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Female wholesalers in Stockholm, 1750–1820

THE AIM OF THIS INVESTIGATION is to analyse the women who managed wholesale businesses in Stockholm during the period of 1750–1820. This period was not only selected for scientific reasons, but also in regard to the availability of source material. The material for periods prior to 1750 is, in the case of Stockholm, incomplete for an investigation on a personal level; for example, the oldest complete census for Stockholm dates to 1755. The final date has been chosen primarily due to the ideological currents concerning women and men that signify nineteenth century Western Europe, which had by then already gained a foothold in Sweden. Specifically, these currents refer to those ideas inspired by Rousseau, which placed women in the home and which viewed the role of wife and mother as their main function.¹

Wholesalers were part of the upper echelons of burghers, socially as well as economically. Legally only men were given permission to trade as wholesalers. The trade legislation was applicable to all types of trade that conferred burghership, though in the case of wholesale businesses the capital involved was greater than for most other types of trade. For all types of trade the widow of a deceased trader could manage the business as long as she did not re-marry. As such she became her deceased husband's deputy in the business.

As there was often a large amount of capital involved in the wholesale business, there were also many people with a great interest in what was going to happen with the business after the death of a wholesaler. There was usually a network

¹ A revision of the debate regarding marriage and how true women should appear in Swedish newspapers during the period 1770–1830 shows that the woman's role as wife and mother was considered as given by nature from 1810 onwards. See Bladh, Christine "Gendered by Nature, or? The debate on female and male qualities in the Stockholm newspapers 1770–1830", in *Only Human*, ed. Arne Jarrick, Stockholm 2000, pp. 191–217.

of men who had been economically dependent on the deceased's activities. Money had been borrowed and lent within this network. It was common to build this network through marriage within different families.

In all businesses it was, regardless of the legislation, relatively rare for widows to continue managing the businesses after the husband's death. Considering that most widows of wholesalers would have belonged to the small group of widows who were economically independent and who had, during their marriage, been more used to a life in which they were expected to be representative rather than active "businessmen", it is surprising to find them as businessmen at all.

However, among the wholesalers as well as their widows there were those who were without capital, although poverty was nevertheless different for different social classes. A poor widow of a wholesaler was poor in relation to others in her social class, but this did not mean that she was poor in relation to the city's proletarian groups. In 1815, in connection with the economic crisis of the nineteenth century's first two decades, a foundation for the needy amongst the society of wholesalers'² members, their wives, widows and unsupported children was established. A "feeble" man could receive 100 rdr banco a year, a widow or wife 75 rdr banco, a married couple 150 rdr banco and an unsupported child 75 rdr banco. If there were more than one child in the same family each one received 50 rdr banco. Boys received their maintenance until their seventeenth birthday and girls until their twentieth.³ Thus the sums given by this foundation were quite substantial.

Very few women continued to manage this type of business after their husbands' death. What makes them interesting is the fact that they did exist as a separate group. The principal question this raises is: what reasons did these women have for their actions? Why did they take over their husbands' businesses?

One reason which can be disregarded at this point is that there were taxation reasons which made people behind the widow prefer to see her formally in charge of the business. Widows had no tax deductions for the businesses they managed. There were therefore no economical advantages in registering a company with the widow while it was in reality managed by her sons or other male relations.⁴

² Societies were the traders' equivalent to the artisans' guilds.

³ Kongl. Maj:ts nådiga resolution den 22 februari 1815 (His Majesty's merciful resolution of 22 February 1815).

⁴ Stadin, Kekke, "Kvinnors skatter", *Manliga strukturer och kvinnliga strategier, En bok till Gunhild Kyle*, Gothenburg 1987.

Ida Bull has investigated the burghers of Trondheim from a gender perspective. She follows the men and wives of the great trading houses during the period 1780 to 1830. The source material consists of public sources as well as letters and other records from the trading houses themselves. Here she is able to follow how both private and business queries are discussed in, for example, the preserved letters. The childrens' education and future marriages are dealt with; it also emerges that both sons and daughters receive education, though the education of the daughters is both different and shorter than that of the sons. The importance of the daughters marrying the right men is also apparent, though Bull argues that it was not a case of forced marriages, rather that the fathers ensured that the daughters married the right person. Her research clearly shows that a marriage was not solely an economical alliance between two families. A marriage should be built on both love and economic equality to be harmonic. Both parties were expected to participate actively in the trading business. The position of the women was not as advanced as that of the men; they should rather be their men's assistants in the trade. On the other hand it was the woman who had the main responsibility for the home. It appears as well that the husband found it natural for his wife to continue the business after his death.⁵

Hilde Sandvik's and Daniel Rabuzzi's investigation of Christiania (present day Oslo) and Stralsund respectively deals with the whole group of women burghers and women amongst traders respectively. Christiania and suburbs had a population of 11,000 in 1801, while the population of Stralsund was approximately 14,000. In 1791 in Christiania, from a total of 162 traders, twelve were women. Hilde Sandvik has not accounted for how many of these were wholesalers.⁶

In Daniel Rabuzzi's investigation of trade in Stralsund, he finds 507 traders in the years between 1755 and 1815. Of these, 54 were women, 50 were widows and 4 were spinsters. Among wholesalers, 7% were women in 1778.⁷ The legislation in Stralsund was somewhat different from that in mainland Sweden. According to the law of Lübeck even widows needed to have a guardian appointed, and the magistrate was to subsequently approve him. Only widows of wholesalers had, since the time of the Hansa, dispensation from a number of restrictions that applied to

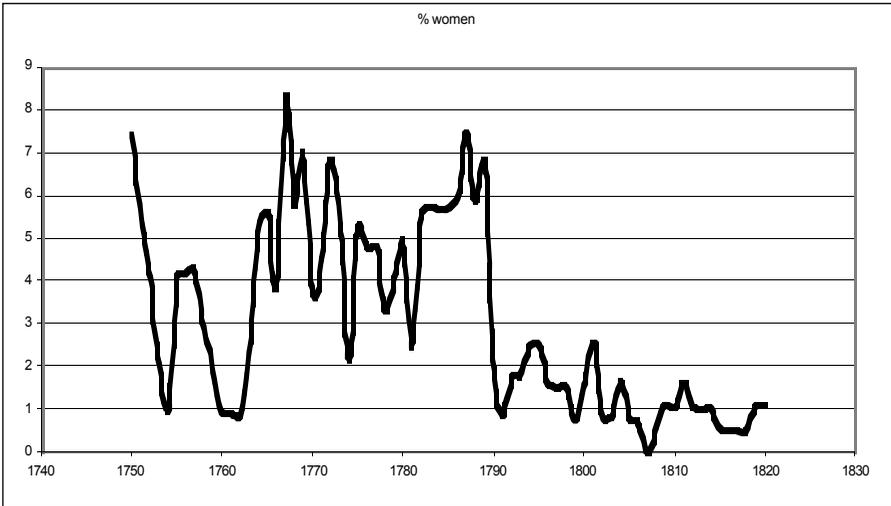
⁵ Bull, Ida, "Kvinnens dagligliv i borgerskapet ca 1780-1830", *Historisk tidsskrift* 1990:4 (Norwegian), p. 484ff

⁶ Sandvik, Hilde, "Umyndige" kvinner i handel og håndverk: kvinner i bynaeringer i Christiania i siste halvdel av 1700-talet, Oslo 1992.

⁷ Daniel Rabuzzi, "Women as Merchants in Eighteenth-Century Northern Germany: The Case of Stralsund, 1750-1830", *Central European History* 1995:4, p. 438f.

other widows, and it is unclear how legislation was applied in this case. They probably had dispensation from this rule as well. Interestingly, no guardians are mentioned in the documents that concern widows of wholesalers.⁸

Diagram 1: Share of women amongst wholesalers in Stockholm 1750–1820.



Source: Borgerskapets bemedlingskommissions verifikationer 1750–1820, SSA.

The diagram above shows how large the percentage of women amongst wholesalers was during the period of investigation. The diagram also shows that women's participation in wholesale trading suffered a disruption around 1790. Even if the percentage of women varied greatly from year to year, there were always women amongst wholesalers prior to 1790. Thereafter the women's percentage decreased. Their average percentage prior to 1790 was approximately four, subsequently it decreased to approximately one. There was no new legislation that might have explained this change. The reason or reasons have therefore to be found in other areas.

A criticism of sources should be made at this point. In order to be able to clarify how many women managed wholesale businesses each year, the verifications of the assessment commission for each year have to be studied. It can be easily observed that on numerous occasions a person might be found as a wholesaler for

⁸ Rabuzzi, p. 45of.

many years, only to disappear for a year and then return as wholesaler again. It is therefore probable that some people were overlooked some years. As far as is possible to know, there are no reasons to suspect that these inconsistencies in the source material should have affected women more often than men, which is why this problem has been disregarded in this study.

The women who took over their mens' businesses can be divided into three categories. The first consists of the women who are only registered as active for less than a year. They managed the company until the distribution of the estate and had no real intentions to continue managing it themselves. The second category continued to manage the business together with sons, the husband's previous partner or with a new business partner. The third category, finally, consisted of those who managed in business alone for a shorter or longer period.

The total of widows during the period of investigation was 66. Of these, 42 were active for more than a year.⁹ I have placed the 24 who ended business within a year in the first category above.

Sixteen or seventeen women managed their businesses alone or with business partners for five or more years. In the case of one woman it is unclear as to whether it really is the same person for the seven years in which she is mentioned. She is alternatively referred to as *Christina Lindeman and son* and *Christina Liedman and son*. It has not been possible to identify her. Due to this, she is eliminated from this investigation, which will concentrate on a selection of the sixteen which remain. The selected cases consist of half the group, eight persons; a separate study on the remaining women is planned to take place subsequently. The intention in this study is to include women who were: wholesalers for a long period; of various ages when they were widowed; and were active sometime within the selected period of investigation.

⁹ Bemedlingskommissionens arkiv (The assessment commission archives), verifications for the years 1750 to 1820, SSA.

The Sixteen Widows of Wholesalers

Table 1: The names of the women and number of active years.

Name	Number of years
* Anna Maria Tottie m. Isac Toutin	30
* Anna Maria Burghardi and sons m. Johan Wretman	26
Carolina Camitz m. Peter Hultman	22
* Anna Maria Schütz m. Elias Brandel	17
Johanna Edenberg m. Magnus Qvast Pet:son	15
Brita Hedberg and son m. Joachim Sutshoff	14
*Christina Nordström m. Carl Magnus Fris	12
*Maria Juliana Törngren m. Joachim Grabien	9
*Sara Lampa and son m. Johan Habickt (m. 1 Anders Fahlborg)	8
Margareta Biörckman in co. w. F. Lundin m. Anders Plomgren	8
Margaretha Christina (surname unknown) m. Henriik Albrecht	7
Johanna Robért m. Johan Weilandt	7
*Maria Liwijn m. Leonard Pinchartd (m. 1 D. Burghardi)	6
Anna Maria (surname unknown) m. Holm	5
Margaretha Dorothea Murray m. David Müller	5
*Ulrica Christina Willman m. Johan Melchios Starbus	5

Source: Borgerskapets bemedlingskommission (The assessment commission), verifications, SSA, *Svensk släktkalender och svenska ättartal*, Stockholm 1890's.

Note: Anna Maria Brandel finished with the wholesale business in 1772, after seventeen years in the business. In the time that followed she managed only the sugar refinery that constituted part of her inheritance from her deceased husband. She managed the sugar refinery with great success until her death in 1799. If one includes the 27 years that she managed only the sugar refinery, her time as a businesswoman was all of 44 years.

*Included in the investigation.

This study will concentrate on the background of the women, in particular from which families they hailed. Did these specific women come from families in which the fathers were successful wholesalers or in which the fathers managed other successful companies? Were their marriages alliances connecting successful companies or did previous family ties mean that their marriages did not endanger capital leaving the family? Here, I research their family background and at which age they entered marriage. Were they pawns in a game between men or is it possible to suppose that they managed their businesses out of interest and of free will?

The businesses' financial viability is necessary for the analysis. A profitable bu-

business would have been more interesting for the men around them than a small business, of which a widow would have had financial benefit.

The Economy of the businesses

The appropriation (= tax) that every burgher paid each year is listed in the assessment commission's verifications. The appropriation was based on the turnover of the business.

Table 2: Appropriation paid first and final year that each individual managed their business. Daler copper coins, also calculated in hl rye (last two columns)

Name	Appropriation year 1, dcc	Appropriation final year dcc	Appropriation year 1 in rye	Appropriation final year in rye
Toutin Anna Maria n. Tottie 1769–1798	50	108	43	38
Wretman Anna Maria n. Burghardi and sons 1764–1789	200	810	103	389
Hultman Carolina n. Camitz 1768–1789	250	216	203	104
Brandel Anna Maria n. Schütz 1755–1772	125	1620	147	783
Qvast Pet:son Johanna n. Edenberg 1782–1796	90	72	55	32
Sutshoff Brita f. Hedberg and son 1756–1769	50	60	45	51
Fris Christina n. Nordström 1809–1835	1260	2532	229	372
Grabien Maria Juliana n. Törngren 1798–1806	72	54	25	11
Habickt Sara n. Lampa (m. 1 Anders Fahlborg) And son 1765–1772	400	120	221	58
Plomgren Margaretha n. Biörckman in co. w. F. Lundin 1772–1779	250	75	121	50
Albrecht Margaretha Christina 1750–1756	20	10	36	9
Weilandt Johanna n. Robért 1772–1784	540	360	261	221
Pinchardt Maria n. Liwijn (m. 1 D. Burghardi) 1775–1780	100	288	61	188
Holm Anna Maria 1787–1791	108	72	62	37
Müller Margaretha Dorothea n. Murray 1772–1776	240	100	116	67
Starbus Ulrica Christina n. Willman 1785–1789	72	90	36	43

Source: Borgerskapets bemedlingskommission (The assessment commission), verifications, SSA. Price of rye: Lennart Jörberg. *A History of Prices in Sweden 1*, Lund 1972, p. 632–634.

Note: The price of rye has been used in the table as a rough measurement of changes in the cost of living.

A new system of coinage was introduced in Sweden in 1776. Prior to this daler silver coins and daler copper coins had been in use. The new monetary standard was riksdaler banco. In the table above all sums have been calculated in daler copper coins. This is to enable a comparison of how the taxes changed in reality for the various individuals. That tax has been converted in relationship to the cost of rye is yet another attempt to enable the comparison of the individuals' tax over a span of time. This calculation takes into consideration the inflation during the 70-year long period of investigation.

Six of the women in the investigation paid more tax in their final year as wholesalers than they had in their first year as wholesalers. The fact that so many paid less than they did at their start as wholesalers is not particularly amazing considering the advanced age they had reached.

Another means of comprehending the size of their businesses is to compare with other wholesalers of the same period. In 1755 the appropriation paid by wholesalers in the Old Town varied from 5 daler copper coins to 400. The wholesalers of Norrmalm paid between 10 and 125 daler in appropriation. The two widows included in this investigation who were active that year paid 125 daler (Anna Maria Brandel) and 10 daler (Margaretha Christina Albrecht) respectively.

Amongst wholesalers in 1780 can be found Carolina Hultman, who paid 10 rdr, Anna Maria Toutin with 8 rdr, Anna Maria Wretman 13 rdr, Maria Pinchartd 16 rdr and Johanna Weilandt 10 rdr. The male wholesalers paid between 200 and 3 rdr.

Only one of the women of the investigation can be found amongst those who paid appropriation in 1810. That was Christina Fris, who paid 83 rdr. The male wholesalers paid between 333 and 8 rdr.

The women in the investigation ran neither the smallest nor the largest wholesale businesses in the city. This applies regardless if they managed their businesses alone or in company with others. Many of the businesses were so small that the women's financial survival might have depended on them.

Background of the selected women

Table 3: Personal data of the members of the cohort.

Name	Father's Profession	Age at Marriage	Age Difference	Widow At age	Age at Death	Number of children
A M Tottie	Tobacco manufacturer	27	3	53	84	0
M. Liwijn	Court judge	24/31	?/-1	30/46	86	3/1
A M Burghandi	Wholesaler	20	21	39	82	3
A M Schütz	Wholesaler	16	18	27	74	7
C. Nordström	Tobacco manufacturer	20	14	51	77	7
M J Törngren	Customs officer	20	10	63	75	4
S. Lampa	Brewer	19/32	?/3	30/46	60	9/0
U C Willman	Dyer	29	19	40	65	5

Source: See respective personal description

Note: Before / = first marriage. After / = second marriage.

Anna Maria Toutin's father, Thomas *Tottie*, was a tobacco manufacturer and trader in Stockholm. Anna Maria was born in his marriage to Christina Schönman, his second marriage. Thomas *Tottie* was the father of 15 children, and Anna Maria was the youngest, born in 1715. After his death in 1724, his widow took charge of the tobacco factory until 1730, when his sons, Charles and William, took over. They closed down the tobacco factory and developed a very successful wholesale business. Many of Anna Maria's sisters were married into successful trading houses in Stockholm. Anna Maria herself was 27 years old when she married the three year older Isac *Toutin*. He was not only a wholesaler but managed a silk-stocking factory as well. Together they had one daughter, who died at the age of one. When Isac passed away in 1768, Anna Maria was 53 years old and childless. She never remarried and remained a widow until her death in 1799 at the age of 84. She is listed as wholesaler and manufacturer right up until her death. There was a joint will at the time of Isac's death, and the balance of the estate less deductions for debts was 64,570 daler. Of this Anna Maria received 62,233 daler. There was not very much left for other heirs. According to the census of 1790, the household consisted of herself and 11 employees. When Anna Maria passed away, she still owned the property in the Old Town, the blocks Juno 91 and 92, which had been in the family's possession since the time of Isac.¹⁰

Maria Pinchardt née Liwijn and *Anna Maria Wretman née Burghardi* were mother and daughter. Maria Pinchardt was the daughter of Leonard Botwid, a magistrate court judge in Stockholm. She was twice married, and entered into her first marriage in 1722, at age 24, with Daniel Burghardi, age unknown. Together they had daughter Anna Maria (b. 1724) as well as sons Johan Fredrik and Daniel. Maria's husband Daniel passed away in 1727, and she remarried two years later to the wholesaler Leonard Pinchardt, her junior by one year. They had one child together, son Adam, who also became a wholesaler and passed away at the advanced age of 91, a bachelor.

At the time of Leonard Pinchardt's death, the family lived at Stora Nygatan in the Old Town. Eight houses in total, to a value of 92,000 daler copper coins, are listed in the estate inventory. The most valuable one was estimated to be worth 50,000 daler; the total value of the estate was 693,914 daler. The widow received half of this as well as the so-called widow's benefit of 34,478 daler. It was a large amount of money for a widow of 77 years, and despite her age she continued with the business until her death in 1784. Her property was valued at 197,334 daler copper coins (10963 rdr banco). This was divided between her three surviving children, Anna Maria, Johan Fredrik and Adam.¹¹

The daughter, Anna Maria, from Maria Pinchardt's first marriage, married at age twenty to the wholesaler Johan Wretman, who was 41 years old at the time. It was Wretman's second marriage, and he had previously been married to Anna Christina Weylandt and had a son from that marriage. Anna Maria and Johan had three children together, two sons and a daughter. Johan's son from his first marriage and his eldest son in the second both became wholesalers, while the youngest son became an iron mill owner. Johan Wretman died in 1763 at age 60. The widow took charge of the business, initially on her own and subsequently jointly with her stepson and her eldest son. The final year that Anna Maria was included as partner in the business was 1789. She did not pass away until 1806, aged 82. Incidentally, her son Fredrik also died in the same year and her daughter had predeceased her mother as well.

At the time that Johan Wretman passed away the family owned house number

¹⁰ BOU 1769-I-204, BOU 1800-III-38, Mantalslängd Staden Inre och Östra (Registers of population City Inner and East) 1790 p. 402, SSA, *Svensk släktkalender och svenska ättartal* part 7 p. 421, Stockholm 1891, Forsstrand, Carl, *Skeppsbroadelen*, p. 93, Stockholm 1916.

¹¹ BOU 1775-III-694, BOU 1784-I-187, SSA, *Svensk släktkalender och svenska ättartal* part 11, p. 332, Stockholm 1896.

62 in the block Typhon in the Old Town. It was then valued at 24,000 daler copper coins. When Anna Maria Burghardi died, she owned three quarters of the same property. The full value of the property was by then 5,500 rdr banco. The total value of the estate at the time of Johan Wretman's death was 227,386 daler copper coins and at the time of Anna Maria's death it was 1,520,073 daler copper coins (56,299 rdr banco). Bearing in mind that the distribution of Johan's estate only allowed Anna Maria to keep slightly more than half, the value of her property had grown considerably, even taking into consideration the inflation of the period (the price of rye rose by 175%).¹²

One of the widows who managed a very successful business was *Anna Maria Brandel* née Schütz. Her father was a wholesaler in Gothenburg and had, at the time of her marriage, a large amount of business connections with his daughter's future spouse Elias Brandel. Anna Maria was only 16 years old when she married Elias, 18 years her senior. They had seven children together. When she was 27 years old, Elias passed away and Anna Maria remained a widow for the rest of her life. She managed the wholesale business until 1772, after which she continued with the sugar refinery also left to her by Elias. She managed it until her death in 1799. She was then 74 years old.¹³

Carl Magnus Fris and *Christina Nordström* married in 1777; she was 20 years old at the time and he was 34. Carl Magnus Fris' father had died in 1748, and two years later his mother remarried to Anders Dimander, owner of a tobacco factory. His widow succeeded to the business when he died, and in 1778 expanded it by taking over an older franchise for tobacco spinning. Carl Magnus was admitted as a partner in his mother's business around 1790. After the death of Anna Dimander in 1792, the tobacco spinning mill of Carl Magnus' younger brother, Petter Dimander, as well as the tobacco spinning mill of his father-in-law, Anders Nordström were incorporated. The brothers were both married to daughters of Anders Nordström.¹⁴

In addition to several houses in Stockholm, the family also owned Töreåfors ironworks and sawmills in Norrbotten and part of Bjurfors brass works. Further-

¹² BOU 1763-II-507, BOU 1806-IV-15, SSA, *Svensk släktkalender och svenska ättartal* part 2, p. 421, Stockholm 1886.

¹³ I have written an article that deals with Anna Maria Brandel and her daughter and granddaughter. "En borgarfamilj som andra?" In *Människan i historien och samtiden. Festskrift till Alf W Johansson*, Stockholm 2000.

¹⁴ *Svensk släktkalender och svenska ättartal* part 9, p. 18f, Stockholm 1893, *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* (Swedish biographical dictionary) part 11, p. 266f.

more they were, as can be seen above, partners in the Dimander tobacco factory. They resided in and owned house number 30 at Skeppsbron in the block Cadmus. Their most renowned property was Waldermarsudde with its, in their own name established, Frisens' park, still preserved at Djurgården. When Carl Magnus passed away at age 65 in 1808, the estate's balance was 70 084 rdr banco; the widow was allowed to keep 36,794 rdr banco. At the time of his death the couple had seven children together, five sons and two daughters. The youngest son still lived at home in 1810, and was enrolled in a private school. Christina had five members of staff in her household. Her estimated annual income was 2,500 rdr on which she paid 800 rdr in tax. At the time of Christina's death, when she was 77 years old, only two children remained alive. They had 85,133 rdr banco to share. Produce from the sawmill and the tobacco manufacturing were sold in the wholesale business. At the time of Christina's death the estate declared secure claims to a value of 20 133 rdr. Several institutions were included amongst those in debt to her company, and they were such diverse establishments as Katarina workhouse and Danvikens asylum on the one hand, and Tullgarn's and Drottningholm's palaces on the other.¹⁵

The date of marriage of *Maria Juliana Törngren* and *Joachim Grabien* is not known, but it would have been one or a few years prior to the birth of the eldest daughter, who was born in 1753. If this is correct, Maria Juliana was 19 or 20 years old and Joachim 29 or 30 at that time. Maria Juliana's father was employed at the Customs, but within the Törngren family there were several wholesalers. Maria Juliana and Joachim had several children. The eldest son made his career as a trader and trading agent in Livorno, Italy. Joachim died in 1795 at the age of 73 and Maria Juliana in 1807 at the age of 75. At the time of Joachim's death the family owned a house in the parish of Katarina valued at 2,500 rdr banco. They had invested in stocks both in "Ostindiska kompaniet" (the East India Company) and Västindiska kompaniet (the West India Company) and owned shares in ships. Due to large debts, the estate's liabilities greatly exceeded its assets by 16,675 rdr banco.

Despite this, Maria Juliana appears as a wholesaler in the verifications of the assessment commission in 1798, three years after her husband's death. She carried on the wholesale business until her death in 1807. At the time of her death the

¹⁵ BOU 1808-I-918, BOU 1835-II-398, Mantalslängd Staden Södra och Västra (Registers of population City South and West) 1810 p. 39, SSA.

debts as well as the assets were considerably smaller than at the time of Joachim's death. The assets now were 626 rdr and the debts 875 rdr. This means that the estate's liabilities were 249 rdr. Amongst other things the house in Katarina was sold and the family lived in a rented apartment in the Old Town. Despite her financial position, Christina herself and her two children, still living at home, each owned a gold watch and the family had a room with silk furniture.¹⁶

Sara Lampa married twice. She married the spice trader Anders *Fahlborg* first and subsequently the wholesaler *Johan David Habicht*. She was the daughter of the master of brewers Johan Claesson Lampa and Elisabeth Westerman. It was her father's second marriage and she was child number 14 out of a total of 17 children. Sara herself had nine children in her first marriage while her second marriage was childless. She was 19 years old when she married for the first time; Anders Fahlborg's age is unknown. Sara was 30 years old when Anders passed away. Since five of the children had died before their father, there were now only four children alive. Amongst other things the family owned the property number 148 at Österlånggatan and a sugar refinery at Nygatan. The residue of the estate was 148,520 daler copper coins when all liabilities had been deducted. Of this the widow received 74,259. The remainder was divided between the children. Sara entered her second marriage two years later to Johan David Habicht, who was 35 years old. Johan David had no direct heirs when he passed away at only 49 years of age in 1760. He did, however, have six siblings. One brother had died, and by the time the estate inventory proceedings were completed, his widow had passed away as well. Sara and Johan David had a joint will, and thanks to this the greater share of the estate went to Sara. The estate's entire inventory less deductions for liabilities was valued at 678,010 daler copper coins. The children of the widow were considered to have a claim to 105,561 daler. The five remaining heirs received 12,119 daler copper coins each and the remainder went to the widow. The family owned three properties at the time of Johan David's death, two in the Old Town and a mansion house. These houses also remained at the time of Sara's decease, but now her children owned shares in them. It emerges from the estate inventory of Johan David that he had been an importer of wine and spirits and that he had also managed a textile factory. After her husband's death the widow managed the company in partnership with her son from her first marriage to Johan Anders. In 1770

¹⁶ Census City South and West 1800 p. 444, BOU 1795-IV-945, BOU 1807-III-531, SSA, *Svensk släktkalender och svenska ättartal part 10* p. 496, Stockholm 1894.

he, aged 32, as well as the 29 year old daughter, still lived at home with their mother. The household also contained a relation of the same age as Sara herself, as well as nine members of staff. What remained after her was 277,411 daler. She owned rather large shares of ships, which were valued at 89,000 daler copper coins. Nothing, however, indicates that she had kept the textile factory. Sara only reached the age of 60.¹⁷

In 1770 *Ulrica Christina Willman* was 29 years old. She married the same year to the 48-year-old *Johan Melchior Starbus*. Her parents were the dyer Henric Willman and his second wife Anna Helena Westerman. The father had 17 children in all, 14 of whom were born in his second marriage. Ulrica Christina was her mother's eleventh child. She herself had five children. Of these, four were still alive when Johan Melchior passed away in 1781. The children were then between nine and two years old. Ulrica herself was 40 years old and Melchior had reached the age of 59. The family owned a house in the parish of Klara in which they lived. The house was valued at 3,333 rdr banco. In 1780 the widow and the children had moved to the Old Town to a house at Skeppsbron, which she owned. According to her estate inventory which was made six years later, the value of the house was 13,528 rdr banco. In 1780 two of the daughters, two maids and a manservant lived together with Ulrica Starbus. The family had to pay tax for one room with silk furniture as well as a gold watch. The third daughter lived with her family in the same property. She was married to the wholesaler Alexander Lundholm. In 1806 at the age of 65, Ulrica passed away. She had already discontinued the wholesale business in 1789. Three daughters were still alive, all married to wholesalers. The youngest daughter had married a brother of her eldest sister's husband. The sisters inherited 11,786 rdr banco which to share.¹⁸

Personal data

Were there any personal data that could explain why these specific women continued to manage the businesses after their husbands' death? Were there any common features amongst them? Or must everything be explained on the personal level?

¹⁷ BOU 1745-I-1122, BOU 1762-IV-178, BOU 1774-II-390, Mantalslängd Staden Inre och Östra (Registers of population City Inner and East) 1770 p. 376, SSA, *Svensk släktkalender och svenska ättartal part 10*, p. 332, Stockholm 1894.

¹⁸ BOU 1782-IV-1081, BOU 1806-IV-442, Mantalslängd Staden Inre och Östra (Registers of population City Inner and East) 1800 p. 444, SSA, *Svensk släktkalender och svenska ättartal part 11*, p. 439, Stockholm 1896.

The fathers of two of the women were public officials; the other fathers belonged to the upper levels of burghers. One public official was a magistrate's court judge and the other father was employed by the Customs (his position is unknown). Thus all hailed from financially stable families. Many of the fathers were also politically active. Consequently all the women came from families with good social networks, where alliances of marriage were used as a part of the business activity. But this was of frequent occurrence in the social class to which the women of this investigation can be assigned. Anita Göransson has found the same phenomena amongst the burghers of Norrköping.¹⁹ This only confirms that these women had a background, which was normal for the women who married wholesalers at this period of time.

The age at which they entered marriage for the first time was between 16 and 29. The two who were the oldest when they married, Anna Maria Tottie 27 years old and Ulrica Willman 29 years old, were amongst the youngest in very large families. Sara Lampa was also born late in a large family. She still married early, at age 19. Despite this, it does not seem unreasonable for the families to have concentrated on getting their eldest daughters strategically married early. Sara Lampa's first husband was a spice trader, and it was not until her second marriage that she married a wholesaler.

Most married considerably older men. As a consequence, many of them became widows at a relatively young age while they still had young children. With young children to inherit the family fortune it might have been tactical not to remarry, at least not to a man who himself also had children. The two who did remarry did so to men without children of their own.

Only Anna Maria Toutin/Tottie was childless. She was widowed at age 53 and managed the wholesale business and the factory until her death, something that she was probably forced to do unless she wanted to end up in a situation where she ran the risk of being a burden on her siblings' families in her old age. The foundation established in 1815 to protect, amongst others, widows of wholesalers, did not exist during her lifetime.

It was only Christina Fris/Nordström who would have been able to turn to the foundation, which had been established in 1815 for widows of wholesalers and their children. Nevertheless, she preferred to continue managing the business. Neither does it seem likely that she would have been able to turn to the found-

¹⁹ Anita Göransson, "Kön, släkt och ägande. Borgerliga maktstrategier 1800-1850", *Historisk Tidskrift* 1990:4.

ation. Her children, however, could of course have taken over the business sooner than they did. Perhaps she did not have confidence in her children's abilities and wanted to manage and have insight into the affairs herself.

The only one of the widows who lacked capital was Maria Juliana Törn-gren/Grabien. At her husband's as well as her own death, the estate's liabilities exceeded its assets.

Trying to find a common denominator amongst these women is difficult and somewhat forced, but a likely reason for them to continue with the wholesale business after their husband's deaths, despite stable finances, with one exception, appears to be to keep the estate intact, and not to divide it. These specific women might simply have considered themselves better equipped to manage the business than their sons in the instances where the sons were adult. When they had young children the aim seems to have been to keep a profitable business within the family. That many of them then continued with the business after their sons had grown up was probably due to the fact that they, after many years in the business, considered themselves most suited as business executives.

Summary

This investigation is based on a limited amount of source material consisting of documents concerning eight women in the case of personal data, and sixteen for more comprehensive information. The criteria for selecting these sixteen have been that they should have carried on their husbands' wholesale businesses for five years or more during the period 1770–1820.

Is it possible to find a common reason for these specific women to continue with the wholesale business after their husbands had passed away? No private letters or other sources of a personal nature have been used in this investigation. On the basis of the source material, which has been used, only one common reason can be found, namely the financial, though what the financial reason was varied for each individual widow.

Anna Maria Tottie/Toutin was middle aged and childless when her spouse died. If she had retired to survive on the inheritance from Isac for the remainder of her life, which was almost 30 years, she would have had to live very frugally. The life with eleven members of staff, which she as a businesswoman had been able to live, would have been impossible for her to maintain unless she had continued with the wholesale business. In the case of Maria Juliana Törn-gren/Grabien the circumstances were similar. Contrary to Anna Maria Tottie/Toutin, she did have

children, but they were adults by the time she was widowed aged 63. She is the only individual in the investigation who inherited nothing from her husband. His liabilities greatly exceeded the estate's assets. The business she managed was far from the large trading company managed by many of the other women. It decreased over time as well.

Sara Lampa/Fahlborg/Habicht's and Maria Liwijn/Burghardi/Pincharchts' reasons for managing their businesses were similar. Both had been married previously and both had children from their first marriage. To continue the trading business was a way of securing these children's share in the property left by the husbands.

Anna Maria Burghardi was first sole owner and subsequently partner in a business which greatly increased in size during her time there. She retired some years prior to her death. Her assets enabled her to live her final years in comfort. Anna Maria Schütz/Brandel fits the same pattern. She was, contrary to the previous widow, sole owner of her successful business. Both were widowed while they still had children who were minors. Had they married, the children would have risked losing part of the family fortune. Had they liquidated the businesses, their sons, who might have wanted to continue as wholesalers as adults, would have had to set up anew. Christina Nordström/Fris and Ulrica Willman/Starbus were also widowed while they had children who were still minors. All four managed businesses in which the turnover increased with time. Ulrica Willman/Starbus's wholesale business was not amongst the largest in the city, while the others were involved in large trading houses.

Many of the conclusions reached in this investigation correspond with those reached in Daniel Rabuzzi's work on 18 widows of wholesalers in Stralsund. The majority of the women's fathers belonged to the city's upper levels, which is consistent with the fathers of this group. The average age of marriage in Stralsund was 22,7 years old and in Stockholm 21,9 years old. The women in Stralsund were widowed between the age of 22 and 65. In Stockholm they were between 27 and 63 years old. The widows in Stockholm were within the same age range as those in Stralsund.²⁰ Any more comparisons with Rabuzzi's outcome would be unsafe, as the information available is not comparable to his.

There has been much debate, recently, in gender history, on the status of the widow in pre-industrial society. Most of this debate has concerned rural women,

²⁰ Rabuzzi, p. 442f

and lower- and middle-class urban women; few have studied urban upper-class widows. Much of the research has been inspired by Thomas Laquer's theory concerning the one-sex and two-sex model. In pre-modern times, Laquer argues, women and men were considered basically similar; the woman was, essentially, an incomplete man. The separation of the sexes into two separate species was introduced later, primarily by the philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment. According to historian Maria Sjöberg, who builds on this thesis, the separation of women and men in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century society was based on perceived differences of degree, rather than differences in species. This model helps explain the unique position, among women, held by the widow.²¹ As a widow she was considered, regardless of age, capable of performing tasks forbidden to single and married women. She could, among other things, manage and run a bourgeois business. She was seen as a capable intermediary link between the deceased husband and the society he had left behind. This may be the reason why we find women managing some of the more successful companies during the early-modern period.

But why do the women disappear from this financially profitable market? Various scholars have put different theories for this forward. Daniel Rabuzzi suggests that the reason for this can be found in the political arena. Women's lack of political rights made it easy to push them away from the financially more attractive areas. Personally I am of the opinion that the reason is primarily to be found on an ideological level. There were no political obstacles to giving women equal political rights as men; however, there clearly were ideological obstacles, and one that were strengthened by the ideas of enlightenment which emphasized the "natural" differences between the sexes. The woman's natural place was in the home, where she should care for the husband and children, while the man's place was in the public arena.

21 Sjöberg, *Maria, Kvinnors jord, manlig rätt. Äktenskap, egendom och makt i äldre tider*, p. 18, Hedemora 2001.

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