

# Women and Men in the Coastal Districts on the Swedish Westcoast

## A Study of the Roles of Men and Women and of Cultural Contacts

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This study will show the differences in the conditions of life for men and women during the earlier part of the 20th century and the consequences thereof. The men lived far from home a great part of the year, because of their deep-sea fishing. One notices the responsibility the women had in many areas of life. They developed a significant independence within their areas of responsibility. The areas for which the men carried responsibility at home were connected to the sea. Men and women avoided interfering into each other's tasks. The women at the coast were responsible for more than what was usual in other milieux both in the country-side and in towns. The women's main responsibility for the economy can be noticed in their care of the money which the men earned from fishing, as well as the income from letting accommodations to summer visitors. This, in my view, has strengthened the women's position in the home. In the contacts with strangers, the women at the coast have proved to be conscious of the norms and ideologies which they represented. They were openly opposed to things which conflicted with their views and they tried to ward off other influences from outside. The Swedish men were both well received and regarded as competitors in Norwegian harbours. The men have been more changeable than the women and tolerant towards new ideas. The reason for this, may be that they had a more mobile life than the women and consequently also got more impressions from other ideological views and ways of life than what they were confronted with among the women at home. This openmindedness lessened conflicts when they visited Norwegian harbours.

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This is a study of the different conditions in the lives of women and men in some coastal villages in the province of Bohuslän on the Swedish west coast, where fishing has been the main source of income. How have responsibilities been divided and what conclusions can be drawn regarding the division of power or dominance between the sexes?

The coastal communities, characterized by fishing, differ from the inland regions. While the men were away from home for long periods during the summer, the women stayed at home together with children and elderly men,

helping the work running. In what ways has this fact influenced the roles of men and women compared with other rural areas where men and women have lived closer together? Have women in coastal regions been more independent in their relationship to men than elsewhere? Does the fact that women carry responsibility in many cases – even in duties that in inland environments fall on men, like farming and cattlebreeding – lead to increased status or dominance by women in a local milieu in relation to men? How correct are the opposed opinions of earlier research on the "misery" of

women, i.e. women being suppressed by men on the one hand, and the power of women – i.e. women being responsible for central parts of life – in coastal communities, on the other (cf. e.g. Berggreen 1980, Stoklund 1985, Jørgensen 1986)? The period I have studied lasts from late 19th century up to the time of the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> Economy and life in this area under study was around this time depending on deep-sea fishing west of Norway, near the Shetlands or Iceland.<sup>2</sup>



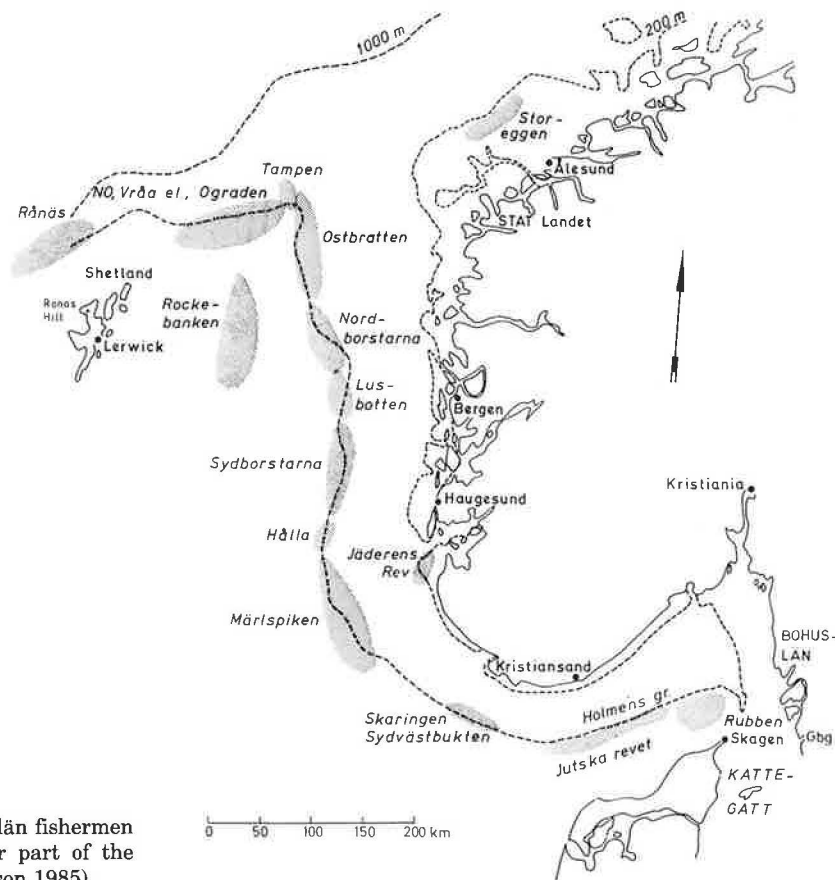
Map of Bohuslän

# 1. Women at Home and Men at Sea

The fact that the men were so far from home, meant that men and women had to live apart for long periods of time. The fishing trips lasted for 6–8 weeks at a time. They started in March and ended in September. Before they left for the fishing-waters, the women had *extensive tasks of preparation*. They had to prepare food and clothes<sup>3</sup>. They made oil skin clothes and organized the baking of large batches of what was called “käppkakor”, i.e. thin crisp-bread which was dried on a stick under ceiling. Responsibility for brewing large quantities of beer was taken in turns by the wives of the men in the same crew.<sup>4</sup>

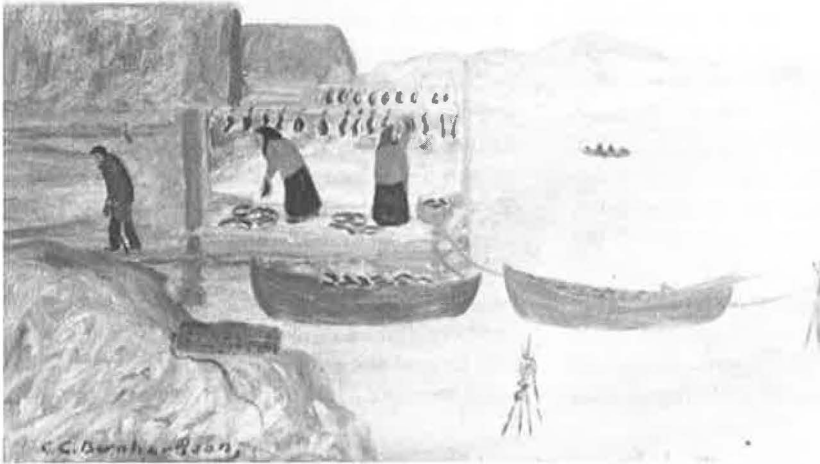
The men were aware of, and actually pointed out, how strenuously the women worked, while the women themselves have not mentioned this in the interviews made with them. This

might indicate that they accepted their conditions and that they were not aware of any other alternatives. They might thus have had a feeling of resignation and kept quiet about their heavy tasks when talking to outsiders. A fisherman, born in 1883 in Edshultshall, in 1976 reminisced the following about his youth: “It was the womenfolk who had to spin the hemp in winter-time. It was the women who had to clean out the fish. The women had to sew all the clothes and knit all the socks the fishermen were to bring along when we went to the fishing-grounds near Iceland or the Shetlands. I don’t understand how they managed all this” (no 1). Men’s attitudes towards the women’s strenuous working situation<sup>5</sup> can be seen according to what they had observed as children and as grown-ups. But the fact might also be that the mothers heavily impressed this view on their sons’ minds. In the coastal com-



Banks where the Bohuslän fishermen fished during the latter part of the 19th century (From Olsson 1985).

Women hanging up fish for drying in the 1920's. Picture made by the painter of ethnological motifs, Carl Gustaf Bernhardson.



A woman on the island of Valön collecting fire-wood in 1903. Privately owned photo.

munities the women carried the main responsibility for bringing up the children. Because of the many tasks the women had during the summer half of the year, their social contacts were mainly limited to working together, like the preparing of the fish or hay-making, or when they met at the common well while collecting water. Among other things the men had to mend their fishing-tackle before their departure. In winter, the mending had to be done in the kitchen, since it was too cold to sit in a boat-shed. This was irritating for the women, since this kind of work conflicted with their well-known ambitions to keep their houses as clean as possible.<sup>6</sup> Some informants have told me how their mothers cleaned and aired the house with wide-open windows when the men had left with their fishing-tackle. This actually was the only occasion when a conflict was caused by the interests of the men – the boat, the fishing and fishing equipment – intruding on women's traditional area of responsibility. The men usually kept out of the women's domains, except during the winter when they even baited their fishing-tackle – used for coastal fishing – in the kitchen.





The women say farewell to their men of a boat's crew from the island of Dyrön. The boat is setting off for deep-sea fishing near the Shetlands. Privately owned photo from around 1920.

When a fishing-boat left its harbour for a longer journey, there were specific *farewell-ceremonies* clearly emphasizing the differences between men and women in the coastal communities. The women acted collectively as one group and the men as another. The women went aboard and before they left the boat, they shook hands with the men. Women and children then followed the fishing-boat in a smaller boat and waved to the men as long as they could see them. A fisherman's wife, born in 1877 on the island of Käringsön, told in 1942: "When the fishermen were ready to leave, their family went aboard. Sometimes they took us in tow as far as to Måseskär. There we had to taste the small beer and have some sandwiches, women and children. Then one might also have to try a piece of the rice-puddings which the fishermen had taken along."

When the men were away for a long time, their life at sea occupied a lot of the women's minds. This is evident through interviews as well as letters written by women to their men in foreign harbours. This information indicates the *anxiety women felt for the survival of the men* at bad weather. A woman on Käringsön in

1925 wrote a letter to her husband on the North Sea: "I can't be at peace when you're at sea. And these storms, for there have been terrible storms during the last week. I was fairly calm until Thursday. Then I began to feel worried and anxious. But on Friday the wind blew so badly that I thought I would go crazy... Then I had a painful, sleepless night. The storm roared and howled. It was as if it grinned at my worrying. In fact, I was so afraid and nervous that I wouldn't have had the courage to get out of bed... I thought the most dreadful thought that can be thought, that I would never see you again. Then on Saturday morning, I phoned Gertrud (another fisherman's wife). She was in just as much despair as I was. During the whole Saturday I was so worn out from the terrible night that I had no strength to think. Then when the telegramme came from the boat on Saturday at 8 o'clock, it was as if I didn't have any energy left for the endless joy which it, after all, brought to me". In the collected material of interviews, there are many corresponding descriptions. A man in Grundsund, born in 1922, recalls how, when he was a child, his mother used to worry about



Grundsund women walking to the post-office impatiently hoping for letters from their men at sea in the 1920's. Painting by Carl Gustaf Bernhardson.

her husband and his crew when the winds were strong. She would then kneel in her home and recite hymns. She also told her children to read hymns and lamented so loudly that the children could hear it: "They will never return". "They will never manage this". "What will happen to them?" (no 2)<sup>8</sup>. Her anxiety lasted until she received a post-card in the mail, saying that the men had called at some Norwegian harbour. That is the reason why the women went to the post-office with such eager expectation in the mornings. The men used to write post-cards or letters as soon as they had called at a port, sheltered from storms or in order to deliver their catch. They did so because they knew that the women thought of them and were anxious for their lives. They told that they were in good health, how large their catch was and when they planned to return.

Women who had received a post-card or a letter immediately told the others. If one boat-crew had sent a message but not another one, the wives of the second crew would at once get

more worried. When the informant in Grundsund, born in 1922, grew up, he heard many times women in that position lamenting: "What has become of our men?" or "Where can our men be?" (no 2). It was comfort in times of worry when the women visited each other to talk and thus share their worries. Many women have also experienced how their religious faith gave them strength and comfort when they thought of the dangers their menfolk were exposed to at sea.

Many old fishermen have reported that they realised that the women were more worried about them than they themselves were when they were close to the storms far away. They felt that they had no other choice than to set off for their next fishing-journey when they had been ashore, saved from a storm. For this reason they had to forget the dangers they might have to face anew. Norwegian fishermen who had experienced bad accidents have expressed similar views (Rabben 1983: 153f). So both women and men lived under tough working conditions. In order to support themselves in the



Postcard sent by a fisherman from Kristiansand to Dyrön in 1906 with the text: "Dear Brother, live well. A warm greeting to you all from me. J. B. Nilsson."

society they belonged to, it was necessary for both parts to struggle hard. Beside the hard work of taking care of family and house, livestock, getting fodder, collecting fuel etc., the women carried the worry for the dangerous conditions under which the men lived and nobody could influence.

The women's worrying and longing for the men at sea indicates that they did not only experience a relief of not being suppressed when the men were away. We cannot, however, only interpret this as an expression of love and care for the men. There may also be economic reasons. The women had obvious difficulties in supporting themselves when they became widows, which was not uncommon. Because of a surplus of women it was not as easy for women as for men to get married again. In order to survive, the widows had to carry out even more

tasks than other women, like fishing near the coast. Married women generally did not fish.

Thanks to messages in post-cards and letters sent from foreign ports, the women were able to calculate the approximate time of the return of the men. Then there were ceremonies of return. Women and children went up on some high mountain close to their coastal village in good time, looking towards the horizon. They often came there many days before-hand. Here a kind of women's solidarity was manifested. They did needle-work and chatted, a change from the normally hard daily work, and at the same time a way of sharing worries and longings. When a boat could be seen, the women began to cheer and sometimes to sing.<sup>9</sup>

The men used to bring sugar-candy for the children from Norwegian ports. They bought china and plates of clay from a factory in Egersund for the women.<sup>10</sup> The money they earned when they were out fishing was also given to the women. The ceremonies around the return of the men continued up to the Second World



Fishermen from Dyrön preparing a Sunday dinner at sea, 1931. Photo privately owned.

War. Around this time, the outer conditions changed noticeably. Because of imported tele- and radio communications the men were able to more regularly be in contact with the women at home. Then the women's farewell and welcome ceremonies were not as relevant as before.

## 2. The Men's Cultural Contacts in Foreign Ports

The men's contacts with other cultures occurred when they visited foreign ports. For the fishermen of Bohuslän this meant ports in southern and western Norway, from Kristiansand and westwards, especially Mandal, Farsund, Egersund, Flekkefjord, Haugesund and earlier also Ålesund.

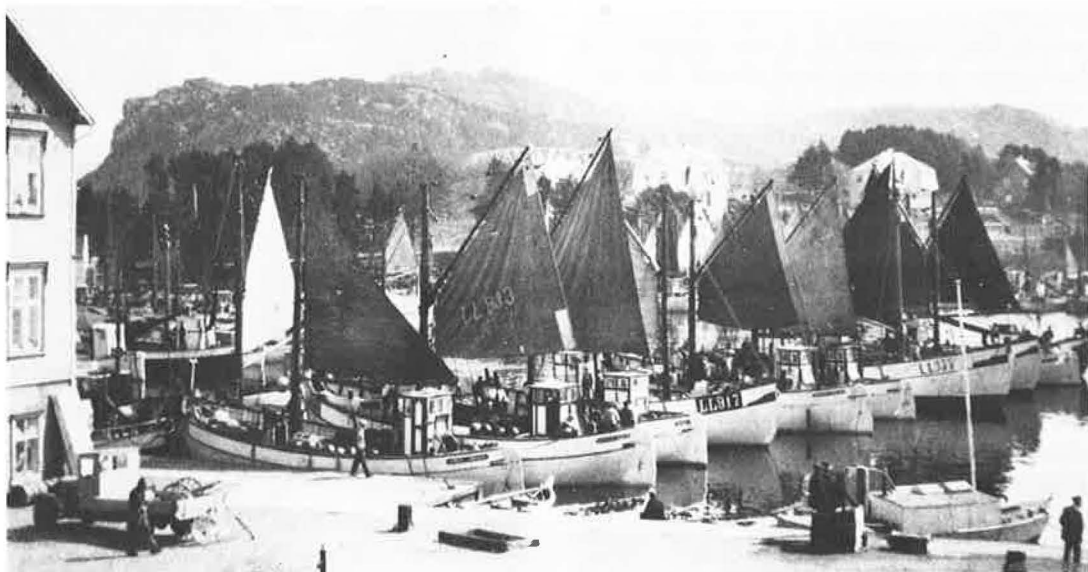
### A. Economic contacts

On their way to the fishing-grounds, the fishermen of the early 20th century called at Kristiansand in order to *buy mackerel or herring for baiting as well as barrels of salt* for salting the fish at sea. The Swedes also called at Norwegian ports to find shelter from the storms. They stayed for as long as one or two weeks.

Up to the time of the Second World War, the

deep-sea fishermen of Bohuslän *delivered part of the catch to buyers in Norwegian harbours*, often the same firm that had furnished them with bait, barrels and salt on their way out. The buyers of fish, among them the firms "Ekberg" in Kristiansand and "Bø" in Egersund whom many Swedish fishermen dealt with, then exported the catch to the US, primarily. The Swedes also went to smaller places like Kleven outside Mandal and the islands of Svinør and Flekkerøya. There they were able to buy bait at a lower price. Both Swedish fishermen and informants on these islands have vouched for this. On Svinør, many Swedish fishermen have sold cod to the buyers who produced split dried cod.

These business contacts meant that the Swedes got to know buyers of fish in the Norwegian harbours and also the bakers from whom they bought some of their provisions of bread. These were the connections Swedes had with Norwegian men of a higher social and economic position. Since the Norwegians had economic interests in the contacts with the Swedish fishermen, conflicts were guarded against. Many fishermen have told of the close connections they had with Norwegian fish-exporters (cf. Engelbrektsson 1985). Ekberg in Kristian-



Fishing-boats from Smögen and Kungshamn in the harbour of Farsund, 1933. Privately owned photo.

sand, for example, used to invite his customers to his home, especially on Sundays when there was no fishing or business. He also invited the Swedes to go with him to meetings of the Evangelical meeting-house, to which he belonged. Many fishermen accepted this invitation, even those who did not belong to a Free Church in Sweden. The close contacts between

Swedish fishermen and Norwegian fish buyers can be seen in songs written and sung by Swedish fishermen. A fisherman from Fiske-tången, for example, born in 1848, wrote an Ålesund song in the 1880's. It was written down in 1934, the author being the informant. I print here verses 1–4:

- 1  
The bravest men, I think, on the round of the earth  
Are the Swedish fishermen who sail to Ålesund  
They are well behaved when they walk around the town  
At sea, they sail hard when there are half-gale winds.
- 2  
The merchants of Ålesund are cheered up  
When the Swedes come sailing in  
They run out in the streets and keep watch carefully  
Where they will land, in order to fetch them.
- 3  
Welcome Swedish brothers to the land of Norway  
Now you have sailed across roaring salty seas  
We greet you warmly and ask what winds  
Brought you here, and you are so light of heart.
- 4  
Come, join me at the office for a drink of welcome  
Then we shall bargain for the fish you bring  
Then they offer eight shillings for one kind of cod, that will do  
And up to six for the other kind and look proud and haughty.

(This song belongs to a person at Smögen).

The contacts with the fish buyers ceased when a Norwegian law in the late 1930's prohibited Swedes to deliver fish to Norwegian harbours. This law irritated many Swedes when they started fishing again in the North Sea after the Second World War. A fisherman from Sydkoster, born in 1915, tells: "The Norwegian law for fishing was issued in 1938, but its effects were obvious only after the war. It was difficult to sell off the catch there. It took at least twenty-four hours and the fish deteriorated. Prices were unfavourable for us, too. In Farsund, west of Lindesnäs, southern Norway, the au-

thorities were worst, but not private people" (no 3). There is much similar information stating that the Swedes after the Second World War were irritated with the officials when they landed in Norwegian ports, mainly to find shelter from the storms.

#### *B. Ideological influences*

While visiting Norwegian harbours, Swedish fishermen were invited to, and often took part in, a wide range of *religious activities*. There were meetings in the so-called meeting-houses, especially those belonging to the Salvation

Army. Men who at home did not attend meetings arranged by free religious movements outside of the Swedish State Church, the so-called Free Churches, also attended. A fisherman from Smögen, born in 1896, who was not a member of any Free Church reports that "in Norway we always went to the Salvation Army. What appealed most to us was the Salvation Army's song book" (no 4). As a result of these contacts with new movements, which they had no connection to in Sweden, the men in Bohuslän's coastal villages were more open to new religious movements than the women. The women, in a different way, clung to the religiosity of the church they already belonged to (see below). A woman from Edshultshall, born in 1914, tells that her father "belonged to the State Church, but that he had high regards for the Salvation Army, for he had been out in the ports. And he said it was because of the work they did. In that respect the State Church is behind, he always said" (no 5). This open-minded attitude towards free religious movements was in conflict with the religious training the fishermen had received at home from their mothers and ministers in the Bohuslän villages (cf. Hörmander 1980). The ministers noticed that because of their visits to Norway, the men had different opinions regarding religion than the women. A minister in Rönnäng on the island of Tjörn writes in his official report in 1895 that "when the soldiers of the Salvation Army arrive in their boat, the men, when they are at home, follow the Norwegian example of being so tolerant that they don't chase the 'yacht' (boat) away", but "more sensible women are ashamed to run after travelling so-called preachers the way men do" (Rönnäng Church Archives). One informant in Grundsund, born in 1922, tells that his father (1887–1976) claimed that during the first decades of the 20th century he didn't have the courage to tell his wife and other women in Grundsund that he had visited the Salvation Army's meetings in Norwegian harbours (no 2). What impressed the Swedish men the most with the Salvation Army were their songs and music, but also their solidarity and care for other people. At these meetings, Swedish fishermen made acquaintance with many Norwe-

gian women and this added to the attraction to visit the meetings. Some Swedish fishermen started dating the women they met at the Salvation Army's meetings. A large part of the activities offered in the harbours were made up of religious activities. Even if the social side of the religious meetings attracted many Swedish fishermen, quite a lot of them were genuinely converted. Many of these men have agitated for the new free church faith during the 20th century in their respective region of the Swedish west coast. They have received their impulses from Norwegian or British harbours. Among these were the young men who returned from Grimsby in England to the island of Åstol in Bohuslän in 1923, where they took the initiative to a strong revival movement of the Pentecostal Church (Gustavsson 1984). A minister in the Rönnäng parish, of which Åstol is a part, wrote in 1927 about the religious influences from abroad: "Fishermen from this parish who had visited England, Denmark, Norway and other countries on their fishing expeditions came back and worked for the Pentecostal Movement in particular" (Rönnäng Church Archives).

### *C. Social contacts during leisure-time*

Other spare-time activities in Norwegian harbours were *going to cinema, dancing and walking along the streets and in parks* in the Norwegian coastal towns. In this way, the fishermen made acquaintance with Norwegian women, some of which lead to more regular contacts and even marriages. A fisherman in Grundsund, born in 1910, who married a Norwegian woman in 1943, says: "We enjoyed going for walks in the park of Kristiansand and other places where we landed. There we met girls whom we started talking to. The Norwegian women were easy to talk with" (no 6). When a fisherman had got to know a Norwegian woman more closely, he might be invited to her home. Later on, the other men of his crew might also get an invitation. A fisherman from Fisketången writes in a letter from Ålesund on February 18th, 1900, that he was invited to a home where one of his friends from Smögen recently had got engaged to a girl: "Last night, I was at the Jaakina's and



A fish buyer from Smögen has taken this photo of the 17th of May celebration in Kristiansand in 1934. Photo privately owned.



was very well entertained. They asked me to visit them as soon as I get the time and said that I mustn't sleep aboard when we are there. So tonight I'm going over there again."

Women informants in Norwegian harbours have stated that Swedish fishermen were nice to talk to when they met them in town. Obviously, young women have showed interest in making acquaintance with the Swedes. In some cases this has created irritation in relation to their Norwegian male fellows of the same age in the coastal towns. Some interviews with Norwegians reveal that the Swedes might be carrying wooden sticks to stand their ground in case of conflicts with Norwegian men when they walked through the streets. A number of Norwegian informants have said that the Swedes walked in groups and wore wooden shoes which the Norwegian city dwellers did not. They were looked upon as being dirty and smelling of oil from the engines in the fishing-boats.

Because of the frequent visits of Swedish fishing-boats to Norwegian coastal towns specific *restrictions* were announced *regarding the young women*. Many women informants who had grown up along the Norwegian south coast have told that they were clearly told in their homes that they were not to walk on or near

the quay and certainly not to go aboard the Swedish boats. It was especially the women's fathers who imprinted these prohibitions on their girls. A woman, born in 1917 in Mandal, who moved to Grundsund in 1942, says that her father threatened to beat her if she walked near the Swedish boats. But she met Swedes in the cinema or at dances (no 7). The fathers did not approve of young women who were regularly dating Swedish fishermen. These were viewed as "seafolk" and one could not be quite sure of where they came from or whether they could be trusted. Other women have told that they risked their reputation if they spent time near the boats talking to the Swedes. Because of social pressure, they did not dare to pass the quay alone. Another woman, born in 1909 in Egersund, who moved to Grundsund in 1945, tells that the Swedes used to "shout after us the way men do" when she and some other women went for an evening walk within sight of the boats during the 1930's (no 8). The women had to refrain from answering the men close to the quay. The Swedes were aware of these restrictions. This was one of the reasons why they left the quay area when they wanted to get into touch with Norwegian women. A fisherman in Grundsund, born in 1910, says that women who boarded Swedish fishing-boats

risked being called “töser”, which roughly means ‘whore’. Therefore, the girls were very cautious of going on board with us” (no 6). Only when a woman had got to know a Swedish fisherman so well that she was engaged to get married, did she dare to go aboard his boat. Otherwise she was the object of social sanctions. Some of the Norwegian women who married Swedes had not been aboard the Swedish boat before they were married or just before the wedding when the man came to take her to Bohuslän in his fishing-boat.

#### *D. Professional contacts with Norwegian fishermen*

The Swedish fishermen were also connected with Norwegian fishermen when they visited the Norwegian harbours. The records in many cases show that there were positive relations. One man, born in 1902 on Flekkerøya, remembers that in his youth there might be up to fifty Norwegian and Swedish boats next to each other in the port of Kristiansand: “The crews paid visits to each other and there were long-winded discussions and comments on the fishing” (no 9). Norwegian informants say that the conflicts were more common long ago. One reason was because the Swedes drank more alcohol then (Rabben 1982: 172) than later in the 20th century, another that they competed for the catches of fish. The Swedes had a great advantage because they had larger and more appropriate fishing-boats and fishing-equipment. In the paper “Fjordenes Blad” of May 19th 1897, Norwegian fishermen of Sogn og Fjordane were encouraged to get together and buy “other and more up-to-date fishing vessels. Let us in the future be saved from the sight of these Swedish frigates which fill our harbour in spring” (Johansen 1982: 97). In some cases there was hand-to-hand fighting, e.g. on the pier of Kristiansand and Ålesund in the late 19th century and around the time of the breaking-up of the union between Norway and Sweden in 1905. It has been told that the Swedish and Norwegian fishermen asked each other when they were out fishing: “Have you heard if war has broken out?” Both Swedes and Norwegians feared a war since they had connections with each other at the fishing grounds

as well as on land. They depended on each others’ services, for example when certain Norwegians worked on Swedish boats. This was important to the Swedes who wanted to have a so-called “known man” on board, i.e. someone who knew the waters when they were on their way to a port. They worked as pilots when the ship was to land. A fisherman, born in 1857 on Dyrön, tells that “his wages was that he was allowed to angle for cod on his own account as much as he could manage when the ship was at anchor overnight, as soon as the fishing lines were prepared with hooks and laid into the water” (NM EU 12245).

*Norwegian fishermen have learnt new methods of hauling* from the Swedes. This is indicated both from the interviews I have made and from notes collected by Olof Hasslöf in the 1920’s and 1930’s. This fact has hampered conflicts during the early 20th century. A fisherman from Ålesund, born in 1877, told in 1931 that in 1901 they learnt purse seine fishing from Smögen fishermen. In 1905 this method definitely caught on.<sup>11</sup> Fishermen from Ålesund hired Swedish fishermen onto their ships in order to learn the new method. An informant, born in 1905 in Grundsund, says that “we really made friends with the fishermen from Egersund” (no 10). The welcome given to the Swedish fishermen can be seen against the background that the Swedes were an economic asset to the Norwegians. On the other hand, the Swedes learnt from the Norwegians in the early 20th century to split the mackerel.<sup>12</sup> Beside these positive contacts when *Norwegian and Swedish fishermen learnt fishing methods from each other*, there have also been conflicts, mainly because of the competition for the catches. The competition lessened, however, from 1938 on, when the Swedes no longer were allowed to deliver fish in Norway. After the Second World War, Swedish fishermen have landed in Norwegian harbours to a lesser extent.

In the springs of the 1930’s a yearly football-match took place between Norwegian and Swedish fishermen in the harbours visited by the Swedes. The Smögen men, who had formed a sports club already in 1913, had an outstanding team which used to win the matches



against the Norwegians. This caused some conflict in the contacts between Norwegian and Swedish fishermen. A man, born in 1916 on Smögen, remembers for example, that when a judge from Smögen had judged a match won by the Smögen fishermen over Flekkefjord, people there talked about "the false judge" (no 11).<sup>13</sup>

### 3. The women's meeting with inland cultures

I would now like to comment on what kind of people or cultures outside their own coastal region the women were acquainted with and their reactions. Were these contacts filled with conflicts or more harmonious, and in that case, why?

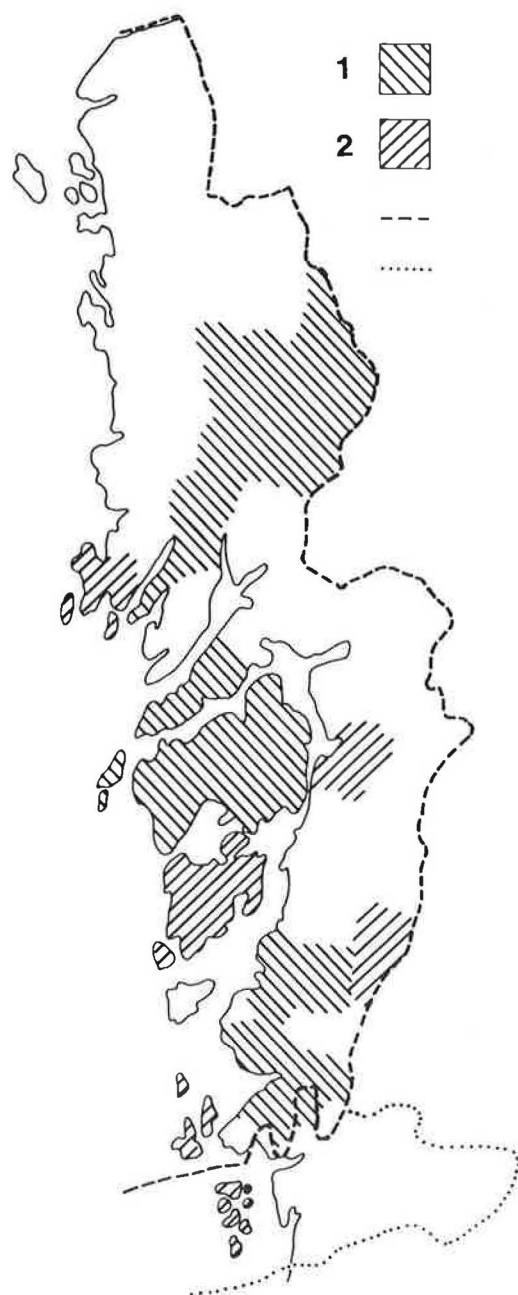
#### A. Ideological antagonisms

A *pietistic revival* within the Swedish State Church, called *Schartauanism* after its leader, Henric Schartau, spread in parts of Bohuslän during the latter part of the 19th century, especially in many coastal villages on Orust and Skaftö, like Kåringön and Grundsund (see map). This can be seen against the background of many co-inciding factors. Firstly, there were noteworthy changes in the industry of the coastal villages. There was a strong economic improvement within the fishing. Deep-sea fishing for ling around the Shetlands was extensive from the 1860's, especially in mid-Bohuslän on Orust and Skaftö which is exactly where Schartauanism formed its most important strongholds. Bohuslän's coastal areas also had a period of great economic improvement during the herring-fishing era from the late 1870's up to around 1900.<sup>14</sup>

Economic changes of course do not create religious revival movements, but they can form essential backgrounds (Gustavsson 1984). Revival movements need strong leaders, i.e. charismatic preachers. Young preachers of that calibre were based in parishes where Schartauanism spread quickly (cf. Nelson 1933–1937). Secondly, it did not take root in other parishes, for example on Tjörn, with similar industry and comparable changes in the economy. Schartauanism was not rooted here, at least

not in comparison with its spreading on i.e. Orust and Skaftö.

Where Schartauanism did break through, it was to a great extent carried by women. This is



1 Parishes where Schartauanism was prominent in Bohuslän.

2 Parishes where Free Churches were prominent.

exactly what Bjarne Stoklund has found to be true in the revival movement, the Home Mission, on the Danish island of Laesø during the latter part of the 19th century. Stoklund interprets this fact as an indication of the women's revolt against earlier defined roles for men and women (Stoklund 1985). Thanks to the women, Schartauanism was passed on from one generation to the next, once it was established, the reason being that in the coastal villages it was mainly the women who were responsible for educating the children while the men were away. So they imprinted their views and norms on the new generations. Among the women, a system of control or informing grew, to make sure that the norms were followed and that the way of life was kept, so that no other ideologies intruded. Schartauanism would not have flourished for so long, had it not had this stronghold among all these women in the coastal villages. So called "preacher's women" or "gossip-women" also formed part of the system of control. They informed the minister when the norms were not adhered to in the parish or if preachers did not stick to the old religious message (cf. Gustavsson 1981: 41f).

Stories about Free Church preachers trying to make their way into parishes of Schartauan character, tell how the women were the most averse to the new thinking, but also very loyal to the minister. The new ideologies were regarded as false doctrines. At a meeting arranged by the Swedish Missionary Society, a Free Church founded in 1878, in the beginning of the 20th century in Kungshamn, a woman told those gathered: "You mustn't stand here and listen to this. It is the anti-christ", according to a lady informant, born in 1878 (IFGH 4944: 14). A man, born in 1890 on Björkö in the Gothenburg archipelago, helped arranging a free church meeting on Käringsön in 1912. A woman opened her door shouting: "You heretic spirits, why are you on our island? Get off from here" (no 12). The lay-preacher, August Johansson from Västergötland who travelled along the Bohuslän coast around the beginning of the 20th century, reports of a meeting in 1903 with a woman in a parish influenced by Schartauanism: "I had been out on one of my regular visits to a cottage quite near

the church and asked for their approval of holding one or more meetings. The housewife answered very sternly: "We have our church and the minister. We go to church every Sunday and we don't need more of that kind".<sup>15</sup> This may be compared with the information given by a fisherman's wife in Grundsund in 1947. She was born 1861: "Nobody has gone to listen to them if there were these free preachers. Everyone had God's word at home and a minister who taught the true faith in church" (LUKA 1994). Such opposition from the women has continued long into the 20th century.<sup>16</sup>

When a definite ideology such as Schartauanism<sup>17</sup> had taken root it was difficult for other ideologies to gain ground within the same area, much because of the firm action of the women. In districts where Schartauan preachers did not work, like in the southern archipelago of Gothenburg, on Tjörn and the peninsula of Sotenäs to which Smögen belongs (see the above map), they were more open towards the Free Church Movements from the last decades of the 19th century and onwards. In such parishes one does not find in the official reports of the ministers or from other sources of the same period that ministers have warned strongly against Free Church Movements. Ministers in Schartau-inspired parishes, however, have done so (cf. Hörmander 1980). As an example I quote a document by the Schartauan revivalist preacher H. F. Ringius in Solberga written in 1907: "False teaching and sects are worse than the most ungodly way of living, both in themselves in that they severely misuse the name of God and because they secretly encourage more severe ungodliness" (Ringius 1907: 20). In contrast I quote here a clergyman's official report from Smögen in 1904. There had been a meeting-house belonging to the Swedish Missionary Society since 1880: "The outward life of their members is proper and they are seldom hostile towards the State Church or its ministers" (Kungshamn Church Archives). There is no mentioning of heresy or false teaching. When the Pentecostal Movement had reached Åstol in 1923 in the parish of Rönning and from then on grown a great deal, the minister wrote in his official re-

port in 1927: "I have never sought verbal fights, well knowing that they hurt rather than help" (Rönnäng Church Archives).

In *coastal communities*, too, where *Free Churches* rather than *Schartauanism* had gained a prominent position, women have acted firmly to guard the free church ideology in the battle against people from outside who might introduce other ideologies and norms. Women of the Free Churches have been very cautious towards the summer visitors. Both on the island of Björkö, where the Swedish Missionary Society dominated and on Åstol, where the majority belonged to the Pentecostal Movement, women have been reluctant to take in other lodgers in their houses than those belonging to a Free Church. If they did not, the women made very sure that the lodgers would not offend against the free church norms, that they didn't smoke or consume alcohol (Onsér 1976, Gustavsson 1984). A woman from Stockholm, born in 1899, who since 1934 rented a lodging on Åstol during the summer, points out that her landlords "approved of me because I didn't drink or smoke and I dressed decently even according to their strict standards" (no 13). If the holiday summer visitors did not live according to the norms that were important among free church members, they were told so by the women. They had to be moderate in their consumption of good food for example. A summer visitor on Björkö, born in 1896, tells that "they didn't like that we ate so lavishly. It made them terribly irritated". The wife of this informant was once told that "you have made food to your god" (no 14). In the contacts between the summer visitors and the resident population, not only the different norms were of significance. Also the social and economic differences were important. The economy of the coastal population did not allow any extravagant consumption, so the free church women could defend themselves referring to their ideological views.

### *B. Cultures with social differences*

The connections with the holiday summer visitors was a new experience for the local residents from the 1880's on. Before that time, town-dwellers of higher social ranks had vis-

ited health resorts (Stackell 1975), but from the 1880's they sought recreation and physical therapy in the salty waters of the islands furthest out on the seaboard. When they rented an accommodation in the same house where the landlady lived, the preconditions for close contacts between the women responsible for the accommodations and the summer visitors, were formed. The summer visitors very seldom were acquainted with the working fishermen.

*The great social and economic superiority of the holiday summer visitors* hampered closer contacts and even cultural influences between the summer visitors and the local residents as long as during this whole period of leasing accommodations, i.e. up to around 1940. The *hat-in-the hand* mentality of the local population was apparent in most sections of every-day life, for example they let the best dwelling to the summer visitors while they themselves found retreat in the basement or in the attic. The summer visitors strengthened their superiority by giving presents to the local residents – gifts like books and magazines to the grown-ups and sweets to the children. These can be seen as charity. The servility of the local population was encouraged by the fact that the women – who were responsible for the economy of the family – depended on the income from letting accommodations to add to what the men earned at sea. This was the main factor in checking conflicts. The summer visitors viewed the local residents as being close to nature, uncomplicated, picturesque, the sort of people they looked down upon. The only closer contact they had occurred when they once a summer invited their landlord and lady for dinner at the summer hotel where they took their meals every day. The hosts invited their lodgers for coffee once or twice a summer.

The local women had to work hard during the summer, for example in preparing the fish (cf. Löfgren 1977, Thormark 1984), while the summer visitors only sought recreation. Sometimes they were walking around in their white dresses watching the women working with the fish. There was a gap between two social worlds. People met close enough physically, but there was no real contact, mainly because of the social differences. Marriages between



Two local women, dressed in black, saying farewell to holiday summer visitors on Kåringön in the late summer of 1934. Photo privately owned.

summer visitors and local residents did not occur. The summer visitors arranged their own dances at the summer hotels. But their servants which the visitors brought with them took part in the dances on outdoor dancing floors or on the piers, arranged by the local population.

When the summer visitors gradually began preparing their own meals and did not have every meal at summer hotels, they became interested in learning different recipes for fish-dishes from the fishermen's wives. The local population, however, did not copy the way of life of the summer visitors. One reason was that the social difference was too big, another that they wanted to mark their social position by keeping a distance. One manifestation was that they usually did not take part in the Mid-summer celebrations, for example dancing around the may-pole as the visitors did. This tradition was not known to the local residents until the summer visitors arrived. This shows that the inferior social and economic position of the local population did not lead to servility in all spheres of life. This is particularly obvious in the case of how the local residents guarded the *sanctity of Sundays*, a norm which was *ideologically motivated* from the Schartauan tradition. The women refused to make the beds or clean the houses for the summer visitors on a

Sunday. The visitors also had to respect the way their landlord and landlady spent their Sundays, a tradition especially important to the women. They thus had to be as quiet as possible, especially during the time of the service, and dress up, since the ideological consciousness of the fishermen's families was great. In this case, the ideological influence was stronger than that of the social hierarchy. In other words, here we see both social and ideological conflicts.

### *C. Cultures with social similarities*

One category of inland residents the coastal women met during the summer was *craftsmen* who undertook various jobs in the coastal villages. They were mainly building houses and repairing. The men of the coastal villages contacted and made agreements with carpenters from wooded inland districts before they set off for their long fishing expeditions in spring. So the men were responsible for decisions and had the final control regarding house constructions or the making of reparations, while the women had to help with the practical work. This was a natural consequence of the conditions of the work at that time. The building work and the reparations took place during the summer. The carpenters were fetching their timber during the winter and the spring in wooded inland dis-

A wood-cutter from Orust on Kåringön during the 1930's. Photo privately owned.



tricts of Bohuslän (e.g. GHM A 6329, 6330). Thereafter, they brought the timber by boat to the coastal villages. There the women were to meet them at the quay in order to transport the load to the building-site and carry for the builders. They also had to give the carpenters board and lodgings.<sup>18</sup> The interviews indicate that the conversation contacts were closer with the craftsmen than with the summer visitors. One reason was that the women of the fishing villages and the craftsmen from the inland were more equal economically and socially and another that they worked together. And the craftsmen did not represent a different ideology as was the case with the free church movements and the summer visitors. Furthermore, the craftsmen did not stay at the coast, but returned home when they had finished their work. The fact that the coastal women and the craftsmen belonged to different sexes obviously did not cause conflicts, quite contrary to the differences of ideology and social and economic position.

The coastal women had more regular contacts with the *farmers* who lived in the neighbourhood a bit inland than with the carpenters of the woods. The farmers lived much closer to them. In the fishing villages there were only very few cows which the women, aided by their children, milked and brought fodder to from

the small islands.<sup>19</sup> The fishermen owned some of the cows, but they were leasing some from farmers for the summers. The cows grazed in meadows near the fishing village. The fishermen's wives milked the cows in exchange for feeding them during the summer. The farmers fetched their cows in the autumn. These exchange agreements of economic character did not lead to any social contacts. There were closer connections, however, between the women from the fishing villages and the farmers from further inland who helped them to harvest the hay on the small islands in the summer. One farmer, born in 1901 in Morlanda on the island of Orust, tells: "I cut the hay for all the fishermen of Kåringön. We were invited to a great party on Kåringön when we returned, having harvested all the hay. The women rowed us in their boat together with the hay. We stayed with the family for whom we cut and brought in the hay. We spent the whole week there, one night with each family for whom we cut" (no 15). This way of keeping cattle lasted until the beginning of the 1930's, when the health inspectors prohibited the keeping of cows and other domestic animals, which were not fenced in in the coastal villages.

The cows in the fishing villages only furnished the families with some of the milk they



Fishermen's wives collecting milk from a farmer's wife near the fishing village of Grundsund during the 1920's. Painting by Carl Gustaf Bernhardson

needed. Therefore, many women and children had to go on foot or by boat a few times a week to a farmer's family who lived at a distance off. The men did not take part on this job even when they were at home during winter. The *fisherwoman went to her own particular family*. The milk was mostly payed in cash, but in some cases the women brought fish as exchange. Only a few fishermen's families could visit the same farmer's family, because there were only very small farms in walking distance to the fishing villages. This buying of milk was the closest form of contact between fishermen's families and farmers, lasting throughout the year. These social contacts took place between women of an equal social and economic status and of a similar religious ideology. Carl Gustaf Bernhardson, born in 1915, who paints ethnological motifs, grew up on a small farm near Grundsund. He remembers how the women used to chat in his grand-mother's kitchen. They spoke about news and memories from the past while the farmer's wife poured the milk up into the jugs. On many occasions the women and their children were offered some food. The fishermen's children noticed how much food the farmers had. Many people have mentioned this in the interviews, especially regarding the

First World War when the fishermen's families had very little to eat. At that time, the women went in large groups to ask the farmers for food. One woman, born in 1904 in a farmer's home on Orust, remembers that "the women walked around, for example from the village of Stocken. They all wanted farm produce. The women carried bundles. They often wanted a ride home" (no 16). In these situations, the coastal population especially valued the treats they were offered and also gifts like bacon, butter or cheese. A man from Grundsund, born in 1905, tells that almost the only times he was allowed to satisfy his hunger during the First World War, was when he visited a farmer (no 10). Families who traded in milk also visited each other for family celebrations and yearly festivities. On Sundays, a farmer's family might be invited to the fisherman's family. Beyond this family-centered contact, built around the milk trade, there was no real contact between women from the fishing village and the farmers' families. The thoughts of the fishermen's wives were focused on the conditions in the coastal village and of their men at sea. They turned towards the inland only to get the necessary food for the family and to sell the fish (cf. Persson 1977)<sup>20</sup>.



Milk-trade, marked by personal contacts, ceased on the whole in the 1930's, when the milk was brought by boat instead to the coastal villages by larger suppliers or dairies to which the farmers in Bohuslän began to deliver their milk during the 1930's.<sup>21</sup> The 1930's mark the end of the trade contacts between the fishermen's families. At that time, too, the social contacts ceased since they were so closely connected to the economic relations.

*The fishermen's wives* also collected potatoes from the farmers. They worked for the farmers for several days in the autumn and were given potatoes as a compensation for helping to dig them. A farmer, born in 1902 in Morlanda, certifies that only women from the neighbouring fishing villages carried out this work (no 17). A farmer, born in 1894 a bit inland from the coastal village of Hälleviksstrand, tells that the farmers only employed "women from the archipelago when the potatoes were to be dug... We had 6-7 women who helped us. And they were to be given a sack of potatoes a day. And then they were to be given food. We served them dinner and coffee" (no 18). In these cases, the social contacts between the women and the farmer's family were close. The fact that the contacts were so harmonious is not primarily due to the economic dependence, but rather to the relative lack of social or ideological differences.

*The men's transactions with the farmers* have also been concentrated to a certain family. Their contacts, however, have not been as regular as those connected to the women's milk-trade. The men of the fishing villages visited a farmer once every autumn in order to buy his family's need of potatoes and grain for one year. The men went to farmers further away than those whom the women visited.

When visiting the farmers' homes, the fishermen were offered large provisions of food and they usually brought fish in return. The rest was paid in cash. A form of social contact, beyond the trade in the autumn, was that the farmer's family once a year was invited to visit the fishermen's family, just to be together as friends. The families also sent post-cards to each other on festive occasions, especially at Christmas time. The trade with grain ceased

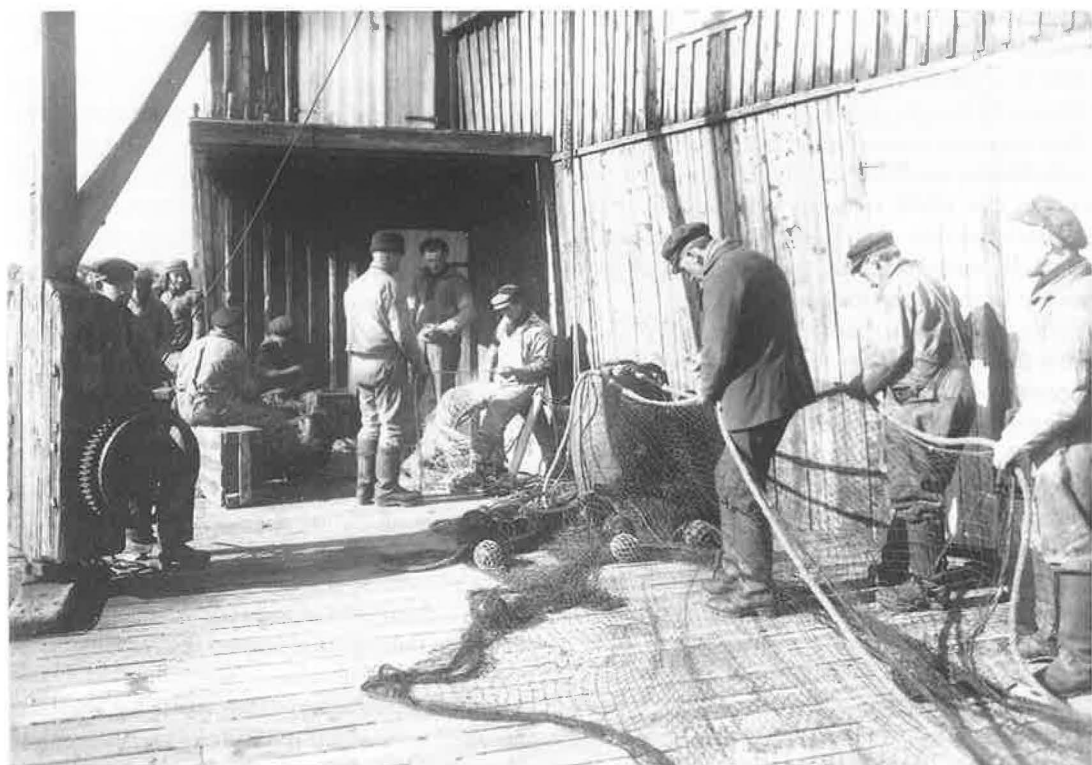
before the Second World War, when the millers disappeared from the fishing villages. Restrictions were also issued in the early 1930's on keeping domestic animals in the fishing villages (see above), and then the need for grain as fodder vanished. The trade with potatoes continued into the 1940's and 1950's when potatoes began to be sold in the shops. The men's contacts with the inland residents<sup>22</sup> were thus of a more occasional character than those of the women. On the material level, I don't find any cultural influence.

## Summary

This study has shown the differences in the conditions of life for men and women during the earlier part of the 20th century and the consequences thereof. The men lived far from home a great part of the year, because of their deep-sea fishing. One notices the *responsibility the women* had in many areas of life.<sup>23</sup> They developed a significant *independence* within their areas of responsibility. They carried the main responsibility for bringing up the children which means that they imprinted norms, views and ideologies upon the new generation. This fact also influences the men's view of the women and their hard work, something they appreciated also later on in life.

The areas for which *the men* carried responsibility at home were *connected to the sea*, i.e. the boat-house, the boat and the harbour. Men and women avoided interfering into each others' tasks. Men i.e. did not collect milk at the farm or take care of the animals, not even during the winter when they were at home<sup>24</sup>. Then they usually went fishing near the coast. A reasonable explanation to the divided areas of responsibility is the outer situation of the men being so far away from home during the summer half of the year. The women at the coast were responsible for more than what was usual in other milieux both in the countryside and in towns. In any case, there is no proof that men had given women their areas of responsibility. And it cannot be verified that men alone had carried the responsibility.

When the men were not out at sea, fishing, they mainly spent their time together near the



The men in a boat's crew from Smögen mending their fishing nets on the quay in front of the boat-houses. Photo taken in 1924 by Dan Samuelsson. The Bohuslän Museum, Uddevalla.

boat in the harbour. In winter time they gathered in someone's house in the evenings. The women worked in their homes while the men chatted. This fact can be interpreted in different ways: the men may not have wanted to interfere with the women's tasks in the home, or they may have been happy not to have to carry out the many and strenuous tasks which the women had to do, both inside and outside.

The women's main responsibility for the economy can be noticed in their care of the money which the men earned from fishing, as well as the income from letting accommodations to summer visitors. The women have thus both earned their own money through leasing and administered the money which the men earned. This, in my view, has strengthened the women's positions in the home. The decisive factor in the question of dominance between the sexes can hardly be that the men earned more money than the women (cf. Carlslund Pe-

tersen 1986), but rather who took care of the household economy, i.e. the women.

*In the contacts with strangers, the women at the coast have proved to be conscious of the norms and ideologies which they represented, and this lead to conflicts. They were openly opposed to things which conflicted with their views and tried to ward off other influences from outside. These were obviously regarded as a threat to the situation they were in. Therefore, they had to make a firm resistance from the beginning. This can clearly be seen in their relations to free church movements. The women at the coast of Bohuslän feared that people from outside would bring new ways of thinking which might threaten traditional norms and views. Through guarding the traditions, the women were able to keep their influence over norms and ideologies, while new influences might undermine their dominance. The conflicts were strengthened if there also*





Two fisherwomen cleaning out the ling in the village of Mollösund in 1899. Photo The Gothenburg Museum of History.

were social and economic differences, as was the case in the relations to the summer visitors.

This firm action by the coastal women towards outsiders who represented other views or who came from a different social background indicates that the women have been independent within their areas of responsibility. In any case, they have not openly been dominated by the men besides the contacts with the carpenters from the inland. In relation to them, the man made the decisions and the women would help with the practical work. I cannot find any support for the argument which only points to the suppressed position of the coastal women in comparison to the men.

*The Swedish men were both well received and regarded as competitors in Norwegian harbours. The positive relations were connected with the fact that they represented an economic asset for the Norwegian fishermen*

during the early 20th century. The reason was that they taught them new methods of catching fish. On the other hand, the Swedes and the Norwegians competed for fishing places and the amounts they caught. The Swedish men also competed with the Norwegians for their women and for this reason they were less appreciated by younger men on the whole, not only by the fishermen, in Norwegian coastal towns. The women's fathers, too, were fairly unfavourably disposed, since the Swedish fishermen were regarded as being a mobile category of people which they could not immediately trust.

In contrast to the stability among the coastal women and their defence of the dominating ideologies, norms and behaviour, *the men have been more changeable and tolerant towards new ideas.* The reason for this, may be that they, in contrast to the women, had a more mobile life and consequently also got more im-



Two fisherwomen from the coastal village of Edshultshall lifting potatoes on a farm in the 1930's. Photo privately owned.

pressions from other ideological views and ways of life than what they were confronted with among the women at home. This open-mindedness lessened conflicts when they visited the Norwegian harbours. The men had to be prepared to compromise when they entered new milieux, rather than solely propagating their own values and interests.

## Notes

1. This research is a part of a big project on coastal culture in southern Norway, northern Jutland in Denmark and western Sweden, the so-called

Kattegat – Skagerrak project. This study is based on interviews, records in archives as well as written and photographed materials collected along the Bohuslän coast and in coastal villages of southern Norway from Kristiansand and westwards. Among other things to be mentioned are letters and postcards sent by fishermen to their homes from foreign harbours.

2. Concerning fishing places, see Hasslöv 1949, and later on Olsson 1985.
3. Cf. Löfgren 1977. Corresponding information for women is told also in Norwegian coastal communities. Bratrein 1976, Avdem & Melby 1985: 17ff.
4. Information from a woman, born in 1877 on Kärningön, GHM A 5355.
5. Cf. Johansson 1985: 449f regarding corresponding information from milieux of woodsmen.

6. This has been told by travellers during the early 20th century. E.g. Bååth 1904.
7. GHM A 5355, cf. Thomas 1893: 637 regarding corresponding traditions in Mollösund, 1887.
8. Cf. Thormark 1984: 79 regarding corresponding information from Klädesholmen.
9. Corresponding ceremonies of return were common also among Norwegian fishermen's wives when the men returned from a longer fishing journey. A woman, born in 1885 in Toftenes at Mandal, told in 1962: "I remember well what a joy it was when we caught sight of the big ship sailing in with all sails set, having waited for a long time. We cheered and watched for father". A record 1962/63 from Vest-Agder District Archives, Kristiansand.
10. E.g. GHM A 4658, a fisherman, born in 1857 at Smögen.
11. GHM A, unnumbered record.
12. E.g. GHM A 364, a fisherman, born in 1846, Mollösund.
13. In this context, I do not report on Swedish fishermen's visits to Danish, Icelandic and English harbours, since the contacts with the local population were insignificant there compared to what was common in Norwegian harbours. Regarding the Norwegian's fishing near Iceland, see Shetelig Hovland 1985.
14. Regarding the development of the fishing methods, see especially Hasslöf 1949, Cornell 1985, Olsson 1985.
15. Johansson 1916: 59, cf. Bohusläns skärgårdsmission 1974.
16. The Pentecostal Movement had been able to rent a hall in Tanum, northern Bohuslän, for its meetings. In a report in the magazine of the Pentecostal Movement, Evangelii Härold of 9th March, 1950, one can read about the consequences of this: "The fact that we were able to use this hall irritated some opponents immensely, and they soon tried to close it for us. The women of SLKF (The women of the Farmer's Party) knew what to do. At a women's meeting in Bergslycke, Tanum, 27 of the 29 ladies present, agreed about a protest to those responsible for the district meeting hall against them lending the hall to the Free Church. The men on the board gave in when they received this protest and many other complaints and they closed the hall for the sake of 'peace', so we could not hold our services there any longer".
17. I note here only the coastal communities and not the farming and forest villages of inner Bohuslän. There were certain parishes which were strongly influenced by Schartauanism, while the free church movements gained ground at an early stage in other parishes.
18. Before the 1870's, there is no information in the parish catechetical reports about craftsmen who lived in the fishing villages. They moved back and forth from the inland instead. From the 1870's on, certain craftsmen began to settle in the coastal villages, but carpenters on the whole continued to come as guests workers from the inland up to the beginning of the 20th century.
19. Cf. Jensen 1983a, b, Berggreen 1984, Gjertsen 1984.
20. Here I might mention, too, the women's selling of fish on the yearly markets in the inland, what Alfa Olsson has researched (Olsson 1979, cf. Hasslöf 1949: 393ff). No social contacts occurred, however, around these business trips.
21. Milk transports on regular boat connections began earlier to fishing villages on islands like Kärnön and Smögen. It was farmers, i.e. men, who brought milk cans and sold to many fishermen's families. No social contacts were established in this connection beyond the business.
22. There were conflicts, however, between youth from the fishing villages and from farms at dancing places (see e.g. Gustavsson 1978: 111ff), as well as between the men of the fishing villages and stone-masons in the surrounding regions when the stone-cutting business started to grow during the latter part of the 19th century and continued during the first decades of the 20th century in northern Bohuslän (Persson 1984, Stenindustrin 1981). I choose to disregard these conflicts here, however.
23. Cf. Stoklund 1968, 1985, Berggreen 1980, Ek 1980, Frykman 1985, Thompson 1985.
24. Cf. Bratrein 1976 regarding the same conditions in northern Norway. See also Ek 1980.

## Abbreviations

- GHM A Göteborgs historiska museums arkiv, Göteborg (The Archives of The Gothenburg Museum of History)
- IFGH Folkminnesarkivet vid Dialekt- och ortnamnsarkivet, Göteborg (The Archives of the Folklore Institute, Gothenburg)
- LUKA Kyrkohistoriska arkivet, Lund (The Ecclesiastical History Archives, Lund)
- NM EU Etnologiska undersökningen vid Nordiska museet, Stockholm (The Ethnological Survey of the Nordic Museum, Stockholm)

The newly collected material of interviews has not yet been recorded. Therefore, I have quoted the informants in numerical order.

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