

monier och andra iscensättningar var för legitimering-
en av den nya politiska ordning som etablerades 1772
och hur mycket tid och resurser som lades på dessa ar-
rangemang. Hon visar också hur mycket av denna poli-
tik som präglades av ett behov av att markera gentemot
den gamla frihetstida regimen. Flera av komponenterna
i kungens politiska budskap har visserligen framhållits
av tidigare forskning, men bekräftas här genom analy-
ser av andra företeelser och annat källmaterial. En av
framställningens styrkor är de komparationer som görs
med andra regenter, vilka tydliggör att kungens age-
rande styrdes av en rationalitet som var etablerad bland
de flesta av Europas furstehus i slutet av 1700-talet.
Författaren hade kunnat bredda en del av undersök-
ningarna för att på så sätt få en bättre förståelse av
den logik som styrde maktutövningen och de begräns-
ningar som existerade, men det förtar inte intrycket av
att detta är en intressant och läsvärd bok som bevisar
att det kulturhistoriska perspektivet kan generera ny
kunskap om den politiska historien.

Patrik Winton

Fredrik Thisner, *Militärstatens arvegods: officerstjänstens soci-
alproduktiva funktion i Sverige och Danmark ca 1720–1800*,
Studia historica Upsaliensia 230 (Uppsala: Acta Uni-
versitatis Upsaliensis, 2007). 373 s.

Fredrik Thisner's dissertation is an interesting contri-
bution to the field of Nordic research on the eight-
eenth century, in which the officer corps and holders
of military posts have been the focus of particular in-
terest. Thisner has based his research mainly on some
earlier Swedish, Finnish and Danish studies on the
subject – in particular those of Björn Asker, Gunner
Lind, Gunnar Artéus and Kaarlo Wirilander – with
which he demonstrates his familiarity with his subject,
as he does with his research on the broader field of
office holding and social mobility. In addition to his
knowledge of his subject, Thisner demonstrates both a
command of, and competence in, the field of historical
research as well as an awareness of the complex reality
of the eighteenth century in which the officers lived
their lives.

Thisner's main question (p. 31) concerns how
seeking a military post and the position of an officer
functioned as a means for ensuring a position among
the social and power-holding elite in Sweden and Den-

mark-Norway during the period between 1720 and
1800. This strategy of upward mobility was also used
by other groups in eighteenth-century society, but evi-
dence to support this is often very hard to find because
phenomena like upward social mobility are not obvi-
ously visible. As Thisner's study shows, it is most eas-
ily identifiable in the military sphere.

Military officers were the most organized group
in eighteenth-century Nordic society. The system of
allocating military posts as an economic solution was
highly organized and the members of the officer corps
in the regiments were socially and culturally controlled
by a strict code of honour and masculine values. This
situation made them into a group that has proven to
be a very fruitful subject for a wide variety of histori-
cal research.

Thisner's dissertation is well structured and pro-
ceeds fluently with the use of metatext. The work is
divided into two main sections. The first describes the
economic role of military posts, and the second the
social dimension attached to them. Thisner's approach
to the subject is to make a comparative study between
the two Nordic military states, Denmark-Norway and
Sweden, but as he points out (p. 43, 62), the main
focus is on the Swedish officer corps. The principle
objects of his study are three infantry regiments: the
Swedish *Upplands regemente*, the Norwegian *La trondheim-
ska regementet* and the Danish *Kronprinsens regemente*.
The primary sources consist of various kinds of documents
from Sweden and Denmark such as military registers,
officers' pension-fund records and private letters from
officers.

Thisner locates his research in a socio-economic
structural context, in which he defines the state and
its military structures as a 'late feudal state' (*senfeod-
dal stat*). He also emphasizes the fact that the Nordic
countries were 'military states' (*militärstater*). Thisner
places his study in a broader theoretical context using
Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of social reproduction and
social capital.

Thisner's study opens up a view into a more com-
plex world where things are not always that apparent
and often not exactly that what they may seem to be
at first sight. Consequently, the research results often
become a subject of debate. For example, the post of
captain was not just a position that secured its incum-
bent an income, but also one that permitted him to
recognize his place – and to be recognized by others
as having such a place – in a regiment, in the army or
in society more generally. However, as Thisner shows,

research methods using a culturally broader approach produce more interesting results when the focus is not strictly limited to the economic base.

The author succeeds especially well in his research when he points out the practical functions of the field armies. The roles of different troops such as cavalry, infantry, artillery and sappers are clearly presented. Also the roles that were attached to different military posts are clearly elucidated. Such matters are important, although the research focuses on a period (1720–1800) when Sweden and Denmark did not take part in any long or major wars of the kind that had occurred during the previous century. Military customs continued to hold a central place in the minds of the people in the upper strata of society, a fact which should be better appreciated in other areas of historical research. Thisner clearly points this out when he emphasizes the need for a man to perform the role of ‘an officer and a gentleman’ among the elite.

Thisner notes that the benefits which officers gained from their posts were primarily social rather than directly economic. The problem is that this is not easily measured if the research, however comprehensive, is mainly located in a structural socio-economic context and shaped by the questions this poses. Thisner also notes that military posts and the processes by which they were obtained were essentially the same

in Sweden and Denmark, although the political and economic bases of these states were very different. This points to a slight shortcoming in the presentation of the broader theoretical context. That context, with the use of theories about social reproduction and social capital, could have helped the author to draw even more profound conclusions than he has. In this respect, the reader can look forward to Thisner extending his research on the subject.

The discussion of the problematics of using the term ‘class’ (*klass*) is also a bit unnecessary (p. 35). If they did not belong to the Noble Estate (*ofrälse*), officers simply regarded themselves members of a new estate: the ‘soldierly estate’ (*soldatstånd*), ‘military estate’ (*militärstånd*), ‘fifth estate’ (*femte stånd*), or ‘gentlefolk’ (*ståndspersoner, Adels wederlikar*), as the author of course knows.

All in all, Thisner’s dissertation is an explicit, well thought-out and constructed, broad presentation of officers’ lives in the Nordic countries in the eighteenth century and of the many factors that influenced them. It also serves as a very useful resource for research into such aspects of the officers’ lives as loan-taking, marriage bartering and many other matters that went into making up the rich and colourful life of officers at that time.

Ville Sarkamo