

SUMMARY

*Estonians, Swedes and Germans in
Harju–Madise and Risti parishes
during the 17th century*

The first records of Swedish settlement on the Isles of Pakri (Rõgo) and around the bay (Rogerwiek) date from the 13th century. As opposed to the neighbouring Estonian peasants, the Swedish maintained their personal independence. More secure than others' were the rights of the Swedes of Suur-Pakri (West Rogö) Island and Laoküla (Laydes, Lahokull), which were based on land-purchasing contracts derived from the so-called Swedish Right (*ius svevicum*). The situation changed in the 17th century when the landlords doubted the Swedish origin of the heavily assimilated Laoküla peasants and refused to admit their indigenous rights. The Laoküla Swedes repeatedly protested against this in Tallinn as well as in Stockholm. A remarkable insistence on Swedish identity became one of their key defensive tactics, for example the use of Swedish names in order to defend legal continuity reaching as far back as the treaty of 1345.

The reforms of Charles XI that intended to transform methods of governance and the army resulted in active social processes that affected even the Province of Estonia during the 1680s. The focus on the reduction (*reduktion*) of manors raised the question of freeing the state peasants from serfdom, and this in turn served to activate the Estonian peasants. The Swedes that were living on the Estonian isles and the coast were now to be conscripted into marine duty (*båtsmanshäll*) as was the rule in Swedish coastal areas. Recruitment started in 1684 on the territory of Padise manor, which also included the Isles of Pakri. The Swedish peasants, however, set a precondition to their obligation to marine duty: they wanted to have their old privileges confirmed by the king. In August 1684 the Swedes of Laoküla, Suur-Pakri and Väike-Pakri (East Rogö) sent their delegates jointly to Stockholm. Charles XI thus received three complaints. Of these the most far-reaching was one raised by the peasants of Suur-Pakri, because it even criticised the whole concept of marine duty. One of the most common complaints was directed against the local pastor, who according to the peasants did not read enough sermons in Swedish. On August 18 1684 the Swedes from both Pakri and Laoküla received a confirmation from Charles XI stating that they must not be treated as serfs or pay outrageously high taxes.

As complaints were also coming from elsewhere, the king set up a commission to investigate the problems of the Estonian Swedes. The voluminous and detailed proceedings of this commission operating in Tallinn have been used for this article. They demonstrate the Estonian Swedish

peasants' reactions to the reforms, as well as Swedish and Estonian linguistic and ethnic rivalries. In Risti congregation the quarrels developed over the question of which language the pastor should preach in first. In Harju-Madise County there were heated arguments as to whether the parson should be Estonian or Swedish. Although the conflicts described in this article had different reasons the way they displayed linguistic and ethnic factors of identity demonstrate that these had their own place in the early modern Estonian society.