Guises of Power
Integration of society and legitimation of power in Sweden and the Southern Low Countries ca 1500–1900

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Uppsala University was founded in 1477. As higher education had become a necessity for a successful ecclesiastical career, it was only a matter of time before the first University in the Nordic countries became a reality. At first, teaching was carried out on a small scale, a few professors and approximately 40–50 students were enrolled at the University at the same time.

During most of the sixteenth century, the University slumbered as the King, Gustav Vasa, was preoccupied. However, during the first half of the seventeenth century, Uppsala University was revitalised by a Government that needed officials for its expanding administration. The University was supported on the expectation that it would provide not only clergymen as before, but also officials for the local and central administration. The concentration on higher education led to a significant increase in the number of students. In the middle of the century, students were in many ways an important feature of the city’s population. They enhanced the city’s reputation and swelled the burghers’ wealth, but they were also involved in conflicts with the rest of the city’s inhabitants. At that time it became more common than before for students to play pranks on people, disturbing the peace and calm of the township. Groups of students went about the streets, armed and sometimes masked or disguised. Often festivities such as Walpurgis night or fairs ended up with students going berserk in the streets. At times the city guard, the burghers, billeted soldiers or even their own magistrate were targets. Some of these collective student actions were so ruinous, organised and violent that they were recognised by the leading men of the country.

Disturbances and riots were not unusual in Early Modern townships. They represented a wide scale of events, from stone throwing to organised uprisings. Sometimes they were protests directed against the local authorities or Government representatives. At other times they were less organised.
Often, even more serious rioting began with some minor incident, which by different coincidences and circumstances could develop into something fatal. Violence and tendencies to violence were a constant feature of everyday life. Of course most conflicts did not break out dramatically, but some did and they have been recorded in our sources. These disturbances were an expression of relationships and liaisons between different groups in the city, and between various groups and the authorities. By and large, they concerned different aspects of power: the way in which local institutions exercised their power, how the authorities could be challenged and how power ought to be exercised. During the seventeenth century this interaction between the state authority and local corporations, each with its own concept of honour, developed and altered.¹

This paper focuses on different aspects of student unrest in Early Modern Uppsala. I would suggest that they point to three processes of integration. In the student disturbances and the consequent judicial inquiries, these processes came into mutual conflict. It was a matter of the confrontation of corporate identity on different levels with the demands of an absolutist state for control and discipline. On one level, the students’ aim was to cement social bonds and create a new identity, sometimes in an environment that was far from home. To drink and fight together was one way of doing that. On the next level, the University Board was held judicially responsible for the unruly students by virtue of its privileges. The inquiries into student unrest therefore had a clearly integrating intention, where fatherly concern was emphasised rather than an eagerness to punish. The last level in question is the state, which increased its control over the local courts and aimed at the social integration of all its citizens. When things were troubled in Uppsala and seemed to get beyond the control of the University Board, the ultimate recourse was to state power.

Integration through Identity –
Student Culture in Early Modern Uppsala

The students of Uppsala University came chiefly from the families of burghers, clergy or persons of rank. Between 10 and 20 per cent came from peasant homes, which was a large proportion, seen in a European perspective. When these youths arrived at the University they were initiated by older students. This rite-de-passage was called the deposition and had obvious sadistic features. After a number of humiliating tests, the new student abandoned his former life and was baptised symbolically.

Students were organised according to the provinces* from which they came. These later became the “Nations”* that still exist today. The student Nations were founded in the first half of the seventeenth century as a result of several circumstances. First, the increasing numbers of students made it possible. Between 1625 and 1650 student enrolment rose from 300 to 1000 in round figures. Secondly, the nations were a result of the collective thinking of Early Modern society. Just as craftsmen organised themselves in guilds, it was natural for students to form communities. Last, the Nations had foreign models, especially at the German universities. Students from the nobility were an exception as they were not obliged to be affiliated to a nation and in many other ways held themselves aloof from the rest of the students. However, they formed only a small proportion of the academic population – less than five per cent. The student community was grouped province-wise, which indicates that they brought their regional identity to their new Alma Mater. This provincial division was in principle the same as that of the bishops’ dioceses.

The Nations were meeting-points for students from the same part of the country. As the Nations were competing corporations and centres of power beyond the control of the University, attempts were made to subdue and discipline them. The new constitution of 1655 prohibited the Nations

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J. Strömberg, *Studenten, nationer och universitet. Studenternas härkomst och levnadshistorier vid Akademin i Åbo 1640–1808*. Skrifter utgivna av svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland nr 601
completely, which was greeted with emphatic protests from the students. Consequently the University changed its tactics: instead of abolition they tried to integrate the students in the University organisation, and in that way increase control. From 1663, inspectors were elected to supervise the students’ moral behaviour in each Nation. The inspector, one of the professors, was at the first chosen by the University Board, but after a while by the students themselves. In 1667 membership in the Nations was made compulsory for all students, except those of noble birth. The activities of the Nations were also regulated more strictly, with two formal meetings each year, called by the inspector.

The foundations of student corporations were part of the process of creating identity. Many students lived far from their family and relatives, which meant that they lacked the social security of their native home, but also the local social control of that environment. Joining the student community meant joining a new group and another, different social network. When the University tried to forbid the Nations, it met with protests from the students. During the 1660s three serious collective student actions took place which were clearly reactions against the bid for control made by the University Board. But they were also important for another reason: as an important element in the creation of a young male cultural environment of heavy drinking and fighting. Disturbances following drinking in beer cellars and inns were not unusual and these places were important in establishing links to the local community. The role that cellars and inns played for business, employment and rumour-mongering has been described earlier. Beer cellars and inns were important for different social groups who formed their lifestyles through practices and activities there.

In the 1660s many of the collective actions were directed at the students’ own organisation – the University – and its attempts to control its young members. On other occasions other groups were attacked. A constant theme in the history of student unrest in Uppsala is confrontations between groups of students and the city guard. From the 1670s and the following decades, students were a constant menace to the local police. It seems as though the guards constituted a provocation by the city, as far as the students were concer-

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6 Florén, “Västmanlands-Dala nation”, p. 30. According to Florén the nations were “fettered”.
7 ibid., pp. 31–32.
ned. The Corps de garde in the city square was on several occasions attacked and the guards were forced to take cover in the Guard House. At other times the conflicts escalated for a period between guards and students. In a time of revenge and collective honour, even seemingly minor matters could literally be of deadly concern.

Conflicts between students and guards can also be interpreted in terms of class. Most students came from reasonably well-off families while the city guards were men of lower rank in the local community. In the opinion of the students, the guard did not represent any authority and matters did not improve after 1668 when the guard received royal protection and more thorough instructions. On the contrary, the troubles between guard and students really started off then. Throughout the eighteenth century, guards were occasionally attacked by students. It was particularly difficult to control the students of the nobility and the large groups surrounding them. In the case of the nobility there was also a judicial complication as they could demand to be interrogated by their peers if they chose to.

Lenient Corporative Reintegration -
The University Board between State Control and Student Violence

Uppsala University was accorded new privileges and a constitution in 1655, defining its relations with the rest of society for nearly two centuries. During the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries the Academy was an independent corporation, chiefly by virtue of its jurisdiction, which was not rescinded until 1852. The constitution gave the university jurisdiction over its University members in both civil and criminal cases arising within one day's journey from the city (60 km). The University's jurisdiction was separated from that of the city and was dealt with, like the rest of the administration, by the professors, who together constituted the University Board. More serious cases, including the death penalty or mutilation, had to be submitted to the Court of Appeal after consultation with the Academy Chancellor. The chancellor, usually one of the most eminent men in the country, was the major Guardian of the University's interests, but also a Superintendent who sometimes inspected the education and the morals of the students. On the whole

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9 C. M. Schybergsson, *1655 års universitetskonstitutioner* (Åbo, 1918).
the University can be regarded as an independent community, separate from the rest of the city. This distinction must not be exaggerated, however. The corporation was above all a jurisdiction and an economic unit, with no exactly defined limits vis-à-vis the outside world. The University was chiefly an institution to which a young man belonged for a short period of his life before taking up duties as an official of some kind. It was not unusual that a student married a burgher’s widow and took over her late husband’s business. The city court was recruited primarily from among the law students and the municipal craftsmen sometimes moved between University and city and in that way could choose another employer.10

Being judicially responsible, the University Board had to deal with any riots or disturbances in which students were involved. It was responsible for the corporation’s jurisdiction toward the central government, and it also had to maintain its reputation and corporate honour in relation to the rest of the local community. In order to accomplish this the University had to control its members. The most striking feature of its behaviour is, nevertheless, its lenient and integrating attitude towards the students. Actually, this was nothing unique for the University Board. In fact, most of the local courts had this integrating ambition rather than a punitive strategy.11 In the case of the University jurisdiction, there were mainly two reasons for this. One frequent argument was that the students were young boys and they needed a good upbringing and education rather than severe punishment. The Board and the Inspectors should act rather as fathers than as a court of justice.

Another reason actually arose from the Board’s considerations for their own personal safety. Each sentence or proclamation by the Board could, and sometimes did, give rise to retaliation from angry students. There was a latent violence among the students which occasionally came to the surface. The professors and their families were sometimes unsafe even in their own home. Seen from this point of view, the lenient sentences are much easier to understand.

State Control and Social Discipline

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, considerably stronger states were established in Europe. Central governments gained more power and the result was what has often been called the absolutist state or absolutism. During this period a transition from domain state to tax state took place as the income from rulers' private estates was overshadowed by taxes and revenues paid by the people. Other important effects of the dominance of central governments were the rise of bureaucracy, professionalism, mercantilism, and innovations in military technology.\textsuperscript{12} To increase control of their subjects, the states expanded both central and local administrations. As Gerhard Oestreich has shown, thorough social discipline with adherent hierarchies, rationalisation and division of labour embraced both the military and the civil administration centrally and locally.\textsuperscript{13} State-building in Europe has been seen as an integrative process on two levels. The international economy expanded through trade and financial systems crossing national borders. But the political system also required support from the population. The government's task was therefore to reach at least a sense of integration between the state, its officials and its people.\textsuperscript{14}

In Sweden, through the Form of Government of 1634 and the Instruction for the County Governors the following year, the former governors were replaced by county governors with extended, wide-ranging authority.\textsuperscript{15} According to the new norms the county governor was the King's foremost representative in the county\textsuperscript{*} with all-embracing control.\textsuperscript{16} Another opportunity for the state to increase its supervision of the local community was to send commissions or individual officials.\textsuperscript{17} This new state administration

\textsuperscript{12} See for instance J. Kunisch, \textit{Absolutismus. Europäische Geschichte vom Westfälischen Frieden bis zur Krise des Ancien Régime} (Göttingen, 1986); E. Hinrichs (ed.) \textit{Absolutismus} (Frankfurt am Main, 1986).
\textsuperscript{17} S. A. Nilsson, \textit{De stora krigens tid. Om Sverige som militärstat och bondesamhälle} Studia Historica Upsaliensia 161 (Uppsala, 1990), pp. 81–104.
also required higher theoretical qualifications than previously, when ancestry and liaisons alone determined how places were to be filled. The universities, which earlier had been chiefly seminaries training priests, responded to these new demands. Consequently, a great effort was made from the state to revitalise the already existing universities. In Sweden, this development started with the economic improvement of Uppsala University.

The judicial system too was now under more effective Government control. One effect was the emergence of the Courts of Appeal, another was the encouragement of the law faculties. Perhaps the most important consequence was the increased control of the local jurisdictions. The English authors Bruce Lenman and Geoffrey Parker have coined the expression “the judicial revolution”. Briefly, this denotes the development from a local to a central justice, as a result of the strong state and its demand for control. From having been a local concern with laymen involved, the judicial system came to be dominated by state officials. The universities were still ruled by their own professors and they fought hard for their jurisdiction and independence. This was also the case with Uppsala University, whose formal independence the Government tried to diminish during the eighteenth century, though with no great success.

The University kept its corporate freedom and medieval organisation. But the King and the state officials were at times extremely concerned about how matters were handled in Uppsala when the University Board had problems in controlling its students. As shown above, the leniency of their sentences for student unrest were due partly to their fatherly concern but also to their fear of retaliation from the students. The relationship with central

Government also placed the University Board in a dilemma. To retain the Government’s confidence and so retain its own privileges, the University had to control its members. It had to act in a way that preserved its authority, yet it also had to consider its own safety. This became obvious during periods of frequent student riots, as in the second half of the seventeenth century. For a couple of years students tormented the city’s inhabitants with raucous behaviour, gunfire and swordplay. Despite being apprehended, interrogated and sentenced by the Board, the students would not calm down. Sentences were not particularly harsh: most of the students were fined and only a few were relegated for short periods.

When student disturbances continued, the University Board was held responsible. The state did not have the same opinion as the Board concerning its fatherly, educational treatment of the students. The criminals must be punished and order restored. The ambition of the state was however also to integrate and seek harmony in society. The Court of Appeal or the King had the opportunity to show mercy by revoking (leuteratio) a penalty. After student riots during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries commissioners were sent to Uppsala to undertake supplementary investigations. At other times, cases were referred to the Court of Appeal after the Board had failed (or was even reluctant) to investigate. At such times it was clear that the confidence of its superiors in the Board was reduced and state control increased.24 The good will partly diminished and the collective honour of the University was damaged. The interventions of the Commissioners and the Court of Appeal revealed that the King no longer considered the University jurisdiction capable of examining and judging its own members. Unruly students thus exercised some influence on the University’s relations with the state. The professors were not replaced by state officials and the University retained its privileges and medieval organisation, at least formally. In practice the government nevertheless intervened when considered necessary.

Conclusion – Three Levels of Social Integration

During the seventeenth century, Uppsala University was being reorganised and the number of students increased dramatically. From the middle of the

century, students became a group increasingly involved in riots and disturbances. In this paper I have suggested that in analysing these riots we can discern three different attempts to integrate and control. First we have the students trying to create an identity in their new local community. One important way to achieve this was to drink together and then, often heavily armed and masked, run amok in the streets, making the city unsafe for the rest of the community. Student unrest is therefore to be seen as groupings of young men seeking identity and respect. It must be said, however, that not even the student corporation was an egalitarian group. Behind the loyalty sometimes lay quite explicit threats of violence and there was an element of control according to age, rank and physical strength. Even among the students there was a hierarchy and some instigators and leaders often coerced or enticed others into trouble.

Student organisation and integration was not seen with delight by the University. Initially it tried to prohibit the student Nations, but after a while it incorporated them within the University organisation. This met with massive protests from the students, who felt that their freedom was being circumscribed. When sentencing unruly students the University adopted an obvious integrating and conflict-solving attitude. The professors wanted a father-son relationship, aiming to educate them and bring them up. The most important reason was this forgiving mentality was ‘boys will be boys!’ It is hardly surprising to learn that several of the professors sitting in judgement had themselves participated in earlier student disturbances.

Certainly it was a problem for the University Board that the lenient sentences did not calm the students down. At times when student unrest prevailed in Uppsala the King was most concerned. The University had been integrated in the growing absolutist state and was important for several reasons. It still was, of course, first of all a seminary for priests and the clergy had a crucial role in an ideological sense. But it was also educating state officials of other kinds for the growing state bureaucracy. The University’s inability to control its own students was not at all popular with the central Government. State officials were sent over to Uppsala to investigate and the Court of Appeal took over some of the cases. Central Government actions were more harsh towards the students, as they believed that the tender approach adopted the Board was the reason for the troubles. Lenient sentences only encouraged students to cause further disturbances. The state’s aim was to integrate all its subjects, and it demanded social discipline and control.

The keyword in this text has been integration and I have recognised three levels of social integration shown in student riots and disturbances in a Swedish
city. Student groups were integrated through the creation of identity. Between the students and the state, in its difficult intermediate position, the University Board tried to integrate the students in the corporation through flexible local jurisdiction. The growing Swedish state at last, sought to control matters in the country through officials and the Court of Appeal.