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Bio

I am agronomist from the university of Helsinki in 1989. Later when I already had a family with children, I started studying social sciences and environmental policy in the university of Eastern Finland. I graduated with a doctorate in 2009. The thesis was about the fur animal farming in the Eastern Finland. I gained some years of experience in agricultural development in Russia, too.

But I had to leave Joensuu for family reason and did not work anymore in any academic institution. I have been teaching family history = genealogy in adult training centers. In genealogy individuals in history should be recognized. The genealogy has become very popular among older people, particularly those who have a good competence with computers and Internet. A large group of historically important persons are the women in dairy. That is why I talk about the 19th century dairy maids.

Looking for recognition for the early dairy maids

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Animal work is dirty, physically hard and with low income. The agricultural history authors seldom mention this job of lowest rank. The getting of milk in early days was a female enterprise.

My motivation to write this paper is to discuss about animal work. In the 19th century, when the dairy industry took first steps in the Nordic countries as well as Russian empire, where Finland was part of, all labor of getting milk and processing it remained a duty of female workers. I am tracing women, whose career was in animal work. Some of them had been learning and teaching how milk must be treated so, that it will hold its value from cow until to the butter on the dining tables. In Finland, we have no literature about the profession of dairy maids, or *mejerska*, so far.

Dairy maid in the 19th century

Patrons in the rural major houses in the 1840s got an idea, when they realize growing metropolis with wealthy families anxious to buy butter. From inland you could buy butter of poor quality and that is why tradesmen carried from more southern cities in their bags sweet-smelling and smooth butter. Inland butter smelled bad. The reason was: the transport of butter from inland to the cities by the sea such as Viborg and St Petersburg lasted for many weeks. During the long transport the butter got rancid.

The major houses were in short of labor, because working men were sent to cultivations and forest loggings as well as to other rural industries. Why not to order the young women to work in dairy in the major houses? Women at that time did not have any civil rights, but the wives and daughters could be ordered to accomplish jobs.

Later in the beginning of the 20th century, that is from 1905, the cooperative movement landed in Finland. It took over the dairy plants as soon as the legal frame to establish a cooperative among farmers became reality. So, in my paper, I look for the organization of dairy before the cooperatives. Some of the old dairy plants in major houses simply changed the owner as soon as the patron agreed to sell the plant to the cooperative.

The female labour in a major house was divided in two: those who carried their task inside the house, and those who worked outside, in the yard. Those working outside were the one who took care of animals: cattle, birds, sheep, and goat as well as pigs. The tradition was, that horses were looked after by men. However, when men were in short, the women fed and kept clean even horses.

Many herds of cattle were big, but milk was available during only the short summer months. There was not enough fodder for winter months. That is why there was no milk. The genetic breeding of cattle was not very effective. There were many types of cattle breed.

The patrons together with high officers in the Senate executed a high-level decision. The idea was to sponsor the major houses (those with enough of herd) to give women training in dairy. They saw education as a solution to increase the amount of milk available and to improve its quality. Mr Nils Grotenfelt translated a textbook according to the Swedish model of dr. C.E. Bergstrand. (1881.) It tells, how cattle should be kept increasing its production of milk.

In few years of time, there was founded several dairy schools. In 1869, the courses of dairy started in three big major houses. The one in the Eastern part, in the province of North-Karelia, called students to join a course for cattle keepers (*däjor*). The major houses in the south provinces named their course for mejerists (*mejerskor*). As the Senate named instructor for dairy plants reporter in his writing in 1890, the curriculum in the courses was the same despite of difference in name. The school was for two years. The first year of the

study students learned work with cattle and its care in the cowhouse, and the second year was devoted to the care of milk. (Grotenfelt 1890.)

The schooling had dramatic influence. There was an explosive growth in the amount of milk. To follow up one region, the North Karelia, and the customs office in Joensuu, where exported butter to St Petersburg had to be registered, increase in figures looks like this:

1861-1865 50 000 kg

1866-1870 314 000 kg

1871-1875 442 460 kg.

The exported amount of butter from North Karelia increased in 15 years ninefold. (Osuusmeijeriliike 1910, Ahonen 1985.)

In North Karelia, the school lied in the farm of Simananiemi, Liperi with the patron Johan Hälström. The site is some 30 km south-west from Joensuu. First eight students started the school. They received a teacher from the capital of the county, Kuopio. The theory was taught by the patron himself. After the finishing of the school, the women started to travel around the province, and give advice for women on farms, how to receive proper milk and butter. I find that this activity is explaining the increasing figures of Joensuu customs office. (see Table).

Discussion and a research plan

Women had always churned milk or cream to butter. Their technology was simple with local variations. This is an interesting story. But I am asking not about the technology. I am interested about the women who made the industrial production to come true.

Over one thousand years the so-called "butter-tax" had been collected by landlords in the provinces of Finland. Since medieval times women had worked and nourished families, husbands and solders and upper persons. They milked and churned milk. (Compare Ohlander Ann-Sofie ja Ulla-Britt Strömberg 1996.)

While most people stayed in rural regions, the 19th century urbanization started diversifying people and the division of labor. The early dairy schools only for girls represented an innovation but strengthened the gender division in work. Milking and churn remained a female task. The division further deepened as dairy plants grew and got economic significance.

Old days a dairy was regarded as a job suitable for rural, uneducated girl. The success in dairy industry may have brought improvements in cattle care and dairy. The economic growth gave recognition, too. What happened to the female jobs and income? The economic growth or industrialization never changed the female position as a worker in a

milk factory. Also, the early dairy maids and their names have been forgotten.

According to Touko Perko (2011) some 2000 girls took part in dairy schools in the 19th century. Maybe only few of them remained in the dairy field. Many of them married and got children and did not stay in business. The patrons of major houses complained that a woman had got an education, but she run away from work. The situation of dairy schools was not easy, since many patron's arguments did not favor animal production, but preferred training in cultivation. The patrons did not see any use to train women in cultivation.

To become a dairy maid was one of the few working opportunities for rural women. The training in school opened new doors either in marriage or for independent career. However, when I am reading the history books of dairy plants, (which are many) there are no names of dairy maids mentioned. However, in art, the dairy maids are well known. The art is national in character. One of the most known historical drama spectacle by Hella Wuolijoki tells the sad story of a young beautiful dairy maid, to whom the patron of the house had fallen in love, so that she got pregnant. There are paintings of dairy girls such as the picture of Albert Edelfelt from 1889. Also, many local historians often mention the girls that had received schooling in dairy. (Such as Blomstedt 1981.)

Once, some years ago I was talking to a lady from Mikkeli, Finland, about my interest in the life of dairy maids in the past. She told me that there had been some courses around Mikkeli province (South Savolax) in the end of the 19th century. The girls who finished the course had good working opportunities. No rural girl earlier had a chance to get a paid job (unless going to a town). The story tells about such a reputation of the girls, that some Danish farmers came to look for a wife in Mikkeli. (See my earlier writing Karkinen 2017.)

I am planning to trace the old documents about dairy schools. The National Archive in its various provincial offices seems to have stoke up some documentation. In fact, I looked after in the Internet search for the Archive, that about 20 schools have been reporting about their work before 1900.

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