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Parliamentary history in Norwegian school textbooks (1800–2000)

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates how the Norwegian Parliament has been treated in history textbooks between 1800 and 2000. It also includes coverage of the medieval assemblies known as *ting*. Writing national history was affected by the Union with Sweden 1814–1905. In the early nineteenth century, authors often omitted parliamentary history as it had involved conflict with the Swedish king Carl Johan (reigned 1818–44). Over time, the Norwegian Constitutional Assembly and Norwegian Parliament became important topics. In the 1890s, textbooks began presenting recent history from a nationalist point of view. This continued after independence had been achieved in 1905. As the scene of the most important struggles in society, parliament often dominated such narratives. During and after the Second World War, some textbooks included mild criticism of the constitution and parliament. The constitution had not allowed poorer people to vote and parliament had collaborated with the German occupants. Parliamentary history received declining emphasis between 1950 and 2000. This stemmed from more international history and social history being included in curricula. Democratization remained central when considering the nineteenth century, and in the 1990s religious and ethnic minorities began to be included in the narrative of how the constitution had emerged in 1814.

KEYWORDS

Norwegian Parliament; Norwegian Constitutional Assembly; medieval assemblies; democratization; history textbooks; educational laws; history curricula

The Norwegian Parliament, called the *Storting*, was created at the constitutional assembly at Eidsvoll in 1814. Although not originally in possession of extensive powers – it was due to meet for three months every three years – its creation heralded a new dawn in Norwegian nationhood as the country had been ruled autocratically from Denmark since 1661. The independence proclaimed by the Norwegian Constitutional Assembly lasted only a few months, until Swedish forces had taken control. Towards the end of the year, parliament became the defender of Norwegian interests within the new union with Sweden. It reinforced that role in 1818, the 1820s and as late as the 1830s, when the Swedish king Carl Johan attempted to increase his discretionary powers. From the

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1860s to the 1880s parliament succeeded in implementing a modern system of representative democracy. It has thus played a crucial role in late modern Norwegian history.

The aim of this article is to investigate how the Norwegian Parliament has been covered in history textbooks over two centuries. Individual authors needed to pay attention to the laws and curricula throughout most of this period. However, such injunctions do not seem to have mattered as much as the prevailing political climate. It was only after the Liberal government began challenging Sweden actively on Norway's rights within the union after 1891, that textbooks dared to present an unapologetically nationalistic account of contemporary history. Coverage of parliament and the constitutional assembly did not thereafter undergo further evolution until social class was occasionally brought to the fore from the 1940s and the situation of minorities in the 1990s. The name *Storting* derives from the medieval assemblies, *ting*, in which all free men met to make laws and enforce them. These will often be noted in order to provide continuity to the history of legislatures. The existence of the *ting* could have provided arguments for democratization and, later, its legitimacy. No author, however, made the point that the principle of popular influence on lawmaking has deep roots in Norway. It is in any case only recently that schooling has sought to promote democracy and human rights. The commitment to instilling democratic consciousness in students was first introduced in the curriculum in 1960. It became a legal requirement in the sixth form in 1974 and in other types of schools in 1998.¹

Thirty-five textbooks, of which the earliest was published in 1802 and the most recent in 2000, constitute the raw material for this article.² Most decades are represented, though few history textbooks were published before the 1830s. Table 1 enumerates the books in question, sorted according to year of publication. Many went through several editions, in which case only one version was read.

The books will be examined in the context of the half-century in which they were published. During the first period, until 1850, history was not even part of the curriculum in state-run schools. There was no mention of the subject in either the first or the second educational law of the new state from 1827 and 1848. History eventually saw the light of day in a law about schooling in the countryside from 1860. It was to constitute part of general studies, for which it, geography and natural science would provide reading exercises.³ The law made history a subject in the secondary schools in 1869, where it had in any case existed since 1739 in the case of the grammar schools and probably 1783 in the case of the *guild* schools.⁴ It would appear from the beginning of the *middle school*, a new tier acting as an induction to secondary education, and also in both the Latin and practically oriented *gymnasia*. The desired learning outcome was that by the end of the *middle school* pupils should possess an outline of world history and more complete understanding of Nordic, especially Norwegian, history. In the *gymnasium* pupils were expected to acquire a comprehensive

¹ Lov om videregående opplæring (1974) § 2. Lov om grunnskolen og den videregående opplæringen (1998) § 1.1

²The dominant textbook before 1802 was Ove Malling, *Store og gode Handlinger av Danske, Norske og Holstenere* (Copenhagen, 1777). See S. Lorentzen, *Ja, vi elsker ... Skolebøker som nasjonsbyggere 1814–2000* (Oslo, 2005), pp. 11–13.

³ Lov om Almueskolevæsenet paa Landet (1860) § 5

⁴S. Lorentzen, *Fra fag til emner. Ungdomsskolens samfunnsfag i historisk perspektiv*. Volume 1. *Fra Forsøksplan til mønsterplan* (no place of publication, 1988), p. 30. T. A. Baune, *Den skal tidlig krøkes ... Skolen i historisk perspektiv* (Oslo, 2007), p. 38, p. 39.

Table 2. The different time periods.

Time period	Laws and curricula	Outlier among textbooks	Main tendencies
1800–1850	None	<i>Wergeland</i>	Little coverage of the constitutional assembly and parliament.
1850–1900	History made a subject in secondary schools in 1869. Civics introduced into subject in 1889.	<i>Ræder</i>	Nationalism becomes influential. Coverage of ongoing democratization and conflicts in the union puts parliament centre stage.
1900–1950	Curriculum of 1922/1925 introduced history and civics in primary schools.	<i>Håvardsholm</i>	Parliamentary history important, but rarely glorified. Mild criticism of constitutional assembly and parliament towards end of period.
1950–2000	Curriculum of 1960 incorporates history into the new social science subject.	<i>Olstad</i>	Ongoing process of downgrading parliamentary history. Increased focus on international and social history.

understanding of pre-modern and Nordic history, as well as the history of one of the European great powers.⁵

It took three decades from 1800 before a modicum of history books appeared. This was because the subject was only taught in 63 schools early in the century.⁶ It is known that textbooks have a profound influence on actual teaching in a subject.⁷ They are probably as close as it is possible to get to nineteenth and early twentieth-century classrooms. In a sense, the books are also the nation's official memory of past events and its understanding of itself.⁸ To help the reader navigate an article which is overwhelmingly empirical, Table 2 below summarizes the main tendencies and educational context of the textbooks in each period.

The early nineteenth century

In this section books which were published before 1850 will be considered. The scholar Peter Friderich Suhm had been one of the founders of the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters in 1760, testament to an emerging national identity. Suhm died in 1798, but a new version of his history of Denmark, Norway and Holstein intended for students was published in 1802. It provides an indication of how the *ting* were regarded before the period of increased democracy inaugurated in 1814. Suhm stated that the kings would frequently visit the *ting*, without which nothing concerning the whole kingdom could be decided.⁹ However, the order of the knighthood gained ascendancy over the common people during the reign of Magnus Erlingsson (1161–84) in Norway, in which solely the clergy and the aristocracy were called to the councils of the realm and the *ting*.¹⁰ The later king Magnus Law-mender [1262–80] was also seen

⁵Lov om offentlige Skoler for den høiere Almendannelse (1869) § 14.7, § 15 A 6 and § 15 B 5

⁶The four grammar schools and 59 guild schools. Baune, *Den skal tidlig*, p. 38.

⁷N.M. Justvik, 'Lærebokas dominerende posisjon i historieundervisningen – bare for elevenes skyld?', *Acta didactica Norge* 8, 1 (2014), [p. 1]. T. Solhaug and K. Børhaug, *Skolen i demokratiet – demokratiet i skolen* (Oslo, 2012), p. 162. S. Rognaldsen, 'Samfunnsfag og elevvurdering' in S. Dobson and R. Engh (eds), *Vurdering for læring i fag* (Kristiansand, 2010), p. 111.

⁸O.S. Stugu, 'Oppsedande fortidsbilette. Ein gjennomgang av fire historielæreverk for vidaregåande skole', *Historisk tidskrift* 80, 2 (2001), p. 250.

⁹P.F. Suhm, *Udtog af Danmarks, Norges og Holstens Historie til Brug for den studerende Ungdom. Omarbejdet af M. Jørgen Kierulf* (Copenhagen, 1802), p. 9.

¹⁰Suhm, *Udtog*, p. 54.

as depriving the people of their say in government through solely admitting the votes of these elite groups in matters of state.¹¹

Albert Lassen wrote a slim world history in 1830 which pursued a biographical approach. Hence there was no consideration of the *ting*, but the new parliament was seen as a vital force, as it had accepted the oath of Carl XIII of Sweden to uphold the constitution in 1814.¹² Andreas Faye's history of Norway published in 1831 concentrated on the *ting* rather than the new parliament. Faye reckoned that lawmaking and judicial power originally was divided between the king and the people. The king would make law which only became valid upon the people's acceptance of it at the *ting*.¹³ As for Magnus Law-mender, he was seen as creating a nobility on a foreign mould to counteract the power of the clergy. The textbook gave him greater credit for creating a single law code out of the laws passed by the four main *ting*.¹⁴ The power of the monarchy was strengthened in this national law through Magnus's making it hereditary and by the time of Haakon V (reigned 1299-1319), Faye believed that only the consent of notables was required to legislate.¹⁵ Thus the same general trends were present in the histories of Suhm and Faye, though placed in different centuries. They agreed that the people had once had a significant say in making laws, which was then eroded over time.

The poet Henrik Wergeland was opinionated on a wide range of issues, which might be expected to affect his history textbook from 1836. In fact, his views seldom featured, but as the son of Nicolai Wergeland, a defender of aristocracy at the constitutional assembly, he could hardly neglect this momentous event in Norwegian history or the later occurrences flowing from it. Henrik Wergeland, far more radical than his father, was adamant that parliament had acted wisely in rejecting the king's demands for increased powers in 1821.¹⁶ But, like his father and despite being a nationalist, he believed that union with Sweden was a necessity for Norway at this time.¹⁷

The renowned historian Peter Andreas Munch saw nothing but merit in the reforms of Magnus Law-mender. In a history of Scandinavia published in 1838, Magnus was praised for introducing a single and improved system of law for the entire kingdom, for warding off strife through making the monarchy hereditary, for reintroducing a nobility at court and for making the laws of Norway's colony Iceland more unified.¹⁸ Munch saw representative assemblies as crucial to national feeling, at least in the case of Iceland whose parliament was abolished in 1800.¹⁹ His treatment of the constitutional assembly in 1814 was nevertheless matter-of-fact and marked by a harmonizing perspective, whereby Sweden was judged to have acted reasonably. The textbook was never actually introduced into schools.²⁰ At 438 pages it was considered too cumbersome.²¹

¹¹Suhm, *Udtog*, p. 60.

¹²A. Lassen, *De mærkeligste Personers Levnetsbeskrivelser og de vigtigste Tildragelser igjennem alle Tidsaldre. En Lærebog i Historien for de første Begyndere* (Christiania, 1830), p. 393.

¹³A. Faye, *Norges Historie til Brug ved Ungdommens Underviisning* (Christiania, 1831), p. 66.

¹⁴Faye, *Norges*, p. 139, p. 140.

¹⁵Faye, *Norges*, p. 149, p. 151.

¹⁶H. Wergeland, *Udtog af Norges Historie til Brug i Borger- og Almueskoler* (Kristiania, 1836), p. 65.

¹⁷O.A. Storsveen, *Mig selv. En biografi om Henrik Wergeland* (no place of publication, 2008), p. 283.

¹⁸P.A. Munch, *Norges, Sveriges og Danmarks Historie til Skolebrug* (Christiania, 1838), p. 87.

¹⁹Munch, *Norges*, p. 487.

²⁰O. Dahl, *Norsk historieforskning i 19. og 20. århundre* (Oslo, 1959), p. 55.

²¹A. Kjus, *Sitt fedrelands Herodot. P.A. Munch og det norske folks historie* (no place of publication, 2003), p. 25.

Another textbook from the 1830s by Christen Christensen was a world history and therefore did not deal with Norwegian affairs at length. It correctly stated that Christian Frederik, the Danish prince who had started the uprising against the Treaty of Kiel in 1814, whereby Norway was ceded to Sweden by Denmark, had pinned his hopes on Britain as saviour.²² This put an international perspective on the events of that year, which after all were repercussions of the Napoleonic Wars. Another world history for school use was published in 1841 by Maurits Hansen. While all these textbooks judged it safest not to depart from the official line that Norway was now a sovereign nation and that Sweden had facilitated this, only Hansen's was obviously sycophantic. He decided not to treat individual sessions of parliament, which airbrushed the differences with the Swedish king away. Instead, it was stated that 'the Norwegians love Carl Johan as a father'.²³ There was little or no mention of the earlier *ting*, only that Magnus Lawmender unified the various codes of law in existence.²⁴ Thus, the earliest textbooks published in the new state generally did not promote or show much awareness of democracy. Only Wergeland supported parliament in standing up to Carl Johan's power grab, whereas other authors tended to be silent. It was generally acknowledged that the people's role in governance during medieval times had been significant and that the monarchy had been limited. However, this point was diluted since it was also agreed that such conditions had come to an end. Although believed to have been effected by Magnus Lawmender's reforms, those policies were nevertheless praised.

Contesting the union

The Swedish dimension is even more important to consider in the remaining textbooks from the nineteenth century. Conditions in the union became more turbulent from the 1850s onwards, with the first constitutional conflict emerging over the post of viceroy. The Norwegians had been reassured that they were in a union of equals, which they regarded as belied by such a position being in existence. In 1854 and 1859 parliament voted to abolish the vicerealty, only for its decision to be vetoed by the king (Oscar I and Carl IV respectively) on both occasions. It was eventually sanctioned by the new king Oscar II upon his accession to the throne in 1872. Despite being the most popular of the Swedish monarchs in Norway, his reign also saw the most strife relating to the union, eventually leading to Norwegian independence in 1905. Demands for democratization were connected to this because greater powers for parliament weakened the government as a separate force and consequently the monarchy.

Educational policy was an influence on what went into the textbooks, but not so much on the analysis which followed. As explained above, history only emerged as a subject in 1869. In 1889 it was expanded to include civics. Pupils in the countryside were to learn history with civics from the age of ten, whereas urban pupils were introduced to history at seven, but not with a civics component until the age of twelve.²⁵ Civics is of interest because it mostly concerned how the state was governed, which of course included a

²²C. Christensen, *Kort Uddrag af Historien om de vigtigste Verdensbegivenheder* (Arendal, 1838), p. 128.

²³M. C. Hansen, *Almindelig Verdenshistorie fra de ældste indtil vore Tider, til Brug i Skoler og ved privat Underviisning* (Christiania, 1841), p. 523.

²⁴Hansen, *Almindelig*, p. 270.

²⁵Lov om Folkeskolen paa Landet (1889) § 2 and § 6. Lov om Folkeskolen i Kjøbstæderne (1889) § 2 and § 4.

focus on parliament. New curricula were introduced in 1890. Primary schools were to focus on Norwegian history and civics was to form part of the textbook.²⁶ It was pointed out that since history was primarily an oral subject, the textbook should be used sparingly until the last years.²⁷

In any case, most writers of textbooks concentrated on *middle schools* and the *gymnasia*. Ludvig Kristensen Daa, the author of a textbook on medieval history from 1874, had been a professor at the University of Christiania (i.e. Oslo) since 1866. He was able to put together a work suitable for schools whether they chose to concentrate on British, French or German history.²⁸ It gave a notably international dimension to the *ting*. Daa wrote that they were common to all Germanic peoples. The kingship was elective and decided at the assemblies in each country.²⁹ Daa approved that Magnus Law-mender unified the four jurisdictions then in existence, though he admitted this was the cause of ordinary peasant influence on lawmaking falling away. He also provided the argument for why it had to be so. With the four main *ting* still in existence, it was impossible to write identical laws from four separate sources.³⁰

Even if medieval assemblies did not provide much inspiration for democratization, their treatment acts as a litmus test for an author's views on democracy. The more an author regretted that the popular influence on these had been curtailed, probably the more democratic his mindset. Munch simply did not care that the *ting* were rendered ineffective by royal fiat. Daa explained it could not be otherwise. On the cusp of the 1890s, which featured greater politicization of recent history, Andreas Emil Eriksen published a book about Norway, Sweden and Denmark for secondary schools in 1887. Like most other writers, he acknowledged that Magnus Law-mender's unification of the laws nullified popular influence on lawmaking. Peasants were still elected to serve on the *ting*, but vital positions tended to be the gift of the king.³¹ Eriksen thus distinguished between the apparent and actual state of things, a theme which was soon to become important in politics.

By the 1890s, the many conflicts which had erupted and the divisive issues which had not yet been settled, could not be kept under wraps anymore. The changes which had been implemented over the previous decades were too momentous not to receive attention in history books. A new law from 1896 made civics compulsory also in the *middle schools* and the *gymnasia*. The law charged *middle schools* with inculcating knowledge of the most important events in world history, with more specialized concern for modern history and that of Norway. The *gymnasia* were to offer a more thorough grounding in the most vital ancient, Norwegian, French, German and English history, comprehensively after 1789.³² The social order in Norway and other countries was to feature, which was apt to lead to comparison.

One book published in 1894 immediately inspired other authors. Discussing civics, Dr Anton Ræder called Norway not a democracy, but a constitutional monarchy.³³ The 'people' were, however, in charge of lawmaking through parliament, which since 1871

²⁶Rundskrivelse fra kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet 19de december 1889 (Kristiania, 1889), p. 13.

²⁷See K. Kjeldstadli, *Fortida er ikke hva den en gang var. En innføring i historiefaget* (Oslo, 2013), p. 275.

²⁸L.K. Daa, *Lærebog i Middeldalderens Historie* (Kristiania, 1874), fo. 2r- 3r.

²⁹Daa, *Lærebog*, p. 28.

³⁰Daa, *Lærebog*, p. 239.

³¹A. E. Eriksen, *Norges, Sveriges og Danmarks historie for middelskolen og gymnasiene* (Kristiania, 1887), p. 46.

³²Lov om høiere almenskoler (1896) § 8. 5 and § 9. 6

³³A. Ræder, *Historisk Lærebog for Middelskolen omfattende saavel Nordens som Verdens historie* (Kristiania, 1894), p. 286.

had met every year and to which ministers had been admitted since 1884.³⁴ This summarized in two sentences the dramatic and long-lasting constitutional struggle which increased parliament's powers and thus strengthened democracy. Although other authors had by now thrown caution to the winds, Ræder continued to be politic in view of Swedish suzerainty. In the case of the quarrels between parliament and Carl Johan, he accepted the king's version that he deployed Swedish and Norwegian troops at Etterstad outside Christiania in 1821 in order to avert an invasion by the great powers.³⁵ They were allegedly angered by parliament's refusal to pay part of the Danish state debt, which Carl Johan was demanding, and the other apple of discord was parliament's insistence on abolishing the nobility, originally vetoed in 1815 and 1818. There was also coverage of the viceroy issue, the rise of the legendary Liberal leader Johan Sverdrup, the struggle for annual parliaments (where the book gave the impression the king was not adamantly opposed) and the impeachment trial of the Christian Selmer ministry in 1884, which was treated as any other change of government. In fact, the king's being forced to appoint Sverdrup as prime minister led to the crucial principle of parliamentary sovereignty.

Albert Kjær, a scholar, published a general history of the world, the church and Norway in 1899, which was intended for use in the *middle schools*. As with Daa's book, Kjær linked the *ting* to Germanic customs, and thus did not see them as peculiarly Norwegian.³⁶ The events of 1814 and later political developments were treated concisely. Kjær wrote as if there was hope of retaining independence as late as October 1814 when the extraordinary session of parliament met, by stating that many were still against union with Sweden and believed the war could be continued successfully.³⁷ This was in fact a chimera as the Norwegian king and commander of the army, Christian Frederik, had abdicated and returned to Denmark. That this claim should resurface, however, is evidence of rising Norwegian self-confidence. Kjær treated the conflict between Carl Johan and the parliament of 1821, but only in connection with the Danish state debt and without mention of the nobility issue.³⁸ This was a significant lacuna, but the creation of a separate Norwegian flag that year was included. The conflicts over annual parliaments and ministers' admission to parliament were addressed, and their significance brought out to a much greater extent than in Ræder.

Siegwart Petersen's long-standing textbook on Norwegian history was revised in 1897 by Gustav Storm. Professor Storm was known for his monographs with plenty of detail, but perhaps lacking in synthesis.³⁹ The 1897 edition showed traces of increasing Norwegian assertiveness. A peasant revolt against parliament in 1818, motivated by new taxes, received coverage. However, Petersen and Storm explained that it resulted from the country's financial difficulties and its citizens' poverty after 1814. They also mentioned that Carl Johan 'immediately' pardoned the leader, comprehensible in view of further conflict between parliament and king in 1821 over the nobility and the Danish state debt.⁴⁰ The book seemed to value national unity, seen in its description of both peasants

³⁴Ræder, *Historisk*, p. 287.

³⁵Ræder, *Historisk*, p. 289.

³⁶A. Kjær, *Lærebog i historie. Verdenshistorie-Kirkehistorie-Norges historie* (Kristiania, 1899), p. 66.

³⁷Kjær, *Lærebog*, p. 318.

³⁸Kjær, *Lærebog*, p. 323.

³⁹Dahl, *Norsk historieforskning*, p. 196.

⁴⁰G. Storm and S. Petersen, *Norges Historie. Mindre Udgave for Folkeskolen* (Kristiania, 1897), p. 79, p. 80.

and civil servants as having the country's best interests at heart, though in opposition to each other.⁴¹

Oskar Kristiansen's textbook on international and Norwegian history for the primary school was greatly inspired by Ræder's work described above, but far more nationalistic. It gave a relatively sympathetic portrayal of Christian Frederik and mentioned that the Swedes had used threats during the negotiations over the union and constitution.⁴² Unlike the neutral portrayal in Ræder, Kristiansen stated that in 1821 the Norwegians saw the gathering of troops at Etterstad as a menace, though he also gave Carl Johan's version that they were there to defend against a potential great power intervention. The textbook described the whole brouhaha over the Danish state debt and the law abolishing nobility as a 'serious confrontation' between parliament and the king.⁴³ Moreover, Carl Johan demanded an absolute veto six parliamentary sessions in a row (i.e. over 18 years). Kristiansen even reported on undecided matters which caused strife, such as the trading flag, which parliament had twice voted should only contain the Norwegian colours, but which Oscar II had vetoed each time.⁴⁴ It was eventually proclaimed as law in 1899, two years after the book appeared.

As would be expected as the century marched on, these books contained greatly increased coverage of the events of its second half. National history was to a great extent centred on parliament, sometimes supplemented by biographical history regarding illustrious Norwegians of the modern age. The dividing line on politics was between the one writer who downplayed differences within the union or treated these without comment (Ræder) and those who presented a more partisan Norwegian point of view (Kjær, Storm/Petersen and Kristiansen). The second type looked forward to the national story as it would be told after independence in 1905. Ræder was more likely to emphasize differences between Norwegians and minimize differences between Norway and Sweden. This attitude may have shown detachment from his personal views, as he is known to have been a Liberal. Even if he did not assert his party's views and tendencies, the others did, which tallies with previous research that liberalism had a much greater impact on schoolbooks than conservatism.⁴⁵

Becoming independent

Due to the high degree of autonomy that the Norwegians had enjoyed in the union, the gaining of independence in 1905 did not have a major impact on schooling. As discussed, it had been possible for history textbook authors to convey that the conflicts with Sweden were at times tempestuous. No new educational reforms were introduced until 1922, for the countryside, and 1925, for the towns. After the German invasion on 9 April 1940, Nazification attempts in the schools began in 1942. But most of the textbooks which are available to us had been written before the invasion and none featured a Nazi perspective. Therefore it makes sense to consider the period from 1900 to 1950 as a whole.

⁴¹Storm and Petersen, *Norges*, p. 82.

⁴²O. Kristiansen, *Lærebog i historie (Verdenshistorie og Norges historie) for Folkeskolen* (Kristiania, 1897), p. 131.

⁴³Kristiansen, *Lærebog*, p. 146.

⁴⁴Kristiansen, *Lærebog*, pp. 147–9.

⁴⁵F.W. Thue, 'Den historiske allmenndannelse. Historiefaget i høyere/videregående skole, 1869–2019', *Historisk tidsskrift* 98, 2 (2019), p. 169.

Among the books from the first decade of the twentieth century was one on Scandinavian history, published in 1902 and intended for *middle schools* by Jens Raabe. This textbook stood out by containing probably the most admiring account of parliament. Raabe said the constitution of 1814 at a stroke turned subjects of absolutism into one of the freest people in the world.⁴⁶ He was very complimentary about how parliament handled the challenge of agreeing to the union with Sweden, while holding on to the constitution.⁴⁷ He gave the impression that parliament won all the conflicts against Carl Johan. The gathering of troops at Etterstad in 1821 was regarded as a plain threat, which parliament withstood in only agreeing to pay a lower sum of money to Denmark.⁴⁸ In actual fact, the sum had been revised downwards through British mediation in 1819 without parliament being consulted.⁴⁹ Equally, in 1836 Carl Johan prorogued parliament, to which it responded by impeaching the viceroy Severin Løvenskiold, who had been a pro-Swedish delegate at the constitutional assembly.⁵⁰ Raabe regarded parliament as having won this power struggle since the king called an extraordinary session of parliament the following year, during which the system of local government was set up.

The other two textbooks which will be examined from the first decade of the twentieth century stem from 1907 and 1909, thus after Norwegian independence had been achieved. This of course created important new information to go into history books, namely the precise details of how it occurred. Ole Jensen wrote a primer for history designed to be used in primary schools and the earlier years of secondary education. It had good coverage of the constitutional assembly and the events which followed. The conflict in 1821 between parliament and Carl Johan was related and only the view that the gathering of troops at Etterstad was a bullying tactic was given.⁵¹ Although parliament conceded on the Danish state debt, Jensen preferred to dwell on the abolition of the nobility, where parliament overcame the king. The significance of annual parliamentary sessions and the admission of ministers to the chamber was explained well.⁵² The rupturing of the union in 1905 was the last topic and a full technical account was given of this.⁵³ There had also been changes on civics, including the direct election of parliamentarians in single-member constituencies and women beginning to get the vote in local elections.⁵⁴

Although Steinar Schjøtt's contribution from 1909 was a textbook in world history it had more on the *ting* than Jensen's work from 1907. The precise details of how the elections to the constitutional assembly were conducted were given later in the book.⁵⁵ Recent political developments were updated with most women now having the right to vote.⁵⁶

⁴⁶J. Raabe, *Lærebog i Norges Historie med hovedtræk af Sveriges og Danmarks historie. For middelskolen* (Kristiania, 1902), p. 116.

⁴⁷Raabe, *Lærebog*, p. 118.

⁴⁸Raabe, *Lærebog*, p. 124.

⁴⁹N. Bjørge, Ø. Rian and A. Kaartvedt, *Norsk utenrikspolitikkens historie. Volume 1. Selvstendighet og union. Fra middelalderen til 1905* (Oslo, 1995), p. 250.

⁵⁰Raabe, *Lærebog*, p. 125.

⁵¹O. Jensen, *Norges historie i fortellinger for skolen og hjemmet* (Kristiania, 1907), p. 85.

⁵²Jensen, *Norges*, p. 93.

⁵³Jensen, *Norges*, pp. 95–7.

⁵⁴Jensen, *Norges*, p. 101, p. 102.

⁵⁵S. Schjøtt, *Lærebok i Verdshistoria. Til bruk for lærar- og ungdomsskular* (Kristiania, 1909), p. 369.

⁵⁶Schjøtt, *Lærebok*, pp. 443–7.

In the new curricula relating to schools in the countryside (1922) and the towns (1925), history became a subject in primary schools from the fourth year onwards. The goals stated that pupils should learn about the most important events and personalities in their own country's history as well as its civics. They should additionally attain knowledge of the events from international history which had the most influence on Norway.⁵⁷ History proceeded chronologically so that the *ting* were to be covered in the first year of studying the subject. The events of 1814 belonged in the penultimate year, while the last year featured conflict between parliament and the king, the struggle for democracy and the dissolution of the union, all of which put parliament centre stage.⁵⁸ Civics concerned above all how parliament was constituted and how the system of government worked. Parliament and earlier assemblies, then, continued to play important roles, at the same time as the curriculum called for greater focus on how ordinary people lived. The history curriculum for the towns was made identical. For the first time international history featured in primary school. The greater attention paid to international and social history was the beginning of a trend which was later almost to displace parliamentary history.

Norway's story. For school and home by Jens Hæreid was originally published in 1911, but reissued periodically, with the present version being from 1926. It had a more colourful and detailed description of the *ting* than was usual. In modern history, Hæreid also gave a fuller picture than others of the peasant revolt of 1818 against parliament. The leader, Halvor Hoel, had been elected to parliament in 1815, but had been sent home due to his criminal record. His response was to wreak revenge in a revolt that sought to reintroduce absolutism and make the union with Sweden firmer. He was sentenced to heavy labour, but the king pardoned him and even gave him a pension.⁵⁹ The information about Hoel's criminal tendencies and the pension put parliament in a favourable light in connection with its power struggle against Carl Johan.

A novelty was the book published by Bernhard Håvardsholm in 1928. That is because its title referred to social science and civics rather than history. Social science was not technically a school subject at the time, only an addendum to history. In any case, the early chapters of it constituted a concise history book. The book claimed, with a flavour of civics, that the regional *ting* passed judgement in larger cases and the local ones in smaller matters.⁶⁰ Håvardsholm saw the monarchy as traditionally a comparatively weak institution. Power was, however, transferred from the peasants to the king when Magnus Law-mender introduced the unified code of law, passed by all the *ting* and thereby depriving them of their powers.⁶¹ This gave an historical introduction, as per the intention of the author, to the institutions existing in contemporary Norway.

The last of the history books from the 1920s was part of a three-volume series planned jointly by the historian Arne Bergsgård and the headmaster Severin Eskeland. The first and third volume by Bergsgård had no especial coverage of parliament and the *ting*. It is the second volume by Eskeland on medieval and early modern history which is of

⁵⁷Kirke- og utdanningsdepartementet, *Normalplan for landsfolkeskolen* (Kristiania, 1923), p. 38. Kirke- og utdanningsdepartementet, *Normalplan for byfolkeskolen* (Oslo, 1925), p. 34.

⁵⁸*Normalplan for landsfolkeskolen*, p. 39, p. 40. *Normalplan for byfolkeskolen*, p. 35, p. 36.

⁵⁹J. Hæreid, *Norigs saga. Fortald for skule og heim* (Oslo, 1926), p. 133.

⁶⁰B. Håvardsholm, *Norsk samfundslære* (Oslo, 1928), p. 6.

⁶¹Håvardsholm, *Norsk*, p. 16, p. 17.

interest here. Like a few writers from the previous century, Eskeland saw the system of *ting* as Germanic. He regarded attendance at these as compulsory.⁶² The *ting* took place at each new moon and full moon, being led by a chieftain. The regional *ting* were led by all the chieftains jointly or by the king after the monarchy became a force in society.⁶³ The law was traditional and unwritten. A leading judge or speaker explained it in simple terms at the *ting*. Most of this information was not present in other books or had a different interpretation.

The one history book from the 1930s which will be examined here was by the retired headmaster Tormod Knutson. It was published in 1935 and seemed somewhat nationalistic in places, the title being *The Story of our People*, written in runes on the cover. Similarly to Håvardsholm, Knutson thought it was possible to appeal verdicts by the local *ting* to the regional assembly.⁶⁴ The book continued into the late modern era, without adding much to what has already been treated above.

The new laws for primary schools in 1936 reflected the ominous international situation. In the countryside, the description of history was changed to 'history with social science' and it was also appended that efforts to create peace between the nations should form part of the subject.⁶⁵ In the towns, 'history' remained the name of the subject, but it was stated that it included civics and efforts to create peace between the nations.⁶⁶ These laws led to new national curricula in 1939. The history syllabus for the countryside echoed the peacebuilding mentioned in the law.⁶⁷ The *ting* were on the syllabus for the fifth year (second year of history instruction) and it was stated that there was a *ting* in each locality and each region.⁶⁸ The modern parliament was described through material on the constitutional assembly and the union with Sweden in the sixth and seventh years.⁶⁹ The struggle for parliamentary democracy was linked to Sverdrup, Liberal prime minister after 1884, and parliament also featured in the very last topic: state and municipal governance today. The syllabus for the towns was in most cases identical to that of the countryside, but with additional topics.⁷⁰ It is obvious from the themes to be covered that parliament was important within nineteenth-century history, though hardly dominant overall. Because there was less material for pre-modern history, the *ting* held an important place, but on the other hand a lot less is known about them so it is unlikely that they could be covered in depth.⁷¹

A version of a textbook by the scholar Fredrik Scheel, who died in 1932, was updated by the popularizer Fredrik Christian Wildhagen in 1940. It concerned Norway and the other Nordic countries. The authors regarded a tier of lawmakers as evolving within the oldest *ting*, which they erroneously believed to be *Eidsivatinget* and *Frostatinget*,

⁶²A. Bergsgård and S. Eskeland, *Lærebok i historie*. Volume II. *Middelalderen og den nyere tids historie ved Severin Eskeland* (Oslo, 1929), p. 10.

⁶³Bergsgård and Eskeland, *Lærebok*, p. 11.

⁶⁴T. Knutson, *Soga um folket vårt* (Oslo, 1935), pp. 30–31.

⁶⁵Lov om folkeskolen på landet (1936) § 6.1

⁶⁶Lov om folkeskolen i kjøbstædene (1936) § 4.1

⁶⁷Kyrkje- og undervisningsdepartementet, *Normalplan (mønsterplan) for landsfolkeskolen* (Oslo, 1947 edition), p. 78.

⁶⁸*Normalplan (mønsterplan) for landsfolkeskolen*, p. 80.

⁶⁹*Normalplan (mønsterplan) for landsfolkeskolen*, pp. 92–6.

⁷⁰Kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet, *Normalplan for byfolkeskolen* (Oslo, 1948 edition), pp. 94–7.

⁷¹A systematic exposition exists in T.H. Aschehoug, *Norges Offentlige Ret*. Volume 1. *Statsforfatningen i Norge og Danmark indtil 1814* (Christiania, 1866), pp. 56–67. There does not appear to be further research on the medieval *ting* since then. J. Mallek, 'Estates Assemblies in Norway in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 21, 1 (2001), p. 75.

the regional *ting* for eastern Norway and the Trondheim-area respectively.⁷² It was the creation of these tiers which led to the curtailment of popular sovereignty. Their representatives were elected, from whom leading members were appointed. Such developments meant the cessation of the *ting* as meeting places for all free men.⁷³ This was a different interpretation which eschewed the creation of a single law for the country in 1274. The book had a precise and standard treatment of the events from 1814 onwards.

Although published in 1941 during the German occupation, a work on Norway's, Denmark's and Sweden's history for the *gymnasia*, did not depart from the prior conceptions. It was written by Oscar Albert Johnsen, a professor of history at the University of Oslo, and the headmaster Tord Pedersen. Johnsen was an authority on the *ting*, whose origins as significant regional assemblies he dated to the reign of Haakon the good (935-961) for the western and southern country and Olaf Haraldsson (1015-1028) for the eastern parts.⁷⁴ The *ting* had the capacity to end the rule of a chieftain and appoint another from the same clan.⁷⁵ On modern history the book saw the crucial event at the constitutional assembly in 1814, as the decision to ignore relations with the outer world and merely concentrate on writing the constitution and electing a king.⁷⁶ This initially ruled out union with Sweden, but of course it could not be avoided in the end. Norway was formally the equal of Sweden in the union which was established in the autumn of 1814. In practice, the symbols of the state, the flag and the existence of a viceroy showed Norway's subjugation to Sweden.⁷⁷ None of these, however, were mentioned in the Act of Union and this potentially allowed Norway to change these conditions over time. Here was a clear-sighted point which gave a legal backdrop to the events which did in fact take place.

Bernhard Stokke's contribution from 1942 was unaffected enough by Nazism to become a standard work in schools in the post-war era. It had little information relating to the *ting* in general, though there were numerous mentions of events which had taken place at them. He made a new point about the Norwegian constitution of 1814: while giving greater popular influence than any other at the time, it still meant that only property owners could vote.⁷⁸ There was little focus on the conflicts which led to increased democratization. The reader was told that people celebrated outside parliament when annual sessions were voted in, but not how this had been a controversial measure in the preceding years and for what reason.⁷⁹

Magnus Eriksen's history for primary schools published in 1945 was a revised version of a work written before the war. Eriksen admitted that parliament was cajoled by Carl Johan into paying the Danish state debt, though it was victorious in the case of the laws on nobility.⁸⁰ The full meaning of the conflict over ministers' admission to parliament was given. The principle that the king must choose his government according to the

⁷²F. Scheel and F.C. Wildhagen, *Norges og de andre nordiske rikers historie. Lærebok for gymnasiet* (Oslo, 1940), p. 18.

⁷³Scheel and Wildhagen, *Norges*, p. 119.

⁷⁴O.A. Johnsen and T. Pedersen, *Lærebok i Norges, Danmarks og Sveriges historie for gymnasie* (Oslo, 1941), p. 29, p. 33.

⁷⁵Johnsen and Pedersen, *Lærebok*, p. 15.

⁷⁶Johnsen and Pedersen, *Lærebok*, p. 160.

⁷⁷Johnsen and Pedersen, *Lærebok*, p. 166.

⁷⁸B. Stokke, *Folket vårt gjennom tidene. Noregssoge og verdssoge med bilete, kart og oppgaver* (Oslo, 1942), p. 134.

⁷⁹Stokke, *Folket*, p. 164.

⁸⁰M. Eriksen, *Historie for folkeskolen* (Oslo, 1945), p. 198.

representation of the parties in parliament stemmed from this.⁸¹ There was also full coverage of how the union with Sweden was dissolved. This revision included consideration of the role of parliament during the Second World War. The German leader of occupied Norway, Josef Terboven, had wanted parliament to dethrone King Haakon VII. The ordinary parties, among which the Nazis were not represented, did indeed vote to remove him.⁸²

The 1900–1950 period thus did not witness major changes in the role or coverage of parliament in history textbooks. This was despite independence being achieved in 1905 and Norway being occupied by Germany 1940–45. The educational laws of 1922 and 1925, however, began widening the subject matter of history, which in the next fifty-year period was to lead to marked change in how the subject was taught.

The end of high politics?

The last sets of books under consideration were written after the greatest reform relating to schooling in the twentieth century. In 1959 a new law relating to the primary schools took effect, allowing local authorities to set up nine-year comprehensive schools. History remained a subject in this law, alongside the new ‘social science studies including contemporary knowledge’.⁸³ However, for schools which were established according to the new model of nine years’ compulsory education, ‘social science’ replaced and incorporated history, geography and civics. New curricula were published for this type of school in 1960 and in 1969 nine years’ education was implemented nationwide.⁸⁴ One of the goals of the new subject was to inculcate an understanding of democracy.⁸⁵ The total number of school-hours devoted to history stayed constant in the countryside and was increased in the towns (provided no vocational options were chosen).⁸⁶ The *ting* no longer formed part of the history syllabus, as international history received more space. On the other hand, the procedures of parliament and elections were specifically mentioned and democracy in various countries was to be taught in an historical context.⁸⁷ In the seventh year, history included coverage of the constitutional assembly and in the eighth year the struggle for democratization was a topic.

What kind of textbooks would be written under the new system? A new trend was to write a book specific to a single year of the comprehensive school. Ola Skogstad wrote three history books, each of which was to be used to cover specific parts of the syllabus. The one intended for the seventh year was published in 1968. It dealt with history from 1814 and was somewhat livelier than earlier books. Thus, when considering the constitutional assembly, a particularly rousing and principled speech by the priest Jonas Rein received attention, maybe to inspire the students.⁸⁸ However, the constitution was hardly seen as a revolution: Those who had power before it remained in charge. There was also an anecdote about how the speaker of the new parliament, W.F.K. Christie, received a

⁸¹Eriksen, *Historie*, p. 225.

⁸²Eriksen, *Historie*, p. 250.

⁸³Lov om folkeskolen (1959) § 6.1

⁸⁴Lov om grunnskolen (1969) § 2.1

⁸⁵Forsøksrådet for skoleverket, *Læreplan for forsøk med 9-årig skole* (no place of publication, 1960), p. 157.

⁸⁶*Læreplan for forsøk med 9-årig skole*, p. 9, p. 10.

⁸⁷*Læreplan for forsøk med 9-årig skole*, p. 170, p. 171.

⁸⁸O. Skogstad, *Historien forteller. Lære- og lesebok i historie for ungdomsskolen*. Volume 1. 7. skoleår (Oslo, 1968), p. 141.

threatening letter during negotiations with the Swedes in 1814. He eventually decided to burn it and the next day said nothing about it in parliament.⁸⁹ The extraordinary parliament that year was a great relief for Norwegian national feeling, as it ended much better than anticipated.

Skogstad also wrote books for the eighth and ninth year. Only the one for the ninth year contained anything of interest relating to parliament, as it comprised the most modern history. Again, it concerned the less than heroic role of parliament during the German occupation. The presidential council of parliament [led by Vice-President Magnus Nilssen of the Labour Party in the absence of the president, Carl Joachim Hambro] agreed to appoint a council of the realm to replace the elected government. It encouraged the king to abdicate, receiving majority support in a vote.⁹⁰

Due to the chronological ordering, a textbook for the ninth year by Jon Hilmo and Dr Asbjørn Øverås contained mostly contemporary history, which in practice meant little focus on parliament. Between 1945 and 1965, parliament was even sidelined a little due to the Labour Party achieving a majority, a rare feat in Norwegian politics. Accordingly, the closest the book came to considering parliament was through a table showing the number of parliamentarians elected for each party in the relevant period.⁹¹ There was greater scope to treat parliament in a book by historian Axel Coldevin, published in 1969, because it was written for both the eighth and ninth year of school. It pursued a narrative style, with good explanations for why the conflict over ministers' admission to parliament mattered. The intrinsic difficulty was compounded by it being undefined what was entailed if the king vetoed an act which changed the constitution.⁹² The crucial aspects of the conflict with Sweden over the union were also treated in a comprehensible way. Parliament was the voice of Norwegian nationalism in this matter, which by 1905 had united the entire people behind its demands.⁹³ In its treatment of the Second World War, the book gave the impression that only a minority of parliamentarians wished the king to abdicate.⁹⁴

History remained an official subject in the *gymnasia*. That the subject had not changed much is shown by a wide-ranging textbook published in 1971 by Magnus Jensen with continued coverage of the *ting*. Unlike Skogstad's work, it did not give full details of Jonas Rein's monumental speech at Eidsvoll in 1814, but it explained how it very narrowly won the debate in the constitutional assembly for supporters of independence.⁹⁵ The book praised parliament for acting bravely in the face of Carl Johan's dissolution of it in 1836, which paid dividends as it was reconvened just four weeks later.⁹⁶ As for parliament's actions in 1940, the book claimed the Germans forced the presidential council [led by Magnus Nilssen] to send a message to the king asking him to abdicate. Eventually the parliamentarians agreed to depose the king, whereupon the Germans made new demands which led to negotiations breaking down, luckily extricating the country.⁹⁷

⁸⁹Skogstad, *Historien*, p. 145, p. 146.

⁹⁰O. Skogstad, *Historien forteller. Lære- og lesebok i historie for ungdomsskolen*. Volume 3. 9. skoleår (Oslo, 1972), p. 168.

⁹¹J. Hilmo and A. Øverås, *Historie for ungdomsskolen*. 9. skoleåret (Oslo, 1967), p. 165.

⁹²A. Coldevin, *Historie for 8.-9. skoleår i den niårige folkeskolen* (Oslo, 1969), p. 96.

⁹³Coldevin, *Historie*, p. 116.

⁹⁴Coldevin, *Historie*, p. 269.

⁹⁵M. Jensen, *Nordens historie for gymnaset* (Oslo, 1971), p. 162, p. 163.

⁹⁶Jensen, *Nordens*, p. 175.

⁹⁷Jensen, *Nordens*, p. 233.

An attempt to condense the entire history syllabus for the last three years of the comprehensive school into a single work by Harald Hansejordet was published in 1988. It dealt with the struggle over annual parliaments and the admission of government ministers to parliament on two pages, merely stating the effects when the matters were concluded (in 1869 and 1884 respectively).⁹⁸ This very brief treatment completely overturned high politics in favour of social history, a trend that was ongoing through the 1970s and 1980s and which received its stamp of approval in 1994.⁹⁹ The remaining textbooks which will be examined are all from the new type of secondary school replacing the *gymnasium*, which followed different curricula than those obtaining in compulsory education.

Under the curricula for Reform 94, history was split into two sections with 1850 as the dividing line. Under pre-1850 history, students were expected to have knowledge of ideas and institutions which were of significance in the early democratization process.¹⁰⁰ The formulation makes it likely that this concerned the constitutional assembly and parliament. As for the learning outcomes in post-1850 history, students were to be able to account for political changes and conflict as well as to discuss changes of the political regime in society and employment.¹⁰¹ These goals pointed to parliament as being the site of such changes, but not exclusively so as there was additional focus on wider society.

There is no doubt that this represented a telling downgrading of parliament within history instruction. The institution was not mentioned by name, the *ting* were not included and democratization was seen in a wider context. By coincidence 1994 happened to be the year in which parliament ceded significant powers to the European Union through Norway's joining the single market.¹⁰² The highwater mark of parliamentary sovereignty may thus have been the years 1905-93, which had not been covered extensively in history textbooks as it represented a static rather than dynamic situation. There is also the question of whether traditional topics would continue despite what Reform 94 had laid down.

A book covering Norwegian history before 1850 by Terje Emblem, Ivar Libæk and Øivind Stenersen had a few lines on the *ting*. As for the 1814 constitution, it promulgated a modern conception. On the one hand, it was radical in giving as many as 40 per cent of adult men the vote. On the other, usually not mentioned in earlier works, it did not actually create freedom of conscience since Jews and Jesuits were denied entry to the kingdom.¹⁰³ The book considered the dilemmas faced by the extraordinary parliament in 1814 and showed how it succeeded well in maintaining and, in some areas, strengthening the constitution.¹⁰⁴ It also explained parliament's conflicts with Carl Johan after 1818, in which it folded on the Danish state debt, but held firm on the abolition of the

⁹⁸H. Hansejordet, *Historie* (Oslo, 1988), pp. 90–91.

⁹⁹T. Ryymin, 'Innledning. Historie i politikutformingen' in *idem* (ed.), *Historie og politikk. Historiebruk i norsk politikktutforming etter 1945* (Oslo, 2017), p. 16.

¹⁰⁰Kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, *Læreplan for videregående opplæring. Eldre historie. Nyere historie. Felles allmenne fag* (Oslo, 1996), p. 2.

¹⁰¹*Læreplan for videregående opplæring*, p. 5.

¹⁰²For the practical effects of this, see T. Nordby, *I politikens sentrum. Variasjoner i Stortingets makt 1814–2000* (Oslo, 2000), p. 27, p. 243, p. 244.

¹⁰³T. Emblem, I. Libæk and Ø. Stenersen, *Norge 1. Norgeshistorie før 1850. Cappelens historieverk for den videregående skolen* (Oslo, 1997), p. 224.

¹⁰⁴Emblem, Libæk and Stenersen, *Norge*, p. 231.

nobility and in resisting his proposals to weaken its powers.¹⁰⁵ Thus the treatment of parliament in this book mostly matched earlier accounts, but was modern in considering the treatment of religious minorities.

The same authors, with one additional colleague (Tore Syvertsen), also published a history book for the period after 1850. It paid much closer attention to social history than was the case with older textbooks. The formula was what problems existed and what laws parliament passed in order to rectify the situation. Because there was also consideration of the political system in the nineteenth century, this led to ample coverage of parliament for that period. It said of the 1869 decision to introduce annual parliaments that it allowed continuous opposition to the government.¹⁰⁶ It covered the political struggle for the introduction of parliamentary sovereignty and included a comparative element towards the end in which it considered why these developments occurred earlier in Norway than in the other Scandinavian countries. Its answer was that there was no class of nobles or gentry who were able to impede democratization.¹⁰⁷ This linked closely to Norwegian identity as an egalitarian country. As the book was published in 1997, the authors were able to consider the politics of almost the entire twentieth century. Parliament was often referred to in the narrative of events.

A number of authors, including the historian Kåre Tønnesson, produced a work on Norwegian history before 1850. On the role of the *ting* these were described as both adjudicators and legislatures. The focus was on the limits to their power: it was stated that although a litigator might succeed in his complaint at the *ting*, he himself would still be responsible for enforcing justice. Since arms was the deciding factor anyway, many chose to go directly to a physical struggle rather than raise the matter at the *ting*.¹⁰⁸ Despite peasants making laws on the four main *ting*, it was possible for the king to issue decrees.¹⁰⁹ The book was not conducive to Norwegian nationalism when treating the constitutional assembly. The regent Christian Frederik was probably colluding with Frederik VI of Denmark to restore Danish sovereignty when the international situation allowed it.¹¹⁰ Among the 75 patrician representatives at Eidsvoll, 68 were of foreign origin.¹¹¹ The book claimed that the constitution was radical, with 45 per cent of adult men being given the right to vote.¹¹² Even so, it did not see the uprising that led to the constitution as popularly based, but as the working of elites.¹¹³ There was the usual coverage of the conflicts between parliament and Carl Johan, with the gathering of troops at Etterstad in 1821 considered here to have been instrumental in making parliament cede on the issue of the Danish state debt.¹¹⁴ However, it stood firm on the issue of the nobility and rejected Carl Johan's proposals to increase the power of the king in 1824. Although Carl Johan on average vetoed a fifth of the acts passed by parliament,

¹⁰⁵ Emblem, Libæk and Stenersen, *Norge*, p. 238.

¹⁰⁶ T. Emblem, I. Libæk, Ø. Stenersen and T. Syvertsen, *Norge 2. Norgeshistorie etter 1850* (Oslo, 1997), p. 67.

¹⁰⁷ Emblem, Libæk, Stenersen and Syvertsen, *Norge*, p. 74.

¹⁰⁸ K. Tønnesson (ed.), J. Eliassen, C. Krag, K. Sprauten and S. Støa, *Spor i tid. Noreg før 1850* (no place of publication, 1995), p. 24.

¹⁰⁹ Tønnesson (ed.), *Spor* p. 43.

¹¹⁰ Tønnesson (ed.), *Spor*, p. 154.

¹¹¹ Tønnesson (ed.), *Spor*, p. 157.

¹¹² Tønnesson (ed.), *Spor*, p. 159.

¹¹³ Tønnesson (ed.), *Spor*, p. 161.

¹¹⁴ Tønnesson (ed.), *Spor*, p. 189.

his governments in the 1820s often introduced bills implementing what he had previously declined to support.

The companion volume to this book, covering history after 1850, was written by the historians of the Second World War, Ole Kristian Grimnes and Berit Nøkleby. It gave a standard explanation for the politics of the period, also dealing with nineteenth-century mentalities. Many were sceptical about political parties in parliament, others thought it an anomaly that Norway alone did not allow government ministers to attend.¹¹⁵ The tension created by the conflict over the latter and the king's veto made politics a concern of the masses. The struggle within the union in the 1890s benefited the Liberals and allowed them to introduce universal manhood suffrage in 1898.¹¹⁶ Ending the union in 1905 may have been the last occasion on which parliament took centre stage. After this, it was more reactive to popular pressure, while the interwar years witnessed decades in which parliament and governments were weak due to opinions being so sharply divided.¹¹⁷ During the German occupation, the presidential council of parliament was pressured into writing a letter to the king asking him to abdicate.¹¹⁸ Until 1961 the Labour Party held a majority in parliament and the opposition believed that this emasculated the institution, as decisions were in fact made in Labour headquarters. The King's Bay mining accident in 1963 temporarily allowed other parties to form a government, which was the last case in which parliament was considered at length in this work.¹¹⁹

These modern books avoided parliamentary history in the twentieth century, instead dealing with the laws passed by parliament on the economy and social conditions. An extreme example indicating how far the wheel had turned from traditional high politics to greater interest in social history, was the book by the labour historian Finn Olstad published in 2000. Even for the nineteenth century, when parliament was the scene of the most momentous decisions regarding the country, there was no coverage except for a page about the Liberal and peasant opposition of the 1870s led by Sverdrup.¹²⁰ Although the emphasis on democracy has been strengthened in educational laws and the curricula in recent years, democracy is today conceived more as rights, norms and participation than in its original meaning of government by the people.¹²¹ This was even more clearly brought out in the 1994 curriculum for the now-separate civics.¹²² Knowledge about actual democracy consequently forms just one component of democratic citizenship.¹²³ This explains why parliamentary history is no longer seen as of prime importance.

Conclusion

Throughout this period of two hundred years, there was rising emphasis on democracy in Norwegian society. To early nineteenth-century authors of history books, this constituted

¹¹⁵O.K. Grimnes and B. Nøkleby, *Spor i tid. Noreg etter 1850* (no place of publication, 1995), p. 46.

¹¹⁶Grimnes and Nøkleby, *Spor*, p. 64.

¹¹⁷Grimnes and Nøkleby, *Spor*, p. 95.

¹¹⁸Grimnes and Nøkleby, *Spor*, p. 123.

¹¹⁹Grimnes and Nøkleby, *Spor*, p. 164.

¹²⁰F. Olstad, *Veier til vår tid. Norgeshistorie etter 1850* (no place of publication, 2000), p. 55.

¹²¹Ø. Østerud, F. Engelstad and P. Selle, *Makten og demokratiet. En sluttbok fra Makt- og demokratiutredningen* (Oslo, 2003), p. 19. J.H. Stray, 'Demokratipedagogikk', in K.L. Bergo and J.H. Stray (eds), *Demokratisk medborgerskap i skolen* (Bergen, 2012), p. 20.

¹²²O. Skarpenes, *Kunnskapens legitimering. Fag og læreplaner i videregående skole* (Oslo, 2007), p. 254.

¹²³J.H. Stray, *Demokrati på timeplanen* (Bergen, 2011), p. 12.

a challenge. How could they present students with the salient facts about a constitutional assembly and a parliament which had acted as thorns in the side of the Swedish monarchy, without straying from the bounds of acceptable opinion? The solution was often to say as little as possible or to claim that Sweden had facilitated Norwegian ‘independence’. They had greater scope to cover the medieval *ting*, where the consensus was that they had afforded all free men the chance to make law in their district, until the unified national law code of 1274 had strengthened the king’s powers. No author made contemporary political points about it, but the extent to which this change was regretted may be regarded as indicative of his stance on democracy.

As parliament began to carve out a greater role for itself as the only elected institution until 1884, when governments began to be appointed based on electoral results, textbook authors needed to chart the conflicts of the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s. These all related to how much power parliament should wield and ensured plenty of coverage of parliamentary history. In the 1890s the union itself became a matter of controversy. By now Norwegian self-confidence had reached such heights that most textbook authors dared to present a frankly nationalistic account of recent events and what had gone before.

This continued after 1905 when independence was achieved. From 1940 mild criticism of the political institutions was added to otherwise complimentary accounts: poorer people had not had their situation improved by the constitution, and it was admitted after 1945 that parliament had been collaborationist in the face of the German occupiers. Between 1960 and 1969 history was incorporated into the new subject of ‘social science’ in the emerging nine-year comprehensive schools. The *ting* were removed from the syllabus in favour of more international history. All aspects of what was known about them had in any case by now been covered in the corpus of the textbooks.

The changes in the curriculum, new interest in social history and the more mundane role that parliament had played in society in the twentieth century, led to history books in the 1970s and the 1980s which sometimes did not even contain parliamentary history. History remained a separate subject in the new type of secondary schools which had replaced the *gymnasia* in 1974. The new curricula under Reform 94, however, mentioned neither the *ting*, the constitutional assembly nor parliament by name and democratization was conceived as occurring both institutionally and socially. The intrinsic importance of the modern representative institutions ensured that textbook writers still covered them. There was even the new perspective of religious or ethnic minorities who had been short-changed by the constitution. The *ting* also continued receiving limited attention.

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