

'King of Sweden, the Götar and the Wends'...
What about the Finns?: Investigating
Finland's absence from Swedish royal
titulature in medieval and Early Modern
Sweden



Caroline Wilhelmsson
University of Aberdeen

Abstract: This article is about Swedish royal titulature and Finland's absence from it. It is concerned with understanding why Finland, which was officially integrated into the Swedish kingdom in the thirteenth century, was never acknowledged in the short form of the Swedish royal title although others were, despite not being officially Swedish subjects. The article looks at the development of early medieval royal titles, including their meaning, and the context of their introduction and use. It then proposes several theories to try and address Finland's lack of representation. These hypotheses require an investigation of alternative historical definitions of some of the ethnonyms used in royal titulature, and reevaluate our understanding of Finland's relationship with Sweden in the medieval and Early Modern periods. The study concludes that while a definite answer cannot be given, Finland's native population might have been eclipsed from public view by the cultural Swedish elite. In addition, a historically negative reputation may have encouraged its exclusion from royal honours. It is also possible that Finland was included under a different terminology born out of the Early Modern Period's reinterpretation of the past. Finally, evidence points to Finland being treated as its own entity separate from the rest of the kingdom.

1. INTRODUCTION

Upon his accession to the throne in 1973, the current Swedish monarch, Carl XVI Gustaf, altered his official title to become known only as 'King of Sweden'.¹ Until then, the monarch's official, shortened title had traditionally been '(By God's grace) King of Sweden, the Götar and the Wends'.² Unsurprisingly, royal titles in Sweden have not always been the same throughout the centuries. Prior to the fourteenth century, for instance, the title read 'King of the Svear' instead of 'King of Sweden'. Similarly, the Götar were not always mentioned in the title. These developments, which will be explained in this article, are a reflection of the shifting political situation and ambitions of the various leaders who succeeded each other throughout the kingdom's history. But one constant characteristic of Swedish royal titles is that they almost never included Finland or the Finns, despite their inclusion within Sweden for six hundred years. Nevertheless, there were religious and administrative positions relating to Finland held by people other than the king. It is not these positions which are the main focus of this article (although they will be briefly mentioned), but the king's relationship with Finland as evidenced by his titles. As I shall explain in the course of this essay, kings often had many titles reflecting their possessions and claims. These titles were usually too long to be used conveniently on a daily basis. Thus, a shortened form of royal titulature would be used, focusing on the credentials considered most essential. Finland never made it into the shortened form of Swedish royal titulature.

The purpose of this article is to try and understand why regional populations such as the Svear, the Götar, or the seemingly anecdotal Wends, were singled out in royal honours while Finland, an integral part of the kingdom, was to a large extent ignored. Swedish royal titulature included many other titles which cannot be studied

¹ Stefan Donecker and Roland Steinacher, 'Der König der Schweden, Goten und Vandalen. Königstitulatur und Vandalenrezeption im frühneuzeitlichen Schweden', in *Vergangenheit und Vergegenwärtigung Frühes Mittelalter und europäische Erinnerungskultur*, ed. by Helmut Reimitz and Bernhard Zeller (Vienna: Der Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), pp. 169–204 (p. 169).

² In Swedish, the Wends are called *Vender*, but I will use the anglicised form in order to avoid any confusion with another population group with a similar name, the *Vends*. Conversely, I will retain the term *Svear* so as to avoid confusion with the modern term for all Swedish people, *Swedes*.

in the present article but Finland, being Sweden's oldest dominion, is of particular interest. There is some literature concerning the Swedes' perception of the Finns in law and daily life, although it remains a rather niche subject. Two pieces of scholarship are particularly relevant to this paper. Firstly, Marko Lamberg's article 'Perceptions of Finns and Ethnic Boundaries in Sweden during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era', which provides an overview of the dynamic between the conquerors and their new subjects. It notably underlines the duality of Sweden's treatment of the Finns: equal in law, inferior in life. Secondly, Torbjörn Eng's PhD thesis, *Det Svenska Väldet: ett konglomerat av uttrycksformer och begrepp från Vasa till Bernadotte* [Swedish forms of Dominion: A conglomerate of Expressions and Concepts from Vasa to Bernadotte], addresses the construction and use of royal titles as political tool in Sweden. Eng's timeline is, however, slightly different, his study mainly covering a later period than the present article. It is also not directly concerned with Finland. The current paper therefore aims to combine Lamberg's ideas with Eng's approach.

I will firstly present a brief timeline of the evolution of Swedish royal titles with an emphasis on their beginnings in the medieval period. I will then discuss whether the meaning of 'Svear' might have been extended to them in a case of political assimilation. In turn, this will allow me to question whether negative attitudes towards the inhabitants of Finland may have contributed to their effacement from public view. Subsequently, I will focus on an alternative theory equating the Wends and the Finnish people. Lastly, I will show that Finland may have historically been treated as separate from the rest of the kingdom and therefore may not always have fallen under direct royal authority. The article will conclude that the design and use of royal titles in relation with Finland evidences a historically ambiguous relationship between the king of Sweden and his subjects, which underlines Finland's relative autonomy within the realm.

2. A TIMELINE OF SWEDISH ROYAL TITLES

a. 'King of the Svear'

The title assumed by Swedish leaders changed throughout the years. An infamous hindrance in the study of Swedish history is the near total lack of primary sources until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Therefore, while Rimbert's *Life of Saint Ansgar* suggests that the title was already used in the ninth century, there may have been kings calling themselves 'King of the Svear' earlier than this.³ The first king for which there is concrete evidence is Olof Skötkonung who reigned from the late tenth to early eleventh century.⁴ At that time, Sweden was an elusive concept which was by no means as clearly defined as it is today. Instead, the different regions which now constitute Sweden were essentially independent from each other. Despite the historical influence of Svealand with Uppland at its core, Östergötland and Västergötland were essentially autonomous kingdoms of their own.⁵ Areas such as modern-day Småland and Jämtland may have functioned as peasant republics, while Götaland kept an ambiguous status until the seventeenth century.⁶ The earliest coins that Olof struck in the 990s (the first king to do so) were inscribed with *SITUN*, *SIDEI*, and similar expressions, referring only to Sigtuna.⁷ The first written mention of Sigtuna is found on these coins.⁸ Soon after, as evidenced by later coins, Olof began calling himself *Rex Sœvorum*.⁹ Sigtuna was a Christian town situated in the region of Uppland, which was itself still mostly pagan.¹⁰ But the slightly wider scope allowed

³ Olof Sundqvist, *An Arena for Higher Powers: Ceremonial buildings and religious strategies for rulership in Late Iron Age Scandinavia* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 40–2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 44–5.

⁵ Thomas Lindkvist, 'Kings and Provinces in Sweden', in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia vol. 1: Prehistory to 1520*, ed. by Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 221–234 (pp. 221–5).

⁶ Philip Line, *Kingship and State Formation in Sweden: 1130–1290* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 58–61.

⁷ Lennart Castenhag, 'Olof Skötkonungs sigtunapenningar från ca 995 – Sveriges första mynt?' (Swedish Numismatic Society, 2018) <<https://numismatik.se/2artiklar/Sigtunapenningar-995-1030/SP.php>> [accessed 26 April 2020].

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Sundqvist, *An Arena for Higher Powers*, p. 45.

¹⁰ Birgit Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia from Conversion to Reformation, ca. 800–1500* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993), p. 104.

by the substitution of Sigtuna with the Svear suggests that Olof's sphere of influence (or ambitions) might have grown with time. Nevertheless, the extent of his true power remains a source of debate.¹¹ It is known that Olof had to retreat to Götaland as his Christian faith prevented him from exerting any real authority over the people of Uppland.¹² This was notably recounted by the German chronicler Adam of Bremen during the late eleventh century, in his *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*.¹³ In any case, there is no direct evidence that Olof used the title of 'King of the Svear and the Götar' himself during his reign. It is possible, however, that the term *Svear* may have referred to both the Svear and the Götar since Svealand had historically been seen as the heart of what would become the Swedish kingdom. It is certainly how Adam uses the term. Indeed, as part of his description of Sweden, he carefully lists different regional populations, including the Götar (whom he calls Goths), and sums them up as being part of the Svear.¹⁴ This was common in ecclesiastical writings, but the fact that later kings felt the need to refine their title to include the Götar suggests that this conflation may not have been systematic.

b. 'King of the Svear and the Götar'

In fact, the title of 'King of the Götar' and similar constructions existed in parallel to the title 'King of the Svear'. It is less often documented, but examples include a papal letter from 1159 addressed to Karl Sverkersson, *gothorum regi*, which was used as a stand-alone title apparently encompassing the whole of Götaland.¹⁵ An earlier letter, from 1080, is specifically addressed to *Visigothorum regibus*, the kings of the Visigoths reigning in Västergötland.¹⁶ Interestingly, however, Karl Sverkersson, who in 1159 was known as 'King of the Götar', was referred to as *regis sweorum et gothorum* by the

¹¹ Line, *Kingship and State*, p. 51.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg–Bremen*, trans. by Francis Tschann (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

¹⁴ Adam of Bremen, pp. 204–6.

¹⁵ Svensk Diplomatariums huvudkartotek (SDHK) nr: 44724.

¹⁶ SDHK nr: 169.

pope in 1164, thus being the first ruler formally titled so in writing.¹⁷ In the five years between these two letters, serious political events happened in which the Pope played an important role:¹⁸ Karl's rivals Erik and then Magnus, who had claimed Svealand, were defeated, allowing Karl to claim authority over their lands. In addition, it was decided that a new archdiocese would be created catering to Sweden, with Uppsala chosen as its see. It is thus likely that the Church encouraged the union of the Svear and the Götar to facilitate its own expansion across the realm.¹⁹

It is not before the late thirteenth century that the Svear and the Götar were routinely used together as part of the royal title. The first leader to succeed in exerting direct and lasting influence over all regions of the realm was Birger Jarl. Earlier kings had enjoyed varying levels of success in the same endeavour, but the history of Sweden as a kingdom arguably starts with Birger.²⁰ Indeed, by crushing local rebellions and forming an alliance with the Church in 1248 at the synod in Skänninge (a meeting attended by papal legates, Swedish bishops, Birger Jarl, and other dignitaries), the Jarl effectively created the Kingdom of Sweden and consolidated its borders, its definition and its administration.²¹ It is also during his rule that Finland was formally incorporated into Sweden. Finland, in the early Middle Ages, did not exist as a clearly defined political entity. It was a sparsely populated area, comprising loosely organised Finnic farming groups in the south, and mostly nomadic Sámi populations in the north.²² There is no evidence for the existence of a state or overarching kingdom encompassing these different peoples at any point during the medieval period which, I suggest, may have made Birger Jarl's conquest of their territories easier. But Birger Jarl, whilst he held power, was never king. His son

¹⁷ SDHK nr: 202.

¹⁸ Nils Blomkvist, Stefan Brink and Thomas Lindkvist, 'The kingdom of Sweden', in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c.900–1200*, ed. by Nora Berend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 167–213 (p. 200).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Line, *Kingship and State*, p. 51.

²¹ Lindkvist, 'Kings and Provinces', pp. 226–30.

²² Joonas Ahola and Frog, 'Approaching the Viking Age in Finland' in *Fibula, Fabula, Fact: The Viking Age in Finland*, ed. by Joonas Ahola and Frog with Clive Tolley (Helsinki: SKS, 2014), pp. 21–84 (p. 55–60).

Magnus Ladulås, however, was elected king in 1275. He was the first king to commonly use the title of *Sveorum gothorumque Rex*.²³

c. 'King of Sweden, the Götar, and the Wends'

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, 'Sweden' replaced 'the Svear' in royal titulature.²⁴ Magnus Eriksson was the first to enact the change. This followed a similar trend in continental Europe, whereby ethnic titles were transformed into territorial ones during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The *Rex Francorum* ['King of the Franks'] became *Rex Franciae* ['King of France'], the *Rex Anglorum* ['King of the Angles'] became *Rex Angliae* ['King of England'], etc. These changes followed the consolidation of power in these newly centralised states.²⁵ The change in titulature in Sweden happened in a similar context, during the reign of the first king to enact a kingdom-wide law. Until then, provincial laws had prevailed. The late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries saw the greatest developments in state formation in Sweden.²⁶ Eng also points out that, during Magnus Eriksson's reign, the use of 'Götar' as part of the title sharply decreased.²⁷ Of course, they were now understood to be part of Sweden. However, the 'Götar' were swiftly reinstated by the next regents, in what Eng argues was a propagandistic reminder of Sweden's ties to ancient and prestigious Germanic tribes.²⁸ Interestingly, the 'Götar' element was kept as it had been previously, an ethnic title, and was never transformed into a territorial one ('Götarike' or 'Götaland').²⁹ The reasons for this are unclear, although the intent was probably to avoid giving the impression of territorial division and to focus solely on the lineage.

The Wendish component came in much later. The ethnonym 'Wends' has always referred to Slavic populations, but depending on the author and time period,

²³ SDHK nr: 1071; 1096; 1107; 1124 etc.

²⁴ Torbjörn Eng, *Det Svenska Väldet: ett konglomerat av uttrycksformer och begrepp från Vasa till Bernadotte* (Lund: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2001), p. 88.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

²⁶ See Philip Line, *Kingship and State*.

²⁷ Eng, *Det Svenska Väldet*, p. 88.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

it could denote a wide variety of people.³⁰ Ever since Tacitus wrote about the Wends, the term has been clouded in mystery. Different interpretations of it have surfaced throughout the centuries. The Wends have at times been thought of as living in the southern Baltic regions, in Finland, or even further south in continental Europe.³¹ Nineteenth-century linguists saw a connection between the modern Finnish word for Russia, *Venäjä*, and the Wends or one of their sub-branches, the Veneti. The theory has yet to be convincingly rebuked.³² Some scholars, especially during the Early Modern period, considered the Wends to be identical with the Vandals, a Roman-era Germanic tribe that migrated from southern Scandinavia. The opinion of Early Modern historians on that theory was usually informed by their political agenda.³³ It was certainly a convenient association, allowing the Swedish king to claim authority over a wider range of southern Baltic people (the Wends), under the pretence that they had once come from Sweden (the Vandals).³⁴

However, in the context of medieval Scandinavian history, the name Wends/*Vender* was most often attributed to the populations inhabiting modern-day eastern Germany and Poland.³⁵ The term appears with this precise meaning throughout Old Norse literature.³⁶ The title of 'King of the Wends' had, therefore, initially nothing to do with Sweden. In fact, the first king to claim authority over the Wends was Canute VI of Denmark, who reigned between 1182 and 1202. He had just conquered Pomerania and Mecklenburg in present-day northern Germany and, therefore, assumed a new title to demonstrate this.³⁷ It was then part of Danish

³⁰ Rado Lencek, 'The Terms Wende–Winde, Wendisch–Windisch in the Historiographic Tradition of the Slovene Lands', *Slovene Studies Journal*, 12 (1990), 93–97.

³¹ Donecker and Steinacher, 'Der König der Schweden', pp. 169–77.

³² Vilhelm Ludvig Peter Thomsen, *The Relations Between Ancient Russia and Scandinavia, and the Origin of the Russian State: Three Lectures Delivered at the Taylor Institution. Oxford, in May, 1876* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 3.

³³ Donecker and Steinacher, 'Der König der Schweden', pp. 169–77.

³⁴ Eng, *Det Svenska Väldet*, pp. 101–3.

³⁵ Tinna Damgård–Sørensen, 'Danes and Wends: a study of the Danish attitude towards the Wends' in *People and Places in Northern Europe, 500–1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, ed. by Ian Wood and Niels Lund (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991), pp. 171–187 (171–81).

³⁶ *Danakonunga sögur: Skjöldunga saga, Knyttlinga saga, Agrip af sögu Danakonunga*, ed. by Bjarni Guðnason (Reykjavík: Fornritafel, 1982), pp. 93, 335. For many other examples, see index p. 197.

³⁷ Damgård–Sørensen, 'Danes and Wends', pp. 171–81.

monarchs' titulature until 1972. In Sweden, Gustav Vasa is usually considered to be the first to have appropriated the new title following the kingdom's breakaway from the Kalmar Union, which had united it with Norway and Denmark since 1397.³⁸ But, in fact, Karl Knutsson, who reigned at various times during the fifteenth century, was already known as 'King of the Wends' in addition to 'Sweden and the Geats', as attested in a notice of his death from 1470.³⁹ He did, however, reign in the context of the Kalmar Union and was therefore also King of Denmark, which explains the use of the title.⁴⁰ He also worked personally to form alliances with Poland and the Teutonic Order, thus adding weight to his use of the title.⁴¹ Vasa's revival of it was possibly both about claiming descent from an ancient, illustrious tribe, and about competing with the king of Denmark.⁴² Indeed, the latter had appropriated the title of 'King of the Götar', despite the Götar firmly belonging to Sweden. Vasa may have simply returned the favour by appropriating the Wends.⁴³ Anecdotally, we may note that Vasa's grandson, Sigismund III, was made king of Sweden in addition to being king of Poland in 1592. In his case, therefore, he truly was 'King of the Wends'. The union of both kingdoms did not, however, last long.⁴⁴

d. Bishop, *hertig*, and 'Grand Prince' of Finland

The absence of Finland from the royal titles does not mean that no title ever had any connection to Finland. Ever since the Church first identified Finland as a target for its Christianisation efforts, titles relating to it have been used. In the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, for instance, there were bishops of Finland. Very little is known about the earliest holders of the position. A papal letter from 1209 laments the

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ SDHK nr: 29110.

⁴⁰ Jens Olesen, 'Inter-Scandinavian Relations', in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. by Knut Helle, pp. 710–770 (pp. 743–53).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Donecker and Steinacher, 'Der König der Schweden', p. 169–70.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ For an overview of this brief period of Swedish history, see Stefan Östergren, *Sigismund: en biografi över den svensk-polske monarken* (Stockholm: KHF, 2005).

difficulty of finding volunteers for the assignment owing to the notorious fate suffered by previous candidates.⁴⁵ It is therefore more than likely that the first bishops had very little influence on the local population, if any at all, though they were the first bearers of a title exclusively relating to Finland. For the first hundred years of Christian presence in Finland, the bishop also functioned as a secular leader. Bishop Bero, who was in charge from 1248 to 1258, had influence on religious matters but was also credited in later sources with organising taxation in the region.⁴⁶

The progressive consolidation of centralised power in Sweden during the thirteenth century led to an administrative position, separate from the religious office, being created in order to manage Finland: *hertig av Finland*. The term *hertig* does not have a direct English equivalent, although it is cognate with German *herzog*, which is still a title today. Both *hertig* and *herzog* are usually translated as 'Duke'. The first holder of this new title was Bengt, Birger Jarl's son, who held it from 1284 to 1291.⁴⁷ It is unclear what the position entailed. It is also unclear how necessary it was. Indeed, between Bengt and his successor, there was a gap of eleven years during which it appears that no one held the title. In fact, only a handful of men spread over three centuries seem to have ever held the title of *hertig av Finland*.⁴⁸ It is possible that the notorious lack of medieval Swedish and Finnish sources may be depriving us of some information concerning potential additional holders; however, the fact that bishops were still active during this time and were well documented suggests that they might never have fully given up responsibility for the province. In fact, Bengt was offered the diocese of Linköping shortly after being named *hertig*, and served as its bishop from 1286 until his death.⁴⁹ What is interesting about the title of *hertig av Finland* is that

⁴⁵ SDHK nr: 321.

⁴⁶ 'Chronicon episcoporum Finlandensium', in *Scriptores rerum suecicarum vol. 3:2*, ed. by Claes Annerstedt (Uppsala: Edvardus Berling, 1876) <<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/Sweden/Abo/contents.html>> [accessed 28 April 2020].

⁴⁷ Line, *Kingship and State*, p. 136.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 185.

⁴⁹ SDHK nr: 1356.

the men holding these titles were not the king. They were, however, close relatives of the king. This can be interpreted in several ways.

Firstly, while the title of 'King of Sweden and the Götar' conveyed the idea that the monarch was directly in charge, delegating to less senior relatives could instead convey the impression that Finland was a periphery not considered prestigious enough to be the king's responsibility. This would not be surprising considering the systematically demeaning view taken of the Finns throughout the medieval period, which will be discussed at a later stage in this article. But there is also another possible explanation for the delegation of the dukedom of Finland to a royal relative: dynastic territorial partition. There are examples of this elsewhere in Europe, notably in medieval Hungary, where the king's brothers and other close kinsmen were routinely given a dukedom (often external territories conquered by Hungary) over which they essentially reigned as sovereigns themselves.⁵⁰ This arrangement was very similar to that existing between the king of Sweden and the duke of Finland. In fact, Croatia, which was taken over by Hungary in 1091, retained its local nobility and for many purposes its own government, meaning that the takeover remained peaceful for several centuries.⁵¹ It is possible that a similar situation prevailed in Finland; there is no evidence to suggest the contrary. In Hungary, partitioning the land was probably a way of ensuring stable successions, although the exact origins of the practice remain unclear.⁵² Indeed, by installing rulers from the same dynasty in all corners of the kingdom, the Hungarian king could make sure that power would not fall into the hands of another family. However, while parallels between the dukedom of Finland and the Hungarian dukedoms are plentiful, there is a major difference between them. On the one hand, the territories taken over by Hungary had been kingdoms in their own right, centralised and organised with their own reigning dynasties. There was, therefore, a real risk that these dynasties may rebel to regain their sovereignty.

⁵⁰ Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526*, trans. by Tamás Pálosfalvi (London: I.B Tauris, 2001), pp. 30–5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 35–6.

⁵² Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, pp. 30–1.

Finland, on the other hand, had never been united before. The Swedish king would therefore not have needed to keep it from native royal families. In conclusion, it is impossible to say with any certainty why the king of Sweden delegated Finland to his kinsmen, although there may be both cultural and strategic reasons for this.

From the sixteenth century onward, it must be acknowledged that Finland did feature more prominently in royal titulature. King Johan III was the first, somewhere between 1577 and 1581, to call himself 'Grand Prince [*storfurste*] of Finland'.⁵³ He had first held the title of *hertig*, given to him by his father Gustav Vasa.⁵⁴ During his stint as *hertig*, Johan certainly seems to have been more invested in his estate than his medieval predecessors. He settled in Turku where he turned the ducal court into one of the most refined of northern Europe.⁵⁵ Under his lead, Finland became a culturally and politically prominent part of Sweden. Acting as a truly independent leader, he was sometimes at odds with official Swedish policy, which eventually led to his brother King Erik jailing him and stripping him of his titles in 1563.⁵⁶ After Johan's eventual accession to the throne in 1568, it became habitual for Swedish monarchs to assume a title related to Finland. This was most often that of 'Grand Prince of Finland' following the example of the traditional Russian use of similar titles both by the tsar himself and other senior members of the royal family.⁵⁷

Kings often have numerous titles and honours. They may belong to military orders or hold local distinctions. This is true of many modern monarchs as well. Until the Vasa dynasty, Swedish kings had held relatively simple and straightforward titles. But as the realm and later empire grew, titles were used to assert authority over an

⁵³ Lena Huldén, 'Johan III' in *Biografiskt lexikon för Finland 1. Svenska tiden*, ed. by Henrik Knif and Fredrik Hertzberg (Helsinki: Atlantis, 2008) <<http://www.blf.fi/artikel.php?id=313>> [accessed 28 April 2020].

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ For a history of the title of Grand Prince in Russia, see Mikhail Raev, 'The emergence of the title *velikii kniaz'* in Rus' and the *Povest' Vremennykh let'*, *Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog instituta* 51 (2004) 47–69 (p. 51). For a study of the implications of the use of such a title in various diplomatic situations during the Early Modern era, see Jan Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe: Ritual and the Culture of Diplomacy, 1648–1725* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

ever-larger number of areas. On his coronation day, the fifteenth of March 1607, Karl IX (Johan's younger brother), for instance, held the titles of 'Sveriges, Götes, Venders, Finnars, Karelers, Lappars i Norrlanden, de Kajaners, och Esters i Livland, etc. Konung'.⁵⁸ The 'etc.' is especially telling as it suggests that the list may be longer, even if it officially was not. Such a long title would have been reserved for formal occasions only. It would have appeared on very important letters sent to foreign dignitaries, and diplomatic events. On a more casual basis, however, a shorter title would have been used. Karl IX's coins only read inscriptions such as 'CAROLVS IX D[ei] G[ratia] SVECORVM GOTHORVM VANDALORUM ETC REX'.⁵⁹ A letter written to the German community living in Stockholm in January 1607 omits royal honours, instead using his local titles of 'Duke of Södermannland, Närke and Wärmland'.⁶⁰ Of course, the king had not been crowned yet, which may explain this choice, but he had been reigning for several years already and therefore a royal or regent title could have been expected. Indeed, he had already used royal titlature on his coins long before his coronation ceremony.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the letter shows that a king could use different titles depending on the occasion. In a break with tradition, Karl IX did mention the Finns as such, rather than simply Finland, as part of his title alongside other peoples over which he claimed authority.⁶² He also did away with the title of Grand Prince, and simply listed the Finns alongside his other subjects. The changes were applied to all other titles too. Instead of referring to Karelia, he listed the Karelians, instead of Lappland, the 'Lapps in the northern lands', and so on.⁶³

In his study of royal titlature, Eng discusses Karl IX's choices. He proposes that Karl's titlature may have been a reflection of the political situation following the

⁵⁸ Sofia Ruhne, *Bilden som budskap: myntningen i Sverige 1568–1611* (Stockholm: Stockholm Universitets Historiska Institutionen, 2004), pp. 26–7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ 'Karl IX:s stadsfästelsebrev till Stockholms tyska församling 1607' <<https://stockholmskallan.stockholm.se/post/27985>> [accessed 29 April 2020].

⁶¹ Ruhne, *Bilden som budskap*, pp. 25–26.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 26–7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Treaty of Teusina struck in 1595 between Sweden and Russia.⁶⁴ This treaty was drawn up following the Old Livonian (1558–1583) and Russo-Swedish (1590–1595) wars, which saw Sweden and Russia compete for expansion.⁶⁵ The new peace treaty required future kings of Sweden to renounce a number of titles previously held by Johan III.⁶⁶ The Russians were also made to relinquish several territories, thus re-establishing the borders as they were prior to the conflict.⁶⁷ Eng's argument suggests that Karl IX may have therefore tried to maintain some claim over as many populations as possible without risking a diplomatic rift. Eng also presents other possible explanations for Karl's titulature, one of which is the natural continuation of the new diplomatic circumstances I just discussed. Karl IX may have tried to shift the focus from territories, which were now more strictly regulated following the treaty, to the people who inhabited these lands.⁶⁸ Claiming sovereignty over people rather than lands, which of course could not move around as populations could, effectively allowed Karl to claim authority over these subjects while bypassing the limitations imposed by the treaty. In theory, should the land be taken over by the enemy, its people would remain the Swedish king's subjects. Had it been realistic, this would of course have been extremely advantageous.

In addition, Andrew Gillett points out that, in the case of early Germanic kingdoms such as those of the Franks and the Lombards, the insistence on specific peoples in royal titles was not only intended to assert the king's power over them, but was in fact a means to convey unity among them. Indeed, Gillett explains that the Merovingian Lombardic and Frankish territories were divided within sub-regions which in some cases were nearly independent and competed against each other.⁶⁹ Lumping together an entire group based on their ethnicity despite political divisions

⁶⁴ Eng, *Det Svenska Väldet*, pp. 161–2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁶⁹ Andrew Gillett, 'Was Ethnicity Politicized in the Earliest Medieval Kingdoms?', in *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Andrew Gillett (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), pp. 85–122 (p. 115).

could have therefore been used as a diplomatic tool to force peace.⁷⁰ Based on this example, it can be suggested that Karl IX's change of titulature was therefore a reflection of the political landscape of his time rather than an indication of his own attitudes towards Finland. It is worth noting that, despite the apparent success of Johan's stint as ruler of Finland, Eng also questions the extent to which the Vasa dynasty truly held authority over Finland, or to what extent the public had confidence in this authority. Years of wars against the Russians, the resurgence of paganism in pockets of Finland, and the refusal by some Swedish troops to fight on the Finnish front, may have eroded public faith in Sweden's ability to handle the area.⁷¹ Thus, Karl IX's titulature may have listed the Finns alongside all other subjects, rather than as a separate dukedom, to emphasise a sense of unity which had been lacking until then.

Lastly, Gillett also reminds us that there is little evidence that royal titles as presented in surviving sources, which were often written by third parties, were routinely used by the kings themselves.⁷² Karl IX's use of an ethnic title for the Finns (among other peoples) might therefore have been exceptional even during his reign – further research into contemporary charters will be needed to determine this. A degree of personal preference should also always be accounted for,⁷³ meaning that there is perhaps less to read into his title than previously thought.

In any case, neither Finland nor the Finns were ever made part of the shortened form of the Swedish royal title. In addition, listing the Finns as a people rather than Finland both originated and ceased with Karl IX and, while his successors kept occasional use of 'Grand Prince', they only used it during formal occasions. It ultimately stopped being used altogether in the eighteenth century. It was briefly recreated for the infant son of Gustav IV Adolf; however, he died early and Sweden subsequently lost Finland in 1809.⁷⁴ The question therefore remains as to why Finland

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Eng, *Det Svenska Väldet*, pp. 138–9.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁷³ Ruhne, *Bilden som budskap*, pp. 26–7.

⁷⁴ Eng, *Det Svenska Väldet*, pp. 221–3.

was never given the same rank as other regions, and why ceremonial titles attached to it were never ostensibly or consistently used.

3. POSSIBLE REASONS FOR THE EFFACEMENT OF THE FINNS

a. The Finns hidden behind the Swedish majority

Lamberg has argued that, in a legal context, the Finns were understood to be Swedish and therefore did not need to be singled out.⁷⁵ The idea that the Finns were generally seen as Swedish is also supported by the fact that a significant part of Finland's population were immigrants from central Sweden.⁷⁶ As mentioned above, we know that Viking Age and medieval Finland was sparsely populated, and there is no indication that this region was centrally administered.⁷⁷ Following the Swedish takeover of Finland, there was a sizable influx of new arrivals. Over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, many people crossed the Gulf of Bothnia from Sweden into Finland in search for more land and, possibly, hoping to escape growing taxes.⁷⁸ Many of these people may have come from Hälsingland, which led to many place-names in southern Finland to reflect that origin: Helsingfors, better known as Helsinki, is a prime example of those immigrants' toponymical impact on the region.⁷⁹ Taxes, infrastructure, town building, and major economic developments were all orchestrated by the Swedish authorities,⁸⁰ in line with the wider processes of state formation and Europeanisation witnessed in Sweden during the same period.⁸¹ Thus, there easily could have been a conflation between the ideas of coming from Finland and being Swedish.

It must also be noted that the local population seems not to have fought off their Scandinavian neighbours. The incorporation of Finland into the Swedish kingdom

⁷⁵ Marko Lamberg, 'Perceptions of Finns and Ethnic Boundaries in Sweden during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era', *NORDEUROPAforum Zeitschrift für Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur*, 14 (2004), 3–23 (pp. 4–5).

⁷⁶ John Westerholm, 'Populating Finland', *Fennia*, 180 (2002), 123–140 (pp. 128–30).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ 'Svenska Ortnamn i Finland' (Helsinki: Institutet för de inhemska språken, 2012) <<http://kaino.kotus.fi/svenskaortnamn/>> [accessed 27 April 2020].

⁸⁰ Kirby, pp. 38–9.

⁸¹ Line, *Kingship and State*, pp. 420–62.

was remarkably peaceful. There had been some crusades into Finland in order to Christianise the remaining pagans there during the first half of thirteenth century, and possibly as early as the twelfth century, but the overall conquest was quite uneventful.⁸² There is no evidence, for instance, of large-scale rebellions as had been seen in Uppland in the mid-thirteenth century. Of course, all sources concerning medieval Finland come from Sweden and may therefore be biased. Yet, fourteenth-century laws seem to suggest that the Finns were well-respected, at least in theory, and were given the same rights as ethnic Swedes.⁸³ The assimilation might therefore have been rather smooth. In support of this theory, a letter from Birger Jarl dated to 1250 may be used: it clearly states that whoever settled in the kingdom of Sweden (including Finland) would have to follow Swedish laws and would be called a 'Swede'.⁸⁴ The fact that later chronicles credited Bero, a contemporary of Birger Jarl, with introducing taxes in Finland has already been noted. Furthermore, taxation records from the sixteenth century indirectly point to a taxation system linked to the Crown already being in place in the thirteenth century.⁸⁵ This is evidence that Swedish systems of governance were already in effect in Finland and that the local population was expected to follow the kingdom's laws. This, coupled with the fact that a large part of Finland's population directly came from Sweden, help explain the conflation.

b. Negative views of the Finns

In parallel, it is possible that the king did not want to emphasise this association. There was perhaps a reluctance to fully acknowledge his new subjects. Indeed, we know that the Finns were routinely seen as uncultured and brutal, which was a common medieval attitude to most populations living on the periphery of established kingdoms. Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis* is an excellent example of the

⁸² Lamberg, 'Perceptions of Finns', p. 5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸⁴ SDHK nr: 629.

⁸⁵ Tapani Tuovinen, 'The Finnish Archipelago Coast from AD 500 to 1550 – a Zone of Interaction', *Iskos*, 19 (2011), 10–60 (p. 41).

systematically negative treatment of peripheral groups. As far back as Tacitus, who describes what he calls the Fennians as 'living in wonderful savageness', learned men despised the populations of modern-day Finland.⁸⁶ In Adam of Bremen's *Gesta*, Finland is consistently depicted in a negative light. Its inhabitants are said to be 'barbarians and savage',⁸⁷ and later marginalia points out their use of poison as murder method, thus underlining their treacherous character.⁸⁸ Medieval popes and higher clergy also routinely complained about Finland and its perceived lack of religious zeal.⁸⁹

The Finns' representations in narrative work also did not escape the stereotypes and many scholars such as Else Mundal or Jeremy DeAngelo have written about their depiction in the sagas.⁹⁰ *Heimskringla* is full of references to Finnish people – although in most cases it is unclear whether the author meant Finnic or Sámi populations.⁹¹ It is hard to distinguish between historical fact, myth and fiction in *Heimskringla* because it was written several centuries after the events it aims to depict. This means that its treatment of Finnish people(s) should be read not as reflection of Viking Age attitudes but as a reflection of a thirteenth-century Christian Icelandic author's views.⁹² However, in many cases *Heimskringla's* depiction of Finnish people is similar to that of Adam of Bremen, with an emphasis on their alleged treacherous behaviour through the practice of magic. Sámi women, in particular, are often blamed for manipulating Norse men through magic.⁹³ Sámi warriors are accused of cheating in battle by

⁸⁶ Tacitus, *The Germania and the Agricola: The Oxford Translation Revised, with Notes*, intro. by Edward Brookes (2013), p. 46 <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/7524/7524-h/7524-h.htm>> [accessed 25 April 2020].

⁸⁷ Adam of Bremen, p. 200.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Lamberg, 'Perceptions of Finns', p. 5. For examples, see SDHK nr: 321, 514, 207 etc.

⁹⁰ Else Mundal, 'The perception of the Saamis and their religion in Old Norse sources', in *Shamanism and Northern Ecology*, ed. by Juha Pentikäinen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996), pp. 97–116. See also Jeremy DeAngelo, 'The North and the Depiction of the "Finnar" in the Icelandic Sagas', *Scandinavian Studies*, 82 (2010) 257–286.

⁹¹ DeAngelo, 'The North', pp. 262–3.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 257.

⁹³ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla (vol. I)*, trans. and ed. by Anthony Faulkes and Alison Finlay (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2011), pp. 72–3.

manipulating the weather.⁹⁴ Other examples abound. This emphasis put on magic, nearly always used for evil purposes (from a Norse perspective), helped the author underline the otherness of the Finnish people.⁹⁵

Negative attitudes towards the Finns are also obvious in later (and better documented) times. A literary drama released in 1647, *Alle Bedlegrannas Spegel*, tells the story of an innocent maiden marrying a cruel and brutal Finnish man who eventually murders her and runs away to Finland in order to escape the authorities in Sweden.⁹⁶ Since such ideas of Finnish people as brutal, violent and uncivilised seem to have persisted over the centuries, it is possible that the king expressed their lower status through his title.

c. The Wends as Finns

It has been suggested that the Finns may have been what Vasa had in mind when he added the Wends to his titlature.⁹⁷ Eng has pointed out that the typical Latin term for the Finns, *finnis*, was usually used in the Early Modern period to specifically denote the Sámi (rather than all inhabitants of Finland), and Vasa may not have wanted to be associated with them.⁹⁸ He would have thus needed another term to refer to the inhabitants of Finland outside of the Sámi. The ethnonym 'Wends' may have provided him with a reasonable alternative. Indeed, there exists an alternative interpretation of the name Wends. It was particularly popular in Early Modern Sweden, at a time when the nation was rewriting its own ancestry by reinterpreting (and sometimes inventing) its ties to ancient Germanic tribes. Critics of this fundamentally flawed approach to history, such as Olaus Petri, were silenced by royal order.⁹⁹ Because the ethnonym itself has been used to mean different populations

⁹⁴ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla (vol. II)*, trans. and ed. by Anthony Faulkes and Alison Finlay (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2014), pp. 256–7.

⁹⁵ DeAngelo, 'The North', pp. 258–60.

⁹⁶ Lamberg, 'Perceptions of Finns', p. 3.

⁹⁷ Donecker and Steinacher, 'Der König der Schweden', pp. 180–1.

⁹⁸ Eng, *Det Svenska Völdet*, p. 94.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

from different regions throughout times, there is indeed room for interpretation.¹⁰⁰ While most medieval sources reserve the name 'Wends' for the Slavic populations in the southern parts of the Baltic region, there have been instances in history where the Wends were connected to the Finns. Ptolemy, for instance, described them as living much closer to what he called the Finns than is alleged in most later sources.¹⁰¹ But it is in the post-medieval period that the connection between Wends and Finns strengthens. Among other documents, a map from 1482 places *Venthelant* somewhere around northern Sweden.¹⁰² Martin Waldseemüller's map from 1516 presents an area called *Ventheland* of which the main towns are listed as Oburgis (Åbo) and Viburgis (Vyborg).¹⁰³ Of course, these were well-known Finnish towns. The map provides unreliable information, however, with some of its illustrations intended to depict Scandinavia mixed up with those from Asia.¹⁰⁴ It is, therefore, possible that this *Ventheland* might be misplaced. It was also common for Early Modern maps to refer to the Gulf of Finland as *sinus Venedicus*, which was said to be named after the people inhabiting the regions on each side of the gulf, an area called *Venelandia*. *Venelandia* was in turn assumed to be cognate with *Finlandia*.¹⁰⁵

But it must be remembered that maps can be just as politically motivated as books. Their content should therefore never be automatically considered true. German historians were particularly popular in Early Modern Sweden, and they used the term *Wandalia* to refer to Finland and neighbouring areas. This, however, had been the case since at least the twelfth century when *der/die Wenden* first appeared in German to refer to any Slavs.¹⁰⁶ Early Modern authors and cartographers may have been influenced by the German terminology, which is not evidence that the Wends truly were Finns. Furthermore, all the maps associating Finland with the Wends were

¹⁰⁰ For an overview of the different meanings behind 'Wends' and cognate terms, see Gudmund Schutte, *Our Forefathers: the Gothonic Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 81–6.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Donecker and Steinacher, 'Der König der Schweden', pp. 184–5.

¹⁰³ Chet Van Duzer, *Martin Waldseemüller's 'Carta marina' of 1516: Study and Transcription of the Long Legends* (New York: Springer, 2019), pp. 37–8.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Donecker and Steinacher, 'Der König der Schweden', pp. 184–5.

¹⁰⁶ Eng, *Det Svenska Väldet*, p.102.

written precisely at a time when Scandinavian kingdoms were scrambling to rewrite their histories by appropriating ancient Germanic tribes. The maps may therefore reflect the political propaganda of the time rather than objective scientific data.

The conflation between Wends and Finns later gained mass appeal because of Swedish historian Johannes Messenius' fifteen-volume work *Scondia Illustrata* written between 1616 and 1636.¹⁰⁷ In this monumental history of Sweden, Messenius presents his understanding of how the Wends came to inhabit Finland. That sees him draw the genealogical tree of ancient Germanic tribes, going back to the Biblical Flood and Noah's descendants. He argues that the Wends belonged to a much larger empire over which Noah's fourth son ruled until the empire was broken up, and the Wends and Slavs were separated from the rest. He then goes on to explain how the Wends spread from the Caucasus all the way up to Scandinavia, including the traditional areas associated with them in modern-day Germany and Poland. The Romans, however, are said to have reclaimed the lower parts of *Venelandia*, but we are told that the northern part of it, fiercely defended by the Swedes, retained control of its land and kept its name. And that is how the inhabitants of Finland came to be known as Wends when no one else bore this name anymore.¹⁰⁸

This theory's strongpoint is that it emphasises the subtle difference between using an ethnic title as opposed to a territorial one. Messenius' story about the origins of the Finns and the Wendish diaspora across Europe makes it possible for the so-called 'King of the Wends' to claim authority over an incalculable amount of people without being restricted by borders. By adopting a title relating to Finland, which by that time was well-defined, the holder would restrict himself to that particular area. In addition to this, we know that when Karl IX was crowned and assumed, among others, the title of king over the 'Lapps in the northern lands', this was met with protest. It caused uproar not because he claimed authority over this particular people, but because this amounted to serious territorial claims which could have technically

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 179–80.

¹⁰⁸ Johannes Messenius, *Scondia Illustrata*, ed. by Harald Olsson (Lund: Gleerup, 1944).

encompassed parts of Norway and Russia on top of northern Sweden and Finland.¹⁰⁹ Avoiding a controversial territorial claim, while asserting authority over an elusive people, was therefore politically smart. Messenius also reminds us how a king's title can help create a narrative about the kingdom. In that sense, the loosely-defined Wends were useful as a blank canvas on which the king could project a glorious history to tie back to his current possessions.

Nevertheless, Messenius' reinterpretation of Biblical and Roman history, and his account of the Germanic migrations across Europe, are mostly fictitious. His work inscribes itself in a wider scholarly trend typical of the Early Modern period which was concerned with national self-awareness and notions of mother/fatherland.¹¹⁰ It was written to provide legitimacy to the people of Finland by linking them to the ancient Scandinavian populations and served to justify the Swedish king's hold on Finland by presenting the kingdom as protector of the Wends. It conveniently lumped the Vandals, the Wends and all Scandinavian peoples together, manipulating their names and movements to create a politically relevant narrative. It must be remembered that this was written at a time when Sweden was expanding its empire and becoming a military superpower in Early Modern Europe. Thus, a lot of what was written then served to legitimise and explain the rise of this newcomer to the international stage and served as justification for further military conquests.¹¹¹ It can, therefore, be concluded that Vasa's revival of the title was motivated by several factors. Firstly, he probably tried to add perceived prestige to his titulature by invoking a nearly mythical tribe. Additionally, it may have been an attempt to claim populations in the southern Baltic region. Finally, he may also have simply appropriated his rival's title.

There is nevertheless a serious flaw in this theory: if the Wends meant the Finns, then why the need for another title (Grand Prince) reserved exclusively for Finland?

¹⁰⁹ Ruhne, *Bilden som budskap*, pp. 26–7.

¹¹⁰ David Kirby, *Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period: The Baltic World 1492–1772* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 286–7.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 162–3.

The king had many regional titles. For example, Karl IX's use of his title of Duke of Södermannland, among others, has already been noted. However, these titles referred to smaller political units. Finland was also divided within smaller political units, and yet the title of Grand Prince referred to the whole of Finland. Based on this inconsistency alone, the theory that the Wends equated the Finns should be considered carefully.

d. A separate title for a truly separate office

As noted previously, early medieval holders of the title *hertig* were separate from the king. It is perhaps in that separation of powers that the answer to our questions lies. For reasons that might have included all of the aforementioned, it is conceivable that Finland was genuinely treated as slightly separate from the rest of the kingdom, not simply intellectually but also administratively. It is intriguing that both the titles of *hertig* and 'Grand Prince' are related to Finland and not to the Finns directly. As explained earlier, the Swedes took over Finland out of political necessity, pressed by the Church. Rather than being a natural extension of the king's personal authority, I consider it plausible that for the first couple of centuries of Swedish rule, the administration of Finland was considered more of a task entrusted to the Swedish state by the Church, a sort of nominal guardianship.

Indeed, there is already clear evidence that, during the early thirteenth century and most probably earlier, the Archbishop of Lund was tasked with finding bishops to send to Finland (the Archdiocese of Lund, then in Denmark, was responsible for Sweden as well).¹¹² This was a request from the Church, not a royal ambition. Secondly, we also know that half-way through the thirteenth century, responsibility over Finland was transferred directly to the papal legate William of Sabina, who was given extraordinary powers to override all Scandinavian bishops.¹¹³ Sabina was able to unilaterally dictate terms concerning Finland and directly gave instructions

¹¹² SDHK nr: 321.

¹¹³ SDHK nr: 577; 578.

regarding the policies to adopt in the region.¹¹⁴ Between 1246 and 1248, there was no bishop at all and, instead, the region may have been administered directly by friars, although which exact order was in charge is debated.¹¹⁵ Finland may have simply been part of the exchange of favours between Birger Jarl and the Pope. At the synod of Skänninge, each offered to protect the interests of the other. One can speculate that the administration of Finland was a condition for the Church's political support for the Jarl. This would mean that the medieval Swedish state only served to channel the Church's authority over Finland rather than having any of its own. Thus, if the governing of Finland can be understood as a mission given by the Church rather than as the product of the Swedish king's ambitions, the use of a separate title relating only to Finland (and not necessarily assumed by the king himself) is justified.

It is during the reign of Gustav Vasa that the Roman Catholic Church was replaced by a new stately institution in Sweden.¹¹⁶ It is, therefore, from that period that the kingdom of Sweden could exert unlimited influence over Finland, which would then explain the sudden cultural and political development of the region under *hertig* Johan. I argue that this also explains why from the beginning of his reign as Johan III onwards, the appendage was usually added just after the Wends and before other titles. This shows that it was still perceived as an important title to hold, despite its secondary nature.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I have now shown that the core Swedish royal titles never included Finland, despite the region geographically representing an immense part of the kingdom, and a strategically fundamental asset. While this article is not able to give a definitive explanation as to why this was the case, several potential reasons were presented. Firstly, following the annexation of Finland by Sweden, a considerable part

¹¹⁴ SDHK nr: 618.

¹¹⁵ Line, *Kingship and State*, p. 446.

¹¹⁶ Birgit Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia*, p. 79.

of its population may have been of Swedish origin following well-documented waves of migration eastward from the fourteenth century onwards. In that case, it might have been seen as unnecessary to distinguish between the Swedes and the other populations represented in Finland. Secondly, it is possible that the Swedish king did not want to be associated with an area that was said to be inhabited by primitive, barbaric and unsophisticated people. When Gustav Vasa added the Wends to the royal title, the ethnonym usually reserved for southern Slavic populations may have referred to Finland too. Early Modern historians certainly tried to link the Wends to Finland in order to strengthen the Crown's claim over it. Crucially, Finland was perhaps not initially truly meant to be part of the Swedish kingdom. Rather, the Swedish monarch may have been entrusted with its safeguarding simply because Sweden was its closest Catholic neighbour. Thus, the administration of Finland may have been treated as a separate task that could be passed on to other senior figures – bishops or royal relatives. None of these explanations strictly exclude one another.

What can be seen from the evolution of Swedish royal titlature between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries is that titles give us clues about the true nature of a king's power and his relationship with his subjects. A king's title was chosen carefully to reflect not only the kingdom's political reality, but also its ambitions and aspirations. It was a powerful diplomatic tool. Titles could be manipulated to rewrite the people's history in order to create a sense of nationhood in a realm traditionally dominated by regional identities. They could also be used to threaten rivals, but they sometimes might have meant what they said. The effacement of Finland in royal titlature was perhaps not as much a mark of disrespect towards the Finns as it was a sign of their autonomy.