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Karsten Skjold Petersen. *Geworbne Krigskarle. Hvervede Soldater i Danmark 1774-1803.* Copenhagen: TÖ ¸jhusmuseet Museum Tusculanums Forlag, 2002. 399 pp. EUR 47.00 (paper), ISBN 978-87-7289-796-7.

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Military history has traditionally been a most neglected and ignored subject within Danish historiography and among professional Danish historians in general, and so it has been until rather recently. This has probably to do with the traumatic Danish defeat of 1864 and the subsequent Danish national small-state complex. There has been a strongly military-sceptic and pacifist tradition in Danish historiography and consequently the military sides of social history have been more or less been ignored. Those who actually did deal with military history were usually professional army officers whose interests were often narrow and purely military, thus ignoring the larger perspectives of their research themes.

However, as the military sector of former ages was usually the one that swallowed by far the largest part of the taxpayers' money and was furthermore a striking element within society in general, so ignoring this sector means a distorted and insufficient picture of social history. For these reasons the trend among Danish professional historians in recent years to deal with military aspects of social and political and other kinds of history must be welcomed. And Karsten Skjold Petersen's book is an example of this. The author is a museum keeper at the T=jhusmuseet (The Danish Army Museum) in Copenhagen, and the book is a revised version of his Ph.D. thesis which was publicly defended in September 2000.

The period in question, 1774 to 1803, was a reorganisation of the structure of the Danish armed forces in 1774, meaning an increase in the number of conscripted soldiers and a reduction of the number of recruited, often foreign-born professional soldiers. In 1803, a new plan for the army organisation meant that the number of conscripts (from the Danish peasant population) was strongly increased and in principle (even if it took some years in practice), recruitment was abolished. From then on, the Danish army was based on conscripts rather than on professionally recruited soldiers. The image of those professional, recruited soldiers within the Danish army has traditionally been very negative: they have been described as crude, brutal, foreign (usually German, which after 1864 was certainly not considered an advantage), uncivilized, morally depraved, unreliable, drunk, violent, and criminal and thus a nuisance to the rest of society. The aim of Karsten Skjold Petersen is to give a more nuanced picture of the life of these professional, recruited soldiers, write their social history so to say, to examine their living and housing conditions, their marital status, their origin and past and what happened to them after having left the army. This theme is, as mentioned, almost completely unresearched and Karsten Skjold Petersen has made many comprehensive, extensive, and thorough studies in archival material, mostly from the archives of the Danish armed forces today kept in Rigsarkivet (The Danish National Archives), but also in provincial and local archives. Furthermore, besides using this archival material produced by various Danish authorities he has supplemented by using written accounts and memoirs from former soldiers in the Danish army, thus throwing a different and alternative approach to what the life of those soldiers was like from the one that can be read from the official, archival material.

And indeed, Karsten Skjold Petersen has succeeded in producing much new and interesting knowledge on the field. The organisation and functioning of the recruiting system at home and abroad has been carefully examined and with one regiment as a sample, a statistical examination of the background of the recruited soldiers (their country of birth, age, marital status, profession, denomination, former service, and reasons for accepting recruitment into the Danish army) has been made. It turns out that more than 50 percent of the recruited soldiers were foreign-born, most of them from the German lands. Many of them had learnt some kind of skilled trade. Most of them were Lutherans but also Catholics, Reformed and Orthodox were represented. The reasons for enlisting cannot be measured quantitatively, but on the basis of qualitative sources and being aware of the danger of crude simplification, Karsten Skjold Petersen

subdivides them into professionals, refugees and adventurers, and those who had had no choice but to enlist. The next chapter is on the service of those recruited soldiers: jurisdiction, the harsh penal code, desertion, duties, ceremonial, equipment, advancement, and degradation

Then follows a chapter on the social conditions, dealing with themes such as billeting or barracking, living conditions, marital status, family, crime, and reasons for discharging. The period in question was one when billeting was replaced by barracking. Financially, the soldiers belonged to the lower class, often living in real poverty, also in comparison with civilian members of the lower class. Many had learned a skilled trade, however; half of the troops did work in these trades during their spare time and make money themselves, thus enabling the government to pay them lower wages than it would otherwise have had to. Indeed, many of them did only serve (and receive pay) one month a year, working in their trade the other eleven months. Others who had not learnt a skilled profession had to do unskilled work to survive. After twenty-four years of service the soldiers were entitled to a small pension; however, not everyone managed to stay that long in service. Those who had to discharge because of illness or physical decay before that were helped by affirmative action at appointments to subaltern civilian posts or by permission to work in their trade unchallenged by the guilds. The army was very much a society within society with its own esprit de corps and feeling of identity.

The final chapter before the conclusion is about the complex, versatile, and often somewhat problematic relationship between the troops garrisoned in the towns and the rest of the town population. Even if they were billeted into the houses of the citizens and many of them as mentioned worked in their skill trade, they remained a visibly alien community. The attitudes of the civilian population towards having a garrison in their town or not were mixed. Some saw the troops as a welcome source for increase of demand and consumption, in other words as an economic stimulus, whereas others feared unwelcome competition and insecurity. Relations between the soldiers and the civilian lower class could be tense.

Finally, Karsten Skjold Petersen makes a showdown with the above-mentioned very negative image of the recruited professional soldiers. Certainly, the soldiers were not rich but after all, were guaranteed a minimum wage and often had the right to do skilled or unskilled jobs besides. The army was a community, providing identity and a social status even if the soldiers were poor, besides securing sick benefit, age benefit, free schools for children of soldiers and pensions for wives, and trade privileges, and even if they were poor, they were too valuable for the army to allow them to starve to death. Certainly, there were soldiers who fit in with the traditional negative image of the soldiers, but they were very few. Besides those was a core of ambitious and reliable people who were kept in permanent service (p. 287). The largest group was, however, the most stable one, namely the so-called free men who did usually only serve one out of twelve months a year and worked in their skilled trade or as unskilled wage earners the other eleven months.

So Karsten Skjold Petersen has indeed succeeded in writing a more nuanced and informative social history of the recruited professional soldiers than we have had until now. Now, our knowledge about both the recruiting system and the recruited soldiers has dramatically increased. Karsten Skjold Petersen's approach must be characterized as descriptive rather than problem-oriented. As his theme, as mentioned, to a large degree till now has been as good as unexplored, much can be said in favour of such a descriptive approach and much new and valuable information has indeed been produced. However, due to the voluminous amount of source material he has had to limit his field of examination to the period between 1774 and 1803, and to the Danish army (excluding the Norwegian one: these armies were organisationally independent but belonged of course to the same state) and limited himself to concentrating on the infantry alone. Most problematic among those limitations for the reach of his conclusions is the chronological limitation (1774-1803). His conclusion about the traditional negative image of the soldiers being to a large extent a myth can only with any certainty have validity for the years between 1774 and 1803– i.e., a relatively short period. And one may argue that this period might not be at all typical for the behaviour of professional soldiers in general. Firstly, this period is usually being characterized as the age of the Enlightenment with its civilization and general de-barbarization and it might be that the threshold of tolerance towards uncivilized and crude behaviour from the soldiers, both from the officers and from the rest of society, was much lower then than during, for example, the age of Christian the Fourth (1588-1648) or the age of Frederick the Fourth (1699-1730); both these ages were characterized by lengthy wars, whereas Karsten Skjold Petersen's period was, until the beginning of the nineteenth century, a period of peace. Secondly, Petersen's period was a period of transition in which the recruitment system was gradually being replaced by a conscription system; that means an age where the recruited element of the army was being reduced and where the recruiting system had

its heyday behind it.

So the social history of the recruited, professional soldiers within the Danish armed forces has not been written yet; earlier periods need to be examined before we can be sure that the traditional negative image of these troops is a myth. But at least for now, the long-neglected and ignored study of the military sector within Danish social history has begun and Karsten Skjold Petersen has set a high standard of thoroughness and use of voluminous, extensive, and disparate source material for others to live up to.

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