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- 1 The first of the two collective volumes reviewed here results from the productive project on the history of crime in Finland and surrounding areas, directed by Heikki Ylikangas. Other publications in English have already appeared (one reviewed as a short notice by me in CHS 3,2). Of the seven contributions to this volume, five deal with Finland, one with Sweden and one with Estonia. Violence, mainly homicide, is the principal subject, with four contributions devoted to it. The other three are about illegal revivalist meetings, fornication and parent-child conflicts.
- 2 New, to my knowledge, is the study of cases of violence in the Vatican Archives. An institution called the Penitentiary – studied earlier by Schmugge¹ for its dispensations from illegitimate birth – functioned as chief absolution agency for all Catholics. Kirsi Salonen deals with the Finnish people who travelled to Rome between 1450 and 1521 to obtain forgiveness for manslaughter or assault. They constituted almost three quarters of all Finns in the Penitentiary archive. With indications for a similar percentage among Swedes, whereas for the rest of Christendom cases of violence accounted for no more than a third of the total, Salonen concludes that this is evidence for the violent character of Nordic society. I am not entirely convinced. For the moment, these percentages only prove that Finns and Swedes considered the absolution from an act of violence a particularly good reason to undertake the journey to Rome. Equally interesting is the relatively large number of priests, among the perpetrators as well as the victims. This may indicate that priests in Finland (still) were integrated more closely into lay society than in other countries at the time, partaking in conflicts fought with knives just as easily as laymen did – a conclusion which Salonen hints at on the last page.
- 3 Koskivirta's contribution on homicide in a region of Eastern Finland that witnessed slash-and-burn cultivation even in the eighteenth century, leaves a few questions open. The figures seem to be based on prosecutions, not on body inspections, but cases of «unpunished homicide» (dismissed because of insufficient evidence) are also mentioned. Do the latter include default trials of fugitive killers? Marti Lehti, on the other hand, carefully discusses the nature, value and limitations of his sources. Homicide rates are based mainly on causes of death and police statistics, whereas he uses court records to obtain information about the character and context of violence. That is a sound methodology and it is applied in two contributions, one on Finland between 1905 and 1932, the other on Estonia, 1919-1999. Both countries differed from mainstream Europe to the extent that industrialization did not bring about a reduction in violent crime. Homicide waves occurred mainly in periods of social malaise and collapse of administrative order. These are only a few of the conclusions in Lehti's very rich articles.
- 4 I find the other three articles less path-breaking, but that may be just my bias as a specialist in violence. We learn that Finland had pietists outside the official church in the early 19th century, who were not allowed to gather for a service; that Finnish courts, like German ones, punished night courting in the 18th century; that Finnish Lutherans, like their coreligionists elsewhere, stressed parental consent for marriage. In some cases the problem is an insufficient emphasis on a comparative approach interesting for an international audience, which is necessary when you publish in

English. Thus, few readers will care about the fact that Ylikangas' evidence for the spread of pietism in one particular province, in a Finnish book of 1979, was overlooked by the authors of a Finnish article of 1987. And his insistence on explaining the spread of pietism in terms of various social factors – as opposed to the personal religious appeal of certain preachers – while perfectly OK, is something that few criminal justice historians will consider as still in need of emphasis. Koskivirta's starting point is 1748, «the establishment of the Province of Kymenkartano and Saavo (see Map 1)» (p. 121). We do not learn why this was an important event and Kymenkartano is not even listed on the map. The only idiosyncrasy I found in Lehti's contributions concerns two incidents in which the booty of a robbery was EEK 1760 and 3300, respectively, without an indication of how much that was worth. Lehti consistently adopts a comparative approach and his articles will interest historians of violence as well as criminologists.

- 5 The collection edited by Ågren *et al.* links two areas of Europe which are geographically quite apart. It will be noted only briefly here, partly because its subject transcends that of crime and justice proper. The book results from a comparative project for which funding had been obtained in Sweden as well as Belgium. An explicit comparison between the two countries, however, is made only in the editors' introduction (six pages), the last page of Andersson's contribution on women and property in the courts and in Bergman's article on executions. The other contributions deal with either Sweden or the Southern Netherlands/ Belgium alone, even though this is not always acknowledged in the titles. The subjects covered include the secularization of dating, student and peasant revolt, and legitimations for absolutism in the Swedish case and social control (broadly conceived), the family, the police, and sexual violence in the Belgian case.

NOTES

1. Schmutz (Ludwig), *Kirche, Kinder, Karrieren. Päpstliche Dispense von der unehelichen Geburt im Spätmittelalter*. Zürich 1995.

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