

The Johan Skytte Prize in Political Science

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Abstract: Johan Skytte was a true scholar of the 17th century in Sweden. In 1622 he instituted a new professorship in Eloquence and Politics financed by a separate patronage donation. It has survived all through the years and will soon celebrate its 400 years' anniversary. In 1994, the foundation running the practical/economical parts of the donation founded an international prize: The Johan Skytte Prize in Political Science. This year, the 21st prize goes to Francis Fukuyama.

Keywords: Political Science, Johan Skytte, the Johan Skytte Prize in Political Science, Skytte Foundation, Uppsala University.

I. JOHAN SKYTTE AND HIS DONATION IN 1622

Johan Skytte (Figure 1) was born in 1577, son of a merchant. Duke Karl, later to become King Karl IX, understood that the young boy was unusually gifted and intelligent, and he paid for his education abroad [1]. He staid abroad for 9 years, visiting different universities in Germany, and travelling to France, England and Scotland. In 1598 he took his thesis in Marburg. He was deeply taken by ramism, the philosophy by Petrus Ramus [1, 2]. According to Ramus all sciences were based on the depth and sharpness in intellectual thinking as expressed by eloquence. Eloquence was the base for everything. *It could turn and twist the human heart in whatever direction wanted.* Skytte argued that it should be put in the service of the state.



Figure 1. Johan Skytte became Vice Chancellor of Uppsala University on January 1, 1622. The same day he instituted a donation for a new professorship in Eloquence and Politics on the basis of a patronage right endorsed by the King.

Back in Sweden, he became tutor of the crown prince Gustavus Adolphus (later King Gustavus II Adolphus). In 1604 he was ennobled, and soon after started to build his magnificent castle Grönsö (Figure 2). He was a true scholar and his career was remarkable: Councillor at court (1603), District judge (1605), Governor of Västmanland (1611), Chamber councillor (1612), Privy Councillor (1617), Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University (1622), Baron of Duderhof (1624), Governor General of Ingria, Livonia and Karelia (1629), Vice-Chancellor of the University in Dorpat (1632) and President of Göta Court of Appeal (1634).

Johan Skytte had noted – obviously with some frustration – that the Swedes were doing very well on the battlefields, but often failed at the negotiation tables. Something must be missing, and he thought he knew what it was; basic knowledge in politics and talent in eloquence.

Therefore, when he took office as Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University on the 1st of January 1622, his first action was to initiate a donation to Uppsala University; a new professorship in "Eloquence and Politics" financed by a patronage donation. In a confirmation letter by the King, Skytte and his descendants were assured the right of patronage to appoint the Professor Skytteanus in Eloquence and Politics at Uppsala University. This "just patroni" has now survived for 393 years, the present author being the 11th Patronus Skytteanus [1].



Figure 2. The castle of Grönsö built by Johan Skytte in the period 1607-1610. With this monument Johan Skytte took his final step into the Swedish aristocracy.

Approaching 400 years

The Skytte professorship in Eloquence and Politics at Uppsala University is the oldest chair in political science in Europe (and the World). In 7 years we will celebrate the 400 years' anniversary, which must be held as quite remarkable.

Did it help?

The ultimate intension by Skytte with the institution of the new professorship was to increase the capacity and performance of the Swedes who led the peace negotiations. Professor Lewin (Lewin in [1], p. 84-87) answers "yes" to this question and adds: "there is no doubt that the donation highly contributed to the improvement in Swedish diplomacy and natural education".

Johan Skytte himself took part in the peace negotiations at Brömsebro in 1645. For Sweden the result was very successful. Johan Adler Salvius, a friend of Johan Skytte, played a central role at the Westphalian Peace negotiations in Osnabrück and Münster in 1648. In the background, even Bengt Skytte, the new patron of the Skytte donation, had a large influence on the result, which was very favourable for Sweden. The 1648 *Peace of Westphalia* generated a new system of political order in Europe based on the concept of co-existing sovereign states. Finally, the 7th patron, Adolf Göran Mörner, was the co-author of the 1809 basic law of Sweden. So, also the patrons contributed to the goals set by Johan Skytte in 1622.



Figure 3. At the 2006 party, Crown Princess Victoria was the guest of honour, here together with the patron (to the right) and the prize winner Robert Putnam (in the middle). Photo: Jessica Mörner, 2006.

II. THE JOHAN SKYTTE PRIZE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

In 1994 (after some reorganization discussed in [1]), the Skytte Foundation instituted a new prize: *The Johan Skytte Prize in Political Science*

The prize winner was to be awarded a sum of money (today 500,000 SEK) and an excellent silver medal. The day of prize awarding begins with a short ceremony in the cathedral, a prize lecture, and a major dinner party (Figure 3) with a toast for the donor, a welcome by the patron, a presentation of the prize winner by professor skytteanus, the prize awarding, a thank from the prize winner and an acceptance speech by the person sitting beside patronus' wife. The day after, there is an excursion to Grönsö, the castle of Johan Skytte built around 1610 (Figure 2).

The prize has even come to be called "*a Little Nobel Prize in Political Science*" (the web of professor Josef Colmer, 2006).

The prize winners

The first winner of the Johan Skytte Prize in Political Science was Robert Dahl in 1995, an easy choice, it seems, because if anyone stuck out as a "*primus inter pares*" in political science, it was Dahl. The followed: Juan Linz in 1996, Arend Lijphart in 1997, Alexander George in 1998, Elinor Ostrom in 1999 (later to become Nobel Prize winner in Economics), Fritz Scharpf in 2000, Brian Barry in 2001, Sidney Verba in 2002, Hanna Pitkin in 2003, Jean Blondel in 2004, Robert Keohane in 2005, Robert Putnam in 2006, Theda Skocpol in 2007, Rein Taagepera in 2008, Philippe Schmitter in 2009, Adam Przeworski in 2010, Ronald Inglehart & Pippa Norris in 2011, Carole Pateman in 2012, Robert Axelrod in 2013, David Collier in 2014 and Francis Fukuyama in 2015 – indeed, a remarkable line of excellent scientists.

This year's laureate, Professor Fukuyama received the prize with the following motivation: "*with a breathtakingly well read, sharpness and boldness he sheds new light on the emergence of the modern political order*" (the motivation for all the other prize winners can be found in [1]).

The nomination

The nomination of potential candidates for the prize follows the principles of the Nobel Committee; i.e. high-quality proposals from the international scientific community, which are then evaluated by a prize committee. The Prize Committee of the Skytte Foundation is headed by Professor Skytteanus. The committee provides a written proposal including a sharp and well-worded motivation. The foundation endorses the proposal. I encourage readers to take part in the nomination process.

The 20 years anniversary in 2014

Last year, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the prize. At this occasion, the Skytte Foundation launched a book entitled "*Johan Skytte, his donation in 1622 and the Johan Skytte Prize in Political Science*" [1]. It gives the background, a presentation of Johan Skytte, an account on the patronage during the last 292 years, the institution of the prize in 1994, and a presentation of all the 20 prize winners.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Read the fascinating story about Johan Skytte, his donation, the prize and, not least, the presentation of all the prize winners. Besides, all readers should consider taking active part in the nomination process.

Acknowledgement

The book here discussed can be requested as pdf-file or even as hard copy from the Institute of Eloquence and Government at Uppsala University via michal.smrek@statsvet.uu.se.

REFERENCES

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