

Cultural Landscapes

Spatial Aspects of Power and Authority in the Duchy of Augustenborg

Mikkel Venborg Pedersen

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After years of languishing on the edges, the study of landscape and the interpretation of place and space have returned to centre stage in the curriculum of the social and human sciences. The new cultural history, the new cultural anthropology, and the new cultural geography have many common interests in these fields, like European ethnology which is traditionally affiliated to these questions as well. This article draws its material from a hunting-case on the shooting grounds of the dukes of Augustenborg (in the present-day Danish-German border region) around 1780 and its finale in a down-right massacre of ducal deer. Through analysing this case, the article shows some of the possibilities for landscape interpretation in cultural analysis in general and contributes to the knowledge of how power and authority both created and (in part) were created through different landscape use and interpretation.

Curator & Researcher Mikkel Venborg Pedersen, Ph.D., The National Museum, Danish Collections, Open Air Museum, Kongevejen 100, DK-2800 Lyngby, Denmark. E-mail: venborg@natmus.dk.

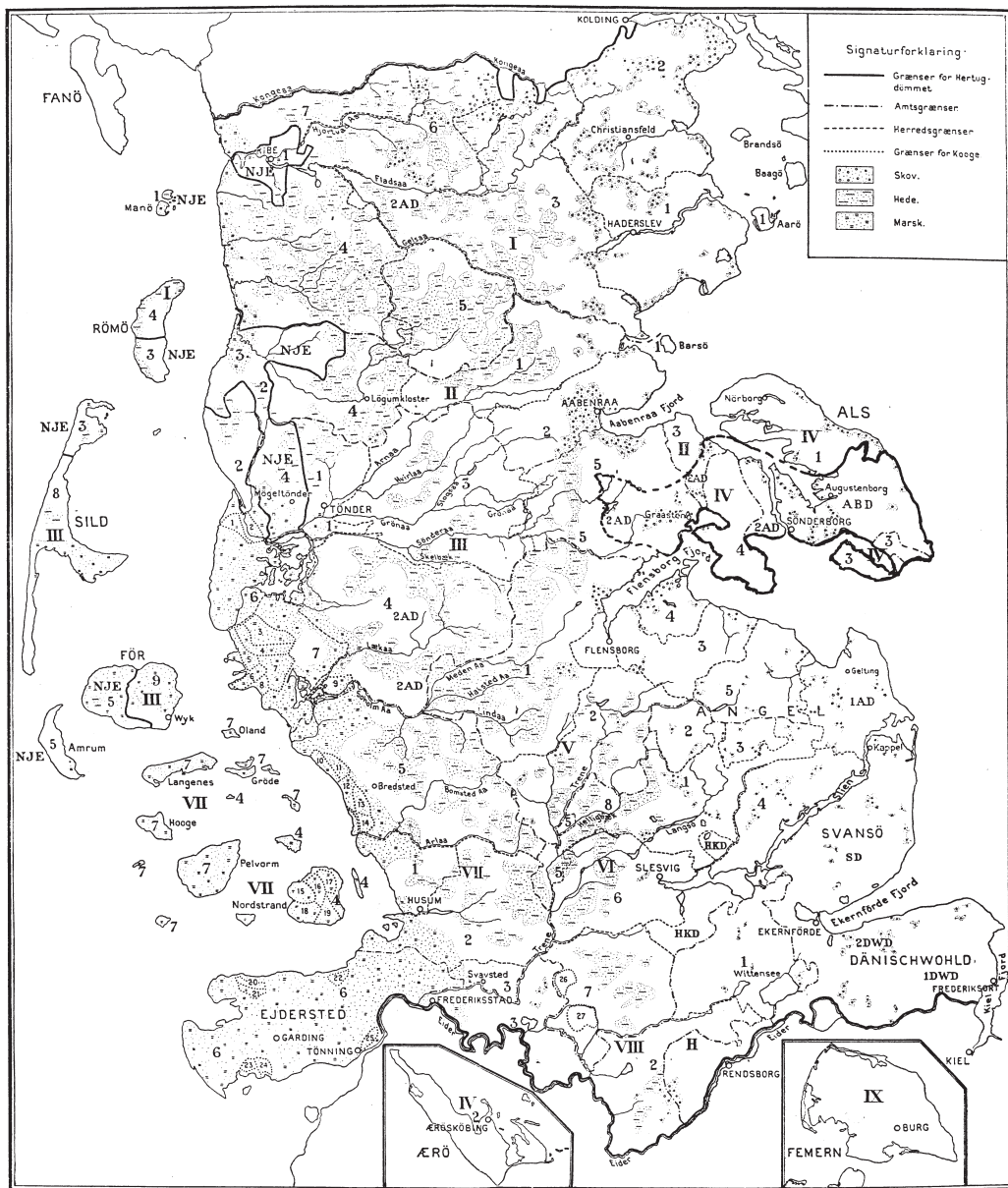
Introduction

In the duchy of Augustenborg, in the present day Danish-German borderland, a battue took place in April 1779. It was a large hunt for deer on the lands of the Rønhave estate, one of the duchy's demesne farms. Apparently, about 90 deer were killed and the hunt included peasants from two different villages. However, this was an unusual hunt. The huntsmen were not the ordinary ones, the hunt was performed unconventionally, and the deer were chased in the wrong way against the duke's practice. In fact, the duke was not there at all. Instead, what happened on the 15–16 April, 1779, was an illegal battue ending in a ritual massacre of deer, which were chased into the waters of the nearby Allsund and drowned. This incident forms the background of this article, which will analyse the case in two different ways. As a contest over landscape interpretation and, hence, as a questioning of ducal power and authority. And as a splendid case of unofficial

traits breaking through for a brief moment in early modern European peasant culture.

Public and hidden transcripts

Sources for understanding popular culture in early modern Europe often derive from official censuses, records, etc. that usually express an official view of society and culture. Another category of sources reveal counter-cultural expressions, the world turned upside-down. The two categories rarely intersect and they often seem to speak of two separate worlds. This is a well-known dilemma for ethnologists (and others) who traditionally search for popular culture: Big debates have been carried out and theoretical models have been developed of the general relationship between elite and popular culture. The examples include Peter Burke's *Venice and Amsterdam* (1974) or Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's study of the *Carnival of Romans* (1981). Court cases and counter-cultural conceptions have served as source material for



Kort over Sønderjyllands administrative Inddeling ca. 1800.

The Duchy of Schleswig-Holstein-Sønderborg-Augustenburg, in short just Augustenburg, existed between 1651/53 and 1851. At the time of the peasant battue of 1779, the reigning duke was Frederik Christian I (1721–94). He had succeeded his father in 1754 and took over a quite modest territory. At his death in 1794, however, he had consolidated and enlarged the duchy considerably so as to cover, in the main, what on the map is indicated with ^{IV}ABD: “The Princely Augustenburg District”. The duchy thus covered the southern part of the island of Als, centred around the main residence in Augustenborg formed up by a new splendid castle with a growing town around it. But also the southern part of the peninsula Sundeved around the summer and hunting castle Gråsten (Graasten, Gravenstein) at Flensborg Fjord (part of the map’s ²AD) and the hereditary seat of Sønderborg with the town of Sønderborg (the map’s ^{IV}3 and 4) were in ducal possession, and the duke functioned as *Amtmand* (app. royal governor) in these areas as well as in the princely district proper. The peasant battue took place in the woods north of Sønderborg, next to Augustenborg Inlet. The duke held hunting rights on all of Als (the map’s ^{IV}), whether in his own or in the King’s possession.

some of the most fascinating studies in the new cultural history and in microhistory – from Carlo Ginzburg's miller (1980) through Nathalie Zemon Davis' Martin Guerre (1983) and Robert Darnton's worker's revolt (1984) to the Italian *Querderni Storici's* preference for studies on the background of court cases (Muir & Ruggiero 1990, 1991). These are also known and used sources in European ethnology. Examples include Moser and Kramer's *Rechtswolkunde*, Silke Göttisch's *Alle für einen Mann* (1991) and the agreement that culture are usually seen better in conflict (Ehn and Löfgren 1982).

In my own studies of the dukes of Augustenborg, 1700–1850, and of noble ethos and cultural manifestation in the world, an ordering official culture has been in focus.¹ To borrow the American anthropologist James C. Scott's (1990) expression, I have studied the *public transcript* of those in power. Also the powerless have public transcripts, however. For them, the public transcript is "the public performance required of those subject to elaborate and systematic forms of social subordination" and will usually "be shapen to appeal to the expectations of the powerful" (Scott 1990:2). There is nothing strange about this. In a social system of hierarchy and subordination, the less powerful will rarely speak truthfully to the powerful. Simultaneously, the powerful "have their own compelling reasons for adopting a mask in the presence of subordinates" (Scott 1990:10) as they have to live up to the expectations that exist of the powerful. Actions by elites that publicly contradict the basis of a quest for power are in themselves threatening to that quest, but the act of authority is in itself also a claim to authority (Withers 2000: 532).

As a social reality, an elite as nobility is not only constituted through its formal position or through what it thinks of itself, but also through the social recognition of its status. Nobility has to be made manifest, and for those in power a public transcript has to be played out. It has to be clear to all that one is better than others, or that one carries noble virtues. In the noble scheme of things, the virtues that make some better than others are inherited through kinship. When noble virtues have shown once, and

have been socially and legally sanctioned through ennoblement, they will remain in the family forever, carried on from father to son. This is the basic claim of nobility (Oexle, 1990), and serves as *the* rationale for noble ways of thinking.

Nobility can be defined in many different ways. Following Weber, it can be defined as an estate and thus as a concrete kind of ethics. Nobility can also be defined as something legally developed from a *noblesse de fait* to a *noblesse de droit*. Third, nobility can be defined as what is inherited through blood, playing the tune of the nobles themselves. All three definitions (and there are no doubt many more) probably mattered in different measures at different times in the minds of nobles in early modern Europe. However, they have one thing in common. They only work if the noble is recognized as noble, as better than others.

In his work on the French court (1981) and again in his enormous work on the history of Western civilization (1980), Norbert Elias has dealt with the noble mind and the recognition of nobility. In a perhaps somewhat off-hand, but nevertheless thought provoking, statement Elias argues that a duke must act like a duke, or he is soon no duke at all:

"Ein Herzog muss sein Haus so bauen, dass es ausdrückt: ich bin ein Herzog und nicht nur ein Graf. Das gleiche gilt von seinem ganzen Auftreten... Ein Herzog, der nicht wohnt, wie ein Herzog zu wohnen hat, der also auch die gesellschaftlichen Verpflichtungen eines Herzogs nicht mehr ordentlich erfüllen kann, ist schon fast kein Herzog mehr" (Elias 1981:99).

Probably, this was especially the case in a relatively open nobility as the French, but was also true of the small and, until mid-18th century relatively closed Danish nobility. It is crucial to be recognised, and to this purpose many areas were put into use that in principle perhaps can be organised into five spheres (Venborg Pedersen 1999): the creation of the proper dynastic character in the individual members of a dynasty; the creation of the proper physical surroundings (castles, etc.); the creation of the proper social frame-work (a court, for example); the

creation of the proper public behaviour (expressed through ceremonies and rituals, balls and “lordship”); the creation of the proper landscape and nature (the right space) making possible a continuous demonstration of ducal splendour and power even when the duke is not present (for example through making exclusive roads, memorabilia such as obelisks and follies far away from the castle areas, or perhaps most thoroughly through creating shooting grounds inaccessible for the subalterns, as we shall return to below).

The already mentioned study by Scott (1990) focuses on the *hidden transcript*. Hidden transcript “characterize discourse [in what ever form] that takes place “off-stage”, beyond direct observation by powerholders. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those off-stage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflict what appears in the public transcript” (Scott 1990:5). It is those speeches that the less powerful have spoken out for themselves or in front of their family, friends, the village peasants, or to God. It is those clenched fists behind the back when bowing for the hunting party riding over the newly sown fields. And at times, it comes into the open as Silke Göttisch has shown in *Einen für alle Mann* (1991), when peasants deliver complaints signed by everyone so no one can be blamed and the message comes through.

In the duchy of Augustenborg, in April 1779, a kind of rebellion also played out through the briefly mentioned peasant battue, but it was not a hidden transcript spoken out with low-key voice in a peasant house somewhere on the estate grounds. It was a hidden transcript becoming public and can best be described as a battle for power over a symbolic piece of land, or a battle over the meaning of the duchy’s spatial lay-out. What is interesting is not so much that the rebellion took place or that the hidden transcript turned public. If enough individuals have felt and expressed a fantasy of revenge or change of system, and if insults these individuals experience are but variations of injustice carried out systematically towards a whole group or strata of people, they may form a collective cultural product which could be a form of rebellion (Scott 1990:9). What is more interesting, I

believe, is that it happened so consciously, with such knowledgeable use of cultural codes, and, above all, with such skilled use of the ducal symbolic landscape. The public and the hidden transcript *must* have a common domain of understanding each other, even though they are hidden for each other in everyday life. If for no other reason, then for the reason that the dukes otherwise would have to communicate their superiority to their subalterns (and equals not to forget) with other means. The social recognition of nobility, and superiority, would otherwise be endangered. This article addresses this common domain, in the case of the landscape and its symbolic contents.

Cultural Landscapes

Life happens somewhere. Culture is sited (Olwig & Hastrup 1997). All stories, narratives, and occurrences have a spatial aspect which can serve as an entrance (de Certeau 1988: 115–130) to an understanding of the incident. This approach has perhaps been somewhat understudied in the focus on culture’s spiritual aspects in recent years and in the so called post-modern critique, but it has been a theme in European ethnology since the early days of the discipline (though conducted under other auspices), and for example, in Scandinavian ethnology’s celebrated “three dimensions”: time, place, and social environment. Now, the interest in the spatial aspects of culture has blossomed again, perhaps contradictory, through the critique contained in *Writing Culture* by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (1986) and its many followers. In the discipline of cultural geography, *Writing Culture* has inspired a new cultural geography stressing many of the same features as the new cultural history or the new cultural anthropology. It follows the same metaphor of culture-as-text and references, norms and beliefs by also seeing landscapes as texts holding information (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Duncan and Ley 1993; Hirsch and O’Houlon 1995). One of the volumes in this field is even titled *Writing Worlds* (Barnes and Duncan 1992) and stresses the same critique of naive (positivist) description and analysis as *Writing Culture* did. The struggle in the new cultural geography

to move on after the critique of representation has also often meant a return of hermeneutics and interpretative cultural analysis, just as in much cultural history, cultural anthropology, and European ethnology.

In short, a landscape can also be considered a text in the sense that it also holds cultural information. Of course, it is not possible fully and mimetically to represent the seen landscape of somebody looking at it in the past, but it should be possible to pursue a hermeneutic reading of a few selected sites. Also, landscapes can be considered tools of communication through which reproduction of meaning, values, and social order is mediated. Landscapes are not just in themselves. They are part of a larger socio-cultural frame and must also be understood in accordance with the practice of interpretation and understanding in this frame, in Augustenborg, I suggest, as a noble pursuit of a public transcript stating moral supremacy, social status, and political power. As such, a landscape is not only important as a result of social acts but part of the acting in itself.

In other words, the place in itself can be seen as a very important area for ducal manifestations. The place is a crucial field for the creation and continuity of power, status, and hierarchy, of authority. For the public manifestation of elite status, symbols of great power were (and still are) always needed. Symbols that must be both popularly understood and to a certain extent enduring both in form and in content. This can be difficult to secure in practice, but for noble families of early modern Europe, for example, the built environment (castles, parks, and small court towns in the case of princes such as the Augustenborgs) served this purpose *par excellence*, not least through their long lasting qualities and immediate, very simple expression: a big house means power. That also more subtle readings were required to fully understand a castle in all its implications of style and lay-out (as art history tells us) demonstrates the fact that it can be a symbol on many levels and in several dimensions and equally potent for numerous people at the same time (Venborg Pedersen 2000).

This perspective on landscape and built environment is fairly close to a study by the

American cultural geographer James Duncan (1990) in which he analyses the relations between a landscape and the reproduction of power and authority in the kingdom of Kandy on Sri Lanka around 1800, through what he calls a hermeneutical perspective on landscape interpretation. In particular, he shows how landscape both serves to consolidate culture and destroy culture over time. In Kandy, there were two competing ideas of what kingdom should be. One view, *Asokan*, was closely connected to Buddhist notions of the king as a servant of the public good. This was reflected in public buildings such as monasteries, convents, churches, and public service institutions. The opposite view, *Sakran*, held ideas of the absolute monarch, ruling his people from a god-like position. This latter notion of kingdom was reflected in buildings such as royal palaces, huge open squares, and fenced parks and gardens, quite close to the European notion of ideal nobles. The city of Kandy served as a stage on which the king could show his abilities to reign in a way that balanced between the two concepts. In 1803, however, Kandy was destroyed due to English attacks, and a large re-building program was initiated from 1809–12. A big tower was built in the middle of the city, representing the centre of the world. It both symbolised and underpinned royal power. Around this tower, the city was built in parallel streets with a big lake as its other centre. The work force consisted of peasants. The king's interpretation was that he was about to create *Sakra's* city. The interpretation on the side of the nobility was that the king had too big a taste for power, taking seriously only one of the two notions of kingdom. For the peasants (although there are only few sources) the immense work was a source of dissatisfaction. A rebellion soon took place, ironically only to the benefit of the English. Duncan concludes that what at first was seen as a battle over the interpretation of a landscape later became a battle for political authority.

To enter the more familiar ethnological-anthropological language, one could call the landscape of Kandy an arena. For Victor Turner, building on Van Gennep, rituals and other symbolically loaded actions provide setting and

markers for the collective transformation of everyday structure into the liminal phase of *communitas*, a “temporary collective state of total unity” (Turner, 1974), making the world understandable and bearable. A special accentuated form of liminality is, for Turner, the social drama which in itself is divided into breach, crisis, redress and (perhaps) reconciliation, just as the phased ritual in which the social drama appears as the middle phase. In the field where cultural paradigms are formulated, established, and come into conflict with other paradigms, a social drama often plays out – as seen in Kandy. This happens in a concrete arena. In this arena, paradigms become transformed into metaphors and symbols that are used to mobilise political power and in which there is a trial of strength. A social drama is, as conducted in liminal phases of society’s life, the phased process of paradigm’s contestation. And it happens somewhere, though not necessarily in one and only one site. Arenas can be in many sites and often linked in a sequence of events. They can be spread out in a landscape.

The dukes of Augustenborg tried to “be” in the landscape in many different ways, to create arenas where they, and only they, decided what should be understood by its lay-out. They produced space. They built a new castle in the 1760s and 1770s in the town of Augustenborg. They assured that the estate holders of the duchy were locally based, and they assured roads, bridges and inns for travellers, etc. They tried through such means, at least symbolically, to be present almost everywhere in the duchy – in a way the dukes tried to become almost transcendental figures embodying the public transcript wished for in the duchy. By being there, in whatever shape or form, the dukes sought to dominate and create a certain system as seen in Kandy. The dukes did not try to form disorder, they tried to keep order, but disorder appeared in the 1779 peasant battue.

Hunting

Besides creating huge sites in bricks and plaster, probably the most demonstrative way of being in a landscape for nobles was to rush around from corner to corner of the duchy, over

fields and pathways, through meadows and woods, commanding several hundred peasants, hounds, horses, and game-keepers to run here, there, and everywhere. In short: to pursue the noble activity of hunting.

In the late 18th century, it was still a common argument that hunting was an ideal activity for masters (Winterling 1986:145), and Machiavelli directly saw hunting as a way to train a prince for war (Machiavelli, 1993). Riding and hunting skills simply belonged to the correct upbringing and life style of a prince. Others saw it as a way of recovering from the heavy duties of ruling and/or as game management. On the other hand, in the 17th and 18th centuries no prince could gain much knowledge of modern warfare by hunting deer. Many princes stayed on hunting campaigns for so long that they never got around to govern, and game management turned out to become damaging to both animals and peasant fields (Winterling 1986:145ff; Müller 1995:58). Or so the moralists said. There is no doubt, however, that hunting still belonged to the ideal of nobility. Hunting was a splendour of nobility, underpinned by the fairly large amounts of money this joy would cost per year.

In 1831–37, the hunt at Augustenborg cost between approximately 383–395 *Thaler*.² The wages for the chief game-keeper and game-keepers as well as game-boys, buglers, hunters, etc. all included clothes, food and lodging and amounted to 815–889 *Thaler*. To compare, the court cost approximately 2500–3000 *Thaler*, the *Hardesvogtei* 4500–5000 *Thaler*, the stables 1000–2000 *Thaler*, and the forestry approximately 1400 *Thaler* in 1831–37. Thus, the hunt alone cost about 1/3 of the court and almost as much as the stables – and the stables’ books even cover the horses used at the great hunts! In addition, there was what could amount to ruthless exploitation of both forest and game resources in the areas, if we are to believe general statements of the day (Weissmann 1985). Also damages to the peasant fields and thus angry peasants, poaching, etc. could be calculated into the “costs of the hunt”.

At Augustenborg, not only money was spent on hunting. Organisationally, a whole branch was formed to secure a proper and successful hunt. In 1777 a new chief game-keeper, Detlev

Nielsen, was appointed, or rather, his appointment from two years before was officially stated and his instruction formally given. It seems that now order in the hunt was to be created. No less than 20 big hunts, 30–35 smaller and 12–15 “rounds of shooting” were to be carried out each year. To raise better hounds, the game-keepers from now on were to take over the raising of them – before it had been the peasants’ duty to do so. It was the chief game-keeper’s duty to breed the hounds and for this purpose he received the necessary amount from the estates with the best hunt in the duchy. He had to keep books and was accountable to the stable-master. In addition, Detlev Nielsen, as all employees, had to be faithful and do his outmost, also to try to limit expenses though in no way to the detriment of the hunt. The hunt was more important than money. He would hold a salary of 100 *Thaler* per year as well as free dwelling in the hunter’s lodge and was allowed to choose between 50 *Thaler* every year, or twice a year a green uniform and once a year a full equipment including boots and coats. It seems that Nielsen chose the former alternative. He stayed in service till 1803.³

The hunting organization made ducal authority visible in the duchy in a very concrete way. The game preserves, hunting areas, and game-keepers were simply there, spatially speaking. The latter carried the duke’s uniforms with his coat-of-arms and were allowed in his name to pursue the hunt, to chase off poachers, and to cross the peasants’ fields. The erection of game preserves via fenced woods for deer, canals dug across the landscape, pathways for the horses through the woods (woods in which the peasants had often previously been allowed to gather firewood and let their pigs forage), and heavy duty to battue underlines the impression. The landscape was changed to fit the noble activity of hunting. Other landscape users, the peasants, were forced to have their immediate interests put aside.

At Augustenborg, both high and low hunt were pursued. Individual shooting, *pürsch*, battues on foot, and tracking with hounds were all well-known forms to judge from the game-keeper’s instructions.⁴ However, there is no doubt that the most noble form of hunting was hunt-

ing by horse. In England, this is mostly known in the case of the fox hunt, but on the continent, not least under French influence, hunting by horse was mostly after deer (Laursen 1996). Basically, it could take one of two forms: the *chasse de parforce* (riding to hounds) or the battue. *Chasse de parforce* was considered the finest, probably because it was the most extensive and expensive to perform and because it was *French*. Some days before the actual hunt, a deer was sought out and marked for the *parforce*. The idea then was to follow this deer on the day of hunt with a great *meute* of hounds till it became too exhausted to run. A strong animal could last an entire day. The master huntsmen followed the deer on horses on well planned pathways through the woods. The paths were usually laid out in the pattern of a star. The staff followed the well trained hounds through the woods.

Today, we would certainly consider this form of hunting somewhat cruel, but it was an elegant and festive moment for people back then. The whole hunt was led by the chief huntsman with the help of the buglers blowing the specific signals for directing the huntsmen. When the deer stood, the signals sounded for the highest ranking to come forward and thrust the deer. An apparent draw-back in this form of hunting was that the meat could not be used for human nutrition, but the antlers were a worthy prize for the effort. The elegance of the *parforce* is thus underlined by the waste of meat as well as the considerable terrain needed, the huge staff, the considerable numbers of hounds, and not least the well trained horses belonging to well run stables. All in all, one must have been master of the world when thrusting a run-down deer after a whole day’s pursuit (Weissmann 1985: 438–456).

The Hunt in 1779

The case of the battue in 1779 at Augustenborg was fairly complicated, but in brief it began with another case, or actually two, proceeded for the supreme court for the duchies Schleswig and Holstein at Gottorp Castle in July 1779. The first case was against the lease holder of Rønhave estate, Friberg. The second against



Map of the island of Als, drawn by Lt. F. Rampe in 1811 (belongs to the *Museum at Sønderborg Castle*). The duchy of Augustenborg covered the southern part of the island. In 1740, the Danish Crown passed the hunting rights on the entire island of Als to the duke. The rights were later re-confirmed and stayed in force till the end of the duchy in 1851. On the map the villages and the small towns of Augustenborg and Sønderborg are all depicted.

the *forstandere*, or village-leaders, Peter Hansen and Christian Hansen, of the two villages Ulkebøl and Kær under Rønhave estate. At first, they were only accused because of offences committed by 8–10 boys of their villages. The request for penalty was designed to “prevent all further conspiracy against the duke and [pre-vent] in the ducal preserves further battues to be organized”, as the duke’s lawyer Lorenzen said. It appears to have been a case of illicit hunting and poaching. The three Gottorp judges sat to find their way through the mess; the court protocols have been kept as sources.⁵

On June 28th, 8–10 boys were seen trying to drive deer away from the grain fields of the two villages. Peter Hansen and Christian Hansen claimed that this happened because of the increasing amount of game causing more and more damage to their fields. The peasants, incidentally, were permitted to do so and the duke would not have done anything if none of the deer had been hurt. However, it later appeared that the boys had cut the throat of one deer. In

connection, Friberg was accused of having participated in the driving off of the game with “several of his men”. Hence, he was also liable to punishment according to the lawyer Lorenzen. However, Friberg was not punished as he could justify that he had had no part in the driving. Also, it appears from his testimony that the affair was less modest than Lorenzen presumed. Friberg calls it a regular battue. According to Friberg, the two village-leaders had summoned him to the battue under the claim that they had been allowed by the ducal chief game-keeper Nielsen, a claim Friberg never believed. So here we are, battue or ordinary driving off of game? Permission or not? Damage to ducal possessions, and hence a mark against the duke’s *public transcript*, or not?

To complicate matters even further, at this early stage in the trial Friberg could already tell that on the 15th he himself actually hunted on his lands, as was his right as part of his lease contract. But he found no game and went home. This was supported by testimonies by two ducal



On this extract of the map the area of the peasant battue in 1779 is highlighted. The woods from which the deer were chased “into the salty waters”, the villages Ulkebøl and Kær and the enclosed game reserves of the estate are seen. This is the arena(s) of the social drama in April 1779, the ducal landscape the peasants interpreted in their own way.

forest rangers in the area. Friberg ended his defence by claiming that he had done nothing wrong, and he pleaded that if he had unwittingly transgressed then he was convinced of the ducal grace and mercy. He should be, since the penalty of 12 *Thaler* that the court sentenced him was cancelled by the duke. The duke was clearly not interested in having one of his more superior servants sentenced by the royal court at Gottorp. In December 1780, Friberg’s case ended without further tribulation. Thus, it could have been without further interest if it was not for one accusation by Friberg during his defence procedure: that the peasants had not only driven off game but had performed a regular battue.

This was serious, as peasants were not allowed to hunt on ducal lands under any circumstances. By doing so, they not only assaulted the ducal rights of possession. They not only apparently killed a deer. They hunted in all openness and thus publicly jeopardised both the honour and authority of the duke and the civil order of

society, as this was an act of insubordination, symbolically performed in one of the most symbolically loaded areas of ducal life at all. Or so it seemed, if Friberg’s statement was correct. To investigate, the duke once again took out writ against the village leaders Peter and Christian Hansen, though this time in companion with “all house owners of the villages”. The matter was serious and the duke used all his power. In April 1780, the court convened again, Lorenzen once again representing the duke and with a long list of witnesses summoned to testify. The peasant leaders met on behalf of the charged. According to Lorenzen the following appears to have happened.

On the estate lands of Rønhave, and thus in the villages of Ulkebøl and Kær, there had been an especially fine hunt in recent years. However, the peasants had been allowed to drive the game off their fields and into the ducal woods with small dogs. Furthermore, lease-holder Friberg had offered them an agreement of compensation

if they would leave the game alone. However, the peasants had not acceded. Also, the practice had been that the game-keepers “as far as possible” had tried to shoot only on fields with bad sowing. As further background, Lorenzen could adduce that there had never “been heard any complaints over the growing damages by the game until last Easter [April 1779]” after which an investigation was undertaken and the peasants allowed on a larger scale to drive off the game, though only under the outspoken direction of a ducal game-keeper. But – and Lorenzen now changed style into a veritable complaint – these ungrateful peasants organised a regular battue April 15–16, led by Peter and Christian Hansen who organized a professional hunt in two rounds for 40 and 50 deer respectively, chased them off the fields, over a preserve, through the “masterly structures,” tearing up and damaging hedges and locks and finally chased the deer into “the salty waters.” For the completion of this battue, the two village leaders had demanded four men per farmstead, two per house, and one per squatter, and furthermore 13 men on horseback “so they in the best way could perform this outrageous deed”.

It is impossible to know, Lorenzen went on, how much game was actually chased, not to say damaged, and how severe the damage on the preserves and wood had been. However, it is certain that the chief forest ranger (who vainly tried to prevent the peasants from committing their act) rescued two of the approximately 90 deer out of the water, found one dead in the nearest preserve and another on the top of a thorn bush “as token of triumph to public show”! Lorenzen was shattered. He knew the deeper idea behind this and he continued: “such a dubious act, of which we here in this country previously know nothing of, likens public insurrection”.

It was a severe crime, Lorenzen continued. In its concrete materiality but mostly because of its dimensions. It was not the act of one person but two whole villages who after due deliberation had exceeded all “limits of subordination” and broken with all foundations of the law. Lorenzen demanded the highest penalties permitted by the law. He also explained that as it all had been planned, that is premeditated, at least the previous day, there could be no excuse

on behalf of the peasants in this case. How long would it have taken them to find out that it was illegal – Lorenzen asked rhetorically. And if they should claim that they had realized that they were out of bounds, why did they continue? Did they not know that they should always seek approval from higher authority who would have told them not to do so? Common people are weak, Lorenzen implied, but that did not mean that the insubordination could be disregarded as it was so grave, especially for the two peasant leaders and the 13 men on horseback. They had, Lorenzen ended his long procedure, “offended themselves against the order and security of the state and the dignity of knightly prestige and standing”. The penalty for that was death.

As the peasants and witnesses were examined, the poor people became more and more confused and contradictory in their testimonies, standing there in a court in front of high masters and in all respects out of their usual world. But in all the confusion it appears that game-keeper Grotrian, on April 12, had driven the game together for a counting of heads and there perhaps had permitted the peasants to perform the battue, further that the chief forest ranger apparently was informed about the matter, and also that he had been present during the hunt and not spoken against it at any time. The court refused to pronounce sentence but Lorenzen did not give up. Again he summoned all possible witnesses to court, demanding the same case and penalty. Ducal honour could not bare to lose and it appears that there was more to be said.

The final verdict was pronounced on May 21, 1781. In the case leading up to it, and in itself, new events were mentioned together with confirmation of some from before. The hunt was performed on April 15–16 and was organized according to what has been described. Also the deer triumphantly put on a thorn bush was found. But what about the role of the game-keeper Grotrian? And what about the peasants’ testimonies? In the second case, they were almost without exemption overruled as they were all implicated in the battue. And Lorenzen could present witnesses of a far higher position in society: the ducal stable-master, three forest rangers, lease steward Friberg, *synsmænd* Chri-

stensen from the village Kær, and chief forest ranger Jürgensen.

Game-keeper Grotrian, who came from a long-serving and trusted family of ducal servants, had made a mistake, but Lorenzen did everything to diminish the damage and did so with luck. The peasants, as subordinates, should have known that Grotrian could not grant permission for a battue and the village leaders should have been sensible enough to somebody in higher places. But in the line of argument Lorenzen pursued, the game was chased over and through fences and fields and into the water. Also, the peasants' claim that the game found its own way into the water could simply be dismissed as everybody knew that game fears water. In addition, the ducal servants who were present during the two days had done everything to avoid the battue, but they were considerably outnumbered by the peasants, their wives, and children. The chief forest ranger was even "with gross language turned back by the peasants" and threatened on the beach when he tried to prevent the game from being chased into the water. And what should the poor man have done, Lorenzen went on, as the duke and most of the hunting and forest staff were at Gråsten and thus not much help was to be found at nearby Augustenborg?

The court ended by concluding that the peasants had actually performed the battue and not in accordance with the permission given (or not given) by Grotrian to drive the game off their fields; that they had driven the game into the water; that they had killed at least two heads of game (out of the 90 deer chased, the rest appears to have drowned); that they triumphantly had put one on a thorn bush; that they had destroyed a ducal preserve; that it had been organized by the village leaders in a very efficient way; and that they, after the two days of hunting, had celebrated at an inn in Sønderborg. However, the judges also concluded that the killed deer was cut by game-keeper Grotrian himself and that the ducal staff present had not done everything in their capacity to prevent events developing. The two villages were sentenced to fines of 50 *Thaler* and the costs of the case. In 1803, Grotrian became chief game-keeper after Detlev Nielsen.⁶

Power and Authority in Landscape

Whether the case was proceeded correctly, whether the peasants received a fair trial, whether the penalties were fair, in short, whether justice was served, are not the most interesting questions in this case today. It is far more rewarding to try to understand what the case can actually tell about ducal manifestations in the physical absence of the duke, about the spatial dimension of this manifestation and about the cultural importance of space involved in a fairly remarkable case like this peasant battue. Quite evidently, Lorenzen got it right when he claimed that it was more than just the material damage that was important in the case. It was an attack on the duke as duke. And it was an attack on society's order as well. This appears to be a fair interpretation. However, what lies behind this basically rather disgusting case: the murder of almost one hundred deer in a peasant revolt? This is where we should start, as the best point of entry into a culture is often where it seems most alien (Darnton 1984:82).

Around the peasant battue, the ducal hunt had already become more and more unwanted from a peasant point of view. It was hard to get rid of, however. As late as 1843, the estates' chief inspector Bahrt tried to reorganize the peasants' duties to battue;⁷ it appears that Bahrt was the (modern, economically, entrepreneurial thinking) man. Bahrt's reorganization was motivated by complaints from peasants over the ducal big hunts, especially the battues, now that a new allocation of land to the farms, moving of farms into the open lands, and hedging, fencing, and canal digging were very well under way. Bahrt recommended that the duke only held the battue for fox once a year, and only because he considered fox a vermin. The duke overruled the chief inspector's recommendation – how could he do otherwise given the importance of hunting as a symbolic means of manifestation?

The case provides an insight into what is usually called a process of modernization, *in casu* the changes in connection with upcoming agricultural reforms. Estates slowly began to consider agricultural farming in a modern sense

with emphasis on productivity, provenue, and entrepreneurial skills. Another hint is the fact that the staff at Augustenborg, also in forestry and hunting, began to consist of educated men. An elucidating example concerns the growing internal feud between the chief game-keeper and the chief forest ranger, the latter becoming ever more independent from its counterpart. Modern agricultural farming and forestry simply and inevitably clashed with large scale hunting. Already a ducal wish in 1810 for a fenced game preserve shows this as the wish caused chief game-keeper Grotrian and chief forest ranger König to initiate down-right hostilities on behalf of their respective offices. In 1810, the two fought over questions put by the duke.⁸

The duke would like to know how much game there could be in such a preserve and how big it should be. Also, he wanted to make sure that enough feed could be provided for the game during winter and to that end he demanded accurate calculations of salaries and costs, in itself a step toward modernization. Importantly, he was concerned whether the peasants actually “know how to provide the feed”. Most importantantly, the duke wanted to be sure that the project did not start and end unfinished “to the laughter of the public”. The duke was advised to expect a stock of two buck with about ten animals on an area of suitable size. For the fencing, however, the chief game-keeper wanted dikes, wooden palisades and ditches, whereas the chief forest ranger found the palisades far too ostentatious and recommended brick walls instead! Costs would amount to about 2400 *Thaler*, the two agreed, also because one could not be sure that the peasants actually knew how to do things and hence professionals had to be paid for the job.

Most interesting, however, is chief forest ranger König’s special comment that was attached to the documents. He did not like the idea of game and preserves at all but as he had seen how much damage the game made on the forests he had willingly co-operated with the recommendation as he did not presume that the duke would be totally without game, probably a correct judgement from König’s side. However, he and Grotrian recommended that the fenced

preserve would be far too costly and hence should not be made. On the other hand, König continued in his special opinion, if the duke in the future would expect anything from his work as forest ranger the amount of game in the woods simply had to be diminished considerably. To this end, chief game-keeper Grotrian made a special comment as well, stating that he also found the preserve far too expensive but had to object strongly to König’s ideas of actually shooting the stock of game to reach a level from which it would not recover in ten to twelve years! Hard opinions from both of them. Neither the preserve nor the culling were ever performed.

In the years after 1810, this fight was repeated over and over again, and the duke was forced to find more and more Solomonic decisions. He had, after all, a deep interest in both sides of the matter. There is no need to pursue these utterly complicated matters. Above all, they demonstrate a general clash between the old world’s interest in hunting and the new world’s interest in economic forestry and the interminable double-bind that this clash presented for the ducal public manifestation. They also tell about the deep changes in the spatial outlay of the duchy of these years, both due to agricultural and forest reforms and due to the joys of hunting. Perhaps, the peasant battue of 1779 was a sort of forerunner of what is more clearly seen in this “debate of modernisation”?

Apart from these more heavy-handed matters of rights and duties, fields and woods versus game interest, the field of hunting was also an ideal place for peasants to show more or less deliberately thought-out dissatisfaction with the duke, not only as huntsman but as duke and master and hence with society’s organisation at large (as lawyer Lorenzen astutely pointed out). By its very performance, hunting was a manifestation of power and right, of those hunting being better than those beating. But in folklore, the peasants could find support for the importance of hunt and the damage it caused both to themselves and to the huntsmen, more precisely from folklore which belongs to the peasant and not the ducal world of understanding. All over Europe exist the legends of the haunted huntsman, haunted by bad conscience, in the

snarers of elf maids, deprived of his eternal soul. In Denmark, the legend is usually connected to King Valdemar IV Atterdag and his wild hunting at Gurre Castle in Northern Zealand, in England it is King Arthur, and in France it is King Henri IV (Weissmann 1985). Peasant revenge for an unjust social order? It seems a fairly justified interpretation. And if so, the battue for the peasants was a fairly obvious way to riot – as it was for artisans in France to kill cats (Darnton 1984).

The battue was a very complex chain of events of which we can only know a little. But I believe we have been able to see enough to catch a few glimpses also of the peasant perception of ducal affairs and the world order they lived under, seen through a combination of traditional symbolic elements in a down-right insurrection at the dawn of the modern world. Even though it did not lead to direct political changes, the insurrection made the duke look like a comic figure in the eyes of the world, including his own subalterns, and thus ridiculed the entire legal and social order. As Lorenzen pointedly phrased it in the court room of Gottorp Castle: the peasants had “offended themselves against the order and security of the state and the dignity of knightly prestige and standing”.

After the battue the peasants met in an inn in Sønderborg to celebrate the two days of free rioting – to celebrate what, pace Turner, could be understood as a social drama initiating and making possible as well as public two days of *communitas*, with self-made rules and free opportunities for symbolic action, for instance, garrotting the duke in disguise of a buck on a thorn bush. As a symbol, the buck on the bush was more or less empty of original content, but it was full of popular revolt and social criticism. It is imaginable that the big and small events of the days have been told over cups of beer and plenty of schnapps. Perhaps some guilt or fear of what would happen next had to be swallowed as well. And perhaps stories were told in the peasant houses and huts after the hunt. Day by day, they may have improved and become part of the *hidden transcripts*. And after the trial, the stories were perhaps along the lines of: “yes, we were in court”, and “yes, we were punished, but what a fool we made of them!” I feel convinced,

but cannot prove it in any strict sense, that there has been laughter – Rabelaisian laughter (Bahktin 1984; Darnton 1984:99)!

Through the peasant battue in 1779, it has been possible to catch a glimpse of the *hidden transcript* of the powerless, of how they could resist in hidden ways, for instance by ridiculing those who took themselves too seriously, for example the nobles. Honoré Balzac puts it another way: “The only irony allowed to poverty is to drive Justice and Benevolence to unjust denials” (quoted from Scott 1990:90). Perhaps, but equally perhaps not, the verdict at Gottorp was unjust. At least, ridicule had been secured. Resistance had been performed and this time not in a very hidden and subtle way. Punishment had been laid on the peasants, but if the argument about telling stories holds, success was secured anyhow. The hidden transcript had shown itself in public.

Another, not necessarily contradictory, possibility can be to view the matter as a question of battle over interpretations of space in the duchy, much as Duncan saw the three meanings behind the new city of Kandy. In Kandy, the battle of interpretation led to, coexisted with or derived from a battle of ideals of society. In Augustenborg, society was un-negotiably hierarchical, and the duke was at the top of the ladder. He was its centre, its master, he provided a sort of justice and peace and demanded loyalty and work in return as in all patriarchal systems (following Weber). He had overwhelming power if seen from a peasant house in the villages in 1779. But ways were found to take over one of the most symbolically loaded spaces in the duchy: a ducal game preserve. By hunting the game the peasants hunted the duke. By overruling the orders, later pleas, from the game-keepers present they overruled the duke. They made him ridiculous because they had taken over his landscape. In some way, the peasant rebellion on the game preserves of Rønhave estate was the *Bastille* of Augustenborg. At least for those two days in April 1779. “By controlling the public stage, the dominant can create an appearance that approximates what, ideally, they would like subalterns to see” (Scott 1990:50). On April 15–16, the subalterns decided themselves what to see

– they wanted to see a buck on a thorn bush, that is, the duke on a thorn bush.

The peasants must have known that it was a serious matter – if not before, then surely after the trial. And the duke knew immediately, it appears. Hence, he did not judge the matter himself but took it to the royal court at Gottorp. Lawyer Lorenzen even claimed that the state and society at large were in danger. The immediate interpretation could be that the duke “got the better of them”. But was it not them who got the better of him? For a duke of royal decent and master in his own duchy it must have been humiliating to have to take one’s own peasants to royal court in a matter of insubordination. It must have been humiliating that the case was at first rejected due to ducal servants’ perhaps incorrect behaviour. And it must have been humiliating that it ended with only a 50 *Thaler* penalty.

The whole case also shows that the ducal cultural universe was *theirs*, the order sought to be established was *theirs*, and even though they tried the best they could to make others believe in it, or at least live according to it, it did not work all of the time and everywhere. Until the duchy’s end in 1848, it gradually became more and more difficult. The possible models for political domination that had been handed down to the dukes were ritual and symbolic forms of behaviour. In early modern Europe, the ceremonial worked as a “staging” of masterly power and at the same time as regulator for conduct at court and in inter-state affairs, as a study of this topic, *Zeremoniell in der Krise*, defines its field (Jahn, Rahn & Schnitzger 1998). It could be added that ceremony and different forms of symbolic behaviour regulated far broader conduct and were an inseparable part not only of court culture in early modern Europe but of societal order in general.

However, the authors of *Zeremoniell in der Krise* are correct that ceremonial behaviour in effect sought to regulate a certain order in the world and hence was highly vulnerable in times of crisis – crisis such as the peasant battue. Ceremony works when the master is unquestioned. When he is questioned ceremony tends to become extended. Different forms of ceremony can be put into use: state ceremony towards

equals, court ceremony towards single subalterns, master ceremony towards subalterns, in general supporting a quest for status and authority (Jahn, Rahn & Schnitzger 1998:7–8). Nevertheless, a fair and frequent objection to this interpretation would be that it requires all levels of society to be able to understand at least some of the aspects involved in the performance of ceremony and rituals. Do they? Did they in Augustenborg?

The different glimpses of subaltern reception of ducal manifestation indicate that they actually understood quite a bit – not least when we consider the battue and the conflict over the interpretation of space. If the duke can be put on a thorn bush and driven into the water, although in symbolic disguise, then this is proof that he is no better than others (not noble). But it is only proof if the peasants reached the same interpretation. To play out the resistance of the hidden transcript demanded knowledge of the rules and means to play. Perhaps subaltern groups knew more about these rules than we often tend to realise today. Perhaps, or probably, the duke knew that they knew, or at least had sensed that they did. Hence the trial at Gottorp. And the ducal hard-line strategy worked at first. Order was restored. At least there are no recorded cases even remotely resembling this one until the end of the duchy in 1848. But order was shattered. The old trusted “mechanism ceremonial” had failed to convince, and, not to be overlooked, in one of the symbolically most loaded areas of ducal manifestation at all, the hunt.

Envoi

Eventually, the apparently most magnificent means of manifestation, such as the landscape and activity of hunting, inevitably would represent something past and hence imprison the dukes in this past unless they were capable of changing the spatial frames and simultaneously changing their symbolic content. The strongest card for landscapes and sites in a symbolic sense is that they are long-lasting. This is also their problem as it gives them an unchanged and limited expression through their manifest form. When the surrounding world begins to “read” other values into the landscape as well as

those intended, difficulties lie ahead for the creators of the original values. The kings of Kandy had to realize this. So did the dukes of Augustenborg.

Faced with an opportunity to express the hidden transcript, the peasants in Ulkebøl and Kær immediately grabbed it and performed the noble privilege of hunting. The ducal world order, held up not least by the noble pursuit of hunting, had broken down. The court case at Gottorp apparently restored order, but the duke had failed to convince that he was better than others and lost control of landscape interpretation. His landscape, the cultural landscape of Augustenborg, for two days was taken over by somebody else. The duke, through his formal ownership of land and his traditional role, still seemed to be in charge of the creation of space, but the peasants were increasingly taking part in the understanding and interpretation of it. What at first could be seen as a battle over the interpretation of landscape became a battle over political authority. And, accordingly, landscape and battles for landscape interpretation perhaps are not the worst places to look for culture and cultural paradigms. After all, life happens on earth.

Notes

1. This article is based on my studies in the duchy of Augustenborg in the years 1994–2000. It draws on more detailed studies for chapter 7 in *Duke* (Venborg Pedersen 1999), which was my Ph.D.-thesis (University of Copenhagen). I thank Ole Bech-Petersen, Ph.D., for comments on the article.
2. Archives of the Augustenborg Estates, pk. 70. All sources for this article are part of the Estate Archives, placed in *Landsarkivet for de sønderjyske Landsdele*, Denmark. All translations from the sources are mine.
3. Archives of the Augustenborg Estates, pk. 109.
4. Archives of the Augustenborg Estates, pk. 109.
5. Archives of the Augustenborg Estates, pk. 109.
6. Archives of the Augustenborg Estates, pk. 109.
7. Archives of the Augustenborg Estates, pk. 109.
8. Archives of the Augustenborg Estates, pk. 109.

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