

Thomas Daltveit Slettebø, Ola Teige and Øystein Lydik Idsø Viken (eds.), *Fredsårene. Norge i fred 1720–1807* (Oslo: Dreyers förlag, 2022). 439 s.

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While continental Europe did not see any change, as it continuously experienced a multitude of wars throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the period following the Great Northern War until the Napoleonic Wars is described as an era of peace (*fredsårene*) both for Danish-Norwegian and Swedish history. The anthology published by Thomas Daltveit Slettebø, Ola Teige and Øystein Lydik Idsø Viken revisits the Norwegian experience of peace between 1720 and 1807 in twelve chapters which discuss political, economic and military aspects as well as memory culture of peace. However, it must be critically noted that only two of the twelve authors who contributed to this book are female.

Although not stated in the table of contents, the book is implicitly divided into two parts: the first part deals with political, economic, military, and legal aspects, while the second part looks at memory-cultural issues. This division is in line with the two main objectives for the anthology which the editors explicate in the introduction: to examine the prerequisites for this era of peace and its perception by the Norwegian population. However, the first seven articles are not limited to prerequisites for this era of peace in a narrow sense, but describe how economic, military, and legal conditions change during peacetime, thus, debunking the judgement of earlier research which interpreted this era as an age of stagnation.

Øystein Rian and Michael Bregnsbo take a closer look at the political framework for the Norwegian era of peace. Bregnsbro deconstructs the narrative of the peaceful Danish-Norwegian foreign policy in the second half of the 18th century. He shows that the experience of peace is only true when it comes to the territories of Denmark and Norway themselves, while other parts of the Danish-Norwegian empire have been involved in conflicts in the North of the Holy Roman Empire

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as well as outside Europe. Neither was the Danish-Norwegian military downsized during these years, nor did the kings and their governments pursue a peaceful and revanchism-free foreign policy. The fact that Denmark and Norway did not get involved in wars was most likely a matter of chance.

The article by Jonas Nordin and Oskar Sjöström on Sweden during the period of peace following the Great Northern War completes the Norwegian perspective and comes to similar conclusions as Bregnsbo's. Furthermore, Nordin and Sjöström show how hostility to war arose not only among the Swedish social and intellectual elites from the mid-18th century onwards, but also in the public at large, and that the arguments gradually shifted from pragmatic and economic considerations to moral ones.

Finn Erhard Johannessen and Trond Bjerckås focus on economic aspects of peace. Discussions about costs are often limited to the context of wars. Historical peace research has so far not asked about the costs of peace. Like Bregnsbo, Johannessen is able to show that peace did not automatically lead to a reduction of the military sector. It was only after the establishment of the union between Sweden and Norway in 1814 that the Norwegian military, which had been enlarged around the middle of the 18th century, was downsized. The military was a significant economic factor, stimulating Norway's economic and infrastructural development even in peacetime.

Peace as a driving force for change becomes even more evident in the article by Trond Bjerckås, who argues that peace changed the state's economic framework. After the end of Great Northern War, the Danish-Norwegian government had to find new sources of income. While the new tax register was withdrawn because it could not satisfy the government's expectations due to changed conditions for tax revenues as a result of peace, when special taxes from wartime were no longer acceptable, the sale of churches was considered a success that helped to balance state finances. Although here too the effect was rather small. From this situation, a transformation in the state's economic thinking developed towards cameralism, as Bjerckås argues.

Knut Dørum's and Ola Teige's contributions scrutinise deviant behaviour on a local and a transnational level, respectively. Knut Dørum compares two cases in which peasants and soldiers deny military service and the supply of soldiers in 1752 and 1799. The fact that these refusals took place in peacetime make them particularly interesting. He interprets the behaviour of the peasants and soldiers as expressions of compliance with legal norms and conflicts of interests. Ola Teige's article examines how Denmark-Norway and Sweden have dealt with the problem of extraditing criminals to the authorities of the other state and contextualises these measures with discussions on the natural law and sovereignty. The Great

Northern War serves as a *caesura* for identifying changes in the extradition practice. Teige's contribution is the longest in the entire book and, at 70 pages, more than twice as long as most of the others, which leads to a slight imbalance.

A third of the contributions in this anthology deal with aspects of the culture of remembrance and explore the question of whether and how it has changed in peacetime. Thomas Dalveit Slettebø describes how Fredrikshald, the town, where Charles XII of Sweden was killed at Fredriksten fortress, developed into a memorial during the 18th century era of peace. Ina Louise Stovner and Finn Erhard Johannessen contribute with an art-historical perspective when discussing Nicolai Abildgaard's historical paintings at the Riddersal at Christiansborg Palace and comparing war and peace time medals, respectively. Inga Henriette Undheim explores how war and peace are represented in Ludvig Holberg's historical works.

The anthology is concluded by Øysten Lydik Idsø Viken's article on how thoughts about war and peace changed in the public discourse in Norway. Increasingly, peace became an identifying factor in political rhetoric during the 18th century. While war symbolised the strength of the ruler and demanded discipline of the subjects in the beginning of the century, peace opened the ways for immoral behaviour. Gradually, peace was reinterpreted as a value in and of itself. As such it was an expression of the king's and his subjects' close connection to God.

Combining these different perspectives on peace, the anthology draws a wide picture of the era of peace in Norway. The fact that neither the introduction nor the articles included in the anthology tie in with theoretical or methodological discussions from the field of (historical) peace research reflects the state of the art of historical peace research not only in Norwegian, but also in Scandinavian early modern history and cannot be held against them. Rather, the anthology might serve as a point of departure and stimulus for further research and discussions on historical peace in Norway and Scandinavia.