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Peder Johansen: Miller, Fiddler, Bachelor Storyteller

At age thirty-two, Peder Johansen was much younger than most of Tang Kristensen's informants, who tended to be at least in their late forties.[1] This skewing toward older informants was a well-known bias of Tang Kristensen and many other nineteenth century folklorists. Much of Tang Kristensen's collecting was informed by the ideas, prevalent among folklorists of the time, that their most important task was to preserve the vestiges of a quickly disappearing folk culture, and that older people—by virtue of their age alone—were closer to this vanishing culture. People such as Peder prove the absurdity of the latter belief.

Tang Kristensen provided the following short synopsis of Peder's life, a portrait patched together from the little scraps of biographical information that he was able to get from Peder:

> *Peder Johansen* er født den 15. april 1855 i Svejstrup. Faderen var møller i Svejstrup mølle, og han er derfor selv bleven møllersvend. Faderens plejefader var en meget bekjendt klog mand, der døde 80 år

gammel, da Peder blev konfirmeret, og var allerede da noget svækket. Samme kloge mand var særdeles god til at fortælle, og det er ligefrem umuligt for Peder at huske alt det, han hørt af ham. Nu er han møllersvend i *Fuldbro mølle* og var det også, da jeg første gang opsøgte ham, og han kom til at fortælle for mig. Men i mellemtiden har han været borte derfra en tid. I alt har han været der i en 6 år. En del af hans historier har jeg skrevet op i møllestuen, hvor møllegjæsterne opvartes med en dram og en drik øl. Han er også spillemand, og en gang han skulde spille til en fastelavnslegestue, fik jeg fat i ham et par timers tid, før han begyndte (JAT vol. 6, 310).

[Peder Johansen was born April fifteenth, 1855 in Svejstrup. His father was the miller at Svejstrup Mill, and that's why he became a journeyman miller himself. His father's foster father was a very well known folk healer who died at the age of eighty, when Peder was confirmed; he was already quite weak by then. That same folk healer was a very good storyteller and it is downright impossible for Peder to remember everything he heard from him. Now [Peder] is the journeyman miller at Fuldbro Mill, just as he was the first time I sought him out and he wound up telling stories to me. He has been there for six years in all. I recorded a number of his stories in the mill room, where the mill guests were served a dram

> and a beer. He is also a local musician, and once when he was supposed to play for a *fastelavn* party, I got a hold of him for a few hours before he started.]

Although Peder lived a seemingly simple life as a bachelor, eventually sharing a house with his unwed sister, his back-story is far more complicated. Furthermore, his role in the mill was not simply that of a hired hand. He was an important figure in the economic and social life of the mill, interacting with mill guests, caring for the mill's fishery, and keenly aware of which farms were doing well and which were not. Because he was a musician, he was a well-known figure in the local community and, along with his boss the miller, imparted a certain personality to the mill. Like Kirsten Marie Pedersdatter, he hardly fit the image of rural poverty that was implicit in much of Tang Kristensen's descriptions of his informants. When he died in 1928, he left ten thousand crowns to Skanderup church, more than enough to buy the church a new bell. Just as telling stories to Tang Kristensen guaranteed that his voice would live on in the archive, the money he gave to the church guaranteed that his memory—or at least his headstone—would live on in the local environment.[2]

Family history

Understanding how Peder wound up where he did requires one to go back several generations in his intriguing, if somewhat convoluted, family history. This history explains in part Peder's profession as a journeyman miller, his fascination with books and, importantly, his role as a local musician (*spillemand*). Peder did not grow up in a poor household, and

it would be inaccurate to describe him as a member solely of the day laborer or cotter (*husmand*) class. As the son of a miller, he grew up in a fairly well to do family. In most communities, the social standing of the miller was one that hovered between the farm owners and the local market town merchants. Although Peder's father's mill was modest compared to the much more elaborate and wealthy Fuldbro Mill where Peder spent much of his adult life as journeyman, it was still a mill, and the miller's family was still accorded the social status of other millers. As happened with many young men and women born into the newly emerging rural middle class (farm owners, millers and master craftsmen), their adulthood included an incremental step down into the upper reaches of the cotter class. While they may have lost some economic footing, they carried their social background with them.

Peder's development as a storyteller and fiddler is best traced back to his foster grandfather and namesake, Peder Johansen. The elder Peder was born in June 1788, in Dover parish, the son of a smallholder, Johan Jensen, who originally had a copyhold on a local farm. His mother was Johan's second wife, Maren Sørensdatter. Altogether, the elder Peder had nine brothers, sisters, half brothers and half sisters. Despite the drain that such a large family could place on a household's economy, the farm was profitable enough to support the entire family.

The elder Peder learned to read at a young age, a rare skill at the time since universal schooling had yet to be established. In the first decades of the nineteenth century he became well known in the area around Dover as a folk healer, a career that could be lucrative (Lægdsmand 1954, 130; Rørbye 1976b; Hansen 1960). He owned several important books for folk healers, including Simon Paulli's *Flora Danica* (1648), a seventeenth century precursor to the much larger project of a

similar name that was produced from the mid eighteenth century up through the nineteenth century, and *Henrik Smids Lægebog* (Henrik Smids Doctoring Book), a book from 1577 that was among the most common books in the libraries of Danish folk healers. The elder Peder was relatively well off, perhaps because of his father's status as a farm owner. His early education certainly suggests a degree of economic stability, at least in his youth, and he did quite well with his later endeavors as well. Because of his background and his success, he amassed enough capital to purchase a mill, *Møllergården*, in Svejstrup, just south of Dover. The mill was a water-driven mill, the most common type of mill in Denmark at the time. Along with his work as a folk healer, the mill guaranteed him a steady income, both from milling and the associated fishing rights.

The elder Peder was also well known in the area as a raconteur of fairy tales. But he was even better known as a musician, a *spillemand* (pl. *spillemænd*). *Spillemænd* played at parties, celebrations, events and other gatherings, and they also took on aspiring students. While many *spillemænd* were able to make a comfortable living, being a *spillemand* was but one of the many irons in the fire for the elder Peder. He was no ordinary *spillemand* either. While it was unusual for *spillemænd* to learn music any way other than by ear, Peder became adept not only at reading music but also at formal composition and notation (Lægsmand 1954, 130). Both of these skills allowed him to expand his repertoire (without having to be present when the piece was played), and to circulate his own compositions to a much wider audience (and thus expand considerably his audience and reputation).

In 1828, the elder Peder acted as the godparent for the birth of his niece Mariane Sørensdatter.[3] Peder's own marriage to Anne Sørensdatter did not produce any children. Anne must have died some time between 1845 and 1850,

since the elder Peder appears in the 1850 census as a widower.[4] Although Peder and Anne Sørensdatter did not have any children, sometime between 1834 and 1840 they took a young man by the name of Søren Andersen into their house.

Søren was born on August 24, 1819, the son of Anders Rasmussen and Johanne Catrine Sørensdatter from the neighboring town of Brokbjerg in Østbirk parish. It is unclear how Søren had come into contact with the elder Peder, although Lægdsmand proposes that Søren was related to Peder's family (Lægdsmand 1954, 131). Søren became apprenticed to Peder as a musician, most likely after he had been confirmed at the age of fifteen. Søren and Peder soon become a musical pair, with Søren playing second fiddle (literally) to the more accomplished Peder at local parties and gatherings. Søren continued to live with Peder even after Peder's wife's death. In 1854, he married Peder's godchild and niece, Marianne Sørensdatter (Sørensen), and thus solidified the relationship that had already been established between the two (Søren became Peder's nephew-in-law). The arrangement also gave Peder the chance to secure his dotage and his legacy by entering into a secure *aftægt* agreement. Søren took over the mill and, at the same time, guaranteed the elder Peder a roof over his head and food in his belly until his death.

Søren soon became a more accomplished fiddler than his mentor. Just as with the elder Peder, there are numerous stories about Søren's prowess. Among the best known of these tells of a visit he made to Århus. He was watching an orchestra audition at the harbor, when he remarked loudly that the cellist's instrument was out of tune. The director told him to come up and do better if he could and, of course, he did and he could (Lægdsmand 1954, 131). The story is likely apocryphal, as there are no other records attesting to Søren's

ability to play the cello, a skill that was unlikely given the rarity of cellos in rural Jutland. Stories of this nature are widely attested, where the role of unlikely hero is attributed to local musicians. Accordingly, these stories should be viewed as legends that could be deployed rhetorically, at once confirming the abilities of the local musician and critiquing the snobbery of the urban musical elite (Lægdsmand 1954, 131).

To add to his mystique, Søren acquired the nickname "Kat," although not deliberately. Nicknames were common since many people at the time had similar names. Local figures of some import would almost always have a nickname, and studies of *spillemænd* attest to this practice (Lægmand 1954; Berntsen 1921). The nickname was related to Søren's alleged propensity for poaching: he was known to go hunting at the drop of a hat, and to skin the animals himself, a task that was usually left for the socially untouchable nightmen (*natmandsfolk*) and hobos (*rakkere*) (Lægdsmand 1954, 131-2; Gaardboe 1968; Hansen 1952). Among the animals he would kill and skin were cats, hence the nickname. Søren did not like his nickname, nor did his son Peder Johansen, who inherited it from his father.

Søren and Mariane had five children: Kresten, who became a carpenter and moved to America, where he later died; Johanne, who moved to Copenhagen as a young woman, and married a man who later became an assistant director of the police; Kirsten who married a local man; Sørine, who worked as a hired girl in Copenhagen for many years, before returning to live with her younger brother Peder; and Peder, who became a journeyman miller, a musician and a storyteller.

Although Peder (the younger) spent most of his adult life living alone, there is little to suggest that he was particularly lonely. Instead, he was at the center of life at the mill both during the business day, when he took care of the milling, the

mill guests and the eel traps that the miller had placed in the mill sluice, and in the evening, when there were parties and get-togethers at which he would play music and tell stories. Photographs of Peder show a short man with long sideburns, always wearing a storm hat. He enjoyed smoking and Olsen's photograph shows him with a traditional long pipe, his hands resting on his thighs. What the photographs do not show is that Peder was a slob, renowned for paying little attention to his clothes or appearance.

One of the most detailed descriptions of Peder is found in an article written by Karen Plovgaard, a daughter of one of Peder's acquaintances and neighbors, for the periodical *Østjysk Hjemstavn* (The Eastern Jutland Region) (Plovgaard 1956). In her portrait of Peder, she emphasized not only his ability to play the violin, which he called his "Fiol," but also aspects of his personality. According to her, he always wore homespun, high boots and a blue storm hat. He had a booming bass voice, and was articulate yet in a fairly rough way. According to Plovgaard, "Pers tale var drøj og djærv, et Oratorium af stærke Udtryk og slaaende Sætninger, som virkede fængslende" [Per's speech was coarse and frank, an oratory of strong expressions and remarkable sentences that were captivating] (Plovgaard 1956, 109). His penmanship was beautiful and he was also apparently well read (Plovgaard 1956). In her portrait, Plovgaard relates an interaction between Peder and a local teacher that highlights both Peder's learning and his sharp tongue:

> En af Egnens Degne, som efter Tidens Skik selv drev sin Embedslod, og som iøvrigt var en lige saa dygtig Lærer som en habil Jorddyrker, kørte personlig sit Korn til Mølle. Han indlod sig gerne i Passiar med Per. En Dag drøftede de et Spørgsmaal, som laa

> noget over Dagen og Vejen, og Læreren, der imponeredes af Møllersvendens Belæsthed, følte sig foranlediget til at sige: "Naar man skal se sig til, saa sidder De inde med ikke saa lidt Viden." "Naa ja," svarede Per roligt, " "lidt har man vel samlet sig efterhaanden, men min Lærdom takker A nu hverken Præst eller Degn for (Plovgaard 1956, 110).
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> [One of the area's parish clerks who, following the customs of the time, farmed his own plot and who was, it should be mentioned, just as good a teacher as he was a farmer, drove his grain to the mill himself. He enjoyed discussions with Per. One day, they were discussing a somewhat obscure question, and the teacher, who was impressed by how well read the journeyman miller was, felt prompted to say, "When you take a second look, you're quite learned." "Oh," Per answered calmly, "one learns a bit after a while, but I thank neither minister nor parish clerk [teacher] for my learning."]

This anecdote reveals the role of the mill as a meeting place where people discussed issues of the day, Peder's engagement in those discussions, and his frequent needling of those in positions of authority. Peder was not unwilling to spend money on books, even though he was unwilling to spend money on new clothes, or even to have a tailor sew the homespun that he kept in his chest. Among his prized possessions was *Salmonsens Leksikon*, a well-known, encyclopedic work, which he felt was a better resource than the more narrowly focused *Traps Danmark*: "Trap kan være

god nok; men Salmonsens Leksikon er nu alligevel bedre. Det samme siger Sørine (hans Søster). Der er ikke den Ting, man ikke kan faa Besked om hos Salmonsen" [Trap is fine, but Salmonsen's Encyclopedia is better. Sørine (his siter) says the same. There's nothing you can't learn something about in Salmonsen] (Plovgaard 1956, 110-1).

Although in his stories and in various anecdotes Peder critiques officers of the local parish including the minister, he was nevertheless quite religious. He went to church frequently and, as noted, bequeathed a large sum of money to Skanderup church later in life. He said that the motivation for this bequest was to replace the old church bell, which he said rang false. Given his musical background, he could not stand listening to it. The new bell was to be inscribed "Gud tilhører Magten og Æren i Evighedernes Evighed" [To Him be the power and the glory forever and ever] (Peter 5:11), a sentiment that recognizes the power of God, yet at the same time suggests that worldly power, embodied in ecclesiastic institutions, is of little spiritual importance.

Plovgaard relates another anecdote of the lengths to which Peder would go to attend church, even in bad weather, recounting the events of a particular Christmas evening:

> Han havde besluttet at gaa i Kirke. Efter Fyraften begav han sig henved en Mil lange Vej fra Fuldbro Mølle over Bakkerne og gennem Dyrehaven til Skanderborg Slotskirke. Det sneede og var koldt. Han havde en god Dags Arbejde bag sig, men det regnede han ikke. Imidlertid: Gudstjenesten, som havde frydet ham saare, trak ud, Hjemturen tog sin Tid, og det blev langt ud paa Aftenen, før han, tilsneet og træt, naaet hjem til Møllen. Det var saa sent, at han

fandt Huset lukket og slukket. Pigerne, som vel troede at Per havde truffet Kendinge, som havde indbudt ham til Julenadver, var gaaet i Seng. For en Sikkerheds Skyld havde de dog sat en Kovs med Suppe og Kød paa Komfuret til ham. "Det hele var mænget sammen," fortalte han, "men hvad gjorde det? A var jo godt sulten. Og bagefter havde A "Juleroser".[5] Han sad i vor Stue og berettede om sit Julefærd. Nu halede han Heftet frem og bredte det ud paa Bordet til Beskuelse. Det var et skønt Hefte med dejlige Billeder. Vi var alle interesserede i det. Men i mit Hjerte havde jeg ondt af Per, at han havde maattet traske ude i Stormen og Sneen, medens vi andre havde hafte Juletræ. Nu forstaar jeg, at han slet ikke var at ynke. Hans Helligaften havde været god nok—bedre, end de fleste nu om Stunder oplever den (Plovgaard 1956, 110).

[He had decided to go to church. After payday, he walked along the six-mile long road from Fuldbro Mill over the hills and through the forest to Skanderborg castle church. It was cold and snowing. He had a good long hard day of work behind him, but he didn't think about that. In the meantime, the sermon, that had given him great succor, kept going, the trip home took a while, and it was late at night before he got home to Fuldbro Mill, tired and covered with snow. It was so late that he found the house dark and locked tight. The girls, who assumed

> that Per had met some friends who had then invited him to a Christmas meal, had gone to bed. To be on the safe side, they had put a pot with soup and meat on the stove for him. "It was all clumped together," he said, "but what difference did that make? I was quite hungry. And afterwards I had 'Julerosen.'" He sat in our living room and told us about his Christmas journey. Then he pulled out the magazine and spread it out on our table for us to see. It was a pretty magazine with wonderful pictures. We were all interested in it. But in my heart I felt bad for Per, that he'd had to tramp out in the snowstorm while the rest of us had had a Christmas tree. But now I realized that I shouldn't feel bad for him. His Christmas Eve had been good enough—better than most people these days experience.]

Despite the overtly Romantic tone in Plovgaard's description of Peder's Christmas Eve, it does reveal several things about Peder's personality, in particular his stubbornness, his self-reliance, and his abiding interest in reading. Peder's reading undoubtedly informed his storytelling, although not as much as the stories that he had heard as a child from his father and from his namesake, the elder Peder Johansen. Even though Tang Kristensen was most impressed by Peder's storytelling, he was actually better known in the local area for his music just as was the case with his father and his foster-grandfather. According to Plovgaard, Peder's violin playing was energetic and beautiful, despite that while he played he often sat stone-faced, "urørlig som en Buddha" [motionless like a Buddha] (Plovgaard 1956, 109).

Peder spent his entire life as a bachelor and there is no indication that he ever had anything that approached a long-term relationship with a woman. Later in life, after he had lost his job at Fuldbro Mill, his older sister Sørine moved in with him in a small house in Vrold. Plovgaard recounts one incident that reveals a more sensitive side to Peder, particularly in regards women, than might otherwise be expected from a seemingly otherwise sloppy, macho journeyman miller:

> Vi havde hjemme en ualmindelig sød og køn ung Pige. Hun var tillige god af Sind. Engang havde hun faaet en ny Kjole og kom ind i Stuen for at præsentere sig i sin Pragt. Per var tilfældigt paa Besøg og syntes vel, at ogsaa han skulde deltage i den almindelige Beundring. Saa lød hans Bas: "Naa, hvor mange Hjerter skal du saa have knust ved Hjælp af den Kjole?" – Pigen lo glad til ham: "Slet ingen!" – "Saa er du billig, min Pige. Bliv ved med det!" Det var noget uhaandgribeligt smukt ved Situationen. Per, der, saa vidt vides, ikke interesserede sig for kvindelig Skønhed, havde sagt akkurat det rigtige til den unge Pige, der i sit Hjertes Uskyldighed blev lykkelig over den i hendes Øjne alderstegne Mands Kompliment (Plovgaard 1956, 111).
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> [At our house we had an unusually sweet and pretty hired girl. She also was a good person. One time she had gotten a new dress and she'd come into the living room to model it. Coincidentally Per was visiting and

> thought that he should participate in the usual admiring. Then his bass voice said, "Well, how many hearts are you going to break with the help of that dress?" – The girl laughed happily to him, "None."—"Well, then you are too cheap, my girl. Keep it up!" [6] There was something inexplicably beautiful with the scene. Per, who as far as was known, was not interested in feminine beauty, had said exactly the right thing to the young girl who, in her heart's innocence, was thrilled by what in her eyes was the older man's compliment.]

Again, Plovgaard's comments are hardly the most trustworthy, yet they reveal both Peter's seeming disinterest in women and, at the same time, his kindness, revealed through his ability to turn a phrase and make someone else feel good.

Despite his (hidden) kindness, Peder did not suffer fools gladly. He was brusque with the local children when he worked, and he often let fall criticisms of the customers. Plovgaard describes one such encounter:

> Han kunde sommetider være skarp i Biddet. Det var han f.Eks. imod en Møllegæst, der klagede over de daarlige Tider og paastod, at det var ham umuligt at svare enhver sit. "Naar det er Tilfældet," docerede Per, "maa du vel enten være doven eller fattig." "Jeg er det sidste," indrømmede Manden. Per, der just var ved at tage en mod Vognfadingen rejst Sæk paa Nakken, drejede Hovedet og kiggede op: "Men er du sikker paa, at det

> sidste ikke er en Følge af det første?" (Plovgaard 1956, 111)
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> [He could sometimes have a sharp bite. For example, he was once like that with a mill guest who stood complaining about the hard times and claimed it was impossible for him to pay all his creditors. "If that's the case," lectured Per, "you must either be lazy or poor." "Well, I'm the latter," admitted the man. Per, who was just about to take a sack out of the wagon and put it on his shoulder, turned his head, looked up and said, "But are you sure the last isn't a result of the first?"]

The quick thinking hired hand with a sharp tongue is a common character in Peder's stories.

Peder was well known as being less than clean and, at times, downright slovenly. One account suggests that he had a problem with beard lice (Strange Nielsen 1964, 118). He apparently often showed up at peoples' houses unshaven and with flour in his hair. Plovgaard relates one story that highlights this apparent lack of hygiene:

> Een Gang gik hans Malproperhed dog for vidt—syntes min Mor. Det var, da hun og hendes Piger fandt en tygget Skraa i Melet til den store Rugbrødsbagning. Hun paatalte det saaledes: Vi havde bagt Franskbrød af amerikansk Flormel, og da Per kom paa sin sædvanlige Kaffevisit, blev Snitter af det ny Brød budt om. "Sig mig nu, hvad du synes om det!" sagde Mor blidt. "Ja, det var da",

> som Per kunde bande, "noget dejligt Brød." "I det Mel finder man heller ingen Skraa; det sker sommetider med Melet fra Fuldbro Mølle." "Det var [Satans]." Men dengang følte Per sig alligevel truffet og blev rød i sit ubarberede Ansigt (Plovgaard 1956, 112).
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> [One time my mother thought that his slovenliness went too far. It happened when she and her hired girls found a plug of chewed tobacco in the flour for the big rye bread baking. She described it as follows: We had baked french bread from American flour, and when Per came for his normal coffee visit, slices of the new bread were served. "Tell me what you think of it!" said my mother sweetly. "Well that was some," boy how Per could swear, "wonderful bread." "One doesn't find plugs of tobacco in that flour either; sometimes that happens with flour from Fuldbro Mill." "Well I'll be damned." But Per felt he'd been caught that time, and his unshaven face blushed.]

Peder's slovenliness was too much for the new miller, Søren Jørgensen, who took over Fuldbro mill in 1898 from Jørgen Sejersen for whom Peder had worked. Peder was bitter at being let go, and protested that he had done a good job keeping things clean and in order at the mill. When he left, he said: "Men A siger nu, at A nok har kunnet være mit Mølleri bekendt. I Dag har de gjort rent efter mig. Men efter at have skrabet og skuret i alle Kroge, saa fik de alligevel kun tre Baljer Skidt. Det kalder A it møj, naar det drejer sig om tre Lofter" [But I tell you, I could be proud of my mill. They

cleaned up after me today. But I'd scraped and scoured all the nooks and crannies and so they only got three buckets of dirt. I don't call that a mess when we're talking about three mill lofts] (Plovgaard 1956, 112). Losing his work at the mill marked the end of a period of independence in Peder's life, but it was something that would have had to happen sooner or later. In the 1890s, smaller motorized mills were quickly replacing the old water-driven mills. By the start of the twentieth century, most farms had their own electric powered mills, and the days of the water mills as meeting places drew quickly to a close.

The Local Environment

Fuldbro Mølle (Fuldbro Mill) lies approximately one and a half kilometers north of Tåning and six kilometers west of Skanderborg, on the southern edge of Mos Sø (Mos Lake). The mill was situated at the extreme eastern edge of Skanderborg parish, a parish that was dominated by the large market town of Skanderborg. The mill had a past of its own that stretched far back in Danish history. The earliest records relate that it became a possession of the Crown some time after 1231. Along with the mill were fishing rights at the mouth of Tåning river in Mos Lake. The young King Valdemar Atterdag (ruled 1340-1375) sold the mill to the Cistercian Øm monastery in a property exchange that was sanctioned by King Erik of Pomerania.[7] After the Reformation, the mill once again became a possession of the Crown, and by 1587, the mill was in service to the Crown at Skanderborg castle. The mill fell into disrepair in the early seventeenth century, and was plundered by the Swedes in 1644. It remained in a decrepit state for much of the late seventeenth century, but was clearly running again by 1699,

since the miller was indicted that year on charges of milling for residents of Dover parish, who were otherwise supposed to use Ry mill.

The mill became part of the Skanderborg cavalry district (*rytterdistrikt*) in 1718. Various leaseholders ran the mill through the early eighteenth century. Interestingly, taxation records suggest that the fishing rights were more valuable than the actual milling. In 1767, the copyholder on the mill, Peder Jørgensen, bought the mill for 3,614 rixdollars at an auction held for the Skanderborg Ryttergods estate after its dissolution. Kaspar Vilh. Munthe af Morgenstierne acquired the mill in 1800, but shortly thereafter, in 1802, he deeded the mill to Adam Fausing. After Fausing died, his widow, Abigael Siøgaard, continued running the mill and, after her death in 1840, the mill was taken over by their son, Jacob Adam Fausing. He ran the mill until his death in 1874, at which point his widow, Valborg Fausing, took over running the mill. Their daughter, Adamine Marie Kirstine Fausing, married their neighbor, Jørgen Sejersen, who then took over running the mill in 1881. It was during Sejersen's stint as owner that Peder worked as journeyman miller.

Sejersen was deeply involved in local politics and was a member of both the parish and county councils. He was a Freemason and a member of the Skt. Clemens lodge in Århus. He always invited his lodge brothers to a large Christmas celebration at the mill (Strange Nielsen 1964, 120). Given Sejersen's role in the community, and Peder's well-read and outspoken character, it is inconceivable that he and Peder did not discuss local and national politics in their many daily interactions. In 1898, after a failed attempt to start a bakery at the mill in 1896, Sejersen was forced to sell the mill, and it was purchased by Søren Jørgensen. Jørgensen both modernized and expanded the mill, focusing more effort on

the fishing rights and the smokehouse, which were both part of the larger mill complex. He also fired Peder.

The mill was not free from controversy in the surrounding communities, and the mill owner was frequently embroiled in disputes and disagreements with his neighbors. Perhaps the most lasting and important of these disputes was one that went on for close to sixty years and was based on a disagreement over the flood level that the mill was allowed to keep. In 1792, the local farmers filed their first claim against the mill. They were upset that a newly installed flood board, used to control the level of the water in the sluice, was causing local streams to back up and the overall water level of the lake to rise. Consequently, their fields were being flooded, resulting in a loss of use for grazing and, just as importantly, damaging the hay that was grown on the low lying fields. This excessive damming was in direct violation of the Danish Law of 1683, that stated in part: "Mand maa ej giøre Mølle af ny, uden mand haver Dam og Damstæd, og saa at Vandet flyder ej paa anden Mands Eng, eller Ager" [One may not build new mills unless one has both a pond and a pond house and that the water does not flood others' meadows and fields] (Bk 5, Ch 11, Par 1). Fausing, who was miller at the time, had inherited the problem from the previous owner. Peder Jørgensen, who had bought the mill in 1768, had improved the mill's waterways, but in so doing had changed the otherwise standard flood levels of the streams and lakes. One of the main reasons Jørgensen wanted a greater water depth in his sluices was so that he could sink eel traps: the eel catch was, as noted, a lucrative side income for the mill.[8] Jørgensen did not install this deeper flood board only for the fishery. It provided more power to the mill, and this resulted in a finer and faster milling of the grains. The dispute between miller and local farmers continued for many years, and was finally decided in favor of the miller in 1855, with only a few

concessions made to the rightfully angry farmers (Bundgaard Lassen 1933).

Fuldbro Mill was also the site of a small skirmish during the war of 1849 and, because of this, the area became closely linked in the local political imaginary to aspects of a nascent Danish nationalism. The skirmish resulted in the death of a single Danish soldier, Private Jens Simonsen of the 3rd Dragoon regiment.[9] While tragic for his family—and in particular for his beloved who placed a memorial on his grave inscribed in part "Du for ret og ære stred / og for Danmark sank du ned" [You who fought for law and honor / and for Denmark's sake sank down]—the skirmish had little import in the overall outcome of the war. It was precipitated by Danish scouting expeditions that were trying to find weak spots in the Prussian defenses, and to ascertain whether attacks along the enemy's flanks could be successful. The ultimate goal of the Danish military planners was to cut forward enemy troops off from their supply routes to the south. The scouting expedition was successful in one sense, since the Danes soon discovered that the Prussian troops were stretched thin. More importantly for the sake of local history—and the connection of the local area to events of a national character—was the aftermath of this minor engagement, particularly in the rhetorical deployment of the event in the service of a particular national liberal ideology and later in the service of a conservative Danish nationalism in the mid twentieth century. In the late nineteenth century, however, it seems that the skirmish at Fuldbro Mill was more of a local curiosity than any type of touchstone in local political life.

Fuldbro Mølle and miller Fausing were also at the center of a debate over a bridge toll that the miller had originally been allowed to collect from people traveling along the Skanderborg road. In return for the toll, the miller was

expected to keep the bridges in good condition. The miller argued that a new road over Nybro near Skanderborg as part of the Skanderborg–Horsens main road project of 1831 would result in significantly decreased traffic, and that he would then lose money. His complaint—and his request to retain his right to the Fuldbro Mill road toll—was affirmed in 1843. Later, in 1861, a commission from the county rescinded the right to the toll, and paid a small compensatory sum of approximately one hundred ninety rixdollars. In 1880, construction started on a new road from Skanderborg to the mill, passing through Vrold. The construction went slowly, and in 1882 and 1885, numerous complaints were lodged over the near impassibility of the road at the mill, which was still the responsibility of the miller, without any clear resolution of the problem. The mill relied on the transportation infrastructure, yet at the same time the miller was aware of the reliance of the local farmers on the mill. Accordingly, the repeated disputes between miller, farmers and local authorities bring into stark relief the interdependent yet often-conflicting interests of these groups. While the mill may have been a great place to meet and talk, it was also a location fraught with economic and political tension. This tension reflected the deep changes being wrought in social organization by the rapid move toward capitalist modes of production and democratic modes of governance.

Local political life was greatly influenced by the large market town of Skanderborg, with Horsens to the south, Silkeborg in the west and Århus further to the east. The politics of the area was deeply divided between the conservatives of the *Højre* party and the farm owners' *Venstre* party. In the Skanderborg electoral district, the *Venstre* party held sway, with occasional *Radikale Venstre* (Radical Left) and *Socialdemokrat* (Social Democrat) candidates making it into parliament from the area. *Socialdemokratiet* won a greater and

greater following in the southern part of the county, particularly in Horsens, where the local newspaper *Horsens Folkeblad* (Horsens Folk Paper, est. 1866) was the main outlet for the increasingly liberal politics of the area. *Skanderborg Amts Avis* (Skanderborg County Newspaper) was mainly a newspaper of the *Venstre*. Because of this, *Radikale Venstre* established *Skanderborg Amtstidende* (Skanderborg County Times) in 1893.

In 1839, Steen Steensen Blicher began holding popular meetings (*folkemøder*) at the highest point in Denmark, *Himmelbjerget*, in the center of the county, and just north of Dover parish. The meetings, although political in tone, were not directed against the government. Instead, they supported a pan-Scandinavianism that had begun to attract followers. The meetings, however, petered out by 1845. Later political life became focused not only on questions of a national—or even pan-Scandinavian—nature, but also of a decidedly local and regional nature. This shift in focus was particularly true in the wake of the military defeat of 1864 and the district (*kommunale*) reform of 1867. Unlike Vendsyssel, the two main spiritual and religious movements in the area were the indigenous Grundtvigian movement and the Inner Mission. The Grundtvigians were particularly powerful in the area, and their folk high school (*folkehøjskole*) in Gjedved was a local bastion of Grundtvigianism.[10]

Peder spent most of his childhood in Dover parish in the Hjelmslev district of Skanderborg county. Dover was primarily a church site and not much of a town at all. Numerous other towns dotted the parish including Ry stationsby. Skanderborg lay on the main Århus-Fredericia rail line, which was opened in 1868, while Ry lay on the secondary Skanderborg-Silkeborg line, opened in 1871. Vrold was situated at the switch for the two lines and, in 1867, one

of the farms in the town was forced to sell close to three hundred thousand square feet of land to the railway.

Other towns in Dover included Alken (first mentioned as Alcken in 1490), Svejstrup (mentioned in 1267 as Sueghestorp, 1554 Sueystrup), Illerup (1317 Egeltorp, 1554 Jllerup), Siim (1338 Seen, 1575 Sim), Boes (1554 Buoes) and Firegårde. There were several noteworthy farms in the parish, including Dover farm (earlier Hvidsminde), with a *hartkorn* valuation of 11 barrels; Højlund (7.2 barrels); Hemstok Østergård (6.2 barrels); Hemstok Vestergård (6 barrels); and Elmely (4.2 barrels); and several smaller farms (Trap 1958, vol. 8.2, 537-9). There was also a large mill in Ry that got its power from Gudenå, Denmark's longest river. Although farmers were assigned a primary mill up through 1862, once milling was deregulated, a healthy competition between mills, and mills and farms, sprang up. Windmills, while convenient, could not provide the reliability or the quality of water mills such as those at Ry and Fuldbro.

When Peder moved to Fuldbro Mølle, he also moved to into the much larger Skanderborg parish, which was broken into three sections: Gram in the east, Vrold in the west, and Forlev in the north. Vrold was one of the oldest settlements in the area, and was first noted as Wraghældæ in 1231. The history of Vrold is closely linked to the land reforms of the late eighteenth century. An unpublished manuscript by Kaj Klostergård provides interesting detail of the history of the town, and also offers a fairly detailed view into the workings of a small village up through the nineteenth century (Klostergård, unpublished ms).

In the 1760s, the Crown decided to disestablish the various cavalry districts (*rytterdistrikter*) of which Skanderborg was one. Accordingly, all of the estate was sold at a large auction in April, 1767. The old castle in Skanderborg was sold to be razed, and the land valued at 6,000 barrels of *hartkorn*

was distributed across twelve main farms and dozens of smaller holdings. All the buildings were typical half-timbered thatched-roof buildings. The large number of landless houses in Vrold—a seeming anomaly—was related to the castle in Skanderborg: the workers at the castle had all lived in Vrold. The annex farm in Vrold along with Fuldbro Mill were sold separately, whereas most of the other farms were sold together, in the first instance to Privy Councilor (*gehejmråd*) Woyda from Skanderborg. Vrold itself was comprised of fifteen farms and thirty-four smallholdings; seven of the farms were so-called "whole farms" valued at 5-6-1-2, while the remainder were so-called "half farms" valued at 2-7-0-2½ (Klostergård, unpublished ms). Over the next several decades Woyda sold all the farms to the copyholders, as well as all the smallholdings and landless houses in the town itself. That meant that the houses in Vrold were still owned by the farmers, who could then lease them to tenants. In 1794, only five of the houses in Vrold were "self-owned."

The partitioning of Vrold's fields in 1789 did not follow the normal "star" pattern that was otherwise common in many parts of Jutland. Instead, because of the inconsistency of the quality of the land in the district, most farms were allotted various plots, spread helter-skelter about the area (exactly the type of problem that the reapportionment of lands was supposed to prevent). Not surprisingly, the original partitioning led to a fairly lively resale and trade of fields over the course of the next decade. By the late nineteenth century, the organization of the farms and their fields had long been rationalized. The population of Vrold proper in 1880 was five hundred three, while three hundred one people lived in farms and smallholdings on the surrounding fields. The town, because of its earlier close connection to the castle, had a large number of craftspeople living there—these were all craftsmen who were allowed to work outside of the market

towns.[11] In 1880, there were two clog makers, three tailors, nine weavers, a smith, a cooper, a wheel smith, a casket maker, two butchers, two masons and two carpenters. There were also nineteen day laborers, and three people who worked in the local roofing tile factory. There were nine people who received poverty assistance.

Fire was a constant threat for many of these tightly built villages. Consequently, over the course of the nineteenth century, many towns established their own fire departments. In the eighteenth century, increasing attention had been paid to fire prevention and fire fighting in the market towns and the city of Copenhagen. Insurance companies also came to play a significant role in requiring both comprehensive inventories of people's possessions, as well as means and infrastructure to combat fires that went beyond the simple law that everyone was required to help extinguish fires. The rural areas were finally included in the new fire insurance regime in the late eighteenth century, with the promulgation of "den almindelige brandforsikring for landbygninger" [the common fire insurance for rural buildings] in 1792. The parceling of fields and the subsequent removal of buildings out onto these fields had influenced the development of this comprehensive approach to rural fire insurance. With the county reform of 1867, the fire service became one of the responsibilities of the local parish board.

Although there had at one point been a church in Vrold, it was torn down shortly after the Reformation and the materials from that church were used to expand the church in Østbirk. By the time Peder lived in the area, the local church was Skanderup church, high on a hill on the outskirts of Skanderborg. The church at Skanderborg castle was at first to be used only when the king was in Skanderborg, although this cost-saving measure was soon abandoned because of its unpopularity. The castle church was opened once again to the

citizens of Skanderborg (although not Vrold) already in 1699—it is interesting to note that Peder sought out the castle church rather than Skanderup church (where he was eventually buried) on his Christmas Eve foray.

Schools in Vrold were closely linked to the Crown. The first school for the children of the town was one of the so-called cavalry schools (*rytterskoler*), established by Frederik IV; the school itself was not in Vrold, but rather in Skanderborg. The first school in Vrold proper was established in 1761, and was paid for by the dean in Skanderborg out of his own pocket. The school law of 1814 seems to have had little impact on the school in Vrold, as it had already been established. Interestingly, a local private school had also been established by the early nineteenth century in Vrold, and the two schools competed for students. By 1824, the private school had been disbanded, and the local public school was the only one in town. In 1860, the old school building was replaced with a new one; that same year, a private school for girls was also established. In the 1870s, the schoolteacher Ole Dixen began holding night courses for young men and women in the area who had already been confirmed. Similarly, in 1877, Laurs Laursen started a continuation school at his farm in Vrold, which he was able to keep open until 1888 when financial problems forced him to close its doors. This type of continuing educational activity and outreach, along with the folk high schools, resonates with Peder's own interest in reading. While he may not have attended any of these schools or classes, he certainly came into contact on a fairly frequent basis with young men and women who did. Nevertheless, he was a worker, and he made a point of noting that he was largely self-taught and that many of his lessons he had learned in the schoolhouse of life.

Millers

Mills were an important part of the rural economy, and acted as a crucial interface between the farmers and the markets: without the mills, the farmers' grains were essentially useless both for the farmers and for the growing populations in the market towns and cities. The mill also served as an important meeting place for the farmers in the surrounding area. When grain was brought to be milled, the farmer or his hired hand would retire to the mill room where he would have a drink, smoke a pipe, and perhaps have something to eat. Usually, several people would be waiting for their grain to be milled, and the mill room became a natural setting for people to tell stories, exchange information on local events, and debate larger political and economic questions. Tang Kristensen hints at as much in his own descriptions of collecting from Peder. One can surmise that this context was one of the primary contexts for Peder's storytelling.

The social and economic status of millers was high and, because of the nature of their work, millers straddled the divide between the farmers (farm owners and *husmænd*) and the town merchants (particularly grocers and bakers). Through the end of the nineteenth century, many mills opened their own bakeries as a way to take advantage of their easy access to flour and the constant demand for fresh bread: although most farms baked their own rye bread, finer breads such as french bread were mostly baked in bakeries. Fuldbro mill also tried such a venture, but with little luck, probably because of the intense competition from bakeries in nearby Skanderborg.

Millers took payment for their services both in kind and in cash. In 1698, commerce regulations were amended, and the somewhat vague discussions of weights and measures in the 1683 *Danske Lov* were clarified, particularly in regards the

toll vat (*toldkar*) that millers used to measure their share of the milled grain (Bk 5, Ch 11, Par 3). With the new law, the *toldkar* was fixed at one *potte* (0.97 liters). Generally, the charge for milling was one *potte* per measure (*skæppe*) (17.39 liters), or five and a half percent. Slightly different rates applied for the type of grain and the fineness of the milling. By the late nineteenth century, the miller's toll (*tolde*) was becoming less popular, and a standard monetary rate, usually one mark (33 øre) per barrel of milled grain, was instituted at many mills. With reforms in 1917 to the commerce law, the practice of using the *toldkar* was forbidden (Sørensen 1954, 8).[12] Instead, millers were required to accept only monetary payment for their services; by that time, mechanization had become commonplace on many farms, and most windmills and many water mills had lost their place of primary importance in the agricultural economy.

There were two main types of mills in Denmark up through the nineteenth century. The most picturesque, but also the most inefficient, were the large windmills, while the real workhorses of the milling profession were the water mills. Windmills (which have made a comeback in the Danish landscape in the form of high tech mills for generating electricity) only functioned when the weather cooperated. In low wind, they could not generate the power necessary to mill grain, and in high wind, there was danger of damage to the millworks. Furthermore, in rain or snow, the sails could easily be torn or destroyed. There were two main types of windmills, both of which used four mill arms that were set with canvas sails to harness the wind power. The largest of these could have a total span of forty-two *alen* (approx. 28.5 meters), although the most common size was thirty-two *alen* (approx. 22 meters). The most common windmills had a fixed base, and only the upper portion could be rotated to catch the wind.

The entire structure of the other type of mill, the post mill (*stubmølle*), in contrast, could be rotated.

Water mills were more efficient than windmills, and could run around the clock, year round. The speed of the mill—and by extension the precision of the milling—was easier to control in these mills. There were regulations that governed how much water the miller was allowed to hold back, given the impact that the holdback could have on water levels in the surrounding area, but even these laws were open to interpretation. The only thing other than drought that could stop a water mill was ice, but ice could be broken up, and the mill works defrosted with buckets of hot water. The sole advantage that windmills had over water mills was that they did not require access to water. When the windmills did not—or could not—turn, people were forced to make the longer journey to the nearest water mill. Of course, mills were not only used to mill grain: they also provided the power for saws at sawmills.

Peder was not a miller himself, even though his father had owned a mill. But having learned the tricks of the trade at his family mill, he was able to hire himself out as a journeyman. Unlike the miller whose status hovered at the upper end of the social and economic scale, Peder's status as a journeyman put him on economic par with many cotters and the more skilled group of journeyman craftsmen, such as smiths, carpenters and coopers. Socially, he inhabited an intriguing position, as he would routinely come into contact with people from all walks of life, from hired hands and day laborers on up through the social classes to the wealthiest farmers, the cohorts of the miller.

Work in the mill was physically demanding. Although the mills were in use year round, the work was at its height during the period from the end of the harvest through the beginning of the planting season. Most mills, including *Fuldbro*, had their

own landholdings, and the journeyman and apprentices would help planting and harvesting the mill's property. Since the mill was also in use during this period, the work simply diversified to include farming duties, and there was little let up in the pace or the quantity of work. Like many watermills, Fuldbro also had a fairly productive eel-trapping endeavor, and Peder was in charge of tending the traps.

The days at the mill were long and the work relentless. During the busiest part of the year, the mill would also run on Sundays. By the end of the century, threshing machines, particularly steam-powered threshers, were coming into greater use. This mechanization of farm work meant that the steady stream of grain to be milled throughout the winter months, with farmers generally driving to the mill every eight days or so, changed to a more front-loaded process. The frequent trips to the mill were an artifact of the slow and laborious process of hand threshing, and insured that the farmers were generally forced to sell their grain irrespective of market prices. Farmers also had to drive to the mill to mill their grain for the monthly baking—this milling would be coordinated with their other milling. With the advent of more efficient harvesting and threshing, the rhythms at the mill changed, and the months immediately after the harvest became the busiest months. Farmers could now coordinate their grain sales with changing market prices during the course of the winter months, and this market behavior influenced the farmers' decisions when to mill. Nevertheless, the relatively low speed at which grain was milled guaranteed that there would almost always be a backlog.

The workday started early, before the first "guests" (as mill customers were called) arrived. The millhouse floor would be swept, the sluice gates opened to start the mill wheels turning, and the mill yard readied for the arrival of the first wagons, sometimes as early as four a.m. Once the guests

began arriving, the journeyman would be responsible for keeping track of each guest's grain, making sure that they received the proper quantities of the proper grain sorts. There was a lot of opportunity for dishonesty, particularly at large, busy mills, and Peder alludes in his storytelling to the possible tricks one could play, either as a miller or as a guest, to get a little more than was rightfully one's own. Despite the numerous stories and sayings that referred to dishonest millers, such as " 'Kan I ikke lade den tolde, som tolde skal,' sagde mølleren da han toldede—Konen, svenden og drengen havde toldet forud" ["Can't you let the one toll who is supposed to toll," said the miller as he tolled—the wife, the journeyman and the apprentice had tolled before him"] (Sørensen 1954, 8), there was a strong corrective against such deceptive practices, namely the reliance of both the miller and the farmers on each other. Since the two parties had an ongoing relationship, there was little incentive to cheat (Tangherlini 1998b).

Viggo Sørensen describes the normal workday in the 1890s at Øresø watermill in western Sjælland, one of the five mills built by King Valdemar Atterdag (1320-1375):

> Om morgenen var det mit arbejde - navnlig fra høst til hen i foråret - at "pille" (skalle) to tønder byg. Den ene blev lavet til byggryn og den anden til bygmel, det skulle gøres hver dag, og jeg måtte ikke standse, før det var gjort. Møllersvenden, en ældre mand, som havde været der i mange år, passede grovmalingen i den anden ende af møllen, tog mod møllegæsterne og fik dem ind i møllestuen, hvor de fik øl og snaps og piben stoppet, medens deres korn blev malet. Undertiden, når der var nogen stykker

samlet ved det svære egetræsbord, blev der snapset godt. Når møllersvenden kunne se sit snit, løb han ind og så til dem, og så efter, at der var noget på flasken, tobak i tønden og øl i den store skurede egetræskovs. Men han havde jo ellers nok at gøre med at læsse af vognene, få det malet og læsset igen, lavet et praktisk sæde til møllegæsten på sækkene og sat pisken op, så det var så behageligt som muligt at gå til, når engang de blev færdige med at snapse. Hestene blev jo sat i møllestalden, medens kornet blev malet og kunden beværtet... Der blev intet vejet, men vi skilte ad saa godt som muligt, når vi hældte anden mands korn på kværnen. Alle sække måtte bæres ud og ind i møllen, men der var dog lidt hejseværk, så sækkene kunne hejses op på kværnloftet. Der var en gammel møllersvend, som hjalp os at bilde kværne. Han havde i sin tid været svend på møllen, og han fortalte, at de forhen måtte bære sækkene op på kværnloftet. I hans tid havde folk også en pige med til mølle, når de skulle have sigtet; det foregik ved håndkraft, og det måtte pigen hjælpe til med. Der var meget at gøre i Øresø mølle dengang. Men værst var det i vindstille, da vindmøllerne ikke dengang havde hjælpekraft. Så kom de kørende langvejs fra med store læs, ja, det skete, at de kom kl. 4 om morgenen for at være først. Der kom også møllegæster langt ud på aftenen og hele søndagen (Sørensen 1954, 4).

[In the morning it was my job—that is to say from harvest on into the spring—to shuck two barrels of barley. One was turned into barley meal and the other barley flour, it had to be done every day, and I wasn't allowed to stop until it was done. The journeyman miller, an older man who'd been there for many years, took care of the coarse grinding in the other end of the mill, greeted the mill guests and brought them into the mill room where they got beer and *snaps* and their pipe filled while their grain was milled. Sometimes, when several had gathered by the heavy oak table, they drank quite a bit of *snaps*. When the journeyman miller saw his chance, he would run in to them and make sure there was something in the bottle, tobacco in the barrel, and beer in the large oak pot. But he had enough to take care of already what with unloading the wagons, milling it, and loading it up again, making a nice seat for the mill guests on the sacks, and putting the whip up there, so it was as comfortable as could be when they were done drinking their *snaps*. The horses were put in the mill stall while the grain was milled and the guests served… Nothing was weighed, but we separated things as best we could when we poured someone's grain into the mill chute. All of the sacks had to be carried in and out of the mill, but there were some pulleys so that the sacks could be hauled up to the grain lofts. There was an old journeyman miller who helped us

> sharpen the millstones. He'd been the journeyman at the mill in his time and told us they used to have to carry the sacks up to the grain loft. In his day, people would also bring a hired girl along with them to the mill when they had to have things sifted; that was done by hand, and the girl had to help with that. There was a lot to do at Øresø mill back then. But the worst was when there was no wind, since windmills at the time didn't have any backup power. Then they'd come driving from a long way off with big loads, yes it would happen that they'd come at four in the morning to get there first. Mill guests would come until late out in the evening and all day Sunday.]

Although there would have been small regional differences between the work at Øresø and Fuldbro, the mills were approximately the same size, and the rhythm of the workday was probably similar.

The journeyman was also responsible for keeping the millstones in good condition. In most water mills, the lower millstone was fixed, while the upper grinding stone was turned by a series of gears coupled to an axle that was in turn driven by a gear works turned by the water rushing through the sluiceway. The millstones were made of different materials, although the best stones were the Rheinish stones, since they were porous and soft, and easy to recut, insuring that the grinding surface had a regular shape. Millstones from Skåne tended to be hard and quickly became smooth, making them all but useless for grinding. By the 1880s, artificial millstones were starting to appear. These composite millstones used flint, and stayed sharper much longer. Not

surprisingly, up through the early twentieth century, most mills and home mills had switched to the use of these new millstones. Apart from grinding stones, most mills also had husking stones, used to husk grain such as barley. In Sørensen's description above, the apprentice is charged with the husking, while the journeyman is in charge of the actual milling.

Milling required significantly more skill than simply tossing a bag of grain into the mill opening and waiting for it to come out the other end. The speed of the mill and the condition of the grain all were factors in the quality of the end product. A journeyman would have had to know how to mill to different grades of fineness for all the different grains at different degrees of dryness. He would have had to know how to repair the millstones, keep the sluices in working order, and repair the machinery, including the mill gears and millstone supports. Balancing the millstones so that they turned freely without wobble was an important task, as an out of balance millstone would not only grind poorly, but could also cause serious damage to the millworks. The journeyman would also have had to know how to keep track of the constant parade of customers with varying amounts and varying types of grain to be milled. Finally, the journeyman would have had to make sure that the customers were cared for in the mill room, and that their horses were cared for in the stalls. Add to that the ancillary functions of keeping track of the eel fishery, and it seems amazing that Peder had time to play music, read books, and tell stories.

Spillemænd (Local Musicians)

Although a miller by profession, one of Peder's passions was playing music. Local musicians were in considerable

demand throughout rural Denmark, being called on to play at family and community celebrations and the ubiquitous *legestue*—parties that were arranged by young men and women to celebrate seasonal festivals such as Christmas or Carnival (*Fastelavn*). By World War I, different musical rhythms and different styles of dance had begun to win over even rural youth. Consequently, the *spillemænd*, particularly those who were not interested in learning new rhythms or new instruments—the piano and drum were moving into places of prominence once held by the fiddle and the accordion—were unable to continue the profession. As the musical landscape changed, the *spillemænd* were replaced by traveling orchestras, gramophones and radio.

Few details are known about Peder's experiences as a local musician, apart from the brief descriptions provided by Plovgaard and the passing mention by Tang Kristensen. But details of the life of another *spillemand*, Peder Pedersen (1856-1937), known as "Jyde Peter," provide insight into the *spillemand* tradition of one of Peder's contemporaries. It is very likely that "Bitte Jens" Christensen knew "Jyde Peter," since both of them lived in the tiny village of Ersted, and "Jyde Peder" was roughly the same age as Bitte Jens's children. Similarly, Jyde Peder was only a few degrees of separation away from Peder Johansen himself. Jyde Peter's career as a musician started at a very early age when his parents discovered that the three-year-old Peter could sing along to a melody played on a violin by the local tailor (Nordjysk folkekultur nodehefte 1995, 3). His parents bought him a small concertina, and later, as his musical talents became more developed, a violin.

Jyde Peder came from a modest background. His father was a clog maker and a farmer as were most of the cotters who lived in close proximity to the forest. When Jyde Peter was four years old, his family moved from his mother's foster

father's small house to a house of their own. They had been given a small plot of land by Jyde Peder's paternal grandfather, the smith in Årestrup, on which to build. One day, his maternal grandfather found himself in need of a second fiddle for a large party he was planning and, when he was unable to find someone experienced, he turned to Jyde Peder's parents. Jyde Peder, who was only nine years old at the time, jumped at the chance. According to his memoirs, he performed competently and energetically at the party that lasted through the night, finally breaking up at six in the morning. Parties that lasted through the night were the norm, and it is certain that Peder Johansen played frequently at such all night affairs. Describing these parties, and Jyde Peter writes, "Ballerne kunne være ret livlige. Det skulle helst ende med slagsmål. Nar de et havde været opp at slås, så havde der ingenting været ved ballet" [The balls could be quite lively. It was best if they ended in a fight. If they didn't have a fight, then the ball hadn't really amounted to anything] (Nordjysk folkekultur 1995, 13). By the age of eleven, Jyde Peter had managed to learn how to play the flute, and at a forest dance (*skovbal*) in Hobro, he so impressed the bandleader that he was asked to join the orchestra.

At about this time, Jyde Peter's father became the manager of the large local mill, Røde Mølle, and in an intriguing intersection with Peder Johansen, Jyde Peder became an apprentice miller (his characterization of himself as "2. møllesvend" or second journeyman miller seems a bit unlikely, as he was still only twelve years old) (Nordjysk folkekultur 1995, 9). Despite his work at the mill, he was well on the way to launching a career as a musician. The orchestra leader from the forest dance recruited him heavily, and after a meeting in November in Hobro, Jyde Peter writes, "[jeg] var ... med dem i egnen omkring Hobro til bryllupper og andre fester og legestuer, også alene, og i min egen egn, både

sammen med morbror Niels som jo lærte mig noder til begyndelsen" [I was with them at weddings and other parties and gatherings in the area around Hobro, and also alone and in my own area with my uncle Niels who had taught me to read notes in the beginning] (Nordjysk folkekultur 1995, 9). Working in the mill for his father, and then playing with the Hobro orchestra left little time for school and, as with Peder Johansen, Jyde Peter developed an uneasy relationship with ministers and schoolteachers. The local minister was apparently aware of Jyde Peter's extraordinary musical talent and, once Jyde Peter was confirmed, wished him luck with what turned out to be a successful musical career (Nordjysk folkekultur 1995, 9). By the time Jyde Peter reached fifteen years of age, his path had diverged dramatically from that chosen by Peder Johansen. Rather than sticking to the mill, Jyde Peter first joined the military to play in their orchestra, and later became a musician in Copenhagen, playing for C. C. Møller at *Folketeatret* (The Folk Theater), Olfert Jespersen at the Copenhagen Zoo, and as the reserve oboist at the Royal Theater under the direction of Johan Svendsen. Back in Jutland, *spillemænd* like Peder Johansen continued to play for local dances, parties and weddings.

One of the interesting features of Jyde Peter's memoirs is a short overview of the local *spillemænd* in the Årestrup area at the end of the 1860s and the beginning of the 1870s. This unusual list of twenty-five musicians from six adjacent parishes provides a sense of the number of musicians one could expect to find in an area of this size at the time. He lists a total of nine musicians for Årestrup parish, his own parish, and it might well be that he forgot others from the neighboring parishes. Given this, the implication is that there were nine or ten musicians in each parish who were competent enough to play at local parties. Frequently, *spillemænd* played alone but, when the parties were bigger, they

would play as a pair or, in some cases, as a trio, a quartet or even more. In this manner, a network of *spillemænd* that crossed parish boundaries developed. The development of such a network is not surprising, and mimics most of the other networks that characterized social life in rural Denmark. A similar network of influence, albeit far more diffuse, also informs the storytelling tradition.

The network of *spillemænd* to which Jyde Peter belonged placed him in the general circle with others who had played with and learned from Peder Johansen's father "Kat Søren." In nearby Salten Skov, two of the best-known *spillemænd* were "Kren Piesen" and "Carlsen" (Kristiansen 1946, 151). Carlsen, like Jyde Peter, had played in the military orchestra, as well as one of the traveling orchestras of east Jutland. His partner, Kren Piesen, had learned a great deal from Kat Søren but also from another *spillemand*, Wartho, who was also a musician at the *folketeater* in Copenhagen with Jyde Peter, completing this wide circle of influence (Kristiansen 1946, 151). It also creates a link, however tenuous, between Peder Johansen and "Bitte Jens" from Ersted.

Jyde Peter makes another distinction in his list of local *spillemænd*, namely that between the "amateur" and the "professional." This distinction has several implications for an understanding of *spillemænd* in these small communities. In his list, he mentions only four amateurs. Since all the other *spillemænd* are listed with their main jobs, such as "Maler Jakob i Årdestrup" or "Bette Jens, møllersvend i Nørvads mølle," the use of the term "amateur" must refer to the frequency with which they played at parties and the eagerness with which they marketed their services. The implication is that, for the professional *spillemænd*, there was a lively, competitive market for their services, and plenty of word-of-mouth advertising. People's experiences at parties must also have played a significant role in this market. Stories that tell of

adept or inept *spillemænd* would accordingly have been an important part of this informal market. By Jyde Peter's standards, Peder Johansen would not have been considered an amateur. His musical pedigree and the obvious degree to which he used his music to supplement his income from the mill would have placed him firmly in the ranks of the "professionals." Along with his considerable talent as a fiddler, Peder's ability to make use of stories about his well-known father and foster grandfather would have been useful marketing devices.

Jyde Peter also offers short comments on both the repertoires and the playing styles of other *spillemænd*—so, for instance, Hjort Anders from Årestrup played with the bow in his left hand and "omvendte strenge" [reversed strings] (a *spillemand* precursor to Jimie Hendrix), while Kræn Bentsen, a tailor from Årestrup, was "særlig flink til at sekundere" [really good at playing second fiddle] (Nordjysk folkekultur 1995, 7). The repertoires of the *spillemænd* were in constant flux, with the musicians adapting as well as they could to new musical influences, incorporating newly written and popular songs, and maintaining a catalog of old favorites. A *spillemand* would have been expected to have a fairly large repertoire with a range of styles including mazurkas, waltzes, polkas, the "hamborger" and the "hopsa." Although most *spillemænd* played from memory or from simple "fake" books, Jyde Peder eventually wrote down many of the songs he could remember. In these transcriptions he included annotations to indicate features of the music not usually included in collections of folk melodies such as those collected by Tang Kristensen. These notes included descriptions of tempo, ornamentation and dynamics (Nordjysk folkekultur nodehefte 1995, 4).

Jyde Peter also offers some interesting comments that hint at differences in regional styles of playing, writing, "Alle

hvad boede vest for Årdestrup kendte ikke til harmonie. Men fra Årdestrup og østpå lavede de ganske gode dobbeltgreb ud af hovedet, medens dem vestpå spillede melodie allesammen, lige meget hvor mange de var. De var af denne grund ubehjælpsomme, når de ikke kendte stykkerne samme" [Everyone who lived west of Årdestrup didn't know anything about harmony. But from Årdestrup and off to the east they could invent quite nice double stops, while those to the west all played the melody together, no matter how many there were. Because of that, they weren't very helpful if they didn't know the same piece] (Nordjysk folkekultur 1995, 7). The *spillemænd*, particularly the professionals, were keenly aware of what others were up to, whom they had learned from, how they played, with whom they played, and their individual competence. Furthermore, they were also quick to emphasize what they could do that others could not, and eager to build their local reputations through successful gigs. Although Jyde Peter moved to Copenhagen, and continued to develop musically learning other styles and instruments not commonly found in the rural villages, he clearly had an interest in the persistence of the *spillemand* tradition in Jutland. Near the end of his life, he not only wrote his memoirs, but he also wrote down many of the pieces that he had played when he worked as a *spillemand* in Årestrup and Hobro. Fortunately, he managed to record two gramophone discs with these melodies just days before his death. These recordings provide a further window into the *spillemand* tradition that was an important part of Peder Johansen's life.

Overview of Peder's repertoire

It is difficult to compare Peder's repertoire to that of his peers, since so few of his age cohort were included as

informants in the large folklore collections of the late nineteenth century. Similarly, it is difficult to make any definitive statements about his musical repertoire, since no one collected it. Nevertheless, certain features of his legend repertoire—in comparison to that of other legend informants—can be teased out. Peder's repertoire is skewed toward believable stories, both legends and descriptions of the local environment, and folk beliefs and practices (Tangherlini 1994, 210). There are but a few aspects of his legend repertoire that stand out as statistically unusual. Perhaps because of his relationship to the church, ministers appear more frequently in his legends than would be expected (Tangherlini 1994, 210). Not surprisingly, women appear with far less frequency in his stories than would be expected (8% versus 35%).[13]

First Three Meetings—1888

Tang Kristensen met Peder during a two and a half week field trip through eastern Jutland, in February, 1888 (MO vol. 3, 158-62). His route took him on a long p-shaped loop up the length of Jutland, with numerous side trips. His dedication to (or perhaps obsession with) collecting is clear in his description of the trip. In a letter home, he wrote that, because of all the snow, it was difficult for him to get much out of the trip. Yet when he arrived in Horsens, where he received a letter from his wife telling him that his children had the measle (Olaf and Laura were very sick, and Frode was not as bad), instead of abandoning the trip and going straight home, he decided to extend the trip, hoping to salvage his collecting efforts (MO vol. 3, 161). He went on to visit the mother of Teacher Hovgaard in Grejs, who refused to tell him any stories at all, and then decided to walk the long way

to Vejle along the snow-covered Grejsdals road, a distance of well over six kilometers. From Vejle, he continued on to Kolding to conduct business with a publisher, and finally he returned home, not because his children were sick, but because "det saa ud til mere Vinter" [it looked like more winter was on its way] (MO vol. 3, 162).

Despite Tang Kristensen's negative evaluation of the trip, it did yield excellent records from some truly exceptional storytellers. Besides Peder, he also collected from a pair of storytellers, Michael Hansen and Jens Nielsen Bæk, both of whom were among his best informants. The field trip spanned a total of one hundred and eighteen field diary pages—certainly among the most successful of all his field trips, despite its brevity. Peder, Mikkel and Jens's stories account for well over two thirds of what he managed to collect.

Tang Kristensen's first meetings with Peder Johansen took place over the course of several days. Peder was busy both with his work in the mill and with playing fiddle at local celebrations. Consequently, it was difficult for Tang Kristensen to find enough time to quietly sit and record from Peder. Although Tang Kristensen bemoaned the encroachments into the collecting time, these interruptions should be seen as part of the normal performance context. In this manner, Peder's repertoire, particularly the first three sessions, might reflect a more normal performance than the forced interviews on which Tang Kristensen usually relied. Peder's performances were not solely for Tang Kristensen, and the flow of the sessions were subject to external disturbances—another customer at the mill, for example.

During the third session, Tang Kristensen implied that Peder was both tired and hung-over, describing his encounters with Peder over three days of collecting as follows:

Man havde fortalt mig, at Peder Johansen, der havde sit Hjem nede ved Østerenden af Mos Sø, var saa udmærket til at fortælle Historier, og jeg maatte da om til ham. Han var rigtignok temmelig ung og ugift, men jeg vilde ikke fortryde at komme til ham, sagde man. Han var ellers Møllersvend i Fuldbro Mølle, men han var ogsaa Egnens Spillemand, saa hans Tid var meget optaget. Efter at have taget Afsked med Lærer Meldgaards gjæstfrie Hjem gik jeg saa om forbi Mos Sø.... Da Peder Johansen ikke var i sit Hjem, maatte jeg altsaa op til Fuldbro Mølle. Men han skulde passe sin Gjerning og kunde ikke fortælle for mig uden om Aftenen. Jeg gik saa op til Taaning og besøgte der baade R. P. Randlev og Lærer Hovgaard, og ved Aftenstid gik jeg saa ned til Møllen igjen, og satte mig i Møllestuen, hvor alle Møllegjæsterne kom ind paa gammel Maner og fik en Skjænk. Det varede syv lange og syv brede, inden Peder Johansen blev færdig med sit Arbejde og kom ind og fik sin Nadver, og saa endelig kunde sætte sig hos mig. Saadan tilbragte jeg to Aftener der i Møllen. Man bød mig intet til Livets Ophold, men lod mig dog sidde i Fred, og ved Sengetid søgte jeg op til Taaning for der at faa Nattely hos Hovgaard.... Nu havde jeg hørt, at Peder Johansen skulde spille ved et Fastelavnsgilde i en Gaard, der laa midtvejs mellem Lille-Taaning og Taaning By, og saa gik jeg derind og talte med ham i en Pavse og fik ham til at

love mig, at han næste Dag vilde komme ind til Degnens og blive der og fortælle for mig. Jeg fik nemlig for lidt ud af det der nede i Møllen, der var alt for megen Forstyrrelse, og den Dag var han nemlig fri. Han kom ogsaa efter bestemmelsen, men da han havde spillet det meste af Natten og ikke havde faaet sovet ud, var han jo ikke allerbedst tilpas til at fortælle. Dog gik det helt godt, og vi fik meget skrevet op den Dag (MO vol. 3, 158-9).

[They had told me that Peder Johansen, who lived down on the eastern end of Mos lake, was incredibly good at telling stories and that I had to go to visit him. He was, to be true, quite young and unmarried, but I wouldn't regret visiting him, they said. He was the journeyman miller at Fuldbro Mill, but he was also the area's local musician, so he was quite busy. After I took my leave of Teacher Meldgaard's hospitable home, I walked past Mos lake… Since Peder wasn't at home, I had to go up to Fuldbro mill. But he had to take care of his work and couldn't tell stories for me except in the evening. I walked up to Taaning and visited both R. P. Randlev and Teacher Hovgaard there, and in the evening I went down to the mill again, and sat down in the mill room where all of the mill guests came according to the old customs and had a drink. It was ages before Peder finished his work and came in to have his dinner, and then he could finally sit

> down with me. I spent two evenings like that in the mill. No one offered me anything, but they let me sit there in peace, and at bedtime, I went off to Taaning to get lodgings with Hovgaard… Now I had heard that Peder Johansen was supposed to play at a Carnival party at a farm that was halfway between Little Taaning and Taaning village, and so I went in there and talked to him during a break and got him to promise me that the next day he would come to the parish clerk's place and tell stories to me there. I was not getting enough down there in the mill, there were far too many interruptions, and he had that day off. He came as we'd agreed, but since he'd played most of the night and hadn't slept enough, he wasn't in the best shape to tell stories. But it went quite well and we got a lot written down that day.]

In the accompanying presentation of Peder's repertoire, each of the three sessions are broken out from the other—the first two were collected in the millhouse, while the third was collected the day after the Carnival party in the local teacher's house.

Fourth Meeting—1895

Tang Kristensen's fourth visit with Peder took place during his final photographic trip with Peter Olsen, in September 1895. This trip took Tang Kristensen and Olsen along the eastern coast of Jutland, between Vejle and Århus.

It is unclear if Tang Kristensen collected any stories from Peder during this visit, or if he returned afterwards to collect these last stories. There are no subsequent entries in *Minder og Oplevelser* concerning Peder, and the field diary entries for the fourth session are interspersed with other notes that Tang Kristensen made during the other photographic trips. It is likely that Tang Kristensen intended only to collect biographies from his informants, and to keep them all within a small section of his field diaries. When he discovered that he had a little extra time—and that Peder had the time to tell stories—he flipped several pages ahead in the field diaries, and wrote Peder's stories there (7131a-7144b). Indeed, there is some confusion in the field diaries from pages 7051a through 7138a; the order of the notes do not follow the order of the field trips, and it appears that Tang Kristensen deliberately left blank pages, perhaps for exactly the eventuality of an informant having time to tell and he having time to listen and write.

Notes

[1] If his best legend informants are any gauge, the median age for his informants was sixty-three years old (Tangherlini 1994).

[2] It is standard practice in Danish cemeteries to remove the headstones of people whose closest relatives have stopped paying rent on the burial plot. This lapse in payment usually occurs within one or two generations.

[3] She was the child of his brother Søren and Søren's wife Kirstine Christiansdatter.

[4] Lægdsmand's suggestion that he was married to Ane Nielsdatter in April of 1839 appears to be based on a misreading of the church records, since Peder is clearly still married to Anne Sørensdatter in the 1845 census (Lægdsmand 1954, 130).
[5] *Juleroser* was a magazine that came out from 1881-1944, initially edited by Vilhelm Bergsøe, and included both stories and illustrations.
[6] The expression, "så er du billig" [then you are cheap] is hard to translate accurately given the meaning of "cheap" in colloquial English. Peder clearly meant that she would easily be able to break many hearts with her dress, but that she was too good a person to do so.
[7] See the discussion of other holdings of Øm monastery, particularly in the town of Mejlby, in the chapter on Ane Margrete Jensdatter.
[8] Indeed, by the 1930s, the mill had abandoned milling altogether in favor of fishing, particularly eel. The current mill does no milling whatsoever, but still has a smokehouse producing gourmet eel.
[9] The skirmish took place on July 16, 1849.
[10] In 1892, Gjedved was joined by Ry folkehøjskole. Founded by Helge Hostrup, this school was also firmly in the Grundtvigian's camp.
[11] According to the Danish Law (1683), these were smiths, carpenters, masons, coopers, wheel smiths, potters, homespun tailors, and clog makers.
[12] In a 1907 reform to the commerce law of 1857, the measures *skæppe* and *tønde* were eliminated. A *tønde*, or barrel, equalled 8 *skæpper* or 139 liters of grain.
[13] A more exhaustive analysis of Peder's repertoire can be found in my earlier study of legend tradition in Denmark (Tangherlini 1994, 205-45).