

Maria Julku

”For your own benefit and defence.” Persuading Peasants to Participate in Castle Building in Early Modern Ostrobothnia

The act of persuading is defined as *inducing (someone) to do something through reasoning or argument*.¹ It can be argued that the skill to persuade was important for the Vasa rulers in the 16th and early 17th century Sweden, because they were dependent on the support of the peasantry. By using the specific case of castle building in Ostrobothnia (Sw. Österbotten, Fi. Pohjanmaa), this article asks, how did Charles IX attempt to persuade peasants to accept their burdens? What kind of arguments did he stress and which rhetoric techniques did he use? In research, Charles IX’s rhetoric has been described with words such as direct, coarse or “common”.² This article illustrates an aspect, which has not been emphasised in previous research of the Vasa rulers’ rhetoric: the use of reference to past events as a method of persuasion.

When Gustav Vasa created a centralised state organisation, incorporating the element of bargaining between the state and the estates turned out to be vital. This was achieved through the establishment of the four-estate diet, and the interaction on local level between the peasantry and office-holders, who were the king’s representatives. Another way for peasants to voice their grievances was by addressing their complaints directly to the king. King Gustav and his descendants wanted to know of the grievances: the rulers were suspicious of office-holders’ actions and wary of the mood among peasantry, but by acting as protectors against malpractice, they also wanted to emphasise the legitimacy of their regime. The political culture of early modern Sweden has generally been seen as one of negotiation and compromise rather than conflict, as there were few major rebellions, and the peasants had representation. During his reign, Charles IX (r. 1604–1611) made efforts to further

¹ The Oxford English Dictionary, 2019 Oxford University Press, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/>, viewed 18.1.2019.

² Sven Ulric Palme, “Karl IX”, *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon: Band 20, Ingeborg–Katarina*. Norstedt, Stockholm 1975, 631; Sven Ulric Palme, *Kungligt och kvinnlig*. Halmstad 1958, 102–105; Erik Petersson, *Den skoningslöse. En biografi över Karl IX*. Natur & Kultur, Stockholm 2008, 291; Lars-Olof Larsson, *Arvet efter Gustav Vasa*, Prisma, Stockholm 2005, 410–418.

develop a centralised state organisation. To achieve the desired results, he had to bargain with the peasantry to perform labour and transport services.³

The most notable research of rhetoric and propaganda in the early Vasa era (1523–1611) is still Kurt Johannesson's article "*Retorik och propaganda vid det äldre Vasahovet*" (1969). It concentrates on the rhetorical tradition and political propaganda in the courts of Gustav Vasa and Eric XIV. According to Johannesson, messages in Swedish intended for the common people used a simple style with limited vocabulary, whereas messages written in German and especially in Latin, intended for an audience of European princes and intellectuals, used several elements from the classical rhetoric.⁴ Johannesson does not focus on the rhetoric aimed at peasants, however. Concerning the interaction between the Crown and the peasantry, Mats Hallenberg has examined how Gustav Vasa legitimised the state organisation's existence to the subjects. Promise of protection was a tool that Gustav Vasa used in his rise to power. In exchange for raised taxes, peasants would be free from fighting. It was also a tool that his descendants continued, emphasising the king's duties of protection against outside enemies and maintaining peace and order in the realm. Charles IX especially presented himself as a protector of peasant rights.⁵ Using sources from the second half of the 16th and first half of the 17th century, Börje Harnesk has studied how the early modern state tried to legitimise its right to the subjects' resources. When peasants addressed their petitions to the king asking for lighter burdens, they received answers that sometimes agreed to their requests, but more often than not refused them. According to Harnesk, the argumentation by the Crown took varied forms and adapted to what each situation demanded, as noted also

³ Börje Harnesk, "Everyday Resistance and the Hidden Transcript in Seventeenth-Century Sweden." *Hopes and Fears for the Future in Early Modern Sweden, 1500–1800*. Ed. Petri Karonen. SKS, Helsinki 2009, 250; Ulla Koskinen, "The Story of Violent and Aggressive Peasant Elites in the North." *Aggressive and Violent Peasant Elites in the Nordic Countries, c. 1500–1700*. Ed. Ulla Koskinen. Palgrave Macmillan, London 2016, 3; Mats Hallenberg, Johan Holm & Dan Johansson, "Organization, Legitimation, Participation. State formation as a dynamic process – the Swedish example, c. 1523–1680." *Scandinavian Journal of History (SJH)* Volume 33 Issue 3, 2008, 252–253 & 255.

⁴ Kurt Johannesson, "Retorik och propaganda vid det äldre Vasahovet". *Lychnos* 1969, 2–4 & 8.

⁵ Mats Hallenberg, "Kungen, Kronan eller staten? Makt och legitimitet I Gustav Vasas propaganda." *Maktens skiftande skepnader. Studier I makt, legitimitet och inflytande I det tidigmoderna Sverige*. Red. Börje Harnesk. Umeå Universitet, Umeå 2003, 26; Jan Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe: Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States*. Routledge, London and New York, 4–5 & 54; Anna Maria Forssberg, "The Final Argument: war and the merging of the military and civilian spheres in 17th-century Sweden." *SJH*, Volume 39 Issue 2, 2014, 171–172; Hallenberg, Holm & Johansson 2008, 253 & 256.

by Johannesson of Eric XIV. In comparison, the peasantry's argumentation was more stereotypical.⁶

Persuasion of peasants was of course wholly deliberate: the goal was to make them perform their services without resistance. Anna Maria Forsberg describes in her research of rhetoric surrounding later 17th century conscription, how county governor Svante Banér instructed bailiffs to use persuasive arguments to win over peasants, who were resisting orders to contribute timber.⁷ One way to look at persuasion is to divide it into direct means (force, threats, bribes) or symbolic means (the use of signs, most importantly spoken and written words or gestures). It has been noted that the Swedish Crown preferred the use of words to costly coercion.⁸ This was true when Charles IX was attempting to make the begrudging peasants of Ostrobothnia accept their burdens. Taxes had been rising continuously to finance the almost unbroken warfare since Gustav Vasa's death and the growing demands of the state machinery. Besides taxes, and increasingly conscription despite early promises by Gustav Vasa, the contribution of peasants was also needed in various building works.

In 1605, Charles IX wanted to have two castles built in the northern corner of his realm in the province of Ostrobothnia. This project was related to his ambitions concerning northern areas in general, and in part to improving the defence capabilities of Ostrobothnia, which in recent past had suffered from war-time raids. The larger picture behind his plans was gaining control of Lapland and the Arctic Coast. Economic factors stemming from taxation, natural resources and trade were central in Charles IX's Arctic Policy.⁹ Had he not tried to persuade the peasants in any way, instead refusing to reply or simply commanding to obey, he could have risked angering the peasants. He knew the peasants of Ostrobothnia had changed their loyalty before, allying with Charles himself, who represented freedom from the tyranny of Klaus Fleming, the steward loyal to king Sigismund. Enforcing the

⁶ Börje Harnesk, "Konsten att klaga, konsten att kräva: Kronan och bönderna på 1500- och 1600-talen." *Maktens skiftande skepnader. Studier I makt, legitimitet och inflytande I det tidig-moderna Sverige*. Red. Börje Harnesk. Umeå Universitet, Umeå 2003, 74; Johannesson 1969, 39.

⁷ Forsberg, 2014, 175–176.

⁸ George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 1999, 2; Dag Retsö, "No Taxation Without Negotiation." *SJH Volume 42 Issue 4*, 2017, 446; Anna Maria Forsberg, *Att hålla folket på got humör. Informations-spridning, krigspropaganda och mobilisering I Sverige 1655–1680*. Stockholms universitet, Stockholm 2005, 282; Kaspar Kepsu, "The Unruly Buffer Zone. The Swedish province of Ingria in the late 17th century." *SJH Volume 42 Issue 4*, 2017, 416.

⁹ For more on the Arctic Policy, see e.g. Santeri Ingman, *Kaarlo IX:n Jäämerenpolitiikka I*. Helsinki, 1894; Santeri Ingman, "Kaarlo IX:n Jäämeren politiikka vuosilta 1603–1613." *Historiallinen arkisto XIV. Suomen historiallinen seura*, Helsinki 1895; Mirka Lappalainen, *Maailman painavin raha. Kirjoituksia 1600-luvun Pohjolasta*. WSOY, Helsinki 2006.

commands by resorting to coercion or violence would have been a job of Charles IX's servants in Ostrobothnia: the local steward and the bailiffs with their men. Ultimately, this would have been a very difficult task, risking even further conflict and causing a strife between the peasants and office-holders.

The language that Charles IX used in his responses to the peasantry of Ostrobothnia is of interest, since it shows how the particular case of Ostrobothnia with its history allowed him to use concrete examples in line with classical rhetoric, aiming to appeal to the reluctant peasants. On the whole, there was a demand for labour in early modern Europe due to the modernisation of castles and building of new ones to meet the advancement of cannon fire. According to John Hale, no government could pay more than a fraction of the new projects out of its revenue. Moreover, it was considered too risky to cover the cost by imposing new taxes for the whole population in peacetime. Workforce and a significant portion of the costs had to come from the local populations, with the plea that they were paying for their own protection.¹⁰ This argument, as exemplified in the title of this article, was therefore certainly not unique to the Swedish kings.

Source material related to the castle building is not very extensive, but direct or indirect reference to some kind of resistance has so far been found in ten main documents. One document by Charles IX is essential regarding his use of persuasive language. The sources consist of complaints addressed to the king from the peasants, responses by the king, orders from the king to his Steward of Ostrobothnia, as well as account books kept by bailiffs. In analysing letters sent by the king, it has to be noted that a letter at that time, especially a royal one, was nearly always the work of more than one person. The king dictated the content of the letters, which his secretaries wrote. Formulaic phrases such as greetings and addresses were added in by the secretaries, but sometimes the king wrote amendments to the letters with his own hand. The multifaceted origin of royal letters has to be kept in mind when analysing features such as choice of words. This may have been especially true with letters concerning complaints, as in the royal chancellery there were certain secretaries tasked with presenting these letters to the king.¹¹ How much of the king's letters is his direct quotation may be impossible to verify. Then again, looking at the many raging letters Charles IX sent to his office-holders, it does bring to mind that he was in control of the content without much censoring having happened.

¹⁰ John R. Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe 1450–1620*. Leicester University Press, Leicester 1985, 206–208.

¹¹ Ivan Svalenius, *Rikskansliet i Sverige 1560–1592*. Svenska rikskansliet, Stockholm 1991, 39; Nils Edén, *Om centralregeringens organisation under den äldre Vasatiden*, Uppsala 1899, 213–214.

Complaints from north and south

In late 1605, a peasant called Olof Olofsson Tervo was sent to Stockholm from Ostrobothnia. Tervo was accused of inciting a rebellion. It was said that peasants in his parish were refusing to deliver loads and to help build a castle. This incident was related to an order, which King Charles IX had given earlier the same year.¹² Two castles were to be built in Ostrobothnia: one on the coast in the marketplace of Oulu to replace a fort in poor condition, built over a decade earlier, and the other inland in wilderness along an ancient waterway (in present-day Kajaani). Charles IX ordered Isak Behm, who was to be the Steward of Ostrobothnia, to commence building work and to look for limestone deposits and materials for the manufacture of bricks. Tervo's home place can be concluded to have been the parish of Kemi, c. 100 kilometres north from Oulu. The peasants of Kemi were supposed to deliver limestone from a nearby deposit. At the time, Ostrobothnia was divided into two areas in fiscal administration, northern and southern bailiwicks (*fögderi*). According to Charles IX, peasants from both bailiwicks were obligated to deliver wood, stone and limestone; to participate in day labour, and to perform other duties.¹³

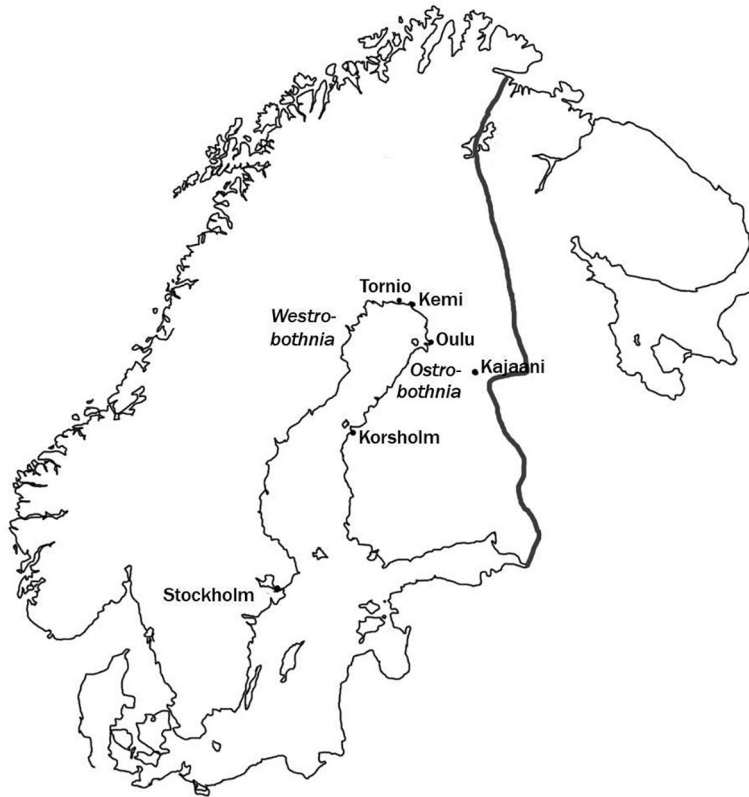
Peasants' labour service (day labour) had originally formed during the 14th and 15th centuries, when a number of medieval castles were being built in Sweden. Peasants of a certain area were required to work usually a handful of days each year to build the castles. In the later medieval period, this statute labour was often replaced by a payment exacted from the peasantry. Gustav Vasa made labour duty compulsory again to be able to draw work force for working on his royal manors. Castles also needed maintenance and repairs. However, peasants preferred to evade labour duty by payments made in money or kind instead of travelling even long distances to work – often exactly at the time when there was work to be done on their own farms.¹⁴ Initially there is no reference of anyone in Ostrobothnia being spared from the various tasks, no matter how long the distance to the castles. When the time came for the delivery of limestone, Behm appears to have encountered problems with the peasantry of Kemi. A little farther north, peasants of Tornio (part of the province of Westrobothnia) were also obligated to deliver limestone from the deposit, which they complained about.¹⁵

¹² Charles IX to Olof Olofsson Tervo 5 December 1605, SE/RA/1112.1/B/99, Riksregistraturet (RR), Swedish National Archives (SNA), Stockholm (the location will not be repeated hereafter); Charles IX to Isak Behm 9 December 1605, SE/RA/1112.1/B/99, RR, SNA; Charles IX to Isak Behm 8 April 1605, SE/RA/1112.1/B/99, RR, SNA.

¹³ Charles IX to his subjects in Ostrobothnia 5 May 1607, SE/RA/1112.1/B/104, RR, SNA.

¹⁴ Suvia Seppälä, *Viljana, Nahkoina, Kapakalana: Talonpoikien maksamat kruununverot Suomessa vuosina 1539–1609*. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura (SKS), Helsinki 2009, 212 & 216–217.

¹⁵ Charles IX to peasants in Tornio parish 31 December 1607, SE/RA/1112.1/B/104, RR, SNA.



It makes sense that peasants in Kemi and Tornio resisted the delivery of limestone, because the distance to Oulu was so long. Burdens caused by castle building were also new in the area, as no day labour had traditionally been demanded in the northern bailiwick. According to Suvia Seppälä, who has studied 16th century taxation, no concrete labour days were demanded in the northern bailiwick, and instead they were replaced by payments made in money or kind.¹⁶ However, Seppälä uses the sample year of 1586. It should be added that even in the northern bailiwick some day labour was demanded of peasants in the 1590s, when the first fortification was erected in Oulu, although most of the work is likely to have been done by soldiers present in

¹⁶ Seppälä 2009, 217.

the area.¹⁷ Another earlier example would be the construction of the Keminmaa Old Church (c. 1520–53), where day labour seems to have been used on a small scale to obtain materials for the church. Seppälä sees the use of payments as a necessity, since the journey to the royal manor of Korsholm, where the peasants' labour could have been used in the 16th century, was too long.¹⁸ By the early 17th century, when Charles IX had an intense need of labour for the new project, he did not deem the journey vice versa from Korsholm to Oulu too long. Consequently, complaints arose from Korsholm. In a letter previously unused in research, peasants of Korsholm complained that Isak Behm was demanding them to work on the Oulu castle four days a year. They asked the king, "how possible is it for those who live 20, 30 or 40 miles¹⁹ from there to travel there to work?"²⁰ They even asked to compensate the day labour by paying a sum of one *daler* or even more. In the southern bailiwick, peasants were used to doing day labour to the manor of Korsholm, but the demand to travel such a long way north was new. Peasants even referred to the old system in their letter to the king, so they clearly felt that the new demands made by steward Behm were unfair. As previous research has pointed out, peasants were naturally more inclined to resist everything that made their situation worse than before, rather than old burdens they were used to. It was the change from previous circumstances, which caused resistance.²¹ A few months later the king sent a letter, in which he did not spare the peasants from anything, but asked them to agree to help willingly.²²

¹⁷ Edvard Grönblad, *Urkunder Upplysande Finlands Öden och Tillstånd i slutet af 16de och början af 17de århundradet. Första flocken. Handlingar rörande klubbekriget. Tredje häftet. J. Simelii arfvingar*, Helsingfors 1846, 108; Charles IX to peasants of Ostrobothnia 27 March 1600, SE/RA/1112.1/B/90, RR, SNA. Of complaints of day labour in the 1590s, see also Armas Luukko, *Pohjois-Pohjanmaan ja Lapin historia II: Pohjois-Pohjanmaan ja Lapin keskiaika sekä 1500-luku*. Pohjois-Pohjanmaan, Kainuun ja Lapin maakuntaliittojen yhteinen historiatoimikunta, Oulu 1954, 787.

¹⁸ Signature marks of local peasants were carved into wooden beams. PhD Panu Savolainen 25.1.2019 *Tutkimuksen verkostot*. Presentation, Turku, Finland; Seppälä 2009, 212 & 216–217.

¹⁹ Approx. 120–240 km or 75–150 international miles. True distance between Oulu and present-day Vaasa is over 300 km.

²⁰ "Huru mögeligitt thet ähr them som boo ther ifrå på 20-30-och 40 Miler therifrå dett draga och arbeta – –". Inhabitants of the province of Korsholm to Charles IX 5 February 1605, SE/RA/1133/1133.05/~2, Skrivelser till Hertig Karl, Karl IX 1500t–1600t, Skrivelser till konungen, SNA.

²¹ Kimmo Katajala, *Suomalainen kapina. Talonpoikaislevottomuudet ja poliittisen kulttuurin muutos Ruotsin ajalla (n. 1150–1800)*. SKS, Helsinki 2002, 194 & 203; Hale 1985, 244.

²² Charles IX to his subjects in Ostrobothnia 5 May 1607, SE/RA/1112.1/B/104, RR, SNA.

Charles IX's rhetoric and classical persuasion techniques

When Charles IX addressed peasants of Ostrobothnia, he used distinct phrases to justify the castle building and to persuade peasants to accept their burdens. The question of to what extent Charles IX was familiar with the rhetorical tradition is somewhat unclear. "Classical rhetoric", as in both the practices of public speaking and the body of works describing it, was transmitted from Greece by Roman education to the European Middle Ages and the early modern period.²³ Unfortunately, little is known of Charles IX's education. Rhetoric was certainly an important part of the education of his older brothers Eric XIV and John III.²⁴ A notable collection of books was purchased for the young princes, and as adults they showed a keen interest in scholarship. The education program planned by their teacher Georg Norman was influenced mainly by Roman authors as well as Erasmus and Melancthon's views on education. The princes' studies begun with a Latin grammar, and a central work in Norman's program was Cicero's *De officiis*, describing what motivated people to act on behalf of others, and how a future ruler should behave in order to influence and lead other people (2.21–89).²⁵ No similar program has survived for Charles IX, 13 years younger than John III. His main teacher was a French Calvinist Jean d'Herboville. Partly because little is known of Charles IX's education, he has sometimes been considered less educated than his brothers. Another reason has been the estimation of his coarse rhetoric and writing. This view has also been challenged by pointing out his later book purchases and theological writings.²⁶

Whether or not the books originally purchased for the older brothers were used in Charles IX's education is uncertain. It has been commonly acknowledged that he never mastered Latin. This is also reflected in a list of his book purchases from the 1590s, a high percentage of which were German translations of Latin texts. There is no evidence of Charles IX having known other languages than Swedish and German.²⁷ The list gives an idea of what interested him as an adult: theological books dominate, but there are a number of historical works and so-called practical books about the natural life or medical practices. No books dealing with rhetoric

²³ James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*. University of California Press, Berkeley 1974, preface; Kennedy 1999, 1–2.

²⁴ Less attention has been paid to the education of mentally ill Magnus, but he is known to have owned a rather substantial library. Magnus von Platen, "Hertig Karls bokrägningar." *Lychnos* 1956, 73.

²⁵ Arne Losman, "Erik XIV och Johan III i böckernas värld." *Kolme kuningasta Turun linnassa = Tre konungar på Åbo slott. Gustav Vasa, Erik XIV, Johan III*. Turun maakuntamuseo, Turku 1993, 46; Johannesson 1969, 17 & 20; M. Tullius Cicero, *De officiis*, E typographeo Clarendoniano, Oxford 1994.

²⁶ Palme 1975, 631; Larsson 2005, 258–259; Petersson 2008, 23–24.

²⁷ von Platen 1956, 74; Petersson 2008, 25.

are to be found.²⁸ It has been suggested, however, that all three brothers would have owned Erasmus' standard work of letter writing, *Opus de conscribendis epistolis*, a compilation of classical, medieval and humanist sources.²⁹ Even if Charles IX was not as bookish as his brothers, it is difficult to imagine his education would have been so drastically inferior that it would have neglected to delve into the classical and current theories of rhetoric. He was supposed to be far from the succession to the throne, but eloquence was essential for any nobleman. The point here is not to claim that Charles IX had read certain books, which would then have directly influenced his use of rhetoric or decisions, but to stress that he lived in a time when rhetoric was still flourishing after the renaissance of classical rhetoric through Italian humanists. By all accounts, he should have received an education that introduced him to the tools of persuading and influencing others.

As for the view of Charles IX's rhetoric being coarse, another way to look at any direct use of language by him has been to see it as deliberate rather than resulting solely from lack of education. Rhetoric was important for Charles IX to be able to discuss with peasants in their own style, and through his direct and popular language, he managed to gain the peasants' trust. He has been called "a demagogue in the popular genre", equipped with a sense of drastic wording.³⁰ Letters that Charles IX sent to the peasants of Ostrobothnia definitely follow the sort of simple style with limited vocabulary as described by Johannesson, but it is possible to identify elements of classical rhetoric in them. Persuasion, according to Aristotle, consists mainly of three rhetorical elements: *ethos*, the credibility of the speaker, *logos*, the logic and truth behind the message, and *pathos*, the emotion stirred in the audience. Cicero described it as winning over those who are listening, proving our case to be true, and calling their minds to what emotion the case demands.³¹ In his letters, Charles IX was establishing personal credibility by presenting himself as a pious king and defender of the realm. In the letter addressed to the peasants of Ostrobothnia, Charles IX described how he had ordered two castles to be built "in the name of the Holy Trinity, in honour of God and the Swedish Realm – –"³². Because the castles would be for the peasants' defence and benefit, Charles IX was now asking them to obey willingly. In general, religious argumentation in these sources is scarce, mainly to

²⁸ von Platen suggests an unidentified *Julius Caesar Rede usus* is likely a textbook in rhetoric. However, he also suggests it is either a work by Julius Caesar or Julius Caesar Scaliger's *Poetices libri septuex*. Only war commentaries survive from Caesar, and Scaliger's work was a manual of poetics rather than a textbook of rhetoric. von Platen 1956, 76 & 85.

²⁹ Stina Hansson, *Svensk brevskrivning. Teori och tillämpning*. Litteraturvetenskapliga institutionen vid Göteborgs universitet, Göteborg 1988, 21.

³⁰ Palme 1958, 103–105; Larsson 2005, 410; Petersson 2008, 23–24 & 291; von Platen 1956, 84.

³¹ Kennedy 1999, 114; Wendy Olmsted, *Rhetoric. An Historical Introduction*. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2006, 30 & 51.

³² "[V]di den Helige Treefaldighetz namn, Gudi til ähro och Swerigis Rijkie til berhöm – –". Charles IX to his subjects in Ostrobothnia 5 May 1607, SE/RA/1112.1/B/104, RR, SNA.

be found in passing in formulaic phrases such as above. In the propaganda used by Vasa rulers, notions like obedience and loyalty towards the king and fatherland were stressed, whereas the use of religious argumentation was used very sparingly, related to the still precarious situation with the Reformation.³³

In a letter that contained the orders for the Steward of Ostrobothnia, Charles IX wrote:

*As our call and office demands that we as the ruling lord, to the betterment and growth of our dear Fatherland and Crown, should always seek and demand everywhere in Norrland good locations, where to establish and build castles and towns for the defence of the realm, we have therefore –*³⁴

The prevailing idea in society was of reciprocity. It was the king's duty to protect his subjects, who were obliged to pay taxes. Charles IX was using the argument of protection even before having given any royal pledge in his official coronation in 1607.³⁵ The notion of protection was vaguely formulated in the Country Law of Christopher (*Kristofers landslag*), in use since 1442 parallel to the original unifying law of all Sweden, Country Law of Magnus Eriksson (since the 1350s). Charles IX reprinted the law from 1442 in 1608, which finally made it replace the older version. The section concerning the king's rights and duties, known as *Konungsbalken*, was similar in both versions. In the pledge that the king had to promise, the fifth article stated that the king should guard the castles and counties as well as their property, and to protect the borders so that none of the aforementioned would diminish. The sixth article declared that the king should not place new taxes except in certain circumstances, of which the first one was a threat by an outside force, from which the king could not otherwise protect himself. In such a case, all people of Sweden should be obedient to the king in all matters necessary to him and the Swedish kingdom.³⁶

On the general basis of taking necessary steps for guarding the realm, Charles IX could argue that by building fortifications, he was doing his duty as the protector

³³ Hallenberg, Holm & Johansson 2008, 253. Conversely, in the state propaganda of the latter 17th century, religious rhetoric was one of key elements used to convince subjects of the necessity of war, along with stereotypical portrayals of the enemy and the common threat to all Sweden. Forssberg 2005, 287–294; Forssberg 2014, 179–180.

³⁴ "[E]fter vårt Kall och Embethe kräuer att wij såsom een Regerende Herre vårt käre Fäderneslandh och Cronones förbättringh och tilwext altijdh sökie och fordra skole, Szå all denn stundh nogerstädes vthi Norlanden fins sköne lägenheter, der man både befestningar och Städer, Rijkett till försuar, fundere och opbyggie kan, hafue wij fördenskuld –". Charles IX to Isak Behm 8 April 1605, SE/RA/1112.1/B/99, RR, SNA. Same phrasing used also earlier in Charles IX to Master Daniel and Jöns Pedersson 3 January 1605, SE/RA/1112.1/B/100, RR, SNA.

³⁵ Harnesk 2003, 67.

³⁶ *Talonpoikain laki. Kuningas Kristofferin maanlain suomennos (1442) Coloniuksen kopion mukaisena*. Toim. Esko Koivusalo. SKS, Helsinki 2005, 14.

of the realm. He was presenting himself as a good ruler and establishing personal credibility, especially important since he was not the legal heir. When studying the rhetoric of Charles IX, Harnesk has observed that the rhetoric of loyalty is missing from the sources he used. In eight letters to peasantry or conscripted soldiers from 1601, Charles IX referred to loyalty only once. Harnesk suggests the reason is to be found in Charles IX himself being a usurper and having dethroned the legal sovereign. The rhetoric of patriotism, however, is prevalent.³⁷ Yet from the sources concerning Ostrobothnia, the rhetoric of both loyalty and patriotism is missing. There is no talk of "Swedish man" or "Swedish man's honest name", as noted by Harnesk, because Ostrobothnians were never considered *Swedish*. It was clear that they, like all inhabitants of Sweden's eastern counties, belonged to the same kingdom and were subject to the same laws, but there was a certain distinction. Language was a separating factor, and the majority of peasants of Ostrobothnia spoke Finnish, even though on an administrative level Ostrobothnia was not seen as part of the area known as Finland.³⁸ Mentions of fatherland are also few in the letters to Ostrobothnia; only to be found in the passage quoted above. The realm (*riket*) is mentioned in a passage that asks the peasants to help in that, which is for the best of the king and the realm.³⁹ Referring to the peasants of Ostrobothnia as Swedish would have been out of place, and Charles IX used language that suited the situation. In another context, appealing to the emotional concepts of loyalty and patriotism could have been effective persuasion techniques, but they would not have been suitable when addressing the peasants of Ostrobothnia.

Use of examples to evoke fear and a desire for safety

In pleading to his duty as a protector of the realm, Charles IX was actually describing something the Crown had *not* previously done in Ostrobothnia. It was an area, which the Crown had not traditionally protected. Peasants in Northern Ostrobothnia had been exempted from paying a certain tax, if they took care of their own defence.⁴⁰ During the 25-year-long war between Sweden and Russia (1570–95), Russian Karelian troops attacked the northern bailiwick repeatedly causing considerable destruction and killing hundreds of people. Even during times of ceasefire, guerrilla

³⁷ Harnesk 2003, 71.

³⁸ Instead, in administration Ostrobothnia was tied together with Westrobothnia several times during the 16th and 17th centuries. Ostrobothnia as well as Åland were usually not considered to be among the counties that consisted "Finland". The name Finland originally referred only to the area of Finland proper, and in the 15th century widened to mean the whole of present-day southern Finland, earlier referred to as Österland (Eastland).

³⁹ Charles IX to his subjects in Ostrobothnia 5 May 1607, SE/RA/1112.1/B/104, RR, SNA.

⁴⁰ Luukko 1954, 743–744; Katajala 2002, 202; Mirkka Lappalainen, *Susimessu: 1590-luvun sisällissota Ruotsissa ja Suomessa*. Siltala, Helsinki 2009, 160–161 & 178.

war continued. These attacks were retaliated at least a few times by similar attacks, which prompted more attacks in return. Local peasant troops were not able to prevent the attacks, and the Crown finally sent soldiers after the largest settlement area of Liminka had been destroyed twice over.⁴¹

Similar to how European rulers in general argued that peasants were paying for their own safety, Charles IX used it as his main appeal when addressing the peasants of Ostrobothnia. The argument of general benefit for everyone in the kingdom was used heavily later in the 17th century to justify conscription, but the castle building in Ostrobothnia could be presented as a direct benefit specifically to the people of that area, which would seem like a more effective argument. It is a classical strategy of demonstrating that the action serves the best interests of the audience.⁴²

*Because all of that will be for your benefit and defence, which is why we are asking you there to help willingly –*⁴³

*So that these same castles will be built for the safety and defence of you, who live there, and your descendants, for God knows something unexpected might happen in future.*⁴⁴

Charles IX was well aware of what had previously happened in Ostrobothnia, but the prediction of future conflicts could anticipate his plans concerning the northern areas, which culminated in attempted attacks to Russia from Ostrobothnia in 1609–11. In 1598, Charles IX had said that the castle of Oulu was not built ”for any other reason than for your own best and defence”⁴⁵. Whether or not the castles were built only because Charles IX wanted to protect the peasants is a different matter, but he was trying to persuade them by appealing to their self-interest: *in the past there were no castles, and look what happened then. Now castles are being built with your help, so that in future you and your children will be safe*. It is a rational argument, but one that has a strong emotional appeal at its core.

⁴¹ Werner Tawaststjerna, *Pohjoismaiden viisikolmattavuotinen sota. Vuosien 1570 ja 1590 välinen aika*. Helsinki 1918–1920, 478–493; Werner Tawaststjerna, *Pohjoismaiden sota 1590–1595 ja Täysinän rauha*. Helsinki 1929, 267–298.

⁴² Forsberg 2014, passim; Oswald 2006, 19.

⁴³ ”Huarföre och efter alt sådant länder ider til gagn och förswaar, då begiäre wij att I där till godhwilleligen will förhiälpe –”. Charles IX to his subjects in Ostrobothnia 5 May 1607, SE/RA/1112.1/B/104, RR, SNA.

⁴⁴ “[A]tt samme befästningar matte blifue opbygde, ider som där boo och idre efterkommande til wärn och förswar, hwar Gud förbiude om något odörmodeligitt i framtijden kunne påkomma.” Charles IX to his subjects in Ostrobothnia 5 May 1607, SE/RA/1112.1/B/104, RR, SNA.

⁴⁵ “[I]cke i något annat Meningh opåbudet ähn till idert egit bättre och förswar –”. Grönblad 1846, 108.

Examples were a central strategy in classical argumentation. Aristotle saw historical examples as useful, because generally *future events will be like those of the past*. By making analogies between the past and the present, history could suggest what might happen in the present.⁴⁶ By describing the past destruction, Charles IX was able to illustrate how different the situation could have been.

Think back to when Sweden was in direct conflict with Russia. If some castles and fortifications had then been built there on the edge of the realm, which peasantry could have used to take shelter in, then the Russians would not have come so far as they did, and you or your parents would not have experienced so much damage – –⁴⁷

Charles IX was now essentially selling protection in the form of the castles to the peasants of Ostrobothnia, asking their labour services in return. What he ultimately wanted was for the peasants to obey without causing problems for the building work. He did not directly present the past unsafety as a failure on the part of previous rulers, but the implication is that Charles IX is a good ruler, who is taking care that castles are built for the peasants' safety. He had already argued in a similar way some years earlier, when asking peasants to repair the old fort in Oulu willingly: if only it had been well fortified during the previous year (peasant uprising of Club War 1596–97), many casualties could have been avoided.⁴⁸ It is a similar kind of argumentation that Vasa rulers had already used. In 1561, Eric XIV was asking peasants from areas surrounding Vyborg to participate in improving castle fortifications. He asked them to remember the most recent feud (Russian attack against Vyborg in 1556 during Russo-Swedish War of 1554–57), and what could have happened to the people themselves and the whole realm, had there not been a castle. According to Eric XIV, a well-fortified castle would give protection against the Russians for those living close to the border.⁴⁹

Comparing the two letters shows that the language used by Charles IX was more direct, whereas Eric XIV used praise and acknowledgement of help throughout the letter in a clear example of *captatio benevolentiae*, or securing of goodwill. In medieval letter-writing theory, its purpose was to praise the recipient's good deeds

⁴⁶ Olmsted 2006, 22.

⁴⁷ "Betänkiades något tillbaker then tidh, att Swerige war i oppenbare feigde med Ryssen, Där då hade någre Huss och Befästningar i landzähnden waritt opbygde, som almogen hade kunnet holla sig vnder, då hade Ryssen inthet så widt kommitt, som han giurde, och J eller idere förehlder icke fått så myckin Skade som thet skedde – –". Charles IX to his subjects in Ostrobothnia 5 May 1607, SE/RA/1112.1/B/104, RR, SNA.

⁴⁸ Grönblad 1846, 108.

⁴⁹ Eric XIV to common men in Äyräpää, Jääski and Lappevesi hundreds. 13 February 1561, SE/RA/1112.1/B/32, RR, SNA.

to make them more amenable to requests that followed, even to promise services in return.⁵⁰ Eric XIV called the recipients “dear good honourable men” (*käre godhe Dannemänn*), asking their help “gracefully” (*gunstligen*), and acknowledging it will be a burden for them.⁵¹ Importantly, he promised that the help he requested would not be turned into a permanent burden – as soon as they have done what is necessary for the castle, they will be relieved. Charles IX failed to include any such *captatio benevolentiae* in his letter, in Cicero’s terms trying to win the peasants over.

The examples used by Charles IX and Eric XIV were not far-fetched parallels, but all the more powerful because they had actually happened in very recent past. By asking the peasants to think back to the horrors that had happened to them and their loved ones, Charles IX was using both *pathos* and *logos*, appealing to the peasants’ emotions as well as their common sense. He was persuading the peasants according to classic principles of propaganda, evoking pre-existing emotions and stimulating a desire for a goal, in this case the basic need of safety, suggesting that he was the one who could provide it.⁵² Reference to previous experiences included a threat of future horrors. It conjured visions of what could happen again in future, unless there were castles to seek shelter in. Fear was very real in Ostrobothnia, after all. During the long war, peasants had been living in constant fear of attacks. After the war, there were rumours constantly circulating of Russians amassing troops to attack Ostrobothnia. In the end, the 17th century turned out to be peaceful in the area that is now known as Finland, but people of Ostrobothnia or the central seat of power had no way of knowing it, basing their expectations of future only on what they had known before.

Concessions are another classical persuasion technique – conceding points that the orator could afford. Granting concessions that did not cost much has been seen as gaining popularity among peasants.⁵³ One such concession Charles IX did give to the peasants of Tornio, who were spared from having to deliver limestone to Oulu. It was likely a tactical decision by the king, who could not agree to all the other things requested.⁵⁴ Concerning the day labour, though, for the first four or five years Charles IX did not relent. The complaints in the source material are from the first two years of castle building, but even though no complaints are known from the following years, there seems to have been enough resistance that day labour became troublesome. Castle building in Ostrobothnia is more of a case of quiet resistance,

⁵⁰ Murphy 1974, 221–223; Ulla Koskinen, *Hyvien miesten valtakunta. Arvid Henrikinpoika Tawast ja aatelin toimintakulttuuri 1500-luvun lopun Suomessa*. SKS, Helsinki 2011, 100.

⁵¹ Similarly, nearly a century later in 1659 governor Svante Banér wrote to peasants in Stockholm’s archipelago saying e.g. that he understood the difficulties and stressing the fact that it would benefit the peasants themselves and lead to security for everyone. Forssberg 2014, 175–176.

⁵² J. A. C. Brown, *Techniques of Persuasion. From Propaganda to Brainwashing*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1963, 23–24.

⁵³ Kepsu 2017, 416 & 425; Harnesk 2003, 73.

⁵⁴ Charles IX to peasants in Tornio parish 31 December 1607, SE/RA/1112.1/B/104, RR, SNA.

the kind that did not necessarily leave many traces in source material.⁵⁵ There was a transition around 1609/10, because account books state that instead of doing day labour, peasants from both bailiwicks paid in money and kind to provide for soldiers who worked on the castles daily.⁵⁶ Charles IX's successor Gustav II Adolf replied to a complaint from both bailiwicks in 1613, saying the peasants were fully aware they would not be taxed unless they had given their approval (*beiakett*) and agreed (*samsatt*) to it, *because they were afraid to travel a long way to work*.⁵⁷ The words used indicate there had been some kind of a negotiation, and peasants had agreed to an alternative to the day labour. If the system of day labour had been unproblematic, no negotiation and transitioning to the use of taxation would have occurred. The change is likely related to a wide-scale tax renewal that happened in Sweden at that time. The work was finished in Ostrobothnia in late 1608.⁵⁸ During this process, all complaints that peasants had would have come to the knowledge of the office-holders in charge of the renewal. By adopting the system of using soldiers for the labour, work was able to continue without obstruction, even if peasants still complained about the severity of taxes.

Conclusion

Looking at the state-building process of early modern Sweden as a process of not only top-down state measures, but bargaining between the central authority and peasantry, it becomes of interest how the central authority tried to establish legitimacy in its interactions with the peasants. When King Charles IX ordered two castles to be built in Ostrobothnia, it meant new burdens for the peasants, who had to participate in the delivery of materials and the building work itself. Ostrobothnia was a vast province and distances to the castles were long, so from the beginning complaints arose from the far corners of the province. Day labour was also a new burden, because historically in Ostrobothnia only the peasants living closest to Korsholm had to perform day labour, and the ones living further away could compensate by payments made in money or kind. Peasants in the northern parish of Kemi seem to have refused to deliver limestone, but no other cases of open resistance are known. Instead, peasants utilised their right to petition to the king. In his replies, Charles IX asked them to help

⁵⁵ Harnesk 2009, 252–254.

⁵⁶ Oulun linnan ja Pohjois-Pohjanmaan voutikunnan tilikirja 1610–1611, KA 4868: 17v, Voudintilit, The National Archives of Finland, Helsinki.

⁵⁷ Gustav II Adolf to peasants in northern and southern bailiwicks of Ostrobothnia 28 May 1613, SE/RA/1112.1/B/119, RR, SNA.

⁵⁸ Armas Luukko, *Etelä-Pohjanmaan historia III. Nuijasodasta isoonvihaan*. Etelä-Pohjanmaan historiatoimikunta, Vaasa 1945, 376–378.

willingly. Before giving any concessions, he attempted to achieve their cooperation by persuasive arguments.

Two central themes that arise in the arguments are the king's duty to protect his subjects and the benefit of the castles to the peasants themselves. This article has illustrated that Charles IX used an array of classical persuasion techniques. There is no evidence of him being well acquainted with the rhetorical tradition, but neither is it likely that he would have been set apart from learning something so essential for 16th century noblemen. In the letters, Charles IX established personal credibility by portraying himself as a pious and good king, who was fulfilling his duty as the protector of the realm, the basis for which were the king's rights and duties as described in law. The argumentation and language he used were simple, in line with the tradition of Vasa rulers to use a simple language when addressing the peasants, but it seems to have been even more direct and stripped down compared to that of his oldest brother. Unlike Eric XIV, Charles IX failed to try to "secure the goodwill" of the peasants when asking them to help with castle building, not using many persuasion techniques that he could have used, like acknowledging the hardship for the peasants. Neither did Charles IX plead to the peasants' sense of loyalty or patriotism, but like his brother he had the acuteness to adapt his argumentation to what the situation demanded: those arguments would have ill-suited the circumstances in Ostrobothnia and Charles IX personally as a usurper. Patriotic language fit the locale: fatherland and the realm, yes, but Finnish-speaking Ostrobothnians were no Swedes. The results seem to confirm what Börje Harnesk has suggested about the Crown's ability to adjust its argumentation according to each situation.

While the arguments of protection and benefit are rather stereotypical, Charles IX's main point was the specific dreadful past along with the future benefit. Using the recent destruction in Ostrobothnia as an example, he was able to argue that if castles had existed back then, no harm would have befallen the people. It was an appeal to common sense, but also to emotion. By drawing the comparison between past and future, he evoked memories of past horrors and hinted of the possibility of new ones. Asking the peasants to think back to what had happened to them or their parents conjured up powerful emotions. The castles were built for the safety of the peasants and their descendants: Charles IX was stirring the audience's emotions, but also illustrating the logic behind his request, using both *pathos* and *logos*. Showing that the matter is of personal concern to the recipient is a classical rhetoric strategy, and also typical to the early modern European rulers in general: the peasants were paying for their own protection.