



Unemployed? Debt problems? Tired of never getting promoted? Does the government owe you money? Do you have the solution to a pressing social problem? Are you an entrepreneur with an exciting new invention? Do you and the other peasants in your parish want to pay less tax? Are the merchants in that nearby town infringing on your trade privileges? What can you do? Well, if you happened to live in premodern Sweden you could petition for help by writing a supplication!

Supplications submitted to the king, his representatives, and the Swedish Diet were used for a variety of reasons. They were one of the most common ways, if not *the* commonest way, for Swedish subjects to interact with the powers that be. This channel of communication gave the king's subjects direct access to the central organs of state, and anyone, man or woman, rich or poor, could use it. Right across the middle of this strict, hierarchical society ran a channel that cut through barriers and hierarchies, a channel that brought ordinary Swedes into direct contact with their rulers and representatives. Yet until now there has been no systematic study of Swedish supplications over time. They are finally given the attention they deserve in Martin Almbjär's study of supplications in the Age of Liberty (1719–1772). Tracing their legal, administrative, and political roots, Almbjär shows how political concerns, administrative realities, and social norms all impacted on the development of the Diet's handling of supplications, and ultimately who could and did use that particular channel. The Swedish experience is also compared with that of other countries, confirming that much like the rest of Europe, the powers that be needed to balance their increasing claims on power against the reality of day-to-day governance.

Martin Almbjär is a historian at the Department of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, Umeå University. *The voice of the people? Supplications submitted to the Diet in the Age of Liberty, 1719–72* is his Ph.D. thesis.

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Department of Historical, Philosophical
and Religious Studies
Umeå University, SE-90187 Umeå
www.idesam.umu.se
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The voice of the people? *Supplications submitted to the Swedish Diet in the Age of Liberty, 1719-1772*

Martin Almbjär

