

# Abstracts

Anna Sommer Møller: Burn or Bury? The Debate on Cremation in Denmark ca. 1874-1900, *Fortid og Nutid*, June 2007, p. 82-102.

Cremation is a subject which regularly crops up in the public debate. It made its latest appearance in the autumn of 2006, when the Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs asked The Ethical Council for its advice on the ethical aspects in connection with utilizing the heat generated by the cremation ovens. But whilst contemporary debate turns on questions about *how* the cremation process should be carried out, the debate in the last decades of the 19th Century raged about *whether at all* cremation should be permitted; this was finally the case in 1892.

The present article charts the 19th Century debate on the question of cremation, which was originally introduced as a medical and hygienic issue, and primarily discussed in medical circles. Gradually, the debate was joined by other groups, and the question was put into other contexts, just as new arguments, particularly of legal and religious nature, were brought in. This development led to conflict and disagreement between the interested parties, and frequently they defined the problem and argued their points of view in ways so different that they found it difficult to agree what it was they disagreed about.

The story about the introduction of cremation is interesting exactly because of the conflicting points of view and the complexity of the debate. A number of central issues in the contemporary social debate were involved, e.g. the question of the relation between religion and modern natural science. For this reason, the story of the early cremation in Denmark can be seen as a mirror, in which various aspects of tradition and modernity were reflected and combined in new ways.

Mie Buus: Hunting as a Subsidiary Occupation in Fishing Communities in the Danish Region of Thy ca. 1880-1950, *Fortid og Nutid*, June 2007, p. 103-115.

Hunting has always mirrored economic and cultural conditions of society, and the hunting, which today takes place in the area of dunes, moors and plantations in the region of Thy, serves recreational purposes and belongs to the more exclusive segment of hunting because of the large stand of red deer in the area. If we go back in time a couple of generations, hunting, as a locally adapted strategy, played a decisive role for survival in this region. In the early 20th Century, west coast fishing in Thy was still too uncertain to base a living upon, and therefore many fishermen supplemented their economy by hunting in the dunes and moors near the sea. The dunes and moors are now facing a new status as a national park, and for this reason it has become topical to look into aspects of the cultural history of hunting in Thy.

For this reason, in 2006 the Museum for Thy and Vester Han Herred undertook a cultural historical study, supported by the Directorate of Cultural Heritage and in cooperation with Thy Forestry District and Agger Hunting Association. The results of this study as well as the present article are based on evidence collected in the form of a number of interviews with old hunters and fishermen in the coastal communities as well as written sources in the form of hunting diaries, merchants' account books and files of poaching trials.

Jens Chr.V. Johansen: *The Weight of History. On the Increasing Size of Historical Theses for the Doctorate, Fortid og Nutid*, June 2007, p. 117-128.

The average volume of a Danish historical thesis for the doctorate has risen considerably over the years. Measured by weight there is a rise from an average 400 grammes per thesis 150 years ago to just under 1,800 grammes today, with a markedly increasing tendency since the 1980s.

This development, which makes the use of a reading desk ever more imperative, corresponds with development in those countries, with which we normally compare ourselves. It has been suggested that the increased volume is due to fiercer competition among the candidates for the doctorate, the desire to display erudition and a greater amount of detail. The present article argues that the use of personal computers bears a heavy responsibility for the swelling of theses, and recommends that the delete button be brought into more frequent use.

*Abstracts translated by Jørgen Peder Clausager*