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Those mysterious words – what do they mean? Part 2

BY ELISABETH THORSSELL

Koja
A koja is a very small, probably also poor, cottage. My dictionary translates it as a “hovel.”

Bonde (pl. bönder)
In general it means farmer, but there were three kinds of farmers:
1) skattebonde; he owned his land, the children could inherit it, and he paid his taxes to the Crown directly.
2) frälsebonde; he farmed land belonging to a nobleman (adelsman), and paid his taxes to the nobleman, who kept it, as the nobility was exempt from ordinary taxes. After 1789 a frälsebonde was able to buy the land he had rented from his landlord.
3) kronobonde; he farmed lands belonging to the Crown and paid his taxes to the Crown. It was possible from 1701 for the kronobonde to buy the land, and he had priority to buy the farm he lived on. This is called “skatteköp” and there are records about these purchases that can give a description of the various fields and other properties belonging to the farm, and also the price that was paid.

Inheritance of farmland
When a skattebonde died, one of his children usually took over the farm, and after evaluation paid the siblings their share of the value. The distribution of the inheritance (arvskifte) was regarded as a private matter, and does not often show up in the records of the local court.
But it was a different matter if the farmer wanted to sell land. If he had inherited it, it was called “arvejord.”

This type of land could not be sold out of the extended family, unless nobody wanted it. The intended sale had to be announced (upphjudet) at three court meetings. If nobody in the family complained, then the buyer would get his land title (lagfart) during the fourth court meeting.

Land that people had purchased themselves (avlingejord) was easier to sell, but still had to be announced at three court meetings.

The records for purchases of land are kept in the records of the local court (häradsrätt), and are microfilmed to the mid-1800s. During the 1800s the documents in possession of the farmer about land purchases start to be listed in the estate inventories (bouppteckningar).

Försvarslös
In the old days you had to have a steady job, like being a farmer, a tenant farmer, a craftsman, or be hired as a dräng or piga for a year.

If you did not have a master who gave you protection (försvar) and who could write a testimony for you, you might end up as being regarded as a vagrant (lösdrivare).

A vagrant could be arrested and taken to the county capital (residensstaden), and interrogated. These interrogations (förhör) are still to be found in the county records.

If your answers were not satisfactory, you might end up in the enlisted army, or be sentenced to work in a state-owned quarry.

Women usually were sent to a female prison, where they worked spinning for factories.

If a vagrant could find somebody in the home parish to give him/her a job, he/she was released.