

5. The Household Economy of the Great Copper Mine, 1716–1724

Hedvig Widmalm

By the middle of the 1720s Sweden had lost its status as a military power in Europe and was in the process of rebuilding its economy and government. The restructuring involved far-reaching changes in the power-dynamics of the country and is visible also in one of the country's largest industrial corporations, the Great Copper Mine (Stora Kopparberget) in Falun. This chapter discusses the protests a group of Falun miners made against a series of economic reforms implemented at the mine in 1724, and how the protests were received by a royal commission appointed by the Swedish Diet to investigate the householding at the mine.¹ First, the content and context of the reforms are briefly outlined. Next, the miners' complaints, and the protocols of the ensuing discussions at the commission's meetings are examined. The chapter aims to bring out what these events reveal about economic thinking in the early 18th century. The discussion's starting point is that we cannot use modern conceptualisations of the economy and economic actors to understand the history of the past, because people thought of the economy in very different ways from today.

It is evident that the conception of economy in the 1710s and 20s was that of a household economy. This idea permeated society, from the public to the individual level. As we shall see, the miners at the Great Copper

¹ In Swedish, the commission was titled The Commission over Householding at the Copper Works in Falun, *Kommission över hushållningen vid kopparverket i Falun*.

Mine criticised the economic reforms in accordance with the household concept, for example when criticising the obligatory use of the town's new warehouse for grains, and the appointment of new overseers at the mine. Their conception of economic management clashed with that of the administration of the mine, but both parties had to relate their arguments to early modern ideas of householding. By moving beyond modern views to the ideas and terms of the period we can better understand how this earlier form of economy was argued over by both the mine's administration and the people who worked in the mine, what united their viewpoints and how they differed.



Early plan of Stora kopparberg mine. Situationsplan över Stora Kopparbergs gruva. Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm.

In Sweden, economic activity was either called *hushållning*, meaning householding, or *oeconomie*, derived from the Greek word for household, *oikos* (Frängsmyr, 1971; Runefelt, 2001). Historians have frequently used the ideas of the early modern household ideology when analysing the policies of pre-modern states (Frängsmyr, 1971; Amussen, 1988; Gray, 2000). Less

frequently do we have studies that use this when analysing the ideological convictions of individuals or small groups, which is the approach of this chapter. Householding was economy according to the idea that the state functioned in the same way as private households. Economic policy accordingly was similar to the management of a private household. In the 1740s and 50s, Swedish economists like Anders Berch (1711–1774) and Carl Gustaf Löwenhielm (1701–1768) described larger and smaller households as existing on different levels of society, one contained within the other. The largest household was the divine household, or *Oeconomia Divina*. Within this household was the public household, *Oeconomia Publica*, and society's smallest unit was the private household, *Oeconomia Privata* (Legnér, 2004, pp. 87–88; Frängsmyr, 1971, pp. 222–223; Runefelt, 2005, p. 43). Householding unified households on different levels, and made the management of national economies intelligible to common householders.

This conception of householding contained the view that the hierarchical order should be static. It also emphasised the need for balance, different forms of work and different social roles all complementing each other. Within private households this complementary balance was evident in the diversified production and the division of tasks according to gender, age and status. At state level, it could also be applied to different units of production. Berch described how different forms of production required different forms of householding: agrarian sectors required agrarian householding while iron works required their own type of management. What he described was the need for complementary specialization, not in specific tasks but in the organization of different economic sectors. This division and specialization in different areas was an important characteristic of Swedish mercantilism (Magnusson, 2001, p. 28; Sjöberg, 1993, pp. 21–24). It was evident in the policy to create a «householding of Bergslagen»² in the iron-making regions, implemented from the 1730s onward when all activity, including forestry and agrarian production, was diverted to the purpose of producing iron in the areas surrounding the mines and iron works (Karlsson, 1990, p. 231).

2 *Bergslagen* indicates both the geographical area where metals were mined and processed, in central and eastern Sweden, as well as the co-operation of *bergsmän* who were responsible for this work.

The aim to uphold the ideal of a static, balanced household economy informed the reforms that were introduced to the management of the Great Copper Mine. The reforms were met with petitions and protests that were also couched in the ideology of the household economy. In other words, we cannot see the contenders as modern, but as pre-modern actors with contemporary conceptions of both the national and the private economy. The Great Copper Mine serves as a useful microcosm for studying how the householding of the state impacted the householding of private households. In particular, the work of the 1724 Royal Commission shows us, as we shall see, how the householding of the state impacted the household-based hierarchical relationships between the miners, the mine's owners and managers and the state. Exploring the reforms and the protests against them reveals how crucial for good householding it was to maintain mutual trust and responsibilities across the hierarchical boundaries.

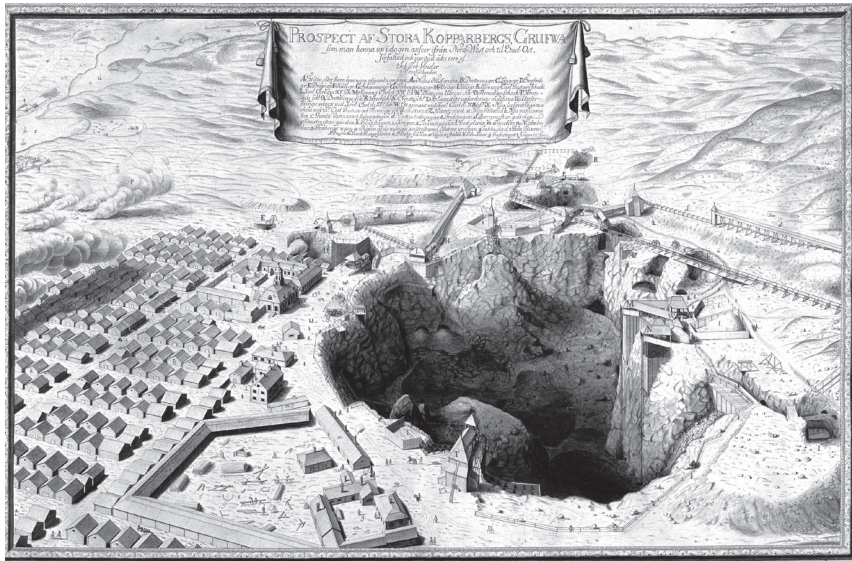
The 1724 commission's task to investigate the householding of the Great Copper Mine in effect involved evaluating the reforms introduced there in the 1710s and 1720s. Previous research on the commission has largely focused on the role of the Falun burghers in inciting the protests that occurred, and how this played into the new political role of the burgher estate in Sweden. Their political actions have been depicted as pioneering and unique in relation to the other groups that mounted protests, who have been regarded as followers (Ericsson, 1970, pp. 111–114; Olsson as cited in Ångström-Grandien & Jansson, 2012, p. 148; Lindroth, 1955, pp. 365–367). The role of the burghers has perhaps been brought to prominence because it fits with the larger political developments that occurred during this time, when the absolutist reign ended and the burghers gained more influence in the Diet (Lindberg, 2001, pp. 50–51; Ågren, 2007, p. 27). However, a closer look at the role of the miners reveals independent agency. The miners' actions followed a pattern of political activity beginning with a strike in 1696 and culminating in a riot in 1743. Interestingly, there is a clear precedent of miners' protests in the actions of miners in the Norwegian copper mine at Røros, undertaken for similar reason in the 1680s, as Kristin Ranestad and Sven Olofsson show in chapter 2. Another similarity between the Falun miners and the miners in Røros was that they had the right to live in their own homes, and could keep gardens there. However, the pollution

near the mine in Falun made it difficult to grow substantial amounts of crops. As in Røros, the miners could get married and form families, as evidenced by the many miners' widows in the mining district, numbering between 200–250 in the early 18th century (Eriksson, 1970, p. 192). Despite this, the Falun miners were still legally defined as *legohjon*, belonging to a type of servant class. Urban Claesson has interpreted the discontent they expressed in the late 17th- and early 18th century as a reaction against the differences between their practical life and their legal status (Claesson, 2015, pp. 48–57). Since the Falun miners were servants (rather than householders) and were not represented by an estate in the Diet, I argue that their complaints exposed and questioned the hierarchical system of the early modern household economy in a way that the burghers did not.

Stability and change

To show how the Falun town and the Great Copper Mine shaped and were shaped by the household economy it is necessary to briefly describe some of the positions in the mining industry, key institutions and the town's social structure. The Swedish mining and metal industry was divided into separate regions (Bergslagen districts, as they were called), each consisting of a number of smaller districts called *bergmästare*-districts, that is, Mine Inspectors' districts. (Almquist, 1909, pp. 133, 151). The term Bergslagen, however, does not only refer to a geographical area, but also to the conglomeration of Head Miners in the region. The Great Copper Mine was the third of eleven Bergslagen regions in Sweden, each with their own independent mining court where disputes, problems and administrative issues were adjudicated. In Falun the court included an elected group of 24 elder Head Miners. In 1714, Anders Swab (1681–1731) was appointed Mine Inspector (*bergmästare*) of the Falun mine. One of his tasks was to preside over the mining court.

The Great Copper Mine was divided into several units, or shares, owned and operated by Head Miners. The Head Miners were not shareholders in the modern sense. They employed miners and managed their work in the mine, sometimes working alongside them. Besides this, their role carried many more practical and legal tasks and they supervised the smelting of



View of the Falu copper mine from the northwest. Vy över Falu koppargruva från nordväst. Lavering av Johan Tobias Geisler, 1718. Foto: Nordiska museet. Lisens: Public domain mark.

copper, which was often carried out in smelting works on their own plots of land. As landowners, the Head Miners could be classed as a type of mining peasants, but their place in the Diet's four estates was not clear-cut. While iron-making Head Miners were grouped together with the peasants, in copper-making they belonged to the burgher estate (Sjöberg, 1996, p. 17). Furthermore, Head Miners were exempt from taxation of their land, in common with the aristocracy. This led to them sometimes being perceived as a fifth estate, with their own separate role in society. The group had originated in medieval German mining towns, but by the early 18th century they had disappeared from the German lands and the only equivalent was found in Norway (Söderberg, 1932, pp. 67, 103).

In Sweden, the Head Miners' social role was changing. In the 1710s and 1720s, there were complaints that too many Head Miners had moved away from the production sites and had delegated supervision of the work there to others. Eli Heckscher states that this group of absentee owners made up about a third of the 800 Head Miners who owned parts in the Great Copper Mine at the start of the 18th century. The other two thirds were Head Miners of the traditional sort, who supervised mining and smelting

themselves (Heckscher, 1940, p. 43). Nevertheless, worry about some Head Miners' distancing themselves from the mine was partly what prompted the Mine Inspector Anders Swab to institute a series of reforms starting in 1716.

As the mining operation expanded during the 17th century, Falun became a popular destination for men seeking work as miners (*gruvdrängar*), while women had been barred from working in the mine at some point before 1718 (Outhier as cited in Sahlin, 1897, p. 10). This gendered segregation was a marked difference from other Swedish mines, where women were listed in the rosters as mining maid servants (*gruvpigor*) well into the 18th century (Henriksson, 1996, p. 71). Women did, however, work above ground with roasting and smelting copper (Boëthius, 1951, p. 211; Claesson, 2015, p. 53).³

The miners' employment took different forms. Sten Lindroth has estimated that ca 600 were *gruvdrängar*, young miners (Lindroth, 1955, vol. 1, p. 528). Many of these were employed by Head Miners, while another 200–300 worked for the conglomeration of mining and metal works – the Bergslagen. According to Bertil Boëthius 1200 people in total were employed at the mine during this period, in various positions (Boëthius, 1951, pp. 87, 168). What unified all the employed miners was that they were legally defined as servants. This status was tied to the notion of the household as an economic unit. According to the tenets of household economy, the miners' subordinate status was justified by the fact that they did not own the properties on which they worked, but were members of the owner's household. The owner was the householder and had the duty and authority to rule over the other members of his household (Uppenberg, 2018, p. 55). Such household units were officially represented by the householder, commonly characterized as the «head» of the household body, with the other members representing the limbs. Ideally, the householder would be assisted by a wife in supervising and managing the house. They both ruled over the household's children and servants (Runefelt, 2001, pp. 105–106). There was a conception that servanthood was supposed to

3 The earliest known reference to the prohibition of women was made by Anders Swab in 1718, in a mining court document copied for the Royal Commission of 1724. See Riksarkivet (RA) Äldre commissioner (ÅK) 408 (1724), Vol. 2 Akter, Handlingar, p. 831. Another assertion that women were not permitted to work in the Great Copper Mine was made by visiting French pastor Regnaud Outhier in 1737, quoted in Sahlin, 1989, p. 10.

be transitory, a path young people took before becoming householders themselves (Laslett, 1977; Kussmaul, 1981, p. 26; McIsaac Cooper, 2004, p. 281). In reality, for hundreds of years in Sweden, there had been people who were in a permanent state of servanthood, but the structure of 18th century society with its estates did little to acknowledge or accommodate these groups. There were few opportunities for servants to save money or purchase their own properties, completing the life cycle. In this way, inequality between servants and householders was cemented (Harnesk, 1990, pp. 19–20; Uppenberg, 2018, pp. 29–31, 35).

In the miners' case, their servant status meant that they were subservient to a householder within a household structure of sorts. In practice however, many miners lived in houses separate from their masters. It was also not uncommon for them to be married. Thus the miners' households mimicked those that held legitimate political authority. It became increasingly uncertain who their householders were, as the Head Miners appointed delegates to supervise and evaluate their work. This state of affairs created tension between the miners and their employers, who were still legally their masters.

A series of crises in the early 18th century heightened these tensions. Along with the devastation caused by the Great Northern War and an outbreak of plague in 1710, there were years of bad harvests during the following decade. In 1715 a type of emergency coin had been minted in order to settle the Crown's debts and fund the war effort; this had caused strong inflation in the country. The use of bills and tokens as replacements for coins became increasingly common, causing debts to soar (Edvinsson, 2012, p. 410). Finally, with the Treaty of Nystad in 1721, Sweden was defeated and gave up most of its Baltic provinces to Russia.

The bad harvests in the years 1715–1720 slowed the imports of grain and starvation threatened society. The Mine Inspector Anders Swab pushed for establishing a warehouse for grains funded by the Board of Mines, the state's administrative bureau that regulated mines, ironworks and metal manufactories (established in 1637). Such institutions were not uncommon in Scandinavian mining. In chapter 2, Olofsson and Ranestad reveal that warehouses where miners could access food and tools had existed in the Røros Copper Works since the 1650s. Swab's inspiration though, appears

to have come from the mining towns in Saxony and Bohemia that he had visited (Ericsson, 1970, pp. 30–31). The Falun warehouse's original purpose was to supply the poorest miners with food and clothing.⁴ This was the first of many reforms Swab implemented to make mining more efficient, to care for the mine's labourers and to place them under his authority.

The reforms and their impact on the hierarchy of the household economy

Anders Swab's reforms in the years 1716–1720 were wide reaching and their aims were ambitious. Many of his reforms had the purpose to create economic equality between the Head Miners. For example, he abolished the game of dice – which had been used to decide the working order and the access to ore in the mine since the late middle ages. He introduced measures to regulate how much ore each of the Head Miners' teams could extract, appointed a new bookkeeper to check the amounts of ore the teams had extracted, and he redistributed ore between the teams to achieve equality (Lindroth, 1955, p. 361).⁵ Other reforms Swab introduced concerned the supplies of firewood and new overseers to document and tax work teams who conducted explorations of new and abandoned mining rooms (Lindroth, 1955, pp. 362–363).

In parallel with the reforms, plans for a clothing manufacture were drafted in 1718, which was opened in 1721. This was a charitable institution creating work for young women and girls who lived near the mine. Swab stated that its purpose was to teach young women to support themselves so that they would not roam the streets and resort to «rudeness, laziness, begging, gossip, quarrels and such that is not healthy or gainful for youths.»⁶ Though it was meant to operate as a kind of school, there was also an assumption that it would run at a profit. In Stockholm an

4 Swab outlined this plan to the Board of Mines in 1715. See Riksarkivet (RA) Bergskollegium huvudarkivet (BkH), *Protokoll* (1715) E 4: 136, pp. 2260–2262.

5 Sten Lindroth is among those who have argued that equality between the Head Miners was not achieved, since even though the barrels were of equal size their contents differed in quality and value in the different mining rooms.

6 «... uthan lära ifrån barndomen ingenting annat, än igenom fräckhet, lättia, tiggeri, sqwaller, och argheter och sådant som ungdomen icke nyttigt och gagnarligt är», RA ÄK 408 vol. 2, *Akter, handlingar*, p. 835.

orphanage work house operated according to this rationale. The religious motivations behind these establishments followed a pattern similar to contemporary orphanage-work houses in German towns (Rydberg, 2017, pp. 104–105; Blom, in Sjöberg, 1997).

The greatest change, spearheaded by Swab, was implemented in the winter of 1720 when the administrations of the town and the mine were fused into one, forming an entity known as a mining town, or *bergstad*. The effect of this fusion was to force prominent burghers and Head Miners to join in each other's activities. Less wealthy burghers who could not afford to buy shares in the mine interpreted this as a subjugation of their interests, as the whole town's activities became more centred on the mine. Indeed, it was the burghers' complaints that initiated the 1724 Royal Commission.

As a result of Swab's reforms, the administration of the mine became more complex and also more centralized. The conglomeration of mining and metal works now appointed their overseers to evaluate the miners' work, and distributed their wages via the warehouse for grains (Lindroth, 1955, p. 363). In doing so, they undermined the authority of the people who had previously had this role, namely the guards appointed by the Head Miners. The new appointments brought the management more directly under the state's control, a development we also see in the administrative centralization that occurred in Røros in the 1680s (see chapter 2 by Ranestad and Olofsson).

Swab's reforms were implemented according to his understanding of householding. This included the notion of household hierarchy as something set, immovable and connected to the nature of the work performed rather than to wealth. It was for this reason that the game of dice, which since medieval times had decided when the Head Miners' teams worked in the mine, was abolished. This game of chance had led to unequal distribution of ore between the Head Miners. Swab argued that economic equality between them would keep them from being motivated by greed. An equal distribution of the ore would, instead, encourage them to reinvest their earnings in the mine. This equality could only be achieved when counted out in money, according to Swab.⁷

⁷ Stora Kopparbergets arkiv (STORA), *Gruvrätten serie 57* (1716), p. 547.

The reforms that were the most relevant to the miners were the ones that affected their relationships with the Head Miners. For this reason, the warehouse for grains was a target of their criticism, even though it was created for their benefit. They feared it was removing them from the authority of individual Head Miners, to work more directly for the conglomeration of mining and metal works. This change was manifested in the way the miners received their wages. Instead of being paid directly by the Head Miners they ostensibly worked for, they began to receive their wages via the new warehouse for grains. The warehouse's activities had also expanded to administer widows' pensions, their inheritance and funeral aid. Its profits funded new excavations in the mine.⁸

Furthermore, Swab appointed new *bergsfogdar*, bailiffs who would evaluate the miners' daily work. The evaluations were used to decide the miners' wages, a further infringement on the authority of the Head Miners (Heckscher, 1940, pp. 51–52). These reforms in particular made both the Head Miners and miners uncertain of what rights and obligations they now had towards each other.⁹

The Commission and the miners' complaints

The Diet had sent a royal commission as a response to protests from burghers, Head Miners and miners in Falun in 1724. The commission was led by Swen Lagerberg. As the appointed leader of *Statskontoret*¹⁰, he was second in rank to Arvid Horn (1664–1742), the president of the Privy Council Chancellery. His presence shows how important the Great Copper Mine was to the kingdom at the time. It also placed Anders Swab's leadership in question. Swab defended his position by questioning the authority of all the different groups that had protested against his reforms. He portrayed himself as a man who had sworn an oath to the King, entrusted by the highest power in the land.¹¹ He worked to delegitimize those who protested

8 STORA *gruvrätten serie 57* (1716), pp. 25–36, 49–50. The warehouse had begun to have this function. See also pp. 9, 60–61, 94, 123, 132, 149, 170 and 207, in which various mining ventures, as well as payment for workers, are shown to have been transmitted via the warehouse.

9 This was discussed during the commission. RA ÄK 408 Vol. 1, p. 380.

10 *Statskontoret* can be defined as an agency for public management.

11 RA ÄK 408 vol. 2 *Akter, handlingar*, pp. 20–22. Also mentioned in RA ÄK 408 vol. 1, *Kommissionsprotokoll*, p. 620.

by claiming they were led by a disorderly rabble, *hoopen*, or *myckenheeten*, «the many».

The commissioners led by Lagerberg in some ways accepted this characterization as pertaining to the miners. The miners had no apparent right to act as a collective. Unlike burghers and Head Miners, miners were legally not permitted to appear at the mining court unless they were called (Boëthius, 1951, p. 40). Before they were called to the commission's hearings in 1724, there was a discussion about the legality of their protest. The commissioners raised the question whether the miners could present their protest together as a group, or if the crowd of miners would create disruption. Finally, the miners stated that they would choose a representative and that they would all be present but silent.¹²

The question of the miners' right to assemble was really a question of what authority entailed, and who had the right to hold it. The commissioners were wary of granting the miners status as a group that could act collectively, as apparent in their dismissive responses to certain arguments the miners made. When talking about the miners' demands for wages paid in cash, the commissioners argued that they would only spend it on drink. They then disputed the miners' complaints about working conditions by saying that the mine must be a good place to work since anyone could see, when a miner died or fell away, how many came and announced themselves as wanting to take his place.¹³ During this time, the high mortality rate of the miners was used as an argument for granting them special privileges, such as their own plots of land, a miners' hospital, widows' pensions and provisions from the warehouse (Montelius, 1968, pp. 159–173; Hildebrand, 1946, pp. 667–672). The commissioners showed that far from securing such privileges, this mortality rate could be used against the miners. Mining continued even if they fell away.

This was how the commissioners addressed the miners themselves. Their phrasing was different when they addressed Anders Swab with regards to the miners' complaints. After being asked why he had not ordered guards to quell the protests, Swab explained that «the many» and «the rabble»

¹² RA ÅK 408, Vol. 1, *Kommissionsprotokoll*, p. 573.

¹³ RA ÅK 408, Vol. 1, *Kommissionsprotokoll*, p. 580.

appeared in such large numbers that it was difficult to prosecute them all.¹⁴ The protocol stated: «It was asked of him [by the commission], whether the Assessor [Swab] thought that one should prevent the subjects¹⁵ from showing the superiors their poverty, and whether such a thing would be illegal?»¹⁶

Using the word «subjects» to identify the miners was how the commissioners acknowledged that they had a place within Swedish society even though they represented no estate. «Subjects» meant that they belonged to a larger structure, being subjects of the King and the Diet. This granted them rights that were connected to the system of different layers of households in society: if the miners were mistreated by their immediate superiors, they had the right to appeal to the superiors ruling the larger household that contained the Great Copper Mine, the household of *Oeconomia publica*, the state. It meant that they could appeal to the King and the Diet to complain about Anders Swab. This was how the household economy was enacted in practice during this period. As Karin Hassan Jansson has shown, the language of household hierarchy had seeped into Swedish culture at this point in time; the expectations people held of each other accorded to their placement in the household hierarchy and affected the ways in which their actions were judged by others. No matter their status, most members of society knew how to use the language of the household to argue for themselves (Hassan Jansson & Lindström, 2017, p. 371).

As the manager of both his own and the larger household of the Great Copper Mine, Swab held power, but he also had the responsibility to care for his subordinates. He was vulnerable to accusations of overreach. He appeared to receive the commissioners' comment about subjects as a rebuke, modifying his description of the miners in his reply.¹⁷ When he was asked why he could not prosecute the miners, Swab's ability to control the people in his care was also questioned. The commissioners argued that he should punish troublemakers to set an example. He replied that

14 RA ÅK 408, Vol. 1, *Kommissionsprotokoll*, pp. 622–623.

15 The Swedish word is *undersåtar*. RA Å K 408, Vol. 1, *Kommissionsprotokoll*, p. 624.

16 «Det förestältes honom, om Assessoren tyckte; at man borde hindra undersåtarne at för Öfwerheten andraga sin nöd, och om sådant woro olagligt?», RA Å K 408, Vol. 1, *Kommissionsprotokoll*, p. 624.

17 RA Å K 408, Vol. 1, *Kommissionsprotokoll*, p. 624.

if he did that, he would have time for nothing else, «... this organization being no different than private householding, in that when a servant in the house does something bad, you can punish and steer him right, but when all servants begin to make trouble and defy, there is no way to manage them.»¹⁸ In his eyes, the servant-miners presented a unified front, which meant that they could not be punished easily.

In conclusion, the miners were characterized in two different ways by their superiors at the commission's hearings. One was as a rabble where each member, lacking individual skills and individual worth, could be easily replaced. This was used to delegitimize their claims to authority. However, Swab and the commissioners' collectivizing of the miners in this way also revealed them to be an ominous force. The second way the commissioners characterized the miners was as subjects of the King and the Diet, placed under their protection in accordance with household ideology. As subjects, they had the right to complain about their immediate superiors to higher authorities; however, they were also in a state of perpetual dependence and subservience.

«With us, changes are frequently made»

The miners cast themselves in a different light. Their protests are of particular interest because of the way in which they argued about authority, where it should rest and why. The miners certainly conveyed their subservience in the complaint they sent to the Diet. It was written as a bid for aid from a higher authority, casting the miners as the dutiful subjects that the commissioners deemed them to be. The complaint would not have been treated seriously by the commission if they had not. However, even though it conformed to a genre, the document contains explicit criticism against Swab's reforms, particularly against his appointment of new overseers.

The miners sent in two letters to the commission. The shorter letter, read to the commission on the 13th of April 1724, mainly concerned not receiving wages on time. The thrust of the complaint was directed at the

18 «... warande det wid detta wärket ej annorledes beskaffat, än det tilgår wid en privat hushåldning, at när en dräng i huset gör illa, kan man äntel afstraffa och styra den, men när alt tienste-folket begynner at treskas och uppsättia sig, då har man ingen uthwäg med dem». RA Å K 408, Vol. 1, *Kommissionsprotokoll*, pp. 622–623.

warehouse for grains. The miners were worried that they would soon be forced to take their payments there, rather than receiving it directly from the Head Miners they worked for. «Though some miners are not now bound to the warehouse, it can happen soon enough, since, with us, changes are frequently made.»¹⁹

They went on to state that they would rather take a lower wage than the wage set for them, if they could receive it in cash. This was in response to a stipulation that the miners would receive one third of their payment in kind, in the shape of food, clothing and tools from the warehouse. The Falun miners had cause to worry that they would receive an even larger part of their wages in kind. At the commission there was a discussion about whether the miners would need cash at all, or whether the Head Miners should be able to buy everything they needed for them.²⁰ According to this way of thinking, the Head Miners' authority was derived from this father-like status, and from his ownership of the property on which the servants worked. As Ranestad and Olofsson show in chapter 2, this issue was yet another parallel to the miners' problems in Røros more than thirty years earlier.

An earlier letter from the miners, dated February 24, was longer, with the title «The miners' complaint». It was signed by 250 miners, and contained harsher criticism of Swab's administrative reforms. They complained about being forced to use the warehouse for grains, and the slow delivery of fuel for fire-setting that caused their work and their wages to be delayed.²¹ The strongest criticism was against the bailiffs Swab had appointed to oversee and evaluate their work. The miners said that these bailiffs had no experience with mining. When questioned by the commission they claimed many of the bailiffs were afraid to even enter the mine because they disliked the dust.²² This delayed their evaluations of the amount of mined copper ore, which in turn delayed the payments of the miners' wages.

19 «...fast en del grufwedrängar nu intet äro bundne til magasinet, så kan det snart nog ske, efter som oftast med oss göras förändring.» RA ÄK 408, Vol. 2 *Akter, handlingar*, p. 166.

20 RA ÄK 408, Vol. 2, *Akter, handlingar*, pp. 445–450.

21 RA ÄK 408, Vol. 2, pp. 167–174.

22 RA ÄK 408, Vol. 1, *Kommissionsprotokoll*, pp. 577–578. The smoke from the mine and from the smelting huts nearby was poisonous. See Johan Browallius's description of the Falun smog and the lung-disease it caused in Falun to the Royal Science Academy (*Kungliga Vetenskapsakademien*), in Browallius (1743).

Instead of these bailiffs, the miners wanted the Head Miners themselves, or their deputies the mining guards,²³ to evaluate their work as they had done in the past. It is important to note that in the household economy, the householders' authority rested in his personal character, his knowledge and his presence at the site where the work took place. The miners complained that this presence, and the knowledge, were missing. When the miners were called to the commission, they were questioned on this point. Their complaint was regarded as an act of insubordination. In Swab's view it constituted a mutiny that would upset the natural balance of power at the mine. In one of his many letters to the commission, Swab wrote,

There is something wrong with society when the common men want to become rulers and take a stand on issues which they do not understand or have the right grasp of, to want to change everything according to their whims; to libel and accuse the foremen and the servants of the state, to place blame on everything that is built for the common good, and more such things which pave the way for the wreck and ruin of these costly and important works. God prevent such miserable consequences of this unruliness, mismanagement and noise!²⁴

Was there any truth in Swab's accusation that these «common men» wanted to become rulers, or was this just used to discredit his opponents? It was important for the miners to act as subjects for their complaints to be seen as legitimate – in accordance with household ideology. For the most part, they did this, but one of their statements was more ambiguous. When the miners were questioned about the supervision and evaluation of their work, they said they preferred when the mining guards did it, but admitted that some of them were too old to enter the mine. «They also said, that an old miner would be as knowledgeable about the mine, and would send a good load of ore forward as quickly as the guards, and often sooner...»²⁵ Here the miners claimed they could oversee and evaluate their

²³ *Vaktare* in Swedish.

²⁴ «Det står och i denne Societeten intet wähl till, när gemehne men willia blifwa regerande och taga sig tillfälle i saker, som dhe intet förstå och hafwa rätt begrep om, att willia ändra alt efter sitt tycke, förtahla och anklaga förmännen och Betienterne lasta alt hwad till allmän nytta är anlagdt och mehra sådant, som alt bahnar wägen till detta kåstbahre och angelägne Wårcketz rum och undergång, hwilken beröfwelige efterfölgd på denne oroo, misshällighet och owäsende Gud nådeligen afwärie!» RA ÅK, Vol. 2, *Akter, handlingar*, p. 179.

²⁵ «De sade ock, at en gammal grufwedrång woro så kunnig i grufwan, och gofwe så snart an en god skuta, som wacktarne, och ofta snarare.» RA ÅK, Vol. 1 *Kommissionsprotokoll*, pp. 575–576.

work themselves, more efficiently than the Head Miners' guards. It is not apparent that the miners had a subversive intent in making this statement to the commission, but for all purposes they said they could take over the work of the Head Miners, their masters. They based this claim to authority on their unique knowledge of the mining process, which made them more efficient managers and meant they would receive fair wages. No oath to the King, no inherited status, but presence and knowledge lent them that authority.

If the miners' protest had an effect on the rulings of the commission, this was not openly acknowledged in the protocols. However, the miners were not punished for their insubordination, and the commissioners finally ruled that they should not be forced to take payment at the warehouse for grains.²⁶ This can be compared to a similar outcome in Røros, where the miners could choose to receive their payment in cash or in kind, as shown in chapter 2 by Ranestad and Olofsson. The warehouse was reduced to its original function as a distributor of grain.²⁷

Summary and conclusion

The starting point for this investigation was that that the miners' rationale can best be understood if seen in the light of the norms of the early modern household economy, norms that were shared with their masters at the Great Copper Mine. The miners were permitted to present their complaints against their local superior, the Mine Inspector Anders Swab, since this was in accordance with the tenets of the household economy. To do so, they had to present themselves as subordinates and in need of help from even higher authorities, the Diet and the King. Because they followed this path, they were allowed to explain their arguments to the commissioners: that they were worried about being forced to take payment in kind, worried about the warehouse encroaching on the Head Miners' rightful authority, and concerned that the bailiffs' lack of competence delayed their wages. Anders Swab had to present their concerns to the

²⁶ RA ÄK, Vol. 1 *Kommissionsprotokoll*, pp. 850–851, 855, 857.

²⁷ RA ÄK, Vol. 1 *Kommissionsprotokoll*, pp. 849, 855.

commissioners, defending himself as a man who had sworn an oath to the king, a part of the established hierarchy. It does not appear that the miners were punished. However, they were certainly regarded with suspicion by the commissioners for presenting the complaints, and their legitimacy as a group was questioned. There was no dramatic change as a result of their actions. What is the purpose of investigating an event like this, where the change effected is not obvious?

This is a micro-historical investigation based on a close reading of some of the 1724 Royal Commissions' documents. Since the perspective is narrow, minor changes become significant. The case of the Great Copper Mine shows how pervasive the ideas and tenets of the pre-modern household economy was at the micro level. The reforms and the miners' protests against them both accorded with this conceptualisation of the economy. This micro historical approach has the promise to illuminate how broader changes ultimately resulted from the decisions taken by individual actors. These were not 'modern' actors. They saw the economy very different from how we see it today. The investigation has revealed how they utilized the flexibility that this seemingly rigid household-based economy allowed, without directly challenging it. Subordinate groups could use their subordination to argue for their own causes, as the miners did in 1724.

References

Primary sources

National Library of Sweden (Kungliga biblioteket):

Browallius, Johan, «Några rön och anmärkningar angående roströken i Falun» 1743,
Svenska Vetenskapsakademiens handlingar 1700–1829 41 C K. Vol. IV.

Riksarkivet (RA), Stockholm:

Äldre kommissionsmaterial (ÄK). Kopparbergskommission 1724 (408)

Vol I, Protokoll.

Vol. II, Akter, handlingar.

Bergskollegium huvudarkivet (BkH):

E 4: 136, Protokoll, ink. Brev, supplier, rannsakingar mm. 1715.

Stora Kopparbergs AB:s centralarkiv (STORA), Falun:

Gruvrätten:

Protokoll serie 57, 1716.

Inkomna skriftväxlingar, brev och suppliker till gruvrätten t. o. m. 1766: E3 volume 452.

Secondary literature

- Almquist, J. A. (1909). *Bergskollegium och Bergslagsstaterna 1637–1857: administrativa och biografiska anteckningar*. Stockholm: Norstedt.
- Amussen, S. (1988). *An ordered society: Gender and class in early modern England*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Boëthius, B. (1951). *Gruvornas, hyttornas och hamrarnas folk: bergshanteringsarbetare från medeltiden till gustavianska tiden*. Stockholm: Tiden.
- Blom, C. (1997). Husmoder och lärmoder: om kvinnliga befattningshavare vid Stockholms barnhus. In E. Österberg (Ed.), *Jämmerdal och fröjdesal: kvinnor i stormaktstidens Sverige* (pp. 170–195). Stockholm: Atlantis.
- Claesson, U. (2015). *Kris och kristnande: Olof Ekmans kamp för kristendomens återupprättande vid Stora Kopparberget 1689–1713: pietism, program och praktik*. Göteborg: Makadam.
- Edvinsson, R. (2012). The international political economy of early modern copper in Sweden 1624–1776. *European Review of Economic History*, 16(4), 408–429.
- Ericsson, B. (1970). *Bergsstad Falun 1720–1769*. Uppsala: Appelbergs.
- Frängsmyr, T. (1972). Den gudomliga ekonomin: religion och hushållning i 1700-talets Sverige. *Lychnos*, 1971/72, 217–244.
- Gray, M. (2000). *Productive men, reproductive women: The agrarian household and the emergence of separate spheres during the German enlightenment*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- Harnesk, B. (1990). *Legofolk: drängar, pigor och bönder i 1700- och 1800-talens Sverige = Farm servants and peasants in 18th and 19th century*. Umeå: Umeå Universitet.
- Hassan, K. J. & Lindström, J. (2017). Pigan i fadersväldet. Regler, undantag och mikrohistoriska möjligheter. *Historisk tidskrift*, 137(3), 351–378.
- Henriksson, H. (1996). Kvinnorna i Bergslagens gruvor. In Å. Karlsson (Ed.), *Järnkvinor: Bergslagens kvinnodagar 1995* (pp. 71–97). Uppsala: Uppsala historiska institutionen.
- Heckscher, E. F. (1940). Den svenska kopparhanteringen under 1700-talet. *Scandia*, 13(1), 22–89.
- Hildebrand, K.-G. (1946). *Falu stads historia 1641–1687*. Falun: Falu nya boktryckeri.
- Karlsson, P.-A. (1990). *Järnbruken och ståndssamhället: institutionell och attitydmässig konflikt under Sveriges tidiga industrialisering 1700–1770*. Stockholm: Jernkontoret.
- Kussmaul, A. (1981). *Servants in husbandry in early modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Laslett, P. (1977). *Family life and illicit love in earlier generations: Essays in historical sociology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Legné, M. (2004). *Fäderneslandets rätta beskrivning: mötet mellan antikvarisk forskning och ekonomisk nyttokult i 1700-talets Sverige*. Helsinki: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.

- Lindroth, S. (1955). *Gruvbrytning och kopparhantering vid Stora Kopparberget intill 1800-talets början. 1, Gruvan och gruvbrytningen*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Magnusson, L. (2001). *Korruptionen och den borgerliga ordningen: essäer från svensk ekonomihistoria*. Stockholm: Atlantis.
- McIsaac, S. C. (2004). From family member to employee: aspects of continuity and discontinuity in English domestic service, 1600–2000. In A. Fauve-Chamoux (Ed.), *Domestic service and the formation of European identity. Understanding the globalization of domestic work, 16th–21st centuries* (pp. 277–296). Bern: Peter Lang.
- Montelius, S. (1968). Falu gruva: ett dödens väntrum. *Ymer*, 88, 159–173.
- Olsson, D. S. (2012). Kopparberget i Falun under Stormaktstiden. In I. L. Ångström-Grandien & B. G. Jansson (Eds.), *Fornstora dagar: en antologi med texter om Falun, Stora Kopparberget och Sveriges stormaktstid* (pp. 133–153). Falun: Högskolan Dalarna.
- Runefelt, L. (2001). *Hushållningens dygder: affektlära, hushållningslära och ekonomiskt tänkande under svensk stormaktstid*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Runefelt, L. (2005). *Dygden som välståndets grund: dygd, nytta och egennytta i frihetstidens ekonomiska tänkande*. Stockholm.
- Rydberg, A. (2017). *Inner experience: An analysis of scientific experience in early modern Germany*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Sahlin, C. (1897). *Stora Kopparberget och Falu stad i reseskildringar: utdrag ur äldre och nyare tryckta källor, sammanställda af C. S.* Falun: Falun nya boktryckeri.
- Sjöberg, M. (1993). *Järn och jord : bergsmän på 1700-talet*. Stockholm: Stads- och kommunhistoriska institutet.
- Sjöberg, M. (1996). När bergsmannen blev bonde – en arbetsdelning i det förindustriella Sverige. In Å. Karlsson (Ed.), *Järnkvinor: Bergslagens kvinnodagar 1995* (pp. 14–32). Uppsala.
- Söderberg, T. (1932). *Stora Kopparbergets historia. 2, Stora Kopparberget under medeltiden och Gustav Vasa. Stora Kopparbergs*. Stockholm: Bergslags Aktiebolag.
- Uppenberg, C. (2018). *I husbondens bröd och arbete: kön, makt och kontrakt i det svenska tjänstefolkssystemet 1730–1860*. Gothenburg: Unit for Economic history, Department of Economy and Society, School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg.
- Ågren, K. (2007). *Köpmannen i Stockholm: grosshandlares ekonomiska och sociala strategier under 1700-talet*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Ågren, M. (Ed.) (2017). *Making a living, making a difference: Gender and work in early modern European society*. New York: Oxford University Press.