



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

# **BERÄTTELSE OM 1700-TALET**

## **Frihetstiden och Gustav III:s regeringstid i svensk historiekultur från 1870-tal till 1990-tal**

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### **Akademisk avhandling**

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Narratives about the eighteenth century: The Age of Liberty and the reign of Gustav III in Swedish historical culture from the 1870s to the 1990s

**Abstract**

This dissertation analyses historical-cultural change in Sweden by focusing on historical narratives concerning the eighteenth-century epoch called the Age of Liberty and the subsequent reign of Gustav III. The overarching aim has been to study these narratives in a Swedish national historical culture from the 1870s to the 1990s. Three different arenas are examined in which history has been mediated in society: the historical research arena, the history textbook arena and the press arena. The dissertation analyses the relationship between the mediation within these arenas and how this relationship has changed over time. The theoretical framework is based on history didactical perspectives concerning historical culture and the mediation of history. This study shows that the three arenas are the most homogeneous in relation to each other during the period from the 1870s up until the 1920s. The historical culture is dominated by two main narratives during this period. One conservative, royalistic state idealist narrative, and one prodemocratic anti-Gustavian narrative, originating from the works of Anders Fryxell. From the 1920's onwards, the arenas drift apart and becomes more heterogeneous in relation to each other. From the 1960's onwards, a Lagerrothian pro-parliamentary, prodemocratic narrative becomes prominent in textbooks and press, but not as prominent in historical research. The narrative consolidates democratic ideals in its contemporary context by highlighting parliamentary and democratic traditions in the nation's history. The shift from one dominant narrative to another suggests that the political applicability of research narratives in different times has a strong impact on historical cultural change within the framework of the nation. The study also shows that the most dominant narrative has not shifted chronologically from an old narrative to a newer one. Rather, the shift has been from one dominant narrative direction to another, while both have been mediated simultaneously for decades. It is concluded in the study that the view of a "lag" between historical research and other arenas must be nuanced and placed in the context of specific historical narratives.

**Keywords**

Historical culture, history mediation, narratives, historiography, Age of Liberty, Gustav III

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