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Boys learning craft skills. Rural artisan apprenticeships in early modern Finland

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Abstract

Research on handicrafts has generally concentrated on the study of urban artisans and guilds. However, not all artisans operated in towns, nor were rural artisans always small marginal groups. For instance, the majority of Finnish artisans lived and worked in the countryside. They had the right to take on apprentices; therefore, most rural artisans received their training from artisans working in the same environment. This article characterizes apprentices in the early nineteenth century in Finland and studies how rural artisans organized their occupational training. A single large Finnish parish was selected as the subject of this research, in order to study artisans and their apprentices more individually, and to examine details such as the duration of apprenticeships, completion rates, and the social backgrounds and ages of apprentices.

Index terms

Keywords : apprenticeship, handicrafts, rural artisans, countryside, skills, Finland, nineteenth century, parish

Full text

1 Rural artisanship was not a rare phenomenon in early modern Finland; on the contrary, by the end of the eighteenth century the majority of Finnish artisans lived and worked in rural areas. They obtained their training and skills from various sources. Occasionally, the countryside received a flux of apprentices, journeymen and even artisans from urban areas, who had failed to secure Guild Master positions in towns or were otherwise attracted to work in the countryside. Sometimes boys —and apprentices were always boys— had been purposely sent to towns to learn a craft and they were then expected to return to the countryside. Nevertheless, the majority of skills and practices that rural artisans possessed were learned from other rural masters, even though apprenticeships and the tripartite career pattern of artisans have been traditionally associated with craft guilds and urban environments.[1] Overall, the prestige and skills of rural and urban artisans were different, with urban artisans enjoying a greater prestige. A difference was also apparent in training practices; rural craft skills were valid only in rural areas and were intended to respond to the needs of rural customers, and their standards occasionally differed from those of the craft guilds.[2]

2 The aim of this article is to examine how rural artisans organized their apprenticeships and to determine the characteristics of apprentices in the early part of the nineteenth century. Naturally, there are many similarities between guild-based apprenticeships and rural conventions, but studying the training practices of rural artisans offers a different perspective on apprenticeship research.[3] A single large Finnish parish was selected as the subject of the research. This permits us to study artisans and their apprentices more individually and systematically, and to examine details such as the duration of apprenticeships, completion rates, and the social backgrounds and ages of apprentices. Not all apprentices succeeded in creating independent careers as artisans, but with this individual approach it is possible to discover the different careers some apprentices pursued. Practices and differences between trades can also be identified, and we can assess the role of the apprenticeship in the general development of the economy.

3 The general approach of this study is prosopographical. A large Finnish parish called Hollola was chosen as the subject of this research. To examine the subject, a collection of short biographies on apprentices was compiled (according to prosopographical principles) from various sources.[4] The biographies include information on the boys' dates and places of birth, their parents' social status, the craft masters' names and domiciles, the duration of the apprenticeships and the young men's activities thereafter. The study focuses on the careers of 118 apprentices serving their time in the research area between 1810 and 1840. The parish of Hollola was a typical rural parish located outside the 'ban mile' so that urban craft regulations did not apply to rural practices. By Finnish standards Hollola was a well-known and prosperous parish, which attracted artisans from the neighbouring parishes as well as journeymen from the towns. During the research period the population of Hollola increased from 5,000 to nearly 8,000. This entirely agricultural parish in Southern Finland (100 kilometers north of Helsinki and the Gulf of Finland) also benefited from good road networks.

4 Information about apprentices was collected from several sources because the lack of formal organizations (guilds) meant that no records were kept on apprentices. The most informative sources were parish registers, which were originally lists of individuals receiving Holy Communion, but they can also be used as population records because they list households and their members. If apprentices were still minors, i.e. if they had not completed confirmation classes and been duly confirmed, they were entered in the children's book.[5] Other official sources include the annual census lists, where masters were required to report the members of their households

(aged between 15 and 62) for whom the masters had to pay poll taxes.[6] Rural artisan affairs —such as work licences and permits to take apprentices— were first processed in the local district courts. Rural artisans did not have their own courts or general meetings to resolve their matters, whereas in towns, the guild meetings and town courts dealt with the majority of artisan internal affairs.[7] The second stage in processing rural artisan cases was the governor and the county administrative board, who made the final decisions on permits, usually referring to the rulings of the local district court. The literature illustrates only a fragmentary picture of rural apprenticeship practices. No studies are available on Finnish rural apprenticeship practices as such, but the theme is touched upon in many historical studies, mostly from the eighteenth century. Here Laakso's work in particular provides reference material concerning rural areas and Papinsaari for his part about events in craft guilds.[8] Local parish histories[9] are likewise available to strengthen the argument and widen the perspective outside the primary research area. Due to the common histories of Finland and Sweden, it is also important to take developments in Sweden into account, and this is mainly documented in the works of Edgren and Söderlund.[10]

The parish artisan institution and the right to take apprentices

5 According to mercantilist principles, authorities in Finland (and in Sweden, of which Finland was a part until 1809) regarded craft work as an urban occupation and all the trade and craft production had to be conducted in towns. However, in a highly agrarian state, which had only a few small towns, rural crafts had to be tolerated and accepted as necessary. Contrary to many other European countries, in the Kingdom of Sweden the parish artisan institution in the 1680s formally organized rural crafts. Nevertheless, the general attitude towards rural crafts was restrictive: only a few trades were allowed in rural areas and town artisans were protected by a so-called "ban mile", a radius of several miles around a town where rural artisans were not allowed to work or needed the guild's approval to do so.[11] As the guilds controlled only the urban trades, their power was limited to towns; craft guilds did not operate or have jurisdiction in Finnish or Swedish rural areas.[12]

6 In a formal parish artisan system, artisans had a licence to work and they paid special handicraft taxes to the Swedish crown.[13] The work licences were granted by county governors, but an applicant had to have a written testimonial from the local court (consisting of members of the local community); thus, the customers of artisans had a say in regulating the number of craftsmen working locally. Local residents were experts in deciding whether there were sufficient work opportunities for new entrepreneurs.[14] Without local support, it was impossible to achieve the status of parish artisan. This was highlighted in the eighteenth century, when an application for a new artisan was made to the district court in the name of the whole community. In the nineteenth century the artisans were usually more active and applied for this position themselves, although it was likely that support for the application had been canvassed in advance.[15]

7 At first, only those practicing the most needed trades, such as blacksmiths, shoemakers and tailors could apply for recognition as a parish artisan.[16] Governors could, however, grant permits for nearly all trades (with the exception of goldsmiths), according to their own judgement, by referring to the statute issued in 1604 stating that peasants could keep the artisans they needed. Therefore, weavers and tanners were sometimes active among the parish artisans.[17] Restrictions were relaxed in 1824, when several craft occupations gained the legal right to operate in the countryside, or more precisely, they could apply to be accepted as parish artisans because, despite the strict legislation, informal craft activity had been

commonplace.[18] In Finland, the law restricted the practice of rural crafts until the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1879 freedom of trade liberated the practicing of craft trades, in both urban and rural areas.

8 The legal framework for artisans and apprentices can be found in general guild orders (the latest *skråordning* is from 1720), which laid down the limits of the guilds' activities. Although the general guild order was designed for craft guilds, it also affected rural artisans and their apprentices. For instance, the order stipulated that the minimum enrolment age for apprentices was 14 and it prescribed a maximum trial period of two months.[19] For rural parish craftsmen, the correct written rules concerning artisans and their training practices were few and non-specific. Essentially, rural artisans were permitted to have apprentices, as stated in the 1686 ordinance, while shoemakers and tailors were allowed to take one more skilled assistant, known as a *lärodräng*, in addition to their apprentice boys.[20] In 1727 the entitlement was repeated, but with the amendment that this hired assistant had to have already served an apprenticeship.[21] In other words, in the eighteenth century there were two types of rural apprentices: hired assistants who were usually designated according to their age and past apprenticeships(*lärödräng*), and younger boys who were apprenticed (*läropojke*, or more often *lärogåsse*).[22] Here, the position of hired assistant was similiar to that of an urban journeyman (in Swedish *gesäll*), but as the different title reveals, they were not identical.[23]

9 At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries the new title *lärling* (or usually designated by the equivalent abbreviation) became more frequently used and finally replaced the older, more exact titles, making it difficult to distinguish between different apprentices.[24] As stated in the statutes (in 1686 and 1727), parish artisans had to apply for official permits from local district courts and the county administration to employ apprentices, just as they had done when applying to validate their own position. It is probable that artisans only needed permission to take more skilled servants.[25] This conception receives support from the fact that there are fewer applications to take on apprentices than there were boys being apprenticed. In the Hollola district court between 1810 and 1840 only one master applied for permission to take an apprentice, but there were over 100 apprentices in Hollola.[26] Therefore, in practice, artisans seldom requested permission to take apprentices because no permission was required for underaged apprentices and the number of young apprentices was not restricted.[27]

Apprenticeship practices in rural areas

10 Official artisans had a monopoly on apprenticeships; in towns, the guild masters were responsible for teaching the next generation, and in rural areas the responsibility fell to the parish artisans. When a boy entered into an apprenticeship the terms of the apprenticeship were arranged between the master and boy (or his guardians).[28] Written contracts or indentures were not compulsory; in the countryside agreements were often oral. Therefore, there are only a few written contracts available since these agreements were not usually confirmed by the district courts, and there were no public notaries.[29] Disputes about the terms of the contracts are likewise rare and these were settled in local courts. The county administration and governor were sometimes involved; the governor could issue warrants to apprehend runaway apprentices.[30]

11 In town, an apprenticeship began by enrolling the boy in the apprenticeship records of the guild. These records included information such as the boy's and his father's name, the father's occupation and the duration of the apprenticeship.[31] Among rural artisans the system was less organized. Generally, rural masters reported their apprentices to parish priests as new members of their households and

they were registered as such. This confirms the notion that apprentices were part of their masters' households because, even when a young boy's parents lived nearby, the boy's name was still transferred to the household of the master craftsman. As members of an artisan household, apprentices were under the master's authority and they had to obey without question. It was generally accepted that apprentices were obliged to take part in the duties and chores of their masters' household, to a reasonable extent.[32] Drawing the line between what was normal and excessive involvement in ordinary household chores, however, proved difficult and became a common grievance, as evidenced in the court records.[33]

12 Masters were obligated to teach their apprentices all they knew of their trade without withholding knowledge. How this transfer of knowledge occurred, however, is largely unknown. Most likely, the training was part of a trial and error process, where apprentices started on less demanding assignments, familiarizing themselves hands-on with the material, style and working culture of the craft, then later completing more complicated tasks. In rural areas they had to meet the needs of the country people, which were usually different from those of urban customers. This meant that rural apprentices were not competent enough to work in towns and they needed more training if they were transferred to town.[34] Technical knowledge and skill acquisition were only a part of the training. The apprenticeship period included an initiation into cultural context where apprentices were acquainted with the position of artisans in society, which differed from that of the rest of the population.[35] Artisans were an urban element in the countryside.[36] One sign of an artisan's own culture was the use of surnames and the style of names. In western Finland there were no traditional family names; the name of the farm was used as a surname to differentiate between people. Artisans did not have farms, so they often used typical Swedish family names or names that were compiled from the craft occupation like *hammar* or *sax*, meaning hammer or scissors. For apprentices it was a rite of passage to change their name at a certain point in their careers, often just before starting an independent career.[37]

13 For a rural apprentice to complete his training, it sufficed to serve a number of years with a craft master; there were no tests or demonstrations of skills after the apprenticeship was completed. Sometimes there were written proofs of the time served in apprenticeship, but this was not usually necessary, either. The applicants were usually locally well-known men, who had often worked independently for a number of years (a kind of trial period) before applying for the status of parish artisan.[38] This is a clear difference from urban training, where journeymen and sometimes apprentices produced masterpieces before becoming a master artisan or journeyman. In addition, written certificates were more common in urban environments.[39]

Apprenticing the next generation and numbers of apprentices

14 Naturally, not all artisans had apprentices. Conceivably only artisans who were skillful and had sufficient work assignments could act as instructors. A large number of apprentices was seen as an indication of a master's good skill and reputation, and also of his prosperity.[40] Nearly all the craftsmen who had apprentices were official parish artisans, artisans in unofficial positions rarely had the time, skills or reputation to train up apprentices.[41] Usually, a parish artisan would take one or two apprentices over his whole career, but there were also artisans who had more apprentices; one could say that their focus was on training apprentices. Half of the master tailors and shoemakers had their own apprentice(s), although this value was slightly lower for the smiths (Table 1). Considering all crafts, for those masters with

apprentices, each master had on average 1,7 apprentices.[42]

Table 1 – Master artisans who took on apprentices, according to their trade (Hollola, 1810-1840).

	Number of master artisans	Number of master artisans who had apprentices*	%	Number of apprentices	Average number of apprentices per master (for *)
Smiths	51	20	39	35	1.75
Tailors	44	22	50	34	1,55
Shoemakers	54	29	54	49	1.69
Total	149	71	39	118	1.66

Source: Prosopographical database on artisans in Hollola 1724–1840.

15 Both tailors and shoemakers could benefit from extra helpers, but obviously their career prospects were not equal. Shoemakers had fewer apprentices until the 1820s, when there was a growing demand for finer shoes (Table 2). Previously, it had not been easy to get a position as an apprentice shoemaker in Hollola because in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there were only a few parish shoemakers.[43] In addition, making shoes was a common trade for soldiers; they had infiltrated the business in the eighteenth century, but could not keep apprentices.[44] The lack of masters is just one reason why so many shoemakers in Hollola in the 1820s and 1830s were guild-trained journeymen, who, after failing to achieve guild master status, returned to the countryside.[45] These new shoemakers took on more apprentices and the trade also became a more suitable career prospect for poorer boys —so the number of the apprentices increased.

Table 2 – Number of apprentices according to their trade (Hollola, 1770s -1830s).

	1770's	1780's	1790's	1800's	1810's	1820's	1830's	Total
Smiths	15	11	8	4	9	8	17	72
Tailors	28	9	6	6	3	13	18	83
Shoemakers	6	2	5	2	7	20	19	61
Carpenters	3	8	3	1	0	0	0	15
Weavers	8	3	1	0	0	0	0	12
Total	60	33	23	12	19	41	54	242

Source: Prosopographical database on artisans in Hollola 1724-1840.

16 Previously, the tailor trade was deemed suitable for the younger sons of peasants: the status of the trade was high enough and it was considered to offer lucrative career prospects to children who would not inherit a family farm.[46] This was seen especially in the 1760s and 1770s, but after this peak there were significantly fewer tailor apprentices. There may have been a change in the appreciation of the trade, or the need for new craftsmen may have decreased. Nevertheless, the burden of supporting the hired help was alleviated by traditional customs. Shoemakers and tailors led an itinerant way of life, going from one customer to another, living at their expense while carrying out their work assignments. The customers were also obliged to feed the apprentices.[47]

17 The number of smith apprentices was low compared with the total number of master smiths. One reason for this was that some smiths tried (quite successfully) to keep the trade secrets within their own kin; in several smith families the skills were passed on only to sons and no apprentices were employed.[48] There were also trades where no new apprentices were taken. In weaver and carpenter trades it was more common to have apprentices in the eighteenth century, but not in the following century (Table 2). For weavers, the obvious reason was that it was a dwindling occupation for men because women were gradually taking over the craft.[49] In the nineteenth century no-one was willing to apprentice his son to a weaver —for that reason there were no longer any parish weavers. For carpenters, the reason for

having no apprentices was different because the career prospects for carpenters were better than ever during this period. Carpenters in Hollola did not, however, keep apprentices or train competitors in addition to their own sons because the trade was a family business.

18 There was high variation in the number of apprentices due to the economic situation and, more generally, the development of the society. For instance, population growth resulted in opportunities for new artisans and hence more boys were apprenticed. The increasing wealth of customers and their changing consumption patterns also created more opportunities for rural artisans. However, the general economic situation or customers' increasing/decreasing wealth did not always coincide with the number of artisans and their apprentices. For example, the 1830s were economically difficult years (due to bad harvests and several epidemics)[50], but that was not reflected in the number of apprentices —artisans took on more new apprentices than ever. In addition, the future career prospects of apprentices might have been worse than those previous generations. In general, the number of apprentices was not high in relation to the total number of boys for a given age group; only few youngsters chose to be apprenticed.

The characteristics and later careers of apprentices

19 In Finland, artisans and their apprentices were in principle all male; girls were not admitted into formal apprenticeship in early modern times, neither were there female rural artisans.[51] The general characteristics of apprentices can be determined because the approach of this study is individualistic. Firstly, there was little variation in the starting ages of these apprentices. However, larger differences are observed according to the trade. Smith apprentices were usually slightly older than other apprentices, the average age for entering the smithy was 21 (Table 3). Most of the young boys started around 17-22 years old, but it was not too late to start training even after turning 25 (Table 4). An obvious reason for this was that the smith trade required physical strength.[52] It was also commonplace for smith apprentices to have worked elsewhere before being apprenticed, for example in farms as farmhands.[53]

Table 3 – The starting age, training time and residence of craft apprentices (Hollola, 1810-1840).

	Smith	Tailor	Shoemaker	Total or average
Number of apprentices from native parish	16	24	33	73
Number of apprentices from another parish	17	10	15	42
Average starting age/years	21	16	18	18.3
Average apprenticeship time, all apprentices/years	3.6	4.3	4.1	4
Average apprenticeship time, craftsmen/years	4	4.9	5	4.6

Source: Prosopographical database on artisans in Hollola 1724-1840.

20 A contrasting result is observed for tailors, where the average age of being indentured was 16 years (Table 3). Tailor apprentices were quite often mere children when they started their training and it was common for these apprentices to be mentioned in children's books —in other words, minors were frequently being indentured.[54] Some of them were probably younger than 14 years old, which was the official minimum age. Due to their young age, they often came from their father's household without much work experience in other trades. Tailoring evidently did not need the same type of physical strength that was required in the smithy.[55] Regarding shoemaker apprentices, the starting age and knowledge of other work was generally

between that of a tailor and smith. The average starting age was 18 and some of them were minor boys coming from their parents' households without prior work experience. The majority of apprentices, however, were over 17 years old and many of them had had time to gather work experience as farmhands. Apprentices over 25 years old were rare, so the shoemaker apprenticeship was a young man's business (Table 4).

Table 4 – The starting age of craft apprentices according their trade (Hollola 1810-1840).

	≤16	17–19	20–22	23–25	26–28	29+
Smith	1	16	10	2	4	1
Tailor	21	8	3	0	0	0
Shoemaker	15	20	8	4	0	1
Total	37	44	21	6	4	2

Source: Prosopographical database on artisans in Hollola 1724-1840.

21 The length of the training period varied among trades (Table 3). It is often stated that it was dependent on the skills of the trade, the apprentice's age and prior experience, and on whether the apprentice was required to compensate the cost of his training by working for his master for a lengthy period of time.[56] Due to the absence of indentures, it is impossible to ascertain whether the premiums shortened the apprenticeship time or not. In the court records there are only a handful of examples of payments made between masters and apprentices, so it may not have been very common to pay for training and hence complete a shorter training period.[57] In general, apprenticeships among Finnish rural (and urban) artisans lasted three to five years.[58] Curiously, the limited number of written contracts usually stipulated an apprenticeship period of five or six years, which does not directly reflect the average numbers, which are estimated by the duration of time the apprentice lived in the master's household.

22 In general, there are no great differences among trades, only between individuals and personal situations. Naturally, the average training time of apprentices who later became independent artisans was longer than overall figures presents because dropouts lower the figures (Table 3). The difference is not, however, very large. Consequently, it was not very common to leave training unfinished, especially when the short training time was occasionally the sign of fine-tuning the apprentice's skills. This was journeyman-like behavior, where basic skills were acquired with the initial master (or with the father) and afterwards the apprentice spent one additional year with another artisan.[59] Otherwise, short apprenticeships were sometimes a sign of trial periods or of training interrupted for other reasons (Table 5). This usually happened by mutual consent because there are only a handful of court cases resolving such cases.

Table 5 – The number of craft apprentices according to the length of their apprenticeship (Hollola, 1810-1840).

	<1 year	1-2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	> 7 years	Total
Smith	6	7	4	9	3	4	2	35
Tailor	5	5	5	8	4	1	6	34
Shoemaker	10	9	3	8	5	3	11	49
Total	21	21	12	25	12	8	19	118

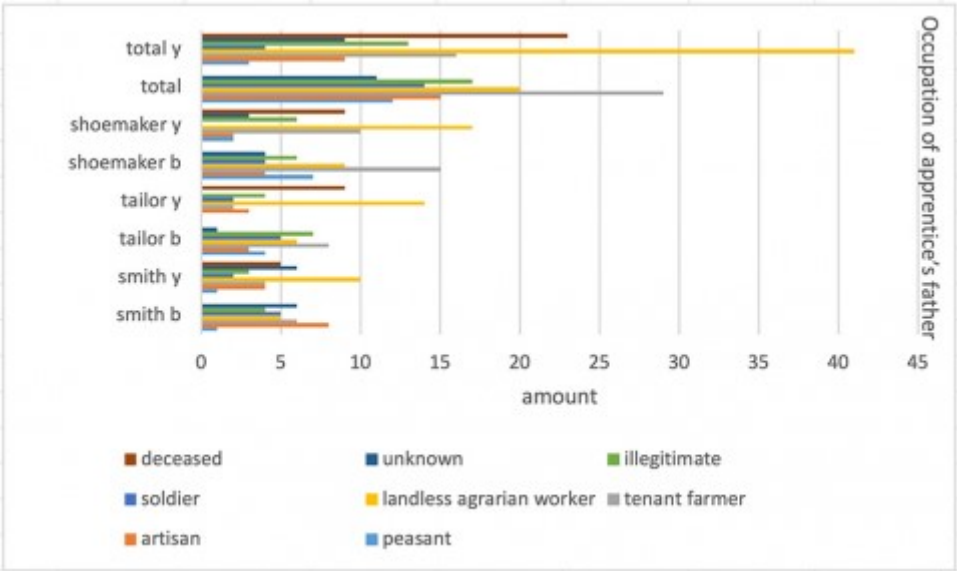
Source: Prosopographical database on artisans in Hollola 1724-1840.

23 Master smiths usually trained for approximately four years. Tailor and shoemaker apprenticeships lasted slightly longer, the average being close to five years (Table 3). Apprenticeships longer than six years can be considered exceptional. One such exception was the lengthy training periods of shoemakers (Table 5), mainly the result of long training periods in the city. However, from the 1830s onward, an increasing

proportion of apprentices was not able to set up their own businesses, and instead continued to work for wages, often moving between different masters' households for a number of years.[60]

24 The social backgrounds of apprentices differed widely. There are some problems in ascertaining the social origin of apprentices because so many came from neighboring parishes (Table 3). This demonstrates that it was easy to cross parish borders and seek a willing master from a larger area. Generally speaking, it was not common to find a master in one's home village.[61] This confirms the general notion that apprentices were a highly mobile group.[62] Through investigating the backgrounds and family connections of apprentices it was possible to determine a father's occupation at two points in time: when his son was born (in the birth records) and when he left home to be apprenticed or otherwise sought employment elsewhere (by following his life course) (fig. 1). Here information on a father's occupation when their son was born was less relevant because a father may have later changed occupation. Notably, fathers who were the younger sons of farmers and who did not inherit the farm, were later called by terms related to the various types of landless agrarian workers. In addition, many boy's father had deceased. In general, the social standing of apprentices was lower on reaching adulthood than at birth.

Fig. 1 – Occupations of fathers when craft apprentices were born and were young men (Hollola, 1810-1840).



The father's occupation when the apprentice was b = born, y = a young man.

Source: Prosopographical database on artisans in Hollola 1724-1840.

25 The general impression from the existing literature is that apprentices were mostly the younger sons of peasants.[63] This is determined by eighteenth century evidence. However, in the nineteenth century it was uncommon for peasant fathers to send their sons to artisan households. Being apprenticed gave a potential livelihood for landless people, by which soldiers, tenant farmers and landless agrarian workers hoped to offer their sons a future in a given craft. For instance, after 1809 (when Finland was annexed to imperial Russia) the Finnish army was disbanded, which meant that sons of soldiers needed new career options, and an artisan was a viable one.[64] The number of fathers working as tenant farmers (mainly crofters) was also increasing, and they evidently favored sending their sons to be trained as artisans. Sons of landless agrarian workers were not rare in the eighteenth century, but later it is clear that apprentices came from more modest social backgrounds.

26 The presence of the father in a boy's life was not necessary to become to an apprentice. In fact, many apprentices were orphans or fatherless when entering apprenticeship. Some of them were illegitimate. According to the older traditions, apprentices should have been of respectable origin, in other words, born within

marriage. By the nineteenth century, several boys born out of wedlock became apprentices, so the expectations had obviously changed.[65] Another traditional way was to raise boys to follow their father's profession. This meant that a shoemaker's son commonly became a shoemaker; following family traditions was more apparent in the smith trade. When a father was teaching his own son, the latter was not designated as apprentice, but merely as an artisan's son. Thus, it was not very common for an apprentice to have an artisan family background because the sons in the father's training did not appear among the apprentices. Only if the father could not teach himself did the son of the artisan officially become apprentice in another artisans' workshop. Or, as previously mentioned, the son of an artisan learnt extra skills and perfected his skills by visiting another artisan's workshop.

27 The last theme of this section concerns the final career choices of apprentices. The percentage of smith apprentices who qualified is high; in 1810-1840, half of them become smiths themselves (Table 6). Sixteen of them worked as smiths in Hollola and at least three in neighboring parishes. Nine of the apprentices did not achieve the status of master smith. However, only one of them discontinued after a short period of training. Curiously, the other eight, despite several years of apprenticeship and apparently even completing it, took up other occupations, such as enlisted soldiers, tenant farmers and even landed peasants. Obviously, craft skills were highly appreciated and learning the trade was valuable —but it did not automatically mean establishing as an independent artisan. Sometimes it may have been a question of using boys and youngsters as labor force, especially when the boys were poor.[66]

Table 6 – Careers of apprentices after apprenticeship (Hollola, 1810-1840).

	Smiths	%	Tailors	%	Shoemakers	%
Artisans	19	54	20	59	22	45
Not artisans	9	26	11	32	20	41
Unknown	7	20	3	9	7	14
Total	35	100	34	100	49	100

Source: Prosopographical database on artisans in Hollola 1724-1840.

28 During 1810-1840, the highest percentage of apprentices becoming artisans in their trade was for tailors; nearly 60% of apprentices became master tailors (Table 6). There were two apprentices who were registered as such for years without qualifying; most likely they worked as hired assistants for other artisans. Three of them were in apprenticeships for less than two years, so they probably discontinued. However, there were others who may have served their full time, because they are listed as apprentices for over five years without ever becoming masters themselves. Thus, as in the case of the smiths, they completed all the apprenticeship years, but this did not follow with a formal career. These men became something other than self-employed artisans, even though they could have taken informal advantage of their craft skills. It is difficult to assess whether these men could not find support for their parish artisan application, if their training was insufficient or if the time was simply not right for them to set up their own businesses. Not all apprentices ended up as an artisan. It is also doubtful whether they even intended to become artisans; there have always been more apprentices than artisans or even journeymen.[67] This is seen in the shoemaker's trade, where apprentices constitute the largest group, but the percentage of those successfully completing their indentures is the lowest, less than half (Table 6). Sometimes the apprenticeship was only one period of time, where a boy could get some short-term security and livelihood and the artisan got an unpaid assistant.

Boys learning craft skills

29 Rural artisans learnt their skills from various sources, but most learned their trade from other rural artisans. There were many similarities with urban practices, even though rural apprentices were inferior in both rank and skills compared with guild-trained apprentices. Therefore, rural apprentices, when transferring to towns, had to continue learning with guild masters. In contrast, urban apprentices or journeymen did not face the same difficulties in rural communities. The economic situation and societal development, including population growth, affected the number of apprentices. The increasing affluence of customers and their evolving consumption patterns likewise created more demand for rural artisans. Therefore, artisans took on more apprentices, although the general economic situation did not always directly reflect the number of apprentices. However, in economically difficult times the future career prospects of apprentices may have been poorer and, in any case, not all apprentices became artisans. It is surprising how many did not have an independent artisan career, despite serving a full apprenticeship. There must have been some other benefits from serving the apprenticeship.

30 Overall apprenticeships were only available to males. The characteristics of the apprentices were varied due to the requirements and individual characteristics of the trades. Of course, trade-specific features and averages can be observed, for instance, the age when an apprentice began his apprenticeship varied; tailor apprentices started as young boys and smiths as adult men. The average apprenticeship lasted three to five years but individual characteristics and agreements between masters and apprentices meant more than just trade, some apprentices served four years, some six. The backgrounds of the apprentices were also quite diverse, although these appear to have become more modest. Most of the boys were the sons of non-landed people, not the younger sons of peasants. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to study the latter half of the nineteenth century to ascertain if the prestige of the apprenticeship system and the social origins of the apprentices continued to fall and to determine why this occurred.

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Notes

1 De Munck – Soly 2007, p. 10-11.

2 Möller 1936, p. 52; Papinsaari 1967, p. 259.

3 Uotila 2020.

4 On principles see Keats-Rohan 2007; Uotila 2014, p. 31-43.

5 These registers are not without shortcomings. This mainly concerns timing: it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when a new apprentice arrived and left an artisan's household because this is established by records of his attendance at communion, which admittedly was a compulsory, yearly act, but still a vague measurement of time. In childrens' books, there are usually no time markers whatsoever, so timing has to be estimated from other sources if possible.

6 Artisans also provided them with legal protection; everyone in the Kingdom of Sweden had to be registered as belonging somewhere and have this type of protected status, otherwise they were deemed unprotected vagrants. Edgren 1987, p. 134.

7 Söderlund 1949, p. 103-106, 238-242.

8 Laakso 1974; Papinsaari 1967. On artisan research in general see also Heino 1984 and Ranta 1978; Vainio-Korhonen 1998.

9 Most of the Finnish parishes produced volumes on their own history, where the content is quite typical and uniform. There is usually a chapter on local artisans —their number, local customs and accounts of interesting court cases.

10 Söderlund 1949; Edgren 1987. On Swedish rural artisan research in general see also Gadd 1991.

11 Heino 1984, p. 67-69; Gadd 1991, p. 244.

12 Contrary to many other countries, see for instance Ehmer 2008, p. 148-150.

13 Governors granted the work licence in the form of a legal document called gärningsbrev in Swedish and the special artisan tax was called gärningsöre.

14 Ranta 1978, p. 104.

15 Uotila 2014, p. 124-125.

16 For a brief while masons (1756), bricklayers (1762) and glaziers (1766) were allowed to work in rural areas (until 1789). Masons and glaziers were permitted to do so again in 1802. Söderlund 1949, p. 230; Ranta 1978, p. 90; Gadd 1991, p. 299-300.

17 Ranta 1978, p. 90-94.

18 Uotila 2014, p. 79-81, 114-117.

19 Söderlund 1949, p. 169, 405-420; Edgren 1987, p. 65.

20 The titles are given in Swedish as in the original texts, because Swedish was the official language of Finland at the time.

21 Von Stiermann 1733, p. 2006-2007; Modée 1742, p. 673. See also Heino 1984, p. 73-74; Gadd 1991, p. 248.

22 Laakso 1974, p. 65, 129.

23 The word lärodreng was also known in towns, where it referred to first-year journeymen, who were expected to stay with the master for one more year. Söderlund 1949, p. 345. See also Jutikkala 1949, p. 300; Rosenberg 1993, p. 128.

24 Therefore, it could not have been done in this research. See Uotila 2020, p. 172-173.

25 In the literature it is often said that rural artisans did not employ journeymen and these hired assistants mentioned above are usually considered as regular apprentices if the phenomenon is acknowledged at all. Jutikkala 1934, p. 470, Saarenheimo 1974, p. 416; Suvanto 1992, p. 232.

26 NA, County of Uusimaa and Häme, Governors' Secretariat, Records of applications 1790-1830.

27 Some guilds limited the number of apprentices per master. Söderlund 1949, p. 112; Papinsaari 1967, p. 246, 314; Edgren 1987, p. 154.

28 Enforcement of apprenticeship contracts was usually deemed to be the guilds'

responsibility. Epstein 1998, p. 690-692; De Munck – Soly 2007, p. 9, 11-14; Epstein 2013, p. 31.

29 Crowston 2007, p. 46.

30 NA, County of Uusimaa and Häme, Governors' Secretariat, Records of applications 1790-1830 and Edgren 1987, p. 155.

31 Möller 1936, p. 50; Papinsaari 1967, p. 249; Vainio-Korhonen 2010, p. 232-233.

32 Söderlund 1949, p. 393-394; Papinsaari 1967, p. 265-266; Edgren 1987, p. 155; Wallis 2008, p. 843-844.

33 For instance, NA, Archives of Hollola District Court, court records winter 1823 § 113 and autumn 1833 § 63 and winter 1834 § 27.

34 Often their apprenticeship time was taken into account when they were in town to learn more. Kaukovalta 1931, p. 440; Möller 1936, p. 52; Halila 1939, p. 598; Jutikkala 1949, p. 299; Papinsaari 1967, p. 259; Vainio-Korhonen 1998, p. 130-131.

35 De Munck – Soly 2007, p. 13-16; Epstein 2013, p. 29.

36 Hanssen 1952, p. 412, 446-447, 458; Gadd 1991, p. 155.

37 Möller 1936, p. 52; Söderlund 1949, p. 264; Hanssen 1952, p. 506; Gadd 1991, p. 155-156.

38 Uotila 2014, p. 126.

39 Söderlund 1949, p. 169, 259; Kyöstiö 1955, p. 61; Tommila 1959, p. 203; Aaltonen 1963, p. 42; Vainio Korhonen 2010, p. 230.

40 Laakso 1974, p. 69-70.

41 Uotila 2014, p. 275-277.

42 Laakso 1974, p. 68-69.

43 In 1810 there were only six parish shoemakers and over 600 peasant households. This lack of masters, however, may be a peculiarity of the research area, and perhaps in other parishes there were more shoemaker apprentices. Uotila 2014, p. 117.

44 Söderlund 1949, p. 226; Niemelä 1991, p. 127-128. See also Laakso 1974, p. 121-122.

45 Uotila 2014, p. 222-223.

46 Laakso 1974, p. 120, 138.

47 NA, Archives of Hollola District Court, court records autumn 1832 § 251.

48 Laakso 1974, p. 121, 138; Uotila 2014, p. 265.

49 Vainio-Korhonen 2000, p. 48-49.

50 Kuusi 1937, p. 80.

51 Vainio-Korhonen 2010, p. 249-250; Uotila 2014, p. 29.

52 Laakso 1974, p. 132-133.

53 Uotila 2014, p. 239.

54 Since the main source material is ecclesiastical records, the age of majority is here determined as being attained when the young child was confirmed and thus eligible to receive Holy Communion. Usually confirmation was when a child was about 15 years old, but it depended on how well he or she had learned the catechism. NA, Archives of Hollola church, pre-confirmation registers of Hollola ca. 1750-1840.

55 Papinsaari 1967, p. 262.

56 Söderlund 1949, p. 397; De Munck – Soly 2007, p. 9, 12-14; Epstein 2013, p. 29-31.

57 Arajärvi 1959, p. 297; Tommila 1959, p. 202. See also Söderlund 1949, p. 391-392; Laakso 1974, p. 136.

58 Kaukovalta 1931, p. 445; Laakso 1974, p. 131; Vainio-Korhonen 1998, p. 130.

59 Uotila 2020, p. 183.

60 Söderlund 1949, p. 382-389; Uotila 2014, p. 241-243.

61 Uotila 2014, p. 227-229.

62 Tommila 1959, p. 203-205; Rosenberg 1966, p. 55-56.

63 Laakso 1974, p. 112-117.

64 Niemelä 1990, p. 186-187.

65 Edgren 1987, p. 66, 152, 213; Uotila 2015.

66 Edgren 1987, p. 192; De Munck – Soly 2008, p. 21. See also Uotila 2014, p. 244.

67 Edgren 1987, p. 192.

List of illustrations

Title	Fig. 1 – Occupations of fathers when craft apprentices were born and were young men (Hollola, 1810-1840).
Caption	The father's occupation when the apprentice was b = born, y = a young man.
Credits	Source: Prosopographical database on artisans in Hollola 1724-1840.

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