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978-0-521-03181-3 - Historical Role Analysis in the Study of Religious Change: Mass Educational Development in Norway, 1740-1891

John T. Flint

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**The Arnold and Caroline Rose Monograph Series
of the American Sociological Association**

Historical role analysis in the study of religious change

This study in historical sociology explores the relationship between educational development and religious change in Norwegian society during a period of significant social and economic transition. John Flint traces the process whereby the laity radically reduced clerical control over religious institutions. In contrast to the usual preoccupation with sectarian movements, this book focuses upon religious protest movements which *remained within* the established order and shows how they were an integral part of a general trend towards the dissolution of religious unity.

The author examines census materials, reports to the Ministry of the Church and Education, and quantifiable information contained in organizational histories – using historical role analysis to describe the changing relationship between state church pastors, parish school teachers, pupils, parents, and lay preachers.

With these materials, his study draws on and contributes to the sociology of comparative educational development, in an examination of the movement towards mass literacy. Professor Flint's account of religious protest movements analyzes their emergence as related to the processes whereby popular literacy was increased, which facilitated religious mobilization among the laity. The conclusions he draws from this Norwegian study have wider theoretical and methodological implications, and will be of interest to historians and those studying the sociology of religion and education.

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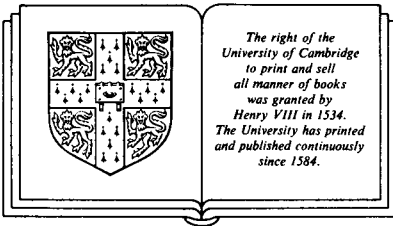
Historical role analysis in the study of religious change

Mass educational development in
Norway, 1740–1891

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Preface

The border between historical sociology and social history has become so permeable in recent years as to be nonexistent for a growing number of practitioners. Nevertheless, it is probably true that most social historians make little if any effort to test or extract *explicit* propositions of a more general explanatory character. Their emphasis continues to be upon making intelligible a particular sequence of social acts and relationships with reference to some aspects of a specified time period and location. Propositions and generalizations may be more or less *implicit* in the guise of research questions which define and guide selective criteria in terms of which a monograph is prepared. Among many historical sociologists, more or less explicit conceptual schemes adapted from earlier research on a similar range of social phenomena are often utilized as central elements defining the major variables of testable propositions which may be confirmed, rejected, or modified by the new case material.¹

The ambivalence I experienced in trying to decide upon a reasonably accurate title for this book may serve to illustrate the ambiguities of these rather blurred distinctions. My first but not ultimate choice, “Mass educational development and popular religious change in preindustrial Norway, 1740–1891,” provided a straightforward indication of time, place, and social historical topic. My primary concerns, however, are more general in a substantive and methodological sense. Thus, my final title became as it now reads, “Historical role analysis in the study of religious change,” sub-title, “Mass educational development in Norway, 1740–1891.” This comes much closer to expressing my historical–sociological objectives.

I have sought to address the concerns of those scholars interested in the scientific study of popular religious change. Perhaps my most distinctive contribution to the literature will consist of a focus upon those much-neglected religious protest movements which *remain within* an established order in contrast to the much more familiar preoccupation with sectarian movements. The latter are included but receive secondary emphasis. Interwoven with these foci is considerable systematic attention to the process of

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secularization as part of a general trend toward the dissolution of religious unity, of which the protests are also an integral part.

Secondly, I have drawn upon and attempted to contribute something to the sociology of comparative educational development, with particular focus upon the social organization of mass literacy production as this impinged upon the religious mobilization of a laity in a preindustrial context.

Finally, regional historical variations in systems of social stratification provide the comparative context within which descriptions of the interplay between mass educational developments and popular religious change are presented and partial explanatory sketches constructed.² Throughout the text I have tried to utilize what I label “historical role analysis” as a device for structuring the descriptive process, focusing above all upon the changing relationships between state-church pastors, parish school teachers, pupils, parents, and lay preachers.

Where possible, I have drawn upon official records (census reports, reports to the Ministry of Church and Education, etc.) or secondary analysis of quantifiable materials contained in organizational histories in order to sharpen comparative descriptions of educational systems at the diocesan and provincial levels as well as similar regional variations in the timing, tempo, and magnitude of popular religious mobilization, particularly between 1860 and 1891.

Most of the above could be translated into the more formal language of conventional sociological analysis – for example, dependent (religious mobilization), independent (educational role-system development), and contingent (class analytic) variables. Such statements of relationship (propositions) probably could be “derived” from an integrated codification of what passes for theory in the sociology of religious movements, secularization, and educational development. Such an effort, while possibly of value in another context, would, I believe, tend to obscure some of my more modest objectives and at the same time misrepresent my own evolving skepticism regarding the adequacy of timeless and spaceless claims of some varieties of structural/functional as well as conflict theory. It is my contention that historical role analysis is a procedural, descriptive device which may be congruent with, accessible to, and translatable into a variety of alternative, though not necessarily mutually exclusive, interpretive perspectives. In short, it is my hope that I have provided grist for several alternative theoretical mills, not excluding my own reconsiderations at some later time.

Part of the reason for this rather cautious approach to explanatory claims derives from the relative absence of a long-term controversial literature within Norwegian historiography of a kind comparable in depth and scope to that in England on, for example, the cause, course, and consequences of the Puritan

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Revolution (or Civil War?), or the Halevey thesis regarding the counter-revolutionary functions of the Methodist Movement.³ Obviously, as I note below, without the superb work of Molland, Mannsaaker, and Dokka, as well as of Stein Rokkan, Vilhelm Aubert, and the research associates of the last two, this enterprise never would have been undertaken. It is not that controversies relevant to my concerns here have not been evident. For example, the scope and impact of the Hauge movement, as well as patterns of political mobilization and conflict after about 1869, have certainly generated scholarly controversy, but not, in my view, of the often radically divergent variety so familiar among English social historians. Such controversies not only sharpen perspectives but often generate a wider range of empirical research which thus becomes available to later interpreters with still other axes to grind. The relevance of all this will, I trust, become evident throughout the text, particularly with reference to changing patterns of class, status, and power as between major regions between 1740 and 1891 where I have built upon the work of Skappel, Steen, Semmingsen, Mannsaaker, Rokkan, and Aubert. The unresolved ambiguities of this social-historical process are grappled with most directly in chapter 5.

One of the pleasures of social research comes in learning how generous many people can be in facilitating that process. During the initial phase of my work this included the staff of the University Library in Oslo, the Norwegian Central Statistical Bureau, the Royal Archive, and the church history section of the library at the University Theological Faculty, as well as the Institute for Pedagogy. The Institute for Social Research was most hospitable in providing work space during a summer research period in Oslo. On my return to Binghamton, two centers became absolutely indispensable to my efforts: first that glorious treasure trove, the New York Public Library, and secondly the interlibrary loan section of the SUNY/Binghamton Library, particularly during the periods when Janet Brown, Rochelle Moore, and Nancy Huling were in charge. My special appreciation goes to Gloria Gaumer, Lisa Fegley-Schmidt, and their staff at the manuscript center for typing the several drafts of this work. Nancy Hall and Nettie Rathje in the Sociology Department were most helpful in ways too numerous and diverse to be listed here. Finally, my thanks go to the University Awards Program of the State University of New York for providing a grant making possible a research summer in Oslo which laid part of the foundation for later work.

My scholarly indebtedness to Dagfinn Mannsaaker, Hans Jørgen Dokka, and the late Einar Molland will become evident to the reader. Dr. Mannsaaker, one-time Royal Archivist and editor of *Historisk Tidsskrift* and, above all, distinguished social historian of Norwegian religious life in the

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nineteenth century, must be acknowledged as the single most helpful guide to bibliographic sources. He also made me aware of the network of scholars most relevant to my concerns. Professor Dokka is a case in point. He expanded my awareness of the then (1969) available secondary literature on the history of the several levels of Norway's educational system as well as some more crucial gaps and limitations of that literature.

Erling Reksten and Ulf Torgersen of Oslo University's history and political science faculties respectively provided additional guidance and, above all, together with Thomas Mathiesen of the law faculty, provided a rich and warm personal, conversational context which I will always remember as among the most stimulating of my professional life. Erik Rinde, founding director and long-term patron of the Institute for Social Research whose generous hospitality greatly facilitated my work, was part of that context.

My long-time friend and fellow student of things Scandinavian, Mari Lund Wright, responded promptly and generously to several requests for needed materials. Most particularly, she brought me in contact, indirectly, with the late Ola Rudvin through her correspondence with him, which enabled me to clarify, if only in part, certain problems of interpretation of his text, used extensively in chapter 3 below.

The most extensive critiques of the manuscript I owe to the generosity of Professors Robin Williams, Charles Tilley, Robert Wuthnow, and Henry Valen, the latter of the University of Oslo and a major contributor to the historical-ecological study of political change in Norway. The three readers for the Arnold Rose Monograph Series, then anonymous, now acknowledged elsewhere, helped me to sharpen the argument, and cautioned me against assuming too much about a potential reader's knowledge of the history of a small country on the European scholarly periphery. Professor Ernest Q. Campbell, editor of the series, focused my attention on the most salient features of those critiques and thus facilitated my efforts to respond to their recommendations. Finally, Wendy Guise and Charles W. Hieatt, general and copy-editor, respectively, at Cambridge University Press, provided the most tangible assistance of all. Dr. Hieatt's meticulous attention to the language of the text brought my attention to some of its ambiguities I was simply too blind to see.

Among my professional colleagues at SUNY-Binghamton who have read and commented upon it in whole or in part are John Casparis, Ronald Fullerton, James Geschwender, Melvin Leiman, and Dag Tangen, a visiting scholar from Oslo University. It is, of course, my hope that by including the several modifications and additions suggested, the quality and readability of the manuscript have been significantly enhanced. As usual, the remaining weaknesses in the text are my own invention and responsibility.

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Three persons must be mentioned who share a rather different relationship to my efforts. My teacher and friend, the late Hans Gerth, provided a model of erudition, of intellectual passion and excitement which remains one part of my inner life as a scholar. It is, to be sure, a part of me which also delayed completion of the manuscript. Professor Sylvia Thrupp, founding editor of *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, someone I have met only through her generous and immensely helpful correspondence in connection with articles for her journal, provided a kind of encouragement which is the salvation of many a discouraged young would-be professional. The present book, only one chapter of which she saw in an early draft, is significantly linked to that moral support. Finally, my dear wife, Frieda, who has had to live with a rather short manuscript for a very long time, and whose editorial preference for at least a few short sentences greatly improved the readability of the text – to her I owe more than the traditional debt.

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Note on Norwegian place names

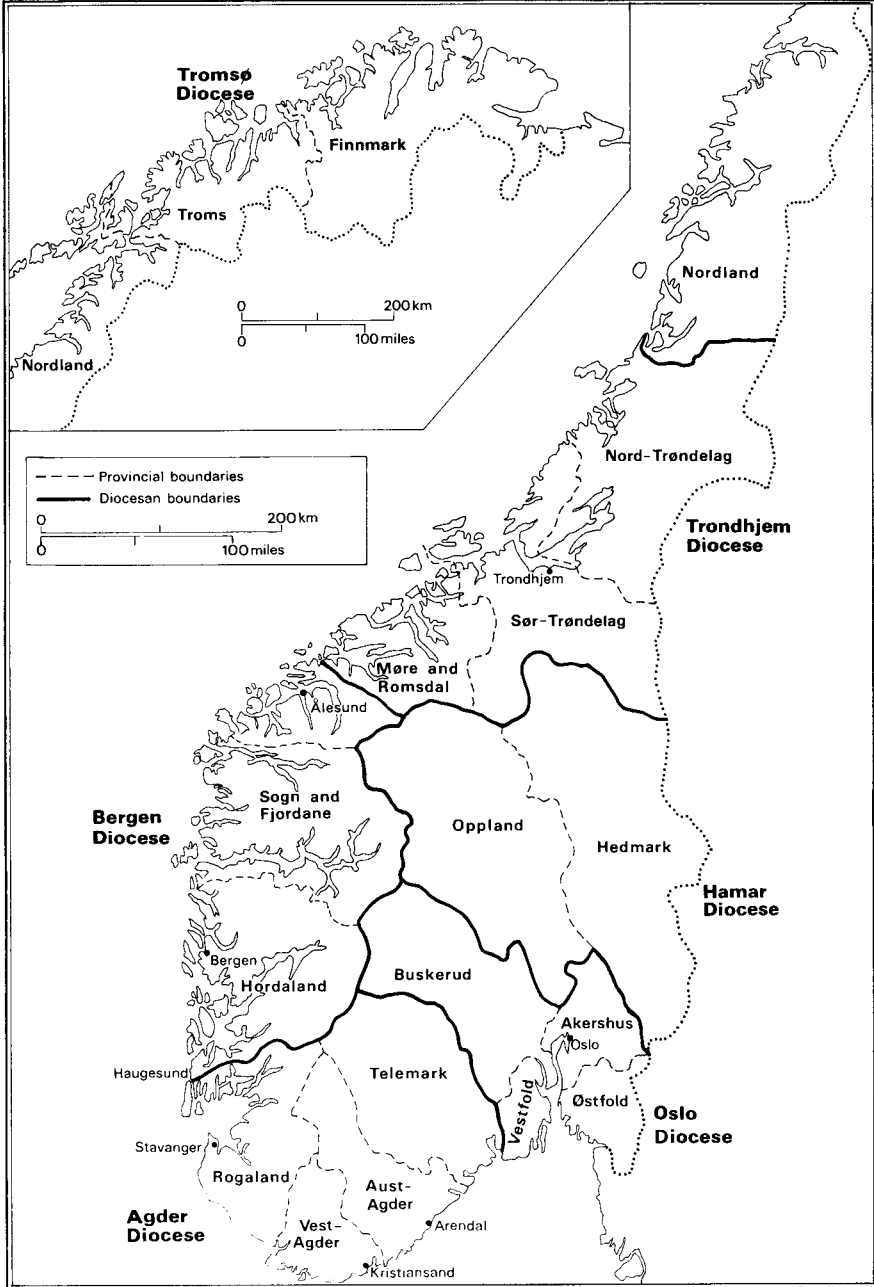
Throughout the text, statistical tables, and in the outline map showing provincial and diocesan boundaries, I have used twentieth-century names rather than those to be found in official reports (census, etc.) of all sorts throughout the nineteenth century and earlier. The similarities and differences can be indicated as follows, with the earlier names in parentheses. *Provinces*: Akershus (Akershus), Østfold (Smaalene), Vestfold (Jarlsberg og Laurvig), Buskerud (Buskerud), Hedmark (Hedmarken), Oppland (Kristians), Telemark (Bratsberg), Aust-Agder (Nedenes), Vest-Agder (Lister og Mandal), Rogaland (Stavanger), Hordaland (Søndre Bergenshus), Sogn og Fjordane (Nordre Bergenshus), Møre og Romsdal (Romsdal), Sør-Trondelag (Søndre Trondhjem), Nord-Trondelag (Nordre Trondhjem), Nordland (Nordland), Troms (Tromsø), Finmark (Finmarken). *Dioceses*: Oslo (Kristiania), Hamar (Hamar), Kristiansand (Agder), Bergen (Bergen), Trondhjem (Trondhjem), Tromsø (Tromsø).

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Provinces and dioceses of Norway, c. 1865, using twentieth-century place names