Scanian nobleman, Axel Pedersen (Tott) of Härlöv placed his seal on King Eric’s Coronation Charter in 1397. The Kalmar Union was no longer Queen Margaret’s vision; in the years after King Eric’s election, it became the political reality for the populace of the three Scandinavian kingdoms. The Union had two facets; it was a unit of political power; consisting of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, whilst it was also a vast geographical empire stretching from Greenland to Finland; including the Shetland Islands, the Orkneys and Iceland, the strategical islands of Gotland and Oland. It seemed that the future of the three Nordic kingdoms was sealed … or was it? The Axelsson Totts’ economic and social expansion during the period of the Kalmar Union was intrinsically interwoven with the political ambitions of their vast internordic network. Like their father before them, the nine brothers would support the concept of the Union, for trade, as well as serving their network affiliations and dynastic intentions.
Kin, Friends and Unfriends

A Study of the Axelsson Tott Network during the Period of the Kalmar Union
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MARGARET WALLACE NILSSON

LINNAEUS UNIVERSITY PRESS
KIN, FRIENDS AND UNFRIENDS

A Study of the Axelsson Tott Network during the Period of the Kalmar Union

MARGARET WALLACE NILSSON

LINNAEUS UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Dano-Swedish Axelsson Totts created one of the most influential family networks of the Kalmar Union. The Union was not only a political construction created by Queen Margaret, it was an important geographic area for inter-Nordic trade and dynastic contacts. The Axelsson Totts adhered first and foremost to the ideal and emotionality of inward loyalty to the family. This thesis re-evaluates the motives, choices and decisions of this dynamic and influential Nordic border-gentry magnatial family's network from c. 1450 to 1487. Men and women of the magnatial network were designated specific roles according to birth and roles assigned by friendship and marriage according to status, position and gender within the hierarchy of the network. The Axelsson Totts rose through the ranks of the Scanian border-gentry, carving out a unique position in Scandinavian history when Denmark, Sweden and Norway were united under one ruler. From 1448 Scandinavian politics fragmented partly due to the agendas of the polarization of rivaling magnatial networks of the most powerful families in Sweden and Denmark. The union monarchs actively resisted the political intentions of the magnates to create an aristocratic republic in Sweden, whilst their ambitions threatened the Church as direct source of political power. The Axelsson Totts created a personal economic empire within the borders of the Kalmar Union, from where they aspired to dominate the politics of the Kalmar Union and controlling the power of the union kings. The push and pull effect of magnatial factionalism and personal feuds became a trigger mechanism behind the political tension and inward armed conflicts which periodically defined the relationship within and between the magnatial networks and their relationship to the Crown. The Axelsson Tott's long term economic strategies made them serious political contenders for power from 1464. Their obtrusive play for power would not go unnoticed by the Union kings, the Swedish Protector Sten Sture, key members of the Church.

Keywords: Late Middle Age, res publica, female networks, Ivar Axelsson, Magdalena Karlsdotter, Karl Knutsson, Christian I, Sten Sture, state formation, factionalism.
Abstract


The Dano-Swedish Axelsson Totts created one of the most influential family networks of the Kalmar Union. The Union was not only a political construction created by Queen Margaret, it was an important geographic area for inter-Nordic trade and dynastic contacts. The Axelsson Totts adhered first and foremost to the ideal and emotionality of inward loyalty to the family. This thesis re-evaluates the motives, choices and decisions of this dynamic and influential Nordic border-gentry magnatial family’s network from c. 1450 to 1487. Men and women of the magnatial network were designated specific roles according to birth and roles assigned by friendship and marriage according to status, position and gender within the hierarchy of the network. The Axelsson Totts rose through the ranks of the Scanian border-gentry, carving out a unique position in Scandinavian history when Denmark, Sweden and Norway were united under one ruler. From 1448 Scandinavian politics fragmented partly due to the agendas of the polarization of rivaling magnatial networks of the most powerful families in Sweden and Denmark. The union monarchs actively resisted the political intentions of the magnates to create an aristocratic republic in Sweden, whilst their ambitions threatened the Church as direct source of political power. The Axelsson Totts created a personal economic empire within the borders of the Kalmar Union, from where they aspired to dominate the politics of the Kalmar Union and controlling the power of the union kings. The push and pull effect of magnatial factionalism and personal feuds became a trigger mechanism behind the political tension and inward armed conflicts which periodically defined the relationship within and between the magnatial networks and their relationship to the Crown. The Axelsson Tott’s long term economic strategies made them serious political contenders for power from 1464. Their obtrusive play for power would not go unnoticed by the Union kings, the Swedish Protector Sten Sture, key members of the Church.

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The castle ruin of Lillö lies on a small islet once surrounded by the meandering river Helgån, within walking distance of the medieval town of Vä. This now tranquil place was once the setting of the most dramatic events in the history of the region. This once majestic fortified house was built by the dynamic and powerful family of Axelsson Tott of Härlöv. Lillö's existence was a solid and ever-present reminder of the family's dominance in local regional and eventually national politics. My early fascination with this family and their designated place in history made me aware of just how little I knew about Scandinavia in the Late Middle Ages, and especially the history of the Kalmar Union's place in the wider history of European expansion and state-building processes, despite the obvious interlinking of the history of the British Isles and Scandinavia from the eighth century onwards. My historical curiosity led me to study the realms of the medieval period, and politics of the Kalmar Union and the people who made it into political reality. The result of my interest in the Axelsson Tott network's prominent role in the realization and conflicts of the Union is this thesis. During my time at Kristianstad University I became an enthusiastic student of history and English literature, from where I embarked on the long journey to acquire the methodological and theoretical tools and the necessary empirical knowledge for historical research. I owe a special debt of thanks to Professor Marie-Louise Rodén and Docent Ingemar Ottosson, both of whom encouraged me in my determination to research the Axelsson Totts.

The staff of the Department of Cultural Sciences at the Linnæus University offered me the opportunity to fulfill my ambition to study the Axelsson Tott network. Since August 2012, under the academic guidance of my thesis supervisors, Docent Anders Fröjmark and Docent Malin Lennartsson, my research has gradually taken form. To paraphrase Anders, it has not been an overly rapid process. If I have succeeded in killing all my darlings of course remains to be seen. Anders, you are my rock in the academic world; you have been my inspiration and mentor throughout, and without your detailed knowledge of the Middle Ages I would have achieved nothing. You have taught me not only how to use the historian's craft and believe in myself, you have also encouraged me to think freely, and only intervened when you thought it absolutely necessary. You have shown great patience, kindness, and interest in my research, tolerant of my postgraduate stubbornness and set English way of expressing myself in writing. Thank you for all our wonderful conversations, lunches, discussions; your words of wisdom and encouragement; and the detailed emails: I sincerely hope they will continue in the future.
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Margaret Wallace Nilsson
Djurröd, 2019

Dad, I wish you could be here on this great day in my life. You left this world far too soon. I regret that I never got the opportunity to say farewell to you. Your knowledge, intelligence and personal integrity served to awe and inspire me to do greater things. You are truly missed, whilst remaining a huge part of my life. This thesis is dedicated to your memory.

Malin, without your invaluable and direct comments, my thesis would have lacked that all-important structural framework. Your sharp-minded observations have been critical to the formulation and content of the thesis. You too have shown huge interest in my thesis project. I feel honoured to have had two such excellent supervisors.

A special thank you is in order to Docent Louise Berglund, opponent at my final seminar in February 2017. Your invaluable comments and critical suggestions concerning the direction form, and content of the thesis came at a crucial moment, and for that I am forever grateful. Also, I would like to offer my thanks to all the staff at the Department of Cultural Sciences (KV) at Linnaeus University for their generous support and advice. I have also had the pleasure to study alongside and discuss my project with several historians from the National Graduate School in History (Lund) and partaken of their knowledge through the graduate school’s international collaboration with York University, special workshops, and graduate courses.

I would not have survived the last six years without the support of my doctoral colleagues. With Ella Andrén I have shared not only the four walls of our tiny office, but also this epic journey from day one. We worked together as postgraduate representatives on the supervisors’ board HLK in 2014–2016. Ella, I am truly grateful for your friendship and lending a sympathetic ear to my intense discussions, plans, ideas, historical whims, and personal woes. You are and always will be a true and dear friend. Also, thank you to my postgraduate colleagues for their friendship, support, and constructive comments. It has been a pleasure and an honour to have worked and studied alongside you all. A special thank you goes to my dear friend Dr. Michal Salamonik of Södertorn University, whose thesis I read and commented on in 2016, and who very kindly returned the favour. You will always be connected to happy memories of my visits to Stockholm for courses and postgraduate activities during an intensive period in my life, and you are a source of true inspiration.

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Contents

PART 1: INTRODUCTION ........................................................................... 10
  Regnabo, regno, regnavi, sum sine regno! ................................................. 11
  Fate steps in ............................................................................................. 12
  Aim of the thesis ......................................................................................... 17
Chapter 1 ......................................................................................................... 20
  Margaret Valdemarsdotter – Queen, master and Nordic visionary ............ 20
  The Coronation Charter and the Union Letter ......................................... 22
  A wider geopolitical conspectus of fifteenth century Europe and
  Scandinavia ................................................................................................. 26
  Summary ..................................................................................................... 29
Chapter 2 ......................................................................................................... 31
  A dynasty in the making .............................................................................. 31
  Axel Pedersen - political satellite and network strategist ............................ 44
  Anders Pedersen (Gyldenstjerne) – rekindling dynastic ties ...................... 46
  The Axelsson Totts – A dynastic driving force in Nordic politics .............. 48
  Summary ..................................................................................................... 50
PART 2: SOURCES, METHOD AND THEORY ......................................... 52
Chapter 3 ......................................................................................................... 53
  Thesis disposition ........................................................................................ 53
  The Sources ................................................................................................. 54
    Online databases and the transcript sources ............................................ 56
  The current Tott research position and relevant sources ............................. 57
  Methodological approach ............................................................................ 61
    The comparative method ......................................................................... 62
    The comparative perspective ................................................................... 63
  Theoretical approach ................................................................................... 66
    The nature of emotions – real and ritual .................................................. 66
    An anthropological network perspective of friendship ............................ 72
  Summary ..................................................................................................... 75
    PART 3: THE MINDSET OF FIFTEENTH CENTURY POLITICAL
    CULTURE ...................................................................................................... 77
Chapter 4 ......................................................................................................... 78
  Friends and unfriends – the study of networks............................................ 78
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The construct of ideals in practice</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflict, consensus, cooperation and polarization</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The common weal and the res publica</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meditation and the common weal</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The magnatial presentation of self</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lineage and kin relations</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dynastic visual mediation</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lordship, patronage and magnate assertion</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>PART 4: AXELSSON TOTT NETWORK STRATEGIES 1460–1487</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kin relations and magnatial operation</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tott interests, dynastic cohesion and decisions 1461–1471</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Bishopric of Odense</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philip Axelsson – the Tranekær affair</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three weddings and the union negotiations</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sten Sture the Elder</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ivar Axelsson’s Visborg retinue in his accounts for Gotland</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Searching for the paid retinue</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>PART 5: FEMALE EMPOWERMENT?</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The anticipation of widowhood</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Widows and widowhood: the practical rules of engagement</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Widows in Scandinavia</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female social networks in the fifteenth century</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case study 1: Birgitta Olofsdotter the Elder</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case study 2: Magdalena Karlsdotter</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case study 3: Elin Gustavsdotter</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>King Karl’s inheritance: a conflict in the making</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conventions: Personal and Place names used in the thesis

As far as is possible, the standard modern English forms of personal names and place names have been used. There are a number of exceptions, however. I have used the form Eric when mentioning Eric Axelsson, King Eric and Eric Ericsson. King Karl Knutsson (Bonde) for King Charles VIII or II; and King Hans (christened Johannes and normally referred to as John in English texts and articles). I have also chosen to use the form Olof for Olof Axelsson (Tott), whose name is also spelt Olaf or Oluf. I have used both Axelsson and Axelsen where appropriate.

Scandinavian names in this period combined the given name with a patronymic: –son for men and –dotter for women. In some rare instances the matronymic name form was used, two examples being Nils Sture and Nils Kyrning. As is conventional, dynastic family names are given in parentheses after the patronymic – hence Ivar Axelsson (Tott) and Eric Ericsson (Gyllenstierna). Some individuals used the family’s (fathers and mothers) dynastic name – for example Arvid Trolle, Sten Sture, Johan Oxe and Trued Has.

I have used the Swedish forms for Finnish place names: Åbo (Turku), Viborg (Viipuri), Olofsborg (Olavinlinna), Tavastehus (Häme Castle), and Tavastland (Häme).
PART 1: INTRODUCTION
The popular image of Lady Fortuna was a telling reminder that medieval people truly believed that an individual could enjoy a certain degree of success in this life. It could be achieved through self-assertion and personal endeavour, whilst believing in the pervasive idea that there was an intervening power greater than man himself. Fortuna, ever fickle, steered the lives of men and dictated their destinies.

Fortune did not lie in the hands of the individual, because success was subject to astrological intervention, and only spiritual salvation could save the soul from the persecutions of Hell. Dante elaborated on how Fate was thought to influence man according to the four stages of life on the wheel of fortune. In the Middle Ages a man did not deny his fate, and had to accept the divine nature of it as part of the natural cycle of life, between the trials of birth and death.

Fate steps in

On the 17 July 1397, Lady Fortuna cast her intense gaze on a young would-be knight, Axel Pedersen (Tott), who was in the company of his uncle, Jep Axelsson (Tott), a distant kinsman, Stig Åkesen (Tott), and sixty-four other magnates and clerics who had gathered in Kalmar to witness the coronation of the first Union king of the three Scandinavian kingdoms. The three Tott men represented the branches of the Tott dynasty of Skåne in the south of what is now Sweden: Härlöv, Sjörup/Krageholm, and Næs. Axel Pedersen personified the Härlöv Tott's rise in Scandinavian politics. By affixing his seal to the Coronation Charter and swearing the oath of allegiance, he committed himself and his family to Queen Margaret's vision of an eternal union between the three Scandinavian kingdoms. Axel Pedersen expanded his power, wealth, and political reach under the auspices of King Eric and the second Union king, Christopher. Axel Pedersen's sons continued to fulfill their father's wishes, creating one of the greatest dynastic networks of the Kalmar Union. Ninety years after Axel Pedersen sealed the fate of his family, binding their future to the idea of a unified Scandinavia in 1397, his last surviving son; Ivar Axelsson was forced to make a hasty retreat to Lillö, his seat in Skåne, a defeated and broken man. The family's fiefdoms were lost to the Swedish Protector Sten Sture the Elder and the Danish King Hans. Standing in the shadow of Lady Fortuna, he could only watch as she turned the wheel: the Axelsson sphere of influence had been eclipsed, and their power had come full circle. So, why study the network of the Axelsson Totts?

The Axelsson Totts are, without a doubt, one of the most powerful and historically intriguing families to have emerged out of the Late Middle Ages in

---

Regnabo, regno, regnavi, sum sine regno!

No mortal power may stay her spinning wheel.
The nations rise and fall by her decree.
None may foresee where she will set her heel:

she passes, and things pass. Man's mortal reason cannot encompass her. She rules her sphere as the other gods rule theirs. Season by season

---

1 Figure1. Härkeberga Church, Enköping Municipality, Uppland, Sweden: The Rota Fortunae depicts a human figure, often representing the life cycle of a king’s reign. The text bands read from left to right: I shall reign, I reign, I have reigned and I have no kingdom. Mural painting attributed to Albertus Pictor, late fifteenth century. Photograph by Zacharias Nilsson; See Lundberg, 1961, pp. 11, 19–22: The author wrote, “In this church interior lives the spirit of the Sture Age, it lives with a rare intensity” [I detta kyrkorum lever sturetidens anda, lever den med en sällsam intensitet].

2 Dante Alighieri, c. 1320, The Inferno VII, lines. 82–87; translation by John Ciardi, 1954; Rollin Patch, 1914, p. 14: Romanist, Howard Rollin Patch observed that in the medieval world Fortuna represented, “…one idea of the great power that roll[ed] through all things, or at least that roll[ed] all things.”
The popular image of Lady Fortuna was a telling reminder that medieval people truly believed that an individual could enjoy a certain degree of success in this life. It could be achieved through self-assertion and personal endeavour, whilst believing in the pervasive idea that there was an intervening power greater than man himself. Fortuna, ever fickle, steered the lives of men and dictated their destinies. Fortune did not lie in the hands of the individual, because success was subject to astrological intervention, and only spiritual salvation could save the soul from the persecutions of Hell. Dante elaborated on how Fate was thought to influence man according to the four stages of life on the wheel of fortune. In the Middle Ages a man did not deny his fate, and had to accept the divine nature of it as part of the natural cycle of life, between the trials of birth and death.

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3 Horrox, 1994, pp. 6–8; Paston Letters, 1983, part 1, letter no. 350: John Paston III wrote to his brother John Paston II, who narrowly escaped with his life after the Lancastrian defeat at the Battle of Barnet in April 1471. He wrote that Fortuna stepped in and decided the outcome of the Lancastrian cause. See also Eriksson, 2017, pp. 52–54 for a similar discussion of the role of fate in fifteenth century medieval society.
Scandinavia and Europe. Fate, it can be assured, had nothing to do with it! According to historian Knud Fabricius the Axelsson Totts were compatible in stature and power to that of the great English Neville family during the War of the Roses in England. Fabricius observed that there were some striking similarities between the 16th Earl of Warwick, called the Kingmaker, Richard Neville and Lord Ivar Axelsson. This comparison was included in his review of Alexandra Skoglund’s doctoral thesis (1904) where she discussed the role and politics of the cadet branch of Axel Pedersen’s family in Sweden between 1441 and 1487. Fabricius’s observation was the first to be made by a Scandinavian historian. He sought beyond the three kingdoms in order to contextually comprehend the family’s ever tightening grip on power during the period of the Kalmar Union and their eventual political rise and fall. Knud Fabricius’s astute comparison of Richard Neville, the Earl of Warwick with Ivar Axelsson Tott, serves, not only as a starting point in this thesis, but also sets the scene in understanding the mind-set of one of Scandinavian’s greatest magnates. Fabricius wrote:

Ivar [Axelsson Tott] was not dissimilar to the men of France who were courteously known as ‘the league of public good’ … [he] questioned the might of kings as did the great Earl of Warwick. Both stood for personal honour; they were the bulwarks of their families, surrounded by their kin and friends; both utilized opportunities to arrange marriages with the womenfolk of the royal household, and took a leading role in the deposition of kings, whilst always having their own ambitions firmly in sight … but not necessarily built on stable foundations … An English author once said of ‘the kingmaker’ that Warwick was an archetypical feudal lord. His retinue was large; in reality, he was more politician than warrior, and more diplomat than politician. Such a description could be useful when describing a Nordic seigneur.4

The origins of the Neville family of Raby in northern England were similar to the Axelsson Totts. Both families had a senior and junior branch, comprising of several adult sons and daughters. The Nevilles exploded onto the medieval political scene in a similar way as the Axelsson Totts of Härlöv. Ralph Neville, 1st Earl of Westmorland, was a patron on the large scale, and was employed as trusted royal servant by the Lancastrian kings on England’s borders with Scotland and Wales and during the Hundred Years War with France. At the height of their power and acclaim, the Neville marcher lords established themselves as leaders of northern English society. Their reputation eventually stretched far beyond the Anglo-Scottish Borders.5 As Axel Pedersen’s loyalty to Queen Margaret and King Eric was never doubted, so too was Ralph Neville’s loyalty to John of Gaunt the Duke of Lancaster, son of Edward III. But as with all comparisons, there was one crucial difference between Ralph

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4 Fabricius, 1904, p. 296. All translations are my own.
5 Hicks, 2005, pp. 11–17.
Fabricius wrote: understanding the mind-set of one of Scandinavian’s greatest magnates. Tott, serves, not only as a starting point in this thesis, but also sets the scene in an astute comparison of Richard Neville, the Earl of Warwick with Ivar Axelsson. This comparison was included in his review of Alexandra Skoglund’s doctoral thesis (1904) where she discussed the role of the cadet branch of Axel Pedersen’s family in Sweden between 1441 and 1487. Fabricius’s observation was the first to be made by a Scandinavian historian. He sought beyond the three kingdoms in order to contextually comprehend the family’s ever tightening grip on power during the period of the Roses in England. Fabricius observed that there were some striking similarities between the 16th Earl of Warwick, called the Kingmaker, Richard Neville, and the Axelsson Totts of Härlöv. Both families had a senior and junior branch, comprising a large and powerful network of servants; Castiglione described this as ‘a family’. The origins of the Neville family of Raby in northern England were similar to Axel Pedersen’s: both families, surrounded by their kin and friends; both utilized opportunities to arrange different marriages. Ralph Neville, and his second wife Joan Beaufort, the Earl and Countess of Westmorland (see Chart 8), were the senior branch of the Neville family. Davison, 2007, p. 105; See chart 8. Neville’s and Axel Pedersen’s socioeconomic network strategies and the ideal of absolute family loyalty beyond their deaths and between their children from different marriages. Ralph Neville and his second wife Joan Beaufort, the daughter of John of Gaunt, chose to exclude Ralph’s sons and daughters from his first marriage to Margaret de Stafford, and prevented them from inheriting or laying claim to his major fiefdoms and estates. This included the large dowry that his second wife had brought to the marriage. The senior branch petitioned to assert their claim to the hereditary title of the Earls of Westmorland and its lands. Mediation between the two families gave them two-thirds of the properties connected to the honour of Brancepeth, which

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6 Margaret de Stafford was born in the Parish of Brancepeth. Brancepeth Castle (originally built by the Bulmer family and rebuilt by the Nevilles in the fifteenth century) and lands were part of her dowry. Brancepeth was originally built and owned by Saxon Nobleman Bertram de Bulmer, the father-in-law of Geoffry de Nevill d.1194), who may also have owned Raby at some point in time before the Neville family. After her death in 1395, Brancepeth fell under the control of her husband the Earl of Westmorland (see Chart 8). Margaret de Stafford’s mother Philippa was the daughter of Thomas Beauchamp 11th Earl of Warwick and Lady Katherine Mortimer, and aunt of Henry VI’s guardian and teacher, Richard Beauchamp 13th Earl of Warwick. His only surviving male heir, Henry 1st Duke of Warwick, and his daughter Anne (from his second marriage to Isabella le Despenser, the widow of his uncle Richard Beauchamp, 1st Earl of Worcester and brother of Philippa Beauchamp), were subsequently contracted to marry Richard Neville the Kingmaker and his sister Cecily, from the cadet branch of the Neville family. Davison, 2007, p. 105; See chart 8.

included Brancepeth Castle.\textsuperscript{8} Ralph’s widow Joan Beaufort was endowed with the remaining one third of the Brancepeth estate and all of the Raby estate. These holdings should have been inherited by the senior branch of Ralph Neville’s family. The subsequent inheritance feud that ensued led to a prolonged, violent conflict between Ralph Neville’s two families. After long mediation, an agreement gave the earls of Westmorland control of the Durham lordships of Raby and Brancepeth in 1443. The remaining and by far the larger share of the Neville patrimony remained under the control of the Beaufort Nevilles. The two branches remained bitter enemies, and even became rivals during the Lancastrian–York conflict. This rivalry was a direct consequence of the first earl’s decision to place his estates in jointure with Joan Beaufort and to enfeoff the bulk of their lands (especially Joan’s lands) to the junior branch after his death.\textsuperscript{9} Ralph Neville also arranged and paid for several prestigious marriages into some of the wealthiest dynastic families of fifteenth century England.\textsuperscript{10}

Whilst Ralph Neville and Joan Beaufort’s economic strategies led to dynastic division, legal claims, and political rivalry, Axel Pedersen’s belief in undivided loyalty and unquestioned ties of blood cemented his family’s economic interests. The ideal of loyalty to the family unit bolstered their political and economic strategies, protected their interests, and allowed them to represent the interests of the Union king in Sweden and Denmark at the meetings of the three kingdoms. The British historian Thomas Kingston Derry notes that all of the brothers put the family’s interests before the interests of elected kings and councils.\textsuperscript{11} Axel Pedersen’s sons maintained a strong, and as will be seen, unbreakable bond to one another. It was this unique fraternal bond which elevated them far beyond just being a kin network. The family established an arachnid-like network of useful and necessary kin, friends, and clients, which allowed them to control several strategically important fiefdoms in Scandinavia under the auspices of the Crown or through generous pledges

\textsuperscript{8} Liddy, 2008, pp. 33–37, 68–69; see also ibid. 242–246 for sources in the Durham Cathedral Muniments. Liddy offers an in-depth description and explanation of the complex ramifications of Ralph Neville’s and his second wife’s financial decisions. The primary claimant to Ralph Neville and Margaret de Stafford’s lands was their underage grandson, the second Earl of Westmorland. The boy was in a relatively weak position after 1425, which enabled members of the junior branch of the family to take control of several manors and properties in the Bishopric of Durham and in the County of Yorkshire. The claim of the junior branch was supported to some extent by the Crown. The strategy of dynastic supremacy implemented by the younger Neville branch and the increasing defiance and indignation of the senior Neville branch only served to divide the Northern aristocracy and gentry into two camps, which in time undermined the Nevilles’ position in the North.


\textsuperscript{10} Cokayne, 1887–1910, Vol, I–VIII. See Chart 8 for the Houses of York. Beauchamp,Fauconberg, Montacute, Stafford, and Mowbray. Cecily Neville was mother of Edward IV and Richard III and the great-aunt of Richard’s wife, Anne Neville), The senior Neville branch married into the families of Scrope, Holland, Percy, Dacre, and Ferrers (Mary de Ferrers, the daughter of Joan Beaufort by her first marriage, married her step-brother Ralph Neville).

\textsuperscript{11} Derry, 1979, p. 78 ref note marked with *.  

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(mortgaged fiefdoms) offered by the king in times of war or when the royal finances were weak. Each of the Axelsson brothers controlled specific, adjacent geographical areas of Scandinavia: the family’s economic strategies were unified by their dynastic interests and close affiliations with other well-established border magnate families. As a border magnate, Axel Pedersen observed the borders between the Scandinavian kingdoms as important to his economic and political aims and ambitions. He was a loyal advocate of Queen Margaret’s initial political vision of a union under one ruler. The Kalmar Union became a stable economic and social platform from which the Axelsson Totts could develop and expand as an inter-Nordic network, supported by shared common interests with their border network allies. The Axelsson Totts’ tightening grip on Nordic politics in the second half of the fifteenth century was subsequently bolstered by shared family interests and an expanding, personal economic empire, which not only encompassed adjacent geographical areas in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, but also Estonian, Livonian, and Russian mercantile interests. Any study of network-based societies needs a starting point, and here it is the apparent difficulties of governance, which were exacerbated by several drawn-out dynastic feuds and periods of general socioeconomic and political discontent.

In any study of network-based societies one must have a fundamental starting point. Here, the starting-point is the observation of the perceived difficulties of governance which became clearly exacerbated by several drawn-out dynastic feuds and periods of more general economic, political and social discontent. In the struggle to dominate the Nordic realms conflict became the symptom, not the cause, of the persisting problems in the fourteenth century which led to the unification of the three kingdoms. This was also true of the conflicts in the latter half of the fifteenth century. Historian Bo Eriksson observed in his recent study of the Sture dynasties, that the Sture magnates’ interactions and connections with other powerful and influential dynasties in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries expanded their dynastic bonds creating a network of connections, whilst it also gave rise to specific modes of obligations. Dynastic bonds were useful in the pursuit of political influence, to drum up support for someone’s personal cause or mobilize troops for the purpose of embodying or denying someone’s political agency.

Westin, 1967, pp. 8–9 for the translation of certain terms in Swedish and English. The fiefdoms or castle-counties (slottslän) directly under the control of the Crown were called storehouse counties and were administrated by the king’s bailiff; those under the control of a magnate were termed service-counties (förläningar). Service-counties were often administered by an appointed steward in the service of the castle-county’s magnate. Service and storehouse counties exchanged for loans became pledge- or mortgage-counties. These normally reverted to their original owners on repayment of the loan. See Chapter 7 for a detailed account of the events leading up to the confiscation of the Axelsson Totts’ pledged-counties and private estates in 1467.

Maarbjergh, 2000, p. 156.


Political conflict was often fueled by isolated incidents between rivaling families or individuals. Over time such infected feuds became more acute, spreading beyond the personal agency of a group or a dominant individual. Such incidents arose due to the underlying symptoms or outcome of wider and more prevalent changes to the mental landscape. The friction between ideal and reality ultimately influenced the outcome of events in general. It also suggests that parallel pre-state societies were at different stages of development, whilst all were constricted by the ancient and persistent archaic ideals of realm, kingship and feudal duty, rather than a kingdom, dominated by an effective administration and an assertive centre of power presiding over a single nation bound to common and agreed societal directives. The rulers of the pre-state era were mindful of the independence, power and influence of the border-gentry, whilst still being dependent on the support and loyalty of influential border-magnate families, like the Axelsson Totts and the Nevilles in order to enforce royal authority on national, regional and local levels. But this kind of support came at a price for the Crown in form of privileges.  

### Aim of the thesis

This thesis studies how fifteenth-century Scandinavian magnate networks functioned in government and failed in conflict. Magnatial networks played a significant role in the unification and administration of the three kingdoms and the gradual demise of the Kalmar Union. The magnates still held to abiding ideals of the knightly caste – fidelity, piety, and loyalty to both king and God – which were not only the backbone of kingship and the kingdoms, but were also the basis for all relationships with friends and unfriends alike. In the late fifteenth century, wider sociopolitical forces would play a crucial role in determining the form taken by the Kalmar Union, which all three branches of the Tott dynasty actively supported in 1397. As long as the Kalmar Union existed the Axelsson Totts’ motivational and emotional foundations rested on the family’s choices, which were informed by deep-rooted societal ideals and the concepts of political influence, economic status, and knightly standards. These standards influenced the direction of the family’s network relations, which ultimately determined the political direction of the Kalmar Union.

The Axelsson Totts played a vital role in the process of political change, resulting in the emergence of two distinct nation-states in the latter half of the sixteenth century. For border magnates such as the Axelsson Totts, Queen Margaret’s vision of unification was the way forward for the Scandinavian kingdoms, reeling after several decades of armed conflict and the political and economic challenges posed by the Baltic and Northern Europe. Like most

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powerful magnates, the Axelsson Totts did not support the concept of an all-powerful king, regimen regale, and preferred to tread the fine line between the concepts of regimen (king and loyal magnates) and the magnatial res publica. The family’s network strategies are at their plainest in their advantageous inter-Nordic marriages, their Church politics, and their acquisition and struggle to retain control of key fiefdoms and pledge-holdings in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. An empirical study of the Axelsson Tott network, both men and women, serves to support the thesis’s primary claims. To that end, I present my findings in three specific areas of study.

First, an in-depth discussion of the Axelsson Totts’ network strategies, to contribute to the limited body of research specifically concerned with this dynamic family’s legacy in Scandinavian history.

Second, a more wide-ranging discussion of the Kalmar Union as a political construct, and how the Axelsson Totts’ network strategies shaped events after c.1450.

Third, a discussion of the role of women in the Tott network, who have hitherto been overlooked in the history of the Kalmar Union, and indeed the history of the Axelsson Totts.17

The relationships between members of the Axelsson Tott network became increasingly polarized over the course of the fifteenth century. This resulted in the rise of political factions. Changing attitudes towards union kingship and the union of the kingdoms created a new dynamic between the Crown, the magnates, and the Church, which eventually ushered in the concept of governance adopted by the early modern state. Historian Kate Mertes, noting the existence of the magnatial class in the Middle Ages, finds their culturally bound identities to be as equally important as their political dominance. By the second half of the fifteenth century, Scandinavia’s magnatial class had reached an important crossroads in its development. The aristocracy of the late sixteenth century remained deeply and emotionally connected to a notion of the past, and their place in it, as the political benchmark for society, whilst in the seventeenth century they would face far greater economic challenges to their aristocratic lifestyle and influence, which stemmed from the state-building and social processes of the early modern period.18

17 Thomas Småberg’s dissertation in 2004 discusses how the local magnatial elites in Mark and Kind Hundred developed into a closed community over a period of 130 years, from 1390 until 1520.
Chapter 1
Margaret Valdermarsdotter – Queen, master and Nordic visionary

The political construction of the Kalmar Union was, as earlier pointed out, the innovative vision of Danish born Queen Margaret of Norway. The coronation of her elected successor, King Eric in 1397 in Kalmar was the culmination of determined politics and tough negotiations with the Swedish magnates and members of the Scandinavian Church, whose political weaknesses had resulted in the creation of two rivaling groups during the rule of Albrecht of Mecklenburg in Sweden.

Queen Margaret's union signified the end of the Mecklenburg era of influence over politics in Scandinavia and once again heralded in the growing power of a strong and decisive Scandinavian monarchy under Margaret's firm rule.

The position of the union monarch, not the political concept of the Union, suffered a major set-back due to the Engelbrekt uprising in Sweden between 1434 and 1436 and King Eric's political ambitions to infiltrate Estonia and Livonia against the wishes of the three Councils of the Realm.

King Eric was forced to accept the specific demands put forward by the three councils in 1436, and strict limitations to his royal authority. King Eric chose to disregard the stipulations of the agreement, whereby the Swedish and Danish councils rescinded their oaths and dethroned him in both kingdoms in 1439.

He would remain king of Norway for a short period of time before he was also dethroned by the Norwegian council of the realm. The sudden death of Eric's elected successor King Christopher in 1448, would, once again, herald in an era characterized by political and magnatial polarization and inward conflict between the Crown, the magnates and the Church.

Whilst the three kingdoms continued to periodically fall into political disarray, this did not necessarily mean the end of the Kalmar Union, observed as a political ideal or as a geographical concept; on the contrary, the core perception of unity, peace and prosperity under one ruler continued to persist throughout the fifteenth century. Later attempts to re-establish the Union have been made.

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19 Map by Margaret Wallace Nilsson, 2017. The Kalmar Union also included Iceland, Greenland, Faroe Islands and the Northern Isles: the Orkney and Shetland Islands. The Shetland Islands were impignorated (mortgaged, pawned) in part payment by King Christian I in 1468 in return for his daughter Margaret’s hand in marriage to James III of Scotland. The Orkney Islands were annexed by King James on Christian’s default of the full payment of Margaret’s dowry of 60 000 Florins of the Rhine in 1472.
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The position of the union monarch, not the political concept of the Union, suffered a major set-back due to the Engelbrekt uprising in Sweden between 1434 and 1436 and King Eric’s political ambitions to infiltrate Estonia and Livonia against the wishes of the three Councils of the Realm. King Eric was forced to accept the specific demands put forward by the three councils in 1436, and strict limitations to his royal authority. King Eric chose to disregard the stipulations of the agreement, whereby the Swedish and Danish councils rescinded their oaths and dethroned him in both kingdoms in 1439. He would remain king of Norway for a short period of time before he was also dethroned by the Norwegian council of the realm. The sudden death of Eric’s elected successor King Christopher in 1448, would, once again, herald in an era characterized by political and magnatial polarization and inward conflict between the Crown, the magnates and the Church.

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20 Margaret had been elected by the Swedish magnates and clerics to rule Sweden in 1388. She was given the title, “Sveriges fullmäktiga fru och rätta husbonde” [Sweden’s first lady and master], where upon Margaret took on the dual role of both king and queen.

21 Lönnroth, 1934, p. 7; Eslev I, II, 1882, passim; Eslev, 1901, p. 1.


23 Losman, 1970, pp. 192–193; Blom and Moen, 1992, p. 76: Axel Pedersen (Tott) and Peder Oxe were the only two Scanian knights continue their support for King Eric. Peder Oxe was forced to abandon Helsingborg Castle to the Hansa who supported the election of Christopher of Bavaria. Axel Pedersen strategically revised his position concerning his oath to King Eric in order to support the election of Christopher as union king.
to the fact that the union king, the magnates and the Church could and did periodically co-exist and cooperate with each other. Union supporters strove to create political and economic stability, whilst suppressing any potential threats (military or economic) from both established and expanding neighboring foreign powers. But to be clear on one important point; the Union was not necessarily created for the good of all three estates (four estates in Sweden), which was expressed by the growing displeasure of the Swedish peasantry on matters of taxation and the appointment of foreign bailiffs in Sweden. The opinions of the Swedish peasantry could no longer be politically ignored by the middle of fifteenth century. This was due to their relatively strong position in Sweden contra their Danish and Norwegian counterparts.

The discussions which transpired between the three councils show that there was a genuine and sustained desire to rekindle the union of the Scandinavian kingdoms and re-establish relations between the three realms through the regulation of power and the authority of the union king, contra the influence of the magnates and the Church, especially in areas of administration and up-holding of laws in each of the three kingdoms. As this thesis will show, peace and corporation between the three kingdoms were especially important for the economic aspirations of the wealthy internordic border magnates. Historian John Maarbjerg summed this up well when he observed that the vision of unity remained an intrinsic part of Nordic politics throughout the period of the Kalmar Union, “in theory if not always in fact.”

Queen Margaret’s vision of Nordic unity and cooperation would remain a vital political beacon for.border magnate Axel Pedersen) and his nine sons. The Axelsson Totts would proactively attempt to sustain and re-assert Queen Margaret’s vision on two levels; firstly to maintain the wider peace more generally, and secondly the positive socioeconomic effects in the over-lapping border areas, not only because of their geographical positions, but because of the well-established interactions of the people with each other.

One important initial assertion in this thesis is that Axel Pedersen recognized that the unification of the three kingdoms under the rule of a common non-arch was a useful tool to realize Tott dynastic expansion, and his

21 See Dag Retsö, 2009, and Harry Christensen, 1983, for an in-depth study of a Swedish, alternatively a Danish perspective on the fiefdom and taxation strategies of the union kings and protectors of the realm.

22 Lönnroth, 1934, pp. 9, 39: The magnates as a collective source of power included the established ‘stormannaklass’ which consisted of both the ancient, the later nobility and families of non-Scandinavian origin, and over time emerged as the families of the privileged nobility in the period of the Kalmar Union. A personal union between Norway and Denmark was established on the death of Valdemar IV. The Folkunga dynasty became, once again, the foremost power of the Crown. The dynasty was extinguished on the agnatic side after the death of King Olof of Norway and Denmark in 1387. However, the matriline represented by Queen Margaret and her adoptive son Eric carried on the dynasty as the royal power of the Kalmar Union.

23 Maarbjerg, 2000, p. 141.

24 Lönnroth, 1988, p. 32.
own personal political and economic ambitions for his family in all three kingdoms. Where then lay the problem of maintaining the Union and what role did the Härlöv Totts play in the political developments during this relatively long period of attempted internordic political consensus?

But in order to fully understand the implications of the Axelsson Totts’ actions during the conflicts of the Kalmar Union after 1448, contra the personal aims of this prominent and unique family, one must briefly discuss Queen Margaret’s vision of a unified Scandinavia and its position within the wider events and developments in the Late Middle Ages. For the Axelsson Totts, theirs was the extended vision of unity that nourished the family’s ambitions. But there was an authoritative and administrative obstacle in the way, a fundamental duality concerning the appearance and contents of the Coronation Charter and the Union Letter.28

**The Coronation Charter and the Union Letter**

The two documents reveal the complicated nature concerning the fruition of the Union and the wider politics of the period in general. These two documents would play two very distinctive roles in Queen Margaret’s administrative, political and dynastic resolve, when she attempted to transduce thought into practice in 1397.29 To understand the Axelsson Totts’ role in the political processes of the Kalmar Union, one must fully comprehend the creation and function of these two important and unique documents.

For the first time in Scandinavia the Coronation Charter included a Declaration of Allegiance (Swe: trohetsförsäkran) to the king. According to the historian Erik Lönnroth this was a clear case of the European rules of law infiltrating the ideal of kingship and the process of the Kalmar Union.30 The Coronation Charter oath gave legitimacy to the union king’s *regimen regale*. The Union Letter, which remains only in the form of a paper draft, served a very different purpose. This is clear from the stipulation which informs us that the original document was to be copied into six identical letters on vellum with ratifying seals. Two letters were to be dispatched to each of the three kingdoms. This stipulation seems to have never been executed out in reality. The royal councils wanted to strengthen and preserve the idea of *regimen politicum*.31 The original paper draft was the result of the initial discussions, whereby the magnates and the leading men of the Church attempted to regulate the power of the union king’s authority in the three kingdoms separately and according to the legal and administrative systems of each kingdom. There was no forthcoming agreement between the representatives and the union monarch.

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28 This discussion is based mainly on research by Carlsson, 1931, Lönnroth, 1934 and Weibull, 1965.
29 Lönnroth, 1988, p. 31.
The Coronation Charter was presented and ratified in its final form on vellum on 17 July 1397 in Kalmar, akin to the official ceremony, which was strategically held in St Nicholas’s Church.32 Eric had already been crowned hereditary king of Norway in 1389 and now he was acclaimed elective union king of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, by the grace of God for the duration of his own lifetime and crowned under the watchful eye of his step-mother and Scandinavia’s matriarch.33 The charter also confirmed and regulated Queen Margaret’s specific demands of lands and castles for the duration of her lifetime.34 The Coronation Charter did not define any clear limitations to the power of the union king. However, it confirmed his royal supremacy over the three kingdoms. The charter did not specifically express that the king must work with the magnates, but rather, it indicated that the king should consider cooperating with them, and the leaders of the Church for the greater good and prosperity of all three kingdoms. The ideal of good kingship which was interwoven into the text of the charter anticipated how society in the Late Middle Ages had begun to view the king’s role as the Rex Justus – the righteous ruler contra the tendencies of the tyrant king.35

The purpose of the Union Letter was to make the process of unification permanent regardless of who was king, and as earlier mentioned, it aimed to limit the power and authority of the union king in each separate kingdom. In theory the authority of the union king would have become double-edged. King Eric’s authority was derived from the grace of God, whilst it was also observed as being an authority derived from his election through the consensus of his subjects.36 Later drafts of the Union Letter clearly sought to counteract the earlier autocratic tendencies of the first union king and regulate the extent of later royal authority in all three kingdoms in practice.37 The noticeable lack of Norwegian representatives at Kalmar in 1397 was initially debated as part of Norway’s national history by Norwegian historians. The non-representation of

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33 Haug, 1995b, pp. 1–21.  
34 Carlsson, 1955, p. 94; The Coronation Charter 1397 reads, “…wor heræ koning Eric oc hans modher modhersæter, wor nadighe frwe drotning Margarete oss til trot hafue oc en hær eftir til tro … widher goða bothe j thoræ lifuende lifi oc suo eftir thoræ doth…”, [… our king and Lord Eric and his great aunt, our merciful lady, Queen Margaret, that we have entrusted us, and will entrust us with [ …] we will respond to their faith in us for the duration of their lives and so after their deaths]. Lønnroth, 1934, pp. 18–29; Drar 1980, p. 60;  
the Norwegian council was seen as a sign of resistance to the Union. In later years Norwegian historian Eldbjørg Haug has revised this older view of the Union and Norway’s primary role in its creation.38

But the unification and acknowledgment of the three kingdoms under one king for the duration of his lifetime did not guarantee the durability of the Kalmar Union under the authority of a new union king in the future. Historian Henry Bruun asserted that the failure to ratify the Union Letter was a personal set-back for Queen Margaret, whilst it is clearly arguable that the official ratification of the letter may not have been considered a necessity for Margaret, in order for her to reach specific primary political goals.39 On the contrary, Queen Margaret’s reluctance to ratify official documents was a controlling facet of her strategies of rulership and her strengths as a monarch.

Searching beyond Queen Margaret’s personal and political agendas concerning the unification of the Scandinavian kingdoms, the letter should also be seen as an important source which reveals the political realities of the division of power in the Late Middle Ages. The influence of socio-cultural practices which favoured an established hereditary line of kingship, contra elective kingship, would play a significant role outside of Scandinavia. King Eric followed the Law as an elected union monarch. However, he did show some tendencies towards the creation of more European-like hereditary succession in all three Scandinavian kingdoms.40 Eric’s attempt to create hereditary monarchies in Sweden and Denmark were counteracted by the magnates’ growing resistance in 1438 and Eric’s dethronement in 1439, curtailed the establishment of an over powerful kingship.41

To illustrate just how complicated it was to have a king who was both elected and hereditary one needs a relevant example. The principle of elective monarchy would also be of particular concern for the English diplomatic mission sent by King Henry IV of England in 1402. Queen Margaret sought a strong west European ally to ward off the growing threat of the Teutonic Order in Livonia.42 The main objective for the English mission was to gather both practical and economic information in order to fully evaluate and document the effects of the elective rules of kingship in Denmark and Sweden, but most importantly to understand and anticipate the practical consequences of implementing both elective and hereditary principles. They also sought to investigate the earlier agreement concerning the succession of the Norwegian

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38 Haug, 1995a, pp. 9–43; Larsson, 2006, p. 89; Olesen, 2003, pp. 724–726.
40 Enemark, 1996, p. 50.
41 Axel Pedersen (Tott) was one the last of the Danish nobility to abandon King Eric kingship; Jahn, 1835, pp. 520-521, no 18, letter on paper dated St John’s Day (24 June) 1441; Rep Dipl., p. 581, no 7213; von Möller, 1874, p. 107.
throne after King Eric’s death and the continuation of the royal dynasty. The findings of the diplomatic mission were crucial to the on-going negotiations to arrange a successful double wedding between King Eric and Princess Philippa, and the future king of England, Henry (V) and Eric’s sister Catherine.

Changes in the discussions were initiated akin to the developing desire of Henry IV to connect with the innovative trade markets of the Low Countries and a possible alliance with France. Henry IV’s choice to abort the marriage alliance between his oldest son and Catherine, happened for several reasons: the English commission expressed concerns with the concept and uncertainty of an elective monarchy, whilst an alliance with the Flemish Hainaut dynasty offered a well-established hereditary alternative, and more interesting diplomatic and trade possibilities for England on the continent of Europe. Finally, the English king, in consideration of the circumstances surrounding his own acquisition of the English throne, may have wanted a more prestigious bride for his son with a dynasty boasting a strong connection to France. Henry IV did after all usurp the throne of England from his cousin, Richard II, and therefore had just as much to prove, if not more than Queen Margaret and her adoptive Pomeranian born heir Eric. She did after all rule over one of the largest areas in the Northern hemisphere at this point in time. Henry V chose to marry the French king’s daughter, Catherine of Valois, in accordance with the treaty of Troyes in 1420. The choice of Catherine as Henry V’s bride was a step to toward reaching consensus between France and England, whilst the marriage clearly promised to strengthen the English king’s position and influence in France on the death of the French king. Henry V’s goal to force peace between France and England after a century of hostilities between the two kingdoms was not dissimilar to Queen Margaret’s forthcoming actions which strengthened Denmark’s position after the unification of the Scandinavian kingdoms.

44 TNA, E 30/1090, date, 14 May 1402 (Latin): The original contract of marriage between Philippa, the daughter of Henry IV of England and Eric, King of Denmark, Sweden and Norway.
45 TNA SC 8/295/1474, C 47/28/7/3.
46 Catherine was the younger sister of Isabella of Valois, the child-bride at the age of seven to Richard II. After Richard’s murder Isabella refused to marry Henry IV’s son, Henry. Isabella was returned to France in 1401. The French Court would refuse a further offer of marriage in 1406, which prompted King Henry IV to refuse to release her dowry from her marriage to Richard II. She eventually married her cousin, Charles, Duke of Orléans, dying in 1409 at the age of nineteen, whilst giving birth to their only surviving daughter, Joan of Valois.
47 Henry’s proposal of marriage between himself (27 years old) and the twelve year old Catherine of Valois was first rebuked by Charles VI of France in 1413. Henry’s answer to this diplomatic rebuff was to invade Normandy. The later loss of Rouen in 1419 to the English forced the hand of the French king. Henry insisted that Catherine’s hand should be part of the peace treaty. She gave birth to Prince Henry in 1421. The death of Henry V in 1422 changed the political direction of both England and the future of its dowager queen just twenty years of age. Parliament adopted a law forbidding dowager queens to marry without the permission by Parliament. Catherine was in theory doomed to be a widow until her death. However, this did not stop her from having a clandestine relationship and secret marriage with a poor Welsh nobleman called Owen Tudor (Welsh: Owain ap Maredudd ap Tudur), resulting in the birth
In light of the discussion presented here, it would be realistic to conclude that the need for peace and order in Scandinavia was a primary goal of Margaret, the Church and the magnates. The desire for good assertive government was a strong motive for the creation of a union at this crucial point in time, especially for the kingdom of Sweden, which threatened to become a province of the Mecklenburg dukes.

From one perspective the Kalmar Union changed the roles, direction and dynamics of the magnatial networks in governance and administration of the three realms. From another perspective the unification of the three kingdoms provided a specific context in which the Scandinavian nobility were able to redefine their political affiliations and interests.

The magnates belonged to the privileged nobility, and whilst being powerful in their own right, they would also come to play an important role as political antagonists concerning the union king’s power and authority, whilst also functioning as representatives of the Crown’s wider royal administration and interests. The magnates were to maintain law and order on regional and local levels. Still, the magnatial class adamantly protected their own personal economic position, whilst also taking into consideration that control and power was a double-edged knife, because it also offered advantages which included translating the Crown’s authority and justice in the peripheries of the Union, far removed from the centre of king’s power.

A wider geopolitical conspectus of fifteenth century Europe and Scandinavia

From a wider European perspective the rulers of Western Europe and Scandinavia in the fifteenth century attempted to strengthen their own position and authority, contra the position of magnates and Church. This would not go unchallenged. Periods of conflict and protest were not unusual and generally corresponded with periods of royal weakness.48 Conflict and protest between the Crown and magnates was gradually thwarted and repressed by the end of the sixteenth century. The triumph of kingship over a magnatial res publica heralded in the realities of a strong early centralized monarchy, which became the embryo of the modern state in the making. The conflict-encounter was a vital part of the political developments toward new and more permanent state structures in the coming decades. But such encounters also embodied competition over the monopoly of both established and new trade routes, new innovative warfare techniques, religious reforms and strong state finances

of three sons and two daughters. Catherine was finally forced into a nunnery and her children removed from her care after Owen Tudor was thrown in prison. He was later executed by the Yorkists after the Battle of Mortimer’s cross in 1461: See for example Friedrichs, 2006, p.73.

which anticipated the birth of the modern state.49 The individual failings of the union kings, the Church and the magnates within the agreed boundaries of governance, laid the foundation for political polarization within the networks of their powerbases and national divisions.50

By the fifteenth century the established agenda of the influential magnatial networks was also forced to compete with the expanding influence of the wealthy burgher class in the growing towns, concerning personal loans to the king and the ideal of the privileges which consolidated the magnatial class. Factors of push and pull between different groups were expounded within specific public and personal spaces. Change was counteracted by the strong belief in tradition. The magnates clung to the ideality of every individual’s predestined and allotted role within the structure of society and of governance. Good government or rather the ideal of good government was put in place in order to better serve the common interests of the people and not just the specific interests of, or the socio-cultural preservation of one particular group.

The reality of antagonistic network interests, like those of the Axelsson Totts and the Nevilles meant that an individual was often faced with several considerations of which he or she had to take into account when conflict loomed, whereby decisions were made based on considerations of the appropriateness of their actions: group and individual priorities came into conflict, which motivated the magnates to choose strategies which considered elements of self-preservation or core network concerns. On a less personal level it was a question of the king’s rule observed in balanced national politics, the changing role of the Church and the role of the magnates in government.51

The break-up of network relations strengthened the ideal of hand fast kingship as being the most important marker of established political and societal stability through consensus and agreement. Consensus was achieved through knowing how to behave within the cognitive space of prevailing socio-cultural and political ideals. Historian John Watts argued that the ideal of consensus perched silently on a number of formal principles and socio-cultural patterns of behaviour. The formal guidelines and pre-existing patterns of behaviour would eventually come to define the structure and limitations of politics during the Middle Ages.52

The corporate failure of the three Nordic councils and Queen Margaret to reach a decision at Kalmar shortly after the coronation of King Eric, to officially verify and confirm a binding set of stipulations drawn up in the Union Letter, which were never put in place to ensure the practical administration of the Union. The lack of results is evidence of the basic

The corporate failure of the three Nordic councils and Queen Margaret to reach a decision at Kalmar shortly after the coronation of King Eric, to know how to behave within the cognitive space of prevailing socio-cultural stability through consensus and agreement. Consensus was achieved through appropriateness of their actions: group and individual priorities came into consideration of which he or she had to take into account when conflict loomed, whereby decisions were made based on considerations of the reality of antagonistic network interests, like those of the Axelsson Totts and the Nevilles meant that an individual was often faced with several order to better serve the common interests of the people and not just the predestined and allotted role within the structure of society and of governance. The belief in tradition. The magnates clung to the ideality of every individual's specific public and personal spaces. Change was counteracted by the strong factors of push and pull between different groups were expounded within networks was also forced to compete with the expanding influence of the networks. Also the monarch's unfitness to rule and a prolonged economic depression were of grave concern to Parliament. The result of these problems led to the physical removal of kings, periodic magnatial factional disputes, regional uprisings, which allowed the tendencies of personal political and dynastic ambitions by men such as Richard Duke of York and Richard Neville Earl of Warwick who attempted to control the realm in England to fulfill their personal ambitions.

Norway, Denmark, Sweden, also experienced several stages of political development and conflict, which in historian Erik Lönnroth’s opinion were parallel in nature and outcome to the troubles and conflicts of the English kingdom. These developments paved the way for the Axelsson Totts. Both England and Scandinavia would experience phases of economic stagnation and recession alternated with periods of prosperity and peace. The underlying problems which eventually created the political divide between the three councils and the future union monarchs from Queen Margaret’s original aims.

The Kalmar Union was ruled by five monarchs; Eric (of Pomerania), Christopher III (of Bavaria), Christian I (House of Oldenburg), followed by his son and grandson, Hans (Johan) and Christian II. Sweden was also periodically ruled by elected protectors of the realm. These were Karl Knutsson (Bonde), who was also elected king of Sweden three times; Nils and Jöns Bengtsson (Oxenstierna), Eric Axelsson (Tott), Sten Sture the Elder, Svante Nilsson (Night and Day), Erik Trolle, Sten Sture the Younger and finally Gustav Eriksson (Vasa), who was elected king of Sweden in 1523 and crowned in 1527. Sten Sture the Elder was the most successful of the protectors, ruling Sweden from 1470 to 1497, and from 1501 until his death in 1503. This study recognizes that the Axelsson Totts struggled to continue Queen Margaret’s vision, despite growing network factional tendencies during the reigns of Christian I, Hans, Karl Knutsson and under the rule of Sten Sture the Elder in Sweden after 1470.

In order to place the Kalmar Union in a European context, it is important to look farther afield at similar conflicts, namely, the War of the Roses in England which broke out due to several crucial factors of social and political discontent: heavy fiscal demands by the Crown, the exasperating foreign war with France which eventually led to huge territorial losses for the English king. Also the monarch’s unfitness to rule and a prolonged economic depression were of grave concern to Parliament. The result of these problems led to the physical removal of kings, periodic magnatial factional disputes, regional uprisings, which allowed the tendencies of personal political and dynastic ambitions by men such as Richard Duke of York and Richard Neville Earl of Warwick who attempted to control the realm in England to fulfill their personal ambitions.

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53 Nils Jönsson was first married to Kristina Ivarsdotter. She became the sister-in-law of Axel Pedersen, through his second marriage to Ingeborg Ivarsdotter.
54 Lönnroth, 1959, p. 90; See also Kaeuper’s introduction to de Charny’s, A Knight’s Own Book of Chivalry, 2005 (1356), p.20. Kaeuper observed that the insecure position of the Valois kings during the Hundred Years Wars that, “Any reasonably acute observer would have feared the factionalism that would, in time, make the Hundred Years War a veritable civil war in France.” It was the division of the French nobility caused by the factionalism which weakened France against England and lead to inward war amongst the French nobility. Lönnroth observed similarities between the developments in France in the fourteenth century and the events of the Kalmar Union as a political construct in the fifteenth century. Factionalism observed Lönnroth and Kaeuper was disruptive to government, whilst being self-destructive for the kings and the nobility alike.
problems of the realm which prevailed in England and the Scandinavian kingdoms, created an overall risk for further political turbulence and a wider dissatisfaction with the king’s rule. One important development in this period was the political position of the magnates and their need to adapt their network strategies due to rapidly developing, rather than slow developing political events, which brought about unavoidable economic and social change.

The power struggles of the fourteenth century and the devastation of the Black Death should be viewed as catalysts, rather than root causes of change in the fifteenth century. Such radical changes influenced the perceived self-image and socio-cultural reality of the landowning nobility. Even the church was forced to rethink its position as the spiritual pillar and protector of Christian society. The social closing of the magnatial class was followed by a gradual process of social partitioning, exposing them to the problems of social and economic adaptation over time. This process of separation inadvertently came into conflict with the rigidity of intrusive and well-established societal ideals bolstered by the dominant cultural ideal of chivalry. At the end of the Middle Ages the lower nobility had partially fused with the ranks of high nobility. It could be argued that the amalgamation of earlier more distinctive groups resulted in the cognitive reinforcement of established and deep-rooted ideals which remained mentally embedded in the socio-cultural environment in the late fifteenth century.

Summary

From a cognitive history perspective it is possible to argue that there were two contradictory social and cultural spectrums to the phenomenon of crisis which need to be considered; crisis accelerated innovative social changes and advancements. New developments were in fact inevitable and over time accepted by society, whilst fear of innate and sudden change actually served to strengthen the notion of that which went before and is no more, which was outwardly expressed in a strong desire to reinforce cultural ideals and insular social boundaries. These ideals, as carriers of culture, became points of social conflict and part of the vision of the Kalmar Union in 1397.

The Kalmar Union and the War of the Roses were born of the political realities of inward dynastic conflict and relatively weak kingship in the late fourteenth century. The Union, however, offered a unified economic context for the Scandinavian kingdoms and most especially for the wealthy border-magnates. It should be pointed out that the underlining structure of a

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55 Småberg, 2004, pp. 46–47: ref. no. 84.
56 Taylor, 2015, p. 141; In line with Professor Craig Taylor, use of the term ‘chivalry, here it functions as a collective term denoting members of the nobility and their men-at-arms who defended the kingdom and the king’s rule. Chivalrous denotes acts of knightly courteous as described in the poetry, romances and handbooks of the period.
predominantly network society based on the roles of patrons and clients; kin, friends and unfriends was essential to the creation of the Union. The changing attitudes and conflicts within and between networks and individuals would have a negative effect on the Kalmar Union over time. Queen Margaret authoritative principles of rule strove to control destructive network tendencies which she believed threatened the existence of the Kalmar Union from within. The Union, as a political and economic constellation was the vital platform from which the Axelsson Totts and their network would derive power and influence in Scandinavia.

The Union offered an opportunity for the Scandinavian kingdoms to address the aggressive expansion politics of their German and Russian neighbours. The Charter confirmed a new political order for the Scandinavian kingdoms, which, stood in contradiction to the after-thought of the clauses, restrictions and political vision of the Union Letter. The Charter represented an ideal of unity under one king, whilst the letter was the blue-print of the political reality on which the Union rested. But as we shall see, wealthy families such as the Axelsson Totts obviously saw several advantages of creating and supporting a Nordic Union that potentially offered new political and economic possibilities for the Nordic nobility. The Union of the three kingdoms offered the Härlöv Totts both the motive and opportunity to widen their personal and public interests. Their attitude to the role of the Union and that of the union kings was structured around the division of power, the limits of the king’s authority and the role which the magnates would play in the administration and governance of the kingdoms.

More generally, the period of the Kalmar Union must be viewed as being part of earlier social changes, trade developments and the wider ongoing European political developments moving toward more centralized royal authorities, which strove to create effective administrative and judiciary systems. During the Kalmar Union the magnates and the Church in Denmark and Sweden would once again adopt a more assertive attitude toward the politics of the two realms. Norway’s more prominent position and active role in fourteenth century Scandinavian politics became more introverted under the dominance of the union kings in the fifteenth century.

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58 cf. Liddy, 2008, p. 77; The author uses Mervyn James terminology ‘lineage’ to ‘civil’ society when describing the social development of northern society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the Middle Ages lineage society consisting of a networks of dynastic families and their household followers, all bound by the dominant cultural ideals of the period. Liddy pointed out that this was a political and social landscape under the aristocratic dominance of a just few families, most notably the Neville Earls of Westmorland. The Neville’s influence of northern society was not dissimilar to the position and power exercised by the Axelsson Totts in NE Skåne.
59 James, 2001, p. 114.
60 SMR, D. 2, (Engelbrekt Chronical), 1866, pp. 4–6, v. 105–146.
Chapter 2

A dynasty in the making

The following chapter presents a discussion on the earliest origins and development of the Tott dynasty. Like most noble families in Scandinavia the origins of the Tott dynastic roots are constructed around myths and ambiguous assertions, but not wholly reliable sources, according to historian Hans Gillingstam.61

The deceased’s family sought solace for the curing of souls and requests for eternal prayers by the medieval Church. The eternal memory of the dead was secured by generous donations of money, land and property, some of which were recorded in the Libri memoriales. The first tangible glimpse of the Tott dynasty is believed to be through the eternal memory of Scanian born Thord Tott, whose death was recorded in the Liber Daticus Lundensis vetustior: also more generally known as the Liber daticus or Lunds gåvobok.62

The information in the Liber daticus is a useful starting point for searching for individuals who lived and can be traced to other extant sources.63 In some

61 Gillingstam, PHT, 1983, (79), p.75. The Dynastic name Tott was first used in 1542. Earlier ancestors and individuals were often identified through their heraldry and their patrimony, which Hans Gillingstam duly noted in his review of Åke Thott’s 1983 jubilee publication. The farther back in time one goes, the more difficult it is to positively identify individuals and their dynastic roots without the visual proof of surviving heraldry such as seals, donated patron altarpieces, mural decorations and grave monuments. Some artefacts remain without a context and the owners of these objects tend to become emeshed in later genealogical speculation and family narratives. c. f. Kleinschmidt, 2003, pp. 260-263; a similar observation concerning the origins and rights of the Habsburg rulers, in an autobiographical narrative commissioned by the Elected Roman Emperor Maximilian I at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Aristocratic genealogical charts translated dynastic stability and in the case of ruling kings, the foundation on which the institution of monarchy rested, through, “the presumed and concocted … genealogical tradition of ruler.”

Åke Thott’s book was published for the jubilee of the family’s 700 year of unbroken roots. Thord Åkesen’s father’s name was Åke, and possibly Thordsen, but there is no information forthcoming in the sources. Two sources identify Thord Åkesen’s grandfather. King Valdemar’s grant of Villingehoved between 1158 -1160 included a witness called Thord prefect of Roskilde. He was one of several good and honest Danes and Norsemen; “et multi innumerabilis uiri boni et honesti. Dani. Et Normanni subscriberunt.” Another letter dated 18 November 1158–1177, also mentions Thord as a witness to the grant of Langholm to Bishop Absalon. DD. Series. 1, 2, 1153–1169,no. 128 and.132. The name Tott was probably a used to describe the personal attributes of Thord Åkesson and later became the identifiable name recognized by his descendants.

62 The Liber Daticus, 46v, (text at the bottom of the page); A barely readable notice that records the death and yearly remembrance of Thord Thott, “Anno domini MCCCC.0 primo obit dominus Thordo dictus Thaat, miles, qui ad anniversarium suum annuatim...”, From the transcript by C. Weeke, 1884, p.108, ref 2. It should be duly noted that after carefully comparing C. Weeke’s comments and transcription to a facsimile of the original book, a number of discrepancies in the order of folios in Weeke's transcription are to be duly noted. This is also the case concerning the main body of text and the added notices/obituaries in Liber daticus, which makes a comparison of Weeke’s text with the original MS more difficult.

63 Borgehammer, PHT, 2018, pp. 144–45.
cases, but not all, the Liber daticus is useful for the verification of genealogical chronicles, charts and narratives dating from the late sixteenth century and onwards. However, these earlier genealogies included general mistakes due to confusion between individuals with the same name and by some later misconceptions which have been questioned and corrected by modern genealogists and historians.64 Having said this, it is equally important to keep in mind the mentality of the magnatial class, concerning who one believed one was and from where these beliefs harrowed, were crucial cognitive components to the overall perception of dynastic identity in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period.

Dynasty and proof of origin were important cultural and social markers, and for those wanting to connect with the Tott genealogies, this was no exception.65 Chart 1 (p. 32) shows the three separate branches of the Tott dynasty in the fourteenth century, which is attributed to the divergence of the main line. The Næs branch stemmed from Nils Åkesen (Kyrning). He adopted his mother’s dynastic weapon rather than his father’s. His son Åke Nielsen identified himself with the Tott coat-of-arms rather than the Kyrning coat-of-arms66 (see Chart 1, p. 34). Åke Tordsen’s son, Axel Åkesen continued to identify himself with the Tott coat-of-arms, as did his two sons, Jep and Peder Axelsen. The oldest son, Nils Kyrning may well have considered his mother’s ancestry (distant kin of Knut Porse, Duke of Estonia and married to Duchess Ingeborg of Sweden) to have been superior to that of his father’s in the early part of the fourteenth century, hence his choice of heraldry.

64 Weeke, 1889, p.33; XIV and reference no. 2: Although the Liber daticus does state, “ ... in Luddokopinghe sita, que justo empcionis tytulo habuit de domino Petro Kyrning milite ...”, Weeke seems to have mistaken Peder Niels Due of Vånga (d. 1366) with Peder Nielsen Kyrning (d. 1378) married to Inger Nielsdotter Due; See also SRA SDHK 11351. Agreement between Archbishop Nils (Jönsson) and Knight Peder Nielsen Kyrning; dated the 24 November 1378. The parties came to the agreement that the properties sold by Peder Kyrning to the archbishop should be placed in the care of the Peder Kyrning, Peder Spaldener (squire) and the Nun’s Convent in Lund. Peder Nielsen Kyrning’s aunt was Kirsten Kyrning married to Åke Tordsen (Tott).

65 Sophia Brahes släktbok; DAA; Thott, 1983, pp. 24–25, 28–30. At the turn of the twentieth century, DAA presented the Tott dynasty as one of the oldest dynasty in Scania and that the origins of the dynasty was said to have harrowed from Tord Skiegge Tott, who allowed himself to be baptized to the Christian faith in 1085. He was later buried alongside his pagan ancestors at Kjelfinge Høi (Thulahögen) Västra Strö; Sophia Brahe also presents the dynasties origins of the Totts from the Næs branch’s perspective, where the Thula Monument where the geographical place of the monument plays an important role in the perpetuation of the Tott origins. The mound is now known to be a natural formation in the landscape, where two rune stones and five bauta stones, raised c. 1000-1025), which is situated between two Tott fortified houses; Näs and Eriksholm. Sophia Brahe wrote that Tage Thott of Eriksholm told his grandchildren that his ancestor Thor/Tord Tott’s grave monument at the Thula Mound was removed to Eriksholm by Anders Stigsen (Tott) in 1446, as a permanent reminder of his forbearer’s memory. For more information about the monument, see the Swedish National Heritage Board’s (Riksantikvarieämbetet) website.

66 Thott, 1983, pp. 24–31; Erslev, 1882, pp. 18–19; An example of an individual outside of the family network using the Tott coat-of-arms is Jens Mus of Ellinge (d. after 1406); heraldic weapon delaid into two quarters white and red, lower half blue. Jens Mus kidnapped and married Kirsten Pedersdotter (Tott). In Ystad’s Franciscan Monastery, a stone relief confirms that he att some point in time he adopted his wife’s heraldic weapon.
Håkon, the Arch Deacon of Lund d. 1283. The arch deacon donated his private estate Lilla Hammar to Lund's Cathedral Chapter.

Further, Tord Tott's son Peder, the Sub Deacon of Lund is also remembered in the Liber Daticus in 1305, "... obiit vir nobilis, dominus Petrus, filius domini Thordonis Thaat militis, subdyaconus, hujus loci canonicus."

Niels Kyrning remembers his wife Edla Pedersdotter (Galen) d. 1348 and son Peder Nielsen (Kyrning) of Knutstorp, "...filius suus Petrus Niclæson de Knuthsthorp post mortem dicte matris sue."

Peder Nielsen Kyrning was the grandson of Kirsten Kyrning and Åke Tordsen (Tott). Further, Jep Axelsen honours the memory of his wife Margaret Bondesdotter (Due), "Anniversaruium domine Margarete uxoris domini Jacobi Absolonis militis…"

In an open letter, dated the 28 October 1421, there is concrete evidence that a marriage had taken place between one Märta Truedsdotter and Axel Pedersen's anonymous son. The dynastic family of Märta Truedsdotter, the wife of the illegitimate son, is generally uncertain, but some evidence does suggest that she was member of the Has dynasty.

The anonymity of Axel Pedersen's son in the sources suggests that he was a son born out of wedlock. The letter also indicates that Axel Pedersen at some point in time he had recognized his son's existence and his own limited undertakings as the boy's father. The unnamed son seems to have fathered three children: two sons and a daughter before his early demise c. 1421. His death was closely followed by the deaths of both Märta's and the children before 1430. The presence and considerations of an illegitimate son in Axel Pedersen's life may well have influenced his attitude toward the future preservation of the family unit, whereby he advised his legitimate sons to avoid illegitimate children for reasons of inheritance and to maintain the family's dynastic integrity, which would become flawed by the existence of illegitimate children, who posed a potential threat to the economic centre of the core family network. As will be later discussed, this line of reasoning may well explain Olof Axelsson's avoidance to acknowledge his son Jörgen Olofsson (Tott), who was illegitimate by birth. According to historian Jan Raneke's research the...
(consanguineus) Hákon, the Arch Deacon of Lund d. 1283. The arch deacon donated his private estate Lilla Hammar to Lund’s Cathedral Chapter. 69 Further, Tord Tott’s son Peder, the Sub Deacon of Lund is also remembered in the Liber Daticus in 1305, “... obiit vir nobilis, dominus Petrus, filius domini Thordonis Thaat militis, subdiaconus, hujus loci canonicus.”70

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69 Lunde Domkapitols Gavebøger, 1884, ref. 2, p.108.
70 Liber Daticus, f. 102r; Lunde Domkapitols Gavebøger, 1884, p. 249.
71 Styffe, BSH 1911, pp.65–66; Odman, 2002, p.39; Peder Nielsen Kyrning was a brother of the Archbishop of Lund, Jakob Nielsen d. 1361. Knutstorp was also the birth place of Tycho (Ottesen) Brahe 1546. Liber Daticus, f. 88v; Lunde Domkapitols Gavebøger, 1884, p. 213, see also ref. no. 1 and 2.
72 Liber Daticus, f. 60v; Lunde Domkapitols Gavebøger, 1884, p. 148; Flensmarck, 2003, pp. 98–99; Rep. Dipl. II. No 2770 and no. 3607 (dated 1470 resp. 1475).
73 Rep. Dipl. I; see letters dated 1372 and 1376. DAA, 1891, pp.180–182; this points to a possible early established Scanian connection between the dynastic families Has and Tott in the second half of the fourteenth century.
illegitimate Axelsson Tott children were allowed to use the Tott the coat-of-arms coloured with black and white tincture.\textsuperscript{74}

Chart 2. The Tott-Has connection

The marriage between the unnamed Tott son and Märta Truedsdotter could also be considered a part of Axel Pedersen’s earliest marital strategies, and the gradual expansion of the family’s traditional geographical area of authority in Skåne, which eventually encompassed most of Scandinavia in latter half of the

\textsuperscript{74} The Danish sources are silent concerning the birth circumstances concerning the identity of this unknown Axelsson, Rep. Dipl. I, no. 5943; Raneke referred to Peter von Möller’s earlier work on Halland’s history from 1874. A closer study of von Möller’s 1874 study shows that whilst he included Axel Pedersen’s son and Märta Truedsdotter, there is no mention of the black and white tincture. But that is not to say that it did not exist or was ever used; See Wallace Nilsson, 2010, p. 55; von Möller, 1874, pp.108–109; Raneke, I, 1982, p. 94 and source reference at the bottom of the page; DAA, 1900, pp. 417–418.
It may seem paradoxical that Axel Pedersen considered his illegitimate son a useful pawn in Scandinavian politics in order to further his personal ambitions for his legal sons, whilst he seems to have remained officially sideline by his father. From a judicial perspective, the illegitimate son’s legal status meant that he was never a threat in questions of inheritance or in fiefdom politics. The threat was potentially political and social. Axel Pedersen used an accident of birth to his own advantage.

There are other relevant ties which connect the Has and the Tott dynasties. These are helpful in an attempt to identify Märta Truedsdotter’s family origins. She may well have been a daughter of Trued Has of Örtofta. Daughters are often mentioned without a name. However, it is known that Trued Truedsen’s son Knud married Maren Bondsedtter (Tott), Sjörup-Krægholm branch; Maren was the daughter of Bonde Jepson (Tott) and Cecilia Nielsdotter (Jærnskægg). Trued Has was known to have had at least four children; two sons and two daughters, Christina and one who remains anonymous: Christina was named after her aunt (will, dated 1372). The unknown daughter could be Märta, who may well have been named after her kin relation Merete Sivertsdotter Grubendal. She was the grandmother of Jens Andersen Grim (Has) to Tostrup, who was remarried to Kirsten Stigsdotter (Tott). Jens Grim (Has) was the half-brother of Cecilia Nielsdotter (Jærnskægg). In 1376 Merete Sivertsdotter was described as being the good friend of Juliana Pedersdotter Grubbe, wife of Peder Axelsen (Tott). According to early seventeenth century genealogical traditions passed down by Countess Sophia Brahe, Märta was identified as being a member of the Has dynasty. The countess incorrectly identified Märta as being the wife of Kettil Axelsson (Tott). Kettil was in fact married to Märta Laurensdotter (Ulfeldt). Olof Axelsson was contracted in marriage to Cecilia Abrahamsdotter, the daughter of Abraham Brodersen, and the aforementioned Cecilia Nielsdotter. In 1475 Kettil Axelsson’s brother-in-law Jens Due (Thott), sold the man-or/farm complex called Bieriegord to Knud Truedsen. The complex was originally part of Jens Due’s inheritance after his mother, Maren Bondsedtter. Local historian Tor Flensmarck observed that in an earlier letter, dated 1470, Bonde Jepson gave a manor called Biergæ gard.

76 von Möller, 1874, p.108.
77 Reinsert, 1992, p. 54, ref. no. 59; Thott, 1983, p. 120; Svenska slott och herresäten vid 1900-talets början, p.36.
79 von Möller, 1874, p.108.
to his son Jens Due (Chart 1a). Flensmarck made the careful assumption that these two manors were in fact the same property.80

Trued Has’ early connection to Gotland may also be relevant to the present discussion. He is often mentioned as being dubbed knight at King Eric’s and Princess Philippa’s wedding in 1406. This obviously was not the case: according to two open letters dated after 1406, which disproves any such claim. He was called squire (D: væbner) as late as 1409.81 Trued Has remained a faithful servant/client of Queen Margaret throughout her life and was duly awarded for this loyalty. He was appointed sheriff of Gotland in 1412 and remained so until his death in 1437.82 Despite Visby being an organized town with fairly good defenses, there was a need for the Crown to protect and improve its interests. Trued Has reinforced and enhanced the defenses of Visborg Castle during his long captaincy of Gotland.83 Improvements to the castle were of vital importance, in order to better defend the town of Visby against possible siege and from aggressive pirate activity in the fairway off the coast of Gotland. The Axelsson Totts’ interest in Gotland may well have originated from Axel Pedersen’s earlier family connection and ambitions, which pleads a logical connection between the two men. Sources also show that Trued Truedsen, Axel Pedersen and Anders Jacobsen Grim (Has), confirmed a number of private business transactions.84 Assuming that Märta was a daughter of Trued Has and kin related to Anders Grim, this may well be evidence of the Axel Pedersen’s growing interest in utilizing the Has family connection to Gotland, at least two decades before Olof Axelsson took control of Visborg from King Eric in 1449.85

As earlier mentioned, the border magnates, especially powerful families such as the Axelsson Totts, were aware of the huge financial and political

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82 Rep. Dipl. III, 1401–1450; no. 6187, Visborg, 30 April, 1425. The reconfirmation of Visby’s privileges (letter dated the 2nd of September 1411). Trued Truedsen was married to Henning Podebyske’s daughter Kristina; Lindström, GM II, 1895, p. 313, ref. no.1. On his death a symbolic donation of his armour was made to the Franciscan convent Church of St Catherine. In the early part of fourteenth century such provocative donations of armour were not welcomed by the enemies of the Franciscan Order. Liber Daticus. Weke, 1884, pp. 238–239; ref. no. 6, 2 resp. 3. The name Thruogi Has is mentioned twice. Weke’s includes both Trued Knudsen Has and his son Trued Truedsen in the references to the original text. The dedication (p.238) describes Trued Has as being the brother of Lund Cannons Peder and Niels Knudsen.
83 Styffe, 1911, p. 431.
84 Rep. Dipl. III, no 5809. Letter from Henning Podebyske to Axel Pedersen; dated the 29 October 1419. Trued Truedsen (Has), member of the Danish Council. Parchment; see the 4th seal.
85 Skoglund, 1903, p. 26: Skoglund made the interesting observation that Olof Axelsson succeeded in coming to an agreement which stopped hostilities between his troops and those of the Swedish commander Magnus Gren. Magnus Gren was through his uncle, Judge Ivar Nilsson, cousin of Ingeborg Ivarsdotter (Ivar Nilsson Dynasty) who became the second wife of Axel Pedersen (Tott). This was an important agreement which defrayed potential conflict between two kinsmen of a larger network rather than two opposing commanders representing King Christian and Karl Knutsson (Bonde).
gains to be made through the creation of a Nordic Union and peaceful transnordic magnatial connections in all three kingdoms. Strategical network marriages were a crucial factor in realizing these wider economic and political goals. Networks were held together by mutual bonds of gift practices, loans, promises of support and personal assurances, as well as offering grants of land, town houses or farms; these bonds also included social/political ad-vantages and even promises of legal representation or redress.  

The ruling class lived by the ideal of honour (largesse), good lordship (prudence) and loyalty (a valued chivalric standard) as the social and political currency of magnatial society; together, they set the standard for other groups lower down on the social food-chain; adhering in theory to the concept of good realm and kingship, social, political harmony, a strong dynastic home base (Maps 2 and 3), economic prosperity, and good public order. Few men, in reality, truly and wholly, motivated their choices and decisions on this ideal; Axel Pedersen may well have been one of the few who did. 

The Tott dynasty became closely affiliated with the Scanian and Danish networks of the most powerful and notable families, Galen, Krognos and Kyrning, Has, Bille, Falk, Grubbe and Brok in the fourteenth century. Some of these dynastic network connections were established as early as the twelfth century. By the beginning of the fifteenth century the Härlöv branch had widened its network to include useful and influential Swedish dynastic contacts. Interestingly, Ivar Axelsson (Tott) first contracted his daughter Beata in marriage to a young Scanian born nobleman Truid Pedersen (Galen). This marriage alliance reconnected the Härlöv Totts to the powerful Danish Galen dynasty and the Næs Totts, in the latter half of the fifteenth century. Ivar Axelsson’s choice of husband for his eldest daughter seems to have been motivated by both local established family affiliations and personal estate strategies.

Peder Nielsen (Galen) owned several farms and estates, including Araslöv and Färlöv which bordered geographically onto Ivar’s estates and lands, enfeoffed, or otherwise connected to Lillö Castle. Any children from such a marriage would become the charges of Ivar Axelsson if either Truid Pedersen...
or Beata died.82 Ivar also controlled the Ellinge Estate in the Parish of Västra Sallarup for many years, after it was inherited by his young nephew and charge, Claus Nilsson (Sparre of Ellinge93). Beata’s marriage to Truid Pedersen, not only offered the Härlöv Totts renewed ties to established allies within the family’s traditional core area of influence, it also potentially gave Ivar Axelsson control of four bordering hundreds: Villands, Gärds, Gythinge and Lister94, whereby he gained control over the junctions between them (Maps 2 and 3). The marriage union was initially successful, producing a son, Trud Trudsen. Unfortunately he did not reach mature age, and predeceased his father Truid Pedersen who also died shortly thereafter. But as a healthy and wealthy young widow with no children, her marriage prospects were good. Beata was eventually contracted into a strategic marriage to Swedish nobleman Arvid (Birgersson) Trolle in 1466. Ivar’s younger daughter Agneta had been betrothed to a young Swedish knight Sten Sture before her death in 1465. Both men came from powerful families, active in the border region between Scania and Småland.

But not all of Ivar Axelsson’s relationships in the original geographical area of the family interests were friction free. He became embroiled in a drawn-out conflict with Archbishop Tue Nielsen (Juul) in the 1460s over the rights to 4 marks rent for land in the parish of Norra Åsum. The fourteenth century donation of land still remained under the control of Lund’s fabrica in the second half of the fifteenth century.95 Historian Sten Skansjö suggested that the farms in question had been donated to the Church by an earlier generation of the Härlöv Totts. This donation may well have included specific stipulations, affording the donators’ family permission to build a private chapel in Norra Åsum’s Church and even retrieve the original donation at a later point in time. The donation of farms made by the widow of Peder Axelsen (Tott) in 1376 included the disposition rights of the Peder Axelsen’s children and grandchildren. The wording used by Tue Nielsen, observed Skansjö, indicated that the land had been sectioned off from the extensive estates of the Härlöv Totts at some point in time. The donated Tott lands in question appear to have remained strategically important to the family’s estate concentration in the

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93 Claus Nilsson’s grandfather married Cecilia Clausdotter (Serlin), a half-sister to Axel Pedersen (Tott). Ellinge Castle in Västra Sallarup’s Parish was under the control of Peder Axelsen (the elder) in 1371. Sparre = Chevron (Heraldry).
94 Gythinge – from 1637 divided into West and East Göinge. Ellinge Castle passed from the Galen dynasty to the Tott dynasty in the mid thirteenth century. Axel Pedersen’s brother-in-law Niels Svendsen (Sparre) took control of Ellinge after the death of his wife Pernilla Pedersdotter.
95 Simonson, 2008, p. 21, ref no. 4, 5 and 6. Lund Cathedral had a special fund, which the fabrica used for the construction and repair of the cathedral and to buildings annexed to the cathedral. It also was used for the cost of worship services; wine, wax, incense. In addition, it was also used to pay fees to prebendates or priests who organized fairs in the church’s various chapel schools.
geographical area surrounding the castles of Lillö and Härlöv in the latter half of the fifteenth century.96

The Axelsson Tott network was initially built up over three centuries of loyal royal service, strategic intermarriages and strategic land purchases. The creation and maintenance of an expansive economic and social powerbase was vital to their future political success. A cyclical strategy of marriage alliances lay behind the family’s initial social advancement and economic expansion. Closeness to the events leading up to the creation of the Kalmar Union offered the family the opportunity to infiltrate Swedish national politics before and after the fall of King Albrecht 1389. The sons of Peder Axelsson continued to expand the family’s original power base far beyond Skåne from c.1450. This expansion was structured around sound economic transactions, political awareness, friendship affiliation and a strong sense of kinship.

96 Juliana Pedersdotter’s open letter of donation to Lund Cathedral’s ‘fabrica’ dated the 25 April 137: The donation mentions two farms in Skätteljunga in the parish of Västra vram. In retrospect the relationship between the witnesses is not obvious. A closer study of the three men shows that the donation was confirmed by her father Peder Grubbe of Ordrup. The second witness squire Anders Jacobsen (Lunge) was the grandson of Cecilia Grubbe’s. Her father was a cousin to Peder Johansen (Grubbe), who was the grandfather of Juliana Pedersdotter (Grubbe). She was married to Peder Axelsson (Tott), d. 1375 (chart 5a). The third witness was Torkild Nielsen of Gladisax (Bing). He was married to Ide Pedersdotter (Falk) until his death. Torkild Nielsen’s was related to Anders Bing (cousin or second-cousin?) who married Lucia, the great-aunt of Peder Axelsson: (Tott). SRA, SDHK 10813, Full transcript and facsimile (It is not clear how some of the members of the Bing dynasty were connected to one another); DS 9242 and extract in Dipl. Dan IV; One seal remains intact; Later transcripts: E 102a fol. 51 no 95; B 29 fol. 12v. no 89, RA 0202; See also Olufsson, FGC 14, 1961, pp. 10–14 Skansjö, 2006, p. 44; Diplomatica Dioecesis Lundensis, DDL, 3, p. 419–420; DAA, 1900, p. 416; DAA, 1888, p.80; Flensmarch, 2003, Del B, pp.111-115; Libri Memoriales,1884, ed. C. Weeke, p.305: The initial donation also included the clause which gave the exploitation rights of the donated farms to Juliana and Peder Axelsson’s children and grandchildren. Archbishop Tue’s open letter dated the 23 July 1460, mentions a dogged dispute over the rent of 4 marks from Engle in Åsumtorp in the parish of Norra Åsum with Ivar Axelsson (Tott). This donation may well have been one of several earlier donations of land made by the Härlöv Totts to Lund’s Cathedral ‘Fabrica’ (the only source which mentions the donation of Engle is Archbishop Tue’s letter). Legal proceedings concerning the rent from Engle took place in Skeppsåröf in 1472, whereby Ivar Axelsson and his steward Olof Olsson placed their seals on the open letter from the hearing; See Olufsson, FGC 15, pp. 13–21; Styffe, 1912, p. 53; Olufsson also speculated on a possible connection between these donations and the construction year of the private chapel in Norra Åsum’s Church, which was commissioned by the masters of Lillö Castle. Olufsson observed that the architectural style of the chapel was similar to that of Christian I’s chapel in Roskilde Cathedral and St Gertrud’s Chapel in Vä. All three chapels were constructed in the latter part of the fifteenth century, which points to Ivar Axelsson as the possible patron of the two chapels in Vä. He held Lillö from 1446/7 until his death in 1487; For further connections between Peder Axelsson (Tott) and Anders Jacobsen (Lunge) and Erik Nielsen (Gyldenstjerne); Wieselgren, 1842, pp.188–189; SRA SDHK 20429/ Rep. Dipl 4753, the outcome of a property dispute between Canon Jens Poulsen and Squire Nils Jensen (Galen) over the rightful ownership of eight farms (Christinegård) in Tengelsås, Frosta Hundred, dated Lund 23 February 1425.
Map 2. The map represents the original local powerbase (dark green area) of the Härlöv Totts in Skåne controlled by Axel Pedersen Tott at the end of the fourteenth century. The map shows the main highways that connected the family’s social and economic interests to the family estate Lillö: Map not to scale; Margaret Wallace Nilsson 2017.
Map 3. Ivar Axelsson’s estate interests in the hundreds Villands and Gärds: Ljungby manor was under the control of the Bille dynasty and the adjoining estate (Araslöv and Färlöv) interests of members of the Galen and Krognos dynasties in the neighbouring Hundred of Gythinge c. 1460 (Göinge): Map not to scale; Margaret Wallace Nilsson 2017.
Most important for developments after 1460 were the mutual family agreements in 1442, which dictated the economic structure of the closest family members and the politics of the kin/friend group in order to preserve

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97 Andersson, 1948, pp. 64–75.
the network on both expand the family’s original power base far beyond Skåne from c.1450. This expansion was structured around sound economic transactions, political awareness, friendship affiliation and a strong sense of kinship. Most important for developments after 1460 were the mutual family agreements in 1442, which dictated the economic structure of the closest family members and the politics of the kin/friend group in order to preserve the network on both personal and non-personal levels after the death of their father. Documents dated 1442 and 3 August 1447 clearly show how unique the Axelsson Totts were in their unequivocal and enduring loyalty to the family as a dynastic unit and to each other as brothers. The following section will therefore discuss Axel Pedersen and the strategies which contributed to his political and economic success.

Axel Pedersen - political satellite and network strategist

Axel Pedersen’s origins were Dano-German. His grandmother’s family (Wirtenburg) may have originally lived in Western Pomerania, which may partly explain Axel Pedersen’s persistency in his loyalty to King Eric. Also his two marriages offer an insight into his understanding of linking borders and fiefdoms to best serve his own network ambitions within the border magnate network in Skåne, he was without a doubt a political architect as well as great magnate. He married Katarina Axelsdotter (Krognos) the daughter of the wealthy and powerful landowner Axel Kettilsson (Krognos) and Swedish born Katarina Eriksdotter (Puke). After Katarina Axelsdotter’s death, he married Ingeborg Ivarsdotter, the daughter of the influential Swedish judge, Ivar Nilsson and Margareta Tordsdotter (Bonde). The children of younger branch of the Axelsson Totts were cousins twice removed to Karl Knutsson (Bonde) through their maternal grandmother Margareta Tordsdotter.98

Axel Pedersen’s marriages lay the foundation of the future political and economic aims of his nine sons. He fathered at least fourteen children, twelve survived to maturity His first marriage secured the family’s economic and political position in Denmark and Skåne, whilst his second marriage allowed the Härlöv Totts to branch out into Sweden and eventually Finland in the 1450s. Two successive generations of the family also attempted to infiltrate Norway, without any real long-term success. Only four of Axel Pedersen’s sons were alive in 1466; Åke d. 1477, Eric d. 1481, Laurens d. 1483 and Ivar d.1487. Six of the brothers: son NN, Kettil, Peder, Olof, Philip and Anders (drowning accident) all died between c.1421 and 1465. His daughters had also passed away during child-birth or succumbed to sickness before 1430.

98 See chart 6 b.
99 von Möller, 1874, pp. 101–102; Åke Axelsson took control of Varberg Castle and Halland in 1447. Axel Pedersen held Varberg from c. 1410, after the execution of Abraham Brodersen (Tjurhuvud).
Important to remember in all further discussions concerning the Axelsson Totts, is the active encouragement of inward loyalty between father, sons and son-in-law, which dictated his personal economic strategies and the later division of his estates and fiefdoms between his children. His demand for loyalty from members of the core of the network defined the crucial structure of relationship between his sons after their father’s death. Loyalty was pivotal to the relationship he shared with his two families and their closest kin. Loyalty became the axis around which his sons’ actions would revolve. A man’s word, whether written or uttered, was prone to his honour.100

The fortified house of Lillö and the nearby older wooden fortress of Härlöv (now only visible as an exposed hillock in the landscape surrounded by the remains of several fortified ditches) were symbolic of the family’s local authority and dominance. The family was affiliated with a Skåne based group of influential magnates boasting analogical economic strategies and political goals. Lillö and Härlöv were strategically constructed in the marshes near the major road to Jönköping, which was directly connected to Vä, Norra Åsum, Åhus; Lister, Sölvesborg and Ronneby.101 The land and water cross-roads between Gärd, Villands and Gythinge hundreds (Map 3) lay at the geographic heartland of the family’s network influence and power.102

These two castles symbolized more than a strong magnatial presence in the once dense fen-like landscape of Gärd hundred; they also represented the wealth, and power of the border-magnate class. Gärd hundred was originally pledged by the Swedish king, Albrecht to Axel Pedersen’s uncle, Jep Axelsen, in return for the active service of twenty knights-at-arms against the Danish king. Jep Axelsen successfully redirected his royal affiliations several times for his own personal economic aims, rather than for political motives, during the struggle to take control of Skåne in the 1360s. Perhaps the geographical position of the Härlöv Totts’ main estates motivated men such as Jep Axelsen to continuously re-evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of kings and other

100 Fabricius, 1904, pp. 201–203.
101 SRA SDHK 24883; original letter on paper with one seal dated Näsbyholm 15 February 1446; Transcript commentaries in LÄU III: 278, B 29 fol. 397 no. 315 and Rep. Dipl. 7581. Reisnert, 1992, pp. 163–169: Archbishop Tue of Lund informs Lund’s Chapter that King Christopher placed the administration of Sölvesborg Castle and the surrounding area under the equal control of Klaus Nielsen (Sparre of Ellinge) and Nils Jensen (Galen) of Hammer. Both men were connected to the Tott network. The letter also mentions Peder Axelson Tott is also mentioned in a matter concerning the appointment of justices to the area. Whilst it is not documented when and under what circumstances the Axelsson Totts first gained control of Sölvesborg, Lister and Ronneby, it is known that Klaus Nielsen was Axel Pedersen’s nephew and Ivar Axelson was charged with the guardianship of Klaus Nielsen’s son Nils on the death of his father in 1451. The second castellan Nils Jensen (d. 1454) became the father-in-law of Beat Ivarsdotter (Tott) on her marriage to Truid Nilsson. It is worth noting that Kettil Axelsson died at Sölvesborg 1454. So it might be logical to conclude that Ivar or his half-brother Kettil were awarded Sölvesborg shortly before 1454. This supposition takes into account the fact that the family’s pattern of transferring their fiefdoms to each other on the death of one of the brothers (the Finish fiefdoms of Eric Axelson and Axel Pedersen’s Varberg), and may well have been the case for Sölvesborg.
102 Helge son, 2016, pp. 83–84, especially figure 1.
noble patrons. Such pragmatic re-evaluations therefore demanded that a
magnate made decisions for the wider good of the family, rather than making
isolated decisions based on ideals of loyalty and service to others.
Each of Axel Pedersen’s sons received an equal share of their father’s estates.
One important clause of the agreement drawn-up by Axel Pedersen, forbade
them to challenge each other over matters of inheritance, and fiefdoms. They
all inherited an area of economic interest, whilst maintaining common fixed
political and economic goals as a family. Axel Pedersen protected the family
interests through his choice to consider the welfare and future of all his
children. His daughters Ellen and Beata both received a generous dowry. Ellen
married into Olof Stigsen’s (Krognos) family and Beata was contracted to
Torben Bengtsson (Bille). 103 Axel Pedersen’s fifth son Ivar, born to his
Swedish wife Ingeborg Ivarsdotter, inherited his father’s vast private estates in
Skåne and Blekinge, and a large portion of his mother’s Swedish estates.

Lillö Castle represented the continued status and influence of the family
through Ivar Axelsson’s rising position in Scandinavian politics after 1452
(Map 2). It also posed a potential threat to the authority of kings. Long after
the death of the Axelsson brothers, Lillö would remain a constant reminder of
the Axelsson Tott’s influence and power, and the struggle to control Skåne.
After Sweden’s annexation of Skåne in 1658 the castle would remain a thorn
in the side of the Swedish King Karl X. Lillö Castle was finally demolished on
the order of the Swedish King in 1659, in order to avoid Danish aristocratic
insurgents using Lillö to plot against the Swedish Crown. Skåne, as part of the
Swedish territories, afforded Lillö a strategical position in the Skåne
landscape, posing a potential Danish threat to the garrison town of
Kristianstad, founded by King Christian IV of Denmark in 1614, after the
sacking and burning of Vä by King Gustav II Adolf of Sweden in 1612.
Christian IV withdrew the charter rights of Vä, Åhus and Sölvesborg,
awarding new ones to the heavily fortified and well protected Kristianstad.

Anders Pedersen (Gyldenstjerne) – rekindling
dynastic ties

The far-reaching reputation of the Axelsson Totts is also to be observed in the
case study of Danish knight Anders Pedersen of Ågard (Gyldenstjerne). 104
Anders Pedersen attempted to reconnect with Denmark through Axel Pedersen

103 DAA, 1900: Ivar Axelsson Maren Torbensdotter (Bille), daughter to Torben Bille and his second
wife Cecilia/ Sidsel Ovestdotter (Lunge).
104 Lander, 1969, p. 82; Hicks, 2006, pp.7–30; Liddy, 2008, pp. 67–69, 82–85, 115, 145–146, 239; The
conflict between the senior and junior branches of Ralph Neville’s family is commonly termed the
Neville–Neville feud by English historians.
Henry, Andrew, George and William.

Crown in France. He received his letters of denization from Henry VI, in permission to remove part of his inheritance from Denmark. In a later letter family line and estate interests in Denmark. In 1445 he petitioned Henry VI for aristocratic culture and traditions. It also indicated a desire to preserve the Axel Pedersen's sons, was Anders Pedersen's wish for her (or at least one his several extensive estates in Denmark from both his father and mother.109 Pedersen strove to maintain his Danish interests, through the inheritance of nurturing his new economic and political interests in England, Anders Sigismund (d.1437) as a result of the Emperor's representative Duke Heinrich X Rumpold von Silesia-missions.106

Anders Pedersen was knighted for his loyal and long service to the English Crown in France. He received his letters of denization from Henry VI, in 1433.107 Under the patronage of the Duke of Bedford (Henry V’s brother) he was appointed castleton of Caen in Normandy during the early years of the minority rule of the young King Henry VI. Anders Pedersen was, one can conclude, a successful soldier of fortune. He was appointed English ambassador to France in 1438. In 1441 after being dubbed Sir Andrew Ogard, he was awarded grants of land in Buckenham and Rye, and represented the County of Norfolk in the English Parliament. He was appointed commissioner of the peace for Norfolk and Hertfordshire. Like many magnates he had serval client interests with both the Houses of Lancaster and York. At some point during the reign of Henry VI, Anders Pedersen became a client and an active member of Richard Duke of York’s network. Anders Pedersen died shortly before the outbreak of the Lancaster-York conflict in the 1450s.108 Whilst nurturing his new economic and political interests in England, Anders Pedersen strove to maintain his Danish interests, through the inheritance of several extensive estates in Denmark from both his father and mother.109

One clear motive for arranging the marriage of his only daughter to one of Axel Pedersen’s sons, was Anders Pedersen’s wish for her (or at least one his children) to learn to speak Danish, and become accustomed to Danish aristocratic culture and traditions. It also indicated a desire to preserve the family line and estate interests in Denmark. In 1445 he petitioned Henry VI for permission to remove part of his inheritance from Denmark. In a later letter

105 Anders Pedersen was a younger son of royal councilor Peder Nielsen of Agaard.
106 von Möller, 1874, p.103: In 1423 Axel Pedersen participated in a diplomatic to the Emperor Sigismund (d.1437) as a result of the Emperor’s representative Duke Heinrich X Rumpold von Silesia-Glogua’s unexpected death in Copenhagen 1423. Axel Pedersen was accompanied by two councilors: Erik Nielsen of Agaard of the Gyldenstjerne dynasty and Eric Ericsson of Vinstorp (Gyllenstierna). Erik Nielsen was the grandfather of Anders Pedersen. The founder of Swedish branch of the Gyldenstjerne dynasty Eric Ericsson was also related to Anders Pedersen. His father Peder Nielsen signed both the Union Letter and the Coronation Charter in 1397.
107 TNA, SC 8/26/277; CPR 1429–36, p. 288. Letter of denization, 8 July 1433 Information is available as a digital resource: England’s Immigrant Database.
Anders Pedersen had four surviving sons, Sir Andrew Ogard of Buckenham and Rye, and Sir George Ogard and one of Axel's powerful sons. His wish for social and dynastic prestige tied to such a marriage contract.

**The Axelsson Totts – A dynamic driving force in Nordic politics**

The Axelsson Totts became one of several intensive magnatial driving forces behind the political events of the fifteenth century. Network studies widen the latter field of research to include the study of magnatial strategies and their durability in fifteenth century. Nordic magnatial network relations faced many twists and turns due to sudden changes in the magnates’ political direction, the Nordic Union’s existence hinged on the Sweden kingdom’s political stance and choice of ruler. More generally, the fifteenth century was an era of periodic power struggles between the Crown, the Church and the expanding cohesion of the magnate class, power struggles which also included developments in Scandinavia.

The creation of the Union widened the scope of socio-economic strategies available to the wealthy and versatile border magnatial families. The benefits to be reaped through unity and internal peace, far out–weighed the negative consequences of conflicts. In this regard the Axelsson Totts saw the potential of a Union and utilized it to their economic and political advantage. The family established internordic arachnid-like network connections, which would eventually reach out from the borders of Scandinavia.

Whilst primary focus is on the study of the Axelsson Tott’s network strategies, it is important to observe them within the framework of a changing magnatial class influenced by an expanding view of the world and the embracing of European political cultural ideals. Scandinavia’s peripheral geographic position made it pervious to the infiltration of new political, economic, spiritual, cultural and social input. From a Scandinavian perspective the Tott clan most certainly considered themselves bearers of culture and

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power through their own innovative network strategies and socio-cultural attachments, structured around ancestral origins and dynastic traditions, stretching back in time beyond memory. These ideals were carefully weighed-up in magnatial choices and decisions.

In order to contextually understand the choices and decisions of the Axelsson Totts, one must observe them, not only from a local power context, but one must also consider them in a context of an expanding internordic magnatial network within the framework of the Kalmar Union. King Christian I’s and Sten Sture’s later attempts to disarm and subjugate the powerful brothers and their vast network into compliance to the authority of the Crown, through the enforcement of aggressive fiefdoms, pledge and Church politics, only served to drive them further from each other. Historian Lars-Olof Larsson observed that internordic magnatial families, such as the Axelsson Totts, were an active and willing driving force behind the initial idea of a Nordic Union, which laid the foundation for the course of action adopted by Ivar Axelsson and his brothers in the latter half of fifteenth century.

According to historian Herman Schück’s line of enquiry the Swedish based magnates actively strove to pull themselves free of Danish hegemony. The two remaining kingdoms maintained feeble ties to one another. In the sixteenth century Norway became a province within the kingdom of Denmark and not a kingdom in its own right. The Swedish magnates persisted in their goal to take control of the most strategically important castles and fiefdoms in Sweden in the fifteenth century. The man who controlled the key fiefdoms of the kingdom (Sw: förläning) extended his own personal power into the Council of the Realm, which according to Swedish Law, should be led by native-born Swedish men of high birth.

A brief inspection of the pedigrees of the magnates who were involved in this process of separation and consolidation shows that many Danish magnates had marriage connections in Sweden and Norway, and the Swedish magnates had marriage or kin connections in Denmark and Norway, as was the case of the Axelsson Totts. The ethnic make-up of the magnatial factions in the fifteenth century was clearly not based on Swedish versus Danish interests. They were in fact affiliated groups created out of the underlying network mentality of several generations overlapping economic and dynastic interests. The magnates were connected through various different social, economic and political networks rather than aligned national feeling. Olle Ferm debated the idea of a functional and persistent national thinking behind the conflicts of the Kalmar Union which in today’s society one would not recognize as, or call nationalism. The magnatial networks created around regional and local interests,
which then became interwoven with the overriding interests of national politics.

Schück’s English language article, “Sweden as an Aristocratic Republic”, discussed the role and concerns of the magnates and the developing role of the kingship in the fifteenth century. He brought to attention the fact that there was a possible connection between the developments in Scandinavia and those of Central and Northern Europe during the Late Middles Ages. The article dealt with the founding of the Kalmar Union and the possible reasons for its creation, the problems of government and the political realities of unifying three kingdoms. \(^{115}\) The political changes in and around the Baltic Sea, the ensuing dynastic conflicts in the Nordic region and the failure of Nordic politics led to the creation of the Union of the three kingdoms. Under Queen Margaret and her adoptive heir Eric, the Union developed a natural centre of power in Denmark. The strengthening of Denmark at the centre of the Union effectively threatened to marginalize both Sweden and Norway politically, and to a certain degree economically.

**Summary**

This chapter discussed the origins of the Axelsson Totts, from the earliest recorded individuals of the dynasty in the thirteenth century, the division of the family into three distinctive network branches: Næs, Härlöv and Sjörup-Krageholm and the family’s network connections and rivalry with other powerful and wealthy transnordic dynastic families. The chapter went on to discuss some of the earliest magnatial affiliations of the Härlöv Totts in the fourteenth century. The Kalmar Union became the political and economic spring-board for the Härlöv branch under the auspices of Axel Pedersen and his many sons. The union allowed them to create a far-reaching private economical empire within the Kalmar Union; a power position which they held for almost a century. The chapter also offered a relevant English comparative aspect, observed through the strategies of the northern border-magnate Ralph Neville and his two families. The dynamic Neville family rose through the ranks of the English high nobility under the patronage and kinship of both the Houses of Lancaster and York. Both the Nevilles and the Axelsson Totts became kingmakers in their own right during the conflicts of the Kalmar Union and the War of the Roses. Both families would meet a similar fate. Also included in this chapter was the case study of Danish born knight and soldier of fortune in the Hundred Years War, Anders Pedersen (Gyldenstjerne), who wished to re-assert his personal ties to Denmark and the powerful Axelsson Tott network through a marriage alliance between his daughter and one of Peder Axelsson’s sons. Anders Pedersen’s plan was never

\(^{115}\) Schück, 1984, p. 65; Tjallén, 2005, p. 163.
realized. The initial assertion presented in chapter one raises several questions concerning the role of friendship, marriage, political affiliations, and women contra role of the dominant ideals of the period.
PART 2: SOURCES, METHOD AND THEORY
Chapter 3

Thesis disposition

The general disposition of the thesis is the following: part one includes an initial introduction which presents the Axelsson Totts, sets the political scene of the Kalmar Union and outlines the aim of the thesis, underpinned by a driving theoretical assertion concerned with the ideals of kingship, realm, mediation, consensus and how the events led to magnatial polarization during the period of the Kalmar Union. The Union is also presented in a wider European perspective, and includes a discussion which presents a vision of unified kingship in Scandinavia and to whom such a vision became politically and economically important. Following on from the introduction are chapters one and two. Chapter one is a presentation of Queen Margaret’s vision discussed through the Coronation Charter and the Union Letter. This chapter introduces the reader to a wider geopolitical European and Scandinavian conspectus as the time of the Kalmar Union was created. The chapter closes with a presentation of the aims of the thesis. Chapter two presents the Tott Dynasty’s earliest documented origins. This is followed by a presentation of the network strategies used by Axel Pedersen Tott as a member of the border-gentry and important participant in the early stages of the Kalmar Union.

Part two (chapter three) of the thesis presents the general disposition of the thesis, a presentation of the more general sources concerned with studies of the Scandinavia in the Middle Ages, followed by a presentation of the sources specific to a study of the Axelsson Tott network. Part three of the thesis (chapters four, five and six) presents the mindset of the fifteenth century. The chapter includes a discussion on friendship, followed by a presentation of the highly held chivalric standards that were both used and abused by the Scandinavian nobility to claim its place in the social hierarchy of the period. Part three closes with a discussion on the magnatial representations of self. Key terms are discussed within the framework of fifteenth century political culture. One important objective is to discuss the practical implications of choice and decision-making as being integral to the actions and interactions of the magnates as an elite group of society.

The focus of part four (chapter seven) is on the Axelsson Tott political and economic strategies between c. 1460 and 1487. Part five (chapters eight, nine and ten) elaborates on how ideals translated into practice and the effect they had on the scion relationships within the Tott network. Chapter eight discusses the practical and pragmatic nature of choice and decision-making of both male and female members of the magnatial network. An engendering aspect is vital to the wider understanding of the roles and social constraints of men and women in predominantly network societies. This chapter also considers direct
power strategies initiated by men, contra the intermediary power strategies of women as heiresses and widows, within the Tott network. In chapter ten three case studies are built-up around the empiric sources which serve to illustrate how women orientated within the magnatial network in practice. Chapter nine discusses the political and economic implications of King Karl Knutsson’s testament. Chapter ten presents the final conclusions of the thesis. Following on from this are four appendices which include transcripts, translations, and facsimiles of the original sources included in the case studies, King Karl’s and Ivar Axelsson’s testaments and Magdalena Karlsdotter’s letter of dower. A parallel timeline for the Kalmar Union and the Axelsson Totts, and finally lineage charts and diagrams offer extra visual support and information to the analysis itself. The extensive bibliography includes a list of abbreviations, primary sources, primary printed sources, secondary sources, and online sources; lists of diagrams, tables, figures, maps and charts. An index is included to facilitate for the reader.

The Sources

The thesis engages a wide variety of primary empiric sources, transcribed primary sources and supportive secondary sources. Each category exhibits both specific characteristics, whilst they also induce several problems; the fragmented nature of the empiric sources in Scandinavia, understanding the terminology of the language in context, and the concerns over condition and their value as historical documents. The availability of the extant sources (lost to archives or simply mentioned in other later secondary sources) and most importantly discrepancies between the primary texts as printed transcripts or as contemporary copies/drafts. In some cases the provenance of contemporary and later copies can be put into question.

Historian Michael Hicks asserted that it is difficult to deduce idealism of politics in the medieval period because there are deficits in the evidence, which is one of the major problems when dealing with the source materials. The historian must therefore make certain vital but cautious assumptions pertaining to the number, type, character and origins, that is to say; the context and sociopolitical and economical intent of a source document. The empiric sources presented in this thesis are represented in six categories or types of text: private, public, literary, and heraldic/genealogical, and finally texts emanating from or to the many religious and spiritual institutions of the period.

The first category includes open letters or public (‘All these who see and hear this letter…’) and private correspondence between two individuals. This

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116 Chrimes, 1936, p. 3.
The main body of medieval charters and letters are held at the National Archives of Sweden and Denmark. Online databases and the transcript sources give us a unique window into the life of the magnate and people in his immediate vicinity. These sources are dated from the late fourteenth century to the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The fourth category of sources belongs to the worldly literature. This includes Danish and Swedish chronicles dating from the fourteenth to the late sixteenth century; mirrors of advice, political treatises, and the popular knightly romances and poems. Several of these are available as online resources from the Swedish National Library (KB), the British Library (BL), The Uppsala University library (UUB), The Danish Royal Library (Kgl.B) and Ghent University Library, to name just few. Many of the original sources in transcript form and facsimiles are available for purchase in print.

The fifth category of sources includes a range of heraldic and genealogical literature in book form and charts. These types of sources are useful when one studies socio-culturally created emotions and the transformation of mentalities over time. Genealogies can be used to reconstruct affinal and kin relationships over time. Genealogies can be used to reconstruct affinal and kin relationships with the following abbreviations SRA and DKA.

Henceforth in the thesis the Swedish National Archive The Danish National Archives are denoted respectively.

The final category of sources are the religious texts, remembrance books, diaries, letters of donations and gifts to religious institutions or to specific individuals from these institutions and confessional requests for the health of soul before and after death, some of the sources are concerned with marriage and papal dispensations for marriage. These are also available as originals on re-
between several individuals and dynastic families. Important when using genealogies is the margin of error and false lines, which in some cases was woven into the genealogies of the nobility by mistake or was deliberately construed on behalf the persons or persons who had commissioned the chart.

The final category of sources are the religious texts, remembrance books, diaries, letters of donations and gifts to religious institutions or to specific individuals from these institutions and confessional requests for the health of soul before and after death, some of the sources are concerned with marriage papal dispensations for marriage. These are also available as originals on request, facsimiles, or as edited transcripts, translations in both printed and online editions. These include the Liber daticus vetustior (also known as Lunds domkyrkas gåvobok), St Birgitta’s Revelations and Diarium Vadstenense.

Online databases and the transcript sources
The main body of medieval charters and letters are held at the National Archives in Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland. Each Archive offers information through an on-line service. The Diplomatarium Danicum is the most recent of the four Scandinavian databases and therefore not all sources are available as digital resources. The database offers a limited number of sources in translation and transcript form. The printed version of the Diplomaticum Danicum includes information on charters and letters dating from the year 789 to 1450. They are edited, commented on and published by the Society for Danish language and Literature (Danske Sprog og Litteraturselskab). The Repertorium Diplomaticum Regni Danici Mediævalis includes diplomas dating from 1085 to 1513. The Danish Database is an ongoing project which started in 2014. At the present time it offers a limited selection of diplomas for study online dating from 1401 to 1450.

The Svenskt Diplomatariums huvudkartotek (SDHK) is an online register available for reference purposes and localizing documents for researchers. The database has been updated and improved in the last few years. The charters, diplomas and letters are preserved either as originals on parchment, on paper, copies or reproduced in later transcripts. The primary intention of the SDHK database was to make the most difficult to read medieval texts more widely accessible for researchers. Each document is provided with a clear summary in modern Swedish. Each post includes references to related source documents; copies and transcripts found in the SRA collections, and where they are included in a variety of relevant secondary sources. The Abbreviations used in every post are listed and explained in a separate PDF, also available online. In addition, the text editions and the documents are supplemented with historical comments as well as text and source critical biographical notes. The earliest

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118 Henceforth in the thesis the Swedish National Archive The Danish National Archives are denoted with the following abbreviations SRA and DKA.
texts for the years up to 1380 and in the side series for the years 1401 to 1420 are published and edited in the Diplomatarium Sueticum (DS) series and the Svenskt Diplomatarium (SD) dating from 1401. SDHK is subject to open access via SVAR (Sweden’s digital research room). The database is continually updated to include, not only the basic bibliographic information but now includes facsimiles and transcripts in Latin as well as in vernacular language. Many of the original charters and letters included in SDHK series are held by other archives: for example; the Krupperup Archive (Gyllenstiernska Krupperupstiftelsen), the Swedish National Library, and Uppsala University Library.119

The third database is the, Diplomatrium Norvegicum. It offers transcripts and information for the first twenty-two volumes of the original collection comprising of twenty-three printed volumes. Finally, the Finnish sources are printed in Finlands Medeltidsurkunder I-III (FMU database). The Finnish and Norwegian databases are also subject to open access and offer both transcriptions and bibliographic comments to the printed texts. There are several letters and charters (including some which originate from Sweden) held by other national archives. For example: a range of original letters from the Teutonic Order and the Hanseatic League are held as photo copies in Swedish Archives in the Hansisches Urkundenbuch (Hans. UB). These record the official meetings of the Hanse cities and are published in several extensive volumes dating from 1870 to 1970. The reproduced transcripted sources date from the rise of the League c. 1258 to its demise in 1560. The documents are collectively published under the title Hanserecesse (HR). Crucial to any study of the Middle Ages are the transcripts and critical notes in the Scandinavian Diplomata. The chronicles of the period offer both changing personal and political insights into the events and toward individuals of the period. The literature of the period offers mental insights into the structure and development of the political culture of the magnatial class.

The current Tott research position and relevant sources

The research position for the Axelsson Totts is a limited one. They are included in most studies of the Union as protagonists of the events. In this thesis they are at the centre of events. There are few secondary works dedicated to the history of the family and the family as important participants to Nordic Union history. These sources are therefore essential to this thesis.

119 Schück, 1976; The author offers a detailed account of the Swedish National Archives creation, the origins and the passing down of the sources in the various forms as they are recognized and cataloged in the archive today. The Svenskt Diplomatariums huvudkartotek (SDHK) is accessed through SVAR, The digital research room. https://sok.riksarkivet.se/svar-digitala-forskarsalen.
Alexandra Skoglund’s academic work, *De yngre Axelssönernas förbindelser med Sverige 1441–148*, studied the role of the cadet branch of the Härlöv Totts. She defended her thesis at Uppsala University on 27 May 1903. A year later Knud Fabricius reviewed Alexandra Skoglund’s dissertation in HT(S) 1904, under the title of, “*En Nordisk lensmands liv i det 15de århundrede*” which included an appendix with details of Magdalena Karlsdotter’s inheritance after Karl Knutsson. Fabricius made some very interesting observations concerning what could be gleaned out of a wide range of primary sources, offering information pertaining to individual members of the Tott network. He also asserted that alternative sources could be used in the elusive search for a wider range of more personal facets of Ivar Axelsson and his wife Magdalena Karlsdotter’s personalities.

Seventy three years after Skoglund defended her thesis, Swedish-Estonian historian Hain Rebas presented his research concerned with the Baltic trade in the Late Middle Ages. In *Infiltration och handel: Studier i senmedeltida nordisk Balticumpolitik i tiden omkring 1440–1479*, Rebas included and discussed the important and specific role which the Axelsson Totts played in the Baltic trade, the politics of the Baltic Rim and the Union of the three Scandinavian Kingdoms through their specific connection to Karl Knutsson and the influential individuals in the Baltic kingdoms connected to the family’s Gotlandic, Finnish and Russian trade interests. Rebas also showed that Eric Axelsson supported Karl Knutsson’s trade politics from c.1444.

After Eric Axelsson took control of Finland in 1457 he actively pursued trade ambitions in an attempt to divert the lucrative Russian Novgorod trade through the city of Narva and via the Neva River to Viborg in Finland. 120 Eric Axelsson’s attempt to influence the Russian trade and push back the Hansa, coincided with Olof Axelsson’s increased interest in the tenure lease of the Gotenhof factory in Novgorod. The Gotenhof trading factory was still under the control of the Hansa merchants in the earlier part of the fifteenth century. The position of the Hansa traders in and around the Baltic Sea was also challenged by an aggressive, but aborted attempt by Gotland’s master Olof Axelsson. He asserted to raise the rent and transfer the control of the old Scandinavian Novgorod trading factory from Reval to Visby.121 Eric Axelsson would also purchase the last remaining stronghold of the Teutonic Order in Sweden, the Årsta Commandry in Österhaninge. 122

The Danish historian Flemming Glattar Sørensen studied the estates and economic features of the Axelsson Totts in his thesis, *Axelssønernes økonomi og handel 1420–1487* (1975). Unfortunately this work is no longer accessible

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121 Rebas, 1976, pp. 129–135: The Novgorod factory was originally founded by the Gotlandic traders who wished to establish and maintain permanent contact with the expansive Russian markets in the tenth century. The weakening position of traders on Gotland was due to the strengthening of the German Hansa, whereby they lost control of the factory by c.1330.
in its original form. There is, however, an abridged version published in German entitled, “Familienwirtschaft und baltische Wirtschaft: Aspekte einer spätmittelalterlichen Familienwirtschaft”. The article is included in the first volume of a series of publications called *Studien zur Geschichte des Ostseeraumes*. Sørensen’s study included several interesting tables, maps and diagrams, offering very unique and detailed insights into the Axelsson Totts’s trade strategies and accumulated wealth for a time span of almost seven decades. Sørensen’s study began with Axel Pedersen and ended with Ivar Axelsson’s death and the loss of the major fiefdoms, pledges and estates which remained under his control. He mapped the fortunes and direction of their trade and estate interests rather than their specific political interests. But it should be noted that the Axelsson Tott’s economic interests were deeply reliant on the outcome of their political strategies and network affiliations. Historian Paul Sjögren studied the Axelsson Tott’s personal and political relationship with Knut Posse. Knut Posse’s political career and economic achievements were interwoven with those of the Axelsson Totts, most especially the interests of Eric Axelsson in Finland.

The studies by Paul Sjögren, Hain Rebas and Flemming Glattar Sørensen have contributed to a wider perspective and understanding of the Axelsson Totts as influential and dynamic border magnates. Together with Skoglund’s earlier study these four works can be observed as being complementary studies of the Axelsson Totts political, estate and trade interests. My own growing interest of this dynamic family is to be observed in my 2010 Master thesis, *Axelssonerna (Tott): Ett ekonomiskt imperium inom gränsadeln i 1400-talets Norden* and a later text presentation in 2014, *The Axelsson Totts: Back from the Abyss of Scandinavian Historiography*. Here, I was given the opportunity to present my own research of this border-gentry family and how they created a unique private economic empire within the framework of the Kalmar Union and the Baltic Rim trade politics. Paul Sjögren’s observations concerning the aims and ambitions of the Axelsson Totts is an important theoretical starting-point in the further study of the Axelsson Totts.

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123 Glattar-Sørensen, 1995.
124 Sjögren, 1950, pp. 142–172. Styyfe, 1911, p. 419; Historian Karin Hagnell identified Knut Posse as a client of Eric Axelsson from 1465. Posse was appointed sheriff of Tavastehus together with Jöns Olofsson (Stenbock) between 1474 and Captain between c. 1470–1490.
125 Sjögren 1950, p. 142; The author observed that, “Deras primära målsättningar ha varit den egna och släktens ekonomiska och politiska maktställning såväl på rivaliserande stormannafaktioners och kungamaktens bekostnad. Med klarsyn ha dessa danska herremän emellertid insett, att den nordiska trestatsunionen erbjudit dem större och friare spelrum att förverkliga sina planer, än vad endast Danmark och Norge kunde göra.” [Their primary goals were their own and that of the dynastic family’s economic and political titles, both at the expense of rival magnatial factions and at the expense of the Crown’s position. With a clear sense of purpose, these Danish magnates realized that the Nordic Union of the three kingdoms offered them greater space in which to manoeuvre economically and politically, more so than just Denmark and Norway ever could].
Ivar Axelsson’s antagonistic relationship with the expanding numbers of Dutch traders in the Baltic Sea was discussed presented in an article by Karin. Hagnell published in 1940.126 Hugo Yrwing published a suite of articles between 1966 and 1970, concerned with the period of events from 1470 until Ivar’s fall 1487. Yrwing discussed and analyzed several perspectives from earlier studies: this included research by Karin Hagnell, Salomon Kraft, Sven Ulric Palme and Kenneth Lundholm.127 Both Ivar Axelsson’s and Åke Axelsson’s accounts have been transcribed by Evert Melefors and Dick Wase, and by Sven Welander, respectively. In 2009 Linda Rosendahl discussed the importance of clothing in Ivar’s accounts for Gotland. Erik Lönnroth included the Axelsson Totts in an article concerned with the politics and participants of the events leading up to the 1471 Battle of Brunkeberg in 1938 (republished in 1949 and 1959). Hain Rebas included discussions concerned with the underlying causes behind Sten Sture’s actions and agendas as Swedish protector in his thesis and in articles which included the role that Otte Torbjörnsson’s trial and execution in 1475 played in the deteriorating relationship between Ivar Axelsson and Sten Sture the Elder.128 Jan-Christian Schlüter has also published articles concerned with Ivar Axelsson’s role as captain of Gotland, his accounts and the men with whom he chose to surround himself. These points will be discussed in more detail later in the dissertation.

If we are to understand the later internordic political aspects of the Axelsson Tott’s network we need to briefly present the family’s dynamic roots. It is true to say that the earliest origins of the established border magnatial families are obscured by time and the lack of sources. But within this dynamic obscurity one can observe the reiterated stories and myths which would play an important part in the development of magnatial dynastic self, which was deeply rooted in dynastic traditions. This in turn justified the dynastic dual influence over society and its politics, and bolstering their perceived right to acquire crown fiefdoms, royal grants and they themselves as vassal lords to make grants of land.

Dynastic traditions had an important role in how the Nordic border magnates socio-culturally envisioned themselves contra their earlier ancestral roots which eventually translated into their own specific personal political and economic context in the fifteenth century. Susan Crane discussed the development of and spread of heraldic devices, which came to play an important role in identifying of ancestral roots and origins in England in the fourteenth century.129 The use of heraldry as a form of self and group identity also became socio-culturally popular in Scandinavia. Local historian Christer Olofsson observed that there was an avidity against the magnatial families’,

126 Hagnell, 1940, HT (S), pp. 300–305.
127 See the thesis bibliography for further details of the respective authors and the titles of their major works to the study of the Axelsson Totts during the Kalmar Union.
which is reflected in their personal family chapels and the re-modeling and decorating of churches. The Tott dynasty left a blue-print of temporal dynastic attitudes and medieval spiritual expressions not only in Skåne and Denmark, but also in Sweden and Finland.

Historian Karin Hagnell’s study of the Sture Chronicles offered explanations and insights, not only of the Kalmar Union as political period, she was also forthcoming in presenting information pertaining to the relationship between the Axelsson Totts and Sten Sture, and the Axelsson Tott’s role in politics in the Sture propaganda of the chronicle writers. The first historical work to emerge in Denmark, which discussed the history of the Union and included vital information concerned with the Axelsson Totts, was Arild Huitfeldt’s Chronicle of the Kingdom of Denmark, in 8 volumes, 1595–1603 (Danmarks Riges Kronike). Huitfeldt chose to write his chronicle in vernacular Danish in order to reach out to a wider spectrum of readers. Huitfeldt’s chronicle is a useful source to elucidate on a Danish perspective of Union and Danish in order to reach out to a wider spectrum of readers. Huitfeldt’s chronicle also refers to official documents; letters and personal family anecdotes passed down from generation to another and now lost to historians. Danish historian Jens Olesen’s study of the Union conflicts between the Union kings and the magnates from 1450 to 1481 includes several interesting observations concerning the Axelsson Totts strategies and their relationship to the union kings. French historian Corinne Péneau’s doctoral thesis entitled, Le roi élu: Les pouvoirs politiques et leurs représentations en Suède du milieu du XIIIe siècle à la fin du XVe siècle, offers insights into the reign, style of kingship and governance of Karl Knutsson (Bonde).

Methodological approach

In this thesis the choice of implementing a comparative perspective is twofold: firstly to place the Axelsson Totts in a wider European perspective of inward conflict, network societies and state-building processes in the late fifteenth century. Secondly, a comparison between the Axelsson Totts and the Nevilles may reveal how relevant social and political mechanisms motivated their choices and decisions. Under a surface of obvious similarities, two magnatial family structures developed in different directions, despite analogical sociocultural influences which weighed into the outcome of their actions. In order to

131 Lindström, GM I, 1892, pp. 91–92. Lindström mentions general repairs and donations to St Gertrud’s Chapel, which were funded by Ivar Axelsson and Magdalena Karlsdotter.
132 Olesen, passim, 1983.
133 English title: The Elected King: Political Powers and Their Representations in Sweden from the Mid XIIIth Century to the Late XVth Century.
uncover and understand the behavioural patterns of the Axelsson Tott network, one needs to look farther afield, beyond male engendering, the Nordic borders and the events of the Kalmar Union.

The comparative method

Comparative studies often boast good intentions, but not always successful in their conclusions. Still users of this method have made huge head-way and even harvested fruitful results in areas such as the spread and adaption of religion, law, commerce and literature. Marc Bloch’s histoire comparée is the foundation on which I attempt to apply this method in practice and in the form of perspective. In this thesis it is the mentality of the participants of parallel turbulent events of the fifteenth century, prior to the birth of the national state, who are discussed in comparative terms in order to explain political and social similarities, respectively the variations in the structures of the Axelsson Tott and the Neville of family networks in Scandinavia and England.

Historian Peter Baldwin argued that the notion and myth of uniqueness of nations served only to validate the claim of historical national peerlessness.\(^{134}\) It is not national histories that should be the focus of comparative studies, but rather the commonalities between individuals and kingdoms. There are common features or attributes and variations of the networks that made-up and created these nations. They are the mechanisms which need to be understood in order to trace the process of state-formation in the earlier network based societies, rather than the state itself. Historian Benjamin Z. Kedar used the comparative history method in his study of social, political and legal phenomena. He explains this in the following manner:

\[…\text{basically identical effects permit identifying the similar causes that generated them, whereas subsidiary differences…are traceable to the particular conditions in which each of them originated. Also … the comparison of institutions in several societies reveals a marked similarity. It is possible to reconstitute the ancestral civilizations in which these societies originated.}\(^{135}\]

Historian Harald Kleinschmidt, on the other hand, used a descriptive method/theoretical approach to his study of cultural concepts and change in the Middle Ages. He emphasized adaptations, not change per se, observed in the transfer of culture and ideas. He asserted that the initial description of conceptual changes, “…warrant[s] cross-cultural comparisons before an explanation can be provided.” Kleinschmidt then argued that actions and interactions should be the guiding beacons in such comparative studies.\(^{136}\)

\(^{134}\) Baldwin, 2004, p. 3; Zelander, 2000, pp. 17–18.


\(^{136}\) Kleinschmidt, 2003, p. 335.
Arguably, this also opens for cognitive history perspectives pertaining to the mentality of culture and change.

The thesis applies a comparative aspect rather than using direct comparative methodology of comparison. In engaging in a comparative aspect I attempt to place the Axelsson Totts in a wider scope of European network studies. In order to observe changes in magnatial strategies and the social dynamics of a network over time, one needs to observe both individuals and groups of the network through a wider comparative geographic perspective.

This function is met by contextually comparing the Axelsson Totts with the more widely researched and internationally studied magnatial family, the Raby–Middleham Nevilles, their relationship to the kings of England and their network base in Northern England. Both the Axelsson Totts and the Nevilles created independent peripheral magnatial networks, whose expansive private and public economic spheres of interest enabled them to actively participate and determine the politics of the Kalmar Union and the realm of England: both families eased into the role of kingmakers, clerics and diplomats, becoming active protagonists in the struggle to control and manipulate the political direction of England and Scandinavia, and neutralizing the ineffectual tendencies of the Crown in order to bolster and protect the families’ economic and social ambitions.

I believe that the study of the strategies and choices of groups and individuals, especially the Axelsson Totts and the Nevilles will bear fruit through the comparative method and widen the understanding of the similarities between Scandinavian and European magnatial lords as dominant individuals in national politics and as the self-assertive leaders of the network on regional and local levels of authority. The Axelsson Totts and the Nevilles are observed to have motivated individuals to support them, through their decisive and sometimes devastating decisions, which affected their own position and that of the individuals connected to their networks. Two similar and interesting groups of magnates – the Nordic and English can help us to understand the specific characteristics they did and did not share as border magnates and those they shared with the other magnate groups more generally. In exposing the foundation on which the magnates based choices and decisions were made, it is possible to pin down that which served to bind powerful and influential families, and those choices and decisions that served to divide them.

**The comparative perspective**

Just because two societies or kingdoms were close geographically, it does not necessarily mean that cultural, economic and social developments impacted them at the same time and in the same way; or were understood or interpreted in the same way. Direct comparisons are often made difficult by the imbalance or lack of source evidence. This, however, does not mean that comparative
methodology falls short of its purpose, on the contrary, the use of a comparative perspective could be an important tool to aid the historian’s understanding and explanation of the socio-cultural mechanisms behind patterns of development of culture, social systems and the spread and transfer of knowledge. Comparing objects, events, people, laws, language, literature, architecture, social values a. s. o. allows us to observe changes, similarities and adaptations of thought in theory into actions in practice.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a comparative perspective? Firstly it should be pointed out that one contextual or spatial phenomenon helps to explain the context or shed some light of other contexts. The events and conflicts of the Kalmar Union were part of wider on-going process of geopolitical and economic change. American historian Robert Roswell Palmer asserted that a wider understanding of change in Europe must also include the more geographically peripheral Scandinavia as part of a wider developmental trend of the fifteenth century which transformed the geopolitical map of Europe as we understand and perceive it today. A comparative perspective could in fact offer insights into the decision-making of the men and women who created and participated in the events of the Union. The events of the period should be observed through the lens of the destructive processes initiated by both individuals and affiliated groups in Europe at that point in time.

Historian A. J. Pollard observed that internal conflict or ‘inward war’, that is to say; civil war, was a common feature of Western Europe’s past. He suggested further comparisons with fifteenth century Spain (Castile and Aragon), the Netherlands, and France as kingdoms sensitive to stress and strain of fragmented decentralized politics, powerful aristocratic networks, limited royal resources, insignificant armed forces and ineffective bureaucracies. Historian K. R. Dockray made an interesting comparison between the War of the Roses and the Japanese Ōnin Wars. It should be pointed out that when a network disintegrated, it was the self-determining factors that became accentuated by the dynamics of wider conflict and not the overall consensus of the group. In widening the scope of Pollard’s Western European perspective and Dockray’s Japanese/ English perspective by redirecting the historian’s focus geographically northwards to include the conflicts of the Kalmar Union, it helps to widen the overall understanding of conflict and network society in Western Europe, and Scandinavia in the fifteenth century. Through a geographical perspective, more can be learned about the consequences of conflict, the socio-political and economical structures of the magnatial networks and the general spread and understanding of ideas within this particular group, whilst

137 Palmer, 1959–64, p. 4.
139 Dockray, 1979, pp. 143–170.
recognizing the specific traits common to the conflicts in Scandinavia. In comparing the cognitive mechanisms behind two or more geopolitically and time spread conflicts, it is possible to offer a diverse spectrum of explanations concerning the internal nature of the period’s political cultural conflicts through the actions of the participants, rather than the more obvious and outward explanation of the events themselves.

The comparative perspective in this thesis takes into consideration that a society or social system cannot be fully understood without considering a similar society or system. The primary limitations of the comparative method alludes to the idea that societies differ in so many ways, that a comparative method becomes less meaningful or difficult to apply based on the total disparity of differences whether these differences are time related, document/source related or context related.

Parameters outside of the general areas of political and economic developments unite the magnates of Scandinavia and England in an uneasy but plausible investigation of their motives, choices and decisions based on both specific and general cognitive cues, earlier cultural influences and experiences that played a vital and decisive role in forming the magnatial class of Europe in the fifteenth century. Historian Christer Olofsson observed that on a local level the Middle Ages was not period of social-cultural isolation; people travelled on business or went on pilgrimages. 140 It should also be noted that even diplomatic and educational missions offered those all-important European cognitive cultural impulses which eventually infiltrated the mentalities of the Nordic peoples.

The concept of choice and that which motivates it, strengthens the idea of *ruling rather than just reign*, which partially helps to explain the underlying structure of the decision-making of the magnates’ and their actions contra the strength and weaknesses of the monarchy to empower and enforce royal authority. The kingdom of Sweden was interchangeably governed by a union king or an elected protector between 1397 and 1523. These two forms of authority pathed the way for both magnatial cooperation and contentious conflicts. Schück describes the emergence of a political dualism which would colour and characterize Scandinavian history for the next hundred years. Conflicts of interest opened the door of opportunity for the most powerful and wealthiest dynastic families, to ally themselves into political factions. The Axelsson Tott’s created a transcendent economic network to protect the family’s interests. Magnatial network strategies would effectively weakened the king’s control of Sweden within the Union, whilst it also served to check the power of the Swedish Protector chosen by the magnates and the men of the

140 Olofsson, FGC 15, p. 14; *Acta pontifum danici*, 1908, no 1773; Eric Axelsson Tott studied at the University of Padua. Although there are no sources concerning Eric’s full brothers, they too, will have attended university, possibly also in Italien. Their older half-brothers studied at German and French universities.
Church. By the end of Sten Sture’s long period as protector in Sweden and the crowning of King Hans as union king, the magnates, archbishops and bishops clearly boasted more defined roles and duties in the everyday routines of government in the Swedish kingdom.

Theoretical approach

The nature of emotions – real and ritual

We cannot know how all people felt, but we can begin to show how some members of certain ascendant elites thought they and others felt, or at least thought they ought to feel. This is all we can know. But it is quite a lot.141

This opening quotation concerns the study of the nature of emotions.142 Here Rosenwein accounts for the thwarted attempts of historians to re-feel that which has been felt by individuals in the past. Historians can only speculate and partially confirm felt emotions and the use of ritualized emotions through textual and visual sources. These sources show that there was a spectrum or range of socio-cultural emotions applied onto society and those that were felt from within an individual.143 Idea historian Kristiina Savin observed that feelings are imperceptible to the human eye; they are immeasurable and cannot be weighed. Not so the ritualized emotions which were an important, if not a vital physical feature of the medieval public theatre of society. These emotions were the codex of the court, and innate to the outward actions of the nobility; ritualized emotions which would eventually filter down to the lower nobility and merchant class.144 Ritualized emotions were an important, if not a vital physical feature of the medieval public theatre of society. They became learnt behavioural patterns. At the opposite end of the emotional spectrum were the basic and evolved emotions bound to human nature and not to the rules of human society. Searching for emotions in the sources is to try to pin down that which modern individuals believe people from the past have felt. The translation of these emotions is more a question of how people in Middle Ages

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141 Rosenwein, 2006, p. 196.
142 In the Scandinavian languages emotions are synonymous with feelings. It is rather a question of expected social and culturally adopted outward emotions (emotioner) and inward spontaneous feelings as part of an individual’s human nature (känslor).
143 I observed that during my visits to museums, castle ruins, archives that people do attempt to connect with the past; to feel what they felt or we believe that they felt through physical contact with objects; touching, smelling, and looking; also by trying to recreate the past or physically reenact it. This is not dissimilar to medieval practices concerning the devotion and handling of relics, or creating ones image in the form a saint. Both Ivar Axelsson and Sten Sture materially and visually extended their emotional selves in their statues of St George.
144 Savin, 2016, p. 32.
experienced life and conveyed meaning into politics, through public displays of socio-cultural bound emotions.\textsuperscript{145}

The Theory of Emotions has extended into several fields of historical research, and in recent years has initiated studies specific to conditions in Scandinavia. Historian Thomas Småberg has written several excellent articles concerning the emotions of Middle Age literature, aristocratic Swedish friendship and the masculine language of friendship observed in the mentality of medieval bishops in Scandinavia. Two recent dissertations concerned with 18th century topics of emotions concerning the language of love and the use of male tears in war have used the Theory of Emotions to support their findings.\textsuperscript{146} Historian Eva Österberg’s groundbreaking study, traced the nature of emotions in friendship relations. In her latest research she maps the history of social and cultural attitudes toward children from the Middle Ages to modern society, offering an emotio-cognitive explanation of changes in attitudes toward children in the extant sources in literature, cultural forums and the social settings of distant societies.

What was considered emotional changed expression throughout the Middle Ages, and no longer emotional in a modern context\textsuperscript{147} In fact; attitudes and emotions evolved and changed throughout the Middle Ages – no emotions are static, because they always abound to the changes which evolve between individuals or a group. These changes gained momentum through cultural, political, religious or social contexts. So what were emotions and how were they expressed in the Middle Ages?

Emotions observed as feelings, are part of the human biological make-up: these are basic reactions vital to human communication and survival. These have evolved over millions of years of cognitive development connected to the understanding and changing of the natural environment to which humans were exposed and primed to navigate. The development of social and culturally ideals led to the development of emotions, which were expressed through societal norms. Historians Rebecca F. McNamara and Una McIlvenna argued that it was not biological emotions which interest to the history scholars of emotions, but rather created socio-cultural emotions. Huizinga’s very early observations make him an important precursory researcher of emotions, who has been followed by historians such as Rosenwein, Reddy and Haupt, and as such, he should be regarded as a pioneering researcher of the history of emotions, despite the fact that several scholars using the history of emotions have argued that Huizinga’s findings are outdated. In “Patriotism and Nationalism in European History”, Johan Huizinga made the astute observation that the terms used to describe kingship in the Middle Ages;
regnum and civitas, expressed the political emotions specifically concerned with the concept of kingship, rather than the patriotism of the people as the national foundation of the state. Historian Philip Line also makes a similar observation in his discussion on process and character of Swedish state formation in the High Middle Ages.

Historians explore the emotionality of language, implied actions, ideals and concepts of earlier societies, considering aspects of gender and hierarchies within specific groups and social network structures using extant sources and a broader range of alternative artefacts. In this thesis emotions are recognized as being real or socio-cultural cognitive devices dictating both formal actions and attitudes based on motives, choices and decisions of prominent members of fifteenth century magnatial society.

Emotions from this perspective are then useful in the study of the mentalities of state building processes and how these shaped the mentalities of the ruling class in fifteenth century society. This perspective, whilst adding a wider understanding of the magnates’ roles as participants central to the sphere of political culture in the fifteenth century, also becomes the spring-board for the expressions of state structures in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the changing role of the aristocracy under a powerful centralized monarchy.

Russian historian Aaron Gurevich observed that focus on intellectual, ideational was the crucial socio-psychological soil in which culture arose was sustained. Here he suggested that culture is sustained and maintained almost like a garden. Various groups sustained or planted their intentions, actions and social interaction, whilst the theologians, philosophers and political thinkers maintained or nourished its theoretical form.

Societal values and mentalities evolved gradually over time taking on a translucent or definite quality. Barbara Rosenwein denoted that there was an identifiable link or the continuation of a rich vocabulary, expressed in the emotions of the societies of Greek and Roman Antiquity. They enriched the period with displays of ritualized, real or performed expressions of language and actions. In fact American historian Barbara Wertheim Tuchman observed as early as 1978 that:

People of the middle Ages existed under mental, moral and physical circumstances so different from our own, as to constitute almost a foreign civilization. As a result,
qualities of conduct that we recognize as familiar amid these alien surroundings are revealed as permanent in human nature.\textsuperscript{153}

Tuchman pinned down a number of relevant factors pertaining to the mental, physical and moral conditions which we as modern individuals would consider threatening, strange or abstract. However, she also implied that there was a biological dimension to human behaviour that was much slower to change and had not developed beyond the point of \textit{longue durée} and which we would find equally recognizable. The way in which individuals orientated socially within friendship networks, or as Barbara Rosenwein called them, “emotional communities”, tended to act, react, and interact with the specific and dominant temporal or spiritual ideals. These were political, social and cultural inherent societal cues. They either controlled or constricted an individual’s emotions in order for them to conform to a set of ritualized behavioural and specific standards. Despite external influences on the \textit{emotional communities}, Rosenwein also observed that there were still internal and natural processes of the human behaviour and feelings which are recognizable in our own behavioural patterns.\textsuperscript{154} The latter are the emotional constants of human behaviour. So have emotions changed over the course of historical time? This is a vital question concerning my own aims in this thesis and one which I feel needs to discussed more fully.

Emotional constants were also the focus of \textit{Emotions: A Brief History} by Keith Oatley. He discussed the concept of when the world became modern. It is more a question of modern compared to whose standards or description of unmodern. One cannot deny, and it must be argued; that medieval men and women assumed that their contemporary emotional world was vital to how they did or did not view the past. Life after death was arguably more important to their world view than the past as spatial concept. They aspired toward personal salvation. For the social elites the past was usually concerned with lineage and family origins interwoven with the history of the world and the preservation of these origins after death. Therefore, the question of modernity is relative to whom where and when. Oatley asserted that to claim that the world was not modern before 1300 was a general post-historical assertion. ‘Modern’ in the sense that some historians date the beginning of the modern world to the Renaissance and Dante Alighieri’s \textit{The Divine Comedy}, which Oatley writes, is in fact a gross generalization. Observing timelines of history and the results of societal developments, one can observe huge variations in the transfer of societal and cultural developments observed through spatiality and time. Dante was part of a much longer literary Renaissance.\textsuperscript{155} The long

\textsuperscript{153} Tuchman, 1978, p. xiv; the author researches the period of 1340–1400, through political, military, and social lenses.
\textsuperscript{154} Rosenwein 2006, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{155} Oatley, 2004, pp. 3, 15–16.
renaissance of knowledge and innovation was a period which comprised of several cognitive developments of human thought progression and an intrinsic part of the specific and overlapping rooms or spaces of the temporal and the spiritual development.

Were medieval people more expressive in their emotions? If they were, why and to what purpose did these ritualized emotional displays then serve in the public alternatively the private arena, and if they affected their ability to make necessary decisions in the perceived space of rationality?

Harking back to Huizinga’s, his views and observations of the Middle Age cultural decline still resonate almost a century after it was first published.156 His starting point was that the medievals were unable to control their emotions; they were irrational and part of a pre-civilized dark and distant Europe: a pessimistic world that turned to extreme visuality, morbidity and decadence in the face of apocalyptic episodes, of human aggression, war and violent conflict.157 They were children in the midst of a learning process where socio-cultural qualities were spiced with outbursts of uncontrollable emotions. The uncontrollable gave way to more civilized and controlled behaviour. Huizinga considered emotions as, “The passionate and violent soul of the age”. Individuals orientated from one emotional exaggeration or extreme to another like an emotional pendulum swinging back and forth. He added that, “All emotions required a rigid system of conventional forms.”158

In this sense, asserted historian Christopher M. Bellitto, emotions were socially and culturally constructed and not the emotions innate to every individual’s primordial human behaviour.159 It is first when external factors fueled internal constraints within European court society in the thirteenth century that the one can talk of modern. From a civilizing perspective, earlier historians came to the conclusion that the medieval aristocrats were violent, temperamental and lacked the restraint to control their emotional outbursts – they were devoid of, or lacked the accomplishment of any form of modern rationality or logical thinking.160

Historian Stephen Jaeger made an interesting observation concerning Elias’s extensive work on the mechanics of change. Elias’s construction of the Middle Ages was mostly supported by a collection of post medieval sources rather than contemporary empirical ones. The sources were combined with a viscous theoretical analysis structured around the nature of the relationship between the individual and society. Huizinga observed an inner socio-cultural

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156 Bloch Vol. II, Chapter XXX, “Disorder and the efforts to combat it”, 1978, p. 411; Huizinga’s influence is clearly echoed in Bloch’s view, that the mentality of violence was a deeply rooted structure of the Middle Ages, “…violence was an element in manners. Medieval men had little control over their immediate impulses; they were emotionally insensitive to the spectacle of pain, and they had small regard for human life.”
159 Gurevich (Gurevitj), 1997, p. 187.
stagnation in the Middle Ages. This stagnation was brought about through a mental change toward physical developments, and duly forced through a filter of negativity; plague and pandemics; revolts and slave markets, whilst other historians chose wars, climate change and bad harvests.\(^{161}\) It is, as Jaeger pointed out, the assumptions of his method that are the primary results and not the reality of the dynamic forces in action, which transformed societies over time, observed in the contemporary source materials. Huizinga turned unconditionally to art, music and prose which it has been argued, formed Huizinga’s reality of the Middle Ages.\(^{162}\) These, I would argue, were the representations of a constructed reality, rather than a lived reality. In observing alternative sources I believe it is possible to enhance the mentalities of men and women as mirrors reflecting social standards, politics and economics. But, as we shall see realities and un-realities became interwoven with each other. They created what I would call a time and context bound outlook on the world; an outlook specific to the Middle Ages.

New questions have arisen and old questions need to be answered anew since Huizinga’s studies were first published. J. R. Lander wrote that Huizinga’s concepts were in fact:

\[\ldots\text{an imagined morphology of decay… endower[ing] the [fifteenth-] century with a collective death wish […] The concept of a swift sixteenth-century growth of the national state and modern institutions from the debris of a decaying medievalism.}\(^{163}\]

Lander described a kind of phoenix bird phenomena of generalizations rising from the ashes of older but identical and accepted assumptions. Lander called this a tendency toward almost commonplace writing of European historians, pointing to that fact that England had its own very personal insular form of historical writing. I would argue that this was also the case of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century Scandinavian historians. British medieval historian George Holmes observed a certain lack of analysis in Huizinga’s early twentieth century work. Huizinga, he wrote, was inspired by Hegel, observing that this type of European philosophy was no longer a dominant theory of philosophy at the turn of the twentieth century. Huizinga described the fifteenth century as a violent world steering ever closer toward the autumn of decline and winter of decay, “… over-ripe and beginning to rot after the spring and high summer of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.”\(^{164}\)

He wrote a narrative based on the transition of the seasons on the Middle Age culture without considering that the seasons are cyclical events. They were structured

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\(^{162}\) See Harrison’s comment in the preamble to Hans Reutercrona’s translation of Huizinga’s original work.

\(^{163}\) Lander, 1969, p. 11–12.

around the recurring break-up and the regeneration of nature. It was Huizinga’s aim: to tell the story of the medievals drowning in the much loved Malmsey wine of their socially and politically over fermented society, which resulted in the birth of something more rational, logical, durable and persistent – the early modern state.

Basic emotions, asserted Ekman, consisted of, “…the characteristics unique to th[e] family”, are the emotional themes and variations, adding that, “the themes are the product of evolution, while the variations reflect learning”. These could be identified as biologically innate feelings and socio-geographical coerced emotions. What Ekman does not discuss are socio-cultural structured emotions that were applied in the Middle Ages as cognitive devices of communication which were necessary, not just to conform to, but in order to take part ‘correctly’ in the practices, connected to the emotio-rituality of society and at the same time decode the communality of it. Every individual played a specific role in the hierarchies of society and the network. Basic emotions, variations of basic emotions as learnt emotions, and socio-cultural conceptual and ritualized emotions are equally important to our understanding of what emotions represented for the individuals of earlier societies. Literature, music and art filled the embedded emotional space with meaning. Real emotions and socially engaged emotions are two important facets of human nature and human social behaviour. The manifestation of one type of emotion does not mean that other types cannot exist in the same cognitive space. It would be true to assert that there were certain contentions between them in the Middle Ages, yet the duality of the medieval society allowed all variables of emotions to coexist spatially and in practice.

An anthropological network perspective of friendship

The chapter has thus far considered the emotionality of network connections observed through the expectation of ideal reactions, rather than the reality of human interactions and not the network in practice, where certain individuals played key roles as leaders of the network, and other individuals adopted proactive roles within the network. A third category of individuals had opaque, but important supportive roles within the network. The supportive role, I suggest, was indicative to the female network sphere.

The Axelsson network strove after remaining a cohesive social and hierarchical unit. Even so, the network brought together contentious individuals of society, where the actions and decisions of these individuals could and did affect the internal dynamics of group relations, causing disputes and discord amongst the members of the network. The Axelsson Totts, like the Nevilles, shared complicated horizontal and vertical kin/blood relationships with members of their affinity. Network connections were maintained for pragmatic

Diagram 1 Jeremy Boissevain’s Informant Network visually illustrates the relationship between individuals of a network.

I: Personal cell composing of Ego’s closest relatives and a few intimate (trusted) friends. Ego invests both time and energy in terms of material and emotional resources on these individuals.

II & III: These are Ego’s intimate zones of interaction. Ego maintains active and intimate interactions with his relatives (kin) and friends, and maintains more passive interactions with other relatives and friends farther away from the personal cell sphere. Whilst further away from Ego’s personal cell these individuals are still emotionally important to him. This group of individuals is important on a pragmatic level for economic and political purposes, i.e. the logistics of daily life.

IV: This is Ego’s effective zone. The individuals in this zone have their own networks which Ego finds useful. Here Ego maintains warm relations in order to gain access to the friends of his friends. These friends according to Boissevain are instrumental rather than emotional friends.

V: This group of individuals is peripheral to Ego’s memory. He recognizes them by face but not by name, whilst they recognize him. Ego has no use of these individuals pragmatically or emotionally and they are pushed to the periphery of Ego’s network. These are the well-wishers of Ego’s network. Some of these individuals are closer to Ego’s extended zone VI rather than his personal cell I.

The diagram is adapted to show the relationship between two or more networks. For Boissevain’s original diagram see Friends of Friends: Network Manipulators and Coalitions, 1974, p.24.

The following discussion looks more closely at the realities of friendship and family networks in practice rather than the ritual and emotive aspects as discussed in the Theory of Emotions. Diagram 1 illustrates the complexity of network relationships in practice. The Informant Network Theory model was first formed by Dutch anthropologist Jeremy Boissevain, who studied the network hierarchical structures and human contentions in practice between several interconnected local families and their friends on the island of Malta. Boissevain’s informant studies are therefore useful in an attempt to study networks of the past. Boissevain’s long-term fieldwork was based on first-hand observations and later analysis. His work resulted in several network studies.

As an anthropologist Boissevain was interested in how friendships were initiated, networks were created and pragmatically maintained. Boissevain observed several types of relationships between members of the network over many generations. He put forward his ideas and findings after a renewed interest in Network Analysis Theory in the 1970, which had shifted focus away from the dominant and rigid theories of structural-functionalism. Boissevain’s interest in this area of study came more than a decade before the History of Emotions and the introduction of Emotional Communities began to interest historians as a viable theory in order to explain human relationships, whilst they were also motivated by economic, political, social survival, economic ambitions. In the long run both older established friendships and new pragmatic ones could be and became problematic to maintain. For the individual seeking spiritual, social/economic and political advancement, the lineage of the prospective in-laws was vital to the overall expectations of the family as a network unit. The study of such connections offers vital clues to the mentalities and cognitive orienteering of the Axelsson Totts and how they perceived the roles of the kin and friends, their ancestry, origins, honour and loyalty.

166 Larsson, 2006, pp. 228–230.
169 Boissevain, 1979, p. 392; “Strukturfunktionalism”, (www.ne.se). Structural functionalism is a comprehensive sociological theory, developed by Talcott Parsons. He argued that there were four general functions needed for a social system to remain viable: 1. Structural features: 2. Adaptation to the environment (economy), effectiveness (politics): 3. Patterns of conservation (culture), and 4. Integration (organization). Theories of Structural-Functionalism centre on a wider perspective concerned with the social and economic mechanisms behind society and networks. Researchers diverged from meaning and symbolism turning to modern descriptions of kinship and lineage. The above information is retrieved and adapted from the following internet sites; http://www.anthrobase.com/Dic/eng/def/structural_functionalism.htm.
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170 The diagram is adapted to show the relationship between two or more networks. For Boissevain’s original diagram see Friends of Friends: Network Manipulators and Coalitions, 1974, p.24.
cognitive interaction and how networks expressed themselves outwardly toward the periphery and inwardly toward the nucleus of an individual’s context, rather than a sociological one.

Boissevain asserted that human individuals were (and still are) social entrepreneurs in that it is important for them to maintain friendships, create goals, reach these goals and solve problems within that which he called constructed coalitions in order to realize and reach their aims and be successful – in other words: they were formed by consensus and cooperation practices. Although Boissevain did not study historical societies, he did make some interesting and relevant observations quintessential to this present study: by observing behavioural patterns of modern friendship networks it is possible to observe their genesis or origins, that is to say, earlier historical networks, whilst avoiding translating them with help of present-day descriptions. Boissevain emphasized the being and the becoming of social institutions – or more simply put, the social and prevalent dynamics of these networks. By this it is meant that the network patterns which emerged in the past, textually describes and visually illustrates the exact relationship between individuals within the practical framework of the informant network. Ego in this instance is a leading magnate who creates a network of related (Consanguinei) and non-related individuals (amici). All individuals of the network were expected to have one unified aim: to maintain the network, whilst they harbour several personal aims which nourishes their own personal cell and may even interact with (consensus) or react to (conflict) other informant network structures. Moving away from the theory of friendship and networks, one needs to present and discuss the key concepts which offered social and cultural structure to the idea of friendship within the physical network itself.

Summary

Chapter three opened with a general disposition of the thesis. This was followed by the methodological and theoretical approaches which support my research. The use of comparisons, emotions and cognitive mechanisms are useful tools when searching for logical explanations concerning the socio-cultural representations of late fifteenth century society and how they fell out in reality. The ideals of the medieval world play a vital role in the in-depth empiric study of the Axelsson Tott network and the understanding of the motivational factors behind their choices and decisions. The comparative method puts the period of Kalmar Union and actions of the Axelsson Totts within a wider spectrum of European medieval political and trade history. The Theory of Emotions and Boissevain’s network theory help us to better understand inward friendship and conflict through the consensus strategies used by the magnatial networks in fifteenth century Scandinavia. Jeremy Boissevain studied informant networks in practice through extensive field
studies on close-knit network communities. His findings offered a useful anthropological perspective of how network friendships work could be applied to a study of networks from the past. Elements of loyalty and reciprocal responsibility were present and an oath or a promise was not to be taken lightly. The thesis subject also engages key observations by earlier scholars in the few available secondary sources. The use of a comparative perspective, rather than direct comparison, reveals subtle, and yet, important socio-cultural similarities and differences between two seemingly analogous family structures and political destinies.
PART 3: THE MINDSET OF FIFTEENTH CENTURY POLITICAL CULTURE
Chapter 4

The study of magnatial network structures and friendship interactions in the Middle Ages is no easy task to address: more so during the Kalmar Union. Boissevain’s model is not only useful in modern anthropological studies of now existing communities and networks; it is useful as a starting point in the unraveling of historical relationships between networks and individuals of a network, whilst human interactions remain basically constant. This chapter is concerned with the socio-cultural aspects of human interactions in which have been adapted contextually over time.

Friends and unfriends – the study of networks

“The enemy of my enemy is my friend…”\textsuperscript{171}

Historian Julian P. Haseldine observed that friendship studies of different types of friend relationships have been identified as widened over time. Historians have identified the operation of friendship used by a group or an individual, in conflict resolution situations, as part of the diplomatic missions or friendship contacts at corporate level. However, Haseldine admits that, although researchers have widened the field of friendship studies, less researched are the network structures, where both informal and formal friendship were initiated, flourished and demised.\textsuperscript{172}

Late Middle Age networks developed through the identification of useful friendships. Friendship or rather the notion of what it was and was not, had evolved within a societal structure whereby the communality of the group as friends of friends separated itself from the notion of unfriends\textsuperscript{173} or individuals outside of the network of the group - the others. Individuals, to a wider extent, allured to the consensus of political and economic intent within network societies. Network consensus extended from a leading member or members of

\textsuperscript{171} This quotation is part of the 1884 English translation of \textit{The Arthashastra}. For a more detailed original translation of the entire text see \textit{The Arthashastra}, 1992, translated and edited by, L.N. Rangarajan, p.520. A Sanskrit treatise on statecraft, dated to the fourth century B.C.

\textsuperscript{172} Haseldine, 2013, p. 84.

\textsuperscript{173} BL. Ms. Cotton Otho C.XIII; the expression unfriend was first used in Layamon’s Brut, dated to 13th century “\textit{And we sollen wende; and wip ham fihten. slean houre onfrendes}.” Lines: 2707–2708. It denotes the relationship of contentious individuals, who may have once been called friends and members of the network, but circumstances dictated that they were no longer considered to be true friends and therefore adversaries. Online resource: Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse. Layamon’s Brutis can be accessed through the Oxford Text Archive; http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/.
the core family to include the close kin and finally the wider inclusion of loyal friends, clients, mediators and peripheral well-wishers.

The late medieval network should be observed as an underlying structure, vital to the mentality of the political culture of the period. Magnatial networks were created and friendships sustained through the choices and decisions of the core members, who in turn influenced and encouraged kindred relations. Peripheral friendship ties motivated the choices and decisions of distantly connected individuals: the friends of friends of friends who hardly ever came into direct contact with the core of the network, but stood to reap the benefits of its protection and were important to the network’s defense in times of national crisis and dynastic feuding. Also, the study of the cultural and social function of friendship networks and network individuals as participants of a wider state-building process is still a relatively unexplored area and needs to be addressed more seriously.

Societies in the Late Middle Ages did not and could not revolve solely around the concept of national politics, because medieval politics emanated from within the local and regional networks of the magnates, Church representatives and servants of the Crown. Several historians in Scandinavia have approached the subject of friendship and networks, whilst none take a closer look at the network decision-making of the magnates as part of the state building process of the Kalmar Union. They observe the structure of the network rather than the cognitive tools that held or broke-down the structure of the network. The duality and expectations of network friendship translated into a vital and imperative emotional fundamant of the medieval political culture in the fifteenth century

Two important doctoral theses in this field of study in Sweden are historians Lars Hermanson’s research on the bonds of friendship, in the High Middle Ages and Thomas Småberg’s more specific research, of the developing Swedish aristocratic friendship relations, which eventually created the closed nobility of Mark and Kind Hundreds, in Västergötland in the Late Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{174}

Lars Hermanson’s answer to the critics of friendship research was to assert that the modern definition of friendship places it firmly within the private sphere between two socio-emotionally interacting individuals for the people of the Middle Ages friendship was acted out both in public and in private and cognitively separated by the specific purpose they aimed to serve. Hermanson used the intrinsic expression ‘bärande band’ [literally: structural ties] to describe how friendship transcended from the abstraction of the ideal into concrete practice from the eleventh to the thirteenth century – friendship was a state of being, it was something you did.

\textsuperscript{174} Hermanson, 2009; Småberg, 2004.
Friendship relations were embroidered onto the complicated socio-cultural framework of network society. An individual chose friends primarily from within the kith and kin for specific reasons and then others, in the periphery space of the network. Men and women were not born of nature to be friends. Every individual was assigned a role within the hierarchy of the network. This in turn created the prerequisite for, and served to maintain the wider structure of societal harmony. In practice choice was motivated, not only by internal influences of friendship relations, but also through the external pressures to perform and take part in the political cultural public arena: theoretical friendship ties were bound to a set pattern of social and cultural ideals, whilst friendship in practice created the framework of the rapidly changing direction of the political and economic culture of the period. The emotions connected to utterances of friendship, love and fraternity, were not to be underestimated in terms of political culture in practice, seen as a stable and pregnant socio-cultural ideal. Early Middle Age society, asserted Hermanson, was structured around a pluralistic organization of group culture, both men and women identified their own and others’ needs and expectations with more than one group. Individuals could cross one or more network boundaries depending on the pretext of the contact.

Network contacts were spiritual and secular: they were to be observed in alliances, the brotherhood of knights, as part of the core family, within the household of a magnate, as part of a dynasty, and toward the kin and kith. Authority was divided horizontally between different group constellations, not as in the early modern state, where authority was vertically enforced on the people form a strong centralized monarchy. Hermanson asserted that the idea of distinct organized vertical power structures or rather the lack of them, is something earlier historians have side-lined for the idea of a centre of authority hierarchically enforcing its power on the people.

The awareness of what choice actually encumbered for a group or an individual within the acknowledged limitations of their network was important to know. This was vital to the physical and psychological make-up of the magnatial network in the fifteenth century. Collective consensus of a network or between two or more networks was structured around arbitrary decisions born of mediation which aimed to maintain a wider social and political harmony. The flip-side of these relationships was contention and divided loyalties in times of societal unrest and inward political war. Collective group consensus grew out of agreement and was easily disrupted by more personal driven individual goals and pursuits. Feuding was strictly regulated by the law in order to encourage a solution acceptable to all parties. Agreement was

175 Hermanson, 2009, p. 189.
177 Hermanson, 2009, p. 189.
necessary in order to mentally embody the ideal, but also to apply the notion of consensus in practice. The wider consensus and success of magnatial networking was vital in maintaining the greater peace of the community in general – the common weal. Informal network practices of the *cognate et amici* were particularly useful when attempting to infiltrate the difficult to access formal spheres of communication, which ultimately influenced magnatial behaviour and dictated the scope and range of their decision-making.

Following on from David Gaunt’s observations concerning the construction of the kin and kith relationships, and which Gaunt supported on a theoretical framework based on modern social anthropological standpoints, historian Christer Winberg asserted that there were several levels of relationships, all with their own unique and important social distinctions within the aristocratic network. The interconnectedness of core network members belonging to a specific family (*kärnfamiljen*) was separate and apart from all other relationships. Here the shared dynasty was recognized by several inter-related families (*ätten*) and the wider kinship (*släktrets*) comprised of several kin families who shared and recognized the same ancestry. The kith and kin was recognized as being both male and female (*frände, fränka*), and included both distant and close relatives of an individual. Finally, the group of unrelated friends who were invited into the network (*vänner*) should also be included as being important to the social dynamics of the network. All friend relationships were vital to the function of both the framework and the internal structure of the network. The bonds of family, kin and friends became the socio-cultural adhesive that welded the magnatial network: dynastically, economically and politically, constituting the mental and cognitive make-up of fifteenth century political culture are instrumental in understanding motive, choice and decision-making as major contributing factors to the heightened political polarization of the influential magnatial families in Scandinavia with focus on the Swedish and Danish kingdoms between the years 1448 and 1487.

The magnatial family will be discussed through relevant examples that serve to illustrate the interactions and kin interconnectedness within the

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179 NEOB, 2010, p. 786; *Ätt*; Old Swedish *ärt*; Old Danish *et* – of Germanic origin denoting family (*släkt*), clan (*stam*). Old English, *aeh†*; property; original meaning; ‘they who belong together’; closely related to the word - to own (att åga); Thornton, 2009, pp. 93–94.

180 Winberg, 1985, pp. 14–17, see also ref. on p. 15 Gaunt, 1983, pp. 208–210. The terminology ‘kärnfamilj’, is the core of kin network in this thesis, should not be confused with the modern term ‘kärm’ family. In the modern meaning ‘kärm’ denotes the atomic/nuclear family first used in the 1950s, which comprises of only the father, mother and children. This is a term construction of the modern era after WWII. I follow historian Alan MacFarlane’s argument, that there is evidence that the nuclear family existed in the thirteenth century social context in England. The core family was recognized through both the mother and father. This was the personal family unique to an individual, whilst they were also part of wider social network of consisting of near related families of the same the dynasty, other dynastic families and finally the peripheral kith; also MacFarlane, 1986, p. 39.
cognitive space of the affinitive network. It should be duly noted that the thesis does take into account the aspect of gender as being both important and vital to the function of the magnatial network. After careful consideration of the sources, it became clear that the inclusion of the implicit cooperative strategies and actions of female network members, contra their male opposites, offered a three dimensionality to the study, that might otherwise have been overlooked by applying an all-male perspective. Marriage strategies within and between the magnatial networks was a vital power nexus to react from and interact with other networks. It is important to include both men and women as necessary components of the historical narrative, illustrated in their specific network roles and identities. Historian Joan Wallach Scott asserted that the way forward in women’s history, was to consider women as both makers and participants of history:

… mak[ing] women a focus of inquiry, a subject of the story, an agent of the narrative – whether the narrative is a chronicle of political events […] and political movements […], or a more analytically cast account of the workings or unfolding of large-scale processes of social change. 181

Networks in the Middle Ages navigated between the ambiguities of the ideals of res publica and res privata. 182 Political relationships are considered by some historians to have been much stronger than personal relationships. 183 The relationship between Axel Pedersen Tott and his two families was indeed an exception. Evidence in the sources seems to suggest that their personal emotional ties were stronger than the emotio-political bonds they chose to share with others or were forced to initiate in order to develop and strengthen the family’s and the individual’s socio-economic position. In comparison, the off-spring of the English magnate, Ralph Neville, the 1st Earl of Westmorland, although boasting a similar family structure, his off-spring seemed to have followed a more general pattern of initiating strong political ties of service, whilst maintaining divided and weaker emotional and socio-economic bonds between his two families. 184 The similarities and disparities in the families’ strategies points directly to the laws of inheritance and bequeathal of properties, estates and titles in Scandinavia and England. Haseldine wrote of network friendships that:

… most individual relationships were multiplex [in the Middle Ages]… involving more than one source of obligation, where, for example, kin might also be allies, while most networks of formal friendship were also only one of a number of overlapping networks

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181 Wallach Scott, 1988, p. 17.
182 Österberg, 2010b, pp. 23–25.
184 Hicks, 2006, pp. 12–17.
in which an individual or institution might participate and which were often articulated in the same or similar language as friendship.\textsuperscript{185}

In a study of the complicated multifaceted communities of individuals, who resided within a collective consensus of expectations, actions and motives, they still had to consider personal choices and decisions within a context of cultural ideals and social expectations. Thomas Småberg wrote that:

… networks are space and time-bound; their construction is dependent on the type of society and in what time they exist. Social networks can in certain periods or in certain types of society affect the structure and organization of society itself. It is therefore important to investigate how individuals arranged these relationships. From this perspective basic values are revealed, and new light is thrown on the formation and development of societies, where we are also able to highlight opinions pertaining to family, birth and service.\textsuperscript{186}

This thesis recognizes that the arrangement of relationships was vital to the social and cultural overlapping structures of the magnatial network. The nature and mentality of the affiliated magnatial network was defined inwardly by its interactions and bonds to the kin, close friends and the most peripheral members of the group, whilst dynastic strategies were put into place to guarantee the survival and continuation of the family. Likewise, the network defined its existence and political function outwardly to the unfriends of other magnatial networks, and through external interactions with the well-established formal networks of the Crown and the Church.

\textsuperscript{185} Haseldine, 2013, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{186} Småberg, 2007, p. 145; original text: Dessa nätverk är rums- och tidsbundna; de konstrueras annorlunda beroende på vilket samhälle och vilken tidsepok de existerar i. De sociala nätverken kan under vissa tider och i vissa samhällstyper till och med påverka själva strukturen och organiseringen av samhället. Det är därför viktigt att undersöka hur människorna ordnade dessa relationer. Genom en sådan granskning blottlägger vi grundläggande värderingar och skänker nytt ljus åt bland annat samhällens formering och utveckling, men vi förmår även belysa sådant som synen på släktskap, börd och tjänst.
Family, kin and others

… family was one’s best friends. Indeed the Old English freond now ‘friend’ could also mean kinsman [and] was cognate with OE wine […] a supporter or friend.187

The ideal of kinship was a vital component of medieval socio-political culture. It is observed through the lens of the complicated structure of the magnatial networks. The origins of medieval political and social culture were firmly embedded in family, friendship, kinship and dynasty that is too say: deference to lineage and kin network connection.188 The most recent studies of friendship and the role of friendship as a tool for interaction between the members of the kin, show that blood bands and friend relationships were mutually important within the hierarchical structure of the magnatial community. Historians Joaquim Ramos de Carvalho and Ana Isabel Ribeiro observed that:

Choices regarding acquisition of new kin are some of the most important choices made in social interaction, and therefore re-veal fundamental aspects of social life.189

The validation and affirmation of kin and friend relations were crucial to the maintenance and continuation of the informal and spiritual structures of the network society.190 There were two functions of kinship, noted historian David E. Thornton, to regulate society and the economy. He observed that kinship was a mechanism, whereby the kinsmen were important in keeping order and resolving conflicts between its own and others.191 Kinship in more general terms, observed Michael Hicks pivoted around an axis of consanguineous (blood) connections and a shared common ancestor, and the continuation of the dynasty. The mechanism behind affinal (created contacts of friendship) kinship was marriage, which bonded blood relatives, in-laws and godparents into groups of individuals. The afforded position within the kin group created both parallel and separate needs and aims for every individual. Magnatial kinship was a closed elite system of inter-marriages between blood relatives and one of the most important building blocks of dynastic networks. Degrees of blood were trifles to be dealt with and solved at papal level.192

Unions and alliances between powerful families were neither unusual nor were they unique in the Middle Ages, because they were a necessity for social and dynastic survival. The peripheral regional and local networks represented not only the king’s power far from the royal centre of his authority; they also

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190 Hermanson, 2009, pp. 225–234
191 Thornton, 2009, p. 94.
192 Hicks, 2013 (2006), pp. 28–29; see also ref. no. 20, p. 224.
represented law and justice in the peripheries of society through their own position. The peripheral network individuals adhered to regional and local political concerns and connections, whilst there patrons also adhered to the wider political goals of kingship represented in the political agenda of the monarch.\textsuperscript{193} The spread of local magnatial conflicts developed an acute character of dynastic division, especially when they spilled over into the realms of national politics. Disturbances in the localities caused by wide-spread economic and political rivalry between the leading dynastic families sometimes resulted in an overall shift in magnatial affiliations due to the involvement of the king or the king’s representatives to reach a peaceful solution. Maintaining face was important in any local dispute and the only way to maintain face was to defend one’s honour personally.\textsuperscript{194}

Knightly and courtly ideals from earlier centuries offered a useful outward expression for the notion of honour and loyalty, and lay like a blanket of preconceived, yet still important concepts which continued to implicitly shape the notion of honour and loyalty of the magnatial elite of the fifteenth century. Magnatial ideals, according to historian Hans Gillingstam were considered a threat and an opposing sub-culture to that of the Christian Church institutions and the institution of monarchy itself.\textsuperscript{195} Eva Österberg argued in the opposite direction, asserting that alliances and institutions counteracted the innate fear of societal chaos. Alliances between two or more individuals were made to preserve the peace and to find a personal haven of safety with other likeminded individuals.\textsuperscript{196}

Sofia Lenninger’s short study of the network of Swedish magnate and lawman, Nils Eringislesson of Hammersta in Södermanland offers an example of this fear. Whilst, Lenninger did not directly study network friend relationships, she did study the earliest mechanisms which bound Nils Eringislesson and his aristocratic kin to their estate strategies and privileges in Sweden.\textsuperscript{197} There are several recent studies of other types of later networks in Sweden. These include: Niklas Stenlås’ research of party politics in the 1940s, Ylva Hasselberg’s study of the Clason family’s private correspondence 1804–1850 – the owners of Furudal Ironworks in Rättvik - and Leos Müller’s study of the growth and power constraints of the commercial sector 1600–1800.

Within the magnatial network all decisions were taken based on the expectations and outcome of affinitive kinship. The medieval kinship which aligned the societal elites included overlapping social and quasi friendship connec-

\textsuperscript{193} Kelham, 1986, pp. 3–15. The author’s thesis studies the network/affinities of the Scottish magnatial class in the late fifteenth century. He made several relevant observations concerning the development of the kin and dynastic networks specific to the Scotland which could be considered parallel to the development of the dynastic kin in Scandinavia in the same period.
\textsuperscript{194} Zmora, 2014, pp. 184–185.
\textsuperscript{196} Österberg, 2007, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{197} Lenninger, 2009, pp. 86–126.
tions, as well as economic and political relationships. Common to all these networks was interdependency and the expectation of mutual benefits based on motive, choice and decisions, and therefore an important part of late medieval western political culture. 198

The affinitive group became a common nexus of power. From this power space the relationship between benefits, expectations and authority existed parallel to the power nexus of kingship and that of the Church. The network could or could not bolster mutual goals and decisions for both men and women. Authority and power was the foundation of society emanating from the king’s rule contra the secular networks of the dynastic families, kin and magnates and the specific institutional structure of the Church. They could choose to support each other if there were commonly shared or vested interests involved. But history and events have shown that if the position of the affinitive network, kin or retinue was threatened, then cooperation between the three main nexuses of societal authority easily broke-down. Attacks on the power and authority were deemed justified when the common weal and privileges of the magnates and the clergy were threatened by the king’s authority and his prerogative to rule. 199

The ideal of kinship and the emotionality of supportive friendship networks have played an important role throughout the history of humankind: from basic family units to the elaborate religious and secular networks of the medieval period and beyond. This includes not only western concepts and ideas of friendship but even a wider range of friendship concepts from other parts of the world. Mutually common for all were the ideals and practices of friendship; its function, meaning and content as a cognitive mechanism of interaction. These interactions were expressed both physically and mentally, and formed around unwritten sets of societal self-guidelines which conveyed the type, boundaries and expressions of friendship. 200 This would even include the specific strategies of the female members in relation to the strategies of their male counterparts.

200 Österberg, 2010b, p. 37.
The idealization of friendship

...friendship in the ancient sense implied cool calculation of interest and unreserved loyalty ... [it] is not maintained by affection.201

The medieval western concept of friendship developed from the writings of the Greek and Roman philosophers. The rediscovered ancient ideals of friendship were amalgamated into medieval Christian theology.202 There are aspects of medieval friendship one might consider alien and strange in today’s society, but in a medieval context the foundation of friendship becomes more transparent and how it developed and functioned as part of the network ideal of society. It was vital to encourage and nourish friendship relations in order to survive, especially in periods of serious internal national and regional political strife, or as part of the widening factional conflicts and dynastic feuds triggered by family disputes.

An individual had many roles to play within the network: family member, kin, friend, client and patron or all them at the same time. These complicated friendships evolved into a system or even systems of societal relationships on various social, ritual and emotional levels. Such relationships were important for magnatial decisions concerned with the accumulation of economic resources and expanding political power.203 For the most part these were not friendships of feelings, of physical love/attraction and personal preferences, but as Charles Ross argued: they were varying grades of friendship and kinship founded on mutual respect, needs and obligations; similar goals, mutual duty, rights and bilateral goodwill.204 Brian Patrick McGuire discussed the dynamics of genuine emotions or personal feelings in his groundbreaking study of the relationships between the members within the confines of the monastic house.205 Stephen Jaeger studied similar emotions and friendships through a wider range of literary sources, individuals and locations. Jaeger identified friendship and the reasons for friendship as part of a more expansive theological tradition concerned with the preferred state of love between friends according to the Church, was spiritual rather than physical or false friendship.206 St Birgitta condemned certain types of friendship. The utilization of false friendships was an important subject in her revelations. The

201 Sigurðsson, 2013, p. 3, ref. no. 6.
202 Hibbs, 2001, pp. 130–133. Hibbs discusses Aristotle’s thoughts on friendship and how these ancient ideas were adapted by Thomas Aquinas to answer the questions pertaining to the perceived social and political patterns of friendship that dictated the internal essence of medieval society. Hibbs asserts that Aristotle explicitly connected the notion of friendship with the ancient Greek idea of the common good, whilst St Thomas writes that, “Every friendship consists in good communication” and that, “every communication is reduced to the political”.
204 Young, 1996, p. 44; Waugh, 1988a, p. 8; 1988b, p. 5.
205 McGuire, 2010 passim.
206 Jaeger, 1985, p.62
political patterns of friendship that dictated the internal essence of medieval society. Hibbs asserts that ideas were adapted by Thomas Aquinas to answer the questions pertaining to the perceived social and were amalgamated into medieval Christian theology. The rediscovered ancient ideals of friendship founded on mutual respect, needs and obligations; similar goals, mutual friendships evolved into a system or even systems of societal relationships on various social, ritual and emotional levels. Such relationships were important to the structure and function of the Axelsson Tott network, as well as being part of the dominant political culture of government.

Historians Constant J. Mews and Neville Chiavaroli discussed two dominating ideas of medieval friendship in the Latin West and how these ideas were expressed linguistically. They observed that there was a shift toward the standardization of the terminology applied to medieval letter writing. Help manuals concerning the correct use of the language of friendship became very common. These manuals revealed that the language of friendship was consistent over time and location in the Latin West. This consistency in space and time allow for the study and understanding of friendship seen through the conventions of language rather than the development of language as such. This is most obvious in the salutations, in the main body of the text and the final greeting of the correspondence. There were rules and norms to which both the sender and the receiver were forced to adhere. Medieval language was strongly ritualized in construction and was important in the maintenance of established friendships, the rekindling of old ones, in order to nurture of new friendships.209 Agreements concerning grants, requests for aid or favours offer linguistic insights into the role, obligations and understanding of friendship obligations between the retainer and the retained rested on a strengthening of confidences, standards of chivalric loyalty and knightly notions of honour. The understanding between retainer and the retained was also a part of the social dynamics of the magnatial network. A retained individual was a potential connection between the core family and other individual.

Men were still held together by personal relationships and loyal services for past support, now and in the future throughout the longue durée of state development, reaching its zenith in the fifteenth century. Friendship and loyalty were inseparable from the ideals of knighthood and chivalry. Personal services, privileges and protection were socially and politically distributed and maintained, both vertically (equal levels) and horizontally (unequal levels).

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208 Haseldine, 2013, p. 72.
209 Haseldine, 2013, p. 72.
Friendship was strictly a moral state and not necessarily an emotion of love. Eva Österberg observed that friendship for Aristotle balanced between ethics and concord, that cognitively prompted the move away from the medieval definitive understanding and outward displays of friendship toward the inward understanding of friendship of the Early Modern society.

Social bonds where important, especially marital unions which were primarily agreements between the parents and the kin relations. Duty to the kin overrode any real emotions, as these were irrelevant and certainly not the prime goal connected to the continuation of dynastic family and the maintenance of noble and sociopolitical networks. Marriages were prevalent to the socio-emotionality of the family and the kin networks. Marriage offered the possibility of new network or the reinforcing of established friendship networks. The families were bound to the clauses of the marriage contract and the expectations the union offered in social and political advancement, which included reciprocal support and help. Marriage was firmly anchored between the bed sheets of political benefits and economic gains. This was an alliance between two suitable, but not necessarily compatible individuals. However, it was obviously an advantage if the parties took a liking to each other. But it must also be pointed out that marriage not only entailed the desire for male heirs and dynastic continuation, it created widows with expectations of dower, whilst many estates were divided and partitioned between two or more surviving heiresses when the male line became extinct. The transition of land and property through the female line in England, as in Scandinavia, was considered, “a dangerous point of transition with the potential for realigning wealth and power”. But if the need arose a magnate could plead his case through the maternal line. The marriage strategies of the Axelsson Tott’s in 1466-67 are instructive examples from Scandinavia which exemplify the strengthening and re-alignment of network interests. The Axelsson Tott’s marriage strategies will be discussed in more detail in chapters five and seven.

Legal historian Helle Vogt concluded that the laws of Scandinavia were important in maintaining a balance between the protection of land and the interests of the kin and the family, contra the rights and wishes of the individual to donate to the Church as gift strategies in their wills. Contested kinship could easily threaten the unity and political viability of the affinitive network. The inclusion of socially undesirable individuals of lower birth into a dynastic network often went against the wishes of the kin and was at best disruptive; at worst it was a dangerous strategy. Magnatial decisions that included undesired individuals into the network were considered harmful to the greater good and shared interests of the group. The kin were obligated

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210 Österberg, 2010b, pp. 29–30
212 Småberg, 2004, p. 44.
214 Waugh, 1988b, pp. 5–6, 23–24
to help and support each other. Most importantly these obligations found strength in the unwritten and informal practices of society. The ideal of kin-relationships and practices within a socio-political affinity also applied (with some modifications) to Scandinavian Society in the Late Middle Ages, as was the case for Europe in general. Scandinavian friendship and kin relations had their roots in the Old Norse traditions several centuries before the introduction of Christianity and Canonical Law. These ancient roots were duly influenced and adapted to the new cultural, spiritual and social practices which were gradually absorbed into Scandinavian society in the twelfth century.

Amicable kinship could be real (blood relatives by birth), ritual (pseudo: doing friendship) or adoptive (married or related through marriage). Real kinship was involuntary, whilst adoptive and ritual kinship relations were created and motivated through choice and consensus. Amicable friendship was narrower, in the sense that it was either ritual or unritual. Ritual friendship had a wider forum of expression which included all members of the network, whilst unritual friendship was considered ‘true’ and directed at particular members of the network. The consolidation of extended family groups into larger communities meant that these relationships become less personal over time.

Lars-Olof Larsson observed that bonds of friendship in the medieval period were elastic and ductile in that they could assume various guises in friendship practices and that certain types of friendships were formed on the foundation of dependency between two men of different ranks and status. A knight of high status could have several knights and squires at his disposal. On the continent these relationship were vassal-like in structure, whilst in Scandinavia’s the relationships between two men was more patron and client-like in structure, but both systems ultimately showed characteristics of quasi-friendship relationships.215 Both systems reflected earlier practices where the tribes and clans of Europe interacted more closely with one another. Smaller kin groups came together to create larger communities due to the ever more complicated administrative and trade developments which led to the merger of smaller communities. Where does family, kinship and friendship thus equate in this development? One could consider real, adopted and ritual kinship combined with ritualized alternatively non ritualized friendship as the social plumbing of society well into the fifteenth century.216 Important to point out is that real and adopted notions of friend/kin communities were not interchangeable notions but rather complementary structural ideas of medieval society. They were ordered relationships of amicable relations, shared by the kin and extended to include the friends of the kin group.217

Historian Kenneth Loiselle observed that sociologists perceive the display or offering of friendship through service, as a form of instrumentality, whilst historians observe that service was aligned to patron-client relationships, rather than real/true friendship. Loiselle observed that friendships became, “material or emotional assistance in times of need or crisis.” Citing Anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers, Loiselle wrote, “[B]y definition all friendship must be both sentimental in inspiration and instrumental in effects, since there is no other way to demonstrate one’s sentiment than engaging in actions which speak plainer than words”.218

In other words, friendship was something that was practiced; it was a choice motivated by decisions which enabled the social inclusion of an individual in a network: the need to be socio-emotionally connected by strong bonds of friendship loyalties through actions and interactions between a patron and client, master and servant or king and vassal (socially constructed emotions). Alternatively, it was expressed through true friendship (physically embodied feelings) where each part is equal and the feelings emitted are based on inner expression of love.219 What was said and how it was expressed mattered in the Middle Ages. The latter led to personal displays of friendship and public outward actions of honour to verify and maintain friendship relations. Gifts were symbols of loyalty, trust and reciprocated friendship, and played an important role in cementing friendship roles, whilst satisfying different forms and goals of friendship. In the Late Middle Ages the borders between these two forms of friendship became intertwined with each other because of the social structure, nature and function of the magnatial network.

Friend- and kindred-cohesion was well organized and recognized within groups. Hermanson argued that oath-giving was a tool to be used in the assizes or given before a large assembly of men. The oath became part of a ritual whereupon religious relics, texts from the Bible or even psalms were introduced to offer the act a solemn and spiritual element. The act became sacralized in the presence of witnesses. In a very early study of the oath and oath-giving, historian Bertha Surtees Phillpotts discussed the meaning and expectation of oath-giving and swearing on an oath, calling those who witnessed the taking or making of an oath thereby oath-helpers (witnesses). Elements of loyalty and reciprocal responsibility were present and an oath was

219 Haseldine, 2013, p. 73. Here it is worth quoting the author in his own words. He observed that language; “has been seen to function as a language of inclusion, articulating and promoting group or institutional identity in ways which transcended simple instrumental strategies. The ethical norms it conveyed were in effect internalized by actors and affected their actions and their emotions, forming a currency of political discourse by which to critique behaviour and which was therefore effective beyond the sphere of personal likings […] The medieval discourse of ideal friendship, then, cannot be dismissed as platitude; it reflected the ways in which personal relations were seen to interact with politics. Spiritual and idealized personal friendship is not in opposition to ‘instrumental’ forms but functioned to provide the ideological underpinning or shared ethical understanding which allowed friendship to be used in the pragmatic or consensus-building contexts in which we encounter it.”
not to be taken lightly by the oath-helpers who swore the innocence of the accused by supporting his or her claim. The false witness of the accused made oath-helpers guilty of perjury. Both the oath-taker and the oath-helper were made to suffer the consequences of perjury due to the unchivalrous behaviour of the accused. Phillpotts observed that these traditions originated as tribal ideas of close family and extended family, that is to say, friends and kin.\(^{220}\)

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\(^{220}\) Phillpotts, 1913, pp. 6–7.
Chapter 5

The construct of ideals in practice

The magnatial class was culturally bound by older unwritten rules that were passed down and transmitted from one generation to the next. These were part of oral traditions that were visually presented through a forum of outward formal and public rituality contra informal nodes of contact. This outward sense of rituality was also to be observed in the emotions and mechanics of obligation of honour. The magnates’ belief in honour bound loyalty extending beyond the estate of the nobility. It was important to adhere to the personal loyalty of family, good friendship with members of the closest kin, whilst maintaining useful quasi or adoptive friendships, rather than friendship for the sake of friendship. The latter was friendship for gains and favours (dyadic relationships). These friends were part of the network’s paid retinue or one of several peripheral well-wishers – clients of clients or friends of friends so to speak.221

Friendship was maintained and acknowledged for the astuteness of diplomacy and to influence politics. These types of followers were useful in regional and local administration, just by their physical and sometimes ominous presence as an affinitive lord’s supporters: these relationships could be both formal (written contracts) and informal (a favour, support, a promise). Important to point out, is that an informal agreement was still an honour bound agreement between two or more parties. Discussions within the network took place almost exclusively amongst family and close fiducial friends. Alliances were born of crucial decisions and agreements which strove to enhance the core of the family and the trusted kin. This also meant that the lord was probably well-informed who were his family and kin, as they were of him. Tentative decisions and agreements were formulated in the private space and later verified in a physical form, confirmed in writing in the public space. They were often reconfirmed in transcripts and copies, used by later generations of the friendship communities in order to strengthen and reinforce individual or group identity or legal claims to property and donations.

The study of decision-making within the framework of one or more social networks, as part of the political culture of the period, is useful in the further historical exploration of network mentalities, bonds of friendship and the network emotionalities of a specific group such as the magnates. A contextual analysis of extant documents specific to an individual or group of individuals during watershed moments of Nordic history, offers new and revised insights into the network strategies of the magnates in the fifteenth century and the

impact their action had on developments and outcomes, and as a composite group on the developments toward independent kingdoms. Further, these events should be seen as the catalysts which changed the role and out-look of the magnates as part of a growing centralized royal administrative network in the sixteenth century.

In order to better understand the inner workings of a network, historian Peter Aronsson (et al.) suggested three research perspectives for the study of social networks. Each perspective offers three points of focus concerning network interactions:

1. The network as a collective unit - an institution (or group).
2. The nodes of contact within a network - the motive and intentions of the network members.
3. The final perspective places focus on network typology – the inward identifiable connections of a network and its outward searching for nodes of contact with other networks.  

All three perspectives are useful to this thesis, which observes social interaction as the mental building block of network societies. Social interaction between members of a network or between two or more networks created and maintained the emotional content between individuals in formal and informal spaces. The interests of the public space concerning an individual’s affiliations with others should not to be confused with an individual’s personal sphere of interests. The decisions of the collective did not always find consensus with the decisions of the individual. The tension between group decisions and personal ones easily led to inner conflict and rivalry within the network itself if not mediated and resolved. Created group loyalties were prone to attack in personal disputes.

Lars Hermanson’s discussion on the term philos, observed that in the classic period (BC 500–300) philos was understood to be friendship structured around familiarity; that is to say, friendship founded on a developing trust and consensus. Such friendship was achieved and could not be demanded or won based only on the premise of status and birth. One did friendships by actively creating and maintaining the necessary environment connected to the ties of friendship. The Romans used the word amicitia to describe the ideal friendship. The ideal of friendship was adopted in the thirteenth century as a didactic tool, whereby the goal was to unite the public sphere with the numerous private spheres for the greater common good and societal harmony.

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222 Aronsson et al., 1999, p. 2.
224 Hermanson, 2009, pp. 27–29 and 33–34; Christensen, 1980, pp.119–120; One example is observed in certain elements of Queen Margaret’s rule manifested itself through the acceptance of the magnates and prelates to support her after the death of her son King Olof, whilst other dimensions of her political
The magnatial networks would become an extension of the king’s authority, grants of fiefdoms and castles functioned as a mechanism of royal incitement in return for loyalty. But it was equally necessary for a magnate to maintain and nourish strategic friendship by leading men or being led by another lord of an affinitive group – the retinue. The lower gentry and artisans of the towns and the larger agrarian population were a further extension of the realm on a grass-roots level which allowed the magnates to control the periphery of the kingdom and the king to penetrate the outer boundaries the kingdom. It could be argued that mutual and common recognition of the king’s rule was necessary in order to assert authority from the centre of realm to the periphery. Imbalance and disruptions locally and regionally, if not checked, resulted in armed conflict. Certain common informal interests were shared by the magnatial networks, but not with the Church or Crown. It was the specific interests, political as well as economical, that developed into points of conflict concerning the legitimacy of the royal authority and the extent of the crown farther from the natural centre of authority.

Groundbreaking studies in Scandinavia have focused on the impact of changing mentalities over a longer period of time. The conclusions of these studies resulted in Swedish historian Eva Österberg’s more cautious observation that one should not overemphasize changes as such, terming change as a form of political culture. Medieval political culture, argued Österberg, was inert in nature. She observed that the slowness of change was mainly due to the fact that the participants acted upon deeper underlying and well established pre-existing norms. Here I would suggest that the political culture of the fifteenth century was continuously forced through a process of social assessment and cultural reevaluation, resulting in tangible changes and the revivification of established societal ideals, which Österberg called experiences. The longue durée of experiences, I then suggest, gave way to outward expressions of the ideals which persisted in memory and became the remembrance of actions. From this perspective notions of change and adaptation over time are important to the understanding of motivation, choice and decision-making during the politically unstable events of the fifteenth century. Past experiences did in fact motivate to form new choices, which gave

\[\text{aims were firmly realized as the result of the dire condition of the Swedish kingdom after the death of the powerful magnate and landowner, Bo Jonsson (Grip). Queen Margaret clearly showed her political potential in pursuing a Nordic politic in order to realize her wider vision of unification; one important dimension of Queen Margaret’s ambitions to create a collective Nordic politic and strengthen Scandinavia’s position against aggressive trade and expansion threats from the Hansa and German principalities under the rule of the Holy Roman Emperor. Queen Margaret was unique in this aspect of kingship. Regents were for the most part unable to effectively reach out from the centre of authority to the periphery of their kingdoms, which created a mutual dependency between kings and magnates.}\]

\[\text{223 Neuding Skoog, doctoral dissertation, Stockholm University, 2018, p. 77; see also Hicks, 1995 concerning the function and development of ‘Bastard Feudalism’.}\]

\[\text{226 Österberg, 2008, p. 76; Lerbom, 2003, p. 65, ref. no. 5.}\]
rise to strategical decisions made in the present to safe-guard the future and preserve the past – basically it was a matter of strong embedded societal ideals versus the contemporary realities of society at any given moment in time.

Through the notion of the *longue durée* of societal developments and cultural ideals, these became the compound elements specific to societal norms and standards. They were transmitted through abstract notions onto the realities of the events. The notion of the good lord and the meaning of friendship were encompassed by chivalric ideals. These ideals even reached Scandinavia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries through an influx of members of the German nobility with its established knightly culture, which impacted the mental and cognitive processes of the Scandinavian nobility. This is most noticeable when a new ideal transitioned and became part of the established practices. I call this process the construct of magnatial ideals on reality. Magnatial choices and decisions were founded on various levels of understanding and references common to them as a group. However, individual members prioritized differently within the basic structure of the socio-cultural network.

Historian Erik Lönnroth observed the use and function of Eric’s Chronicle in Sweden as source of useful information for the magnatial class: example by history of events. The Swedish magnates adapted European social and cultural ideals as their own. Lönnroth observed that the timeless ideal which once had been a political cultural reality in the high Middle Ages still endured long after its’ golden age. The ideal of knighthood was physically and mentally maintained in the Middle Ages through the undertaking of a mutual oath of honour and loyalty, whereby the ideal of consensus served to suppress social tensions.

The tension between king and magnates arose due to conflicting political and economic interests. Lönnroth’s observation correlates well with historian Nicholas Perkins studied the role of the chivalric and romantic literature, not only as group entertainment and fictive pleasure, but also serving as general guides or handbooks of chivalric behaviour. Focus centered on how an individual should act and interact with others at critical moments or when making vital decisions. Art historian Herman Bengtsson also observed that kings, noble princes and knights used the chivalrous and courtly heroes of the romances and chansons as a kind of cultural yardstick for their own and others actions in reality. In line with historian John Maarbjerg’s observations concerned with the ideal of good service and the reciprocal

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227 Haskins, 1926, p. 20; “The spread of ideas in the Middle Ages is only in part a history of slow diffusion through the resisting medium of local habit and custom”.
229 Lönnroth, 1959, p. 74.

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demand for service, earlier socio-cultural ideas still infiltrated deep into mentalities of the magnates during the period of the Kalmar Union. Both Maarbjerg’s and Hermansson’s observations support my argument that the motivation behind their decision-making was connected not only to conflicting political ideologies of realm and kingship, but overlapped with the development of affiliated networks within the construct of the political union and as result of the conflict from within the Union.232

The romance literature, observed Perkins, asked its audience an implicit but soul searching question: What and how would you do in a similar situation and what would you do if it happened to you?233 Both Perkins and Bengtsson considered the courtly and chivalric romances to be an image of self-sacrifice behind a glossy façade of courtly ideals. Historian Olle Ferm observed a similar tendency in his article concerned with the fifteenth century Swedish version of Goliad, called Skämtan. Ferm’s assertion agrees with my own findings, which point to the fact the romance literature still conveyed moral learning at the close of the Middle Ages.234 The lessons to be taught were in effect a familiar contemporary reality used in times of crisis in order to understand and parry the forces at play behind the magnatial decision itself and most certainly the critical decisions applied to loyalty.

The proximity of affinal friendship provided the magnates with a back-drop of motives, expectations and opportunities to interact and influence both the centre and the periphery of the magnatial inner-circle closest to the royal household, where forceful decisions could find favour with the king, his kin, one of his closest friends or trusted servants. Magnatial relationships were both horizontal and vertical. Service and counter-service were carefully regulated in both directions within the affinitive networks. It was vital to recognize the social and political undertones in the ritually emotionalized language of familiarissimus where members could make gradual demands and careful requests within the framework of the network system.

Historian Gerd Althoff stressed that one must study the behaviour and patterns of thought that steered critical friendships and how individuals learned to successfully utilize this social plat-form as an effective springboard for decision-making on the fifteenth century political arena.235 The area of friendship and of course Gerd Althoff’s relevant observations on the subject of friendship and decision-making, is an area of important historical research.

Eva Österberg observed that friendships or alliances between friends and family members of Icelandic society in the Middle Ages were a necessary life insurance for any individual to survive. Without the emotional and physical back-up of the kin an individual would have found it almost impossible to

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232 Maarbjerg, 2000, p. 146.
235 Althoff, 1999, p. 98.
actively take a position or stand point in a society which lacked an effective centralized structured administrative and juridical organization.\textsuperscript{236} The general recurrent breakdowns of royal order and crippling royal finances in the fifteenth century created a similar political and social void in which individuals were forced to navigate toward others in order to create personal comfort and social inclusion: this was the safety net of the known common social space. Harald Kleinschmidt argued on similar lines in his discussion on the relationship of the network, which he observed was a shared communality of pragmatic interactions and actions within the spaces of regular communication and daily experience.\textsuperscript{237} The interactions of patron and client, kin and friend, men and women within the affinitive network were critical in the maintenance of communicative consensus and mediation. Both were vital elements of the political culture of the period.

Conflicts of interests between opposing networks of dynastic families surfaced in light of the king’s need to maintain his authority with the support of the powerful nobility and their network retinues. Support could be easily won by making grants of crown property to the most influential members of society both worldly and spiritual. The idea of fidelity to the network was inadvertently threatened by personal ambitions. This in turn raised concerns with individuals from the nobility and the Church concerning the safety of their fiefdoms, estates and earlier donations during periods of forced royal resumptions. The magnates and clerics preferred to have pre-written guarantees of life-time tenure over several generations, their families and members of their networks.

**Conflict, consensus, cooperation and polarization**

Consensus and cooperation were vital to the general sense of societal order and for the mediation of feuding parties/families/institutions. Mediating and consensus encouraged network individuals to actively work toward lasting acceptable solutions. In this sense, making the right decision was crucial to the outcome of conflict. Conflict often led to the polarization of the individuals of different networks. On occasion the inability to reach consensus divided the individual members of network, leading to inward magnatial polarization. The aim of the mediators was to restore a general consensus and sustainable cooperation between parties which often involved forcing the feuding parties to reconcile their differences and grievances. The king’s mediation in a dispute was the last resort to create a long-lasting peace.\textsuperscript{238}

The disputes connected to the Axelsson Totts were closely interwoven with the interests of the union kings and the Swedish protector Sten Sture, whereby personal disputes became part of the overall politics of the Kalmar Union


\textsuperscript{237} Kleinschmidt, 2003, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{238} Opsahl, 2007, p. 17.
period. Mediated agreements were expected to be respected and upheld by all members of the network(s). Disputes and mediations were an integral part of the fifteenth century political culture, whilst escalated disputes were seen as dangerous and disruptive to the politics of the realm and threatened to disrupt the general order and harmony of society.\(^{239}\) It was therefore important for the king when the disputing parties presented their cases before him, to demonstrate great personal strength, impartiality, conviction and wiseness when disputes threatened peace and order, escalating towards violent confrontations. The king’s decision or formal ruling was considered final. To refute such a decision was considered offensive to his person, authority and to his realm. This of course did not guarantee an everlasting peace because feuds did continue and were even resumed by later generations when a king died or, as in the case of England and Scandinavia, kings were elected, deposed, usurped or the realm was placed under the leadership of a protector.

Divided loyalties to king and realm, contra the best interests of the kin network were expressed outwardly in strained confrontations which put an individual’s loyalty, well-being and safety into question. Likewise the vital role of an emotional linguistic discourse used to arbitrate disputes was of great importance in order to reach amicable and lasting solutions acceptable to all parties. It could be argued that the undercurrent of ideals to which a group commonly adhered, were not to be underestimated.\(^{240}\)

The ideals of good-lordship, duty and honour were held true by the magnatial class, oscillating around a practical axis of a potential or imminent threat that disputes concerning donations, inheritance, marriage and dower agreements, gifts, pledges, grants, a. s. o. could and did break out, which in turn led to demands for personal vindication and risk for aggressive and bloody or viscous drawn-out feuds with other more far-reaching consequences if these types of disputes were left unresolved; inward factional conflict and civil war being the fore-most consequence of prolonged national, regional and local disputes.\(^{241}\)

The common weal and the res publica

Before proceeding with a discussion concerning the relationship between the ideal of the common weal and the political concept of res publica in the fifteenth century, it is necessary to say something on the origins of them. A narrow definition of common weal, according to historian David Rollison, comes from the French comun, which in turn is derived from the Latin

\(^{239}\) Kleinschmidt, 2003, p. 313; Reynolds, 1997, p. 329.

\(^{240}\) Althoff, 2004, p. 9.

commonly adhered, were not to be underestimated. Parties. It could be argued that the undercurrent of ideals to which a group’s loyalty, well-being and safety into question. Likewise the vital importance in order to reach amicable and lasting solutions acceptable to all. Mediated agreements were expected to be respected and upheld by all members of the network(s). Disputes and mediations were an integral part of local disputes. When disputes threatened peace and order, escalating towards violent bloody or viscous drawn-out feuds with other more far-reaching consequences. Threat that disputes concerning donations, inheritance, marriage and dower agreements, gifts, pledges, grants, a. s. o. could and did break out, which in turn led to demands for personal vindication and risk for aggressive and misrule. Actions and failings (private and public) of individual monarchs which were challenged by the contemporary moralizing authors of the chronicles and propaganda pamphlets. There are several examples in Scandinavian history where kings were deemed unfit to rule or burdened with grave allegations of misrule.

The actions taken against the unworthy king were underpinned by the law of the land; tyranny was met by resistance. It was the right of the opinion of the majority. In reality the ‘people’ were in fact a limited group of magnates and prelates. Peasant uprisings were put down with brutality. The kings of the Kalmar Union and England periodically faced resistance to their rule and for much the same the reasons. This resistance stemmed from the fourteenth century perception of good and fair rule whereby the people could challenge

Sten Sture and Ivar Axelsson Tott could not be resolved by peaceable or amicable negotiations which did continue and were even resumed by later generations when a king died or, his realm. This of course did not guarantee an everlasting peace because feuds and civil war being the fore-most consequence of prolonged national, regional and local disputes.

The ideal of the common weal was closely aligned with the outcome of negotiations. The king’s men negotiated on behalf of the people through the representation of the king. It should be said, that the institution of monarchy remained a social and cultural constant throughout the Late Middle Ages and well into the sixteenth century due to the ambiguous nature of the state. The ‘state’ in the fifteenth century was the physical presence of the king supported by a network of magnates and prelates. The ‘people’ were the institutions and groups who periodically opposed the king’s rule and authority. Monarchy was instituted by God for the welfare of the kingdom, and to protect the continuity of the realm from its enemies, which implies that monarchy in the fifteenth century was never questioned or critiqued as an institution. It was rather the actions and failings (private and public) of individual monarchs which were challenged by the contemporary moralizing authors of the chronicles and propaganda pamphlets. There are several examples in Scandinavian history where kings were deemed unfit to rule or burdened with grave allegations of misrule.

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communis, meaning together and to oblige to do service. The Crown, Church and magnates worked together for the better good of society and for the people. On the other hand, the Old English co[m]mun stemmed from the Germanic language and denoted the governance of a more particulated society. In the earlier Germanic societies the commun was a body of freemen or common people called allmogen; this third estate was a distinct group and socio-culturally separated from the nobility and the clergy. One can conclude that the ideal of the common weal refers to collective well-being and not one group’s well-being contra another’s.242

In this thesis the concept of res publica is understood to be a form of governance, whereby a council of men worked together with the king for the good and welfare of kingdom or the state, and where the king’s authority was reduced and all decisions taken by the council and approved by the king. In the Swedish kingdom the magnates attempted to create an alternative form of governance to that of authoritarian kingship, defined by Herman Schück as being an aristocratic res publica.243 This type of res publica did not exclude the king’s authority in matters of governance. Whilst during the Sture Period the Protector of the Realm took on the role of king.

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the king’s right to rule and in practice remove him from power or at very least restrict, modify and control the wider extent of his royal authority.

In the Late Middle Ages the common weal of the people was used in more general terms to explain the universal concept of a unified common good of society. Historian S. B. Chrimes observed that jurist, knight, chief justice of the King’s Bench (from 1442) and Lord Chancellor in the exile government of Henry VI between 1463 and 1471, Sir John Fortescue’s work, was more concerned with kingship than state, whilst at the same time, his theory of kingship was closely connected to the origins of the State. Chrimes wrote that,

We can see … in the fifteenth century, the beginnings, at least, of a process that was to merge the scared mystery of kingship onto a theory of the State which might be sacred but not mysterious.244

Sir John Fortescue attempted to fill the space between the abstraction of the common weal and the res publica, and the reality of them in practice. In his legal treatise, De laudibus legum Angliae [In Praise of the Laws of England], Fortescue suggested reforms in order to enhance kingship through statutes, and a system of legal education. This was his reaction to the drawn-out, and at times bloody, struggle for power between the Houses of Lancaster and York. He maintained that certain aspects of the common weal were targeted by the agendas of specific groups of society opposed to the rule, legitimacy and authority of the king and his closest magnates. He wanted to ascertain were public good became the good of private intentions.245 Still, the idea of reform and realm was mentally equitable in the minds of men in the fifteenth century, whilst any attempt to reform the realm through the circumvention the king’s authority and power was difficult to visualize. A man could not initiate reforms without the authority of the king.246 All subjects, without any exceptions, expected to obey the high commands of the body royal.247

Albertus Magnus

The idea of good governance and friendship relations had been discussed in earlier centuries. An important theorist of the Middle Ages, was Albertus Magnus (Albertus of Cologne c. 1200–1280). Few have appreciated just how important his observations concerning friendship and the nature of true friendship as part of governance and societal harmony have been, in the centuries after they were first written. Albertus Magnus believed that true friendship navigated toward the ideal of love and the recipient of this idealistic

244 Chrimes, 1936, p. 305.
246 Gustafsson, 2019, p.18: Article in Svenska Dagbladet.
247 Chrimes, 1936, p. 306; Encyclopædia Britannica (online), Sir John Fortesecue lived between c. 1385 and c. 1476.
love became a friend. There were both benefits and pleasures in being friends, where the utility of friendship made love accidental rather than being true in its own right. Albertus drew parallels between friendship and political associations (networks, the royal court and religious centres). Friendship and the goal of the political association were identical because it secured the life of virtue, creating the conditions for harmony or concordia where each was characterized by the common good.

Political virtue was, according to Albertus, the keeping of the political community where advantages contra disadvantages motivated action, were the focus of the polity in the thirteenth century. According to Aristotle, untruths were condemned by Albertus as evil and therefore not be considered a theological virtue, yet still he reasoned that untruths were a necessary part of the realm of secular society and therefore an accepted exception because a lie or untruth could sometimes serve the political utility (Aristotle, The Ethics, Book IV). He further developed his argument by considering actions in the same way and came to the conclusion that an action normally considered evil could become valid if it was for the good of the political community and the up-holding of the common weal (Aristotle, The Ethics, Book V). On a more practical level Albertus Magnus expressed the fifth century Augustinian view that harmony, peace, and the common weal could only be reached with a limited degree of success, as observed by Aristotle.

Albertus Magnus asserted that the human community provided the conditions for the group to be become collectively self-sufficient whereby it would flourish, enabling the group to pursue a life of virtue. In the temporal sphere it was the collective aims and achievements of society rather than the individual goals and achievements of the individual which brought virtue to society and therefore perpetuated the notion of the common weal. This was the overall aim of the collective. Virtue was lost through the individual’s aims and ambitions and society could not therefore uphold the principles of the common weal.

**Sir John Fortescue**

Moving forward to the latter half of the fifteenth century the paradigm of maintaining social harmony and virtue was also confronted by John Fortescue, during a period of state-building processes, deep political division and economic crisis in fifteenth century England. Sir John Fortescue discussed and debated, were in fact the actual essence of the realm in the fifteenth century seen through differences, legal developments, forced changes and conflicts of

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248 Rosser, 2015, p. 42.
251 For commentaries and translations from Latin to English of Albertus Magnus’s works based on The Ethics; https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/albert-great/
interest concerning anointed kingship, the legal succession to the throne, and the realm pitted against the idea of the greater common good of the people. His ideas of the *common weal* and the state were more closely aligned with those of the Bible rather than to the reality of societal interactions. Fortescue’s biblical referencing was used to prove his point concerned with the quality, hierarchy and content of kingship.

Fortescue’s ideas offer a unique opportunity to explore state processes and medieval political culture from a contemporary perspective based on personal experiences and an insider understanding of contemporary legal practices and notions of state. His ideas on kingship and realm offer relatable observations when studying a similar process, such as creation and demise of the Kalmar Union. Conflict threatened to undermine the very institution of monarchy and the realm. Fortescue’s primary discussion centered on the question of how to best preserve the common weal on two separate but unifying levels; secure the freedom of the English people whilst bolstering the economic and political position of the monarch in order to strengthen it. He believed that obedience to the king was an absolute and necessary condition of the realm, whilst the king’s subjects were expected by virtue of his position to aid him in his assignment that was ordained by God and because they had through the act of crowning assented to the king’s gracious rule.

The king who, according to Fortescue, failed to up-hold the common weal or used it to better his own elevated royal position in order to harvest private profit, was a tyrant and therefore an oppressor of the people. Contemporary kingship was in the minds of the medieval society a dignity whereby the king administrated his realm, with the consent of God and the assent of the people, justly and for its defense and well-being. The English envoys whose task it was to negotiate peace with France during the Hundred Years War were strongly reminded of the principle of the common weal,

> God made not the people […] for the princes but he made princes for his service and for the wele … to reule them in tranquillite mene of deue ministracion of justice.\(^{252}\)

The ideal of the common weal was closely aligned with the outcome of negotiations. The king’s men negotiated on behalf of the people through their representation of the king. The necessity of monarchy remained throughout the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth century because of the ambiguous nature of the state. The ‘state’ in the fifteenth century was the king and his supportive network of magnates and prelates. The ‘people’ were the institutions and groups who periodically opposed the king’s rule and authority, whereby the institution of monarchy remained a social and cultural constant throughout the Late Middle Ages. Monarchy was instituted by God for the welfare of the kingdom, and to protect the continuity of the realm from its

\(^{252}\) Chrimes, 1936, p. 17.
enemies, which implies that monarchy in the fifteenth century was never questioned or critiqued as an institution. It was rather the actions and failings (private and public) of monarchs that were challenged by the contemporary moralizing authors of the chronicles and propaganda pamphlets. There are several examples in Scandinavian history where kings were deemed unfit to rule or burdened with grave allegations of misrule.

In Scandinavia actions taken against an unworthy king were underpinned by the law of the land. It was the right of the people to forcibly remove such kings from power, through the pressure of the wider opinion of the majority. In reality the ‘people’ were in fact a limited group of magnates and prelates. The kings of the Kalmar Union and England faced some resistance to their rule and for much the same the reasons. This resistance stemmed from the fourteenth century perception of the good rule whereby the people could challenge the king’s right to rule and in practice remove him from power or at very least restrict, modify and control the wider extent of royal authority.

In the Middle Ages the weal of the people was used in more general terms to explain the universal concept of a unified common good of society and a harmony which transcended all other forms of good observed in the idea of the Civitas Dei. Sir John Fortescue attempted to fill the space between the abstraction of the common weal and its reality in practice in treatise. He maintained that certain aspects of the common weal were targeted by the agendas of specific groups of society opposed to the rule, legitimacy and authority of the king and his closest magnates. One observation stemming from this discussion is that the economic and political decisions of the Axelson Totts and the Nevilles clearly spring-boarded from the wider notion of the idea of the common weal which came of the king’s authority, but also the idea that network associations were the backbone of good governance, formed by friendship; family and kinship as part of the political landscape of amici contacts.

**Meditation and the common weal**

Mediation in disputes was a means of coming to an agreement, where all parties involved, were appeased or at least satisfied to a certain degree over the outcome of a disagreement when a third part or mediator was involved in the process. Representation and participation in meetings in order to resolve conflicts by mediation was important to the ideal and function of the medieval society. Church prelates were often appointed mediators in conflicts, although not always impartial to the disputing parties positions, as both patrons and receivers of gifts and favours to the religious institutions and houses. The Christian socio-political apparatus rested on a foundation based on the principle of the up-holding of the concept of the common good which stipulated harmony, mediation, cooperation and agreement. This meant that even the lower orders of the Church hierarchy could in theory, and did in
practice influence their superiors for the sake of the common weal within limited space of the orders and institutions of the Church. The notion of breaking down hierarchies as a parallel concept in order to create and maintain harmony was therefore fully logical within the realms of the temporal politics of medieval society.\textsuperscript{253}

Communities or emotionally affiliated networks during the Middle Ages seemed to take on board both spiritual and temporal concepts of the common weal from the ideal of the Civitas observed historian Peter Coss, whereby the concept of the common good; its physical embodiment and how it should best be expressed allowed for a mental transformation, which then was adapted to include a wider political meaning in the Late Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{254} To illustrate this mental transformation observed by Coss, the following two in-depth discussions of Albertus Magnus and Sir John Fortescue offer arguments from two very different propagators of the medieval common weal and societal concordia, separated by some 350 years of human interactions.

Summary

This chapter discussed the ideals of kingship and realm and how the common weal of society, the \textit{res publica} were part of a political construct where networks played a definitive role in maintaining order, consensus and harmony. Friendship and kin relations within a network were vital components of the political culture of network based societies. It developed into a finely tuned cognitive construct of society. The magnatial class \textit{res publica} became a competing political construct to that of absolute monarchy. Julian Pitt-Rivers showed that surrogate friendships with in a network society were created out of necessity, whilst kin friendships, was nourished by the bloodline of the kin group. Knowing and acting on the difference between friend and kin was vital in the utilization of amicable relations. It was equally important for the magnates to know when to terminate a friendship or reconsider the boundaries of old and established ones. Bonds of friendship; real, supposed or imagined, were part of the foundation of the social and spiritual public order of society whereby such bonds, ritual or real, became vital components of friendship relations which created a trellis-work weighted down by the principle of \textit{amity} and loyalty.

The moral obligation to ‘feel’ was important to the ideal of amicable relations, which in turn was important when making good decisions and following the course of action which ensured the harmony of society and of the survival of the network. The common weal was maintained through channels of

\textsuperscript{253} Kempsall, 1999, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{254} Coss, 2008, pp. 43–45.
cooperation and consensus. Its competing opposite was societal disharmony, which led to conflict and chaos. Decisions were made in an altruistic direction and viewed in terms of good or evil; friend or foe, chivalrous or unchivalrous; righteous and unrighteous; high born or lowborn. All were socially cognitive constructed opposites. The notion of amicable relations within and between groups and individuals was instrumental in preserving social and political order.255

A man was theoretically bound by the loyalty of friendship and to honour the mutual contract in order to fulfill his duty. Sometimes men risked everything for the ideal of the ancient chivalric standard of the knightly class and their duty to up-hold the common weal. In reality the magnate was often forced adhere to an oath of honour or make pragmatic personal decisions according to the choices available to him at any given moment. The chapter also presented the two medieval thinkers; Albertus Magnus and Sir John Fortescue and how they defined friendship as part of politics from the perspective of the spiritual and the temporal. Having now discussed the theoretical structure of kin, family and friend, the next chapter focuses on the practical implications of choice and decision-making within the kin, family and friends. Moving away from the emotionality of society, the following chapter explores the representations of emotions through objects in the magnatial presentation of self.

255 Gurevich, 1990, pp.176–177; Karnes, 2011, p.3; Karnes treats imagination as a subject which is capable of doing things. An individual thinks and acts by way of utilizing the imagination.

Chapter 6

The magnatial presentation of self

Modern critics are blaming the fifteenth century for not living up to ideals which it had not set itself in the first place.257

Societal ideals and concepts were more than just the building blocks of fifteenth century political culture; they were also vital components in the formation of magnatial identities. The magnates’ political and economic expectations gave rise to both personal and public obligations. Expectations contra obligations, I then assert, acted as the mental catalysts of elitist thinking, which in turn became the linchpin which either up-held or undermined king-ship, good service and chivalry. Gift giving was and symbolic objects were important in the maintaining and nurturing the magnatial performance. Magnatial mental performance are to be observed in the magnates’ cognitive ability to successfully respond correctly in accordance with societal ideals, whilst navigating the realities of the political climate nationally, and successfully transferring these signals onto both the social and political realities at hand. Successful individuals translated these signals into opportunities and advantages which led to necessary or even pragmatic decisions at the right time, whilst anticipating the outcome of the ongoing events. The Axelsson Totts and Nevilles were no exception to this pattern of engagement. However, knowing the basic physical structure of the family and the outcome of events do not necessarily reveal underlying differences in the socio-economic and political strategies of these two families.

Historian Charles R. Young’s studied the strategies of the various branches of the Nevilles over several generations, led him to make a relevant observation pertaining to the nature and variety of primary sources concerning the Neville clan: namely that the main bulk of surviving documents are concerned with royal service rather than private affairs, thereby risking tendencies of overemphasis on service and under emphasizing the kin relations and bonds they shared as a family. Contemporary commentators confirmed that royal service and strategic marriages played a relevant, crucial and signal role in the Nevilles’ social ascendancy.258 These strategies it could be argued, placed the different branches of the family, firmly at the centre of the king’s realm since at least the middle of the twelfth century, whilst maintaining and expanding their own parallel peripheral centre of power in the localities. The family’s network strategies culminated and coincided with political career and fate of

258 Young, 1996, p. 2.
Richard Neville, the 16th Earl of the Warwick, in the late fifteenth century. Young argued that the developing geographical spread of the Nevilles’ estates in England and most especially those which established them in the border area between England and Scotland were a relevant factor to their economic and political success in the fifteenth century.

The Axelsson Totts were a close-knit family and kin unit. Uncompromising unity and loyalty was a two-edged knife; on the one hand, it made them strong and successful, and on the other hand, it made them vulnerable to attacks from within their own network. The family’s social and political elevation made them a combined force to which men adhered. Over time the Union monarchs had become wary of the Axelsson Totts’ combined power as both magnates and royal servants. This wariness stemmed from the fact that the family was forced to reconsider their loyalties toward the later union monarchs and the Swedish protectors in the early fifteenth century, in order to successfully protect and maintain the family’s wider economic interests and political agenda of the Kalmar Union.

Ring inscriptions offered the bearers not only dynastic identity, they also gave them spiritual comfort, healing, truth, loyalty, protection and fidelity. Valuable objects represented the power of the owner and the expectations placed on the receiver of such a gift. The symbolic offering or exchange of gifts became interwoven with the characteristics and properties of the object as gifts. Individuals understood and used objects in order to communicate dynastic roots, worldly power, affinity, friendship, social position and spiritual intention.

The ‘Tottska’ ring and the Warwick ring are visual and physical representations of dynasty, status, wealth and power. The bezel of the Tottska ring is decorated with the distinct Tott heraldry engraved with the inscription, Maria on the inside. It was found in 1864 at Kungs Husby, Trögds Hundred. The Neville ring is attributed to Richard Neville 16th Earl of Warwick. Tradition says that the ring was symbolically retrieved from the body of the Earl after the Battle of Barnet in April 1471: the bezel shows the Warwick bear and the ragged staff. The ring carries two inscriptions: ‘soulement une’ (only one): the motto of the Earls of Warwick. Inscribed into the shank of the ring is ‘be goddis faire foote’ (by God’s fair foot’), a popular fifteenth century oath.

Objects took on the role of physical embodiment as affiliations, bonds of trust, and group commitment within a network, all visually embraced in the ritual of giving and receiving. Gifts were vital to the communication and mediation which cemented and reinforced allegiances on many levels of society. Gifts and donations giving between network members created a physical and psychological bridge between the kith and kin, and their affinitive friends including the more distant group of well-wishers: the friends of friends (Sw: gynnade individer), peripheral to the inner-circle of core family. Well-wishers could be called upon for services rendered in exchange for promises of help or physical reimbursement for favours done. Achieved group consensus or unavoidable contention relied on an individual’s reactions to the dynamics of group.

Cooperative consensus was expressed both implicitly and explicitly within the socio-emotional spheres of the family, the kin and friends of the network. This, not only included the magnates themselves, but also the women and clients of varying social status who willingly bonded to the core of the main family through informal understandings of service, duty, loyalty and protection. These vital network relationships were cemented and maintained on a background sought of established social and cultural conformities. The implications of maintaining family, kin and friendship/well-wisher ties, as we shall see, could either empower an individual (-s), alternatively losing their support left them vulnerable to attack.

Lineage and kin relations

The network of dynastic interactions presented itself like a gordian knot of contacts expressed by both implicit and explicit actions, decisions and informal social mediation in conflict situations. The magnate families created these strategic patterns of complicated social and cultural interconnectedness horizontally and vertically from the core to the periphery of the magnatical network. Friendship bonds were instrumental to maintaining the network when new and established family relationships were either created or reconfirmed.

In order to maintain a network of followers, the English king Henry VI rewarded loyalty and friendship with titles, honours and lands. These clients were themselves patrons and had their own agendas and interests, and were dependent on loyal clients to maintain and sustain their patrons’ interests. In return for loyalty and support the magnates took care and were mindful not to offend the feelings or position of their clients. It would not be wrong to compare the conflict-filled role of Sten Sture who clearly became a favorite of Karl Knutsson during the last months of his life, others loyal to Karl may well have felt that they were being marginalized in order to accommodate his young client. Sten Sture would eventually challenge the primacy, honour and authority of the more senior leading members of his kin and former allies.

Through objects the magnates were able to embrace social status as expressions of the political culture of the period. Personal objects, such as rings, were vital in maintaining and displaying patron/client relationships. Relationships were only determined by actions and the contextual understanding of owning precious objects as visual statements of wealth and position in a society, where hierarchies shaped the socio-political and economic dynamics of both individuals and groups. The production, the owning and the giving of objects should be observed as being the by-product of human network interactions and therefore reflections of society, observed in group and individual self-identification. Rings bearing coats-of arms became concrete representations of the knightly ideal, filling several, but distinctive, physical spaces in the fifteenth century.260 They emanated contextual meaning on different levels. Certain objects such as cups, drinking and decorative horns, goblets, silver spoons and rings were not just material status symbols of wealth: they had over the centuries become objects which symbolized peace and spiritual protection. They also symbolized willingness to mediate and compromise especially during foreign diplomatic missions.261

Figure 7. ‘Tottska ringen’ SHM 3233, man’s ring dated to the Late Middle Ages, photograph Image by M. Wallace Nilsson 2016 and presented with the permission of the National History Museum Stockholm; Figure 8. The ‘Warwick Ring’ no. 53.114.29, photograph by M. Wallace Nilsson, printed with permission by The National Museum Liverpool © 2014.

261 Hermanson, 2009, pp. 10–11; FMU V, no 3967; Laurens Axelsson had owned a decorative horn, according to the list of chattels removed from Viborg Castle in 1483. “Jtem en horn, beslaget met koper, forgilt.”[Also a horn covered in copper and gold-plated].
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His relationship to Ivar Axelsson became more distant and contentious after the death of Karl Knutsson in 1470, despite the intermediary efforts of the Swedish Council to re-establish, or at the very least, establish intermediary common ground for their relationship. After the deaths of Åke (1477), Erik (1481) and Laurens (1483), Ivar’s strategies became more defensive. Sten Sture adopted a less cautious strategy to undermine Ivar Axelsson’s position.

Two phenomena stand out concerning the dynamics of dynastic relationships of the magnatial networks. Affinitive bands and common interests contra the private disputes between individuals divided families and haltered the overall social and political dynamics of the affinitive network. Scott L. Waugh underpinned the function, dangers and pit-falls of the complicated nature and even problematic entangled blood and kin relations of the magnates’ social interconnectedness within the wider affiliated network. He wrote that:

Marriage altered the configurations of inheritance and kinship, it had to be controlled by the family and by the social network in which the family was enmeshed […]. Marriage and kinship helped to shape the identity of groups and of the elites as a whole giving individuals a common stake in the descent of lands.

But this was not always the case because specific inheritance strategies of conscious exclusion show the opposite. Exclusive inheritance strategies created a dynastic rippling effect engulfing and influencing the relationships between core family members and their closest retainers.

The first Earl of Westmorland, Ralph Neville’s dynastic strategies proves this point well. He bequeathed the main bulk of his lands and personal wealth to his second family, who gained socially from their immediate royal connections, whilst his titles went automatically to oldest son of his first family, the grandchildren of Hugh de Stafford, 2nd Earl of Stafford. The titles which were automatically inherited by the oldest son continued the agnatic line of the earldom, whilst his lack of physical wealth side-lined the new earl’s family economically in the localities and politically on a national level. Ralph Neville’s dynastic strategy would be directly affected by the outbreak of conflict between the Houses of Lancaster and York in 1452.

At the other end of the dynastic strategy spectrum one finds Axel Pedersen Tott. He implemented a strategy of equal distribution between his sons, whilst compensating his sons-in-law through his daughters’ marriage contracts. The foremost cornerstones of the magnatial class was that of family and ancestry, or rather, the representation of right of birth in several lines of a particular branch contra other branches of the dynasty; the honour and largesse of knightly self-identity was strengthened through strategical marriages: either through the new alignment of two dynastic families or a series of inter-marriage, which aimed at re-strengthening the established dynastic ties.

Figure 9. ‘Ärvdabalken’ from Magnus Eriksson’s Land Law of Sweden, KB, in Cod. Holm. B1, f. 24 v. The illustration shows the rules of direct and indirect inheritance and the position of every potential beneficiary, who stood to inherit the deceased, seen at the centre of picture. This version of MEL is dated to the late fifteenth century. By permission of the National Library of Sweden. Photograph by Jens Östman, 2017.
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\textsuperscript{262} Waugh, 1988a, p. 8.
Dynastic visual mediation

Lineage was central to fifteenth century culturally created self-imagery. It was linked to privileges, patronage, estate accumulations and great personal wealth; the right of landownership and the holding of commissions to the crown. Social and economic gains were formed over time, within the space or room of political developments which reached the ultimate zenith in the later aristocratic monopolization of society and landownership in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Richard Neville and Ivar Axelsson represent the ultimate product of dynastical engagement, political service, economic prowess, loyalty, the creation and destruction of patron-client relationships, marriage unions and the emotionality of agreements in the fifteenth century.\(^\text{263}\)

Lineage, ascendancy (by blood, marriage and myth) and important friendship affiliations were often prominently displayed in the fifteenth century; as coats-of-arms, banners and livery, heraldic devices carved into stone reliefs strategically placed inside and on the outside of university colleges, chapels and churches; this would also include the donation of stained glass windows by wealthy and influential patrons to the Church, monasteries and early universities and colleges.

Heraldry, lineage narratives and charts were just as important as the elaborate charters, books, pageants, chronicles. Heraldry became popular in jewelry, on expensive silver and gold objects, clothing, on seals, or prominently displayed on pedigree rolls. Heraldry was used to the interior walls of their houses, castles, chantries, chapels and even churches. The role of visual mediums was to establish a dominant position in a particular geographic or within affinitiva networks. Heraldry became popular in the fifteenth century. It was a system of desirable patronage and marriage and the protection of royal patronage needed in order to achieve a family's ultimate social-political and economic goals.\(^\text{263}\)

Author's interesting discussion, based on his own study and the findings of archaeologist Jes Wienberg in 1993, concerning the donation, founding and construction of Romanesque West towers on private chapels (gårdskyrkor) and village churches in Denmark and Scania. See also my later discussion concerning the inclusion of King Karl's grandfather's (Karl Ulfsön, Sparre of Tofta) lineage in the so called Förbindelsesedichten. King Karl's new introduction he connected the content of Eric's Chronicle to the later Karl's Chronicle which links the ancestry of Karl Ulfsön's family to St Eric of Sweden.

\(^{263}\) cf. Winberg, 1985, pp. 10–14. The author’s research is an in-depth analysis of Swedish aristocracy’s right of ancestry contra landownership and right to the pre-emption of inherited estates, lands and properties in Sweden; this was a system of social inclusion that was practiced for more than 600 years. With the abolition of these privileges by way of a royal regulation in 1863, land and property could be sold to buyers outside of the dynastic family and should be seen as a maceration of the privileges held by the Swedish aristocracy and families belonging to the higher estate of Sweden; Winberg’s English summary, pp.231–243.

\(^{264}\) Skansjö, 2006, pp. 23, 28–30, ref 24 on p. 93, cited literature, p.109 and p. 33 (figure 3); See the author’s interesting discussion, based on his own study and the findings of archaeologist Jes Wienberg in 1993, concerning the donation, founding and construction of Romanesque West towers on private chapels (gårdskyrkor) and village churches in Denmark and Scania. See also my later discussion concerning the inclusion of King Karl’s grandfather’s (Karl Ulfsön, Sparre of Tofta) lineage in the so called Förbindelsesedichten. King Karl’s new introduction he connected the content of Eric’s Chronicle to the later Karl’s Chronicle which links the ancestry of Karl Ulfsön’s family to St Eric of Sweden.
Lordship, patronage and magnate assertion

The grace of lordship and patronage began to take on a more structured form in the thirteenth century polarizing toward the quasi feudal magnatial networks observed in the fifteenth century. It was a system of desirable patronage and client relationships between the great lords closest to the king (and of course to the queen). The maintenance of these patron/client relationships were vital in national governance in order to reach out to the localities of the kingdom.

Network relationships of this type were a necessity for both personal and family success and most especially for up and coming families of the lower gentry/knighthood. But it should not be forgotten that maintaining patron-client networks was also the concern of the dynastic and magnatial families in their quest to create a mental as well as a physical abutment to their authority in the peripheral geographical areas of the kingdom. Magnatial powerbases, asserted historian Scott Waugh, were formed through decades of good service, loyalty, magnatial self-assertiveness, the consolidation of the kin through marriage and the protection of royal patronage needed in order to achieve a family’s ultimate social-political and economic goals.265

Magnatial networks were powerbases and a further trajectory of regional magnatial identity and existed parallel to an overriding identity emanating from the centre of the realm. The Axelsson Tott’s and the Neville’s kin relationships with other families in the localities offered them the opportunity to create extensive networks where common interests orbited around the benefits of royal service, cooperation within the network of the kin and outward consensus toward other networks in order to implement personal and group agendas. Strong network affiliations strengthened the members’ social positions nationally, regionally and locally.266

Patronage was vital to economic and political opportunities. The institution of friendship networks played a vital role in a family’s survival and wellbeing. Changes or disruptions to the inner dynamics of such entangled relationships of social and economic dependency opened the door to misunderstandings, disputes and at worst armed conflict.

When cooperation and consensus broke down between individuals of a network or between two networks, it was necessary to reinforce relationships in order to restore societal order and balance through shared interests of protecting personal and public rights. Scott Waugh argued that:

Political relations between the king and the landholding elite are now viewed as essentially cooperative rather than conflictive […] they [the king and nobles] shared an interest in the protection of property, the defense of the realm, and the maintenance of social order. They likewise shared the values, benefits, and obligations of feudal lordship, for all of the greater lords held lands of the king in addition to commanding

266 Young, 1996, p. 144.
tenants of their own […] perceived royal actions as harmful to […] shared interests […] conflict was an exception rather than a rule […] Royal lordship embodied each element of medieval society … [and] it affected marital choices and kinship patterns.267

As earlier mentioned the social, economic and political advancement of a family was not normally achieved or became an established powerbase over one generation. Consolidation and expansion were active processes of socio-political and economic factors which on the one hand influenced and nourished network development over several generations. It should be pointed out that the Scandinavian kings and the protectors of the realm in Sweden did not control the direction of elite marriages as was the case in England. Obviously as monarchs they were most likely well informed and wary of the consequences concerning dynastic marriages between influential families and the effect they could potentially have on royal power. But it was not only marriage which bolstered the magnatial network, where inheritance also played an important role for the maintenance and continuation of the network. Historian George A. Holmes wrote that the purpose of retinues and indenture as the perpetrator of inheritance:

… supported, besides the noble family, itself, a host of receivers and auditors, stewards and lawyers, soldiers and heralds, councilors and minstrels, menial servants and followers of all kind, who were fed and paid by the lord. In return, they maintained his wealth and glory and […] ensured the continuity of the inheritance in minorities. The existence of this crowd of dependents makes the inheritance a unit of social life as well as a unit of landownership.268

Other important factors were sound economic transactions and using the law to the family and kin advantage in money, land and property disputes. The outcome of economic claims in the courts hinged on good service, useful contacts within the Church, loyal patronage and a patron willing to support his clients’ claims. The ultimate goal for social and politically hungry up-starts was to establish social and political affinitive ties to the higher aristocracy which promised to enhance the economy and social standing of the family, alternatively for those who had reached their goals, it was vital to maintain and preserve their position. A powerful or respected leader in the localities, a member of the English Peerage or a representative from the Nordic Councils of the Realms had direct access to royal and aristocratic patrimony in the form of rewards.

267 Waugh, 1988a, pp. 5–6.
268 Holmes, 1957, p. 58.
Summary

In chapter six the idea and practicalities and the need of having more than one prevailing social or cultural identity was discussed. It also discussed how identities were visually and orally expressed. The magnates had several separate identities, each with a specific role to play in the political and social culture of the fifteenth century. The chapter dealt with the social function of personal objects as being inherent to these identities, observed as expressions of the knightly class, the ideal of good service and friendship. A knight’s honour, largesse and reputation mattered even in the fifteenth century. Finally, the chapter discussed lineage and dynastic origins as a vital part of the social and political culture of the period, and the important role of patronage and lordship as part of the structure of the magnatial network.
Having discussed how language, visual mediums and objects served to embellish and constitute magnatial position and authority, enhancing the idea of an amalgamated and coherent social group, it would be naive to suggest that magnatial relationships were always equal or without conflict. Some decisions resulted in conflicts of interests, which promised to divide the kin members into factional groups. Behind the white noise of these conflicts lay land, fiefdom, loans and title disputes which threatened the future of the magnatial network from within. Cooperation strategies were paramount to maintain family and kin networks. Scott Waugh pointed out that dynastic ambitions in England, observed through wardships, marriage and landownership were interwoven with the wider politics of the king and realm. In fact dynastic network ambitions and the governance of the realm were to certain degree inseparable entities of the polity in the fifteenth century. From a parallel perspective this was also true of the relationship between the king and dynastic magnatial networks of the Kalmar Union. Network and fifteenth century disputing practices were closely aligned to much older and over time re-defined cultural and social ideals that, as was earlier pointed out, slowly filtered down over time, influencing the mentalities of several generations of dynastic development, which established new meaning and practical expressions within the patrimonial structures of the magnatial families. Personal affiliations, contemporary practices concerning disputes and societal ideals all played vital and sometimes decisive roles in the mental processes associated with the realities of motivation, choice and decision-making and the outcome of events. The formalities of dependency and the implementation of largesse were interwoven into a rituality of re-affirmed loyalties and bonds of kin-ship/friendship which were formed through underlying ideas, of waning, but still important ideals of the noble class, chivalry and the role of the knights at the end of middle Ages. The dubbing of knights became less common, whilst the act itself was still considered intrinsic to the role and identity of the great magnates, and therefore still a vital socio-cultural standard in a late fifteenth century context, although, it would seem that during times of crises these ideals experienced either a renaissance or were thrown to the wind for more personal and pragmatic reasons. This is most obvious in the reality of the magnates’ behaviour, observed through their pragmatic interactions and reactions within their own network and how the ideal of chivalry translated...
Chapter 7

Kin relations and magnatial operation

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\(^{269}\) Waugh, 1988a, pp. 6–11.
outwardly in displays of honour and loyalty in any specific given situation, most especially on the battle field.\footnote{A Knight’s Own Book of Chivalry, 2002 (1356), Kaeuper, introduction, p. 28 and section 40 of the modern English translation of Charny’s original Middle French treatise, pp. 95–96.}

Emotional bonds strengthened a magnate’s formal obligations to the king and realm. But obligations were also horizontal in nature: these informal obligations influenced the magnates as both patrons and leaders of men. This was most noticeable in the role of the dynastic family as a coherent group, friends, well-wishers and other dependents. However, these relationships were not static in structure and on occasion such connections were prone to personal liabilities. Despite personal differences the magnates found it necessary to work together politically toward a common goal. This included taking into consideration personal or political patron-client concerns of self-interest contra the interests of the affiliated network and that of the Crown.

A magnate who lost the confidence of others within the network was exposed as being physically weak due to the decline in support by the group. For the retained client these doubts resulted in lack of faith in a lord’s ability to deliver his promises, influence or intervene on behalf of his retainers and kin in social and economic matters. He may even fail to avert or see justice done in the law courts, or lodge petitions and pleas with the king’s nearest advisors and court favorites in the hope of royal intervention in drawn out disputes.

Such concerns and doubts surfaced in displays of both real and visually ritualized emotions. The Axelsson Totts were obviously not devoid of real feelings, but they did utilize ritualized emotions and emotional displays in a visual and language forum used as a discursive device in order to convey meaning and intention: a mental codex, if you will, transmitting specific signals to specific groups and individuals. This kind of emotionality is to be observed through their complicated visual and literary world in both secular and spiritual forums. Network members must have surely felt some kind of powerlessness in face of the escalating family feuds, and rapid turnarounds in political and economic fortunes.\footnote{cf. Palme, 1950, pp. 92–93.}

Marriage alliances were a common place network strategy which created emotionally bound political, economic affinitive groups and ensured that both wealth and lands passed between a limited numbers of dynastic families over several generations. The network appeased honour by aiding a kin relative to save the dynastic bloodline from political ruin, social disgrace and economic obscurity. A strategically sound marriage alliance could be the saving grace of a dynasty.

In the second half of the fifteenth century royal attainders and confiscations became more brutal and at times openly spiteful. From 1457 until his dethronement in Sweden in 1467, King Christian I used pledges and fiefdoms as a form of magnatial control and to overcome his personal beleaguered
economic problems. But his fiefdom strategies also fueled emotional concerns which eventually gave way to certain reservations concerning the king’s intentions by the established magnatial families. The Axelsson Totts, whose power and influence was partially supported by long term pledges and fiefdoms in Denmark, Skåne, Halland, Blekinge and Gotland, were directly threatened by the needs of the union kings to first and foremost strengthen their own position in the Baltic and secondly for the continuation of the Nordic Union and the strengthening of the Union Crown contra the powerful magnatial networks.

It was the king’s prerogative to inhibit and check the power of the influential magnates: equally so, he needed to keep faith with them in order to maintain a power base of authority and mete out royal justice. Most importantly, the king chose his own representation amongst the magnates and prelates, but it was equally important to maintain a good working relationship with the magnatial class as source of power and authority in general. They, like the king, harboured personal ambitions as landowners and political actors. The mentality of uncertainty in the holding of the crown’s lands was a psychologically and physically effective way of controlling the influence and power of magnates and their clients in order to maintain overall royal authority. If and when the king went too far in his demands and repudiated his royal oath it resulted in general discontent amongst the magnates. They often polarized into affinitive factions: those who aimed to gain from royal patronage and those who stood to lose through re-orientated royal patronage. King Christian I actively implemented this strategy not only in Denmark, but also in Sweden in order to control the magnates as a potential opposing source of power to the king’s authority. It also served to generate extra incomes from the royal fiefdoms in the form of increased fees as well as demanding ordinary, extra taxes and duties from Sweden. This strategy led to King Christian’s inevitable expulsion as king of Sweden in 1467 and the reinstatement of the deposed Karl Knutsson Bonde.

Accusations of disorderly conduct and a more general growing discontent directed toward King Christian I in 1467 were in fact echoes of the same accusations once leveled at Karl Knutsson’s autocratic tendencies ten years earlier. He chose exile in Danzig after the decision of the Swedish Council of the Realm to depose him on the 30 May 1458. The table turned when a

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270 Christensen, 1983, p. 73.
271 Christensen, 1983, pp. 94-95.
272 Neuding Skoog, 2018, p. 144.
273 Christensen, 1983, pp. 94-95.
274 Neuding Skoog, 2018, p. 144.
275 Letter dated Stockholm 21st September 1467; Bishop Hans of Strängnäs, ten knights, the mayor and Council of Stockholm call Karl Knutsson to reassume the government of the kingdom. Transcript of lost MS in Peringskiöld E19; VHAA: dep. SRA: German contemporary translation by Archiv Der Hansestedt Lübeck 1; Stylfe, BSH III, no. 89; Schück, 1976, p.341, no. 75, (SDHK 28746).
276 Lönnroth, 1934, p. 247.
277 Diplomatarium Christierni Primi, p. 96, no.76. The council motivated the removal of a monarch from power on the grounds of greediness and evil ways, whereby such kings showed disdain through
letter of protest from Eric Axelsson (Tott), dated 14 September 1467 reached the Council of Lübeck. He sought the support of Lübeck’s against King Christian’s undeserved persecution which his family was forced to endure at the hands of King Christian’s fiefdoms policy and his tendencies of absolute rule. Eric Axelsson’s tone is clear evidence of the growing animosity of the Axelsson Totts toward King Christian’s economic strategies, which they saw as being personally directed at members of the Axelsson Tott family.\textsuperscript{278} King Christian’s unprovoked attacks on the Axelsson Totts, from c. 1462 would eventually result in a strong and rancorous reaction by Ivar Axelsson. He rescinded his oath of loyalty to King Christian on the 22nd May 1467.\textsuperscript{279}

Several confiscations would be partially reversed, but with the loss of social and political standing in the public arena. Erik Lönnroth assessed the political situation in April 1471 from the Axelsson Tott’s perspective, whereby the developing political situation threatened to destroy their vast Nordic empire of estates and fiefdoms. Agreeing to the Kungssäter Agreement was a clever, but necessary gambit, by the Axelsson Totts to attempt to re-establish their Danish empire through their reconciliation of King Christian as union king.\textsuperscript{280}

After Karl Knutsson’s death in 1470, King Christian invoked his right to the Swedish throne. A meeting between parties was held in Kungssäter in April 1471 in order to initiate negotiations. The actual results of the meeting are still debated by historians. A preserved Swedish proposal for a peace agreement does offer partial insight as to what was discussed. The proposal states that all parties would meet at Stegeborg Castle in order to resolve the ongoing conflict between Christian and the Axelsson Totts. The results of these negotiations

\textsuperscript{278} SDHK 42596, Photocopy; Stockholm, 14 December 1467, Eric Axelsson (Tott) to Lübeck’s Council, language German; BSH III, no. 88 (transcript); Photocopy in Lüb. UB XI, no. 287. The original letter is held by the Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck.

\textsuperscript{279} Rep. Dipl. R.2, B.2, no. 2272 (original letter no longer exists); Christensen, 1983, pp.116-118. Christensen refers to appendix 9 for the transcript of the German letter dated to the late 19th century. According to Dr. Michael Gelting (DRA) this is an internal archival reference, and not a correct reference for the letter: DRA, Hertugdømmerne, E.J. v. Westphalen, Diplomatarium Slesvico-Holsaticum, afdeling A. (complete transcripts), pakke/series 42 (vol. XXIX – XXX, 1463-1473); E. J. von Wesphalen was Ernest Joachim von Westphalen 1700-1759; he was appointed 1st Mayor of Kiel in 1730. He was also curator of the Christian-Albrecht University in Kiel, in the service of Dukes of Holstein. He published a history of Germany 1739, which included passages on the kings and Swedish protectors of the Kalmar Union. He makes no mention of the Axelsson Totts but he seems to have had access to a number of sources/documents which may or may not have included a Danish or German copy of Ivar Axelsson’s original letter to King Christian. Enquiries after the letter held at the DRA reveals that it is at the present time misplaced in their collection.

\textsuperscript{280} Skoglund, 1903, p. 183; Lönnroth, 1959, p. 170: Eric Lönnroth wrote, “Kungssätermödraget har varit Axelssonernas schackdrag för att rädda sig ur spelet inför det hotande sammanbrottet av deras svenska välde.”; SRA SDHK 29243 and 29244, for details of the various copies and transcriptions on paper and in print of the original agreement in Swedish. A month after the Kungssäter Agreement King Christian declared his intentions concerning Ivar Axelsson’s continued control of Gotland under the Danish Crown. See DCP, p. 252, no 174, 20 May 1471.
depended on the Axelsson brothers recovering their confiscated fiefdoms and private estates, in order for them to recognize Christian as union king, and provided the conditions of the agreement were accepted by the three councils of the realm. By June 1471, Christian had gathered the Danish fleet outside of Stockholm and was acclaimed king of Sweden by the Council of Uppland. A truce was initiated for further negotiations. At the same time, Sten Sture the Elder was actively recruiting farmers in Närke and Östergötland in order to support his position as Protector of the Swedish Realm. Clearly Sten Sture and the Axelsson Totts had two different agendas concerning the future of the Union, only one year after the death of Karl Knutsson. A military encounter was the result of the prevailing political situation. Christian and Sten Sture met at the Battle of Brunkeberg on the 10 October 1471. The outcome of the clash was a devastating defeat for Christian and the Kalmar Union.

From an emotional perspective this agreement was monumentally disastrous on a personal economic level, and spelt potential disaster for a family’s dynastic name, future and reputation: economies were repairable, whilst public humiliation was most certainly harder to bear both psychologically and physically. Posthumous forgiveness and political rehabilitation of later dynastic generations or friends of the dynasty were important political and social markers and tools of royal redress and forgiveness – a way of moving forward toward restoration of the common weal, societal harmony and restored confidence in the king’s rule. Therefore certain actions of redress carried out on the regent’s behalf could and did motivate the magnates to take decisive and drastic decisions based partially on the idealism of society but more importantly, they were the result of the cold and harsh political realities of the period.

Tott interests, dynamic cohesion and decisions 1461–1471

The following section discusses the choices and decisions of the Axelsson Totts in a period of the Union’s history which was engulfed by conflict and factional division. The Axelsson Tott’s role in the events and their deteriorating relationship with King Christian, which not only changed the direction of the Union; it sealed the future of the family’s political fortunes. Three events stand out as sources of concern in King Christian’s protracted conflict with the Axelsson brothers: the Bishopric of Odense candidature; the Tranekær affair

281 SRA, SDHK 29243, 29244; Styffe, BHS IV, no 2, p. 2; Olesen, 1983, pp. 320–321. Worth noting is the presence Peder Nielsen (Tott) at the meeting. He represented King Christian’s interests at the meeting. He was a member of the Næs Totts and distantly related to the Axelsson Totts of Härlöv. See p.35 of the thesis. Peder Nielsen’s fru Ide Corvitzsdotter (Rönnow) was related to Claus Rönnow, who also represented King Christian’s interests.
and aggressive confiscation of the brothers Danish fiefdoms and private estates, which also included those of Åke Axelsson, in 1467, only a year after the Tott-Bonde-Sture Alliance at Nyköping Castle and the council meeting in an attempt to revive the Union and discuss the re-instatement of a union king. The disputes between King Christian and the Axelsson Totts were preceded by several years of political chaos and inward conflicts caused by factional rivalry and the division between the members of the Swedish Council of the Realm concerning the future of the Kalmar Union and the demands of the Axelsson Totts for redress and the re-entry of their rights over the family’s confiscated estates and fiefdoms.

At the beginning of 1457 the Swedish council rescinded their oath to Karl Knutsson, and confiscated his fiefdoms, lands and private properties. He fled to Prussia where he received protection under the auspices of Danzig’s ruling council.282 Waiting in the wings was the Danish/Norwegian King Christian. The Union was re-established for short period of time. In face of the growing criticism to Christian’s rule and autocratic tendencies, he was deposed in Sweden in 1464 under similar circumstances to that of King Karl’s dethronement seven years earlier. The conflicts of divided nobility in Sweden lay behind the erratic changes of ruler. Between 1464 and 1465 Sweden was ruled for a short period of time by Karl Knutsson. He was once again rejected and deposed a second time and replaced by Eric Axelsson (Tott) as Protector of the Realm.

At the beginning of Eric Axelsson’s short term as protector, he tried to curb the ongoing conflicts between the two major magnatial factions by remaining neutral to the agendas of the both parties. Due to widening schism between Eric Axelsson's brothers and Christian I, Eric eventually chose to transfer his loyalties to his kinsman Karl Knutsson and support his family’s claim in their dispute with King Christian. He resigned as Swedish protector in favour of Karl’s re-instatement for the third and final time in 1467. A year earlier both Eric and his two younger brothers, Ivar and Laurens, had merged into a powerful magnatial network with the Sture, Trolle and Bonde dynasties. By 1467 Ivar had rescinded his personal oath to Christian, whilst still supporting the concept of the Union under a weakened monarchy with the Axelsson Totts in a leading position; a strategy which served to protect the family’s collective network economic interests in all three kingdoms.

The Bishopric of Odense

Peder Axelsson was probably the second oldest son, after Kettil (d.1454). Peder, as second son, followed a traditional career in the Church. As a member

282 See Kumlien, 1940, for an in-depth study of King Karl’s exile in Prussia.
of Lund’s cathedral chapter, Peder Axelsson was considered controversial. He was appointed Dean of Lund. He was also appointed prior of Dalby in 1437. A complaint by the former prior of Dalby, Håkan Friis, came to the Pope’s attention in 1438. Peder Axelsson falsely accused Håkan Friis for irregularities in his service as prior. By 1437 in the service of King Eric as his personal chaplain, Håkan Friis found it difficult to assert any influence over King Eric after the Pope agreed to reinstate Håkan on the condition that he paid a fee in order to retrieve the priory. Håkan Friis could not pay or refused to pay for the priory, because Peder Axelsson retained the post until his death in 1463.

Obviously the close relationship and the sway the Axelsson Totts had over King Eric and their connections to the Archbishop of Lund, Hans Laxmand, had significant impact on the outcome of the dispute between Peder Axelsson and Håkan Friis. The later conflict between the cathedral chapter and King Christian, led to Peder Axelsson’s nomination to the Bishopric of Odense in 1459 in protest against King Christian’s choice to nominate one his loyal servants, Mogens Krafse to the post of bishop. Peder Axelsson’s candidature was clearly a threatening prospect and was openly challenged King Christian. Peder Axelsson’s candidature was personally overturned by the Pope on the wishes of the king. King Christian’s interference concerning the election of Peder Axelsson resulted in a serious point of conflict between the king and the Axelsson Totts.

The primary direction of the discussion deals with the possible and probable concerns which King Christian initially harboured over the appointment of Peder Axelsson. In order to find the answer one needs to briefly look at the broader political consequences of the Axelsson Tott’s growing influence on the politics of the Danish and Swedish realms. The Axelsson Totts, at this point in time, now held several important fiefdoms. They included the control of strategic sea and land trade routes. As prominent members of both the Swedish and Danish Councils of the Realms, the brothers exercised immense influence in all areas of the Kalmar Union, which included Finland, Gotland and Halland. Gotland came under the family’s control in 1449 and remained an important pledged fiefdom until May 1487. Halland had been under the control of the Axelsson since the early part of the fifteenth century. By 1467 they also held the Finnish Fiefdoms as part of their expanding sphere of power.

Peder Axelsson’s Odense aspirations, seen from Christian’s perspective, were a serious threat to his position as union king. The Bishop of Odense automatically became a member of the Danish Council of the Realm. Olof, Åke, Ivar, Philip, Peder and possibly even Laurens and Anders would

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283 Losman, 1970, p. 121; Peder Axelsson’s half-brother Eric Axelsson held a position as a lay cantor in Lund’s Cathedral under Hans Laxmand.
284 Rebas, 1976, p. 139.
285 Phillpotts, 1913, pp. 252–253; the author quotes Hans Hildebrand in ref.no.5 on p. 252.

124
effectively dominate the Danish council, whilst Eric Axelsson was an important leading member of the Swedish Council of the Realm. King Christian turned to his influential brother-in-law, Duke Ludovico Gonzaga of Mantua, for support. Duke Ludovico was able to sway Pope Pius II to overturn Peder Axelsson’s nomination. In the background of the King’s diplomatic efforts, was Queen Dorothea who indirectly sought support and aid for her husband’s papal lobbying activities through her sister Barbara, wife of the duke. Dorothea sent expensive gifts. These gifts included a significant number of ermine furs, and promises of support in order to arrange a good position within the Scandinavian Church for her brother-in-law’s second son Francesco, and the future prospect of being nominated to the position of Archbishop of Lund.

Both Ivar and Olof Axelsson were active participants in supporting their older brother’s claim to the Odense Diocese, but without success. Olof Axelsson helped Peder Axelsson with a loan of 1,000 gold marks in order for him to continue his struggle for the Bishopric in Rome. Pius II’s final decision was that Peder should be forever silent in this matter or risk being excommunicated from the Holy Church. The matter was naturally resolved on the death of Peder Axelsson in the summer of 1463. In a letter from Pope Pius II dated 23 August 1463, he recommended that Christian’s young nephew, Francesco Gonzaga of Mantua be appointed Dean of Lund with jurisdiction over the priory of Dalby. Most interesting is the fact that both positions were previously held by the newly deceased Peder Axelsson Tott and the choice of dean to Dalby Priory was clearly founded on King Christian’s innate belief that kings had the right to appoint their own clients and kin to key positions within the Church in order to utilize Church resources. This put the king at odds with members of the cathedral chapter, who insisted that it was they, and not the king, who put forward suitable candidates to church positions.

Peder Axelsson’s candidacy to the Bishopric of Odense was the first real conflict to surface between King Christian and the Axelsson Totts. Clearly, King Christian could not fail to notice that the brothers were a growing power to be reckoned with, and therefore a possible threat to his position and authority as ruler. This was the critical starting point of the king’s conflict with Axelsson Totts.

The unofficial Danish royal historian, Hans Svaning wrote in *Danmarks historie*, (c. 1579), that Ivar Axelsson had become resentful of King Christian’s untoward actions against his brother, Peder Axelsson. Obviously the members of the Chapter wanted a bishop who represented its members and not a bishop who felt that he must put the agendas of his royal patron first before that of the diocese or Church. Ivar Axelsson, suggested Svaning, was most offended and angry over the king’s rebuff and treatment of his older half-

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286 La Freniere, 2012, p. 177.
brother. The growing tensions between the Axelsson Totts and King Christian took a new turn because of the Tranekær Affair, which was beginning to unfold parallel to Peder Axelsson’s nomination to Odense, and only served to add more fuel to the already smoldering fire of discontent between the powerful Axelssons and King Christian.

**Philip Axelsson – the Tranekær affair**

Philip Axelsson Tott was married only once; to Ermegard Eggertsdotter Frille. She was the daughter of the influential knight and member of the king’s council, Eggert Frille (d.1470). Their only surviving heiress, Ingeborg Philipsdotter was first married to Gustav Karlsson Gumsehuvud and secondly to Eric Arvidsson Trolle. Gustav Karlsson was a cousin to Karl Knutsson Bonde and step-father of Sten Sture the Elder. The latter, Eric Trolle, became the step-son of Beata Ivarsdotter (Tott) through her marriage to Arvid Trolle. Eric Trolle was elected protector of the Swedish Realm during the first half year of 1512 after the death of Svante Nilsson.

Almost simultaneously as the Odense dispute between King Christian and Peder Axelsson broke out, a dispute between the king and Philip Axelsson (Tott) concerning the revised conditions of the king’s pledge of Tranekær Castle and Langeland began to surface. King Christian had willingly reconfirmed Philip’s right to Tranekær (the original pledge was dated 23 July 1456) for a further six years in 1462, on the condition of an increased fee of 1,000 silver marks, which was to be paid in good faith directly to the king. Philip Axelsson was according to the original pledge, obliged to compensate King Christian with 1,100 Rhenish gulden, 800 English gold nobles, 100 marks or 200 Rhenish gulden and 300 Lübeck marks for the rights to the rents and fees of Tranekær and Langeland. The revised agreement also included an improved clause concerning the right of Philip Axelsson’s heirs to take over Tranekær and Langeland on his eventual death. From the perspective of the

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288 GKS 2444: folios 50 r and 50 v. (The National Library Copenhagen); Hans Svaning may well have read the original letter dated 1467, where Ivar Axelsson declared his motives for rebuking his oath of loyalty to King Christian; See also Fabricius, 1904, pp. 224–225.


289 Arvid Trolle was earlier married to Karin Johansdotter to Fanö (Gädda), daughter of Johan Nilsson to Fällnäs (Gädda) and Juliana (Karlsdotter (Gädda). Karin died before 1465.

290 The Tranekær affair arose as a direct result of King Christian’s provincial fiefdom and pledge strategies; Christensen, 1983 for an indepth analysis of the King’s regional strategies.

292 SRA, Skokloster Collection, a copy on parchment, dated 26 August 1479; Lükten, 1909, p. 548-549; Christensen, 1983, p.323, (SDHK 28015): from King Christian I to Philip Axelsson (Tott); See Rep. Dipl. no, 1509 for a full transcription of the letter.

290 DBL III, ‘Eggert Frille’.
Axelsson Totts the improved provisions of the original agreement, meant that Philip’s brothers could take-over the administration and control Tranekær if and when Philip died.

Although, changes in the terms of contracts were not uncommon, questions concerning King Christian’s motives arose when he decided to retract the fiefdom to the crown after the mutual endorsement and payment of the renewed contract, without any substantial explanations for his sudden U-turn concerning the fiefdom. King Christian’s hardening attitude toward Philip Axelsson’s repeated claim to Tranekær and Langeland or the reimbursement of both fees was without results. Philip Axelsson refused to accept the king’s decision concerning the pledged sums of money and the monarch’s somewhat dubious behaviour toward a knight of the realm in refusing to pay back what was in fact a loan to the Crown. After Philips sudden death in 1464, the demand for the reimbursement of the fees was taken up by Ivar Axelsson and Eggert Frille. King Christian dug in his heels and flatly refused to return the pledge or compensate the family. The Axelsson Totts must have considered Christian’s actions as unfitting the conduct of a king toward his loyal vassal lords. A king stood by his word and was true to his seal.

One possible reason for King Christian’s sudden change of heart in the matter of Tranekær could have been part of the king’s personal and public attempts to improve his finance after his earlier military actions to expand Danish influence in Estonia and Livonia, and subordinate the Teutonic Order to the Danish Crown; but also to attempt to strengthen his own position as union monarch through his Schleswig-Holstein military campaign. He even pushed to win ground in the dispute with the Councils of the Realms concerning the terms and conditions of Queen Dorothea’s dower. Furthermore, this may well have been an attempt to curtail the growing power of the Axelsson Totts and their infiltration of areas in around Odense and Langeland. The letters of grants and pledges during Christian’s reign in Denmark show that several fees were attached to various agreements concerning both new and old grants and pledges under the control of the Crown.

294 MSS, Vol. I and Vol. II, from vol. II see pp. 48-51, p.76, pp. 146-149. No. 44 (note: three transcribed texts in Danish, German and Latin), 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57, 112 and 113 and from vol.1 copybook 1, (1912), see pp. 35 and 56, No. 50, 78.
295 Olesen, 1980, pp. 319-323.
297 Christensen, 1983, p. 360; see appendix 3; Skoglund, 1903, pp. 135-136. Skoglund pointed out that King Christian had no legal grounds to withdraw the pledge in 1462. The dispute between the Danish crown and the Axelsson Totts over Tranekær was finally resolved by King Hans. Ingeborg Philipsdotter’s husband, Gustav Karlsson (Gumsehuvud), was the step-father of Sten Sture and the brother-in-law of King Karl through his marriage to Birgitta Stensdotterr (Biélke). He successfully negotiated with his wife’s step-father Bengt Bille, Danish Councilor of the Realm, concerning Ingeborg’s right to the fees paid for Tranekær by her father to King Christian I.
Eggert Frille’s network kin connection to Philip Axelsson would inevitably draw him into centre of Axelsson Tott politics and their expansive economic interests. This was most obvious after the death Philip Axelsson in 1464.

In choosing to support the kin and family rather than the king, Eggert Frille inadvertently chose sides against King Christian. Ermegard’s choice to marry Bengt Torbensen Bille only added another layer of complicated personal conflict on Eggert Frille’s loyalties. He participated at the council meeting held in Jönköping in September 1466, where the Axelsson brothers had successfully ousted Archbishop Jöns Bengtsson as leader of the Swedish council. Eggert Frille was accused of speaking against the king. The use of force then under-taken by King Christian to regain control of Tranekær resulted in the escalation of the conflict with the Axelsson Totts and the eventual reinstatement of Karl Knutsson as Swedish king. The situation worsened through the infected feud between Ivar Axelsson and Bengt Bille over lands designated to Maren Torbensdotter, the second wife of Ivar Axelsson and sister of Bengt Torbensen.

During much of the conflict Ingeborg Philipsdotter was placed under the guardianship of her uncle, Ivar Axelsson. This formidable family network now felt the need to close ranks in order to safe-guard the family’s collective wealth and the legal rights of Ingeborg Philipsdotter; those of Olof Axelsson’s widow and the Axelsson Tott pledge to claim to Gotland after both Olof and Philip had succumbed to sudden illness in 1464 (most likely the plague as other direct members of Olof Axelsson’s family also died at the same point in time). On receiving the news of Philip Axelsson’s untimely death, Ivar set course for Gotland which now stood without a captain. The risks involved in such a journey, highlights the urgency of Ivar’s choices due to the acute nature of the situation at hand. He remained at Visborg Castle to support and protect Olof Axelsson’s widow by taking control of Visby. During Philip Axelsson’s absence, Eggert Frille was entrusted to administrate Tranekær Castle and Langeland. After Philip’s death, Eggert Frille was accused of not representing the best interests of King Christian and holding Tranekær for Ivar Axelsson. The king’s refusal to compensate Philip Axelsson’s daughters according to the law infuriated Eggert Frille. He refused to relinquish Tranekær to the Danish crown, whereby the dispute could not be resolved on amicable terms. Tranekær was confiscated under duress in May 1467. Shortly after this incident and in a bid to force the king’s hand, Ivar Axelsson, driven by strong personal motives, was faced with only one choice, he retracted his personal rejected at the realm itself) in support of his brother’s and close family members’ personal grievances with the union kings and his later aggressive and questionable land confiscations of the Axelsson brothers and their removal as sheriffs and castleton, whilst embargos on trade and the import of private

commodities to Gotland from Denmark were forced upon them. Eggert Frille was eventually forced into exile after refusing to appear before the king in Copenhagen to face a number of serious accusations. Lübeck’s town council was eager to take up and mediate his case with the king. The mediation of Lübeck’s ruling council was unsuccessful, as is seen in the exchanges of letters between Eggert Frille and the Danish Council. He was openly suspicious of the king’s insistence that he present himself before the council, fearing for his safety and his life.

Eggert Frille’s refusal to comply with the King’s demands resulted in his attainder and loss of all properties, land and fiefdoms. Only when Queen Dorothea pleaded with her husband on behalf of her old, loyal and trusted servant from the time her of marriage to King Christopher, did he receive a pardon and a partial reversal of the confiscation of his estates. The private lands were returned to Eggert Frille in full, but Christian refused to return earlier fiefdoms and pledged holdings held by him. One possible explanation was Eggert Frille’s increased economic and political orientation toward the inner core of the Axelsson affinitive group; it appeared that he actively supported their political and economic agendas in 1466, rather than those of King Christian.

Three weddings and the union negotiations

1466 was not only a turning point in the direction of the Axelsson Tott network strategies; it was the turning point for the Kalmar Union. The reason for this was one of the most spectacular events in Nordic fifteenth century history, which took place at Nyköping Castle, which saw the formation of a powerful internordic dynastic network in Sweden. The intention of Ivar and Eric Axelssons’ marriage strategies was to primarily strengthen the socio-economic Tott network in Sweden, whilst it also promised political influence, through their marriages to Magdalena Karlsdotter (Bonde) and Elin Gustavsdotter.

300 Christensen, 1983, pp. 117–134; Danish historian Harry Christensen did in fact show in his study of Christian’s policies concerning the retraction and or suspension of crown grants and lands also affected individuals and families with friendship affiliations and connections through blood and marriage; see also Olesen, 1983.
301 Skoglund, 1903, pp. 136–137; Olesen, 1983, pp. 239–244.
305 Magdalena’s half-sister was married to Eric Ericsson (Gyllenstierna) in 1446. For information surrounding the events of 1466 see the letters discussed and transcribed in, Monumenta diplomatica Svecana, ed. J. H. Schröder 1820/22, pp. 44–47: SRA, transcript version in B 15 f. 253, (SDHK 28329). Prior to Ivar’s union with his third wife Magdalena, a letter was dispatched to Hans, the prior of the Dominican friary in Kalmar, dated the 1st November 1464: Ivar had arranged for requiem masses over the souls of two Danish born wives, Margareta (Paulsdotter) Laxmand and Maren Torbensdotter (Bille), and himself. Ivar Axelsson’s choice of wife in his third marriage was not without legal
Magdalena was the daughter of Karl Knutsson, and Elin was the widow of Knut Stensson (Bielke). She was one of two surviving daughters to the Swedish knight Gustav Algotsson Sture and a cousin once removed of Sten Sture the Elder. The third wedding was between Ivar Axelsson’s daughter, Beata, and Arvid Birgersson Trolle, one of Scandinavia’s wealthiest landowners.

The marriage constellation of the Tott-Bonde-Sture-Trolle dynasties would play an important, if not a crucial role for King Karl’s and the Axelsson Tott’s personal ambitions, and the later politics of the Kalmar Union. It was more than politics which interested the Axelsson Totts at this point in time; there was also the potential to expand the family’s influence and interests beyond the borders of Denmark and Sweden. It should be pointed out that the three brides offered both economic and political potential for their husbands, as widows both Magdalena and Elin would become two very influential and powerful landowning members within the Tott network and as active donors to the Church.

There was one important decision which lay behind the Axelsson Tott’s the strategies; namely the council of realm’s decision in 1465 to return King Karl’s confiscated fiefdoms and pledges. It was King Karl’s economic worth that interested them. King Karl became an important counter-weight to the ambitions of Christian I. Karl had been forced into exile in 1457 after being accused of not upholding his elective oath to the Swedish magnates and the peasantry; a group that included Eric Axelsson. Historians Hain Rebas and Sven Ulric Palme observed that Karl Knutsson’s intimate relationship with the Axelsson clan was first established through the distinctive aspects of Karl Knutsson’s national politics, and his interest in Finland, Gotland and Estonia/Livonia.

problems. Ivar and Magdalena Karlsdotter were related in the 3rd degree, whereby a necessary marriage dispensation was issued.

306 Skoglund, 1903, pp. 36–38; ref. no. 1: Elin Gustavsdotter was the niece of Bishop Sigge of Strängnäs, Gustav and Fader Ulflsson (Sparre); all three men were councilors of the realm. Elin’s sister was married to David Bengtsson (Oxenstierna), the brother of Archbishop Jöns Bengtsson, David and Jöns were the grandsons of Krister Nilsson (Vasa) and great nephews of Ramborg Nilsdotter (Vasa), who married Tord Rörikksson (Bonde). Ramborg was the grandmother of King Karl Knutsson. Her daughter-in-law Cecilia Bosdotter (Dyre) was married to Ramborg’s son Karl Tordsson and later to his brother Knut Tordsson. Cecilia Bodotter was therefore the step-mother of King Karl. Cecilia’s father Bo Dyre sold the estate of Täckhammar and its adjoining mill to Eric Axelsson in 1458. For more information concerning Täckhammar see Chapter six.

307 Knut Stensson (Bielke) was a half-brother to King Karl and full brother to Birgitta Stensdotter, mother of Sten Sture the Elder. She married twice; to Gustav Anundsson (Sture) and Gustav Karlsson (Gumsehuvud).

308 Palme, 1950, pp. 21–23; Lundholm, 1956, pp. 3–4 and ref. no. 1; Eriksson, 2017, pp. 86–90; Elin Gustavdotter’s father, Gustav Algotsson, was a brother of Sten Sture’s grandfather Anund Algotsson.


310 Rebas, 1976, pp. 117–182. Rebas asserted that the Axelsson Totts inherited and actively expanded Karl Knutsson’s economic and political interests from Finland and Gotland with the goal of infiltrating politics and diverting trade; Olesen, 1980, p. 317.
Karl Knutsson’s position as reinstated ruler rested on the support of a select group of Nordic magnates. During his time as Marshall of Sweden he had offered grants of the former estates under the control of the Oxenstierna-Vasa constellation to the then young squire, Eric Axelsson Tott, and knight and justice for the island of Öland, Erengisle Nilsson the younger (Hammarstaätten). Karl Knutsson aimed to reinforce his contacts and affiliations with the Danish nobility through his association with Eric Axelsson’s powerful half-brother Olof Axelsson, father-in-law of Erengisle Nilsson to Hammersta.311

The union between Magdalena Karlsdotter and Ivar Axelsson can be seen as one of the most important results of the association between King Karl and the Axelsson brothers. Karl Knutsson had probably met Eric Axelsson’s younger brother, Ivar, during his exile in Prussia.312 Historian Alexandra Skoglund maintained that it was strange that Eric Axelsson had shown support for King Christian’s reinstatement as union king at the time of King Karl’s removal to Finland in January 1465, but no decisions was forthcoming by the Swedish Council of the Realm. Clearly the Axelsson Totts saw possibilities in both candidates.313 The Axelsson Totts was one of the most powerful family constellations in Scandinavia in 1465. Like Richard Neville. The 16th Earl of Warwick in England, The Axelsson brothers were on way to becoming both kingsmakers and throne takers, depending on what the perspective candidates brought to negotiating table, in the quest to further expand their magnatial imperium. King Karl’s inheritance and estates promised power and influence in Sweden and Finland, whilst was in principle depended on the support of the Axelsson Totts in order to be union king.

The news of the betrothals probably reached Christian in the spring of 1466. The developments in the first half of 1466 Skoglund, concluded, were the key to King Christian’s growing political animosity toward the Axelsson Totts in 1467. She observed that Ivar’s retraction of loyalty to Christian was not unexpected and that the conflict over Tranekaer may well have had a partial role to play in Ivar’s decision. Skoglund’s conclusion was rebuked by Knud Fabricius, who maintained that Christian did not react negatively to the news of the planned marital unions and there was no evidence to suggest that he had protested prior to the events at Nyköping in 1466, or showed any concerns over the marriage alliances initiated by the Tott, Bonde and Sture

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311 Palme, 1950, pp. 24–25; Erengisle Nilsson was a half-brother to Bo Nilsson (Grip), the grandson of the powerful judge, squire and royal councilor in Sweden Bo Jonsson (Grip).
312 Wallace Nilsson, Master thesis, 2010, pp. 55–56: See also Carlsson 1943 and Olesen, 1983, p. 222. During the discussions held in Stockholm on the choice of a new union king after the death of King Christopher in 1448, four of the Axelsson brothers Olof, Ivar, Philip and Eric were present at the meeting. Their ominous presence must certainly have been noted as they monitored the specific interests of the family contra the interests of the three kingdoms and of the interests of the union. Marriage alliances allowed for political influence over the direction of the Union whilst offering economic gains in all the three kingdoms strengthening the family’s overall economic and political agenda.
313 Skoglund, 1903, pp. 103–105.
dynamics. In fact, the Danish representatives who attended the planned meeting of the councils to discuss the future of the Union included Ivar Axelsson and Laurens Axelsson’s father-in-law Eggert Frille. The Swedish council included Eric Axelsson and several of the family’s affiliated network friends. King Christian may well have hoped for certain positive effects of the marriage alliances which he may have hoped would bring him closer to Sture and Bonde dynasties and strengthen his working relationship with the Axelsson Totts. It is fair to say that King Christian underestimated the strength of the brothers’ relationship and the strong family bonds they shared to their deceased father and their estates and lands.

Jens Olesen observed that the marriage unions offered a logical line of communication between Christian and the Swedish and Danish councils of the Realm through Ivar and Eric Axelsson. This observation is vital to the thesis, because it offers a deeper understanding of the Axelsson Totts’ social and economic strategies as an emotionally coherent family and as influential border magnates, whilst the dynastic alliance Tott-Bonde-Sture-Trolle was created and determined by the political events unfolding at this critical point in time in Scandinavian politics. This new alliance would drastically change the political direction of the Kalmar Union and the future of Gotland. One cannot fully disregard the fact that the Axelsson Totts were toying with the choice to follow an independent oppositional strategy where they could reap the harvests by helping Karl Knutsson to regain some of his confiscated fiefdoms and private estates from 1457 and taking control of them through the right of marriage after the king’s death, without undermining their own Danish estates or position, and still support King Christian as union king.

The first aspect of the plan probably motivated Karl Knutsson to agree to the union between Ivar and Magdalena. The Axelsson Totts were interested in the possibility to further their own economic expansion and widen their political influence within the Kalmar Union. At the time of Magdalena’s espousal she was, together with her half-sister, the sole heiresses to Karl

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314 Skoglund, 1903, pp. 117–120; see also Fabricius, 1904.
316 SRA, original letter on parchment, dated Stockholm 30 January 1465, (SDHK 28366 facsimile), printed in FMU 3256: From Archbishop Jöns Bengtsson, Bishop Ketil in Linköping, royal councilor Eric Axelsson (Tott) and other prominent members of the Swedish Council, to King Karl Knutsson (Bonde) surrounding the circumstances of the confiscated estates belonging to himself, and Queen Catherine. According to the agreement with the Swedish council King Karl and his daughters’ were to be reunited with the family estates (confiscated in 1457), whereby they entertained the right to once again enjoy and use them as they saw fit. “Jem skal och for:da konung Karl och hans dötter haffua, niwta, bruka och behalla all the gotz, som the rætteliga arrfith haffua, sa och the gotz, som konungh Karl eller hans husfrw, dröthning Katherina, met ræte bördebudh till sik köpt eller löösth haffua, æ aff huem thet helzt wora kan, sa och all the godz, som for:da konung Karl köpt haffuer for æn han wart konung j Sverige.” [Also it shall remain that King Karl and his daughters’, to enjoy, use and retain all the estates, that they have rightfully owned, even the estates that King Karl or Queen Catherine have rightfully owned through either purchase or by sale to whosoever they wished, including all the estates that King Karl had bought before the time he was king of Sweden].
Knutsson’s land and estates, Also, the confiscated of fiefdoms to the crown were theoretically theirs if Karl Knutsson was reinstated and or fully reimbursed by the crown. So a tentative conclusion is that the Axelsson Tott strategies included certain dimensions of speculation of what could be gained together with that they already anticipated – Magdalena’s entitlements after her father. This actually contradicts S.J. Payling’s more general claim concerning heiresses, that, “Negotiations for her [heiress’s] hand turned principally upon her expectations at espousal, not upon a speculation as to what chance might later bring her”.317

The proposed alliance with Karl Knutsson and the Axelsson Totts would in theory, offer both parties the promise of success, and future financial security, land gains and a strong alliance that would be able to counter balance the Oxenstierna-Vasa faction. The aggressive economic attacks by King Christian directed at the Axelsson brothers, family and kin were considered unfair and motivated them to reconsider their choices and make certain decisions for the economic and political future of the family and the Tott dynasty rather than the union king.318 The deaths of Olof, Philip, Peder and Anders Axelsson between 1464 and 1465, was a huge blow to the family’s accumulated power. This meant that the remaining brothers were forced to rethink their strategies and look outside of the intimate core of the family to strengthen the Axelsson Tott socio-political network. Ivar Axelsson was probably wary of King Christian’s motives after the treatment of his family and possibly toyed with a plan to build-up a strong affinitive group with some of the most influential families in Sweden. During the interim period between King Karl’s removal in 1465 to Raseborg in Finland to his third and final reinstatement as Swedish king in 1467, Karl Knutsson seems to have developed a close friendship with Eric Axelsson Tott who held Viborg, Åbo and Tavastehus. Both men were wary of the Oxenstierna-Vasa faction under the influence of Archbishop Jöns Bengtsson.

Eric Axelsson’s decision to improve the defenses of Olofsborg, not only from Russian incursions into Swedish territory, but also potential threats from King Christian, may well have motivated the choice of marriage partner for Ivar Axelsson and cement the Axelssons’ newly formed bonds to the Bonde and Sture dynasties. The decision to support King Karl was also motivated by Jöns Bengtsson’s political orientation toward King Christian and the Oxenstierna dynamic agendas. The legal questions surrounding the prior knowledge of the Axelsson Totts pertaining to King Karl’s confiscated properties were a key factor in how Ivar and Erik made their decisions not to support Christian’s demands. King Karl’s claim to his private and pledged estates awarded to him by the Swedish Council and later confiscated by King Christian, made the eighteen year-old widow, Magdalena Karlsdotter, an attractive heiress, whilst

318 Olesen, 1983, p. 227
Ivar’s control of Gotland under the Swedish Realm was equally alluring for Karl Knutsson. Lars-Olof Larsson wrote that the marriages helped the Axelssons to bind the Swedish border-gentry more firmly to the Axelsson Tott network. Karl Knutsson was a member of the older dynastic families and the Bonde affinity was well established in the border areas of Sweden. Support for the Axelsson Totts was further endorsed by the removal of Archbishop Jöns Bengtsson as protector of the realm and election of Eric Axelsson in 1467.\textsuperscript{319}

Ivar Axelsson and his brothers turned to the nobility for support in order to establish their position, excluding the support of the peasantry. The Stures, on the other hand, had a long tradition of aligning their personal interests with the discontent of the peasantry. They held the trust of the influential Dalecarian peasantry, the miners of Kopparberg and more importantly the Stockholm Burghers. The decision to shut out the Swedish peasantry was a serious flaw in the Axelsson’s play for power. But, the Axelsson Tott motive becomes clear in this course of action. They faced two choices, both of which had significant immediate and long term consequences for the family and the political events in the later decades of the fifteenth century.

The treatment of Peder Axelsson, the confiscation of Tranekaer and the king’s confiscation of both pledged castles and private estates belonging to the Axelsson Totts tipped the scales in favour of Karl Knutsson’s nomination as king of Sweden.\textsuperscript{320} King Christian gave his support to the Oxenstierna network who wished to counteract the strong position of the Axelsson Totts in Sweden. The factional struggles and the disruption it left in its way were duly noted in the Vadstena Diary.\textsuperscript{321}

The independent campaign led by Karl Knutsson’s long term ally and friend Nils Sture (Natt och Dag) for the reinstatement of Karl as Swedish king was a problem for the newly aligned affinitive group led by the Axelsson Totts. Ivar Axelsson’s choice to either support Christian I or Karl Knutsson would be vital to the outcome of the group’s politics but also to the economic agenda of the Axelsson Totts.

There was also the question of the several important pledged areas and castles, which if they had been returned to Karl Knutsson would have become part of the economic interests of the Axelsson clan. Both Eric and Ivar needed to be sure that their estates remained safe before they could commit to King Christian election. The Swedish council of the Realm’s earlier decision to compensate and reinstate Karl Knutsson’s estates became a condition for the acceptance and reinstatement of King Christian as union king 1465. By 1466 this was not consistent with either the Axelsson Tott agenda. Ivar Axelsson

\textsuperscript{319}Larsson, 2006, p. 38; “Jöns Bengtsson” (Oxenstierna), SBL, 1992-94, Vol. 28, p.496.
\textsuperscript{320}BHS III, no. 88, pp. 181–183. Letter dated thev 14 September 1467: Eric Axelsson (Tott) to the Council of Lübeck: He complains about the unfair treatment of his family by King Christian.
worked for the interests of his prospective father-in-law, gaining both economically and politically as a result of these efforts. The representatives of the two councils could only agree to respect the earlier agreement reached by the councils, “effter then gamble förbindingh”, whereby they promised to keep the peace and preserve societal harmony, which included free trade and communication, and the magnates’ right to freely and without hindrance visit and benefit from their estates in all three Scandinavian kingdoms, and that the councils would meet at Kalmar on 22 July 1467 in order to further discuss the impending re-election of King Christian, in an attempt to revitalize the Kalmar Union.322

The Swedish delegates returned to Stockholm to further discuss the matter with Archbishop Jöns Bengtsson and other members of the Council of the Realm, including Erik Axelsson, and then inform Christian of their decision. There was, according to Jens Olesen, a need for an overriding reason and effective explanations if the Swedish council was to accept Christian as king of Sweden. Alexandra Skoglund had earlier asserted that the decision to accept Christian had to be first anchored with Jöns Bengtsson. Olesen indicated that there was a more general aversion of the Council members to reinstate Christian. Clearly, the Swedish council was not only divided over choosing Christian or Karl Knutsson, they were also divided as a council between themselves. Olesen observed that there are no sources which support Skoglund’s suggestion that Christian’s re-election was wholly dependent on Jöns Bengtsson’s choice of king.323

The Axelsson Totts’s economic interests in both Sweden and Denmark would become a political problem for King Christian, contra his campaigning to revitalize the Kalmar Union under a strong monarchy. Faced with these choices, the council’s motives and decisions to refute Christian would be crucial to the later political developments, which included diverse economic contentions between the magnates themselves and within the magnatial factions. As already pointed out Ivar’s relationship with King Christian was not without problems due to the King’s earlier interference with what should be deemed as Axelsson church, political and economic agendas in order to curtail their growing influence and power within the Nordic councils of the realm and politics of the Baltic region.

In the months following on from the events at Nyköping Castle, Sten Sture married Ingeborg Åkesdotter, daughter of the powerful Danish castleton of Varberg, Åke Axelsson. More interesting in this context are the earlier events where Sten Sture is first mentioned in the sources which connect him to the Axelsson Totts prior to 1466 at Nyköping Castle.

Sten Sture the Elder

Sten Sture was a young and obscure knight when he was betrothed to Ivar Axelsson’s youngest daughter Agneta in 1465. At about the same time, Åke Axelsson had arranged a prestigious marriage for his daughter Ingeborg to Hans Sigurdsson (Sudreim), the son of the powerful Norwegian seneschal, Sigurd Jonsson (the Norwegian king’s most important subject and the wealthiest magnate in Norway at this point in time). The sudden death of both Agneta Ivarsdotter and Hans Sigurdsson in 1465 exposed the overall position of the Axelsson Totts to the realities of death and the effect these two particular deaths would have on their political aspirations, economic ambitions and the vital continuation and development of the dynastic line. This was not the first crisis for the powerful and influential Axelsson Totts. From a geopolitical and social perspective the death of Hans Sigurdsson was a serious setback for Åke Axelsson’s ambitions as lord of Halland, to expand the family

324 SRA, original letter on parchment, confirmation of Ingeborg’s betrothal to Hans Sigurdsson, dated Varberg 11 March 1464 (SDHK 28264); printed in DN XVI: 219 and Rep. Dipl. 2:1, no. 1727: See also SRA, original letter on parchment (SDHK 39409): Hans Sigurdsson’s letter confirming Ingeborg’s dower.
interests into Norway through the betrothal and marriage of his daughter Ingeborg. Märta Bengtsdotter (Vinstorpaätten) would eventually play an instrumental role in the marriage between her daughter Ingeborg and Sten Sture the Elder in 1466. Märta actively intervened on behalf of Sten Sture, in order for him to obtain a marriage contract for her daughter Ingeborg Åkesdotter. He was rejected by her father and uncles. In a second attempt Sten Sture sent two letters; one to Åke Axelsson and the other to Märta Bengtsdotter. A comparison of the two letters reveals Sten Sture’s two separate strategies.

In his letter to Åke Axelsson, economics, support from the friends/kin of Tott dynasty and loyalty to the core family stand out as vital themes behind Sten Sture’s bid to marry into the Axelsson Tott family. He promises Ingeborg a substantial dower if he is given permission to pursue a marriage contract. Sten Sture also promised to abide by Åke Axelsson’s will and be a good son to him. The letter sent to Märta, offers itself to the female mentality where he promised to love and take care of Ingeborg and her best interests if Märta (and Åke, whom Sten Sture will persuade) were to accept the offer of marriage on behalf of their daughter. Sten Sture makes reference to Ivar Axelsson’s daughter, his contracted bride prior to her sudden death in 1465. Thus Sten Sture gives the impression that this was a mark of approval from the Axelsson (Totts). The marriages must have come to the attention of King Christian at some point in time.325

The gravest consequence of Sten Sture’s later betrothal to Ingeborg Åkesdotter was the effect this marriage would have regarding the internal political dynamics of the Union and how it inevitably changed the overall social, economic and political dynamics of the Tott-Bonde-Trolle-Sture alliance before and after Ivar’s death. The marriage between Sten Sture and Ingeborg did not have an immediate impact as such, but certain realities pertaining to the marriage had probably not escaped the notice of Åke Axelsson’s brothers, especially Ivar Axelsson, who now found himself in the tentative position as the brother of Åke Axelsson’s son-in-law, rather than consolidating his influence as father-in-law over both Arvid Trolle and Sten Sture; one must assume that they would probably have been expected to loyally support Ivar Axelsson’s intentions and aspirations and accept Ivar’s closeness to King Karl as the king’s main advisor and son-in-law.

There was some initial hesitation on the part of Åke Axelsson to sanction such a union. Sten Sture’s initial request was met with a negative response. His political and economic plans to infiltrate Norway had seriously floundered in 1465 because of the unexpected death of Hans Sigurdsson, and whilst his

325 MISS, Vol II, 1914, letters no. 36, 37; both dated 6 October 1466, pp. 40–43; ref. no. 1 on p. 40.
relation to King Christian remained good, the marriage between Sten Sture and Ingeborg could adventure his overall position of trust in Denmark.\textsuperscript{326}

The decision to confirm the betrothal of Ingeborg to Sten Sture drastically halted the dynamics of the Tott network, which would directly and indirectly influence the choices and decision-making strategies of the close family, kindred folk and their network protagonists.\textsuperscript{327} Throughout the 1460s there was growing contention between the Axelsson Totts (but not directly Åke) and King Christian. Sten Sture agitated openly against the Union, whilst his new found position within the core of the Tott network may well have contributed to raise the level of animosity over time between Christian and the Axelsson Tott network.

To further understand the motives of Sten Sture, in choosing Ingeborg Åkesdotter, it is necessary to discuss the marriage union in economic terms rather than political ones, focusing on the land properties owned and held by Åke Axelsson Tott and lands which were expected to be inherited by Ingeborg. For this purpose the transcriptions and comments of Åke Axelsson’s surviving accounts, researched and discussed by historian Sven Welander, are the main source of information. The remaining accounts and documents held at the national archives of Sweden and Denmark (nine remaining sources of the original twenty-five transactions) and in the Diplomataria of transcribed letters and charters, are the main body of existing letters of land purchases made after 1455 by Åke Axelsson. These are not included in the accounts. Studying the dates of the surviving documents, Welander came to the conclusion that the accounts were created before 1455.\textsuperscript{328}

Åke Axelsson’s inheritance from his grandmother and his mother were not included in his general accounts. He chose to keep inherited properties and acquired properties separate. He bought properties and land, mainly from the gentry and the lower nobility wishing to sell or be forced to sell farms and estates, especially during the Engelbrekt Uprising. These were concentrated to areas in the vicinity of his pledged holdings and his private properties in Halland in the vicinity of his main estate complex Hjuleberg. The properties owned by Åke Axelsson in the neighbouring Swedish counties offered direct access to the vital river outlets that flowed to the coast of Halland. The dominant position of Åke Axelsson in both North and South Halland and Ivar’s control of the adjacent fiefdom of Hishult, (which was a separate county in the Middle Ages, and included parts of northern Skåne), meant that the Axelsson Totts had almost full control over the major water trading routes and the major castle strongholds along the coastline bordering with the open waters of the Kattegat and contained geographically in the west by the Jutlandic peninsula in

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{326} DRA, original letter on parchment, dated Nyköping 6 October 1466, (SDHK 42595): For a transcript version of the letter see BHS III no. 84.
  \item \textsuperscript{327} Fabricius 1904, p. 279.
  \item \textsuperscript{328} Herr Aage Axelsøns (Thott) “jordebok”, 1957, ed. S. Welander, p. 50.
\end{itemize}
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the North Sea, the Danish islands of the Straits and Skåne. Important to note is that the Kattegat is a continuation of the Skagerrak which joins the North Sea to the Baltic Sea. Åke Axellson had large sums of money at his disposal for his property acquisitions at the beginning of the 1450s. The Axellson Totts controlled most of the coastal area from Halland to Kalmar including Gotland.

Ivar Axellson’s Visborg retinue in his accounts for Gotland

Gotland has been mentioned more than once in the thesis. The island was an important nod for the trade interests of the Axellson Totts and central to their sphere of influence in the Baltic Sea from 1449 to 1487. This section studies friendship and affiliated relationships in Ivar Axellson’s accounts for Gotland more closely. Ivar took over control of Gotland in 1464 after the death of his brothers Olof and Philip. The surviving information in Ivar Axellson’s account book for Gotland is a unique source of information for his remaining three years as master of Visborg Castle.

The accounts represent the years 1485–1487. The ledger had originally 116 thick paper pages sewn inside a protective cover made of brown leather (pigskin). The outside cover is believed to be original to the accounts. Only 112 remain today. One of the missing pages came from the first part of the accounts, whilst three pages are missing from the third part. Only the seams of these four pages remain. As to why the pages were removed can only be speculated upon. They may have simply fallen out of the cover over time, but one should keep in mind that Ivar Axellson made a hasty retreat from Gotland The four pages may have contained sensitive or dangerous information, which was detrimental to the safety of his family and certain friends of the network, and which he felt he did not want to fall into the hands of either King Hans or Sten Sture the Elder.

Searching for the paid retinue

The study of client and friend relation in the fifteenth century, present certain difficulties in the Scandinavian sources. Although the Axellson Totts held Gotland from 1449 to 1487, there are no detailed accounts which survive for Olof Axellson’s period as commander of the island and certainly none for Philip who died one month after his older brother.

The accounts are an important source of information because they not only offer insights into the actual make-up of the private garrison of Visborg retained by Ivar Axellson, they also offer unique insights into the relationships

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329 Herr Aage Axellssons (Thott) “jordebok”, p. 5; See also Wallace Nilsson, 2010, pp. 43- 44.
331 A later source for Visborg Castle’s garrison is Sören Norby’s accounts for Gotland 1523-24.
Figure 11. Ivar Axelsson modeled himself in the effigy of the warrior knight, St George on horseback. The figure had long golden hair and bore the distinctive red and yellow of the Tott dynasty. The statue stood in St Hans Church, Gotland and is believed to have been commissioned as a tomb monument for Ivar Axelsson. His brothers, Philip were also laid to rest in St John’s in 1464. The statue was eventually moved to Visborg Castle after the Reformation and was also repainted in the blue and yellow of the Swedish Caroleans, when Gotland became a Swedish territory in 1645. The original grey/white horse with the red cross of St George painted on its forehead was repainted brown. Visby, Gotlands Fornsal. Photograph: By Anders Fröjmark, 2017.
between members of the retinue and they interacted with the master of Visborg. Other posts allow historians to penetrate the everyday life of a fifteenth century nobleman. Foreign and local contacts were numerous on Gotland. Many of these individuals were in the service of Ivar Axelsson and contributed to tax collections, and the defense and maintenance of Visborg Castle at this critical point in time.

The accounts include several personal details, the actual up-keep and improvements to the fortification of Visborg, as well as Magdalena’s private estate, as well as deliveries to Lillö and material supplies for improvements to Stegeborg Castle, over a two year period. One is also offered a unique list of the Visborg garrison under the command of Ivar Axelsson. Although no sources remain for Ivar Axelsson’s period as commander of the garrison of Stegeborg 1467-1487, it is possible to appreciate the size of the Tott garrison by studying the size and expenses of the garrison in Gregers Mattsson’s (Lillie) accounts and supply book, as commander of Stegeborg from 1487 to 1492. 332 Also in the summer of 1485 Laurens Skinkel, a member of Ivar’s retinue, traveled on two occasions, on the order of Ivar Axelsson, from Visby to Sweden, on a mission to Sten Sture. The same Laurens Skinkel was appointed castellan of Visborg from 1509–1517 after Jens Holgersen (Ulfstrand).333

A later additional comment to the first folio of the Visborg accounts concerning the date and the ownership of the accounts was a later construction based on specific observations of the book’s contents.334 The accounts mention retainers, tradesmen, contacts (possibly agents) and faithful servants, as well as the receiving of gifts, donations, grants or income given or received by Ivar Axelsson. The accounts also reveal information pertaining to the social and ethnic make-up of the Visborg garrison, whilst also offering information about the visitors to the castle during the last intensive years of Ivar’s life.

Most notable is that both Hans Åkesson (Tott) and Erland Kagge were retained and received payment for their services according to the list of Visborg

333 Melefors & Wase, 1991, pp. 122 and 142, f.25r and 30r; Lindström, GM II, 1895, pp. 450–451; Erslev, 1879, p.14; An interesting comment made by Lindström concerns Ivar Axelsson’s nephew Jørgen Olofsson. According to the author Olofsson became a client of Jens Holgersen, the son-in-law of Arvid Troll. Lindström also noted that Olofsson participated in acts of open piracy, off the shore of Gotland. He was personally mentioned by name in one of the many written complaints presented by the Hanseatic League. Lindström does not specify the exact year of the complaint.

These two sources must be discussed parallel to other relevant documents in order to illuminate on the wider aspects the affinities and the realities of the choices available to the individuals of the affinity and their eventual decisions based on both private and public motives reflected in vital economic, political and social strategies of survival.

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garrison. Hans Gillingstam noted that Squire Knut Nilsson (Sparre of Hjulsta and Ängsö; a cousin once removed of Ramborg Gustavsdotter and brother-in-law of Tönne Eriksson (Tott), a grandson of Åke Axelsson) was retained by Ivar Axelsson and died on the island of Gotland. The garrison was multi-ethnic and included several men from Estonia; whilst others were recruited from Gotland, Dalarna and Småland, Pomerania, Mecklenburg, Prussia, Poland/Livonia, Jutland, Halland, Blekinge and Skåne. This ethnic diversity may have been Ivar’s crucial strategy to keep the garrison free from strong Swedish and Danish tendencies. Too many Danes or Swedes would have posed two potential threats of defection if and when the castle came under attack from the Swedish Protector, Sten Sture, or King Hans. Skåne and Halland were natural recruiting areas for retainers and labourers. The garrison was neutral to the politics of Sweden and Denmark and faithful to the interests of Ivar Axelsson Tott, as long as they received regular payments for their service and loyalty. The following excerpts offer a brief glimpse into the ethnic make-up of the garrison in the summer accounts of 1486:

Anno Dominj medlxxx Sexto festum pentecostes [14/5]

Sweneløn om Sommeren
Slage hanssøn
Erland kagge
... Knwd nielssøn
... hans køgemester
Dirik oldefelt
henrik dringgelbergh
Dawit
... Jep jwde
Soppenbrod
... niels dallecarll
pedher dallecarll
oloff wan hawen

xxx mark hwíth [Swedish: Sparre of Hjulsta and Ängsö]
xxx mark hwíth [Scandinavian origins: Stiernsköld]
xxx mark hwíth [Vendish, gentry/yeoman: Kagg]
xxx mark hwíth [Swedish: Sparre of Hjulsta and Ängsö]
xxv mark hwíth
xxv mark hwíth
x mark hwíth [Westphalia: see figure 13]
viij mark hwíth
xxv mark hwíth
x mark hwíth [Estonia/Livland]
viij mark hwíth [Dalecarian, Dalarna]
viij mark hwíth
viij mark hwíth

335 Ivar Axelsson Tott’s räkenskapsbok för Gotland 1485–1487, p. 93, eds. Melefors and Wase, 1990; SRA C9, f. 17v, pp. 15–19; see also Lund, 2017, pp. 24–28. Gillingstam, 1952, pp. 318–329: ref no. 355. Tönne Eriksson (Tott) was married to Karin Nilsdotter (Sparre of Hjulsta and Ängsö), dead before 1495, in his first of three marriages. Tönne Eriksson periodically supported the Union kings and later the Swedish protectors. He held Raseborg 1492–1513 during the reigns of King Hans and during the Protectorate of Sten Sture. Tönne Eriksson held Viborg Castle between 1513 and 1520, during the protectorates of Svante Nilsson and Sten Sture the Younger, Tönne Eriksson was beheaded on the express order of King Christian II in 1522. See chart 6b.

This type of recruiting should be seen as a particular strategy used by the Axelsson Totts to create a loyal affinity of armed men. Very little is known about the makeup of the garrison at Stegeborg during the period it was administrated by Ivar Axelsson (between 1467 and 1487). What is known is that Erland Kagge was appointed sheriff of Stegeborg by Ivar Axelsson; he was forced to capitulate after a three-month-long siege led by Gregers Mattsson in February 1487. The siege was the result of Ivar's refusal to relinquish the castle to Sten Sture the Elder.

Ivar's decision to defend his right to the castle was the result of irreversible differences in political direction and economic self-agendas between the two men. These differences had eventually turned into open hostilities, which divided the Tott-Bonde-Sture-Trolle affinity into two opposing factions. The diverging differences between Ivar Axelsson and Sten Sture had a profound effect on the social and political dynamics of the network and the coherency of its friends and kin members. It also had profound consequences concerning the politics of Sweden and the future of the Union's direction.

The political crisis gradually deepened after 1475 due to the breakdown in factional politics in Sweden, becoming more acute after the deaths of Eric Axelsson, Laurens, and King Christian between 1481 and 1483. The question of the Union of three Scandinavian kingdoms—whether to or not to be—and the Axelsson Totts's hold on the Finnish fiefdoms and Gotland, were once again the political priority of the meeting in 1483; this was Ivar Axelsson's last-ditch attempt to save his family's economic empire and restore the balance of power within the Tott network, with a unified wish to resume the Nordic Union with the Axelsson Totts in a leading position in the councils of the Realm and control of the most important fiefdoms. This would also have guaranteed the return of the family's confiscated estates and pledges. Sten Sture's ambition ran contrary to the Axelsson Tott's overall political and economic goals.

The failure of Ivar's plan was not only due to the fact that his two brothers died during this crucial period of dissent, it was also due to the fact that the Swedish council was divided as to which strategy best suited the realm. This was not case in 1472 and 1476 where the most of the Swedish council stood behind the politics of the Axelsson Totts and the wider aims of the network. Even the young Svante Nilsson (Natt och Dag) spent time at Visborg during the turbulent last years of the struggle for power between Sten Sture and Ivar Axelsson Tott. Although not mentioned in the accounts, as were Ivar's son-in-law, Arvid Trolle and Stegeborg's sheriff Erland Kagge; extant correspondence shows that Svante spent time at Visborg Castle in 1482, boasting a good relationship between his mother and Ivar Axelsson.

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338 SRA SDHK 31908, Sten Sture's letter of settlement to Ivar Axelsson, 14 May 1487, concerning the conditions for the capitulation of Stegeborg; see also Schück, 1976, p. 364, no 76.


340 Original letter held by The Museum Archive in Gdańsk (Muzeum Narodowe): See also SRA, SDHK 31190, photocopy; later transcript DKA; See letter written by Maria Zelewska, dat. Gdańsk 28.9.1977.

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337 Mårten Mattsson was a servant of Claus Åkesson (Tott).
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Visborg Castle, which he believed would guarantee loyalty to the Axelsson Totts during times of relative peace and most importantly, in periods of conflict and crisis, defined by the changing nature of the king's authority and realm contra the patron/client expectations of network loyalties and friendship within the framework of the Kalmar Union. Finally the deaths of King Christian, Eric Axelsson and Laurens Axelsson allowed Sten Sture the Elder and King Hans to undermine and attack Ivar Axelsson's vulnerable position between 1483 and 1487, and the later position of his widow in the early part of the Sture Age.

Summary
The chapter offered a discussion specific to the decision-making of the Axelsson Totts; the Candidacy to the Bishopric of Odense, the Tranekær Affair and the dynastic union of the Tott-Bonde-Sture dynasties at Nyköping Castle. The latter event should not been seen as the root cause to the Axelsson Tott’s conflict with King Christian I and the later conflict between Ivar Axelsson and Sten Sture the Elder, but rather as catalyst to a change in the direction of politics and the Kalmar Union after 1470. The first two events should be considered two connected attempts to thwart the influence and power of the Axelsson Totts in Denmark at a time when King Christian I was attempting to consolidate his power and authority as union king amongst the magnates and Church. The chapter also presented some interesting details concerning the Tott network and the origins of the men affiliated to them on Gotland recorded in Ivar Axelsson’s accounts for the period 1485–1487. The accounts reveal that Ivar Axelsson preferred an ethnically diversified garrison to defend
Visborg Castle, which he believed would guarantee loyalty to the Axelsson Totts during times of relative peace and most importantly, in periods of conflict and crisis, defined by the changing nature of the king’s authority and realm contra the patron/client expectations of network loyalties and friendship within the framework of the Kalmar Union. Finally the deaths of King Christian, Eric Axelsson and Laurens Axelsson allowed Sten Sture the Elder and King Hans to undermine and attack Ivar Axelsson’s vulnerable position between 1483 and 1487, and the later position of his widow in the early part of the Sture Age.
PART 5: FEMALE EMPOWERMENT?
Chapter 8

Widowhood was anticipated at the moment of marriage\textsuperscript{341}

The anticipation of widowhood

Historian Sue Sheridan Walker observed that in order to hear the voices of women in the Middle Ages:

we must listen to the their demands in texts […] The control of property – as heiress, landholders by their own acquisition, joint tenants, and doweresses – gave medieval women power, status, and a need to be familiar with the land law. […] Litigation about real property and appurtenant rights required that women, especially widows, be an active part of that pervasive legal culture.\textsuperscript{342}

Still, the social interactions of women during the Kalmar Union, with only a few exceptions, have been sidelined, their voices phased out, mainly due to the fact that the history of the Union is traditionally summed up in terms of national politics, factional conflict, revolts, and church politics – considered traditionally to be the concerns of men. Exclusion, in case of women, it can be concluded, has created a void in the historical narrative of the period. The Kalmar Union is no exception, despite the fact that the chronicle writers of the period observed the deeds and fate of women as being relevant to the outcome of events.\textsuperscript{343} Women of the noble networks in Scandinavia are not studied in as much detail as the networks of the female religious houses or those of their male network counterparts, which means that knowledge of the structure and dynamics of the female social network within the wider magnatial network of the family and kin is relatively limited. Historian David Baldwin made a similar point concerning the general failure to research the proactive role and function of the sisters of Richard Neville, the Earl of Warwick, during the War of the Roses.\textsuperscript{344} This is equally true concerning the women of the Tott-Bonde-Sture network in Sweden.

\textsuperscript{341} Leyser, 2002, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{342} Sheridan Walker, 1993, pp. 81–82. The author’s study is concerned with struggle of English widows, but having said this, Sheridan Walker observations offer some valid points of discussion concerning the situation of Scandinavian widows in the law text.
\textsuperscript{343} Nordquist, 2015, p. 168; Nordquist observed that the author of the Younger Sture Chronicle (\textit{Cronica Swecie} 1520–1523) observed that the ambitions of women affected the natural social order and hierarchy, which the writer felt had a negative influence over the decisions and actions of the magnates. The effectively points to the notion that when women, deliberately or mistakenly, side-stepped the set social and gender hierarchies of society, their actions led to conflict between the men of the network: See for example SMR 2, v. 5195–5199.
\textsuperscript{344} Baldwin, 2009, pp. 16–17.
Twentieth century writer, Virginia Woolf observed in her essay, A Room of One’s Own, that female self-assertion could truly free a woman, but she must have money and a room of her own, then and only then, believed Woolf, it was possible to be successful and reap the fruits of life’s endeavours. Here, Woolf recognized that there was female economic position which offered independence, but could not exclude men entirely. From such a vantage point, it was possible for a woman to view the world and react outwardly toward society.

Both Sheridan and Woolf’s insights are a suitable starting point in an analysis of the female socio-economical position of the female elites in the Late Middle Ages. Women of medieval society preferred the comfort zone of the intermediary space, rather than reacting from a direct power base as the springboard for action. Direct and indirect influence could be considered the dividing line between how men and women were primed to express their personal authority and economic intent. Female empowerment stemmed from the fact that women of the magnatial networks brokered vital economic and dynastic resources. These were only accessible to the magnates through marriage or remarriage to women of the nobility. Such marriages almost always guaranteed partial or full access to the national political arena and the Crown. Historian Rhoda L. Friedrichs pointed out that, “A bride who was a maiden brought a dowry [into the marriage], but a widow had a dower [as well as a dowry], conventionally one third of her late husband’s property, and often in jointure as well.”

Women had to grasp every opportunity to utilize intermediary influence in legal actions and have their economic rights confirmed. This allowed them to legally enter, sell or donate properties set aside for them in dower by their husbands, alternatively receiving suitable compensation in the form of money/chattels or other compatible properties. The size and type of estates awarded to women of the elite class in dower, often led to disputes between members of the late husband’s and the widow’s family. Some disputes, as will be later discussed, spilled over into national politics and factional rivalry. Swedish historian Maria Sjöberg concluded that, although the public space, did indeed, limit the actions of women, they were successful in using custom, the law and the Church to make their opinions heard. Women did not consider themselves without purpose or a subordinate group of society.346

The reality of legal representation in the Middle Ages, demanded a woman’s physical presence at hearings and during estate transactions. Agreements and legal contracts could not be finalized, officially sealed or otherwise implemented without the female party’s express approval. The duality of the female persona was on the one hand, an acknowledgement of her

rights, whilst on the other hand; her forced silence deemed her a subordinate and limited position to that of men. Therefore, one of the main concerns in the following discussion is how women chose to orientate between the acknowledgment of her physical persona and the silence of her involuntary subordination within the social structure of the magnatial network.

If one adopts a point of departure concerning the agency of women, which assumes that their strategies contributed to the developments of the Kalmar Union and allowed them to actively participate in the wider space of society dominated by their male counterparts, certain questions arise out of such an assumption. How and to what degree did they influence the magnatial network and the wider politics of the period? When one talks of the female participation influencing the dynamics of the magnatial network one must consider the politics and economics of conflict.

One interesting suggestion as to why women seem less exciting or interesting than their male counterparts, harks back to lack of interest in them more generally. Take the case of the lesser known queens of England. The most recent research considers Joan of Navarra, the second queen consort of King Henry IV. Her case has been recently put forward by historians Tom Watson and Natalia Rodríguez-Salcedo. The starting point of investigation was the historical silence surrounding her life as queen and dowager queen of England. They came to the conclusion on the basis of the evidence, that her “motherly relations with her stepchildren weren’t the essence of modern headlines, let alone late medieval contemporary chroniclers.”

Women, Michael Hicks observed, are vital to the historic narrative. If historians persist in limiting their investigations to the “best documented individuals of the past”, it would constitute an elitist and sexist perspective of history and include, “all but a tiny handful of unrepresentative individuals… and render history impoverished and limited indeed.” In other words, even the most obscured women of historical events matter. It matters how they are presented by historians; it also matters how they chose to represent themselves, contra how men wanted them to be represented. Female life choices and decisions did, as we shall see, influence the events and people with whom they must or chose to interact.

Magdalena Karlsdotter fits well into this company of historically obscured women, despite her being born into the high nobility, the daughter of the elected king of Sweden and married to Ivar Axelsson (Tott), one of Norden’s most notable magnates and the bulwark of the most powerful magnatial network of the period. Magdalena was a one several surviving female member of the Tott network of the political crisis of 1487, which heralded in the Sture regime’s grip on power in Sweden. Also, the reputation of her more

346 Watson and Rodríguez-Salcedo, 2017, p. 7.
documented kin relation Birgitta Olofsdotter the Elder’s life, has from the onset been formed by several historians who communicated her rambunctious female behaviour as problematic, which makes her story all the more important to the political events of the period. Elin Gustavsdotter, the widow of Eric Axelsson, also another independent and influential female member of the Tott network. Women, as did their male counterparts, related to more than one useful identity: in reality they were wives, mothers, wealthy heiresses, independent widows, business women, queens, nuns, great ladies and patrons. These identities were weighed up against the unreality of her as a figure of perfection in the romance literature or an alluring advocate of the devil in religious texts.

The range and choice of identities should be recognized as evidence of female empowerment created in the space where women were able to express a degree of intermediary self-assertion, contra the subservient role created by the dominant assertions of men through specific male representations of a woman’s place within the social hierarchy. Maria Sjöberg came to the conclusion, that as long as women did not threaten to undermine the power structure which dictated their position, they were free to make decisions after a wide variety of choices available to them.

Historian Natalie Zemon Davis observed that by the beginning of the sixteenth century, French women’s identities were expressed through their relationships with their husbands, children, kin, dynasty, lineage, patrons and God, and that women as part of the patriarchal family searched, “…[the] boundaries toward self-discovery, self-presentation [and] strategies for achieving some personal autonomy...” The magnatial network was in fact a forum for female self-identifying qualities, where she actively sought and exponated her position through the network’s male members.

Likewise, historian Johanna Andersson Raeder presented a study of the economic conditions of the female members of the Swedish nobility in the Late Middle Ages. The main focal point of her research considered patterns of marriage, frequency of marriage and remarriage chosen by women. Andersson Raeder supported her thesis on the George Duby’s theory, which asserted that there two conflicting patterns of marriage in the Middle Ages; the aristocratic and the sacred. Further, she used Deniz Kandiyoti’s theory of patriarchal
Figure 12. BL Harley MS. 4431. Detail Miniature of French widow, authoress and critic, Christine de Pizan writing in 'The Book of the Queen', 1410–15. Notice the little dog sitting at her feet. The dog symbolized female domesticity, but was also a sign of the devil according to Christian symbolism. The dog’s presence actually presents the duality concerning a woman’s place within the medieval household and the presupposed threat her literacy imposed on the male members of the household.\footnote{Gilchrist, 2012, p. 114; Neumann, 2008, p. 263.} (Free from known BL copyright restrictions).
bargaining, companionship or mutual working arrangements between two married individuals, where women accepted the logic of subordinating themselves to their husbands or guardian. But does this mean that women were subordinated to the will of men in all matters?

Women’s rights, as earlier pointed out, were protected by the National Law (MEL). In practice these rights were easily overlooked or ignored, and often contested by other would be obscure inheritance claims. Support from the men closest to her in legal disputes was vital and necessary, especially in aggressive legal claims on the widow’s estate, to pay her deceased husband’s debts through property transfers and valuables or through loss of estates to the Crown. Financial demands and loss of estates could easily undermine a widow’s whole existence. Some widows freely considered the possibility of personal security through remarriage. In actively seeking the advice or support of male kinsmen or considering remarriage, a widow was not necessarily subordinating herself to social and cultural conventions, but rather assuming a more pragmatic and practical strategy, which complied with the judicial conventions of the law. As land and property owners they took the necessary advice and practical help from men within their own network in order to reap certain social benefits and protect their economic rights.

These choices are echoed in the contemporary medieval debates on the merits of marriage, and the reality of a woman’s position and worth, discussed in the critical writings of Christine de Pisan (d.1430), who in her own lifetime, became the champion of her sex, an independent participant of medieval intellectual French society and a worthy critic concerning the unrealities connected to the ideal of women, whilst also recognizing that in practice there were still limitations which women needed to overcome to gain true independence. Drawing on the dual nature of medieval societal thinking, Herman Bengtsson observed that there were two ideals to which both sexes closely adhered; the knightly and the female. Knights and fair maidens were subject to the flights of fantasy presented to the royal courts and noble houses by the authors of the romances. Such individuals did not exist outside of the pre-set limitations of the social and cultural ideals of the period, and functioned as examples for its audience. But some women, often queens and noble widows were politically and economically very successful, despite the overall domination of male culture and knightly standards.

The position of the ‘femme sole’ was at any given time, motivated by pragmatic choices and decisions concerning remarriage, attitudes toward widowhood, likewise wanting to escape the rigors and demands of secular life and taking refuge behind the wimple of Christ (Sw: dok). Some women

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355 Oxford Dictionary: Law – a single woman: spinster, widow or divorcee or woman whose marriage has been dissolved/ annulled. It could also be a married woman who enjoyed an independent disposition of property and wealth. The expression derives from the Anglo–French: a woman alone; Meale, 2009, p.85; Barron, 1989, p.40.
rebuked their vows of faith in search of satisfaction in the secular world. Women of the Middle Ages were surprisingly durable and when the need arose, they stepped outside of the domestic or the spiritual sphere into the legal in order to protect their property rights.356 The widow’s share of her husband’s estates was limited by the law to one third. But as we shall see in the cases of the Tott women, their portions could be potentially larger than was normally awarded by the law. The reaction of the kin and close family to their dowries and dowers would decide the outcome of such property and land disputes and the course of national politics.

Widows and widowhood: the practical rules of engagement
The status of widowhood offered most women of elite society the opportunity to administrate their own estates and safeguard the rights of any surviving offspring. But this was not always a matter of course in practice because the widow’s independent position was often challenged by perspective claims on the deceased estates; some were personal economic reasons and other claims arose because of the state of national politics. Intermediary negotiating strategies were helpful, rather than resorting to the risks of aggressive hands-on conflict. The demands made on the widow clearly shows that women did, in fact, contribute in maintaining the social and economic structure of the network through their implicit, and yet important roles as mediatory negotiators and marriage brokers.357 So it would be misleading to assert that all women were always subordinated to men and that every women felt the need to be empowered. The realities of the female sex in medieval society were physically risky – that is to say; the risk of loss of property rights and income, and most especially the risks of child-bearing and birthing, which was the main purpose of marriage and the continuation of the male dynastic line.358

A widow’s rights varied geographically, culturally and socially. For example, a widow of nobility in England was, according to the king’s authority, forbidden to remarry without first petitioning for a royal license. Her plea was followed by a determining fee payable to the Crown before a license to avoid marriage or to choose her own partner was awarded to her.359 Women

356 Bovey, 2015: British Library, BL article available online.
358 Bovey, 2015, comments on the subject of childbirth contra a life of spiritual contemplation, “though the appeal of this way of life might be difficult to grasp today, for a medieval woman, one of its attractions must have been freedom from the dangers of childbearing.”
359 Young, 1996, p. 7 and ref. no. 44, for the original sources: CRR, Deputy Keeper of the Records, London, 1922, volume 1, p. 265. In the case of Hugh de Neville, the Chief Forester of King John and Henry III, the Crown took custody of the dower lands belonging to Hugh de Wac’s widow and the custody of the Hugh de Wac’s heir. They were former associates and friends. After the death of Hugh Wac, Hugh de Neville borrowed the widow forty pounds in order to petition the king for the privilege of eventually choosing a new husband or to remain a widow if her new husband predeceased her. The agreement between Hugh de Wac and Hugh de Neville was entered into before the death Hugh de Wac
were forced to make personal pleas or petitions, through their male representatives, to the king for the right to receive a guarantee or writ which enabled them to manage their own estates, take wardship of their daughters, arrange their daughters’ marriages and avoid forced remarriage themselves. In defying specific clauses of a marriage contract a widow who remarried without permission risked the future of her new husband and their eventual off-spring. Such marriages were punished with heavy fines, loss of estates, titles, royal pensions. In some cases they even suffered the consequences of social and dynastic stracization.\footnote{Friedrichs, 2006, p. 77.}

Advantageous marriage contracts extended the core of the family interests and influence to include even peripherally potential and interesting clients of the network. There were of course women who willingly entered into several marriages. Young widows entered into a new marriage as part of the family’s economic or socio-political strategies. Alternatively, more mature widows, not wanting to enter into a new marriage or marry beneath their class, withdrew from public life to a convent having taken legal care of their estates and chattels.\footnote{Friedrichs, 2006, pp. 70–71.} Widowhood could be relatively short for a young aristocratic girl holding titles and dynastic lands, whilst widowhood could stretch over several decades for the mature women. Marriage opportunities presented the chance to renew or create new nodes of contact within or between networks.

Women were sometimes forced to take on the burden of responsibility and debt of their deceased husband’s estates. War, trade and foreign business trips were also occasions where the welfare of the estate was placed in the hands of the wife or widow.\footnote{Meale, 2009, p. 85; Leyser, 2002, pp. 285–287; See historian Henrietta Leyser’s presentation of a longer text extract from Christine de Pisan’s, \textit{The Book of the Three Virtues, Books II and III} translated by C. Cannon Willard and edited M. Pelner Cosman in 1989 with the title: \textit{A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor: The Treasury of the City of Ladies}: Christine de Pisan offers invaluable insights of life in the Middle Ages. Her work aimed at offsetting the male narratives of life which dominated the literary scene of the period. She wrote that, “The world is full of governors of lord’s land […] who are intentionally dishonest. Aware of this, the lady must be knowledgeable enough to protect her interest so that she cannot be deceived. She should know how to manage accounts and should attend to them often, also superintending her agents’ treatment of her tenants and men. […] As for penalties against poor people, she should be more compassionate then rigorous.” Clearly, de Pisan encourages her female counterparts to actively engage in the running of the family’s estates not only for her own well-being, but for the prosperity and well-being of her family, clients and tenants.} In fact, the widow’s actions and decisions concerning her right to administrate her husband’s estates and chattels make donations, to buy and sell property, offered her economic and social possibilities, whilst her
newly acquired status caused strong reactions from both the close core family and peripheral members of the immediate kin because marriages were dynastic affairs. Moving away from Europe and England the next section will study the specific situation and rights of widows in Scandinavia.

Widows in Scandinavia

In contrast to the English widow, a woman in Scandinavia enjoyed the freedom to choose her own course of action on the death of the husband or at the very least, approve the choice of a new husband. The family and kin in Scandinavia arranged marriages independently and without any direct intervention by the king. The right to remarry also included the dowager queens.363

From a narrow perspective they were of nature expected to follow rather than lead society, whilst on a wider level of analysis they often adapted or utilized their outwardly subordinated role to their advantage and found success in their implicit strategies. However, some women became embroiled in long legal battles; some were threatened or suffered the consequences of taking a more forceful stand point concerning the purpose of the institution of marriage. Maria Sjöberg asserted that it is not the subordinated role of women which should be in focus but rather how women’s subordination was expressed and influenced the social male power relationships. Sjöberg used the term power-making relationships (maktskapande relationer). These relationships maintained the balance of power in a society where the transitional power structure of the magnatial network dictated every individual’s position and their dependency on others in order to define themselves.364

Women, it could be argued, lacked real power. It would be more accurate to assert that in certain areas of society women were able to exercise influence within the arena of the male dominated political field. In other words they became empowered by the outcome of events and were in fact implicitly active participating members of society, who took charge from the coulisse rather than taking the centre stage itself. Women strategies were either motivated by their social circles and economic position as prospective wives or maintained

363 SBL, “Dorotea”, 1945, vol 11, p. 355: An example from the period of the Kalmar Union is Queen Dorothea (c. 1430–1495). After the death of King Christopher, Dorothea rejected a proposal from within her family’s German network, which favoured an alliance with the Polish King Kasimir IV. She personally intervend for a marriage between herself and Christopher’s successor, Christian of Oldenburg. Dorothea hoped that Christian would be able to displace Karl Knutsson as Swedish king and become union king, whereby she would remain queen of all three kingdoms.

by a personal self-awareness of their limitations as widows or established wives.\footnote{Leyser, 2002, pp. 185–186.; Leyser discusses English medieval conditions, which serve as a comparative perspective to that of the conditions in Scandinavia.\textsuperscript{365}}

Lack of support or broken friendship ties within the affinitive network could and did alienate a widow, who was theoretically allotted a weaker position, which often entailed the future of one or more children from an earlier marriage. A widower’s surviving children and the grandchildren of predeceased parents from one or more prior marriages, could be alienated from their father’s property through the actions of an assertive widow. Inheritances were also put at risk through the supremacy of a cadet branch over the lesser social senior branch.

Both Swedish National Law and Municipal Law (Stadslagen) guarantied the rights of all children: both male and female.\footnote{Line, 2007, pp. 70–78.\textsuperscript{366}} However, as Charlotte Vainio showed in her study of the function and the role of a woman’s guardian/legal attorney (målsman), legal documents contradicted the stipulations of Magnus Eriksson’s National Law and Municipal Law, and did not always guarantee women’s rights in practice, because the law allowed the horizontal kin to plead their case. The legal attorney (förmyndare) of the children would therefore play an important role in guaranteeing their rights, especially those of the women. Women relied on the influence and power of the vertical family network. Legal documents pertaining to marriage and inheritance became more complicated as literary and legal practices developed throughout Europe and Scandinavia in the Late Middle Ages.\footnote{Vainio, 2010, pp. 3–4; Vainio’s initial starting point of her investigation was the opening clause of the marriage section in Magnus Eriksson’s Land Laws MEL (Giflobalen XI), \textit{Nu sipan bonde ok husfru gift æru, þa þe haua naa at sioeng saman lighat þa ðer han henna rættir målsman, ok ægher sökia ok suara for hona.} Now since the man and woman are married and have shared the same bed, he is therefore her legal guardian and responsible for her actions; See also Vainio, 2013; Holmbäck and Wessén, 1962, for a modern Swedish transcript of MEL.\textsuperscript{367}} Widows as we shall later see, although protected by the law, saw their dowers threatened and taken away from them. The female social network remained partially dependent on their male counterparts to defend their rights from the potential threat of inheritance disputes and in business arrangements.
Chapter 9

Female social networks in the fifteenth century

In the following section the female social sphere of interest is observed within the wider political and economic context of the dynastic and kin network and discussed through the presentation of three women central to the period of the Kalmar Union. These women were core members of the Axelsson Tott network: Birgitta Olofsdotter (Tott), Magdalena Karlsdotter (Bonde) and Elin Gustavsdotter (Sture). In the section concerned with Magdalena Karlsdotter the reader will also become familiar with Ramborg Gustavsdotter (Sparre of Hjulsta and Ångsö) and Christina Karlsdotter (Bonde).

The choice to present three case studies is motivated by the fact that these women’s lives were connected to the political developments and the later break-down of the Tott-Bonde-Sture alliance in the years following the death of Karl Knutsson Bonde, and Sten Sture’s bid to retain and extend his newly won position of power in Sweden after 1476, which led to the marginalizing of Ivar Axelsson after the Kalmar Ordinances (Kalmar Recess) in 1483, whereby the Council of the Swedish Realm agreed to re-instate the Union under the authority of King Christian’s son Hans, and attempt to resolve the dispute surrounding the confiscated fiefdoms, private and pledged estates of the Axelsson Totts. The outcome of both these ordinances reflected the Swedish council’s wish to recreate the Union, which contrasted with the reality of Sten Sture’s personal political ambitions and economic agenda from 1471 until his downfall in 1497.

Common for all of the aforementioned women is that they were able to negotiate the obstacle course of events and personal outcomes by utilizing their social position, beyond the limited range of choices available to them, and whose motivation to survive dictated their decisions. Their cognitive awareness of how to act and react was formed by their experiences as heiresses and wives, and finally through the reality of widowhood. Their motivation and personal ability to take explicit action or implicitly react, if and when it was necessary, to specific situations, was deeply embedded in the ideals of network loyalties and disloyalties, but also their understanding of lineage and birth as socio-cultural markers, and the dynastic expectations that ran parallel to the realities of the experiences and outcome of dynastic conflicts. Disputes threatened to break-down magnatial relations and undermine the cooperation and mutual consensus of the network.

The medieval natural order placed women in a subordinated position within the male dominated structures of society. Magnatial network structures were

created and defined through marriage, inheritance and the maintenance of kin/friend connections. As we shall see the following examples reveal that the women of the magnatial networks created their own nodes of contact and established their own social strategies within the magnatial. Their ancillary role allowed the implementation of implicit pragmatic social and economic strategies which allowed them to navigate within and even around the magnatial network(s) from below, with varying rates of success.\textsuperscript{369}

Protection and sense of community offered by the network, was physically and psychologically essential to all its members. One of these functions was to protect the rights and honour of the network women. Initially widows depended on the continued support from surviving mature children and of her family. It was less likely that the kin of the older step-children and grand-children would support a widow’s claim to an extensive portion her deceased husband’s estates. When support for such claims was lacking, they turned to their male relatives and close friends within the wider network of their own dynastic family and to members of the Church to bolster their claims.

Network support will be observed through the actions and experiences of these women. Some widows, facing the threat and opposition of mature step-children, and failing to gain or maintain the support of the key members of core family and influential friends to represent their interests, were forced to opt for drastic measures to maintain control over the main estates of their deceased husbands or at the very least to guarantee monetary compensation for them. The case concerning the dower and the business transactions of Olof Axelsson’s oldest daughter, Birgitta the Elder and the will of Karl Knutsson will serve to exemplify the key role that legal documents played in inheritance conflicts and how the outcome of such conflicts were influenced by the strategies that the deceased’s relatives asserted to disprove the claims of other dependents. The Tott Inheritance and pledge disputes became intrinsically entangled with the wider political developments after 1470.

Birgitta Olofsdotter had already gained a reputation as being a controversial figure of the Union struggles. Despite living almost all her entire married life in Sweden, her personal and political affiliations remained staunchly true to King Christian, Queen Dorotea and to those of her father Olof Axelsson. This was most obvious during the conflict between King Karl and King Christian I in the 1450s in the struggle for the future of the Union and the throne of Swedish kingdom. Like her powerful uncles she understood her Danish and Swedish economic and political positions as integral to the interests of the Axelsson Thott network. Birgitta was accused and found guilty of divulging Swedish troop movements, accused of high-treason by Karl Knutsson and sentenced to death by burning at the stake in Stockholm 1452. But as a member of both the Swedish and Danish high nobility and supported by her powerful and influential family network, her sentence was reduced to a period

\textsuperscript{369} Småberg, 2004, p. 39.
of forced confinement at the Priory of St John’s in Kalmar (St Johannes nunnekloster). Before moving on to a discussion of the Hammersta Affair and Birgitta’s struggle as a childless widow fighting to remain in possession of her dower of Hammersta in Sweden and confirm the sale and the eventual reimbursement of her mother’s inheritance from Queen Dorothea, a brief biographical account of Birgitta’s life is forthcoming before discussing her business and donation transactions.

Case study 1: Birgitta Olofsdotter the Elder

Birgitta’s mother, Karin Jensdotter (Falk), was c. thirteen years old at the time of the betrothal to Olof Axelsson. Olof was between eighteen and twenty years of age. A comment included in Danmarks Adels Aarbog indicates that the choice of bride was not without problems. Olof and Karin did not get on well with each other, whereby the relationship suffered. The most important result of the union was the birth of Birgitta. Olof may well have separated from Karin Jensdotter until her death, as Birgitta was the only child from this marriage. The sources reveal that during the period c.1420 till 1430 Olof Axelsson fathered an illegitimate son Jörgen. His mother was probably of low birth and remains anonymous. Jörgen was never personally or officially acknowledged by his father or considered to be Olof’s legal heir. He did maintain contact with his older sister and other kin members of the family network after the death of his father, and was a witness in at least one surviving letter pertaining to one of Birgitta’s property transactions.

Olof Axelsson remarried c.1430, this time his choice of bride fell on a member of the Danish Brok dynasty. Johanna Nielsdotter died before 1460. This relatively long marriage produced no heirs and therefore posed no direct threat to Birgitta’s position as her father’s soul legitimate off-spring. Birgitta’s position and economic interests as sui jure heiress changed, however, when her father married for the third and final time to Anne Jensdotter (Present). Olof’s decision to remarry may well have been motivated by the fact that he had no surviving legitimate male heirs from his previous marriages and as previously mentioned his only living son, Jörgen Olofsson, stood outside the

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371 DAA, vol.17, 1900, pp. 418–419, “hendes vis befaldt ham ikke vel” [He did not like her ways].
372 Thott, 1983, p. 134; SRA, original letter on parchment, SDHK 33058; Letter dated Stockholm, 19 January 1494, (one of the letters in the Hammersta Affair suite of letters); Birgitta Olofsdotter confirms her an earlier letter where she donates her inherited estates from her husband and mothers, the contested Hammersta and Vallø Estates to Uppsala Cathedral on her death. She also declares the letter of sale of the aforementioned estates to Sten Sture as null and void. Karen Jensdotter is mentioned as being dead, because Olof Axelsson married his second wife c. 1430. Karen Jensdotter, who died before 1429.
373 Thisset, 1897, p. 149. In 1525 Jørgen Olsson transferred his estates in Sweden which he had received from his uncle Eric Axelsson and Elin Gustavsdotter to Olof Nielsen of Vallø in return for food, clothing and necessary maintenance (board).
The death of Ingeborg’s father, five uncles (c. 1440, 1454, 1463, 1464 and 1465) and her estrangement from her remaining powerful relatives would also become an important contributing factor to the negative outcome of events after 1476. Birgitta’s initial position remained relatively independent, whilst her legal claims were supported by her very powerful uncles, male cousins and the wider kin of the Tott network, all of whom had a vested inheritance interest in bolstering her legal position, because Birgitta’s dower and widow’s share of Eringisle’s estates were a future extension of the Axelsson Tott’s economic interests in Sweden and Denmark. In alienating herself from her remaining uncles’ protective network, it became impossible for them to support her legal claims and estate transactions after 1479.

Birgitta the Elder married only once. She was at least twenty years old when she became the second wife of the much older, Swedish judge for Öland, royal councilor and wealthy landowner Eringisle Nilsson (Hammersta dynasty). They were married from 1442 until Eringisle’s death in 1469. There were at least three children born in Eringisle’s second marriage, none of whom survived to maturity. However there were children from his first marriage at the time of his union with Birgitta. By 1465 this situation had also changed. His son Algot Eringislesson, who had married twice, was also dead. Algot died without heirs. Birgitta, Algot’s sister, had been contracted in marriage to Eringisle (Karlsson) Gädda of Gäddaholm. She predeceased her father, brother and two young daughters, who were placed under the guardianship of their father. Eringisle Gädda married a second time to Bengta Simonsdotter (Körning). This marriage produced two surviving daughters. After the death of Eringisle Gädda in 1475, his widow Bengta married Birgitta Olofsdotter’s cousin, Jörgen Åkesson (Tott). He became the guardian of Eringisle Gädda’s surviving children from his second marriage. Jörgen had one child with Bengta Simonsdotter, a son Åke Jörgensson.

Chart 3 on the opposite page, illustrates the complicated nature of the inheritance after Eringisle Nilsson, observed through the Tott, Hammersta and Gädda dynastic connections. Eringisle Gädda’s and Jörgen Åkesson’s active participation and aggressive stand against Birgitta’s claim, as a widow with predeceased husband and children (not to be confused with barren), would become central to Birgitta’s active defense seen in her personal choices and decisions to pursue her claim of dower of the Hammersta Estate and other estates held in jointure by herself and Eringisle between 1442 and 1469.

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374 Thiset, 1897, p. 148; ref. no. 3; DAA, 1900, Vol 17, pp. 419–420.
376 Bendix, PHT, 1956, p.145; Se SRA SDHK 30006. The letter mentions Birgitta and Eringisle’s predeceased daughter Anna.
377 Bendix, PHT, 1956, p.145; Se SRA SDHK 30006. The letter mentions Birgitta and Eringisle’s predeceased daughter Anna.
378 Algot Eringislesson was to married Karen Hansdotter (Kröpelin) and Cecilia (Eriksdotter) Nipertz. Cecilia was the sister of Karen Nipertz, the widow of Laurens Axellson Tott after 1483.
379 Eringisle (Karlsson) Gädda was the nephew of Johan (Nilsson) Gädda, whose seal was amongst the eight seals on Birgitta Olofsdotter’s letter of dower in 1442; SRA SDHK 24006; see Gillingstam, 1996, p.127 for a published transcript of a later sixteenth century copy of the original letter; Thiset, DAB, 1897, p.153.
380 DAA, 1900, vol. 17, p. 423.
The death of Ingeborg’ father, five uncles (c. 1440, 1454, 1463, 1464 and 1465) and her estrangement from her remaining powerful relatives would also become an important contributing factor to the negative outcome of events after 1476. Birgitta’s initial position remained relatively independent, whilst her legal claims were supported by her very powerful uncles, male cousins and the wider kin of the Tott network, all of whom had a vested inheritance interest in bolstering her legal position, because Birgitta’s dower and widow’s share of Eringisle’s estates were a future extension of the Axelsson Tott’s economic interests in Sweden and Denmark. In alienating herself from her remaining uncles’ protective network, it became impossible for them to support her legal claims and estate transactions after 1479.  

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The letters included in the Hammersta suite were important for Birgitta’s future financial security and position as a widow, having no surviving heirs of her own. These letters are dated 1460 to 1467; the period includes events pertaining to Olof Axelsson’s third marriage and the death of Birgitta’s step-children Algot and Birgitta. Eringisle Nilsson and Birgitta Olofsdotter wrote their joint wills three years before his the death. But it was the publication and realization of the will in Birgitta’s favour which gave rise to conflict. Her most serious threat came from Eringisle Gädda’s opposition over the extent of her right of inheritance and dower after Eringisle Nilsson. She also faced an eventual threat from her younger half-siblings and her father’s widow Anna Jensdotter concerning her mother’s inheritance of the Vallø estate in Denmark. Realizing the potential double threat which Birgitta face, Eringisle Nilsson made economic provisions for his second wife. On the 28 June 1467 Eringisle officially transferred the property rights of Birgitta’s dower Hammersta and other estates in Östergötland to her in writing. He also awarded Birgitta a sizable inheritance portion of his personal family estates, as well as his purchased and pledged properties. She was to also to enjoy Eringisle’s estates to the fullest whilst his granddaughters were still children and until her death. The size of Birgitta’s widow’s portion was considerably larger than the one third portion stipulated in the National Law of Sweden and more in line with the widow’s portion as stipulated in the older Provincial Laws.

The discrepancy between the sizes of Birgitta’s inheritance portions did not necessarily disqualify the legality of Eringisle’s generous award to his second wife. However, dower and widow’s portions larger than stipulated in MEL were usually contested after the death of the husband. Disputes arose from the widow’s demands to take legal possession of her widow’s portion of the husband’s estates and properties awarded her according to her letter of dower, alternatively a demand for compensation in money. In Eringisle’s will, Eric Axelsson was appointed to represent Birgitta’s interests and Eringisle Gädda represented the interests of his children and late wife (including their portion of the inheritance after Algot Eringislesson). They confirmed the will by placing their seals after those of Eringisle and Birgitta. Eringisle Gädda, as will be shown contested Birgitta’s right to control and enjoy her husband’s estates within two years of the death of his father-in-law.

Birgitta’s and Eringisle’s letters were presented for the Council in Stockholm in 1470 and 1472 as evidence of Birgitta’s rights; on both occasions they were accepted by the Council, after a careful examination of them. Confirmation of the decision was noted in the judgment dated the 28th of August 1472. The letters were judged to be undamaged and authentic. In

381 SRA, original letter on parchment; dated Stockholm’s Castle, 28 August 1472; SRA SDHK 29456; Rystad, 1957, pp.203–204; for an interesting comparison see the economic strategies of the 1st Earl of Westmoreland Ralph Neville and his second wife Joan Beaufort.

382 SRA, original letter on parchment; dated Stockholm 28 June 1467; SRA SDHK 28733; Rystad, 1957, p. 201.

383 SRA, original letter on parchment; dated Stockholm 19 October 1466; SRA SDHK 28630 printed in Rep. Dipl. 2164; All four seals remain intact; Eringisle Nilsson, Birgitta Olofsdotter, Eric Axelsson and Eringisle Gädda.
answer to the Council’s decision, Eringisle Gädda made the serious accusation that Birgitta’s letters were in fact forgeries. Seven years later, in a very different political context her letters were rejected and the decision of 1472 was reversed in favour of Eringisle Gädda’s remaining heirs.383

The letters included in the Hammersta Affair offer insights in how the law could be circumvented through property transfers, pledges and conditional donations to the Church. Birgitta’s and Eringisle Nilsson’s assertive actions were implemented for two different reasons. Eringisle had come to the realization that his estates would leave his dynasty on his death. For Birgitta it was her economic position as childless widow which invoked these estate transactions.384 Birgitta attempted to empower her own personal position through the dynastic shortcomings of her husband, which is seen in their joint actions to transfer a larger portion of Eringisle’s inherited estates to Birgitta. This joint strategy would have effectively delayed the transfer of Eringisle’s main estates during Birgitta’s lifetime. In view of the dynastic onslaught to which her claims were subjected and the effect of the developing political schism due to the deterioration of the Tott–Bonde–Sture affiliated network after 1475, Birgitta continued to assert her independent position as widow outside of the family network between 1479 and 1498.

At the time of her widowhood in 1469 Birgitta was almost fifty years of age. She chose to remain a widow, but not to withdraw from public life. She remained in Denmark for much of her remaining life, only briefly returning to Sweden between 1493 and 1494 to complete a business transaction concerning the sale and receipt of payment for the Hammersta Estate and other properties she had sold to Sten Sture the Elder. She returned to Denmark where she died in 1498. Birgitta’s last, and from a medieval perspective the most important transaction of her life, concerned the spiritual care of her soul in the after-life. In 1498 there were few immediate members of the core family alive to realize these provisions or who cared enough to make provisions on Birgitta’s behalf.

383 SRA, original letter on parchment; dated Stockholm’s Castle, 28 August 1472; SRA SDHK 29456; See also SRA SDHK 29505; Rystad, 1957, pp. 193, 201; see even Lundholm’s analysis, 1956, pp.124–125; Lundholm supports his argument that Birgitta’s letter dated 1467 was false based on the fact that the aforementioned scribe Jep Pedersen did not testify at the hearing in 1472. Rystad pointed out that the same Jep Pedersen was in the service of Eringisle Gädda in 1472 and he had arranged a safe conduct for Jep Pedersen who fained ill-health in order to avoid giving evidence at the hearing. In 1479 Birgitta’s opposition once again rejected the decision of the Council from 1472. Seven years later in 1479 the claimants offered new evidence to the Stockholm Council in the form of a post-confession by a scribe called Clement who claimed that he had forged the letters on behalf of Birgitta. Clement had conveniently passed away by the time of the new hearing.

The decision of 1472 was duly reversed by the Council led by Sten Sture in favour of Eringisle Gädda’s heirs. One explanation for this U-turn decision was the developing political situation in Sweden, where the Axelsson Totts now stood in opposition to Sten Sture and his economic agenda. The other cause was that Birgitta had effectively alienated herself from her uncles, at this politically critical point in time; DRA original letter on parchment; dated 12 October 1479; printed in Danske magazin, 1745, 1:2, pp.41–42.

384 Rystad, 1957, pp. 203–204; for an interesting comparison see the economic strategies of the 1st Earl of Westmoreland Ralph Neville and his second wife Joan Beaufort.
The individuals closest to in life; her uncles, many of her cousins and other kin were dead.

Birgitta Olofsdotter not only attempted to maintain control and empower her person and situation throughout her life, she was concerned for her soul in the after-life. She asked for masses to be said every Thursday, during the morning service and at evening song by the Franciscan friars of the convent in Stockholm. In return for these vital spiritual services she donated a stud farm called Liderne in Sollentuna Hundred to the convent.\(^{385}\) The next section moves away from her spiritual donation, whereby offering an economic perspective pertaining to Birgitta’s earlier decisions as a woman and member of the high nobility.

**The reputation of a widow and limitations of her space**

Birgitta Olofsdotter’s widowhood, historian Göran Rystad concluded after presenting the results of his thorough re-examination of the letters pertaining to the Hammersta Affair. He asserted that this was a controversial struggle to assert her rights against those of her immediate family and her husband’s kin through marriage.\(^{386}\) Birgitta actively asserted her widow’s status in an attempt to maintain control of her estates and preserve the rights awarded her by her husband, who wished only to safeguard his second wife’s position before and after his death. Rystad was not entirely satisfied or convinced of the prevalent conclusions of earlier historians and their influence on his contemporaries, historians Palme and Lundholm, concerning her tenacious reputation as a forger, liar and traitor. Rystad touched on some interesting points concerned, not only, with the authenticity of the Hammersta letters, but also how Birgitta’s legal position as childless widow, very much depended on the ensuing political developments and the deteriorating relationship with her own dynastic family.

Birgitta Olofsdotter’s disputes over Hammersta and Vallø are well documented and discussed in Sweden, but almost unknown outside of Scandinavia. Her legal entitlements, as a widow, were eventually challenged by Eringisle (Karlsson) Gädda on two separate occasions, after the death of his father-in-law, his first wife Birgitta and his brother-in-law Algot. Eringisle Gädda’s first two attempts to overthrow the original ruling made by the Council of the Realm in 1470 failed. So too, the second claim in 1472.\(^{387}\) As

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\(^{385}\) SRA, transcription on paper, a letter of donation by Birgitta Olofsdotter to the Franciscan Friary in Stockholm, dated Stockholm, 9 March 1498; Hadorph: I E73, p. 22; Örnhielm: XII Svartrödrakloster; SDHK 33585.

\(^{386}\) Rystad, *passim*, 1957.

\(^{387}\) Letter dated: Stockholm’s Town hall, 28 August 1470. Sweden’s Protector of the Realm Sten Sture and others judge in favour of Birgitta Olofsdotter, Eringisle Nilsson’s widow’s claim concerning the authenticity of her letter of dower, dated 15 January 1442, and a later conformation of the said dower dated 28 August 1467. SRA Original letter on parchment; transcriptions Peringskiöld: E 2, E. 57; Örnhielm: XI p. 610; G 29, LSåB; FMU 3433; SRA SDHK 29149 (facsimile available online);
earlier mentioned, the Council of the Realm, led by Sten Sture the Elder clearly ruled that her letter of dower, dated 1442, was genuine and valid. Eringisle Gädda took up the case again, with his third and most serious accusation directed at Birgitta’s honour and person— that of forgery. In Eringisle Gädda’s last ditch attempt to take control of Hammersta, he claimed that Birgitta had been aided by a scribe, whom Eringisle Gädda claimed had been instructed to use her deceased husband’s seal to legalize forged or unconfirmed documents pertaining to her supposed dower of the Hammersta Estate and other property transactions, whilst her step-mother Anne Jensdotter contested Birgitta’s inheritance of Vallø in Denmark.\(^388\)

In 1484 Jörgen Åkesson (Tott) presented additional evidence to the Swedish Council in an attempt to sway their judgment. The evidence in question was a copy, of a letter dated 1446; Rystad pointed out, that the letter was in fact a transcript of an earlier copy of an original letter that no longer existed. The transcript was presented more than ten years after the first decision, which confirmed Birgitta’s original letter, dated 1442. Jörgen Åkesson represented the claims of his step-daughters, as well as his own economic interest in taking control of Eringisle’s extensive estates. In representing his step-daughters and in extension his son Åke, Jörgen chose to oppose the rights of his cousin Birgitta.\(^389\) These interesting points of discussion have been discussed in detail, the aim here not to discuss false versus authentic, but rather Birgitta’s position and actions as a widow.

The decisions of 1479 and 1484 were based on questionable evidence put forward by her male opponents and accepted by the council, which overturned the original judgments of 1470 and 1472. The outcome of the two later claims became the foundation of her reputation. But however central Hammersta and Vallø are to Birgitta’s reputation in history, they are still part of a wider context of Birgitta’s life. It is therefore necessary to look beyond the Hammersta Affair and study documents pertaining to her life more generally, in order to better understand Birgitta’s position and piety observed through her decisions as a woman and childless widow.

**Birgitta Olofsdotter’s property transactions and donations**

A perspective of document inclusion creates a wider political, social and economic context for Eringisle’s and Birgitta’s shared business transactions and the motives which formed their economic decisions. Moreover, important

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\(^388\) Lundholm, 1956, pp. 124 –125; Palme, 1950, p. 127; Rystad, 1957, p. 195; see ref. no 500 on p.197 of the thesis

\(^389\) Rystad, 1957, p. 94; Palme, 1950, p. 130; Lundholm, 1956, p. 127. Both Palme and Lundholm wrote that Jörgen Åkesson presented a transcript of the original letter of dower (1446) to the court in 1484. Rystad, on the other hand, asserted that Jörgen Åkesson’s så called transcript was, in fact, copied from an earlier, and noe lost transcript of the original letter.
in this context are Birgitta’s independent actions and decisions after the death of her husband, which includes the drawn-out Hammersta Affair dispute over Vallø and the consequences of her alienation from the core of the family network. In the case of women, there are only a limited number of surviving documents directly and indirectly connected to them. The letters discussed in this section date from 1446 to 1498.\textsuperscript{390} The donation of Birgitta’s dower to Uppsala Cathedral and the sale of Hammersta and Vallø will be discussed in due course.

Birgitta was also involved in property transactions together with her father and husband Eringisle Nilsson, whilst also completing several personal business transactions of her own. She made several generous donations and sold property to a number of religious houses. There is even evidence to suggest that Birgitta lent large sums of money to private citizens in Stockholm and pledged personal chattels in return for smaller monetary loans. Putting Birgitta’s 1442 letter of dower aside, the first document where Eringisle Nilsson and Birgitta Olofsdotter appear together as man and wife is dated 1449. They received confirmation from Algot Eringislesson, who also represented the rights of his predeceased sister Birgitta, whereby confirming that he had taken legal possession of their deceased mother’s chattels and other property included in the Ulvåsa Estate.\textsuperscript{391}

In 1463 Olof Axelsson and Birgitta Olofsdotter, purchased the farm of Åsen in Mogata village, Hammarkind Hundred, from Lars Laurentsson (squire?) and his wife Ingegerd, both residing in the village of Å, for the sum of thirty Stockholm marks. Here Birgitta and her father appear to be acting on equal terms as buyers in this transaction.\textsuperscript{392} In 1466 Eringisle Nilsson and Birgitta attempted to take possession of properties donated to Strängnäs Cathedral by Canon Magnus (Siggesson) Holk. The letter stated that Eringisle and Birgitta would reimburse the Cathedral for several properties donated by Magnus Holk. Eringisle also claimed that he was the closest surviving relative of the now deceased Strängnäs canon. This claim resulted in a dispute with the Bishop of Strängnäs. Birgitta continued to independently champion Eringisle’s original claim in the 1480s to no avail.\textsuperscript{393}

In December 1471 Birgitta sold a farm (?) called Solberga in Rinkaby village, near the town of Örebro, to the Monastery in Eskilstuna. Of interest

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{390} Rystad, 1957, p. 189.
  \item \textsuperscript{391} SRA SDHK 25481; original letter on parchment dated 26 February 1449 (?). The date of the letter is uncertain. There is a date 1440, noted in the corner of the original letter, but in a later hand. However, Birgitta was not married to Eringisle Nilsson in 1440; Styffe, 1911, pp. 248–249.
  \item \textsuperscript{392} SRA SDHK 28106, original letter on parchment, dated Stegeborg 17 March 1463; Lundberg, 1978, pp. 104–105; Lundberg mentions that Eringisle was stripped of his command of Örebro Castle, parallel to the charges brought against Birgitta in 1452. Her actions had immediate political repercussions for her husband, who later received command of Stegeborg Castle, which clearly offers an insight into the quickly changing political landscape in Scandinavia from 1450 onwards.
  \item \textsuperscript{393} SRA SDHK 28616, original letter on parchment, dated Nyköping 29 September; transcriptions: Peringskiöld: E 59: cf. 86 (reg.); Örnhielm: V p. 1051; See also Liedgren, 1986, PHT 3–4, p. 105.
\end{itemize}
here, is the fact that none of her closest male relatives confirm the donation. Johan Eriksson\textsuperscript{394} and Jörgen Olofsson confirmed the transaction.\textsuperscript{395} Jörgen Olofsson, although close to his uncles Ivar and Eric, had no real position of influence within the Axelsson Tott network. He showed no interest in national politics, and therefore one might assume that Birgitta may have deemed him a reliable witness wanting of any political or economic motives. Birgitta also made a donation of the estate of Holknäs and a third of the estate of ‘Bokkatækkæ’ to the Franciscan Convent in Söderköping. In case of the last donation she asks her uncle, Eric Axelsson, to confirm it on her behalf. This donation was made prior to the serious schism between Birgitta and her uncles. Birgitta’s generous donations to the Church before 1475 were con-firmed and remained uncontested by the kin.\textsuperscript{396}

Four letters were dated Almarestäket, the 30 November 1475. These documents included a property transaction with Nils Sture, the confirmation of several other property transactions with Nils Sture, religious donations and a receipt confirming a payment for items Birgitta had purchased from Birgitta Karlsson (Bonde), Nils Sture’s wife. The properties transferred or sold to Nils Sture were in Mörkö village in Hölebo Hundred, Västerrekarne Hundred, Rinkaby village in Glanshammar Hundred, and two farms in Simonsö. Birgitta also sold farms to Nils Sture which she had originally purchased from Knut Bengtsson for 45 Stockholm marks; one in Simonsö, two in Broby in Västerrekarne, three farms in Solberga, for which she had received payment; also the transfer of two farms in Simonsö, where one of the farms mentioned had belonged to Birgitta’s and Eringisle’s deceased daughter Anna.\textsuperscript{397}

More interesting was Birgitta’s decision to sell her inheritance after Eric Axelsson to her cousin Bengt Åkesson in 1486. This included properties and land in both Sweden and Finland. She made specific mention of the Estate of Rösund in Söderköping with all its land and meadows. Amongst the men who confirmed the letter was Johan Oxe, a distant relative of Birgitta.\textsuperscript{398} After Birgitta left Sweden to reside in Denmark she appears to have systematically sold or donated most of her estates outside of Denmark to various members of the family and kin. As late as 1494 Birgitta sold Yttersöra in Berg Parish,
Vadsbo Hundred in Västergötland to Squire at arms Peter Staffansson (Tjurhuvud). She calls him my dear friend. Peter Staffansson was in fact more than a friend; he was Birgitta’s cousin on her mother’s side and also the grandson of Abraham Brødersen. Peter Staffansson was in the service of King Hans in 1501 and resided as one of the king’s local judges in South Halland. Yttersöra (small estate or farm) changed hands again in 1505, when Peter Staffansson sold the property to Anna Karlsdotter (Vinstorp Dynasty), widow after Eric Karlsson (Vasa) a member of the kin and Eric Ericsson (Gyllenstierne), the great-grandson of King Karl of Sweden and the niece of Åke Axelsson and Märta Bengt dotter.399

The estates of Hammersta and Vallo
One of the four letters dated 30 November 1475 concerns Birgitta’s controversial and contentious donation of her private estate Vallø and her dower of Hammersta to Uppsala Diocese.400 The donation, according to the stipulations, would first come into effect after her death. None of her uncles, male cousins or Eringisle Nilsson’s heirs confirmed the donation. But one name does stand out amongst the witnesses; that of Nils (Bosson) Sture. He was the primary opponent in the Täckhammar Affair and is discussed in more detail further into this chapter. The donation letter was received by the Archbishop of Uppsala Jacob Ulvsson. Birgitta’s estates which she donated to the Church were theoretically lost to her own family and her husband’s heirs.401 The stipulations of the donation set in motion a chain of events which would have both dynastic and political consequences for all the involved parties, but most especially for Birgitta, in wanting to assert her rights as independent widow.

By 1479 she had lost the vital support of the Tott network and stood in opposition to Eringisle Nilsson’s heirs. The reason for the conflict between Birgitta and her uncles is not entirely clear. The sources are silent on this point. One might assume that they had willingly supported Birgitta against the legal attacks by Eringisle Gädda concerning her right to Hammersta. They also offered an attestation concerning the Estate of Vallø, only to realize that she had donated it to the Church some years later.402 A further donation of

399. SRA, original letters on parchment; letter dated 10 February 1494, SDHK 40670; letter dated Halmstad 14 February 1505, SDHK 35070, printed HI 4: 46, p. 386; ÅSF 1:3 s 274.
400 For a thorough discussion of Birgitta’s struggle over the Vallø Estate see Rystad, 1957, pp. 196–201.
401 SRA, original letter on parchment; Peringsköld: E 52 f. 15v (reg.); Örnhielm: II p. 947; SDHK 3000; Rystad, 1957, pp. 205–206.
402 Hermanson, 2013, pp. 26–27; Lundholm 1956, 1958; Rystad, 1955–1957, 1959, for an in-depth discussion on the Hammersta affair; Fabricius, 1904, pp. 225–226; Styffe, BSH III, nr 88, see also ref. 366 in this thesis; Fabricius pointed out that the conflict over the estate of Vallø, which was part of Birgitta’s inheritance from her mother and which followed with her when she was contracted in marriage to Eringisle Nilsson. Åke Axelsson confirmed the total transfer of the estate in 1461. Eringisle Nilsson in return waived his right to Glii in Sweden, his estates in Halland and confirmed that he
farmsteads to Örebro Monastery was confirmed on the 31st of March 1476, where once again Nils Sture is one of the attesters. Some months later Birgitta donated two farms in the villages of Brytneby and Älvestad in Broberg’s Hundred to Vadstena Abbey. She asked Laurens and Eric Axelsson (named as guardian and dear uncle) to confirm these donations.403

Birgitta’s uncles willingly confirmed these two smaller donations which had been part of Eringisle Nilsson’s purchased estates. Specifically naming Eric Axelsson as her guardian does point to the fact that she recognized him as her legal representative in the donation dated the 10 July 1476. It is possible that Birgitta’s insistence over her donation of the larger main estates of Hammersta and Vallø to Uppsala Diocesan in 1475 had a catalyzing effect on their already failing relationship and contributed in widening an earlier dynastic schism between them.404 It could be speculated that Birgitta’s decision to donate Hammersta and Vallø was an act of spite simply to annoy her uncles, with whom she had already come into conflict. Both Vallø and Hammersta were part of the Tott and Hammersta dynasties’ estates, governed by custom and inheritance rights. These types of donations and sale transactions needed to be confirmed and negotiated by the dominant male members of the family.405

The discord between Birgitta and her then living uncles did not surface until after the earlier transactions and donations, it is possible that her relationship to the remaining living Axelsson brothers was the ongoing result of events which had taken place at a much earlier stage of the Union struggles.406 Birgitta’s father and her uncle Philip both died in 1464, remaining were her father’s younger brother Åke and four half-brothers. One could speculate that Birgitta reacted negatively to the younger Axelsson’s realignment network strategies which polarized toward Karl Knutsson from 1466.

Birgitta’s business contact and business transactions with King Christian and Queen Dorothea strongly reflect her political and personal loyalty affiliations. Her ill sentiment toward King Karl may well have persisted in the decades after her forced confinement in Kalmar. But because no surviving documents can enlighten historians on her reaction to Ivar Axelsson’s marriage to Magdalena Karlsdotter, her uncles’ support of Karl Knutsson’s kingship and the Axelsson’s withdrawal of their allegiance to Christian I, the cause of the breakdown in their relationship remains an open topic of historical debate, but careful speculation may offer a partial explanation.

owed his wife 1200 Rhenish marks. Parts of these estates were sold to Queen Dorothea. King Christian later took the shares belonging to Åke Axelsson’s daughters. Eric Axelsson, in his defense of his brothers’ actions against King Christian, mentioned the Vallø affair as just one of several grievances against the family by the king.

403 SRA, original letter on parchment; dated Stockholm 10 July 1476; Transcripts in Peringskiöld: E 60: E f. 176v (reg.); Örnhielm: X p. 831; SDHK 30096.
405 Olesen, 1983, pp. 243–244.
In an attempt to counteract and even annul the Uppsala donation, Ivar and Laurens Axelsson demanded that Birgitta accept the authoritative decision of her legal guardian; Eric Axelsson. Stockholm City Council ruled that she was to submit herself to her guardian’s will in order to protect her estates. On 5 October 1476 Birgitta informed the Stockholm Council that her donation of Hammersta had been confirmed before she was forced to abide by the wishes of her guardian. Therefore one can conclude and contrary to the conclusions of earlier historians, she was not forced under the guardianship of Eric Axelsson in connection with the Uppsala donation, but rather forced to abide by her guardian’s decision to withdraw the donation at a later date on behalf of the dynastic families overriding will and economic interests. Eric Axelsson may well have been chosen to represent Birgitta in legal matters before or shortly after the death of her husband. Birgitta claimed that Eric Axelsson had made no clear protest concerning the donation and therefore insisted that it was a legally binding transaction. In the case of Birgitta Olofsdotter, Maria Sjöberg’s earlier discussed observations concerning the subordinated role of women within the power structure of earlier modern society and the limitations of a woman’s position in the Law came into conflict with the more flexible social role as noble widow at the apex of society and the dynastic network.

Summary
It is a fair and logical assumption to attribute some of the breakdown of Birgitta’s and her uncles’ relationship to the political navigation their loyalties away from King Christian from 1467. The political reorientation of Ivar, Laurens and Eric must have logically affected the children of Olof and Åke Axelsson Tott. These were not decisions necessarily implemented to put an end to the Kalmar Union, or undo kin and friendship ties to the Danish Crown. In 1466 they implemented logical economic strategies in order to strengthen their personal network goals in Sweden which could only to be realized through interconnected marital ties with the Bonde and Sture dynasties. If the Tott clan believed that Birgitta had acted with the best interests of the core dynastic network, she would have been free to make relatively independent decisions and still enjoy the protection of the family. However, Birgitta may well have seen widowhood as an independent platform from where she could act in accordance with what she considered her own personal interests, setting aside the realities of the limitations society placed on her first as a woman and secondly allowed her as widow, and as such her actions and decisions left her without the protection and support of the family network.

408 Stb 1, 1917, p.73.
Case study 2: Magdalena Karlsdotter

The second case study focuses on the third wife of Ivar Axelsson, Magdalena Karlsdotter. She was the youngest of the three surviving daughters of King Karl Knutsson. Ivar’s first two marriages connected him to two Danish dynastic families, Laxmand and Bille (chart 1c, p 34.). His marriage to Magdalena created new dynastic and network opportunities in Sweden. After Ivar Axelsson’s death in 1487, Magdalena chose to remain a widow, whereby gaining a wider personal independence from the age of about 38 years old until her death in 1495. As earlier discussed in the case of Birgitta Olofsdotter, women in general were never fully independent or separated from the men within the social and legal structures of society.

Magdalena’s marriage to Ivar Axelsson (Tott) seems to have been a successful match, where mutual respect (and one can assume reciprocity of affection) seems to have formed their life together. This is to be observed in Ivar’s attention to his wife’s well-being and personal needs, carefully recorded in detail in his accounts for Gotland. Ivar also feared for her safety in politically uncertain times, in the years following the death of King Karl and Sten Sture’s ongoing bid to consolidate his grip on political power and take control of the Swedish kingdom. The strong emotionality of their relationship is also textually present in Magdalena’s wish to have masses said for her husband and a request for absolution for his soul from the Pope because of an unfulfilled promise to do pilgrimage in thanks for a speedy recovery after a bout of sickness. Their bond as man and wife is also present in Ivar’s letters of dower and inheritance. Ivar’s sudden death most certainly would have triggered an inward spiritual and outward personal crisis for Magdalena concerning the welfare of her husband’s soul and her own immediate earthly existence.

409 Axelsson Totts räkenskapsbok för Gotland 1485–1487, eds. Melefors and Wase; Fabricius, 1904, pp. 278–279; One could speculate that being the widow of such a controversial participant in the later conflicts of the Kalmar Union, may have had a negative effect on Magdalena’s possibilities or wish to remarry. Widowhood offered her a platform of independence and political neutrality from which to orientate socially and economically.

410 Ivar’s commission of the pair portraits c. 1474–1475 symbolized the political tone and uncertainty of the period. The two images sent an implicit, yet still, a clear message to other members of their own dynastic network and the networks of their rivals as part of the context of factional conflict and societal uncertainty after the Battle of Brunkeberg in 1470. The pair portraits were commissioned shortly after a hostage drama to which Magdalena was exposed during the renewed factional struggle for power in Sweden. It could be argued that the portraits were the product of both real emotions between to individuals, whilst representing the emotionality, rituality, piety and belief in the continuation of their noble line through God’s protection. The images (parts of an altar piece) are not only self-glorifying iconographic images; God was on the side of the righteous, the chivalrous and the pious, not the aggressors who are Ivar’s opposites. The images reflect the ideal of the nobility in Scandinavia as chosen by God to lead and maintain the harmony of society. The portraits are now displayed at Gavnø Castle in Denmark. Fabricius, 1904, pp. 253–254, ref. no. 2; Bengtsson, 1999, pp. 235–239. DV, 1996, 797, p. 348–349, ref. no 3.
The remaining correspondence and accounts emanating from Magdalena after 1487 offer a rare glimpse of a strong, independent and determined widow, despite her need to judiciaally and in practical matters rely on her powerful and influential nephews, her son-in-law Arvid Trolle and her husband’s former loyal contacts and agents. Likewise, her personal relationship to Sten Sture the Elder and his wife Ingeborg Åkesdotter (Tott) became particularly strained, which is to be observed in the surviving correspondence between Magdalena and her niece Ingeborg concerning Magdalena’s private and personal chattels: a casket of belongings, most likely official documents concerning the right to the fiefdoms of Svartsjö and Åkerbo Hundred and pledges (fiefdoms) given to King Karl by the Swedish Council of the Realm on his ascension to the throne for the third time. The casket was abandoned or forgotten after the capitulation of the Stegeborg garrison on 14 May 1487. Ingeborg’s tone, and Sten Sture’s distantly polite, but level reply, proves to illustrate the effect of rising tensions within the network between the deaths of Karl Knutsson in 1470 and Ivar Axelsson in 1487: the network at this point had gradually diverged in separate directions, resulting in new network male constellations of power and dependency. In between were the women who acted as social nodes of contact between the men of the network.411

It is therefore most probable that Magdalena maintained vital economic contacts with her husband’s former Baltic and Danish trading agents and clients in order to continue utilizing their services for trade. She corresponded with her nephews, especially Hans and Bengt Åkesson (Tott), for practical reasons, but also for personal communication. She also corresponded with other individuals of her husband’s extended network. In the role as a widow, Magdalena became preoccupied with the export of by-products from animal husbandry, especially animal fat and butter produced and processed on her extensive estate Bosgården (inherited from her father King Karl), situated on the out-skirts of Söderköping, and other major estates. She remained there until her death in 1495 and was laid to rest close to the altar of St Francis in the Franciscan Convent in Söderköping.412

The remaining accounts and diplomas show that Magdalena and Ivar shared an influential position and positive relationship with the religious and secular institutions of Söderköping and Gotland. According to Ing-Marie Munktell, Magdalena also managed other extensive estates, albeit with the help of trusted male relatives and loyal servants that remained close to Ivar Axelsson prior to

412 Cod. Holm. A. 21. 9r, Diarium fratrum minorum Stockholmensium. 1379 –1550. See also information from Söderköping’s Municipality, Hus med Historia, on line resource.
his death. Magdalena’s personal bailiff, Per/Peder Olofsson from Vadstena (to whom I shall return), is recorded as collecting tenancy fees/rents in both ready money and in kind: i.e. butter/fat products, corn, oats, rye, hops, and pig iron, especially from Magdalena’s estate complex Stora Bjurum. She also traded in hemp which was used for the production of coarse textiles - mainly rope and sails but also for the production of household textiles and shoes. Furs, meat, poultry and fish products, such as fowl, red meat, pork, oxen, salmon and eels originating from Magdalena’s estates in Västergötland and Östergötland and Småland. The estates in question generated large incomes. In a letter from Ramborg to her husband Gregers Mattsson, Ivar’s successor to Stegeborg in 1487. The following section also includes correspondence connected to both Elin Gustavsdotter and Christina Karlsdotter.

**Kin concerns; Axel Laurensen (Brok) to Magdalena, 1487**

After Ivar’s death, Magdalena Karlsdotter’s situation must have been a precarious and economically vulnerable time for her, mainly due to the loss of his fiefdoms and pledges, but also because she was the daughter of Karl Knutsson, which made her part of Ivar’s ambitions and the conflict with Sten Sture. The events of 1487 would have certainly affected her both personally and politically. Magdalena was aware of the advantages and disadvantages associated with the kin, friendships and the potential risks of rivaling networks to which she was forced or needed to adhere for support or take a stand against for the good of kin network, whilst still remaining on her guard, during the months after Ivar’s death (see the contents of Ramborg Gustavdotter’s letter appendix IV). Throughout her marriage to Ivar, they failed to produce a male heir. The death of their only infant daughter, Margareta in 1473, and his only surviving daughter Beata (December 1487) from his first marriage, would prove seminal to the future of Ivar’s and Magdalena’s estates.

Magdalena is mentioned in only a few remaining personal letters. These letters are important when studying how women at the very apex of Scandinavian society became involved and finalized trade transactions as part of their personal economic self-empowerment. The following section is a presentation of Magdalena’s correspondence that she received from Ivar’s Danish agent Gunnar Krabbe, Axel Laurensen (Brok), Ramborg Gustavsdotter (Sparre of Hjulsta and Ångsö) and Martin the Confessor General of Vadstena. The individuals mentioned in the letter were established clients and kin of Ivar Axelsson. The gravity of political developments prior to Ivar’s death was overshadowed by the remaining questions surrounding his fiefdoms and vast

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private estates, which Magdalena was expected to administrate after his death. In a letter sent by Axel Laurensen (Brok) to Magdalena, at Ivar’s fortified house, Lillö in Skåne Autumn 1487, one meets a personal and familiar tone that expounded genuine concern for Magdalena on behalf of the correspondent.  

Axel Laurensen’s letter is thoughtful, but pragmatic in tone. The letter was written just a week after Ivar’s death. It informed Magdalena of her husband’s sudden, but not entirely unexpected demise.  

Where Ivar died and was laid to rest remains a mystery. Axel Laurensen’s insights into Ivar’s death,

414 SRA, original letter on paper, dated 9 October, 1487, Transcript and discussion concerning the emotions expressed in the letter, in Erik Lönnroth, 1941, 18, pp. 9–10, (SDHK 31957): The author of the letter in question is most probably Axel Laurensen/Larsson/Lagesen Brok/Brock and not the son of Ivar’s brother Laurens Axellson as identified by Erik Lönnroth. Axel Laurensson Tott was no more than fifteen at the time of Ivar’s death. He was not regionally or emotionally tied to Scania or Denmark and remained a squire until his death, c.1516: For sources pertaining to Axel Laurenssson (Tott) see SDHK database posts 37233 and 37693: Ivar Axellson retired to Scania in May 1487 and was most likely somewhere between Lillö and Lund at the time of his death. Axel Laurensen (Brok) was known to have been in the service of both King Christian I and King Hans. He may well have been a faithful friend/retainer (?) having had strong affinitive connections to the Axellson Totts in general. In a modern Swedish translation by Erik Lönnroth, Axel Laurensen laments that, “Hade det varit Guds vilja, då hade jag mycket gärna sett, att han hade levat ännu någon stund med eder och med flera vänner [...] Jag törvade här i landet och ville hava talat med honom, förrän jag för av landet”: Hagnell identified the author of the letter as Axel Laurensen (Brok): Hagnell, 1941, pp. 43–44, ref. no. 79: Lönnroth 1941:18: Carlsson, 1955, p. 6, ref no. 6; Flensmarck, 2003 pp.302–303. There was a gathering of the dynastic families in Stockholm 1477 to celebrate the marriage between Nils Klasson (Sparre av Ellinge) and Margareta Lagesdotter (Brok); Fröjmark, 1992, p. 91; Rep. Dipl, 2: 2, no. 4100. Nils Klassonwas the grandson of Pernilla Pedersdotter (Tott) and Nils Svensson (Sparre av Ellinge) and formally placed in the care of Ivar Axellson after the death of his father Klaus Nilsson.  

415 Wallace Nilsson, 2010, p.82. In Ivar Axellson’s detailed accounts for Gotland for the years 1485–86, there are indications of general health issues pertaining to an older man. On one occasion he sent his trusted servant, Esborn to find a particular plant from the aristolochia group of flowers/ birthwort, pipevine or Dutchman's pipe (Sw: Hålrot/ Aristolochia clematitis) which was used to cure or relieve several complaints, including inflammatory infections, rheumatic pains and heart problems. A day later Esborn was dispatched to Roma Abbey to offer a sacrifice of four marks toward his master’s recovery. Ivar was at the time of death about 67 years old. He even complained that he could not come, as agreed upon, to a meeting with Sten Sture during the drawn out conflict between them, due to probable bouts of malady.  

There is reason to conclude that Ivar was not fanning sickness, the Sture Chronicle implied. Magdalena’s letter to Pope Julius asked for his forgiveness because Ivar did not undertake his planned pilgrimage. This implies that his death came suddenly and that she was worried about her husband’s soul in the after-life. She asked to be allowed to revise the terms of his promise, which ties in well with Hans Åkesson’s letter to Magdalena informing her of his plans to do pilgrimage. This implies that his death came suddenly and that she was worried about her husband’s soul in the after-life. She asked to be allowed to revise the terms of his promise, which ties in well with Hans Åkesson’s letter to Magdalena informing her of his plans to do pilgrimage. It bears up the earlier assertion of Kenneth Loiselle that emotional assistance in the letter in question is most probably Axel Laurensen/Larsson/Lagesen Brok/Brock and not the son of Ivar’s brother Laurens Axellson as identified by Erik Lönnroth. Axel Laurensson Tott was no more than fifteen at the time of Ivar’s death. He was not regionally or emotionally tied to Scania or Denmark and remained a squire until his death, c.1516: For sources pertaining to Axel Laurenssson (Tott) see SDHK database posts 37233 and 37693: Ivar Axellson retired to Scania in May 1487 and was most likely somewhere between Lillö and Lund at the time of his death. Axel Laurensen (Brok) was known to have been in the service of both King Christian I and King Hans. He may well have been a faithful friend/retainer (?) having had strong affinitive connections to the Axellson Totts in general. In a modern Swedish translation by Erik Lönnroth, Axel Laurensen laments that, “Hade det varit Guds vilja, då hade jag mycket gärna sett, att han hade levat ännu någon stund med eder och med flera vänner [...] Jag törvade här i landet och ville hava talat med honom, förrän jag för av landet”: Hagnell identified the author of the letter as Axel Laurensen (Brok): Hagnell, 1941, pp. 43–44, ref. no. 79: Lönnroth 1941:18: Carlsson, 1955, p. 6, ref no. 6; Flensmarck, 2003 pp.302–303. There was a gathering of the dynastic families in Stockholm 1477 to celebrate the marriage between Nils Klasson (Sparre av Ellinge) and Margareta Lagesdotter (Brok); Fröjmark, 1992, p. 91; Rep. Dipl, 2: 2, no. 4100. Nils Klassonwas the grandson of Pernilla Pedersdotter (Tott) and Nils Svensson (Sparre av Ellinge) and formally placed in the care of Ivar Axellson after the death of his father Klaus Nilsson.  

416 cf. Hicks, 2013 (2006), p. 22; concerning the burial sites of Richard III and his Queen, Anne Neville and why they did not receive a burial monument which reflected their rank and status in fifteenth century society; commenting on Ann Neville’s obscured place of resting, he wrote, “There was nobody who cared enough about her memory to commission even a modest a tomb. They may have been afraid of associating themselves too closely with the disgraced usurper […] so, Ann too became forgotten.” So too, was the fate of Ivar Axellson. The political situation and the state of the Union at the time of his death made it impossible for the most of the transnordic magnates to honour and remember him. Like Richard and Ann, Ivar was forgotten and his memory suppressed, which in some way reflects on the memory of Magdalena, not as the daughter of a King, but as the wife of one Norden’s most powerful and controversial magnates.
indicate that he may have been present or at least in the vicinity, when Ivar passed away. Ivar retreated to the security of his castle Lillö, prior to his death, and following the loss of the Gotland, Öland and Bornholm according to the agreement between King Hans and Protector Sten Sture the Elder of Sweden.

This was obviously an affinitive friend and distant kinsman from an earlier established network connection offering his support to Magdalena, which bears up the earlier assertion of Kenneth Loiselle that emotional assistance in times of crisis was part of the expectations of established friendship relations. Axel Laurensen’s family was inter-related with the Axelsson Totts through Olof Axelsson’s marriage to Axel Laurensen’s aunt, Johanna Nilsson (Brok). Axel Laurensen warned Magdalena not to prolong her mourning and to keep her wits about her. There were other more important matters at hand – her estates, dower and inheritance. Axel Laurensen warned her to be wary of those who would call themselves kin or friend, and do her harm; refute her rights and take that which was per definition of the law hers to rightfully own. As mentioned earlier, Ivar and Magdalena did not have any surviving heirs, whilst Ivar’s estates that had not been specifically put aside for his daughter Beata or part of Magdalena’s dower, would not remain uncontested by enemies and kin.

Of course, the land hungry members of the immediate kin and even in-married family members (Ivar was married three times) outside of the nucleus of the family may or may not have seen Magdalena’s rights in the same light. She expected to live many years as a widow. Several legal actions were taken against her after the death of her husband; demands to pay debts and disputes over personal chattels and inheritance portions are recorded in the sources.

As earlier discussed in the case of Birgitta Olofsdotter’s attempts were often made to alienate widows from their estates through legal actions and counter claims including the extraction of debts and loans to be compensated by property exchanges. Reproaches against a lady’s piety, honour and character were effective weapons used by both magnates and men of the Church in face of female vulnerability. Magdalena’s person was also openly attacked in a letter written by Martin, Confessor General, concerned with accusations of wicked goings on at her Vadstena property. He presents the recipient of these complaints as the worthy Lady Magdalena. The actual complaint was directed

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The confessor accused Peder Olofsson of drunkenness and of unjust and cruel treatment of the tenant farmers. The good people in her service wrote to Confessor Martin, had fled to Vadstena Monastery for help and protection, because they lived in fear of his ungodly behaviour. The confessor reminds Magdalena of the serious turn of events leading up to the complaint; he also mentions the recent loss of her husband. He accuses Peder Olofsson of behaving in a slanderous, shameful and ungodly manner. The confessor's letter follows the set pattern of the period whereby he soberly addresses Magdalena according to the demands her social rank and noble honour before presenting a barrage of accusations against Peder Olofsson. The confessor implied that if Ivar Axelsson were alive he would have most certainly had control of the men in his wife's service. In effect, Martin questions Magdalena's strength as a widowed landowner to maintain effective control of her disruptive and cruel bailiff. A widow's person, piety and reputation were without exception and reflected those who did her bidding on a speculative note, it was possible that Vadstena might have hoped that Magdalena would donate her estates or place them under the protection to Vadstena, after being heavily criticized by the Confessor General.

This letter highlights the vulnerability of a widow's reputation, when she sought to independently administrate her own estates. There is no extant response to these serious allegations and Magdalena's reaction is not known. But one can assume that she like her medieval sisters' believed in contemporary chivalric standard of propriety and its ideals, which also embodied the conduct and piety of women as widows and those in her service. A further example of the attempt of distant kin to take possession of estates through dubious legal actions against widows, will be further discussed in the drawn-out dispute in the case study of Elin Gustavsdotter and her struggle to take possession of her designated dower of Täckhammar and to which I shall shortly return.

Stepping up to the mark: trading agent Gunnar Krabbe informs Magdalena Karlsdotter Ivar's former agent Gunnar Krabbe contacted Magdalena on the 1 October 1487.

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* Jens Nilsen (Brok) gave Birgitta Olofsdotter the Younger the Roskilde Estate of Rye. The estate was managed by Claus Serlin.** Olof Axelsson represented the interests of Birgitta the Elder concerning her inheritance from Jep Basse.*** Johanna Nielsdotter is identified as being Axel Laurensen aunt.

at Magdalena’s bailiff Peder Olofsson, the manager of her estates in Östergötland, which included the administration the estate.

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418 DAB, Thiset, 1897, p.139 ref no. 5.
419 Rep Dipl. II, no 6016 and 8332.
The confessor accused Peder Olofsson of drunkenness and of unjust and cruel treatment of the tenant farmers. The good people in her service wrote Confessor Martin, had fled to Vadstena Monastery for help and protection, because they lived in fear of his ungodly behaviour. The confessor reminds Magdalena of the serious turn of events leading up to the complaint; he also mentions the recent loss of her husband. He accuses Peder Olofsson of behaving in a slanderous, shameful and ungodly manner. The confessor’s letter follows the set pattern of the period whereby he soberly addresses Magdalena according to the demands her social rank and noble honour before presenting a barrage of accusations against Peder Olofsson. The confessor implied that if Ivar Axelsone were alive he would have most certainly had control of the men in his wife’s service. In effect, Martin questions Magdalena’s strength as a widowed landowner to maintain effective control of her disruptive and cruel bailiff. A widow’s person, piety and reputation were without exception and reflected those who did her bidding on a speculative note, it was possible that Vadstena might have hoped that Magdalena would donate her estates or place them under the protection to Vadstena, after being heavily criticized by the Confessor General.

This letter highlights the vulnerability of a widow’s reputation, when she sought to independently administrate her own estates. There is no extant response to these serious allegations and Magdalena’s reaction is not known. But one can assume that she like her medieval sisters’ believed in contemporary chivalric standard of propriety and its ideals, which also embodied the conduct and piety of women as widows and those in her service. A further example of the attempt of distant kin to take possession of estates through dubious legal actions against widows, will be further discussed in the drawn-out dispute in the case study of Elin Gustavsdotter and her struggle to take possession of her designated dower of Täckhammar and to which I shall shortly return.

Stepping up to the mark: trading agent Gunnar Krabbe informs Magdalena Karlsdotter

Ivar’s former agent Gunnar Krabbe contacted Magdalena on the 1 October 1487. Krabbe does not mention Ivar’s sudden death around the 30

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420 SRA SDHK 39463; The Krapperup Archives: Letter dated 1 October, Hörby, 1487, language Danish: original letter on paper: SDHK 34201, May 1500, (Low German). For a transcript of the letter see, Der Stralsunder Liber memorialis (Schwerin 1964), ed. Herbert Ewe, Teil 6, s. 91–2, nr 327; see also Raneke II, 1982, p.426; Östensson, PHT, 1970, p. 155, ref 19; Gunder Krabbe (d.1509) was probably (information is slight) related to Bengt Krabbe, Judge for North Halland as he is called “Ghunder Krabbe, to Wardberghe”: Original letter on parchment, Varberg Castle, 25 January 1491, Printed in LAU, pp. 136-137, (SRA SDHK 32553): King Hans confirmed a joint donation of land from, Bengt Krabbe and Bengt Åkesson (Tott) to the Cistercian monastery of Ås in North Halland. Gunder Krabbe was probably related to Tyke Krabbe (son of Måns Krabbe) Sheriff of Sölvesborg in 1506, who
The wealth of...in 1483. Claus married Ellen Cor fitzdotter (Rönnow). She was a sister-in-law of Peter Nilsson of castle in 1486. A Marcus Dringelberg also received payment from Ivar Axelsson: see f. 17v. Alnarp (Thott, Næs branch). She was sued along with her son-in-law by Hans Åkesson’s daughters for have passed to Hans. Claus was appointed royal groom to King Hans in 1486 and did service together (Tott) to Hjuleberg was appointed Ivar Axelsson’s interim governor of Visborg Castle in his absence. Dringenberg was according to Krabbe in the company of Ivar’s nephew Claus Åkesson (Tott). Dringenberg was a trusted and long standing servant to three Union kings; Christopher, Christian I and Hans. He received expansive privileges from time of King Christopher’s reign until his death in 1501 during the reign of King Hans.

at the tender age of twelve participated in the Danish offensive against Ivar Axelsson’s Gotland in 1487. See also Rancke II, 1982, p.426; Östenson, PHT, 1970, p. 155, ref no.19.

Diplomatium Dioecesis Lundensis, vol. IV, 1909, p. 65, nr. 76: Roskilde, 19 October, 1465. Jep Jensen, the attending priest of the St Anne’s Altar in Roskilde, was granted two plots of land that were earlier donated by Per Brun from Malmö to the up-keep of the St Anne’s Altar.

Of interest in Ivar Axelsson’s account for Gotland (RA C 9), f.57r, is list of individuals belonging to the garrison of Visborg and other paid clients of Ivar Axelsson. A Henrik Dringenbergh receives 10 Danish marks hvid (albus). This may be the same Henrik Dringenberg mentioned in Gunnar Krabbe’s letter to Magdalena. Gunnar Krabbe is mentioned in the same accounts dealing in corn deliveries for Olof Skipper (also mentioned in the letter), (£67). “Jem Skipper oloff owes for myn herres korn han forde frafa gawder krabe paa hans frakt.” Claus Åkesson is also referred to several times in the accounts and is known to have served as client at his uncle’s castle. After the initial break up between Åke Axelsson’s sons, the mention of Claus in the letter is not out of place: See also Jan-Christian Schlüter, 2010, pp.105-107. He mentions both Henrik Dringenberg and Claus Åkesson as residing at the castle in 1486. A Marcus Dringelberg also received payment from Ivar Axelsson: see f. 17v.

Person (Gamby): 1934, pp. 92–98; Rosborn, 2015, pp.115–116: von Möller, 1874, pp.153–154; Lindström, GM II, 1895, p. 449; Melefors & Wase, 1991, p. 483; Henrik Dringenberg is first mentioned in the Danish sources 1451. He bought several properties in Malmö and secured the advowson, in the Church of St Peter and financed the Dringenberg Chantry and Library. Claus Åkesson (Tott) to Hjuleberg was appointed Ivar Axelsson’s interim governor of Visborg Castle in his absence. According to Lindström Claus Åkesson was sheriff of Visborg after Magnus Este (possibly related to the men mentioned named Este in Ivar’s accounts, and who was identified as being sheriff of Visborg in 1483. Claus married Ellen Corfitzdotter (Rönnow). She was a sister-in-law of Peter Nilsson of Alnarp (Thott, Næs branch). She was sued along with her son-in-law by Hans Åkesson’s daughters for neglecting a lawful exchange of inherited estates after the death of her husband Claus, which should have passed to Hans. Claus was appointed royal groom to King Hans in 1486 and did service together with his brother Erik for King Hans of Denmark. Together they mustered 31 armed knights. Claus Åkesson’s year of death is unknown. The advowson originates from MEL: ‘patronage of a religious house or benefice’, with the advocacy to defend it and speak for it. Dringenberg was also a trusted client and servant to King Hans’s father Christian I.
Kings, magnates and clerics came to Dringenberg for substantial personal loans and to use his useful contacts for favours. He was what one might call an unofficial banker and patron of the Church, which allowed him a wider role in the politics and economics of the realm and the larger towns in Scandinavia, such as Malmö and Copenhagen. He represented the economic interests of Malmö at the meeting with the Hansa in Copenhagen in 1462 and 1469. He took tenure of the only royal mint office in Denmark, which had opened in 1440. The mint master also controlled and protected the interests of the gold and silversmiths based in Skåne. Dringenberg was himself a goldsmith. His duties as mint master and private banker in Copenhagen and Malmö took up most of his time.

What the nature of Claus Åkesson’s business was with Dringenberg, Malmö’s most powerful citizen, so soon after Ivar’s death, is not known. One might suppose that he was there in the capacity of a friend, on the king’s official business, repaying debts or borrowing money for his own needs or those of the patron, or possibly exchanging information. The wealth of several burgher families (i.e. Medici, Fugger) surpassed that of the established kings, aristocrats and even popes.

424 Danske Magazin IV, R.I, 1873, p. 76: Erik Person, 1934, p.94. King Hans borrowed 400 silver marks from Henrik Dringenberg, according to King Hans and Queen Christina’s accounts for the year 1487. See also Gottfrid Carlsson, 1955, pp. 39 and 62: DRA original diploma on parchment, dated Kalmar 7 September 1483 (SDHK 31341): Carlsson observed that in the additions to the union proceedings of 1483 (Carlsson skiver 1482?) an effort was made to regulate toll payments and the in and out-flux of silver. Silver coinage was to be taken as toll payments and used to produce coinage according to the official mint contract. The king would not be allowed to produce coins on his own behalf without the express permission of the three councils. Paragraph 8: “Och skal al tol legges til adh halla myntedh oppe medh eehrwrw het til fØrende airdh haffuer och jngen fogot eller ambizman hafswa macht til adh taga for tol clda slat eller hvmla eller nagra andra warer eller loffuen vtan sylff jo til myntens behoff och ey skal konunge macht hafswa nagodh mynt sattia eller forwanda vtan medh menoge riksens radh radh j het rike.” This was clearly an attempt to curb problems with certain types of toll payments in kind and not in silver coins. This was due to the scarcity of ready money. Toll in silver guaranteed that the mint would have had a steady supply of silver in order to produce trustworthy coinage. It should be pointed out that limitations of the production of coinage did not guarantee the honesty of the mint master.
Figure 14. The Krapperup Archives: letter dated, Hörby, 1 October 1487 (SDHK 39463).

Ivar Axelsson’s agent Gunnar Krabbe contacts Magdalena Karlsdotter concerning the sale and purchase of gods. He also informs of the general news from Malmö. Transported by sea to Visby by Olof Olsson, named as ‘Skipper oloff i owes’ (Åhus on the southern tip of Villand Hundred). He was called ‘Olof from Köge’ in the accounts and receives eight marks according to Ivar’s fees: he was paid “smosvensløn … oloff olss – viij mark with.”

He received payments for handwork and general repairs to one of Ivar’s ships; he was entrusted with the transport of vital cargo from Stegeborg to Visby. Presupposing that the letter originated from a period encompassing August to October 1487 (the date is not certain but certainly not 1451 as written in a later hand on the reverse side of the letter, we might tentatively assume that this may well have been one of Ivar’s last business transactions. As Ivar’s widow, Magdalena steps up to the mark in order to conclude the business transaction.

The casual mention of Claus Åkesson (Tott) now in the company of none other than King Hans’s mint master and customs commissioner, Henrik Dringenberg, who was residing at that point in time in Malmö, raises questions, which because of the lack of sources, cannot be answered. However, there is room for conjecture as to why he would bring up the subject with Magdalena. This may well have been a coveted warning to Magdalena who had the support of Bengt and Hans Åkesson, and their cousin Jörgen Olofsson. The latter was the illegitimate son of Olof Axelsson, who was...

Further, Jep Mikkelsen had been ordered to deliver hops to Magdalena’s agent in Malmö. Jep Mikkelsen declined to make the delivery because he had not received secure documents in order to proceed with the transaction. Secure in this case was a contract preferably written on parchment rather than on paper. This offers an understanding as to why tradesmen demanded parchment not paper for written contracts. Official paper correspondence in Sweden was used from about 1345. Paper was imported from Italy and an expensive quality product to boot. It was available to those who could afford it. Judging by the shape and size of paper correspondence now held at various archives, it is obvious that every inch counted. Paper although widely used by monarchs and the Church since the second half of the fourteenth century did not reduce Jep Mikkelsen’s distrust of it in business transactions as late as 1487.

Two possible scenarios start to merge from the details in Gunde Krabbe’s correspondence to Magdalena when comparing the details with specific transactions recorded in Ivar’s accounts for Gotland 1485-1487. The sender of the letter, Gunnar Krabbe, was a Hallandish/Danish agent in Skåne in the paid service of Ivar Axelsson and whose task it was to arrange the transport, sale, purchase and negotiations of prices for various commodities. These gods were...

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425 Raneke II, 1982, p. 423; Possibly Jep Mikkelsen who is mentioned by Raneke. He was a squire and is recorded in sources from 1472 until 1491.
transported by sea to Visby by Olof Olsson, named as ‘Skipper oloff i owes’ (Åhus on the southern tip of Villand Hundred). He was called ‘Olof from Köge’ in the accounts and receives eight marks according to Ivar’s fees: he was paid “smosvenslon … oloff olssøn ---- viij mark hwith.” He received payments for handwork and general repairs to one of Ivar’s ships; he was entrusted with the transport of vital cargo from Stegeborg to Visby. Presupposing that the letter originated from a period encompassing August to October 1487 (the date is not certain but certainly not 1451 as written in a later hand on the reverse side of the letter, we might tentatively assume that this may well have been one of Ivar’s last business transactions. As Ivar’s widow, Magdalena steps up to the mark in order to conclude the business transaction. The casual mention of Claus Åkesson (Tott) now in the company of none other than King Hans’s mint master and customs commissioner, Henrik Dringenberg, who was residing at that point in time in Malmö, raises questions, which because of the lack of sources, cannot be answered. However, there is room for conjecture as to why he would bring up the subject with Magdalena. This may well have been a coveted warning to Magdalena who had the support of Bengt and Hans Åkesson, and their cousin Jörgen Olofsson. The latter was the illegitimate son of Olof Axelsson, who was

adopted into the core of the Axelsson Tott network by his uncles Ivar, Erik and Laurens, a decade after his father’s death.\textsuperscript{427} They chose to ally themselves with their uncle Ivar Axelsson and would later ally themselves with Sten Sture the Elder, whilst Claus and Eric Åkesson chose to support King Hans’s claim to the Swedish throne and the re-establishment of Union, despite the fact that Claus had been in the service of Uncle Ivar at Visborg according to the surviving accounts for Gotland.\textsuperscript{428} Claus and Eric Åkessons’ choice to support King Hans meant that the sons of Åke Axelsson were effectively and politically divided concerning the future of the Union in 1487.\textsuperscript{429} The alternative but unlikely scenario is that this was Magdalena’s personal business transaction where she used loyal agents and merchants known to and trusted by Ivar. In the letter she is to be observed managing business transactions whilst obviously using her network of male contacts and close kin in order to finalize important details.

Some years after the death of Ivar, Magdalena, having no legal issue to consider and of her own free will, as an independent widow, transferred several of her largest estates to Hans Åkesson (Tott) and his wife, Kerstin Eriksdotter (Gyllenstierna), Magdalena’s niece, ensuring that they remain within the jurisdiction of the core family.\textsuperscript{430}

\textsuperscript{427} Carvalho and Ribeiro, 2008, p.173: The authors maintained that adoption was not a relative form of spiritual kinship in Portugal in the early modern period, because the Christian Church had, over time, gradually minimized the role of adoption and therefore excluded in their analysis of early modern spiritual kinships. However, adoption would play a crucial role in the politics of the realm in the late fourteenth century and continuing to re-establish network kin connections and new network relationships in the late fifteenth century in Scandinavia. This may be because of the weaker overall position and later infiltration of the Church in Sweden and Denmark. Adoption was, “a very central tool connecting kinship and social ‘engineering’ in pre Christian Roman society; Djurklou, 1891, p. 147, ref. no.2; The author discussed the appearance of the letter (SDHK 30099 for facsimile of letter) concerning Jörgen Olofsson’s adoption, writing that it was without seals and that he, amongst others who have studied the letter, consider it to be a concept for a later adoption letter. Because no sealed version of the letter exists, it is unclear if the actual adoption was made official. Whilst Jörgen’s decision to side with his cousins Bengt and Hans Åkesson to deny support to King Hans’s claim to the Swedish throne, indicates some form of earlier preconceived aligned loyalty to his uncles Ivar Eric and Laurens Axelsson and explain his later attachment to Ivar Axelsson’s granddaughter and her husband Jens Holgersen (Ulfstand).


\textsuperscript{430} SRA, original letter on paper, no. 119, dated Vinsarp 1480-90? (SDHK 30656), Hans Åkesson (Tott) to Magdalena Karlssdotter: SRA, original letter on parchment, dated Söderköping 30 June 1491 (SDHK 32619), transcript n Misc. 69:5: Sävstaholm Collection, original on parchment, Hans Åkesson to Magdalena Karlssdotter, dated Söderköping 2 July 1491, paper copy held by the Krapperup Archives, printed in Monumenta diplomatica Svecana, ed. Schröder, 1822, p. 66, no xxi, (SDHK 32627, photopy), Magdalena Karlssdotter to Hans Åkesson: RA original on parchment, dated Sodertälje 28 June 1493, SRA facsimile, transcript in Peringskiöld E54, (SDHK 32962, photocopy), Sten Sture and others sue Magdalena Karlssdotter for debts incurred by Ivar Axelsson.
Magdalena’s half-sister Christina Karlsdotter also owned several large estates, where Fågelvik in Småland was the most important. Eric Ericsson (Gyllenstierna) effectively managed the estate on behalf of his wife. This particular estate was part of Christina’s inheritance from her father Karl Knutsson (Bonde). She and Eric Ericsson resided and administrated Fågelvik many years before the death of King Karl.\footnote{See discussion concerning Karl Knutsson’s last will and testament dated 1470 chapter ten and appendix I.}

Christina continued to administrate her estates with great success after the death of her husband in 1477. Ing-Mari Munktell observed that Christina left small notes (in her own hand?) lodged inside of the estate books. This indicates that Christina could read and write. The accounts book reveals that she had required a striking knowledge of matters concerning inheritance and estate management. Christina often turned to her half-sister’s adept and influential son-in-law Arvid Trolle for advice after the death of her husband. Both Christina and Magdalena were successfully represented by Arvid Trolle and other members of the core kin. Land which once belonged to them was also retrieved through his own business transactions; for example, the purchase of Stensö from Per Brahe, which included the purchase of a large meadow that had been jointly owned by Magdalena and Christina.\footnote{Turning to men such...}
as Arvid Trolle could be observed as dependency, but it also reflects the pragmatics of the period and the practical position of women. By using the knowledge and expertise available to her, it was possible to increase the effectiveness of her estate operations and returns. It should be remembered that Arvid Trolle was one of the richest landowners in Scandinavia the late 1470s, having inherited huge estates and properties after the death of his second wife; Beata Ivarsdotter (Tott); he controlled vast land holdings in Denmark and Sweden.

These estates (c. 1118 units before 1490) were bequeathed to Erik Trolle after his father’s death in 1505. Between 1487 and 1505 Arvid Trolle incorporated properties in Skåne, Halland and Zealand from Beata’s dower and inheritance into his own estates. The estates in Skåne included substantial properties in Gärds hundred. These were bequeathed to Beata after her first husband Truid Pedersen (Galen) and her only son, Peder Truidsen, who had predeceased both his parents. The properties originating from the Galen-Tott marriage alliance would have been partially controlled by Ivar Axelsson if Trued Truedsen (Galen) had survived his father. Many of Ivar’s properties were later incorporated into Jens Holgersen to Glimminge’s (Ulfstand) estates through his second marriage to the much younger Margareta Arvidsdotter (Trolle), Beata’s daughter in her marriage to Arvid Trolle.

The properties belonging to Ivar’s second wife, Maren (Marina) Torbernsdotter (Bille) and their daughter NN (predeceased her father) were awarded to Maren’s brother, Bengt Torbensson (Bille). A dispute broke out concerning the right to Maren’s dower and their daughter’s inheritance portion of the Bille estates. The infected inheritance dispute between Ivar Axelsson and Bengt Bille eventually spilled over into the conflict concerning Philip Axelsson’s pant to Tranekær, which King Christian had also awarded to Bengt Bille, after the castle had been taken by force from Eggert Frille, who had

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433 Arvid Trolles Jordebok 1498, ed. Almquist, 1938: HH, pp. 23–25, 29 for a complete table showing the Danish estates.
435 Hansson, 2011, p.146–147: Sjögren, 1944, p.128: Rep. D II, no. 7872–3 and 7877: On a number of occasions before the courts, Arvid Trolle represented his wife and children in making claims on properties that were part of her dower agreed upon by her deceased husband Truid Pedersen (Galen) and property that should have legally passed to his dead son through Beata: Curt Wallin, 1990, p. 17. According to Wallin the local parish church in Djurröd, Villands Hundred, Skåne, was patronized by the dynastic family Galen. Following Sven A. Noreen’s theory (GHÅ 1961), it was Truid Pedersen (Galen) and Beata Ivarsdotter (Tott) who commissioned the lime wall murals, executed by the Vittskövle group of painters, which still partially exist today. The remaining restored murals show images of St Olof and St Knut. Truid Pedersen’s parents, Peder Nielsen (Galen) and Kristina Stigsdotter (Tott) donated the church a gift of two larger farm complexes in the village of Djurröd. Ivar had then estates in close proximity to the estates of Peder Nielsen and Truid Pedersen. Beata’s marriage to Truid Pedersen was more probably based on economic advantages rather than political advantages. Her marriage to Arvid Trolle was part of Ivar’s strategy to infiltrate the influential Småland’s nobility and the acute political developments in 1465–66.
become the legal guardian of Philip Axellson’s daughters and his estates. Eggert Frille was later forced into exile after suffering persecution at the hands of King Christian for his loyalty to the Axellson Totts. 437 The Tott disputes with Christian I concerning pledges, confiscated fiefdoms and private estates, and inheritance conflicts became interwoven with the wider politics of the Kalmar Union.

Christina’s concerns contrasted with Magdalena’s more personal interests as a woman without issue. Magdalena took into consideration the close kin network as well as securing a strong independent financial situation as a widow. 438 Kin and friends were very important nodes of contacts for a widow. Ing-Marie Munktell came to the conclusion that Christina Karlsdotter, although dependent on her closest male kin, concerning lawsuits and inheritance disputes, showed a facet of independence and personal diligence in her decision-making. Christina took a keen interest in the practical running of her estates, whilst also protecting her own personal rights and the rights of the dynastic family’s future generations. More so, Christina had the well-being and inheritance interests of her five surviving children.

Another interesting, but little known member of the kin network close to Magdalena was Ramborg Gustavsdotter (Sparre of Hjulsta and Ängsö). She was the second wife of Gregers Mattsson (Lillie). Gregers Mattsson’s affiliations with Eric Axellson (Tott) developed through Bengta Mattsdotter’s (Lillie) marriage to Eric Axellson c. 1450 (or possibly earlier). Eric Axellson and Gregers Mattsson remained on good terms throughout the period, until Eric’s death in 1481. Gregers Mattsson remained close to both Ivar and Laurens Axellson after Eric Axellson’s demise, despite his developing pragmatic client/patron relationship with Sten Sture the Elder. Only one private letter remains. Ramborg’s letter to Magdalena reveals that she probably wrote several letters to Magdalena Karlsdotter.

**Female insights of the political situation after 1487 - Ramborg Gustavsdotter voices concerns to Magdalena Karlsdotter**

A short, but none-the-less informative letter dated 2 November 1488 was sent by Ramborg Gustavsdotter to Magdalena Karlsdotter. 439 The letter caught my attention mainly because there was no available information concerned with either the content or context of the letter. Questions of a more empiric nature materialize when addressing a source which is basically unexamined by earlier historians. The letter is signed by Ramborg Gustavsdotter and commented upon by a corresponding hand on the reserve side of the letter. Magdalena Karlsdotter is noted as the addressee. Magdalena had taken up residence at her

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438 Munktell, 1981, pp. 17–19 and 35 ref. 15–1; see also RA C15 Jordebok på Fågelviks landbor from 1473–1476 (The Accounts for Fågelvik)
439 VHAA, original letter on paper, dated Stäkeborg (Stegeborg) 2 November 1488, (SDHK 32125).
estate Stora Bjurum in 1488. The absence of information and lack of interest in the letter means that it has no clear historical context and the content has therefore remained unknown. Having had the opportunity to study the letter, I suggest a reading of the contents with parallel cross referencing of other extant known correspondence and documents which will place the letter in a specific context of time, a context of events and a context of socio-emotional network kin individuals.

The letter is dated just one year after the dramatic changes of the Tott dynastic fortunes in 1487. The letter, or rather the contents of the letter, I suggest, was an attempt to strengthen established ties, not only between the two women related by blood and kin, but also the wider kin network observed from a perspective of network breakdown. The letter as an artefact also helps in expanding our knowledge of the structure and function of medieval female lay noble networks at a specific point in time. This would include favours, gifts, business transactions, contact through servants, deaths of kin family members, widowhood, the loss of children and more broadly: the sweeping political changes in national politics and how these women chose to communicate and cooperate with other women of the affinity contra the explicit actions and political orientation of their male kin and counterparts. Here friendship, confidence and respect were built-up and maintained between Ramborg and Magdalena. Ramborg called her sister. It was considered very polite to address and recognize kin/ friends between two socially equal individuals.

The letter expresses the concerns and worries of Ramborg who wishes to travel to Magdalena, but does not dare undertake such a journey without a written and sealed travel document. The journey Ramborg speaks of was to coincide with Görvel Eriksdotter’s (Gyllenstierna) wedding feast, which took place in Söderköping 1488. This was an opportunity for the powerful Sture–Tott–Bonde affinity to put their political differences aside and come together to celebrate the union between Görvel and the young knight Knut Alvsson (Tre rosor), welcoming him into the core network of the families. Ramborg mentions Lady Christina (probably Christina Karlsdotter of Fägelvik, Magdalena’s half-sister and mother of Görvel). Ramborg also writes that she is waiting for her husband to return and that she dared not travel before his return. Ramborg mentions that she would have liked to talk to Magdalena’s servant before his departure from Stegeborg. The style of the letter is very informal but carries undertones of an awareness of the political situation during the early Sture period. This letter was sent from one close kin friend to another, which leads me to make the careful assumption that ‘Knwt’ is Knut Alvsson (Tre rosor). This assumption is based on the fact that Ramborg elucidates to Knut’s coming wedding in Söderköping or that he is in the vicinity and could reach Gregers Mattsson without any problems or delays.440

440 See Appendix IV.
The context of the letter reflects the dynamics of the kin network at a specific point in time. Another clue to the social context of the letter is to be sought in Gregers Mattsson’s food and fodder book for Stegeholm (f. 21v), “Jtem, myn frwe” to Söderköping with gifts of butter, beer and meat for the Görvel and Knut’s wedding feast.\footnote{Here, ‘myn frwe’ is Ramborg, who planned to travel to Söderköping with gifts of butter, beer and meat for the Görvel and Knut’s wedding feast.} “Further, My Lady (Ramborg) travelling to Söderköping for maiden, Görvel’s wedding – two pounds of butter, one keg of beer and three roe deer.”\footnote{Gregers Mattssons kostbok…, “Further, My Lady (Ramborg) travelling to Söderköping for maiden, Görvel’s wedding – two pounds of butter, one keg of beer and three roe deer.”} The quotation mentions a personal contribution, by Gregers Mattsson and Ramborg Gustavsdotter, of beer and butter to a forthcoming wedding feast. Taking into consideration the earlier conclusion that marriage celebrations filled with courtly rituals, were one of the most important social events for a network of participating dynastic families, it also served as a forum to distract from problems, but also an important event which helped the participants to discuss other matters such as personal economic arrangements, local and regional disputes within and between rivaling magnatial networks.\footnote{Bengtsson, 1999, pp. 58–59.} Even national politics, will be shown to have been included in these important social events. Therefore having constituted the importance of large family social gatherings, the timeframe and planning of this particular wedding is absolutely crucial to the following discussion.

The above extract from Gregers Mattsson’s accounts for Stegeholm Castle indicates the forthcoming wedding festivities at a time when the Tott, Bonde, Sture affinitive network had broken down and some of its affiliated members had orientated toward Sten Sture rather than the more politically divided third generation of Axelsson Totts (Åke Axelsson’s sons). But what does Ramborg’s letter tell us about the network? The answer to this is to be sought in the complicated genealogies and marriage strategies of the affinitive and affiliated network itself and the specific socio-geographical orientation of the network at this point in time.

Görvel’s father was deceased Eric Ericsson since 1477. He had been both brother-in-law and close friend to Ivar Axelsson, and had for many years been a loyal client to Ivar’s brother, Eric Axelsson, and most probably a client of King Karl. The groom was the wealthy Norwegian born magnate Knut Alvsson of Akershus. One year earlier he had chosen to ally himself with Sten Sture in the latter’s conflict with Ivar Axelsson. This marriage union must therefore be considered strategically political for the kin network, whilst also a potentially good economic match for the two families involve.

Görvel was Knut’s first wife. She was about 33 years old at the time of the wedding. Knut Alvsson survived his first wife by seven years.\footnote{444 http://www.gyllenstierna.org/pdf/attatavla.pdf; Christina Karlsdotter was born c. 1432. She married Eric Ericsson (Gyllenstierna) in 1446. She bore at least ten children. Görvel was the youngest daughter of five sisters Only Görvel and Kerstin survived to maturity. Kerstin married Hans Åkesson (Tott) and lived as a widow as late as 1500. Görvel’s birth date is not known but one can speculate that she born} Knut Alvsson...
went on to marry Anders von Bergen’s widow, Mette Ivarsdotter (Dyre).\textsuperscript{445}

She is best known as the wife of Swedish Protector of the Realm, Svante Nilsson. This was her third and final marriage. The choice of groom for Görvel suggests yet another attempt by the Tott network to orientate toward the Norwegian nobility and rekindle their already established political connections in Sweden, through Knut Alvsson’s Swedish-Norwegian connections and ancestry.\textsuperscript{446}

Returning to Ramborg’s letter, one observes a warm friendship and a sense of emotional reconciliation, whilst Ramborg’s words are also marked by a circumspective tone toward the recipient. The simple and honest nature of the language is directed at Magdalena, whilst there are also elements of concerns for the personal safety of her husband and herself. Ramborg’s main concerns most likely stemmed from her husband’s political realignment of his affiliations to Sten Sture and his participation in the siege and fall of Stegeborg.

The letter offers a unique insight into the concerns of the female members of the network in the Sture Age, after the downfall of Ivar Axelsson. They seem to have experienced the period as one of political uncertainty, not only due to the breakdown of the relations between Ivar Axelsson and Sten Sture, but also because they were living in a time when the common weal of society had broken down due to several years of factional politics and magnatial conflicts. For some this was a period of “Pax Sveciae vernat, Dominus quia Steno gubernat”, for those who stood in ten Sures’ way, it was not.\textsuperscript{447} Sten Sture actively consolidated and publically embellished his authority during the earlier Sture period, which was manifested in the St George and the dragon statue in St Nicholas (now Storkyrkan/Church in Stockholm), which may well have made both old and new supporters of Sten Sture more cautious and uneasy of as to his motives and personal elevation, especially the former clients and close kin of the Axelsson Totts.\textsuperscript{448}

not later than 1455. This meant that she was c. 33 at the time of her wedding and surprisingly old for a woman to marry for the first time. Lönnroth, 1941, pp. 21–22.

\textsuperscript{445} Anders von Bergen’s family originated from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Bergen on the island of Rügen) and had Danish, Norwegian and Scottish marital connections. Their daughter Kerstin von Bergen was eventually contracted in marriage to Axel Laurensson (Tott). DAA, 1900, p. 430.

\textsuperscript{446} https://snl.no/Knut_Alvsson: accessed 2017. Knut Alvsson, Svante Nilsson and Sten Sture agitated against King Hans 1501–1502. Knut Alvsson was later killed on board Henrik Krummedike’s ship in the Oslo fjord, as a result of the failed rebellion of discontented peasantry in Norway against King Hans. The rebellion failed mainly because King Hans retained the full support of the Norwegian Council of the Realm. Alvsson’s motive for the uprising is a matter of historical speculation. It is possible that there was a plan to unite Sweden and Norway in a union with the exclusion of Denmark.

\textsuperscript{447} Palme, 1950, p. 286; Lundholm, 1956, p. 75; See the above inscription by Albertus Pictor, in 1484, placed above the door of the sacristy of Kalmar Church in Kalmar Parish, Uppsala.

\textsuperscript{448} Anjou, 1938, pp. 333–334; Svanberg and Qwarnström, 1998, pp. 45–73, 196–198, especially pp.73, 196; the statue of St George, the dragon and the maiden placed as an altarpiece in Stockholm’s Cathedral (Storkyrkan) and was according the authors financed by donations from his network supporters. Remark to Svanberg’s and Qwarnström’s text concerning the identification of the heraldic shields represented on a wall of a castell tower or city port. Svanberg identified the Tott shield (no.72)
Both warm friendship and an understanding of the importance of female kinship is one of the noticeable qualities of the letter. Ramborg indicates that she had also received letters from Magdalena and may well have felt that there was a need to re-affirm harmony and consensus between herself and Magdalena. Ramborg’s husband Gregers Mattsson had been granted Stegeborg Castle by Sten Sture, albeit with stringent stipulations. Gregers Mattsson’s choice of political affiliated redirection may well have been motivated, by what could be personally lost or forfeited if he remained loyal to Ivar Axelsson. His decision was based on practical magnatial network interactions, rather than maintaining and reacting to concerns of idealized friendships. But still, changing affiliations also created caution and uncertainty concerning the new patron and client relationship.

This was most obvious after the failed conspiracy to remove Sten Sture from power 1481—1483 and the pragmatic decision of several Tott affiliated individuals to distance themselves from the Axelsson Tott agenda. The group of conspirators included Ivar Axelsson’s son-in-law, Arvid Trolle. At the same time Sten Sture still had an invested interest in the Axelsson Totts’ confiscated Danish estates, through his marriage to Ingeborg Åkesdotter and the fact that only Åke, Philip and Laurens Axelsson had surviving heirs after 1487. The growing tension between Ingeborg Åkesdotter, Sten Sture and Magdalena intensified after the death of Ivar. This is to be observed in her repeated requests to be reunited with her personal (and even Ivar’s) chattels and valuables in a casket, that had been abandoned at Stegeborg, after the garrison had capitulated and left the castle. In granting Stegeborg to Gregers Mattsson, Sten Sture effectively placed both Ramborg and Gregers in an undesirable position between two of the most influential Tott women; Magdalena Karlsdotter and Ingeborg Åkesdotter.

Ramborg Gustavsdotter to Gregers Mattsson, 1489: political agitation and conflict.

A later letter dated 5 September 1489, sent from Ramborg to her husband, Gregers Mattsson, airing certain concerns over the poor revenues they received from Ivar Axelsson’s former fiefdom Stegeborg. Gregers Mattsson was granted Stegeborg by Sten Sture after the offensive against Ivar Axelsson’s

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as representing Laurens Axelsson (Tott), Laurens died in 1483 (not 1482 as Svanberg wrote), six years before the Statue was placed in the cathedral (1489). Knowing that both Laurens and Ivar Axelsson were in conflict with Sten Sture at the beginning of the 1480s, this is a doubtful conclusion; neither Laurens nor Ivar would have willingly contributed to the creation of Sten Sture’s St George. Possibly their nephews, Bengt or Hans Åkesson donated to the statue.

449 Reitso, 2009, p.151; Neuding Skoog, 2018, p.153; By 1490 Ramborg openly expressed the strong opinion that her husband should try to exchange Stegeborg for another better and more profitable fiefdom. Thus it can be concluded that women held equally high expectations concerning the acquisition and administrating of fiefdoms.

commander of Stegeborg, Eggert Krummedike, early in 1487. During the two decades before 1487, Ivar Axelsson had controlled Stegeborg. The terms and conditions of the fiefdom were made more favourable after 1472. Ivar had carried out extensive improvements and re-enforcements to the castle, refortifying its defences to include a round tower and a new outer defence stone perimeter. Ivar’s account book for Gotland bears witness to several transports. These included the transport of lime and other vital goods by his trusted merchant/agent called Kylenborg. Ivar’s accounts for Gotland show that there were several transports of building materials from Visborg to Stegeborg Castle in 1486/7 shortly before Ivar’s downfall. Other correspondence show that Kylenborg was in the service of Magdalena and employed as her personal steward/fiduciary in 1489.

The conditions tied to a specific fiefdom most likely affected the way in which its commanders viewed their own position to benefit from the appointment and the reality of the cost concerning the up-keep of the castle and revenues to the Crown, contra the magnate’s return on revenues. This position also, included who they believed owned the exploitation rights of the revenues. The Axelsson Totts held their fiefs for the duration of their lifetime and in certain agreements a fixed number of years by the kin after the death of the commander. Fiefs held in pledge of a loan were similarly considered as the family’s personal property. The letter sent from Laurens to Sten Sture after the death of his brother Eric clearly shows that the improvements made to Viborg in Finland and the cost of its defenses against the Moscovite threat justified Ivar’s and Laurens’s explanation as to why they should continue to hold Viborg, Tavastehus, Olofsborg and Raseborg in the future.

The cost of reparations, the defense, the upkeep of the garrisons and other castle folk, motivated and justified their choice not to personally relinquish the Finnish fiefs for to Sten Sture, but to the Council of the Realm. Sten Sture’s demands were according to Ivar purely self-motivated and made without consideration to the honour of the Axelsson brothers and the constitutional agreement of 1481. He defended the Axelssons’ Finnish politics in letter from Viborg to the Council of Realm, and not directly to Sten Sture, where he...

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453 SDHK 30187, dated 1477, Eric Axelsson to Sten Sture the Elder, transcription in C 3 (V: 5), printed in SR SIII: 1, p. 82; Schück, 1976, p. 360 no 47; Hockman, 2006, p. 271; Olofsborg was initially constructed in wood by Eric Axelsson c.1475. The castle foundations of stone were constructed in 1477. The castle was strategically situated in order to repel Russian attacks from the east and thus ensured the domination of Savonia by the Swedes.
criticizes and accuses Sten Sture of not respecting the terms of the fiefdoms. He excused himself from participating in the planned Tälje meeting in July 1481. He also noted that Sten Sture was greedy and dishonest. In other words, he did not maintain the age-old encoded knightly standard that was so much admired and still used by both kings and nobleman in the late fifteenth century. At the close of the Middle Ages, the knightly standards of King Arthur and Sir Yvain were still the absolute measure of a magnate’s character.

Ivar may well have also been referring to the drawn-out dispute concerning the exchange of money between Knut Posse (Tavastehus), Laurens Vridag (citizen and agent from Reval) and Sten Sture. The Swedish Protector’s power agenda obviously included his personal plans to expand his economic interest in the Baltic trade through the control of the Finnish fiefdoms. These were to be incorporated into his political and personal trade aspirations, encompassed in his personal sphere of power.

According to the agreement between Ivar and Sten Sture, Ivar would receive the lesser fiefdoms of Raseborg, Öland and Bornholm in exchange for Viborg, Olofsborg and Tavastehus. It seems that Ivar accepted the lesser fiefdoms probably motivated by the fact that he now stood alone without the support of his powerful brothers and was planning to continue his trade from Gotland. Raseborg was traditionally a part of his now deceased father-in-law’s sphere of influence, whilst Öland and Bornholm were fiefdoms that were theoretically part of Christina Karlsdotter’s inheritance according to her father’s will and were originally an earlier pledge made to King Karl in 1457.

On a more speculative note, if Ivar had physically taken control of Öland and Bornholm he would have re-enhanced and secured his powerbase in the South, given his position from Gotland and Skåne and the Baltic Sea. When the feud between two former allies had escalated to the point of no return in 1484, the only reasonable outcome was Ivar Axelsson’s fall. He was lost to

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454 Rep. Dipl. R 2:3 no 4905, 2:8, p. 416; Lundholm, 1956, p. 92; Schück, 1976, p. 361 ref. no. 6; Schück comments that Arild Huitfeldt, referred to the remains of a copy or draft of Ivar’s letter, which he had had at his disposal when he was compiling his chronicle of Denmark’s history, 1652, pp 282–283; Bengtsson, 1999, pp. 225–226.
456 Palme, 1950, pp. 109–111 and 148–156. Lundholm, 1956, p. 104; Stst 2:2; Sten Sture was almost certainly involved in the laundering of gold from Stockholm’s Mint in 1483. He was forced to deny any accusations of his involvement in the Hans Grave affair in front of the Municipal Council of Stockholm. Later sources show that the same gold, now in the form of rings was bought by Ivar Axelsson and Arvid Trolle from Sten Sture’s mint master Hans Grave. See ref. 434 concerning the inclusion of a paragraph in the Kalmar Ordinances in 1483 concerning the Swedish Council’s transparency into, and the king’s limitations concerning the minting of coins. Palme concluded that Sten Sture was no better than his network counterparts concerning business methods and moral scruples; they were men of their time, in a period where the finances of the realm and private affairs merged into one another. Palme also added that judgements and conclusions concerning Sten Sture’s political achievements are overshadowed by his covetous, sly, and wanton business deals, motivated by ambition and shrewd economic strategies.
Lady Fortune – the Axelsson sphere of power had finally eclipsed. After deliberations between King Hans and Sten Sture on the island of Öland, all earlier agreements between Ivar and Sten Sture were declared null and void; Ivar’s interests, those of his wife and dependent kin, were swept aside for the interests of his two powerful rivals in the struggle for power in Sweden. Raseborg, Öland and Bornholm were reclaimed by Sten Sture. Ivar’s immediate reaction was to defy his onetime friend and ally, Sten Sture, one more time; he renewed his loyalty to King Hans, relinquishing his grip on Gotland, to the Danish Crown, in the hope of regaining both Gotland and Sölvesborg as fiefdoms from the Danish Crown.

In fact, Ivar Axelsson had already been forced into a pressing situation by his former ally Sten Sture after the death of Laurens in 1483. Ivar informed the Swedish Council of the Realm in 1483 that he was willing to negotiate and eventually relinquish the disputed fiefdoms (Gotland was not included) to the council, but not directly to Sten Sture.\(^{457}\) This decision highlights the seriousness of the deteriorating relationships between these two powerful individuals. In a letter sent to the Danzig City Council, Ivar Axelsson describes Sten Sture as a wanting, thankless, disloyal and unchivalrous knight. Historian Hugo Yrwing observed political rather than personal tendencies in Ivar’s letter dated 6 August 1481. The letter is dated to the time of the dispute between Ivar, Laurens and Sten Sture over the Finnish Fiefdoms.\(^{458}\) From a network perspective Sten Sture was clearly promoting his own personal agenda before that of the collective kin and close affiliated friends of the network. The fact remains that the Axelsson Totts supported his claim to protector of the realm, whilst still attempting to acquire support from the opposition by negotiating with Erik Karlsson (Vasa).\(^{459}\) A joint Axelsson unit of power attempted to influence the choice of protector. In addressing the conflict from such an idealistic perspective Ivar clearly emphasized the vital role they played in Sten Sture’s election, support founded on the honour of the family, but also taking into considerations the family’s agenda.

Ivar claimed that without the support of the Axelsson Totts, Sten Sture would not have been elected protector of the Realm. Yrwing also made the observation that both Hagnell and Palme saw undiplomatic tendencies in Sten Sture’s demands on Ivar Axelsson, who became more obstinate to Sten Sture’s political strategies and demands to win Gotland and the Finnish Fiefdoms in order to secure his own power position.\(^{460}\) Ivar probably felt let down by Sten Sture. He and his brothers had helped Sten Sture to power, in return for his

\(^{457}\) Schück, 1984, p. 71. The author comments that in 1471, shortly after the Battle of Brunkeberg, Sten Sture ordered a volume which was later called the Rolls of the Realm (c. 350 documents). Several of the texts served to prove Sweden’s claim to both Skåne and Gotland.

\(^{458}\) Yrwing, 1966, pp. 127–128. The only existing reference to this particular letter is in Arild Hufeldt, 1652, pp. 283–284.


\(^{460}\) Yrwing, 1970, p. 129.
help regarding the execution of King Karl’s will and the inheritance rights of
the king’s son Karl Karlsson. The Axelsson brothers had almost certainly
supported Sten Sture’s election to the protectorate, in return for his
cooperation. In contesting the legitimacy of the will before the Swedish
Council, Ivar hoped to neutralize Karl Karlsson’s right to his father’s estates.
Also, the events and unfulfilled expectations concerning the chosen direction
of marriage strategies in 1464–1465, which aimed to strengthen, reconnect and
widen their network affiliations in border counties, were thwarted by the
outcome the events after 1471.

Sten Sture had once been betrothed to Agneta Ivarsdotter, Ivar Axelsson’s
second daughter, at the moment of her untimely death in 1465. The marriage
between Ingeborg and Sten Sture in 1467 would eventually affect the
dynamics of the affinity, halting the socio-political emotionality of the fabric
or core of the Tott friendship network, despite the marriage remaining
childless. Instead of being Ivar Axelsson’s son-in-law and compatible to
Arvid Trolle, Sten Sture became the son-in-law of Ivar’s half-brother Åke.
This second betrothal and marriage to Ingeborg Åkesdotter gave both Ivar
Axelsson and Sten Sture new kin roles and personal political motivation within
the core of the network.

Ingeborg’s generous endowment from her father would not leave the Sture
Dynasty on her death, if she predeceased her husband. Sten Sture stood to
inherit all of her properties and lands designated to her in her father’s will.461
Ivar’s decision to fight for what he considered to be part of the Axelsson Tott
consolidated estates, facing what he believed was a two-pronged threat from
Sten Sture and King Hans, his decisions to fight lacked all rationality, one
might assume. But from Ivar’s point of view his honour, his political standing
and the future of his family’s estates had been put into question. When faced

461 Eriksson, 2017, pp. 86–90: Although Sten Sture remained without legal male and female heirs, he
was not without issue. In fact he had a daughter, Birgitta, who was placed at Vadstena in 1485. This
arrangement probably suited Sten Sture’s economical plans, in that the Vadstena received a generous
gift and Sten Sture’s gratitude. Arranging a suitable marriage would have cost more and she did not
have the right to inherit her father and therefore less attractive on the marriage market. Her worth was
in property and name, not name alone; Claes Gejrot, DV, 1996, p.362, DV: 862: ... Octobris, dominus
Henricus episcopus Lincopensis consecravit nobis virginem nomine Birgittam filiam domini Stenonis
Sture militis et pro tunc gubernatoris regni Svecis in sororem. Deo gracias, [October, Henry, Bishop
of Linköping consecrated the girl named Birgitta, daughter of Lord Sten Sture knight, presently Lord
High Protector of the Kingdom, and sister to us. thanks be to God.] and p.456, DV:1163: Item, v
Callendas Iulii obitii soror Birgitta Stenonis, [Also, on 27 June the sister Birgitta Stensdotter died]. See
my argument concerning King Karl’s decision to place his daughter Birgitta Karlsdotter with the nuns
of Vadstena. The need to appease God for one’s own personal last rite of passage, and for those of their
family and friends was an important feature in the considerations of how life, death and salvation.
Those acts we know about were, I would assert motivated by political and economic choices and by the
tradition of rulers to favour the Vadstena sisters. There were strong elements of fear concerning the
eternal damnation of the soul. So in placing their daughters at Vadstena, one can conclude, that pious
intent was the primary motive for donations and gifts, whilst there was an element of sound economics;
good politics with the possibility for spiritual redemption in next life.
with the reality of Sten Sture’s threats in both his private and national political economic agendas he felt that it was a cause worth fighting for.

From a pragmatic perspective, Ivar Axelsson chose to renew his oath of allegiance to King Hans. His final and most defiant decision was motivated by the political and economic expectations of being reunited with his fiefs, Sölvesborg including Lister and the town of Ronneby in Blekinge, whilst retaining Gotland, whilst also taking control of Borgholm and Öland as earlier agreed upon with Sten Sture. This solution would have given Ivar control of the roads, the waterways and much of the Skåne coastline and the areas around Gotland – a risk neither Sten Sture nor King Hans were prepared to take. Together they effectively pushed Ivar Axelsson out of Nordic politics through land and fiefdom limitations and personal confiscations.

The way in which Sten Sture took control of Stegeborg for the Swedish crown and later pledging it to a former Axelsson Tott client/friend, must have raised both personal concerns for both parties. The letter offers evidence that friendships and patron-client relationships were not to be taken lightly, and that all agreements were honour bound. Stegeborg was a matter of principle for Ivar Axelsson, whilst it was a question of political self-preservation for Gregers Mattsson in 1487. Both contrived to cooperate, whilst coming from different directions. The letter from Ramborg to her husband made this very clear. Gregers Mattsson’s decision to politically re-orientate his loyalty to the protector of the Swedish realm was purely pragmatic in the sense that he maintained an agenda of social and economic self-preservation and he chose to back the winning horse and not the three legged old nag that was bound to fail before the last furlong. Ramborg may well have showed a wider degree of inward emotional and social independency in her interactions with Magdalena. Gregers Mattsson’s behaviour and decisions were a form of pragmatic political and economic dependency; he was not a natural born leader. This could be considered a weakness in a knight, whilst it was clearly one of his strengths and outwardly visible in his successful political re-orientation. Gregers Mattsson was adaptable whilst still cognitively responsive to the sensitive political developments of the Kalmar Union and the position of the union kings.

Summary
Magdalena Karlsdotter’s remaining correspondence, although limited, still offers some interesting insights, not only concerning Magdalena’s life as a widow, her piety and private concerns, but also her relationship with individuals nearest to her within the Tott-Bonde-Sture network and others that were part of the well-established Tott network connected to magnatial families in Denmark, Skåne and Halland. Here again it is evident that a widow’s position, although socially and legally defined, her independence was
generally accepted by the kin members, but she was, as also seen in the correspondence, exposed to the antagonisms of the same men over property rights, personal self-assertion to make choices and take decisions concerning business transactions and the administration of estates. The claim to maintain control of fiefdoms and pledged properties of the deceased husband was especially difficult to assert, if she lacked support from key family members within the network.

Sten Sture stands out as oppositional to both King Karl’s and Ivar’s wishes after 1487, despite having confirmed them in 1470 and 1475. Magdalena was dependent on her nearest male kin in the judicial sense, but showed a wider independence concerning business and property transactions where she chose to work with, and utilize the services of Ivar’s former agents and sheriffs, whilst also maintaining and imitating business and kin contacts with Arvid Trolle, Bengt and Hans Åkesson in order to remain financially independent. On the other side of the coin one observes how Magdalena and the other the women of the network worked to bridge the sociopolitical schism created by the long conflict between Ivar Axelsson and Sten Sture. One also encounters the essence and emotions of her relationship with her husband Ivar as his wife and her relationship to the kin as his widow.

Case study 3: Elin Gustavsdotter

Täckhammar: a disputed endowment

This last section is concerned with the dower of the widow of Eric Axelsson, who died at Viborg Castle in Finland in 1481. Both Eric Axelsson and Elin Gustavsdotter failed to produce any surviving heir from both their first marriages. They were predeceased by several joint heirs. Shortly after his death, the will confirmed Elin’s inheritance and endowment rights. The will was almost immediately exposed to an inheritance struggle over the estate of Täckhammar. The estate and its adjacent mill were to be transferred to Elin, according to the terms of her dower on the death of Eric Axelsson. The core of the Tott network gathered strength and successfully defended her rights of dower, when the legality of the endowment was put into question by the peripheral rights of other weaker claims to the farm. As in the case of both Magdalena Karlsdotter and Birgitta Olofsdotter, Elin’s dower rights were also vulnerable to attacks, whereby other potential beneficiaries could contest the property agreements arranged by Eric Axelsson for Elin’s financial benefit, during the remainder of her lifetime. Elin’s powerful relatives and kin were former clients and friends of the Axelsson Totts. Several of these individuals gradually became the part of the inner core of the Sten Sture’s network in the

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462 Bärbo Parish was dominated by the estates of Täckhammar, Tista and Näs. For Täckhammar’s medieval origins; Information online; http://www.raa.se/.

196
and resided at Täckhammar when the conflict first surfaced. He refused to
Nils Bosson was not only guardian of Laurens Axelsson’s children; he was
197

467 SRA, original letter on parchment, dated Helsingborg 15 June 1414, printed in SD 960, (SDHK
466 Berta was the daughter of Eric Åkesson (Tott) and Beata Evertsdotter (Moltke).

465 Uppsala University Library (UUB), original letter on parchment, dated Stockholm 13 August 1490
(464 c.f Styke, 1911, p. 280; Täckhammar (Thekhamar) was pledged 1414 to Nyköping’s sheriff Arendt

1490s. Without their help Elin would have faced the prospect of losing the
estate of Täckhammar to the dubious claim made by Nils Bosson (the younger
Grip dynasty). Eric Axelsson had legally purchased Täckhammar and mill
from Bo Nilsson (the Elder Grip dynasty) in 1458. The farm and mill would
later become part of Elin’s dower in 1466.

We know this, because she later bestowed rights of ownership to both the
estate and the mill to her young nephew Arvid Davidsson (Oxenstierna). The
transfer of the estate was confirmed according to a witnessed and sealed
agreement dated 1491. Arvid Davidsson would in due course, endow his
wife Berta Eriksdotter (Tott) with Täckhammar. Berta Eriksdotter was one of
Eric Axelsson’s primary heirs through her father Eric Åkesson (Tott). This
transfer of property through Berta Eriksdotter meant that Täckhammar would
remain within the Tott Dynasty. Elin’s decision or rather initiative to give her
nephew Täckhammar, was most likely motivated by an earlier legal attempt in
1490 by Bo Nilsson’s son, Nils Bosson (the younger Grip dynasty).

Nils Bosson was not only guardian of Laurens Axelsson’s children; he was
also married to Ivar Axelsson’s granddaughter, Anna Arvidsdotter (Trolle),
and resided at Täckhammar when the conflict first surfaced. He refused to
relinquish the estate to Elin in right of her dower in 1481. Arvid
Davidsson’s gesture toward his wife Bengta illustrates the strategies used by
the magnatial families when complicated dower and inheritance disputes
loomed on the economic horizon. The use of consensus between the remaining
brothers and close male kin within the inner core of the group served to protect

463 FMU V, no. 3667; List of items removed from Viborg Castle (Finland) on 21 July the
representatives of Elin Gustavdotter’s sister-in-law’s, Claus Åkesen (Tott), Eggert Ericsson and Nils
Bosson (Grip), Elin Gustavdotter also actively took part in safe-guarding the rights of the family. She
is noted to have actively removing personal possessions, valuables, weapons and gunpowder from the
Castle of Viborg. These were the personal chattels and valuables which belonged to Karin Nipertz after
the death of Laurens Axelsson in 1483. Elin took a leading and active role, not only as a representative
of the family, but also being clearly involved in the transfer of Viborg Castle to Sten Sture.

464 c.f Styke, 1911, p. 280; Täckhammar (Thekhamar) was pledged 1414 to Nyköping’s sheriff Arendt
Styke by Knut Bosson’s widow Ermageard Johansdotter (Bulöw); SRA SDHK 27240, letter dated 8
June 1458.

465 Upplåsala University Library (UUB), original letter on parchment, dated Stockholm 13 August 1490
(SDHK 32468): Sten Sture awards Täckhammar to Elin Gustavdotter: UUB. Nordin, original letter on
parchment, 16 June 1491, (SRA, SDHK 32602): Arvid Knutsson confirms the award of Täckhammar to
Elin Gustavdotter, (SDHK 32669): 22 October 1491, Elin Gustavdotter gives Täckhammar to her
nephew Arvid Davidsson (Oxenstierna), (SDHK 32668); 22 October 1492, Arvid Davidsson gives
Täckhammar in dower to his wife Berta Eriksdotter (Tott), (SDHK 44618): letter dated 8 February
1500, Bengt of Tomta (Rosbo Hundred) and Nils Erengislesson (Gädda) confirm Elin Gustavdotter
dower of Täckhammar. Postcriptum in Birger Nilsson (Grip) and Birgitta Brahe’s account book in the
Wijkasamlingen vol. 3 (E 2741), pp. 30–31, SRA; Säfstaholm Collection vol. 33 (earlier 85), s. 338, RA.
Transcriptions published in HH 4, p 362, HH 7, appendix on p. 11.

466 Berta was the daughter of Eric Akesson (Tott) and Beata Evertsdotter (Moltke).

467 SRA, original letter on parchment, dated Helsingborg 15 June 1414, printed in SD 960, (SDHK
18358).

468 UUB: E 169:315: contemporary transcript on paper, dated 10 August 1495; Printed in the Nordinska
transcript collection (SRA SDHK 33270).
her rights, whilst outwardly illustrating the collective strength of the kin as a group. Several letters dated before and after Elin’s death in 1495 allow us to follow the dispute long after the individuals that were originally and directly involved were dead and buried.

Summary

Marriage was a serious business because it was part of the crucial dynastic trellis-work of secular society. Marriage and widowhood created the roles that women were expected to play at some stage in their lives. Their primary role of a woman was to beget male heirs. Marriage and widowhood entitled a woman to access her dower and legal inheritance after the death of her husband. Wives and widows acted and reacted to the socio-economic mechanism to which they were subordinated through the choice of partner in network societies; a choice which was not necessarily that of the woman herself. Social interactions in the cognitive space of dynastic expectation were motivated and driven by economic concerns and political ambitions, which determined the choice of bride and the decision to seal a contract between two networks or between two families within the same core network. The honour of the family and that of the bride’s prospective in-laws restricted a woman’s personal empowerment to refute an offer of marriage. A woman’s position within the power structure of society subordinated her to the decisions made on her behalf, by her father, uncle, brother, cousin or husband, whilst at the same time the very same societal mechanisms offered a certain degree of independence within the pre-set socio-cultural limitations of society.

Wives and widows in Scandinavia could and did sell, and buy commodities, properties and land. They also donated and pledged land independently of their husbands’ estates. But it was socially and economically important that one or more men representing the close kin approved the transaction by placing their seals on a document and thereby giving their consent to complete a transaction. More importantly it strengthened the legality of a document in property disputes undertaken by later generations. A woman acted from an implicit space rather than an explicit position – this was her behoof and contributed to her success. From one perspective the Middle Ages was not a period of true female emancipation, but certainly it is a partial truth seen from a gender related perspective; women did assert themselves through a wider spectrum of social identities, which in turn reflected their choices and decisions in several areas of society, including economic conditions, the judiciary, production, services, literature, art and even war; in handcrafts, medicine and spirituality.

Birgitta Olofsdotter and Elin Gustavsdotter had to fight several dynastic challenges in order to receive that which was rightfully theirs according to the Law. They did not fail to produce children and even fulfill their dynastic duty,
which was the procreation of heirs. The non-continuation of the dynasty put them at a disadvantage on the deaths of their children and husbands. Magdalena Karlsdotter’s challenge as a widow stemmed from her position as the daughter of a king and the wife of probably one of the most powerful men of the fifteenth century. She too, failed to produce a living male heir to continue Ivar Axelsson’s line. Common for all three women was that they found themselves on the losing side, albeit within the core dynastic network or the union conflict. Dynastic and political conflicts not only coloured and dictated the context of their lives, they also laid claim to their future as magnatial widows. Michael Hick’s wrote, of the Kingmakers daughter, Anne Neville, “Her life illustrates repeatedly the making of the medieval marriage […] Anne never … married for love, but was rather the object – and the financial beneficiary of two materially prudent marriages.”469 This was not only true for Anne, but also true for almost all women of the high nobility, including queens. The choice of marriage partner was often not theirs to make, whilst the circumstances of their widowhood was theirs to take. In empowering their position as widows they attempted to take command of their lives, this also included demanding their rights of dower, and to administrate their estates and do business. For this reason their motives and decisions were sometimes challenged and questioned by the very same men, who professed to offer the safe haven of the network to protect those very same rights.

The harsh reality of drawn-out inheritance disputes was that in death the disputing parties were still cognitively vital to the outcome of the dispute, whilst it should be stressed that the consensus and disapproval of the friendship network’s inner core was sometimes used against widows who distanced themselves from the protection of the group. A widow who did not abide by her subordinated position within and against the will of affinitive family group risked being alienated from the protective network.

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469 Hicks, 2013 (2006), p. 27.
Chapter 10

In the following chapter the discussion moves away from the rights and the intermediary negotiated social space of widows, to consider the economic and social implications and realities of women actually inheriting the primary dynastic estates of their fathers within the political power framework of the society and socio-economic structure of the magnatial network. The recognized rights of a daughter to inherit the main estates of her father did not necessarily mean that she had the judicial right to control them. A married woman’s inheritance, according to the Law, was placed under the administration of her husband. Male heirs and *sui jure* heiresses were proclaimed as coming of age generally and entered into their estates. Patterns of marriage in the Late Middle Ages point to a strong desire and preference for male heirs. A first born son followed by other male heirs, offered the family future dynastic security. Predeceased children and surviving daughters threatened to disperse the family’s dynastic lands. Remarriage was an obvious solution to the lack of male heirs in order to secure the family’s dynastic future.

Magnatial network relationships were maintained through the expression of ideal friendship, whilst their physical structure was based on the preference of the male line and dynastic endogamic marriages. These marriage lines were fundamental to the creation of a useful number of strategical connections pertaining to the father-son inheritance. This does not mean, however, that daughters were of no consequence in such a context or did not inherit their fathers. All but three of Axel Pedersen’s (Tott) children failed to produce legal male heirs. The three exceptions were his son Åke Axelsson and his daughter Ellen Axelsdotter from his first marriage to Katarina Axelsdotter (Krognos) and his son Laurens Axelsson from his second family. Åke Axelsson married once and produced five surviving male heirs as well as several daughters. The main Härlöv line failed in the third generation on the male side and became extinct in the end of the seventeenth century. The Krognos line which Ellen Axelsdotter married into became extinct at the end of the fifteenth century. Erik Åkesson (second son of Åke Axelsson) produced five successive father-son inheritances followed by a father-daughter inheritance in the 6th generation after which the male line failed. When a direct paternal beneficiary was not forthcoming, the dynastic families were forced to make necessary adaptations that included other male kin – trusted sons-in-law, nephews and recognized bastard sons. The maternal lines of the magnatial network then

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470 Ivar Axelsson married three times, Eric Axelsson two, Gustav Karlsson (Gumsehuvud) at least three times. King Karl also married three times. He sired two male heirs; son Ture who reached his teenage years and Karl who was a young child at the time of King Karl’s marriage to his mother, Christina Abrahamsdotter; See DAA, SBL and ÄSF.
served to play an important role in the stability and continuation of the kin network when the male line withered.

Such a deviation from normal practices aimed to hold together as group and keep the family’s physical wealth and estates fairly intact. Joel Rosenthal suggested that in theory three to five apparent and presumptive male heirs were needed to keep the chain of cohesive inheritance through unbroken patrilineage. The reality of course is that inheritance and patrilineage was governed by slump and unavoidable biological factors of nature – death being the most final of them. It should be pointed out that the laws of inheritance in Scandinavia were based on the division of the deceased’s accumulated estate between all off-spring, both male and female, and even the claims of other potential heirs in the Swedish Land Law (MEL).

However, there was a more complicated socio-political facet to the begetting of male heirs; the arrival of a new male heir in a second and even third marriage, who then survived childhood, affected and threatened the established judicial position of older sisters from earlier marriages and the economic speculation of their husbands. This was indeed problematic and often led to friction between members of the dynastic network. There was a risk that such disputes would be become part of national politics. The magnates kept this in mind when they entered into marriage contracts. A wealthy bride-to-be was by blood part of the main core of her dynastic family, whilst after marriage she moved within the dynastic circle of her husband as kin. Her position was based on the understanding of what a she was initially contracted to contribute socially to the marriage contra what she was expected to bring financially to the accumulated wealth of her husband’s dynastic family in the future, based on her dower and inheritance at the time of the marriage. But as we shall see multiple marriages, the birth and eventual death of male heirs, inevitably hindered such carefully considered magnatial ambitions.

**King Karl’s inheritance: a conflict in the making**

The approximate date of King Karl’s last testament is fixed to a few weeks before his death in May 1470. The use of the will as an object of study, serves to exemplify how the birth of a son, the marriage to a mistress and the death of a father affected the position of those we call sisters and daughters. The details of King Karl’s testament will be discussed from the perspective of Tott transnordic network strategies, contra the developing factional politics which threatened to undermine the concept of the Kalmar Union. When King Karl’s

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testament (see figures 1a, 2a) became public knowledge, it must have come as both a personal and public slap in the face for his two powerful sons-in-law, Ivar Axelsson and Eric Ericsson. They had married their respective brides based on the future understanding they would take control over part of or even all of Karl Knutsson’s vast wealth and estates. At the time of Magdalena Karlsson’s union with Ivar Axelsson in 1466 King Karl had no surviving male heirs, making his daughters, Christina and her half-sister Magdalena, the two primary inheritors of his vast estates and wealth.

The situation changed when King Karl’s low-born mistress, Christina Abrahamsdotter gave birth to a male child. But as long as they were not married the illegitimate boy’s existence, posed no direct threat to either Magdalena’s or Christina’s position as the king’s female heirs apparent. However, King Karl’s marriage to his mistress in the spring of 1470 and Sten Sture’s sudden, but prominent presence at court in the last months of the king’s life, threatened to dash all the carefully considered Axelsson plans in the years leading up to king’s death. This section shall consider the position of his two daughters according to the framework of the law and in the mobilization of the power and influence which the Axelsson Tott network could levy, in order to sway the decision of the Swedish Council of the Realm regarding the will’s legality. Through the explicit support of their husbands, Magdalena and Christina were able to empower their own position contra the threat of the potential claims by Christina Abrahamsdotter and King Karl’s only son. In the background of the ongoing conflict between King Karl’s main beneficiaries, there was also another potential threat developing which threatened Ivar Axelsson’s political future; this was the personal agenda of Sten Sture, self-professed Protector of the Swedish Realm and appointed guardian of King Karl’s wife and son.

Historian Sven Ulric Palme observed, that in order for Magdalena and Christina to take receivership of their share of the royal inheritance after King Karl, Ivar Axelsson and his brothers were forced to make several necessary concessions to Sten Sture, concerning Ivar’s 1468 nomination to interim Protector of Sweden and a divided Swedish Council’s later decision to sanction Sten Sture’s claim to the title of protector. Palme also pointed out that both Sten Sture and the Axelsson Totts were conscious of King Christian’s claim to the Swedish throne, which necessitated that Sten Sture maintain the support of the Axelsson Totts concerning his nomination as protector and the fate of Åke Axelsson’s confiscated estates, which his wife, Ingeborg Åkesdotter’s would one day inherit.\(^{472}\) The Axelsson Totts, on the other hand, needed Sten Sture to support their struggle against King Christian, in order to

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\(^{472}\) Rep.Dipl. II: 2, pp. 553–554; Lundholm, 1956, pp. 78–49; In 1476 Åke Axelsson and Märtå Bengtsdotter agreed that Ingeborg would inherit equally with her brothers. Sten Sture showed interest in Varberg Whilst he did not succeed in taking control of the castle after Åke Axelsson’s death in 1477, but he did take control of Ingeborg’s vast inheritance.
regain control of their Danish fiefdoms and the family’s confiscated private estates.473

The Sture Chronicle, was structured around Sten Sture’s biased rendition of history, consciously interweaving two separate and unrelated events; King Karl’s marriage to his mistress and Sten Sture’s later appointment to Protector of the Realm. According to the chronicle the dying king willingly put the command of his soldiers and Stockholm Castle in the hands of his young nephew, but this does not necessarily mean that the king gave him the title of protector. The title was not King Karl’s to give. The question of the Swedish throne and succession of Sten Sture to protector seems to be answered in the Sture Chronicle (vv. 1933–1952).474 The narrative of the chronicle rejects all other erroneous and potentially threatening versions of past events, but most especially it was the Axelsson Tott version of the events prior to and after the death of King Karl, Sten Sture needed to erase from history. Olaus Petri later pointed out the fact that the Tott-Sture-Bonde political marriage, and the reasons for its existence, resulted in, “much bickering thereof.”475

Interestingly, the documents pertaining to Sten Sture from 1458 to 1470 do not offer any clear indication as to the strength of the relationship between Sten Sture and Karl Knutsson prior to April 1470 and after Sten Sture’s victory over Christian I’s troops at the Battle of Öresten. But what is clear, is that Ivar Axelsson and Karl Knutsson had developed a close working relationship, as well as having a personal relationship through the king’s daughter Magdalena. The events of 1470 can be seen to be the catalyst in the relationship between King Karl and Sten Sture but equally so, the king’s relationship with his son-

473 Palmer, 1950, pp. 44–45.
474 Klemming, RK 1867–1868, p. 67: Sten Sture’s version in hindsight, tells us an official Sture version of the events before and after King Karl’s death; »Arom äpter gudz brydd xiiiic lxx [1470] aar/ som nw oppa themne tiidh til staar/ ville gudh hielpa konungh karl aff sina nødh/ oppa stokholms sloth bleef han dödh/ han gaff ther opp sin anda/ gud latli homun i hymerike landa/ noghot för än han dou leeth han see sina snilla/ tha togh han tiil åkta sina frilla/ och åkther ther nz sin son/ holkit ey är wthan storan mon/ then tiidh thetta skeer/ waare när fäntyte och än meer/ och antwardher han slottit i händher/ her steen och saa alla swäna i sändher och saa monde thz tiil gaa/ thz han strax monde slottit faa/ och skedde thz wthan alth swik/ thz han höffiusman dome i sverige fisk, för thy rikensens raadh thz sporde, thz han motrh fiende stridh tordev; [1470 was a time of dilemma for God. But God was willing to help King Karl with his problems. He died in Stockholm’s Castle and surrendered his soul to God. He let him enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Shortly before he died, he showed great wisdom by wedding his mistress and thereby making his son legitimate, which was achieved without any problems. This happened about the fifteenth. He placed the responsibility of the castle in the hands of Lord Sten, who ordered his squires to occupy the castle. This was done without betrayal. He was proclaimed protector of Sweden by the Council of the Realm, who believed that he dared to do battle against the enemy].See also DV, 1996, p. 351, v. 804: Item, in 4a ebdomeda post festum pasche, scilicet 3a feria proxima ante festum sancti Erici obiit Karolus in castr Stokholmensi et ibidem in monasterio fratrum minorum sepultus est Hic idem rex Karolus in extremis commissit domino Stenoni Stura militi castrum Holmense et totum regnum Suecie ad gubernandum. [Further, in the fourth week after Easter, on the Tuesday prior to the fest of St Eric, King Karl died at Stockholm Castle and was buried in the Franciscan monastery. The very same King Karl turned the command of the Castle and the government of the Swedish kingdom to the knight, Sten Sture].
475 Olaus Petri (Olai Petri Svenska krönika), 1860, ed. Klemming, p. 266. (Online resource).
in-law, Ivar Axelsson. A letter from King Karl to the Council of Danzig, dated Stockholm 19 April 1470, indicates that the relationship between King Karl and Ivar Axelsson was in a phase of dramatic change.\textsuperscript{476} Ivar’s intense pirate activities from Gotland were almost contemporary with the uprising of Erik Karlsson (Vasa) against King Karl’s rule in 1469. Erik Karlsson was supported by a former Oxenstierna supporter, Trotte Karlsson (Eka). Trotte Karlsson had initially supported King Karl’s restitution in 1464, only to change his affiliations in favour of his removal as Swedish king in January 1465. Two years later as a member of the Swedish council he called for King Karl’s return in.

In 1469, Trotte Karlsson would once again redirect his loyalties in support of the Oxenstierna network uprising. But after a crushing defeat in Dalarna, Trotte Karlsson was forced to take refuge in Denmark. He died fighting for the Union and King Christian at the Battle of Brunkeberg in 1471.\textsuperscript{477} King Karl was obviously inclined to mistrust his supporters and even those closest to him. This included Ivar Axelsson and King Karl’s belief that Ivar Axelsson supported the Union’s resurrection under an elected union king, but not necessarily the election of King Karl. Growing doubts concerning his son-in-law’s loyalty are to be observed in King Karl’s remarks, in answer to several complaints put forward by the Council in Danzig. The king implied that his son-in-law had surrendered Gotland to the Danish king and that Ivar’s pirate activities were therefore the concern of the Danish king.\textsuperscript{478}

In light of the aforementioned observations concerning the growing resistance to his rule, Karl Knutsson’s will is a significant and much underestimated source in the history of the Kalmar Union. The testament helps to pin-point an alternative explanation and time perspective for the political rift between the Axelsson Totts and Sten Sture, observed through the changing attitudes toward the uncertain situation surrounding King Karl’s kingship and the pendulum like loyalty of his friends and network adversaries. The testament offers the first real indication that Sten Sture had a private agenda separate from the overall agenda of the affinitive network led by the more senior and politically dominant Axelsson Totts.\textsuperscript{479} At the time of King Karl’s death, four of the nine brothers were still alive. Together they constituted a formidable family alliance. The four brothers received full and undivided support from the five sons of Åke Axelsson, until the outbreak of renewed conflict, after Sten Sture became the Swedish protector. Historian Gottfrid Carlsson asserted in the 1940s that there was both social and political

\textsuperscript{476} SRA, SDHK 29095.
\textsuperscript{477} SRA, SBL, 1949, “Trotte Karlsson”, vol. 12, p. 575; See also Olesen, 1983, passim, pp.196–352.
\textsuperscript{478} SRA SDHK 29095; See Gillingstam, 1952, pp.467–488.
\textsuperscript{479} Carlsson, 1943, pp. 21; FMU 3419 and FMU 3420; Wojewódzkie Archiwum Państwowe w Gdansku, Gdansk, original on paper, dated Visborg 23 April 1470; RA photo copy in 300, D/11 nr 83, photo copy DKA, (SDHK 29096); Ericsson, 1923, s. 33 no. 253; Yrwing, 1978, p. 64; Harrison, 2002, pp. 407–409.
significant in this document, observed in a context of magnatial network relationships.  

**Karl Knutsson’s testament: earlier studies**

This section is a brief resumé of the earlier research and secondary sources pertaining to the will’s origins and history. The first, but incomplete, description of the contents of the will (the original?) was published in Olof von Dalin’s (1708–1763) early eighteenth century contribution to Sweden’s history.  

Some years later, Sven Lagerbring (1707–1787) obtained access to a transcript or copy of the will. He published his findings in 1758. Lagerbring wrote that his version of King Karl’s will originated from another copy dated c.1690. This particular copy was found amongst Johan Nilsson Gyllenstierna’s (1617–1690) private papers and correspondence. Lagerbring noted that King Karl’s last wishes did not include any bequests or donations to any individuals of the Church, no requiem masses to be said and no funds to set aside for a royal prebendary.

However, the will does suggest that the ailing king carried a holy relic, which indicates some need for spiritual comfort. The relic would have given King Karl an innate sense of protection through the wearing of something derived from the body of Christ on his person. King Karl’s spirituality should not be confused with his ambiguity toward the Church as a pious and a devotional institution, which he believed was fueled by religious bigotry and superstitious nonsense. King Karl, as most Christians in the Middle Ages, wished to safe-guard his soul and that of his family in the eternal afterlife. However, the will does mention that King Karl re-donated a religious image to Vadstena Abbey, which he had purchased (or removed) from the Abbey along with other valuable items in 1454. The removal of the items was recorded in the *Annales of Vadstena*. King Karl’s donations to the Church balanced between his political motives and the redemption of his soul. King Karl was...

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480 Karl Knutsson’s testament; date unknown, 1470. (SRA, avskrift på papper, ser II, Ra 0102, SRA SDHK 29037; FMU 3419, [transcript]. For Gottfrid Carlsson’s explanation and a possible dating of Karl Knutsson testament to 1470. 1943, pp. 22–27. See also Appendix I of this thesis.

481 von Dalin, 1750, pp. 774–776: see also Gottfrid Carlsson, 1943.

482 Carlsson, 1943, p.2; Carlsson, cited Sven Lagerbring’s personal observation of King Karl’s will, wrote, ”... med Påfwiske widskapelser än detta. Inga stålsmassor. inga Munkskiänkor och skärelds penningar nämns här, några helgedomar äro de enda minnesmärken af Påwiska andakten, som här förekomma. Det är mindre underligt at K. Karl bar på sin hals et andelikt järtekn med heligas qvarlefwor uti ...”. Carlsson points out that Lagerbring was not wholly correct pertaining to, ”munkskiänkor” adding that King Karl did in fact present offer gifts to the Convent of Vadstena where two of his wives and a daughter were laid to rest. But these were items once removed by or purchased by King Karl from Vadstena and therefore not strictly gifts as such, rather he was returning them to their rightful owner. In the Vadstenadiariet it written on 17 January 1451, DV 614, p. 266: “Item corpus Katerine regine Karoli regis, translatum est de Stockholmis et spectulum in cappella regis, die Antonii abbatis.” [Also, today the mortal remains of Queen Katarina, the consort of King Karl that had been transferred from Stockholm were laid to rest in the King’s Chapel/Chantry in the fast day of Anthony the Abbot].

483 Carlsson, 1942, p. 3

205
certainly aware of Vadstena’s position as a powerful religious institution and a useful ally in times of conflict. Gottfrid Carlsson pointed out that, in regard to the Swedish Church one can discern a similar attitude in Sten Sture the Elder and King Gustav I’s relationship with the Abbey.484

Gottfrid Carlsson discussed the contents of the will in a context of the actual political situation prior to and after King Karl’s death. The article is very useful in an analysis of socio-politico network motives and strategies. The circumstances of its creation and purpose lends itself to new perspectives on the analysis of motives, choices and decisions during the critical weeks in April/May 1470 before the king’s death. Carlsson’s aim was to offer a new and more accurate text of the will; illuminate on contents, and bind them to the economic and political consequences that came in the aftermath of it. But it should be pointed out that Carlsson did in fact briefly touch upon the social consequences that the will had on the Tott network affiliations. There were underlining decisive factors of political division behind the conflict which overshadowed the kingdom of Sweden and the ambitions of the Union kings thenceforth.485 The will, I suggest, was one of the major catalysts which led to the break-down of the inner core of the network surrounding the Axelsson Totts. I also suggest that King Karl’s actions seriously impacted the future of the Union and the direction of politics in Sweden on a much wider and deeper level of division and conflict.

King Karl’s inheritance: claiming the agnatic line of inheritance
When Karl Knutsson’s perceived intentions became a matter of public record, they most likely triggered an immediate reaction within the core of the Axelsson Tott family, and one might assume a delayed reaction within the wider context of the Tott-Bonde-Sture affiliation, and even the Swedish council. The repercussions of the will became the foundation of discord between Sten Sture and Ivar Axelsson, which eventually widened over time, turning the future of the Kalmar Union on its head. The members of the Swedish Council were at odds with each other after the death of King Karl. The will did not mention or include any witnesses; temporal or otherwise. The role of the witnesses was to validate the content of any legal document.486 The obvious reason for the lack of witnesses in King Karl’s will was that the king had married his mistress without obtaining the approval of the Swedish council. The consequences of the king’s actions saw Ivar Axelsson pushed aside and the Swedish Protectorate fall into the hands of Sten Sture.487

484 Carlsson, 1942, p. 3.
486 Ray and Cossar, 2011, p. 64.
Karl Karlsson’s birth rekindled King Karl’s hopes, relative to the Halmstad agreement of 1450, whereby the son of King Christian or the son of King Karl was to be considered a suitable contender to Union king. In 1450 King Karl’s son, Ture Karlsson, would have been a contender according to the agreement. Unfortunately Ture died and Christian’s son Hans was accepted as the presumptive Danish and Norwegian king on his father’s death. The suggestion made by King Karl that his new son should ascend the Swedish throne after his death needed the wider approval of the Swedish council. But the 1450 agreement certainly cannot be ignored as a factor which may have motivated King Karl’s choice to legalize his young son’s social status and theoretically push his interim successor Ivar Axelsson aside, in an attempt to favour the agnic line of inheritance and descent.

Disputing the will

The dispute over the legality of the will and the king’s marriage was initiated by the three men closest to King Karl, but socially farthest from the deceased king’s third wife at this point in time; his sons-in-law Ivar Axelsson and Eric Ericsson (Gyllenstierna). The third protagonist was the king’s young nephew Sten Sture the Elder.

Several relevant sources connected to the events leading up to the will being made public, are represented in the references below. This particular will helps in the analysis, understanding and significance of sudden and unexpected changes, which threatened the emotional bonds of marriage, kin- and friendship, reflected in the decisions taken by the magnates as logical reactions to the will. King Karl was not successful in engaging the magnates of the Swedish Council of the Realm in his plan to have his son elected king of Sweden. If King Karl was not able to consolidate the future of the Swedish kingdom through himself, his plan may well have been to attempt to do it through his only male descendant, supported by his grandfather’s vague lineage claim to the royal bloodline of Eric the Holy.

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488 SMR I, p.165, vv. 57–74; Blom, 1972, pp.139–146 ref. no 14, pp.158–165, pp. 171–172 and 204–205; Larsson, 2006, pp. 227–228; Harrison, 2015; online article Svenska Dagbladet; Some historians carefully assert that King Karl claimed his royal blood through a fifteenth century addition which bound the earlier Eric’s Chronicle to his own chronicle Förbindelsedikten, whereby King Karl’s, great-great-grandfather Nils of Tofta (Sparre of Tofta) had married Märta Eriksdotter, a third sister of King Erik Eriksson, ‘Lisp and Lame’, thus making King Karl a direct descendant of St Eric. Historian Conny Blom came to the conclusion that Nils of Tofta was in fact the personal creation of Karl Ulfsson (Sparre of Tofta), King Karl’s grandfather and not fifteenth century propaganda created by King Karl Knutsson. This type of genealogical falsification was not unusual and generally used to embellish, link and elevate coming generations of the family lineage to the social circles of the high nobility and even royal lines. Falsification or, if you will, dubiously constructed connections continued to be used by professional genealogists from the sixteenth century onwards to serve the aims of the emerging aristocracy. Karl Ulfsson’s claimed lineage; “Och börja aff en konung heth erik/ han haffde alt sweirike vnðher sigh/ oc sante eriks sonason/kounungh erik haffde systra tree/her knve aff folkunga fik ena aff the/ hon heth elin oc annar märetha/ henne fik her niels aff tofta [...] mz henne fik han her abiorn
How did the core network of individuals closest to King Karl emotionally react to this catalytic change observed through the dynamics of the personal bonds of kinship between these three men? Dissent, dismay, mistrust, political rivalry and network consensus are key aspects central to the events after 1470, whilst the will in itself was disastrous for the long-term affinitive relations between Ivar Axelsson and Sten Sture and the political developments after King Karl’s demise.

It may be correct to assume that Sten Sture was well informed of the contents of the will and that Christina Abrahamsdotter, was attempting to protect her newly won status and the legally uncertain and disputed assumed rights of her son. The will stipulated that Christina did not want to share certain items between her son and his half-sisters; the wording may well indicate some form of prior discussion between King Karl and his new queen on this subject. It is reasonable to assume that Christina was all too aware of the uncertain and dangerous situation in which she and her son found themselves and Sten Sture’s convincing role as the trusting guardian may well have soothed her initial fears concerning the awaited reaction and actions of her powerful new unwilling relatives as ominous political and economic rivals. Although she was married to King Karl, she and her young son were never formerly embraced by the family, nor were they ever considered members of the powerful Axelsson network. This was the socio-cultural and economic reality the king’s mistress must have endured as his queen.

During the last weeks of King Karl’s life, he was probably bedridden, frail and wholly dependent on his closest family and trusted servants. Both Sten

nilsson/ aff honom föddis her wlf abjornsson/ Aff wlfwie föddis her karl j toffta/ …” [Eng translation: And so it begins with a king named Eric/ he ruled over the whole of Sweden/and he was the grandson of Eric the Holy/King Eric had sisters three/ lord Knut (Eriksson) of the Folkunga Dynasty was given one of them to be his bride/ she was called Elin and the other Martha/ she was betrothed to lord Nils of Tofta […] with her he was begotten a son called Abjorn Nilsson/ he was begotten a son called Ulf Abjörnsson/ He was begotten a son called Lord Karl of Tofta/…]

Karl Knutsson’s grandmother Helena Israelsdotter was born of the high nobility. She and her sister Ramborg were married into the Sparre av Tofta dynasty. Ramborg married David Nilsson (Sparre av Tofta). Helena and Ramborg were directly related to St Birgitta through their father Israel Birgersson (Finstaätten), as well as being direct and indirect descendants of several members of the Folkunga Dynasty (both legitimate and illegitimate lines). It is therefore possible to assume that Karl Knutsson’s harboured certain doubts concerning his great-grandmother’s lineage as being inadequate in order to vindicate or justify his claim to the Swedish throne, although the latter were de facto members of the early Swedish high nobility and generationally active in thirteenth and fourteenth century politics, it was King Karl’s grand-father’s construed lineage interwoven into the new prelude of Eric’s Chronicle in the fifteenth century which may well have been seen to serve King Karl’s claim to royal origins. Therefore the genealogical addition to the Eric’s Chronicle should be observed as being a clear attempt to legitimately cement and justify Karl Ulfsson’s ancestry.

Yet, it cannot be fully disregarded or ignored that the inclusion of this particular lineage may well have become a useful dynastical device in order to cement his claim to the Swedish kingdom and through which he later unsuccessfully attempted to continue his line through his only surviving male heir Karl Karlsson. A strong sense of lineage and dynastic belonging, rather than a direct implementation of political propaganda, would as Blom concluded, explain the inclusion of Karl Ulfsson’s false lineage in the later Rhyme Chronicle.
Sture and Christina were residing at Stockholm Castle during this critical period. Ivar Axelsson had travelled to Gotland; also Eric Ericsson seems not to have been in the near vicinity at this time. A study of the extant letters in the archives, indicate that Sten Sture had been representing his uncle in an official capacity for several weeks. Ivar Axelsson came to Stockholm first after the king’s death. These circumstances point toward the fact that Sten Sture may well have gained the confidence of King Karl and the Queen, whilst he was most certainly aware that the situation would or could never be accepted by the Axelson Totts. Sten Sture’s own political plans did not include being the guardian of a child king for some fifteen years or so, only to relinquish power to Karl Karlsson at his coming of age, if he was to be accepted by the Swedish Council of the Realm. Sten Sture would later refuse to relinquish his title of Protector of the Swedish Realm in favour of King Hans who had succeeded his own father as presumptive union king in 1481, so why would he be motivated to willingly give the title to Karl Karlsson. In light of King Karl’s earlier and binding agreements with Ivar Axelsson and the Swedish Council in 1468, it was therefore vital for Sten Sture to maintain the initial trust of the wider dynastic alliance in the face of King Christian I’s renewed threats to re-instate the Union and implement his own political and economic plans by force.

The wider political dynamics of King Karl’s will

So what does the will actually tell us about the situation within the Tott-Bonde-Sture alliance between April and May 1470? The contents reveal some interesting clues to the thoughts that must have weighed heavy on the mind of the dying king; decisions concerning lineage, the inheritance of his heirs and the true extent of the loyalty of his closest friends and kin shortly before his death.

The king’s last will supplanted and invalidated any earlier wills and rights of inheritance that his two legitimate surviving daughters were to expect. Christina and her half-sister Magdalena were to share the estates of their father and the separate endowments of each respective mother in right of their

489 Eric Ericsson Gyllenstierna was in Stockholm on official council business between August and September of 1470, concerning the inheritance, rights and authenticity of certain letters confirmed with the seal of the late Erengisle Nilsson and presented in court by his widow, Birgitta Olofsdotter the Elder. No other letters exist or have survived to indicate that Sten Sture was in Stockholm before or during King Karl illness and on the king’s death. SRA, Stureark. A a 28, original letter on parchment, dated Stockholm 28 August 1470. Postscriptum Emil Hildebrand’s regester (DRA), no 137 Hammerstaaffären; S U Palme, 1950, pp. 126–136; Lundholm, 1956, pp. 120–137; RA, original parchment. Transcripts in Peringskiöld: E 57 (reg.); Örnhielm: XI p. 614; G 29, LStB. Peringskiöld: E 57 (reg.); Örnhielm: XI p. 614; G 29, LStB; (SDHK 29148); SRA, original letter on paper, the 5 September 1470; Bishop Hans of Strängnäs and others verify that Eric Ericsson (Gyllenstierna) had read the letter to the bishop from Erengisle Gädda, concerned with the details of Birgitta Olofsdotter’s dower, from her deceased husband, Erengisle Nilsson; transcript in Peringskiöld: E 57; Örnhielm: XI p. 614; G 29, LStB, (SDHK 29155, facsimile); Rystad, 1955–57, 1959.
inheritance and in consideration of the fact that they would inherit the deceased Ture Karlsson (full brother of Christina) who would have inherited the main estates and fiefdoms after his father had he not died some years earlier. Ivar Axelsson and Eric Ericsson made their calculated decisions to marry the daughters of Karl Knutsson, founded on social and economic realities prior to 1469.

The revised inheritance of his daughters surfaced in the clauses of the new will. King Karl stipulated which properties and possessions should go to his former mistress Christina Abrahamsdotter, now his wife, and for all intense purposes Queen of Sweden, and their young heir Karl Karlsson. The boy was also to inherit the whole estate of Christina’s deceased brother Ture Karlsson. One interesting stipulation concerns certain items of property kept at Åbo Castle, which were originally brought into the marriage by Christina Abrahamsdotter, but now administrated by King Karl. These particular items were not to be divided between her son and her step-daughters. Other items belonging to King Karl were to be considered part of the king’s and his new wife’s mutual property. This meant that both Christina and Magdalena stood to lose a substantial share of King Karl’s most valuable chattels to their half-brother. The will safe-guarded the assumed rights of Karl Karlsson and his mother, whilst limiting the earlier assumed rights of King Karl’s daughters for legal redress. The new stipulations and limitations were not to Magdalena’s and Christina’s favour, and therefore would not have been to the advantage of their respective husbands, who were the legal representatives of the two sisters.

The greater bulk of the king’s personal estates, according to the will, were to be redirected to Karl Karlsson and Christina Abrahamsdotter. The boy stood to inherit the largest portion of the king’s estates and lands, as well as his chattels and the most treasured personal possessions, which included the king’s sword and armour, a religious amulet (relic capsule) and a gold spoon which Magdalena had once given her father as a personal gift. Ivar and Magdalena, one can only assume, were fretful, not only over the gold spoon, but over some of the other objects of economic and spiritual value; the relic capsule amongst other valued possessions. Their anxiety, however, may have been for very different reasons. The gold spoon represented both sentimental and important economic value, whilst the relic capsule had a spiritual value rather than economic. The concerns of the immediate affected parties further deepened as King Karl, it appears, had indirectly intended to call on the Council of the Realm to elect his son as his legal successor to the Swedish throne. This request would have effectively overturned the prior agreement taken at Örebro in 1468, between King Karl, the Council of the Realm and his very influential son-in-law Ivar Axelsson, also a member of the Swedish Council alongside his two brothers, Eric and Laurens; his son-in-law Arvid
Trolle and several other affinitive friends and kin. As mentioned earlier, chosen to take on the difficult duty of guardianship of Karl Karlsson and the king’s widow, Christina Abrahamsdotter, was Sten Sture. King Karl obviously perceived (or hoped) Sten Sture to be trustworthy, loyal and an excellent choice of guardian for his young son and queen, based on the fact that he did not stand to inherit any properties or land, only certain chattels from the estate.

This was considered normal practice in the Middle Ages because Sten Sture was the son of the king’s half-sister Birgitta Stensdotter (Bielke). The assignment of Sten Sture to be Karl Karlsson’s guardian poses some afterthought because it may indicate some prior knowledge of the contents of the will of the dying king on behalf of Sten Sture. Certainly one should be cautious in concluding that Sten Sture had full knowledge of the will’s contents, but he was present at the rushed wedding and the wording indicates that Sten Sture must have been informed at some point in time of King Karl’s wishes concerning his son’s future and Sten Sture’s role to secure the young boy’s election as king and head the minority council of such a king.

Their relationship had obviously developed parallel to or because of King Karl’s growing mistrust of his powerful son-in-law at the royal court in Stockholm and the Axelssons’ much older Danish connection. The king, it seemed, had had a change of heart at the onset of 1470. In February 1468 a letter composed by King Karl, was dispatched to the Uppsala Diocese enquiring about certain earlier official papal documents concerning his legal rights and prerogative as King of Sweden. He called for a thorough search of the Cathedral’s caches, instructing them to send the sought after letters to Örebro in time for the meeting of the Council of Realm. It is during this meeting where he officially asked the council to accept Ivar Axelsson as his successor and Sweden’s interim protector.

In the only surviving version of the will, or as I suggest, a first draft of the testament (April/May 1470) published by Gottfrid Carlsson 1943, p. 26. It should be duly noted that King Karl had had an ambition to turn directly to the Council of Realm as noted in the document. This can be observed in the final lines of the document. King Karl implores, that, “wij alth theta forscriffna sa skickardt oc gifflad haffia tha bidie wij kerlige wora elskelige borgemestare radh och menhet j Stocholm at hängia latha theres stadt incigle medh wort secret neden widh theta bref till winisbyrd Ditum in Castro Stocholmensi Anno domini Mcdlx (1470) etcetera”. Hanging seals would have been attached to a vellum membrane of the official letter. The cursive letters are omitted here as they indicate abbreviations and changes to the manuscripts in later versions from the eighteenth century including that of the Lagerbring copy printed in FMU. The line where King Karl turned directly to his council is crossed out in the chancellery draft held at the Swedish National Archives (SRA), indicating that it was not to be included in an official version. King Karl died before any such copy was made. The Swedish Council was presented with the draft informing them of the king’s last wishes.

SRA original letter on paper, Noraberg the 28th February 1468 King Karl informed Uppsala Cathedral Chapter of his royal authority. Örnhielm: I p. 431 (SDHK 28799); SRA, Örebro 30 March 1468. Ivar Axelsson swore an oath of loyalty to King Karl and the Swedish Council of the Realm, whereby he was appointed interim successor on the eventual death of the king; See RK II, p. 248; Schück, 1976, p. 341 no 76, (SDHK 28810), later transcript of original letter is available for study at SRA.
It is reasonable to assume that after February 1468; the king’s son and mistress who had survived the rigours of childbirth, and was in theory, the only living direct beneficiary from the paternal line of the king, legitimate or not. Due to such circumstances and at some point in time prior to the king’s death, King Karl may well have toyed with idea that Sten Sture was a suitable candidate to take on the role of guardian. In theory, a reversal of the decision to elect Ivar Axelsson ensured that Sten Sture would not restore the Union of the Scandinavian kingdoms to King Christian. Historians have translated Ivar Axelsson acceptance of the position of interim protector, was not motivated by the desire to win a crown and be elected kin of Sweden and would not have been logical decision for the Axelsson Totts take. Ivar Axelsson would have taken into account the fact that his father-in-law had won and lost the Swedish crown three times and been exiled twice. Sven Ulric Palme observed that the Axelsson Totts were more anxious to regain control of their estates and fiefdoms in Denmark, rather than throw themselves into a downward spiral of political conflict with King Christian concerning the Swedish Crown. In offering the Swedish crown to King Christian, they could dictate the politics of the Union from the centre of power – the Axelsson Totts would dictate the politics of the Union through the union king.

The reality of the situation was another. In accepting the will whilst the king was alive, Sten Sture was able to reconsider and reinforce his own position concerning the Protectorate of Sweden with the much needed support from the citizens of Stockholm and the Swedish peasantry in the aftermath of the king’s death. This enabled Sten Sture to assert his own political and economic ambitions, whilst disregarding his prior undertakings and loyalties toward the king’s young son and widow, and asserting his own power agenda contra the power of his affinitive kinsmen.

King Karl’s included specific benefactors in the will. He hoped, that his generosity would be answered by the kin in the support for his son. But this was a son of questionable birth and his candidacy as Karl’s potential main heir and successor unsure. A reasonable conclusion is that the terms of the will triggered a crisis of kin loyalty within the group itself and in relation to, and within other parallel network groups who either supported the stipulations of will, the counter-claims of the three opposing magnates or supported the reinstatement of King Christian as union king. Karl Knutson’s inheritance crisis signaled a gradual process of change and growing distrust between the affiliated members of the Tott-Bonde-Sture-Trolle network alignment.

Karl Karlsson (Bonde) vanished from the sources about the time of the agreement between Ivar Axelsson, Eric Ericsson and Sten Sture. Most likely Karl and his mother resided in Finland, probably in the area of Raseborg from where Christina Abrahamsdotter originated. *Stockholm Stads Tänkeböcker* later recorded in 1488, that King Karl’s only surviving son presented himself.

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492 Palme, 1950, pp. 34–35.
before the Stockholm council bearing a letter from Sten Sture concerning certain chattels left in Danzig which Karl Karlsson claimed belonged to him as they were bequeathed to him by his father Karl Knutsson. According to the council records, Stockholm’s sheriff Arvid Olsson had been entrusted with certain “klenoder” belonging to King Karl’s son. After Karl Karlsson’s short appeal to the Council in Stockholm, he disappears from the records; his existence and fate becoming a question of conjecture and myths.

Securing the future of the dynastic network

The decisions and overall course of action the sons-in-law of Karl Knutsson chose to adopt after the death of the king, reveals certain interesting cognitive dimensions of the magnatial mentality in crisis situations. Ivar Axelssson and Eric Ericsson cooperated with Sten Sture by pooling their network resources together, but for very different reasons. For the sons-in-law Ivar and Eric it was the extensive estates of King Karl that were at stake. Who should inherit what and on which grounds? For Sten Sture it was purely political ambition and personal gain which motivated his actions and decisions. Sten Sture made a serious bid for real power on the death of King Karl; a decision which dramatically affected the equilibrium of the affinitive group. Sources in the archives support this observation, whilst the Sture Chronicle narrates Sten Sture’s propagandist version of events. On the surface Sten Sture it seemed lived by the terms of chivalric conduct and accepted the terms of the guardianship. In reality he had no intention of cutting short his personal political ambitions in favour of Karl Karlsson’s minority rule as future king of Sweden. At best it would have been a disputed minority for at least a decade and more, with political disruption as a possible result of emerging magnatial interests, whilst also facing the overhanging threat of other potential candidates and demands for the reinstatement of the Union.

In order to resolve the immediate threat which the will posed, the three magnates contested the legality of the marriage, throwing doubt over the stipulations of the will and thereby the legality of the boy’s eventual claim, his right to the bulk of his father’s estates and his election as king of Sweden. The amicable agreement reached by the three men was at the time a logical solution to the situation at hand. Magdalena and Christina would inherit both parents and their deceased brother’s estates. Sten Sture would receive the...
support of Eric, Laurens and Ivar Axelsson, and other members of the group in securing his nomination to the Protectorate, whilst Christina Abrahamsdotter’s marriage in practice and her status as King Karl’s legal wife in the eyes of the Church, was declared invalid because it had not first been pre-confirmed and ratified by the Council of the Realm, therefore making her son’s claim of succession to the dead king’s titles and primary heir to the bulk of his father’s estate null and void. But there still remains one important question left unanswered. Why did Ivar Axelsson give-up his right to the protectorate in favour of Sten Sture?

Ivar Axelsson’s pragmatic decision to support Sten Sture was probably not an easy one to make, but this may well have suggested by his brothers. This would have been favourable to both their economic aims and the political intentions of the Axelsson Totts. Ivar’s personal intentions were probably twofold; to maintain a dominant position with the support of his brothers over the affinitive group through their protégé Sten Sture and to negotiate together with his brothers and nephews for the return of the family’s confiscated properties in Denmark. These decisions were motivated by necessity and the more pragmatic need to change political strategies. The choice of a new strategy led to irreversible changes and the chain of events after 1476; open conflict and drawn-out disputes between the onetime affinitive friends and kin. The inevitable divide between Sten Sture and Ivar Axelsson created imbalance and disharmony within the affinitive group itself, causing the retraction of the Tott dynasty after 1487. With that said: where does one find evidence of the first real signs of deterioration of the network and which events and sources serve to illustrate this? For this one needs to study the events of 1475 through Ivar’s own testament and Magdalena Karlsdotter’s dowry.

Ivar Axelsson Tott’s last will and testament is dated Stockholm 8 July, 1475. A close inspection of the will reveals that certain features are not included in the will. He makes no specific donations to the Church or an individual of the Church. Although, it is fair to say that Ivar Axelsson was very generous and even thoughtful toward Church institutions and its member’s during his lifetime. Ivar and his wife Magdalena were also active participants in the recording Katarina’s miracle stories (1472–1475), in order to the canonization process of Katarina Ulfsdotter (Ulvåsa Dynasty) to be approved by the Pope in Rome. The seals do not follow the order expressed in the letter, but rather, a hierarchical order within the House of Tott in relation to Arvid Trolle’s role as loyal retainers and son-in-law to Ivar Axelsson, through his marriage to Beata Ivarsdotter; the only surviving daughter from Ivar’s first marriage to Margareta Poulsdotter (Laxmand). The original letter pertaining

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498 Margareta Laxmand’s sister Anne Laxmand was married to Anders Eriksen (Gyldenstierna). He was the great-uncle of Andrew Ogard/Anders Pedersen (Gyldenstierne).
to Magdalena’s dower (SW: *morgongåva* 499) is held by the Krapperup Archive. There is a scanned version held by the Swedish National Archives (*regester*). It is also available as a published transcript in *Arvid Trolles Jordebok 1498*. The letter of dower mentions the pre-nuptial property rights designated Magdalena upon her marriage to Ivar Axelsson Tott in 1466. The dower was negotiated and confirmed before the marriage, whilst no official exchange seems to have taken place between the two parties involved. The dower arrangements are also dated and confirmed on the same day as the letter of testament. The letter of dower and the testament are both similar and dissimilar to each other, whilst both play an interesting role in the unfolding events between 1472 and 1475.

The letters, as we shall see, were more closely linked to the affair concerning pirate activities carried out by the Captain of Ålvsborg, Otte Torbjörnsson (Fågel). 500 Otte Torbjörnsson specifically targeted the Dutch and Hanseatic merchant shipping fleets as they neared the mouth of the estuary guarded by Ålvsborg Fortress. He was arrested and incarcerated from 1472 until his trial and execution in 1475. 501 The final judgment was passed by Sten Sture and the execution carried out just four days before Ivar Axelsson put his private affairs in order. This coincidence was discussed by historian, Hain Rebas in detail, but worth repeating in order to show that there were political tensions within the Tott – Sture – Bonde network, long before the ordinances of 1483, which effectively pushed Ivar Axelsson on the sidelines of Nordic politics. 502

Whilst appearing very formal, a closer investigation concerning the contextual background of the Otte Torbjörnsson affair and Ivar Axelsson’s letters, allows the exploration of the social and political emotional implications of the letters, rather than their legal implications. By peeling away the layers of formality in the letters, it is possible to reveal both ritualized and real emotio-cognitive expressions observed in the motive and choices, which prompted Ivar Axelsson to hastily put his house in order. Behind the background noise of the events in question, a very serious indirect warning slowly surfaced through the actions of the up-and-coming Sten Sture. This was a warning directed at his kinsman by marriage and now a distant ally in Nordic politics. Ivar Axelsson stood accused of similar pirate activities, which occurred off the coast of Gotland. Several Dutch merchants aired their concerns directly to the


500 Tunelds, 1833, p. 587. An interesting notis reads that, Otte Torbjörnsson, c.1400-1475. He was appointed Danish sheriff of Agnehelm fort, under King Eric c. 1433. Agnehelm was subordinate to Axevalla Castle and an administrative centre bordering between Västergötland and Värmland. According to Tunelds, Torbjörnsson was known for his cruelty and unfair behaviour toward the local people. C. G. Styffe, 1911, p.180: Styffe does not mention Torbjörnsson. Interestingly, Queen Dorothea gave her support to Otte Torbjörnsson in 1474.

501 See for example SRA SDHK 29503, 29723, 29574, 29640; Lundholm, 1956, pp. 100–101.

Hansa authorities. The Hansa then reached out to Sten Sture and the Council of Stockholm to resolve the matter. Both the Hansa and Dutch traders also mentioned Ivar Axelsson’s activities around Gotland, which reveals the deep complexity of the political and trade situation in the region in the 1470s. The dower and the testament are the result of the complex relations between kingdoms, monarchs, trade organisations and magnatial networks. Now having identified the political and economic aspects pertaining to the context of the two letters, the next two sections present and discuss the author, receiver and witnesses mentioned in the documents.

Ivar Axelsson was a member of the Swedish Council of the Realm and fief holder of Gotland; his two brothers Eric, castleton of Viborg in Finland and Laurens, castleton of Raseborg. The witnesses mentioned in the two documents include members of the Swedish governing council: Swedish Protector of the Realm, Sten Sture and son-in-law to Åke Axelsson, castleton of Varberg; Hans and Bengt Åkesson, the sons of Åke Axelsson and finally one of Sweden’s wealthiest landowners of the fifteenth century, Arvid Trolle of Bergkvara; son-in-law and most certainly client to Ivar Axelsson. Jörgen Åkesson, also a son of Åke Axelsson, ratified only one of the two documents, the letter of endowment. Such documents were the concern of the network. But is it not the documents that stand out, it is rather the date they were written and ratified which is of interest.

These two documents were drawn up in an atmosphere of growing tensions between Sten Sture and Ivar Axelsson. As Karin Hagnell, Hain Rebas and Hugo Yrwing have all pointed out, Sten Sture’s interest in the sale of pig iron to Danzig and the privileges offered to Dutch traders went against the Axelssons well defined and long term established trade interests in the Baltic Sea based from Gotland and the Finnish fiefdoms. The brothers negotiated a land purchase with the Teutonic Order in 1467, whilst maintaining active trade contacts with Narva, Danzig and Reval. 503 Both the Hansa merchants and the Dutch traders turned to Sten Sture for redress and compensation for loss of goods and other commodities due to increased pirate activities in the Baltic Sea after c. 1469.

503 Sørensen, 1995, pp. 105–107; Rebas, 1976, pp. 135–137. Wallace Nilsson, 2010, pp. 63–64; Fritz, 1969, pp. 491–492. Reval burgher Ever van der Lippe received 5700 Riga marks (4320 Rhenish marks) as payment for the Årsta Commandry which had been in the possession of the Livonian order, a branch of the Teutonic Order. The estate complex was purchased around the time of the break-up of relations between Christian I and the Axelsson Totts (1467). Årsta was the last stronghold in Sweden still owned by the order. The purchase of Årsta had three primary goals: Monopoly over the butter and fat exports from the region, the Årsta Commandry lands surrounded Eric’s estate Aspö. The purchase of Årsta gave Eric Axelsson (Laurens Axelsson from 1476) control of the waterways between Aspö and Årsta (Mälaren) and consolidated a larger geographic area of land close to Stockholm. The estate transaction was finalized at the same time as Ivar Axelsson rebuked his loyalty to the Danish king and King Christian I, retaliated by confiscating the family’s private estates and fiefdoms in Denmark and Eastern Denmark (Skåne, Halland, Blekinge).
Otte Torbjörnsson’s execution in 1475 came after he was charged and convicted for various crimes which included piracy. The balance of power between the Protector and the Axelsson Totts clearly favoured the position of Sten Sture who had the support of the Stockholm burghers. Ivar’s letter of dower and testament, as earlier pointed out, were ratified only four days after Torbjörnsson’s execution. Behind the death of one of the Axelsson Totts’s affiliated friends were several key factors for Sten Sture’s and Ivar Axelsson’s action. Firstly, Sten Sture needed the support of the Stockholm Burghers and they needed the Swedish protector to safeguard the expanding pig iron exports from Stockholm to Danzig. Secondly, Sten Sture obviously had private interests in the growing Dutch trade and the pig iron markets of Europe. Thirdly, Sten Sture wanted to make an example of Otte Torbjörnsson, because he could not go to the direct source of opposition – Ivar Axelsson and his powerful family. Ivar was motivated by the Axelsson Tott’s need to maintain good and stable mercantile relations with Danzig, especially interests concerning the family’s extensive export of horses from Sweden and Finland through the port of Danzig. Also, the family’s well established export interests in animal fat based products. Interestingly, Ivar Axelsson and the members of the Swedish council were in Stockholm and present at the trial of Otte Torbjörnsson, as late as 1 July. However, they did not take any active part in the proceedings after that date or during Otte Torbjörnsson’s sentencing on 4 July. Only burgher members of the Stockholm council were present when Sten Sture passed final judgment.\(^\text{504}\)

Yet, Ivar’s reaction to the execution and the fact that Sten Sture had distanced members of the Swedish council from the sentencing proceedings, offered rising urgency to the situation and Ivar’s hasty decision to put his house in order, now realizing that the Tott network was under considerable threat, due to Sten Sture’s own personal political and economic ambitions as Swedish protector. Sten Sture’s future plans did not take into account the earlier and established fiefdom and economic interests of the Axelsson Totts.\(^\text{505}\)

In order to effectively strike out at Ivar Axelsson, Sten Sture would have been forced to negotiate not only his own position within the Tott network, but also his position contra the Dutch and the Hansa, and most importantly, the position of Ivar’s powerful brothers, nephews and son-in-law, who together were a force to be reckoned with as an affiliated family unit. Sten Sture needed to carefully consider the Axelsson Tott family members who were active in the Swedish council. Finally, Sten Sture would have to face the reaction of his father-in-law and Halland’s uncontested dynast, Åke Axelsson. The risks of

\(^{504}\) *Stockholm stads tänkeböcker* 1474–1483, pp. 17–18, record the trial on the 1 and 4 July when Sten Sture passed judgment on Otte Torbjörnsson.

\(^{505}\) See the following articles in their entirety: Hagnell, HT, 1940; Yrwing, 1970 and Rebas, 1976, p. 207. See also Rebas, 1982, 1991. Several extant sources are included in the SDHK database. These are SDHK: 29503, 29552, 29574, 29586, 29723, 42636-37, letters dated between 1472 and 1474.
losing the support of the network far out-weighed the problem. So what was Otte Torbjörnsson’s role in the enfolding events? The former sheriff of Älvsborg was a squire of low-birth and client of the Axelsson Totts. He was simply an accessible target. Sten Sture could demonstrate his power and leading role as Protector of Realm whilst protecting his own political and personal trade ambitions by supporting the complaints of the Dutch merchants, the City of Danzig and the Hansa. The contention concerning Sten Sture’s economic ambitions and the politics of the Swedish realm conflicted with Axelsson Totts’s long term personal trade ambitions and the reestablishment of Kalmar Union.

Summary

Chapter ten discussed the implications and significance of Karl Knutsson’s will and the initial effect it would have had on the Tott–Bonde–Sture network in 1470. The dominate beneficiaries of the king, his two surviving daughters and their husbands effectively pushed King Karl’s queen and son out of the political and economic scheme of things to come. Further, the political and economic fall-out of the will allowed Sten Sture to secure and strengthen his position as Protector of the Swedish Realm with the necessary support of the Axelsson Totts and their powerful clients, whilst Sten Sture’s nomination as protector would inevitably change the direction of Scandinavian politics. Otto Torbjörnsson trial and execution must be seen as a warning to Ivar Axelsson: Sten Sture had the necessary support to take decisive actions against Axelsson Tott clients who failed to comply with the protector’s economic and political strategies. Ivar’s decision to make his will and confirm Magdalena’s dowry came as a result of the demonstrative action taken by Sten Sture with the support of the Stockholm council in 1475. The future of the Kalmar Union was furthered debated and decided upon at the Ordinances of 1476 and 1483, events which inadvertently also sealed the fate of Ivar Axelsson and the Axelsson Tott dynasty after 1487.
Chapter 11

Final conclusions

I began by positing the theory that socio-cultural ideals and political forces formed the network context of the magnates’ motives and choices during the Kalmar Union. It is crucial to understand the mindset of the Late Middle Ages and the deep-rooted sociocultural ideals integral to that mentality if we are to make sense of magnatial decision-making in the context of the Kalmar Union. The magnates’ attitudes hardened towards King Eric when he attempted to put in place a modified political vision after the death of Queen Margaret in 1412. The Axelsson Totts adhered to Margaret’s line, political and economic visionaries who supported the creation of a unified Scandinavian community, which thrived through magnatial inter-Nordic connections.

This thesis argues three points vital to any understanding of the actions and decisions of the Axelsson Totts during the Kalmar Union. Firstly, the realm as a form of governance took on a network form in the fifteenth century. Secondly, the women of the magnatial network were also active participants in maintaining the interests of its members, having a vital role to play socially, culturally, and economically. The widening of the Axelsson Tott network, aimed to bind other powerful dynasties to their own, enabled them to expand the family’s personal economic empire within the bounds of the Kalmar Union. Thirdly, Queen Margaret’s vision of a united Scandinavia was essential to the preferred network strategies of the Axelsson Totts and their thinking as leading members of the magnatial class of Scandinavia, observed from a wider European context of historical network studies. Here a comparison with the Neville family in England during the War of the Roses has been very informative. The thesis shows that the development and break-up of the Axelsson Tott’s power-base was necessarily determined by the strengths and weaknesses of the Union monarchs, the Swedish protectors of the realm, and the negative development of the kin/friend forces within the Tott network itself. This too was the case for the Neville family. Knud Fabricius’s comparison of two powerful lords and kingmakers, Ivar Axelsson and Richard Neville, was one starting point for this thesis. Fifteenth-century magnatial networks have been observed from a dual perspective: the actions, choices and decisions of the men, parallel to the strategies of the female members of the Axelsson Tott network. The Axelsson Totts’ network was structured around the ideal of friendship, loyalty, and conflict resolution – three ideals which over time became deeply embedded in Scandinavian politics.

The personal strategies and decisions of the Härlöv Totts throughout the Kalmar Union not only ensured that they were primary participants in the inter-Nordic and Baltic political scene, but they were also a driving force in the
state-building processes of the late fifteenth century and the emergence of the early modern state. The Axelsson Totts created a powerful network, which was formed and ultimately transformed by the direct actions and decisions of the leading magnates and the women’s mediating strategies to maintain the overriding interests of the network (which extended to their own specific interests as heiresses, wives, and widows). Jeremy Boissevain’s anthropological network theory informs the theoretical arguments put forward in the thesis. He argues that all interactions in network-based societies are designed to maintain consensus between its members, rather than encouraging contentious relationships to develop. Disputing strategies and mediation played an important role in maintaining societal harmony within the Tott network and between members of its dynasty.

Axel Pedersen (Tott) belonged to a group of border magnates who believed that diplomacy, consensus and agreement with the elected ruler were the prerequisites for the success of the Union, and of course for the promotion of their network relations and agendas. Axel Pedersen’s economic and marital strategies served to strengthen the core family network, and were instrumental in the transference of a fundamental concept of network unity. He believed that political force, internal network conflict, and marital tensions were counterproductive for his family’s ambitions and for the wider good of the Scandinavian kingdoms. The choices and decisions of the Dano-Swedish Axelsson Totts must therefore be analyzed in terms of the core family’s expansive inter-Nordic network strategies.

The heterogeneous structure of the magnatial network was vital to its function and maintenance, both short- and long-term, in what was a period of magnatial conflict. Although women were dependent on and even socially subordinate to their male counterparts in certain respects, they did in fact work together for the good of the network. Widowhood offered Magdalena Karlsdotter, Elin Gustavsdotter and Christina Karlsdotter the opportunity to be independent landowners in their own right. This is discussed here for the women of the Tott–Bonde–Sture network after 1470. They themselves preferred the inner harmony of their immediate, core network, despite the obvious political rift instigated by Sten Sture, which led to the division of the male members of the network into political factions. Heiresses, wives and widows, as did their male counterparts, recognized and capitalized on the specific social and political roles they were expected to play in the network. The unpredictability of life forced them to constantly reevaluate their positions, making decisions based on the reality of unfolding events rather than on the socio-cultural norms of their class. The empirical sources presented in this thesis illustrate how choices and decisions were substantiated by personal priorities on certain occasions, but by wider national aims at other times, especially when attempting to monopolize or influence the Kalmar Union’s political direction. The Axelsson Totts’ attempts to dominate on the national
level and in the Baltic region are evident between 1460 and 1487. Sten Sture’s political ambitions divided the Swedish council, which included the most influential members of newly aligned Tott–Bonde–Sture network. Those willing to support Sten Sture’s vision contributed to the breakdown of the network, increasing the factional tendencies of its members and changing the course of political events after 1475. Factionalism and personal ambition ultimately tested the friendships and dynamic of the network to the limit.

The ideal of network friendship, loyalty, honour and largesse was called into question when the network’s members were faced with the choice of actively supporting or resisting the national polity – pragmatic strategies centered on the survival of one’s own economic and social interests, which disregarded the common good and harmony of the wider network and the realm. The knightly ideals of the High Middle Ages, which had once fueled the hearts and minds of both noblemen and noblewomen, now aspired in theory, did not always match their actions when faced with the realities of war. These ideals were now the subject of popular saintly cults in the late fifteenth-century Scandinavia. The chivalric ideals of knightly heroes were shedding their gloss of realism, becoming aspirational cultural ideals rather than a code for the nobility to live by. The deeper the conflicts became, the wider the space between the sociocultural standards of consensus and the commonality of both individuals and groups in the network. This led to the abandonment of idealistic values. But this was not the case of the Axelsson Totts. They clung to the ideals of the chivalric standard, in order to strengthen their self-image, and ultimately their inner conviction of what they believed they represented: the knightly creed’s absolute social status and cultural standards as figureheads of medieval society.

The Axelsson Totts were unique in their strong loyalties to one another; in the later generations, the family’s affinitive relationships were much weaker. The Finnish historian Tuula Hockman concludes that later generations of the Tott dynasty were less loyal to the good of the dynastic unit, and harboured a degree of political animosity towards one another. The interconnectedness of kin emotionality in theory strengthened the dynastic ambitions of the Axelsson Totts, which were instrumental in their actions towards kin/friendship and the role of the Crown. Strong family bonds elevated their dynastic interests to those of the core family group. This interconnectedness was evident in the cycle of marriages between a limited numbers of dynastic families over several generations – intermarriages re-enforced the dynastic network. New dynastic connections extended the influence of the magnatial network in new directions, with potential economic and political advantages. The strategies implemented by Axel Pedersen (Tott) had the advantage that he could bequeath the family’s dynastic lands equally between his sons from his two marriages. The bequeathal of land, fiefdoms and estates was connected to specific conditions which his children agreed to abide by. In providing his
daughters with substantial dowers, he sought to guarantee the loyalty of his sons-in-law. The children of Axel Pedersen’s only illegitimate son may well have strengthened his belief in the role of the core family as a closed economic and political unit.

The satisfaction of the needs of the men and women of the core family and of close kin was a vital socioeconomic dimension to all Axelsson Tott family relationships. Their individual roles were important to the core structure and function of the network. This did not mean, however, that recognizing illegitimate children was without certain advantages when need or opportunity arose. The relationship between the children of Peder Axelsson was never questioned, but only as long as all the brothers were alive – Ivar Axelsson as the last surviving son did not retain the full support of all his nieces and nephews. As was pointed out by Tuula Hockman, they were less loyal as a new generational group of magnates. Ivar Axelsson’s third marriage also showed that he actively sought an economic and political reorientation during the turbulence of King Christian’s reign as third Union king. The attempts by the Ivar, Eric, Olof and Philip Axelsson Tott failure to produce adult male heirs was a key factor to the family’s dynastic survival. The future of the dynasty lay solely in the hands of Åke Axelsson’s surviving sons, who it was hoped would prioritize loyalty to the Tott dynasty during the political developments of the Sture Age after the death of the Swedish King Karl Knutsson in 1470.

The sociopolitical standards of fifteenth-century magnatial society were not subject to the whims of their monarchs or their peers. The Axelsson Totts’ inability to engage with the wider populace in order to create a powerbase in Sweden weakened their overall position in society and within the factional Tott–Bonde–Sture network after the death of Finland’s popular captain Eric Axelsson in 1481. After the death of Ivar Axelsson in 1487, the Tott network failed to maintain the consensus of the first and second generations; gone were the bonds of kinship and loyalty that the nine Axelsson brothers valued so highly for maintaining a viable amicability between individuals, families and kin when protracted disputes escalated into conflict.

It might also be concluded that Gregers Mattsson’s choice to switch sides was motivated by rational decisions based on the reality – and fragility – of Swedish politics, whilst still holding true to the ideals of loyalty and largesse of medieval society. Gregers Mattsson was said by Lars Sjödin and Hans Gillingstam to have been of a yielding nature showing no real independence of action. His putative political weakness could be seen as a mechanism that enabled him to react to his surroundings, carefully calculating his next move in response to the unfolding political situation. He certainly adapted well to the rule of both the union monarchs and the Swedish protectors: he kept abreast of the rapid regime changes of the Kalmar Union and maintained kin
relationships with the Axelsson Totts, which safeguarded his own position and that of his wife Ramborg.

Fifteenth-century Europe was dominated by network societies that periodically set the political tone and worked against attempts to develop strong or over-mighty kingship – regimen regale. The strengthening of the monarchy threatened to limit the power of the magnates and the Church by introducing strong, state-like structures. Magnates preferred to dictate politics and trade through their network connections, not to be controlled by a strong centralized royal administration. That said, a kingdom was the foundation on which kingship balanced, and the only form of power which carried meaning in the Middle Ages.

The collective might of the Scandinavian magnate class had a significant bearing on the fifteenth-century political arena. The magnates’ individual motives and agendas drove the dynamic of events, however, and not societal developments per se. The twin ideals of friendship and consensus were vital to the range of the magnates’ responses, which in turn influenced the course of events. All political outcomes must therefore be analyzed in terms of network interactions and core friendships, even at times of conflict. The Axelsson Totts believed in the ideal of kingship and the creation of the Kalmar Union to create a permanent peace between the three kingdoms, whilst they were aware that the survival of the Union enhanced the family’s inter-Nordic ties in the border regions between the three kingdoms, and helped them realize their ambition to control both trade and politics in Estonia and Livonia. In helping strengthen the Scandinavian kingdoms’ geopolitical position the Axelsson Totts also strengthened their own economic and political position as a family unit. The Axelsson Totts’ economic interests in Sweden, Denmark, and Finland and their active engagement in the Baltic trade policy of the Kalmar Union and the Baltic became intertwined with the personal and national agendas of the Scandinavian monarchs and protectors. Still, the Axelsson Totts believed in the value of an assertive ruler – over whom they could exert influence and control. As inter-Nordic magnates they had to strike a balance between the perception of regimen politicum and the strength of the magnatial res publica.

All the conceivable power bases – the Church, the Kalmar Union, the powerful magnatial networks – drew their political, economic, and social legitimacy from kingship and the worldly authority of the king. The Church and magnates competed with monarchs, whilst the viscous cognitive evolution of the role and authority of the king meant that the magnates and the Church were unable to conceive of a society without kingship. Together they formed the medieval state before the birth and acceptance of the early modern, strong, unified states of the latter half of the sixteenth century. The ideal of a good and righteous ruler of the people was vital to understanding the magnates’ attitudes towards their kings’ behaviour and supposed wrong-doings, and when he was no longer considered good and fair, his removal from power. The right to
depose the union monarchs was central to the mentality of the res publica and the role and limitations of elected monarchy, contra the magnates’ active role in governance as a necessary controlling factor, in order to maintain the common weal of the people and the harmony of the realm. It was this which underpinned the magnates’ understanding of the ideal of a magnatial res publica, perhaps more so in Sweden than in Denmark and Norway.

The Axelsson Totts worked together in accordance with their father’s wishes, whilst they chose to collaborate with other dynastic families to reach compromises, which gave them political control over the direction of the Union under the aegis of the Union king. Their support for King Karl and his re-election as King of Sweden in 1467 was part of this: it allowed them to protect their economic and political interests from the aggressive ambitions of Christian I as both Union and Danish king. The Axelsson brothers probably would have succeeded, if it had not been for their underestimation of the grim determination of their network ally, Sten Sture the Elder, between the death of Karl Knutsson and the Battle of Brunkeberg in 1471.

Uprisings and usurpations were accepted courses of action for magnates keen to control the realm and an elective kingship. The rex justus willingly took guidance from leading magnates and clergy for the good of the realm. The accelerating political divergence of the three Scandinavian kingdoms after the death of Ivar Axelsson in 1487 signaled the eventual demise of Queen Margaret’s vision of Nordic unity. The political failure of a unified Scandinavia inadvertently spawned the centralized nation-state, dutifully administered by a subjugated nobility and Church in the sixteenth century. Power would emanate from the developing early modern monarchy and its grip on the state, not from the retreating dynastic networks of the medieval magnates.
Appendices
Appendix I: King Karl Knutsson’s testament: the history of the will in the archives

In *Rikets brev och register: arkivbildande, kansliväsen och tradition inom den medeltida svenska statsmakten*, Herman Schück discussed the structure and contents of Karl Knutsson’s Archive and the Swedish Royal Council’s Archive during two final reigns, 1457–1467. The document, asserted Schück, was a chancellery copy, which had been part of the Royal Council’s Archive. The archive was eventually moved from Strängnäs to Stockholm Castle. Schück limited this particular study to documents pertaining to Karl’s and documents from the Fågelvik Estate, (Stäkeholms Län), Småland, now commonly referred to as the Fågelvik tradition (*Fågelviks tradering*). King Karl’s private letters and other documents from his time in exile in Prussia, 1457–1464 were not included in Schück’s study. The main body of Karl Knutsson’s surviving documents remained with the descendants of the Gyllenstierna Dynasty, into which he married his oldest daughter Christina. Her husband, Eric Ericsson (Gyllenstierna), administrated Fågelvik from 1446/7 until his death in 1477.

Gottfrid Carlsson described the will as a copy on paper (Carlsson writes, ‘contemporary copy’) of the now lost original will which was once part of King Karl’s private archive. If the will was a post-construction, certain questions arise out of this assumption pertaining to the presence of corrected text, as well as the general overall appearance and style of the document. Most noticeable are the added lines of text on folio 2. If this was a copy of the will, as Carlsson assumed in 1942, then the additional text would have most likely have been incorporated in the main body of text in a later officially prepared and recognized vellum document. Any later copies of the will would have included the additional text. If, however, one follows a line of investigation that this was a first draft (pre-constructed text), the added text takes on the form of an afterthought on behalf of the king, and together with the changes to the text, it makes more sense to consider the paper document as

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507 Styffe, 19011, pp. 234–325.
509 A careful examination of the testament reveals that it was written two sheets of paper. At some point in time they were glued on to a thick sheet of (probably) acid free paper.
a draft to a later final and official document (See the many arguments concerning the appearance and legality of Union Letter dated 1397). This draft was remained part of King Karl’s private archive, which indicates some anxiety on behalf of the king; probably due to his fast deteriorating health, as well as problems concerning the age and legal status of his son, Karl Karlsson in May 1470. There are no standard salutations included, nor are there any witnesses included, who confirmed the documents contents. The only named individuals in the will are King Karl’s beneficiaries. Important legal documents had to include such vital information if they were to be considered legally binding, if they were to be used in later property disputes. Any transcripts would include the names of the witnesses. But it is not only the physical qualities of the will which one needs to consider, it is the explosive nature of the will’s contents which needs to be assessed.

Schück observed that there were fewer surviving documents for the period of King Christopher’s reign and the initial phase of King Karl’s first period as king of Sweden, 1440–1452. Many of King Karl’s documents in the Royal Council’s archive were lost in the fire at Stockholm’s Castle 1697 (Tre kronor). The draft to Karl’s testament was one of the few documents to survive the fire. But there are questions which arise out of such a statement. From

The will, if discussed from the perspective as a first draft (not a copy of the original testament or a transcript of a later copy), is then an underestimated source in any discussion of the outcome of the political events prior to and after Karl’s death on 15 May, 1470, which hailed the beginning of the Sture Age in Swedish history. Gottfrid Carlsson made an intriguing observation concerning Hans Hildebrand’s interest in the will. Carlsson observed that, “Hans Hildebrand var under de senaste mansåldrarna nära nog den enda historiker, som ägnade Karl Knutssons testamente en smula uppmärksamhet.”511 But there was an interest in the will amongst the Swedish nobility and historians, as there are several surviving eighteenth century copies which include transcript copies by Johan Peringskiöld, Sven (Lager) Bring, the above mentioned Hans Hildebrand, Eric Benzelius and others.512 Professor Jan Liedgren identified just such a copy of the will in a letter sent from Archbishop Eric Benezelius the Younger to his brother Gustaf. The letter was dated 21 October 1740; there the archbishop mentions a copy of the will.513

The following transcript of King Karl’s will is followed by an English translation. All additions, changes to the text and double wording remain in the

510 Compare King Karl’s testament with Ivar Axelson’s will, dated 8 July 1475.
511 Carlsson, 1943, p.1 [Trans: Hans Hildebrand was probably the only historian in recent times, who offered any substantial attention to Karl Knutsson’s will].
512 Carlsson, 1943, pp. 1–2, ref. no. 1 and 2 for historian, Jan Liedgren’s comments concerning the Gyllenstierna copy: Herman Schück, 1976, pp. 342–343, ref. no. 11, 12 and 13.
513 A private note written by Jan Liedgren mentions Eric Benzelius’s letter collection published by Johan Hinric Lidén in 1791.
transcription. Some punctuation has been used in the transcription, only to facilitate reading of the text for the modern reader.

[Folio 1] Testamentum serenissimi principis et domini Karoli dei gracia Swe-cie, Norwegie etcetera regis illustrissimi


514 SRA, transcription on paper: series II. A 29037; See Carlsson, HT 1943; A +/- indicates the line change according to the original document. Gottfrid Carlsson recounted the will as a list of numbered items. In the English translation I have chosen not to keep Carlsson’s numbering and listing system of representing each item separately. Changes in the original document are rendered as such in above text. Italics in the text indicate changes made in later renditions of the original document. Repeated words have not been removed from current version of the transcribed text, whilst they are not included in the English translation. There are no marks to indicate the presence of embossed seals ever being added the paper. The will is one sheet of paper and written on both sides.

515 For further information on the Wiby Estate Complex see K.G. Grandinson, 1942, pp. 298–301; Grandinson notes that Wiby manorial complex is recorded in several manorial accounts kept at the national Archives of Sweden, belonging to Karl Knutsson, Ivar Axelsson Tott and Hans Åkesson Tott; Tord Röriksson Bone’s letter dated 21 June 1408, SRA, SDHK 17020, issued at Tullgarn in the Parish of Vagnhärad in the Province of Södermanland, Odensvi in the Parish of Vibly in the Province of Närke and several other properties, most likely including the manorial complex of Tullgarn. The letter certified that Karl Knutsson’s mother, Margaret Karlsdotter (Gumsehuvud), was officially endowed with several properties from her father’s estate on entering into marriage with Knut Bonde, these were bequeathed to King Karl as her only surviving son and heir.

516 A ship with a tower that could hold 150 armed men besides the crew. King Karl bequeathed Ivar Axelsson and Sten Sture a ‘barta’ each; the latter was under reconstruction to make it larger; Bertil Åhlund, 1991, pp. 103–114. The author observed King Karl’s interest in ships, “Despite sometimes difficult political and economic problems, Karl Knutsson had a clear understanding of the Navy's role in the fight against King Christian I. He succeeded in equipping and maintaining a fleet of operational ships, whereby Sweden's independence could be maintained” [My translation].
517 Hulk - A large, wide flat bottomed cargo ship that displaced the much smaller cog in the second half of the fifteenth century.
518 Stodhest = stallion/hingst.


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\(^{519}\) In the original document it states, “...wor jaktt talje knifwen”. A type of small coast sailing vessel.

\(^{520}\) Carlsson, 1943; Kumlien. 1940 “wort helgedoma kaar som wii pläga daglige haffua pa wör hals”; this line is clearly added to the text in the right hand margin of folio 1v which appears to have the character of an afterthought. For more information on relic capsules from the medieval period see Cynthia Hahn, 2011, pp. 8–19.

\(^{521}\) Tydeman, Tideke or Tideman Mönick was a merchant, and one of King Karl’s host during his seven year exile in Prussia.

\(^{522}\) Flogel=sammet=velvet.

\(^{523}\) Illegible line of text comprising of four or five words because of a fold in the centre of the paper.

\(^{524}\) The deletion of “elsikelige rad oc men werduge fäder ...” indicates that King Karl had seriously reconsidered his intention of presenting the will to the Royal Council of the Realm, but quickly came to the conclusion that they would probably protest the contents and the king’s intent.
elskelige borgmestare radh oc menhet i Stockholm at hän/gia latha therest stadz incigle medh wort secret neden widh thetta breff till wintnisbyrdh Datum /in Castro Stockholmensi Anno domini Mcdlxx etcetera [no day or month]

Translation.
Appendix II – Translation of King Karl’s last will and testament: SRA (Sweden).

The last will and testament of the Serene Prince and Lord, Lord Karl Knutsson, by the grace of God King of Sweden and Norway etc.

We etc. certify with this letter that if God allows and so arranges, that when we depart from this world because of the illness we now endure, it is our will that our remaining properties shall be divided as is written here:

Item our beloved daughters, Magdalena and Christina Karlsdöttrar shall receive, have and enjoy Borgholm Castle and Öland until that time they are relinquished to the Crown, in accordance with the letter awarded to us. Our daughter, Magdalena shall inherit, enjoy and keep our estate Haga, with as many subordinate farms and fees which the law of the land entitles her whether they are our inherited or purchased estates, and she will also receive the estates, including Svinnegarn and some estates in Västergötland which belonged to our beloved wife, Queen Catherine. God have mercy on her soul, who purchased these estates with the money she received as her dower, and which her letter clearly states. Item our daughter Christina Karlsdotter and her heirs shall inherit, receive, enjoy and keep the estate of Fägelvik and all the subordinate estates and fees of which she is legally entitled. Item, On the occasion of our wedding our beloved wife Birgitta Turesdotters, God have mercy on her soul, did receive the property of Ekholm in dower, which we jointly owned in the village of Viby near Tiveden [Närke] and we wish shall go to our aforementioned daughter Christina and her heirs. Item, our beloved son Karl Karlsson shall inherit, enjoy and keep Rönö, share of estates and fees to which he is legally entitled. Item all our bought properties are to be awarded and transferred to our wife Christina Abrahamsdotter and our son Karl Karlsson. We forbid any objections concerning the transfer these estates to my wife and son and their right to these properties. Item, our dear sister-son, Sten Sture, knight, who owns no legal right of inheritance is with love and trust appointed attorney and representative for our wife and son, Christina Abrahamsdotter and Karl Karlsson. He shall defend and aid them in their legal rights, which Sten Sture has promised and willing to do. Item, we give our dear son-in-law Ivar Axelssson our largest bartsa (sea-going vessel), a large gold-plated silver bowl with high white tower and three silver bowls in the larger bowl; also a gold-plated silver necklace with a silver lock. Item, to my
dear son-in-law Eric Ericsson we give our holk (small sea-going vessel) and the contents that was purchased from Arvid Trolle; also a box with a crystal lid and silver-plated fittings. Item, we give our dear sister-son Sten Sture our bartsa and a silver-plated necklace with a gold lock; ou red and gold shirt, cape and hat lined with sobel and our dapple horse. Item, we give our dear brother-in-law Sir Nils Sture the small boat and fittings (Snäckka) which we had built last year at the castle; also a gold necklace with a gold-plated lock. Item, we give our beloved daughter Magdalena our black horse (mare) and saddle as a sledge horse (the horse is kept at Örebro) and all cattle at Haga. Also two gray horses kept at Åbo (Finland) and with this she shall be content and not exchange any property with our wife Christina or our son Karl Karlsson. When we gave her in marriage to Sir Ivar Axelsson at Raseborg Castle received half of the chattels due unto her. Item, we give our beloved daughter Christina the largest grey horse that we have at Åbo, the same horse that the Dean of Åbo gave to us as a sledge horse. This shall Christina be content with and not make any future demands on the inheritance we give to our wife and son, Christina Abrahamsdotter and Karl Karlsson. For we gave her all the personal chattels belonging to her mother, including her share of the property and chattels belonging to our son Ture Karlsson (died young). Borgholm Castle and Öland with fees rightfully belong to Christina and her husband Erik Eriksson. These fees have been taken away from them by King Christian. Item, we give our beloved wife Christina Abrahamsdotter our boat Täljekniven, a small sailing boat purchased from Olof Hindersson, a private glass framed alter picture containing the relics of the saints, and a small gold spoon that our daughter Magdalena gave us; also two black horses and our mare, also our mare from Anderstad. Item, we give our beloved son Karl Karlsson our relic capsule with the saints [which I wear everyday around my neck], and other personal heirlooms that my agent in Danzig, that we were to travel to in the late Summer, in his safe keeping, our gold-plated sword, spurs and other kitchen pots, pan and utensils, also he shall have our bed linen, wall tapestries, embroidered cushions bolsters, and other lengths of materials that we and our dear wife Christina took with her to Raseborg Castle and which she demands that he shall keep and not be part of Magdalena’s or Kristina’s inheritance. Item, we give to Vadstena Abbey our silver framed picture of the saints, our largest horse and armour. Item, to our dear sister-son Nils Clausson a red shirt, cape and hat lined with sobel and a length of cloth to a shirt. Item, to our dear daughter-son Knut Eriksson a red cape lined with ermine, a belt to a shirt and a string of chalcedony beads. Item, we give our relation, Sir Nils Sture’s wife, Birgitta a gold ring set with a crystal. Item, Sir Johan Kristernson’s wife, our niece, the lady Birgitta a gold ring set with a turquoise, and our relation sir Staffan Olsson’s wife, Sigrid, a gold ring set with a [sapphire], and our grand-daughter Kristine Eriksdotter a brown silk edged length of cloth (?).525 That

525 Vogt, 2017, p. 139; “golden rings … are almost exclusively given to female relatives.”
we have ordered and given all that is here written, we ask our beloved council and worthy father beloved mayor, council and citizens of Stockholm to testify by attaching the seal of Stockholm below on this letter next ours. Given at the Castle of Stockholm anno Domini mcdlxx [1470].
we have ordered and given all that is here written, we ask our beloved council and worthy father beloved mayor, council and citizens of Stockholm to testify by attaching the seal of Stockholm below on this letter next ours. Given at the Castle of Stockholm anno Domini mcdlxx [1470].
Figure 3a: Ivar Axelsson’s (Tott) last will and testament. Stockholm 8 July 1475. Four seals remain of the original eight. Copyright: Swedish National Archives (SRA).

SRA, original letter on parchment, dated Stockholm 8 July 1475. Ivar Axelsson’s (Tott) will (SDHK 29963, facsimile); Printed in Arvid Trolles Jordebok, 1498, ed. Almquist, 1938, HH 31, no.3, p.160. Seven seals of which no.4 and no.7 are lost, only a fragment of seal no. 6 remain. The remaining intact seals are in quite good condition and remain attached to the letter: no.1. Ivar Axelsson Tott, no. 2. Sten Sture, no. 3. Eric Axelsson Tott, no. 5. Arvid Trolle. My comment: no. 4, Laurens Axelsson’s seal is lost, no. 6, a fragment of Hans Åkesson’s seal remains and no.7, Bengt Åkesson’s seal is lost. He makes no mention of Jörgen Åkesson and Nils Sture in his will.

Appendix II: Ivar Axelsson Tott’s testament

Jak Iwer Axelsön pa Herløff ridder, bekennis ok gör uiterligt, ath for then store kerlighet ok margfaldigh/ godwillia, som myn elskeligh kere hustru Magdalene kongh Karlz dotter mik yterligh gjort ok beuist hawer, tha/ hawer jak nw meth myn frij goduillia och beradde modhe ok meth samtyke och fwbordt myn kere maags/ Arwit trollis ok flere mine wenners ok frenders rade vnth formemde myn kere hustrv Magdalene alle mine panthe,/ som mik retteligh tilhøre hwilke the helst ware kwnne, j sin lifzdaghe, om thet Gudh swa forseet hawer hon/ mith lifj længher lewer j swa motte ath nar Gudh tækcis kalle henne aff thenna werlden, tha skulle tesse for:ne/ pante, som myn kere hustrv meth mik

526 SRA, original latter on parchment, dated Stockholm 8 July 1475. Ivar Axelsson’s (Totts) will (SDHK 29963, facsimile); Printed in Arvid Trolles Jordebok, 1498, ed. Almquist, 1938, HH 31, no.3, p.160. Seven seals of which no.4 and no.7 are lost, only a fragment of seal no. 6 remain. The remaining intact seals are in quite good condition and remain attached to the letter: no.1. Ivar Axelsson Tott, no. 2. Sten Sture, no. 3. Eric Axelsson Tott, no. 5. Arvid Trolle. My comment: no. 4, Laurens Axelsson’s seal is lost, no. 6, a fragment of Hans Åkesson’s seal remains and no.7, Bengt Åkesson’s seal is lost. He makes no mention of Jörgen Åkesson and Nils Sture in his will.
Appendix III: Ivar Axelsson’s letter of endowment

Figure 4 a. The Krapperup Archive, original letter on parchment, Stockholm 8 August 1475: Ivar Axelsson’s letter of dower to his third wife Magdalena Karlsdotter. This image is reproduced by special permission of the Krapperup Archive’s head curator. Photograph by Janne Hallqvist 2009.

The Krapperup Archives; original letter on parchment; Photocopies held by DRA and SRA; printed in Monumenta diplomatica Svecana, ed. J.H. Schröder, 1821, pp.45–47, no. XIV; Sjögren, 1944, p. 67, ref. no. 2: Six of the original eight remain intact. Seals no 3 and 8 are lost. They are difficult to distinguish on the facsimile. The fourth seal belongs to Ivar Axelsson Tott. (SDHK 28613); the original letter concerned itself with the formalities of Magdalena’s dower is dated, Nyköping 22 September 1466, refers a post-medieval transcript of the original letter, B 314, pp.189–190, UUB.

Translation
I, Ivar Axelsson of Härlöv, knight, declare and decree, that due to the love and consideration always and forever shown to me by my beloved wife Magdalena, the daughter of King Karl, I now of my own free will and initiative, and in agreement and on the advice of my dear son-in-law Arvid Trolle, my friends and kin, hereby bequeath unto my aforementioned dear wife Magdalena all the pledges, which are rightfully mine which ever they may be, during her lifetime, if God allows her to survive me, and when God deems fit to take her from this world to the next, then those aforementioned pledges that we have received together, will be freely and without delay and hindrance be awarded to my legal heirs. Exempted from these pledges are the ones that my daughter Beata by right of her mother will receive, these being her mother’s inheritance, and the fiefdom of Hishult in Halland, which I received in pledge from King Christian for 100 genuine English Nobles, and of which fiefdom I have issued a letter in favour of my son-in-law Arvid Trolle and my daughter Beata. She will also very much receive and enjoy all my chattels as long as she may live, if she doth survive me, with the exception of my riffles and swords. Finally, I hereby place my seal on this letter opposite the seals of the honest and worthy men, Lord Sten Sture, Knight, of Gripsholm, my beloved brothers Eric Axelsson and Lord Laurens Axelsson; knights, Hans Åkesson, Arvid Trolle, Bengt Åkesson squires, all of whom hang their seals alongside mine on this letter. Stockholm, the Saturday after Visitations day in the year 1475.

527 Magdalena Karlsdotter.
528 Svenskt konversationslexikon, vol. 1, 1845, pp. 116–117. “Dalin uppger, att han “för första gången funnit skjutgevär med krut omtalas i Sverige år 1483, uti förlinking mellan riksföreståndaren Sten Sture och hans sväger Ivar Axelsson” ”. ([Olof von) Dalin mentioned that the first time he had heard of the use of rifles with gunpowder was in the settlement between Protector Sten Sture and his brother-in-law Ivar Axelsson in 1483]. Ivar was in fact Ingeborg Åkesdotter uncle.
Appendix III: Ivar Axelsson’s letter of endowment

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Jak Jwer Axsilsson jhærdloff Riddare etc. gor witerligith J thzta mit breff ath pa theen tidh mit bryllop War i nykopinh Anno Domini etc. Tha gaff/ iak mine ælzkelige kere hustrv magdalene konugh karls dotter til heder ok margengaffua pa rættan hinders dagh tryhwndrada fwldwiktoge/ Swara ængelske nobbele ok loffuade iak pa samma tidh widerlæggie hænne the fornemnde nable i jordegotz Jnnan nat ok Aar thaer næst æpter/ som hennes fermeter margangaffuebreff thær om vtwiser Ok æpterthy iak thz ekke forre giort haffuer thå ær iak nw swa eens warden mz/ min kære maagh Arffuit

529 The Krapperup Archives; original letter on parchment; Photocopies held by DRA and SRA; printed in Monumenta diplomatica Svecana, ed. J.H. Schröder, 1821, pp.45–47, no. XIV; Sjögren, 1944, p. 67, ref. no. 2: Six of the original eight remain intact. Seals no 3 and 8 are lost. They are difficult to distinguish on the facsimile. The fourth seal belongs to Ivar Axelsson Tott. (SDHK 28613); the original letter concerned itself with the formalities of Magdalena’s dower is dated, Nyköping 22 September 1466, refers a post-medieval transcript of the original letter, B 314, pp.189–190, UUB.
Translation

Ivar Axelsson of Härlöv, knight, etc., declare that at the time of my wedding which took place in Nyköping in the year etc. [1466] I hereby honour and endow my beloved wife, Magdalena, the daughter of King Karl on the day established by law, a dower of 300 English Nobles530 and promise to exchange them for their corresponding value in estates. Since this has not been fulfilled, I have on the advice of and in agreement with my son-in-law Arvid Trolle, my close kin and my friends, in compensation for the dower, shall give her the estates that belonged to my mother531 in Sweden, wherever they are, together

530 Lindström, GM II, 1895, p. 321; SRA SDHK 31912. Ivar Axelsson borrowed 300 silver marks from the Franciscan Convent of St Catherine in Visby. The loan was approved at the time of his marriage to Magdalena Karlsdotter. It was reimbursed through a pledge of land, dated 13 May 1487, whereby Ivar transferred his privately owned property of Gråbo and two adjoining meadows to St Catherine’s Cathedral (Sancta Katarina). A permanent transfer of the aforementioned property was later confirmed by Arvid Trolle in a letter dated 5 August 1498 (SRA SDHK 33617).

531 Ivar Axelsson’s mother, Ingeborg Ivarsdotter (Ivar Nilssonätt), was the second wife of Axel Pedersen (Tott). She died in 1466. Worth noting is that Ingeborg’s sister Kristina was married to Nils Jönsson (Oxemstierna), who was elected protector of the Realm in Sweden together with his brother Bengt Jönsson on the death of King Christopher in 1448. Nils Jönsson and Ivar Axelsson’s father-in-law King Karl Knutsson became bitter enemies concerning the future of the Union of the three Scandinavian kingdoms, until the former’s death in 1450. Nils Jönsson’s son from his second marriage, Erik Nilsson married Karin Eriksdotter Nipertz. After Nils Eriksson’s death she married Ivar’s brother Laurens Axelsson. Jöns Nilsson’s third wife was the sister of Gustav Karlsson (Gumsehuvud). He became step-father to Sten Sture the Elder on his marriage to Birgitta Stensdotter (Bielke), the half-
with all my private estates I have acquired, since my wife and I have been together. And if God willing, joins us through children, then these heirs born of wife will inherit the aforementioned dower of their mother and not be separated from their father’s. If we should depart this world without children; God forbid it, my heirs will hold these estates in Sweden for as long as the law allows. If the value of the estates and chattels do not amount to 300 English nobles then my heirs and myself agree to pay her [Magdalena] in either gold, silver or Stockholm’s örtug/ortig which are recognized by the Danes has being equal to 300 English nobles. Finally I implore the honest and high-born men: Sten Sture, my dear brother-in-law and Protector of the Realm, my brother Eric Axelsson, Nils Sture, Laurens Axelsson; Hans Åkesson knight, my dear son-in-law Arvid Trolle, Bengt Åkesson, Jörgen Åkesson, Squires, to place their seal beside mine on this letter. Stockholm 1475: Saturday after the visitation of the Virgin Mary etc.

Translation

Ivar Axelsson of Härlöv, knight, etc, declare that at the time of my wedding which took place in Nyköping in the year etc [1466] I hereby honour and endow my beloved wife, Magdalena, the daughter of King Karl on the day established by law, a dower of 300 English Nobles and promise to exchange them for their corresponding value in estates. Since this has not been fulfilled, I have on the advice of and in agreement with my son-in-law Arvid Trolle, my close kin and my friends, in compensation for the dower, shall give her the estates that belonged to my mother in Sweden, wherever they are, together.

Lindström, GM II, 1895, p. 321; SRA SDHK 31912. Ivar Axelsson borrowed 300 silver marks from the Franciscan Convent of St Catherine in Visby. The loan was approved at the time of his marriage to Magdalena Karlsdotter. It was reimbursed through a pledge of land, dated 13 May 1487, whereby Ivar transferred his privately owned property of Gråbo and two adjoining meadows to St Catherine’s Cathedral (Sancta Katarina). A permanent transfer of the aforementioned property was later confirmed by Arvid Trolle in a letter dated 5 August 1498 (SRA SDHK 33617).

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Appendix IV: Ramborg Gustavsdotter to
Magdalena Karlsdotter

Figure 5a. SRA original letter on paper, Stegeborg 2 November 1488: Letter from Ramborg Gustavsdotter (Sparre of Hjulsta and Ångsö) to Magdalena Karlsdotter (Bonde) before the wedding of Görvel Eriksdotter (Gyllenstierna) and Knut Alvsson (Tre rosor).
(SDHK 32125): Image courtesy of SRA (Sweden).

Sösterligh helse till fore & senth kerligh meth gwdh käre söster maa [?]
j bede thet jak sende idher thet tackell som j scriffwe ethir och haffdhe
jak gernä thalit vnth idher tienere om manght ärendh och han for
saa betiden aff stadh och sagde mek intthet till Item maa j wedhe thet
jak haffwer ingen wisse tidende aff myn herre en jak wenter hannom
daligt dagh him for thy tor jak ey fare tidh wdhen jak for frw
Christines532 scriffuelsse en wille j scriffwe myn herre till thaa toghe han thet
gansca wel till williä en myn herre533 er saa granlagdh ath jak ferdis
icke wdhen breff ok han ey heller Och idhert breff [rasure] Skal bidhe

532 Christina Karlsdotter (Bonde).
533 Gregers Mattsson (Lilje).
Hanom en tyktis hanom knw534 scuffue myn herre till medhen thet er saa ner
till bedhra worder thet hanom meth idher allswollwsth gwdh befalende
ok S:ta anna selff tredie scuffiuit stekeborgh festum animarum Anno domini
Med (?) lxxxviiij

Ramborgh
göstaffzdotter

Translation

With the love of God, I offer you sisterly greetings. Dear sister you wrote to me about
sending you some tackle I sent for and I would have also liked to have spoken with your
servant about many matters but he took his leave of the town without saying to me. Also,
you should know that I have no certain tidings from my Lord, but I await his return daily. I
do not dare to travel even after receiving Lady Christina’s letter but should you want to
write to my lord, he would receive this graciously, but my Lord is concerned that we should
not travel without first obtaining the proper safe conducts, in order for us to undertake such
a journey. And has to your letter letter encouraging my husband to write to him. It is better
that Knut writes to him, as it is close to the time, and as is his worthy duty God willing.
Written at Stegeborg on the day of St Anna with the virgin and child and All Souls day in
the year 1488

Ramborg
Gustavsdotter

534 Most likely Ramborg is referring to Knut Alvsson (Tre Rosor), who planned to marry Christina
Karlsdotter’s daughter Görvel in Söderköping.
Tables

Table 1. Protectors of the Swedish Realm\textsuperscript{535}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protectors of the Swedish Realm</th>
<th>from</th>
<th>To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karl Knutsson (Bonde)</td>
<td>1438</td>
<td>1440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengt and Nils Jönsson (Oxenstierna)</td>
<td>1448</td>
<td>1448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl Knutsson (Bonde)</td>
<td>1448</td>
<td>1457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jöns Bengtsson (Oxenstierna)</td>
<td>1457</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Eric Axelsson (Tott)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kettler Karlsson (Vasa)</td>
<td>1464, 1465</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jöns Bengtsson (Oxenstierna)</td>
<td>1465</td>
<td>1466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Axelsson (Tott)</td>
<td>1466</td>
<td>1467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Regants of the Kalmar Union

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regent</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From</td>
<td>To</td>
<td>From</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret I (1359 – 1412)</td>
<td>1387</td>
<td>1412</td>
<td>1387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric (1382 – 1459)</td>
<td>1389</td>
<td>1441</td>
<td>1396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher (1426 – 1448)</td>
<td>1441</td>
<td>1448</td>
<td>1440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl Knutsson (1406 – 1470)</td>
<td>1449</td>
<td>1450</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian I (1426 – 1481)</td>
<td>1450</td>
<td>1481</td>
<td>1448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans (1455 – 1513)</td>
<td>1481</td>
<td>1513</td>
<td>1481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian II (1481 – 1559)</td>
<td>1513</td>
<td>1523</td>
<td>1513</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{535} All information for tables 1 and 2 was sourced from http://historiska.se/upptack-historien/artikel/regentlangd/.
Lineage charts

Chart 6 a. The Härlöv, Sjörup and Næs dynastic connection

NB. Each dynastic family is reconnected to individuals of the original dynastic line of the Tott dynasty (black line) and shown with a specific colour line.

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536 NB. Each dynastic family is reconnected to individuals of the original dynastic line of the Tott dynasty (black line) and shown with a specific colour line.
N.B. Erik (Arvidsson) Trolle's mother was Karin Johansdotter (Gädda) till Fanö, d.1465. He married twice: first to his stepmother's aunt Ingeborg Philipsdotter (Tott), and was also married to Karin Eriksdotter (Gyllenstierna) the great-granddaughter of Karl Knutsson (Bonde). The red line indicates a re-connection with the original dynastic line through the blood and marriage.
537 N.B. Erik (Arvidsson) Trolle’s mother was Karin Johansdotter (Gädda) till Fanö, d. 1465. He married twice: first to his stepmother’s aunt Ingeborg Philipsdotter (Tott), and was also married to Karin Eriksdotter (Gyllenstierna) the great-granddaughter of Karl Knutsson (Bonde). The red line indicates a re-connection with the original dynastic line through the blood and marriage.
Chart 7. Bielke-Bonde, Sture- Tott Connection
Presentation of the Axelsson Totts of Härlöv

Axel Pedersen: c. 1370-1446/7, Knight, Councilor of the Danish Realm, Commander of Varberg, Liège Lord of Halland a.s.o. Married twice to,
   1. Katarina Axelsdotter (Laxmand)
   2. Ingeborg Ivarsdotter (Ivars Nilsson’s Dynasty)

Senior family:

Olof Axelsson: c. 1400-1464, Knight, Councilor of the Danish Realm and Lord High Constable, Commander of Gotland (1449-1464). Married three times to,
   1. Karin Jensdotter (Falk).
   2. Johanna Nilsdotter (Brok).
   3. Anna Jensdotter (Present).

Peder Axelsson: c. 139? – 1463, Dean of Lund and Prior of Dalby. He was also nominated to the position of Bishop of Odense.

Åke Axelsson: 1405-1477, Knight, Councilor of the Danish Realm, Commander of Varberg, Liège Lord of Halland. Married once to,
   1. Märta Bengtsdotter (Vintorpa Dynasty).

Ketil Axelsson: c. 139?/140? – 1454, Lord of GrubbeOrdrup. Married once to,
   1. Mette Laurensdotter (Ulfeldt): She later married Erik Eriksen (Lövenbalk).

Ellen Axelsdotter: married to Olof Stigsson (Krognos).

Beat Axelssdotter: married to Torben Bengtsson (Bille).

Cadet family:

Eric Axelsson: 1418-1481, Knight, Councilor of the Swedish Realm, Protector of the Swedish Realm, Nordic Steward and Commander of Viborg, Finland. Married twice to,
   1. Bengta Mattsdotter (Lillie).
   2. Elin Gustavsdotter (Sture).

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538 Aca Pontificum Danica III, 1908, p. 90, no 1773, 23 August 1436; Eric Axelson is confirmed to be 18 years old, making his date of birth 1418 and not 1415 as is often written..
**Ivar Axelsson:** 1420-1487, Knight Councilor of the Swedish and the Danish Realms, Commander of Gotland (1464-1487), Commander of Sölvesborg and Stegeborg. Married three times to,
   1. Margareta Poulsdotter (Laxmand).
   2. Maren Torbendsdotter (Bille)
   3. Magdalena Karlsdotter (Bonde), daughter of King Karl of Sweden.

**Anders Axelsson:** c. 142?/3?-1465. Drowned

**Philip Axelsson:** c. 143?-1464, Knight, Commander of Gotland and Lord of Tranekær. Married once to,
   1. Ermegaard Eggertsdotter (Frille). She later married Bengt Torben (Bille). He was a brother of Maren Torbensdotter.

**Laurens Axelsson:** c. 143?-1483, Knight, Councilor of the Swedish Realm, Commander of Raseborg and Lord of Årsta. Married twice to,
   1. Karin Jönsdotter (Viffert), drowned.
   2. Karin Eriksdotter (Nipertz), widow of Erik Nilsson (Oxenstierna).
**Time-line for the Kalmar Union**

1386–87 – Swedish Marshal Bo Jonsson (Grip) takes the initiative against King Albrecht's favoritism of German landsmen, and appointing them to the most important fiefdoms in Sweden. He introduces an additional tax for the nobility, which was otherwise tax-exempt, leading to open revolt against him. Kung Olof of Denmark and Norway dies in 1487 without issue. In order to avoid electing the young Duke Albrecht, the grandson, of Ingeborg Valdemarsdotter, sister to Valdemar IV, Margaret persuades the Danish Council to stand behind her adoption of Eric (Bogislav, son of Vratislav VII and Marie of Mecklenburg). She is subsequently hailed as "the guardian of the kingdom of Denmark" during the period of Eric's minority.

1388 – The Norwegian council also adopts Margaret as guardian for the kingdom of Norway. Eric and his sister Katarina arrive in Norway. Margaret is accepted as interim regent by the Swedish council.

1389 – Albrecht and his son are taken prisoner after the Battle of Falköping. Her help in ridding the Swedish magnates of Albrecht she is awarded the title of "Sweden's true guardian." Eric crowned king of Norway.

1391 – Canonization of Birgitta Birgersdotter.

1395 – Agreement with Mecklenburg concerning Albrecht’s release from imprisonment.

1397 – Eric crowned union king at Kalmar Castle. The Union is drawn up after the coronation.

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**Time-line for the Axelsson Totts**

c. 1370 – birth of Axel Pedersen (Tott)

1397 – All three branches of the Tott dynasty place their seals on the Corona Charter: Jep Axelsson of Sjörup, Axel Pedersen of Härlöv and Stig Åkesen of Næs.

1399 – Axel Pedersen marries Katarina Axelsdotter (Krognos), granddaughter of Swedish Marshall Eric Kettilsson Puke. Children: Peder, Olof, Kettil, Åke, Beata and Ellen. He also has an illegitimate son.
It is decided that it will be drawn up on parchment in six copies. The Union Letter does, however, was only signed by ten of the 17 Swedish and Danish representatives and embossed with their seal. No Norwegians stamped their seal on the Union Letter. Unlike the Coronation Charter dated 13 July, with 67 seal written on parchment.

Resumption to the Crown of the noble estates in Sweden (mainly the lesser nobles): the appointment of foreign sheriffs and the nomination of specific individuals to positions in the Church despite Margaret’s promise in Kalmar 1397.

1406 – Eric marries the English princess, Philippa, daughter of King Henry IV.

1412 – Margaret falls ill and dies on board her ship in the harbour at Flensburg. Erik takes the helm as independent ruler of the three kingdoms. From 1412 there is growing dissatisfaction amongst the Swedish nobles because of the continued appointment of foreign bailiffs to Swedish fiefdoms, heavy taxes and duties to cover the overall cost of removing the Mecklenburg threat and to finance traditional Danish foreign policy: that is to say: Danish trade interests and traditional geographical expansion toward Estonia and to the South of Denmark, which competes with the interests of the Dukes of Holstein. Danish interests go before the common interests of the three kingdoms.

1416–22 – War between Denmark and Holstein over Denmark’s annexation of the duchy of Schleswig. In order to put a stop to escalated aggressions, Heinrich X, Duke Rumpold of Silesia demands a ceasefire in the Holy Roman Emperor's name.

1409? – Katarina Krognos dies.


1411–1421 – Peder and Olof Axelsson study abroad.

Erik Axelsson is born 1418.

Ivar Axelsson is born 1420.

1423 – Peder Axelsson appointed canon of Lund. Later promoted to the position of dean
1424–429 – On 28 June a final verdict is announced which decrees that Schleswig is part of Jutland, and therefore part of the kingdom of Denmark and thus was not a fief to Holstein. The Dukes of Holstein refuse to accept the judgment. Erik travels on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land leaving Queen Philippa as co-regent with full authority and power to oversee the rule the Union in his absence. King Eric introduces a duty on trade passing the Sound between Denmark and Sweden.

1430 – Philippa dies, Buried at Vadstena Abbey.

1432 – Eric of Pomerania is defeated in the war over Schleswig. He is forced to agree to a humiliating truce and forfeiture of land.


1436 – 20-years of war over the control of the Duchy of Schleswig had cost dearly, most especially for the Sweden. They were unhappy with the tax burden and local misrule. Swedes demand that there should be Swedish men administrating the Swedish fiefdoms. The Hanseatic League makes specific demands to on the union king in order to abolish the Oresund toll. Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson from Dalarna rebels against the foreign sheriffs and demand that King Eric be removed in favour of a Swedish king in Sweden. Engelbrekt dominates politics in Sweden. The Arboga agreement is broken after the election of Karl Knutsson (Bonde) as Sweden’s marshal in Stockholm. The nobility fears that their position is being undermined in reaction to the growing strength of Engelbrekt, who was supported by the peasantry. Engelbrekt and Erik Puke use force to enable them to share the office protector with Karl Knutsson.

1437 – Peder is appointed chaplain to King Eric. He travels to Bologna to study Canon Law. He is appointed Prior of Dalby Monastery by Pope Eugene IV. He is also appointed canon of Roskilde.

1425–1435 - Births of Laurens, Philip and Anders Axelsson.
Engelbrekt is murdered on 4 May 1436 by Magnus Bengtsson (Natt och Dag). Several attempts of reconciliation between the rivaling factions were unsuccessful.

1439 – King Eric is finally dethroned in Denmark, Sweden. Eric takes over Visborg on Gotland.

1440 – Christopher of Bavaria (Eric’s nephew) is elected king of Denmark.

1441 – Christopher’s coronation in Norway.

1442 – Christopher elected king of Sweden.

1445 – King Christopher marries Dorothea of Brandenburg.

1448 – King Christopher dies without issue. Karl Knutsson (Bonde) is elected king in Sweden. The Swedish council is dominated by the dynastic families Oxenstierna and Vasa. Christian of Oldenburg, the great-great grandson of Euphemia Eriksdotter and Duke Albrecht of Mecklenburg, is elected king in Denmark and weds King Christopher’s widow Dorotea.

1449 – Karl Knutsson crowned King of Norway.

1450 – The pro-Danish members of the Norwegian Council are the strongest and elect Christian instead of Karl Knutsson (Bonde). He abdicates in favour of Christian as Norway’s regent. It is simultaneously agreed upon that when one the two kings dies the remaining king would take over the throne in all three countries and thereby restore the Union. The agreement in Halmstad and in Norway, however, leads to a protracted war because both kings are

1439 – Olof Axelsson and his father do not put their seals on the letter deposing Eric.

1441 – Axel Pedersen is one of last magnates to abandon King Eric. Eric Axelsson is dubbed to knight.

1442 - Axel Pedersen’s son and core family members, sign an agreement to put the unity of the family before their loyalty to the Crown and the Church. Peder Axelsson threatens the Archbishop of Lund, Hans Laxmand. His behaviour entails that he is passed over as Hans’s successor.

1447? – Ivar Axelsson marries Margareta Pouladsdotter (Laxmand). She is the niece of the Archbishop of Lund, Hans Laxmand. Possibly this marriage was arranged in an attempt to reconcile the two very powerful families.

1446/7 – Axel Pedersen (Tott) dies. His son Äke Axelsson takes over Varberg after his father. Äke controls all of North and South Halland. His brother Ivar takes control of eastern Skåne and Blekinge.

1449 – Olof Axelsson (Tott) negotiates with King Eric and takes control of Gotland. Äke and Ivar Axelsson are dubbed to knights of the realm.

1450 – Olof Axelsson receives the pledge of Gotland in return for a substantial loan to King Christian I. Olof and Eric are active in the acceptance of Christian as king of Norway. The Axelsson Totts are becoming a threat to the power of kings.

1454 – Kettil Axelsson (Tott) dies whilst visiting Sölvesborg in Blekinge.
1457 – Karl Knutsson Bonde faces increased resistance due to his aggressive estate reductions of church property to the Crown and tax burdens on the people. His main opponent is the Archbishop Jöns Bengtsson, a member of the influential Oxenstierna dynasty. Christian I is elected king by the Swedish Council of the Realm. Karl Knutsson goes into exile in Danzig.

1459 – Duke Adolf (Christian's uncle) dies and his nephew is chosen by knights of the Duchies of Holstein and of Schleswig to be their common overlord. On his appointment as Duke of both duchies they did not become subjects to the kingdom of Denmark. He also swore that the two duchies were to remain conjoined to each other (Schleswig-Holstein). King Eric (of Pomerania) dies in Pomerania.

1464 – Christian’s wars prove very costly for the Swedish kingdom; increased taxation on free peasantry. The Swedes protest. Bishop Jöns Bengtsson had waived tax for certain Upland farmers, which led to his arrest and captivity in Denmark. Jöns Bengtsson’s cousin Bishop Kettil Karlsson (Vasa) stood at the head of a revolt against Christian I, which among other things resulted in the Battle of Haraker on the 17th of April, 1464 and Christian’s expulsion from Sverige. Without any other suitable candidates, Karl Knutsson is asked to take the throne for the second time. The tension grows between Karl and Oxenstierna-Wasa faction. The magnates become stronger. King Karl is once again dethroned and the kingdom is ruled by the magnates and prelates.

1465 – Jöns Bengtsson and Kettil Karlsson rule Sweden together. After Kettil Karlsson’s death Jöns Bengtsson rules the country by himself. He was alive twenty years after the agreement was made.

1467 – Ivar Axelsson retracts his oath of allegiance. Christian I is defeated at the Battle of Haraker.

1468 – King Karl appoints Ivar Axelsson as interim-regent after his death.

1469 – Ivar and Laurens’s feud between Christian and the Axelsson Totts breaks out. Ivar and Laurens’s estates, fiefdoms and pledges are confiscated by Christian.

1470 – Christian’s wider strategy to redeem his finances and influence in the three kingdoms. This is part of the Christian’s wider strategy to redeem his finances and influence in the three kingdoms.

1471 – Christian continues his war on the Baltic kingdoms becoming a threat to the Swedish kingdom. He is defeated at the Battle of Stockholm and the Miners from Dalarna.

1472 – Ivar Axelsson dies and Hans Sigurdsson Häckeberga Castle, Skåne. Agneta Ivarsdotter dies and Hans Sigurdsson (Sudreim) dies.

1473 – Anders Axelsson drowns at Häckeberga Castle, Skåne. Agneta Ivarsdotter dies and Hans Sigurdsson (Sudreim) dies. These three were important to the marriage strategies of the Axelsson Totts.

1474 – Karl Knutsson marries his wife, and his son Karl. Sten Sture is forced to give way to the Council’s new leader, Erik Axelsson (Tott). Sten Sture personally participates while the nobility to rebel under certain conditions goes against the wishes of the Axelsson Totts.

1475 – Sten Sture remains protector until the final election of Hans in Sweden. The Axelsson Totts change their tactics and influence in the three kingdoms.

1476 – Christian I dies. His son Hans is made guardian of both Christina and his wife, and his son Karl. Sten Sture is elected King of Denmark. He also sworn to the Baltic kingdoms becoming a threat to the Swedish kingdom. He is defeated at the Battle of Stockholm and the Miners from Dalarna.

1477 – Christian’s wars prove very costly for the Swedish kingdom; increased taxation on free peasantry. The Swedes protest. Bishop Jöns Bengtsson had waived tax for certain Upland farmers, which led to his arrest and captivity in Denmark. Jöns Bengtsson’s cousin Bishop Kettil Karlsson (Vasa) stood at the head of a revolt against Christian I, which among other things resulted in the Battle of Haraker on the 17th of April, 1464 and Christian’s expulsion from Sverige. Without any other suitable candidates, Karl Knutsson is asked to take the throne for the second time. The tension grows between Karl and Oxenstierna-Wasa faction. The magnates become stronger. King Karl is once again dethroned and the kingdom is ruled by the magnates and prelates.

1478 – Eric Axelsson controls most of Finland. He is imprisioned by King Karl, but later released.

1479 – Olof Axelsson withdraws to Gotland.

1480 – Peder Axelsson seeks the position of the Bishopric of Odense and a given place in the Danish Council of the Realm. Mogen Krafse, King Christian’s candidate is his successful. Christian uses his useful contacts through his sister-in-law’s husband, Marquise Ludovico III of Mantua. Peder is threatened with excommunication by the Pope if he continues to pursue his claim.

1481 – Peder Axelsson dies, but his feud with King Christian over the bishop’s chair of Odense is not forgotten by his brothers. King Christian’s Italian nephew, Ludovico of Mantua, is appointed Prior of Dalby. The choice proves unpopular with the brethren of Dalby Monastery and the members of the Chapter of Lund’s Cathedral.

1482 – Philip Axelsson is dubbed and made a member of the Danish Council of the Realm. The Tranekær affair gains momentum. Axelsson’s interests conflict with those of Christian I.

1483 – Peder Axelsson dies, but his feud with King Christian over the bishop’s chair of Odense is not forgotten by his brothers. King Christian’s Italian nephew, Ludovico of Mantua, is appointed Prior of Dalby. The choice proves unpopular with the brethren of Dalby Monastery and the members of the Chapter of Lund’s Cathedral.

1484 – Peder Axelsson and Bishop Jöns Bengtsson are elected joint Protectors of the Realm in hope of reaching out to the rivaling factions. Olof and Philip Axelsson die. Ivar Axelsson takes over the pledge and administration of Visborg Castle, Gotland. Ivar’s second wife Marina Torbendsdotter (Bille) dies.
forced to give way to the Council’s new leader, Erik Axelsson (Tott).

1470 – Karl Knutsson marries his mistress Christina Abrahamsdotter in order to legalize the birth of his only surviving son – Karl Karlsson. He then revises his will in April in favour of his wife, and his son Karl. Sten Sture is made guardian of both Christina and Karl. The king dies 15 May. Sten Sture declares himself Protector of the realm with the support of the burghers of Stockholm and the Miners from Dalarna.

1471 – Christian continues his war on Sweden. He is defeated at the Battle Brunkeberg on the 10 October. The battle takes place outside Stockholm. He suffers a huge defeat and is forced to retreat and travel back to Denmark. The struggle between Denmark and Sweden leaves the Eastern part of Sweden vulnerable to attacks from muscovites. The Grand Duchy of Muscovy is steadily expanding toward Finland and the Baltic kingdoms becoming a threat to region.

1476 – New negotiations in Kalmar 1, Sten Sture personally participates while Christian remains in Rönneby. In Kalmar it is agreed that a clause entitling the nobility to rebel under certain conditions goes against the wishes of king. Also, if the king dies, the three kingdoms’ representatives would meet in either Halmstad or New Lödöse and elect a new king. Their presumptive elective king is Hans, the son of King Christian and Dorotea. The question of Christian being recognized as the king of Sweden was discussed at the meeting in Strängnäs. The Swedish nobles supporting Sten Sture say no to this suggestion.

1481 – Christian I dies. His son Hans is elected King of Denmark.

1466 – Ivar Axelsson marries Magdalena Karlsdotter (King Karl’s daughter), Erik Axelsson marries Elin Gustavsdotter (Sture) and Ivar’s daughter Beata is married to Arvid Birgersson (Trole). Later Ingeborg Åkesdotter (Tott) marries Sten Sture the Elder. The weddings take place parallel to a meeting at Nyköping House concerning the future of the Union. Two dynastic factions submerge from the political chaos; Tott-Bonde-Sture and Oxenstierna-Vasa.

1467 – Ivar Axelsson retracts his oath of loyalty to King Christian because of several attacks on the family in order to curb their political and economic power and influence in the three kingdoms. This is part of the Christian’s wider fiefdom strategy to redeem his finances and take control over the magnates. A feud between Christian and the Axelsson Totts breaks-out. Ivar and Lauren’s Danish pledges and estates are confiscated by Christian.

1468 – King Karl appoints Ivar Axelsson interim-regent after his death.

1469 – King Christian confiscates Åke Axelsson’s fiefdoms and estates in an attempt to force him to turn against his brothers in Sweden1470 – Christian’s threats fail

The Axelsson Totts change their tactics in accordance with events and changes in national politics

1472 –1475 – Åke Axelsson redeems his estates, fiefdoms and pledges. Still, he does not openly support Christian against his family. The Axelsson Totts demands that their grievances with the king are discussed before they could even consider Christian’s demands concerning the Swedish crown. Erik, 1497 – Sten Sture remains protector until the final election of Hans in Sweden. The continued wars with Russia and high taxes lie behind the decision to
1506 – Sweden is excommunicated. Sten Sture is removed as protector. He does not relinquish his control of Finland. Ivan III of Russia closes the Novgorod trading factory. The last Hansa merchants are forced to abandon the factory or face imprisoned.

1501 – 1503 – The ruling council, which includes Sten Sture, Svante Nilsson, Hemming Gadd and the Norwegian Knight Knut Alvsson (Tre Rosor) invokes the uprising clause of the Kalmar Ordinances and thereby withdraw their allegiance to the King Hans. Sten Sture is re-elected protector. Stockholm Castle is besieged and Queen Christina is forced to surrender the castle in May the loss of the Swedish crown.

1505 – The Kalmar Bloodbath.

1506 – Sweden is excommunicated.

1509 – The Treaty of Copenhagen, in August, recognizes King Han’s fundamental right to the Swedish throne and the Swedes promised to pay an annual tribute of 13,000 marks per year.

1511 – Svante Nilsson dies. Erik Trolle is elected Protector of Sweden, but the popular son of the deceased Svante Nilsson, Sten Svantesson, is later elected. He takes the name Sten Sture the Younger.

1513 – King Hans dies. His son Christian is crowned Danish and Norwegian regent.

1517 – Halmstad Meeting. The Swedish representatives refuse to recognize Christian II as Swedish king, or to pay

This would mean that a large portion of the Tott estates in Denmark would come under the control of Sten Sture the Elder.

1477 – The powerful and influential Åke Axelsson dies. Two candidates for the control of Varberg Castle: Bengt Åkesson (Tott) who supports his uncles and Sten Sture, and his brother Erik Åkesson who is a staunch supporter of Danish king. Eric and Ivar adopt Olof’s illegitimate son, Jörgen Olofsson.

1481 – Eric Axelsson dies. Laurens and Ivar take over the Finnish fiefdoms. Sten Sture demands that they should be handed over to him. The brothers do not agree. They are only willing to release them to the Swedish Council.

1483 – Laurens Axelsson dies. The Recess of Kalmar puts forward the guidelines acceptable to Swedish council if Hans is to be union king of the three kingdoms. The prominent position shared by the Axelsson Tott’s at the union meeting in 1476 is lost: they are sidelined in 1483. The family’s interests are represented by the only surviving brother Ivar, but without the full support of his network. He is pushed aside by Sten Sture. The divide between the former friends widens as Sten Sture’s ambitions grow and his personal political grip on Sweden becomes tighter. Ivar commits Gotland to the Danish kingdom.

1485–87 – The feud between Ivar Axelsson and Sten Sture escalates into armed conflict. Ivar is defeated and leaves Gotland to King Hans in hope of regaining the island and other fiefdoms under the reign of Hans. He does not succeed. He retires to his estate Lillö in

Ivar and Laurens adopt Olof Axelsson’s illegitimate son Jörgen Olofsson. Åke’s daughter, Ingeborg, is bequeathed a brother’s portion of his lands and wealth.
1520 – Sten Sture is seriously injured in January 1520 at the Battle of Åsunden and dies shortly afterwards. A group within the Swedish Privy Council begins negotiations with Christian II and on March the 6th he is recognized as the king of Sweden. Sture party supporters of the late protector do not stand behind the decision. Christian is forced to declare an amnesty before the Sture party hands over the Royal Palace. Christian is crowned in Stockholm in November. After three days of festivities the amnesty is revoked because of a new excommunication presented by Archbishop Gustav Trolle. The Sture party and their followers are executed as heretics at what becomes known as the Stockholm Bloodbath.


1523 – Uprising by the Danish magnates against Christian’s misrule of the kingdom. The uprising is supported by his uncle, Earl Frederick of Holstein. Fredrick is elected in March of the same year, forcing Christian into exile. In connection with the election of Fredrick, a meeting is proposed in order to discuss the renewal of the Union. No meeting takes place. In Sweden Gustav Vasa is elected King 6 June 1523.

Skåne. September/October 1487 somewhere between Vä and Lund Ivar dies.


Birger Gunnersen excommunicates the Swedish protector Sten Sture the Younger after the capture and dethroning of the Archbishop of Uppsala, Gustav Trolle.

1505 – Death of Arvid Trolle.

1507 – Ingeborg Åkesdotter, Sten Sture’s childless widow, remains in control Tavastahuoch Savilax in Finland until her death.

The overall influence of the Axelsson Totts’ later generations is coloured by national factional divisions and their influence on politics begins to diminish after the deaths of Bengt and Hans Åkesson c. 1500.
1524 – King Frederick and King Gustav meet in Malmö. Sweden relinquishes its claim on Bohuslän, Blekinge and Gotland. In return King Frederick gives up his claim to the Swedish throne. After 133 years of unification, war and inter-Nordic political conflicts the concept of a united Nordic Union and the ideal of magnatial network politics are lost to the wider European political and economic developments of centralized state-formation.
Bibliography

Abbreviations

ÄSF  Äldre Svenska Frälsesläkter Ättetavlor
BL   British Library
BSH  Bidrag till Skandinaviens historia ur utländska arkiver
CRR  Curia Regis Rolls
DAA  Danmarks Adels Aarbog,
DAB  Danske Adelige brevkister
DCP  Diplomatarium Christierni Primi
DBL  Dansk Biografisk Leksikon
DKA  Danish National Archives Copenhagen (Rigsarkivet)
Kgl.b Danish Royal Library, Copenhagen (Kongelige Biblioteket)
DN   Diplomatarium Norvegicum
DV   Vadstenadiariet = Diarium Vadstense
FGC  Förening Gamla Kristianstads Årskrifter
FMU  Finlands medeltida urkunder (Dipl. Fennicum), ed, Hausen
http://extranet.narc.fi/DF/index.htm
GHÅ  Gärds Härads Hembygdsföreningars Årskrifter
GM, I, II Anteckningar om Gotlands medeltid, Lindström
Hellm. Misc Per Hellmans regester av Miscellanea-brev i Berchs Diarium
Novum, Tom. III, VHAA: s dep., RA (RA 0401)
HH   Historiska handlingar
HSH  Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia
HT (D) Historisk tidsskrift (Denmark)
HT (N) Historisk tidsskrift (Norway)
HT (S) Historisk tidsskrift (Sweden)
KB   Swedish National Library, Stockholm (Kungliga biblioteket)
KK   Karlskrönika
KLNK  Kulturhistoriskt lexikon för nordisk medeltid
LÅU  Lunds Årkestifts Urkundsbok
LStB Linköpings stadsbibliotek, Stiftsbiblioteket
MEL  Magnus Erikssons Landslag (National Law of Sweden)
MISS Missiver fra Kongerne Christiern I.s og Hans’s tid, vol 2
MRA  Meddelanden från svenska riksarkivet
NEOB Norstedts etymologiska ordbok
PHT (D) Personhistorisk tidsskrift
PHT (S) Personhistorisk tidsskrift
Rep. Dipl. Repertorium Diplomaticum Regni Danici Mediaevalis

1524 – King Frederick and King Gustav meet in Malmö. Sweden relinquishes its claim on Bohuslän, Blekinge and Gotland. In return King Frederick gives up his claim to the Swedish throne. After 133 years of unification, war and inter-Nordic political conflicts the concept of a united Nordic Union and the ideal of magnatial network politics are lost to the wider European political and economic developments of centralized state-formation.
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Diagram

1 Jeremy Boissevain’s network model (p. 75)

Charts

1 The three branches of the Tott dynasty
2 The Tott-Has connection (p. 38)
3 The Tott, Hammersta, Gädda Connection
4 Connection between Magdalena Karlsdotter and Axel (Brok)
5 Tott-Bille connection
6a The Härlöv, Sjörup and Næs dynastic Connection
6b The Härlöv branch: Family 1
6c The Härlöv branch: Family 2
7 Bielke-Bonde, Sture-Tott connection
8 A simplified chart of Ralph Neville’s lineage

Tables

Table 1 Protectors of the Swedish Realm
Table 2 Regents of the Kalmar Union

Figures

Figure 1 ‘The Wheel of fortune’ in Härkeberga Church, Uppland, Sweden (p. 11)
Figure 2 Ralph Neville and Joan Beaufort, St Mary’s Staindrop (p. 14)
Figure 3 Richard Neville in mourning attire, St Mary, Warwick (p. 14)
Figure 4 The castle ruin of Lillö, Skåne (p. 43)
Figure 5 The castle ruin of Glimminge, Skåne (p. 43)
Figure 6 Örup Castle, Skåne (p. 43)
Figure 7 SHM 3233: The Tott ring, Historical Museum Stockholm (p. 108)
Figure 8 The ‘Warwick Ring’ no. 53.114.292, Liverpool Museum (p. 108)
Figure 9  BL f. 24v: MEL‘ärvdabalken’.
Figure10  SDHK 28264:  11 March 1464.
Figure 11  St George, Fornsalen, Gotland).
Figure 12  BL Harley MS. 4431: Detail Miniature of French widow and 
authoress Christine de Pizan).
Figure 13  RA (Sweden), photocopy C 9, f.57r).
Figure 14  39463: 1st of October 1487.

Appendices
Figure 1a, 2a  Karl Knutsson’s will 1470.
Figure 3a  Ivar Axelsson’s will 1475
Figure 4a  Ivar Axelsson’s letter of dower 1475.
Figure 5a  Ramborg Gustavsdotter’s letter to Magdalena Karlsdotter.

Maps
Map 1  The Kalmar Union and Baltic kingdoms c. 1460.
Map 2  The original Axelsson Tott power base of the Härlöv Branch of 
the Tott dynasty in the first half of the fifteenth century, 
including the major highways which connected the family’s 
social and economic to their private estates and 
fiefdoms.
Map 3  Ivar Axelsson’s personal economic and regional political interests, 
extending from Lillö Castle.
Index

Abjörn Nilsson, 207
Abraham Brodersen, 36, 168
Agneta, 39, 193
Akershus, 187
Albertus Magnus, 104
Albertus Pictor, 11, 272
Alice Cokesley, 47, 48
Anders Axelsson, 132
Anders Jacobsen (Lunge), 40
Anders Jacobsen Grim (Has), 37
Anders Pedersen (Gyldenstjerne), 46, 50
Anders von Bergen, 188
Anjou, 188, 263
Anna Karlsdotter, 168
Anne Neville, 15, 198, 269
Archbishop Nils (Jönsson), 32
Arthashastra, 77
Arvid Davidsson, 196
Arvid Knutsson, 196
Arvid Trolle, 125, 136, 140, 143, 172, 183, 184, 189, 191, 193, 195, 210, 213, 231, 235, 236, 238
Axel Kettilsson, 44
Axel Laurensen, 173, 174, 175
Axel Laurensson, 174, 188
Axel Pedersen, 12, 13, 14, 16, 20, 21, 24, 28, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 44, 45, 46, 47, 50, 52, 58, 81, 111, 144, 199, 219, 220, 238, 248, 250, 253
Barnet, 107
Bavaria, 20, 28
Beata, 38, 39, 46, 125, 129, 173, 175, 184, 196, 213, 236
Bengt Torbensen, 127
Bengt Åkesson, 167, 172, 215, 235, 236, 239
Bengta Simonsdotter, 160
Berta Ericsson, 196
Berta Eriksson, 196
Bertram de Bulmer, 14
Bille, 38, 42, 46, 126, 127, 128, 167, 171, 183, 184, 185
Birgitta Brahe, 196
Birgitta Olofsdotter, 150, 157, 158, 159, 160, 162, 164, 165, 166, 170, 171, 175, 195, 197, 208
Birgitta Turesdotter, 230
Bishop Absalon, 31
Bishop Kettil, 131
Bishop Sigge of Strängnäs., 129
Blekinge, 46, 119, 141, 194, 215
Bo Jonsson, 94, 130
Boisrevain, 72, 73, 74, 77
Bonde Jepson, 36
Borgholm, 194, 230, 231
Brunkeberg, 59, 121, 171, 192
Buckingham and Rye, 47
Caen, 47
Castile and Aragon, 63
Cecilia Abrahamsdotter, 36
Cecilia Clausdotter (Serlin), 39
Cecilia Nielsdotter (Jærnskægg), 36
Charny, 28, 118, 261
Chivalry, 28, 118, 270
Christian, 19, 28, 40, 46, 48, 59, 103, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 136, 137, 144, 155, 157, 158, 169, 170, 174, 178, 182, 184, 202, 206, 208, 211, 215, 228, 231, 236, 271
Christian IV, 46
Christina Abrahamsdotter, 199, 201, 207, 209, 211, 213, 230
Christina Karlsdotter, 157, 173, 183, 185, 186, 187, 191, 240, 241
Christine de Pisan, 154
Church of St Catherine, 37
Claus Rönnow, 121
Claus Åkesson, 142, 178, 179, 181
common weal, 80, 85, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, 121, 188
Coronation Charter, 12, 22, 23, 251
Dalarna, 141, 142
Dalby, 123, 124
Dante Alighieri, 11, 68
Danzig, 119, 122, 192, 203, 212, 215, 217, 231
David Nilsson (Sparre av Tofta), 207
decision-making, 52, 78, 80, 94, 105, 117, 137, 144

Diplomatica Diocesis Lundensis, 40

Dorotea, 155
Dringenberg, 178, 179, 181
Duke of Bedford, 47
Durham, 154
Edla Pedersdotter, 34
Egbert Frille, 125, 126, 127, 128, 131, 184, 185
Elin Gustavsdotter (Sture), 129, 157
Ellinge, 32, 39, 45, 174, 175

Emotional Communities, 72
Emperor Sigismund, 47
Engelbrekt, 20, 30, 137
England, 13, 25, 28, 46, 47, 59, 61, 62, 64, 70, 80, 81, 88, 98, 99, 107, 114, 117, 149, 153, 154, 155, 200, 263, 265, 269, 276, 279
English Parliament, 47
Eric Axelsson, 45, 57, 58, 120, 122, 123, 124, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 145, 150, 167, 169, 170, 185, 187, 190, 195, 199, 215, 235, 236, 239
Eric Ericsson, 47, 128, 168, 183, 187, 206, 208, 209, 211, 212, 231
Eric the Holy, 206
Eric Åkesson, 182, 196
Eric’s Chronicle, 95, 112, 206, 207
Erik Nielsen (Gyldenstjerne), 40
Erland Kagge, 140, 143
Ermegard Eggertsdotter Frille, 125
Ermegard Johansdotter (Bulöw), 196
Estonia, 20, 32, 126, 129, 141
Finland, 44, 55, 57, 58, 60, 123, 129, 132, 167, 190, 195, 196, 211, 215, 216, 231
Fortuna, 11
France, 25, 28, 47, 63
Francesco Gonzaga of Mantua, 124
Geoffry de Nevill, 14
Glimmingehus, 43
Gotenhof, 57
Gotland, 37, 57, 59, 119, 120, 123, 127, 129, 131, 133, 138, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 171, 172, 174, 175, 178, 180, 181, 182,
Kalmar Ordinances, 157, 191
Kalmar Union, 13, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 41, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 74, 77, 78, 96, 97, 99, 107, 117, 120, 121, 122, 123, 128, 129, 131, 134, 144, 147, 149, 155, 157, 170, 171, 194, 203, 205, 217, 259
Karin Jensdotter, 159
Karin Johansdotter, 125
Karl Karlsson, 193, 206, 207, 208, 209, 211, 212, 228, 230
Karl Ulfsson, 112, 206, 207
Katarina Axelsdotter (Krognos), 44, 199
Katarina Eriksdotter (Puke), 44
Kettil Axelsson, 45
King Christian, 37, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 141, 144, 158, 169, 185, 201, 203, 211, 215, 221, 253, 254, 255
King Christopher, 20, 45, 128, 130, 155, 179, 226, 238
King Eric, 9, 12, 13, 20, 23, 24, 25, 27, 37, 44, 123, 207, 214, 218, 252, 253, 254
King Hans, 65, 126, 138, 141, 145, 168, 174, 175, 178, 179, 181, 182, 188, 192, 193, 194, 208
King Henry IV, 24, 25, 149, 251
King John, 153
King Olof, 21, 93
king, Albrecht, 45
kinship, 41, 50, 54, 72, 80, 83, 84, 85, 89, 103, 111, 114, 182, 189, 207
Kirsten Kyrning, 32
Kirsten Pedersdotter, 32
Kirsten Stigsdotter, 36
Knut Porse, 32
Knut Posse, 58, 191
Knut Stensson (Bielke), 129
Kristianstad, 46
Kungssäter, 120
Lancaster, 47, 50, 111
Langeland, 125, 126, 127
Lars Laurentsson, 166
Laurens Finnsson, 36
Laurens Skinkel, 140
Liber Daticus Lundensis vetustior, 31
Libri memoriales, 31
Libri Memoriales, 40
Lillö Castle, 38, 40, 43, 46
Linköping, 131, 193
Lister, 39, 45, 194
Lister, 45
Livonia, 126, 141
Ljungby manor, 42
longue durée, 87, 94
Lucia, 40
Ludovico Gonzaga of Mantua, 124
Lund Cathedral, 40
Lundholm, 59, 161, 163, 164, 165, 168, 169, 170, 208
Lunds gåvobok, 31
Magdalena Karlsdotter, 53, 57, 60, 128, 129, 132, 144, 149, 157, 169, 171, 172, 173, 175, 176, 177, 181, 182, 185, 189, 190, 194, 195, 198, 201, 213, 236, 237, 238, 240
Magnus (Siggesson) Holk, 166
Magnus Eriksson, 110, 156
Magnus Gren, 37
Maren Bondesdotter, 36
Margaret, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 30, 34, 37, 41, 93, 227, 234, 273
Margaret Bondesdotter (Due), 34
Margareta (Paulsdotter) Laxmand, 128
Margareta Tordsdotter, 44, 144
Maximilian I, 31
Mechlenburg, 141
Merete Sivertsdotter Grubendal, 36
Mortimer, 26
Märta Bengstedt, 136
Märta Eriksdotter, 206
Märta Laurensdotter (Ulfeldt), 36
Märta Truedsdotter, 34, 35
Næs, 32, 38, 50, 121, 178, 243
Network, 48, 71, 72, 73, 77, 79, 117, 118, 158
Neville, 13, 28, 30, 46, 50, 61, 87, 106, 107, 112, 113, 147, 153, 174
Nils Bosson, 196
Nils Erengislesson (Gädda), 196
Nils Jensen (Galen), 40, 45
Nils of Tofta (Sparre of Tofta), 206
Nils Sture (Natt och Dag), 133, 144
Nils Åkesen (Kyrning), 32
Norfolk and Hertfordshire, 47
Normandy, 25, 46, 47
Norrå Asum, 39, 40, 45
Norway, 20, 21, 23, 25, 28, 30, 44, 49, 50, 55, 58, 135, 136, 188, 230
Novgorod, 57
Nyköping, 122, 128, 130, 134, 137, 144, 166, 196, 237, 238
Odense, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 144
Olaus Petri, 202
Oldenburg, 28, 155
Olof Axelsson, 36, 37, 57, 124, 127, 130, 138, 159, 175
Olof Hindersson, 231
Olof Olsson, 40, 181
Olof Stigsen, 46
Ordruz, 40
Otte Torbjörnsson, 59, 214, 216, 217
Owen Tudor, 25
Oxenstierna, 28, 33, 129, 130, 132, 133, 196
patron, 31, 40, 86, 89, 90, 97, 108, 112, 113, 114, 118, 124, 145, 179, 185, 189, 194
patronage, 47, 50, 112, 113, 114, 115, 119, 178
Peder Axelsen, 32, 36, 39
Peder Axelsson, 39, 40, 41, 50, 123, 124, 221, 248, 251, 252, 253, 254
Peder Nielsen, 32, 34, 38, 46, 47, 121, 184
Peder Nielsen of Agaard, 46
Peder Oxe, 20
Per Brahe, 183
Per Brun, 178
Peter Friis, 47
Peter Staffansson (Tjurhuvud), 168
Philip Axelsson, 125, 126, 127, 184, 221, 249, 254
political culture, 52, 56, 67, 78, 79, 80, 83, 85, 87, 92, 94, 97, 98, 103, 104, 106, 108, 115
Pomerania, 28, 44, 141, 142
Pope Pius II, 124
Princess Philippa, 25, 37
Prussia, 122, 130, 141, 225, 229
Queen Catherine, 131, 230
Queen Christina, 179
Queen Margaret, 12, 13, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 28, 94, 218, 223
Raby-Middleham, 62
Ralph Neville, 46, 50, 81, 111, 163
Ramborg Gustavsdotter (Sparre of Hjulsta and Ångsö), 157, 173, 185, 240
Raseborg, 132, 190, 191, 192, 211, 215, 231
regimen politicum, 22
regimen regale, 22
Renaissance, 68
res publica, 26, 81, 98, 99, 100, 104
Rex Justus, 23
Richard III, 174
Ronneby, 45, 194
Roskilde Cathedral, 40
Rota Fortunae, 11
Scandinavia, 13, 20, 23, 26, 30, 31, 48, 49, 52, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 78, 80, 81, 84, 88, 89, 94, 95, 98, 129, 147, 155, 156, 171, 179, 182, 184, 200, 270
Scania, 30, 39, 44, 46, 60, 112, 119, 137, 141, 174, 180, 184, 191
Scotland, 19, 84, 107, 265, 270
Sir John Fortescue, 100, 101, 103, 104, 105
Sjörup-Krageholm, 33, 36, 50
Skåne, 12, 35, 41, 44, 45, 46, 138, 141, 142, 179, 184, 192, 194, 215, 253, 254, 257
Småland, 39, 141, 173, 183, 184, 225
Sophia Brahe, 36
Spain, 63
Sparre of Ellinge, 39
St George, 139, 188
St. Birgitta, 55, 86, 207
St. Gertrud’s Chapel, 40, 60
Stegeborg, 120, 140, 143, 172, 173, 181, 185, 188, 189, 194, 240, 241, 262
Structural-Functionalism, 72
Svante Nilsson, 28, 125, 143, 144, 188
Sweden, 20, 23, 24, 25, 28, 44, 46, 48, 49, 55, 56, 57, 60, 64, 78, 84, 95, 112, 114, 118, 119, 121, 122, 128, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 137, 140, 141, 143, 144, 147, 149, 157, 158, 159, 163, 164, 167, 168, 170, 171, 175, 180, 182, 184, 188, 192, 202, 204, 205, 206, 207, 209, 211, 212, 215, 216, 226, 227, 228, 230, 238, 240, 267, 272
Sölvesborg, 45, 46, 192, 194
Tavastehus, 58, 132, 190, 191
Teutonic Order, 24, 56, 57, 126, 215
the Coronation Charter, 47
The Divine Comedy, 68
The Liber Daticus, 31
the Netherlands, 63
Thord Tott, 31
Thula Monument, 32
Torkild Nielsen of Gladsax (Bing), 40
ranekær Castle, 125, 127
Tre rosor, 186, 240
Trotte Karlsson (Eka), 203
Trued Has, 36, 37
Truid Pedersen (Galen), 38, 184
Truid Truidsen., 39
Tue Nielsen (Juul), 39
Täckhammar, 129, 168, 195, 196
Ulf Abjörnsson, 207
Union Letter, 22, 23, 24, 27, 30, 47, 52, 226
Vadstena, 133, 169, 173, 177, 193, 204, 231
Valdemar, 21, 31
Vallø, 159, 160, 162, 164, 165, 166, 168, 169
Walter Skirlaw, 154
War of the.Roses, 50
Warwick, 13, 28, 107, 108, 147
Vasa, 28, 33, 129, 130, 132, 168, 192, 203
Westmorland, 30, 81, 111, 154
Viborg, 57, 108, 132, 190, 191, 195, 196, 215
Villands, 39, 42, 45, 184
Wirtenburg, 44
Visborg, 37, 127, 138, 139, 140, 143, 145, 178, 182, 190, 203
with Görvel Eriksdotter, 186
Vä, 40, 45, 46
Västra Sallerup, 39
York, 28, 47, 50, 111, 272
Ystad, 32
Åbo, 132, 209, 231
Åke Nielsen, 32
Åke Thott, 31
Årsta Commandry, 57, 215
Älvsborg, 214, 217
Öland, 130, 160, 175, 191, 194, 230, 231
Örup, 43
Österhaninge, 57
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