

# BERGSMÄN OCH TACKJÄRNSPATRONER

PERSPEKTIV PÅ INDUSTRIALISERINGSPROCESSEN  
1810–1900

with an English Summary

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# Abstract

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This thesis studies the preconditions for the industrialization of the Swedish iron industry in *Lekebergslagen* in the county of Närke. It focuses on the *Bergsman* and the ironworks, and on the division of production between these two, which was imposed by the government from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onto the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *Bergsman* and his household were mining peasants. They had special privileges, for example the mining peasants had exclusive property rights to their land during a long period of time. In return they had to produce pig-iron for the Swedish state. The pig-iron was transformed into bar-iron at the ironworks. By the year of 1810 the mining peasants lost these exclusive property rights. The purpose of this study is to analyze the consequences of this development. Which were the consequences of the land reform for the traditional division of production between the ironworks and the mining peasants? Two concepts central to this study are *economic stratification* and *penetration*. These concepts were previously discussed in the research of the Western European proto-industrialization. The researchers considered the industrialization a long process where groups of capitalists and a proletariat evolved through socio-economic stratification, and the small-scale commodity production was penetrated by the capitalists, who finally transferred all production into factories. In conjunction, those two processes constituted the foundation for the *industrial breakthrough*. Previous research often studies one of these three aspects, but this thesis studies the relationship between *penetration*, *differentiation* and *industrialization*.

The iron industry gradually evolved during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and by the end of the century it was centralized, that is, industrialized. This study shows that the industrialization process was far from linear. The industrialization of the iron production in *Lekebergslagen* was preceded by complicated interaction between several operators as well as between different types of capital. The mining peasants of *Lekebergslagen* were gradually involved in a production system that was mainly controlled by others because of a credit system. The mining peasants in *Lekebergslagen* were exploited by local creditors within or linked to the mining peasant community, or by the ironworks. A group of capitalists eventually appeared in the local society. We might even say that the mining peasants in *Lekebergslagen* were gradually proletarianized during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This proletariat was not set free until the mortgage banks were established in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, and when the iron production was centralized. The mining peasants then got the opportunity to emancipate from the local users and to invest in agriculture instead of iron production; in the eyes of the ironworks, exploitation of the mining peasants was no longer the most cost-efficient production solution.

Keywords: mining peasants, industrialization, iron industry, *Lekebergslagen*, 19<sup>th</sup> century