or less in pursuit of upward social mobility (Rinne and Jauhiainen 1988, 14, 19–20; Häggman 1994, 23–26; Haapala 1995, 97–122). In addition, there were ambitious individuals emerging from the lower social orders—the landless people—who got a foot in the door of the new middle class, thus creating the “rags to (relative) riches” stories of their time. As a case study, the younger Ahrenberg siblings can be regarded as an example of such a story.

The new middle groups both benefited from the legislative, economic, and cultural changes in society, and accelerated that change by their own actions. In Finland, one of the key factors behind the emergence of the middle groups was education, which was becoming increasingly available to common people after the Primary School Act of 1866. Twenty years after the passing of the Act, 79 percent of the rural municipalities had one or more primary schools, and in 1903, there was only one municipality totally lacking a primary school (Statistics 1908, 96).

By educating themselves and their offspring, and by creating a cultural ethos of their own, the members of the new middle groups aimed to set themselves apart from the uneducated masses as well as from the traditional elite, which was regarded as old-fashioned and decadent (see Marja Vuorinen’s article in this volume). With education came a more profound realization of the individual’s opportunity to rise to greater things and affect the course of his or her life. Socio-economic status was no longer seen as a quality strictly bound to inherited economic, social, and cultural capital, but as an attribute dependent on individual action and decision-making (Markkola 2003, 135; Nieminen 2003, 262–65; Dribe and Svensson 2008, 126). This way of thinking gradually eroded the foundations of the *ancien régime* based on the idea of inherited socio-economic standing within (or outside) the traditional system of the four estates. In a broader sense, the endeavor of the middle groups was part of the process in which the old way of dividing people into four estates was replaced by a class division as a means of social distinction (Häggman 1994, 23–26; Haapala 1995, 97–122).

It should be noted, however, that as ideologically important as the elementary schools were, the change in society brought about by education was by no means sudden or dramatic. This was because in the early 1900s the Finnish school system was still far from comprehensive. The network of schools did not reach all school-aged children, and, in terms of total coverage of education, Finland was behind other Northern and Western European countries. According to the 1910 census, half of the adult population was still illiterate (Haapala 1995, 39).

Furthermore, the emerging middle class was not homogenous. For the young folk moving up from the lower orders, elementary school or occupational training could open the door to the *lower*-middle class. On the other hand, the path to the *upper*-middle class remained barred for them for decades, partly because secondary schooling, leading to upper-middle class professions, was considered too expensive. As late as 1910, only 7 percent of the age group entered secondary education (Haapala 1995, 39). Thus, although the expanding primary education may have increased the opportunities for social mobility for the lower social orders, all in all, the growing importance of education in society helped the better-off social groups to gain and secure the more privileged positions within the middle class (Maas and van Leeuwen 2002, 191).

The article seeks to open a new perspective on the modernization of Finnish society around 1900 by discussing the interplay between societal change and individual lives. On the one hand, there are the major structural changes that made Mauritz and Elin Ahrenberg's social ascent possible *in theory*: first, the increase in educational opportunities for the common people (Alapuro 1994; Häggman 1994; Haapala 1995; Markkola 2003; Nieminen 2003; Rahikainen 2003); second, industrialization and economic liberalization (Ahvenainen, Pihkala, and Rasila 1982; Kekkonen 1987; Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992; Konttinen 1993; Haapala 1995; Pihkala 2001); and third, the emergence of new career opportunities for women within the expanding field of public sector social work (Vattula 1981; Rinne and Jauhiainen 1988; Anttonen 1994; Satka 1994; Henriksson 1998; Rahikainen and Räisänen 2001; Henriksson and Wrede 2004; Annola 2013). These changes and their impact in society have been widely discussed elsewhere.

On the other hand, less attention has been paid to the subtler mechanisms by which the common people were able to actually seize the new opportunities *in practice*. In this article, the focus is on these mechanisms, the ways in which people of humble background managed to weave their lives into the fabric of the new society. The article also aims to discuss how the widening range of opportunities influenced the self-understanding of common people. Discussing the Ahrenberg siblings' fight for a better future also sheds light on their common enemy. It is obvious they were trying to escape poverty. But as poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon, it is justified to ask what kind of poverty the Ahrenberg family was experiencing and what it meant for them to be poor. It is also worth pondering how the available source material reflects not only social ascent but also poverty.

The source material for this article consists of official documents and records kept by both secular and ecclesiastical authorities: communion books, poll tax registers, court records, and military records. Contemporary newspapers and periodicals are also used where applicable. The picture of the Ahrenberg family is enhanced by analyzing private documents such as letters, school reports, and work references. The letters include material written by Elin Ahrenberg at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as two letters from Liisa Aarrevaara, the granddaughter of Mauritz Ahrenberg. These letters were written in 1992 and 2008 in response to inquiries sent by Professor Mikko Mäntysaari<sup>1</sup> and the present author.

### **THE DOWNFALL OF EDLA AHRENBURG**

Edla Ahrenberg was born in Kisko parish in July 1846, the youngest daughter of a crofter, Carl Ahrenberg, and his wife, Maria Helena Salin (Kisko Birth and Baptism Records 1796–1852). The family was farming a tenant farm called Haukia, belonging to Finnari farm in Jyly village. After the demise of the parents within a short period of time, 1865 to 1866, Edla Ahrenberg moved to the neighboring Pohja parish to work as a maidservant in the household of a civil engineer, Karl Johan Broberg (Kisko Death and Burial Records 1839–1900; Kisko Moving Records 1839–1869).

Edla Ahrenberg trod a path typical for young rural women in Finland as well as in Northwestern Europe in general: country girls and boys—and especially those coming from the lower social orders—were supposed to work as maidservants or farmhands for a couple of years before marriage (Steedman 2004; Rahikainen 2006, 28–29, 35; Dribe and Lundh 2010, 352–53). At twenty-one, Edla Ahrenberg was somewhat old to be leaving home for the first time, which may have been because she took care of her ailing parents.

Things did not work out for Edla Ahrenberg in Pohja: in August 1868, she was summoned to Pohja-Tenhola district court and prosecuted for theft and for disturbing the peace of the Sabbath. During the two hearings in court, Edla Ahrenberg willingly confessed to having stolen woolen yarn from the nearby Antskog textile factory several times during the previous year. She had also stolen two banknotes of

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1 Professor Mikko Mäntysaari approached Liisa Aarrevaara in order to write an article on Elin Ahrenberg (Aarrevaara) as a pioneer in the field of Finnish social work. The article was published in 1992 (see Mäntysaari 1992). Professor Mäntysaari was kind enough to place the material he had collected for his research at the disposal of the present author. The collection includes copies of the letters Elin Ahrenberg wrote to her employer Johannes Lohilampi at the beginning of the twentieth century. The original letters are stored in the Johannes Lohilampi Archive, Sammatti, Finland.

one hundred Finnish *markka* (marks) from the suitcase of her employer's guest the previous summer (Court Record 1868). Moreover, as the court record reveals, four silver teaspoons were also involved:

Edla Johanna Ahrenberg explained that she had followed [her employer and his guests] to the said picnic as a maidservant; that Engineer Broberg had a cellar in which the service for the picnic had been stored; that upon leaving for the picnic, four silver teaspoons had been forgotten in the basement; that Edla Johanna Ahrenberg, a day after the picnic, or Monday morning, had taken the said teaspoons and hidden them in a sock found in Broberg's attic.<sup>2</sup>

It came out in the first hearing that Edla Ahrenberg had tried to get rid of one of the stolen banknotes by asking her elder sister Kristina Malmberg to purchase ten ells of shirt fabric with it, but the local shopkeeper had grown suspicious of a humble woman possessing such a large sum of money. The police soon traced the banknote to Edla Ahrenberg herself (Court Record 1868).

The district court found Edla Ahrenberg guilty and sentenced her to a fine of 672 marks, 60 pennies. As there was absolutely no way Edla Ahrenberg could have paid the fine, the pecuniary penalty was replaced with corporal punishment, which in her case meant birching. Because the court could not ignore the fact that Ahrenberg was heavily pregnant, the birching was to be executed only after the birth of the child. In the meantime, Ahrenberg was to be held in Uusimaa County Prison in Helsinki, where she had already been detained between the two hearings. In addition, Edla Ahrenberg was subjected to an ecclesiastical punishment: she was to repent her sins and beg for absolution in front of a pastor and two witnesses. In the fall of 1868, Edla Ahrenberg was sent off to Uusimaa County Prison (Court Record 1868).

Why did Edla Ahrenberg's career as a maidservant turn into a series of thefts? The court record gives no indication of her personal motives, but it is possible that her choices had to do with the Finnish Famine of 1866–68. Although Pohja and Kisko were not among the worst-hit regions, living conditions were poor there as well. For example, in April 1868, the local newspaper *Sanomia Turusta* reported on hunger and disease in Kisko, and it is clearly visible in the parish register that typhoid especially was carrying people off in Pohja (*Sanomia Turusta* 1868; Pohja Death and Burial Records 1849–1900).

<sup>2</sup> All translations are by the author.

It may be that not even a position in an engineer's household was enough to ease the insecurity the young maidservant must have been experiencing amidst the news of the misery. The situation became even gloomier during the spring and summer of 1868, as Edla Ahrenberg must have realized that she was expecting a child. As the pregnancy became more visible week by week, it was quite obvious that she was sooner or later going to lose her job at the Broberg house.

The first thefts in the winter of 1868 may have happened on the spur of the moment, but as the offences became more frequent in the summer, one cannot help thinking that Edla Ahrenberg was desperately trying to ensure her survival by stealing. She was especially keen on stealing or purchasing material for knitting and needlework. Her "specialization" was probably due to the fact that she was living close to a textile factory, but it may also imply that she was actually planning a new life as a knitter or seamstress. There is some support for this speculation in the account of Liisa Aarrevaara, according to whom her great-grandmother, Edla Ahrenberg, earned her living as a dressmaker (Aarrevaara 1992; 2008). Although no official document has been found of Edla Ahrenberg's career as a dressmaker, it is possible that she was indeed adept at needlework and intended to make a living out of it.

Edla Ahrenberg's daughter Olga was born in Uusimaa County Prison in December 1868, and soon thereafter Ahrenberg was granted absolution by the prison chaplain for her fornication. On being released from prison, Edla Ahrenberg returned to her home parish, Kisko, where another absolution was granted in March 1869—this time for theft and disturbing the peace of the Sabbath (Viapori Birth and Baptism Records 1815–1891; Kisko Criminal Records 1826–1889). Whether the birching was actually executed at some point during the process is not known.

As the official records provide no details, it is not easy to find out how exactly Edla Ahrenberg organized her life after returning to her home parish in 1869. In poll tax registers, as well as in the communion books, she appears in connection with Jyly village, but on a separate list of people with no fixed abode (Kisko Poll Tax Registers 1870–1910; Kisko Communion Books 1863–1899). It should be noted that her new status does not refer to her criminal past but rather to her difficulties in finding employment (Pukero 2009, 22).

Although Edla Ahrenberg had atoned for her crime in the eyes of both the secular and ecclesiastical authorities, there was no way of going back to normal. It is likely that no one wanted to hire a servant with a criminal past. In the late 1800s, servants applying for a new post were obliged to present a small printed booklet with grades for health, honesty, sobriety, diligence, chastity, and so on, given by



previous employers (Vuorela 1977, 659). While it is not known whether in Edla Ahrenberg's case the booklet was checked, she was nevertheless unable to find a position as a domestic servant.

The account of Edla Ahrenberg's great-granddaughter, Liisa Aarrevaara, gives an impression of Edla being shunned by her relatives in Kisko (Aarrevaara 1992). However, according to the parish registers, it seems fair to assume that Edla Ahrenberg was actually living at her old home, Haukia tenant farm (see also Miettinen 2012, 268–70). After the death of Carl Ahrenberg, the croft was taken care of by Edla Ahrenberg's elder sister Henrika and her husband, Gustaf Lindfors. Living at Haukia, in close contact with her sister's family, Edla Ahrenberg could probably manage somehow by carrying out temporary tasks and odd jobs available in her immediate surroundings in Jyly village. It is not hard to imagine Edla Ahrenberg putting her alleged needlework skills to use at this point in her life (see also Markkola 1989, 50–51; Markkola 1994, 113).

The parish registers even imply that there was a closeness between the two sisters: when Mauritz, the second illegitimate child of Edla Ahrenberg, was born in December 1874, Henrika and Gustaf Lindfors were registered as his godparents (Kisko Birth and Baptism Records 1853–1886). Henrika Lindfors was no stranger to a stained reputation: she had herself given birth to an illegitimate son in Karjalohja parish seventeen years earlier. As Henrika had married afterwards and ended up as a respectable crofter's wife, life had turned out just fine for her and her son. Henrika's son was actually entrusted with the Haukia tenant farm after the death of Henrika's husband in 1887 (Karjalohja Birth and Baptism Records 1839–1886; Kisko Marriage Records 1683–1874; Kisko Communion Books 1880–1889). It should be noted that there was a tradition of godchild–godparent relationships inside the Ahrenberg family: Kristina Malmberg (née Ahrenberg) and her husband were marked as the godparents of Henrika Ahrenberg's son (Karjalohja Birth and Baptism Records 1839–1886). Edla Ahrenberg and her son were included as a part of this tradition.

Judging from the parish registers, Edla Ahrenberg was not totally ostracized by the rest of the community. This observation is substantiated by the work of Tiina Miettinen (2012), who has analyzed the lives of unmarried women in Häme Province. Miettinen suggests that from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries in Häme, women with illegitimate children may have been separated from their families in the communion books but not in real life. They were not driven away from their homes but, in fact, helped by their families (Miettinen 2012). In the case of

Edla Ahrenberg, the supposed intrafamilial aid was informal in nature. According to the Poor Relief Act of 1879, parents were obliged to support children under fifteen, and children were supposed to take care of parents unable to work. The municipal poor relief would be forthcoming only if these lineal methods of help failed. However, siblings like Henrika Lindfors and Edla Ahrenberg were under no obligation to support each other.

On the other hand, it is impossible to know if Edla Ahrenberg was nevertheless despised *within* the context of informal intrafamilial aid—or whether the attitude of her sister’s family towards her changed over time. In 1883, Edla Ahrenberg had a third illegitimate child. The daughter, Elin Ahrenberg, was christened at Kisko parsonage, with one of the parsonage maidservants and a crofter’s wife as her godmothers. No immediate family was involved that time (Kisko Birth and Baptism Records 1853–1886).

In 1884, Edla Ahrenberg’s eldest child, Olga, came of age and left Jyly village in order to work as a maidservant at Liuhto farm, Kurkela village, which was to be the first in her long series of positions in domestic service. Olga Ahrenberg led a fairly independent life, changing her surname to Lehtinen in the years 1903 to 1906 (Kisko Communion Books 1880–1889; Ahrenberg 1890–1915). It is unknown whether she actually maintained a connection with her mother and her siblings. However, there is no recollection of her among the living members of Mauritz Ahrenberg’s family—for example, in her first letter, Liisa Aarrevaara did not even mention Olga among the children of Edla Ahrenberg, and in her second letter, Liisa Aarrevaara indicated that from the point of Mauritz’s family, Olga simply “disappeared without a trace” (Aarrevaara 1992, 2008).

It may well be that Olga Ahrenberg deliberately tried to avoid Jyly village, and thus alienated herself from the rest of the family. Her childhood had probably been harder than her siblings’—after all, she had been born in a prison and forced to live her first years in the village while the sentence of Edla Ahrenberg was still fresh in living memory. Nevertheless, the records of Kisko, Perniö, and Halikko parishes reveal that Olga Ahrenberg by no means “disappeared” in adulthood but trod, rather paradoxically, a path similar to that of her mother. Olga, too, remained unmarried and became the mother of an illegitimate child as her son Arne was born in Halikko in 1901. On the other hand, unlike her mother, Olga Ahrenberg was able to get service positions in spite of the child *and* the fact that she suffered from a speech defect, a stutter (Ahrenberg 1890–1915; Kisko Communion Books 1880–1889).

On the whole, illegitimacy was not uncommon in rural Southern Finland. According to Pirjo Markkola, every third maidservant gave birth to an illegitimate child in nineteenth-century rural Häme. Kisko was located on the boundary between the two other southern provinces (Turku and Pori, and Uusimaa), and in both of these the overall illegitimacy rate was high, especially among the landless population (Nieminen 1951, 289–90; Markkola 1994, 60–61). In that sense, the Ahrenberg women, Edla, Olga, and Henrika, were not unusual. The lives of Olga Ahrenberg and her aunt, Henrika Ahrenberg, further suggest that women with illegitimate children could have a relatively satisfactory future if they were able to go on working or contract a marriage—whereas a crime was not easily forgotten by the employers.

With Olga gone, Edla Ahrenberg still had to support her two younger children, Mauritz and Elin. The official records suggest that she could not perform her duty. According to the 1880–1905 poll tax registers, Edla Ahrenberg was not directly supported by municipal poor relief but was exempted from paying the poll tax because of her poverty (on female-headed households' overrepresentation among poverty-related tax-exempted households, see Miikka Voutilainen's article). However, the communion book of 1880–1889 shows that the tax relief was not enough: in 1887, Edla Ahrenberg had to send Mauritz, who was now in his early teens, as a foster child to Uusikylä farm, Kavasto village. In the 1910 poll tax record, Edla Ahrenberg is finally mentioned as a person receiving municipal poor relief (Kisko Poll Tax Registers 1880–1910; Kisko Communion Books 1880–1889).

### **MAURITZ AHRENBURG AND THE WORLD OF SELF-MADE MEN**

In February 1893, eighteen-year-old Mauritz Ahrenberg volunteered for military service in the Finnish Guard (*Suomen Kaarti*) (Ahrenberg 1892; Recruitment Records).<sup>3</sup> By volunteering, Mauritz Ahrenberg entered the army rather exceptionally, three years before the age of conscription, choosing a three-year term of service in the Finnish elite troops (Ekman 2006, 378–80; Talvitie 2012). Mauritz's choice was the first step away from the traditional setting of the Ahrenberg family and a likely future as a farmhand in Kisko region. This way he was also deviating from the customary way the youth of the lower social orders led their lives before marriage, as described above.

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3 The military records concerning Mauritz Ahrenberg's career in the Finnish Guard were kindly brought to the attention of the author by two researchers who specialize in military history, Kari J. Talvitie and Tuomas Hoppu.

Mauritz Ahrenberg was qualified as a marksman in the Finnish Guard, and apparently did well, because six months later he was one of the four men in his company selected to be trained as non-commissioned officers. In 1894, Ahrenberg passed the examination required of the trainees, after which he was first entitled to the military rank of junior sergeant. In February 1896, Mauritz Ahrenberg was transferred to Kruunupyö Company, Western Finland, as a junior platoon officer, and in November 1896, he resigned. The transfer and his resignation probably had to do with the fact that Mauritz Ahrenberg was married to Helga Mäkelä in 1897. The bride was a farmer's daughter from Vimpeli parish, located close to Kruunupyö. Eventually Mauritz and Helga Ahrenberg settled in the nearby Veteli parish and started a family there (Finnish Guard Records 1893–1896; Kruunupyö Reserve Company Records 1896; Ahrenberg 1907–1916; Aarrevaara 1992, 2008).

The Guard records shed light on two things of special interest. First, when Mauritz Ahrenberg was listed as a volunteer, he was also listed as a *shoemaker* by profession. Given that he was only eighteen years old, it is probable that he was not really an independent craftsman but a youth who happened to have acquired some skills in shoemaking. When Ahrenberg was being raised as a foster child in Kavasto village between the years 1887 and 1889, there was, for example, a shoemaker on the nearby Wiiari farm, so it would have been relatively easy for the young Mauritz to learn something about shoemaking (Kisko Birth and Baptism Records 1887–1900). In Veteli, the title of shoemaker offered him an alternate occupational niche (Veteli Birth and Baptism Records 1897). By presenting himself as a shoemaker, Mauritz Ahrenberg once again rejected the idea of adopting the identity of a farm-hand or a vagrant. He was building a new kind of self-understanding as a self-employed person.

Second, what is interesting in Mauritz Ahrenberg's military career is that, in addition to military skills, the training included basic academic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic (Talvitie 2012). As superficial literacy (reading) was required of all young people wishing to complete the compulsory confirmation school, Mauritz Ahrenberg could read tolerably even before he volunteered for the military. However, it is safe to assume that the all-round training he received in the Finnish Guard offered him a key to social advancement. When the second child of Mauritz Ahrenberg was born in Veteli in 1899, the father was listed as a *tradesman* by profession (Veteli Birth and Baptism Records 1899). It appears that Mauritz had started a business of his own. The first business attempt in Veteli was not entirely successful, however. For example, in April 1905, Ahrenberg appeared as a debtor

on a protest list published by a financial newspaper. He was to pay a 200-marks bill to a hat factory in Tampere (*Kauppa-lehti* 1905; on indebted merchants, see Riina Turunen's and Maare Paloheimo's articles in this volume).

The path of Mauritz Ahrenberg from a penniless foster child to an entrepreneur was eased by legislative reforms. His opportunities were enhanced by economic liberalization, started in 1859 with the passing of the Freedom of Land Trade Act, continued in the 1860s with the abolition of the Guild System and Hired Labor Act, and completed in 1879 with the passing of three new acts: the Freedom of Movement Act, the Freedom of Profession Act, and the above-mentioned Poor Relief Act. The reforms obliged all adult citizens capable of work to support themselves, but also granted them freedom to make their living where and how they wanted. Because of the reforms, in the 1890s, Mauritz Ahrenberg was free to ply the trade of a shoemaker, or to start a business of his own as a rural tradesman. Had he been born a generation earlier, all this would have been much more difficult, if not downright impossible, for him.

In 1907, Mauritz Ahrenberg and his family moved from Veteli to the neighboring parish of Lappajärvi and started a new business in Itäkylä village, relatively close to the birthplace of his wife in Vimpeli parish. Mauritz Ahrenberg sold dress fabrics and clothing at a “moderately low price” (Ahrenberg 1907–1916; *Ilkka* 1907a). He became one of the heralds of the modern time: along with economic liberalization, industrialization, and the increase in retail trade, factory-made fabrics and clothing soon triumphed over home-made products. It is somewhat ironic that Mauritz Ahrenberg's business in fact threatened the livelihood of vagrant women, many of whom supported themselves by working as village seamstresses, as Edla Ahrenberg may have done (Markkola 1989, 48–52).

Judging by the contemporary newspapers, the time in Lappajärvi seems to have been relatively prosperous for Ahrenberg and his growing family. Quite quickly, Mauritz Ahrenberg became a relatively prominent figure in his new community. For instance, in 1907, he was voted onto the Lappajärvi Assessment Board (*Ilkka* 1907b). This was a position of trust—the function of the assessment board was to set tax rates individually for each parishioner.

The way Mauritz Ahrenberg settled into the clannish Western Finland community may have had something to do with the fact that he was married to a local girl. Helga Mäkelä's father, Juho Mäkelä, was a freeholder peasant with a relatively large property. He had been honored with the title of parish supervisor in the parish of Vimpeli (Norrena 1997, 29). For Mauritz Ahrenberg, Helga Mäkelä was a good

match, a passport into a new local network (see also Dribe and Svensson 2008, 128–29, 140; Dribe and Lundh 2010, 374). One could also ask whether Mauritz Ahrenberg's status as a worldly wise and enlightened newcomer in the community contributed to his position (see also Long 2005; Stewart 2006; Dribe and Svensson 2008; Dribe and Lundh 2010).

Mauritz Ahrenberg became one of the founders of Itäkylä Youth Association, established in 1909 (*Vaasa* 1909; Purola 2013, 63–64; Kivipelto 1983, 698). These youth associations, which sprang up throughout Finland at the turn of the century, were part of the process by which the traditional society of estates was slowly replaced by civic society. Whereas the society of estates was based on privilege and the concept of subservience, civic society was based on the notion of liberty and sovereignty of an individual. The new idea of sovereignty was manifest in the way people expressed themselves through the expanding press, their activity in political parties, and the growing number of associations, such as the youth associations. The core ideology was one of encountering each other as fellow citizens, free of the divisions imposed by the old system of four estates (Alapuro, Liikanen, Smeds, and Stenius 1989). And it was precisely people like Mauritz Ahrenberg—people born outside the system of estates but aspiring to a superior social status—who were keenly engaged in the emerging civic activity. For Mauritz Ahrenberg, the Itäkylä Youth Association offered an arena in which he was able to further strengthen his understanding of himself as an independent actor.

Mauritz Ahrenberg was apparently so well-off that it became possible for him to support his mother, as was his duty according to the law. Edla Ahrenberg left Kisko in order to live in her son's household in Veteli, accompanied by the eighteen-year-old Elin Ahrenberg (Aarrevaara 1992). The latter had completed both Kisko elementary school and confirmation school, and was now looking for a job as a girls' craft teacher in an elementary school. Luckily for her, such posts came open several times in Veteli parish in the years between 1901 and 1906 (Ahrenberg 1897; Ahrenberg 1902–1906; Kisko Communion Books 1890–1899). Thus, with the exception of Olga, the Ahrenberg family was briefly reunited. When Mauritz and his family moved to Lappajärvi in 1907, Edla Ahrenberg probably followed her son, but Elin parted company with them in order to work as a housekeeper in Sammatti parish, Southern Finland.

In the 1910s, Mauritz Ahrenberg's fortunes changed for the worse; he was afflicted by the Finnish national disease of the time, pulmonary tuberculosis. Growing rapidly weaker, Ahrenberg had to sell his business and buy a small patch

of land to ensure the survival of his family (*Ilkka* 1910; Aarrevaara 2008). It is not known whether Mauritz Ahrenberg had significant insurance or savings, but in any case his sickness radically undermined the financial standing of the family.

It seems that even the old mother, Edla Ahrenberg, once again had to face a precarious existence as Mauritz was dramatically failing to support her. Because she was officially still a resident of Kisko parish, she was sent back to Kisko, to be supported by the municipal poor relief there (Kisko Poll Tax Registers 1910). The extreme measures suggest that it was believed that Mauritz Ahrenberg was dying—in August 1911, Elin Ahrenberg wrote to her friend that Mauritz was so weak he could not speak properly, so that any day could be his last (Aarrevaara 1911).

Quite surprisingly, Mauritz Ahrenberg rallied from the first bout of illness, and in the years 1910 to 1916, he still had time to see three more children born into the family, and three of his sons pass away (Ahrenberg 1907–1916). At this point the roles of Mauritz Ahrenberg and his younger sister Elin reversed. Elin Ahrenberg had become a poorhouse directress, and in 1911, she was able to take Edla Ahrenberg to live with her at Vesanto poorhouse. In addition to organizing the care of the mother on a more pleasant and respectable basis, Elin Ahrenberg helped her brother's family by sending them money (Aarrevaara 1914). In April 1916, Mauritz Ahrenberg passed away at the age of forty-one, leaving his wife with four children, the youngest of whom was only seven months old (Aarrevaara 1916).

### **ELIN AHRENBURG AND THE WIDENING HORIZONS**

If military service was the passport to a better life for Mauritz Ahrenberg, the elementary school served to advance Elin Ahrenberg, the youngest of the siblings. In addition to two ambulatory schools, there was a proper elementary school available in Kisko, established as early as in the 1870s (Kvist 2000, 194).

Attending elementary school was not self-evident in nineteenth-century Finland. School education was mostly available to those children whose labor was not crucial to the survival of the family, that is, the offspring of the traditional elite and wealthy farmers. Schools were still rare, especially in the rural areas, and most parents considered education an unnecessary folly that prevented the children from learning real work (Markkola 1989, 39–57; Markkola 2003, 135). It is worth pondering how it became possible for Elin Ahrenberg, the daughter of a poor vagrant, to attend the school and become a prime example of the new society built on education.

First, school attendance did not necessarily become an economic burden for Elin Ahrenberg. A group of enlightened Kisko parishioners was actively trying

to ensure that as many children as possible could go to school regardless of their background. At the instigation of these people, the poorest pupils were given small grants at the annual school Christmas party. The grants were funded by private donations and the income from municipal taxation on spirits. Moreover, the upper floor of the school building was turned into a small hostel in order to accommodate the children whose homes were in the remote countryside (*Aura* 1890; *Aura* 1896; *Kvist* 2000, 194–96). For example, Haukia tenant farm was some ten kilometers away from the school.

Second, it appears that Elin Ahrenberg's mother did not object to her attending elementary school. Rather, elementary school may have seemed a relatively reasonable choice—especially as Elin Ahrenberg was a good pupil, receiving exceptionally high marks for reading in parish catechetical meetings and top grades at elementary school (*Kisko Communion Books* 1890–1899; *Ahrenberg* 1897). Edla Ahrenberg's positive attitude toward her daughter's education resembles a phenomenon common in the towns: because there was less suitable work available for children in an urban environment than in the rural communities, city children were able to attend school more regularly than their rural counterparts (*Haapala* 1995, 38–40; *Rahikainen* 2003, 162–66).

After completing elementary school in 1897 and coming of age in 1898, Elin Ahrenberg had an excellent school report with which to start her career but inadequate means to continue her studies at secondary school. Clearly unlike her mother and sister, she would not spend her youth in domestic service. Elin Ahrenberg's options were infinitely superior to those of her mother and sister, but nevertheless limited. This combination brought her both the freedom and the pain of making her own way in a changing society.

It is possible to follow Elin Ahrenberg's search by analyzing a letter she sent to the Helsinki Deaconess Institution in 1903 (*Ahrenberg* 1903) and two letters she addressed to the Chief Inspector of Poor Relief between the years 1906 and 1910 (*Huoltaja* 1923a; *Records of Received Letters*). More information is provided by the application Elin Ahrenberg submitted to the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1921, attaching all school reports and references (*Ahrenberg* 1897–1921). These documents evince four interesting points.

First, the documents show that Elin Ahrenberg tried to build her future by seeking forms of further education that did not require large financial investments. In 1902 and 1903, she studied at Elias Lönnrot Housekeeping School in Sammatti parish. The aim of the school was to teach young women of humble background



how to take care of the daily women's work on a farm by the standards of the rising middle groups, and, in the process, to elevate the simple country girls to patriotic citizens (Uniooni Naisasialiitto 1893, 14, 52; Ollila 1993, 56–65; Kallio 2002, 278–79). What became crucial for the attendance of poor girls like Elin Ahrenberg was the opportunity to apply for a free place by presenting evidence of impecuniousness. Elin Ahrenberg was granted a free place by reason of her limited economic means (Student Register 1902–1903).

In 1904, Elin Ahrenberg supplemented her education by taking independently a girls' craft teacher examination at Raahe Teachers' College. Apparently she did not take any classes but relied on the craft skills she had learned at elementary school or at home. The examiner, Sigrid Axelson, the drawing and craft teacher at the Teachers' College, gave Elin Ahrenberg a certificate that authorized her to work as a craft teacher at elementary schools (Ahrenberg 1904). Thus, at twenty-one, Elin Ahrenberg was qualified to work as a housekeeper and as a girls' craft teacher.

Second, the documents reveal that even though Elin Ahrenberg's posts as a substitute craft teacher in Veteli and as a housekeeper at Lohilampi farm in Sammatti must have eased the financial situation of the family, she was not happy with either of them. These jobs could not fulfill her expectations, because what she wanted from an occupation was not just salary, but a deeper sense of *vocation*. In her 1903 letter to the Helsinki Deaconess Institution, Elin Ahrenberg clearly articulates her urge to offer her life in the service of suffering fellow men, either as a missionary worker or a deaconess (Ahrenberg 1903).

Third, it is obvious that Elin Ahrenberg understood that there were still invisible divisions in society, which were hard to overcome. In her letter to the Deaconess Institution, she pointed out in an almost apologetic tone that she had not been able to educate herself "properly" because of her poor origins. The same undercurrent is present in the question Elin Ahrenberg addressed to the Chief Inspector of Poor Relief in 1910: she wanted to know if there was any hope at all of her becoming a poorhouse directress if she had not attended secondary school (Ahrenberg 1903; *Huoltaja* 1923a; Records of Received Letters). It seems that Elin Ahrenberg was anguished by the fact that the options open to her were restricted by her lack of secondary education.

On the other hand, Elin Ahrenberg must have known that secondary education was far beyond her reach. In nineteenth-century Finland, secondary schools were available for the daughters of more privileged families: for example, almost 75 percent of the students at girls' secondary schools were the daughters of civil

servants and the bourgeoisie (Ketonen 1977, 78–79; Salminen 1995, 22). Thus it seems more likely that Elin Ahrenberg was less intent upon a better education than on voicing her uncertainty about what was required of a deaconess or a poorhouse directress. The ultimate purpose of the letters was to ascertain how far it was possible to leap from the world of crofters, cottagers, and rural servants into which she had been born.

Fourth, the noble thought of a vocation can be seen as a token of a new phase in the development of Elin Ahrenberg's self-understanding: she no longer saw herself as a person to be helped by others, but as *a helper*, an independent actor. What is especially interesting is the way Elin Ahrenberg approached the director of the Deaconess Institution and the highest official of poor relief in Finland. Although both addressees were considered to be decidedly senior officials, the letters of Elin Ahrenberg cannot be regarded as humble petitions but rather as matter-of-fact inquiries. This implies that Elin Ahrenberg was indeed not a subject but a citizen. She knew there was more than one possible future open to her, and she was not afraid of finding out more about these alternatives.

### **THE LONELY HEAD OF THE FAMILY**

Because she considered the strict religious control of the Deaconess Institution odd, Elin Ahrenberg did not become a deaconess (Ahrenberg 1903). Instead, she chose to become a poorhouse directress. Both deaconesses and poorhouse directresses worked with the poor and the shunned, but whereas the deaconesses were bound to follow an implicit Christian calling (Markkola 2002; Kauppinen-Perttula 2004), the ideological framework of a poorhouse directress was less clearly defined. Moreover, poorhouse directresses were better paid: in 1894, for example, the annual salary for a deaconess was 160 marks, but poorhouse directresses, working in the rural areas, were normally paid between 240 and 500 marks a year (Suomen Naisyhdistys 1894, 183, 188). Thus in choosing the world of municipal poorhouses over the Deaconess Institution, Elin Ahrenberg opted for a wider ideological *Lebensraum* as well as for a better-paid job.

To the chief inspector and other state officials of poor relief, poorhouses were not only shelters for those poor who were not capable of work and who had no relatives to support them, but the poorhouses were also correctional institutions, intended for people who were constantly trying to resort to poor relief in spite of their ability to work. The “idle” able-bodied poor were to be locked up in a

poorhouse in order to learn to follow the principle of the new legislation: all people were required to work for a living.

Thus, managing a poorhouse was not an everyman's job. According to the chief inspector, the educational goal of a poorhouse was best achieved if the director was an educated, unmarried woman—possibly even a member of the old intelligentsia within the traditional system of the four estates, or at least a recruit from the upper part of the emerging middle class—sharing the state officials' perception of decent citizenship. In practice, women seeking to become poorhouse directresses were to have basic education (elementary school) as well as experience in nursing, mental nursing, childcare, housekeeping, and bookkeeping (Helsingius 1892, 2–4; Annola 2011, 81). In the nineteenth century, these forms of education were mostly available to women of the upper social groups.

However, as the women of the upper social groups did not find the hard, rural, relatively low-paying job appealing, the position of poorhouse directress began to be filled by women of lower social standing and rural background. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century, this process was fuelled by the fact that an increasing number of women of humble background were able to meet the qualifications, thanks to the expansion of elementary schools and the establishment of new kinds of practical schools, such as the Elias Lönnrot Housekeeping School in Sammatti. Over time, the qualifications of a poorhouse directress became separated from the applicant's social background and were to an increasing extent bound to education, that is, certificates and practical training in a poorhouse (Annola 2013, 199–202). It was this development that opened the directress position to Elin Ahrenberg and women like her.

Moreover, there were still traces of the mental image of the occupation as the *vocation of the educated*, with which the state officials had tried to recruit the women of the upper social groups at the turn of the century. Hence, employment as a poorhouse directress could serve as a stepping stone to a new kind of self-understanding for women of modest origins. For Elin Ahrenberg, standing at the threshold of the new middle class, an occupation that combined many-sided down-to-earth work with an elevated vocational ethos was a perfect professional solution.

Elin Ahrenberg's road to a poorhouse directress was rocky, however. In response to her letter of 1906, she was informed by the chief inspector that she lacked a general overview of the field of poorhouses, as well as the required nursing skills. Elin Ahrenberg took this as a temporary shortcoming, which she unhesitatingly rectified the same summer by practicing at Jalasjärvi poorhouse and at Lübeck

hospital in Kokkola (*Huoltaja* 1923a; Ahrenberg 1897–1921). According to Liisa Aarrevaara, these studies were financed by Mauritz Ahrenberg (Aarrevaara 1992). It should also be noted that Mauritz was supporting their mother, Edla Ahrenberg, at that time, which gave Elin the opportunity to study and work elsewhere in Finland.

It was only after another letter to the chief inspector in 1910 that Elin Ahrenberg finally managed to get her first appointment as a poorhouse directress in Rautalampi parish. Considering the deteriorating health of Mauritz Ahrenberg, Elin's appointment came at just the right time for the family. As poorhouse directresses were usually given private rooms within the institution, Elin Ahrenberg would be able to take care of her mother alongside her daily work. It is probable that she had been lacking this kind of opportunity when working as a housekeeper in Sammatti.

The appointment in Rautalampi marked the starting point of a long and meandering career, during which Elin Ahrenberg moved several times. She changed her post every year, which, in fact, resembles the way rural servants renewed their contracts of service every fall. In 1910, Elin Ahrenberg served at Rautalampi poorhouse; in 1911, she moved to Vesanto; in 1912, to Saarijärvi; and in 1913, to Leppävirta, all of which were located in Central or Eastern Finland. In 1914, she finally managed to find a place she was happy with: Lempäälä poorhouse in Southwestern Finland (Ahrenberg 1897–1921; Annola 2011, 151–52).

A considerable amount of money was needed to cover the moving expenses. The first move from Sammatti to Rautalampi seems to have been especially problematic for Elin Ahrenberg. Because she could no longer rely on her sick brother, she had to borrow money from her employer, Johannes Lohilampi, the owner of the largest farm in Sammatti. Johannes Lohilampi was eager to help his departing housekeeper to start a new career, especially as some parishioners were circulating rumors about him having a relationship with her (Aarrevaara 1911). After Elin Ahrenberg's removal to Rautalampi, the socio-economically mismatched friends engaged in a correspondence lasting for many years. Eventually Johannes Lohilampi relinquished his claim to any interest (Aarrevaara 1916).

It seems that Elin Ahrenberg was always searching for a better place—better located, better paid—despite the fact that every move must have been a small shock for the sickly and aging Edla Ahrenberg, who was now living (and moving) with her daughter. In November 1912, Elin Ahrenberg wrote to Johannes Lohilampi:

As I have my old mother to take care of, I am not that willing to move in wintertime, but the better salary is tempting me. They would pay me 100 marks more there [in Saarijärvi]. [. . .] We'll see, I still haven't decided what I'm going to do in case they promise me a wage increase here [in Vesanto]. The main thing is, though, that I am beginning to get a good name, something to be a little bit proud of. (Aarrevaara 1912)

The letter reveals that, besides the well being of Edla Ahrenberg, two other things had become very important to Elin Ahrenberg: her reputation as a poorhouse directress, and the question of salary. These two aspects were intertwined in the numerous wage negotiations in which Elin Ahrenberg engaged during her long career. Rather cool-headedly, Elin Ahrenberg took to threatening the local decision-makers with leaving if they would not give her a raise in salary. In some cases, the local authorities were so afraid of losing a good poorhouse directress that they agreed to Ahrenberg's terms. This happened, for instance, in Lempäälä, where in 1918 the local board of poor relief agreed to raise Ahrenberg's salary against the wishes of the municipal council (Mäntysaari 1992, 15–16; Annola 2011, 152–53).

Elin Ahrenberg's fight did not stay local. By 1917, she had become both a model directress in the eyes of state officials, and the chairwoman of the newly established professional association for actors within the field of municipal poor relief, *Suomen Köyhäinhoitovirkailijain Yhdistys*. Under the leadership of Elin Ahrenberg, the association was fighting for pensions and better salaries for *all* poorhouse directresses. To these determined women, being a poorhouse directress was not just an altruistic vocation, or an extension of every woman's motherly nature, but hard work for which sufficient remuneration was needed (Annola 2011, 153–54, 224–34).

The fight was fuelled with fear. Like many of her colleagues, Elin Ahrenberg was afraid of being left alone and penniless in her old age, or in case of sickness. There was no pension system, and the salary of a poorhouse directress was so low that it was considered very difficult to put money by for retirement. Thus the most dreadful prospect for an aging directress, or a directress with poor health, was to be forced to live as an inmate in the same poorhouse she had previously been in charge of (Annola 2011, 226–27).

Elin Ahrenberg's health had never been very strong: she suffered from nervousness and a heart condition. As early as in 1911, she was strongly advised by three different physicians to give up her stressful work as a poorhouse directress (Aarrevaara 1911). Elin Ahrenberg refused to follow the doctors' orders but resorted

to medication and went on working as usual. The decision cost Ahrenberg her life; she died in November 1923, at forty years of age (*Huoltaja* 1923a).

Elin Ahrenberg's reluctance to give up working was in all likelihood partially a result of her ambitious attitude towards her career, but it was also a decision dictated by necessity. The fact that the entire family needed the money Elin Ahrenberg earned as a poorhouse directress made it impossible for her to quit. With the deaths of Olga in 1915 and Mauritz in 1916, her role became even more crucial. She was now the undisputed head of the family, and everyone else looked to her for support. Should she fall ill and lose her ability to work, there would be no one to support her. She had to go on.

In her new role, Elin Ahrenberg also felt obliged to help the late Mauritz's sons, Reino and Väinö, who had come of age. As Mauritz's family now owned only a small patch of land, Reino and Väinö Ahrenberg had to leave Lappajärvi and build their futures on education. Reino Ahrenberg attended Tuomarniemi School in Ähtäri, Western Finland, in order to become a forester. According to Liisa Aarrevaara, Elin Ahrenberg let Reino spend his holidays in Lempäälä, and it is also probable that she was financing his studies. Reino Ahrenberg graduated in 1920. Väinö Ahrenberg, in his turn, lived in Elin Ahrenberg's household when studying in the nearby city of Tampere (Aarrevaara 1992).

Several hundred people from near and far attended Elin Ahrenberg's funeral in December 1923, expressing their condolences to the aged mother, who was now burying her last child. The closest relatives, however, were not present nor do they appear, as would have been customary, in the death announcement, according to which Elin Ahrenberg was deeply missed by her mother, colleagues, friends, and the inmates of her poorhouse (*Huoltaja* 1923b; *Huoltaja* 1923c). Mauritz's widow, Helga Ahrenberg, also refused to take the homeless Edla Ahrenberg back to Lappajärvi to live in her household. Edla Ahrenberg died two months later in January 1924 (Aarrevaara 1992; Mäntysaari 1992, 16).

Through the deaths of Elin Ahrenberg and her mother, three viewpoints open on the lives of the Ahrenberg family at the end of the 1910s and at the beginning of the 1920s, illustrating the change in socio-economic standing and the relations between the two branches of the family over the years.

First, it seems that Mauritz had been the connecting link between the two parts of the Ahrenberg family, and after his death, the family ties started to loosen to the point where Elin and her mother were actually rather distant to Mauritz's surviving family. This assumption is corroborated by Liisa Aarrevaara, according

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to whom Elin Ahrenberg was “not that much connected to her brother’s family” (Aarrevaara 1992). It may be that Elin Ahrenberg had helped Mauritz’s sons gain a foothold in society because she had wanted to pay back the debt of gratitude she owed her late brother. Thus, the help was a matter of obligation rather than true closeness between the family members.

Second, it can be argued that Elin Ahrenberg compensated for the loose family ties by dedicating her life to the network of poorhouse directresses and their professional association. When the wills of Elin and Edla Ahrenberg were opened, it emerged that special arrangements had been made: both daughter and mother had bequeathed their entire estates to the association (Mäntysaari 1992, 16; Annola 2011, 153). The Ahrenbergs’ bequest was allocated very precisely: it was to be used for the establishment of a rest home for weary poor-relief workers. Thus, it seems that Elin Ahrenberg had not wanted to support the association in general, but to take concrete action to help her colleagues cope with their stressful work. In so doing, she had bluntly ignored her surviving relatives in favor of the occupational network, which did not please the offspring of Mauritz Ahrenberg (Aarrevaara 1992, 2008).

Third, the wills indicate that Elin Ahrenberg and her mother had not been living a hand-to-mouth existence during their last years but adopted values typical of the new middle groups, according to which austerity was a virtue. Both women had been able to save money. They had not simply been putting aside modest sums but taking advantage of the modern insurance companies and savings banks. Elin Ahrenberg had a life insurance worth 2,000 marks at Suomi Insurance Company, and, more astonishingly, the old mother had total savings of 6,801 marks in the local savings bank. The new standard of living is also apparent in the estate inventory deed made after the death of Elin Ahrenberg, as items typical of the lifestyle of the new middle groups appear on the list of possessions: plants, vases for cut flowers, books, linen, a coffee service, cutlery, fruit knives, silver sugar tongs—and nine silver spoons (Aarrevaara 1924).

## CONCLUSIONS

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Finnish society was changing. The old system of the four estates was gradually being replaced by class divisions as a means of social distinction. The place of an individual in society was no longer defined by privilege and the concept of subservience, but by the idea of sovereignty, manifest in civic action. At the heart of the change were the new middle groups, the emerging Finnish middle class. It was basically recruited from among artisans,

farmers, lower officials, and civil servants, and the petit bourgeois of the cities, in other words, from the relatively new occupational groups that had developed outside the traditional estate society.

However, in a changing society, opportunities for social advancement could also open up for the members of lower social groups. Among the upwardly mobile were Mauritz and Elin Ahrenberg. As landless, non-propertied people, they were born outside the traditional system of the four estates. However, by taking advantage of legislative reforms as well as new forms of education, the Ahrenberg siblings were able to abandon the traditional life-cycle of a rural servant and integrate into the new middle groups.

Mauritz Ahrenberg's key to success was the all-round training he received in the Finnish Guard, as well as legislative reforms that made it possible for a literate and numerate soldier to start a business of his own. For Elin Ahrenberg, the pre-conditions for social advancement were created by the progress of public education and care institutions at the end of the nineteenth century. Elementary schools were established, and new forms of post-elementary-school education were introduced, many of which were specially designed for youth of more modest origins. New career opportunities opened up in the institutions of the expanding public sector—in schools, hospitals, and institutions of poor relief—for women in particular. New paths and new spaces emerged in society. For a poor but astute young woman like Elin Ahrenberg, treading these paths and occupying these spaces could mean improvement of her socio-economic status. Thus, the means for social advancement were different for Mauritz and Elin Ahrenberg, depending on their gender.

The social mobility of Mauritz and Elin Ahrenberg contrasts with the relatively stagnant life of their elder sister, Olga Ahrenberg, who worked as a maidservant for twenty-six years or more in Kisko or neighboring parishes. In a way, she was successful, too, because she was able to find employment in spite of her speech defect and the birth of an illegitimate child. Judging from the parish registers, it seems that her life as a maidservant and as a mother was less turbulent than her mother's had been. However, having been born fifteen years earlier than her younger sister and suffering from a stutter, Olga Ahrenberg did not have equal opportunities for social advancement. It remains unclear whether or not she was content with her lot in life.

The life of the Ahrenberg family illustrates the change in society, but also highlights another characteristic of Finland at the turn of the century: the insecurity that could not be relieved by the non-existent or extremely primitive social security system. For Edla Ahrenberg, struggling with an unwanted pregnancy in the year of



the 1868 famine, stealing may have appeared the only way to survive. Some forty years later, the terminally ill Mauritz Ahrenberg could do nothing but sell his business, thus weakening the economic prospects of his surviving family. In the 1920s, Elin Ahrenberg was treading a fine line between her weak heart and her role as the major breadwinner of the extended family. Because there was no pension system, she just had to keep on working.

What clearly emerges from the case of the Ahrenberg family is the importance of grassroots-level aid in terms of both survival and advancement. Although there are recollections of Edla Ahrenberg being shunned by her relatives, it seems that she was not totally excluded from the community. Partial as the acceptance may have been, Edla Ahrenberg and her children always had a place they could call home. A relatively stable residential situation made it possible, for instance, for Elin Ahrenberg to attend elementary school in Kisko, which had a tremendous impact on the course of her life.

As for Edla Ahrenberg's own family, the mother and her two younger children formed a close triangle within which aid was forthcoming whenever needed. Mauritz Ahrenberg supported his younger sister financially when she was studying, Elin Ahrenberg aided her brother and his family after he lost his ability to work, and both siblings took care of their old mother in turn. In addition to the intrafamilial help, Elin Ahrenberg especially was probably aided by local philanthropists in Kisko and through the stipend fund of the Elias Lönnrot Housekeeping School. She also borrowed money from her former employer. The mutual aid within the family as well as the supportive measures engaged in by external actors together formed a buffer zone. This reserve made it possible for the Ahrenbergs to seize the new opportunities of social advancement brought about by the change in society and to fight financial insecurity by compensating the shortcomings of the primitive public sector social security.

In light of the source material, poverty was most obviously omnipresent in the life of Edla Ahrenberg, who was exempted from paying the poll tax because of her financial situation. Her younger children were better off but did not altogether escape poverty: for Mauritz and Elin Ahrenberg, poverty may not have been a tangible part of everyday life as in the case of their mother and many others among the landless people, but it still affected their mindset. For instance, Elin Ahrenberg was always haggling for a better salary, but also making deprecatory remarks about her background and education, which, according to her, was inadequate because of her poor origins. To Elin Ahrenberg, her humble background was simultaneously

a motivating and an inhibiting factor. She was realistic enough to understand that even though society was changing, there were still barriers that were hard, if not impossible, for someone like her to cross.

On the other hand, what is revolutionary in the way the Ahrenberg siblings faced poverty, is their unwillingness to adopt an apathetic, fatalistic attitude typical of many poor people. For Mauritz and Elin Ahrenberg, poverty was not something God had intended for them. Rather, it was a condition that could and should be overcome by making plans for the future and actualizing them in the best possible way. This new way of thinking was one of the key elements behind the fall of the old system of four estates. Concrete actions such as legislative reforms were needed in order to make room for the new society—but it also took people with an adventurous mindset to actually see the widening horizon, and courage to take the first steps towards it, and to make the revolutionary seem perfectly ordinary.

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### **III**

## **IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE CHANGING ELITE**



# THE EXPERIENCE OF IMPECUNIOUSNESS IN A NOBLE FAMILY AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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## ABSTRACT

Being a member of the elite imposed high demands on the livelihood of noble civil servant families in Finland at the end of the nineteenth century. Although the salaries of high-ranking officials were relatively substantial, they could not always ensure the standard of living which was demanded by the elite of the Grand Duchy of Finland. This article concerns the family of the governor, Baron Gustaf Aminoff, and their livelihood. The living of the Aminoff family was totally derived from Governor Aminoff's salaries and fees; they had no other sources of income, such as a manor or land. The Aminoff family constantly suffered a lack of money and its everyday consumption was rational and frugal. The family occasionally found its financial situation depressing. Many noble families lived constantly on credit, and so did the Aminoff family. When debt relationships were based on trust, a good reputation was crucial. At the end of the nineteenth century, Finnish society was still very hierarchical. Noble families struggled between the traditions of the noble way of life and the social pressure caused by the new wealthy industrial and commercial elite. The officials' system of rank also caused strain: the more senior the official, the more opulent of a lifestyle was required.

## INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century was a good time to be an aristocrat, stated Dominic Lieven, when researching the history of the aristocracy in England, Germany, and Russia in that century. Compared to its ancestors, the European elite lived then a more secure, comfortable life, and they lived longer, with some more wealth. The significance of the aristocracy as a ruling class had declined, but this process took a long

time and happened at different rates in different countries (1992, 1). If the nineteenth century was in many respects a good time for the European aristocracy, was it as good for the Finnish noble elite?

Here I study the life of a Finnish noble civil servant family at the end of the nineteenth century. I will focus on the lives of Baron Gustaf Aminoff's family. The article deals in particular with wealth, property, and impecuniousness as a subjective experience. What kind of livelihood did an upper civil servant have at the end of the nineteenth century? I will attempt to answer these three questions: (1) How did the members of the family experience their socio-economic situation? (2) What kind of demands and expectations did they have concerning their standard of living? (3) Could they afford to maintain this standard of living? First, however, I will start with a specification of the backgrounds of the Cedercreutz and Aminoff families since noble families' financial situations were closely linked with kin and family, and their particular history.

In the nineteenth century, very few Finnish noblemen or women had such great economic, political, or social authority that they could be called aristocrats in the European sense. I, therefore, avoid the term "aristocracy" (on the concept of aristocracy, see, for example, Lieven 1992, xiii–xxi; Paaskoski 2006, 9–12; Powis 1984). Nevertheless, the Finnish elite had its own ruling class. The ruling class consisted partly of the families ennobled during the Swedish era. In consequence of the nature of the Finnish administrative apparatus, a great part of the elite were high officials who had connections to St. Petersburg. The nobility still played a crucial role among the higher office-holders in the Grand Duchy of Finland (see Snellman 2014, 77–95; Ylikangas 1996, 462–74). Official rank conferred status, but it did not automatically ensure affluence.

According to Alex Snellman, the prestige of the Finnish nobility reached its zenith in the Grand Duchy of Finland between the years 1820 and 1860. This position was based on high offices, political power, and the ownership of manors. Later in the nineteenth century, this high social standing started to decline. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the political and economic power of Finnish nobility had mostly vanished. The former ruling class had mostly integrated into the middle class (Snellman 2014, 89, 109, 273–88; for similar analyses in Sweden, see Norrby 2005; Elmroth 1981).

When studying the wealth of a Finnish noble, a good source is the probate inventory. The probate inventories of nobles are very well preserved in Finland. Until 1868, the inventories of the nobility were delivered to the Courts of Appeal,

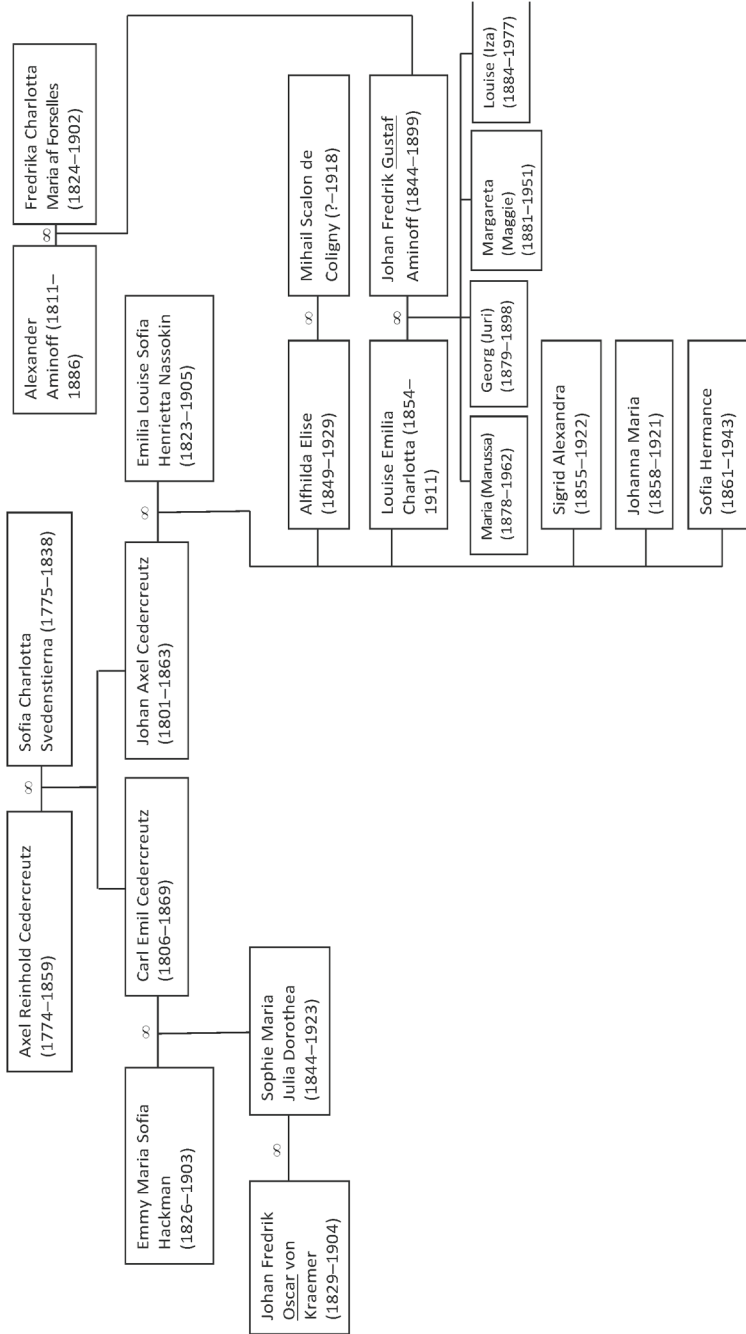
so they can be found in their own collections in the archives of the Turku, Vaasa, and Viipuri Courts of Appeal. After 1868, the probate inventories of the nobility—just like those of commoners—came under the jurisdiction of the area where the deceased person had lived at the time of death (e.g., Nummela 2013, 169; on the probate inventory procedure, see Markkanen 1988; Hemminki 2014, 261–72).

Probate inventories have been used as primary sources for ascertaining the wealth and property of a person or family at the end of the nineteenth century. The inventories record the assets of a deceased person. The assets comprise immovables and movables, including credits and debts. In addition, there are the minutely itemized claims and debts of the deceased. When studying the debt relationships, the probate inventories are very useful sources (Markkanen 1977, 24; 1988, 46–51; Aunola 1967, 34; Perlinge 2005, 40; Hemminki 2012, 385–86; 2014, 52–53, 261–65).

To access the probate inventory of a certain noble person, the individual's physical location at the time of death must be known. Because the Finnish nobility in the nineteenth century was very mobile, as they lived long periods away from their houses, visited relatives, and traveled abroad, identifying their permanent residence can be difficult. It seems certain that mobile nobles were not always registered in the parishes when they moved out or in. Without the knowledge of the last domicile, it is challenging to locate the right jurisdiction archive where the probate inventory of a certain deceased person is stored. In this work, I use the probate inventories of Gustaf and Louise Aminoff; Louise's father, Johan Axel Cedercreutz; and Louise's grandfather, Axel Reinhold Cedercreutz. So far I have not been able to locate the probate inventory of Emilia Cedercreutz, mother of Louise Aminoff. The probate inventories of Gustaf's parents, Alexander and Fredrika Aminoff, were destroyed in a fire in the archive of Vehmaa jurisdiction. All members of the Cedercreutz/Aminoff family presented in this article are shown in Figure 1.

In addition to the probate inventories, I use the Cedercreutz/Aminoff family correspondence and one surviving account book as sources in this article. When the idea is to research wealth as a subjective phenomenon, in other words, how a person experiences his or her wealth or impecuniousness, personal letters are an excellent source (on the methodology of correspondence and letter-writing, see, for example, Leskelä-Kärki, Lahtinen, and Vainio-Korhonen 2011; Dierks 2011; Nixon and Penner 2009; Nevalainen and Tanskanen 2007; Bland and Cross 2004; and Stanley 2004). In this family correspondence, the use of money is one of the most important and regular topics. Because the financial resources of the family were limited, they

Figure 1. THE CEDERCREUTZ/AMINOFF FAMILY



Sources: Carpelan 1954, Aminoff 1978



had to plan carefully together how disposable assets would be used as profitably as possible. The pages of letters reveal not just the everyday planning of expenditures but also the feelings, desires, and dreams connected to daily life.

## **THE CEDERCREUTZ AND AMINOFF FAMILIES**

The Cedercreutz and Aminoff families undoubtedly ranked among the higher Swedish-speaking gentry in Finland. Both families were ennobled during the Swedish Realm and were introduced to the Finnish House of Nobility right after it was established in the years 1816 to 1818. The Aminoff family is one of the oldest and largest noble families still living in Finland. The exact genealogical data can be traced to the beginning of the seventeenth century, when this Russian *boyar* family was introduced to the Swedish House of Nobility. The roots of the family go back to the thirteenth century (Aminoff 1978; Carpelan 1954). The background of the Cedercreutz family is in the iron industry of Central Sweden. Jonas Folkiern (1661–1727), who took the name Cedercreutz, was ennobled in 1711. He was the owner of the Ludvika ironworks (Carpelan 1954).

Louise Cedercreutz and Gustaf Aminoff were joined in marriage in Moisio manor in Elimäki (a parish in Southeast Finland) on May 3, 1874. The marriage ceremony brought together two families with baronage. Baron Gustaf Aminoff was born in Saari manor in Mynämäki (a parish in Southwest Finland) on August 21, 1844. He was the firstborn in a family with eight children. Gustaf's parents were Baron Alexander Aminoff and Fredrika af Forselles, whose father owned Moisio manor, where the marriage ceremony took place (Carpelan 1954).

Louise lived her first years in St. Petersburg and Turku. From time to time the Cedercreutz family also spent time in Köyliö (a parish in Southwest Finland), in Köyliö manor, which was owned by Louise's father, Governor Johan Axel Cedercreutz, until his death in 1863. If Gustaf Aminoff had numerous brothers, Louise instead grew up in a family with six daughters and not a single son. The oldest daughter died very young, but the rest of the sisters, Alfhilda, Louise, Sigrid, Johanna, and Sofia, lived long. Louise was born on September 27, 1854, in Alexandrevskoje in St. Petersburg, where her father held office. The family returned to Finland in 1858 when Johan Axel Cedercreutz was appointed acting governor of the province of Turku and Pori (Carpelan 1954).

The financial premises for Louise's and Gustaf's marriage were not good, certainly not on the bride's side. After their father's death in 1863, the Cedercreutz sisters were left with practically no assets. The death of Governor Johan Axel

Cedercreutz was a devastating piece of news. He committed suicide in Helsinki, where he had been delegated to attend the Diet in December 1863. According to the newspaper accounts, Governor Cedercreutz had cut himself thirty-two times with a knife in a bathhouse. He immediately received help, but despite all medical care he died a few days later (*Sanomia Turusta*, December 18, 1863).

When the father Johan Axel died, the oldest daughter, Alfhilda, was fourteen years old, Louise was nine, and the youngest, Sofie, only two years old. Governor Cedercreutz owned the Köyliö manor, but it was an entailed estate (*fideicommissum*) and could only be inherited by a male heir. Johan Axel and Emilia Cedercreutz had no sons, so the Köyliö manor passed to Johan Axel's younger brother, Senator Carl Emil Cedercreutz. The Cedercreutz family had huge financial difficulties. The daily life of the governor's family was funded entirely by loans. When Johan Axel died, the amount of his debts was equal to his assets, including his immovable properties. In practice, he was ruined (Aatelisten perukirjat: Probate inventory of J. A. Cedercreutz, Ecm:20, ATCA, PAT).

Bankruptcy was one of the greatest anxieties among the nobility. It was almost impossible to recover from personal bankruptcy and retain one's good name. Public humiliation, lost reputation, impaired living standards, and the possible loss of a career were too much for many noblemen to bear (on bankruptcies in the nineteenth century, see, for example, Gratzner and Stiefel 2008; Lester 1995; Riina Turunen's article in this volume). Alistair Owens has analyzed the upper middle class's wealth and inheritance strategies in early nineteenth century in Stockport, England. Owens observes that among nineteenth-century middle-class communities, it was a great shame for a man if he could not take care of his property and plan ahead, providing for his family after his death (2001, 303–4). There may have been similar feelings of shame in Governor Cedercreutz's mind when he struggled with his financial problems.

Because there was no inheritance, making a good marriage was, in practice, the lifeline for the five Cedercreutz daughters. Alongside inheritance (especially inherited land), a marriage strategy was the most important factor affecting financial resources among noble families in Europe. Even more important on the marriage market, however, could be the ancestry, social networks, and political and social authority of a family (Habakkuk 2003, 146–54; Ilmakunnas 2011, 53). The social status of the Cedercreutz family was obviously high, despite the governor's bankruptcy and the sensation it caused. Johan Axel's brother, Councillor of State (*statsråd*) Carl Emil Cedercreutz, held many significant state offices. During his

career, he was a member of the Committee for Finnish Affairs in St. Petersburg and a member of the Finnish Senate.

An important connection of the Cedercreutz family's social network was, however, Carl Emil Cedercreutz's daughter, Sophie Cedercreutz, who was married to Admiral Oscar von Kraemer (on von Kraemer, see Estlander and Ekman 1931). He was one of the most distinguished Finnish officers in the Russian army. He served, for example, as a chief of staff in the Russian Navy, as a Russian minister of the navy, and as adjutant general to His Imperial Majesty. In the public relations and personal affairs of the nineteenth-century elite, connections to St. Petersburg were crucial. Oscar von Kraemer was an important link to the imperial family and to the highest circles of St. Petersburg for all those who belonged to the family network. Gustaf Aminoff's family also ranked high among the gentry (*ståndspersoner*), the upper crust of Finnish society. The Aminoff family represented the old nobility and enjoyed great social prestige (see Tandefelt and Vainio-Kurtakko 2013, 187). The Russian origin of the family was surely more of a help than a hindrance in the Grand Duchy of Finland. Gustaf Aminoff's father, Alexander, and especially his grandfather, General Johan Fredrik Aminoff, owned several significant manors in Finland, including Sällvik, Saari, Rilax, and Sundholma.

Distribution of the estate was difficult in the Aminoff family. As Alexander and Fredrika Aminoff had eight children, it was obvious that the immovable property would not suffice for everyone. Their solution was that the Sundholma manor end up with the third son of the family, Björn. The two older sons, Gustaf and Adolf, had embarked upon military careers, whereas Björn was an engineer. For centuries, the military tradition had been very strong in the Aminoff family; it is probable that the family thought that the career of a military officer was still a lucrative and respectable choice for elder sons.

The number of children in a family was a concrete challenge for noble families, even those with quite large properties. The more children there were, the more their upbringing and education cost. When there was a conscious effort to keep land in the family, it was common for one or two of the sons to inherit the bulk of the land at the other children's expense. Inheritance strategies have always been essential among the upper classes and their welfare provision in Europe. Families tried to safeguard their possessions in the family and also to keep them in capable hands (Habakkuk 2003, 51–65; Nummela 2013, 164). However, there were differences between noble and middle-class strategies of inheritance. Many noblemen wanted to give the main part of their properties to the eldest child, preferably a son,

because he also inherited the title of the family. Among the middle class, the estate of a deceased person was usually divided and an attempt made to share the assets equally between all the children, both sons and daughters (Owens 2001, 313–16; Cannadine 1990, 12–13). So far in Finnish research, no such comparison has been made of inheritance and family provisions among different social classes in the nineteenth century.

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIVELIHOOD AND GOOD REPUTATION**

Several studies have proved how important a good reputation and a trustworthy social network were, for example, for merchants in the nineteenth century (see, for example, Ojala 1999; Kallioinen 2002; Karonen 2004; Keskinen 2008). A good reputation was also absolutely crucial in achieving significant office.

Gustaf Aminoff's official career included both military and civil service. It was typical for governors and other high-ranking civil servants to be chosen from among the commissioned officers (Gluschkoff 2008, 59–60; Ylikangas 1996, 474–82). Lieutenant-General Aminoff's military career was remarkable. He served in almost all the wars that Russia waged in the Caucasus and Turkey in the 1860s and 1870s. He served, for example, as a military governor in Transcaspia, as a commander of the Novotorsk regiment in Courland, and as a commander of the Finnish Guard in Helsinki between 1884 and 1888. After his term in military service, Gustaf Aminoff was appointed governor of the Kuopio province (in Eastern Finland) in 1888 (Aminoff 1978).

Gustaf Aminoff had excellent prospects for achieving distinction as a civil servant in Finland, thanks to his social standing, his own and his ancestors' achievements, and his good reputation and connections. The office of governor was the first step in this career, but clearly the salary was not sufficient to support the way of life the Aminoff family wanted. The family constantly lived very frugally. One reason for the relative impecuniousness of the Aminoffs as compared with many other genteel families was lack of immovable property. In the nineteenth century, immovable property was significant to the degree of wealth (Nummela 2013, 178). People of every level of society with land and real estate prospered when the value of property rose at the end of the nineteenth century (Markkanen 1977, 60–61, 166). The productivity of manors increased at the end of the nineteenth century, and possessing a manor could be a lucrative business owing, for example, to forestry (see Gluschkoff 2008, 139–40; also Kalleinen 2014). Because the Aminoff family did not own a manor, farmhouse, or town residence, its wealth never increased to a very high level.

Very few members of the nobility owned a manor. During the nineteenth century, the Finnish nobility had moved increasingly to the cities, the location of the posts and social life of the officials. Numerous manors passed into the possession of untitled gentry (Snellman 2014, 102–9; Tandefelt and Vainio-Kurtakko 2013, 190; also Åström 2007). The total income of a landless noble family was usually made up of earnings from many different sources, and such was the situation in the Aminoff family. The main part of the family's income was Gustaf Aminoff's salaries and fees from his official career. Apart from these, there were various allowances and grants from the Tsar and loans from various pension and relief funds.

The salaries of all other officials in provincial administration were determined by statute, but a governor drew a salary based on fees (Keisarillisen Majesteetin Armollinen Julistus: Asetuskokoelma/The Code of Statutes 1894:50). The fees were evidently fixed separately with each governor. There are, however, some examples of the wage level of the governors. At the end of the nineteenth century, it was slightly lower than a senator's wage level. The annual salary of a senator in the 1890s was around 20,000 Finnish *markka* (marks) (introduced as a currency 1860), whereas the salary of a governor was about 18,000 marks (governor of Uusimaa province in 1877). By way of comparison, the salary of a rural police chief (*länsman*) in 1893 was 1,600 marks per year and the salary of the Governor-General 64,000 marks (Kulla 1987, 78–79; see also Ylikangas 1996, 433–34). The Aminoff family regarded the wage level of a governor as barely tolerable. In 1880, Gustaf Aminoff was interested in an official position within the authority of the Russian Ministry of War in St. Petersburg. The salary of this office was around 16,000 marks per year, almost the same wage level as a governor. Gustaf and Louise Aminoff regarded this salary as low but tolerable (Aminoff 1880a, 1880b).

In addition to salaries, the Tsar granted the senior officials extra allowances. These allowances were always gifts, which the Tsar graciously bestowed at his discretion. They were usually unofficial; for example in the accountancy of the Tsar's account books, there were no entries for these allowances (Kulla 1987, 74; Savolainen 1994, 149–54; Ylikangas 1996, 434). The discrete nature of most rewards and allowances causes problems in assessing the types of income in noble families. Because of these discrete methods, there is no source from which they can be extracted. This procedure ensured, however, that nobles were not denigrated to the same level as common people in need of financial assistance. They could maintain their dignity and honor.

Because these extra allowances were paid at the Tsar's personal discretion, it was crucial to try to make a favorable impression on the potentate and his representative in Finland, the Governor-General. Louise and Gustaf Aminoff's marriage was a certain kind of "joint venture" where both the husband and wife did their utmost to secure an adequate livelihood and a good reputation for their family. Together they tried to ensure offices and emoluments for Gustaf Aminoff so that the family could maintain the standard of living it desired.

According to the family's correspondence, Louise Aminoff played a significant role as a negotiator or enquirer in many situations concerning Gustaf Aminoff's duties, both in the military and in the civil service. Louise Aminoff's negotiations in Helsinki and St. Petersburg were well planned with her husband. Louise's virtues in such public relations included first-class expertise in etiquette, a calm and analytical personality, and good conversation and language skills. She spoke both French and Russian, so the negotiations, for example, in the highest circles of St. Petersburg, were easy. Louise, moreover, enjoyed a good social network. This helped her to become acquainted with the right people in high places. In the letters there are several examples of journeys to Helsinki or St. Petersburg where Louise traveled especially to make enquiries and elicit information for her husband.

The senior officials of the Grand Duchy were under constant surveillance. At the end of the nineteenth century, the press was very interested in the actions of the governors. The Finnish press published a great deal of information about the governors, some of it completely correct but also rumor and gossip, and on occasion with political purposes. Public knowledge naturally affected the officials' reputations, which they tried to protect as well as they could, for example, by correcting groundless rumors. Louise Aminoff was also adept at this tactful rehabilitation if needed. The same also concerned other population groups in nineteenth-century Finland. Mika Kallioinen talks about a specific entrepreneur culture when he describes the conditions of successful business life in the nineteenth century (2002, 118–20). Among officials there certainly pertained similar unwritten rules and norms.

The position in the bureaucracy was a concrete indicator of social standing. As Kaarlo Wirilander has stated, rank, estate, and office were the real objectives in life; money and education were only the means to this end (1974, 105; also Ilmakunnas 2011, 22). Even though wealth did not guarantee social status, it helped to achieve it. A position in the highest circles demanded appropriate settings: lifestyle, housing, and appearance should be in accordance with one's social standing. All this called for money. Traditionally the nobility did not accumulate great wealth through

productivity. Money was an instrument for manifesting social status, and this is what distinguished the nobility ideologically from the burghers, whose conceptions of wealth and capital were utterly different. The burghers wanted to maximize their profits but also to take bigger risks. Austerity and the prudent use of money were among their ideals (see Granqvist and Gustafsson 2013, 154; Englund 2012, 49–69; Norrby 2005, 77–78).

The blurring of the estate distinction became stronger throughout the nineteenth century. Many noblemen engaged in business, including military officers (Granqvist and Gustafsson 2013; Paju 2011; also Snellman 2014, 176). On the other hand, many wealthy burgher families gave up the ideal of modesty and austerity, and started to consume like the aristocrats and emulated the nobility's way of life (see Müller 1998, 15, 281; on the lives of the burghers of Turku, see Brunow-Ruola 2001; Rosengren 2003). Furthermore, the gradual weakening of the estate distinctions intensified because of the ennoblement of men who had made their marks in business or industry. The nineteenth century gave rise to a new elite, which incorporated different social groups. The senior civil servants of the Grand Duchy of Finland were one of the groups which had to keep up their high social prestige.

### **LIVING ON CREDIT**

When a nobleman took office, it was crucial to maintain a good reputation and position and to explore the possibilities of promotion. The official wages and grants were the only way to secure a sufficient and adequate standard of living for the family. When the salary was insufficient for this, many families had to resort to borrowing. In the issue of a noble individual's wealth, debts played a highly significant role. This was typical in Europe, despite the diversity among the nobilities of the European countries and within each country (Fontaine 2014, 70).

The wealth of the Finnish nobility has so far been little researched. Wealth issues surface naturally in many studies dealing with single noble families (see, for example, Lappalainen 2005; Lagerstam 2007; Lahtinen 2007; Lönnqvist 2007; Glushkoff 2008; Koskinen 2011; Vainio-Korhonen 2012; Kalleinen 2014). Johanna Ilmakunnas (2011, 2012) has researched the lifestyle, consumption, and indebtedness of the Swedish noble family von Fersen, but no comprehensive and systematic analysis has been presented in Finland. However, Ilkka Nummela opened the discussion in his article and researched the wealth of the Finnish nobility in the years 1820 to 1867. According to Nummela, there is no doubt about the wealth of the nobility when compared to that of many other social groups. Furthermore,

Nummela demonstrates that the wealth of the nobility increased in this era and the relative social standing of the nobility improved (2013, 171–73, 184; on the wealth of the Finnish nobility in Eastern Finland, see also Puntanen 2000). This is corroborated by Alex Snellman’s research findings (2014).

The Finnish nobility was highly heterogeneous in terms of wealth. However, these differences did not change throughout the nineteenth century. Nummela reports that the differences in wealth within the noble estate did not fundamentally differ from the differences in wealth of the population in general. The concentration of wealth and the polarization of people were generally obvious in nineteenth-century Finland. According to Nummela, there was no unitary “noble elite” in Finland. Great differences in wealth created inequality within the noble estate (2013, 175, 184; see also Snellman 2014, 284–88). The situation was the same in other European countries. The nobility was not equal, neither measured by wealth nor by social status. However, in many European countries, the nobility was divided into more distinct groups than in Finland. Especially in those countries where the most influential part of nobility was gathered around the court of a powerful ruler, the differences between the higher and lower nobility were much more obvious than in Finland. Good examples in the nineteenth century are Russia and especially the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg monarchy, where the nobility was divided explicitly into court society (*Hofgesellschaft*) and second society (*zweite Gesellschaft*) (Godsey 1999, 60–61).

The heterogeneity of the Finnish nobility’s wealth was concrete. Some of the nobility were among the wealthiest as they owned land, estates, and stocks. Others owned some property, but usually this consisted mainly of movable assets like furniture, clothing, and tableware. There were also noble persons of limited means. One part of the nobility was deeply in debt; those especially at risk of going into excessive debt were the ones with no estates but still some property. Many of these people were high-ranking officials. In many cases, personal property consisted largely of movable assets that had been purchased on credit.

Historians have argued about the reasons for going into debt and how deeply in debt nineteenth-century aristocrats really were. For example, historians have long debated how deeply in debt the aristocracy in England actually was, and why. They have speculated among other things that the nobility in general may have lived reckless and extravagant lives leading to indebtedness. Furthermore, they have deliberated on the influence of industrialization on the economic situation of the aristocracy



(see Spring and Spring 1996; Cannadine 1995; Habakkuk 2003; Fontaine 2014, 70–82; on indebtedness among the Swedish aristocracy, see Ilmakunnas 2012).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Finnish nobility was already heavily indebted. In the mid-nineteenth century (1820–68), one-fifth of deceased nobles were deeply in debt. This is quite a lot as compared to other groups in society (Nummela 2013, 182–83). There is no exhaustive information after 1868, but it can be hypothesized that the situation continued much the same later in the nineteenth century. At least among the noble families I study, incurring debts seems to be more the rule than the exception (on a similar situation in the Nordenskiöld family, see Kalleinen 2014, 159–65, 231–33).

In the nineteenth century the economy was based on trust and social networks (see, for example, Hemminki 2014, 159–213; Keskinen 2008, 147; see also Fontaine 2014, 268–96; Müller 1998, 36–38, 276–83). Trust was also crucial for the households of the nobility, as their standard of living was in many cases based on credit. Land and estates clearly strengthened the creditworthiness of a nobleman (Ilmakunnas 2011, 69). Credits were also granted, however, to noblemen owning no immovable property. A nobleman with significant social standing and extensive networks was creditworthy. The credit market and banking business were undeveloped in Finland until the 1860s. People needing small loans were dependent on wealthy people who could lend money. The merchant houses and shopkeepers were also notable lenders in the nineteenth century (Rasila 1982, 105–10; also Hemminki 2012, 375, 380; 2014, 176–78; on shopkeeper lenders, see Kaarniranta 2001).

In the probate inventories of nobles there were usually various kinds of creditors. For example, at the time of Governor Johan Axel Cedercreutz's death in 1863, he had nearly eighty valid promissory notes, some of which were bills of exchange. The most important creditors were relief funds or the administration. The main creditor was the Pension Fund for the Military (*Finska militärens enke- och pupilkassa*), with receivables to the tune of 40,000 marks. The ecclesiastical Chapter of Turku (*Domkapitlet i Åbo*) had lent 20,000 marks, and the Pension Fund for the Ecclesiastical Authorities (*Finska eklesiastikstatens enke- och pupilkassa*) 4,000 marks (Aatelisten perukirjat: Probate inventory of J. A. Cedercreutz, Ecm:20, ATCA, PAT).

However, most of Governor Cedercreutz's loans had been arrangements with private persons, friends, and relatives. The mutual debt relations were based on trust, although there were existing promissory notes. The debts were usually agreed upon without any intermediary, and the lender trusted that the borrower would settle his affairs. The lists of creditors reveal the social networks of a deceased person.

J. A. Cedercreutz had borrowed money from the same people and families with whom the Cedercreutz family were otherwise acquainted. These were also the people with whom marriage alliances were formed. The Aminoffs, von Haartmans, and Björkenheims were such families. In the circle of acquaintances were also the factory owner P. C. Rettig and naturally *kommerseråd* (honorary title, conferred for merits in business) J. F. Hackman, whose daughter was married to Johan Axel's brother. Both had lent small sums to Governor Cedercreutz (Aatelisten perukirjat: Probate inventory of J. A. Cedercreutz, Ecm:20, ATCA, PAT).

The situation was not always so ideal that a debtor lived up to his obligations. This was the case with Johan Axel Cedercreutz. The financial situation of Governor Cedercreutz was fundamentally unsound. His father, Axel Reinhold Cedercreutz, was already in financial difficulties. His debts were processed by the Court of Appeal after his death in September 1859. The dire financial situation of the owners of Köyliö manor originated in Axel Reinhold's lifetime. The big loans from the funds had already been arranged by Axel Reinhold. He had fewer loans from private persons than his son, so Johan Axel had to try to rectify the lamentable situation by borrowing from friends and relatives (Aatelisten perukirjat: Probate inventories of A. R. Cedercreutz Ecm:18 and J.A. Cedercreutz, Ecm:20, ATCA, PAT)

Neither was the situation of Carl Emil Cedercreutz an easy one. He inherited the entailed Köyliö manor estate from his brother. Cedercreutz was compelled to find other collateral or find guarantors for their loans, since the entailed estate had to be kept intact and could not be mortgaged (on entailed estates, see Hemmer 1950, 54–55).

After his brother's death, Carl Emil Cedercreutz evidently resorted to one large loan with which he probably paid off the debts of the estate. Among the Cedercreutz letters, a draft of a promissory note between Carl Emil and J. F. Hackman survives. Carl Emil borrowed 16,000 roubles (64,000 marks) from his father-in-law. There is also a plan for amortization of the loan (Cedercreutz-suvun kokoelma: Draft of a promissory note, file 1, CFC, NAF). J. F. Hackman also secured loans for his son-in-law, for example, one worth 1,400 roubles from the Pension Fund for the Ecclesiastical Authorities (Suomen Kirkollisvirkakunnan leski- ja orpokassan arkisto: Register of Debtors and Creditors, Bb:1, APFEA, PAT). Probably with the financial aid from Hackman, it was possible to keep the Köyliö manor in the family despite the huge burden of debt. J. F. Hackman was a very wealthy man; at the time of his death, the estimated value of his estate was 2.5 million marks. Carl Emil's wife Emmy Cedercreutz also became a silent partner in the merchant house of Hackman and Co.

after her father's death (Enbom and Sandelin 1991, 49–50).

The person in need usually turned first to her or his family. The nobility often lent money to relatives. The same phenomenon occurs elsewhere in Europe, for example, in England (Cannadine 1995, 41–42; see also Fontaine 2014, 26–69, 49). Helping relatives was a duty hard to shirk. I have already referred here to the strong mutual trust among the nobility, and this was particularly strong in family networks. The decision on financial aid for a relative was a very emotional matter, which was not always based on cold financial logic (see Keskinen 2008, 149–50).

The Aminoff family also had a family member in financial straits. Louise Aminoff's sister, Alfhilda (Ally) encountered severe financial problems in Russia. She was married to a member of the Russian aristocracy, Mihail Scalon de Coligny. He owned the Lukianowka estate in *Kurskaja gubernija* (the administrative district of Kursk). At the end of the year 1888, the estate was insolvent. Ally started her attempt to save the property (Graf 1889; on the property rights of noble Russian women, see Marrese 2002; on women and property in Sweden, see Ågren 2009).

Ally Scalon fought for the property with all her strength. She negotiated with the Finance Minister of Russia and the Bank of Nobility in St. Petersburg, which was the principal creditor. According to the letters, Ally's efforts were apparently successful. However, she also needed cash to maintain the estate and its farms. For that she turned to her relatives in Finland. In 1889, there were lengthy meetings in Helsinki, where Louise Aminoff and several other relatives sought ways to help Ally. The relatives decided that they could not leave Ally without any financial help despite their own lack of money. They sent 2,700 marks, less than Ally had asked for. Louise's share was 500 marks. Probably they did not need to borrow the sum; Louise had saved it from her housekeeping money (Graf 1889; Aminoff 1889a, 1889b).

What was then the financial situation of Gustaf Aminoff when he died in 1899? He also had debts in excess of the total value of his assets. His property consisted of two Russian government bonds, one Finnish bank bond, some gold and silver, furniture, household articles, and a horse and carriage. He had also a 920 mark deposit. His total assets were some 14,000 marks. His debts amounted to some 24,600 marks. The principal creditors were the Life Annuity Assurance Institution in Turku (*Livränteanstalten i Åbo*), the Pension Fund for the Military, and the Pension Fund for the Civil Service (*Finska civilstatens enke- och pupilkassa*). Gustaf Aminoff also had several bank bills. The considerable number of open credits with retailers and service providers, such as goldsmiths, photographers, and tailors, reveals

the exigencies of the gubernatorial lifestyle (Kuopion raastuvanoikeuden arkisto: Probate inventory of Gustaf Aminoff, Eb:28, AKCC, PAJ).

By the end of the nineteenth century, a loan agreed with a bank was a neutral business transaction, but according to my sources, the banks were not significant sponsors of the noble lifestyle. The most important group of creditors seems to have been various funds. This may be due to relationships of trust. It is likely that the boards of pension funds were occupied by people who were part of a nobleman's social network. Loans were easier to obtain when they were based on mutual trust. Borrowing money was still a very sensitive business, to be kept highly confidential, especially if there were guarantors involved (see, for example, Kuusterä 1995, 65; on the creditors of European aristocracy, see Fontaine 2014, 70–87).

It is also obvious that the noble civil servant used his loans almost entirely to finance his daily life. They neither bought nor built houses, invested in business or agriculture; nor were loans taken when an estate was divided. Borrowed money was used for rents, health care, travel, clothing, furniture, vehicles, food, drink, and social life. This appears to explain the problematic indebtedness of the Aminoff family. The ideal situation would have been if the credits had in some way increased productivity. In the Aminoff family, they had no assets to lend. The borrowed money did not increase prosperity; the only gain was to maintain their social standing. It was very important but also impaired the affluence of the household. In the long term, the financial situation of the family was thrown off balance. Laurence Fontaine (2014, 16) has claimed that debt might be both a factor in impoverishment but also a protective element in a network of solidarities. Such was the situation in the Aminoff/Cedercreutz family.

The Aminoff family had two particularly heavy expenditures: health care and the children's education. The family wanted to invest in the children's education, including that of the girls. Three of the four children were secondary school graduates and two children studied in the Imperial Alexander University in Helsinki. Living in Helsinki was expensive; the family had to pay for the young students' rent, food, and social lives.

If the children's education took money, health care was even more expensive. Trips to the watering places and clinics of continental Europe could take months and did not come cheap. The members of the Aminoff family traveled to Germany several times in the 1890s; they especially favored Wiesbaden. They traveled in Europe for other purposes, too. Louise Aminoff spent the winter of 1899–1900

in Europe, mainly in Italy, recovering from her husband's death. Their youngest daughter, Iza, was broadening her horizons in England in 1907 and 1908.

The Aminoff family's lifestyle was far from extravagant. Naturally the clothing, food, and the furnishings had to be appropriate to the governor's family. Great parties or soirées were rarely held in Kuopio; these were mainly official soirées which were part of the governor's duties. The governor and his family, however, were sought-after guests at various public and private galas and soirées. For all these events, it was necessary to acquire suitable and fashionable clothing and accessories not only for the governor himself but also for the ladies of the family. The best circles of Kuopio were not very demanding in this respect, but in Helsinki, not to mention St. Petersburg, the situation was very different (on the life of a Finnish noble officer and civil servant in St. Petersburg, see Lönnqvist 2011, 126–69).

The Aminoff family considered their visits to Helsinki very carefully. For example, Louise Aminoff wrote to her son, Georg (Juri), in 1896:

Father has incidentally mentioned the Diet ball, but I'm afraid that when the time comes, there will be many obstacles. First of all, the financial situation is a problem. Such an excursion for Father and Marussa will cost enormously, and our current money situation is alarming.

Pappa har väl flykligt nämnt om landtdagsbalen, men jag fruktar att då det kommer till kritan det kommer att uppstå för många hinder. Främst den pekuniära sidan, ty en sådan resa för pappa med Marussa skulle bli enormt dyr, och vår nuvarande penningställning är verkligen mycket bekymmersam. (Aminoff 1896)<sup>1</sup>

The strain of peer-group pressure may have been the hardest for the nobility. The life of nobles had for centuries been very consumption-oriented. For example, in England the consumption habits of landed families changed radically at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, when luxury items became widely available because of imports and more developed light industry. At that time, the bellwether of luxury life was, however, the French aristocracy (Habakkuk 2003, 277–79; also Ilmakunnas 2011, 366–74; on the luxurious lifestyle of the French elite, see Forsström 2011). Many noble families could afford the required standard of living and also be models for those unfortunates who could not

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1 All English translations are by the author.

maintain their position with equal ease. Admitting to poverty was deemed shameful for a member of nobility (Wirilander 1974, 67).

The Aminoff family was economical and sensible when they purchased clothing and furniture. This did not mean that they compromised on the principles of elite consumption. On the contrary, the few garments that were tailored were of high quality and appropriate for a governor's family. At the end of the nineteenth century, dressing in accordance with social rank was still necessary. The means of distinction, however, were more subtle than before. When trade and the production of more expensive fabrics had increased and the wealth of the lower social classes had grown, the elite had to find different ways to distinguish themselves apart from luxury (on Finnish consumption in the nineteenth century, see Ikonen 1991). The women of the upper classes avoided flamboyance and cultivated the opposite. Restrained and high-quality clothing became a sign of social status. Gradually, splendor came to be seen as a sign of the parvenu nouveau-riche. With scant funds available, austerity was not a choice but a necessity. Yet there were certain matters of principle. Consumption, just like the demeanor as a whole, should be temperate, dignified, and less obtrusive (on consumption and status, see Bailey 2011).

In many families, the financial situation became more problematic after the death of the breadwinner. As the health of Gustaf Aminoff declined in the 1890s, Louise Aminoff tried to encourage her husband to take care of himself. She was naturally worried about her beloved husband's health, but also about the future: how would the family survive without Gustaf? Despite all care, Gustaf Aminoff died of a heart defect in 1899. After that, the livelihood of Louise and her daughters was dependent on Louise's personal income. The income consisted of widow's pensions from Finland and Russia. Iza, the youngest daughter, was still living with her mother. They moved to Pohja parish (in Southern Finland) in 1902, where they lived in a rented house. The daily living expenses had to be scraped together from different sources.

Noble widows, however, had some opportunities to take advantage of their social networks for applying for unofficial relief. For example, in 1900, Louise Aminoff badly needed money for Iza's education. After Gustaf Aminoff's death, she made a long journey to Italy with her two daughters, Maggie and Marussa. They traveled via St. Petersburg and Warsaw. In St. Petersburg, she also had a chance to arrange financial matters. Louise contacted Admiral Heyden, who was the chairman of Alexander's Committee for the Wounded (*Aleksanders Komitée för de sårade*). Louise was fortunate, because on the same day, the Grand Duke had a meeting with

the Committee. Heyden asked Louise to prepare an application quickly, which she did with the help of Oscar von Kraemer. The Grand Duke approved her application on the same day, so Iza received 180 roubles per year for her education until she was eighteen years old. (Aminoff 1900)

In addition to Louise's pensions, the family received extra money from Emilia Cedercreutz's widow's pensions. She stayed for long periods with her daughter, Louise, paying 77.50 marks per month for her board. Her whole pension was 150 marks per month according to her account book. Emilia's pension came from the Pension Fund for the Civil Service after Johan Axel Cedercreutz's death (Cedercreutz-suvun arkisto: Emilia Cedercreutz's account book 1905, file 1, CFC, NAF; *Helsingfors Dagbladet* June 17 1864). She had no other property except clothing and some personal items.

After moving to Pohja, Louise and Iza also earned extra money by keeping bees and chickens and selling honey and eggs on a small scale. However, this modest extra summertime income was not enough. Louise also had debts, and she was very anxious about them. In 1908, she wrote to Iza:

I'll make it clear to you that we have to pay off our debts. If you can get along with that extra pension of yours and interests, 850 marks, and spend all the holidays at home, I can pay at least 3,000 marks per year. Then it will take 4.5 years. Maybe I will live that long. I would be very happy, because the thought that you should sell everything from our home after my death to pay off our debts makes me very restless.

Jag ville blott göra dig klart att vi måste börja betala våra skulder. Om du hade nog af din extra pension och dina räntor således 850 m. och fritt alla ferier hemma borde jag kunna betala minst 3000 m. om året. Då blefve allt be: inom 4,5 år. Kanske får jag lefva så länge, jag vore lycklig däröfver, ty tänken att du skulle få lof att efter min bortgång sälja allt ur vårt hem för att betala skulderna, gör mig helt ängslig. (Aminoff 1908)

When Louise Aminoff died in 1911, she still had her burden of debts. However, she owed a great deal of money to her daughters: Marussa 3,400 marks; Maggie 2,500 marks; and Iza 4,600 marks. The sum total of her debts was over 16,000 marks. Louise Aminoff had some personal property, as noble widows usually had, even those widows who were in debt (see also Lönnqvist 2007, 226; Vainio-Korhonen 2012, 188–98). The house where she lived in Pohja was tastefully furnished. Louise

also owned clothing, linen, silverware, and some golden jewelry. At the time of her death, she had 330 marks in cash, over 800 marks as a pension, and one bond (Bank of Uusimaa) worth 300 marks. From her husband she had inherited two government bonds of the Russian state, worth altogether 600 marks (Pohjan kärjäkunnan perukirjat 1911: Probate inventory of Louise Aminoff, Ec1:22, ARj, PAH).

## CONCLUSION

Louise Aminoff spent the winter of 1891–92 in Wiesbaden, Germany, as a patient in the famous Professor Pagenstecher's eye clinic, where her iritis, the inflammation of the iris of her eye, was treated. The journey was not only for medical care; she also enjoyed the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the lively European spa, where she met new people and enjoyed a high-spirited social life. She wrote to her husband Gustaf:

Oh, darling, I really understand those people who can afford to travel abroad for two or three months every year. Not only to learn to know new places and circumstances but also new people. I would absolutely do so, if I were rich, and would enjoy it enormously. . . .

Ack, älskling, nog förstår jag de människor som då de ha råd därtill, resa ut årligt på par, tre månader. Ej blott får att se och lära känna olika orten och förhållanden men äfven människor. Jag skulle ovilkorligt göra det om jag vara rik; och njuta ofantligt däraf. . . . (Aminoff 1892)

Louise's words above tell a great deal about the life of a noble civil servant's family at the end of the nineteenth century in Finland. Persistent impecuniousness was typical in many noble families. Between the lines there are hidden memories from the good old days and the fulfilling way of life with travel, social engagements, and a cosmopolitan lifestyle. After all, Louise's words do not express bitterness but rather nostalgia.

As Snellman has proved, the Finnish nobility was a very heterogeneous group in the nineteenth century: the nobility was an estate, not a social class (2014, 284–88). Therefore the lifestyle or wealth of the Cedercreutz/Aminoff family is very hard to classify as typical or atypical. They represent the “typical” noble family as well or as poorly as any other family at the end of the nineteenth century. By observing the life of the Aminoffs, it is possible, however, to create a picture of the challenges that the noble civil servant family had to face in a modernizing society. At the end of the nineteenth century, the wages of high-ranking officials were insufficient to support the standard of living required of them.



The more senior the official, the greater the demands regarding lifestyle. Trying to meet these demands was challenging and frequently resulted in severe financial difficulties. Governor Gustaf Aminoff's family suffered from a lack of money, which at times they found depressing. The constant and frugal planning of housekeeping was hard for Louise Aminoff. There was always something on which they had to compromise. The hardest part was giving up dreams and hopes. The women of the Aminoff family dreamed a lot, especially about travel abroad. They could travel, but more new experiences from Europe were always desired. Despite all the disappointments, there is little bitterness or jealousy in their letters, although money was always an important topic. Instead, the financial situation of the family caused feelings of anxiety and dismay.

Why were the demands on the standard of living so high in upper civil servant families? First, the structure of the old-world estate society had not yet disintegrated, especially on the socio-cultural level. Society at the end of the nineteenth century was still very hierarchical. It was clear that members of the upper class should live like their peers, and the pressure from their own social group was strong. However, some changes had already occurred in Finnish society. The consumption standards of the upper class were still high, but more and more commoners could reach this level. The wealthy upper class grew and absorbed people other than members of the old estates. This development put pressure on those social groups that could be called the old elite. The effect on the nobility, once the yardstick of consumption, was dire. In the nineteenth century many noblemen persistently tried to reach the required level of consumption and maintain their social standing. Now the trend was in the hands of the new elite, which prospered rapidly in business and industry.

The second reason for the high demands was the culture of the senior officials in the Grand Duchy of Finland. Most senior officials had to live and behave in keeping with their rank. Clothing, furnishings, the decoration of public and private residences, and an imposing social life emphasized the prestige of senior officials in relation to the common people but also to one another. The hierarchy of officials was rigid and laid down officially in the rank orders issued by the Tsar. The most senior officials were closely linked to St. Petersburg. Partly this relationship could be called interdependence, including economically. The Tsar rewarded whom he wanted and when he wanted. The governor-general was surrounded by his own little local "court" in Helsinki. It was, of course, more modest than the real court in St. Petersburg but still significant in its own surroundings. If an official wanted to make an appearance and most of all to be a member of powerful networks, he had

to integrate into the most exclusive social circles of Helsinki. Social life cost a lot, but it was vital.

Reverting to Louise Aminoff's words at the beginning of this chapter, we find the third aspect of high demands on the noble way of life. It is the consumption-oriented and cosmopolitan tradition of nobilities everywhere in Europe. Many nobles had to change their lives radically, a phenomenon especially apparent in Finland where the nobility had never been extremely wealthy as compared to some other European countries. At the end of the nineteenth century, prosperity among the nobility was far from obvious. Many noble families hung on to their social and cultural capital, but materially their lives were less magnificent than before. An appropriate lifestyle was maintained in many cases by borrowing money. Loans were seen as the only way to survive, which in many cases was the reality—sacrificing the standard of living was not an option. Living on credit seemed to be relatively natural and generally accepted; at least it was a necessity. One could claim that living in debt was one source of livelihood. Despite this, many nobles felt great pressure under their burden of debt. The thought of leaving their children or other heirs crippled with debt was particularly daunting. Loans were never taken with a light heart.

The poor financial situation of the Aminoff family represents relative poverty. It did not mean a lack of food or basic commodities, poor housing, or general misery, but rather a compromising of the lifestyle that the social prestige, noble tradition, and culture of high-ranking officials required. The situation of the Aminoff family illustrates the gentrification of the nobility. From the economic point of view, their reference group was no longer the financial elite of society but rather the affluent middle-class. Ideologically the family did not, however, integrate easily into the middle-class. The noble tradition was still very strong, which was seen, for example, in attitudes toward work and livelihood. Being a civil servant was rather a lifestyle than a living, which is one main reason why maintaining proper standards was so important and required such efforts. It necessitated living on credit and constantly cherishing the prestige and good reputation of the family.

If the traditional noble way of life was partly a burden at the end of the nineteenth century, there were also aspects in which many noble families survived in the rapidly modernizing society. The meaning of social networks, cosmopolitanism, and extremely good social skills including language proficiency were remarkable in their assimilation into twentieth-century society. With these, the Finnish nobility had found new ways of making a living and gaining influence in the modern world.

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# BOURGEOIS STORIES OF IMPOVERISHED NOBLEMEN AS EVIDENCE OF THE DECLINE OF THE NOBLE ESTATE

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## ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the ideologically motivated representations of noble poverty in nineteenth-century Finnish print publications that were used to justify a takeover of society by commoners. The national-level public debate on the issue was slow in nature and took place in different genres, namely works of fiction and journalism, as well as non-fiction books on national history. Of the fiction writers, Zachris Topelius and Arvid Järnefelt come particularly to the fore. Topelius, who doubled as an academic historian and newspaperman, made good use of the medium of fiction to educate his readers about the development of society in the past, while simultaneously promoting a progressive political agenda focusing on the gradual withdrawal of the nobility from the political and economic arena. Järnefelt's numerous descriptions of voluntarily and involuntarily poor noblemen were based partly on personal and family experience and partly on his egalitarian, Tolstoyan social-political agenda. Further proof is sought from newspaper material and non-fictional representations of national history. The article aims to show that noble poverty as a symptom of the general decline of the noble estate is a distinct, uniform, and recurring narrative theme in nineteenth-century political discourse.

## INTRODUCTION

The economic and political modernization of the late nineteenth century was powered by the onset of capitalism. It favored new types of industry and business, and introduced new structures in commerce. These in turn became a novel source of wealth, and eventually of status and power, creating a stratum of business tycoons,

who by background were usually commoners. The older aristocratic types of wealth and industry lost ground in the process. At the same time, the recruiting base of bureaucrats broadened, and higher education became available even to individuals of peasant origin. All this severely undermined the economic and social position of the traditional, hereditary noble elites, whose livelihood had been drawn mainly from landowning and related industries—extensive agriculture, forestry, and sometimes mining—and whose social status had rested on their membership in administrative hierarchies and the restricted distribution of certain types of cultural and social capital (Kuisma 1993; Peltonen 1990; Snellman 2014; Soinen 1974; Wirilander 1974).

In Finland, and indeed throughout Europe, this socioeconomic development coincided with the rapid growth of the publishing industry. The development of print media—newspapers, journals, books of fiction and non-fiction—into a mass-level phenomenon, and the related cultural and ideological mobilization, gave rise to new political forces, providing them with the necessary steady momentum, which further contributed to the redistribution of power. The gradual introduction of a voting system based on universal suffrage brought with it a major change in the field of politics, giving precedence to the subtle, quasi-invisible power of persuasion. Distribution of news and information proved an efficient tool for influencing thoughts and gaining hegemony in a society that operated on the so-called democratic principle (Anderson 1991; Briggs and Burke 2002, 106–207; Gellner 1983; Häggman 2008, 13–271; Nieminen 2006).

The new era brought new men to the center of society. The university-educated, nationally oriented middle-class intelligentsia utilized the growing print industry to establish itself as the founding core of the nation. While distributing information and entertainment, the newcomers simultaneously introduced themselves as the prime defenders and educators of the subordinate societal groups. To better establish the self-image of a selfless, moral, progressive, liberating new force, the intelligentsia created an opposite: the image of a greedy, decadent, reactionary, oppressive old nobility. History books were utilized to create, *ex post facto*, a background narrative of a *longue durée*. Newspapers provided the forum for straightforward political debate, while fiction became the vehicle of a more subtle emotional manipulation (Vuorinen 2010). As both factual and fictional genres were inclined to use elements of the past in the politics of the present, it is important to keep in mind that historical descriptions were very much intended as commentary about the political debates of the day (Anderson 1991; de Groot 2010, Moretti 1999; Mylly 198

2002). What was said about the nobility of the past applied—*mutatis mutandis*—to the nobility of the present.

The nineteenth-century politics of progress, equality, democracy, and nationalism cast nobility in the role of the natural enemy of the forces of modernization. It was respectively portrayed as the personification of stagnation, privilege, and exclusion; the would-be cosmopolitan, imperialist opponent of nationalistic politics; the main historical oppressor of the people through land ownership and military leadership; and the sole group to take advantage of the labor of others, both as workforce and through taxation. Nobility was represented as a thing of the past, doomed to be drowned by the great wave of progress that rose like a force of nature—a decadent group of high-born weaklings, clinging to the remnants of their possessions, traditions, privileges, and culture. In a Social Darwinist vein, fiction writers introduced nobleman characters whose hapless life stories, degenerate personal appearance, deteriorated housing, lack of morals, and diminishing wealth all heralded a fast and irreversible decline (Vuorinen 2001, 2010; see also Taylor 2004).

This article aims to show that noble poverty as a symptom of the general decline of the noble estate was a distinct, uniform, and recurring narrative theme in nineteenth-century discourse on society. To achieve this it analyzes the contents of the newspapers, non-fiction works on national history, and works of fiction of the era. How did the authors portray the individual noblemen and women of the past in order to represent the nobility as the historical oppressor of the people? What kind of state actions, structural changes, inherited circumstances, and personal life choices were presented as the causes of the gradual decline of the economic status of the nobility over the centuries? And how did the authors present the theme of noble poverty to justify the takeover of society by commoners?

The bulk of the article discusses the representations of noble impoverishment in fiction. The literary period of interest extends from the 1830s to the first decades of the twentieth century, and constitutes the classical early phase of Finnish literary fiction. It is usually subdivided into two periods.

The individualistic, emotion-focused *Romantic style* dominated from the 1830s to 1860s, and the more society-oriented, realistic style from the 1860s onwards. The authors of the former period include Johan Ludvig Runeberg (1802–84), academic, schoolmaster, and poet laureate; Fredrika Runeberg (1807–79), a clergyman's daughter and the poet's wife who, unlike her male counterparts, received no formal academic education; Zacharias Topelius (1818–98), a journalist-cum-publisher and professor of history at the University of Helsinki, and the most celebrated

writer of historical novels of the period, all of whom wrote in Swedish; and Karl Jacob Gummerus (1840–98), a rural teacher, writer, and publisher, and Aleksis Kivi (1834–72), a university drop-out of rural origin and the official founding father of Finnish-speaking prose, who both wrote in Finnish.

Among the *Realists* the most prominent authors are Juhani Aho (1861–1921), a journalist and professional writer; Arvid Järnefelt (1861–1932), a nobleman-born anarcho-egalitarian, shoemaker, troublemaker, smallholder, pamphleteer, and novelist; and Minna Canth (1844–97), a well-to-do small-town shopkeeper and literary matriarch, all of whom wrote in Finnish; and a nobleman-born professional writer—novelist and small-town journalist Karl August Tavaststjerna (1860–98), originally trained as an architect, who wrote in Swedish.

Additional support is sought from newspaper material and non-fictional representations of national history. The newspaper articles related to noble poverty were located using the online Finnish National Library Digital Archive search engine (*DigiLib*) and are available through the same. The history profession of the period is represented through the works of the two most prominent historians close to the Finnish nationalistic *Fennoman* movement, Yrjö Koskinen (1830–1903) and Julius Krohn (1835–88), along with their non-Fennoman counterpart Gabriel Rein (1800–67) to provide a more balanced view (for an analysis of Tavaststjerna’s and Koskinen’s works, see also Henrik Forsberg’s article in this issue).

### **COUNTY-LEAGUE NOBLEMEN ON THE MARGINS OF “OUR” HISTORY**

If only to set the scene, a brief excursion into the writing of history, an allegedly factual genre, is appropriate to establish its share in the ideologically motivated portrayal of noble poverty. As we will see, a supposed adherence to actual realities did not prevent the writers from making an ideological point when so inclined.

Even though the important role of the nobility in central and local government, as well as in military leadership in the past, was fully recognized, the main function of the nobility in these histories was to play the role of rich and idle elite. The narrative was based on a simplistic, binary division of oppressor and victim, the evil nobility taking advantage of the poor common people (Koskinen 1869, 112–274; 1877, 62–65, 220–30; Krohn 1878, 68–71, 116–51, 263–69; Rein 1871, 232–65). The prevailing democratic attitude of nineteenth-century historians also led them to highlight the role of commoners as the rightful representatives of the national “us” (e.g., Koskinen 1869, 90, 108, 241, 256, 408; Krohn 1878, 97, 269–70, 307). The actually poor noblemen of the past typically did not succeed in reaching the focus of

important events in the first place. For all these reasons, genuinely poor noble individuals were in short supply in the nationalistically motivated nineteenth-century accounts of national history.

Perhaps surprisingly, the impecuniousness of “our” Finnish noblemen—as opposed to their richer Swedish counterparts—even had certain positive uses in the national historiography. They had a supporting role in the prevailing nationalistic narrative of Finns as the essentially virtuous victims of history (see also Forsberg’s article). The historians typically dwelled upon the alleged maltreatment of the Finns by the neighboring nations, notably by the pre-1809 mother-country, Sweden. To accentuate this, “our nobility” was invariably represented as less wealthy, less powerful, and less unscrupulous than the Swedish aristocracy proper. Its relative poverty was represented as a token of decency, counterpointing the outrageously rich nobility of the Swedish mainland, whose wealth directly indicated economic exploitation. From a national perspective, the local Finnish nobility—elsewhere routinely referred to as an alien and hostile element in society—sometimes came to be hailed as a part of the national(istic) whole (Koskinen 1869, 50–89, 243–46; 1877, 61–62).

The nineteenth-century historians tended to concentrate on events, only rarely touching upon gradual processes of a general economic and political nature; never explicated, these processes can, at most, be found hidden between the lines. The only instance of the impoverishment of the nobility that explicitly interested the historians was the successive reductions of the fiefs that took place during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In general, the loss of income was represented as a just punishment for the greedy nobility, as well as economically beneficial both to the common folk and the state economy (Krohn 1869, 10–12; Koskinen 1877, 172, 230, 261–64, 570).

Nevertheless, the historians again showed sympathy for the “national” nobility. Particularly when it came to the Great Reduction of 1680, they pointed out the same drawback as would some fiction writers, namely that the crown sometimes confiscated even such lands that had originally belonged to the families as private property. Koskinen actually went so far as to call the reductions “a flood that completely washed away the former power of the nobility, [. . .] a deluge that drowned the private property and personal happiness of many individuals, [. . .] often implemented far more harshly than justice and fairness required”<sup>1</sup> (Koskinen 1869, 263–64).

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1 All translations by Marja Vuorinen.

Otherwise, the manor economy was discussed by historians only as an icon of the economic domination of the nobility (Vuorinen 2010, 184–89).

Another instance when the historical nobility could be pardoned and shown as belonging to “us” was when they were attacked and their property destroyed by a foreign enemy. In connection with an incident involving Russian troops invading the eastern parts of Finland in the Kexholm region in 1656, Koskinen indignantly described how the manor houses of the local nobility had been burned down (Koskinen 1869, 233).

### **FICTIONAL NOBILITY IN DIRE STRAITS**

When compared with the so-called factual history, fiction emerges as the even more poignantly emotional medium. As the most encompassing of literary genres, with descriptions covering any and all walks of life, fiction enables the authors to present an extensive array of ideological signifiers. Uninhibited by the restraints of truthfulness, the writers have the greatest freedom imaginable to construct their characters, situations, plots, and dialogues to create persuasive narratives. Fiction is thus particularly suitable for smuggling in ideological content.

The nineteenth-century novelists applied this license to the full. Individual representatives of antagonizing groups were set to play against one another in telling social situations. The romantic novels in particular abounded in descriptions of such encounters. In them, an enterprising young commoner typically challenges a degenerate nobleman and emerges from the conflict as the moral victor. The characters representing the new bourgeois-intellectual elite exhibit personal strength, energy, innovation, and industry, a good character, sound values, and a warm heart. Conversely, the denizens of the old establishment appear indolent, comfort-loving, arrogant, violent, scheming, and cold-hearted.

The theme of noble poverty appears as a part of a more general discourse on noble degeneration aimed at contesting its leading role in society. In a banal reading of Social Darwinism, the signs of noble decadence include degeneration of physical health resulting from an inactive, luxury-loving lifestyle, and mental illness resulting from generations of alleged in-breeding. The gradual process of impoverishment, both in the contemporary nineteenth to early twentieth-century context and in the more distant past—notably the constantly increasing indebtedness from the late eighteenth century onwards—is reported in the same vein. The other alleged moral deficits of the nobility include a tendency toward extensive, violent, warrior-like behaviors even in civilian life; reckless womanizing targeting



the daughters of the lower classes (iconic of the exploitation of “the people”); and an eighteenth-century style of Enlightenment atheism, again setting the nobility apart from the idealized Lutheran devoutness of the people (Vuorinen 2001, 2010).

The nobility as the enemy of the people, as portrayed by the progressive writers, consisted of the male half of the estate. Noble women received no such literary ill treatment, because, as women, they were considered to be pro-emancipation, and therefore naturally in league with the modernists. Women of past centuries, described in the historical novels of the period, and the contemporary women of the mid- to late-nineteenth century were rarely active in the public, let alone the political, sphere. Higher education, military and civil service, careers in the church and, indeed, most professions were open only to men, whereas women were considered to be private people, active within the domestic sphere. And as they often fell victim to the social expectations regarding suitable roles for upper-class women, they were supposed to be keener on overthrowing than maintaining traditions.

In fiction, as well as in real life, the usual—and correct (see Nummela 2013)—presupposition was that noble people were either fabulously or at least moderately rich; as the upper crust of the top echelon of society, they would certainly have appeared that way to most. The progressive writers of fiction, often of bourgeois origin and always with values to match, accordingly portrayed the members of the nobility as societal predators, whose main functions were to rule and govern, to wage war and to collect taxes and rents, using the common people as workforce and cannon fodder, while simultaneously pillaging the fruits of their labors (Vuorinen 2001, 195–202). To provide a symbolic revenge, the authors introduced the theme of noble impoverishment and general decline. On the other hand, the writers of noble origin, personally acquainted with the kinds of life the nobles actually led, also discussed poverty as an actual possibility.

The democratic, egalitarian ethos was present in an array of literary themes typically attacking the manifestations of social inequality. The notion of revolution as the economic and social *nemesis* for the nobility was a favorite of the nineteenth-century progressives. It was represented as an ongoing process, inextricably linked to modernization—a social force as unstoppable as a force of nature. To escape the censor, revolution was referred to metaphorically as castles collapsing when their foundations gave way, and headless—decapitated—French dolls of aristocratic appearance, or mentioned coyly as “the incidents that took place in France” or “the traditions of 1789” (Vuorinen 2001, 244–46).

The most fundamental equality principles were equality before God and before the law. The hereditary caste system was denounced by stating that all human beings were descendants of Adam and Eve and therefore equal as God's creations. Equality in death was pointed out by criticizing its opposite, that is, the habit among the high and mighty of celebrating burials with great pomp and circumstance and of erecting grand monuments to commemorate their dead. To underline the modern ethos, the grand burial vaults of fictional noble families would occasionally collapse, simulating the revolutionary earthquake-like quality of the democratic development. The presence of wealthy noble families in the rural communities was condemned by criticizing the tradition of hanging their coats-of-arms on the walls of the parish churches. The democratic writers also suspected sinister motives, i.e., issues related to undue personal power, behind the already rapidly disappearing right of the lord of a manor to appoint the local minister—usually combined with the obligation to pay his wages. Positive pro-democracy themes included a rather programmatic glorification of manual work, and a literary predilection for passionate cross-class love affairs preferably ending in happy marriages, while the *danse macabre* theme, adopted from medieval religious art, reminded the readers that death, the greatest democrat of all, eventually takes every one—high and low, noble and peasant, rich and poor alike (Vuorinen 2001, 100–102, 235–52).

### **LUXURY AND PRIVILEGE: NORMATIVE PROSPERITY OR STATUS LOST**

The main icon of noble wealth in fiction was the manor house, the seat of its economic power, local-level rural authority, ancestry, cultural capital, lifestyle, and inherited traditions. Many writers described thriving manors, both for historical accuracy and to critically point out the vast difference between noble and peasant lifestyles (Vuorinen 2001, 53–62). Processes leading to the loss of a manor, or even to the mere threat thereof, were given particular weight in fiction, to the point of treating them as the equivalent of losing the very essence of nobility. The loss of an ancestral manor was a powerful literary theme, packed with emotional poignancy as well as ideological weight.

Losing a manor thus signified a considerable loss of both economic and status capital (cf. Irene Ylönen's article in this issue). In the novels set in the seventeenth century, the most dramatic causes for such losses were the successive reductions of fiefs by the crown. Sometimes this meant not only dispossessing a noble family of an actual fiefdom—a piece of landed property allotted with a right to levy the crown taxes, conferred by the state for a temporary period only, as a reward for

services rendered or as a substitute for wages due (for an overview, see Jokipii 1956; 1960)—but unlawfully also of ordinary hereditary lands.

In the later, post-feudal centuries, the typical reason for the loss of a manor was debt. In the descriptions of the eighteenth century, it was usually shown as accumulating slowly over generations. The primary cause was apparently an inability to cover the costs of high living, financed with loans, with the future yields of agriculture. The early capitalism of the nineteenth century introduced into the narratives short-term economic developments—related to speculation and swindles, enhanced by personal incompetence—leading to sudden bankruptcies. Another perennial cause of personal impoverishment was the loss of the right to inherit the family property. In fiction such dramatic twists in the plot served a dual purpose, making the story emotionally interesting while simultaneously providing the reader with the ideologically motivated satisfaction of witnessing the self-inflicted economic downfall of the supposedly high and mighty (Vuorinen 2001, 62–65).

Fredrika Runeberg, in her novel *Sigrid Liljeholm*, published in 1862, describes with sympathy a minor Finnish noble family whose father takes part in the Club War of 1596–97; meanwhile, his capable wife and two daughters manage the manor. He fights on the side of the Catholic Polish pretender to the throne, Sigismund, who eventually loses the war. The ancestral manor is confiscated by the Swedish crown as a punishment for rebelling against the state. Banished from its home, the family settles on a small farm. Its new life as smallholders who personally engage in manual farm labor is celebrated by the author as a token of both admirable resilience and egalitarian spirit (Runeberg [1862] 1983).

Zachris Topelius, in his dual role as academic historian and romantic novelist, had a particularly keen eye for historical detail, reflecting the actual economic trends of each period even in his fictional works. *Feltskärns berättelser* (The surgeon's stories) narrates the saga of the noble Bertelsköld family, created as a model upon which to portray the early modern Finnish military nobility as a collective. The story was originally published as a serial in his newspaper *Helsingfors Tidningar* between 1853 and 1867. It recounts the economic ups and downs of two centuries, culminating in the loss of the ancestral castle in the Great Reduction of 1680. The episode is anticipated by moralizing descriptions of the extravagant living and continuous waste of resources that takes place in the castle, which is decorated with luxurious objects originally acquired as spoils while plundering the homesteads of the vanquished opponents during the Thirty Years' War (Topelius 1949 KT I, 385–86, 678–79, 697–98). The nobility thus appears as a group of luxury-seeking despoilers and exploiters

of resources, unable to manage their personal household in a sustainable manner.

In *Konungens handske* (The king's glove), a short story first published in 1863, Topelius describes a late-eighteenth-century manor, Rautasaari (Iron Island), situated in Eastern Finland. The main economic theme is a slowly accumulating debt, accompanied by a dwindling of natural resources. The masters have for long made a living by mining and refining the local iron ore, but run into debt once the ore deposit is exhausted. An early nineteenth-century agricultural debt case is included as a sub-plot in the famous *Gröna kammarn på Linnais gård* (The green chamber of Linnais Manor), touching upon the economic downward movement of a hapless cousin. In both cases the creditors are wealthy commoners (Topelius 1949 KT IV, 58–59, 94–97, 104–10; 321–31, 338).

In the several realist novels of the late-nineteenth century, with contemporary topics, the extravagant noble lifestyle and ensuing debt—often accumulated over several generations—is still seen as the main cause for noble impoverishment, eventually imperiling even the ancestral manors (Tavaststjerna [1891] 1983, 26–35; Aho KT V, 280; KT VIII, 189–191; Järnefelt 1900, 1–35). A more modern option is a sudden bankruptcy caused by incompetently managed business ventures. A case involving timber mills, in the context of the fast-developing contemporary rural industry drawing on the resources provided by landownership, is mentioned in passing by K. A. Tavaststjerna (1924a, 295–305) in *Allmän gunstling* (Everybody's favorite), originally published in 1890.

The typical noble dwelling in the nineteenth-century narrative was definitely a manor house. Another respectable option was a palatial townhouse, spacious and lavishly decorated, suitable for entertaining in the grand style, typically situated in either the local capital—Turku and later Helsinki—or in that of the empire—until 1809 Stockholm, and thereafter St. Petersburg. An occasional noble diplomat was depicted living at post in a foreign capital (Vuorinen 2001, 53, 65–67).

The norm was counterpointed by descriptions of poor urban housing—either a temporary arrangement, for instance, the meager city digs of young nobles, often students, living on their own and managing the household chores without servants (Järnefelt 1900, 1–8, 44–45; 1902, 180, 278, 343; [1928–30] 1986, 264–65), or a permanent condition, signifying a dire economic and social decline (Gummerus 1873, 85–91; Järnefelt 1926, 3–131).

The normative level of noble wealth could be represented even without the manorial frame of reference. This was particularly evident in the moralizing descriptions of

noble clothing, with the focus on the most luxurious items. For the ladies, these included first and foremost gala dresses, typically made of expensive materials, silk, velvet, or gold brocade. Heirloom jewelry made of precious metals and set with pearls and gemstones was worn with these. The fictional noble gentlemen likewise wore impeccable evening dress to balls and parties. The disapproving authors commented particularly on their excessively fine everyday clothing, often worn with expensive accoutrements of silk and fur. It is worth noting that most writers were actually far more interested in, and annoyed by, the dandified clothing of the aristocratic men than that of the ladies. The female taste for finery was no doubt considered normal and natural, as opposed to the “abnormal”—that is, non-bourgeois—fashions of the noblemen. The main target of the criticism was not blue-blooded people as such, but the socio-political noble estate, represented solely by the wealthy male nobility (Vuorinen 2001, 68–70, 171–74). Pretentious clothes were indeed a *sine qua non* for noblemen, to the extent that when a progressive member of the noble estate wanted to pass for a working man, he only had to shed his finery and change into worn-out clothes (Järnefelt [1928–30] 1986, 100–101).

As for the poorer nobles, they often had to make do and mend. A morally poignant case is included in Fredrika Runeberg’s short story “The most beautiful hands,” in the collection *Teckningar och drömmar* (Drawings and dreams), originally published in 1861. The virtuous daughters of an impoverished noble family serve as a good example in the story—much in the vein of the ball scene in *Little Women*, by Louisa May Alcott, or even the Dashwood girls in Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility*. They are counterpointed by other, more conventionally represented—that is, quarrelsome and selfish—noble girls. The poverty-stricken sisters only have one passable ball dress between them, and solve the problem amicably by taking turns wearing it (Runeberg [1861] 1982, 162–68). Likewise, in J. L. Runeberg’s poem “Jenny,” an impoverished young noblewoman makes a living by sewing ball gowns for other, more fortunate ladies (Runeberg SA II, 219–26). For noble women, poverty was thus represented as a sad but honorable state, even if sometimes hinting that a patch of hard luck was a salutary remedy for their otherwise excessive pride.

When it came to noble men, the effect of material poverty was quite the opposite. The title character of Topelius’s novelette *Gamla baronen på Rautakylä* (The old baron of Rautakylä) is a senile baron whose youth, along with most of his money, was spent during the frivolous late-eighteenth-century *rococo* era in and around the Swedish court. His moral decay is accentuated by a dirty and disheveled personal appearance, as well as by his slowly decaying manor house furnished with

dilapidated heirloom furniture, torn wallpapers, and faded curtains (Topelius 1949 KT VI, 375–80, 410–11)—a setting iconic for the overall decay of the *ancien régime*. A similar case of combined moral, economic, social, and material decay is the womanizing, gambling, thieving nobleman swindler, Count G., one of the antagonists in K. J. Gummerus's *Ylhäiset ja alhaiset* (The high and the low, 1870). He eventually meets his end at the hands of a servant woman whom he once seduced ([1870] 1970, part II, 26–34). Topelius's *Ljungars' saga* (Story of the Ljungars family) of 1896 features two medieval noble brothers, the one wealthy and respectable, the other a poor rogue, who makes his appearance riding on an emaciated horse, wearing tattered, dirty clothes, and wielding a rusty sword (1949 KT VI, 24–25, 66, 91–92, 99–102, 188–197). In Järnefelt's loosely autobiographical play *Kuolema* (Death) of 1903, a deranged nobleman takes to roaming around the city, prophesying. Toying with the religious ideal of Christ-like poverty, he takes to dressing in rags, greatly astonishing his noble cronies (1927, 39, 60).

In fiction, as in real life, noble wealth was also displayed by good living, grand dinners, and sometimes excessive frivolity—disapproved of by the progressive authors as immoral luxury and a waste of resources. Moreover, the practices of the high life were represented as bolstering social inequality, as the finest balls and dances, particularly those that took place at royal or imperial courts, were the exclusive prerogative of the nobility (Vuorinen 2001, 108–12). On the other hand, admittance to parties also drew a line within the nobility. J. L. Runeberg's "Jenny," as well as Fredrika Runeberg's poor young ladies of the one single ball dress are beside themselves with joy when invited to a ball, if also acutely worried about their ability to mount a sufficiently grand appearance (Runeberg SA II, 219–26; Runeberg [1861] 1982, 162–68; as for similar kind of "modest" female nobility, see Ylönen's article).

Poverty was an issue even within the marriage market (Vuorinen 2001, 69)—again, in fiction as in real life. Poor noblewomen who must marry for money are a recurrent theme in Fredrika Runeberg's short stories ([1861] 1982, 136–37, 162–68). Widowhood is also described as a likely cause of poverty, stripping a noblewoman of her possessions so effectively as to make it impossible for her to maintain a respectable lifestyle (Topelius 1949 KT III, 847). Likewise, an orphaned noble girl without a powerful male guardian is in danger of losing her inheritance (Kivi 1984, 769–82). An impoverished nobleman always has the option of marrying a wealthy woman of bourgeois or even peasant origin (Topelius 1949 KT VIII, 91, 416, 610, 706).

## FICTIONAL NOBLEMEN OF DIMINISHING WEALTH

The fictional noblemen all conform to a constant repertoire of ideal types. They range from the archaic-traditional figures of warrior, civil servant, and courtier, typically found in the historical novels set in the early modern era, to the contemporary characters of career military officer, manor-owner acting as a gentleman farmer, modern professional and entrepreneur, to the socially downgraded figures of nobleman worker and total loser (Vuorinen 2001, 206–30; 2012, 131).

Despite the presupposition of noble wealth, many of these standard portrayals occurred even in a poorer aspect, again, not only for the sake of realism but also to underline the impending doom of the noble estate. When it came to fictional noblemen, noble poverty was typically of the relative kind. The writers described a significant and steady, sometimes sharp, decline of wealth, but never outright starvation. For fictional noble women and children, even abject poverty was sometimes possible, but such cases were more about the vulnerability of women and children in general, made only more poignant by their originally high status, than about nobility as such.

Courtiers and civil servants appear in nineteenth-century novels mainly to illustrate the exploiting, opportunistic, intriguing, and generally good-for-nothing ways of the old nobility, and they receive little or no sympathy from the progressive writers. They are understandably never portrayed as manifestly poor, because holders of such positions were required to maintain certain standards; the same usually applied to noblemen of military profession (Vuorinen 2001, 207–23). The only exceptions appear in the realistic descriptions set in the late-nineteenth century. The insufficient wages of the younger officers in the Finnish Guard in particular and in the Russian army in general are mentioned by the better-informed noble-born writers (Tavaststjerna [1891] 1983, 26–32; Järnefelt [1928–30] 1986, 102–103).

The other ideal types relate directly to the binary concept of noble wealth versus poverty. They are discussed below in the order of historical prevalence, from the most ancient to the most recent.

### *Warrior*

The more flashy, not to say bling-bling, figures of the contemporary noble military—typically observed donning parade uniforms bedecked with decorations—were looked upon with disgust by the progressive authors (Vuorinen 2001, 212–16). However, the disheveled field officers, who paid little heed to their looks and concentrated instead on winning the war, were respected as early champions of the

modern egalitarian spirit. Because of the nineteenth-century *pax Russica*, such military men of action typically appeared in past settings. Many of the depictions were based on actual historical characters. Otto von Fieandt, “the shaggy bear of the forests of Savolax,” was described by J. L. Runeberg in *Fänrik Ståls sägner* (Tales of Ensign Ståhl) as a senior officer leading a guerrilla operation during the Finnish War, 1808–09, whereas Topelius, in *Konungens handske* (The king’s glove), recounted his actions in the earlier Russo-Swedish War, 1788–90 (Runeberg SA V, 150–56). Earlier cases of the same ilk were “Klasu the Soot-nose,” in other words, Admiral Klaus Fleming, the bold but eventually hapless defender of Turku Castle during the Club War, 1596–97, who was warmly and admiringly described by Fredrika Runeberg in *Sigrid Liljeholm*, and Åke Tott, “the uncombed horseman,” who took part in most of King Gustav II Adolf’s field campaigns, including the most important battles of the Thirty Years’ War, 1618–48 (Runeberg [1862] 1983, 46–53, 93, 159–60; Topelius 1949 KT IV, 116–22). While not exactly poor, these practically oriented military men nevertheless personified a spirit of service and sacrifice that closely resembled the vow of poverty of the medieval religious orders, as well as the humble democratic mindset that was so *en vogue* in the late-nineteenth century.

The most spectacular of the truly fictitious poor noblemen is undoubtedly Topelius’s Sten Ljungar, the darkly romantic medieval anti-hero of the *Ljungars saga*—a weather-beaten leader of a band of rogues, who, despite his ragged appearance and bad behavior, exudes a raw kind of animal magnetism (Topelius 1949 KT VI, 66, 91–92, 99–102, 196–97). A very different type of poor-but-loyal officer is shamelessly idealized in the shape of Gustaf Adolf Bertelsköld, the hero of Topelius’s eighteenth-century guerrilla warfare scenes, in the book *Flykting* (Fugitive) of the *Feltskärens berättelser* cycle (Topelius 1949 KT II, 149, 188–232).

### *The Eventually Innovative Landowner*

The innovative noblemen farmers in fiction were modern types who belonged entirely to the nineteenth century. Their predecessors, the landed noblemen of the previous centuries, typically treated their manors merely as a source of income and as a place to live, leaving it to bailiffs and stewards to manage, or rather mismanage, the farmhands and the actual farming (Vuorinen 2001, 195–202). The contemporary progressive types were described mainly in order to set a good example. Their real-life equivalents actually benefited the local and even the wider national economy by developing extensive farming, introducing new varieties of grain and livestock, and experimenting with novel agricultural technologies (Soininen 1974,



98–99, 247–48). Most of them were portrayed as eventually successful, but many of them went through lean years in their lives, which, of course motivated them to make the most of the farm.

Because of their modern and progressive nature, the fictional nobleman farmers typically appeared in the works of the realists, rarely featuring in the earlier romantic period. Yet there are two exceptions to this rule. Topelius, in his capacity as a historian intent on pointing out significant development, introduced the character in one of his novels. By way of criticism, he also explored the other aspects of the phenomenon. The Baron of Rautakylä, mentioned earlier, was poor but definitely no innovator, nor was the old Captain Croneld of *Konungens handske*, landing in debt as the eighteenth century drew to its close, but he at least took an interest in his fields—if only to the extent of personally “calling to order his hay-making battalion” (Topelius 1949 KT IV, 58–59).

Topelius’s only nobleman farmer who shows any initiative is the comic relief character in the *Gröna kammarn på Linnais gård*. Cousin Winterloo, whose name is an obvious reference to Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo, has managed to all but ruin his ancestral home, Syrjäkoski (which literally translates as Back-of-Beyond Rapids). Despite his occasional manly efforts to revitalize the manor economy, the debts he has inherited and the extravagant lifestyle of his lady mother are slowly bringing it down. Furthermore, he has lost all his noble ambition, dreaming of becoming a true peasant instead. Syrjäkoski suffers a *coup de grace* by fire, in which the already dilapidated main building is destroyed—allegedly with so many priceless heirlooms, most of which the old lady has actually pawned or sold long before in an attempt to cover her debts. A new opportunity presents itself when Winterloo marries the bourgeois governess of Linnais Manor, who is the daughter of a cheese-making Swiss family. Drawing on her know-how they engage in extensive dairy farming and proceed to experiment with cheese-making, eventually creating a thriving agricultural business with a large quantity of livestock, a creamery, and a cheese factory (Topelius 1949 KT IV, 361–66, 371, 378–87).

The other early exception was introduced by Aleksis Kivi, whose knowledge of such matters stemmed from his rural childhood. As described by Kivi, the *Seitsemän veljestä* (The Seven Brothers) encounter difficulties in the local forest. They are besieged by a huge angry herd of forty bulls belonging to Viertola Manor and have to kill every one of them in order to escape. The lord of the manor is understandably distressed by the loss of his prize animals, but the brothers promise to compensate. The main function of the scene is to make visible the vast difference

in the economic circumstances of the protagonists—what is a considerable but not irremediable economic loss for the nobleman is a veritable fortune for the young freeholder peasants (Kivi 1984, 580–81, 598).

K. A. Tavaststjerna himself was a modern professional—an architect and journalist—who was well informed about and gently critical of the ways of his native noble estate. In the novel *Hårda tider* (Hard times) he describes a fairly typical career of a noble officer of the Guards, Captain Thoreld, who for years lives a happy-go-lucky life on the revenues of his manor, managed by his widowed mother until her death. Coming into his inheritance, he suddenly realizes that the family fortune is almost gone, with the manor in jeopardy, and that he either has to sell and find a new way to make a living, or make the manor profitable and pay the mortgage. Either way, he has to resign from the army and involve himself personally in the management of his property. To achieve this he must put aside all sentiment and cut out the unprofitable practices—along with the decaying avenue of rowan trees, the symbol of cherished but outdated traditions. He also renovates the manorial buildings. One of them he keeps for himself but in the other he installs a modern dairy, along with housing for a professionally trained dairymaid—with whom he promptly forms a relationship—and several other senior farm hands (Tavaststjerna [1891] 1983, 26–35).

Arvid Järnefelt, a nobleman novelist who was also a journalist and political agitator, developed the notion of noble poverty to unparalleled dimensions. He also created several idiosyncratic sub-types of the fictional nobleman. One of these was a radical social-reformer figure designed as a precision tool for promoting a land-reform model. Practising what he preached, Järnefelt himself made a living as an (almost) peasant-style smallholder (see Vuorinen 2012).

Järnefelt's nobleman farmers were idealistic Tolstoyan figures, sometimes with early *Blut und Boden* qualities, whose main aim was to become “ordinary farmers” after centuries of “hitching a free ride on the shoulders of the ordinary people.” His was a programmatic, voluntary impecuniousness, a nemesis self-inflicted by consciously and conscientiously stepping down the social ladder. His fictional characters usually achieved this by dividing their estates into smallholdings and giving them away to local peasants, to accomplish land reform on a personal scale to set an example while waiting for legal measures to be taken—a goal which he also promoted in non-fictional form, in his famous pamphlet *Maa kuuluu kaikille!* (The land belongs to everyone! [1907] 1908).

Järnefelt's loosely autobiographical *Helena* (1902) revolves around a manor house, recounting the destinies of three successive noble generations. The grandfather has adopted a folksy way of living, socializing with the peasants up to the point of begetting bastards on their daughters, but his choice is more about style and personal vanity than about social ethics. The next generation is hit by acute impoverishment, as the despotic grandfather, disapproving of his son's choice of bride, disinherits him, nevertheless allowing the family to continue to live on the premises. Helena, born of that marriage, is likewise left without an inheritance. Once she has grown up, she moves away and seeks to make a meager living in Helsinki by teaching bourgeois children the many languages she has learned during her aristocratic upbringing. Eventually she is reunited with her childhood sweetheart, Georg, the only son of the wealthy owner of a neighboring manor, who has embarked on a military career but begins to doubt his calling. They marry, and Helena persuades him to resign. Together they return to the country, ready to put Helena's idealistic dreams into practice. They purchase her old home from the grandfather's inheritors with all its lands, and allot them as crofts for the local landless people (Järnefelt 1902, 356–61, 367).

In *Maaemon lapsia* (Mother Earth's children, 1905) Järnefelt continues in the same vein, this time painting his former black-and-white idealism over with shades of grey. The innovative nobleman of the older generation is a seasoned, down-to-earth type, whose original idealism has been dented by real-life disappointments. Nevertheless, he still engages in social reform work, for instance, by funding the local school for peasant children. He debates the different reform options with his future son-in-law, a young man with his idealism still intact, who in his youthful enthusiasm would like to give away the lands of the manor as crofts without delay. The older man, who is an expert in crop rotation, warns him that giving land in large quantities to inexperienced growers eager to make a fortune only invites over-exploitation, leading to soil exhaustion. It involves a risk of increasing the overall poverty of nobles and peasants alike, instead of alleviating it. The young couple eventually takes over the manor, shedding their overly enthusiastic idealism and settling on a slow-paced rational reform (Järnefelt 1926, 161–68, 180–81, 186–88, 219, 224, 227, 238, 242, 250–51).

### *Modern Professional*

Formal education and practical expertise were hailed as democratizing forces in nineteenth-century society. Like the agriculturalist, the figure of a modern

professional—a medical doctor, architect, engineer, lawyer, academic, artist, writer, and journalist—was likewise a beacon of the modernizing process typical for the era. Even though such professions brought about a chance of independence from inherited means, for the aristocrats they nevertheless represented a step downward on the socio-economic ladder. The range of their literary appearances resembles that of the innovating farmer, proliferating only after the onset of the realistic period.

In Topelius's *Gröna kammarn på Linnais gård*, an early case of the nobleman as a modern professional originally appears in the guise of a commoner architect—who, after a complicated series of plot twists, is revealed as the legitimate heir to both the manor itself and the title that goes with it, but contents himself with marrying the younger daughter of the manor. After generations of poverty caused by skullduggery with the will of a distant forefather, his noble line is restored to its lawful possessions, even though he chooses to hide the evidence of his true ancestry, so as not to unnecessarily embarrass his future father-in-law, accepting the title only for his sons (Topelius 1949 KT IV, 219–385).

The relative poverty of the noble professionals described by realists is not always elaborated on, or even mentioned, by the writers, who tend to focus on the modern, democratic, ethical quality of the noble professionals' choice of livelihood. The economic uncertainty is made evident only by implication, when describing their clothes, homes, and daily chores, which definitely lack any customary aristocratic luster. These characters include the decidedly bourgeois-minded medical doctor of Tavaststjerna's *Heder och ära* (Honor and glory, published 1893; Tavaststjerna 1924b) and the noble medical student of Juhani Aho's *Kevät ja takatalvi* (Spring, and winter returning, published in 1906; Aho KT VIII, 197). Järnefelt, in his retrospective *Vanhempieni romaani* (The novel of my parents, published 1928–30), mentions a fatherly discussion about the future. Järnefelt senior is ready to accept what he calls the learned professions for his sons, but forbids them to take on any “menial” jobs, such as that of a schoolteacher (Järnefelt [1928–30] 1986, 384–89).

### *Hapless Entrepreneur*

The third modern option for noblemen seeking occupations involving expertise and providing a potential for success, was the career of an entrepreneur. The fast-developing modern industries of the late nineteenth century were typically based on a combination of modern technology with material resources drawn from landed property, such as ore and timber. In the best cases, these were complemented

with a source of inexpensive energy in the form of water power. Nobility as the landed estate had long traditions in both the mining and sawmill industries (see Kuisma 1993).

In fiction, promoting the developing technologies had the same ethical qualities as innovative agriculture, as it also contributed to the common good. Accordingly, most of the noble entrepreneurs in fiction were portrayed as personally successful and promoting the national economy by funding scholarships and disseminating their accumulated expertise through personal networks, even though some of them were accused of tendencies to run their business exclusively for private gain (Vuorinen 2001, 226–28).

When a fictional nobleman entrepreneur went bankrupt, that was to make another point. The hapless noble businessman served as the icon of the inherent unsuitability of noblemen for serious bourgeois professions, along with their inability to cope in the modernizing bourgeois-industrial world. In Tavaststjerna's *En allmän gästling*, the reader is allowed a brief glimpse of a family tragedy behind the sunny and seemingly carefree protagonist. His father is mentioned, in passing, as earning his living as a common teacher, "since his timber business went bust" (Tavaststjerna 1924a, 296). The effect of this brief statement is much greater than its length suggests, underlining the tragicomic nature of the blundering noble businessman.

#### *Manual Laborer*

Järnefelt in his utopian, Tolstoyan love of mankind experimented with manual labor in his personal life (Vuorinen 2012) as well as in his books. To implement his program, he introduced the ideologically motivated character of the nobleman worker. In the novel *Veljekset* (Brethren), Järnefelt describes four brothers, whose different life choices epitomize the honorable options open to impoverished young noblemen seeking a place in modern society. One of the brothers sheds his noble airs and graces altogether, becoming a manual laborer who works in a machine shop. He chooses to keep company only with the other workers, while shunning his relatives and former friends. Compared with the idea of becoming a smallholder, this is an even more extreme case of self-imposed social and economic descent, which Järnefelt considered to be the only morally sound option (Järnefelt 1900, 77–139, 244, 299–300, 331–35).

#### *Loser*

The degeneration and impoverishment of the noble estate was most profoundly illustrated by the image of an overall "loser"; although ugly and anachronistic, the

word epitomizes the phenomenon. The nobleman loser was the embodiment of the vulgar Social Darwinist notion of nobility as a degenerate stock, destined to retreat and eventually dissolve as new, fresh societal forces emerged—a bunch of inefficient, ignorant creatures who could not be trusted to manage even their personal, let alone the public, affairs. They were rarely looked upon by the writers as tragic and suffering figures deserving of pity, but as objects of self-satisfied, ideologically motivated contempt (Vuorinen 2001, 228–30).

Being chronically unable to provide for themselves, the fictional loser figures usually landed in trouble the very moment their families no longer supported them. In Topelius's *Vincent Vågbyrtaren* (Vincent Breakwater, 1860) a group of old friends discuss their long-gone student days. A young nobleman of their old circle, now absent, is reported by a heartless comrade to have tried his hand at writing romantic stories for a living, then married the widow of a rich coppersmith for her money, and eventually died, six years ago, "in a borrowed coat" (Topelius 1949 KT IV, 398, 412–13, 419, 470).

Similarly, Aho's *Tuhlaajapoika* (The prodigal son, 1890s), talented and charming but psychologically weak, is devastated when his father dies, leaving behind only debts. To set matters straight, he contemplates marrying the ugly, hunchbacked daughter of a rich bourgeois entrepreneur. The disgraceful plan does not come to fruition, but its baseness is eventually too much for his tender sensibilities. Having lost his honor, he sees no other way out than committing suicide by drowning (Aho KT V, 274–75, 280–81, 289–93).

True to himself, and much more empathetic than most, Järnefelt created his own versions even of the loser figure. Edward, the eventual hero of *Maaemon lapsia* (Mother Earth's children), is a shy, insecure boy. He sincerely tries to play the part of a nobleman, but is painfully conscious of his poor performance. Unlike the others of his kind, his story is given a happy ending (Järnefelt 1926, 119–21, 126–34, 142, 148–51, 155, 159, 170–72). Järnefelt's other, likewise covertly autobiographical loser figure, the self-styled prophet discussed above, is a much sadder case. Whether deranged or only going through an unusually severe psycho-social mid-life crisis, with economic implications, he nevertheless manages to personify an ideal of Christ-like abandon in his attempted display of absolute poverty.

## **"NEWS" OF FOREIGN NOBILITY LOSING ECONOMIC AND MORAL FOOTING**

Resulting from their origin as the organs of conflicting political parties, newspapers in nineteenth-century Finland were keen to enlarge on day-to-day political

issues. Their style was often decidedly arrogant, to the point of being openly aggressive. Accordingly, their truth was often more ideological than objective in nature (Tommila 1988).

The gradual, relative impoverishment of the nobility was by nature a slow process, whose manifestations typically did not make newspaper headlines. The issue surfaced either in association with unusual, sensational events or in the context of a more general discussion about the decline of the nobility. The imagery closely reflects the narratives established by fiction, revealing the interplay of the two genres. To round off the essay, the attitudes of the press are discussed below in brief.

Generally speaking, the members of both domestic and foreign nobility appeared in the Finnish newspapers as individuals who were immorally powerful, shamefully rich, and/or distastefully prominent (Vuorinen 2010, 198–258). The few publicized counterexamples offered the reader glimpses of the dark underbelly of the European aristocracy.

The favorite themes of the more gleefully “progressive” journalists were those that seemed to testify to a profound degeneration. European nobilities were portrayed as stricken by mental illness caused by in-breeding, ruined economically by gambling, living together unmarried, drinking, shoplifting, forging money, being committed to mental institutions, living and dying in poorhouses, or committing suicide (Vuorinen 2010, 241, 253–56).

Several such mentions referred to steep economic decline, sometimes even to abject misery, expressing little or no empathy towards the people in question. In 1879, two Finnish newspapers were malicious enough to quote *The Times*, claiming that an aged British duke and his duchess had ended up in a workhouse in Leeds (*Helsingfors*, May 5, 1879; *Morgonbladet*, May 3, 1879). In 1881 and 1890, several Finnish journalists quoted their German colleagues accusing the German nobility of spending enormous sums on dubious pleasures—gambling, horseracing, whoring, and drinking—and slowly becoming poor in the process. The reports typically ended with a self-satisfied flourish, foretelling the fast-approaching doom of such aristocracies, while enthusing over the moral superiority of the so-called ordinary people (*Aamulehti*, October 3, 1890; *Finland*, September 26, 1890; *Helsingfors*, August 9 and 10, 1881; *Hufvudstadsbladet*, September 30, and November 27, 1890; *Östra Finland*, February 2, 1881; *Tampereen Sanomat*, September 3, 1890).

When dealing with the liberation of the serfs in the Russian empire, the Finnish papers concentrated on the immediate benefits for the rural population.

They celebrated the liberation as a sweet victory of justice, progress, humanitarianism, and enlightenment, with no mention of the anticipated setbacks to the state and even peasant economies. The allegedly well-deserved economic damage caused to the Russian landed nobility was an obvious subtext throughout the discussion. Their unwillingness to give up their advantages was mentioned time and again as evidence of noble greed (*Åbo Tidningar*, November 12, 1858; *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, January 21 and September 29, 1859; February 15 and October 27, 1862; *Helsingfors Tidningar*, March 6, 1865; *Hufvudstadsbladet*, September 1 and 5, 1876; *Papperslyktan*, March 25 and April 2, 1861; *Sanan Lennätin*, November 12, 1858; *Suometar*, March 21, 1864).

The newspapers sometimes published articles on historical topics, too. When dealing with the history of Sweden, for obvious reasons closely related to the Finnish past, the descriptions followed a narrative of modernization. From the late Middle Ages onwards, the nobility was shown to be on the ascent, becoming ever richer and gaining more and more power, then losing it all in the seventeenth-century reductions, which marked the beginning of a downward spiral. The nobility and the common people were invariably represented as antagonists, pointing out that one's loss was inevitably the other's gain (*Åbo Underrättelser*, April 15 and 17, 1874; October 19, 1875; *Borgå Tidning*, December 20, 1851 and October 20, 1853; *Dagens Nyheter*, October 19, 1877; *Hufvudstadsbladet*, November 10, 1882; *Morgonbladet*, August 18, 1875; *Östra Finland*, May 31, 1889; *Turun Lehti*, April 12, 1877; *Wasabladet*, February 23, 1867; *Wiborgsbladet*, April 14, 1888).

## CONCLUSIONS

In the context of nineteenth-century socio-economic development, the nobles in Finland, as elsewhere in Europe, were eventually on the losing side. The descriptions of noble poverty in contemporary fiction both reflected and fuelled the process. Accompanied by newspapers and non-fiction works, fiction served as the main arena for representing the nobility as being on its way out of the political scene. The noble individuals, or the noble families with traditions and possessions, were not going anywhere, but their personal and economic status and social position dissolved, giving way to an increasingly meritocratic, bourgeois society.

Throughout the political discourse of the period, noble poverty was presented as a symptom of the general decline of the noble estate. It was evident in the newspapers, non-fiction works on national history, and works of fiction. Individual noble men and women of the past were represented as the historical oppressors



of the people through narratives concentrating on the iconic nemesis of their economic power, namely the reductions. Slowly mounting inherited debt, unsuccessful attempts to straighten out the situation, inadequate family strategies, imprudent personal choices, and a general inability to cope with the modern were given as causes for the impoverishment of the nobility. All this amounted to a body of circumstantial evidence, pointing out the inability of the nobility to face the economic challenges presented by modern times. The image of an inept nobleman lost in the rapidly changing society was an easy justification for the takeover of the government by commoners, who by both definition and accumulating proof were well able to navigate the tide.

Historians, writing in a factual genre, could hardly utilize the customary assortment of fictional underlining devices, such as the black-and-white personifications of noble lethargy vis-à-vis commoner energy and industry in the vein of Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard*. Nor could they very well entertain the reader by moralistically portraying impoverished noblemen wooing bourgeois heiresses for their money. Because of a general call for historical accuracy and meaningfulness, their overall choice of topic and range of expression were far more limited than that of the writers of fiction.

Journalists openly combined two opposite callings, that is, publishing facts and engaging in political debate. They were prone to paint black on black, maliciously dwelling upon the misfortunes of foreign noblemen. To bring home a point, the historians might even gently whitewash the face of a past nobility, for example, to promote nationalism by proposing that the "poor" Finnish nobility was less of a threat to the peasant population than its more aristocratic and wealthier Swedish counterpart.

The writers of fiction used a palette that also contained gentler shades of grey; nevertheless, the overall message was still the same. The ideal types of poor noblemen were used to demonstrate the sparseness of the options for survival still open to the nobility. From the degenerate *rococo* gentleman to the hapless entrepreneur, the former officer on the verge of losing a mortgaged manor and the loser going under after squandering his inheritance, to the ideologically motivated figures of the voluntarily poor monk-like warrior and the blue-blooded proto-socialist engaging in an heroic private attempt at land reform or seeking his livelihood as manual laborer, they all show the condition of a nobleman at a loss in a modern world whose ways were no longer his ways.

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# PETITIONING THE TSAR FOR HELP: SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF AN IMPOVERISHED FINNISH MERCHANT AFTER THE GREAT FIRE OF TURKU (1827)

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## ABSTRACT

The article studies how a sudden disaster, the Great Fire of Turku in 1827, affected the life trajectory of a Finnish merchant, Henric Lindberg, who suffered great economic losses in the fire. Despite his attempts to provide for and rehouse his large family, Lindberg, who lost his creditworthiness in the eyes of his former trading partners, was finally forced in 1830 to petition the sovereign for financial help in his distress. Lindberg's petition was highly unusual as primarily the poorest elements of society petitioned for loans or donations for personal purposes—merchants (i.e., members of the bourgeoisie engaged in urban trade), rarely approached the highest decision-makers with such requests. As such, Lindberg's petition provides an example of the deep trust the subjects had in the sovereign's benevolence and, indeed, in the whole petitioning institution. The case exemplifies how diverse and heterogeneous the merchants actually were in the largest city in Finland in the early nineteenth century, and how differently the merchants reacted and recovered in the case of a major disaster. The study provides insights into the underlying mechanisms of the estate society and demonstrates that not even in a hierarchical society was poverty necessarily transmitted to the following generation, but there were indeed opportunities for upward social mobility.

## INTRODUCTION

In the most unfortunate situation that a person can be in due to no fault of his own, that of being surrounded by ten hungry children whom

without the gentle grace of Providence I find it impossible with my own resources to raise into decent persons, I consider myself as a father duty-bound to try everything legitimate to save my children. [. . .] From Your Imperial Majesty's High Grace I venture in the most profound humility to hope for the most gracious grant of support from public funds either as a gift or as a loan, and with the deepest loyal reverence, fidelity and fervor I commend myself to you.<sup>1</sup>

This quote from a petition for a gift or a loan, submitted in 1830 by a merchant and father of a large family to the supreme decision-makers sheds light on the severe hardships and economic distress individuals could face after an external crisis had afflicted an urban society in the early part of the nineteenth century. The merchant in question was Henric Lindberg (born in 1784), who had been engaged in commerce in the city of Turku (Åbo) for over sixteen years and whose business had seemingly prospered until the late 1820s. The petition, which was formally addressed to Tsar Nicholas I of Russia and the Grand Duke of Finland, provides information on how the property and the life that Lindberg and his fellow city dwellers in Turku had built were burnt to ashes in a disastrous fire on the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 1827.

The disaster, referred to in modern historiography as the Great Fire of Turku, destroyed some 75 percent of the city, then the largest urban center in Finland with approximately 12,000 inhabitants (e.g., Rinne 1965, 167; Hietala 2002, 153). The event is still considered the most devastating urban fire in Northern Europe (Suikkari 2007, 10, 33–34; Zwierlein 2011, 140). According to some estimates, the fire caused seventeen deaths, but some sources claim that the number was somewhat higher. The material damage was enormous and the catastrophe left over 10,000 inhabitants homeless (e.g., Dahlström 1930; Rinne 1965, 170–72; Jutikkala 1999, 251; Hietala 2002, 153, 156–57; Laaksonen 2007, 108–10). Inevitably such a major

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1 The quote is from Henric Lindberg's petition [National Archives of Finland (from here on NA), Archives of the Economic Department of the Finnish Senate, File STO AD 463/79 1830]. The original text in Swedish: "Uti den mest olyckliga belägenhet som man kan vara utan eget förvållande, den att vara omgifven af tio hungrande barn, hvilka jag finner omöjligt att utan milde Försyns Nåd med egne krafter befordra till duglige människor, anser jag mig som Fader skyldig att försöka allt tilläteligt till barnens bibehållande. [. . .] Af Eders Kejsrerlige Majestäts Höga Nåd vågar jag i djupaste underdånighet hoppas allernådigste beviljande af understöd från allmänna medel antingen såsom gåfva eller lån, och med djupaste undersäteliga vördnad trohet och nit har jag nåden framhärda." The text was translated into English by the author and Gerard McAlester, when the quote was published and briefly discussed in Paloheimo 2012 (66–67). However, the aforementioned study does not examine business actors' petitions for loans for private or personal purposes.

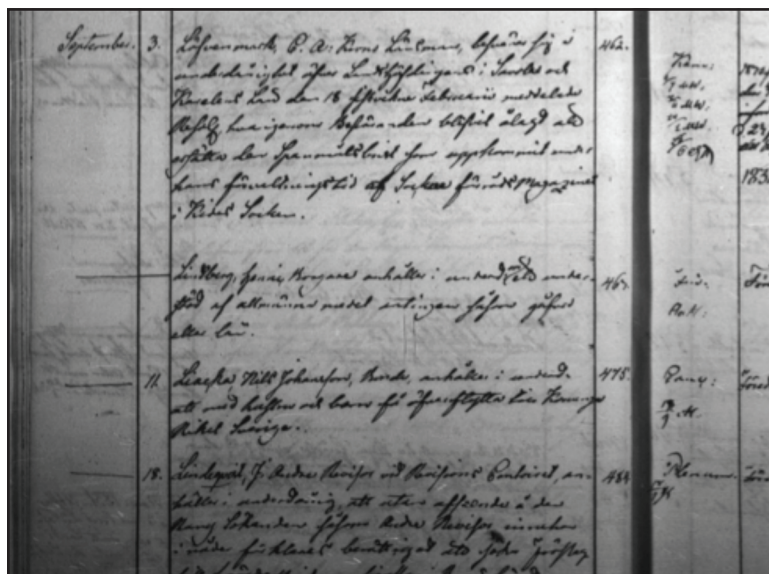
disaster affected every social group in the city and caused uncertainty and economic distress in the years to come. The fire of 1827 as an urban crisis creates a context for this article in which the life trajectory of merchant Henric Lindberg is examined.

Urban conflagrations or the risk of fire have often been catalysts for wider social and structural changes in early modern and modern societies in Europe and beyond (e.g., Bankoff, Lübken, and Sand 2012, 12). In the case of Turku, too, the fire of September 1827 had far-reaching consequences for subsequent developments and is considered a turning point not only in the history of the city but also in the wider national context. The fire not only dramatically changed the urban milieu but also led to the implementation of a new town plan, which was created by a German-origin architect Carl Ludvig Engel (Lilius [2000] 2011). In the new plan, the aspects of fire safety were carefully considered, and they included, for example, widened streets, the planting of trees, and more open space to minimize the risk of spreading fire (Lilius [2000] 2011; Hietala 2002, 154–55; Suikkari 2007, 35–37). The fire insurance system was also reformed and new fire-safety regulations were implemented (Hietala 2002, 157–60). However, even before the catastrophe, some very important changes had already taken place. After the annexation of Finland to the Russian Empire in 1809, Turku lost its position as the capital of the Grand Duchy of Finland to Helsinki, primarily because of political reasons, in 1812. The changed status meant that by the end of the 1810s, the highest national administrative body in the Grand Duchy, the Imperial Senate of Finland (established in 1809), had also been relocated to Helsinki, being closer to St. Petersburg, the capital of the Russian empire. In a way, the Great Fire sealed this development: as a result of an imperial order, the Academy established in Turku in 1640 (formerly The Royal Academy of Turku, in Swedish *Åbo Kungliga Akademi*), whose building with its valuable library had been damaged by the fire, was also relocated in Helsinki (Klinge 1997, 43–49; Laaksonen 2007, 110).

Finnish urban history is to a great extent a record of fires as the conflagrations frequently devastated the cities. Especially from 1800 to 1860, almost every city suffered from outbreaks of fire, which also caused more severe destruction than fires in previous times (Jutikkala 1999, 244–46; Hietala 2002, 145–46; Allemeyer 2007a, 8). Despite the fact that the Great Fire of Turku and its consequences on a local, as well as a national, level have attracted a considerable amount of academic interest, little is known about the fire as an economic disaster and how various social groups or private individuals and their families actually survived and what kind of challenges they faced after the fire. This article aims to provide new insights into



these questions by using the petition by Henric Lindberg as a starting point for a more detailed study. By focusing on the case of the merchant Lindberg and the challenges he encountered, we are able to consider the survival strategies available to distressed business actors in early modern Finnish towns and to demonstrate how a merchant, with little to no accumulated capital or a lack of social and business contacts as a safety net, could remain poverty-stricken for the rest of his life.



Picture 1. In September 1830, Henric Lindberg's petition for a loan or a gift was recorded in the Registers of Petitions of the Economic Department of the Finnish Senate. The picture presents the original double page with the entry describing Lindberg's petition. Source: National Archives of Finland, Digital Archives, the Archives of the Finnish Senate, the Registers of Petitions 1830.

As such, the above-mentioned petition for a loan or a gift, which Lindberg submitted to the Tsar in September 1830, illustrates the long-standing tradition of petitioning the ruling powers in order to obtain relief in situations of personal distress. Indeed, petitioning was used by large sections of the population, including the poorest people as well as those belonging to the middle orders and upper-social strata, to influence social, economic, and legislative matters as well as political decision-making in various countries and times (see, e.g., Bregnsbo 1997; Mark 1998; Zaret 2000, Nubola 2001; Schmidt Blaine 2001; van Voss 2001; Würgler 2001). In the Finnish context of the early nineteenth century, the petitions were submitted to local, provincial, or even the most senior authorities, which represented the continuity of the Swedish tradition and administrative system in Finland after 1809.

The petitions, which were formally addressed to the Tsar, were handled and usually decided by the Finnish Senate using the power delegated to it by the sovereign. The Senate had two departments, including the Economic Department, which took care of public administration and questions related to economy. It also made the final decision on Lindberg's petition.

Despite the dire situation described in the petition, Lindberg received no financial assistance from the Senate in 1830. Interestingly, the original documents reveal that Lindberg had already contacted the lower administrative level and submitted a similar petition to the administrative court of Turku earlier that same year, but this, too, had been rejected. However, the significance of Lindberg's petition lies in the fact that it was a highly exceptional letter since it was not common at that time for merchants and industrialists to petition the ruling powers for loans for private or personal purposes (Paloheimo 2012). The motives for submitting such a petition will be discussed below. According to this humble petition, Lindberg had faced severe hardships after the fire and this had left him destitute and without the means to rehouse his large family.

The article is structured chronologically as follows: to contextualize Lindberg's petition, the petitioning institution is first described, demonstrating that in the first part of the nineteenth century, the highest administration was inundated with submitted petitions, especially from the lowest social groups in Finland. Through the study of petitions and the history of petitioning, the present work creates a better understanding of how indebted or distressed people could use petitions to support themselves or their families after a major crisis. Secondly, the article focuses on Lindberg's background and situation before and after the Great Fire of Turku. A closer analysis will reveal the reasons behind the aforementioned petition and enhance our understanding of such a situation in which a merchant's creditworthiness was highly suspect. The latter part of the article examines Lindberg's attempts to provide for his family and the challenges he faced, especially in the 1830s. The article concludes with a brief epilogue of how Lindberg's sons succeeded after their father's impoverishment. Indeed, the case proved to be very complex: from the outset it is a story of the upward social mobility of a young man whose business prospered until he faced dire setbacks and financial distress after the Great Fire of 1827, but it also became an example of entrepreneurial skills and initiative demonstrated especially by the second generation. The article moreover contributes to the discussion on the history of Finnish entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs' survival in times of austerity.

The research themes presented above will be studied with reference to a wide variety of primary sources: the materials consulted in the article include parish registers, the archives of the administrative court (the magistrates) of Turku, the archives of the Economic Department of the Finnish Senate, and documents produced by a local committee established after the Great Fire Turku (known as *Åbo Stads Brandskade Comite*), which continued its work until the mid-1830s.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary newspapers also provide valuable information on the events before and after 1827.

## PETITIONS IN EARLY MODERN TIMES

Henric Lindberg's petition was received by the Finnish Senate exactly three years after the Great Fire of Turku, on September 3, 1830. It was then registered in the Registers of Petitions, which were kept from 1809 onwards by the Economic Department of the Senate in order to record and manage the incoming letters submitted by subjects, both individuals and collective bodies, representing all social groups (Selin 1994, 87–95; Paloheimo 2012, 24, 60–66). A brief entry in the register describing this particular petition stated only that the applicant was petitioning for financial support from the supreme authority; no other information, such as the exact cause of the petition, was provided. This exceptionally brief entry interested me because the applicant, who was designated as a burgher (that is, a member of the bourgeoisie with formal rights to engage in urban trade) and resided in the largest city in Finland, was asking for either a loan or gift. In this case, further examination of the original documents revealed the longer history behind Lindberg's plight not only as a merchant but also as the father and the head of a large household.

It must be emphasized that Henric Lindberg's petition was only one of thousands of petitions registered by the Finnish Senate in the first part of the nineteenth century. More specifically, the Senate's Economic Department received and then registered in the Registers of Petitions over 30,000 letters between 1809 and 1850

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2 The Great Fire of 1827 also destroyed a part of the archives of the administrative court, which has caused certain challenges to researchers interested in the history of pre-1827 Turku. In addition, the author has not been able to trace Henric Lindberg's business or private correspondence in the archives consulted (if indeed there were any). However, it is unlikely that a merchant of his status ever had proper business accounts or own business archives in the early part of the century. Thus, his life trajectory is mainly studied through ecclesiastical and administrative sources. In the search of archival material on Lindberg's life and business, the handwritten note cards written and collated by Svante Dahlström [the so-called Dahlströmin kortisto] were consulted for additional information after the material was digitalized and made publicly available by the National Archives Service (Finland). The author wishes to thank Merja Uotila, PhD, for her valuable comments on the use of various ecclesiastical archives.

(Digital Archives, Registers of Petitions of the Economic Department of the Finnish Senate, 1809–50). According to an analysis of detailed information of almost 6,600 petitions submitted to the Senate in nine reference years between 1810 and 1850, it was extremely rare for a business actor to petition the highest authorities for financial assistance for private or personal purposes (Paloheimo 2012, 36–41). In early nineteenth-century Finland a large body of petitions was initiated by ordinary people, who petitioned the sovereign to help them in their distress. Petitions were used by various disadvantaged groups, such as indebted rural inhabitants or impoverished widows, of whom the former were overburdened, for example, with taxation while the latter petitioned for financial support, pensions after the death of a spouse, or other kinds of assistance for their family needs. The number of such letters about personal distress or family emergencies was fairly high during and after various crises, for instance, crop failures or economic downturns (Paloheimo 2012, 67).

During this period, merchants or industrialists needing capital in order to invest in new production facilities or other businesses frequently petitioned for government loans, but unlike in Lindberg's case, the objects of these business-related loans and the sums of money requested were usually very precisely documented in the entries of the Registers of Petitions (Paloheimo 2012, 66–67). On a more general level, petitions were widely used by merchants, industrialists, and the like, who attempted to influence and shape the institutional environment regulating commerce and trades through petitioning: for example, they contacted the top decision-makers with their requests especially in situations of conflict and in times of economic downturns or when property rights needed to be secured (e.g., Peacey 2007; Peters 2010. With regard to Finland, see especially Kuisma 1983; Karonen 2004; Nurmiainen 2009; Keskinen 2012; Paloheimo 2012). Against this backdrop, Lindberg's request differed considerably from the majority of the applications submitted by other individuals representing the same social group, the bourgeoisie.

Lindberg's rationale for petitioning the sovereign was indeed very similar to the grievances that large masses of people across continental Europe, Russia, and North America submitted to their sovereigns and governments in early modern times. Petitions, grievances, and supplications, which are commonly understood as requests for favors or for the redress of injustices, could be submitted for various reasons and on various occasions both by individuals representing the lowest strata of society as well as those who belonged to the intellectual elite or the economic and political elite. Various authorities received petitions concerning, for example, individuals' subjection to social or economic problems or to administrative procedures

or legislative issues. For example, accidents, illnesses, untimely family bereavements, natural disasters, or sudden catastrophes, such as floods, earthquakes, and fires, might well have been reasons which shook or ruined the basis of the everyday lives of individuals in early modern times (e.g., Friedrichs 1995, 275–76).

In such situations, some relied on their family and kin, while others turned to informal or formal institutions in their local community or petitioned support and help from officials representing the local, provincial, or national authorities and the sovereign. Besides the aforementioned instances, petitions were also addressed to individuals in powerful positions or to those who were able to grant favors as they were informally or institutionally close to positions of power (Würgler 2001, 16; Norrhem 2007, 36–38). In addition to individuals, various groups used petitioning for political purposes in rebellions, revolts, and various kinds of mass movements (e.g., Mark 1998, 2154–55, 2225–26, 2229; Zaret 2000, 218–19; Lipp and Krempel 2001, 151). Indeed, petitions communicated the concerns of the population to the highest decision-makers, that is, even from the most peripheral areas to the political center. Another important aspect is that the petitions also provided the sovereign with insights into the prevailing moods of the subjects as well as a way to display clemency and favor (Zaret 2000, 59, 88; Nubola 2001, 36; Berglund 2009, 42–46).

Lindberg's petition, which was dated September 1830, sets out his motives for making such a request. It was stated that the Great Fire of 1827 had ruined the economic base of his trade and left him without the means to provide for his family. According to the documents included in the case file, Lindberg was asking for financial help to re-house his family since he had lost almost all his property as a result of the fire. The language in Lindberg's petition was highly emotional as it emphasized his children's needs and even included religious references as seen in the quotation at the beginning of this article. It is obvious that the use of this kind of descriptive language was thought to be an effective way to influence the most senior decision-makers in this particular matter. Most likely, the petition was written by an official scribe versed in deferential language and thus able to use expressions showing submissive respect. Similar pleas have been recorded after disastrous fires, for example, in nineteenth-century Russia, where fire survivors appealed to the Tsar, presenting the sovereign as a benevolent father and themselves as destitute victims of divine acts (Frierson 2012, 48–49, 65–66).

Despite its deferential style, Lindberg's petition was not successful, as the Economic Department—using the decision-making power delegated by the

Tsar—announced that no loan or gift from state's general funds was to be granted to the petitioner (Digital Archives, Minutes of the Economic Department of the Senate, the joint session of Department II, 1830–1830, Ca: 68, October 6, 1830). No justifications were evinced for this particular decision; the minutes noted the refusal in a single sentence. This reflects the decision-making policy of the Economic Department: it did not provide financial support for merchants' private benefit, but the government loans were intended to support commercial and industrial development in various segments of economy.

Given the above-mentioned observation that in personal distress only the poorest people appealed to the sovereign, one might ask whether the petition was Lindberg's last opportunity to secure financial help. Had he already asked support from his family and kinship networks (if he had any) or the city administration? These questions are discussed below.

### **LINDBERG'S COMMERCIAL CAREER UNTIL 1827**

To understand how a seemingly well-established businessman had ended up in the predicament described above, we must first go back to 1814, that is, the year when Henric Lindberg was allowed to begin his career as a merchant in Turku. Lindberg, who had been born in a rural parish, had applied to the Turku administrative court to be granted so-called burgher's right, meaning the right to engage in urban trade. The formal right was required because the right to engage in urban trade (commerce, shipping, and craft) was primarily the domain of the bourgeoisie. Since his application was approved, Lindberg became a so-called Finnish burgher and thus was a member of the petty bourgeoisie (Archives of the City of Turku, Proceedings and accounts of the Finnish burghers' mutual aid fund in Turku, A VI a: 18). The aforementioned title did not refer to an ethnic group but to the fact that Lindberg was granted the right to engage in retail trade, which was actually easier to gain as requirements were not as strict as for the right to engage in overseas trade (Mauranen 1980, 443). This included trade with freeholder peasants residing in the surrounding countryside from whom the merchants purchased agricultural and forest products or with whom the merchants traded for various commodities (Wuorinen 1959, 158–59; Keskinen 2012, 50–53). In practice, for individuals of more modest origins, obtaining the status of a burgher could open the way to upward social mobility and economic prosperity. However, it must be noted that there was still a vast social and economic gap between the petty bourgeoisie and the leading burghers, that is, the upper echelon of the merchants consisting of

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prominent merchants and ship-owners engaging in both domestic and foreign trade. This small group possessed both economic and political leverage not only at the local but also at the national level.

An interesting question in this context is how Henric Lindberg—originally a son of a *rusthållare* (a landowning farmer) who had moved to the then-largest city of Finland in early 1809—could embark on a career as a merchant. As Lindberg came from a land-owning family, his social background was fairly good in the rural context. However, his older brother became the new head of the farm which—in practice—left few options for the younger sons. In 1809, Henric Lindberg had worked as a fire guardian and was thus a worker with low status in the city community. Probably he had gained some experience in retail trade as, immediately after his arrival in Turku, he had worked briefly as a servant in the household of a local merchant (Digital Archives, The Cathedral Parish of Turku, The Communion Book of the Turku Finnish Parish 1807–13, I Aa1:32). It also seems that Henric Lindberg was determined to move up the social ladder: he took the last name “Lindberg” only after moving to Turku, obviously in order to improve his social position.

Launching even a modest business as a merchant certainly required at least some capital. Interestingly, Lindberg was married twice and the first marriage provided him with some capital and property. He was first married to Helena (Lena) Bergvall, a widow of a mason’s journeyman, Carl Wallenius, who had died in Turku in early 1809 at the age of thirty-eight (Digital Archives of Finland’s Family History Association, Cathedral Parish of Turku, Records of births, baptisms, marriages and deaths, 1809–22). Helena had inherited her first husband’s wealth, and, judging from the probate inventory of Carl Wallenius’s household, he had been quite wealthy for a mason’s journeyman (Archives of the City of Turku, Town Court of Turku, Probate inventories, B I c 16, 1810). The probate inventory even documents a significant sum of cash, which is certainly an interesting detail as we know that at the time of Carl Wallenius’s death the Finnish War of 1808–09 was still being fought on Finnish and Swedish soil. Probably Wallenius had been saving money to meet the costs of acquiring a master’s status (see Uotila 2014, 215).

Helena Bergvall and Henric Lindberg married in April 1811, but unfortunately Helena died in late 1813, some months after giving birth to their son. From her first marriage, Helena had two children, a daughter and a son, the latter of whom died young (Digital Archives, Cathedral Parish of Turku, The Communion Book of the Turku Finnish Parish, 1812–18, I Aa1:38). Helena’s daughter lived with her stepfather Henric, married, but died in childbirth in 1821 (Digital Archives, The

Cathedral Parish of Turku, The Communion Book of the Turku Finnish Parish 1812–18, I Aa1:38; HisKi project, The Turku Finnish Parish, The records of births and baptisms, 1736–1865). It seems likely that Henric Lindberg's marriage to Helena Bergvall, who was some ten years older than her husband, provided him with such assets that he could afford to apply for merchant's rights and launch a new business in Turku in 1814. Namely, Henric Lindberg inherited his wife Helena together with their infant son and Helena's aforementioned daughter (Archives of the City of Turku, Town Court of Turku, Probate inventories, B I c 20, 1814). As their son perished soon after his mother, the father would eventually inherit his share of the mother's inheritance.

After 1813, Henric Lindberg continued to reside on the plot that belonged to his first wife. This plot (number 123) was located in Aninkaistenmäki (*Aningais Backen*), which was in the northern part of the city. His second marriage took place soon after he had received formal rights to operate as a merchant. In September 1814, Henric Lindberg was married to Lovisa Nyberg (born in a rural parish in 1792) and the couple was blessed with ten children of whom the first, a son, was born in 1815. By September 1827, the family had eight children and their ninth child was born after the devastating fire in November 1827. Two years later the family grew by one new member as Lindberg's wife gave birth to their tenth child, a son named Anders (Digital Archives, The Cathedral Parish of Turku, The Communion Book of the Turku Finnish Parish, 1815–31, I Aa1:43; HisKi project, The Turku Finnish Parish, The records of births and baptisms, 1736–1865). Until 1827, the large family had still been living in the Aninkaistenmäki area, on the aforementioned property number 123. Besides Lindberg's family, several other people—servants or older people—shared the same courtyard. Lindberg also owned another property (number 117) in this part of the city, but it is likely that he rented it to earn additional income (Digital Archives, The Cathedral Parish of Turku, The Communion Book of the Turku Finnish Parish, 1815–31, I Aa1:43 and 1820–26, I Aa1:48).

According to the details provided in the documents, the business activities had brought prosperity to Henric Lindberg over the years, and by the mid-1820s he had most certainly built up a network of business partners with whom to trade. Furthermore, he seemed to invest in building social networks: for example, the children born in his second marriage had godparents representing the same or higher social groups and some of them actually had an extraordinary number of godparents. As a merchant and a father, Lindberg might have wished that some of his sons could eventually continue his business activities. At least Lindberg's firstborn son



from his second marriage was at school by the mid-1820s, which indicates that the parents wanted—and could afford—to invest in their children’s education (Digital Archives, The Cathedral Parish of Turku, The Communion Book of the Turku Finnish Parish, 1820–26, I Aa1:48).

If Henric Lindberg still cherished such hopes, they must have vanished on September 4, 1827, when, after a dry and warm summer, the city experienced an apocalyptic disaster. The fire, which started in the late evening, began in the northern part of the city, where, for example, the petty traders and craftsmen—including the Lindberg family—resided (on housing and living conditions in Turku, see Savolainen 2014b). The fire spread rapidly in the compact cluster of wooden buildings, and within a few hours spread throughout the northern part of the city. Just before midnight the flames gathered more strength in the rising storm and sparks started a fire on the roof of a building on the other side of the River Aura, which divided the city—the townsfolk had hoped the river would protect this side of the city. In the darkness of the following night, the flames reached the buildings in the southern part of the city, igniting, among others, the Cathedral, the Academy, several administrative buildings as well as the residences of government officials, prominent merchants, and clergy (e.g., Dahlström 1930; Rinne 1965, 168–76; Jutikkala 1957; 1965; 1999, 245–46; Hietala 2002; Laaksonen 2007, 108–10; Suikkari 2007, 33–35).

## **RECOVERY AFTER THE GREAT FIRE**

Outbreaks of fire were not only a threat to property but also to civil order in cities, and thus organizing the administration was an important task in order to avoid the collapse of administrative and public infrastructure in the aftermath of the fire (e.g., Allemeyer 2007b, 147; Bankoff, Lübken and Sand 2012, 13; Pyne 2012, 55). In Turku, immediately after the fire a local committee was established to organize relief and building works in the ruined city. At first, this so-called Fire Committee took care of rehousing the homeless, and collected and delivered material and financial aid donated for the townsfolk (see, e.g., Dahlström 1930; Hietala 2002. For a detailed report of the committee’s work, see *Åbo Underrättelser*, September 10, 1836; *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, September 15, 1836). After the disaster, the Tsar ordered that grain from the warehouses of the Russian garrison located in the city was to be supplied as emergency relief for the fire victims. He also displayed his benevolence to the victims by donating a large sum of money from his personal funds. Furthermore, the residents were exempted from Crown taxes for ten years and from providing accommodation for the military (Dahlström 1930, 351–52; Hietala 2002, 156–57).

As the newspapers published items describing the disaster, a rising wave of compassion spread through the Finnish population and even beyond. In various places, fundraising was organized to relieve the plight of the Turku residents, and the city received foodstuffs, building materials, and monetary help from Finland, Russia, and elsewhere in the Baltic Sea region in such towns where local Finns organized relief aid (Archives of the City of Turku, The Fire Committee, Minutes of the Committee, T 1 1). Over the years, lists of donors and donations were published in national and local newspapers, and in this way the press kept the public aware of the tragedy and the reconstruction. In fact, at the same time, devastating fires in other Finnish cities, such as Viipuri (*Vyborg*), reminded the people of the catastrophic consequences of urban fires for decades to come (e.g., Einonen 2013).

<p>Utan att derföre widare fästa öf wid spridda mindre eldsvåder såväl i städerna som på landet, vilja wi, så widt wi känna, uppräknå de eldsvåder, genom hvilka största skäden antingen helt och hållet eller till en betydlig del under loppet af en månålder nedbrunnit. Dese äro</p> <p>Hjörneberg . . . . . år 1801 och 1852.                  Drabestad . . . . . " 1810.                  Ekenäs . . . . . " 1821.                  Fredrikshamn . . . . . " 1821 och 1840.                  Helsingfors . . . . . " 1809.                  GamlaKarleby . . . . . " 1805.                  Jakobstad . . . . . " 1835.                  Kuopio . . . . . " 1817.                  Nyfå . . . . . " 1793, 1846 och 1855.                  Tavastehus . . . . . " 1831.                  Uleåberg . . . . . " 1773 och 1822.                  Wasa . . . . . " 1852.                  Åbo . . . . . " 1775 och 1827.                  Nyfå . . . . . " 1849.                  Lewisa . . . . . " 1855.</p> <p>Når man öfverstådar denna bedröfliga tåfa, faller naturligtvis tanken wemodig på den omständigheten huruvida Finlands städer öfwen fortfarande stola wara dömda att en hwar i sin tur prögiswad åt eldens safer. Det är</p>	<p>ogden, der ofta hela byar läggas i aska. Utan att erföre widare fästa öf wid spridda mindre eldsvåder såväl i städerna som på landet, vilja wi, så widt wi känna, uppräknå de eldsvåder, genom hvilka största skäden antingen helt och hållet eller till en betydlig del under loppet af detta sekel nedbrunnit. Dese äro:</p> <p>Hjörneberg år 1801, 10 Juni o. 1852, 22 Maj. *)                  Nya Karleby " 1805, 5 Maj.                  Helsingfors " 1808, 17 Nov.                  Drabestad " 1810, 6 Okt.                  Kuopio " 1817, ?.                  Ekenäs " 1821, 14 Juni.                  Fredrikshamn " 1821, ? o. 1840, 22 Maj.                  Uleåberg " 1822, 23 Maj.                  Åbo " 1827, 4 o. 5 Sept.                  Tavastehus " 1831, 14 Sept.                  Jakobstad " 1835, 2 Sept.                  Nyfå " 1846, 23 Aug. o. 1855, 28 Juli.                  Nyfå " 1849, ?.                  Wasa " 1852, 3 Aug.                  Lewisa " 1855, 6 Juli.</p> <p>Når man öfverstådar denna bedröfliga tåfa, faller naturligtvis tanken wemodig på den omständigheten huruvida Finlands städer öfwen fortfarande stola wara dömda att en hwar i sin tur prögiswad åt eldens safer. Det är dock en ringa tröst för men-</p>
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Pictures 2 (left) and 3 (right). In 1855, a newspaper published an article on urban fires in Finnish cities and listed the fires in the first part of the nineteenth century. Sources: *Helsingfors Tidningar*, August 15, 1855; *Åbo Underrättelser*, nro 63, August 10, 1855.

After the fire, those with more limited means or without a network of relatives or other kinds of social safety nets had to rely on the donations and aid or monetary compensation provided by their fellow citizens, authorities, and the aforementioned committee. The wealthiest members of the community suffered the greatest economic losses, but they certainly had better networks and contacts on which they could rely and from whom they could obtain financial help. For example, Johan Christopher Frenckell, the owner of Frenckell's well-established printing house, lost almost all his machinery and facilities as a result of the fire. However, he soon

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bought new machines from Sweden and continued to print the local newspaper (Nikula 1972, 40; Finnish Business Leaders: Hanski [2001] 2008). By the end of 1827, he was already able to resume his book trade (e.g., *Åbo Tidningar*, December 29, 1827). The most prominent merchants and industrialists in Turku, such as the brothers John and Erik Julin, were able to continue their business activities with the help of extended credit (e.g., Nikula 1972, 47). Some of them, like Abraham Kingelin, were lucky enough as their property was not damaged by the fire (Nikula 1972, 40).

Merchant Lindberg's family resided in the northern part of the city, which was most severely damaged. After the fire, Lindberg was among the first to submit a petition to the Fire Committee for compensation: he submitted his request for compensation on December 11, 1827, for the two properties he owned in the city (Archives of the City of Turku, The Fire Committee, Alphabetical and chronological registers of individuals petitioning for compensation, T I: 14 and T I: 15). In his application Lindberg reported the extent of the damage he had suffered: according to the documents the total amount of the damage Lindberg had suffered amounted to 4,250 paper roubles. The major damage had occurred at the property (number 123) where the family house had been located. The fire had destroyed the house consisting of eight rooms as well as a store, storage buildings, and buildings for livestock. It seems that Lindberg had invested a remarkable sum of money in the house and buildings surrounding it as the worth of the damaged property was estimated at as much as 2,850 roubles (Archives of the City of Turku, The Fire Committee, Alphabetical and chronological registers of individuals petitioning for compensation, T I: 14 and T I: 15).

Besides immovable property, Lindberg lost movables, grain and foodstuffs, which were meant either for sale or for home consumption. In the official document submitted to the Fire Committee, Lindberg listed that he had lost the following: several barrels of grain and malt, hay, timber, various pieces of furniture, and several household objects (Archives of the City of Turku, The Fire Committee, Estimates of Fire Damage, T 1 28 I). Certainly part of the destroyed property was meant for sale, but the documents do not explicitly specify the damage caused to Lindberg's businesses. Naturally, the reason for this is that, in the context of the early nineteenth century, personal or familial and business matters were often very closely intertwined. Lindberg's case is a good example of this, and it is impossible to make a distinction between the damage caused to business activities and personal property. After the disaster, the Fire Committee collected detailed data on damage and paid

compensation to the victims of the fire. According to the committee's estimate, the fire destroyed over 2,500 homes. Generally, the level of compensation to the fire victims was low: the compensation granted was from approximately 3 to 6 percent of the value of the property the victims had reported to the committee when petitioning for compensation (Nikula 1972, 44. On the amounts of the compensation, see also *Åbo Tidningar*, May 6, 1835). Eventually, Lindberg received only minimal compensation from the committee but, as we will see in the following section, there is reason to believe that this money went to Lindberg's creditors, who collected unpaid debts after the fire (NA, Archives of the Economic Department of the Finnish Senate, File STO AD 463/79 1830).

The parish registers and the poll tax registers indicate that the Lindberg family continued to live there at property number 123 for at least a short time after the fire, but it is not possible to ascertain what kind of house they actually resided in (Digital Archives, The Cathedral Parish of Turku, The Communion Book of the Turku Finnish Parish, 1828–34, I Aa1:53; Poll tax registers of the province of Turku and Pori, 1825, T: 17). Judging from the poll tax registers for 1830, the family lived in property 117, while at the same time there were several vacant and unbuilt plots in the area (Digital Archives, Poll tax registers of the province of Turku and Pori, 1830, T: 22). However, the registers recorded the information with a delay of one year, which makes it more challenging to follow the housing arrangements of the family. The fact that Lindberg owned two parcels of land in the northern part of the city may have afforded the family some additional security at that point. It was quite common for even the members of the local petty bourgeoisie to own more than one plot. Usually these plots were located in the outskirts of the city, and their value was rather low compared to the land in the more central areas (Jutikkala 1962, 344–45).

The late 1820s was the critical period when Lindberg's financial problems increased. His economic situation was affected by his failure to insure his property, and therefore he received no further indemnity after the fire. Indeed, only a minor part of the townsfolk had insured their properties as the insurance system was not yet well developed in Finland. Fire insurances were mostly used by the wealthiest part of the population living in urban centers—this also applied to Turku, where the members of the gentry and the prominent mercantile class insured their properties more often than did the petty bourgeoisie (Savolainen 2014a). The town dwellers had had two kinds of insurances, either taken from a Swedish fire insurance office [*Allmänna brandförsäkringsverket*] or Finland's Insurance Office. Because

of the scale of the damage in Turku, both companies suffered major problems and were not able to take proper care of the indemnifications to the fire victims. The Swedish insurance office was also heavily burdened by the payments to the victims of the great fire in Borås in June 1827, and eventually both offices went bankrupt (Dahlström 1930, 377–88; Halonen and Nevanlinna 1983, 33; Savolainen 2014a). The fire insurance industry grew markedly only from the mid-1800s onwards as several Finnish and foreign companies launched their businesses in the country (e.g., Halonen and Nevanlinna 1983).

### **UNSUCCESSFUL LOAN APPLICATIONS AND DEBTS FALLING DUE**

In the 1830s, Henric Lindberg's family became even more mobile. However, it is difficult to be absolutely certain about the housing arrangements of the family after the fire because of the reorganization of the town plan and the expropriation of all the burnt plots by the city administration (on the expropriation, see Jutikkala 1962). A comparable practice of expropriation of burnt areas was widely used in other fire-damaged cities in Europe and beyond. The practice legitimized the resettlement of the poorest elements of society after a disaster, and it also served the purposes of rationalizing urban space and controlling the city (Bankoff, Lübken, and Sand 2012, 15). Similar developments took place in Turku as the established elite came to reside in the central areas, and the petty bourgeoisie, servants, and workers of low status focused on the outskirts of the city. One contributing reason for this change was that the size of plots was bigger in the new town plan, and thus their number in the central areas of the city actually diminished.

From 1828 onwards, the Fire Committee began to auction the plots to new owners. However, it took several years before all the plots were sold. As a result of the expropriation and the auctions in Turku, the ownership structure of land changed (Jutikkala 1962). The registers of auctioned properties reveal that some of the prominent businessmen in the town seemed to exploit the situation in order to pursue their own ends as they purchased several plots of land in the city center (Archives of the City of Turku, The Fire Committee, Registers of auctioned properties, 1827 and 1829–33, H 1 and H 2).

Henric Lindberg also participated in the auctions of new plots and attempted to purchase a piece of land for rehousing his family. As his financial situation was unstable, he first sought to secure a loan from the town administrative court and then, in 1830, from the supreme authorities as described in the introduction. In late 1829, just after the birth of his tenth child, Lindberg submitted a petition to

the Turku administrative court requesting that the mayor and the administrative court allow him to buy a property on credit. Lindberg also asked for a small loan for building a new house for his family. According to the petition, he had some capital of his own but the sum was not sufficient to pay for the land and the building costs of a new family house. For Lindberg, the decision must have been a great disappointment: he did not receive the much needed support he had asked for. The Turku administrative court offered no justification for its refusal (Archives of the City of Turku, Administrative Court of Turku, proceedings of February 10, 1830).

It seems likely that Lindberg petitioned the loan from the administrative court in order to keep his possible creditors at bay and reassure them of his creditworthiness. The documents would suggest that Lindberg still had some contacts who were willing to support him if his credit worthiness were ensured: Lindberg wrote in his petition that several members of the peasant estate had promised to provide him with timber and building materials if they were to hear that Lindberg had received the required monetary support (Archives of the City of Turku, Administrative Court of Turku, proceedings of February 10, 1830). It may be that here Lindberg was referring to his trading partners with whom he had been doing business earlier. It is not known whether he himself had had any trading partners who were in debt to him.

Even though he received no loan, Lindberg made an offer for a plot sold at an auction organized by the Fire Committee in June 1830. The price of the plot, which was located in the northern part of the city, was 160 paper roubles. The agreement also included a smaller sum of money as rent to be paid to the city every year (Archives of the City of Turku, The Fire Committee, registers of auctioned properties, 1829–33, H 2). Soon after the auction, Lindberg was in more serious difficulties as he was unable to pay the required sum of money. At this point he turned to the Tsar and submitted the aforementioned petition for a loan or a donation to the Senate asking for a sum to cover the price he was required to pay for this particular plot but, as noted, Lindberg's request was not granted. After this Lindberg's economic situation seemed to deteriorate even further: he was unable to pay the cost of the plot, and the Turku administrative court, therefore, ordered a public auction to resell it in February 1832 (Archives of the City of Turku, Administrative Court of Turku, proceedings of February 8, 1832; records of the auctions of 1832, P1 a 42 19 V 1832; *Åbo Tidningar*, February 15, 1832; *Åbo Underrättelser*, February 15, 1832). Soon after, Lindberg's problems accumulated: a large loan fell due as the creditor, a freeholder peasant, died, and to cover the loan, Lindberg's possessions were again

sold at an auction. In April 1832, not only several pieces of furniture and household objects but also two buildings located on the two aforementioned plots (117 and 123) were auctioned (Archives of the City of Turku, records of the auctions of 1832, P1 a 42 19 V 1832). However, the worth of the auctioned buildings and property did not suffice to cover the debts.

Although Henric Lindberg must have been deep in debt in the 1830s, he had to continue his attempts to find a small plot and a house for his family. At this point, some of the oldest children had already moved away from the family home—for example, three sons were serving as apprentices or clerks in the households of local merchants (Digital Archives, The Cathedral Parish of Turku, The Communion Book of the Turku Finnish Parish, 1836–42, I Aa1:65).

Rehousing a large family was definitely a challenge due to the economic upheaval after such a disaster as there was not only a shortage of financial means but also of building materials, and in this context, building a new house would have required additional efforts even from a well-to-do merchant. The contemporary commentaries also record that the fear of bankruptcies and the lack of trust in Turku made business activities and economic recovery even more challenging (Nikula 1972, 47). Henric Lindberg managed to purchase a half of a small plot where the family resided but eventually this was auctioned in 1838 to cover his debts (Archives of the City of Turku, Administrative Court of Turku, registers of auctions, P I a 47). Small announcements of this auction were placed in local and national newspapers just before the auction was held (*Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, May 3, 1838; *Åbo Underrättelser*, May 9, 1838).

It is likely that at this point Henric Lindberg renounced his rights as a merchant in Turku. In some towns, merchants used to renounce their rights if they could not continue in business because of economic problems or an unstable business environment, such as those during or just after wars or other events such as urban fires. Lindberg was still designated as a merchant or a burgher in various primary sources and newspaper announcements in the early 1830s but by the mid-1840s he was commonly designated as a former burgher (see, e.g., *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, May 26, 1845). A register of the burghers of Turku, which included lists of new burghers and information on those who had renounced their rights, contains only a brief entry concerning a merchant who may have been Henric Lindberg. According to the register, a merchant called “Lindeberg”—no first name appears in the entry—had renounced his rights as a burgher of Turku in May 1839 (Archives of the City of Turku, The book of burghers in the city of Turku, A VI a: 1). However, it must

be noted that primary sources are sometimes ambiguous: for example, it is possible that the name Lindberg had other variants: it could easily have been written as Lindeberg or Linberg by the contemporary scribes.

### **MUTUAL AID AND ACTS OF CHARITY**

The aforementioned auctions in 1832 and 1838 were not the only signs of the Lindberg family's misfortunes; the economic challenges followed the head of the family in the later years of his life. The impoverished merchant and one of his children received financial support from a mutual aid fund (*Fattig Cassa*) maintained by the local petty bourgeoisie from the early 1830s onwards. The fund was the same as that which Henric Lindberg had joined in 1814, when he had been granted the rights to operate as a merchant in Turku. According to the accounts of this fund, Lindberg's youngest daughter, who was born in 1825, received a small yearly sum of money from this mutual aid fund in the 1830s. Henric Lindberg himself received similar assistance at least in 1838 (Archives of the City of Turku, Proceedings of the Finnish burghers' mutual aid fund in Turku, A VI a: 19, 20). The documents cover only the years until the early 1840s, and thus it is not known whether Lindberg received this support for a longer period of time. At the same time similar support was granted to other needy persons, such as merchants' and craftsmen's destitute widows and minor children. This fund was based on its members' mutual assistance and was an important part of the mutual aid system created by the burghers themselves as it provided much needed help for individuals and families at times when the public poor-relief system was targeted almost exclusively at the most destitute and all the lowest strata of society (on this development, see, e.g., Markkola 2007)

The tribulations of Henric Lindberg must have been well known in the local community: the monetary support from the mutual aid fund granted both to the daughter and the father as well as the newspaper announcements of the public auctions definitely spread the news among the townsfolk. Perhaps the public awareness of the family's situation was one of the reasons for a legacy Henric Lindberg received in 1845 from the will of a local merchant called Ivan Titoff. Titoff, who had Russian roots and was probably born in Hamina (*Fredrikshamn*), was related to the renowned Kiseleff merchant family on his mother's side. Members of this family resided both in Helsinki and Turku (e.g., Finnish Business Leaders: Yrjänä 2009). He had engaged in domestic trade as did many other merchants of Russian origin in Finnish towns in the first part of the century (Paloheimo 2013). The merchant Titoff had been childless with a Lutheran spouse, but was widowed at an early age



(Carpelan 1910, 56–57). In later life he is said to have been mentally unstable and thus was assigned a legal guardian from the early 1840s onwards. Titoff had accumulated a large fortune during his active years in business life and then became a renowned benefactor in Turku due to his will, according to which over 42,000 silver roubles were bequeathed to several institutions and individuals (Carpelan 1910, 56–57).

Titoff, who died in June 1844 in Turku, left a will including thirty-seven bequests according to which his fortune was to be donated to various good causes. According to the will, which was signed in 1841, a considerable part of his fortune was bequeathed to his own and his deceased wife's relatives in Finland and in St. Petersburg as well as the Orthodox and Lutheran churches in various Finnish towns. In addition, Titoff left 5,000 roubles to the local mutual aid fund of the burghers, the so-called "*Borgare Lådan*," and ordered that the yearly interest should be distributed among the poorest widows or burghers in Turku (Archives of the City of Turku, Town Court of Turku, Probate inventories, B I c 50, 1844; *Åbo Tidningar*, July 6, 1844; *Finlands Allmänna Tidningar*, April 19, 1845).

Under the terms of Titoff's will, Henric Lindberg received a significant sum of money, 200 roubles. In the original document, Lindberg was described as sick and needy (*sjuklig och behöfvande*), a description that was not included for any other person mentioned in the document. Interestingly, Lindberg's adult son, Carl Fredric, received an even larger bequest from the estate. Most likely the reason for this was that he worked as a bookkeeper for one of Titoff's legal guardians, Wasili Swetkoff, who was also a prominent Turku merchant of Russian origin. Swetkoff, as well as his daughter, was among those who benefited greatly from the will (Archives of the City of Turku, Town Court of Turku, Probate inventories, B I c 51, 1845).

Titoff's will and generosity received considerable attention in local newspapers as several announcements concerning the bequests were published when the implementation of the will was reported (e.g., *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, May 6, 1845; *Morgonbladet*, June 2, 1845). Such generous bequests were typical among merchants and industrialists in nineteenth and early twentieth-century major Finnish towns. In fact, philanthropy seems to have played an important role in the activities of the business actors having close connections to the city of Turku (Carpelan 1910). During the time when the public poor-relief system was underdeveloped, donations and other acts of charity were a widely used way to take care of the poorest members of the community, and the wealthy merchants and industrialists donated considerable sums to churches, local schools, and societies in order to support and

educate the lower social orders. Philanthropy was especially typical of Russian-born entrepreneurs in the nineteenth century as it was an important element of the Orthodox faith, and several prominent business families contributed to charity in their local communities (Koukkunen and Kasanko 1977; Långvik-Huomo 2006; Finnish Business Leaders: Valtonen 2009. See also Ramsay 1993, 70, 108).

It is evident that Ivan Titoff's will provided much needed financial help for Henric Lindberg's family. The money was probably used to pay off debts, since in 1850, when Henric Lindberg died—he was almost sixty-six years old—no debts were mentioned in the probate inventory. The document recorded that Lindberg's widow and three of their sons, Alexander, Carl Fredrik, and Anders, should care for the estate. Four of the daughters, Lovisa Wilhelmina, Maria Carolina, Amanda Antoinette, Fredrika Gustafva, were mentioned in the document, thus three of the ten children had died before 1850 (Archives of the City of Turku, Town Court of Turku, Probate inventories, B I c 56, 1850). The adult daughters were unmarried at the time the probate inventory was signed and thus in the eyes of the law they were considered to be minors (on women's rights, see Pylkkänen 2009, 37–48).

According to the probate inventory, the value of Henric Lindberg's property was very modest. The document listed a few pieces of furniture, some household objects, and clothing that had belonged to him but included no linen or clothes belonging to the widow (on widows' portions and rights in the distributions of estates, see Markkanen 1998). Certain items indicate that the family had had at least some rather more valuable items, among them a few pieces of painted furniture, of which the most valuable were a painted chest, a wardrobe, and a wall clock. Dishes and copper and iron coffee pots were also recorded. The value of the items listed in the document was estimated at over twenty-four rubles, six kopecks in silver. According to the document, the funeral costs, which were over sixty-six rubles in silver, were paid by two of Lindberg's sons, and together with the administrative payments, the cost exceeded the value of the deceased's property. However, neither the two sons nor other children presented any claims and it was agreed that the property would remain in the possession of their mother (Archives of the City of Turku, Town Court of Turku, Probate inventories, B I c 56, 1850). Naturally, such an arrangement was intended to secure the future life of the widow and the unmarried adult daughters, who might not have had any other means of subsistence.

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## THE SECOND GENERATION

By early 1850, three of Henric Lindberg's sons, namely Alexander, Carl Fredrik, and Anders, had received at least basic training for their occupations. They had followed in the footsteps of their father and were all engaged in commerce: Alexander and Carl Fredrik, who were born before the mid-1820s, were designated as traders or merchants ("hökare," "viktualiehandlande," or "handlande") while the youngest brother, Anders, was designated as a shop assistant in the documents consulted for the purposes of this study (on the terms, see Paloheimo 2012, 71–72 and the literature referred to therein). As mentioned above, Carl Fredrik Lindberg had served as a bookkeeper at the store owned by Wasili Swetkoff, and he also continued retail trade at Swetkoff's former store after his death, which indicates close relations with the Swetkoff family. Lindberg also took care of the voluntary auction of the property of Swetkoff's widow after her death in 1866 (*Åbo Tidningar*, January 15, 1855; *Åbo Underrättelser*, August 24 and 28, 1855; *Sanomia Turusta*, September 28, 1866; November 2, 1868).

Alexander and Carl Fredrik Lindberg became well-established members of the local community. Alexander was married in 1847 and had at least five children, of whom a daughter and a son died young. Together with his wife, Alexander had at least eight godchildren in the city—all the families belonged to the same or slightly higher social groups (HisKi project, The Turku Finnish Parish, The records of births and baptisms, 1736–1865). By the early 1850s, Carl Fredrik Lindberg had already established himself as a businessman with rights to engage in both domestic and foreign trade. He was married to a merchant's daughter in 1858 (HisKi project, The Turku Finnish Parish, The records of marriages, 1858). By the late nineteenth century he owned a general store in Turku (Finnish Business Leaders: Teräs 2013). At an early age, Carl Fredrik Lindberg was voted onto a local decision-making organ, the city elders, and was a long-serving board member of a local savings bank. These tasks are proof positive of the trust and appreciation he enjoyed in his local community. This appreciation was also demonstrated on his death in November 1903, as in addition to his immediate family, eminent members of local economic and political life reportedly graced his funeral with their presence (*Åbo Tidning*, November 30, 1903; *Åbo Underrättelser*, Dec. 3, 1903; *Hufvudstadsbladet*, Dec. 1, 1903; December 2, 1903; December 7, 1903). One of the obituaries mentioned in passing that Carl Fredrik Lindberg's father had been a burgher in Turku, but except for this brief note on his background, the accounts include no other similar remarks.

## DISCUSSION

Since urban as well rural fires were common in early modern Finland, the fate of Henric Lindberg's family was shared by thousands of people, whose chances of economic survival were destroyed by fire. The disastrous fire that ravaged the city of Turku, not only destroyed the basis of Henric Lindberg's daily life but also his source of income and the means to support his dependents. As he sought to overcome economic hardship, he was eventually forced to petition local authorities and the ruling powers for financial support. His petitions not only provide evidence of the economic impact of the fire of 1827 on inhabitants in the city of Turku but also demonstrate especially well how people trusted the petition institution—in other words, the sovereign's benevolence and charity—in moments when their lives were shattered by a crisis which threw them into poverty.

Like the large majority of the residents of Turku, Henric Lindberg had no fire insurance which could have provided additional security in the event of fire. Since he received only small compensation from the Fire Committee established in Turku soon after the fire, Lindberg's economic situation never recovered. Over the years he went deeper and deeper into debt and his property was auctioned several times in order to cover his debts. However, the support from the mutual aid fund maintained by the petty burghers and the bequest from the Ivan Titoff's will demonstrate that communal solidarity persisted after the fire although the scale of the disaster placed serious pressure upon it.

Despite the financial distress of the father, three of Henric Lindberg's sons, who reached adult age and received at least basic training in commerce on the shop floors of local merchant houses, were able to move higher up the social ladder in the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus the family history demonstrates how a sudden external crisis did not necessarily lead to a situation in which poverty was transmitted from one generation to another. On the contrary, a closer case study provides examples of how entrepreneurship, business skills, and contacts could open the way to upward mobility and prosperity. In other words, an individual's modest origin or lowly status in the hierarchy of an estate society did not necessarily determine his or her life trajectory; nor was the second generation condemned to lifelong poverty if the parents had suffered economic crisis. Of course, it must be noted that in the context of the second half of the nineteenth century, Finnish society gradually started to change, and other factors, such as education, gained more importance and finally replaced rank as the measure of social standing.

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# ENTERPRISING PEOPLE AND THE THREAT OF IMPOVERISHMENT AND SOCIAL LOSS: THE CONSEQUENCES OF URBAN BUSINESS FAILURE IN FINLAND AT THE END OF THE 1870S

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## ABSTRACT

This article contemplates the individual level socioeconomic consequences of bankruptcy by studying market-oriented, self-employed people in Jyväskylä, a small town in central Finland. The article asks if poverty and social loss were inevitable consequences of urban business failure and also seeks to explain why some recovered and others did not. Through the method of collective biography and by utilizing a varied selection of legal documents and parish and governmental materials, this article shows that, even though a bankruptcy could cause serious financial and economic outcomes, and even proletarianize a debtor, impoverishment was not the inevitable consequence of bankruptcy. These bankrupts from the middle social stratum had means to cope. Moreover, the variation between individuals in the consequences of business failure is shown to be contingent upon the existence of certain preconditions, such as the amount of bad debt and the practice of proper behavior.

## INTRODUCTION

This article studies the individual level outcomes of business failures. It is widely acknowledged in the research that the economic and social spheres of life were intertwined and dependent on each other in pre-industrial societies (e.g., Muldrew 1998). Recently, more attention has been paid to business failure as a crisis of an individual which could threaten not only an individual's and his family's financial standing and the ability to make a livelihood by impeding re-entry into business, but

also cause various social outcomes, such as shame or loss of reputation (e.g., Balleisen 2001; Mann 2002; Vause 2012; Safley 2013). Yet we still do not know enough about the actual individual costs of bankruptcy, how contemporaries responded to the failed individuals and what happened to them afterwards (Fridenson 2004, 562–65; Nyberg and Jakobsson 2013, 76).

This article adds to the understanding of the risks and uncertainty inherent in pre-industrial economic life by studying the threat of impoverishment to middle-class<sup>1</sup> burghers following business failure. Impoverishment is considered not only economically but also through its social dimensions. The study concerns the small town of Jyväskylä in central Finland at the end of the 1870s. It focuses on ten bankrupt small entrepreneurs and self-employed individuals and on how bankruptcy affected their socioeconomic standing. This is done by observing the incomes and societal participation of the bankrupts through the following variables: invitations to stand as a godparent; assignments of commissions of trust; and the ability to remain in the house or to be required to move. The second objective is to contemplate the course of recovery in order to ascertain why some recovered well and others not so well. Therefore, special attention is paid to background variables such as occupational coping strategies, the economic conditions of bad debt, and whether or not the bankrupts followed the rules of business culture.

The aftermath of bankruptcy in pre-industrial societies has recently attracted more scholarly attention. Many studies note that bankruptcy could be extremely shameful and dishonorable, especially in the early modern period, even leading to being ostracized by society (Häberlein 2013; Safley 2009, 2013; Coquery 2013, 61). This is also the conclusion in many studies dealing with nineteenth-century bankruptcies. For example, Vause (2012) establishes through a single case of a French merchant how business failure could lead to the loss of reputation and the violation of trust in social relationships. Nyberg and Jakobsson (2013, 83–85) describe the difficulties for Swedish merchants of coming back to business, and Balleisen (2001) studies the collective biography of American failed entrepreneurs and the difficulty of returning to business and make a living. At the same time, however, it has been claimed that during the nineteenth century, bankruptcy became more tolerated and better accepted, and, in consequence, both the economic and social outcomes were

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1 The term *middle group* refers in this article to the group of people who were part of the bourgeoisie, that is, merchants and artisans in towns, who had special rights to engage in business and to participate in the town administration up to the 1870s, when these special rights were revoked.

less dire (from a legal historical point of view, see Gratzner 2008; Di Martino 2012; from a cultural historical point of view, see Mann 2002).

Legal codes and cultural attitudes drawn from the individual personal narratives of members of the upper social stratum as well as public debates are important in constructing the institutional frames that formed the boundaries within which individuals could act. They do not, however, reveal the actual individual results of business failure. The conclusions about the lost intangible assets become more vivid even though they are rather difficult to verify from the original sources, and thus they are drawn, for example, from the fact that many bankrupts moved away (Vandermeulen 2007, 632–36; Balleisen 2001, 170–73; Karonen 2009) or that they could not attract new credit for new business ventures because of the lost trust (e.g., Coquery 2013). Less work has been done on scrutinizing how bankrupts were actually treated in their local communities and by their peers, that is, if bankrupts were really excluded from these because of the negative effects of misfortunes in business. In the same sense, research verifying the difficulties in making a living through actual longer-term income development is mainly lacking. Apart from Kim Kaarniranta's (2001) research on Finnish rural grocers and their creditors, the topic has not so far been explored. Thus the notions of impoverishment are based on rather implicit interpretations.

Nonetheless, by studying commercially minded bankrupts in 1840s America, Balleisen (2001) shows that bankruptcy did not necessarily imply that one's business or occupational career was over. Instead, these bankrupts had many measures to utilize in their recovery. The bankrupts had skills to utilize in paid jobs, and they often had reasonable social networks which could assist them in their recovery (Balleisen 2001, 173–76, 206–19). Moreover, it has been shown that even though bankruptcy could destroy trust and reputation, the bankruptcy proceedings provided a forum in which a bankrupt could present his predicament and thus try to make good (cf. Lester 1995, 88; Reynard 2001; Safley 2013, 7). Neither was business failure always an irreparable loss even in the past; some debtors might actually go under several times (Coquery 2013, 53; Gratzner 2001).

Yet the existing studies have not explained univocally which factors separated those who recovered well from those who did not. In Finland, however, bankruptcy is not traditionally considered a learning experience as might be the case elsewhere (cf. Balleisen 2001, 188–91), but a rather wretched experience. For example, in his memoirs, Anders Ramsay, a nineteenth-century entrepreneur, described how for him going bankrupt meant losing his right to re-emerge, sacrificing his honor, social

position, and the respect of his fellow men (Ramsay 1921, 155). A similar tone pervades most studies touching on nineteenth-century bankrupts. Impoverishment and social death are often mentioned as a consequence of a business failure (e.g., Kaarniranta 2001; Mäntylä 2009; Karonen 2009). However, the subject lacks a thorough investigation. Therefore, the interpretations are mainly based on temporary and locally disparate single cases of individuals mainly from the upper estates or upper commercial stratum. Additionally, when one digs a little deeper into the literature, there are signs that some bankrupts actually coped fairly well (e.g., Bonsdorff 1956; Favorin 2009; Yrjänä 2009).

Thus the Finnish conception of nineteenth-century bankruptcy is quite ambiguous and contradictory, especially when compared to Finland's western neighbor, Sweden, where, according to Martin Åberg (1991, 192–96), bankruptcies were fairly commonplace and tolerated at that time. The Finnish conception also seems to differ from scholarly notions highlighting more lenient and relaxed attitudes to bankruptcy during the nineteenth century. This is not surprising, as the earlier studies are rather Anglo-American-centered. On the contrary, in the reform of the Finnish bankruptcy legislation in 1868, a more creditor-friendly legislation was actually adapted. Then, for example, the option to get one's debts discharged—a feature which many legal historians consider a significant factor for the future prospects of bankrupts—was removed (Havansi 1992, 12–16; Di Martino 2012).

Hence, the question whether or not a Finnish late nineteenth-century business failure was a social and economic death is still largely unresolved. Therefore this article ventures to challenge the Finnish concept of bankruptcy as something that inevitably led to poverty. Certainly, it might well be the end result of a business failure, because bankruptcy could be seen as the opposite situation to what the nineteenth-century business community most appreciated. Empirical studies have shown that the nineteenth-century business community favored conventional and honorable behavior, solvency, and good reputation, including legally acquired wealth, solvency, and keeping one's word. A good reputation was a passport to social networks which could guarantee that a person was worth trusting and which also increased his social standing. Especially in the absence of wealth in the family, an individual had to build his reputation and trust by education and practice (Åberg 1991, 190–91; Ojala 1999, 311–12; Kallioinen 2002, 119–20; Keskinen 2008; Häberlein 2013; Nyberg and Jakobsson 2013, 83–85).

In this article, in order to contemplate the individual social costs, special

attention is paid to the social standing<sup>2</sup> of a debtor before and after a failure from the point of view of societal inclusion and exclusion in a local community (Barnes 2002, 20–21; cf. Dias and Teixeira 2014, 4). Given the difficulty in finding any actual signs of an individual's social standing in the historical sources, the scrutiny is conducted by studying the bankrupts' participation in those specific essential social functions in Finnish local societies at that time. First of all, being selected as a godparent is studied. For example, Kotilainen (2008, 135–37), Piilahti (2012), and Marttila (2010) have noted that in Finnish society the choice of a godparent had many invisible connotations of social and economic significance. Although the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Finland had its rules concerning the choice of godparents, the relationship between godparents, their godchild, and that child's parents was a ritualized communal relationship which parents used to secure their child's life course. The invitation to be a godparent meant that a person was socially accepted. For the elite, economic solvency was an especially important requirement for a godparent.

Secondly, commissions of trust are considered. In a local Finnish community, formal commissions of trust were municipal or ecclesiastical administrative posts, such as taxation committees or the parish council. More private commissions of trust included such roles as acting as an executor or a trustee in bankruptcies or as a manager in associations. In addition, there were co-operative associations in towns as well. Consequently, whereas Balleisen (2001), for example, estimates the role of human capital and social relationships in the recovery, this article evaluates if a debtor's earlier social and economic significance could be facilitated in recovery, that is, if they could shield a debtor from social ostracism after failure.

In this article, two established wholesalers, six fledgling small retailers or shopkeepers, and two craftsmen are studied closely. The cases encompass all merchants' and artisans' bankruptcies coming before the Jyväskylä town court in 1878 and 1879 in which a debtor was alive when the proceedings started. Consequently, the research is conducted applying the collective biography method. The commercial careers of each of ten bankrupts are constructed through in-depth analyses of local level data. These biographies serve as the basis for micro-level comparison (cf. Alapuro 2012). The life cycles of the bankrupts are studied with special reference to the ten or so years preceding their failures and the five years thereafter.

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2 Social standing refers here to a person's position in the hierarchy of a local community, which might be either an inherited or an achieved status, gained, for example, through prestige, economic wealth, or membership in certain social circles.



In practice, conducting the research necessitated applying the methodology of source pluralism, which refers to combining scattered and sometimes scanty evidence from several archival items into one entity and thus adapting many reading methods with sources (cf. Myrdal 2012). The study began with the identification of bankruptcy cases from the archives of the Jyväskylä town court. Bankruptcy documents are divided into two separate archival series. Legal proceedings and verdicts can be found in the court records. The appendices on the grounds of which the bankruptcy proceedings were initiated are archived separately from the court records as bankruptcy files. They include bankruptcy applications, inventories, debt registers, demand letters from creditors, and other letters to the court. Evidence on bankrupts' inner experiences is scanty in the sources, but court records and bankruptcy files in particular provide unique sources through which to examine the economic situations of small-scale actors who normally do not appear in the sources.

Besides the court records and bankruptcy files, the data were collected from the income-tax registers of central government. Taxation registers are used here to study bankrupts' income and business or occupational activities before and after their failures. Source critical notions on fiscal archives are presented elsewhere (see Miikka Voutilainen's article in this volume). Municipal tax registers are also used here to study titles and fields of business after business failures as well as some other personal records and trade license registers from the Jyväskylä area. The evidence of moving away and of being a godparent is studied from the Jyväskylä town parish registers, while newspapers provide a great deal of further information on the bankrupts' life cycles.

In Finland, bankruptcy meant at once surrendering one's property to creditors in a legal system. It could not be carried through if there were not enough assets in a bankrupt's estate. Because insolvency always required the existence of debts, bankrupts were not initially the poorest of the poorest people, but men and women who had had an ability to engage in credit relationships (Konkurssisääntö [Bankruptcy Code of 1868]). Consequently, the bankrupts studied here were part of the new bourgeoisie, which emerged during the nineteenth century. This meant people whose background was not initially in trade or other businesses and who did not necessarily have family fortunes to support their aspirations, but who became engaged in commercial enterprises with the help of improved schooling opportunities and less stringent legislation (Mauranen 1981; Piilahti 2012).

Hence, nearly all of the ten bankrupts examined here are examples of some socially upward mobility. Initially they were the sons of crofters, sharecroppers,

freeholder peasants, ill-famed merchants, and bankrupt dyers and merchants. The bankrupts' experiences in business differed, but they all had gone through some education and practical training (Appendix 1, Table 5) on which they based their entries to the market. The bankrupts also had their different positions in the local middle-class social hierarchy. In terms of social standing, the wholesalers and former business partners Thomas Häggman and Anders Turdiainen belonged to the upper-middle class, while others were members of the lower-middle class (Table 1).

<b>Group</b>	<b>Financial and Social Premises</b>
<b>Established Wholesalers</b> • Thomas Häggman • Anders Turdiainen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established, diversified, and solid business at some point</li> <li>• Many foreign trading partners</li> <li>• Big bankruptcies (over 50 creditors)</li> <li>• Well established and long-standing social position and relationships</li> </ul>
<b>Fledgling Retailers: Promising Market Entries</b> • Johan Toivainen • Anders Poutanen • Thomas Kuntsi • Henrik Soikkanen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promising beginning, failure soon after market entry</li> <li>• Some foreign trade partners</li> <li>• Medium-sized bankruptcies (under 35 creditors)</li> <li>• Positively founding social standing</li> <li>• Admitted to commercial networks based on apprenticeship</li> </ul>
<b>Fledgling Retailers: Trial and Error</b> • Gustaf Ekholm • Sergei Dunajeff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure soon after market entry</li> <li>• Local trade partners</li> <li>• Small bankruptcies (under 15 creditors)</li> <li>• No signs of significant social standing</li> </ul>
<b>Artisans</b> • Matts Hartman • Adolf Björkman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small-sized business</li> <li>• Small bankruptcies (under 15 creditors)</li> <li>• Social standing based on family and artisan networks</li> </ul>

Table 1. Characteristics of the bankrupts.

Jyväskylä offered an excellent opportunity for upward social mobility for enterprising people, who could engage in trade or municipal administration offices because Jyväskylä had been founded only in 1837 in an almost uninhabited area. The first decades of its existence signified a continuous flow of new population to the town from every part of Finland. In 1880, only 35 percent of the total number of 2,000 inhabitants had been born in Jyväskylä (Tommila 1970, 257; 1972, 17–20). Therefore the social networks of the town were in the process of taking shape. By the end of the 1870s, Jyväskylä was already known for its many educational opportunities. At the time some 10 percent of inhabitants made their livelihoods by trade. Industry and handicraft professionals made up 24 percent of the population (Tommila 1970, 247, 256–57).



Picture 1. Jyväskylä in the mid-1890s. Located in central Finland, Jyväskylä was surrounded by vast forests and many lakes and could be reached from all over the country by waterways and roads. Source: Historian kuvakokoelma. National Board of Antiquities.

Even though the bankrupts went under in different phases of their businesses' life cycles, they had one thing in common. They had all been involved in the timber boom of the 1870s. Then the demand for timber caused a boom which put wealth and riches into the hands of an ever-larger and more diverse group of individuals in central Finland, too. However, the boom faded as fast as it came when a deep international recession hit Finland, too, causing one of the worst financial crises in the country's history (Rasila 1982, 91, 100–101; Cameron 1989, 279–82).

## **A THREAT MATERIALIZED?**

### *Economic Consequences*

After a bankruptcy application, it was difficult to make a living. This was not only because a bankrupt had to surrender all his assets to the care of his creditors, but also because a bankrupt was no longer his own man. He no longer controlled his house, his shop, or his workshop. He had lost his patriarchal authority. In addition to this, a travel ban was imposed on a bankrupt for the duration of the bankruptcy proceedings (Konkurssisääntö [Bankruptcy Code of 1868]). If a debtor could not find

another way to provide for his family during the proceedings, he might be granted a subsistence allowance from his own estate. If the creditors in charge of the bankruptcy estate were not willing to grant this allowance voluntarily, a debtor could apply for it from the town court. Then, for example, a family of two adults and two minor children might be granted maintenance for around two weeks at two Finnish *markka* (marks) a day (Records 1862–1881, Town Court, Jyväskylä, Apr. 26 1880). The amount was anything but high at a time when the mean day's wage of a man working in the agricultural sector at that time was 1.35 marks (Vattula 1983, 441), and it must be noted that the allowance was paid from the debtor's own bankruptcy estate, not from any common societal instance.

Otherwise, little is known about how bankrupts provided for themselves during the proceedings. The dismal situation of the bankrupts immediately after their proceedings commenced was aggravated by the fact that the Bankruptcy Code of 1868 was interpreted in Jyväskylä town court so that the law forbade taking even a family's clothes and bedclothes from the estate, even though the debtors usually applied to be granted these assets (Turunen 2012, 46–47). Moreover, after the Bankruptcy Code of 1868, a bankrupt continued under obligation to make full payment of his debts unless he managed to conclude an agreement with every creditor. The prospects for post-bankruptcy life were indeed formidable. Could the bankrupts rise from this shock after losing nearly everything, or were they doomed to everlasting penury?

During the years following financial failure, incomes seem generally rather low (Table 2). The income tax payable to the central government applied only to yearly incomes that were higher than 500 marks (Wikström 1985, 22). This exacerbated bankrupts' miserable situation; surely, they had some income to make ends meet. According to the Poor Relief Committee Records 1878–85, none of them applied for poor relief. It seems highly likely that turning to poor relief was not an option in their cases, not only because of their social status but also because they were not regarded as *needy poor*, nor eligible for relief because they were able to work and thus provide for themselves (Markkola 1994, 107–109; see also Maare Paloheimo's article in this volume).

According to the economist Heikki Renvall, annual incomes lower than 2,000 marks meant that a household was, in fact, impecunious (1900, 80). However, this almost contemporary notion needs to be re-evaluated in future research. This is because the average of incomes among all merchants who paid this tax in Jyväskylä was around 4,400 marks in 1880, falling there to around 3,500 marks in the next

year. At the same time, the lower quartile of incomes also decreased from 2,000 marks to 800 marks. Therefore, when the incomes of the bankrupts are compared to their counterparts and, more importantly, to the majority of town dwellers who never earned incomes over 500 marks, it is hardly plausible to claim that bankruptcy inevitably led to poverty (Crown's Accounts 1878–1885, Town Bailiff, Jyväskylä).

Name	Year Prior to Bankruptcy (B)	Year of B	Year after B	2 Years after B	3 Years after B	4 Years after B	5 Years after B
Häggman	500	500	–	–	–	*	
Turdiainen	800	1,000	800	600	1,000	–	*
Toivainen	2000	–	–	–	–	600	–
Soikkanen	600	–	–	–	–	–	–
Kuntsi	1000	–	200	400	800	1,300	1,500
Björkman	100	–	100	–	200	700	700
Poutanen	400	–	–	–	100	–	*
Hartman	300	–	–	–	100	–	*
Ekhalm	–	–	–	–	*		
Dunajeff	500	–	–	*	200	*	

Table 2. Bankrupts' net annual incomes exceeding 500 marks. Source: Crown's Accounts 1878–85, Town Bailiff, Jyväskylä.

\* Bankrupt moved away or died, so did not appear at all in the tax registers.

Of course, some of the bankrupts disappear totally from the state income registers, whereas the income of one of them never exceeded 500 marks during the research period. Thus the depth of the drop also depended on a debtor's financial significance in the first place. Despite this, it is clear that no longer being included in the taxation register meant relegation from the earlier higher social status to a group to which most urban people belonged. The rigorous bankruptcy legislation of the Finnish system could thus proletarianize a middle-class person and relegate him and his family to the lowest class of the urban dwellers. Nevertheless, the fact that many bankrupts surfaced among the taxed people only to disappear once again shows that ways of making a living were available, even though real success was rare.

Only three of the bankrupts, Anders Turdiainen, Adolf Björkman, and Thomas Kuntsi, managed to earn incomes worth notice in many consecutive years. Of course, none of the bankrupts gained significant wealth or great success during the period studied, but total poverty was not an inevitable consequence of business failure.

The question is why these men filed for bankruptcy in the first place—only one of them was compelled to do so by a creditor—when it must have been expected that from bankruptcy would ensue many difficulties. It is not likely that they did not know what they were doing. First of all, bankruptcy as a legal procedure was nothing new to the contemporaries as it had been part of the Finnish legal system for centuries. Of course, it had been only ten years since the legislation had been renewed and made more severe regarding debtors. Yet, and despite some moralistic commentators who suggested that it was fashionable and modern to go under and to benefit from it (*Päijänne*, Oct. 16, 1879; *Keski-Suomi*, Dec. 13, 1879), it was likely that filing voluntarily for bankruptcy was due to necessity.

The men studied here ended up insolvent because of the expiry of temporary bills of exchange mainly from the local creditors, which took these men to final insolvency. When a debtor's financing was predominantly based on bills of exchange, it signaled that a debtor's solvency was questioned. This was because creditors' claims were better protected when they granted credit in the form of a bill of exchange. The appeal in court to recover debts was simpler, faster, and more secure than with other kinds of credit devices (Turunen 2012, 72–84). The predominance of bills of exchange in becoming insolvent also suggests that bills of exchange had become more widely used in the country, in a way that has been described in other studies (Balleisen 2001, 27–32), but it was also a sign that there was no longer any other kind of funding available to a debtor. Thus, the fast and non-negotiable expiry of bills of exchange made a bankruptcy application the only means to avoid imprisonment for debt and to stop the accrual of interest and the confiscation of property for every debt one by one (e.g., Bankruptcy Files 1878–1879, Town Court, Jyväskylä, Dunajeff to the Town Court, Aug. 27, 1879; Bankruptcy Code of 1868; Turunen 2012, 37–40).

### *Social Consequences*

It seems that bankrupts, when going through financial failure, suffered even more in social standing than in their ability to manage economically. In general—in the manner that serving as a godparent had a significant bearing on social appreciation and acceptance—the bankrupts ceased to belong to those social circles from which godparents were chosen (Table 3). Only Thomas Kuntsi, who managed to gain again good financial standing after his failure, also seems to have succeeded in retaining his social appreciation. Not even the merchant Anders Poutanen or the shoemaker Matts Hartman invalidate the significance of economic recovery to social recovery and acceptance. Poutanen had a godchild after his first bankruptcy, which ended in

agreement with his creditors—his creditors agreed to discharge 40 percent of his debts because they trusted him and his ability to pay in the future—but Poutanen was not invited to be a godparent after his second failure in 1881 (Records 1862–1881, Town Court, Jyväskylä, Jan. 5, 1880). The parents of the godchild of the shoemaker Matts Hartman came from the same socio-economic artisan group as he did.

The drastic failure of Thomas Häggman is also validated here. Economically, Häggman experienced the greatest fall among the bankrupts studied. Social loss seems to be as significant. After his failure no one wanted Häggman to serve as a godparent, whereas earlier the parents of his numerous godchildren were among the highest-ranking merchants and officials of the town.

Name	Before: Number of Godchildren/Years	After: Number of Godchildren/Years	Before: Ratio	After: Ratio
Häggman	19/10	0/4	1.9	0
Turdiainen	3/4	0/4	0.75	0
Toivainen	1/10	0/5	0.1	0
Soikkanen	2/3	0/5	0.67	0
Kuntsi	2/4	3/5	0.5	0.6
Björkman	5/10	0/5	0.5	0
Poutanen	1/5	2/5	0.2	0.4
Hartman	2/8	1/5	0.25	0.2
Ekholm	0	0	0	0
Dunajeff	0	0	0	0

Table 3. Number and ratio\* of godchildren before and after bankruptcy. Source: Registers 1868–1885, Town Parish, Jyväskylä.

\*The ratio of godchildren relates to the number of years when a bankrupt on the whole could stand as a godparent in Jyväskylä. This was dependent on a debtor's age because a person could stand as a godparent only after his confirmation at the age of fifteen and on the time a debtor had been living in the town as some had stayed there for decades and some only a few years.

All things considered, the examination of godparent relations here is in accordance with the findings in earlier research estimating economic solvency to be the most essential characteristic appreciated by parents when they chose a godparent for their child. Financial soundness and social standing were intertwined in the circles of commercially minded people. However, the selection of a godparent should not either be overemphasized because it does not, of course, reveal all the social relations pertaining between these individuals.

In general, it seems that there was more variation between the individuals when economic recovery is considered. By contrast, social costs seem to have touched them more commonly as a group. This is verified when the commissions of trust are also investigated. Basically, access to commissions of trust ended when a person was declared bankrupt. Officially, the bankruptcy law only restricted the debtor's civil rights when the debtor was convicted of bankruptcy offence. Again, one person stands out. Thomas Häggman had served for years in several most considerable commissions of trust. Anders Turdiainen and Johan Toivainen had held such positions, too, but to a lesser extent (e.g., *Keski-Suomi*, Jan. 29, 1876; May 26, 1877; Dec. 1, 1877). After failure, such positions were no longer accessible. Some of the bankrupts applied for municipal offices after their failures. None of them, not even the relatively well surviving Thomas Kuntsi, were appointed (Registration Records 1878–1885, Administrative Court, Jyväskylä, Mar. 7, 1881; *Keski-Suomi*, Aug. 31, 1881; *Päijänne*, Jun. 8, 1881).

However, the dismal prospects for the bankrupts' social recovery improve somewhat in light of cooperation for the public good. For example, the bankrupts were not excluded from voluntary work in the fire brigade, where all hands were needed (e.g., *Päijänne*, May 18, 1881; *Keski-Suomi*, May 21, 1881; Mar. 22, 1882). Yet bankrupts were no longer eligible for managerial positions, serving only as rank-and-file members. As with cooperative actions, bankrupts still felt welcome among their peers. Many of them continued to be members of The Society of Shop Assistants, which was founded in 1875 on the initiative of Anders Turdiainen (Tommila 1972, 226). Only briefly, at the time of his bankruptcy proceedings, was he absent from the board of the society (Roll of Members 1876, 1881, Society of Shop Assistants, Jyväskylä).

Clearly, bankruptcy had one particularly demeaning social consequence. With the exception of Thomas Kuntsi and Matts Hartman, bankruptcy hurled the bankrupt families into a period of instability and fluidity. Whether the bankrupt families rented or owned their homes, after bankruptcy, they usually moved around Jyväskylä several times. Usually the destination was the outskirts of the town. Moving from more respectable central sites was to adjust decreased incomes to expenditures, but definitely it signified social depreciation.

As a consequence, some years after the research period, only two out of ten bankrupts were still working in a known occupation or business in Jyväskylä (Kuntsi, Björkman). One had disappeared from the sources after he moved to beyond the town borders (Soikkanen), one had passed away (Toivainen), and another six had



moved away (Häggman, Turdiainen, Poutanen, Hartman, Dunajeff, Ekholm). Although it is not within the scope of these data to draw any general conclusions as to why some moved away and some did not—for example, some of them had kin in town, some did not—moving away was not a normal measure for the burghers with families and established living places and businesses. The parish records of Jyväskylä show that searching for one's own place in the world was characteristic for younger, unmarried people, such as shop assistants and journeymen. However, it is clear that those who recovered best both economically and socially stayed, while those who lost everything moved. Yet, it must be noted that moving away was also an option open to these people. Such was not the case for everyone at that time. However, moving away did not happen immediately after the bankruptcy proceedings. The bankrupts tried to cope in their hometown first. This gives reason to believe that the social consequences were not as profound as has been suggested in earlier studies, but it was more financial recovery and a need for maintenance that played a role in this decision.

## **EFFORTS TO AVOID IMPOVERISHMENT**

### *Economic Opportunities*

Even though bankruptcy narrowed the options for securing a livelihood, these bankrupts had human capital, that is, means and skills to utilize in many urban occupations and thus avoid total poverty. The know-how in trade and handicraft professions was valued in local labor markets as most of the bankrupts made their livelihood at least temporarily in paid work as bookkeepers and shop managers. Additionally, some of the bankrupts hawked cheap articles or continued in their artisan jobs (e.g., *Keski-Suomi*, Jan. 24, 1880; Feb. 11, 1882). For some, such as Adolf Björkman, working in paid work in the same business he had been running before his failure gave him a fair livelihood. Working was not only requisite but also worthwhile. If there were no aggravating circumstances found in bankruptcy proceedings, debtors were granted a benefit so that not all their future incomes or property would be used for the unpaid bankruptcy.

Hence, bankruptcy did not kill initiative, and the institutional framework played a part in the recovery, too. The bankrupts' chances of making ends meet were supported by the relaxed legislation governing business and occupations in 1879. It afforded everyone new opportunities for self-employment. Thus some bankrupts kept stalls and sold alcohol and snacks here and there (Registration Records 1878–1885, Administrative Court, Jyväskylä, e.g., May 27, 1881, and Mar. 31, 1884).

Besides their small retail businesses, Johan Toivainen went into bakery products and Sergei Dunajeff became a sausage maker (Trade License Registers 1880–1884, Jurisdictional District Bailiff, Laukaa, 1883).

The Trade Act of 1879 applied to both sexes. Thus it enabled some bankrupt families to abandon the traditional patriarchal ideals of spouses and exploit their womenfolk's opportunities to engage in business. Hence the wholesaler Thomas Häggman transferred his bakery to his wife for a while at the time of his bankruptcy without even having to answer to the accusations of concealing property from his creditors. The retailer's wife, Ewa Poutanen, established a café in her own name after Anders Poutanen's second bankruptcy. However, one year later, Ewa Poutanen returned to the domestic sphere and her husband took over the business. Consequently, if a financial crisis caused a change in the domestic arrangements and the pre-industrial cultural values and habits of such middle-group families, it did so only temporarily. Nonetheless, when bankrupts accepted all kinds of job opportunities and even utilized their womenfolk's resources in order to recover, they adopted the very same strategy that was common among the needy and poor working population and in general for people in crisis in pre-industrial societies (Markkola 1994, 101–104; Boulton 2000, 56).

Even so, all these were inferior jobs compared to the bankrupts' former businesses, and clearly they wanted something more respectable. Before the wholesaler Anders Turdiainen and the retailer Thomas Kuntsi began as restaurateurs (Tommila 1970, 294, 305), both drifted into the sphere of menial odd jobs. Especially for Turdiainen, who had been the owner of one of the biggest trading houses of Jyväskylä, the fall from the status of an established businessman to that of a man seeking jobs in bookkeeping must have been a major abasement (*Keski-Suomi*, Feb. 12, 1879). Nonetheless, these two men managed to start up in business again, albeit not as wholesalers or retailers, but as restaurateurs. Apparently they managed to retain some of their social networks and the ability to attract credit, or maybe it was because of the fairly safe nature of the restaurant business, but nonetheless they managed to return as independent proprietors. These two were lucky, because first and foremost the bankrupts' aim was to gain re-entry to the market, but none of the others really succeeded in this. Johan Toivainen, whose initial rise toward entrepreneur was quite promising, tried, but then he moved into the timber industry and eventually left behind an estate which was encumbered by debts (Bankruptcy Registers 1880–1899, Town Court, Jyväskylä, 1885; Municipal Tax Records 1878–1885, Jyväskylä Town, 1885). The grocer Sergei Dunajeff, who had always lived

a mobile and colorful life, tried a few times by selling foodstuffs, but never really succeeded. Instead, Dunajeff eventually absconded, leaving his wife to deal with the debts he had made, in order to get to America.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Number of Creditors</b>	<b>Creditor's Claims</b>	<b>Assets</b>	<b>Ratio of Debts and Assets</b>
<b>Häggman</b>	57	218,495.00	157,150.23	-61,344.77
<b>Turdiainen</b>	50	125,731.70	(36,090.01)* -	(-89,641.69)*
<b>Toivainen</b>	34	39,902.80	26,840.35	-13,062.45
<b>Soikkanen</b>	23	54,112.47	38,539.88	-15,572.59
<b>Kuntsi</b>	23	18,278.66	23,207.32	+4,928.66
<b>Björkman</b>	3	157.50	230.30	+72.60
<b>Poutanen</b>	8	12,245.27	12,546.09	+300.82
<b>Hartman</b>	15	15,347.78	14,888.07	-459.71
<b>Ekholm</b>	5	1,598.14	1,214.68	-383.46
<b>Dunajeff</b>	10	5,137.69	4,009.85	-400.82

Table 4. Assets and Debts of the Bankrupts (the unit of currency is marks). Source: Records 1862–1881, Town Court, Jyväskylä; Bankruptcy Files 1878–1879, Town Court, Jyväskylä. \*Data invalid.

Yet the reason behind the cautious and modest business practices was not so much learning from failure, but rather an inability to raise capital for new business ventures. It was not because of the lack of official credit institutions. There were a savings bank and two commercial banks in Jyväskylä which would have been able to finance their businesses, but the banks did not lend without proper collateral. Also, the Finnish banking sector was still in its infancy and cautious in risk taking. Therefore, in a small community where the bank managers knew well everyone's economic situation, the forms of formal lending were still mixed with the traditional informal lending, which was based on trustful relationships and lending between private persons (Tommila 1972, 196–97; Pipping, 1962). Instead, former bankrupts were not profitable business associates. They had lost their good financial standing and creditworthiness because in most cases they were indefinitely crippled by unpaid debts after the proceedings. Usually there was not really much property in the estate after the open auctions. This can be seen as a partial reason why some coped better than the others. As is visible in Table 4, the creditors of Thomas Kuntsi probably suffered from the general inconvenience of bankruptcy proceedings, but not from bad debts (the ratio of debts and assets). There were significantly more assets than debts in Kuntsi's estate. Consequently, Kuntsi also had the most favorable starting point for

his post-bankruptcy life.

With the help of an agreement with his creditors, Anders Poutanen went back to trading. The opposite situation of the balance sheet of Henrik Soikkanen caused him to disappear almost entirely from the public records after his failure, even though Soikkanen had made quite a notable fortune in the logging business in the 1870s. The example of Anders Turdiainen questions the unambiguous link between economic and societal recovery. At first, before he was caught and condemned for selling homemade spirits, Turdiainen earned fairly well (Records 1862–1881, Town Court, Jyväskylä, Oct. 24, 1881). Yet his status as a sought-after godfather seems to have vanished with his bankruptcy. One explanation may be that resuming business activities did not suffice to remove the negative effects of large bad debts to his creditors.

Yet it is likely that not all the difficulty of starting over was because of the lost funds. The disastrous power of the harsh economic climate at the time had its impact on individuals, too. Not even exemption from paying all his debts shielded Anders Poutanen from the era which contemporaries observed as something unprecedented. Poutanen carried on business only one or two years before closing his debt-ridden shop for the second time (*Keski-Suomi*, Jan. 12, 1884). The contemporaries called the end of the 1870s an era of bankruptcies (*Vaasan Sanomat*, Feb. 19, 1878; *Savonlinna*, Apr. 20, 1878; *Päijänne*, Nov. 26, 1878; Dec. 11, 1879). The contemporary descriptions of the many bankruptcies seem indeed credible given the rise in the number of bankruptcies seen in the local level data on Jyväskylä (Figure 1). The rise was not only absolute but also relative. In the 1860s, approximately one person in a thousand surrendered his property to creditors; in the next decade, two people; and in the 1880s, almost three people out of a thousand filed for bankruptcy. The peak occurred in 1879 when as many as approximately four or five people out of every thousand inhabitants went bankrupt.

Thus, as Balleisen (2001, 185) points out, during a boom, former bankrupts might have served quite well as businessmen, but in a depression, limited demand caused difficulties for everyone. The demand could barely support the non-bankrupt persons, and when trade was liberated in 1879, there was almost an overflow of new entrepreneurs in the town (Tommila 1972, 208–10). When the societal change occurred, in which the bourgeoisie lost their former privileged position in regard to public offices (Mauranen 1981, 197–98), there was no longer such a need for the unsuccessful individuals or their contribution in the economic and societal appointments of the local society.

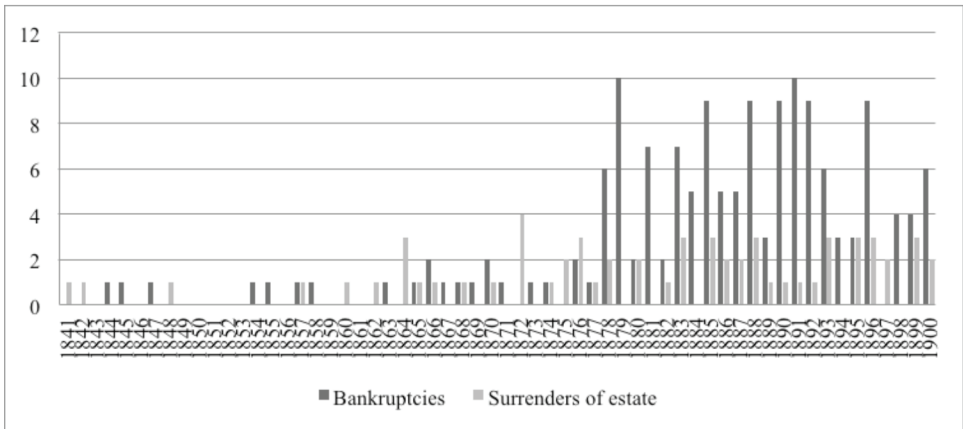


Figure 1. Number of Bankruptcies in Jyväskylä 1837–99. Source: Records 1837–1862, District Court, Laukaa; Records 1862–1881, Town Court, Jyväskylä; Bankruptcy Registers 1880–1899, Town Court, Jyväskylä.

### *The Importance of Following the Rules of Society*

The bankrupts explained their predicaments during proceedings by trying to assure everyone that they still were trustworthy men of their word and had followed the unwritten rules of business culture. This was done by emphasizing necessity when filing for bankruptcy. If unpaid debts due and payable were to be paid through confiscation of property, which was another choice, the bankrupts claimed that this would be prejudicial to other creditors' interests. By their own admission, they did not want some creditors to receive payment before others.

Because recently, I have noticed, that because of my business affairs which are in bad shape, I cannot repay my debts of which some already are under a claim of recovery and confiscation. Therefore, in order not to favor one creditor over another, I must surrender my property to the creditors at once to satisfy my every creditor. (Bankruptcy Files 1878–1879, Town Court, Jyväskylä, Poutanen to Town Court, Aug. 11, 1879)<sup>3</sup>

Despite their predicament, they did not blame a cruel world, an adverse economic climate, or accidents for their failure. Such talk was characteristic of a bygone age (cf. Möller 1954, 272–76). Now it was no longer valid. Therefore the bankrupts stressed their efforts in trying to do everything possible to avoid bankruptcy and secure creditors' assets (e.g., Bankruptcy Files 1878–1879, Town Court, Jyväskylä,

3 Translated by author.

Toivainen to Town Court, Jan. 2, 1879).

The measures which the bankrupts took to maintain and to restore trust in themselves were also to show that the failure was not a result of fraudulence or negligence. The example of Thomas Häggman shows that the deep social and economic fall of a bankrupt was not only dependent on the losses of creditors or bad economic climate. Respectable behavior played a role, too.

Thomas Häggman's career as an entrepreneur lasted twenty-two years and ended in the third largest bankruptcy of the decade in Jyväskylä. As a result of his long career he was one of the town's prominent figures both socially and economically. Yet no one suffered from the bankruptcy as badly as Thomas Häggman and his family. Exactly how the family provided for themselves in the years following his ruin is not known. On the other hand, his former business partner, Anders Turdiainen, succeeded in engaging in business again and provided for himself better than almost any other of the bankrupts studied, even though he, too, lost a significant amount of his creditors' money.

The difference between these two men was honesty, a feature which is highlighted, for example, by Erika Vause (2012). Although Anders Turdiainen's creditors made some comments on his behavior concerning his business management, unlike Häggman's creditors, they did not accuse him of fraudulent or dishonest measures (Records 1862–1881, Town Court, Jyväskylä, Nov. 9, 1878; Feb. 10, 1879; Sept. 15, 1879). Thomas Häggman had broken the rules of business culture which valued honesty, honor, and solvency, whereas Turdiainen only defaulted on the last mentioned value.

Thomas Häggman was convicted because his accounting was inadequate—he did not take good care of his creditors' money. Häggman requested the Supreme Court to free him from his punishment for the sake of kindness and mercy. Appealing to the upper instances was the only way to restore the last remnants of trust in him, his reputation, and his financial ability to function. However, the appeal was unsuccessful (Resolutions 1880, Legal Department of the Senate). Therefore, Häggman could be compelled to make up for his remaining debts by working, and he also faced three months' imprisonment. There was no coming back from this, as the example of Gustaf Ekholm also proved. Ekholm's future aspirations were largely hopeless when he ended up in a debtors' prison before the proceedings (Records 1862–1881, Town Court, Jyväskylä, Aug. 5, 1878). In addition to this, unlike the other bankrupts, in the judgment Thomas Häggman was denied the right to retain some of his future income to sustain his family. Therefore, there were few options

open to Thomas Häggman. This dire distress after his bankruptcy is seen in his selling illicit beer without a license (Registers 1868–1885, Town Parish, Jyväskylä, 1880). Thomas Häggman, “good and quiet by nature, sophisticated and considerate in behavior,” was completely ruined (Sariola 1940, 36), whereas Anders Turdiainen at least partly retained his good name, which he could exploit in his post-bankruptcy life.

Thus former prominent standing did not suffice to remove the stain of the dishonest action a bankrupt had committed. The honest or fraudulent nature of the failure was a more significant factor in formulating the future prospects of a bankrupt than earlier reputation and position.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article studied the threat of financial and social impoverishment of commercially minded, self-employed, bankrupt individuals. By studying the ten bankruptcy cases in one urban community, Jyväskylä, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, this article suggests that the life paths of the bankrupts looked like a wave motion: nineteenth-century Finnish society enabled a person to rise from rags to riches, even if rather modest riches in this case, then drop back to rags, and finally lift him again if certain rules were followed and certain prerequisites and external conditions prevailed. Therefore, it can be said that bankruptcy was not a definite dead end, at least for these people belonging to the middle stratum of society.

Business failure could certainly throw a burgher into poverty, but not necessarily irretrievably. Bankruptcy was not a process with only one outcome. Taking more individuals under scrutiny reveals the multidimensional nature of the reality more clearly. This article shows how the consequences of economic misfortune were almost always notable, but they varied more between individuals than perhaps has previously been recognized. Bankruptcy could destroy an individual’s membership in the social circles of commercially minded people, and absolute poverty was a serious threat, but only if certain conditions materialized. These included breaking the rules of business culture, acting dishonorably towards creditors, incurring large bad debts to creditors, and ending up in prison. In such cases, not even previous social standing was enough to enable a bankrupt to recover.

Most bankrupts managed to earn incomes which few town dwellers ever earned. Of course, these were usually smaller incomes compared to what they were used to, but then again, impoverishment was relative when mirrored against the lower social groups in the urban community. Nonetheless, business failure affected

both the income level and the social standing of most bankrupts. Only successful financial recovery and acceptable behavior saved a bankrupt from moving away to less prestigious residential areas and helped him to retain his social position, at least in the circles from which godparents were chosen. Hence, this research highlights that several socioeconomic factors must be taken into account when conclusions are drawn on the individual outcomes of business failure. To complicate things further, several different combinations of these factors must actually be taken into consideration. But life in all its aspects is always complicated.

Although it cannot be denied that in cases of bankruptcy economic and social life spheres were intertwined, it seems that the effects of bankruptcy were collectively similar in social consequences, whereas the variation in financial recovery was wider. Thus, the conclusion is that a bankrupt had to reach quite a significant financial status if he wished to regain his social standing. The social consequences must not be overestimated, however. Bankrupts clearly still felt welcome among their peers and friends, for example in associations and other activities with fellow town dwellers, even if they were no longer eligible for the most important commissions of trust. Moreover, the future prospects of the bankrupts were neither completely in their own hands, nor conditional only on the responses from local community. A harsh economic climate and legislative boundaries played a role, too. The threat of social loss and impoverishment could materialize, but this was not the inevitable, predetermined fate of a bankrupt. Both social and economic spheres played important roles during the process of recovery in the lives of those who had suffered greatly from the consequences of business failure.



**APPENDIX 1**

Name/Age When Bankrupt	Occupation/Earlier Occupations	Bankruptcy Application	Duration of Self-Employment	Education/Practice Time
Ekholm, Gustaf/25	Shop keeper	Jul. 22, 1878	14 months	Bookkeeping course in Vaasa technical school/c. 10 years
Häggman, Thomas/53	Wholesaler/shop assistant, shop manager	Oct. 5, 1878	22 years	Not known/c. 12 years
Turdiainen, Anders/31	Wholesaler/shop assistant, commercial agent	Nov. 9, 1878	4 years	Commercial school in Helsinki/at least 2 years
Toivainen, Johan (dies in 1885)/27	Small retailer/shop assistant	Jan. 16, 1879	10 months	Not known/Some years
Soikkanen, Henrik/30	Small retailer/sawmill inspector	Feb. 19, 1879	10 months	Not known/Not known
Kuntsi, Thomas/29	Small retailer/shop assistant, shop manager	May 24, 1879	13 months	Commercial school in Turku/c. 7 years
Björkman, Adolf/36	Timber agent, dyer	Jul. 12, 1879	14 years	Elementary school/Some years
Poutanen, Anders/26	Small retailer/bookkeeper, shop manager	Aug. 11, 1879, and Jun. 29, 1881	20 months	Not known/at least 4 years
Dunajeff, Sergei/22	Grocer/ rural merchant	Aug. 27, 1879	c. 2 years (4 months in Jyväskylä)	Not known/Not known
Hartman, Matts/23	Shoemaker/ apprentice and journeyman	Sept. 29, 1879	15 months	Sunday school/c. 9 years

Table 5. Commercial Experience of the Bankrupts. Source: Records 1862–1881, Town Court, Jyväskylä; Bankruptcy Registers 1880–1899, Town Court, Jyväskylä; Tommila 1972, 285–86; 291; 294; 302; 304–5; 372; 386.

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- Municipal Tax Records 1878–1885, Jyväskylä Town. Jyväskylä City Archives.
- Poor Relief Committee Records 1878–1885, Jyväskylä Town. Jyväskylä City Archives.
- Records 1837–1862, District Court, Laukaa. Provincial Archives of Jyväskylä.
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## AFTERWORD

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It is not easy to find a definition to cover the phenomenon of poverty exhaustively and profoundly. When tracing the destinies of the bankrupt entrepreneurs in the Finnish town of Jyväskylä, Riina Turunen in her article in this journal laconically notes: “life in all its aspects is always complicated.” Anyone studying poverty and the poor, especially in history, can assuredly have no difficulty in agreeing with Turunen’s view. There are several reasons for this. Given the inaccurate and imprecise nature of the real income and resource level of people in the nineteenth century, living mostly in a natural economy, we tend easily to either neglect or exaggerate the extent of poverty. It is difficult to calculate the income of people “who survived through self-employment and functioned largely without money” (Allegra 2015, 153–54). Some indication of the phenomenon that we habitually connect with poverty, may originally be reflections from other factors: living in the wilds, a simple lifestyle, poor health, weak power positions, loneliness, or an attitude towards life. Poverty is also relative. It is relative to the determinations made by the local power holders, state or international organizations. It varies depending on the conditions of age, household, social networks and capital, potential power, and other contextual factors. It depends on the capabilities and fortune of a single person or a family (Jütte 1994; Allegra 2015, 154). It may be relative to preceding or subsequent situations in life. Impoverishment (or enrichment) is not the same as permanent poverty. To better understand historical poverty, we have to look at it from the perspective of the life course and by the methods of life-course analysis. Above all, poverty is definitely an experience relative to one’s own consideration and aims for a good life, or of escaping a bad one.

Among the articles in this journal, several distinctions can be made. The first problematic one is between poverty and the poor. As mentioned in several articles,



poverty as a major social problem and as specific scientific knowledge has been typical of Finland since the eighteenth century (Rosenborg 1858; Haatanen 1968; Pulma 1985; Häkkinen and Peltola 2001). Poverty has become rooted deep in the mentalities of the Finnish people. It has set its mark on the special ways in which people handle bread, in their hatred of poor-relief officers and fear of poorhouses, and how they construct interminable tales of family wretchedness (Häkkinen 2004). Henrik Forsberg in his article demonstrates how extreme poverty and humility were deemed heroic by the ruling elite in the years of nation building on the one hand, and threatening in the time of the Civil War and after. This twofold meaning of poverty manifests itself as an eternal argument over whether the poor are a dangerous and growing underclass, or a heroic country of hunger fighters. This argument is far from the real life of the poor and has served other purposes. In the difficult nineteenth century, poverty was so widespread that at first glance any attempt to calculate its exact levels and to quantify its extent seems to be a waste of time. However, Miikka Voutilainen's impressive calculations on the number of poor by area and social status affords a novel approach. Here poverty better reflects the actual, genuinely meager resources of the poor than the capacity and willingness of the local authorities to provide poor relief, the latter method having been the conventional way to measure the extent of poverty in history.

A next important subject of discussion is impoverishment. It has been mentioned that the majority of the Finnish population lived so near to the minimum level of resources that impoverishment was not possible without dire consequences. In this difficult century, the recurring famines, wars, and epidemics caused a shortening of the average lifespan, which proves that going down was indeed possible. Impoverishment as a result of crises was an acute danger that also threatened the wealthy, the middle class, and even the gentry. The inescapable social aftermaths of personal bankruptcy are shown in the articles by Irene Ylönen, Maare Paloheimo, and Riina Turunen. A strange combination of the shame of impoverishment and the real possibility of it is analyzed by Marja Vuorinen, who describes how the old elite was portrayed in the fictional stories in newspapers and novels. But after all, was the nineteenth century a period of general impoverishment (Soininen 1974; Häkkinen and Peltola 2001), or was it a century of burgeoning opportunities, overall social upward mobility, and all kinds of economic, social, and political progress and growth, the first steps toward "The road to prosperity" (Hjerppe 1989; Ojala, Eloranta, and Jalava 2006)? In my opinion, it is a question of the viewpoint. From the perspective of the present day, the seeds of growth can easily be situated there.

The structural and institutional prerequisites of the former positive development were created in this century. But from the viewpoint of the eighteenth century, the picture is different. The recurring destructive crises, the growth of the landless population, downward social mobility, mounting social tensions, and even a shortening of the average lifespan are indicative of a contradictory century. For individuals and families, it was a bifurcated period depending on the time and location of birth, social background, and status. This duality is presented in the articles by Anu Koskivirta and Johanna Annola.

Was the life course of the underprivileged somehow preordained in nineteenth-century agrarian or urban circumstances? Was the circle of poverty an everlasting phenomenon? For tens of thousands of people in rural nineteenth-century Finland, the option for a life change never came. However, there were always exceptions, where a window opened for even fast, upward social mobilization through marriage or inheritance, but these cases were rare. Looking at the end of the century, the situation changed. The descendants of the laboring poor, or those of the better-off people whose future prospects were far from encouraging, were both compelled and allowed to make a choice between exiting and staying. This door opened first for the generation born between 1860 and 1880, “the children of the hunger years.” The stream of the members of this generation navigated toward the urban areas and overseas. Hunger was the driving force; obtaining better salaries in urban occupations was the pull factor. Taking this risk opened up opportunities for social mobility, both upwards and downwards. This huge social movement, an escape from the agrarian world, was a movement when “destiny was changed.” In the long run, it was a productive decision, at least to the coming generations (Häkkinen, forthcoming).

The last aspect is the ideals of “a good life” and “a decent life course,” or their opposites “a bad life” and “a no-good life course.” We commonly believe that the aim of having a personally good life and of being able to offer similar prerequisites to one’s own descendants is a fundamental characteristic of our cultures and societies (Bertaux and Thompson 2007, 1; Tafarodi et al. 2012, 785). Maybe it is a goal shared by most people both internationally and historically (Silva 2014; French 2011). But what do the terms “good” and “bad” really mean? What are their meanings for individuals, families, and kinships? They have always been constructed in relation to time, place, and the prevailing conditions of society. Their continuity has been challenged especially during societal crises, in times of turmoil, uprisings, struggles, and revolutions—for instance in the grueling days of the hunger times.

We do not necessarily know how the poor of nineteenth-century Finland understood their own lives on the quality of life scale. This level of experiences seems to consistently elude definition and calculations by historians. For those common people who had been able to get some education, the nineteenth century appeared as a period of confusing religious or scientific ideas of life (Kauranen 2013; Suni 2014). Was “a good life” available only in the Hereafter, or was it possible in the here-and-now? This contradictory view of the world was crucial in experiencing life and poverty.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto. 2014. *Her Own Worth: Negotiations of Subjectivity in the Life Narrative of a Female Labourer*. Studia Fennica Ethnologica 16. Helsinki: Finnish Literary Society, 215 pages, photographs, notes, references, appendices, abstract, index. €43.00. ISBN 9789522226099.

*Her Own Worth: Negotiations of Subjectivity in the Life Narrative of a Female Labourer* is an ethnographic study of gender, class, and work in the twentieth-century. It is the life story of Elsa Koskinen, a Finnish female worker, based on interviews by Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto between 2001 and 2014.

Finland went from an agrarian, nonindustrial country to a socially progressive, technologically advanced, industrial nation during Elsa's lifetime. The author begins with a brief description of Finland during the first decades of the twentieth century, a history that contextualizes Elsa's narratives.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Finland was part of the Russian Empire. Alexander II ascended the throne in 1855, bringing reforms that paved the way for industrialization, and between 1870 and 1940 Finland was transformed into an industrial country. Along with large industrial centers, there were numerous small factory communities in the countryside. One of these was the Inha Ironworks in western Finland, the setting for much of Elsa's narrative.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, industrialization, rapid growth in population, and improved standard of living caused economic instability, social divisions, and the rise of labor movements. This was also the time of national awakening. The divisions between landowning, conservative nationalists (the Whites) and socialists and communists—mainly crofters, and agrarian and industrial workers (the Reds) were deepening. The Russian Revolution of 1917 led to the collapse of the Empire, the end of the Grand Duchy of Finland, and the collapse of the Finnish government and the social order. Finland declared its independence in 1917 and

serious competition ensued over leadership. The division between the Reds and Whites led to a bloody civil war in 1918. Although the war lasted only three months with the Whites as “victors,” the number of victims was some 40,000, most of whom died in mass executions and in detainment camps. Three quarters were Red combatants and sympathizers. Deep divisions scarred social relations for the next decades, which were reflected in separate cultural, social, and athletic organizations and in separate shops, halls, and clubs. Labor unions were abolished.

Only ten years later—1927—Elsa was born into a family of workers. Her father worked at the Inha Ironworks. This was a factory community where the lodging was owned and provided by the company as long as you were employed there. Although the author gives the history of her family and the ironworks factory, she does not have information about family or local activities during and after the war. What of her family and community? How did those divisive years that tore communities and families apart impact the workers’ culture where Elsa, in her later years, believed she belonged?

In 1939 and at the onset of World War II, Elsa was twelve and in the sixth grade. Because of the war, schools were closed and Elsa sought work as a maid for a middle-class family. At the age of fifteen, she was hired as a low-level worker at the factory. The cultural ideal in Finland at the time was that females belonged in the home; however, this was war time and many local girls and women worked at men’s jobs in the factory. Elsa stayed at the factory after the war, eventually married a co-worker, and then stayed at home to raise her three children. When her children reached adolescence, Elsa again returned to work at the ironworks factory.

Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto interviewed her grandmother, Elsa Sanelma Koskinen, which resulted in many hours of audiotapes analyzed for this study. Koskinen-Koivisto examines Elsa’s narratives in their socio-cultural and historical contexts for an understanding of how changes related to work, class, and gender influenced how she saw her own worth at the time of the author’s interviews. Koskinen-Koivisto also examines Elsa’s different narrative strategies to create continuity in her life story and how she sees herself in relation to shifting cultural ideals. Elsa’s narrative opens up a continuous process of dealing with past experiences that are rooted in her physical and material life as a working-class girl, a young woman, a mother, a homemaker, an active worker, and a retired worker.

In *Her Own Worth*, Koskinen-Koivisto provides methodological models with her narrative analysis. “By analyzing the micro-narratives, their actors and content, and their relation to the entire life narrative as a whole,” she provides a model to

examine the ways in which narrators “strategize to build a multi-vocal life story by contrasting different experiences and adapting conflicting and contradictory attitudes” (153).

Another important dimension to Koskinen-Koivisto’s work is as a study of workers’ culture. Elsa never forgot her roots as a laborer and through life always felt part of that culture even when her husband became a manager at the factory and thus achieved middle-class status. The term “greasy-skinned worker” embodied the cultural ideals of what it meant to be a laborer and working class and underlined Elsa’s place in her narratives (155). She claimed to have always been a greasy-skinned worker, establishing continuity between herself as a young factory worker and her later self, the wife of a technician (152). The factory was where Elsa became a skilled laborer. She remembered the smells, noise, sound of work, stating there was nothing today that compared with it (152). Learning the skills and rhythm of work meant that Elsa had a professional identity and was a member of the working community that had its own humor, rules, and culture (152). Yet, she was not an activist; she was an ordinary female worker who did not play a special role in the community. By studying the narratives of an individual worker, the author enhances our understanding of what it means to be a worker in a changing society and to observe workers culture from the inside.

Because the author is working with her grandmother, a complexity about which she is well aware, she comes to this study with intimate experiences and a wealth of rich data that augment the narratives and make her more sensitive to nuances that a stranger might miss or misinterpret in the narratives. As a folklorist, I did not have a problem with this situation. The author’s dialogic approach to the interviews and her meticulous and multi-layered process of analyses are unquestionably thorough. Sometimes I wanted more information that was not there, possibly for reasons that the topic was too personal. She knew what to pursue and what was best left alone. That is ethical. There are topics that are not discussed. Nonetheless, this is an objective yet sensitive study. In the larger scheme, this study contributes to the scholarship of class and gender. It also adds a valuable dimension to workers’ culture studies and to oral historical approaches to data.

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Pasi Sahlberg. 2011. *Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland?* New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University. xxii, 167 pages. Available through Amazon.com. ISBN 9780807752579. (Second edition, published in 2015. 264 pages. \$25.95. ISBN: 9780807755853. EBOOK \$24.95. ISBN: 9780807773291.)

At a time when American educators and public alike have become increasingly concerned about the quality of education, Finnish education has become increasingly successful. While most Finnish educators comment that discipline problems are worse today than in previous generations, most Finnish schools are quiet and well-run when compared with their counterparts in the United States. Teachers with twenty or more years of experience are also likely to comment that in spite of increased concerns for discipline and motivation, the school curriculum, teaching, and level of student performance are superior to that of a generation ago. Few if any American teachers of the same age group would say the same, particularly in reference to student performance.

Finland is not just out-performing the United States; the small Nordic country has recently come to the attention of educational researchers world-wide because the Finns are out-performing most nations. In the year 2000 the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development began testing fifteen-year-olds internationally in reading, mathematics, and science every three years. In all three categories Finland has performed at the top—first in reading, fourth in mathematics, and third in science in 2000, and the pattern has largely continued to the present. The USA has been towards the middle of the participating countries.

How has Finland achieved such results and in a relatively short period of time? In describing Finland's success, Dr. Sahlberg recommends that nations which want to improve their education systems consider what Finland has done in the past thirty years. In seeking to improve mediocre schools, Finland concentrated on creating an equitable system in which there is very little variance in pupil performance from school to school. Nations that find themselves with serious problems, such as elevated school drop-out rates, early teacher attrition, and failing schools, would do well to consider how Finland addressed such problems. Instead of tightening control over schools, instituting draconian measures to weed out bad teachers and low performing schools, and implementing an unprecedented number of standardized tests, Finland took the opposite approach and encouraged collaboration among teachers, schools, administrators, and governmental agencies. It instituted a system

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of trust and shared responsibility with very little testing. In Finland teaching is a respected profession that accepts only the best candidates into its teacher-preparation programs. Dr. Sahlberg comments that “research and experience suggest that one factor trumps all others: the daily contributions of excellent teachers” (70).

In addition to improving its education system, at the same time public policy makers showed equal concern for such areas as health, employment, income parity, and social mobility, which helps to explain why schools throughout the country do equally well. Dr. Sahlberg identifies Finland’s “ability to reach broad consensus on most major issues concerning future directions for Finland as a nation” (39) as a key factor in its success in education. Finland’s success in educating its children is part of its multi-faceted social welfare network. All children have the opportunity for early childhood care and pre-school. Comprehensive health services and early screenings for learning problems are available to all, regardless of their socio-economic status. The child poverty rate is very low by international standards, at under 4 percent (48, 69). Equity in education is merely one part of Finland’s social goals. Those who are losing hope in public education should read this book. Considering how far Finnish society has travelled in the past seventy years is a good example of what people can achieve if they work together.

This book is arranged thematically, with each chapter offering a different reason why Finland ought to be used as a source for ideas in improving education systems. Beginning with the history of modern Finnish education in chapter one, it describes the progress from an elitist system with a bulk of its population only moderately educated to a model of social equity and with a bulk of its population very well educated.

Chapter two begins by describing Finland’s mediocre performance on international standardized tests from the 1950s through the 1980s. Beginning in the 1990s, Finland rose to the top in all categories tested. The bulk of the chapter answers the question “What factors might be behind successful education reform?” (43). It is not just the number of students reaching a high level of learning that makes an education system good. Dr. Sahlberg lists other factors to be considered, such as increasing levels of education among adults, widespread equity among students and schools, the efficiency and cost of school systems, which ought to be from public funds, and the extensive use of special education services.

Chapter three focuses on Finland’s highly trained teachers. The way to attract and retain talented professionals is to “strike a balance between classroom teaching and collaboration with other professionals in school” (70). In a highly competitive

selection process, only 10 percent of applicants are accepted into elementary education programs. Since all teachers hold a research-based master's degree with thesis, they are qualified for a variety of careers. This small group of very well educated people generally chooses to enter the teaching profession and to remain in it throughout their working lives.

Chapter four describes how Finland fits into international educational research and change, the "Global Education Reform Movement," GERM. Since the 1980s, many countries have tried to improve their school systems primarily by instituting high-stakes testing of students and teachers, focusing heavily on literacy and mathematics, reducing the freedom of teachers to choose their own teaching methods, and applying the business model for success to education (100–101). Sahlberg describes the issues that are of serious concern to many American educators, who find themselves setting aside their "moral goals of human development" (101) in favor of passing the next standardized test. He very clearly illustrates the Finnish Way, with its focus on creative learning, innovation in teaching, and placing confidence in teachers, as opposed to the Global Education Reform Movement methods.

The book concludes with chapter five by addressing the question: "Will Finland sustain its high educational performance in the future?" (125). It looks hopeful that they will do just that. Sahlberg cites a number of factors in Finnish society that reinforce the Finnish educational climate. Finland has steadily resisted adopting practices supported by the "Global Education Reform Movement," GERM, such as test-based accountability of schools and individual teachers, even though some of its Nordic neighbors have moved in this direction. Another factor supporting Finnish success is the prevalence of nongovernmental organizations in society. It is common for Finns of all ages to be involved in associations or societies. "Young people learn social skills, problem solving, and leadership when they participate in these associations. It is commonly accepted in Finland that these associations give a positive added-value to formal education offered by schools" (126). Additionally, Finland is a society where it is common that consensus is achieved on important social and political issues. The decision of a few decades ago to base education on the concept of equal distribution of resources is not debated by the public; it is universally accepted. "As a consequence, the basic values and the main vision of education as public service" remains intact regardless of which political party controls the government. All Finns agree that an educated public is the key to a successful nation (131). "Will Finland sustain its high educational performance in the future?" This is impossible to predict, but we can say that Finns are no less committed to an

educated populous now than they were in 1972 when the first major reform came to pass.

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Ahola, Joonas, and Frog, with Clive Tolley, editors. 2014. *Fibula, Fabula, Fact: The Viking Age in Finland*. Helsinki: SKS. 519 pp. €43.00. ISBN 9789522226037; ISBN 9522226033. (Studia Fennica. Historica 18).

Finland's relationship to the Viking Age is somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, the Viking Age is a Scandinavian category defined on the basis of Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish history, especially in relation to Western Europe and the British Isles. Finnish nationalism since the nineteenth century has focused on distancing Finland from Sweden and Scandinavian identity, emphasizing Finland's distinct linguistic and cultural heritage. Nonetheless, the imagery popularly associated with "ancient" Finland—notably Gallen-Kallela's iconic illustrations of myths included in Lönnrot's *Kalevala*—draws heavily on the Scandinavian Viking Age. In the "language wars" of the late nineteenth century, the Swedish-speaking population in Finland also emphasized a connection with the Vikings in the interest of establishing a high age for the Scandinavian linguistic presence in Finland (see Aalto's chapter, 145). As the editors Ahola and Frog point out in the introduction to the volume (21), a typical response to the mention of the topic is to ask, "Were there Vikings in Finland?" Giving a meaningful answer entails defining the notion of Vikings and what is meant by Finland at that time.

This hefty anthology contains twenty-one essays (counting the lengthy introduction and afterword), which represent different areas of archaeology, folklore, history, linguistics, onomastics, paleobotany, and population genetics. All the contributors have affiliations with Finnish institutions. The scope is impressive. Many of the chapters are empirical in focus and expository, presenting an overall picture of a particular aspect of Finland in the Viking Age and providing references to relevant literature. Other contributions are more theoretical (e.g., Tolley; Korpela; Heininen, Ahola, and Frog; Frog). Several of the authors include basic introductions to the methods of their disciplines; these introductions are designed for readers outside that specialty.

A substantial portion of the book's 519 pages consists of framing material and metatext. In addition to a 64-page introductory essay (21–84), there is a preface (8–16), acknowledgements (17–18), introductions to the individual sections (87–90, 171–74, 323–26), and an afterword (485–501). In contrast to the generally concise main articles, the framing material sometimes seems discursive and chatty. At the end of the book are separate indices for personal names (505–6) and place names (507–10), a general index (511–16), and an index of cross-references among the articles (504). References are listed after each individual chapter rather than for the volume as a whole.

The preface (8–16) starts by explaining the rationale behind the volume's title (8–9), then describes the project and its workings (10–11, 13–14). The contributions reflect a three-year dialogue among contributors from different disciplines, where paper drafts were discussed and workshopped by the participants. The interdisciplinary discussion would be a model for other research projects to follow. Numerous cross-references among the articles in the volume (indexed at the end of the volume) reflect this dialogue. Because the chapters are written as separate articles, there is some overlap among the different pieces. In a few cases, different perspectives appear that may be in conflict—for example, Schalin (408) seems tentatively to accept the possibility that place names might suggest Scandinavian settlement west of the river Kymi in the early Viking Age, whereas Ranninen and Westman (328) maintain that there is no archaeological or “credible toponymic evidence of any Scandinavian settlement during the Viking Age in the present-day territory of Finland” (with a cross-reference to Schalin). These slight discrepancies highlight the difficulties of interpreting the evidence.

The massive introduction by Ahola and Frog (21–84) covers very broad territory—from the image of the Viking Age in Finnish popular culture and its historical background (21–26) to the problems of disciplines being out of step with developments in adjacent disciplines after the mid-twentieth century (27–29), to population movements and language shifts in Finland prior to and during the Viking Age (48–61), and to the conception of the Viking Age as an anthropocentric category (61–66) and as a period of mobility and transition (75–76). This introduction contains a lot of useful information, but especially the theoretical portions could have been condensed.

The main body of the text is divided into three sections with the broad titles of “Time,” “Space,” and “People.” The section on “Time” (87–168) outlines changes that occurred in the region during the period in question—in languages, material

culture, climate, and coins—as well as shifts in the terms used in modern scholarship to refer to this period. Clive Tolley’s “Language in Viking Age Finland: An Overview” (91–103) provides a brief introduction to the languages spoken in the territory of modern-day Finland during the Viking Age. Ancestral Finnish dialects were probably present in coastal regions and Sámi varieties further inland; a paleo-European substrate may or may not still have been present during the Viking Age (92). Finnish speakers were in contact with speakers of Germanic (95) and Slavic (93) languages, but the precise nature of the contact and the ages of loanwords are difficult to ascertain. Tolley emphasizes the difficulty of dating linguistic changes precisely and identifying languages with archaeological cultures. He explains linguistic terminology and issues clearly for non-specialists.

Ville Laakso’s “The Viking Age in Finnish Archaeology” (104–16) discusses characteristics of the Viking Age in Finland from an archaeological point of view. It is standard in Finnish archaeology to view the Viking Age (800–1050 AD) as the penultimate period of the Iron Age, which extends from the Pre-Roman Iron Age (400–1 BC) to the Crusade Period (1050–1150/1300 AD) (104). Archaeology of this period focuses mainly on cemeteries (107). Cairns with cremations and level-ground cremation cemeteries (*polttokenttäkalmisto*) were common across the central area; inhumations appeared in Satakunta and mounds were common in Åland (107). Widespread adoption of inhumation burial near the end of the Viking Age is a sign of Christianization (110). There is settlement continuity across the core settlement areas from the Merovingian period into historical times, but the ethnicity of inhabitants outside the core areas is uncertain (111).

Samuli Helama (“The Viking Age as a Period of Contrasting Climatic Trends,” 117–30) summarizes climatic changes that can be reconstructed from tree rings (dendroclimatology) as having taken place during the Viking Age in the territory of modern-day Finland. The Viking Age corresponds to a period of gradual long-term warming with larger short-term fluctuation (121). There was also a strong trend toward drier conditions (121). The years 804, 824, and 865 had notably cool summers, probably connected with volcanic eruptions elsewhere in the world (124–25). This likely had a deleterious effect on rye and barley yields (126–27).

Tuukka Talvio discusses “The Viking Age in Finland: Numismatic Aspects” (131–38). The 7,000 coins (Islamic, German, and English) dated to the eighth through twelfth centuries and found in Finland represent only one percent of those found in all the countries around the Baltic (134), and most of those from the mainland are late, from the eleventh century (cf. Raninen and Wessman, the same

volume, 337). There was not a monetary economy anywhere in Finland during the Viking Age (134). Within the territory of modern-day Finland, two areas stand out: Satakunta in the southwest has a much higher density of scales, although there is only one known hoard from the province (134–35). The Åland islands show a complete lack of coin finds from around 1000–1140, perhaps indicating a discontinuity in settlement (135–36). Some imitations of Byzantine and Islamic coins were minted in Finland in the eleventh century (136).

Sirpa Aalto (“Viking Age in Finland? Naming a Period as a Historiographical Problem,” 139–54) provides a quantitative overview of discussions of the Viking Age in Finnish historical and archaeological periodicals over the course of the twentieth century. Archaeologists use the term Viking Age (and its translational equivalents) more than historians (143). While interest in the period did not decrease following the Second World War, there was a decrease in use of alternative terms such as “Heathen period” (144). Although connections with the Vikings were emphasized by the “Svekomans”—promoters of Swedish language and culture in Finland—in the late nineteenth century, the Swedish term *vikingatiden* ‘Viking time’ does not appear to be more popular in the Swedish-language *Historisk tidskrift för Finland* than its Finnish translational equivalent *viikinkiaika* in Finnish-language publications, perhaps because the debate had waned by the time the journal first appeared in 1916 (145–46). The 1980s marked a new interest in Viking Age archaeology with the theory of continuity of settlement in Finland since the last Ice Age (147). The quantitative approach provides a bird’s-eye view of scholarship rather than a discussion of specific texts.

Petri Kallio (“The Diversification of Proto-Finnic,” 155–68) describes the differentiation of the Finnic languages starting from early in the Common Era. The first division is between Inland Finnic (the ancestor of South Estonian) and Coastal Finnic (from which the other Finnic languages descend) (156–58). The second split separated Gulf of Riga Finnic, which later became Livonian, from other Coastal Finnic (Gulf of Finland Finnic) (158–60). While Livonian shares some features with South Estonian, Kallio argues that these can be viewed as secondary developments (158). The third split is between North and Central Finnic (160–63). North Finnic gave rise to the Finno-Karelo-Veps dialect continuum (160); Central Finnic was a dialect continuum from which North Estonian and Votic are descended (163). Kallio dates the break-up of Proto-Finnic to around the second century CE (164). Kallio’s treatment is more technical than that of Tolley, specifying the sound changes that define each split.

The second main section, “Space” (171–320), concerns the problem of defining meaningful boundaries for “Finland” in relation to the Viking Age, as well as variation within the territory of modern-day Finland and Karelia. Jukka Korpela’s “Reach and Supra-Local Consciousness in the Medieval Nordic Periphery” (175–94) discusses contacts between the northeastern European periphery and European centers, emphasizing that what is viewed as reachable or “near” is dependent on communication technologies and worldviews (175–76). Connection by water routes made Europe “a network with holes in it” (177). While “[t]he medieval world was a world of small centres and separate cultures” (179), Christianity brought a universalizing world-view and sense of commonality among the upper classes (179). A few centers in southwest Finland and the Ladoga area were fully Christianized during the Middle Ages, but large parts of Finland remained pagan (182). Contacts between the northeastern margin of Europe and the European centers during the Viking Age were superficial (185). Southwestern and western Finland were integrated into the Swedish kingdom by 1300, but Eastern Finland, Karelia, and the Dvina region remained remote areas with waterway connections to Viking trade networks via the fur trade (185). The Hanseatic trade, where merchants profited by trading over long distances using awareness of distant markets, altered understandings of time and distance, connecting the periphery to a supra-local consciousness and facilitating the consolidation of royal power (188).

Mervi Koskela Vasaru (“Bjarmaland and Contacts in the Late-Prehistoric and Early-Medieval North,” 195–218) discusses the place referred to in medieval Norse sources as Bjarmaland (sometimes translated as Permian or Northwest Russia). Although Bjarmaland appears in legendary sagas as a locale where fantastic adventures take place, it was likely a real place, with a settled population and burial grounds (196, 203), that had contacts with Norsemen through the fur trade, as well as visits (as in *Örvar-Odds saga*, 205), and sometimes hostile altercations (205). The 9th c. Anglo-Saxon account of Ohthere locates Bjarmaland fifteen days’ sailing north and east of Hálogaland, near *Terfinna land*, the south coast of the Kola peninsula (200). The Norse place name *Gandvík* (201) has been connected with the Finnish name of the bay *Kantalahti* on the White Sea; the Finno-Ugric name is likely older (201). The place name *Vina* has been identified with Finnish/Karelian *Viena* on the southern coast of Kantalahti or with the Northern Dvina River (201). The theonym *Jómali*, mentioned in *Ólafs saga helga* in Snorri Sturluson’s *Heimskringla* as a god of the Bjarmians, is clearly Finnic (202). It is, however, not possible to identify it with a specific Finnic language. Russian archaeology characterizes settlements as

“Finno-Ugrian” without differentiating among different Finno-Ugric cultures (214), but the twelfth- and thirteenth-century burials from Kuzomen’ contain bronze spiral ornaments of types known from Finland and Karelia (209).

Jari-Matti Kuusela (“From Coast to Inland: Activity Zones in North Finland during the Iron Age,” 219–41) addresses changes in settlement during the late Iron Age in the northern parts of modern-day Finland, which has usually been excluded from discussions of Iron-Age Finland (219–21). Bronze and Iron-Age sites from North Ostrobothnia divide into cooking pits and barrows or stone settings (223). Cooking pits date mainly from the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages (ca. 800–1 BC) and are linked to the manufacture of seal train oil (223–24). They generally appear close to the shoreline (224–26). Barrows are also stable relative to the shorelines (226). Late Iron Age finds from the interior of northern Finland are largely stray finds, not associated with a specific site (229–30). Kuusela assumes these were deposited by local communities (231). The number of stray finds seems to increase toward the end of the Iron Age (232–33). After 600 AD the coastal barrow cemeteries stop being used, and stray finds dominate the archaeological record in both coastal and inland areas (235). Weapons are associated mainly with inland finds (235). Silver deposits also appear starting in the Late Iron Age (237). It appears that activity zones in Northern Finland shifted from coast toward interior starting around 600 AD, and that activities included violence and trade (237).

Teija Alenius (“Pollen Analysis as a Tool for Reconstructing Viking Age Landscapes,” 242–52) explains how pollen preserved in anaerobic lake sediments and peat bogs (243) can be used to characterize vegetation in past times. Sediment cores from the lake Kirjavalampi at the edge of Ladoga show indications of human land-use starting around 70 AD and rye cultivation from ca. 600 AD (247). The presence of both *humulus* (hop) and *cannabis* (hemp) increases around the Viking Age (249). An open cultural landscape of fields and grazing areas is indicated from around 1200 AD onward (249).

In “Toponymy as a Source for the Early History of Finland” (253–68), Matti Leiviskä discusses place names in the Siikajoki river valley in Northern Ostrobothnia. He describes the methodology of using onomastic data from the Names Archive and from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century tax records to reconstruct settlement history (255–60). Place name types that only occur in a few parts of the country can indicate a movement of population between those areas (259–60). Names from another language (e.g., Sámi) suggest language communities living side by side and some bilingualism, but it is important to distinguish between names borrowed as



units and ones formed using borrowed words (259). The oldest stratum of names in the Siikajoki area appears to be Sámi names of smaller waterways in the upper part of the valley (261). The Sámi population in the region had disappeared by the mid-sixteenth century, so these must be medieval or older (261). Names associated with western Finland (Tavastia and upper Satakunta) include the names of larger waterways and are found over the whole area, including parts inhabited by Karelian and Savo people by the sixteenth century; therefore the western Finnish names must also be medieval or older (261). Names of eastern Finnish (Karelian) origin appear to be younger (as they refer to smaller places) and probably stem from Karelian migrations to the area during the Middle Ages (261). There are very few place names in the Siikajoki region associated with southwestern Finland (Finland Proper) (261) or of Scandinavian origin (262). Leiviskä ends with a plea for further onomastic research, as “toponyms are the only plentiful, easily available and regionally unbiased source material from the early history of Finland” (264).

Denis Kuzmin presents “The Inhabitation of Karelia in the First Millennium AD in the Light of Linguistics” (269–95). The archaeological record indicates that the area of Karelia has been inhabited for some 9,000 years (271). Some hydronyms likely reflect a pre-Sámi paleo-European substrate (280). There is evidence of a Sámi substrate over the whole Karelian area (274). Many words for landscape features and fauna are borrowed from Sámi into Karelian as well as into Veps and northwestern Russian dialects (274, 278–79). The linguistic form of these loans indicates that the forms of Sámi languages in the substrate were not uniform and differed from the Sámi languages spoken today (284–85). The majority of the area was likely inhabited by Sámi speakers during the Viking Age (291). There is also evidence of an “Old Vepsian” settlement in Aunus Karelia starting from the Viking Age (287–91).

The final chapter in the “Space” section, “‘Geopolitics’ of the Viking Age? Actors, Factors and Space” (296–320) by Lassi Heininen, Joonas Ahola, and Frog, introduces “critical geopolitics,” emphasizing “the politicizing of physical space” (298) and incorporating such factors as actors, identities, and knowledge as well as resources and technologies (296–97). The Viking Age was marked by increased connectivity across Northern Europe and between it and other regions. It can be said that during this time Northern Europe emerged as a conceptual entity (315, cf. 173). Finland was linked to these networks, although it was marginal to and came to be subordinated under the increasingly centralized power structures in Scandinavia (316).

The final main section of the book (323–482) is called “People.” Sami Raninen and Anna Wessman discuss “Finland as a Part of the ‘Viking World’” (327–46). The authors emphasize that the archaeological record has been interpreted through the lens of modern identities (327–29). While the only part of present-day Finland likely to have had a permanent North Germanic-speaking settlement during the Viking Age is Åland (328), the developments in Scandinavia associated with the Viking Age affected the area of present-day Finland through increased mobility and trade (334–39). This chapter, like Talvio’s (135–36), includes a specific discussion of Åland (329–30), which is otherwise largely “outsourced” to the companion volume (Ahola, Frog, and Lucenius 2014).

Elna Salmela’s “The (Im)Possibilities of Genetics for Studies of Population History” (347–60) begins with a basic introduction to genetics and population genetics (347–56). It is difficult to use genetics to identify “Viking” influences (here apparently interpreted as influxes of population from Scandinavia) in Finland because the time scale is quite short and the populations are closely related to begin with (356–57). However, there are some indications of an influx of new genetic material in the areas of Satakunta, Porvoonjoki, and southern Ostrobothnia (357) (the last perhaps because of migration from Southwestern Finland). East-west differences within Finland seen in autosomal and Y-chromosomal loci but not in mtDNA may reflect male-dominated migrations from Scandinavia to western Finland (357).

Joonas Ahola’s “Kalevalaic Heroic Epic and the Viking Age in Finland” (361–86) emphasizes methodological difficulties. Ahola discusses different approaches to Kalevala-meter poetry that have been historically prevalent and the ramifications of different assumptions for inferences about which subjects might date to the Viking Age (368–75). Some epic themes such as Lemminkäinen, Kaukamoinen, and the Bond (Ahti and Kyllikki) were thought by Kaarle Krohn to date to the late Iron Age, the end of the pagan period, and to reflect historical hostile contact between Finnish and Scandinavian populations in southwestern Finland (370). Ahola (380) considers various possible explanations for the similarities between the “kolbítr” (coal-biter) antisocial hero seen in Norse sagas, Kaukamoinen and other subjects in Kalevala meter poetry, and Russian *bylina* (380), viewing it possible “that the three traditions derive from a common background in a (broadly) definable historical period ... or may have been adapted cross-culturally either from east to west ... or from west to east” (381). Ahola is cautious about endorsing a particular historical scenario.

Kaisa Häkkinen discusses “Finnish Language and Culture of the Viking Age in Finland” (387–88). Direct historical study of Viking Age Finnish is impossible

because of the lack of sources; therefore, its study relies on comparative evidence, reconstruction, and extrapolation (387). Some Old Russian loanwords from the latter half of the first millennium AD relate to trade and Christianity (390). Some Germanic loanwords can be connected to changes in material culture, such as cultivation of plants (392). Based on their sound structure, the Finnish words *äyskäri* ‘baler’, *humala* ‘hop’, and *laukka* ‘allium sp.’ are likely to be early Norse loanwords from the Viking Age (394–96).

Johan Schalin’s “Scandinavian-Finnish Language Contact in the Viking Age in the Light of Borrowed Names” (399–436) also stresses methodological difficulties. Schalin views the Old Swedish place name *Kiulo* as a borrowing from early Finnish (412). Some of the place names mentioned in King Valdemar’s itinerary from the thirteenth century (such as *Luxarø* < *Juutt(i)saari/Juutinsaari* ‘the island of the Jutes’ [414]) most likely were not established in East Scandinavian at the time (414–16). The name *Tavastland* (Old Scandinavian *Tafæistaland*), attested in the eleventh century Swedish runestone Gs13, is probably not based on a Finnish form (contra some earlier researchers) but on the ethnonym *Tafæistr* ‘laggard-Estonian’, also attested as a personal name (416–21). *Herdalar*, mentioned in a poem by Sighvatr Þórðarson in *Óláfs saga helga* in *Heimskringla*, does not correspond to Hirdal in western Nyland (notwithstanding a popular celebration held there) but could fit *Karis/Karjaa*, if the Norse name ‘battle-valley’ is not invented to fit the theme of the poem (422–25). The first element of *Åland/Ahvenanmaa* might reflect a reborrowing via Finnic into Early East Scandinavian of the Proto-Germanic precursor to Swedish *ö* ‘island’ (425–27). Schalin’s conclusions are generally cautious, reflecting the difficulties of place name etymology.

The final article under “People” is Frog’s “Myth, Mythological Thinking and the Viking Age in Finland” (437–82). This expansive chapter takes a broad perspective on “myth,” viewed as “a socially constructed non-reflective model for interacting with the world and interpreting experience” (440), encompassing ritual practices, worldviews, and cognitive models that can be called “deep mythology,” as well as “surface mythology—gods, stories, mythic images, otherworld topography, etc.” (441). The Viking Age was probably characterized by the spread among North Finnic cultures of the *tietäjä* ‘knower, magic practitioner’ and associated incantation-based magic, likely influenced by Germanic contacts, at the expense of earlier shamanistic practices (451–54). The reference to *jumolanuoli* ‘god’s/magically empowered being’s arrow’ in the thirteenth-century Novgorod birchbark letter no. 292, the earliest preserved text in a Finnic language (443–44), “reflects a technology of

verbal magic suggestive of the deep mythology of the *tietäjä* institution” (465). It shows the development \**juma* ‘god, sky’ > \**juma-la* ‘god’ distinguishing the name of a sky god from the word for sky itself, as in \**Ilma-ri* ‘sky being’ < \**Ilma* ‘sky, weather’ (450).

The collection ends with an “Afterword: Vikings in Finland? Closing Considerations on the Viking Age in Finland” (485–501) by Joonas Ahola, Frog, and Clive Tolley. This epilogue is largely concerned with definitions—what are meaningful temporal boundaries for the Viking Age in relation to Finland; what does “Finland” mean in that period; are there more precise terms than these familiar ones? The “Finnish Viking Age” (489), “a pivotal era of transition in the history of Finland and Karelia” (500) could be viewed as a longer period (750–1250) than the traditional 800–1050 AD, bookended by the founding of Staraya Ladoga in 753 AD and the Second Swedish Crusade in 1249 and subdivided into periods before and after 1050 (489).

*Fibula, fabula, fact* is an innovative and ambitious collection assembling many different types of information in an accessible form in English. The presentations of different methodologies relating to recovering the past are also useful. The chapters vary in their density and readability, and the organization could in places be clearer. Much remains to be explored in relation to the Viking Age in Finland. Overall the book provides a useful point of entry for scholars and students interested in Finnish (pre)history or in the history of Northern Europe more generally.

## REFERENCE

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