

EARLY MODERN COURT STUDIES



Edited by Liesbeth Geervers and Harald Gustafsson

# Dynasties and State Formation in Early Modern Europe

Amsterdam  
University  
Press

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# Early Modern Court Studies

The early modern court in Europe was a political and cultural powerhouse and a hotbed of confessional intrigue, factional rivalry and international diplomacy. With a potent confluence of power, prestige and capital, the court set the tone for cultural innovation and fashions, provided for large numbers of people in food, board, wages and/or perquisites, while also being responsible for safeguarding the nation's security. Yet no court operated in isolation. The maintenance of international relations through kinship ties, treaties and alliances were crucial to dynastic success as the courts vied with one another on the highly politicized stage of European monarchy.

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# Dynasties and State Formation in Early Modern Europe

*Edited by  
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Cover illustration: Family potrait by David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl (1690–99) showing Queen Dowager Hedvig Eleonora, Charles XI of Sweden, Prince Charles (XII), Queen Ulrika Eleonora, Princess Ulrika Eleonora, Duke Frederick IV of Holstein-Gottorp, Dowager Duchess Fredericka Amalia of Holstein-Gottorp (sister of Queen Ulrika Eleonora) and Duchess Hedvig Sophia of Holstein-Gottorp (daughter of Charles XI)

Queen Ulrika Eleonora and Dowager Duchess Fredericka Amalia were sisters. Their children, Hedvig Sophia of Sweden and Duke Frederick IV of Holstein-Gottorp were married in 1698.  
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# 1. Building Dynasties, Shaping States: Dynasty and State Formation in Early Modern Europe

*Liesbeth Geevers and Harald Gustafsson*

**Abstract:** The introduction discusses the concepts of dynasty and state formation and their interrelated nature. It stresses the need to define the concept of dynasty as a kinship group with an acute sense of historical continuity, claiming the right to rule a certain territory and manifesting this claim in political, social and cultural ways; and the related concept of dynasty formation as the acts, conscious or unconscious, whereby such a group achieved and upheld its position as a dynasty, and how that position developed and changed.

**Keywords:** dynasty, state formation, early modern Europe, dynasty formation

## Dynasties

Dynasties are becoming ever more central in research on medieval and early modern power. The field has advanced to such a degree that the first articles focusing on dynasty as a concept have now seen the light, among them one by Natalia Nowakowska.<sup>1</sup> One of the conclusions of Nowakowska's article is that dynasty is a concept that is used in various different meanings: as an 'an umbrella term for early modern monarchy'; to describe succession regimes; or as a self-fashioning discourse.<sup>2</sup> The first use focuses on monarchies, the second on successions and the third on self-representation.

1 Nowakowska, 'What's in a Word?'

2 Nowakowska, 'What's in a Word?', pp. 460-61.



However, some researchers have also focused on dynasties as social groups, like Peter Haldén, who recently argued that (aristocratic) family groups were essential building blocks in pre-modern state formation.<sup>3</sup> A few years ago, and incidentally without using the term 'dynasty', Giora Sternberg sketched the intricate status differences between members of the wider Bourbon dynasty during the reign of Louis XIV, inadvertently delineating the hierarchies that shaped the broader dynastic group.<sup>4</sup> This volume intends to add its voice to the choir of dynastic history by engaging with the concept of dynasty, breaking it down into several constitutive concepts and exploring the relationship between dynasties and state formation.<sup>5</sup>

It is only logical and right that historians are beginning to wonder what we actually mean when we use the term 'dynasty'. This question is perhaps all the more relevant because the term was not normally used during the early modern period, at least not in its usual modern meaning. Anyone who has worked with genealogies will recognise that terms like house (*casa, maison, Haus*) or lineage (*prosapia, Stamm*) were used much more commonly to refer to the family at the heart of the work. Alternatively, the issue was sidestepped completely by referring to 'the genealogy of the counts/dukes/kings of ...'.<sup>6</sup> The term 'dynasty' was almost never deployed in this context. Instead, until around 1750 'dynasty' was used in the meaning Aristotle gave to it: namely a power structure, lordship or dominion, with the implication of arbitrary rule by an extreme oligarchy.<sup>7</sup> The term normally described polities in antiquity. 'Dynasty' did not gain its modern meaning until the late eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, the contemporary meaning of the word 'dynasty' does not help us when we wish to analyse family-based power structures in early modern Europe. This does not mean that we should not use it. There may be benefits to using concepts that contemporaries also used to describe the phenomena in their own time, but there are plenty of examples where

3 Haldén, *Family Power*.

4 Sternberg, *Status Interactions*.

5 This volume is a result of the research project 'Re-thinking Dynastic Rule: Dynasties and State Formation in the Habsburg and Oldenburg Monarchies, 1500–1700', funded by Riksbankens jubileumsfond (P17-0090:1). Our initial conclusions have been published elsewhere: Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation'; Geevers, 'Ny dynastisk historia'.

6 A few examples of the use of 'house': Péril, *La genealogie et descente*; Rasch and Stumpf, *Hauß Osterreich*; Morigi, *Historia brieve*. Examples of the use of 'lineage': Hossmann, *Genealogia Austriaca, Das ist: Oesterreichischer Stam[m]*; Vitignano, *Prosapia D'Austria*.

7 Nowakowska, 'What's in a Word?', p. 454.

8 Nowakowska, 'What's in a Word?' The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the meaning 'a succession of rulers of the same line or family'.

sticking a modern label on such a phenomenon is equally helpful. Would Emperor Ferdinand II ever have used the term ‘confessionalisation’? Or, for that matter, how often does Cardinal Richelieu refer to ‘state formation’ in his writing and correspondence? Yet such terms both illuminate and summarise important developments in seventeenth-century Europe. That ‘dynasty’ was not a contemporaneous term is therefore not a problem in itself, but it does add to our responsibility to define it carefully, as with all our analytic concepts. This is not something that all authors devoting works to dynasties are wont to do. Nowakowska is entirely right in pointing out that many historians use the term uncritically and with multiple meanings. This is of course a result of the fact that the term is so widely used, even in our modern-day conversations about royal families, that its meaning appears to be quite self-evident. Obviously, the various uses Nowakowska identifies indicate that — at least among historians — it is actually not immediately clear what ‘dynasty’ does mean.

This is not because of a lack of definitions. One definition often used is proposed by Wolfgang Weber, who wrote that a dynasty was ‘an optimised manifestation of the family’ with ‘a heightened sense of identity’, a ‘collection of assets’, and practices of marriage and inheritance that aim to keep the assets together, and ‘an increased sense of historical continuity’.<sup>9</sup> Weber has been criticised, by Heide Wunder among others, for focusing too much on dynasty as an agnatic line. Instead, Wunder has stressed the cognatic perspective: both men and women have to be taken into account with their different roles within a dynasty. She sees a dynasty as ‘a complex web of relations and fields of action for the men and women [of the family] living at a given time’.<sup>10</sup> It is important to bear this web of family relations in mind and not focus solely on the father-and-son perspective of the dynasty. What could be labelled the vertical dynasty, the dynasty’s extension into the past and into the future, is important, but so is the horizontal dynasty, the actual group of ‘living men and women’, and how they perceived and acted out their dynastic relations. The horizontal perspective on dynasty is often neglected but will be central in this book.

Weber’s use of the definition can give the impression of ‘dynasty’ as something that is either achieved or not yet achieved by a ruling family. Once such and such elements were in place, we can speak of a dynasty. But the

9 Weber, ‘Dynastiesicherung’, p. 95; ‘eine optimierte Erscheinungsform der Familie’; ‘erhöhte Identität’; ‘gemeinsam genutzten ... Besitz’; ‘gesteigerte historische Kontinuität’.

10 Wunder, ‘Einleitung’, pp. 16–17, p. 18: ‘komplexes Beziehungsgeflecht und Handlungsfeld der jeweils gleichzeitig lebenden Agnaten und Agnatinnen’.

focus on a family's contemporaneous members — a set of individuals that changed with each death, birth and marriage — and how they coalesced into a cohesive dynasty group 'at a certain time' (to paraphrase Wunder) highlights the fact that we cannot consider dynasties to be a 'finished product' at any time during their existence. In addition to changes in the 'biological hardware' — the actual family members — we should also take into account that membership of the dynasty was subject to social conventions: sanctioned marriages brought new members to the family, whereas unsanctioned — say, morganatic — marriages did not; the children were treated quite differently depending on whether they were the fruits of lawful marriages, unsanctioned marriages or extramarital relations. And there is the perennial question of where the dynasty ended: were nieces and nephews still part of it? Did this depend on whether they were the offspring of a sister or a brother? Did this change over time, and did it depend on certain circumstances? What constituted the 'dynasty' could change over time and according to circumstances, and depended on the different contexts in which it operated. Indeed, rather than chasing an elusive definition of this protean family group, it might be more useful to focus on the processes that caused it to change shape. In line with this thought, we find it more fruitful to see 'dynasty' as a process, to focus on dynasty *formation* rather than dynasties, which can be seen as a continual process, just like state formation.<sup>11</sup>

Here, we will understand dynasty as a kinship group with an acute sense of historical continuity, claiming the right to rule a certain territory and manifesting this claim in political, social and cultural ways.<sup>12</sup> Dynasty formation refers to the acts, conscious or unconscious, whereby such a group achieved and upheld its position as a dynasty, and how that position developed and changed. An important feature of dynasty formation is that the interests of individual family members needed to be subordinated to the family's collective interests, be they political and social (holding on to, and extending, its patrimony and status) or cultural (representing the family group). This often happened through the promotion of dynastic awareness both among the family members and among a wider public, with the intention of establishing the dynasty as a social unit, and solidifying its claims to its assets and its societal position.

11 Weber uses the concept *Dynastiebildung* (dynasty building), but we prefer dynasty formation, stressing both conscious and unconscious acts forming the dynasty. *Dynastiebildung* can also give the impression of something that has been achieved once and for all.

12 Definitions of the central concepts in dynasty research are discussed in an earlier publication of our project; see Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', pp. 347–50.

Our understanding of dynasty and dynasty formation deliberately avoids defining the kinship groups in terms of who belonged to the dynasty and who did not. Who were seen as members and who not depended on the context in each individual case. There could be different political, social or cultural concerns dictating the inclusion of persons in the dynasty or their exclusion. The dynasty was also open to different ways of organising the internal hierarchy of the group. There was not one fixed way in which a dynasty should be seen and behave; how the dynasty formation process of a given princely family developed is an empirical question.

Another important concept used in this volume is dynastic centralisation. With ‘dynastic centralisation’ we mean the degree to which the ruling prince tried to control his relatives — and possibly succeeded. It refers to the concentration of power within ruling families in the head of the family, whereby the family head becomes more powerful and junior relatives less autonomous. In general, our hypothesis is that there was a process of dynastic centralisation going on in the early modern European dynasties, which was mirrored by, and closely connected to, the centralising process we see within states.<sup>13</sup>

## Dynasties and States

One of the factors that may have impacted dynasty formation is state formation. During the early modern period, European states, entangled in an emerging state system, in many cases developed a greater coherence, effective tax systems, military muscle and centralised rule.<sup>14</sup> This is a sweeping characterisation of processes that were far from unidirectional, and most European states remained more or less loosely connected conglomerates of areas where the authority of the ruling centre differed between different territories.<sup>15</sup> In the long run, however, the polities of Europe achieved a greater ‘stateness’. In the discussion of this state formation process, many aspects have been highlighted, for example the importance of such interest

13 Gustafsson, ‘Dynasty Formation’; Geevers, ‘Ny dynastisk historia’.

14 The modern classic on this development is Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*. See also, e.g. Downing, *The Military Revolution*; Glete, *War and the State*; Tuong Vu, ‘Studying the State’; Gustafsson, *Makt och människor*; Dincecco, Cox and Onorato, *Warfare, Fiscal Gridlock, and State Formation*, SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3836109> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3836109>.

15 Elliott, ‘A Europe of Composite Monarchies’, pp. 48–71; Gustafsson, ‘The Conglomerate State’, pp. 189–213; Morrill, ‘Dynasties, Realms, Peoples and State Formation’, pp. 17–43.

groups as the traditional aristocracy,<sup>16</sup> the estates,<sup>17</sup> emerging capitalist groups<sup>18</sup> and indeed the common people.<sup>19</sup> Different social groups and networks have thus been singled out as influential within the state, and many contemporary scholars see the state as a network that can be used by other networks.<sup>20</sup> But less attention has been given to dynasties as possible power groups, or networks, at the heart of the state, and the relation between state formation and dynasty formation remains to be explored.

What role did dynasties play in the state formation process? Nowakowska sketched how concepts of dynasty, monarchy and succession can merge in the implicit thinking of historians, which indicates that 'states' and 'dynasties' were highly connected, forming a relationship that can be called symbiotic. In early modern European history, there were very few states without ruling houses, especially after the heyday of city republics came to an end. Even among the republics that remained, some had dynastic elements — the Orange-Nassaus held several more or less hereditary stadholderates in the Dutch Republic, while the English Protector Oliver Cromwell made use of royal trappings and was succeeded by his son.<sup>21</sup> Many an overthrow of some tyrant or other ended with the election of another monarch in their place. Such examples highlight that it was hard to imagine a polity without a hereditary head. Even in elected monarchies, the new ruler was normally a close relative of the old. At the same time, dynasties were of course founded on some material base, often hereditary — one of the core elements of dynasties would seem to be the handing down of a patrimony to following generations. That did not need to be a state in the modern sense — aristocrats who held non-sovereign lordships were avid dynasty-builders as well<sup>22</sup> — but historians generally associate dynasties with sovereign polities.

In addition, Michael Mann used the term 'dynastic centralisation' to refer to the efforts of the Austrian Habsburg rulers to impose a common

16 Anderson, *Lineages*.

17 Holenstein, 'Empowering Interactions', pp. 1–31; Rutz, 'Möglichkeiten und Grenzen fürstlicher Herrschaft', pp. 97–126, p. 102: characterises estates as 'Strukturelement vormoderner Staatlichkeit'.

18 Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*.

19 Te Brake, *Shaping History*; Gustafsson, *Makt och människor*; Dørum, Hallenberg and Katajala, *Bringing the People Back In*.

20 Glete, *War and the State*; Braddick, *State Formation*.

21 The historiography on the Orange-Nassaus is extensive. Recent monographs in English include: Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic*, and Broomhall and Van Gent, *Gender, Power and Identity*; Woodford, *Oliver Cromwell's Power*.

22 Geever and Marini (eds), *Dynastic Identity*.

administration on their fragmented domains, composed of civil servants who were loyal to the dynasty.<sup>23</sup> Mann's use of the phrase indicates how dynasties could play a role in holding states together by providing a focus of loyalty: centralisation around the dynasty. Particularly in monarchies where proto-national identities were not strong — as was the case in many conglomerates — and overarching institutional structures were absent or weak, such a 'rallying around the flag' meant dynasties played an important role in keeping monarchies together.

## Spain and Denmark

How did state formation processes shape dynasty formation? Preliminary answers to this question have emerged from our research project 'Re-thinking Dynastic Rule', which centred on the Spanish Habsburgs and the Danish Oldenburgs during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As explained above, we see dynasties as changing family groups. Our research shows that both membership and internal organisation were subject to change over time, and state formation played a role in these changes. Succession practices are a case in point. In the sixteenth-century Oldenburg monarchy, partitions were still possible — not in the kingdom of Denmark-Norway but in the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, outside the kingdom proper. This led to the emergence of several branches that became quite independent of each other — different dynasties, we might say. However, partly at the demand of the local estates, who resisted further political fragmentation, these partitions stopped. During the seventeenth century, younger brothers were provided for outside of the monarchy, in prince-bishoprics. This intervention by the estates changed the position of brothers within the House of Oldenburg markedly: brothers no longer set out on an independent path by acquiring their own portion of the dynastic patrimony but experienced a substantial status decline. The status decline was accompanied by obstacles to marriage which limited the number of branches of the dynasty.<sup>24</sup>

From the middle of the seventeenth century, there was a drive towards dynastic centralisation in Denmark. When Frederick III had to relinquish much of his power to the aristocrats in 1648, he increased his power within

23 Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, pp. 338–51. Mann's 'dynastic centralisation' may be described as 'centralisation around the dynasty'. As noted before, we develop another definition of the term in this volume, which may be described as 'centralisation within the dynasty'.

24 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation'.

the dynasty by excluding his half-siblings from influence. In 1660, the King took power within the state when Denmark-Norway became a hereditary, absolute monarchy. This was followed by heavily centralising administrative reforms, but also by the King's total domination of the dynasty. Dynastic centralisation thus preceded state centralisation, and in the end each strengthened the other.

Equally, the combined forces of increased administrative centralisation and pressure from the estates shaped the Spanish Habsburg dynasty. In both the Austrian and Burgundian predecessor dynasties, partitions had been common practice and they continued during the sixteenth century, but then stopped. This was not due to the existence of a monarchy-wide succession law that prohibited partitions, but rather to a changed perception of the monarchy: previously, the dynasty's patrimony had been seen as a collective possession, but after 1600 it came to be conceived more and more as an indivisible whole — a process we can trace in successive royal testaments.<sup>25</sup> In this case, the wishes of the estates of, for instance, the Low Countries — who had fielded many proposals to have a second son as their hereditary prince — clashed with emerging notions of 'reasons of state', which disapproved of the dissection of the state.<sup>26</sup> And, as in the Oldenburg case, this dramatically changed the position of brothers, who no longer had a chance to strike out on their own or marry — two closely connected developments.

But the continued pressure from local estates provided a role for younger princes nevertheless: estates in both the Low Countries and Portugal pushed for the appointment of governors of royal blood, which provided high-ranking opportunities to younger brothers, sisters and other relatives. Negotiations between the estates and the central court — where unity-friendly ministers wielded much influence — thus changed the roles of family members within the monarchy. Younger princes were to play a subordinated role as governors, instead of becoming independent rulers in their own right. While the central administration could become more centralised, partly due to the end of partitions, the dynasty flourished and became a power group where multiple members were called upon to govern, turning the Spanish Habsburg dynasty into a beast with several heads. But a strong hierarchy existed between the various heads, of course. At the end of these developments, the Spanish Habsburg monarchy had become perhaps a more

25 Geevers, 'The Miracles of Spain', pp. 99–119; García-Badell Arias, 'La sucesión de Carlos II', p. 147.

26 Rivero Rodríguez, *Olivares*, p. 193. Esteban Estríngana, '¿Renunciar a Flandes?', pp. 85–110.

cohesive ruling group, with various members ruling different territories, but also more stratified, with a king who commanded and relatives who obeyed. Centralisation within the states thus impacted the Oldenburg and Spanish Habsburg dynasties in different ways, but that state formation had an impact on the shape of dynasties seems undeniable.

## **Lessons from the Contributions in this Volume**

While a comparative research project focusing on two monarchies may steer us clear of the usual mistake of elevating a single observation into a model, the sample is of course still too small to draw any solid conclusions. This volume expands the empirical base for our contentions beyond the Danish Oldenburgs and Spanish Habsburgs by bringing together contributions on France, England and Scotland, the Austrian and Spanish Habsburg monarchies, Sweden and the county of Nassau, a collection of Lutheran, Calvinist and Catholic polities that were either quite territorially centralised or not at all. This broadens the basis for tentative conclusions and hypotheses, although it has to be kept in mind that most of the contributions focus on Protestant north-western Europe. Five of the eleven articles deal with Sweden and Denmark, since one of our purposes was to bring Nordic dynastic studies into closer contact with current international research and to expose a wider audience to Nordic research on this topic.

In the following short presentation of the contributions, we will discuss three aspects central to our project and the subject of this volume that recur in many of them: the extent and organisation of the dynasty; the relation between dynasty formation and state formation; and dynastic centralisation. How ruling houses dealt with these questions gave rise to, and was a result of, their dynastic culture.

Several of the authors highlight what we have termed the horizontal perspective on dynasty instead of the vertical — defining dynasty as a family's contemporaneous members and not only as a line of successive rulers. In her chapter on sacral and divine legitimation for monarchy (Chapter 2: 'Divine Right of Dynasty: Deposing the God-Given Monarch in Protestant Europe'), Cathleen Sarti studies depositions of monarchs in Northern Europe. She asks how rulers with such a strong divine legitimacy as the Scandinavian and British monarchs could still be deposed, without breaking with this religious ideology. The answer is that legitimacy was anchored not in one single person but in the dynasty as a whole. By bringing an uncle, a brother or another close relative of the deposed monarch to the throne — a person



from the horizontal dynasty — the idea of kingdom by the grace of God was upheld. This shows that ideologies on divine right were in fact projected on the horizontal dynasty instead of only on rulers.

Seeing dynasty as a group of contemporaneous individuals necessarily opens up for studying inclusion and exclusion — who was part of this group and who was not? In Fabian Persson's study of the Palatine relatives of the Swedish rulers (Chapter 3: 'Presence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder: Proximity and the Creation of Dynasty'), it is obvious that presence or absence at the court was an important variable in establishing membership. In the first generation, the Palatines worked hard to be physically present at the royal castle in Stockholm, which worked relatively well, and one of their own, Charles Gustav, was to follow his cousin Queen Christina on the throne. But in the next few generations, despite being close relatives of the kings, the Palatines failed to be present and were in fact excluded from the dynasty; they were, so to speak, pushed outside the horizon.

Whereas Persson highlights the importance of presence, Rubén González Cuerva highlights the role of education, socialisation and employment in delineating the extent of the dynasty. (Chapter 4: 'The Austrian Nephews: The Offspring of Maximilian II and Maria of Austria at the Service of the Spanish King'). The division of the Habsburgs into an Austrian and a Spanish branch created a situation where some of the sons of Maximilian and Maria were raised at the Spanish court by Philip II and employed in Spanish service, while others stayed in Vienna. As González Cuerva concludes, 'the interpretation of dynastic interests varied from individual to individual'. There were conflicting interests, in which not least the senior women of the family had an important say, and instead of two well-defined Habsburg branches, we find a much more amorphous and malleable dynastic group.

We once again meet Philip II in Liesbeth Geever's study of how he, in 1586, arranged the layout of the royal crypt in the Escorial and thus rearranged the dynasty (Chapter 5: 'Sixteen Corpses: The First Reburials in the Escorial in 1586 and the Dynastic Dynamics that Made Them Happen'). Not just kings and queens were buried there, but also their children — infants, adults and illegitimates — and even an array of nephews, cousins and other relatives. This created an inclusive, 'post-mortem' dynastic group. Two family dynamics were at work here. First, Philip as family head exercised increased authority in mandating burials in the Escorial, including for individuals who had indicated other wishes (a 'pull' dynamic). Second, peripheral relatives who previously would not have had any expectation of being buried in the dynastic crypt actively pushed for burial in the Escorial, by making

testamentary stipulations handing control of their place of burial to the family head (a 'push' dynamic). Interestingly, the young Austrian archdukes that served in the Spanish monarchy, described by González Cuerva, make their appearance again in the crypt, showing how socialisation, employment and burial were connected.

Rulers and their relatives often worked together to shape the dynastic family group, by being present, sending their children to other courts and settling on place of burial together. Mats Hallenberg's contribution (Chapter 6: 'An Elected Dynasty of Sweden? Blood, Charisma and Representative Monarchy') highlights the autonomy of the Swedish kings in another aspect: While King Gustav Vasa deliberately involved the relatives of his two wives in governing the country, his sons choose to distance themselves from their relatives among the Swedish nobility, trying to make the dynasty more exclusive. Taken together, our contributions demonstrate that there existed several strategies, both on behalf of the ruler and of the family members, to manage the flexible outer borders of the horizontal dynasty.

Hallenberg also highlights the complicated relations between dynasty formation and state formation. The Swedish Vasa monarchy was formed in an interplay between the ruler, the noble elite and the diet (the *riksdag*); Gustav Vasa made the project a 'joint responsibility' by getting the agreement of the council of the realm and the four-estate *riksdag* for the introduction of hereditary monarchy and the creation of duchies for his younger sons. Hereditary monarchy strengthened the position of the ruler, but it was achieved in cooperation with other groups in society, who would become, in the future, arbiters of the position of the king. In this way, a *monarchia mixta* developed that proved to be a long-lived framework for politics in Sweden.

The relationship between state formation and dynasty formation is further explored by Joakim Scherp (Chapter 7: 'Narrowing Dynastic Rule: Models of Governance, Social Conflict and the Hobbesian Bargain in Early Modern Sweden (1560–1718)'). When Queen Christina of Sweden decided to abdicate from the throne in 1654, she did her best to give her cousin and successor Charles Gustav a strong position with respect to the aristocracy and the Swedish *riksdag*. Yet, Scherp argues, the Council of the Realm and *riksdag* made a conscious effort to limit the dynasty's power by only granting hereditary rights to the new King's offspring, while cutting off his other relatives — his brother Duke Adolf Johan and indeed the abdicated queen — from the royal family tree. The relatives' position did not improve under kings Charles XI and XII, who managed to limit the power of the Council — we might recall that Persson showed how the relatives of these kings were relegated to a peripheral position. The Swedish example thus

highlights how power players like the Council and the *riksdag* could establish parameters for the dynasty's composition.

Both Hallenberg and Sarti show how sudden changes, like the deposition of rulers or introduction of new forms of government, did not exclude continuity; to a large extent, the dynasty represented this continuity. Jasper van der Steen (Chapter 8: 'The Nassaus and State Formation in Pre-Modern Germany') also deals with how dynastic continuity was possible. Besides offering a good general discussion on state formation and dynasty formation, Van der Steen's chapter focusses on the practice of partitioning the holdings among the sons of the Nassau dynasty. Like many other German princely houses, the Nassaus did not practice primogeniture, and their small county came to be divided and subdivided many times. Conventional wisdom would say that this hampered state formation, but the family repeatedly made provisions for future reunifications, should one of the lines be extinguished. These family pacts, together with state-building activities in the respective parts of the patrimony, represented, as Van der Steen claims, 'a different road to modernity'.

Another common tool for dynastic continuity was marriage. In his article (Chapter 9: 'Dynastic Marriage Spheres in Early Modern Europe: A Comparison of the Danish Oldenburgs and Three Houses of the Empire'), Harald Gustafsson claims that marriage was an essential means of dynasty formation, useful both for creating and maintaining inter-dynastic networks, and to demonstrate the status of the house or even enhance it. It has often been claimed that most European princely houses were related to one another; that there existed a 'European family of princes'. The present study falsifies this hypothesis; on the contrary, it supports claims that there existed a relatively closed marriage sphere among the Lutheran houses. Religion was important in choosing spouses for princely children, but equality of status was most important. The quest to give the children the opportunity to retain their appropriate status level seems to have been more important than possible political gains.

A clearly discernible concern for providing for all the dynasty's members through inheritance or marriage did not, however, get in the way of dynastic centralisation, which was a tendency that can be observed in many of our cases. We have already seen Hallenberg noticing it for the early Vasas. Scherp draws a parallel between Charles XI and Frederick III in Denmark, who took control of his family before introducing absolutism in the state. Philip II's regrouping of the deceased members of the family, as shown by Geever, also demonstrates these new powers of the ruling member of the dynasty. In contrast, centralising within the Spanish Habsburg monarchy was delayed, according to Cuerva, by the fact that the members of the

Habsburg dynasty pursued their different individual interests; perhaps too little dynastic centralisation after all?

In France, dynastic centralisation and a centralisation of state power was on the move in the seventeenth century, which left the younger sons of the king in a precarious situation. In his contribution (Chapter 10: 'The Frustrations of Being the Spare: Second Sons in the French Monarchy and their Increasingly Limited Roles in Politics and Society, 1560s–1780s'), Jonathan Spangler examines the fate of four younger brothers of kings, who traditionally bore the title of *Monsieur*. Having been autonomous political power players wielding considerable military clout in the sixteenth century, dynastic centralisation forced them to distinguish themselves in social and cultural ways instead from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards. They acted as patrons of the arts or even of political writings: the last *Monsieur* examined, Louis-Stanislas, count of Provence, took part in the public debate in this way in the period leading up to the French Revolution. Over the generations, younger brothers had gone from being rivals of their ruling brothers to being decisively subordinated.

While we have seen that dynastic centralisation had consequences for politics and culture, the contribution of Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen shows that there were alternatives to dynastic thinking (Chapter 11, 'Danish Dynastic Histories in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Claus Christoffersen Lyschander, Vitus Bering, Ludvig Holberg and Hans Peter Anchersen'). Most histories that are discussed were written while the Danish kings were establishing their dominance within their dynasties and in the realm. We can see the development reflected in the histories. Arild Huitfeldt, writing around 1600, described the situation *before* centralisation within the dynasty and the Oldenburg monarchy, singing the praises not of the dynasty but of the Council of the Realm as the focus of authority; he presented Denmark as an *elective* monarchy, which downplayed the dynasty's role (but elevated that of the Council), and abhorred the partitions going on in the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, which was a dynastic rather than a 'national' policy. Later authors, however, tended to focus on the long sequence of kings and the fact that the Danish kingdom had always been in essence a *hereditary* monarchy, which downplayed the role of the Council and was probably exactly the sort of focus a dominant family head and ruler would have appreciated. This sort of centralisation also allowed for a kind of unification between ruler and people: many later authors were also keen to give the Danish realm and people a long, heroic and basically mythical history. This is an interesting hint at the affinity of dynastic thinking with emerging ethnicistic and nationalistic thinking.

All these articles thus highlight different aspects of dynastic centralisation (inheritance, marriage, deposition, burial, historiography, the roles of junior relatives as well as of other power wielders like the Nordic Councils of the Realm), and different ways of going about it: each dynasty dealt with it in its own way. It might be fruitful to speak about differing dynastic cultures; there were alternative paths of dynasty formation, just as there were varieties of interplay between dynasties and state formation.

## Ways Forward

Early modern dynasty formation and state formation were deeply interconnected, but neither process was determined by the other. In the long run, both dynasty formation and state formation in early modern Europe moved in the direction of centralisation, but only in the very long run, and as a result of context-bound actions, not as an inevitable process. Both processes were also influenced by many other developments, less touched upon in this volume, such as rising merchant capitalism, globalisation, demographic changes, social protest or war. We believe our project and the contributions in this anthology have shown how dynasties and dynasty formation existed in a complicated societal framework. The dynasty itself can be regarded as interest group in the state, and as other such groups, it could be more or less coherent.

Building on the contributions to this volume and our own studies of Spain and Denmark, it is possible to point to a few important paths for further dynastic studies. One is the varying extent and organisation of the horizontal dynasty. Who was regarded as belonging to the dynasty varied between different contexts, and the same person could be treated as a family member in one respect, but not in another. This was not only dependent on the choice of the ruler. The agency of other family members is important to take into account, as well as the agency of other interest groups in the state like parliaments and estates or, in Scandinavia, the Council of the Realm. This process of dynasty formation was often characterised by dynastic centralisation. Whether or not dynastic centralisation occurred depended on the outcome of the negotiations between all these stakeholders. A question for further research is thus: When and why did dynastic centralisation succeed or fail, and how was this connected to state formation? Closely connected to this is the drive we have seen for dynastic centralisation. It was driven by the head of the family, but he (or very occasionally she) always had to take into account the actions of other

family members, as well as the political framework and the actions of other interest groups in the state.

In this context, gender differences ought to be studied more closely, but also different possibilities and strategies for dynasty members of differing age and marital status. Being eldest son or one of the cadets created different problems and opportunities, while there might have been less differences among the daughters. Daughters married off to other dynasties had an interesting dual position as link between two houses. The possibilities of women to influence dynasty formation is worth further studies, as well as the positions and actions of illegitimate family members.

Such questions could preferably be investigated in comparative studies of different dynasties. Comparison is also needed to address the question of dynastic culture. What factors lay behind how dynasties chose to act, for instance when marrying off their younger members or distributing heritable resources, even partitioning the right to rule, between them? There were surely political and material factors involved, but also something that could be called cultural preferences. Both dynasty formation and state formation took place within a framework of cultural conceptions on how society and human relations should be organised.

All in all, we hope this volume demonstrates the advantages of working with 'dynasty' as an analytical concept and of looking for connections between dynasty formation and state formation. Like state formation, dynasty formation was — and is — a continuous process, wherever there were kinship groups striving with some success for a central position within a polity. That this process can be played out in a multitude of ways depending on political, social and cultural contexts is perhaps the most important message to take from our project and this volume.

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## 2. Divine Right of Dynasty: Deposing the God-Given Monarch in Protestant Europe

*Cathleen Sarti*

**Abstract:** In the early modern period, the discourse on divine right of monarchy reached a peak. At the same time, depositions of monarchs by their own subjects increased as well, events which were — in theory — not possible within the political ideology of divine right. This chapter argues that the theory of divine right and the practice of depositions did indeed complement each other when taking a closer look both at the ideas of divinely legitimated monarchy and of the course of events during a deposition. In particular, the role of the dynasty and of the form of government within divine right of monarchy is discussed further and identified as central to early modern political thought.

**Keywords:** divine right of monarchy, depositions, Northern Europe, political thought, political culture

‘Kings are called Gods by the propheticall King Dauid, because they sit vpon GOD his Throne in the earth, and haue the count of their administration to giue vnto him. Now in this contract (I say) betwixt the king and his people, God is doubtles the only Iudge, both because to him onely the king must make count of his administration (as is oft said before) as likewise by the oath in the coronation, God is made iudge and reuenger of the breakers: For in his presence, as only iudge of oaths, all oaths ought to be made.’<sup>1</sup>  
— James VI/I, the only Stuart king in three generations not to be deposed by his subjects. He was the son of the deposed Mary I of Scotland, father of the deposed

<sup>1</sup> [James VI], *The True Lawe of Free Monarchies*.

Charles I of England and Scotland, and grandfather of the deposed James II/VII of England and Scotland.

The scholarly king of Scotland and later of England as well, James VI/I of the house of Stuart was just the highest-ranking author of one of the many political texts justifying monarchical rule as God-given in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The combination of new media (book printing in all its different formats), the questioning of hitherto indisputable truths about God and the world, and the growth of literacy and education among European populations led to intense discussions about the basis of political order. The discourse on the divine right of monarchy reached a peak especially in the latter half of the sixteenth century, but also during the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, depositions of monarchs by their own subjects increased. In Protestant Northern Europe, 25 per cent of all monarchical reigns between 1500 and 1700 ended with the monarch being deposed.<sup>3</sup> Discourses on divine right, political order or the right of resistance, and actual political unrest and rebellion came together at this point. Looking at depositions and their surrounding discourses therefore provides an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the divine right of monarchy.<sup>4</sup>

As I argue in this chapter, such a deeper knowledge of how contemporaries understood divine right is needed due to a common misrepresentation of divine right as the right to rule of an individual monarch and as a right which protected monarchs from depositions.<sup>5</sup> Most influential was the study by John Neville Figgis, first published in 1896, in which he presents the idea of a divine right of kings, based on English cases, as the basis for non-resistance and passive obedience. Moreover, he linked the divine legitimation of monarchy to hereditary right by primogeniture and to the accountability of monarchs to God alone.<sup>6</sup> This misrepresentation is based on an overemphasis on political writings by James VI/I, Jean Bodin and others, and the monarchical spectacle of supposed sacrality, evident in rituals such

2 See also Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, p. 19.

3 See Sarti, 'Depositions of Monarchs', p. 581, footnote 2.

4 Kern, *Gottesgnadentum und Widerstandsrecht* discussed this connection between discourses on divine right and resistance theory with practice for the early Middle Ages.

5 Greenleaf, 'The Thomasian Tradition and the Theory of Absolute Monarchy', p. 747 understood divine right as including non-resistance to an unlawful or lawful monarch. See also Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings*, pp. 5–6; Burgess, 'The Divine Right of Kings Reconsidered', pp. 841–2.

6 Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings*, pp. 5–6.

as the royal touch, while at the same time ignoring actual historical events and discourses outside of scholarly circles.<sup>7</sup> If consideration is given not only to political writings and royal representations of power, but also to the turn of political events, and discussions in councils, parliaments, broadsheets and newspapers, theatre plays, street ballads, and on the streets, a different picture of the political culture and discourse on divine right emerges.<sup>8</sup> Understanding the nexus between the rise in divine right discourses and the parallel increase in political conflict during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries requires an approach which includes political *culture*, not just political thought.<sup>9</sup>

Since the early Middle Ages, the idea of the divine right of monarchy was often expressed through the formula of *dei gratia*, or by the grace of God. Monarchs used and still use this formula in their letters, when issuing coins and basically everywhere they can. Arguably, this formula refers to both a sense of humility — an office is given by God's grace and not earned in any other way — and also a sense of legitimation — God gave the office, and the officeholder is responsible only to him.<sup>10</sup> In political thought, the latter interpretation was deemed controversial and the subject of debate. In particular, questions were discussed as to whether a monarch stood above or was subject to any laws, whether an institution or a selected group of people could judge them, what the role was of sacral powers like the Church or the pope, and whether there were any other limits to a monarch's power.<sup>11</sup>

In this chapter, I am going to discuss the interpretation of the divine right of monarchy as related to non-individual rulership, and argue that

7 On such an approach, see also the criticism in Charette and Skjönsberg, 'The History of Political Thought', pp. 470–83.

8 Already Figgis stated that divine right was 'essentially a popular theory, proclaimed in the pulpit, published in the market-place, witnessed on the battle-field', Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings*, p. 3.

9 Niggemann, *Revolutionserinnerung* uses such an approach for the political culture in late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century England, see pp. 71–2, 251–7. See also Stollberg-Rilinger (ed.), *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?* Similar ideas were discussed in Kevin Sharpe's trilogy on Tudor and Stuart rule in England, Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*; Sharpe, *Image Wars*; Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule*.

10 Range, 'Dei Gratia and the "Divine Right of Kings"' expands on this tension between these two interpretations, see esp. p. 131. In the early modern period, divine right was often interpreted as only being responsible to God, that is, not being judgeable by anyone else. See Charles I's speech on the scaffold, Kenyon (ed.), *The Stuart Constitution*, document 88b, pp. 293–5, here p. 294.

11 A short overview of the research on each point is offered by Range, 'Dei Gratia and the "Divine Right of Kings"', p. 133 and p. 135. See furthermore Burgess, 'The Divine Right of Kings Reconsidered', p. 840–1. More extensively, different ideas and strands of political discourse during this period are presented in Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Political Thought*.

contemporaries understood divine right as going beyond the single body natural of a king or queen. I do not dispute that divine right might refer to an individual monarch, but argue that more often its usage included notions of shared rulership and even of the political order specific to one kingdom.<sup>12</sup> As such, both the dynasty and the wider structure of a realm became more important than the single individual who wore the crown at a specific moment in time. The basis of this analysis are depositions in Protestant Northern Europe. Protestantism as part of the political culture of these realms is therefore one basis for this study. In this chapter, ‘dynasty’ is used as ‘families who rule, who strive to pass on their patrimonies to their descendants’.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the divine right of monarchy was not a single political idea but contained a whole cluster of ideas and conventions, forming the background for a political culture in which the monarch was both at the top and at the centre of a polity, but never without limitations or ruling alone. Finally, divine right, even if applied to an individual ruler, was not everlasting. Divinely legitimated monarchs could be forsaken by God.

## The Political Thought of the Divine Right of Monarchs

One of the main foundations for political thought in the sixteenth and seventeenth century was the Bible.<sup>14</sup> Especially in the Protestant realms of Northern Europe, it was thought important to turn to scripture — Luther’s principle of *sole scriptura* — for all kinds of questions, including how to live together in a political community.<sup>15</sup> The problem was that the Bible texts are contradictory. The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans was usually quoted in this context: ‘[1] Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. [2] Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.’ (Romans

12 One example of this was the Latin East crusader kingdoms, see Jordan, ‘Corporate Monarchy’, p. 3. See also Earenfight, ‘Absent Kings’, p. 33.

13 Geevers, ‘The Invention of Dynasty’, p. 25. See also Geevers, ‘Ny dynastisk historia’, pp. 88–9 for a discussion of the term. The term ‘dynasty’ is under discussion right now, and a new research field is emerging, of which this book is part. See furthermore Duindam, *Dynasties*; Gustafsson, ‘Dynasty Formation’.

14 See among others Weber-Möckl, *Das Recht des Königs*; Pečar, *Macht der Schrift*; Queckbörner, *Englands Exodus*; Pečar and Trampedach (eds), *Die Bibel als politisches Argument*; Pietsch, ‘Das zweischneidige Schwert der Friedfertigkeit’; Killeen, *The Political Bible*.

15 See also Oakley, ‘Christian Obedience and Authority’, esp. p. 171.

13: 1–2). This seemed clear: whoever is in power is there by the will of God. Any resistance against this power is against God's will. However, the stories of Jesus and his apostles contradict this. The New Testament tells of several acts of resistance against secular powers, even acts that were obviously legitimated and enjoyed the aid of God: '[17] Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, [18] And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. [19] But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, [20] Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life ... [29] Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.' (Acts 5: 17–20, 29) This was divinely sanctioned resistance to worldly power!

Furthermore, going back to the Old Testament, God was not initially in favour of monarchy; the people of Israel demanded a king like all the other nations, and not 'just' judges presiding over them as God had given them. When the prophet Samuel conveyed this demand to God, this was his answer: '[7] And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.' (1 Sam. 8: 7) According to this, God did not want another ruler over his people aside from God himself. In the end, he came around to this idea, but the first king was not really a success story: Saul grew suspicious of his son-in-law David and feared rebellion. He became so paranoid that his rule suffered and, in the end, the said son-in-law replaced him as the king of the Israelites. David was more successful and was used throughout the later Middle Ages and early modern period as an example of a good monarch, or even as the model for replacing a bad ruler with a good one.<sup>16</sup> The Bible has at least as many stories of bad kings as it has examples of good rulership.

As these examples from the Bible, one of the earliest political texts, already show, living together in political communities has always been accompanied by discussions about political order. In the Western tradition, ideas were written down and discussed throughout the ages from Plato's *Politeia* and

16 See more on David and Solomon as examples of good rulership, Fábíán, 'The Biblical King Solomon', pp. 54–5. The story of Saul and David played a role in the narratives after the deposition of James II/VII, and was connected to a national English sense of being chosen by God, see Niggemann, *Revolutionserinnerung*, p. 130; and more extensively on the latter, Queckbörner, *Englands Exodus*. See also Straka, 'The Final Phase of Divine Right Theory', p. 641 for the comparison of Saul and David with James II/VII and William III in 1689. This story was also referenced during the deposition of Erik XIV of Sweden when he was compared to Saul to de-legitimise him.

Aristotle's *Politics*, Augustine's *City of God* and Aquinas's *De regno, ad regem Cypri*, to Machiavelli's writings, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Locke's *Two Treatises* and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract*, and many more. Furthermore, practitioners of government wrote practical advice for their rulers or their successors, or participated in the scholarly discussion on political thought as James VI/I did or, later, Frederik II of Prussia.<sup>17</sup> Above all in the Middle Ages and early modern period, European political communities and political thought were based on Christian ideas and a Christian worldview which permeated every aspect of life. Of course, ideas of divinity, divine legitimation or divine favour were also widespread in ancient communities. Moreover, traces of the connection between the divine and monarchy can still be found in today's monarchies: British coins claim D G (*Dei Gratia*) and F D (*Fidei Defensor/Defensatrix*) next to the portrait of Elizabeth II, linking the monarch to the Church, faith, and God. Nonetheless, the pre-modern royal realms stand out in the intensity of the discourse about the relationship between sacral and temporal rule, the divine legitimation of monarchs, the role of God in politics and political, and the struggle to form realms and communities pleasing to God (*gottgefällig*). After the Reformation, the question what was pleasing to God gained a confessional note, and it became a point of conflict to which confession a realm and their monarch professed.

In these discourses, however, the interests of the author have to be considered — in political thought, the author is never dead.<sup>18</sup> James VI/I, who wrote one of the most influential books for seventeenth-century political thought on divine right as well as the quote from the beginning of this chapter, was the son of Mary I of Scotland, better known as Mary Stuart or Mary, Queen of Scots. It was obvious that he would argue that no one was allowed to judge a divinely legitimated monarch: even though she was an anointed queen, his own mother was judged and executed by mere mortals, by the English to add insult to injury.<sup>19</sup> The French state philosopher Jean Bodin, who argued in favour of monarchs having absolute sovereignty, lived during the French Wars of Religion in which the question of how a monarch believing in a false God could be divinely legitimated

17 Joseph Canning notes the importance of writers engaged with political reality as well for the late Middle Ages, see Canning, *Ideas of Power*, p. 1. Frederik II published on the basis of letters he exchanged with Voltaire a discussion of the art of rulership, arguing against Machiavelli's ideas, [Friedrich II.], *Antimachiavell*.

18 Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, ch. 7, 'The Death of the Author', pp. 142–8.

19 More on James VI/I as political author and king, see Houlbrooke (ed.), *James VI and I*; Burns, *The True Law of Kingship*. See also James's own works, [James VI], *The True Lawe of Free Monarchies*; James VI, *Basilikon Doron*.

was 'discussed' in a very bloody conflict with high death tolls on both sides.<sup>20</sup> Thomas Hobbes subordinated individual freedom to political order, and argued for the right of absolute monarchy.<sup>21</sup> This was based on his experiences in the British Civil Wars in which the legitimate monarch was executed, and political order was dissolved along with the previous form of government.<sup>22</sup> The experience of the author as an important background element influencing their writings is also seen in writings arguing against divine right, as in the case of John Locke. He supported a right to rebellion and wrote against absolute and divine monarchy, even before having to leave England due to his possible entanglement in the Rye House Plot against Charles II.<sup>23</sup> In Sweden, the nobleman Erik Sparre argued in his *Pro Lege, Rege et Grege* that a monarch must rule together with the council. He was also involved in the political conflict between the Swedish king Sigismund and his uncle, Duke Charles of Södermanland, the later Charles IX.<sup>24</sup> Political writings were and are mirrors of the circumstances of their authors.

A closer look at the arguments put forward by scholars writing favourably about divine right reveals the reason why these authors promoted this concept. They firmly believed that political order could only be kept in a divinely legitimated monarchy with a social hierarchy and (supposedly) a clear chain of command.<sup>25</sup> According to the prolific James VI/I, monarchy resembled the divine and came close to perfection.<sup>26</sup> Only the 'Mortall God' under the 'Immortall God' can keep 'peace and defence', as Hobbes argued.<sup>27</sup> This does not necessarily mean that each monarch was divinely legitimated, just that the monarchy and hierarchical forms of political and social order should be kept, and disorder should be avoided at all cost. It is no wonder that in nearly all the depositions in Northern Europe between 1500 and 1700, it was the monarch who had brought disorder to the realm. These monarchs failed in one of their most basic tasks — to keep the peace

20 Fox argues that it was in sixteenth-century France where the theory of divine right was fully formed, see Range, 'Dei Gratia and the "Divine Right of Kings"', p. 132. See Bodin, *Sechs Bücher*.

21 Hobbes, *Leviathan*.

22 Metzger, *Thomas Hobbes*.

23 See Harris (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy* on the impact of Locke's ideas, and more general on him, Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality*. See also [Locke], *Two Treatises of Government*.

24 Sparre, 'Pro Lege, Rege et Grege'.

25 See also Greenleaf, 'The Thomasian Tradition', p. 748.

26 [James VI], *The True Lawe of Free Monarchies*.

27 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 89.



within the realm and provide order and justice.<sup>28</sup> The wish for political order, which seemingly could only be provided by a divinely legitimated monarchy, was shared by a majority in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. In 1649, establishing a Republic was the last resort for Charles I's deponers, as it was in 1581 in the later Dutch Republic.<sup>29</sup> In all other depositions between 1500 and 1700, the governmental form of monarchy remained untouched, and 'only' the person at the head of government was exchanged.

## Divine Right, Dynasties and Depositions

Monarchy as the preferred form of government and as protection against political disorder had, however, inherent problems. The divinely legitimated monarch was not chosen based on their merit, but usually through succession laws and traditions, which could prove susceptible to error, that is, bad rulers. Furthermore, legitimacy by divine right was brought into question due to the Reformation and the subsequent uncertainty as to which interpretation of the divine was the right one. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one question regarding the divine right of kings was especially pressing: what happens when the rule of God and the rule of man are not the same? This became a real political problem when the monarch, seemingly placed on their throne by God, was deemed unworthy — however one might define unworthy. An unworthy monarch was often understood to be a tyrant. However, tyranny was conceived differently in different realms at different times. Religious differences between the monarch and most of his subjects just added a new possible contentious point.

The concept of tyranny, like the concept of divine right, encapsulates various elements.<sup>30</sup> Important aspects were legitimate and legal succession, the behaviour of a ruler during their reign, the personal piety of the monarch, and sometimes just the perception of these things by subjects and foreign parties. In extreme cases, like the British Civil Wars, the perceived tyranny of Charles I, problems with his piety and the accusation that he was

28 Related to this is Range's reference to a monarch by divine grace as binding them to Christian ideals and values, Range, *Dei Gratia* and the "Divine Right of Kings", pp. 137–9. See on the principal duties of kingship Schubert, *Königsabsetzung*, p. 46; Reinhard, *Geschichte der Staatsgewalt*, p. 48.

29 Wrede, 'Königsmord, Tyrannentod', p. 243–4; Wende, 'Der Prozeß gegen Karl I.', p. 185. See for the Dutch contexts Helmers and Janssen, 'Understanding the Dutch Golden Age', p. 7.

30 One of the best recent discussions of the political idea is offered by Turchetti, *Tyrannie et tyrannicide*. In recent years, several publications highlighted the continued importance of understanding tyranny and tyrants, see Greenblatt, *Tyrant*; Snyder, *On Tyranny*.

blood-guilty clashed with the deep piety of leading members of the political, and especially the military, elite.<sup>31</sup> These people shared a deep belief in the imminence of Judgement Day, and were therefore very worried about who would lead them and their fellow English (not much thought was given to the rest of the British Isles) in the last stand, the fight of good versus evil after the coming of Christ.<sup>32</sup> Having the wrong leader would reflect badly on them and endanger their afterlife. They probably felt closer to the apostles imprisoned by the Sadducees than to Paul advising a new political community. Deposing the king was not based on any anti-monarchical sentiments but, in contrast, on a deep belief in divinely sanctioned monarchy.<sup>33</sup> The monarchy was given by God, but not necessarily to the individual occupying the throne, especially if they lost God's favour by becoming a tyrant. Charles I was explicitly called 'tyrant, traitor, and murderer, and public enemy to the Commonwealth' in the sentence that the High Court gave him, showing how important it was to the judges to rid the kingdom of such a king.<sup>34</sup>

But what happened after an individual was identified as not (or no longer) divinely sanctioned and was therefore deposed? Looking at who actually replaced a deposed monarch, the close relationship between the new monarch and the old is strikingly obvious. In England, Scotland, Denmark-Norway and Sweden, in six out of ten cases the new monarch was the closest family member. In a loose composite monarchy like the Kalmar Union uniting Denmark, Norway and Sweden, a deposition could mean a complete separation from the other kingdoms and the dynasty: in 1523, Christian II's Swedish deposer Gustav Eriksson (Vasa) was not related to the union king from the Oldenburg dynasty, and instead established an independent kingdom, thereby ending the Kalmar Union.<sup>35</sup> In the other parts of this personal union, Denmark and Norway, the Oldenburg Christian II was replaced by his paternal uncle Frederik I, also an Oldenburg. The cohesion between Scotland and England in a similar case in 1689 was greater: both kingdoms in this personal union replaced their shared monarch James II/VII with his oldest daughter and her husband, Mary II and William III. Even when the monarchy was abolished as in 1649, the opponents to Charles I first tried to convince him to abdicate in favour of one of his sons, or to have one

31 See Crawford, "Charles Stuart, That Man of Blood" for this understanding of Charles's tyranny.

32 Pečar, *Macht der Schrift*.

33 See also for the situation in the 1690s in England, Straka, 'The Final Phase of Divine Right Theory'.

34 Gardiner (ed.), *The Constitutional Documents*, pp. 378–9.

35 See in general Gustafsson, 'A State That Failed?'

of the Stuart sons forcefully replace their father. After all, this had worked in 1327 when the English king Edward II was forced to abdicate and his son, Edward III, became king. From the point of view of 1648/49, the forced abdication of Mary I of Scotland and her replacement by her son, James VI, had also been successful. Considering all the trouble evoked by the much more complicated situation surrounding the deposition and succession of Richard II by his cousin, Henry IV, especially later in the fifteenth century with a whole chain of depositions legitimising their actions with this event, the combination of forced abdication and succession by the eldest son was an attractive solution.<sup>36</sup> In other words, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, an individual monarch who had clearly lost God's favour could be deposed, but the monarchy and, if possible, the ruling dynasty should be preserved to ensure political order and legitimacy. In Sweden, the irrational behaviour of Erik XIV showed, in the eyes and words of his contemporaries, that he was punished by God with the spirit of Saul. Hence, he had obviously lost God's favour.<sup>37</sup> Erik's replacement with his oldest half-brother was therefore an accepted solution. This idea of dynastic responsibility for ruling members was apparently so well-known that even the slightest hint was enough to legitimate the Dutch stadholder's interest in English affairs in 1688. William III came with an invasion army to England in 1688 and declared this justified: 'And since our dearest and most entirely beloved Consort the Princess, and likewise ourselves, have so great an Interest in this Matter, and such a Right, as all the World knows, to the Succession of the Crown.'<sup>38</sup> For readers not as well-informed about the British royal family tree as the contemporaries of the Glorious Revolution in England apparently were: William was third in line to the English throne — and the first male candidate — as the nephew of James II, and he was married to the first in line, Mary, James's eldest daughter. This dynastic connection of William III of the House of Orange moreover led to part of the political elite addressing the infamous 'Letter of Invitation' to William, giving him further legitimation to invade England in 1688.

Of course, this line of succession only applies if you leave out the new-born son of James II, James Francis Edward Stuart.<sup>39</sup> In general, minor heirs, especially if they were very young, were ignored unless they served the

36 I have expanded on this argument in Sarti, 'Depositions of Monarchs', pp. 586–7.

37 Hildebrand (ed.), *Svenska Riksdagsakter*, document 381, here p. 339.

38 *Journal of the House of Commons*, pp. 1–6.

39 See on the relation between divine right and the events in England in 1688/89, Straka, 'The Final Phase of Divine Right Theory'.

purpose of the deponers, as was the case with the one-year-old James VI of Scotland. In comparison, Charles (IX) of Sweden ignored Sigismund's children and their claim to the throne (Sigismund's eldest son, Wladyslaw, was four at the time of Sigismund's official deposition in 1599, his sister Anna Maria six). Generally, the governmental form of monarchy was accepted throughout the early modern realms, the ruling dynasty was preferred to anyone else, and usually it was just the individual occupying the throne at that time, and most often also the head of the dynasty, who was no longer accepted. Looking at depositions more broadly, the need for a suitable rival candidate with a strong claim to the throne becomes obvious. Such a strong rival candidate was usually a member of the ruling dynasty, though not necessarily according to the laws of agnatic primogeniture.<sup>40</sup> Despite the blood relation to the deposed 'tyrant', these rival candidates were accepted by their new subjects.

The political events and the discussions surrounding the attempts to replace Charles I with one of his sons in England, or the replacement of Sigismund with Charles IX in Sweden, highlight the importance of a certain dynasty for a specific realm. Even when the reigning monarch proved unacceptable, they were not replaced by just anyone. As far as possible, dynastic succession laws were observed, or — if a specific dynasty was not connected to the realm as in the early sixteenth century in Sweden — traditional forms of legitimate succession such as election by council and/or parliament were used. Sixteenth-century England kept the Tudors, their northern neighbour Scotland the Stuarts, and a century later, even the radicalised religious and military elite in England tried to keep the Stuarts. Forty years later in the Glorious Revolution, it was still the Stuarts who prevailed, now widely accepted in England and Scotland. Late sixteenth-century Sweden was happy with the Vasas, and in the 1520s, Danish deponers of the Oldenburg king Christian II chose his paternal uncle as leader of the opposition and the new King — and a branch of the Oldenburgs still sits on the Danish throne today.

In Protestant Northern Europe, only early sixteenth-century Sweden did not have an established dynasty, or at least not a royal one. The Sture had been the leading family in Sweden since the middle of the fifteenth century but their representatives never claimed the throne. Instead they ruled as governors (*riksföreståndare*). Even in 1501, Sten Sture the Elder did not claim the throne when the king was deposed who had ruled within the construct of the Kalmar Union, the personal union between Denmark,

40 See also Duindam, *Dynasties*, pp. 127–42.

Norway, and Sweden. Christian II, the son of the king deposed in 1501, came back in 1520, waging war against the Sture government and defeating the leading member of the Sture family, Sten Sture the Younger, in battle. This led to Sten's death, and left the family with Nils, Sten's eight-year old son, and Svante, his three-year-old son.<sup>41</sup> Lacking an established royal dynasty, and with the leading noble dynasty lacking an adult male leader (although Sten's widow Kristina Gyllenstierna was a formidable ruler and military commander), Sweden instead turned to its tradition as an electoral monarchy, choosing its next king by election and acclamation as it had in 1448 with Karl Knutsson (Bonde).<sup>42</sup> Since most of the noblemen of the right age were dead or imprisoned by the time Sweden defeated Denmark and deposed Christian II, the choice was easily made to elect the military leader and accepted captain of Dalarna, Gustav Eriksson (Vasa). As Gustav I of Sweden, he later established a hereditary monarchy, and successfully left the kingdom to his eldest son, Erik. The depositions among his sons were again a sign of the acceptance of the dynasty but not necessarily of the individual favoured at the moment by the succession law of primogeniture. These depositions also referred back to the Swedish custom of choosing a king amongst the last king's relatives, preferably the sons.<sup>43</sup>

Depositions as political conflicts about who was the right ruler for a monarchy showed the connection between a dynasty and a realm as well as the conservative preference for political stability.<sup>44</sup> Nothing was worse than anarchy, or anything which was perceived as anarchical, whether by the ruler, the political elite or various opposition groups. The stance on social and political order differentiates pre-modern European kingdoms from modern polities where law and order are no longer necessarily the most important political values on which everyone agrees. If in such a pre-modern polity the ruling individual was not able to guarantee stability, thereby losing their legitimacy and God's favour, or was in anyway else perceived as tyrant, the dynasty was expected to step in — and usually it did. An established dynasty offered a broader historical context, a longer tradition than any individual could, and consequently political stability superseding the individual failure of one of its members. Depositions were not simply power struggles, or palace coups within the dynasty. No dynastic

41 To complicate matters, Sten Sture the Younger was related to the Sture family through his great-grandmother, but took the name Sture (instead of his dynastic name *Natt och Dag*) for political reasons, to show kinship and political allegiance.

42 Yrwing, 'Konungavalet i Strängnäs 1523'.

43 See also for Denmark, Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', p. 347.

44 See also Reinhard, *Geschichte der Staatsgewalt*, esp. p. 31.

rival candidate, however powerful they might be, could successfully defeat the monarch without the support, or at least the meaningful passiveness, of the majority of the political elite and the inhabitants of the kingdom.

## Realm and Crown

Directly related to this last argument is another: that divine right entailed an understanding of traditions and political culture which was supposedly given by God, and specific to an individual realm.<sup>45</sup> This included ideas of who belonged to the cluster of people who could legitimately sit on the throne: elected monarchs from a pool of candidates related to the royal families in Scandinavia, even after the hereditary right was introduced; or close relations of the last monarch in the British Isles.<sup>46</sup> Electoral capitulations or oaths also played a role, which James VII of Scotland really should have realised when he never bothered to take this coronation oath in Scotland.<sup>47</sup> But more broadly, it also included the very important question of who else was destined to rule the realm. Here, ideas of consensual rule were dominant.<sup>48</sup> Consensual rule meant that the aristocracy and their institution, the Privy Council, but also representative institutions like parliaments or the Nordic assemblies (the things) contributed to the government of the realm. Furthermore, maybe most importantly in the realms of Northern Europe being discussed here, the idea of each realm having a specific tradition and law that had existed since time immemorial was influential.<sup>49</sup>

Conversely, depositions were less likely when the political elite had substantial influence, or hereditary monarchy was a securely established custom of the realm. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Sweden had eleven different individuals as monarchs (two of them ruled more than once), seven of whom were deposed. By 1600, Sweden had an established tradition and process of deposing monarchs. Interestingly enough, the next Swedish deposition after Sigismund's in 1599 was in 1792, the assassination of Gustav III at a masked ball. In the intervening two centuries, the ruling dynasties,

45 There has been a broad debate on the relation between kingdoms and God, and even more, on the relation between specific kingdoms and God. The political thought on this topic is discussed by von Friedeburg, among others, 'Bausteine widerstandsrechtlicher Argumente', pp. 137–43.

46 Electoral monarchy and hereditary principles did not have to be mutually exclusive, see Schnettger, 'Dynastic Succession in an Elective Monarchy'.

47 This problem is discussed by Israel, 'General Introduction', p. 8.

48 See on this concept Schneidmüller, 'Konsensuale Herrschaft'.

49 See Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution*.

first the Vasas and then several small dynasties that could claim somewhat of a dynastic relation to the Vasas, struggled to produce heirs to the throne. In the end, the Swedish elite had quite some influence on their monarchs, and even Swedish absolutism did not last very long. The eighteenth century was already termed the Time of Liberty, and when Gustav III tried to grab more power at the end of this century, he was deposed.

Norway also had a strong tradition of getting rid of kings in the twelfth and thirteenth century. However, the end of this civil war era coincided with the introduction of hereditary monarchy in the 1240s. After that, Norway usually stuck with its monarchs until the very end, or until Denmark or Sweden forced it to depose them. Norway had to be forced by Denmark to depose even Christian II, who really earned his title of tyrant (though not in Norway) as well as to dethrone Erik of Pomerania in 1440 — although it has to be admitted that all these kings were much less tyrannical in Norway than they were in Denmark or Sweden. Usually, Norway was left to the political elite to govern as long as they generally accepted the king, who was resident in Copenhagen. It seems there was simply no need for a deposition when consensual rule was observed due to the struggles within the dynasties, or when resistance to depositions was entrenched as a custom of the realm.

One problem with these distinctive traditions and customs of individual realms concerned the unions of kingdoms of different kinds in the early modern period.<sup>50</sup> This is easily seen with Sigismund of Sweden, oldest son of the Swedish king John III, grandson of Gustav I, and basically as Swedish as they come. However, being elected to the throne of Poland-Lithuania, speaking Polish, and — even worse — being Catholic, in addition to not being in Sweden after inheriting the throne led to him being ousted. He was viewed as a foreign king — bringing a ‘foreign rule [with] violence and tyranny’ (*fremmende Härskap [med] Wäld och Tyranni*) to the kingdom.<sup>51</sup> Even in the nineteenth century, all documents about him were collected in a publication on Swedish relations with foreign powers. A similar conflict within a personal union is also apparent when England executed the Scottish king, Charles I. Even though Charles I was by no means liked in Scotland, they usually had other traditions for dealing with unpopular kings: Scottish nobles imprisoned their monarch or forced them to do their bidding, and afterwards were quite happy to accept them once again as kings. But executing the Scottish king, who was coincidentally also the English king,

50 See Backerra, ‘Personal Union’.

51 Stiernman (ed.), *Alla Riksdagars och Mötens Besluth*, p. 481. More extensive on this, Sarti, ‘Sigismund of Sweden’.

went too far, and was yet another reason to continue the British civil wars.<sup>52</sup> These different customs and traditions could also lead to a monarch of a personal union being deposed in one of the realms, but not in the other. John II of Sweden (deposed in 1501) continued to rule over Denmark and Norway until his natural death, as did Sigismund of Sweden (deposed in 1599) in Poland-Lithuania. That the deposition of James II of England led to his deposition as James VII of Scotland was a sign that these two realms had grown together and shared their traditions and customs — at least enough to continue wanting to be ruled by the same monarch and dynasty.<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

We need to broaden our understanding of the divine right of monarchy to gain a better understanding of how contemporaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw this principle: not as a static idea unchanged since time immemorial, but in actuality, a concept under discussion. In this discussion, monarchs were interested in emphasising their elevated individual position in this concept, dynasties used it to legitimise the whole house and its special role in a realm, and many inhabitants of a realm understood it as their proto-national identity to be part of a God-favoured realm. For them, the form of government was important — it had to be a monarchy, not a republic without a divinely legitimated ruler. Furthermore, people believed that the legitimate ruler of their monarchy had God's favour, unless they lost it. Then, God's favour would automatically pass to the next legitimate ruler of the specific dynasty ruling the realm. In the worst-case scenario, the dynasty as a whole lost God's favour, or was not available to rule the realm. In such a case, rare as it was, going without a monarchy was the only option, for example for the devout believers of the New Model Army. In fact, establishing a new dynasty in England that was not God-favoured was one of the very few options not even discussed. In Protestant Europe, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, exchanging one dynasty for another, except when the first dynasty died out, was inconceivable, and in the few cases of foreign rulers (or rulers perceived as foreign) in monarchies, there was huge opposition to them (William III in England, Sigismund in Sweden, the Danish Kalmar Union kings in Sweden). In the eighteenth century, dynasties and their territories

<sup>52</sup> Russell, 'The Anglo-Scottish Union', p. 249.

<sup>53</sup> See Brown, 'The Vanishing Emperor', p. 68 and p. 73. Morrill, 'The British Problem', p. 3.



were exchanged much more readily (e.g., Lorraine and Tuscany). This set an example for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when changing or in fact choosing the ruling monarch and dynasty from diverse candidates became a standard of monarchical politics. The divine right of dynasty had by then lost its hold as one of the most popular political ideas, even though traces of the connections between monarchs, dynasties and realms with God, the divine and the Church remain.

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### 3. Presence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder: Proximity and the Creation of Dynasty

*Fabian Persson*

**Abstract:** The soft edges of early modern dynastic conceptions, especially in times of dynastic fragility, made it possible to manoeuvre oneself into the dynasty and become part of it. The recurring theme of ‘royal blood’ and ‘the Gustavian family’ was a help to the Palatines in Sweden in this context. It made it easier to see the Palatines as dynastic members rather than a separate dynasty. The strategy of dynastic presence required both time to work and grow roots as well as actual physical presence but it could pay off handsomely.

**Keywords:** dynasty, dynastic presence, dynastic fragility, dynastic membership, dynastic inclusion

In 1644, the teenage queen Christina’s elderly, bastard uncle, Carl Carlsson Gyllenhielm, was in a secure enough position to dare raise the sensitive issue of her marriage and succession now that she was about to be declared of age. In a letter to the Queen, Gyllenhielm outlined the challenges of a foreign match for the Queen as well as her late father’s thoughts about the succession.<sup>1</sup> Gyllenhielm’s letter was designed to present the Queen’s cousin Charles Gustav as the ideal match and heir. He listed the problems for her with a foreign marriage: prolonged absence and alienation from the realm. The late king had considered the elector of Brandenburg (the

<sup>1</sup> National Archives of Sweden (*hereafter* RA), Skrivelser till Konungen Kristina och förmyndarregeringen vol. II, Carl Carlsson Gyllenhielm to Queen Christina [1644]. I wish to thank Torsten Söderbergs stiftelse for their generous support to the project ‘Att leva i maktens hus: En kartläggning av boende på Stockholms slott’. This has been crucial for the work behind this chapter.

Queen's cousin on her mother's side) as a possible husband for his daughter. Though Gustav II Adolf 'wanted the young Elector to be educated here in Sweden, in language, customs and religion, after the customs and habits of the fatherland', this had not happened, and therefore the young elector was clearly not a good match in Gyllenhielm's eyes. Instead, Gyllenhielm pointed out, the Queen should marry a young man '*ex Gustaviana familia* on his mother's side' in accordance with the succession rules of 1590 and 1604. If the Queen, however, did not want to marry, she should 'direct the succession to certain lines and families'.

Gyllenhielm recounted to Queen Christina how his brother, the late king Gustav II Adolf, was concerned about the succession as he was 'daily in mortal danger' because of the war and therefore called his sister to Sweden so that her children would be born here. When the King was shot, but not killed, at Dirschau in Prussia in 1627, this underlined the fragility of the dynasty. As the King was lying in bed, he talked to the chancellor Oxenstierna and his brother Gyllenhielm. Oxenstierna reported that the King's cousin Sigismund, king of Poland and deposed king of Sweden, had discussed who would inherit the crown if Gustav II Adolf was killed in battle with no heirs of his body. "Maybe," said the King of Poland, "his nephew [Charles Gustav]." To this, after some thought, he turned to the Chancellor and me, and replied to the Chancellor: "Yes, I do not know where you would find anyone better". Thus, Gyllenhielm concludes: 'from this you have what his late Majesty's intention and affection were for the succession.' He continues to argue that 'someone of the royal blood' should be trained and used in secret matters of the government.

Ten years later, Charles Gustav, the Queen's cousin, for whom this letter was a thinly veiled but forceful plea, did succeed to the crown. How did he and his family manage to position themselves for the succession?

## Dynastic Inclusion and Exclusion

Gyllenhielm's use of the concept of 'the royal blood' is interesting. The concept of blood opened a wider, more inclusive cognate interpretation of dynasty. In his influential history Johannes Magnus talks several times about 'royal blood'.<sup>2</sup> Johannes Magnus also explains how 'the royal blood' could be transmitted through the female line.<sup>3</sup> In his will of 1605, Charles

2 Magnus, *Swea och Götha Crönika*.

3 Magnus, *Swea och Götha Crönika*, p. 204.

IX talks about the dynasty as his father 'King Gustav's family' rather than using a dynastic name to identify them.<sup>4</sup> The dynastic inclusion is visible in the Succession Order of 1590, when John III regulated that if the family died out on the male side a woman could inherit the throne. When choosing a husband, she should, however, opt for a German prince who descended from Gustav I.<sup>5</sup>

This highlights that what constituted a dynasty was not simply a question of genealogy, even if tidy family trees and dates for the beginning and end of dynasties in textbooks may give that impression. Such genealogies were often later compilations reflecting political agreements rather than messy contemporary realities. Dynastic labels are frequently later inventions or convenient fiction; most Vasas did not call themselves Vasa, while the Habsburgs and Romanovs were only so long-lived because new families latched on to the original dynasties and took their names. The biological nature of family and procreation can hide the fact that a dynasty was a social construct. It could be patrilineal or, less often, matrilineal. It could encompass polygamy or be strictly monogamous. Dynastic membership could also vary according to political circumstances. There was often a core group of people who would be perceived as members of the ruling dynasty, but a more peripheral dynastic group could take on a fluid status. Under some circumstances such members could move into the core dynastic group whereas under other circumstances they could remain on the periphery or even be pushed out completely. Early modern contemporaries could extol the glories of a ruling family while being well aware of the complexities of what constituted this dynasty behind the gilded façade. Natalia Nowakowska has argued that the very concept of dynasty is 'surprisingly etymologically unstable'.<sup>6</sup>

Jeroen Duindam has analysed how dynastic rule was prevalent throughout history in most parts of the world.<sup>7</sup> Duindam has contrasted the vast number of princes in Ming China to the small group in most European principalities.<sup>8</sup> A plethora of cadet branches of the imperial house could swallow immense resources while at the same time gradually sinking to the status of something like princely gentry. The number of Ming princes in 1644 has been calculated at between 80,000 and 200,000. The following Qing

4 Stiernman, *Alla Riksdagars och mötens besluth*, vol. I, p. 608.

5 Stiernman, *Alla Riksdagars och mötens besluth*, vol. I, p. 384.

6 Nowakowska, 'What's in a Word?', pp. 1–22.

7 Duindam, *Dynasties*.

8 Duindam, *Dynasties*, p. 131.



dynasty also expanded to more than 73,000 at the beginning of the twentieth century. These hordes of very minor princelings were not characteristic for the European dynasties. Yet in Europe as well the boundaries were not clear cut. It might be said that dynasties had softer or harder edges according to the needs to the ruling family. If it was dwindling towards extinction, the edges could soften in order to absorb new dynastic members. Political ructions could lead to dynastic edges hardening to exclude cadet branches, bastards or deposed branches.

Dynastic convenience or emergency created solutions to various predicaments and influenced who would benefit from dynastic membership. A crucial variable in this dynastic equation was presence — or absence. Absence made royal princes into non-persons, invisible. A former dynastic member could be cast aside, and absence facilitated such a process greatly. In 1599, the Swedish estates declared that if the exiled King Sigismund (whose pondering on the succession was discussed at the sickbed of Gustav II Adolf in Dirschau in 1627) sent his son, the four-year-old Swedish Crown Prince Vladislav, to Sweden within a year, he would be made king. There he would be raised and controlled by his ruthless great-uncle Duke Charles. Unsurprisingly, King Sigismund refused to hand over little Vladislav. Yet if he had, the plans of Duke Charles would probably have been derailed. Vladislav would have been established once again at the heart of the dynasty. An absent, Catholic prince was far easier to remove from people's minds and memories.

There was a precedent for the success of this method: another Swedish crown prince who was still alive in 1599 and had been pushed aside. Prince Gustav, son of the deposed Erik XIV, was only seven years old when he was separated from his parents in 1575 and sent abroad. It was later decided by John III to 'keep mother and son apart from each other, in the best interests of the realm, until the end of his life'. The Prince drifted around Europe until he died in Russia in 1607. Dynasties could be radically changed by sending princes abroad. The limits of dynasty were never as clear-cut as later genealogies may make them appear. In Sweden, the Vasa dynasty split into branches after kings were deposed. In the second half of the sixteenth century a number of Vasa princesses had married German princes, but they tended to reside in their new, small principalities. Yet their very existence constituted a potential to create a larger dynastic context.

If dynasties were malleable, there were different ways to expand or shrink them. One important instrument in including or excluding people from a dynasty was presence or absence: dynasties could be radically changed by moving princes abroad or hauling them back in. Dynastic inclusion

and exclusion were strategies deployed time and again. One could say that dynastic instability masked a remarkable degree of flexibility. While dynasties tended to be presented as very long-lived and monolithic, they sometimes achieved this by considerable tweaking. In some cases, this tweaking meant cutting off undesirable branches. The son of Erik XIV and the sons of King Sigismund were not the only European princes to be excluded from their dynastic context. Dynastic exclusion happened in several polities, such as with the descendants of James II and VII of England and Scotland, after their father lost his throne in the Glorious Revolution.

Dynastic exclusion carried its own risks as it could easily result in dynastic extinction. An excluded branch was also a constant threat as it represented an alternative to the government in place. Dynastic inclusion, on the other hand, came with its own set of problems. A classic example is the inclusion of bastards in the dynasty. Robert Oresko has pointed out how bastards of the Savoy dynasty were 'an additional pool of talent' to draw from, and if the dynasty were threatened by extinction, bastards could prove a last resort.<sup>9</sup> In 1520s England, Henry VIII appears to have countenanced the possibility of making his illegitimate son the duke of Richmond his successor. Such strategies to rely on bastard backup were met with increasing hostility. The insertion by Louis XIV of his bastards into the royal succession in France created great ructions among his more distant, but legitimate, relatives.

Rubén González Cuerva has used the concept of 'dynastic members' being put to use to administer different parts of the realms ruled by the Habsburgs.<sup>10</sup> In the 1560s, the young archdukes Rudolf and Ernst were sent to live at the Spanish court of their uncle Philip II. The fact that Philip only had one sickly son made the presence of these young boys even more significant.<sup>11</sup> They were followed in 1570 by their younger brothers Albert and Wenzel, who travelled to Spain that year. It is telling that the two archdukes who did not go to Spain but stayed in Vienna were not integrated into King Philip's dynastic patronage.

Dynastic membership could also be emphasised through rituals.<sup>12</sup> Giora Sternberg has analysed how finely calibrated and simultaneously fluid the dynastic ranking of different groups of the same dynasty could be. Rituals could confirm the rank of a cadet branch but also demote it. In the funeral procession of Gustav II Adolf, his brother-in-law the Count Palatine John

9 Oresko, 'Bastards as Clients', p. 40.

10 See this volume: González Cuerva, 'The Austrian Nephews'.

11 Ibid.

12 Thiry, 'Forging Dynasty', p. 270.

Casimir and his two sons Charles Gustav and Adolf Johan walked directly behind the coffin.<sup>13</sup> Even though the leading councillors governing the realm during the Queen's minority tried to hold them at arm's length, it was difficult to ignore the presence of the Queen's closest kin and they were thus given this prominent ritual position. Similarly, Adolf Johan served his cousin the Queen at the coronation meal in 1650.<sup>14</sup>

## Dynastic Fragility

In 1622, the future of the Swedish royal family looked precarious. Only a few years earlier the King, Gustav Adolf, had two other male princely relatives (if we forget the Polish branch of the family). Both of them, his brother Duke Charles Philip and his cousin Duke John, were dead by 1622. Apart from his Polish cousins, the King's closest kin were his sister and a number of German princes who were sons or grandsons of Swedish princesses. As a campaigning monarch there was a distinct risk he would die in battle (as he eventually did ten years later). In this situation of dynastic fragility, Gustav Adolf thought it wise that his sister Princess Catherine and her family should return to Sweden.

Already present at the Swedish court were several minor branches of the Vasa dynastic tree, but these descendants were deemed unsuitable for the succession. The King's older illegitimate half-brother Carl Carlsson Gyllenhielm was highly trusted and reliable, but his bastardy was a bar to the throne. The same impediment applied to the King's own bastard son, Gustav Gustavsson. In the 1620s, 'Little Gustav' (to quote the accounts) and his tutor were at court.<sup>15</sup> But as a bastard he was not the right material for the succession. Another member of the court was Elizabeth Carlsdotter. She was the daughter of the King's brother Charles Philip who, just before his death, had secretly made a misalliance by marrying a Swedish noblewoman. The difference in rank made Elizabeth similar in status to her clearly illegitimate relatives Carl Carlsson and Gustav Gustavsson.

The Palatines were a different kettle of fish with no stain of illegitimacy. The King's older sister Catherine had married the rather poor but politically savvy German Prince Johan Casimir of Zweibrücken in 1615. After marrying

<sup>13</sup> Grundberg, *Ceremoniernas makt*, p. 155.

<sup>14</sup> Grundberg, *Ceremoniernas makt*, p. 182.

<sup>15</sup> RA, Slottsarkivet (*hereafter* SLA), Vinkällaren, K Mts Reviderade räkenskaper vol. XI (1628), fol. 185.

for some years in Sweden, in 1618 they left to take up residence in Kleeburg in a tiny sliver of the Palatinate. The plan appears to have been to stay and Johan Casimir began building a residence named after his Swedish wife (Catharinenburg).<sup>16</sup> In 1622, confronted with dynastic scarcity, Gustav Adolf thought it a good idea that Catherine and Johan Casimir should return to Sweden; they did so and remained there for the rest of their lives. This boosted the size of the extended royal family as Catherine and Johan Casimir had a brood of five children who reached adulthood, while Gustav Adolf only had one girl, Christina, who survived infancy. As shown by Andreas Kappelmayer, Johan Casimir continued to foster an identity as an exile, a stranger.<sup>17</sup> Yet he also was a savvy political player who worked hard to establish his family as part of the royal Swedish family. After the death of Princess Catherine, Johan Casimir opted to have her buried in the crypt of her father, King Charles IX, emphasising her status as a member of the royal dynasty.<sup>18</sup>

From 1622, the Palatines remained in Sweden like princely barnacles. In the 1620s, they were often present at court. Sometimes Johan Casimir dined at court.<sup>19</sup> Sometimes wine was served to members of the retinue of Johan Casimir and Princess Catherine.<sup>20</sup> In 1628 there were beds for Princess Catherine, the 'little master' and her daughter and several courtiers and servants.<sup>21</sup> The Palatines also managed to, some years earlier, place a trusted female courtier who had served them with Queen Maria Eleonora and Princess Christina.<sup>22</sup> As the Queen accompanied the King on his campaigns in Germany, Princess Catherine was responsible in 1631 and 1632 for looking after her niece Christina. This position of the Palatine family being intertwined with the royal family became much more complicated all of a sudden when the King fell in battle in 1632. The Council almost immediately began to push the Palatine family away from court. Princess Catherine was of the view, probably well founded, that some were plotting against the Palatine family.

Proximity would influence perceptions of who was part of the royal family and who was not. Early modern Swedes were conscious of this aspect and

16 Chatelet-Lange, *Die Catharinenburg*.

17 Kappelmayer, *Johann Casimir*.

18 Kappelmayer, *Johann Casimir*, p. 588.

19 SLA, Vinkällaren, K Mts Reviderade räkenskaper vol. XI (1625).

20 SLA, Vinkällaren, K Mts Reviderade räkenskaper vol. XI (1628), fol. 185.

21 SLA, Husgerädsammaren D II a:3 (1628), fol. 204v.

22 Anna von Ungeren. She is mentioned in several earlier letters by Princess Catherine. RA, *Skrivelser till konungen Gustav II Adolf* vol. XXIV: Catherine to Gustav Adolf, 1 September 1618; and Catherine to Gustav Adolf, Kleeburg, 11 April 1619.

tried to influence it. Quite typical was a Council discussion during Queen Christina's minority in 1635, when councillors (who acted as regents) tried to decide whether to offer accommodation inside the royal palace to Johan Casimir.<sup>23</sup> Councillors hostile to the Palatine family tried hard to keep Johan Casimir away from the Queen. Typically, the Treasurer, a cousin of Chancellor Oxenstierna, thought Johan Casimir should be lodged in a house in town rather than in the palace.<sup>24</sup> They referred to the precedent that Duke Charles (the Queen's grandfather) had lodged in town during the reign of his brother King John III in the 1580s. The Palatine loyalist and councillor Skytte argued against this and said of the precedent that Duke Charles had only lodged in town when the royal brothers were quarrelling; when they were friends, Duke Charles would be accommodated inside the palace. He added that if Johan Casimir was not given rooms in the palace he would be offended. The unease about continuing to view the Palatines as extensions of the tiny royal family was palpable. One reason could be that all of the councillors had experienced a civil war between branches of the royal family only a few decades earlier. In another discussion the councillors talked about the conflict between King John and Duke Charles and later Gustav Adolf and Charles Philip — making clear 'that such a fire must not be lit again'.<sup>25</sup>

The efforts to keep the Palatine family on the outside were not eased. Their opponents felt it was imperative that in public ceremonies the Palatine family should not be given a special place indicating royal or semi-royal standing. In 1633, the Dowager Queen wanted the eldest Palatine daughter, Christina Magdalena, who stayed at court as company for the little Queen, to be given a salary, which was denied.<sup>26</sup> In the same year, Johan Casimir was allowed to accompany the little Queen into the Hall of the Realm, when she was to meet the assembled estates, but he was not allowed to sit down, as giving him a place would formally exalt the family. Councillor Gyllenhielm, the royal bastard and a staunch defender of his Palatine relatives, thought this ludicrous. Another councillor and former courtier (Mattias Soop) said that 'if no chair was offered His Highness, he would be disgusted'. In the end it was suggested he could have a place standing at the window.<sup>27</sup> When Princess Catherine wanted to accompany Queen Christina into the Hall

23 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. V, nr 307: 13 November 1635.

24 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. V, p. 305: 12 November 1635.

25 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. IV, p. 268: 1 February 1634.

26 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. III, p. 226: 4 November 1633.

27 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. III, pp. 25–6: 13 February 1633.

of the Realm to meet the Estates a year later, she was denied 'as she had no place'.<sup>28</sup>

But the Palatine family also had a group of allies who numbered Gyllenhielm, the councillor Skytte and the politically marginalised Dowager Queen, Christina's mother. The pro-Palatine faction regularly emphasised their Swedishness. In 1635, that it, shortly after the death of Gustav II Adolf, the royal bastard Carl Gyllenhielm argued Charles Gustav was 'Swedish [*Suecus*]' and should travel around the provinces; people would be pleased to 'be visited by someone of the native royal blood'.<sup>29</sup> In 1634, the Dowager Queen emphasised to the Council that in her view Johan Casimir was now a 'native' Swede (*för inländisch*) and not a foreigner.<sup>30</sup> In 1635, the Council did agree to a gold cloth dress for Christina Magdalena, but they hesitated to give Charles Gustav, the eldest Palatine boy, free food in the palace.<sup>31</sup> In the same year, Charles Gustav and Christina Magdalena were denied fodder for their horses at the court's expense, as they were not employed.<sup>32</sup> However, that was later rectified.<sup>33</sup> Tellingly, in 1635 the Council also asked Johan Casimir if any of his sons would be interested in becoming prince-bishop of Bremen.<sup>34</sup> It would have provided a step up for one of the Palatine princes, but also a step away from the court at Stockholm.

At this stage, several of the younger Palatines had managed to get a foothold in the royal palace. They are somewhat elusive in the sources as their presence in the palace was largely informal. However, in letters from a Palatine tutor it is clear that Charles Gustav and Christina Magdalena were in the palace in 1635.<sup>35</sup> They appear to have lived there permanently and they took part in various ceremonies with the Queen their cousin, such as funerals and weddings.<sup>36</sup> In 1636, the breakthrough came as the Council

28 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. IV, p. 197: 29 July 1634.

29 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Stockholm, 19 December 1635.

30 RA, K 80 Kungliga arkiv utgångna skrivelser, Maria Eleonora to the Council, Nyköping, 25 March 1634.

31 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. V, p. 138: 14 August 1635; and p. 72: 2 June 1635.

32 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Stockholm, 15 August 1635.

33 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Stockholm, 31 August 1635.

34 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. V, p. 26: 17 March 1635.

35 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Stockholm, 22 August 1635.

36 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Stockholm, 18 September 1635; and Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Stockholm, 19 December 1635.

decided to separate Queen Christina from her unruly mother. Instead, Princess Catherine, who as the Queen's aunt had a clear claim, became the new person in charge of her care. Naturally the accounts now show a special chamber for Charles Gustav as well as a bed for his mother Princess Catherine in the palace.<sup>37</sup>

Also in 1636, Carl Carlsson Gyllenhielm wrote to Princess Catherine that the young Queen had expressed a wish to have one of her female cousins as company in her studies. Gyllenhielm was eager this should happen and pushed hard.<sup>38</sup> This opened up an opportunity for a more formalised, constant Palatine presence at court. Gyllenhielm was clearly impatient to help establish his relatives at court and in the good favour of the Queen, who was now ten years old. As the Palatine children Charles Gustav and Christina Magdalena became steadily more integrated into the fabric of court life, a steady stream of letters from their servants to their parents chronicle their activities at the heart of the royal family. Particularly Charles Gustav's tutor was quick to inform Johan Casimir and Catherine of all marks of inclusion, for example, when Charles Gustav went hunting with members of the court,<sup>39</sup> danced with the Queen,<sup>40</sup> or when the Dowager Queen and the young Queen gave Charles Gustav magnificent New Year's presents.<sup>41</sup> Other letters were filled with more idle gossip.<sup>42</sup> From the tutor's letters, it is evident that in 1636, the younger Palatine children, Eleonora Catharina, Helena and Adolf Johan, were also present at court.<sup>43</sup> The Palatine children eagerly emphasised their royal background. Charles Gustav visited the meadow outside Uppsala where kings had been elected in the Middle Ages,<sup>44</sup> returning there some months later with a large retinue.<sup>45</sup>

37 SLA Slottshuvudböcker G I:4 (1638).

38 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål Ser. III a (E 32): Carl Carlsson Gyllenhielm to Princess Catherine, Stockholm, 15 February 1636.

39 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Svartsjö, 24 June 1637.

40 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Stockholm, 19 January 1636.

41 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Princess Catherine, Stockholm, 5 January 1636.

42 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Princess Catherine, Stockholm, 20 August 1636.

43 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Stockholm, 25 April 1636.

44 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Uppsala, 23 April 1637.

45 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Stockholm, 15 July 1637.

In 1638, Princess Catherine died. Her death could have destroyed the standing of the Palatine family at court — severing their direct link to the ‘Gustavian’ family — but by that point they had become entrenched. The Queen was now twelve years old and had become used to and attached to her relatives. Soon after Catherine’s death, Carl Gyllenhielm, always eager to further cement the Palatine’s position, suggested to the Council that her daughter, Christina Magdalena, should be appointed as court mistress to be put in charge of the Queen.<sup>46</sup> At twenty-two, Christina Magdalena was rather too young for this position and nothing came of it. Shortly afterwards Johan Casimir pleaded with the Council that his children should at least be allowed to stay at court.<sup>47</sup> The Chancellor, not normally positive towards the Palatines, emphasised that living in Germany would be more comfortable for the Palatines, but also conceded that the present war made that difficult and that it was a duty to look after them as the Queen’s ‘close kinswomen and playmates’. The result was that the young Palatines would stay.<sup>48</sup>

From now on the Palatine family was openly ensconced in the palace and integrated into court life. The impressive size of Johan Casimir’s set of rooms is indicated by the 416 glass windowpanes that were installed in 1639. The favoured position of the Queen’s cousins was also demonstrated in various ways, such as Adolf Johan and his sisters receiving sugar and other expensive spices from the kitchen outside meals,<sup>49</sup> or Christina Magdalena’s tailor having his own chamber.<sup>50</sup> The court was now even paying courtiers who served the Palatine children (two maids of honour and six servants in 1646).<sup>51</sup> The Palatine children would also feature prominently in the Queen’s list of New Year’s presents.

While Chancellor Oxenstierna was careful never to express the Palatines’ Swedishness — speaking of them as the Queen’s kin, but never as having royal Swedish blood — a certain rapprochement was discernible between him and the Palatines. In 1637 he visited Charles Gustav’s chamber for the first time. He was ‘greatly amazed that he was so badly lodged and his chamber had no tapestries and other things’. The lack of book cabinets (rather than bookshelves) also struck the Chancellor.<sup>52</sup> Later the same year

46 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. VII, p. 377: 16 January 1639.

47 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. VII, p. 454: 6 February 1639.

48 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. VII, p. 457: 6 February 1639.

49 SLA, Hovförtäringräkenskaper K M:ts (1645) I A:63.

50 SLA, Slottshuvudböcker G I:xx (1640).

51 SLA, Hovstatsräkenskaper K Mts I:24 (1646).

52 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrivelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Stockholm, 23 March 1637.



Charles Gustav, with the Chancellor's blessing, began to receive training in the royal chancery to better understand government.<sup>53</sup>

The position of the Palatines was well and truly established. Charles Gustav hurt his leg in a tournament in 1640, several members of the Council paid visits to the Prince in his chamber.<sup>54</sup> Four years later, when Charles Gustav was abroad, his tutor also wrote that 'many *patriae amantes* wish His Highness Charles was back in the country, for many reasons'.<sup>55</sup> Later on in the 1640s foreign diplomats would also meet the Palatine children, further marking their special status.<sup>56</sup> As the Palatine children reached adulthood and married, their weddings were organised by the court. One of the daughters, Maria Eufrosyne, married the favourite and rising star of Queen Christina's court, which further cemented the Palatine power base. The younger Palatine son, the rather impossible Adolf Johan, was appointed head of Queen Christina's court, the Grand Maître. The great prize, though, the hand of the Queen, was denied her cousin Charles Gustav (despite a secret early betrothal). What she did do was make her cousin a hereditary Swedish prince and her chosen successor. At her abdication in 1654, Charles Gustav did indeed succeed his cousin to the throne, as Charles X Gustav. Johan Casimir's 'presence'-strategy had in the long run been extremely successful.

## Absence

When analysing the 'presence' strategy of Johan Casimir, it is telling to compare it to the short-sighted 'absence' strategy of the next Palatine generation. Interestingly, the younger siblings of King Charles X Gustav had learned little from the experience. In contrast to their brother and their father Johan Casimir, they did not play a long game in the following decades, despite a new, precariously small Swedish royal family after Charles X Gustav's early death in 1660, leaving the throne to his four-year-old son Charles XI. His brother, Duke Adolf Johan, who was permanently in a great sulk, stayed away from the court where he had spent his youth, failing to establish

53 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 14: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Stockholm, 2 September 1637.

54 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 15: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Stockholm, 21 November 1640.

55 RA, Stegeborgssamlingen, Skrifvelser till Johan Casimir och hans gemål E 15: Bengt Baaz to Johan Casimir, Stockholm, 14 December 1644.

56 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. VIII, p. 661: 21 July 1641; and p. 675: 3 August 1641.

any sort of presence during his nephew's reign. In 1673, it was said Adolf Johan was there for the first time in thirteen years.<sup>57</sup> He did not allow his children to come to court either. His children never became close to their royal cousins and married almost as if they wanted the branch to die out or become ineligible (for example, marrying people too old to procreate or making morganatic marriages). Four of the children reached adulthood. In 1695, Charles XI noted that his cousins Catharina and Maria Elisabeth had set sail for Germany.<sup>58</sup> The two sons had already been travelling back and forth between Sweden and the continent for some years. They still maintained some links and would meet the royal family and attend various functions. After the 1690s, however, the links became increasingly tenuous. The oldest son, Prince Adolf Johan, did return to serve as an officer but died young in 1701.

The younger son, Gustav Samuel, lived mostly abroad and in 1696 converted to Catholicism. In practice, this barred him from any chance of ascending the Swedish throne. Evidently accepting that his opportunities to begin a cadet branch that would inherit the crown were non-existent, in 1707 he married a forty-nine-year-old princess of Pfalz-Veldenz. After an annulment in 1723, he entered into a morganatic marriage with a daughter of one of his hunt officials. Catholic, childless and having squandered his chances of the Swedish succession, Gustav Samuel still hoped to inherit Zweibrücken if his cousin Charles XII should die. In 1710 Gustav Samuel sent a New Year's letter, in Swedish, expressing his wish for the 'conservation of the Royal House'.<sup>59</sup> Three years later he raised the issue of his cousin Charles XII possibly dying without male heirs, in which case 'Our Ancestral house' Zweibrücken would go the next male kin (namely himself).<sup>60</sup> Gustav Samuel appears not to have aspired to the much grander prize of Sweden. After Charles XII's death, Gustav Samuel again wrote to his cousin Ulrika Eleonora, who succeeded her brother on the throne, to discuss his right to Zweibrücken. He also emphasised 'the close bonds of blood' and his hope 'always to see the Swedish Sceptre in the Palatine House'.<sup>61</sup> In May 1720,

57 National Archives of Denmark (*hereafter* DRA), Tyske Kancelli Udenrigske Afdeling (*hereafter* TKUA), Speciel Del Sverige vol. LXXXIX, Jens Juel to Christian V, Kalmar, 4 October 1673.

58 Hildebrand (ed.), *Karl XI:s almanacksanteckningar*.

59 RA, Kungliga arkiv, Skrivelser till Ulrika Eleonora d.y. i folio K 226, Gustav Samuel to Ulrika Eleonora, Zweibrücken, 30 January 1710.

60 RA, Kungliga arkiv, Skrivelser till Ulrika Eleonora d.y. i folio K 226, Gustav Samuel to Ulrika Eleonora, Strassburg, 13 August 1713.

61 RA, Kungliga arkiv, Skrivelser till Ulrika Eleonora d.y. i folio K 226, Gustav Samuel to Ulrika Eleonora, Zweibrücken, 8 February 1719.

Gustav Samuel, now prince of Zweibrücken, wrote to his cousin again to congratulate her on her husband Frederick assuming the crown.<sup>62</sup> He, naturally, highlighted their connections: 'as I am related in blood with His Royal Majesty, and Your Majesty together with me are of the Royal Swedish blood of the Gustavian family, descending through which the Swedish Crown has fallen in inheritance to Your Majesty.' For the first time Gustav Samuel seemed to hint at some right to the Swedish crown. He praised the Queen for inheriting the throne but added that 'my right of inheritance for me and my posterity' may be forgotten by the Swedish Diet. He wrote that again in November the same year, this time highlighting how his nephew 'belongs closest to Your Majesty in blood of the whole Palatine House'.<sup>63</sup> The nephew, Carl Adolf Gyllenstierna, was his sister Catharina's son with a Swedish aristocrat. Young Gyllenstierna did actually stay in Sweden and was appointed chamberlain to his relative the Queen in 1719, but he was killed in a duel 1733 without leaving any children. The last of the four Palatine siblings, Maria Elisabeth, also left Sweden. She married an official, an aristocrat who served the elector of Saxony. In 1719 she wrote from Hamburg to her cousin Queen Ulrika Eleonora (in French) for support in money matters.<sup>64</sup> Her only daughter Aurora Christina von Gersdorff never married and stayed away from Sweden.

Being present was a strategy that required time and tact to work, and Duke Adolf Johan was lacking in both tact and forward planning. Thus, his line, though present in Sweden for a long time, failed to position themselves as heirs in waiting. Adolf Johan stayed away from court and actively kept his children almost imprisoned at his residence of Stegeborg, until they fled. The four Palatine siblings did not stay very long at court, nor did they plan wisely with an eye to inheritance. Despite knowing the Swedish language and customs and the royal family, they still married in a way that made it difficult for them to edge back into the royal family at a later opportunity. That said, they may have found it a more peaceful and satisfying life to be a prince of Zweibrücken or married to a Saxon official rather than hanging around the court in Stockholm with a rather vague status.

62 RA, Kungliga arkiv, Skrivelser till Ulrika Eleonora d.y. i folio K 226, Gustav Samuel to Ulrika Eleonora, Zweibrücken, 17 May 1720.

63 RA, Kungliga arkiv, Skrivelser till Ulrika Eleonora d.y. i folio K 226, Gustav Samuel to Ulrika Eleonora, Zweibrücken, 1 November 1720.

64 RA, Kungliga arkiv, Skrivelser till Ulrika Eleonora d.y. i folio K 226, Maria Elisabeth to Ulrika Eleonora, Hamburg, 16 April 1719.

## The Soft-Edged Dynasty

To later historians, Charles X Gustav represented a clear-cut shift to a new dynasty. To contemporaries, it was more complicated. He was of the royal Gustavian blood and a born Swede and could be perceived as continuing the dynasty. There was some grumbling, such as Jakob De la Gardie in 1649, arguing against the Queen's request that Charles Gustav be made her heir. He conceded Charles Gustav was 'of *Gustaviana familia* on his mother's side but even so not on his father's side'.<sup>65</sup> The Council tried to refuse the Queen's demand but had to give in eventually. Interestingly, all the councillors knew Charles Gustav and praised him personally. Typically, one of them said that Charles Gustav was 'of Her Majesty's blood' and 'born and raised in the Realm'.<sup>66</sup>

The concept of blood was often used in this context. Thus, the estate of the burghers declared that they wished heirs and regents to be 'sprung from the royal Gustavian family and blood'.<sup>67</sup> The dynastic proximity of Charles Gustav turned him into a dynastic member in many minds. In a clergyman's diary from the diet of 1650, he recounts a speech by Chancellor Oxenstierna.<sup>68</sup> He praised 'the Royal Gustavian Family' but also warned that it was now extinct in the male line and only survived through 'one spark', Queen Christina. However, Oxenstierna added that Charles Gustav should be declared heir to the throne as he was 'of the same Gustavian family on his mother's side; also His Grace has shown he merited this, knows the law of the Realm, justice, customs, language & cetera'. To the same Diet, the Queen made a formal proposition that Charles Gustav be made her heir 'as Her Majesty's closest kinsman in the Realm',<sup>69</sup> especially as he was a 'born Swedish man, sprung from the Royal Gustavian family on his mother's side', had shown his worth in war, and knew the laws, language and other customs.

His son, the young Charles XI, was described by the estate of the clergy in the 1672 diet as 'a precious descendant sprung from and left to us by the royal Gustavian family'.<sup>70</sup> In a famous celebratory poem addressed to Charles XII, he was referred to as 'descended from the Gustavian stock'.<sup>71</sup> When Frederick was elected king in 1720, it was said that through his marriage

65 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. XIII, p. 340.

66 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. XIII, p. 356.

67 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. XIII, p. 365.

68 'Dagbok, förd vid 1650 års Riksdag', vol. 22, p. 60.

69 *Ibid.*

70 *Prästeståndets riksdagsprotokoll*, vol. III, p. 164.

71 Isogaeus, *Carla Seger-Skiöld*.

to Queen Ulrika Eleonora he was ‘implanted in the Glorious Gustavian Royal Family’.<sup>72</sup> Yet another dynastic sprig was attached to the Gustavian (Vasa) family in the 1740s with the election of a new crown prince of the Holstein-Gottorp family. The descent of the new Crown Prince from Gustav I would be used for dynastic purposes endlessly for almost a century. In a speech in 1747, the leading politician Carl Gustaf Tessin waxed lyrical about the new Crown Princess being ‘chosen as mother of our reborn Gustavian dynasty’.<sup>73</sup>

## Epilogue

In conclusion, the Palatines managed skilfully and tenaciously to build up a position at the heart of the Swedish court. As Gyllenhielm and others pointed out, by being present they learned the Swedish laws, language and other customs. They also, crucially, got to know the Queen and other people personally. They were not just abstract German princelings with whom you exchanged courtesy letters and marked the New Year, weddings and deaths. The advantage this provided was clear both to Johan Casimir and to others, which explains both why he and his supporters such as Gyllenhielm pushed for the Palatine brood to be housed in the palace — and why others tried to resist this. The soft edges of early modern dynastic conceptions, especially in times of dynastic fragility, made it possible to manoeuvre oneself into the dynasty and become part of it. While some, such as the Polish branch, suffered dynastic exclusion, the Palatines managed to achieve dynastic inclusion. The recurring theme of ‘royal blood’ and ‘the Gustavian family’ was a help in this context. It made it easier to see the Palatines as dynastic members rather than a separate dynasty. It was also a discourse that was continued after 1654, in that the royal family was still often referred to as the Gustavian family. Even if two separate crypts were created in Riddarholmskyrkan, the Gustavian crypt and the Caroline crypt, the royal family could be seen as a seamless continuation of the dynastic heritage that started with the founder King Gustav I.

While presence worked out well for Johan Casimir and Charles Gustav, this strategy was sometimes markedly unsuccessful. In the 1690s, some cousins of Charles XI came to Stockholm but received a fairly cold reception. Three weeks after a diplomat noted that the King’s cousin, the princess of Bevern,

72 Tegenborg-Falkdalen, *Vasadöttrarna*, p. 149.

73 Meyer, *Svenska Parnassen*, vol. II, p. 282.

had arrived in Stockholm in 1692, he wrote that 'both queens are very fed up with her'. Prince August Ferdinand of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel-Bevern also came to Stockholm but soon left without managing to cling on. Charles XI, always mindful of costs, might have felt his patience stretched as he had to pay the Bevern expenses. The Princess stayed on for another month before finally leaving. This Bevern presence may have felt too long for the royal family but it was too short to establish any useful future connection to the dynasty.

A decade later, several cousins presented themselves in attempts to marry Princess Ulrika Eleonora.<sup>74</sup> One prince of Bevern and one of Birkenfeld both entertained hopes of becoming part of the much grander royal family of Sweden. A more distant relative but also a suitor was Charles Leopold of Mecklenburg (a descendent of Gustav I).<sup>75</sup> These machinations came to naught as the Princess married a prince of Hesse, later King Frederick I, but the lack of any offspring did set off renewed attempts to connect to the royal family.

Thus it was that when, in January 1739, the childless Queen Ulrika Eleonora prepared a secret memorandum on the succession, there were no close Palatine cousins to place on the throne.<sup>76</sup> Instead she tried to keep her detested nephew and his family out of Sweden (comparing them to the Stuart Pretenders) and planned that an eighteen-year-old German prince, Christian of Pfalz-Birkenfeld, should succeed. Prince Christian had already succeeded to the duchy of Zweibrücken after the Queen's cousin Gustav Samuel died in 1731 and it went to Prince Christian's father. He belonged to a distant cadet branch of the family. His mother had arranged for him to have a Swedish governor directing his education. Her nephew, Charles Frederick, had previously been perceived to be of 'the royal Swedish blood' but the Queen was determined to quash any claims he could make.<sup>77</sup>

However, the Queen died only two years later without young Prince Christian being firmly established and while he was still being educated away from Sweden. In the fierce battle over who would be chosen to succeed the ageing King Frederick, Birkenfeld was a contender, but a weaker one than if he had been present. A hostile aristocrat wrote that the peasants could not get their tongues around the name of the duke of Birkenfeld but referred to him as 'the French Birkhane'.<sup>78</sup> The foreign nature of the

74 Fryxell, *Berättelser ur svenska historien*, vol. XXX, p. 8.

75 Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, vol. III, p. 103.

76 RA, K 205 Wissa Punckter och conditionner, 21 January 1739.

77 Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia*, vol. I, p. 308.

78 Lundvall (ed.), *Sverige under Ulrica Eleonora och Fredric I*, p. 183.

prince was emphasised here. About Birkenfeld and the Hessian contender, Prince Frederick, a hostile pamphleteer said, albeit they had good qualities, ‘they are, though, strangers in our Realm, in our climate, laws and they are ignorant in the language itself, though they should not be strangers in the language so they need not interpretation but they themselves can listen to and help their subjects’.<sup>79</sup> The candidate chosen by the Diet was the one seen as having the most royal blood, despite only being a member of the royal family through his late grandmother. The burghers in the Diet declared that the realm had flourished ‘through the kings of the Gustavian and Caroline family, and only one descendent of the same royal family is left’.<sup>80</sup> Here the Gustavian and Caroline families have merged into one royal line, showing again how the soft edges of a dynasty worked. The prince in question was elected crown prince, but then it became clear he had already accepted an offer to become heir to the Russian throne and he preferred that greater prize.

If Prince Christian of Birkenfeld had actually come to court in the 1730s, he could have succeeded. Being present was half the battle. Instead, a distant descendant of the Gustavian family, Adolf Frederick of Holstein-Gottorp, was now chosen at the behest of the Russian Empress; his Vasa (or Gustavian) credentials were then brandished over the coming years and decades.<sup>81</sup> He was hailed as ‘the Right descendant on his mother’s side, and the closest line of the Glorious Gustavian Family’. The Birkenfeld failure shows how the ‘presence’ strategy required both time to work and grow roots as well as actual physical presence.

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79 DRA, TKUA, Relationer fra Sverige 1742: the pamphlet ‘Een Svensk Udenlands varende Adelsmands Skrivelddr til sine begge Systersonner i Sverrige’.

80 *Borgarståndets riksdagsprotokoll*, vol. VIII, p. 112.

81 Laine, ‘Kungliga slott’, p. 105.

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## 4. The Austrian Nephews: The Offspring of Maximilian II and Maria of Austria at the Service of the Spanish King<sup>1</sup>

*Rubén González Cuerva*

**Abstract:** The simultaneous unity and division into several branches of the House of Austria offered a challenging situation in the case of the fifteen sons and daughters of Emperor Maximilian II (1527–76) and his wife — and cousin — Maria of Austria (1528–1603). As nephews of King Philip II of Spain, even as his possible heirs, these children enjoyed his powerful uncle's protection and acknowledged the Spanish legacy of the dynasty. By analysing their different education, role-holding and circulation within Europe, we reflect on how these individuals were pivotal to spread Philip II's interests and how dynastic formation intertwined with national constructions.

**Keywords:** Habsburgs, dynasty, Philip II, imperial court, Rudolf II

### Maximilian II and the Development of Intra-dynastic Dynamics

For the current topic of state-building and the use of cadet branches for advancing dynastic goals, the numerous offspring of Emperor Maximilian II (1527–76) and Maria of Austria (1528–1603) constitute a perfect generation as the only legitimate grandchildren of Emperor Charles V apart from Sebastian I of Portugal and Philip II's small number of descendants. Nine of these fifteen archdukes and archduchesses reached adulthood; thus the blessing of fertility also became the nightmare of finding offices and allowances for all of them. This task was especially problematical considering the quite

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements: This research was supported by a 2018 Leonardo Grant for Researchers and Cultural Creators, BBVA Foundation.

limited financial possibilities of Maximilian II as ruler of the Austrian monarchy and the Holy Roman Empire. Maximilian acknowledged on occasion his fear of leaving his children poor and without prospects. For that reason, he accepted sacrifices and justified impious policies based on reasons of state only to avert 'the miserable state of his house, leaving six sons and three daughters young and poor, with no support and at the mercy of his neighbour, the Ottoman sultan'.<sup>2</sup>

Philip II of Spain (1527–98), Maximilian II's cousin and brother-in-law, offered on his part access to the comparatively large Spanish market of favours, constituted by offices and grants in Iberia, Italy, the Netherlands and America. As Hohkamp has pointed out, the Habsburgs were able to disburse a more varied array of titles, patrimony and honours than just the primogenital succession.<sup>3</sup> In this vein, Philip II's patrimony was so global and impressive that it was known as 'the empire on which the sun never sets', but its inner articulation was far more precarious and unstable. The political system of the Spanish monarchy had been very complex and relatively erratic from the aggregation of the crowns of Castile and Aragon in the late fifteenth century until its final institutionalisation around 1580. Such a vast agglomerate of territories and legacies had a shallow prior tradition and almost no united institution except the ruling family and the royal court. Thus, dynastic members were pivotal in administering those realms as the most legitimate royal alter egos. Philip II's politics of patronage shows how every single member of his dynasty became a potential agent for articulating his domains and demonstrates that the underlying logic was more clannish than patrilineal: even bastard relatives were included as a matter of course, such as Philip II's natural siblings John of Austria and Margaret of Parma, who were both governors of the Netherlands.

Furthermore, Philip II's demands on his family were especially intense because, despite inheriting most of his father Charles V's possessions, he lacked the imperial title, which passed to the Austrian branch of the family. In consequence, he was largely unable to count on the traditional legitimisation and the universalist claims Charles V had enjoyed.<sup>4</sup> Instead of ruling the

2 Giovanni Micheli to the Dux of Venice, Vienna, 13 November 1567, in Turba (ed.), *Venetianische Depeschen*, vol. III, p. 415: 'Il misero stato della casa sua, lasciando sei figliuoli maschi et tre femine pupili et poveri senza appoggio alcuno a discrettione del vicino, che è il signor Turco.' The same lamentation appears in Luis Venegas de Figueroa to Philip II, Vienna, 3 December 1567, *Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España (hereafter CODOIN)*, vol. CI, p. 323.

3 Hohkamp, 'Sisters, Aunts and Cousins', pp. 92–3; Thiessen, 'Exchange of Gifts', pp. 29–31.

4 Rodríguez-Salgado, *The Changing Face of Empire*, pp. 33–40, 126–31, 339–55; Rivero, *La monarquía de los Austrias*, pp. 95–106, 115–20, 145–60.

Holy Roman Empire, Philip II governed a para-imperial power, which has offered many challenges both to historical analysis and to contemporary commentators. The spread of notions such as ‘particular empire’ or ‘hegemonic monarchy’ has created a peculiar subfield for discussing the building of this political entity as a composite monarchy, a dynastic agglomerate or a constellation of courts.<sup>5</sup> For that long process of empire-building (as distinct from monarchy-building or state-building), Philip II particularly required the services of his Austrian relatives for two main reasons: firstly, the need for top-level trusted agents for administering the senior lay and ecclesiastical positions at his disposal; secondly, the crucial necessity of the imperial family for legitimising his European policy as the heir of Charles V. Despite a prevalent teleological scope when looking at the Spanish process of state-building, the transformations of that period were still dynastic rather than national in nature.<sup>6</sup> Such a dynastic substrate conditioned the shaping of the Spanish monarchy, implying both visible advantages and weaknesses: the ability to coordinate and be present in widespread territories, but also an excessive dependence on personal ties and a shallow degree of integration.

Beyond Philip II’s demanding priorities, a shared dynastic culture prevailed. Regardless of their regional origins, all the members of the Habsburg family were aware of being part of a bigger ensemble that entailed duties and honours and was expressed in domestic terms as the Most August House of Austria.<sup>7</sup> As a member of such an organisation, Maximilian II had to implicitly admit that Philip II, his mistrusted cousin and brother-in-law, should act as patriarch and actively intervene in his own children’s education and future. Apart from lacking a big patrimony and rich revenues, Maximilian II’s main handicap was his dubious spiritual position. Although he observed the practices of the Catholic faith externally, his Lutheran sympathies were as obvious as his insistence on receiving communion *sub utraque specie* (both bread and wine), as Protestants did. The rest of the family considered that such an atmosphere was unfit for raising the next imperial generation. For

5 Elliott, ‘A Europe of Composite Monarchies’, pp. 48–71; Bonney, *The European Dynastic States*, pp. 345–9; Gustafsson, ‘The Conglomerate State’, pp. 189–213; Fernández Albaladejo, ‘Imperio e identidad’, pp. 131–50; Vermeir, Raeymaekers and Hortal Muñoz (eds), *A Constellation of Courts*.

6 Raeymaekers, ‘In the Service of the Dynasty’, p. 246.

7 A precise definition of dynasty is ‘an optimal manifestation of the family, that marks itself through a heightened sense of identity and definition to the outside world; a collection of assets that form an expressly collective possession, such as territories, rank, rights and offices; marriages and inheritance practices that are intended to pass on the patrimony undiminished or enhanced; and an increased sense of historical continuity’, in Weber, ‘Dynastiesicherung and Staatsbildung’, p. 95, translated in Geevers and Marini, ‘Introduction’, pp. 10–11.

these reasons, and despite being a *pater familias*, Maximilian II's authority was kept very limited by his father, Emperor Ferdinand I, until the latter died in 1564. Ferdinand I, the younger brother of Charles V, had long ago accepted his secondary role in the dynasty, and he sympathised with the idea of bolstering the Spanish education of his grandchildren as he was born in Castile and kept several traits of his Iberian identity throughout his life. Ferdinand I's agency was underpinned by Maximilian II's wife, Maria of Austria, loyal sister of Philip II and authoritative advocate for a line of action grounded on dynastic entente, pious Catholic positions and Spanish traditions.

Dynasty, as a family business, overcame personal leanings and opinions. The shared and highly respected notion of dynastic service smoothed the quarrels around Maximilian II as much as the repeated intervention of family mediators, beginning with Empress Maria. Maximilian II reluctantly ceded to this intricate network of influences and pressures, thus subordinating his personal priorities as an imperial prince and non-fervent Catholic in order to secure a respected position for his children. By promoting the circulation of family members and entente, Maria (and to a lesser extent Ferdinand I) helped strengthen Philip II's position and thus Spanish dynastic formation. There was no preconceived grand design for raising and employing these young archdukes and archduchesses, just a mixture of family tradition and opportunity, under the competing agencies of Maximilian and Maria. While the father emphasised the humanist and literary side, the mother stressed their moral formation according to strict Catholic standards and in Spanish. Maximilian failed to influence his children on the spiritual side, as all of them were confirmed as Catholics and took Communion *sub una specie* (bread alone).<sup>8</sup> The linguistic aspect was very important in the cosmopolitan court of Vienna and in consequence these Habsburgs mastered several languages, except for Empress Maria, who always resorted to her native Spanish despite having spent thirty years in the Holy Empire. She only spoke Spanish with her children as that was the habit in her household, which was made up of Spaniards and central Europeans skilful enough in that language.<sup>9</sup>

This Spanish and Catholic education in a German-speaking area with a Protestant majority implied a stark gender differentiation. By 1564, all the male children were institutionally and physically separated from their

8 Gebke, 'Auf den Spuren der "weiberhandlung"', p. 52.

9 Fichtner, *Emperor Maximilian II*, pp. 117–18; Edelmayer, *Söldner und Pensionäre*, pp. 50–1; Patrouch, *Queen's Apprentice*, pp. 102–3, 143–8.

mother's household and raised outside the Hofburg Palace.<sup>10</sup> Empress Maria's daughters were educated in her *Frauenzimmer* (household) and, thanks to restrictive rules of access and a relative high degree of authority over domestic issues, the Empress could guarantee an orthodox and pious daily life for them.<sup>11</sup> Court observers emphasised the devout character of these girls, such that Archduchess Anne, the oldest daughter, even desired to enter a nunnery.<sup>12</sup> Following this path, Archduchess Elizabeth founded a Poor Clare convent in Vienna when she became a widow, and spent the rest of her life there, while Archduchess Margaret professed vows as a Poor Clare nun in Madrid.<sup>13</sup>

A more communicative and independent lifestyle was reserved for the archdukes, for whom the risks of Protestant contamination were consequently much higher. The only hope for Maria of Austria, as it was for her father-in-law Emperor Ferdinand I, was to send the boys to Spain, both for reasons of spiritual safety and to make them familiar with their dynasty's main possession and their possible inheritance. Philip II had only one sick son, Prince Carlos, and then his nephews were the next in the line of succession. These reasons and the constant agency of Ferdinand I and Maria were efficient enough, so that in 1563 the two elder brothers, the future Emperor Rudolf II and Archduke Ernest, were sent to their uncle Philip II's court.<sup>14</sup> Maria openly acknowledged the mixture of affective and strategic reasons behind this decision:

because they will be a pledge and guarantor that will ensure that the King [Maximilian II] will not go forward in the blindness that had begun to be understood from him, for by growing up in Spain and with the Prince

10 Luis Venegas de Figueroa to Philip II, Vienna, 3 December 1567, *CODOIN*, vol. CI, p. 323; Noflatscher, *Glaube, Reich und Dynastie*, pp. 39, 46; Patrouch, *Queen's Apprentice*, pp. 129–30.

11 Maria 'would want to take them all off if she could [all her male children from Maximilian II], but not the daughters, who are under her hand'. *Puntos que Felipe II mandó que se tratasen cuando estuviese en Guadalupe* [Items that Philip II ordered to be discussed in Guadalupe], 4 January 1570, *CODOIN*, vol. CIII, p. 412.

12 Luis Venegas de Figueroa to Philip II, Vienna, 3 December 1567, *CODOIN*, vol. CI, p. 324; Maria of Austria to Philip II, Vienna, 28 February 1568, *CODOIN*, vol. CI, p. 380; Archivo General de Simancas (*hereafter* AGS), Estado (*hereafter* E), legajo 658 (*hereafter* leg.), n. 32: *Puntos de las cartas del Emperador y la Emperatriz y Dietristan* [Items in letters by Maximilian II, Empress Maria and Dietrichstein], 1568.

13 Patrouch, 'The Archduchess Elisabeth', pp. 80–4; González Heras, 'Sor Margarita de la Cruz', pp. 597–614.

14 The count of Luna to Philip II, Vienna, 13 October 1561, *CODOIN*, vol. XCVIII, p. 249; AGS, E, leg. 651, n. 102: Instructions to the Imperial Ambassador Martín de Guzmán, Madrid, 9 December 1562; Mayer-Löwenschwerdt, 'Der Aufenthalt der Erzherzoge', pp. 13–18.

[Carlos] they all will have the love and friendship that is appropriate between these houses.<sup>15</sup>

From that time on, the ten surviving children were treated and classified in pairs. After Rudolf and Ernest's stay in Spain between 1563 and 1571, Archdukes Albert and Wenzel took their place from 1570 on. As a testimony of Maximilian II's lack of enthusiasm for these Spanish transfers, he did not decide who would join Archduke Albert but gave a dice to Archdukes Mathias and Wenzel to leave it up to chance.<sup>16</sup> Therefore the last pair of brothers, Archdukes Mathias and Maximilian, did not stay in Spain and accordingly they did not enjoy Philip II's patronage to a comparable extent. In the case of the sisters, the elder pair, Anne and Elizabeth, married in 1570, while the younger pair Eleonora and Margaret remained with the Empress.

The shared experiences between the different groups of siblings ensured that as adults they developed firmer bonds of trust and affection with those who had joined them in Madrid, Vienna or the Empress's *Frauenzimmer*.<sup>17</sup> The different profiles of each pair of brothers and sisters led to more specific training. Rudolf and Ernest's retinue in Spain was filled by Germans and under the direct control of the imperial ambassador Adam von Dietrichstein, in line with their position as the first two in the imperial line of succession. For their part, Albert and Wenzel's household was almost entirely constituted by Spaniards and was out of Maximilian II's control. Maximilian ceded charge over almost every aspect of these two children's education except the requisite of keeping the German language. This was mandatory for imperial powers to enable communication and acceptance and constituted a key question of identity, as Maximilian II himself had experienced.<sup>18</sup> He had spent two years in Spain (1548–50) and he wrote to German princes from

15 AGS, E, leg. 650, n. 93, fol. 3v: the count of Luna to Philip II, Vienna, 29 January 1561: 'porque seran una prenda y fiador q asegurara que el Rei [Maximilian II] no pase adelante en las çeguedades que del se abian comenzado a entender, como porque criandose en España y con el principe [Carlos] se tendran el amor y amistad que conviene aya en estas casas.' See also Nuncio Commendone to Cardinal Borromeo, Brussels, 16 November 1561, in *Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland* (1892–2016, 37 vols) (*hereafter NBD*), vol. II/2, p. 40 and AGS, E, leg. 652, n. 50: Maria of Austria to Philip II, Bratislava, 16 November 1563.

16 Maria of Austria to Philip II, Prague, 29 May 1570, in *Epistolario de la emperatriz*, p. 181; Luis Venegas de Figueroa to Philip II, Speyer, 31 July 1570, *CODOIN*, vol. CIII, pp. 534–5.

17 For the close relationship between Rudolf and Ernest see Moravský Zemský Archiv (Brno), Rodinný archive Ditrichštejnů Mikulov, 423, 1898/201, fols 17r and 7r: Rudolf II to Adam von Dietrichstein, Bratislava and Vienna, 17 March 1572 and 23 January 1574.

18 AGS, E, leg. 663, n. 125: Maria of Austria to Philip II, Prague, 14 and 29 May 1570, and *Epistolario de la emperatriz*, p. 182; Fichtner, *Emperor Maximilian II*, p. 108.

Valladolid how much he missed his cherished German land: 'We [desire] coming to the laudable German nation (which we have heartily longed for above all else).'<sup>19</sup>

The four archdukes' stay in Madrid was crucially important in letting Philip II consider them reliable agents. The key element was a tailored education whose most relevant aspect was not the typical syllabus based on classical literature and on Latin, German and Spanish writing, but mastery of the rigid Catholic spirituality of the Spanish court and its political culture and traditions. After Rudolf and Ernest returned to the Empire, Philip II's agents in Vienna emphasised not the archdukes' love for Spain, but their ostentatious show of the Catholic practices of praying and fasting and their refusal to be served by Protestants.<sup>20</sup> However, as local Catholics were much more lax, those practices were interpreted not in religious terms but in national terms: the Protestants condemned their new style as 'Spanish' while Maximilian II mistrusted Adam von Dietrichstein, the Archdukes' high steward, as he was 'Hispanicised' ['españolado'].<sup>21</sup> Maximilian II needed Spanish support and employed a rhetoric of submission to Philip II, but rebuked the latter's controlling machinations and the presence of ambitious Spanish advocates in his court. By contrast, Maria was the driving force behind this rapprochement which indirectly reinforced Spanish Habsburg dynasty-shaping.

Nevertheless, Maximilian II interiorised the dynastic logic perfectly and the only candidate he considered for marrying Anne of Austria, his eldest daughter, was Carlos, the Spanish crown prince. Maximilian even evaluated promoting Prince Carlos as king of the Romans (elected heir apparent of the Empire) due to his inability to afford a high dowry.<sup>22</sup> Regarding the marriage of the second daughter, Elizabeth of Austria, the imperial couple discreetly clashed. Maximilian II explored the possibility of marrying Elizabeth to King Charles IX of France, while his wife Maria pushed for

19 Maximilian II to the Elector of Brandenburg, Valladolid, 9 January 1550, in Loserth (ed.), *Die Registratur Erzherzog Maximilians*, p. 492: 'wir in die loblich teutsch nation komen (darein wir dann fur all andere ding herzlich verlangen haben).'

20 AGS, E, leg. 659, n. 79: Juan del Pino OFM, s.l, s.d. (post 1571); The count of Monteagudo to Philip II, Vienna, 6 April 1572, *CODOIN*, vol. CX, p. 431.

21 AGS, E, leg. 670, n. 85: The count of Monteagudo to Philip II, Vienna, 28 February 1573; and n. 65, fol. 3v: The count of Monteagudo to Gabriel de Zayas, Prague, 28 March and 30 September 1575 and leg. 673, n. 90, fol. 4v; Edelmayer, *Söldner und Pensionäre*, pp. 79–81.

22 AGS, E, leg. 657, n. 4: Adam von Dietrichstein to Philip II, Aranjuez, 11 May 1565; Giovanni Micheli to the Dux of Venice, Vienna, 13 November 1567, in Turba (ed.), *Venetianische Depeschen*, vol. III, pp. 413–6; Fichtner, *Emperor Maximilian II*, pp. 109–12; Rodríguez-Salgado, 'Philip II's Relations with Rudolf II', p. 350.



the candidacy of her nephew Sebastian I of Portugal, the son of her beloved only sister, Juana. Maria's advocacy for a match within the family included spying on Maximilian's correspondence, openly reproaching him for his French policy and using the Spanish diplomatic network in Vienna and Rome to boycott her husband's negotiations.<sup>23</sup> In the dynastic field, Maria behaved not as a submissive wife but as an empowered actor and protective mother, who was perfectly entitled to develop her own policy. Maximilian condescendingly accepted her machinations for the Portuguese match even as he simultaneously benefitted from her tireless efforts in faithfully negotiating with Philip II for a convenient Spanish wedding for Archduchess Anne.<sup>24</sup> In the end, a compromise was found in 1570. Elizabeth was to marry Charles IX of France while Anne, after the successive deaths of the Prince and the queen of Spain, married her uncle Philip II.

### Rudolf II and the Limits of Circulation within the Family

The outcomes of this dynastic policy were to be witnessed after 1576, the year in which Emperor Maximilian II suddenly died. Empress Maria felt she had sufficient authority to search for proper Catholic destinations for her children, and there was no one to act as a counterbalance.<sup>25</sup> Maximilian had been a caring father (although he insistently declared he loved Anne, the elder daughter, more than the other children put together), but he had proved to be passive and hesitant in providing for their future, as he wanted to avoid depending excessively on Philip II or the pope.<sup>26</sup> By contrast, Maria immediately resorted to Spanish and Papal patronage, employing the rhetoric

23 AGS, E, leg. 656, n. 11, fols 1v–3v: Luis Venegas de Figueroa to Philip II, Bratislava, 19 July 1567; Luis Venegas de Figueroa to Philip II, Vienna, 30 September and 14 October 1567, *CODOIN*, vol. CI, pp. 284–8 and 292–4.

24 AGS, E, leg. 656, n. 11, fols 1v–2r: Luis Venegas de Figueroa to Philip II, Bratislava, 19 July 1567; AGS, E, leg. 657, n. 8: Adam von Dietrichstein to Philip II, Madrid, 29 July 1566; AGS, E, leg. 655, n. 61, fols 2v–3r and n. 62, fols 2r–4v: Lord Chantonnay to Philip II, Imperial Camp over Győr, 22 and 24 September 1566; Patrouch, *Queen's Apprentice*, pp. 135–7, 211–3; Gebke, 'Gender, Space und Agency', p. 53.

25 Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (*hereafter* AAV), Fondo Borghese (*hereafter* FB), serie III, 122, fols 13r–13v: Maria of Austria to Pope Gregory XIII, s.l., s.d.; Bibliothèque de Genève (*hereafter* BGe), Collection Favre (*hereafter* Favre), XXIV, fols 39r–39v: Juan de Zúñiga to the marquis of Almazán (previously count of Monteagudo), Rome, 13 March 1577; BGe, Favre, XIX, fols 102v–103v and 107v: the marquis of Almazán to Juan de Zúñiga, Prague, 16 and 29 March 1577.

26 Giovanni Micheli to the Dux of Venice, Vienna, 5 February 1568, in Turba (ed.), *Venetianische Depeschen*, vol. III, p. 427; Luis Venegas de Figueroa to Philip II, Vienna, 31 March and 2 June 1568, *CODOIN*, vol. CI, pp. 407 and 430; Fichtner, *Emperor Maximilian II*, pp. 107–9.

of a poor widow looking after her orphan children. Rudolf II, her son and the new emperor, appears in those months' correspondence as a supporter of his mother's policy rather than as the instigator.<sup>27</sup> The outcomes were tangible in just a few months. Archduke Albert was consecrated as a cardinal and nearly appointed archbishop of Toledo, while Archduke Wenzel was promoted to the successor of the prior of Castile and Leon in the Order of Malta and Mathias and Maximilian were proposed for imperial archbishoprics.<sup>28</sup> As a symbol of this shift, Archduchesses Leonor and Margarita as well as Archdukes Mathias and Maximilian were confirmed as Catholics in 1577.<sup>29</sup> The final proof of this dynastic and religious reinforcement should have been the marriage between Emperor Rudolf II and his cousin the Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia of Spain, thus consolidating the tradition of reserving crowned rulers for intra-dynastic marriages.

At first Rudolf II followed this dynastic and religious line, whose success was due to the convergence of interests among the actors involved (i.e. the king of Spain, the Pope, the Emperor and the Dowager Empress). The fluent coordination between Vienna, Madrid and Rome was possible thanks to the use of the dense Spanish diplomatic network. Lacking a proper imperial ambassador in Rome, Empress Maria appointed a personal agent there, Gaspar de Santiago, who liaised with Philip II's ministers.<sup>30</sup>

These manoeuvres demonstrated that the prerequisite for enjoying top ecclesiastical positions in the Spanish monarchy was long familiarity with Philip II, a factor that distinguished Albert and Wenzel from Mathias and Maximilian. The first two, although being native Austrians, were first and foremost presented as nephews of the king of Spain. Thus, Albert was proposed for the title of cardinal-archduke or cardinal of Spain, while Wenzel was granted the future title of prior of Castile and Leon in the Order of Malta without requiring his naturalisation.<sup>31</sup> Philip II did not attempt to separate Wenzel from his imperial background, but instead sought to accumulate titles and bailiwicks from both the *langues* of Germany and of Castile, León and Portugal in the Order of Malta. Philip II's attempt to add the priory of Bohemia and the bailiwick of Brandenburg for his nephew was in line with his usual approach when dealing with the Empire. He first consulted

27 AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 167: Rudolf II to Philip II, Prague, 27 January 1577.

28 BGe, Favre, XXIV, fol. 39v: Juan de Zúñiga to the marquis of Almazán, Rome, 13 March 1577; Ezquerria Revilla, 'Los intentos de la corona por controlar la orden de San Juan', p. 411.

29 BGe, Favre, XIX, fol. 101r.: The marquis of Almazán to Juan de Zúñiga, Prague, 16 March 1577.

30 Instituto Valencia de Don Juan (Madrid), envío 5-1, n. 114 and BGe, Favre, XIX, fols 107v-108v: the marquis of Almazán to Juan de Zúñiga, Prague, 10 January and 29 March 1577.

31 BGe, Favre, XIX, fol. 109r: the marquis of Almazán to Juan de Zúñiga, Prague, 29 March 1577.

his sister Empress Maria, but the operation failed because Emperor Rudolf II blocked what he perceived as an intervention in his imperial policies. The use of Wenzel as a dual dynastic agent could not be sustained as he died prematurely in September 1578.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Rudolf II was already adopting his father Maximilian II's mistrustful attitude towards Philip II's vast dynastic plans, which were more beneficial for the Spanish side and left a mere auxiliary role for the Austrian side.

Misunderstandings and disagreements showed that the interpretation of dynastic interests varied from individual to individual. Besides, a system based on personal rule was heavily conditioned by vital constraints such as death and affections.<sup>33</sup> In this sense, Archduke Mathias tested the resilience of dynastic entente in October 1577 when he fled from the imperial court to be appointed stadholder of the Netherlands by the Flemish who had rebelled against Philip II.<sup>34</sup> Mathias was the easiest target to help the rebels. Rudolf was busy as the new emperor, Archduke Ernest expected to be appointed governor of Austria, while his younger brothers Albert and Wenzel had almost been adopted by Philip II, who never supported either Mathias or his brother Maximilian to the same extent. Mathias's governorship in the Netherlands was brief and unsuccessful but despite his efforts to regain the confidence of his relatives, his mother Maria had a very cold relationship with him and Philip II mistrusted and almost ignored him for the rest of his life. Even thirty years after this affair, the Spanish ministers still doubted Mathias should succeed Rudolf II as emperor.<sup>35</sup>

These personal constraints facing general plans were also evident in the case of the matriarch, Maria of Austria. After becoming a widow in 1576 and arranging the future of her children, she felt that the moment had come to retire to her native Castile. Her pleas went unheard by the Emperor, the king of Spain and the Pope, who were well aware of her pivotal role in guaranteeing fruitful religious and dynastic communication with the imperial court and, more specifically, in acting as the caring mother

32 BGe, Favre, XXIV, fols 273v–274r: Juan de Zúñiga to Maria of Austria, Rome, 18 July 1577; fol. 319r: Juan de Zúñiga to Rudolf II, Rome, 10 August 1577; BGe, Favre, XXV, fols 124r and 417r–417v: Juan de Zúñiga to Jean L'Evesque de La Cassière, Grand Master of the Order of Malta, Rome, 25 January and 25 June 1578; Ezquerro Revilla, 'Los intentos de la corona', pp. 417–24.

33 Gebke, 'Frühneuzeitliche Politik', pp. 106–12.

34 Maczkiewitz, *Der niederländische Aufstand*, p. 281.

35 Maria of Austria to Rudolf II, Lisbon, 16 July 1582, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Vienna) (*hereafter* HHStA), Familienkorrespondenz (*hereafter* FK) A, 4/7, fol. 120r: 'I think that the main aim of Mathias in this life is finishing mine, because he just gives me cause for it.' See also HHStA, Spanien – Höfische Korrespondenz (*hereafter* SHK), 2/7, fols 49r–49v: Maria of Austria to Mathias I, s.l., 5 November 1592; González Cuerva, *Baltasar de Zúñiga*, pp. 253–62.

of a dozen archdukes and archduchesses, as Pope Gregory XIII stated.<sup>36</sup> It was acceptable for Philip II and Rudolf II to negotiate her appointment as governor of the Spanish Netherlands, but not to allow her an independent retirement.<sup>37</sup>

Philip II only changed his mind after the death of his wife Anne of Austria in October 1580, coinciding with his conquest of Portugal and the lack of any other adult relative in his court. Maria of Austria then fitted his dynastic plans, both as a possible viceroy of Portugal and, if necessary, as the regent on behalf of his underage son. Moreover, Maria could be escorted to Spain by one of her daughters, either the spinster Margaret or the widow Elizabeth, to become the fifth wife of Philip II. Rudolf II and Ernest, acting as an authoritative duo in family questions, rejected with all their might Maria's attempt to leave, but their plots were fruitless against the stubborn will of their mother. Even in such a direct relationship, Rudolf II's dynastic needs were overcome by Philip II's.<sup>38</sup>

Maria's return was partly a dynastic strategy, partly her personal will; the imperial minister Wolfgang Rumpf blamed the second factor on a capricious and stubborn female attitude.<sup>39</sup> She travelled to Spain in July 1581 accompanied by her younger daughter Margaret, who became a nun in the Descalzas Reales monastery of Madrid, while the Dowager Empress apparently retired from public life to an adjacent palace after refusing the honour of the vicereignty of Portugal. Her other daughter, Elizabeth, dowager queen of France, imitated her mother in tenaciously claiming her own

36 BGe, Favre, XXIV, fol. 121r: Juan de Zúñiga to Margarita de Cardona, Rome, 17 April 1577; Koller, 'La facción española', pp. 113–8.

37 AGS, E, leg. 683, n. 5: Juan de Borja to Philip II, Bratislava, 5 April 1578; AGS, E, leg. 669, n. 40: *Las condiciones con que presupone el Emperador que se ha de tratar el concierto*, 1578; AGS, E, leg. 687, s. n.: Juan de Borja to Philip II, Prague, 24 February 1579.

38 Archivio di Stato di Venezia (*hereafter* ASV), Dispacchi Senato (*hereafter* DS), Germania, 8, fols 1r, 94r, 98r and 101r: Alberto Badoer to the Dux of Venice, Prague, 1 March, 25, 26 and 27 July 1581; Rudolf II to Johann Khevenhüller, Prague, 26 April 1581, in Schoder, 'Die Berichte von Johann Khevenhüller', pp. 55–9; Nuncio Santacroce to Cardinal Gallio, Prague, 11 July 1581, *NBD*, vol. III/10, pp. 496–9; Schoder, 'Die Reise der Kaiserin', pp. 151–80.

39 ASV, DS, Germania, 8, fol. 70r: Alberto Badoer to the Dux of Venice, Prague, 11 July 1581: Rumpf 'entrò poi meco a detestare questa risoluzione dell'Imperat.ce dicendo che non aveva alcuna ragione per essa, ma che in fine questa era una fermezza da donna, et che dubitava che si vorrà partire serrando l'orecchie a queste ragioni le sono state dette, per ché questo è proprio delle donne, et vecchie et gioveni, di essere ostinatissime nei suoi propositi' [Then he visited me to express his loathing for this resolution by the empress saying that she had no reason for it and that it was no more than woman's weakness and he doubted that she would want to depart ignoring the reasons that she was told, because this is typical in women, both old and young, to be very obstinate in their enterprises].

room for manoeuvre as a widow. Elizabeth retreated to her native Vienna, where she founded the convent of Our Lady Queen of Angels, soon known as *Königinkloster* (the Queen's Cloister). From her base in this local version of the *Descalzas Reales*, Elizabeth did not retire from worldly affairs but actively contributed to the dynastic endeavour of the re-Catholicisation of Austria.<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, from the very beginning of his rule, Rudolf II shared with his grandfather and father the uncomfortable sensation of holding the highest title of Christendom but being constantly overruled by Philip II. Although Rudolf kept his appetite for Spanish fashion and culture, he proved to be much more cautious and less collaborative with Spanish policymaking.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, he assumed he was entitled to receive Philip II's unconditional support for his own problems, like the Turkish wars of Hungary, for which he sought the (unenthusiastic) mediation of his mother Maria and his brother Albert.<sup>42</sup> However, the main intra-dynastic disagreement was not on military aid but on marriage strategies. Although Rudolf's future marriage to the Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia had been taken for granted since the 1570s, the negotiations never advanced seriously as Rudolf's dowry demands (sovereignty over the Netherlands) were not acceptable for Philip II. After more than a decade of fruitless conversations in which Maria's mediation proved to be ineffective, Philip II negotiated Isabel Clara Eugenia's marriage with the next archduke in age, Ernest, and after his sudden death in 1594, with the loyal Archduke-Cardinal Albert of Austria. When the compromise was announced in 1597, Rudolf II showed his anger and surprise at not being consulted and vainly attempted to gain the Empress's support.<sup>43</sup> Keeping alive the marriage discussion and postponing his succession plans were the only fields in which Rudolf could maintain his own legitimate dynastic authority vis-à-vis Philip II, but at a very high cost, as he ended up bypassed and almost dethroned by his brothers. His contemporary, Elizabeth I of

40 Hodapp, *Habsburgerinnen und Konfessionalisierung*, pp. 96–116, especially 107–8.

41 Labrador Arroyo (ed.), *Diario de Hans Khevenhüller*, p. 162: 'The emperor [Rudolf II] did not match his late father [Maximilian II] in the demonstrations and affection to the Spaniards'; Rodríguez-Salgado, 'Philip II's Relations', pp. 354–7.

42 AAV, FB, III, 94C, fols 256r–257r, 259v–260r, 108r–v and 197r: Papal Legate Borghese to Cardinal Aldobrandini, Madrid, 2 and 11 February, 9 March and 2 May 1594; HHStA, Spanien Varia, 3/5, fol. 155r: Cristóbal de Moura to Johann Khevenhüller, Aceca, 13 May 1596; Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barberiniani Latini, 5841, fols 84v–85r: Nuncio Ginnasi to Cardinal Aldobrandini, Madrid, 1 April 1597; Niederkorn, *Die europäischen Mächte*, pp. 208–9.

43 HHStA, Spanien Varia, 3/6, fol. 279: Rudolf II to Johann Khevenhüller, Prague, 17 April 1597; HHStA, SHK, 2/6, fols 20r and 27r: Rudolf II to Maria of Austria and Philip II, Prague, 17 April 1597; Rodríguez-Salgado, 'Philip II's Relations', pp. 386–90.

England, followed the same path of remaining unmarried but with more success.<sup>44</sup>

## Habsburg Dynasty Formation and National Constructions

On balance, after years of differences in their educational, role-holding and circulation within Europe, the result by the 1590s was a dysfunctional family, dispersed, poorly coordinated, but relatively united. Duerloo is right in stating that the main weakness of the house of Austria at the beginning of the seventeenth century was not the lack of understanding between the Spanish and the imperial branches, but the lack of unity among the children of Maximilian II and Maria.<sup>45</sup> The main division was which patron (acknowledging a high degree of porosity) these archdukes and archduchesses followed. Mathias, Maximilian and Elizabeth remained in the Hereditary Lands with Rudolf II, while Albert, Ernest and Margaret served Philip II in one way or another. Only one clear criterion determined their personal situation: whether or not they had lived in Spain.

The destiny of Emperor Maximilian II's children must be observed more through a matriarchal lens, as Empress Maria of Austria deployed personal, dynastic and religious elements to provide for them. Her central role in keeping smooth communication between the Habsburg courts has been overshadowed due to the loss of most of her correspondence, an impressive collection which we only know through indirect testimonies and some scarce remains.<sup>46</sup> Throughout her adult life, Maria showed neither an interest in nor a clear appreciation of jurisdictional, imperial and international politics as they are understood nowadays. By contrast, she openly and legitimately dedicated herself to dynastic politics following a dutiful motto: 'may we all serve what we must' [que todos sirvamos lo que debemos].<sup>47</sup>

She devoted herself to dynastic action in two senses: firstly, as an accomplished wedding planner for all her children and her grandson Philip III

44 See Bužek (ed.), *Ein Bruderzwist* and Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, pp. 210–18.

45 Duerloo, *Dynasty and Piety*, p. 241.

46 Charles V and Philip II wrote regularly to Maria but not to Maximilian, who only received formal letters and was referred to their letters to Maria. HHStA, SHK, 1/4, fol. 128r; Charles V to Maximilian II, Brussels, 5 August 1555; HHStA, SHK, 1/5, fols 12r–12v; Philip II to Maximilian II, Brussels, 16 May 1556; AGS, E, leg. 655, n. 64, fol. 9r; Lord Chantonnay to Philip II, Imperial Camp over Győr, 5 October 1566. The Ducal Archives of Alba have preserved a unique collection of letters by the Empress, directed both to the duke of Alba and to Philip II. *Epistolario de la emperatriz*.

47 Maria of Austria to Philip II, Vienna, 28 February 1568, *CODOIN*, vol. CI, p. 382.

of Spain, thus fostering dynastic cooperation;<sup>48</sup> secondly, through her ardour in supporting succession plans for her male children. The three attempts to have Archdukes Ernest or Maximilian crowned as king of Poland between 1572 and 1589 were fervently supported by Empress Maria while Maximilian II and Philip II followed these negotiations half-heartedly.<sup>49</sup> The latter faintly and belatedly supported Archduke Maximilian in his Poland succession claim of 1587–88 and only after constant pressure from Empress Maria, who extraordinarily quitted the Descalzas and went to El Escorial to plead with her brother.<sup>50</sup> Based on the available sources, Maria interceded with Philip II but never intrigued against him, even when she was presented with a tempting plan to put Ernest on the Portuguese throne.<sup>51</sup> She also dosed her efforts according to which son was involved. In 1594, Maria concentrated her energies on promoting Ernest for the throne of France and Albert for the archbishopric of Toledo rather than in supporting Rudolf II's requests of assistance against the Turks.<sup>52</sup>

As a final remark, did Maximilian II and Maria's children act as Spanish agents? For early modern Spanish state-building, historians have assessed the institutional, ideological and centripetal contributions by the royal councils, the spread of the Inquisition and the centrality of the royal court.<sup>53</sup> Geevers is right in evaluating the dynastic ingredient not in terms of mere state-building but as a process of 'patrimonialisation', which does not mean 'centralisation'.<sup>54</sup> In the case of the Austrian nephews, the archdukes cooperated in the process of Spanish empire-building by concentrating high ecclesiastical and government positions: Albert as a cardinal, viceroy of Portugal, archbishop of Toledo and sovereign of the Netherlands; Wenzel as prior of Castile in the Order of Malta; and Ernest as governor of the Netherlands.

However, Spanish empire-building was a side effect of a more deliberate process of dynasty formation in which the Habsburg networks of patronage

48 AAV, FB, II, 14, fol. 182r: Nuncio Caetani to Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, Madrid, 6 December 1597; AAV, FB, I, 682, fols 38r–39r: Nuncio Bastoni to Cardinal Aldobrandini, Madrid, 23 January 1599.

49 AGS, E, leg. 670, n. 14: Adam von Dietrichstein to Philip II, Vienna, 22 June 1573.

50 AAV, Segreteria di Stato (*hereafter* SS), Spagna (*hereafter* Sp.), 33, fols 409v and 418r: Nuncio Speciano to Cardinal Rusticucci, Madrid, 23 September and 9 October 1587; AAV, SS, Sp., 34, fols 201r–201v and 214r–214v: Nuncio Speciano to Cardinal Montalto, Madrid, 5 and 11 March 1588.

51 ASV, DS, Germania, 7, fols 239r–240r: Alberto Badoer to the Dux of Venice, Prague, 19 July 1580.

52 AAV, FB, III, 94C, fols 264r and 273v: Papal Legate Borghese to Cardinal Aldobrandini, Madrid, 14 March and 14 April 1594; AAV, SS, Sp., 45, fols 51v–52r: Nuncio Caetani to Cardinal Aldobrandini, Madrid, 1 January 1594.

53 Artola, *La monarquía de España*, pp. 300–40; Villacañas Berlanga, *Historia del poder político*, p. 234; Martínez Millán, 'La corte de la monarquía hispánica', pp. 17–61.

54 Geevers, 'Dynasty and State Building', p. 292.

were not differentiated. Ernest served as governor for both branches, the conquest of the throne of Poland was a shared dynastic enterprise, and the rule over the Spanish Netherlands functioned as the perfect job opportunity for Austrian Habsburgs (Ernest, Albert and their cousin, Cardinal Andrew of Austria).<sup>55</sup> Well into the 1570s, the possibility of reuniting Charles V's patrimony was alive and the establishment of an autonomous court in Brussels under Albert and Isabel Clara Eugenia showed the porosity and continuity of intra-dynastic communication. Only retrospectively can an irreversible separation be seen between the two branches as the founders of the modern Spanish and Austrian states.

That system operated not through a bilateral communication between two crowned heads but through intertwining collateral branches and individuals who negotiated their interests and necessities with varying degrees of success. For that reason, a supposedly detached figure like Empress Maria became a central force mobilising her relatives to coordinate their widely concurrent goals. At a lower level, a contingent of servants from the administration and households of these individuals constituted a dynastic network circulating between the constellation of courts of the house of Austria and reinforcing their shared identity and interests.<sup>56</sup>

The formation of such a multinational and cosmopolitan dynasty, however, included cultural prerequisites for reaching the top level, a process of Hispanisation in line with the preponderance of the Iberian branch. This did not mean converting to a national culture but rather adopting the sophisticated uses of the court of Madrid, which included the Spanish language as well as Burgundian etiquette, Italian fashion, Flemish art and exotic goods.

The imperial family itself constituted a veritable Babel. Maria of Austria only spoke and wrote in Spanish to her children, whereas the personal communication among them switched between German and Spanish. The daughters preferred Spanish while Mathias and Maximilian never mastered their mother's language and resorted to Italian when speaking to southerners.<sup>57</sup> This situation led to an interesting association: wherever

55 AAV, SS, Sp., 46, fols 269r–269v: Nuncio Caetani to Cardinal Aldobrandini, Madrid, 26 April 1595.

56 Raeymaekers, 'In the Service of the Dynasty', p. 247.

57 HHStA, SHK, 2/7, fols 49r–49v: Maria of Austria to Mathias I, s.l., 5 November 1592; AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 167: Rudolf II to Philip II, Prague, 27 January 1577; BGe, Favre, XIX, fol. 103v: the marquis of Almazán to Juan de Zúñiga, Prague, 16 March 1577; ASV, DS, Germania, 6, fol. 49r: Vincenzo Tron to the Dux of Venice, Vienna, 22 July 1577; HHStA, SHK, 2/3–6, *passim*; HHStA, FK A, 4–5, *passim*; Patrouch, *Queen's Apprentice*, pp. 23, 63; González Cuerva, 'La casa de la emperatriz María'.



there were Spaniards or where Spanish was spoken, the existence of a 'Spanish faction' was assumed (especially in Vienna and Brussels). Through a nation-state lens, this would imply the coordination of elite groups acting in the 'interest of the Spanish king' and supporting the consolidation of his monarchy. This presumption is misleading in two senses. Firstly, the cultures of decision-making were too complex and the competing priorities of a global monarchy, as seen in the long deliberations of the Spanish Council of State, showed how difficult it was to ascertain what such a 'Spanish interest' truly was. Secondly, the obedient coordination of those individuals in terms of a court faction was almost impossible. However, it was rooted in a cultural reality: Philip II and his ministers relied more on these 'Españolados' not so much for reasons of linguistic ease, but for reasons of spiritual and ideological reliability. As a side effect, this Habsburg dynastic formation delayed Spanish state-building in a national sense.

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## 5. Sixteen Corpses: The First Reburials in the Escorial in 1586 and the Dynastic Dynamics that Made Them Happen

*Liesbeth GeEVERS*

**Abstract:** This chapter analyses the Spanish Habsburg crypt at the Escorial and the dynamics that caused it to become increasingly inclusive. Two main dynamics are identified: family heads exercising increased authority in mandating burials in the Escorial, including for individuals who had indicated other wishes, like siblings and adult children. And peripheral relatives who previously would not have expected to be buried in the dynastic crypt (cousins, widowed sisters, illegitimate children) actively pushing for burial in the Escorial, by making testamentary stipulations handing control of their place of burial to the family head. Together these 'pull' and 'push' dynamics gave family heads much more authority in arranging for their relatives' post-mortem destinies and shaping a Habsburg community of the dead.

**Keywords:** Spanish Habsburgs, Escorial, royal burials, dynasty

In the early days of November 1586, a curiously quiet ceremony took place in the Escorial, the newly built palace-monastery near Madrid whose basilica had been consecrated the previous summer. Consisting of a palace, a monastery, a basilica, a seminary and a library, the Escorial was where Philip II, the king of Spain and the man who had ordered the palace to be built, spent the hot summers as well as the secluded time before Easter. In early November, he was not present — he had left only weeks before to hunt rabbits at one of his other leisure palaces. Overseen only by the monastery's monks, over a period of three days, sixteen coffins were taken out of the monastic church where they had been assembled and placed in a crypt below the main basilica's high altar: with this final translation, the

corpses of sixteen Habsburgs found their last resting place and the Escorial had taken on its intended role as royal mausoleum.<sup>1</sup>

Such a mass reburial of royal corpses was quite unparalleled in any of the domains under Habsburg authority. Moreover, the assembled royals formed a group that was equally unusual. They included widowed sisters who were former queens of other countries (more commonly buried with their husbands), small children who had died in infancy (usually buried close to wherever they died), an illegitimate son (almost never buried in close proximity to kings), a sororal nephew (should he not have been buried along with his father?) and even an adult prince who, in his testament, had expressed the wish to be buried somewhere else! There was hardly any precedent for a collection of relatives like this to be buried together at the same burial site. The size and symbolism of the Escorial — much discussed — and its art collections make it a ground-breaking monument from an art-historical perspective.<sup>2</sup> In addition, I would argue that the sheer novelty of the royal burial practices enacted there also make it a monument to the changes that we can see happening within dynasties all over Europe in the early modern period: the emergence of larger and wider family groups that were ever more strictly stratified, led by ever more powerful family heads.<sup>3</sup> In this contribution I will argue that the Escorial's burial practices reflect changing family dynamics, leading to a strengthening of the family head's authority and a weakening of individual family members' agency. I will do so by analysing the dynamics and politics that caused all of these unexpected characters to await the Resurrection together in the basilica's crypt.

Dynasties were families and thus groups, encompassing deceased forebears, contemporary kin and future offspring.<sup>4</sup> Even if such groups found their basis in biology — physical bodies connected to each other through blood and marital ties — their manifestation as a single group was a social construct. Two brothers inheriting different patrimonies might become enemies, each stressing his connection to forebears but not to each other, negating their blood ties and constructing two separated families.<sup>5</sup> Or they

1 'Memorias de Fray Juan de San Gerónimo', pp. 407–11.

2 Kamen, *The Escorial*; Noone, *Music and Musicians in the Escorial Liturgy*; Mulcahy, *Philip II of Spain*; Checa Cremades (ed.), *De El Bosco a Tiziano*.

3 Geevers, 'Ny dynastisk historia', pp. 87–97; Sabeen and Teuscher, 'Kinship in Europe: A New Approach', pp. 1–32.

4 Mirella Marini and I have developed this point, citing relevant literature, in our 'Introduction', pp. 1–22.

5 Many German houses were on opposite sides of the Thirty Years' War. For instance, Thomas, *A House Divided*.

might become co-workers, jointly furthering the interests of their common lineage, presenting themselves as the co-leaders of one family group.<sup>6</sup> Reconstructing a dynasty therefore entails more than mere genealogy. We need to examine communication among family members and their collective cultural expressions to gauge how exactly the group was composed.

Cultural representations of the dynasty are one way in which dynasty formation took shape: the promotion of dynastic awareness both among the family members and among a wider public, intended to establish the dynasty as a social unit and solidify its claims to its assets and its societal position.<sup>7</sup> In the Spanish context, it is hard to overlook the Escorial as a marker of royal power and identity. One of the explicit reasons behind its construction was the burial and glorification of the Habsburg emperor Charles V.<sup>8</sup> But over time many more relatives were buried there. The occupants of the Escorial crypt lay there together because they were a dynasty. Deciding who would be allowed to rest alongside the Emperor would thus be a powerful way to shape the dynasty and show who belonged to it and who did not.<sup>9</sup>

Since burial sites involved the physical remains of the family members, answering the questions of dynastic belonging was a matter of the house itself. Contingencies played a role in determining burial locations: mourning relatives might be reluctant to move a corpse from its place of death because that needed to be done with appropriate ceremony, which turned it into a very expensive enterprise. Moreover, the vicissitudes of travel complicated such journeys and not every deceased family member might warrant the expense and hassle. Remains might therefore simply 'end up' somewhere convenient, close to where the individual involved had died.<sup>10</sup> But as the reburials of 1586 show, such considerations did not always prevail and if they

6 As Charles V and his brother Ferdinand I. See Fichtner, 'Sibling Bonding and Dynastic Might', pp. 193–211.

7 This definition is based on Weber, 'Dynastiesicherung und Staatsbildung', 94–100.

8 Martínez Cuesta, *Guide to the Monastery of San Lorenzo*, p. 12; Kamen, *Escorial*, pp. 67–9; de la Cuadra Blanco, 'La idea original', pp. 375–413.

9 Bijsterveld, 'Royal Burial Places in Western Europe', pp. 25–43. Bijsterveld argues that dynasties strived to connect their present members to the past by rearranging older tombs or transferring the remains of predecessors to new burial sites, as well as to the future by creating space for the burial of many more family members in the future.

10 To give a later example from the Dutch royal family: in 1806, the six-year-old daughter of the future king William I died while the family, exiled in Germany, fled Napoleon's army. She was buried at a Prussian royal estate where her burial site was marked by a tombstone but later forgotten. A new owner of the estate discovered the grave in 1911 and informed the Dutch Queen, who had the little princess' remains transferred to the dynastic vault in Delft. Van Raak, *Vorstelijk begraven*, pp. 64–6.



did not, it was invariably the family head or other prominent family members who decided on the final resting place of deceased relatives. Moreover, burial sites are unique in that the corpse could really only be buried in one place (even though entrails and organs might be buried elsewhere).<sup>11</sup>

The composition of the groups of people buried together tells us a great deal about the shaping of the dynasty. Who was in, who was out? Collective burial sites reflect 'post-mortem dynasty formation', the physical shaping of the family group through the gathering of its deceased members, producing a very intimate interpretation *of* the dynasty, *by* the dynasty. In analysing *how* coffins or cenotaphs were ordered (and how this order changed over time), we also get an idea of the hierarchy within the group. Can collective burial sites tell us something about the process of dynastic centralisation?

In this contribution I will use the demography of the Habsburg burial sites as a basis for an analysis of dynasty formation and changing family dynamics (dynastic centralisation). First, I will give a brief overview of prevailing burial practices in the Habsburgs' predecessor states, the Burgundian Low Countries, Austria and Castile, to highlight the novelty of the Escorial situation. Second, I will examine for each member of the group of 1586 how they ended up in the Escorial (and why some whom we might have expected to find there found their final resting place elsewhere), adding some later examples to emphasise my argument. In the conclusion, I will reflect on the usefulness of funerary demography as a tool to analyse the processes of dynasty formation and dynastic centralisation.

## Dynastic Traditions: Burgundy, Castile and Austria

First of all, let us turn briefly to the prevailing burial traditions in the Burgundian Low Countries, Austria and Castile. The sixteenth-century Spanish Habsburgs ruled more areas than just these (in fact, they did not rule Austria at all), for example Naples, Milan and Aragon. But in their wills, the early sixteenth-century Habsburgs (Philip the Handsome and Charles V) only referred to burial sites in Burgundy, the Low Countries and Castile as their possible post-mortem destinations.<sup>12</sup> It seems reasonable, thus, to focus on those traditions if we want to know what options were available to

11 Bůžek, 'Die Begräbnisfeierlichkeiten', pp. 260–73, describes the embalming of Ferdinand I, Maximilian II, Archduke Ferdinand II and Archduke Charles of Styria.

12 Philip's testament: Gachard, *Collection des voyages*, vol. I, pp. 493–6; Charles's testament: *Testamento de Carlos V*.

these rulers. Neither of the two men ruled Austria, which does not feature in their plans, but since the dynasty as a whole was still strongly connected to Austrian traditions, it seems reasonable to include them as well.

When we examine the traditions in the Low Countries, Castile and Austria, it becomes immediately clear that none of the dynastic traditions to which the Habsburgs were heirs had anything similar to what happened in 1586. In Castile, rulers had generally been buried in one of the main cathedrals of the realm. There were royal chapels in (or near) the cathedrals of Córdoba, Seville, Toledo and Granada.<sup>13</sup> Several kings were buried individually in monasteries.<sup>14</sup> Their sisters were invariably buried in the lands of their husbands, or in the religious house in which they had professed. Younger princes normally chose a significant church within the domains they had received for their maintenance, while those who died in infancy were buried close to their place of death. González Jiménez notes, for instance, the death of a very young 'infantita' in 1235 who was buried in the convent of San Isidro in León, 'which seems to indicate that the little infanta died while the monarchs were in that city'.<sup>15</sup> So a common burial site for the kingdom's rulers did not emerge during the Middle Ages, while siblings and small children were not normally laid to rest alongside them.<sup>16</sup> The last Trastámara rulers followed in the footsteps of their predecessors: they buried their son, who predeceased them, in his own monastery, while they erected a new chapel for themselves outside the cathedral of Granada, which was itself newly built to celebrate the conquest of that town in 1492.<sup>17</sup>

The picture is similar in Austria. Until the emergence of the Kapuzinergruft as a dynastic vault in the middle of the seventeenth century, most Austrian rulers chose individual burial sites, while those who held imperial or royal crowns were often buried at sites associated with those crowns (like the cathedral of Speyer for emperors and St Vitus Cathedral in Prague for

13 Laguna Paúl, 'La capilla de los reyes', pp. 235–51; Alonso Álvarez, 'Los enterramientos de los reyes'; McKiernan Gonzalez, 'Monastery and Monarchy', p. 207; Ruiz Souza, 'Capillas Reales funerarias catedralicias', pp. 9–29, p. 15.

14 Labra González, 'De la chartreuse de Miraflores'.

15 del Arco, *Sepulcros de la Casa Real*; González Jiménez, *Fernando III*, p. 150: 'lo que parece indicar que la muerte de la infantita se produjo estando los monarcas en dicha ciudad'.

16 Fernando Arias Guillén, 'Enterramientos regios en Castilla y León (c. 842–1504). La dispersión de los espacios funerarios y el fracaso de la memoria dinástica', *Anuario de estudios medievales* 45 (2015), pp. 643–75.

17 Margarita Cabrera Sánchez, 'La muerte del príncipe Don Juan. Exequias y duelo en Córdoba y Sevilla durante el otoño de 1497', *Espacio, tiempo y forma. Serie III. Historia Medieval* 31 (2018), pp. 107–33; William Eisler, 'Charles V and the Cathedral of Granada', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 51 (1992), pp. 174–81.

emperor-kings of Bohemia).<sup>18</sup> Some sites housed several generations and a variety of relatives (including sisters, younger children and unmarried brothers, for example Königsfeld), but none of them developed into a truly inclusive, long-term dynastic vault. In Austria, we detect a strong correlation between independent rule and individual burial: those dukes and archdukes who held their own patrimonies invariably arranged their own burial as well.<sup>19</sup> The fact that all males were entitled to a share in the inheritance meant that many Habsburgs rested in individual locations. The emergence of the more or less dynastic vault in St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna in the fourteenth century did not break this rule. Most of the Habsburgs buried there, who were members of two different branches of the house, died as rulers of Vienna (either as the hereditary ruler or as a regent for an underage nephew or cousin).<sup>20</sup>

The sixteenth-century Austrian Habsburgs held firmly to this tradition. And as long as the Austrian Habsburgs practiced partible inheritance, individual burial sites persisted.<sup>21</sup> Emperor Maximilian I planned an elaborate cenotaph for himself in Innsbruck, while Ferdinand I, his wife and son Maximilian II were all buried in St Vitus Cathedral in Prague, the burial site of their predecessors from the house of Luxemburg. Ferdinand I's two younger sons had chapels erected for themselves. Of Maximilian II's many sons, who died between 1593 and 1621, most found individual burial places.<sup>22</sup> Maximilian III, the fourth son, wrote his first testament when he was Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, which did not provide him with much of a patrimony. He wished to be buried in the crypt in St Stephen's Cathedral, where several of his siblings who had died as children also rested, as well as a large number of medieval rulers of Vienna. But after he acquired the county of Tyrol as an independent prince, he changed his testament and opted for a splendid monument in Innsbruck instead.<sup>23</sup> Even the next generation of Austrian Habsburgs chose individual burials: Emperor Ferdinand II (died

18 Brigitta Lauro, *Die Grabstätten der Habsburger. Kunstdenkmäler einer europäischen Dynastie* (Vienna, 2007), pp. 24–6.

19 Claudia Moddelmog, *Königliche Stiftungen des Mittelalters im historischen Wandel: Quedlinburg und Speyer, Königsfelden, Wiener Neustadt und Andernach* (Berlin, 2012).

20 Renate Kohn, 'Eine Fürstengrablege im Wiener Stephansdom', *Archiv für Diplomatik* 59 (2013), pp. 555–602.

21 The last independent Habsburg counts of Tyrol were laid to rest in the Jesuit church in Innsbruck. The final burial was that of Sigmund Francis of Tyrol, who died in 1665. Lauro, *Grabstätte*, pp. 212–13.

22 Lauro, *Grabstätte*, pp. 26 (Rudolf), 168 (Ernest and Albert), 192 (Maximilian) and 200 (Matthias).

23 Dudík, 'Erzherzogs Maximilians I. Testament', p. 241.

1637) had prepared a marvellous chapel for himself in Graz. It was only Ferdinand III who started the tradition of the burial of his relatives in the Kapuzinergruft in the late 1630s, when he buried his infant sons there, over half a century after the 1586 translations in the Escorial.<sup>24</sup>

### 1549: The First Group

Clearly, the group of relatives assembled in the Escorial in 1586 is extraordinary not only when compared to previous dynastic practices, but also in comparison to the contemporary relatives in Austria. So, how did they end up being laid to rest in the Escorial together? While Philip II is normally — and rightfully — seen as the mastermind behind the Escorial complex, he cannot be given all the credit for the burial practices that developed there. Rather, his father Charles V had already started gathering an uncommon group of relatives in the 1540s with the intention of burying them, alongside himself in due course, in the Capilla Real of Granada. Granada was a symbolically significant place. The capture of the city of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs had marked the end of the Reconquista. Isabella of Castile had commissioned the building of a cathedral there to commemorate the event and to claim the town for Catholicism. Following in the footsteps of earlier Reconquista kings, she also chose it as her burial place.<sup>25</sup> Considering Charles's own battles with Lutheran princes in the 1540s, one can imagine the appeal that the symbolism of Granada must have had for him and he chose it for his own burial as well.

24 Demmerle and Beutler, "*Wer beghert Einlass?*", p. 33.

25 The cathedrals of Seville, Córdoba and Toledo were also built on the sites where the main mosques had been located and their conquerors rested there. McKiernan Gonzalez, 'Monastery and Monarchy', pp. 207, 214–215; Macia Serrano, 'San Juan de los Reyes', pp. 55–70. Ferdinand the Catholic stressed this connection in his testament, ordaining his burial in Granada's Capilla Real in Granada 'which city it has please Our Lord to be conquered and taken from the power of and subjection to the Moors, infidels, enemies of Our Holy Catholic Faith, taking us, even though we are an unworthy sinner, for his instrument; and since He has shown us this favour, we wish that our remains remain forever there, where the remains of the Most Serene Queen are to be buried as well, so that they can together praise and bless His Holy Name. (la qual Cibdad en los nuestros tiempos plugo a nuestro Señor, que fuesse conquistada e tomada del poder e subjeccion de los Moros, infeas, enemigos de nuestra S. Fe Catholica, tomando a Nos, aunque indigno y pecador, por instrumento para ello; e porende queremos, pues tanta merced nos frizo, los huessos nuestros estén alli para siempre, donde tambien han de estar sepultados los huessos de la dicha Serenissima senora Reyna, para que juntamente loen e bendigan su santo nombre'.) Testament edited in Dormer, *Discursos varios de la historia*, p. 398.

Of the sixteen corpses reburied in 1586, almost half (seven) had been meant to rest together already according to the intentions of Charles V. They were Charles V himself, his wife Empress Isabella, his young sons Juan and Fernando, his sisters Queens Mary of Hungary and Eleanor of France, and his daughter-in-law Princess Maria of Portugal. Although the cathedral of Granada and its Capilla Real were commissioned by Isabella the Catholic, Charles was in fact the person who had them built.<sup>26</sup> He laid his grandparents, the Catholic Monarchs Isabella and Ferdinand, to rest there, as well as his father, Philip the Handsome. He had always indicated the chapel as his own burial place as well, at least if he should die in Castile. That his spouse should be buried there as well is not surprising. She indicated that she wanted to be buried in Granada, although Charles was to have the last word.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, directly after Isabella's death in Toledo in 1539, Charles had her remains taken south.<sup>28</sup> Considering Isabella's wish to be buried with Charles, this obviously also implied that Charles had now settled on Granada as well. But ruling spouses resting together was of course more the rule than the exception.

It is with the inclusion of Maria of Portugal, Charles's daughter-in-law and Philip II's first wife, that we start to see a new pattern emerging. The young princess married Philip in 1543 and died in 1545 after suffering complications from the birth of her first child. Not yet eighteen years old, she had stipulated in her testament that she wanted to rest alongside her husband Philip, but that for the period before Philip's own death, he could temporarily bury her wherever he liked.<sup>29</sup> Since she died in Valladolid, she was buried there as well.

A few years later, in 1549, Charles V decided to have his daughter-in-law reburied in Granada. The late 1540s were years of great consequence for Charles. After winning the Battle of Mühlberg (1547), he had overcome the largest threat posed by the Lutheran princes of the Empire. It was time to turn his attention to his succession. He married his eldest daughter Maria to his eldest nephew Maximilian and appointed the couple governors of Castile (1548). He denied the young couple a part of his patrimony, even though the Low Countries and Milan had been suggested as Maria's dowry,

26 Eisler, 'Charles V', pp. 174–81; Mozzati, 'Charles V', pp. 174–201.

27 Mazarío Coletto, *Isabel de Portugal*, p. 182: mentions a testament of 1527 in which she decided on the Capilla Real, with her grandmother Isabella the Catholic, while Charles should decide where exactly to place her coffin. In a testament of 1529, Isabella left the choice up to Charles. *Ibid.*, p. 183. Both testaments in Archivo General de Simancas (*hereafter* AGS), Patronato Real (*hereafter* PTR), legajo 30, docs 10 and 11.

28 d'Albis, 'Sacralización real', pp. 262–6.

29 AGS, PTR, leg. 31, doc. 23: clauses from the testament of Princess Maria of Portugal.

but did make sure they became king and queen of Bohemia. Meanwhile, his son Philip would travel through his future domains to be heralded as heir to the Spanish Habsburg patrimony (including the Low Countries and Milan),<sup>30</sup> and Charles wrote his final political testament for him.<sup>31</sup> Finally, Charles would hammer out the succession to the Empire with his brother Ferdinand. He was, in short, setting his house in order.

It is in this context that we must also view the reburial of Maria and along with her, that of the two little princes Fernando and Juan, Charles V's sons. In line with common practice, the two infant princes had been buried where they died: Fernando (died 1530) in Madrid and Juan (died 1538) in Valladolid.<sup>32</sup> Reburying the three of them, with considerable pomp,<sup>33</sup> departed from traditions in a number of ways. Maria had indicated that she wanted to be buried next to Philip. In reburying Maria in Granada, Charles expressed an expectation (or perhaps merely a wish) that Philip would be buried there as well. Not only would this imply four generations of rulers being buried in the Capilla Real (Isabella and Ferdinand, Philip the Handsome, Charles and Philip), more than in any other royal burial chapel, but it also implied that Charles made this choice for his son, who would, if all went according to plan, die as a sovereign ruler, who would normally be in control of his own post-mortem destiny. This indicates that Charles tried to develop the Capilla Real into an all-encompassing, multi-generational burial site, establishing a new tradition which future generations should feel bound to follow. The inclusion of the infantes Fernando and Juan was wholly unprecedented as well. Such young children — both died in their first year of life — had never been reburied before, nor included in a rulers' crypt.<sup>34</sup> By reburying them in his own intended resting place, Charles constructed a burial site which was more inclusive than anything seen before. He included these little children in the post-mortem family group. Instead of a rulers' crypt holding the remains of ruling couples, the Capilla Real was meant to become a dynastic, or family, crypt, holding the remains of all family members irrespective of their role in life. Indeed, in breaking

30 This journey was described by Calvete de Estrella, *El felicissimo viaje*.

31 *Corpus documental de Carlos V*, vol. II, pp. 569–92.

32 'Memorias de Fray Juan de San Gerónimo', pp. 110–11.

33 Zalama, 'Las exequias de la princesa doña Maria de Portugal', pp. 307–16.

34 It did happen that newborns were buried along with their mothers if both died during or immediately after childbirth. For instance, Empress Maria Anna, daughter of Philip III of Spain, died in 1644 along with her child; the same happened to Archduchess Maria Anna, sister of Empress Maria Theresia, 1744. The infants were placed in their mothers' coffins. Demmerle and Beutler, *Wer begehrt Einlass?*, pp. 62–3; Hawlik-van de Water, *Die Kapuzinergruft*, p. 163.

with several established traditions, Charles's Capilla Real is a very clear precursor to Philip's Escorial.

But Charles's innovations do not stop there. Two more uncommon individuals were meant to be buried in the Capilla Real alongside Charles: his widowed sisters Mary of Hungary and Eleanor of France. Mary had served as governor of the Low Countries from 1531 to 1555 and Eleanor had joined her after the death of Francis I of France, her husband, in 1547. When Charles abdicated his thrones in 1555–56 in Brussels, both were present and both decided to follow Charles to Castile (not exactly 'home' for them, since both were born and bred in the Low Countries) after the abdication, foregoing any burial in the lands of their husbands. All three died in 1558, but Eleanor was the first. Apparently, she left the choice of her burial up to her two siblings: the official record of her burial in 1558 states that Mary of Hungary consulted with Charles after opening the testament to decide on a place where Eleanor's remains could be placed while they decomposed, until both siblings decided on a permanent place of burial.<sup>35</sup> They decided to bury their sister temporarily close to where she had died, in Mérida — until 'something else will be decided', as Charles reported to his son.<sup>36</sup> Mary, who wrote her last will in September 1558, some months after Eleanor's death, expressed her wish to be buried with her sister.<sup>37</sup> The lack of any specific spot indicates that Eleanor's remains had not been assigned a permanent resting place yet. It also indicates that Mary left her place of burial essentially up to Charles, the remaining sibling who should choose Eleanor's last resting place (she also named Charles her universal heir, theoretically giving him the financial wherewithal to arrange her burial). That Charles intended for them to rest alongside him in Granada is implied by the fact that Philip, king of Castile since 1556, ordered his sister, regent in Spain at the time of Mary and Eleanor's deaths, to see if their aunts could be brought to Granada.<sup>38</sup>

We see a few things at play here. Concerned with preserving his legacy after 1547, Charles took an active interest in the family burials. He broadened the group of people that might expect burial in a dynastic crypt: young children

35 AGS, PTR, leg. 31, doc. 13, fol. 44r.: 'entretanto que se consume y gasta'. The testament itself seems not to have been preserved.

36 *Corpus documental de Carlos V*, vol. IV, p. 412: 'hasta que otra cosa se acuerde'. The impersonal formulation implies, perhaps, that Charles was not planning to take any decision himself.

37 AGS, PTR, leg. 31, doc. 25. Translated and edited in Kerkhoff, *Maria van Hongarije*, pp. 307–11, Appendix 2, testament dated 27 September 1558: 'qu'il soit mis et enterré ou le corps de la feu Roynne treschreتيene ma seur le sera'.

38 Eisler, 'Charles V', p. 178. Eisler argues, therefore, that Granada remained the dynastic burial place until 1559.

were included. He also stretched his authority as the family head to decide on family burials, 'appropriating' his daughter-in-law's remains and thus strongly hinting that Philip should choose the Capilla Real as well. Charles was starting to 'pull' more and more relatives into his dynastic crypt. His sisters show another developing trend: rather than capitalising on their independence as royal widows and commissioning an individual burial somewhere, they were happy to delegate the choice of where to be buried. Leaving the choice up to Charles, they implicitly accepted a subordinated position in their brother's family crypt. Financial reasons but also their relatively weak loyalty to their marital dynasties probably played a role. By the time the choice had to be made — after their deaths in 1558 — Charles had himself abandoned his authority as family head, so it might well have been Philip who decided that the three siblings should be united in death. In any case, both Charles's 'pulling' and his sisters' discrete 'pushing' for a burial at his side led to the formation of quite a large post-mortem family group. A string of relatives had now been 'attached' to the Emperor: his spouse, his sons and his sisters. Reburying the Emperor in the magnificent Escorial, which Philip would soon start building for precisely that purpose, would thus entail reburying all of them — or disregarding Charles's and their last wishes.

### 1586: The Second Group

Charles V's own actions thus explain the inclusion of almost half of the individuals who were reburied in 1586. The inclusion of young children and wives would in fact explain almost all the others: in addition to the people we mentioned before, the 1586 group included four children who had died before reaching the age of eight: the crown princes Fernando (1571–78) and Diego (1575–82), infante Carlos Lorenzo (1573–75) and infanta Maria (1580–83). Two further spouses of Philip were in the group as well: Isabella of Valois (1545–68) and Anna of Austria (1549–80). Queen Isabella had left her final destination up to Philip, citing her continuing obedience to him.<sup>39</sup> Anna had stated the same, but added more boldly that she wished to be buried near him, keeping him company in death as she had in life.<sup>40</sup> These two

39 AGS, PTR, leg. 30, doc. 28: testament of Isabella of Valois, dated 27 June 1566, when she was about seven months pregnant with the infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia, her first live birth (born 12 August 1566).

40 AGS, PTR, leg. 29, doc. 2, fols 6v–7r: 'Porque ansi como le he hecho compañía en vida con tanto amor y conformidad assi querria que mi cuerpo le hiziese al suyo despues de muerta.'



spouses acted much like their predecessors a generation earlier and it does not surprise us that they were reburied along with the others in 1586. By this time, the inclusion of the children does not surprise us either. Charles had established a precedent for including even the youngest deceased relatives. Their inclusion became even more logical as the court settled permanently in Madrid (all the children died there<sup>41</sup>) and the Escorial was built at less than a day's journey away. The dynastic vault now basically also became the 'nearby' location where young children had traditionally been buried (even though the San Jerónimo monastery in Madrid itself remained the even closer option). If the presence of the spouses and children is thus explained, that leaves three individuals who merit our special attention: the adult crown prince Don Carlos (1545–68), Philip's nephew Archduke Wenceslaus (1561–78) and his illegitimate half-brother Don Juan (1547–78). Don Carlos, Wenceslaus and Don Juan highlight the trends which we already saw emerging during Charles V's reign: a family head stretching his authority, and other relatives eager to join the crypt. Let us start with the family head.

Charles V had exercised his authority as head of the house to mandate burials in the Capilla Real for several relatives. His young children could not choose for themselves, while his spouse and sisters indicated their willingness to let Charles decide for them. He firmly appropriated his daughter-in-law's remains. But his most eloquent expression of his authority as the family head came after his abdication. The Emperor had made it abundantly clear that he wanted to be buried in Granada. But when he left his thrones to his son Philip, he felt that he could no longer make that decision for himself. In a codicil to his testament, dated 9 September 1558 (less than two weeks before his death) he wrote: 'Because I renounced my kingdoms in favour of King Philip after I granted the said testament, I now see fit to leave it [place of burial], as I leave it, up to the King, my son.'<sup>42</sup> The most sensible way to understand this clause is that, in abdicating his throne, Charles felt he also abdicated his position as head of the family, and thus as arbiter of the family's final resting places — even his own. Of course, he had made it more than clear where he intended to be buried, but the wording of the codicil still allowed Philip to deviate from Charles's wishes, which he did.

41 'Memorias de Fray Juan de San Gerónimo', pp. 143 (Carlos Lorenzo), 244 (Fernando), 360 (Diego), 366 (Maria).

42 AGS, PTR, leg. 29, doc. 10, fol. 54v.: codicil dated 9 September 1558: 'Porque despues que otorgué el dicho testamento hize renunciacion de todos mis reynos ... en el serenissimo rey don Phelippe ... tengo por bien de remittillo como lo remitto al Rey mi hijo.'

It seems that the lesson Philip learned from all this was not so much the importance of respecting last wishes, but rather that he had the authority to choose the resting places he saw fit for his relatives, regardless of their wishes. In 1568, Philip's only son Don Carlos died. Father and son had had a troubled relationship for years. Geoffrey Parker has argued that Philip finally gave up on his son in 1565; he no longer considered Don Carlos suitable as an heir to the throne. Three years later, matters came to a head and ended with Don Carlos's indefinite imprisonment. During his incarceration, the Prince's eating disorders worsened, and he basically starved himself to death.<sup>43</sup> He was twenty-three when he died, but he had written his testament before his nineteenth birthday, in May 1564.<sup>44</sup> That means that the testament predated Philip's final doubts about his son's mental capacity and it was not contested on those grounds. In 1564, the Escorial was already under construction, but the Prince stipulated a burial in the Toledan monastery of San Juan de los Reyes. This monastery had been founded by Isabella the Catholic for three reasons: to commemorate her important victory over her rival for the throne, her niece Juana 'la Beltraneja'; to celebrate the birth of her son Prince Juan; and to serve as her own burial site — a motivation which reminds us somewhat of Philip II's reasons for building the Escorial.<sup>45</sup> (Of course, some years later, the conquest of Granada seemed an even more worthy event to be commemorated with a cathedral and a burial chapel.) The monastery had thus considerable royal pedigree. That Don Carlos should have chosen this monastery — where no other royals rested — was not completely out of the ordinary either. After all, it was not unheard of for a crown prince to be buried separately from his ruling parents; Don Juan, the only son of the Catholic Monarchs, had had time to compose a testament before his death in which he left the choice of his burial up to his parents, who had him buried individually in the monastery of Santo Tomás in Ávila.<sup>46</sup> While the Catholic monarchs thus could make the choice, this was actually in accordance with their son's last wishes. When Don Carlos

43 Parker, *Imprudent King*, p. 184.

44 AGS, PTR, leg. 9, doc. 23: testament of Don Carlos, 19 May 1564.

45 Gijón Jiménez, 'El Convento de San Juan de los Reyes', pp. 103–4. Later, Isabella would choose to be buried in Granada, of course, but still stipulated in her testament that if Granada were inaccessible, her remains should be deposited at San Juan de Reyes. Charles V had a catafalque raised for her there, which remained in place throughout the sixteenth century, providing a visual reminder of the Queen when Don Carlos expressed his wish to be buried there. *Ibid.*, p. 107. See also, Domínguez Casas, 'San Juan de los Reyes', p. 373.

46 Cabrera Sánchez, 'La muerte del príncipe Don Juan', 107–33. Don Juan's testament: AGS, PTR, leg. 31, doc. 10.

died, his father ignored his son's testamentary stipulations and had him temporarily buried in the monastery of Santo Domingo el Real in Madrid, until the Escorial was ready to receive his remains.<sup>47</sup>

Similar assertiveness saw to it that Archduke Wenceslaus was among the 1586 sixteen. Wenceslaus was Philip's nephew, son of his sister Maria and her husband Emperor Maximilian II. He was the youngest of six brothers and had been sent to his uncle's court for his education. As a youth of sixteen he had entered the Order of St John with the expectation of becoming its grand prior one day, but the young man died before turning eighteen (and before writing a testament). The very next day, his uncle Philip decided on his final resting place: he was to be moved to the monastery church at the Escorial to await his final relocation to the crypt in the Escorial's basilica.<sup>48</sup> The wording of this order was identical to similar orders which Philip issued for his own sons (the infante Carlos Lorenzo had died in 1575, Prince Fernando would die in October 1578).<sup>49</sup> Without even taking the time to consult Wenceslaus's mother or brother (who was the new emperor), Philip simply mandated what was to happen with him.

It was not very likely that either his mother (who was planning to return to Castile) or his brother (who showed little interest in taking care of any of his brothers financially) would have wanted to repatriate Wenceslaus's remains — prohibitively expensive as that would have been — if only because there was no obvious dynastic crypt in Austria at this time. That is probably why Philip's overreach went undisputed. This was to be different a generation later, when the next king, Philip III, hosted some of his own nephews at his court. These were the three eldest sons of his sister Catalina and her husband Charles Emmanuel, duke of Savoy. The eldest of the nephews,

47 AGS, PTR, leg. 29, doc. 24: 'Acta del depósito del cadáver del Príncipe Carlos en el Monasterio de Santo Domingo el Real, en Madrid.' Officially, Don Carlos's body was deposited there until the King decided where it would rest definitely, leaving the possibility that he would find a final resting place elsewhere than in the Escorial — for instance San Juan de los Reyes. The acta does not mention any religious offices being performed at this point. The nuncio, Archdukes Rudolf and Ernest and their mayordomo Dietrichstein, members of the council of state and a few others were present to witness the event.

48 When Wenceslaus's remains arrived at the Escorial, 'os encargamos y mandamos le rescibais y pongáis en la iglesia de prestado del en la bóveda que está debajo del altar mayor della donde están los demás cuerpos Reales para que esté allí en depósito con ellos y se haga acto dello en forma que se acostumbra hasta tanto que se haya de enterrar y poner en la iglesia principal del en la parte y lugar que nos mandaremos señalar: que así es nuestra voluntad'. 'Memorias de fray Juan de San Gerónimo', p. 242.

49 The exact same order accompanied the remains of Prince Fernando, who died 18 October 1578, 'Memorias de fray Juan de San Gerónimo', pp. 244–5; the same procedure as with Carlos Lorenzo in 1575: 'Memorias de fray Juan de San Gerónimo', p. 143.

Filippo Emanuele, died while in Castile and Philip III, following his father's example, had the young man quickly buried in the Escorial. But rather than a surplus younger brother, this time the deceased was the heir to his father's duchy and much loved to boot. Anticipating that Charles Emmanuel would want his son's remains repatriated to Turin, the Savoyard ambassador tried to explain to his master that his son had been buried with all honours,<sup>50</sup> and also that Philip III would not be very keen to let him return home.<sup>51</sup> The next king, Philip IV, equally disregarded his brother's last wishes. The Cardinal-Infante Fernando died while serving as governor of the Low Countries, but he had also been archbishop of Toledo for many years. In his testament, he indicated that he wanted to be buried in the cathedral there.<sup>52</sup> Philip IV simply ignored this and had his brother buried in the Escorial instead. Over the generations, therefore, we see how the Spanish kings from Charles V to Philip IV stretched their authority to decide their relatives' final resting places to an ever further degree, riding roughshod over the wishes of some, while simply appropriating the remains of others.

There were exceptions, of course, who only appear exceptional in hindsight. We have seen that two of Charles V's sisters were buried with him. Philip II had two sisters of his own, but neither of them would be buried in the Escorial. Both were widows who travelled back to Castile, like their aunts. But their situation was different. Philip's youngest sister Juana had been married briefly to the crown prince of Portugal. Her husband died before he could ascend the throne, and before the birth of their only child, Sebastian. As a widow, Juana travelled back to Castile and served as governor there from 1554 to 1559. During these years, she founded a monastery, later known as Las Descalzas Reales, which she richly endowed and where she spent a lot of time in her own quarters. By the time she died in 1573 (at which point the construction of the Escorial had been underway for a decade), she had made it very clear that she intended to be buried there as well, in the

50 Archivio di Stato, Torino (*hereafter* AST), Corte, Lettere ministri Spagna 151.25, mazzo 12: Ambassador Este to Charles Emmanuel, Valladolid, 12 February 1605: 'Sua Maesta ha voluto ch'il corpo si porti a San Lorenzo l'Escuriale nel deposito della casa reale con l'honore et accompagnamento che Vostra Altezza vedra dalle relatione e non poteva fare d'avantaggio per un figliuolo che non fosse suo primogenito, e perche Vostra Altezza potrebb'essere ben fora il parere di volerlo costi, parmi rapresentarle non esser bisogno, stant'il luoco che segli a dato e l'honore che segli e fatto e se nella perdita si grande havra dolore in questo si console che non se poteva fare d'avantaggio.'

51 AST, Corte, Lettere ministri Spagna, 151.25, mazzo 12: Este to Charles Emmanuel, Valladolid, 27 February 1605: reported to Carlo Emanuele that Philip III intended it to be a 'sepoltura e non deposito'.

52 de Abreu y Bertodano, *Colección de los tratados de paz*, vol. III, p. 618, the testament of the Cardinal-Infante Fernando.

small side chapel which had served as her oratory. She even left a design for her tomb.<sup>53</sup> A widow of means, she made her own arrangements, ignoring both her brother's efforts in the Escorial and the Portuguese traditions into which she had married.

Philip's other sister, Maria, represents a more complicated story. She was widowed in 1576, when her husband Emperor Maximilian II died. She made plans to travel back to Castile, where she arrived in 1581. In addition to her testament, dated 1581, she left several codicils, dated 1589, 1594 and 1600. The testament was written when she was still in Vienna, but planned to travel to Spain. Accordingly, she stipulated a burial in the Chapel of Saint Wenceslaus, in St Vitus Cathedral in Prague, close to the graves of her husband and father-in-law. (Earlier in 1581, Rudolf, her eldest son, had decided to lay his father Maximilian to rest in the crypt in St Vitus Cathedral that also housed Ferdinand I and Anna Jagiellonica, Maximilian's parents.)<sup>54</sup> But in case she had already travelled to Spain, she wished to be buried in her sister's convent of Las Descalzas Reales<sup>55</sup> — a pragmatic desire to be buried close to where she died, which we have seen in many other earlier Habsburg testaments. In a codicil drafted in 1589, Maria, by now in Spain, stated that she had told her confessor where she wanted to be buried and that he would communicate her choice to the King.<sup>56</sup> Her next codicil, dated 25 February 1594, mentioned the Escorial as her preferred place of burial. However, to console her daughter Margaret, who had travelled with her to Spain and had become a nun in Las Descalzas, Maria wished for her body to remain at the Descalzas convent until Margaret's death.<sup>57</sup> In 1600 she changed her mind again and settled on the Descalzas convent.<sup>58</sup>

The fact alone that Maria wrote so many codicils highlights that she was free to choose, but it seems that Philip exerted pressure on her to make

53 Archivo del Palacio Real, Caja 4, Expediente 9: Testamentos de Juana de Austria.

54 Bůžek, 'Die Begräbnisfeierlichkeiten', p. 268.

55 AGS, PTR, leg. 31, doc. 28, Spanish copy of the testament on fols 28 and next. Stipulations regarding burial at fols 29r–29v. The original testament was dated in Vienna, 20 August 1581.

56 AGS, PTR, leg. 31, doc. 28, fols 300r and next.

57 AGS, PTR, leg. 31, doc. 28, fol. 315r: 'primeramente horden y mando que en llebandome nuestro señor desta vida a la eterna que espero por solo su misericordia se junten mis testamentarios abajo nonbrados y de mi parte digan a mi hermano *que* en confirmacion de la merced que me tiene hecha de que me entierren en san lorenzo nonbro y senalo aquella yglesia por mi sepulture guardandose el horden que fuere serbido de dar para ello pero por no faltar a mi hija Margarita juntamento biba e muerta con que no podria dejar de bibir mas desconsolada suplico a mi hermano con el encarecimiento que puedo de licencia para que me deposite aqui por los dias que ella bibiere en este monasterio de la madre de dios de consolacion fundado por mi hermana.'

58 AGS, PTR, leg. 31, doc. 28, fol. 330v.

the 'right' choice, that is, the Escorial. A drawing of the crypt made in 1586 — when the sixteen corpses were reburied — shows spaces allotted to Maria as well as to Philip.<sup>59</sup> Since both of them were then alive and well, this expresses most likely the expectation that both would be buried there in due time. This may indicate that the choice Maria had communicated to her confessor was indeed the Escorial. Philip also included an effigy of his sister in the group cenotaphs that were to be erected on both sides of the main altar. Since the only other depictions were of persons who were actually already buried in the Escorial, this shows that Philip expected her to be buried in the Escorial in the early 1590s — in line with Maria's latest codicil (1594).<sup>60</sup> It was only after Philip's death (1598) that Maria finally determined to remain at Las Descalzas. Here, we suspect that Philip put quite a lot of pressure on his sister, 'pulling' her into the Escorial, but not quite succeeding. Philip's dealings with his two sisters do seem to indicate that the King was much more adamant about Escorial burials in the 1580s and 1590s (regarding Maria's burial) than he had been in the early 1570s (regarding Juana's burial), when the basilica and crypt were not yet finished.

One final member of the 1586 sixteen remains to be discussed: Don Juan, Charles V's natural son. While we have seen how first Charles and then Philip II extended their authority to pull their relatives into their crypt, Don Juan exemplifies the other dynamic: peripheral relatives lobbying to be buried with the rest of the family. Born in 1547, Don Juan died young, while serving as royal governor in the Low Countries in 1578. In the true style of a landless prince with great ambitions, he tried to use his position in the Low Countries to launch an assault on England, depose its Protestant Queen, marry the Catholic pretender and rule as king.<sup>61</sup> His early death prevented all this from happening. At his deathbed, Don Juan conveyed his wishes to his confessor, who, in turn, conveyed them to the King, Philip II. Quoting Don Juan, the confessor wrote to Philip: 'With regards to my corpse, I want to ask you [confessor] to request in my name that the King [Philip II], mindful of ... the willingness with which I have served him, grant me this favour, that my remains be placed somewhere near those of my lord and father [Charles V].'<sup>62</sup> Fully dependent on his royal brother, it is no wonder

59 Drawing reproduced in de la Cuadra Blanco, 'Idea original', p. 378.

60 Bustamente Garcia, 'Tumbas reales del Escorial', p. 67. The final group was placed in 1598.

61 Parker, *Imprudent King*, p. 243.

62 'quíerole encargar y pedir que en mi nombre suplique á la Majestad del Rey mi Señor y padre, que mirando ... á la voluntad con que yo le procuro servir, alcance yo de S. M. esta merced, que mis huesos hayan algún lugar cerca de los de mi Señor y padre'. Letter from Don Juan's confessor to Philip II after Don Juan's death, Namur, 3 October 1578. CODOÍN, vol. VII, pp. 248–9.

that Don Juan could not provide for his own burial. It was, however, quite a bold request to make, since up to then, bastards had almost never been laid to rest so close to their royal relatives. Philip II acceded to this request and had Don Juan's remains transported to Castile and buried in the Escorial.

Don Juan was quite forward in formulating his wish to be buried near his father. Later examples of relatives who could not expect a burial in the dynastic crypt but wished for it anyway tended to formulate their wishes more circumspectly: Filiberto of Savoy, a younger brother of the unfortunate Filippo Emanuele, expressed his desire that the then-king of Spain, his cousin Philip IV, decide on his final resting place. Philip IV did not hesitate and had Filiberto buried in the Escorial, even though the Savoyard ambassador relayed Filiberto's father's request (Charles Emmanuel again) to bury his son in Turin.<sup>63</sup> The same strategy was followed by Archduke Charles of Austria-Styria, an uncle of Philip IV who died while in Spain.<sup>64</sup> Archduke Charles was the youngest brother of Emperor Ferdinand II and was almost entirely excluded from the family patrimony. He had become bishop of a few prince-bishoprics that were ravished in the Thirty Years' War, leaving him with a precarious income at best. He travelled to Spain in the hopes of receiving some yearly allowance and the office of governor of Portugal.<sup>65</sup> He fell ill shortly after arrival and died within weeks. Charles's imperial brother made no noise about repatriating his remains — a silent echo of the ease with which Archduke Wenceslaus's brother had accepted the Archduke's burial in faraway Castile. (Also, there still was no dynastic crypt in Austria, even though another of the Emperor's landless younger brothers had been buried in their father's crypt.<sup>66</sup>) His best chance to be buried well was to throw himself on Philip IV's mercy, and in his hastily drafted testament he accordingly left the choice of burial place up to his royal nephew. Unlike Don Juan, neither Filiberto nor Archduke Charles thus explicitly requested a burial in the Escorial, but in leaving the choice to the King, they quite deliberately opened the door to such an outcome. The reason for this circumspection is most likely that only the family head could determine such matters.

63 AST, Corte, Lettere di ministri 151.21 18, fasc. 1 (unfoliated), Anastasio Germonio to Charles Emmanuel, Madrid, 4 October 1624.

64 Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv Wien (*hereafter* HHStA), Hausarchiv, Hofakten des Ministeriums des Innern, Karton 6, 6.1 Vidimierte Abschrift des Testaments dd Madrid den 28 December 1624 des Erzherzogs Carl von Österreich.

65 Correspondence between the Viennese court and the ambassador in Spain, Hans Khevenhüller, can be found in HHStA, Spanien, Diplomatische Korrespondenz, fasz. 18–1 to 18–3.

66 Lauro, *Grabstätten*, p. 134.

Nevertheless, such indirect formulations reinforced the family head's authority when it came to burials.

We might wonder why relatives like Don Juan and Filiberto of Savoy wanted to be buried in the Escorial. The prestige of the place and of the other deceased (most importantly, Emperor Charles and the kings of Spain) made it a socially very desirable place. Since the Escorial included a monastery, prayers for the deceased's souls were also assured. Charles's widowed sisters likely felt very little connection to their countries of marriage. Eleanor's marriage had not been blessed with children who might have kept her in France. On the contrary, the new king, her stepson Henry II, froze her out and gave her no role in the ceremonies surrounding her husband's death.<sup>67</sup> Eleanor had received the duchy of Touraine after her husband's death, but Henry II confiscated her dowry, so she might still have been short of funds to finance an appropriate lifestyle or an individual tomb.<sup>68</sup> People like Don Juan, Filiberto of Savoy and Archduke Charles had no great patrimony of their own either but were financially largely dependent on their Habsburg kinsmen. They would not have had the means to establish their own chapels either. In this sense, their pushing to be buried in the dynastic crypt illuminates their lack of independent agency.

## Conclusion

The reburial of the sixteen Habsburg corpses in 1586 was in many ways unprecedented. Never before had such a large group of people been reburied, and never before had a dynastic crypt contained the types of relatives that were now placed together: not just rulers and their spouses, but young children and widowed sisters as well, along with more distant and even illegitimate relatives. This assembly certainly has something to do with Charles V's visions of how the Capilla Real should be: a crypt not just for his predecessors and successors, but for his entire family. As time went on, this vision of the family crypt — no longer in Granada but in the Escorial — only became more inclusive. Both pull dynamics and push dynamics were instrumental in bringing this about: while family heads exerted their authority ever more audaciously, shaping their post-mortem family groups with little care for individuals' wishes or their relatives' paternal family's wishes, this actually offered a prestigious final resting place for many

67 Combet, 'Éléonore d'Autriche', p. 21.

68 Knecht, 'Éléonore d'Autriche', p. 412.



people who did not have the means or the authority to determine their own fates. Their loss of independence meant they no longer had the means to build chapels of their own and they therefore became more dependent on their family head. These push-and-pull dynamics reflect junior relatives' deteriorated financial position and decreased agency. The dynastic crypt in the Escorial expresses therefore on the one hand how the post-mortem dynasty became ever larger and more inclusive, but at the expense of greater inequality within its ranks.

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## 6. An Elected Dynasty of Sweden? Blood, Charisma and Representative Monarchy

*Mats Hallenberg*

**Abstract:** This essay addresses the introduction of royal primogeniture in Sweden by king Gustav I in 1540 and 1544. Previous research has described the first decision as informed by absolutist ideology, while the second has been considered a compromise in line with the medieval constitution. My contribution will discuss the key elements in this process and identify absolutist and constitutional markers. I argue that the introduction of hereditary monarchy actually strengthened representative government functions. The decision of 1544 gave the Swedish estates and the council of the realm a clear stake in the perpetuation of the monarchy. Hereditary monarchy paved the way for a monarchical regime that was dependent on balancing the influence of the aristocracy and the commoner estates.

**Keywords:** hereditary monarchy, regime shifts, royal blood, elite cohesion, absolutism, political representation

In the summer of 1523, Gustav Eriksson Vasa (Gustav I, r. 1523–60) was elected king of Sweden by a meeting of royal councillors and selected representatives in the cathedral town of Strängnäs in central Sweden. The decision signalled a radical change after a long period of civil strife. Little is known about the meeting, but surviving documents state that the election was made in full accordance with the medieval national law. This was of vital importance since Gustav was a usurper of the throne, the leader of an insurrection against the lawfully elected King Christian II (also King of Denmark and Norway). As the first native Swedish king of Sweden for half a century, Gustav would eventually proclaim the title hereditary within the

Vasa family in 1540 and 1544, thereby changing the medieval constitution that had served the realm for nearly 200 years.

In this essay I argue that the introduction of hereditary monarchy in Sweden should be analysed as part of a wider regime shift that would shape Swedish politics for years to come. Royal primogeniture was introduced during what is termed the 'German period' (1538–43) when Gustav I opted to reform the central administration by implementing collegiate forms of organisation. Previous research has considered this a kind of revolution from above, which opened the way for absolutist forms of rule in the Swedish realm.<sup>1</sup> However, the law of hereditary succession was formally approved by the Swedish estates — noblemen, clerics, burghers and peasants — at a national diet (*riksdag* in Swedish) in Västerås in 1544. This meeting confirmed the status of the *riksdag* as the seminal political arena for deciding on matters of national importance. I therefore contend that the creation of a new royal dynasty required retaining and even strengthening the representative functions inherited from medieval times: the Council of the Realm as well as the meetings of the estates. Dynastic politics also provided the King with an extended family of noble in-laws that had a crucial role in maintaining the Vasa regime.

This study of hereditary monarchy is part of the research project *Shifting Regimes: Representation, Administration and Institutional Change in Early Modern Sweden*.<sup>2</sup> I will begin by briefly describing the general objectives of this project, before moving on to discuss the problem of dynastic consolidation and state formation in medieval and early modern Europe. Particular attention will be paid to the dynamics of different forms of monarchic rule: traditional, charismatic and representative. The main part of the essay will be devoted to the actual events when hereditary succession to the Swedish crown was proclaimed in 1540 and 1544. In the concluding part I will discuss the long-term effects of dynastic consolidation on the early modern state, and whether royal primogeniture actually promoted political stability in Sweden.

## Shifting Regimes: Absolutist and Constitutional Rule in Sweden

For scholars of political history, the history of early modern Sweden remains something of an enigma. After the disintegration of the Nordic union of

1 Edén, *Om centralregeringens organisation*; Lundkvist, 'Furstens personliga regemente', pp. 209–25.

2 The research is funded by the Swedish research council (*Vetenskapsrådet*).

crowns after 1521, Sweden had its own royal dynasty and maintained its political independence throughout the period. Several scholars have referred to Sweden as an example of effective organisation. Charles Tilly has claimed that Sweden might have been the only country that managed to install a system of direct rule before the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The Swedish historian Jan Glete has demonstrated how Sweden developed into a model fiscal-military state in the seventeenth century, fully organised to sustain large military forces through extensive taxation.<sup>4</sup> While Sweden experienced strong monarchic rule, representative institutions remained important. The *riksdag*, the national diet, allowed for a broad political representation of the four estates: noblemen, clergy, burghers and peasants. There was also a strong tradition of self-government in the provinces. Sweden thus corresponds to the model of participative local government that Thomas Ertman has identified as an important pre-condition for the development of constitutional government.<sup>5</sup> The historian Eva Österberg has even suggested that the influence wielded by local institutions had important implications for modern democracy in Sweden.<sup>6</sup>

This picture of general political stability is contradicted by the frequent shifts in the balance of power between the monarch, the aristocracy and the *riksdag*. Gustav I established a strong, centralised monarchic government in the sixteenth century that has been labelled ‘absolutist’ by some scholars.<sup>7</sup> The warrior kings Gustav II Adolf (r. 1611–32) and Karl X Gustav (r. 1654–60), both succeeded in restricting the influence of the Swedish estates whilst in government and Charles XI (r. 1680–97) introduced royal autocracy by the end of the seventeenth century. However, periods of strong princely rule were punctuated by government breakdowns when representative institutions regained their formative role. During royal minorities, the aristocratic council assumed government functions in the king’s name. When it came to high politics there was simply no stable trajectory towards representative government in early modern Sweden.

In the project *Shifting Regimes* we propose to explain the relationship between volatile politics and long-term institutional stability by comparing six early modern political shifts, from the introduction of hereditary

3 Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European states*, p. 25.

4 Glete, *War and the State*. General overviews of the period: Kirby, ‘Sweden as a Great Power’, pp. 165–291; Peterson, *Warrior Kings of Sweden*.

5 Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan*.

6 Österberg ‘State Formation and the People’, pp. 115–25.

7 This is discussed in Nilsson, *The Money of Monarchs*, pp. 119–29, 152–7. For Sweden as an absolutist regime see Anderson, *Lineages*, pp. 173–91.



monarchy during the reign of Gustav I to the triumph of constitutional government in 1809. How did Sweden manage to develop effective administrative institutions, despite oscillations between royal absolutism (Sw. *envälde*, the traditional term for the periods 1680–1718 and 1772–1809) and proto-parliamentary rule? To address these problems we focus on the interactions between ruling monarchs, bureaucrats and elite groups wielding influence through representative bodies like the *riksdag* or the aristocratic council. The events in 1540 and 1544, which radically altered the constitutional frame of the Swedish polity, make an effective case for discussing the dynamics between regime shifts and long-term institutional change.

### Medieval Monarchy: Charismatic Leadership and Royal Blood

Peter Haldén has demonstrated how notions of kingship, kinship and mutual cooperation between elite groups were fundamental for the political order in medieval and early modern Europe. In the Frankish kingdoms the king was normally elected or had at least to be formally accepted by the leading magnates of the realm. The institution of elective monarchy created reciprocal bonds between the monarch and the elite groups, as the king promised protection of the law and religion in exchange for loyalty and service from the magnates. However, the lack of a clear order of succession often made elections contested, as various contenders for the crown used all available means to eliminate their opponents.<sup>8</sup>

The first Frankish kings were charismatic leaders with important military and religious functions. Their status as rulers was dependent on successful military campaigns that would provide lands and tributes to distribute among their followers. Royal blood was considered sacred and the charisma of the king might therefore be transferred to all his legitimate descendants. Early monarchs practiced polygamy, resulting in a large number of brothers and cousins who fought each other to advance their claim to rule. This system was eventually stabilised by the gradual introduction of primogeniture, which stipulated that the eldest son of the king should inherit the throne. The Roman Catholic Church's programme for making the elites conform to monogamy played a major part in this.<sup>9</sup>

8 Haldén, *Family Power*.

9 Duby, *Love and Marriage*; Haldén, *Family Power*, pp. 49–61, 64–9, 85–7.

The introduction of royal primogeniture went hand in hand with the sanctioning of noble privilege and standardisation of dynastic succession within noble families. Philip S. Gorski and Vivek Swaroop Sharma argue that the networks of kinship and family formed social institutions for promoting trust and resolving conflicts as well as facilitating agency.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, cooperation between royal and noble families became increasingly important in European politics from the sixteenth century. Indeed, the early modern state might well be analysed as a conglomerate of familial relations, as Julia Adams have demonstrated in her work on the United Provinces.<sup>11</sup>

Liesbeth Geervers and Harald Gustafsson have both argued that dynasty formation should be considered an important aspect of early modern society, part of but not equivalent to state formation. The horizontal group of princes and princesses could be a vital asset for the ruling monarch, but they might also constitute a potential threat. In the case of Gustav I of Sweden, dynasty formation and state building became firmly entwined, as the King struggled to confer legitimacy on his regime in a period of domestic and foreign upheavals.<sup>12</sup>

Elective monarchy in Sweden was first codified in provincial laws, then in the National law codes from c. 1350 (Swedish: *Magnus Erikssons landslag*) and in the revised version from 1442 (Swedish: *Kristofers landslag*). The former stipulated that the king should be elected by the chief judges from each province, normally prominent aristocrats. Preferably, one of the sons of the deceased king should be chosen. Although the law acknowledged that the king might be elected by the majority, the process was about confirming the top candidate rather than a free election. In the late medieval period, the Council of the Realm — including both lay and church magnates — played a decisive role in the nomination of a new monarch.<sup>13</sup>

The complex system of elective monarchy provides an example of what Peter Haldén has described as an institutional embedding of the social elites. The aristocratic councillors constituted themselves as ‘good men of the realm’, representing the people and the polity rather than their own personal interest.<sup>14</sup> However, this development did not provide lasting stability for domestic politics. Quite the opposite, political conflict and intermittent

10 Gorski and Sharma, ‘Beyond the Tilly Thesis’, pp. 81–5.

11 Adams, *The Familial State*.

12 Geervers, ‘Ny dynastisk historia’, pp. 87–97; Gustafsson, ‘Dynasty Formation’, pp. 345–406; Isacson, ‘Dynastisk centralisering i 1560-talets Sverige’, pp. 11–37.

13 Charpentier Ljungqvist, *Kungamakten och lagen*, pp. 248–63; Nauman, *Ordens kraft*, pp. 46–8.

14 Haldén, *Family Power*, pp. 96–105; Schück, *Rikets råd och män*.

civil strife characterised the period up to the election of Gustav I in 1523. The medieval system of embedding social elites clearly had its limitations.<sup>15</sup>

## Hereditary Monarchy in Swedish Research

Scholars have linked the introduction and implementation of royal primogeniture in Sweden with the personal rule of Gustav I. A young man of noble birth — without blood connections to former kings of Sweden — Gustav Eriksson succeeded in overthrowing Christian II and proceeded to rule the country for nearly forty years. This was in itself an extraordinary achievement since most of his predecessors had ended their rule prematurely, being expelled by rival fractions. The merchant elite of Lübeck had sponsored Gustav's rise to the throne, providing capital and military equipment in exchange for economic privilege. By 1523, the old Swedish elite was severely hampered after years of political strife topped by the bloodbath in Stockholm. This atrocious event had decimated the proponents of the Sture party and compromised the supporters of Christian II.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, Gustav I could start his rule by installing his own supporters in important positions. In spite of this, the young king had to face several domestic uprisings as well as external threats. In 1527 Gustav called a meeting of the *riksdag* to sanction the confiscation of Church property and the introduction of Lutheran teachings in the realm. The decision effectively undermined the political autonomy of the Church, while at the same time providing financial resources to strengthen the royal army and navy.

By 1540, Gustav I was ready to consolidate his position further. He had overcome several attempts at insurrection and his military forces had successfully stood the test against the combined forces of Lübeck and Mecklenburg in the Count's War of 1534–36. Gustav's alliance with the nobility had proven resilient and he had boosted the crown's finances with the confiscation of Church lands and with the influx of silver from the Sala mine. The Swedish monarch now opted to reconstruct the state administration from the top down, and to secure the throne for his own offspring. The claim for hereditary succession must be analysed as a part of the larger project to introduce new forms of rule to the rudimentary

15 For an overview of Scandinavian politics in the late medieval period, see: Larsson, *Kalmarunionens tid*.

16 Ericson Wolke, *Stockholms blodbad*; Bisgaard, *Christian 2*, pp. 268–87; Harrison, *Stockholms blodbad*. For Gustav I's insurrection, see Gustafsson, *Gamla riken, nya stater*, pp. 72–6.

Swedish state. The period 1538–43 has been dubbed ‘the German period’ of Gustav I’s rule, as the King recruited a contingent of top bureaucrats of German origin. The most prominent of these was the chancellor Conrad von Pyhy, who had served under the emperor Charles V. The chancellor was well acquainted with absolutist ideology and the principles of Roman law, and he was instrumental in drafting the document that introduced hereditary monarchy in Sweden: the oath of allegiance from 1540.

The implementation of hereditary monarchy was a key subject for constitutional historians in the early twentieth century. Emil Hildebrand stressed the overall continuity from the medieval Law of the Realm to Gustav I’s declaration of hereditary monarchy. The medieval constitution had stressed the birthright of the sons of the ruling monarch, and Gustav embraced this argumentation right from the beginning. Already in 1526, the young monarch made his councillors confirm that his future offspring would have precedence in their rights to the throne following his demise. For Hildebrand then, the decision of 1544 was but a logical extension of the medieval Swedish constitution.<sup>17</sup>

Others have argued to the contrary, pointing to the international models that inspired the new law of succession. Ingvar Andersson, while recognising the inspiration from absolutist ideology, claims a direct connection to the French Salic law that explicitly excluded female contenders from power.<sup>18</sup> Gottfrid Carlsson and Birgitta Odén both focused on the hereditary rights of the younger Vasa princes, first stated in the *riksdag*’s decision from 1544 and then confirmed by another resolution from 1560, known as the Last Will and Testament of Gustav Vasa. The latter document formalised the creation of independent duchies for the dukes Johan, Magnus and Karl, an arrangement that would be a constant cause of conflict for the rest of the century. Gottfrid Carlsson held that the will of 1560 was inspired by German models that sanctioned the partition of the territory between the sons of the prince. He thus saw a direct conflict between the absolutist claims of Gustav I in 1544 and the feudal character of the 1560 document. Birgitta Odén recognises the German inspiration for the Swedish declarations of princely inheritance. However, she also stresses the inclusion of the estates in all these arrangements. According to Odén, the decision of 1560 confirmed previous agreements by creating a common frame for cooperation between the king, the Vasa princes, the aristocracy and even the commoner estates.

17 Hildebrand, ‘Gustav Vasas arvförening’, pp. 129–66; see also Hildebrand, *Svenska statsförfattningens historiska utveckling*, pp. 222f.

18 Andersson, ‘Förebilden till Gustav Vasas arvförening’, pp. 224–33.

Rather than being an expression of absolutist ideology, royal primogeniture in Sweden ended up confirming the joint responsibility of the monarch and the estates in maintaining the realm.<sup>19</sup> This perspective is highly relevant for the following study.

While some scholars have stressed the long-term constitutional trajectory of the Vasa monarchy, others have maintained that the introduction of royal primogeniture signalled a radical break with medieval monarchy. Gustav I first pressed his claim to rule as a dynastic monarch at a meeting with the Council of the Realm at Örebro in 1540. The noble councillors swore to stay loyal not only to Gustav I but also to all his successors on the male side. The Swedish historian Ivan Svalenius has argued that the oath taken in Örebro served to recognise Gustav I's claim to rule according to absolutist principles. The reforms initiated by Pyhy effectively paved the way for systematic government intervention in matters that used to be subject to regional or local authorities.<sup>20</sup> Both Svalenius and Lars-Olof Larsson consider the *riksdag* decision of 1544 as evidence that the King was now moderating his absolutist claims. Svalenius concludes that hereditary monarchy was introduced by the consent of the estates, and that all references to divine sanction and absolute right were excluded from the decision. Larsson is even more specific: while the oath of 1540 signalled a clear violation of the law of the realm, the pledge of the Västerås *riksdag* made no direct reference to the earlier document.<sup>21</sup> While the sessions pacts (including Gustav Vasa's last will from 1560) remained a constant source of conflict for the remainder of the sixteenth century, the immediate outcome was a strengthening of Gustav I's personal rule through the active support of the estates.<sup>22</sup>

To understand the nuances in the successive transformation from elective to hereditary monarchy we must analyse the key events of 1540 and 1544 in detail. In the following section, I will review the major sources to demonstrate the dynamic between absolutist claims and representative functions. I will also discuss the further implications of this development for politics in early modern Sweden.

19 Carlsson, 'Gustav Vasas testamente', pp. 16–35; Odén, 'Gustav Vasa och testamentets tillkomst', pp. 94–141.

20 Svalenius, *Gustav Vasa*, pp. 169–73; Lundkvist, 'Furstens personliga regemente'.

21 Svalenius, *Gustav Vasa*, pp. 205–6; Larsson, *Gustav Vasa*, pp. 224–5, 272–3.

22 Edman, 'The Testament of Gustav Vasa as a Symbolic Source of Dynastic Legitimacy and Political Power in the Rhetoric of Johan III', abstract for a conference paper to be presented at the Conference on Dynasty and Dynasticism 1400–1700, Somerville College, University of Oxford, 16–18 March 2016, <https://uppsala.academia.edu/JohnEdman>.

## Introducing and Implementing Royal Primogeniture

Gustav I was legally proclaimed king of Sweden at a meeting in Strängnäs in June 1523. The assembly consisted of councillors of the realm, noble magnates and church dignitaries, and possibly some representatives from the towns and the peasant communes. According to the documents, the election was in full accordance with national law, which stipulated that representatives from all parts of the realm must be present to give their consent. There is no surviving list of the persons present; the King himself stated that he was elected by 'the Council of the Realm with the acclaim and consent of the common people'. In Gustav's first announcement to his people, the election took second place to the fact that the new ruler now controlled his domain by military force. He proclaimed that he had already seized most of the important strongholds in the realm, and that he would soon conquer Stockholm and Finland as well. The legitimacy of the new monarch thus rested on his status and charisma as a military leader, as well as on traditional law.<sup>23</sup>

For Gustav I, the threat of being deposed was very much a political reality. There were several attempts to overthrow his regime during his first ten years as a ruling monarch. Gustav himself even used the treat of abdication as a political instrument to forward his own political interest, notably at the diet of Västerås in 1527. As late as 1536 there was an alleged conspiracy to kill the King.<sup>24</sup> At this point, there was a young royal family to consider. Gustav I had lost his young queen Catherine of Saxony-Lauenburg a year after giving birth to Prince Erik (b. 1533, r. as Erik XIV 1560–68), the designated heir to the throne. The King then married Margareta Leijonhuvud, a member of a leading noble family, and Prince Johan (r. as Johan III 1568–92) was born in 1537.<sup>25</sup> The Swedish monarch thus needed to strengthen his dynastic claim to the throne to secure the future position of his descendants. Introducing royal primogeniture would strengthen the ideological foundation of the Vasa regime, supporting the political and administrative reforms that were already on their way.

The meeting in Örebro took place in late December 1539 to early January 1540. The King was of course present, along with his aristocratic councillors,

23 Gustav I's proclamation to the people, in *Svenska riksdagsakter 1521–1718*, vol. I–1, pp. 8–9, <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:kb:riks-21799163>.

24 Larsson, *Gustav Vasa*, p. 203; Åberg, 'Conspiracy or Political Purge?', pp. 315–30.

25 On Gustav Vasa's family see Larsson, *Gustav Vasa*, pp. 181–7, 206–9. Queen Catherine was not of the prestigious house of Wettin in electoral Saxony, but from a small protestant principality in northern Germany.

the chief bureaucrats Pyhy and Norman as well as the leading Church dignitaries. Importantly, Gustav I also brought the infant princes Erik and Johan to face his trusted servants. The next generation of Vasas were thus able to personify the claim for dynastic succession. According to documents dated 4 January, the meeting concluded with all the magnates swearing an oath of allegiance to the royal family. Although the original document has been lost, the oath exists in several copies in the royal archives. A compiled version was published in the official series *Svenska riksdagsakter* back in 1887.<sup>26</sup>

The first manuscript copy is from the latter part of the sixteenth century. It is attributed to the aristocrat Hogenskild Bielke (1538–1605), a leader of the aristocratic opposition against Johan III and then Duke Karl, the future Charles IX (r. 1599–1611). Hogenskild was not sympathetic to the absolutist claims of the Vasa monarchs, as his relation of the event demonstrates. The document first describes the circumstances when the oath of allegiance was taken:

[This is a] Copy of the oath that was sworn upon the naked sword in Örebro, and thereafter confirmed by the Holy Sacrament, which preceded the provincial ordinance of Västergötland later that same year (however, being against Swedish law).<sup>27</sup>

Hogenskild Bielke's note states that the councillors first swore the oath of allegiance upon the King's sword and then sealed the agreement by taking the sacrament together. The manifestation of secular power thus took precedence in the ceremony. The annotation also refers to the instruction for the Government council of Västergötland, issued in April 1540, and to the oath itself being a violation of the law of the realm. The latter statement is instructive of the constitutional programme forwarded by Hogenskild and his noble kinsman Erik Sparre in the late sixteenth century. They wanted to restore the power of the aristocratic council vis-à-vis the king, and they were therefore sceptical to the Vasas' claim to rule by the grace of God.<sup>28</sup>

26 *Svenska riksdagsakter 1521–1718*, vol. I–1, pp. 250–3. The primary transcripts are in National archives of Sweden (*hereafter* RA), Riksdagsacta vol. R 4724.

27 RA, Riksdagsacta R 4724, transcript no. 3 in the Örebro documents: 'Copia av den ed som skedde på ett blott svärd i Örebro och sedan anammades det högvärdiga sakrament där uppå, vilket allt ländade på den landsordning som då ställt var, och sedan förseglades i Västergötland uppå samma år (och är dock emot Sveriges lag).'

28 Berg, 'Hogenskild Bielke'.

Historian Sari Nauman has studied oath-swearing in sixteenth-century Sweden. She stresses that the oath was a binding statement of great political significance, essentially oral in its nature. The medieval councillors had pledged their collective allegiance to the realm, and such an oath was normally sworn upon the Holy Bible.<sup>29</sup> On this occasion however, the magnates opted to swear upon the King's drawn sword, a symbol of royal power and justice. The religious character of the alliance was instead confirmed by taking Communion, in accordance with Martin Luther's teachings. The Örebro ceremony thus pushed Sweden's status as a Protestant realm to the fore, while supporting Gustav I's claim for supremacy in political as well as religious matters.

Another transcript adds an introductory part that explicitly states the purpose of the whole ceremony:

In this way his royal Majesty instructed them, when they laid their hands upon the sword:

In the name of God the Father, his Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen  
 And from the power and strength given by the almighty God,  
 which have been passed to us and all our royal and princely heirs, from  
 generation to generation, over you and all our subjects upon this Earth,  
 to rule and reign,  
 we extend the sword of justice over you, in testimony  
 to swear and tell the following:<sup>30</sup>

This statement appears dictated by Gustav I himself, commanding his loyal councillors to swear allegiance to him and to all his heirs for generations to come. It clearly demonstrates that Gustav — inspired by his German chancellor — considered himself ruler by the grace of God, and that he expected his followers to accept the Vasas' dynastic claim to the Swedish crown according to divine right.<sup>31</sup> A following passage indicates that the young princes were present in the room when the ceremony was carried out. This stressed the personal character of the oath of allegiance; strengthening

29 Nauman, *Ordens kraft*, pp. 43–5.

30 RA, Riksdagsacta R 4724, transcript no. 1 (also in no. 4) in the Örebro documents: 'Efter det sätt, hållt konung majt v a n h dem före, när de lade sina händer uppå svärdet: Uti namn Gud faders, sons och den helige andes, Amen, och utav den allsmåktige gud gudomlige kraft och makt, vilken oss och alla våra kungliga och fursliga livsarvsherrar, ifrån arvingar till arvingar, undt och förlänta äro, över eder och alla våra undersåtar uppå jorden, att styra och råda, utsträcka vi det rättvisans svärd över eder, till en vittnesbörd och där med svärja och säga, som här efter följer.'

31 Lundkvist, 'Furstens personliga regemente', p. 213.



the intimate bond between the monarch and his male heirs on the one hand, and the Swedish elites on the other.

While the introductory text raised strong absolutist claims, the oath itself seems a little less straightforward. The signatories solemnly swore to remain loyal and true to both the King and his royal offspring. They also promised to support the monarch with good advice and to act in concord to prevent all hostile action from the enemies of the realm. After pledging to defend the royal family with their lives, the dignitaries promised to assist the monarch in matters of government, to ensure that both rich and poor received justice and vowed that they would never betray what was decided in secret council. Lastly, the signatories stated that they had sworn this on the King's sword and taken the Holy Communion together as a token of their honesty.<sup>32</sup>

Rather than a simple act of submission, the councillors' oath actually echoes the medieval ethos of the aristocratic council. Although the signatories clearly express their allegiance to the monarch and his family, they also stand together to shoulder the collective responsibility for the welfare of the realm. The detailed parts of their pledge all conform to traditional ideals of allegiance, as demonstrated by Sari Nauman: obedience to the King, protection of law and justice, and vows to defend the realm against all enemies.<sup>33</sup> I would argue that the oath of 1540 confirms the Council of the Realm as a representative body with specific rights. While recognising the supremacy of the King, the council still claimed an autonomous position as the guardian of just government. The political privilege of the aristocracy thus retained its central role in the newly proclaimed dynastic state.

Four years later, the situation was very different when Gustav I called the *riksdag* to a meeting in the provincial town of Västerås in January 1544. This was the first meeting of all the estates since the Västerås *riksdag* of 1527, when the King had attacked the economic privileges of the Church. Gustav I now desperately needed to restore political stability after the shockwave of the Dacke rebellion. The uprising in the southern provinces had threatened to overthrow the Vasa regime and left the King in dire need of support for his legitimacy. The confirmation of hereditary monarchy was one essential component of this policy, but the estates also agreed on other important matters. They promised to finance a standing domestic army while also proclaiming Sweden an evangelical kingdom. However, the decision did

32 *Svenska riksdagsakter 1521–1718*, vol. I–1, 250–3. The transcripts in RA, Riksdagsacta R 4724 contain the same words, with minor differences.

33 Nauman, *Ordens kraft*, pp. 38–43.

not elaborate on religious doctrine, but entrusted ecclesiastical matters to the King and the archbishop. The days of radical reform were over. The chancellor von Pyhy had already fallen from grace and Gustav I wanted to proceed cautiously in both spiritual and worldly matters.<sup>34</sup>

The *riksdag* of 1544 started with a long oration by the King in which he described his personal struggle for the wealth of the realm and its inhabitants. This was in essence a variation on the myth of the king-liberator that Gustav I had been carefully cultivating for years to help legitimate his claim to the crown.<sup>35</sup> Gustav reminded the representatives how their ancestors and the fatherland had suffered before his own rule, ‘through robbery, murder, fire, plentyful and countless Christian bloodshed’. The alleged reason for this was that the people had lacked a shepherd and a king, thus proving ‘how dangerous it is to keep country and realm without a loyal head, who has will and love for the fatherland’.<sup>36</sup> Fortunately, Gustav I had come along to save the day:

Then his Royal Majesty, with the help and trust of the almighty God, sincerely and with great care has considered all the trouble, misery, danger and destruction of the realm as well as the poverty, sorrow and threat of ruin of its habitants.<sup>37</sup>

This time, the overall focus lay on religious legitimation: how Gustav I had secured the preaching of God’s true word and how he had provided the country with good laws and statutes. Gustav’s address to the *riksdag* elaborated on the monarch’s continuing struggle to ward off false preachers and to abolish all forms of idolatry and superstition. The Swedish realm was an evangelical community, now firmly detached from the papal palace in Rome.<sup>38</sup> The lesson learnt from history was that all Swedes must stick to-

34 Larsson, *Gustav Vasa*, pp. 272–8; Berntson, *Mässan och armborstet*, pp. 343–6; Czaika, ‘Vad var reformationen?’, pp. 33–52.

35 Hallenberg, ‘Kungen, kronan eller staten?’, pp. 19–41.

36 The King’s address to the estates, *Svenska riksdagsakter 1521–1718*, vol. I–1, pp. 337–8: ‘... med rof, mordh, brandh, mycket och otaligit christet blodhz uthgiutelse’ (p. 337); ‘... huru farligt thet är, att behålla landh och riker uthan et troget hufvudh, som till fäderneslandet vilie och kärlek hafver’ (p. 338).

37 *Svenska riksdagsakter 1521–1718*, vol. I–1, p. 339: ‘Så hafver hans kongl. Mt och igenom then alzmektige Gudz nådige tillhielp och försyn detta rikes höge anliggende betryck, nödh, farligheter och fördärf och thess inbyggiares elendighet, bedröfvelse och sväfvande undhergång hoss sig högeligen och med stor sårg troligen öfvervägit.’

38 Brilkman has demonstrated the Lutheran connotations in Gustav I’s legitimation of power: *Undersåten som förstod*.

gether to avoid suffering under foreign domination. The King also reminded the representatives of the formidable military forces he had organised to keep the country safe from its enemies. Although Gustav claimed he had always acted in a loyal, regal and fatherly matter, he feared that his efforts would all come to naught without the active support of his subjects. He consequently urged the representatives to consider the prosperity of the realm and make sure that the fatherland would be ruled by one 'of your own blood', instead of being subjugated by foreign powers. Therefore, the monarch urged the estates to recognise the hereditary rights of Prince Erik and his younger brothers.<sup>39</sup> Gustav I thus linked his dynastic claim to the crown with the notion of a national monarchy under an evangelical flag, the one alternative to foreign rule.

The estates of the *riksdag* responded to the King's proposition by an official declaration that finally declared the Swedish crown hereditary among the male members of the Vasa dynasty — *arvföreningen* in Swedish.<sup>40</sup> Several members of the noble estate sealed the document, but they claimed to speak for the clergy, the commoner estates and all the inhabitants of Sweden as well. The signatories recognised their duty to act for the wealth of the realm, and agreed with the King that internal strife was the worst of all misfortunes:

When the ruling order, that is the head, and the limbs, that are the subjects, become detached and divided, most often many dangerous and disastrous changes have befallen.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, Sweden must follow the example of other kingdoms who had cherished the principle of primogeniture and whose rulers had always been of domestic blood. The document branded elective monarchy as the root of many evils. A situation where one dignitary favoured the first candidate and another supported his opponent might lead to the destruction of the right bloodline and threaten dynastic succession. The signatories denounced the medieval electoral system, described by Haldén as a successful embedding of elite interest, as dangerous and counterproductive. Instead, political stability must be secured by recognising the right of Gustav I and his male

39 *Svenska riksdagsakter 1521–1718*, vol. I–1, p. 374.

40 The declaration is published in *Svenska riksdagsakter 1521–1718*, vol. I–1, pp. 378–90.

41 *Svenska riksdagsakter 1521–1718*, vol. I–1, p. 380: '... att alltid och till thet meste genom regementzens, som är hufvedens, och lemmernes, som är undersätternes, uenighet och syndrung hafve uthi värden margfallelige och monge farlige och svinde förändringer eller omskiffelse sig offthe tildraget'.

offspring to rule as hereditary princes. The noble representatives stated that Gustav had come to power as an elected monarch. However, they also stretched the truth to strengthen his royal status. They claimed that Gustav was the rightful heir in line according to birth, kin and blood. The *riksdag* thus projected the Vasas' dynastic claim backwards as well as forwards, while still cherishing the elective principle:

While our gracious lord King Gustav, has been elected, acclaimed and accepted as a natural hereditary king ... we therefore recognise his young princely heirs, born and unborn, by nature and all Christian statutes and in accordance with bloodline, as rightful heirs to the crown and realm of Sweden.<sup>42</sup>

The declaration of the Västerås *riksdag* directly referred to the oath of allegiance taken at the Örebro meeting, contrary to what Lars-Olof Larsson has claimed. The estates confirmed that the 1540 decision was now the valid constitution of the realm. The Vasas' claim to the hereditary monarchy crown was accepted not just by the aristocratic councillors but also by the commoner estates of the *riksdag*, representing all the inhabitants of Sweden. What had started out as something resembling a royal *coup d'état* was now fully approved by the political community of the realm. Still, the fact that Gustav I had started out as an elected king was stated clearly in the documents.

The agreement also outlines the terms of royal succession. Duke Erik is proclaimed heir apparent to the Swedish crown, to be succeeded by his oldest son and then by future generations of his male heirs: 'from the line and to the line, one after the other shall assume the task of government'.<sup>43</sup> In the case of Erik dying without any male offspring to succeed him, the crown should pass to Duke Johan and his heirs on the sword side. Should this fail, then Duke Magnus's line of princely heirs would take over, and after their demise the lines of yet unborn Vasa princes. Interestingly, this system of strictly male primogeniture was supplemented by recognition of the regal status of the younger Vasa princes. The estates swore to provide lands and

42 *Svenska riksdagsakter 1521–1718*, vol. I–1, p. 383: 'att effther thet högbeelte nu regerende konglige Ma:t, vår aller nådigeste herre, konung Göstaff, såsom en naturlig effter linien till Sverigis krone en erffkonung och elliest öfver riket utvald, hulled utförsedd och stadfest konung är ... aname vi förthenskuld the samme hans konglige Ma:t unge lifsärfhärskafter, födde och ofödde, såsom och oss effter naturen och alle christelige stadger rätter och effter blodzlinien ägner och bör, till vår rätte och neste Sverigis crones och rikets ärfvinger.'

43 *Svenska riksdagsakter 1521–1718*, vol. I–1, p. 385.

rents for the junior branches of the dynasty, and to recognise their status as princes of the blood. This statement anticipated the decision of 1560 when the estates approved the creation of hereditary duchies for Johan, Magnus and Karl. It confirmed the notion that a successful dynastic state must provide support for the side branches of the royal family. Younger sons and nephews were family assets to be mobilised for promoting the status of the Vasa dynasty. The Vasas were thus constituted as an extended horizontal group, elevated to royal status through the blood of their ancestors.<sup>44</sup>

Royal primogeniture signalled a radical shift in the balance between the monarchy and the aristocracy. The Swedish magnates lost their ancient right to elect a ruler from several candidates. The younger Vasas became princes of the blood, entitled to special privileges in the future. However, the declaration from 1544 clearly demonstrates that the aristocratic council retained a central position in the new monarchy. Should Gustav I die before Duke Erik reached the legal age of majority, government authority must be delegated to four aristocratic councillors and Queen Margareta, until Erik was old enough to assume his responsibilities.<sup>45</sup> The article placed the aristocracy — and the queen dowager — firmly at the helm in case of a long minority. This constituted a window of opportunity for the aristocracy that would open up on more than one occasion in the following century. Promoting the ideal of patriarchal power also meant acknowledging the role of the senior female member of the royal house. In spite of the prevalent misogynist discourse, male primogeniture did not fully exclude women from the political process.<sup>46</sup>

Finally — and most importantly — the declaration of the estates addressed the situation should the Vasa dynasty fail to produce any male heirs altogether. In this case, the Council of the Realm and the estates of the *riksdag* must face the mutual responsibility of electing a new monarch. The motivation for this was to prevent the worst-case scenario of a foreigner sitting on the Swedish throne. The representative institutions of the realm thus retained the right to elect their ruler, albeit only in extreme cases of family misfortune. This privilege was now extended to include the commoner estates as well as the aristocracy.<sup>47</sup>

The Västerås *riksdag* of 1544 had profound effects on the course of Swedish politics. On the one hand, the meeting recognised the dynastic

44 Carlsson, 'Gustav Vasas testamente'; Odén, 'Gustav Vasa och testamentets tillkomst'.

45 *Svenska riksdagsakter 1521–1718*, vol. I–1, pp. 387–8.

46 John Edman has demonstrated how Erik XIV dismissed female rulers in order to strengthen his own dynastic claim: Edman, 'The Testament of Gustav Vasa'.

47 *Svenska riksdagsakter 1521–1718*, vol. I–1, pp. 388–9.

claims of the Vasa family while also consigning the military and economic resources needed to support a strong national monarchy. The Swedish estates placed infrastructural power firmly in the hands of the monarch, who was no longer relegated to a modest position of *primus inter pares*. Gustav I and his successors would rule by the right of Swedish royal blood, and the inherited charisma of the King that had delivered the realm from foreign oppression and defended the true evangelic faith. On the other hand, the new constitution also confirmed the central positions of both the aristocratic council *and* the commoner estates of the *riksdag*. Gustav I became the founder of a dynasty, dependent on — but also able to navigate between — the support of the commoners and that of the nobility. This three-part conflict would remain a dominant theme in Swedish politics for the rest of the old regime.<sup>48</sup>

The introduction of royal primogeniture in Sweden was less a matter of absolutist claims than a successful negotiation of family politics. Gustav I succeeded in aggregating interests behind his regime by utilising the political institutions at his disposal to forge a new kind of representative monarchy. The procedure gave the *riksdag* precedence over medieval law, and established the notion that laws and statutes might be altered — with the estates' approval.<sup>49</sup> This principle paved the way for the events of 1569 and 1599, when the Swedish estates would provide the necessary support for deposing a hereditary king.<sup>50</sup>

### The King's In-Laws: The Extended Vasa Dynasty

While the introduction of hereditary monarchy was of great symbolic and ideological importance, there were also more pragmatic reasons: dynastic rights sanctioned the position of the King's kith and kin in the governing functions of the realm. The King's German advisors had provided the bureaucratic expertise needed to formalise Gustav's personal rule, but the King needed further assistance with the pressing matters at hand. In fact,

48 Holm, 'Att välja sin fiende', pp. 29–50; Hallenberg, Holm and Johansson, 'Organization, Legitimation, Participation', pp. 247–68.

49 These institutions included the provincial and local districts courts, since decisions by the *riksdag* still had to be negotiated and confirmed in all parts of the realm.

50 Johan III's removal of his brother Erik XIV was sanctioned by the *riksdag* in January 1569. Charles IX, the youngest son of Gustav I, initiated a similar procedure against his nephew Sigismund in 1599. Grundberg, *Ceremoniernas makt*, pp. 105–35; Larsson, *Arvet efter Gustav Vasa*, pp. 371–81.

a parallel system of government was already under construction: a familial state utilising the services and social capital of Gustav's in-laws.<sup>51</sup>

When Gustav I started recruiting top bureaucrats from Germany, he had already been king of Sweden for fifteen years. The first generation of Vasa supporters, who had participated in the uprising against Christian II, were on their way out or already dead and gone. A new generation of young noblemen and able commoners were ready to take their place. These men had started their service as young squires in the King's court (Swedish: *kungens gård*), at the castle of Stockholm or in one of the major provincial strongholds. They were reared in the King's service and those who had proven themselves would be trusted with royal office or military command.<sup>52</sup>

The inner circle of regime supporters consisted of young aristocrats who also happened to be the King's relatives by blood or by marriage. They included Gustav I's nephew Per Brahe, the son of the King's only sister and sibling Margareta. Per Brahe started his long and distinguished career as a chamber councillor in 1539, assisting the King in auditing the records of local officials. He also played an important role in the suppression of the Dacke rebellion in 1543 and became councillor of the realm in 1544. Per Brahe continued to serve under two of Gustav's successors and would later reflect on his long years in royal service in his *Oeconomia*, a book of instructions directed to his sons.<sup>53</sup>

Gustav's second marriage, to the young noblewoman Margareta Leijonhufvud in 1536, created new bonds between the King and the old aristocracy. The Queen's brother Sten Eriksson was the monarch's most trusted advisor from the late 1530s and worked side by side with the chancellor Pyhy and the King himself. Queen Margareta's sisters also married leading noblemen and the new in-laws became effective contributors in the development of the state organisation. Gustav Olsson (Stenbock), Svante Stensson (Sture) and Axel Eriksson (Bielke) were all granted substantial fiefs in the southern provinces. They thus provided the necessary link between the King and the local government.<sup>54</sup> These men, forming the core of the royal council,

51 In Julia Adam's analysis of Dutch government in the seventeenth century, the leading merchant families exploited the organs of the state to forward their own interests; Adams, *The Familial State*. There is a strong argument that Gustav I treated Swedish state functions in a similar way: as an instrument for family power. Odén, 'Gustav Vasa och testamentets tillkomst', pp. 134–6; Lundkvist, 'Furstens personliga regemente', pp. 221–3.

52 Anthoni, 'Finländare i hovtjänst hos Gustav Vasa', pp. 133–46; Nilsson, *Krona och frälse*.

53 Eriksson, *Statstjänare och jordägare*.

54 Nilsson, *Krona och frälse*, pp. 103–7; Samuelson, *Aristokrat eller förädlad bonde?*; Hallenberg, *Kungen, fogdarna och riket*, pp. 335–7; Tegeborg Falkdalen, *Margareta Regina*.

were also present in Örebro in 1540 and at the *riksdag* of Västerås in 1544.<sup>55</sup> In a way, the royal in-laws thus succeeded in promoting themselves along with their Vasa patrons.

Marrying below royal status was seldom a viable option for monarchs in early modern Europe. When Gustav I chose his first spouse, Catherine of Saxony-Lauenburg, he wanted a princess of the blood who could make his own dynasty appear legitimate in the eyes of his fellow rulers. The liability of being usurpers of legitimate power would plague the Vasa monarchs for nearly a century to come.<sup>56</sup> However, from the King's perspective the second marital alliance with Margareta turned out to be a success. The King gained a hard core of loyal supporters who could command considerable social and political capital. This bond was confirmed by Gustav's third marriage to Katarina Stenbock, the daughter of Gustav Olsson, in 1552. The aristocrats were indispensable when it came to bargaining with the peasant communes over delicate matters. They remained a reserve corps of loyal dignitaries that the King could call upon when there were critical matters at hand. In that way, Gustav I could rely on aristocratic support without having to grant its key members a permanent role in the government of the realm.<sup>57</sup>

Harald Gustafsson has coined the term 'extended dynasty' for the group of illegitimate children that King Christian IV of Denmark tried to naturalise as members of the Oldenburg dynasty.<sup>58</sup> Although Gustav I's in-laws were never given similar recognition, they did play a decisive role in establishing dynastic control over the state administration. I therefore suggest that we might think of Gustav I's relatives as a temporary extension of the new royal dynasty, a necessary component for entangling dynasty formation with state building.

From a short-term perspective, the King's in-laws and relatives did prove a valuable asset for the Vasa regime. They were eventually bestowed with hereditary titles and fiefs that placed them above their noble peers. Still, their position vis-à-vis the monarch would become a liability in the longer run. The personal bond established between Gustav I and the

55 The oath-takers in Örebro included Sten Eriksson and his brother Abraham, as well as Svante Sture and Birger Nilsson (Grip), the latter being married to the King's niece Brita. When the oath was confirmed in Lödöse three months later Gustav Olsson was also among the signatories. All of the above plus Per Brahe and Axel Eriksson signed the decision of the Västerås *riksdag* in 1544. *Svenska riksdagsakter 1521–1718*, vol. I–1, pp. 253, 292 and 378–9.

56 Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action*; Haldén, *Family Power*, pp. 161–2.

57 On the organisation of the Swedish state as a family enterprise, see Larsson, *Gustav Vasa*, pp. 286–91.

58 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', pp. 386–91.



aristocrats could not be successfully transmitted to the next generation of Vasa princes. Three of Gustav's sons would eventually become rulers of Sweden, and each of them would face stiff opposition from the aristocrats who demanded a larger say in government matters. The royal in-laws who had supported the elevation of the Vasa family even played an active role in the removal of Erik XIV.<sup>59</sup> I would argue that the Vasa regime failed to strengthen state capacity when it came to integrating the aristocratic elites in the daily business of government. Gustav I's extended family of in-laws turned out to be a temporary offshoot, never to be cultivated by the younger Vasa princes.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the events introducing hereditary monarchy in Sweden has demonstrated the ambiguous character of the whole process. Gustav I's original claim to rule by the grace of God and not by the consent of the estates was clearly a pivotal force. The oath of allegiance from 1540 was steeped in an absolutist context, yet it also highlighted the political rights of the aristocratic council (supplemented by three Lutheran bishops) to represent the people and to advise the ruler on behalf of the realm. The decision by the *riksdag* of Västerås in 1544 did establish royal primogeniture, while also outlining the details of the succession order. Gustav I and his successors would rule by right of royal Swedish blood, while also claiming to be the chief guardians of the true evangelical faith. However, the agreement effectively extended responsibility for dynasty and realm to include the commoner estates. Royal succession was no longer a matter confined to the traditional elites. From now on, burghers, priests and even peasants would have a clear stake in the preservation of the monarchy. From this perspective, hereditary monarchy presented a much broader embedding of elite groups than the medieval constitution had allowed for. Family power supported by the aristocracy, to paraphrase Peter Haldén, was superseded by a dynastic monarchy relying on both the *riksdag* and the aristocratic council.

This extension of the political community of the realm might well have been an extraordinary response to an acute regime crisis. The Dacke uprising of 1542–43 shook the Vasa regime to its roots, and Gustav I needed to re-establish himself as a legitimate king of all Sweden. Birgitta Odén

59 Larsson, *Arvet efter Gustav Vasa*, pp. 107–17, 165–9, 273–9, 343–9.

has suggested that the inclusion of the commoner estates was meant to be a last resort; normally matters of government would be handled by the King and his council. As long the King ruled in full consent with his noble councillors, there would be little need for the support of the estates. However, this turned out to be a rare case. Conflicts within the dynasty, as well as between monarchs and aristocrats, constantly forced a Vasa ruler to summon the estates to strengthen his position. The last fifteen years of Gustav I's rule, as well as the autocratic regime of Charles XII (r. 1697–1718), appear to be exceptions that prove the rule: a strong personal monarchy could only achieve its goals with the active support of the commoner estates. The complicated interplay between the King, the council and the *riksdag* would dominate Swedish politics for the remainder of the old regime. Early modern Sweden might qualify as a mixed monarchy of sorts, but the relations between the political groups were never harmonious.<sup>60</sup>

Representative institutions had an important role in establishing royal primogeniture, but notions of blood and charisma also played a part. Gustav I was not a blood relative of any previous king of Sweden, but he was indeed a nobleman of Swedish blood. This was of utmost importance for the legitimacy of the new regime. In Gustav's propaganda, hereditary monarchy was identified with a national monarchy. This marked a decisive break with the Scandinavian union of crowns that had lasted for almost 150 years. Gustav I though, claimed to honour a greater continuity and denied that his regime constituted a break with tradition. Rather, the Vasa dynasty re-established the blood relations that had once been constitutive for the formation of the Swedish realm. It remains a matter of dispute whether the King's Finnish subjects would be part of this community of blood or not.<sup>61</sup>

Gustav I's personal charisma as a military leader, the bold freedom fighter who had conquered the throne and expelled all foreign enemies, is less conspicuous in the documents from the 1540s. Yet military force was still a constitutive part of the Vasas' claim to rule. While addressing the estates, Gustav I stressed his achievements as commander and organiser of a formidable army and navy. Although his fighting days were long over — if there ever were any — the King still proclaimed himself a master of the art of war. However, religious legitimation came even more to the fore. The King

60 For a discussion of Sweden as a mixed monarchy see Runeby, *Monarchia mixta*. Runeby warns against exaggerating the constitutional character of the Swedish system, emphasising the strong intellectual influence from German and French political theorists.

61 On the status of the Finnish peasants in the Swedish realm, see for example Ylikangas, 'Från ättemedlem till konungens undersåte', pp. 31–54.

prided himself on having restored his people to the one true evangelical faith, and that was yet more important than the fear of foreign enemies. Gustav even recognised that Denmark, as well as Norway, were also evangelical kingdoms just like Sweden. Exit the image of the king-liberator; enter the image that would last even longer: the fatherly monarch who cared for both the spiritual and the material welfare of his subjects. This propaganda figure was more befitting for a founder of a dynasty, representing the blood of the nation as well as the will of his people.

In recent years, historical sociologists have begun to recognise the fundamental significance of dynastic networks for state formation in medieval and early modern Europe. Scholars like Philip S. Gorski and Peter Haldén argue that the institution of kinship constituted a stabilising force in European politics, often overlooked by scholars focusing on armed conflict. In the Swedish case however, dynastic consolidation did not serve to promote political stability, at least not from the longer perspective. Incessant political conflict and civil strife marked the reigns of Gustav I's successors. The second generation of Vasa princes were at odds not only with each other but also with their relatives among the Swedish aristocracy. The extended dynasty of royal siblings could not provide stability in the long run. In fact, the infighting among the dynasty's princes did not stop until the younger sidelines gradually became extinct in the seventeenth century. Dynastic centralisation was eventually achieved by Gustav II Adolf through aggressive warfare against his kin in Poland. However, extending the Vasa dynasty was still an option, as demonstrated by the attempt to install the young prince Karl Filip as tzar in Moscow in 1612–13.<sup>62</sup>

Dynasty alone could not create political stability. Rather than just promoting elite cohesion, royal primogeniture created a constitutional platform that allowed the commoner estates to act on behalf of the realm. Dynastic monarchy combined bureaucratic efficiency and representative functions to promote a balance of power that served Sweden surprisingly well for large parts of the early modern period. This system did not offer any definitive checks against absolutist claims from the monarch, but it did offer the necessary tools to restore constitutional government after periods of royal autocracy. In this way, introducing royal primogeniture meant promoting a new form of representative, or mixed, monarchy. Future rulers of Sweden had to learn how to balance their demands for personal rule with the active participation of all four estates of the *riksdag*.

62 Wetterberg, *Kanslern*, vol. I, pp. 181–3, 199–202.

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## About the Author

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## 7. Narrowing Dynastic Rule: Models of Governance, Social Conflict and the Hobbesian Bargain in Early Modern Sweden (1560–1718)

*Joakim Scherp*

**Abstract:** When Queen Christina of Sweden abdicated the throne in 1654, she left her successor Charles X Gustav a strong position vis-à-vis the aristocracy and the Swedish Riksdag. The offspring of the new King were given hereditary rights, but his other relatives were cut off from the royal family tree. This contribution argues that this was at least partly the result of a conscious effort on the part of the Council and Riksdag to limit the power of the royal family, and that many wished to avoid the bloody internecine feuds of the Vasa family. This contribution investigates the discussions in the Riksdag concerning non-ruling royals in order to further understand the ideological support for, and resistance to, royal power. A new periodisation of Swedish early modern history from a dynastic perspective is also suggested. Theoretically, the contribution relies on prospect theory and the political philosophy of Hobbes in its analyses.

**Keywords:** Queen Christina – Charles X Gustav – Riksdag – Council of the Realm – dynasty formation

When King Charles XII died in 1718, there was no legitimate successor to the throne. Why was this? The explanation that is explored in this contribution is to be found in the foundation of the royal dynasty he belonged to, the Palatine dynasty (1654–1720). This dynasty was from the beginning designed to be limited to the male offspring of Charles X Gustav, and not to any of his close relatives. Sweden had experienced multiple conflicts between members of the dynasty during the reign of the house of Vasa (in the period



1560–1621), and the appropriate solution seemed to be to limit the royal dynasty to a minimum. Even the brother of Charles X Gustav was excluded from the dynasty.

I propose that the function of the members of the dynasty — dynasty formation — was closely connected to the models of governance — state formation — employed during three different periods: the dynastic-feudal model (c. 1560–1611/25), during which royal dukes wielded great powers; the dynastic-oligarchic model (c. 1611/25–75), in which members of the royal family and the upper crust of the aristocracy formed an oligarchy that ruled together with the monarchs through the Council of the Realm; the absolutist-meritocratic model (c. 1675–1718) in which merit and competence decided who assisted the absolute king in governing the realm, and other members of the royal family, as well as the aristocrats, were relegated to minor roles.

In analysing how the historical experience of the civil strife fed into the dynasty formation, I use the political theory of Thomas Hobbes and the prospect theory of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky. I hypothesise that the fear of civil war led the Swedish political actors to prefer a single strong power centre, in the form of the monarch, at the expense of other members of the dynasty. But the immense power and wealth accumulated by the aristocracy during the dynastic-oligarchic period led to different preferences among the nobility on the one hand, and the commoners on the other. The latter hoped that members of the Palatine dynasty could help them upend the power of the aristocracy, while the former feared exactly this outcome. This conflict permeated the negotiations in 1649 and 1650, which resulted in the proclamation of Charles Gustav and his offspring as sole heirs to the throne during the rule of Queen Christina. He was not to wield any independent power until he was put on the throne — it was solemnly proclaimed that the realm was unified under one ruler: the Queen.

During the minority of Charles X Gustav's son Charles XI, there were conflicts caused by the claims of royal persons in the form of the child king's uncle Adolf Johan and of Christina, who had abdicated. Their claims were firmly rejected by a unified political nation once they started to use the language of power: the Crown would remain united. They were both expressly excluded from the succession to the throne, further narrowing the scope of the dynasty. When Charles XI reached maturity, he put an end to the dynastic-oligarchic model and introduced absolutism. A somewhat surprising feature of his new model of governance was the refusal to use relatives in important positions. Thus, when the head of the royal house

finally got the chance to put dynasty formation into practice himself, he opted for dynastic centralisation. I hypothesise that this was a feature of a new royal ideology in which no one subject was favoured above another in the eyes of the supreme monarch. The fulfilment of the Hobbesian ideal thus paradoxically weakened the dynasty that was supposed to produce the sovereign rulers. This weakness ultimately led to the introduction of a constitutional regime after Charles XII's death in which the monarchs were almost powerless.

## The Question

The death of Charles XII, king of the Swedish realm, in the trenches outside the Norwegian fortress Frederikssten was a momentous event in Swedish history. The absolutist political system fell after being in existence of about forty years. It was replaced by a constitutional regime in which the Swedish Diet, the *riksdag*, exercised strict control over the executive Council of the Realm, the *riksråd*. The monarchs were degraded to members of the *riksråd* with two votes and the tie-breaking vote.<sup>1</sup> Sweden had hastily moved from strict absolutism to parliamentarism in a course of events that has rightly been called revolutionary.<sup>2</sup>

There were of course many causes of this development.<sup>3</sup> Here, however, I will focus on the dynastic context that made the revolution possible. Charles died with no apparent heir. He had failed in his dynastic duties by refusing to marry (he said on at least one occasion that he would marry when the war was over, but only to a woman of his own liking). His surviving sibling, Princess Ulrika Eleonora, was legally excluded from automatic inheritance to the throne after her wedding to Frederick of Hesse-Kassel. The other candidate, Charles's teenage nephew Karl Fredrik of Holstein-Gottorp, had even flimsier claims, grounded in the fact that he was the son of the King's deceased sister Hedvig Sofia.<sup>4</sup> The candidates were thus few: the base of the dynasty that carried the absolutist system was narrow. Why was this? Why had the Palatine royal family (Pfalz-Zweibrücken, a branch of the house of Wittelsbach) failed to produce enough members to secure the reign?

1 Behre, 'Frihetstiden', pp. 238–9.

2 Which can be exemplified by the title of Lennart Thanner's influential doctoral thesis: Thanner, *Revolutionen i Sverige efter Karl XII:s död*.

3 Roberts, *Frihetstiden*, pp. 9–17.

4 Roberts, *Frihetstiden*, p. 17.

## The Argument

I will argue that the reason for this can be traced to the time when the dynasty was designated as Sweden's rulers during the reign of Queen Christina, and the developments during the reign of Charles XI: the dynasty was supposed to be narrow since an extended royal family was seen as a threat rather than an asset in the light of historic experience. From the beginning, the dynasty formation of the Palatine family was performed by actors outside the family.<sup>5</sup> I will also argue that this general view was shared by members of the royal house, aristocrats and commoners alike.

The motivations for the political actors, I hypothesise, can be found firstly in prospect theory, which stresses loss aversion in comparison to a specific reference point. In this case, the aristocrats had reached a position of power and wealth that led them to try and keep what they had gained. The commoners' reference point, meanwhile, was a state of affairs in which the nobility's power was checked. The way to achieve both these goals was to maintain what I will call a Hobbesian bargain that ensured that the monarch enjoyed full sovereignty in his or her realm in exchange for keeping the peace. These theories are presented more fully below.

The position of the members of the royal house also serves as a kind of touchstone for what I regard as three quite distinct models of dynasty formation combined with state formation in Swedish early modern history:

1. The dynastic-feudal model (c. 1560–1611/25). The monarch ruled with the assistance of royal dukes, and often also with the support of aristocrats related to the monarch.
2. The dynastic-oligarchic model (c. 1611/25–75). The monarch ruled with the assistance of members of the aristocracy; the members of the royal family were on an equal footing with the aristocrats and they jointly formed a ruling oligarchy. The monarchs were the sovereign rulers of an undivided realm. The Council of the Realm was the central arena in which the oligarchs and the monarch decided on policies.
3. The absolutist-meritocratic model (c. 1675–1719). The monarch ruled with the assistance of chosen men hand-picked on the basis of merit and loyalty, regardless of birth. The members of the extended royal family enjoyed the same position as a member of the nobility.

5 On the concept of dynasty formation, see Gustafsson, 'Dynasty formation', p. 149.

## The Dynastic-Feudal Model

In the Middle Ages, states in general, and monarchies in particular, were tightly connected to the ruling families.<sup>6</sup> Indeed the differentiation between the property of the state and the ruling family's property could take a very long time to establish. The rulers were also naturally inclined to give the members of their families important roles in government. They were regarded as more trustworthy and loyal than non-related persons, no matter how competent the latter could be. This attitude is borne out by a study by a team of political scientists of the correlation between large ruling families and regime stability: the larger the families, the more stable the regime.<sup>7</sup>

The Vasa dynasty was the first royal house of Sweden that managed to introduce inheritance as the method of succession, which was decided at a *riksdag* in 1544. Then it was established that the dynasty's founder Gustav I Vasa was to be succeeded by his eldest son Crown Prince Erik (XIV). Erik's younger brothers were appointed dukes. The status of the dukes in relation to the realm first became clear when Gustav Vasa's testament was presented and approved by the *riksdag* a short time before Gustav's death in 1560.<sup>8</sup> The testament would be one of the founding constitutional documents for the duration of the Vasa dynasty and, with important modifications, even for the ensuing Palatine family.

The testament was built on the assumption that cooperation within the dynasty would give the Vasas a firm grip over the kingdom. The dukes, Johan (III), Magnus and Charles (IX), were given nearly as much authority as the king over their duchies. While their father had endeavoured to supervise the royal bailiffs by himself, which had proved to be an arduous task, the four brothers combined could exert more efficient control over the bailiffs and through them over every household in the realm.<sup>9</sup>

Another feature of the model was the participation in government by 'the king's kin' (*kungafränderna*). The Vasa family had only quite recently risen above their aristocratic peers and had relatives among other noble families. Furthermore, two of Gustav Vasa's three queen consorts (Margareta Leijonhufvud and Gunilla Stenbock) came from the Swedish aristocracy, and their families were integrated among the *kungafränderna*. The dynastic connection to the nobility added a further element to the mix created by

6 Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*, pp. 45–6, 81, 439.

7 Kokkonen, Krishnarajan, Møller and Sundell, 'Blood is Thicker than Water', pp. 1–3, 28–31.

8 Larsson, *Gustav Vasa*, pp. 272, 294–6; Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, pp. 191–7.

9 Odén, 'Gustav Vasa och testamentets tillkomst', pp. 128–35.

the testament — the *kungafränder* became the leading aristocrats because of their close connection to the royal house. The men of those families were the backbone of the Council of the Realm, the *riksråd*, and thus played an important part in the administration of the realm.<sup>10</sup>

It should be emphasised that the testament's dynastic-feudal model was hardly the *a priori* recipe for civil war that has been presented by later historians.<sup>11</sup> As mentioned earlier, recent research has shown that dynasties on average were strengthened by having a multitude of princes and princesses.<sup>12</sup> But, of course, not all outcomes are in accordance with the average. As many as four serious conflicts between dukes and kings can be discerned during the six decades following Gustavus Vasa's death:

1. King Erik (1560–68) vs Duke Charles and Duke Johan. Conflict over the degree of independence for Duke Johan led to a civil war in which Erik was deposed.<sup>13</sup>
2. King Johan (1568–92) vs Duke Charles vs the *riksråd*. This was a cold war between three parties, which continually switched allies among each other.<sup>14</sup>
3. King Sigismund (1592–98) and the *riksråd* vs Duke Charles. A civil war broke out between nephew and uncle in 1597, in which the uncle had strong support particularly among the commoners while the *riksråd* supported Sigismund. To cut a long story short, Charles conquered the throne, Sigismund lost his crown, and the leading men of the *riksråd* lost their heads.<sup>15</sup> Even after Charles succeeded to the throne as Charles IX (1598–1611), he continued to strike down the aristocracy.
4. King Gustav Adolf (1611–32) and the *riksråd* vs dukes Karl Filip and Johan. A cold war that in hindsight has largely been neglected as unimportant by historians but was taken very seriously by contemporaries. Several of the men who helped frame the Palatine dynasty were active in high office during this conflict: Axel Oxenstierna, Carl Carlsson Gyllenhielm and Jacob De la Gardie among others. The Chancellor of the Realm Oxenstierna later expressed it thus: 'You know well that bad blood existed between King Gustav Adolf and the two princes, Duke Karl Filip and Duke Johan of Östergötland. Had not God called them both

10 Larsson, *Gustav Vasa*, pp. 286–91.

11 See for instance Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, pp. 196–7.

12 Kokkonen, Krishnarajan, Møller and Sundell, 'Blood is Thicker than Water', pp. 16–19.

13 Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, pp. 206–10, 233–9.

14 Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, pp. 296–327.

15 Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, pp. 369–94.

to Himself so early, there certainly would have been bloodshed in the land.<sup>16</sup>

## Establishing the Dynastic-Oligarchic Model

By the time the two young dukes from the fourth conflict had died (in 1618 and 1622),<sup>17</sup> Gustav Adolf had already chosen a new model of governance. When his father died in 1611, he was legally too young to rule alone. The seventeen-year-old was by law to gain 'one half' of his royal authority when he turned eighteen and would be given full royal power when he turned twenty-four. But instead he struck a deal with the *riksråd*, notably the new chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, and was permitted to ascend the throne with full power in exchange for an extensive royal charter. The charter endeavoured to protect the nobility in general and the aristocrats of the *riksråd* in particular from the kind of oppression associated with his father. Even though the King would go on to violate many of its paragraphs, the charter became the point of departure for a close collaboration between the King and the blue-blooded aristocrats of the *riksråd*. This benefited both parties, especially since Gustav II Adolf and Oxenstierna were both brilliant individuals who worked well together.<sup>18</sup> The nobility obtained a monopoly on the high offices of the realm. The King and chancellor endeavoured to tie the Swedish nobles' interests to the state, which simultaneously would be strengthened and rationalised. The nobles were expected to serve both as army officers and civil servants. In order to render themselves useful they were expected to educate themselves, dutifully work long hours and even use their own resources for the benefit of the state. But even if they did not live up to these demands, they would still enjoy the economic and social privileges that went along with noble status. The most influential of them supported the King's aggressive foreign policy and were quite handsomely rewarded with conquered land and booty when the wars turned out to be successful.<sup>19</sup>

The King had almost no male relatives, but the ones he had he integrated into the oligarchic system rather than making them territorial dukes. His bastard half-brother Carl Carlsson Gyllenhielm and his brother-in-law Count Palatine John Casimir of Pfalz-Zweibrücken were used in the *riksråd*

16 Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, vol. I, pp. 129–38, quotation from pp. 137–8.

17 I am not aware of any speculations that they were assassinated.

18 Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, pp. 56–9; Rosén, 'Regimförändringen 1611', pp. 102–5.

19 Larsson and Österberg, 'Vasatiden & Stormaktstiden', pp. 123–7.

and in the administration along with non-royal nobles. Gyllenhielm was made Admiral of the Realm (*riksamiral*)<sup>20</sup> and Johan Casimir was given important military and financial tasks.<sup>21</sup> Even if they worked as equal partners with the other members of the *riksråd*, there were tangible tensions between on the one hand Gyllenhielm and the Count Palatine and on the other hand Oxenstierna and his allies.<sup>22</sup> This dynastic counterweight to the aristocrats was certainly reassuring to the King, especially since his relatives consistently lobbied to strengthen the King's power. Through his military abilities and political skills, Gustav Adolf was able to dominate his noble collaborators, and since their joint efforts met with such splendid success in the form of military victories there was no need to complain. After the King was killed in battle in 1632, the five highest office-holders of the realm — among them Gyllenhielm and Oxenstierna — formed a regency government that on the whole continued the policies of the late monarch.<sup>23</sup>

### Limited from the Beginning: The Fate of Johan Casimir

What was the role of the six-year-old Christina's closest relatives during the regency that followed her father's death? In most European countries, they would have exerted huge influence since they had a vested interest in the preservation of the dynasty. In Germany, where Johan Casimir had been raised, the practice was that the oldest male relative of the minor ruler was appointed *Administrator* and led the government during the regency. The Count Palatine may have expected that Gustav Adolf had designated him for that position in the will that he assumed the King had left. To John Casimir's surprise (and disbelief) there was no will, and Oxenstierna and the majority of the *riksråd* wanted to weaken rather than strengthen the German's position.<sup>24</sup> Johan Casimir in turn was worried about the financial security of his family (even though he was quite wealthy). He requested the estate of Stegeborg — which he and his wife already held as compensation for the dowry he had not been paid — as an inheritable property.

The *riksråd* recoiled. They feared that he wanted an inheritable fief held by him as a prince (which probably was not the case) and this they would

20 Granstedt, 'Karl Karlsson Gyllenhielm'.

21 Kromonow, 'Johan Kasimir'.

22 Olofsson, *Carl X Gustaf*, pp. 65–8.

23 Nilsson, *De stora krigens tid*, pp. 13–17.

24 Kromonow, 'Johan Kasimir'.

not grant him. They expressed the fear that he was trying to secure his son as successor if Christina died, and that a fief held under noble privileges by a royal person could put him on a par with royal dukes. They invoked an utterance from the deceased King himself who had said that if he had many sons, he would never give them their own principalities (see below). This was said in conjunction with the difficulties associated with the negotiations between the King and his brother Duke Karl Filip. It was still not politically appropriate to point to the civil wars of the 1500s as a warning, since the current royal line was descended from the ultimate victor. But certainly, this loomed large in the minds of the aristocrats, virtually all of whom had relatives who had been killed or banished during this period. The *riksråd* expressly wanted the family to be treated as a noble family, and for John Casimir's sons to be accepted into the House of Nobility (*riddarhuset*). There were only counts and barons in Sweden, the delegates from the *riksråd* told Johan Casimir, no independent princes. At the same time, they conceded that his offspring's royal pedigree granted them a personal status that set them apart from other nobles.<sup>25</sup>

The situation thus was complex, and it was further complicated by the fact that the opposition of Gyllenhielm and John Casimir made them natural allies to the commoner estates. The peasantry, the burghers and the clergy resented the aristocratic rule and the endless wars that the alliance between aristocrats and monarchs had seemingly brought with it. The Palatine family thus became associated with the commoners, and their demands raised the stakes in the political struggles from the 1630s onward. The commoners demanded fewer noble privileges and revocation of Crown goods that had ended up in noble hands. Among nobles it was feared and among non-nobles it was hoped that if Johan Casimir's descendants were to win the throne, they would implement these policies.<sup>26</sup> This socio-political element in the dynastic struggle was present during the conflict between Sigismund and his uncle, but it was not at all evident that it would once again colour the intra-dynastic relations. Gustav Adolf's conflict with the dukes had none of this character. It was the meteoric rise of the magnates during the 1630s and 1640s among intense misery for the rest of the nation that fostered the vehement anti-aristocratic sentiments among the supporters of Palatine succession. To the aristocrats it certainly began to look like the 1590s and 1600s all over again, and possibly even worse, since they would lose property and privileges they had gained since then.

25 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll 1633*, pp. 74, 155–63.

26 Lövgren, *Ståndsstridens uppkomst*, pp. 1–26.



That the fear expressed by the *riksråd* of disunity and rival claims to the throne by a parallel royal family reflected real concerns has been challenged from two directions. Some have maintained that they selflessly protected Christina's interests and the security of the realm.<sup>27</sup> Others by contrast claim that the aristocrats self-interestedly tried to maximise their profits by keeping the royal house weak and dependent on themselves, which the Queen herself hinted at. Some have even suggested that they wanted to establish an aristocratic republic in Sweden.<sup>28</sup>

I do not deny either that sentimental attachment to the family of the deceased King was a reality for the members of the *riksråd*, or that they were quite greedy. However, I will argue that fear and the wish to keep the acquired position were the major reasons for the aristocrats' preference for a narrow dynasty throughout the process of establishing the Palatines as a royal dynasty. The troublesome history of the royal dukes that I have sketched is the evident backdrop for this fear. I will apply the logic of prospect theory as a guide for understanding the actions of the aristocrats and the commoners respectively. Furthermore, I will likewise use the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes as a means of understanding their actions. I hypothesise that the logics presented by these theories can give a deeper understanding of events.

## Prospect Theory

Prospect theory was developed by the Israeli psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky as a correction to the behavioural models used by economists, which presuppose individuals to be utility-maximising.<sup>29</sup> Rather than being utility-maximising, test subjects' most discernible tendency when facing choices is loss-averseness. Fear of losing has been shown to be a much more important driver of human behaviour than desire for gain. But the loss is always measured relative to a reference point. Often the reference point is what an individual possesses at a certain time, but the reference point can also be a situation in the past, or a future situation in which an individual or group has received what they regard as a share that they are entitled to. If the reference point is the current situation, individuals will be unwilling to take risks where they risk losing what they have. If on the

27 Olofsson, *Carl X Gustav*, p. 39.

28 Bedoire, *Guldålder*, p. 31.

29 Summarised in: Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, pp. 278–319.

other hand they have already lost something, then the reference point is their endowment in the past, and they become risk-prone rather than loss-averse in order to regain what they have lost or gain whatever they regard as their fair share.

Applied to the actors in the power struggle that accompanied the rise of the Palatine royal family, I hypothesise as follows:

1. The aristocrats' reference point was the wealth and power that they had acquired through their alliance with Gustav Adolf; they were thus decidedly loss-averse and would not risk civil war.
2. The commoners' reference point was a restoration to a state before the aristocrats gained power and riches, so they were accordingly willing to take the risk of upending the current state of affairs even if it meant an enhanced risk of civil war. They were risk-prone.

### The Hobbesian Bargain

But why would the aristocrats not choose to rule directly themselves? Would that not be the safest alternative if they wanted to protect their newfound wealth? A Kahneman-Tverskyist response to that question would be (I conjecture) that aiming for this optimal solution meant shaking up a status quo that had worked out very well. 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it', as the saying goes. But a deeper answer is suggested by the safety that an established and unquestioned royal dynasty provided for both high-ranked and low-ranked groups in the state. Safety meant safety from civil war, which was plaguing large parts of Europe during the first half of the seventeenth century. The Thirty Years' War would today have been categorised as an 'internationalised intrastate conflict',<sup>30</sup> and this bloodbath added further urgency to the fear of civil war that Sweden's own recent history already evoked. It was that fear of descent into violent chaos that famously would prompt the contemporary English philosopher Thomas Hobbes to call for absolute sovereignty for the ruler. Only a single strong hand with a monopoly on violence in a given territory could secure the peace. The overpowering fear of violent chaos made submission to the state an attractive solution.<sup>31</sup> Note that I do not suggest that the Swedish political actors were directly

30 As defined by Uppsala University's Department of Peace and Conflict Research, [https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#tocjump\\_8284184856183705\\_12](https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#tocjump_8284184856183705_12) (accessed 13 January 2021).

31 Smith, *Political Philosophy*, pp. 141–2, 147, 150–2, 156–7.

influenced by Hobbes, just that the dynamic that Hobbes describes so elegantly was at work.

And for Swedish circumstances, the ideal solution was the youngest branch of the Vasa dynasty, which was now ruling the realm and had earned a great deal of legitimacy across different sections of society. The bargain that the subjects of Sweden had bought into meant that sovereignty would be undivided — no power centre was to be independent of the ruler. Even though the aristocrats of the *riksråd* were influential, they only had the right to counsel — not the right to decide anything on their own during the reign of an adult monarch. The Swedish political scientists Andrej Kokkonen and Anders Sundell have shown that, on average, royal inheritance of the Crown provided the most stable solution to the problem of succession — it was less likely to lead to civil war than elective monarchy.<sup>32</sup> So the system that the Swedes had decided on was good for everyone. Most agreed that a strong state of the kind that recently had been built, with Chancellor Oxenstierna and King Gustav Adolf as the chief architects, had benefits for all. It was strong enough to wield a monopoly of power, which meant that both peasant uprisings and noble revolts did not have great chances of succeeding, and thus it was reassuring to the social groups that feared either of such uprisings. And even if the burdens of the foreign wars were crushingly heavy at times, the strong state protected the realm from wars waged within Sweden's borders.<sup>33</sup>

The fear of civil war and adherence to the Hobbesian bargain was universal, but the fear was expressed differently at different times by different actors, as we shall see. The non-noble estates were dissatisfied with the present conditions, but certainly feared the prospect of a fractious aristocratic republic even more. The commoners, in contrast to the nobility, were prepared to accept members of the royal house wielding autonomous power — provided they made common cause with the commoners. For the aristocrats, the nightmare was that the monarch or a royal duke would ally with the commoners and present a threat to their lives, property and happiness. The hereditary ruler should be persuaded to work with and be

32 Kokkonen and Sundell, 'Leader Succession and Civil War', pp. 451–7, 461–2.

33 It could be argued that most people were used to the hereditary monarchy by now, and that the force of habit in itself made support for the existing political order almost natural. But one should remember that the (third!) branch of the Vasa family tree that governed by the early 1600s had a rather weak claim to the throne and thus had to buy support among the elites and the common people. Furthermore, the active foreign policy put strains on the resources of most subjects. If the situation turned intolerable, the option to call on the Polish Vasas still existed, at least in theory. See Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, p. 26–9, 52–6.

counselled by the aristocrats in the *riksråd* — which was what had by and large been practised by Gustav Adolf and his daughter.

Simultaneously collaborating with the monarchs and keeping them in check was a delicate operation, and the balance act risked being upended when Christina suddenly proclaimed that she wanted her cousin, Count Palatine Johan Casimir's son Charles Gustav, to be her designated successor in 1649.

### 1649: Fears and Fierce Debates

Queen Christina is famous for three bold actions: her decision never to marry, her abdication in 1654 and her subsequent conversion to Catholicism. The reasons for each of these moves have been much discussed,<sup>34</sup> but they are not the primary concern here, although the consequences of all of them will figure in the following. Christina was the last of the Vasa dynasty with a legal claim to the throne, and the problem of succession was thus urgent. The threat of civil war loomed large in the minds of the members of the *riksråd* and the *riksdag* alike. For these men the obvious answer was that Christina ought to marry; this was the solution preferred by everyone from the poorest peasant to the richest count.<sup>35</sup>

Christina avoided addressing the question of marriage from the time of her accession to the throne in 1644. By then her cousin Charles Gustav had emerged as the prime candidate to become her spouse. If Oxenstierna and the other aristocrats had misgivings about him, they did not express it openly. The *riksråd* instead agreed to the appointment of the twenty-five-year-old Charles Gustav as chief commander over the Swedish forces in Germany, on the condition that Christina would marry him (as she had indicated she would).<sup>36</sup>

Christina's uncle, Charles IX's natural son Carl Carlsson Gyllenhielm, was convinced that Charles Gustav was the right choice for marriage. But already by the mid-1640s he outlined a back-up plan in a letter to Christina.<sup>37</sup> In case his niece chose not to marry, she should confer the hereditary right of succession upon Charles Gustav and his offspring. But as hereditary prince,

34 Asker, *Karl X Gustav*, pp. 76–8.

35 Asker, *Karl X Gustav*, pp. 83–4.

36 Asker, *Karl X Gustav*, pp. 88–90.

37 Riksarkivet Marieberg, *Skrivelser till drottning Kristina och förmyndarregeringen*, vol. II; see also Olofsson, *Carl X Gustaf*, pp. 143–4.

Charles Gustav ought not to receive an independent duchy, in accordance with Gustav Vasa's testament. He had heard her father Gustav Adolf say that even if he had had many sons, he would not give them duchies as had been done in the past:

thereby the Crown's power is weakened, and evil councillors may incite misunderstanding and disunity among them [the king's presumptive offspring] as had happened before; instead they would earn their living by serving in the Council and in high offices, obeying their king ... [my translation]

In other writings Gyllenhielm also proposed to elevate the status of the most prominent officeholders (who were also councillors): they would be regarded as princes. Thus, the amalgamation of aristocrats and royalty into one seamless oligarchy would be complete! Even though the Vasa scion Gyllenhielm and Oxenstierna were on opposite sides on many issues, they agreed on many fundamental aspects. Among them was the oligarchic, duke-free, model of rule. Whether Christina took her cue from her uncle's letter, which at least one historian has suggested,<sup>38</sup> is uncertain. In any case she decided to appoint her cousin her successor when she made up her mind never to marry. And she suddenly declared this intention during the *riksdag* of 1649.<sup>39</sup>

Charles Gustav himself, the councillors and the members of the *riksdag* all thought that a marriage between the cousins was the ideal solution to the problem of succession. Charles Gustav was raised in Sweden, had a close relationship with Christina and had proven himself to be an able soldier. There would be no overbearing foreign prince who would try to rule them, but a familiar man who spoke the Queen's Swedish. And the uncertainty of succession would be avoided when Christina eventually gave birth to a son.

Even though Charles Gustav was central to these hopes, the estates and particularly the *riksråd* were reluctant to appoint him as the designated successor. A famously heated debate between the young queen and the opposition in the *riksråd* led by Marshal of the Realm Jacob De la Gardie gives clues as to why. Both parties feared civil war. The aristocrats were afraid of a conflict between the Queen and an overly mighty appointed successor who might crave the throne prematurely. What if both Christina and Charles Gustav raised families simultaneously? Then there would be

38 Olofsson, *Carl X Gustaf*, p. 144.

39 The following is based on *Svenska riksrådets protokoll 1649*, pp. 338–69.

two royal dynasties in the realm — a recipe for civil war for sure. They also feared that the Count Palatine would not preserve their privileges or guarantee their personal security. Bad memories from the reign of Charles IX were conjured up by De la Gardie: he had been put under surveillance based on mere suspicion from the King. The solution had been the noble privileges promised by Gustav Adolf. If the realm was now to be transferred to a new dynasty without similar protection of life and property, they would be no better than ‘slaves’.<sup>40</sup>

Christina on the other hand accused her councillors of wanting to reintroduce an elective monarchy, which would lead to endless struggles among the aristocrats. She claimed that the *riksråd* wanted to introduce an aristocratic republic on the Polish model. The current civil wars that shook the monarchies of England and France were also held up as warning examples.

In retrospect these fears seem overblown. And there are good reasons to suspect that the expressions of fears partly served as a means to put pressure on the opposing party. There was of course no risk of parallel dynasties due to the fact that the Queen had decided never to marry, which she at last had to concede to the worried councillors. The claim that the *riksråd* wanted to establish an aristocratic republic was fervently denied by its members and lacks credibility. If Jacob De la Gardie had wanted to maximise wealth and power he should actually have supported Charles Gustav’s claims — he was the father-in-law of Charles Gustav’s beloved sister Maria Euphrosine and thus was excellently positioned to gain from his elevation.<sup>41</sup> But it seems clear that he and the *råd* tried to secure their gains in an uncertain situation rather than seek to obtain yet more.

A kind of deal was struck. Charles Gustav became the designated successor in spite of the resistance of the *riksråd*, but with no claims of inheritance. Among the estates the nobility at length resisted the designation, but the commoner estates supported Charles Gustav’s cause. They also clearly preferred a marriage between the cousins, but Gyllenhielm seems to have persuaded them that the Palatine would be a counterweight to the aristocrats should they become too powerful.<sup>42</sup> Despite the support from the clergy, the burghers and the peasantry, the resistance of the nobility made it impossible to declare Charles Gustav the hereditary prince. But just to make sure, an expression in the proposition was erased, in which Charles Gustav’s family

40 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll 1649*, pp. 343–5.

41 Jacobson, ‘Maria Euphrosine De la Gardie’.

42 Lövgren, *Ståndsstridens uppkomst*, pp. 54–65.

ties with the Queen were used to strengthen his claims. This could give 'his brothers' (even though Charles Gustav only had one surviving brother) the mistaken idea that they also had a claim on the Swedish throne. It had to be clarified that the designation as successor was a personal honour bestowed specifically on Charles Gustav.<sup>43</sup>

In the charter Charles Gustav agreed to as a condition for his acceptance as the designated successor, he had to promise the Queen that he would be loyal to her and obey her alone, and if he succeeded to the throne he would keep the Lutheran religion, the laws of the land and the privileges of the respective estates. This was not a watertight protection of these privileges, but neither was the spectre of elective monarchy exorcised. It was during the coronation *riksdag* in the following year that Charles Gustav would become hereditary prince of Sweden.<sup>44</sup>

### 1650: Strife, Sovereignty and Secured Succession

The political temperature in the Swedish realm continued to be high. The Peace of Westphalia had not resulted in the easing of taxes and conscriptions that the subjects had hoped for. It now seemed clear that the nobility had enriched itself through the war, while everyone else had become poorer. And the accelerating rate of donation of Crown land to nobles was simultaneously draining the resources of the state and further empowering the magnates. Worse, a famine swept the country and exacerbated the anger among the peasantry, who also claimed that the nobles abused them. And many feared that worse was to come.<sup>45</sup> It was rumoured by some that the aristocrats wanted to introduce a republic and by others that Axel Oxenstierna was persuading the Queen to marry his son Erik.<sup>46</sup> Even Charles Gustav feared that he would have to fight a civil war against the aristocratic faction in order to secure the throne if Christina died or abdicated.<sup>47</sup>

During the coronation *riksdag* of 1650 the conflict exploded, and civil war seemed close at hand. The commoners launched a furious attack on the nobility's privileges and urged a revocation of Crown goods that were in noble hands. The Queen for a time encouraged the commoners and

43 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, vol. III, pp. 360–1.

44 *Alla riksdagars och mötens beslut*, vol. II, pp. 1105–17.

45 Roberts, 'Queen Christina and the General Crisis', pp. 37–42.

46 Weibull, *Drottning Christina*, pp. 22–4; Asker, *Karl X Gustav*, p. 82.

47 Asker, *Karl X Gustav*, p. 90.

asked them to present their views in writing. But she retracted her support after a while and granted some minor concessions to the peasantry and the burghers while the clergy achieved its long-awaited privileges. The nobility thus owed their continued pre-eminence to the Queen, which they also credited her with. The commoners on the other had also turned to the Queen in order to gain protection from the aristocratic tyranny they feared. Thus, Hobbesian fears led to a strengthened position for the Queen and the monarchy.<sup>48</sup> Neither the estates nor the *riksråd* had given up hope that Christina would marry Charles Gustav, until September 1650. But then both the *råd* and the *riksdag* had to accept the fact that the Queen would never marry. After some sarcastic comments from Christina about her councillors' alleged preference for an aristocratic republic, Chancellor Oxenstierna explained his view on the subject. In Sweden the people were powerful, and therefore they needed to be governed by strong monarchs. Christina commented that this *riksdag* had shown exactly that. The disagreement was neither as deep nor did it last as long as during the previous *riksdag*.<sup>49</sup>

Then the Queen and the councillors agreed on working out the terms on which her cousin had to agree to become hereditary prince. This proceeded in a spirit of cooperation. For the present purposes the most important feature was the total agreement on the fact that neither Charles Gustav nor his offspring would obtain an independent position in the realm. They would not get independent duchies — he and his sons would have to be contented with fiscal privileges equal to those enjoyed by the nobility. But the Queen was reluctant to grant them the political rights of that estate and let them participate as members of the *riddarhus*. On the one hand that would be beneath their royal status, and on the other hand they might use their influence to incite the other nobles to rebel against the king, as had happened in France during the *Fronde*. Instead they ought to serve the Crown in some capacity. Their role would thus be similar to that of Johan Casimir, which may have been the example the Queen had in mind.

Christina also denied the right for Charles Gustav or his offspring to be consulted in matters of state as long as he was just a hereditary prince, as Gustav Vasa's testament prescribed, and which had been the practice until the deaths of the dukes Karl Filip and Johan. The prince and his

48 Roberts, 'Queen Christina and the General Crisis', pp. 43–5.

49 The following is based on *Svenska riksrådets protokoll 1650*, pp. 303–12, 318–26, 329–38, 342–52.



heirs would instead be consulted at her pleasure, in contrast to the *riksråd* which by law she was obliged to be counselled by. The *riksråd* agreed to this. But it is uncertain if they agreed to what the Queen then said — that it would be possible for Charles Gustav to include his sons in the *riksråd*; which was of course in line with the dynastic-oligarchic model. What she forgot, or pretended to forget, was that the Law of the Realm stated that only Swedish noblemen could be members of the *riksråd* (*Kungabalken* section 4 § 4).<sup>50</sup> This forgotten paragraph would later be used to exclude Charles Gustav's brother Adolf Johan from power, as we shall see. On the whole, though, the unanimity between the monarch and her councillors was striking — there would be no strong independent prince within the borders of Sweden. The sovereign would be sovereign. When it was reported that members of the *riksdag* thought that Charles Gustav should be granted a duchy, Oxenstierna said it was because of ignorance of the consequences, and De la Gardie mentioned the struggles that had occurred during the time the realm was divided between dukes and kings. There are good reasons to doubt that ignorance was the cause; the commoners rather were consciously prepared to take the risk of civil strife since the present state of affairs was unacceptable to them.

The commoners had more fear of the partition of the realm than the donations to the nobility brought. Charles Gustav was thought to be a valuable ally in the continued struggle to thwart the aristocratic rule. Gustav Vasa's testament was invoked to support their insistence that Charles Gustav should be given a duchy. The testament had not even been mentioned in the discussions between the Queen and the *riksråd*. Oxenstierna explained to the commoners that conflicts between brothers had been one of the major sources of disunity since Gustav Vasa's reign. The commoners at last had to stomach this, but rather than agreeing that Charles Gustav ought to swear that he would guarantee the nobility's donations they said that they would go home without signing the Act of the *riksdag* (*riksdagsbeslut*). This of course was a major blow to the aristocrats. Christina and Charles Gustav probably were not too unhappy, since this meant that the magnates held their newly acquired possessions at their pleasure without the strong legal protection the aristocrats had wished for. In the charter Charles Gustav had to agree to, the above-mentioned agreements were spelled out.<sup>51</sup> It stated that the testament of Gustav Vasa was still the constitutional foundation for royal hereditary succession, but

50 *Sveriges konstitutionella urkunder*, p. 60.

51 *Alla riksdagars och mötens beslut*, vol. II, pp. 1153–7.

that in some respects it had been changed. The most important change is expressed in the third paragraph:

And since Her Royal Majesty and the Council of the Realm have decided that the realm henceforth never shall be divided, but remain one body under the ruling King; thus We [Charles Gustav] or our heirs will not ask for any principality ... [my translation]<sup>52</sup>

In a way it is remarkable that this reframing of the Swedish constitution is not given a more prominent place or expressed more fully. From now on Sweden would be one and undivided, ruled by one sovereign only! It is also remarkable that only the Queen and the *riksråd* are mentioned, while the estates are not said to have agreed to this. That was of course only fair, since the commoners had not retracted their wish that Charles Gustav should have a principality. But the legality of this change is somewhat dubious, even though the charter was included in the *riksdagsbeslut*. According to the Law of the Realm (*Kungabalken*, section 4 § 7)<sup>53</sup>, the representatives of the people had to agree to any new law — as had indeed been the case with Gustav Vasa's testament that was now being altered.

No mention was made of Charles Gustav's siblings, who thus were not part of the new dynasty. He now had to find a suitable princess and create a new royal family, which was strongly urged by the Queen and the *riksråd*. Even though up to this time he had been regarded as a champion of the commoners, he and Oxenstierna now approached each other.<sup>54</sup> When an anti-aristocratic zealot wrote him a letter urging him to seize power, he dutifully showed it to Christina.<sup>55</sup> During his rule he collaborated with the aristocracy, even though he pushed a partial revocation of Crown goods through the *riksdag* in 1655.<sup>56</sup> The dynastic-oligarchic model still worked.

The formation of the Palatine dynasty was thus performed by Christina, the *riksråd* and the *riksdag*, not by the members of the new royal house themselves.<sup>57</sup> Its basis was a single unmarried individual whose belligerence was a constant threat to his life. The Hobbesian fears of chaos and civil war still lingered — ironically because of the very narrowness of the royal line that was designed to reduce the risk.

52 *Alla riksdagars och mötens beslut*, vol. II, p. 1155.

53 *Sveriges konstitutionella urkunder*, p. 61.

54 Olofsson, *Carl X Gustaf*, p. 212.

55 Asker, *Karl X Gustav*, pp. 118–9.

56 Asker, *Karl X Gustav*, pp. 152–5, 167–70.

57 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', p. 339.

## Threats to Sovereignty I: Adolf Johan<sup>58</sup>

Charles X Gustav survived his wars, but died of pneumonia as early as 1660, during a *riksdag* assembled in Gothenburg. His only child, the future Charles XI, was four years old by then. Hastily, the King prepared a testament when his imminent death seemed certain. As a document which defined how the realm was to be ruled during Charles's infancy it ought to have been discussed with the *riksråd* and approved by the *riksdag*. These demands were only partly met: the estates had earlier asked the King to plan for the government of the realm when he was absent from the realm, which was later taken by royalists to mean that the *riksdag* had pre-approved the testament. And on the King's deathbed, five members of the *riksråd* had been present and had sworn to uphold it.

The most controversial part of the testament was that Charles Gustav's brother Adolf Johan was to become Marshal of the Realm, commander of the armed forces and warden of his nephew Charles XI. Furthermore, he would be a member of a regency government that also included the widowed Queen Hedvig Eleonora (who would have two votes) and his brother-in-law Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie. The close relatives of the infant king were to control five out of eight votes. To Charles Gustav's mind this was obviously a means to secure the dynasty's control over the government.

When the content of the testament became known among the assembled estates, a political crisis immediately emerged. The struggle between aristocrats and commoners was brought to life, with great mutual fear. And this time there was no adult monarch to protect them from each other. The *riksråd* and the estate of the nobility declared that the testament was invalid and unacceptable. Formally, it was invalid since the proper steps of approval had not been taken. It was emphatically argued that the King had dealt with the realm as if it was his personal property, which he could dispose of as he wished. This was unacceptable regarding a public act. Concerning its content, the most important objection was that Adolf Johan was not a Swedish nobleman, and thus was not eligible for any post that required participation in the *riksråd*. Moreover, Charles Gustav had in his Accession Charter agreed to appoint only Swedish nobles to the five high offices of the realm, and Marshal of the Realm was one of the five. The commoners came to the opposite conclusion: the testament had been approved in a proper manner. The prohibition against foreigners in the government should not

58 This section builds on parts of Chapters 6–8 of my doctoral thesis, although the perspective is different here. Scherp, *De ofrälse och makten*, pp. 128–55, 160–72, 206–21.

apply to Duke Adolf Johan, who had been raised in Sweden and was the son of a Swedish princess. It seemed like a mere technicality.

The conflict became a stand-off between the two sides. A provisional solution was presented by Bishop Samuel Enander, who suggested that the matter should be resolved when a new *riksdag* was to be assembled in connection with the King's funeral — then each member of the estates would have received instructions from home on how to vote concerning the testament. He had proposed that the testament would be in force in the meantime, but in this he and the commoners had to capitulate to the intransigent nobility.

In preparation for the following *riksdag* in Stockholm during the autumn of 1660, the aristocrats did their homework. So, the exclusion of Adolf Johan from the regency government was more or less a foregone conclusion, after some horse-trading with the commoner estates. In a declaration of the estates, Adolf Johan's hereditary claims to the throne were rejected. The issue now seemed to be settled but turned up again when the Marshal of the Realm who had been elected in Adolf Johan's stead died. The Duke turned up unannounced during the *riksdag* of 1664 and in person delivered a letter to each estate in which he demanded to be given the post of Marshal of the Realm in accordance with the testament. This was a headache for the regency government: in order to deny Adolf Johan the position he claimed they had to expressly deny the validity of the testament. This was risky, since it meant an open (although posthumous) challenge to the dead King's authority and disrespect of his last wishes. It could lead to problems further down the road — which indeed it did when the adult Charles XI learned of this action against his revered father.<sup>59</sup> Clearly, Adolf Johan's hope was that the commoner estates would support his claims. There were some scattered expressions of sympathy; notably a faction of the peasantry supported the Duke's actions. They stemmed from the regions close to Adolf Johan's castle of Stegeborg — so it is plausible that he had agitated among them before the *riksdag*. Most commoners thought, however, that the matter had been settled conclusively during the second *riksdag* of 1660. And since only the monarch or his or her deputies were entitled to address the estates, the Duke's letters were returned unopened to him. To render Adolf Johan's claims moot, the regents and the *riksråd* proposed that the highly regarded Carl Gustaf Wrangel would be the new Marshal of the Realm. He was quickly approved by the *riksdag*. This prompted Adolf Johan to angrily urge Wrangel to reject his new position. The blunt behaviour was universally condemned by the

59 Scherp, *De ofrälse och makten*, pp. 277–9, 288–9.

estates, who rallied around Wrangel. The King's uncle was arrested after he had drawn his sword against a colonel of the guard. A special act was passed by the *riksdag* condemning his behaviour and rejecting his claim by declaring the testament invalid. The nobility wanted to deal harshly with Adolf Johan, either expelling him from the realm or forcing him to sign an act in which he retracted his claims and promised to remain calm. The commoners wanted to treat the King's uncle more leniently, and the resourceful Bishop Enander suggested that he would be given a chance to verbally retract his claims. This Adolf Johan did, and he consequently did not have to sign the humiliating contract.

The appointment of a member of the royal house as the leading regent during Charles XI's minority awoke fears among the aristocracy and hopes among the commoners. I do not think the rejection of the testament was determined by greed for more wealth and power on the part of the aristocrats.<sup>60</sup> In that case they would surely not have decided to limit donations of Crown land in the statute that was to regulate the regency government (*Additamentet* 1660 § 12).<sup>61</sup> Instead, it was the presence of a royal uncle endowed with great powers in a shared government with members of the *riksråd* that set off the alarm bells: the memory of Charles IX was still vivid among the aristocracy. It was not unheard of for royal uncles to grab the power they had held during their nephew's minority — according to recent research, a royal uncle was a potentially destabilising factor.<sup>62</sup> And civil unrest was to be expected in such a scenario. During the discussions on how to govern the realm when the King was abroad — this was before the King had fallen ill — Bishop Enander suggested that a steward should govern in the King's name. The nobility then vaguely alluded to 'the history of Charles IX', without spelling out any accusations against the King's maternal grandfather.

They also feared what the commoners hoped for, that a strong member of the dynasty would implement the commoners' financial programme from 1650: revoke Crown goods and take away privileges. But in view of this, the commoners abandoned Adolf Johan fairly quickly in the face of

60 However, that is the claim of Adolf Johan's recent biographer. Lange, *Adolf Johan*, pp. 137–55, 170–7. I obviously disagree that these motivations were the most important ones for the aristocrats, but I also reject his claims of Adolf Johan's allegedly great support among the commoner estates and in Sweden generally. The biography is in these parts based on an incomplete reading of the research literature and one single source, the report of a Danish diplomat (and not the sources produced by the relevant political actors), which may explain our different views.

61 *Sveriges konstitutionella urkunder*, pp. 109–10.

62 Kokkonen, Krishnarajan, Møller and Sundell, 'Blood is Thicker than Water', pp. 20, 26–7.

stern aristocratic resistance. It seems that the very act of rejecting a royal testament was more frightening than the rejection of a member of the royal family that few knew much about. The situation was thus in reality quite different from Charles IX's time, as the establishment of a narrow new dynasty had excluded Adolf Johan from positions of real importance. And when his actions turned angry and violent, the political nation united against him — it would not suffer an assault on domestic peace.

### Threats to Sovereignty II: Christina<sup>63</sup>

The controversy regarding the abdicated Queen in 1660 presents some interesting parallels with the case of Adolf Johan. Ironically, she fell victim to the principles of sovereignty that she had herself established in 1650. Christina had negotiated quite generous financial support from Sweden, codified in her abdication charter. This charter was to be confirmed by every new Swedish ruler, and according to its terms amounted to a fundamental law of the realm. After her cousin's death, Christina intended to combine her presence at the royal funeral with the settling of her affairs with the new regime. The *riksråd* and the regents did not see any problems with this and wished the strong-willed Queen out of Stockholm as fast as possible. But the clergy did not agree to confirm the charter. According to this act she had the right to appoint both priests and civil office-holders in the parts of realm that supplied her subsistence, and since Christina was now a Catholic, the religious unity was at risk. What if she started to appoint Catholics to important offices? Furthermore, she openly practised her new faith while in Stockholm. The clergy, led by Bishop Enander, reminisced on the dangers of religious disunity and how since the Reformation they had sternly resisted monarchs who deviated from the 'true faith'. They garnered support from the other estates, mainly the commoners. The peasantry expressed fears about the unlikely scenario that Christina would marry a Catholic prince, which would lead to civil war and their souls' eternal condemnation. The regents and *riksråd* reluctantly declared that the charter had to be altered. Henceforth, Christina would not be authorised to select priests.

This in turn moved Christina to action. Not that she cared much about ordaining the priests, but violating the sacrosanct Abdication Charter once might lead to further, more unpleasant, changes down the road. She thus

63 This section builds on Scherp, *De ofrälse och makten*, pp. 198–206

declared that her abdication was retracted, and that she would re-take the throne if the four-year-old Charles XI died without heirs. When the letter in which she stated this was delivered to the estates, she openly addressed the peasant delegates and said that they could come to her if they needed money. She obviously sought support from the peasantry to put pressure on the aristocrats — not unlike what had happened in 1650. But her action swiftly united the estates against her. She had now become a threat to the domestic peace. The clergy and burghers wanted to put her under arrest or retract her pension, but the nobility preferred to be more lenient.<sup>64</sup> The terms were made harsher — the Queen had to sign an obligation in which she promised only to appoint Lutherans as civil servants. Furthermore, in the Act from this *riksdag* it was stated that the estates were forbidden to elect Christina if the young King would die without offspring.

The Queen who had in 1650 proclaimed the unity of the realm was now seen as a threat to that unity, both in religious and territorial respects. That shows that the principle of undivided sovereignty was more important to the Swedes than any particular person. The swift response when Christina claimed that she had a right to the throne is very telling. Having multiple claimants to the throne was regarded as a clear path to civil war and a temptation for those who preferred a change to current conditions. As Adolf Johan would do four years later, Christina tried to win support from commoners who were dissatisfied with the oligarchic settlement. But when push came to shove, it turned out that their wish for peace was stronger in this case. It seems likely that Christina was no longer regarded as a champion of the commoners since she had abandoned their cause in 1650, and thus the fear of civil war prevailed over any lingering sympathies for her.

In another paradox, the quest for undivided sovereignty led to a further narrowing of the royal house that was supposed to exercise the sovereign power. Christina and Adolf Johan were excluded from any part in government and their hereditary rights were expressly refuted. Using Harald Gustafsson's term, the actors outside the dynasty engaged in dynastic exclusion, a policy that had begun already when Charles X Gustav's siblings were excluded from the dynasty.<sup>65</sup> But would Charles XI try to reconnect with them and use them or other relatives in government? The answer to this question was, somewhat surprisingly, no.

64 *Johan Rosenhanes dagbok*, p. 303.

65 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', pp. 349–50.

## The Absolutist-Meritocratic Model and Dynastic Weakness

Charles XI was elevated to absolute ruler in the late 1670s and early 1680s. He put an end to the dynastic-oligarchic model established by Gustav Adolf — he denied the *riksråd* independent political influence and reassigned much of the land that had ended up in noble hands to the Crown. The commoners of course enthusiastically supported the King when he implemented their own financial programme of 1650, but the price was that their own political influence vanished when the *riksdag* also lost its power to Charles XI.<sup>66</sup>

What would be the new King's model of dynasty/state formation? To a large degree he preferred to elevate competent men from humble background to high positions, even if there were of course also many blue-bloods in high office. When commoner men had reached a certain level of office in the military or the civil administration they were promptly ennobled by the King. The men who reached really high office were made counts and barons and thus were of equal status with the aristocrats from the ancient families.<sup>67</sup>

The aristocracy had lost its power, but so had the members of the extended royal family. Charles was surprisingly stingy when it came to the few close relatives he had, and did not give them any important offices. He could easily have elevated his uncle Adolf Johan to a prominent position again — and make him and his offspring part of the dynasty with rights of heritage should Charles's own bloodline die out. Though his uncle was by now a bitter and cantankerous man, the King could have made a point of restoring the honour of a prominent member of the royal family who, of course, could be expected to be loyal. Neither did the King employ Adolf Johan's sons in high functions, nor did he endeavour to find princely spouses for Adolf Johan's daughters. Instead, many of Adolf Johan's landed estates were confiscated by the Crown, another fate he shared with the aristocracy.<sup>68</sup> Charles's bastard brother Gustav Carlson likewise was given the cold shoulder, and was also impoverished by his brother's stern revocation of the grants of Crown land he had received from their father.<sup>69</sup> This was in stark contrast to the position Gustav Adolf and Christina gave Charles IX's natural son Gyllenhielm. In light of this it is certainly not surprising that the illegitimate offspring of Gustav Adolf, the house of Wasaborg, did not have any prominence at all during what is termed the Caroline absolutism.<sup>70</sup>

66 Rosén, *Det karolinska skedet*, pp. 137–79; Scherp, *De ofrälse och makten*, pp. 257–95.

67 Scherp and Forss, *Ulrika Eleonora*, pp. 61–73.

68 Lange, *Adolf Johan*, pp. 205–23, 235–45.

69 Boëthius, 'Gustaf Carlson'.

70 [adelsvapen.com/genealogi/Af\\_Wasaborg\\_nr\\_6](http://adelsvapen.com/genealogi/Af_Wasaborg_nr_6) (accessed 17 January 2021).



Poor and powerless is a quite apt description of the situation of the closest relatives of the absolute King. Why was this so? Why did he himself engage in what amounted to the same kind of dynastic exclusion that the external political actors had performed when the dynasty was formed? A conclusive answer cannot be given until further research has been conducted. But I do not think that the Hobbesian fear played a major part — that fear would certainly explain why they were not made territorial dukes but hardly why they were not made councillors, for instance. However, I think the combination of absolutism and meritocracy that was the foundation of the new model is a plausible answer. In the ideology of Caroline absolutism there were no demi-gods, there was only one god: the King.<sup>71</sup> He may have been inspired by Frederick III's similar policy in neighbouring Denmark.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, everyone from duke to pauper was first and foremost a subject, and no one person was above any other in the eyes of the King. They were equal subjects, as the historian Åsa Karlsson has put it.<sup>73</sup> It is likely that this model largely explains the stingy treatment of the royal relatives — neither nobility nor princely birth entitled someone to high office. When it came to the revocation of the grants of goods to his relatives, it also seems likely that the King wanted to make a point of equal treatment of nobles and royal relatives. Indeed, the royal relatives *were* nothing more than nobles. This was also a fulfilment of the Hobbesian bargain. According to Hobbes, the sovereign should not recognise any subject as more prominent than the other, but give equal justice and protection to all.<sup>74</sup>

When the dynasty formation was finally in the hands of its leader, and not Christina, the council or the estates as previously, he opted for what the historian Liesbeth Geevers has called dynastic centralisation.<sup>75</sup> The dynasty was thus reduced to the offspring of Charles XI and his queen. Unfortunately, the late 1600s was a time of exceptionally high infant mortality, even for royalty. Four of the seven royal children died during early childhood — all of them boys. It is of course impossible to guess what would have happened if they had survived. What would their position have been in relation to the oldest brother Charles (XII)? The two daughters, Hedvig Sofia and Ulrika Eleonora, had hereditary rights to the Crown on the condition that they remained unmarried.<sup>76</sup> That somewhat propped up the dynasty, even

71 Rosén, *Det karolinska skedet*, pp. 185–9.

72 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', pp. 391–4, 400, 403–40.

73 Karlsson, *Den jämlike undersåten*.

74 Smith, *Political Philosophy*, pp. 160–1.

75 Geevers, 'Safavid Cousins'.

76 Rosén, *Det karolinska skedet*, p. 401.

though their gender foreordained them to be pawns in the game of princely marriage alliances. This might explain the otherwise surprising fact that the princesses were not given educations suitable for presumptive rulers. When they became involved in governing Holstein-Gottorp and Sweden, respectively, they were forced to go through on-the-job training.<sup>77</sup> Hedvig Sofia's death in 1708 and Ulrika Eleonora's marriage in 1715 made the dynasty's grip on hereditary monarchy very fragile indeed, since it rested in the hands of the less than marriage-prone Charles XII. The structural weakness of the monarchy was noted by the opponents of absolutism who, after Ulrika Eleonora's wedding, began planning for the very advantageous bargaining situation that the King's death without legal successors would present.<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusion

The question posed at the beginning of the chapter can now be answered. Apart from contingencies like infant mortality, the narrowness of the Palatine dynasty was there by design. From the beginning, the aristocratic *riksråd* and Queen Christina wished to keep the bloodline narrow. And even the commoners, who were in favour of a stronger position for the new dynasty, gladly supported the exclusion of Christina from the line of inheritance in 1660. They also accepted the firm exclusion of Charles X Gustav's brother from hereditary rights in 1664, which was pushed by the aristocrats in the *riksråd* and in the estate of the nobility. When the dynasty formation was finally left in the hands of the dynasty's leader Charles XI, he continued the policy of narrowing. Unfortunately for the Palatines, this structural weakness proved fateful when contingent causes set in: infant mortality and the failure of Charles XII to provide a successor.

My hypothesis of why the political actors made these choices (apart from Charles XII's reluctance to secure the dynasty) can be summarised in a chronological presentation.

1. What I have called the dynastic-feudal model of dynasty/state formation (c. 1560–1611/1622) entailed the introduction of royal dukes endowed with great powers. Instead of strengthening the ruler, this led to a protracted period of civil conflict. This led to what I call a Hobbesian fear that divided sovereignty would lead to civil war: like Thomas Hobbes most Swedes came to prefer a strong ruler ruling an undivided country.

77 Grauers, 'Hedvig Sofia'; Scherp and Forss, *Ulrika Eleonora*, p. 10.

78 Thanner, *Revolutionen i Sverige efter Karl XII:s död*, pp. 47–52.

2. In the ensuing dynastic-oligarchic model (1611/1622–75) the members of the royal family were integrated to form a ruling elite that also consisted of the high nobility, and that governed the realm in close collaboration with the ruler. The dynastic-feudal model was explicitly overturned when the Queen and the oligarchs proclaimed Sweden to be an undivided territory, with a sovereign ruler and without territorial dukes. The successful foreign policy of this period led to the accumulation of vast wealth and power for the oligarchy. In the terms of the prospect theory developed by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, this caused different social groups to have different reference points — different desirable states of affairs. While the aristocrats tried to defend their current position, the commoners resented both the aristocrats' meteoric rise and the hardships of the constant warfare — and thus wanted to adjust the social order in accordance with their own vision of a more equitable society (their reference point). The commoners hoped to achieve this by strengthening the Palatine dynasty. However, the episodes with Adolf Johan and Christina show that the whole political nation united against royal persons who could pose a threat to undivided sovereignty. The Hobbesian fears of civil war at times trumped even the commoners' wish for social change.
3. Finally, Charles XI introduced the absolutist-meritocratic model (1675–1718). The oligarchy lost its power and its wealth, and during this period the monarchs relied on ambitious men of lowly birth rather than aristocrats — or relatives. Charles XI did not use his close relatives; rather he treated them as other members of the old oligarchy: he confiscated their goods and kept them away from power. This dynastic centralisation and continued dynastic exclusion may have been influenced by an absolutist ideology that gave no one an elevated rank before the throne, not even the King's family. Possibly it was inspired by Frederick III of Denmark's similar policy.

The political scientist Francis Fukuyama has argued that rulers are always tempted to benefit their kin by appointing them to important offices, instead of using merit as a selection mechanism. And the risk of regression to such practices is never entirely eliminated. The step from what Weber called patrimonialism to the state of rational Weberian bureaucracy was a hard one.<sup>79</sup> And it was certainly not taken in full in Sweden during the age of Caroline absolutism. Nevertheless, the meritocracy that put princes and

79 Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*, pp. 16–17, 229, 291, 338–43, 371, 439, 450–1, 453–4.

aristocrats alike in the shadow may have had long-term effects on Swedish administrative culture. And the narrowness of the dynasty that embodied the absolutist regime certainly made absolutism easier to overturn, thus preventing an authoritarian tradition from growing deep roots in Sweden.<sup>80</sup>

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## 8. The Nassaus and State Formation in Pre-Modern Germany

*Jasper van der Steen*

**Abstract:** Historians tend to throw states, dynasties and historical periodisations into the same pot, approaching ‘dynasty’ and ‘state’ as two sides of the same coin. Although there is much to be said for this approach, it neglects the role of the family. This chapter addresses this problem in dynastic history by studying pre-modern state formation as a family business. By focusing on the house regulations of the Nassau family, a dynasty in early modern Germany not renowned for its state building, this chapter argues that scholars of dynasty and state formation may gain from a more open approach to the strategies pre-modern princely families deployed to secure their portfolio of lands, titles, offices and other goods for the future.

**Keywords:** state formation – partible inheritance – long-term succession strategies – Nassau dynasty

Historians tend to throw states, dynasties and historical periodisations into the same pot. Tudor England, for instance, refers to the English kingdom in the period 1485–1603, when it was ruled by members of what later became known as the house of Tudor. Other examples in historiography where ‘dynasty’, state and a periodisation overlap include Ming China, the Safavid Empire and Bourbon France. This practice in historiography betrays the assumption that there is a degree of unity that can be imposed on states ruled by a single family and that ‘dynasty’ and ‘state’ are two sides of the same coin.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the editors, reviewers, and participants of *Dynasty and State Formation in Europe 1500–1700* and Bart van der Steen for their helpful suggestions and criticisms on earlier

This is not so surprising if we look at the etymology of 'dynasty'. Jeroen Duindam explains in his global history of dynasty that the term derived from Ancient Greek and denoted 'lordship and sovereignty'. According to this etymology, the ruling family and the state thus happily coincide. Yet now the term is 'commonly understood as a ruling family, a line of kings or princes'.<sup>2</sup> Natalia Nowakowska has attributed this shift to the *Encyclopédie* of 1755, which defined the term as follows: 'DYNASTY, s. f. (Hist. anc.) means a series of princes of the same race who rule a country'.<sup>3</sup> The use of multiple interpretations of 'dynasty' has caused confusion and detracted from the concept's analytical edge.<sup>4</sup> Some see the concept for instance as an important category in the contemporary self-identification of princes, theoretically independent of the territories they ruled, while others underline the primacy of territorial title and status, which defined dynastic identities rather than the other way round.<sup>5</sup>

Two developments in the fields of state formation and dynastic power continue to put pressure on these definitions. Firstly, John Elliott has shown that the composite state was ubiquitous in early modern Europe and that dynasties were often the only common denominators in otherwise distinct polities. This perspective raises questions about the precise relationship between the dynasty and the state, however we may define this latter concept.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, the concept of 'dynasty' has been opened up by new insights produced by kinship studies, gender history and history from below. One of these insights is that dynastic history can no longer be reduced to a sequence of male rulers but should also include the wider family network, including women, cousins, prematurely deceased offspring and illegitimate children.<sup>7</sup>

These new insights are essential for our understanding of the early modern world, but they have also created a new problem. The traditional idea of 'dynasty' has become both so all-encompassing and elusive that, as

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2 Duindam, *Dynasties*, p. 4.

3 'DYNASTIE, s. f. (Hist. anc.) signifie une suite des princes d'une même race qui ont régné sur un pays.'

4 Nowakowska, 'What's in a Word?', p. 7.

5 Nowakowska, 'What's in a Word?', p. 12; Hardy, 'Dynasty, Territory, and Monarchy'.

6 Elliott, 'A Europe of Composite Monarchies', pp. 48-71.

7 Kaiser, 'Regierende Fürsten und Prinzen von Geblüt', pp. 3-28; Geevers, 'The Miracles of Spain', pp. 291-311; Duindam, *Dynasties*; Broomhall and Van Gent, *Gender, Power and Identity in the House of Orange-Nassau*; Pieper, *Einheit im Konflikt*.

a concept, it has increasingly begun to slip through scholars' fingers like a handful of sand.<sup>8</sup> This explains the continued popularity of the outdated model of dynastic history as a serial biography of male rulers.<sup>9</sup> Since the 1980s historians have, in different ways, tried to solve this problem. Dynasty became a social construct and imagined community.<sup>10</sup> Some historians connected it to the institution of the princely court.<sup>11</sup> Others noted the impossibility of distinguishing between those in the dynasty and those outside it.<sup>12</sup> The matter of how individuality put tension on dynastic interests further complicated the concept.<sup>13</sup>

The shift in dynasty's meaning from lordship, via a male line of succession, to a kinship system with an increasingly inclusive but virtually undefinable membership causes doubt about the concept's continued analytical value. But such is the case with all historical concepts. Theories and concepts are tools for historians to solve 'recurrent explanatory problems'.<sup>14</sup> By concentrating on particular aspects of a phenomenon, other aspects inevitably lose focus. The same is true for the concept of dynasty. This chapter pleads the case for dynasty's continued relevance in the study of state formation but also contends that scholars must not simply equate dynasty to an interpretation of *raison d'état* that yokes modern state formation to centralisation. They should foster a more open mind towards the dynastic rationale that drove members of princely families in their actions.

The most important recurrent explanatory problem of 'dynasty' is its role in state formation. Historians have traditionally tended to adopt a binary approach to the matter, presenting some states and their dynasties as failures in and victims of European state formation and others as its prime driving forces and beneficiaries.<sup>15</sup> In the context of the principalities in pre-modern Germany, Peter H. Wilson called this approach the 'failed nation state thesis'.<sup>16</sup> Some dynasties were able to develop and wield the increasing stability and power of the state, while many other dynasties failed to do so due to a variety of factors, including bad choices and sometimes sheer bad

8 This was already observed by Weber, 'Dynastiesicherung und Staatsbildung', pp. 91–136; Geever and Marini, 'Introduction', pp. 1–22.

9 Curtis, *The Habsburgs*; Crawford, *The Yorkists*; Meyer, *The Tudors*.

10 Weber, 'Dynastiesicherung und Staatsbildung'; Geever and Marini, 'Introduction'.

11 Duindam, *Dynasties*.

12 Kraus, 'Das Haus Wittelsbach und Europa', p. 426; Nowakowska, 'What's in a Word?', p. 11.

13 Jendorff, 'Eigenmacht und Eigensinn', pp. 613–44.

14 Tilly, *As Sociology Meets History*, p. 11.

15 For a useful overview, see Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, pp. 5–16.

16 Wilson, 'Still a Monstrosity?', p. 571.



luck.<sup>17</sup> The distinction between ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ continues to bring out the worst teleological biases in the field of state formation and dynastic power. It also emanated in the reputation of the Holy Roman Empire as a ‘monstrosity’ in terms of modern state formation, from which it has only recently begun to recover.<sup>18</sup>

The famous cultural historian Johan Huizinga already warned against the dangers of teleology when he wrote about the history of Dutch national consciousness: ‘When we arrange historical facts into a perspective in order to distinguish a meaningful connection [between them], it is so tempting to see that meaningful connection as an inevitably proven causality.’<sup>19</sup> Historians of dynastic power and state formation seem particularly prone to this risk. One of dynasty’s defining characteristics is a line of princes. Taking the line of succession as their point of departure, dynastic histories tend to be serial biographies, explaining for instance the rise and fall of a princely house as a single bloc. The dual meaning of the Latin verb ‘*succedere*’, namely ‘to follow, follow after, succeed’ and ‘goes on well, is successful, prospers, succeeds’, mirrors how members of dynasties and later historians have equated succession to success.<sup>20</sup>

Much in the same way that methodological nationalism and the rise of the modern, rational, bureaucratic nation-state inform approaches to the history of early modern state formation, historians — accepting succession as the *sine qua non* of ‘dynasty’ — have developed a methodological blind spot for the uncertainties, what-ifs and dead ends that to a large extent characterised dynastic power in world history.<sup>21</sup> We need a much more open-ended approach to dynasty and state formation to capture these uncertainties. This chapter will show what such an approach could bring and what scholars of state formation and dynastic power stand to benefit by it.

To gain a more open perspective on the relation between dynasty and state formation, this chapter focuses on the house of Nassau in the Holy Roman Empire. It might seem like a contradiction in terms to study state

17 Also see Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, p. 7.

18 Wilson, ‘Still a Monstrosity?’, Zmora, *Monarchy, Aristocracy and State*; Stollberg-Rilinger, *The Emperor’s Old Clothes*; Hardy, *Associative Political Culture*.

19 Huizinga, ‘Uit de voorgeschiedenis van ons nationaal besef’, pp. 432–3: ‘Het is zoo verleidelijk, wanneer wij de historische feiten gerangschikt hebben tot een perspectief, zoodat wij er een begrijpelijk verband in zien, dat begrijpelijk verband te houden voor een als onvermijdelijk bewezen oorzakelijkheid.’

20 Lewis and Short (eds), *A Latin Dictionary*.

21 Exceptions include Haddad, *Fondation et ruine d’une maison*; Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms*, p. 4.

building by a dynasty known for its *Kleinstaaterei*. After all, historians have presented the Nassaus as a notoriously unsuccessful example of state building. There is currently no state of Nassau; its last remnant — the Duchy of Nassau — was annexed by Prussia in 1866. Yet, taking its cue from studies in German *Landesgeschichte*, this chapter shows that as a case study this dynasty offers a few important advantages. Where, for instance, Heinz Schilling used the country of Lippe as a laboratory to study confessionalisation and state formation in Germany, this chapter focuses on the house of Nassau to explore the relationship between dynasty and state.<sup>22</sup> Precisely the absence of the 'burden' of hindsight facilitates an examination of the Nassau state-building efforts on their own terms instead of taking the ultimate outcome as a point of departure. Furthermore, it allows us to focus not on the state but on the family to explore what strategies dynasties developed to hold on to their power and pass it on to the next generation.

### Partible Inheritance and Primogeniture

Throughout history, people and their communities have faced tensions between the interests of the individual and the interests of the group. Sometimes it is necessary to surrender individual liberties to protect or benefit the community. But what interests are most important? And who determines what interest will prevail in any given situation? These universal questions stand at the heart of political thinking, from antiquity to the present day. We can perceive this historical tension in every conceivable corporation and community, from local villages, towns, guilds and provincial assemblies all the way up to the relationship between citizens and their national governments. The internal dynamics in the princely dynasties of early modern Europe were no exception.

The dynastic systems that were in place to deal with the tension between the interests of the individual and those of the group stood in the way of modern state formation in pre-modern Germany. Partible inheritance, for instance, had been the default succession practice since antiquity, partly because it fostered intra-dynastic solidarity. It survived for a comparatively long time in the Holy Roman Empire. For this reason, the nineteenth-century historian Karl Braun remarked, referring to the house of Nassau as an example: 'It is a peculiarity of most dynastic houses in southern and western Germany that they do not have even the slightest conception of the idea of

22 See, notably, Schilling, *Konfessionskonflikt und Staatsbildung*.

the state.<sup>23</sup> From a modern perspective, the political culture of the Holy Roman Empire and its ruling dynasties obstructed modern state formation.

Yet in recent decades historians have argued that we should not overstate the supposedly irrational attitude towards state formation among Germany's ruling families. In many ways, family and state interests coincided in pre-modern Germany. The family derived its importance from the lands that it ruled, and fragmentation of those lands would injure its power base in the Empire, in the course of the sixteenth century when it became increasingly difficult to use partitions to increase a family's number of votes in the Imperial Diet.<sup>24</sup> It was in the interest of princely families to consolidate their power. One of the most obvious examples is the introduction of primogeniture to prevent territorial fragmentation, which was adopted by many German dynasties in the course of the late medieval and early modern period. The Golden Bull of 1356 had already laid down the indivisibility of electorates. And with their *Constitutio Achillea* of 1473, the Hohenzollerns sought to avoid partitions of Brandenburg-Prussia and over time created one of the most powerful states in the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>25</sup>

Primogeniture spread slowly and partible inheritance, condominiums and other forms of political association proved resilient practices. This was not because their adherents were irrational but because these practices fulfilled needs in their contemporary context.<sup>26</sup> Paula Sutter Fichtner has shown that Protestants, in some ways, experienced more difficulty in circumventing the divisive potential of partible inheritance. Firstly, a career in the church — common among the younger sons in Catholic houses — was a decidedly less attractive alternative to dynastic rule in Protestant Europe. Secondly, Lutheran family ideals opposed the practice of barring younger sons from the succession.<sup>27</sup> Many families who enjoyed imperial immediacy (i.e. who recognised no overlord other than the Holy Roman Emperor) and practiced partible inheritance received their fiefs assigned to the *gesamten Hand*. This meant that all the agnates were enfeoffed collectively and acted as joint stakeholders.<sup>28</sup>

Primogeniture has long been seen as the rational choice and partible inheritance as an irrational relic of the past. Yet the house regulations in

23 Braun, 'Prinz Hyacinth', p. 423: 'Es ist eine Eigenthümlichkeit der meisten Dynastengeschlechter im südlichen und westlichen Deutschland, dass sie von der Staatsidee auch nicht die entfernteste Ahnung haben.'

24 Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire*, p. 425.

25 Bonney, *The European Dynastic States*, pp. 527–8.

26 Jendorff, *Condominium*; Hardy, *Associative Political Culture*.

27 Fichtner, *Protestantism and Primogeniture*; also see Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire*, p. 425.

28 Westphal, *Kaiserliche Rechtsprechung*, p. 33.

dynasties that practiced partible inheritance demonstrate a keen awareness of the potentially harmful effects of this succession practice. These regulations provided members of princely families with guidelines as to what to do if one among them violated the rules. They demonstrate rational thinking about how to prevent individuality from injuring collective interests. As the next sections will demonstrate, these house regulations are rich sources for the study of German dynasties and state formation.

### The Family Business of Dynastic Power

In the early modern period, house regulations (*Hausgesetze*) — an umbrella term for the family pacts concluded by members of princely dynasties and also including important testaments — served the important purpose of regulating succession.<sup>29</sup> As a source, however, they are underutilised by historians, probably because nineteenth-century historians associated them with partible inheritance and blamed them for the slow unification of Germany. As such they seem unlikely sources for the study of early modern state formation. Still — as we will see — house regulations served the state by serving the dynasty.

How did these regulations serve the family? The individual members of a princely family in early modern Germany were, as a rule, subjects of the Holy Roman Emperor but not of one another. Each agnate enjoyed imperial immediacy.<sup>30</sup> As such, German dynasties differed from royal families in Europe. Like the royal families, they engaged in state formation but, unlike them, no head of the family could simply dictate family rules, and fiefs were often held '*in gemeinschaft*'.<sup>31</sup> A German territorial ruler — generally even if he was a member of a dynasty practising primogeniture — was at least theoretically a *primus inter pares* with varying degrees of influence over his relatives.<sup>32</sup> Family rules in German dynasties were the product of house conferences where the agnates, as stakeholders, would assemble and agree on common ground. They did so whenever the need for new regulations arose, for instance when the family risked over-fragmentation due to a surplus of heirs or faced extinction because of a lack of successors. Partition treaties

29 For a critical discussion of the term 'Hausgesetz', see Bornhak, 'Beiträge zur deutschen Hausgesetzgebung', p. 290.

30 Somsen, 'Intra-Dynastic Conflict', pp. 55–75.

31 Also see Hardy, *Associative Political Culture*, pp. 83–4.

32 Bornhak, 'Beiträge zur deutschen Hausgesetzgebung', p. 290; *Europe Divided*, p. 73.

are excellent sources for studying the policies that the dynasty developed over time to secure its future.

The best-known Nassau example is the partition concluded in 1255 between the brothers Walram and Otto of Nassau. The pact served not only as a partition but also as a treaty of mutual succession: should one line die out, the other would succeed to its possessions. It became known as the *Prima Divisio* and created a Walramian and an Ottonian branch of the family, which would never again be reunited.<sup>33</sup> This chapter focuses on the Ottonian branch. The Ottonian Nassaus developed ties with the Low Countries from the beginning of the fifteenth century: in 1403 Engelbert I of Nassau married the heiress Joanna of Polanen, whose dowry included extensive Netherlandish property, notably the lordship of Breda. As lords of Breda, subsequent counts of Nassau were enfeoffed by the dukes of Brabant. In their Netherlandish lordships they were only mediate vassals of the Holy Roman Emperor while in Germany they enjoyed imperial immediacy.<sup>34</sup>

Historians have often approached partitions as irrational barriers to the formation of the modern state. Yet, as Robert von Friedeburg has reminded us, this interpretation does not do justice to the dynastic rationale that underpinned these partitions.<sup>35</sup> After Engelbert I's death in 1442, his two surviving sons divided the inheritance. The eldest son John IV inherited the richer Netherlandish possessions while the second son Henry II succeeded to the German lands.<sup>36</sup> This was to become a dynastic tradition. Since Henry II died without children, the children of John IV once again concluded a pact. This pact of 1472 between the brothers Engelbert II and John V confirmed that the senior line inherited the Low Countries possessions and the secondary line the German lands. It reconfirmed the practice of mutual succession, but this time within the Ottonian branch: should one Ottonian line die out, the other would inherit, and should all Ottonian branches die out, the fiefs would devolve on the Walramian line.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, since Engelbert II died

33 Koninklijk Huisarchief, The Hague (*hereafter* KHA), inv. A1a, Nr 1: 'Prima Divisio' (1255).

34 See for instance: Nationaal Archief, The Hague (*hereafter* NA), Nassause Domeinraad inv. 1.08.01 29.1988: 'Verklaring van den hertog van Brabant, dat Engelbrecht II, graaf van Nassau, den leeneed heeft afgelegd voor Breda en verdere goederen in Brabant' (1475); Nassause Domeinraad inv. 1.08.01 30.3110: 'Akte van beleening van prins Willem I van Oranje met zijn Brabantsche leenen' (1545). Also see: von Arnoldi, *Geschichte der Oranien-Nassauischen Länder*, p. 5.

35 von Friedeburg, *Luther's Legacy*, p. 46.

36 On the relative value of the Netherlandish and German possessions of the house of Nassau, see: Glawischnig, *Niederlande, Kalvinismus und Reichsgrafenstand*, p. 9.

37 KHA Inv. A 2 Nr. 481: 'Die Brüder und Grafen Engelbert II. und Johann V. von Nassau-Dillenburg vereinbaren in einem Vertrag, dass ihr Erbe immer in der männlichen Linie am Stamm Nassau verbleiben soll, um einer Erbzersplitterung vorzubeugen' (1472).

without heirs the next generation could continue this practice. The two sons of John V divided the inheritance. Henry III inherited the Netherlandish lands and William of Nassau succeeded to the patrimony in Germany.<sup>38</sup>

What we see, then, is that from the marriage in 1403 onwards each generation produced an heir and a spare, and in each generation only one of those two fathered surviving male heirs.<sup>39</sup> Although elements of this practice depended on chance, it was also a deliberate dynastic strategy that ensured survival of the dynasty while preventing over-fragmentation of the patrimony.<sup>40</sup> The strategy was also maintained when more than two heirs survived their father. This happened when René of Nassau-Chalon, prince of Orange and the heir of Henry III — who had inherited the principality of Orange through his mother's side — died without children in 1544. Henry's younger brother, Count William, had four sons at the time (and would father one more). René had appointed his uncle's son William as heir to the Netherlandish portion, a decision which received imperial approval.<sup>41</sup> In a separate pact Prince William and his father Count William agreed to reconfirm the earlier family agreements regarding mutual succession.<sup>42</sup> Although the other sons remained stakeholders of the German possessions, the second son John ruled on their behalf.<sup>43</sup> These dynastic pacts between Nassau agnates demonstrate rational thinking about the dangers of both the potential oversupply of heirs, which could lead to over-fragmentation and thus oblivion, and the undersupply of heirs, which could lead to extinction and, again, oblivion.

## The State

The strategy described above was a family strategy but should not only be seen as an internal family matter. The pacts regulated succession to titles, lands and feudal rights over people and therefore touched the lives of the

38 KHA Inv. A 2 Nr. 501a.: 'Vertrag und Teilungsbrief von Graf Johann V. von Nassau-Dillenburg zu Gunsten seiner beiden Söhne Heinrich III. und Wilhelm' (1504).

39 Glawischnig, *Niederlande, Calvinismus und Reichsgrafenstand*, p. 8.

40 Also see Wrigley, 'Fertility Strategy', pp. 135–54.

41 KHA Inv. A 2 Nr. 637a: 'Zustimmung von Kaiser Karl V. zur Übereinkunft zwischen Graf Wilhelm 'dem Reichen' von Nassau-Dillenburg und seinem Sohn Prinz Wilhelm I. 'dem Schweiger' über den Nachlass von René von Chalôn' (1545).

42 KHA Inv. A 2 Nr. 706a: 'Erbteilung des Grafen Wilhelm 'dem Reichen' von Nassau-Dillenburg zugunsten seiner Söhne (beglaubigte Abschrift)' (1557).

43 Pons, 'Oraniens deutsche Vettern', pp. 125–53; for the bonds between Nassau and Orange, see: Groenveld, 'Nassau contra Oranje'; Geevers, 'Family Matters', pp. 459–90; Geevers, 'Being Nassau', pp. 4–19; Geevers, 'Prinselijke stadhouders', pp. 17–32.

inhabitants of Nassau territories as well. Furthermore, dynastic policies facilitated state building. The prevention of over-fragmentation of the family territories not only served to safeguard the family's political position in the Empire. Around 1500, the small number of stakeholders compared to later periods also enabled Nassau rulers to consolidate their position in their own lands, particularly in Germany.

Indeed, since the fifteenth century, successive generations engaged in a wide range of state-building activities in their territories. These included settlements with the local nobility, especially those who claimed imperial immediacy and autonomy from the house of Nassau. In 1486 John V of Nassau, for instance, took over the local nobleman Heiderich von Dernbach's serfs in exchange for financial compensation.<sup>44</sup> That same year he brokered a similar agreement with the brothers and local noblemen Philip and Conrad von Bicken.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, John issued many decrees for the regulation of justice, public order, guilds and trade in his territories.<sup>46</sup> Via the Wetterau Association of Imperial Counts, the Nassaus also made treaties and land exchanges with neighbouring princes, including the counts of Solms, Hanau and others, for the purposes of mutual defence against the territorial aspirations of both the lower nobility and the greater princes of the Empire.<sup>47</sup>

The sixteenth century was considered even more successful for the Ottonian Nassaus by the German historian Karl E. Demandt, who called it their 'greatest century'. John VI resumed the earlier attempts at administrative centralisation. In 1566, for instance, he enacted a new '*Regierungs- und Ratsordnung*', which established a central administration of all secular and spiritual state affairs in the castle at Dillenburg.<sup>48</sup> The Reformation and the subsequent process of confessionalisation provided John VI, like other rulers, with new tools to further build on his ancestors' expansion of the state.<sup>49</sup> The

44 Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden (*hereafter* HHStAW) Abt. 170 II Nr. 1486: 'Regelung der Nachfolge bei den Gotteslehen und Eigenleuten zwischen Graf Johann von Nassau und Heidenrich von Dernbach' (1486); Arnoldi, *Geschichte der älteren Dillenburgischen Linie*, p. 35.

45 HHStAW Abt. 170 I Nr. 1962: 'Die Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Johann Graf zu Nassau und Diez wegen seines und Vaters Johann Graf zu Nassau, Diez und Vianden mit Philipp, Ritter, und Konrad von Bicken' (1486); Arnoldi, *Geschichte der älteren Dillenburgischen Linie*, pp. 40–1.

46 See for instance: HHStAW Abt. 171 Nr. L 559: 'Landesordnung des Grafen Johann V. von Nassau' (1498); and Nr. N 184: 'Policey- und Zunftordnungen des Amtes Nassau' (1497–1522). For useful overviews of John V's administrative innovations, also see: Arnoldi, *Geschichte der älteren Dillenburgischen Linie*, pp. 62–5; Demandt, *Geschichte des Landes Hessen*, p. 400.

47 Arnoldi, *Geschichte der älteren Dillenburgischen Linie*, pp. 144, 201–19; Schmidt, *Der Wetterauer Grafenverein*.

48 Demandt, *Geschichte des Landes Hessen*, p. 412.

49 Schmidt, 'Die "Zweite Reformation"', pp. 209–13.

Nassau territories had become Lutheran in the 1530s and became Calvinist under John's rule in the 1570s.<sup>50</sup> The Peace of Augsburg (1555) had vindicated the Lutheran princes in their confiscation of Church goods in their territories and placed oversight of Church affairs in their hands.<sup>51</sup> Although Calvinism was still banned and lacked the protection of imperial law, Calvinist princes arrogated the same rights afforded to Lutherans. With their own territorial Church, the counts of Nassau enjoyed more opportunities than before to exercise spiritual and social control over their subjects.<sup>52</sup> John VI instituted ecclesiastical regulations for the purposes of social discipline and poor relief, school orders for his subjects' education and the establishment of the high school of Herborn, which became an important training ground for Calvinist princes, nobles and clergymen.<sup>53</sup> These regulations also included a mandate against witchcraft and wizardry (1582) and one against 'frivolous dances and other customs' (1585).<sup>54</sup> Confiscation of property that had formerly belonged to the Catholic Church allowed the Count to finance the transformation of Nassau possessions from feudal territories into an increasingly bureaucratic and 'rational' territorial state.<sup>55</sup>

As this section has shown, the Nassaus were no strangers to what may be called early state formation. At the end of the sixteenth century, the overlap between the reason of state and what we might call the 'reason of dynasty' — advanced by the family pacts — ensured that the authority of the Ottonian counts of Nassau in their German territories was better established than ever before.

## A Different Road to Modernity

After the death of John VI of Nassau, his sons decided on a course that has astonished historians ever since. In 1607 they divided the patrimony

50 Schmidt, *Konfessionalisierung*, pp. 19, 45, 53; Schilling, 'Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich', p. 24; Wolf, 'Zur Einführung des reformierten Bekenntnisses', pp. 160–93; Reinhardt, 'Von der Stadtrepublik zum fürstlichen Territorialstaat', pp. 147–61.

51 Schmidt, *Konfessionalisierung*, pp. 3–4.

52 Münch, *Zucht und Ordnung*, pp. 35–98, 191–2.

53 Oestreich, 'Grafschaft und Dynastie Nassau', pp. 22–49; Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*, pp. 291–4; Menk, 'Territorialstaat und Schulwesen'; Schmidt, *Konfessionalisierung*, pp. 54, 67.

54 Arend, *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen*, pp. 175–6.

55 Schilling, 'The Reformation and the Rise of the Early Modern State', p. 26; Blaschke, 'The Reformation and the Rise of the Territorial State', pp. 62–3; Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation*, pp. 38, 135–6; Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, pp. 502–3; Stollberg-Rilinger, *The Holy Roman Empire*, p. 78.



— which at that time counted around 50,000 inhabitants — into five parts. They thus effectively prevented their lands from becoming a more powerful territorial state.<sup>56</sup> Four of these five new lines survived into the eighteenth century. Only halfway through the eighteenth century, after the extinction of all but one of these lines, did the German possessions of the Ottonian Nassaus once again fall into the hands of one man: John VI's great-great-great-grandson William IV of Orange-Nassau-Diez.

In the seventeenth century, the Nassaus thus failed spectacularly in state building in comparison to European monarchies and some other German territories — Brandenburg-Prussia being the best example.<sup>57</sup> But great state-building dynasties like the Hohenzollerns were, numerically, the exception rather than the rule. A more inclusive approach to dynastic power, one that also takes German *Kleinstaaterei* seriously, has implications for our understanding of the relation between dynasty and state. The Nassaus followed a path that cannot properly be understood either by a one-sided focus on the merits of the modern state or, from this vantage point, a dichotomy between the 'winners' and 'losers'.

As the Nassau family branched out, the connection between dynasty and territorial state became more tenuous than before. The incomes of the different parts were barely enough to support a suitable lifestyle and several Nassaus found opportunities in other parts of the Empire to supplement their income by entering into the service of other princes.<sup>58</sup> The career paths of the five brothers illustrate the level of fragmentation in the family. William Louis of Nassau-Dillenburg — the eldest son — was a stadholder of Friesland in the Dutch Republic and a commander in the States Army.<sup>59</sup> His younger brother John VII of Nassau-Siegen sought to introduce primogeniture in his portion but refrained from doing so after his eldest surviving son, the later John VIII, had converted to Catholicism. After John VII's death, Nassau-Siegen was thus further divided into no fewer than three tiny parts.<sup>60</sup> The third

56 Demandt, *Geschichte des Landes Hessen*; Glawischnig, *Niederlande, Calvinismus und Reichsgrafenstand*. Although John VI provided instructions in his last will of 1597 as to how this partition should be executed, he also ordered his sons to rule the Nassau territories jointly, an instruction that the brothers largely ignored: HHStAW 170 I Nr 5237: 'Testament des Grafen Johann VI. von Nassau-Dillenburg' (1597), f. 2v and Nr 5464: 'Teilung der Grafschaft Nassau-Katzenelnbogen' (1607), f. 1r.

57 Externbrink, 'State-Building within the Empire'; Marcus, *The Politics of Power*.

58 Groenveld, 'Fürst und Diener zugleich', pp. 269–304; Pons, 'Oraniens deutsche Vettern'.

59 More than twenty counts of Nassau fought on behalf of the Dutch Republic during the Revolt of the Low Countries, see: Oestreich, 'Grafschaft und Dynastie Nassau im Zeitalter der konfessionellen Kriege', p. 25.

60 KHA Inv. A 4 nr. 1268a: 'Testament des Grafen Johann VII. von Nassau-Siegen' (1621).

brother Georg of Nassau-Beilstein started governing his portion after the death of his father but, after his eldest brother's heirless death, was promoted to Dillenburg. Ernest Casimir succeeded his eldest brother as stadholder of Friesland in the Dutch Republic. And the fifth and youngest brother John Louis of Nassau-Hadamar became a Catholic, like his nephew John VIII, and embarked on a successful career in the imperial service, playing an important role in the Westphalian peace talks. State building in Germany was generally not at the top of their list of priorities.

The fragmentation after 1607 suggests that the common denominator in the Nassau family was not simply the German territory they ruled but rather the idea of belonging to the same dynastic community of interest. Of course, the partition did not entirely preclude state building. John VII, for instance, modernised the military in his territories, pioneering the transition from a feudal system of vassalage to one based on loyalty to the fatherland.<sup>61</sup> But historians generally emphasise the political fragmentation — perceived as irrational — without paying attention to the regulations that the family purposefully developed in order to secure the dynasty's future.

### The Regulations of 1607

House regulations reveal that in families where partible inheritance was the norm, awareness of its potentially negative consequences stimulated the creation of policies to limit the damage — especially during the political turmoil of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.<sup>62</sup> When John VI made his will in 1597 he did not introduce primogeniture in his territories, even though he had five sons and fragmentation was looming. Primogeniture was not an easy solution due to the legal requirement of consent from the next in the line of succession, but also because members of princely families considered it harmful to intra-dynastic equality and solidarity. Instead, John therefore asked his sons to rule the Nassau territories jointly, a request that they ignored after his death in 1606, each son preferring to rule his own portion of the territory.<sup>63</sup> Financial and political independence and the corresponding status were the implicit motivation for their choice.

61 Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, vol. I, p. 495.

62 Spieß, *Familie und Verwandtschaft*.

63 This was not unusual. See Westphal, *Kaiserliche Rechtsprechung und herrschaftliche Stabilisierung*, p. 33.

Despite this ‘failure’ to remain together, there was a shared desire for joint management of certain family assets that should not be underestimated. This is evidenced by the partition treaty of 1607, in which the brothers laid down the conditions of their division of Nassau lands, and by the *Erbverein* of 1607, which they created as a legal framework to make sure future generations would never alienate family property or allow female succession to *Land und Leute*. Using family regulations to maintain some degree of unity was not a novelty in 1607. By 1600, for example, the castle of Nassau had become politically and economically a relatively inconsequential possession, but remained nevertheless highly symbolic. This was primarily so because it gave the family its name and title. In 1255, the brothers Walram and Otto of Nassau had agreed to continue joint management of this symbolic family seat in perpetuity.<sup>64</sup> Later regulations reconfirmed the symbolic importance of the castle.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, John VI had already determined in his last will of 1597 that the artillery and other weaponry in the castle of Dillenburg would remain an indivisible part of the patrimony, which meant that the coercive potential of the dynasty — small as it was — remained largely centralised.<sup>66</sup> Although strategies to prevent disunity caused by partition and to protect territorial integrity were thus already in place, the high number of heirs and, consequently, greater risk of fragmentation required more complex and detailed regulation of the family.

The Nassau regulations of 1607 answered these needs and centralised certain functions in the dynasty. The brothers decided, for instance, that a *primus inter pares* — also known as a ‘senior’ — would represent the agnates in both active fiefs (where Nassaus served as the overlord) and passive fiefs (where Nassaus were enfeoffed as vassals). They also arranged that this ‘senior’ would always be the eldest living descendant of John VI, a measure aimed at avoiding future confusion and conflict about the position.<sup>67</sup> On a similar note, they agreed to maintain a central archive in the main ancestral castle Dillenburg for the administration of their feudal rights. They decided that all original feudal deeds were to be stored in a vault of the castle and that representatives of each of them or their heirs would have access to the archive in order to consult these documents.<sup>68</sup> The Dillenburg archive

64 KHA Inv. A1a, Nr 1: ‘Prima Divisio’ (1255).

65 KHA Inv. A 2 Nr. 706a: ‘Erbteilung des Grafen Wilhelm ‘dem Reichen’ von Nassau-Dillenburg zugunsten seiner Söhne (beglaubigte Abschrift)’ (1557), f. 1v; HHStAW 170 I Nr 5464: ‘Teilung der Grafschaft Nassau-Katzenelnbogen’ (1607), f. 1v.

66 HHStAW 170 I Nr 5237: ‘Testament des Grafen Johann VI. von Nassau-Dillenburg’, article 9.

67 HHStAW 170 I, Nr U 5464: ‘Teilung der Grafschaft Nassau-Katzenelnbogen’ (1607), f. 5v.

68 *Ibid.*: f. 5v–6r.

is one of the predecessors of the modern-day Hessian State Archives in Wiesbaden; it is ironic that an institution that has helped make state formation possible — the archive — was in fact the result of a dynastic partition agreement, historically known for obstructing such state formation. The brothers also adopted their father's prescribed system for conflict resolution that had emphasised the desirability of settling disagreements internally or by appointing arbiters from the Wetterau Association of Imperial Counts. Only if this proved unsuccessful in the first instance would an appeal to the imperial courts of justice be acceptable.<sup>69</sup> And in their *Erbverein* of 1607 the brothers promised on behalf of themselves and their descendants to continue to defend each other's interests against external challenges.<sup>70</sup>

Four out of the five lines created by the partition in 1607 survived into the eighteenth century and the regulations of the Partition and *Erbverein* remained valid until the extinction of the penultimate surviving branch Nassau-Siegen in 1743. The brothers had probably not expected the branches to attain such longevity, for the family history of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had taught them that Nassau partitions were often only of relatively short duration. This means that the regulations should not only be approached as signs of disintegration but also as well-considered plans for reunification. Although the partition treaty and *Erbverein* may seem short-sighted from a modern perspective of state formation, in fact they contained detailed forms of scenario planning. These ensured that if a branch died out — even after having survived independently for more than a century after the partition — its possessions would devolve on the surviving agnatic branch.<sup>71</sup> An ostensible lack of administrative centralisation compared to other European principalities hence did not preclude rational ideas about the preservation of unity within the family as well as the political integrity of the Nassau territories.<sup>72</sup>

## Conclusion

The fact that the Nassau dynasty did not become a shining example of modern European state formation in the seventeenth century and early

69 HHStAW 170 I Nr 5237: 'Testament des Grafen Johann VI. von Nassau-Dillenburg' (1597), ff. 6r–v; HHStAW 170 I Nr 5464: 'Teilung der Grafschaft Nassau-Katzenelnbogen' (1607), f. 6r; HHStAW 170 I Nr 5472: 'Nassauische Erbverein' (1607), article 27.

70 HHStAW 170 I Nr 5472: 'Nassauische Erbverein' (1607), article 26.

71 *Ibid.*, articles 1–14.

72 See Van der Steen, 'Dynastic Scenario Thinking'.

eighteenth century was the result of choices made at the beginning of the 1600s and before. What we can learn from those choices is not that with hindsight they vindicate the importance we attach to the modern state, but rather that primogeniture is just one strategy that dynasties can pursue to hold on to and augment their power. Furthermore, this chapter has shown that administrative centralisation and the German practice of partible inheritance were not always mutually exclusive.

As such, this case study about the house of Nassau in pre-modern Germany challenges the double teleology that continues to distort research into both dynastic power and state formation. Success in state formation has, to a large extent, been equated to a polity's survival into the modern age and a high degree of administrative centralisation. Successful dynasties, in their turn, are those that survive as the suppliers of heads of government in those polities. Yet the 'failure' of Nassaus in seventeenth-century state formation was not necessarily a dynastic failure.

After the extinction of the penultimate branch of the Ottonian Nassaus in 1743, William IV of Orange-Nassau-Diez and his son William V tried to have the Nassau territories recognised by the Holy Roman Emperor as a single fief with a statute of primogeniture in both the male and female line. Although the project was unsuccessful, it reveals that the Nassaus used the extinction of all but one Ottonian cadet line to consolidate their territories, just like John VI had done in the sixteenth century.<sup>73</sup> During the French Revolutionary Wars around 1800, William V's son — the later King William I of the Netherlands — accepted compensation for the loss of his possessions in the Low Countries. A treaty between France and Prussia in 1802 allocated to him the secularised Church territories of Fulda, Corvey and Weingarten and the imperial city of Dortmund.<sup>74</sup> His acceptance of this form of compensation reflects the words his ancestor Count William Frederick of Nassau-Diez penned in his diary more than a century earlier, in 1647. 'We are just private persons', William Frederick had written, 'and can settle anywhere. We have our goods and such a reputation, thank God, that we can always do well and advance ourselves through war.'<sup>75</sup> 'Dynasty first' seems to have been a key value in the Nassau family.

73 Demandt, 'Die oranischen Reichsfürstentumspläne', pp. 161–80.

74 Koch, *Koning Willem I*.

75 Nassau, *Gloria Parendi*, p. 368: 'wij sijn maer particulire [113] en kunnen ooverall terecht komen. Wij hebben onse goederen, Godtloff sulke reputatie, dat wij alletijt kunnen wel geraecken en door den oorloch voortkomen'.

To conclude, long-term perspectives on European history benefit from the distinction between reason of state and reason of dynasty. And scholars of dynasty and state formation may gain from a more open approach to the strategies pre-modern princely families deployed to secure their portfolio of lands, titles, offices and other goods for the future. Even though agnatic succession purists will claim the Nassaus died out after the deaths of William III of the Netherlands and Luxembourg in 1890 and William IV of Luxembourg in 1912, today the Ottonian and Walramian branches allow female succession and therefore still occupy the thrones of the Netherlands and Luxembourg, respectively.

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## 9. Dynastic Marriage Spheres in Early Modern Europe: A Comparison of the Danish Oldenburgs and Three Houses of the Empire

*Harald Gustafsson*

**Abstract:** Princely marriages are here seen as a key component in dynasty formation and dynasty securing. The marriages of the Danish royal house and three houses of the Empire are studied for the period c. 1530–1700. Most of them took place within what can be labelled a Scandinavian-German-Lutheran marriage sphere. It was a highly hierarchized sphere with little contact between top (royal and electoral houses) and bottom (comital houses). The will of a princely couple to let their offspring continue to lead their lives at an appropriate status level, or a higher if possible, together with confessional considerations, seems to explain more of the marriage pattern than purely political considerations.

**Keywords:** dynasty formation, marriage spheres, early modern, Denmark, Holy Roman Empire

In studying dynasty formation, marriages are central in many ways. Since inheritance was essential to the very idea of dynasty, regarded as a vertical line of inheritance, it was of core importance who married whom and could have legitimate children. But even when we consider dynasty as a horizontal network of relatives, marriages are important. They not only determined how assets were passed from one generation to the next; how the ruling couple arranged the lives of all their children, choosing suitable matches or deciding to let some of them stay unmarried, was of vital importance

in dynasty securing by establishing links to other dynasties that upheld or enhanced the status of their own dynasty.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of this, there are few attempts to systematically study the marriage patterns of early modern European dynasties. In the existing literature, there are differing interpretations on some central issues. Some scholars have assumed that the ruling houses were closely related. 'Until the end of the *ancien régime*, one can, with a slight exaggeration, say that Europe was ruled by one single family, only divided into many branches', according to Andreas Kraus.<sup>2</sup> Against this notion of such a 'European family of princes', other historians have maintained that Europe was divided into different princely marriage spheres, which had little contact with each other.

Heinz Duchhardt sees three factors as essential for establishing such marriage spheres (*Heiratskreise*): confession, geography and exclusivity. After the reformation, he claims, Europe was, in confessional terms, divided into a Protestant marriage sphere and a Catholic one. The wish not to be too far away from relatives contributed to a further division into separate Eastern-Central European, North German-Scandinavian, Habsburg-Italian and Western European spheres (the well-known Madrid-Vienna marriages of the Habsburgs were exceptional). Finally, the ambition to maintain the exclusivity of the family led to marriages between houses that were of similar status.<sup>3</sup>

The notion of different marriage spheres has been supported by several studies, pointing not least to confession as a crucial factor in setting limits to the choice of spouses. In a study of Hesse-Kassel, Philip Haas finds that this Calvinist house predominantly married other Reformed houses.<sup>4</sup> But according to Haas, the marriage choices depended above all on political interests. It was a matter of securing and improving the position of the

1 For dynasty, dynasty formation and dynasty securing as analytic concepts, and the horizontal perspective on dynasty, see Chapter 1 in this volume. I wish to thank Liesbeth Geevers, Lund University, and Dorothee Goetze, Bonn University and Mid Sweden University, for fruitful comments on a draft of this article.

2 Quoted in Wolfgang Weber, 'Dynastiesicherung und Staatsbildung. Die Entfaltung des frühmodernen Fürstenstaates', in idem. (ed.), *Der Fürst: Ideen und Wirklichkeiten in der europäischen Geschichte* (Köln 1998), p. 91. All translations into English are mine.

3 Heinz Duchhardt, 'Die dynastische Heirat', *Europäische Geschichte Online* (EGO), Institut für Europäische Geschichte (IEG), Mainz 2010-12-03, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/duchhardt-2010-de> URN: urn:nbn:de:0159-20100921192 (accessed 21 November 2021).

4 Philip Haas, *Fürstenehe und Interessen: Die dynastische Ehe der Frühen Neuzeit in zeitgenössischer Traktatliteratur und politischer Praxis am Beispiel Hessen-Kassels* (Darmstadt-Marburg 2017), p. 344.

dynasty, of keeping the door open for future inheritances of new territories, and of winning immediate foreign political gains.<sup>5</sup>

This stress on traditional political interests as a motivation behind all princely marriages is found widely in the literature. Another example is Simone Knöfel's thorough study of the marriages of the house of Wettin, which reigned in Electoral Saxony and the smaller Saxon duchies. She characterises their marriage policy as 'dynastic interest policy', which was a blend of 'dynastic policy, foreign policy, geopolitics and internal dynastic perspectives'. She also notes a strong preference for spouses of the same confession, but states that political motives were hidden behind the confessional considerations.<sup>6</sup>

It is, however, not obvious that princely marriages should be viewed only in the light of such rationalistic political behaviour. As we have seen, Heinz Durchhardt maintains that marriages were concluded between houses with the same status. Daniel Schönplflug, in his seminal study of the marriages of the Hohenzollerns, underscores this *Ebenbürtigkeit* [equality of birth] as 'one of the most important, perhaps the most important factor' for a 'marriage of full value' among the princely families of the Empire. It was acknowledged that the match between the status of the two families could not always be 'arithmetic' since there was a limited supply of potential spouses, but it must at least be 'geometric', which meant that the minimum criterion for a princely spouse was that she/he should come from another ruling house or a house represented at the Imperial Diet, the *Reichstag*.<sup>7</sup> There might be room for challenging the overriding importance of purely political considerations, instead giving more weight to social and cultural factors such as status equality and positioning within the princely hierarchy.<sup>8</sup>

Another point of discussion is if there was a gender difference in marriage frequency; it seems as if sons were more likely to remain unmarried. Married

5 Haas, *Fürstenehe*, pp. 325–9.

6 Anne-Simone Knöfel, *Dynastie und Prestige: Die Heiratspolitik der Wettiner* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, 2009), pp. 1–3, 76.

7 Daniel Schönplflug, *Die Heiraten der Hohenzollern: Verwandtschaft, Politik und Ritual in Europa 1640–1918* (Göttingen 2013), pp. 91–2. This does of course not mean that Schönplflug is blind to the political side of the marriages, of which he gives many examples.

8 An early example where simple political explanations are put in question is Paula Sutter Fichtner, 'Dynastic Marriages in Sixteenth-Century Habsburg Diplomacy and Statecraft: An Interdisciplinary Approach', *American Historical Review* vol. 81, no 2, 1976, pp. 243–265. Using anthropological theory, she sees the marriages, and the economic transactions involved in them, as 'instruments for the perpetuation and enhancement of status, the conservation of wealth, and the maintenance of privilege and power' (264). Her empirical study is, however, rather limited: the Habsburgs marrying during the reign of Ferdinand I.

younger sons could create side branches that could split the inheritance or even be hostile to the main branch; it was less dangerous to let all the daughters marry.<sup>9</sup> Several studies have shown that a higher proportion of men than women remained unmarried in German princely families.<sup>10</sup> Another gender difference has also been noted: daughters were more likely to marry spouses of lower rank, and sons spouses of higher rank.<sup>11</sup>

The existing literature thus raises several questions — on the extent of the marriage spheres, on the different interests at play in choosing marriage partners and on gender differences — that will be approached here through a study of the marriages of four princely houses. In a previous study of dynasty formation of the royal Oldenburgs of Denmark-Norway (hereafter: the Danish Oldenburgs), I mapped their marriages from the end of the civil war in Denmark in 1536, when Christian III secured his position as king of Denmark-Norway and established his line of the Oldenburgs, until the death of Christian V in 1699.<sup>12</sup> The present article will compare the Danish Oldenburgs' marriage patterns to three princely houses within the Holy Roman Empire: the house of the counts of Oldenburg, the Brunswick-Lüneburg line of the ducal Welfs, and the Albertine Wettins of Electoral Saxony. They are chosen to represent different status levels among the Lutheran houses of the Empire, and they have numbers of children and marriages that are roughly comparable to the Danish Oldenburgs during approximately the same period.

The purpose is twofold: to put the Danish Oldenburg dynasty in a broader perspective, and to find clues to general trends in the marriage patterns of early modern European dynasties. This will be done by mapping the marriages of the legitimate sons and daughters of the heads of the houses during the period. Whom did they marry, what was the geographical distribution of their spouses, what was their status level, and how many sons and daughters remained unmarried? How was the 'problem of the younger sons' solved? And what explains the choice of marriage partners?

9 Heide Wunder, 'Einleitung: Dynastie und Herrschaftssicherung: Geslechter und Geschlecht', in idem. (ed.), *Dynastie und Herrschaftssicherung in der Frühen Neuzeit: Geschlechter und Geschlecht* (*Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, Beiheft 28) (Berlin 2002), p. 18; this was a problem for dynasties all over the world: Jeroen Duindam, *Dynasties. A Global History of Power, 1300–1800* (Cambridge 2016), p. 88.

10 Judith J. Hurwich, 'Marriage Strategy among the German Nobility, 1400–1699', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* vol. XXIX:2, pp. 173–5; Knöfel, *Dynastie und Prestige*, p. 39.

11 Hurwich, 'Marriage Strategy', p. 180.

12 Harald Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation: The Danish Oldenburgs 1536–1699', *Historisk Tidsskrift* vol. 120:2 (2020), pp. 345–406.

I will study the marriages of all sons and daughters of reigning princes of the four houses, and also take into account those who stayed unmarried (except those who died before reaching the age of twenty). In some cases, a ruling brother was responsible for marrying off his siblings, and in a few cases, the ruler himself married, but to simplify the discussion, they are all called 'sons and daughters' in this text. The total population consists of ninety-nine persons, of whom seventy-three married; a few married several times, which gives the total of seventy-nine marriages.<sup>13</sup> I have noted the positions, home territories/houses and confessions of the men the daughters married, and the same variables for the fathers-in-law of the sons.

*Ancien régime* Europe had a fairly fixed hierarchy of status in society; to a great extent, this is also true of the princely houses, not least within the Empire. The position in this hierarchy was for instance demonstrated, but also contested, in how the *Reichstag* was organised.<sup>14</sup> As shown in the tables below, I have divided the partner houses into five categories roughly in line with this *Reichstag* ranking from the highest status to the lowest: royal, electoral, ducal, comital and others (non-princely).

Royal houses outside the Empire, such as the Danish Oldenburgs, were obviously at the top of the status hierarchy.<sup>15</sup> The electoral houses formed the exclusive upper echelon of the hierarchy in the Empire, fighting to uphold a position as 'the pillars of the realm' in between the Emperor and the other princes.<sup>16</sup> The dukes had a higher status than the counts, but the 'prefix counts', princes with the titles *Markgraf*, *Landgraf* and *Pfalzgraf*, are regarded as equal to dukes in the tables below. The Count Palatine of the Rhine (*Pfalzgraf bei Rhein*) had the status of elector, but the electoral branch of the house does not appear in the study. Several persons from side branches do however; they kept the title Count Palatine despite not being electors, thus placing them above simple counts.<sup>17</sup> It seems fair also to regard

13 See Appendix 1 for sources.

14 Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, 'Zeremoniell als politisches Verfahren: Rangordnung und Rangstreit als Sturkturmerkmale des frühneuzeitlichen Reichstags', in Johannes Kunisch (ed.), *Neue Studien zur frühneuzeitlichen Reichsgeschichte (Zeitschrift für historische Forschung, Beiheft 19)* (Berlin 1997); Peter Wilson, *Heart of Europe: A History of the Holy Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass. 2016), pp. 408–12.

15 Cf. how several German princely houses, especially after 1648, made great efforts to obtain a royal title outside the Empire: Wilson, *Heart of Europe*, p. 174.

16 Axel Gotthard, *Säulen des Reiches: Die Kurfürsten im frühneuzeitlichen Reichsverband* (Husum 1999); see for instance pp. 26, 741–3, 842.

17 On the counts of the Palatinate and their status, see also Andreas Kappelmayer, *Johann Kasimir von Pfalz-Zweibrücken (1589–1652): Standeswahrung und Fremdheitserfahrung im Schweden Gustavs II. Adolfs und Christinas* (Münster 2017), pp. 61–2



margraves and landgraves as above ordinary counts; there are five in the sample and they all belonged to the *Reichfürstenrat*, thus having the same status as the dukes.<sup>18</sup> In order to assess the status of the partner, it is also of importance to see if the groom or the father-in-law actually had a reigning position or was an inferior member of his house.

## A Humble House: The Counts of Oldenburg

The counts of Oldenburg, distant relatives of the Danish-Norwegian royal house, ruled a county with the same name in north-western Germany.<sup>19</sup> Included here are the marriages of the children of Johann V through to Johann VII, during the period 1530–1652, and also the children of Johann VII's son Anton II, who ruled the county of Delmenhorst, which was usually joined with Oldenburg. (German personal names will be given in German, and Danish names in Danish.) In total, there were twenty-six children who reached maturity, of whom seventeen married (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Marriage partners of children of the counts of Oldenburg 1530–1642**

Family of spouse	Sons	Daughters	Total
Royal	0	0	0
Electoral	0	0	0
Ducal etc.	3	5	8
Comital	1	6	7
Other	2	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>

Sources: See Appendix 1.

As a rule, the German Oldenburgs married other German houses with approximately the same, relatively humble, status. There were no marriages to royal or electoral houses. Eight of the spouses came from ducal houses, but only in two cases did this involve reigning dukes. In 1537 Anton

<sup>18</sup> On the organisation of the *Reichstag* and the status hierarchy of the princes, see Helmut Neuhaus, *Das Reich in der frühen Neuzeit* (Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte 42) (München 1997), pp. 19–38. I am also grateful to Dr Dorothee Goetze, Bonn University, for information.

<sup>19</sup> On Oldenburg during the period, see Christine van den Heuvel & Manfred von Boetticher (eds), *Geschichte Niedersachsens* vol. III:1 (Hannover 1998), pp. 56–60, 140–1.

I married Sophie, daughter of the reigning duke of Saxony-Lauenburg, and in 1633 Katharina became the second wife of Duke August of the same duchy. Saxony-Lauenburg was a small duchy; its rulers came from the old and well-esteemed house of Ascania, but at this time it was of modest political significance. A sign of this is that Christian III of Denmark-Norway and Gustav Vasa of Sweden, both usurpers to the throne and not readily accepted among the princely houses of Europe, both married princesses from Saxony-Lauenburg; that was probably all that they could get.

The remaining six ducal marriages were to ducal houses that could hardly be called reigning. Three of them were to the Danish Sönderborgs, who held the title 'duke of Schleswig-Holstein' but they only held tiny territories in the lands of the Danish king, mostly in Schleswig, without sovereign rights.<sup>20</sup> The Sönderborg secondary line of Beck (one marriage) did not hold any territory at all.<sup>21</sup> One of the Oldenburg sons and six of the daughters married partners from the houses of other counts.<sup>22</sup>

Counties and side branches of duchies were what was usually within reach of the children of the German Oldenburgs. This relatively low status in a context of princely ruling houses is further underlined by the two non-noble marriages. Two sons of Johann V, who had been co-regents with their brother Anton I, were forced out of government in 1542, and both then married non-noble women. It is likely that they had been in these relationships for a while, but could not legalise them socially while still ruling counts. By marrying these women, they in fact left their princely status.

Another fact possibly pointing to the low status is that nine of the children never married. Seven of them were daughters. With a relatively modest base in the small county of Oldenburg and with numerous daughters — Johann VII, for instance, had four daughters, two of whom remained unmarried — it was probably difficult to afford to let them all marry. Of the five younger sons, three married. The four sons of Johann V ruled the territory together for several years; two of the younger sons married. Anton, younger son of Anton I, married and received the family inheritance of Delmenhorst as his patrimony.

In geographical terms, all the spouses came from the Empire (or the closely associated Schleswig in the case of the Sönderborgs). Most came

20 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', pp. 367–8, 394–6.

21 The two other marriages in this category were to Württemberg-Weitlingen and Braunschweig-Dannenberg, houses with a position not unlike the Sönderborgs with respect to the families' main lines.

22 Including Anhalt-Zerbst, where the ruler had the title *Fürst*.

from the northern and central parts, the exception being one daughter who married a spouse in Württemberg in the south.<sup>23</sup> But it is more a question of confession rather than geography. All spouses, without exception, belonged to Lutheran houses, and such houses were most frequently found in the northern and central parts of Germany.

### In the Middle of the Hierarchy: The Ducal House of Brunswick-Lüneburg

If we continue up the status ladder to the duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg, the picture is both familiar and slightly different (Table 2).<sup>24</sup> The sample covers the children of Ernst I through to the offspring of Georg Wilhelm; I also include the latter's own marriage and that of his predecessor Christian Ludwig.<sup>25</sup> This makes seventeen marriages in total.

**Table 2. Marriage partners of children of the dukes of Brunswick-Lüneburg 1559–1682**

Family of spouse	Sons	Daughters	Total
Royal	1	0	1
Electoral	1	0	1
Ducal etc.	3	5	8
Comital	0	6	6
Other	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>

Sources: See Appendix 1.

As for the German Oldenburg children, most of the Brunswicks found their spouses in the families of dukes and counts.<sup>26</sup> But there is a difference in the ducal marriages as compared with the Oldenburg ones; the majority (four)

23 Juliana, married to Manfred I of the Württemberg side branch of Weitlingen in 1652.

24 On Brunswick-Lüneburg during the period, see van der Heuvel & von Boetticher (eds), *Niedersachsen*, pp. 69–76, 149–59.

25 After the death of Friedrich IV in 1648 without heirs, Brunswick-Lüneburg fell to the Brunswick-Calenberg branch of the Welfs and was ruled in turn by the brothers Christian Ludwig and Georg Wilhelm.

26 The dukes also include one margrave, one *Pfalzgraf* and one *Landgraf*, cf. above p. 191 on the titles.

of the Brunswick partners were ruling dukes or daughters of ruling dukes. Just like with the German Oldenburgs, the finest matches were achieved for the sons; none of the sons married into a comital family, while five daughters went down that far; one of them even married a non-reigning count.<sup>27</sup> The final proof of the Brunswick-Lüneburgs' higher status is their marriages into electoral and royal circles. Franz Otto married a daughter of the Elector of Brandenburg in 1559 and in 1561 Wilhelm got a daughter of the Danish king; both marriages took place early in the period.

The ducal family would never reach that level again and the family ran into succession troubles in the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>28</sup> In 1658, Georg Wilhelm promised never to marry and to leave the throne at his death to his brother Ernst, but in 1681, he nevertheless married a French Huguenot noblewoman who had been his mistress for many years. This non-princely and non-Lutheran marriage stands out, but was probably due to Georg Wilhelm's renouncement of the right of any future offspring from this marriage to inherit the throne. There was sympathy in Lutheran circles for the French Calvinists as persecuted Protestants, which might have made such a marriage less unacceptable, provided it did not have consequences for the inheritance.

With this exception, all marriages were concluded with Lutheran houses.<sup>29</sup> They were all within the Empire, except the French and the Danish marriages. Compared to the Oldenburg comital house, the ducal Brunswick-Lüneburgs had more contacts with the few Lutheran houses in the southern parts of the Empire, with three marriages there.<sup>30</sup>

Nine of the twenty-four adult Brunswick children stayed unmarried, which is the highest proportion in the sample. Two of them were younger daughters of Wilhelm the Younger, who had eight daughters who reached maturity, while six of the unmarried offspring belonged to his seven sons. With so many siblings, there was a high risk that many had to stay single.

The pattern with younger sons staying unmarried, and usually directed into church careers, is familiar from the general picture, but an original aspect here is that Wilhelm's eldest son, Ernst II, did not marry either, which opened the way for his younger brothers when he passed away in 1611. Three

27 Magdalena Sophie married Arnold of Bentheim-Steinfurt, brother of the reigning count Erwin III, in 1561.

28 On the complicated family relations between the branches of the Welfs, which led to the establishment of Electoral Hannover; see van der Heuvel & von Boetticher (eds), *Niedersachsen*, pp. 155–6.

29 There was one marriage to the Palatinates, but that was to Karl I of the side branch of Birkenfeld, Lutheran in contrast to the main Calvinist branch.

30 Pfalz-Birkenfeld, Hohenlohe-Langenburg, and Ansbach.

of them followed in due order on the throne. They had all had ecclesiastical posts, two of them prince-bishops, and had probably been supposed to stay unmarried in order not to split the dynasty. What is remarkable, however, is that none of them used the opportunity to marry after they had become reigning dukes. There might have been personal and/or political reasons for this; for the present study, it is enough to note that the option to stay unmarried was chosen sometimes, even by reigning princes.

### Safeguarding a Position at the Top: Electoral Saxony

The dukes of Electoral Saxony had twenty-two children who reached maturity during the period from Duke August to Duke Johann Georg III (marriages from 1548 to 1693). Twenty of them married, several of them more than once, which makes a total of twenty-five marriages.<sup>31</sup>

The positions of the grooms and of the fathers-in-law of the brides reflect the higher status of the Electorate compared to the mere duchies. Four marriages were concluded with royal houses, or rather with one specific royal house: the Danish Oldenburgs. Denmark-Norway and Electoral Saxony became close allies in the middle of the sixteenth century and this 'special relationship' continued for over 100 years, which was of vital political importance for Denmark.<sup>32</sup> This royal relationship must have enhanced the position of the Albertine Wettins in the eyes of other German houses, or, from their own perspective, underlined that an electoral house was on a par with a royal house. Three of the marriages involved Danish princesses moving to Saxony as electresses, and one a Saxon princess marrying the successor elect to the Danish throne, who, however, died before he and his wife could become king and queen.

There was only one connection, concluded in 1582, with another electoral house, namely Brandenburg. There was naturally a limited supply of potential marriage partners from the electoral houses, since there were in reality only three secular electors — Brandenburg, the Palatinate and Saxony — and of these three, the Palatinate dukes were Calvinists during

31 I include here the marriage of Elector August himself in 1548. On Electoral Saxony during the period, see Karl Czok (ed.), *Geschichte Sachsens* (Weimar 1989); Reiner Gross, *Geschichte Sachsens*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig 2001).

32 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', p. 357–8; Karl-Erik Frandsen, '1523–1533', in Esben Albrechtsen, Karl-Erik Frandsen & Gunner Lind, *Dansk udenrigspolitik historie 1. Konger og krige 700–1648* (Copenhagen 2001), p. 290.

**Table 3. Marriage partners of the house of Electoral Saxony 1548–1693**

Family of spouse	Sons	Daughters	Total
Royal	3	1	4
Electoral	1	0	1
Ducal etc.	11	8	19
Comital	1	0	1
Other	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>

Sources: See Appendix 1.

most of the period.<sup>33</sup> In play might also be a political divergence between the two Lutheran electoral houses, since Saxony often sided with the Emperor, which was normally not the case with Brandenburg; the Brandenburg Hohenzollerns moreover converted to Calvinism in 1613.

The majority of the Saxon children married into ducal families (or 'prefix counts'); this is true for seventeen of them. In all cases except two, the partners were ruling dukes or daughters of such ruling dukes.<sup>34</sup> The exceptions were two marriages to the Schleswig Sønnderborgs, once again pointing to their high status in the German marriage market, perhaps because they were related to the Danish royal house. For a prestigious house like the electoral Saxon house, there was less need to look for partners further down the ladder, although three ended up marrying into comital families. One of them was Anna, who married William of Orange in 1544; he had the title of count of Nassau in the Empire, but was also prince of Orange and he was certainly a better match than an ordinary count.

In contrast to the Oldenburg and Brunswick-Lüneburg children, almost all of the Saxons married. In fact, of the children reaching maturity, only one, Christian I's second daughter Dorothea, stayed unmarried. However, she still managed to secure an adequate position since she became abbess of Quedlinburg, a Lutheran *Reichsabtei*, and thus in fact the secular ruler

33 The kingdom of Bohemia was also an electorate, but it was held by the Austrian Habsburgs, who also held the imperial Crown, and were Catholics. Besides, the Habsburgs did not act as electors during the studied period; they re-entered the electoral collegium in 1708: Neuhaus, *Das Reich*, pp. 26–7. The electorate of the Palatinate was furthermore transferred to Catholic Bavaria for a period during the Thirty Years' War. A new Protestant electorate was created for Hannover in 1692, too late to have any influence in this study.

34 Including one margrave, one Count Palatine and one landgrave.

of a small territory. Of the four younger sons who did not follow a father or a brother as elector, two of them became prince-bishops, and two obtained small parts of the patrimony to rule in the *freundbrüderlicher Hauptvergleich* of 1657, which created secondary lines with limited sovereignty under the electoral house.<sup>35</sup> The Saxon electoral couples managed to give almost all of their children a ruling position of a sort.

The closeness of Electoral Saxony to the Catholic emperors did not result in any Catholic marital connections, except Anna's above-mentioned marriage to William of Orange, who, although brought up as a Lutheran, was officially a Catholic at that time.<sup>36</sup> Later on, he switched to Calvinism and became the champion of the Dutch Revolt against Catholic Spain. There was also only one connection with a Calvinist house: in 1570 August I's daughter Elisabeth married Johann Kasimir of the Palatinate-Simmern, who was a stout Calvinist; he later acted as regent of the Electoral Palatinate during his nephew's minority. This marriage proved unhappy, and Johann Kasimir ordered his wife to be placed under house arrest, accusing her of adultery. The religious difference may have played a part, and the Saxons never again married a Calvinist during the period. All of the spouses, except the Danes and the Sønderborgs, were sought from within the Empire. In this, Saxony shows fundamentally the same geographic and confessional profile as Oldenburg and Brunswick-Lüneburg.

## A Wider European Scope: The Danish Oldenburgs

During the period from Christian III to Christian V, the Oldenburgs of the royal house of Denmark-Norway produced twenty-five children who survived to at least twenty years of age. Of them, nineteen married, one of them twice, which makes twenty marriages. In a previous study, I concluded that the Danish Oldenburgs were part of a Northern German, Protestant web of princely marriage connections.<sup>37</sup> In the light of the present com-

35 See, e.g., Joachim Säckl: 'Herrschaftsbildung und dynastische Zeichensetzung: Die Sekundogeniturfürstentümer Sachsen-Weissenfels, Sachsen-Merseburg und Sachsen-Zeitz in der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts', in Vinzenz Czech (ed.), *Fürsten ohne Land: Höfische Pracht i den sächsischen Sekundogenituren Weissenfels, Merseburg und Zeitz* (Berlin 2009).

36 On this marriage in its context of dynastic politics, see Liesbeth Geevers, 'Family Matters: William of Orange and the Habsburgs after the Abdication of Charles V (1655–67)', in *Renaissance Quarterly* vol. 63 (2010), especially pp. 474–8.

37 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', p. 365; in that study, I also included the siblings of Christian III, which is the reason for the slightly differing numbers in the two studies. For a brief account in

parison, this conclusion must be partly reformulated. They participated in the Northern German, Lutheran marriage sphere, but had a higher status and a wider scope than even the electoral houses.

**Table 4. Marriage connections of the Danish Oldenburgs 1548–95**

Family of spouse	Sons	Daughters	Total
Royal	2	2	4
Electoral	2	4	6
Ducal etc.	6	4	10
Comital	0	0	0
Other	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>

Sources: See Appendix 1.

There were four connections with royal houses, the same number as for the Saxons, but while the Saxon connections were all to Denmark, the Danish connections were more widely dispersed. There was one marriage to the family of the Russian Tsar; this was Prince Magnus, who, in 1573, acted on his own, without the consent of his royal brother, King Frederik III. While it was therefore not a matter of dynastic politics, it still testifies to the broad horizon of a royal house.

The other royal spouses came from Scotland, England and Sweden, which meant that the Danish Oldenburgs had connections to all the Protestant kingdoms of Europe. But, unlike the other three houses under scrutiny here, they did not stay within the Lutheran sphere. In 1589, Princess Anna was wedded in Oslo (this was the only Danish royal marriage of the period to take place in Norway) to King James IV of Presbyterian Scotland, and in 1683 Prince Jørgen (George) married Anne of Anglican England in London. Two marriages below the royal level further underline the broader religious perspective: to the Calvinist houses of Hesse-Kassel and the Palatinate, in 1667 and 1671 respectively.<sup>38</sup>

English on Denmark during the period, see Knud J.V. Jespersen, *A History of Denmark* (Houndmills, 2004), pp. 30–45.

<sup>38</sup> It was, however, not easy to overcome the confessional hindrances; in the 1667 marriage, the future Queen Charlotte Amalie of Hesse-Kassel only got guarantees for keeping her Calvinist faith and the right to hold private Calvinist services after tough negotiations that threatened to spoil the project: Haas, *Fürstenehe*, pp. 171–5.



Most striking is that ducal families were the most frequent marriage connections of the Danish royal children, while not one single child had to be content with a count or a count's daughter.<sup>39</sup> Neither did they have to marry persons from non-reigning branches. Only two marriages fall outside the reigning circles: Magnus's Russian adventure, which was not sponsored by his home court, and Ulrik, prince bishop of Schwerin, who married a German noblewoman; the marriage was possibly only morganatic.<sup>40</sup> Three daughters married non-reigning princes, but their spouses were all waiting for a reigning position and obtained one relatively shortly after the marriage.<sup>41</sup> As mentioned, Prince Jørgen (George) married Anne of England and Scotland in 1683; her father, James, had a good chance of becoming king since his brother Charles II was childless; indeed, that was what happened on Charles's death in 1685. A Danish royal child could therefore count on a ruling position or something close to it on marriage.

Six children stayed unmarried, five of them younger sons. Before the late sixteenth century, younger sons could get a ruling position in the duchies of Schleswig-Holstein, but after that possibility disappeared due to the resistance of the nobility in the Duchies to their further participation, it was difficult to give them a position that would allow them to marry.<sup>42</sup> Christian IV's younger son Frederik is an exception that was explicitly motivated by the suspicion (which proved right) that the eldest son, Christian, would not produce an heir; a very clear case of dynastic securing.<sup>43</sup>

The Danish Oldenburgs formed part of the Lutheran, German web of princely relations, but were definitely situated in the uppermost echelons of it. They had wider connections, and were not as confined to Lutheran houses as we have seen in the other three cases. This also meant that their geographic scope was wider.

## Gender Variations and the Fate of the Younger Sons

As noted in the introduction, the younger sons have often been seen as a problem in dynastic securing for ruling houses. Having a certain number of

39 Included in the dukes is one *Landgraf*.

40 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', p. 353.

41 In 1548 Anna married the brother of the Elector of Saxony, who succeeded him in 1553; in 1666 Anna Sophie married the *Kurprinz* of Saxony, who became elector in 1680, and in 1671 Wilhelmine Ernestine married the *Kurprinz* of the Palatinate, who also became reigning elector in 1680.

42 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', p. 382–6.

43 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', p. 369.

younger sons was desirable to secure the inheritance if the oldest failed, but having too many married sons could pose a threat of side branches which could claim a share in the assets of the dynasty. This could explain the tendency, noted by several scholars, for daughters to marry more than sons.<sup>44</sup>

The Danish Oldenburgs fit well into this picture. Of nine younger sons reaching the age of twenty, five stayed unmarried. There were special circumstances surrounding the marriage of the four that did marry. Christian III's younger sons Magnus and Hans the Younger could marry since they had obtained an independent position (Magnus in the Baltic and Hans at Sønderborg). Christian IV's son Frederik married in 1643, since, as we have seen, his older brother Christian had not produced an heir despite being married for nine years. Jørgen (George) achieved a splendid match with the English royal family and moved to England. Only under such special circumstances were the younger Danish princes allowed to marry. Brunswick-Lüneburg follows a similar pattern, with six unmarried younger sons out of nine. Both Electoral Saxony and the county of Oldenburg, however, deviate from this pattern. All five younger Saxon sons in the sample married. It is worth looking at their situation.

Elector Christian II was childless, but his brother Johann Georg (I) married only two years after him, in 1604, and although Christian II died in 1611 without heirs, that could not have been foreseen seven years before. Johann Georg was administrator of the bishopric of Merseburg and thus had a ruling position of his own when he married. Johann Georg I's younger son August was reigning prince-archbishop of Magdeburg and also count of a smaller part of Saxony (Weissenfels). At the same time, his brother Christian obtained Saxony-Merseburg. Moritz, thrice married, had got Saxony-Zeitz, also at the same time (1657). Finally, the younger son of Johann Georg III, Friedrich August (August the Strong), married in 1693, at a time when his reigning brother (who actually died the next year) was still unmarried. The Saxon tactic was obviously to find positions for the younger sons in order to let them marry. It is also worth noting that a position as prince-bishop or administrator of a princely bishopric did not always exclude marriage.

Of the five younger sons of the county of Oldenburg, three married. The four sons of Johann V ruled the territory together for several years; two of the younger ones married. Anton, younger son of Anton I, married, but had by then already obtained the family inheritance of Delmenhorst as his own territory to rule.

44 See above p. 190.

Obviously, the unmarried status of the younger sons was not a general phenomenon. Some dynasties followed this pattern, but for others, it seems to have been a priority to find ways by which the younger sons could marry. It depended on what assets could be found at the disposal of the dynasty, and how willing the dynasty was to let the patrimony be divided, or let it be ruled in common. On an aggregate level, the study confirms the picture of a higher marriage frequency among the daughters than the sons, but it also shows that this was not always so in all princely houses.

Another pattern observed in previous studies was that sons were more likely to marry upwards, in status terms, and daughters downwards.<sup>45</sup> This too seems to be true on an aggregate level, but with individual variations. In the whole sample, ten men and six women married upwards, but there is also a slight majority of sons marrying downwards: twenty-four, compared with twenty-two daughters. This movement was most striking in Brunswick-Lüneburg, where two sons and no daughters 'climbed', while six daughters and only one son 'fell'. But on the other hand, several daughters of the county of Oldenburg moved upwards (five out of eleven), while it was only true of three Oldenburg sons (of six).

It is difficult to judge Saxony in this respect, since it was problematic for an electoral family, at the top of the hierarchy, to find spouses on the same level and with the same confession. The royal Danes could hardly rise at all, except by marrying an imperial offspring, which was hard to imagine for confessional and political reasons. Most of the Danes and the Saxons had to 'go down' (seventeen of the twenty-one Danes, and twenty of the twenty-five Saxons). Once again, the variations between the houses are striking, partly reflecting their position in the hierarchy, partly influenced by something best described as differing dynastic cultures.

### **A Web of Connections, but Moderately Dense**

With very few exceptions, the marriages of the four houses in the study took place within a marriage sphere that can be characterised as North European, Lutheran and basically, even for Denmark, confined to the Empire. There was a web of family connections, but how dense was it?

As we have seen, the patterns of the four houses were not identical. In total, our four houses had marriage connections to precisely fifty different

45 Above p. 190.

houses.<sup>46</sup> In fourteen cases, a princely house had connections to two of the four studied houses, in two cases to three of them; this was the Holstein-Gottorps and the Hohenzollerns of Brandenburg, who both had marriage connections to Denmark, Saxony and Brunswick-Lüneburg. But in the resting thirty-four cases, there was just a single connection. For example, the marriage of Katharina of Oldenburg to Count Albrecht II of Hoya in 1561 was the only Hoya marriage in the sample.

Some houses were, however, represented by several branches. The different Welf branches of Brunswick, such as Calenberg, Grubenhagen and Wolfenbüttel, seem to have been popular; they account for nine marriages to all the four houses combined in our study. There were status differences between the branches; while for instance Wolfenbüttel had connections to the royal Danes and the electoral Saxons, the Dannenbergs married the neighbouring ducal family in Lüneburg and the counts of Oldenburg. Another popular cluster was the Sønnerborgs; four of their different lines are recorded, accounting for nine marriages. Although only semi-reigning their tiny territories under the Danish king, and not in high esteem in Copenhagen before the 1670s,<sup>47</sup> among other houses they probably still had a high status as close relatives of the Danish royal house.

A few of the houses had several connections with the same house. The most intensive links were the marriages between the Danish Oldenburgs and the Saxons, with four marriages between 1548 and 1666.<sup>48</sup> This relationship between the leading Lutheran kingdom of Europe and the leading Lutheran principality of the Empire was important for both sides. This special relationship was not matched by any other in the sample; there are only three examples of two marriages between the same houses during the period.<sup>49</sup>

It is difficult to say if this should be seen as a dense web of relations or not. The number of connections seems relatively low for a period of a

46 Of the seventy-six marriages concluded to princely houses; i.e. excluding the two bourgeois marriages and the one noble marriage.

47 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', pp. 395–6, 399.

48 Knöfel, *Dynastie und Prestige*, p. 151, gives ten Saxons marriages with the Danish Oldenburgs for roughly the same period, but that is by counting the Holstein-Gottorps and the Sønnerborgs as belonging to the same dynasty. It is true that they were closely related, but during most of the period, they had cold or even hostile relations; Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', pp. 394–9. From Copenhagen's point of view, a Saxon marriage to one of the tiny Sønnerborg duchies would not have been regarded as a connection to the Danish royal house. This shows the danger in having a definition of 'dynasty' that focuses too much on lineage and inheritance, and not on the actually existing ruling houses.

49 Brandenburg and Saxony, Oldenburg and Saxony-Lauenburg, Saxony and Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel.

century and a half.<sup>50</sup> The houses within the Lutheran North European marriage sphere were thus not necessarily all closely related, although in many cases it would undoubtedly have been possible to find some family connection. The main impression is of a relatively loose web, where there was room for variation according to the individual preferences of the houses — what might be labelled different dynastic cultures — and practical circumstances, such as the supply and demand for marriage partners at any given time.

### Concluding Discussion

This study confirms that it is inappropriate to talk about a ‘European family of princes’.<sup>51</sup> The four houses under scrutiny belonged to a geographically relatively limited marriage sphere. In the scheme suggested by Heinz Durchhardt, this can be labelled the North German-Scandinavian sphere. This must, however, be further qualified, since confession was a defining feature. With very few exceptions, the marriages of these Lutheran houses took place with other Lutheran houses. This is especially true for the three German houses in the sample. The sheer geographical distance does not seem to have played the important role Durchhardt ascribes to it; there were a few marriages concluded with Lutheran houses at a greater distance, in southern Germany. This marriage sphere can best be characterised as Scandinavian-German-Lutheran.

This marriage sphere produced a web of relations, but a relatively loosely knit web. Some houses did not have any direct relationships with each other and only limited connections with houses that were prominent among the contacts of certain other houses. Status differences also dictated such variations, where the different echelons in the hierarchy had limited contacts with each other.

There were clear gender differences in the marriage patterns. As has been shown in other studies of German princely marriages, more sons than

50 This is in contrast to the marriage connections studied by Fichtner; she shows that both the Habsburgs and the Hohenzollerns choose partners within a relatively limited circle of other princely houses, or even within their own. Fichtner, ‘Dynastic Marriages’, pp. 249–50.

51 Schönplflug, *Die Heiraten*, pp. 265–75, reaches basically the same conclusion, although he focuses on the royal houses only and follows them over a longer period, including the nineteenth century when confessional barriers meant less; he states that there were more or less close connections between most houses and speaks about ‘a “European family of dynasties” consisting of different marriage spheres’ (p. 272).

daughters 'climbed up' the status ladder, and proportionally more daughters 'went down'; however, there was considerable variation between the houses. Also in line with previous research, which has pointed to a tendency to let as few sons marry as possible in order not to create side branches, the younger sons of the Danish Oldenburgs and the Brunswick-Lüneburg Welfs were more likely to remain unmarried than their sisters. But this was not true for the German Oldenburgs or for the Saxon Albertine Wettins. There were obviously several ways of solving the dynasty-securing problem of what to do with the younger sons.

In a previous study, I characterised the Danish Oldenburgs as belonging to a northern German, Lutheran marriage sphere, on a par with the electoral houses of the Empire.<sup>52</sup> After this comparative study, it seems more correct to place them at the very top of this marriage sphere, and even partly outside it. As a royal dynasty, they could forge connections with other royal houses, and they had a slightly broader approach to the confessional variable, with Anglican and Calvinist marriages. Still, most of their connections were with German Lutheran houses. For the latter, achieving a Danish royal match must have enhanced their prestige and thus helped to shape their dynasty formation.

How can this marriage pattern best be explained? As mentioned in the introduction, many scholars have underlined the political nature of princely marriages. Both traditional foreign-policy goals of the states in question and dynastic politics, such as maximising the dynasty's influence and making possible future inheritance claims, have been seen by some authors as the most important factors when arranging princely marriages. Others have stressed social and cultural factors, such as confession and, especially, equality of status.

These differing emphases might, to some degree, depend on the methods. In Haas's study of Hesse-Kassel, he bases his conclusions partly on learned treatises and partly on seven case studies of marriages in the period 1649–1740. The treatises strongly stress that reasons of state always must take precedence over the personal wishes of rulers and their offspring.<sup>53</sup> Such treatises are, however, normative sources, not descriptions of reality, and the strong emphasis on denigrating interests other than those of the state raises suspicions that such a conflict did indeed exist. The case studies deal exclusively with reigning or future reigning princes, either heirs to the throne of Hesse-Kassel marrying foreign princesses, or Hessian princesses

52 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', p. 355.

53 Haas, *Fürstenehe*, pp. 77–144.

marrying heirs or rulers in other territories; in other words, exactly the kind of marriages where we can suspect high politics to have been of particular importance.<sup>54</sup> As often in dynastic studies, the vertical aspect of the dynasty, the inheritance, is given priority over the horizontal: the dynasty as a network of the living members of a family at a given time, including all siblings. Focusing on the horizontal aspect can give new insights into dynasty formation.

When Knöfel studied the marriages of the Saxon houses and concluded that they were highly political, she did take all marriages into account, including younger sons and daughters who did not marry ruling princes. But she admits that in many cases it is not possible to find any political considerations in the sources. She claims, however, that this is because it was obvious for contemporaries that political considerations were important, and because many negotiations were carried out through personal communication by envoys that did not find its way into documents.<sup>55</sup> This is a classical *e silentio* argument, and such arguments are always less convincing.

In the present study, including all marriages of all siblings, it is not possible to analyse the details of every marriage negotiation. The same is true of Schönplflug, studying all Hohenzollern marriages from 1640 to 1918, who underlines the importance of status equality.<sup>56</sup> With this method, drawing conclusions from aggregate figures, it is easier to catch sight of the social pattern of the marriages than the concrete political considerations, and the quest for status equality emerges as the most likely explanation of the pattern.<sup>57</sup>

This quest for status equality shows itself in the different marriage patterns of the four dynasties. In Schönplflug's terms, the matching was 'arithmetic'. It was not always possible to find partners at exactly the same hierarchic level. Some had to be content with going a step down — but usually only one step. The ducal Brunswicks could marry a comital spouse if no suitable ducal one was available, but preferably not any non-reigning count (this only happened in one case). The Electoral Saxon house had to

54 Haas, *Fürstenehe*, pp. 145–322.

55 Knöfel, *Dynastie und Prestige*, p. 6.

56 This is not to say that Schönplflug disregards the political side of the marriages, which figures among other factors in his analysis; Schönplflug, *Die Heiraten*, pp. 155–9, p. 281.

57 Knöfel also lays stress on status relations, but her key concept *Prestige* seems to differ from Schönplflug's *Ebenbürtigkeit*; according to her, the dynasties strove to rise in the hierarchy by marrying upwards and avoid 'social death' following downward marriages (Knöfel, *Dynastie und Prestige*, p. 29), which is a more power-oriented interpretation.

find spouses among the counts only in a few cases; dukes were preferred. There was also a quest to try to move up the scale, which the Saxons best managed to do with their four marriages into the Danish royal family. The German Oldenburgs mostly stayed within the circles of other comital families, but occasionally advanced to ducal level.

This is of course not to say that there were no political calculations involved in the marriages. Princely marriages can undoubtedly be called dynastic politics; they contributed to dynasty formation and dynasty securing. At times, they could also be clearly motivated by foreign-policy concerns, although that has not been studied here.<sup>58</sup> It is, however, difficult to discern any systematic foreign-policy goals. There were no stable foreign political alliances with repeated marriages, except the Danish-Saxon connection. There is no obvious geopolitical pattern, either. There is more of dynastic politics in them; a good marriage increased the social capital of the dynasty, a marriage with a partner of equal status kept it intact.

It is to some extent a matter of what term you chose: the desire to retain the house's social position can be labelled dynastic politics, or it can be seen as a cultural preference. I am inclined to interpret my results in a socio-cultural manner; there must have been a strong will among princely couples to let their offspring continue to lead their lives at an appropriate status level. Schönplflug hints at something of the same when talking about 'another only indirectly political function of the marriages': 'the support of the family members'.<sup>59</sup> This partly material, partly cultural aspect is clearly expressed in all marriage contracts concerning Danish princesses during the period: on marriage, they were entitled to 'stately and princely jewellery, fine objects, clothes, silver tableware and others, as it a daughter of the king of Denmark ... well befits and behoves'.<sup>60</sup>

In purely political interpretations, princely children are often seen as mere chess pieces in a power game; it was never a question of their preferences or happiness, they had to sacrifice themselves for the state and/

58 An obvious example is the marriage between Karl XI of Sweden and Ulrika Eleonora of Denmark as part of the peace deal after the war between Denmark-Norway and Sweden. One could also mention, for example, the marriage the year before between Charles II of Spain and Louis XIV's niece Marie Louise, see Silvia Z. Mitchell, 'Royal Women, Marriage Diplomacy and International Politics at the Spanish, French and Imperial Courts, 1665–1679', in Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (eds), *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500* (London and New York 2016), pp. 86–106.

59 Schönplflug, *Die Heiraten*, p. 280.

60 Quoted in Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation', p. 356.



or the dynasty.<sup>61</sup> There were of course what we today would label forced marriages and marriages that turned out to be unhappy, but in principal the children would probably have agreed with their parents about the need to choose partners within an appropriate segment of the princely hierarchy, in order to uphold a certain level of status and material welfare, or if possible enhance it.

A search for partners within the right echelons of the status hierarchy and of the right confession provides the factors that best explain the pattern we have seen in our four houses. The outcome of the search naturally also depended on the supply of potential spouses and certainly on considerations of dynastic politics as well as state foreign politics. But the patterns of the four houses were not the same. Some strove harder than others to give all their children a ruling position, and some directed their interest more towards certain parts of this marriage sphere than others. Perhaps we can talk about differing dynastic cultures within the same marriages sphere, leading to different paths in dynasty formation.

### Appendix 1. Children of Four Princely Houses from the Mid-sixteenth Century to the Late Seventeenth Century

Only children who survived to the age of twenty are listed. The grooms or fathers-in-law with princely titles were all reigning princes except when otherwise noted. 'Not fully reigning' means that the daughter's bridegroom or the son's father-in-law did not rule a territory with full rights; for instance, this is the case with the Danish Sønderborg lines or the Saxon *Sekundogenituren*. 'Daughters' and 'sons' refers here to all close relatives of the ruler who married during the period; sometimes, the situation involved a reigning brother who was responsible for marrying off his siblings.

Main sources: Detlev Schwenicke, *Europäische Stammtafeln. Neue Folge, Band I.1* (Frankfurt a.M. 1998), tables 23–25, 167–168; *Band I.3* (Frankfurt a.M. 2000), table 278; *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* (<https://biografiskleksikon.lex.dk/>). Complementary information from *Deutsche Biografien* (<https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/>) and German Wikipedia (<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Hauptseite>). The internet sites were accessed on several occasions during 2020.

61 'Primarily, the prince used his family members as dynastic resources and these dynasty members had to yield to his interests and plans'; Haas, *Fürstenehe*, p. 328.

**County of Oldenburg (including Delmenhorst): Daughters**

<b>Daughter</b>	<b>Married in</b>	<b>Groom</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Anna b. 1501	1530	Enno II of Ostfriesland	count	
Katharina b. 1538	1561	Albrecht II of Hoya	count	
Anna b. 1539	1566	Johann Günther I of Schwarzburg(-Sonderhausen)	count	co-regent; sole regent in Sonderhausen 1571
Klara b. 1547	unmarried			
Anna Sophia b. 1579	unmarried			
Maria Elisabeth b. 1581	unmarried			
Katharina b. 1582	1633	Albrecht Friederich of Arnstein-Barby(-Mühlingen)	count	co-regent
Magdalena b. 1585	1603	Rudolf of Anhalt-Zerbst	prince	reigning in Zerbst after partition in 1603
Sophia Ursula b. 1601	1633	Albrecht Friedrich of Arnstein-Barby(-Mühlingen)	count	co-regent
Katharina Elisabeth b. 1603	unmarried			
Anna b. 1605	1634	Johan Christian of Holstein-Sønderborg	duke	not fully reigning; 'Abgeteilter Herr'
Klara b. 1606	1645	August Philipp of Holstein-Sønderborg-Beck	duke	not reigning
Sibylla Maria b. 1608	unmarried			
Dorothea b. 1609	unmarried			
Sidonia b. 1611	1649	August Philipp of Holstein-Sønderborg-Beck	duke	not fully reigning; 'Abgeteilter Herr'; first married to Anna (above)
Aemilie Antonia b. 1614	1638	Ludwig Günther I of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt	count	
Juliana b. 1615	1652	Manfred I of Württemberg-Weitlingen	duke	not fully reigning; 'Herrschaft' under Württemberg

**County of Oldenburg (including Delmenhorst): Sons**

<b>Son</b>	<b>Married in</b>	<b>Bride</b>	<b>Status of father</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Johan VI b. 1500	unknown	Anneke Meyer	unknown	relinquished his ruling rights, probably before the marriage
Georg b. 1503	unknown	Heilke	unknown	relinquished his ruling rights, probably before the marriage
Christoph b. 1504	unmarried			
Anton I b. 1505	1537	Sophie of Sachsen-Lauenburg	duke	
Johann VII b. 1540	1576	Elisabeth of Schwarzburg-Blanckenburg	count	co-regent
Christian b. 1544	unmarried			
Anton II b. 1550	1576	Sibylle Elisabeth of Brunswick-Dannenberg	duke	not reigning
Anton Günther b. 1583	1635	Sophia Katharina of Sønderborg	duke	not fully reigning; 'Abgeteilter Herr'
Christian IX b. 1612	unmarried			

**Duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg: Daughters**

<b>Daughter</b>	<b>Married in</b>	<b>Groom</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Margarete b. 1534	1559	Johann I of Mansfeld-Hinerort	count	heir to the throne, reigning from 1660
Elisabeth Ursula b.1539	1561	Otto IV of Schaumburg	count	
Magdalene Sophie b. 1540	1561	Arnold of Bentheim-Steinfurt	count	not reigning
Sophie b. 1541	1561	Poppo XII of Henneberg-Scheusingen	count	(possibly wrong in Schwennecke?)
Sophie b. 1563	1579	Georg Friedrich of Brandenburg-Ansbach	margrave	
Elisabeth b. 1565	1586	Friedrich of Hohenlohe-Langenburg	count	likely governing a part of the county from 1580

Daughter	Married in	Groom	Status	Comments
Dorothea b. 1570	1586	Karl I of Pfalz-Zweibrücken-Birkenfeld	count palatine	
Clara b. 1571	1593	Wilhelm I of Schwarzburg-Frankenhausen	count	co-regent and founder of side branch
Anne Ursula b. 1572	unmarried			
Margarethe b. 1573	1599	Johann Casimir of Sachsen-Coburg	duke	founder of the Coburg line
Maria b. 1575	unmarried			
Sibylle b. 1584	1617	Julius Ernst of Brunswick-Dennenberg	duke	not fully reigning; 'Herrschaft'
Sophie Dorothea b. 1666	1682	Georg Ludwig of Brunswick-Calenberg	duke	not reigning

#### Duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg: Sons

Son	Married in	Bride	Status of father	Comments
Frantz Otto b. 1530	1559	Elisabeth Magdalena of Brandenburg	elector	
Friedrich b. 1532	unmarried			
Heinrich b. 1533	1569	Ursula of Saxony-Lauenburg	duke	
Wilhelm b. 1535	1561	Dorothea of Denmark	king	
Ernst II b. 1564	unmarried			
Christian b. 1566	unmarried			
August the older b. 1568	unmarried			
Friedrich IV b. 1574	unmarried			
Magnus b. 1575	unmarried			
Georg b. 1582	1617	Anna Eleonore of Hesse-Darmstadt	landgrave	
Johann b. 1583	unmarried			
Christian Ludwig b. 1622	1653	Dorothea of Sønderborg-Glücksburg	duke	not fully reigning
Georg Wilhelm b. 1624	1676	Eleonore d'Olbreuse	marquess	French Huguenot nobility

**Electorate of Saxony: Daughters**

<b>Daughter</b>	<b>Married in</b>	<b>Groom</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Anna b. 1544	1561	William the Silent of Nassau and Orange	prince	count of Nassau-Dillenburg, prince of Orange
Elisabeth b. 1552	1570	Johann Kasimir of Pfalz-Simmern	count palatine	not reigning (administering the Palatinate for his under-aged nephew from 1583)
Dorothea b. 1563	1585	Heinrich Julius of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel	duke	prince-bishop at time of marriage, reigning duke in 1589
Anna b. 1567	1586	Johann Kasimir of Saxony-Coburg-Eisenach	duke	co-regent
Sophie b. 1587	1610	Franz I of Pomerania-Stettin	duke	prince-bishop at time of marriage, reigning duke in 1618
Dorothea b. 1591	unmarried			reigning abbess of Quedlinburg in 1607
Sophia Eleonore b. 1609	1627	Georg II of Hesse-Darmstadt	landgrave	
Maria Elisabeth b. 1610	1630	Friedrich III of Holstein-Gottorp	duke	
Magdalena Sibylla b. 1617	1634	Christian of Denmark	prince	elected successor to the throne but died before accession
Erdmuthe b. 1644	1662	Christian Ernst of Brandenburg-Bayreuth	margrave	

**Electorate of Saxony: Sons**

<b>Son</b>	<b>Married in</b>	<b>Bride</b>	<b>Status of father</b>	<b>Comments</b>
August b. 1526	1548	Anna of Denmark	king	
Christian I b. 1560	1582	Sophie of Brandenburg	elector	
Christian II b. 1583	1602	Hedevig of Denmark	king	
Johann Georg I b. 1585	1604	Sibylle Elisabeth of Württemberg	duke	

Son	Married in	Bride	Status of father	Comments
	1638	Magdalena Sibylle of Prussia	duke	
August b. 1589	1612	Elisabeth of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel	duke	
Johann Georg II b. 1613	1638	Magdalena Sibylle of Brandenburg-Kulmbach-Bayreuth	margrave	
August b. 1614	1647	Anna Maria of Mecklenburg-Schwerin	duke	
	1672	Johanna Walpurgis of Leiningen-Westerburg-Schaumburg	count	
Christian I b. 1615	1650	Christina of Sønderborg-Glücksburg	duke	not fully reigning; 'Abgeteilter Herr'
Moritz b. 1619	1650	Sophie Hedwig of Sønderborg-Glücksburg	duke	not fully reigning; 'Abgeteilter Herr'
	1656	Dorothea Maria of Saxony-Weimar	duke	
	1676	Sophie Elisabeth of Sønderborg-Wiesenburg	duke	not reigning
Johan Georg III b. 1647	1666	Anna Sophie of Denmark	king	
Johann Georg IV b. 1668	1692	Eleonore of Saxony-Coburg-Eisenach	duke	
Friedrich August b. 1670	1693	Christine Eberhardine of Brandenburg-Bayreuth	duke	

### The Danish Oldenburgs: Daughters

Daughter	Married in	Groom	Status	Comments
Anna b. 1532	1548	August of Saxony	duke	not reigning; reigning elector after his brother in 1653
Dorothea b. 1546	1661	Wilhelm of Brunswick-Lüneburg	duke	
Elisabeth b. 1573	1590	Heinrich Julius of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel	duke	
Anna b. 1574	1589	James VI of Scotland	king	

Daughter	Married in	Groom	Status	Comments
Augusta b. 1580	1596	Johann Adolf of Holstein-Gottorp	duke	
Hedevig b. 1581	1602	Christian II of Saxony	elector	
Anna Sophie b. 1647	1666	Johan Georg III of Saxony	<i>Kurprinz</i>	heir to the electorate; reigning from 1680
Frederikke Amalie b. 1649	1667	Christian Albrecht of Holstein-Gottorp	duke	
Vilhelmine Ernestine b. 1650	1671	Karl of the Palatinate	<i>Kurprinz</i>	heir to the electorate; reigning from 1680
Ulrikke Eleonora b. 1655	1680	Karl XI of Sweden	king	
Sophie Hedevig b. 1677	unmarried			

### The Danish Oldenburgs: Sons

Son	Married in	Bride	Status of father	Comments
Frederik II b. 1534	1572	Sophie of Mecklenburg-Güstrow	duke	
Magnus b. 1540	1573	Marija Staritsa	prince	cousin of the tsar
Hans the Younger b. 1545	1568	Elisabeth of Brunswick-Grubenhagen	duke	
	1588	Agnes Hedevig of Saxony-Anhalt	duke	widow after the elector of Saxony
Christian IV b. 1577	1597	Anna Cathrine of Brandenburg	prince-bishop	elector 1598
Ulrik b. 1578	unmarried			
Hans b. 1582	unmarried			
Christian b. 1603	1634	Magdalena Sibylle of Saxony	elector	
Frederik III b. 1609	1643	Sophie Amalie Brunswick-Calenberg	duke	
Ulrik b. 1611	unknown	Katharina Hahn	noble	
Christian V b. 1647	1667	Charlotte Amalie of Hesse-Kassel	landgrave	
Jörgen (George) b. 1653	1683	Anne of England	king	
Frederik b. IV 1671	1695	Louise of Mecklenburg-Güstrow	duke	

Son	Married in	Bride	Status of father	Comments
Christian b. 1775	unmarried			
Carl b. 1680	unmarried			

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## About the Author

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# 10. The Frustrations of Being the Spare: Second Sons in the French Monarchy and their Increasingly Limited Roles in Politics and Society, 1560s–1780s

*Jonathan Spangler*

**Abstract:** This chapter examines the changing role of the younger brother of the king in the monarchy of France, from the Wars of Religion to the Revolution. It traces the evolution of the relationship between these princely siblings, from one of competition and a desire for independence to a tighter bond of loyalty and an understanding that the needs of the dynasty must always proceed individual desires. Like other major grandees in this period, they recognised that cooperation with the Crown as an embodiment of the state was usually more beneficial for their personal and dynastic success than competing with it. This was not always a smooth transition, and the first two princes examined here, François, duke of Alençon, and Gaston, duke of Orléans, spent much of their lives in rebellion against royal authority of their elder brothers. The second pair, Philippe, duke of Orléans, and Louis-Stanislas, count of Provence, learned to express independent authority in different, less threatening, ways, notably in the patronization of arts and architecture, the development of private properties, and the cultivation of clients and favourites separate from those of the monarch.

**Keywords:** Bourbons, siblings, princes, patronization, dynasticism

‘... in this country, the brother of the King has no other will than that of the King  
himself.’

— Elisabeth-Charlotte, duchess of Orléans (19 May 1699)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance de Madame, Duchesse d’Orléans*, vol. I, p. 225: ‘... dans ce pays-ci, le frère du Roi n’a d’autre volonté que celle du Roi même’.

The early modern period is recognised as the crucial period in the political history of Europe in which dynastic states were gradually — or in some cases revolutionarily — transformed into nation states, and the role of monarchical institutions (such as the court) reduced in favour of more representational forms of government. In looking at this transformation, historians have studied the individual histories of monarchs or of the court more generally, but until recently have overlooked the roles played by other members of the ruling dynasty: wives, siblings, children, cousins. With the rise of scholarly interest in gender, for example, the number of focused studies on queenship has risen, and especially studies that focus on its place in the development of the state.<sup>2</sup> An important step forward in expanding this further was taken by Katia Béguin, whose study of the second family of France, the princes of Condé, cousins of the king, demonstrated how a shift in mentality occurred at this level of the aristocratic hierarchy, whereby the *grandes* of France recognised that cooperation with the Crown as embodiment of the state was more beneficial for their dynastic success than competing with it.<sup>3</sup> By 1660, the Condé family were the strongest allies, rather than competitors, of the French monarchy, an alliance solidified through marital and patronage ties — and it was a two-way street: they offered complete loyalty and lent their entire clientele network to the service of the Crown, and in return the Crown ensured they remained at the top of the hierarchy through fiscal privileges, appointment to the most important court offices and provincial governorships.<sup>4</sup> My own work on the house of Lorraine-Guise in the seventeenth century arrived at mostly similar conclusions: the highest aristocrats saw the benefits of working in partnership with the monarchy, after a century of challenge, conflict and division, from the Wars of Religion to the Fronde.<sup>5</sup> By the eighteenth century, this family too was completely secure in its position at court and in the provinces<sup>6</sup> — they had not been ‘tamed’, as the older historiography assured us, but had formed a partnership that was mutually beneficial, to

2 For example, Cosandey, *La Reine de France*; or Mitchell, *Queen, Mother, and Stateswoman*.

3 Béguin, *Les Princes de Condé*.

4 In particular, this was secured through marriages to a niece of Cardinal Richelieu in 1641; a niece of Cardinal Mazarin in 1654; and marriages to illegitimate daughters of Louis XIV in 1680 and 1685. In return, they held the prestigious posts of Grand Maître de France and Governor of Burgundy to the end of the *Ancien Régime*.

5 Spangler, *The Society of Princes*. A similar argument is made in Rowlands's study of the high nobility and the army, *The Dynastic State and the Army*, notably for the Montmorency-Luxembourg family.

6 Spangler, ‘Holders of the Keys’, pp. 155–77.

themselves but also arguably beneficial to the state as it allowed it to grow and evolve in a stable environment, without the continual threat of division and instability that characterised the reign, most notably, of Louis XIII.<sup>7</sup>

Another crucial element of this story of consolidation of government was the position of the monarch's younger brothers. Throughout the history of any monarchy, the younger siblings of kings have posed challenges to authority, as someone raised in the same manner, with the same lineage and princely aspirations, and often as the recognised heir to the throne until the monarch himself produced an heir. Courtiers and other elites were always therefore keen to maintain awareness of the royal brothers' feelings and their aspirations for power as, given the nature of human health and divine providence in the pre-modern world, royal power could shift from one sibling to the next at the shortest notice. Royal brothers were thus often seen as a threat — and this could turn into the threat of an ambitious royal uncle in the next generation, following the succession of a minor king. This chapter will examine the lives of four second sons in the French monarchy, their efforts to maintain their independence and authority as members of the princely society, and the counter efforts employed by the monarchy and its advisors to try to limit this same independence and, as with the Bourbon-Condé or Lorraine-Guise families, to turn them into unquestionably loyal supporters of the monarchy. Early modern France is an ideal historical laboratory for this topic in providing a nearly continual series of case studies — kings with younger brothers — which allows us to see the change in their relationship over time, from the 1560s to the 1780s.<sup>8</sup>

The shift can be best seen in the contrast between a desire for individual glory and a recognition of the importance of a united dynastic front. The first of the four princes in this survey, the duke of Alençon, spent much of his career in defiance of the wishes of his older brother, King Henry III, whether in outright revolt or in pursuing his own independent foreign policy. He argued for example, in July 1578, that he was defying the King's

7 See the now classic studies: Jouanna, *Le devoir de révolte*; and Constant, *Les conjurateurs*.

8 This chapter is based on my monograph, *Monsieur*. It focuses on the careers of four men known as 'Monsieur', omitting Henri, duke of Anjou, who later in life became king as Henry III, and is thus frequently studied on his own. The count of Provence too became king, as Louis XVIII, though not until after the French Revolution, in very different circumstances, and thus there is another 'Monsieur' during the Restoration, his brother the count of Artois, who also became king, as Charles X. Across this period, only Henry IV and Louis XV had no younger brothers. Certainly there are prominent examples of younger brothers of kings in other monarchies — James, duke of York for Charles II of England; Prince Heinrich, for Frederick II of Prussia; the Cardinal-Infante Fernando for Philip IV of Spain; and so on — but there is less of an inter-generational continuity for these monarchies.

orders forbidding him from aiding the Dutch in their revolt against Spain because ‘as a prince of France’ he could not ignore pleas for assistance, and was pleased to act as their prince, even as a figurehead, in the years that followed, despite the problems it caused for his brother’s foreign policy back in France.<sup>9</sup> Just over two centuries later, during the Assembly of the Notables called in 1788 to address the crisis of government in France, the count of Provence, younger brother of Louis XVI, presided over the only segment of the bureau that voted in favour of changing the composition of the Estates General (doubling the third), but also called for moderation in any reforms and especially continued respect for the King<sup>10</sup> — this despite his support in private for, in some instances, radical change and criticism of the monarchy and even the monarch, as seen in pamphlets printed with Provence’s tacit support.<sup>11</sup>

The four men, known at court as ‘Monsieur’ or ‘Monsieur, frère unique du roi’, are François, duke of Alençon (1555–84); Gaston, duke of Orléans (1608–60); Philippe, duke of Orléans (1640–1701); and Louis-Stanislas, count of Provence (1755–1824). In this essay I will focus on the writings, where possible, and the actions of these princes that demonstrate an important shift from their willingness to take up arms against their brothers to a desire instead to maintain harmony within the family and within the realm. Instead of a near persistent life of rebellion and mistrust, which characterised the careers of the first two younger brothers, by the time of the second two we see the emergence of an alternative form of expressing princely power, notably through patronage of the arts, building and collecting. Probably unintentionally — since the main goal of any dynasty was to perpetuate its own power, not to forge new political realities — this shift contributed in the long run to the establishment of the modern state: a state governed not through brute force but through reason.

## The History of the Spare

From the earliest days of hereditary kingship, there have always been tensions between having too few heirs and having too many. With too few, there

9 Holt, *The Duke of Anjou*, p. 101, as noted by the Venetian ambassador, Hieronimo Lippomano, 9 July 1578, in *Calendar of State Papers, Venice*, vol. VII, pp. 579–82.

10 Mansel, *Louis XVIII*, p. 44. The deliberations of the Bureau de Monsieur over the doubling of the third are printed in *Procès-Verbal de l'Assemblée des Notables*, pp. 101–8. Lever, *Louis XVIII*, p. 116, points out that the public knew that this was the view of the Prince himself.

11 See below.

is uncertainty about the future of the tribe or kingdom — which clans will struggle for power when the current leader dies? — and with too many, there is inevitable strife between brothers (or sisters) over who will succeed or how power will be divided. Either situation is bad for nascent state building, and pre-modern communities recognised this, so regulations evolved that would determine rights of succession, though this process was slow and developed over many centuries. Eventually, leading warrior families became recognised as royal dynasties, adhered to these regulations, or fought to change them in order to legitimise their continued hold on power.<sup>12</sup> Some communities preferred election, with the most able leader chosen by the aristocracy from amongst a select dynastic pool; others developed a system whereby the most senior dynastic male (in age, not direct lineage) took power when a king died; and still others adopted primogeniture to ensure a smooth succession from father to eldest son in the hopes of avoiding civil war.

In France, once primogeniture was established in the eleventh century, the royal state could build and grow, in contrast to the earlier Carolingian world in which the kingdom continued to be divided and sub-divided in each generation, following ancient Germanic practice. The Capetians went even further and made certain this succession was secure by crowning the eldest son within a king's lifetime ('association').<sup>13</sup> This was good for the dynasty, and arguably good for what we would later call the state — though the idea of dividing the kingdom between siblings did not disappear entirely<sup>14</sup> — but it was not so good for those younger sons who previously might have been given a subsidiary kingdom to rule and now found themselves excluded from power. At first the problem was solved by marrying second sons to wealthy heiresses, and founding lineages based on these inherited properties (and taking their names as new dynasties: Vermandois, Dreux, Courtenay). From the early thirteenth century, a new system emerged — soon emulated by western monarchies from Portugal to Scotland — by which a portion of the royal domain was set aside to be ruled autonomously by a younger son, an apanage, which nevertheless remained part of the royal estates as a whole,

12 See the introduction and various chapters in Rodrigues, Santos Silva and Spangler (eds), *Dynastic Change*; and Chapter 2 ('Dynasty: Reproduction and Succession') in Duindam, *Dynasties*.

13 Lewis, *Royal Succession in Capetian France*. For a succinct recent overview of pre-modern Europe's succession systems, see Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, pp. 3–4; and pp. 89–98, for the emergence of designating an heir within a king's lifetime — which was not original nor unique to the Capetians, but they were the first to normalise the practice.

14 Following the death of Louis X in 1316, his brothers Philippe and Charles debated whether they should divide the kingdom, and some suggested a third part should go to sister Isabella's husband, Edward II. Chaplais, 'Un message de Jean de Fiennes à Edouard II', pp. 145–8.

and would revert back to the Crown in default of an heir. At first, as in the case of Artois and Burgundy, these heirs were not specified as male only, but following the loss of those provinces through female succession, this was soon rectified.<sup>15</sup> A good example of a blend of these two systems is seen in Robert of France, younger son of Louis IX, who was given the rather small county of Clermont as his apanage but later married the heiress of the lordship of Bourbon. This lordship was then erected into a dukedom for their son in 1327, and the house of Bourbon was born.<sup>16</sup> By the fourteenth century, the apanage system was well established, and we see the pattern already of giving the duchies of Orléans, Anjou, Touraine, Berry and others along the Loire Valley to younger sons, and the establishment of cadet branches that sometimes lasted several generations (the two houses of Anjou being the most prominent).

But the history of the dukes of Anjou points to a second mechanism that was employed to relieve tensions between kings and their younger brothers: foreign conquest. Encouraged by their elder brothers to venture abroad, they established an empire that stretched from the Mediterranean to the Baltic, occupying the thrones of Sicily, Hungary, Poland and even Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, they too were subject to nature's whim or divine will, and to the regulations of the French apanage system, so when they died out, not only did their sizeable landholdings within the kingdom return to the Crown, so too did their claims to foreign principalities. On the death in 1480 of René, duke of Anjou, king of Sicily, for example, his heir (ultimately) was his cousin King Louis XI. The king of France thus re-incorporated the duchy of Anjou and added the county of Provence to the royal domain; his successor, Charles VIII, went further and used the Angevin succession to launch his own claims to the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily.<sup>18</sup>

Another force that became more sharply defined in the later Middle Ages was the idea of dynasty itself, and by extension a shared right to rule, transmitted through the blood, a 'corporate monarchy'. This was exhibited in the fifteenth century in the senior princes of the blood controlling the king when he was weak (Charles VI) or rebelling against him when he was strong (Louis XI). In 1465, several princes led by the duke of Bourbon allied

15 For the history of the apanage see Wood, *The French Apanages*; and more recently Bula, *L'Apanage du comte d'Artois*.

16 Bartlett, *Blood Royal*, p. 199.

17 Tonnerre and Verry (eds), *Les Princes Angevins*.

18 Kekewich, *The Good King*; de Mérindol, *Le Roi René*.

against Louis XI and declared a motivation of restoring proper government and reducing taxes in the name of public good (so the ensuing conflict is labelled the War of the Public Weal, or *Guerre du Bien Public*). They did not wish to depose the King, but to rule alongside him as members of his dynasty, his *conseillers-nés* (counsellors by birth).<sup>19</sup> Over three centuries later, in 1791, the exiled count of Provence and his brother the count of Artois wrote a public letter to Louis XVI admonishing him for having accepted the revolutionary Constitution, and reminding him that he was merely a usufructuary or 'caretaker' of the Bourbon Crown, and that they too had interests in maintaining its power and its prestige. In a later letter, Provence even accused the King that he was 'degrading the throne with your own hands'.<sup>20</sup> This idea of the corporate nature of the French crown, belonging to all of its dynastic members, not just the head, was thus a strong one, and outlived the *Ancien Régime* itself. In its own way, this was an expression that the state was more important than the individual who ruled it, an expression of the Kantorowiczian idea of the 'king's two bodies', one physical and temporary, and one spiritual and undying.

Despite the continued clash between the ideologies of corporate and absolute monarchy, overall, the dual dynastic strategy of apanage and overseas conquest was good for the French monarchy and good for younger royal sons. By the mid-sixteenth century, however, European attitudes towards both domestic and international power were changing. At home, monarchs were less keen to share power with over-powerful subjects, even members of their own extended dynasty — a point highlighted by the clash between François I and the duke of Bourbon in the 1520s.<sup>21</sup> Abroad, with the rise of more regulated and systematic forms of diplomacy, outright conquests of kingdoms by force were looked upon less favourably. As a result, while apanages were still created for younger French princes — the two younger sons of François I, for example, received Orléans and Angoulême — they were increasingly limited in the scope of their authority. Regulations governing apanages were much more strictly codified, particularly in the reigns of

19 Favier, *Louis XI*, pp. 462–4.

20 Archives des Affaires Étrangères (*hereafter* AAE), MD, France 588, no. 12, Provence and Artois to Louis XVI, 10 September 1791; Feuillet de Conches (ed.), *Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Madame Élisabeth*, vol. IV, p. 261, Provence to Louis XVI, 3 December 1791.

21 Charles, duke of Bourbon (1490–1527), was Constable of France, the highest position in the French military. He was also heir to the throne after Francis I until the latter began to have sons. He was denied honours he thought were his due, and when the King tried to remove some of his hereditary lands, went into service of Emperor Charles V and was stripped of all lands and titles (1523).



Charles IX in the 1560s and Henry III in the 1580s.<sup>22</sup> And while younger sons were still encouraged to be valiant military commanders — see the successful career of the duke of Anjou in the 1560s before he became king as Henry III in 1574 — they were no longer encouraged to go abroad to seek conquest, for fear of disrupting the diplomatic balance of power established by major peace conferences like that of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559.<sup>23</sup>

Yet, as actual political power was increasingly denied to younger brothers and to other members of the extended ruling clan,<sup>24</sup> ceremonial and honorific power was increasingly centred on them instead. By the 1570s, they became known more formally as ‘princes of the blood’, descendants of Saint Louis, those with potential to inherit the throne.<sup>25</sup> Their blood was thus sacred and they needed to be elevated above all other aristocrats in the kingdom. In particular that meant the powerful princely families like the Lorraine-Guise, Savoie-Nemours and Gonzague-Nevers, or aristocratic clans recently raised up by means of ducal titles, previously restricted to royal princes, like Montmorency or La Trémoille. The princes of the blood were given precedence in all things over these ducal families; they were the first ceremonially in coronations and rituals, and the first in line for pre-eminent military commands or provincial governorships. To elevate the brother of the king over even these princes, therefore, but without giving him extensive powers, it became the custom to address him with the simplest and thus the grandest honorific title possible: ‘Monsieur’. The first to use this honorific title, though sporadically, was the younger brother of Charles IX, Henri, duke of Anjou.<sup>26</sup> When he himself succeeded to the throne in 1574 as Henry III, his younger brother François, duke of Alençon, thus became the new Monsieur.<sup>27</sup> Alençon was not only important as the senior male member of the house of Valois after the King, he also remained

22 Charles IX, ‘Edit sur l’inalienabilité’, printed in *Recueil general*, vol. XIV, Part 1, pp. 185–9; Henri III, ‘Les Règlemens faict par le Roy (1585)’, in Cimber and Danjou (eds), *Archives curieuses de l’histoire de France*, vol. X, pp. 315–31. See the forthcoming chapter by Le Roux, ‘The Establishment of Order’.

23 See Haan, *Une paix pour l’éternité*.

24 By the mid-sixteenth century there were only the Valois princes of the immediate royal family and one remaining cadet branch: the Bourbons.

25 See Jackson, ‘Peers of France’; and Cosandey, ‘Préséances et sang royal’, pp. 19–26.

26 Saint-Simon says the title ‘Monsieur’ was not exclusively used for the king’s brother until the time of Gaston d’Orléans (Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, vol. XVII, pp. 278–302); but the contemporary political writer Loyseau pinpoints its use to the earlier Valois princes (Loyseau, *Les Oeuvres de Maître Charles Loyseau*, p. 44).

27 From 1576, he was given his brother’s former apanage of Anjou, so was referred to as duke of Anjou, but for consistency’s sake here I will refer to him as Alençon.

heir to the throne for as long as the King remained childless. The same was true for the younger brother of Louis XIII, Gaston, duke of Orléans, who was heir to the throne longer than any of the others in this sample: twenty-eight years. The younger brother of Louis XIV, Philippe, duke of Orléans, was heir to the throne for eighteen years; while the younger brother of Louis XVI, Louis-Stanislas, count of Provence, was heir for only seven years (though seven critical years). As a potential future sovereign, Monsieur could not therefore be pushed aside or ignored, and was repeatedly the centre or focal point of cabals and opposition to royal policy. The tension between the need for a male heir and the contentment of a junior royal prince would be a continual source of strife (and embarrassment) for Henry III, Louis XIII and Louis XVI.

#### Four Princes, Four Sources of Authority

The recognition of a need to control or contain the authority and ambitions of a younger son began in fact with Henry III, who, as Monsieur, outshone his older brother Charles IX on the battlefield, for example in his great victory over the Huguenot forces at Moncontour in October 1569. Control was also needed closer to home in the corridors of political power: Henri was the clear favourite of his mother, Catherine de Medici, and in addition to his title as Lieutenant-General of France, the King had augmented Anjou's powers further in December 1569 by naming him Intendant-Général du Roi. This gave him political powers as well, for example the authority to countersign official royal letters.<sup>28</sup> Anjou was now virtually a second king. Indeed, the English ambassador noted cynically that Henri would never agree to marry the English queen, Elizabeth I, as was being proposed, because he felt he would lack the ability to manage his own affairs in England, whereas in France he governed the state as suited him.<sup>29</sup> The prince proposed military reforms, dictated church appointments and made suggestions on how to achieve peace between the religious factions.<sup>30</sup> As a Catholic hero, Frenchmen looked to him, rather than to the King, for leadership in these troubled times. Charles IX's authority was undermined, and he was relieved when Anjou pursued one of the traditional pathways to power by being elected head of a foreign kingdom, Poland-Lithuania, in 1573. Yet

<sup>28</sup> Le Roux, *La faveur du roi*, pp. 18, 89.

<sup>29</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign*, vol. X, p. 3, 3 January 1572.

<sup>30</sup> Knecht, *Hero or Tyrant?*, pp. 65–6.

there was always a conundrum: a prince like the duke of Anjou (and later the next Monsieur, Alençon) was praised for his valour and strength, but criticised for overshadowing the monarch;<sup>31</sup> if, in contrast, a prince shied away from power, he was accused of being lazy and irresponsible. Gaston discovered the latter during his period of retreat away from court and away from politics following his failed rebellions in the 1630s or as he tried to remain neutral during the Fronde.<sup>32</sup>

In the next generation, some commentators believed Philippe was raised specifically to be effeminate so as not to threaten the virile reign of his older brother. This notion is hard to sustain under scrutiny, as it would be terribly risky given the precariousness of the health of early modern children, even princes.<sup>33</sup> If a prince looked strong, he was perceived as a threat; a weak prince was seen as unworthy of the royal name — a classic catch-22. As expressed by Nancy Nichols Barker in reference to Philippe, but applicable to all the second sons: ‘Philippe was in fact caught in a game he could not win. If he strove to excel, he earned not the approval of his mother [the Regent, Anne of Austria] and her minister but their displeasure; stemming from fear lest he outshine the king. If he played along with their program, submitting with docility, and learning little, he invited their disrespect if not their contempt for his childish ways and idle games.’<sup>34</sup>

To provide a base for limited independence within France and an income sufficient to allow princes to maintain the lifestyle appropriate to their rank, an apanage was given to the second son, usually at the time of his marriage. The apanages given to the four *Monsieurs* analysed here were sizeable, and followed the traditional patterns set out in the fourteenth century and codified in the sixteenth.<sup>35</sup> The fourth son of King Henry II, François (or to use his birth name, Hercule, later changed at his christening), was given the

31 See Catherine de Medici’s angry letter to her son, reprimanding him for undermining his brother’s authority through his independent actions in the Low Countries: Catherine to Monsieur, 23 December 1580, *Lettres de Catherine de Médicis*, vol. III, pp. 304–9.

32 Cardinal de Retz, for example, condemned his hesitancy to commit himself to any one political faction, claiming that fear was ‘his dominant passion’: *Mémoires du Cardinal de Retz*, vol. I, p. 112.

33 Primi Visconti, a visitor to the French court (though several years later), claimed that one of Mazarin’s nephews had been the first to ‘corrupt’ Monsieur, and suspected that he had been purposefully put in Philippe’s path by Mazarin to complete his plan of emasculation of the second son. Primi Visconti, *Mémoires*, p. 13

34 Barker, *Brother to the Sun King*, p. 43.

35 Apanages and financial analysis are covered in Chapter 3 of my book. I use the word ‘*Monsieurs*’ in the anglicised plural rather than the more correct French *messieurs* as a means of identifying it as a specific title.

duchy of Alençon (in Normandy) in 1566. This was a fairly small apanage, but it was soon augmented with the neighbouring counties of Perche and Dreux, and the Norman seigneuries of Gisors, Mantes, Meulan and Vernon — all forming a fairly contiguous block southwest of Paris — plus a new duchy of Château-Thierry in Champagne. In 1576, as part of a reconciliation deal following a rebellion against the Crown, he was further awarded the duchies of Anjou, Touraine and Berry — a major power bloc — and the county of Evreux, which added to his Norman lands.<sup>36</sup> Alençon had no male offspring, so all of these returned to the Crown on his death in 1584. A generation later, Gaston, the second surviving son of King Henry IV, was at first called 'duc d'Anjou', but was not given a formal apanage until his marriage in 1626. This apanage consisted of the duchies of Orléans and Chartres, and the county of Blois, later augmented with the large seigneurie of Montargis (east of the Orléannais) and the duchy of Valois.<sup>37</sup> Gaston also held private estates, notably the duchy of Alençon, which had been converted from royal domain into a form of private property known as an *engagement* to use as part of Marie de Medici's *douaire* or widow's portion,<sup>38</sup> and which Gaston then inherited from his mother when she died (as he also did the Palais Orléans, now known as the Luxembourg Palace). He also was able to benefit from his management of the vast properties of his wife and underage daughter, Mlle de Montpensier, lands covering much of central France (Auvergne and the Bourbonnais).<sup>39</sup>

Gaston too had no surviving male heir, and at his death in 1660, the Orléans apanage passed back into the royal domain (and his daughter now controlled her own lands), just in time to be re-allocated to Philippe on his marriage a year later. Philippe, also called 'Anjou' as a child, was given the apanage of the duchies of Orléans, Valois and Chartres (though not Blois), and the seigneurie of Montargis, later augmented by the duchy of Nemours as a 'sweetener' for his remarriage in 1672.<sup>40</sup> He too was given

36 Holt, *Duke of Anjou*, p. 11; see also Nevers, *Mémoires*, vol. I, pp. 561–7.

37 Dethan, *La vie de Gaston d'Orléans*, p. 77. There was another, second son born to Henry IV, called 'Monsieur' and 'duc d'Orléans' from his birth in 1607, but he was never baptised so was given no formal name before he died in 1611. In genealogical sources he is sometimes called 'N. d'Orléans', which probably refers to 'non-nommé', not 'Nicolas'. See journal entries referring to this child without a name by the royal children's physician: Héroard, *Journal sur l'enfance*, vol. II, pp. 11, 88.

38 The differences between *apanage* and *engagement* are discussed in Cosandey, *La reine de France*, pp. 94–7. Archives Nationales (*hereafter* AN), AP 300 I, no 115, 'Transaction pour la succession de la reine Marie de Médicis, cédée par le roi au duc d'Orléans', 15 March 1646.

39 The Montpensier fortune has been recently analysed by Allorent, *La fortune de la Grande Mademoiselle*. See also Pitts, *La Grande Mademoiselle*, pp. 263–8.

40 Barker, *Brother to the Sun King*, p. 69, analyses documents made later in the administration of the apanage, AN, 300 AP I, 199, Apanage de la maison d'Orléans, 1762, p. 12

a major palace in the centre of Paris in which to hold his court, the Palais Royal, but in his case, it was formally added to his apanage in 1692. A year later, it was Philippe, not Gaston, who benefited in the long term from the Montpensier succession as his cousin's principal heir, augmented by part of the Guise succession (also via Mlle de Montpensier, notably the principality of Joinville in Champagne). As will be explored further below, this was an important step in establishing the financial independence of the Orléans dynasty, through the possession of both the Orléans apanage and the privately owned Montpensier and Guise estates.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, Louis-Stanislas, the third, but second surviving, son of the Dauphin Louis-Ferdinand (who predeceased his father, Louis XV, in 1765), was like his predecessors known from birth by one title, 'count of Provence', but was given different estates for his apanage at the time of his marriage in 1771: the duchy of Anjou and the county of Perche.<sup>42</sup> Unlike them, however, his name did not change. He remained 'Provence' though he held no lands there, a practice which went back to the reign of Louis XIV when the youngest of the King's grandsons was known as the duke of Berry, though his apanage actually consisted of the duchies of Alençon and Angoulême.<sup>43</sup> Louis XV's elder grandsons too were given ducal titles, Burgundy and Berry, but neither was given a formal apanage as the elder of the two died young and the other succeeded his father as Dauphin, and thus formally had no separate financial establishment from the King's household.<sup>44</sup> The youngest of the King's grandsons, Charles-Philippe, count of Artois, was given the last of the formal apanages of the *Ancien Régime* in 1773, consisting of the duchies of Auvergne, Angoulême and Berry.<sup>45</sup>

All of these apanages were given to second sons to enable them to live as princes, to supply their households, pay their domestic staff and display

41 Barker, *Brother to the Sun King*, p. 188; Spangler, *Society of Princes*, pp. 171–2; AN, R3 117; and AP 300 I contain all the various papers of the Guise succession (notably no. 103 and no. 115 for these details pertaining to Orléans). The aggregate of these various successions were studied in detail by Hyslop, *L'Apanage de Philippe-Egalité*.

42 AN, R<sup>5</sup> 33, Apanage of the Count of Provence.

43 Berry is an interesting anomaly in this overview, as, although he was never a Monsieur of France, for seven years (1700–1707) he was considered heir of the new king of Spain, Philip V (the former duke of Anjou). See <https://www.heraldica.org/topics/france/apanage.htm> (accessed 17 October 2020).

44 Lahaye, *Le Fils de Louis XIV*, pp. 184–7.

45 Artois's sons, born in 1775 and 1778, used his subsidiary ducal titles of Angoulême and Berry only as 'courtesy titles' (as they were not given apanages themselves), in the same fashion as the short-lived son of Gaston (duke of Valois), and the son and heir of Philippe (duke of Chartres), who later succeeded as second duke of Orléans.

themselves in public as befitted their royal rank. But revenues from these apanages became ever smaller (or in fact remained static as other expenses rose), so Philippe and Provence in particular had to rely on royal gifts and on entrepreneurship to achieve independence from the Crown, as will be explored below. Reminding ourselves of the second major strategy for medieval French princes to achieve independence, the notion certainly persisted into the early modern period of princes achieving sovereign status outside the kingdom: we have seen that the younger brother of Charles IX, the duke of Anjou, was elected king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania in 1573, only to return swiftly when he succeeded as king of France himself in 1574; the next brother, Alençon, avidly pursued the goal of becoming king-consort to Elizabeth I in England (1579–81), then came very close to establishing himself as sovereign prince of the Low Countries — proclaimed as such in early 1582, before being chased out following the disastrous pillaging of Antwerp by his soldiers a year later.<sup>46</sup> Gaston was briefly considered for the throne of Poland-Lithuania in 1626, and did enjoy sovereignty, at least in a miniscule way, over the sovereign principality of Dombes (north of Lyon), in his wife's name and subsequently his daughter's name, with his face on the coinage to prove it.<sup>47</sup> Philippe (as duke of Anjou in his teens) was proposed in several instances as the prince to reclaim once again the long-contested Angevin succession to the throne of the kingdom of Naples, in 1647 and 1654, and even much later in the 1660s, as part of the on-going French war effort against Spain (whose king actually ruled in Naples). But these plans came to nothing, and were most likely diplomatic smokescreens on the part of the French government.<sup>48</sup> There were no such proposals for the count of Provence in the 1770s–80s, though it might be interesting to speculate that he was given this provincial title (the first use of it since the Angevin succession of 1480 noted above) as a means of re-asserting French

46 Holt, *Duke of Anjou*, examines in detail the enterprise of the duke of Alençon in England (Chapters 6 and 7); while Duquenne, *L'Entreprise du Duc d'Anjou*, attempts to unravel the motivations and the double or even triple game played by the duke of Alençon between Henry III of France, Elizabeth of England, William of Orange and Philip II of Spain.

47 Secret instructions sent to Prince Radziwill for a project to make Gaston king of Poland in 1626, Bibliothèque municipale de Besançon, Collection Chiflet Ms. 117, fol. 67ff. See for a brief history of the sovereignty of Dombes, with images of its coinage (including a double portrait of Gaston and Marie), the website of the Musée Militaire de Lyon: <https://www.museemilitairelyon.com/spip.php?article222>. Several examples of Gaston alone can be seen at [https://en.numista.com/catalogue/dombes\\_principality-1.html](https://en.numista.com/catalogue/dombes_principality-1.html) (both websites accessed 17 October 2020).

48 The suggestion in 1647 is noted in Henri de Lorraine, *Mémoires du Duc de Guise*, vol. VII, p. 45. For the later dates see Gregory, 'Parthenope's Call', pp. 147–68 (p. 167); and de Cosnac, *Mémoires*, vol. I, pp. 329–38.

presence in the Mediterranean in the later part of the eighteenth century. Yet the notion of going abroad to obtain a better place at the sovereignty table was not dead in the eighteenth century, as easily demonstrated by the second grandson of Louis XIV, Philippe d'Anjou — a Monsieur who never was since his older brother, Louis, duke of Burgundy, died before ascending the throne — who was established on the throne of Spain as Philip V. This was true in the nineteenth century as well, with the thrones of Greece and Norway being filled by younger brothers of the king of Denmark.

### Protest and Rebellion as Princely Duty

Displays of fraternal rebellion are as ancient as the institution of monarchy itself, but in France these reached a dangerous peak in the fifteenth century with the League of the *Bien Public* (or Public Weal), organised in part by the duke of Berry, younger brother of Louis XI, in 1465. As with many similar conflicts, this protest against the centralisation of power by the monarchy was couched in the language of the great princes defending the interests of the general public.<sup>49</sup> A century later, François, duke of Alençon, used similar language when defending his flight from court in 1575, seen as a rebellion against the authority of his brother Henry III: in his 'remonstrance' of Dreux, he called for a defence of the ancient laws of the kingdom (vaguely defined), a removal of foreigners (Italians and Lorrainers) from government and an Estates General to be called to settle the differences between Catholics and Protestants once and for all.<sup>50</sup> At the same time he claimed he was answering an appeal for support from many 'nobles, clergy, citizens and bourgeois', and to underline his altruistic intentions, took for himself the title 'The King's Governor-General and Protector of Liberty and the Public Good of France'.<sup>51</sup> Alençon's challenge to the monarchy was ultimately settled through the 'Peace of Monsieur' of May 1576, which granted concessions to the Duke (notably the augmentation of his apanage), his aristocratic allies (the 'malcontents') and to the Protestants whose rights they claimed to be defending.<sup>52</sup>

49 Small, *Late Medieval France*, p. 212.

50 Bibliothèque nationale de France (*hereafter* BnF), Ms Fr. 3342, fols 5–6, printed in 1576 as *Brieve remonstrance à la noblesse de France*.

51 'Gouverneur General pour le Roy et protecteur de la liberté et bien publique de France', as detailed in a letter by the English ambassador, Valentine Dale, 21 September 1575, *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign*, vol. XI, pp. 137–46.

52 Printed in Nevers, *Mémoires*, vol. I, pp. 117–35.

Half a century later, Gaston, duke of Orléans, also left court to protest his brother Louis XIII's refusal to grant him or his favourites the access to power to which they felt they were entitled. From his exile at the court of the duke of Lorraine, he published a letter to the King, in May 1631, blaming the King's minister Cardinal Richelieu for this lack of respect, and more damningly, for bringing division to the royal family, despotism to royal government and violence and misery to the people of France.<sup>53</sup> A year later, he once again railed against Richelieu as the 'disturber of public peace, enemy of the King and the royal family'.<sup>54</sup> The armed rebellion that followed was soon crushed, but this time there was no general peace treaty, and neither Gaston nor his allies were pacified with gifts and promotions, at least not right away. In fact, rather than being forgiven, the duke of Montmorency, head of one of France's oldest and grandest noble families, was executed in October 1632 — a shocking turn of events and a real symbol of the triumph of absolutism in France.<sup>55</sup> Gaston spent two years in exile in Brussels and only returned on condition that his chief favourite, Antoine de Puylaurens, would be given a dukedom (though he too died, in mysterious circumstances only a year later).<sup>56</sup> Neither Alençon nor Gaston could be severely punished for their respective actions, or even ignored, as both remained heir to the throne at the time, and their words about acting in the interests of the French 'public' continued to carry weight, as coming from potential future sovereigns. Indeed, Alençon had used similar language when attempting to forge a position for himself as ruler of the Low Countries in 1578, as 'Protector of the Liberty of the Netherlands'.<sup>57</sup> Gaston would again employ similar language when he joined the party of princely malcontents in a late phase of the Fronde ('the Fronde of Monsieur') in 1651,<sup>58</sup> which forced the Regent, Queen Anne, to agree to call an Estates General to be held later that year.<sup>59</sup>

53 Published as *Lettre écrite au Roy par Monsieur*. Printed in *Les papiers de Richelieu*, vol. VI, pp. 395–411.

54 AAE, MD France 802, fol. 225.

55 As noted by Bercé: 'Cette mise à mort d'un duc et pair, issu d'une des plus illustres familles de la noblesse, frappa l'opinion et imposa l'image d'une raison d'État terrible, et implacable': *La naissance dramatique de l'absolutisme*, pp. 137–8.

56 'Traité pour l'accommodement de Monsieur', in AAE, MD France 811, fols 59–61, printed in *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de France* vol. I, pp. 123–6.

57 *Traité entre Msr le Duc d'Anjou et les estats generaux des pays bas, 13 aoust 1578*. An original copy is in the BNF, Ms Fr 5138, fols 57–60; and it is printed in Du Mont, (ed.), *Corps universel diplomatique*, vol. V, Part 1, pp. 320–2: *Accord et Alliance faite*.

58 For the 'Fronde of Monsieur' see Dethan, *Vie de Gaston d'Orléans*, pp. 279–85.

59 Agreement with the Queen Regent, BnF, Ms. Baluze 346, fol. 93; available on Gallica, 'Correspondance de Gaston d'Orléans': <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90014608/fig1.item.r=baluze%20346> (accessed 30 October 2020).



But whereas after 1576 Alençon was given somewhat more respect by the administration of Henry III, after the rebellion of 1632 Gaston was pushed from court into a form of internal exile at the château of Blois (partly by choice) for much of the rest of Louis XIII's reign. This happened again after the failure of the Fronde in 1652, and he lived far from court for the rest of his life. This time the young Louis XIV himself used similar language to seal his uncle's disgrace in a 'Déclaration du roi portant pacification pour la securité publique'.<sup>60</sup>

Having witnessed these tumultuous events in Paris as a child, Philippe, duke of Orléans, may have learned that a united royal family is beneficial not just to the kingdom or the dynasty, but also to his own health and happiness, and there are no similar declarations or manifestos from this prince denouncing his elder's brother's tyranny or attempts to defend the 'public weal'. Unlike his predecessors as Monsieur, Philippe was, after 1661, not the heir to the throne, which surely also influenced any willingness for courtiers or political actors in Paris to support him or use him for their own causes. When he did leave the court in protest — for example, in January 1670, on learning that his wife was to be given a prominent role in international diplomacy, and that his requests for benefices located within his apanage of Orléans for his favourite, the chevalier de Lorraine, were to be denied — he communicated with his brother through private correspondence and the intervention of high-level government ministers. In this instance, he wrote from his château of Villers-Cotterêts to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, expressing his anger at his brother's actions, and accusing him of deliberately encouraging his wife to disobey and undermine him: 'I came here due to the extremity of anguish that required me either to leave his presence or to remain at his court in shame.'<sup>61</sup> Louis XIV was swift to appease Philippe with gifts, for him and for his favourites. This method of keeping the peace is underlined by recent historians like Nancy Nichols Barker, who writes that the King recognised that the best way to keep his brother in line was to keep him under the domination of his favourite, the chevalier de Lorraine, someone the King knew he himself could control, as the younger brother of one of his own favourites, and as a courtier completely dependent on the Crown for his financial survival.<sup>62</sup> But this royal strategy was certainly recognised

60 Published in Paris, 1652.

61 *Documents historiques*, vol. II, 513–15: '... je suis venu icy avec la dernière douleur de me voir obligé de m'esloigner de luy ou de demeurer avec honte dans sa cour'.

62 Barker, *Brother to the Sun King*, pp. 28, 139–40. For a detailed account, see Lurgo, *Philippe d'Orléans*, pp. 111–15. This is explored further in my own article, 'The Chevalier de Lorraine'.

by contemporaries as well: the ambassador from Savoy, the marquis de St-Maurice, reported to his master in Turin that peace was reached thanks to the mediating efforts of high-ranking courtiers, and that the King had promised that the chevalier de Lorraine would be given a large pension.<sup>63</sup> The ambassador from Berlin, Baron Spanheim, commented in his memoirs that although Louis XIV disliked the Chevalier personally for his disreputable behaviour, 'purely wishing to keep peace between himself and his brother, he gave appearances of friendship and even a pension'.<sup>64</sup> Two decades later, in 1694, Monsieur complained to his brother about his son the duke of Chartres not receiving a military command or any prominent provincial governorship (both of which were being showered at the time on the King's own bastard sons). Once again, Louis made promises to promote Chartres (which he did not keep) and gave Philippe more money to embellish Saint-Cloud, and gifts to the chevalier de Lorraine. The duke of Saint-Simon is more direct in saying that Louis XIV 'knew the means of appeasing Monsieur: the Chevalier did his customary job'.<sup>65</sup>

None of these fraternal struggles — the dispute over Philippe's wife's leading role in international diplomacy in 1670, his weakness in distributing ecclesiastical patronage within his own apanage to his favourites, or the disagreement over his son's lack of promotions in 1694 — were accompanied by any public manifestos. In fact, the third Monsieur rarely published anything at all. A more active political voice did emerge once more in the fourth Monsieur, the count of Provence. He did allow his sentiments to be known publicly, though again not in active rebellion, but through tacit approval of his name being attached to political commentary written by his clients and favourites. There was an early attempt at political engagement in the months following the accession of his brother, Louis XVI, in May 1774, by means of a short pamphlet entitled 'Mes Idées' in which he urged his brother to continue the path of their grandfather in asserting royal absolutism over the rebellious *parlements*.<sup>66</sup> But this was completely ignored, and Monsieur was mostly silent with regard to politics for the next decade, restricting his frustrated feelings at being excluded to his private correspondence with

63 St-Maurice, *Lettres sur la Cour de Louis XIV*, vol. I, p. 402, 26 February 1670.

64 Spanheim, *Relation de la Cour de France*, pp. 112–13.

65 Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, vol. II, p. 259.

66 This short pamphlet, though addressed to the King, was published in the *Journal Historique Du Rétablissement De La Magistrature*, vol. VI, pp. 252–69. Whether it was written solely by Monsieur or not is in doubt, Lever (*Louis XVIII*, p. 39) suggesting it was drafted for him by Sieur Gin, a supporter of Maupeou's reforms.

his friend King Gustav III of Sweden,<sup>67</sup> or his favourite and a member of his household, the comte de Lévis.<sup>68</sup> In public, he supported the King, right or wrong.

Nevertheless, Monsieur's interest in reform was known, and pamphlets were published that were addressed to him as the kingdom entered its crisis period, using by now familiar terminology about the rights of princes to intervene when the monarchy was in danger and also, as before, urging not reform but 'restoration' of the traditional way of doing things, with the Crown leading but guided and supported by its noble elites: 'Réflexions Patriotiques sur les Entreprises de Quelques Ministres de France, Adressées à Monsieur, Frère du Roi' (1788).<sup>69</sup> These publications could be conflicting, however: a pamphlet produced in 1788 on Monsieur's own private printing press, and specifically dedicated to him (*Le Citoyen Conciliateur, contenant des idées sommaires, politiques et morales sur le Gouvernement Monarchique de la France*, by the Abbé Charles-François de Lubersac, a well-known political writer) called for a reform of society and a shift in the fundamental idea that the monarch derived his authority not from God but from the people;<sup>70</sup> whereas a book published in March 1789 by Monsieur's former teacher and now the royal historiographer of France, Jacob-Nicolas Moreau, and also publicly linked to Monsieur (*Exposition et défense de Notre Constitution Monarchique Française*), was a much more conservative defence of royal authority and an attack on the idea of popular sovereignty.<sup>71</sup> Which viewpoint did Monsieur truly support? We can see that Provence was not just a passive dedicatee of the latter work: a later inventory of Provence's library reveals that he owned twenty-three copies.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, however, as

67 See for example, letters in Geffroy, *Gustave III*, vol. II, pp. 293–4 (29 March 1777), and pp. 395–6 (25 June 1779).

68 Lévis, *Souvenirs et portraits*. Some of these, for example, reveal that by the late 1780s Provence had become quite interested in reform, ending noble financial privileges and limiting the powers of the monarch: pp. 335, 361, letters of February–March 1789 and 21 April 1789.

69 See Newberry Library copy on Archive.org: <https://archive.org/details/rflexionspatriotooloui> (accessed 27 September 2020).

70 Available on Google Books. The dedication to Monsieur notes that he and the count of Artois had been placed on either side of the throne to serve as its supports and ornaments, and to bring the spirit of wisdom and goodness into the heart of the Monarch, a position that allows Provence to demonstrate to the King that he is the true leader and friend of the two premier orders of the Kingdom, and overall the protector of the people.

71 Also on Google Books. While there is no explicit dedication, the author's position as Premier Conseiller et Secrétaire des Commandemens de Monsieur is clearly published on the frontispiece. See Hervouët, *Jacob-Nicolas Moreau*.

72 Mansel, *Louis XVIII*, pp. 43–4.

we have seen, Monsieur's speeches at the Assembly of the Notables called for respect for and obedience to the King.

Even in the midst of revolutionary turmoil, Monsieur attempted to remain publicly loyal, though he was frequently entertaining ideas about displacing his brother and forming a regency government. In late December 1789, he responded to rumours to this effect by appearing before the Commune of Paris, with a speech written for him by Mirabeau, calling himself a 'citizen' and affirming his commitment to the changes sweeping across France. The revolutionary mayor of Paris (Jean Sylvain Bailly) stood by his side and proclaimed that 'Monsieur has shown himself to be the premier citizen of the Kingdom in voting for the Third Estate in the Second Assembly of the Notables. ... He is therefore the premier author of civil equality. He gives a new example of it today'.<sup>73</sup> In February 1791, Provence faced down an angry mob that had gathered in front of his residence, the Luxembourg Palace, protesting rumours that he was going to flee the country. He turned the situation onto its head by declaring his open support for both the new Constitution and the King, then proceeded to lead the crowd in procession to the Tuileries to pay his respects to his brother in a broad public gesture.<sup>74</sup> He did in fact leave the country only a few weeks later. It was only at this point that Monsieur began to express disappointment publicly with his brother's rule, making clear his differences in policy, notably in the King allowing himself to be removed from legislative power by agreeing to the newly adopted French Constitution, and reminding him that he too was a potential heir to the Bourbon Crown.<sup>75</sup> Monsieur even wrote to his cousin the prince of Condé, leader of the *émigré* troops, saying that they should not worry about what his brother the King wanted, since it was clear that all of the princes of the blood now had shared interests in imposing their will on the King and his government once he would be freed by a successful invasion.<sup>76</sup>

## Patronage and Entrepreneurship

The first two Monsieurs, Alençon and Gaston, had tried hard to behave in the 'traditional' manner of junior royal princes — or at least were

73 Bailly's speech is quoted in the *Gazette Nationale ou Le Moniteur Universel*, 29 December 1789; *Collection complete*, vol. XVI, pp. 120–1.

74 *Départ Manqué de Monsieur*, p. 4.

75 Mansel, *Louis XVIII*, pp. 63–4.

76 As quoted by Condé in a letter to his son the duke of Bourbon, 4 July 1792, in Crétineau-Joly, *Histoire des Trois Derniers Princes*, vol. II, p. 54.

encouraged to do so by their friends and advisors. They therefore suffered from frustrations and setbacks, especially Gaston who saw countless of his favourites exiled, imprisoned or executed (since he himself, as heir to the throne, could not be). In contrast, the later two *Monsieurs*, Philippe and Provence, found other means of expressing their princely authority, notably through the development of their estates (both their apanage and privately held lands), building princely residences, collecting art and precious objects, and patronising artists, writers and scholars. They recognised that by the seventeenth century a huge part of a prince's authority lay not in brute strength but in magnificence — the term used in the early modern sense not merely of appearing grand, but as a great distributor of patronage, a *mécène*, a follower of Maecenas.<sup>77</sup> This is not to say that Gaston did not do these things, or even most royal princes before him, as part of the normal *métier* of being a prince, but he was the first to make this his focus, rather than a persistent scramble for political power. In this aspect Gaston became the model for this change in princely behaviour, emulated by his successors.

What we do see for our last two, or even last three, *Monsieurs* is that, instead of staging a physical rebellion, royal cadets adopted a strategy of cultivating a rivalry in taste. Having witnessed in his youth his uncle Gaston outshining Louis XIII in his construction and decoration of the château of Blois, Philippe may have had a similar strategy at Saint-Cloud — though of course, this task would be nearly impossible given the attentions Louis XIV lavished on Versailles. The historian Philippe Erlanger even goes as far as to say that Monsieur's re-building of Saint-Cloud in the mid-1670s was in its way a form of rebellion, since he pointedly did not consult Colbert (the King's superintendent of royal building projects) or Charles Le Brun (Louis XIV's arbiter of the arts), but the lesser known (at that time) architect Jules Hardouin Mansart and the almost completely unknown Jean Girard. To decorate his interiors, he chose the painter Pierre Mignard, a rival of Le Brun who was then in disgrace with Colbert. Monsieur liked having artists who were 'his'.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, many of the artistic highlights at Saint-Cloud were created *before* similar features appeared at Versailles, for example his Salon d'Apollon, which was certainly a model for the later celebrated

77 See Bussels, *Rhetoric, Performance and Power*; and Versteegen, Bussels and Melion (eds), *Magnificence in the Seventeenth Century*.

78 Erlanger, *Monsieur, frère de Louis XIV*, pp. 184–5. See Néraudau, *L'Olympe du roi-soleil*, p. 184, who describes the frescos at Saint-Cloud by Pierre Mignard as a 'manifeste artistique et idéologique' of Philippe's baroque tastes, which were out of step with Louis's classicism.

Hall of Mirrors.<sup>79</sup> It is necessary therefore to take a closer look at princely patronage as a form of expressing authority within the confines of political loyalty to the Crown.

The first of the four *Monsieurs*, the duke of Alençon, did not live as long as the other three princes in this study, so he did not enter the phase of life — middle age — in which the others excelled at creating architectural monuments. Had he lived longer, he may have transformed the chief residences of his apanage, the late Gothic château of Plessis-lès-Tours or the medieval fortress of Château-Thierry, into something spectacular.<sup>80</sup> But he did build up a network of artists and thinkers, many of whom served as his secretaries and advisors — for example the poet and historian Jean de la Jessée (or La Gessée), who provided an account of the Duke's arrival in the Low Countries as its 'liberator' in 1582, then composed funeral poems for his late master in 1584.<sup>81</sup> Recent art historical research has demonstrated that there was also a significant patronage network being created by the time of his death, and stresses the idea of using art patronage as a form of 'counter-politics' and 'counter-power'.<sup>82</sup> But there is also a stress on the Duke's interest in harmony and balance as a complement, not an opposition, to his brother, and as a perpetuation of royal patronage, assuming that Alençon would at some point succeed his brother as king.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, there was always significant cross-over, and many of 'his' clients were also clients of the King. One such example is his *valet de chambre*, Balthasar de Beaujoyeux (originally the Italian Baldassare de Belgiojoso, who arrived in France in the suite of Catherine de Medici), best known today as the author of the *Ballet comique de la Reine* (1581), commissioned by Queen Louise de Vaudémont, and who also served as a *valet de chambre* of the King.<sup>84</sup> There was also a fascinating international dimension to Monsieur's patronage network: for example, the well-known English painter and miniaturist Nicholas Hilliard was in the service of the prince from September 1576, also as a *valet de chambre* (though purely honorific); Hilliard's recent biographer argues that

79 Austin-Montenay, *Saint-Cloud*, pp. 21–3, 34–6; Micio, *Les Collections de Monsieur*, pp. 35, 37–8, 99.

80 Recent research shows that Alençon did in fact have great plans for renovating Château-Thierry: Blary, 'Origines et développements d'une cité médiévale', pp. 224, 248.

81 *Discours sur la venue et honorable réception de Monsieur* (1582); *Larmes et regretz sur la maladie et trespas de M<sup>or</sup> François de France* (1584). See the latter, for example, on Gallica: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k71889f> (accessed 16 October 2020).

82 Maillard, 'Monsieur, frère du roi, mécène', pp. 263–72.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 271–2; Harrie, 'Guy Le Fèvre de La Boderie's Vision'. La Boderie was also a secretary of the Duke, from 1571.

84 Maillard, 'Monsieur, frère du roi, mécène', p. 268.

although this placement may have been part of a spy network for the earl of Leicester, it seems equally likely that Alençon was eager to make use of a first-rate artist to augment his own display of princely magnificence.<sup>85</sup>

In a similar way, Gaston d'Orléans was a patron of writers and poets from an early stage, and he too was perceived as a future king due to the long period of childlessness of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria. Probably the most well-known recipient of his patronage was the poet and playwright Tristan l'Hermite, who held a post as *gentilhomme de la chambre* and was an important advisor to Gaston in writing his public protest manifestos.<sup>86</sup> Contemporary commentators noted early on that as a young man Gaston became known as a prince of refined tastes and nobility of spirit, more so than his more severe older brother, so much so that people from all over France clamoured to get positions in his household.<sup>87</sup> But it was not until he reached middle age and withdrew from politics after the failed rebellions of the early 1630s that he really began to form a significant artistic entourage and set about rebuilding his primary apanage residence, the château of Blois. As with Alençon, this has been an area of fruitful research recently, with inter-disciplinary historians like Pierre Gatulle examining Gaston's patronage of the arts (literature, architecture, music) as a means of re-assessing our view of him overall, seeing him as a prince forging a new form of princely loyalty to the Crown and to the state.<sup>88</sup> Other historians have less generous views, seeing Gaston as 'a totally self-preoccupied prince for whom opposition and rebellion became a way of pulling money and lands out of his kingly brother, and an office or two for clients'.<sup>89</sup> If Gaston's intentions were indeed to become an apolitical *prince-mécène*, events made it difficult for him to achieve this, notably as an older man and the senior adult male of the house of Bourbon during the minority of Louis XIV, when he was continually pulled back into the political arena during the turbulence of the Fronde. Nevertheless, the legacy of the Orléans Wing at Blois remains today as a testament of Gaston's patronage — a bold statement of Classical design out of step with the then favoured Gothic. He also nurtured the budding talents

85 Goldring, *Nicholas Hilliard*, pp. 136–9.

86 Dethan, *Vie de Gaston d'Orléans*, p. 235. See Gatulle, 'La Grande Cabale de Gaston d'Orléans', pp. 301–26.

87 *Mémoires de messire Robert Arnauld d'Andilly*, vol. IX, p. 448. See Caldicott, 'Gaston d'Orléans', pp. 37–48.

88 Gatulle, *Gaston d'Orléans*.

89 Orest Ranum, certainly no stranger to mid-seventeenth-century politics and the topic of princes and state-building, in an online review of Gatulle's work: [http://ranumspanat.com/gatulle\\_gaston.html](http://ranumspanat.com/gatulle_gaston.html) (accessed 20 October 2020).

of some of the giants of the later *louisquatorzian* age, notably the architect François Mansart, the garden designer André Lenôtre, the playwright Molière and an Italian musician who initially served as his daughter's ballet teacher, Jean-Baptiste Lully.<sup>90</sup> Gaston also commissioned individuals to collect for him treasures both from the ancient world (coins, statues, engraved stones), and from the new, such as drawings of rare plants from the Caribbean. Both remain amongst the core collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle.<sup>91</sup>

The life of the *prince-mécène* was more fully achieved by Philippe d'Orléans, whose rebellions were few, but whose buildings and collections were truly on a princely level. A key difference, however, lay in the fact that many of those for whom Gaston served as patron were also leading political players (or aspired to be), such as Jacques Le Coigneux or the comte de Montrésor. None of Philippe's favourites or major clients had much political ambition if any. For the most part, like their master, they too were more interested in obtaining funds to pursue their own collections and building projects (for example the chevalier de Lorraine at the château de Frémont). A century later, Provence had no significant favourites, perhaps because he had much less patronage to give. The exception here is his Superintendent of Building Works, Jules-David Cromot du Bourg, who dominated his master's patronage as both financial manager and artistic advisor, and who had aspirations to replace Louis XVI's choice as Minister of Finance.<sup>92</sup> Both princes therefore devoted much of their energies and financial resources to developing princely residences outside of Paris (and away from the court at Versailles): Saint-Cloud for Philippe and Brunoy for Provence.<sup>93</sup> Philippe was moreover a ravenous collector of precious stones and fine metalwork, and also known as a great patron of the theatre and opera.<sup>94</sup> He hosted the latter within his Paris residence, the Palais Royal, especially after the King had mostly withdrawn

90 Cosperec, 'Le nouveau château de Blois', and 'Le "Grand dessein"', in Claude Mignot (ed.), *François Mansart*, pp. 161–7, 170–3; Caldicott, *La Carrière de Molière*, pp. 32–3; 44–51. Lully was actually brought to France by the duchess of Guise who was in charge of looking after her granddaughter La Grande Mademoiselle in her minority. For the fascinating nexus of patronage between the two houses of Orléans (Gaston and Philippe), the composers Lully and Charpentier, and the playwright Molière, see Ranum, 'Lully Plays Deaf', pp. 15–31.

91 Dethan, *Vie de Gaston d'Orléans*, pp. 233–4.

92 Sciamia, 'Le Comte de Provence', pp. 61–76.

93 The classic studies of both of these properties are now quite dated, and though they provide useful details, are in need of modern analysis: Magne, *Le Château de Saint-Cloud*; Dubois-Corneau, *Le Comte de Provence*. For a more recent publication, see the beautiful edition by Montenay, *Saint-Cloud*.

94 See Micio, *Les Collections de Monsieur*, especially Chapter 1, 'Le Goût de Monsieur'; and Fader, 'Music in the Service of the King's Brother'.



his patronage for the arts from the capital.<sup>95</sup> The duke of Orléans' renown as a collector spread internationally through contemporary reports, such as that of the tourist Martin Lister, with extensive details of his visit to Saint-Cloud, and its Grand Cascade in particular, in 1698.<sup>96</sup> Monsieur's wife's aunt, Sophia of Hanover, visited in 1679 and wrote that the gardens were the best in the world, both for their setting high above the River Seine and for the extensive waterworks; she even preferred Saint-Cloud to Versailles.<sup>97</sup> In both collecting and music, Philippe was known as a trend-setter: he showed an avid interest in Chinese art decades before it became the fashion, and favoured the more 'modern' Italian-style music of Marc-Antoine Charpentier over the classicism of Lully. Much more bookish, Provence patronised playwrights and learned societies, such as the Musée de Monsieur, a lecture hall in Paris that ran a regular series of talks by scientists and writers, and was founded in 1781 by Monsieur's 'Intendant des cabinets de physique, de chimie et d'histoire naturelle', Jean-François Pilâtre de Rozier. The patrons of this 'museum' were mixed: half were titled, half not, with the prospectus for the group stating clearly that *all* 'citoyens' could acquire 'des lumières' (enlightenment) regardless of rank, and that 'precious equality' would 'mix the classes' ('mêlé les rangs').<sup>98</sup> Like Gaston and Philippe, Provence wanted to patronise artists and businesses that were different from those officially supported by the Crown; in this regard he was particularly successful in breaking the monopoly of Sèvres porcelain through his support of a factory built at Clignancourt, known as the 'Manufacture de Monsieur'.<sup>99</sup> Both of the later Monsieurs patronised artists, writers and fabricators who were different, not necessarily better, than those officially patronised by the Crown.

But perhaps the greatest shift in mentalities of these two later princes can be seen in their willingness to engage in entrepreneurial activity. The most innovative chapter of Barker's biography of Philippe deals with his development of his estates, notably his support for the construction of the Canal d'Orléans. Her significant conclusion is that, far from being a useless dependant and a drain on Crown finances, by the time of his death Philippe was financially independent and had established his descendants, the house of Orléans, as an independent power in the eighteenth century.<sup>100</sup> The

95 Sauvel, 'Le Palais-Royal', pp. 173–90 (p. 176).

96 Lister, *A Journey to Paris*, pp. 196–201.

97 Sophie of Hanover, *Mémoires et lettres de voyage*, pp. 155, 157.

98 *Statuts et Règlements du Premier Musée*. See Lynn, *Popular Science and Public Opinion*, pp. 82–90.

99 de Plinval de Guillebon, 'La manufacture de porcelaine', pp. 62–9.

100 Barker, *Brother to the Sun King*, Chapter 8, 'Service to Mammon' (pp. 166–98).

importance of this is that, as princes no longer dependant on the monarchy for their livelihood, they could pursue their own political agenda, culminating in the opposition to the monarchy led in the revolutionary era by Philippe's great-great-grandson, Philippe 'Égalité'.<sup>101</sup> Perhaps with this in mind, Provence was kept on a tighter financial leash by Louis XVI, though he too set out to make himself financially independent. Ever the most historical-minded of the Bourbon princes of his generation, he studied and learned from Philippe's experience at the end of the seventeenth century and knew he ought to build up a private fortune for himself that would free him from this dependency and that could be enjoyed by his future descendants. This was especially important as they, no longer holding the rank of *Fils de France*, would not benefit from the relevant large pensions from the Royal Treasury — he says this specifically in a letter of March 1772: 'in order to assure a future for my descendants'.<sup>102</sup> He first tried to develop his apanage lands, as Philippe had done, by reviving ancient feudal dues in his apanage domains (on trees cut, on minerals obtained) and was eventually successful, increasing the initial sum of 300,000 *livres* in annual revenue to 1,978,284 by 1788. His biographer Mansel asserts that Provence can be considered the 'most capitalist Bourbon there has yet been'.<sup>103</sup> In the end, however, Provence had no children, and of course the Revolution swept away even these best laid plans.

## Conclusion

All four royal princes known as Monsieur in France between the 1570s and 1790s shared a general frustration with being a spare. They were held to the highest standards of princely behaviour and were expected to show leadership qualities in case of potential succession to the throne. At the same time, if they showed too much leadership or independence of political will, they were considered a potential threat to their elder brother the king. In this period of great change in state formation, increased centralisation and the rise of absolutism challenged medieval concepts of corporate monarchy in which the monarch wore the crown but all of the great princes and magnates of the realm had a stake in governance. The idea of 'Une foi, une

101 Ambrose, *Godfather of the Revolution*; Armstrong Kelly, 'The Machine of the Duc d'Orléans', pp. 667–84.

102 Mansel, *Louis XVIII*, p. 25, quoting a letter of March 1772 to the Duc de la Vrillière, *Ministre de la Maison du Roi*, Coll. Dr Jean Gautier, Brunoy: 'pour assurer un sort à mes descendants'.

103 Mansel, *Louis XVIII*, p. 25

loi, un roi' (one faith, one law, one king) may have taken root by the early seventeenth century, but the older idea lingered, even to the end of the *Ancien Régime*. The count of Provence recalled when he was in exile that his cousin, the prince of Conti (Louis-François de Bourbon), the leader of a princely rebellion against the absolutist projects of Louis XV in the 1770s, had once said: 'The crown belongs to all of us; only the eldest amongst us wears it.'<sup>104</sup> But Conti had then found himself excluded from power, and even physically exiled from court.<sup>105</sup> The person most affected by this move towards absolutism was the monarch's younger brother, who found himself increasingly excluded from political power. This chapter has examined how some of these spares, beginning in particular with Gaston d'Orléans in the 1630s, looked elsewhere to express their princely power, through the patronage of the arts.

Younger brothers like Gaston faced a double challenge: they must demonstrate independence to maintain their reputation as royal princes, as natural leaders of the nobility, but they also needed to be dependent so as not to threaten the pre-eminence of their older brother at court or in the public sphere. They must be educated in the art of princely rule, able to take over sovereignty in case of the sudden death of the king, but they must not display signs of overt ambition or eagerness to take power. At the same time, as the role of the monarchy in general became more public, with the rise of the baroque state and of a popular press, royal brothers emerged as crucial components of a royal family's public representation — disagreements in private were allowed, but the family must stand united in public. There was now more of a need for siblings to uphold the royal 'brand'. This is seen best in the public statements of the count of Provence in the years leading up to the French Revolution.

Can we say that this evolution of fraternal relationships in France's royal family was part of the so-called 'civilising process'? Instead of a transformation from warriors into gentlemen,<sup>106</sup> do we have warriors turning into patrons? We have seen here that all four of the men known as 'Monsieur' were avid patrons of the arts, builders, collectors, defenders of maverick painters and writers, and even challengers of royal monopolies (as with Lully or Sèvres). They were focal points around which alternatives to royal patronage networks could be constructed. This was especially true at Gaston's court at Blois during the ascendancy of Cardinal Richelieu, when those out of

104 Quoted by Louis XVIII (as Provence was now called by royalists) in a letter to his brother Artois in February 1803: Daudet, *Histoire de l'Émigration*, vol. III, p. 297.

105 Swann, *Exile, Imprisonment, or Death*, pp. 220–30.

106 As described by Schalk, 'The Court as "Civilizer" of the Nobility', pp. 245–63.

political favour had to seek support elsewhere, and at Philippe's Parisian residence the Palais Royal, once Louis XIV's primary attentions had turned away from Paris and more towards matters spiritual. The Palais Royal was also thus a safe haven for those courtiers who wished to continue the more hedonistic lifestyle of the earlier years of the reign.<sup>107</sup>

This leads to a final point that should be made, and a topic that needs to be explored in greater detail. Second sons were not simply alternative patrons of the arts, they were also patrons of people: from the duke of Alençon to the count of Provence, their households provided the best opportunities for younger sons of the grand court nobility, or members of the more obscure provincial nobility, to get established and find their fortunes on the national stage. Some of them went on to play a larger role in the royal government, and in this way contributed to the processes of state formation, through pulling the provincial nobility and their client networks more closely in towards the centralised state.<sup>108</sup> As investors in businesses — a canal, a porcelain factory — second sons could also assist the monarchy by acting as private individuals in a way that the monarch publicly could not.

In examining the changes and continuities in the behaviours and actions of the four men who lived as second sons in the French monarchy in the last two centuries of the *Ancien Régime* we do see a persistence of this view of the corporate nature of a dynastic state, but we also see a definite change in the willingness of the most senior princes of the realm to defend, at least publicly, the actions and the absolute authority of the head of the family, their elder brother the king.

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<sup>107</sup> For more on this shift in royal interests and Philippe's place in it, see my chapter, 'Pivot to Piety', in Rohr and Spangler (eds), *Significant Others*, pp. 210–33.

<sup>108</sup> This was especially true when a Monsieur succeeded as king, like Henry III, whose key favourites (Joyeuse, Epemon) started out with fairly humble provincial origins. See Le Roux, *La Faveur du Roi*, pp. 244–54. Alternative princely patronage, of both the arts and of people, forms the core of Chapter 5 of my new book, *Monsieur*.

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# 11. Danish Dynastic Histories in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Claus Christoffersen Lyschander, Vitus Bering, Ludvig Holberg and Hans Peter Anchersen

*Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen*

**Abstract:** The article examines how five Danish historians, two before and three after the introduction of Absolutism in 1660, have dealt with dynasticism. Contrary to what one would expect dynasticism played only a minor role in national history writing (Arild Huitfeldt, Vitus Bering, Ludvig Holberg) both before and during Absolutism. The reason seems to be the force of tradition and the difficulties of constructing a readable narrative mirroring the confusing world of dynastic connections. The two serious attempts at dynastic history (Claus Christoffersen Lyschander and Hans Peter Anchersen) had two traits in common: They were both private initiatives and they shared the ambition to trace Danish history back to a distant and heroic past.

**Keywords:** historiography, dynasticism, Absolutism, Denmark

Many of today's historians of early modern Europe agree: dynasticism, that is to say kinship structures and a political culture prioritising family interests and solidarity, matters.<sup>1</sup> The great nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians on the other hand often neglected the dynastic element of early modern political and social history, and there is still a need to reemphasise and integrate it into our historical understanding of early modern Europe and the wider world. From a historiographical point of view, it is not difficult

1 One example out of many: Duindam, *Dynasties*.

to explain why the great liberal historians of the nineteenth century and their more economically and socially orientated heirs of the twentieth century pushed dynasticism to the margins of their historical narratives (they did not ignore it completely). It represented the old order they despised and wanted to get rid of. Dynasticism was reactionary, a disturbing element, an obstacle to be overcome by the modern nation state and its historians.

But what about their early modern predecessors who themselves lived in an age of dynasties? Did they see dynasticism as a structuring element of their own contemporary political culture and did they recognise its historical role in state formation? What turns up when we try to look for dynasticism in early modern historiography? In the following pages I will explore how a number of Danish historians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries dealt with the concept of dynasty. Even if this does not lead to the discovery of a whole new tradition of Danish dynastic history, it will shed fresh light on some of the well-known members of the historiographical canon and a couple of less illustrious figures.

### Arild Huitfeldt and Dynasty as a Source of Trouble

The traditional starting point of Danish early modern historiography is the Danish nobleman Arild Huitfeldt (1546–1609) and his monumental *Danmarks Riges Krønike* (Chronicle of the Realm of Denmark) in ten quarto volumes (1595–1604).<sup>2</sup> Huitfeldt's work, more annals with a large component of inserted official documents than history proper, is structured according to the individual royal reigns. However, this dynastic backbone is more a convenient way of ordering the strictly chronological account than anything else. Huitfeldt evidently downplayed the importance of dynasty in favour of the role played by the Danish 'political nation', that is the aristocratic Council of the Realm and the nobility. He saw Denmark as an ancient *valgrige* (elective kingdom) where power was shared between the king and the aristocratic *rigsråd* (Council of the Realm). The Council of the Realm not only formally elected the king and advised him on matters of politics, it also safeguarded the integrity of the realm and had the authority, if necessary, to depose a tyrannical king.

2 The two standard accounts of Danish historiography are Jørgensen, *Historieforskning og Historieskrivning* and Mørch (ed.), *Danmarks Historie*. For a succinct account in English, see Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Historical Writing in Scandinavia', pp. 449–72. For a thorough treatment of the period around 1600, see: Skovgaard-Petersen, *Historiography at the Court of Christian IV*. On Huitfeldt see: Heiberg, 'Arild Huitfeldt og Christian 4.', pp. 111–30.

In Huitfeldt's political vision, the realm, its laws and its institutions take centre stage, not the dynasty that as often as not is a source of trouble. In the preface to his history of the tyrannical Christian II he put it quite bluntly: 'Seldom do we find that three or four good princes have succeeded one another in power, but evil ones have been interspersed among the good.'<sup>3</sup> Such evil princes were of course God's punishment, but in due course God put an end to the trial 'by lawful means' (= the Council of the Realm), as happened as late as in 1523 with the deposition of Christian II. Correspondingly, he conceived of the Kalmar Union between Denmark, Norway and Sweden (1397–1523) not as a dynastic union but as a commonwealth of realms. Modern historians still discuss whether the Kalmar union was primarily a dynastic union or a commonwealth of realms, but in Huitfeldt's political vision there is no doubt about the latter being the case.<sup>4</sup>

Not least due to the strong position of the Council of the Realm in Denmark proper, the only dynastic 'buffer zone' available was the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein on the border with Germany where succession was hereditary and the territory could, and on several occasions would, be divided among the male members of the dynasty, thus creating a series of collateral branches. To Huitfeldt this was a tragedy, a political error on the part of king and Council and a perpetual source of political problems.<sup>5</sup>

This is not to say that dynasticism was entirely absent from Danish political culture in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It found expression in royal funeral monuments like the royal Chapel of the Franciscan Church in Odense and later the royal Chapel of the Three Magi in the Cathedral of Roskilde.<sup>6</sup> In other words: dynasticism was a political and cultural practice but not a literary genre.

### Claus Christoffersen Lyschander: Dynasticism and Gothicism in Full Bloom

The historiographical breakthrough of dynasticism in Denmark came in 1622 when the royal historiographer Claus Christoffersen Lyschander (1558–1623/24) produced a heavy folio volume of 708 pages whose longwinded

3 Huitfeldt, *Historiske Beskriffuelse*, the preface.

4 Hedemann, 'Myten om Kalmarunionen', pp. 145–59; Gustafsson, 'Kalmarunionen igen', pp. 175–84.

5 Huitfeldt, *Kong Hansis Krønike*, p. 7–8; Huitfeldt, *Konning Friderich Den Førstis*, pp. 1–5.

6 Kryger (ed.), *Danske kongegrave*, vol. II, pp. 172–95 (chapter by Birgitte Bøggild Johannsen), pp. 267–325 (chapter by Hugo Johannsen).

title is usually shortened to *Danske Kongers Slectebog* (Genealogical Book of Danish Kings).<sup>7</sup> It was published in the triumphant early part of the long reign of Christian IV (r. 1588/96–1648), at a time when the Lutheran Danish monarchy was a resounding success politically and culturally — and dynastically as well due to two generations of successful strategic marriages. This resulted in Danish princesses on the thrones of England and Scotland (Anne), Electoral Saxony (Anna and Hedevig), Braunschweig-Lüneburg (Dorothea) and Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (Elisabeth).<sup>8</sup> In this sense *Danske Kongers Slectebog* seems like a true reflection of the spirit of the times.

Contrary to what we would expect today, the need to express dynasticism in history writing was not felt very strongly by the well-educated and dynamic King himself, who left literary matters to his chancellors.<sup>9</sup> The chancellors on the other hand focused on the obvious need for a readable and up-to-date Latin history of Denmark. It therefore comes as no surprise that when Lyschander was appointed royal Danish historiographer late in life (1616) he was given the traditional task — a political priority since the 1550s — of writing a Latin history of Christian III (r. 1534–59) and Frederick II (r. 1559–88), that is the history of the father and grandfather of the present king Christian IV. After that, he was supposed to double back and write about all the preceding Danish kings back to Frode Fredegod, who was king of Denmark at the time of the birth of Christ, ‘taking care to supplement everything missing in Saxo’.<sup>10</sup> In other words, his task was first to write contemporary history and then to move backwards and enlarge and update the great medieval national history *Gesta Danorum* (around 1200) by Saxo Grammaticus.

What Lyschander actually did was something rather different. He did start on a history of Christian III in Latin, or rather he started to rewrite existing manuscript chronicles left by earlier royal historiographers, but broke off after completing 100 pages covering only the dramatic first three years of the reign (1534–36), leaving the ensuing twenty-three years between 1536 and 1559 to someone else. This someone else was probably the esteemed Dutch humanist scholar Johannes Pontanus (1571–1639) who eventually

7 Lyschander, *Danske Kongers Slectebog*. On Lyschander see the dated but indispensable Rørdam, *Klavs Christoffersen Lyskanders Levned* and Skovgaard-Petersen, *Historiography at the Court of Christian IV*, pp. 118–20.

8 Gustafsson, ‘Dynasty Formation’, pp. 345–406.

9 Skovgaard-Petersen, *Historiography at the Court of Christian IV*, pp. 43, 45–9, 67–70.

10 Rørdam, *Klavs Christoffersen Lyskanders Levned*, p. 61. See also Lyschander, *Danske Kongers Slectebog*, p. 2.

delivered a *Rerum Danicarum Historia libris X* (Ten Books of Danish History) (Amsterdam, 1631) covering all Danish history from the beginnings to the accession of the house of Oldenburg in 1448.

However, Lyschander did write a full history in Danish of the reign of Frederick II covering the years 1559 to 1588, although even in this case he leaned heavily on an existing manuscript history of the Nordic Seven Years' War (1563–70). This history of Frederick II was eventually published in 1680 without mention of the author's name but should be included in any assessment of his work.

The one thing Lyschander did publish shortly before his death was the above-mentioned *Danske Kongers Slectebog*, whose full title can be translated as *An overview of Danish history. A short summary from the beginning of the world till the present king Christian IV, structured as a genealogical book of Danish Kings, so much as can be gathered from old and truthful Danish, Cimbrian, Italian, Spanish, French, English, Scots, Lombard, Norman, Polish, German, Saxon, Frisian etc. histories, antiquities and documents* (Copenhagen, 1622).

The *Danske Kongers Slectebog* was not at all what he had been hired to do, for it is decidedly not a narrative history of the Danish kings from the time of Christ to the present. Rather it is a systematic handbook of the origins of the Danish people and their rulers stretching back to the days of Noah and up to Lyschander's own times. This includes several of Europe's ruling dynasties who, according to Lyschander, actually had a Danish pedigree.

Lyschander's *Danske Kongers Slectebog* is consistently structured along dynastic lines (see below). In the preface to the reader he explained the rationale behind this:

And because lords and kings are the shining lights, and their children and descendants *sunt nervi Historiarum*, the living and moving sinews in the *historical* body, therefore all of it is here presented (according to the time and industry our Lord has bestowed) in a genealogical book of the illustrious and powerful Danish kings.<sup>11</sup>

If dynastic history in Lyschander's view constituted the sinews of history, the spirit moving them can be identified as Gothicism, that is the idea that

<sup>11</sup> Lyschander, *Danske Kongers Slectebog*, p. 1: 'Oc efterdi Herrerne oc Kongerne / ere de skinnende Liuss / oc deris børn oc efterkommere / *sunt nervi Historiarum*, de leffuende oc rørlige Sæner vdi det *Historiske* Legomme; Da haffuer mand dette aldsammen her (effter den tid oc flid vor Herre vilde forlæne) vdi voris høylofflige oc Stormectige *Danske Kongers Slectebog* forfatted'.



Denmark was the true homeland of the heroic Goths and the numerous peoples and dynasties identified with them or descending from them (Scythians, Cimbrians, Amazons, Vandals, Lombards, Normans etc.).<sup>12</sup> As the Goths were supposed to have conquered Rome and founded several kingdoms in Europe, Asia and Africa, this was a vision of history that catapulted Denmark from the periphery of Europe to the centre stage of world history.

Denmark was not the only kingdom to claim the attractive Gothic heritage, and Lyschander's work is best understood as a full-blown attempt to counter the better known and more successful Swedish claims to the Gothic past put forward by the exiled Catholic Archbishop Johannes Magnus (1488–1544) some seventy years earlier in his great Latin histories of the Swedish Kings (published posthumously in 1554).<sup>13</sup> But whereas Johannes Magnus located the homeland of the Goths in the Swedish provinces of East and West Gothland, Lyschander showed that they originally came from Danish Scania (now southern Sweden), incidentally his own home province.<sup>14</sup>

Considered as a piece of historical literature Lyschander's *Danske Kongers Slectebog* is abysmal. It is dry and quite unreadable because it is not a narrative, or even a bundle of narratives, but a tangled criss-crossing web of rudimentary family histories in three parts. The first part is divided into five books but totals only 124 pages. It draws the line of descent from Noah via his son Japhet and grandson Gomer to Alchanes, who was an ancestor of the famed Cimbrians, Goths and Danish Jutes, founders of the Danish realm. During this period of state formation, as we would say today, the Danes lived under a series of Danish chiefs and judges — just like the Jews in ancient Israel before King Saul. The fifth and last book takes up more than half of this first part and describes the migrations of the Goths, Getes and Gythings from Scania and the many realms they conquered or founded in central and southern Europe in antiquity. It also includes the line of Spanish kings (descendants of the Visigoths) up to the present.

The second part encompasses eleven books totalling 250 pages and covers the period from King Dan (year 2910 after creation, 1253 after the deluge), the first king of a united Denmark, to Christopher of Bavaria, the last king before the Oldenburg family ascended the throne in 1448. This sounds like a straightforward chronicle of kings in the old medieval style, but the last

12 Svenning, *Zur Geschichte des Goticismus*; Schmidt-Voges, *Gothizismus als Identitätsmodell*; Neville, 'Gothicism and Early Modern Historical Ethnography', pp. 213–34.

13 Johannesson and Larson, *The Renaissance of the Goths*.

14 Lyschander, *Danske Kongers Slectebog*, p. 52.

four chapters give an overview of the histories of the exploits and kingdoms founded by the Vandals and Lombards in eastern and southern Europe and in Africa in antiquity and the early Middle Ages, of the Obotrites in Mecklenburg (homeland of Queen Anna Catherine, wife of Christian IV), of England and Scotland from the beginning to the present and of the Normans and their history in Normandy and southern Italy.

The third and longest part of the *Danske Kongers Slectebog* numbers thirteen books, covering 330 pages, and contains the history of the Oldenburg family (hailing from the county of Oldenburg in Northern Germany, south of the Weser). It will come as no surprise to anyone that the Oldenburg dynasty, like most old and illustrious families of Europe, could be traced back to the Danish King Gotrich. This part of the book offers genealogical overviews of all the major princely, royal and imperial houses in Germany while the actual history of the Danish Oldenburg kings from Christian I (r. 1448–81) to Christian IV (r. 1588–1648) only takes up the final thirty pages of the final, thirteenth book.

As will be clear from this overview, the *Danske Kongers Slectebog* is a very comprehensive work and more of a genealogical handbook of European history than a Danish history in any conventional sense. History in its narrative form has been sacrificed for the greater good of demonstrating three interconnected ideological points: that the Danish royal dynasty, like other European dynasties, could trace its origins to the Biblical genealogy; that the heroic Goths and all the peoples and states belonged to Danish history; and that this Gothic-Danish descent formed the backbone of most European dynasties.

Apart from making the book unreadable, the focus on the 'dynastic sinews of history' has the interesting effect of moving queens and princesses to the forefront for the simple reason that in several instances the dynastic continuity of the Danish royal family as well as its connection to other princely and royal houses ran through them alone. An example of this is the second book of the second part, which begins with the ancestor of all subsequent Danish and Swedish kings, the Valkyrie Queen Svanhvide (Swanwhite). The following lines give a good impression of Lyschander's rugged style:

Swanwhite, daughter of the aforementioned King Hading and Queen Ragneld of Denmark, a lovely, virtuous and brave woman; she killed Queen Torild of Sweden, made Torild's stepson Regner king and later married him, took her brother King Frode the Brave of Denmark, who made war on Sweden, captive, and together with her husband King Regner she later

killed and buried him. She ruled the realm well and lived in great glory and love with her husband: and after his death she mourned herself to death. Together they begot a son, Hotbrod.<sup>15</sup>

Swanwhite's grandson eventually ascended the Danish throne because no other male issue from King Dan was left. Similar queens highlighted by Lyschander are Queen Giurrethe (Geruta), Queen Estrid and of course Queen Margaret.<sup>16</sup>

Lyschander's predilection for dynastic history with a female twist was not limited to the royal family or the last decade of his life. Before becoming a royal historiographer he had been closely connected to a number of great aristocratic families. One of these was the Bille family, and in 1597–1602 Lyschander had composed a long poem (1,377 lines) called *Billeslægtens Rimkrønike* (Rhymed Chronicle of the Bille Family) celebrating its ancestry.<sup>17</sup> The poem consists of sixteen parts — one for each of the sixteen noble ancestors (great-great-grandparents) of his noble patron Sten Bille. The first part describes Sten Bille's father in the third person, but the remaining fifteen parts are from the point of view of female ancestors who describe their lineage's origin, destiny and connections to other noble and princely families. We can take Lady Margreta Trolle (1475–1522), grandmother of Sten Bille's father, as an example. In the poem she proudly recounts that her father, Arvid Trolle (c. 1440–1505), was a Swedish councillor of the Realm with relations all over Denmark and Sweden. He was 'an in-law of nearly every nobleman of any importance'. Her mother's lineage was even more illustrious because it descended from King Canute, patron saint of Denmark (martyred in 1086), and included no fewer than seventeen kings and a host of lords and princes.<sup>18</sup>

Lyschander's *Billeslægtens Rimkrønike* reminds us that royal and political dynasticism should not be studied in isolation but must be understood in connection with dynastic mindsets and narratives in other parts of the social and political elite and with genealogical and ethnic visions of history like Gothicism. Royal dynasticism was only the tip of the iceberg, politically as well as culturally.

15 Lyschander, *Danske Kongers Slectebog*, pp. 142–3, see also p. 137.

16 Lyschander, *Danske Kongers Slectebog*, pp. 161, 203, 240.

17 Lundgreen-Nielsen (ed.), *C.C. Lyschander's Digtning*, vol. I, pp. 69–125, vol. II, pp. 67–128. The poem was eventually printed in 1722 and erroneously ascribed to Birgitte Bille, sister of Jens Bille (see vol. II p. 70).

18 Lundgreen-Nielsen (ed.), *C.C. Lyschander's Digtning*, vol. 1, p. 78–80.

In the preface addressed to the reader, Lyschander, not without complacency, describes the *Danske Kongers Slectebog* as a 'new and unusual work'. He might have been convinced of that himself and in a Danish context he was right but viewed in a broader perspective it would be more correct to say that the *Danske Kongers Slectebog* was a late example of a type of dynastic and ethnic history that emerged with the Renaissance. The printing press led to an explosion in the amount of historical and genealogical information available on distant pasts and far-off lands, and new vistas of historical reconstruction opened up — partly with the help of ingenious forgers like Anniius of Viterbo (c. 1432–1502).<sup>19</sup> Through an annotated collection of ancient historical texts, the *Antiquitatum variarum volumina XVII* (Seventeen Books of Various Antiquities) that he had 'discovered', he was able to close the gap between the sketchy Biblical account of the peopling of the Earth after the Flood and the extant ancient and medieval chronicles. Anniius was the first to demonstrate the full potential of this approach as he included a line of twenty-four Spanish kings from Noah's grandson Tubal, the first king of Spain, to Mellicola, living just after the fall of Troy. Needless to say he dedicated his work to the royal Spanish power couple Ferdinand and Isabella.<sup>20</sup> Other, more sober examples of the same endeavour would be Franciscus Irenicus's *Germaniae exegeseos volumina duodecim* (Twelve Books Giving a Description of Germany) (Hagenau, 1518) and Wolfgang Lazius's *De Gentium aliquot migrationibus, sedibus fixis, reliquiis linguarumque initiis et immutationibus ac dialectis libri XII* (Twelve Books about the Migrations, Territories, Remains of Some Peoples and about the Beginning, Development and Dialects of Languages) (Basel, 1557).<sup>21</sup>

In a Scandinavian context the true heir to Anniius of Viterbo was the above-mentioned Johannes Magnus, who installed Magog, another of Noah's grandsons, as the first king of Sweden and was able to provide a very full account of his and his successors' exploits. Lyschander was less bold and creative, more a compiler than a poet, and as is evident from his preface he was perfectly well aware of the increasing criticism of the tradition of

19 Bizzocchi, *Généalogies fabuleuses*. Bizzocchi traces the fortune of Anniius in Italy, France, Spain, Germany and England. On Sweden see Wifstrand Schiebe, *Annius von Viterbo und die schwedische Historiographie*.

20 Anniius of Viterbo's work was printed under several different titles in different versions. The text on the Spanish kings, 'De primis temporibus' is not in the first edition, *Commentaria super opera diversorum auctorum*, but can be found in subsequent editions at least from *Antiquitatum variarum volumina. XVII* (Rome, 1512), fols LXXXVI–XC. See also the handy 1652-edition (with an excellent index): Anniius of Viterbo, *Berosi sacerdotis Chaldaici*, pp. 292–307.

21 Cordes, *Die Quellen der Exegesis Germaniae*, pp. 49–50.

Annus of Viterbo and Johannes Magnus. But what was he to do? Without Annus and other only slightly more reliable sources, his grandiose vision of dynastic Danish Gothicism would collapse like a house of cards and the Swedes would gain a near monopoly on Gothicism — which they eventually did. The following generations of Danish historiographers in fact discarded most of the distant Gothic past and kept to the higher ground of more reliable classical sources.<sup>22</sup>

### Vitus Bering: The Priorities of Style

It is normally assumed that the introduction of hereditary kingship and absolutism in Denmark-Norway in 1660 entailed a strengthening of the dynastic element in politics and culture. There was no longer any Council of the Realm to embody the realm independently of the king and safeguard its integrity, and the royal court gained in importance as the sole reliable source of patronage and career opportunities. In Germany as well as in Sweden, dynasticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries often led to partitions and to a corresponding fragmentation and weakening of the state. However, no plans to divide the kingdom in order to establish younger Danish royal sons as sovereign princes seem ever to have been seriously considered. On the contrary, the (secret) *Royal Law* of 1665 and the (even more secret) *Political Testament* of Christian V of 1683–84 emphasised that the younger members of the royal family should never be granted a more or less independent position as lords of any part of the territory. They ought only to receive appanage — to enjoy an income but not exercise any special authority beyond the privileges enjoyed by any other landowners. This development was part of a larger European trend towards primogeniture, centralisation and the marginalisation of younger sons, but it must be added that this trend was by no means as clear and self-evident in the 1660s as it must appear to later historians.

Only on the fringes of the dynasty as it were, in the role granted to the royal bastards (the so-called natural sons and daughters), can we observe a growth in the dynastic sphere. Christian IV had begun the tradition of fathering a sizable bunch of royal bastards even before the introduction of absolutism. The males, all surnamed Gyldenløve (Golden Lion), were used in war and diplomacy; the females were married off to up-and-coming young noblemen. A mixture of bad luck and personal failings prevented the success

22 Skovgaard-Petersen: *Historiography at the Court of Christian IV*, pp. 166–9.

of what was in principle a very promising strategy: the Gyldenløve boys died too early, and the attempt to use the husbands Christian IV had chosen for his daughters as a dependable power base misfired. After the introduction of absolutism in 1660, Frederick III (1648–70), Christian IV (1670–99) and Frederick IV (1699–1730) kept up the tradition of siring bastards. In contrast to Christian IV they succeeded in turning their Gyldenløve sons into reliable political and military leaders and their daughters into useful prizes for the reliable elements of the court nobility.<sup>23</sup>

So dynasticism was a political reality, but what about in the history books? Frederick III and his advisors were acutely aware that the introduction of hereditary kingship and absolutism was a watershed in the political and constitutional development of Denmark but seemingly they did not think that this entailed a new sort of history. Since 1650 the celebrated Latin poet Vitus Bering (1617–75) had been royal historiographer. His renown as a master of the most high-flung and elaborate Latin rhetorical style was so great that after the resounding Swedish victories in the war against Denmark in 1657–58 the Swedish warrior-king Charles X Gustav (r. 1654–60) offered him a position as the Swedish royal historiographer with the assignment to write the King's history — an offer Bering politely declined.<sup>24</sup>

After the introduction of absolutism, Bering was told to concentrate on three topics: the siege of Copenhagen during the second Swedish War in 1658–60, the introduction of absolutism in 1660 and the early history of Denmark, that is on the one hand contemporary history and on the other the remote past. He finished the first and third assignments. A history of the siege of Copenhagen was ready for publication by 1673 but did not appear until after his death two years later, probably for reasons having to do with the delicate Danish-Swedish relations in the context of a general European war (the Franco-Dutch War, 1672–78). When war between Denmark and Sweden eventually broke out in the summer of 1675, all diplomatic considerations evaporated and the book was printed.

Bering's other finished work was a Danish history from King Dan to Christopher of Bavaria, the last king before the accession of the Oldenburg family in 1448. It carries the title *Florus Danicus* (Danish Florus) and was only published in 1698 — the delay presumably again being due to diplomatic considerations. The title was an allusion to the highly esteemed *Epitome of Roman History* by the second-century author Lucius Annaeus Florus. The *Florus Danicus*, on 688 folio pages with rather large print, covered well-known

23 Gustafsson, 'Dynasty Formation'.

24 On Bering see Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Klassikerimitation og danmarkshistorie', pp. 55–79.

territory because precisely this stretch of Danish history had been treated extensively in published Danish histories by the above-mentioned Danish historiographer Johannes Pontanus, as well as his co-historiographer Johannes Meursius.

Can we detect any dynastic tendencies in Bering's *Florus Danicus*? In my opinion, hardly any. He does emphasise, but has trouble proving, that since King Dan Denmark has been ruled by only three royal families, the Oldenburg family being the third. This put Denmark on a par with France where it was customary to speak of 'the first, second and third royal houses' (*la première, deuxième et troisième race*), being the Merovingians, the Carolingians and the Capetians. Apart from this emphasis on dynastic continuity, Bering followed tradition, and what he offered was essentially a digest of his illustrious predecessors Saxo, Krantz and Pontanus. This means that the dynastic element is reduced to providing a sense of continuity in what is in essence a succession of reigns with a focus on the monarch. It is royalism rather than dynasticism, because what looks like dynasticism sometimes is just chronology and a convenient way to chop up the narrative into manageable chunks.

### Ludvig Holberg: Speed Writing and Natural Law

A generation after the publication of Bering's *Florus Danicus*, the father of the Danish Enlightenment, Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754), wrote his three-volume *Dannemarks Riges Historie* (Danish History) (1732–35) in Danish, stretching from the earliest times up to the reign of Frederick III, and therefore ending in 1670.<sup>25</sup> In contrast to Bering, Holberg was born and educated under absolutism and had a political mind. However, if anything his history is even less concerned with dynasty than Bering, even if Holberg lived and wrote during the reign of Christian VI (r. 1730–46), who relied heavily on his family and allowed his queen Sophie Magdalena to bring several poor relations to Denmark. If we take a look at international politics, Holberg would also have found food for dynastic thought in the so-called wars of succession during his lifetime: the Nine Years' War (1688–97) centring on different claims to the Palatinate, the Spanish War of Succession (1701–14), the Polish War of Succession (1733–35) and the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–48). Last but not least, Holberg was a staunch believer in hereditary kingship for the

<sup>25</sup> On the life and letters of Holberg see Knud Haakonssen and Olden-Jørgensen (eds), *Ludvig Holberg*.

simple reason that he saw it as a key to political stability. In other words, Holberg ought to have written a dynastic history but he did not.

He did of course pay lip service to dynasticism. The introduction to the first volume of *Dannemarks Riges Historie* is a discussion of whether Denmark had originally been a hereditary kingdom (the answer was emphatically yes!) and whether and when it had ever been an elective monarchy (the answer was only since the deposition of Christian II in 1523, until the introduction of absolutism in 1660 corrected the error). However, the point of view of the discussion is strictly constitutional, not dynastic. Concerning the Dark Ages, the favourite playground of dynastic speculation as witnessed by Lyschander, Holberg is dismissive and openly rude, making fun of the heroic Cimbrians, Goths and Vandals and comparing their campaigns to snowballs that accumulate dirt (other peoples) as they roll down the hill.<sup>26</sup>

When it comes to the Oldenburg family itself, Holberg's tenor changes. To him 'the Royal House of Oldenburg is one of the most singular and illustrious of all history'. With the exception of the tyrannical Christian II (ruled 1513–23), all the other members of the family embraced the virtues of their ancestor, Christian I, 'so that it would seem that Denmark during 300 years had been ruled by one and the same king'. This he does not hesitate to call 'a special divine gift and glory that I do not find in any other country'.<sup>27</sup> However, this is more royalism than dynasticism.

How do we best explain Holberg's blind spot when it comes to dynasticism? One could venture two explanations: first, Holberg worked fast and, with few exceptions, on the basis of established traditions that he condensed and placed in the right perspective (as he saw it). This he did through a number of remarks or comments that supplemented the smooth-running narrative, but he did not fundamentally change the material he worked on. For this reason, Holberg's history ends up being modern on the surface, in the explicit evaluations of events voiced in the comments, but very traditional at the core, the actual narrative, where he largely built on the above-mentioned Arild Huitfeldt and Johannes Pontanus.

Second, philosophically Holberg was a disciple of the great German Natural Law theorist and historian Samuel Pufendorf (1632–94), for whom politics and history are governed by reason of state, not by dynastic principles or group interests. This trait in Pufendorf and Holberg makes them seem remarkably modern, like exponents *avant la lettre* of the realist approach

26 On this and other expressions of Holberg's humour see Olden-Jørgensen, 'Holbergs "sædvanlige Munterhed"', pp. 137–64.

27 Holberg, *Dannemarks Riges Historie*, vol. I, pp. 636–7.



in foreign policy analysis. But before we wax lyrical about the modernity of Holberg, we should not forget his heartfelt and religiously coloured royalism.

### Hans Peter Anchersen: Dynasticism and Kinaesthetic Learning

Even if Holberg looms large in Danish historiography and for good reasons, there are others worth mentioning. There is a certain irony in the fact that Holberg's tenant, friend and colleague, Professor Hans Peter Anchersen (1700–65), published a book in Danish in 1745 called *Herthedal ved Leyre i Siælland og det gamle Danmark 150 for og efter Christi Fødsel* (Herthadal at Lejre on Sealand and the old Denmark 150 years before and after the Birth of Christ), replete with exactly the sort of learned speculation about ancient Nordic history that Holberg abhorred. A key point in Anchersen's book was the identification of the location of the famous pan-Germanic temple of Nerthus (or Herthus) described by Tacitus in Chapter 40 of his *Germania*. According to Tacitus, the temple was situated in a sacred grove on an island in the ocean, which Anchersen identified as the village of Ertedal near Lejre on the island of Sealand. This thesis had been first proposed by the famous antiquarian Ole Worm (1588–1654) in 1643, and now Professor Anchersen corroborated it with more than 400 pages of text.

But Anchersen did more than that. In 1757, twelve years after the publication of his book and three years after Holberg's death, he designed a historical monument park that was erected in 1757–62 on the grounds south of Ledreborg manor house near Lejre. It became known as the 'historical and antiquarian (or genealogical) peripatetic academy at Ledreborg'.<sup>28</sup> Ledreborg was the residence of Count Johan Ludvig Holstein (1694–1763), son of a German aristocratic immigrant and one of the leading Danish statesmen during the reign of the dipsomaniac King Frederick V (r. 1746–66).

The academy consisted of a number of open spaces in the park connected by avenues and decorated with no fewer than 341 statues, obelisks, benches and stones with inscriptions, most of them painted, but a few of them carved. The inscriptions contained information on the rulers and peoples of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, England and Germany (Saxony) from the remote past, beginning not with Noah but with the arrival in the North of the later to be deified Odin and leading up to the present day. This shows that Anchersen was up-to-date on ancient Nordic history because not only had Lyschander's Gothic fantasies been dropped in favour of more reliable

28 Eriksen, 'Herthadalen, fortidsbruk og historiefag', pp. 59–84.

classical sources, chief among them Tacitus, but since the 1680s traditions derived from old Norse sources with information about the immigration of Odin to Scandinavia had become increasingly accessible.

Visitors could stroll along the avenues and absorb the overview of the different dynasties and peoples, while connecting avenues showed how the dynasties linked up. Oak dominated in the part of the academy dealing with heathen history while lime trees were predominant in the part describing the Christian era. The park was open to the public and the presence of a canteen indicates that there must have been a steady stream of visitors. Regrettably, only a few fragments of the academy remain today but it is an interesting example not only of a dynastic conception of history but also of an original attempt to turn unwieldy genealogical knowledge into a sensory experience. Whether it was successful in doing so is difficult to determine because no sources tell us about the impact.

### **Conclusion: The Link between Dynasticism and the Quest for a Heroic Past**

The case studies above allow a couple of tentative conclusions. First, even in times when dynasticism was a living social and political reality, it was obviously not the first choice among history writers. This is easy to understand in an aristocratically biased author like Arild Huitfeldt, who saw dynasticism as a threat to the political and social order he cherished. It is much less understandable in a royal historiographer of commoner stock like Vitus Bering or a convinced supporter of hereditary absolutism like Ludvig Holberg. Both Bering and Holberg seem to have been entirely satisfied with royalism and only used rudimentary dynasticism as a convenient scaffold for their histories. One suspects that the evident challenges of composing a readable historical narrative that took account of the criss-crossing web of dynastic connections daunted them — as it daunts any would-be reader of Lyschander's *Danske Kongers Slectebog* even today. A mere succession of main characters (kings) surrounded by a select number of other characters (spouses, councillors, enemies and friends) is so much easier to handle and more pleasant to read.

Second, it is interesting that both of the above-mentioned ambitious attempts at dynastic history, Lyschander and Anchersen, were the fruit of individual scholarship rather than expressions of a political ideology at court or the express will of the political leadership. Lyschander's *Danske kongers Slectebog* was in many ways the opposite of what he had been hired

to do as the royal historiographer, and Anchersen's design of the historical and antiquarian peripatetic academy at Ledreborg sprung from his own erudition, as witnessed by the book he published. If there was a link to politics, it consisted in the need of Count Holstein — a royal favourite but also a foreigner — to demonstrate Danish patriotism.

Third, apart from being driven by individual predilections Lyschander and Anchersen have one more thing in common. They were strong believers in a distant and heroic national past that they wanted to bring to life. For Lyschander this past was Gothic, stretching back to Noah, and by these means he turned most of European history into a subsection of Danish history and implicitly countered Swedish attempts to claim the Gothic heritage. Anchersen was more modest and modern but no less determined. His heroic past began with the immigration of Odin, relied on classical and Nordic sources and inscribed only the Scandinavian countries, England and part of Germany into the Danish past. Maybe the most obvious conclusion is that the link between dynasticism and the quest for a heroic ethnic past seemed like an obvious good idea in an age of nascent nationalism and strong dynasties. The only problem was that it did not work!

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*Slectebog, saa meget mand af Gamle og Sandferdige Danske, Cimberske, Italienske, Hispanske, Frantzoske, Engelske, Scotske, langobardiske, Normanniske, Polske, Tiiske, Saxiske, Frisiske etc. Historier, Antiquiteter oc Documenter haffuer af forfare* (Copenhagen, 1622).

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- Slectebog, saa meget mand af Gamle og Sandferdige Danske, Cimberske, Italienske, Hispanske, Frantzoske, Engelske, Scotske, langobardiske, Normanniske, Polske, Tiuske, Saxiske, Frisiske etc. Historier, Antiquiteter oc Documenter haffuer af forfare* (Copenhagen, 1622).
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In state formation research, princely houses have been a blind spot. The development of states has been discussed from many perspectives, like interstate competition, internal social conflicts, fiscal-military developments, etc., but at the centre of most European states, there was a princely house. These ruling houses have been overlooked in studies about state formation. What's more, when discussing such dynasties, the vertical chronological perspective (grandfather-father-son) is all dominating, for instance in the focus on dynastic continuity, dynastic culture and representation, and the like. This collection of essays highlights the horizontal perspective (ruler, all children, siblings, cousins), in asking how the members of a princely family acted as a power network. The quest is to develop an understanding how this family network interplayed with other factors in the state formation process. This volume brings together existing knowledge of the topic with the aim of exchanging insights and furthering knowledge.

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