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Integration of Immigrating Merchants in Trondheim in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century

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Introduction

In the period from mid-seventeenth century up to late eighteenth century overseas merchants established themselves as an elite in Trondheim. In that period Trondheim was structured as a port-city connected to the larger European economic network surrounding the North Sea and the Baltic. Merchants immigrating from London, Hamburg, Amsterdam and above all from Flensburg settled in Trondheim and monopolised the growing export of the region, consisting of fish, timber and copper.

My paper will deal with some aspects of their construction of networks in their new home place. Their position was based on one hand on their international network. Many of them had strong family traditions in trade – also in trade on Norway – and they were eager to maintain and shape their connections abroad. On the other hand their position was based on a social integration in the elite, in which intermarriage was an important element. The third element I will focus on is their position as intermediaries between the region surrounding the city and the international market. Through the intensified trade and closer connection to the world market these merchants brought, people in the region were recruited into the export industries as workers in the forests, on the sawmills, in the mines, and as transport workers and fishermen, in addition to their work as peasants. Following this development, work in the households was restructured in new ways along gender lines. As intermediaries between city and hinterland, the merchants managed, with support of the growing state, to a large degree to monopolise foreign connections and divide commerce between themselves and different groups of traders allowed only to trade inside the country.¹

Merchants with an international background

Before the seventeenth century there was very little international trade originating in Trondheim. Bergen was the international commercial city in Norway, and what was exported from Trondheim went through Bergen. That was changed during the seventeenth century. Several merchants coming from abroad established themselves in Trondheim and built up an international trade from there. But their presence in Trondheim and in the region was not new at the time. From earlier on merchants from Holland, England and Germany had sailed along the Norwegian coast up to Finnmark and traded with the peasants there, buying fish. Up to the middle of the seventeenth century foreigners could quite freely trade with the peasants, but from then on official policy gave privileges to Norwegian merchants and took steps to centralise trade to the cities.

Quite a few foreign merchants answered to this by establishing themselves in Trondheim. For some of them their family background is known, and we can trace their kinship traditions to long distance trade to the region in earlier generations. One of them was

¹ The paper is based on my book *De trondhjemske handelshusene på 1700-tallet. Slegt, hushold og forretning (The Trondheim Merchant Houses. Family, Household and Trade)*, Trondheim 1998, and my present work on a regional history on Trøndelag, where my contribution covers the period 1650-1850, to be published 2005.

Henrik Horneman, born in Flensburg in 1644, who married a merchant's widow in Trondheim in 1669. His grandfather is known to have traded on North-Norway in the early 1600's. How Henrik Horneman first came to Trondheim we do not know, but most probably he had been sailing on one of the many Flensburger ships trading on Trondheim. The immigrating merchants kept the contact with their place of origin, as for instance the Englishman Thomas Hammond, who is first traced in Trondheim in the 1650's. He was then travelling as a merchant, but in 1659 he married in Trondheim and settled there, continuing his trade – now with his brother in London as partner.

The men who established themselves as long distance merchants in Trondheim from the mid-seventeenth century on belonged to an international network stretching over the North Sea and Baltic region. Their trade and finances gravitated towards Amsterdam, where they had commissionaires, but they also built up a network connecting themselves to other cities of importance to their trade. Building up this network, kinship relations were of great importance, either to use directly as commissionaires, or to help them access a wider network of contacts.²

The establishment of an elite

On immigration to Trondheim, a few of the merchants brought capital in money. More important was their experience from international trade through generations and their contacts to the international network.³ As they came to the city as a result of the network of the long distance trade, they were already in a position to integrate into the – however small – circle of people who belonged to this network. To shape these contacts into an integrated circle able to establish themselves as an elite in the city, marriage policy was an important element. When Thomas Hammond changed his hometown from London to Trondheim it was done as a result of his marriage to Elisabeth Sommerschild, the daughter of another immigrating merchant, Henry Sommerschild or Henry Englishman. The father in law made his fortune on trade in timber and herring, while the son in law continued the timber trade with his brother in London as recipient of his goods. Lorentz Mortensen Angell is another example of immigrants who married into the local elite. He married not only once, but three times. His first marriage was entered into in 1653 with Margrethe Puls, the daughter of an already established immigrating merchant from Hamburg. With this marriage Lorentz entered the leading circle of his new hometown. The marriage also brought him considerable inheritance. His second marriage was with a woman with a strong family background on the coastal Norway and in the North Norwegian fisheries. His third marriage was with a woman who was not wealthy, but who was the widow of a man who had been trading in copper. Lorentz' three marriages established or strengthened his connections to the merchant elite in the city, the fish-trade interests in Northern Norway and the mining interests in the Trøndelag region. Many more examples of first and second marriages establishing important relationships could be mentioned.

The merchants in Trondheim were well aware of the importance of marriages. Catherine Hall has for England made a point out of the importance of wives as an informal partner in business, an extra source of capital, an extra pair of hands, extra knowledge and an extra set of family and friends.⁴ For immigrants the knowledge and connections to family and friends was extremely important. By means of marriage they could construct their social capital in a way that would help them convert it into money capital. In a description of

² Ida Bull: "Merchant households and their networks in eighteenth-century Trondheim", *Continuity and Change* 17 (2), 2002, pp. 213-231.

³ The concepts of economic, social and cultural capital, as they are analysed and used by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, are useful describing how this integration worked. P. Bourdieu: "Sur le pouvoir symbolique" in *Annales* 3/1977, pp. 405-11. P. Bourdieu: *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*, 1979.

⁴ Catherine Hall: *White, male and middle class*, Cambridge and Oxford, 1992, p. 180f.

Trondheim in 1702, the most important merchants are divided in three kinship circles. Around the central persons Albert Angell (a second-generation immigrant), Henrik Horneman (a first generation immigrant) and Jens Hansen Collin (immigrant from Denmark, with a slightly different background than the others, as he came to Trondheim as a civil servant and from that position made his way into business) were gathered their sons, sons in law and brothers in law, to constitute the upper strata of the Trondheim bourgeoisie.⁵ Later on these circles integrated further, through intermarriage between the families.

Henry Sommerschild was not only a merchant. He was also integrated in the administrative elite in the city as member of the city council.⁶ He was not the only one of the immigrating merchants who achieved such positions. When the Danish-Norwegian king in 1660 gave himself absolute power, the city administrations were changed. When Henry Sommerschild, as an early immigrant, was a member of the city council he was elected by the burghers. After 1660 the king had the power to appoint the council. But still the members were often recruited from the city. Several of the long distance merchants of first or second-generation immigrants were appointed to the council. When the merchants Hans Hagerup (married to the daughter of the immigrant Thomas Hammond) and Hans Horneman (son of an immigrant) were appointed members of the council in 1731 it was even made as a point that there *should* be merchants in the council.⁷ The circle of long distance merchants were heavily involved in governing the city.

Intermediaries between region and world market

When it was so important for Lorentz Angell to marry into a family with interest in the fish trade, or to marry a woman with connections in the copper trade, the reason was his own involvement in these trades. When merchants from the seventeenth century settled in Trondheim instead of travelling along the coast from abroad, it did not mean that the basis of their trade was changed. The basis was still raw material found in the countryside. Making themselves part of the elite in the city was therefore not enough for the immigrating merchants. Building a network tying the city to the region was equally important.

Fish was an old Norwegian trade, but grew in importance from the seventeenth century. The merchants who settled in Trondheim had to build a network to secure the goods. They did that partly by using professional fish traders with a foothold both in Trondheim and in the coastal areas, partly by using employed servants travelling to the fish districts and buying directly from the fishermen. Intensive work was needed to be able to compete with the more established fish trade in Bergen. To make this trade effective it was important to create stable contacts and networks that could secure sufficient supplies of fish. Marriage was an important way of creating such networks, and probably many of them could build on family acquaintances from earlier times.

Timber was also among the products that had made the Norwegian trade attractive to foreign merchants. The European need for timber was increasing, and especially the timber trade between England and Trondheim grew in the course of the seventeenth century. When Thomas Hammond established himself in Trondheim around the middle of the century, it was as a result of this trade. He bought timber from the peasants in the region, but quite soon he got hold of his own land and forest property, to be able to run his own sawmills with material from his own forests. Thomas Hammond's forest property was the basis that his daughter Sara

⁵ Bjørn Sogner: *Kjøpstad og stiftsstad. Trondheim bys historie*, Trondheim 1962, p. 279.

⁶ Ida Bull: *Thomas Angell; kapitalisten som ble hjembyens velgjører*, Trondheim 1992, p. 45.

⁷ Regional archiv in Trondheim, Magistrates archive Db22. Bull 1998, p. 284.

and son in law Albert Angell used to build a substantial timber trade and several saw mills in Trøndelag.⁸

Copper was the third important export article from Trondheim, and was a new product from the seventeenth century. The Røros mines were opened in 1644, the Løkken mines in 1656, and the Selbu mines in 1713. The Trondheim merchants were engaged in the copper exports from an early stage, and soon even as mine owners. Lorentz Mortensen Angell was already in 1665 an important copper exporter, and his trade connections to Flensburg concerned copper alongside with fish.⁹

The connection to the mines was the basis not only of copper exports, but also the provisioning of the mines. Even in years with loss on the copper, to own parts in the mines could be profitable. The owners had the right to supply the mining society with all provisions they needed. They were eager to take part in this trade, and if prices on these supplies were high, this could make up for losses on the copper.¹⁰ Copper export was therefore combined with trade in corn and other import goods, as well as fish sales to the mining societies. For a fish merchant the market at the mines was a nice supplement, which made him able to find an outlet of all his fish, as the fish sold to the mining people could be of poorer quality than that offered to the market abroad.

The role of the peasants

The fish trade obviously depended on the work of the fishermen. Originally the fish was dried in the fishing districts and sold as stockfish. But in the eighteenth century klipfish was introduced on the market. This was both more capital intensive and more labour intensive. The salt was a costly means of production and the fish had to be washed and dried in several operations. Merchants engaged more heavily not only in the trade, but in the financing and production as well. The new product also engaged the population along the coast more intensely.

The timber trade also depended on the work of the peasants. The sawmills depended on labour to cut the timber, float it down to the sawmill, saw the timber and bring it to the harbour for shipping. The fact that these merchants had their sawmills on their own land served to solve the problem of securing enough labour. The tenant farmers on their land were engaged in the forests and on the sawmills. Even the mines depended on the interplay between trade and agriculture. The work in the mines was full-time work, but only for the men in the families. The wages were calculated to be supplied by work on the small plot where wives and children were responsible for agriculture, and where the husbands took part in the work during weekends and harvests.¹¹ The mines also depended on labour from the peasants in the region for coal burning and transport.

The merchants doing long distance trade were obviously depending on raw material from the countryside and on the work of peasants in the region. But following this, the growth of international trade also changed the lives of peasant families in the region. When the trade during the seventeenth century was concentrated to cities, the peasants lost the direct contact

⁸ Stein Tveite: *Engelsk-Norsk trelasthandel 1640-1710*, Bergen/Oslo 1961, p. 472. Bull 1992, p. 46. Thomas Angells stiftelsers arkiv [The archive of Thomas Angell's foundation], Revisjonsforretning etter Thomas Angell, skifteforretninger etter Albert Angell og Sara Hammond.

⁹ Regional archive in Trondheim, Trh. notarialprot. 1679-1702, fol. 3b and following. H. Dahle: *Røros kobberværk 1644-1894*, Trondhjem 1894. Stadtarchiv Flensburg, A. Altes Archiv 222a Peter Bischoff. Reisebeschreibung 1677-78. Bull 1992, p. 34.

¹⁰ Knut Sprauten: "Rådmann Hans Hornemann og hans virksomhet", *Trondhjemske samlinger*, Trondheim 1980. Ida Bull: "Enkers levebrød i et førindustrielt bysamfunn", *Historisk tidsskrift* 1986.

¹¹ Eilert Sundt: *Om Røros og omegn; reiseberetning*. Trondheim 1858. Finn Birger Larsen: "Rørosarbeidernes levestandard på 1700-tallet", *Heimen* 1982, pp. 171-182.

with foreign merchants and ship captains. But when the merchants resident in Norwegian cities monopolised the trade, the roads to international markets were at the same time made more regular. The peasant families were able to base more of their existence on supplies and work for the export trade. The new ways of organising trade enabled the region to be more closely integrated in the commercial development in Europe. With their demand for export products the merchants induced peasants along the coast to intensify their fishing, peasants in the forest districts to labour in the timber industry, and peasants near the mines to engage as miners or as transport workers and coal burners. This development was closely connected to what has been called an industrious revolution.¹² This “revolution” is characterised by drawing household members more intensively into productive activities. In Trøndelag this development led more male peasants out of the household more of the time, working in fisheries for months, working in the forest during wintertime, working in the mines most of the week, or transporting deals, copper, provisions to and from Trondheim. The same development forced their wives and children to work more intensively cultivating the land and minding the farm animals. It has been said that a fisherman in this period is two persons, a man engaged in fisheries, and a woman running a farm.¹³ Eilert Sundt, who studied social questions in Norway around the middle of the nineteenth century, stressed the importance of agriculture for the miners’ families. This gave the miners’ wives a proper occupation, and was a considerable contribution to the households’ support.¹⁴

The close connection between industry and agriculture points to the concept of proto-industrialisation.¹⁵ Important characteristics of proto-industrialisation are that there exists an economic and social interplay between agriculture and industry in the way that labour can change between working in agriculture and industry according to need, season and gender; secondly, that the industry is co-ordinated by city merchants; and thirdly, that the industry depends on distant markets.¹⁶ The literature on proto-industrialisation has mostly concerned home industry, especially textile industry, performed in the workers’ homes, but organised by merchants who deliver the raw material and sell the products.¹⁷ But industry in the pre-industrial era was not restricted to home industry. Other forms of industry, likewise organised by merchants, were organised as manufactures or concentrated because of the access of resources.¹⁸ The proto-industrial characteristics are easily recognisable in the activities of the Trondheim capitalists if the criteria are taken to be interplay between work in agriculture and industry (seen more for the household as a unit than for each individual), merchants’ organisation, and distant markets, rather than home production. Trondheim capitalists invested their capital in the mining industry, equipped the mines with working capital like coal, gunpowder and iron, organised the activity, sold the products – and collected the profits.

¹² Jan de Vries: “The industrial revolution and the industrious revolution”, *The Journal of Economic History*, 54, 1994, pp. 249-270.

¹³ Reference in : Sølvi Sogner: *Far sjøl i stua og familien hans. Trekk fra norsk familiehistorie før og nå*, Oslo 1990, p. 34.

¹⁴ Eilert Sundt: *Om Røros og omegn; reiseberetning*, Trondhjem 1858.

¹⁵ F. Mendels: “Proto-industrialization: the first phase of the industrialization process”, *Journal of Economic History*, 32, 1972. Maxine Berg (ed.): *Markets and manufacture in early industrial Europe*, London 1991.

Sheilagh C. Ogilvie: “Proto-industrialization in Europe”, *Continuity and Change*, 8(2), 1993, pp.159-179.

¹⁶ M. Berg: *Markets and manufacture*, 1991, p. 4f.

¹⁷ Edgar Hovland, Helge W. Nordvik and Stein Tveite: “Proto-Industrialisation in Norway, 1750-1850: Fact or Fiction”, *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 1/1982, pp. 45-55, acknowledge the close connection between the Norwegian industries and agriculture. However, they dismiss the idea that proto-industrialisation played a prominent part in Norwegian economy, on the ground that putting-out system in production of consumer goods was more or less absent, precisely because Norwegian peasants were heavily engaged in production of staple goods for export.

¹⁸ Sidney Pollard: “Regional markets and national development”, in M. Berg (ed.): *Markets and manufacture*, London 1991.

Based on their landed estates they built up sawmills, and organised the peasants on their lands as “proto-industrial” workers in the timber trade. They invested money in the fish trade by furnishing the fishermen with equipment, and organised the coastal population in klipfish production on the coastal rocks. Fish trade, mining and timber trade were all industries living in a symbiotic relationship with agriculture. All of them depended on workers in the trade working in agriculture as well. Most work in these industries was not full year’s work. Only mining gave in principle work all year, but there it was necessary to make allowances for the workers’ agricultural work by giving them time off during weekends and harvest seasons. And mining depended also on coal burning and transportation, performed by peasants in the region. All of these industries employed mostly men, except fish processing, where women were heavily involved. Work in the industry was not supposed to give the men a wage to support a family. The fact that the family had their basis in agriculture gave work to other family members and was a necessary contribution to the family economy. The interplay between agriculture and industry made it possible to pay wages below subsistence. Agriculture in that way subsidised the industries on which the merchants based their trade.¹⁹

For peasant families this involvement in capitalist economy made them able to pay increasing taxes to a more organised state. It also made them able to increase their consumption of new import goods. Silk scarves and velvet caps, sugar, coffee and tobacco became available to people also in the countryside. Civil servants complained in the late eighteenth century that imported material and luxury products were spreading among ordinary people. But one of these civil servants commented on the complaints and claimed that it was a fact to be praised rather than regretted. The lust for luxury stimulated the industriousness of the people. Fear of hunger could make people industrious, but in the eighteenth century the availability of new articles of consumption could also stimulate industry.²⁰

Conclusion

Seen from the city, the region can seem as the city’s hinterland, whose function was to produce what the city needed for its own consumption and for its trade. From the region on the other hand, the city was a necessary link to the international economy, enabling the district to develop a more diversified economy.

Trondheim can be perceived as a network city. Based on its regional network the city linked itself to other trading centres in Europe and in the world. In this, the merchants’ personal networks were essential. Seen from the large merchant cities in Europe, like Amsterdam, Hamburg and London, Trondheim was a small town in the periphery, but all the same one of those cities, with their own local network in their own region, necessary to make the larger economic systems work.

The city can not be seen isolated from its surrounding. The economic life in the city depended on utilising the resources in the region where it was situated. Moreover, the region depended on the city and its economic structures to be able to utilise these resources. The city based networks served to mobilise the resources in the region, and tie the region together. In this process, the lives of the people in the districts were changed. Peasant households were drawn more intensely into a capitalist economy, and that changed the structure of their work and how the work was organised along gender lines.

¹⁹ Pat Hudson: “Financing firms, 1700-1850, in Maurice W. Kirby and Mary B. Rose (ed.): *Business enterprise in modern Britain; from the eighteenth to the twentieth century*, Routledge 1994:88-112.

²⁰ Gerd Mordt: *Kristiania-ansjosen og den industrielle revolusjon, Heimen.*, 2003.