

WE, NORWEGIANS
THE NATIONAL IDENTITY
OF NORWEGIAN ELITES
IN EARLY MODERN TIMES
(16TH-18TH CENTURY)



Krystyna Szelągowska

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Norvegia Regnum, 1662, Willem et Johannes Blaeu

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INTRODUCTION

Norwegian elites are the collective protagonist of this work. In the context of modern Norway this concept needs detailed analysis, especially that we are concerned with a non-homogeneous period. Although the 18th century is the main focus of this work, references to the previous periods (16th and 17th centuries) are numerous and unavoidable. In the age following the year 1660, when absolutist regime was introduced in Denmark-Norway, the concept of elites is more or less uniform – it refers mostly to officials i.e. lay officials, protestant clergy and military personnel. By its own nature the topic directs us towards the literate elites; those who were either involved in the public debate or felt a desire to write down their experiences. These were mostly civil servants – only later, in the second half of 18th century the educated burghers started participating in the public dispute. It is important to say that these were immigrant elites, coming mostly from Denmark. But when analysing the earlier period, all this appears to be not a simple matter. First of all, it was a unique transition period of the disappearing of the old (Norwegian) elites and shaping new, Danish-Norwegian, ones. Secondly, their composition was somewhat different because apart from the representatives of literate protestant clergy, it included also a few noble families and the upper stratum of the burgher's class, who in the 16th and 17th centuries (until 1660) expressed their identity only in a limited way, for example through political activity. As will be shown, the Norwegian peasantry of the modern era will need to be analysed as well, which results from adopting a certain approach to identity formation of the Norwegian elites.

The chronological period with which this work is concerned is the modern period (i.e. from the 16th to 18th century), but caesuras are established according to specific dates. This may seem strange as we deal with a topic of change in identity and thought. Both dates are connected with revolutionary events in the Norwegian history, although it is apparent that a change in thought connected with particular phenomena often appears across generations. The beginning is the year 1536, which is a moment when the personal union between Norway and Denmark was replaced by the subjugation of one country to the other. The

formal relationship between the two countries, however, was not very clear, which I will try to show in the first chapters of this work.

The end of the period falls between 1780 and 1790. These dates are chosen both on the basis of merit and from practical reasons. The latter reasons are such that, in relation to the shaping of Norwegian national identity, the last decade of the 18th century has been studied by historians in detail. However, much more important seems to me the fact that in the 1790s an extensive national program exists which does not yet postulate independence and creation of nation state but is not very far from that. In fact, one can talk about a fully-shaped identity of the generation which soon will attempt to build a Norwegian state but because of the strong legalism of Norwegian society, it has postulated only an in-depth reconstruction of the Danish-Norwegian Union.

The symbol of this identity can be seen in the action of four Norwegian merchants, the so-called conspiracy in Eda Skanse of 1790, which is (in fact, still incidental) evidence of budding Norwegian separatism.¹ The political invigoration connected with the French Revolution and the relations between Sweden and Denmark as well as the economic boom experienced by Norway thanks to the American Independence War were direct causes of shaping the new thought about national identity.

Two main aims of this work are as follows: an attempt to characterize the changes in the national identity of the aristocracy of officials and to reconstruct its shape in the final moment of this process. It does not mean that I believe that the identity once shaped stays unmodified. It is possible, however, to distinguish certain stages of this process and attempt to identify the moment in which identity – at this particular stage – reached its mature form. In our case this moment happened at the turn of the last two decades of the 18th century. Soon after, however, the process of re-evaluation will start anew as the changing historical circumstances will pose other challenges to Norwegians.

Therefore, this work will aim at presenting both the content of national identity in the 18th century as well as the sources that inspired it – through showing that it results from previous stages of national identity development in 16th and 17th century. In Norwegian historiography these periods are often treated as an introductory phase, as the most common current approach is the analysis of

¹ N. Bjørge, 'Selvstendighet og union. Fra Middelalderen til 1905', in *Norsk utenrikspolitikk historie*, vol. I, Oslo 1995. pp. 204–205; C. Pabst, 'Zur Vorgeschichte der Universität Oslo und zum Erwachen des norwegischen Nationalbewusstseins', in *Politische Ideologie und Nationalstaatliche Ordnung*, München, Wien 1968, p. 264.

what happened later i.e. re-gaining of the independence by Norway in 1814. This work will rather view the phenomenon of 18th century identity as the final stage – the result of changes in consciousness taking place in the modern era.

The goal of this work will be presenting earlier phenomena from which the 18th century identity originated and which the elites could resort to during the reconstruction process. This requires characterizing, first of all, the then-existing (i.e. before the year 1660) consciousness of the elites – their sense of belonging to the Norwegian state and Norwegian national community. This consciousness was mostly visible in political activity of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie and in the written activity of clerks and clergymen (creating literature and scientific writings). The second resource which the 18th century elites drew on in the process of identity shaping was modern culture as well as peasant identity. Accepting this assumption leads us to the third research aim of this work, which is an attempt to propose a theory of national identity changes in the circumstances of dependence from another country and during the influx of foreign elites.

With such research questions, three areas of theoretical considerations appear. The first is the question about the definition of national identity, closely connected to the problem whether we can discuss it in the context of pre-industrial or pre-modern era. The second issue is the problem of relations between the elites and lower social classes resulting from the concept of identity changes presented in this work. The third, finally, is the question about the understanding of the term: collective identity.

Deliberations on ‘the age’ of nations and national consciousness are related to the heart of the matter i.e. focusing on the shape of elites’ consciousness in the modern era. Equally important are the questions about the mechanisms of identity development in those elite circles, whose origin was foreign (or which were subject to denationalization) but which gradually became rooted in the new identity.

Both questions have been the subject of academic research for a long time. The discussion about the definition of a nation, what the process of shaping a nation looks like, how to define national consciousness, has continued for more than two hundred years. One of the most important questions in this debate is whether we can discuss national identity in the preindustrial age, or, as historiography formerly claimed, in the age before the French Revolution. This question is a basic one in the process of nation shaping and can be interpreted as the question whether nations are a modern invention or whether they have origins in earlier eras. The debate on this topic has resulted in a large body of literature. It is so

broad that studies, reviews bibliographies, encyclopaedias and guides of this literature are being created to present the major theories of historians, sociologists, psychologists or political scientists.² In fact, a full presentation of the academic debate on this topic as well as using the complete list of references in an introduction is no longer possible. It is also not in fact necessary because as it usually happens no theory explains in full the specific, empirically experienced, phenomena. It is, therefore, advisable to employ many different theoretical models.

This way, a historian, as well as other scholars, must attempt at a convergence of different interpretations or concepts. A Polish scholar specializing in the national identity of peasants, Jan Molenda, said the following in reference to theories and definitions of identity created by sociologists and psychologists: 'They are not in fact very relevant to a historian concerned with older periods because his method of analysis is contingent on the preserved sources.'³ Craig Calhoun wrote recently that no single theory can explain a such diverse matter like nationalism.⁴ It is then necessary to select from many theories these elements, which could help explain this process.

In the beginning, one reservation must be made that the notion of 'nationalism' (which hardly does feature in the present work) is to be used only for the ideology and political movement which contain ideas of nation-state, national unity as the basic, most important and extolled value, the cult of national distinctiveness, and finally, the notion of expansion. In this way we are concerned with a modern phenomenon.⁵ This, however, is not related to identity or national consciousness or the existence of a particular nation.

² Two recent works can be mentioned in this context: P. Lawrence, *Nationalism. History and Theory*, Pearson Education Limited 2005 and A. D. Smith, *Nationalism*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2003 (for older studies see K. Szelałowska, 'Problemy narodu i świadomości narodowej w nowszych publikacjach angielskich i amerykańskich (na marginesie pracy Anthony D. Smitha, *The ethnic origins of Nations*, Oxford 1986)', *Przegląd Historyczny* 80 (1989) 3, p. 571–579). Both will be used and referenced to in this text in Polish translation (P. Lawrence, *Nacjonalizm. Historia i teoria*, translated P. K. Frankowski, Warszawa 2007 and A. D. Smith, *Nacjonalizm. Teoria, ideologia, historia*, translated E. Chomicka, Warszawa 2007. An interesting debate (T. Stryjek, J. Kiliński, M. Łuczewski) on the last Polish books in that topic has been recently published in *Kwartalnik Historyczny* CXVI (2009), 4, Warszawa 2009, p. 73–141.

³ J. Molenda, *Chłopi, naród, niepodległość. Kształtowanie się postaw narodowych i obywatelskich chłopów w Galicji i Królestwie Polskim w przededniu odrodzenia Polski*, Warszawa 1999, p. 34.

⁴ C. Calhoun, *Nacjonalizm*, transl. B. Piasecki, Warszawa 2007, p. 183.

⁵ Cf. A. D. Smith, *The ethnic Origins of Nations*, New York 1986, p. 11; idem, *Theories of Nationalism*, London 1971, p. 171.

Medieval scholars have always defended the concept of national identity in pre-modern age.⁶ Johan Huizinga is remembered to have said the following about the supposed non-existence of national identity in the Middle Ages, which was a result of lack of appropriate notions: 'On the same basis one might conclude that there were no cosmic rays in the Middle Ages.'⁷ Although modernists rarely refer to such argumentation, pre-modern scholars still have a lot to debate. It is undeniable that thanks to works of Middle Ages historians and the theory of *longue durée* formed by the 'Annales' school, the modernist view of the nation history was seriously weakened.⁸ Let us remind that modernists are those who propose that nations are products of modernization and that they did not exist in pre-industrial age. This view dominates almost the whole of the 20th century, and its main representatives are Hans Kohn, Louis L. Snyder, Carlton J. H. Hayes, Karl W. Deutsch, Elie Kedourie, as well as modern scholars such as Ernst Gellner and Benedict Anderson. This pattern is often accompanied by the constructivist approach, concerning not the age of nation itself but the forms of nation shaping processes as 'created' by the elites. The famous theory of Eric Hobsbawm of invented tradition⁹ belongs to this group. A contrary theory (primordialism) assumes that nations, first of all, are a natural phenomenon, secondly, are 'eternal' and continue their existence in an unchanged form. This theory is connected with the 'primary bond', which existed before a rational and

⁶ P. Lawrence, op. cit., pp. 261, 262; A. Kłoskowska, *Kultury narodowe u korzeni*, Warszawa 2005, p. 48.

⁷ J. Huizinga, 'Patriotism and nationalism in European History'(1940), in *Men and Ideas: history, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance; essays*, transl. J. S. Holmes, H. van Marle, New York 1959, p. 99; other argumentation emphasized that the medieval nationalism could have been expressed in forms alien to us and that is why we have difficulty with recognizing them (R. T. Jones, *The Desire of nations*, Llandybie 1974, p. 72); see *Nationalism in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. L. Tipton, New York 1972.

⁸ This opinion of a Polish scholar seems largely exaggerated to me: 'The West has ceased discussing whether nations are constructed or not but – how they are constructed or re-constructed. It has become obvious that nations are a modern phenomenon, tightly connected to changes of the nation-state, economy and social structure. It is not debated, however, whether the nations are modern or not but what is their connection to modernity' M. Łuczewski, 'Przeszłość i przyszłość polskiej nacjologii', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 116 (2009), 4, p. 126; it is worth adding that the author of this opinion lists in the footnote works from 1998–2003. See P. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 295.

⁹ E. Hobsbawm, 'Wprowadzenie. Wynajdywanie tradycji', in E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger (eds.) *Tradycja wynaleziona*, transl. M. Godyń, F. Godyń, Kraków 2008. It is worth noticing that the author distinguishes tradition from custom, convention and routine (op. cit. p. 10–11).

civic bond appeared and molded the identity. The most famous theoreticians of this approach are Edward Shils or John Armstrong. Recently, this theory has been developed by Azar Gat in his book *Nations. The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism*.¹⁰ The author sees the question of primordial approach in his own way, as he states: “Although highly diverse and multifarious, human cultural forms have been built as a range of variations around a clearly recognizable deep core of innate, evolution-shaped human propensities. (–) Ethnicity in general, as opposed to any specific ethnos, is primordial in the sense that it has always been a defining feature of our species. Nationalism is not primordial in that sense, if only because that particularly form of political ethnicity is historically intertwined with the rise of the state-societies, premodern or modern”.¹¹ The theory of perennialism, on the other hand, accepts the existence of nations and national consciousness in the distant past, but with the reservation that it is rather a historical and cultural entity and not a natural one, undergoing changes. Another theory – ethnosymbolism – rejects both primordialism and the modern approach. Its most famous current representative Anthony D. Smith maintains that in the case of many nations some form of national consciousness existed before and links them to the subjective memory of an ethnic community which precedes a nation.¹² One of the supporters of these anti-modernist viewpoints is the Polish historian Benedykt Zientara.¹³

Another motive in this debate is the problem of the way a nation is shaped. Already in the 19th century there appeared a theory, most fully presented by a German scholar Friedrich Meinecke (although the roots of the theory are to be found in the thought of J. G. Herder) about two ways of nation shaping in Europe. He distinguishes between ‘non-political’ or cultural nations, which are prevalent in Eastern Europe and political and legal nations, which exist in Western Europe mostly. In the case of the former, we talk about the ‘nation-to-state’ model and in the case of the latter – about the ‘state-to-nation’ model.

Since long it has been suspected that this theory does not exhaust the complexity of modern nation shaping processes. Simply speaking, in many cases it

¹⁰ A. Gat with A. Jacobson, *Nations. The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press 2013.

¹¹ Ibidem, pp. 41, 42.

¹² A. D. Smith, *Nacjonalizm...*, pp. 65–83; P. Lawrence, op. cit., pp. 244–256; A. D. Smith, *The ethnic...*, p. 12.

¹³ B. Zientara, *Świt narodów europejskich. Powstawanie świadomości narodowej na obszarze Europy pokarolińskiej*, Warszawa 1985.

does not agree with the facts. Firstly, the division into eastern and western types of nations seems to be a simplification because in this very case the border on the Elbe cannot be the decisive factor.¹⁴ Secondly, the notion of ‘small nations’ of Europe created instead is also not satisfactory because it is too general. This group encompasses most European communities, which, apart from the fact that they are small in terms of population, are very different from one another. Thirdly, the separation of ‘culture’ and ‘politics’ can also be questioned. While it is possible to imagine a cultural community, that is a community linked by bonds of various culture systems, without referring to any political projects (for example not promoting any independence demands), the opposite situation is very unlikely. Besides, in many cases the cultural demands have in fact a political character.¹⁵ It is especially visible in the history of many Eastern European states – such as Poland. Let us stress that it also concerns Norway.

Smith proposes a certain modification of Meinecke’s division. He talks about the western model of a nation which is territorial and eastern model – which is ethnic. The former is characterized as the one based on sense of territory, common law and legal institution, with a sense of solidarity and shared culture.¹⁶ The eastern type of nation undergoes a process of transforming an ethnic community into a national one through mobilization, territorialization, and politicization. The community is based on genealogy, folk culture, dialect and nativism. It does not refer to common law or legal institutions.¹⁷ Unfortunately, this division leaves a lot to be desired as well, which becomes obvious to anyone who studies, for example, Norwegian history, which shows how closely related those two areas can be. Similarly, the Finnish history does not follow this division, because here both cultural and political-territorial bonds played key roles in the shaping of the nation.¹⁸

In the context of the distinction between eastern and western model of nation formation, a question, especially important to the Norwegian historians, appeared about the role of the elites in the nation-shaping process taking place in multi-national states such as the Oldenburg monarchy or Habsburg empire.

¹⁴ Andrzej Walicki questioned Meinecke’s dichotomy saying that it is not relevant to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Idea narodu w polskiej myśli oświeceniowej*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 20–21).

¹⁵ A. D. Smith, *Theories...*, p. 172.

¹⁶ A. D. Smith, *The ethnic...*, p. 135–136.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 137–138.

¹⁸ Ł. Sommer, *Mowa ojców potrzeba od zaraz. Fińskie spory o język narodowy w pierwszej połowie XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2009, p. 135.

The previously mentioned constructivist theory uses here the notion of ‘national awakening’, which in fact means the process of creating national identity by the elites. These elites later instill this national identity in the common people (who at the time have at most their local, ethnic identity and the sense of being a local, someone from here). This in consequence is supposed to lead to the nation-shaping process in the 19th century.¹⁹

This model can also be questioned. Placing the initial stages of the process at the beginning of the 18th century automatically produces a question about what was before and what ideas and heritage the elites of the time could refer to. Secondly, it seems that no ‘creation’ of national consciousness would have been possible if it did not correspond to the mentality, expectations and imaginations of the lower social classes. We should rather talk about a continuous re-interpretation of tradition, its new codification and staging, but not about its ‘invention.’²⁰ Medieval scholars noticed that in the Middle Ages ‘in the process of shaping European nations the main role was played not by the top strata of the intellectual and chivalric elites but the middle chivalry, lower clerks, the middle class, lower clergy, i.e. all classes less attached to Roman, chivalric, or Christian universalism and more to the life of the country people.’²¹ This would mean that even then, despite the existing at the time class divisions, national consciousness of the upper classes developed as a result of contacts with lower classes.

I am definitely most close to non-modern theories, although I see a lot of inspiring and interesting ideas in different schools of thought. Borrowings and syncretism can be risky, however, because of an attempt to connect contradictory philosophical systems, but, nevertheless, one can find in all of them some elements that are more universal. It is my opinion that a nation defined as human community linked to a certain, specific, territory, with which people have emotional ties, has existed in Europe at least since the Middle Ages²². It is at the same time obvious that nations change over time – no one will claim that the shape of the nation then was the same as now. This concerns every historical phenomenon including the notion of the state.

¹⁹ In Polish historiography this position was represented by Józef Chlebowczyk, *O prawie do bytu małych i młodych narodów*, Warszawa 1983.

²⁰ T. Edensor, *Tożsamość narodowa, kultura popularna i życie codzienne*, transl. A. Sadza, Kraków 2004, p. 19.

²¹ A. Kłoskowska, op. cit., p. 48

²² Recently an interesting concept has been presented by Caspar Hirschi: *The Origins of Nationalism. An Alternative History from Ancient Rome to Early Modern Germany*, Cambridge 2012, pp. 1–3.

The state is a certain structure and organization which has been changing over the ages while keeping some common elements and the same can be said about a nation.²³ It cannot be excluded that national consciousness, a bond with the community, could manifest itself in political, administrative or social structures, which may seem strange to us today.²⁴ Following the perennialist theory I consider a nation i.e. a certain union of people to be continuous although assuming many different forms. Similarly to ethnosymbolists, it is important for me what pre-modern forms of national and ethnic identity looked like.²⁵ This approach defines the national identity as a constant reinterpretation of a pattern composed of values, myths, legends and symbols and the people's identification with this pattern as well as with the cultural heritage.²⁶ I feel close to the school of 'primordialism' because to understand the notion of identity it is in my opinion necessary – although I am aware of the risk linked to this stance – to assume the existence of certain innate human characteristics. I will return to this idea later.

Many theoreticians point out the fact that one of the most primary components of national identity is the bond with the territory which results from having been born and brought up in a certain place. The connection to land and the place of birth becomes the most important and the most primary element in identification of national community.²⁷ Its importance was stressed by John Armstrong by calling it a dominant factor in forming the group-identity in Europe.²⁸ Benedykt Zientara provided an interesting interpretation of these issues writing: 'The tribal identity contained already most components typical for the wider national identity except one: love of one's country understood as a specific geographical area. A long-lasting residence of the people with a tribal identity in a new country and accepting them into the community facilitated the creation of a nation.'²⁹

²³ Compare A. Ousagen, 'Nationernes denationalisering', *Scandia*, LX (1994), 1, p. 53.

²⁴ R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., p. 71.

²⁵ A. D. Smith, *Nacjonalizm...*, pp. 72, 81.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 31.

²⁷ Even in the situation when land is rather a myth or a memory as in the case of the European Jews. A. D. Smith, *The ethnic...*, p. 28; Compare S. Ossowski, 'Ziemia i naród', in: idem, *O ojczyźnie i narodzie*, Warszawa 1984, p. 55.

²⁸ See P. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 253.

²⁹ B. Zientara, 'Świadomość narodowa w Europie Zachodniej w średniowieczu. Powstanie, mechanizmy, zjawiska', in A. Gieysztor, S. Gawlas (eds.), *Państwo, naród, stany w świadomości wieków średnich*, Warszawa 1990, pp. 15–16; A. D. Smith, *The ethnic...*, p. 93, 184–186; G. Karlsson noticed that when in the Middle Ages the Icelandic nation started to develop, being immigrant from Norway, the main indicator was the territory and only

In reference to Finland, a thesis connected to multilingualism has been formulated that the idea of a nation has for a long time been based first and foremost on the birth criterion: the concept of a nation ‘meant those who live in or come from Finland regardless whether they speak Finnish or Swedish’.

In this context, a suggestion of a ‘third way’ was formulated of how a nation can be created: ‘A nation is not in fact only a totality of all its citizens, or an ethnic (or religious or ideological) group living in a foreign country, but there is a third possibility that it is a totality of citizens living on a given area if this group perceives itself as a whole.’³⁰ In this context the role of the name as an element shaping the identity is basic and important.³¹

Contemporary sociology also pays considerable attention to this element of national identity. When talking about a nation it is natural that a vision of specific landscape, sometimes with people performing specific actions appears, says T. Edensor.³² The basic associations: the Netherlands with polders and windmills, Finland with lakes and Norway with fiords – have rather a symbolic role today but they come from times when the land, certain geography (topography and climate) had an important identifying role both in categorizing oneself and in indicating differences between oneself and others. Landscapes give a specific recognizable mark to nations. Being full of national symbols and moral values to which they refer, landscapes contribute to nation-building by providing it with geographical barriers which serve also as mythical boundaries. Landscape is also a symbol of eternal, constant continuity, a bond with a soil which provide humans with means of living.³³

I notice here a close connection with the sociological theory of ‘little homeland’ and link the local identity to it. Stanisław Ossowski, considering the types of relations a person may have with a territory, distinguished between the ‘private homeland’ ‘personal’ – that is the local place of belonging, which is close to the German notion of *Heimat* – and the ideological homeland which included the whole community. The idea behind the latter was based on the conviction of being a part of the territorial community, which was an image of the ‘land

later the ethnic and linguistic differences. G. Karlsson, ‘Folk og nation på Island’, *Scandia*, LIII (1987), 1, p. 133.

³⁰ P. Renvall, [a contribution to the debate], in T. Schieder (ed.) *Sozialstruktur und Organisation europäischer Nationalbewegungen*, München 1971, p. 31.

³¹ T. Eskeland, ‘Stedsnavn og identitet’, *Nordlit*, (2004), 10, www.hum.uit.no/nordlit/10/eskeland.html (14.11.2008).

³² T. Edensor, op. cit., p. 58.

³³ T. Edensor, op. cit., p. 58–59.

of my nation.' The personal connection bases on the fact of having been born in a particular place and the awareness that one's ancestors also belonged to this place. The connection with the ideological homeland, on the other hand, is rather indirect although 'Experiencing a place through literature, art, historical tradition may create a personal relation, which sometimes competes with the relation created by long-time direct experience'. Therefore, homeland and its vision become a crucial element of national culture, which results in a certain attitude towards the home territory.³⁴

Antonina Kłoskowska developing Ossowski's thought, claims that 'The universe of national culture was first defined as identical to the broadly understood fatherland, reaching beyond the range of purely territorial references limited to one's country of origin.'³⁵ The connection with the land and place of birth / upbringing becomes a vital, basic factor shaping one's identity (one may say it is its core) although not the only one and not a sufficient one. A similar view related to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was formulated by Janusz Tazbir.³⁶

We can start talking about national identity only when, on the basis of birth and connection with a particular, named land, such qualities as belonging to a culture and ethnicity and later a legal and political community appear.

This meant, as I have already mentioned, that we can talk about national identity also in reference to Norwegian peasants of the modern era. It is a controversial thesis because many historians who would agree to accept that there existed a national attitude among the elites in the pre-modern times, maintain that peasants could have 'at most' some connection to their region.³⁷ Peasants' identity is described then as ethnic in opposition to national, which was supposed to be on a higher level, restricted to the elites. However, this distinction seems to be groundless because both types of identity could (and can) exist concurrently or complement each other.³⁸ The sense of connection to the state and its historical heritage, which causes identification with the political, legal and historically

³⁴ S. Ossowski, 'Analiza socjologiczna pojęcia ojczyzny' [1946], in idem, *O ojczyźnie...*, pp. 26, 29, 37, 43; idem, 'Ziemia i naród', in *O ojczyźnie...*, pp. 54–55.

³⁵ A. Kłoskowska, op. cit., p. 51.

³⁶ J. Tazbir, 'Polish National Consciousness in the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century', in *Concepts of Nationhood in Early Modern Eastern Europe, Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, X (1986), 3–4, p. 333.

³⁷ N. Bończa-Tomaszewski, 'Polskojęzyczni chłopci? Podstawowe problemy historii chłopów polskich', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, CXII (2005) 2, pp. 91–92.

³⁸ A. Minken, 'Norsk og svensk identitet før nasjonalismens epoke' *Historisk Tidsskrift*, LXXXII (Oslo 2003), pp. 75–87, p. 78.

shaped community existing on a broader, not only local, territory, may perfectly co-exist with the ethnic connection that is more of a cultural nature.

I am not postulating any particular shape or content of peasant identity – there may exist significant differences between how the identity of the elites and of peasants was shaped. A significant role in this process is played by folklore understood as a composite of behaviors and views, which mirrors identity. In the context of a group that, due to many reasons, does not possess a lot of opportunities to express its own identity the main indicator may be assumed to be the existence of tradition and the attitude towards it. Accepting folklore as the constituting factor of identity is linked to the meaning of this concept, namely ‘being oneself’. This means, in fact, that the subject has certain qualities for a long time. The longer this time is, the more strongly these qualities are connected with the identity of a certain community. Many scholars are convinced about the importance of folklore in this context. They treat it as one of the characteristics of national identity, as one of the most vital source of group symbols, in terms of articulating them and supporting their existence, as Alan Dundee states.³⁹ We should notice, in addition, that peasant culture has always been relatively static – all the changes occurred quite slowly. At the times when a program of national reconstruction appeared in reaction to the sentiment of collapse or discrimination, reaching back to the folk culture, which was known to be ‘old’, was a natural attempt at finding the sources of strength and power. The conservative peasants could be perceived in this context as those, who preserved the ‘virtues of the ancestors’.

Such an attitude remains logically linked to the concept of the ‘little homeland’ or, using the term from the Polish language ‘*ojcowizna*’ (the land of the patrimony). The connection to it, i.e. the local customs, land – landscape, people, time, language or faith, had long been a foundation for the peasant identity. We cannot call it ‘national’ if this term contains political and citizen concepts. In this sense, a Polish *kmieć* (yokel), distancing himself e.g. from participation in the January Uprising, or a Norwegian *bonde*, looking on indifferently at the construction of the independent Norway in 1814, did not have national consciousness. In my opinion, however, such limitation should not be imposed.⁴⁰

³⁹ Z. Bokszański, *Tożsamości zbiorowe*, Warszawa 2005, p. 120.

⁴⁰ A Welsh researcher into the national consciousness remarked, rather caustically: ‘This definition of the nation as the community ruled by a particular state is always popular in countries, where ethnic uniformity has not been achieved but is a basic aim of central government policy.’ R. T. Jones, op. cit., p. 12.

If we are discussing modern community, which is being shaped in the context of mass society, with its publicly accessible education, military duty, horizontal and vertical social mobility, and subject to the influence of mass culture, we can talk about modern national consciousness. It will be defined in the context of citizenship and political involvement. When, however, we are discussing older times, the pre-modern society, the notion of national identity may signify a slightly different phenomenon, more strongly linked to culture, in which the concepts of 'ojcowizna' (land of the patrimony), the connection to the birthplace and homeland have more meaning. Nonetheless, the existence of modern elements such as identification with a specific country (or Crown) and its whole territory, historical memory concerning more than the local territory and connected with the history of the country, cannot be excluded.

There is no such simple equation that pre-modern times equal ethnic identity and the modernizing stage equals national identity. At both of these stages similar concepts co-exists, the difference being the proportions between them or their mutual relations. Stanisław Ossowski did not hesitate and spoke about the 'peasant patriotism' when he talked about the Polish peasants before the First World War: 'Even a simple peasant is a patriot, though he does not call himself a Pole, but a Kurp, Mazur or a Catholic, who does not know what is this Poland, who is apprehensive at the thought of national independence because of the fears of serfdom, but who stands by his land, language and customs, sub-consciously feels the connection that links him to his compatriots and even persecution will not force him to give up his nationality about which, in fact, he has little idea.'⁴¹ In my opinion, such reference to certain, instinctive, indeed primal, response, stays relevant also in the modern times.

The reflections of Jan Molenda seem similarly relevant to earlier times. While researching the peasant social consciousness at the turn of the 19th and the 20th century, he applied Ossowski's theory of the 'little homeland', pointing out the co-existence of two stages of consciousness. The first stage is dominated by the connection with the regional, personal and private homeland; the second – with the ideological homeland. The author admits that it is difficult to pinpoint the exact moment when one changes into the other. He also highlights that the process of shaping the national identity undergoes fluctuations: taking part in patriotic activity does not have to be constant.⁴² Maybe then, one should resign from perceiving this process in linear terms? Maybe the slow process of

⁴¹ Qtd after J. Molenda, op. cit., p. 37.

⁴² Ibidem, pp. 34–37.

identity change is not about the 'transformation' of one form into the other but about positioning of the same (in the ontological sense) elements in a different configuration? Depending on the context of the community, certain components may sometimes dominate, while at other times they will be rather in the background. The reality may also impose different forms of expression of this identity.

Considering the new model of identity shaping, which could replace the idea of 'national awakening', it is useful to take the concept of the role of the elites and non-elites in the process of forming a nation from ethnosymbolism. According to Anthony Smith, the leaders –intelligentsia, political frontmen and the bourgeoisie remain under the influence of the people, and this can limit their originality, as well as provide them with examples and social context.⁴³ Discussing the pre-modern times in Norway, we will not speak about the bourgeoisie; there are also no political leaders to speak of, but the core of the relationship between the commoners and the clerical class i.e. the elites of the times, stays the same. It needs to be remembered what kind of society we are talking about – in the Norwegian society of this period, in which class divisions hardly existed, the distance between lower and upper classes, although it existed, was considerably smaller than in other European countries.

These elements of the theory may serve to construct the notion of nationalization of the Norwegian elites. The concept is not entirely original because, it seems, a similar phenomenon can be observed for example in Finland, although in a different period. This may be linked to the fact that Finland, like Norway, experienced the influx of foreign – in this case Swedish – elites. This resulted in the Swedish language gaining importance and being adopted as – alongside Latin – the language of the educated people. Because these people and later their children and grandchildren, identified with the new country, a dilemma was born concerning the national belonging. It became especially sharp after the year 1809, when Finland became an autonomous Grand Duchy to the Russian Empire. Then the elites had to decide on the matter of their identity.

One of the most famous Finnish national activists of the 19th century Johan Wilhelm Snellman described it in the following way: 'Swedes we are no longer, Russians we cannot be; we must be Finns'. Later Snellman wrote about the educated elites, who speak Swedish and as a result are alienated, when they should become the Finnish elites. 'The majority of this class is of original Finnish stock;

⁴³ A. D. Smith, *Nacjonalizm...*, p. 80.

it has at least been born and raised among a Finnish population.' The slogan formulated by Snellman was to educate the nation and to nationalize the educated.⁴⁴

There are obviously many differences between the Finnish and Norwegian processes of creating a nation, however, it is interesting that both 19th century intellectuals and modern historians noticed the process which can be called assimilation rather than national awakening. It also seems necessary that the role of the elites should be described differently in this context.

The view of Friedrich Meinecke that the elites are 'creators and carriers' of national consciousness is supported by many scholars. Antonina Kłoskowska said 'Whatever can be said about the more popular, in the populist sense, sources of national identity and the idea of a nation, it is true that the elites played the main role in shaping and expressing these concepts.'⁴⁵ One can notice the difference: Meinecke wrote about 'creating the national consciousness', the Polish scholar, on the other hand, about the 'shaping of an idea.'

This approach is acceptable when one highlights the fact that the actions undertaken by the elites with regard to identity changes are, first of all, verbalization i.e. giving name, describing those ideas that one considers to be the main sources and signs of being different. In other words, it was a description (often evaluative) of what makes us different from others. Secondly, the intelligentsia, on the basis of the already-named identity, creates theories and concepts through which it attempts to place its nation within the European context as well as highlighting its attractiveness. Thirdly, it promotes ideas that become indicators of identity in order to activate the society and achieve a significant link between the paradigm it had named (together with its elements) and what constitutes the consciousness of lower classes i.e. with what they consider to be their identifying content. Finally, at the last stage, the intelligentsia undertakes activities aimed at politicizing i.e. uses the national identity to create nationalistic ideology.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ E. Jutikkala, K. Prinen, *A History of Finland*, Revised Edition, New York 1974, p. 203–204. Lauri Hanko, in this context, spoke directly about the crisis of identity, which the Finnish elites were to solve through the identification with the simple, illiterate Finnish peasants. (L. Honko, 'The Kalevala Process', in *Kalevala 1835–1985. The national epic of Finland*, Helsinki University Library [1985], p. 17; M. Klinge, *Fińska tradycja. Eseje o strukturach i tożsamościach Północy*, transl. J. Suchoples, Wrocław 2006, p. 149; an interesting analysis of this remark by Snellman was presented by Ł. Sommer, op. cit., pp. 178–180.

⁴⁵ A. Kłoskowska, op. cit., p. 49.

⁴⁶ Z. Bokszański writes about it in the following way: 'The common members of the national community, entangled in interactive everyday routine, having disjointed knowledge about the past, entangled in fragmentary folklore, are not able to fully notice the distinctiveness of one's own identity. It is the few chosen representatives of the nation

Such undertakings do not create national identity because to do so, the elites would have had to have such identity earlier at least to some degree.⁴⁷ Apart from that, none of these activities can be successful if the elites do not refer to identity and consciousness of lower classes at every stage. Only the values and cultural elements which belong to all social classes in a community can be considered as elements of its identity.⁴⁸ If the elites tried to introduce into the identity something alien to the experience of the rest of the populace, it can be assumed that the absorption of this element would last for generations.⁴⁹

It seems that the above scheme of actions is extremely teleological – an impression could be formed that the elites are putting into practice a planned ‘nation-making process’ aiming at achieving a previously established goal in the name of certain interest: their? higher classes? Providence’s? In my opinion, however, this is a mistaken impression. The elites realize in this way, first of all, their own need of being rooted down, the need to become ‘the local’, somebody tied to a particular environment. This need, very natural and primary for most people, may result from the necessity to eliminate the competition or fight against discrimination. Secondly, by undertaking these actions, the elites realize an equally natural for educated people – and since the scientific revolution of 17th century increasingly important – need for analysis, naming, classification and interpretation of the reality in which they live.

In the process of national identity development in the modern era one can speak rather about replacement than about construction and transfer. As it seems, mutual influences may lead to the following results: in the situation when the elites are of foreign origin, their nationalization and assimilation may occur.

who occupy themselves with the discovery, re-construction and presenting the whole as well as caring for its integrity’ (op. cit., p. 119).

⁴⁷ Referring to the linguistic matters, Smith wrote: “Linguistic reformers do not discover their nationalism through their intellectual labor. The vernacular is glorified, and elevated to become **the** popular language (but not in every case even in Europe) only **after** its students have become nationalistically inclined and **because** they have already made this self-discovery (all emphases come from the author).” A. D. Smith, *Theories...*, p. 149.

⁴⁸ Z. Bokszański, op. cit., pp. 119–120.

⁴⁹ Ø. Sørensen wrote: “It is out of the question that the Norwegian population passively accepted every vision of what was created by the elites as national. The ideas held by the elites what is national were responded to only when they agreed with – or at least were not contradictory to – widely accepted streams of thought and attitudes in Norway.” (‘Hegemonikamp om det norske. Elitenes nasjonbyggingssprosjekter 1770–1945’, in idem (ed.) *Jakten på det norske. Perspektiver på utviklingen av en norsk nasjonal identitet på 1800-tallet*, Oslo 1998, p. 19).

In another case, when, for some reason, the position of the autochthonic elites has been weakened, they may become strengthened. Finally, it is possible, as a result of mutual influence, that a reconstruction of the current consciousness model occurs. Sometimes, it is possible that the three models of changes overlap.

The model of the changes in the consciousness of Norwegian elites is connected to specific political circumstances i.e. the situation of the state. In this case, Norwegian state had been dissolved and the power there was taken over by foreign political structures, situated outside the country. The Norwegians became a part of the Danish monarchy, under the rule of the Oldenburg dynasty (theoretically in a union), in which the power, apart from the king, was held by Danish nobility to whom they had to yield. This also meant entering a different type of state structure. The Oldenburg monarchy was, similarly to many European states at the time, on the one hand, a conglomerate state, i.e. multinational, multilingual and multiethnic. On the other hand, it was, especially after the introduction of absolutist regime in 1660, a modern state that is – as it is called in English-speaking social sciences – a scientific one.

In this type of state, two kinds of actions can be observed with reference to nationality. The first is the politics of acceptance of distinctiveness as long as loyalty and obedience are observed by the subjects. If the particular national and ethnic groups accept without question the sovereignty of the center (usually the rule of the king, although in the case of the Oldenburg state until 1660 we can speak of the sovereignty divided between the monarch and the Council of the Realm), it does not attempt to enforce any solutions which could damage the sense of national separateness.

The second type of politics, which, as it seems, was an inevitable consequence of modernization of the state, entailed unification, integration and centralization. It led to a motivation for homogenization. A thesis can be even risked that the more modern a state is, the stronger this motivation was. Such politics was so distinctive that it inspired historians to consider the similarities between the actions of the modern state to the politics of national state. Although such form of the state was most popular in the 19th and 20th centuries, a question can be asked whether the practical side of such politics did not come into play earlier? Cultural and ethnic indicators (language, customs, mentality) were noticed already by the authorities of the modern state in the early modern era. Their existence was considered negative and to be eliminated.

This can be demonstrated by the example of Swedish politics towards the Danish population in Scania after 1658–1660. Its ethnic and cultural distinctive-

ness was noted and it was thought to be crucial to impose both Swedish language and 'spirit' (which in fact was culture; let us remember the establishment of the university in Lund in 1668). Similarly, in the case of the Finnish minorities living in the territories of the proper Sweden until 1809 – their language distinctiveness was perceived as a threat to the cohesion of the country.⁵⁰ The ethnic and cultural categories were, as we will see, known and applied by the Danish authorities.

It is often emphasized that it is precisely the politics of the modern state which became the source of national awakening in the modern age because thanks to it various minorities realized their own distinctiveness.⁵¹ It should be added that, in fact, the modern multinational state, undertaking homogenizing actions, awarded superiority to one national group over the others. This group became most closely linked with the state and its nationality (language, culture) and became the nationality of the state. Following ideological reflection, rulers promoted the development of national historiography of apologetic nature in which the dominant group became the subjects of history. The nationalism of the ruling nations, shaped in the 19th century, often refers back to these occurrences.⁵²

These actions within culture had no lesser significance for the communities which did not belong to the dominant group because they often inspired them to undertake similar activity within their own possibilities.

As a result, the politics of the modern conglomerate state towards the dominated groups (countries) in fact stimulated the feeling of distinctiveness (under the condition that it had been properly rooted). The loyalty program to standing 'above – nation' king, identification with the Crown, respecting the custom law all reinforced the sense of historical continuity, creating an illusion that nothing had changed. At the same time, however, the pursuit of centralization and homogenization met with resistance because it generally interfered with the interests of the peripheries and gave privileges to the center.

⁵⁰ A. Minken, op. cit., pp. 81, 80, 77, 79; Ł. Sommer, op. cit., pp. 154–155.

⁵¹ K. Lunden, *Nasjon eller union? Refleksjoner og røysler*, Oslo 1996, p. 38, p. 51; A. D. Smith, *Theories...*, pp. 234–235; K. Pomian, *Europa i jej narody*, transl. M. Szpakowska, Warszawa 1992, pp. 138–139. An analogy could be found in the Habsburg monarchy, e.g. already at the turn of 17th and 18th century there occurred some tendencies in the confessional politics which had an influence on the identity formation of the Romanians in Transylvania, see K. Hitchins, *The idea of Nation. The Romanians of Transylvania, 1691–1849*, Bucharest 1985, pp. 21, 25, 32; The considerations of M. Hroch about the Habsburg dynasty focus of the 19th century (*Male narody Europy. Perspektywa historyczna*, transl. G. Pańko, Wrocław 2003).

⁵² B. Lindberg, 'Introduktion', in Å. Karlsson, B. Lindberg (eds.), *Nationalism och nationell identitet i 1700-talets Sverige*, Uppsala 2002, pp. 7–9.

Resistance and the feeling of being discriminated against resulted in the need of internal integration on the basis of sentiments originating from the common elements identifying the group. This resembles ‘secession nationalism [in the sense of a nationalistic movement]’ typical for colonial countries. The situation in Norway was even more complicated. The fact is that we deal here with the influx of foreign elites. In the period we are interested in, i.e. the 16th and 17th centuries, there happened an exchange of the elites in Norway: the old, fully Norwegian elites were dying out, which was accompanied by the influx of foreign ones, mainly from Denmark. It is, then, a different situation from the one Michael Hechter described writing about colonial countries.⁵³ This is a situation in which the natives’ indignation about the discrimination must have been preceded by the process of transformation from being immigrants into becoming the locals. The newcomers had to settle down in their ‘new fatherland’, start to feel a patriotic link to it and create a new national identity. Secessionism could only develop when the sensation of threat had been preceded by the process of norwegization of the elites – achieved through the relationship with the local people and through re-interpretation of the already existing identity of the old elites stored in literary and scientific works of the era.

A question, however, remains to what extent the proposed approach is typical only in the case of Norway. Can it be applied to describe the Habsburg domain, also a typical case of a conglomerate multinational state? How would it apply to the situation of the Czechs, whose condition seems to be similar in some respects? How does it compare to the non-Polish inhabitants of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth? In Eastern Europe, it seems, a different model occurred (the experts on the subject do not question the view that the national consciousness existed already in the early modern period).⁵⁴ Scholars emphasize a great role, which in many cases was played by firstly – the religious denomination as the identifying element, secondly – language (long before the Romantics described it as the manifestation of national spirit), and finally – the strong connection between national ideas and the upper classes, the political elites, who emphasized their distinctiveness from the rest of the populace.⁵⁵

⁵³ A. D. Smith, *Nacjonalizm...*, p. 94–95.

⁵⁴ Compare the studies in the collection *Concepts of Nationhood...*

⁵⁵ I. Banac, F. E. Sysyn, ‘Introduction’, in *ibidem*, pp. 276–277; J. Tazbir, *op. cit.* pp. 322, 327; H. Goldblatt, ‘Orthodox Slavic Heritage and National Consciousness: Aspects of the East Slavic and South Slavic National Revival’, in *Concepts of Nationhood...*, p. 337.

It seems, then, that we should search for different 'regional' models because there were many pathways to creating nations in Europe. Sometimes similarity does not have to result from geographical location, but rather from the analogies occurring in history. There is no place here to develop this issue further, however, I would like to highlight the possibility of distinguishing the categories of nations in the history of Europe, which shared a similar fate in the area of our interest. First of all, the state existed in the Middle Ages and, as a result, many elements of identity were then formed: myths, the cult of historical figures (including patrons and martyrs), the state Crown, sometimes the founding dynasty, sacred or important place – symbols and other. Secondly, there was a long established name referring to a given territory which functioned in culture – as something to admire (landscape) and have attachment to. Thirdly, the people had a strong sense of distinctiveness, basing on their customs, language and culture. Next, there occurred the loss of independence, which led to the influx of foreign elites. Additionally, this happened at a similar point in time: on the turn of the Middle Ages and the early modern period and was the outcome of the pressure coming from a mighty neighbor, usually in the phase of building a dynastic and sovereign state at the time. The national consciousness could have developed then as an answer to assimilating and centralizing tendencies of the dominant power.⁵⁶ This group would include in my opinion apart from Norwegians – Scots, Irishmen, Welsh, Bretons, Finns – the list may not be complete. The Czech case also fits the model, although the breakthrough occurred a little later, at the beginning of the 17th century. There also exist great differences in the social make-up of the society and in the legal status of peasants. Krzysztof Pomian was writing about countries that had lost their independence and dynasties, coming under power of other Crowns: 'In each case, the dynastic relationships came into play: marriage or inheritance. Therefore, this did not mean the loss of traditional autonomy and the rights and liberties belonging with it.'⁵⁷ The author lists Catalonians, Basques, Welsh, Irishmen, Icelanders and Norwegians in this context. The Welsh scholar Bud B. Khleif, on the other hand, wrote here about 'Third-world's nationalism', which was developing in European countries, which in the early modern period were the subjects of 'colonization' of their stronger and more advanced neighbors: England (in the case of Wales and Scotland), France (Brittany) and Spain (Galicia and the Basque country).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ K. Webb, *The Growth of Nationalism in Scotland*, Harmondsworth 1978, p. 25.

⁵⁷ K. Pomian, op. cit., p. 142.

⁵⁸ B. B. Khleif, *Language, Ethnicity and Education in Wales*, The Hague 1980, p. 10–11.

Finally, the theoretical problem of collective identity needs to be discussed. The notion of identity includes all these elements of one's personality, which describe its core and at the same time distinguish it from other people's. According to the scholar Anita Jacobson-Widding, identity refers to the feeling of continuity or sameness. This refers to the continuation of some qualities of the subject in time.⁵⁹ One may also accept that identity is a form of structure.⁶⁰ Taking into consideration the fact that this study is concerned with a collective protagonist, it is necessary to adopt a concept of the collective identity i.e. admit that '...the collective is a multitude of individuals, which mutually perceive one another as similar enough so that it is possible that to speak about the 'us''⁶¹

In the case of national identity by analogy the concern will be with these elements of collective self-knowledge of a community, which, in its opinion, characterize it 'towards the inside', that is describe those qualities which cause the community to 'remain itself' ('the canon of thought resulting in some type of 'self-concept'⁶²). At the same time these are ideas, which allow this collective to distinguish itself from other national communities. National identity is what characterizes all the members of the community creating – as Karl Deutsch wrote – a certain communication code.⁶³ A phrase used by Józef Chlebowczyk seems to me very accurate: 'kinship of mentality'.⁶⁴

In this context what can be inspiring is the reflections of scholars investigating the national question from the beginning of the 20th century referring to the psychology of the masses. Gustave Le Bon wrote about a mental constitution, formed rather by the late ancestors, not by the living generation.⁶⁵ Even if we approach the – typical for the period – style cautiously, it cannot be denied that the – usually mythological – image of the past and ancestors plays a big role in the formation and maintenance of national identity. On the other hand, George Everett Partridge defining in 1919 patriotism pointed out five most significant components of this, as he called it, 'sentiment' i.e. soil, community, habits, the land in its historical form and the state or political leaders.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Zbigniew Boksański, op. cit., p. 36–37.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, p. 33.

⁶¹ Ibidem, p. 59.

⁶² Ibidem, p. 110.

⁶³ See K. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication. An Inquiry into the Foundation of Nationality*, Massachusetts 1972, p. 96 ff.

⁶⁴ J. Chlebowczyk, *O prawie do bytu...*, p. 49–50.

⁶⁵ P. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 103

⁶⁶ Ibidem, p. 106.

I have stated earlier that identity should be perceived as a structure; therefore, a question about the nature of this structure seems natural, although we are aware that when referring to human psyche, using such categories might be risky. Is identity to be perceived as a hierarchy of levels or as a structure consisting of equal components? Is the emphasis put on mutual impact of particular constituents or can they function independently? I would put forward a hypothesis that we deal here with an 'onion' structure i.e. components stacked concentrically upon one another. The evolution of this configuration, i.e. historical changes of national consciousness, would depend on gradual addition of the layers around a stable, but increasingly more hidden, core. The core, in turn, would be the most primary and natural relationship of a person with the place of birth and growing up i.e. the 'little homeland'. The verification of this hypothesis would rest on establishing whether the continuity of themes can be observed in the period of our interest or more precisely, which of these themes are present constantly, and which appear later.

Therefore, the phenomenon which sociologists discuss (e.g. Antonina Kłoskowska, saw it as the process of nation formation: '(–) the process of internal unification of culture, broadening the participation in the cultural universe of the community (–)'⁶⁷), I would see as the development in the members of the community of subsequent layers around the core, which is the link with the local homeland. The way to manifest this link for peasants would be traditionalism in relation to material culture, customs and beliefs. The elites would express this link in a more sophisticated form, articulated mainly in literary works.

Proposing such a hypothesis means the necessity to refer to the concept of 'primordially'. I realize that for many positivist-oriented social scientists this approach might seem suspicious as it refers to the constancy of human nature or even the existence of some metaphysical elements in it. However, we do not study them directly but their material and verbal manifestations.

The subject of Norwegian national identity has long been under scrutiny of Norwegian historians. It is impossible to discuss these issues here, especially that the transformations in the interpretation of this phenomenon are connected not only with the history of shaping Norwegian national independence, but also with the changing patterns of historical thought.⁶⁸ Undoubtedly, the

⁶⁷ A. Kłoskowska, op. cit., p. 44.

⁶⁸ More on the subject, K. Szelałowska, 'Problemy norweskiej świadomości narodowej w erze nowożytnej w ujęciu współczesnych historyków norweskich', *Przegląd Historyczny*, XCVIII, (2007) 2, pp. 247–257.

closeness of regaining independence in 1814 had an enormous influence on the writing of history. As a result, the dominant concept in Norwegian historiography proposes that the 18th century is in fact a 'preparation' for this event, 'a spiritual prelude' as one historian phrased it.⁶⁹ Historiographers from those countries which in the 19th century were undergoing various processes of 'national renaissance' see this in a similar way. A considerable interest in this issue manifests itself in the fact that it was mentioned in works which did not necessarily concern the matter of national identity formation. Syntheses and monographs concerning the history of literature, ideas, culture or science contain a lot of material and remarks on this subject. We find among them comments from the supporters and opponents of the thesis that national identity existed in the early modern period.

The number of works devoted to Norwegian national identity and the process of nation forming has increased in recent years. Most of them, however, focus on the changes occurring in the 19th century. One of the main works concerning this topic is *Jakten på det norske* (Oslo 1998) edited by Øystein Sørensen. The article written by Olav Christensen included in this work discusses the whole modern era, although with an emphasis on the 18th century. There are no doubts, however, that Norwegian historians maintain that in the 18th century national identity existed, yet mostly among the elites. There is also no emphasis on the fact that this identity is formed in relation to its previous forms.⁷⁰

In general historians agree that between the years 1771–72, as a result of the abolition of censorship, an eruption of patriotism occurred which demonstrated already developed national feelings. Works researching this period were written such as Kåre Lunden's *Norsk grålysning, Norsk nasjonalisme 1770–1814 på allmenn bakgrunn* (Oslo 1992). This author does not only question the opinion that the Norwegian nation was born in the 19th century but also gives evidence showing the existence of national identity in the Middle Ages.⁷¹ It is

⁶⁹ Ø. Sørensen, 'Kampen om Norges sjel', *Norsk idéhistorie*, in T. B. Eriksen, Ø. Sørensen (eds.), vol. II, Oslo 2002, pp. 23–24.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, p. 9, 10, 24; P. E. Rynning, *Salmediktning i Noreg. Frå dei fyrste kristne tider i vårt land og fram til vår tid*, vol. 1, Oslo 1954, p. 170; O. Christensen, 'En nasjonal identitet tar form. Etniske og kulturelle avgrensninger', in Ø. Sørensen (ed.), *Jakten på det norske* pp. 51, 52–55.

⁷¹ K. Lunden, op. cit., pp. 97–98, 102–103, 148–149; 'Fantes det ein norsk nasjonal identitet i mellomalderen?' In M.-B. Ohman-Nielsen (ed.), *Nasjonal identitet og nasjonalisme*, Oslo 1994; A similar view is developed by Sverre Bagge, *Fantes det en norsk nasjonal identitet i middelalderen?* Ibidem.

Lunden who, referring to Smith's works, formulated a thesis that in the case of Norway we can talk about the model of 'secession nationalism' discussed above.

Odd Arvid Storsveen wrote his work on the Norwegian identity in the period between 1784–1801 («*Fornuftig Kierlighed til Fædrelandet*». *En analyse av norsk patriotisme mellom 1784 og 1801*, Oslo 1997) and recently the Danish historian Rasmus Glenthøj presented the process of shaping the national identity in Norwegian clerical elites in the period between 1807–1820 (*En moderne nations fødsel*, Odense 2008).

Many historians, while considering other topics or in discussion articles, formulate theses that the Norwegian national identity existed even earlier i.e. in the 16th and 17th centuries. Erik Opsahl stressed that the Norwegians in the modern era satisfied the criteria for a national community.⁷² Anne Minken noticed that the existing cultural differences between social strata and regions do not imply that we cannot speak about a community: 'Groups which in a visible way belong to a common culture may at the same time distinguish themselves as distinct ethnically individuals and ethnic groups may include distinctive cultural differences.'⁷³ One can pose here a provocative question whether a stadium hooligan and a university professor belong to the same nation? Cultural differences between them are colossal. Antonina Kłoskowska wrote that '(–) the cultural community is never complete and identical in all of the social strata, classes, and social categories.'⁷⁴

Øystein Rian, one of the leading contemporary researchers of the modern era, whose works I will refer to numerous times later,⁷⁵ consistently supports the idea of national consciousness existing in Norway in the modern era: 'This consciousness must have been so common, I believe, that all adult sane people in Norway were conscious that they lived not only in some town or village, or district, but that they lived in a country whose name was Norway.'⁷⁶

⁷² E. Opsahl, '«Norge [...] thette rige som vort federne rige og land». Norsk identitet i lydriketida (1537–1660)', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, LXXXI (Oslo 2002), p. 116.

⁷³ A. Minken, op. cit., p. 86.

⁷⁴ A. Kłoskowska, op. cit., p. 51.

⁷⁵ First and foremost the following: *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten, 1536–1648*, Oslo 1997 (*Danmark-Norge 1380–1814*, Oslo 1997–1998, vol. II); *Den nye begynnelsen 1520–1660*, Oslo 1995 (*Aschehougs Norgeshistorie*, ed. K. Helle, Oslo 1994–1998, vol. V); *Embedsstanden i dansketida*, Oslo 2003; *Maktens historie i dansketiden*, Oslo 2003.

⁷⁶ Ø. Rian, 'Oppfatningen av Norge fra seinmiddelalderen til 1814', in O. A. Storsveen et al. *Norsk patriotisme før 1814*, Oslo 1997, p. 168. The author wrote later: 'Identity always existed, partially it was manifested as strong patriotism, sometimes was rather an undercurrent, limited and modified by other currents': p. 183; Idem, 'Danmark-Norges

When it comes to Polish historiography one must admit that the matter of my interest has not been discussed. While the history of Norway in the 20th century, as well as in the Middle Ages, is of some interest to Polish historians, the history of Norway in the early modern era is unknown. There are two, now classical, syntheses of the Danish history by Władysław Czapliński, which provide information on how the whole monarchy functioned. Apart from these, there is a recently published book by Andrzej Żygadło on reformation in Scandinavian countries describing its history. The only volume which treats the history of Norway holistically is the work by Andrzej Bereza-Jarociński which brings a wealth of important facts. Some of the figures from my book were included in *Słownik pisarzy skandynawskich* (*A Dictionary of Scandinavian Writers*), although because the nature of the work we deal here with rather brief entries, similar to the synthetic works devoted to the history of Scandinavian literature. Janusz Małek in his work presented the history of Norwegian Estate representation in the modern era.⁷⁷ Altogether the above works do not constitute a significant body of research. We can only console ourselves by the fact that early modern Norway is equally marginalized in the histories written in other countries.

The matter of national consciousness formation has been of interest for Polish historians and sociologists. We can enumerate here those, whose works belong to classical sociology as Florian Znaniecki, the already mentioned Stanisław Ossowski, Józef Chałasiński and Stefan Czarnowski. The works of Antonina Kłoskowska and Jerzy Szacki also have great significance. The younger generation is represented by Jarosław Kiliński. Historians who contributed greatly to the study of this area were Marcei Handelsman, Stefan Kieniewicz, Józef Chlebowczyk and Tadeusz Łepkowski. At present this area is investigated by Andrzej Walicki. The interest of the above historians focused rather on later periods than the early modern period of history. This refers also to the work by Jan

historie. Refleksjoner over Harald Gustaffssons refleksjoner', *Historisk Tidsskrift* LXXIX (Oslo 2000), 3, pp. 378, 379.

⁷⁷ W. Czapliński, *Historia Danii*, Wrocław 1965; idem, *Dzieje Danii nowożytnej*, Warszawa 1982; A. Żygadło, *Reformacja w Szwecji, Danii i Norwegii. Studium porównawcze*, Warszawa 2005; A. Bereza Jarociński, *Zarys dziejów Norwegii*, Warszawa 1991; *Słownik pisarzy skandynawskich*, ed. Z. Ciesielski, Warszawa 1991; M. Krzysztosiak, *Przewodnik po literaturach skandynawskich*, Poznań 2000; J. Małek, 'Zgromadzenia stanowe w Norwegii w l. 1536/37–1661', in Z. H. Nowak (ed.), *W kręgu stanowych i kulturowych przeobrażeń Europy Północnej w XIV–XVIII wieku*, Toruń 1988, pp. 117–135; idem, 'Reprezentacja stanu chłopskiego w Norwegii w XVI i XVII wieku', in A. Czacharowski (ed.), *Samorządy i reprezentacje chłopskie w Europie Północnej u progu nowożytności (XV–XVIII wiek)*, Toruń 1990, pp. 75–84.

Molenda on the national consciousness of Polish peasants or works by Nikodem Bończa-Tomaszewski. Naturally, the most intensive studies were made into the Polish national consciousness, however Polish historians were also interested in the formation of German national consciousness. One can here recall a collection of studies *Pojęcia "Volk" i "Nation" w historii Niemiec (The concepts 'Volk' and 'Nation' in German history)*, articles written by Maria Wawrykowa and the work by Tomasz Szarota on the German auto-stereotype i.e. 'Michel'.⁷⁸ The studies into national identity are continued by a younger generations of scholars. Here one should list the research into Polish national consciousness at the beginning of the 19th century by Tomasz Kizwalter; a study of Welsh nationalistic ideologue Gwynfor Evans by Krzysztof Jaskułowski and the book written by Jarosław Czuby on 'double' loyalty of the Polish elites after 1795.⁷⁹

Most of the above listed historical works can be classified within the modernist paradigm. However, there are also works which discuss the problem of national consciousness occurring earlier in the modern era and the Middle Ages. Apart from the already mentioned Benedykt Zientara, there are other medieval scholars focusing on this subject such as Roman Heck, Stanisław Bylina or Sławomir Gawlas.⁸⁰ As far as the modern era is concerned one should mention Janusz Tazbir, Teresa Chynczewska-Hennel and Urszula Augustyniak. The work of Urszula Augustyniak may be in many respects considered precursory. She turns to plebeian literature, which is not high-brow, to study the state of consciousness of lower social strata. The example of this work shows that the issues of our interest were also the focus of study for historians of culture and literature.⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Pojęcia "Volk" i "Nation" w historii Niemiec. Materiały z sesji naukowej zorganizowanej przez Zakład Historii Niemiec IH UAM w dniu 15 V 1979*, Poznań 1980; M. Wawrykowa, 'Rozwój świadomości narodowej w społeczeństwie niemieckim w XIX wieku', *Przegląd Zachodni* XXXIX (1983), 2, pp. 41–51 and idem, 'Państwo narodowe i mniejszości narodowe w Niemczech w drugiej połowie XIX wieku', *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, XLIV, (2000), 6, p. 1–27; T. Szarota, *Niemiecki Michel. Dzieje narodowego symbolu i autostereotypu*, Warszawa 1988.

⁷⁹ T. Kizwalter, *O nowoczesności narodu. Przypadek Polski*, Warszawa 1999; K. Jaskułowski, *Mityczne przestrzenie nacjonalizmu. Historia i mīt w walijskiej ideologii narodowej*, Toruń 2003; J. Czuby, *Zasada "dwóch sumień". Normy postępowania i granice kompromisu politycznego Polaków w sytuacjach wyboru (1795–1815)*, Warszawa 2005.

⁸⁰ This historian is the author of a review titled 'Stan badań nad polską świadomością narodową w średniowieczu' in A. Gieysztor and S. Gawlas (eds.) *Państwo, naród, stany w świadomości wieków średnich*, Warszawa 1990, pp. 149–194.

⁸¹ The work by T. Chynczewska-Hennel mentioned here is an article based on the work by this author: *Świadomość narodowa szlachty ukraińskiej i Kozaczyzny od schyłku XVI do*

The book that I am putting forward describes the process of changes in the consciousness of Norwegian elites in two parts. The division is based on the chronological criterion resulting from an important political change that is the introduction of absolutist regime. In fact, there are arguments not to adopt such a division because – as we will see – many themes are continuous, which proves how long-lasting particular elements of Norwegian national identity were. The threshold of the year 1660 is in many cases indeed artificial. On the other hand, however, it signifies not only the change of the political system but also the change of Norway's position in the union resulting from the acceptance of the Royal Law (*Kongeloven*) and reorganization of the law. Paradoxically, contemporaries believed that an important change had occurred and that it was a change for the better. A historian will agree that the change was important but will not be certain of its positive assessment. Most importantly, the conditions of development and the functioning of the elites changed because the clerical estate – a true pillar of the absolutist regime – started to come into being. A practical reason was also taken into consideration: when dividing a large era into two parts it is easier to deal with the material.

The first part of this work starts with outlining the political and social situation of Norway after the year 1536. The main questions to be answered here are concerned with conditions and the legal and political sense of the 1536 change. Next, the Danish politics towards the Norwegians in this period is presented and a question is posed: to what extent the activities of Danish authorities could influence the Norwegian national identity. The following chapter discusses the manifestation of the identity and its content. Here, the focus is on the identity expressed verbally. Another topic deliberated on in this chapter concerns the external circumstances that had an influence on the identity. The next chapter presents the identity expressed non-verbally, which concerns mainly peasants, although in this case we also find manifestations which belong in the previous part. From the chronological perspective, this chapter presents the whole period between 1536 and 1790 as, when peasant memory and folk culture are concerned, a division into two periods would be in fact irrelevant.

The second part of this work begins with a chapter devoted to the consequences of the year 1660 for the development of identity. The questions posed there are as follows: how did the Danish politics change in these times? What were the circumstances of the transformation of the elites? What did this trans-

połowy XVII wieku, Warszawa 1985; U. Augustyniak, *Koncepcje narodu i społeczeństwa w literaturze plebejskiej od końca XVI do końca XVII wieku*, Warszawa 1989.

formation look like? The social and economic changes were one of the aspects of the process of norwegization of the elites (i.e. making the elites Norwegian), which accelerated after the year 1660. In the first half of the 18th century, thanks to the work of two important figures of the country's intellectual life: Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754) and Erik Pontoppidan (1698–1764), the problem of the shape and place of the Norwegian nation was clearly outlined. The aim of the chapter is to answer the question what was this influence like and what was the content, verbalized by the two authors, which created a catalogue of distinctiveness. Another question can also be posed i.e. what was the importance for the Norwegian elites of the fact that these two authors started writing about Norwegian issues.

The content of the next three chapters is divided according to problems which they address. Referring to the second half of the 18th century the questions about manifestations and substance of national identity resulted in the presentation of the ways of self-identification as well as a discussion of the concept of the 'fatherland' and the meaning of the word 'nation'. Next there is a description of actions which were considered by contemporaries as patriotic and were linked to putting the national program into practice, although this term was not used. Finally, in the last chapter I posed a question about the structure of identity in order to try to find out what kind of components it consists of, drawing on from how and in what context the largely understood Norwegian issues were discussed. The aim was to identify the elements of the 'dictionary' which was thought to be the code of communication inside the community: concepts, language (phrases, metaphors, conventions), symbols, myths (and stereotypes) as well as values. The creation of such 'dictionary' must precede the formation of a nationalistic ideology with its program of building a nation state.⁸² This is mostly the creation of the elites, although it only names what already exists. It is also important to remember here that the elements of the set were not all born after the year 1770 but included many elements which were known earlier. In this part I also attempt to re-create the 'onion' structure of the identity, showing its layers.

Research into national identity usually requires a wide collection of primary sources, which is connected with the fact that the manifestations of national awareness may be expressed both verbally and non-verbally. They can be both direct and indirect. In fact, the research should concern all the written texts,

⁸² K. Lunden, *op. cit.*, p. 48–49.

perhaps with the exception of purely theological writings. The elites created a varied collection of written works: academic texts, literature, diaries and letters. In the middle of the 18th century journalistic sources appeared. Before the year 1660 we can speak about some sort of political activity and thanks to this also official sources can be used such as those connected with meetings of the estates, requests made to the crown, and documents concerning Norway created in the royal chancery in Copenhagen.⁸³ Because the lower social classes (peasants included), as far as they could, were also involved in public activity, these documents can be used as sources of information on the identity of this social strata. With regards to this social class it was necessary, nevertheless, to turn to the data concerning non-written manifestations of identity i.e. first and foremost, folk culture (folk customs, tradition, broadly understood relics of material culture), beliefs, memory of myths, legends and historical facts. It was essential to include ethnographic work. The access to many sources was difficult and that is why the author of this work could use them only partially. It does not seem, however, that a wider employment of such material would significantly change the conclusions based on the written sources.

⁸³ Two collections of sources were primarily used: *Aktstykker til de norske stændermøders historie 1548–1661*, ed. O. A. Johnsen, vol. I, Oslo 1984 (offset of the edition from 1929), vol. II, Oslo 1969, vol. III, Oslo 1984 (further ANS) and *Norske Rigs-registrarer. Tildels i Uddrag*, vol. I–XII, Oslo 1861–1891 (further NRR); available on the digital archive page of the University of Bergen: www.da2.uib.no.

PART ONE

**THE PROCESS OF SHAPING
NORWEGIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY
IN 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY**

CHAPTER ONE
THE LOSS OF INDEPENDENCE OF NORWAY
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 16TH CENTURY

In Norwegian history there is a period of union – when the country was joined with Sweden or Denmark (or both) in a personal union. This occurred after a period of Norway’s greatness during the Middle Ages, after the death of King Håkon V (1270–1319, king 1299¹), who did not leave a male heir. The dynastic crisis paved the way for the agreements with neighbouring countries: in 1319, the grandson of Håkon, son of Eric, Duke of Södermanland, Magnus Eriksson (1316–1374, king to 1343) ascended to the throne in Norway and Sweden. The union fell apart in 1343, and the ruling son of Magnus – Håkon VI (1340–1380, king 1343) united with Denmark, marrying princess Margaret, the daughter of Valdemar IV Atterdag of Denmark (1359). Towards the end of 14th century the Norwegian and Danish thrones were united under the rule of their son Olaf IV (1370–1387, king 1380) and then Margaret.² At this point a period of union between Norway and Denmark began and lasted until 1814. During the Kalmar Union, Sweden was also a part of this agreement, but in 1523 at the time of the crowning of Gustav Eriksson (1496–1560), it severed all bonds with Denmark and Norway. Such dynastic trouble gave the Norwegian Crown an ambiguous status: hereditary succession existed, although weakened by the presence of females in the line. In addition, according to the medieval traditions of Norwegian patrimonial state, the state was an inheritance of the king (*odel*). At the same time the tendency to emphasise the elective character of the monarchy was equally strong, especially among the aristocracy.

The period of the union for Norway meant practically the end of its former magnificence. Its role was diminishing and the political centre was slowly

¹ This information about ascending the throne concerns only the throne of Norway, also in the case of rulers having other crowns.

² The daughter of the king, Margaret (b. 1353 d. 1412), had a special status. She was the ruler, but she was neither the queen nor the king. In the Danish-Swedish agreement from March 1388 she was described in a phrase *fru och husbonde och fullmäktige förmyndare* (Eng: “Sovereign Lady and Ruler”); Valdemar IV Atterdag, (b.ar. 1320 d. 1376), king of Denmark from 1340.

moving towards the neighbouring countries. The contemporary Norwegian historian Steinar Imsen noticed that the main obstacle to successful politics was the fact that from the 14th century Norway practically lacked centralized power structures, which were in fact abroad, and from the end of this century – in Copenhagen. The Norwegian state developed ‘beyond the borders of the country’ according to the aims and plans of the Danish ruler. ‘Norway was a kingdom, but not a state’ – Imsen writes.³ Since the beginning of the Kalmar Union Norway became the object of political games rather than their subject.

In direct confrontation with the neighbours, which resulted from Norway having lost its own dynasty, it turned out that the neighbours were stronger. Norway’s weakness was a consequence of many factors.

The country was weakened by the power-hungry politics of Håkon VI (1340–1380, king 1355), who wanted to match his great predecessors although he had neither the strength nor the means to do so. The economic weakness also resulted from the fact that from the end of 13th century Norwegian trade was completely dominated by Hanseatic merchants, who, by the privilege from the year 1294, ensured their full control over the most important cities: Bergen, Oslo and Tønsberg. All attempts to get rid of this dependence failed and the union with Denmark, which was already fighting the Hanseatic League over the control of the trade routes on the Baltic Sea, pulled Norway into the conflict with the trading and political power even more. Already in the 15th century, the increasing role of the Hansa in Norwegian economy was connected with the decisions of the reigning rulers: Christopher of Bavaria (1416–1448, king 1440) and Christian I (1426–1481, king 1450), which brought huge losses to Norway. The Hanseatic wilfulness only strengthened the Norwegians’ feelings of aversion towards foreigners.

From mid-14th century, Norway faced a demographic catastrophe caused primarily by the bubonic plague (the Black Death epidemic), which halved the population of the country. According to some trustworthy sources only one third of its inhabitants survived. Around the year 1300 the number of inhabitants totalled 300 thousand and at the beginning of the 16th century – 200 thousand.⁴ The crisis in agriculture which resulted from this catastrophe was still

³ S. Imsen, ‘Den politiske tilstand i 1536. Hvilken politisk makt hadde Olav Engelbrekts-son?’ in S. Supphellen (ed.) *Nytt søkelys på Olav Engelbrekts-son*, Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter 2004, No. 2, p. 50.

⁴ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 12; *Aschehougs og Gyldendals Store Norske Leksikon*, vol. XIV, Oslo 2006, p. 11.

present in the 15th century, which was evidenced by the increasing number of abandoned farms (*ødegårde*).⁵ The dying out of the Norwegian noble families caused by the epidemic (from three hundred noble families at the beginning of 14th century, only 60 were left at the end of the century) had not only social but also political consequences. In the 15th century it was connected with the influx of the Swedish and Danish aristocracy and nobility into Norway. Their role in the country grew with time. Because they often were employed in offices, already in the 15th century the aversion to foreign rule in Norway was growing. The weakness of the local aristocracy caused the main governing body apart from the King – The Council of the Realm (*riksrådet*) to become a representative of foreign nobles, losing its position of a partner equal to the king.

In the mid-15th century, in connection with the political crisis in Denmark, the Council managed to regain its independent position for a short period of time. It decided to continue the union with Denmark (at the same time in Sweden, the opposition against the union with Denmark was growing stronger, culminating in a series of uprisings) and, following the Danish Council of the Realm, elected as king Christian I, the first Danish monarch from the Oldenburg dynasty, who was crowned as king of Norway in July 1450 in the Nidaros⁶ Cathedral in Trondheim.

The treaty signed soon after by the members of both Councils (the Bergen agreement) established a personal union and guaranteed Norway the equality of rights, preservation of all existing rights and privileges, exclusivity in appointments of office positions for the 'locals' (*innfødte statsborgere*), joint election of the king, joint decision making concerning war, mutual help in case of attack and it also decreed 'brotherly love' between both kingdoms.⁷ The concept of this union, expressed in the Bergen treaty, became the basis for the Norwegian politics, the so-called aristocratic constitutionalism (*riksrådskonstitusjonalisme*). This was a medieval concept of legal state analogous to the

⁵ Ø. Rian, 'Olav Engelbrektsson, den store taperen i norsk historie. Synet på ham i ettertida' in *Nytt søkelys på...*, p. 11.

⁶ The name «Nidaros» named after the river Nid is the oldest name of this settlement, which after development was re-named Trondheim. This name was left in the name of the diocese (*Nidaros bispedømme* – set up in 1030, from 1153 – archbishopric) and in the name of the cathedral – *Nidarosdomen* (*Nidaros domkirke*).

⁷ 'At begge riker, Norge og Danmark skulle heretter bli og være til sammen i broderlig kjærlighet, samhandling og venskap...', Unionstraktaten mellom Norge og Danmark. Bergen 29 august 1450' in J. E. Ebbestad Hansen (ed.), *Norsk tro og tanke*, vol. I, [s.l.] 1998, p. 169–171.

Danish one. Norwegian aristocratic constitutionalism supported maintaining Norway's (or more precisely its Council's) position of equality of rights in the union, elective monarchy and the guarantee of office positions for the persons born in Norway. This constitutionalism became the basis for maintaining the independence of the country during the times of political crisis in the 20s and 30s of the 16th century.

The Norwegian Council (as distinguished from the Danish one) was dominated by the clergy, very often originating from petty nobility. At the same time, it was interested in gaining a status similar to the Danish Council in the country. Its prerogatives, however, were much smaller. The Council practically had no administrative bodies, neither its own officials nor its own office or budget. What is more, it did not have a tradition of independent action as 'always' the king had been the most important political force in the country. In addition, the Council was divided by private interests of its members, for whom building up the power of their own families was more important than political accord. Every member of the Council had his own office (fief) which engaged his time and efforts. The geographical conditions of Norway – large distances, hardships of travel related to the many geographical barriers such as mountain chains, icebergs, rapid rivers etc. did not create favourable circumstances for frequent meetings and integration of the Council. All these weaknesses will manifest themselves clearly in the time of political crisis in 20s and 30s of the 16th century. However, one must remember that weakening the power and authority of the Council resulted directly from the politics of the Danish kings who introduced Danish aristocracy into it, ignored its decisions, did not call meetings and took over its competencies. As a result, in the times of crisis it was the king who was the most important decision maker – the initiative remained in his hands.

There are many indicators that the society was not pleased with the on-going changes. It was characteristic that the Bergen treaty was written in Danish and not in Old Norse (*norrønt*, the form of language developed in the Middle Ages, used in sagas, among other things) which was going out of use at the time and was classified as literary language. This mirrored the increasing Danish influences in culture. The discontentment of the society was also connected with the politics of the kings, which was not always advantageous for Norway, breaching the agreements from Bergen, and growing aversion of the peasants – free sharecroppers – against the nobility and royal servants, *fogder*,⁸ caused by the

⁸ In the case of *Fogd*, pl. *fogder* (new Norwegian *fut*, *futer*), in English the – German term *vogt* is used; the administrative unit in the charge of a *fogd* is called *fogderi* (pl. *fogderier*).

growing fiscal burdens and tributes (levies). At the turn of the centuries, several revolts occurred which were brutally suppressed by the Danish authorities.

Different sources show that national elements can be traced in various conflicts of 15th century. Peasants rebelled against foreigners (i.e. Swedes and Danes); they protested against appointing them to offices and requested that these should be reserved for the people born in Norway. In public speeches, appeals to ‘good Norwegians’ (*godhe Nordhmenn*) appeared. The figure of St. Olaf (d. 1030, king 1015–1028), who was believed to guarantee public order, was frequently referred to.⁹ The Archbishop of Nidaros Aslak Bolt (ar. 1377–1450) in a letter from 1449 described requests from Norwegians directed at him to prevent a German or Dane from being elected king. The people demanded that the candidate should be – according to the everlasting law written in the sagas – a descendant of the old Norwegian dynasty. National viewpoints were also visible in other texts which were written by the Archbishop. The later coronation charter¹⁰ of Karl Knutsson Bonde (14–8/1409–1470, king 1449–1450) – a document at the time truly extraordinary – was written down in Old Norse.¹¹ The *Breviarium Nidrosiense*, prepared in 1519 at the instigation of Danish archbishop Erik Valkendorf (ar. 1465–1522) for the Norwegian church, contained two pages in Old Norse, which proves that this language was still in use in the Church – the predecessor of Valkendorf, archbishop Gaute Ivarsson (1437–1510) used solely Old Norse.¹²

The Norwegian crisis, which lasted for almost four decades of the early 16th century, ended in 1536 with the complete loss of Norway’s independence. The political maelstrom resulted from a combination of many factors: the aspirations of Danish rulers, primarily of Christian II (1431–1523, king 1513) and Christian III (1503–1559, king 1536), and their Danish politics, to which Norwegian issues were subordinated. Danish officials living in Norway had their own plans, intentions and sometimes large political ambitions. The Catholic clergy, first and foremost bishops with the archbishop of Nidaros played an

All local administrative and self-government posts are referred to by their Norwegian names.

⁹ S. Imsen, *Norsk bondekommunalisme fra Magnus Lagabøte til Kristian Kvart*, vol. I, Trondheim 1990, pp. 174, 186, 189, 190.

¹⁰ The Danish *Haandfestning* was a document, a privilege sworn by the King at the moment of election and ascension to the throne. Its significant contents regulate the basic rules of state functioning and most important privileges of nobility and clergy (the Church).

¹¹ S. Imsen, ‘Den politiske tilstand i 1536...’, p. 42.

¹² K.-H. Hognestad, ‘Det trykte ord – bokens historie i Norge’ *Til Opplysning*, III (2000), www.ub.ntnu.no/formidl/utgivelser/til_opplysning/to_nr3.html (16.08.2006).

important role. For these groups one of the most important motives for action was the fears that the Danish rulers would introduce Protestantism in both monarchies. Norwegian nobility was becoming less and less important and the Norwegian Council of the Realm – divided, weak, dominated by the Danes – was not able to undertake any independent political actions. The rest of the society – peasants as well as not so numerous bourgeoisie, usually of foreign origin (among others: German, Dutch, English) – stayed rather passive. The cruelty with which the Danish authorities suppressed all peasant revolts was very well remembered – peasants realized how hopeless and harmful their fight with the state could be.

The third part in the union – Sweden – did not participate directly in the events that took place in Norway. It had, however, an enormous influence on what was going on in Denmark at the time, and the soon the independent Sweden (becoming a subject of politics in the Baltic Sea basin) was taken into consideration in all deliberations concerning Norway, which continued for the next three hundred years. In those times, Sweden, in many different ways and with varying intensity, was in favor of changes in Norway: it lodged territorial claims, tried to persuade the Norwegians to break off the union with Denmark and wanted to conquer the whole country and take the Norwegian crown. Many actions were undertaken by the Danish with this factor in mind.

The question about the reasons for Norway's demise in 1536 is considered to be one of the most important ones in Norwegian historiography. Indirect reasons are connected with the 16th century demographic catastrophe, especially the disappearance of Norwegian nobility, the crisis of agriculture and the decline of central power structures. The discussion about direct causes concerns the assessment of the main actions of the key figures. For Norwegians the evaluation of archbishop Nidaros Olav Engelbrektsson (ar. 1480–1538) is especially important. Questions about the aims and character of his actions, their effectiveness and their chances of success have been provoking a lot of discussions.¹³ One of the most recent works, by the leading figure among Norwegian historians, Lars Hamre, concentrates on precise re-creation of events from the years 1513–1537 and shows the archbishop as a politician striving not so much to achieve independence, which according to Hamre is an ahistorical approach, but rather to maintain the system based on the main assumptions

¹³ Recently the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters devoted a conference *Nytt søkelys på Olav Engelbrektsson* (Trondheim 10–11 October 2003) to this issue, from which the already mentioned proceedings have been published.

of aristocratic constitutionalism related to the Catholic Church.¹⁴ A question arises here whether this is not in fact a confrontation between a conservative vision of political order, connected with striving to maintain the current system, with the political program of the 16th century modernization i.e. a program intending to build a modern national-dynastic state represented by the Danish Crown. This is the approach of Øystein Rian, who presents the archbishop as the defender of the 'Norwegian system' that is the common governance and political balance between the Crown and the Council of the Realm, and in the social context – between the Catholic Church and landowners – petty nobility and peasants at the same time.¹⁵ For Rian, however, the national character of the archbishop's politics is more evident. He emphasizes the reluctance of the bishop to cooperate with Danish Catholics, which manifested itself in his actions. This reluctance would be strange if we assumed that the bishop was motivated only by religion and clerical interest. Rian similarly interprets the obstinacy of the bishop when it came to Norwegian coronation. He quotes the statements of his contemporaries, who describe the bishop as a Norwegian patriot. Rian points to the geographical work written in 1532 by a German scholar: *Terrae Sanctae (-) Syriae, Arabiae, Aegyptii et Schondiae (-) descriptio*, in which a clear anti-Danish attitude can be traced. It is also known that this work by Jacob Ziegler was based on information gained from, among others, Olav Engelbrektsson when they both stayed in Rome. The work contained a few notes on the past history of Norway: a magnificent, thriving country which fell into decline as a result of the introduction of elective crown because this change enabled the Danish conquest of Norway. According to Rian, the bishop's politics was aimed primarily at maintaining the country's independence within the union with Denmark but he did not see a contradiction between this goal and maintaining Catholic faith – both these issues were parts of the same program for him.¹⁶ Steinar Imsen also draws attention to the national character of the bishop's politics. He writes that the bishop was strongly attached to the Norwegian political traditions and law, which was manifested by minting a coin with the image of St. Olaf, who was the king and patron of the country, with the inscription – consistent with the Norwegian tradition – 'Norway's [Eternal] King'.¹⁷

¹⁴ L. Hamre, *Norges politiske historie 1513–1537*, Oslo 1998, p. 825.

¹⁵ Ø. Rian, 'Olav Engelbrektssons kamp for det norske system. Det viktigste og mest interessante nederlag i Norgeshistorie' in *Nytt søkelys...*, p. 91.

¹⁶ *ibidem*, p. 95–97.

¹⁷ S. Imsen, 'Den politiske tilstand...', p. 43.

It is not clear whether Norway's downfall was a consequence of the anachronistic system of government or whether its defenders were too weak to confront the Danish monarchy. It is possible that both these elements played an equally important role. It is certain that attention must be paid to the gradual dismantling of Norwegian state that had lasted for 35 years as well as weakening of the elites resulting from the politics of the Danish from the beginning of 16th century.¹⁸

The politics of the Oldenburgs towards Norway was in fact quite consistent, although not always identical in the chosen methods. The main goal was always subjugating Norway and replacing equality with control. It was important not only with regard to the interests of the Danish nobility, for whom Norway could become the area of 'colonization' of some sort, but also because of geopolitical reasons. The control over Norway strengthened the international position of Denmark also in confrontation with Sweden. Additionally, Danish kings, referring to deeply-rooted Norwegian traditions, strived to give Norway the status of hereditary kingdom, wanting in this way to strengthen the position of the Crown. This was a solution that arose often in Europe, when the ruler joined the electoral with hereditary position, giving him political and military support and determining his real possibilities. Such striving could become an important part of the Oldenburg battle for the strengthening the royal power and, in further perspective, for the introduction of absolute rule. This obviously did not evoke Danish nobility's enthusiasm.

The politics of imposing control on Norway was begun by prince Christian (later Christian II) sent here in 1506 as viceroy. Not only did he brutally suppress all the unrests and riots (1508) but also had the political aim to concentrate power in his hands. Its main elements were appointing only trustworthy and loyal persons to important offices, taking decisions without consulting the Council of the Realm and emphasizing the viceroy's authority.

In 1510 the prince put forward the nomination of his counselor Erik Valkendorf to become the archbishop of Nidaros. The appointment for this position was of huge importance. The archbishop of Nidaros was in charge of the Trondheim diocese, which was the most important and one of the wealthiest in the country and as a result of his title was the lord of the cathedral that symbolized the Norwegian state. Nidaros was the place of coronation and the necropolis of Norwegian kings. Here rested the remains of St. Olaf. The archbishop had at

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 94.

the time the position of almost a sole ruler. From the 13th century he had the right to mint coins, had his own army, both on land and sea, had many fiefs and he also had a duty to collect taxes. The archbishop of Nidaros was an informal leader of the Council of the Realm and to some extent a regent; he was deputy king and the steward of the country. From the times of the bishop Aslak Bolt, who was the steward of the country after the year 1448 in the interregnum, to the rule of bishop Gaute during the times of king Hans, until Olav Engelsbrekts-son, the archbishop of Trondheim was an unofficial national leader, although he did not always enjoy corresponding support.¹⁹

After his father's death, Christian was crowned in 1513 in Copenhagen and in July 1514 – in Norway. The new king turned out to be one of the most interesting but at the same time one of the most troublesome monarchs in the history of Denmark and Norway. His strong temperament and stormy private life were accompanied by a modern program of strengthening the bourgeoisie and protecting the peasants, often against the interest of nobility. He was a precursor of mercantilism and at the same time a supporter of strong royal power, which was not appreciated by the Danish nobility. For Norway this meant, on the one hand, an uncompromising struggle for full control of the country and, on the other, the program of accepting Norway as hereditary kingdom – in contrast to elective Denmark.

The absolutist politics of the king, harshness of the governance and breaking the law soon caused discontent. The politics of Christian was criticized by the peasants, who remembered very well that old Norwegian law (commonly called the 'St. Olaf's law') forbade the kings to impose extraordinary taxes without their permission. The fiscal pressure was painful, even more so that the beginning of the 1520s brought crop failure and weak fishing hauls. During things (*ting*) and less formal conventions peasants complained and produced petitions to the king's representatives but did not get any answers. A common outrage was caused by persecutions and severe punishments for those who dared to criticize the royal officials. However, peasants themselves, who most painfully experienced the brutality of royal officials, were not able to organize the next revolt. Also the Council stayed passive.

In fact, the only institution which resisted the king's political influence was the Catholic Church. In the beginning there were disagreements between the local royal officials and bishops, but soon a conflict developed between the king

¹⁹ S. Imsen, *ibidem*, p. 41–45; S. W. Nordeide, 'Erkebispesetet belyst gjennom borganlegget', in *Nytt søkelys...*, p. 27, 30–33.

and archbishop. Valkendorf started to directly experience the results of his royal friend's political decisions. Financial needs forced Christian to impose an extraordinary tax on Norway and the tax was also applicable to bishop's possessions. The King demanded that the bishop's army take part in the war against Sweden and looked more and more critically upon Valkendorf's independence, his nominations, and the fact that he solely manages the incomes from pilgrimages to St. Olaf's relics in Nidaros. Basing on the canonical law the archbishop attempted to search for justice with the pope but soon after arriving in Rome – he died (1522).

In the meantime, the rule of Christian II in Sweden resulted in a national uprising under the lead of Gustav Eriksson, later called Vasa, and in Denmark it led to the revolt of the nobility, who refused to obey the king, appointing his uncle, Frederick I (1471–1533, king 1523) to the throne. In April 1523, Christian II escaped from Copenhagen, going to the Netherlands under protection of his brother-in-law, the Roman Emperor Charles V.

Because the position of the new monarch was difficult (the coup d'état and removal of Christian II from power was not uniformly accepted) a period of relative independence began in Norway. The king, however, did not abandon the idea of imposing full control over Norway, although he acted differently from his predecessor. The Council, weakened by the decisions of Christian II, had been meeting very rarely in incomplete line-up and had difficulty with making unanimous politics.

In the political struggle during the rule of Frederick I in Norway both Danish and Norwegian aristocrats took part: both clergymen and royal officials. They very often represented their own interests, especially that most families had already been mixed in terms of nationality. The family of Ingerd Ottesdatter (Rømer) from Austrått (ar. 1475–1555) is a good example here. She was one of the wealthiest and most significant women in Norway at the time. She did not only participate in the events (although her participation is not always clear) but also, thanks to her five daughters whom she married off to members of Norwegian and Danish nobility, she became a 'mother-founder' figure for the new, Norwegian-Danish nobility.

During this very stormy period none of the sides managed to gain an advantage over the other. On the Norwegian side the archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson presented a rather consistent program, although this program was not obvious from the beginning. Engelbrektsson, an educated graduate of Rostock University, was a proud and ambitious man. He was also a determined opponent of

the Reformation. He was the informal leader of the Council and an important dignitary. In fact, he governed over almost a half of Norway. It can be assumed that already at that time he was interested in actions that could strengthen the position of the Council i.e. the whole country in the relationship with Denmark.

In the beginning Engelbrektsson acted cautiously, swearing the oath of allegiance to both Christian II and Frederick. Thanks to this he managed to regain a lot of independence and deprive the strongest representatives of the king of their influences. It seemed that a period of the Council's rule in independent Norway started. However, these were only illusions – in the years 1525–26 all weaknesses of the Council and Norwegian nobility came to the surface, which only due to the uncertain position of Frederick did not cause immediate intervention. Nobility was not interested in public activity and could not or did not want to summon and encourage peasants to act. This, at the same time, was a success of the Swedish nobility.²⁰

Meanwhile in Denmark, reformation tendencies were increasing, encouraging outbreaks against the Church in Norway, although not for religious but economic reasons. Under the guise of reforms some luminaries seized the Church possessions and fiefs, which were administered by the clergy. The archbishop's fears were amplified by news coming from Denmark that the king was siding with the Reformation. It was unknown whether the king would want to keep the articles of his charter that guaranteed independence to the Church in Norway.

Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson was more and more convinced that a compromise was impossible and that he had to face a struggle. He was aware that he would need a strong independent ally. Frederick supported German Protestants and his son introduced Reformation in his duchy of Schleswig. Because at the time the Catholic side had an advantage in the inner struggles in the Roman empire, naturally the bishop's hopes were tied to the emperor Charles V. This in turn required the need to reconcile with Frederick's main enemy, the former king Christian II, who was in exile under the emperor's protection.

Most likely Engelbrektsson regarded this alliance without enthusiasm – Christian had a very bad reputation in Norway but was connected to the emperor in a political and familial way. He also had good contacts with Catholic dukes of the Reich. He was a Protestant himself but promised to respect the independence of Church in Norway and – if he regained the throne – to make Denmark come back to Catholic Church. For this reason, he was an attrac-

²⁰ S. W. Nordeide, *op. cit.*, p. 20–21.

tive partner for the archbishop, who additionally hoped that the emperor will have him under control. In November 1531 Christian with his hired army came to Norway beginning his fight for Norwegian throne. The attempt turned out to be a failure. Frederick maintained control over all strongholds of southern Norway and local fiefs. Christian II exhibited incompetence and uncertainty. His military actions did not bring any success. Additionally, the former king antagonized his Norwegian clergy allies by suddenly nominating an ardent Protestant for the post of the Chancellor. The chances for success were increasingly smaller, especially that aid was coming from Denmark. In June 1532 Christian II agreed to sign the so-called Oslo treaty in which he entered into a settlement with Frederick; in exchange for the promise of royal treatment, personal meeting with Frederick and a safety guarantee he pledged to disband his army and retreat from Norway. Frederick broke the safety guarantee: Christian was arrested and then imprisoned in a fortress Sønderborg on Danish island Als, where he lived till the end of his days (he died in 1559).

In this way, Frederick I managed to maintain control in Norway but soon in April 1533, he died and the political crisis entered into its decisive phase. This time serious disturbances occurred also in Denmark – a civil war called the Count's Feud (*Grevens fejde*) broke out.

The sources of the conflict were social and political struggles in Denmark at the time, with which questions of faith were connected. The war was provoked by the dynastic crisis related to the reformation in the Church. The sons of the deceased king represented different outlooks; the older one – Christian – was on the side of Reformation, while the younger, Hans, was attached to Catholicism. The fact that the issue was not quickly resolved resulted in the situation in which external powers, especially Lübeck, the most important Danish competitor of all Hanseatic League cities, wanted to benefit from the conflict. Supporting the right to the throne of the overthrown king Christian II, the city sent in its hired army in May 1524. The leader of the army was the German *condottiero* – count Christopher of Oldenburg (from whom the name of the conflict was derived). The bourgeoisie, primarily from Copenhagen and Scania, and some nobility from Zealand sided with Christian II. On the other hand, the nobility from Jutland, sympathizing with Protestantism, sided with Duke Christian, proclaiming him the King. As a result, a civil war broke out in Denmark. Also peasants joined the conflict supporting Christian II and standing against the Jutland nobility.

The outbreak of the *Grevens fejde* caused a lot of difficulties in Norway. As a result of a recent defeat the candidacy of Christian II did not cause enthusiasm

of the Norwegians. Many people rather supported the young king. A further discouragement for them was the participation of Lübeck in the conflict, which sided with Christian II – this Hanseatic city was perceived as a serious threat for the Norwegians as a result of historical developments.²¹

Archbishop Engelbrektsson, suspecting that he may soon have to accept Christian III as king, because his advantage in the Danish civil war was increasingly visible, wanted to use the crisis to force following of the main rules of aristocratic constitutionalism and old Norwegian laws as well as ensuring Norway a position in the union guaranteed by the 1450 Bergen treaty. A division within the country started to become apparent: while the northern Norwegian nobility sided with the archbishop, the southern nobility was against him. The Archbishop sent a letter summoning an electoral meeting. His arguments were very characteristic. The bishop wrote that the summoning of the meeting was necessary because some actions are ‘against our – all inhabitants of Norway – honor, [sworn] oath and obligations according to [the rules] of St. Olaf’s coronation and the Norwegian law’.²²

Christian III, however, aimed rather at subjugating Norway than at returning to the state described in the Bergen treaty. The new monarch saw this as not only as an opportunity to reinforce the power of Denmark, suppress all the potential Swedish claims to Norway, but also as an occasion to strengthen his own royal position. It was enough to force the idea of hereditary Norwegian crown, which was possible because this matter was unclear according to Norwegian laws. To gain this, Christian was ready to pay a price – giving Norway (fiefs) away to Danish nobility.

Being aware of his difficult position, the archbishop renewed contacts with the emperor Charles V. This time he decided to act on behalf of the rights to the Norwegian throne of Christian II’s daughter – Dorothea (1520–1580) and her husband Prince-electoral Frederick II of the Palatinate (1482–1546; they were married in 1535 and because of the fact that the son and heir of Christian II died in 1532 the closest pretender to the throne could be the Prince-electoral Frederick II). This was a program aiming at ‘a Catholic king for Norway’ and the archbishop was convinced that he would gain the support – also military – of the emperor. In some sense one can speak of a great consistency of the bishop: he strove to have a Catholic king of Norway – in the beginning it was to be Christian II and later the Palatine Prince-electoral Frederick. In both cases Olav

²¹ Ibidem, p. 30.

²² After L. Hamre, *op. cit.*, p. 816.

Engelbrektsson called for external aid.²³ He believed that the fate of the Catholic Church in Norway could be a strong argument. The archbishop received promising letters both from the emperor and the Prince but soon it turned out that their interest was rather moderate and the hopes of the Norwegian bishop – illusory.

The final resolution came in the beginning of 1536. Counting on the foreign aid, the archbishop not only carried out an assassination on Christian's envoys but also started military actions.

These actions were aimed at intercepting strategically important places before the expected invasion. However, aid did not come. All over the country, Danish nobles were convincing the bishops and the inhabitants to take the side of the new king, usually receiving declarations of loyalty. The archbishop, being aware of his military weakness, could not wait for external help any longer and turned to Christian III with a negotiations proposal. He asked for amnesty, for consent to conduct the election of Christian by the electoral meeting of the Norwegian nobility and for signing by Christian a charter identical as his father, king Frederick I, did.

However, Christian did not want a compromise any longer and – what was worse – did not feel the need of one. Meanwhile in June 1536 the siege of Copenhagen, which had lasted for many months, ended successfully and together with this – the civil war in Denmark. Soon after entering the city, Christian ordered the imprisonment of Catholic bishops and decided to introduce Lutheran denomination to Denmark. The archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson became, therefore, not only a rebel against the royal power but also a representative of the 'delegalized' Church.

Having succeeded in Denmark, Christian decided to solve the Norwegian problem with the use of force. In October 1536 he signed a charter in which, among others, he included decisions concerning Norway – the so-called Norwegian paragraph (*Norgesparagrafen*). In spring 1537 he sent his army to Norway, forcing the archbishop Olav into exile. The bishop died in Netherlands in 1538. Till May, the bishop's stronghold Steinviksholm near Trondheim defended itself counting on aid but it finally surrendered. In this way the political fate of Norway was settled for the next three hundred years.

²³ T. Ellingsen, 'Den kirkelige tilstand i 1536. Hvilken åndelig/moralsk makt rådte Olav Engelbrektsson over?' in *Nytt søkelys...*, p. 58.

CHAPTER TWO
NORWEGIAN SOCIETY
IN 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

In the beginning of the 16th century Norway was a scarcely populated country. According to estimations, the populace around the year 1520 was approximately 200 thousand.¹ Within this number, around 190 thousand lived in the country and the remaining 10 thousand – in cities. Over the century Norway's population increased to 300 thousand inhabitants in the year 1600, but still 90 per cent of this number were inhabitants of the country.² In 1665 the population reached 440 thousand; this growth occurred despite the loss of land. In 1701 – the population was 727 thousand. Norway reached one million inhabitants in the first half of the 19th century.³

Norwegian peasants in 16th and 17th centuries, having approximately one third of farmland in the country, were for the most part sharecroppers (tenants). However, around 20 per cent owned their land and belonged to the category of yeomen (*Odelbonden*), i.e. having the right of ownership and inheritance originating from medieval or even tribal laws. The tenants could farm the land belonging to different owners: the Crown, nobility, clerks and even other peasants. The ownership did not necessarily translate into the level of wealth; situations where the owner of the land was poorer than the tenant were not uncommon because of larger burdens for the state. It is worth remembering that Norwegian peasants were not only farmers. In many areas farming of the land was marginal to their economic activity. The activity connected with harvesting trees was much more significant: peasants were woodcutters, had their sawmills, the more well-to-do ones attempted to sell lumber. In the North and

¹ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 101. Other parts of the kingdom had: Denmark – 600 thousand, Schleswig-Holstein – 400 thousand, Island – 50 thousand. The most densely populated were the duchies – there were 15 times more inhabitants per square kilometer than in Norway. At the same time Sweden had around 800 thousand inhabitants (idem, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, pp. 31–32).

² Ø. Rian *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 103.

³ In 1845 Norway had 1.3 million inhabitants. A.-L. Seip, *Nasjonens bygges 1830–1870*, Oslo 1997 (*Aschehougs Norgeshistorie*, ed. K. Helle, Oslo 1994–1998, vol. VIII), p. 78.

along the coasts, peasants were most of all – or almost exclusively – fishermen. Also raising cattle was important – mainly goats and sheep. A lot of landless peasants were employed in the nascent mining and metallurgical industry. The variety of peasant activity was quite broad and a lot of it was close to those branches of economy which started to be modernized and became market oriented the earliest. Thanks to this in the 17th century the Norwegian peasantry, similarly to the rest of the society, experienced the European transformation of the time less painfully and could even benefit from it early.

Between nobility and peasants there were folk elites, the so-called *knaper*. This group was composed of wealthy freeholders, often owners of a few farms and originating from petty nobility. Historians coined a term to describe them: ‘farmer nobility’ (*bondeadel*). These were generally literate people with social aspirations that led to marriages with descendants of ministers and royal officials. They were characterized also by a greater economic activity, for example they occupied themselves with commerce on a larger scale. These people were leaders of peasants, their settlements were centers of local administrative institutions (until 1660) – here things (assemblies) or other meetings took place. Additionally, urban landowners also belonged to this group, as well as owners of fishing boats, merchants (those who were not city citizens), skippers. Members of this group were appointed to lower, partially elective, offices of *bondelensmann* or *lagretmann*.⁴ The origin of many of these families could be traced back to the Middle Ages when their ancestors belonged to the group of so-called *setesveine* – these were the lessees of church land, military servicemen, domestic servants, assistants and representatives in ministry work of a higher level, mostly of bishops. Exercising their right, archbishops of Norway often ennobled their assistants and in this way *setesveine*, who stayed in close relations with the peasants, were at the beginning of the modern era a part of lower, petty

⁴ The office of *bondelensmann* (pl. *bondelensmenn*) originated in the Middle Ages. This was an assistant of royal administrator who with time became representative of local peasant population. From the end of 16th century he was accountable to the *fogd* aiding him in court related cases and collecting taxes. A few *lagretmenn* (sing. *lagretmann*) created a panel of judges, hence the translation of a juror or sworn judge is often used. *Lagretman* were sworn and assisted the *lagmann* (pl. *lagmenn*) who was a court Norwegian law expert. He usually originated from the nobility. His role was weakening starting from the beginning of 17th century. S. Imsen, H. Winge, *Norsk historisk leksikon. Kultur og samfunn ca. 1500-ca. 1800*, Oslo 1999, pp. 261–262, pp. 241–242; *Norsk historisk leksikon. Næringsliv, rettsvesen, administrasjon, mynt, mål og vekt, militære forhold, byggeskikk m.m. 1500–1800*, ed. R. Fladby, S. Imsen, H. Winge, Oslo 1974, pp. 204–205, pp. 188–189.

nobility.⁵ They did not manage to maintain this position after the Reformation and most families were declassified to the level of peasant elites – *knape*, often, however, remembering their former noble status.

The existence of these groups was one of the reasons why the social divisions between nobility and the rest of the society, mainly peasants, were rather vague. On the other hand, this was caused by the fact that one cannot speak about fully developed and distinguished nobility in the case of Norway. The name itself, Norwegian *adel*, was a borrowing from Danish and did not appear earlier than in the beginning of the 16th century. The nobility as a group can be spoken of with reference to the tribute and acceptance of Frederick II (1534–1588, king 1559) in 1548 and their first class privilege was awarded in 1582. As everywhere else, the Norwegian nobility originated from the royal warrior aristocracy who in the 13th century underwent the process of considerable stratification. At this time the first titles appeared – i.e. the hitherto classes started to be called barons and knights and everyone was entitled to the title *herre* (lord). In the 14th century a final division occurred: into aristocracy that controlled the administration of the state (fiefs) and participated in the Council of the Realm and the lower nobility (kighthood), who were not very distant from the wealthy peasants. This petty nobility (*lavadel*) was numerous and significant as they formed the basis of public life in the country. Clergy of all levels originated from this class so it remained in a close relationship with the Catholic Church in Norway. Its legal status, however, was not clear because only some had their own coats of arms and were exempt from taxes.

After the Reformation and loss of independence by Norway, together with the abolition of the Council of the Realm, Norwegian aristocracy – already sparse and very weakened – lost its political significance. The powers from Copenhagen were not willing to accept the nobility of many families from lower aristocracy; a lot of them were degraded to peasantry creating its elites. The remaining noble families – magnates and lower – were gradually integrated with incoming Danish aristocracy and its clients. Constant changes in the number of aristocracy result from this. At the turn of 15th and 16th century the number of nobles of both sexes totaled around eight hundred (which amounted to 0.2 per cent of the population). After the crisis in the beginning of 16th century, this number decreased by half as a result of many representatives of lower nobility losing their titles. At the end of 16th century there were accounts of 100 adult

⁵ L. Hamre, *op. cit.*, pp. 798–799.

men belonging to nobility (which gives around 400 people in total). In the 20s of the 17th century there were approximately forty adult males belonging to nobility.⁶ The group of *knape* was still quite numerous – if they were taken into account when speaking about nobility its number would be about 4 thousand.⁷

At the time the process of differentiation of the nobility from the rest of the society was more and more apparent. Families adopted noble names and coats of arms with an official confirmation of nobility from the king. The privilege from 1582 listed freedom from personal tax, limited income tax and customs. It also regulated the issue of mixed marriages – with the aim of excluding them. Marriage with someone not belonging to the noble class resulted in losing nobility. The nobility was gradually withdrawing from serving in lower offices, from which until then they did not stay away. Career possibilities were rather limited because despite the formal law allowing them to receive fiefs (finally guaranteed in 1591) the Norwegian nobility as a rule did not get them as they could not compete with the Danish aristocracy and their clients. What was left was gentry life – rather modest (especially in comparison with the possibilities of Danish nobility at the time, not even mentioning the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein) but decent. Attempting to maintain its status, Norwegian nobility did not isolate themselves from other social strata (see below).

Nobility living in Norway after 1536 slowly became less and less Norwegian as the process of making it more and more Danish took place. This was related to the influx of Danish aristocracy, nobility and their not-noble clients caused by the royal nominations to offices such as fief lords, village *fogder* and district judges (*sorenskriver*).⁸ The settlement of the liege lord presiding over one of the four largest fiefs (Akershus, Bergen, Trondheim, Båhus) became the political and cultural center. Here in some sense a court developed where young noblemen could prepare for their careers and gain necessary good manners. The influence of such court in the 16th and 17th century was an element of making the elites Danish but because the family of the liege lords was often mixed, an integration of Norwegian and Danish nobility occurred.

⁶ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 29.

⁷ Idem, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, pp. 34–35.

⁸ *Sorenskriver* (pl. *sorenskrivere*) – lit. sworn scribe; an office created in 1591; at the beginning he was a scribe (secretary) and a counsellor to the assembly court. In the 17th century he started appearing, rather informally, as the member of the court panel, which was officially confirmed by the decree of 1634. Finally, in 1687 *sorenskriver* became the sole judge of the lowest court. S. Imsen, H. Winge, *Norsk historisk leksikon...*, pp. 408–410.

The only office which till the end of the 16th century stayed in Norwegian hands was the court post of *lagmann*.⁹ The point was that to hold it one had to know Norwegian law very well and this in turn required the knowledge of Old Norse language. However, already in the 17th century these requirements ceased to matter.

The main way of integration was marriage (observing the class divisions) – usually a marriage of a Danish immigrant with a Norwegian woman, daughter of the local nobleman, minister and sometimes a peasant. In such situations the children and grandchildren from this marriage identified with their place of birth. However, situations when a Danish nobleman treated his duties and lands in Norway only as a source of income were frequent and as a result he neither settled nor lived there doing all his business by proxies. It is estimated that in 1639 40 per cent of lands belonging to the nobility in Norway belonged to 18 per cent of noblemen residing in Denmark and not connected with Norway.¹⁰

In the first half of the 17th century in Norway, like in many other European countries, the nobility was in the state of crisis. The number of noble families was decreasing and many of them were becoming impoverished. The family estates were falling into the hands of bourgeoisie or office servants and some families lost their noble status. A lot of Danes were deciding to return to Denmark. It was quite common that the clients of a Danish nobleman – originating from different groups of the Danish society including bourgeoisie and peasantry – decided to stay in Norway. They settled down in Norway through marriage into local families. Holding lower administrative offices, setting up many broadly defined businesses (to which the economic situation was conducive) they became part of the new Norwegian elites.¹¹

At the end of the 16th century also the bourgeoisie gained the status of a national estate (*riksstand*) and, together with this, the right to send representatives to the general estate assembly. The bourgeoisie in Norway was not numerous (at the end of 16th century it still had around 10 thousand members) and the cities were small. The biggest one, Bergen, had around 8 thousand inhabitants; the next in size – Trondheim and Oslo had two and two and a half thousand respectively. The rest of the cities were inhabited by around a thousand people.¹² The cities had their own boards with representatives of craftsmen. A large propor-

⁹ See footnote 4.

¹⁰ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 177.

¹¹ Idem, *Embetsstanden...*, pp. 31–32, 53; Idem, *Maktens...*, p. 85.

¹² Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 124.

tion of bourgeoisie was of foreign origin – the migrants were from Denmark, Germany, the British Isles and the Netherlands. Still the percentage of local incomers in the number of migrants was significant – in Bergen in the first half of the 17th century 40 per cent of the population that settled down in the city came from various regions of Norway.

Around mid-17th century the progress of urbanization became apparent. The number of city populations reached 30 thousand (in Bergen – 10 thousand); in addition the port and trade centers (*ladesteder*), which did not have the city rights, were developing as well as town settlements around mines. All together at that time there were around 40 different kinds of urban centers (*by*). The town folk was not sharply differentiated – there was no sharp divide between the patricianship and the common people; both merchants and craftsmen participated in city councils, mixed marriages were common and both groups maintained various relationships with the clergy and office clerks.

The class of office clerks formed a separate social category. Before 1660 it was mostly clergy because other officials belonged primarily to their own social strata: nobility, peasantry or bourgeoisie. The clergy identified mostly with the Church and their origin was of lesser importance. As a social class, the clergy participated in estate meetings – higher – personally, lower – by election.

After the reformation the clergy in Norway was subject to the growing Danish influences. At the beginning the battle against Catholicism was not very fierce and for the next dozens of years in the 16th century the ministers who – being Norwegian by birth – were Protestants by name only. This was facilitated by a great attachment of the population to the traditional customs and confessions. However, beginning mid-16th century the state controlled whether all the religious functions were entrusted solely to Lutherans with appropriate preparation. The Protestant bishops – called superintendents – took care of this. In practice this meant an influx of Danish clergy, usually from the Copenhagen area on Zealand. The Danish influence on the Church was mostly connected with the introduction of the Danish language. All the liturgical texts – including first and foremost the Bible – were written in Danish. This language was also used for masses, psalm singing and sermons. Later, Danish language would be also adopted by the ministers born and raised in Norway, not only as a result of education gained in Copenhagen but also because the dialect was not sufficient for the functions they fulfilled. In their cases, however, the differences were smaller: as a rule they spoke Danish with Norwegian accent and pronunciation; they often used Norwegian grammatical structures.

It is supposed that the old Norwegian nobility also used Danish, as it was similar to Norwegian.¹³

The Danish influence on the Church was connected with the fact that the whole organization of this institution was a transplant of the Danish one as it was based on the Danish Church orders published in 1537 (Latin version) and in 1539 (Danish version). The Norwegian regulations were published by Christian IV (1577–1648, king 1588) in 1607. It did not grant the Church in Norway any independence as it was quite a mechanical copy of the Danish one and it did not take into account any distinguishing features of Norway.¹⁴

As the Lutheran orthodoxy was becoming stronger at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, all the clergymen suspected of having pro-Catholic sympathies were eliminated. In 1629 king Christian IV imposed a requirement for all minister candidates to graduate from the Copenhagen University Theology Department. In this way also Norwegians were subject to an unified education in terms of religion and language.

The clergy was, nevertheless, the group in which before 1660 there was the highest percentage of people coming from Norwegian families.¹⁵ This group, however, was also undergoing the process of integration. The migrant Danes willingly married the daughters of the local ministers, clerks or members of the peasant elites, settled down and in this way gave beginning to the new Danish-Norwegian elites. The clergy also did not isolate themselves from other social classes, including the peasants. This subject will be discussed further in this work.

Between 1536 and 1660 one can observe a gradual disappearance of the Norwegian elites understood as a cultural and social community.¹⁶ The purely Norwegian element was almost imperceptible within the nobility, which was already shrinking in the economic and demographic sense. Almost all Norwegian noble families were related to Danish ones, sometimes to German or other. The bourgeoisie, especially wealthier, were noticeably dominated by foreign families, who, however, very often had lived in Norwegian cities for generations. In lower social strata – among the clergy and officials – this phenomenon was less evident. Here, at least till the end of the 16th century, the percentage of

¹³ P. N. Grøtvedt, 'Den kulturelle og språklige bakgrunnen for biskop Jens Nilssøns (og Oluf Børgerssøns) forfatterskap', *Maal og Minne*, 1971, pp. 56, 69, 71.

¹⁴ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, pp. 42–43.

¹⁵ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 46.

¹⁶ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, p. 53.

people born and raised in Norway was significant. The office of the village *fogd*, for example, still after the year 1536 was given by the Danish fief-holders to the local residents but by mid-century this practice had changed and the number of appointed Norwegians was decreasing – in the first half of the 17th century the majority of village *fogder* were clients of the Danish fief-holders coming from Denmark. Another change occurred halfway through the 17th century, when the percentage of people born in Norway started to grow – but these were members of new Norwegian-Danish elites.¹⁷

In the period of nobility rule between 1536 and 1660 it is much easier to trace the process of disintegration of the old Norwegian elites than to show the shaping of new elites, also because of the fact that the numerical data is very scarce. The changes which occurred due to the introduction of absolutism, aimed at regulating administrative structures and the increase of the efficiency of the royal control, allow a more precise description of how the new elites were formed.

In the context of the development of national consciousness an important question must be posed about the relations between the elites and lower social classes, especially the peasantry. An undisputed answer is, however, difficult to formulate here. Many historians perceive a large distance between the elites and the peasants, which was, nevertheless, a common phenomenon in Europe at the time. The elites often treated peasants with contempt, describing them as ‘mob’. Rian noticed that the work of Hans Nielsen Hauge¹⁸ at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries and his popularity among the peasantry may indicate a hidden aversion of this group towards the civil servants.¹⁹ It seems even more true about the earlier times. The elites in Norway were of foreign origin, which – especially before 1660 – could influence the large distance between them and the local communities.²⁰ The Church was similarly alienated, being dependent on the king in Copenhagen. The ministers were forced to work within an institution with an autocratic structure, which prevented them from establishing good relationships with peasants. The period after reformation is

¹⁷ Idem, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 29; idem, *Maktens...*, pp. 51–52.

¹⁸ Hans Niesesen Hauge (b. 1771 d. 1824) a revivalist lay minister originating from a peasant family; in 1796 he experienced a religious epiphany and began to preach Lutheranism in the spirit of Pietism. He was the author of many religious works; arrested and sentenced many times (among other things, to hard labor); he exhorted peasants to become economically active.

¹⁹ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 138.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 121.

characterized by increased conflicts between ministers and peasants, usually due to financial issues.²¹ Peder Claussøn Friis,²² the minister from the Stavanger diocese and an author writing at the turn of 16th and 17th century, on many occasions complained about peasants who consistently refused to pay tithes, showing insubordination and condemning their spiritual leaders to poverty.²³ According to a historian of literature the aversion of peasants to the ministers was reflected in Norwegians fairy tales: they often featured a witch, who was a minister's wife.²⁴ In the 17th century the ministers played an important role in disciplining the peasantry – forcing them into obedience to the authorities, fulfilling duties and observing the law. As royal servants they were representatives of the power structure, to which peasants felt an aversion.²⁵ Peasants were defeated in virtually all conflicts with the authorities, which led to their consolidation against the bourgeoisie and civil servant elites.²⁶ Even more so that in the 17th century the distance between the country and the court and the city was growing, mainly as a result of the decreasing of the political-administrative independence of the peasants, lesser chances for social advancement and narrower economic opportunities.²⁷

This image, however, is not entirely unambiguous.

There are numerous examples indicating that nobility in Norway, including the one originating from Denmark, maintained various social and even friendly relations with lower classes. Historians often quote the description of the celebrations in Bergen in 1556 when a wealthy magnate, provincial governor Erik Rosenkrantz (1519–1575) organized a wedding for his village *fogd* on the premises of the castle inviting not only the nobility but also many members of Bergen bourgeoisie, including craftsmen.²⁸ In documents and supplications

²¹ Ibidem, p. 116.

²² Peder Claussøn Friis (b. 1545 d. 1614), clergyman, from 1566 minister at Lista, near Stavanger; author of description of Norway, translated Snorri Sturluson's *Norske Kongers Chronica*.

²³ P. C. Friis, 'Om Tienden paa Agdesiden', in idem, *Samlede Skrifter*, pub. G. Storm, Kristiania 1881, pp. 228–29.

²⁴ M. H. Hult, *Framing a national narrative. The Legend Collections of Peter Christen Asbjørnsen*, Detroit 2003, p. 155.

²⁵ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelse...*, pp. 214–15.

²⁶ Idem, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 108.

²⁷ Idem, *Den nye begynnelse...*, p. 207.

²⁸ A. Heise, 'Bidrag til Familien Rossenkrantz's Historie i det 16. Aarhundredes sidste Halvdel. Anden Afsnit', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, series V, vol. VI, Kjøbenhavn 1886–1887, p. 135; Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelse...*, p. 119.

authored by the nobility directed at the king in the 16th century (on the occasion of assemblies in 1548 and 1591) certain phrases occurred indicating that nobility acts on behalf of ‘common inhabitants of the Kingdom of Norway’ and requests not to burden the inhabitants excessively as well as to guarantee peasants their rights.²⁹ Although one should not overestimate such statements because nobility was first and foremost concerned with furthering their own interests, remarks like this are evidence that the nobles did not ignore the situation of the peasantry in the country. Requesting the creation of the office of a district judge (then still a scribe) the nobility pointed out that his role was to give advice and help to the peasant *lagretmann*. It postulated, however, releasing the peasant courts from the duty of giving sentences in more serious cases.³⁰ Hans E. Næss, a law historian, thinks that this entreaty of the nobility was not only in the interests of the peasantry but even after ‘consultations’ with them.³¹

Notes from the inspection by bishop of Oslo Jens Nilsson (1538–1600) from the 90s of the 16th century also show relationships with the peasantry. When the luminary visited the parish, after the mass a reception took place, to which the local elites and representatives of peasants were invited. The participation of peasants and their wives, often referred to by name, in the reception is always mentioned. It is true, though, that the representatives of the common people usually dined in a separate room; the bishop, local pastor and other civil servants dined in the first room (usually better prepared), however, the bishop’s visitations allowed him to get in touch with people coming from lower classes of the society.³² The Swedish historian Harald Gustafsson noticed that the Scandinavian agrarian societies in the early modern era were characterized by similar circumstances of life across all social classes. He concluded with regard to Sweden: ‘When a peasant, a minister, a nobleman and a town burgher met at the Diet in Stockholm, they could all engage in a lively conversation about the weather during the last harvest.’³³

²⁹ ANS/I, pp. 18, 19, 105, 108–109, 117.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 111–112.

³¹ H. E. Næss, ‘Sorenskriver i arbeid’, in H. E. Næss (ed.) *For rett og rettferdighet i 400 år. Sorenskrivere i Norge 1591–1991*, Stavanger 1991, p. 27.

³² *Biskop Jens Nilssøns Visitatsbøger og Reiseoptegnelser 1574–1597*. Pub. Y. Nielsen, Kristiania 1885, *passim*; Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelse...*, pp. 118–119; P. N. Grøtvedt, *op. cit.*, pp. 40, 47–48.

³³ H. Gustafsson, ‘The Nordic countries, so similar and yet so different’, in K. Katajala (ed.) *Northern Revolts. Medieval and Early Modern Peasant Unrest in the Nordic Countries*, Helsinki 2004, p. 29.

I already mentioned one piece of evidence, which substantiates the thesis that in Norway there were smaller divisions between the social classes than in other countries i.e. the fact that there existed a group of ‘peasant nobility’ that is the peasant elites originating from the nobility. From this class many officials originated, which resulted in a connection between the officials and the peasants. Thanks to this, according to a Norwegian historian Halvdan Koht, the class of officials could maintain their Norwegian identity and later, despite belonging to Danish culture, become defenders of the Norwegian tradition of independence.³⁴ Most officials lived in the country and their living conditions did not differ significantly from those of wealthier peasants. This is often illustrated by works of two 17th century writers: the already mentioned Friis and the poet Peter Dass³⁵ from the end of 17th century, a minister writing poetry in folk dialect, describing everyday life, hard work of fishermen and peasants from Northern Norway. The author of Friis’ biography noted that his writings mirror a mentality very similar to the peasant mentality for example fear of natural elements, whose beauty Friis did not see at all, emphasizing rather its threats.³⁶ Also the statement by the minister Jacob Rasch (1669–1737) in a letter from 1696 written to a Danish luminary attests to his closeness to and understanding of the peasants. He mentioned his essay in which he described certain peasant superstitions, adding jokingly that it might be dangerous to publish such things because if the peasants read it (sic!) they will confirm themselves in these superstitions as they will have everything very clearly spelled out. Rasch quoted in the true peasant Norwegian dialect: *mæ hæve prentæ Bogstave før de* (lit: I have got it printed).³⁷ That clergy and other clerks were interested in peasants, their lives and culture, is evidenced in their scientific involvement, which will be discussed further. Although in the beginning these interests may have stemmed from a contrast which existed between the local, peasant culture and the elite culture³⁸ shaped by foreign influences, or from the feeling of being in touch with exoticism, they shortened the distance between these two groups in every sense and could become the starting point for shaping closer relationships.

³⁴ H. Koht, ‘Verknaden av unionen med Danmark på det norske bondestanden’, in S. Imesen, S. Suphellen (eds.) *Studier i norsk historie 1537 – c. 1800. Lydriket 1537–1660*, Oslo 1981 (*Norske historikere i utvalg*, Oslo 1967–1983, vol. VII), pp. 272–273.

³⁵ Petter Dass, b. 1647 d. 1707, minister and poet; lived in northern Norway where in Alstahaug he was the rector; he created topographical and religious poetry.

³⁶ G. Storm, ‘Om Peder Claussøns Friis og hans Skrifter’, in P. C. Friis, *Samlede Skrifter...*, p. LIV.

³⁷ D. A. Seip, ‘Planer om en norsk ordbok før 1700’, *Maal og Minne*, 1923, p. 189.

³⁸ P. N. Grøtvedt, op. cit., p. 48.

Most probably, quite naturally children of ministers and other officials had contacts with their peasant contemporaries. The domestic servants were such a natural link between a minister's residence and a peasant's farm. These servants were recruited from peasant families living nearby.³⁹ A similar role was fulfilled by peasant administrators, the so-called *kirkevergene*, who were always recruited from peasantry. There is a lot of evidence that in Norway officials had good contacts with the peasant elite i.e. with those who due to their wealth, age, position and common sense were predestined to fulfill the role of counsellors. It seems that the royal officials often counted with the opinions of the peasant community.⁴⁰

Despite the lack of trust, both sides influenced one another and various impulses went both ways.⁴¹ A famous religious poet from the end of the 17th century Dorothe Engelbretsdatter (1634–1716) in her poems included phrases coming from the common people's language and she used motifs from folk music in her psalms.⁴² A lot of evidence shows that frequent cooperation between officials and peasants existed, especially when common economic interests were at stake. The support which peasants received from officials in matters they requested was often the result of coincidence of interests. However, these alliances were very diverse. Peasants could for example ally with officials against merchants or against peasants from a different region or together with merchants against officials.⁴³ The minister Peder C. Friis wrote himself about the local officials supporting peasants. Complaining about peasants not paying the tithes, as it was already mentioned, Friis described a village *fogd* who responded to him that he was a peasant himself, lived among peasants and did not intend to persecute them (that is to execute the fees). The local church administrator behaved similarly.⁴⁴ Facts like this strengthen the impression that the Norwegian society was in some sense egalitarian and that there existed attitudes that called for liberation from – to use a 19th century expression – 'class prejudice'. It is even more evident when one realizes that some situations occurred when officials supported the peasants' protests without there necessarily being a common interest at stake. It is known that many of them shared the peasants'

³⁹ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, pp. 119–20.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 100, 101; Ø. Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel...*, p. 8

⁴¹ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 115.

⁴² P. E. Rynning, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

⁴³ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 107.

⁴⁴ P. C. Friis, 'Om Tienden'..., pp. 228–229.

aversion to military service. This was reflected in remarks made by the king Christian IV himself who after the war with Sweden between 1643–45 criticized the Norwegian clergy that instead encouraging peasants to serve in the military, they were discouraging it.⁴⁵ In this light, even the disciplining role of the officials becomes ambiguous. Johan Ernst Sars, a 19th century Norwegian historian, concluded that the language and cultural links between Danish and Norwegian elites were less significant than ‘the link which joined these elites with the peasants in their own countries and than the influence of the same social relations, living circumstances being marked by the same natural world.’⁴⁶ Seeking for a European analogy, a modern Norwegian historian Rian noticed the similarity of the Norwegian-Danish elites during the times of absolutism to the English-Irish elites in Ireland, although he emphasized that in the case of Norway the distance dividing these elites from the peasantry was significantly smaller.⁴⁷ It will become more apparent in the 18th century, when the intelligentsia will start to experience sympathy, respect and pride towards peasants, best expressed in the myth about ‘the free and proud’ Norwegian peasant.

⁴⁵ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelse...*, pp. 214–15; idem, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 120; G. Sætra, ‘Norskebondeoprør på 1700-tallet, en trussel mot den dansk-norske helstaten?’, *Historisk Tidsskrift* LXXII (Oslo 1998), 3, p. 303.

⁴⁶ J. E. Sars, ‘Nationale Stemninger og Tilstande i Tidsrummet 1536–1660’, in *Studier i norsk historie...*, p. 32.

⁴⁷ Ø. Rian, *Hvordan ble Norge og Nordmennene oppfattet av seg selv og av andre under eneveldet 1660–1814*, Foredrag, Kulturelle prosesser i Det Danske Rige i det lange 18. århundrede (1680–1814). Hillerød, 25. april 2003, <http://www.landsarkivet.dk/multikulturel/aktiviteter/kulturellepapers/Nordmennene%20under%20eneveldet.pdf> (19.10.2004); similarly H. Gustafsson referring to all Scandinavian countries, op. cit., p. 28.

CHAPTER THREE
DANISH POLITICS TOWARDS NORWAY
AND NORWEGIANS IN 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

The analysis of the Danish politics in the period in question seems necessary for two reasons. Firstly, it may contribute to answering the question whether there existed any possibilities for the Norwegians to maintain their own identity. Was the broadly understood distinctiveness of the Norwegians before the year 1536 completely eliminated or did some space emerge, which could become a secure footing for the people? The matter of distinctiveness may be considered on the legal, political and cultural level.

Secondly, the activities of the Danish authorities, the decisions taken, the way of referring to the society and the presented justifications had to be, at least to some degree, consistent with the extant Norwegian attitudes. For example, declaring respect for Norwegian law – that is, as it was traditionally called, for St. Olaf's law – proves that it had a very special significance for the Norwegians and functioned as an important reference point. As we will see, St. Olaf's law was treated as an indicator of identity, an identification sign and the proof that 'the Norwegians are a free nation.' At that moment the political reality and the question to what extent the totality of these attitudes agreed with the reality and how far it mystified it are not important. What counts is the very existence of such an essential element of identity.

In other words, the Danish politics may confirm the fact that specific political and legal views existed in the Norwegian consciousness. These views could become a basis for the idea of the Norwegian distinctiveness. These ideas, in turn, stimulated identity formation.

Both of the above aspects are compatible as they refer to the same phenomena. Questions arise here about the possibility of maintaining the legal and political distinctiveness of the Norwegian state in reference to the internal and international situation. This question provokes another: how did Danish authorities view the Norwegians? Were they aware of the fact that they deal with a separate society with its own history? Or perhaps they viewed the Norwegians

– as it was described in the Norway paragraph of 1536 – as a group of people similar to for example the inhabitants of Jutland.

If we assume that in the 16th and 17th centuries the Norwegians had a sense of their distinctiveness, a question will appear how was this distinctiveness expressed? On the legal-political level it was articulated in the following: the name of the country, royal forms of address, law, separate institutions, rituals and ceremonies as well as symbols. The question about Danish politics referring to these issues may, in a reliable way, define their existence. Thanks to such an analysis we will be able to find out whether the Norwegians were still convinced about the legal and political distinctiveness of their country and also whether their views had any basis in reality. In other words, can we speak about this distinctiveness in reality and not only in the views and attitudes. It is in fact a question about the actual status of Norway within the Danish monarchy.

As we have already stated, the sense of distinctiveness was based not only on legal and political indicators but also cultural ones. The confirmation of their existence should not be sought in Danish politics because it did not refer to them in any way. These cultural indicators could be for example the cult of St. Olaf and some elements of folk culture. We will see, however, that the awareness of these phenomena was the basis of Danes' conviction that they were dealing with a separate nation.



The basic question which needs to be posed when analyzing Norway's situation after 1536 is whether one may speak about Norway maintaining its political and legal distinctiveness. In some sense it boils down to a question to what extent the Norwegian paragraph of 1536 was enforced and observed.

The 'Norwegian paragraph' from Christian's III charter regulated the legal status of the country. The king stated in it that 'we have promised and granted the Council as well as the nobility of Danish monarchy that if we – with God Almighty's help – conquer the Kingdom of Norway or some of its parts, strongholds, lands or districts subordinated to it, they will be subordinated from this time to The Danish Crown like its other lands – Jutland, Funen, Zealand and Scania and they will not be treated as or called a separate kingdom but a part of Danish kingdom subjugated to Danish Crown forever. In case of riots breaking out, the Danish Council of the Realm and the inhabitants are obliged to come

to Our aid.¹ Such an article meant the loss of sovereignty by Norway as only a few months later the king put his announcement into practice. The content of this article was the result of a settlement between the Council and the king – the subordination of the country to Denmark was in the interest of them both. The awareness of this subordination was rather widespread – the Norwegians had a sense of loss of independence and subjugation to Copenhagen.²

A question remains, however, to what extent the assumptions of such politics were implemented. Certainly various legal consequences of Norway's subordination ensued such as the abolishment of the Norwegian Council of the Realm and of the strongly independent Catholic church, the introduction of king election procedures – the Norwegian meeting of the estates automatically paid homage to the monarch that had been previously elected by the Danish Council, of which until mid-17th century no Norwegian was a member. In fact, the country was governed by the Danish authorities and Danish officials and clergymen migrated into the country.

On the other hand, however, the Norwegian paragraph was not announced to the public and its clauses were never officially referred to. Historians emphasize that even in the year 1537, while sending army to Norway, Christian III did not refer to this charter.³ When the relations between the two countries were referred to, what was mentioned was the Bergen agreement from the 15th century, the Kalmar union, or the practice from the period of Queen Margaret's reign i.e. the legal documents in which Norway featured as an independent country.⁴ There is a lot of evidence that, contrary to the contents of the charter, Norway – officially and practically – was perceived as a separate country (already Christian III speaking about Norway used the word *rike* – meaning state, kingdom and not *land* – land, country). In the proclamation which called all the estates of Norway to come to the homage to the successor prince Frederick (future Frederick II) the term 'Our Kingdom of Norway' (*vort Rige Norge*) was used.⁵ Similar phrases were used in documents by Christian IV.⁶ For the whole period

¹ *Norske middelalderdokumente*, ed. K. Helle, Universitetsforlaget 1973, p. 512, <http://www.uib.no/hi/kjelder/norges-art.html> (01.05.2006).

² Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, pp. 34–35.

³ Idem, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, p. 23.

⁴ As in Norwegian Law, *Norges Lov*, of Christian IV from 1604, *ibidem*, pp. 21–23; H. Kongsrud, *Den kongelige arveretten til Norge 1536–1661. Idé og politisk instrument*, Oslo 1984, p. 48–49.

⁵ ANS/I, p. 3.

⁶ For example the privilege for Norwegian nobility of 1646, ANS/I, pp. 578–579.

of union, the name of the Kingdom of Norway was in use and appeared in documents, including the most important ones: Christian IV's codex of 1604 and the King's Law (*Kongeloven*) of 1665, which introduced the absolutist regime.⁷ A phrase often used in the 16th century royal decrees addressed to the Norwegians was 'your homeland' (*theri federne rige*, lit. your fathers' kingdom).⁸ After the end of the First Northern War in 1568, king Frederick II wrote a letter to the inhabitants of Jemtland, in which he informed them that 'everything returned to a state of agreement and peace between three countries: Denmark, Sweden and Norway'. He used a similar expression in the year 1571.⁹

During all this time the monarchs consistently used the title of the king of Norway, describing fiefs and offices as belonging to the 'Norwegian crown'. It is difficult to speak about a unified politics towards the whole monarchy.¹⁰ Both countries were treated separately with their populations viewed as two separate nations. These differences were also visible to foreigners.¹¹ Historians noticed that when addressing the Norwegian peasantry, the kings were using a completely different language from the one used in their addresses to Danish peasants. However, it cannot be said that the Danish authorities had a consistent politics of 'danization' of the Norwegians.¹² It is important to notice here that such thinking influenced the cultural projects of Danish kings. The attempts in 16th and 17th centuries to create a new synthesis of Danish history resulted in various works being written, in which the history of Norway was not, or almost not, included.¹³ In the Danish project to create the national synthesis, Norway – as a separate country – did not exist.¹⁴ Only in the second half of the 17th century Frederick III (1609–1670, king 1648) initiated works on the new synthesis of the history of Norway, entrusting this task to an Icelandic scholar Thormodus Torfæus¹⁵ who lived in Norway.

⁷ Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, p. 21; idem, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 41.

⁸ ANS/I, p. 33; Christian IV's letter to the nobility, 4.08.1624, NRR/V, pp. 414–415.

⁹ NRR/I, pp. 609, 675.

¹⁰ Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, pp. 67–68.

¹¹ Idem, *Hvordan...*

¹² E. Opsahl, op. cit., p. 115.

¹³ This concerns most of all the syntheses of Arild Huitfeldt, Johannes Pontanus and Johannes Meursius.

¹⁴ K. Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Torfæus' Norgeshistorie som udtryk for den unge enevældes interessen' in A. I. Jacobsen (ed.), *Den nordiske histories fader. Tormod Torfæus*, Karmøy 2002, pp. 23, 26.

¹⁵ Thormodus Torfæus, b. 1636 d. 1719, historian, born in Iceland; from 1664 lived in Norway as an official; 1667–1680 royal antiquarian, 1682 royal historiographer of Norway;

From 1537 the Oldenburg kings were developing a royalist ideology based on presenting themselves as kings of Norway, warrantors of the Norwegian law (St. Olaf's law), depending on loyalty and faithfulness of the Norwegian subjects. In this ideology the kings were the inheritors and continuers of the Middle Age Norwegian monarchs and the heroes of sagas. The instruction prepared by Christian III for his son in 1548 contained the oath which the prince was supposed to take during the ceremony. It included the promise to give verdicts 'according to St. Olaf's and Norway's law'. In case the Norwegians demanded any privileges, the prince was to say 'we will observe St. Olaf's and Norwegian law for all inhabitants of Norway and we think that this scope of freedom is satisfactory'. References to Norwegian law were also included in the homage act of the successor to the throne Frederick (*hyldningsbrev*).¹⁶

The idea that the Norwegian throne was hereditary was a political problem. In the Bergen treaty (1450) both monarchies, Danish and Norwegian, were described as elective. This was one of the bases of aristocratic constitutionalism in both countries. Danish nobility made sure that a specific paragraph was included into each charter. Oldenburgs, however, although reconciled with this legal solution in Denmark, tried to support the hereditary crown in Norway, noticing here a chance to strengthen their royal rule. The Danish Council of the Realm firmly protested. Frederick I had to promise in his charter not to use the term 'the legitimate heir of Norway'. But Christian III already returned to this phrase and when organizing the invasion of 1537 appealed to his hereditary rights to the country.¹⁷ The title of the heir of Norway was often used by the younger brother of the successor to the crown (or the king).¹⁸

This ideology was treated very seriously by the kings, which is evidenced by the peace negotiations after the lost war of the 1640s. Facing Swedish territorial claims, the Danish Council of the Realm pressed to give Norwegian territories away first. This met, however, with a strong opposition from the king Christian IV, who tried to minimize the losses. It had, of course, a rational basis – at the time Norway was becoming an increasingly important economic part of the country and what is more, Denmark was occupied. Historians notice, however, strong monarchical sentiments. Similarly, Frederick III during the ne-

collector and expert on Icelandic manuscripts; the author of a four volume work *Historia rerum Norvegicarum* concerning times until the end of 14th century (1711).

¹⁶ ANS/I, pp. 12, 16.

¹⁷ L. Hamre, op. cit., pp. 805–806; Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 33.

¹⁸ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 41.

gotiations in Roskilde in 1658 strongly defended the Norwegian land. He was more willing to give Scania to Sweden than the Norwegian district Trøndelag with Trondheim (historically Nidaros) and Båhuslen. He saw these regions as his own hereditary possession and, in addition, their inhabitants had been very successful in the war. Scania, on the other hand, was a region where Danish nobility had their estates. The King finally yielded but already in the next peace agreement in Copenhagen he managed to regain the district Trøndelag with Trondheim.¹⁹

The opinion that Norway was considered to be a separate legal and political entity and not just one of the provinces is supported by the fact that Danish authorities kept the Norwegian coat of arms. The heraldic analyses show that Norway was treated neither as a province nor as an incorporated territory. In the worst case, the Norwegian coat of arms was ignored or placed on the side.²⁰ Most often, however, the Norwegian emblem depicting a lion with an axe (one of St. Olaf's attributes) was placed in the center of the national emblem, next to the Danish coat of arms depicting three blue lions.²¹ The Norwegian coat of arms was placed on the emblem of the whole monarchy in such a way that it indicated the national, not provincial or local, position of the country, although it was connected with giving priority to Denmark. According to the emblem it was an union of two independent countries, although placed in a certain hierarchy. During the Christian III and Frederick II reigns, when Denmark had strong claims to the Swedish throne, the emblem was divided into three parts and the symbols were placed in the following order: Denmark, Norway, Sweden. The Swedish rulers had similar emblems at the time. Later, the Swedish element was discarded. After the introduction of absolutism the content of the emblem changed: in 1670 Christian V (1646–1699, king 1670) introduced an emblem divided into three parts dedicated to the Danish coat of arms, the Norwegian coat of arms and the so-called 'union' coat of arms (three crowns), which symbolized – according to Danish monarchs – a historical union of three Scandinavian states (which was the constant object of their dreams). Around this main depiction, smaller coats of arms of subordinated lands or peoples

¹⁹ N. Bjørge et al., *Selvstendighet og union. Fra Middelalderen til 1905*, Oslo 1995 (*Norsk utenrikspolitikk historie*, Oslo 1995–1997, vol. I) pp. 175–76, 181; Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 244.

²⁰ H. Trættemberg, 'Norges statssymboler til 1814', *Historisk Tidsskrift XXIX* (Oslo 1933), p. 89.

²¹ Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, p. 23.

were placed; these were among others Schleswig, Holstein or historical Goths.²² The image on the Christian V's seal was similar.²³

The lion appeared on Norwegian coins by the end of the 13th century at the latest during the reign of Eric Magnusson (1268–1299, king 1280). This form of Norwegian emblem dominated on Norwegian coins till the 20s of the 20th century, with an exception between the years 1546–1627. The reintroduction of the lion on the coin was then accompanied by the placement of the emblem on the seals of customs officials and on paper watermarks. The popularization of the emblem in this way could stimulate the sense of national identity and distinctiveness. When coins without the lion started to appear in 1776, complaints were voiced but without effect. The flag was of lesser significance; although Norwegian emblems appeared on the banners they had often local character.²⁴

Some separate ceremonies, symbolism and rituals were maintained, the homage to the new king (*kongehylling*) among them. At the same time this was the ceremony of the confirmation of king's election. This act dated back to pre-Christian times to the custom of confirming the choice of the king by the thing. When in 1548 Christian III published a universal proclamation, in which for the first time since 1536, he called for arrival to the homage ceremony of the Crown Prince Frederick, he appealed to the customs known from Norwegian political practice i.e. centuries old tradition based on one's own law. This proved the readiness of Danish authorities to maintain them, which intensified the sense of distinctiveness. Even more so that according to tradition the ceremony of homage was codified in the new Norwegian Law by Christian IV. 'In this way Norwegian's own political culture, in the sense of the structure of traditional imagination, internalized norms and rituals, was maintained and developed within the Oldenburg monarchy after 1537'.²⁵ The organization of homages was a significant proof of the legal distinctiveness of the country, proof that the Norwegian crown still existed, that the people of Norway and their kingdom still existed despite the dependence on Denmark.²⁶ A similar function was served by the maintaining of the Meetings of the Estates, which were assessed by the Polish scholar: 'When assessing the Meetings of the Estates in Norway's history it needs

²² H. Trætteberg, op. cit., pp. 12, 14, 16–20.

²³ Ibidem, p. 60.

²⁴ Ibidem, pp. 23, 25–26, 36, 40.

²⁵ E. Opsahl, op. cit., pp. 108, 110, 115.

²⁶ A. O. Johnsen, 'Stændermødernes karakter, myndighed og betydning' [1906], in S. Imsen, S. Suphellen [eds.], *Studier i norsk historie 1537...*, p. 101; S. Sogner, *Krig og fred 1660–1780*, Oslo 1996 (*Aschehougs Norgeshistorie*, ed. K. Helle, Oslo 1994–1998, vol. VI), p. 23.

to be said that they were a place where identity and distinctiveness were cultivated within the Danish-Norwegian state²⁷ Maintaining other kinds of Meetings – such as *herredags* (specific for Norway assemblies of nobility, to which the King and members of the Council of the Realm came) had a similar effect.²⁸

The Danish policy of maintaining the *status quo* was favorable to perceiving Norway as a separate state also as a result of preserving the highest post of the Chancellor (*Norges rikes kansler*) although it was not always appointed. This function, originating in the Middle Ages, had now a different character. From the end of the 16th century the Chancellor was a type of a superior and at the same time representative of Norwegian nobility; he also had wide judicial competences. The privilege of 1591 guaranteed that only Norwegians (or to be more precise – persons born or living in Norway) could be appointed to this post. The main task of the Chancellor was making certain that the authorities did not infringe on the privileges of the nobility. However, against the regulations, the right of appointment and dismissing the Chancellor belonged solely to the king.

The introduction in 1572 of the office of *Stattholder* i.e. the royal governor, appointed from the liege lord of Akershus, could have a similar meaning. As the link between the central authorities, the administrative apparatus and the Norwegian society, the *Stattholder* received complaints from the people about the officials and administrated the Church property that was repossessed by the state after the Reformation. The role of the office was increasing in the first half of the 17th century in connection with the wars with Sweden (in this situation the *Stattholder* could become the commander-in-chief of the Norwegian army) and the growing economic importance of Norway. From 1667 the *Stattholder* was also the president of the High Court for Norway. According to a Norwegian historian, Albert Oscar Johnsen, creating this office was in fact admitting that Norway is within the monarchy a ‘consistent and independent’ part.²⁹



Maintaining the peasant self-government that had originated in the Middle Ages was a very significant fact. As is stated by the contemporary expert on this matter Steinar Imsen, it is in fact thanks to the self-government traditions,

²⁷ J. Małłek, *Zgromadzenia stanowe...* p. 131.

²⁸ E. Opsahl, op. cit., p. 109; Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, pp. 43–44.

²⁹ A. O. Johnsen, *Hannibal Sehesteds Statholdersskab 1642–1651. Et Tidsskifte i Norges historie*, Kristiania 1906, p. 6.

thanks to preserving peasants' rights to manage the matters of the community and the ability to work together, peasants maintained their identity and distinctiveness during the Danish rule.³⁰ The peasant self-government consisted of local and provincial things as well as offices such as *lensmann* (later more and more often called *bondeleensmann*), *lagretmenn* or *nemde* that is elective members of the community settling conflicts and giving sentences. The local community had first and foremost legal and judicial functions, being responsible for keeping public order.³¹ In all self-government structures peasant elites dominated, from which all the appointments for official posts were made. At the same time one must remember that that thing, *nemde* and *lensmann* served a double function: the self-government function, creating a representation of the local community and the state function because they had to fulfil tasks set for them by the authorities.³² As the researcher of this phenomenon maintains, the Norwegian peasant self-government dates back to Norman times. The fact that the feudal system did not develop in Norway and that peasants there had not only personal freedom but also individual, and not common, possession of land (or the right of land cultivation) served the consolidation of the peasant self-government.³³ This system survived practically unchanged till the modern era and the loss of independence in 1537 had no influence on it. On the contrary, the reign of Christian III is considered to be rather a 'golden age' of the peasant self-government in Norway. Danish authorities in fact adopted an attitude of continuing the traditions of the Norwegian state, abiding by the law, respect for the existing social institutions and maintain the link between the Crown and the peasantry. 'Legitimism and consensualism became the main elements of the new authorities' attitude to the Norwegian society'.³⁴ The change of 1537 cannot be understood as any breakthrough in the peasant self-government history.³⁵

Reforms on a larger scale started to be introduced at the beginning of the 17th century by Christian IV who was trying to modernize the state within the oligarchical kingdom. The apex of this process was the so-called recess of 1643, which summarized legal changes from 30 years. These changes were the result of work of a special commission (working between 1631–32), which was

³⁰ S. Imsen, *Norsk bondekomunalisme...*, vol. II, p. 10.

³¹ *Ibidem*, vol. I, p. 195.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 200.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 202–203.

³⁴ *Idem*, *Norsk bondekomunalisme...*, vol. II, pp. 232, 233.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 41, 87, 108, 109.

presided over by the Norwegian chancellor Jens Bjelke.³⁶ The commission proposed, often in response to peasant complaints, various changes and improvements, which in the end were sanctioned by the king. The new law did not aim at all at direct and uniform limitation of peasant self-government. The aim was rather to broaden the range of cooperation between the communities and the government and to integrate the self-government with the state offices better. This limited the possible range of peasant activity to a certain extent but mostly gave room to professional bureaucracy. The new law therefore also facilitated the system and thus could have been more easily accepted by the peasants. The function of *sorenskriver*, had a tremendous significance for the creation of a professional legal system. This office developed into the district judge i.e. an official of the basic judicial level in the country, serving also other functions such as notary. The office of the district judge was to be integrated with existing structures i.e. the jury (*lagretmenn*) or *nemde*. The evolution of the thing had a similar character. The thing gradually became the court of first resort (lower court) and the state official i.e. the *fogd* played an increasingly important role in it. The thing did not lose its other tasks – it still was the public life forum. *Nemder* remained as an important element of self-government but their status was formally settled. The office of *lensmann* also evolved; it finally became the lowest level of state administration and an assistant subordinated to the *fogd* but at the same time it remained the representative of the peasant community. This was reflected in the changed name: the name of *lensmann* was changed in the documents into *bondelensmann* i.e. ‘peasant *lensmann*’.³⁷ ‘The term ‘peasant *lensmann*’ reflects social values. ‘Peasant *lensmann*’ is a *lensmann* viewed from outside and from above by the body of officials having their own sense of status, who wanted to distance themselves from the surrounding peasant society’.³⁸

The changes occurring under the reign of Christian IV were described as ‘the collective integration of peasants with the state through the self-government union’.³⁹ It was a completely different situation from the one in Denmark, where between the peasant community, limited to the grange, and the state there was a squire having a full control over the peasants.⁴⁰ In Norway the peasant par-

³⁶ Jens Bjelke b. 1580 d. 1659; a great-grandson of Ingerd Ottesdatter; Chancellor of the Kingdom of Norway, 1614; war commissioner 1643–45; author of economic and legal works; at the time of death second to the king landowner in Norway.

³⁷ S. Imsen, *Norsk bondekomunalisme...*, vol. II, pp. 120, 125–129.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 225.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 226.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

ticipation in the public life was significant because the rules, originating from Middle Ages, were maintained that the estate meetings are attended in a large number also by peasant representatives. Similarly to the representatives of other estates, they were also signing the homage acts. The contacts between the royal power and the peasantry were not impaired because, as before, the homages as well as *herredag*, were fora where peasants voiced their complaints and supplications. What is even more important, it is known that these on many occasions initiated changes in the legal system.⁴¹ All this gave the country some democratic features.

Between 1536 and 1660, Norway was also the subject of international law, appearing in various international actions and treaties signed by Danish monarchs.⁴² Especially soon after 1537, it was impossible to pursue a different politics because of the claims to the throne of Christian II (who resigned from them in 1546) and then his daughters, Dorothea and Christina (1521–1590), who never resigned from their claims. The Swedish claims were a separate issue; admittedly king John III (1537–1592, king of Sweden 1568) resigned from his claims to the Norwegian throne in the Treaty of Stettin (1570) but later, the Swedish kings continued those claims thanks to the ties with the Gottorp dynasty, a different branch of the Oldenburg house.⁴³

Danish kings did not abolish Norway's legal autonomy in many cases. In many 16th and 17th century documents assertions exist about the willingness to abide by the 'St. Olaf's law'⁴⁴ i.e. by the traditional Norwegian law codified in the middle of the 13th century by Magnus VI called Magnus the Law-mender (*Lagabøter*, 1238–1280, king 1263). In the 17th century Frederick III promised to abide by the old laws and privileges in a privilege issued for the nobility (*at holde adelen udi Norge ved deris loug och rett*).⁴⁵ Norwegian law was present as a reference point in everyday decisions made by the royal office. These could be nomination acts, land bestowals (often joint), open letters (*aabne Brev*) to the people (peasantry, townsmen, clergy – often identical), 'cover letters' sent to the inhabitants of a certain district in connection with nominations for offices, orders and admonitions. Some of these had a strongly official character and required invoking the Norwegian law (*Norges Lov, Loug*) or St. Olaf's law

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 235.

⁴² E. Opsahl, op. cit., p. 109; N. Bjørge, op. cit., pp. 139–141.

⁴³ Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, p. 24.

⁴⁴ E. Opsahl, op. cit., p. 111.

⁴⁵ ANS/II, p. 249.

(*St. Olavs Konges Lov*).⁴⁶ Invoking ‘Norwegian custom’ or ‘old custom’ (*Norges gamle Skik*) or using the phrase ‘as it had been since time immemorial’ was also frequent.⁴⁷ Especially by awarding fiefs and land, it seemed necessary to include the expression that all laws concerning the people will be abided by: *Tjenere (...) boendes ere veed Lov, Skjel og Ret og dem ikke uforette imod Norges Lov*”, or “*holde Alle og enhver særdeles ved Norges Lov, Skjel og Ret*”, or ‘*holde Godset ved Hæved og Magt, og Bønderne derpaa boendes ved Norges Lov, Skjel od Ret*’.⁴⁸ In the *lagmann* nominations a phrase appeared that their duty is to ‘aid everybody, the poor and the rich, to ensure that the law of Norway [was abided by during his handling]’ (*hiælpe hver Mand, fattig og rig (...) til Norges Lov og Ret*).⁴⁹

A lot of separate court institutions were preserved such as the old office of *lagmann* judge (12 persons in the country in total) requiring the knowledge of old Norwegian law.⁵⁰ Also other court institutions originating from the Middle Ages were not abolished. After the introduction of absolutism in the years 1660–1661 Danish authorities started to aim more consistently at the unification of the legal system in both countries but despite this tendency the most basic differences were preserved such as the allodium law (*odelsrett*), including the privilege of common usage of fallows.⁵¹ It is commonly thought that such legal conservatism contributed to the preservation of Norwegian identity after 1536, especially that the separateness of the state was connected with judiciary distinctiveness in the consciousness of the society as well as of the authorities. The conservatism served at the same time to reduce social discontent.⁵²

The fact that peasants retained their own customary law (*heimretten, heimloven*), though uncodified and not always in agreement with the statutory law,

⁴⁶ NRR/I, pp. 97, 109, 116, 152, 193, 200, 207–208, 240, 328ff; NRR/II, pp. 3, 32–33, 78, 216, 244–45, 378–380ff; NRR/III, pp. 6, 13, 16, 225ff; NRR/IV, p. 234ff; NRR/IX, p. 261ff; NRR/XII, pp. 23, 31ff.

⁴⁷ NRR/I, pp. 150, 152, 302, 376, 639; NRR/II pp. 78–79ff; NRR/XII, p. 233.

⁴⁸ NRR/I, pp. 265–66, 284–285, 291–292, 298, 301–302, 504, 527ff; NRR/II, pp. 8–9, 45–46, 72, 84–85, 89–90, 104–106, 111–112, 112–113ff; NRR/III, pp. 506–507, 372–73ff; NRR/IV, pp. 83–84; NRR/V, pp. 37, 207–212ff, 300; NRR/VIII, pp. 38–40ff, 189ff; NRR/IX, pp. 31–32, 35–36, 45, 229, 248ff; NRR/X, pp. 45, 198, 244ff; NRR/XI, pp. 16ff.; NRR/XII, pp. 99–101ff.

⁴⁹ NRR/I, pp. 411, 444; NRR/II, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 42.

⁵¹ S. Dyrvik, *Truede tvillingriker 1648–1720*, Oslo 1998 (*Danmark-Norge 1380–1814*, Oslo 1997–1998, vol. III), p. 303.

⁵² Ø. Rian, op. cit., p. 42; idem, ‘Olav Engelbrektsson...’, p. 101.

was of no lesser significance. This law had a very long, often pre-Christian, tradition. Basing on the customary law, peasants did not fulfil their duties and questioned the levies imposed by the state. It was estimated that in the 15th century between 20 and 30 per cent of fines paid by the Norwegian peasants were punishments for insubordination towards the authorities.⁵³



Apart from the political and legal moves and decisions, the attitudes of the Danish authorities towards Norwegians have a considerable significance. Their deeply rooted mistrust towards Norwegians and, not always rational, fear of rebellion indicates that the Danish authorities had no doubt that they were dealing with a separate nation. Such fears were characteristic especially for the nobility and were expressed in the actions of the Council of the Realm. The monarchs themselves – rightly as it seems – were more willing to express deep trust in loyalty and faithfulness of ‘our beloved inhabitants of Norway’. Before the Danish-Swedish Kalmar war (1611–1613), in 1611, the Danish Council expressed its concern about the Norwegians’ loyalty, being at the same time aware that these concerns originate in the way Danish officials treat ‘devout inhabitants of Norway (who deserve nothing but good from Your Majesty and our nation)’. When soon after, in 1638, king Christian IV proposed to create the people’s militia in Norway, the Council expressed its mistrust, not knowing, what the Norwegians could use the weapons for. The Council stated that the militia could only be created if the officer function was given to the Danes. The *Stattholder* of Norway Hannibal Sehested during the war 1643–44 complained that Norwegians cannot be relied on.⁵⁴ These reservations undoubtedly were maintained by the constant rivalry with Sweden – also the politics of the neighbor did not allow to forget that Norwegians are not only a separate nation but also it was uncertain

⁵³ J. Sandnes, ‘Lex non scripta – Den norske heimeretten’, *Historisk Tidsskrift* LXXVIII (Oslo 1999), 2, pp. 141, 150; Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 99; idem, *Maktens historie*, p. 133.

⁵⁴ Ø. Rian, ‘Olav Engelbrektsson...’, p. 100; idem, ‘Danmark-Norges historie. Refleksjoner’, p. 380; idem, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, pp. 244–245. Hannibal Sehested, b. 1609 d. 1666, Danish aristocrat, son-in-law and close assistant of king Christian IV; 1642–51 *Stattholder* of Norway; after dismissal forced to give up most of his Norwegian property; he lived abroad; in 1658 he returned to become an advisor to his brother-in-law king Frederick III; he supported him at the moment of introduction of absolutism; reformed the financial system.

how they would behave during a confrontation.⁵⁵ These apprehensions were to a certain extent a result of historical experiences, especially from the period of the First Northern War (Nordic Seven Years' War), during which the Swedish king Erik XIV (1533–1569, king 1560–1568) appealed to the Norwegians to cast off the Danish yoke and promised them independence in return for support in war. Norwegians adopted during this war a completely inappropriate attitude towards the enemy – in Trondheim the townsmen paid homage to the Swedish king and the peasants all over the country refused to fight.

One of the points in the navy code may also serve as evidence of fear for separatist actions. It forbade, under the penalty of flogging, to call a countryman for help in the case of a fight. Anybody who responded to such a call was also subject to a punishment.⁵⁶ However, Danish authorities were not always consistent in their apprehensions just as in the 1620s when the government, concerned about the deep reluctance of Norwegian peasants to take part in the wars with Sweden, decided to arm them. Thousands of rifles found their ways into peasants' homes at that time.⁵⁷ Apprehensions were more common, though. King Frederick IV (1671–1730, king 1699) learned his lesson during the, otherwise grotesque, action of the troublemaker Povel Juel⁵⁸ who tried to re-gain independence for Norway with the help of Russia and Sweden. Although the plot was quickly discovered and the unfortunate patriot was, in accordance with the law, dismembered before the eyes of the Copenhagen public, after this event 'Frederick IV never felt certain again'.⁵⁹

The wars with Sweden, taking place also on the Norwegian territory, required the mobilization of the society. The appeals always contained some references to the love of the country – Norway. In the time of the First Northern War, Frederick II appealed to the inhabitants to combat the enemy using the

⁵⁵ Idem, *Maktens...*, p. 22.

⁵⁶ O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse, 1720–1814*, Oslo 1998 (*Danmark-Norge 1380–1814*, Oslo 1997–1998, vol. IV), p. 159; Ø. Rian, *Maktens historie...*, p. 99 This author also proposed a hypothesis that the fact that the chief commanders of the Norwegian Army in the 18th century rarely stayed in Norway proves that the authorities were afraid that they can use Norwegian feelings to create a political basis (p. 93).

⁵⁷ N. Bjørgo, op. cit., p. 173.

⁵⁸ Povel Juel, b. around 1673 d. 1723, official, merchant, *amtmann* (county governor) of Lister 1711–1718, dismissed, in 1722 started to plot against the king with the Swedish envoy and Holstein officer in order to take away Greenland, Faroe Islands, Island and Norway from Denmark; executed.

⁵⁹ F. Bull, *Norges Litteratur fra reformationen til 1814*, Oslo 1928 (*Norsk Litteraturhistorie*, ed. F. Bull, F. Paasche, Kristiania Oslo 1923–1935, vol. I), p. 544.

phrase ‘your fatherland’ (*Eders Fædreneland*).⁶⁰ In the appeal of 1570 to the inhabitants of Jemtland, a province situated in the center of Norway, the king referred to Norwegians’ sense of attachment and loyalty to their own country, not to Denmark. The awareness of such distinctiveness was real and exploited in the current politics.⁶¹ The appeals to the love of the country found their way into the propaganda campaign of Hannibal Sehested in the 1640s.⁶² As we will see further in this work, later on the Danish leaders appealed to the Norwegians in a similarly patriotic way.⁶³

When in 1649 Frederick III wanted to regain the Norwegian Idre and Særna territories by the Swedish border, he ordered his envoys to check the ‘nationality’ of the inhabitants in order to demonstrate the ‘Norwegian character’ of these territories and gain a basis for his territorial claims. What is interesting, the royal representative, general Georg Reichwein (1593–1669) wrote in his report that the way of dress, architecture of the houses and language all indicate that the inhabitants are Norwegians and not Swedes. What we have here is a quite early reference to the ethnographical and cultural characteristics as indicators of nationality. Frederick was using the category of Norwegian nationality all the time referring to the inhabitants of both territories and highlighted that their renouncement of Norwegian nationality and denouncing the loyalty to him – the king of Norway – resulted only from the fear of the Swedes. During the whole matter, the idea of connection between the inhabitants of Idre and Særna and Denmark, Kingdom of Denmark or the Crown of Denmark did not appear even once and the notions of ‘Norway’ and ‘Norwegian character’ were alive political categories.⁶⁴ Similar conclusions can be drawn from the contemporary, Swedish observations. In 1650 the local official complained about the inhabitants of Jemtland (which was from 1645 under the Swedish rule) that they ‘are as good Norwegians as the ones living in Norway’.⁶⁵

In this way a system was developed which in fact gave the population a clear message: the kingdom of Norway and St. Olaf’s law were preserved and the Danish authorities were aware that they were dealing with a separate, Norwegian nation. ‘... a message was continuously communicated to the Norwegian

⁶⁰ NRR/I, pp. 393, 400, 403, 406, 408–409, 414, 434, 549–550.

⁶¹ E. Opsahl, op. cit., p. 110.

⁶² O. A. Johnsen, *Hannibal...*, p. 52.

⁶³ The European context of this phenomenon see: A. Gat with A. Yacobson, *Nations. The Long History...*, p. 235.

⁶⁴ E. Opsahl, op. cit., pp. 100, 107.

⁶⁵ Qtd after: *ibidem*, p. 114.

nation that the Norwegian state, Norwegian Crown and all the rights related to these, still exist.⁶⁶



This way of thinking, however, is not only the background of the political praxis. It played a significant role in the formation of the Danish politics towards Norway in the 17th century, which was linked either to the international situation or to the changes within Denmark itself. Two important matters appear here: the program to create Norwegian army and the politics of *Stattholder* Hannibal Sehested, the son- and brother-in-law of Danish monarchs. Its aim was to increase the independence of Norway in the union, which was directly connected with the official recognition of the Norwegian throne as hereditary. This kind of politics was promoted by the *Stattholder* at a subtle behest of both monarchs. The personal politics of Frederick III also played a certain role. He nominated Norwegians (or at least persons associated with Norwegian nobility) for important offices in 1650s and 60s. Henrik Bjelke (1615–1683), the son of Jens Bjelke, was entrusted with the commandment of the fleet and Cort Adeler (1622–1675) was given the position of Admiral-General. The importance of such nominations was that, regardless of the Danish goals, they led to the increase of national consciousness in the Norwegian society.⁶⁷

As Norwegian historians claim, such actions were the stimulation for the new patriotism, resulting in 1661 in the formulation of demands that aimed at the increase of the independence of the country within the union. These demands were presented on the occasion of the homage to the absolute king Frederick III.⁶⁸

The plans of creating Norwegian army, whose main aim would be to defend the country against Swedes, appeared during the Danish participation in the Thirty Years' War in autumn of 1627. The plan was confirmed by Christian IV and in the spring of 1628 the Norwegian meeting of estates introduced extraordinary taxes for this goal. The works were not finalized at the time and many times in the following years the idea was returned to. In the beginning of the 1640s, also as a result of more tense relations with Sweden, the idea was

⁶⁶ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, p. 35.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 85.

⁶⁸ C. O. Bøggild-Andersen, 'Christian IV tidsalder', in A. Friis, A. Linvald, M. Mackeprang (eds.) *Schultz Danmarkshistorie. Vort Folks Historie gennem Tidende*, vol. III, København 1942, p. 154; O. A. Johnsen, *Hannibal...*, p. 160; *idem*, *Stændermødernes historie...*, p. 102.

proposed again. *Stattholder* Christoffer Urne (1593–1663) proposed it in November 1640 and in the summer of 1641 the project was introduced during *herredag* in Bergen, accepted in November and signed by the king. An army of around six thousand peasants and was created and garrisons were established in more important cities. The nobility and clergy offered cavalry (500 mounted soldiers). Also a small fleet of 30 ships was created. Most of the officers, however, did not come from Norway.

While the army was being put together, there were a lot of national elements and references to tradition. As a rule, every four farms were to provide one soldier – according to a conversion rate used in the general levy in the 11th century. The main weapon was a battle-axe, a traditional weapon used by Norwegian peasants in the Middle Ages and mentioned in 13th century codices.⁶⁹ The importance of the battle-axe is highlighted by the fact that it was St. Olaf's attribute and an element of the Norwegian emblem. The banners of the time did not contain any national or identifying elements, only quite accidental ornamentations. However, already in the 1650s this changed. The banners contained the name of the place where the soldiers came from and the symbol of the administrative district (*fogderi*). Also local traditions were often referred to.⁷⁰

The war that soon began (between the years 1643 and 1645; called in the Norwegian tradition after the name of Sehested – *Hannibalfeiden* – ‘the Hannibal war’, part of the Thirty Years' War) ended with Denmark's defeat and the Norwegian recruits again showed their reluctance to fight. Despite this, the Norwegian army commanded by Sehested – in contrast to the Danish army – was up to a point successful and retained both the Jemtland and Herjedalen provinces attacked by Swedes. This success was mostly due to well organized provisions. Nevertheless, both provinces were lost as a consequence of the defeat in war (1645 Peace of Brømsebro). The regions of Idra and Særne, taken over by the Swedes during the war, were irretrievably lost. During peace negotiations the Danish Council and nobility required that the Danish territories be saved and satisfy the Swedish territorial demands primarily by giving up Norwegian land. Their wishes were fulfilled – Danish territorial losses were small and incomparable to the Norwegian ones. They were only the islands of Gotland, rather Swedish revindication, and the remote Ösel.⁷¹

⁶⁹ K. Alnæs, ‘I Kongens klær’, in B. Kaldhol et al. (eds.) *Fra forfall til ny vekst* Oslo 1980 (*Norges kulturhistorie*, ed. I. Semmingsen et al., vol. III, Oslo 1979–1981), pp. 205, 209.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 218.

⁷¹ Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, pp. 249, 250.



A separate chapter was the politics of Hannibal Sehested towards Norway. It has been puzzling historians for a long time. His biographer Oscar Albert Johnsen thought that at the heart of the Danish magnate's politics towards Norway was the opinion that the change of Norway's status in the union, i.e. the increase of its independence, lies in the interest of the whole monarchy. Sehested believed that otherwise the union may break up. According to Johnsen, Sehested was aware that after the Peace of Brømsebro, Norwegians believed more and more that their large and growing contribution to the state finances did not translate into its bigger defense possibilities. He was afraid that this could threaten the union of both countries.⁷² He was also concerned with Norway's growing economic importance connected to the economic changes of the first half of the 17th century.

Sehested wanted to limit the competences of the fief-holders for the benefit of central power and the decrease the supremacy of the Danish nobility officials in Norway. The creation of Norwegian army was also to increase the independence of the country, especially that, as a result, part of taxes remained in Norway.⁷³ Acting on this level, the *Stattholder* strengthened the Norwegian estates because thanks to him the meeting of estates became a forum where the independent Norwegian politics began to develop. The cooperation with the estates was necessary, especially that Sehested realized that his political line will be criticized by the Danish nobility. Already in 1643 the *Stattholder* asked the meeting to support his initiatives. In 1644 he had his first success: a separate office for Norway was created (General Commissariat) in order to collect Norwegian taxes intended for defense. The office was headed by three officials accountable to the *Stattholder*. The creation of this office increased Norway's independence and also gave more possibilities to the *Stattholder*.⁷⁴

After the war, Sehested continued his politics. He struggled to leave those taxes in the country which could be spent on the Norwegian army. He achieved his aim only partially; because of the Council's opposition the army was reduced in number but Sehested managed to convince the king to leave extraordinary taxes in the country. Thanks to this, Sehested's successors were able to prepare the Norwegian army well for the next war with Sweden in the 1650s.

⁷² O. A. Johnsen, *Hannibal...*, pp. 158, 82.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, pp. 161–163.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 109–113.

In 1646 Sehested received from the king the powers of the annual calling of the meeting of the estates. In this way he became a strong political power, much stronger than his position of the royal governor would suggest. He enjoyed the support of his royal father-in-law, who noticed certain benefits from such politics: the income in the royal treasury from Norway was growing systematically and Sehested turned out to be extremely efficient at collecting all the fees. The control over Norway and its resources could directly strengthen the king's position in tensions with the Council.⁷⁵

The Danish Council of the Realm, just as Danish nobility, had a critical and suspicious attitude to Sehested's actions. Already during the war it criticized him and demanded that the command of the war was transferred to the Council. The creation of new offices and the agreement that some of the taxes were left in the country caused that during the assembly in 1647 the nobility of Zealand demanded the return of the former situation. The issue surfaced again after Christian's IV death in 1648 during the preparation of the new king's Frederick charter. The Council wanted to introduce into the document statements about Norway's subordination to Denmark and the transfer of all its taxes to Copenhagen. It also demanded the right to nominate an additional official who would co-participate in the management of the military. Sehested, however, still in alliance with his brother-in-law i.e. Frederick III, did not allow such regulations to be introduced.⁷⁶



The matter of the hereditary nature of the Norwegian throne was logically connected with the politics of the *Stattholder*. It was already mentioned here that the Danish monarchs remarked on several occasions that the Norwegian throne, unlike the elective Danish one, is hereditary. The matter was broader, however, because it concerned the whole monarchy. In the middle of the 17th century, when Denmark was declining as evidenced by the greater and lesser war defeats (including the disastrous involvement in the Thirty Years' War in the years 1625–29), ideas about the state reform began to circulate and one of the most popular of them was the plea to introduce hereditary crown. In 1614 a scholar and mathematician Christoffer Dybvad (1578–1622) in his letter to the king among other things criticized the electiveness of the throne. In the 1640s

⁷⁵ Ibidem, pp. 91–93.

⁷⁶ Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, pp. 27–28.

the future lawyer and professor of the Copenhagen University Rasmus Vinding (1615–1684) published an essay in France arguing for the supremacy of the hereditary throne over an elective one.

Christian IV was interested in these opinions. As he thought that the modernization of Denmark and maintaining its position in the Baltic Sea region was his main aim he concluded that the only way to achieve this is strengthening the power of the monarch. The first step towards it was to abolish the election. Because such changes in Denmark were extremely difficult, the king decided that it was best to start with Norway, especially that he, as many of his predecessors, was convinced that the Norwegian throne was hereditary. However, more down-to-earth motives were also important. As it was mentioned, in the middle of the century the Norwegian economic growth became apparent as shown by a greater participation of the Norwegian income in the country's budget. In 1641 it totaled 24 per cent, in 1647–33 per cent. The King wanted to gain complete control over these assets and best – over the heads of the Danish nobility and the Council. A successful way to legitimize such control would be adopting a rule that Norway is the hereditary monarchy of the Oldenburgs.⁷⁷

When in 1646 the Council, concerned about Sehested's too large independence demanded that he put forward a report from his activities, the king responded that the *Stattholder* is accountable only to him because Norway is his hereditary kingdom.⁷⁸ A few years later, the new king Frederick III behaved in a similar way, giving his wife Sophie Amalie the incomes from the silver mine in Norwegian Kongsberg, totally disregarding the usual procedure as he treated Norway as 'his own private territory'.⁷⁹ Frederick even before coronation was using the title 'heir of Norway' and resigned from it only under the Council's pressure.⁸⁰

Already during the war, in the 1640s, an anonymous text was written in Latin: *Tractatus de jure regni Norvagici haereditario, cum anexis documentis seu literis publicis signatis A-G*.⁸¹ The author, referring to historical argumentation, tried to prove that Norway had always been a hereditary kingdom. Additionally, he expressed Norwegian patriotism emphasizing that Norway had always been a separate legal-political body. The text contained some anti-Danish and

⁷⁷ H. Kongsrud, op. cit., pp. 224–225.

⁷⁸ O. A. Johnsen, *Hannibal...*, p. 93.

⁷⁹ H. Kongsrud, op. cit., p. 197.

⁸⁰ Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, p. 29.

⁸¹ H. Kongsrud, op. cit., pp. 113–114.

anti-Swedish comments.⁸² This work, however, cannot be treated as proof of Norwegian national consciousness because its author was, most probably, a Dane – Jens Dolmer (1615–1670), a historian, teacher and educator of the king’s illegitimate son – Ulrik Christian Gyldenløve (1630–1658), who at the time was still a student at the Knights’ Academy in Søro in Zealand and the text was probably inspired by king Christian IV himself.⁸³

In 1647 Christian IV ordered Sehested to see if ‘old documents’ can be found in Norway to prove the hereditary nature of the Norwegian throne in the family of Oldenburg. The results of this ‘archive query’ of the *Stattholder* are not known but soon after, on the occasion of the homage to the new king Frederick III, he started propagating the idea of changing the legal status of the Norwegian throne.

During the feudal homage of Frederick in Christiania in August 1648 a new treatise also in Latin was written, anonymous (the author was a famous officer and royal official Jacob Madzøn (d. 1663) and without a title. It is preserved in the collection of the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters where it can be found under the title *Anonymi Consilium, given to king Frederick the Third so that he preserves hereditary throne in Norway*. Its author was a Norwegian who not only identified his nationality but wrote that he was forced to leave his fatherland because of the suffering he feels seeing his country being subordinated to Denmark. He emphasized that Norway had been and still was a separate country not just a Danish province. Further in his work, he presented a program of political reforms that were not only to strengthen the royal power but also to increase Norway’s independence. He suggested, among other things, accepting the primacy of Norwegian nobility in nominations for offices, retaining Norwegian income in the country, maintaining national army, creation of central offices and limiting the competences of Danish fief-holders. All this were to be accompanied by accepting the Norwegian hereditary throne, and later also the Danish one.⁸⁴ According to a Norwegian historian: ‘The changes proposed in the *Consilium* referring to Norway were never presented as the aim in itself. They are rather side-effects of politics that is supposed to ensure the king with the hereditary throne in Norway and later also in Denmark. The anonymous author presents some national postulates but they are subordinated and coincide with the monarch’s aims. The fact that his plan was giving Norway

⁸² Ibidem, pp. 102–109.

⁸³ Ibidem, pp. 115–117.

⁸⁴ Ibidem, pp. 144–152.

the status of hereditary kingdom could flatter the Norwegian national consciousness but the aims of the document could not be called patriotic.⁸⁵

Additionally, the analysis of the text shows a serious congruency between the reform proposals and Sehested's political program. This congruency is apparent not only in the proposed changes but also in the methods that were supposed to be used. The author included in his text the *Stattholder's* plan of action and the text was part of his campaign.⁸⁶ Does it mean that Madzøn's treatise may not be used as a premise to show the level of national identity at that time? I will return to this matter later.

Sehested's actions had, however, a much larger scope. It can be noticed that the documents produced by the Norwegians in connection with the homage of 1648, i.e. proxies for representatives at assemblies or requests presented to the authorities, contain the term 'hereditary king' much more frequently than before. For instance, the clergy of Stavanger cathedral chapter described Frederick as 'the rightful heir and king of Norway'. Such phrases, in different wording but always containing an element attesting to the conviction of hereditary character of the throne, were included in many documents produced by representatives of all estates.⁸⁷ They appear most consistently in the documents coming from the clergy and bourgeoisie of the western Norway, that is the territory directly under the influence of the *Stattholder*. The statement that the appearance of such expressions may be connected with Sehested's influence can be supported by the fact that it appears incidentally also in Danish proxies created on the same occasion.⁸⁸ It is known that such opinions were expressed publicly during the celebration of the homage, which took place on the 21st of August 1648 in the St. Trinity's Church in Christiania. Following the rules of the ceremony, the Chancellor of Denmark, Christen Thomesen Sehested (1590–1657) informed in his speech the congregated estates of Norway about the election of the king made by the Danish Council of the Realm and called Norwegian estates to accept him and pay homage to him.⁸⁹ According to a later source, the Chancellor of Norway Jens Bjelke answered saying that the estates will pay homage to the prince Frederick as he is 'the rightful heir of the Kingdom of Norway and there

⁸⁵ Ibidem, p. 163.

⁸⁶ Ibidem, pp. 177–180.

⁸⁷ ANS/II, pp. 15, 24, 47, 253, 255, 256, 257.

⁸⁸ H. Kongsrud, op. cit., pp. 189–190; O. A. Johnsen, *Hannibal...*, pp. 120–121.

⁸⁹ 'Kansler Kristen Thomessøn Sehested tale i Trefoldighedskirken.' [21 August], in ANS/II, pp. 236–239.

is no one among the living who would have greater rights to this Kingdom.⁹⁰ The Chancellor, a politician closely cooperating with the *Stattholder*, a representative of the new Danish-Norwegian nobility and one of the most important figures of Norwegian politics of the middle of the 17th century, used the occasion to state publicly that he considers Frederick's rights to the crown as resulting from hereditary throne and not the from election of the Danish nobility.

The answer to the question whether Sehested's politics was an expression of Norwegian separatist efforts is rather negative. The uneasy reactions of the Danish nobility may mean that the activities of the *Stattholder* were perceived as the threat to unity of the kingdom and to the privileged position of Danes in Norway. In fact the Danish aristocrat was the executor of king's plans and even when he acted independently his main aim was to strengthen the Danish crown and the king's power. He had little regard and sentiment for Norway itself and many of his utterances show his not too favorable attitude towards the Norwegians. The *Stattholder* was always angry when Norwegian peasants made the exploitation or war efforts difficult. It seems that he treated Norway rather instrumentally. He aimed most of all at the improvement of the procedures of collecting fees by facilitating the administration. This mostly meant more concentration of power in Norway and the desire to leave Norwegian resources in the country, which in itself contributed to the development of separatist ideas.⁹¹

It cannot be excluded that personal motives also played some role. Sehested was an ambitious, power- and money-hungry man. During his office in Norway he managed to obtain large areas of land – finally they amounted to 1/16 of all lands in Norway. At the same time he was selling out his estates in Denmark – it cannot be excluded, according to Johnsen, that he was planning to settle down in Norway and achieve a strong and independent position here. The biographer emphasizes, however, that it never implied plans to sever the ties with the Danish crown.⁹²

Can Norwegian attitudes of the time be interpreted only using the categories of the political campaign of the Danish *Stattholder*, in which the Norwegian public opinion was treated as the tool of royal politics? Not entirely. First of all, it can be assumed that if both Christian IV and Frederick III were interested

⁹⁰ 'Norges Rige arfve-rige det er kort oc klar bevis oc underretning, at Norges rige hafver icke alleniste af første begøndelse, men oc altid siden været oc endnu er it ret arfve-rige', in ANS/II, p. 604.

⁹¹ Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, pp. 249–250, 133.

⁹² O. A. Johnsen, *Hannibal...*, pp. 125, 132, 159.

in the matter of heredity and in this context they referred to the strongly delineated legal distinctiveness of the country, then it may have been connected with the estimations that such actions will be met with a positive response of the Norwegian elites.⁹³ Secondly, in the 1650s, when Sehested as a result of the Council's actions was no longer an official and withdrew from active politics, in connection with the homage of the king's son Christian (later Christian V) the next political campaign took place, which gives serious evidence as to strong national sentiments of Norwegians and their care of the country's best interest. As we will see, at this time Norwegians expressed the same opinions as those created by the *Stattholder*.

It is certain that the administration of Sehested played an important role in the formation of Norwegian national identity. The actions aiming at the increased independence of the country, an attempt at financial independence, cooperation with the estates, appealing to Norwegian patriotism, campaigning to transform Norway into a hereditary kingdom of the Oldenburgs – all this must have had an influence on the Norwegian elites. Even more so that such politics was supported by one of the most important figures of the monarchy, cousin to the kings, a man of strong personality and character. It may be said that he offered an action plan to the new Norwegian elites, which could have contributed to the integration of these groups and at the same time could function as a sign identifying and distinguishing these elites from other ones in the kingdom. This plan would fail, however, if Norwegian society did not have a sense of national identity to which Danish politics could refer.

As it was mentioned, the question of hereditary nature of the throne returned during the homage to prince Christian in 1656. In the official documents issued before the assembly, Frederick III described himself as the 'hereditary king of Norway'.⁹⁴ The assembly became also an occasion to present scientific arguments. At the king's behest, an anonymous legal-historical treatise was created titled: *Kingdom of Norway – hereditary kingdom that is a short and clear proof that the Kingdom of Norway not only at the beginning but ever since had been and still is a true hereditary kingdom*.⁹⁵ Referring to a distant past, medieval laws and chronicles, the author attempted to prove the thesis stated in the title. At the same time the treatise exploited the patriotic theme, emphasizing the history and long existence of the Norwegian country but also criticizing Danish politics towards

⁹³ J. E. Sars, *Nationale stemninger...*, p. 30.

⁹⁴ ANS/II, s. 449–551.

⁹⁵ 'Norges Rige arve-rige...', in ANS/II, pp. 572–647.

Norway in 1536. The author wrote that the Norwegian paragraph from this year included in Christian III's charter was illegal, that the Danes maltreated the Norwegians by behaving like enemies and tyrants and not like brothers. What was characteristic was, that it was the Danish Council whom the author blamed for this kind of politics. He also criticized the 16th century Danish historian Arild Huitfeldt (1546–1609), an eulogist of Danish nobility and the system of magnate oligarchy, for writing about the incorporation of Norway; equally well, he maintained, one could write about the incorporation of Denmark by Norway. The use of the word 'province' by this historian in relation to Norway was wrong as well. 'One could wonder why Arild Huitfeldt offends Norway so strongly, calling it 'a province' while this has been a kingdom famous for 800 years and it is so treated not only by the reigning hereditary monarchs, who are the kings of Norway and Denmark, but also by all its inhabitants and foreigners.'⁹⁶

According to the interpretation of a modern historian Helge Kongsrud, the author of the treatise, already known to be Jens Dolmer, a Dane, represented the same monarchical point of view as other authors. His reference to Norwegian injuries was only instrumental and served only to demonstrate errors and the lawlessness of the nobility politicians. The praise and the confirmation of the historical Norwegian state were to become the basis for the claims to the hereditary throne. They could result in the increased power of the king only on the condition that they concerned a country that was historically and legally separate. From the point of view of royal interest highlighting the equal position of Norway in the union and the criticism of discrimination was sensible, especially that the Danish nobility could be blamed for the politics and this discredited them in the eyes of Norwegians.⁹⁷

Disregarding the motives that guided the author, or in fact authors, because the Madzøn's text from ten years before was part of the same campaign, a conclusion can be drawn that the creation of such texts would not have been possible if a widespread consciousness of political and historical distinctiveness of the Norwegian state and knowledge about one's own identity had not existed – at least in the elite circles. Including patriotic arguments would be senseless if the authors did not feel that this could be an effective means to mobilize the Norwegians and Norwegian public opinion.

Another, not less important, aspect of these events, is a question about their consequences. There is no direct data which would show the social reception of

⁹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 637–40.

⁹⁷ H. Kongsrud, *op. cit.*, pp. 129, 138, 140.

the campaign of Sehested and two Danish monarchs. It is difficult to assume, however, that the events from the assembly remained unknown. The same relates to the treatises written on this occasion. They were not published in print but their content must have been known. There is a striking similarity between the argumentation used by Dolmer in criticizing Huitfeldt and those used half a century later – as we will see – by Ludvig Holberg. In addition, we know the next part of the process – the society's attitude during the wars with Sweden between 1657–1660. Most historians emphasize that it is in these wars for the first time after 1536 when Norwegians on such a large scale showed willingness to fight and efficiency in battle. It is thought that one of the reasons was the Danish politics in the 1640s and 50s.



Danish politics, although not always consistent, in fact to a large extent maintained the distinctiveness of Norway. What contributed to this was: preserving the country's name, emblem and symbols, consistent use of titles referring to a special position of Norway in the monarchy as a result of the hereditary nature of the Norwegian throne. Similarly, the maintaining or creating certain central offices, political institutions and rituals, treating Norway as a subject in international relations, invoking old Norwegian laws and constant declarations of willingness to obey them. One can also notice certain mistrust in the Danish politics of the time towards the Norwegians, fear of them (the question is whether the fear was justified) and through many actions the conviction is shown that the Norwegians are not simply inhabitants of a certain province like for example the people of Jutland – but a nation with history and well-shaped identity. In the 17th century some aspects of the Danish politics, such as the actions undertaken by Christian IV and Frederick III to accept the hereditary nature of Norwegian throne directly stimulated the development of national identity and shape the thinking of new Danish-Norwegian elites. The creation of the Norwegian army and war with Sweden played also an important role in this process.

The analysis of actions and attitudes of Danish authorities provides us with knowledge that the Norwegians were different from other nations, that their distinctiveness was based on elements differentiating them from others and integrating them together. It does not tell us, however, whether Norwegians – all or some of them – were aware of their distinctiveness. In other words, whether

they linked their distinctiveness with the historical entity which Norway was at the time. This could be demonstrated on many levels – beginning with a connection with a different geographical environment and ending with a political state. To answer this question we have to, in some sense, give voice to Norwegians themselves and quote different statements from these times and also show various actions which give evidence to the fact that Norwegians were aware of their distinctiveness on many levels.

CHAPTER FOUR
NORWEGIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY
IN 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

When researching the national identity and consciousness, the subject of analysis may be their verbal and non-verbal expression. In the former case we are concerned with the analysis of various texts, where the following evidence of the subject's identity appears: the identity of the subject is expressed in identifying phrases, the texts attempt at direct description of the country's situation (at the time of writing or earlier) or even formulate demands or programs referring to the whole country or the whole society.

In the latter case the subject of research could be various actions and behaviors with political and cultural character attesting to national identity.

Both levels of research overlap, therefore, it seems justifiable to distinguish three subjects of study here. First, political phenomena – attitudes of the Norwegians during the wars with Sweden, their public appearances and activity as well as behavior towards the Danish authorities. The second subject of study would be the statements indicating in a direct way the degree of identification with Norway and its matters i.e. mostly the activity of Norwegian humanists in the second half of the 16th century and scientists and writers in the 17th century.

Concerning the lower classes, who in this era, unsurprisingly, left behind very few written sources, an important element of non-verbal expression may be those products of spiritual (preserved and written down later) and material culture which indicate the national identity. They are indeed the evidence for a steady sense of distinctiveness. The third subject of study will, therefore, be the folk culture and its permanency. Because of the specificity of this subject, a separate chapter will be devoted to it.



The 19th century Norwegian historians striving to document the national and patriotic attitudes of Norwegians in the 16th and 17th centuries were describing with pleasure the reluctance with which Norwegians treated the per-

spective of wars with Sweden in the 16th century, perceiving it as a proof of anti-Danish tendencies. Norwegian peasants, especially the inhabitants of the borderlands, faced with military draft in war against the Swedes, very often responded that they promised to their neighbors to live in peace and friendship so they refuse to join the army. Desertions and escaping from the fleet were very common.¹ During the First Northern War, the Swedish invasion of Eric XIV was accompanied by a propaganda action in which the Swedes invoked the anti-Danish sentiments. The initiator was the Norwegian brawler, a certain Enno Brandrøk, who tried to convince Eric that both the nobility and the commoners in Norway are ready to riot against Denmark. Many Norwegians surrendered to the Swedes without any resistance, taking an oath of loyalty. The anti-Danish sentiments were strong in Trondheim, where the townspeople in 1564 not only opened the gates of the city for the Swedes but also appealed to the inhabitants in the surrounding area to surrender to Eric.

Such actions were interpreted by historians as a proof of Norwegians' dissatisfaction with the forced subordination and the influx of Danes into the country and at the same time a continuation of the politics from the 15th century when Norwegian nobility often became an ally of the Swedes against the Danes.² Modern historians suppose that the aversion towards the Danes could have been religiously motivated i.e. the dissatisfaction of the Norwegians with abolishing Catholicism and especially the attacks on St. Olaf's cult.³ The aversion to fighting could not be explained only by political motives and the above interpretation seems a little exaggerated. The avoidance of military service and reluctance to participate in the war were common among peasants in many European countries, also in the 20th century.

This does not mean, however, that the matter was completely insignificant. War experiences did not strengthen pro-Swedish attitudes. In fact, to the contrary. Swedes had a hostile attitude towards the population – looting and plundering – so the First Northern War became a turning point in the relationships between Scandinavian countries. The increasing aversion to Swedes, which, as we will see, at the end of the 17th century will change into hatred and, finally, they will be described as the 'eternal enemy', will be accompanied by the increasingly better attitude towards Denmark.

¹ K. Alnæs, op. cit., pp. 202–204.

² J. E. Sars, op. cit., pp. 13–15; S. Supphellen, *Innvandrerne by*, Oslo 1997 (*Trondheims historie 997–1997*, ed. J. Sandnes, Oslo 1996–1997, vol. II), p. 46, 48.

³ H. Røsoch, *Trondheims historie*, Trondheim 1939, p. 90.

In the beginning of the 17th century, in connection with the so-called Kalmar war, an unprecedented event happened in Norway, however, also without any further consequences. It is unknown how far conclusions we can draw from it. The matter concerns the sad fate of the expedition of the hired soldiers on Swedish pay, who under Capitan Ramsay's command came in 1612 to Romsdal. Their aim was to get to Sweden through Norwegian territories. A spontaneous mobilization of peasants occurred. They set a trap for the soldiers near Kringen (at the foot of the Dovre mountains, in the Gudbrandsdalen valley). Only eighteen soldiers were left alive from a 300-soldier division.⁴ The event must have been widely heard about because the next year king Christian IV awarded some of the skirmish participants granting them ownership of the land. What is more important, the memory of the event survived, as in 1733, on the occasion of Christian VI's (1699–1746, king 1730) travel to Norway, a monument was erected in the place of the battle. As we will see later when the next century is discussed, the history of the skirmish became material for literature and its memory survived also among the lower classes. Norwegian historians are very cautious to consider the Kringen skirmish an undisputed proof of Norwegian peasants' patriotism as in the same war a completely different event occurred. It was the mobilization of Norwegian peasant soldiers in 1611, who were gathered in the camp near Svinesund in Eastern Norway. The recruits spent their time quite pleasantly: they drank, sang, shot into the air and then... went back to their homes saying goodbyes to their commanders. As Øystein Rian claims, such behavior was more typical for the Norwegians than the Kringen battle. It was this battle, however, that foreshadowed a new era.⁵

In the 1640s a Norwegian army was created which had not only peasant but also, to a large extent, national character. Both its successful start in the wars with Sweden and the fact that it was later preserved were factors which could have influenced the national identity. The attitudes of both Norwegian soldiers and the civilians began to change. The army showed much greater discipline and courage. This does not mean, however, that the problem of army desertion disappeared. It was still large but no longer posed a threat to the whole war effort. Especially that the fighting soldiers displayed their high morale and discipline.⁶ The army became a symbol of Norwegian loyalty towards the monarch,

⁴ T. Michell, *History of the Scottish expedition to Norway in 1612*, Christiania 1886, p. 53.

⁵ Ø. Rian, 'Er vikingen den typiske nordmann?' in C. Due-Nielsen (ed.) *Struktur og Funktion. Festskrift til Erling Ladewig Petersen*, Odense 1994, p. 135.

⁶ K. Alnæs, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

which was scrupulously used by the royal propaganda describing Norwegian peasant soldiers, their courage and faithfulness as an example to follow in the whole kingdom.⁷ From a later period, there comes an inscription on a medal commemorating Frederick IV's travel to Norway in 1704: 'The whole world should learn among the Norwegian mountains courage, loyalty and valor and what honor brings'.⁸ It may be supposed that such evolution could have been related to the fact that the Norwegian peasantry accepted the Danish royal ideology which was aimed at Norwegians a century earlier. It was, let me remind you, the idea of the king – the continuator and heir of medieval Norwegian monarchs. The peasants most probably ignored the fact that the king was first and foremost a Danish monarch. They saw in him mostly the king of Norway, a guarantor of abiding by the St Olaf's law and the geographical distance did not allow them to confront these ideas with reality. Especially that another, well-justified, candidate to the throne was not to be seen – for years there had not been a Norwegian family who could present their rights to the throne. One of the elements of such thinking was the conviction that the Norwegian throne was, in opposition to the elective Danish one, a hereditary throne.⁹

From 1652, preparations to another war were going on in Norway. Norway put forward an army of total 11-thousand soldiers (1657), which meant that every fifth adult man was mobilized. Thanks to good organization, efficient command and courageous soldiers Norwegians had many successes in this war. They twice resisted an attack on Båhuslen (September 1657 and January 1658), ousted (under the commandment of Jens Bjelke) the Swedes from Trøndelag and Jemtland, regained Herjedalen. In the meantime, Denmark was losing the war. The country was occupied and the entry of the Swedish king Charles Gustav in Zealand meant a catastrophe. In February 1658 a peace treaty in Roskilde was signed, in which Norway, despite its military successes, lost large territories (Denmark lost its lands in southern Sweden). For Norwegians, the loss of the Trøndelag district was especially painful as it brought about serious problems for the local trade. The regions given up to Sweden were subject to strict occupation. Sweden did not only impose heavy taxes but also forced peasants to serve in the

⁷ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 65.

⁸ *Mod, troskab, tapperhed og hvad det giver ære, den hele verden kan blandt norske klippe lære*, qtd after: Ø. Rian, 'Den frie og stolte norske bonden. Myter og realiteter' in H. Winge (ed.), *Lokalsamfundet og øvrighet i Norden ca 1500–1750*, Oslo 1992, p. 149.

⁹ Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, pp. 21, 26; idem, *Hvordan...*; idem, *Maktens...*, pp. 31–32.

military sending the recruits to war fronts in Livonia and Poland. The war was soon resumed and the Norwegians were well-prepared for it. The main authority in the country was – in the face of the fact that Copenhagen was surrounded – the Norwegian aristocrat, son of the Chancellor and the leader of the army Jørgen Bjelke (1621–1696) and the *Stattholder* Niels Trolle (1599–1667). In the appeal to the citizens, Jørgen Bjelke used very characteristic phrases invoking Norwegians' love for the country, loyalty to the Crown and the 'valorous Norwegian blood'. He appealed to the inhabitants of the provinces lost to Sweden in previous wars: 'We are one country, one nation who for many centuries lived under the power of one king, administered and traded together connected by friendship and which cannot be divided without harming itself and losing its honor.'¹⁰

The Norwegians responded to such appeals with a general, national mobilization in which the new Danish-Norwegian elites, who were slowly starting to identify with the new place of living, played an important role. 'For the first time since a long time the society felt the spirit of armed rebellion and many people had a sense of the community spirit, which later would be significant for the development of Norwegian national identity.'¹¹ It was also important that they realized their own battle power, military possibilities, which all led to the stimulation of national identity.¹²

To finish the theme of the influence of the wars with Sweden on the sense of national belonging, let us quote information from a later period. During the Northern War and subsequent Swedish invasion, the authorities in Norway managed to mobilize the peasants from the east of Norway to guerilla warfare.¹³ At this time a few events occurred, which later became national legend – these were the courageous acts of Anne Colbjørnsdatter (ar. 1665–1736), the wife of the minister Jonas Rasmus, who will be presented later in more detail. In 1716, when she was forced to give quarters to a Swedish division, Anna convinced the soldiers to set up a big bonfire which became a signal fire for the Norwegian army. Later, she gave them a lot of beer and vodka and secretly sent a messenger to alert the closest Norwegian division.¹⁴ Her story became a part of folk culture, contributing to the opinions about the inborn, national courage of Norwegians.

¹⁰ E. Opsahl, op. cit., p. 117.

¹¹ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 246.

¹² J. E. Sars, op. cit., pp. 23–24.

¹³ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, p. 95.

¹⁴ H. J. Huitfeldt-Kaas, 'Anne Colbjørnsdatter' [biographical entry] C. F. Bricka [ed.] *Dansk Biografisk Lexicon tillige omfattende Norge for Tidsrummet 1537–1814*, vol. IV, Kjøbenhavn 1890, p. 24.

The wars with Sweden in the 16th and 17th centuries show an evolution of attitudes of the Norwegian society: from complete indifference to engagement, which is considered by the later generation undisputedly to be patriotism and was exploited in order to build the canon of national identity. Of course various factors had impact on such a change in Norwegians' behavior. The actions of the Swedes, growing oppression of the state, which more and more successfully enforced discipline or even the economic growth, which produced, together with growing prosperity, a sense of certainty, self-confidence and the necessity to defend one's possessions. The wars also gave an opportunity to sense and express one's own identity by creating a place of confrontation with 'the other' and forcing the people to support either one or the other side. We cannot forget, however, that the wars were also a factor which encouraged tightening the links with Denmark, although in a specific way: through the consolidation of the sense of loyalty and attachment to the Danish monarchs.



The awareness of one's own distinctiveness, of belonging to the political and legal Norwegian community and the sense of possessing one's own, different from the Danish, interests surfaced on occasions of important political events, often resonating with the convention adopted by the Danish authorities. In 1548, on the occasion of prince Frederick's homage, Norwegian nobility issued a supplication to the king. They presented themselves as 'the nobility and *lagmenn* from the Kingdom of Norway'. They asked for abiding to the Norwegian law, all privileges and freedoms granted by former monarchs including the rule that all changes be introduced with assent of 'the local nobility'.¹⁵ A similar entreaty was issued on the occasion of the next homage to the monarch Christian IV in 1591. Repetition of entreaties was usual because these laws were regularly broken. Nobility petitioned for abiding by the old Norwegian laws and for awarding fiefs. It asked to nominate a chancellor of Norway 'from those born in the country'. The nobility recalled their merits for the country '...we entreat that Norwegian nobility... is appreciated and that fiefs are awarded and help provided to them; as we have served best to our king and lord and much harm was done to us and to our fathers including damages and expenses connected with the previous war so that our farms and houses are burnt down, plundered and

¹⁵ ANS/I, pp. 18–19.

ruined and much harm will follow if [these damages] are not fixed. Especially, that we are still obliged to defend the country of our fathers and the monarchy according to ability and wealth as did our fathers and ourselves till now...¹⁶ It is important to note that the nobility addressed the kings as monarchs of Norway and not of Denmark calling at the same time Norway their ‘fatherland and country’ (*fedrene rike og land*).¹⁷

In 1643, in connection with the government’s proposal to impose an extraordinary tax, the nobility – members of the Norwegian meeting of the estates – began to demand that this money is left in the country and spent on the defense of Norway. It seems that such appeals were a result of an action started by a new (from 1642) *Stattholder* Hannibal Sehested.¹⁸

The nobility’s appeal in 1648, again invoking the old Norwegian law, contained a concrete plea to grant them equal status and rights with the Danish nobility: ‘That no difference is made between a Norwegian and a Danish noble... and that the Norwegians, as the Danes, are granted honors, fiefs and other as the countries are united; our pedigree is both Norwegian and Danish and we boast as much obedience, loyalty and faithfulness as Denmark...’ Additionally, the nobility asked for the taxes paid by the Norwegians to be spent on the country’s defense and choose ‘local officers for the military service.’¹⁹ This petition reflects various phenomena: the awareness on one’s own identity is accompanied by the sense of strong connection with Denmark, which results from family bonds as well. It is worth noticing that although there had been a change in the ethnic and family make-up of the elites (a strong Danish element), which the nobility realized, there still existed a sense of discrimination most probably based on the place of residence. It turned out that from the perspective of Danish authorities residing in Copenhagen, the Norwegian nobility was ‘foreign’ because they lived in a different country. What was also important was the fact that, being placed far away from the center, the inhabitants of Norway had much more difficulty in being nominated for offices, receiving favors and privileges.²⁰ Erik Opsahl rightly remarked that taking into account the favoritism towards the Danes by the authorities, the Norwegian nobility, which had in fact Norwegian-Danish roots, would rather emphasize the fact that they belong to the Danish

¹⁶ ANS/I, pp. 111, 112.

¹⁷ E. Opsahl, op. cit., p. 110.

¹⁸ Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, p. 246.

¹⁹ ANS/II, pp. 242–43.

²⁰ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, p. 113.

nobility if they indeed felt such a bond. It was not so; on the contrary, this nobility completely unanimously presented themselves as Norwegians and did not feel any common interest with the Danish nobility.²¹ Such attitudes of the Norwegian nobility were confirmed by a report of a Swedish envoy in 1653, who wrote that in Norway there was a lot of dissatisfaction from the fact that Danes were awarded with fiefs and officer nominations.²²

Place of birth became the basic identifying category. Having existed earlier, it was a very solid category occurring in other nations, too. Analyzing the national consciousness of the Cossacks, a Polish scholar pointed out the role of the birthplace, recalling a phrase from the first half of the 17th century: 'It is not the faith that makes a Russ, a Pole or a Lithuanian but birth and blood: Russian, Polish, Lithuanian.' This leads us to a conclusion that the identification of *gente Rutheneus* was of no less importance to the Ukrainian nobility as *natione Polonus*.²³

The explicit demand for equality that appeared among the Norwegian nobles could also have been a consequence of the changes which were made in the mindset of *Hannibalsfeiden* and connected to the politics of the *Stattholder* Sehested. At the same time, the above mentioned text *Anonimi Consilium* was created, written by a Norwegian at a political behest of the *Stattholder* and king Frederick himself. According to Helge Kongsrud, quoted in the previous chapter, this text does not propose a patriotic program because all its appeals had been subordinated to the aim of strengthening the royal power. Nevertheless, in many of its phrases, in my opinion, strong national consciousness and an awareness of national interests can be sensed. Madzøn wrote that Norway in the union with Denmark is in an inferior position because as the king with the court reside in Copenhagen, the Norwegians have to travel there with all their business, which benefits only the capital city and 'Norway becomes a subordinate [country]'. Presenting political plans, the author wrote that after the final strengthening of the throne in Norway it is necessary to negotiate with Denmark 'not because Your Majesty believes that the matter of hereditary throne is questionable, and not because Your Majesty needs confirmation for Your hereditary rights, but only because this hereditary law, which Your Majesty with

²¹ E. Opsahl, op. cit., p. 113.

²² J. E. Sars, op. cit., p. 31.

²³ T. Chynczewska-Hennel, 'The National Consciousness of Ukrainian Nobles and Cossacks from the End of the Sixteenth to the Mid-Seventeenth Century', in *Concepts of Nationhood...*, pp. 379, 390, 391.

Your royal family have to Norway, should become famous in the whole world, and to show those convinced that Norway is only a province subordinated to the Danish crown that they are mistaken.’ Also writing about a fair distribution of the burden of supporting the court and mutual aid in case of war, Madzøn justified this with a statement about the equality of both countries. He believed at the same time that a rule should be accepted that ‘the Kingdom of Norway is not subordinated to the Danish power and authority.’²⁴

It cannot be said that the author’s train of thought was always logically correct and that his arguments stood the test of criticism. It is, however, interesting why the author mentions this line of thought so frequently. What is the aim of the constant emphasis of the fact that Norway is discriminated against and that this should be changed? The main purpose of the treatise – let us remember that Hannibal Sehested was its main initiator – was to propose to the king such political actions which would strengthen his position in Norway and in consequence his position in the whole monarchy. From this point of view, the constant references to the harms inflicted on Norway do not seem necessary. There are two possible explanations here and they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Firstly, such program could have been proposed by the author himself, who used the opportunity to express his patriotic feeling and maybe influence his mighty rulers. The second explanation could be that he might have been writing by Sehested’s order, who knew that in this form the program would become attractive for Norwegian elites and thanks to this it will be easier for him to secure their support. In fact, the hereditary nature of Norwegian throne – important to the King and the Court – was not the most important from the point of view of Norwegian interests and the status of Norway as a country. What was more important was to guarantee the influence on internal politics, abolishing various formal and informal limitations, which both restricted the opportunities and were indicators of the country’s subordination. In both cases the text of *Anonymi Consilium* – although it expresses the political program of the Danish politician and not of Norwegians – reflects the fact that there existed a population conscious not only of their own distinctiveness and identity but also having a sense of political interest of their own country.

According to the expert on the area, Oscar A. Johnsen, the views of Norwegians on the character of the Norwegian throne were pragmatic. We cannot speak about a blind attachment to one, specific vision but rather about adapting

²⁴ ANS/II, pp. 326–27, 332–333.

it to the current needs of the country. It is true that from the 12th and 13th century the throne was hereditary and this was perceived by a large part of the Norwegian society as a guarantee of internal stability.²⁵ However, already in the 15th century Norwegians started to perceive such political system as harmful to the country, which made them support the elective throne, just being introduced in Denmark at the time. In popular opinion the elective throne gave an opportunity for political bargaining and in this way gaining benefits for themselves and the country. This opinion was also prevalent in the 16th century, accompanied by the belief that the homage ceremony is in fact the independent election of the king by the Norwegians. Such conclusions were drawn by Johnsen from the analysis of authorizations given by the peasants for the assemblies. He maintained at the same time that the society was in fact aware that this was some sort of fiction as the king was chosen by the Danish Council of the Realm. In this light, the support of the Norwegians for the idea of restoring the hereditary throne was an expression of Norwegian desire to become more independent. The only possibility – Johnsen writes – to avoid the election of the king by the Danish Council was to reinstate the hereditary throne, that is, the system of succession that existed in Norway in the period of its full independence.²⁶ In this context Madzøn's program gains national character – it was to be an attempt to exploit a situation, to 'sell one's support at a high price.'²⁷



Mentioned several times already, the changes occurring in the middle of the 17th century i.e. creation of the Norwegian army and the politics of Sehested brought results in 1650s. In a sense what we have here is the repetition of the phenomena from the previous decade but the intensity of those occurrences creates a new standard.

The first indicator of the stimulation of Norwegian nobility was most probably the assembly in Moss (1653) where it was decided that a person should be chosen (from among the local nobility) who would request the king to gather and publish the Norwegian privileges. The nobility wrote that this would give

²⁵ O. A. Johnsen, 'Om det norske Folks opfatning av Tronfølgen før 1660. Foredrag paa det norske Historikermøte i Kristiania 1912', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, series 5, vol. 2, Kristiania 1914, pp. 194–95.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 217–218.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 219–220.

them an opportunity to see if there is not anything in there that would be against the Norwegian law.²⁸ Two years later Frederick III appealed to Norwegians for voluntary taxation. The response was extraordinary. An absolute majority of Norwegians agreed but many votes came with a reservation that these taxes should be kept in the country. Nobility, clergy and peasants were adding such phrases as: ‘for the defense of the country’, ‘for the defense of the fatherland’, ‘for the country’s benefit’. In some cases it was accompanied by a phrase concerning the benefit of the king. Among the 68 documents, 43 include remarks about the allocation of the tax for the country’s needs. 12 cases talk only about the king’s needs and 13 do not contain any reservations.²⁹ On earlier occasions similar reactions were rather incidental (in 1639 the townspeople of Bergen came up with such a demand; in 1643 – nobility).³⁰ In 1657 in an identical situation the heat of the moment was even higher, but the phrases were more ambiguous. The nobility of northern Norway declared a voluntary payment for ‘the defense of the country’, ‘for the benefit of the country’. They described themselves as ‘real patriots’ but they did not specify which country they had in mind. The delegates from southern cities of Norway also paid a tax for ‘the defense of the fatherland’ and they used the term ‘our beloved fatherland’ in reference to both countries.³¹

The matter of hereditary throne was returned to during the homage ceremony of Crown Prince Christian in 1656. Even though Sehested was no longer the *Stattholder* and no longer took part in the Norwegian politics, the action was still initiated by the king (Frederic III) and his luminaries. It should be noticed how lively the Norwegians were reacting to possible encouragements from the court. In the warrants prepared for the representatives for the assembly the titular name ‘hereditary Norwegian king’ was placed many times. Out of 54 documents for the clergy, this title appears in 49 (once even in the form of ‘heir of our beloved country Norway’), in bourgeoisie documents in 5 out of 11. In the peasant warrants it appears seven times out of 159 documents.³² During the homage ceremony (20 August 1656) the gathered people could have felt some sort of *déjà vu*. In the manuscript of the speech of the Danish chancellor there are some mysterious notes saying: ‘the chancellor responded that it was in accordance with Norwegian law that the one who became elected to be the

²⁸ ANS/II, pp. 379–380.

²⁹ ANS/II, pp. 417–427.

³⁰ Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, p. 246.

³¹ ANS/III, pp. 15–17, 30–31.

³² ANS/II, pp. 453–568.

Danish king, will become the king of Norway'.³³ Historians speculate that it was probably Chancellor's rejoinder to somebody's public remark (similarly to Jens Bjelke, as it was stated in the previous chapter) that Norwegians accept prince Christian on the basis of his hereditary rights to Norwegian throne.³⁴



The events of the 1650s most probably were causing much hope. On the occasion of the introduction of the absolute rule, the representatives of clergy and bourgeoisie in Norway (it is worth noticing that thanks to clergy and Danish bourgeoisie Frederick III was able to introduce the change) issued some postulates at the authorities. A program of equal rights for Norway in the union was then formulated. This program referred to in some sense to Sehested's strivings and the political project from Madzøn's text.

In August 1661, when at the assembly in Christiania Norwegians paid homage to Frederick as hereditary king, two petitions were presented – from the clergy and from the bourgeoisie. In both documents there were postulates to establish separate institutions in Norway of central character, which would automatically extend the country's independence. The clergy asked for the establishment of three resort colleges in Norway: legal, church and state (a kind of superior institution over others, 'governmental'). The bourgeoisie presented a longer list containing 37 points; five of them were petitions of, let us say, 'national' character. They asked for the introduction of a rule that for the officer posts, Norwegians ('the locals') were to be given priority. They also wanted that a higher school (an 'academy' as it was described) was established. Point 37 stated that Norway and Denmark should be treated equally in all matters. Finally, they petitioned for a trade college to be established as well as the High Court for Norway. Additionally, economic postulates were put forward: the abolition of customs duty for Danish corn and monopoly for Norwegian vessels to carry Norwegian goods to England. A postulate to continue the meeting of the estates had its place in both petitions.³⁵ The argumentation concerning the request for a university seems interesting: 'here, in this country, an academy should be established, in which children of decent people could get education without having

³³ ANS/II, pp. 570–571.

³⁴ H. Kongsrud, op. cit., p. 234.

³⁵ S. Sogner op. cit. pp. 25–26; [Andragende fra kjøbstæderne 1661], in *Meddelelser fra Det Norske Rigsarchiv...*, vol. I, Christiania 1870, pp. 37–38, 40, 41–42.

to **go abroad** (emphasis mine – K. S.) at a young age which is connected with problems and costs for parents...³⁶ The phrase used here ‘go abroad’ refers to no other place than Copenhagen. As there was no response from the Danish authorities the issue returned the following year. This was connected with the fact that Danish authorities established a special commission made up mainly of the representatives of Norwegian townspeople to investigate ‘the state of Norwegian affairs’ (mostly regarding the economy) and write a report for them. In April 1662 the commissioners repeated the request for a higher school and a resort commerce college for Norway.³⁷ In July 1662 a privilege for Norwegian merchants was issued that put into practice their economic postulates; in March 1666 Frederick III created the High Court for Norway (*Overhoffretten*). The remaining postulates were not addressed by the authorities. It is not unlikely, although these are only speculations, that through informal channels information was passed to the Norwegian elites about a very reluctant attitude of the Danish authorities to the idea of the university. This can be concluded from the fact that the Norwegians did not address this issue again for practically a hundred years.



The documents from estate meetings demonstrate another aspect of the fact that Norwegians perceived their separateness as they often refer to the law. The references to ‘Norway’s law’ or the law of St. Olaf³⁸ in different contexts appear in different documents such as nobility supplications (1548, 1591, 1648), warrants for the peasant representatives (1610), homage letters of the clergy (1648) and peasantry (1610), nobility letters (1652) and peasantry (1648) about voluntary contributions. Such thinking is shown in everyday practice in the protocols of the meetings of the Stavanger Cathedral Chapter from the years 1571–1630. References to the Norway’s law (*Norgis loug*)³⁹ appear here often. Similarly in the peasant supplications sent to the King regarding various matters: *Norrigis loug och rett*⁴⁰ is often referred to. It is known that despite being subjugated to

³⁶ [Andragende fra kjøbstæderne 1661]..., p. 42.

³⁷ [De norske Commiteredes Erklæring om Norges Indkomst og Vilkaar, 1662], in *Meddelelser fra Det Norske Rigsarchiv...*, vol. I, Christiania 1870, p. 321.

³⁸ ANS/I, p. 18, p. 103, p. 110, 142; ANS/II, p. 94, p. 110, p. 241, pp. 302–304, p. 365.

³⁹ *Stavanger Domkapitels Protokol 1571–1630*, ed. A. Brandrud, Kristiania 1901, pp. 14, 95, 156, 182, 185, 222, 229, 250, 252, 257, 283, 335, 344, 350, 356, 485.

⁴⁰ *Norske Supplikker 1660–1662*, vol. II, ed. V. Eriksen, R. Fladby, Oslo 1990 pp. 64–65, p. 221, p. 320, p. 389, p. 470, p. 476; p. 394, p. 462, p. 476; p. 423, p. 473; ANS/II, p. 249.

Denmark, Norway managed to retain its own legal structures and separate law. It is nevertheless important that in the consciousness of the society (as in the consciousness of the Danish authorities) this, still being in force, law became a sign identifying the national community.⁴¹ Mostly it concerns the codification of Magnus the Law-mender of the 13th century and also the unwritten common law – *heimretten*. Especially the law concerning the ownership of the land – the allodium law – became the symbol of this distinctiveness. Such thinking appeared in 1530s when a common ‘ideological platform’ of Norwegian peasants emerged, which consisted of ‘conservative, even reactionary’ defense of the acquired rights called St. Olaf’s law.⁴² A strong peasant attachment to the traditional law is understandable – it defined the position of peasants, gave them the basis of defense against economic and social subjugation to the higher classes. Towards the end of the 16th century peasants, as one modern scholar states, knew the law very well and were able to quote it from memory during court trials against the local officials.⁴³ Also in the works of 16th century humanists – which will be discussed later – it is apparent that they believed that the legal status of the country did not change and that the old law was still valid.⁴⁴ The role of the law as an identification factor goes back a long time. ‘The ethnic law (*professio legis*) was the major mark of the tribal affinity of humans.’⁴⁵

The political indifferentism – which especially in the 16th century meant that for the peasants it did not matter who was on the throne in the capital city or was a fief-holder in the nearby town – was accompanied by a strong will to retain the current rights. As long as the authorities acted according to St. Olaf’s law, peasants were ready to accept them.⁴⁶

Other institutions, often with a long history, had a similar function. These institutions were: offices of *lagrettmann*, *bondelensmann*, things, whose importance became apparent in the 1620s, homages to the king or the meetings of estates. Often peasants participated in them rather as extras, however, it seems that even only such participation could strengthen their affinity with the legal-political community of Norway.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 42; E. Opsahl, op. cit., p. 111.

⁴² S. Imsen, *Norsk bondekomunalisme...*, vol. I, p. 138.

⁴³ M. Njåstad, ‘Resistance in the name of the law’, in *Northern Revolts...*, pp. 114–115.

⁴⁴ H. Kongsrud, op. cit., p. 74.

⁴⁵ K. Modzelewski, *Barbarzyńska Europa*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 64, 67.

⁴⁶ L. Hamre, op. cit., pp. 804–805.

⁴⁷ K. Alnæs, op. cit., p. 238; E. Opsahl, op. cit., p. 114.



All the facts quoted above point to the statement that the identity of the people was not connected so much with the specific region but with the whole country. The identification concerned Norway, the kingdom of Norway, and not the region, which could at the same time be the object of sentiment and identification but generally in a wider context. What may attest to this was the way in which Norwegian students described themselves when they enrolled at foreign universities. In the school register of Rostock University from the years 1419–1689 (incomplete) there often appears the phrase: *de Norvegia, Nortman*, sometimes together with the name of the town. In the period between 1419–1500, out of 108 Norwegian students 20 used such a phrase, the others just gave the name of the town. In the period between 1501–1600, out of 202 Norwegians, almost a half – 99 persons – used the name of the country and in the period 1601–1689, out of 87 Norwegian students almost all i.e. 80 said they were coming from Norway.⁴⁸ In the years 1575–1674, at the Leiden University, there were 705 students from the Danish-Norwegian kingdom. Danes were a great majority among them. 62 students described themselves in various forms as Norwegians, usually using the phrase *Norwegus, Norwiganus* and adding the name of the town, for example *Norwegus Christiania, Berga-Norwegus, Bergensis Nordwegus, Asloensis Norwegus*.⁴⁹ Similarly, Norwegian students at Köln University between 1507 and 1535 stated that they were *de Norvegia* sometimes adding a more precise description where they came from: Oslo or Trondheim.⁵⁰ Giving the name of the city was probably a formal requirement because it was important to record which cathedral school had sent the candidate.

A similar reflection comes to mind while reading the diary of Mikel Hofnagel from 1620–1664, the headmaster of cathedral school in Bergen. Many entries show that he was interested in the events from the whole country. In the year 1610, registering the plague, he mentioned that in Trondheim over 1800 people had died and in 1648 he wrote on the occasion of funeral ceremo-

⁴⁸ C. Lange, 'Matrikel over de norske studerende ved Rostock Universitet 1419–1460', in *Norske Samlinger*, vol. I, Christiania 1852, pp. 90–95.

⁴⁹ C. F. Bricka, 'Fortegnelse over Danske og Norske, som ere immatrikulerede ved Leydens Universitet i det første Aarhundrede af dets bestaaen (1575–1674)', *Personallistorisk Tidsskrift*, vol. II, Kjøbenhavn 1881, pp. 104–135, 193–210.

⁵⁰ L. Daae, 'Matrikel over de nordiske Studerende ved Universitet i Köln i det sextende Aarhundrede', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, vol. 3, Kristiania 1875, pp. 483–490.

nies of Christian IV that ‘The praying days have happened here as in the whole Norway’.⁵¹



Another proof of national sentiments could be the attitude and behavior of Norwegian students at the Copenhagen University. This chapter has its continuation in the 18th century because at that time, especially in the last decades, students were the group who most strongly demonstrated their patriotism and discontentment with the situation of their country. The behavior of the Norwegian students was, first of all, characterized by a strong determination to keep together and support one another when needed; second of all, by a great nostalgia for their home and a strong feeling of separateness of the environment in which they found themselves and third of all – the aversion towards the Danes. Such behaviors, often being the starting point of student fights and brawls, were typical for the era, where universities were a meeting place for international community so it was easy for arguments and conflicts to arise. What is interesting in this case, however, as Rian writes, was the fact that most of these Norwegian students in mid-17th century were children of Danish parents who came to Norway not so long before.⁵²

At the turn of the 16th and 17th century, according to a medieval tradition, Norwegian students on the University of Rostock established their own fraternity, naming it *Regentia Sancti Olafi*. When in 1629 Christian IV gave an order that the position of the minister in Denmark-Norway could be awarded only after graduating from Copenhagen University, a greater number of Norwegians started coming to the capital to study. Even before this date, in 1611, something like a Norwegian student union was established (with its own venue at St. Peders stræde), the so-called Norwegian College. At that time, they were under protection of the only Norwegian professor Cort Aslakssøn (1564–1624).⁵³

During the siege of Copenhagen in 1659, Norwegian students took part in the defense of the city. A Norwegian company was formed, which was included

⁵¹ M. Hofnagel, ‘Optegnelser 1596–1676’, in N. Nicolaysen (ed.), *Norske Magasin, Skrifter og Optegnelser angaaende Norge og forfatted efter Reformationen*, vol. II, Christiania 1868, p. 179, p. 214. The author lived between around 1620 and around 1664, so because his entries concern the years between 1596 and 1676. N. Nicolaysen rightly concluded that before 1620 and after 1664 had to be written by someone else (ibidem, p. 168).

⁵² Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, p. 29.

⁵³ A. H. Winsnes, *Det Norske Selskab 1772–1813*, Kristiania 1924, pp. 2–4.

in the regiment put together by the University. This company emphasized its distinctiveness in many different ways. At this time students issued a petition to authorities: ‘Since Norway displays the same obedience as Denmark, and Danes in Norway are still awarded with the highest posts, Norwegian students demand that a few professors were nominated from their nation, who could take them under their patronage and support them when need be.’⁵⁴ The request was not fulfilled. On occasion of the siege, some remarks appear in the sources, which attest to a certain aversion towards the Danes, even declaring sympathy for the Swedes.⁵⁵ They were, however, not numerous, and the Norwegian company showed much dedication in fights.

Most historians note – often in accordance with contemporary Danish sources – a great Norwegian nostalgia for their homeland, sense of alienation and lack of possibility to adapt to the new environment. It is stated that it was exactly the stay in Copenhagen, showing the young people their separateness – regarding both the language and culture – that became the turning point in creation of the new identity. It is important to note here, however, that they did not describe themselves as members of local, regional communities but as Norwegians.⁵⁶ It is also remarked that there existed a strong feeling of dissimilarity of the natural environment ‘here, below’, as Norwegians used to say, meaning the valley, rural Denmark of mild climate so different from the mountainous, austere landscape of their motherland characterized by severe climate.⁵⁷ In many reports the aversion towards the Danes is visible. In the beginning of the 18th century, the Danish scholar Hans Gram (1685–1748) complained about the conceit of the Norwegians and their conviction of being superior to the Danes.⁵⁸ This was the root of many conflicts at the University. Such behavior was also described by an outside observer, the English author of

⁵⁴ Qtd after Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, p. 29.

⁵⁵ A. H. Winsnes, op. cit., p. 8.

⁵⁶ G. Albeck, F. J. Billeskov Jansen, *Fra runerne til Johannes Evald*, København 1971 (*Dansk Litteratur Historie*, ed. P. H. Traustedt, 1971, vol. I), p. 558; Ø. Rian, *Hvordan...*

⁵⁷ A. H. Winsnes, op. cit., pp. 3, 8. This historian, however, believed that that these feelings do not prove that the Norwegians had national identity; O. Feldbæk, ‘For Norge, Kjæmpers Fødeland. Norsk kritik og identitet’, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, LXXIII (Oslo 1994), 1, p. 42; Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 64; C. Pabst, ‘Zur Vorgeschichte...’, p. 261.

⁵⁸ Hans Gram, b. 1685 d. 1748, Danish philologist and historian; in 1730 he was nominated to be the royal historiographer and librarian, in 1731 – archivist; in 1742 he became a co-founder of the Danish Science Society; he authored many historical treatises which belong to the erudition current; he was an outstanding representative of critical historiography in Scandinavia.

the description of Denmark-Norway from the end of the 17th century, Robert Molesworth.⁵⁹



Is there a directly expressed national identity in the literary and academic works of the 16th and 17th century which discuss the past and current situation of Norway? Is there any interest of this kind and in what sort of sense? The Norwegian body of literary works in the 16th and 17th century was not vast but taking into consideration the fact that the first printing house of the country was created in the 1640s and that there was no higher education institution in Norway, the output of the officials and ministers in these centuries should not be disregarded.

Norwegian historians group together the 16th century humanist scholars, working in such places as Bergen, Oslo and Stavanger. Apart from the already mentioned Peder Claussøn Friis and the bishop Jens Nilssøn, this group included also Absalon Pederssøn Beyer, Mattis Størssøn, and Hallvard Gunnarssøn.⁶⁰ The 17th century was dominated by the scattered and varied written output of many officials and ministers living in Norway, who tried their hand at academic works – historical, geographical, topographical and linguistic.

Among Norwegian historians there is no agreement whether we can speak about national consciousness in the case of 16th century humanists. ‘In the works of humanists it is difficult to find national feelings’ – wrote the authors of the synthesis of Norwegian history.⁶¹ They noticed, however, that the content present in the works from that era could inspire future generations, who by choosing individual elements could use them to build a ‘national

⁵⁹ Ø. Rian, *Hvordan...*

⁶⁰ Absalon Pederssøn Beyer, b. 1528 d. 1575, a theologian, historian; he studied at the Copenhagen and Wittenberg universities; from 1553, a lecturer of theology in the cathedral school in Bergen; in 1562 his students staged a play “The Fall of Adam” which is considered the first public theatrical performance in Norway; the author of a diary between 1552–1572 and a topographical description; one of the most important writers of the Norwegian Renaissance. Mattis Størssøn, b. around 1500, d. 1569, clerk – *lagmann* (in Eastern Norway), historian, humanist; from 1540 lived in Bergen. Hallvard Gunnarssøn, lat. Halvardius Gunnarius, b. around 1548/49, d. 1608, teacher, writer, historian, humanist; studied in Copenhagen and Rostock; from 1577 till his death, a lecturer in the Oslo cathedral school; the author of literary and historical works.

⁶¹ L. Holm-Olsen, K. Heggelund, *Fra runerne til Norske Selskab*, (*Norges litteratur historie*, ed. E. Beyer, Oslo 1995, vol. I), p. 353, 355; O. A. Johnsen, *Hannibal...*, pp. 1–2.

ideology.⁶² They also noticed that the stories about the former Norway glory, reaching not only literate audience (they could be passed on by ministers and they suited well the peasant knowledge of sagas and legends), could shape new historical consciousness.⁶³ They finally also agreed that the authors of 16th century works such as Absalon Beyer or Peder C. Friis possessed knowledge about what distinguished them from the Swedes and the Danes.⁶⁴

Many historians think, however, that when discussing the people writing and publishing in this period one can speak about national identity, about belonging to the Norwegian community of people, history and law as well as geographical space. The evidence for that would be the sense of nostalgia after the lost independence, sense of harm, aversion towards the Danes, although the political system and objective weakness of the society did not create many opportunities to express such opinions.⁶⁵

The works of the 16th century humanists and the 17th century authors were written mostly in Danish, sometimes with Norwegian traces. The knowledge of Old-Norwegian (Old Norse) was waning and was becoming more and more the domain of a small group of lawyers (*lagmenn*) and historians. They were writing works which were a translation-travesty of sagas. It can be supposed that they were under heavy influence of language convention that dominated in medieval works. Similarly, works in Latin mirrored the literary conventions of the Renaissance and Baroque. The schematism of many works is the reason that it is difficult to talk about a body of work meaningful in the sense of originality and literary greatness. The conclusions drawn from it should be by its nature formulated cautiously and viewed always in the context of conclusions drawn on the basis of other sources.

The written output of these times was varied. It can be roughly divided into scholarly and literary. The first category includes historical, legal works and topographical descriptions, which were a very popular genre in Norway of the early modern era that was an attempt at providing a multidimensional account of the country with its history, nature, people and geographical conditions. It is difficult to divide works of that era according to their topics – they were not precisely delineated. This group will also include a unique – for the end of

⁶² L. Holm-Olsen, op. cit., p. 353.

⁶³ N. Gilje, T. Rasmussen, *Tankeliv i den lutherske stat*, Oslo 2002 (*Norsk idéhistorie*, vol. II, Oslo 2002), pp. 96–97; L. Holm-Olsen, op. cit., p. 364.

⁶⁴ N. Gilje, op. cit., pp. 106, 275.

⁶⁵ Ø. Rian, *Olav Engelbrektsson...*, p. 8; idem, *Maktens...*, p. 98.

the 16th century – source i.e. reports from visitation visits of the bishop Jens Nilssøn from the years 1574–1597. The other body of texts, significantly smaller, was literary output which was dominated in this era by incidental poetry, often in Latin. One usually speaks about the true Norwegian literature only at the end of the 17th century when writers such as already mentioned Dorothe Engelbretsdatter and Peter Dass appeared. Theological works were a separate category, which included incidental sermons, religious poems, psalms, theological treatises. Such writings undoubtedly prove the kindling of intellectual aspirations of the Norwegian elites, their ambitions to write and publish their own works but from the point of view of the topic of this work this seems insignificant.

The first reflection that comes when studying the works of the 16th century humanists and 17th century scholars is connected with their doubtless interest in national matters. There were plenty of works dealing with Norway although it is clear that works of political nature were absent; Norwegians did not concern themselves with the problems of political system. It is worth noticing here that these writers – usually officials or ministers – obtained more support from the nobility, or even magnates, sometimes of pure Danish origin. Such persons as Christoffer Valkendorf (1525–1601), Erik Rosenkrantz, Axel Gyldenstjerne (ab. 1542–1603) i.e. the Danish aristocrats who performed the highest functions in Norway, were writers themselves and participated in gathering of Norwegian folk songs (*folkeviser*), were interested in the history of Norway and in the sagas, which they tried to translate. They also supported Norwegian efforts, e.g. *Stattholder* Christoffer Urne caused that in 1633 the work of Peder C. Friis was published.⁶⁶



The interest in Norwegian issues resulted in a large number of many descriptions of Norway – the whole country or just its part: a town or region. Considering this interest a proof of national identity cannot be sufficient to diagnose the national consciousness because not only is it an indirect proof but also the motives of taking up such work could have been various. In many cases the authors did not inform their audience about them at all. So not necessarily was an attempt to describe a parish undertaken by a minister motivated by

⁶⁶ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, pp. 119, 130.

patriotic feelings. However, such a decision, usually connected with a lot of intellectual effort, work and time, may attest at least to having some sentiment for the subject of the work. And even if not, it created premises that could inspire thinking about the region as something interesting, worthy of describing and – who knows? – worthy to be presented to the audience in Copenhagen itself. This kind of writing, in my opinion, bolstered the sense of local connections and local patriotism. Not to mention the fact that it gave knowledge about various places and the realities of the country. Considering the fact that traveling in Norway was difficult, such knowledge was valuable.

However, the result of the interest in Norway were not only topographical descriptions. Historical writing was hugely important, which included texts of different character, starting with translations, ending with independent treatises. Also in descriptions of Norway, the historical memory was reflected in noting down historical associations and searching for material traces and monuments from the national past. The third area, similar to historical writing, were texts concerned with law. The fourth one, the studies of the local folk people's language very different from Danish. In the case of peasants, other features were also interesting: behavior, customs, character. The interest in history, law, language and character of local people created output which because of its topics, independently of the content, must be treated as evidence of the sense of separateness and identity.

However, the analysis of the contents of the most significant works to which there is access, is much more important. On the basis of the 16th and 17th century texts, it is possible to construct a certain model of thinking about Norway, which could mirror the identity in the sense that the most important motifs can be found there which make national identification possible. I would consider the following to be such motifs: interest in St. Olaf, apologetic approach to national history and its heroes often connected with patriotic praise of the country in contemporary times. Another motif would be the attitude to nature, and in a broader sense the geographical environment of the country, as well as opinions on 'Norwegian folk' and attempts to write its description ('the national character'). Anticipating the further development of this work, let us notice, that identical parts of identity can be detected in the writing – academic and literary – of the 18th century. A larger source database will allow us to recreate the structure of this identity. When it comes to the 16th and 17th century, the analysis concerned only the most representative works, so the application of this method seems risky.



The question of self-identification must be our point of departure. The question seems to concern an obvious thing, because the society did not only come into contact with the ideal of the separateness of Norway as a state (as it was shown) in announcements of the authorities, but also Norwegians at all official occasions were using the concepts related to the separate Norwegian state – in the historic and geographical sense. It is sufficient to look through the list of titles of various works from that period to be rid of doubts that the writers were not only perfectly aware of Norway's distinctiveness, as they used widely the phrases *Norge*, *Norske rige* or *dette Rige* ('this kingdom'), but also believed that these expressions should be introduced into scientific language – independently from its domain. The name of the country became a subject of analysis – Peder C. Friis in his *Description of Norway* began his lecture by analyzing the sound and origin of the name of the country. The second subject of his study was the country border, which divided it from Denmark, Sweden and Russia.⁶⁷ Arent Berntsen included a similar introduction in his work.⁶⁸ Beyer, on the other hand, gave evidence of the sense of Norway's territorial integrity, noting down in his journal a remark from a letter to Erik Rosenkrantz, which read (the event takes place during the First Northern War) that the Jemtland province will always belong to the Norwegian Crown.⁶⁹ Bishop Jens Nilssøn, making notes from visitation travels, wrote that in a certain town there is a border between Norway and Sweden and then he described its course.⁷⁰

The identification of people is not less important. The basic way to refer to people from Norway were Norwegians or Norwegian people, in various linguistic forms. The expressions such as 'inhabitants of this country' are much rarer. There is a clear distinction between strangers and locals: writers from Bergen visibly isolate the group of, mostly German, Hanseatic merchants and

⁶⁷ C. Friis, 'Norriges Beskrifuelse', in G. Storm (ed.) *Samlede Skrifter af Peder Claussøn Friis*, Kristiania 1881, pp. 245–46, 247, 379; idem, 'En kort Extract af de norske Kongers Chronica...', in *ibidem*, p. 143.

⁶⁸ Arent Berntsen, b. 1610 d. 1680, from Bergen, from 1648 city hall clerk in Copenhagen; A. Berntsen, *Danmarckis oc Norgis Fructbar Herlighed* [1665], København 1971, [reprint], pp. 247–48.

⁶⁹ A. P. Beyer, 'Bergens Kapitelbog [1552–1572]', in *Norske Magasin...*, vol. II, Christiania 1860, p. 431.

⁷⁰ [J. Nilssøn], *Biskop Jens Nilssøns Visitatsbøger og Reiseoptegnelser 1574–1597*, ed. Y. Nielsen, Kristiania 1885, pp. 128, 157–58.

craftsmen, shown as we will see, rather in negative light. The attitude to Swedes, expressed in writing, is mixed: Beyer wrote about *perfidios Suedos*⁷¹ and Friis emphasized rather strong connections, similarities and eternal friendship between Norwegians and Swedes. On this occasion he noted the opposite attitude of Norwegians towards the Danes, whom they hated, especially those from Jutland. This was an audacious opinion, which was not accepted by the Danish censorship represented by the publisher, professor Ole Worm⁷² from Copenhagen and was banned from publishing.⁷³ Bishop Nilssøn, listing various people that he had met during his visitation travel, often noted that he met Danes or Germans (he noticed also whether they knew Norwegian).⁷⁴

Also individual self-identification was rather without a doubt: Absalon Beyer presented himself as *Normannus* and *Noricus* and Friis matriculated on Rostock university as *Nicolaus Pætreus Norwegianus*.⁷⁵



A great interest in the broadly understood topic of Norway is a firm proof of the existence of national identity. The fact itself that the writing work was undertaken can be treated as evidence. A popular kind of writing, which gave an opportunity to focus on the matters of homeland, were topographical descriptions. The subject of study was the whole Norway, one region, town, parish and sometimes even a smaller place. As a rule, this type of description attempted to show their subject from all sides. They discussed its history, geography, nature, climate and sometimes its people and their customs. There are principal texts, e.g. by Absalon Beyer, which entered the canon of the national literature and smaller, unknown, texts, often preserved in manuscripts, which provide, nevertheless, evidence of the burgeoning engagement of people, who came from Denmark altogether, in the matters concerning their place of living, and soon – their place of birth.

⁷¹ A. P. Beyer, 'Bergens Kapitelbog...', p. 227.

⁷² Worm, Ole, b. 1588, d. 1654, Danish scholar, doctor and historian, from 1613 professor at University of Copenhagen; creator of *Museum Wormianum*, a famous in Europe cabinet of curiosities; he gathered a large body of runic inscriptions publishing them in the work *Danicorum Monumentorum libri sex* (1643); was in touch with European scholars.

⁷³ P. C. Friis, *Norriges...*, p. 256.

⁷⁴ [J. Nilssøn], op. cit., p. 380.

⁷⁵ A. P. Beyer, op. cit., pp. 158, 261; G. Storm, 'Om Peder Claussøn Friis...', p. XXXII.

Absalon Pederssøn Beyer belonged, according to Norwegian literature experts, to the most outstanding Norwegian writers of the era. His work *Description of Norway* created in the 1570s was published only in 1780 but it was known from many re-writings, influencing in this way the future generations of literate Norwegians.⁷⁶ It was an attempt at characterizing the country both from the geographical and nature side and from cultural-historical. Especially this latter area deserves highlighting. As it can be seen, historical content and Beyer's references to the situation of contemporary Norway are truly significant.

Peder Claussøn Friis, already mentioned several times, was a huge persona among all the authors of descriptions of Norway; he belonged to the humanists and lived near Stavanger. His writings include descriptions of Greenland and Iceland showing that they belonged to the Danish-Norwegian monarchy, preserved in manuscript. Two most important works are: *The True Description of Norway and nearby islands*⁷⁷ written about 1599 and published by Ole Worm in 1632 and the translation of Snorre sagas, which will be discussed later in this work. Both works played a very important role in the history of Norwegian culture. *The True Description...* became a model for a whole series of similar works created over the next two hundred years. Other writers used it, for example the folk poet from the turn of the 17th and the 18th century, Petter Dass. Friis was an author known and read by the peasants, who reported in 18th century that they knew the 'three Peters' works best, meaning Friis, Petter Dass and the Danish author of collections of folk songs Peder Syv.⁷⁸

Completing the list of works dedicated to Norway, one can list numerous smaller works. Minister Iver Pedersen Adolph, living between 1620 and 1665, a provost in Gudbrandsdalen left in manuscript a description of smelter in Lesja, published in 1650s. Samuel Bugge (1605–1663), minister and provost, was writing works on animals, especially birds and fish, living in Norway. Mentz Christoffersen, deputy head and provost (parish priest) in Trondheim, who died in 1657, left behind a Latin diary where he included descriptions and information on the municipality of Trondheim, its clergy and the Nidaros cathedral. It is this source, not retained in entirety at present, that the 18th century historian,

⁷⁶ L. Holm-Olsen, op. cit., pp. 362–364.

⁷⁷ P. C. Friis, *Norriges oc omliggende øers sandferdige Bescriffuelse, indholdendis huis vært er af vide baade om Landsens oc Indbyggernis leilighed oc Vilkor, saa vel i fordum Tid, som nu i vore Dage*, Kbh 1632.

⁷⁸ N. Gilje, op. cit., p. 96.

who will be discussed later, Gerhard Schøning⁷⁹ used. Erik Hansen Schønnebøl (1540 – between 1590 and 1595), a nobleman, who received fief in the area of Lofoten and Vesterålen, and took the position of a *fogd* there, left behind a description of this land written around 1591. The unknown writer ‘Scriver (scribe) Simon Nielsen’ who died in 1592 left descriptions of the Akershus fortress. Christen Steffenson Bang wrote *The Description of the city of Christiania*, full of expressions of local patriotism. Hans Hanssøn Smed (blacksmith) wrote a description of Finmark titled *Speculum Boreale* and Jens Lauritssøn Wolf (1585 – after 1648) – a description of Norway titled *Norriga Illustrata* (1651), which was a compilation and repetition, but it enjoyed significant popularity.⁸⁰



The history of the country was a popular topic. One can speak of three forms of expression of this interest. Firstly, historical works were created: translations, adaptations of medieval works or independent writing. Secondly, it was inserting ‘historical’ information into topographical descriptions. And thirdly, the locations of historical places as well as monuments of all kinds that the writer came across were recorded. In this sense historical material is present in the writings of very different nature, even, as we will see, in the records from visitations of the bishops.

16th century Norwegian humanists were all the time searching for inspiration in the medieval chronicles and Norwegian sagas, which gave the fullest picture of old history of the country. They translated those works, made travesties and adaptations. The most important of their works are: the translation of royal sagas by Laurends Hanssøn,⁸¹ *The Norwegian Chronicle* by Mattis Størssøn, the translation of Snorri sagas by Peder C. Friis and the history of Norway written by Hallvard Gunnarson. The independent writings include *The Hamar Town Chronicle (Hamarkronike)*, the work titled *The Establishment of the City of Bergen* (s.c. *Bergen Fundats*) or the essay by Mattis Størssøn about the history of German merchants in Bergen.⁸²

⁷⁹ Gerhard Schøning, b. 1722 d. 1780, historian, rector of Cathedral School in Trondheim 1751, prof. in Knight’s Academy in Sorø 1765, Royal Archivist 1775.

⁸⁰ Ibidem, p. 410.

⁸¹ Laurends Hanssøn, died around 1558, a *lagmann* in Stavanger.

⁸² A more detailed discussion of the historian Renaissance work see K. Szelałowska, ‘Renesansowa historiografia norweska na tle pisarstwa historycznego XVI w. w Skandynawii’, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, CXVI (2009), 1.

Apart from those main historical works, in the 17th century, in the period before the introduction of absolute rule, many smaller works were created, which, although not always retained, attest to the fact that among the elites the interest in the history of the country was kept up, sometimes in the local sense.

Per Alfsen (1581–1663), a doctor and *lagmann*, was the author of an unpublished work devoted to the Norwegian ‘antiquities’ (*Picturae quarundam antiquitatum Norvegarum...* from the year 1627) and a study on Norwegian law. In 1623 Mikkel Aalborg, a *sorenskriver* from Vang, edited (*Antquiteter udaf Vangs sogn paa Hedemarken i Opslo* retained in manuscript) a small work describing the ‘antiquities’ found in his district. This author was for a long time considered to be the creator of the Hamar chronicle. Jens Bjelke, the already discussed Chancellor of Norway and descendant of Lady Ingerd from Austrått, was the author of two works devoted to the Norwegian law published in 1632 and 1657. Arnold Hansen de Fine, vice deputy and rector in Bergen (who died in 1672) started to write the history of Norway but this work was left unfinished and was eventually lost. According to H. Ehrencron-Müller: ‘The loss was probably not big’.⁸³ Henrik Høyer, a Bergen doctor and priest originating from Germany as well as an amateur historian (died in 1616) gathered a large collection concerned with Norwegian history, which was handed over to the Copenhagen University after his death. He left in manuscript the work titled *Commentariolus de coenobiis Norvegiae* (published in the 18th century by a Danish historian Jacob Langebek). Anders Foss (1543–1607), bishop in Bergen from 1583, published Latin *Genealogia regum Daniae et Norvegiae* (1577) and in 1592 published in Copenhagen the translation of the work to Danish (*Fire Taffler eller Stam Register: Om Danmarckis oc Norgis Konger*). Minister Ivar Leganger (1629–1702) exchanged correspondence with the very Thormodus Torfæus and was concerned with the history of his parish, leaving its description in manuscript (from the year 1668). Gerhard Miltzov, minister in Voss (died in 1688) authored an impressive work *Presbyterologia Norwegico-Wos-Hardangiana*, published in Copenhagen in 1679. It is considered the first (known) regional history in Norway.⁸⁴ His description of Hardanger and the work on the history of the clergy in the Bergen diocese, left in manuscript, were not retained. Jacob Rasch, known foremost from his linguistic works, left in manuscript a collection of his drawings

⁸³ H. Ehrencron-Müller, *Forfatter-lexicon omfattende Danmark, Norge og Island indtil 1814*, vol. III Kjøbenhavn 1926, p. 50.

⁸⁴ I. Ekrem, ‘Norway’, in M. Skaftø Jensen (ed.) *A History of Nordic Neo-Latin Literature*, Odense 1995, p. 81.

which showed the coats of arm of Norwegian nobility. Bishop Jens Nielsson was interested in medieval sagas, creating their copies and put together a list of historical Norwegian kings, lists of bishops and archbishops – the names of ministers of Oslo cathedral were accompanied by his comments. Between 1523 and 1537 Anders Sæbjørnsson created the Danish translation of Norwegian law of Magnus the Law-mender from 13th century – this text, about whose 80 copies are known, became the most popular unpublished work in Norway in the second half of the 16th century. The author added also a list of kings of Norway and a genealogical tree showing the origin of Oldenburgs from old Norwegian kings.⁸⁵ He demonstrated in this way that the Danish king was a rightful heir of Harald Fairhair (*Hårfagre*, ab. 855 – ab. 930, king about 872), and therefore had legal rights to the Norwegian crown.

The study of historical interest included in works of other nature brings equally significant information. Originating in the 1590s, visitation diaries (and at the same time descriptions of travels) by the bishop of Oslo Jens Nilsson are the evidence of a lively interest in the history of the country. The bishop painstakingly, although briefly, noted down local stories (legends) for example those connected with St. Olaf: ‘there are two stones in the east..., they say that St. Olaf sat at them and dined; he also sent a messenger from there...’. And near the church in Visteland there is a St. Olaf’s spring ‘by which people gather’. He noticed – as many generations of writers coming after him will do – burial mounds, where ‘it is believed warriors are buried’. In another place there is a burial mound, in which it is thought ‘the king and the queen from pagan times are buried’.⁸⁶

Numerous historical notes are present in the most popular description of Norway, written by Friis. Almost for all the localities, the author noted down various historical events: assemblies, battles or meetings. He gave information about which king built what where, which historical character lived in a given place. He quoted short anecdotes taken from sagas. As usual, the most often mentioned hero was St. Olaf ‘remembered together with his happy and peaceful reign and good times, which were then in this country’. Friis wrote that, as the sagas say, a part of the Vigen territory was won by the king in the game of dice from the king of Sweden. In Gudbrandsdalen, Gudbrand lived who gathered an army against St. Olaf; here also the father of the king, Harald, lived. The residence of St. Olaf was in Gierstad; he escaped from the country over the

⁸⁵ I. Ekrem, ‘Historiography in Norway c. 1523–1614’, in *ibidem*, p. 240.

⁸⁶ [J. Nilsson], *op. cit.*, p. 156, p. 160, p. 234, p. 409.

islands in Nordmøes and ordered a stone gate to be built in Heliesund. The author described the field near Stiklestad, where Olaf died, noticing that a barn still stood there, where the body of the killed king was laid.⁸⁷ Then Friis listed three leaders of the peasant army who killed St. Olaf: Kalv Arnesson from Egge (ab. 990–1051), Hårek from Tjøtta (ab. 965–1036) and Tore Hund from Bjarkøy (listed in sources 1022–1030).⁸⁸ He gave much information on other Norwegian kings: Harald Fairhair, Olaf Tryggvason (d. 1000, king 995), Harald III Hardrada (*Hardråde*, 1015–1066, king 1046/1047), Sigurd the Crusader (*Jorsalfare*, 1090–1130, king 1103), Inge Haraldsson (1034–1161, king 1136) and Sverre Sigurdsson (ar. 1151–1202, king 1184).⁸⁹ Apart from this, he mentioned burial mounds, where warriors were buried, the stones in Spangreid, which Olaf Trygvasson's warriors were throwing at each other. He quoted the rune text and wrote about the oldest churches in Norway and so on.⁹⁰ A similar approach was undertaken by the author towards the list of old administration units, the so-called *fylke* (this name is also used in contemporary Norway). Here as well, describing almost every locality, the author quotes historical data.⁹¹ The author did not omit the contemporary history, mentioning the recent wars with Sweden and the reign and history of Christian II.⁹² Peder C. Friis undoubtedly showed great interest in history. A model, created by him, of describing the country will be often imitated in the future.



The interest in Norwegian language, precisely speaking in the language used by the uneducated townspeople and villagers, appeared relatively early, however, there were only short attempts to describe it. More serious attempts to write linguistic studies will appear in the next, 18th, century. Nevertheless, these works are interesting evidence of academic interest and show that some members of the elites saw a need to get to know the language used by the people better.

The most common sign of the interest in dialects was providing Norwegian names (sometimes a few of them: regional, historical and modern) of various

⁸⁷ P. C. Friis, *Norriges Beskriffuelse...*, p. 358.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 302, 265, 276, 289, 291, 308, 344, 359, 370–71 (the spelling of the rulers' names is modern).

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 268, 284, 285, 310, 325, 329, 356.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 310, 313, 325, 329.

⁹¹ P. C. Friis, *En kort Extract...*, pp. 143–147.

⁹² P. C. Friis, *Norriges Beskriffuelse...*, pp. 284, 295, 307, 312, 357.

objects as well as animals, plants, atmospheric phenomena and geographical terms. This is what Friis did in his work as well as bishop Nilsson. Here, however, a caveat needs to be made: the bishop was aided by a secretary, a Norwegian by birth, who most probably was responsible for the Norwegian terms present in the work. However, there is no reason to suspect that Nilsson's linguistic interest was also the secretary's merit. The bishop's mother was a Norwegian peasant's daughter and it can be suspected that the bishop had at least basic knowledge of Norwegian language and felt nostalgia towards it.

Before the year 1660 very few works were written that concerned Norwegian language. Many of them were published. Around 1625 the minister Jørgen Thomassøn wrote *A Small Norwegian Grammar, together with some Norwegian expressions*. Minister Christern Jenssøn published in 1646 in Copenhagen *Norwegian Dictionarium i.e. a dictionary, which contains many Norwegian words and everyday expressions, names of many tools, birds and fish as well as animals which are present in Norway...* A richer body of work on this topic will appear by the end of the 17th century and in the 18th century. It will be also much more professional.



Many works from 16th and 17th century were lost; many are practically inaccessible. We can only draw conclusions from the fact that they were created and from their titles. Fortunately, works of great importance have been preserved and the analysis of their content may give us an image of national themes. What seems to attest most to the national consciousness of the authors is the apologetic approach to national history, connected with more or less exaggerated praise of modern Norway. One can at the same time pose a question, what is the place in their work of other two motifs, important in the 18th century: the country's nature and Norwegian people – their character, behavior and evaluation.

The apology of national history was clearly voiced in the *Description of Norway* by Beyer, a work created in the 1560s. The author made an attempt to show great achievements of Norwegians in the past, connecting this with a polemic with voices questioning the Norwegian historical achievements. The power of the homeland in the past was connected to military actions and conquests made in science and arts (one example is a great 'unmatched in the whole Europe' Nidaros cathedral), merits in popularizing Christianity, excellent law (the author emphasized that it punished the evil without taking into consideration

the status of the guilty one). With true affection Beyer described the splendor of old Norway: 'Norway then was respected and esteemed, had a golden crown on its head and a golden lion with a battle axe'.⁹³

Also Hallvard Gunnarson's chronicle, published in Rostock in 1606, had a clear apologetic slant. The author emphasized the greatness of historical rulers, whom he portrayed as men that were combative, famous and devout. In his work, typical, conventional phrases appeared such as: 'Norway had never had a greater ruler', 'his fame is known all over the world'.⁹⁴ He manages as well to include a usual virtue of a ruler which was the respect for the law. Describing the political ambitions of the king Valdemar I of Denmark (1131–1182, king 1147/1148), he wrote that the liberty loving Norwegians did not let him establish supremacy over them and the king himself, having realized this, resigned from his objectives and returned to Denmark.⁹⁵

The third example may be the *The Hamar Chronicle*, where a sentimental, nostalgic and rather fictional image of a medieval town was presented. The author, unknown to us, was drawing a picture of a rich, populous town with dense architecture of houses and merchants' stalls. He described its military capabilities and mentioned the bishop's might. He was describing the idyllic living conditions in a town: it was pleasant to move around the town in the summer because 'the trees and herbs had a very pleasant smell'.⁹⁶

The patriotic slant was an element of a pragmatic character of this historical writing. The description of Hamar was characterized by a desire to show how wonderful, big and rich this town was in the past. The aim of such an approach was the preservation of the former glory in memory, so much different from current paucity. To achieve it, the author committed many distortions and misrepresentations. The writing of Beyer had a similarly pragmatic character. The author himself explained that he wanted to describe Norway and illuminate its history to counter many slanderers and explain the reasons of the fall of the Norwegian state, of which clearly he was aware.⁹⁷ But it can be concluded from the text, that the author wanted to point out to his compatriots everything that

⁹³ [A. P. Beyer], 'Absalon Pederssons Norges Beskrivelse' [ar. 1567], in *Norske Magasin...*, vol. I, pp. 74, 77, 100, 79, 79/80, 78.

⁹⁴ H. Gunnarsson, *Norges kongekronike* (Chronicon Regum Norvegiæ), transl. preface, ed. I. Ekrem, Oslo 1992, pp. 129, 159, 169, 178, 257–258, 275.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 219.

⁹⁶ [Hamarkrøniken], <http://www.dokpro.uio.no/litteratur/hamarkroniken...>, pp. 126, 127, 132, 129, 128.

⁹⁷ [A. P. Beyer], 'Absalon...', pp. 71, 83.

could give hope, consolation and faith in the better future of their country. In this sense it could be said that he wrote in order to console the hearts of the Norwegian people. This consolation was to take its source from the description of all the wonderful things characterizing Norway – its nature and the great, virtuous past. Another important motif seems to have been the criticism of contemporaries who, did not compare well with their great ancestors, and of whom the author did not think highly. It was then important that his contemporaries got to know the greatness of their ancestors in order to have somebody to emulate.

Later there appears an even clearer prophecy: ‘The kingdom of Norway, which once was an independent country and it had countries under itself which were paying tributes, became – in its and the world’s old age – a dependent country. However, sometime in the future, Norway will wake up if a ruler will be found, because it not so impoverished and weakened not to be able to return to its former power, as between these rocks there is still plenty of good butter [it is possible that it meant food in general – note from K. S.], silver, gold and other precious goods. The people are still characterized by the old virtue, virility and power and could support their ruler and their country if they could see him on a regular basis and experience graces from him; it is not surprising that the people are very reluctant to defend the head of state if they hardly see their ruler and king. Is it possible to love somebody you haven’t met and never see?’⁹⁸

These extracts already show a few motifs. Apart from the already mentioned motif of consolation, there is something that reminds one of a postulate for the Danish kings (whose rights to the throne were not questioned by Beyer) to be in touch with their Norwegian subjects more. The remark about the unwillingness to fight concerns probably the recent experiences during the wars with Sweden.

The patriotic tendencies in Bergen writers were strongly connected with criticisms and accusations towards the Hanseatic League. The continuing dislike between the local and Hanseatic merchants, mutual pretensions and accusations of receiving excessive privileges and finally the statements issued by Germans that Norway had never been an independent kingdom, provoked Norwegian intellectuals to react.⁹⁹ In this case we can, to some degree, say that Norwegian intellectuals were fulfilling an order of the Danish authorities, who wanted to weaken the Hanseatic merchants. This concerned Absalon Beyer¹⁰⁰ and also, in another work: *Bergens Fundats* from 1580s, an unknown writer

⁹⁸ Ibidem, pp. 99, 110

⁹⁹ I. Ekrem, *Historiography in Norway...*, p. 241; L. Holm-Olsen, op. cit., p. 355.

¹⁰⁰ [A. P. Beyer], ‘Absalon...’, pp. 83, 88.

showed Hanseatic activities as a streak of lawlessness, violence, breaking the old Norwegian laws given by Norwegian kings. He also emphasized that contrary to what German merchants believe, Norway will fare very well without them: 'The Kingdom of Norway is a country which will cope thanks to its own yield and God's grace... I will prove that all the serfs and folks living from Baahus to Bergen (i.e. from the border with Sweden to the western coast – note K. S.), on water and on land, are able to feed themselves from the produce that God gives them from this land'.¹⁰¹ What is characteristic is the consistency with which the authors of both works differentiated between 'town' and 'townsfolk' from Germans and German merchants.

In Mattis Størssøn's essay *A short report on merchants from Bryggen, their arrival in Bergen, written by Mattis Størssøn R.I.P., formerly a lagmann from Bergen, basing on privileges and chronicles* written in 1560s¹⁰² a meticulous report was made of all decisions taken by the Norwegian kings and the laws granted by them. The description of Hanseatic lawlessness and the injuries that the people experienced from them ends with a conclusion: '[Hansa] in the Middle Ages started to create a government [*regimente*] that had never existed in Norway before and because they were not forbidden to do so, they brought in so many immoral customs, which were against the law, that the inhabitants could have been totally destroyed, which is a prophecy that would almost fulfill itself now unless God and His Royal Majesty help soon'.¹⁰³

The praise of the country, a topic often discussed by writers, as it was in Beyer's works, was accompanied by complaints about it being in ruin and attempts to explain the causes of this state. Beyer tried to explain this by referencing the logic of historical process, that is, a regularity of 500-year periods observed by him.¹⁰⁴ He also used the motif, typical for the period, of anthropomorphism of the country's history – comparing it to a human life cycle. The disappearing of nobility was also for this author a proof of the fall of Norway. He wrote that Norwegian nobility was dying out, partly because of the plague, and the present politics of the kings is not advantageous to the country (it does not receive any grants or estates).¹⁰⁵ The fall of Norway resulted from, as Beyer saw it, the fol-

¹⁰¹ [Bergens Fundats (1580–83)] in *Norske Magasin...*, vol. I, pp. 532, 533–34.

¹⁰² M. Størssøn, [Beretning (1560–69)], in: *ibidem*. Bryggen, is a still existing coastal district of Bergen, inhabited in the medieval times by Hanseatic merchants.

¹⁰³ M. Størssøn, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–46.

¹⁰⁴ K. Szelałowska, *Renesansowa...*, p. 97.

¹⁰⁵ [A. P. Beyer], 'Absalon...', pp. 73, 90, 82–83.

lowing changes: the loss of its own king, the disappearance of nobility and loss of land which Norway had formerly possessed.

However, the description of Norway's fall was for Beyer only the initial point for his remarks. His aim was, rather, to show the magnificence of Norway and that its revival is possible. Discussing the evidence of his country's magnificence, Beyer mentioned natural riches, the features of folk people (generous, respect the law, love freedom and are valiant at the same time) and respect from other countries.¹⁰⁶

It is certain that Beyer's patriotism had a nostalgic character and contained neither significant anti-Danish elements nor calls to armed fight. It can be stated that the author seems resigned to the fact that the rebirth of his country is rather a matter of distant future but it would be difficult to deny that the work of the Bergen humanist presents a fully developed national consciousness. It refers to historical, legal and political matters and to the unwavering conviction that Norway was first and foremost a historical and legal entity. This concerns the separateness and distinctiveness of the country thought of as geographical space, whose inhabitants are people linked by historical bonds to the Norwegian kingdom, history of the ancestors and common national character. Nothing points to the fact that Beyer, thinking about Norwegians, limited the national belonging. It would be without sense – he himself was from the bourgeoisie and the Norwegian nobility had practically disappeared – if Norwegians existed, and he was certain of that, folk people had to be Norwegians.¹⁰⁷ A contemporary historian even used the expression 'national ideology' referring to Beyer's message.¹⁰⁸

In Friis' work, however, the praising attitude, national pride and patriotic tone were more moderate. Mentioning various towns in the country he described them as 'famous', 'old', 'significant', 'well-built'. They had 'pretty churches', 'pretty houses'. He focused mostly, as could have been expected, on Trondheim and St. Olaf's Cathedral and on the person of the saint king. Friis devoted to this matter separate excerpts of his works titled: *Nidaros or Trondheim, Church in Trondheim. On St. Olaf's holiness and on the building and magnificence of Trondheim. More on St. Olaf's corpse*. The author described the magnificence of the Cathedral's building which 'remains unmatched in Christian world' in terms of

¹⁰⁶ Ibidem, pp. 91–97, 101–108, 109.

¹⁰⁷ E. Opsahl reaches the same conclusion, «Norge...», p. 106.

¹⁰⁸ N. Gilje, op. cit., p. 100.

its architecture.¹⁰⁹ The story of St. Olaf was obviously recounted with Protestant distance; the author was skeptical about the report on the miraculous preservation of the dead king's body, explaining it rationally (the cunning monks were to regularly exchange corpses so that it was always in good shape). He meticulously, however, described the life of the saint, his burial, cult, the history of the cathedral and king's relics in the last, stormy times of wars with Sweden. He was critical of the eagerness of the reformers, who needlessly destroyed many valuable objects possessed by the Church.¹¹⁰

Also Arent Berntsen mentioned the magnificence of Nidaros; he included the cathedral into 'miracles of the world'.¹¹¹ The admiration of the city and of the cathedral, which in fact belongs to the most prominent monuments of the Gothic sacral style in Scandinavia, is a common motif. The manner in which Gunnarssøn in his history of Norway expressed feelings towards this most distinguished Norwegian building is very characteristic. A short piece of information taken from the sagas: the king Magnus Erlingsson 'went north to Trondheim', was formulated by the historian as follows: Magnus 'sailed to Trøndelag, where the famous, old and pious city of Trondheim lies on the river Nid and has many famous churches'.¹¹² The way Beyer described the city and the cathedral has already been presented.

The unusual excerpt in which Friis in his *Description of Norway* presented the Norwegian national bread that is *flatbrød* – a kind of crispy bread, similar to Slavic *podplomyk* – was noted by many historians. This excerpt was inserted into the description quite unexpectedly; it is not connected with the former or latter body of text. It is a classical digression, which is meant not only to describe a certain ethnographic and culinary curiosity but is also meant to defend it. Friis attempted to prove that the invention of such bread was very rational taking into account the circumstances of living in Norway (it was easy to bake and could be stored for a long time). He also rebuked the criticism of those who were mocking the bread. Friis praised it, listing it as one of the achievements of his compatriots.¹¹³ After him, also others praised it and in this way the modest bread became an element of national identity.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ P. C. Friis, *Norriges Beskrivelse...*, pp. 347, 352; see also. P. C. Friis, *En kort Extract...*, p. 146.

¹¹⁰ P. C. Friis, *Norriges Beskrivelse...*, pp. 350–351.

¹¹¹ A. Berntsen, op. cit., p. 266.

¹¹² M. Størssøn, *Den norske krønike...*, p. 101; H. Gunnarssøn, op. cit., p. 233.

¹¹³ P. C. Friis, *Norriges Beskrivelse...*, pp. 331–332.

¹¹⁴ N. Gilje, op. cit., pp. 281–282.



The writing of the period also contains the views of authors on Norwegian folk. A question can be asked here if there are opinions here that could be the harbingers of the immense interest in this topic in the 18th century and the tendency to mythologize the Norwegian folk or the ‘free Norwegian peasant’, who in the pre-Romantic period became some sort of a symbol of the free Norwegian nation. Both questions must be answered rather negatively. The opinions about the Norwegian folk are rather sporadic, always result from the author’s other aims, and almost none attempt characterizing his compatriots for themselves. The remarks are often scattered and were based on personal experience or heard opinions. For this reason they seem more realistic than the descriptions presented by Norwegian intellectuals in the 18th century.

Beyer was critical of his countrymen, pointing out many behaviors which were different from the magnificent achievements of the ancestors: he highlighted the cowardice displayed during the wars, mediocre results of farming and agreeing to the presence of Hansa. He admonished his contemporary Norwegians for forgetting about their compatriots living in Greenland.¹¹⁵

Friis also had a negative approach, however, the sources of this attitude were quite different. Friis, as a minister in the south of Norway, involved in the administrative activities of the Church, experienced, cautiously speaking, the animosity of some peasants, especially in the historical region of Telemark and its surroundings. He gave its inhabitants an exceptionally negative opinion. He emphasized that they were disobedient, wayward, contrary to the authorities, with tendencies to rebellion, wild, cruel, solving all the quarrels with knives, and they led indecent lives. They are not hospitable and have dislike towards strangers, especially towards priests. Friis quoted stories about peasants bragging about how many ministers they killed: ‘I myself knew a peasant, whose father killed three ministers and he was asking God not to let him die before he kills as many himself’.¹¹⁶ Such view was also presented by Friis in an official letter sent in 1606 to the head of the district, complaining that the peasants do not want to pay tithes. He also reproached them for their attachment to ‘papacy’, aversion to the national faith and clergy, highlighting their ‘bad character’. Friis emphasized that such a bad attitude characterized peasants for a long time already.¹¹⁷ He used this

¹¹⁵ [A. P. Beyer], ‘Absalon...’, pp. 85–86, 101.

¹¹⁶ P. C. Friis, *Norriges Beskrifvelse...*, pp. 265–66, 269, 271, 273, 274, 300, 301, 325.

¹¹⁷ P. C. Friis, *Om Tienden...*, pp. 235–36, 224, 225.

for his own considerations: Norwegian ancestors had to be folk raw and hard, because Norwegians had always been like that: hard, resistant, disobedient, willful, restless, rebellious and they still are like that – especially in the mountains and far away from the coast where ‘folk wild and evil’ live.¹¹⁸ It could be that this Friis’ opinion resulted from, typical for the period, thinking in degenerate terms: in his writing there was also a motif of longing for ‘the old, good times’.¹¹⁹

Bishop Nilssøn was also critical of the inhabitants of Telemark, writing about their attachment to old Catholic habits, rapturous character, being prone to fights and drinking.¹²⁰ Let us add that such opinions, although sometimes repeated, are not fully supported by legal sources: court reports and sentences.

Some voices were more friendly, however. Friis himself, with all his preacher’s zeal, could not hide his admiration. He wrote about great courage and strength of peasant hunters, who equipped only with a short weapon alone go to kill a bear, while foreigners drag a suite of 15 people to the hunt, each armed with javelins and halberds and yet are not able to hunt the bear so they withdraw in shame.¹²¹ He also happened to describe people from some regions of Norway as ‘good and pious people’.¹²²

A revision of the negative opinion of Telemark people appears already in 1591, when Hallvard Gunnarssøn, on the occasion of the homage assembly for Christian IV in 1591, described in the Latin poem *Acrostichis* the peasant delegates from this region. He described their appearance and clothes; he wrote about how wild they used to be but now they became sociable and hospitable and in the last war (i.e. the First Northern War) they distinguished themselves with bravery.¹²³ It is one of the first texts where some ‘ethnographic’ interest can be found.

Similarly, Arent Berntsen tried to rehabilitate the Norwegian folk. In his description of Norway from 1650s he directly referenced Friis’ description of Norway, praising him and using his ideas often but questioning his opinions about the Norwegians. He stated that the author drew too general conclusions based on individual cases and that his description is contrary to the records of

¹¹⁸ P. C. Friis, *Norriges Beskrivelse...*, pp. 257–58.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 309, 312, 335, 353; *idem*, *Om Diur, Fiske, Fugle oc Trær udi Norrig*, in *idem*, *Samlede Skrifter...*, pp. 23–24, 57, 128.

¹²⁰ [J. Nilssøn], *op. cit.*, pp. 384, 429–30.

¹²¹ P. C. Friis, *Norriges Beskrivelse...*, pp. 22.

¹²² *Ibidem*, p. 303 (inhabitants of Stavanger Stift) and p. 305 (Mandal amt).

¹²³ Y. Nielsen, ‘Biskop Jens Nilssøns Liv og Virksomhed 1538–1600’, in [J. Nilssøn], *op. cit.*, p. LXIII.

foreign writers and to the experience of many people.¹²⁴ It is true – he wrote – that Norwegians from Telemark were thought to be brave, valiant people who did not let off any offence but apart from that they were good, sensible, diligent, hard-working folk who knew how to earn their living – it was known that in this region there were peasants who possessed even a hundred thalers in silver.¹²⁵ Berntsen also pointed to the skills of Norwegian peasants, writing about dexterous craftsmen and hunters and also about the fact that Norwegians easily learnt philosophy and theology.¹²⁶ We have here probably the first writer who devoted a separate chapter to the description of Norwegians in his work, attempting to collate the character and talents of the people with their geographical-economic circumstances. The author emphasized the differences in this area between Norway and Denmark. The starting point was the thesis that God in his goodness gave Norwegians certain features of character so that they could effectively use the natural conditions in which they were to live. The description of Norwegian people was positive and contained a portrayal of them as diligent, hard-working, brave, sensible, dexterous and intelligent. The author stated that they were neither envious nor egoistic but generous towards the poor and hospitable to travelers – it would be difficult to find a nation that matched Norwegians in hospitality. They showed respect to the authorities and did not have any rebellious tendencies. Berntsen explicitly wrote that since the time when the Kingdom of Norway united with Denmark under one government no rebellion or uprising occurred. Norwegians also showed respect to the clergy – they attended masses, even if it meant traveling long distances and overcoming dangers, often risking their own lives. They were not quarrelsome, lived in peace, were not easy to provoke ‘unless they are seriously slighted; then they are able to prove that they do have fearless hearts.’ To sum up the chapter, the author once again lists all the virtues of his compatriots finishing with: ‘when need arises, they are brave, stout-hearted and intrepid people as their ancestors were since time immemorial.’¹²⁷



Is the motif of nature visible in early-modern Norwegian identity? First of all, it seems that the way nature is presented depends on the type of writing. Generally, it

¹²⁴ A. Berntsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 245–46.

¹²⁵ *ibidem*, p. 285.

¹²⁶ *ibidem*, p. 297, pp. 318–19.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 286, pp. 315–321.

can be said that while in academic works of different kinds and topographical descriptions the enthusiasm for Norwegian nature is moderate, in literary works beginning from the end of the 16th century it is more discernible. We must remember that Norwegian nature and geographical surroundings were seen as dangerous, threatening and unfriendly by the people of the 16th and 17th century as nature did not adapt easily to economic or sustenance needs of a human being. The admiration of nature occurred of course but usually the nature it referred to was bucolic and Arcadian. It was only in the pre-Romantic and Romantic period when dangerous elements like the sea and the mountains started to be appreciated.

What was highlighted in the writing of the period was all what was characteristic for the Norwegian landscape: rocks (*klipper*), fiords, fast-flowing rivers, steep mountains, icebergs, raw climate. Beyer rarely spoke about Norwegian geography and nature but in those small excerpts emotional approach appeared when the author listed “our rocks”, high mountains, beautiful and fertile land.¹²⁸ Hallvard Gunnarsøn dedicated his work to the Danish historian Arild Huitfeldt, encouraging him to visit Norway and to see ‘Norwegian mountains which tower over the North Pole’.¹²⁹ In the text of his chronicle, he used literary language to say: ‘Dovre mountains, which raise towards the stars with their strong sides’.¹³⁰ Friis was rather free from sentimentalism. It can be noticed that his description of a bear, that is the main Norwegian predator, is not free from fascination and indeed contains some anthropomorphic elements: the bear is great and dangerous, does a lot of damage, but he attacks humans only when provoked, is courageous, noble, chivalrous – it can even be said – because groups of bears never attack a single opponent.¹³¹ However, in general Friis has a pragmatic, peasant-like attitude to nature, including animals. He differentiates between nature harmful and beneficial to a human being. His vision of the natural environment was dominated by fear. Rocks are high and evil; in the mountains it is cold and that is why the land is infertile; the waterfalls are always dreadful as are rocks and mountains; the waters are dangerous, deep, cold and cruel. The fast-flowing rivers and waterfalls are often used, as it can be presumed, for pushing criminals into them and drowning people. The author wrote with terror about the Tarvanger lake that in the past a bishop and six priests drowned in it. Fishing and travelling are always life-threatening en-

¹²⁸ [A. P. Beyer], ‘Absalon...’, pp. 88, 91.

¹²⁹ H. Gunnarsøn, *Norges kongekronike...*, p. 109.

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 229.

¹³¹ P. C. Friis, *Om Diur...*, p. 22.

deavors.¹³² Only in one place did Friis mention ‘beautiful oak forests’; he wrote kindly about the Norwegian pine (*furu*) – i.e. about the national tree of Norway side by side with fir and spruce – ‘a very useful and remarkably famous tree.’¹³³ Bishop Nilssøn was similarly indifferent to the charms of wild nature as in his writings he often complained about bad and dangerous roads.¹³⁴ When in 1698 minister Knud Pederssøn asked the Danish notable Mathias Moth (1649–1719) for help and promotion, he listed, among his other merits, the fact that his life had been threatened on numerous occasions: ‘during an avalanche of stones or snow which are to be always feared in these narrow fiords and between these high mountains, and because of which 178 people unfortunately died in recent times...’¹³⁵ However, the image of Norwegian nature must have been treated as an identifying sign as for example the coat of arms of the newly created town Christiansand (1643) contained the drawing of spruce, against which the Norwegian lion with a halberd and a crowned shield was placed.¹³⁶



Also the literary output of the period contains motifs presenting national identity, which function as its identifiers and at the same time show the Norwegian separateness. As it was already mentioned, this output was not big. Mostly it contained works of little value. Only towards the end of the 16th century attempts at Latin poetry appeared, in the circles of Oslo intellectual elites. The main figure in this circle was the bishop of Oslo Jens Nilssøn, the author of the already mentioned travel diary, which he wrote during his visitation travels around the Akershus diocese. His strictly literary work was the poem *Elegidion*, which is a funeral ode created after the death of his daughter and which appreciates Norway’s nature.

The poem is the epitome of the classical Latin humanism and that is where certain predictability and conventionality come from but it distinguishes itself

¹³² P. C. Friis, *Norriges Beskrivelse...*, pp 253, 254, 276, 290, 299, 302, 306, 309, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 361, 373.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, p. 303; *idem*, *Om Diur...*, p. 131.

¹³⁴ P. N. Grøtvedt, ‘Biskop Jens Nilssøns visitatsreise til Telemark 1/7–31/7 1595’, *Maal og Minne*, Oslo 1977, p. 38.

¹³⁵ Qtd after: D. A. Seip, ‘Planer om en norsk ordbok før 1700’, *Maal og Minne*, Kristiania 1923, p. 195.

¹³⁶ P. Holm, ‘Forsøg til en Beskrivelse over Lister og Mandal Amter’, *Topographisk Journal for Norge*, vol. III, no. 10, Christiania 1794, p. 104.

by a large number of personal feelings which show authentic suffering of a father after his child's death. The author presented all the circumstances when he received information on his daughter's illness and death (he was travelling at the time) – and in this way we acquired an interesting, poetic description of the Telemark region in the south-western Norway. He portrayed the beauty and splendor of nature as well as its intimidating supremacy which may inspire fear in a human being. He described rocks, forests, long winters, deep rivers and fiords, wild animals, raw and hardened peasants and hunters. As in the beginning of the 20th century, the biographer of the bishop and the publisher of his works, Andreas Brandrud wrote: 'As far as I know, it is the first attempt of describing Norwegian themes, Norwegian nature, people and relations in the form of Renaissance, humanistic poetry'.¹³⁷ The poem *Idyll*, written soon after, contained a description of the Oslo valley and mentions of the Akershus stronghold.

Holger Hanssøn Arctander (dates of birth and death unknown) became famous because of his poem *Encomolion Norwegianus*, in which he placed numerous descriptions of his native nature and winter hunts. Published in 1625, the poem was an obligatory academic exercise from rhetoric. It contained information on the geographical location of Norway, descriptions of landscapes, fauna, cities and towns, natural resources and praises of the Nidaros cathedral. In one word, it revokes the descriptions which were created at that time only written in the form of a Latin poem. Full of declarations of the love for the country and faith in its glorious future, it is most probably evidence of the nostalgia felt by Norwegian students in Copenhagen. At the same time, it is a largely conventional and predictable text.¹³⁸ However, the choice of topic lends evidence to the strong self-identification of the author.

Undoubtedly, the work of Peter Dass was the most important in the second half of the 17th century. Being a minister in the north of Norway, he devoted his poems to the region and people living there. In his poetry he used folk language: *Norwegian Song from the Valley* (*Den norske Dale-Viise*) and the *Trumpet from Nordland* (*Nordlands Trompet*). In his work there are motifs connected with patriotic involvement, strong relationship to the land and the people and the native history. What is important to say is that Dass was famous and widely read in his period so he could influence large parts of the Norwegian society.

¹³⁷ A. Brandrud, 'Jens Nilsson av Oslo. Et Billede fra Norges senere reformationshistorie', in Jens Nilsson, *To og Tredive Prædikener holdt i Aarene 1578–1586 af...* ed. A. Brandrud, O. Kolsrud, Kristiania 1917, pp. 128–29.

¹³⁸ I. Ekrem, 'Norway'..., p. 77.

Peter Dass was an extraordinary phenomenon in the literature of the period. His big parish Alstahaug in Nordland demanded from him not only ministry work but also economic involvement. As many ministers of the time Dass was making business delivering various goods to Bergen: first and foremost fish, supplied by the fishermen from Lofoten islands. The minister became familiar with the everyday life in this region because he participated in it. He observed people's hard work, struggles with harsh nature and the worsening life conditions. He devoted part of his poetry to this, including his religious works which had pietistic overtones. Dass' poems and psalm were known to the people of Nordland and were circulated in hand-written duplicates as they were published after the author's death. 17 such duplicates of the poem *Nordlands Trompet* have been preserved till the present day.

As one historian put it, Peter Dass 'is the first of our poets, about whom we can say that he is a truly Norwegian writer'.¹³⁹ It results from the fact that in the *Nordlands Trompet*, although written in Danish, the author very often used Norwegian grammatical forms and there were so many Norwegian words and expressions taken from the folk language that the censor who was preparing the work for publication in 1763 stated that they should be translated into Danish for the reader's sake.¹⁴⁰ The author himself provides Norwegian names for the phenomena he describes such as a certain type of wind or a species of fish.¹⁴¹ *Den Norske Dale-Viise* is, on the other hand, all written in the folk Norwegian dialect.

The topics and the author's attitude are no less significant for the national character of Dass' work. *Nordlands Trompet* was a poetic counterpart of the topographical descriptions, a genre, as we know, truly popular in Norway. It contained all the features typical for the genre. What catches one's attention is the involvement with which the author wrote about the life of the inhabitants of his region, with whom he, without a doubt, identified himself. What may prove this, is not only his knowledge and orientation but also the fact that he often used first-person plural as in this probably most famous quotation from the poem: 'sea fish are our daily bread; if we lose them, we will face poverty'.¹⁴² He wrote about the people 'my countrymen' and in many excerpts described the hard lives of fishermen, poverty and hunger, dangers from the threatening

¹³⁹ H. Fett, 'En Nordlands sjelesorger' in *Petter Dass 1647–1947*, Bergen 1947, p. 98.

¹⁴⁰ D. A. Seip, 'Om teksten' in *Petter Dass, Nordlands Trompet...*, ed. idem, Oslo 1958, p. 139.

¹⁴¹ P. Dass, *Nordlands Trompet*, ed. D. A. Seip, Oslo 1958, p. 27, p. 34.

¹⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 35.

elements and people's dependence on the Bergen merchants connected with the constantly growing debts. The moralizing tone of the poem was connected with this because the poet, as a minister, did not fail to explain that all this is God's will which one should accept. He himself was doing that constantly, expressing his humility in religious poems.

Although Dass' poem expressed a sense of belonging to a very specific and separate region,¹⁴³ there is no doubt, in my opinion, that the author was aware that his identity did not have only local character but referred to the whole country. The poem concentrated on the description of one region but the author often referred to Norwegians employing the term 'Nordlander' and Norwegian interchangeably, which is understood as the name of the region can be translated as 'The Land of the North'. We find here also references to the history of the country, as on the occasion of the description of the island Bjarkøy he brought up the narrative about saint King Olaf and his murderer, the rich Tore Hund.¹⁴⁴ Speaking of the Helgeland region, the poet mentioned the legendary leader, who conquered these lands 'in the times before Norway was united into one country'.¹⁴⁵ He also described more modern history, that is the 14th-century outbreak of Black Death plague which depopulated some regions of Nordland.¹⁴⁶ Describing the town of Gilleskaal he mentioned that its name originated from the assemblies of the people which had been organized in the times when Norway was still pagan. He also referred to *Norwegian Chronicles* and quoted legends from Snorri.¹⁴⁷

The most basic indicators of identity are connected, however, with the region of Nordland, the little-homeland of the poet. The author expressed this identity in various ways. The starting point could be the sense of separateness, not only shown, but also emphasized. This sense of separateness was the result, according to Dass, first and foremost of the lifestyle characteristic for the inhabitants and the natural surroundings. The poem starts with an invitation to read, which is expressed metaphorically – it is an invitation for the feast, where no foreign dishes will be served. There will not be any French soup, pheasants, turtles, cloves or any other Indian spices. There will not be cucumbers, olives or

¹⁴³ M. A. Hauan, 'Å eg vet meg eit land der oppe mot nord. Nornorsk identitet og regionale øvelser', *Nordlit*, no. 10, Tromsø 2001.

¹⁴⁴ P. Dass, op. cit., pp. 113–114.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 72.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 73.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 81, 118.

capers. Instead of all this, Norwegian dishes will be served: sausages, ham, flat-cakes, butter served on a special wooden plate, goat cheese, groats, herrings and first and foremost, the national bread – *flatbrød*. This juxtaposition has a function of contrasting the living conditions of the Nordland peasants – including the author – and the rest of the world. The poet did not hide that such culinary tastes are affected by poverty: I am too poor to cook as they do in the world.¹⁴⁸

The contrast was emphasized on the occasion of every description of nature and geographical surroundings, which took a lot of place in the poem. The rocky, foggy coast, threatening waters in which many had been drowned, strong winds, cold, infertile land – these are the conditions in which people of Nordland live. The author declared that he would write about “grey rocks, permanent snow lying on them, about streams and rivers”. He also wrote how strange is life in the eternal night, described the winds blowing as nowhere else. He wrote that the whole well-being of the country bases on fish: there are no silver or gold mines, our country does not flow with milk and honey, we only have fish.¹⁴⁹

In Peter Dass’ poetry the essence of a human life i.e. the everyday toil, the conditions in which he lives, the nature that surrounds him are all elements of identity. They decide about the sense of belonging to the land and people living in it.



The motifs present in the poetry of late Renaissance and Baroque in Norway, the expressed emotions and descriptions are complementary to the content of the academic work. Similar motifs appear in both genres (nature, historic memory and pride in the achievements of the ancestors, referring to Norway as a separate legal and political entity, an attempt to assess the Norwegian people and, finally, feelings expressed directly). These motifs are elements thanks to which identification occurs and identity is expressed. Although we cannot always say that they have been exhausted and that they were at all times coherent, it seems that they reflect a certain state of consciousness, which could become the basis on which the elites of the 18th century could build their own identity and later a national program.

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem, pp. 12–13, p. 113.

¹⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 113, p. 20, p. 24, p. 35.

CHAPTER FIVE
NORWEGIAN PEASANTS:
MEMORY AND CONTINUITY

The national identity expressed in writing naturally characterized the elites. There is no reason, however, to limit the studies of national consciousness only to this. Modern sociology points out the fact that while investigating this phenomenon it is useful to examine the everyday culture as this may give a more authentic image because it was erroneous of the traditional approach to focus too much on the high culture and the actions of the elites. The matter concerns the analysis of 'the unreflective forms of identification' such as places, landscapes, conventions, habits, everyday objects or various types of narration.¹ Such approach seems even more sensible when discussing the, mostly illiterate, peasant cultures, although, on the other hand, studying one, narrow aspect of everyday life in the distant past, that is national identity, is difficult because of limited sources.

On the other hand, also modern popular writings such as plebeian and picaresque literature may be – as shown by a Polish scholar – the subject of analysis of most important terms such as nation or society. The author emphasizes here the questionable validity of differentiating between 'popular' and 'official' culture.²

In the lower social strata these 'unreflective forms of identification' through which identity was expressed are: memory about the past and continuity of various elements of everyday life. Such a large category may contain narrations: stories, fairy-tales, legends and songs; customs: habits, cults, material culture, ways of managing and building, designs of certain everyday objects, clothes, tools and decorations. Also artistic work is included here – singing, music and dance. It seems that a certain conservatism, resistance to novelties and attachment to 'what and how it was done by the fathers' was significant in modern Norway. A Norwegian scholar of Polish origin thinks that in Norway throughout the centuries, generally, a 'meme-friendly culture' has developed, in which growth occurred thanks to continuation and reforms and not due to revolutions and breaks. 'A meme' in this approach signifies a unit of memory –

¹ T. Edensor, *op. cit.*, pp. 14, 36.

² U. Augustyniak, *op. cit.*, pp. 14, 17

'narration and imagery which resounds in the community and is handed down from generation to generation – an image, story, melody, ritual, which is not automatically copied but is remembered and changed [-]'.³

The conservatism was, first and foremost, typical for the peasant mentality but soon also the elites started to appreciate it. The continuity which referred to material culture and customs was often emphasized by the 18th century writers and was supposed to be another piece of evidence that Norwegian peasants stayed faithful to their legendary ancestors in an exceptional way. This did not exclude the criticism which the Enlightenment reformers directed at peasants when they did not want to adopt various farming innovations.

Finally, a conviction was born – theoretically present in European culture in the second half of the 18th century and developed in the period of Romanticism – that folk culture preserved the unique features of the national character in the best way. The consistency, or one can even say, the stubbornness of the Norwegian peasants to cultivate old customs was noticed by the Norwegian elites quite early, giving ground to the belief that Norwegian peasants represent a certain, Norwegian, type of character. This way of thinking led to mystifications and mythologizing but one was certain: there were so many customs, behaviours and objects which linked the present of Norwegian peasants even with the very distant past. This was not a situation which could further the pro-intellectual viewpoint: the peasants should probably be educated about the modern farming techniques but when it came to knowledge and sense of what it means 'to be Norwegian' the elites came to the conclusion that they should learn what it means from the peasants.

What were the elements which the non-verbal identity consisted of?

For many centuries one of the most important components of tradition was St. Olaf's cult. It belongs in fact to both: folk and high culture. It was already discussed how the memory about the saint king was included in the academic work of the period. But this memory was in fact more lively and present in the everyday lives of many Norwegians.

King Olaf Haraldsson, as we know, reigned in the beginning of the 11th century and is thought to be the creator (or sometimes the co-creator) of the Norwegian state and at the same time the ruler who introduced Christianity and died (on 29 July 1030) from the hands of pagan reactionaries. Contemporary historiography considers this image with some skepticism but this does not

³ N. Witoszek, *Norske naturmytologier. Fra Edda til økofilosofi*, transl. T. Hanssen, Oslo 1998, pp. 13–14, 15.

change the fact that the cult of the king connected with the miracles worked by him began immediately after his death. Nidaros, where he was buried, became the goal of pilgrimages from all over the country.

In the 12th century, in the times when, thanks to close cooperation between Magnus Erlingsson and the Church, the process of giving the Norwegian monarchy the modern character was occurring (the first Christian coronation took place in 1163) and the legend of St. Olaf was enriched by new elements. In the undated privilege for Øystein Erlendsson, the first arch-bishop of Norway (d. 1118), the king entrusted his kingdom to St. Olaf and described himself (and his successors) as his representative (*vicarius et ab eo teneris*). Norway was supposed to be the patrimony of the saint king, his allodium (*odel*), which is ruled by the successive kings on his behalf. This approach was supported by Olaf's idea presented in an anonymous Latin work from the 12th century *Historia Norwegiae* where the king is presented as the 'eternal king of Norway' – *perpetuus rex Norwvegiae*. Additionally, at the same time, a conviction became popular that Olaf was the first lawmaker in Norway and the eternal law of Norway was created by him. The St. Olaf's cult was tunneled and put in order by the Church, especially at the instigation of the arch-bishop Øystein, the author of the work *Passio et miracula beati Olafi*. This version of the king's life was introduced to *Gammelnorsk homiliebok*, which was written in the national language and could reach more people. This way the Church communicated to the people ideas, which were, in its opinion, important for the development of the state and society.⁴ At the same time in the surroundings of Trondheim another Latin version of Norway's history was created authored by the monk Theodoric, most probably from the St. Augustine order, *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium*.⁵ All these elements: Olaf as the miracle-worker and a Saint, the creator of the law, known since then by his name, and the image of the eternal king of Norway combined into a myth, which in the modern era and later became a stable component of the national identity and self-identification.⁶

There were many stories and legends about the king. The visual representations of him i.e. the paintings and sculptures showing a bearded man with an

⁴ H. J. Orning, *Unpredictability and Presence. Norwegian Kingship in the High Middle Ages*, Leiden, Boston 2008, p. 45.

⁵ K. Helle, *Under kirke og kongemakt, 1130–1350*, Oslo 1995 (*Aschehougs Norgeshistorie*, Oslo 1994–1998, ed. idem, vol. III.), pp. 40, 46–47; G. Danbolt, *Nidarosdomen, fra Kristi-kirke til nasjonalmonument*, Oslo 1997, p. 75.

⁶ Ø. Rian, 'Olav Engelbrektssons kamp...', p. 97.

axe, sometimes killing a dragon, were present in many Norwegian churches and a large part of them survived the Reformation.⁷ There were many 'St. Olaf's springs' all over Norway with healing water. During peasant weddings there was a custom of drinking a toast to 'God the Father, the Holy Spirit and St. Olaf'. In the 17th century in the period of establishing Lutheran orthodoxy the Church finally decided that such behavior was blasphemous but would not punish it explaining that the custom was very old. It has already been discussed here that for both Norwegians and Danish authorities it was customary to identify the traditional Norwegian law with St. Olaf's name. With time, the cult started to lose its religious overtones but Olaf remained an important hero of folk imagination and for many – as a historic king – was also a symbol of glorious past. It is believed that the increase in aversion towards Swedes in the 1560s, during the first Northern war was caused by the news about their profanation of St. Olaf's corpse in the Nidaros cathedral.⁸

The traditional holiday Olsok, celebrated on 28–29th of July on the eve and the day of the king's death, was connected with St. Olaf. The name of the holiday and King's name can be recognized in the names of numerous plants, beliefs about weather, animals or legendary creatures, sayings and proverbs on work and human behavior as well as the formulated rules of correct behavior. The date of the holiday was connected to many happenings and customs. The ancient name of the St. Olaf's holiday or 29th of July 'Olsokdag' was used in vernacular year count.⁹ It was also used in the Church, as evidenced by the minutes of Stavanger cathedral chapter from the 16th century: for the day of 29th July the ministers used the term *Sancti Olaj regis dag* or *Olai tid*.¹⁰ The case of Olsok is an example of syncretism – Christian beliefs merged with pagan ones, connected with the date important for the agricultural works. It is important to notice that the holiday was celebrated in Norway still in the beginning of the 20th century.¹¹

⁷ [F. Nannestad], *Biskop i Trondhjem dr Frederik Nannestads optegnelser i hans almanakk av 1750 om kirker i Nord-Norge*, ed. J. Uwolff, Tromsø 1942, pp. 14, 15, 22, 23, 26, 28, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 45, 48, 51; G. Schøning, *Reise som giennem en Deel af Norge i de Aar 1773, 1774, 1775 paa Hans Majestets Kongelige bekostning er gjort og beskrevet af...*, vol. I, Trondhjem 1910, p. 247.

⁸ S. Supphellen, *Innvandrerne by...*, p. 46.

⁹ [Trosner Hans], *Tordenskjolds Matros. Dagbok ført av en norsk matros paa den dansk-norske flaaete 1710–1714*, ed. R. Tank, Kristiania 1923, p. 186.

¹⁰ *Stavanger Domkapitels protokoll...*, pp. 469, 479, 481.

¹¹ L. Hamre, op. cit., p. 797; L. Daae, *Norges helgener*, Christiania 1879, pp. 21, 46, 80; K. Bing, *Olsoktradition*, Bergen 1913, pp. 5, 19–36.

17th and 18th century writers quoted legends passed around by the locals about Olaf; they described the traces of his ‘stay’ in the region, according to the reports of the locals; places, where Olaf rested; crosses set up as a memento of the king (which the people still take care of); springs, which thanks to him gained healing powers; miracles that he worked – as Schøning assessed, St. Olaf was for Norwegians what Alexander the Great was in Asia: what the people did not understand and could not explain was described as the miraculous actions of the saint.¹²

The memory of the saint king was also connected with memory about the times of the Middle Ages and preservation of many legends and stories originating from sagas and with memory of historic characters from the early history of Norway: kings and jarls. 17th and 18th century Norwegian researchers noted many examples. Thormodus Torfæus noted in the 1660s a local folk story about a beautiful girl (who lived in this neighborhood) named Åslaug, who became the queen of Denmark. The historian described how he was told that this legend (written in a 14th century saga) is handed down from generation to generation and in the neighborhood it is a custom to give girls the name of Åslaug. Soon after, Jonas Ramus met a similar story; Peter Holm (in the end of 18th century) – a hundred years later and in the 1820s the poet Conrad N. Schwach. None of them could have read the story.¹³ In his travel diary (1749), the bishop Erik Pontoppidan wrote that the local people often reminiscence the ‘old, fairy-tale events and actions’ and that the peasants know many stories (according to the bishop credible) about the actions and travels of St. Olaf.¹⁴

Referring to the old times was also connected with the attempt of the local people to explain the sense of and interpret the local ‘relics’ such as burial mounds, menhirs, or stone circles. In his diary Hans Trosner, a sailor from the Norwegian fleet, the participant of the Northern War, described as peasants dug

¹² H. Strøm, *Physisk og oekonomisk Beskrivelse over Fogderiet Søndmør belligende i Bergens Stift i Norge*, [s.l.] [1762], [1957 facsimile], vol. II, pp. 251, 266, 267, 354, 356, 460; G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. I, pp. 106, 149; vol. II, pp. 5, 42, 65, 66, 67, 74; [Anonymus] ‘Forekommende Merkværdigheder angaaende Lombs Præstegjeld i Guldbrandsdalen’, in *Danmarks og Norges Oeconomiske Magazin*, vol. I, København 1757, p. 266. E. M. R. Mandt, *Historisk Beskrivelse over Øvre Telemarken*, ed. O. Solberg, [s.l.] 1989, pp. 56–57, 116.

¹³ F. A. Stylegar, ‘Åslaug-Kråka fra Spangereik og Ragnar Lodbrok: Lindesnesområdet som kulturell “melting pot” i vikingtid og tidlig middelalder’, in A. I. Jacobsen et al. (eds), *Den nordiske histories fader. Tormod Torfæus*, Karmøyseminariet 2002, Karmøykommune, pp. 129, 131, 132.

¹⁴ [E. Pontoppidan], *Prokantsler Erik Pontoppidans Levnetsbeskrivelse og hans Dagbog fra en Reise i Norge i aaret 1749...*, ed. N. E. Hofman (Bang), Odense 1974, p. 130.

a burial mound up and found coins there from the times of king Håkon (he does not specify which one).¹⁵ The authors of the 18th century topographical descriptions (which will be discussed later) quoted local, handed down from generation to generation, stories about the local monuments or about the proper names. Hans Strøm wrote that the local folk thought that a burial mound contained the ashes of Valborg (Walpurga) the heroine of skalds' songs; that the place had had a different name in the past which was given in the sagas as the place of a historical battle from the end of the 10th century; another, on the other hand, is identified by the people as the place, described in the chronicle of Egill Skallagrímsson, of the battle with the giant Liftingur Bleike, which is also buried in a nearby burial mound.¹⁶ Historian Gerhard Schøning quoted stories from the local folk, who supposedly remembered legends connected with the battle of Stiklestad and described identical to Strøms' folk explanations of the origin and contents of the local burial mounds. On the court of Egge, which in the 11th century belonged to one of king Olaf's opponents, Kalv Arnesson, the local people showed the historian two cups, which were allegedly in Kalv's possession (Schøning questioned this story).¹⁷ Nicolai Ch. Lassen (1748–1818) wrote that the inhabitants of Enelve Grunde showed a stone obelisk, under which, as they claimed, a hero of sagas and his companions had been buried.¹⁸ Hans Jacob Wille (1756–1808), in turn, described the occasion on which he was shown an old building in which a king lived; in some other place, the people showed him an axe that had belonged to a 15th century magnate, which was supposed to have healing powers. On this occasion, the author complained about the fact that very often various objects are taken away from the peasants by travelers: 'Not informing the public about anything, they took away from the peasants what until not so long ago remained in their farms and what should still remain there.'¹⁹ The information about various historical objects stored in private houses such as old parchments, parts of armament is quoted also by other authors.²⁰ Historians have discovered, that the manuscript of the diary written by the minister Søren

¹⁵ [H. Trosner], op. cit., pp. 25–26, 28.

¹⁶ H. Strøm, *Physisk og oeconomisk...*, vol. II, pp. 114, 409, 411.

¹⁷ G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. I, p. 65, vol. II, pp. 70, 93, 182–83.

¹⁸ [N. Ch. Lassen] *N. Ch. Lassen Dagbog fra 1777 over en Reise igjennem Guldbrandsdalen*, Lillehammer 1933, pp. 9, 12.

¹⁹ H. J. Wille, 'Utrykte Optegnelser om Thelemarken', ed. L. Daae, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, series 2, vol. III, Kristiania 1882, pp. 159, 161, 166, 170, 178.

²⁰ [N. Dorph], 'Biskop Niels Dorphs Optegnelser paa de adelige Familier, som findes i Aggerhuus Stift 1749', *Magazin til den Danske Adels Historie*, vol. I, Kjøbenhavn 1824,

Søfrenssøn in the end of the 16th century was found in a peasant's house, from where, by the end of the century, it fell into the hands of Hans Jacob Wille.²¹ It was also remembered about the Kringen skirmish from 1612 (which was discussed in chapter 4), and it is also another piece of evidence for the persistence of memory about this event together with the 17th century wars with Sweden and the Northern War. Charles XII (1683–1718, king of Sweden 1697) became a popular hero among the peasants.²²

It is possible that to some extent, at least in the 18th century, historical books could have supported the folk memory. Historians have always been interested in the question whether and to what extent peasants were familiar with the text of Snorri Sturluson, translated by Peder C. Friis at the beginning of the 17th century and published in 1757 (its second edition) or other, newer, publications. It is difficult to give a unanimous answer taking into account the discussions on this topic. It is highly probable that peasants came across published books but no sooner than at the end of the 18th century. The sources of the time show evidence of familiarity with Snorri's, Friis' or Jonas Ramus' works. However, the picaresque description written by the Danish Romantic poet Adam Oehenschläger (1779–1850) presenting Norwegians 'passionately reading Snorri' belongs more to fairy-tales than facts.²³

Also the relics of Catholicism, which survived the Reformation can be considered an element of continuity and memory. We know of this from the visita-

pp. 43, 44, 46, 51; [N. Ch. Lassen], op. cit. pp. 16–17; L. Daae, 'Norsk Adel i det forrige Aarhundrede', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, vol. I, Kristiania 1871, p. 509.

²¹ A. E. Erichsen, 'Indledning' in *Presten Søfren Søfrenson Memorialbog 1564–1599*, Kristiania 1898, p. VI.

²² [H. Trosner], op. cit., p. 28; J. W. Klüver, 'Et Øienvidners Beskrivelse over den svenske Armees Tog...' *Ny Minerva for April 1808* København 1808, pp. 68–69; H. Refsum, 'Karl den XII og den store nordiske krig i folketradisjonen på Romerike', *Historisk Tidsskrift* XXIX (Kristiania 1930–33), p. 201; E. Hoff, 'Udkast til en Beskrivelse over Friderichshalds Bye og Friderichsteens Fæstning med de tvende Præstegjæld Idde og Berg', *Topographisk Journal for Norge*, no. 6, 1793, København, p. 31.

²³ K. Liestøl, 'Peder Claussøn Snorre hjå norske bønder', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, series 5, vol. V, Kristiania 1924, pp. 501–502; F. Bull, 'Peder Claussøns Snorre som norsk bondelesning', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, series 5, vol. VI, Oslo 1927, pp. 190–191; H. Koht, 'Peder Claussøns Snorre som norsk Bondelesning', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, series 5, vol. V, Kristiania 1924, pp. 104–105, 109, 113; H. Refsum, 'Snorre som bondelesning på Romerike', *Historisk Tidsskrift* XXVIII (Oslo 1927–28), pp. 407–408, pp. 419–421; idem, 'Snorre og sagaerne som norsk bondelesning', *Historisk Tidsskrift* XXXII (Oslo 1942–44), pp. 398–400; A. B. Amundsen, 'Jonas Ramus' [biographical entry], *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon*, vol. VII, Oslo 2003, pp. 307–308.

tion notes of bishop Nilsson: these were mostly burial rituals and the custom of celebrating the anniversary of the church building consecration. The bishop was angered not only by its Catholic origin but, first and foremost, by the fact that these days it became an occasion for mass drinking and fights.²⁴

Until the end of the 17th century the cult of Catholic Saints was observed (e.g. St. Hallvard, the patron of Oslo, or St. Sunniva), as well as time counting measures and names of the days originating in the Middle Age Catholic customs.²⁵ Pilgrimages to holy places were still organized as well as to healing springs linked to some churches. Even in the 17th century the peasants celebrated the church holidays, which had been rejected by Protestantism i.e. the anniversaries of church building consecrations. How widespread were these celebrations can be seen by the reactions of the state authorities: the official documents from 1621 reported the peasants' continuing attachment to Catholic customs including iconolatry.²⁶ In 1622 the king Christian IV issued two letters to the bishops about this matter.²⁷ Until the year 1835, secretive Midsummer meetings (mainly of pagan origin) were taking place. Catholic names were also popular and historians noted increased instances of the name Olaf in comparison to the times before Reformation.²⁸ Hans Strøm wrote in 1775 that peasants preserved Catholic customs such as tipping one's hat when the Church bell tolls or making a sign of a cross on the objects that one wanted to protect.²⁹ Hans Jacob Wille mentioned in 1786 a figure of St. Lawrence, which was preserved in a 17th century church in Moland.³⁰ This author devotes a lot of place to the pagan and Catholic relics, describing both as 'superstitions'. He wrote about idols, local peasant saints, about the custom to carve the letters ISH on the beam above the door, which signified Christ, and was supposed to protect against magic. Peasants believed that the beer that was brewed for Christmas was based on the recipe coming from Odin and preserved till the present day. They were also attached to pagan first names.³¹ An analogy with Sweden here can be drawn, where after the Reformation the people preserved their attachment to the period of fasting.

²⁴ P. N. Grøtvedt, 'Biskop Jens Nilssøns visitatsreise...' pp. 40, 43.

²⁵ K. Gervin, *Oslo domkirke. Mennesker og miljøen i 900 år*, Oslo 1997, p. 57.

²⁶ S. Imsen, *Norsk bondekomunalisme...*, vol. II, p. 166.

²⁷ NRR/V, pp. 260, 277.

²⁸ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, pp. 51, 52.

²⁹ H. Strøm, *Tilskueren paa Landet*, vol. II, København 1775, p. 170.

³⁰ H. J. Wille, *Utrykte...*, p. 172.

³¹ H. J. Wille, *Beskrivelse over Sillejords Præstegjeld i Øvre-Tellemarken i Norge*, København 1786. pp. 221, 237; idem, *Utrykte...*, p. 164.

The preservation of St. Olaf's legend in the folk memory, historic and legendary events from the sagas, old chronicles and skalds' songs as well as the attachment to the remnants of the old beliefs were not the only identifying elements of Norwegian peasants. Another one was the folk culture, which played an enormous role in shaping identity: its material artifacts, customs and habits linked to work and leisure. I want to point out that many of its elements were preserved for a long time.

The aim of this work is not the analysis of Norwegian folklore in the modern era nor even an attempt at presenting it in its entirety. Such a task would be far too extensive for the purposes of this work. The aim is solely to point out, using the examples taken from a large body of subject literature that in the case of folk culture a certain continuity and permanence occurred (at least until the end of the 19th century), which allows us to treat it as an element strongly influencing the identity of the people of Norway.

As in many other European countries the research on folklore, in the beginning in the form of collecting data and relics, started on a larger scale in Norway in the first half of the 19th century (although the beginnings of such interests can be seen already in the 17th century). It is known that the dominant Romantic viewpoint of that period and the fact of the recently regained independence strongly influenced the way of perceiving folk culture, which caused many misunderstandings and biases. Modern researchers are more cautious in evaluating this body of work. At the same time, they attempted – referring to the extreme assessments formulated at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, according to which the works of the Romantics should be treated in its entirety as a literary construction – to rehabilitate these accomplishments. In the case of Norway, it had been noticed that the country in the first half of the 19th century preserved many features originating from the distant past. Its culture was the product of a strongly conservative community, which was attached to tradition, was rather backward and remained quite often in relative isolation.³² The conservatism of everyday customs concerned many things: the way the houses were built, their equipment, rules and techniques of farming, tools, decorative motifs, parts of clothing, folk dances or songs, fairy tales and legends.

It is important to remember that in Norway 'the country' is a quite conventional term because it is very different from the country that had formed in Central and Eastern Europe. Instead of a dense settlement with a clear central

³² P. Anker, *Folkekunst i Norge. Kunsthåndverk og byggeskikk i det gamle bondesamfundet*, Oslo 1998, p. 7.

point such as a church or an inn, in Norway there occurred rather scattered settlements consisting of separate farms (*gård*). The word *bygd* used in Norwegian language generally signifies out-of-town areas and sometimes is a synonym of an administration area such as a borough (*kommune*). The organization of farm became popular already in the Viking times and was preserved till today. It meant building a large number of buildings – both for people and stock – within the farm. In this way a *gård* (Danish: *gaard*) was created that is literally a farm but in some cases such translation can be misleading. A *gård* consisted of minimum 4–5 buildings up to even 35, and 10–12 on average. Therefore, it does not always correspond to our image of a farm, even more so that in one *gård* a few owners with their families could live.³³ The term ‘estate’ is better, especially that the term *gård* is used to describe the living quarters of officials, gentry and nobility. In addition, every *gård* had always had its own proper name and many of these names had a more than a thousand-year tradition.³⁴ It could be placed at a certain distance from other settlements but even then it remained a part of a larger whole called *bygd*.

The administrative divisions, precisely speaking the borders between the units, were also long-lasting. Their names were preserved sometimes even for hundreds of years. For example in Rogaland, the *fogderi* – districts of the fopt – were ring-fenced in the years 1520–21. This division was preserved until the administrative reform in 1894 and it was still informally used in 1920s.³⁵

It is striking how strongly Norwegian peasants were attached to the ancient lifestyle that concerned material culture. This created circumstances and life conditions unchanged for generations. It was often the result of poverty and certain climatic and topographical conditions, which caused some solutions to be optimal. However, the attachment to the existent methods of designing the farm in this way became an expression of identity, a way to identify ‘locals’ and a method to recognize one’s ‘little homeland’.

The type of building called *langhuset*, which originates in pre-historic times, was still being built in the beginning of the 20th century with only slight modifications. A certain type of an attic (*loft*), which appeared in 14th century, still oc-

³³ H. Stigum, K. Visted, *Vår gamle bondekultur*, vol. I, Oslo 1951, pp. 40–41.

³⁴ M. Olsen, *Farms and Fanes of ancient Norway*, Oslo 1926, pp. 16, 64; A. Lillehammer, *Fra jeger til bonde*, Oslo 1994, (*Aschehougs Norgeshistorie*, ed. K. Helle, Oslo 1994–1998, vol. I), p. 159.

³⁵ B. Saxe-Utne, ‘Rogaland – fra syle til fogderier’, *Stavanger Museum Årbok*, LXXXIII (1973), p. 80.

curred on the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Rooms with an open hearth in the middle (*årestue*) were built in Vestlandet still in 19th century and in the 20th century these rooms changed their purpose, becoming storage rooms.³⁶ *Årestue* from Setesdal dating back to the end of the 17th century was designed in a typical medieval way: one living room, having also the function of a kitchen, dining room and bedroom, with an open hearth in the middle and a hole in the roof to let out the smoke.³⁷ This way of building was mentioned also by Schøning.³⁸ Only in the 18th century the living quarters were started to be rebuilt on a larger scale (in some regions of Norway already in the 17th century). Furnaces and fireplaces were put in and windows were inserted.³⁹ In many regions of the country peasants covered the roofs of their houses with peat even at the end of the 19th century.⁴⁰ After the year 1000, the many-family houses were beginning to be replaced with a new type of a building, *stua*, dedicated to one family. This kind of a building became common in the 12–13th centuries and was in use till the 18th century.⁴¹ The storage building *buret*, which is built until today, was described already in the medieval laws (*Gulatinglovet* from the second half of the 11th century) and appears in Snorri's work.⁴² Also the way the entrance to the building was designed was preserved from 13th till 18th century.⁴³

The types of farming tools, identical to the ones found in Viking archeological excavation sites in Oseberg, were used in the country in Norway still in the 19th century.⁴⁴ This concerns for example the plough, which was preserved unchanged, with minor improvements only, for three thousand years. Historians noticed that the plough described by Gerhard Schøning in his report from the travel around Trondheim is almost identical to the one found in archeological excavations.⁴⁵ The looms had not changed for centuries and the embroideries

³⁶ P. Anker, op. cit., pp. 66–67, p. 74, pp. 87–88; R. Hauglid, 'Wood Carving', in *Native Art of Norway*, ed. idem, Oslo 1977, p. 13, R. Asker, 'Rose-painting', in *ibidem*, p. 63.

³⁷ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelse...*, p. 110.

³⁸ G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. I, p. 84.

³⁹ K. Visted, H. Stigum, op. cit., pp. 69, 66.

⁴⁰ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelse...*, p. 104.

⁴¹ R. Hauglid, 'Stue og barfroi i Østerdalene', *Bygd og By. Norsk Folkemuseums Årbok*, XXXI (1985–86), pp. 5–10; K. Visted, H. Stigum, op. cit., p. 65.

⁴² H. Landsverk, 'Tradisjonar omkring bur og loft i norske gårdstun', *By og Bygd*, XXXII (1987–88), pp. 2–13; K. Visted, H. Stigum, op. cit., p. 99.

⁴³ K. Visted, H. Stigum, op. cit., p. 85.

⁴⁴ P. Anker, op. cit., p. 56; K. Visted, H. Stigum, op. cit., pp. 131, 139, 153, 160.

⁴⁵ H. Stigum, 'Plogen', in *Bidrag til bondesamfundets historie*, vol. I, Oslo 1933 pp. 106–107; K. Visted, H. Stigum, op. cit., p. 140.

and tapestries show a great similarity to those from the Middle Ages.⁴⁶ When in the 20th century a daughter of a fisherman from Lofoten Islands (born in 1883) created a description of fishing tools used by her father, it turned out that they were really similar to those presented by Peter Dass in his poems.⁴⁷

In woodcarving, one of the main domains of Norwegian folk art, one can notice an attachment to traditional ornamentation. Geometrical and plant-based motifs had shapes very similar to those from the early Middle Ages. Such ornaments, originating from Roman and Gothic styles, occurred on objects created in the country in the 18th century.⁴⁸ Woodcarvings found on the oldest preserved chest (from 1598) have medieval shapes.⁴⁹ The woodcarvings common in Telemark in the 17th century employed motifs typical for the Roman style: leaves, wreaths, scenes of hunt or fights with dragons, geometrical motifs and drawings of mythical creatures. The enlivenment in folk art of the 17th century characteristic for Norway also occurred in this region, but, in contrast to other areas of Norway, there were no motifs from Renaissance or Baroque but from medieval ornamentation.⁵⁰

Until the 19th century in the region of Telemark beds were produced, which were very similar to the ones found in the boat from Oseberg. A newer type of bed from this region is similar to the 14th century design. A characteristic type of chair (*kubbestol*, full with support for the back) had been produced from the Middle Ages till the middle of the 19th century. For the Romantics, *kubbestol* almost became a symbol of Norwegian folk traditions.⁵¹ The arrangement of furniture in the room was also long-lasting. When the 19th century researcher Eilert Sundt was travelling round Norway, without going into the room, he was able to say where all the furniture had been placed.⁵²

There was a special object in Norwegian homes: the drinking horn (*drikkehorn*). We know that in the homes of the elites it was used until the 18th century. C. B. De Fine (1745) with great interest wrote about the use of this vessel in

⁴⁶ H. Engelstad, 'Norwegian art weaving', in *Native art...*, pp. 113, 116, 118.

⁴⁷ S. Sogner, op. cit., p. 130.

⁴⁸ P. Anker, op. cit., pp. 100–101, pp. 133–134, pp. 142–44; R. Hauglid, 'Wood carving...', pp. 13, 14; P. Anker, 'Rosemaling, skurd og vevnad', in *Fra forfall til ny vekst...*, pp. 280–281.

⁴⁹ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, illustration, p. 112; K. Visted, H. Stigum, op. cit., p. 288.

⁵⁰ P. Anker, 'Retardering eller renaissance? Om draker og rabarberblader i 16–1700 århundredes folkelige kunsthåndverk', *By og Bygd. Norsk Folkemuseums Årbok*, XXX (1983–84), pp. 16–36; idem, 'Rosemaling, skurd...', p. 281.

⁵¹ P. Anker, *Folkekunst i Norge...*, pp. 116, 117.

⁵² K. Visted, H. Stigum, op. cit., p. 285.

peasant houses, emphasizing that it originated in pagan times. In Norwegian peasant houses, it is used... even today. But the meaning of the horn was greater as various customs and legends were connected with it – that is why I. Wiel (1743) devoted a lot of place to it in his description. The author showed how the local people not only preserved old drinking horns but also used them and remembered countless fairy-tales, stories and legends connected with it, originating in a distant past.⁵³ From the medieval times up until the 19th century a cup in the shape of an animal head was in use.⁵⁴

The strong attachment of peasants to tradition is also evidenced by the ethnographers who study folk dress. A Polish scholar writes that Norwegian attachment to folk dress was connected with their sense of separateness and that in this dress, up until the 18th century, ‘the remnants of archaic clothes’ originating from the times of the Vikings were preserved.⁵⁵ The traditional Norwegian dress had elements originating from prehistory, and the main parts – from late Middle Ages. It stayed in use till the 19th century. Its colors and ornamentation were of such character as well as the cloth was made of unshaped fabrics.⁵⁶ Until 1860s and 70s, a hood was in use in Norway, whose shape was exactly like in the Middle Ages.⁵⁷ In Jølster in northern Norway a special regional outfit is worn until today. This outfit consists of the bride’s crown, exceptionally richly ornamented, originating in the Middle Ages.⁵⁸ Also female everyday head ornaments originated in this period. Shoes made of rawhide were worn in Norway, especially in Telemark, since prehistory and the wooden ones until the 20th century.⁵⁹ The painting in the wooden church in Gol from 1699, which shows the family of a rich peasant Bjørn Frøysok, presents a traditional peasant outfit with shirt and cap exactly like those worn in the Middle Ages.⁶⁰ It is worth mentioning that the landlord holds an axe in his hand, i.e. the tradi-

⁵³ A. Eriksen, *Topografenes verden. Fornminner og fortidsforståelse*. Oslo 2007, pp. 152–153.

⁵⁴ P. Anker, op. cit. pp. 120, s. 122; C. B. de Fine, ‘Beskrivelse over Stavanger Amt’ [1745], in *Norske Magazin...*, vol. III, Christiania 1870, p. 209.

⁵⁵ B. Bazielič, *Stroje ludowe Skandynawii i krajów bałtyckich*, Wrocław 1995, pp. 18, 55, 56–59.

⁵⁶ G. I. Trætteberg, ‘Folk costumes’ in *Native art...*, pp. 148–149; A. Noss, *Frå tradisjonell kleskikk til bunad i Vest-Telemark*, Oslo 2003, p. 237.

⁵⁷ A. Noss, ‘Eit mellomalderplagg i levande tradisjon’, *By og Bygd. Norsk Folkemuseums Årbok*, XXV (1974–75), Oslo 1976, passim; A. Noss, *Jølster og den gamle kleskikken*, Oslo 2005, pp. 8, 133, 13.

⁵⁸ A. Noss, *Jølster...*, p. 8.

⁵⁹ A. Noss, *Frå tradisjonell...*, pp. 237–38, 241.

⁶⁰ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 204

tional weapon of Norwegian peasants already from prehistoric times. The axe remained a popular weapon until the 18th century in the country, having also a decorative and symbolic functions. It was inherited and stayed in the family for many generations. A specimen from 17th century was preserved. The owner put a poetic inscription on it: 'I am an axe which can be relied on/ in the whole Norway I am unmatched / anyone who would like to fight me, should think about it / which should be understood by every man and every woman.'⁶¹ This inscription is striking because it talks about the whole country. Similarly to the already mentioned report by Reichwein, it proves that in the peasant consciousness a sense of connection to the whole country existed, not only to the region.

The customary system of call to arms based on using *budstikker* (bidding sticks) also originated in the Middle Ages and its procedure was codified in the Magnus the Law-mender's law from the middle of the 13th century. According to a previously established route, information was passed from estate to estate in the form of a wooden object which was placed in the doorframe or wall, accompanied by an oral message. This custom was still practiced, although rarely, in the 18th century and from time to time even in the 19th century.⁶² Another way of raising the alarm was the so-called *vard* i.e. wood piles put on hilltops (originally along the coast) and fired up when needed. This method being used in 1718 during the Great Northern War was described by Hans Strøm.⁶³ In 1791 the Swedish agent of Gustav III (1746–1792, king of Sweden 1771), reporting on the preparations the Norwegians made for a possible Swedish invasion, mentioned also that 'all the generals are considering setting up *varderne* (a type of fire signal) from hilltop to hilltop throughout the whole country so that they warned of the coming danger...'⁶⁴ Similarly long-lasting was the sign of possession i.e. *bumerke* placed not only on houses and furniture but also as a signature on documents.⁶⁵

Historians of music point out that the instruments, which remained popular in the peasant community since prehistory such as the willow flute, the horn and the drum and those known since the Middle Ages: the dulcimer, the violin (of a few kinds), the Norwegian zither (*langeleik*) and the mouth harp

⁶¹ R. Rasch-Eng, 'Norske våpen – eller bondeøkser etter 1500', *By og Bygd. Norsk Folkemuseums Årbok XXIV* (1974), p. 63.

⁶² S. Sogner, op. cit., p. 33.

⁶³ A. Eriksen, op. cit., pp. 106–107.

⁶⁴ Qtd. after Y. Nielsen, 'Gustav IIIs norske politik, et Tillæg til "Gustavianska Papperen"' *Historisk Tidsskrift*, series 2, vol. I, Kristiania 1877, p. 291.

⁶⁵ S. Sogner, op. cit., p. 31.

(*munnharpe*) were used until 18th, 19th and even 20th century being used for example during the peasant wedding receptions. The history of these instruments is documented by sources of the preserved instruments (the oldest preserved dulcimer for example come from 1524) and descriptions in medieval sources. Many musical pieces such as lullabies, folk songs, dance melodies or religious songs originate in the past.⁶⁶ The instrument which, however, is most associated nowadays with Norwegian folk music – the violin – was popularized on a larger scale in the 19th century. Norwegian folk dances such as *springar*, *gangar* or *halling* also are of quite recent origin. As scholars presume, they come from the early Renaissance dances from before 1600.⁶⁷

The non-material monuments i.e. fairy-tales take a very special place in Norwegian folk culture. It is a part of this culture which made truly international career as the fairy-tale collections edited in the 1840s by Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe have been translated into many languages. The authors, belonging to the main representatives of Norwegian national Romanticism, considered the fairy-tales as evidence of a thousand-year continuity of Norwegian culture. They believed that these texts had national character since their origins, that they represent Norwegian qualities and that they express the Norwegian spirit. By the end of the 19th century such thinking was criticized as non-academic and ethnographers pointed out that fairy-tales have a transnational character – in every corner of the world the same or similar motifs appear and what was thought to be the essence of ‘Germanic’ spirit appear already in the *One Thousand and One Night* stories or tales from India. As I have already mentioned this criticism was softened a little. Contemporary scholars notice that the fairy tales often present the spiritual world of the past. Even if the motifs are of foreign origin, a few generations might be sufficient to make the fairy-tale more home-like and make it reflect the native culture.⁶⁸ Even more so that in some fairy-tales motifs and anecdotes taken from national, medieval texts such as the Younger Edda. According to one scholar, the ‘norwegianisation’ of the fairy-tales was based on the introduction of the native geographical environment, historical elements, the re-creation of Norwegian customs and

⁶⁶ *Norges musik historie. Tiden før 1814. Leerklang og kirkesang*, ed. A. O. Vollsnes, Oslo 2001, pp. 143, 145, 153, 155–56, 157, 175; M. Bing, ‘Den norske harpa, *By og Bygd*. Norsk Folkemuseums Årbok, XXXI (1985–86), pp. 206–208; P. E. Rynning, op. cit., p. 88.

⁶⁷ J. Krogsæter, ‘Folk dancing’, in *Native art...*, p. 22.

⁶⁸ Ø. Hodne, *Det norske folkeeventyret. Fra folkediktning til nasjonalkultur*, Oslo 1998, p. 102.

lifestyle as well as the use of specific narration, language and sense of humor.⁶⁹ The Polish expert and translator of Norwegian literature, Adela Skrentna, wrote about the Norwegian character of the fairy-tales: 'What is typical of Norwegian fairy-tales? A troll is typical... The hero of Norwegian folk stories is [the boy] Askeladden (i.e. Ash Lad)... Askeladden is good, helpful to those in need and this wins him many aides. He is also an incurable optimist. It is this character that made the fairy-tales so popular in Norway. It might have been because Askeladden impersonates some character traits of Norwegians.

As in fairy-tales from all over the world, also in Norwegian stories, the king and his court appears. It is, however, different. It corresponds to the imagination of the peasants and lumberjacks who lived in faraway valleys... The king from the Norwegian folk tales is a rich agrarian similar to a Norwegian peasant, and the royal court is nothing more than a big, wooden building, a farmhouse. The king with a pipe in his mouth often stands on the doorstep and overlooks the works. The princess, however, can be seen in the cowshed.⁷⁰

Apart from the fairy-tales also legends, myths and customs were handed down from generation to generation. Bishop Nilssøn in his visitation diary wrote about peasant superstitions which occurred in the area he was visiting such as those connected with healing or fire protection. Writers and scholars who visited this region in the 18th century wrote about the very same superstitions and the story about a magical horn, noted down by the bishop (let us add that Bishop Nilssøn's accounts were published only in the 1880s) was later recorded in the same region (i.e. in Telemark) by the 19th century ethnographer Moltke Moe.⁷¹ In bishop's diaries there is a story about an apparition ambuscading travelers and offering them a drink during Christmas time. The same legend – from different sources – was included by Schøning in his Gudbrandsdalen travel description.⁷²

The continuity of folk culture delineates certain environment, certain space within which the identity of individuals and community can be shaped. The elements of this culture are known for generations. They are the same ones as in

⁶⁹ Ibidem, pp. 101, 127, 157, 167, 159.

⁷⁰ A. Skrentna, 'Przedmowa' in P. Ch. Asbjørnsen, J. Moe, *Zamek Soria Moria. Baśnie norweskie*, translated from Norwegian by B. Hłasko, A. Skrentna, Poznań 1975, pp. 5–6; The famous writer Sigrid Undset also wrote about Norwegian fairy-tales in a similar way (A. H. Winsnes, *Sigrid Undset*, Warszawa 1959, pp. 266–268.)

⁷¹ P. N. Grøtvedt, 'Biskop Jens...', pp. 44, 45, 46.

⁷² B. Hodne, *Norsk nasjonalkultur. En kulturpolitisk oversikt*, Oslo 1994, p. 66.

the times of the ancestors and therefore they give people a sense of connection to their past.

The regions where the continuity of these customs seems the greatest are Telemark and nearby Setesdal and Numedal. Partially it also concerned Hardanger. It is in these areas where the most out of the 200 preserved pre-Reformation buildings remain. Also the medieval ornamentations were used there the longest. And here also was the epicenter of old fairy-tales, songs, folk songs, sagas and stories thanks to which this area became a real Mecca for ethnographers already in the 19th century. The dialect of the Telemark inhabitants retained many old, even archaic, features.⁷³ Scholars point out that these regions were distinct among others in Norway firstly as they had a greater number of peasant owners and secondly because of a very stable property structure originating in distant past and based on the allodial law. Large church, aristocratic or royal properties did not exist here. These regions were dominated by not so large farms to a large extent self-dependent at least on a local scale. What is interesting, this area was out of the way of the great historical events and was somewhat isolated. There are no great influences of European cultural trends – the Renaissance and Baroque – which are present in the folk culture of other regions of Norway.⁷⁴ It is thought also that the peasants from Telemark were different from those in the rest of the country. The memory of former freedom was very strong there, which was reflected in their songs. The already mentioned property structure created a good basis for resistance to the authorities of both state and church (and together with that also to the foreign cultural influences).⁷⁵ Let us remember that by the end of the 16th century both Jens Nilssøn in his visitation notes and minister Friis were writing about the ‘wild and disobedient’ peasants from Telemark. What is interesting, already bishop Øystein Aslaksson (around 1337–1407) in 1395 complained about the inhabitants of Telemark in precisely the same way.⁷⁶ Here violence and solving problems with knife and fist seemed to be more common than in every other place. These peasants resisted the authorities and could not get used to the discipline demanded of them by the absolute authorities. They retained their independence, nearing the concept of the mythical ‘proud and free Norwegian peasant’. According to the Romantics every Norwegian peasant should be like this – impersonating the authentic fea-

⁷³ P. N. Grøtvedt, ‘Biskop Jens...’, pp. 44, 45, 46.

⁷⁴ P. Anker, *Folkekunst i Norge...*, pp. 147, 150–153; idem, ‘Retarding eller’..., p. 39.

⁷⁵ P. Anker, ‘Retarding, eller’..., p. 39.

⁷⁶ P. N. Grøtvedt, ‘Biskop Jens...’, p. 43.

tures of Norwegian character (spirit). But according to one historian: 'A peasant from Telemark was not a typical Norwegian'. What is interesting, however, was the attitude of Danish authorities to these people. Without condoning the rebellious nature and disobedience, the authorities could not ignore the valor and courage of this people. They attempted to use these behaviors in creating the ideal of a Norwegian peasant equipping him, at the same time, with deep loyalty and faithfulness to the king.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Ø. Rian, 'Den frie og stolte...', p. 148.

PART TWO

**18TH CENTURY TRANSFORMATIONS
OF THE NATIONAL IDENTITY OF THE ELITES**

CHAPTER ONE
DANISH POLITICS TOWARDS NORWAY
AFTER 1660; THE CHANGES OF THE ELITES

The modern bureaucratic, national and dynastic state (including the absolutist Oldenburg dynasty) worked towards uniting and bonding its subjects around one center. This gave birth to integrational efforts, however, not always according to the rulers' expectations. In a multinational conglomerate state not all the groups necessarily automatically sensed their connection with the center. It sometimes happened that the integrational tendencies of the state resulted in a reverse consequence: by the law of opposition and resistance, an identity was born, which was not connected or not wholly connected to the center. The Norwegian historian Sverre Bagge wrote about the situation in which the dynastic conglomerate state was not only pre-national but also anti-national i.e. it fought the national tendencies which were dangerous to the whole.¹

This was the case of Norway: the integrational and centralization-oriented attempts of the absolutist state caused resistance and pushed the elites to integrate not with the Danish center but with the people of the country where they lived. It turned out that the elites have more issues, businesses and emotions in common with the indigenous people (from which, on the other hand, they had different social views and, to a large extent – culture) than with Copenhagen, although the majority of families originated from Denmark. The politics of the state worked as a stimulating factor, causing the acceleration of the national identity formation and, finally, the revealing of the program. It cannot be treated as the main contributing factor, as the shaping of identity concerned the reinterpretation of the extant identity model and thickening of the bond between the elites and the local people.

The elites originating from Denmark found themselves in the situation of divided loyalty. The attempted compromise solution was for a time the idea that one can separate the attachment to the rulers from the attachment to Denmark or to be more precise, that one can reconcile the 'royal' patriotism i.e. faithful-

¹ S. Bagge, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

ness to the dynasty from the country of origin with the 'Norwegian' patriotism i.e. with the love of the country of birth and living. It turned out, however, that this effort was doomed to failure.

Absolutism as the system of undivided and unlimited royal power strived for a largely understood unification. In the beginning it concerned only the legal systems but with time also other spheres were affected by this tendency. Secondly, absolutism strived for centralization i.e. the accumulation of power in the hands of the king, which meant: in the hands of the Danish-German aristocratic-clerical elites actually residing at the court. In consequence, the change of the political system caused the abolition of many local government institutions, which before had given ample opportunity to express one's own identity or to articulate political interests. These institutions were among others the meetings of the estates, homage meetings and the local town governments. As one historian stated, thanks to the fact that the meetings of the estates existed, in Norway there existed the possibility of creating independent political institutions.² Their abolition not only limited the political activity of the society but also meant that a forum where important opinions were expressed was eradicated. Therefore, after the year 1660 the official clerical sources (such as protocols from the estate meetings), which would give us some information about the sense of identity of the participants of these meeting, are no longer available.

Gradually, peasants were losing their legal competences which were exercised through things or *lagrettmann*. Treated as evidence of sustained till that time independence, also the office of the Chancellor was abolished. The strong unification tendencies caused the final changes in the law. A new, unified Danish codex (*Danske Lov* – 1683) was created but soon in 1687 its Norwegian counterpart – *Norske Lov* – was put together. Although some differences were preserved, for example the allodial law, the codices were similar, which meant a serious limitation of legal distinctiveness of the Kingdom of Norway. The references to the 'everlasting' St. Olaf's law were no longer used. One of the consequences of centralization was the phasing out of the Norwegian office of *Stattholder*. It existed without a break until 1739 since when it stayed vacant. It was re-activated in 1750, only to be abolished in 1771. The king appointed the *Stattholder* only during the Napoleonic wars i.e. soon before the union was disbanded in 1814. These facts illustrate a very characteristic tendency: the at-

² H. Jensen, *Dansk-norsk vekselvirkning i det 18. Århundrede*, København 1936, pp. 12–14.

tempts to delegate competences and power to Norwegian institutions were met with an opposite tendency: that of the full centralization of power in Copenhagen. Only during the wars or acute crises the Norwegian institutions were granted the right to make important decisions.³

According to some Norwegian historians, the consequences of the introduction of absolutism were indisputably negative. The politics of centralization caused that the political situation of the country was defined by such phenomena as: total subjugation to the royal power, lack of legal guarantees of retaining the separate laws and in fact the status of a province.⁴ However, this deterioration was likely to bring other long-term effects because the sense of separateness could thrive on the accumulating discontent.

In the absolutist state there was a strong tendency for the state to regulate as many issues as possible: starting from big politics and law and ending with everyday lives of the citizens. Many spheres were under the state's rationing, which, taking into account the large extent of centralization, meant that every inhabitant who wanted to obtain anything: office position, employment, financial aid, permission to start a business had to personally apply for the official decision in the capital. For Norwegians this was especially inconvenient because of large distances.

What is worse, the central authorities in Copenhagen who produced numerous regulations, quite often revealed a glaring lack of knowledge about the Norwegian circumstances, together with differences in social, legal or even climatic areas. Historians do not doubt this, pointing to many facts connected with it. The fact that the Danish authorities were not well informed about Norwegian relations caused the situation in which the answers and reactions to supplications of the subjects were misguided and the authorities often made wrong decisions.⁵ The decisions undertaken as a result of mercantile politics concerning customs on crop imports to Norway (1669) and the crop monopoly (1735) were clear evidence of the lack of awareness of the Norwegian situation – the government did not realize that the crop production in Norway was so small that even together with the Danish import it did not satisfy the needs.⁶ This decision therefore condemned the subjects to the continuous threat of famine – it is difficult to assume that it was a conscious decision. Decisions

³ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, pp. 91, 92.

⁴ H. Jensen, *op. cit.*, pp. 12–14.

⁵ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 113; *idem*, *Maktens...*, pp. 54–55, p. 88.

⁶ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, p. 106.

taken in the 1760s had even more dramatic consequences. It was at this time when the Copenhagen government decided to introduce extraordinary poll tax (*ekstraskatten*) not realizing how heavy a burden it would be for the Norwegian population. This resulted in peasant revolts (*strileskrigen*).⁷ The next crisis occurred in the years 1786–1787 i.e. the unrests called the Christian Lofthuus⁸ uprising. It also however occurred, although seldom, that such ignorance was beneficial to the Norwegians: in the 1660s the government did not realize that the cadastral commission working in Norway which was registering the Norwegian resources was constantly underrating them to lower the tax burden.⁹ It must be stated, however, that the authorities in Copenhagen were making attempts to change this, although these were national initiatives. Planning reforms, the government in 1743 sent a list of forty questions to all officials, mostly ministers, which concerned the economic conditions, statistical data from different spheres to illuminate the state of the country. This data stayed rather unused but the initiative became a direct inspiration for many people to take up efforts, whose results were topographical works, which will be discussed later.¹⁰

The data concerning breaking of the law may attest to the difficulties people had with adapting to such regulations and to how exaggerated and excessive they must have seemed to them. The studies on crime among peasants in the 17th century showed how the structure of offences changed. While in the years 1617–19 the offences labeled generally as ‘disobedience towards the authorities’ constituted 25 per cent of all crimes, in the years 1656–59 it was already 49 per cent. This data, although from the period before the absolutism was introduced, is reliable because the process of increasing the competences of the state (and alongside this the demands from the inhabitants) was already initiated by Christian IV together with the program of monarchy modernization.¹¹

⁷ Ø. Rian, *Embetstanden...*, p. 87; idem, *Maktens...*, p. 104.

⁸ Christian Jensen Lofthuus, b. 1750 d. 1797, peasant leader, an owner of a sawmill and lands in southern Norway; he initiated complaints against officials to the authorities in Copenhagen, collecting peasant signatures; the commission established in 1787 recognized these complaints as valid but Lofthuus was arrested; peasants came to his defense and riots ensued.

⁹ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, p. 86.

¹⁰ S. Supphellen, ‘Den historisk-topografiske litteraturen’, in E. B. Johnsen, T. B. Eriksen (eds.), *Norsk litteraturhistorie. Sakprosa fra 1750 til 1995*, vol. I, 1750–1920, Oslo 1998, p. 201.

¹¹ Ø. Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen...*, p. 53.



The introduction of absolute rule, and especially its unification program, brought about a formulation of a new type of internal politics, which was the politics of a unitary country i.e. *helstatspolitik*. During the whole absolutism period such politics delineated the method of referring to different parts of the monarchy. The politics of unitarianism was shaped by the authorities in Copenhagen relatively late – only in the 2nd half of the 18th century. In practice, however, Frederick III had already started it. Unitarianism meant a drive to ‘retain at all costs all the parts of the monarchy and their slow integration with Denmark proper...’¹² In this concept of the state there was no place for any kind of separatism and for emphasizing one’s own identity. All the inhabitants were to be first and foremost the subject of the Oldenburg king and the future goal was to incorporate them into one nation or other community.

The final formulation of unitarian politics came about directly after the dramatic period of Johann Friedrich Struensee’s (1737–1772) rule. In the years 1770–71 he was a self-appointed ruler of the monarchy, a German, the court doctor of the mentally ill Christian VII (1749–1808, king 1766) and his wife’s lover. He became the cause of a serious crisis. Despite freedom and modern tendencies Struensee’s rule was perceived in Denmark as the rule of ‘the hated foreigner, the German’ who deprived the king of power and became the queen’s lover and the one who dishonored the dynasty and the Crown. This period was treated as the perpetuation of the German domination from the previous king’s rule, Frederick’s V (1723–1766, king 1746). After abolishing the Struensee’s rule, which occurred as a result of an action supported by the queen mother Juliana Maria (1729–1796) and her son, the Hereditary Prince Frederick,¹³ a new group came to power, who, headed by Ove Høegh-Guldberg,¹⁴ initiated the politics of national reaction.

¹² G. Szelągowska, *Poddany i obywatel. Stowarzyszenia społeczne w Danii w dobie transformacji ustrojowej w XIX wieku*. Warszawa 2002, p. 31.

¹³ In Norwegian and Danish languages *arveprins* (Ger. Erbprinz); this is not direct heir to the throne, this title being the Crown Prince (*kronprins*), but a claimant further down the line. Frederick the Hereditary Prince (b. 1753 d. 1805) was the son of Frederick V, a step brother of king Christian VII and the father of the future king of Denmark Christian VIII.

¹⁴ Ove Høegh-Guldberg, b. 1731 d. 1808, a Danish politician, historian; teacher of the Hereditary Prince Frederick; the leader of his cabinet from 1771; 1780 secret advisor and titular minister of state, de facto minister and member of the state cabinet; after the coup

It was expected that the inhabitants would treat the whole monarchy as their home country and not only some parts of it. In practice, Guldberg's politics gave confidence to the Danish national sense becoming the basis for the Danish patriotism. Such was the meaning of the decree which replaced the German language in the Danish army as well as the significance of the changes in the education system i.e. the introduction of Danish language in Latin schools (1775). These were the reasons why many Danish intellectuals supported such politics. The works of Peder Frederik Suhm¹⁵ and Ove Malling (1747–1829) were most significant. The former in 1776 published the *History of Denmark, Norway and Holstein* (which was personally censored by Guldberg¹⁶) and the latter, in the following year, published *The Great and Good Deeds of the Danish, Norwegians and inhabitants of Holstein*. Both works were used in schools as textbooks and presented the monarchy as an undivided whole, making the faithfulness and loyalty of the inhabitants towards the authorities the highest virtue of the citizens. At the same time Guldberg had a rather reluctant attitude towards the plans of studying abroad. His reaction to a request for financial support is known to be such that there was no point in going across the river Eider to obtain knowledge. However, it is worth noting that he eventually provided the financial aid.¹⁷ The capstone of Guldberg's politics was the act concerning 'the privileges of birth' (*Indfødsretten*) from 1776 which introduced the law that all the offices in the country could be appointed only to the people who were born in this country i.e. Denmark, Norway and Schleswig-Holstein. According to a Danish historian, the introduction of such a law in times when a citizen-based notion of homeland dominated in Europe, was rather unheard of and foreshadowed in fact the politics of national state, although at the same time, multinational state.¹⁸ It can be worth discussing whether the traditions that

d'état of the Crown Prince Frederick (1784), he was nominated as *stiftamtmand* in Århus; the author of a three-volume history of the world (1772).

¹⁵ Suhm Peder Frederik, b. 1728, d. 1798, Danish aristocrat, historian; 1751–65 lived in Trondheim, where he married an heiress to a merchant fortune Karen Angell and together with Gerhard Schøning and Johan Ernst Gunnerus established the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters (1760); the author of a 14-volume history of Denmark (*Historie af Danmark*, 1782–1828).

¹⁶ O. Feldbæk, 'Dansk og norsk. Fællestiden sidste slægtled' in M. Skougaard (ed.), *Norges-billeder. dansk-norske forbindelser 1700–1905*, København 2004, p. 70.

¹⁷ V. Helk, *Dansk-Norsk studierejser 1661–1813*, vol. I, Odense 1991, p. 304.

¹⁸ O. Feldbæk, 'Fædreland og Indfødsret. 1700-tallets danske identitet', in O. Feldbæk (ed.), *Dansk identitetshistorie*, vol. I, *Fædreland og modersmål 1536–1789*, København 1991, p. 111.

originated in the Middle Ages, which described access to offices in a similar way, were similarly significant. And if we link this tendency with the Enlightenment period, should we not notice the relationship between this current of this era, which turned away from the universal image of culture and – inspired by Rousseau and Herder – emphasized the significance of one’s own, national culture which should be defended against foreign influences?

The attempt at reconciliation in the *Indfødsretten* between the national and multinational state was based on the introduction of the place of birth as the basic identification category, but on the other hand, this place consisted of the whole kingdom. Bolstering the confidence of Danish inhabitants, Guldberg was at the same time reinforcing the unitarian foundation of absolute rule. He rejected, considering them a threat, all national tendencies within the borders of the kingdom. One of his statements directed at Suhm during the works on the above-mentioned textbook was: ‘There are no Norwegians. We are all the citizens of the Danish state. Do not write for those dreadful wiseacres from Christiania.’¹⁹

The reactions of the Danish society to Guldberg’s politics were enthusiastic. But from the Norwegian point of view it had a completely different dimension. *Indfødsretten* was supposed to hamper the development of national separatisms.²⁰ It is no wonder then that the Norwegians (similarly to the inhabitants of the principalities) reacted quite skeptically to the bill of *Indfødsretten*.²¹ We may suppose that this law did not have any larger meaning for the Norwegians. For the Norwegian elites Germans or other foreigners did not constitute a problem as they did not contend for the Norwegian posts; the problem were the Danes themselves, more and more often perceived as competition.²² This problem was not resolved by the bill.



As we will see, the great majority of Norwegian elites were willing to accept as theirs the main elements of the *helstatspolitiken*. A sense of connection to the dynasty, respect and attachment to the particular monarchs, strong royalism

¹⁹ S. Dyrvik, O. Feldbæk, *Mellom brødre 1780–1830*, Oslo 1996, (*Aschehougs Norgeshistorie*, ed. K. Helle, 1994–1998, vol. VII), p. 83.

²⁰ O. Feldbæk, ‘Fædreland og Indfødsret...’, p. 201.

²¹ Idem, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, p. 284–86; we know from elsewhere about homage; for example an occasion poem was written by J. N. Brun.

²² Ø. Rian, *Hvordan...*

characterized many officials, both lay and clergy. This was also present in the lower social classes. But the Norwegians were aware at the same time that the main part of the unitarian policy, the thesis that all parts of the monarchy are equal and are treated equally, remained pure theory.

Helstatspolitiken meant not only the absolutist unification of the country but also strongly reinforced the centralization tendencies, especially those connected with the Copenhagen striving to centralize power. The Oldenburg monarchs, being aware of the variety of their subjects – as the differences between the Norwegians, Danes and Germans from the principalities were to be seen with a naked eye – treated the centralization of power as the condition for keeping the country together.²³ Therefore, in Copenhagen not only the king with his court resided but also the most important state offices – lay and military – and institutions of economic character such as numerous manufactures, the central bank (*Kurantbanken* established in 1736) or insurance agencies. The capital, being very well fortified, served an important military function. Copenhagen was also an intellectual center as the seat of the head of the Church and its central institutions as well as thanks to the existence of Copenhagen University, which everyone who wanted to be a clerk must have finished. In the 18th century all created institutions of scientific and artistic character were placed in Copenhagen. These institutions were: the library, theaters, scientific societies and the fine arts academy. The capital was privileged compared not only to Norwegian but also Danish (especially Jutland) towns.²⁴ Such concentration was beginning to be very inconvenient for Norwegians. The Danish government, however, did not intend to take their pleas for creating their own institutions in their country, such as university or bank. The government was prepared to defend the privileged position of Copenhagen. For example, already in 1722, there was a project to publish a newspaper *Ridende Mercurius* in Bergen. This plan was prepared by a Dane but the Copenhagen publishers, who wanted to uphold their dominant position won government's favor and did not allow the publishing plan to come to fruition.²⁵ All such initiatives were perceived by the government as evidence of separatist tendencies and as a threat to the unity of the monarchy. It is not surprising then that there was a slow erosion of the sense of loyalty that the Norwegian elites had towards Denmark.

²³ Idem, *Maktens...*, pp. 84, 132–33.

²⁴ S. Sogner, op. cit., pp. 116–118.

²⁵ Ø. Davidsen, *Et 200-års minne. Om grunnleggelsen av regelmæssig pressevirksomhet i Norge*, Oslo 1963, p. 92.

It is worth to note here, that at the same time Danish authorities were friendly towards the increased local and individual social activity of the Norwegians in the 18th century. What could have had an influence on their attitude was undoubtedly the enlightenment and modernizing character of their internal politics (and in fact of the state, which had – at least in the 18th century – installed internal reparatory mechanisms, which was evidenced by the undertaking of a grand reform scheme by the end of that century). All efforts to gain economic or civilizational progress, setting up organizations and societies of scientific or economic character, individual actions of ministers – the propagators of progress – were accepted by the authorities. Guldberg himself was sympathetic towards the requests for financial support for the Norwegian Science Society, and Hereditary Prince Frederick became its patron and official chairman. This way the patriotic activity of Norwegian officials was channeled.²⁶



The Norwegian reservations towards the Danish rule were increasing as a result of the fact that the difference between the political practices and official propaganda was increasingly more sharply visible. The propaganda proclaimed the equality of all parts of the kingdom. The term coined in 1728 by the historian Andreas Hojer (1690–1739) – ‘the twin kingdoms’ (*Tvillingriger*) became truly popular. From the point of view of the king – there is one country and from the point of view of the citizens – two, wrote Hojer.²⁷ This term was supposed to signify the equality of both countries, the trait that – as we will see – was also emphasized by Ludvig Holberg, who highlighted the difference of state politics before and after 1660. Christian VI during his travel across Norway in 1733 denied the request issued by the townspeople from Christiania for new privileges for the city, stating ‘equal brothers – equal chances’ (*Gleiche Brüder, gleiche Kappen*). This sentence was supposed to mean that because of the equality of treatment for all the parts of the kingdom, the king cannot grant privileges to some over others. It cannot be excluded that the emphasis in the official documents (especially those issued after 1720) on the equal treatment could have resulted from the anxiety concerning the ultimate loyalty of the

²⁶ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 66.

²⁷ S. Heiberg, ‘Det oldenborgske monarki. Danmark og Norge 1536–1814. Et rids’, in *Norgesbilleder...*, pp. 18, 35.

Norwegians (the case of Povel Juel could have given the Danish authorities a lot of food for thought).²⁸

Moreover, the authorities did not resign from the names that had been in use till that day – still (especially in the first half of the century) they spoke about the Norwegian kingdom, Norwegian crown and of the ‘cherished Norwegian subjects’. What is more, we can talk about the continuous sympathy and interest, and in the 18th century, as a result of a romantic-sentimental attitude to Norway, about its idealization.²⁹

Since directly after 1660 discontent and anxiety surfaced, which were caused also by the lack of response to Norwegian requests that were presented earlier, king Frederick III in 1664 sent his illegitimate son Ulrik Frederik Gyldenløve to Norway giving him the position of the *Stattholder*. The main task of the young prince was to calm down the atmosphere and to convince Norwegians to accept the new system of rule. Due to that he could enjoy great independence. During the war in the 70s the situation was similar. Gyldenløve retained his position until 1699, long enough, to gain significant popularity among the Norwegians. This happened as a result of the efforts to lessen the taxation burden, heavy penalties for the officials who abused power or officers who mistreated soldiers and peasants.³⁰ The *statholder* was remembered in history as ‘peasants’ friend’; his opinions on the Norwegian peasantry became famous. He appreciated their significance. Among others in the following way: ‘The well-being of peasants is the most important thing and the basis of preservation of the whole kingdom of Norway’.³¹ Additionally, the official (and later his successors) constantly appealed to the Norwegian sense of patriotism.³² He appealed to their love for the country (Norway), faithfulness to the kings – whom he called the kings of Norway, scrupulously avoiding any references to Denmark. In 1693 he wrote that it was difficult to find a nation which would, as the Norwegian peasants, love their country so much thinking it was the most fantastic country in the world.³³ Apart from that, certainly, Gyldenløve was putting into practice the politics of the absolutist country: he was making the tax system more efficient and developed the military. As a result, as was counted by historians, at the

²⁸ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, pp. 124–125.

²⁹ S. Heiberg, op. cit., p. 15.

³⁰ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, p. 90.

³¹ Qtd after S. Sogner, op. cit., p. 87.

³² Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, p. 98.

³³ K. Lunden, *Nasjon eller union? Refleksjoner og røysler*, Oslo 1996, p. 148.

beginning of the 18th century Norway overtook Sweden, becoming the most militarized country in Europe: having one soldier for each 25 inhabitants. The times of Gyldenløve's rule were characterized by the consolidation of merchant-bureaucratic elite that had been forming already before 1660.³⁴



One of the first manifestations of the sentimental fascination in the 18th century is said to be the journey of the king Christian VI and queen Sophie Magdalene (1700–1770) to Norway in 1733, which lasted many months. This journey was not only a standard journey of a new monarch, concerning the rule of and administration of the country. It was to be a clear ideological message: the presence of the king's spouse was supposed to show an ideal image of the marriage; the visit in Norway was to symbolize the ideal state of the union of both countries, based on harmony and perfect unity. This message was especially important for the queen, who soon after the coronation (1732) established a medal with the motto: *L'union parfaite*.³⁵ The memorial of the travel was an album put together by a Norwegian official Henrich Willemsen *Norske Reise Anno 1733* (The Norwegian Journey, anno 1733). The album contained colorful drawings showing the mountainous landscape, precipitous rocks and hanging bridges which showed the difficulty and dangers of the travel. However, overcoming these difficulties by the royal couple and their court resulted in a positive evaluation of this 'wilderness'.³⁶

The second way to commemorate Christian's VI Norwegian journey was the 'Norwegian house' built in Hirschholm, which harmonized with the environment on the outside i.e. with the baroque and classical palace architecture, but inside it had interiors and decorations typical for a Norwegian cottage. It was created at the express wish of the queen Sophia Magdalene who wanted it to remind her of Norway.³⁷ The work was completed by the Norwegian carpenter Gabriel Bortzmann, who was brought from Norway. Around the house Norwegian 'national' trees were planted i.e. spruce, which did not grow in Denmark at the time.³⁸

³⁴ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, p. 91.

³⁵ E. Westengaard, 'Lykkelig den som rejser i Norge. Christian 6. og Frederik 5. rejser til Norge 1733 og 1749', in *Norgesbilleder...*, pp. 87, 100.

³⁶ S. Sogner, op. cit., pp. 40, 43.

³⁷ W. Swensen, '«Det norske Huis» i Danmark. Kontaktskapende kongerejser', *By og Bygd. Norsk Folkemuseums Årbok*, XVIII (1964–65), Oslo 1966, p. 10.

³⁸ E. Westengaard, op. cit., pp. 93, 97.

The fashion for Norway re-appeared in connection with the journey of the next ruler Frederick V in 1749. It was, in fact, much more modest and devoid of certain royal sheen as the journey of 1733 had but it brought forth an extraordinary work *Nordmandsdalen* (the valley of Norwegians). It was a collection of natural size sculptures situated in the park of the royal palace Fredensborg in the northern Zealand. The statues represent men and women in Norwegian (60 sculptures) and Farer (10) folk costumes. They were ordered by the king Frederick V from a German sculptor Johann Gottfried Grund, who fashioned his works after the 10-centimeter ivory figurines by a Norwegian wood-carver Jørgen Kristensen Garnaas. Historians presume that the personal involvement of Frederick V in creation of the garden decorated with Norwegian sculptures could have been a result of his favorable feelings towards the Norwegians. A contemporary diarist noted that during the visit in 1749 the king showed his friendliness towards his Norwegian subjects and he wanted to gain popularity among them; during the banquets he raised toasts ‘to all Norwegians!’, ‘to all thinking in Norwegian way!’ and of course ‘to Norwegian girls’ – using the local, Norwegian word: *gjenter* (modern Norwegian: *jenter*).³⁹ It is known also that also later the king stayed in close contact with Norwegians – especially peasants – who turned to him with different requests. It is also known that between 1762–63 Frederick took personal interest in the Norwegian troops stationed in Copenhagen, who were withdrawn from the seven-year war front: the king financed the medical care of the sick soldiers.⁴⁰ It is, however, also an expression of cultural tendencies, which appeared in Denmark at this time: fascination with the exotic, ethnicity – which will become of interest to the Romantics – farming and peasants, authenticity and primordialism. The Enlightenment political thought in turn, bringing with itself the category of full-fledged citizens, the cult of freedom and human rights, including equality, focused the attention on a different model of society. These new interests were unavailable to the Danish peasant because of low social status, the institution of serfdom and lack of freedom.⁴¹ In the culture of Danish Enlightenment the Norwegian peasant became the local variant of ‘the noble savage and together with the wild

³⁹ [C. Deichman] ‘Historiske Optegnelser af...’, in *Meddelelser fra det Norske Rigsarchiv, indeholdende Bidrag til Norges Historie af utrykte Kilder*, vol. I, Christiania 1870, p. 20.

⁴⁰ G. Norrse, ‘Fra de norske troppers ophold i København 1762–63’, *Historiske Meddelelser om København*, series 4, vol. VI, København 1959–60, p. 326.

⁴¹ A. Oxaal, *Drakt og nasjonal identitet 1760–1917. Den sivile uniformen, folkedrakten og nasjonen*, Oslo 2000, pp. 35, 41, 73–74, 79.

nature, associated with freedom, he was included into the symbolic realm.⁴² At the same time, he could become a paragon of a citizen and a patriot.

On the other hand, the park by the Fredensborg palace in this shape, personified various ideas connected with the official politics: equality of both parts of the 'twin monarchy' (it was also symbolized by a monumental sculpture, personification of Denmark-Norway). The significance of Norway in the union, resulting from the growing economic potential and military importance, different status of peasants, treated, at least in propaganda, rather as citizens than as subjects, also could become a motivation to create works, which were to illustrate the 'eternal' faithfulness of Norwegian peasants to the Oldenburg throne. The artistic project was in agreement with the European ideas of the time that viewed the North as the cradle of freedom, retained mainly by the strong, proud and free Norwegian peasants,⁴³ not mentioning the nascent pre-romantic tendencies.

Such predilections of the Danish court could have had a double effect. They could have been received positively; they could have given a sense of confidence and increase the pride in one's own country. At the same time, however, they could have been irritating, because it was clear, that the rule of equality that concerned both parts of the kingdom was often overlooked in view of the practically privileged position of Denmark (and Copenhagen) in the union and the concept of the legal and political distinctiveness of Norway was being displaced by the idea of a unified and central state. The concept of twin kingdoms was to be treated as its camouflage and the praises of Norway as some sort of compensation for Danish rule and subordination of Norway.⁴⁴



From the 17th century, the process of the elites becoming more Norwegian (norwegisation) can be observed. It was, generally speaking, the process of changing the social and national structure of this group and the appearance of new perception that was connected with the slow assimilation and enculturation of the people coming from Denmark, who were assigned various positions here. Since before the 1660 Norway was ruled by the Danish nobility, those

⁴² E. Westengaard, op. cit., p. 100.

⁴³ M. Skougaard, 'Det norske haveteater. Nordmandsdalen i Fredriksborg in *Norgesbilleder...*, pp. 110–111, 115.

⁴⁴ S. Heiberg, op. cit., p. 35.

people were also the widely understood clientele of the Danish noblemen, who were given administrative, court and church duties. Despite the fact that the nobility was not interested in assimilation with the local community, though there are examples of a sympathetic interest and assimilation of nobility, the case was different with the clientele. This group lived much closer to the local peasantry meeting with them daily. It was them who were the seed of the formation of the new Danish-Norwegian elites after 1660. As a result of the fact that older, medieval Norwegian elites had been disappearing for at least two centuries, the new elites began to dominate. Most of their members originated from mixed Danish-Norwegian families. And many came from the Danish families settled down in Norway.

The new elites can be divided into three groups: nobility, bourgeoisie and the officials' estate. As a result of the low presence of noble families, and the loss of their privileged position, their role in shaping national culture was insignificant. The bourgeoisie did not engage in much intellectual activity, although it served as a large recruitment base of people who used pen as their profession. From our point of view, the officials' estate was the most important, even more so as it was this group who would have the decisive influence on the Norwegian public opinion and cultural changes in the 18th century. In the time of the absolutism between 1660–1814, these elites 'gained a more Norwegian character in confrontation with the Copenhagen authorities'.⁴⁵

The new elites are referred to as Danish-Norwegian elites, emphasizing the significant – and in some cases dominant – role of the Danish element in their formation. And at the same time, we deal with the increasing process of settling down of these elites. After 1660 many noble dignitaries returned to Denmark, not necessarily accompanied by their local clientele.⁴⁶ These people, being in family relationships with the local community, often had been born in Norway, did not see much sense in returning to Denmark. They were left 'alone' in Norway: their perception changed as the need to integrate with those surrounding them appeared. Already in the 17th century, the elites, although dominated by the people originating from Denmark, had Norwegian identity, Rian writes.⁴⁷ Born in Norway, raised in Norway, very often having Norwegian mothers, and finally working in Norway people, who, though remembering about their Danish roots, this part of their families and being still in contact with its members,

⁴⁵ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, p. 132.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 85.

⁴⁷ Ø. Rian, 'Danmark-Norges historie. Refleksjoner...', p. 381.

more and more identified with the country they lived in. The Danes living in Norway felt differently than those in Denmark – so they soon started to identify with Norway, and eventually defend it (and its interests) in the fight with the Copenhagen center.⁴⁸ As we have seen, already before 1660 such identification led to a construction of a certain program: the nobility demands or postulates brought forward by the bourgeoisie and the clergy in the years 1657–1661. Generally, this was a postulate concerning giving equal rights to Norway in the union.⁴⁹

The norwegianisation of the elites meant at that time the growth of the percentage of people born in Norway compared to the immigrants. Generally speaking, the number of officials between 1660–1800 was growing. It is estimated that in 1660 there were about 1100 officials in the country: 400 church officials, 400 – civil and 300 officers. In 1800 there were 1800; the number of church officials remained the same but there were 600 civil servants and 800 officers.⁵⁰ It is generally believed that in the first period of absolutism the majority of the officials were Danish. More precise research of the Bergen district (before 1660 – fiefdom and later – a diocese) showed that the Danes constituted 78% of the *fogder* and were slightly over a half among the district judges and the group of ministers consisted predominantly of people born in Norway. For years 1700–1750, the parish ministers consisted of 70 to 80% of people born in Norway. This increased to 90% by the end of the 18th century. This tendency concerned the bishops as well: between the years 1720–1814 21 bishops were appointed, 15 out of which were born in Norway.⁵¹ In total, it is estimated that among the 1800 officials at the beginning of the 19th century 1250 were born in Norway: 500 officers, 350 ministers and 400 civil servants. The majority of them had a Danish father and Norwegian mother, which most probably had a large influence on the development of the connection with the birthplace.⁵² Also con-

⁴⁸ Ø. Rian, *Hvordan...*; idem, *Den nye begynnelse...*, p. 235; idem, *Maktens...*, p. 123; idem, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 63.

⁴⁹ Idem, *Maktens...*, p. 84.

⁵⁰ This rather small number could be extended: the group of people connected with the authority in Norway by the end of 18th century was, according to Rian's estimations, around 8 thousand; he added non-commissioned officers, lower clerk personnel and the servants of the officials; lower officials in the villages and cities, chaplains, ministers. Proportionally to the rest of the population it amounted to one member of the authorities every 110 inhabitants, while in France at the same time, these proportions were one to around 80. (Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, p. 109).

⁵¹ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, pp. 50–51.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 54.

cerning the nobility, a view has been formulated that Norwegian mothers and wives contributed to the fact that new generations identified more with Norway than with Denmark.⁵³

No less important were the links resulting from career connected to Norway or from the owned lands.⁵⁴ In this time the slow process of making the elites (officials and merchants) economically independent from the state occurred. As a result, their links with the local community were becoming tighter and were becoming more local and familiar, one can say, 'native' in character. As we could see during the period of absolutism, the elites more and more were able to reproduce themselves although there still remained the sense of being discriminated against caused by the fact that Norwegians lost in the recruitment process for the official positions, especially those of higher status and bigger remuneration, with the Danes. However, all the time the Norwegians took up the challenge, which was the result of the economic activity and gaining wealth by the Norwegian officials, who took advantage of the developing trade in the 17th century.⁵⁵

What may be also significant was the fact that Norwegian elites, in contrast to Schleswig ones, did not integrate themselves with the authorities and social elites of Copenhagen – they did not belong to the court-official circle of people, who spent their time in the capital and had close connections with the rulers. The Norwegian elites remained a group that was consistently marginalized.⁵⁶



The process of norwegianisation of the elites was also connected with the economic changes, because apart from the difficulties in obtaining a post, it was those changes that made Norwegians realize the difference in their position. Firstly, the direction of the development of each country was different: Denmark remained a rural country and Norway to a large extent changed to trade, shipping, and industry. Thanks to this, market economy started to develop more quickly in Norway and its role in the international trade i.e. export of timber and fish became increasingly more important in the economy of the whole

⁵³ Idem, *Den nye begynnelse...*, p. 114.

⁵⁴ Idem, *Hvordan...*

⁵⁵ Idem, *Maktens historie...*, p. 112; Idem, 'Danmark-Norges historie. Refleksjoner...', p. 381, p. 384.

⁵⁶ S. Heiberg, op. cit., pp. 37, 39.

kingdom. The economic growth encountered, however, some obstacles, which was noticeable already before 1660 and which was reinforced by the introduction of absolutism. The mercantilist rationing in the economy as well as centralization, which led to consolidating all the financial institutions in Copenhagen soon turned out to slow the progress down. It was clearly visible that even independently from the rulers' will on balance it was the Danish interest that won. It can be said that the Danish government was not interested in developing a strong and independent Norwegian economy. It wanted, however, to ensure the income from the export of Norwegian raw materials. Such vision was put forward in the work of a Danish luminary from the beginning of the 18th century Otto Thott (1703–1785), a member and later the leader of the trade commission in Copenhagen. In his work *Considerations on the State of Trade (Uforgribelige tanker om Kommerciens Tilstand)* from 1735, Norway is presented as a marginal country, which had only three valuable resources at its disposal: fish, timber and minerals. Thott wrote about modest perspectives of development for Norway, also as a result of small population. And among them, he added bitterly, only drunkards and idlers.⁵⁷

Such Danish politics resulted in the situation where in the 17th and 18th century Norwegian (that is the ones operating in Norway) entrepreneurs: merchants, owners of sawmills, forests and coalmines started to realize that their interests did not completely overlap with Danish interests.⁵⁸ It is true that Norwegian bourgeoisie originated from Norway only in small percent: a large percentage were migrants from different European countries such as Germany, Scotland, the Netherlands and Denmark itself. The segment of Norwegian bourgeoisie was significant and their social mobility was, naturally, bigger. Moving from the peasant to the bourgeoisie stratum (and in the next generation to the office worker class) was proportionally greater in this group, and their links with the local people were at the same time stronger.⁵⁹ The economic interest caused the dependence to be serious. In the natural way it favored the development of the connection to the country of inhabitation: the townspeople united against the 'foreign' authorities in Copenhagen. Additionally, it caused the development

⁵⁷ S. Mentz, 'Mellem verdensmarked og helstat. Norges dynamiske eksportøkonomi' in *Norgesbilleder...*, p. 47.

⁵⁸ F. Bull, *Fra Holberg til Nordahl Brun. Studier til norsk aandshistorie*, Kristiania 1916, p. 11; K. Lunden, 'History and society' in W. H. Hubbard et al. (eds.), *Making a historical culture. Historiography in Norway*, Oslo 1995, p. 21; Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 65.

⁵⁹ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, p. 117.

of transport which systematically integrated this, otherwise geographically divided, country.⁶⁰ The bourgeoisie was getting wealthier as a result of the rapid economic growth. They were gaining a sense of strength and of their capabilities. An opinion was emerging that their demands were justified, and that the inhabitants had the right to co-decide about their country.⁶¹

However, this problem did not concern only the bourgeoisie elites but the whole society. All the inhabitants of Norway could find out rather painfully what it meant to be subjugated to the Danish economic interests when in 1735 the government introduced the already mentioned corn monopole (*Kornmonopolet*), that is the exclusive right to supply southern Norway with corn by Denmark (this law did not concern northern Norway). In fact, one can speak about the privileged position of Danish producers on the Norwegian market already in 1669 when a very high import custom tax was introduced on foreign corn.⁶² The corn monopole was often suspended and its evaluation is rather ambiguous. Historians draw attention to the fact that it did not have such a catastrophic effect on the situation in Norway as the contemporaries suspected. It is important, however, that the Norwegians associated the monopole with high prices, with the duty to buy the worse Danish corn and, in extreme cases, this law was accused of causing famine. And these sentiments could not be changed even when, for the sake of treating equally all the parts of the kingdom, in the same 1735, the Danish government presented the Norwegian iron producers with an import monopole to Denmark. This was, however, not considered a fair compensation, especially that at the same time the authorities imposed the maximum price on this iron. The economy politics, as we can see, was an enormous breach in the whole *helstatspolitik* since it meant in fact treating Norway (as well as Iceland, where the monopole was also in force with similarly damaging result) as a separate part of the country.



Foreign politics, especially with Sweden, is also an important background to the changes taking place in the elites. Not only did it create real possibilities to increase the country's independence but also the Swedish – Danish relations influenced the attitudes in Norway. The conflicts with Sweden were taking place

⁶⁰ Idem, *Den nye begynnelse...*, p. 235.

⁶¹ Idem, 'Danmark-Norges historie. Refleksjoner...', p. 384.

⁶² Idem, *Maktens...*, pp. 105–106.

on the Norwegian territory and Norwegian loyalty seemed to be a crucial factor so the Danish authorities introduced, like in the previous centuries, the politics of encouraging Norwegians to resist against Sweden which resulted in actions sometimes directly supporting national sentiments. Firstly, in the situation of more precarious relations with Sweden neither a consistent *helstatspolitik* nor excessive centralization were possible. This was visible during wars with Sweden: between 1675–79 (*Gyldenløvefeiden*) and during the Northern war between 1709–1720, the so-called eleven-year war. As every military conflict, these wars too, independently from their objectives and the will of the rulers, contributed to the growth of patriotism and national feelings. According to the unanimous opinion of historians, in the wars from the second half of the 17th century and in the northern war, the Norwegian aversion to take part in the battles was not noticeable anymore. On the contrary, the Norwegian army presented valiance and sacrifice. This had an influence on the position of the elites. While till the half of the 17th century the officials found it difficult to reconcile their Norwegian sympathies with the loyalty to the throne also because of the aversion of Norwegians towards fighting, now this problem had disappeared.⁶³

During the war, Norway was automatically gaining larger autonomy, which was mostly connected with the working of central institutions: *Stattholder*, commander in chief of the army and *Slottsloven* – a special commission which dealt with fortifications and with military competences. This situation was immediately abolished after the end of military action. In fact, this meant that after 1720 (the end of the northern war) there were no possibilities to expand these competences and sometimes even to retain the central institution in the country. During peace times the monarchs preferred that the commander-in-chief of the Norwegian army was near them rather than in Norway.⁶⁴ This was the case with the prince Charles of Hesse-Kassel (1744–1836) who was the commander-in-chief of the Norwegian army between 1772–1814; he visited Norway twice: in 1772–73 and in 1788. Both visits were connected to tensions in relations with Sweden.

It is true, however, that in the second half of the 18th century the position of Sweden did in no way match its capabilities and successes from the previous century, or even from the period of the northern war, but neither did Sweden re-

⁶³ Idem, *Embetsstanden...*, s. 64–65.

⁶⁴ Swedish agents were reporting at the time about the gossips making rounds in Norway: Denmark was to be afraid to send somebody significant to Norway because Norwegians could choose him as their king. (Y. Nielsen, 'Gustav IIIs...', p. 70).

sign from the expansion on the Scandinavian peninsula nor did Denmark stop to fear this invasion. The Swedish ambitions to conquer Norway were still alive, especially when it came to the part of political elites. When in 1772 Gustav III gained full political power as a result of a *coup d'état* it was evident that he was really ambitious and felt deep hatred towards the Danish Oldenburgs (which, however, did not prevent him from copying Danish land reforms) and so in the eyes of the Danish authorities the threat became real. Gustav was dreaming about re-creating the kingdom position of Sweden and of re-gaining the territories lost in the wars of the first half of the century and at the same time opposing Russia, whose expansive politics often had Danish support. One of the ways this could happen was to separate Norway from Denmark. Gustav was convinced about Norwegian hatred towards the Danish rule and about their desire to be free from 'Danish subjugation'; he believed that one brave man was enough to fuel revolution against Denmark.⁶⁵ Therefore, he initiated politics, whose aim was to find support in Norwegians. The propaganda action that was undertaken was to organize a traditional journey (which had medieval origins) round the country (*Eriksgata*), along the border with Norway.⁶⁶ Soon the threatening news in Copenhagen was that Gustav was concentrating his army by the border. At this time, in January 1773, in Norwegian churches the king's proclamation was announced. The king wrote that abroad there were rumors 'offensive to the loyalty and unwavering dedication of Norwegian subjects'. He, therefore, decided it was essential to announce to the Norwegians his firm belief that if necessary the Norwegian nation would confirm its dedication to the king and dynasty with blood.⁶⁷ However, at the same time the authorities were preparing for a different development: in a secret instruction to the prince Charles of Hesse-Kessel it was written that a possible uprising in Norway should be brutally repressed. If the Norwegian troops joined the Swedish army, they should be treated as enemy.⁶⁸ As it can be seen, the Danish king was ready to accept Gustav's calculations as real. Eventually Danish authorities decided to sign an 'eternal alliance' with Russia in 1773, which was directed against Sweden. In the light of these facts, the dismissal of Norwegian requests to have greater independence can be interpreted not only as a result of unitary politics but also as being caused by the fear that Norwegian separatism inspired by a larger institutional indepen-

⁶⁵ Ibidem, pp. 27–28.

⁶⁶ O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, p. 196.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, p. 287.

⁶⁸ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 140.

dence would drive the society to seek a treaty with the Swedes. The question remains if these calculations were right. Most probably it was just the other way round: the pro-Swedish tendencies in Norwegian politics were caused rather by (much later) the growing opinion that the interests of Norway and Denmark were diverging. It was the opinion that the Danish politics, overly concentrated on Danish affairs, was detrimental to Norway.

The reactions of Eastern-Norwegian elites to the activity of the Swedish agents are a demonstration of that. Beginning in 1770, Gustav (still as the heir to the throne) sent his representatives to Norway, both officially as diplomats and unofficially. They had the task to identify Norwegian attitudes, spy and report evidence of anti-Danish sentiments and at the same time disseminate pro-Swedish propaganda. The reports from all these emissaries often contained information about Norwegian discontent, which was however limited to complaining.

The renewal of Swedish actions occurred in the 1780s. The instigation to intensify the activities was the Christian Lofthuus uprising in 1786 although it is emphasized that it would be difficult to describe it as having any national character. It is possible, however, that the leader himself might have gained such views. There is an account of the meeting with Lofthuus that took place in prison – rattling his shackles – the rebel said ‘in this way is a man who wanted to free Norway treated.’⁶⁹ A historian very moderate in his conclusions – Yngvar Nielsen wrote: ‘At this time, the sentiments in Norway were indeed such that the skillful Swedish influence, more than at any time before, could have been successful or at least could have led to weakening the relations with Denmark.’⁷⁰

In the meantime, the international relations were becoming increasingly tense. After the breakout of the Russian-Turkish war propitious conditions were created for Gustav to make an attempt to realize his ambitions plans. Danish authorities, taking into consideration the Swedish action, started to make some arrangements. It was necessary to placate the sentiments in Norway. This aim was to be achieved by abolishing the corn monopole and later, in June 1788, the visit of the heir to the throne, Crown Prince Frederick.⁷¹ Many demonstrations

⁶⁹ Y. Nielsen, ‘Gustav IIIs...’, p. 45.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

⁷¹ Frederick VI, b. 1768 d. 1839; the king of Denmark from 1808, of Norway 1808–1814; he took over the throne as the lord protector in place of his mentally ill father, Christian VII, as a result of palace coup 1784 overthrowing O. Høegh-Guldberg; he supported big social reforms in Denmark in the 80s and 90s; from 1797 he personally took decisions in foreign policy, making an alliance with Napoleonic France in 1807; in January 1814 he

of support took place at this time; the country was inundated with occasional literature in which the authors declared their love and loyalty to the throne. Norwegians, however, used the occasion to display their Norwegian patriotism and formulate dozens of postulates addressing the authorities. All this contributed to the very lively atmosphere of the second half of 1788.

In the summer of 1788 the Swedish-Russian war broke out, in which Denmark was ready to fulfill its alliance duties and take part in the military action against Sweden. Some role was played by the Norwegians who formed several regiments and organized an 'auxiliary expedition' to Gøteborg under the command of Charles of Hesse-Kessel.⁷² In fact, the expedition occurred practically without any fighting, after a month, the army withdrew. The Norwegians had mixed feelings. Traditionally, nobody wanted to take part in the war especially if it meant going abroad. But the negligible effect of the expedition as well as its appalling organization caused discontent and disappointment. A Swedish agent reported that Norwegians did not appreciate being sent to Sweden and that they believed that the Danish authorities should use mercenary soldiers.⁷³ When, however, in November 1788 prince Frederick visited Christiania again, the Norwegians in their imagination started to perceive the expedition as a courageous epic and a small skirmish near Kvistrum became a significant battle.⁷⁴

Another period of tensions between Denmark and Sweden occurred in spring 1789. Swedish agents were reporting to the king about the peaceful attitude of the Norwegians but at the same time they stated that in the country a dislike of the Danish government was growing.⁷⁵ Such feelings were kindled by the outbreak of the French Revolution. In Christiania the events were closely followed and although the city was very far from rebellious sentiments, in the eyes of the Swedish consul general the situation escalated to the 'boiling point'.⁷⁶ The consul, and unofficially an agent, as every agent had undoubtedly a tendency to exaggerate but there is other data that attests to unrest and large expectations. In autumn 1789, a rich merchant from Christiania, Bernt Anker

signed peace in Kiel foregoing the rule over Norway; 1811 he founded the Norwegian university in Christiania; being a staunch supporter of absolutism, in 1834 he agreed to establishing the advisory provincial estate assemblies in Denmark.

⁷² I.e. the so-called *Tyttebærkrig* – the cowberry war – the name came from the fact that there were very poor provisions for the soldiers who had to obtain the food themselves.

⁷³ Y. Nielsen, 'Gustav IIIs...'; p. 193.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 139, 171, 179, 182.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 220, 222.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 255.

(1746–1805) travelled to London and rumors were disseminated that under cover of his business he intended to make some efforts in order to gain ‘independence for Norway’. Yngvar Nielsen cautiously concluded: ‘There is a lot of evidence that in winter 1789/90 the thought about breaking off the union or at least about bringing about deep change was not foreign and there was discontent in political circles.’⁷⁷ Maybe not only in the political circles as in 1790 in his reports the British consul John Mitchell wrote about ‘a significant increase in the country of the feeling of discontent with the Danish rule as well as about spirit of independence’. He also described riots where the dislike of the Danes was voiced.⁷⁸

In march 1790 king Gustav III ordered his close associate Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt (1757–1814) to start talks with the ‘Norwegian opposition’. In the meeting that took place in a Swedish border town Eda (Eda Skanse) on 11 March 1790 the Norwegian side was represented by four merchants and entrepreneurs from eastern Norway. The agreement was not reached but nevertheless it was decided that contacts should be continued (until Gustav’s III death in 1792). According to Armfelt’s report, the Norwegians were interested in independence and the union with Sweden was not appealing to them also because – under the influence of the idea of French Revolution – they did not want to introduce aristocratic rule in Norway of the kind as in their mind existed in Sweden.⁷⁹

The Eda Skanse conspiracy is treated suspiciously by Norwegian historians. The economic motivation of the plotters is emphasized (they all came from eastern Norway, for whom the economic ties with Sweden were especially important). Apart from that, it is true that the Norwegian public opinion had no idea about the action and most probably would not join the rebellion. The idea seemed rather insane and even if one takes into consideration extensive Swedish assistance. Simply, the Norwegian independence (not mentioning the military fight to achieve it) did not exist at that time in the ‘expectation range’ of the Norwegians.⁸⁰

And even so, the plot cannot be totally disregarded. It meant that the idea of independence appeared in the mind of some Norwegians. It meant that the

⁷⁷ Ibidem, pp. 223, 224, 225.

⁷⁸ ‘Stemninger i Norge omkr. 1790. Breve fra den engelske konsul i Oslo’, ed. A. Bugge, *Historisk Tidsskrift* XXVIII (Oslo 1927–29), pp. 111–112.

⁷⁹ Y. Nielsen, ‘Gustav IIIs...’, p. 261.

⁸⁰ O. A. Storsveen, ‘Fornuftig kjerlighed til Fædrelandet’. En analyse av norsk patriotisme mellom 1784 og 1801’, in *Norsk patriotisme før 1814*, Oslo 1997, pp. 59–62, 10.

development of national identity of Norwegian elites reached its climax – the conviction that it is possible and necessary to create an independent, national country. Now it was dependent on the external circumstances how quickly this idea would spread in the Norwegian society.



Social, economic and political factors led to changes in mentality. This is another side of the process of norwegianisation of the elites i.e. of developing their identity which based mostly on the connection with birthplace, more broadly with the natural and cultural environment in which one grows.⁸¹ An increasingly stronger belief in one's distinctiveness was connected with this.

Since we deal here with a migrant population, to a certain extent it is the process of assimilation. Accepting the local culture, growing into the local population, the development of the sense of 'being from here' connected with pride and an emotional link are indispensable elements of such assimilation. However, at the same time it is a process of re-interpretation of the concept of national community and the shape of identity. The outcome is a new quality, which, as we will see, is so strongly linked with the former idea that there is an impression that what had occurred is a slow evolution, a slow development rather than "birth" or 'awakening'. Colloquially speaking, to be awakened, one must have been asleep. In Norway of the 16th and 17th century – as far as national identity is concerned – nobody was sleeping.

We have observed how in the 16th and 17th century the identity and the feeling of belonging to the Norwegian nation manifested themselves, having the name and relation to the Norwegian country and law. The connection with this community, in a typical way of development of identity at this stage, based mostly on birthplace which was the main identifying element used to differentiate oneself from 'the stranger'. It concerned the whole community although at the same time we have here the connection of regional or even more local character.⁸² The incomers from Denmark – as well as their sovereigns – did not have any doubts that they found themselves in a country radically different from Denmark. Every person born and raised in Denmark must have noticed how

⁸¹ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 23; Such ideas occur in Holberg, but also e.g. in P. F. Suhm, *Nærværende 18de seculi Charakter i IV stykker, udkastet af... Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter*, vol. IV, Kjøbenhavn 1768, p. 145–149.

⁸² Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, p. 27.

different the natural world of Norway was. Certainly a person from Denmark accustomed to lowlands and rural landscape experienced shock when coming into contact with mountainous Norway with its severe climate.⁸³ It was not yet the fascination with the majestic and wild Norwegian landscape, however. As we have already seen, the nature and natural environment were rather fear-provoking as they were seen as dangerous. But a great difference between the geographies of Denmark and Norway must have caused a belief that since we live in such different lands we have to be different.

Secondly, a newcomer from Denmark noticed that he is in a country which could not be labeled as another Danish province because the country possesses a legal and historical distinctiveness. This was made in some way evident by the Danish politics as well as by the behavior and reactions of residents to various decisions of the authorities. This is connected to the third, hypothetical, reflection that a Dane settled down in Norway could have had. It was the perception that that the local population forms a community not only different from any other – Danish, Swedish or German – but also a community being aware of this difference, being able to name it and keen to cultivate it.⁸⁴ The newcomers from Denmark dealt with the population conscious of its distinctiveness. What has been already discussed: invoking traditional law, formulating political postulates, a specific language in which the matters of the country were discussed – language, let us remind, overtaken by the Danish authorities, who reinforced this consciousness with their politics – all of this attested to national identity. The contact with culture – with academic and literary works written after 1536 – grounded this impression.

But the way of thinking about Norway and its affairs characteristic after 1536 – characteristic both for the local elites and for peasants – was slowly losing its power. As we have already seen the main markers of identity, apart from birthplace, were also law and historic memory. However, after 1660 being a Norwegian as well as assimilating of newcomers into the local population and culture started to become associated with trouble because for the Danish authorities the criterion of birthplace was equally important, becoming the reason for discrimination. The politics of the government, different from that in the former era, was more and more visibly turning against the Norwegians, gradually changing the country into another province. What was worse, the

⁸³ Idem, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 63.

⁸⁴ F. Bull, *Landet og litteratur. Artikler og taler*, Oslo 1949, p. 10; Ø. Rian, *Den aristokratiske fyrstestaten...*, p. 29.

declarations and reality clearly diverged. The declared equality of all parts of the country was in practice fictitious; the ‘beloved subjects’, ‘most loyal of all’ Norwegians were more and more clearly realizing that, although not any more as a result of nobility’s action, they still are treated as second-category citizens.



To sum up, until absolutism was introduced, Norway remained to a large extent the same as it was before 1536. The difference, as we can see, unpleasant for the elites, was connected with the displacement of local by foreign nobility. Central power structures were moved to Copenhagen, similarly as it had been in the 15th century. The abolishing of Catholic Church was a setback to national culture but in fact the Old-Norse language disappeared already before the Reformation. The social change connected with it, for example the influx of Danish ministers, was spread over time and it was not felt as severe. Meanwhile, the change of the system in 1660 meant a rapid modernization of the administrative system. The growth of bureaucracy, together with the increase of the competences of the authorities, and what follows, its growing interference in people’s lives, led to a situation in which every subject had to deal with the state institutions much more often than before.⁸⁵ In the case of subjects living in Norway – regardless of whether they came from Denmark or whether they were natives – this change caused many unpleasant experiences and difficulties in daily life, which directly resulted from the fact that one was a resident of Norway. Now the discontent with the union with Denmark did not originate in the nostalgia of the former glory but current difficulties in daily life. Referring to the glorious past, invoking such markers of one’s identity as one’s own law, the figure of St. Olaf, which were an important ingredient of Norwegian identity, no longer satisfied the new Danish-Norwegian elites. Firstly, they felt they lived in a different reality, and secondly they were also completely different people.

In this situation there was a need for re-interpretation – a new formulation and verbalization of the identity. Many of the activities of the elites in the first half of the 17th century, as we have already seen, were aimed just at this. Those who were interested in the place they were living in, wanted to deal with the reality that surrounded them. History – recorded history but also the material monuments – constantly provided evidence for the distinctiveness and magnif-

⁸⁵ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, pp. 113, 132.

icence of their new country. This however was not sufficient. It was necessary to find contemporary factors whose description and characteristics could become the constitutive matter of identity.

In a certain sense what foreshadowed the new way of thinking about Norway were the petitions by ministers and bourgeoisie presented to Frederick III during the homage assembly in 1661, which have already been discussed. Let us remember that both groups requested the central institutions for Norway to be built: the resort colleges – legal, church and state – ‘governmental’, trade, the high court and university. Such demands indicate that Norwegian elites were aware of the direction in which the state reform would go and wanted it to have the same character in Norway as it had in Denmark. The idea was to create analogous, bureaucratic structures. The matter did not concern the plans of autonomy, self-government (although the desire to have one’s own central institutions was connected with such an idea) not to mention independence, but the fact that the modernization program of the government also included Norway in a beneficial way for this country. The supplicants most probably took the government’s announcements about the equality of both countries at face value. As we know, the obstacle to fulfilling the requests – which were in fact truly justified – was a different idea of the state – the unitary state.

The new way of thinking was also evident in the science program formulated by Thormodus Torfæus in the last decades of the 17th century. This historian was planning to create (in the shape of a collective work by the local ministers) a new version of the description of Norway, assuming that the work by Peder C. Friis from the beginning of the century was already out of date. He wanted to include information not only geographical in nature but also descriptions of various interesting places such as strongholds, battlefields, more prominent manor-houses. Next to these historical ‘monuments’ also economic information was to be included: kinds of soil, crops, unusual and rare things in water, minerals and metals. What also needed to be included were old stories and superstitions that circulated among peasants. The project, which was to be financed by the king, did not come into fruition.⁸⁶ But it is a proof of the fact that Torfæus – consciously or subconsciously – felt that a work about the glorious history of Norway of which he was the author, was not sufficient. He believed that academic activity should encompass the current reality and that the contemporary Norway and its inhabitants deserved their own ‘description’.

⁸⁶ J. R. Hagland, ‘Om skrivare hos Tormod Torfæus på Stangeland in *Den nordiske histories fader...*, pp. 46–47.

On the other hand, the interest in this matter was very common at the time in northern Europe. Such academic projects were present in Denmark; we know them also from England where in the second half of the 17th century John Aubrey was attempting to join his traditional antiquarian interests with Bacon's epistemology, which dominated in the newly-established Royal Society, in fact creating thereby a research project into folk culture: he believed that the accounts of living people should be written down and he investigated the customs of peasants.⁸⁷ One of the interpretations of these phenomena treats the interest of the modern era in folklore as a rationalization instrument of an ancient idea about the divine origin of royal power. This concerned the sanctification of the land and transferring divinity to it: the country was supposed to possess 'natural' powers residing in the local language, tradition and links with the past. Studying these issues, connected with the lives of simple folk was to be a part of the program of formulating national ideas, which was developing in the elite circles in the 16th and 17th century.⁸⁸ Returning to the Danish-Norway territory, let us cite a story when in 1732 Danish-German-Norwegian aristocrat Frederik Anton Wedel⁸⁹ came to a court ball in the guise of a peasant from Telemark. Similar disguises were used at the balls in Gottorp palace in 1683.⁹⁰



The reinterpretation of national identity undertaken in Norway, which was tightly connected with the process of the elites' assimilation, demanded closer contacts with the local peasants. The new elites had to learn how to be Norwegian. A good source of knowledge about it were old books (as we have seen, the model they contained was slowly going out of date) or people, who were Norwegians 'since always' i.e. peasants. Such education occurred mostly in the

⁸⁷ G. Parry, *The Trophies of Time. English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century*, Oxford 1995, pp. 276, 296.

⁸⁸ R. D. Abrahams, 'Phantoms of Romantic Nationalism in Folkloristic', *Journal of American Folklore*, CVI (1993), 418, pp. 4, 16.

⁸⁹ The Wedel family came from Holstein; sources trace it back to the 13th century. It divided into five lines, which developed in Sweden, Denmark and Norway where it settled in the 17th century. In 1683 the Marshall and commander in chief of the Norwegian army Gustav Wilhelm Wedel (1641–1717) bought Jarlsberg lands and received the title of earl. Since that time the family took the name of Wedel Jarlsberg. Frederik Anton Wedel Jarlsberg was his grandson and he himself was the grandfather of Johan Casper Herman W. Jarlsberg (1779–1840) – the main figure in the fights for the country's independence in 1814.

⁹⁰ M. Skougaard, op. cit., p. 118

18th century and its process and outcomes are visible in the activity and writing of the contemporary officials. But the beginnings were to be observed already in the 17th century.

We may briefly indicate that the readiness for such a bond was obvious in many activities undertaken by the elites, for example, in taking interest in peasants' language and postulates to use their language to communicate. A certain interest in peasants can be observed i.e. in their lives and customs. Such material was included by Friis and Berntsen in their project as well as by Torfæus. Peasants and their life were the main topic of the poems by Peter Dass. The contacts between the two social groups were becoming closer. In the 18th century, similarly to what we have seen in the case of Danish elites,⁹¹ this position was strengthened by the European cultural tendencies, as a result of which the elites took up the task of 'organic' work for the country and peasant community treating such work as a manifestation of patriotism. Respect and admiration for the peasants are increasingly common in the sources.⁹² Academic interests were born or developed: research into peasant language or dialects, customs, beliefs and daily life that is all that is currently classified as anthropological or ethnographic interests. 18th century researchers attempted to describe the peasant national character and peasant economy. The peasant dress became a motif in the artistic creations already in the 40s, from when the oldest preserved wooden figures in peasant dress originate. Dolls dressed in such a way were also becoming more and more popular. Let us remember that such dolls in regional dress were the models for the sculptures in Nordmandsdalen. Their popularity increased: they were taken to the king's *Kunstammer*; they could be found in the collections of many dignitaries. Around 1760 a sophisticated silver model of a mechanical wardrobe was created in Norway, which was filled with dolls in folk clothes.⁹³ The drawing of a peasant fighting with a bear was an ornament of an iron furnace made in steelworks in the 1760s.⁹⁴ It was often the case that a

⁹¹ During the already mentioned visit of Christian VI and his spouse in Norway (1733) a significant event took place: one of the dignitaries organized a party to which seven older peasant married couples were invited together with their children and grandchildren. They danced a folk dance for the royal couple showing strength and vitality of 'the people living among nature' (A. Oxaal, *Drakt og nasjonal identitet 1760–1917. Den sivile uniformen, folkedrakten og nasjonen*, Oslo 2000, pp. 64–65).

⁹² Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 119; 'Et norsk stridsskrift mod embedsmagten fra trykkefrihetstiden', ed. D. A. Seip, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, series 5, vol. 3, Kristiania 1916, p. 405.

⁹³ A. Oxaal, op. cit., pp. 43–47.

⁹⁴ S. Sogner, op. cit., p. 180.

ship was named *Den norske Bonde* (a Norwegian peasant) or *Den raske Bonde* (a quick peasant).⁹⁵ The publicists who were writing anonymously for the press signed their texts as ‘peasants’.⁹⁶ Some significant events occurred during the visit of Crown Prince Frederick in 1788: on his route when entering and leaving the cities, a suite of mounted peasants appeared at his side with torches and unsheathed sabers or traditional axes. It was supposed to be a symbol of peasant loyalty and readiness to defend the prince. The newspaper *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler* was reporting these manifestations eagerly.⁹⁷

Simultaneously, in literature and especially in poetry a tendency to idealize peasants developed and to perceive the quintessence of the nation in them.



A question can be posed, however, whether, taking into consideration still extant class divisions, the differences in positions and differences in culture, such exchange was possible. It was typical for the era to treat peasants with superiority, distancing oneself from them, and emphasizing one’s place on a higher step of the social ladder. In the case of Norway, however, there are grounds to believe that peasants did not allow others to treat them in such a way.

We have already presented the egalitarianism existing in Norway, which was quite unusual in the modern society. Such egalitarianism was the result of a special position of the peasants – their individual freedom, ownership of land, participation in the public or even political life as well as the result of the fact that they served – as in the Middle Ages – in the military defense forces. Various changes reinforced the tendencies to perceive peasants as co-citizens (or rather co-subjects of an absolutist monarch).

First of all, a significant number of Norwegian peasants were literate. Striving to pursue a pietistic renewal of religious life, King Christian VI in 1739 introduced a bill ordering compulsory reading classes for children. The analysis

⁹⁵ L. Opstad, ‘Kulturprovinsen Norge’ in *Norges kulturhistorie...*, vol. III, p. 8.

⁹⁶ PET, ‘Til Hans Kongelige Høihed Kronprinds Frederik ved Ankomsten i Trøndelagen den 10. Julii 1788, *Minerva*, vol. IX, København 1788, p. 243; O. Feldbæk, ‘For Norge, Kjæmpers Fødeland. Norsk kritik og identitet’, *Historisk Tidsskrift* LXXIII (Oslo 1994), 1, p. 39.

⁹⁷ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler* No 27, 2VII; No 31, 30 VII; No 51 17 XII 1788; Years later Jacob Aal (1773–1844) reminisced how by the entrance to Skien, the prince was greeted by a hundred of peasants from Telemark in ‘true national clothes’ with ‘wide axes’ (S. Dyrvik, O. Feldbæk, op. cit., pp. 22–23).

of parish sources showed that at the time literacy had already been developed. Already in 1625 the bishop of Oslo Nils Glostrup (ar. 1585–1639) reported that in the eastern Norway there were peasant children who could read.⁹⁸ In the 18th century there are known places where 80 to 90 per cent of the population born before 1710 could read. In Haram parish in western Norway in mid-18th century in almost every household there were printed books of mostly religious character. The research into book printing in Norway showed a rapid increase in the numbers of published works of this character between 1725–1775. In Upper Telemark the number of books possessed by peasant families (according to research on documents concerning inheritances) clearly rose in the first decades of the 18th century, which signifies that more and more books were being bought by the generations born between 1640–1690.⁹⁹ In the second half of the 18th century peasants were writing letters to newspapers, corresponded with each other, wrote diaries or propositions to the Science Society to be awarded prizes for rationalization and modernization of their farms (and those prizes were indeed awarded). The propositions were not schematic but contained precise and detailed descriptions of the activities or introduced changes. Often the local officials helped in formulating such applications: *fogder*, ministers or district judges.¹⁰⁰ As one historian noted, the image of peasants that is evident from the sources i.e. backward and without any understanding was a conscious auto-creation which was supposed to help them avoid punishment. Peasants were mobile, increasingly better educated and interested in the world around them. They received impulses and ideas from abroad, although this concerned mainly the peasants living on the coast.¹⁰¹ In some sense, as we will see, this was confirmed by the officials complaining that peasants started to adopt foreign fashions, wasted money on things from abroad etc. A characteristic episode was described by a historian from a later period: in the times of wars with Great Britain between 1807–1814, around 5 thousand Norwegian sailors were taken prisoner by the British. The majority of them used this time to learn how to

⁹⁸ H. Refsum, 'Christian Stub, Kjeld Stubs sønnesøn. En embedsmand i Bergen kritiserer Ludvig Holberg som historiker for overdreven lokalpatriotisme', *Årbok for Romerike Historielag*, VI (1966), p. 63.

⁹⁹ J. Fett, 'Lesekunde og bøker i norske bondesamfunn', in *Norsk litteraturhistorie. Sakprosa...*, pp. 184–189.

¹⁰⁰ A. Mikkelsen Tretvik, 'Bondens brev', in *Norsk litteraturhistorie. Sakprosa...*, pp. 91–93; A. Apelsest, 'Lærdom, borgarlegging og skriftkultur', in *ibidem*, p. 48; M. Aase, 'Kvinner premiesøknader' in *ibidem*, p. 85.

¹⁰¹ G. Sætra, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

navigate. Large scale courses were organized with the help of the officers.¹⁰² Finally, as Arne Apelseth concludes: 'On the turn of the 18th and 19th century most of the Norwegian peasants were in the midst of the process which can be called the modernization of mentality and cultural practices.'¹⁰³

Peasants could become partners for the officials when the government after 1660 initiated the process of selling churches – they were often bought by peasant communities which took over their management. From 1740s after school reforms, peasants cooperated with the officials also in the areas of school management and care for the poor.¹⁰⁴

Another interesting phenomenon is evident in the court sources: although things had lost their legal privileges becoming rather only a background for the district judge, the legal competences of peasants increased. Peasants knew the law, were aware how to use it in their own as well as community's interest. They learned to solve conflicts in the courtroom not in the inn or 'behind the barn'. This phenomenon finds confirmation in the observations of the officials and their common complaining about peasant argumentativeness and barratry.¹⁰⁵



After 1660 the process of shaping new elites in Norway accelerated. It was a phenomenon linked to the assimilation which, at the same time, had its social and mental dimensions. In the social dimension we observe the integration of newcomers from Denmark with the autochthonic social groups: the Norwegian nobility and, first of all, the local peasantry. Marriages, economic ties, similar position in relations with the Danish authorities were factors in this assimilation process. The new elites were creating, however, a new identity. The process of reinterpretation of the extant identity was not supposed to reject its older indicators. On the contrary, there is a certain continuity between the elites of the 16th and 17th centuries and people of the Enlightenment era. We can speak about the complementation and adding new elements to the identity. New times brought new challenges: the integration would not have been successful if the newcomer had not come into a deeper spiritual contact with the local

¹⁰² B. E. Johnsen, 'En sjømans 'skatkammer' in *Norsk litteraturhistorie. Sakprosa...*, p. 72.

¹⁰³ A. Apelseth, op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁰⁴ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 117.

¹⁰⁵ E. Sandmo, 'Et opplyst og stridbart folk' in *Norsk litteraturhistorie. Sakprosa...*, pp. 181–183.

population. The interest in this population grew and together with it – respect, sympathy and finally the readiness to work to improve the village environment. In most cases, when such work was undertaken, it was motivated by patriotism: the elites already at this time had a developed sense of identity – a sense of connection with land and people. In the 18th century what could start was the phase of verbalization of the national identity: discourse in which the country should be identified, characterized, which should delineate loyalties and problems and, finally, name things which were evoking emotions. Such discourse was not only a translation of emotions into words – it was simultaneously their sanction and legitimization.

When after 1660, Norwegians were confronted with the requirements and politics of a modern country a new problem appeared. The new, re-interpreted identity should take into consideration the fact that Norway was a part of Oldenburg monarchy, as it was believed with equal rights, equally treated and loved by the rulers. Both the elites as well as peasants were convinced that Norway is a nation with its own history, nation in essence political and this was connected with the idea that the Crown is not only Danish but also Norwegian.¹⁰⁶ As in many modern conglomerate nations it was necessary to find a formula in which Norwegian identity, with references to tradition of one's own state, could be reconciled with belonging to a large kingdom. Such a formula was created by two Enlightenment writers: Ludvig Holberg and Erik Pontoppidan.

¹⁰⁶ Ø. Rian, *Hvordan...*

CHAPTER TWO
THE INFLUENCE OF LUDVIG HOLBERG
AND ERIK PONTOPPIDAN ON THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE NATIONAL IDENTITY IN NORWAY

Both writers take a prominent place in the Danish-Norwegian culture in the first half of the 18th century, although there were many differences between them as they represented different world views and intellectual trends and they originated from different backgrounds.¹ This is probably the reason why both in Danish and Norwegian historiography it is difficult to find works where

¹ The part devoted to Holberg in this chapter was presented at the conference 'Ludvig Holberg: tracing the common European identity' which took place in Gdańsk on 16 and 17 April 2004 and was published under the same title in the collection: *Inspiring the 18th century Norwegian national movement – Ludvig Holberg and his works*, eds. M. Sibińska, K. Michniewicz-Weisland, Gdańsk 2005, pp. 31–39. In Polish there are not many works on Holberg. Recently, the first biography of this author has been published: K. Szelańska, *Ludvig Holberg. Uczony, pisarz, prześmiewca*, Białystok 2014. The main characteristics of him and his work can be found in the following works: M. Krzysztofiak, *Przewodnik po literaturach skandynawskich*, Poznań 2000, pp. 53–56; S. H. Kaszyński, M. Krzysztofiak, *Dzieje literatury duńskiej*, Poznań 1985, pp. 47–57; biographical entry by S. H. Kaszyński in *Słownik pisarzy skandynawskich*, ed. Z. Ciesielski, Warszawa 1991; focused mainly on his theatrical achievements are works of M. Sibińska, a. o.: afterword in: *Ludvig Holberg, Jeppe ze Wzgórza i inne sztuki*, translation, compilation and afterword by M. Sibińska, Gdańsk 2004, pp. 121–135; *Skandynawski wiek światel. Doświadczenia teatralne Ludwiga Holberga*, Gdańsk 2011; on Holberg's and his contemporaries political thought: K. Szelańska, 'Myśl polityczna wczesnego Oświecenia w Danii-Norwegii' based on the doctoral dissertation *Wczesnooświeceniowy światopogląd w Danii-Norwegii w świetle twórczości Ludwiga Holberga i jego współczesnych*, Warszawa 1986 (the typescript in the library of the Warsaw University Institute of History), *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski*, 3/1990; on Holberg's reception: eadem, 'Ludvig Holberg w Polsce i Rosji XVIII w.', *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, no. 11–12, 1985. Erik Pontoppidan (b. 1698 d. 1764), minister, historian, theologian; from 1723 he worked as a minister connected to the movement of moderate pietism. In 1734 he became the court's chaplain; in 1738 a professor of theology on the University of Copenhagen. He held many state position and published many academic works. He authored the textbook for confirmation, which was in use in Denmark until the end of the 19th century entitled *Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed, udi en enfolding Forklaring over M. Luthers liden Katekismus* ('Through truth towards the fear of God, through unified clarification of Luther's Small Catechism'), 1737.

their output would be simultaneously analyzed. Holberg – a poet, playwright, philosopher and historian – born in Norway. After graduating from studies in Copenhagen and a few years of travels around Europe, he became a professor of the University of Copenhagen. He is thought to be the precursor of the Enlightenment in Denmark-Norway and the father of modern literature in both countries. Many of his works retained their freshness till this day and are still interesting to the modern audience. The academic work of the Dane, Pontoppidan – historical, theological or connected with natural science – belonged to the traditional understanding of science and is now forgotten. He remained in memory as a bishop, who played an important role in the introduction of pietism into the national Church. However, belonging to these two currents: pietism and Enlightenment should not be treated as a factor differentiating those two writers because, despite appearances, these currents represented not wholly incompatible worlds of thought.

From the point of view of research into the Norwegian sense of national identity, both figures are significant as they played notable roles in the process. Their influence was most probably neither intentional nor conscious. Both discussed Norwegian themes in their works, although in dissimilar ways, and both, foreshadowing new tendencies, inspired the next generations of Norwegian elites suggesting two, different in some ways, approaches to what it meant to be Norwegian.² It can be stated that these two approaches were complementary and that at one point they merged into each other.

In the case of Holberg, his influence could be understood on two levels. One would be that of the writer's biography: the fact that he was born in Norway together with his works and achievements and the other would be his writings and the opinions expressed in them: what and how he wrote about Norway. On the other hand, Erik Pontoppidan could have an impact only by means of his writing. It does not mean, however, that this influence was automatically less significant. On the contrary, it seems that Pontoppidan's inspirations were in some sense more permanent and long-lasting.

Holberg discussed the Norwegian issues in a broader context, in some sense incidentally. His only work fully devoted to Norway was the description of the city of Bergen, which had a very local character. But the Norwegian topics appeared in many of his works: he wrote about the Norwegian law in his textbook on Nature's law, about the history of Norway in the work entitled *The History of*

² According to a German historian, Claus Pabst, Holberg could be treated as the first combatant for Norwegian independence. K. Pabst, op. cit., p. 257; A. Apelsest, op. cit., p. 42.

Danish Kingdom; some of his comedies, perhaps, reflect the Norwegian circumstances. However, his writings were holistic: it can be said that in both literature and science he represented *helstatspolitik*. Pontoppidan, on the other hand, published two books exclusively devoted to the Norwegian issues: *The Natural History of Norway*³ and the dictionary of Norwegian language, *Glossarium Norvegicum*.⁴ The former work became an example to be followed by many authors of topographical descriptions (although, what will be discussed below, it was not the first one referring to the 18th century). It contained the account of natural environment or, as it was then referred to, the inanimate world (the terrain, soil, minerals) and the animate world (i.e. fauna and flora). The author took into the consideration also the inhabitants, devoting two chapters to the characterization of the Norwegian nation and its customs. The dictionary, on the other hand, was a list of words unknown in Denmark and used by Norwegian peasants. Both works were ground-breaking (although the national character of Norwegians was for the first time described not by Pontoppidan but in fact by Holberg). Let us add that material concerning Norway was included by Pontoppidan in his autobiography and Norway travel journal from 1749, which were mentioned in chapter four, part one of this work. These texts were published only in the 19th century so they could not have influenced Pontoppidan's contemporaries.



As it was mentioned, Holberg's influence on Norwegian identity was linked to his achievements. It was clear to all that this man – a professor of the University of Copenhagen, the author of dozens of various popular works and a moral and intellectual authority – was a Norwegian, born in 'the famous merchant city of Bergen'. In other words, he was a fellow countryman who managed to achieve considerable success. Being aware of this could have been the grounds for pride and an increased sense of self-worth. This issue is connected with the reception of Holberg's oeuvre and the level of knowledge of his works by his contemporaries.

The Norwegian historian Francis Bull focused on researching the reception of Holberg's work in the 18th century Norway. Studying the catalogues of private

³ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. II, [1753], reprint, København 1977.

⁴ E. Pontoppidan, *Glossarium Norvegicum* [1749], facsimile in H. Hamre, 'Erik Pontoppidan og hans Glossarium Norvegicum', *Årbok for Universitet i Bergen*, Humanistiske Serie 1971, No. 2, Bergen–Oslo 1972, pp. 31–89.

libraries, he noticed that Holberg's works, especially such as *The Description of Denmark and Norway*, *Niels Klim's Underground Travels*, the poem *Peder Paars* and some theatre plays were present in almost every 'literate' household (including the peasant families). The list of nine most widely read books includes seven works written by Holberg. The most popular was *The Description of Denmark and Norway* i.e. the work that includes, among others, a few pages describing the Norwegian national character. Bull wrote that only the Bible was a more popular work in this era. The personal contact with the master was also important. Many Norwegian students at the University of Copenhagen were choosing Holberg as their personal preceptor although he was not an approachable person and he most probably disregarded the duties connected with this position. Interestingly, Bull stated that remembrance of Holberg was preserved in Gudbrandsdalen, where he spent some time in his youth.⁵

When in the 1770s Norwegians began their efforts to establish a university, they referred to Holberg as a great Norwegian patriot in many works justifying the need of such venture. The context was usually quite special as it concerned the sources of financing the university. As it is known, Holberg gave his inheritance to the Royal Knight Academy in the Danish town of Sorø. Norwegians wrote that this inheritance should have been donated towards the Norwegian university and that if Holberg ('*ein so patriotischer Norweger*' as the bishop Johan Ernst Gunnerus wrote in 1772 as the first Norwegian who in the 18th century suggested that the Norwegian university should be established) had believed that creating of such a school was possible, he would have given his inheritance to it.⁶

It would be very difficult to list all the texts from this era in which Holberg's fellow countrymen were paying respect to the great writer. One, however, should be quoted because of its completely unofficial character. The diary that had been written from 1754 by the minister Otto Holmboe (1710–1773) begins with an entry that reads: 'On the 27th of January after midnight Ludvig Holberg died.'⁷ The decision to write down, in completely private notes, the incident of

⁵ F. Bull, *Fra Holberg til Nordahl Brun...*, pp. 53–55, 58; idem, *Landet og Literaturen*, Oslo 1948, p. 103; see H. Jensen, op. cit., p. 39.

⁶ J. E. Gunnerus, 'Vorschlag und Plan zur Errichtung einer Universitet in Norwegen', *Historisk-Philosophiske Samlinger*, vol. II, Christiania 1812, p. 214.

⁷ Johan Ernst Gunnerus, b. 1718 d. 1773, a priest and scholar, studied in Copenhagen and Halle where he met with Enlightenment rationalism of Christian Wolff, whose ideas he began to relentlessly propagate, and in Jena; in 1754, he was a provost in Copenhagen, a University lecturer (theology, philosophy, law); in 1758 he was nominated the bishop of Trondheim; here in 1760 he established a science society (from 1767, the Royal

the death of a great compatriot attests to how important this event was to the minister. From other public events, the minister sometimes only noted down the national celebrations connected e.g. to the king's birthday.

In the 18th century Norwegians had no doubts that Holberg was a Norwegian. What is more important, however, Holberg himself identified as such. He never concealed his Norwegian origins, describing his childhood and youth in Norway with vividness, kindness and nostalgia. Holberg described himself as a Norwegian on many occasions, using the term 'fatherland' (*Fædrelandet*)⁸ and he spoke about its inhabitants *mine Landsmænd* (my countrymen, compatriots).⁹ When he was signing up in the Bodleian Library in Oxford he labeled himself 'Norvegus'.¹⁰ He published the anonymous polemic with the legal text by Andreas Hojer under a pseudonym of *Ole Peersen Nordmand* (*Ole Peersen, the Norwegian*). He was angry each time when, abroad or in books, he encountered the ignorance of the representatives of the so-called 'larger' nations of Europe concerning his fellow countrymen.¹¹ When in March 1747 Holberg was granted the title of baron, he designed his coat of arms, which subsequently was granted to him. This coat of arms refers to the Norwegian symbols in an obvious way, as it presents the Norwegian landscape: an image of a mountain (rock), taken from Holberg's father's coat of arms and used earlier by him as the property sign on a signet ring. The other image used on the coat of arms was an image of a spruce. This tree is common in Norwegian forests and was used in heraldry.¹²

Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters) and completely devoted himself to natural investigations becoming a recognized scholar in this area; in 1771 he was called back to Copenhagen to take up the task of reforming the university by order of J. F. Struensee; at that time he proposed creating a university in Norway. [O. Holmboe], 'Stiftprovst dr theol. Otto Holmboes dagbog – optegnelser 1751–1773', ed., choice, L. Daae, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, series 2, vol. II, Kristiania 1880, p. 120. Otto Holmboe, b. 1710 d. 1773, a minister, studied at the University of Copenhagen, from 1734 held several positions in the Church (chaplain, parson, provost).

⁸ L. Holberg, 'Tredie Brev til Højvelbaaren Herre' in *Værker i tolv bind*, ed. F. Billeskov Jansen, vol. XII, København 1971, p. 193.

⁹ L. Holberg, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse*, Kiøbenhavn 1729, pp. 20, 34, 36; idem, *Tredie Brev...*, p. 194.

¹⁰ F. Sneedorff, 'Breve' in idem, *Samlede Skrifter*, vol. I, Kjøbenhavn 1794, pp. 521–23.

¹¹ He described twice his meeting with an Italian (a resident of Piedmont) who was telling him that Norwegians had heads (eyes) just like pigs. And some Englishman irritated him saying that Norway is... a city in Sweden. L. Holberg, 'Første Brev til Højvelbaaren Herre' in *Værker i tolv bind...*, vol. XII, København 1971, p. 44; idem, *Dannemarks og Norges...*, p. 20.

¹² The images of coat of arms in: L. Holberg, *Værker...*, vol. XI, illustrations no 245–247 and vol. I, illustration no. 25.

The sense of being Norwegian, as it was stated by a great Danish expert on literature Vilhelm Andersen, was also reflected in the literary works of Holberg. The mock-heroic poem *Peder Paars* was a satire on the Danish society and on the Danish national character written from the point of view of a foreigner. The figure of the servant Henry in his plays illustrated – most probably in a much idealized way – a resident of Bergen, i.e. his compatriot. Andersen also mentions an event when Holberg – a music lover himself – played with true emotion a melody (most likely folk) titled ‘Norwegian mountain piece’ for his friend Hans Gram, a Danish historian.¹³

All this information lets us draw conclusions on Holberg’s consciousness that he was not a Dane but a member of a different nation. In the beginning of his residence in Copenhagen his feeling of this difference could be strengthened by the difference of his language. It was to be different in pronunciation, accent, syntax and vocabulary. Such a view was promoted by researchers who analyzed not only his writings but also drew conclusions from some events in his life such as the story from his autobiography how during the siege of Copenhagen in the Northern War by Swedish soldiers he was mistaken for a Swede and arrested.¹⁴ Holberg referred to his language as Danish; what is more, in one of his anecdotes he told a story about his parents who did not think to teach him his mother tongue (i.e. Danish) as he could learn it ‘from the boys on the street’. In this way he was sent to a German school.¹⁵ Holberg thought that the children running around Bergen suburbs were speaking Danish. However, there are also phrases that show that he thought of his language (the one he was using in his youth) as Norwegian. In his autobiography he described an incident which took place in Kristiansand and which was in fact a duel between him and a visitor from the Netherlands on who knew French better. ‘I was shooting at him with Norwegian-French arrows and he was responding with French-Dutch ones’ – he was making fun of his poor knowledge of French.¹⁶ Moreover, he sometimes included the information what a given Danish word was in Norwegian; he

¹³ V. Andersen, ‘Holbergs Henrik’ in idem, *Litteraturbilleder. Anden Samling*, København/Kristiania 1907, pp. 26, 29, 31, 24.

¹⁴ A. Garborg, ‘En norskstalende Jeppe’ in *Holberg Aarbog*, København 1920, p. 95; D. A. Seip, ‘Holbergs Talemaal’ in *Holberg Aarbog*, København 1921, p. 35; J. Nordahl-Olsen, *Ludvig Holberg og den berømmelige handelstad Bergen*, Bergen 1920, p. 164; D. A. Seip, *Om norskhet i språket hos Holberg*, Oslo 1954, pp. 7, 16, 33–34 ff.

¹⁵ L. Holberg, ‘Orthographiske Anmærkninger’ in *Holbergiana. Smaa-Skrifter af og om Ludvig Friherre af Holberg*, ed. A. E. Boye, vol. I, København 1832, p. 176.

¹⁶ L. Holberg, ‘Første brev...’, p. 43.

translated from Norwegian to Danish and he was giving Norwegian equivalents of names. D. A. Seip stated that Holberg's poor versification may have resulted from the influence of Norwegian language.¹⁷ However, in his autobiographical works, in which his stay in Norway is described, there are no mentions about the language used by the Norwegians living in the country. It can be thought that this was not important to him. It might have seemed natural to him that peasants were speaking differently which had resulted not from different nationalities or ethnicities but simply from social differences. It is most probable that Danish peasants also had a different language from the residents of Copenhagen, especially the educated elites. Moreover, one must remember that Holberg was a writer and language was for him literary material so the Norwegian language, in which – as he believed – no literary works were created, was of no interest to him (Beyer, Friis, Dorothe Engelbretsdatter were writing in Danish; Dass and his poetry was practically unknown in the big world of the capital and sagas were written in Old Norwegian, which was used only by some inhabitants of Island – as he wrote¹⁸).

This linguistic mixture, lack of clarity and understanding regarding the differences between the languages were in those times, when the linguistic research was only at the beginning stage, quite typical. However, it is worth remembering that most officials working in the Norwegian countryside were conscious of the differences in the language used by peasants. Many of them, as has been and will be discussed, attempted to conduct linguistic research, which took the form of 'collecting' those Norwegian words which were unknown and non-existent in Danish. Such activities became later the basis for more professional academic research. Erik Pontoppidan was one of these researchers: he was not only conscious of the differences between the language used by Norwegian and Danish peasants but also encouraged Danish people to familiarize themselves with it, as this would make their office work easier. He devoted some of his research time to the folk Norwegian language by preparing a dictionary for publication.



Although in the case of Pontoppidan one can neither speak about self-identification nor about any ties to the Norwegian nation, the fact that the bishop of Bergen, a famous and popular scholar, a person closely related to the royal

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 86; D. A. Seip, *Om norskhet...*, pp. 11–13, 23.

¹⁸ L. Holberg, *Epistler*, ed. F. J. Billeskov Jansen, vol. II, København 1945, p. 302.

palace (although at the time being somewhat out of favor) took interest in the language of the peasants and, in a different book, he described their customs together with a very favorable image of Norwegian national character, could have been a reason to be proud and an encouragement to follow in his footsteps. It has been noted that Pontoppidan showed great interest in the people among whom he was living. He was in touch with the simple folk and encouraged them to share their stories about daily life, beliefs and superstitions, legends and historical events.¹⁹ There is evidence of this kindly interest in the travel journal from 1749. It included remarks about the national character of the Norwegians, their patriotism, description of peasant customs, together with the custom of skiing, stories of historical figures heard from the peasants (including stories about St. Olaf). These remarks were all private, not necessarily meant for publication and they can be treated as evidence of such friendly attitude of the Danish minister to Norwegians.²⁰

So what kind of content included in the works of both authors could have had an influence on the shaping of identity? This question can be posed differently: are there in the works of both authors those elements of identity that could be traced in earlier works? The first issue will be the question about Norway's distinctiveness: is it noticed and if it is, then in what way? The second issue concerns the concept of the nation: how is it defined, what characterizes it and how is it different from other nations?



Holberg's statements concerning Norway both directly and indirectly presented Norwegians as a separate nation and Norway as a separate country. In his *Description* in almost every aspect he pointed out the differences between Denmark and Norway beginning with obvious geographical differences, through culture, army, offices, coins and last but not least – the emblem. Holberg meticulously stated that the Norwegian emblem was a lion in a golden crown with a halberd on a red background. What was especially significant was the separate legal system, different from the Danish one, that had its own history and had already been developed in the Middle Ages.²¹ Also in one of his first works *The*

¹⁹ H. Nilsen, 'Biskop Erik Pontoppidan og skolestellet i Bergen stift', *Årbok for Bjørgvin bispedømme*, 1955, Bergen, pp. 81, 20.

²⁰ [E. Pontoppidan], *Prokantsler Erik Pontoppidans...*, pp. 141, 142, 144–46, 132, 130.

²¹ L. Holberg, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, pp. 668–671.

Introduction to the Natural Law he gave examples taken from the Norwegian and Danish law. In *The History of the Danish Kingdom* he mentioned Christian IV's initiatives to modernize *Norske Lov*. One of the most interesting pieces of evidence for Holberg that Norway was a separate country was the position of peasants and the fact that the nobility was absent in Norway. He considered this issue in the work on the history of Denmark, writing that in the past there was a lot of Norwegian nobility and not worse in chivalry and virtue than the nobility from other European countries. In the modern era, on the other hand, only several noble families were left. He also stated that only Christian IV took into consideration the pleadings of Norwegian nobility and appointed a Norwegian to the highest offices i.e. Hans Pedersøn (of Wild Boar coat of arms) and he did not refrain from mentioning that the Danish Wild Boar coat of arms looks completely different from the Norwegian one.²² Holberg listed eleven noble families from the times of Frederic III (he had some reservations with regard to the origin of some of these families) stating at the same time that in his times there was not any nobility left.²³ (This does not change the fact that in the *Description* he included a list of family names). Another Norwegian specialty was the *odel* institution, the allodial law i.e. the status of free peasants who inherited the land they owned.

In fact, the geographical and natural distinctiveness of his country is not particularly visible in Holberg's texts although it had been shown in *The Description* and he placed the symbol of Norwegian nature in his coat of arms. This lack was dutifully compensated for by Pontoppidan. Historians noticed that he was the first one who described Norwegian environment so precisely, and additionally, also from his own experience thanks to contacts that he had with the inhabitants.²⁴ In *The Natural History of Norway*, he devoted a lot of place to the description of Norwegian geography emphasizing how different it was from Danish nature. The context is also important because the author to some extent criticized his fellow countrymen for their ignorance about Norway: he advocated that instead going on costly journeys to foreign countries, any candidate for an office should familiarize himself for at least six months 'with this Kingdom, so closely linked to Denmark'. He wrote also that every Norwegian

²² Idem: *Dannemarks Riges Historie*, ed. J. Levin, vol. II, Kiøbenhavn 1856; pp. 376–377.

²³ Ibidem, vol. III, p. 102.

²⁴ A. Skavlan, 'Erik Pontoppidan og hans Beskrivelse af Norge, *Folkevennen*, vol. XXIV, Christiania 1875, pp. 445, 446; M. Neiiendam, *Erik Pontoppidan*, vol. II, Kiøbenhavn 1933, pp. 179, 180.

immediately recognized a person who didn't know 'the Norwegian idioms' and who was ignorant on how this country was different from Denmark.²⁵ Pontoppidan made an in-depth analysis of the mountainous terrain of Norway. The issue was not trivial as the Norwegians were commonly pitied because of it: especially the inhabitants of the rural Denmark were convinced that the Norwegian mountains do not create good conditions for living. Pontoppidan tried to correct those views, listing both advantages and disadvantages: it was true that in the mountainous Norway the soil was not fertile, the roads were dangerous and the snow and stone avalanches were common. But at the same time the rains helped the vegetation grow, there were many mineral and iron ores in the mountains and the mountains were natural defense fortresses. What is more, they were aesthetically pleasing: the landscapes were much more beautiful and interesting than those flat lands where everything seemed the same.²⁶

History as an indicator of Norway's distinctiveness was mostly discussed by Holberg, although Pontoppidan authored many historical works himself. His lack of interest in the history of Norway could have been, but did not have to be, accidental. While research into Norwegian natural conditions and language could have brought many different advantages to the Danish monarchy, it did not include historical analyses. As far as this domain was concerned, the bishop was a typical Danish patriot. However, there are some remarks in his works, which represent the official stance on the position of Norway in the union. The union with Denmark is a union of two equal partners. To provide evidence of this he quotes an excerpt from the Bergen treaty from 1450. In addition, since the times of Kalmar Union, the process of uniting two nations into one had been progressing as a result of the common government, religion, and language. Thirdly, the monarchs, especially absolutist ones, treated both nations impartially, loving and appreciating them equally.²⁷ Also the burial mounds with their 'giants' – constantly mentioned in topographical works – found their place in Pontoppidan's 18th century writings, as we will see. The prehistoric graves of former nobles were very common in Norway. They had been always attracting attention of travelers and scholars. Because of their sizes they were associated with the giants described in the sagas and mythology who long time ago lived in Norway and from which, as it was believed, Norwegians descended. Pontoppidan also, basing on Torfæus, cautiously mentions the burial mounds, stating

²⁵ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. I, from the unnumbered introduction.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 92–97, 102.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, vol. II, pp. 380–381.

however that he did not see the described miracles in the form of untypically sized skeletons with his own eyes.²⁸

Holberg treated the history of Norway in a more developed way as it was important to him. In his main historical work, *The History of the Danish Monarchy* as well as in other, smaller works the author presented a separate history of a separate country at one time united with Denmark. Discussing the Middle Ages, he described two historical timelines – of two countries that were often at war with each other. Norway had its own rulers, its own laws, a separate royal coronation ceremony, the Norwegian estates led their own politics and the population was hostile to any attempts to limit its independence.²⁹ This approach was not a new one, since one could have used the works of such predecessor as Torfæus who had written *Historia rerum Norvegicarum*. What was essentially new, was taking into consideration the modern history, especially the union with Denmark. Although the author's interpretation agrees with the official version and with the one presented by Pontoppidan, the importance of Holberg's remarks rests upon the fact that they are earlier and more developed. Holberg stated firmly that the Kalmar Union was entered into by two independent countries, whose decisions were fully autonomous and that the phrase that 'Denmark incorporated Norway' was equally valid as the phrase 'Norway incorporated Denmark'.³⁰ He also quoted those facts, which gave evidence to Norway retaining its independence in the union, for example to separate ceremony of homage which the Norwegian estates gave to the new king or royal successor.³¹

Holberg also referred to the sensitive topic of Norway losing its sovereignty in 1536 and the fights of bishop Olav Engelbrektsson. Discussing these and at the same time responding to the Danish historian Arild Huitfeldt, he wanted to show that Norwegians were maltreated. Their opposition from 1532 (against Frederick I) and 1536 (against Christian III) originated from personal motives of the archbishop who was also persuaded to take action by the foreign rulers.³² The author wrote also that Norwegians supported Christian II 'out of compassion' and also because they believed that the promises made by Frederick I had

²⁸ Ibidem, pp. 387–388.

²⁹ L. Holberg, *Epistler...*, vol. I (essay 94), pp. 58–59, (essay 167), p. 288, (essay 168), p. 297; idem, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, p. 732; idem, *Dannemarks Riges Historie...*, vol. I, p. 165.

³⁰ Idem, *Dannemarks Riges Historie...*, vol. I, s. 339.

³¹ Ibidem, pp. 258, 375; vol. III, pp. 31, 354.

³² Ibidem, vol. II, pp. 169–172, 231–232, 233, 276; vol. III, p. 10.

been broken.³³ Norwegian behavior should not be regarded as rebellious and, first and foremost, they should not have been punished for their actions. Holberg here rejected Huitfeldt's argumentation, who had written that privileges are received for merits and lost for rebellion. If it was so, then why the Danish were not punished since they rebelled against their own king more often and more violently. The Norwegian rebellion was based on words, and the Danish, on the other hand – the author referred to the Count's Feud here – took to arms.³⁴ He pointed out as well that it is difficult to speak about a rebellion when two candidates to the throne appear in an elective monarchy.³⁵ He also disagreed with the interpretation of the Danish historian who wrote that the dependence of Norway to Denmark is a simple consequence of the fact that Norwegians agreed to recognize as king the ruler chosen by Danish estates. Holberg responded that former did not necessarily result from the latter.³⁶ The final complement of these views was the statement that the change of Norway's status in 1536 was caused by the Danish nobility who wanted to subjugate the country in order to take advantage of its resources – most probably without the kings' will or knowledge.³⁷ Holberg meticulously described the efforts of the Norwegian estates, undertaken during Christian IV and Frederick III reigns, to improve the situation of the country, the complaints issued to the throne in which Norwegian nobles described how their rights were broken and how the Danish nobility, assigning offices, imposed its rule over the country.³⁸

Writing about Norway's loss of independence in 1536, Holberg was using two phrases. One – *at skille Norge ved dets Herligheder* – can be translated as 'depriving Norway of its sovereignty',³⁹ and the other *at skille Norge ved sit eget Raad, og at reducere Riget til en Province* as 'depriving Norway of the Council of the Realm and reducing it to a province'.⁴⁰ In both cases he used categories which referred to the legal-political status of the country.

³³ Ibidem, vol. II, pp. 173, 276; vol. III, p. 10.

³⁴ Ibidem, vol. II, p. 173; vol. III, p. 10.

³⁵ Ibidem, vol. III, p. 10.

³⁶ Ibidem, vol. II, p. 242.

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 376

³⁸ Ibidem, vol. II, pp. 375–376; vol. III, p. 102.

³⁹ *Herlighed* in folk language means "glory" and "extraordinariness"; in the early modern era however it was used in the sense referring to the Middle Ages: as the title of the highest authority on a given land, a privilege regarding ownership, servitude. It seems that in this context the most suitable word is "sovereignty". The second meaning is resources in the sense of natural resources, fertile soil etc.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, vol. II, pp. 173, 172, 276, 376.

In the works published at the turn of the 16th and 17th century, Arild Huitfeld presented a version of Danish history which was upheld till the year 1660. It was in agreement with the ideology of nobility constitutionalism and, with reference to Norway, he attempted to justify the politics of the Danish nobles. The polemic with his work showed what was characteristic for Holberg i.e. the emphasis on the difference between the politics of the monarch and the politics of Danish nobility or Danish Council of the Realm. Holberg suggested on many occasions that the Oldenburg kings were not responsible for the oppression of Norway (this concerned especially the kings Christian IV and Frederick III); on the contrary, the country owed to them improvement of its situation. It was exactly thanks to the introduction of absolutism (Holberg always called this event *da den Kongelige Myndighed ved Souverainitetet blev restitueret* i.e. ‘the restoration of the sovereign royal power’) in 1660 and 1661 that the introduction of equal status of Norway and the abolition of the Danish nobility oppression became possible.⁴¹

Holberg’s interpretation of the historical events from the 16th and 17th century is far from consistent. The author perceived the history of his country in the context of criticizing the government of Danish nobility, which he thought to be illegal and harmful. The Norwegian example was supposed to prove this. The statement that Holberg loved absolutist rulers as they improved the situation of his country is tempting. This thesis cannot be unanimously rejected – we do not know about the personal experiences of Holberg’s family member – e.g. those of his father in dealing with the Danish nobility ruling in Norway. It is known from elsewhere that he considered the privileged position of the nobility resulting from birth only to be nonsense and his Norwegian birth definitely contributed to this view. However, the thesis about “national” motives for Holberg’s favorable attitude towards the Oldenburgs is in my opinion a little risky. The basis of such an attitude was rather an authentic conviction held by Holberg of the superiority of the absolutist system, about its fairness as well as consistent monarchism – anything that in any way limited the royal power was harmful according to Holberg. He perceived the myth of the year 1660 as an event proving that a social contract between the monarch and the people had been entered, which coupled the deep loyalism towards one’s country with Enlightenment tendencies.⁴²

⁴¹ Ibidem, vol. II, p. 276, pp. 376, 597; idem, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, p. 22.

⁴² An analysis of Holbergs ideas on nobility, absolutism and the state formation in: K. Szełagowska, *Myśl polityczna...*; eadem, *Ludvig Holberg. Uczony...*, p. 265–266, 275–285.

Moreover, it is worth noticing that Holberg's consciousness of belonging to the Norwegian nation was connected with the sense of community with the Danish. In his works he happened to defend the threatened – usually by the foreigners – Danish honor.⁴³ He defended the Danish monarchy against its critics from abroad; he wanted to praise the greatness of the country and its history. It was also consistent with Holberg's visible sense of loyalty and attachment to the Danish monarchy, the Oldenburg dynasty and its rulers. This is not the place to analyze the political views of the writer but such a motif – the praise of Danish absolutism, attachment to the dynasty and authentic favorable feelings towards the kings such as e.g. Frederick IV – is a constant element of any diagnosis of Holberg's political views. In the context of the topic of this work this is important because such an attitude (which he thought typical for the whole Norwegian nation) caused that any thoughts on separating the 'twin kingdoms' were foreign to him. Holberg connected the sense of belonging to the Norwegian nation, consciousness of his origin, with a strong link to the Danish monarchy, as well as Danish culture and language. No supporter of separation of Norway and Denmark (or even of weakening the union through emancipating Norway to a larger extent) could find encouragement to take up such actions in Holberg's texts. This cannot be explained only by the fact that there was censorship in the country.



Because both authors referred in their works to national matters, a question appears how – if at all – they defined the notion of 'the nation'. In chronologically earlier Holberg's writings, similarly to the language matters, there is no order or consistency. Two names, appearing in this context in Germanic languages: nation (Norwegian: *nation*) and folk (Norwegian: *folk*), which had been given different meanings by German Enlightenment thought, were most often used by Holberg interchangeably. He treated them most probably as synonyms, as on many occasions when he wrote about one community, in the same context he spoke of nation-folk constituting the country and listed in order: the Danish, Norwegians, Islanders, the inhabitants of Schleswig-Holstein and the Sami people in the far North. All this material was included in the chapter entitled *Om den danske nation* i.e. *On the Danish nation*. Holberg's thought here presented a comparison of the Danish and the Norwegian nations: he stated

⁴³ E.g. 'Holger Danske Brev til Burman' in *Holbergiana...*, pp. 166–169, 172, similarly in 'Første Brev...', pp. 70–71, 183.

that they were two separate nations united into one folk of Danish-Norwegian monarchy.⁴⁴ This opinion was usually interpreted in such a way that the union was of political nature, a group of citizens or rather subjects of one monarch.⁴⁵ Such an interpretation probably is not wrong although my impression is that Holberg did not use either concept consciously. It is difficult to speak about precise and consistent usage of the names by the writer, so it may be suspected that he did not think much over the meaning of both notions.

In the case of Pontoppidan, his *Natural History of Norway* from 1750s includes interesting ideas. As it has been said above, also this author used the notion of two nations, that were united into one folk. This would point to a rather conscious use of both concepts, where the word *Folk* would have a broader and at the same time less precise meaning. Both authors used this term to describe the people in the whole kingdom regardless of the differences between the specific groups, who inhabited different areas. This would support the above interpretation.

However, in contrast to Holberg, Pontoppidan's work shows evidence that he defined the concept of the nation differently. He stated that the nation is 'the owners and inhabitants of Norway', focusing on the factor of the place of residence. He noticed as well that 'in each country it is the large number of common people that constitute the proper nation.'⁴⁶ In the European culture the passage from Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) that *c'est la campagne qui fait la nation...* was quite popular. The fact that Erik Pontoppidan formulated the same view in the years 1752–53 provides evidence that in the intellectual atmosphere of the 18th century Europe, new ideas concerning the society, especially the lower classes, were emerging when they were thought about – or, colloquially speaking, they were 'in the air'.

The inclusion of the lower classes, i.e. peasants, into the concept of the nation was in Pontoppidan's case consistent. One can see this in his characterization of the Norwegian nation, which takes account of all the social strata in order. The author was describing peasant customs, their traditional cuisine but he did not forget about town inhabitants. Describing the intellectual capabilities of the Norwegians, he listed a large group of scholars belonging to the elites of the kingdom, among others the bishop Johann E. Gunnerus, Gerhard Schøning and of course

⁴⁴ idem, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, p. 20.

⁴⁵ F. Billeskov Jansen, 'Indledning til Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse', in: *Værker...*, vol. I, København 1969, p. 26.

⁴⁶ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie...*, vol. II, p. 356, 410.

Holberg (another piece of evidence that his contemporaries considered him to be Norwegian). At the end of the chapter devoted to the nation, the author treated the Norwegian nobility (which will be discussed later) as the natural part of the nation. It seems that the author was not able to connect these two different groups using either a cultural factor such as language and customs or a social one – this concerns people from all social strata – or even the place of residence because many scholars lived in Copenhagen. These groups according to him were connected by the place of birth/upbringing and common ‘national character’.

Regardless of what was the reason – the inclusion of all groups into the Norwegian nation by Pontoppidan i.e. peasants, nobility, bourgeoisie and scholars – was truly inspiring. It could give grounds – regardless of personal relations between the elites and peasants – to the reaching for folk culture by the elites as the source of inspiration and as the basis for one’s own, not yet fully shaped, identity.



For both authors, the existence of separate nations was obvious and in a typical way connected with what had been for ages called the national character. Holberg showed such thinking in the context of the descriptions of his travels round Europe when he experienced what different nations were like and tried to characterize them. He used these experiences later in his work throughout his entire life. It seems that then existing thinking about the national character, represented also by Holberg, was represented by perceiving the nation as a community distinguished by certain features and such features that are rather associated with individual personalities and their behavior such as courage, cowardice, politeness, snobbery, and so on. So the English are not talkative but think deeper; the French are clever (but superficial); the Dutch are hard-working, slow but effective and perseverant and the Germans are characterized by moderation and common-sense. Such descriptions, based on the oldest stereotypes, occurred in Holberg’s works very often, serving him also as stylistic resource.⁴⁷ It is interesting that when using such characteristics Holberg referred them to the whole nation, not paying any attention to the differences between the people inhabiting different regions. Although he noticed huge differences between e.g. the inhabitants of southern and northern France (he wrote e.g.

⁴⁷ L. Holberg, ‘Tredie brev...’, pp. 248–272; more on this topic see K. Szelałowska, *Wczesnoświeceniowy światopogląd...*, pp. 174–179.

that he could not understand the Gasconian dialect very well), he discussed the national character of all French people. He acted similarly in the case of the Italians.⁴⁸ He did not mention any differences concerning Germans. Such thinking was also displayed by Pontoppidan, who in a similar way, as we will see, described the national character of the Norwegians.

European intellectuals had been for a long time wondering about the reasons for the differences between national characters. This issue was considered in the context of the form of statesmanship as it seemed that depending on certain national characteristics nations can be more or less adapted to some political systems. It had been believed that the most important cause was the geographical environment: topography and climate. Many writers such as e.g. Montesquieu listed other factors, not connected with nature. Holberg basically mentioned two main sources of the shaping of national character. He recognized the role of geographical determinism, stating in *The Description of Denmark and Norway* that the different character of the Norwegians is the result of the different climate, similarly to the dissimilarities between northern and southern Italians, which resulted from geographical differences.⁴⁹ He was, however, conscious of the significance of other factors. With time, he pays less and less attention to the theory of geographical conditions, describing at length how the national character is shaped under the influence of laws, upbringing, impact of the monarch (an example that was often invoked by him was Peter the Great who, as he claimed, changed the cowardly Russians into the bravest nation in Europe), bigotry, which can be instilled in the people, ambition, love for the monarch and so on. The geographical and physical factors such as climate, food, air may influence the physical constitution of the people but not their character. 'People are born strong, but they become courageous and virtuous thanks to the upbringing.'⁵⁰ In the case of Norwegian peasants he wrote that their character was shaped in a most serious way by the fact that they were free men, having their own freedom (which was to be the result from the system of allodial law), which will be later discussed. Such a way of thinking was in concordance with Holberg's Enlightenment worldview, which paid a lot of attention to educating and 'bettering' the people.

⁴⁸ L. Holberg, 'Tredie brev...', pp. 83–83, 270–271.

⁴⁹ Idem, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, p. 35; 'Tredie brev...', p. 270.

⁵⁰ Idem, *Epistler*, vol. III, p. 274; the whole essay no. 275, p. 313–315, devoted to the changes of national character, similarly, essay no. 72, vol. I, p. 302–304; vol. 2, pp. 10–22 (essay *Aarsager til at en nation bliver krigerisk*); vol. V, pp. 219–221.

Pontoppidan, considering the sources of such and no other national character of Norwegians, accepted the significance of geographical factor. ‘This strong and tough folk seemingly adapted to their settlements amongst the hard rocks’.⁵¹ He clearly indicated the influence of the climate on the people: ‘clear and healthy’ air was supposed to make them healthy. Pontoppidan summarized: ‘Daily experience teaches us that the differences between nations and their characters to some extent result from specific air, food, upbringing and the way of life’.⁵² It turns out, however, that other factors were also important: Pontoppidan, when characterizing Norwegians, and to be exact: Norwegian peasants as talented, intelligent and fast learners, similarly to Holberg, was of the opinion that this results not only from the clear air but from their personal freedom and from the fact that, in contrast to peasantry from other European countries, they were not serfs.⁵³

In both authors’ characteristics of the Norwegian nation, one can observe many common themes. These similarities may result from real-life observation of behaviors common in the Norwegian society. As Pontoppidan’s work is about twenty years younger than Holberg’s writings, it cannot be excluded that those opinions were repeated, which seemed right at the time. It is difficult, however, to accept that these views could result from the stereotypes present in literature as there are no known and significant characteristics of such kind concerning Norwegians. Those formulated earlier could have been unknown or were so rudimentary and general that common themes are hard to find.

An important difference between both descriptions is their size. Holberg in fact briefly summarized his characterization; included in *The Description* covers a few pages; apart from that there are a few notes in autobiographical letters or essays. Pontoppidan’s analysis is more extensive and includes more elements. The author not only attempted to describe the national character, physical appearance or the most common diseases in Norway, but also included ethnographic material. Thanks to this, the bishop’s work, as well as most 18th century topographical work, became a valuable source for the 19th century ethnographical works. He wrote about traditional Norwegian bread i.e. *flatbrød*, about *barkebrød*⁵⁴

⁵¹ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. II, p. 389.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 392.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 398.

⁵⁴ Bread for which the peasant used ground birch bark mixed with flour. In the 18th century the population was forced to do that by famine at least three times (in the beginning of 1740s, 70s and 80s). In the then journalistic writings *barkebrød* became its symbol.

kneaded in dearth times, about soups and porridges made with various corns to which peasants add a salty herring. He described traditional dress, paying attention to regional differences; he also mentioned – explaining to his readers what they were – that Norwegians use skis to move around when snows are high. He criticized the excessive luxury in the way the bride was dressed, which was so ornamented that she looked ‘ludicrous and bizarre.’⁵⁵ He then characterized the building style, explaining what the Norwegian *Gaard* was and listed different types of buildings around the farm. He devoted a lot of space to various branches of the economy in Norway i.e. trade, crafts, farming, forestry (he emphasizes that it was the most important), mining, sea navigation and fishery – at which Norwegians excelled, which they loved but what took the life of many of them. Finally, hunting was an important source of food.

As it had been already mentioned, Erik Pontoppidan created in this way (being inspired only partly by the 17th century) a model of a text i.e. the so-called topographical description, emulated later by a large group of Norwegian writers. In many of their works this topic was discussed more precisely than in bishop Pontoppidan’s work. In this way the concept of the nation was broadened. The description of Norwegian nation took into consideration – apart from the typical and already used categories of law and character – also cultural features, strongly connected with peasant identity. It can be said that Pontoppidan suggested the direction of a certain way of thinking about the nation in ethnic categories while Holberg remained in the “characterological” sphere on the one hand, and on the other – in the historical-political sphere.



However, both authors, writing about Norwegians, focused mostly on peasants. Holberg did not reflect upon this too much and he did not attempt to construct a definition. He noticed only that the Norwegian society in fact consists exclusively of peasants because the bourgeoisie originates from this social stratum.⁵⁶ His interest was then caused by the reality: the definite dominance of peasants in the population structure. As we have seen Pontoppidan attempted to formulate a general thesis: not only in Norway, but everywhere the nation consists mostly of peasants. Such an attitude could have been influenced by the subconscious search for those features which defined the distinctiveness

⁵⁵ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. II, p. 439.

⁵⁶ L. Holberg, ‘Første brev...’, p. 29.

of Norwegians. He pointed out that the inhabitants of the cities or the coast were not very different from Danes, so they were not interesting to write about. It concerned for example cuisine or dress: 'When Norwegian dress is concerned, in the cities they are not very distinctive, in the country, however, to the contrary.'⁵⁷ It can be linked to the functional nature of the analysis of national identity: its aim was primarily to serve as a distinguishing factor which differentiated 'the locals' from 'the foreigners'. Two categories which were most vivid in this context were: the place of birth and national character. The former because of its, as can be said, obviousness and the latter because it is quite easily made into a stereotype so it is easy 'to use'.

Both authors noticed that the status of the Norwegian peasants was different from the European ones. Holberg described the allodial law as very old and respected even by the elected Danish kings. He stated that this system makes the Norwegian peasant a 'nobleman in miniature' of sorts and what is more important, thanks to it the peasants had a sense of dignity and honor as well as ambition.⁵⁸ The context in which Holberg placed this description suggests that he was of the opinion that Norwegian peasants-owners had some sense of citizenship and patriotism; a statement supported by some of his descriptions of the 17th century wars that took place on the Norwegian soil, which will be discussed below. Pontoppidan, on the one hand, ascribed such features as '*ingenia, vivida, fervida et altiora erecta*'.⁵⁹ He also devoted a lot of place to describing the allodial system.⁶⁰

Both authors were in agreement when they described Norwegians as brave. Holberg wrote that Norwegians were famous for their great courage and did not have any equals in this matter. He stated that this was a unanimous opinion of Danish, Swedish and German writers. Such general phrases were illustrated by Holberg with examples of how Norwegians behaved in the recent wars, which formed a large part of his *Description of Denmark and Norway*. He quoted episodes from the 17th century wars with Sweden – from the year 1612 and 1658. He described how, after Trondheim was taken over by the Swedish in 1658, the local inhabitants came to the commander, offering him their life and death 'to free the country'. He explained the fierceness of Norwegians by the horrible experiences under the Swedish occupation (Swedes e.g. kidnapped the

⁵⁷ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. II, pp. 425, 434.

⁵⁸ L. Holberg, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, pp. 533–534.

⁵⁹ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. II, p. 398.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 461–64.

recruits and sent them to the front in ‘Prussia’, also to Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to take part in the ‘Swedish deluge’) and besides this by the eternal hatred towards the Swedes. He pointed out that Norwegian peasants took part in those battles and the whole description was crowned by a personal touch in which the author proudly stated that his father made his name in those battles. He also highlighted that also in the 1670s Norwegians were successful in the wars with Sweden.⁶¹ On the other hand, Holberg had a balanced attitude towards the actions of Scandinavian ancestors i.e. the Vikings, whom he did not deny courage and military genius but he bitterly added that it would be probably have been better if instead of fighting they engaged in more useful activities such as farming.⁶²

Also Pontoppidan wrote about Norwegian courage, not reaching, however, into the distant past but emphasizing the ‘natural’ assets of the Norwegians that predestined them to military roles: strength and agility, high abilities in the use of weapons and resilience. All this was to be the result of upbringing and ‘healthy air’; Pontoppidan wrote that among the young Norwegians (from all social classes) physical exercises were very common; they could fight very well, ride a horse, swim, ski and climb. And, using their abilities and topography to their advantage, they could scare away the enemy.⁶³

Usually, together with the remarks about courage, the authors included comments on loyalty and devotion to the kings. Judging by its extensiveness, this theme was important to Holberg. In his *Description* he pointed out that in the past Norwegians ‘were very restless’ being involved in many civil wars. But for the past one hundred years, they had displayed such loyalty and attachment to the throne that not only were there no rebellions but also the Oldenburg kings appointed Norwegians to their imperial guard because they trusted them as they trusted no one else.⁶⁴ And as once (in the Middle Ages) Norwegians could have been seen as an example of fickleness, now, since the times of Reformation, above all other nations on earth, they could serve as an example of constancy, obedience and being reluctant to take part in a rebellion. Next, Holberg quotes the recent history of Povel Juel plot: ‘and we can quote the events from a few

⁶¹ L. Holberg, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, pp. 241, 382–384, 471–480.

⁶² Idem, ‘Dannemark og Norges Sõe Historie in *Holbergiana*, vol. I, pp. 71–76; idem, *Dannemarks Riges Historie...*, vol. I, p. 22; idem, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, pp. 3–6.

⁶³ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. II, p. 395, vol. 1, p. 101.

⁶⁴ L. Holberg, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, p. 36.

years back when a Norwegian was put to death for high treason and it turned out that none of his compatriots took part in it [i.e. in his plot]⁶⁵ The author repeats the view that one of the most characteristic features of the Norwegian nation is loyalty to the dynasty and attachment to the Oldenburg kings.

Pontopiddan was of the same opinion. He wrote that such Norwegian attributes as faithfulness and integrity are visible in their attitude towards the kings, the evidence of which they gave in recent wars. He also quoted an anecdote which he had heard from the general Barthold Heinrich von Lützwow (1654–1729) about an event from 1716, the time of a campaign against the Swedes, when a group of Norwegian peasants came to him giving the following speech: ‘Father, we have heard that you have unwanted visitors that you want to get rid of. If you want to use our help, tell us what we are to do and you will see that we will become as one.’⁶⁶ The quoted statement is important because of the language that was used. The way in which Norwegian peasants spoke to the general, aristocrat and a representative of the king without using official titles and using only the phrase ‘father’, most probably a usual Norwegian appellation when speaking to the authorities, was supposed to prove the Norwegians’ innate pride, dignity and ambition. They were very far away from any sort of prostration in front of a superior in terms of social class. ‘The serious, Cato-like face [of a Norwegian peasant from the mountains] inspires respect’ – Pontopiddan wrote in an excerpt devoted to physical appearance.⁶⁷ This image agrees with Holberg’s image of the ambitious peasant who values honor. Such views began to solidify towards the end of the 18th century contributing to the dissemination of the myth of the ‘free and proud’ Norwegian peasant.

Pontopiddan’s view on Norwegians’ intellectual abilities has already been mentioned. Holberg discussed it earlier, writing that although there is no academy in Norway (i.e. the university) any more, there are still Norwegian scholars. He emphasized that those who can afford it study in Copenhagen, and later go travelling abroad, learning languages to which they have natural aptitudes.⁶⁸ Pontopiddan wrote more extensively on this subject. ‘If you are so inclined to discuss with a Norwegian peasant the topics of heaven and earth [you will see that] he made more use of his natural gifts than of scholarly knowledge’ – he

⁶⁵ L. Holberg, *Epistler*, vol. II, p. 304.

⁶⁶ E. Pontopiddan *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. II, p. 402.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 386.

⁶⁸ L. Holberg, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, pp. 22–25.

wrote, quoting the above mention list of Norwegian scholars.⁶⁹ He also stated that in contrast to the people from countries such as France, Italy and Spain, Norwegian peasant does not believe that the northern lights are a miracle and a sign foretelling bad events.⁷⁰ In this context also Pontoppidan mentioned that the possibilities for Norwegians would be greater ‘if in his country there were equally good conditions [to study] as those in Denmark.’⁷¹ He referred also to his own experiences, mentioning with what satisfaction he performed school visitations (which he performed as bishop) thanks to the visible talents of the students.⁷²

Both authors stressed great talents of Norwegians in the area of crafts. Holberg wrote that his compatriots were especially talented in arts and crafts and Norwegian peasants could create real gems with their bare hands.⁷³ Pontoppidan wrote extensively about such capabilities saying that Norwegians had great inclinations towards all sorts of crafts. It concerned especially wood-carving: the author listed the names of peasant artists, whose works found their way into the royal collection and which were so beautiful that their admirers paid their weigh in silver.⁷⁴

An interesting theme was introduced by both authors who noticed that a lot of peasant families originated from the nobility or even from royal families. Norwegian peasants, wrote Holberg, think that they originated from the Norwegian nobility and one cannot say that this view is completely wrong.⁷⁵ He also mentioned the process of transforming the Norwegian noble families into peasant ones in his synthesis of Denmark’s history quoting the names of the peasants who in 1734 received a confirmation of their nobility from the king.⁷⁶ Also Pontoppidan noticed this, writing about it in two ways: in one place he mentioned some peasants who **imagine** [emphasis K. S.] that they were descendants of noble families, earl families and even royal ones. In another place he described noble families who lived peasant lives, but who stored the memory and tradition of their family ancestors. ‘One hears sometimes in a peasant’s eulogy the names of his ancestors listed and in the houses there are

⁶⁹ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. II, pp. 399–400.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, vol. I, p. 19.

⁷¹ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. II, p. 397.

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 398.

⁷³ L. Holberg, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, pp. 22–25.

⁷⁴ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. II, pp. 393–395.

⁷⁵ L. Holberg, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, p. 534; also in ‘Første Brev...’, p. 29.

⁷⁶ L. Holberg, *Dannemarks Riges Historie...*, vol. III, p. 102.

still the noble coat of arms and a shield as well as the house mark (*bumerke*).⁷⁷ Highlighting this phenomenon could have had a large significance for the Norwegian readers of both writers. Moreover, it can be assumed that these were not just empty words. 18th century Danish sources mention for example the strivings of two Norwegian peasant families to have their noble status restored in the times of Christian VI. The matter concerned the Tordenstjerne til Gulloug family, living in Lier near Drammen, who received the restoration of the noble status in 1734 from the king (this was the family written about by Holberg). The report from 1749 includes the description of the family house, where until recently, old suit of armor was kept: a shield, a sword and armor. The second case concerns the decision of the king Christian VII from 1765 regarding the Botner family from Høland, whose members, though living a peasant lifestyle, very well remembered about their origins. Using the genealogical table from the church for support, they stated that they had owned their land for five hundred years.⁷⁸

The remarks of Holberg and Pontoppidan referred to some real situations and as we will see they will be supported by other authors in the 18th century. In many cases undoubtedly common records of such phenomena resulted from them being extraordinary, although it cannot be excluded that there were other motives at play here. The statement that a part of Norwegian peasants come from noble or royal families (which also signifies their being deeply rooted in history) made this group feel more superior in the world of social and class divisions. It could have been a factor which would foster getting closer: the elites found it easier to reach to peasant culture, easier to come into contact with the common people if these people had those features. The same mechanism was at work concerning the whole image. In this sense the tendency to mythologize and idealize Norwegian peasants would be a trick, which could have made it easier for the elites to stay in touch with the common people. This trick could have helped them to integrate with the local community from which the minister, judge and the *fogd* were still different. It was easier to overcome barriers between them and the peasants if they believed that these peasants also have 'blue blood' in their veins and thanks to it they stay connected to the Norwegian tradition of a separate history and statesmanship and additionally they have such features of character for which they can only be admired. The myth of the

⁷⁷ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. II, pp. 407, 460.

⁷⁸ L. Daae, 'Norsk Adel i forrige Aarhundrede', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, vol. I, Kristiania 1871, pp. 507–511.

‘free and proud’ Norwegian peasant now took on a functional character, whose aim was to lead to building up a national sense of unity.

Pontoppidan was undoubtedly inclined to idealize peasants like that. His remarks were quite characteristic for a fascinated foreigner but could have been easily taken up by the Norwegian elites, especially that they were supported by the authority of a bishop. Pontoppidan praised Norwegians for being well shaped, slender, tall, very resistant to low temperatures and usually walk on ice with their bare foot. He also praised them for their strength (especially fishermen). At one point the author almost comically stated that in their free time young Norwegians from all social classes, except doing physical exercises, write runes, play a horn and compose songs (*vise* – usually a song with many stanzas, a kind of a ballad).⁷⁹

It cannot be stated, however, that the authors did not notice Norwegian flaws. Holberg wrote that his fellow countrymen were so convinced about their superiority that they sometimes disregarded others. They also sometimes lived beyond their means. Although people ascribe quarrelsomeness and the tendency to rowdiness to them, the author stated that such features should be rather ascribed to the foreigners living in Norway. Moreover, Norwegians stubbornly hang onto their own opinions which can be interpreted both as a flaw and as a virtue.⁸⁰ Pontoppidan again presented a more extensive image. The former belligerence of Norwegians had been to some extent retained – peasants, still easily annoyed and proud, often take to knives during fights. They are stubborn and quarrelsome; they often go take matters to court and in that they can count on their neighbors for support⁸¹ (which means that these were not neighborly feuds but rather trials against royal officials).

Pontoppidan also described a very typical peasant quality – conservatism. On the one hand, the assessment of such an attitude was negative: the author wrote that the peasant economy would be much better if they were not so attached to the way their ancestors worked: ‘if in this and other matters they did not have so many scruples against introducing even the smallest changes into the ways of their fathers, or even against turning a stone from a place where they had left it.’⁸² Similarly, peasants are attached to the ‘ancient’ way of living by their ancestors. Pontoppidan could then, following Friis who wrote it 150 years ear-

⁷⁹ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. II, pp. 386, 389, 395.

⁸⁰ L. Holberg, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, pp. 22–25.

⁸¹ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges Naturlige Historie*, vol. II, pp. 405–407.

⁸² *Ibidem*, vol. I, p. 164.

lier, describe the famous *flatbrød* – the national dish. The author noticed, however, that such mentality can have its good sides, as everywhere, peasants are least likely to be influenced by fashion.⁸³ And following fashion was according to the Enlightenment scholars, as well as according to the ministers, a cardinal sin.

The views discussed above that could have stimulated the development of identity presented a certain intellectual idea including two key elements: indicating a sharp distinctiveness of Norway and the image of Norwegian nation. Both ideas are closely connected because the characteristic of a nation, its ‘flaws and virtues’, influence also the distinctiveness of the country similarly to topography or its own history. The descriptions provided by Holberg and Pontopidan supported the shaping of identity of a nation different from others as well as of a country which should not be treated as a less important part of another one. But in Holberg’s writing there is another theme which could enrich this identity with a certain thought, directly connected with the place of Norway in the union with Denmark.



There is no doubt that Holberg fully accepted the Danish-Norwegian union in the form which it gained in the years 1660–61. However, some features of this union were making him anxious. In his *Description of Denmark-Norway* he considered economic matters, noticing the inequality between the two countries. He stated that the economic ties between both countries had a special character. The Danes do not export anything but import a lot of commodities. Where do they take the money from? From Norwegian export. Norway was the main exporter of such goods as minerals (iron and copper), fish, timber, and fish oil. In this way it brings precious metals into the country on which it earns money so it is Norway that ‘sustains’ the monarchy. Denmark, he wrote, is similar to a huge lake and Norway is like rivers thanks to which the level of water in the lake is sustained.⁸⁴ The context must again be seen holistically – Holberg was worried about the economy of the whole kingdom. Supporting mercantilism, he emphasized that Danish imports should be reduced and the outflow of gold and silver from the country should be stopped. But the Norwegians interpreted these excerpts differently. According to many historians this view – regardless of it being right – greatly influenced the Norwegian elites in the second half of

⁸³ Ibidem, vol. II, pp. 427, 436.

⁸⁴ L. Holberg, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelse...*, pp. 587–588.

the 18th century. The considerations started whether, faced with the fact that Norway ‘sustains’ the kingdom, the Danish government politics concerning it was fair. Such questions became ubiquitous especially in the period when Norwegians attempted to gain more independence e.g. to have their own university established. At the same time these views – in the longer term – could inspire trust that Norway has economic capabilities at its disposal which will allow it to survive as an independent country.⁸⁵ However, the fact is that Holberg did not intend to promote a negative image of Norway’s position in the union, which is evidenced by the fact that nowhere did he mention any inconveniences resulting from the politics of unitarianism: he did not mention the lack of central institutions, university (and he was a university professor) or bank. Either he did not notice those lacks or he thought that the king knows best what to do to make all his subjects happy.



There were several themes in the work of Holberg and Pontoppidan, whose development and continuation made the expression of the national identity possible for the elites in the 18th century. These themes were first and foremost: the ability to describe and define the distinctiveness of Norway in terms of its nature i.e. geography and wildlife as well as its politics and law. The presented description of Norwegian national character or the list of the features typical for Norwegians, both their flaws and virtues, gave a set of views which Norwegian writers could formulate about their compatriots, both in the way they could refer to the whole nation (Norwegians) and to Norwegian peasantry.

As we will see many phenomena which were mentioned by Holberg and Pontoppidan would become elements of the identity of Norwegian elites, beginning with the thought that climate and natural environment shape the national character, through remarks about the noble origin of peasants, till the information on their great talent in wood-carving. The national pride was strengthened by the tendency, stronger in Holberg’s work than in Pontoppidan’s, to perceive the past of the country as famous, great and laudable. A cautious opinion expressed about the unequal economic relations in the union could be developed into considerations on to what extent the economic interests of both countries are the same and if the authorities take into consideration the needs of the Norwe-

⁸⁵ F. Bull, *Fra Holberg...*, p. 12.

gian partner to a right degree. A logical follow-up to this could be the numerous complaints by Norwegians regarding discrimination. In this way in the first half of the 18th century both authors presented in their works a certain set of issues, which could, as a matrix of some sort, serve to identify the elements of identity as well as become the starting point for the formulation of the change program.

To what extent did the work of both authors refer to the activities of Norwegian elites in the 16th and 17th centuries? The opinions about Norway's distinctiveness – geographic, historical, political – agreed with the opinions of most writers: such views can be concluded from the works of Absalon Beyer, Peder Friis, Thormodus Torfæus and many others. In many earlier works one can see a great fascination with Norway's great past. The assessment and opinions of the nation itself are rare, and interestingly, rather negative. In the middle of the 17th century a very cautious reaction to this criticism appears in the form of Bernstsen's remarks, who questioned the credibility of Friis' opinions. In the 1st half of the next century a clear turn appears: a strong tendency to present rather positive national features. As we will see, however, this tendency will not be the only one: many Norwegian writers will not stop from mentioning national flaws.

In Holberg's case, it should be noted that he did not represent the current of 'focusing' only on Norwegian matters unlike many of his predecessors, for whom it was most important to describe Norway or its part. One can say that as he felt himself more of a citizen of the Danish-Norwegian kingdom, he regarded it as a whole and wanted to devote his writing to it. From the point of view of new, Danish-Norwegian elites he was an almost perfect authority. He provided justification for the natural sentiments, including pride, linked to the place of birth and living. He showed in a modern way what Norwegian identity could look like, leaving at the same time a lot of place for interpretation and development of this theme. Simultaneously, he retained a sense of connection and loyalty with Denmark – not only to the monarchs, residing in Copenhagen, who in his view (not an original one after all) were also kings of Norway and their politics improved Norway's position in the union but with Danish culture and language. This must have been important for the people, whose fathers, grandfathers and sometimes they themselves were born in Denmark and who had family, acquaintances and patrons in this country. A Danish historian noticed, that in the structure of Norwegian identity which was being formed in the 18th century one element was missing, which at the same time was present in Denmark: the image of an enemy. He explained that there was no need to have one: the elites were almost completely Norwegian and their reproduction based

on internal recruitment.⁸⁶ One cannot completely agree with this explanation. As we will see in the discussions on patriotism and national sentiments as well as on the situation of the country, the theme of discrimination and harm caused by Denmark will be constantly present. Norwegian elites did not have a sense of 'internal reproduction'. However, the image of the Dane as an enemy could not be produced, even if this Dane was a rival and dominated in the country, discriminating against Norwegians. The connections between both countries elites were just too strong. The Norwegian elites had to produce a model of double loyalty: to Norway and to the Danish country. For the majority of Norwegian intellectuals such duality was something absolutely normal and typical until 1814, even if around the middle of the century there was a significant turn: the link with the country of birth and upbringing would become more important than with the country of the king and state.

Eric Pontoppidan completed this model with a stronger tendency to idealize and express a generally extremely favorable and extensive opinion of the Norwegians, especially peasants. He suggested a model of nation that included all the social classes and his diagnosis theoretically referred to the whole nation, although as we have seen, in practice he focused on peasants, as it was them who represented the Norwegian distinctiveness. Pontoppidan presented the depiction of the nation more broadly including not only the description of physical and mental features of the nation but also all that constitutes a separate way of living such as daily culture (including material culture) and customs. He also included language – here Pontoppidan was not perhaps the most original, although it was him who published the first dictionary of Norwegian language which was not just a modification of the Danish language.

Both writers provided the basis for the 18th century elites: Holberg referred to the historical consciousness and legal distinctiveness of Norway typical for the previous centuries. Pontoppidan boosted the confidence of the intellectuals in coming into closer contact with peasants: their favorable image, interest in their customs, emphasis of their role occurred before but the expertise and significance of the authors helped.

At the same time the sense of distinctiveness was connected with a strong link to the dynasty and the belief in the sense of the union in Denmark. The problem was that if, on the one hand, the Oldenburgs, who loved and appreciated Norwegians, wanted the best for them, then where the actual problems and

⁸⁶ O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, pp. 170, 171.

difficulties were coming from, and what was the origin of the actual discrimination and lack of interest in specific Norwegian conditions? For the generations, who grew up in the 50. and 60. the optimistic image presented by Holberg slowly started to lose consistency.

We need to pay attention to the fact that the phenomenon of double loyalty and double identity that was developing in the 18th century Denmark-Norway has many European analogies. The most well-known example is the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where on the basis of the unity of legal status, political domination and values concerning this position, a Polish national union of noblemen was created with nobles originating from Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine. This was parallel to the sense of connection with the place of birth and upbringing.⁸⁷ Double loyalty characterizes also the inhabitants of the Royal Prussia, who ‘emphasized that they belong to the Crown, but are indeed a separate country with separate laws and connected to the Crown only by the figure of the King [-]’⁸⁸ Despite the developed national consciousness, also in modern Wales we observe a strong loyalty towards the British Crown.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ J. Tazbir, op. cit., p. 322; J. Bardach, ‘Wieloszczeblowa świadomość narodowa na ziemiach litewsko-ruskich Rzeczypospolitej w XVII–XX wieku’ in J. Staszewski (ed.) *Pamiętnik XV Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich*, vol. I, part 1, Gdańsk–Toruń 1995, p. 27.

⁸⁸ J. Małek, ‘Powstanie poczucia krajowej odrębności w Prusach i jej rozwój w XV i XVI wieku in *Państwo, naród, stany...*, p. 247.

⁸⁹ R. Tudur Jones, op. cit., p. 133.

CHAPTER THREE
WE NORWEGIANS, OUR COUNTRY
AND NATION

In the 18th century, national identity, not only that concerning the elites, may be recognized on the basis of a few phenomena, which can be put together into a logical whole. The first component is self-identification. Similarly to the previous period, both in official and private statements, in which self-identification was necessary, as well as in those where it happened incidentally, a clear and unequivocal sense of belonging to the Norwegian community can be acknowledged. These were mostly dispersed, sometimes singular, remarks, which grew in number when they acquired an official and unanimous character and when the written production increased.

Secondly, after identifying oneself as a Norwegian, one could express feelings towards one's home country. There are many emotional accounts referring to Norway.

Thirdly, as a result, it was necessary to point out the entire separateness of Norway and its distinctiveness. Norway was supposed to be completely different from Denmark and from other countries. As we shall see, the concept of a nation was strongly connected with emphasizing one's place of birth and living. Therefore, proving the distinctiveness of the nation demanded proving the distinctiveness of the country.

Fourthly, having the awareness of being a Norwegian and feeling emotionally invested in the country, one could make an attempt at a theoretical delineation of the term 'home country'. And such a reflection appeared in the 2nd half of the 18th century during a 50-year long Danish-Norwegian discussion. An attempt was made then to define the home country, especially in the context of the Norwegian connection with the Danish crown.

The last element would be understanding the term 'nation' in the Norwegian context. It is difficult to talk here about any sort of discussion. The meaning of this notion must be concluded from the context; only in a very few cases its definition was attempted. Nevertheless, the term 'nation' referring to the Nor-

wegians was commonly used and it can be supposed that it had a more modern meaning than it is usually assumed.

It seems more important to highlight the fact that this identity did not refer to a region or a province but to the whole Norway.¹ In the case of clerical elites, it may be connected with the sense of cultural unity (originating in a similar educational background and speaking Danish). As a unified (in this sense) group, they connected their identity with the whole country.²

As in the previous centuries, an example of self-identification can be found in the origin declared at the moment of official registration. In the books of the Bodleian Library in Oxford there are entries of 79 citizens of Denmark-Norway. Sixteen students described themselves more precisely and the most frequent description was *Norvegus*. In some cases, the city was added e.g. *Christiano-Norvegus* or *Nidrot. Norvegus* (from Trondheim). There was also one description of *Norvego-Danus*.³ As Hello Velk states, still after 1676 the inhabitants of the province Båhuslen (which, since 1660, belonged to Sweden) considered themselves Norwegian. In the matriculation books the following terms to describe signing up students appear: *patria Norvegus*, *Norvegus* or *Bahusensis ex Norvegia*, which comes from as late as 1716!⁴ The author of one of the Bergen descriptions, Edvard Edvardsen (1630–1695), a great local patriot signed his work in a characteristic way *fød i Bergen, Ed. Ed. Norv. Berg.*, which means ‘born in Bergen, Edvard Edvardsen, a Norwegian from Bergen’.

There were a few sailors in the Dutch service on the list produced in 1705 who were signed as ‘Norwegen’ – according to, as can be assumed, the information the sailors provided themselves.⁵

The diary notes from 1680–86 left by Rev. Melchior Augustinussøn from Meldal in the southern Trøndelagen show both a perspective truly national and an interest in what was occurring in the whole country. The information included in the diary was not only of local character. The author mentioned burning down of the city of Stavanger (‘the old, good city’), he wrote about the

¹ Sølvi Sogner, the author of the sixth volume of the history of Norway, is convinced that for the people of 17th and 18th centuries the sense of belonging to a region was more important than to the nation or country (S. Sogner, op. cit., p. 58). However, she herself quoted facts which undermined this opinion.

² K. Mykland, *Skriver, fut og prest*, in *Norges kulturhistorie...*, pp. 193–94; O. Feldbæk, ‘For Norge, Kjæmpers...’, p. 37.

³ F. Sneedorff, op. cit., pp. 521–23.

⁴ V. Helk, op. cit., vol. II, p. 90.

⁵ S. Sogner, op. cit., p. 73.

king's visit in Trondheim, about the fire in Christiania – very precisely ('on 23 April at 11 p.m.') and about the fire in Bergen.⁶

The rector of the cathedral school in Trondheim, Benjamin Dass (1706–1775) in his letter to Hans Gram from 20 September 1736 in a characteristic way mentioned a proverb: 'Before the grass grows, the cow will die, to use our Norwegian proverb.'⁷ One should not overemphasize the use of the pronoun 'our'. Being often used in the Norwegian context, it rather indicates a manner of speaking than an identifying element (it was often used by e.g. the Danish).⁸ However, the proverb quoted above, folk in origin, indicated that Dass was in touch with the Norwegian daily life, folk language and, more importantly, was aware of its connotations. During the Northern War in 1719 a poem was created and circulated round Norway: 'Norwegians swear that the Norwegian crown will never fall prey to the Swedish King; till Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer still occur in Norway.'⁹ The Norwegian admiral of crown fleet, the famous Tordenskiold, signed a letter to the king: 'we, Norwegian boys from Dynekilden' (a place, where Norwegian ships under his command entered the biggest sea battle in the Northern War, 1716); on another occasion he wrote 'a poor boy from Norway'. He also swore 'I will behave like an honest Norwegian'.¹⁰ He justified his military actions with the necessity to free the 'Kingdom of Norway' from the Swedish threat and he described the country in a characteristic way calling it 'poor Norway'.¹¹

In the diary of the above-mentioned Hans Trosner, a sailor and a soldier in the Northern War, there are many indications how much he was interested in the news from Norway: he noted, when the mail from Norway came, wrote down the news from Norway for example about the plague that caused high

⁶ [M. Augustinussøn], 'Melchior Augustinussøns Annaler 1670–1705' [selection], ed. L. Daae, *Personallhistorisk Tidsskrift*, series 3, vol. III, København 1894, pp. 264–267.

⁷ [B. Dass] 'Af Benjamin Dass's Brevveksling med Hans Gram', ed. A. E. Erichsen, *Vor Ungdom* 1897, p. 230.

⁸ Nevertheless, one could wonder if using this pronoun (also in phrases *vi* – "we" or *vores Norge* – "our Norway") may indicate a certain sense of connection. For B. Andersson using this grammatical form may be evidence of some way of identification (B. Andersson, *Wspólnoty wyobrażone*, transl. S. Amsterdamski, Kraków 199, p. 43).

⁹ 'Af gazetterne, relation fra Røros udi Norge den 16de Januari 1719', ed. N. Nicolaysen, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, series 2, vol. II, Kristiania 1880, pp. 125–126.

¹⁰ Letters from 5 July 1717, 8 June 1716, 6 June 1713, 28 July 1714, 16 November 1716; [P. W. Tordenskiold], *Tordenskiolds Brev*, ed. O. Bergersen, Trondheim, 1964, pp. 70, 144, 256.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 494–95, 213–15, 216.

mortality or about the military draft in the Stavanger district, about the supplication to the king, on the movements of troops in Norway, about the imposed taxes and other liabilities (pointing out that lower charges were imposed on Denmark).¹² Trosner continuously used identifications which distinguished between Norwegians, Danish, Swedes, although it must be noted that in the true soldier way he used the term ‘we’ to refer to the whole army of the kingdom.

When in 1733 King Christian VI with his spouse travelled round Norway, the subjects were eager to express their reverence and dedication. The city dwellers greeted the King with triumphal gates but what is interesting they decorated them also with the Norwegian motifs: the portraits of Norwegian Kings beginning from Harald Fairhair, the founder of the Norwegian kingdom. Such demonstration took place in Christiansand, the place where the bourgeoisie were still dominated by the newcomers from Denmark.¹³

In many cases the identification with Norway was expressed explicitly. The poet Dorothea Engelbretssdatter – in her laudatory letter Leonore Christine¹⁴ described her as “the Norwegian flame” (*Norske Fakkell-Blus*) – introduced herself in these words “I come from the Norwegian clerical family”.¹⁵ Most of those who wrote about Norway in any context emphasized that they were writing about their country (*vort Land*), about their countrymen – *vi Norske*, i.e. we, the Norwegians. The distinction between Norwegians and all other nations like the Danish, Swedes or Germans was very common.¹⁶ It was usually connected with an attempt to present ‘the national character’ – similarly to how it was done in the first half of the century by Holberg, which was discussed in the previous chapter. Even in private exchanges such categories appeared, as Carl Deichman’s notes demonstrate. He was discussing the phenomenon of diary

¹² [H. Trosner], op. cit., pp. 30, 32, 40, 62, 132.

¹³ Ø. Rian, *Hvordan...*; S. Imsen (review) ‘Norske Reise Anno 1733. Beskrivelse af Kong Christian 6 og Dronning Sophie Magdalene Rejse til Norge 12 Maj til 23 September’, Faksimileudgave, København 1992, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, LXXIII (Oslo 1994), 3, p. 399.

¹⁴ Leonore Christine, b. 1621 d. 1698, Danish princess, the natural daughter of the King Christian IV, a spouse to aristocrat and dignitary Corfitz Ulfeldt; in 1663 accused of participation in the plot of her husband against the king Frederick III, she was sentenced to 22 years in prison in Blåtårn fortress; in this time she wrote her autobiography *Jammersminde* (A Memory of Lament), one of the most important achievements in the Danish literature of the 17th century (published in 1869 for the first time).

¹⁵ Leonore Christine, ‘Æredikt til Dorothe Engelbretsdatter’ [1681], in *Fra gamle dage. Memoarer, dagbøger, salmer og dikt av kvinder ca. 1660–1880*, ed. E. Aasen, Oslo 1983, p. 53; D. Engelsbretsdatter, *Taare-offer* in *ibidem*, p. 68.

¹⁶ H. Meyer, ‘Bergens Beskrivelse’ [1764] in *Norske Magasin...*, vol. III, p. 461 ff.

writing, rare in the Danish culture, and explained it by the ‘moderation of this nation.’¹⁷ In 1788, in connection to the prince Frederick’s (the heir to the throne) visit in Norway, among many laudatory poems, a poem was published signed CIM in the supplement to the *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*. It had classical content – a typical description of Norwegian virtues, a declaration of loyalty and a complaint about the difficult position of the country.¹⁸ Such remarks were very frequent at the time. However, this one was written by a Swede C. I. Manderfeldt, a famous brawler and spy of the King Gustav III. And it received a sharp retort. A few weeks after, on the pages of the newspaper, an anonymous author asked: ‘Who gave you the right to speak on behalf of the Norwegians?’¹⁹ Jacob Nicolai Wilse introduced himself as a Dane, naturalized in Norway (*Jeg er kuns naturaliseret her*) emphasizing at the same time big differences between Norway and Denmark.²⁰

Giving information about their origins, Norwegians were using the term *Fødeland*, i.e. literally ‘the country of birth’ – but connected to the upbringing.²¹ Another term was *Fædreneland*, that is literally ‘the country of the fathers, ancestors.’²² It is my impression that it is difficult to link the usage of these two

¹⁷ [C. Deichman], ‘Historiske Optegnelser af Carl Deichman’ in *Meddelelser fra det Norske Rigsarchiv, indeholdende Bidrag til Norges Historie af utrykte Kilder*, vol. I, Christiania 1870, p. 5. Carl Deichman, b. around 1705 d. 1780, an owner of a smeltery, collector, clerk; he managed to gather a huge collection of manuscripts, specimens, coins and books and (together with the capital) bequeathed them in his will to the city of Christiania, which created the Deichmanske Bibliotek operating in Oslo till today.

¹⁸ CIM, ‘Norges hilsen til Hans Kongelige Højhed Kron-Prinds, *Tillæg til Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, 4 VI 1788, qtd. after: Y. Nielsen, *Gustav III’s...*, 112.

¹⁹ *Norske-Intelligenz Seddeler*, No 29, 16 VII 1788.

²⁰ J. N. Wilse, *Physisk, oekonomisk og statistisk Beskrivelse over Spydeberg Præstegield* [1779], Valdesholm forlag, Spydeberg, 1991, pp. 10, 161, 171. Jacob Nicolai Wilse, b. 1734 d. 1801, clergyman, naturalist, born in Denmark; graduated from the Copenhagen University, 1768 took the Spydeberg parish, in 1785 Eidsberg in south-eastern Norway (Østfold); the author of numerous topographical works, a dictionary of local dialect; he made meteorological observations which were valued in Europe; in the beginning of 1790s became involved in the matter of Norwegian university, calling in 1793 a meeting in Christiania; a committee was chosen then (with Wilse), which started a contest for a project of the university; a petition to the king was also prepared which requested the setting up of a university, but the response was negative.

²¹ C. M. Leganger, ‘Tanker i Anledning af den Kongelige Allernaadigste Befaling om nogle Beneficiierende Gaardes Udnævnelse til Militair-Boeliger for Compagnie-Cheferne i Norge, *Minerva*, vol. VI, Kiøbenhavn 1787, pp. 175–176.

²² J. J. Milche, ‘Noget om Bygselvæsenet i Norge, et Brev, skrevet i Aaret 1777 til en daværende Minister’, *Minerva*, vol. IX, Kiøbenhavn 1788, p. 78; [C. F. Hagerup], ‘Brev fra

terms with two different concepts of the country – the context does not support this. It is true that the country of birth could only have been Norway, but the term *Fædreneland* referred to both countries. I also did not notice that the use of the word *Fødeland* (that is, as it could have been assumed, the reduction of the role of the country) was connected to the stronger identification with the union and attachment to Denmark, and that the word *Fædreneland* signified any separatist tendencies. For example, a famous poet Edvard Storm worked as a teacher in Copenhagen and his student, the famous Danish Romantic poet Adam Oehlenschläger wrote that during one geography lesson, beginning his lecture on Norway, he said ‘And now, dear child, we will move on to discuss my home country’.²³ Storm also used the term *Fædreneland* and the conclusion cannot be drawn that he was less favorable towards the union, as he was one of the few Norwegians who wrote a laudatory ode for *Innfødsretten* (1778).²⁴ Ole Irgens speaking about Norway, also used the term *Fædreneland* and smoothly continued to use the same term regarding Denmark-Norway.²⁵ Even Hammer, i.e. *Philonorvagus*, linked the two terms, saying: ‘As the native (inhabitant – *Indfødt*) I feel to be a representative of my country (*Fædreneland*), poor Norway’.²⁶

en Ven i Trondheim til sin Ven i Kiøbenhavn’, *Minerva*, vol. XIV, Kiøbenhavn 1788, p. 322; J. N. Brun, ‘Deres Kongelige Høyhed Prints Friderich Arve-Prints til Danmark og Norge etc. etc.’ [dedication for the crown-prince Frederick] in idem, *Einar Tambskielver. Et Sørge-spil*, ed. E. N. Wiger, Oslo 2002, p. 25; P. N. Daldorph, ‘Om Skov-Hugst og Ager-Dyrkning i de Norske Field-Bøyder samt andet angaaende Bondens Oeconomie og Leve-Maade’ [1755], in *Danmarks og Norges Oeconomiske Magazin*, vol. I, Kiøbenhavn 1757, p. 107; J. T. With, ‘Forsøg paa et tilstrækkeligt Midel at oppfinde, hvorved Skovene i Norge kunde spares, og de af den Kommende store Fordele continueres’, ibidem, vol. V, Kjøbenhavn 1761, p. 145; ‘Nogle Christiansandske Præsteautobiografier’, ed. E. A. Thomle, *Personallhistorisk Tidsskrift*, vol. IV, Kjøbenhavn 1883, p. 287.

²³ H. Bjørkvit, ‘Edvard Storm – utdypning’ [biographic entry], *Store Norske Lexicon*, http://www.snl.no/nbl_biografi/Edvard_Storm/utdypning (06.07.2009). Edvard Storm, b. 1749 d. 1794, a poet, teacher; studied at the University of Copenhagen but did not graduate; worked as a teacher in Norway where he had many contacts with the local peasants and in Copenhagen, where he became a headmaster in 1790; he also died here.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ O. Irgens, *Den Selskabelige Strædsomhed for Videnskabernes Vedligeholdelse. En Tale...*, 12 IV 1774 med *Secreterens* [L. Wittrup] *Svar*, Trondheim [1774], pp. 17, 25. Ole Irgens, b. 1724 d. 1803, a clergyman, graduated from the Copenhagen University, 1773 a provost of the Trondheim cathedral, 1773–1780 the vice-president of the Norwegian Science Society there; 1779 bishop of Trondheim.

²⁶ [E. Hammer], *Philonorvagi velmeente Tanker til veltænkende Medborgere* [Kiøbenhavn 1771], p. 8. Even Hammer, b. 1732 d. 1800, graduated from the Copenhagen University;

Both terms, as it seems, were in fact synonymous. Other ways of self-presentation were such sentences or phrases as: 'My countrymen, that is inhabitants of Norway', 'an honest Norwegian', 'Norwegian patriot', 'dear countryman, dear countrymen', 'native Norwegian'.²⁷ The authors of texts began their writings from a declaration: I am a Norwegian.²⁸

The readers of the newspaper *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel* in 1763 considered themselves to be Norwegians and they sometimes referred to the language of the published texts, complaining that they were not written in Norwegian.²⁹

The cases of obliterating of the differences between what was Danish and what was Norwegian met with irritation. For example, the historian Gerhard Schøning reviewing the map of Norway published in Copenhagen criticized its author for making the Norwegian geographical names and terms sound Danish. He became annoyed when a German scholar August L. Schlözer (1735–1809) listed him as one of the Danish historians.³⁰

In the case of focusing on a specific city or region, it was always presented in a broader context e.g. linking the history of the city with Norwegian history or emphasizing its 'Norwegian character'.³¹

travelled round various European universities; from 1771 worked as a clerk in Norway, among others he became an *amtmand* in Romsdal; 1776 he established Romdalske Praktiske Landhuusholdningsselskab (a society to support farming).

²⁷ F. N., 'Velmeent Opmuntring for sine Lands-mænd, samtlige Norges Indvaanere, til at betiene sig bedre af Landets Graa-Steen, til allehaande Bygninger i særdeleshed Kirke-Bygninger, optegnet af...' in *Danmarks og Norges Oeconomiske...*, vol. I pp. 67, 71, 73, 114; O. Holmboe, 'Nogle Poster, som behøvede af tænkes paa, og sættes i verk til Agerhuus Stiftes Opkomst og Forbedring' in *ibidem*, vol. II, p. 166; D. Schiöth, 'Om Val af Sæderkorn og i sær om den Norske Rug' in *ibidem*, vol. IV, pp. 266, 267; 'En gammel forsøgt Norsk Patriot og Landmands Huusholdnings-Agerdyrkning Journal, holden og antegnet Meere til en velmeent Erindring end en selvklog Foreskrift' [anonymous] in *ibidem*, vol. VI, pp. 3, 36, 37; 'Forsøg til at opløse det første Problema, som lyder saaledes: Naar en bemidlet Mand, som haver ingen Livsarvinger vil gøre et testament til almindelig velfærd; hvilket er det beste Anslag som hannem kan gives?' [anonymous] in *ibidem*, vol. VIII, p. 395.

²⁸ [O. G. Meyer], *En Nordmands Undersøgelse, hvorvidt de Aarsager kan gjelde som anføres mod en norsk Akademie*, Kiøbenhavn 1771, p. 113; J. N. Brun, [preface to *Zarine*], qtd after: O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, p. 287.

²⁹ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 14, 24 August 1763; No 15, 31 August 1763.

³⁰ S. Larsen, *Med dragning mod nord. Gerhard Schøning som historiker*, Tromsø 1999, pp. 70, 99.

³¹ H. Meyer, 'Bergens Beskrivelse...', pp. 428, 564.



Such presentation was frequently connected with an emotional tone: Norway (sometimes the home city or region) was beloved, outstanding, poor, underprivileged, hurt, and worthy of admiration.³² This last motif dominated i.e. an obvious tendency to present one's own country in apologetic terms. The reasons for the admiration of Norway were its natural resources: forests, metals (e.g. the mine in Røros was supposed to be one of the most famous ones in Scandinavia or even in Europe), and fish. The idea of general barrenness of the country was rejected by pointing out beautiful forests and meadows in the interior of the country. Numerous cities and markets created wonderful conditions for the development of trade. Trondheim was praised and especially its famous cathedral – the wonder of architecture, which still impressed people despite the damages. Finally, significant historical events were emphasized and called interesting and dazzling.³³ In the 80s, as it can be seen from the announcements in *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, the ships were named after the name of the country: 'Norge' and 'Den gamle Norge'.³⁴

Deep feelings were visible in phrases such as 'the beloved country' or the Schøning's invocation from the farewell speech of bishop Gunnerus: 'O Norway, Norway, our beloved Norway and beloved country'.³⁵ Such sentiments were present especially in poetry as a result of the genre. They were for example such as by Johan Nordahl Brun: 'Above all I love my own country where I was born and where I grew up...' and 'My disquiet and longing concerns the regions guarded by the mountains...'.³⁶ Brun expressed similar emotions in prose in his travel diary: 'At 2 p.m. we saw again the old, good Norwegian rocks and we welcomed our country with great joy. (–) At six, we passed [the peninsula] Lindesnes and we drank a toast to the old Norway'.³⁷ Happiness and pleasure

³² O. Irgens, op. cit., 16; H. Meyer, 'Samlinger til Bergens Kirkehistorie' [1764] in *Norske Magazin...*, vol. III, Christiania 1870, p. 254.

³³ [E. Hammer], op. cit., s. 9, 11, 60, 78, 89; G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. I, pp. VII–X, 3, 58, 80; O. G. Meyer, op. cit., p. 8; H. Strøm, *Physiske og oeconomiske...*, vol. I, unpaginated preface; F. N., op. cit., p. 77; E. Steen, 'Det nasjonale-historiske drama' *Edda*, no 4, Oslo 1972, p. 247.

³⁴ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 23, 9 VI 1784, No 32 10 VIII 1785; L. Opstad, 'Kulturprovinsen Norge' in *Norges kulturhistorie...*, p. 7.

³⁵ *Samling af Minde-Taler holdne i det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers-Selskab over adskillige af dets afdøde Medlemmer*, ed. H. J. Wille, København 1805, p. 48.

³⁶ J. N. Brun, *Mindre digte*, Christiania 1818, pp. 78, 107.

³⁷ *Fra de Norske Selskabs Kreds. Udvalg af Vers og Breve*, ed. S. A. Lindbæk, Kristiania 1913, p. 55.

caused by the return to the homelands were a common motif in autobiographical and literary texts.³⁸



The distinctiveness of Norway was emphasized in various ways. It was pointed out that the Danish language lacked words to describe many typical Norwegian phenomena. The differences were listed: in Norway the inns were differently organized, the river crossings formed in different places, the vicarage i.e. the vicar's household had a different function and the clergy generally worked differently.³⁹ Many suggestions of economy reforms, or remarks upon the state of Norwegian economy, were connected with indicating the different and unknown in Denmark natural conditions and atypical settlement organization.⁴⁰ Similarly, it was emphasized that laws should take into consideration different climate, terrain, customs and mentality of the Norwegians. What was good for Denmark was not necessarily good for Norway – these were two different and distant countries and the Norwegian allodial peasant was completely different from a Danish subject.⁴¹ Also history was supposed to attest to the distinctiveness of Norway as the country avoided the negative consequences of feudalism.⁴²

The motif of Norway's distinctiveness appears in almost all the texts concerning the issue of the university because it was one of the key arguments for its establishment. It was argued that another country, so different from Denmark, required a separate, different university. It was supposed to develop those areas of knowledge which were more necessary in Norway or for which Norway had better conditions.⁴³ In Denmark, for example, sciences necessary for mining were not supported as it is a lowland country, the rector of the mining school in Kongsberg pronounced.⁴⁴ What is more, the statement that the Danish were

³⁸ *Nogle Christiansandske...*, p. 287; J. Rein, *Samlede Digte*, vol. I, Kiöbenhavn 1802, p. 88.

³⁹ H. Strøm, *Physiske og oeconomiske...*, vol. II, from unpaginated preface; J. N. Wilse, *Reiser i Østfold på 1700-tallet*, [1782–87], ed. T. Stubberud, Valdisholm forlag 1993, pp. 26, 34–35, 47.

⁴⁰ 'Fire anmerkninger henhørende til Oeconomiens Forbedring, nemlig:...' [anonymous] in *Danmarks og Norges Oeconomiske...*, vol. II, p. 62.

⁴¹ [E. Hammer], op. cit., pp. 24, 25.

⁴² J. J. Milche, op. cit., p. 83.

⁴³ O. G. Meyer, op. cit., p. 19.

⁴⁴ P. Thorstensson, 'Tale, holden ved Indvielse af det Kongelige Norske Bergseminarium den 27 May 1786, ved...', *Minerva*, vol. VII, Kiöbenhavn 1787, p. 331.

not able to make suitable decisions when Norwegian issues were concerned, based on emphasizing geographical differences between Denmark and Norway. The Danish, as the author of one topographical description wrote, had no idea what mountains looked like, how steep some paths were, how rough the terrain, how barren the soil could be, and they did not know early frost.⁴⁵ Geographical differences between Norway and Denmark were emphasized by the Norwegians living in Copenhagen. The climate and air were thought to be terrible here and they caused – as it was claimed – the death of many Norwegians and all of the Norwegians here suffered from homesickness. Nothing here reminded them of the beloved country; they are in a foreign environment, far away from their families and friends.⁴⁶

In the argumentation in favor of establishing Norway's own bank, arguments concerning Norway's different economic reality appeared, apart from those regarding geographical location and distance from Denmark.⁴⁷ Jacob Nicolai Wilse wrote in 1777 that the monarchy consisted of two completely different parts and it would be advantageous to leave some place for the self-government and specific circumstances, as well as equal treatment of both parts.⁴⁸ It is interesting that Wilse emphasized that the advantages of such politics would be visible both in the times of peace and in the times of war... It was noticed that Norway needed separate legal regulations concerning for example the Church and the clergy.⁴⁹

A specific way, although most probably unconscious, to highlight the differences between Norway and Denmark was the custom to enrich poetical texts with footnotes. In notes, sometimes even quite long, Norwegian words were explained, not only translated them but it was also explained what they referred to e.g. in description of beliefs or folk customs.⁵⁰ As if the poets, writing and publishing in Copenhagen, had been aware of the fact that they were presenting something so exotic that it needed to be explained to the Danish reader.

⁴⁵ A. Smith, *Beskrivelse af Trysil*, qtd after A. Eriksen, *Topografenes verden...*, pp. 218–219.

⁴⁶ [C. F. Hagerup], op. cit., p. 314, pp. 333–334.

⁴⁷ 'Forhandlinger om Oprettelse af en Bank i Norge 1760–1773' in *Meddelelser fra Det Norske Riksarchiv...*, vol. III, Oslo 1933, p. 436.

⁴⁸ O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, p. 294.

⁴⁹ 'Brev om Capellanismem (fra Norge)' [anonymous], *Minerva*, vol. XV, Kiøbenhavn 1789, pp. 315–17.

⁵⁰ A. Bull, *Land-Livet. En Sang. af...*, Kiøbenhavn 1787, pp. 3, 14, 22, 26.



Self-identification, emphasizing Norway's distinctiveness give some basis to say that the national identity existed. However, the national problem was in this period also the subject of theoretical reflection. In the Age of Enlightenment, the home country was commonly under discussion. In multinational countries these discussions resulted in formulating a concept of patriotism which involved a connection with the country or monarch (dynasty) referring to a much older tradition. In Denmark such a viewpoint was represented by a Danish writer Tyge Rothe, who in 1759 published a pamphlet *Thoughts on loving one's country* (*Tanker om Kiærlighed til Fædernelandet*). He presented there a view that the home country is first and foremost the commonwealth of citizens. For everyone the home country is the country in which one works, where one does one's duty and which one supports with one's effort. The place of birth or the language are not relevant here. Everyone has a natural preference for one's place of birth but it should not be mistaken for a mature and conscious patriotism. The decision to form bonds with a certain country must be a decision made by free citizens, so Rothe by definition excluded the possibility of patriotism in despotic countries which were ruled by tyrants. He also linked this sentiment with morality making patriotism a moral sentiment similar to 'loving one's neighbor' but at a larger scale. Such a cosmopolitan concept must have been very close to the royal court of Frederick V, where the Germans with Johann von Bernstorff (1712–1772) played a big role. The author in fact, directly referred to the situation on the court praising the king for the fact that he was open to the presence of foreigners.⁵¹

However, a resentment towards this situation was growing in the Danish society. The Enlightenment bolstered national sentiments. It presented a program of building the national culture, spreading national language and fighting against foreign influences in all spheres. The period championed support for scientific research and all activity which was supposed to strengthen, develop and re-build the home country. Putting this program into practice was supposed to be one of the bases of progress, especially in terms of enlightening the folk people. Such a program, stimulating the national sentiments – in some sense in contradiction to itself – started to pave the way for a different approach to the national question. As a result, the Enlightenment started to support the

⁵¹ O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, pp. 163–164.

growing resentment towards foreign influences, which in the nearest future was to establish the bases of the idea of a national state.

In this situation, the necessity to define patriotism anew occurred and especially to define its key antinomy of the locals vs. the foreigners. After the death of Frederick V in 1766 the Danish elites did not hide their resentment towards his advisors. In the first years of the new king's rule, the young Christian VII, a favorable climate was created for the presentation of a different notion of patriotism. At this time the Norwegian lawyer Eiler Hagerup, among others, answered such political demand and published in 1767 a pamphlet *A letter on love for one's country*.⁵²

There are easily discernible antique patterns in his argumentation, as Cicero already had written about two home countries that a man can have. Hagerup explained that under the notion 'the home country' he understands two things: '...the natural place of birth and the country, which thanks to birth became our country of residence, and also the society, whose member we become and whose rules will concern us...'. We love, then our place of birth, which is a result of the fact that it is here where ideas and concepts of nature were instilled in us. The connection with the society is no less natural: we are born with the need of being loved and it is natural that we love what is closest to us. We stop being children and we become citizens – and then not parents but the community is supposed to protect us and give us security. But if we expect this, we need to make the society love us and appreciate us by becoming valuable citizens. In this way, two-way obligations are created, whose fulfillment become the right basis for our love for the country. But, as Hagerup emphasized, if we are to love our country, its native inhabitants (*Infødde*) cannot feel like foreigners in their own country: 'If we are to love our country, then those who were born here cannot feel here as foreigners. The feelings that make us patriotic must be continuously kindled so that we are convinced that it is here, in our country, where we want to live'. It is especially painful when foreigners are given priority in being appointed for offices: '... nothing damages the spirit of the people, nothing suppresses the feeling of love and disposition towards one's country as much as the fact that they see that the rulers despise them, that they are not trusted because of the superstition that there are only a few of

⁵² E. Hagerup, *Brev om Kierlighed til Fædrelandet*, København 1767. Eiler Hagerup, b. 1736 d. 1795, from a clerical family, a clerk, from 1768 an *amtmand* in Finnmark, from 1771 worked in Copenhagen.

wise men that could be used; as when they see they are being passed over for offices and privileges.⁵³

At the end Hagerup appealed to the king, to ‘the first patriot’ in the country emphasizing that when on seeing his patriotism and devotion to the country, the citizens will be more willing to fulfill their patriotic duties.⁵⁴

Hagerup may not have questioned the notion of the home country seen as the commonwealth of the citizens but he demanded the acceptance of the fact that the feeling towards one birthplace is equally important. He therefore postulated not the removal of the foreigners from the country but rather giving priority to the ‘indigenous’ people. He subtly drew the young king’s attention to the fact that if he expected his subjects to feel love towards their own country and to his royal person, he should also demonstrate that he himself was attached to them and considered them most important and having priority in granting privileges.

If we were to compare Hagerup’s views with those presented by Holberg and Pontoppidan – Hagerup was a generation younger than both of them – a certain logic appears. Both older authors distinguished between belonging to the state-political community and belonging to a community based on the place of birth. When defining the nation, if they took up this task, they wrote about ‘the inhabitants’, the people who were born in Norway. The characteristic of the Norwegian nation prepared by Pontoppidan may suggest that he treated culture and language as an important indicator. Holberg saw history as important, which also referred to people born in Norway. The category of being born and brought up in a certain place turned out to be basic in this case. It is not surprising

⁵³ Ibidem, pp. 4–7, 13, 25–26. The author emphasized also that patriotism concerns also the lower social classes. You should not think that peasants are only suited to do hard work and agree to too big inequalities as in this way their patriotism will not be stimulated. The limitation of freedom works in a similar way – the slave will never be a patriot. The excessive burdens, limitations of freedom, of becoming wealthier and usage of one’s possessions lead to the decline of virtues – a person does not become more industrious but rather learns begging and stealing. We should make an effort so that the peasant love for their region, i.e. the soil which they cultivate, is transferred to the love of the entire country. Finishing his considerations, Hagerup wrote that the love for the country, the appreciation with which one returns to it from a journey, the joy when one meets a countryman abroad, are those most natural human behaviors. When we visit the embassy of our country abroad, we feel at home – but we experience a disappointing dissonance when it turns out that the envoy (i.e. ambassador) is linked with our country – on whose behalf he acts – by nothing more than his post (pp. 27–31).

⁵⁴ Ibidem, p. 32.

then that it was moved to the forefront of attention of the writer of the younger generation (it may be assumed that he knew works of both 'classical authors').

Hagerup's text belonged to a clear political trend so it is not so certain that when he was writing about the home country he always meant Norway. Rather, he perceived his home country as a 'two-layered' construct – the one closer to 'nature', i.e. to a person's natural tendencies and sentiments; this is the place of birth, family and childhood. All this was represented by Norway. The second one, gaining a more social, legal and political character, is an organization ruled by the Kings i.e. Denmark-Norway. Speaking about the rights concerning the native inhabitants, Hagerup did not have in mind the rights of Norwegians in relation to the Danish but the rights of both nations in relation to the Germans dominating the court.

The period of Johann F. Struensee's rule itself must have strengthened the hostility towards foreigners, especially towards the Germans. This concerned first and foremost the Danish, for whom the dictator, his connections at the court and the situation of the king Christian VII were deeply offensive. The Norwegians were not so much affronted but they – also devoted to the court and loyal – also suffered when faced with humiliation that their monarch had experienced. In the meantime, Struensee abolished censorship in the course of his reforms. Therefore, some opportunities appeared for the patriotic sentiments of Norwegians to be expressed. Johan Nordahl Brun was one of the most important figures in this context.⁵⁵

His early texts were not only patriotic but even nationalistic as well as fiery and warlike. One of them was *Einer Tambeskielver* devoted to the events from the 11th century Norway and to be more precise to the conflict between the eponymous hero, a Norwegian magnate and the king Harald Hardrada. The drama is full of pathos, remarks on the greatness of Norway and the fight against tyrants. All this seemed suspicious to the Danish and criticism appeared concerning exaggeration and fears of instigating rebellion. Brun refuted the criticism in his polemic entitled *To Norwegians on loyalty to the king and the love of the country*.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Johan Nordahl Brun, b. 1745 d. 1816; bishop of Bergen from 1804, poet, the son of a tradesman and a gentleman farmer; he graduated from theological studies at the Copenhagen University, 1772 started a career as a clergyman; outstanding preacher, poet, playwright, supporter of absolutism, an opponent of the union with Sweden.

⁵⁶ J. N. Brun, *Til Nordmænd om Troeskab mod Kongen og Kierlighed til Fædrelandet. I Anledning af Einar Tambeskielver ved...*, Trondheim 1773.

Brun introduced a clear distinction between the natural home country – which is Norway, and the citizenship home country i.e. Denmark (Denmark-Norway). The natural character of the former was literal: ‘We feel the best in Norway and we should announce this to the whole world. The cold, which causes the Danish to get sick, strengthens our bodies. We like the rocks because we are used to them and the most beautiful regions in Denmark do not cause such awe in us as the view of a river crawling between two mountains. Such love for the home country was inspired by nature’. And further: ‘It is commonly known that we here in Norway breath fresher and healthier air than people in Denmark; at least it is healthier for us; nowhere is our mind so light and cheerful as under our own sky. I, personally, feel best when it is so cold that the journalist [i.e. the reviewer – K. S.] would freeze to death’. Brun emphasized that even the ‘most primitive country bumpkins’ agreed with the words on the love of the country from his works when he read these words to them: ‘(the Norwegians) always, more than any other nation in the world, loved their home country [literally the country of birth – K. S.]; and it is a characteristic trait of my compatriots’.

These remarks were accompanied by strong declarations of faithfulness, loyalty and obedience to the kings. The author wrote that the monarchs were aware of this faithfulness and had full trust in their Norwegian subjects that Denmark was their home country and that they were ready to defend it. Calling for friendship and cooperation he forcefully claimed: ‘We never found it honorable to decry everything that is not Norwegian’. But at the same time he finished with a call to his compatriots: ‘Let us not be overtaken by the Danish in what is great, beautiful or good! And let it be from now on as it has been till today: that no people in the whole world could overtake Norwegians in their loyalty to the king and in their love for the country!’⁵⁷

In Brun’s description, there appeared a clear identification of the home country with the place of birth and with its typical natural environment. The writer emphasized that it is with this country that his and his compatriots’ strong emotions are connected as well as a certain adaptation to it. A motif appeared here, which often came up in the remarks of the Norwegians living abroad: one can live only in one’s own country! However, a citizenship country also exists i.e. the monarchy and king, who traditionally is an object of unswerving loyalty. In the context of the whole body of work by Brun and what his texts sound like,

⁵⁷ Ibidem, pp. 3, 24, 21, 3–4, 22, 31–32.

it seems that the emotions linked with Norway were much stronger and the attitude towards Denmark was more reasoned.

A similar approach can be seen in the text by Hans Arentz *The Outline of Norwegian Reasonable Patriotism (Grund-Tegning af den fornuftige Norske patriotism)* in 1787. Hans Arentz (1731–1793) was a judge in the local court, originated from the clerical family in which we find ministers, teachers and lawyers. The founder of the family is thought to be the father of the writer Fredrich Arentz (1699–1779) bishop of Bergen, who married the niece of Ludvig Holberg himself – Cathrine Frederikke Holberg. Hans' brother, Fredrich Christian (he also adopted the name of Holberg) was a rector at the Bergen cathedral school.

The moment of the creation of the text, although directly connected with the competition organized in 1786 by the Scandinavian Society for a patriotic text, was very special. In the 1780s some events were taking place which had a considerable influence on the stirring of the political and patriotic interests. The relations between Denmark and Norway were becoming increasingly complicated, which – together with Christian Lofthus uprising and the fresh memory of the hunger experienced by the inhabitants – gave birth to strong emotions and growing interest in the situation of the country.

Similarly to other authors, Arentz considered the place of birth to be the basic criterion for identification and defining the home country. Thanks to this fact as well as to upbringing, connection to family and friends, the nature connected a person with his country. In practice, it means that also parents should be local. According to the author, the situation of a person born in Norway is not changed by the fact that the father came from abroad – Arentz referred here to the situation of a clerk who came from Denmark. Patriotism, understood primarily as a feeling, an emotion or an attitude became a natural category and had a cultural sense only thanks to the influence the family environment had in one's childhood. Arentz differentiated also between the natural patriotism and the 'citizen virtue', which was the connection to the state. Everybody can be a good citizen or subject but one may become a patriot only through birth. The author added precisely that the fact that some country may be connected with another state was not related to patriotism. He quoted similar cases i.e. the Habsburg Monarchy and the United Kingdom and pointed out that nobody identifies and Austrian with a Czech or a Scotsman with an Englishman. One cannot then mistake a Dane for a Norwegian. Further conclusions were very strong, as the author wrote that Norwegian patriotism referred to the Kingdom

of Norway – its land and people. Therefore, the aim of the Norwegian patriot must be Norway – the country in which he was born and grew up.⁵⁸

Arentz suggested also some limitations. In line with the Enlightenment philosophy, patriotism, similarly to any other feeling, should stay under the control of reason. The following category appeared: ‘reasonable patriotism’, which, according to the author, stays in accordance with one’s social and citizen duties. In his subsequent considerations there appeared further conditions, from which it can be deduced that such limitations concerning Norwegian patriotism were for the author a consequence of adopting this, reasonable point of view. Reasonable and, we could add, realistic, because these conditions were nothing else as acceptance of the power of the dynasty, the union with Denmark and a sympathetic attitude towards the Danish.⁵⁹

The union with Denmark was, therefore, presented as something positive and advantageous for Norway, however, the author emphasized that one should not believe the opinions that Norway were in this union ‘a subjugated province.’⁶⁰ This remark may be ambiguous. On the one hand, it may express a conviction and faith (or at least a declaration) that Norway is a fully-fledged partner in the union. On the other hand, from this remark, as from the entire text, one can conclude that the author treated Norway in terms of a country. Below an opinion (critical, to be honest) will be discussed about the tutelary court in Christiania. In this context it seems an important fact that the author, referring to this court, used a term *Norges Herlighed* which means in this context an institution having sovereignty and the highest power.

The majority of historians who discussed Arentz’ text were focused primarily on his definition of home country and patriotism, at the same time emphasizing its non-Enlightenment and pre-Romantic character. However, further considerations of this author are also interesting i.e. an attempt at presenting what this reasoned, Norwegian patriotism should be concerned with in order to fulfil the duties towards the home country. These considerations can be seen as a specific course of action for the Norwegian elites, who wished to do something useful for their home country, i.e. Norway. It included actions to modernize agriculture, develop the fishery, forestry, mining; it mentions the bank and the university. The author remained a realist, though. As he wrote about the

⁵⁸ H. Arentz, *Grund-Tegning af den fornuftige Norske patriotism*, Bergen 1787, pp. 8–10, 11, 14–15, 19, 27.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 21, 22, 32.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 59.

tutulary court in Norway, he mentioned that it did not have the function of the high court (what kind of a high court it is when one can appeal its sentences – he ironized). Therefore, either it should be awarded with such status or it should be abolished. In the matter concerning the Norwegian bank, he agreed to the creation of a subsidiary of the Copenhagen bank in four capitals of the Norwegian provinces. Speaking of the silver mine in Kongsberg, he noticed that it would be beneficial if these treasures stayed in Norway in the form of coins and only then found their way to the royal treasury. At the same time, he admitted that he was ready to leave this matter to ‘the wise decision of the monarch’. On the other hand, he spoke out unconditionally on the necessity to create a Norwegian university.⁶¹

Arentz’ demands demonstrated that, contrary to his declarations, the union did not necessarily fulfill all the Norwegian expectations. The entire mental construction of the author could have looked as follows: a Norwegian patriot loves his home country – Norway and wants to act for its advantage. He must, however, accept the reality: the Dutch authorities and the union with Denmark. Therefore, he should focus on specific actions which could help to better the situation of Norway in the union.

Comparing Arentz’ considerations with those of Hagerup’s one can notice that being Norwegian in the concept of home country had been sharpened. Arentz connected the idea of the home country, which evoked emotions, with Norway, as the place of birth. He was not any longer interested in the relations between Denmark, Norway and Germany but only in the attitude of the Norwegians towards Denmark and their place in the entire monarchy. It seems also that the idea of being faithful to the dynasty has a conventional function in Arentz’ text rather than a value, which would evoke authentic emotions. This was different from the texts of his predecessors such as Holberg (or even as his contemporary Brun). Although even in these cases we can suspect that many of such declarations were supposed to ‘support the career’ of the author.⁶²

It is almost fully certain that the concept of patriotism understood as ‘organic work’ for the benefit of the home country – Norway – connected with loyalty (although not necessarily with emotional involvement) to the union was generally accepted by the elites.⁶³ I would want to underscore here that the cusp

⁶¹ Ibidem, pp. 44–45, 50–51, 54–55.

⁶² O. Christensen, ‘En nasjonal identitet tar form...’, p. 59.

⁶³ Ø. Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel...*, pp. 223–24; H. Christensen, ‘Hans Strøm’, part 2, *Edda VI* (1919), vol. XII, 4, p. 225; V. La Cour, *Mellem Brødre. Dansk-norske Problemer i*

of 1780s and 1790s started a new period – a period of work on the program of actual autonomy and great mobilization of the Norwegian society. In the 1790s there develops a separatist tendency, although not entirely clear at the time.⁶⁴



One more issue requires an explanation: who is referred to by the writers when they use the word ‘Norwegians’ or inhabitants of Norway? What social categories are hidden behind those concepts – or, more precisely, what is the place of peasants? Are they counted as part of the nation or not? It is characteristic that in many cases these issues were not explained. The authors wrote simply about Norwegians – often using the convention of the period – not defining which social groups they were referring to. Speaking more precisely, no one was excluded. The fact that the notion ‘the inhabitants of Norway’ was used interchangeably with Norwegians meant that they had in mind the entire population without differentiating it into groups of different estates, social statuses, places of birth or wealth. Under no circumstances can such theory be applied to Norway according to which the concept of the nation referred only to the enlightened higher classes. The society of modern Norway had a loose structure where the divisions were not strict and where peasants enjoyed their personal freedom and where nobility did not exist. Speaking of the Norwegians as a group without peasant would have seemed absurd. Especially that the clerical elites and the bourgeoisie were of foreign origin and were fully aware of that fact.

There is a certain train of reasoning to be noticed in the texts by authors, namely the point of departure is the statement that Norwegians have certain qualities; next, the information about peasants is introduced to then unnoticeably return to the information on Norwegians ‘in general’. Another way was to characterize the customs or behaviors of the peasants as typical for all Norwegians or as ‘national’ qualities. For example, in 1763 *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel* published, in the form of an anonymous letter by Mrs. Ø. introduced as a foreigner, reflections from a journey across Norway. The author shared her impressions on the inhabitants and describing the Norwegians she meant everybody, emphasizing at the same time that the peasants are ‘different from our peasants’. She pointed out their extraordinary behavior and many extracts

det 18. Århundredes Helstat, Birkerød 1943, p. 199; Ø. Sørensen, *Hegemonikamp om det norske...*, p. 24; R. Glenthøj, op. cit., p. 94.

⁶⁴ N. Bjørge et. al., *Selvstendighet og union...*, pp. 204–205.

referred to the whole population and its qualities.⁶⁵ The scholarly and literary works from the period contain a similar approach. A remark accompanied the description of peasant culinary tastes, crispbread (*Flatbrød*) to be exact: it is ‘the daily bread of the Norwegian people’, not only of peasants but also of people from higher strata. The characteristics of the Norwegian nation (*den norske Nation*) included the whole population (the authors wrote about ministers, members of the middle class, and pointed out the fact that there was no nobility in Norway). The characteristic qualities of peasants were listed and then they were quoted as examples of intellectual capacities the figures of Holberg, Wessel, Tullin or Brun.⁶⁶ Wilse wrote: ‘...pride in all situations is here [i.e. in Spydeberg] as in other places in Norway, a national feature...’⁶⁷ Mentioning the Christmas time (*Jul*⁶⁸), he remarked ‘It is such a national holiday that it was celebrated before the introduction of Christianity.’⁶⁹ Often, presenting local names of plants, animals or natural phenomena the authors used ‘national’ words.⁷⁰ Hans Strøm describing the features of the Norwegians also meant – which can be concluded from the context – all the inhabitants. He wrote about the cussedness and quarrelsomeness of the people who treat murdering a *fogd* as a virtue⁷¹ – and such views could have been held only by peasants. Nicholai Ch. Lassen described manual dexterity of peasants from Gudbrandsdalen and concluded that such dexterity was natural for Norwegians.⁷² Arentz (1785) declared that when writing about the inhabitants of Norway he would focus on the peasants (precisely speaking, on the village inhabitants) because the other ones (i.e. city dwellers)

⁶⁵ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 9, 19 VII 1763.

⁶⁶ J. Wilse, *Physisk, oeconomisk...*, pp. 299–300; idem: ‘Karakter af den Norske Nation, med mere’, *Morgen-Posten. Et Ugeblad for Aar 1790*, V, vol. I, Kiøbenhavn 1790, pp. 10–25. Johan Herman Wessel, b. 1743 d. 1785, a poet, comedy writers, studied in Copenhagen; his most famous work is the parody of imitative classicistic tragedies *Kierlighed uden Strømper* (Love without stockings, 1772). Christian Braunmann Tullin, b. 1728 d. 1765, a poet, clerk, the author of lyrical poetry containing the praise of nature with religious overtones; his most famous poem is *Maidagen* (A May Day) from 1758.

⁶⁷ N. J. Wilse, *Physisk, oeconomisk...*, p. 335.

⁶⁸ In Norwegian the word *Jul* refers both to Christmas (Christmas eve, the 24th December, is called *Julaften*) as well as the pagan holiday of winter solstice.

⁶⁹ N. J. Wilse, op. cit., p. 354.

⁷⁰ E.g. H. J. Wille, *Beskrivelse over Sillejord...*, p. 235.

⁷¹ H. Strøm, *Tilskueren...*, vol. I, pp. 59–63; in his description of Søndmør he wrote that the whole Norwegian nation has a positive outlook, *Physiske og oeconomiske...*, vol. I, pp. 501–502, in similar way H. J. Wille, *Beskrivelse over Sillejord...*, p. 335.

⁷² N. C. Lassen, op. cit., pp. 34, 43.

were foreign and not so numerous.⁷³ Beginning his chapter on the population of the region, he stated: what else can be said about it? the same as about the rest of the country – the historical changes ‘transformed the Norwegian ways of thinking and customs’⁷⁴ The anonymous author of a thanksgiving letter to Johan Nordahl Brun for the drama *Einar Tambeskjelver* expressed an opinion that the drama shows ‘the character of the whole natio’ (*heele Nationens Character*).⁷⁵

Next to such indirect evidence, a directly expressed thesis appeared in many texts that the Norwegian nation consists mainly of peasants. Such thesis appeared for example on the occasion of the discussion about the allodial law. As one of the authors phrased it, it was supposed to be a national characteristic of the Norwegians. Addressing his compatriots, the author cried: *gamle Norges Odelsmænd!* In a different place he used a phrase: ‘Norwegian peasant, a peasant who has a farm, land and the voice of the people.’⁷⁶ Another author clearly stated: ‘The allodial law signifies the spirit of the whole nation, not only of allodial peasants but also of leaseholders.’⁷⁷

Finally, we can encounter a general definition of the nation based on a conviction that the nation equal peasants. As it was discussed in the previous chapter, such a view was expressed already by Pontoppidan: ‘In every country it is the large number of common people that constitutes the proper nation.’⁷⁸ Both he and Holberg agreed that in the case of Norway, the nation equalled peasants. In the second half of the 18th century such opinion was expressed by Wilse: ‘In the heart of the country, far away from the cities, in the mountains, there is the core of the nation.’⁷⁹ Another author noticed again that “over the fiords and in the mountains for the most part the old language and national character had been preserved”⁸⁰

The understanding in which the Norwegian nation consists mostly of peasants was dominating in poetry. Since the times of Norwegian Society – which

⁷³ H. Arentz, ‘Søndfjord, i det Nordre Bergenhusiske Amt [ab. 1785]’, *Topographisk Journal for Norge*, XXIX, Christiania 1801, pp. 91–92.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, XXXII, p. 90.

⁷⁵ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 2, 13 I 1772.

⁷⁶ J. Wulfsberg, ‘Et Par Ord om Odels-Retten i Norge’, *Minerva*, vol. IX, Kiøbenhavn 1788, pp. 157, 186, 144.

⁷⁷ C. M. Leganger, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

⁷⁸ E. Pontoppidan, *Norges naturlige Historie...*, vol. II, p. 410.

⁷⁹ J. N. Wilse, *Karakter af den norske...*, p. 12.

⁸⁰ M. Schnabel, ‘Prøve paa hvorvidt det gamle Norske Sprog endnu er til i det Hardanger-ske Bondemaal. Første Stykke’, qtd after O. Monsson, ‘Marcus Schnabels ordsamling’ in *Norsk sakprosa...*, vol. I, p. 82.

will be discussed later – the attention of poets was focused on the home country: its nature, history and people. And the people were the indigenous inhabitants of the land who were closest to nature, who lived similarly to the way in which their ancestors lived, and most fully realized the ideal of a human being unspoiled by civilization. What happened was a full identification of a Norwegian with a peasant, mountain dweller, hunter or fisherman. The model and inspiration for the poets from the Society was Hans Bull who in 1771 published the poem titled *Concerning the Happiness of the Peasant on Enjoying Freedom and Property*.⁸¹ The main character in the poem was the inhabitants of Norway consisting of peasants. Claus Friman (1746–1829) described his impressions from Nordmandsdalen and joy which he felt upon seeing the figures of Norwegian peasants: *mit Norges Bønder, my compatriot (min kiekke Landsmand)*.⁸² Let us add that a similar understanding of national community in the elites could be observed in the 18th century Sweden.⁸³

⁸¹ H. Bull, 'Om Landmandens Lyksalighed ved Friheds og Eiendoms Nydelse' in idem, *Samlede Skrifter*, Oslo 1937, pp. 32–49. Hans Bull, b. 1739 d. 1783, a poet, student of Gerhard Schøning; writer of the pre-Romantic poetry, popular in the period, concentrated on the descriptions of nature and history of the country

⁸² *Poetiske Samlinger udgivne af Det Norske Selskab*, part II, [1783], Kristiania 1922, p. 11.

⁸³ M. Ahlund, 'Det nationella landskapet. Om upptäckten av den svenska naturen i Elias Martins bilder' in *Nationalism och nationell identitet...*, pp. 27–28.

CHAPTER FOUR

PATRIOTIC ACTIVITY

The fact that the Norwegians started to notice more and more clearly the difference in national interests, was linked to the growing belief of the Norwegians that the Danish authorities were not familiar with the Norwegian conditions and made decisions basing on Danish circumstances. Those decisions were often difficult to put into practice in Norway or even harmful. What logically followed, as we will see, were complaints against discrimination. The increased activity of the absolutist state, which wanted to regulate more and more matters and was actualizing its modernizing goal, created an increasing number of opportunities for such reflections. The comments on the mistaken, and often harmful, decisions of the Danish officials concerning Norway were often accompanied by questions to what extent the authorities in Copenhagen were unaware of the Norwegian circumstances. In this way the complaints were softened. With time, however, especially between 1770 and 1772 remarks appeared which indicated a belief that there was envy, jealousy or malignancy behind the Danish motivation. On the whole, journalism developed three motifs: separateness of the country, lack of knowledge about the Norwegian conditions and the feeling of being discriminated against. All this together had great potential. It could very simply lead to the conclusion that the only solution is separation and finally – independence.



The conviction that the Danish did not know the Norwegian conditions could be expressed in general remarks, which often appeared in sources, such as: our brothers – i.e. the Danish, the valley dwellers – have a mistaken idea about the natural conditions in Norway.¹ However, often specific points were listed. In 1739 the rector of the Trondheim Cathedral School Benjamin Dass referred to the recent regulations concerning education published by the king Christian VI,

¹ A. Eriksen, *Topografenes verden...*, p. 218.

which reformed the education system in the kingdom. Being a supporter of the reforms, Dass, nevertheless, wrote that the article regulating the performance of religious practices by the students did not take into consideration the fact that in winter in northern Norway frost is so severe that you cannot meet at school early in the morning: ‘as here at this time it is still night’. Commenting on the list of textbooks included in the regulations, he wrote ‘We, who live so far away from the Enlightened world, really lack the necessary books’. Further in the regulation, the authorities followed the suggestions to raise teachers’ salaries by abolishing the Latin schools (otherwise quite weak) and transferring the saved finances to salaries for cathedral school teachers. Dass noticed that very little will change, as in the Trondheim district there is only one Latin school.² The authors referred frequently to such lack of knowledge when they justified their academic research into language or topographical descriptions. In the introduction to his description Hans Strøm explained the large volume of his work saying that he wrote it also for the Danish, who, for example, had never seen a mountain and therefore had no real knowledge about Norway.³

In private notes even more explicit remarks appeared. An ironic comment appeared in 1758 on the regulation published in Copenhagen: ‘These people have such an idea about the situation in Norway as I have about the sultans’ estate.’⁴ Another diarist writes in a similar tone: ‘In the Chancery [Danish – K. S.] there is no one, who knew anything about Norwegian matters, which was the root of many absurdities.’⁵



Throughout almost the whole of the 18th century the list of complaints was fairly unchanging, although the order of the matters could change. This depended on the situation of the moment, on who the author was and what was the aim of his text. Complaints and suggestions increased especially in the period of Struensee. Thanks to the freedom of the press introduced by the dictator, numerous texts could be published, which critically assessed the situation of Norway in the union, and at the same time Danish politics. The publication of

² [B. Dass], Letter to Hans Gram, 17 IV 1739, in op. cit., pp. 232, 233, 234.

³ H. Strøm, op. cit., vol. II, from the unpaginated preface.

⁴ [O. Holmboe], ‘Stiftprovst dr theol. Otto Holmboes dagbog...’, p. 130.

⁵ H. Barhow, *Reflexioner over Norge og den norske Nation*, qtd after V. La Cour, op. cit., p. 199.

the following authors were most famous: Ove Gjerløv Meyer, Gustav Strømbo, Even Hammer, Immanuel Christian Grave.⁶ These authors were young people, just after graduation or still students. They are thought to be representative of the Norwegian clerical young generation; a generation who in an open way thought of Norwegian national interest and used the term ‘The Kingdom of Norway’ directly.⁷ Many historians emphasize that we deal here with the fully shaped national identity and national feelings. It concerns the whole country and the whole nation including the lower classes. Although none of the authors formulated independence demands explicitly, one could feel under the surface, as a Danish historian, Ole Feldbæk, describes it, ‘the hope of freedom.’⁸

The next significant period was the second half of the 1780s with its climax during the visit of the heir to the throne Frederick in 1788. Many remarks appeared at this time in the press: the prince was kindly welcomed, even subserviently, but it was always linked to pleas that he should improve the situation of Norway. The pleas directed at him expressed the harm done in general terms and said that Norway was forgotten and excluded.

A large part of the complaints formulated in the second half of the 18th century had a general character and was often only an introduction to more specific considerations: treating Norway in a novercal way by the Danish. Denmark was described as ‘a jealous sister’ and the Danish people were accused of treating Norway as an endless spring of resources. ‘*Un sol riche par nature, pauvre par politique!*’ Norway was supposed to be ‘scorned’ and it was suspected that it had hidden enemies.⁹

⁶ Ove Gjerløv Meyer, b. ar. 1742 d. 1790, studied at Copenhagen University, lived in the capital, supporting himself from teaching and writing; was the prime mover behind the Norwegian Society; in 1778 he came back to Norway and worked as a clerk. Immanuel Christian Grave, b. 1739 d. 1820, a clergyman, from 1772 chaplain, from 1782 a vicar. Published *Nationale fortællinger for den norske bondestand* (1811).

⁷ O. Feldbæk, ‘For Norges...’, p. 28; M. Jensen, *Norges historie. Norge under eneveldet (1660–1814)*, Oslo 1963, p. 116.

⁸ O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, pp. 169, 171; Also according to C. Pabst for Meyer the University became a symbol of the “upcoming freedom”; C. Pabst, op. cit., p. 263.

⁹ Ø. Davidsen, op. cit., p. 55; [E. Hammer] op. cit., pp. 10–16, 15, 19, 22–24, 60, 93–97, 98, 100, 8; Meyer wrote about “false doctors, who give poison in cold blood”, O. G. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 4, 5, 11, 14, 17, 18, 20, 22, 36; and Ch. Pram, wrote that the Norwegian people had “hidden enemies on the court whose gossiping causes that no Norwegian or any of his works would be taken into consideration”, C. Pram, ‘Breve fra Christen Pram til H. W. von Warnstedt og Skuespillerdirektionen 1778–91’, ed. H. Ehrencron-Müller, *Personalhistorisk Tidsskrift* series 4, vol. IV, Kiøbenhavn 1901, p. 42.

Fervent accusations of discrimination were expressed in characteristic language. Norway was supposed to be ‘a colony’, ‘second Greenland’, ‘Siberia’, ‘Scandinavian Peru’ and it was always oppressed by ‘the Danish and Jutland serpents’. The Norwegians were to be subjugated like camels and donkeys, bearing burdens and plundered by the *fogder*.¹⁰

In the 1780s the set of problems had not significantly changed. Bernt Anker, a burgher from Christiania, one of the richest people in Norway, a clerk and community worker, in his 1785 speech to the Norwegian Society spoke about his country in the following way: ‘You, an abandoned spot on Earth, which is everything and – considering the lack of attention – nothing at the same time. You who have no university or fleet; where fewer people live between Lindensnæs and Vardøhus [the southern and northern boundaries of Norway] than in London or Paris. You, who had never and will never be conquered or subjugated, my Home Country...’ In his prologue to the theatrical play staged privately he stated: ‘... such plans important for the success of the generations, which due to a bad spirit of Norway were never put into practice as the capital full of intrigues swallowed everything breaking the rules of the union [of Denmark and Norway]. Oh! My home country, underappreciated and scorned...’¹¹

The intellectual elites, clergy and clerks, for whom the connections with culture and education were the most important mostly formulated complaints about the lack of appropriate institutions in the country and its own university in the first place. Benjamin Dass, Schøning, Gunnerus and many others wrote

¹⁰ O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, pp. 93, 167–169, 238; Such phrases appeared in the poem published in *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 11, 11 III in 1772. They were accompanied with a belief in the king who needs to be informed about the Norwegian misfortunes and who will unavoidably remedy them. The author should not be hastily mocked for naivety; the declaration of the faith in the king, good words directed at the monarch functioned also as a unique ‘insurance policy’ – the king was not criticized; this would be dangerous but also politically unreasonable. A greater result was to be expected from criticism and complaints against the royal officials, which had been practiced by the Norwegians for the previous one hundred years (Ø. Rian, ‘Den frie og stolte...’, p. 135). The second insurance policy could be the surprising signature. Under the poem the following inscription appeared: ‘I wrote this poem myself – said Jeppe from Bierget’. The person mentioned in the signature was a character from the comedy by Ludvig Holberg under the same title. The character is a drunkard, devoid of his own will and character Danish peasant who becomes the butt of an intrigue and a joke according to the motif ‘a peasant becomes a king’. Putting this figure in the signature may be treated as a safeguard measure: in case anything happens, one might always say that the poem was just a joke. *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 12, 18 III 1772.

¹¹ Qtd after O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, p. 296.

about difficult access to books, the insufficient level of education, which would teach practical skills and the lack of any kind of academic institutions (libraries, bookshops or publishing houses). The authors employed an alarming tone: for the lack of educated doctors, people die; the economy cannot be modernized as there were no economy specialists. One of the authors attempted to calculate the losses that were experienced by Norway without a university – both cultural and economic losses amounted to 20 thousand thalers annually.¹²

It was argued that in many European countries even smaller regions had their own universities. In Mecklenburg there were two, on the British Isles eight in total, including four in Scotland. Norway, in contrast, according to Gunnerus, *ein ganzes Königreich*, had none. That is why there were so few academics among the Norwegians although they were intellectually gifted.¹³

The authors emphasized that the studies at the Copenhagen University did not fulfil their task. The stay in the capital had a negative influence on the young Norwegians ('they acquire negative attitude towards their motherland'). A big city ('a collection of all kinds of people who lead one to temptation') caused moral disorder and, besides, the costs of studying were too high there for Norwegians. The Norwegian students were discriminated against because at the Copenhagen University nobody took care of them and they did not have access to support that depended on the professors' will e.g. the access to Borch College (a free of charge student dormitory) or grants for trips. They wrote about how badly the Norwegian students were treated: 'No Norwegian is going to get a promotion without additional gifts. *Objectio*: he is not suited for studies. Stupid Danish people!' Meyer mentioned 'the lord professors of the Copenhagen University' who treated the Norwegian students with contempt. In the presence of the heir to the throne who was visiting the Science Society in Trondheim in 1788, its president reminded everyone about the harm resulting from the lack of university, noticing that the love of the Norwegians would not increase if they were continuously denied the thing for which they had been asking for so long.¹⁴

¹² For example, it was believed that for the development of trade in Bergen, it was necessary to establish a trade school there, 'Forsøg til at opløse...', pp. 394, 389, 398; 17, 18, 20, 22, 36; [E. Hammer] op. cit., pp. 10–16, 15, 19, 22–24, 60, 93–97, 98, 100, 8; P. Thorstensson, op. cit., pp. 330, 331–32.

¹³ J. E. Gunnerus, 'Vorschlag...', pp. 210–211; P. Thorstensson, op. cit., pp. 330, 331–32.

¹⁴ Bishop Gunnerus stated that students often were present at the university only during examination time i.e. two or three times a year and each time only a few months. 'One can call this visiting rather than studying at the university', 'Første Tale... holdt den 29 Januar 1768', *Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter*, vol. IV, Kiøbenhavn 1768,

The complaints about the economic situation were no less significant. The minister and provost Otto Holmboe wrote in his diary on the 19th of April 1756: 'The Danish sent their crops to France and Norwegians are not allowed to buy it from foreigners. Let God have mercy upon us. When they [Danes] exported everything, the ban was announced that the Danish were not allowed to export anything until September, when they had nothing to export anymore, but when something appears, they will be allowed to export'.¹⁵ The minister's sarcasm referred to the crops monopoly, which, as it was mentioned, often caused food scarcity in Norway. This bill and its consequences were given a lot of attention and the common motif in Norwegian complaints was *Barkebrød* and famine of the Norwegian peasants. Authors wrote about poverty, about peasants dying from the lack of food, about the cynicism of the Danes, who in the time of poor harvest prefer to feed the foreigners than those whom they call their brothers' and their 'disgraceful greediness and stinking egoism' were undermining the security of the country.¹⁶ It was mentioned that as a result of Danish politics in Norway there was no money, trade and shipping were not developing.¹⁷ Writers were also emphasizing the unbalanced distribution of the burden of financing the soldiers (Norwegians were burdened more although their situation is 12 (?) times worse than Denmark's. '*Quelle étonnante disproportion!*' – wrote the author in 1757).¹⁸ It was mentioned that the economy was overly concentrated on Copenhagen and the Norwegians were forced to buy more expensive and inferior Danish items, simultaneously being prohibited from buying English products.¹⁹

pp. 21–22; also the diarist mention the poverty during studies, '*Nogle Christiansandske...*', pp. 285–86; L. Daae, *Gerhard Schøning*, Christiania 1880, pp. 21–22; S. Larsen, op. cit., p. 27; O. G. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 4, 5, 11, 14; [C. F. Hagerup], '*Brev fra en Ven...*', pp. 323, 333, 335–36, 337; H. Barhow, op. cit., p. 199; H. Strøm, *En Nordmands Fordring til sine Landsmænd ved Anledning af Rothes Danmarks og Norges Fordringer til hinanden*, Christiania 1788, (unpaginated); PET, op. cit., p. 253; [J. H. Strøm], '*Noget om et Akademi i Norge*', *Minerva*, vol. XIX, Kiøbenhavn 1790, p. 1–37; J. D. Landmark, '*Videnskabers selskab*' in *Fra heksebål til frihetstid*, Oslo 1938 (*Norsk Kulturhistorie*, ed. A. Bugge, S. Steen, 1938–1942, vol. III), p. 443; [E. Walo], *Forestillingen om de unge Studerende fra de Latinske Skole udi Norge, hvorlunde de, med mindre bekostning og mindre Besvær, kunde blive forfremmet og forsørgtet til Rigets større Gavn, end som hidindtil har været, forfattet av...*, Kiøbenhavn 1773, pp. 5–8.

¹⁵ [O. Holmboe], '*Stiftprovst dr theol. Otto Holmboes dagbog...*', p. 125.

¹⁶ O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, pp. 81–82; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler* No 12, 18 III 1772.

¹⁷ [E. Hammer], op. cit., pp. 10–16, 15, 19, 22–24, 60, 93–97, 98, 100, 8.

¹⁸ N. H. Collin, '*Optegnelser fra en reise i Norge 1757*', ed. L. Daae, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, vol. IV, Kristiania 1877, p. 505.

¹⁹ O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, pp. 81–82.

During the 1788 visit of the Crown Prince Frederick it was again written about the poor state of farming, poverty and famine, which forced the peasants to eat bark off the trees and about the fact that there were no factories, no bank or the growth of trade. The diagnosis of the bad state of the country was treated as patency. The dissatisfaction with the crop monopole was expressed again. The authors wrote that Norway was suffering from famine and with their metal resources they could buy food abroad. ‘Meanwhile we are told to support the Jutland liege lord so that he produces poor crops which – no matter how bad – certainly will be sold to us.’ A postulate appeared to build granaries. The poor state of finances (there was no money in circulation) was mentioned as well as peasants’ burdens and egoism of clerks.²⁰

Basically none of the authors questioned the union itself, which was described as eternal; the declarations of loyalty to the throne were frequent and the king’s assistants or clerks were blamed for the mistakes of the Danish authorities.²¹ Nevertheless, some of the remarks or postulates referred to political issues.

A demand appeared to create Collegium Oeconomicum i.e. a trade ministry for Norway.²² Similar to the university, or bank this would be a central institution, which would allow for more independence for the country. Some voices appeared criticizing the fact, that the main decisions were made not by the Nor-

²⁰ P. E. T., op. cit., p. 254; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 26, 25 VI 1788, No 29, 16 VII 1788, No 23 13 VIII 1788; [F. J. Bech], ‘Om det norske Bøxelvæsen’, *Minerva*, vol. XXI, Kiøbenhavn 1791, p. 241; H. Strøm, qtd after O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, p. 300; [C. Pram], ‘Noget om Bygselvæsenet i Norge [1777]’, *Minerva*, vol. III, Kiøbenhavn 1788, p. 100–102; ‘Om et Bøygde-Magazin i Næs i Hallingdalen’ [anonymous], *Minerva*, vol. XIX, Kiøbenhavn 1790, p. 239, p. 243; [Ch. Sommerfeldt], ‘Politiske Fragmenter, Norge fornemmelig angaaende’, *Minerva*, vol. VI, Kiøbenhavn 1787, pp. 220–222, 229, 231; a lot of critical remarks appeared already in *Danmarks og Norges Oeconomiske Magazin*: an economic resort college should be established for Aggerhuus stift because the one in Copenhagen, is good for Denmark – the result is taking bad decisions; export of resources takes the bread away from the countrymen; the import of goods from abroad is too big; the law allows for cheating peasants (O. Holmboe, ‘Nogle poster...’, pp. 173–174, J. T. With, op. cit., pp. 147–48, 155); Bergen lacks not only a school but a stock exchange, insurance company; the law is either not being observed or it is impossible to be observed, C. M. Olrik, *Forsøg om Bergens Handel*, Sorøe 1764, www.da2.uib.no (10.09.2008), pp. 188–194, 195.

²¹ O. G. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 4, 5, 11, 14, 17, 18, 20, 22, 36; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 12, 18 III 1772. [E. Hammer], op. cit., pp. 10–16, 15, 19, 22–24, 60, 93–97, 98, 100, 8.

²² [E. Hammer], op. cit., pp. 10–16, 15, 19, 22–24, 60, 93–97, 98, 100, 8; O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, pp. 81–82.

wegians but foreigners. Even Hammer pointed out that after 1660 there was no law which said that Norway had lesser privileges than Denmark and pointed to Scotland as an example, where economic solutions were not imposed by England. On the contrary, the Scots were taking part in the governing of the country, sending their representative to the parliament. Meanwhile in Norway the decisions were made by unqualified people – what did it matter that an office was established to deal with forests when a baker, a wig maker and a drummer were employed in it... The Danish had little idea of the economy – he jeered.²³ As many other authors, Hammer emphasized that it was abnormal and unhealthy that the decisions concerning Norway were taken by people who did not know anything about it and not by the indigenous inhabitants. In another text there is a remark that Norwegians were treated unfairly: the Danish were occupying the posts more often than ‘the native people’ (*Landets indfødte Børn*).²⁴

What demonstrates how strong the feeling of being wronged was, is the appearance of this motif in non-journalistic works, e.g. in poetry. Johan Nordahl Brun in his poem (1770) described the suffering of a mother who grieved over a child that had died. The child’s spirit tries to console her by saying that he does not regret that he hasn’t become a citizen of the country ‘where the unfortunate descendants weep for the brave ancestors. Where I would see most of my compatriots fighting [–] poverty; suffering would whisper indescribable misfortunes to my ear.’²⁵ In his poem dedicated to the Crown Prince Frederick in 1788, Jonas Rein wrote that the one, whose hand picks bread for those who are not useful, must himself feed on tree bark...²⁶

What can show how strong and common was the conviction that Norwegians were treated unfairly is the fact that the comments on the discriminating politics of the authorities appeared as ornaments on objects. In 1771 a set of 24 glass cups was made in the Nøstestang manufacture to become wedding gifts. Each of them carried an image and a short poem, which usually described the economic discrimination of Norway. They informed, for example, about the Danish restrictions on forest clearing or functioning of the silver mines. On the

²³ [E. Hammer] op. cit., pp. 22, 26, 27, 61, 74.

²⁴ Ibidem, pp. 27–28; P. Thorstensson, op. cit., pp. 330, 331–32; L. Daae, ‘Nogle Bemærkninger om norske Forhold fra det attende Aarhundrede’, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, series 3, vol. V, Kristiania 1899, pp. 431–432.

²⁵ J. N. Brun, *Mindre Digte...*, p. 123.

²⁶ J. Rein, *Samlede Digte*, vol. I, Kiöbenhavn 1802, p. 100. Jonas Rein, b. 1760 d. 1821, poet, priest; vicar in Bergen, 1814 member of Constitutional Assembly in Eidsvold.

19th cup an inscription was put with a complaint about the lack of university in Norway, and on another one there was the following poem:

*Here salmon struggles against the current
Isn't this the portrait of a Norwegian?
What does he have from his efforts, after all?
His fat will only bring joy to others.²⁷*

In other words, only foreigners i.e. the Danish profit from the work and efforts of the Norwegians.

There is evidence that also peasants perceived the politics of the authorities as discriminatory. In 1774 a group of 57 representatives of peasantry presented a request, protesting against the prohibition to produce vodka. The peasants linked this ban to the Danish crop monopoly, writing that it is ‘a great harm and offence to Norway’. They also wrote on this occasion that the imported Danish vodka had an extremely unpleasant, disgusting taste and forcing people to drink it was seen as ‘if the Danish wanted to say in this way that it is good enough for Norwegians.’²⁸ The fact that peasants were able to articulate complaints and point to the Danish politics as harmful for the country and offensive to Norwegians, gave strength and support to the claims of the elites of being unfairly treated by the authorities.



Beginning with the feeling of being discriminated against and complaints, the path went straight to postulates and the programme of changes and from here – to taking action. In many cases action was on the whole limited to requests connected to citizen initiatives. The Norwegians were not allowed to establish the University – here till the 1790s there are only complaints and requests and only sometimes projects. They could, however, set up societies and promote individual action, which through ‘organic work’ and ‘work at the grassroots level’ attempted to spread the Enlightenment ideas of progress, education and knowledge. Academic work was a specific type of activity in which works were created that popularized knowledge about the home country and its culture in various

²⁷ O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, p. 87 (photo and signature); O. Christensen, op. cit., p. 69 (photo and signature, own translation).

²⁸ Ø. Rian, ‘Reflexioner over...’, p. 379.

ways. Simultaneously they gave credence to patriotic interests and motivations. The authors wrote about the necessity to develop the country and improving its state in different domains. They wished to show that the home country matches other, more famous nations in some domain. They wanted to show the world that Norway existed and that there were many reasons for Norwegians to be proud. It is obvious that in each case there were individuals and personal factors at play which were often more down-to-earth. But in the public discourse of the 18th century the notion of patriotism, also as inheritance from the antique era, was undoubtedly one of the most basic and certainly counted as positive and praiseworthy. Patriotism, understood as the love to one's mother country, a wish to serve it and to support its development belonged to the category of virtues regardless of the fact that for the Enlightened people being open to the world, other people and tolerance were a necessary condition to be counted as civilized people.

The patriotic activity that served Norway and its people was the simplest sign of the consciousness that the Norwegian elites had of belonging to the Norwegian nation. The formula of work 'for the benefit of the country' remained unclear until it was established what this term referred to. At this place two threads become one: the development of patriotism and the birth of modern reflection on the concept of nation. We deal here, then, with two subjects of research. It is, described in the previous chapter, that century-long discussion on patriotism, an attempt to define it, which was quite closely linked to various aspects of the internal politics of the Danish state. The second research subject was the varied, group and individual, practical and theoretical, activity of the elites presented as the service to the country and motivated by patriotism. The process of developing the national identity by the elites took place in two simultaneous ways and it is difficult to state whether these two processes are causally linked to each other (so that one could place them diachronically) or do they just run in parallel and condition and stimulate one another.

A similar approach was suggested by Odd Arvid Storsveen in his work on Norwegian patriotism in the years 1784–1801. He defined the so-called practical patriotism and discussed initiatives connected with the visit of the Crown Prince Frederick in 1788 in Norway, the Eda Skanse plot from 1790, scholarly activity (including the creation of the Topographical Society) and literary output. In the second part he presented the discussion about some important questions associated with patriotic goals: the question of the university, bank, the allodial law and the arguments which appeared at the end of 1790s about the

decline of patriotic feelings in the Norwegian people. It is worth highlighting, however, that Storsveen himself identified academic activity (e.g. topographical writing) as patriotic.

As we have seen, the home country had a national character already: it was a country inhabited by historical and cultural community of Norwegians. Such awareness, present in the peasant community in its own way, now was to become a part of the elites' consciousness who in a large part originated from abroad. In the first half of the century this consciousness was linked to the connection with the Danish state. The evolution of this consciousness would be connected to a large extent to weakening of this connection. This was linked to a parallel discussion on how to define the home country and what patriotism should look like. In this discussion modern categories of nations and national identity were born and verbalized. The deeply-rooted awareness of separateness became a topic for debate: what is the basis of the separateness and how it should be protected. This was connected with more and more common awareness of divergent economic interests of Norway and Denmark. The natural follow-up to this, was an increasingly common question about Norway's place in the union. More and more frequently the answer contained complaints against discrimination, unfairness and novercal treatment. However, it was difficult to draw a conclusion: as a result, the independence program found its way to the Norwegian elites' expectations relatively late, practically just before 1814.²⁹

Organizational structures

It was not characteristic only of Norway that in the 18th century the citizens of the country got strongly involved in public activity. There were different forms of such activity as it always depended on specific situations and needs of a particular country. Everywhere educated people who belonged to the elites and were not necessarily wealthy, took up challenges that were caused by the period they lived in. The root cause of these actions were social and economic processes, demographic growth, increasing wealth of the people and gradual erosion of estate notion of the society, which was being replaced with the idea of integration.

The Enlightenment believed in progress but it was not satisfied with the conviction that progress would come someday (it was, after all, inevitable) and

²⁹ Ø. Sørensen, *Kampen...*, pp. 23–24, 31–32; idem, *Hegemonikamp...*, p. 24; R. Glenthøj, op. cit., p. 94.

wanted to accelerate it. Sometimes the distance between the home country and other countries was very clear. In these cases, progress meant catching up as it was necessary to get closer to the developed countries of Europe so that the honour of the homeland was not blemished. And also, so that the inhabitants of the mother country, similarly to other nations, could benefit from progress which was occurring at the time. In the case of Norway, from the 1740s and 50s, as Francis Bull stated, the elites attempted to demonstrate their patriotic attitude becoming involved in the work for the public good. It was clear that this involvement concerned not the good of the whole Danish-Norwegian monarchy but only their country – Norway.³⁰ The Norwegian elites wanted the stimulation of science and education, established learned societies, published book and wanted to increase literacy. They strived to modernize economy through introducing novelties into farming, teaching peasants, rewarding those who reached good results or deployed more modern technical developments. The elites were attempting to obtain certain benefits from the authorities such as the establishing the university and bank in Norway. Finally, intellectual aspiration of many people were connected with the full focus on Norwegian affairs; it was believed that academic work could contribute to the general development of the country. The interest taken in the home country matters is evidence that the elites felt a strong connection with the country. The research into catalogues of private book collections which belonged to the members of the elites showed how the number of texts devoted to various aspects of Norway's situation and Norwegian matters systematically increased in the second half of the 18th century.³¹

A correspondence to the Enlightenment in Finland can be noticed here. This period was called 'the period of utility' and was characterized by the focus on practical goals connected with the sentiments for the local home country.³² It seems, however, that in the case of Norwegian authors the connection with the whole Norway, understood as a separate state, was much more noticeable.

One can speak of the new quality of Norwegian elites' undertakings i.e. about the intensification of such activity due to intellectual enlivenment in the 1760s. At this time a new generation appeared of people born in the 1720s and 30s. Such enlivenment could be the result of many changes: the education reform of Christian VI from 1739, the activity of people such as Erik Pontopidan who, while he was a bishop in Bergen, established the teachers' seminary

³⁰ F. Bull, *Fra Holberg...*, p. 11.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

³² Ł. Sommer, *op. cit.*, p. 163

(Fridericianum Seminary set up in 1749) dedicated mostly to poorer youth. A mathematical school for soldiers existed in Christiania since 1750 and in 1757 in Kongsberg a Mining Academy was created but both schools taught only vocational subjects. Although Norwegians were proud of the Academy, knowing that it was unique in Europe, its highly specialized orientation did not satisfy them. In the 1760s the press started to be published. In 1763 the first regular Norwegian newspaper appeared in Christiania. This was *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel* published once a week.³³ In the beginning it was dominated by small ads but in each issue also some other material appeared. The newspaper had national ambitions and there were attempts to distribute it outside Christiania,³⁴ The publishers referred to popular German *Intelligenzblätter* although only to their 18th century, and not earlier, form i.e. by enriching the ads with articles, letters and poems. In Bergen *Efterretninger* started to be published and in Trondheim *Trondhjemske Tidende*.

The interest in public affairs made people set up societies and clubs, thanks to which together with the development of self-organization, the public opinion started to emerge.³⁵ Creation of many structures was supposed to compensate the backwardness of the nation in terms of academic and cultural institutions because, as it was mentioned before, the created institutions of such kind were situated in Copenhagen. The establishment of Science Society was the first successful and famous attempt in Norway. It was created in Trondheim initiated by Johan Ernst Gunnerus, a renowned theologian and philosopher who in 1758 was nominated for the bishop's post in Trondheim. Meanwhile, from 1751, Gerhard Schøning, who will be presented later, was the cathedral school rector. The bishop found kindred spirit in him and their regular meetings and discussions gave birth to the establishment of, initially informal, Trondheim Society (1760). The third member of the initiation group (the so-called three-leaved clover from Trondheim) was Schøning's friend, a Danish historian Peder Frederik Suhm. The group published the first volume of writings in 1761 and in 1767 they obtained a royal permission to establish the Royal Science Society in Trondheim (which exists till today).³⁶ The Society organized meetings and lec-

³³ In the 18th century its name was more free: "Nordske..." or "Sedler" appeared in various configurations. To avoid confusion, I use the title given on the 1st edition of the paper.

³⁴ Ø. Davidsen, op. cit., p. 28.

³⁵ A. Apelseh, op. cit., pp. 44–45.

³⁶ On the circumstances of the creation and the 18th century activity of the Society see K. Szelałowska, 'Norweskie Towarzystwo Naukowe w Trondheim na tle życia umysłowego w Norwegii XVIII wieku', *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski* III (1988), 4.

tures, gathered collections – including library collections, maintained contacts with abroad. It soon became an important place for the public discussion about Norwegian matters, including the question of the university.³⁷

The network of farming societies (*Landhuusholdningsselskab*) created in 1770s had a slightly different character. It was modelled upon a society created in Denmark in 1769. The basic goal of these societies was to advocate progress in farming (sometimes in the field of economy, too) through supporting individual farmers and distributing rewards. It is interesting that there were many such societies and on all rungs of administrative divisions of the country, beginning with *stiftamt* and ending with *fogderie*. They were located in close proximity to peasants, although the peasants themselves rarely signed up for these societies.³⁸

In the beginning of 1790s (1791) the Topographical Society was created in Christiania which was supposed to be a forum for everybody in Norway who was writing in this very popular genre. As we will see the ambitions of the founders were much larger. The Society started to publish *The Norwegian Topographical Journal* in which numerous longer and shorter descriptions of various Norwegian regions and towns appeared. One of the founders was Jacob Nicolai Wilse, one of the most important persons of the Norwegian Enlightenment, and at the same time of the national movement from the end of the 18th century. He unambiguously described himself as a Dane but when one examines his writing and activity, it can be noticed that he was a full Norwegian patriot. His writing was almost completely focused on Norway. In his travel reports and topographical descriptions he used specific Norwegian vocabulary and he consistently wrote the geographical names in Norwegian. Wilse's activity was even more important. In 1777 he suggested establishing a Realschule in Christiania and in the 1790s on the forum of the Topographical Society he got involved in the struggle to set up a university in Norway, which will be discussed later. He was one of the main authors of such important Norwegian journals as *The Norwegian Topographical Journal* or Danish *Minerva*, where he published texts concerning Norway only.

Going beyond the chronological framework of this work, let us mention the organization whose goals were broadly national in the most explicit way i.e. the Society for Welfare of Norway (*Selskabet for Norges Vel*). It was created

³⁷ S. Supphellen, *Innvandrerne* by... p. 325.

³⁸ M. Aase, *Patrioter og bønder. Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskabs arbeide med landbrukspremier 1772–1806*, Trondheim 1997, p. 1.

in the last period of the union, in the times when independence of the country or at least great changes in Norway's status in it, were openly discussed. This institution belongs to the period when political program was being formulated. Although the primary motive to create the Society was the matter of the university, its goals, range and form of activity were significantly different from those from the 18th century.

Scientific writing

The process of norwegization of the elites was connected with the interest in scientific activity concerning Norway, which existed throughout the whole modern period. The year 1660 does not seem to be a significant watershed. The output of the 16th century writers unambiguously described Norway as a country with its own political traditions, political history in which there was no lack of evidence of power and greatness. The memory of the fact that Norwegians are a separate nation and have their own history was preserved in the works of Peder C. Friis and Absalon Beyer.³⁹ In the 17th century these ideas were absorbed by the new, Danish-Norwegian families which shaped their Norwegian identity.⁴⁰

The scientific writing of that period sometimes had a narrower perspective. That is where an impression may come that, while the 16th century referred to the whole country, the 17th century – more to the region, therefore we deal here with regional identity. It is however in my opinion, an incorrect conclusion. The topographical or scientific writings of the local pastors and clerks always had local character – another type of writing simply went beyond the capabilities of the people often living in secluded places and without access to any scientific framework. The local point of view did not exclude, however, the consciousness of belonging to a greater whole.

Such motifs could be undertaken by Holberg and his contemporary writers and followers. There is a clear continuity visible although the character of the works changed, also as a result of the development of science in general. The 18th century authors of topographical works knew very well and often referred to the works of their predecessors; Schøning in his historical works did the same.⁴¹

³⁹ F. Bull, *Ludvig Holberg som Historiker*, Kristiania 1913, p. 49.

⁴⁰ Ø. Rian, 'Olav Engelbrektssons kamp...', p. 101.

⁴¹ H. Strøm, *Physisk og oecanimisk...*, vol. I, p. 491, vol. II, p. 397; G. Schøning, *Beskrivelse Over Den tilforn meget prægtige Og vidtberømte Dom-Kirke i Throndhjem, Egentligen kal-*

The 18th century scientific works paid attention to various testaments of the past, which were to demonstrate the greatness of the old Norway. Highlighting the glorious past had most certainly compensational functions as well. We observe here a double subjugation: on the one hand, the Danish-Norwegian elites were dependent on Danish rulers. On the other, however, in an analogous way Norway was dependent on Denmark.⁴² Sympathy towards the Norwegian people is often to be seen in these works⁴³ perhaps resulting from noticing the very hard conditions of daily life there. For the Danes living in Norway writing scientific works of this kind became a path to assimilation and therefore they supported this process in those new comers who were not writing professionally but whose connection to the place of living could be bolstered in this way.

It is clear that the motives to take up such writing were different. Often the inspiration came from the above. For many topographical works, as it was mentioned, it was the initiative of the Danish government from 1743. In the 1750s, on the other hand, the government initiated a big discussion, calling on the society to speak out on the topic of the social and economic situation and motivated this by the plans of reforms. The outcome of this action was among others the *Economic Magazine of Denmark-Norway* (*Danmarks og Norges Oeconomiske Magazin*) i.e. eight volumes of various works published in Copenhagen between 1757 and 1764. The initiator of this publication was Eric Pontoppidan.

Practical motives played an enormous role i.e. the willingness to contribute to, according to Enlightenment fashion, progress. Writing and publishing an academic work, with a dedication to some dignitary, could also help one's career. Authors themselves in their prefaces mention the needs of the home country and the necessity to provide the Danish authorities with knowledge about Norway.⁴⁴ Individual ambitions were no less important, awakened during studies, as was the willingness to overcome the feeling of remoteness which was experienced daily by many officials.⁴⁵

At the same time, however, scientific work concentrated on Norway was evidence of the connection with the country and the wish to describe its parts, patriotically motivated, was a proof of sentiments towards and identification with

det Christ-Kirken, Throndhjem 1762 [Trondheim 2004], pp. 2–10, 321; H. Meyer, *Samlinger...*, p. 259, 267, 271–72, 278–9.

⁴² Ø. Rian, *Hvordan...*

⁴³ Ø. Rian, *Embetsstanden...*, p. 63.

⁴⁴ S. Supphellen, "Den historisk-topografisk litteraturen i Noreg i siste halvparten av 1700-talet. Regionalisme eller nasjonalisme?", *Heimen* XVIII (1979), pp. 202–203.

⁴⁵ A. Eriksen, *Topografenes verden...*, p. 21.

the home country.⁴⁶ An indirect proof of this identification could be the custom of making lists of predecessors in an office – usually the beginning of this line of personages was placed in ancient past. A straight line could be drawn – from the magnates representing the king in a given region, i.e. Harald Fairhair (the end of the 9th century, sometimes the list went back to the mythical Nór) to the 17th-century *amtman* and finishing with the author of the work. In this way the author became a follower of a very old tradition and obtained an identity common with his predecessors⁴⁷ Another, similar, technique was to connect the contemporary administrative region – i.e. *amt* or *stiftamt* – with the old one. Hans Arentz wrote: ‘the contemporary Northern *amt* Bergenhus is the same feud, which was bequeathed by the first Norwegian king to his father-in-law; so it can be said that the *amt* is one of the most ancient in the country when it comes to delineating the territory.’⁴⁸



The areas of knowledge, in which – as before – the subject of Norway was present, were first and foremost historiography, law and the study of language. Historical works were concerned either with the whole history of Norway or just a part of it and historical material was also present in topographical descriptions.⁴⁹ Steinar Supphellen defined topographical writing in such a way: a description of a greater or smaller part of Norway with historical references.⁵⁰ It is worth noticing here that Supphellen was incorrect saying that this type of literature was characteristic of the second half of the 18th century, although it was most common in this period. For example, the description by Bendix Ch. de Fine (1696–1746) comes from 1745. It is important to remember here that in their historical references, the authors clearly linked the history of their own regions with the history of the whole country.

An important work, although not entirely belonging to the Norwegian historiography, was *Historia Rerum Norvegicarum* covering the period until the

⁴⁶ A. Apelseh, op. cit., p. 46

⁴⁷ A. Eriksen, *Topografenes verden...*, p. 47.

⁴⁸ H. Arentz, ‘Søndfjord, i det Nordre Bergenhusiske Amt’ [ab. 1785], *Topographisk Journal for Norge*, bull. 30, Christiania 1801, p. 16.

⁴⁹ E. M. R. Mandt, *Historisk Beskrivelse over Øvre Telemarken* [1777], ed. O. Solberg, [s.l.] 1989, p. 49; H. Arentz, ‘Søndfjord, i det Nordre...’, bull. 28 pp. 4–5, 8–11, bull. 30 pp. 7–23, bull. 31 pp. 55–58. B. de Fine, op. cit., pp. 109–110, 149–157, 173–180, 182–197.

⁵⁰ S. Supphellen, ‘Den historisk-topografiske Litteraturen i Noreg...’, p. 198.

year 1387 written by Thormodus Torfæus over a period of about fifty years and published in Copenhagen in 1711. In historiographical sense it was a rather outdated work but being a royal historiographer, the author was greatly respected. Because of its language *Historia* was an obligatory reading for the educated elites and historians (also for Holberg or the Dane, Hans Gram). Torfæus was an Icelander who settled and spent most of his life in Norway; he considered himself a Norwegian patriot and identified with Norway (when speaking about Norwegians he commonly used the first person plural). In his works he did not hesitate to criticize the Danish usually taking the Norwegian point of view. Describing the Battle of Svolder he emphasized that it was the Norwegian ruler Olaf Tryggvason who was its hero and not the victorious Danish king. He noticed as well that Rollo – the founding father of Normandy – was in fact a Norwegian. In his work Norwegians were depicted as an old, civilized and mighty nation. According to D. A. Seip *Historia Rerum Norvegicarum* created the basis for the national tendencies in the next century.⁵¹

Also from the Danish works it could be seen that Norway is a separate country with its own history. In the 1740s the *Journals* of a society in Copenhagen, which will later develop into the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letter, started to be published. Although they did not contain much material referring to Norway, some sources from the 16th and 17th century could be found in them, e.g. king's privileges for the Norwegian nobility, rescripts and other documents sometimes accompanied with a commentary. For example, in source study on the bishop Karl from Hamar, imprisoned in 1508, one can read that the expedition of the heir to the throne prince Christian (future Christian II) was one of 'the greatest and the most noble deeds in Christian's II youth'. Norwegians, however, would remember that the prince was sent to Norway with a mission to suppress the Norwegian rebellion against the Danish authorities. He became known for cruelty and ruthlessness. The author, however, defended the prince saying that the imprisonment of the bishop was by all means right.⁵² The Norwegian material in the *Journals* was of very varied character. It concerned the economic history or monuments as well. In the description of the inscribed markings and other sources from the Trondheim region one can read the fol-

⁵¹ T. Titlestad, 'Tormod Torfæus – biografisk portrett' in *Tormod Torfæus. Ei innføring*, ed. T. Titlestad, Hafslund 2001 pp. 19, 21.

⁵² 'Nogle Documenter om Biskop Karl i Hamar, hans Fængsel 1508' in *Skrifter som udi det kiøbenhavnske Selskab af Lærdoms og Videnskabers Elskere ere fremlagte og oplæste*, vol. IV, Kiøbenhavn 1750, p. 180.

lowing, remark pleasing to the Norwegians: ‘[–] here and there (i.e. in Norway) one can see the remnants of inscriptions on stones and trees as well as on parchment and paper which are evidence of the brave predecessors of our Norwegians and their famous deeds.’⁵³ There was also a drawing of an old city-seal of Trondheim in this volume. But the most important text could be found in the second volume published in 1746 under a meaningful title *The ancient freedom of the Kingdom of Norway. What it was like before and after the Kalmar Union together with a proof that this Kingdom had never been incorporated into the Danish crown as its province. Based on the common rules of the state law.* The author of the work emphasized that he did not belong to either of the nations – neither was he a Dane nor a Norwegian – so he was impartial.⁵⁴ Indeed, Christian Ludwig Scheidt (1709–1761) was a German from the duchies but we know as well his remark from a letter to a friend (from 1740) that he was a German only with his body, his spirit is Danish.⁵⁵ A famous Danish lawyer and historian, Peder Kofod Ancher (1710–1788) in 1770 published *The Proof that Norway, according to Christian III rescript from 1536 did not become a Danish province.* There is no place here to summarize and evaluate the academic achievements of the authors. It was important, however, that in the 1740s and 50s the Norwegian intellectuals could read in academic journals published in Copenhagen works, from which it was clearly obvious that their country was separate in terms of law and history. A Danish historian writes that when in 1771 the first volume of *The History of the Kingdom of Norway* by Gerhard Schønning was published ‘the perception of Norway as an ancient and independent country, with proud traditions, had already been strongly developed.’⁵⁶

It is worth noticing that in these texts there was the interpretation of history current for the time, which we know as well from the works by Holberg. The unpleasant facts were covered i.e. those that could demonstrate that the Danish wanted the conquer Norway and force it into being a province. Hans Arentz who wrote later, in the already mentioned text devoted to Norwegian patriotism, also presented a characteristic interpretation of events from the beginning of the 16th century. The author stated that the laws of elapsing time were respon-

⁵³ ‘Nogle Inscriptioner og andre Beretninger af Trundheims Stift’ in *ibidem*, vol. V, 1751, p. 92.

⁵⁴ C. L. Scheidt, ‘Om det Kongerige Norge *ældgamle* Frihed’ in *ibidem*, vol. II, p. 318.

⁵⁵ H. F. Rørdam, ‘Scheidt, Christian Ludvig’ [biographical entry], in *Dansk Biografisk Lexicon tillige omfattende Norge for Tidsrummet 1537–1814*, ed. C. F. Bricka, vol. XV, København, 1901, p. 102.

⁵⁶ O. Feldbæk, ‘For Norge...’, pp. 40–41.

sible for the collapse of the Norwegian nobility, i.e. a natural phenomenon, one can say. The Danish actions against Norwegians were, in truth, against the law but the government corrected everything after 1660 and there was no point returning to that matter. The author justified the territorial losses of Norway in the wars waged by Denmark in the 17th century, writing that they could have happened without the union with Denmark.⁵⁷ Retaining such interpretation was necessary if the view on the legitimacy of the union with Denmark together with allegiance to the monarchs were to be sustained. The change of the system in 1660, which allowed for ‘the cutting off’ from the infamous past and blaming the Danish nobility, brought down as a result of the introduction of absolutism, permitted this idea to be firmly established.

From the 1760s to 1780s, many works were published in Norway, which because of their subject matter or the approach, was evidence that the contemporary elites saw Norway as a separate kingdom with its own historical roots and traditions.

Jonas Ramus was an especially prolific author. He was a minister who died in 1718 (b. 1640). His works – both religious and historical – were assessed rather critically already by his contemporaries. However, they were extremely popular, shaping a lot of colloquial imagery of the native history. Ramus was not truly an independent writer so through his writing the Norwegian audience became familiar with the sagas as well as Beyer’s and Friis’ works. He wrote the history of the common Church (*Guds Riige bland Verdens Riger...*, 1706), a description of Norway (*Norriges Beskrivelse...*, written in 1715 and published posthumously in 1735), unpublished collection of Norwegian dialect words of the Nordehov parish. His history of the kings of Norway (*Norriges Kongers Historie i tvende parter...*, published in 1702) contained the history of the Norwegian rulers from the legendary times till the reign of king Olaf Håkonsson in the 14th century i.e. the times of the union with Denmark. Jonas Ramus was also an author of an interesting Latin work *Ulysses et Otinus unus et idem sive disquisitia historica et geographica, qua ex collatis inter se Odyssea Homeri et Edda Island. Homerizante Othini fraudes deteguntur ac detracta larva in lucem protrahitur Ulysses*. The new edition from 1716 was titled *Tractatus historico-geographicus, quo Ulysses et Outinum unum eundem que ess ostenditur*.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ H. Arentz, *Grund-Tegning...*, p. 60.

⁵⁸ Jonas Ramus was remembered in history as the Norwegian equivalent of the Swedish scholar Olof Rudbeck, similarly trying to prove the similarities between the Homeric antiquity and Scandinavia. Other Swedish authors of the period tried to prove that Scan-

Among other historical works let us mention the one devoted to the history of the clergy in Bergen by Albert Hatting (1742–1812) (published in 1774). The history of trade in Finmark was described by the *amtman* Gunder Hammer (1725–1772) in his work published in the 19th century. Hans Hagerup (1740–1793) wrote in 1737 an essay on the trade in Trondheim, which was published only in 1788. Editions of sources also appeared. Christopher Hammer⁵⁹ published the known to us 16th century *Chronicle of the city of Hamar* (1774). Hans Jacob Wille published in 1787 the Scandinavian mythology (*Udtog of den nordiske Mythologie, eller Othins Gude-Lære*). O. G. Meyer wrote about the fact that on the planned Norwegian university, studies on ‘the old Norwegian pagan theology or mythology’ should be undertaken.⁶⁰ Johan Frideric Voss wrote the history of Norwegian mining, which was published only in the 20th century. A clerk in Bergen, Christian Stub (ar. 1693–1736), wrote in the 1720s to a historian Árni Magnússon⁶¹ that he was planning to view and record all extraordinary places in his region, listed by Snorri. His historical interests originated at home in the eastern Norway, where the memory of the old Norwegian history was cultivated and the relics from the past were revered⁶²

The interest in history went beyond the clerical elites. The fact that historical material was published in *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler* demonstrates this. In 1765 a medieval song was published in this paper and in 1766 a short historical essay devoted to Harald Fairhair called ‘the first independent king

dinavian languages were as old as Latin and Greek and originate directly from Hebrew. The Danish writer C. Lyschander, on the other hand, attempted to prove that the king Christian’s IV line can be traced back to Noah. These authors represent the strand of Baroque historiography looking for the sources of the national history in tradition in biblical and classical antiquity. L. Holm-Olsen Ludvig, K. Heggelund, op. cit., pp. 407–408.

⁵⁹ Christopher Hammer, b. 1720 d. 1814, a son of a minister in Gran; he graduated from Copenhagen University and Sorø academy; from 1752 had various clerical positions in Christiansand and Akershus stift. Author of numerous texts from various areas, published in journals. A supporter of potato cultivation in Norway.

⁶⁰ O. G. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 8–9.

⁶¹ Árni Magnússon, known in academic work under the latinized name Arnas Magnaeus, b. 1663 d. 1730, Icelandic historian, studied at the Copenhagen University, 1694 – professor, 1697 – royal archivist, 1702 – professor of philosophy and antiquity, 1721 – professor of history and geography, the director of university library; during his numerous missions to Iceland he found many invaluable medieval manuscripts and sent them to Copenhagen; part of his collection, together with his notes, was burnt in the fire of the capital in 1728; the rest was given in his will to the University; it became the kernel of *Arnarnagnæanske Samling* still existing medieval collection of Icelandic manuscript.

⁶² H. Refsum, ‘Christian Stub...’, pp. 61, 64.

of Norway,⁶³ appeared there. In three consecutive issues in 1769, the modern translation of *Kongespeilet* (or in other words *Konungs skuggsjá*, *Speculum regale*, a work from mid-13th century) was published in the paper.⁶⁴ In a 1784 obituary of a burgher from Christiania it was written that he was from an ancient family, who had lived in *Opsloe* in the past – the old name of the city was used here, one from before the change introduced by Christian IV in 1624.⁶⁵ In some occasional poems written for the visit of the Crown Prince Frederick in 1788, various historical references were included: i.e. a thousand-year-old history of Norway and ‘the old-time giants’ were brought to attention (J. N. Wilse).⁶⁶

Not only in scientific topographical works there were various ‘antiquities’ recorded i.e. material artefacts from the past, but also in descriptions from travels. Here also Norwegian scholars continued the work of their 17th century predecessors. The interest in these ‘antiquities’ was also connected with the model of science dominant at the time, which focused mostly on ‘curiosities’ i.e. extraordinary things.

Among the recorded antiquities there are first and foremost burial mounds, which were, because of their size, identified as the tombs of the giants (*Kiæmpehaug*) who were primeval inhabitants of Scandinavia.⁶⁷ The belief that the Norwegians come from the giants was common, especially among the peasants. Confirmation for it was found in the sagas and old chronicles as well as in the Bible. Renaissance humanists added the writings by the antique authors (let us add that similar ideas existed in the 16th and 17th century England concerning ancient Brits⁶⁸). The 18th century scholars sometimes had doubts but they did not dare to question this belief because it suited their didactic and national programme very well. Other interesting antiquities include stone circles, stone mounds, runic inscriptions, bauta stones (*Bautasteine*) i.e. grave stones, sometimes with inscriptions, stone crosses, old buildings and places where something important had happened and which were connected with important historical events, battlefields and duels (more or less historic) and finally ruins

⁶³ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 36, 4 IX 1765, No 17 23 IV 176.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, No 44, 2 XI 1769, No 45 9 XI 1769, No 46 16 XI 1769.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, No 50, 15 XII 1784.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, No 26, 25 VI 1788, No 44, 3 XII 1788.

⁶⁷ They were considered so characteristic that they found their way into poetry: Hans Bull in his poem “The happiness of a farmer...” mentioned that the plough may dig out a rusty sword from a hill, H. Bull, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁶⁸ G. Parry, *op. cit.*, p. 309–310.

of former strongholds, churches and convents. These monuments, coming from the Catholic times, were not as fascinating as those connected with the sagas and pre-Christian Norway. Also archeological phenomena can be observed here: stones, weapons, daily objects and retained old documents.⁶⁹

The Norwegian emblem was not treated as an antiquity; it was only occasionally mentioned by some writers. It appeared, however, in a different context – a symbol of patriotism and sacrifice for the mother country. A certain colonel Hesselberg speaking to the soldiers – which was faithfully transcribed and published (1780) in the paper (the editors said that it was requested by the readers) – said: ‘Let your paragon be the lion, the Norwegian lion’ (*Følge denne Løve..., Norske Løve!*).⁷⁰ Similarly, the Norwegian emblem was referred to in the occasional letter to honor prince Frederick, remembering the skirmish with the Swedes: ‘Near Quistrum [Kvistrum], your Norwegian lion with a halberd demonstrated its courage.’⁷¹

There was also interest in runes, a clear heritage of the old Norway and the times of Vikings. Such fascinations, as we know, were not inherited from the predecessors and the knowledge about the runes was not at all passed down from generation to generation. To the contrary, the runic inscriptions appearing in the 17th and 18th centuries originate from books and are the effect of the knowledge of the works having been written since 1550. They permeated the folk culture, being used as decorative ornaments or in the house marks (*bumerke*). They became the object of studies for writers in the 18th century such as Marcus Schnabel (1744–1780), Gert Miltzov, Niels Hertzberg (1759–1841), the father of Hans Jacob Wille – Hans Amundsen, or Bendix Ch. de Fine.⁷²

⁶⁹ B. De Fine, op. cit., pp. 109, 114, 150, 154, 152, 153, 157, 174–75, 177–178, 211, 212, 213, 216–217, 218–220, 220–221; H. J. Wille, *Utrykte...*, pp. 156, 159, 169, 170, 171, 173, 172, 174, 175, 178; J. N. Wilse, *Reiser...*, pp. 24, 123–126, 140–141; idem: *Physisk, oeconomic...*, the chapter dedicated to antiquities, pp. 427–442; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 8, 13 VII 1763 (Letter of Mrs Ø..., 1755); G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. I, pp. 15, 16, 24, 37, 65, 85, 86, 91, 106, 107, 145, 154–55, 304, vol. II, 3, 4, 5, 8, 13, 14, 26, 27, 39, 44, 50, 58–59, 60, 62–63, 65, 93, 225; H. Strøm, *Physiske og oeconomicke...*, vol. II, pp. 18, 39, 41, 65, 72, 81, 83, 113, 219, 220, 347, 397, 407, 408, 411, 455.

⁷⁰ [E. Nannestad], *Biskop i Trondhjem...*, p. 12; G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. II, p. 247; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 26, 28 VI 1780, No 27 5 VI 1780.

⁷¹ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 51, 17 XII 1788.

⁷² J. Nordby, *Ettreformatorkiske runeinnskrifter i Norge. Opphav og tradisjon*, Oslo 2001, pp. 64, 66, 82–92, 93, 133, 115, 133; E. Henriksen, ‘Runekorset på Stavanger Museum, *Stavanger Museum Årbok*’, vol. CVI (1996), pp. 70–73.

Topographical writing had a special place in the academic output of the Norwegian elites. This kind of writing, although inspired by Enlightenment, as it had been already mentioned, was a continuation of the 17th century motifs. The 18th century topographical output is considered by historians to be an expression of national consciousness.⁷³ It was also significant in the very process of the shaping of identity – it drew people’s attention to those parts of the country, which had been little known till then and showed Norway’s specificity and what differentiated it from Denmark.⁷⁴ Hans Strøm (1726–1797) – the most notable author of such works – is thought to be the pioneer of the national breakthrough and a writer who expressed the aspirations to expand Norwegian independence although still within the union with Denmark.⁷⁵ Steiner Supphellen put forward a thesis that although these topographical works concentrate on parts of the country: city, parish, church precinct, administrative units, this literature cannot be treated as evidence for regional character of the connection with the land and identity. To the contrary, taking into consideration the method in which the material was treated by the authors, their attitude and goal that they had in mind, their works are evidence of the general Norwegian national consciousness. According to Supphellen the description of parts of the country was not a goal in itself; it was supposed to be a step towards achieving the main goal which was the description of the whole Norway.⁷⁶ This scholar named the patriotism of the authors of topographical works ‘a rational patriotism’, writing that its rational character was connected with Enlightenment ideas, a rational spirit, and the desire to study scientifically the home country. At the same time, it is a type of patriotism because there is the full focus on the matters of the home country and patriotic goals: development and supporting the development of the country.⁷⁷ Aagot Noss noticed that the topographic literature not only in Norway but also in other countries, gave evidence of a strong reception of the mercantile and physiocratic ideas.⁷⁸

The desire to create an ambitious work i.e. the description of the entire Norway was present in the Norwegian elites all the time. In the beginning of the 17th century such a description was created by Friis but already in mid-17th century,

⁷³ N. Gilje, T. Rasmussen, op. cit., p. 297; R. Glenthøj, op. cit., p. 98, O. Christensen, op. cit., p. 60–61

⁷⁴ A. Eriksen, *Toppografenes verden...*, p. 25.

⁷⁵ H. Christensen, ‘Hans Strøm...’, pp. 235, 237.

⁷⁶ S. Supphellen, *Den historisk-topografisk litteraturen i Noreg...*, p. 203.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, p. 208; idem, *Den historisk-topografiske litteraturen...*, p. 111.

⁷⁸ A. Noss, ‘Nordmandsdalen og draktene’ in *Norgesbilleder...*, p. 154.

as we have seen, Berntsen claimed that it was out of date. Under the Christian V's rule (1688) an idea appeared to prepare a map of the entire country, which could serve as a starting point for the creation of its whole description. This idea was presented by Melchior Ramus (1646–1693), the brother of the already mentioned, Jonas. The king took up the idea and after many years of work, in 1692, he was presented with a map of Norway. Next, Ramus created five separate maps of the particular regions of the country. Here, also, the subject of work was the entire country, as a geographical and political entity.

However, at the time the development of knowledge and progress of scientific research made creating a description of the whole country difficult. We can mention a few, of different qualities. Jonas Ramus was the author of a description of Norway, focused on showing its different administrative parts (*Norriges Beskrivelse hvorudi dette Riges Strekning, Beskaffenhed og Deeling udi visse Lehn, Biskopdømmer, Provstier, Præstegjeld, Laugdømmer, Fogderier, Tinglaug etc. forestilles*). The work, finished in 1715, was published in 1735. The classical works were, as we know, the *Description of Denmark-Norway* by Holberg and the *Natural History of Norway* by Pontoppidan. Another initiative was created in connection with the already mentioned request of the king Christian VI from 1743 to send in descriptions of the administrative units of the country. The received responses became the basis for the work of the Danish scholar Erik Jessen Schardebøll, who managed to describe (with significant help of the Norwegian Hans Steenbuch, 1722–1800) and publish in 1763 only one volume of this work titled: *Det Kongerige Norge, fremstillet efter dets naturlige og borgerlige Tilstand*.

In the second half of the century, local descriptions started to dominate; they were often thorough, truly detailed, and attempted to portray the entire image of a certain place.

In the beginning of the 18th century (1710) Hans Skanke (1679–1739) compiled the Latin *fata Nidrosiana* i.e. the history of the city of Trondheim, imbued with the local patriotism and serving as a kind of homage to the historical capital of Norway.⁷⁹ In the early 1740s a work by Ivar Wiel (1711–1756) was written (*Beskrivelse over Ringerige og Hallingdahllens Fogderie: hvorudi findes anført dets Grændser, Situation, Størrelse, Vasdrag, Skoug, og Mark, Dyr, Fugle og Fiske, Mineralia, Naturalia og Antiqviteren med videre*, 1743). The *amtman* of Stavanger, Bendix Christian de Fine, wrote the description of the precinct in which he lived and which he administrated over, which he finished in 1745.

⁷⁹ I. Ekrem, *Norway...*, pp. 90–91.

Writing in the second half of the century, Hans Strøm was considered to be a classic author of topographical literature in Norway. He was an author of the early and exemplary work about the Søndmør precinct (*Physisk og Oeconomisk Beskrivelse over Søndmør Fogderiet belligende i Bergens Stift i Norge*) published in 1762 and 1766 (two volumes) and about the Eger precinct as well (1784). His works were known and appreciated also abroad.⁸⁰ Let us add that he was also an initiator of a farming society in the Søndmør precinct. He personally took care of talented peasant children: one of them was Sivert Aarflot (1759–1817), who became a printer and a publisher. It is perhaps important to say that Aarflot, following in the footsteps of his benefactor, also took care of a talented peasant child. This child was nobody other than Ivar Aasen.⁸¹ In this way a connection was created between an Enlightened patriot and the 19th century father of the Norwegian ‘national breakthrough’. Basing on the materials left behind by Hans Strøm Marcus Schnabel in 1781 wrote and published the description of Hardanger (*Udkast til Beskrivelse over Hardanger...*).

Bergen was still popular. Already in the 17th century, an important work about it by Edvard Edvardsen was created, which was very important from the point of view of the future generations – *The description of Bergen* (1674).⁸² The author born in Bergen as a son of a shoemaker, studied abroad and after coming back to his country, he worked in his home city as a teacher in a Latin school. His work was of erudite character and was a detailed and meticulous description of the city, its buildings and people holding different positions. The author described fires and other disasters that befell the city. A lot of place was devoted to Hansa merchants in Bergen, describing their activity as well as customs and ways of doing business. Edvardsen’s work was practically devoid of national motifs. The author focused on his city and its glory was its main preoccupation. The elements of national identity appeared rarely. The main one was the way in which the author introduced himself: a Norwegian from Bergen. In addition, he mentioned old documents writing that they were written in ‘our ancient language’. A later work by another local patriot Claus Fasting the Elder (1674–1739) had a similar character; Fasting was a Bergen burgher and

⁸⁰ S. Suphellen, *Den historisk-topografiske litteraturen...*, p. 108

⁸¹ Ø. Sørensen, *Kampen...*, p. 26.

⁸² E. Edvardsen, ‘Den Wiit-Berømte i fordom Dage Kongelige Residentzis, och endnu høy-privilegede Kjøb- oc Handel-Stad Bergen udi Norge’ in *Norske Magasin...*, vol. II, Christiania 1868. Edvard Edvardsen, b. 1630 d. 1695, a teacher and writer, studied in Copenhagen and Leiden, 1663 a con-rector of the Cathedral school in Bergen

city mayor, who wrote the *Historical description of the city of Bergen* finished in 1722. Here among the multitude of facts and meticulous descriptions, the way erudite authors used to write, personal opinion is hard to be found. Speaking about Norwegians, the author used the phrase ‘royal subjects in Norway’, ‘the inhabitants of Stavanger *amt*’ and he mentioned once that the German burghers employed ‘Norwegian boys.’⁸³ In one of the passages on the occasion of the city privileges, Fasting mentioned king Olaf, who in 1384 ascended to the throne after ‘old Norwegian kings died out.’⁸⁴ Such a phrase gives evidence of a great distance the author had to the past – it is almost an ‘ancient’ story to him and he suggests that there was a view that the monarchs ruling in Norway are connected to one another and the reign of the Danish kings, in the face of the fact that the dynasty died out, is a natural consequence. Neither in Edvardsen’s work nor in Fasting is there a trace of anti-Danish sentiments or views. Both works are, however, a testament to a strong local patriotism and interest in the home city. The third text is the work by Hilbrandt Meyer from 1764. Insofar as the works of Edvardsen and Fasting concentrate on the city, Meyer presented it on the backdrop of the entire Norway – introducing references to national history, old kings and laws.⁸⁵ A compilation regarding the trade in Bergen was written (1764) by Christian M. Orlik (1728–1793) and an inventory of writers from Bergen (or, as the title says, of all who published anything in print), created in 1766 by Christopher Friman (1742–1791). Baltzer Beck, about whom little is known, published in 1702 in Copenhagen *A Ballad on a Great Fire in Bergen* and in 1707 *A New Ballad on Norway and its Precious Resources* re-printed many times later.

Herman Ruge (1706–1764) was the author of a description of province Valdres (1745), announcing in its title the description of geographical features as well as the character of its people (*Waldresia reserata, det er: Beskrivelse over Provindsen Valdres, dens Situation og naturlige Beskaffenhed af Luft, Land, Vand, producter, Folkets Egenskab m.v.*). The bishop Frederik Nannestad (d. 1774) focused on his post, left behind in manuscript a description of *Things*

⁸³ C. Fasting, ‘Een Historisk Beskrivelse om Bergen udi Norge hvorudi handles Om dens Oprindelse og Situation, om dens Indbyggeres Handel og Næring, om det Hansestædiske Contoir sammestæds, dets Handel og itzige Tilstand, saavelsom dets Oprindelse, forfattet af...’ in *Norske Magazin...*, vol. III, Christiania 1870, pp. 61, 72. Claus Fasting (the older), b. 1674 d. 1739, son of a merchant, clerk, policeman, 1703 the mayor of Bergen.

⁸⁴ C. Fasting, op. cit., p. 50.

⁸⁵ H. Meyer, *Bergens Beskrivelse...*, p. 428, 461. Hilbrandt Meyer, b. 1723 d. 1785, son of merchant, clerk, from 1763 the mayor of Bergen.

worth noticing in Nordland amt i.e. of various monuments and antiquities. Hugo F. Hjorthøy (1741–1812) published a description of the church province (*provstie*) Gudbrandsdalen in two volumes between 1785 and 1786. The peasant poet, Simen Fougner (1701–1783), left a description of Gausdal in manuscript, receiving the 1780 award of the patriotic society in Christiania. Hans Arentz was the author of the description of Stavanger amt, published in 1779 and the *fogderie* of Søndfjord, written in 1785. Johan Michael Lund (1753–1824) published the description of Upper Telemark in 1785 and Hans M. Abel described the church province Gjerestad (published in *Christiansandske Ugeblad* in 1786). Jacob Nicolai Wilse, who has already been mentioned, was the author of a highly regarded work *The Physical, economic and statistical description of Spydeberg* published in 1779. Hans Jacob Wille, the author of the description of the church precinct Sillejord (1786) and travel description of Telemark (1786, unpublished in the 18th century), was equally famous.

For slightly later times, the main forum where topographical works were presented was, mentioned earlier, the Norwegian Topographical Journal (*Topographisk Journal for Norge*) published between 1792 and 1808. Many Norwegian authors published their works here and sometimes works written much earlier were also printed in the journal.



Another area of interest was the Norwegian law. In the 1750s Hans Paus (1710–1770) published a two-volume collection of old Norwegian law, translated into ‘the currently used Danish language’ with commentaries (*Samling af gamle norske Love. Af det gamle Norske i det nu brugelige Danske Sprog oversatte og oplyste med historiske, philologiske, geographiske og juridiske Anmærkninger*). In the contemporary discussion of the work, another Norwegian lawyer, Isaac Andreas Cold (1716–1761) emphasized that it was one of the oldest laws in Europe, since Norway belonged to the oldest countries on the continent.⁸⁶ Paus published also the study of natural law, using empirical material from the Danish and Norwegian law (1750). The odel law system generated interest and was the subject of a number of works. Already in 1750s in *Danmark og Norges Oeconomiske Magasin* a text by David Schjøth (1780–1779) appeared, concerning this subject (*En redelig Nordmands Skrivelse til sin Ven angaaende Odels-Ret-*

⁸⁶ O. Feldbæk, ‘For Norge...’, p. 40.

ten i Norge og dens Følger). Michael S. Døderlein (1740–1786) considered in his work, published in 1762 in Christiania, whether the odels law was beneficial or harmful for the public good. A big discussion on this law was started in 1787. It was caused by a request to the king from the peasants of Akershus amt (1787) who asked for the abolition of this system. The intellectuals reacted immediately and defended the odels law: Christian M. Leganger (1742–1816), Brun, Jacob Wulfsberg (1751–1826).⁸⁷ The discussion was still continuing in the 1790s.⁸⁸ Svend Stenersen (1752–1784), a lawyer, in 1783 published a textbook: *Useful knowledge of the law, dedicated to Norwegians*.



The interest in folk language developed, in comparison to the period before 1660. This language was increasingly frequently identified as Norwegian or even termed ‘the true Norwegian language’.⁸⁹ There were various motives of such interests. In many cases a certain fascination with otherness could have played a role. However, practical motives dominated as it was often spoken about the necessity to communicate with the folk people successfully. Towards the end of the 17th century, the clergy, referring to the planned changes in church law, formulated characteristic postulates. In his opinion from 1682, the bishop of Akershus, Hans Rosing (1625–1699), postulated the necessity to introduce the Norwegian language on a larger scale i.e. the language used by the peasants (or rather their many various dialects). The bishop wrote about Norwegian psalms, readings during christening, sermons, Biblical texts, ‘so that the church (i.e. the congregation – K. S.) understood what it was being told’.⁹⁰ It was because of this reason that such interests were supported by the Copenhagen authorities. Such initiatives could be put into a larger tendency, occurring in Denmark in

⁸⁷ C. M. Leganger, ‘Tanker i Anledning af den Kongelige Allernaadigste Befaling om nogle Beneficerende Gaardes Udnævnelse til Militair-Boeliger for Compagnie-Cheferne i Norge’, *Minerva*, vol. VI, Kiøbenhavn 1787; J. N. Brun, *Tanker om Norges Odels-Ret*, Bergen 1788; J. Wulfsberg, ‘Et Par Ord om Odels-Retten i Norge’, *Minerva*, vol. IX, Kiøbenhavn 1788.

⁸⁸ O. A. Storsveen, op. cit., pp. 105–113.

⁸⁹ Jens Lemvig, a son in law of Knud Leem said this in a letter to J. E. Gunnerus, T. Hannaas, preface in *Professor Knud Leems Norske Maalsamling fra 1740-aari*, ed. T. Hannaas, Kristiania 1923, p. XV.

⁹⁰ *Betenkninger er fra Geistligheden i Norge om Kirkeordinansen 1607 og 2. bok av Norske Lov 1687, foranlediget av planen om å revidere kirkeloven 1631–1753*, ed. H. Fæhn, Oslo 1985, pp. 26, 27, 32, 77; the bishop of Stavanger, Jacob Jersin also spoke in similar terms, p. 79.

fact since the end of the 16th century i.e. the interest in Old Norse language (linked to the increasing involvement in the study of Medieval history), the care taken to preserve pure language and removal of foreign influences.⁹¹ In the 1790s, a Danish dignitary Mathias Moth initiated the works on a Danish dictionary and later, a dictionary of Norwegian. Many Norwegian ministers, who took up the task to collect Norwegian words, phrases and sayings were doing it also because they counted on promotion and a betterment of their professional stance.⁹²

There is evidence of a certain nostalgia for the old language of the home country. In his 1693 letter addressed to Thormodus Torfæus, Iver E. Leganger (1629–1702), the vicar from Sogn included a description of his parish and the explanation of the origin of its name. And at the end of the letter he sighed: 'In this way the language disappeared, as it is not used for singing in the church nor for sermons; nobody speaks it anymore and nothing is published in the Norwegian language.'⁹³ Linguistic interests led to, together with various contacts that the elites had with the lower social classes, a mutual permeation of vocabulary from both languages, contributing to their integration. At a later time, the introduction of Norwegian words into literary language was considered to be a method of shortening the distanced between the elites and folk.⁹⁴

The works which were written about language can be divided into three categories. These were: the attempts to create the entire dictionary of Norwegian language, dictionaries of regional dialects (often attached to topographical descriptions) and finally linguistic works i.e. attempts to analyze a particular problem.

Jacob Rasch, the rector of Latin school in Christiania was especially highly regarded. In his response to Moth's appeal from 1697 he prepared a Norwegian dictionary. There are no doubts as to his personal involvement in the matter. Rasch wrote to Moth about the necessity to collect words, phrases and proverbs and he mentioned that many vicars in Norway were doing such work. He criticized foreign influences in the Norwegian language and devised plans of a scholarly journey around Norway, whose aim was to be the collection of old

⁹¹ H. Ilsøe, 'Danskerne og deres fædreland. Holdninger og opfattelser ca. 1550–1700' in *Fædrelandet og modersmål 1536–1789*, København 1991 (*Dansk Identitetshistorie*, ed. O. Feldbæk, 1991–1992, vol. I, pp. 50–52).

⁹² D. A. Seip, 'Planer om...', p. 188.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 197–98.

⁹⁴ A. H. Winsnes, *Det Norske...*, p. 218.

parchments and learning the local dialects and finding out what the vicars were working on in the linguistic domain.⁹⁵

The works of Knud Leem⁹⁶ were more significant, however, as he was a prominent linguist, who in the 1740s prepared a dictionary of Norwegian dialects, traditionally considered to be the first attempt of such academic work. He did not focus on one region only but tried to include the vocabulary used in the entire country. The initiative to create such a dictionary came from the Danish government but when Leem brought his work to Copenhagen none of the authorities took any interest in it and it was not published at the time.⁹⁷ Leem's dictionary includes a record of about four thousand words 'which were used by Norwegian peasants' but also Norwegian proverbs and phrases. The author sometimes added small ethnographical comments referring to the customs of a given region. The works of Gunnerus and Wille (a manuscript of Norwegian language dictionary mainly from the Sillejord precinct, 1785) were of similar character. The vocabulary collection ascribed to Gunnerus most probably was not his work but of the vicar Eric Gerhard Schytte (1729–1808), from whom the bishop took the work during his visitation. In his letters, the vicar mentioned a somebody who 'plundered my collection of minerals'.⁹⁸

Smaller collections of words from local dialects were more common, however. Jonas Ramus also created a linguistic work, collecting the (unpublished) record of the words from the Nordehov region (1698). Within Moth's initiative, David J. Klim, a writer, *fogd* and assessor in the High Court (d. 1714) created a dictionary of the Robyggjelaget region dialect. In 1745, in the description of Stavanger *amt*, B. Ch. de Fine inserted a record of 'old words, which are still in use among the peasants of the *amt*'. He included also a list of phrases and proverbs and local first names. He wrote on this occasion that many of them were of pagan origin. He noticed that the old peasant language was gradually disappearing (excluding the inhabitants of central Norway) and changing into Danish, so one could largely understand what they were talking

⁹⁵ Jacob Rasch to Matthias Moth, 29 January 1698, qtd after: D. A. Seip, 'Planer om...', p. 192–193.

⁹⁶ Knud Leem, b. 1696/97 d. 1774, a clergyman, linguist; as the vicar and a missionary among the Sami people studied their language, 1752 a professor of Seminarium Lapponicum in Trondheim; the author of the grammar of the Sami language and a Sami-Danish dictionary as well as of an ethnographic description of the Sami people.

⁹⁷ T. Hannaas, op. cit., pp. X–XI.

⁹⁸ J. R. Hagland, 'Ei norsk ordsamling frå tide kring 1770 etter biskop J. C. [sic!] Gunnerus', *Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter*, V (1980), pp. 2–6.

about.⁹⁹ Hans Strøm devoted a lot of place to the description, characteristic and examples of the dialect used by the inhabitants of Søndmøre, comparing it also with dialects from other parts of the country and including a dictionary of little known Norwegian words.¹⁰⁰ Wilse did a similar thing concerning his parish of Spydeberg (*Description...* from 1779, dictionary from 1780). In his diary Lassen mentioned Norwegian words (which he considered very old) and Gunnerus in his correspondence with Linnaeus often gave Norwegian names of animals and plants.¹⁰¹

There were also attempts to translate some texts into dialects. Jacob Rasch translated a part of the *Epistle to the Romans* to the local Norwegian dialect.¹⁰² Knud Leem, on the other hand, translated a part of *The History of the Church* written by Ludvig Holberg into the Augvold dialect.¹⁰³

Linguistic works were also created. Let us mention the work by Hans Olfsen Nysted, a minister (d. 1740), published in 1708 in Copenhagen under a symptomatic title: *Rhetorica laica et pagana. I.e. oratory skills of scholars and peasants, written by somebody who loves the beauty of our native language*. The work by Marcus Schnabel from 1774 (*Prøve paa, hvorvidt det gamle norske Sprog endnu er til i det Hardangerske Bonde-Maal*) is highly esteemed by historians of language, who consider it the first work in the domain of historical linguistics. It contained a dictionary but also an introduction, which was a demonstration of the grammar of the Hardanger dialect. Schnabel reinforced also the Romantic tendencies noticing the role of the language in building a modern nation.¹⁰⁴

However, we do not always have certainty which language the author is referring to on different occasions like in the critique which met the author of a poem praising the national poet Tullin, written in French. The critic in his text published in *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel* (1764) wrote that such a poem should have been written in 'good Norwegian'.¹⁰⁵ Hans Amundsen Wille in his 1764

⁹⁹ B. de Fine, op. cit., pp. 222–225, 225–242, 242–243.

¹⁰⁰ H. Strøm, *Physiske og oeconomicke...*, vol. I, pp. 504–532; J. N. Wilse, *Norsk Ordbog*, Christiania 1780.

¹⁰¹ N. Ch. Lassen, op. cit., p. 15; [J. E. Gunnerus], *Johan Ernst Gunnerus og Carl von Linné brevveksling 1761–1772*, ed. L. Amundsen, Trondheim 1976 pp. 46, 48, 50, 55, 86.

¹⁰² S. Engen, 'Reis dæg, Britha', *Stavanger Museum Årbok*, LXXVIII (1968), Stavanger 1969, pp. 32–33.

¹⁰³ [K. Leem], *Professor Knud Leems Norske Maalsamling fra 1740-aari*, ed. T. Hannaas, Kristiania 1923, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ O. Monsson, op. cit., pp. 79–82.

¹⁰⁵ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 19, 28 IX 1763.

letter to Hammer mentioned that he was working on a translation of a medieval document into ‘contemporary Norwegian’.¹⁰⁶ Like Holberg he could have meant the Danish variety of Norwegian. However, more and more frequently there is no doubt that ‘the language’ meant the one used daily by the people.

Although already from the beginning of the 18th century we find some scattered examples of dialects being used also in writing; in the second half of the century this was more frequent. In 1771 a complaint against a clerk written in the Eastern Norwegian dialect appeared. For the first time the Norwegian language was used for an official matter and at the same time to deal with a current problem, which was probably supposed to be a form of demonstration. All the more that the complaint was published in two languages, together with a Danish translation.¹⁰⁷ Even Hammer in his pamphlet, quoting an anecdote about the meeting between the king Christian V and a Norwegian peasant, cited his words in *bondemaal* – i.e. the peasant language.¹⁰⁸ In the beginning of the 1750s, the vicar Gerhard von der Lith Mow (ar. 1716–1785) wrote (and published) an occasional poem for the king in Gudbrandsdalen dialect and in 1774, trying to obtain an official post, the theology graduate Andreas Christian Krog (1748–1797) wrote to the queen widow Juliana Maria a rhyming request in the Trondheim dialect (and more precisely in Orkdal dialect).¹⁰⁹ These literary attempts may demonstrate a pre-Romantic reception of the idea that language is an emanation of the ‘country’s spirit’ and therefore – the basic building block of national identity. However, the willingness to bewilder people with exoticism, otherness or possibly to take advantage of the Danish fascination with the Norwegians was more significant at the time. Although Krog’s request had to be translated into German for Juliana Maria, it is a fact that it was favorably acted upon in less than a month! The use of dialect was also a strong emphasis on the separateness and uniqueness of Norway as a country having its own – different from Danish – language.¹¹⁰ There were also interests in folk culture. In the beginning of the century Hans Paus (the father of the famous lawyer) wrote down a folk song in Kviteseid dialect.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ J. R. Hagland, ‘Norske diplom som kjeldemateriale på 1700-talet. Brev fra Hans Wille til Christopher Hammer’, *Maal og Minne*, Oslo 1974, p. 66.

¹⁰⁷ D. A. Seip, ‘Et norsk stridsskrift...’, pp. 397–398, 406.

¹⁰⁸ [E. Hammer], op. cit., p. 240

¹⁰⁹ S. Engelstad, ‘Geistlig nyttepoesi fra 1700-tallet’, *Norsk Slektshistorisk tidsskrift*, vol. XXII (1969), pp. 101–102; A. Dalen, ‘Ein supplikk på orkdalsmål’ in *Norsk litteraturhistorie. Sakprosa...*, vol. I, p. 114.

¹¹⁰ A. Dalen, op. cit., pp. 116–118.

¹¹¹ S. Sogner, op. cit., p. 205.

What is more interesting, the peasant language started to be perceived also as literary material and began to be used in poetic works. The majority of writers limited themselves to the introduction of Norwegian words, usually explaining their meaning in footnotes, consciously striving at the expansion of poetic language.¹¹² Edvard Storm played a significant role here, being at the same time an example of an interesting evolution of linguistic interests. Born in Gudbrandsdalen, Storm, already as a young man, between 1766–69, began to record words of the local dialect, and from this he proceeded to write poetry in this language. His *Døleviser* entered the canon of Norwegian literature and became an important source of inspiration to the Romantics. Another, although lesser known, writer who also popularized dialects was Storm's countryman, Thomas Rosing de Stockfleth (1742–1808). This poet was the first one who devised plans of making the literary language fully Norwegian basing on the peasant dialects.¹¹³ In other words, he was planning the move which was put into practice by the 19th century linguist Ivar Aasen.

The linguistic matters found their way into the newspapers. In *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler* there were appeals to preserve the purity of the language, often called Norwegian, although in fact we do not know which language the authors really had in mind. The readers (at least they introduced themselves as such, although there is no certainty that these were in fact authentic letters to the editor) criticized their contemporaries for the overuse of foreign words, together with a remark that 'the love of language of the fathers' should be the evidence of being higher than plebs.¹¹⁴ They also complained that the name of the newspaper is not Norwegian and the authors of the articles should express their thoughts in 'good Norwegian'.¹¹⁵

However, for the clerks working in Norway, the language did not become the distinctive feature in either 17th or in 18th century. The elites building their identity did not use folk language as an element differentiating the Norwegians from the Danish, although it was very well suited for this purpose.¹¹⁶ This occurred most probably because of the fact that the Norwegian elites were very much submerged in the Danish culture. Consequently, shaping of identity occurred without references to a separate language. Another reason of this lack of refer-

¹¹² A. H. Winsnes, *Det Norske...*, p. 157.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 218.

¹¹⁴ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 13, 17 VIII 1763, No 14 24 VIII 1763.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, No 15, 31 VIII 1763.

¹¹⁶ O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, pp. 139, 170.

ences could be a special bond between the elites and plain folk. If the elites had assumed the necessity of ‘bringing up’ or ‘educating’ the folk in order to instill them with national identity, getting to know the folk language would have been necessary. In this case because the elites would have lacked a means to communicate the desired ideas. However, the relationship was reverse: it was the elites who were looking for elements shaping the identity. They were studying the language to get to know it and to get knowledge about this component separating the Norwegians from the Danish. It was not, however, needed as a means of communication. In addition, there was another, practical reason. The differences between Danish and the peasant Norwegian language were often not so big so as to prevent the possibility of communication. This was different than for example in Bohemia where intelligentsia spoke German and peasants – Czech and than in Finland where the differences between Finnish and Swedish were (and still are) huge. In Norway people usually could understand one another.



A frequent type of work was the one in which the authors – usually very precisely and competently – wrote about the contemporary economy: these were texts containing diagnoses, descriptions or suggestions of change. The work by army-officer Andreas Botner (1723–1784) from 1778 remained in manuscript. It concerned the Norwegian economy (*Patriotiske Tanker over endeel af den norske Land-oeconomie*). Andreas Bull (1746–1796), on the other hand, in his 1780 work considered the ways in which the state of Norwegian forests could be improved and in 1786 – the state of factory production.¹¹⁷ Jens Gram (1729–1780) wrote about the Norwegian ironworks, not only describing their state but also suggesting ways to invigorate their growth (1774). Many articles of this kind appeared in the already mentioned *Economic Magazine of Denmark-Norway*. Authors who wrote here were, among others, Christian Grave (1700–1763) (farming) and Ole Hoff (general economy). The already discussed diarist Otto Holmboe published at least two works on this topic. Bishop Nannestad attempted to persuade his countrymen to use the common Norwegian resource i.e. stone more efficiently. Vilhelm La Cour noticed that the articles in the *Magazine* clearly showed the contemporaries how much different the

¹¹⁷ Andreas Bull, b. 1746 d. 1796, clerk, poet, brother of Hans graduated from the Copenhagen University, 1787 *sorenskriver*, 1789 police chief in Christiania; the author of topographical works and poems.

economic problems were in both countries. At all times it was necessary to write which country was being discussed because something like forestry in the whole monarchy did not exist. There existed, however, Danish forestry and Norwegian forestry.¹¹⁸



Peasantry was becoming the subject of academic interest. In 1767 Evan Mel-dal (1728–1786) wrote about cottage industry of Norwegian peasants. Peder A. Schjelderup (1754–1842) published in Bergen a ‘short and simple’ farming textbook for peasants (1777). The vicar Johan Støren published in 1771 a laudatory text about the Norwegian peasant Nils Justesen Eydet, who received an award from the economic society for his effort and industriousness. In 1763 a work by Peder H. Hertzberg (1728–1802) *Information for the peasants in Norway about the cultivation and use of a very useful plant – a potato* came out in Bergen. In 1774 a new edition of this work was published. Also in the press of the period texts on this subjects were printed.

The subject matter of ethnography was equally important. In the already mentioned, published in *Norsk Intelligenz-Seddeles* (1767) *Letters by Mrs Ø...*, there was an emphasis on the description of the folk – their character, behavior and customs.¹¹⁹ However, this kind of material found its biggest place in topographic descriptions. It appeared already in the 17th century, although at the time it was more often postulated to collect such material than in fact done. In the 18th century, according to the pattern presented earlier by Pontoppidan, in each topographic description or description of travel it was written about customs, clothes, traditions or beliefs.

What the authors were interested in and wrote about was country buildings, farming work, tools and appliances, the appearance of peasants, their food habits and clothes. Holidays and celebrations of various kinds were described: wedding and funeral customs as well as types of entertainment: music and dance. They were interested in peasant beliefs, superstitions, fables, legends and, finally, language; sayings and proverbs were quoted – most often those connected to weather prediction. The local dialect was described together with its pronunciation and local names of places. What caused a lot of interest was *Primstav* i.e. a very ancient calendar, still being used by peasants. Although not all authors

¹¹⁸ V. La Cour, op. cit., p. 127.

¹¹⁹ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeles*, No 4, 15 VI 1767, No 8, 13 VII 1767, No 9 19 VII 1767.

fully followed such an academic program, all of them included at least some information of this kind.¹²⁰ In a model work, a description of the Spydeberg parish (1779), Wilse included ethnographic material in its two last parts: the economic part, where he was writing, among others, about the peasant building style, their food, drinks, clothes, tools, and everyday farm appliances and in the ‘political’ part dedicated to the inhabitants and the ‘public-state’ sphere. Here, he wrote about their external appearance, views, superstitions, beliefs, language, daily life as well as holidays, entertainment and dances.¹²¹



At the end, one should discuss the most important figure among all those concerned with science in the 18th century Norway. On account of his specialization Gerhard Schøning, considered to be the first professional Norwegian historian, should have been discussed in the previous part, concerned with the historical writings of Norwegian elites. However, this scholar played a bigger role. He was a comprehensive writer and besides historical works, he created an *itinerarium*, which was in fact a topographical description. Nevertheless, he was, first and foremost, a person, who played an enormous role in the process of shaping the Norwegian national identity. As a teacher, Schøning influenced his students directly; among them there were Johan Nordahl Brun and Nils Krog Bredal.¹²² As a friend, he influenced bishop Gunnerus and Suhm. His scholarly

¹²⁰ Writing about peasants in Ringerige (1743) Wiel devoted a lot of place to their style of life describing ‘ancient’ building constructed ‘in the old Norwegian way’ which existed during the times of king Olav, A. Eriksen, *Topografenes verden...*, pp. 150–152; B. Ch. de Fine, op. cit., pp. 117, 210, 133, ff.; ‘En gammelm...’, pp. 22, 26; H. Strøm, *Physisk og oeconomisk...*, vol. I, p. 535 ff., vol. II, p. 411; G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. I, p. 84, vol. II, p. 10; E. M. R. Mandt, op. cit., pp. 48, 51–52, 54–56, 60, 65, 68, 70, 74–76, 78, 101 ff. 107; H. J. Wille, *Beskrivelsen over Sillejord...*, pp. 76–79, 80, 218 ff., 224 ff. 236, 237–249, 250–254, 254–264, 264–274; idem, *Reiser...*, pp. 181, 182–88, 190–205.

¹²¹ J. N. Wilse, *Physisk, oeconomisk...*, p. 299 ff., p. 333ff.; Hans Arentz (1785) described the beliefs connected with weather and climate, names used by peasants for various atmospheric phenomena, beliefs and superstitions, appearance, local language (dialect). The next chapter is devoted to the peasant lifestyle, customs and traditions including cuisine and nutrition, eating, drinking, clothes, customs connected to the marriage, engagement, childbirth, funeral and wake, games and entertainment. Also peasant houses were described. H. Arentz, *Søndfjord...*, bull. 29, pp. 27–29, 32, 37–39, 40, 78–79, 83, 96, 101, 119, bull. 32, pp. 92–99, bull. 33, p. 32 ff.

¹²² H. Koht, ‘Gerhard Schøning og «Norge, Kjæmpers Fødeland»’, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, series 5, vol. III, Kristiania 1919, p. 156; L. Daae, *Gerhard...*, p. 15. Nils Krog Bredal, b. 1733

output was very much appreciated in his period and many writers – mentioned above – authors writing about Norway continuously referred to Schøning: Jens Andreas Krogh (1740–1783), M. Schnabel, J. M. Lund, Hans Paus, Knud Leem and finally Hans Strøm.¹²³ However, first and foremost, the content, emotions and staunch patriotism present in his works influenced a generation of Norwegians, who, on growing up in the 1770s and 80s, took direct part in building the Norwegian independence in 1814.

Born in 1722 in Lofoten, the islands of Northern Norway, he graduated from the Copenhagen university where he stayed for nine years on the whole, staying in touch with such outstanding figures of Danish academic life as historians Hans Gram and Jacob Langebek (1710–1775). In 1750 he debuted with a small essay *A few remarks on the weddings and wedding receptions of our ancient Scandinavian ancestors* demonstrating his knowledge of medieval sources.¹²⁴ Then in 1751 he managed to publish *Inquiry into the ancient geography of the Nordic countries, particularly that of Norway* paid for by the Danish Royal Society for History and Language Improvement. This work was devoted to the Finmark region located in the far North of Norway and its creation was connected with the Danish-Norwegian negotiations about delineating a border in far North. The matter was of political character as Norwegians (and Danes) had to deal at the time with Swedish claims to the Northern regions. These claims were supposedly scientifically supported by the 17th century scholar Olof Rudbeck (1630–1702). Schøning's work was supposed to counter these claims as the author attempted to prove that Finmark always belonged to Norway. Already in this early, still written in the interest of the whole monarchy, work a very typical for this author Norwegian point of view appeared. He wrote that the Kalmar union worsened the situation of Norway since it caused a political turmoil, foreign rulers appeared in the country, the king was constantly absent and the presence of Hansa started to cause trouble. As a result of the union Norway

d. 1778, playwright and the theatre manager; studied in Copenhagen; in 1756 wrote and staged an opera *Gram og Signe*, a groundbreaking work based on the motifs from sagas; 1761 mayor of Trondheim, supported the establishment of the Science Society by bishop Gunnerus; 1771 was nominated for a manager of the Royal Theater in Copenhagen; staged the opera *Tronfølgeren i Sidon* (The Successor to the Throne in Sidon), which was enjoyed by the public but was mocked by the critics; it was parodied by J. H. Wessel.

¹²³ S. Larsen, op. cit., pp. 48–49; S. Supphellen, *Den historisk-topografiske litteraturen...*, p. 205.

¹²⁴ Ø. Ekroll, 'Gerhard Schøning og domkirken i Trondheim', in G. Schøning, *Beskrivelse...*, p. V.

could not secure its own best interests.¹²⁵ Such position was something new – Schøning had the best interest of his own country in mind, which led him to a conclusion that the union with Denmark could have also negative results. This would have been unthinkable for Holberg.

With the help of his old teacher, Benjamin Dass, Schøning was nominated for the post of the rector of the cathedral school in Trondheim and as we know in 1751 he arrived in this city. Friendship and academic cooperation with Suhm soon resulted in publishing in 1757 a joint work *Improvements to the old Danish-Norwegian History* where Schøning included the biographies of the Norwegian King from the 11th century – Harald Hardrada and archbishop Øystein Erlends-son. In his portrait of the king the author included elements which later would become characteristic for his vision of old Norwegian past – an image of a great, strong (also physically), militant but at the same time wise and experienced ruler famous for his raids of Jutland. Writing about Norwegians, he painted an image of a militant people, hardened thanks to an appropriate upbringing.¹²⁶

Schøning also published some shorter works in the *Journals* of the Trondheim Society and in 1762 he published *The Description of the Astounding and Famous Trondheim Cathedral*. In 1765 Schøning became a professor of history and rhetoric at the Sørø Knight Academy. An important period in his academic life began at this point, which resulted in 1769 work *An Essay on the Origin of the Norwegian People and some other Peoples of Scandinavia*. Here he presented a theory that Germanic people moved to Scandinavia from their original settlements in Scythia by the Don river and there the regions of Hålogaland and Trøndelag located far in the North became their new home; from there they spread further south. The Norwegian nation, therefore, was the earliest one. This migration theory (*Innvandringsteori*) was accepted in the 19th century by the Norwegian historical school becoming a factor in the shaping of identity although it did not withstand academic scrutiny.¹²⁷ The most important Schøning's work was a three-volume synthesis *The History of the Kingdom of Norway*. Its first volume was published in October 1771 and became very popular among young Norwegians who stayed in Copenhagen at that time. These were in fact very special times because of the 'freedom period' thanks to censorship having been abolished by Struensee. Very soon many young writers will

¹²⁵ S. Larsen, op. cit., pp. 49–58.

¹²⁶ Ibidem, pp. 112–114.

¹²⁷ More on this see G. Szelągowska, 'Naród i narodowość w romantycznych koncepcjach norweskiej szkoły historycznej', in *Przegląd Zachodni* 1984, no 1, pp. 63–85.

become inspired by Norwegian patriotism, the praises of the great Norway's future and the portraits of legendary ancestors – the giants.¹²⁸

The synthesis covered the Norwegian history from its mythical origins till the beginning of Olaf Tryggvason's rule i.e. till 995. The second volume appeared in 1773 and the third in 1780, just after the death of its author. The historian's friend – Peder F. Suhm – took care of the publication process. In the meantime, in 1773 Schøning received a governmental grant for a journey round Norway, during which he was supposed to collect material needed to study its history. He made a few journeys in 1773, 1774 and 1775; he travelled to the Trøndelag precinct and then Gudbrandsdalen, Hedemarken, a part of Romerike, finally arriving at Christiania. What was left were the important precincts of western Norway, which he did not manage to visit as in 1775 he was given a prestigious post of the royal archivist in Copenhagen. He finished the third volume of his work and prepared a new edition of *Heimskringla* by Snorri with translation into Latin that was used for the next eighty years.¹²⁹

Historians very much agree that Schøning's works mirror the deeply felt national identity.¹³⁰ Some historians noticed that the author's national self-identification verged on chauvinism.¹³¹ His hypothesis on the origin of the Norwegians could be a counterbalance for the political and cultural Danish domination as well as his views on Norway's greatness and the might of medieval Norway. The title of the synthesis itself was in those times a political challenge¹³² as it did not suit the current ideology of the unitarian country. It was also important that Schøning presented a specific set of phenomena which, in his opinion, constituted Norwegian separateness and which – taken from medieval sources and associated with the period of glory and greatness – were to become an indispensable defining element of the Norwegian identity also in the future.¹³³ The views that the studies of Norwegian culture and history might enrich European culture could become equally attractive.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ K. Nygaard, *Nordmennens syn på Danmark og danskene i 1814 og de første selvstendighetsår*, Oslo 1960, p. 16.

¹²⁹ Ø. Ekroll, op. cit., p. XVII.

¹³⁰ M. Jensen, op. cit., p. 88; K. Valkner, *Norges kirkehistorie ca. 1500–1800*, Oslo 1959, p. 68.

¹³¹ L. Holm-Olsen, K. Heggelund, op. cit., p. 542.

¹³² C. Pabst, op. cit., pp. 260–261.

¹³³ Ø. Sørensen, *Kampen...*, p. 28.

¹³⁴ A. H. Winsnes, *Det Norske...*, p. 15.

Literature

The evolution of literature provides the most direct and clear evidence of the developed national identity or even, in some sense, early nationalism understood as a political idea. It has been mentioned earlier that the beginnings of its national form is to be found in the literary output of the end of the 17th century: the poet Dorothe Engelbretsdatter and Peter Dass. In the first half of the 18th century the whole landscape of Norwegian literature was taken up by Holberg. But this was also Danish literature: in terms of language, subjects, audience and the aim of writing. Holberg wrote for the whole monarchy and wanted to develop literature and culture of both 'twin nations'. Despite their love and reverence for their 'father', his writing could not satisfy the Norwegians in mid-18th century. It lacked a Norwegian perspective, the focus on Norwegian matters and patriotic emotions of various kinds. After Holberg, a period of new literature began. Its character can be described, apart from having direct declarations and descriptions of feelings of love for the home country, as a predilection for Norwegian scenery, i.e. using the local landscape and nature typical for Norway. This was accompanied by looking for inspiration, topic and heroes in Norwegian history, sagas and Old-Norse mythology. Going back in time concerned mostly the Viking times and Middle Ages but not exclusively. Finally, the national character of this writing could be the result of the use of folk language that is dialects.

A breakthrough in the process of national literature formation occurred in the times of Struensee's rule. At this time national demonstrations took place in Copenhagen which could deeply move the young Norwegians staying in the capital. The first one took place in December 1771 when Struensee decided to abolish the Royal Guard which consisted exclusively of Norwegians (the one about which Holberg wrote that it was a special proof of Norwegian loyalty to the throne). The abolition was supposed to be accompanied by the incorporation of the guards into Danish regiments. The soldiers responded with a rebellion, however, they protested not so much against the abolition of the guard but against their transfer to Danish units. They stated that they could agree only to being left in a separate unit or being released from service altogether. They were supported by Norwegian sailors who organized a two thousand strong march on Copenhagen. These events, expressing a certain anti-Danish sentiment, and at the same time being an expression of national loyalty, caused enthusiasm of the Norwegians and sparked an additional, special national

manifestation.¹³⁵ This guards' and sailors' rebellion caused the 26-year-old poet and theologian, already known to us, Johan Nordahl Brun to write a song titled *To Norway, Giant's native land (For Norge, Kiæmpers Fødeland)*. Because of its revolutionary and national overtones, it was later called 'the Norwegian Marseillaise' by a Romantic poet Henrik Wergeland. After it was written its publication was banned and it was released only after almost fifteen years.¹³⁶ Let us quote the first stanza of the poem as an illustration:

*To Norway, Giant's native land,
let us drink today from this chalice.
And when we taste blood,
we will dream about sweet freedom.
We will wake up one day
and break the chains and bonds.
To Norway, Giant's native land,
let us drink today from this chalice...*¹³⁷

Johan Nordahl Brun belonged to a young Norwegian generation who stayed in Copenhagen in the stormy months of Struensee's period. The atmosphere of the capital made a great impression on them as did the first volume of *The History of the Kingdom of Norway* by Gerhard Schøning published in autumn 1771. As Halvdan Koht supposed, this work inspired the whole generation, showing the old Norway as a country of freedom and "the country of giants".¹³⁸ The young Norwegians who had extreme patriotic attitudes were first and foremost fascinated by the written word: they had dramatic and poetic aspirations. The ongoing literary discussions connected also with the staged theatrical works were often interpreted by them in the national context, which was supposedly typical for them, and thus treating criticism as dishonor. As a result of such discussions the community consolidated so that they could finally, following the fashion to create clubs and cultural-literary societies,¹³⁹ created their own club. The first meeting took place on the 30 April 1772 with among others Johan Her-

¹³⁵ Ø. Rian, *Maktens...*, p. 100.

¹³⁶ B. Berulfsen, *For Norge Kiæmpers Fødeland*, Oslo 1965, pp. 3, 14.

¹³⁷ J. N. Brun, 'Norges Skaal (For Norge Kiæmpers Fødeland)', in *Mindre Digte*, pp. 337–338 (own translation).

¹³⁸ H. Koht, *Gerhard...*, pp. 154, 156, 156–57.

¹³⁹ G. Szelałowska, *Poddany i obywatel. Stowarzyszenia społeczne w Danii w dobie transformacji ustrojowej w XIX wieku*. Warszawa 2002, pp. 38–40.

man Wessel, Claus Fasting (1746–1791), Edvard Storm, O. G. Meyer and Brun, most of whom were students of the Copenhagen University or its fresh graduates. Two years later the club received a permission to be officially recognized as *Det norske litteraire Selskab* i.e. The Norwegian Literary Society.¹⁴⁰ Its members' activity was mainly focused on organizing social events where they presented their literary texts, most often poetry. Some part of it was published in their times in three volumes: 1775, 1783, 1793. The Society itself existed until 1812 and one could say that most Norwegian elites of the time had some contact with it. Young writers represented the classical movement taking their inspiration from ancient literature and contemporary French classicism.¹⁴¹ They were quite suspicious of the pre-Romantic aesthetic canon that was already being formed and which was represented in Copenhagen by the Danish poet Johannes Ewald (1743–1781) in the last decades of the 18th century. In this way they expressed their anti-German and anti-Danish sentiments.

The poets from the Society, in whose works the national themes were especially important were first and foremost: Hans Bull,¹⁴² Johan Nordahl Brun, Claus Friman, Peder H. Friman (1752–1839), Jens Zetlitz (1761–1821), Christen Pram (1756–1821), Andreas Bull (Hans' brother), Claus Fasting, Thomas Stockfleth, Edvard Storm. Their literary output, from which a big part were occasional poems, regale songs and lyrical poems contains three basic motifs: fascination with old times and sagas, the admiration of the home landscape and interest in the peasants and their lives. These motifs are often interconnected and overlap. Together they form an image of patriotism and longing for the home country.¹⁴³

The Danish historian Ole Feldbæk characterized the ideological atmosphere of the Norwegian Society as follows: 'The shape of the image of Norway is being delineated, which they drew seeking their national Norwegian identity. Norway

¹⁴⁰ A. H. Winsnes, *Det Norske...*, pp. 33–34, 39–45.

¹⁴¹ M. Krzysztofiak, *Przewodnik po literaturach skandynawskich*, Poznań 2000, pp. 104–106.

¹⁴² This poet, a little older than others, who in fact did not belong to the founders of the Society, left Copenhagen in 1769 but the poets considered him one of them and drew inspiration from his poetry. (W. P. Sommerfeldt, [unpaginated preface], in H. Bull, *Samlede Skrifter*, Oslo 1937.

¹⁴³ The most important historical works include: plays by J. N. Brun *Einar Tambeskjelver*, C. Pram *Stærkodder*, N. K. Bredal, *Gram og Signe*, poems: P. H. Friman *Axel Thordsen og skion Walborg*, C. Friman, *Hagen Adelsten*; many poems refer to historical symbolism or events e.g. H. Bull, 'Om en Landmandens Lyksalighed ved Friheds og Eiendoms Nydelse' in *Samlede skrifter...*, p. 47, J. Zetlitz, 'Paa Madame Castbergs Fødselsdag', qtd after *Fra det Norske...*, p. 20.

was for them not only a province from which they came but they referred to the whole country. Their national involvement included all the Norwegian people. The Norwegian odel peasant was for them an icon of ancient Norwegian values. The heroic past of Norway, its history as an independent kingdom was for many the national starting point. And the magnificent Norwegian nature had a symbolic ethical value for the contemporary Norwegians.¹⁴⁴ The interpretation of national and patriotic content in their poetry might be not so straightforward. Liv Bliksrud demonstrated that many of its elements had conventional character and was connected to the fashions present in the last decades of the 18th century. She noticed that like Holberg, the poets differentiated between the 'natural' and political nation declaring loyalty to the Danish crown.¹⁴⁵ In contrast to many scholars, including K. Lunden, she perceived the identity of the Norwegian members of the Society rather as regional than national. What we interpret as fascination with Norway is rather excerpts of poems taken out of context, which were usually written for competitions and complied with the current aesthetic standards. Therefore, the admiration of the raw Norwegian nature was following instructions for such an image resulting from new literary and philosophical trends: looking for a landscape which would inspire fear and awe and through this, channel the drive to a confrontation with the dark side of life and fear of death.¹⁴⁶ The appreciation of the heroic ancestors (e.g. the famous *Birkebeinersang* by Claus Friman) was nothing else but replication: the descriptions of 'the Northern peoples' extraordinary strength and perseverance taken from Schøning but in fact from Voltaire, Montesquieu and P. H. Mallet. 'Norway became the country of giants on the French soil' writes Bliksrud.¹⁴⁷ There is no doubt that here also, as in every literary current, the convention, fashions or tendencies of the period had their influence on the content and tone of the poetry. However, there are too many of them and their motifs are too strong to treat them only as an accidental and brief result of literary fascinations. The image of identity which can be seen from the poetry of Norwegian Society to a large extent remains consistent with the one that can be reconstructed from other, completely non-poetic texts.

¹⁴⁴ O. Feldbæk, *Danske og norske...*, p. 67.

¹⁴⁵ L. Bliksrud, 'Norsk grålysning eller europeisk afterøde? Patriotisme i Norske Selskab i København', in *Norsk patriotisme før 1814...*, p. 190.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 193–94.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 194–95.

The struggle for national interest: university and bank

The question of the Norwegian university¹⁴⁸ was not only a story of efforts and endeavors to establish a higher educational school. This became a symbol of struggle for national interest, the main argument in accusing Denmark of discriminating against Norwegians and a very emotional subject. A Danish historian, today a classic, wrote in the 1940s: ‘Thanks to the matter of the university, the Norwegian nation obtained its specific «cause» – to a larger degree than thanks to the matter of the bank. It was born not only from the desire to defend the national interest but also from a deep need to give the country’s future – Norwegian character. This was not a matter of political separatism. These were, however, the self-confidence and the feeling of responsibility, which once awakened, could not die down.’¹⁴⁹ Let us add that not everybody agrees with such an interpretation. The already mentioned Liv Bliksrud believes, with which it is difficult to agree, that the main ‘activist’ fighting for the university was the Dane Peder Frederik Suhm and the matter itself did not have a national character; therefore, it cannot be viewed as an expression of national identity.¹⁵⁰

The range and importance of the matter were decided upon to a large extent by the Danish authorities, who being driven by the principles of unitarian politics, did not respond to any of the Norwegian pleas. It might have resulted from the fact that according to the Danish authorities the creation of the university in Norway could lead to questioning of one of the basic principles of absolutism: consistently educated state officials.¹⁵¹

During the period when Struensee was in office, thanks to his reformatory enthusiasm, hopes for changes were born. At the time the first plan of a university was put forward by bishop Gunnerus. This Trondheim scholar, prominent not only as a theologian and a philosopher both in Germany and Copenhagen, but also as the founder and the leader of the academic society, was asked by Struensee to aid him in reforming the Copenhagen University. On this occasion the bishop put forward a brief proposal to set up a separate university in Norway, emphasizing that he was speaking on behalf of the whole nation.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ More on this: K. Szelągowska, ‘Geneza i powstanie Uniwersytetu Norweskiego w Christianii 1760–1813’, *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, no. 7–9, 1981, pp. 161–173.

¹⁴⁹ V. La Cour, op. cit., p. 171.

¹⁵⁰ L. Bliksrud, op. cit., p. 192.

¹⁵¹ L. Opstad, op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁵² *Aktstykker vedkommende bsp. Gunnerus arbeide for Universitetet i aaret 1771*. ed. Y. Nielsen, Christiania 1898–1914, pp. 447–48.

The bishop was not exaggerating because according to his secretary every mail delivery brought packets of letters from the entire Norway in which his countrymen were encouraging the bishop to act.¹⁵³

It may be surmised that the bishop realized the matter would be difficult. There are numerous testimonies of this. In his letter from 16 December 1771, addressed directly to Struensee, the bishop wrote: ‘The Norwegian people will be bound very tightly to Your Excellency if they get the university from your hands. Because if we do not get it now, perhaps we will never get it.’¹⁵⁴ When after the overthrowing of Struensee both matters were abandoned, Gunnerus did not hide his disappointment. In his 1772 letters to Carl Linnaeus he wrote several times that there were no chances for a university any more: ‘We will not get the University in Norway no matter how hard I would work on the matter’ (letter from 29 February 1772). In April he wrote that many Danes were against the university. Soon after, describing the hospitality of the Queen Mother Juliana Maria and the Hereditary Prince Frederick, he added that ‘in the council, with a lot of Danish patriots, many are against the idea...’¹⁵⁵ In the letter from 23 March 1772 to his acquaintance – a clerk from Christiania, the bishop wrote that some accusations had been made against him on the grounds of the plan for the Norwegian university which state that its realization could have serious political consequences such as loosening the ties with Denmark or even a separation of Norway from Denmark. The bishop argued with this view saying that the clemency of the king and observing Norwegian laws are most conducive to the attachment to Denmark. It is rather a refusal to grant the people their requests which may cause unrest in the country. Gunnerus pointed out the example of Finland and Ireland which did not secede as a result of establishing local universities.¹⁵⁶

This remark of the bishop is interesting on many counts. His bitterness and disappointment were obvious, especially that, at the time, the clergyman was nearing his death. He had a few months of very hard work behind him, which did not produce any results. He survived tense moments when after the fall of Struensee, with whom he had been cooperating, there was a court trial of the

¹⁵³ H. Midbøe, *Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Historie 1760–1960*, vol. I, Trondheim 1960, p. 93.

¹⁵⁴ *Aktstykker vedkommende bsp. Gunnerus...*, p. 449.

¹⁵⁵ [J. E. Gunnerus], *Johan Ernst Gunnerus brevveksling...*, pp. 140, 144, 146.

¹⁵⁶ O. Dahl, ‘Biskop Gunnerus’ Virksomhed, fornemmelig som Botaniker, tilligemed en Oversigt over Botanikens Tilstand i Danmark og Norge indtil hans Død’, *Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskabs Skrifter 1888–1892*, Trondhjem, pp. 135–136.

doctor charged with treason and lese-majesty Gunnerus was afraid both for himself and for the Trondheim Society. Fortunately, his fears were unfounded but the tension of these few months strained the bishop very much. He came back to Trondheim as a broken, old man. He died in March 1773. It is also interesting to see what were the results of the accusations of the bishop and Danish criticism of the idea of the university clearly caused by the fears of Norwegian separatism. After all, since a few generations it was spoken and written about the Norwegian loyalty to the throne. This motif was present in Holberg's writing, who made this loyalty to the dynasty one of the characteristic features of Norwegian national character. The reactions described by the bishop showed that contrary to declaration, the Danes did not believe the Norwegians. The bishop's beliefs present in the letter show that he associated the two things immediately: in official declarations Norway is being praised as the support for the throne and 'the most loyal of all the loyal' and at the same time their requests are ignored over the suspicions of treason. Such situation must have been felt not only as upsetting but also as humiliating.

Public interest in the matter proves that the struggle for the university was not only the question of narrow elites. This is attested by the texts which were published in the press, in *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*,¹⁵⁷ among others.

Economic problems in the country became the origin of the idea of setting up the Norwegian bank. There were already earlier initiatives. In 1734 the idea of starting a Norwegian branch of the newly established Danish bank was suggested.¹⁵⁸ In the 1750s F. W. Wedel-Jarlsberg¹⁵⁹ spoke out in favor of creating the branch. In 1760s a few burghers from eastern Norway, mainly from Christiania and Drammen, issued such a postulate to the authorities, which had a wider reach. The result of this request, sent in June 1760 and signed by the owners of trade houses Christian Ancher and Collet&Leuch acting on behalf of merchantry of both cities, was a vivid correspondence with the management of the Copenhagen *Kurantbanken* whom the King entrusted with the matter. The correspondence lasted till the end of 1761 without any outcome. It is difficult to state that the request to establish a bank was at the time a part of independence

¹⁵⁷ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 24, 10 VII 1772.

¹⁵⁸ 'Om Oprettelsen af en Bank i Norge 1760', ed. A. Nielsen, in *Meddelelser fra Det Norske Rigsarchiv inneholdende Bidrag til Norges Historie av utrykte Kilder*, vol. III, Oslo 1933, p. 287.

¹⁵⁹ 'Forhandlinger om Oprettelse af en Bank i Norge 1760–1773' in *Meddelelser fra det Norske Rigsarchiv...*, vol. I, pp. 443–44.

program.¹⁶⁰ It is important, however, that the failure of the matter must have become the source of a great disappointment and doubt in the intentions of the Danish government.

The outcome of the following request for a bank must have been similarly disappointing. It was already after the fall of Struensee, in December of 1772. This time the letter to the king was signed by a large group of burghers from Christiania and Drammen. As a manifestation of national sentiments, the text is interesting for a few reasons: the merchants of two cities in eastern Norway were writing in fact on behalf of the whole nation as they referred not only to their own or their local economic problems but to the situation in the whole country.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, the authors demanded the establishment of a bank which would be in fact completely independent while earlier, ten years before, it was spoken rather about a branch of the Copenhagen *Kurantbanken* which with time would gain more independence. Now, the establishment of a fully sovereign bank with the right to among other things issue banknotes would be a serious step towards an economic independence of the country.¹⁶² The argumentation used is also important. The image of Norwegian economic relationship shown in the letter was dramatic. Contribution, bad crops, high prices were the reasons why 'Norway was in such a situation where the end of strength and goods of the country can be seen' and the creation of the bank was 'the only way to save the country and bringing in its well-being'. The authors also wrote that 'we have [in our hearts] the biggest concern and we feel compassion towards our brothers in the Oppland precincts, who lack the daily bread because of bad crops, rain and frost.'¹⁶³ In other words, the authors in their letter to the king – probably with a typical for such requests exaggeration, however addressing real problems of the country – wrote that the country was in the state of decline and people were dying of famine. They did not receive an answer. The conclusions drawn from these events must have been unambiguous and not very favorable for the Danish authorities. More importantly, the public opinion was aware of the preparations of the letter because the text supporting the initiative and reiterating the arguments about the imminent collapse of the country if the bank

¹⁶⁰ E. Rimehaug, 'Kravet om norsk bank på 1700-tallet – et nasjonalt selvstendighetskrav?', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, LXXVI (Oslo 1997), 3, pp. 317–321, 326.

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 322.

¹⁶² *Ibidem*, pp. 322–325.

¹⁶³ 'Christianias og Drammens Handelstands Ansøgning til Kongen, 22de December 1772, Forhandlinger om Oprettelse af en Bank i Norge 1760–1773' in *Meddelelser fra det Norske Rigsarchiv...*, vol. I, pp. 457–459.

is not established were published in *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel* from June to November 1772.¹⁶⁴

Although it could be concluded from the requests and complaints that Norway was in a dramatic economic situation, there was in fact a strong feeling of growing economic significance in the union and even the consciousness of the fact that Norway ‘was keeping Denmark up’ – as Holberg already wrote about it. In a natural way this became a premise to a view of a possible economic independence of the country. Traces of such thinking are to be found in the press, first and foremost in *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel* but also in advertisements, which was a proof of the vivacity of Norwegian economy and people’s activity.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 25, 17 VI 1772; No 37, 9 IX 1772; No 39, 23 IX 1772; No 43, 21 X 1772; No 46, 11 XI 1772.

¹⁶⁵ Ø. Davidsen, op. cit., pp. 51, 60, 88.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE STRUCTURE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

The category of nation used by the 18th century elites in the sense of a community of the people of the entire country (together with the peasants), assumed, as we had seen by the example of defining the term ‘the home country’, that the basic connection was being born and raised in Norway. Apart from this, there was a subjective feeling of identity and consciousness, which were expressed on the occasion of self-identification. Were there any other parts viewed as identifying elements? What components appearing in the utterances of the Norwegian elites were parts of the structure of identity?

Let us bring back the already described distinction into two methods in which a person defines their identity. One method relies on showing the continuation of some characteristics i.e. ‘let us stay ourselves’ and the second one consists of demonstrating the differences between us and others. The specific elements of the national identity play a double role: they let us stay members of the nation and at the same time serve to differentiate us from other nations. In addition, they are inter-connected: if we accept that the notion of Norwegian national character played a significant role in forming identity, which – as usual – was perceived as something unique, it was connected with the geographical and natural environment, as the character was widely believed to have been shaped by this environment. Finally, it seems that these components may be ordered in an ‘onion-like’ way – i.e. at least some of them follow the pattern of layers – from the closest – a person’s character (the earliest) to the one gained in a reasoned way.

The three groups of components, which can be observed in the identity of the 18th century Norwegian elites were: ‘Nature’ (geographical and natural environment), ‘People’ (national character, peasants and their identification) and ‘History’ (history of the country, the connection with the past, historical law, genealogical ties).¹ The above order is also connected with the structure of the

¹ In the Norwegian historiography dedicated to the development of national consciousness, most of these elements are listed: home landscape, the praiseworthy deeds of war-like Vikings, the allodial (*odel*) law and a special status of peasants, faithfulness to the

layers, as it seems that Nature was the closest to a person. The identification through specific Norwegian lay of the land, landscape, climate, nature was very common and occurred also in the mountainous landscape, rather hostile to humans, in which nothing attractive was noticed. For a few reasons I consider this identification as the most primal. Firstly, it accompanies human beings since the beginning of conscious life as it is closely connected with the place of birth and growing up. 'The country, geographical environment, narrow and tightly-knit, is a natural extension of the family and cannot be distinguished from it. The network of childhood memories, family relationships, oral stories are naturally extended to a village, region and province'.² It is true that the connection with the mother tongue or some family customs, which can then be identified as national, is equally primary. But these earliest impulses can be weakened or sustained. In case of Norwegian elites, the role of the mother tongue or family traditions was diminishing because they could not serve a distinguishing function. The landscape, however, could have such a role. Its disparity was very clear when contrasted with Denmark's geography, with which the elites had close contact when they were going to study at the university or visiting the family. Finally, the birth (and growing up) factor was such a basic identifying factor that it created an alternative word for the 'home country' i.e. 'the country of fathers' and also 'the country of birth'. If we assume that the Scandinavian 'country of birth' is close to the German *Heimat* then this interpretation gains a new legitimization. *Heimat* is associated with primal, oldest human sentiment resulting from the connection with the place of birth and home; a sentiment devoid of not only all political but also rational aspects. It is a sentiment independent of a human being and fully natural. 'The objective factor which causes the realization of familiarity and strangeness is landscape, which consists of the terrain, waterways, flora, fauna and soils'.³ The distinction introduced by Ossowski into

monarch and love of freedom; these features were to be the Norwegian uniqueness; they were supposed to differentiate the Norwegians from other people. In most of the works this concerns the 19th century, at most to the last decades of the 18th century. See N. Witoszek, op. cit., pp. 17–20; O. Christensen, op. cit., pp. 60, 67, 68; A. Eriksen, 'Norge – en naturlig historie', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 1997, bull. 1, Oslo, 76; O. A. Storsveen, op. cit., pp. 46–49; R. Glenthøj, op. cit., pp. 96, 99, 118.

² P. Aries, *Czas historii*, transl. B. Szwarcman-Czarnota, Warszawa 1996, p. 61 (own translation into English).

³ J. Wiesiołowski, 'Funkcje centralne Poznania a problem regionalizmu wielkopolskiego w późnym średniowieczu' in *Państwo, naród, stany...*, pp. 199–200; See also: J. Huizinga, op. cit., pp. 141–142; H.-D. Kahl, 'Einige Beobachten zum Sprachgebrauch von *natio* im mittelalterlichen Latein mit Ausblicken auf das neuhochdeutsche Fremdwort

the ‘private home country’ and ‘ideological home country’ can be brought back to mind here. It is interesting that the Polish scholar writing his text right after the World War II was analyzing the notion of the home country in terms of its territory brought forward the example of a Norwegian.⁴

The second ingredient is ‘People’. The description of *innfødte*, i.e. the indigenous people, had two different strands: one is the description of the Norwegian national character, that is an approach used since time immemorial in order to show the differences between nations and their separateness from one another. The other approach was the description of peasants carried out in two ways. It could be realistic, one could say academic and greatly resemble an ethnographic description or it became an idealizing and mythologizing portrayal of Norwegian *bonde*. The description of the people was in a sense a result of the influence of the previous ‘layers’ of identity because it was assumed that the national features were shaped by the natural environment and national history and to be more precise by the ancestors whose features (blood) were inherited by the inhabitants of Norway.

With the third component we are entering the realm of ‘the ideological home country’. Being called ‘History’ it is connected with the link with the past, following models from old literary texts, the consciousness of the glorious past: also on the level of legends and myths it will become a part of self-identification. With the still ahistorical or maybe beyond-historical thinking dominating in the period, the past and national history were present, also physically in the form of monuments, ‘antiquities’, old parchments or oral stories. They could refer to St. Olaf, other historical heroes, legendary figures known from songs and folk songs and finally from one’s own family and predecessors in office.

‘Nation’ in H. Beumann, W. Schröder (eds.), *Nationes. Historische und philologische Untersuchungen zur Entstehung der europäischen Nation im Mittelalter*, vol. I, Sigmaringen 1978, pp. 103–104; F. Hertz, *Nationality in history and politics: a psychology and sociology of national sentiment and nationalism*, London 1966 pp. 149, 150; L. Snyder, *The Meaning of Nationalism*, Westport Connecticut 1972, pp. 24–25, 153; C. Hayes, *Nationalism: A Religion*, New York 1960, p. 9; J. La Palombara, *Politics within nations*, New Jersey 1974, p. 46.

⁴ ‘When Mickiewicz wants to come back to ‘the bosom of [his] country’, when a Norwegian speaks about his cloudy home country against whose shores the waves break, the phrase ‘home country’ signifies a certain specific territory: the country of one’s family’. S. Ossowski, ‘Analiza socjologiczna pojęcia ojczyzny’ in idem, *O ojczyźnie...*, p. 22. The author points out that among other things Norway’s geography and topography had a significant influence on the shaping of national separateness. (idem: *Ziemia i naród, in O ojczyźnie...*, p. 50).

Nature

Geography i.e. the lay of the land, climate, landscape and nature was the main identifying element. These geographical features inspired poetical metaphors of the country, provided justification and explanation for the origin of certain national characteristics and were the object of admiration and sentiment. They were yet another evidence for the separateness of the country being defined as something ‘typically Norwegian’, something that for a Norwegian was his natural, ‘native’ environment.

The significance of the home landscape for Norwegians was (and it seems it still is) so great that it seems to be an object of cult and the main element of national consciousness. Perhaps as a result of scarce symbolic sphere and a lack of one, unified literary language – the physical domain seems to fulfill a unifying role.⁵ Matti Klinge noticed that the adoration of nature of the home country was characteristic of Scandinavian nations and he connected it to the constant poverty in those countries.⁶ As the US scholar Marte Hvam Hult wrote: ‘...here is not language that is the unifying force but rather concrete physical geography.’⁷

The interest in the natural environment and landscape growing in the 18th century was traditionally linked to Pre-Romantic tendencies and earlier notions explaining the national character through the influence of the climate. But the interest in nature could have other roots. For bishop Gunnerus, the most distinguished Norwegian naturalist of the time, study of nature had a theological dimension as well. In his correspondence with a kindred soul, Carl Linnaeus, Gunnerus emphasized that the richness of the flora and fauna of the world prove the might of the Creator and their study is an activity aimed at worshiping God’s name.⁸ Such an approach, having very little to do with Romantic raptures, was among others inspired by a trend in European writing – ‘physico-theology’ represented by the English writer William Derham, whose work *Physico-Theology...* was published in 1703 and in 1740s and 50s had its

⁵ M. H. Hult, op. cit., pp. 57, 58, 169; It seems that it was equally important in Finland, M. Klinge, op. cit., pp. 161, 162.

⁶ ‘This might have happened because for the Norse nations nature was everything, their only treasure – one could not, or even should not, expect anything more. Idealization of poverty became one of the most important, if not the most important, component of the Norse identity’ (own translation into English), M. Klinge op. cit., p. 308.

⁷ M. H. Hult, op. cit., p. 19.

⁸ [J. E. Gunnerus], *Johan Ernst Gunnerus og Carl von Linné...*, p. 1.

German imitators and it was published in Danish in 1759.⁹ According to the principles of idealistic ontology, people's reality and nature were two completely separate orders. In this thinking nature is supposed to serve humans and is supposed to be something over which humans rule, but it stays foreign to them. The reflection upon nature is to be based mostly on systematization and classification i.e. the model implemented by Linnaeus and in Norway continued also by topographers.¹⁰

However, even without any theoretical justifications, the reference to the specific, sea-mountainous Norwegian landscape was an early and very natural reaction. The clearly visible for the Danish incomers contrast between Danish and Norwegian natural environment. Would the process of shaping the identity look the same if Sweden was in the place of Denmark and the Norwegians would visit Stockholm instead of Copenhagen?



The natural environment served firstly to show Norway's separateness. We have seen how different geographies were pointed to in criticism of the decisions and laws passed by the Danish authorities or requesting changes in the law. Similarly, the differences in geography were quoted when it was spoken of the poor orientation and ignorance of the Danish officials.

The home landscape served also to construct metaphors, shaping a language convention popular in the period. This referred to first and foremost to the way the country was spoken of. Norway was a mountainous country so instead saying 'in Norway' poetic terms were used such as 'in-between the mountains', 'behind Norwegian mountains', or 'among the rocks': *dine Fædre Fielde* – fathers' mountains, or 'the mountainous home country (*klipperige Fødeland*)'. The rocks (*klipper*) were used also in comparisons referring to the features of the Norwegians.¹¹

⁹ J. R. Hagland, 'Biskop Gunnerus' vitenskapelige visitatsreiser i Nord-Norge, *Nordlit*, no 11, 2002, www.hum.uit.no/nordlit/11/08hagland/html (14.11.2008).

¹⁰ St. Larsen, op. cit., pp. 36–37.

¹¹ J. N. Brun, *Mindre Digte...*, pp. 13, 14, 124, 156, 216, 301; idem, *Einar Tambeskjelver...*, pp. 33, 87; M. S. Buchholm, 'Til det Skib, som skal bringe Kronprindsen til Norge, af...', *Minerva*, vol. VIII, København 1788, pp. 235–236; *Norsk Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 2, 12 I 1785, No 26 25 VI 1788, No 29 16 VII 1788; Claus Fasting turns to his home country: only among your rocks, the sun seems beautiful to me, qtd after I. Sagmo, '«...hvilke Vers, hvilket billede! O fæderneland! O Norge!», Norske selvbilleder på 1700-tallet',

Additionally, trees as ‘national’ symbols often appeared: spruce and pine. In the play *Einar Tambeskjelver* the eponymous hero says: ‘Every spruce on the mountain was precious and beautiful to me, double beautiful and loved because my country is the mother of me and of spruce...’¹² In 1733, in connection to Christian VI travel to Norway, a sign was put up in Christiansund containing all the symbolic elements: Norway as *Nordske Klipper*, mountains, pines, deep valleys:

Mens Nordmöers Fyrtræ groer
Bierge Bøye Ryg
Dybe Dalers Sæde
*Grøne Fyrre Træers Top.*¹³

The mountains Dovre started to fulfill a special role as a national symbol. As a result of their importance for transport and strategic location, Dovre mountains had been present in the images of the country for a long time. 16th century writers referred to them. They were the place where legendary beasts lived and as the national symbol they started to occur after the battle of Kringen in 1612 which took its place there. In 1704, in the complaint directed at Frederick IV who was travelling round Norway the Mountain Troll from Dovre (*Bjergtroldet i Dovre*) appeared as the spokesman for Norwegian interests. In 1733 during the already mentioned visit of Christian VI in Norway, in Christiansand, a city where the burghers were still dominated by the fresh incomers from Denmark, in the speeches there appeared symbolism connected with the Dovre mountains. In the second half of the 18th century the mountains became a widely used literary symbol. Brun introduced them into his song *For Norway, the country of giants* and in the drama *Einar Tambeskielver*; a sentence from this play became a saying: ‘sooner the Dovre mountains will collapse than I will break my

Norveg no 34, [s.l.] 1991, p. 187; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 2 13 I 1772; C. Fasting, *Provinzialblade. Udgivne i Bergen*, vol. II, Bergen 1779, p. 401; this convention permeated into the Danish literary language see Leonore Christine, op. cit., p. 53.

¹² J. N. Brun, *Einar Tambeskjelver...*, pp. 113, 62.

¹³ In free translation: “A pine grows in Nordmøre / The mountains bow / in the deep valleys / The tops of green pines”, W. Thue, ‘Korte Efterretninger om Christiansund Kjøbstæd udi Thronhjems Stift...’, *Topographiske Journal for Norge*, vol. IV, bull. 19, Kiøbenhavn 1796, p. 5; Similarly in the occasional poem to honor P. F. Suhm, *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler* No 25, 17 VI 1772; similarly J. N. Brun in his occasional poem on the death of J. E. Gunnerus, *Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab Tab ved HH Hr Biskop J. E. Gunneri Död*. Trondheim 1773, unpaginated.

promise' (*Og Dovre synke ned, før jeg mit Løfte bryder*).¹⁴ In the 1780s the Dovre mountains started to appear more and more often in poetry like in the poem by Jonas Rein *The Winter in Norway* or the poem by Andreas Bull entirely devoted to them. The poet describes the mountains as 'the dwelling of the giants' or 'the guardians of the home country'. A term describing Norwegians also appeared: 'the Dovre gens' (*Dovreslægt*).¹⁵

The valley at the foot of Dovre mountains – Gudbrandsdalen – became an important place too. This was a special region inhabited by wealthy peasants, fostering traditions and historical memory; many of them were literate. It was them who distinguished themselves in the battle of Kringen. According to Francis Bull, the growing popularity of mountains and the valley could be connected with the fact that in the 2nd half of the 18th century many poets originated from there: Edvard Storm, Thomas Rosing de Stockfleth, Ole Stockfleth Pihl (1729–1765), Peder C. Stenersen (1723–1776), Christen Pram. For them 'the Dovre mountains were a natural symbol of the home country, a symbol which was not only an abstract concept but was based on the real familiarity with the nature of Norway by each of them personally'.¹⁶ The poets praised their little homeland painting the image of peasants and often using the local dialect.

The seal of the Trondheim Academic Society had a characteristic drawing (from the 1760s): there were (apart from a didactic sentence, bees symbolizing, as usual, industriousness, and the Norwegian emblem) parts of Norwegian landscape: spruce, a shell and water creatures, foxes, seas and a big fish.¹⁷

¹⁴ No wonder that the members of the Constitutional Assembly in 1814, adjourned the meeting with a pledge: 'United and true until Dovre collapse' (*'Enige og troe, indtil Dovre falder'*).

¹⁵ S. Imsen (review) 'Norske reise...', p. 399; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 51 17 XII 1788; J. N. Brun, *Einar Tambeskielver*, editor's footnotes, pp. 126–127; also the poem *Paa Dovre*, the occasional poem written for the arrival of prince Charles of Hesse-Kassel to Norway; the poet on numerous occasions used metaphors and similes comparing the features of his compatriots to the natural conditions: brave (hard) as Norwegian rocks, loyalty tough like rocks – using the name *klipper*, which was commonly used in reference to Norwegian mountains, *Mindre Digte...*, pp. 3, 14, 15; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 1 6 I 1773; J. Rein, 'Vinteren i Norge' in *Samlede Digte*, pp. 4–9; A. Bull, *Dovrefield med omliggende Egne. Et Digt*, Kiöbenhavn 1784, pp. 15–16; J. Zetlitz, qtd after *Fra det Norske...*, p. 20, idem, 'Til Cleon' in *Poetiske Samlinger...*, vol. III, p. 8; F. Bull, 'Christen Pram og Norge', *Edda*, II (1916), p. 421.

¹⁶ F. Bull, *Fra Holberg...*, p. 22; F. Bull, 'Christen Pram'..., pp. 420, 421; A. H. Winsnes, *Det Norske Selskab...*, pp. 224, 218.

¹⁷ S. Supphellen, *Innvandrerne by...*, p. 325.



The geography of the home country, thirdly, served the role of a factor determining national character. A view was formulated that regarding Norway it was shaped by the landscape, topography and climate. Such notions are often explained by referring to Montesquieu but in fact thinking in such categories is as old as the world.¹⁸ However, it sometimes was put into question (for example by Holberg).¹⁹ The visions of being Norwegian shaped under the influence the natural environment was popularized by Eric Pontoppidan. Brun wrote ‘We, who were born among the rocks, find it enjoyable to climb even the steepest obstacles although we could reach them effortlessly through valleys’. Somewhere else he stated that the love of the home country was instilled in Norwegians by Nature itself. It was stated many times that such Norwegian features as strength, courage, agility and love of freedom come from the cold, healthy air, difficult life in raw environment.²⁰

The influence of nature on national character in the form of a thought-out system was presented by Schøning in reference to ancestors – old Norwegians, which will be discussed later. Life in agreement with nature in their case guaranteed success, from which the contemporaries should draw conclusions. The landscape provided also a rational explanation why the people migrating from the East settle down in Norway; the environment in their country (i.e. in Caucasus) was most probably similar to the one in Norway.²¹ But Schøning directly wrote that the contemporary lifestyle of his countrymen was harmful to them because it did not suit the circumstances in which they lived. Instead of adjusting their customs – food, education of children, lifestyle – to the geography of the country, they emulate the ways of the South, which does not suit them.²²

¹⁸ A. Wierzbicki, *Spory o polską duszę*, Warszawa 1993, p. 14–16.

¹⁹ As well as Edward Gibbon: ‘Many writers have supposed, and most have allowed, though, as it should seem, without any adequate proof, that the rigorous cold of the North was favorable to long life and generative vigor, that the women were more fruitful, and the human species more prolific, than in warmer or more temperate climates’, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. I, New York 1836, (<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/731/731-h/731-h.htm#link92HCH0001>, 16.08.2016).

²⁰ H. Strøm, *Tilskueren...*, vol. I, p. 353, 227; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 26 26 VI 1780, No 27 3 VII 1780; similar views were present in the poetry by Jonas Rein, *Samlede Digte*, vol. I, p. 15; [L. Wittrup], ‘Sekretærens Svar’ in [O. Irgens], *Den Selskabelige Strædsomhed...*, p. 31.

²¹ G. Schøning, *Norges Riiges Historie*, vol. I, Sorøe, 1771, pp. 5–6.

²² *Ibidem*, pp. 18–19.

At the same time, it was noticed that Norwegian character produced certain behaviors and customs unknown anywhere else – for example skiing. This was especially important because they were associated with the most ‘typical’ Norwegian season – winter.²³ Vicar Daniel Schieve mentioned in 1765 how in his youth he travelled in the mountains ‘on the so-called skis.’²⁴ The phenomenon was so little known outside Norway that when it was mentioned in the poem (by Jonas Rein) it demanded an explanation in the footnote. On the other hand, skis appeared in writings about Norway quite often, already in the 17th century, and the constant emphasis and explanations what they were is puzzling. Maybe it was supposed to show the extraordinariness and originality of the country?



Fourthly, the home landscape could become the object of adoration and love; its admiration was indirectly the expression of love towards one’s country and it served to emphasize its otherness and originality, bolstering it at the same time.²⁵ The charms of the home landscape, regardless of the season, were: green and resin-fragrant spruce forests, fresh air, northern lights (aurora borealis), white birches, naked rocks ornamented by majestic pines, the cascades of waterfalls, mountains overgrown with forests, fiords and valleys. Brun wrote about ‘the green crown surrounding the steep walls of the mountains.’ It was very common to consider spruce as the biggest ornament and treasure of the mountains.²⁶ The beloved Norwegian environment consists of cold, rocks, mountains and rivers, healthy fresh air.²⁷ In this description by Brun there is quite a provocative emphasis on these elements which distinguish Norway from Denmark. Hans Bull also wrote how the varied home landscape would be refreshing for him, so bored by ‘the same plains from West to East coast.’ Such a

²³ O. Christensen stated that skiing was Norwegian version of “ethnic journey”; op. cit., p. 68.

²⁴ *Nogle Christiansandske...*, pp. 295–96.

²⁵ For example, Claus Fasting spoke about it directly in his editorial discussion of the first volume of the poetry collection by the members of Norwegian Society. He praised the poem about spring because it contained ‘the image of the home country which interests every patriot’, C. Fasting, ‘Anmeldelser’ in *Poetiske Samlinger...*, p. 111.

²⁶ J. N. Wilse, *Reise...*, pp. 15, 17, 32, 56, 80; H. Arentz, *Søndfford...*, bull. 28, p. 147; J. N. Brun, *Mindre Digte...*, pp. 120, 124; J. N. Wilse, *Beskrivelse...*, pp. 35, 84.

²⁷ J. N. Brun, *Til Nordmaend...*, pp. 3, 23–24; on another occasion Brun stated that the home landscape maybe is not as beautiful as forests, plains and palaces on Zealand but the rocks, sea waves seem manly to him, qtd after *Fra det Norske...*, p. 40.

convention was common also in the 1780s and appeared in many occasional poems.²⁸

Poems and lyrics praising the nature and landscape of the home country were written practically by all poet members of the Norwegian Society: Johan Nordahl Brun,²⁹ Jonas Rein, Jens Zetlitz, Hans Bull, Andreas Bull, Claus Fasting, Claus and Peter H. Friman. All the above mentioned parts of Norwegian landscape were present in them.³⁰ In emotional invocations to the home country the axis of the description as well as the symbol of certain values were features of the home landscape: 'the roar of proud waves,' 'the plain guarded by mountains,' 'sky-high mountains,' 'proud mountains,' 'rocky house.'³¹ Claus Fasting was proud that Norwegian nature could be an inspiration for poetry written in classical alexandrine meter, the use of which Brun was encouraging, suggesting replacing the Greek Parnasus with 'mountains covered with moss.'³²

Nature was associated with the past – there was a common term referring to Norway: 'the mountains (rocks) of our fathers.' Brun wrote in one of his poems: 'I took some water from a fast-flowing stream, from which the giants drank in the ancient times.'³³ The soil was similarly connected to the ancestors. Writing about the hero of his drama, Einar Tambeskjelver, Brun explained his obligation to commemorate him: 'I was born in the place, where his ashes rest.'³⁴

For many a beautiful view is formed mainly by landscape, which had been controlled by people: trees, farms, fields and meadows, harmonizing with the simmer of a flowing river, the valley covered with dense forests, farms all over,

²⁸ On another, more private occasion, Brun, referring to Denmark, used the term *Jydernes Pandekageland* (lit. the pancake country of the Jutes) qtd after *Fra det Norske...*, pp. 44; H. Bull, *Samlede Skrifter...*, p. 33. The poems written on the occasion of the arrival of Crown Prince Frederick in Norway in 1788 contained the indispensable components: hard ground, cold sky, snow, steep, naked mountains – this is the place where fate placed Norway, *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 26, 25 VI 1788, No 34 20 VIII 1788, No 48 3 XII 1788.

²⁹ Brun's poems: 'Norges herlighed', 'Den norske Vinter', 'Udsigt fra Ulrikken', 'En Sang fra det Høie', in the collection *Mindre Digte...*, pp. 271–273, 274–276, 298–300, 301–302.

³⁰ Ibidem, pp. 4, 7, 10, 124; A. Bull, *Land-Livet. En Sang, af...*, Kiøbenhavn 1787; H. Bull, *Samlede Skrifter...*, pp. 26–27, 33; A. H. Winsnes, *Det Norske...*, pp. 135, 208; J. Zetlitz, qtd after *Fra det Norske...*, p. 20.

³¹ J. N. Brun, *Mindre Digte...*, pp. 78, 71; C. Friman, *Poetiske Samlinger*, vol. III, p. 61; *Fra det Norske...*, p. 55.

³² I. Sagmo, op. cit., p. 186; J. N. Brun, letter to J. Zetlitz, qtd after E. Steen, op. cit., p. 248.

³³ J. N. Brun, *Mindre Digte...*, p. 300.

³⁴ J. N. Brun, [Dedication for Hereditary Prince], *Einar Tambeskjelver...*, p. 27.

a church with a steeple, animals grazing – all of this was picturesque and deserved the best brush.³⁵

In the descriptions of the Norwegian landscape, realistic elements also appeared. There were mentions about unpleasant and joyless places or even frightening, wild and threatening. The authors were writing about hanging rocks, sharp rock formations, rapid waterfalls, which looked as if they wanted to swallow a person. Nature was mighty, the elements – threatening and wild animals were preying upon people. Natural environment in Norway is presented in this case as a scourge: high rocks, rocky avalanches, huge forests, deep valleys, rapid rivers, climate: either too cold or too hot, storms, snows – blizzards, drifts, and spring floods.³⁶ Such an approach served to demonstrate what kind of difficulties Norway was going through. Transportation and travel were inconvenient and dangerous; in the descriptions there were avalanches and the charms of sleeping in the open air: the surface's hard, it's cold, there are blizzards all around, terrifying precipices, dangerous waters and strong winds.³⁷ Another consequence was scarce fertile soil. We observe also a skeptical approach to the 'fresh air' theory – Engelbret M. R. Mandt (1722–1781) wrote that in Norway most people died before 50 and the air in Denmark was, in his opinion, equally good.³⁸

However, such a realistic approach usually had its continuation, some 'but' by which the good side was shown (for example, the mountains are dangerous and you cannot cultivate land there but there are valuable minerals there which provide the country with security – such a train of thought had already been represented by Absalon Beyer and in the 18th century – Erik Pontoppidan) or something quite different.³⁹ Mandt for example, showing the Norwegian nature in almost apocalyptic way, stated that the forests are rich and one can earn on them, the mountains give protection, and the text ends with a lyrical description of the beauty of the civilized home country.⁴⁰ Also Schøning was thinking

³⁵ J. N. Wilse, *Reise...*, pp. 24, 25, 28, 32, 33, 56, 65, 80; H. J. Wille, *Beskrivelse over Sillejord*, www.da2.uib.no (12.12.2006).

³⁶ J. N. Wilse, *Reise...*, p. 27; J. Rein, *Samlede Digte*, vol. I, pp. 4–9; H. Strøm, *Tilskueren...*, p. 227.

³⁷ E. M. R. Mandt, *Beskrivelse...*, pp. 50–55, 61–62, 65–66, 68, 70, 75, 77, 79.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 118–119.

³⁹ H. Strøm, *Tilskueren...*, p. 227; [F. N.], *Velmeent Opmuntring...*, p. 79, p. 99; D. Schjøth, *op. cit.*, pp. 319, 320–322; 'Om Skaden af Udenlandske Fabrique Vahres Indførsel i Norge' [anonymous] in *Danmarks og Norges Oeconomiske Magazin...*, vol. V, København 1759, p. 159; G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. I, p. 80; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddele*, No 14 14 IV 1764.

⁴⁰ E. M. R. Mandt, *op. cit.*, pp. 119–121.

in a similar way. He was the historian whose writing opened eyes of the whole generation to the natural riches and beauty of Norway but he himself represented a rather down-to-earth attitude. He stated that what is good in nature is that what can be used by man. In his eyes the mountains were not valuable and he rather emphasized the nuisances of the local geography: infertile soil, cold, rain, winds and wild animals. The Dovre mountains seemed to him high and steep, with strong winds and high snow drifts around. But he also sought compensation noticing fertile pastures in between the mountains, writing about rivers and lakes rich in fish with clean air and healthy water. Although the coasts were rocky and discouraging, he wrote, the mainland had beautiful forests and meadows. Schøning mentioned also that the mountains protected the Norwegians against enemies and freezing winds from the North.⁴¹ The poets on the other hand tried to bolster the Norwegian landscape demonstrating that ‘also Apollo lives among the rocks’ i.e. that also in Norwegian circumstances great art may be born.⁴²

People

The description of the Norwegian national character was first and foremost general, as it referred to the whole nation. This causes a lot of consequences. As we will see, the description was highly conventional, strongly mythologized, emotional and often served a didactic function. We can talk on this occasion about a new program being formulated, which in the future would become a part of the national project. The description of peasant character, which will be discussed below, may have a double form and depends on the type of writing. In poetry, a mythical and emotional image dominates, while topographical works more often offer an ethnographic, realistic report on typical behaviors.

The presentation of national character served various functions. Ivar Sagmo, analyzing patriotic poetry of the last decades of the 18th century, came to a conclusion that the description of the Norwegian national character had connections with the criticism of the civilization characteristic for the period. This was a turn towards what was “natural” i.e. close to nature. Criticism of civilization, being developed in bourgeois intellectual circles, was directed at the unnatural, idle and hypocritical aristocratic lifestyle and mentality. But in Norway the Western juxtaposition between ‘palace and cottage’ could not be used. There-

⁴¹ G. Schøning, *Norges Riiges...*, vol. I, pp. 26, 79, 80–81; idem: *Reise...*, vol. I, pp. 2, 80.

⁴² I. Sagmo, *op. cit.*, pp. 188–189.

fore, all that was ‘unnatural’ was situated across the border (e.g. in Copenhagen, a big city). ‘As a result, character which was designed in connection to European social contradictions became the Norwegian national character.’ The author put forward the analogy with Germans where the role of the ‘unnatural’ aristocratic style was played by the French influences.⁴³

The most typical among the functions that could be played by the description of national character was the compensatory-therapeutic function, if one could call it like this. The admiration of oneself is a way of boosting one’s confidence and a kind of magical thinking about the reality, which does not come up to expectations. Accepting such an image suited the disappointment of the Norwegians with the situation of the country and their own capabilities, which was common and visible in the sources. In the early modern period, since 1536, the Norwegians had many reasons for their discontent and linked it with the Danish policy. In the times of modernizing the Danish-Norwegian country after 1660 the discontent grew bigger because the sense of discrimination started to accompany it. Praising one’s own virtues could at this moment have different functions. Firstly, this was consolation and compensation (therapeutic function). And secondly, more importantly, the idealization of one’s own nation could serve as a justification of one’s discontent and accentuating the harm as well.



Three features of the nation most often listed by writers are: the love of one’s country (not always precisely defined), loyalty to the throne and valor (bravery, fearlessness). All of them are connected because they are tightly linked with behaviors associated with fulfilling the patriotic duties. But all three together demonstrated most effectively what harm was done by the Danish to Norwegians. They were supposed to act like remorse and Norwegians were saying (sometimes even literally): look, we are the most loyal supporters of the throne, we sacrifice our lives for the country and the Danish government repays us in such a way! Discontent needs not only reasoned arguments but also moral support. This is where the deep belief of many Norwegians that their loyalty for the country, their readiness to sacrifice their life for the country are much greater than in other nations. It was expressed in many different ways such as valuating

⁴³ Ibidem, pp. 192–194.

the countrymen and interpreting their activity as patriotic, declaring one's own patriotism and explaining one's own actions in such a way; finally expressing general views on the patriotism of the whole nation.

Generally patriotism was defined, according to the spirit of Enlightenment, in utilitarian and practical terms. Its core was fulfilling one's duties and doing many things useful for the country. Andreas Bull cited in this context the English term "the public spirit", by which he translated the Norwegian phrase *patriotiske Aand* (literally: the spirit of patriotism).⁴⁴

Constructing a furnace for brick baking, taking care of the state of the roads, setting up a brass manufactory and other plants, many initiatives such as setting up literacy and economic societies, issuing magazines popularizing knowledge and (sic!) even consuming Norwegian salt instead of the imported one was associated with patriotism and was supposed to be evidence for patriotic duty. Such thinking agreed with the notion of mercantilism where it was stated that buying locally is a demonstration of patriotism. The establishment of the Academic Society or botanical garden were similarly treated.⁴⁵ How common was thinking in these terms is attested by the phrase from the 1788 reward application for Catharina Pedersdatter Lindholm, the wife of a shoemaker from Trondheim, to the Academic Society. The author wrote about the fact that she started weaving courses for women inspired by patriotic sentiments (*af Patriotismo*).⁴⁶

The authors of academic works endowed their writing with a similar character. They aimed at popularizing the home country or helping it develop and grow. Regardless of the area, the writing was supposed to prove the love for the country. The motives behind establishing the first Norwegian newspaper *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler* in 1763 are also explained in a similar way.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ [E. Hammer], op. cit., pp. 107–108; P. Thorstensson, op. cit., p. 310; A. Bull, *Oeconomiske...*, p. 84.

⁴⁵ H. J. Wille, 'Utrykte'..., pp. 163–64, similarly O. Holmboe, 'Nogle Poster...', p. 170; A. Bull, *Oeconomiske...*, pp. 45–46, 79; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 1, 7 I 1784; Ø. Davidsen, op. cit., pp. 14, 17, 18, 60, 82; C. M. Olrik, op. cit., pp. 208–09, J. E. Gunnerus, 'Første Tale...', pp. 3–4, 21–22; J. E. Gunnerus to O. Thott from 17 September 1763, in O. Dahl, *Biskop Gunnerus's...*, p. 47.

⁴⁶ M. Aase, 'Kvinnernes premiesøknader'..., p. 88.

⁴⁷ E. M. R. Mandt, op. cit., p. 47; H. Meyer, 'Samlinger...', pp. 253–54; G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. I, pp. VII–X; Gunnerus tried to instill others with his fascination with nature: Christopher Hammer in the 1770s published a synthesis dedicated to the Norwegian nature (*Forsøg til en Norsk Natur-Historie*). The remarks on the work *Flora Danica* by the Danish botanist Christian Oeder on some Norwegian plants were prepared by Peter Abilgaard, otherwise exchanging many letters with the bishop. It is not impossible that during his

Jacob Nicolai Wilse, in his text from 1779, emphasized that he decided to have his book published in Christiania and not in Copenhagen for patriotic reasons, although it was more expensive and took more time, adding also that for patriotic reasons he had the engravings printed in Copenhagen and not in Hamburg or Berlin.⁴⁸ The author – a Dane by birth but also a Norwegian patriot, in this way emphasized that he had two mother countries.

Patriotism became an indispensable part of the virtue catalogue. It was emphasized in eulogies of famous figures such as Gunnerus or Schøning; it appeared in obituaries and reviews, when the authors were praised for patriotism: ‘Glory to the Norwegian who writes so splendidly; Norwegian hearts thank him!’ – signed ‘many Norwegian patriots.’⁴⁹ Much patriotic phraseology appeared in the *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler* e.g. signing the letters to the editor, regardless of their subject, ‘patriot’ or ‘Norwegian patriot’, calling patriots to action, publishing short poems containing for example New Year’s wishes for Norway, praise in the form: ‘the pride of our Norway.’⁵⁰

The authors on many occasions and in many forms expressed their deep belief that the Norwegian nation is characterized by extraordinary patriotism.

numerous, months-long visitations, Gunnerus inspired many vicars to write topographical works. (J. R. Hagland, *Biskop...*; S. Supphellen, *Den historisk-topografiske litteraturen i Noreg...*, p. 206; H. Strøm, *Physiske og oeconomiske...*, vol. I, from the unpaginated preface). When Gerhard Schøning published his description of the Trondheim cathedral (1762), he justified his work by the willingness to show the world how magnificent and varied the cathedral was in the time of its prime (contrary to its title, Schøning’s description referred not to the contemporary cathedral, or to be precise to its ruins, but to its historical state from the Middle Ages). The author emphasized at the same time (not entirely consistently) that he wrote his book for ‘my compatriots, inhabitants of this city’. What is interesting, the author did not include a dedication to the king in his work, which was almost obligatory in these times – this strengthens the sense that the work was directed first and foremost to his compatriots (G. Schøning, *Beskrivelse...*, unpaginated preface.; Ø. Ekroll, op. cit., pp. XXVIII–XXIX); In the first issue of the newspaper *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler* the editor included a short poem in which it was announced that the paper intends to make the world realize the existence of the Norwegian people, who have their own mind, which most probably was supposed to mean that there are Norwegians interested in the press and reading. Because, contrary to expectations, the author of the poem wrote, Norwegians are not only interested in war, they can write. (*Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 1, 25 May 1763).

⁴⁸ S. Supphellen, *Den historisk-topografiske litteraturen i Noreg...*, p. 206.

⁴⁹ *Samling av Mindetaler...*, pp. 56, 220, 227–228; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 20, 15 May 1771; O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, p. 295

⁵⁰ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 20, 17 V 1769, 27 X 1779, No 19 7 V 1766, No 13 27 III 1765, No 1, 5 I 1774, No 2, 8 I 1777, No 1 7 I 1778, No 13, 8 III 1780, No 12, 24 III 1784.

They wrote about the sacrifices (also financial), about resignation from their own particular interest, about the common readiness to serve one's country also in the form of fighting in its defense.⁵¹

The conviction of one's patriotism was bolstered by, very well received, opinions of foreigners. In the 1760s the letter of bishop Bartholomæus Deichman⁵² to Frederick IV became widely known. The bishop praised Norwegians for their 'patriotic enthusiasm... bigger than in other nations.'⁵³ The letter was published in *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel* in 1767 and the editorial board added that they were printing it on the request of patriots. From the Ehrencron-Müller's bibliography it seems that bishop Deichmann's 1724 letter was reprinted in Norway numerous times in the 18th century.⁵⁴

The great Norwegian patriotism was to be accompanied by valor, desire of war glory and furious courage on the battlefield. In occasional poems, journalistic writing, poetry, academic works (such as topographical description) but also in official statements to the king there are numerous utterances on this topic.⁵⁵ It was almost always accompanied by the claim that this virtue always

⁵¹ Gunnerus believed that the great love of Norwegians for their country will cause that they will finance their university themselves, J. E. Gunnerus, 'Vorschlag...', p. 218; O. G. Meyer presented a similar view in his leaflet, saying that the Norwegians will support this initiative with their bequests, donations and wills, O. G. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 34, 36; the bishop wrote: 'There is not lack of patriotic thinking in Norway, as well as willingness, enthusiasm and readiness to do something useful and valuable even at one's own cost.' (J. E. Gunnerus, 'Første Tale...', p. 21; similarly: P. Thorstensson, op. cit., p. 330; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 31, 15 VIII 1767, No 35 2 IX 1767; J. N. Brun, *Til Nordmænd...*, p. 6, O. G. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 5, 18; C. Deichmann, op. cit., p. 23; J. Wulfsberg, op. cit., pp. 185–186; A. Bull, *Oeconomiske...*, p. 84; J. Rein, *Samlede Digte...*, vol. I, p. 108; 'Quene-Fluget i Nordland' [anonymous], *Morgenposten*, vol. II, Kjøbenhavn 1790, pp. 726–727; In the poem by Andreas Bull *Dovrefjeld* there is an image of a Norwegian born in freedom, ready to sacrifice all for his country, loving his monarch; maybe 'the size of the people diminished in this country of giants, but the reason increased' (A. Bull, *Dovrefjeld...*, p. 12).

⁵² Bartholomæus Deichmann, b. 1671 d. 1731, a Danish-Norwegian clergyman, bishop of Christiania 1713–1730.

⁵³ Qtd after K. Lunden, *Nasjon eller union?...*, p. 148.

⁵⁴ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 31, 15 VIII 1767 – No 35 2 IX 1767.

⁵⁵ [E. Hammer], op. cit., p. 9; J. N. Brun, *Mindre Digte...*, pp. 11, 84, 15, 216, 279–281; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 29, 16 VII 1788, No 51, 17 XII 1788; H. Arentz, *Grund-Tegning...*, p. 29; J. N. Brun, *Til Nordmænd...*, p. 6; H. Strøm, *Physiske og oeconomiske...*, vol. I, p. 501, O. G. Meyer, op. cit., p. 5; C. Fasting, 'En Drikkeviser' in *Provinzialblade...*, pp. 190–191; H. Bull, *Samlede Skrifter...*, p. 34; 'Christiania og Drammens...'; in *Forhandling om Oprettelse...*, p. 463.

comes together with the constant love for the king, absolute loyalty and faithfulness, which are as unwavering as ‘the Norwegian rocks’.⁵⁶

According to the views of their contemporaries, patriotic Norwegians could not find their place outside the borders of their country. They meant all the lands laying beyond Norway, Denmark included. Foreign countries, generally speaking, were harmful to them. It had already been mentioned about the deep conviction expressed on numerous occasions that a stay in Copenhagen was downright dangerous to Norwegians’ health and life (bishop Gunnerus stated that the Copenhagen air did not do good to Norwegian students writing that ‘the most, at least of those from Trondheim, finish their lives here’).⁵⁷ That these statements were not just grumbles of intellectuals can be attested by the authentic stories of Norwegian soldiers, continually complaining about the Danish bread (heavy, dark, rye bread made on sourdough), which was supposed to make them ill and they were demanding the Norwegian bread i.e. *Flatbrød*.⁵⁸

As it had been already mentioned, the stay in Copenhagen was harmful also because it endangered the national character as youth was forgetting about home and its simplicity. Only in the home country, it was claimed, one could live according to the Norwegian national character i.e. the one which does no harm; Norwegians only like their home landscape and climate. Brun wrote in his drama *Einar Tambeskjelver*: ‘the Norwegian suffers under the foreign sky and then dies’. Andreas Bull put it in poetical terms, painting the image of the people feeding on local food, dressing in local, simple clothes and not looking for the glitter of the city. Thanks to this, the Norwegian remains healthy – he

⁵⁶ H. Arentz, *Grund-Tegning...*, p. 29; J. N. Brun, *Mindre Digte...*, pp. 11, 15, 18, 290; M. S. Buchholm, op. cit., pp. 235–236; J. N. Brun, *Til Nordmænd...*, p. 32; [E. Hammer], op. cit., p. 9; H. Strøm, *Physiske og oeconomicke...*, vol. I; idem, *Tilskueren...*, vol. I, p. 64; A. Bull, *Dovrefjeld...*, p. 10.

⁵⁷ O. Dahl, *Biskop J. E. Gunnerus...*, p. 137; Hagerup stated that both the climate and air in Copenhagen were terrible and many Norwegians died because of this; all suffer because of homesickness. Nothing reminds them of their beloved country; they are in a foreign environment, far away from their family and friends [C. F. Hagerup], ‘Brev fra en Ven i Trondheim til sin Ven i Kiøbenhavn’, *Minerva*, vol. XIV, Kiøbenhavn 1788, pp. 314, 333–334.

⁵⁸ G. Norrse, ‘Fra de norske troppers ophold i København 1762–63’, *Historiske Meddelelser om København*, series 4, vol. VI, København 1959–60, pp. 320–325; J. W. Klüver, ‘Et Øi-ensidners Beskrivelse over den svenske Armees Tog, under General-Lieutenant Armfelts commando, som indfaldt ved Steene Skandse udi Tronheims Stift, den 12de September 1718’, *Ny Minerva for April 1808*, Kiøbenhavn 1808, p. 67; J. N. Wilse, *Physisk, oeconomicke...*, p. 299.

will not exchange his mountains for a work of art.⁵⁹ Such an uncompromising praise of the local environment and its plainness very well harmonized with the commonly criticized idolizing of the foreign countries, mindless copying of foreign fashions and spoiling the language.⁶⁰ The model and carrier of the mocked archetypes was Holberg, and his figure of a French-influenced fashion victim *Jean de France* i.e. 'John French' functioned for a long time as a symbol of such behavior.

The collection of Norwegian virtues is complemented by intellectual talents, ability to learn (often emphasized in the texts connected with the university matter)⁶¹ as well as pride, sense of honor and dignity – emphasized as an important feature of the people (also peasant)⁶² and the love of freedom.⁶³ Hans Bull made freedom (of peasants) the biggest Norwegian treasure claiming that not Kongsberg (i.e. the silver deposits) but freedom make it rich.⁶⁴



Norwegians, as a community endowed with certain features, contained a certain subset – the peasants. The role of this group is so important that, as we have already seen, in some cases the nation was identified with the peasantry. At first sight it may seem that such identification resulted strictly from the demographic reasons – simply, in Norway, the significance of peasants in the society and economy, as entrepreneurs and owners was too big to ignore them in any considerations about the inhabitants of the country. The social reality was such that anyone who took up reflection on the reality or history of Norway, had

⁵⁹ J. B. Brun, *Til Nordmænd...*, pp. 3, 19; A. Bull, *Dovrefjeld...*, pp. 15–16; C. F. Hagerup wrote that in Norway for the students one could organize voluntary, free entertainment in the open air: hunting, sleigh rides, concerts. 'Such pleasures would be ennobled by the innocence, freedom and closeness which all who stay in Norway consider typical for our national lifestyle' (C. F. Hagerup, op. cit., p. 340).

⁶⁰ C. Fasting, *Provinzialbladet...*, pp. 215–219; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 12, 10 VIII 1763, No 13, 17 VIII 1763, No 14 24 VIII 1763.

⁶¹ J. E. Gunnerus, *Vorslag...*, p. 453; P. Thorstensson, op. cit., p. 330; J. N. Wilse, 'Karakter af den Norske Nation, med mere', *Morgen-Posten...*, vol. I, København 1790, p. 14.

⁶² J. N. Wilse, *Reiser...*, p. 35, idem, *Physisk, oeconomisk...*, p. 354.

⁶³ H. Strøm, *Tilskueren...*, p. 353; J. N. Brun, [introduction to *Zarine*], qtd after O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, p. 288; O. G. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 12–13; J. N. Brun, *Mindre Digte...*, p. 290; J. Rein, *Samlede Digte...*, vol. I, p. 108; J. N. Wilse, *Reiser...*, p. 118; C. Deichmann, op. cit., p. 23; A. Bull, *Dovrefjeld...*, p. 5.

⁶⁴ H. Bull, *Samlede Skrifter...*, pp. 37, 38.

to refer to this group. Let us remember that historical traditions strengthened these tendencies. The Norwegian peasantry was in the Middle Age the basis of royal power and peasants for a long time remained a partner in the political game. In the modern era, the remains of this position was self-government and their participation in political life, legal consciousness and finally a clear sense of identity, which referred not only to the region but to the whole country and its historical and legal identity. Peasants were present in the writing of the 16th and 17th centuries but they were portrayed realistically and not all authors referred to them enthusiastically.

This state was overlapping with the 18th century cultural tendencies in Europe. The interest in nature, exoticisms, searching for primality and authenticity was, generally speaking, another symptom of getting tired with the reality inherited from the old and 'dark' ages. Physiocracy directed attention towards peasants for economic reasons and the democratic elements in the reflection upon the country – for political reason. The integration of the society on the new basis, which was a part of modernization processes provide more reasons to occupy oneself with the peasant environment. New literary fashions were being born and the poems of Albrecht Haller about the Swiss Alpine peasants gained many enthusiasts.

In the case of Norway, the interest in peasants played a big role in the process of the elites' assimilation. On the one hand, in contrast to town inhabitants, Norwegian peasants were clearly different from urban dwellers of other nations as they had their own customs, appearance and language. The bourgeoisie was cosmopolitan, as Pontoppidan stated, similar to the one in Denmark or Germany. The city inhabitants could not have been the proof of Norway separateness. And describing and emphasizing this separateness was a repeating motif in the writing of the Norwegian elites.

The second motive was searching for additional sources of origin. The assimilation of the elites originated mostly in Denmark was not only about the link with the place of birth and education. It had to gain cultural foundation in the form of identification with the country's past. It had to be based on the connection with the group which – in contrast to the elites – was indigenous (both in time and place), consisted of those 'born here' and in this way, by definition, was supposed to represent a 'truer' identity. The rustification of Norway was under way, as Nina Witoszek wrote. The 'rural Norway' (*bygdenorge*) was becoming the quintessence of being Norwegian. The author questions the idea that the culture and peasant life were alien to the elites and the 'dalliance' of the

national elites with the country was “a fantasy” on the theme of peasants.⁶⁵ A similar view is represented by Ole Feldbæk: ‘when [the representatives of the elites] speak about the Norwegian peasant, they do not present an idyllic view that comes from Rousseau. Unlike the Danish elites who speak about the serfs, they speak about people who they know and respect.’⁶⁶

The elites did not hesitate to emphasize an important role of the village population in the society. As we have seen, for many members of the elites, peasants were the nation. Almost all writers considered them a subject worth of study. Within the topographical writing, ambitious ethnographic interests developed and many elements of folk culture, also from daily life, were associated by the writers with their identity. Peasants, their life, customs, field works became the subjects of poetry and language – the material. Let us mention the works by Hans and Andreas Bull, Edvard Storm or Jens Zetlitz. However, if peasants were to become the ‘source’ of various components of identity, if they were to become the source of national inspiration their value had to be increased. One method was to use various myth-creating techniques such as idealization of national character, the view that among Norwegian peasantry there are the descendants of Norwegian nobility (or even the royal families) or the claim that this group retained a special bond with the past. As they were the descendants of giants, they had their features, preserved the old customs and language. Another method concerned pointing out different characteristics or features of Norwegian peasants (e.g. personal freedom) which made them into an attractive partner of this ‘cultural exchange’. Not everything, however, can be successfully qualified as myth since for example the permanence of some customs and beliefs – discussed in the first part of this work – was a consistent part of the peasant culture.



The image of *bonde* in the 18th century writing of the Norwegian elites was far from unambiguous.⁶⁷ The Enlightenment rationalism and scientific ambitions imposed realistic image and striving to an honest description of reality.

⁶⁵ N. Witoszek, op. cit., pp. 60–62.

⁶⁶ O. Feldbæk, ‘«For Norge...», p. 38.

⁶⁷ O. Christensen, in my opinion is not entirely correct saying that in the topographical descriptions ‘idealized nature was furnished with ideal people, the odal peasant, the jewel that adorned Norway’ (op. cit., p. 51) This opinion is more suited to the poetry of this period.

Subconsciously, however, there was a need to find everything that made the Norwegian peasant a more dignified, a more equal and interesting member of the society. In this way the image of a Norwegian farmer as the archetype of a Norwegian was born. It validated the activities of the elites, whose part in the 19th century attempted to build the 'new', 'national' Norwegian culture based on peasantry. It was not, however, a literary or other creation but a specific conglomerate: the nationalistic program created by the elites in the 19th century and which they wanted to direct at the lower social classes could not be separated from the reality and had to be accepted by these strata as their own.

Topographical descriptions, in their majority constructed in a similar way, devoted a lot of place to peasants. Pontoppidan's work (published in 1752–53), which in an undisputed way became a model for the writers of the century, was by no means pioneering. Three works are earlier, unpublished during the life of their authors and rarely mentioned by historians: in 1743 two descriptions by Ivar Wiel and Herman Ruge were written, the work by Bendix Ch. de Fine is from 1745 (when it was finished). Although later, the classical more complete and comprehensive works by Hans Strøm (1760s), Jacob Nicolai Wilse (1779), Hans Jacob Wille and Hans Arentz (1780s), clearly referred to Pontoppidan, one cannot say that the interest in the peasants was instilled in the Norwegian elites by the Danish bishop.

The realistic descriptions led to a characteristic of peasantry in which both the vices as well as virtues were listed. Authors were interested in the real life, work and play, the physical state and customs, trying to describe all honestly and objectively. They based their views on rich ethnographic material, partly mentioned in the chapter discussing the peasants' identity.

The information about peasants' hard work, poverty, hunger (in this context the motif of *barkebrød* appeared) was included. Peasants were described as conservative and slow to accept novelties, full of superstitions and susceptible to foreign fashions. To tell the truth, they were not breaking God's and human laws but they were prone to addictions, among which the most common was drinking. In the past they rebelled against the vicars. They were greedy, quarrelsome, unforgiving and insensitive to the beauty of nature. They lived in primitive conditions although they stood out in terms of physical strength (also women).

According to the authors, they also had virtues. They included talents for handicraft (primarily woodcarving), agility and the capability to perform sometimes incredible tasks. Many of the peasants were industrious, talented,

and open to the modern ways farmers, rewarded by the Trondheim Society. They were proud, honorable and solidary. They were literate. In addition, they were healthy and thanks to fresh air – long-living. Their cardinal virtue was attachment to the throne and loyalty to the monarch. They often astounded others with their reason, wit and acumen. Their situation despite poverty was supposedly better than that of peasants in other countries with serfdom and labour service. They had a lot of common sense and lived by the rule: ‘Adhere to the old tradition, go with the majority and stand by your rights.’⁶⁸

Sometimes in these descriptions there appeared a distance characteristic for educated people: ‘... no-one is happier than a healthy, relatively well-to-do, and enlightened enough to satisfy the Norwegian peasant, at least he enjoys – according to [Alexander] Pope – three sources of happiness: health, clean conscience, and satisfying one’s needs. However, I am annoyed a little by one thing: a cow also draws its satisfaction from the same sources when it lies on the ground and ruminates...’ – wrote Wilse.⁶⁹

In his description of Søndfjord (1785), Arentz disputed the stereotypes. Referring to the common opinion about the peasant conservatism, he noticed that

⁶⁸ Hammer, despite his generally uncritical approach to his countrymen, accused the peasants of being superstitious, holding on to old habits, inclined to debauchery, addictions and vagrancy. In his opinion, the peasants lived wastefully, often beyond their means and drank excessively. However, besides this, they had also virtues: bravery, courage, loyalty and love for the monarch as well as talent for craftwork ([E. Hammer], op. cit., pp. 9, 12, 50, 54–55, 55, 56, 57); Mandt expressed his sympathy for the hard-working people and pointed out their endurance in the cold: even during severe frost they go around lightly dressed and they wait out the blizzards being dug in in the snow (E. M. R., Mandt, op. cit., pp. 62, 81); Brun noticed that the Norwegian people (*Almue*) are serious and do not accept new habits willingly, especially when it concerns God and king, they are very stubborn (J. N. Brun, ‘Vore gamle Kirke-skikke forsvarede mod Hr. Confessionarius og Doctor Bastholm’ in *Norsk Tro og Tanke...*, p. 422); Wilse stated that peasants have great woodwork talents; like the Swiss mountain people they can carve in wood with a simple knife (N. J. Wilse, ‘Karakter...’, p. 14.; similarly B. de Fine, op. cit. pp. 113, 116, 117, 118, 120–22, 132, 140, 139, 210, 143); the author of an essay published in *Danmarks og Norges Oeconomiske Magazin* (pub. 1760) wrote about the love of excessive drinking, although he admitted that their habits are improving (D. Schiøth, ‘Om Val af...’, p. 228; and: J. E. Gunnerus, ‘Første Tale...’, p. 21; H. Strøm, *Physiske og oeconomiske...*, vol. I, pp. 501–502, 560–570, vol. II 12–13; N. C. Lassen, op. cit., pp. 11–12, 14, 21, 26–28, 31, 33, 34, 35, 40, 43; H. J. Wilse, *Physiske, oeconomiske...*, pp. 334, 335–337, 340, 346; H. J. Wille, *Beskrivelse over Sillejord...*, pp. 175, 212, 214, 215, 220, 224–25, 229, 231, 232, 233, 234, 274, 282; 26–28, 61–64, 282; idem, ‘Utrykte...’, pp. 175, 180; H. Arentz, *Søndfjord Beskrivelse...*, bull. 29, pp. 70–71, bull. 33, pp. 7–9, 16–17, 21, 22–23, 25–26, 27, 30, 31, 35, 54–55, 63).

⁶⁹ J. N. Wilse, *Reiser...*, pp. 28, 33, 117, 96.

peasants often had a rational and economic reasons to reject some novelty. He commented on drinking alcohol that one needs to remember that the peasant living conditions, their upbringing and circumstances do not give them too many opportunities to hide this addiction and its shameful consequences as in the case of higher social classes. The accusation that peasants like social life too much he countered with a question: why should we deny peasants something that is typical in other social classes? And besides, he noticed that the custom of organizing lavish wedding receptions may be evidence of wastefulness but the gifts from wedding guests make into the assets of the married couple – they are more generous if the party is really extravagant.⁷⁰



Apart from the realistic description there was a tendency to create myths. Poets were very good at that but the point of origin was sometimes the realistic description and concrete, specific information. All writers pointed out, similar to Pontoppidan and Holberg, the beneficial influence of personal freedom, lack of serfdom and labour service and the odal law which guaranteed peasants the ownership of the land, on their situation and character. The Norwegian peasants were often compared to the Danish ones or to peasants from different other countries (Wilse wrote that they were completely different kind of people than Russian peasants). For many authors (although not for all) the peasant freedom was based on the odal law, which is ‘the invaluable national treasure’. The peasant in Norway was to be a free individual.⁷¹

A myth started to be formed at the moment when the authors decided that freedom shaped the peasant personality. Thanks to this the peasantry was supposed to be Norway’s biggest treasure. They were like ancient Romans, who bravely held both the helm of the government and the plough – they were peas-

⁷⁰ H. Arentz, *Søndfford Beskrivelse...*, bull. 29, pp. 70–71, bull. 33, pp. 7–9, 16–17, 21, 22–23, 25–26, 27, 30, 31, 35, 54–55, 63.

⁷¹ H. Strøm, *Det menneskeliv i kort Begreb*, qtd after H. Christensen, op. cit., part 1, p. 221; H. Strøm, *Physiske og oeconomicke...*, vol. I, p. 570; idem, ‘Upartisk Betænkning over den i Minerva for Julii Maaned 1788 indtrykkede Skrift om Bygselvæsenet i Norge’, *Minerva*”, vol. XV, 1789, pp. 130–131, p. 146; idem, *Tilskueren...*, p. 367; Ch. Pram, ‘Noget om...’, pp. 85–86; 88; N. J. Wilse, *Physisk, oeconomicke...*, p. 279, idem, ‘Karakter...’, p. 11; J. N. Brun, ‘Vore gamle Kirke-Skikke...’, p. 422; H. J. Wille, *Beskrivelse over Siljejord...*, pp. 213, 231; C. M. Leganger, op. cit., pp. 176–177; PET, op. cit., p. 250; J. Wulfsberg, op. cit., p. 157–158; A. Bull, *Lands-Livet...*, p. 38.

ants, soldiers and statesmen. Thanks to freedom and ownership, the peasants were to be free from fear, slave mentality, proud, and dignified so they could look anybody straight into the eye. Such spirit was supposed to be reflected in their appearance. Jonas Rein turned to the prince Frederick using poetic language: 'for the Norwegian peasant the king is his father and in this way he addresses him; the peasant is proud, brave and loyal – prince, I am giving you my hand; shake it, king's son – this hand will support your throne.'⁷²

The remark noted down in the description that Norwegian peasants are used to the cold and snow, are more resistant and are able to adapt to these conditions, became the origin of numerous descriptions of practically supermen for whom it is nothing, as for the ancient Jutes in Schøning's writing, frost and snow are natural elements. Hans Bull mentioned 'a naked breast in the cold' and Andreas Bull in his poem devoted to the life in the country (*Lands-Livet*) portrayed the upcoming severe winter: a cold wind starts to blow from the North, the country is covered by snow but my compatriot is joyful and sprightly: 'The North gives birth to a true hero on whose breast ice melts.'⁷³

Finally, the descriptions of the primitive lifestyle, poor, plain food and meagre homes – one room houses with a fire in the middle, and simple clothes. The authors who knew Danish reality (for example Christen Pram) wrote that the local peasants would never accept the conditions in which Norwegian peasants live.⁷⁴ This description outraged Strøm, who wrote a polemic. Indeed there are poor regions, he wrote, but this does not concern the majority of the nation. Various 'primitive' foods are mostly little known local dishes, while most peasants eat completely normally; the kind of whey made of goat milk (*mys-selblande*) quoted as something 'disgusting' is a very healthy drink and most peasants drink beer and vodka as well.⁷⁵

Strøm, an Enlightened rationalist, completely did not understand that for Pram this description was a part of a myth of a Norwegian peasant as a man of nature, unspoiled by civilization and remaining still close to the mythical ances-

⁷² Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler, No 9 19 VII 1763; J. Wulfsberg, op. cit., pp. 144, 158; J. Rein, *Samlede Digte*, pp. 99, 100; Pram wrote that it is enough to cast a glance at the people gathered in the church to see that free peasants have the expression of 'a free and noble man' on their faces (*ædle fri Mands Stempel*). The author added good-naturedly that in truth he did not see that with his own eyes, but he was told about it... (C. Pram, 'Noget om...', pp. 85–86).

⁷³ H. Bull, *Samlede Skrifter...*, p. 34; A. Bull, *Lands-Livet...*, p. 31.

⁷⁴ N. J. Wilse, 'Karakter...', p. 11; C. Pram, 'Noget om...', pp. 79–80, 85, 89.

⁷⁵ H. Strøm, 'Upartisk...', pp. 147–148.

tors. The difficulties of the daily life were not anything negative because thanks to them peasants retained beauty, health and strength. This approach cannot be fully explained by the influences of Rousseau or pre-romantic tendencies. It was much older: in this way the peasant's food was also described by Wiel (1743): 'their meals are still very plain and simple and they have not changed in connection to old Norwegian thriftiness; it is known, however, that history demonstrated that the life-style of old Norwegian kings, especially *Næsse-konger* was not very sophisticated.'⁷⁶

The mythical and idealized image of a peasant contained such features as pride, courage, strength and beauty. Peasants were supposed to be loyal to kings and love their country. Their life was simple – they remained close to nature and ancestors at the same time (they were doubly loyal then). J. N. Brun in his poetry repeated numerous times presented an image of a peasant whose main features were faithfulness – let the Danish kings know (*Danner-Kongehuset*) that: 'Among the rocks live the heroes / Norwegians are loyal and strong.'⁷⁷

Further it was written that the peasant was proud and brave; he went with his rifle to kill a bear – he left the hunting for cowardly rabbits to the nobility. He remembered the heroism of his ancestors and wanted to emulate them: every Norwegian son was a warrior, not only the one with an emblem. The peasant fought for the country not for fame.⁷⁸

The mythical image can be summarized by an excerpt of a poem by Hans Bull: 'It is true that the people born among the rocks did not bend their backs willingly to little tyrants. Blood of heroes flows in the veins of Norwegians. Sooner the Norwegian will bear death than bondage and his loyalty appreciated by the kings is the pillar on which the security of the kingdom rests and the best protection of the throne.'⁷⁹ In this extract there is almost everything that was associated with the peasant myth: the factors determining the character, i.e. birth (indigenoussness), home geography, freedom from serfdom, ancestors' blood and his features: love of freedom, heroism and loyalty to the monarchy.

⁷⁶ Qtd after: A. Eriksen, *Topografenes verden...*, p. 151.

⁷⁷ J. N. Brun, *Mindre Digte...*, p. 4; H. Bull, *Samlede Skrifter*, p. 48; J. Vibe, qtd after *Fra det Norske...*, p. 26; In an anonymous letter from Christiansand, the author explains that the recent Lofthuus uprising resulted from blinding and manipulating the peasant by the leader; the peasants remain loyal to the king who is for them like God on Earth. ('Brev fra Christiansands Stift Af 21de April 1787' [anonymous], *Minerva*, series 2, vol. IV, Kjøbenhavn 1787, pp. 234, 256).

⁷⁸ J. N. Brun, *Den norske Vinter, Mindre Digte*, p. 275; H. Bull, *Samlede Skrifter...*, pp. 45–47; J. Rein, *Samlede Digte*, vol. I, pp. 18, 105, 107; A. Bull, *Dovre-fjeld...*, pp. 12–15.

⁷⁹ H. Bull, *Samlede Skrifter...*, p. 48

In the poetry there is also a place for an idyllic description of calm and happiness of a farmer's life. The poets emphasized the simplicity of a peasant life – he prepares his meals, sews his clothes, drinks spring water, which all give the Norwegian strength and health.⁸⁰



The conviction that peasants inherited their features from the ancestors was an important part of the mythical thinking about peasants. All the virtues of old Norwegians can be found there. In many excerpts there are remarks from which it can be concluded that the simplicity of peasant life was nothing else but a proof of cultivating the historical heritage of the ancestors. In this context a conviction was also important that these ancestors were giants from the sagas, old Norwegian kings or, finally, the nobility. It is worth noticing that such opinions appeared in various types of texts: poetry, topographical descriptions, finally, in historical works. They cannot be connected only to poetic fantasy or literary convention.

In poetry, these motifs were presented in a picturesque way. Peasants were a royal tribe whose name is different but the heart remained the same: they boast innate valor – which the ‘new Sinclair’ will meet. The facial features of the Norwegian peasant (*Du kæmpehoie Dalekarl*) proved a blood relation with the old kings.⁸¹

The scholars gave information that the people retained ‘the old nature of the nation as well as customs and lifestyle’ and foreign fashions and influences did not affect them. Peasants were supposed to be like *adlede Almuestand*, i.e. ennobled peasantry, which since very old times bore people with the most noble features of characters. They seem to have been related to the ancestors and to remind of the old *Næsse-konger*. A flame and heat, courage and valor, which made Norwegians in the old times the dreaded warriors in the entire Europe,

⁸⁰ J. N. Brun, the poem “Den norske Agerdyrkning”, *Mindre Digte...*, pp. 31–49; H. Bull, *Samlede Skrifter*, pp. 44–45; Andreas Bull, in his poem devoted to the life in the country (*Lands-Livet*) painted an idyllic image: the peasants are poor, work hard, eat plainly but healthy, disregard all city entertainment. They value true friendship; marriages are permanent. A happy man! Cultivates his land, loves his home (*Födested*), does not travel. Nature gave him peace of mind. A. Bull, *Lands-Livet...*, pp. 15, 33, 34, 35, 27.

⁸¹ In this place, the poet put a reference note which informed about the Kringen battle in 1612. H. Bull, *Samlede Skrifter...*, p. 34; Andreas Bull repeated this view, *Dovre-fjeld...*, p. 24; C. Friman, *Poetiske Samlinger*, part III, p. 74.

still burned in their breast.⁸² There was a connection between contemporary peasants and kings and the simplicity of lifestyle was to become an element of the Norwegian national character.⁸³

These opinions found their support in the empirical material for example, in the frequent mentions how old the peasant customs are and that they originate from the ancestors.⁸⁴

Already Holberg wrote that among Norwegian peasants there are families going back to nobility. Later writers, especially the authors of topographical descriptions, often repeated this opinion, often trying to come up with proofs. They listed families who stated that they had such a lineage, quoted the stories about the remembrances kept in houses such as armors, swords or documents.⁸⁵

There are also observations that demonstrate the ability to issue a more rational assessment. The process of nobility pauperization was mentioned. It was emphasized that the special status of peasants was connected to the fact that they owned land. This made a peasant (as Holberg wrote) like a 'little Norwegian squire' (*een liden Norsk Herremand*). Without questioning the connection of peasants with mythical giants, it is remarked that their strength diminished a little.⁸⁶ De Fine characterizing a group of wealthier peasants wrote that 'these are not the same peasants as in the times of Christian I [mid-15th century] – these had noble birth by father but lost their noble status as a result of marriage with a non-noble woman; these here are simple peasants, folk people, who inherited odel goods or amassed some property...'⁸⁷

The mythical image of a peasant – free, proud, noble and loyal, living close to nature and to the laudable heritage of Norway – fulfilled many different roles. It referred to many values prized by the European Enlightenment and later by

⁸² H. Strøm, *Physiske og oekonomiske...*, vol. II, p. 501; idem, *Tilskueren...*, vol. I, pp. 71, 77; this author noticed numerous similarities between his contemporaries and old Germans, to whom the ancestors were indeed related (p. 352); G. Schøning, *Reise...*, qtd after F. Bull, *Fra Holberg...*, p. 199; C. Pram, 'Noget om...', pp. 79–80, 85, 89.

⁸³ A. Eriksen, *Topografenes verden...*, p. 152.

⁸⁴ B. de Fine, op. cit., pp. 133, 210, 211.

⁸⁵ A. Eriksen, *Topografenes verden...*, pp. 81, 152.

⁸⁶ 'Although most local peasants come from these giants, who so easily teared each other apart to death, and dragged big stones, covering one another with them after death (that where their common names like Thor and Asbiørn and other that come from a bear have their origin), it seems that the strength of their bodies and spirit disappeared in contemporary peasants' (J. N. Wilse, *Physisk, oekonomisk...*, p. 333; J. N. Wilse, 'Karakter...', p. 23).

⁸⁷ B. Ch. de Fine, op. cit., p. 209.

pre-Romanticism, making Norwegian peasants a model for which Europe was supposed to admire Norway. Thanks to making the peasant worthy of praise and idealization, he could become a partner in the process of shaping the elites' identity. This process, which began with the changes of the state in 1660, culminated in the 19th century.

We know from other sources that the fascination with peasantry was common in the entire 19th century Europe. It may be supposed that the same factors played a role here. These were the Enlightenment ideals of the civil society, in which the activity of lower social classes, their ability to self-organize, played a key role. But also Romanticism sought for the spirit of the nation, its individuality and uniqueness, in the peasant social class (the closest, also idealized, close to nature, pre-industrial past.⁸⁸ It is, however, safe to assume that the 19th century fashions originated in the early modern changes of mentality.

History

The history of one's country as an identifying factor functioned in the form of a vision, usually very emotional and idealizing certain historical figures, events or ancestors in general. The didactic motif often came into play as it was believed that the greatness of the past and virtue of the fathers were supposed to become a model to follow for the contemporaries. In this way Norway was supposed to be reborn. Let us notice that a similar train of thought was present in the 16th century in Beyer's writing. A quite general mechanism worked here: in the face of present shortcomings, the past becomes a compensation and substitute. The biased medieval writing, consolidated by the Renaissance fascination with the national past became the source of truth and authority: it was accepted that the described greatness of the nation corresponded to the reality. The features and characteristics of the ancestors which enabled this greatness were sought after and they were presented as a program for the contemporaries. In this way a remedy for current problems was created. Such thinking, typical for the pre-scientific view of the past and a model of history as 'the life's teacher' is clearly visible in the writing of the main historian of the period in Norway Gerhard Schøning, but also in many historical allusions of other writers and poets. The didactic program had a historic as well as Enlightenment character as its aim was not only the re-birth of the nation but also to eradicate many

⁸⁸ H. Salmi, *Nineteenth-Century Europe. A Cultural History*, Polity Press 2008, p. 28.

vices, inconsistent with the Age of Reason. Another, no less significant, reason of the importance of history was the belief that ‘being ancient’, old, age give validation – if something existed in the old times it is more valid than something new. The opinions about the past could also refer to newer times, most often in connection to the wars waged with Sweden.

It had been remarked about the detailed notes concerning the ‘antiquities’. These objects were often interpreted as empirical proofs of the facts contained in sagas, so they suited very well the model of history as an *exemplum*. The could be connected to the glorious Norwegian history, as they provided evidence of the existence of old kings, heroes or meaningful events.

From the point of view of the elites, the history of Norway proved that Norway was like the ‘second Promised Land’ i.e. a place where such deeds were performed that attested to bravery and valor. The history is worth studying: firstly, because it is very useful as nowhere else, except the Greeks and the Romans, is there such a long list of past rulers, so many accounts of the ancient past, so many old songs. Secondly, the history of Norway could be as useful, interesting and enjoyable reading as anything else.⁸⁹



Obviously the fullest opinion about the national past was included in Schøning’s synthesis of Norwegian history. He created an image of the old Norway as a cradle of European civilization and its inhabitants as the ancestors of the continental nations. It was the Norwegian enthusiasm, belligerence and courage that pulled Europe out of Roman bondage.⁹⁰ The work introduced the notion of complete separateness of Norway and its independence from the other two Scandinavian countries.⁹¹ The history of Norway, however, despite all their extraordinariness and advantage, did not diverge from the European model: there was nobility here like in Germany.⁹² Describing the ‘typicality’ of

⁸⁹ [E. Hammer], op. cit., p. 9; [F. Nannestad], ‘Velmeent Opmuntring...’, p. 90; J. Rein, *Samlede Digte*, vol. II, p. 122; G. Schøning, *Norges Riiges...*, vol. I, p. 23, *Norges Riiges...*, vol. II, unpaginated preface.

⁹⁰ G. Schøning, *Norges Riiges...*, vol. I, unpaginated preface.

⁹¹ This was graphically emphasized by the author invoking the legend about Danaholm, a place where the borders of three kingdoms converged and the kings organized meetings there. They sat at the table in such a way that each of them sat on the territory of his kingdom, G. Schøning, *Norges Riiges...*, vol. II, pp. 308–309.

⁹² G. Schøning, *ibidem*, vol. III, p. 14.

Norway here has a lot of sense. In the past the argument that ‘Norway has no nobility’ was evidence of its inferiority, since it was supposed to indirectly prove that imposing Danish authority over Norway was legitimate. This was the view which Beyer disputed. Schøning intended to defend the good name of his country by emphasizing the uniqueness of its history, but when it was necessary he included it in a more universal model.

This historian emphasized that in the Middle Ages Norway became one of the mightiest and biggest countries in Europe, conquering the majority of Jutland, which, in his opinion, explains why foreign historians were so often mistaken ascribing deeds of the Norwegians (who had plenty of lands there) to the Danes.⁹³ On many occasions, Schøning emphasized that in the old times Norway was more populous, wealthier and there were more trade settlements than today. He often pointed out that a farm, which then belonged to nobility, now ‘similarly as in other countries was transformed into a peasant’s home.’⁹⁴

Also in other authors’ texts there were scattered but frequent remarks on the oldest history of Norway. It is worth noticing that the role of law was emphasized, which in the old times unified Norwegians into one nation. The rules developing the country were praised; it was highlighted that Norwegians created law earlier than other nations. Their law was ordered earlier and complex procedures were created. This was another proof that one could not speak of the Norwegians as barbarians.⁹⁵ These views may have been a reminiscence of the times when one’s own law was the most frequently used identifying element. On the other hand, however, they showed a tendency characteristic for the age of Enlightenment to emphasize the civilized character of the ancestors. This clearly outweighed the fascination with wilderness

⁹³ In the wake of Torfæus, he stated that, for example, Rollo (the founding father of Normandy) was a Norwegian. G. Schøning, *ibidem*, vol. II, pp. 97, 306, 397, 419, vol. I, pp. 68, 122.

⁹⁴ G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. I, pp. 22, 27, 37, 65, 106, 128, 132, On the manor in Østraat, p. 304, vol. II, pp. 9, 134, 84.

⁹⁵ One of the anonymous authors wrote that this happened as a result of amalgamation of Bagler and Birkebeiner, i.e. two factions in the times of Norwegian civil wars on the turn of the 12th and 13th century, into one nation ruled by the law of the same spirit (*Der Bagler og Birkebeine blev forenede til et Folk, bestyrede ved Love, af een og den samme Aand*) PET, ‘Til Hans Kongelige...’, p. 244; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 1, 6 I 1773; It was also written that these laws were created already by *næsse-konge*: this name functioned in the old writing to signify numerous local rulers of Norway, reigning before the ‘unification’ of the kingdom by Harald Fairhair, PET, *op. cit.*, p. 248; J. Wulfsberg, *op. cit.*, p. 145; G. Schøning, *Norges Riiges...*, vol. II, p. 252.

that was coming into existence – the authors were fascinated more by *Heimskringla* than *Edda*.⁹⁶

It is not surprising then that a special object of pride was the Nidaros cathedral. Described already by the 16th century humanists, it found a true admirer in Schøning. It was already mentioned that he devoted a separate work to the cathedral. He stated in it (like in other works) that the cathedral was one of the most magnificent sacral buildings in the medieval Christianity.⁹⁷

St. Olaf was still an important figure. We have already discussed the folk memory connected with him, the presence of the king in the daily life of the peasants. But also for the elites of the 18th century Olaf Haraldsson was an especially important historical figure as the patron of the kingdom of Norway, martyr, a symbol of the kingdom's greatness, also in transcendent dimension. This is evidenced by the meticulousness with which topographers noted down all the monuments, traces and legends connected with him as well as his statements.⁹⁸ The saint king was also recalled in Brun's drama *Einar Tambeskjelver* in a lofty church scene where the characters meet by the king's coffin and his relics are described as 'halidoms' and 'invaluable treasures'.⁹⁹



In the vision of history presented with the 18th century historians, the characteristics of the ancestors, the fathers played a special role. They functioned as an ideal reference point: the founders of the home country, archetypical patriots, warriors and sages. Comparing someone to an ancestor automatically gave them ennoblement and 'a certificate' of nationalism. The more we become like our ancestors, the more Norwegian we will be – the 18th century intellectuals seem to be saying. As we will see, this approach will be especially important in

⁹⁶ J. R. Hagland, 'Nordisk fortid og 1700-talets filologiske prosjekter' in *Norsk litteraturhistorie. Sakprosa...*, pp. 167, 172.

⁹⁷ G. Schøning, *Beskrivelse...*, pp. 1, 2, 149; idem, *Reise...*, vol. I, p. 3; Hans Bull wrote poetic lines about the cathedral (H. Bull, *Samlede Skrifter...*, pp. 59–69).

⁹⁸ Schøning described Olaf as "the Norwegian martyr and patron, king Olaf the Saint". He stated that two local people (described in the saga), who buried the king's body after the battle of Stiklestad, not allowing it to be profaned, deserved immortality (G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. I, p. 2, vol. II, pp. 58, 70); Schøning described the veneration with which the deceased king was treated, quoting the descriptions from the 17th literature, G. Schøning, *Beskrivelse...*, pp. 160–163.

⁹⁹ J. N. Brun, *Einar Tambeskjelver...*, pp. 85–86.

the context of characterizing the Norwegian peasants, whose being Norwegian was based on the closeness – on the one hand – to nature, and on the other, to the ancestors, whose customs and behaviors they cultivated.

But apart from the cultural bond with the ancestors, resting upon the cultivation of their customs and preservation of the memory about their deeds, there appeared an idea of a physical bond: the common blood, connecting contemporary Norwegians with their ancestors. It is, however, quite rare in the period of our interest. In a 1765 letter to the editor of *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel* we read: ‘There are many Norwegians, simpleminded, good, honest but I have in mind the true Norwegians, those, in whose veins there flows [the same] blood continuously since the times when fire and plough started to be used’. The author wrote further: ‘only Norwegian is still as pure and noble as it was at the source [i.e. in the distant past], the descendants are similar to their grandfathers.’¹⁰⁰ The nationality is being equated here with retaining the unbroken bond with the ancestors – blood ties. A similar way of thinking was presented by colonel Hesselberg, speaking (1780) on the occasion of conferring the banner: describing the great Norwegian character, he said, that Norwegians had been shaped by hard work, thanks to which they earn their bread, as well as fresh air, which they breathe among the rocks. He spoke about those features which Norwegians retained despite the change of religion, government, mentality because in their veins the same blood flows as in the veins of their ancestors.¹⁰¹ The phrases concerning the blood of the ancestors flowing in the veins of the sons are to be found also in the poetry of Brun and Friman.¹⁰²

However, the didactic approach to thinking about the ancestors as models to emulate was much more frequent. The fullest and the most resonant representation of it, having the biggest influence on the contemporaries, is to be found in Schøning. But even before he published his work, there occurred statements in which the image of the forefathers, although not so complete, contained many similarities to his description; the emphasis on belligerence and being expansive, performing great deeds and animosity towards foreign influences.¹⁰³ But no less important was – as it has already been mentioned – were the virtues of

¹⁰⁰ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 36, 4 IX 1765.

¹⁰¹ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 26, 26 VI 1780, No 27 3 VII 1780.

¹⁰² J. N. Brun, *Mindre Digte...*, p. 84; C. Friman, ‘Hagen Adelsten’ in *Poetiske Samlinger*, vol. III, p. 7.

¹⁰³ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 13 17 VIII 1763; [F. Nannestad], ‘Velmeent Opmuntring...’, p. 71; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddel*, No 13 17 VIII 1763.

the mind: the liking of poetry and talent to write sagas, which were preserved and are published till this day. It was claimed that *Kongespeilet* was a proof that in 13th century, when the whole Europe was ignorant, in the North ‘a flame of reason’ flickered.¹⁰⁴ Holberg expressed this in a similar way.

According to Schøning, among the features which old Norwegians had, and which should be acquired by his contemporaries (to be more precise, they should return to them), there are simple and healthy life, connected with physical exercise, lifestyle, courage, bravery, love of the country, and a noble way of thinking. These behaviors are those ‘which correspond our lands, our sky, under which we live, which can describe us as a nation as they are original and do not make us into a deficient copy of other nations, towards which, it seems, we have been going for some time’. Thanks to them, ancestors could have gigantic statures: ‘If there ever had lived people of the giant kind (*Kiæmpe – Art*), it must have been in the oldest times in our North...’ The ancestors of the Norwegians (Jutes) valued freedom and did not accept any coercion.¹⁰⁵ Such a suggestive image (embellished by some critical remarks about the contemporary Norwegians, who live completely differently) turned out to be very attractive and suited the tastes and expectations of the young generation, whom pre-Romantic trends had reached, although, as we have seen, they were accepted rather selectively. Traces of reading Schøning’s work are to be found in poetry, journalism, scholarly texts and topographical descriptions.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 47, 20 XI 1765; *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 2, 1 VI 1763, No 44 z XI 1769.

¹⁰⁵ G. Schøning, *Norges Riiges...*, vol. II, unpaginated preface, dedication to the Hereditary Prince Frederick, unpaginated; Jutes – a tribe from which Norwegians originated, were characterized by big physical strength, simplicity and modesty ‘by nature and habit they were created for our North, its rocks and its cold.’ They were characterized by, typical for the ancestors of the Norwegians, scorn for death. Being used to live in agreement with nature, they were free from many diseases and addictions. They raised their children appropriately: the newborns were put on the snow and they toughened them up in the cold. As soon as their children learned to walk, they started to hunt and fish. Accustomed to the cold, they could walk around almost naked. The body was constantly exercised: shooting, swimming, running, javelin throwing, climbing steep mountains, skiing: they were mature adults at an age when we are still children. The bodies were not weakened by debauchery and the marriages were late. The food was healthy and simple; the children were not burdened with hard work (G. Schøning, *ibidem*, vol. I, pp. 15, 18–25, 27–29, 40, 123); when Harald Fairhair unified the country many Norwegians left it, which Schøning explained by their love of freedom (*ibidem*, vol. II, p. 177).

¹⁰⁶ A. Bull, *Oeconomiske*, p. 4; ancestors (*Nordens raske Mænd*) is the family of giants who had courageous souls and strong bodies. We today – are dwarves! Foreign customs are

According to Schøning, the greatness of Norway was rooted in the historic times: belligerence, expansion ended with a success, ability to sail and build ships: *Ormen Lange*, the famous boat of Olaf Tryggvason, definitely was the biggest boat Scandinavia had ever seen. In his opinion, Norwegian ancestors even in pagan times were not ignorant, primitive and barbaric; they were characterized by high culture, nobility, abstinence, surprising in the people to whom war was their nature. The historian believed that they did not lack in common sense, acumen, agility and shrewdness. Schøning emphasized that old Norwegians had their own customs and never copied foreign fashions, which he thought was common in his times in the so called civilized countries.¹⁰⁷



The idealized image of history and the ancestors created by Schøning influenced the younger generation; mostly on the poets from the Norwegian Society, who populated their poetry and dramas with historical figures and heroes from sagas.

In the poem *To Norway, Giant's native land*, which has been already discussed, Brun clearly referred to the belligerent, freedom-loving ancestors – the giants. He presented the complete vision in his historical drama *Einar Tambeskielver*. The eponymous hero is a magnate, a jarl from the 11th century, a historical figure, the associate of king Harald Hadrada. I have already mentioned that the patriotic overtones of the drama caused the outrage of Danish critics. In the poet's vision, the medieval Norwegians were loyal to the Crown,

to blame: brothers, let us leave them behind and let us live like our fathers! – the poem *Karakter av gamle og nyere Tider* said, which was 'sent' to the magazine published in Bergen by Claus Fasting (C. Fasting, *Provinzialblade...*, pp. 137–139); Our ancestors – is *Norges Fordum-Kiæmper* (speech of col. Hesselberg, *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler*, No 26, 28 VI 1780, No 27, 5 VI 1780); their innocent entertainment were songs about heroes and giants, we can remember them and sing today (H. Strøm, *Tilskueren...*, vol. I, p. 195).

¹⁰⁷ G. Schøning, *Norges Riiges...*, vol. I, pp. 124–125; 82, 83, 246, 454–55; idem: *Reise...*, vol. II, pp. 5, 196; the confirmation of such an image of the ancestors was also the descriptions of travelers. Schøning quoted the 15th century account about Norwegians, according to which they were pious, agile, hard-working, honest, moral and tough thanks to the fact that since birth they were being accustomed to the cold; there are in *Norske Intelligenz-Seddeler* polemics with the Danish authors who on the pages of *Den Patriotiske Tilskuer* wrote critically about old Norwegians. In the three-part essay, an anonymous author tried to prove that they were civilized, knew the law and enjoyed their freedom (No 44 2 XI 1769, No 46 15 XI 1769).

ready for sacrifices for the country, freedom-loving, brave as their ancestors, from whom they inherited the ‘blood of heroes’ (‘the nature prepared the Norwegian heart for war’), honest and open – the court hypocrisy could not affect them and they respected the law. The main character spoke to his son dreaming about the war glory: ‘Norway was only very unhappy due to the conquests/ Defend your country and let the Norwegians behind the mountain walls / rest safely as this is important/ There they are themselves, there they know their duties. / Let the one beware who should ever attack the Norwegian! / He will fight a bear for freedom, his possessions and house / He will give out blows, which will crush the shield and the helmet / But in the foreign air he suffers and dies.’¹⁰⁸

The ancestors were also associated with simplicity and modest lifestyle, which was contrasted with the contemporary lavishness, snobbism and following foreign fashions.¹⁰⁹ In poetry the liking of past customs has found many expressions such as in the poem by Brun *Fædrene-Skikke*: ‘we do not blame them; they knew how to fight and how to drink / the Giants from the North were the fear of the countries / We will not forget such customs / they knew more than just how to drink.’¹¹⁰ The calls for the countrymen to emulate the ancestors were very common.¹¹¹

It was quite characteristic that in the period before 1770 the ancestors were praised for the virtues, let us say, civilized – exactly those which – according to the authors – the contemporaries were lacking: rationality, love of culture, defying the foreign customs. The ancestors were seen as the realization and justification of the Enlightenment attitude. At the same time, however, in the creation of the image of the Norwegians and Norwegian national character, references to history suit the didactic program with a clear national character since taking models from the past was supposed to help the nation to re-create its national features and allow for its rebirth. This was linked with frequent Enlightenment criticism of the excessive fascination with the foreign culture and behavior. The criticism of the fashion for foreignness, cosmopolitanism, and indiscriminate copying of foreign, usually French, culture was one of the most typical features of Danish-Norwegian Enlightenment (but not only; it occurred everywhere else

¹⁰⁸ J. N. Brun, *Einar Tambeskjelver...*, pp. 33, 35, 45, 49, 50, 51, 52, 56, 60, 61, 66, 76, 102, 116.

¹⁰⁹ *Norske Intelligenz-Seddele*, No 35, 30 VIII 1780, No 36, 6 IX 1780.

¹¹⁰ J. N. Brun, *Mindre Digte...*, pp. 279–281.

¹¹¹ C. Fasting, *Provinzialblade...*, pp. 202–203; Hammer wanted that the women should come back to the old virtues: industriousness, love for the home and family, cherishing the home crafts [E. Hammer], op. cit., p. 58.

outside France). This was accompanied by the praise of locality and pointing out that the ancestors were great thanks to the fact that they “stayed themselves” i.e. they were original, individualistic, such as they were formed by nature.¹¹²

From the 1770s this model was supplemented by virtues and values which to a larger degree would correspond to the spirit of the times: the criticism of civilization and fascination with wild nature.



Also the newer history was present in historical reflection, which proved, on the one hand, the sense of continuity and on the other, the interest in the recent battles. Old scholars are remembered, such as bishop Jens Nilssøn, the 16th and 17th century wars with Sweden, the visit of king Frederick IV in Norway from 1704.¹¹³ In the 1791 diary from the travel from Bergen to Copenhagen and back, Brun mentioned Tordenskiold and sighed: ‘Today it is calm, we can see Sweden and with pain we look at this part of it, which once belonged to Norway.’¹¹⁴

The authors remembered about the battle of Kringen. Lassen meticulously noted the obelisk commemorating the battle and the grave of a fallen soldier.¹¹⁵ Schøning emphasized the participation of peasants.¹¹⁶ In the poetry the event was mentioned by Hans Bull (1770) and a few years later the battle was popularized by Edvard Storm (who came from Gudbrandsdalen) in *Zinclars Vise* (1782).

Historians were quite cautious about the events from the beginning of the 16th century. These mentions were usually brief and to the point; it is usually emphasized that the Norwegians remained loyal to Christian II, in contrast to

¹¹² I. Sagmo, op. cit., p. 190.

¹¹³ Wilse said that he had the notes of the chaplain of his parish deceased in 1618. The 1598 visitation of the bishop in Edsberg was noted there; he also wrote about the events from the Northern war (J. N. Wilse, *Beskrivelse...*, pp. 427–442; idem, *Reiser...*, p. 121); Schøning, on the other hand, mentioned the events from the 17th century wars, among others quoting a story about how a Swedish general sitting at a table was shot by ‘a Norwegian boy’ (*en norsk Gut*) (G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. I, pp. 38, 39, 40, 52–53, 75, vol. II, pp. 159, 160, 254); Strøm as important considered the plate which commemorated the stay of the king Frederick IV (1704) with the inscription ‘Anno 1704, 8 July, king Frederick IV ate in this room’ (H. Strøm, *Physisk og oeconomic...*, vol. II, p. 133).

¹¹⁴ Qtd after *Fra det Norske...*, p. 45.

¹¹⁵ He also added that two nearby estates were rewards, which the ancestors of the present owners received for extraordinary courage in the battle with the Scots, N. C. Lassen, op. cit., pp. 19–20, 23.

¹¹⁶ G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. I, pp. 139–140.

the Danish. The abolishing of the Council of the Realm was therefore undeserved. These events were called by Wilse as ‘critical circumstances.’¹¹⁷ During his travel around Norway, Schøning came across the Steinviksholm castle ruins and briefly informed that it was built by Olav Engelbrektsson. He described the bishop as the leader of the group who wanted, after the death of Frederick I, to put Christian II and later his son-in-law, palatine Frederick on the Norwegian throne.¹¹⁸

In this context, the evaluation of the union with Denmark from the time perspective appeared. As we know, loyalism dominated among the Norwegians of all social classes and people speaking in public declared their support for the union with Denmark.

One can say that Holberg presented and justified this view the most exhaustively. Several years later Arentz joined him. He considered the royal family to have been born in Norway, first and foremost because of the fact that he considered Oldenburgs to be the descendants of the old Norwegian kings and so they fulfilled the criterion of belonging to the nation. The fact that they were born somewhere else does not mean anything in this case, just like in the case of a child who is born abroad as a result of their parents ‘business trip.’¹¹⁹ Arentz referred to the way of thinking about the Danish kings, which existed in Norway earlier, after 1536. They were perceived as the continuers of the central Norwegian institutions – they were Danish, Norwegian and German simultaneously.¹²⁰ This view existed also in other works of the 18th century.¹²¹

There appeared, however, some nuances such as the critical assessment of the Kalmar union or the off-hand remark by Strøm that the Norwegians are more loyal than others, who similarly ‘once had their own kings, and later were conquered by the foreign ones.’¹²²

¹¹⁷ J. N. Wilse, *Beskrivelse...*, p. 335; H. Strøm, *Tilskueren...*, vol. I, p. 69.

¹¹⁸ G. Schøning, *Reise...*, vol. II, pp. 32–36.

¹¹⁹ H. Arentz, *Grund-Tegning...*, pp. 32, 8.

¹²⁰ Ø. Rian, ‘Oppfatningen av Norge...’, p. 168.

¹²¹ PET, op. cit., pp. 244, 248.

¹²² H. Hammond in his 1784 letter to Suhm: there is no point in studying the history of Norway after the Kalmar union. The union resulted in all the misery; spoiling of the noble Norwegian character originates in the union: ‘the nation is spoilt as a result of the presence of many foreigners and the oppression of the spirit of freedom’ qtd after O. Feldbæk, *Nærhed og adskillelse...*, pp. 294–295; H. Strøm, *Tilskueren...*, vol. I, pp. 64–65.

CONCLUSION

The basic question of this work concerned the form and content of the national identity of the 18th century clerical elites in Norway. Its reconstruction assumed that in fact the matter concerns the transformation of the consciousness which both took into account new elements and modified old ones. This process was linked to the changes in the very social group. In the first part of the period, i.e. in the 16th century, the Norwegian elites still had a native character. Both in the sense of social composition as well as mentality they were a continuation of late medieval elites. Their national consciousness referred to two basic categories i.e. the place of birth (and upbringing) and the sense of national and legal separateness. This was linked to the idea that Norway was a separate historic entity, characterized also by specific natural circumstances – mountains, rocks, fiords and snowy winters created a landscape, with which it was easy to identify. The Danish politics after 1536 strengthened this feelings of separateness. These observations already demonstrate that the Meinecke model was inadequate in the case of Norway.

The 17th century saw an increasingly bigger influx of the Danish – these were feudal lords with their servants and the Lutheran clergy – and the beginning of a slow process of their integration with the local people, mainly the elites. In the national sense we can speak of the beginning of the assimilation process of the in-coming people into the local society and of gradual adoption of the Norwegian point of view, also in the political matters. This process was also caused by the political changes and to be more precise, the politics of Hannibal Sehested (i.e. practically king Christian IV) and the wars with Sweden. However, at its roots there was a natural need to be settled in the new place of stay – to form a bond with the land, people and culture.

The process of settling down was linked to the state of consciousness of the local people. They had to have a developed sense of national identity, which could become the basis of the identity of the new elites. Up till then, the local elites demonstrated their identity in literary output of the 16th century (most

often of the scholarly character), political activity and the statements connected to it. The peasants expressed their identity also in their public activity, through the declaration of their connections with the Norwegian law of St. Olaf, referring to the entire country, as well as non-verbal expression i.e. the attachment to tradition and material culture and to the language. The permanence of the link to the past, attachment to the old customs in daily life and work gave the Norwegian peasants the features of people with a consolidated sense of belonging and separateness, and the conservative approach to the law made them important participants of the public life. It seems to me that the material presented in this work, although it is not exhaustive, allows to adopt a thesis that in reference to the Norwegian peasantry in the early modern period we may speak about the existence of national identity. One reservation needs to be made that both the content as well as forms of expressions were in this case different than in the case of the elites.

The process of assimilation of the new Danish-Norwegian clerical elites in the social sense was connected with forming family bonds with the locals, forming business ties with the country and growing into the local culture. The in-coming clerks and ministers started to show a growing interest in the country, to which they had been sent by the royal order and their children identified with – according to the present way of thinking – as the locals (*innfødte*). The new elites could continue the scholarly passions of their predecessors i.e. to attempt to describe the places where they lived – with their natural and cultural features – look for the historical memorabilia, study the language and life of peasants. Two ideas were already set in the thinking of these people i.e. a strong link with Denmark and its culture and the feeling of loyalty and faithfulness to the throne and the crown. The presence of these elements made the elites seek for similar features in peasants and stress their attachment to the royalistic ideology successfully promoted by the Oldenburgs after 1536.

Although before 1660 the transformation of the identity of the elites was not clearly visible, later we enter a new phase of this process. This is connected with the events of this year but also with the upcoming revolution of mentality, which was caused by the Enlightenment, or even by the whole 18th century. The events of 1660 changed the political circumstances of the Norwegian-Danish elites. The weakening of the position of the Danish nobility, abolishing the Council of the Realm and the introduction of the monarch absolutism and alongside the structures of a modern state had positive outcomes for Norwegians, because they opened the opportunity for promotion, subordinated the Norwegian

matters to the Crown, which to a larger extent had the wellbeing of the whole country in view, and enabled the development of the clerical class. Thanks to this, new tendencies could appear in thinking about Norway. The identification with separate law was declining, as it was gradually becoming a historical relic, from which one could be proud but which did not have much relation to the present life. An image of Norway was being created, which was independent and individual but still connected with Danish monarchy under the rule of the graciously ruling Oldenburg dynasty. Such an approach was created and promoted by Ludvig Holberg, the most influential Norwegian writer of the first half of the 18th century. The development of such thinking was supported also by Danish dignitaries friendly towards Norwegians such as Erik Pontoppidan.

On the other hand, however, the politics of homogenization and integration, finally termed in the 18th century as the politics of a unitarian state (*helstatspolitiken*) was disadvantageous for Norwegians because together with the verbal declarations of the equality of the two countries (and sympathy towards the Norwegian subjects) the Oldenburgs gave various privileges to the center of the state i.e. Denmark and Copenhagen. This tendency together with the typical for absolutism centralizing inclinations meant many daily life inconveniences and the legal solution, which discriminated against Norway. The Norwegian-Danish elites more frequently realized the large extent of incompetency of the clerks in Copenhagen taking decisions concerning the Norwegian matters. Holberg himself, involuntarily, sparked the thinking about the Danish-Norwegian relations in terms of discrimination.

Meanwhile, new ideas appeared in the Danish-Norwegian relations. Physiocracy and national tendencies present in the Enlightenment program, sentimentalism and pre-Romanticism in the 18th century started to stimulate the development of the phenomena which had already existed in the Norwegian culture. The developing Danish interest in the Norwegian culture could also boost the confidence and stimulate the interest in the home country. The intellectual liveliness, the consciousness of the ongoing changes and the feeling that the foregoing vision of the world, the organization of the society and state were becoming outdated led to the growth of social activity and intellectual ambitions, also directed at the development of the patriotic programme. All kinds of activity, academic writing and literature became a means thanks to which one could not only express feelings and opinions but also attempt to name and characterize the notions of home country and nation, which were key to the identity. Statements on this topic give us an image of national identity, which

was formed into overlapping layers of interconnections. One of the most basic is the connection with the place of birth and upbringing understood as a certain described landscape and nature which start having symbolic and metaphysical functions. The next layer of belonging was the connection with the people. Its portrayal consisted of a description of the national character but also led to a focus of attention on the Norwegian peasants, 'the most local of all the locals', indigenous inhabitants of the country. Finally, the cultural layer consisted of the feeling of a connection with the idealized history and great ancestors.

The discourse devoted to the Norwegian matters, concerning specific problems of the country as well as the expression of feelings became the basis on which the elites of the 1790s created the program of changes for the country. It was based on the clear national identity but it did not contain (at least till 1808–09) the basic political ingredient and that is why it cannot be called nationalism. The aim was still changes within the multinational Oldenburg monarchy, equal treatment but not the creation of an independent, national state.

This program contained a diagnosis of the current situation and calls for improvements. The elites pointed out the existing threats both to the wellbeing and success of the nation as well as to its feeling of separateness and identity. These threats were economic weakness and backwardness, subjugation to Denmark in the spheres of economy, administration and culture as well as the influx of foreign customs and fashions. The improvement was supposed to depend on the support of economic and cultural development and the creation of one's own institutions, which would ensure this development. The moral repair was also necessary, or to be more precise the return to the virtues of the ancestors. Thanks to the return to the old lifestyle, Norway's greatness was supposed to be reborn. In this way national identity started to gain a new shape – when in the past it was mostly a natural reaction, a mental need (even if it found its expression in the political sphere), now it was becoming a part of the modernizing program. It can be said that the national identity was supposed to serve its realization for the good of the whole society.

Despite this difference throughout the whole early modern period we can observe a continuity of certain motifs in national identity which gives evidence to the fact that we deal here with a process of transformation, development and not necessarily 'the creation'. In this whole period, the category of the place of birth and upbringing remained important as an identifying factor. The change consisted in the fact that this category was gradually losing its literal character. Instead it was becoming rather a mystical connection with the land,

small homeland, created by the geography as well as people inhabiting it and culture which shaped its character and uniqueness. Another category was the geographical environment, perceived as radically different from the Danish and German landscapes. In this category the change rests upon the different assessment. In the beginning the Norwegian nature was seen as rather threatening, sometimes only linked to attempts of showing some positive sides to the hostile environment; and finally it became an object of cult and admiration.

The constant motif was the feeling of legal-political separateness, which shows how legitimate the doubts concerning the traditional model of two nation-making processes in Europe are. The Western one was supposed to be an evolution of the political community, which produces a nation, and the Eastern one – the evolution of the ethnic-cultural community. The Norwegian references (from all social strata) to legal, political and state foundations of separateness, treated as identifying elements, attest to the fact that the dualistic model in this case does not work.

It does not mean, of course, that this political and legal category did not undergo any changes. Although it might seem that alongside the development and establishment of national identity the feeling of separateness based on it should become stronger, in fact it was the other way round. There is no paradox here, however. The development of the national identity of the Norwegian elites (possibly also those of other nations) did not consist in the gaining the form of the modern, our, identity. One cannot say that we have the national identity 'more developed' i.e. containing the postulate of creation or having a sense of bond with national state, and 'less developed', which lacks this element. The idea of an independent national country belongs to the nationalistic ideology, which is not a higher degree of the development of national identity but a completely different phenomenon. Although the legal and political category is often used as the factor differentiating the ethnic from national consciousness, it does not have to contain the idea of the national state, but rather the sense of separateness of the political and legal organization. The national (in the sense of a connection with a separate social community and its culture) character of this organization is rather sensed that fully consciously present. Among the Norwegians in the 16th century such feeling was very strong and concerned also the peasants; however, it weakened later to function as the idea of Norway – the country within the Oldenburg monarchy. A separate country striving at achieving equality but remaining the part of the whole. One may wonder if the lack of balance that as a result was created between the particular components of the

identity did not require a compensation in the form of the development of all the non-political but cultural parts of identity. In the situation when the legal and political separateness became less sharp, the cultural identifiers became important, on which the identity began to rest, until the moment when in the next phase of transformation, the state component re-appeared. In the face of the double (Danish-Norwegian) patriotism becoming gradually outdated, in the face of the failure of the equality project, the idea of the national state was being gradually created.

The peasants were always an important motif in the image of the national identity, who were treated as a part of the nation. In the beginning they were seen in a very realistic way (sometimes even in a unfriendly way as by Friis), but with time they started to be perceived as the foundation of the nation. The presence of these elements is connected with a wider issue i.e. the model of forming the identity through assimilation and integration of the clerical elites and the peasantry. Let me remind you that one of the intentions was the attempt to show the phenomenon of the national identity formation not through the 'national awakening' but through 'nationalizing the educated' as it was called by the 19th century Finnish intellectual Wilhelm Snellman.

This new element – the mechanism of nationalization through tightening the bond with the peasants – appeared in the 18th century process of national identity transformation. The reasons of such a process existed in the structure of the Norwegian society and a specific situation of the peasantry, or at least the majority of this social class. This class having their personal freedom and ownership of the land, being aware of the tradition of the 'eternal' self-government (although very much limited by the introduction of absolutism), having its own elites and in a large percent being literate, could become not only the symbolic ally in the assimilation process but also in fact a real partner. This was made possible by the fact that the relationships between the local elites and the peasants were much closer than in other countries of modern Europe. It seems to me that the material presented in this work allows one to use the ethnosymbolic theory, which points to this very cultural exchange between the elites and the non-elites, replacing the traditional interpretation based on the notion of the elites as 'the creators and the carriers' of the national consciousness, who impart it onto the lower classes.

Peasants provided arguments for the old age of the nation, its separateness (especially in reference to Denmark), establishment and persistence of these phenomena. In the eyes of the elites they were the fundamental group, on which

the nation rested, since as native inhabitants of the country for generations, they were closest to the mythical and sacred Norwegian nature. Besides, they were the descendants of the 'giants', known from sagas and mythology. Their blood, customs and language, as well as character, were pure, unspoiled by the foreign influences. And at the same time their faithfulness to the monarchs was famous, therefore they suited very well the model of 'double' patriotism accepted by the elites, which connected the love for the country with the loyalty towards the Danish state.

The shape of national identity of the elites formed in the modern era became the foundation for the national programme of the 19th century Norwegian intelligentsia. A new political situation occurred then, because after signing the forced union with Sweden in 1814, the Norwegians started to feel threatened by the Swedish 'amalgamation' program i.e. uniting the two countries into one. On the other hand, some members of the elites started to feel burdened by the heritage of the union with Denmark that lasted for centuries and especially the culture, assessed as unoriginal and a copy of Danish culture. New European intellectual tendencies put forward the idea of the national state, with unified national population, whose individuality and uniqueness based on one's own culture, unlike any other. The spirit of the nation, as the Romantics would say, demanded the national culture to be free from foreign influences. The result of this was the program of 'norwegization' of the culture i.e. first and foremost the language but also tradition. As in most European countries the main source of inspiration and material for these changes was folklore and folk dialects. The notions of Norway as motherland, formed in the 18th century, being a conceptual, theoretical component of national identity, were perfectly suited for a creative development. Thus the continuity was preserved although for the 19th century nationalists the proverbial clerical loyalty towards the Danish Crown and its predilections for the Danish culture (and – paradoxically – a penchant for Copenhagen) sometimes posed problems. Having established views on the Norwegian peasants and instilled admiration for Norwegian nature, the 19th century Romantics and their successors could absorb and use the European tendencies.

The clear continuity in the development of the national identity and the constant presence of a few motifs creates a temptation, to which a historian should rather not succumb, but it is difficult to resist it. This temptation is a formulation of an opinion that there exists a 'natural', immemorial, and almost immutable character of Norwegian identity. This temptation is to sense that the

10th century Viking preparing to fight off a hostile venture would easily find a common language with the contemporary Norwegian, who a day before the referendum on Norway joining the EEC in 1972, put up wooden piles along the coast so that they, when torched at a right moment, called the country to defend itself...

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