

Honour, Masculinity and Corporality in the Officer Corps of Early Eighteenth-Century Sweden

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Military honour and physical commitment to serve king and fatherland played a central role in the lives of the veteran officers of the Swedish army. These were the mainly Swedish and Finnish officers of Charles XII—the Carolines—who fought for Sweden in the Great Northern War (1700–1721). The ideals of military honour and physical commitment strictly controlled the character, thought, speech, habits, actions and decisions of these officers, that is, their whole way of life. The imagined ideal of the noble-minded warrior on the one hand, and the harsh reality of life in the field on the other, created the contradictory military culture in which the Caroline officers lived their dramatic lives.

The military code of honour created an idealistic picture of the model military man. An officer must be honourable in order to be treated with the respect due to a man of his standing, and to earn the right to a distinguished position in society.¹ The goal of this article is to show that, in order to obtain that respect, a military man had to present himself as a person who had offered his body in the service of his king and country. This was the masculine ideal against which officers had to measure themselves, and they consequently represented their actions in a manner that satisfied the requirements of this ideal. In this sense, honour and the body were closely linked.

The aim here is, firstly, to show how military honour, masculinity and the body were connected in practice; secondly, to demonstrate how this connection was idealized in the lives of the Caroline officers in the forms of suffering and sacrifice; and lastly, to show how bodily wounds and shed blood were the physical evidence that the Caroline officers needed in order to prove their honour.

The written and oral traditions of different cultures preserve stories of heroic, manly soldiers and warriors. This worldview takes honour and military glory as the main objects of life. Warrior ideals were also an integral part of the lives of the Caroline officers, especially in the time of the warrior-king Charles XII.² He

was regarded by his officers and men as the personification of warrior honour, and the heart and soul of the whole army. Heroic tales about the king's deeds were told throughout Europe during and after his lifetime.³ Charles XII can also be seen as the model example of a predominant homosocial ideal, which regarded an honourable man as a fighting man.⁴ Interestingly, research drawing mainly on judicial records has revealed an alternate ideal of masculinity consisting of a piety lifestyle, forgiveness and Christian love operating during the same time period in Sweden. However alternative masculine ideal which consisted of piety and Christian love does not restrict the more general predominant homosocial masculinity. Rather it was just a part of it. Asking and praying for forgiveness was more a submitting ritual to defendant person than sign of brotherhood and love.⁵

The reality of life in the army in the early modern period was in many ways far removed from the imagined glory of the battlefield. The members of companies, regiments and field armies formed a society in which the routines and problems of daily life were negotiated in a state of war. In practice, the mentalities and models of action of the fighting men were formed within a contradictory culture in which the masculine role of the warrior, dictated by a code of honour, was constantly challenged. Military honour was tested in many situations, especially in combat and other instances in which a soldier faced death and had the choice of either fleeing or remaining at his post. Honour was tested by insults and challenges to duels. The challenge to one's manliness and honour and the fear that the brutal realities such as fear in a battlefield could make one cowardly and dishonourable were ever present. Honour, masculinity and strength were challenged by a culture greatly oriented toward performance. In this way, military-historical research is linked to more general studies of early modern mentalities and everyday practices.⁶

In this article, the approximately fifteen-thousand commissioned and non-commissioned officers (as well as the volunteers⁷ who wished to become officers in the Swedish army) who fought in the Great Northern War are regarded as combatants (*krigare*). Because of the lack of primary sources for other ranks, this kind of study necessarily focuses on the officers. It should be recognised, however, that many of the officers' values, especially those which were closely linked to masculine qualities such as bravery on the battlefield, were also characteristic of the common soldiers.

The primary sources consist mainly of the archival records of the Swedish Diet (*Riksdagsarkiven, frihetstidens utskottshandlingar*), which include committee records from the Age of Liberty spanning from 1719/1721 to 1772. They include the records of the Placement Committee (*placeringsdeputations handlingar*) from the Diet of 1723, which comprise eleven volumes and approximately nine-thousand pages

of manuscript. These contain mostly claims (*memorialer*) from individual veterans of the Great Northern War, but also the minutes of the committee itself. The members of the Placement Committee were often officers themselves and shared many of the same values as those who had written the claims.

These sources, which were written in the exceptional situation that existed after the Great Northern War constitute a rich repository of sources given that officers could express themselves rather freely in them. The importance and usefulness of the Placement Committee records is evident because the placement process itself served as a challenge to the officers' honour.

After the defeat in the Great Northern War, the armies of Sweden were dramatically reduced, which entailed a substantial decrease in the number of officers. After previous wars officers had been rewarded for their wartime sacrifices, but now the military defeat and the collapse of Sweden's status as a great power meant a personal catastrophe for many officers, too. Some who retained their rank in the army were paid reduced salaries. Retirement was forced upon older officers, and many others were discharged from the army altogether. The placement of officers in the early 1720s was a major operation, as can be seen in the committee records. Of the records from the year 1723, half concern the placement of officers. This large and unified collection of soldiers' accounts reveal an insight into warrior mentalities.

In addition to these archival sources, I have also consulted a variety of printed sources. These sources, such as articles of war (*kriagsartiklar*) and accounts (*slagsberättelser, slagsrelationer*) of battle, provide an insight into the ideals of warrior life and reveal the extent to which warrior values permeated early modern society. Battle accounts and soldiers' diaries (especially the series *Karolinska krigares dagböcker*) also reveal a great deal about those situations in which the ideal of honour manifested itself in action. Combat is a key example of a situation in which the role of honour is easy to discern in the actions of men.

The Connection between Honour, Masculinity and the Body

I will not escape or hide as long as I am given orders and as long as I have life and strength [*Liff och Macht*]. In combat I promise to remain steadfast and willing, as every dutiful and unwounded soldier and servant of the kingdom is bound to do.

All this I promise faithfully and honestly to remain, and may God help me and my soul in all that.⁸

Warrior merits can be divided into four hypothetical categories. The first category consists of qualities linked to the fighting man's role as a loyal servant of his king, country and superior officers. The second is connected with his roles as a member of the officer corps and as a patriarchal figure to his subordinates. The third comprises attributes emphasising his physical prowess and willingness to sacrifice his youth, health and life for the fatherland if required. The fourth is made up of qualities connected with bravery on the battlefield.⁹

Concepts connected with the body and the soul were central in texts pertaining to the lives of the Caroline officers. Even in the Soldier's and Officer's Oath stipulated in Charles XI's Articles of War in 1683, we can see the importance of physical prowess.¹⁰ The oath emphasised the many physical trials which constituted military life. Service in the field armies consisted mainly of physical duties, and the oath accordingly took a form in which soldiers and officers pledged their loyalty as long as they had the 'power of life' and physical strength. Thereafter he promised loyalty to his regiment and the fatherland over his own benefit and fealty over his body and soul in the face of God.¹¹

The connection between body and soul was also central to the medical theories of the time. In early modern Europe, it was a common belief that spiritual qualities were manifested in an individual's physical make-up. Members of the nobility and the military were often described as choleric, which was regarded as the most estimable of the four humoral temperaments, even though it implicated negative tendencies such as anger, irrationality and rashness. Such men were characterised by noble-mindedness, pride, 'self-confidence' and courage. Their main goal in life was honour and glory. Cholera was equated with strong blood circulation, which manifested itself visibly in the form of blue blood. These physical qualities also made for spiritual attributes such as bravery and temptation in action and movement.¹²

Pedigree also played a central role in the lives of the Caroline officers. In a patriarchal society which attached great importance to the family, the individual officer could invoke his family and their sacrifices in his claims. References to family members who had fallen in battle were used by individuals as a strategy for holding on to their positions, given that the individual's name and honour were closely linked to those of his family. For example, an officer named Olof Renberg had lost his father and brother in the Great Northern War, and this was one of the arguments that he used in such a claim.¹³ Death in the service of king and country was a sacrifice that called for the members of the family of the fallen warrior to be rewarded. After all, the same blood that had been spilled ran in their veins.¹⁴ Familial honour was also grounded on the valorous deeds that had been

performed by earlier generations. Such deeds had to be revered because the status and wealth of the family were based upon them. Many officers thus lived in a debt of gratitude to their forebears.¹⁵

The life of an officer was strictly controlled by military society and its norms. His body belonged to the army. Consequently, it was permissible for superiors to inflict corporal punishment on a soldier. In this way, too, the body and the soul were connected:¹⁶ The body defiled the soul, and the soul could be purged by punishing the body. This can be seen in the articles of war and in the functioning of courts-martial. All soldiers were required to attend a court-martial if the charge involved a threat to life, limb or honour. The court-martial was essential for the proper functioning of military society. Because the actions of the guilty brought God's wrath on the whole military community (the army or the regiment), it was important to purge the collective sin that lay over the community by removing the perpetrators from it. That is why such courts-martial were always held under the open sky. Crimes that did not threaten the whole community were dealt with indoors.¹⁷ The different forms of capital punishment reflected the baseness of the crime. Death before a firing squad was more honourable than hanging. The most dishonourable crimes, such as high treason, were punished by mutilation of the perpetrator's body.¹⁸

Likewise, the regiment's *esprit de corps* was maintained by regarding the whole regiment as a living organism. Consequently, its diseased parts had to be removed. In the worst cases, it was possible to decimate the regiment by choosing every tenth man by lot to be hanged. Officers were expelled from their regiments if they broke its code of honour. In some instances it was also possible to order the whole unit to live outside the military camp for a temporary period.¹⁹

Superior officers had the right to maintain discipline by physical means, and in that way violate their subordinates' bodily integrity. A good example is a case described in the diary of Robert Petré. In 1705 Petré was a sergeant major (*fältväbel*), and during the siege of a fortification he had ordered his subordinates to do some duties while he was away. When Petré returned to his post, he found a certain Sergeant Hedberg and his men sleeping. Petré asked the sergeant why he had not obeyed the order. Because Hedberg's response did not satisfy him, Petré hit him with his sword a couple of times. The sergeant felt that he had been insulted and complained about Petré's behaviour to two captains. They found, after hearing Petré's account, that the sergeant major had acted correctly. Hedberg did not drop the case there, however, but insisted on going to see the commander of the regiment, Colonel Jöran Johan von Knorring. The latter offered the aggrieved sergeant no sympathy either, and instead ordered him to be arrested for failing to

obey his superior's command, which had been given in the service of His Royal Majesty. Although Hedberg was released that same evening,²⁰ he had surely received a lesson about obedience and the patriarchal order of military society. The individual had no right to complain about chastisement by his superiors.

Because corporal punishment could be easily inflicted on a soldier by his superiors, it is not surprising that insults from other sources caused extreme reactions. Thus conflicts between common soldiers and civilians often led to fights.²¹ Such behaviour has been described as a rational use of violence.²² It highlights the culturally established need to defend one's honour with force if necessary. For posterity, the most striking form that this took was the duel, which was especially favoured by military officers. Duels were usually fought to the first blood, which meant that blood had to be spilled before the fight was over.²³ The shedding of blood settled a verbal insult, again a demonstration of the close link between the body and honour.

One example of this can be found in Leonard Kagg's was account of his time in Russian captivity. A group of prisoners of war had assembled to receive orders from the Tsar, and they were commanded to take off their hats. Some men who were standing further away apparently did not hear the order. It was raining heavily, and they wanted to keep their heads covered. A Russian guard knocked one officer's hat off so fiercely that his wig also fell to the ground. The officer responded with a couple of heavy punches, thereby inciting a scuffle in which two Swedes lost their lives. Kagg also reports having seen at least eight Russian soldiers lying wounded on the ground.²⁴ His account demonstrates the physical nature of military culture. The early modern cultural code of manliness expected men to respond to insults with physical force.

Suffering, Privation and the Sacrifice of One's Youth for King and Country

With what desire and joy I served my most gracious king and fatherland during the last war, and with what patience I sat in captivity for my fatherland is shown by the fact that I had abandoned the studies I had practised for fourteen years [when I joined the army], and that in captivity I twice endured Russian torture for unsuccessful escape attempts; but despite this, for the love of my fatherland, I ventured a third time, which ended happily. But what grief do I now suffer, who in old age must exchange the fruit of youth for privation and misery.²⁵

Lorenz von Schulz, 1723

Caroline officers had experienced many misfortunes even before the catastrophic defeat in Poltava in 1709. Many officers had fallen in battle or were lost to disease. Many of the survivors carried multiple battle wounds. The officers' claims (*memorialer*) submitted to the 1723 Diet tell the story of the numerous wounds they had collected during Charles XII's war and other campaigns. Moreover, the sufferings of many of the Caroline officers increased in Russian captivity after defeats in battle. Their pledge to sacrifice themselves and their bodies in the loyal service of their king and fatherland was truly put to the test. Honour was closely linked with suffering. Here we should note the significance of Christianity and the suffering of Christ in the world view of early modern Europeans. Physical suffering was thought to ennoble a person and enhance his honour and glory. In addition, many of the Caroline officers experienced a pietistic awakening during their captivity.²⁶

In his claim, Lorentz von Schultz, like many other Caroline officers after the war, appealed to the fact that he had loyally served his king and country despite his suffering. For officers this was a crucial point to make, because loyalty was emphasised in their oath of service and the articles of war:

I N.N. promise and swear by God and His Holy Gospel to serve my King [...] I promise to be a loving, decent and loyal soldier and servant and in every way to further the success and welfare of His Majesty and the Realm.²⁷

The soldiers' oath of service required strong devotion to the Crown. Usually this did not conflict with the views of the Caroline officers themselves, because in principle their loyalty and self-denial were based on reciprocity. The principle of reciprocity, which was characteristic of this age, has also been widely recognised in research into strategic plans of action in other kinds of conflict situations.²⁸

After the Great Northern War, numerous stories were told about the brave veterans whose endurance had proved almost superhuman, and who, at least in some cases, were fittingly rewarded. According to one such story, a corporal in the Royal Bodyguard (*drabantkorpral*) named Rühl took part in a plan to organise a mass escape from captivity. The plan was subsequently revealed to the Russians and Rühl was thrown into a dungeon for nine years, where he lived mainly on bread and water. He endured his incarceration and returned to his homeland after the war. In 1727 he was ennobled and promoted to the rank of colonel.²⁹

As a reward for their loyalty, officers received posts and their accompanying benefits from the state. While these posts secured the officers' living conditions and career prospects, they were also closely linked to other factors in society. They

determined an individual's position in his community, and the holder of a post thus had the right to enjoy the respect and honour that came with it.³⁰ In this context, honour was regarded as a merit that was earned in war. Military posts were considered to be a direct reward for honourable service. This is evident in the records of the final proceedings of the Diet in 1723 concerning the placement of officers. The Diet expressed the principle that 'the strongest spur to honour, virtue and bravery is that all officers should get that which they deserve.'³¹ Accordingly, if a deserving officer did not obtain a post, it was a direct affront to his honour. Officers appealed to their superiors' sense of honour when they applied for posts. Many government officials had a military background and shared the same ideals and sense of honour as the applicants.

In their claims, the Caroline officers also appealed to the fact that they had sacrificed their youth for king and fatherland. As a member of the force that followed Charles XII from Perevolochna to Bender, Officer Olof Lanh of the Uppland Regiment protested that he had not had any time in his youth to learn a civilian profession. He had learned only what was necessary to be a soldier. Another officer, Anders Mörning, also appealed to the fact that he had given up a part of his youth to warfare (*krigsväsendet*).³²

Johan Palander, who held a captain's warrant (*fullmakt*), and who was applying for classification (*indelning*) as a lieutenant in the placement, appealed to the fact that in his fourteen years of service he had sacrificed his best years to learning soldiery.³³ Carl Frestare, who had served in the Västmanland Regiment, also claimed that he had given his best years to the realm, and underlined the fact by pointing out that he had done so languishing in captivity.³⁴ Like von Schulz, Friderich Sture had also abandoned his unfinished studies after a few years at the Academy of Lund and joined the Scanian Dragoons.³⁵

Through these and similar appeals the officers tried to forestall dismissal from the army in the placement process. Officers were trained for war and nothing else. They had chosen a soldier's life and should be treated like soldiers, regardless of whether the country was at war or peace. An officer's career was not just a profession, but rather a way of life in the broader sense. At the 1723 Diet, the veterans strongly rejected proposals for officers to be placed in civilian posts.³⁶

Officers could also appeal to their youth in quite another way. Lieutenant Colonel Berent Christopher von Phasian, who had served from the beginning of the Great Northern War and had recently been discharged, wrote in his memorial that he had been dismissed against his will, and that he still possessed qualities that suited him for military service.³⁷ Von Phasian thus emphasised his willingness and his physical capacity in his claim.

Erich Ekman, who had served with distinction as a non-commissioned officer and been wounded in the assault at Veprick in 1705, pointed out in his claim that he was in the prime of life.³⁸ Second Lieutenant Carl Ulbrich Schilt stated more eloquently that after the war he was in the 'full bloom of youth' (*blomstrande ungdom*) and was therefore highly suited for a military post.³⁹ Ekman and Schilt both stressed that their age made them very suitable for military positions, and that their dismissal would therefore be a waste of human resources. Younger officers like these, usually appointed after the defeat in Poltava, could not in most cases cite many battle merits, so they had to use a different tactic. Their argument was grounded in their youth and good physical condition, while that of their competitors, the older Caroline officers, was based on their having survived many major battles and years in captivity.

Battle Wounds, Blood and the Fallen

The battlefield was necessarily regarded as the main arena that separated valiant warriors from cowards. The baptism of fire was important. Before it, a soldier was just a man in a uniform. The warrior was born on the battlefield after his first battle. His status was later defined in a placement process by how many battles he had experienced. If no one had criticised an officer's conduct in battle, he was regarded as a good officer. If he had distinguished himself in battle, he was considered a gallant officer,⁴⁰ and he enjoyed greater respect both in his warrior society and among the civilian population. Officers of higher rank might even become heroes in the legends of common people.⁴¹

Major Marcus Tungelfelt of the Åbolän Cavalry Regiment was wounded badly and captured in the Battle of Poltava in 1709, but managed to escape from the rigours of captivity and return to Sweden in 1712. In that year his regiment was reformed, and the major served in Charles XII's two campaigns in Norway, remaining in his post until the end of the war.⁴² During that time, Charles had promoted him to dragoon major. Tungelfelt was just one out of hundreds of veterans who submitted claims to the 1723 Diet. He was worried about his livelihood, and felt that his personal honour had been insulted. He mentioned that eleven years before he had been 'mortally wounded' and 'seriously shot up.'⁴³ His stark claim is a good example of the practice of appealing to the officers' shared sense of honour. Tungelfelt also maintained that posts should be given to those who had fought in the most battles.⁴⁴

In this physically oriented culture, the warrior also needed to produce evidence of his bravery. The clearest proofs were combat wounds, which constituted direct physical evidence of bravery, loyalty and suffering. It was a problem for the fighting man if he did not have any wounds, and in such a situation he would need to justify the claim that he was nevertheless a brave soldier. That is why Pehr Cedersparre wrote in his claim that, although he had managed to get through the war without wounds, he had been surrounded by the enemy many times. He had lost his horses and equipment in a situation in which he had also been in danger of losing his life.⁴⁵ In such a case it was necessary for the claimant to resort to self-justification, but this was always very problematical for fighting men in a culture that prized action and physicality over words.

When a warrior had enough physical evidence, no explanations were needed. Second Lieutenant (*kornett*) Alexander Starck could point directly to his wounds, saying that he had been in five major battles, as his wounds could testify.⁴⁶ As a man of honour, this laconic statement was sufficient. Starck's claim evinces a physically oriented warrior culture in which actions and concrete physical evidence went far beyond words. A laconic 'rhetoric of the body' prevailed.

Like Starck and Tungelfelt, Captain Carl Frestare of the Västmanland Infantry Regiment also invoked his wounds. Frestare, who had served even before the war in Holland, was the son of a soldier in the Royal Bodyguard. He had been wounded in the battles of Fraustadt (1706), the Desna River (1708) and Poltava (1709).⁴⁷ Superior officers might also write testimonials (*wittnesbörd*) for their subordinates testifying to their bravery. For example, Axel Sparre wrote in support of Major Georg Plantingh, describing him as active (*hurtig*), brave (*tapper*) and competent (*duglig*). At the end of his testimonial, he mentioned that Plantingh's battle wounds proved his bravery.⁴⁸ During the post-war peace, civilians also showed an interest in the wounds of veterans. The above-mentioned Corporal Rühl, who had suffered greatly in captivity, died at home in Finland in 1740. When he died, people counted sixteen scars on his body.⁴⁹

Baron Sven Lagerberg also enjoyed great respect after the war. Lagerberg was a veteran who had taken part in the Battle of Poltava as a major in the Skaraborg Regiment. His unit was thrown into a hard and bitter engagement at close quarters with the Russians. Lagerberg was 'shot through' (*genomskuten*), and a Russian unit marched over his body. However, a dragoon managed to save him, and he was transported over the Dnieper River at Perevolochna by the men who were following Charles XII on his Turkish campaign. Lagerberg was the Speaker of the Noble Estate (*lantmarskalk*) after the war at the Diet of 1723, a highly prestigious position.⁵⁰

Battle wounds and scars also remained the most highly esteemed symbols of honour in later times. A famous example is that of General Georg Carl von Döbeln, who is probably best known from *Fänrik Ståls sägner* (The Tales of Ensign Stål, 1848), an epic poem by Johan Ludvig Runeberg. The black headband that he used to cover a scar was a clear sign to all that he was a brave warrior, and it considerably enhanced his legendary status.

In the cavalry, the not uncommon case of a rider having his horse shot from under him was regarded to be as meritorious as a battle wound. This, too, served as concrete proof of bravery. Second Lieutenant (*kornett*) Alexander Starck wrote among his credentials in his claim that two horses had been shot from under him at the Battle of Poltava, where he had also been wounded.⁵¹

The practice of appealing to wounds is also interesting because injury and physical 'debility' were in fact often used as criteria for the dismissal of officers from the army.⁵² Although it was honourable for an officer to carry the scars of battle on his body, they should not appreciably impede his ability to perform his duties. It was sometimes the case that an officer's wounds healed to the extent that he was able to carry out his duties, but with increasing age his old injuries might begin to trouble him. When young, the Caroline officers bore their wounds proudly, but in old age they began to suffer from health problems. Even so, the wounds aroused awe among their fellow officers. It was also possible for older officers to be branded physically unfit in order to more easily dismiss them.

Apart from their wounds, the Caroline officers also referred to their blood and the shedding of it. The most common rhetorical formula referred to service in terms of 'life and blood' (*lif och blod*). An officer who could not cite any specific heroic action could nevertheless write that he had served with his life and blood (*med lif och blood tient*), or that he had sacrificed the same (*ofra lif och blod*). It may be noted that civilian officials in the eighteenth century also swore to serve the Crown with their 'life and blood'.⁵³ The formula obviously passed from military into civilian life. In many claims, officers referred rhetorically to fighting 'to the last breath' (*in til dödstand*). Behind these expressions, which did not directly refer to any specific event, lay the fact that most of the Caroline officers actually did give their lives in the war and literally fought to the last breath.

The officers also made more poetic or specific references to blood. Rudolf August von Hallern, who was applying for a post in the Uppland Regiment, stated: 'I with my innermost heart's blood hold myself unsparingly in the military service of His Royal Majesty'.⁵⁴ The above-mentioned von Schultz, who had been severely tortured, wrote in his claim that he had 'never in the least complained, but enjoyed all of [his] blood's work', and that he had 'with blood earned [his]

salary'.⁵⁵ The sacrifice of blood could be invoked in very different situations. After the Swedish-Russian War in the early 1740s, General von Buddenbrock was sentenced to death for his unsuccessful conducting of the war. Although he was given the option of fleeing, his sense of honour compelled him to refuse: 'A soldier must always be ready to sacrifice his blood for his fatherland, even if it be at a place of execution.'⁵⁶

The connection between mind and body is also evident in the manner in which fallen soldiers were treated. Comrades who had been killed in battle were given a firing salute by their units. For example, Carl Magnus Posse described in his diary how fallen Swedes had been buried after the Battle of Holowzyn and saluted with two cannon rounds.⁵⁷ It should be noted that two rounds was the battle signal in the Swedish Army. Officers were usually buried in individual graves, but common soldiers were generally laid to rest in mass graves.

Many of the Caroline officers mentioned the funerals of their fellow officers in their diaries. They also carried the bodies of their fallen comrades from the battlefield so that they could be buried honourably. In a report, Major Gotthard Vilhelm Marcks describes how he and a comrade carried the body of their regimental commander, Colonel Odert Reinhold von Essen, who had been killed in a battle at Isokyrö (Storkyro in Swedish) in 1714. They had found his body along with those of two other officers in a pile of naked corpses. In this account, too, specific mention was made of von Essen's wounds.⁵⁸ The dire consequences of major battles were visible long afterwards. Many of the wounded remained with the armies, fighting for their lives for weeks and months after the battles had ended. Some of them recovered, others died.⁵⁹

Conclusion

The importance of military honour was made manifest in those instances where warrior ideals and the harsh reality of life clashed. The placement of officers in Sweden after the Great Northern War, a process in which the fighting men's sense of honour was challenged, served as one such instance. Scaling down the army also involved a major problem with regard to ensuring the veterans' livelihoods, but the warrior ideal required that in the claims they made the veterans continued to appeal to matters of honour.

The placement process was also very difficult for those officers who sat on the Placement Committee. They were obliged to offend the military honour of the claimants by rationing privileges that they themselves regarded as earned rights.

The claimants were aware this and made both implicit and explicit attempts to appeal to the officers' shared sense of honour. The soldiers always tried to emphasise the honourable acts they had performed. They made reference only to what could be regarded as honourable in their lives, and kept silent about those matters that were less honourable.

The connection between honour, masculinity and the body was significant in the military culture of the Caroline officers. This was manifested most visibly in the figure of the warrior king Charles XII, who embodied the homosocial, masculine ideal of the Caroline warrior. An appeal to one's merits in battle was the best way of defending a claim to a post, because bravery in combat was the most respected virtue in military life. However, the writing of claims involved one further problem. The warrior culture was a physical culture in which actions were accorded greater value than words. Those officers who had clear proof of their bravery, especially in the form of combat wounds, were in the best position. They were able to employ a laconic rhetoric that required no further explanation. An officer without wounds could use other means to illustrate his bravery, but these demanded annoying explaining, which was always suspicious with regard to one's military honour.

The appeal to wounds and combat merits clearly emphasises the fact that the warrior code of honour served as a system for admitting individuals into, or excluding them from, society. It was more difficult to discharge an officer who possessed honourable merits. In practice, of course, when the army had been heavily reduced, other factors like personal relationships and patriarchal duty meant that favourites of the members of the Placement Committee might bypass officers of greater merit. It was nevertheless difficult to overlook an officer with impressive merits, and even more so to ignore the claim of an officer who had proven his bravery. For the soldiers, and especially for those without notable patrons, warrior honour remained an ideal to which they could appeal. The constancy of this ideal thus gives us an insight into the minds of the fighting men of early modern Europe.

Notes

1. For example, Magnus Perlestam, "Såsom en skyldig och oförfärad soldat och Tjänare". Mod i Karl XI:s krigsartiklar', in *Blickar bakåt. Elva uppsatser om ett förgånget nu*, eds Christina Kjellson, Sven Olofsson & Per Sörlin (Umeå, 2004), p. 63; Seppo Tiihonen & Heikki Ylikangas, *Virka valta kulttuuri* (Helsinki, 1992), p. 62.

2. Cf. John Keegan, *History of Warfare*, (London, 1993). According to Keegan, warrior ideals are strongest in societies where they are closely linked to political power.
3. Bengt Liljegren, *Karl XII. En biografi* (Lund, 2000); Erik Sandstedt, 'Karl XII och Alexander-rollen', *Karolinska förbundets årsbok 2000* (Lund, 2001).
4. About military masculinities, see for example, Paul R. Higate (ed.), 'Military Masculinities, Identity and the State' (Westport, CT, 2003); Christopher Collstedt, *Duellanten och rättvisan. Duellbrott och synen på manlighet i stormaktväldets slutskede* (Lund, 2007), p. 40–42; William Ian Miller, *The Mystery of Courage* (Cambridge, MA, & London, 2002); Joanna Burke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (London 1999).
5. Cf. Collstedt, 'Duellanten'. Collstedt argues that the discourse of peace and non-violence, based on the jurisprudence of the time as well as on the narratives of the New Testament that taught a Christian lifestyle and love, constituted the argumentation used in court and also the image of the masculine ideal. See also Kaarlo Wirilander, *Suomen upseeristo 1700-luvulla* (Helsinki, 1950), p. 101–102, also in *Swedish Officerskåren i Finland under 1700-talet* (Stockholm, 1964).
6. Ute Frevert, *Men of Honour: A Social and Cultural History of Duel* (Bodmin, 1995); Jonas Liliequist, 'Violence, Honour and Manliness in Early Modern Northern Sweden' in Mirka Lappalainen & Pekka Hirvonen (eds), *Crime and Control in Europe from the Past to Present* (Helsinki, 1999); Olli Matikainen, *Verenperijät: väkivalta ja yhteisön murros itäisessä Suomessa 1500-1600-luvulla* (Helsinki, 2002); Collstedt, 'Duellanten och rättvisan'.
7. Jan Lindegren, 'Maktstatens resurser' (manuscript), p. 181; Peter Ericsson, *Stora nordiska kriget förklarar: Karl XII och det ideologiska tilltalet* (Uppsala, 2002), p. 27–28; Sten Carlsson, *Bonde-präst-ämbetsman. Svensk ståndscirkulation från 1680 till våra dagar* (Stockholm, 1962), p. 33; Wirilander, *Suomen upseeristo*, p. 145.
8. 'Om alla Officerares samt Gemenas Eed och plicht' in *Krigz-Articlar* (Military Oath in Articles of War) [Stockholm, 1683], p. 78–82, art. 143.
9. Compare to Barry McCarthy, 'Warrior Values: A Socio-Historical Survey' in *Male Violence*, ed. John Archer (London, 1994), p. 106.
10. 'Om alla Officerares samt Gemenas Eed och plicht', p. 78–82, art. 143.
11. 'Om alla Officerares samt Gemenas Eed och plicht', p. 78–82, art. 143.
12. About embodiment and corporality, see for example, Kaarlo Wirilander, *Herrasväkå: Suomen säätyläistö 1721–1870* (Helsinki, 1974), p. 36–41; Hans Andersson, 'Jag mig nöjd under bilan böjer. Berättelser av och om avrättade i Stockholm 1720–1910', *Släkt och hävd*, No. 3–4, 2002; Barbara Donagan, 'Atrocity, War Crime and Treason in the English Civil War', *The American Historical Review* 99, 1994; Anton Blok, *Honour and Violence* (Padstow, 2001); Roy Porter, 'History of the Body', in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge, 1992); Roy Porter, 'History of the Body Reconsidered', in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Second edition, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge, 2001).

13. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R 2444, 'Memorial Renberg', p. 268: 'iag all min tid och wåhlfärd *babladerat* [förlorat?] så wåhl som min i Kongl. Maijt och Riksens krigstjänst afleden salige fader och brödar.'
14. On the patriarchal order, see Piia Einonen & Petri Karonen (eds), *Arjen valta. Suomalaisen yhteiskunnan patriarkaalisesta järjestyksestä myöhäiskeskiajalta teollistumisen kynnykselle (1450–1860)* (Helsinki, 2002); Peter Englund, *Det botade buset: adliga föreställningar om sambället under stormaktstiden* (Stockholm, 1989), p. 101–102.
15. Andreas Marklund, 'På fädernas Axlar. Faderssymboler, manlighet och patriotisk gemenskap under Stora nordiska kriget', *Scandia* 72, 2006, p. 28; Kimmo Katajala *Suomalainen kapina. Talonpoikaislevottomuudet ja poliittinen kulttuuri Suomessa Ruotsin ajalla n. 1050–1800* (Vammala, 2002), p. 220–221.
16. See also Pieter Spierenburg, 'Masculinity, Violence and Honor: An Introduction', in *Men and violence: gender, honor, and rituals in modern Europe and America*, ed. Pieter Spierenburg (Columbus, 1998), p. 3–7.
17. Jussi T. Lappalainen, *Elämää Suomen sotaväessä Kaarle X Kustaan aikana* (Joensuu, 1976), p. 133, 139, 143; Arvo Viljanti, *Väkinäisen sotamiehenpidon sovelluttaminen Suomessa 1600-luvun lopulla II. Uudenmaan-Hämeen lääni* (Turku, 1940), p. 186; Arthur N. Gilbert, 'Law and Honour Among Eighteen-Century British Army Officers', *The Historical Journal* 19, 1976, p. 75–87.
18. Englund, *Det botade buset*, p. 274–275; Björn Asker, 'Johann Reinhold Patkul', in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* 28 (Stockholm, 1994), p. 731–735.
19. 'Krigz-Articlar' [Stockholm, 1683].
20. 'Robert Petrés dagbok', in *Karolinska krigares dagböcker* I (Lund, 1901), p. 80–81.
21. For example Liliequist, 'Violence, Honour and Manliness', p. 186–202.
22. Blok, *Honour and Violence*, p. 103–114; see also Matikainen, *Verenperijät*, p. 86–104.
23. About duels for example Collstedt, *Duellanten och rättvisan*; Frevert, *Men of honour*.
24. Erkki Kansanaho, *Heränneitä karoliineja. Pietismin soihdunkantajia Kaarle XII:n armeijassa* (Helsinki, 1950), p. 91.
25. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2444, 'Memorial von Schultz', p. 266–66v: 'Med hwad lust och glädie iag min allernådigste konung och fädernesland tient, uti förflutne krigstijd, samt hwad tålmod iag under mitt fängelse för fäderneslandet burit, betygat så wäl det att iag mina studier öfwerhaf, sedan iag den 14 åhr idkat, som och när jag i fängelset 2nne ryska Torturer uthärdat för twenne olyckelige Echiaperningar; dock sådant oachtadt, af kiärlek till fäderneslandet den tredie gången wågdadt, som wart ett lyckligit sluut. Men hwad sorg iag nu där emot lider, som måste för mina ungdoms fruchter på ålderdomen i nöd och älende förwandlas.'
26. Kansanaho, *Heränneitä karoliineja*, p. 20.
27. 'Om alla Officerares samt Gemenas Eed och plicht', p. 78–82, art. 143.
28. See for example Kimmo Katajala, *Nälkäkapina. Veronvuokraus ja talonpoikainen vastarinta Karjalassa 1683–1697* (Jyväskylä, 1994), p. 62.

29. Kansanaho, *Heränneitä karoliineja*, p. 89–90.
30. Tiihonen & Ylikangas, *Virka valta kulttuuri*, p. 62.
31. Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, 'Sweriges rikets ständers beslut, giordt, samtyckt och förafskedat på den allmänna riks-dagen, som slöts i Stockholm den 17. october 1723. '8: Elliest beklaga Riksens Ständer högeligen af om kiärlek och omsorg för sine älskelige medlemmar / at af de så utur fångenskapen hemkomne/ som elliest afgångne Officerare [...] / kunnat komma at niuta wärdigt framsteg eller tilträde och indelning wid Regementerne/ hwilket [...] / som den kraftigaste upmuntring til ähra/ dygd och tapperhet äfwen är/ at tilägna den samma dess wälförtiente heder och belöning.'
32. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2444, 'Memorial Langh', p. 296–297: 'Emedan jag i min ungdom eij haft tijd och tilfälle uti någon annan nyttig wettenskap mig informera, utan det endaste jag läst, består därutinnan hwad een rättskaffens soldat ägnar och anstår, samt honom bör wara kunnigt, [...]'; Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2444, 'Memorial Mörning', p. 300v.
33. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2444, 'Memorial Palander', p. 270v: 'Iag som tillbrackt min bästa ungdoms tijd att giöra mig skicklig uti *Soldatewäsende* och nu på 14de året derwijd tient.'
34. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2444, 'Memorial Frestare', p. 9: 'Deribland att tretton åhrs Fångenskap till min beklakelige Disadvantage uti min bästa ålders tijd uthhärdad ändtel. genom den längst wäntade Freden den ädla frijheten under eders Kongl. Majjts hugnesamma Regering äthniuta af den högst fågnad worden.'
35. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R 2450, 'Memorial Sture', p. 15v: 'att sedan iagh några år *Freqv[it] terat Akademien i Lundh* begaf iagh mig i Kongl. Majjts krigstienst under Skånska *Dragone*, som sedan nämdes *Princens af Würtenbergs Regemente*.'
36. *Sveriges ridderskaps och Adels riksdagsprotokoll 1723*, II:II (Stockholm, 1875–1876), p. 333–334.
37. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2419, 'Memorial von Phasian': 'det täcktes högloff. Riksens Ständer nåd och gunstigast behaga mig för mina långa träge tjenester wed ett Regimente, såsom andra officerare wed erfaren är, till att placera, emedan willjan, Lust, och Kropsens hälsa hos mig ännu som för, till att tiena, [...] Man skulle till någon placering nu för tijden ingen legenhet finna, so beder iag i underdåhn-Ödmiuckhet att Högloff. Riksens Ständer Nådh och gunstig wille behaga mig wijd af den A 1720 ingen fast-ställte pension [...].'
38. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2444, 'Memorial Ekman', p. 306: 'Iag ännu finner mig Capabel i Många Åhr.'
39. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2444, 'Memorial Schilt', p. 338v: 'Emedan iag mig må som bäst i min blomstrand ungdomd till fäderneslandetsienst osfererat och Cababel finner.'
40. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2451, 'Protocoll of placeringsdeputation'.

41. See for example Eirik Hornborg, *Karolinen Armfelt och kampen om Finland under Stora nordiska kriget* (Helsingfors, 1952); Andreas Marklund, *Stenbock: ära och ensambet i Karl XII:s tid* (Borgå, 2008).
42. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2449, 'Memorial Tungelfelt', p. 325–328.
43. 'Memorial Tungelfelt', p. 326: 'iag icke allenast biwistat alla de actioner som Regementet träffat, utan och åhren 1708 och 1709 fast dageligen warit på partier commanderad och med fiende esomåftast traffat, hwar wid jag blifwit dödeligen blesserat och twert igenomsuten.'
44. 'Memorial Tungelfelt', p. 326v: 'så framt största reflection skulle giöras på den som de mäst actionerne bewistat.'
45. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2447, 'Memorial Cedersparre' 1723, p. 82v: 'Har wäl sluppit Blessurer men warit många gånger af fienden kringränder i största Lifsfara och mist hästar och munderingar samt all min wälfärd besynnerligast wid Umeå.'
46. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar R2444, 'Memorial Starck', p. 188: 'Därwid Fem Hufvud Actioner bijwistat som mina undfängen blesserer wittna kunna [...].'
47. 'Memorial Frestare', p. 6–12: 'i hwilka Tieste år iag så wähl alla the Actioner, Belägringar och Recontres bewijstat som Regementet warit brukat wed som och åthskilliga Commenderingar och partier måst förrätta, hwilcka mina der wed undfängen Blesserer nogsamt wittna kunna.'
48. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2444, 'Wittnesbörd Sparre', p. 434–44v.
49. Kansanaho, *Heränneitä karoliineja*, p. 89–90.
50. Sven Grauers, 'Swen Lagerberg', in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* 22 (Stockholm, 1977–79), p. 47.
51. 'Memorial Starck', p. 188: 'Hwid Pultava blef 2nne hästar under migh skiutten.'
52. *Sveriges ridderskaps och Adels riksdagsprotokoll 1723*, II:II (Stockholm, 1875–1876), p. 518–22; Wirilander, *Suomen upseeristo*, p. 230–231.
53. For example, 'Memorial Mörning', p. 300–300v; Stockholm; Riksarkivet, Krigshovrätten, E VII, 'Eds formulair för civile ämbetsmän. "Jag skal och med lif och blod förswara det konungliga wäldet."'
54. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2444, 'Memorial von Hallern', p. 321: 'Jag som med innersta hiertablodet håller mig ospard i Kongl. Majjts. Krigstienst [...].'
55. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Riksdagshandlingar, R2444, 'Memorial von Schultz', p. 266–266v: 'Och sittat 9 åhrs fången [...] men beklagligt icke det ringaste för hela mitt blods arbete niutit. [...] med blod förtient löhn [...].'
56. Andersson, 'Jag mig nöjd under bilan böjer', p. 336–337.
57. 'Posses dagbok', in *Karolinska krigares dagböcker* I (Lund, 1901), p. 314.
58. Marcks, 'Kort relation, öfver dett, som vijd Ryska armen under den tiden, iag till föllie af Högvälborne Hr General Major Armfeldtz ordres, efter öfverstånden Battaille, som

skiedde d: 19 februarij I Österbotn och Storkyro Sn, var med påsten att förspörja och inhämpta Summan af våre döda och slagna.' in *Läbteitü Ison vihan historiaan*, ed. Yrjö Koskinen (Helsinki, 1865), p. 334–337.

59. For example 'Posses dagbok', in *Karolinska krigares dagböcker I* (Lund, 1901), p. 317.

Summary:

Honour, Masculinity and Corporality in the Officer Corps of Early Eighteenth-Century Sweden

Military honour and physical commitment to serve king and fatherland played a central role in the ideals of the army of Charles XII of Sweden. These ideals were formed within a culture in which the role of the warrior, dictated by a code of honour, was constantly challenged. My main empirical primary sources consist of the archival records of the Swedish Diet, which included Placement Committee records from the Diet of 1723.

An honourable man had the right to a livelihood and a respectable position in society. My aim is to show that, in order to obtain such a position, a military man had to present himself as someone who had offered his body in the service of his king and country. An appeal to one's merits in battle was the best way of defending a claim to a post, because bravery in combat was the most respected virtue in military life. Those officers who had clear proof of their bravery, especially in the form of combat wounds, were in the best position. In this sense, honour and the body were closely linked.

Keywords: military culture, honour, masculinity, body, Great Northern War, Caroline, Charles XII.