

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN SCANDINAVIA

AN OVERVIEW

by

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and

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INTRODUCTION

It is easy to imagine the family and community structures of the past as static and secure. Americans often think of agrarian life in preindustrial Europe as a peaceful, unchanging existence that was violently restructured in the eleventh hour by the sudden advent of industrialization. But such was not the case. Family and community are human social institutions devised by people in response to the demands of the moment. They have changed constantly throughout human existence and will certainly continue to change in the future. What has remained consistent over time, however, is the centrality of these institutions in human culture.

With that in mind, it makes sense to examine how family and community have developed as institutions in a given cultural area. Scandinavia is an ideal area for such an investigation for several reasons. First, the harsh environment and limited natural resources of the North have caused Scandinavians to invest considerable energy and creativity in familial and communitarian institutions. In a world where famine, disease, and cold were constant threats, people paid careful attention to the needs and actions of their kin and neighbors. In addition, Scandinavia has possessed some of the finest resources for the study of social change imaginable. For centuries, meticulously kept church registries, local property appraisals, inventories, and other sources of evidence have abounded in all the Scandinavian countries. The early development of vernacular literary traditions, especially in Iceland, has added to our body of information about family and society in the past. Finally, for the better part of a century, Scandinavian scholars themselves have been conducting a broad-based interdisciplinary investigation of family and community structures in the North, providing us with plentiful insights and evidence.



Media representations of family and community in Scandinavia abound and form the basis for active social and political discussion. What, however, are the realities of Scandinavian family and community? How have these institutions changed over time? Can we speak of norms of family size and composition, gender roles, interpersonal and societal responsibilities? This study provides an overview of family and community as they have existed in Scandinavia from antiquity to today.



Olaus Magnus (1490–1557) provides an invaluable source for the student of Scandinavian family and community in his *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (1555; *A Description of the Northern Peoples*, 1996). Magnus's work describes the ways of life in, and geographic conditions of, nearly every part of the Scandinavian region. Although given at times to exaggeration and whimsy, the author turns clear and insightful when describing those aspects of Scandinavian life with which he was himself most familiar, especially daily life in medieval Sweden. Through travel in the northernmost portions of the region, Olaus gained familiarity with Saami, northern Finnish, and Norwegian cultures as well. Above is a map accompanying Olaus's great work.

In this study, we examine both family and community institutions as they have developed over time and space in the Scandinavian region. We present the findings of researchers from a variety of different disciplines—for example, ethnology, folkloristics, anthropology, sociology, history, geography—and relate these findings as well to some exemplary works of film and literature. When we appreciate the tremendous importance and vitality of both family and community in Scandinavian cultures in the past, we can understand why such institutions play such a prominent role in contemporary Scandinavian political and intellectual life.

Cultural Ecology

This study takes a cultural-ecological perspective. Earlier students of culture—both in the United States and in the North—tried to fit human diversity into a unilinear model of cultural progression, one relying on notions of evolution borrowed from nineteenth-century positivist philosophy and heavily influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution. Cultures were assumed to pass through economic stages (that is—hunter-gatherer, nomadic pastoralist, agriculturalist), each endowed with its own characteristic familial and communal forms and marching in a single, inexorable progression toward a culminating society possessed of the most evolved institutions and practices.

Ecology (again, a biological concept) offers a different perspective, however. "Evolution"—change—need not be seen as unilinear or even progressive, but rather as "opportune responses to new conditions." Social institutions change in order to meet the changing demands of the environment. For example, a life-style based on communal use of a large forest (as was the case in many parts of medieval Norway, Sweden, and Denmark) will become impossible once deforestation has exhausted the resource itself. Community and family will change so that people can fill new economic or social "niches" in the altered environment. In this conceptual framework, we can view family and community as intertwined in a complex web of factors or forces, each influencing all the others. A change in any one part of the system will affect both family and community structures; similarly, a change in the form of family or community will have ramifications in such disparate parts of the system as the economy and natural environment. We can clearly see this process of interrelated change over time in the North, thanks to the variety and age of our evidence. The reader will find no singular evolution presented in this study but rather a plethora of creative responses to the various and changing demands of living in the North.

FROM ANTIQUITY THROUGH THE VIKING AGE CLAN, COMMUNITY, AND LAND

Lessons of Language and History

One way to gain insight into the familial and communal concepts of any given culture is to examine the terms for kinship and community that exist in the culture's language. This method of research has long interested anthropologists in particular. The earliest kinship terms of the Scandinavian Finno-Ugric peoples (the Saami and the Finns) attest to the importance of extended families in ancient Scandinavian societies. In the Northern Saami language, for instance, terms exist to differentiate between a wide range of extended family members. Instances in which English, for example, would use *aunt*, Saami makes four clear distinctions: *goaski* ('mother's older sister'), *muottá* ('mother's younger sister'), *siessá* ('father's sister') and *ipmi* ('uncle's wife,' 'aunt-in-law'). These ancient terms still reflect the important role of the extended family in contemporary Saami culture. An individual's social and economic existence had always been anchored firmly in membership in a broad clan, and the individual's relations to other members of that group were highly regulated and normative. Finnish terms for in-law relatives also reveal an ancient system of power relations whereby the relative status within the extended family or farm household was clearly expressed. Multiple terms for brother-in-law and sister-in-law reflect subtle differences in roles and status within traditional Finnish culture.

The antiquity of terms may indicate an antiquity of origin, but ancient institutions may also acquire new nomenclature over time, and old terms may shift in significance over centuries. Thus, in the Germanic languages of Scandinavia, complex kin relationships are expressed by fairly transparent compounds of recent origin (for example, Swedish *farmor*, 'father-mother' for a paternal grandmother), but such contemporaneity does not preclude the possibility of an important social role for grandmothers in the ancient past. So, too, basic kin terms like Swedish *far* and *mor* ('father' and 'mother') were used in eighteenth-century Swedish farm society, not only when addressing one's biological parents, but also when addressing honored superiors, such as the farm owner, his wife, or an older farmhand. The evidence of kinship terms must be checked against ethnographic or historical data.

Sometimes historical investigation uncovers earlier kinship relations no longer treated with the same degree of importance today. The Roman historian-geographer Tacitus writes of the ancient Germanic peoples during the first century of the present era: "The sons of a sister are as valued by their uncle as by their father. Many consider this blood relationship more sacred and more intimate..." (ch. 20). The maternal uncle-nephew

Examples of Scandinavian Kinship Terms

SAAMI:
ceahci: father's younger brother
eahki: father's older brother
máhka: father's sister's husband
eanu: mother's brother

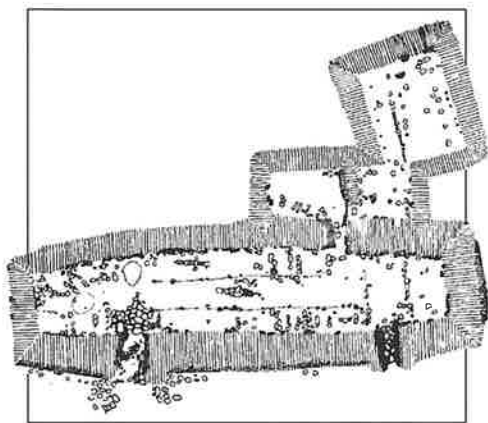
FINNISH:
nato: husband's sister
käly: brother's wife or
husband's brother's wife

SWEDISH:
farmor: father's mother
mormor: mother's mother
morbör: mother's brother
farbror: father's brother

Excerpt from a Traditional Orphan's Song (collected in Finland, 1892)

I do not have, poor soul,
protection in any house
kindness under any roof.
The winds are my protection
the fish do me kindness
I'll have protection in the grave
kindness in the coffin.

(Archives of the Finnish
Literature Society)



Plan of excavated long-house at Skalakot, Iceland. The communal hall contains a central hearth and raised side floors for benches. A deep cooking pit is found at one end. The rooms at the back of the house may have been added later. It was in great halls such as this that the *garðr* residents spent the long winter's nights, subsisting on stored foods and regaling each other with tales and songs. (Plan and details courtesy of Jacqueline Simpson, *Everyday Life in the Viking Age*, 1967.)

relationship holds particular importance in many traditional societies the world over but is no longer central to Scandinavian cultures. Likewise, forms of honorary kinship (for example, foster and blood brotherhood) lay at the basis of nearly all social organizations in the ancient North but hold little if any significance for Scandinavians today.

The centrality of family and clan institutions in Scandinavian societies is reflected in the ancient religions of the region. Scandinavian peoples in general appear to have venerated the spirits of deceased relatives. Familial rituals were performed by either male or female leaders and centered around the familial home and burial ground. Deceased relatives were counted on to act as advocates for the family in the other world, and great care was taken not to anger, shame, or slight the deceased. The wrongful deaths of family members called for immediate revenge, which often escalated into family feuds that could last generations. Life and death were determined by the clan leadership: a child born during a difficult time could be exposed to the elements through the custom of infanticide, which persisted in parts of Scandinavia (for example, in Iceland) even after Christianization.

As might be expected from the centrality of kinship lines, orphanhood represented the nadir of existence. In ancient Germanic law, no man could speak at a regional council meeting or other official function unless he could recite his lineage. Bereft of family assistance, the orphan—male or female—was denied rights, livelihood, and aid in important transactions of social life, such as in marriage. On the other hand, honorary forms of kinship—for example, fosterage, adoption, or blood brotherhood—extended the central familial institution to nonrelatives as well, creating the basis of important trading or defensive alliances among the ancient Germanic Scandinavians.

The *Garðr* System

In contrast to many parts of ancient Europe, the Germanic North appears to have placed greater emphasis on small independent settlements rather than on larger villages or towns. Tacitus writes, "It is well known that the Germanic peoples do not live in cities, and could not bear living close to each other. They live in fact separated and scattered [*discreti ac diversi*], each beside a spring, field, or grove as tastes would have it" (ch. 16). This mode of dispersed settlement helped maintain the clan as a central unit of organization. The notion of a separate farm, however, should not lead us to imagine small isolated holdings occupied by a few people; the Scandinavian *garðr* and its Finno-Ugric counterparts were extensive communities in themselves, usually uniting a variety of related nuclear families, foster members, servants, retirees, and visitors into a complex economic system. In certain respects, especially with regard to territory, boundaries, and religious practices, the *garðr* resembled more nearly miniature city-states than modern interdependent farms.

Although building materials varied considerably from area to area across Scandinavia, the *garðr* institution itself remained relatively stable throughout the region from Iceland to Gotland. The dwelling form was imbued with religious connotations and was paralleled by the *garðr*-like *Asgarðr* ('Gods' Farm') of Scandinavian mythology. Buildings were clustered around a protected center and were flanked by close-lying fields and pastures (infields). Farther out lay the high pastures, distant outfields, forests, and mountain lands. Dangers, both natural and supernatural, increased with the distance from one's own hearth and home. As with family institutions, the supernatural aspects and social prominence of the *garðr* were unshaken by the change in faith in the transition to Christianity.

Siida and *Thing*

No family can ever truly exist as an island unto itself, even in the expanded versions that frequently inhabited the *garðr*. Reproduction and economy both require broader networks of relationships. And a social system based so firmly on kinship and land control could scarcely have survived in the North had it not been augmented through interclan cooperation. Throughout the North, kinship groups formed wider associations for the purpose of regional governance, and those associations represent some of the earliest and most successful attempts at democracy in northern Europe.

The Saami *siida* is known to have existed as early as the sixteenth century and probably predates the development of reindeer herding among the Saami people. In the *siida* system, several extended families or clans shared a single tract of land for hunting, trapping, fishing, and all other possible uses. Family units lived in separate areas during the spring, summer, and fall but came together in a general encampment for the winter. During the winter gathering, all of the members of the *siida* met together in a council meeting. This collective event afforded *siida* members the opportunity to redistribute lands according to each clan's needs, settle disputes both within the *siida* and between neighboring *siidas*, and collect taxes to be paid to the crown or its agents. Since all natural resources and land belonged to the entire *siida*, imbalances due to changes in family size could be compensated for through land redistribution. Saami culture thus combined independent family units with local support systems that helped ensure their survival and conserve natural resources.

As with the Saami, the Old Norse *ætt* ('clan') played a central role in social and legal organization. Tacitus (ch. 7) writes of two different Germanic communal institutions. The first, a static, agrarian community of landholding clans, was led by an elected, though often hereditary, leader. The Old Norse term for a leader of that type was *konungr* ('head of a kin group', that is, king). The second type of social collective consisted of a group of roving warriors, labeled by Tacitus a *comitatus* ('retinue'). Bands of this sort, along with their wives and children, were led by

Pathfinder

The place of family and *siida* in traditional Saami culture is brilliantly depicted in Nils Gaup's film *Pathfinder* (1987). Based on a historical legend, the film focuses on the struggle of a teenage boy, Aigin, to avenge his family's demise and protect the members of a neighboring *siida*. Central to the narrative are the Tschudes, a band of malevolent pillagers who have lost all sense of community either with each other or with nature. Aigin uses his strong communal ties to advantage in battling the Tschudes' evil.

This particular film is only the second ever shot in the Saami language and reflects the cultural revival of the contemporary Saami community.

Hávamál

The Eddaic poem *Hávamál*—first written in the thirteenth century but probably based on oral versions of greater antiquity—presents a litany of wise observations and advice for the Viking Age man. Purportedly the words of the god Óðin, the poem mentions one's responsibilities toward home and hospitality frequently. The following aphorisms in Patricia Terry's *Poems of the Elder Edda*, 1990, illustrate that emphasis:

Though it be little,
better to live
in a house you hold
as your own;
with just two goats,
thin thatch for your roof,
you're still better off
than begging.

Give your friends gifts—
they're as glad as you are
to wear new clothes
and weapons;
frequent giving
makes friendships last
if the exchange
is equal.

a warlord (ON *dróttinn*). All evidence points to the fact that, in the Scandinavian region, groupings of the more static kind of social organization prevailed, even through the Viking Age. Land belonged ultimately to the king, although he generally respected the ancestral rights of clan members to given parcels. In return, each clan paid the king a tribute in manpower, farm produce, or cattle. Land parcels were divided equitably among the members of the clan, and relations with neighboring clans were worked out at annual *thing* councils. The *thing* institution was founded squarely on the clan system: each clan's interests were represented by an elected priest-chieftain who acted as his clan's legal and spiritual leader. Failure to comply with local law or *thing* judgments led to "outlawry"—a status known as *skoggangr* ('forest going') in Old Norse. The *skogarmaðr* ('outlaw') was stripped of all rights within the society and could be slain with impunity. Banished to areas of the natural environment traditionally left unowned in ancient Scandinavia—the forests, moors, and mountains—such ostracized men added further peril to those marginal tracts.

Good relations with neighboring clans were imperative in ancient Scandinavian society and were assured by a variety of exchanges outside of the *thing* institution. Gift giving represented one of the prime methods of solidifying intergroup alliances. A further means of cementing interclan bonds lay in the temporary exchange of children, a custom known as *fostr* ('fostering'). A child brought up in another household formed emotional ties with that host clan and became an assurance of continued good will between the families. Often, a man of lesser status agreed to foster the son or daughter of a social superior as a means of paying homage and securing favor. The Icelandic sagas teem with references to fostering arrangements. The sending of children to neighboring farms also served economic purposes, such as alleviating imbalances in the area's labor pool or gender distribution. Largely for such economic reasons the "farming out" of children remained a standard part of agrarian life in the North through the nineteenth century.

MEDIEVAL PEASANT LIFE CONTINUITIES AND CHANGE IN FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

The ancient *garðr* system, linked together by kingship, *thing*, and law may have been the most basic form of social organization in much of Scandinavia, but other forms of more systematically linked communities developed as well, especially from the early medieval period (which lasted into the thirteenth century). Usually, those organizations were built on the *garðr* institution but involved more regularized cooperation between farm households, united in many cases by a common landlord, representing the church, aristocracy, or state. Such interdependent communities as the hamlet and village fit this description.

Farm Work

One should note that, although most people in the North lived on farms, farming per se proved insufficient to support a large family or clan organization. Rudimentary grain and livestock production had to be supplemented by a variety of other activities: for example, hunting, gathering, fishing, and trading. From time immemorial, the forest supplied products for peasants to reap and trade: branches and bark for kindling or crafts, charcoal, tar, wild apples, and so on. Fishing, particularly of seasonal runs of spawning fish, as well as whaling and seal hunting, helped supplement both income and diet. The Scandinavian *marknaðr* ('market') brought together not only Germanic Scandinavian traders, but Finns, Saami, and various Europeans as well. Cottage industries, such as salt-making, began in earnest in parts of Denmark by the thirteenth century, and all the Scandinavian peoples participated in trade relations from the early Viking Age onward.

The agricultural year involves great seasonal differences in labor needs. Times of planting and of harvest require many more hands than are needed in the lean, quiet months of winter. During those periods of intense labor, a variety of social processes came into play to help farmers accomplish the work necessary for success and survival. First, gender roles within the agrarian environment were much less separate than they were to become in industrialized society. In nineteenth-century Scandinavia, for instance, women standardly worked beside men in such strenuous activities as land clearing, ditch digging, ploughing, harrowing, sowing, and harvesting by sickle. Women, too, shared in such tasks as trapping and net making.

Additional temporary labor was supplied by migrant "hands," who were employed either yearly or seasonally by farmers in need of assistance. Hiring fairs, scheduled at traditional times and at regional markets, served as a means of uniting would-be laborers with interested peasant employers. A hired hand became part of the farm household and was fed and clothed as part of his income. An agreed upon wage was also sometimes paid at the end of the hand's term of employment. It was this class of landless rural workers that swelled during the nineteenth century beyond the labor needs of the existing farms and that led to the greatest changes in Scandinavian rural and urban life.

Another means of supplying needed labor was the tradition known in Norwegian as *nabohjelp* or *dugnad*, in which neighbors pitched in to help farmers in need and received only thanks and perhaps a festive meal or dance in return. Although the tradition was based on some expectation of reciprocity, it also stressed the basic importance of simply donating one's labor for the good of others and can be seen as a continuation of the ancient importance of gift-giving. Much the same kind of voluntary aid, coupled with ample food and refreshments, was known in Finland as *talkoot*. Even today in urban Helsinki *talkoot* 'work parties' are a common way of accomplishing spring or autumn cleaning around multiple-family apartment houses or neighborhoods. Similar customs persist in the urban areas of other Scandinavian countries as well.



Photo of Martin Andersen [Nexø], taken in Askov, Denmark, 1892.

Pelle the Conqueror

Martin Andersen Nexø (1869–1954) was one of the first Scandinavian authors to focus on the plight of the rural and urban poor. In his masterpiece *Pelle Erobreren* (1913–16; *Pelle the Conqueror*, 1985), the author depicts the life of a poor boy from his rural childhood to adult career as a trade-union leader. The first part of the serialized work centers on the experiences of Pelle and his aging father as they migrate from Sweden to a Danish island to become hirelings. Made into a popular film by Danish director Bille August in 1987, *Pelle the Conqueror* has received widespread acclaim for its combination of realistic detail and poignant sensitivity.

Martin Andersen Nexø turned attention to the life of female servants in another great trilogy, *Ditte Menneskebarn* (1917–21; *Ditte*, 1931).

Shareholding

The Ox

Cinematographer Sven Nykvist's 1992 film *Oxen* (*The Ox*) depicts the central role of the Lutheran minister in settling differences and maintaining order within the rural farm community. When hireling and farm-owner clashed—as in any interpersonal conflict—it fell to the minister to effect a solution. The minister defined proper conduct, negotiated between community and state, and set the limits for both punishment and mercy. Nykvist's film presents the paternalistic minister with irony as he seemingly fails in his task and contributes only to the misery and sorrow of the community. Like Ingmar Bergman's films *Fanny och Alexander* (1982; *Fanny and Alexander*) and *Den goda viljan* (1993; *The Best Intentions*), Nykvist's *The Ox* presents a critical view of the Lutheran culture of Scandinavia.

An important formalized shareholding system developed to ensure mutual aid in Denmark and other parts of southern and coastal Scandinavia. Cooperative *fællig* ('fellowship') arrangements appeared in Denmark in the medieval period and continued through the nineteenth century. In the *fællig* system, two or more people shared ownership of a given property (for example, a farm field, saltern, ship, or fishing tackle). Shareholders cooperated in the use of the property and divided the profits between themselves. Separate farm households often shared a single enclosed plot of land, which was either parceled into smaller, separate pieces or farmed jointly. In the latter case, the parties involved divided the harvest in accordance with the size of each partner's share. Shares could be traded, sold, inherited, or divided. Where such share arrangements existed—usually in areas of more limited agricultural potential—farm households survived through a patchwork economic system of interreliance and cooperation. Owning a farm, however small, served as the legal basis within the community to participate in the cooperative network that ensured survival for most of the local populace. Shareholding between equal partners was extended to the fishing and mining industries as well. We can see this form of collective action as some of the first corporations in Europe.

The multiple-activity hamlet or small village system described above was best suited to marginal ecotypes: places where extensive agriculture was hindered by poor soil, rough terrain, or other limiting factors. In the rich farmlands of eastern Denmark, southern and central Sweden, and southwestern Finland, on the other hand, villages were more reminiscent of those of Northern Europe developed during the Middle Ages. In Sweden, orderly villages consisting of groups or rows of houses, sharing a fenced, parceled infield and surrounded by outfields and common grounds, were instituted by law during the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries. The village system made taxation easier and was thus favored by the Crown. Villagers of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, in contrast, witnessed systematic efforts by states to redistribute land and create scattered independent farms, rather than clustered villages. Many of the villages of medieval Sweden and Denmark are gone today—their houses moved, their streets erased—with only a stray church or cemetery to indicate the once cohesive communities of the region. The needs and interests of Scandinavian states had a profound influence on the forms of family and community prevalent in any given region or period.

Lutheranism and Its Effects

Another decisive force that influenced Scandinavian institutions was the introduction of Lutheranism. The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century triumph throughout Scandinavia of this rethinking of Christianity led to the codification of norms regarding family and community. Although Luther's reforms took some centuries to sway the rural populace fully, Scandinavians eventually adopted the new religion with vigor. From a theological standpoint, Lutheranism sought to shift spiritual attention away from collective religiosity (that is, the notion that God exists within a community and in collective worship) toward the more individualistic, a stress on proper conduct, humility, and self-examination. Training in reading and the catechism were fundamental to religious life in Lutheranism, and pastors were charged with the duty of educating and constantly testing their flocks. The demands of those new duties, coupled with missionary efforts among the Saami, led to a tremendous increase in the number of ministers in Scandinavia.

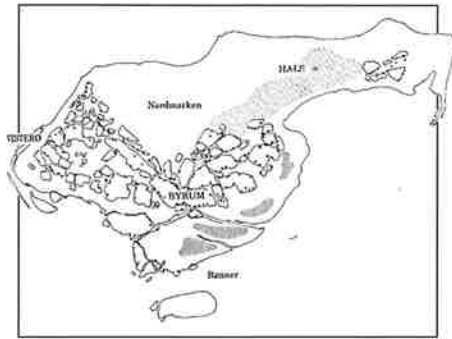
Despite that individualistic thrust, however, Lutheranism paid tremendous attention to family and community institutions. The patriarchal structure of the family was sanctioned and extended, with male control over all household matters becoming standard. On both a symbolic and practical level, the nuclear family model was extended to the congregation as whole, with the Lutheran pastor assuming a more active paternalistic role than had his Catholic predecessors. The pastor advised in both spiritual and social matters, exercising control over his flock's commerce and relations. Church rituals like confirmation, the entry into adulthood, became tied to legal status and privileges. Until the twentieth century, an unconfirmed Scandinavian adult was denied access to public office and certain other occupations. The pastor served as a functionary of the state, keeping meticulous records on parishioners, their births, deaths, marriages, and even arrivals and departures from the area. The local community thus became further connected to broader state authorities.

Barely a century after the establishment of Lutheranism in Scandinavia, religious pietism emerged as an important counterforce in many peripheral areas, including the north and coastal islands. Generally remaining within the state church, at least officially, pietist sects demanded greater asceticism and communal commitment of their members. Often, lay parishioners assumed active roles in preaching or administration, leading to greater identification with the collective and action within the sect itself. Such social ills as alcoholism, poverty, and immorality became the focus of organized action, in which both men and women played central roles.



Detail from a Danish Lutheran catechism on the third and fourth commandments. During the Lutheran era, confirmation marked the passage of the individual into adult life and rights. Confirmation examinations, conducted by the local minister, tested the youth's knowledge of the Bible and Luther's *Catechism*, as well as the ability to read. The *Catechism* not only presented the scriptures but provided interpretations that stressed restraint, obedience, and subservience to parents, masters, ministers, and God. One line reads, "We must fear and love God."

Community Change



Historical map of the island of Læsø, showing once plentiful forests. (Reprinted from Bjarne Stocklund, "Economy, Work and Social Roles: Continuity and Change on the Danish Island Community of Læsø, c. 1200–1900," 1985)

An overexploitation of natural resources in the fragile Scandinavian region led to the disappearance or transformation of many medieval communities, especially in those areas dominated by feudal village institutions (for example, in Denmark and in southern Sweden). Deforestation, excessive turf cutting, and soil depletion led to long-term processes of erosion, sand drifting, and ecological destruction in many parts of Denmark. The disappearance of one form of livelihood, however, was often met with economic innovations that drew on the old familial and communal modes of organization in new ways. Thus, an island community such as Læsø, in the Danish Kattegat, has gone through various phases since its original settlement in the thirteenth century, including economies based on lumber production, salt-making, fishing, shipping, and farming, but has consistently drawn on traditional modes of share-holding and familial cooperation throughout.

The farm remained the basis of most people's lives through the late nineteenth century, and in many parts of the Scandinavian region well into the twentieth century as well. Longitudinal studies in southern Sweden have demonstrated the lasting centrality of the farm household as a social and economic entity, despite technological and cultural changes. Although the organization of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century farms resembled an extended family or clan in many respects, actual kinship played only a minor role in the group's solidarity. The head of the *garafolket* ('the farm folk') was treated as the symbolic father of them all, and no separate terms existed to differentiate between honorary and actual kinship. Children continued to be farmed out as a means of balancing short-term labor needs or surpluses. Owing to the high adult mortality rate and rapid remarriage customs of the seventeenth century, forty to fifty percent of the children would end up in the hands of foster parents even if they stayed at home.

Weddings

One way to understand the changes that have occurred in Scandinavian communities over the centuries is to follow the transformation of courtship and wedding customs. They demonstrate a gradual shift from family-negotiated interclan ritual exchanges during the earliest period of Scandinavian history to village celebrations emphasizing a collective identity during the medieval period. Each type of wedding expresses the culture's changing notions of the individual in relation to the wider groupings of the family and the community. Viking Age weddings, like those depicted in the sagas, were often bilocal: they involved elaborate leave-taking rituals at the bride's household and equally elaborate home-coming rituals at the groom's. Such traditional weddings survived in parts of eastern Finland into the late nineteenth and even early twentieth centuries and involved long cathartic songs of advice, praise, and derision, such as those in the Finnish national epic *Kalevala* (Poems 21–24), collected and edited by Elias Lönnrot.

Those family-centered rites of passage gradually gave way to church and village-centered celebrations involving instrumental music and dance. Such weddings stressed the significance of the event, not only for the families involved but for the community at large: weddings became a symbol of the perpetuation of the village or hamlet and its population. Often, villages possessed an ornate crown that each bride wore on her wedding day. Local custom prescribed the wedding march, foods, and dances for the celebration. Such customs linked weddings together over time and helped bolster village identity. The personalized couple-centered weddings of contemporary Scandinavia, on the other hand, emphasize the more individualistic aspects of modern Scandinavian cultures.

Courtship

Research shows that the "prudishness" people today generally associate with preindustrial courtship and weddings arose in fact very late and as an economic response to the rise of a landless proletariat in the countryside. In areas where few economic differences distinguished families from one another, such as in Dalecarlia, Sweden, a permissive approach to premarital relations was taken. In the tradition known as "night courting," a young man visited the sleeping quarters of eligible women. These encounters often included sexual intercourse, and if the young woman became pregnant, a firm wedding date was set to legitimate the offspring.

In Skåne, on the other hand, where the number of landless peasants was much higher (some thirty to fifty percent during the nineteenth century), landowning parents engaged in stringent matchmaking activities, assuring their children suitable spouses and delaying wedding dates in order to limit family size. In many parts of Scandinavia, such matchmaking even included a system of sibling exchange (*N heimdabytte*, *heimbytte*, *S syskonbytte*), whereby a brother and sister were married off to a brother and sister from another farm. Such arrangements eased the problems of dowry and farm inheritance and were especially common among wealthier landowning peasants.

Inheritance and Retirement

If weddings became increasingly more festive and communal in Scandinavian cultures, retirement and inheritance remained extremely stressful familial matters. Each of the Scandinavian countries had clear laws about inheritance, with a division of property among descendants prevailing in all but Norway, where primogeniture reigned supreme. In actual practice, however, peasants in most parts of the Scandinavian region strove to keep farms intact by passing them on to a single descendant.

The usual way to circumvent inheritance laws was for the older farmer and his wife to cede the farm to a son or son-in-law after arriving

Kalevala

At the center of Elias Lönnrot's literary epic *Kalevala* (1834) lies the wedding between the hero Ilmarinen and the coveted Maiden of Pohjola. Lönnrot collected traditional wedding songs from rural Finland and Karelia to create this section of the epic. Typical of such songs is the following advice to the new bride, reminding her of the difficult adjustment she is about to make:

You are coming to a different household
to another family
Things are different in a different
household
otherwise among others.
You must step thoughtfully
act with circumspection;
not as in your father's meadow
or on your mother's land
with singing in the valleys
cuckooing in the lanes.
When you leave this household
remember all your other possessions
leave behind only these three:
sleep after daybreak,
mother's loving words,
butter fresh from the churn.

(*Kalevala* 23: 27–42)



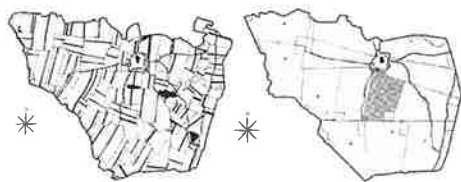
Clans meet at a medieval wedding. Woodcut from Olaus Magnus's *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (1555).



Courtship in the medieval household. Woodcut from Olaus Magnus's *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (1555).

The Great Cycle

Most of the novels, stories, and poetry of the Norwegian writer Tarjei Vesaas (1897–1970) deal with the lives of ordinary people in the Telemark region of Norway where he lived and worked. Vesaas's 1934 novel, *Det store spelet* (*The Great Cycle*, 1967), set on the farm Bufast, follows the life of a boy named Per from the age of six to early adulthood. Per's taciturn father spends much of his time clearing land and feels intensely bound to both nature and the ground he cultivates. As he tells Per early in the novel, "You, too, will love earth, Per. It's all that matters." Although Per does not understand his father's words at the time, he later comes to accept his role and takes over the farm after his father's death. Besides telling the story of Per's struggle to accept his place in the life of the farm, the book describes the rhythms of rural life, with its recurring events and births and deaths of animals and people. Per further has difficulty understanding two predictions made by his father: "You will stay at Bufast to the end of your days," and "Bufast will give you all you need." Later, as a young man, Per sees the course of his life summed up in those almost Biblical statements. The sense of continuity and rootedness inherent in Vesaas's novel exemplifies both traditional peasant life and its symbolic role in many Scandinavian literary works.



Maps showing field patterns in the Danish countryside before and after enclosure. The earlier map displays the small plots and shared responsibilities of the medieval peasant system. The later map shows consolidated, independent farms. Enclosure occurred earlier in Denmark than in many other parts of Scandinavia. The above maps both date from the eighteenth century.

at a contractual agreement whereby they would be allowed to "retire" on the farm until their deaths. Contracts of this sort (*D aftægt N føderåd, kår, S sytning, undantag*) often led to tension between retirees and their successors, who generally shared at least some living quarters and duties over a period of years. Of course, elderly persons who owned no land had little basis for arranging a comfortable retirement and were obliged to depend on the generosity of grown children, local parishes, or unrelated households for their survival.

The relations between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law could become particularly strained and are reflected in the prevalence of evil mother-in-law figures in Scandinavian folklore. At the same time, the relationship could often become warm and productive, as most brides learned the practical aspects of farm management from their mothers-in-law. As with the passing on of the land, peasant men and women passed on their roles to be repeated by the next generation.

In general, areas with a strong distinction between landed peasants and landless tenant farmers developed elaborate matchmaking mechanisms and maintained farm inheritance systems of the types described above. On the other hand, areas with fewer economic differences between families, such as the marginal ecotypes of Swedish Dalecarlia or Danish Jutland, maintained much more egalitarian modes of affiliation and inheritance.

MODERNIZATION: THE GROWTH OF CONTEMPORARY SCANDINAVIA

The nineteenth century witnessed great transformations in Scandinavian social and political organization. Advances in health care led to a marked rise in the rural population just at the time when technological innovations reduced the need for manual labor on Scandinavian farms. The resultant dramatic increase in rural poor led to three major compensatory developments: the creation of new economic niches within the countryside itself, the migration of workers to urban industries, and the emigration of surplus population to the "immigrant nations" of North America and Australia. Each of those developments, in turn, fundamentally influenced family and community institutions, setting in motion a series of changes that continue to alter Scandinavian life today.

The growth of the Scandinavian welfare state and its relation to the forms of family and community are topics of debate in contemporary Scandinavian politics. At the same time, despite the tremendous changes of the last two centuries, strong connections with the earlier family and community systems of the rural past persist, often even in the middle of the urban metropolis.

New Economic Niches

The most immediate response to rural population growth was the development of new economic niches within the countryside itself. In places such as the western Swedish coastal town of Bua, for instance, population expansion led to new occupations, the growth of which eventually transformed the entire community. As the population exceeded the available farmland, more households turned to a combination of various occupations to make ends meet. Tenant-farmer/fishermen combined small-scale farming and fishing with such activities as the gathering and sale of berries, driftwood, heather, and hay. Crafts and cottage industries provided a basis for market exchange. Finally, during the planting and harvest seasons, such farmers worked on larger farms as hired hands.

Marginal economic strategies of this type depended on the existence of landowning farmers both as employers and proprietors over land and resources. These landholding farmers themselves devoted greater attention to crops that could be sold to an outside market (cash crops), by taking advantage of the added labor and specialized economic niches of the tenant farmers. The development of market crops shifted the local economy away from subsistence agriculture and tied the community more integrally to wider regional and national networks. Instead of a system of relatively equal farm households, Bua became possessed of an intricate network of specialized occupational niches and relied on money and outside markets for its existence. Those economic shifts inexorably altered the community institution of the town and eventually altered family size and settlement.

The dichotomy between "preindustrial" and "industrialized" societies obscures the gradual nature of industrialization in many parts of Scandinavia. Scandinavian industry often grew up amidst rural life, altering the economy of farming or subsistence communities in ways that influenced family and community. An example of the slow transformation of rural society into an industrialized economy can be observed in the development of pig-iron production in Uppland, Sweden, beginning in the seventeenth century. The growth of the pig-iron industry in the region transformed the prior interdependent farm society into a two-tiered system consisting of landholding independent farmers and dependent tenant workers.

As entrepreneurs introduced pig-iron facilities into Uppland, charcoal production offered farmers an easy means of supplementing incomes. Charcoal was needed to heat the ore and was purchased from farms surrounding the ironworks. As an alternative source of income, however, charcoal production gradually pulled the farmers away from their previous subsistence practices, a development that became heightened during years of poor harvests and famine. Farmers used the money gained from the sale of charcoal to purchase goods and foodstuffs from the ironworks itself, and when a particular farm's indebtedness rose beyond the value of

Ivar Lo-Johansson and the Rural Proletariat

A special class of landless, migratory farm workers developed under the *statar* system in Sweden during the eighteenth century. This group of married agricultural workers was paid, for the most part, in kind ('stat') and hired under six-month or one-year contracts, much as in the older hiring tradition. *Statar* families, housed in special barracks, were allotted one room per family. Frequently, different families shared a single kitchen. Although some *statar* families could eventually purchase a small plot of land, most remained in an economic and social condition not far from serfdom. A campaign to end the system, led by such figures as the author Ivar Lo-Johansson (1901–90), brought about the abolition of the system in 1944.

Ivar Lo-Johansson was born the son of former *statar* parents. His many novels and short stories focus on the life of the rural proletariat. Among his works are *Godnatt, jord* (1933; *Breaking Free*, 1990) and *Bara en mor* (1939; *Only a Mother*, 1991).

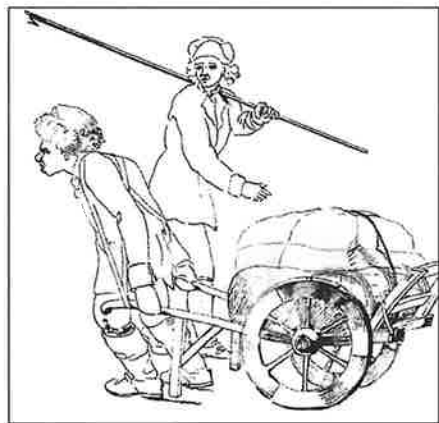


Hans Christian Andersen

The Danish author Hans Christian Andersen (1805–75) became world famous for his fairy tales. In his 1855 autobiography, Andersen recalls his boyhood life in the rapidly growing provincial town of Odense. He describes the family's home as follows:

One little room occupied by the cobbler's bench, the bed, and that couch on which I slept was my childhood home; but the walls were filled with pictures, and on the chest of drawers stood beautiful cups, glasses, and trinkets, and above the bench by the window hung a shelf with books and broadsides. In the tiny kitchen above the cupboard was a rack filled with pewter plates. The small room seemed to me to be large and rich. On the panel of the door a landscape was painted that to me, then, was as meaningful as an entire picture gallery.

Andersen's tales give vivid glimpses of city life in the nineteenth century, the contrast between rich and poor, and the longing for transcendent beauty in a world of harshness and cruelty.



A meeting of classes and backgrounds. A townsman's sketch of rural migrants to the city of Copenhagen on the cusp of the nineteenth century. (Reprinted from B. Blüdnikow and H. Stevnsborg, *København 1790. Billeder af dagliglivet*, 1983).

the farm property, the once independent landholder was obliged to sell his farm to the ironworks and become a tenant (*torpare*) instead. Gradually, such tenants became involved in other duties associated with the industry, particularly transportation, since the ironworks then paid an artificially low price for charcoal produced on tenant farms.

Meanwhile, those farmers who had managed to resist absorption were able to charge higher rates for the charcoal they supplied and eventually reemerged as entirely independent of the local ironwork's economy. In 1849, the farmers opted for enclosure—the redistribution of farm fields that abandoned the medieval mode of shared plots and crops in favor of separate and consolidated tracts. Tenant farmers, in contrast, continued to divide their lands into various small parcels interspersed among other tenants' fields.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, then—a century and a half after the arrival of the pig-iron industry—tenants and landholding farmers had become different social and economic classes. Poorer and more dependent on the region's central industry, tenants often lost their holdings or moved away, while landholding farmers maintained their properties and wealth and have continued to maintain them down to the present day. In many ways, then, industrialization itself helped create the surplus labor and communal forms necessary for the industrial expansion of the nineteenth century.

Emigration and Land Reform

Emigration represented a further solution to population growth throughout Scandinavia. Massive rural emigration took place especially from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, although also from Iceland, the Faroes, and Finland.

The links between emigrant peasants and the families and communities they had left behind often remained strong, leading to various kinds of economic assistance, the sponsoring of new emigrants, and avid letter writing. Many progressive social ideals became familiar to rural Scandinavian communities through accounts given by emigrant letter writers in North America and Australia. New notions of state-supported social welfare thus gained a foothold in otherwise isolated and conservative villages, setting the stage for innovative approaches to social needs in the following decades.

Because of Finland's nineteenth-century status as a Russian Grand Duchy, emigration to the United States was more limited for peasants there. Instead, land redistribution became a prominent theme in Finnish politics both before and after independence and culminated in legislation in 1918 and 1922 that established new farms for a vast number of landless peasants.

Throughout Scandinavia, both through influential letters and through active campaigning among the rural poor, Social Democratic parties and ideals became popular in the countryside as well as the city. In countries still largely agrarian at the turn of the century, the rural success of the party greatly influenced its platform and agenda.

Urbanization

Nowhere was the transformation of Scandinavian society more evident during the nineteenth century than in the cities. Formerly largely the domain of merchants, guildsmen, and government, the cities began to increase in size and importance. Landless peasants found work in newly emerging industries, shipping, and domestic or military service. The small middle and upper classes began to deal with their formerly rural cousins on a much more intimate level.

In many ways, the political and sociocultural profiles of contemporary Scandinavian nations developed out of an intense conflict between the cosmopolitan ideals and standards of urban residents and the communitarian values of the urbanizing rural peasantry. The process of Scandinavian *embourgeoisement* should be regarded not so much the triumph of the middle-class life-style over its rustic counterparts as the negotiation of a new culture that retained as far as possible the values of each class.

The process of cultural negotiation found at times bitter expression in the writings and legislation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Scandinavian leaders. The so-called "porridge feud" of mid-nineteenth-century Norway is a superb example of how the mandates of then-current science collided with established traditional practices of food preparation in the countryside. Male intellectuals' desire to dictate the cooking practices followed by peasant women reflected a deeper desire to unify Norwegian culture under a new, national, and scientifically grounded banner. The hygiene movement of 1930s' Sweden—with parallels in the other Scandinavian countries as well—can be regarded as a similar attempt at extending bourgeois values to the entirety of society. The topic of "hygiene" often masked ideological struggles on central issues, like family size, childcare, and women's rights.

While the educated elite sought to instill urbanizing peasants with cosmopolitan, "urbane" culture, the legacy of centuries of life in the rural North was not simply abandoned by those rural people. Instead, peasants who relocated in the growing cities sought to recreate trusted forms of communal and familial organizations within the limits of urban architecture and livelihood.

The process of "modernizing" the cities themselves—which consisted largely of replacing medieval modes of spatial and social organization with others derived from Renaissance ideals—had only begun to affect urban organization when the new onslaught of working-class denizens arrived. Horses, pigs, cattle, and fowl, common sights in the orderly grid-like streets of the nineteenth-century Scandinavian cityscape, vied for space in cramped urban backlots with garden plots, outhouses, and refuse heaps. Blocks of small flats surrounding a courtyard or alley often resembled miniature villages, with denizens sharing common origins in a particular rural locale and cooperating in ways familiar from rural life.

Tove Ditlevsen

Tove Ditlevsen (1917–76) was one of Denmark's most popular writers. She wrote novels, short stories, and poetry in a career that spanned over 35 years. Ditlevsen grew up in a poor, working-class neighborhood in Copenhagen. She left school at the age of 14 and had a variety of low-paying jobs. Her true wish, however, was to become an acknowledged and successful author.

In Ditlevsen's second novel, the highly autobiographical *Barndommens gade* (1943; *The Street of Childhood*), she depicts the childhood and youth of Ester, a plain and sensitive girl growing up in a working-class area of Copenhagen. As the title suggests, it is the street and, specifically, its influence on Ester that constitute the central theme of the novel. The street provides little comfort and is depicted as a restrictive element in the young protagonist's life, a restrictiveness symbolized by the narrow strip of sky visible from the window of the family's small tenement apartment. The street also contributes to the brevity of Ester's childhood, forcing children to grow up too fast as they deal with not only hard working people like Ester's parents, but also prostitutes, drunkards, and exhibitionists. Ditlevsen's work portrays an urban life of harsh realities and little beauty. Although Ditlevsen herself shunned polemic content, such works as *Barndommens gade* helped propel Scandinavian societies into a massive, long-term approach to bettering the conditions of city life for the region's newly urbanized masses.



En hverdagshistorie, særdeles at anbefale unge Piger til Læsning om Sommeraftener.



Om otte Dage holde vi Bryllup, elskede Kristiane! Da er Du min for evigt, o, hvor denne Tanke gjør mig udsigelig lykkelig!

(Ti Aar derefter)



Jeg skal vise hende, hvo der er Herre i Huset, hun eller jeg. — Hu! at man ogsaa skal være fordømt til at trækkes med saadant et Bæst, saalænge man lever! det er til at blive gal over!

Flinchs Almanak eller Huuskalender 1848

Before and After. The nineteenth-century Danish almanac cartoon shows the fading of love from courtship to married life and parenthood. In the twentieth century, Scandinavian governments have played an ever-greater role in safeguarding the young and weak in society by creating a social welfare system that provides a valuable safety net but, some assert, becomes tyrannical and invasive in the lives of individuals.

TRANSLATION:

An Everyday Story

particularly recommended as reading for young girls during summer evenings.

In a week we shall celebrate our wedding, beloved Christina! Then you will be mine forever. Oh, how happy that thought makes me, happier than I can say!

(Ten years later)

I will show her who is the master of this house, she or I. — Ugh! that a person should be damned to be subject to such a beast for his whole life! It's enough to drive one mad!

Working-class life under such conditions was marked by tremendous spatial constriction. In working-class Helsinki, for instance, multiple families often shared common bathroom and sauna facilities. Extended families—including adults, children, and the elderly—typically lived in a one- or two-room flat. Women went to the harbor docks to do their laundry, sometimes taking the laundry of upper-class families along as well for extra income. The limitations of worker housing influenced the size and form of Finnish working-class families, with the average number of children per household declining markedly. Rural activities, such as food preservation and baking, were also hindered by the limited space of urban homes and the increased presence of women and children in the urban work force.

The difficulties of urban life, combined with romantic interest in the peasant countryside, led to a nostalgic glorification of the rural environment. Scenes from life in farm communities became staples of Scandinavian literature from the nineteenth century onward, continuing even as the populations became urbanized.

In a development parallel to the development of landscape parks in North American cities (for example, New York's Central Park), open air museums were established in a number of Scandinavian capitols. Typical farm buildings, shops, and churches from throughout the countryside were removed to those museums for public enjoyment and edification. In such parks as Stockholm's Skansen, Norway's Bygdøy, and Helsinki's Seurasaari, elite and working-class Scandinavians alike could glimpse a way of life that had become symbolic of national character and worth. Authorities and intellectuals were slow to include urban housing in such parks, and city life became symbolic of the harsh, ugly side of modern existence, especially in Scandinavian literature.

The glorification of the rural village would eventually lead, during the twentieth century, to ambitious countercultural social experiments, such as the bohemian village-in-the-city, Copenhagen's now famous Christiania. Communitarian experiments—sometimes urban and sometimes rural—became important social phenomena in many parts of Denmark and the rest of Scandinavia. Although involving only a small portion of the population and sometimes ending in disaster, such experiments reflected widespread concerns over life in modern, industrialized Scandinavia and a strong faith in the utopian qualities of the small community.

The Politics of Family and Community Today

Family and community became prime issues in Scandinavian politics from the late nineteenth century onward. Issues of women's rights, children's welfare, poverty, health care, and education became the central focus of the Social Democratic and other parties. Interest in those issues gained impetus as voting rights were gradually extended throughout Scandinavia from landholding men alone to all qualified adults. The turn of the century's leftward shift, reversed partly during the era of the two

world wars, eventually led to the mature Social Welfare states of contemporary Scandinavia.

In today's Scandinavia, family and community receive unparalleled public investment. Extensive government programs guarantee a broad range of benefits, including health care, old-age pensions, education, maternity leave, and children's upkeep. Critics claim that the greater mobility of modern urban life, coupled with supportive state welfare programs, has undermined the once crucial cohesiveness of family and community, engendering a bureaucratic society of individualists. Defenders of Scandinavia's social welfare system counter that social programs have merely filled the cultural void created by the long-term effects of modernization. In any case, however, few would disagree that modern Scandinavians rely today on the state for many services formerly carried out by community and family, including the care of children and the elderly and the maintenance of social order.

At a time when most Scandinavians live in urban areas, the regional and local identities characteristic of agrarian life continue to play a key role in both local and national culture. The threatening aspects of integration into the world economy and political system, as well as the arrival of refugee populations and migrants from within Scandinavia, have led to a marked revival in regional culture as a symbolic defense against cultural inundation.

The form and details of such revitalization efforts vary with group and place. Local festivals, foodways, and occasional legislation are maintained to preserve many rural areas from the forces of urban expansion. Cultural distinctiveness, such as Saami cultural identity in northern Scandinavia or Finnish identity in various parts of Norway and Sweden, has become revitalized through cultural and language-maintenance programs. In more peripheral areas throughout Scandinavia, religious sectarianism has helped maintain community integrity and exclusivity, despite economic transformations and the development of vacation homes in many of those formerly isolated areas. Insular religious sectarianism characterizes much of the coastal and many of the island communities of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroes.

While regional and rural local culture has continued to play an important part in the way Scandinavian societies view themselves, the city has remained central to the realities of existence today. The shortcomings and dangers of life in an urban environment are subjects of great concern in much of the region. As elsewhere in the modern West, the contemporary Scandinavian city brings together people in complex webs of overlapping communal identities. In public garden lots, leased from the city or local authority and used to grow vegetables and flowers, many urban Scandinavians express their rural connections and agrarian ideals. At the same time, however—as Barbro Klein (1990) has shown in her study of Stockholm gardens—urban lot-holders' behavior and attitudes toward persons of other cultural backgrounds sharing the same public gardens (for

Nils-Aslak Valkeapää

One of the leading artistic figures in the Saami cultural revival is Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (1943-), whose free-verse poetry recalls the cohesiveness of traditional Saami communities. By combining poetry with song, archival photographs, and hand-drawn illustrations, Valkeapää's works seek to express the essence of Saami identity for modern Saami readers. *Ruoktu Väimmus* (1985; *Trekways of the Wind*, 1994)—a compilation of several of the author's earlier works—is the first extensive collection of Valkeapää's poetry to be translated into English. In the following excerpt, the author addresses his Saami readers, expressing the difficulties of explaining Saami cultural and communal identity to outsiders:

My home is in my heart
it migrates with me

The Yoik is alive in my home
the happiness of children
sounds there
herd-bells ring
dogs bark
the lasso hums
In my home
the fluttering edges of *gáktis*
the leggings of the Sámi girls
warm smiles

My home is in my heart
it migrates with me

You know it brother
you understand it sister
but what do I say to strangers
who spread out everywhere
how shall I answer their questions
that come from a different world?



The midnight sun. Woodcut from Olaus Magnus's *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (1555).

The picture has been renamed "Sun above the Nordic welfare state" in an article—"Vinna eller försvinna?"—by Claes Andersson (1991).

example, Swedish-speaking Finns, Middle Easterners, and ethnic Chinese refugees from Vietnam) reflect deep-seated ambivalence toward cultural outsiders. Throughout contemporary Scandinavia, subtle social strategies of avoidance and distancing characterize interactions between strangers of any origin. This uneasiness when confronted by the new or foreign represents the negative flip-side of the cohesive communal cultures of traditional Scandinavia.

In many ways, the twentieth-century triumph of Social Democratic ideals in the Scandinavian nations can be seen as an extension of ancient communitarian values to the level of the state. In cultures shaped by millennia of struggle with a fierce and yet fragile environment, the desire to ensure the safety and well-being of one's neighbor has proven extremely important. Fears, however, abound in contemporary Scandinavian societies: has the state-cum-community grown so large as to become hopelessly bureaucratic and ultimately unsympathetic to human needs? Has the importance of the family (whichever type that may be) been eroded by years of state support and care? Will the structures of assistance built into Scandinavian societies today be overwhelmed by the arrival of outsiders or (perhaps more pressingly) by the aging and decline of the resident population? Will integration into wider economic and political associations lead to the abandonment of the Scandinavian region's unique and effective communitarian social strategies? The fears of Scandinavian citizens are considerable, and the coming century will undoubtedly see further change in these countries' social institutions. Such changes in Scandinavia will occur, however, with a public awareness born of ages of attention to family and community.

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Photograph of man and child, by courtesy of Lars Bahl, Copenhagen, Denmark. 1

Map from Olaus Magnus's *Historia* (see above). 2

Excerpt from a Traditional Orphan's Song. Archives of the Finnish Literature Society, 1892. 3

Plan and detail of an excavated long-house at Skalakot, Iceland, by courtesy of Jacqueline Simpson, *Everyday Life in the Viking Age*. New York: Dorset P, 1967. 4

Excerpt from the *Hávamál*, in translator Patricia Terry's *Poems of the Elder Edda*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1990. 6

Photo portrait of Martin Andersen [Nexø], taken in Askov, Denmark, 1892. 7

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Historical map of forestation on Læsø. Reprinted in, and from, Bjarne Stoklund's "Economy, Work and Social Roles." *Ethnologia Europaea* 15 (1985): 129–63. 10

Woodcut of clans meeting at a medieval wedding, from Olaus Magnus's *Historia* (see above). 10

Quotation from Elias Lönnrot's collected songs of the *The Kalevala*. Translated by F. P. Magoun. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1963. See 23: 27–42. 11

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Maps of field patterns in Denmark before and after enclosure. Reprinted in, and from, Bent Rying's *Denmark: History*. Copenhagen: the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1988. Reprinted by courtesy of the Ministry. 12

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Quotation from H. C. Andersen's *Mit Livs Eventyr*. In *Samlede Skrifter I*. Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1876. Page 4, tr. Niels Ingwersen. 14

A meeting of classes and backgrounds, a sketch reprinted in, and from, B. Blüdnikow and H. Stevnsborg's *København 1790. Billeder af dagliglivet*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1983. 14

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